

Village Bible Church Consent to Counseling Form

I myself am convinced, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, complete in knowledge and competent to instruct one another. (Rom. 15:14).

Our goal in providing counseling is that we may “*present everyone mature in Christ*” (Col.1:28) - to help you meet the challenges of life in a way that will please and honor the Lord Jesus Christ and enable you to enjoy fully His love for you and His plans for your life.. We believe that the Bible is God-inspired guidance, instruction and power for faith and life (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Therefore, our counseling relies on Biblical teachings and principles applied with “*all wisdom*” through the Holy Spirit to each situation we counsel. We are committed to asking the question, “What does Scripture say regarding this matter?” and to counseling in the light of the response to this question.

We believe that Christ has equipped His body, the church, to provide wisdom, knowledge and instruction to one another (Rom.15:14) in order for each member to live a godly and holy life, pleasing God in all ways. Christ has also equipped His church with spiritually mature leaders who are able to shepherd, lead, teach, and counsel others (Heb.5:11-14) in the church. Though the educational and experiential background of each leader who counsels at Village is unique, the essential training and practice for all leaders who counsel at Village centers around their ability to apply Scripture to the situation they are counseling. For this reason, those who counsel for Village do not present themselves as psychotherapists nor mental health professionals but as Biblical counselors.

In order to avoid misunderstandings regarding the role of leaders in the church that provide “spiritual counsel” these clarifications should be kept in mind.

1. Accountability is a necessity for counseling to be effective. Because of this, our leaders will normally counsel more than once only with individuals who are members of Village Bible Church.
2. Our leaders are not licensed, professional counselors. They will use the Word of God as our text, the Holy Spirit as our guide, and Jesus Christ as our model. We assume that most conflict in our lives is the result of a spiritual problem. While this will not always be the case, that will be our starting point.

Leaders may also be trained in other areas of life that are outside of the realm of providing spiritual counsel. Thus, if a doctor provides “spiritual counsel” through the church, you need to understand that this is separate from his providing “medical counsel” at his clinic. Therefore, if you have significant legal, financial, medical, or other technical questions, you should seek advice from an independent professional. Our pastoral and lay counselors will be happy to cooperate with such advisors and help you to consider their counsel in the light of relevant scriptural principles.

3. God calls the leaders in His church to set an example in “*speech, in life, in love, and in faith and purity*” (1 Tim. 4:12). If any leader should not live up to this standard in any counseling situation, the counselee needs to report to the leadership team any conduct that fails to meet this standard.

4. Confidentiality is an important aspect of the counseling process, and we will carefully guard the information you entrust to us. There are situations, however, when we will share information with others:
 - when the person who disclosed the information, or any other person, is in imminent danger of serious harm unless others intervene (Prov. 24:11-12);
 - when a person refuses to repent of sin and it becomes necessary to promote repentance through accountability and redemptive church discipline (Prov. 15:22; Matt. 18:15-20);
 - when it is helpful to confidentially involve other elders of the church for prayer, direction, wisdom or further understanding.
 - when leaders are required by law to report suspected abuse (Rom. 13:1).
5. There are no financial fees for pastoral counseling. However, it will cost you time, honesty, and hard work. There may be some financial costs for tests administered, books required, or materials distributed; but we will not let the lack of funds stand in the way of this counseling process.
6. It is not our practice or purpose to counsel individuals or couples over an extended period of time. If such counseling is needed, we will connect you with a reputable Christian counselor and will continue to touch base with you and your counselor if you give written permission to do so.
7. It is our policy to not counsel someone of the opposite gender alone more than one time - and then only when others are in the general vicinity. After this one session, if there is a need for further counseling or discipleship, a mature person of the counselee's gender will be added to the ongoing dialog.
8. On rare occasions a conflict may develop between a counselor and a counselee. We will handle these conflicts in a Biblical way, submitting to the procedures set forth in our *Commitment to Peacemaking and Reconciliation*.

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, please talk with a pastor or elder. If these guidelines are acceptable to you, please sign below.

Signed _____

Date _____