

# Center Church

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[ 0 : 0 0 ]     Good morning everyone. I think I do know most people in this room. Now I was used to Bill introducing me in the past and I was just saying that no one's made fun of me yet today. I feel kind of sad because that's my remembrance of our banter between me and Bill.

So I am going to talk for about 45 minutes on a topic which deserves probably weeks and weeks and weeks. I hope to give you some acquaintance with someone named Dr. Tim Keller and some of his thoughts about ministry in the urban context. And that's all we're going to be able to do.

This is his most recent book. It's 444 pages. It's two columns per page. It's got footnotes and it's about 10 point font. You're going to get about one page of that.

So I'm just going to tell you up front. Now, I'm a little bit daunted because Dr. Packer not only read this whole book but he's got one of the forwards. He's got one of the endorsements in the inside cover of it.

Which means it's probably a good book and he knows far more about it than I do. So all the questions at the end will be redirected to Dr. Packer. Thank you. Friends, the right place for us to start this morning is by bringing this time before God. So will you join me as we pray together?

[ 1 : 3 9 ]     Dear God, thank you for the gift of fellowship in the gospel. For the gift of leaders such as Tim Keller who you've given wisdom to.

Pray that we can learn from him this morning and also at the same time understand biblically what you want us to understand.

We pray for revival in our cities, God. We want to see people come to know and love Christ and to raise him up as their savior. So bless our time together. Amen.

Amen. Okay. A little bit more on Tim Keller in a few minutes. I'm going to start by looking at a few parts of scripture.

We're going to start off by talking this morning about one of the challenges we have as the people of God. We are people of God and we are living in a world which is in many ways not of God.

[ 2 : 4 1 ]     At least the inhabitants of the world are not of God. And so there is a balance that we have to strike. And we see it in some of these scriptures. So I'll read for us from 1 Corinthians.

Paul writes, For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant, that I might win more of them. To the Jews I became as a Jew in order to win Jews. To those under the law, I became as one under the law, although not being myself under the law.

That I might win those under the law. To those outside the law, I became as one outside the law. Not being outside the law of God, but under the law of Christ. That I might win those outside the law. So that's Paul speaking about how in his ministry, which was primarily to the Gentiles, but also somewhat to the Jews.

He crossed cultural divides and actually did stuff which he really knew he didn't have to do in order to reach people who didn't know Jesus. So that's Paul saying, you know what, there's a cultural divide here.

And we need to be in that cultural, that culture thing, somewhat, in order to reach the people of that culture. Right, now, so we've got that. That's pretty clear. I don't know a lot of this stuff isn't new to you.

[ 3 : 47 ] But here's another part of the Bible, Ephesians 5, 5 to 9. You know, in the book of Ephesians, the big dividing point at the end of chapter 3 is when Paul writes, this is what you were, but now this is what you are.

Right, and it's chapter 3 and the hinge is right on 3 and 4. So he's saying, this is what you used to be, but this is what you are. Take off the old, put on the new. Right, and so he writes in chapter 5 to them, Don't go back to where you've come from.

Do not become partners with them. For at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light, for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true.

So, the part of the world which is not of God, don't go to that part of the world. Don't emulate that part of the world, because you are a new covenant person. You are a new person in Christ.

Right, so, be in the culture, but not of the culture. Be in the world, but not of the world. Here's another one. Matthew 5, 13 and 16.

[ 5 : 07 ] You are the salt of the earth. But if salt has lost its taste, how shall saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet.

Uniqueness of salt. If you lose your uniqueness of salt, right, your salt, your uniqueness, then you have no value. Right, so, you are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.

Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

So, the people of God, us as individuals and as a community, right, it's both of them, we are supposed to be different than the world, and we're supposed to be like light and darkness, so when people see us, they actually see Jesus.

Right, they see light and darkness. So, we're in the culture, but not of the culture. We don't divide ourselves, so we don't go live in the desert like a monk, right?

[ 6 : 06 ] We're actually in the culture, we're not of the culture. We're supposed to be different than the culture, and that's supposed to be obvious. Here's another one. Matthew 24, 44 to 49.

I'm sure many of you know this. I've preached on this a couple times in the last few weeks because of Easter. Then he said to them, this is after the resurrection of Christ, this is Jesus speaking, then he said to them, these are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.

Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures and said to them, thus it is written that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

You're witnesses of these things, and behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you, but stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high. It's talking about the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit comes.

And then we go to the book of Acts, and it's clear that Christ in heaven is working through the Holy Spirit to continue his ministry on earth, and one of the ways he does that is through the Christian community. So what it's actually saying, right? It's important here.

[ 7 : 17 ] You're witnesses of these things. You've actually got ascending to witness these things to the world, and to do that, you're going to have to be in the world, right?

You can't... Yes? That's a quote from Luke, isn't it? Oh, sorry. Yeah, you're right, actually. Luke 24. Sorry. Sorry, Dr. Packer. No. Yeah, I had preached on it a couple times.

I just got the wrong one, but thank you. The Luke 24. So, I am sending you the promise. So you're going to actually be going out, and you're going to be proclaiming my word, the news about Jesus, about me, to the world.

How do you do that if you're not in the world? Now, do you see the quandary? The quandary is we're supposed to be in the world, but not of the world. We're supposed to be doing mission which people can understand.

We're supposed to be proclaiming Christ in a way that people can understand without going back to being like non-Christians, right? We're doing a mission.

[ 8 : 19 ] We've got a mission in the world which has really turned its back on God. So here's a question. How do we as Christians bring the message of life in Jesus to a world that is set against Jesus without compromising the gospel, without being unintelligible to our world, being considered irrelevant by our world, or being rejected by our world?

Right? How do we do those things? And it's a great question because it's a question all about how we live our lives as Christians and what we do as a church. Right?

Tim Keller, I'm going to talk about it in a second, he actually, this book is actually about that question. Right? It's actually about this question, about how we can proclaim the gospel to a world that doesn't understand the gospel and in a way which is intelligible, which is challenging, which is true to the gospel, not a watered-down gospel, and at the same time be light and darkness, be light and darkness and be relevant to them and be intelligible to the world.

Tim Keller talks about someone named Leslie Newbigin, which I know some of you are familiar with.

Have you guys had a learner's exchange on Leslie Newbigin? No. Okay. No. Okay. That would be a great topic, wouldn't it? Oh, yes. So Leslie Newbigin, one of the things he's known for is he was a missionary to India.

[ 9 : 52 ] Is that right, Dr. Packer? That's right. Yeah, India. Okay. So he's a missionary. He's a British guy. He was a missionary to India, and he worked in India for decades. And then he came back to Britain. I think it was in the 1950s he came back to Britain.

And what he realized is that in India you were very aware that the culture around you was not Christian. And therefore the way you proclaimed Christ, the way you actually brought the message of salvation to the people of India, was very much recognizing the fact that these people knew nothing about the gospel.

They hadn't been raised in churches. They had no memory of Christianity. Christianity. It was not a Christendom society. He came back to Britain in the 50s, and he realized that the churches in many ways were kind of stuck back in the 1920s, and they hadn't realized that times had changed and that very much Britain, with respect to its Christian memory, was like India.

It didn't have much of a Christian memory. Right? And so the churches were still using the same kind of ideas of bringing the gospel to people as they did in the 1920s.

And so they were talking languages that people didn't understand. And he said, you know what, this is crazy. This is a mission field in Britain just like it was a mission field in India. Now, if that was the case in 1950s Britain, think how much more it is today in Vancouver.

[ 11 : 09 ]    Actually, I work at St. John's, but actually my home church is actually a good shepherd now, a church of good shepherd. I'm on the ministry team there, which is a Cantonese church down by City Hall.

And it's been great. I went there last October to help with their English ministry and to try to set up an artisan training base there. And hopefully in September we're going to have four good shepherd interns, Cantonese people, who will be in artisan, which will be great.

But it's very interesting for me to go there and just realize that there is a culture within the culture. Right? And in many ways, the Cantonese culture has more of a Christian memory than the Anglo-Vancouver culture.

And why? Well, we could probably blame the baby boomers. We blame everything on the baby boomers. But something happened within that generation that moved away from church. And now they're children, which we see a lot of them.

I work with Ecclesia, the young adults out at UBC. We see a lot of them come to Christ. And they've come from a completely non-Christian background. Their parents don't know what's wrong with them.

