

# Therapeutic Guidelines

## Christian Family & Children's Center

The following therapeutic guidelines are designed to provide broad based philosophical direction and supervision based on a Christian world view for therapists and others who are working at the Center in helping professions. It is not within the scope of Center services to offer counsel inconsistent with these broad based guidelines. Should a question arise concerning discernment of these guidelines, it is imperative that the therapist's supervisor be consulted and permission granted before continuing to counsel.

### **Definition of Family**

The following definition of family has been adopted by the Center:

God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society. It is composed of persons related to one another by marriage, blood, or adoption.

Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in a lifetime covenant commitment. It is God's unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and His church, and to provide for the man and the woman in marriage the framework for intimate companionship, the channel for sexual expression according to biblical standards and the means for procreation of the human race. The husband and wife are of equal worth before God, since both are created in God's image. The marriage relationship models the way God relates to His people. A husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church. He has the God-given responsibility to provide for, to love, protect and to lead his family by giving up of himself. He has the biblical responsibility to give himself up sacrificially for the needs of his wife. A wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband even as the church willingly submits to the leadership of Christ. She, being in the image of God as is her husband and thus equal to him, has the God-given responsibility to respect her husband and to serve as his helper in managing the household, impacting the world around them, and nurturing the next generation. In a marriage lived according to these truths, the love between husband and wife will show itself in listening to each other's viewpoints; valuing each other's gifts, wisdom and desires; honoring one another in public and in private; and always seeking to bring benefit, not harm, to one another. This type of relationship is described in the Bible in many places, but in particular in Ephesians.

Children, from the moment of conception, are a blessing and heritage from the Lord. Parents are to demonstrate to their children God's pattern for marriage. Parents are to teach their children spiritual and moral values and to lead them, through consistent lifestyle example and loving discipline, to make choices based on biblical truth. Children are to honor and obey their parents.

The above definition of family is important in today's postmodern culture. There are many concepts and views on what appropriate family structure is in the context of society today. It is important to acknowledge in the therapeutic process that everybody may not share the views that are consistent with the Center's prospective. However, it is important that therapists not provide counsel that is inconsistent with the above definition of family. This is further clarified in the subsections below.

### **Marriage**

Marriage is seen as God's ordained plan for males and females who desire to commit their lives to each other. Although marriage is not necessarily for everyone, according to scripture, marriage is God's design for men and women who desire to be committed to each other in the context of living together in physical relationships. Living together with someone outside of marriage or being involved in a physical relationship (sexual) while not married, would fall outside of God's design for healthy relationships. It is important for therapists, at an appropriate point during the therapeutic process, to share God's prospective on marriage and sexuality.

## **Divorce**

Divorce is seen from a biblical prospective as a plan that is only to be used in severe circumstances, such as long term infidelity, abuse, etc. Outside the purview of these particular circumstances (or ones that clearly indicate that a marriage is a destructive and dysfunctional relationship that does not have hopes of recovery because of willful misconduct, it would not be the Center's policy to recommend divorce to a couple. However, it is recognized that couples may lack the skills, motivation or desire for reconciliation. Therapists must acknowledge those issues and deal with them within the context of Biblical prospective regarding family. Our goals are not to provide judgment, but to support and encourage the implementation of biblical truth in marriage and family.

Tools to prevent divorce such as separation (contracted periods of being apart from each other), refraining from physical relationships, and other tools used by marriage therapists are considered to be appropriate in the context of Biblical reconciliation and to be suggested at the therapist's discretion.

The aversion to divorce however, is never to be utilized as an excuse for sinful, hurtful, and unhealthy ongoing behavior or mental health issues that cause tremendous pain and dysfunction to each other and the family.

## **Sexuality**

Sexuality is seen as a design by God to be expressed and fulfilled within the context of marriage. It is the Center's perspective that God has created our sexuality and it is a gift from the Lord. Within this context it is not appropriate for a therapist to recommend any type of physical or sexual relationship outside the context of marriage or to endorse or condone it in any way. Sexuality within the context of marriage is seen to be not only appropriate but designed by God, and intended for full expression and fulfillment for both men and women. Therapists are to be aware of therapeutic techniques to encourage couples to enhance their physical relationship. Sex outside of marriage is a fact of life in the post-modern culture but, it is the Center's perspective that abstinence is God's design for single individuals. Therefore it is against the policy of the Center to recommend the use of birth control, oral and other contraception methods, for persons not married, encouraging abstinence from a purity perspective.

## **Sexual Orientation**

Although sexual orientation is an occasion for widely diverse perspectives and behaviors in today's society, the Center's perspective is that marriage is designed for a man and a woman who have committed themselves to each other in marriage. Although therapy may be conducted with persons of homosexual orientation, it is never to be condoned or endorsed and the ultimate perspective of a therapist would be to see homosexuality as a sin and as a behavior and lifestyle which needs repentance in the context of an understanding of grace, compassion and support. However, acknowledging this fact, that is an individual choice of a

client, persons of homosexual orientation can continue in therapy as long as therapy does not in any way support, endorse, or condone their sexual orientation. This is likewise true of other sexual sins that are of an individual or heterosexual nature.

## **End of Life Decisions**

During the course of therapy, clients may be facing end of life issues that require decisions about medical care, intervention strategies, life pro-longing methods and termination decisions. In today's complex community, these issues from an ethical basis are extremely difficult. In this context, it is important that the therapist maintain a perspective of helping families make Godly decisions in the context of biblical principles. No therapists will ever recommend life termination procedures or the act of taking a life, such as injections of drugs, overdosing, or any other similar measures. The Center distinguishes between the act of taking a life, which is euthanasia and a violation of sanctity of life issues, and the termination of the prolonging of the dying process procedures, which allows the natural course of life or dying to take place. Non-treatment or non-intervention is not euthanasia but recognizes the sovereignty of God as the giver of life.

