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Editor's Foreword

It is altogether fitting that on the fortieth anniversary of its original publication, Dr. Adams's classic work *Ready to Restore* is being produced by P&R Publishing in a new edition. The ten years following the publication of his groundbreaking book, *Competent to Counsel*, were breathless for Dr. Adams. The decade saw the explosive growth of the modern biblical counseling movement, the publication of twenty more books from his pen, and the establishment of the National Association of Nouthetic Counselors (now the Association of Certified Biblical Counselors). During this time, Dr. Adams traveled and lectured worldwide, taught at several seminaries, and moved his family to rural Georgia.

By the end of the decade, the movement had grown exponentially, and Dr. Adams concluded it would be wise for him to produce a concise summary of the basic concepts of nouthetic counseling that would be useful for both the classroom and individual study.

Although this is a new edition, the text remains much the same as the original. The changes are primarily cosmetic with the new interior design. I found a few typos and archaic expressions to correct, but these are still Jay Adams's words. The primary revision occurs in chapter 16. There Dr. Adams urged his readers to continue to grow as counselors and listed a number of resources that

students could obtain to continue their study. Those resources, however, consisted of a number of books that are now out of print and cassette tapes (remember those?) that could be ordered from entities that no longer exist.

Chapter 16 now lists resources for continued study that are easily accessible to the student of counseling today. We begin by listing the works of Dr. Adams himself, most of which were not yet written when this book first appeared. Then we have compiled an admittedly subjective list of the best helps written by men and women Dr. Adams knew and trusted.

It is our prayer that even now, after Dr. Adams's faith has been made sight, this significant book will receive again the wide readership it enjoyed when it was first published forty years ago.

Donn R. Arms

Preface

All Christians must counsel; I have shown this in *Competent to Counsel* and in *The Big Umbrella*. Again, in chapter one of this book I shall investigate that subject in a slightly different way. Since it is true that every Christian must counsel, it is important for those of us who have been involved in doing and teaching Christian counseling to provide help in a form that is both simple and nontechnical, and yet, at the same time, biblical and fairly comprehensive. That is a difficult balance to achieve, I recognize, but it is precisely what is needed. This book is my attempt to meet that need.

But before proceeding further, let me say two things plainly:

First, reading this book will not itself make you a good counselor. My hope, nevertheless, is that it will get you started in the right direction and that it will assist you in becoming much more effective. The application of biblical principles, prayerfully perfected through persistent practice, is required; the study of a book alone will not do the job. What I have in mind in writing this book is to acquaint you with a number of these principles, and to guide you in putting them into practice. But I cannot do for you what you, in prayerful, obedient practice must do before God and your neighbor by yourself.

Second, though this book is fairly comprehensive in its scope,

necessarily many areas had to be omitted in order to make it simple and easy for laymen to use as a *beginning* textbook. That means that I have by-passed many details and have tried to keep from delving into any subject too deeply.¹ But unlike many simple books, this one is neither simplistic nor superficial. Everything in it is the fruit of arduous Bible study as well as a long and successful ministry of the Word in counseling. I have made every effort to produce a book that is free of all the unnecessary complications of technical jargon and tedious argumentation, but (at the same time) preserves and presents a true picture of Christian counseling in a coherent and systemic way. The book is almost entirely free of polemic.

Well, then, if that is the sort of book that you are now about to study, how can you use it most profitably?

Let me suggest one or two ways in which you may do so. First, it may be used as a textbook in Bible colleges, churches, Bible study groups, prayer meetings or older youth groups. The content, scope, format, and language have been designed for such use. In the less formal contexts one way to structure the class would be for the teacher to assign a chapter a week for each member to read prior to attending a seminar based on that reading. He should ask each student to write out observations and questions that the reading occasioned to be presented during the seminar. When these are presented, they may be discussed. Those questions which are not adequately answered should be referred to four persons who have purchased a copy of one of my four more comprehensive books mentioned in footnote number one. During the following week, these four persons may look up answers in these books and report on their findings at the next seminar. This procedure will acquaint the class with the existence of other, more

1. For more depth and detail, see my other books, especially *Competent to Counsel*, *The Christian Counselor's Manual*, *Theology of Christian Counseling*, and *How to Help People Change*.

