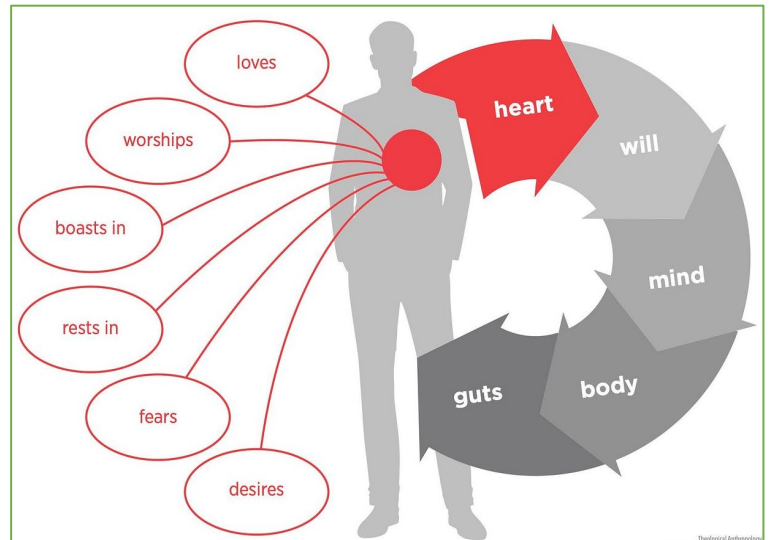


How to Preach to the Heart

For my mind there are two reasons Tim Keller's preaching continues to reach such a swath of hearers: 1) he knows how to vividly preach the gospel from the whole counsel of God, and 2) he is a master at preaching to the heart.

Chapter six, "Preaching Christ to the Heart," in his recent [Preaching: Communicating Faith in a Skeptical Age](#) offers untold homiletical riches on the subject of heralding heart-searching sermons. It includes a section appropriately designated, "How To Preach to the Heart." Keller offers six adverbs to help preachers connect their sermons to their people's hearts. Here they are with some brief comments from The Manhattan Man.



Preach Affectionately

"If you want to preach to the heart, you need to preach *from* the heart. It's got to be clear that your own heart has been reached by the truth of the text. This takes non-deliberate transparency. Heart-moving preachers (in contrast to heart-manipulating ones) reveal their own affections without really trying to. What is required is that as you speak it become evident in all sorts of ways that you yourself have been humbled, wounded, healed, comforted, and exalted by the truths you are presenting, and that they have genuine power in your life."

Preach Imaginatively

"To engage the heart is also to engage the imagination, and the imagination is more affected by images than by propositions. Here we are talking about what are usually termed 'sermon illustrations.' . . . The essence of a good illustration is to evoke a remembered sense experience and bring it into connection with a principle. That makes the truth real both by helping listeners better understand it and by inclining hearts more to love it."

Preach Wondrously

"If we are going to preach to the heart, we need also to evoke wonder . . . Christian preachers and teachers must preach in such a way as to show people the profound good news of that truth. They must point these things out at every turn and have the sense of wonder appropriate to such astonishing claims. Even those of us who believe in the gospel cannot take it in. We do not preach with the tears of joy we should so often have. As we preach we should always open ourselves to let the wonder sink in."

Preach Memorably

"Some modern expository preachers spend so much time on understanding and explaining the text that they have little time to think about two other things: practical application and striking, memorable, fluent use of language. One thing that makes a sermon memorable is its insight. Rather than telling the listeners things they already know in terms they know, a memorable address is filled with fresh, insightful ways of conveying concepts—concepts the listeners may already know at one level but find new and interesting."

Preach Christocentrically

"Here I need only to say that preaching Christ is not only the ultimate way to fully understand a text, nor just the best way to simultaneously reach those who don't believe and those who do, but also the way to be sure that your address moves beyond a dry lecture and becomes a real proclamation of the truth that reaches the heart."

Preach Practically

“Preaching to the heart is to preach practically . . . diversify your conversation partners . . . diversify whom you picture as you prepare . . . weave application throughout the sermon . . . use variety . . . be emotionally aware . . . Be sure, when you deal very specifically with people’s behavior and thoughts, that you combine an evident love for them with your straight talk about sin. Be both warm and forceful when dealing with personal questions—never scolding, never even disappointed.”