[ 12 : 11 ]    They've become Christians. That's what their grandparents used to do. And in my ministry I was involved in, in Australia, fully half our young adults came from non-Christian homes. Which is, thank God, right?

Praise the Lord. And all of a sudden they're realizing, well, there's something we've missed along with. But the way you minister to them is very different. Even if you can't even use words like, like resurrection, they don't even know what that word means.

You can't use a word like atonement. They don't know what that means. And so it's a post-Christendom culture. And that's what Tim Keller is really big about.

Here's what we're going to talk quite a bit about today. We have what we believe, our fundamental doctrine. Ours would be probably summarized quite well in the articles, the 39 articles, as Anglicans.

And I think it's a great summary of Christian belief. It's not exhaustive, but it's still very good. So what we believe. And this is based on the Bible. Okay, now, we have to think about what we believe, how that determines what we do.

[ 13 : 20 ]    Okay, what we do as a church community. So, we believe in the doctrine of the 39 articles. How does that determine what we're going to do as a church?

What our focus will be as a church, right? How we allocate resources. And that's basically where the rubber hits the road in a church. You've got so much space in a building.

You've got so much time of your staff. You've got so much energy of your laity, your volunteers. You've got so much emotional energy. How do we actually allocate that to our mission as a church?

What type of flavor are we going to have as a church? Okay, now, we look at that, what we believe, and then what we do. And we think, how do we actually usually make this jump? How do we usually make the jump?

Now, talk to the person beside you. You know I'm going to do this here, right? Because I need to drink some coffee. So I'm going to make you talk to the person beside you. Talk to the person beside you. And I want you to figure out how you think we do this.

[ 14 : 21 ]    So we have our set of beliefs. This is what the Bible says. That's our set of beliefs. And then we've got to figure out, okay, what are we going to do? What are we going to do? What's our service going to look like? What are we going to put energy and time into?

There's no such thing as a bad ministry. But we've got to figure out what is the best ministry God wants us to do at this time in this place. So talk to the person beside you about how we decide these things. It's a hard question.

I understand that. I'm going to put a chair under here.

I'm going to have to leave her with you to go and sing some more. So don't be offended. No, sorry. You can sing right here. Let me hear you. No, no, no, no. But I'm going to have to leave my back. I'm going to have to leave her with you.

Oh, really? Thank you.

[ 15 : 46 ] Thank you.

Thank you.

We're going to see what we got here. Thank you. Where's the... Oh. I'm just using my voice.

Okay, guys. Rowdy Bunchy. Oh. Welcome, Rowdy Bunch. Okay. Very good. Okay.

It's an important conversation. Okay. What... Just... We don't have time to hear everything, but if... Put your hand up if you reckon you got something that's worth sharing.

[ 17 : 24 ] How do we actually move from belief to practice? Right? How do we do that? Any idea? Take it off the property. Sorry, I don't know what you mean.

Try that. Take our belief off the property. Take our belief off the property? So you've got to tell me a bit more about... No, we've got to get outside and start, you know, working out there. Well, that's your practice.

Yeah. How did you go from there to there? Well, that's a big jump. Yeah. Yeah. It's a key jump. Yeah. Okay. Okay. What else? How do we actually move from belief to practice?

Okay. How about this? How about... Oh, sorry, Isabel? Yeah. Well, I think that when... For myself, I live in a world and do a lot of things for a lot of people who are not Christians.

Yeah. And, you know, I'm not sure that I'm drawing them into my Christian world, but I'm trying. What I do is, I make... You know, I'm just a Christian. So, I speak about my faith, but I don't sort of overthrow in people's faces.

[ 18 : 29 ] Yeah. But then I'll invite them to things, like the Bach Cantata or something that's on in the church or something else. Yeah. I might get tickets for the singing Christmas tree, which is something.

Okay. You just kind of have to let people know. I have had people ridicule me. That's okay. It doesn't... You know, you don't have to worry about people doing that.

So, I think it's just a case that maybe saying, for instance, if I'm a dunce, if you're a dunce, well, I have to go because I have to get up. I like to get up early for church in the morning.

Yeah. So, it just puts it in people's minds. And sometimes people say, wow, I'm a really member of my church, too. So, you know, it's interesting. Okay. You don't know who's out there.

But that's still the practice. So, you've got to believe. You've got to practice. We've got to have the action. So, that's a great example. Here's an example. This is what we believe as a group at St. John's.