## **Abortion**

Abortion is a difficult issue in today's society. It is the Center's perspective that God is the author of life and that abortion in all instances is taking of a human life. Therefore it is against Center policy to ever recommend, support or condone abortion or abortive types of behavior. This is not to be confused with the fact that patients or clients who have had abortions are to be accepted and dealt with in both the post-abortion syndrome and any other grieving process.

## **Parental Authority**

In the context of a Christian world-view God gives parents the responsibility to raise children and therefore the authority to do so. Although parents do not always make the right decisions, it is our belief that parents do have the ability and the right to make those decisions. It is the therapist's responsibility to guide and challenge parents who are being irresponsible in parenting, but it is important to realize that this a parental decision. The only exception to this perspective would be in situations of abuse, or other reportable violations of state law. Poor parenting along a developmental continuum with different children's ages gives cause for a variety of different treatment models. Adolescents in their individuation can be supported in maintaining a healthy individuation (not in ungodly rebellion) from a parent with poor parenting skills, and still remain supportive and cognizant of parental authority. At times it is necessary for the Center Team of therapeutic intervention to intervene in a family situation as to talk about the option of services being withdrawn, therapeutic relationship needing to be terminated, or other types of boundary setting limits being set if we feel this parental authority is being misused in the life of a child or other dependent. In this case a therapist should always notify and consult with a supervisor before establishing such a boundary and confer in the best way to do that in love and concern for the family. This can apply to testing,

placement, treatment, diagnosis and other types of intervention.

### **Education**

It is the Center's perspective that Christian parents have a wide variety of educational options available to them. It is not necessary for all clients and non Champion Christian School programs to refer clients to Champion Christian School. However, it is the perspective of the Center that Christian education is a distinctly Christian choice for parents in today's society and parents should be encouraged to think about it (within or without the Center programs) anytime there is an opportunity to talk about schooling. An integrative educational model that considers God's word as the center of all truth and the guide of the educational process, although not the most common model in today's contemporary society, is the most accurate biblio-centric model of education available in today's society along with homeschooling. It does however provide the only concrete example of an educational environment that has the opportunity in the majority of cases to model and experience the concepts of direct Christian community on a daily basis.

### **Context of Therapy**

It is the Center's perspective that the context of therapy in the Center's programs will be distinctly Christian. This means that therapy will be given by a Christian therapist who is trained in their particular area of responsibility. The definition of Christian in this sense is operating from a Christian world-view, which needs to be articulated and understood by therapists. Scripture, God's word and Biblical principles need to be principles used in therapy. Scripture should be used appropriately in the context of therapy but in itself is not considered to make therapy Christian. It is appropriate to use secularly developed techniques that were developed from a non-bibliocentric world view, as long as they are used from a Christian perspective. It is important for the counselor to think about how their counseling operates from a Christian world view, and to regularly evaluate how their day to day counseling is different because of this perspective.

### **Referral to Outside Agencies**

It is the Center's policy to give preference in referrals to those agencies that are offered from a distinctly Christian perspective such as other Christian counseling agencies or services. However, there are times when a quality Christian agency or counselor is not a practical referral. In this case, appropriate referral sources that are not blatantly anti-Christian are utilized with a Supervisors' approval.

### **Confidentiality**

Confidentiality is an important aspect of any type of counseling. However, definitions and limits need to be established within the context of therapy that protect the therapist and client regarding supervision and counselor accountability. The following principles regarding confidentiality are stringently applied at Christian Counseling Services:

>Communication between Therapist and Clients is always seen in the context of the therapist being a point of contact for Christian Counseling Services. The relationship between them needs to be protected, but in the context of all information shared in the context of therapy is

shared with Christian Counseling Services, not just the therapist alone. This is of course for the protection of the therapist, client and Center.

>All staff members of Christian Counseling Services are required to assure that all information shared within the Center's context remains confidential.

>Therapists are required to disclose any information to their supervisors that is pertinent to the treatment of the case, and definitely any issues that relate to legal issues, life threatening issues, liability issues, or general concerns with the case. This would also include issues of potential dual relationships, client/therapist (Center) tension, and referrals.

>All file, and note material would be included in these contexts as well.

## **Dual Relationships**

Counseling literature is clear about setting boundaries in the context of helping relationships. It is also clear that rural communities such as the Center's create unique issues for professionals. The adage of the one town physician is an important one for consideration, but not to excuse the inappropriate lack of setting boundaries. It is true that counselors may have relationships within a community with some clients, but these relationships must be not defined by the counseling services. This is true especially in being part of the Center and Christian Counseling Services. For that reason we have established the following boundaries for Therapists and other staff members:

1. Therapists cannot have as a client a person that they have a close personal relationship with outside the Center. This would be defined as someone they would call friend, family, or any relationship that would establish other relational guidelines with someone that would be primary besides therapist and client. As an example a counselor may work with someone from their church but should not counsel their pastor.
2. Therapists may not work in any clinical way with a client who is on staff at the Center. When a relationship becomes more than a helpful peer relationship it must be identified with the therapist's supervisor for clarification. Any interactions that happen between therapists and other staff members at the Center must be disclosed to the therapist's supervisor regardless of the significance of the conversations.
3. Therapists may not contact clients or potential clients outside of the context of the Center's offices. No home phone numbers or addresses may be given to clients. All contact must be through the Center and all electronic communication must be through the Center's digital services (not a counselor's personal email.)
4. If through the course of therapy personal boundaries are becoming questionable because of the relationship that is evolving as a part of therapy, or because an outside relationship has been established, the therapist must disclose this to their supervisor for decision making.
5. No therapist may have any romantic, employment, or other outside contractual relationship with a client.