



Headwaters Biblical Counseling Standards of Conduct

The Scriptures of the Old and New Testament exert a controlling authority on both the terms and the content of counseling. Counseling is a relationship where the counselor moves toward troubled people to help with struggles faced in a fallen world. Holy Scripture possesses an authoritative role in controlling those relationships whether they happen in a formal counseling context or informally through living life together. The same Scriptures also claim to directly address the problems, questions, trouble, and struggles that people confront when they seek counseling help. Headwaters Counseling exists to provide Christ centered hope and help to those who are hurting. We are bound by God's Word in the 66 books of the Bible as our standard for counseling practice. We affirm the following commitments as a summary of the terms by which we should order all our counseling relationships. These are the standards of counseling conduct we shall use to evaluate the faithfulness of counselors counseling in our counseling center.

I. The Commitment to Scripture

God inspired the Bible to provide authoritative guidance to his people as they honor him in the midst of difficulties in a sinful world. People seek counseling help when life does not seem to be working properly and they need help understanding and addressing what has gone wrong. Headwaters Counselors believe it is the divine intention of Scripture to describe the perfect standard to which people must conform as they live their lives, the spiritual problems they face in life which challenge that standard, and the process of transformation that God has designed to help them change. Headwaters Counselors are committed to using the Scriptures in counseling out of the conviction that the topics addressed in the Scriptures are the exact issues addressed in counseling conversations.

- A. Headwaters Counselors must use the Scriptures in counseling as the authoritative and sufficient source for counseling content. The Scriptures sufficiently address the issues that trouble people and lead them to seek counseling help. This fact



encourages Headwaters Counselors that a proper understanding of the counseling problems of people combined with a proper understanding of the contents of Scripture lead to the confidence that the biblical text powerfully and relevantly addresses all counseling problems. This truth requires Headwaters Counselors to work to direct all of our counseling conversations to the truths in God's Word, and to encourage our counsees to make much use of the Scriptures in their personal lives.

- B. Headwaters Counselors must reject any secular counseling intervention that is at odds with Scripture. Secular counseling therapies add nothing essential to the understanding and resolution of counseling problems, though secular institutions can provide assistance to Headwaters Counselors when situations like hospitalization become necessary for extreme and urgent care. Such interventions are only effective when they are consistent with Scripture and ineffective when they are at odds with Scripture. In themselves they are unnecessary and insufficient for the counseling needs that people face. Headwaters Counselors do not engage in these interventions or make referrals to counselors that do.
- C. Headwaters Counselors must properly interpret the texts of Scripture that they use in their counseling. The meaning of a text of Scripture is controlled by its genre and by the grammatical and historical context in which it was written and by the intention of the author who penned it. Headwaters Counselors must seek to understand the genre and original meaning of the text of Scripture. Only with that understanding is it possible to communicate the truth of God's Word to counsees.
- D. Headwaters Counselors must make a distinction between the clear meaning of a biblical text and their opinions and applications they derive from that text. There is an important distinction to be made between the author's intended, authoritative meaning of the text and our application of that text. Headwaters Counselors, therefore, must make a clear distinction between the explanation of texts of Scripture and their individual opinions about how to apply that passage to counsees.



Psalms 19; 119:25, 40, 50, 105, 107; Proverbs 6:23; 10:17; Romans 15:4; 2 Timothy 2:15; 2 Timothy 3:1-17; 2 Peter 1:3-21

II. The Commitment to Jesus

Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God who has come in the flesh to redeem fallen humanity from all the effects of the fall through his life, death, resurrection, and ascension to the throne at the right hand of the Father. He is the source of eternal joy and serves as the ultimate resolution for every counseling problem. He intends to do away with all counseling difficulties powerfully, though partially in this life, and then fully in the next. All people access these benefits through faith in him as they begin and continue to live the Christian life. It is the privilege of all Christians to use our conversations to direct all peoples to him at all times and in all places. Jesus is the goal of all our conversations, whether informal or formal.