[ 19 : 28 ] Bach Cantata. That's our practice. Why are we doing a Bach Cantata? How did you make that decision? Oh, I see. So, you're speaking as a church in a whole. As a church in a whole. This is a very big question, right?

Because, as I said, there's nothing wrong with Bach Cantata. Is it the best thing we should be doing with their time? And maybe it is. I don't know. The process is important, though. Right? And this is what this book is actually about.

Okay? So, I'll tell you a little bit about Tim Keller. Tim Keller is currently, he's head minister at a church in New York City called Redeemer Presbyterian Church.

I think he's been there for about 20 years now. It's part of the PCA, which is Presbyterian Church of America, which has kind of been a breakaway orthodox movement within the Presbyterian mainstream church in the States.

Tim Keller, this is a big church. It's, you know, I don't know how many thousands of people. It's planted lots of other churches. He's become quite an influential thinker and well-respected.

[ 20 : 31 ] One of the reasons I like Tim Keller, I'll show you my cards. I like him, is he's very theologically sound. He's very well thought out, but he's also doing ministry.

He's doing ministry all the time. Right? He's in charge of ministry. And so, he sees no disconnection between theology and practice. They have to overlap, right?

They have to overlap for him. And so, he's, from a minister's point of view, if you're doing ministry, he's great to read and to listen to. I may not agree with everything he says, but, you know, he's, I think, most of the stuff he says is just great.

And the other thing that's great about Tim Keller, New York City is not the easiest place to do ministry at. Right? He's not running a megachurch in Dallas, Texas, where most people go to church.

Nothing wrong with a megachurch in Dallas, Texas, or Nashville. Right? He's running a megachurch in New York City. Right? And New York probably is not that different than Vancouver.

[ 21 : 32 ] Vancouver is a hard city to do ministry in. Right? You probably realize that. We're not in the Bible Belt. Maybe down the valley, in Abbotsford, you're in the Bible Belt, but in Vancouver proper, we're not.

And so I think, from our point of view, at St. John's or at Good Shepherd or whatever, he's worthwhile listening to because of the context in which he does ministry. New York and Vancouver is quite a bit of crossover.

And, in fact, New York and any large Canadian city has quite a bit of cultural crossover, I reckon. Montreal is nuanced by French and English, you realize that? But Toronto, New York, I reckon it's the same field.

Okay? So that's one of the reasons why I think he's very valuable to listen to. Here's what this book is about. So what happened? What happened is, I think, ten years ago, all of a sudden, this guy Tim Keller in New York City, his church was growing.

He was planting other churches. He's having quite an influence within the city. He's based in Manhattan, although his church is all around New York City. People started to come to him and said, well, what's your secret? What are you doing?

[ 22 : 32 ] And he thought about it. And he's like, I need to write this book, which is, you know, ten steps to build a megachurch. And how do I do that? And he realized that what he'd learned over all those years wasn't really those ten steps of how to build a megachurch.

What he had learned, or what he thought was valuable to tell people, was this. How do you actually move from what you believe to what you do? Right?

So remember the question I just asked you? Right? How do you move from what you believe to what you do? And that's what this book is about. All 444 pages of it are about that step of actually taking what you believe and figuring out how that's going to determine what you do as a church.

So I'll just read for you a little bit. So this is actually right out of his book, Doctrinal Foundations, What to Believe. Timeless truths from the Bible about God, our relationship to him, and his purposes in the world. It takes into account your theological tradition, right?

Denominational affiliation, and of course systematic biblical theology, your doctrinal foundations. Right? Now, we had this up before, and then we had this up before, and this is what was missing in the middle.

[ 23 : 39 ] Right? Now, if you remember, I started today talking about this culture that we live in, the society we live in, the post-Christendom culture that we live in. Right? And the reason I started that is because that feeds a lot into the middle step.

Right? It feeds a lot into the middle step. So, he calls it the theological vision. Right? The theological vision, which is what connects your doctrine to your ministry.

And he calls it how to see, which is a faithful restatement of the gospel with rich implications for life, ministry, and mission in a type of culture at a moment in history. And for him, it's Manhattan in 2013.

Right? For us, it's different. It's Vancouver 2013. It includes things like your vision and your values, your ministry DNA, your emphasis, your stances, your philosophy of ministry.

