

## **GRAHAM BIBLICAL COUNSELING (GBC)** [A discipleship counseling ministry of Graham Church]

### **PURPOSE & GOALS**

We Glorify and Enjoy God as We Make (Counsel) and Equip Authentic Disciples of Jesus

- GBC's primary ministry is counseling those who attend Graham Church.
- GBC also seeks to pre-counsel/counsel those in the community and surrounding area. (Pre-counseling is an effort to evangelize the lost by counseling them through their personal problems.)
- GBC will also offer resources and training in Biblical counseling.

### **PHILOSOPHY**

- 1) Biblical counseling is really just another description and aspect of discipleship. More specifically, counseling is intensive discipleship that is more concentrated and localized to a person's specific problem (Matt. 28:20a). Sheep, at times, get tangled up in sin and need specialized discipleship.
- 2) The Word of God is central, foundational, and all sufficient for all counseling dealing with non-organic or non-physical life problems. Graham Biblical counseling will not integrate psychology or any other man made philosophy with the Scriptures. [Heb 4:12; 2 Pet 1:3; Ac 20:32; Jn 6:68]
- 3) Biblical counseling is not to be an optional ministry of the church. The local church is called and responsible to counsel one another. Every believer on some level is commanded to counsel other believers. A formal counseling ministry with trained counselors seeks to specialize in applying God's Word to specific common problems. [Romans 15:14; Col 3:16]
- 4) Counseling/Discipleship, cannot merely come from preaching, formal teaching, and evangelism but one-on-one instruction, reproving, correcting, and training in righteousness. Yet, counseling is most effective when incorporated as part of the local church. Hearing and obeying the preaching and teaching of God's Word will motivate growth and change. Engaging in love and fellowship with other believers will be a necessary aid and encouragement. Being under godly leaders who themselves are growing and changing will provide the counselee an example to follow. [2 Tim 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 3:18; Heb. 10-23-25; Heb. 13:17]
- 5) Every true disciple of Christ is commanded to make disciples and be witnesses to unbelievers (Matt. 28:19-20; Ac. 1:8). The goal of counseling unbelievers is to be used of God to reconcile them to Christ (2 Cor. 5:18-20). Therefore, when counseling unbelievers, the counselor is called to make a defense for the hope that can only be found in Christ (1 Pet. 3:15). Yet, proclaiming the gospel of Christ should be done with gentleness and respect (1 Pet. 3:16). Also, the counselor must be careful not to present Jesus as merely someone who can fix the counselee's problems. The counseling must not simply be a therapy session to make the counselee feel better. The gospel should be presented clearly and completely.  
(i.e. God's holiness, man's sinfulness, God's standard for man, man's inability to meet God's standard, God's provision in Christ for reconciliation, and man's response of repentance and faith) .

GBC will be distinctly Christian counseling in accordance with the Biblical philosophy of "nouthetic" counseling.  
(For more details on the counseling philosophy read "What is True Biblical Counseling" below)

## **What is True Biblical Counseling?**

Biblical Counseling:

- Views Sanctification (Christlikeness) as the ultimate goal - to please God (2 Cor. 5:9)
- Exercises Compassionate care for all people
- Uses God's Word as its authority to teach God's Will for any life problem
- Recognizes our full dependence upon the Holy Spirit
- Sees counseling as the ministry of the Local Church, not just of specialists
- Gives Hope in Jesus Christ to the struggling.

### **Biblical Counseling aims at the Sanctification of the individual.**

The goal in Biblical Counseling is "sanctification." This means that we must desire not simply outward behavioral change, but inner change of the heart so that we are more like the character of Jesus Christ. This is God's will for every person's life (1 Thess. 4:3). This not only glorifies God the most, but also brings the most lasting joy to a believer. We don't want to help someone, for instance, just to make their marriage better by giving them techniques to keep peace in the home. We desire change so that Jesus Christ is glorified by the change that God brings about in the person's heart (Rom. 8:28-29). God uses the body of Christ, not just Pastors and church leaders to accomplish His purposes (though Pastors and church leaders must take the lead in this).

### **Biblical Counseling is Compassionate in nature.**

In Acts 20:31 (for a period of 3 years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears), we discover that this form of counseling must be motivated by compassion. It is a ministry that springs from a heart of mercy and love. Even though Paul "admonished" people, he did so with tears of compassion. In Gal. 6:1-2 we see this mercy displayed through "gently" seeking to "restore" those struggling in sin. This is not self-righteous gloating, but a sincere desire to assist and "bear one another's burdens." In this way we are proving to "fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2) and love one another as Jesus Christ loves His people (Jn. 13:34). There is deep involvement in the lives of those struggling; not a "professional detachment" from them or their problems. This compassion must be accompanied by an appeal to change into conformity with God's Word; otherwise this "admonition" becomes empty sentimentalism.

