

## Statement on Counseling and Confidentiality

The Biblical Counseling ministry of this church exists to provide care, counsel, and support to members seeking assistance in their personal walk with Christ.

All Christians struggle with sin and the effect it has on our lives and our relationships (see Rom. 3:23; 7:7-25). Whenever a Christian is unable to overcome sinful attitudes or behaviors through private efforts, God instructs them to seek assistance from other members, and when needed from church leaders, who have the responsibility of providing pastoral counseling and oversight (see Rom. 15:14; Gal. 6:1-2; Col. 3:16; 2 Tim. 3:16-4:2; Heb. 10:24-31; 13:17; Jam. 5:16). Therefore, this church instructs and encourages its members to seek counsel from and confess sins to each other and to our leaders.

We believe that the Bible provides thorough guidance and instruction for faith and life. Therefore, our counseling is based on scriptural principles rather than those of secular psychology or psychiatry. Unless they specifically state otherwise, none of those who counsel in this church are trained or licensed as mental health professionals, nor should they be expected to follow the methods of such specialists.

Although some members of the church work in professional fields outside the church, when serving as pastoral or biblical counselors within the church, they do not provide the same kind of professional advice and services they do when they are hired in their professional capacities. Therefore, members who have significant legal, financial, medical, or other technical questions should seek advice from independent professionals. Our pastoral and biblical counselors shall be available to cooperate with such advisors and help members consider their advice in light of relevant scriptural principles.

## Informed Consent

Confidentiality and trustworthiness are important to maintain between a counselee and their biblical counselor(s). In general, matters discussed in the context of counseling are held in confidence by the counselor or counseling team. However, there are situations in which biblical counselors cannot offer strict confidence.

The following list includes common situations where biblical counselors would have to involve either other church members, church leaders, or appropriate law enforcement. This list is not exhaustive and biblical counselors reserve the right to involve others at their discretion in cases not explicitly listed below.

1. When a counselee indicates an intention to harm themselves or another person.
2. When a counselee shares of a crime against a minor, elder, or dependent adult.
3. When a counselee admits to or discloses that someone else has committed physical, sexual, emotional, or other forms of abuse.
4. When a counselee is engaging in repeated, ongoing serious immorality (e.g. adultery) and church discipline is a potential outcome.
5. When a counselee is a minor and discloses something which the biblical counselor believes the parents need to be aware of.
6. When a biblical counselor receives a court order and is required by law to release information.

By utilizing the biblical counseling ministry of the church, the counselee agrees to allow biblical counselors to share information with others in situations the counselors deem necessary.