- A. Headwaters Counselors must point their counsees to the necessity of faith in Jesus Christ unto salvation. Because Jesus Christ serves as the personal solution to all of our counseling difficulties, the primary goal of every counselor should be to introduce counsees to a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. Faithful counselors will pray for wisdom about the best way to call their counsees to saving faith in Christ, knowing that it is only through a relationship with him that troubled people can know joy now and throughout eternity.

- B. Headwaters Counselors must also point their counsees to the necessity of faith in Jesus Christ unto sanctification. Faith in Jesus Christ is essential, not only to enter the Christian life, but also to grow in holiness throughout life. Headwaters Counselors point their believing counsees to the person and work of Christ as that which makes it possible for them to live the life of faith as they await the fullness of their salvation at the last day.
Matthew 28:16-20; Acts 1:8; Romans 6:1-4; 10:8-13; 1 Corinthians 2:1-5; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 4:4-6; Ephesians 4:15



III. The Commitment to Care

The call to engage in counseling conversations is the call to love others well. Headwaters Counselors demonstrate the love of Christ through the counseling care that they offer to troubled people who seek their help. The counseling relationship is one of loving care, regardless of whether that relationship happens in the context of more formal counseling or simply the care we express to others. Headwaters Counselors seek a posture of loving service in their conversations and avoid bringing harm into the lives of counsees.

- A. Headwaters Counselors must care for counsees in sacrificing time for them. Scheduled appointments are often one practical way to ensure that counseling conversations occur, but a biblical commitment to care for others well can never be limited to formal counseling meetings. Counsees are our brothers and sisters in Christ; they are our lost friends, neighbors, and family members. Loving them well requires our service to them at times that may be inconvenient. Headwaters Counselors spend their energies to love and serve troubled people and never seek to limit their involvement in the life of a counselee to a specific meeting but involve themselves in the lives of their counsees as much as is wise and possible. It may at times be wise to end a formal counseling relationship when counseling has become counterproductive to the counselee. When further meetings are no longer wise or possible, reasonable effort is made to connect a counselee with someone who will continue biblical care.
- B. Headwaters Counselors must care for counsees by seeking to match their words of counseling wisdom with tangible acts of care. The Bible teaches that it is a sinful demonstration of lifeless faith to limit our counseling care to the words we speak, while avoiding acts of care. Headwaters Counselors seek to meet the physical and other practical needs of our counsees wherever possible.
- C. Headwaters Counselors must care for counsees in protecting the weak from harm. Counsees can be harmed by others and can inflict harm on themselves. Headwaters Counselors avoid sinful language and behavior that brings harm into the lives of their counsees. Headwaters Counselors understand that it is impossible to protect the weak from every danger in a fallen world and yet they



endeavor to protect counselees from exposure to the harmful treatment of others through false teaching, unbiblical counseling, harsh speech, abusive treatment, and any other manifestation of sinful relationships. And they actively seek to protect counselees from harm through their own persistent sin.

Proverbs 3:27; Matthew 22:34-40; John 15:12-17; 1 Corinthians 9:1-18; 1

Corinthians 13:1-13; 1 Timothy 5:18; 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12; James 2:14-17; 1

John 2:7-11; 3:11-24

IV. The Commitment to the Church

The church is the body of Jesus Christ, whom he has purchased with his own blood, and has commissioned to advance his kingdom on earth. Because the church is the pillar and buttress of God's truth, it is indispensable in the ministry of counseling that seeks to communicate that truth. Headwaters Counselors do their work with the conviction that biblical change is ultimately impossible apart from the full ministry of the church.

