

“What Do We Do at the Little Brick House?”

I and II Timothy

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I have much to be thankful for and it goes without saying that this is an emotional evening. No one is more surprised that I have been here 20 years than I am. In most of my career I would spend 4 to 7 years there and then the Lord would move me onto something else. When I came to town to be examined as pastor for the church down in Knollwood, Tom Harris and Frank Barker came to me and said “We want you to teach at Seminary.” So I got two jobs the day I came to town. I taught for three years at BTS (Briarwood Theological Seminary) and became well acquainted with Briarwood in the process. That was the connection that led to my coming here to Briarwood 20 years ago.

Earlier this week I asked myself the question, ‘How did I get here?’ While there are a lot of pieces to that answer there are three key ones that go way back, long before perhaps Briarwood existed. One was my mother’s prayers and I’d love to tell you that story because it’s very fascinating but it would take way too long. The other two pieces are actually parts of poems. In my first college speech class I was assigned to memorize and recite the poem ‘Lord, speak to me that I may speak.’ In the process God spoke to me.

There is a hymn titled *O Teach Me Lord, that I May Teach* that says;

*O teach me, Lord, that I may teach  
The precious things Thou dost impart;  
And wing my words, that they may reach  
The hidden depths of many a heart,  
The hidden depths of many a heart.*

The struck me with that hymn and that became the prayer of my heart. A little over a year into the time I became a Christian and that was my freshman year in college.

There was another chorus that we sang that was based on C.T. Studds poem *Only One Life Twill Soon Be Past* and that’s the third little piece. The last line of that poem has reverberated in my mind over and over again and again over the years. The last line says ‘only what’s done for Christ will last.’

Recently I heard a man’s testimony at the Presbytery and I heard some of those same kinds of what seems to be those inconsequential strains in life, yet God used them to tug at his heart just like God used those things to tug at my heart. There have been a lot of things in-between but one of them would have been Tom Cheely. My third year at Sylacauga, Tom Cheely came to me and asked me if I would go teach in Australia at the college we were working with at the time. We said we would go and then he came back a little later and said ‘I need you to go to New Zealand too.’ We said okay, so my wife, myself, Dave Matthews and his wife Betty, who we only knew six months at that time went to New Zealand and share a two bedroom, one bathroom apartment for eight days. I’m happy to tell you we have become very good friends.

There is so much I can thank the Lord for in bringing me here. There are the people, the opportunities to minister to individual hearts, to see marriages become whole, to see individuals overcome anxiety and depression, to see all that in people in the community and not just in the church because Briarwood sponsored this opportunity and I have had the privilege of teaching

biblical counseling on four continents because of Briarwood. So I thank you very much for those opportunities.

My study is titled 'What do we do at the little brick house?' I find in conversations with people that they are not sure what we do at that little brick house on the Briarwood property. So I thought this would be an opportunity to explore that a little bit with you from God's Word, also to begin a transition to my successor, to encourage you to engage with him and to become a part of that counseling ministry in the days to come. I have chosen a large text for this study – I and II Timothy. I won't try to cover it all but I chose those two books because they are practical theology. They are books that are addressed to a young pastor who is dealing with a lot of people problems and that's what we do in counseling. We deal with people problems.

Since I'm constrained by time I'm going to state an assumption behind this message and that is in biblical counseling our task is the same task that Paul assigned to Timothy. Paul dispatched him to deal with people problems – problems of living. They were problems that took place in all different cultural contexts. In the context where he was working the culture was dominated by the idol worship of Diana and all the industries that went along with that. The other thing that was dominate in that culture was an expanding knowledge base. For three hundred plus years the Greek philosophers had been exploring and understanding the world and creating a language that would adapt to that, creating people that would ask questions and adapt to that as well. Paul takes opportunity to engage with that in Acts 17.

For us the influence of culture is illustrated by the normalization of deconstructed human sexuality. It is all around us for it is a dominate theme in our culture and will become a more dominate theme in our culture. The other is the ever expanding knowledge we have in our faces every day. There is the amazing technology we have today from the phone to the computer. This has brought about a dehumanizing factor in our culture and a disconnectedness between people, particularly in families.

