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## **Agreement Between PBC Counseling and Counselee Regarding Confidentiality, Liability Waiver, and Consent to Counsel**

Please read and if you agree, then initial and sign where indicated.

### **Our Goal**

The purpose of biblical counseling is to help you meet the challenges of life in a manner that is pleasing and honoring to the Lord Jesus Christ. Our counseling is offered free of charge as a ministry of Providence Baptist Church of Deer Park, our elders, and our counseling volunteer staff ("PBC Counseling").

### **No Fees:**

PBC Counseling is a non-profit ministry. You have no obligation, express or implied, to pay fees for the counseling you receive through PBC Counseling.

**Counselee Initials:** \_\_\_\_\_

### **Biblical Basis:**

Counseling received through PBC Counseling is strictly religious in nature and is conducted under the authority and leadership of the elders of Providence Baptist Church. We believe that the Bible, consisting of the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments, provides sufficient, thorough guidance and instruction for faith and life (cf. II Timothy 3:16-17, II Peter 1:3-4). Likewise, the guidance received through PBC Counseling is designed to be both complementary to and in cooperation with the local church.

**Counselee Initials:** \_\_\_\_\_

### **Other Professional Advice:**

PBC Counseling elders and staff volunteers are not state licensed psychologists, psychiatrists, or therapists. PBC Counseling provides Scriptural guidance based on the principles of pastoral care. If you have significant medical, legal, financial, or other technical questions, you should seek the advice of a competent, independent professional. Our counselors will cooperate with such advisors and will help you consider their counsel in the light of biblical principles.

We urge our counselees to properly care for their physical bodies and to seek medical treatment for all physiological problems. Our counselors will assist you in responding to such problems in a godly manner, but our counsel is not intended to replace the services of a qualified physician in the treatment of organic issues.

**Counselee Initials:** \_\_\_\_\_

**What is Expected of You?**

It is our (PBC) belief that change must begin within ourselves as we look to Jesus Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit for the power to change. Therefore, we ask you (the counselee) to approach the counseling and encouragement process as an opportunity for personal change and spiritual growth. We ask that you refrain from the temptation of focusing on others, and instead we ask you to focus on what changes God can make in your life – even amid your circumstances. Be advised that you will be assigned “homework.” Homework is a vital part of the change process; therefore, completion of the homework assignments before your next session is expected.

**Counselee Initials:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Observers and Students**

PBC elders and PBC Counseling staff, volunteer members, and students participating in the PBC Counseling program are expected to protect the information they receive to ensure the integrity of the counseling process and the privacy of the counselee. Should a counselor or student fail to protect said information, it may become necessary for them to be dismissed from service in the PBC Counseling ministry.

**Counselee Initials:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Cancellation Policy**

**You must provide notification** when legitimately hindered from attending your appointment. Cancellation notice must be received **at least 24-hours in advance** of the appointment time. PBC Counseling does not charge for counseling, but to help incent you to not miss your appointments, **a donation of \$50 to a charity of your choice will be strongly encouraged prior to scheduling your next appointment.** The purpose for this policy is three-fold. First, minimizing missed appointments helps the counselee achieve and maintain progress. Second, others also need PBC Counseling time, and as good stewards we seek to maximize the service we can provide. Third, many of our elders, counselors, students, and observers travel significant distances to counsel/ observe; their time is valuable, and we want to be sure not to waste it. The simple way to avoid this problem is to call and change your appointment as soon as you are aware of a conflict.

**Counselee Initials:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Confidentiality**

Confidentiality is an important part of the counseling process. Since PBC Counseling differs in some respects with traditional guidelines regarding confidentiality, we have developed a policy which specifically addresses this issue. The privacy and confidentiality of our conversations and records are a privilege of yours, are in some cases protected by law, and are protected by our ethical principles in all but a few circumstances.

Under certain circumstances, however, it may be necessary to reveal information obtained in the counseling process in order to uphold the principles of Scripture, the standards of Providence Baptist Church, its PBC Counseling ministry, and/or the laws of the state of Texas. PBC Counseling does **NOT** hold to the legal concepts of the priest/penitent, doctor/ patient, psychotherapist/patient or counselor/ counselee privileges.

**CONFIDENTIALITY CLAUSE**

Absolute confidentiality is not scriptural. In certain circumstances, the Bible requires that pertinent facts be disclosed to select others (Matthew 18:15ff). In these areas, we follow the guidelines of Providence Baptist Church.