- A. Headwaters Counselors must be committed to the priority of the church in accomplishing their counseling ministry. Headwaters counselors will place themselves under the leadership of Headwaters Pastor of Counseling and pursue the accountability of that leadership as it relates to their life, doctrine, and counseling practices.
- B. Headwaters Counselors must seek to involve their counselees in a faithful church. Counseling ultimately seeks, by divine grace, to aid counselees to conform their life to behavior that glorifies God. Headwaters Counselors understand Christians best grow in grace when they are actively involved in the church.
- C. Headwaters Counselors must seek out, for themselves and those they counsel, churches, which will faithfully discharge the command of Christ to show care through corrective church discipline. Such discipline is a central way that God cares for his flock and protects the purity of the church.
Matthew 16:16-19; 18:15-20; Acts 2:42; 1 Corinthians 5:1-5; Ephesians 2:19-21; 1 Timothy 3:15; Titus 1:10; Hebrews 3:13; 10:25



V. The Commitment to Humanity

God made human beings in his very own image as the pinnacle of his creation. Therefore, they are invested with inestimable dignity. Biblical counseling engages these precious image bearers to show care to them according to the standards of God's Word. Headwaters Counselors work to show honor and care to human beings in every relevant way.

- A. Headwaters Counselors must counsel in a way that protects life and honors the image of God in human beings. Headwaters Counselors never condone the taking of innocent life through murder believing acts such as abortion, selective reduction, euthanasia, and assisted suicide are sins that both hurt people and dishonor God. Headwaters Counselors use their conversations to point people away from such sinful activities and toward a protection of all human life.
- B. Headwaters Counselors must counsel with an understanding of the importance of the heart. The Bible teaches that human beings are guided by the various motivations and desires of their hearts. The heart is the source of initiation for all activity and is of crucial importance in the counseling task. Headwaters Counselors seek to help struggling people change at a level of depth that flows from the inner person to the outer person.
- C. Headwaters Counselors must do their work understanding the importance of care for the physical body. Human beings are whole persons, and so the physical body and the actions that result from it are of crucial importance in the counseling task. Headwaters Counselors will work to foster behaviors that are commanded by Scripture and eliminate behaviors that are forbidden. Headwaters Counselors will also work to emphasize proper care for the physical body including recognizing the importance of professional medical care for medical problems.
- D. Headwaters Counselors must do their work understanding the importance of gender. God created the human race to exist in two equal genders of male and female. God has also commanded that those genders are called to function in different capacities in the contexts of the home, church, and society. The biblical instruction on gender means that, while men and women should disciple one another as they live out their daily Christian lives, women will strive to avoid formally counseling men since this generally requires the task of teaching men



with authority which is forbidden by Scripture. Men will likewise be committed to ministry to women, but will strive to avoid ongoing, one-to-one counsel with women because of the biblical admonitions to stay above reproach and to avoid any hint of sin. Headwaters Counselors embrace the entirety of Scripture's teaching on gender and so work to help troubled people embrace their physical gender revealed at birth, and to function in ways that accurately represent that gender in the world, the church, and in the Christian home.

Genesis 1:26-27; Proverbs 4:23; 20:5; Mark 7:14-23; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20; 11:2-16; 2 Corinthians 4:16-5:4; Galatians 3:28; Ephesians 5:3, 22-33; Colossians 3:18-19; 1 Timothy 2:9-15; 5:23; Titus 1:6; James 1:19-27; 4:1-2.

VI. The Commitment to Purity

God created sex to be enjoyed in the context of the marriage relationship between one man and one woman. All other sexual expressions constitute sexual immorality and are heinous sins, bringing pain into the lives of all who are engaged in them. Counselors have a biblical responsibility to foster sexual purity in their attitudes, actions, and speech.

