

Community of Faith Bible Church

Consent to Biblical Discipleship Counseling And Release of Liability Form

What is Expected of You?

It is our (COFBC) belief that change must begin with ourselves as we look to Jesus Christ for the power to change. Therefore, we ask you (counselee) to approach the counseling and encouragement process as an opportunity for personal change and spiritual growth. We ask that you refrain from the temptation of focusing on others, and instead we ask you to focus on what changes God desires to make in your life, in the midst of your circumstances. Be advised that you will be assigned "homework." Homework is a vital part of the change process; therefore, completion of the homework assignments before your next session is expected.

CONFIDENTIALITY CLAUSE

- 1) Absolute confidentiality is not scriptural. **In certain circumstances the Bible requires that facts be disclosed to select others (Matthew 18:15ff). In these areas we follow the guidelines of COFBC and the Bible. When your church leadership inquires, we will disclose to them the information they need to effectively and biblically fulfill their responsibility to shepherd you.**
- 2) The privacy and confidentiality of our conversations and records are a privilege of yours and are protected by our ethical principles in all but a few circumstances. **BY LAW, there are certain situations in which information about individuals undergoing counseling may be released with or without their permission. These situations are as follows: (Romans 13:1-3)**
 - A. **Where it is proven that children are physically abused, neglected, or sexually abused;**
 - B. **In emergency situations where it is proven that there may be danger to the counselee or others, as with homicide or suicide, confidentiality may be broken;**
 - C. **If a court of law issues a legitimate subpoena relating to a child abuse case, we are required by law to provide the information specifically described in the subpoena;**
 - D. **If an unreported life-threatening felony has been committed, we are required by law to report it to the police.**
- 3) **We reserve the right to consult with others or appropriate church ministry staff members regarding your sessions.** This consultation will be held in the same level of confidence as your sessions. This will involve issues such as:
 - A. Church discipline matters
 - B. Seeking wise counsel to help address the matter in a thorough manner
 - C. Reporting to other leaders on the status of counseling when feasible and appropriate
 - D. Training of other counselors to learn how to handle cases of the same nature

Resolution of Disagreements

If a dispute should arise between the counselee and the counselor regarding the session or the counselor's advice or conduct, one should bring this dispute to the attention of the Director of the Biblical Discipleship Counseling Ministry of COFBC. If the dispute cannot be resolved at this level,

all parties agree to resolve such dispute by submitting to the Conflict Resolution Team of the COFBC (which is comprised of members selected by COFBC's Senior Pastor/Elders) for full and final resolution and conciliation. Both, the counselee and the counselor agree NOT to take this matter to any secular court system. (1 Corinthians 6:1-7)

Waiver of Liability

The undersigned counselee, having sought biblical discipleship counseling as adhered to by Community of Faith Bible Church, a nonprofit religious organization, hereby acknowledges their understanding of the above stated conditions and therefore releases, acquits and forever discharges from liability the Community of Faith Bible Church, its pastor, elders, pastoral/lay counselors, members, employees, ministries, church staff, subsidiaries (including, but not limited to, Community Counseling Center), partners, agents, affiliated/participating churches and business entities, from any and all manner of actions, causes of action, suits, claims or demands in law and equity arising from out of the undersigned's participation in the above-mentioned biblical discipleship counseling ministry.

It is further understood, in consideration for receiving any form of counseling from the Community of Faith Bible Church, the person (counselee) receiving the counseling agrees to all of the provisions, terms and conditions contained within the attached Exhibit A to this Consent to Biblical Discipleship Counseling and Release of Liability Form.

The undersigned agrees that he/she has read and thoroughly understands and agrees to the terms and conditions of this Consent to Biblical Discipleship Counseling and Release of Liability Form and Exhibit A attached hereto (which is incorporated by reference the same as if fully set forth herein) and now willingly (without any coercion) consents to and requests said biblical discipleship counseling from COFBC's biblical discipleship counseling ministry.

SIGNED on this _____ day of _____, AD, 20_____, by

Signed Name: _____

Printed Name: _____

State of Texas
County of _____

Before me, the undersigned authority on this day personally appeared _____, known to me to be the person whose name is subscribed to the foregoing instrument of writing and acknowledged to me that he/she executed the same for the purposes and consideration thereon expressed. SWORN TO AND SUBSCRIBED BEFORE ME, under my official hand and seal of office this the _____ day of _____, 20_____.

NOTARY PUBLIC In and for the STATE OF TEXAS

Printed Name: _____

My Commission expires: _____

EXHIBIT A

Biblical counselors at Community of Faith Bible Church (COFBC) are available for a limited number of counseling cases. Our counselors (by design) are not certified by the State of Texas; however, each counselor is trained and supervised by other counselors. Additionally, COFBC counselors have had extensive training in biblical discipleship counseling and must meet various training requirements established by the Bible and the Director of the Ministry.

