

# Biblical Counseling

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[0:00] God's Word in 2 Timothy chapter 3. From time to time, we take breaks from our verse-by-verse exposition of the Scripture to help you understand why we do what we do as a church.

In fact, if you go on our website, you can find the category, why we do what we do, found there. So we've been going through the book of James. We're at the end of chapter 2, purpose to start into chapter 3 in the coming weeks and looking forward to doing that.

It is most often that we open up to a text and we get right to reading it and we just spend our time in that text. I often say to the younger guys learning to preach, your goal ought to be to keep people's nose in the book, right?

Keep them focused on the text itself. However, it's a little difficult to do that when we do these types of sermons because they're a little more survey-oriented. It's a bit of a step back to try to understand conceptually why we might do what we do.

So I just had you turn to 2 Timothy chapter 3 and it's just going to sit there in your laps for a little while as we set up a case. We are going to look at this passage, but we look at some other passages first before we land in this one as well.

[1:26] So I want you to know it pains me a little to preach sermons like this. It's not my favorite way of preaching. And I also want to give you warning. It is especially important to be discerning when this type of preaching happens, right?

When the scripture is being used to prove the point rather than the scripture itself and forming the point in its presentation. So I just want to say that to you.

I'm aware of what is happening, that it's got its danger. So be discerning this morning as we open up God's word together. The practice, the why we do what we do that we're going to cover today is the practice of biblical counseling.

And we find this to be of particular importance for us to think together about today for three reasons. First and most importantly, you will likely need some extra help for a particular reason at some point in your life.

Perhaps more often than you even realize. And it's important that you know where and how to get the counsel that you need. Who should be helping you?

[2:36] How do you know when somebody is giving you information worth listening to? We live in an age of lots of information. What should you and shouldn't you listen to?

Second, we are committed to biblical counseling as a church. We are already committed to this. We were committed to this in the founding of the church 13 years ago.

It is already practiced here. It's already a thing that we do in some measure. Some of you have been beneficiaries of biblical counseling in the life of our church.

But we also hope to see it practiced more. Thirdly, we have determined as a church to press our efforts forward this year to start a biblical counseling center.

To more formalize that ministry of our church. This endeavor is going to take a bunch of effort on a number of different fronts. But the primary one, the primary effort, the thing we're going to need to work the most at is equipping members of our church to provide biblical counseling.

[3:47] So we're going to be leading a cohort of people through the Association of Certified Biblical Counselors training. So ACBC, if you're here, let's use that term. ACBC's training.

And we would like for you to prayerfully consider being part of this work. Prayerfully consider. Might the Lord use me in this way as I'm laying out this case for you today?

We are hoping to see at least 12 people through the training this year. If you're at all interested, if you think, sign me up, or you think, maybe I'd like to learn more, we're going to have an information session following today's gathering in the large meeting room downstairs.

It's going to be short. We're going to kind of lay out for you what that process looks like and how you can get involved in being trained to be a biblical counselor. So as you're listening to this, as you're thinking about the case that the Bible makes for biblical counseling, I want you to think in those terms.

So why do we practice and believe that God would have us further practice biblical counseling? I hope to sufficiently answer that question for you with three points.

[4:56] This is one of those sermons that's very difficult to condense. There's so much I'd like to say and so many ideas I'd like to explore, but I'm going to try to sufficiently answer that question. Why? Why biblical counseling?

Why should we do it? Why should we do more of it? The first point is this. Number one, humans are troubled as a result of sin.

I don't think that anybody would say that we're not, that there isn't some trouble in the world because of the sinfulness of man. We have reason to be troubled generally.

There has been a curse placed on the world. The brokenness of the place in which we live goes back to the fall. Genesis chapter 3.

We can read in verse 16 and following. God says to the woman, And to Adam he said, Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree which I commanded you, you shall not eat of it.

[6:06] Cursed is the ground because of you. In pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground.

For out of it you were taken, for you are dust. And to dust you shall return. So we can see in these few verses, outward trouble, pain in childbearing, pain in provision, work became labor.

And we see in this text, death. Death is now part. And all of the aches and pains and things that happen taking us to that place is generally part of the fall.

We also see in that curse, inward trouble. Relational turmoil that's rooted in desire. It's going to be problems in our relationship because of original sin.

But we also have specific troubles because of sin. We are part of that sin nature. We received it. We are also willingly sinful.

[7:18] And it causes trouble in our world. A single Bible example of this, James chapter 4, verse 1 and following. James writes, What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you?

Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel.

You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly to spend it on your passions. You adulterous people, do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God?

Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. So we are naturally idolatrous people.

We are naturally seeking satisfaction in a place that it cannot be found. We are trading our God for something paltry, something not worthy of our worship.

[8:21] And this causes all kinds of trouble, relational trouble and otherwise. We feel it.

We have felt it this week. We have likely felt it this morning. If it doesn't hurt for you to roll out of bed yet, brace yourself. It's coming. Young people, on the morning of your 30th birthday.

It's coming. Our bodies are falling apart. We are, apart from the grace of God, wretched inside. And all people, rightly, wish to be freed from their troubles.

We all want ease. We all want to be carefree. We want to be set free from the troubles of this life. God's people know.

We have a theology for this. We understand the nature of the world in which we live. And we also know that one day we will be fully and finally freed from our troubles.

[9:24] Wonderful truth. A wonderful thing to reflect on together. We sing often a song together on the Lord's Day called On Jordan's Stormy Banks I Stand.

Which picks up that typology of God's people, Israel, waiting to cross over into the promised land. And it applies it rightly to the future reality that will be delivered from this world.

Verse 3 says, No chilling winds or poisonous breath can reach that healthful shore where sickness, sorrow, pain, and death are felt and feared.

No more. And then the chorus goes, I am bound, I am bound, I am bound for the promised land and repeats. Right? We look forward to that great day.

But while we await that day, is there any temporal relief for our troubles? Right? Are there instructions?

[10:25] Is there help given to us? And the answer is absolutely yes. But first, to understand where to look for this relief, we need to understand the nature of our being.

How is it that God made us, which brings me to our next point. So number two, humans are embodied souls.

We are embodied souls. We are dichotomous creatures. And dichotomous actually means that we can be divided in two, which is really not the best term.

That's why I like to say instead embodied souls. Right? Because our humanity is both our soul and our body. We will be separated from this body upon death.

But our final eternal state, if we're in Christ, will be in a resurrected body. Right? Bodily dwelling is part of being human.

[11:29] So you've got the two things, both body and soul. Both important. Both God-bearing, image-bearing parts of who we are as people.

And I'm going to juxtapose that to trichotomous being momentarily. But I want to make the case to you that we are two-part in a whole. Right? We are embodied souls.

Genesis chapter 2, verse 7. The Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground, body, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, soul, and the man became a living creature.

Right? This is something that the rest of the creative world does not have a soul. God-breathed life.

Right? So we're both parts, body and soul, and both parts are affected by the curse of sin.

The body, right? There are a myriad number of ailments affecting our bodies. Right? Viruses.

Here's a wonderful example. Have we all felt the curse of viruses over this past couple of years?

[12:43] You guys know that just a couple of weeks ago, I was up here with a sling on my arm because I had an accident and I, turns out, bruised ribs. So I'm feeling much better now, wonderfully. Right? I think pre-fall, I just wouldn't have been stupid enough to have the accident.

We would have avoided it altogether. I think my brain would have been sharper than it was. Or some super cool regenerative property would have made it not painful.

I don't know. I'm a type one diabetic. Right? My immune system killed the part of my pancreas that makes insulin. So I have to do it synthetically. Right? I have a pump and I do all this stuff to put insulin into my body.

There are mental disorders. extreme examples. Schizophrenia. Right? These are ailments of the body. However, one day these bodies will be no more and we will have new resurrected bodies that will be devoid of the corruption of sin.

In the meantime, God has extended to us many common graces. Ways that we can care for our failing bodies. We don't give up on our bodies. We can exercise.

[13:57] It's helpful to maintaining health. We can eat healthy food.

Right? We can help each other think about that, what that looks like.

There's lots of good natural things still that are good for our bodies.

There are also synthesized medicines. Right? Praise God for some of the discoveries and the things that have happened and ways in which we can be cared for. Our lives, by the grace of God,

extended.

There's wisdom to apply these types of remedies. Just think of the grace that people have knowledge to be able to do the things that they are doing. This morning, Jacob Kelly and David Mewson, who are physical therapists, I've got a little ache in my finger that will not go away. And they gave me some advice about my finger. Right? Don't need an MRI. I just need to do some things to my finger to help it be better. Speaking of fingers, Sam lopped off a good portion of the tip of her finger a couple of weeks ago.

And praise God for the wisdom to put antibiotic on it. Like we understand germs and what happens with bacteria in a cut. So her finger's healing quite nicely.

[15:07] Right? So there are remedies. Right? We have ways in which we can care for the troubles of our body. But they don't go away. Right? We're just seeing ourselves right through this temporal dwelling toward an eternal dwelling.