Not too long ago my wife and I were at a restaurant and I watched a family of four come in, a mom, dad and two teenage children. They sat down at their table and immediately they all had their heads in their phones. The waiter came, took their drink order and immediately their heads went back in their phones. The same thing happened when the waiter came to get their food order. A meal time is an incredible time for family communication and it is completely lost – disconnectedness, dehumanization. Our task as biblical counselors and Christians in general is to prayerfully discern the human condition behind our contemporary experience and then to skillfully implement in our age the model that Paul describe to Timothy.

So our 'Timothy assignment' can be found in I Timothy 1:5 which says *[5] The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.* In that same passage and other passages running throughout this book Paul gives seven charges to Timothy. He tells him to be a gatekeeper in I Timothy 1:3-4. He tells him to wage a good war in I Timothy 1:18-19. He tells him to pray for all people in I Timothy 2:1. He tells him to raise up leaders in II Timothy 2:2 and in I Timothy 3. He commands him to teach and prescribe what Paul has laid out for them in I Timothy 4:11-12. He challenges him to practice fleeing from sexual youthful lust and instead pursuing godliness in I Timothy 6:11-12 and he tells him to preach the Word in II Timothy 4:2, 3, 16, and 17.

Our counseling team at the Altadena House understands these assignments in their many dimensions. For example one of our couples doing premarital counseling may exercise a gatekeeping challenge by indicating to a young couple that they need to stop practicing intimacy, repent and practice purity until the wedding night. Our team is about raising up leaders. We

teach, mentor and model counseling. I have taught a lay counseling class for 20 years now but my team is intricately involved in that teaching as well. Carol and I do role plays to teach. We have a lot of fun doing it but it's very serious and it really helps the people in the class grasp what we are trying to communicate. Dr. Cloud will continue that practice. His style may differ but his content and methodology will be the same because he is committed to biblical counseling.

Our team preaches the Word in a variety of ways. From individual counseling to small group that deal with such issues relating to a prodigal child or handling emotions when a child declares they have become a homosexual or working through the addiction of pornography or parenting your parents or managing boomerang children. All of those are titles of small groups that we have run from time to time and our lay people do a lot of those things. All the assignments that I've mentioned and others Paul delineates in one way or another in his teaching to Timothy. We fulfill those in our counseling ministry.

Paul was also concerned for the way Timothy delivers these messages and carries out these assignments. His persona was important. That's why he says what he does in I Timothy 1:5 which I read a few moments ago; *[5] The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.* Paul outlines these two characteristics that are important for Timothy and they are important for us. They are love and patience. Love is to come from a pure heart, a heart that is driven by the motivation to glorify God and to benefit others. Also this is to come from a good conscience; a person who is living what he teaches and counsels others.

Last week I received a sad email. I supervise some people who work on their certification for ACDC and one woman I was mentoring emailed me. She said 'I'm going to have to drop out because of my sin.' She was not able to go forward because she wasn't able to work from a good conscience because she was violating the very thing she was supposed to be counseling and teaching others not to do. The second characteristic that Paul emphasized to Timothy is patience. I have counted seven or eight different places where Paul in his letters speaks to the fact that we are to minister with patience. When you're doing the counseling ministry that is not always easy but that is what we're called to. Our team is not made up of perfect people but they are Godly people who have learned both from the study of Scripture and the school of hard knocks, how to extend grace and to live gracefully in the practice of biblical counseling.

So how do people get prepared for this ministry? Paul addresses that too in II Timothy 2:15 which says *[15] Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.* When you read different translations on this verse you get a little bit different flavor on it. Paul gives a command to study and when you look at it in the original language it is simply stated this way; if I were to give you the task to plow a field using this language structure that Paul uses here then I would say to you that I expect you to complete the task I told you to do. I would also be saying to you that I expect YOU to be involved in the process and not hand it off to someone else. It would be imperative. I expect you to get at it now, don't hesitate.

We also could translate it this way; be diligent in the study of the Bible. If you're going to do biblical counseling obviously you have to use your Bible. The purpose of the study that Paul lays out is to be approved of God in the way you live and in the way you minister. If you were sitting in my office from time to time you would hear some discussion from my counseling team. You may hear something like this; yesterday I had my quiet time and the Lord showed me

this and yesterday afternoon that was exactly what I needed to share in the counselee's life I was with. That's not just my experience that is my lay counseling team's experience. So, the result of study as Paul puts it, then in rightly dividing the Word of God. It results in understanding how the Word applies to life problems. To teach truth directly and correctly is rightly dividing the Word.