Situations where it may become necessary to reveal otherwise confidential information include, but are not limited to the following:

1. When a counselee refuses to renounce/discontinue a particular sin, it may become necessary to seek the assistance of others in the church to encourage repentance and reconciliation in accordance with the Scriptures (cf. Proverbs 15:22, 24:11; Matthew 18:15-20). In such cases, only such information as is necessary to deal with the particular sin will be revealed. Further, said information will only be revealed to those biblically required to be involved. To that end, it may become necessary to contact the pastor and/or other elders of a counselee’s home church. Additionally, should your church leadership inquire, we will disclose to them the information they need to effectively and biblically fulfill their responsibility to shepherd you.
2. Counselors, uncertain as to how a particular issue should be addressed, may reveal necessary information to and seek assistance from another counselor, elder, or PBC Counseling volunteer. This consultation will be held in the same level of confidence as your sessions. This may involve issues such as:
  - A. Church discipline matters
  - B. Seeking wise counsel to help address a specific matter in an appropriate way
  - C. Reporting to other leaders on the status of counseling when feasible and appropriate
3. Training of other counselors to learn how to handle cases of the same nature.
4. If a counselee threatens to harm himself/herself or another person, it may become necessary to notify the proper legal authorities, family members, pastor(s), intended victim, or all the above. If the counselee makes such threats in the context of a counseling session, the counselor will, upon receiving the information, consult with a PBC elder or another counselor, if available, who will work with them to assess the situation and assist in making the appropriate notifications, if necessary.
5. If a counselor is privy to evidence that abuse or some other crime has been or is about to be committed, it may be necessary to reveal such to the legal authorities.
6. PBC Counseling recognizes that in the course of the loving discipline of their children, parents may employ corporal punishment in accordance with the teachings of Scripture. In conformity with those Scriptures, PBC Counseling supports a parent’s right to do so. However, if in the course of counseling, the counselor suspects that a minor child has been physically or sexually abused, the counselor will immediately consult with another counselor and/or PBC elder who will assist in the assessment of the situation. At that point, if it is then suspected that abuse has occurred, the legal authorities will be contacted. If no other counselor or elder is available and a child is in imminent danger of being abused, the counselor will contact the appropriate legal authorities without employing the above consultation process.
7. Observers, including but not limited to, counseling students, may sit in on counseling sessions either to assist in the counseling process or for training purposes. All observers and counselors agree to be bound by the PBC

Counseling Confidentiality Agreement. Should they be found to be in violation of this agreement they may face expulsion from the PBC Counseling ministry by the PBC elders.

- 8. BY LAW, there are certain situations in which information about individuals undergoing counseling may or must be released with or without their permission. These situations are as follows (Romans 13:1-3):
  - A. Where anyone suspects that children are physically abused, neglected, or sexually abused.
  - B. In emergency situations where there may be danger to the counselee or others, as with homicide or suicide.
  - C. If a court of law issues a subpoena relating to a child abuse case, those subpoenaed are required by law to provide the information specifically described in the subpoena.
  - D. If an unreported life-threatening felony has been committed, we are required by law to report it to the police or appropriate authorities.

**Counselee Initials:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Drug and Sobriety Testing**

PBC reserves the right to request voluntary drug and/or sobriety testing at any time during the counseling process. Any requested testing will be at PBC’s expense and will utilize commercially available test kits and gear (such as breathalyzers). Counselees unwilling to take a requested test or testing positive for drugs and/or drunkenness, in the judgment of the Counselors, may be removed or suspended from the program at the Counselors’ discretion. PBC Biblical Counseling is explicitly dependent on the use of the Word of God and the Holy Spirit’s application of God’s Word in the heart of those counseled. A counselee being repeatedly filled with wine (or under the influence of other consciousness-altering substances) will not be filled with the Spirit and so be unable to be helped.

**Counselee Initials:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Resolution of Disagreements**

If a dispute should arise between the counselee and the counselor regarding the session or the counselor’s advice or conduct, the dispute may be brought to the attention of the Director of the PBC Counseling ministry. If the dispute cannot be resolved at this level, all parties agree to resolve such dispute by submitting to the elders of PBC for full **and** final resolution and conciliation. Both the counselee and the counselor agree **not** to take this matter to any secular court system. (1 Corinthians 6:1-7)

**Counselee Initials:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Waiver of Liability**

The undersigned counselee, having sought biblical discipleship counseling as adhered to by Providence Baptist Church, a nonprofit religious organization, hereby acknowledges their understanding of the above stated conditions and therefore releases from liability the Providence Baptist Church of Deer Park and any/all participating churches, pastors, agents, employees, or volunteers from a claim or litigation whatsoever arising from the undersigned’s participation in the above-mentioned biblical discipleship counseling ministry.

It is further understood, in consideration for receiving any form of counseling from the Providence Baptist Church, the person (counselee) receiving the counseling agrees to release and waive any and all claims of any kind against the ministry, the staff, the elders, the pastoral/lay counselors or any participating church, which may arise from, result out of, or be related to conduct or advice/counsel received. Additionally, all counsel provided by PBC counselors is provided

**PBC Counseling – Consent Agreement**

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_

in accordance with the biblical principles adhered to by the Providence Baptist Church and is not necessarily provided in adherence with any local or national psychological or psychiatric association.

That the undersigned agrees that he/she has read and thoroughly understands and agrees to what is expected of them, the confidentiality clause, the resolution of disagreements, and the contents of the waiver, now willingly (without any coercion) consents to and requests said biblical discipleship counseling from PBC's biblical discipleship counseling ministry.

**Counselee Initials:** \_\_\_\_\_

I have read and understand the above Agreement between PBC Counseling and counselee regarding Confidentiality, Drug and Sobriety Testing, Liability Waiver, and Consent to Counsel and agree to be bound by its terms.

**Counselee Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_