in-depth treatments of each subject. The seminar leader should have his own copy of the four books and ought to have read the materials in all of them that are pertinent to the discussion at the upcoming seminar. Involved in the seminar discussion ought to be a number of what-if questions, raised by individuals, or by the class, to which the whole body addresses itself. These questions ought to be concerned with the practical outworking of the biblical principles and techniques discovered in reading as they may be applied under various circumstances to many different counseling cases. Persons in the seminar may wish to share counseling problems that they have encountered to which the chapter under discussion applies (the leader should postpone questions about matters that will be taken up in later chapters²). In sharing actual experiences, the leader *must* make it clear that all cases must be “flattened out.” A case is flattened out when *all identifying factors* (names, dates, places, unusual characteristics, etc.) are omitted. The leader must *zealously cut off any violations of this inflexible rule*. He should break in on any account that might even *tend* to identify someone by cheerfully reminding the group of the rule. *This rule must be observed strictly*. Remember, Proverbs warns continually against gossip; James 4:11 may be read and explained along with passages from the end of Ephesians 4, when first laying down the rule prior to the first discussion period. Some groups may prefer to use role plays instead of permitting discussion of actual cases. Others may wish to do both. For this purpose, a book containing 140 counseling role-play situations has been prepared; it is entitled, *The Christian Counselor’s Casebook*. At the conclusion of each seminar the seminar secretary³ should record conclusions reached by the group in a “Book of Conclusions.” These short, one-sentence conclusions should be agreed upon by the group *as*

2. These may be written in a seminar agenda book for later reference. A secretary should be appointed to write out questions and be responsible for the book.

3. See previous footnote.

a whole. At the close of the course, copies of the book should be made available to each member of the seminar.

Second, in a more formal school situation many of the procedures mentioned above might also be followed. But, in addition, the teacher may wish to assign every member *one* of the four books previously mentioned as required out-of-class reading. A term paper, reporting on that reading, plus the application of principles learned from it to one or more of the problems raised in class may be required.

Of course, there are many variations on these themes. But, if the work done attempts to supplement the emphases and materials in the book by too heavy a dependence on outside sources it will tend to defeat the design of the book. It would be better, in cases where greater scope and depth is desired, to use *A Theology of Christian Counseling*⁴ plus one or more of the other three books as classroom texts.

Naturally, this book may be used for individual study as well.

I know that there is a great need for such a volume as this one; hundreds of Christian laymen, as well as their pastors, have asked me for it. In order to satisfy this need, to build up Christ's church and to honor Him as her Lord, I offer it for whatever purposes He may see fit to use it.

Jay E. Adams
The Millhouse
Juliette, Georgia
1980

4. Jay E. Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling: More Than Redemption* (1979; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986).

1

Who Should Counsel?

Is Christian counseling the work of a highly specialized group of persons? Does it belong to pastors and elders of the church alone? What of everyday man or woman in the pew Christians; do they too have a ministry of counseling to which God has called them as laymen? I am asked these, and dozens of similar questions that grow out of them, almost every week of the year.

The answer is simple, yet profound: God calls *every* Christian to counsel some people, somewhere, at some time about something, but He does not call him to counsel every person, under every situation, at all times about everything. I shall try to explain this statement in the rest of this chapter. In Galatians 6:1 we read: “Brothers, even if a person is caught in some trespass, you who have the Spirit should restore him in a spirit of meekness, watching out for yourself so that you won’t be tempted too.” To that verse we must add Romans 15:14: “I myself am convinced about you, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and competent to counsel one another,” and Colossians 3:16: “Let Christ’s Word dwell in you richly, as you teach and counsel yourselves with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with grace in your hearts toward God.”

These verses plainly place all Christians (all who “have the Spirit”) squarely in the business of counseling.

The command is clear: we all must “restore” any brothers or sisters whom God providentially places in our pathway day by day. But, in the same breath, there are several important considerations that we must mention. To fail to do so will leave a distorted impression of what God requires.

First, note the word *restore*. This word is important. The original Greek word (the New Testament was written in Greek) was used by fishermen and by physicians when they described the mending of fishnets and the setting of fractures. They both called their work “restoration.” A torn net is of little or no value; the fish easily slip through and are lost. Likewise, broken bones in an arm make it useless until they are set. But when nets are repaired and bones have been mended, we say that they have been *restored to their former use*.