Our team has to be this way to get through the training they go through. They read books on counseling process. They read books on specific issues like grief, disappointment, depression and some more serious problems depending on what level of training they do, but they read these books through the grid of the Bible. That leads me to the next thing I want to mention in this study.

It is Timothy's resources and our resources. It says in II Timothy 3:16-17, *[16] All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, [17] that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.* All Scripture is the core resource that we work from. Why is that? It is due to three reasons. The Word of God teaches us who God is and if you think you can understand who you are without first knowing who God is then you're being foolish. I have a book I often have people read called The God You Can Know by Dan Dehaan. It is a lot like J. I. Packard's but it written at a senior high school level instead of at a graduate level but it is excellent. I have people read that because I find that even though we counsel people from great churches in the area people really do not understand the character of God. Therefore they can't understand who they are. The Bible is the only place that is trustworthy that you can go to find out who you are and that's where we go.

Thirdly, we go to the Scriptures to learn how live in a manner well pleasing to God. It's easy to live in a way that pleases yourself for a while but God has made us in such a way that it doesn't end up being easy after a while. When we go to the Bible to learn this we find out from other Scripture that even when life is difficult it's easier to live God's way than it is to live our own way. So the Word of God is our core because it is breathed out by God. Think of it this way. The same God that breathed out His breath into Adam and gave Adam life, breathed out His Word to bring life to us. Thus, it is from our core resource that we developed our methodology. We use the profitable Scripture to prepare our team for the challenges of the culture. We practice what Paul enjoins us to do in II Timothy 4:2 which says *[2] preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.*

I have quoted two verses from Timothy and don't know if you have noticed they are a little bit different. I read II Timothy 3:16 and then II Timothy 4:2. Paul basically says the same thing in these two passages but with a little bit different verbiage. In II Timothy 4:2 he talks about teach, rebuke, reprove and exhort. In II Timothy 3:16 he talks about teaching, reproof, correction and instruction. There is just a little bit different nuance in what he is saying but those four things basically make up the core methodology of what we do in biblical counseling. The teaching of the Word of God sets the framework for it helps us understand who God is, who we are, helps us see where we are off course, how to come back on course and helps us set up a structure whereby we begin to practice the way we should live with regularity.

The word instruction means training with structure. Therefore in biblical counseling we give a lot of homework because we get people working on building structure into their lives. Someone might think we just write out Scripture verses, dispense them as prescriptions and exhort people to do them but we don't do that because we practice this model with patience.

These are the core methodologies prescribed by Paul to Timothy but there are many other dimensions to the practice of biblical counseling. There are many people skills that Timothy acquired by walking with Paul, observing and watching his practice and also by listening to his teaching plus the teaching of other Apostles.

For example, speak the truth in love. Another example is be slow to speak and quick to hear. One thing I have to really stress with people of the counsel is to learn to use your ears. Learn to listen before you respond. Proverbs 18:13 makes that pretty clear when it says *[13] If one gives an answer before he hears, it is his folly and shame.* We need to do this for we are foolish if we don't listen before we speak. Now I'd like to draw this study to a conclusion.

What is the purpose of this instruction to Timothy? It is the pastoral task of discipleship with a major emphasis on biblical counseling that can be answered with a paraphrase of II Timothy 3:17. The man or woman of God may develop the aptitude, the inner character and the skill and knowledge of how to implement the truth to live consistent with a God prescribed manner of life. That is where we are headed. That's what we want to help people achieve and that is what we do at the little brick house.

Critics sometime question the long term viability or stability of biblical counseling when people turn around. I don't have the time to discuss all the reasoning behind that so I'll just close with a real case illustration of what God does through His servant, using the Word of God, patiently, lovingly walking through struggles with people. I won't be using the people's real names in this illustration.

John was a missionary. He came to see me 35 years ago. His mission board had ordered him home from the field and told him he could not return without personal and marriage counselling. He ended up at our counseling center where I was working with him. About two months into the counseling, I got a call from his wife about midnight one night. We lived out in the country at that time and one of the elders lived about a half mile up the road and he lived about a quarter of a mile away from the road. His wife said to me 'my husband is threatening suicide what do we do?' I called the elder that lived up the road and said 'Dan, put your pants on and meet out at the road. Don't ask any questions just come.' Dan was waiting for me, I picked him up and we drove to their apartment. I didn't know some things then that I should have known but I've known since.