But we also have souls. Right? And this term soul is referred to in a bunch of different ways in the scripture. Genesis 2 calls this the breath of life.

Elsewhere in the scripture, this part of our being is called our spirit. You can see 1 Samuel chapter 1 and verse 15. It's called our hidden person.

1 Peter 3 and verse 4. Our inner self, 2 Corinthians 4, verse 16. In other places, this part of our being is described by its functioning.

The function of volition is called our will. John chapter 7 and verse 17. Cognition is called our mind. Colossians 1 and verse 21.

[16:11] This should be distinguished from our brain, the gray matter, actual physical gray matter that resides between our ears. consciousness. It's the functioning that's happening inside, the cognition that's happening between our brains.

Our moral sense of right and wrong is called our conscience. 1 Corinthians 8 and verse 12. And the center, like the seat of our emotions, is most often called our heart.

John chapter 14 and verse 1. For our time frame, this is a very brief survey of these terms. And I would gladly talk with you more about this, but be warned, I'm probably going to give you something weighty to read if you want to talk about this more, but happy to do it.

I hope this morning for you to see that these terms are used interchangeably and that there are so many terms because while we are only two-part beings, we are still rather complex creations.

The Bible uses so much different language to label and describe our soul because it is complex enough that it needs to be observed through different perspectives or lenses.

[17:27] So we're to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, might, strength, all of that. It's compounding every ounce of your being. It's what's being communicated there.

Not that we're made of all these varied parts. We are embodied souls. So why would I spend all this time, briefly anyway, making this case to you this morning?

It is because so many well-meaning Christians consider us to be trichotomous three parts. And they don't all agree on what those trichotomous three parts are.

But what it does is it regularly opens the door for secular psychology to be an active part of the ministry of the church. The reasoning goes something like you have a body which should be cared for by medical professionals.

You have a soul that should be cared for by pastors, other Christians. And you have a spirit, sometimes mind, that should be cared for by a psychologist.

[18:34] Beloved, this should not be so. And I hope to show you why with our concluding point. So this point assumes that we are dichotomous and proves that we are.

Third point, the Bible is sufficient for the task of solving the problems of our soul. The Bible is sufficient for the task of solving the problems of our soul.

Now hear me carefully. It's not sufficient for the task of solving the problems of our body temporally. Fully and finally, yes, we'll have new bodies. But not temporally.

I would not make the case to you this morning that I should stop using insulin and just have faith. I use insulin by faith. God has provided it for me that I might have my being.

I might do good works that he prepared beforehand for me to walk in. We're not making that case. And it gets a little more complex when we're talking about issues of the mind.

[19:45] That gets hard. It gets hard to navigate. I'm not saying that we are anti-medication. I would say we're cautious when it comes to psychotropic medication.

But beloved, if you have schizophrenia, I would strongly encourage you to proceed. Medical help is a good important thing for that type of ailment. An ailment of the body, which connects to a soul and also needs the care of the scripture.

So the Bible is sufficient for the task of solving the problems of our soul. And this is the text. 2 Timothy chapter 3 verse 14 and 17 through 17.

2 Timothy 3, 14 to 17. 17. Paul writing to Timothy, talking about people who have abandoned the truth, and then he says, but as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it, and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. all scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

[21:17] This is our classic sufficiency of scripture text. And here it applies to the life of the follower of Jesus. It is sufficient for this task.

Paul says some striking things here. He says that the Bible teaches us what we need to know to be saved. It makes us wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

Paul says that elsewhere, Romans chapter 10 and verse 17. So faith comes from hearing and hearing through the word of Christ. If you are in Christ, if it's true of you this morning that you have been justified before God, that you've placed believing faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ, you have done that because God worked that in you by his word, power of the spirit and his word. Faith comes from hearing and hearing random philosophy, pop psychology, no, the word of Christ. Paul also says in this text that the Bible has God as its author.

Carried along men, men's pens, wrote the text, but he is its source. It was exhaled by him.

[22:38] And because of this, it makes it authoritative. If God has spoken to the world, he has a right to speak over his creation. it's authoritative.

And because he is God, he cannot lie. Therefore, it's inerrant, which means it does not err, and it's infallible, which means it cannot err, praise be to God.

And because of all these things, then it is sufficient. It is enough. Life and godliness, what we need to know to be in right relationship with our God, and to live lives that are honoring to him, can be found in the Bible, and it needs not be found anywhere else.

What a comfort, and such a day of turmoil. I have been reminded as the information's coming at me, as fast as it's coming at you, maybe faster because some of you send information to me, I go, what do we do?

