

Biblical Counseling Agreement

The Owen Center

Thank you for your interest in Christ-centered biblical counseling. We look forward to working with you. The following information will serve as an agreement between us.

I. General Comments:

Before reading this agreement form, please read the document, “*Interested in Biblical Counseling at The Owen Center?*” (www.theowencenter.com) to understand what we mean by Christ-centered, biblical counseling.

Either you or your counselor may choose to discontinue counseling at any time, without explanation.

Since part of our mission is the training of biblical counselors your counselor may ask your permission for one or more counselors/trainees to attend your counseling sessions. These individuals will observe the same standards of care and confidentiality as your counselor.

As Biblical counselors we welcome the support and involvement of your local church. Therefore, you may ask your counselor to invite a *counseling companion* to join you for in-session prayer and encouragement.

II. Making the Process Most Effective:

To increase the effectiveness of your counseling, we ask that you:

1. *Be committed to biblical counseling* as described on this sheet and any other accompanying materials your counselor gives. Counseling is hard work for you and your counselor.
2. *Attend each scheduled session.* Allow 50-60 minutes for a session. If an emergency arises and you cannot attend a session, please contact your counselor as soon as possible. Please pay your committed investment if you make a non-emergency cancellation within 24 hours of your appointment. Your counselor will not usually counsel by telephone and cannot reply to frequent phone calls, email, or postal correspondence.
3. *Be as open and honest as you can.* Your counselor realizes that talking about your problems may be difficult for you and that your trust in him or her may take time to develop.
4. *Be patient*—your problems did not develop in a day. Your counselor will carefully listen in order to build understanding and trust. This may take several sessions.
5. *Complete any growth assignments given.* Your counselor will give you assignments that fit our counseling aims and will help you make progress between sessions. Completion of your growth assignments are essential for counseling to continue.
6. *Worship.* Connect with a biblical church for God-centered worship, solid Bible teaching with practical life application, pastoral care, and meaningful friendships with others who will grow in God’s grace with you.

III. Confidentiality and Legal Concerns:

Confidentiality is an important aspect of our counseling. Your counselor will carefully guard your personal information. However, confidentiality is guaranteed only within the limits of biblical principles and civil law. For example:

1. Your counselor might be required to divulge information to appropriate civil authorities if there is indication that you or someone else might otherwise be harmed or be at risk of abuse or neglect.
2. In counseling minor children, your counselor might be required to divulge information to parents or legal guardians.
3. When a counselee has vowed submission to the government and discipline of a church (Matthew 18:15-20, Galatians 6:1) and stubbornly refuses to recognize or to repent of a particular sin, your counselor is required by scripture to seek the assistance of others in that church according to the Biblical pattern of restoration.

Our counselors strongly prefer not to disclose personal information to others, and they will make every effort to help you find ways to resolve problems as privately as possible.

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Agreement by Counselee(s):

- You agree not to discuss our conversations with people who do not have a necessary interest in the counseling or conciliation process.
- In situations that involve legal action, you agree to treat all dealings with your counselor as *settlement negotiations*, which are inadmissible in a court of law or for legal discovery. Furthermore, you agree not to compel your counselor to divulge information acquired during counseling or to testify concerning your counseling in a legal proceeding. Your counselor agrees not to voluntarily divulge information acquired during counseling or testify concerning your counseling in a legal proceeding.
- In the unlikely event of a conflict between you and your counselor, you agree to resolve the dispute in a biblical manner, through discussion, and, if necessary, through mediation and arbitration, according to the *Rules of Procedure* of the Institute for Christian Conciliation, available at Peacemaker Ministries' website (www.peacemaker.net). For further information about confidentiality, see the *Guidelines for Christian Conciliation* at the same website.

If you have any questions about the above matters, please talk with your counselor. If you agree to these terms, please sign below and return this sheet to your counselor before or at the beginning of your first meeting.