- A. Headwaters Counselors must seek sexual purity in every area of their lives. The Bible commands Christians to flee all forms of sexual immorality. Those committed to the ministry of the Word in counseling must avoid immorality in their personal interactions with others. Headwaters Counselors do not seek any sexual involvement outside the bonds of Christian marriage regardless of whether that involvement is improper sexual speech, acts of impurity that push the line toward sex, or overt sexual acts. Headwaters Counselors also fight for moral purity in their private moments when no other person is around understanding that all sexual immorality destroys counseling effectiveness by harming themselves and their counselees.
- B. Headwaters Counselors must seek purity in their intentions with counselees. The Bible teaches that all sinful sexual behavior begins with sinful intentions of the heart. Headwaters Counselors fight by grace to defeat the lustful intentions of the heart. Counselors should seek accountability especially when grappling with sinful sexual desires.



- C. Headwaters Counselors must encourage sexual purity in the lives of counselees. The Bible teaches that great pain and consequences come into the lives of those who are guilty of sexual transgression. Because this is true Headwaters Counselors are committed to urging counselees to pursue biblical standards of purity in thought, word, and deed. Headwaters Counselors discourage any expression of sexuality outside the bonds of marriage including lust, pornography, adultery, fornication, and homosexuality. Exodus 20:17; Proverbs 5; Matthew 5:27-32; Romans 13:13-14; 1 Corinthians 6:9-20; Ephesians 5:1-8; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8; Hebrews 13:4; James 1:14-15

VII. The Commitment to Competency

The calling to be a biblical counselor involves more than a commitment to the sufficiency of Christ and his Word in helping people with their problems in living. It also involves a commitment to growing in the kind of wisdom and skill that produces counseling excellence. No counselor of the Word has arrived at a place of perfection, but Headwaters Counselors work to achieve growing competency as they help struggling people.

- A. Headwaters Counselors must pursue the necessary education, training, and experience required to do their work. The best Headwaters Counselors have received quality instruction from wise teachers about how to counsel well, have been trained to develop excellent counseling skills, and have been supervised by mentors who know how to counsel with excellence. Those who want to pursue the highest standards of excellence will pursue as much of this equipping as possible whether through formal or informal means.
- B. Headwaters Counselors must be committed to ongoing education and training to remain effective. New counselees always arrive with fresh problems, and counselors are in constant need to grow in wisdom and skill. Headwaters Counselors, therefore, never quit learning, but always seek to grow their base of knowledge concerning the truths of Scripture, information about the problems that people face, and the wisdom that comes through counseling. When a counseling problem falls outside their area of competency counselors are honest with counselees about their limitations and seek help from others with greater competency.



C. Headwaters Counselors must maintain a vibrant relationship with Jesus Christ to maintain the spiritual vitality necessary for the work of counseling. The Bible is clear that people always speak out of the overflow of resources stored in their heart. This reality means that Headwaters Counselors can only offer truly biblical care as they are walking in close relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ and storing his words in their heart. It is a close relationship with Jesus, more than anything else, that ensures our competency as counselors. Headwaters Counselors fight for a dynamic relationship with Jesus through, among other means of grace, Bible-reading, prayer, corporate worship, and close personal accountability as a part of the body of Christ.

D. Headwaters Counselors must seek to gain as much information about the nature of the problems faced by their counselee to provide effective care. It is impossible to help troubled persons without extensive knowledge of the problem they are confronting. Headwaters Counselors are committed to learning as much about counsees and their problems in order to be able to offer the best possible care. Headwaters Counselors avoid the assumption that they understand the nature of a counseling problem before they have carefully investigated the matter. Proverbs 18:13, 17; John 15:1-11; Matthew 12:33-37; Ephesians 3:14-21; 5:11; Colossians 1:9; 3:16; 1 Timothy 4:15; 2 Timothy 2:2, 15; James 1:19;

VIII. The Commitment to Methodology

Wise counseling requires a commitment to understanding and following the change process as it is revealed in Scripture. Counseling is about offering help to people as they make Spirit-initiated changes in their lives that honor him, and so Headwaters Counselors must know that biblical process and be committed to following it if they are to succeed in their work of counseling. The Bible is a sufficient resource, which explains the processes necessary in the counseling relationship.