What do we do in such an age? And I've just been reminded again, and again, and again, preach the word. Just keep bringing people back to the word. The Bible is sufficient. The man of God will be complete, equipped for every good work.

[23:51] So we don't need secular psychology to remedy our spiritual conditions. We need to look to the word. And we need to help one another look to the word.

And we need to help others, we need to help those outside the church look to the word. Secular psychology, which I have to talk about very broadly right now, but it's insufficient for the task of helping people.

Secular psychology is insufficient for the task of helping people. Did you know that there are more than 250 competing views of human behavior?

Researchers vying for their position to explain how it is that man works. Secular psychology, as practiced in many places, has unscriptural presuppositions.

Now, you might know somebody who's a licensed counselor, who's a Christian. Don't be offended by everything I'm about to say. I have to speak in broad generalities to have a conversation about this.

[24:57] If they counsel well, they do so because they're really being biblical counselors. It has nothing to do with the secular psychology that they may have learned in school.

You could be a biblical counselor in spite of your training. This is a very possible thing to do. But generally speaking, it has unscriptural presuppositions.

First, it has an incorrect view of man. Broadly speaking, secular psychology believes that man is only an advanced animal. It has evolved to be the most advanced of creatures.

It's so complex in us. But man is so much more than a cosmic accident. We have a creator and therefore a design granted to us by this creator.

Way more than advanced animals. Some point of process in evolutionary theory. Another incorrect view of man, secular psychology holds, is that man is basically good or possibly at worst a blank slate.

[26:05] evil. This is not what the Bible teaches. The Bible teaches us that man is evil. Altogether evil. I wrote in my notes man is basically evil and realized that's an insufficient term, right?

Altogether evil apart from the saving work of Christ. So we have a great problem and we need a great helper. Psalm 51 and verse 5, Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me, right?

We are born with a sinful nature. How are we ever going to find the right solution to our problem if we don't understand the problem? Secular psychology also believes that man is autonomous, can change themselves.

This is not true. We need God's help. We need an outside agent to work upon us. For those of us in Christ, that outside agent becomes an inside agent as the Holy Spirit indwells us.

Our catechism question was about that this morning. Jesus said in John chapter 15 and verse 5, I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit for a part for me, you can do nothing.

[27:32] Secular psychology also excuses sin and denies personal responsibility. There is a lot of blame shifting that happens in secular psychology.

You are a product of something. Your parents, your teachers, your society, a given circumstance. Of course you are acting the way you are because again and again and again that blame gets shifted away.

John writes in 1 John 1 verse 8, if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. The Bible never justifies our sin as people who are victims.

People are victims of sin. This is a very true thing, but sinful responses to sin are not justified in the scripture. They never are, and we ought not counsel people as if they are.

Second, psychology calls sin sickness in this attempt to excuse it and to deny personal responsibility. There certainly is such a thing as physical brain illness.

[28:42] I don't want to minimize that point, but the Bible does not allow for these maladies to become excusers of sinful activity. right? When you think about the logic of it, every time I get angry at somebody, I can simply say, well, that's my personality.

I've got a propensity for that kind of thing, right? The scripture would say, well, of course you do, because you're sinful, and you're in need of grace, and you deny that impulse in you and respond righteously.

So it tends to call sin sickness, and secular psychology has no fixed moral values, right? a system that largely denies a creator, therefore leaves morality to our own definition.

As long as we feel positive, we're feeling good about the things we're doing, the decisions that we're making, then our behavior, whatever it may be, becomes justifiable.

There's no standard that we're meant to aim at for our high and ultimate good. good. So secular psychology is not sufficient to the task to help people change.

[29:54] It is possible for a secular psychologist to treat symptoms. It's possible. Perhaps for a counselee to receive some temporary relief, but the primary problem will still persist.

It's a sin nature that needs the changing power of the gospel of Jesus Christ. real change happens in relation to God, which is why God's word must be brought to bear if we want to really help people with their spiritual, with their soul problems.

2 Timothy chapter 3, again, all scripture breathed out by God, and it is profitable, it's good for the task, teaching and reproof and correction and training in a standard morality, in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

So what is biblical counseling? Biblical counseling is discipling from the Bible for a particular problem, for a particular amount of time, so that a counselee can honor God in their life.

Biblical counseling is discipling from the Bible for a particular problem, for a particular amount of time, so that a counselee can honor God in their life, right? It's taking up the scripture, and it's helping people to believe it in a way, it's empowered by the Spirit, that they actually change.

[31:27] Romans 12, 2, you may be familiar with this text. Paul says, do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by your feelings, the renewal of your mind.

