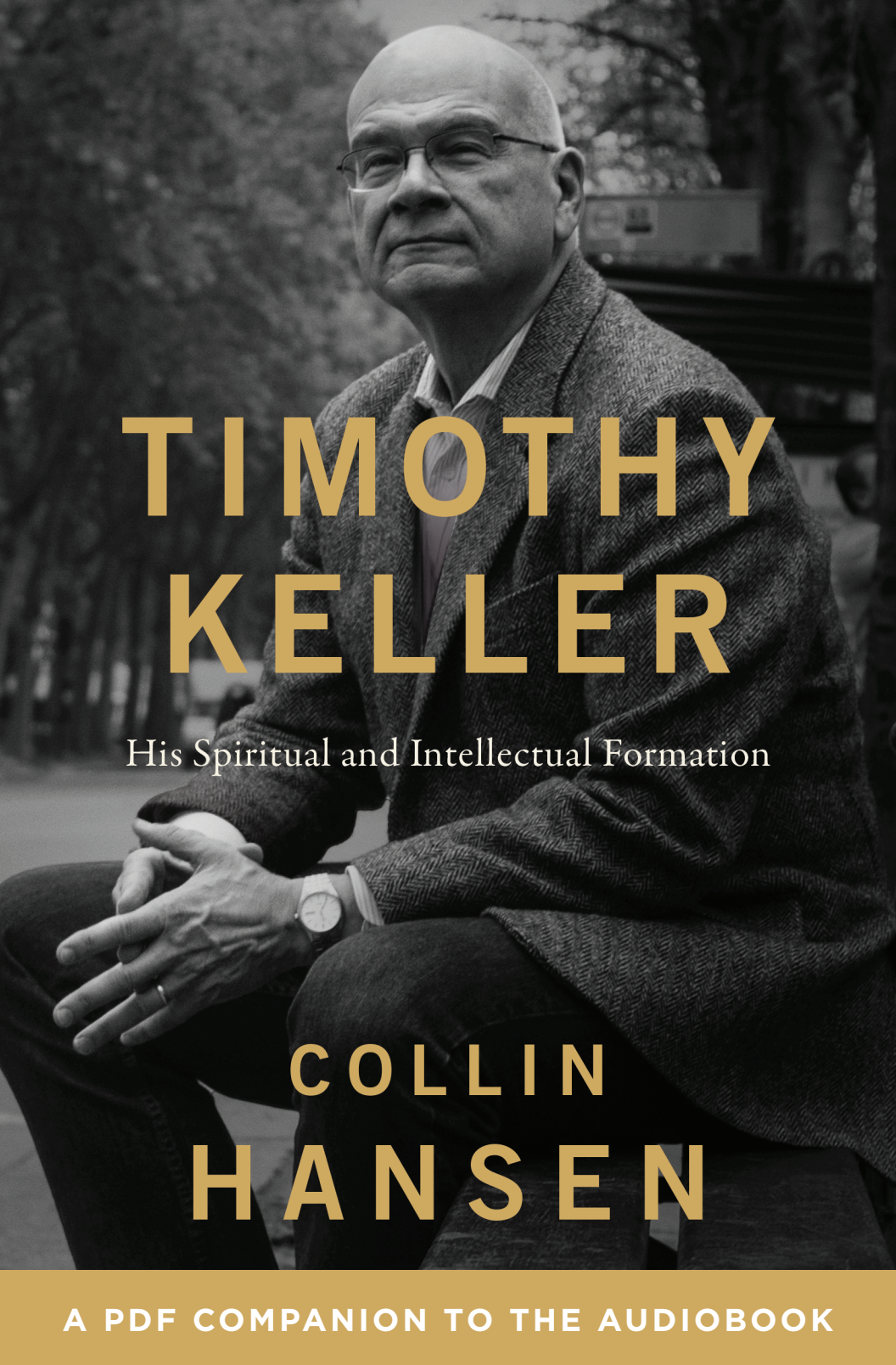




# TIMOTHY KELLER

His Spiritual and Intellectual Formation

COLLIN  
HANSEN

A PDF COMPANION TO THE AUDIOBOOK

ZONDERVAN REFLECTIVE

*Timothy Keller*

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The Keller family moved into their new Allentown, Pennsylvania, house in 1967, the year before Tim (far left) started college at Bucknell. Tim's mother, Louise, stands next to him, holding the family cat. Billy (center) died in 1998. Sharon stands next to their father, Bill (far right).