Director of the Counseling Ministry

Dr. Nicolas Ellen, the director of the ministry, is the Senior Pastor of COFBC. In addition to his pastoral and counseling ministries at COFBC, he teaches biblical counseling at the College of Biblical Studies in Houston, Texas in his role as Senior Professor of Biblical Counseling. He holds both a masters and Ph.D. in Biblical Counseling. He has also written numerous books on biblical discipleship counseling and carries on a national teaching ministry on the subject of biblical discipleship counseling.

The Role of Scripture to the Counselor

If you seek counseling from COFBC, we want you to know that all counseling will be conducted in accordance with the counselor's understanding of the Scriptures. All counseling will be biblically based, meaning that the Scriptures will be the authority in all cases. **COFBC does not subscribe to the teachings and methods of modern psychology or psychiatry, whether expressly secular or the result of any attempted integration with biblical principles. Our counselors do not follow the methods of trained or licensed psychotherapists or mental health professionals. Also, our policy is not to make referrals to such persons.**

If you (the counselee) are not sure that you will be interested in biblically-based counseling, you may first attend one or two sessions to discover what biblical discipleship counseling is like. **If you or the counselor determines that you (the counselee) are unwilling to use the Bible as the final authority for your life, future counseling sessions will be terminated.**

Additionally, each counseling session will conclude with the counselor assigning homework. If the counselee is unwilling to complete the assigned homework, future counseling sessions will be terminated until the assigned homework has been completed to the satisfaction of the counselor. **Any future sessions can be terminated by either party. However, if you (the counselee) are a member of COFBC, the Pastor and/or Elders will be notified of the reasons for termination of your counseling sessions and all By-Laws and/or policies of COFBC shall apply. If you are not a member of COFBC, please note that written correspondence will be sent to your church notifying them of the termination of your counseling sessions and the reasons for said termination.**

Non-members of COFBC

Please note that COFBC is committed to the spiritual health of its members, thus **counseling of COFBC members always takes precedence over all non-member related counseling services.**

If the counselee is a member in good standing with a church other than COFBC, the counselee is **required** to invite their Senior Pastor, Elder, or someone else in a leadership position from their local church to accompany them to the counseling sessions.

We recognize and respect the authority and the discipline of the counselee's church. However, if no one in a leadership position is available to attend counseling sessions with the counselee, COFBC's counselor,

after seeking guidance and approval from the Director of the Counseling Ministry, may decide to move forward with the counselee. However, the counselee **must** provide to the counselor a written letter from their Senior Pastor and/or Elder(s) authorizing him/her to attend counseling at COFBC. This letter must be signed and on the letterhead of the counselee's church. In addition, this letter **must** provide COFBC with the name and telephone number of the person in counselee's church who will serve as the counselee's accountability partner. We do this because we firmly believe in the leadership of your church, and we only want to come along side of them to offer assistance. Also, this will make transfer back to the pastoral care of the counselee's church much easier to affect.

Additionally, if the counselee is unable to bring someone in leadership with them, or to provide some form of accountability from their local congregation, COFBC may elect not to facilitate the counseling process. This is due to the fact that COFBC believes that the Senior Pastor/Elders are responsible for the spiritual well-being of their local congregation. Without the involvement or support of the Senior Pastor/Elders or someone in leadership from the counselee's church, COFBC would be assuming responsibility for counselee's spiritual well-being. Nevertheless, if the Director of the Counseling Ministry were to make a determination that extraordinary circumstances do exist which make this requirement unworkable, the Director of the Counseling Ministry may, at his sole discretion, elect to allow the counseling session to go forward in the absence of any approval or presence from the counselee's church leadership.

Non-member of a Church

If the counselee is currently not a member of a church, for reasons other than church discipline or unresolved sin matters, he/she will be required to attend Sunday services at COFBC while going through COFBC's counseling ministry. For example, if the counselee is going to have 13 counseling sessions, then COFBC would expect that the counselee would attend COFBC for 13 weeks. After such time, COFBC will be happy to assist the counselee in finding a church home and, of course, the counselee is welcome to examine Community of Faith Bible Church as a possibility.

Our experience has been that for changes in people to be lasting, people need more than the help they receive in formal counseling. They need the total ministry of a church in which the preaching, teaching and fellowship are providing the same kind of help that is given in the counseling sessions. **If the counselee does not attend COFBC on a regular basis (i.e., Sunday services and weekly discipleship classes at least three (3) times a month), all future counseling sessions will be terminated.**

Confidentiality

Absolute confidentiality is not scriptural. In certain circumstances the Bible requires that facts be disclosed to select others (Matt. 18:15ff). In these areas we will follow the policy and procedures of COFBC. When your church leadership inquires about the status of your sessions, we will disclose to them the information that is necessary for them to effectively and biblically fulfill their responsibility to shepherd you.