### **Biblical Counseling recognizes God's Word as the ultimate authority.**

A key aspect of Biblical counseling is the conviction that Scripture is sufficient to address any and every problem of life. There is an intimate connection between Biblical counseling and "teaching" as can be seen from several passages. Col. 1:28 says "We proclaim (Jesus), admonishing every man and teaching every man...so that we may present every man complete in Christ." It is not just listening to people's problems and asking them "what do you think?" It involves giving counsel from the Scriptures that directs believers to not only see things that need changing in their lives (admonish) but also how they are to change (teach). Furthermore, this passage highlights the goal of sanctification mentioned earlier (complete in Christ). Col 3:16 likewise links together this dual emphasis on "teaching and admonishing" the saints. They are both integral aspects of Biblical counseling. The same text reminds us that this is only possible insofar as "the Word of Christ richly dwell(s) within you." Biblical Counseling urges the struggling saint to constantly reflect upon the Scriptures.

### **Biblical Counseling is completely dependent upon the ministry of the Holy Spirit.**

Biblical counseling also recognizes the essential importance of the ministry of the Holy Spirit. We believe that no man, no matter how godly or educated, is capable of giving God-glorifying counsel without the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God uses the Scriptures as His authority (not the counselor's opinions, experience, or education). The Spirit of God opens the heart to comprehend the Scriptures (Jn. 16:7-11) and also convinces us that it is true (Jn. 14:16-17). He is the One who guides us in making application of the Scriptures in life (Jn. 16:13; Rom. 8:26-27). His goal is to see Jesus Christ glorified through counseling (Jn. 16:14). Without His ministry, the Bible will appear to be "ink on trees" (you will never understand it, apply it or see God's glory without the Holy Spirit – 1 Cor. 2:10-14). This is why we view the Holy Spirit as being of more importance than the counselor himself.

**Biblical Counseling is a ministry of the Community of saints to one another, not just the ministry of specialists.**

One common mistake in counseling is to make it into a “professional” ministry. How often have you heard Christians say, “he needs professional help”? The Scriptures remind us that counseling is not merely a professional ministry. It is to be practiced by all of the body of Christ. In fact, everyone does counsel other believers – some with faithfulness to the gospel, some by minimizing the gospel. Both Pastors and laymen are to be involved in Biblical counseling (Pastors should “equip” their people in this area - Eph 4:12). In Rom 15:14, Paul is confident that these believers are “...full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able also to admonish one another.” It is godly character, coupled with knowledge of the Word of God and complete dependence upon the Holy Spirit that makes a Christian a suitable counselor.

Believers in the church are exhorted to “admonish the unruly” fellow Christian within the church (1 Thes 5:14). This is actually the “brotherly” way to treat a fellow believer: “admonish him as a brother” (2 Thes 3:15). The implication is that if we do not practice this kind of counseling care for one another then we are not being good brothers and sisters with one another. Even in the family relationship, parents are to raise their children by “bring(ing) them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord” (Eph 6:4). In this passage the counseling ministry is described as “instruction.” This reminds us that teaching and guidance are integral to the counseling ministry of the Lord’s people.

**Biblical Counseling views our Hope in Jesus Christ as integral to Biblical Counseling.**

In 1 Cor. 10:13, we are reminded that our struggles and temptations in life are common to man and that our ultimate hope rests in the faithfulness of God to train us through them. You are not alone in your struggles since others have struggled just like you have and God has given them grace to change. God Himself is central to all Biblical counseling, not incidental. Biblical counseling recognizes that the ultimate hope of man must not be on counseling techniques or theories, but on our sovereign and good Lord God. Struggling men and women must be directed to “hope in God” (Psalm 42:5; 43:5) and not in their counselor or in their own resources. Biblical counseling always directs people to Jesus Christ as the One in whom they should place their hope, not the Biblical counselor.

In summary then, Biblical Counseling incorporates Sanctification as its goal, is filled with Compassion for suffering individuals, uses the Scriptures as our authority and source with dependence upon the Holy Spirit, and sees our ultimate Hope residing in Jesus Christ Himself. Our desire is that we would have the privilege of ministering to you and helping to equip you to utilize the Scriptures in counseling in such a way that they are “profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.” (2 Tim 3:16-17).