Here's some of the questions which your vision might answer. This is from his book. What is the gospel? And how do we bring it to bear in the hearts of people today?

[ 24 : 41 ] What is this culture like? And how can we both connect to it and challenge it in our communication? Where are we located? Are we in a city? Are we in a suburb? Are we in a town, a rural area? And how does that affect our ministry?

Right? The way you do ministry here in Vancouver might be very, very different how you do it in Abbotsford, even though your doctrinal foundations are exactly the same. Right?

To what degree and how should Christians be involved in civic life, in wider civic life, and cultural production within a city? How do the various ministries in a church, word and deed, community and instruction relate to one another?

That's your internal structure of your church and how they actually relate to different ministries. How do they relate to one another? How innovative will our church be and how traditional? How will our church relate to other churches in our city and region?

And finally, how will we make our case to the culture about the truth of Christianity? So, that's your theological vision, right? And finally, you come to your ministry expression, what to do.

[ 25 : 50 ] How the gospel is expressed in a particular church in one community at a point in time. Local culture adaptation, worship style and programming. Discipleship and outreach processes, church governance and management.

Okay? One of the things I think is really valuable, Tim Keller, some of the church movements today are like, well, we get rid of tradition completely. Right? We're just going to clean, clean paper.

And Keller's like, well, no, because there's a reason why tradition has been around for so long. It's because there's value in it. He never elevates tradition above the word of God, but he also recognizes there is value in tradition.

Right? So, the question is, how do we actually use that, not just to continue tradition for tradition's sake? Tradition has a purpose within itself, and that is to edify and to evangelize.

Right? I think Cranmer would pretty much be in line with that, if you look at Article 24 and 34 of the 39 Articles. Okay, so, does that give you an idea? Any questions? It seems simple.

[ 26 : 52 ] Not that simple. Keller's observation is, most churches don't have this. Most churches fall down at this point. Most churches don't actually have a clear vision. They don't actually know where they're going.





They're going to have more contemporary music, but that's because they've decided their DNA is 18 to 25 year olds. That's, we're going to actually reach that group. Right? And then there's other churches, and then a big church like St. John's has multiple groups of people that they're trying to reach and stuff.

And I mean, that's one of the reasons why we have different music and different services. Right? I would, I would not change the 730 AM service for anything, because the people that come are edified in the right way.

by using the old prayer book. Right? I think that's fantastic. Right? But you can do more than one thing if you're the size. If you're a small church, you can't do a million things. Right? So, that's a whole different thing.

[ 31 : 11 ] Keller talks a lot about different church sizes and how much you can do different, different things. Okay. Now, it's important. So, I said that his book is called Center Church, just so you can become conversant with it.

Right? There's a, that's it. Just so you know, so just remember, theological vision in the middle. He calls this, Center Church. Right? That's what the book's actually about.

Right? He calls it Center Church, developing your theological vision. Now, hopefully this is going to work. I've got a little video of him talking about this, and I have no idea if it's going to work.

So, we're going to give it a go, and let's see what happens. So, Center Church is about that step, creating your vision. Right? Creating your vision. Oh, I don't know if this is going to work.

Oh, here we go. We'll do it well. Yeah. Now, click the button. Why do we call this book Center Church? First, it's a call to biblically balanced, biblically centered ministry.

[ 32 : 15 ] The biblical plot line is creation, fall, redemption, and restoration, and we want ministry to be controlled simultaneously, all the time, by all of those parts of the biblical narrative.

Secondly, we call it Center Church because the ministry that we describe comes from urban and cultural centers. Things that work in cities, often we find work in places, outside cities as well, because today urban culture is so influential.

Thirdly, we call it Center Church because we want ministry to be gospel centered. It's possible to believe the gospel and proclaim the gospel and yet still not have your ministry completely shaped by the gospel, but rather be more affected by religious legalism or modern pragmatism.

Fourth, we call it Center Church because it presents a theological vision, which is in the middle between program and doctrine. In the early days of Redeemer, people came to me saying, tell us about the Redeemer model.

And I came to realize there was no specific Redeemer program model the same way there was a seeker church model or a self-church model. Theological vision is the result of deep reflection on the gospel and on your culture.