BY LAW, there are certain situations in which information about individuals undergoing counseling may be released with or without their permission. These situations are as follows: (Romans 13:1-3)

- 1. Where it is proven that children are physically abused, sexually abused, or neglected.** If in the course of counseling, the counselor suspects that a minor child has been physically or sexually abused, the counselor will immediately consult with another counselor and/or COFBC elder who

will assist with the assessment of the situation. However, if it is determined that a child is in imminent danger of being abused, the counselor will contact the appropriate legal authorities without employing the above consultation process.

2. **In emergency situations where there may be proven danger to the counselee or others, as with homicide or suicide, confidentiality may be broken.**
3. **If a court of law issues a legitimate subpoena relating to a child abuse case, we are required by law to provide the information specifically described in the subpoena.**
4. **If an unreported life-threatening felony has been committed, we are required by law to report it to the police.**

Other situations where it may become necessary to reveal otherwise confidential information include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. When a counselee refuses to renounce/discontinue a particular sin, it may become necessary to seek the assistance of others in the church to encourage repentance and reconciliation in accordance with the Scriptures (cf. Proverbs 15:22, 24:11; Matthew 18:15-20). In such cases, only such information as is necessary to deal with the particular sin will be revealed. Further, said information will only be revealed to those biblically required to be involved. To that end, it may become necessary to contact the pastor and/or other elders from a counselee's home church. Additionally, should your church leadership inquire, we will disclose to them the information they need to effectively and biblically fulfill their responsibility to shepherd you.
2. Counselors, uncertain as to how a particular issue should be addressed, may reveal necessary information to and seek assistance from another counselor, elder, or COFBC Biblical Counseling volunteer. This consultation will be held in the same level of confidence as your sessions. This may involve issues such as: A. Church discipline matters. B. Seeking wise biblical counsel to help address a specific matter in an appreciate way. C. Reporting to other leaders on the status of biblical counseling when feasible and appropriate.
3. Training of other counselors to learn how to handle cases of the same nature.
4. If a counselee threatens to harm himself/herself or another person, it may be necessary to notify the proper legal authorities, family members, pastor(s), intended victim, or all the above. If the counselee makes such threats in the context of a counseling session, the counselor will upon receiving the information, consult with COFBC's Pastor and/or elder, if available, who will work with them to assess the situation and assist in making the appropriate notifications, if necessary.
5. If the counselor is privy to evidence that abuse or some other crime has been or is about to be committed, it may be necessary to reveal such to the legal authorities.
6. Observers, including but not limited to, biblical counseling students, may sit in on biblical counseling sessions either to assist in the biblical counseling process or for training purposes. All observers and biblical counselors agree to be bound by COFBC Biblical Counseling Confidentiality Agreement. Should they be found to be in violation of this agreement they may face expulsion from the COFBC Biblical Counseling ministry by the COFBC Pastor and/or elders.

COFBC Biblical Counseling does NOT hold the legal concepts of the priest/penitent, doctor/patient, psychotherapist/patient or counselor/counselee privileges.

At any time during the counseling, for reasons sufficient to himself/herself, the counselor – as also the counselee shall have the option of terminating counseling.

Counselee Responsibility

It should be understood that biblical discipleship counseling will involve giving scriptural teaching and making practical application of the same to each individual counselee. The counselee is held fully responsible for how he/she implements that counsel.

Counselors in Training

Here at Community of Faith Bible Church we not only provide biblical discipleship counseling but are devoted to training biblical counselors. This means that the counselor may have one to two people assisting him/her in each counseling session.

The Bible as the Authority in the Session

We are confident that the Bible has all of the information necessary for life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3). There are no problems between persons or in persons that the Bible fails to address either in general or specific principles. Our counselors are not infallible, nor do they pretend to know all there is to know about biblical teaching and its applications to life, but they are well equipped and competent to help people change. They will make a point to differentiate between God's commands and their suggestions. Counselors will also honestly tell you if they are limited in their capacity to address a matter and will seek help from other trained counselors in matters where they feel it is needed.

Drug and Sobriety Testing

COFBC reserves the right to request voluntary drug and/or sobriety testing at any time during the counseling process. Any requested testing will be at COFBC's expense and will utilize commercially available test kits and gear (such as breathalyzers). Counselees unwilling to take a requested test or testing positive for drugs and/or drunkenness, in the judgement of the Director of the Counseling Ministry and/or counselor, may be removed or suspended from the program at the Director of the Counseling Ministry's discretion. COFBC Biblical Counseling is explicitly dependent on the use of the Word of God and the Holy Spirit's application of God's Word in the heart of those counseled. A counselee being repeatedly filled with wine (or under the influence of other consciousness-altering substances) will not be filled with the Spirit and so be unable to be helped.

Medical/Legal Advice

Please note that COFBC does **not** give medical or legal advice.

“If you are willing to enter into this kind of counseling, please fill out the forms attached below. Once you have filled out the forms, please email the forms to ChurchSecretary@cofbc.org, or mail them to us (See our contact information.) Once you have emailed or mailed the forms, call us to see when/if scheduled times of counseling are available.”

Thank you for your interest in the Biblical Discipleship Counseling Ministry of Community of Faith Bible Church.