

# “Elders and Counseling” (week #4)

By Prof. B. Gritters

Sponsored by Hudsonville PRC Consistory

Sunday, 2PM, October 7, 14, 21, **November 4**

## Class Overview:

Week #1 (Oct 7): The *Need for* and the *Ability of* Others (elders especially) to Help Pastors in Counseling

1. Pastors are not able to handle all the counseling needs in a church. Statistics in the PRC.
2. Elders are called to do this work, but are qualified for it, too. The congregation must learn this.
3. Scripture teaches that all the members have a “competency to counsel.” If so, elders certainly do.
4. How, specifically, can the elders take on this work in their office?
  - a. Elderly, shut-ins, etc.
  - b. Counseling with the minister
  - c. Supervising the counseling done by professionals

Week #2 (Oct 14): The *Elements* of a Good Counseling Session/Visit

1. How to schedule meetings; how often to meet.
2. An outline of any visit should include.... How to make an agenda.
3. The absolute necessity of using Scripture. And how to use it.
4. Developing the skill to listen in order to make judgments. Taking notes....
5. Giving assignments to the members we counsel.
6. Footnote: May an elder counsel a woman? Alone?

Week #3 (Oct 21): *Change* in Counseling: The Primary (and Hopeful!) Doctrine of *Conversion*

1. Most of counseling involves dealing with problems that require *change*...
2. The doctrinal foundation of our approach to change.
3. Essential elements from LD 33.
4. Requiring change and growth, “more and more.”
5. When to bring to the body of the elders for discipline?

Week #4: (**Nov 4**): *Marriages*: Problems & Prevention

This is the final week. Hearty thanks to Hudsonville PRC Consistory for sponsoring these classes. May God bless the work of elders in ministering the Word to the people of God in their troubles.

# ***“Elders and Counseling” (Week #4)***

*(Outline Notes)*

Prof. B. Gritters

## ***Week #4: Marriage: Problems and Prevention***

Introduction:

- A. One of the most important areas for elders and ministers to counsel. For God’s glory!
- B. Thankful for what we have; let us press on to grow here, too.

## ***Marriage: Problems and Prevention***

### **I. Prevention** (need here is self-evident; compare to doctors, dentists)

- A. First, encourage the minister to make applications to marriages in all his preaching/teaching
  
- B. Second, the elders may consider participating directly in pre-marriage counseling
  - 1. What pre-marriage counseling is done? Broader than we may first imagine.
  
  - 2. What parts could elders (deacons) participate in? Family worship; family finance.
  
  - 3. Advantages:
- C. Third, plan 2 “post-marriage” counseling visits.
  - 1. When/why:
  
  - 2. What: a) Family worship; b) bed-time prayers; c) great joys; d) **\*\*areas needing improvement\*\***
  
- D. Fourth, train yourselves to watch for problems. Be alert, like a good shepherd.

### **II. Problems** (the needs here will press upon you)

- A. FIRST, SOME FORMAL MATTERS:
  - 1. Should elders deal with these, or the minister?
  - 2. Meet with the couple separately or together?
  - 3. How often?
  
- B. DEAL WITH COUPLES ON TWO LEVELS: GENERAL *PRINCIPLES*, AND SPECIFIC *PROBLEMS*
  - 1. General principles

- a. Use Scripture: Matt 19:4; Eph. 5; Malachi 2:14
- b. Use Wayne Mack or Jay Adams (see bibliography)
- c. Give assignments

2. Specific problems

- a. First, determine the problems (key text: James 5:16)

- b. Second, deal with them.

C. FINALLY, A COUPLE OF VITAL MATTERS TO KEEP IN MIND:

1. The damage done to the children. Minister to the children!! (perhaps parents of the couple, too)
2. Listen well. Tempted to speak too much. Listen and analyze before giving cures.
3. Most importantly, pray!! (*for* the couple, *with* the couple, and the couple *themselves*)

## **Bibliography**

### **REGARDING MARRIAGE AND PRE-MARRIAGE COUNSELING**

#### **GENERAL:**

- Jay Adams, *Christian Living in the Home*
- Jay Adams, *Shepherding God's Flock* (pp. 234-253)
- David Engelsma, *Marriage: The Mystery...*
- Barrett Gritters, (pamphlet), *The Family: Foundations are Shaking* (brief, many subjects, including family worship)
- C. Hanko, *Leaving Father and Mother: Biblical Courtship and Marriage*.
- Wayne Mack, *Strengthening Your Marriage* (nice exercises included); better is the newer, *Your Family, God's Way*

#### **SPECIFIC TOPICS:**

##### **Place of Husband, Wife**

- Elizabeth Elliot, *Let Me Be A Woman*
- Elizabeth Elliot, *Mark of a Man* (all of Elliot's works are worthwhile)

##### **Sex and/or Birth Control:**

- J. Adams, *Christian Counseling Manual*, pp. 391-399.
- Randy Alcorn, *Does the Birth Control Pill Cause Abortions?*
- Joanne E. DeJonge, *Sexuality and the Young Christian*.
- D. Engelsma, *Better to Marry: Sex and Marriage in I Cor 6,7*
- Norval Geldenhuys, *The Intimate Life* (out of print, but available) Esp. ch. 3, "Love's High Places."
- J. Kortering, "Children, An Heritage of the Lord," in *The SB* (48:256).
- Mary Pride, *The Way Home*, pp. 51-58; interesting medical information re Birth Control

##### **Child-Rearing and Discipline** (many; ask around; opinions vary)

- Gertrude Hoeksema, *Peaceable Fruit* (somewhat idealistic, but very helpful descriptions of the unique characteristics of children at all the various ages)
- Bruce Ray, *Withhold Not Correction* (nice alternative to Dobson's *Dare to Discipline*)
- Tedd Tripp, *Shepherding a Child's Heart*

##### **Finance:**

- Larry Burkett, *The Complete Guide to Managing Your Money*; and tape series, etc.
- Howard Dayton, *Your Money Counts* (nice, brief, Christian approach)
- Dave Ramsey, Various books on finances.

## ***Short Bibliography***

### **REGARDING COUNSELING MARRIAGE PROBLEMS**

- A. **JAY ADAMS** (*Many of Adams' books have sections regarding marriage problems*)
  - 1. Book: *Solving Marriage Problems*.
  - 2. Pamphlet: *What Do You Do When Your Marriage Goes Sour?*
  
- B. **WAYNE MACK** (Adams' disciple)
  - 1. *A Homework Manual for Biblical Living*, volume 2, *Family and Marital Problems*.
  - 2. *Strengthening Your Marriage* (specifically about marriage); *Your Family, God's Way*
  
- C. **OTHERS:**
  - 1. Rev. A. **denHartog**, "Counseling Those with Marriage Problems," (in *SB* 70:183,207).
  - 2. **Dave Carder**: *Torn Asunder: Recovering from Extramarital Affairs*
  - 3. **Ken Sande**, *The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict* (useful also for other conflicts besides marriage problems)

*Note: There are many other resources available on this subject. A pastor or elder is best served by having a few, good books and articles that he can master, rather than so many he doesn't know where to begin. The class notes, combined with the above literature, should give a good foundation to begin bringing the Word to the people of God with troubled marriages. From here, be a good student of the subject, and grow by continual reading and discussion with other elders and pastors.*