The things that you believe to be true are transforming to who we are. So it's that careful application, particular problem for a particular period of time, but what does the scripture say about this issue in your life, and how can you bring it to bear?

What's the practical ways we're going to work out these truths in your life? So if you have a bulletin, real quick on the back, I sort of drew a river.

This is what the scribble is on the back of your page. This is an analogy I picked up from Joel Teague from Faith Community Church, which is kind of a sister church to us, and a lot of people that we love and care about that are part or have been part of Faith Community Church.

This example really resonated with me because I used to teach whitewater kayaking, so you kind of catch that as we talk about this. So you have a river, and here in the river flow, number one, what you would label this, whether you have a pen or not, you can just mentally think about it, the general activity in this analogy of the church is discipleship, right?

[32:59] Helping people to follow Jesus faithfully, to look more like Jesus. Be disciples of Jesus Christ. Discipleship is the noun, and so I always like the verb form of discipling, right?

It's the activity of helping people faithfully follow Jesus, which should be everything a church does, what we exist for. Everything we do ought to be trying to aim people at faithfully following Jesus. Jesus. Just as a river is fed by a tributary, so that's the little thing going off to the side there, sometimes this is going to happen preemptively. So you could write in that blank number two, preemptive discipling, also most regularly called evangelism, helping people see from the scripture their great need of God.

Therefore, the solution to their problem is the Lord Jesus Christ, bringing about faith in them. So preemptive discipling would be one of the things we would do as a church, working to do biblical counseling, evangelizing people with problems, showing them their greater need than temporal fixes, their need of eternal fixes, and empowering for temporal fixes.

That's preemptive discipling. People come into the flow of the life of a church, a healthy church is going to be about discipling people in many, many varied ways. But from time to time, people need to be drawn to quiet water for a particular problem for a particular amount of time.

[34:39] So that's a rock in the middle of the river with some calm water behind it, or a dip in the bank with some calm water there. These are called eddies. The flow of the water slows down.

And as a whitewater kayak instructor, these are the places that we taught skills. If somebody wasn't doing well on the river, you've got a group going down the river, you would pull somebody aside and say, hey, come over here with me, and you would teach them a particular skill before you return them back into the regular flow of the discipling of the church.

I think understanding it this way ought to help us destigmatize counseling, right? Because we all need good counsel, right? I need to be reminded of the wonderful truths of the Bible, right?

It's just discipleship. It's just taking a particular form. It's taking a specific problem for a specific amount of time and addressing that before being turned back out into the regular discipling practices of a church, right?

So we have discipling, we have preemptive discipling, and then we have particular discipling. That's biblical counseling. Particular discipling.

[35:49] So, who can provide biblical counseling? I think you may rightly be thinking, alright, good luck, y'all.

Like, have fun with that. Honestly, if you're sitting here hearing me and you're thinking, I got that, then you need some biblical counseling. We need to preach the gospel to you.

We should be saying, who is worthy for such things, right? Paul says in Romans chapter 15 and verse 14, I myself am satisfied about you, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able to instruct one another.

So, the answer is, you. Now, if you're in Christ, none of us are perfect Christians, but we ought to be growing in our Christ-likeness, which means we can and should share what we're learning, how we're growing, with others.

We ought to be bringing others along with us in this process of following Jesus, right? As we, by faith, follow the Lord, Jesus Christ, right?

[37:03] And these should be people, right? We should be filled with all knowledge, right? We should be working at being equipped equipped because what we need to work at doing is having our counseling Bibles be this thick, and picks up the Bible off his podium, right?

The Bible speaks to the everyday problems of our life. The gospel has application for today, and we want to be equipped to know and how to apply and how to help others believe these things to be true.

So, because of the great love that God has shown us, Christ Family Church, we want to love others with the truth of God's word, and this is why we want to press into biblical counseling and start a biblical counseling center.

You can and should play a part in this. First, pray. Just pray. If we go through all of the trouble, get everybody trained, get them certified, set up spaces to meet in, let the community know that it exists, we go through all the effort, and God doesn't empower the effort, it will be fruitless.

It will be absolutely pointless. So, pray for wisdom, the process of getting things set up, pray for people as they work to be trained, pray about whether or not you should be trained, be part of praying for this effort of our church.

[38:59] Be a good church member, recognized as a member of our church, speaking to members, you have a responsibility to care for one another, right? You ought to be giving each other counsel in some measure, so please be doing that faithfully from God's word.

And consider getting equipped, getting equipped to a higher level, being certified to provide this particular discipling through the biblical counseling center of our church.

Let's pray to that end. Amen.