

**ACBC Exam Study Guide
Counseling Exam 11**

Q: Describe what you believe to be the role of confidentiality in biblical counseling. What kind of commitment to confidentiality should a biblical counselor make? What biblical and practical considerations limit confidentiality? What is the responsibility of a biblical counselor to report to civil authorities on matters of domestic violence, sexual abuse, and other illegal matters? How should biblical counselors cooperate with the authorities about these things?

1. The Role of Confidentiality¹

A. All biblical counselors should _____ prefer not to disclose personal information of others, and should make every effort to help the counselee find ways to resolve a problem as _____ as possible. The Bible strongly commends godly speech (Eph. 4:29) and equally strongly condemns gossip (Pr. 11:13, 16:28, 20:19; Titus 3:2; James 4:11).

B. The clear requirement for all biblical counselors (and Christians) is to live _____ of the gospel of Jesus Christ (Eph. 4:1; Phil. 1:27; Rom. 13:8-10).

C. We must assure that every possible safeguard is in place to provide help, guidance, care, and service to those under our care - to live consistent with the responsibility to _____ like Christ (Romans 13:8-10).

D. Confidentiality in biblical counseling is an ethical choice based upon and _____ by the principles of Scripture. Therefore, we cannot give an ultimate promise of confidentiality. (See below under Sample Statement of Confidentiality)

E. Understanding the biblical nature of _____ helps the counselor determine what should be the limitations to confidentiality.

(1) _____ Authority (Eph. 5:22-6:4; Pr. 23:13-14)

(2) _____ Authority (Romans 13:1-7; 1 Pt. 2:13-17)

(A) A counselor must follow _____ applicable local, state, and national laws.

(B) Laws differ from location to location; therefore, it is imperative to check _____ in your area to determine your _____ responsibilities.

¹ Adapted from Faith Biblical Counseling Training Conference with Kevin Carson, 2015.

“Failure to report suspected child abuse and neglect is a criminal offense (Texas Family Code, Section 261.109).”²

“Family Violence. Also known as ‘domestic violence,’ family violence is an act by a member of a family or household against another member of the family or household that is intended to cause physical or emotional harm. It is against the law in Texas.”³

(3) _____ Authority (Mt. 18:15-18; 1 Thes. 5:12-13; Heb. 13:7, 17; 1 Pt. 5:1-4)

(A) Counseling is done _____ the authority of the local church and pastors.

“5. If you are a member of another church, it will be necessary for your pastor or other recognized church leadership to accompany you to counseling sessions. This is important since we want to recognize and respect the authority and the discipline of other congregations. And, in addition, this makes transfer back to the pastoral care of your church a lot easier to effect. If someone in leadership at your church is unwilling to come with you, we will consider counsel you to seek out a different church that teaches and practices both sound doctrine and love to its congregation.”⁴

(B) Counseling is also a form of _____ and must help facilitate the greater purposes of the church regarding learning and living the truth.

(C) We have those around us in the church to _____ us grow and learn.

F. _____ to Confidentiality

(1) When a counselor is _____ of how to address a particular problem and needs to seek advice from another counselor/pastor/supervisor (Pr. 15:22)

(2) When a counseled attends another _____ and it is necessary to talk with his or her pastor/counselor.

(3) When there is a clear indication that someone may be _____ unless others intervene (including, but not limited to, if there is evidence or reasonable suspicion of abuse against a minor or child, elderly person, or dependent adult).

² https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Protection/Child_Safety/report_abuse.asp#violence

³ https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Protection/Child_Safety/report_abuse.asp#violence

⁴ https://s3.amazonaws.com/churchplantmedia-cms/grace_community_church_glen_rose/gbc_llc_counseling_agreement.pdf

(4) If a subpoena or other court order is received directing the _____ of information.

(5) When a person persistently _____ to renounce a particular sin and it becomes necessary to seek the assistance of others to encourage repentance, restoration, and reconciliation.

