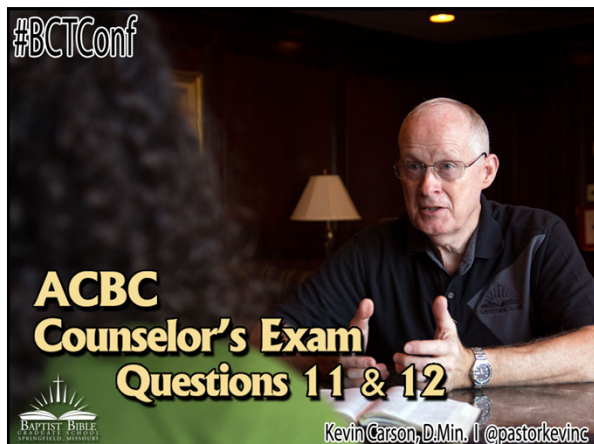


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**ACBC
Counselor's Exam**
Questions 11 & 12

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Question 11

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?

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Key Points and Passages

First Part of the Question

11. *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?*

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Key Points and Passages

- All biblical counselors should **STRONGLY** prefer not to disclose personal information of others, and should make every effort to help the counselee find ways to resolve a problem as **PRIVATELY** as possible. The Bible strongly commends godly speech (Eph 4:29) and equally strongly condemns gossip (Prov 11:13; 16:28; 20:19; Tit 3:2; James 4:11; cf. Prov 6:16-19).

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Key Points and Passages

- The clear requirement for all biblical counselors (and Christians) is to live **WORTHY** of the gospel of Jesus Christ (Philippians 1:27).
- 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 **LOVE** like Christ (Romans 13:8-10).

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Key Points and Passages

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

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Key Points and Passages

- Understanding the biblical nature of **AUTHORITY** helps the counselor determine what should be the limitations to confidentiality.
- **FAMILIAL** Authority (Ephesians 5:22-6:4; Proverbs 23:13-14)
 - A parent in the case of a minor



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Key Points and Passages

- **GOVERNMENTAL** Authority (Romans 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:13-17)
 - A counselor must follow **ALL** applicable local, state, and national laws.
 - Laws differ from location to location; therefore, it is imperative to check in your area to determine your **SPECIFIC** responsibilities.



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Key Points and Passages

- **ECCLESIASTICAL** Authority (Matt 18:15-18; 1 Thess 5:12-13; Heb 13:7, 17; cf. Acts 20:28; 1 Pet 5:1-4; cf. Eph 5:11-16)
 - Counseling is done **UNDER** the authority of the local church and pastors.



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Key Points and Passages

- **ECCLESIASTICAL** Authority (Matt 18:15-18; 1 Thess 5:12-13; Heb 13:7, 17; cf. Acts 20:28; 1 Pet 5:1-4; cf. Eph 5:11-16)
 - Counseling is also a form of **DISCIPLESHIP** and must help facilitate the greater purposes of the church regarding learning and living the truth.
 - We have those around us in the church to **HELP** us grow and learn.



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Key Points and Passages

- Limits to Confidentiality
 1. When a counselor is **UNCERTAIN** of how to address a particular problem and needs to seek advice from another pastor/counselor/supervisor (Proverbs 15:22)
 2. When a counselee attends another **CHURCH** and it is necessary to talk with his or her pastor/counselor



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Key Points and Passages

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



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Key Points and Passages

- Limits to Confidentiality
 4. If a subpoena or other court order is received directing the **DISCLOSURE** of information
 5. When a person persistently **REFUSES** to renounce a particular sin and it becomes necessary to seek the assistance of others to encourage repentance, restoration, and reconciliation



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Sample Statement of Confidentiality

Confidentiality is an important aspect of the counseling process, and we will carefully guard the information you entrust to us. All communication between you, our counselors, and our counseling office will remain in strictest confidence unless you (or a parent in the case of a minor) give authorization to release this information....



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Sample Statement of Confidentiality

There are some situations, however, when it may be necessary for us to share certain information with others: 1) when a counselor is uncertain of how to address a particular problem and needs to seek advice from another pastor/counselor/supervisor; 2) when a counselee attends another church and it is necessary to talk with his or her pastor/counselor; ...



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Sample Statement of Confidentiality

3) when there is a clear indication that someone may be harmed unless others intervene (including, but not limited to, if there is evidence or reasonable suspicion of abuse against a minor child, elder person, or dependent adult; 4) if a subpoena or other court order is received directing the disclosure of information; ...



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Sample Statement of Confidentiality

or 5) when a person persistently refuses to renounce a particular sin and it becomes necessary to seek the assistance of others to encourage repentance, restoration, and reconciliation (See Proverbs 15:22; 24:11; Matthew 18:15-20). Please be assured that our counselors strongly prefer not to disclose personal information to others, and they will make every effort to help you find ways to resolve a problem as privately as possible.



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Key Points and Passages

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



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Key Points and Passages

*“Be sure to distinguish between the concepts of privilege and confidentiality. The clergy-penitent privilege provides that clergy cannot be compelled to disclose **in court** the content of communications shared with them in confidence while acting as a spiritual adviser. The related concept of confidentiality imposes upon clergy **a duty** not to disclose to others any communications shared with them in confidence” (Richard R Hammar, *Pastor, Church & Law*, vol 1, pg. 197).*



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Key Points and Passages

- “The ultimate **GOAL** 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.” Copyrighted quote from Bob Kellemen, Chapter 18, “Ethical and Legal Issues in Local Church Counseling: Caring Like Christ” *Counseling and the Local Church*, Zondervan, forthcoming.