Bucknell students went on strike in May 1970 to protest the National Guard killing of four Kent State students after President Nixon expanded the Vietnam War. Tim and other InterVarsity members engaged the striking students in evangelistic conversations.



Barbara Boyd delivered her “Lordship Talk” at Bear Trap Ranch in Colorado, the InterVarsity camp Tim attended for a month in the summer of 1971. Boyd’s “Bible and Life” series provided him with his foundation for studying God’s Word.



Ed Clowney is the only close personal influence who knew Tim from his awkward Bucknell years in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania, through the Redeemer megachurch years in New York City. By the end of Clowney’s life, he and Keller were reaching together at Reformed Theological Seminary.

MAGDALENE COLLEGE,  
CAMBRIDGE.

23 April 63

Dear Kathy

Congratulations on keeping house!

By the way I also understand "I got a book" But  
your teacher and I are not "English teachers" in  
the same sense. She has to put across an idea  
of what the English language ought to be: I'm  
concerned entirely with what it is and how it  
came to be what it is. In fact she is a  
gardener distinguishing "flowers" from "weeds";  
I am a botanist and am interested in both  
as vegetable organisms.

Love you much,

Yours

C. S. Lewis

C. S. Lewis mediated a dispute between twelve-year-old Kathy Keller and her English teacher in this letter from April 1963. His last letter to her was sent less than two weeks before he died on November 22, 1963. Kathy shared her love for Lewis's Narnia series with Tim.





Francis Schaeffer advised R. C. Sproul on plans for Ligonier Valley Study Center based on the fruitful but exhausting experience of L'Abri in Switzerland.

Classes offered by Ligonier Valley Study Center the summer before Tim and Kathy began seminary illustrate the broader Reformed revival underway in the Pittsburgh area during the early 1970s.

**LIGONIER VALLEY STUDY CENTER**  
**SUMMER SCHEDULE - 1972**

**MAY 10-JUNE 9 BASIC OLD TESTAMENT THEMES**  
An introduction to basic Old Testament theology with focus on themes of creation, fall, covenant, law, prophetic criticism, wisdom literature etc. This course is designed to encourage and facilitate study of the Old Testament.

**JUNE 12 - JUNE 23 PERSON AND WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**  
A study of the person of the Holy Spirit as revealed in Old and New Testament. Special attention will be given to the work of the Spirit in Creation and Redemption. The controversial matter of the "Baptism" and "Gifts" of the Spirit will also be studied.

**JUNE 26 - JUNE 30 CHURCH AND SACRAMENTS (one week - \$10)**  
An investigation of the Biblical view of the Church and Sacraments as well as a survey of the development of these themes in Church History. Special attention will be given to the controversial issue of infant baptism.

**JULY 10 - JULY 21 CHRISTIAN ETHICS**  
An introduction to principles of Christian personal and social ethics with particular attention given to controversial issues of the present. Questions of war, abortion, sexual behaviour, capital punishment, etc. will be dealt with.

**JULY 24 - AUG. 4 PERSON AND WORK OF CHRIST**  
An investigation into the New Testament portrait of Jesus with special attention given to the titles of Jesus such as "Messiah", "Son of Man", "Lord", etc. and a survey of the critical events in the life of Jesus such as his birth, baptism, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, etc.

**AUG. 7 - AUG. 18 CHRISTIANITY AND EXISTENTIALISM**  
A survey of existential thought dealing with the works of Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Sartre, Camus, Jaspers, et al with a special view to their influence upon, and conflict with, classical Christianity.

**AUG. 28 - SEPT. 8 BASIC NEW TESTAMENT THEMES**  
An introduction into the theology of the New Testament with a special view to the concept of the Kingdom of God. The distinctives of Pauline and Johannine theology will be studied.

