



INFORMED CONSENT AGREEMENT

Our Goal – Our goal in providing biblical counseling is to help you meet the challenges of life in a way that will please and honor the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 10:31) and in a way that will bring you the greatest joy and satisfaction (John 15:11).

Biblical Basis – As ministers of the gospel of Jesus Christ our counseling stems from our sincerely held religious beliefs based upon the Bible, including our understanding of sexuality. This is part of our practice of religion. We believe that the Bible provides thorough guidance and instruction for faith and life (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:3). Therefore, our counseling is based upon scriptural principles. *Our counselors are not trained or licensed as psychotherapists or mental health professionals, nor should they be expected to follow the methods of such specialists.*

All counseling will be conducted in accordance with the counselor’s understanding of the Scriptures. However, our counselors do not know all there is to know about biblical teaching and its application to life. Therefore, when necessary, they will seek help, input, or advice from pastors, mentors, or colleagues.

Biblical Counsel – If you have significant legal, financial, medical or other technical questions you should seek advice from an independent professional. Our counselors will cooperate with such advisors and help you to consider their counsel in light of scriptural principles. Our counselors are certified through the ACBC (Association of Certified Biblical Counselors) and approved by the First Counseling ministry of First Baptist Church or are in the supervision process for their ACBC certification.

Counseling Observers – Because we are a training facility, our counselors often “team counsel.” You will meet with a biblical counselor, who will lead the session, and a counseling trainee(s), who will observe as part of his/her certification requirement.

Confidentiality – Confidentiality is an important aspect of the counseling process, and we will carefully guard the information you entrust to us. There are situations, however, in which the counselors may believe that it is wise or mandated (biblically or legally) for them to share certain information with others. It is not possible to list every possible circumstance, but some examples would include (please initial you understand and accept each example):

1. When a counselor is uncertain how to address a problem and needs to seek advice from another pastor or counselor. _____
2. When there is concern that someone may be harmed unless others intervene. _____
3. When abuse or another crime may have occurred. _____
4. When a person refuses to renounce a particular sin and it becomes necessary to seek the assistance of others in the church to encourage repentance and reconciliation or to begin the process of church discipline (Proverbs 15:22, 24:11; Matthew 18:15-20). _____
5. When observers sit in on counseling sessions to assist the counselor or for training purposes (including audio & video recordings—only with permission). _____
6. When the counselee’s pastor, staff and/or church leadership is needed to provide pastoral assistance. _____
7. When the counselor is legally required to provide information or testimony in a legal proceeding. _____

Please be assured that our counselors strongly prefer not to disclose personal information to others, and they will make every effort to help you find ways to resolve a problem as privately as possible.

Biblical Counseling and Psychotropic Medication – While we hold to the sufficiency of Scripture for counseling problems, we know that many who will come to us will have been prescribed medications by a physician. The biblical teaching on the importance of the body affirms the use of medication for physical problems. As biblical counselors, we do not offer medical advice including advice on withdrawing from medications. Our care for counselees may lead us to ask questions about the side-effects of medication, or whether the counselees have allowed the medication to take the place of the Lord as a refuge in their life. We will always encourage counselees with questions regarding medications, or who wish to discontinue using medications, to seek the advice of competent medical professionals before changing or discontinuing any medication. Please initial you understand/accept this. _____

Our Fee – Though it may be necessary for you to purchase materials for your own use, the actual discipleship counseling is done *free of charge* as a ministry to our church and community.

Parental Involvement – When counselees are under the age of 18, we require parents to be involved in the counseling process; this includes the following: counseling sessions, homework, and/or accountability for their child.

Church Involvement: Because we believe the local church has a vital role in the lives of believers (Hebrews 3:13-13; 10:24-25), counselees are asked to commit to attending faithfully their Sunday School class and worship services while receiving counseling.

Church Advocates for Non-members: Because we believe counseling should be the primary responsibility of your home church, you will need to bring a church leader or someone in spiritual leadership as your Advocate; for women, it would be a woman who is in a place of spiritual leadership at your church. This is beneficial for every person involved in the counseling process (Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:1-2). Please see the Church/Pastor Recommendation form for additional information.

Resolution of Conflicts (Arbitration) – On rare occasions a conflict may develop between a counselor and a counselee. In order to make sure that any such conflicts will be resolved in a biblically faithful manner, we require all of our counselees to agree that any dispute that arises with a counselor, First Counseling, or our certifying agencies, as a result of counseling will be settled by mediation and, if necessary, legally binding arbitration in accordance with the Rules of Procedure of the Institute for Christian Conciliation (www.aorhope.org/icc-rules); judgment upon an arbitration award may be entered in any court having jurisdiction. *It is expressly understood that by agreeing in advance to arbitrate that the counselee is giving up his right to a trial in the civil courts.*

Conclusion & Signature – Having clarified the principles and policies of our counseling ministry, we welcome the opportunity to minister to you in the name of Christ and to be used by Him as He helps you to grow in spiritual maturity and prepares you for usefulness in His body. If you have any questions about these guidelines or conditions, please speak with your counselor or someone at First Counseling.

Having read the foregoing information and conditions fully and completely, my signature below indicates that I understand all the material presented and fully agree to comply with the foregoing, and I consent to the disclosure of certain communications as provided above and waive any legal privileges that may apply.

Name (please print): _____ **Parent/Guardian Name*:** _____

Signature: _____ **Parent/Guardian Signature:** _____

Date: _____ **Date:** _____

* only required if counselee is under 18 years of age