## POLICIES

- 1) **Confidentiality/Privacy** – Counselors of GBC understand that confidentiality is an important and vital aspect of the counseling relationship. Counselors agree to carefully guard the information entrusted to them by the counselee to the fullest extent possible. Under certain circumstances, however, it may be necessary to reveal information obtained in the counseling process in order to uphold the principles of Scripture and/or the laws of the state of Michigan. (See Graham Church Counseling Agreement below)
  
- 2) **Counselor Expectations** – GBC counselors are expected to counsel in accordance with GBC’s counseling philosophy, policies, and Graham’s doctrinal statement. It is recommended that all GBC counselors be trained in nouthetic counseling as follows:
  - 1) Training should take place from a nouthetic counseling center or via of correspondence. Training should consist of a minimum of 50 hours of instruction in nouthetic counseling.
  - 2) Counselors should also have a minimum of 10 hours of counseling observation from a trained nouthetic counselor. (This can be completed via of observing DVD counseling sessions.)
  - 3) It is recommended that counselors have some supervision over their counseling from a trained nouthetic counselor. Filling out case report forms is encouraged.
  - 4) Counselors would do well to be trained in hermeneutics and in theology, so that they are handling the Scriptures accurately and applying it correctly to the counselee. Counselors should be well read in Biblical counseling resources (refer to Graham Biblical Counseling Resource list).
  - 5) A growing and vibrant relationship with Lord is vital to being a good counselor. The counselor should be participating member of Graham Church and a godly example before the counselee. Counsel should always be given with humility and speaking the truth in love (Eph. 4:15).
  
- 3) **Cross Gender Counseling** – Counselors should exercise great care in counseling the opposite sex. Counselors should never be alone in the building with a counselee who is a member of the opposite sex. Counseling the opposite sex should occur in the presence of another counselor, a spouse, counselor in training, or observer. In rare situations, a counselor may need to counsel the opposite sex once or twice. But there should be no ongoing counseling of the opposite sex alone.  
Generally speaking, counselors should only counsel a married person once or twice without the spouse’s knowledge. (Eventually, each person needs to be viewed as part of the problem and/or part of the solution.)
  
- 4) **Counseling Minors** – GBC counselors should always attempt to first work with parents (or guardians) when dealing with problems with minors. The Scriptures lay the primary burden of discipleship on parents (Eph. 6:4) and parents are God’s primary agents for bringing children up in the ways of the Lord. When problems cannot be resolved through counseling and equipping parents, counselors should counsel with the parents and the minor. Counseling with parents and the minor present allows the counselor to demonstrate to the parents how to disciple their child and of course help him or her. At times, it may be best for the counselor to meet with the child without the parents present. In such cases, counseling should occur in the presence of another counselor, counselor in training, or an observer. Counselors should also adhere to Graham’s Child and Staff Safety policy.
  
- 5) **Counselee Responsibilities** – Since counseling is really just another form of discipleship, the counselee, who is a believer, needs to be carrying out his or her’s Christian responsibilities. Counselee’s will be expected to be faithful in fulfilling counseling homework, regular church attendance, personal time in the Word and prayer, and fellowship.

6) **Counseling Attendees From Other Churches**

a) The counselee will be encouraged to contact his/her pastor/elder about receiving counseling. The counselee will be encouraged to invite his or her pastor or elder to attend the counseling sessions. And the counselee should be encouraged to inform his or her pastor of the results of counseling.

b) Because GBC believes that counseling is a local church responsibility, counselors will encourage leaders of other churches to be trained in nouthetic counseling and will attempt to provide resources to equip them to counsel their own flock.

c) If a counselee is attending a liberal church or other illegitimate church, it may be appropriate to encourage the counselee to attend Graham for the duration of the counseling.

d) If a counselee is a member of a Bible-believing, doctrinally sound church, counselors should encourage his commitment to his church.

e) These procedures exist because:

- 1) we respect the authority and discipline of other congregations;
- 2) we desire to extend mercy to those in need;
- 3) we desire to provide information and training to other church leaders.

7) **Counseling Unbelievers** – The ultimate and only real solution to people’s problems is Christ Himself. So when counseling unbelievers, the counselor’s aim is to show the counselee his or her need for a Savior and point him or her to the Lord Jesus Christ. Counseling must always rest in the Gospel to transform lives. The counseling must be careful to not make individuals moral without Christ or to leave them with the thinking that a certain method or technique is what solves our life problems. Therefore, it is important that the counselor be wise, gentle, and bold to use counseling as an opportunity to proclaim the Good News of Christ to the unbelieving counselee. If the unbelieving counselee persists in showing no interest in the Gospel and no longer appears to be seeking, then it may be appropriate to terminate the counseling (Matt. 7:6). If the counselee repents and trusts in Christ, then it would be appropriate to counsel fully how a believer ought to respond to sin and life’s problems.

8) **Personal Data Inventory Form (PDI) & Counseling Agreement** – The PDI form is to be used at the counselors discretion. The primary intention of the form is to gain sufficient background information so the counselor can counsel according to understanding and knowledge (Prov. 18:13). The form can also save time and gain information before meeting with the counselee. (Yet, this same information can be gained in a face to face counseling session.) The Counseling Agreement is intended for counselees who are not attending Graham Church. The counseling agreement should be read and signed by those who are not regular attenders of Graham Church.

9) **Costs** – Counseling will be offered for free. If a counselee desires to donate money, he or she may give to Graham Church. Or a counselee may reimburse the church for costs of counseling material such as books, pamphlets, and audio, etc.