

BIBLICAL COUNSELING POLICIES & PROCEDURES

(Please Read, then Sign Consent Form at End)

BIBLICAL COUNSELING MINISTRY - The Biblical Counseling Ministry of NorthCreek Church is a non-profit organization. The purpose of this particular ministry is to provide Biblical counseling services for you as a counselee.

Because this is a ministry within the church, please be aware that we are always training new counselors. It is possible that a counselor trainee may be observing the counselor and the counseling process. Trainees are subject to the same guidelines in regard to confidentiality as our counselors.

Your counselors will not normally be available for telephone conversations due to their scheduled appointments. If you have an emergency, please call the church receptionist and the counselor will return your call as soon as possible.

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 three cancellations without prior notice may forfeit future sessions.

Our Goal – 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 counselees face, we must help them apply God’s Word to their lives.

CONFIDENTIALITY - Does NorthCreek Church’s counseling ministry promise total confidentiality or, in other words, can I say anything and everything without anybody outside that room ever knowing what I said?

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. Carefully 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 five other situations whereby we may be legally or religiously obligated to share certain information with others:

- When there is a clear indication of harm to him/herself or someone else
- When there is evidence or reasonable suspicion of abuse against a minor child, elderly person, or dependent adult
- In discussions with the pastoral staff or elders of NorthCreek Church or previous counselor(s) for the purpose of gaining information for your care or to help in follow-up and after-care
- When a counselor is uncertain of how to address a particular problem and needs to seek advice and wisdom from another staff member or elder. Even in these cases, we will try our best to keep the name/s out of it
- 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 15:22; 24:11, Matthew 18:15-20)

In all of these situations, we will make every effort to be sensitive to your situation and carefully guard your information. We will strive to help you resolve the difficult situations you are experiencing as discretely as possible.

As part of our mission to train and equip others in biblical counseling, we may have counselor(s)-in-training participate in the counseling with us. These individuals will abide by the same standards as outlined above. However, in highly sensitive situations we will consider if apprentices 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 –

1. The church is called to minister to the whole person within the Body of Christ.
2. 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.
3. Our thrust in counseling involves:
 - a. Identifying the core issues.
 - b. Identifying a spiritual mindset.
 - c. A four step process to bring about changes from 2 Timothy 3:16
 - 1)Teaching –what the Bible says about the issues.
 - 2)Conviction–of the necessity for the changes.
 - 3)Correction–the things that need to be done to create the change.
 - 4)Training–homework and accountability that leads to concrete change.
4. 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.

5. 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.
6. The Word of God is a therapeutic tool as well as a theological one. Thus, it can be used to heal emotional/spiritual issues.
7. 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-

1. We begin on time and are not held to a clock.
2. Everyone stays for the entire session and faces all the issues brought up. Nobody gets up and leaves just because the topic is uncomfortable.
3. Everyone speaks for him/herself.
4. Everyone has a chance to be fully heard. We will not interrupt another individual (counselor or counselee) while they are speaking.
5. We will not ignore the nonverbal or body messages that are emitted, but will deal with them openly as they occur.
6. The counselor will not take sides.
7. The time spent together is for the purpose of working on the concerns of persons in the session, not for playing games, making personal points or diversion.
8. Everyone gets an opportunity to define the current problems and suggest realistic solutions. At least one positive action step is desired from each person.
9. Homework is an essential part of Biblical counseling. Each counselee will be expected to complete his/her assignment prior to each session.
10. We will deal mainly with the here-and-now, not getting bogged down in the past and in blaming others.
11. We will confront and deal with each other as honestly and objectively as we possibly can.
12. 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.
13. There will be no physical violence or threats of violence.
14. 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.

INFORMED CONSENT AGREEMENT/WAIVER

As a counselee, having sought Biblical counseling from the Biblical Counseling Ministry of NorthCreek 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 NorthCreek Church, its pastors, agents, employees and lay counselors from any liability (claim or litigation) whatsoever arising from my participation in this ministry.

Print Name _____ Signed _____ Date _____

Print Name _____ Signed _____ Date _____

I further understand that the counseling staff of the Biblical Counseling Ministry of NorthCreek Church are not state liscensed under California statues, and are not psychologists or psychiatrists.

I also understand that the Director of Biblical Counseling, Jeremy Pray, is not state liscensed under California statues, and is not a psychologist or a psychiatrist.

Signed _____ Date _____

Signed _____ Date _____