



Dear Friend,

I am excited that you are considering Biblical Counseling at our church. I have watched the lives of many people change dramatically as they have submitted to the teachings of Scripture in their lives and as they have become faithful to carry out what God has intended for them. I believe that He can and will do the same for you.

There are two things which you need to do prior to coming for counseling at our church. First of all, you need to read carefully the attached "Fact Sheet" which explains about our counseling ministry. We want you to be fully aware of our method and expectations as we help you to work through the issues that are affecting your life.

Secondly, you need to fill out the "Biblical Counseling Form" that is attached to this letter and send it to the church or drop it off at the church office. I realize that it will take some time to answer the various questions, but it is necessary so that we might effectively help you. After completing the form, please return the "Biblical Counseling Form" and retain the cover letter and Fact Sheet for your records. Make sure you review and sign the Liability Waiver on page 5.

After we receive your completed "Biblical Counseling Form" we will contact you to set up an appointment to begin your counseling.

As noted in the attached "Fact Sheet" we do not charge for our counseling at the church. However, you will be required to purchase a Self-Confrontation Manual which will be used to help in your counseling sessions. The cost of the manual is \$20 and is payable at the first session. If you cannot afford the manual, please discuss this with your counselor so that other arrangements may be made.

If you have any questions or concerns that you need answered, please contact the church office or myself at 717-762-7147.

Sincerely,

Michael V. Newman
Senior Pastor

Rev. Michael V. Newman, **Senior Pastor**
Mrs. Judy Peck, **Biblical Counseling Coordinator**
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Otterbein Church
Biblical Counseling Ministry
FACT SHEET

1. **BIBLICAL COUNSELING IS A MINISTRY:** Biblical counseling is a ministry that all committed believers within the body of Christ are to have toward all who have need (based on Matthew 28:19-20; Romans 15:14; Galatians 6:1-5). The Biblical counselors deal with a broad range of problems. It includes broken marriages, parent-child relationships, depressions, alcohol and drug abuse, tension, turmoil, anxiety, fear, worry, and any number of other problems resulting in spiritual, mental and physical distress.
2. **PROFESSIONAL VS. LAY COUNSELING:** Otterbein Church's counseling ministry is done by lay persons from the Otterbein Church who are trained in the use of the Bible and the principles of Biblical counseling. Our counselors are committed to the belief that the Bible provides the only authoritative guide for a relationship with God and with other persons (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Our counselors do not base their counseling knowledge on their own opinions, experiences, or concepts, nor do they base them on the opinions, experiences, or concepts of others. Modern therapeutic techniques and principles of psychology are not used as a part of the counseling and our counselors in no way claim to be "professional" nor are they "professionally" trained. Otterbein's counselors are trained by the lay leaders within the counseling ministry and are under the supervision of the pastoral staff. Our counselors use only the Bible as the basis of their counseling and are trained in Biblical principles which apply to the full range of problems and issues men, women, and children face in a contemporary culture. Otterbein's counseling does not advocate any specific theological emphasis or any practice not specifically addressed in the Bible.
3. **THE FOCUS AND FEES OF THE BIBLICAL COUNSELOR:** Biblical counselors provide their time and energy as a service to God and as a ministry and expression of love to others (based on I Thessalonians 2:7-8; I Timothy 1:5). Therefore, each counselor serves without any charge or fee, or any financial requirement, actual or implied.
4. **TEAM COUNSELING:** At Otterbein, counseling through our counseling ministry is always done in teams. Team counseling has many practical benefits and is supported by Biblical teaching (Proverbs 11:14, 15:22, 18:17, 20:18, 24:5; Matthew 18:16). Normally, sessions are conducted by a team of counselors with one responsible for leading the team and one or two others assisting. There may also be times when a leader in the counseling ministry or one of the pastors may sit in on the session.

Counselees are also vital members of the team as they seek to solve the problems in their lives. The most important member of the team, however, is the Lord Himself, in the Person of the Holy Spirit. He is the One who will provide the hope, the strength, and the wisdom through God's Word to solve problems (John 14:26; Romans 5:3-5, 8:26-27; Ephesians 3:16).

5. **BIBLICAL COUNSELING IS DISCIPLESHIP:** Biblical counselors are committed not only to help you overcome the current problem in your life but also to train you to live all your life in a manner that leads to increasing growth and maturity in the Lord (Psalm 119:165; Proverbs 2:6-12a; Galatians 6:1-5; I Timothy 4:7-8; I John 5:1-5). Thus, in a scriptural sense, Biblical counseling is a ministry of discipleship that teaches you to walk in God's way in the midst of any problem (based on Matthew 28:19-20; I Timothy 1:5; II Timothy 2:2). During the counseling period, it is the responsibility of the counselee to contact one of the counselors on a weekly basis for accountability. The counselors will continue to be available to you for future encouragement after your counseling has ended.

6. **CONFIDENTIALITY:** Trustworthiness is an important commitment and quality of our Biblical counselors. If deemed necessary, the Biblical counselors may talk with the pastor or member of the leadership team for additional guidance about your particular situation. These individuals are often able to provide insight in these situations. It should be clear that no information will be shared with others outside of the counseling team beyond what is necessary to help solve your problems and help you respond in a Biblical manner. Furthermore, if any member of the counseling team or leadership is called to testify in court, the counselor will not withhold information asked of them.

