

Counsel for Couples: A Biblical and Practical Guide for Marriage Counseling, by Jonathan D. Holmes. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019. 288 pp. \$22.99.

The author, pastor of counseling at Parkside Church in Ohio as well as executive director of Fieldstone Counseling, also serves as council board member for the Biblical Counseling Coalition. He writes from a strong commitment to help couples find help for their struggles.

Those who counsel married couples understand the crucial and often unmet needs in every church. But who is sufficient to shepherd couples through the deep waters of marital challenge? Holmes intentionally writes to train pastors and counselors to help couples with troubled marriages. He says, "It is a book written by an ordinary pastor for other ordinary pastors and counselors who are faithfully seeking to love and shepherd the people God has entrusted to them" (17). In the opinion of this reviewer, the author makes good on his commitment.

Who else is the book's intended audience? The author writes not only for pastors and biblical counselors, but also couples in crisis (19). To the latter group, the author says, "The content in each chapter will provide principles you can take to heart and apply to your marriage" (19). The author should be commended for undertaking such an ambitious goal in addressing two audiences, particularly when one is the caregiver, and the other, the cared-for.

The book is divided into two main parts. Part 1 treats the "Basics of Counseling Couples," and Part 2, "Specific Issues You Will Face in Marriage Counseling." Topics in both sections are select. The author makes no pretense to offering a detailed and complete method for counseling couples or a comprehensive list of couples' issues. Yet he does add a welcome discussion, "Caring for the Counselor" (269–80). The one who counsels couples is Holmes's fourth audience. Herein the author reminds us critically that helping couples heal their marriages can take a heavy toll on the counselor, particularly a pastor solely responsible for shepherding oversight of a local church.

Why does counseling couples require special attention? Many pastors feel ill-equipped to handle the challenges that arise when a couple is going through marital difficulties. This may lead pastors to avoid marriage counseling altogether. Instead of shepherding couples through their marriage challenges, they might choose to make referrals to "professional" counselors. To these pastors, Holmes extends an invitation to seek training in biblical counseling (BC) which he defines as simply "taking the truths of God's Word and speaking them in love in the context of a personal relationship with a goal of growing in godliness" (34). Some prefer to call BC soul care, spiritual care, or simply biblical discipleship. Holmes book is a tool that fits in a framework of spiritual growth, starting with salvation in Christ.

The book is helpful and clearly written. A well-trained and seasoned marriage counsellor not only presents you with a method for shepherding couples during some of their darkest hours, but also offers a

treatment for some of the most challenging issues facing married couples. Entire families and their homes are at stake; consequently, the author addresses the topic with a healthy measure of urgency.

I would like to offer several minor suggestions for future revisions of this book. A Scripture index would make the work more accessible for study, particularly for couples whose counselor assigns them homework in passages addressing couples' issues.

Second, no single book can effectively treat all possible challenge to couples. But the absence of any comment about the role of disability in marriages is worth noting. One in seven spouses with disabilities or children with disabilities globally, experience disability trauma that usually does not go away. At the other end of life, those of us who live to be 80 years old will have a fifty percent chance of developing a disabling condition. In short, disability reaches deeply to the hearts of couples. Perhaps a future edition of the book could include basic guidance for couples facing the unique challenges of disability, particularly those whose newborns' have just received a disability diagnosis. Ernie Baker's, *Disability Pressures Our Marriage* (Shepherd Press, 2019) models this counseling for couples. This suggestion made, Holmes's suggestion of audio-taped Scripture for a husband who, due to dyslexia, was unable to read Scripture for his counseling homework was excellent (46–47).

We are indebted to Jonathan Holmes for producing a tool that can help meet the specific needs of couples. This biblical and practical guide is a must read, particularly for pastors who serve as the only pastoral staff member in a local church. I highly recommend this outstanding new counseling book and look forward to reading future counseling publications by Jonathan Holmes.

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Every Believer Confident: Apologetics for the Ordinary Christian, by Mark J. Farnham. Sisters, OR: Deep River Books, 2019. 206 pp. \$14.99.

Serious students of apologetics are aware of the trouble that presuppositional apologists (a.k.a. *transcendental*, *covenantal*, or *worldview* apologists) have had rendering practical their system of apologetics. Presuppositional apologetics does not reduce easily to evangelistic monologues that can be memorized, so it can be difficult, especially for new believers, to master the approach. It is the apologetic method, so it would seem, of Christian elites and philosophers; a method intellectually out of reach for "ordinary Christians" or, worse, an example of the very sorts of intellectual posturing that Paul warns us to avoid (e.g., 1 Cor 1:18–2:5).

Those who have drunk deeply at Van Til's well have found little relief in his publications. As Bill Edgar notes in his introduction to the