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Key Points and Passages

Second Part of the Question

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?



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Key Points and Passages

- Our responsibility is to uphold the **WEAK** (1 Thessalonians 5:14; Romans 13:1-5).
- We must also obey **ALL** laws that require us to report various kinds of abuse (Romans 13:1-7).
- We must tell the truth and protect our **INTEGRITY** throughout the process, including how we communicate to the counselee, the church, and the government (Ephesians 4:15, 25).



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Key Points and Passages

- The church needs to 1) set up appropriate **ACCOUNTABILITY**, 2) provide specific, concrete and creative means of **MERCY**, and 3) **FOLLOW-UP** on how the governmental authorities either are or are not providing help.



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Key Points and Passages

- In every way possible, the church should **COOPERATE** 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 provides the maximum benefit for the counselee.



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Cautions

- You want to make sure you answer all parts of this question.
- Emphasize that confidentiality is **ALWAYS** qualified.



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Resources

- Robert W. Kelleman, Chapter 18, "Ethical and Legal Issues in Local Church Counseling: Caring Like Christ," *Counseling and the Local Church*, Zondervan, Forthcoming
- Robert W. Kelleman, Chapter 12, "Practicing Ethical and Legal Wisdom in Ministry," *Equipping Counselors for Your Church*, P&R, 2011
- Heath Lambert, "A Pastoral Response to Physical Abuse in the Family," *Journal of Family Ministry* (vol. 1, no 2 2011): 34-44



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Resources

- George Scipione, "The Limits of Confidentiality in Counseling," *Journal of Pastoral Practice* (vol. 7, no. 2 1984): 29-33
- Alan D. Ingalls, "Legal and Biblical Issues in Pastoral Confidentiality," *Journal of Ministry and Theology* (vol. 6, no. 2 2002): 80-100.
- Counseling: How to Counsel Biblically – John MacArthur, pg. 109
- Handbook of Church Discipline – Jay Adams, pg. 30-32



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Case Study Erik

Erik is a 20-year-old Believer who has been struggling with pornography for the last three years. Before that time he knew that pornography existed, but had never seen it because his parents carefully monitored all the technology in their home. Erik discovered porn on a trip out of town when some of his friends from High School showed it to him on their phones. Since then Erik has frequently looked at pornography. ...



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Case Study Erik

The problem became worse when he moved to college and had unfettered access to the Internet on his laptop computer. Several weeks ago, Erik became convinced that as a Christian he must begin to deal aggressively with this sin. He did the hardest thing he had ever done and told his dad about the problem. Erik's dad loves his son and wants to help him, but has no idea what to do about a problem like this. They came together to meet you for counsel.



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Question 12

Assume that the information you have here is a straightforward presentation of the facts and write down the homework assignments you want Erik to complete after this first meeting with you. After you list the homework explain the specific issues you will address with Erik in counseling sessions. Please include the categories of "put off" and "put on" in your answer.



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Key Points and Passages

We never start with homework.

Question:

How do you interpret Erik's situation?



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Key Points and Passages

Specific Counseling Issues and Key Passages:

- Union with Christ with daily implications (2 Cor 5)
- Trials, Temptations, Heart, Desires, including contentment (James 1, 4)
- Power of Christ for living a victorious Christian life (Ephesians 1, 2, 3)
- Challenge to live like Christ with appropriate motivations (Ephesians 4, 5, 6)



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Key Points and Passages

Specific Counseling Issues and Key Passages:

- The fear of God and sin (Prov 1; Eccl 12; Isaiah 11; Romans 13)
- Grace, including forgiveness (Eph 2, Titus 2; Eph 4)
- Image of God, including creation and its implications for how we see others (Gen 1-2; Rom 1)



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Key Points and Passages

Specific Counseling Issues and Key Passages:

- Put Off passages
Ephesians 4; Colossians 3; Galatians 5
- Put On passages
Ephesians 4; Colossians 3; Galatians 5
- List specific items of putting off and putting on



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Key Points and Passages

Suggested Homework Assignments:

- When does a thief not become a thief?
Not just when he stops stealing but when he uses his hands to help others.
- Sin specific homework:
 - Monitoring Software
 - Determine best ways to use the laptop (battle plan)
 - Accountability Partner



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Key Points and Passages

Suggested Homework Assignments:

- Spiritual Growth and Discipline specific homework:
 - Bible reading (pick one of the passages, memorize a key verse, write what it means, determine how it applies to your situation, be ready to discuss it next time)



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Key Points and Passages

Suggested Homework Assignments:

- Spiritual Growth and Discipline specific homework:
 - Prayer (counselee, counselor, parents)
 - Attend Services (take notes, write out application to his life)
 - Serve others (be specific according to your context or church setting)
 - Reading Christian literature



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Cautions

Make sure you include both the categories of “put off” and “put on” in your answer.



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Resources

- *Hide or Seek*, John Freeman (Wapwallopen, PA: New Growth Press, 2014)
- *Finally Free*, Heath Lambert (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013)
- *Sexual Sanity for Men*, David White (Wapwallopen, PA: New Growth Press, 2012)



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Resources

- *HELP! He’s Struggling with Pornography*, Brian Croft (Wapwallopen, PA: New Growth Press, 2010)
- *Sex Is Not the Problem (Lust Is)*, Joshua Harris (Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah, 2003)



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