If you are suicidal, threaten to harm yourself or others, or reveal to the counselor that you have committed a crime, the information will not be considered confidential and may be communicated to anyone who can intervene to provide protection to you or others as determined by the counselor in consultation with the leader of the counseling ministry and the pastoral staff.

All of our counselors – including those who are ordained clergy – are committed to reporting any suspected child abuse (sexual, physical, or otherwise) to the appropriate authorities. For most of our counselors this is a direct requirement under Pennsylvania law; as a matter of ministry policy, it applies to every counselor on our team, without exception. If you share information indicating that a child has been or is being abused, please understand in advance that this information will not remain confidential and will be reported.

7. **MEDICAL NEEDS AND BIBLICAL COUNSELING:** Biblical counselors believe in considering the total health needs of the counselee. The counseling team may recommend that you have a full or specified medical examination at your expense. If medical issues arise and treatment is required, counseling will continue at the same time, whenever possible. Biblical counselors are not members of the medical profession and do not give medical opinions on the use of medications or other medical issues.
8. **ELEMENTS OF BIBLICAL COUNSELING:** The counseling team will use all of their Biblical counseling training and skill to help you solve whatever problem is depriving you of the peace and joy that God has promised in His Word. The counselors will concentrate on four essential elements from Scripture:

Understanding Your Problem – because of the need to apply Biblical principles to all of your difficulties, not just “fix your feelings” or change your circumstances. The counseling team, in a spirit of gentleness, will make Biblical inquiry into the various levels of your problems and help you gain God’s perspective on your difficulties (based on Proverbs 18:13; Isaiah 55:8-9; Mark 7:20-23; Romans 5:3-5, 8:28-29; Galatians 6:1-4; Hebrews 4:12; James 1:2-4, 19, 22-25, 4:17).

Your Hope – because in Jesus Christ you have a great High Priest who has been tempted in all things, yet without sin. Even though you may currently be going through a difficult test or even though every sin common to man may be tempting you, God has promised that he will not allow any trial in your life that is beyond your endurance. He has promised to provide a way of escape so that you may be able to endure it without sinning (Romans 6:11-13; I Corinthians 10:13; Hebrews 4:14-16). He will use trials for your benefit as you respond to them in a Biblical manner (Romans 8:28-29; James 1:2-4).

Your Change – because in Christ you can learn how to lay aside the old selfish ways of living and put on the new ways of living in a manner worthy of the Lord. In learning to change Biblically, you will begin to please the Lord in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God (Ephesians 4:20-24; Colossians 1:9-12).

Your Practice – because you need to prove yourself to be a doer of God’s Word and not merely a hearer, thus forgetting what kind of person you are and deluding yourself. Only in becoming an effectual doer of the Word will you be blessed in what you do, and only then will you please the Lord (Hebrews 13:20-22; James 1:22-25; I John 3:22).

9. **WAITING PERIOD:** If a counseling team is not immediately available to begin a continued counseling period with you, you will be counseled as soon as possible. You may be encouraged to attend an ongoing Biblical Principles course while you are awaiting counseling; in this way, you can work on solutions to problems immediately.
10. **LENGTH OF COUNSELING:** Normally, counseling sessions will last about one-and-a-half hours each week and will continue for approximately eight to ten weeks. If you respond quickly to Biblical counsel, the number of counseling sessions may be shortened. However, if the counseling team does not observe definite change in the first few weeks, they will seek to identify the cause of the failure, discuss it with you, and help you to correct it.
11. **COUNSELING APPOINTMENTS:** Because the counseling period requires consistency and faithfulness in you applying God's principles, it is important that you reserve the designated counseling time for the entire counseling period, barring unforeseen circumstances (based on Luke 14:27-30; I Timothy 4:7). If you find that you are unable to come to a particular counseling session, please notify the counselor at least 24 hours before the sessions.

Please note: Otterbein Counseling Ministry generally has a waiting list for those seeking counseling. Therefore, counselees who miss two consecutive weeks without notifying their counselor will be considered no longer committed to biblical counseling. Their counselors may be reassigned. If you later wish to resume biblical counseling, you will need to complete a new counseling form and submit it to the church office.

12. **OTTERBEIN CHURCH INVOLVEMENT AND BIBLICAL COUNSELING:** In order to achieve lasting victory over the problems of life, it is vital that each person become established in a consistent Christian walk. The Lord has provided the church to help in this process (Hebrews 10:24-25). Therefore, it is important that Biblical counseling sessions be accompanied by church activities that encourage discipleship and fellowship. If you do not have a church home, you are welcome to join us in our church's fellowship. If you are part of another church family, the assistance of your church leadership may be requested so that you may even more fully receive the benefit of all the spiritual resources given to you by God. One of your pastors, elders, or deacons may even become part of the counseling team to provide the most effectual help for you. It is our commitment to do what will best help you walk in obedience to God's Word and thus experience victory over your problems.
13. **MATERIALS NEEDED AND EXPECTATIONS:** You will need a notebook, a Bible, and the Self-Confrontation Manual at all sessions, including the first session. Be sure to bring them each time. Come with high expectations. You will find hope and encouragement even during your first session. From then on, with your cooperation, we are confident that you will find trustworthy and Biblical answers for the difficulty that prompted you to contact us.