After restoration, the net or the limb is once more capable of functioning as it should. That, precisely, is the goal of Christian counseling that is set forth in Galatians 6:1. By bearing the burden of counseling those in need (and it is a burden to counsel) one seeks to restore an erring brother or sister to usefulness in Christ’s church to his honor and their benefit (see Gal. 6:2, 5). The counselor does not assume his brother’s responsibilities for him (that isn’t what v. 2 is saying); rather, he bears the burden of his brother’s need for counsel *so that* the brother himself may shoulder his responsibilities (v. 5). That is restoring: restoring another to a place of usefulness in the Lord’s church.

Second, note that the Christian layman himself is to do this restoring. He is not told to refer the brother or sister who needs counseling to the pastor or to the elders of the church. Rather, restoration is his obligation. Presumably, what Paul is saying is that to have the Spirit basically qualifies one Christian to assist another. The fact of the Spirit’s presence makes it not only possible but proper for one to initiate and to enter into the restoration (or counseling) process. That does not mean that one who gets stuck

at some point or other in the course of counseling may not seek the help of another Christian;¹ of course he may. But it does mean that he may not use referral as a means of shirking his own personal responsibilities in the matter. He must remember that God providentially placed the erring Christian in his pathway for him to minister to. Unlike the priest and Levite, he may not pass by on the other side. God requires all of us in such situations to become good Samaritans, pouring oil on the soul at our own expense.

If at some point referral to a pastor or to an elder becomes necessary, it is wise to refer not only the counselee, but also yourself. When you do, you will learn what you didn't know so that, in the future, you will be able to handle the same sort of problem yourself. Moreover, you may be able to offer the counselor invaluable information.

Third, notice also that it is those whom God has providentially placed in your pathway that you are commanded to restore. He has *not* called you to a ministry of *searching out* potential counseling cases (there is hardly any need for that; bodies are strewn all over your Jericho road!). The layman who goes *looking* for problems among his fellow Christians sins; he becomes a "busybody" (2 Thess. 3:11). His task is to do good *as the opportunity arises* (Gal. 6:10); i.e., as God places persons in his way. This important qualification means that laymen are called to an informal ministry of counseling. Counseling is but an *occasional* part of the task of being a Christian. Because they have the Spirit, they are capable of doing such informal counseling as they are called upon to do in the everyday course of their life's activities. But they are *not* called to a formal ministry of counseling as a part of their *life calling*. That task is given to specially gifted men who are ordained (appointed) to that task as teaching and ruling elders who are required to shepherd God's flock.

1. And, of course, if the one needing counseling refuses it, the concerned party may be obligated to call on the elders for help.

To these official church counselors, who are required by God to counsel as a part of their office (or work), God has given a heavier burden and a broader authority that corresponds to it. As a result, they must do what the layman is forbidden to do: they must search out problems among the members of the church in order to nip them in the bud. As shepherds they are required not only to handle the problems that they stumble over along life's road, they must also keep watch over the souls (lives) of each member: "Obey your leaders and submit to them. They are keeping watch over you as men who will have to give an account. Obey so that they may do this with joy and not as a burden, since that wouldn't be to your advantage" (Heb. 13:17). The Greek word in that verse translated "keeping watch" means to "remain awake" and to "be alert" to problems that may arise. "Moreover, laymen may counsel at the second level of the reconciliation/ discipline process (Matt. 18:16) but not at the third (Matt. 18:17–20; though they may be witnesses at that level if they have participated in unsuccessful counseling at the second level). At the third level, the officers, representing" the whole church, forgive or excommunicate using the keys for binding and loosing (vv. 8–20). This third level, disciplinary type of counseling belongs to the "two or three" elders who are called to administer it.

While the scope, and to some extent the type, of counseling that Christian laymen do is limited, it still encompasses a large (perhaps the largest) amount of the counseling that is done in the church. Much of the third level counseling in which elders are now engaged would not have to be done if faithful, instructed laymen had known of their responsibility to counsel and had assumed it. Many of the "one another" passages in the New Testament pertain in some way to lay counseling.²

Because laymen who take the biblical commands to counsel seriously have such a far-reaching and important responsibility,

2. A good assignment for classes would be to locate, study, and report on these passages.

they should study how to do so most effectively. After all, good counsel can help another immensely; poor counsel can be detrimental. The lives of brothers and sisters are at stake, as well as the welfare of Christ's church and the honor of his Name. Therefore, the command to restore must not be taken lightly.

To help you counsel better, in a more biblical way, in the next chapter we shall note some of the proper goals and attitudes that God says must accompany Christian counseling.