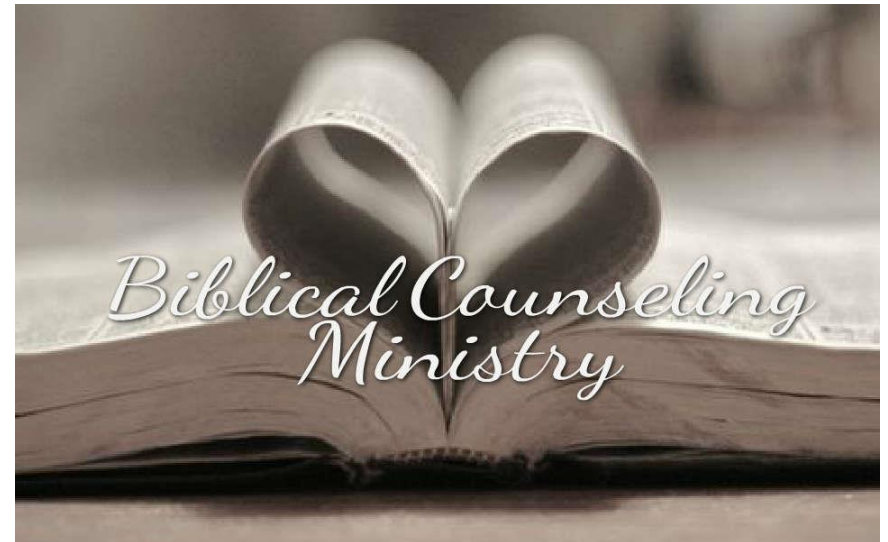




“Communicating gospel truth about grace-focused sanctification in word, thought, and action through one-another relationships that have integrity, genuineness, authenticity, transparency, and reliability, done in love to promote the unity and maturity of the Body of Christ for the ultimate purpose of displaying the glory of Christ’s grace.”

Dr. Robert Kellemen, Gospel-Centered Counseling



Making disciples by following the Lord Jesus Christ to the glory of God

Biblical truth, Heart change

What is Biblical Counseling?

Biblical counseling is really just another name for intensive discipleship. At AGC, we know that the path to maturity is often rough and at times filled with pain and confusion. Sometimes, we may need more intensified, one-on-one care to help us navigate the issues and problems of sin and suffering that we face. At AGC, we believe that the Bible, God's all-sufficient Word, holds the answers to both the normal and complex problems of everyday life. Therefore, the truth of God's Word lies at the center of all of our counseling. Our Counselors are trained in the use of Scripture and the principles of biblical counseling. We are committed to taking the Scriptures seriously and to helping God's people apply His truth to their personal lives in practical ways that help them grow in Christ-like maturity.

Biblical counseling is “for resolving of their doubts, and for help against their sins, and for direction in duty, and for increase of knowledge and all saving grace.” – Richard Baxter, 1656

We are not a licensed counseling agency, nor are we (by design) psychologically or medically trained therapists. However, all of our primary counselors have been certified or are in the process of being certified by a nationally accredited biblical counseling organization (such as ACBC or IABC) and have had extensive training in the field of biblical counseling.

Who are our Counselors?

Jathan Newton, Senior Pastor, AGC

B.S. – Civil Engineering, Purdue University

M. Div. – Baptist Bible Seminary

Seeking certification with Association of Certified Biblical Counselors

Leanne Whitaker

B.A. – History with a specialization in Diversified Liberal Arts, UCLA

Multiple Subject Teaching Credential, California State University, Los Angeles

Certified with the International Association of Biblical Counselors

How Do I Get Started?

Just call or email the Abounding Grace Church Office and ask to set up a biblical counseling appointment.

Contact Us

Mailing: PO Box 1573

Visalia, CA 93279-1573

Office: 625 S. Atwood St.

Visalia, CA 93277

Phone: (559) 740-0567

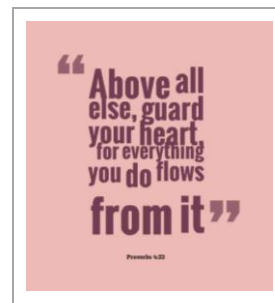
Email: aboundinggracechurch@gmail.com

Web: www.agcvisalia.org

Counseling God's way is different from psychological counseling because it relies on the wisdom of God. We truly believe that God “has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness” (2 Peter 1:5).

We do not simply diagnose problems and prescribe a couple of verses with the promise of instant healing. Rather than mere behavior modification or symptom alleviation, our counseling is concerned with leading the counselee into a growing relationship with Jesus Christ, where his or her thoughts, desires, and actions increasingly reflect the thoughts, desires, and actions of Christ. Therefore, all of our counseling is biblical in scope, and the Bible is the final authority in all cases.

Our goal, in each counseling session, is to help connect our brothers and sisters to Christ through The Bible's grace-centered message in order to bring hope and help find biblical solutions to their unique problems by carefully discovering those areas where there may be disobedience to the principles and commands of Scripture and to help him or her learn how to lovingly submit to God's will in the areas of thinking, feeling, communicating, behaving, relating, and serving.



The target of our counseling is the heart, the control center of man, and we believe that biblical heart change results in transformational life changes!

Who Should Seek Biblical Counseling?

The truth is, we receive counseling every day as we interact in relationships, but sometimes we can need more formal counseling. Most people don't seek counsel when things are going trouble-free in their lives. However, looking for counseling doesn't have to only be an option when in the middle of a major crisis. Our circumstances, big or small, often are so up close and personal that we can be either overwhelmed or blinded by them. Counseling allows a new set of eyes to look in on what's happening in your life; eyes that are not biased to parties involved, or emotionally connected to the situation.