[ 33 : 34 ] The result is a set of theological values, vision, emphasis, skills, that enable you to translate your doctrine into effective ministry in your particular place and time.

And so we treat subjects like contextualization, how do you speak compellingly to people who don't believe what you believe? How do you holistically agree word and deed together in a way that doesn't compromise the gospel?

How do you engage culture? How do you work effectively in cities? In all these ways, the book is addressing issues that Christian leaders and ministers around the world are wrestling with today.

Okay. Okay. Now, so, theological vision.

This is what, this is Keller speaking about theological vision. The gospel is at its center. He's just talked about this a little bit in the video. It is one thing to have a ministry that is gospel believing and even gospel proclaiming, but quite another to have one that is gospel centered.

[ 34 : 38 ] Okay. So, what kind of thing? Is it the same thing? No, he's saying it's not the same thing. It's not the same thing. The second one, the center is a place of balance. Keller's really big on something he calls balance. Right? Well, I'll show you in a second what I'm talking about.

He's, so, we balance word and deed of challenging and affirming human culture. So, he's saying, you don't go into the culture and kind of say everything's bad because there is good stuff within culture.

You affirm the good stuff and you challenge the stuff which is not of God. Right? Of cultural engagement and counterculture distinctiveness. So, you want to be in the culture but not of the culture. That's what we started talking about. Right?

Of commitment to truth and generosity to others who don't share the same beliefs. Right? So, we're committed to the gospel but how do we communicate that to people who don't believe what we believe?

And I'm going to tell you from my experience in Canada, I just talked, we just had the Artisa guys away for a couple days and I talked to them for half an hour but here's what I think is going to be your greatest challenge for the future. It's political correctness.

[ 35 : 37 ] When I was in school before any of the Artisa guys were born, I had to do a course called Man in Society in Hamilton, Ontario which was in grade 11.

Everyone had to do it and it was basically a course of being a good Canadian. Right? And part of that course was tolerance and I believe in tolerance. Right? So, we talked about racial tolerance, we talked about against racism, against sexism, against ageism, and against religious intolerance.

Now, do you see what's happened? Do you see what's happened? When I was 17 years old, being, saying that your faith is right and others is wrong was equated with racism and was equated with sexism.

It was put in the same bucket. Right? It's not the same bucket, right? But this is the world that you're actually, we're doing ministry in. Right? So, and in New York City it's the same. It's very similar.

Okay? And of tradition and innovation and practice. That's the other balance. Right? We have tradition, we have innovation. How do you balance those two things? Last two things.

[ 36 : 45 ] This theological vision is shaped by and for urban and cultural centers so it's very much about ministry in the city. That's where we have to be focusing. But as he said, because urban culture accuses everything now, there's less and less of a rural culture so a lot of stuff actually will flow over to the rural area and the theological vision is at the center of ministry.

That's what we've talked about in the video. So, this is, he works a lot with a guy called Richard Lintz who's from Gordon-Conwell who's one of the lecturers there. So this is very interesting.

See the theological vision. This is Richard Lintz speaking. Having recognized the source of the conversation, God, we must then take into account those with whom he speaks. God does not speak in a vacuum but to and through people and in and through history.

The speech of God is addressed to people across different cultural histories and for this reason, among others, it is often misunderstood and misinterpreted. Nicodemus and the Pharisees stood in a tradition, were conditioned by a culture and applied certain principles of rationality to their own conversations with Jesus.

We do the same today. It is critical that the people of God come to an awareness of their historical, cultural, and rational filters so that they will not be ruled by them. Okay? What?

[ 37 : 54 ] I'm going to have to really go through this and you're only getting, we're going to go over the top of it. Okay? Theological vision. A theological vision allows people to see their culture, this is important, in a way different than they had ever been able to see it before.

So it's about us as Christians being able to look at our culture in a way which will help us proclaim the gospel to the culture. Alright? Those who are empowered by the theological vision do not simply stand against the mainstream impulses of the culture, but take the initiative both to understand and speak to that culture from the framework of the scriptures.

The modern theological vision must seek to bring the entire counsel of God into the world of its time in order that its time might be transformed. See what he's actually saying? That as people of God under the work of the Holy Spirit, just like in the book of Acts was transforming the cities in the book of Acts, we're meant to transform the cities that we live in.