A. Headwaters Counselors must be committed to the truth that the fundamental key to the process of biblical counseling is the person and work of Jesus Christ. We point counsees to the person and work of Jesus Christ, and then teach them



how to grow in his grace. Headwaters Counselors work to point all persons to repentance toward God and faith in Jesus Christ to find forgiveness for their sin and comfort in their pain.

- B. Headwaters Counselors must seek to help counselees change their sinful desires and behavior through a biblical process of putting off sinful attitudes and actions and putting on ones of righteousness. Change requires more than merely stopping sinful desires and behaviors, it also requires beginning new desires and behaviors which honor God. Headwaters Counselors work to help their counselees experience change in this practical way as informed by biblical texts.

- C. Headwaters Counselors must seek to help counselees change at a level of depth through a biblical process of heart renewal. Because the desires of the inner man precede the behavior of the outer man, the Bible requires that a person must take their thoughts captive in order to achieve the kind of change that honors God. Headwaters Counselors help counselees discover how their sinful desires, thoughts, and feelings lead to sinful actions and then work to assist them in forming new patterns of biblical thought and action through the grace of God.

- D. Headwaters Counselors must help their counselees change by meeting with God in prayer. The Bible teaches the way we draw near to God in our sin and suffering is through consistent prayer. God hears the prayers of those who draw near to him in Christ, who desires to help them in time of need. Headwaters Counselors encourage their counselees to express their dependence on God through both public and private prayer.
Acts 26:17; Romans 12:2; 2 Corinthians 3:18, 10:5; Ephesians 4:17-32; Colossians 3:1-17; Hebrews 4:16

IX. The Commitment to Authority

The Bible is clear that God's world is one where structures of authority must be recognized and respected. The Bible teaches that authority exists between the Trinitarian relationships of the Godhead and affects each of our human relationships as



well. Headwaters Counselors work to honor all biblically instituted authorities and assist their counsees to do the same.

- A. Headwaters Counselors must submit to the authority of God above every other authority source and must help their counsees do the same. God is the supreme authority in the world and is himself the source of every human authority. God mediates his authority to us perfectly in the pages of his Word, the Bible. Every source of authority is ultimately held accountable to God's Word as the perfect standard. Headwaters Counselors help their counsees to live their lives in submission to God's authority even when his authority conflicts with human authorities. Such conflicts of human authority with divine authority can create very serious challenges to counsees suffering under the weight of an oppressive and unbiblical authority. Headwaters Counselors seek to help counsees work with other, more faithful sources of authority, to resolve oppression and abuse of authority.

- B. Headwaters Counselors must help their counsees submit to legitimate authority in the context of the home. God has called husbands and fathers to exercise spiritual authority in the home, seeking the welfare of those in his care. God has also called wives to be submissive to their husbands and children to be submissive to the authority of their parents. These authority structures are an incredible blessing when discharged faithfully. Headwaters Counselors will help family members honor these sources of authority appropriately throughout the various stages of life.

- C. Headwaters Counselors must help their counsees to submit to the authority of their church. God has gifted his church with ministers to shepherd the souls of his people. These shepherds have real spiritual authority that must be followed when it is discharged biblically. Headwaters Counselors see this authority as a blessing from God given for the good of his people, and therefore endeavor to help their counsees embrace it.



- D. Headwaters Counselors must help their counsees submit to the authority of the state as it is discharged righteously. God has provided government as a blessing for all people in order to preserve order and righteousness. When this authority is discharged righteously and in keeping with God’s law all people benefit from it. Wherever possible, Headwaters Counselors work to obey the laws of the legal jurisdictions in which they serve, and urge their counsees to do the same. Matthew 20:25-28; Acts 5:29; Romans 13:1-7; 1 Corinthians 10:31; 2 Corinthians 5:9; Ephesians 5:22-33; 6:1-4; Colossians 3:18-21; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 2:13-25

X. The Commitment to Integrity

The Bible emphasizes the importance of honesty in all our relationships. God never lies, and he commands this kind of integrity for his creatures as well. Honesty, therefore, is to be a hallmark of any human relationship including formal and informal counseling. The kind of trust necessitated in counseling relationship requires honesty on the part of counselors. Deceit sinfully undermines this relationship and must be avoided.