"No man should be alone when he opposes Satan. The church and the ministry of the Word were instituted for this purpose, that hands may be joined together and one may help another." – Martin Luther

Counseling provides eyes that can objectively observe with better clarity. In a nutshell, then, biblical counseling is for anyone who wants or needs biblical advice to help them solve a problem, handle a crisis, and/or motivate them towards change. If you've been facing a problem or crisis or have been wanting to change for a while, but you feel like your "wheels are stuck", it may be a good time to consider biblical counseling. Seeking out biblical counseling does not mean that there is something "wrong with you". On the contrary, your desire to grow in Christ-like maturity by submitting your thoughts, emotions, and actions to God means that there is something "right" going on in your life.

What is the Goal of Biblical Counseling?

The goal of all biblical counseling is to help an individual grow to be more like Christ in every way. Unlike secular counseling, which is based on a "disease model" that relies on a necessity of life long treatment and counseling, biblical counseling is for "a season" and has, as its goal, an ending. Together, with your counselor, you will know that you are headed to ending counseling when you have been adequately equipped to respond in faith to your troubles and are showing a consistent pattern of doing so. You will begin to see that the symptoms have lightened: the depression isn't as bad as it was, the husband and wife have reconciled and have rebuilt their trust – the pressure of the original problem is no longer wreaking havoc on your life. Suddenly, one day, you'll notice that you don't feel the need to meet with your counselor anymore. Likewise, the counselor will recognize that you have become equipped to "counsel yourself" and wisely address issues as they arise. That doesn't mean that you will never need to seek out formal counsel again, or that you won't ever need to check back in for some insight and direction when needed, but it should mean that you will no longer need to run to counseling every time you encounter a bump in the road of life.

"In its fullest meaning, success is the attainment of the Biblical change desired, together with an understanding by the counselee of how this change was effected, how to avoid falling into similar sinful patterns in the future and what to do if, indeed, he/she should do so". – Dr. Jay Adams

Does Biblical Counseling Always Work?

Not every problem that comes into the biblical counseling office can be solved, and failure is a recognized part of counseling. However, biblical counselors claim a high-level of success in comparison to secular psychology and psychotherapy. Here are some common reasons for failure in the biblical counseling office:

- Hard-heartedness, lack of interest, failure to complete homework assignments, lack of trust, settling for less than a total reorientation of their lives on the part of the counselee.
- The problem is more intense, needs more time devoted than expected, or is due to an organic (physical) problem.
- Failure by the counselor to hold the counselee responsible for their behavior.
- Failure by the counselor to uncover underlying problems and only handling performance problems.
- Coming to conclusions too quickly or allowing emotions to cloud the counselor's judgement.
- The problem needs more expertise than the counselor can offer.

What Type of Counseling Do We Provide?

- Individual counseling regarding spiritual and personal issues
- Premarital and marital counseling
- Family/parental counseling (with children under the age of thirteen we work primarily with the parents and/or with the parents and children)
- Adolescent counseling (with parental consent and involvement)

What is the Cost?

AGC provides biblical counseling as a ministry at no cost. However, non-members and non-attenders will be responsible for the cost of materials related to homework assignments. Donations to the ministry are accepted and always appreciated.

What Can You Expect From Us?

You can expect that our counselors are people who will love you, be faithful to you, work hard for you, pray with and for you, and care for you in a Christ-centered, biblically-grounded, Spirit-led way. We value and love each and every person who comes to us for counsel, and we promise to do our best to help you find "soul-u-tions" to the problems of sin and suffering that you are facing.

What is Expected of the Counselee?

We expect honesty, openness, genuineness, hard work, consistency, humility, and teachability.

For the duration of counseling, all counsees will be required to attend Sunday church services, and one other mid-week Bible study, prayer meeting, or Sunday School, complete weekly homework assignments, and be partnered with a trained biblical mentor for weekly accountability.

Counsees attending a church other than Abounding Grace Church, not currently attending a church, or attending a church that is not structured to provide the kind of counseling received at AGC will be expected to have their pastor or another mature member from their church accompany them to all counseling sessions and act as an accountability partner, or will be expected to attend AGC and be partnered with a trained biblical mentor from AGC during the duration of their counseling.

We believe that for change to be lasting, people need more than the help they receive in formal counseling, they also need the total ministry of a church in which the preaching, teaching, and fellowship are providing the same kinds of help that is given in the counseling sessions. We recognize that there may be times when we have to make an exception to these rules, and we will work with individuals on a case-by-case basis, but the goal will always remain to have the counselee become engaged in the total ministry of a church where he or she will continue to receive the same kind of teaching and support that they receive from our counseling.

What Can You Expect at Each Appointment?

Typical counseling appointments are scheduled to meet one time weekly. To protect everyone involved, male counsees are scheduled with men, and female counsees are scheduled with women. Our counselors do not counsel with the opposite gender except in a team counseling situation.

Most counseling sessions last 90 minutes, and the entire process (except in very difficult cases) lasts about 8-10 weeks. During your initial meeting, your counselor will determine the goals that he or she would like to work toward. After 5-6 sessions, you and your counselor will evaluate your progress toward those goals and together determine what further action needs to be taken.

Each counseling session will be uniquely tailored to address the issues of sin or suffering that you are facing, and will include a time of prayer, dialogue about the presenting problem, and biblical instruction.

"We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ." – Colossians 1:28

After each session, you will be given homework assignments to complete before your next meeting. The assignments are meant to encourage lasting change, and are where most of your growth will take place as you become a "doer" of God's Word, putting off the "old man" and putting on the new.