

Biblical Counseling

A Position Paper on Biblical Counseling at Grace Covenant Church
Grace Covenant Church Elders

We eagerly desire that God's people grow in faith and love and every grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Achieving this goal requires that we constantly "press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." In this fallen world, there is no standing still. We press on in the upward call or we are pressed back by the world, the flesh, and the devil.

Pressing on inevitably requires speaking truth to one another. Sometimes this is called, "counseling," but we also use other names for this ministry: discipling, encouraging, correcting, edifying, mentoring, instructing, rebuking, or even sharing. Regardless of the name given the work, we must realize that speaking truth to one another is the biblically expected ministry of all who are in Christ. In fact, we can go one step further: in the broadest sense, all Christians are "counseling" in every interaction with another person because there can be no neutrality – our words either build up others or corrupt: "Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear" (Ephesians 4.29).

Grace Covenant Church believes in Biblical Counseling. In this, we gladly align ourselves with the Christian Counseling and Education Foundation (CCEF) and accept their definition of biblical counseling:

The aim of CCEF is to consider how caring for people's souls can be increasingly wise and helpful. This is sometimes identified as biblical counseling.... It describes the troubles we face, how those troubles are experienced, how God speaks to us during those troubles, and how we help each other with wisdom and love." (October 7, 2022: <https://www.ccef.org/about/>)

The Apostle Paul clearly entrusts wise soul care to the believers in the local church: "I myself am satisfied about you, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able to instruct one another" (Romans 15.14). At the same time, we recognize that not every member is ready to provide every type of counseling needed in every situation. Caring for people's souls demands a corresponding call to discipleship and training for all of God's people.

We also recognize that there are different skill levels necessary to counsel and care well in different times and circumstances of life. Examples of categories of soul care that require different levels of training, preparation, wisdom, and maturity:

- Crisis counseling
- Discipleship and mentoring
- Divorce recovery
- Speaking wisdom into deep emotional struggles
- Premarital counseling
- Suicide counseling

We aim to equip God's people to give wise and loving soul care with every word that proceeds from our mouths. To this end, we will be intentional to provide training in biblical counseling as part of our regular and ongoing discipleship ministry. We believe such training is especially important in light of certain observations about the condition of the church:

- There are too many words spoken by Christians in the church that are not wise – we must train God's people in biblical counseling so that we obey Ephesians 4.29.
- There are too many times that Christians defer counseling to people and systems that are steeped in pagan worldviews. Secular and psychological counseling is not a legitimate alternative for Christians; it is an anti-God philosophy built on patently ungodly principles.
- There is a place for godly men and women, committed to Christ and biblical counseling, to earn their living in a career that focuses on counseling. Such professional counselors are worthy of their wages by the same principle that pastors deserve to be paid (1 Timothy 5.17-18). There are deeply ingrained patterns of behavior and thought that can benefit from professional counselors who have additional training in biblical principles and the additional time available to invest in the lives of God's people who have complex and deep struggles. Additionally, there are many people who need biblical counseling who are not part of a local church.
- Even given the place of professional counselors who are wise and mature and especially trained to deal with some of the more difficult and challenging needs of God's people, we insist that there is a critical and significant role for Christians in the local church to speak wisdom to one another both in regular conversation and in more structured discipleship and mentoring relationships. Whether we call some of this work, "counseling" is largely immaterial. It is critical, however, that we equip church members for the soul care which helps one another with wisdom and love to understand the troubles we face and to deal with those troubles faithfully and in a godly and biblical way.

We desire to say with Paul of the members of Grace Covenant Church, "We are confident of you, that you are full of wisdom, knowledge, and goodness, and are competent to counsel one another."