Right? By the gospel. Okay. So here's his three centers of balance of theological vision. So this is what he talks about coming up with your vision, right?

You have to actually take into account these three things. So first of all, the gospel. Right? Do we actually go towards legalism and religion? And I know these are big things too, right?

[ 39 : 15 ] So legalism or religion or do we go the complete opposite way in relativism and irreligion? Right? Do we kind of say, do we actually preach that you have to do these things to be saved?

Right? Which we all know is wrong because we're saved by grace. Or do we go the complete opposite way and say you don't have to do anything to be saved? Right? That's like irreligion and it's relativism and how do we actually balance those two things?

Right? The city. Are we under-adapted to minister it to the city? All we ever do is just critique it.

Right? So we just, we stand separate from the city. We are not part of the city. We don't integrate into the life of the city. We're a separate little kind of club. We have nothing to do with the mainstream of the city.

Or do we over-adapt it? You know, do we never actually critique the city? Do we never critique the things that people love in the city? Do we never actually hold it up to the gospel and say this stuff is good but you know what?

[ 40 : 14 ] This stuff that you're being taught and that you're told is valuable is actually not valuable. Right? How do we balance those two things? And finally, the movement. Do we have a church which is very, very structured?

It's very traditional. It has a set hierarchy. Or do we go more towards a fluid organism where we don't have much structure at all? We don't have maybe no denominations at all.

We don't have any type of tradition that we bring into our church meetings. Right? Now, Keller says, eat any of these extremes on the left or right or wrong.

Right? You actually have to take into account all those different things and figure out the balance that you're going to have as a church community in your given time and in your given place. Now, if you're kind of thinking, I don't get this and that seems really complicated.

It is pretty complicated. That's why you should buy the book. And that's why we're going to ask Dr. Packer at the end. But hopefully, I'm making you conversant with Tim Keller at least. Right? So you get an idea of what he's actually on the book.

[ 41 : 18 ] Okay. We're going to take a look. So let's go back again. Let's go back again. We're going to concentrate in this area here. Right? In the few minutes we've got left, I want us to look in more detail at this area here.

Because this is perhaps Keller's most controversial thing. Right? Perhaps. His beliefs are solid.

I mean, his beliefs pretty much line up with us. He lines up with the Westminster Confession of Faith, which is a Presbyterian Confession of Faith, and that's got a lot of overlap with what we believe as Anglicans and stuff. So, and then his, you know, his movement, that's a point of discussion, but in the time we've got, I want to focus on the city stuff.

Because that's how he talks about how we actually cross the culture into the city. Right? So, gospel contextualization is what he talks a lot about, which is not giving people what they want to hear, but giving the Bible's answers to questions about life, about life in language and forms they understand.

And with appeals and arguments they feel, even if they reject them. So this is obviously going to seriously affect how you preach. It's going to seriously affect how you do outreach. It's going to seriously affect what ministries you're going to run, how they're going to look, how you're going to advertise them, what you're going to invite your neighbors to.

[ 42 : 37 ] Right? See, it's actually saying gospel contextualization. It's actually, a lot of it's communication. Right? Are we actually talking to people in a language you understand? Are we actually making sense to people? Not that we're actually going to become of them, but are we actually speaking their language?

Right? Now, I've got a little video here again of Tim talking about gospel contextualization. So let's give it a go. Contextualization, at first, sounds to people like, oh, you're just giving people what they want to hear.

No, no, no. Contextualization actually does not mean giving people what they want to hear. It means giving them the Bible's answer, which I may not want to hear at all, to the questions that people at their place and time are asking in language and forms that are comprehensible, and by giving people the gospel with arguments and appeals that have a force that they feel.

Whether or not they agree with them, they still see it as compelling. You know you've contextualized when there's three kinds of people out there when you're done. You've got some people who agree they're persuaded.

You've got some people who disagree, but they say, man, I really respect the way in which you did that. Very compelling, very persuasive, you know, very smart, really good.

[ 44 : 08 ] I still don't agree. You have people who are persuaded. Secondly, people who respect you though they're not persuaded. And then the people who don't respect you and aren't persuaded. And you see, the better the contextualizer you are, the smaller that group is.

And the worse you are at it, the bigger that group is. Okay. Okay, so just from that, you're going to see why a lot of people are like, I really don't like Tim Keller at all.

