

## **BIBLICAL COUNSELING POLICIES & PROCEDURES**

*Please read, then sign the consent form at the end.*

### **OVERVIEW OF OUR BIBLICAL COUNSELING MINISTRY**

The Biblical Counseling Ministry of Grace Church is a non-profit organization. The purpose of this particular ministry is to provide biblical counseling services for you as a counselee, **free of charge**.

All counseling will be provided by volunteer lay counselors and not licensed professionals. Therefore, as “biblical” counselors, the goal of our counseling is to help you gain insight into your problem and life, yet help you understand your problem in light of God’s Word and His purpose for your life. The ultimate goal of our counseling is to help you grow in your faith, knowledge, and love for Jesus Christ, and help you be conformed to His likeness.

### **BIBLICAL BASIS**

Because we believe that the Bible to be the very Word of God to man concerning faith and life, the principles used in our counseling will be based upon Scripture and not necessarily in adherence with any psychological or psychiatric association. A foundation to our counseling is our belief that God has specifically created mankind in His own image and for the purpose of His own glory. Therefore, we believe that, in order to fully address the root of the problems that our counsees face, we must help them apply God’s Word to their lives.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

We are often asked whether Grace Church’s counseling ministry promises total confidentiality, in other words, that no one else will ever know what is being shared during a counseling session.

We are discreet but not confidential. The concept of *total* confidentiality is not biblical; however, information regarding a counselee/disciple will be handled with a high level of discretion. Discerning how to share information is an important aspect of the counseling relationship and we will carefully guard any information entrusted to us.

However, Hebrews 13:17 makes it clear that the leaders of the church, not the counselors, have the responsibility for caring for the souls of the church. Because of this, the appropriate staff and/or elders will be made aware of your situation. There are three other situations whereby we may be legally or biblically obligated to share certain information with others:

- When there is a clear indication of harm to you or someone else
- When there is evidence or reasonable suspicion of abuse against a minor child, elderly person, or dependent adult

- When a person persistently refuses to renounce a particular sin and it becomes necessary to seek the assistance of others in the church to encourage repentance and reconciliation (see Proverbs 5:22; 24:11, Matthew 18:15-20)

As part of our mission to train and equip others in biblical counseling, we may have counselor(s)-in-training (CIT) participate in the counseling with us. These individuals will abide by the same standards outlined above. However, in highly sensitive situations we will consider if the CIT should be dismissed for a time. If you think your situation might require this, you can let us know at the time you submit your paperwork.

## **DISTINCTIVES OF BIBLICAL COUNSELING**

- The church is called to minister to the whole person within the Body of Christ.
- We believe that a personal, vital knowledge of Jesus Christ is essential to salvation and is the foundation of all true biblical counseling. As such, we are committed to a presentation of the gospel to those who seek counseling and are not believers in Jesus Christ.
- The main thrust of biblical counseling involves:
  - Identifying the core issues
  - Identifying and establishing a spiritual mindset
  - A four-step process to bring about changes from 2 Timothy 3:16
    - Teaching what the Bible says about the issues
    - Conviction of the necessity for the changes
    - Correction of the things that need to be done to create the change
    - Training via homework and accountability that leads to God-honoring habits
- The Word of God and its practical application functions as the counselor's primary tool. As such, we believe the Bible is the only and absolute authority in our lives today.
- The work of the person of the Holy Spirit is an integral part of the methodology and philosophy of biblical counseling. The Holy Spirit works to effect change through the Christian's new identity in Christ and a careful study of and devotion to the Word.
- The Word of God is a therapeutic tool as well as a theological one. Thus, it can be used to heal emotional/spiritual issues.
- The Scriptures provide the basic standard for every area of life. As such, its system of ethics pertains to any culture and contemporary situation. Biblical counselors, therefore, possess an ethic for both right and wrong thinking and behavior.

## **PROCEDURES**

- Everyone has a chance to be fully heard. We will not interrupt another individual (counselor or counselee) while they are speaking.
- Homework is an essential part of biblical counseling. Each counselee will be expected to complete his/her assignment prior to each session.
- We will deal mainly with the here-and-now, not getting bogged down in the past and in blaming others.
- We will confront and deal with each other as honestly and objectively as we possibly can.

- There will be no retribution, retaliation, or grudges over what is said in the session. Statements made in the sessions are not to be repeated elsewhere.
- There will be no physical violence or threats of violence.
- We will operate on the premise that God’s Word has the solution to our problems and seek to be obedient to it over and against our own conclusions.

Note: Due to the increasing need for our counseling services, we ask that you cancel your appointment at least two days in advance in order that we can offer the time to someone on the waiting list. Having multiple cancellations without prior notice may forfeit future sessions.

**REMOTE COUNSELING**

In situations where in-person sessions are not feasible, we may consider offering remote biblical counseling (also known as Online/Virtual/or Video counseling) via computer or phone. By signing below, I’m indicating that if I participate in remote biblical counseling through Grace Church’s Biblical Counseling Ministry:

- I agree that neither the counselor(s) nor I will record our biblical counseling sessions through the use of technology (audio and/or video) unless all parties have consented, in writing, prior to recording.
- I understand that the risks and consequences from remote biblical counseling include but are not limited to the possibility, despite reasonable efforts on the part of the counselor and Grace Church, that:
  - the transmission of information could be disrupted or distorted by technical failure,
  - the transmission of my information could be interrupted by unauthorized persons,
  - and/or my information could be accessed by unauthorized persons (i.e., Apple, Google, Zoom, etc.).

**INFORMED CONSENT AGREEMENT/WAIVER:** As a counselee, having sought biblical counseling from the Biblical Counseling Ministry of Grace Church, I hereby acknowledge my understanding of the “Policies” (enclosed) of the Biblical Counseling Ministry of this church, and that all these guidelines are acceptable to me. As such, by signing below I do hereby waive any right to pursue legal action against Grace Church, its pastors, agents, employees, and lay counselors from any liability (claim or litigation) whatsoever arising from my participation in this ministry. I understand that the counseling staff of the Biblical Counseling Ministry of Grace Church are not state licensed under Florida statutes and are not psychologists or psychiatrists.

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Printed Name

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Signature

Date