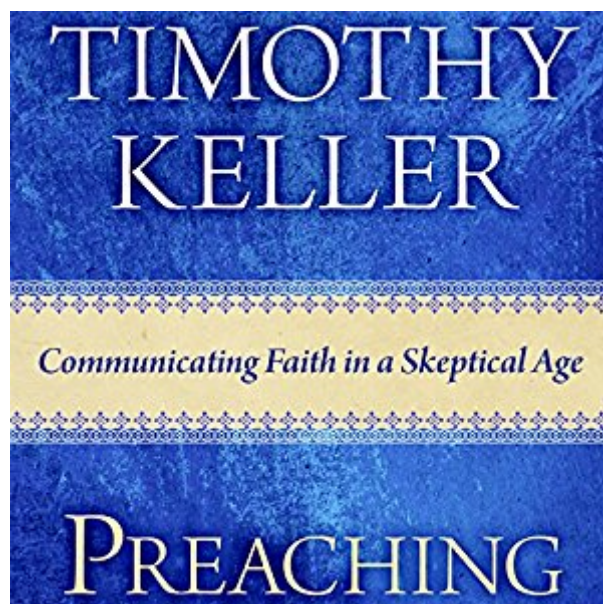


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# Preaching: Communicating Faith In An Age Of Skepticism



## Synopsis

Pastor, preacher, and New York Times best-selling author Timothy Keller's wisdom on communicating the Christian faith from the pulpit as well as from the coffee shop. Most Christians - including pastors - struggle to talk about their faith in a way that applies the power of the Christian Gospel to change people's lives. Timothy Keller is known for his insightful, down-to-earth sermons and talks that help people understand themselves, encounter Jesus, and apply the Bible to their lives. In this accessible guide for pastors and laypeople alike, Keller helps listeners learn to present the Christian message of grace in a more engaging, passionate, and compassionate way.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

All Christians have a spiritual responsibility to teach and admonish one another with all wisdom (Col. 3:16). Some Christians have a further responsibility to teach the word of God more formally, whether in a Sunday School class or from the pulpit. While all Christians can read Tim Keller's *Preaching* profitably, it is intended specifically for those with more formal responsibilities to communicate the faith. (Because most readers of this book will be pastors looking for sermon help, however, I'm going to refer throughout this review to preachers and preaching, instead of using broader terms like teaching or communication.) Keller divides his material into three parts. Part One, "Serving the Word," argues that preachers should preach the Bible (Chapter 1), which means preaching the gospel (Chapter 2), which means preaching Jesus Christ (Chapter 3), about whom all Scripture is written (Luke 24:27). Keller recognizes that there are times when preachers

should deliver topical sermons, but their bread-and-butter sermons should be expositional. Because Scripture tells the unified story of what God has done in Christ through the Spirit to accomplish our salvation, sermons should be gospel-centered. Two dangers need to be avoided: (1) "preaching a text, even about Jesus, without really preaching the gospel," which is typical of moralistic preaching; and (2) "preaching Christ" without really preaching the text, which is typical of proof-texting. To help avoid these dangers, Keller outlines six ways to preach Jesus from all of Scripture that are adequate to both the gospel and the context of a particular passage. Part Two, "Reaching the People," opens with the recognition that preachers must contextualize their messages to their audiences (Chapter 4).

The two words that immediately come to mind when considering Timothy Keller's new book is: rocket fuel. Keller's book is a supercharged approach to expository preaching. *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism* stands alone in book market that includes several approaches to preaching. Some books provide preachers with the nuts and bolts or the mechanics of preaching. Others focus on the rationale for expository preaching. Keller's work includes both and so much more. Readers will be drawn to a few important items that stand out in this work: The Centrality of the Gospel First, Keller is relentless about the necessity of gospel preaching. He stands with C.H. Spurgeon who famously admonished preachers to "preach a text and make a beeline to the cross of Christ." Keller repeatedly challenges preachers to preach "Christ crucified," to "preach Christ through every theme of the Bible." Wherever the preacher finds himself in the biblical text, he must alert the listener to the person of Christ and the completed work of Christ. It is this feature that makes Keller's work unique and should propel his work to the required reading list of every Bible College and Seminary course that pertains to preaching. The Importance of the Heart Second, Keller focuses on the heart in biblical preaching: Preaching cannot simply be accurate and sound. It must capture the listeners' interest and imagination; it must be compelling and penetrate to their hearts. It is possible to merely assert and confront and feel we have been very "valiant for truth," but if you are dry or tedious, people will not repent and believe the right doctrine you present.

Tim Keller is the pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian (PCA) Church in New York City. This is Keller's 15th book, three of which have been on the New York Times bestseller list. Keller's book looks at the three levels of ministering the Word. Level 1 is the informal teaching and counseling of the Word which is the responsibility of all Christians. Level 2 includes greater analyses and might include

writing, blogging, teaching, moderating and mentoring. Level 3 involves the preaching of sermons. Keller's book seeks to be a resource at all three levels, but focuses heavily on levels 2 and 3. Keller is known for engaging the culture. He stresses that contextualization of Scripture is not the same as accommodation of sin. The message must be understandable to the listener so they can comprehend the truth and see where they fall short. The same God honoring message might be taught differently based on the socio-economic, historical, geographic or language variations between audiences. Contextualization must never alter or sacrifice biblical truths. One might ask how to teach the story of the woman at the well to a culture that has never seen a well. Is it most important to focus on the compassion of Christ or the structure that helps hydrate a community? Preaching is not simply the explanation of the text at hand, but utilizing the text to engage the listeners. The hearers must be engaged without altering or sacrificing Scripture. When a preacher or teacher expounds Scripture they must demonstrate how only Christ can save us. Jesus must be the end result of every Sunday school class or sermon. Preachers of the gospel must show in their words they remember the emptiness of a life without Christ.

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