- A. Headwaters Counselors must be straightforward about the kind of counseling they do. Counsees are served when Headwaters Counselors clearly communicate their intention to use the Bible as their authority for all counseling matters. Headwaters Counselors should therefore seek to communicate this commitment in any context whether public or private, formal or informal.
- B. Headwaters 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. Headwaters Counselors seek to maintain trust and integrity by keeping personal information as private as possible. Headwaters Counselors protect the reputation of their counsees by avoiding reckless and unnecessary disclosures of personal information. A biblical commitment to protect counsees from harm as well as commitments to the authority of the home, church, and or state may require disclosure of information that counsees would otherwise prefer to remain private.



- C. Headwaters Counselors must accurately represent their qualifications. It demonstrates a lack of integrity for counselors to misrepresent their training, experience, and areas of expertise in communicating their counseling qualifications. Headwaters Counselors work to represent humbly and accurately their credentials, qualifications, and skill-level.

- D. Headwaters Counselors must exercise care in receiving gifts from those they counsel. Such gifts may be gladly received when given as a token of love and gratitude for the help and care offered in counseling. Headwaters Counselors must be wary of gifts that are perceived as an exercise in manipulation or as an effort to control certain counseling outcomes. Headwaters Counselors never compromise their faithfulness to the Word of God because of a gift received or promised, monetary or otherwise.
Exodus 20:16; 23:1; Leviticus 19:11; Deuteronomy 16:19; Proverbs 19:5; 24:28; 25:18; Zechariah 8:16; Matthew 5:37; 2 Corinthians 4:2; Ephesians 4:25; Colossians 3:9

XI. The Commitment to Reconciliation

God is concerned to pursue peace with his creation. He possesses righteous anger regarding sin but offers to put that anger away through the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. He calls his followers to this same attitude of peace. The calling to be a biblical counselor is, therefore, the calling to be a peacemaker.

- A. Headwaters Counselors must be committed to helping counselees pursue peace with God through faith and repentance. When Headwaters Counselors are aware of areas in the lives of counselees where they are separated from God by their sin, they will always seek, with wisdom and grace, to help them repent of that sin, confessing it to the Lord and forsaking it for the pursuit of new desires and behaviors that honor him.

- B. Headwaters Counselors must be committed to helping counselees pursue peace in their relationships with other people through confession, forgiveness, and



reconciliation. Headwaters Counselors take every available opportunity to help counselees achieve reconciliation in any relationship where this is possible, whether in marriage, family, friendships, or church fellowship. Though life in a fallen world often means that conflicts cannot be resolved, Headwaters Counselors never allow a conflict to remain unresolved when another wise option remains available.

- C. Headwaters Counselors must pursue peace in relationships with all their counselees. When a conflict arises Headwaters Counselors will lead in reconciliation as each party confesses sin and grants forgiveness. Headwaters Counselors are also eager to bring in another party to help facilitate reconciliation if this should be necessary.

Psalm 32:1-5; Proverbs 28:13; Matthew 5:9; 23-24; 6:14; 7:1-5; 18:15-35; Mark 11:25; Luke 17:3; Galatians 6:1; Ephesians 4:31-32; Colossians 3:12-13; James 3:18; 1 John 1:8-9

XII. Violation of Standards

Counselors counseling at Headwaters are required to observe these standards of conduct in order to remain counselors in good standing. It is the task of the Counseling Pastor and Elders of Headwaters to watch over and enforce these standards. Violation of these standards will result in losing the privilege to counsel within Headwaters's counseling center.

Counselor's Name ***Signature*** ***Date***

Received By: ***Signature*** ***Date***