**SEPT. 11 - SEPT. 22 BASIC REFORMED THEOLOGY**  
An introduction into the distinctive theological issues of the reformation including the question of authority, justification, predestination, etc. - the thought of Luther and Calvin will be given special attention.

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**COST:** \$60, includes room and board. Some work scholarships available.

**TO REGISTER:** send \$10 non-refundable deposit to  
Jin Thompson  
Ligonier Valley Study Center  
Stahstown, Pa. 15687



R. C. Sproul's ask-anything "gabfests" became a Monday night highlight at Ligonier Valley Study Center. Tim did the same on Sunday nights for his Hopewell church.

The faculty of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary offered students like the Kellers a theological smorgasbord that continued to nourish them over decades of ministry.



Gordon-Conwell students sensed they were part of something new and exciting at the school led by the architects of American evangelicalism.



Roger Nicole (left) and J. I. Packer (center) gave Tim models of theological conviction with an irenic spirit. Sometimes Nicole presented opposing views so effectively that students couldn't help but conclude that Nicole's own view was wrong.



The “notoriously absentminded” Richard Lovelace (right) introduced Tim to the pneumodynamics in writers as diverse as Flannery O'Connor and John Owen.



Elisabeth Elliot taught both Kellers in her Gordon-Conwell class on “Christian Expression in Speech, Writing, and Behavior.” The tall, imposing, and deeply convictional Elliot shaped both Tim and Kathy in what came to be known as the complementary roles of men and women in the church and home.



The Kellers dedicated their book *The Meaning of Marriage* to “the Robins,” a group of friends from the Gordon-Conwell days who have stuck close through theological changes, child-rearing, and vacations together. Left to right, the couples are (women in foreground) Gayle and Gary Somers, Cindy and Jim Widmer, Kathy and Tim Keller, Louise and David Midwood, and Jane and Wendy Frazier. Not pictured: Adele and Doug Calhoun.



# TABLE TALK

## HERMENEUTICAL NESTORIANISM

Human Christians can differ on very basic issues. We would like to take issue with the CCTS New Testament department on its methodological presuppositions in hermeneutics. To throw the real problem into sharp relief, we will call attention to an analogy traditionally used to characterize the Scriptures and recently endorsed by men such as F. Hagius and G. Bornley.

What is the relationship of the human element of scripture to the divine? We know the Scripture is a fully human book, with a normal grammatical, historical, psychological context. At the same time, the Bible is considered by itself in general and Christ in particular to be not just inspired men's words about God but God's inspired words, historically written. Thus the entire Bible can be said to be the work of one author and intent.

The only parallel example we have of such perfect divine revelation in history is Christ Himself. The analogy is obvious: just as Jesus was fully and truly divine and human yet one Person, so the Bible is fully divine message, written by men, yet one book. "To ignore either the divine or human authorship is to miss the reality of the Bible and the full profit of its teaching" (Bornley, *New Bible Commentary*).

During the Reformation, two basic principles of biblical interpretation emerged in reaction to Rome. First, the "simple, original" sense of Scripture was alone considered binding and valid (as opposed to allegorical sense, etc.). Secondly, the unity of Scripture was asserted in that Scripture was to be interpreted by Scripture (Scriptura Scripturae Interpretes), and any particular verse was to be interpreted in light of the unified sense of Scripture (the *analogia fidei*). It is interesting to note that each of these principles serves to anchor hermeneutics firmly in each of the two natures of Scripture.

The CCTS N.T. department believes strongly that all theological presuppositions must be put behind us when we go to the text of the

Bible. Scripture Scripturae Interpretes is a theological presupposition, says Prof. Schuler. Dr. Michaels believes we must read the Bible as any other historical document, and then our initial stance toward the Bible we hold in common with any unbiased neo-orthodox, liberal, Jewish or atheist historical-literary critic. We can work side by side with them to ascertain the original intent and meaning of the text, and only subsequently to express (as we look on the text, bringing our own religious tradition to bear on it) to discover the "theological" application.

