

NBC Devotional
May 12, 2021
“It's About the Souls”

Good morning, Nazarene Bible College team. It is a great privilege to be invited to join the institution that God used to shape so many of my pastors, my colleagues, and our team in Northwestern Illinois.

There are moments in ministry when you can't help but look back at how far God has brought you. This is one of those moments for me. 2021 marks the 30th year of full-time ministry for Sherry and I. I remember very well how overwhelmingly honored I felt on my first Wednesday night as youth pastor in Rock Island, IL in a small Sunday School room with about 10 teenagers.

And now after all these years of giving my best, I find myself in a different small room, my future NBC office, for a NBC Chapel zoom meeting with you all for the first time.

Full time ministry has put me in a lot of very humble roles, and I was honored to meet the need in every one. I have never been more humbled in ministry than since my election to this role.

The worst thing I could have done as a rookie youth pastor was make it about me, my position, my calling. It was 30 years ago now, but I can still tell you who it was about that night. It was about those ten teenagers who sat around that table. I can still see them: Lori, Heather, Daphne, Shawn, Mark, Chad, Stephanie, Dena, Kurt, Jonathan.

Ministry is not about the minister. It is not even about the mission in an academic sense. It is about achieving the mission in the lives of real people with real names whose souls will still matter long after the buildings and positions and even institutions are all wiped from history.

I was honored to be their shepherd then, and I am honored to join you in shepherding NBC students & staff in the years to come. I can't name all of the NBC students . . . yet, but you can. And THEY have to be the face of NBC, if we are to have a future.

Let's serve these students the way we want them to serve their people for the next 30 years.

I can't tell you that I have a fully formed vision for the future of NBC. But I do know the mission, and God has called me to give my life to do whatever it takes to achieve the mission in the lives of NBC's students.

Can I leave you with a few verses of scripture?

Yesterday, we buried one of our finest ministers, Rev. Tim Livengood, who served the same church for 30 years out of his 42-year ministry. I asked his sons about his Bible, and they said they couldn't get much from it, because everything in it was underlined. Everything! He'd been using the same Bible since the 90's. They did find some verses that were also highlighted and starred. Here is one:

“I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power. Although I am less than the least of all God's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ,”
(Ephesians 3:7-8 NIV84)

Tim Livengood's son, Jon, is also a pastor. Before he took his first lead pastorate, Tim gave his son one piece of advice, and it is what I'll leave with you today.

“Make sure they know you love them, and that God loves them way more.”

It's always dangerous to try to sum up all of pastoral training in a single maxim, but I think Tim came pretty close.

This is what I hope to do here amongst the NBC community, and what I hope the NBC community will do for our students, AND what I hope our students will do in the lives of the people they serve.

We have our work cut out for us, but God assures me there are more for us than against us.

Can I pray for you?

Lord, by your grace and for your glory, will you please open our eyes to the allies and the resources you already have lined up in the heavenlies to fight on our behalf as we give our lives to the one who gave His life to us?

Please Lord, let us do the work you have called us to in a way that brings you glory and achieves your mission in this world.

In Jesus' name and for His sake. Amen.

God bless you! I look forward to hitting the ground running on July 1.

Dr. Scott J. Sherwood, District Superintendent North West Illinois, NBC President-elect starting July 1, 2021