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Review: Christian Counseling: A Comprehensive Guide

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BOOK REPORT

Christian Counseling: A Comprehensive Guide

by Gary R. Collins
Word Books, 1980, 477 pp.,
\$10.95

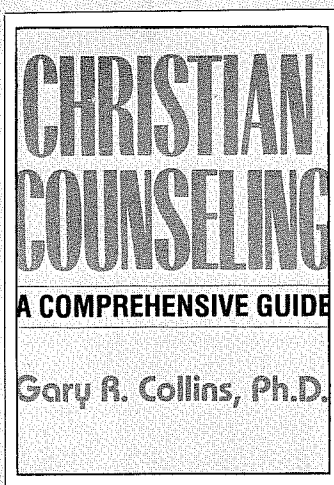
Reviewed by Ronald Hawkins,
Professor of Pastoral Counseling
at Liberty Baptist Seminary,
Lynchburg, Virginia.

Christian counselors have expressed the need for practical guidance and Gary Collins, in *Christian Counseling: A Comprehensive Guide*, helps to fulfill this need. The Christian counselor will find a variety of problems discussed in helpful fashion in this book.

The book opens with a discussion of four broad issues in counseling today: the issues of the relationships between counseling and the church, the heart of the counseling situation, the counselor and counseling, and the crisis in counseling. A minor problem in the order and logic of the book emerges here. The crisis in counseling turns out to be a discussion of "crisis counseling," rather than of the various problems that face the counselor who desires to be Christian in the counseling arena. This discussion of crisis counseling would have fit better in the body of the book, perhaps under other issues. The emphasis on the church as a healing community cannot be made too often and this emphasis is made repeatedly in the book. Yet there is the need to balance that ministry of healing with the ministry of exhortation and confrontation, and that emphasis is not always as readily apparent.

It is a formidable task to outline the core of counseling in a mere 11

pages, yet Collins undertakes the task. The sensitive treatment of such issues as counselor motivation, sexuality, and "burn-out" will prove particularly helpful.



The next five sections are of uneven value. There is a general discussion of anxiety, loneliness, depression, anger, and guilt. The discussion on anxiety is too simplistic to be really helpful, as is the treatment of prevention. Several emphases are helpful. The emphasis on the potential for good in anger is a needed emphasis. This could have been strengthened if specific areas for proper expression of godly anger had been cited. The use of the biblical concept of constructive sorrow to distinguish between proper and improper guilt is also helpful. A paucity of biblical terminology and an abundance of psychological jargon fills this section.

There is an internal inconsistency in the section on guilt, citing opposing authorities such as Menninger and Bruce Narramore, whose emphases are not complementary but antithetical. In the

end the issue of guilt must revolve around the principle of original sin and the overarching tendency of man to do that which is morally reprehensible to God. This moral depravity always produces "subjective guilt," which leads to an encounter with "objective guilt." Both "guilts" are weapons in the divine arsenal to bring men to God. They are in reality not two different kinds of guilt but different facets of the guilt that leads men to the need for, and experience of, forgiveness.

The Footnotes and Bibliographies are helpful in these sections. The interested reader will find an abundance of material to enable him to build on what is given in the book.

The next five sections on singleness, choosing a mate, preparing for marriage, marital problems, and divorce and remarriage are of great practical value for the counselor and Christian educator. The highly readable format and practical content make these sections excellent handouts. There is little in this section on remarriage. To suggest that mate selection for the divorced is generally synonymous with mate selection for the never-marrieds is to drastically understate the needs of the divorced.

The next section attempts to deal with family developmental issues. There is a good, even treatment of the various stages of childhood, adolescence, and middle age.

The section on sex and interpersonal issues is well done. The tendency to equate sex with *doing* instead of *being* is a weakness in the section. Citations of conflicting authorities abound in this book and are merely given, leaving value judgment to the reader. The treat

ment on homosexuality is helpful but weak in terms of its interaction with recent materials. The author neither cites nor evaluates any of the more recent material by geneticists like Money and Ehrhardt at Johns Hopkins.