I didn't call the police, I just went. It took me over an hour to talk him down. Finally he broke down and wept. He was repentant and his wife assured him that she loved him. We continued counselling for about another four months. At that point there had been an amazing turn around in his life and his wife's life plus their lives together. He asked me to write a letter to the mission board so I did and the mission board refused to accept him because I didn't have the credentials that they wanted me to have. So he decided to try another mission board. He was accepted by the other mission board and ended up going back to the mission field. He has been a missionary for 35 years. Last week I received an email from him. He told me his wife was undergoing serious chemo treatment and wanted me to pray for her. Most of his children are in the mission field some place. I don't know all of where they are all at but they are grown and serving the Lord. That is what biblical counselling is about. Praise the Lord for this is what we do at the little brick house.

The work is not finished. Dr. Cloud will need the support and the prayers that you have generously provided to me. He will need fresh recruits who are willing to invest time, effort and emotional energy to learn how to implement the sufficient Scriptures in the lives of hurting,

confused, depressed and angry people who come our way and to patiently love them through the struggles of life.

Before I pray I want to do a commercial for the discipleship, counseling and training seminar we do each summer here at Briarwood. It falls during the last two weekends in July. Look for brochures around the church and on the website. Consider preparing and becoming part of that team with Dr. Cloud. He is going to need you. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, You are a great and awesome God and Lord, we don't say that lightly. You have been immensely patient with me and You have taught me to be patient with others. You have been gracious and taught me Your Word. As I struggled years ago with how in the world I would take this Bible and make it real in people's lives and You have been faithful to teach me that. You have been faithful to enable me to teach others. What a privilege it is Lord for me to look out into this congregation and see some of those folks that we've trained and see from week to week how they are doing what You called us to do. Father, thank You that this church has supported this ministry, has encouraged this ministry and Lord, I pray that You keep us committed to this ministry. Bless Steven as he comes in and takes my place and takes us forward for years to come. Be gracious to us O Lord and honor Your Name in the process for we pray in Jesus' Name, Amen.

### Power Point

#### **Our (Timothy's) Assignment 1:4**

Be – Be a gate keeper 1:3-4

Wage – Wage the good war 1:18-19

Pray – Pray for all people 2:1

Raise up – Raise up leaders I Tim 3; 2 Tim 2:2; Titus 1:5

Command and teach – Command and teach Paul's instruction I Tim 4:11-16

Practice – Practice fleeing and pursuing I Tim 6:11-12

Preach – Preach the Word 2 Tim 4:2

#### **Our (Timothy's) Persona**

Characterized by love I Tim 2:5

Characterized by patience I Tim 4:2 (II Cor 12:12, Gal 5:22, Eph 4:2, Col 1:11, Col 3:12, I Tim 1:16, II Tim 3:10)

#### **Our (Timothy's) Preparation II Tim 2:15**

The Command

The Purpose

The Result

#### **Our (Timothy's) Resources II Tim 3:16a**

All Scripture is our core resource—It teaches us

Who God is

Who we are

How we can live in a manner well-pleasing to God

**IT is our core resource because:**

All Scripture is God breathed

**Our (Timothy's) Methodology – II Tim 3:16 & II Tim 4:1-5**

> Primary text for methodology (profitable sufficient Scripture)

> Practice the model of Biblical Counseling

Teach	Doctrine
Reprove	Reproof—based on teaching
Rebuke	Correct—redirecting to the teaching
Exhort	Instruction with structure (paideia)

> Patience in ministry to people

> And what is the purpose of this instruction to Timothy, this pastoral task of discipleship with a major aspect being biblical counseling?

That the man (or woman) of God may be fitted (developed with the aptitude) and equipped to practice every good work. [pás ("each, every") means "all" in the sense of "each (every) part that applies."

> My Paraphrase: (3:17)

That the man (or woman) of God may develop the aptitude (inner character) and skill (knowledge of how to implement truth) to live consistent with a God-prescribed manner of life.