

# DISCIPLESHIP COUNSELING WAIVER: Grace Community Church (Huntsville, AL)

## HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:

The elders of Grace Community Church (GCC) want you to know that they and other trained, supervised discipleship counselors are available to take a **limited** number of counseling cases. You may obtain initial information by calling the GCC office at (256) 722-5929.

The following outlines several conditions upon which counseling cases will be initiated. While this is not meant to be exhaustive, it does represent our philosophy of biblical counseling, a vital aspect of the total shepherding ministry of GCC.

**(1) OUR PRIORITY**—Discipleship counseling of members of GCC always takes precedence over all non-member counseling (Gal 6:10).

**(2) OUR FRAMEWORK**—The discipleship counseling provided is based on scriptural principles rather than secular psychology or psychiatry. Neither the pastoral nor the lay counselors of this church are trained or licensed as psychotherapists or mental health professionals, nor should they be expected to follow the methods of such specialists. Counseling will be provided by one of the pastors or trained disciplers supervised by a pastor. We strongly encourage same gender counseling. Some of the counseling at GCC is provided as part of a discipleship counseling training program. To facilitate both counseling and training, the discipler may have one to two people assisting him/her in each counseling session.

**(3) OUR FOCUS**—Our focus is to address issues within the scope of biblical parameters. We are confident that the Bible contains all necessary information for life and godliness (2 Pt 1:3). There are no problems between persons that the

Bible fails to address either in general or specific principles. While our counselors do not pretend to know all there is to know about biblical teaching and its application to life, nevertheless, they do know much and will do their utmost to help you. If you should have significant legal, financial, medical, or other technical questions, you should seek advice from an appropriate, independent professional. Our pastoral and lay discipleship counselors will be happy to cooperate with such advisors and help you to consider counsel in the light of relevant scriptural principles.

**(4) OUR FOUNDATION**—All discipleship counseling will be conducted in accordance with the counselor's understanding of the Scriptures. Your counseling will be biblical counseling in which the Scriptures are, in all cases, the final authority. If you are not sure that you will be interested in biblically-based counseling, you will be given the option of attending one or two sessions to discover the nature of biblical counseling. If you are unwilling to use the Bible as the final authority in counseling or are unwilling to apply the biblical principles assigned, sessions may be terminated.

**(5) NON-MEMBERS**—Since we recognize and respect the shepherding responsibility of pastors and church leaders over their own congregations, we generally do not offer counseling to members of other churches. If you are not attending a church, we will expect you to attend GCC weekly.

**(6) OUR (AND YOUR) PREROGATIVE**—At any time during counseling, for reason(s) sufficient to him/her, the discipleship counselor, or counselee, shall have the option of terminating counseling.

**(7) CONFIDENTIALITY**—Counseling sessions are administered by the elder in his professional capacity as clergy. All communications, verbal or written, made by and/or received by the elder during

said counseling session shall be confidential and privileged. Both the counselor and the counselee shall have the privilege to refuse to disclose said communications and to prevent another from disclosing same to a third party to the extent that said refusal is not contrary to Scripture or law (e.g. church discipline; cf. Mt 18:15ff), criminal reporting mandates, etc.

**(8) OUR FEE**—All counseling is done free of charge as a ministry of GCC. Part of the weekly homework assignments may require the purchase of materials that correspond to the counseling.

**(9) MEDIATION**—On rare occasions, a conflict may develop between a discipleship counselor and a counselee. In order to make sure that any such conflicts will be resolved in a biblically faithful manner, we require all of our counsees to agree that any dispute that arises with a counselor or with this church as a result of counseling will be mediated by GCC's elder board. 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 speak with an elder. If these guidelines are acceptable to you, please sign below.

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SIGNED

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PRINT NAME

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DATE