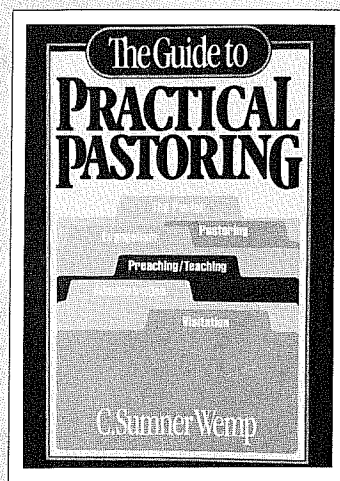
This is an excellent guidebook for the beginning pastoral counselor. The practical guidelines will serve to move the beginning counselor through the murky waters of uncertainty. This book is just one part of a larger resource packet called *The Christian Counselor's Library*.

The Guide to Practical Pastoring
by C. Sumner Wemp
Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982,
279 pp., \$14.95

Reviewed by Paul R. Fink, Professor of Pastoral Ministry at Liberty Baptist College, Lynchburg, Virginia

Drawing upon his many years of experience, C. Sumner Wemp, Vice-president of Spiritual Affairs at Liberty Baptist College, has written a book that delivers what its title promises—a guide to *practical* pastoring. It will be particularly helpful to the pastor who has not had the opportunity for formal training in a college or seminary. Even those with formal education will find helpful suggestions that will make them more efficient and effective in their ministries. The book deals with four areas: (1) The Pastor, (2) Pastoring, (3) Evangelism, and (4) Preaching and Teaching. In each area, Sumner Wemp has drawn upon his experience as a pastor and a teacher of pastors to provide helps and suggestions for pastors who are looking for new and alternate ideas.

In some ways, Wemp's book is a handbook, for he offers suggested forms for ordination services, weddings, funerals, child dedications, deacon ordinations, baptisms, commissioning of missionaries, and other special services. This will be especially helpful



to the neophyte pastor who, when faced with these situations, wonders how they should be conducted. Wemp gives helpful guidelines that can be tailored to suit individual needs and likes.

Wemp's book should be a help to those who teach pastoral theology in colleges and seminaries. It discusses many areas of pastoring that all too frequently are not covered in pastoral theology classrooms.

An added benefit to this book is the Appendix on "The Pastor's Wife" by the author's wife, Celeste, to whom the book is dedicated. Dr. Wemp calls her his "angel," "godly helper," and an "excellent example." This Appendix reminds both the pastor and his wife of the high calling of the pastor's wife.

In reading the book one can be moved to thanksgiving for two things: (1) the rich and varied experience that God has given His servant and (2) His servant's effort to share the benefit of his experience with others.

Free to Stay at Home

by Marilee Horton
Word Books, 1982, 173 pp.,
\$8.95

Reviewed by Lorna Walker Dobson

Through her own struggle and spiritual growth, and later a

ministry to women, Marilee Horton realized a need for older women to teach younger women, particularly in the area of deciding whether to stay at home or work outside the home. The book is based on her realization that when a mother has the opportunity or freedom to stay and be a "keeper" of the home, there are worthwhile long-term benefits for herself and her family. The author is a grandmother who held good jobs during the early years of her marriage but chose some 16 years ago to stay home because she felt it was God's will. She feels that sharing her experiences with younger women will help them consider the consequences of delegating the rearing of their families to others.

Mrs. Horton's research—from constitutional rights and laws for the family, Christian publications, women's magazines, secular books on families of the present and future, and newspaper articles—enhances the easy readability of the book. Her frequent use of the Scriptures indicates that she is a student of the Word who can apply it in a practical way without coming across as "preachy." She does include a clear presentation of the gospel, which makes the book complete for any reader who may not be a Christian.

The book touches every area of family life—the husband/wife relationship, money, children (from infancy to parenthood) and their relationship to the mother. However, the book focuses on the "female factor," though clearly not the head of the home, the most important person.

The author feels an urgency to convey to women that there is an "energetic effort being spent on deleting the traditional roles of mother and homemaker from textbooks, television, and movies." She is "deeply hurt that so many people would consider what [she does] as worthless," when in reality it is "vitally important." Further, she states that "we must preserve, as the norm, the traditional roles of mother as nurturer, and father as