Some people hate him. I really don't like him. Okay. Just a small number. That small number, are you saying? That disagree with him. Well, it depends what, I've been reading critiques of him over the last couple of weeks, so quite a few people don't like him at all.

Okay, here's another. He's going to talk again in a second, and this is about the under-adapted, so we're talking about CD again, right? So the under-adapted ministries, which only kind of critique and say we don't like this about you, versus the ones which are over-adapted and everything's awesome, you guys are awesome and your work is awesome and everything you're doing is great and we love you and come to our church, right?

Those are two quite opposite poles, right? So here's Keller talking about this issue. If you over-adapted to a culture that you're trying to reach, it means you buy into the culture's animals.

[ 45 : 40 ] In other words, if you over-adapted, that means you only adapt and you don't challenge. you only talk about where we agree and you don't ever offend, you don't ever confront.

So if you over-adapt to a culture, you're buying into the culture's animals, you're trying too much to be white. On the other hand, if you under-adapt to a culture, if you're so afraid of over-adapting, you're so afraid of selling out, you're so afraid and you really do everything you can just to be as offensive as you can possibly in.

In other words, if you say, I'm not going to make any difference at all, I grew up in the 1940s in the middle of the Midwest and now here I'm ministering in the 1990s in the middle of Manhattan.

I'm not going to make any changes at all. I'm going to preach, I'm going to sing, we're going to do everything exactly the way I did growing up. Then you bought into your own culture's idol. In other words, you've made an idol out of your own culture.

If you're under-adapting or over-adapting, you're really compromising the gospel. You're really saying culture is more important than the gospel itself. So, there's a danger on both sides and this is the hardest thing for me to get across the country.

[ 46 : 55 ] Because almost everybody I know either comes from a part of the church that says, the church is stuck in the mud, it's rigid, it's locked in the past, we've got to get relevant, we've got to engage the culture.

That's the real problem. There's other people out there saying, no, the church is being assimilated, into the culture, we're being co-opted, we're losing our distinctiveness, we're just becoming worldly, and the whole problem is over-adapting.

If you think the main problem of the church is over-adapting, or if you think the main problem of the church is over-adapting, you're probably doing the opposite mistake right now. he's seen a lot of churches in his life.

Okay. So, once more, we're going to take a little bit look down here, just one more video from him, about different types of churches.

Okay, different types of churches. can you turn it, just a little bit? Yeah, I can't, sorry, I don't, yeah, this is, this is, I should have brought in a better speaker, but, I can't go any higher, Karen, I'm sorry.

[ 48 : 01 ] two ways of understanding religion. The one is, if you live a good life, then God will bless you and take you to heaven when you die.

It's obviously by works. The other approach to religion is, you're saved because of what Jesus Christ has done, and you're saved as a sinner, saved by grace, just by resting on him. I want you to think about weakness and strength in terms of those two systems.

In the first system, God stays in heaven. He doesn't need to come to earth. He gives you the law and you have to obey. So he stays strong. And the way you're saved is by being strong, summoning up the blood, coming together, pulling yourself together, and being good, and being fair, and doing what you should do, and obeying the law, and then you go to heaven.

So it's a strong God speaking to strong people being strong in that salvation. That's what religion is all about. And there's a gospel. And in the gospel, God becomes weak, he empties himself, comes down, and he creates a salvation that you have to receive, and the only way to do that is for you to become weak and say, I am a sinner, have mercy on me a sinner.

People who are saved by works will necessarily run a church for themselves. They'll say, come on, pull it together, get it together, figure it out. We're not going to come to you, you come to us.

[ 49 : 28 ] You can work at it, don't worry, you can make it. But a church that's really shaped by the gospel will say, no, no, no, no, we're going to go to you because that's what Jesus did.

Okay. Okay. I'm going to leave it on that. Hopefully I've given you a taste, a taste, an introduction to Tim Keller's thinking about urban ministry.

there's lots of stuff online. You can look at more videos, you can buy the book. You get this from Regent College. You can also download it for an electronic format for four or five bucks, right, which is a lot cheaper than buying it in hardcover, believe me.

But it's worth the investment because it would be almost impossible to read on a Kindle. It's just too massive. So I would get the old-fashioned way, right, the old-fashioned way. Remember, not a bad way of storing information, right?

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