X. The Commitment to Integrity⁵

B. Biblical counselors must maintain and communicate the biblical standards for confidentiality. Trust grows in relationships where all parties have clear expectations regarding the confidential nature of private information. Biblical counselors seek to maintain trust and integrity by keeping personal information as private as possible. Biblical counselors protect the reputation of their counselees by avoiding reckless and unnecessary disclosures of personal information. Biblical counselors must also make clear to their counselees that a commitment to biblical authority requires the disclosure of certain kinds of information to certain parties. A biblical commitment to protect counselees from harm as well as commitments to the authority of the home, church, and or state may require disclosure of information that counselees would otherwise prefer to remain private.”

“7. Information disclosed in counseling sessions will be held confidential only as the counselor believes the Bible requires. Absolute confidentiality is not Scriptural; matters of church discipline (cf. Mat. 18:15), for instance, under certain circumstances, require one to disclose facts to others.”⁶

G. Confidentiality in biblical counseling does not have legal _____. Therefore, lay counselors do not have privileged communication with the counsel (Steve Levicoff, *Christian Counseling and the Law*, Moody, 71-73).

H. “The ultimate _____ of following ethical (the law of love) and legal (the law of the land) standards is not simply protecting the church from lawsuits, but ensuring that our ministries and ministers remain above reproach, and, much more importantly, protecting the sheep from harm by caring like the Great Shepherd.”⁷

2. What is the responsibility of a biblical counselor to report to civil authorities on matters of domestic violence, sexual abuse, and other illegal matters? How should biblical counselors cooperate with the authorities about these things?

A. Our responsibility is to uphold the _____ (1 Thes. 5:14; Rom. 13:1-5)

⁵ <https://biblicalcounseling.com/certification/standards-of-conduct/>

⁶ https://s3.amazonaws.com/churchplantmedia-cms/grace_community_church_glen_rose/gbc_llc_counseling_agreement.pdf

⁷ Bob Kellemen, *Equipping Counselors for Your Church* (P&R, 2011), Chapter 17.

B. We must also obey _____ laws that require us to report various kinds of abuse (Romans 13:1-7)

C. We must tell the truth to protect our _____ throughout the process, including how we communicate to the counsel, the church, and the government (Eph. 4:15, 25).

D. The church needs to 1) set up appropriate _____, 2) provide specific, concrete and creative means of _____, and 3) _____ on how the governmental authorities either are or are not providing help.

E. In every way possible, the church should _____ with the authorities as they receive permission from or are asked by the counselee. Many governmental officials are willing and happy to have the church assist them in these matters as it provided the maximum benefit for the counselee.

Key Texts:

Matthew 18:15-17

Romans 13:1ff

Key Resources:

Jay Adams, *Handbook of Church Discipline*, (Zondervan, 1986) 30-32.

“Biblical and Legal Safeguards,” Peacemaker Ministries (no date). Available at: [http://www.peacemaker.net/site/c.aqKFLTOBIpH/b.5474589/See section D](http://www.peacemaker.net/site/c.aqKFLTOBIpH/b.5474589/See%20section%20D).

Bob Kellemen, *Equipping Counselors for Your Church* (P&R, 2011), 304-323.

Heath Lambert, “A Pastoral Response to Physical Abuse in the Family,” *Journal of Family Ministry* (V. 1, no. 2, 2011), 34-44.

<https://biblicalcounseling.com/certification/standards-of-conduct/>

Wayne Mack, “Developing a Helping Relationship with Counselees” in John MacArthur, ed., *Counseling: How to Counsel Biblically* (Thomas Nelson, 2005), 109.

Deepak Reju, “Strict Confidentiality?” Biblical Counseling Coalition Blog (June 12, 2012). Available at: <http://biblicalcounselingcoalition.org/blogs/2012/06/12/strict-confidentiality/>

George Scipione, "The Limits of Confidentiality in Counseling," *Journal of Pastoral Practice* 7/2 (1984): 29-34.

Steve Viars, “Handling Child Abuse Reporting and Other Legal Issues,” audio (Faith Baptist Church, Lafayette, IN, 2008).