This is a noble try at scientific objectivity. Nevertheless, what "put your theological presuppositions behind you" really means is "put behind you the assumption that there is a divine author, and assume that it is human". Thus the two natures are separated and dealt with apart from each other. This approach, when applied to the examination of Christ's Person, was branded Nestorianism. It was judged to be singularly inadequate, for the natures cannot be somehow abstracted from each other. Christ's work cannot be understood in such an artificial manner. In this approach, then, also inadequate in examining the Bible! We believe it is, and we would note several results of this approach which attest to this.

First of all, from this point of view an unhealthy gap between biblical and theological studies develops. Many doctrines would not be considered "biblical" but rather "theological". A loss of systematizing biblical content is really the result of under-crediting the unity of divine authorship; the result is a kind of "cafeteria theology" of unrelated themes. If one unconsciously undervalues all of Scripture, what violence is done in relating and reconciling the text?

Not only does this Nestorian hermeneutic undermine the unity of the Bible, but ultimately even the "simple" sense of Scripture is hurt. By setting aside the "presupposition" of divine authorship and intent, the meaning of the

human author becomes culturally bound, and an actual sound "theological" or "eschatological" sense (sense *plenus*) must be posited to relate the text to the 20th century. Rather than two meanings, historical and theological, we should have two hermeneutic steps. These steps should be done distinctly, yet neither without reference to both natures of Scripture. (This parallels good Christological method.)

It is important to note that to assume the unity of scripture is not a theological presupposition as such; it is an evaluation of the kind of literature to be interpreted. Any hermeneutic must adapt itself to the genre of literature to which it is being applied. If the Bible is to any degree unique literature, then to that same degree it deserves a unique hermeneutic.

We cannot fault Dr. Michaels and Schuler's scholarship of intentions. There certainly is a danger of evangelicals being monophyllites as doctrinal disputes in non-spiritualized biblical interpretation. If the human nature of Scripture is not distinguished, there is a tendency for the divine to take over. It is to separate the two natures in a Nestorian fashion tends to diminish the divine nature for the human.

We would end sounding these warnings. 1) This interpretation is imperfect since it ultimately puts the "simple meaning" of the text beyond the average person's grasp, since Ignatius or Josephus throws better light on a passage from Paul than does Pate or Peter. 2) This hermeneutic does not prepare students to move on into theological studies. By the time they take a systematic course many find it artificial and "bored". 3) As orthodox believers, we must not be obscurantists, yet we must not assume that the world's scholarship, performed by religious folk who are not, is somehow neutral and without inclination to mist truth when it runs counter to modern convictions. Our own hearts should show us this.

...sounding of empty clichés. If we hope to change our culture, we will have to change our lives, and take the gospel seriously. Clark H. Pincock in *Set Forth Your Case*

The first issue of *Table Talk*, edited by Tim and several other Gordon-Conwell students, featured his article "Hermeneutical Nestorianism," which sharply criticized two professors of New Testament.



David Midwood (left) joined Tim in founding the Edmund P. Clowney Fan Club at Gordon-Conwell. Among Tim's closest friends, David died of colon cancer in 2014.



Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.  
Used with permission.

Tim returned to his alma mater of Gordon-Conwell to deliver the 2016 spring convocation address. By this time, he had become a world-renowned church leader, in contrast to his days as an intelligent but overlooked student.

Tim and Kathy joined more than seventeen thousand young Christians at Urbana '76, which featured speakers Billy Graham, John Perkins, Edmund Clowney, Elisabeth Elliot, and Helen Roseveare. John Stott delivered four expositions on the biblical basis for missions.



Courtesy of Urbana. InterVarsity's student mission conference



Courtesy of Urbana. InterVarsity's student mission conference

John Stott gave Tim his first model for expositional preaching. To Keller, Stott did more than anyone else in creating evangelicalism as the middle space between fundamentalism and liberalism.



Hopewell, Virginia, became the focus of an environmental scandal just before the Kellers arrived in this former home of a DuPont dynamite factory. All three Keller sons were born in Hopewell.

Tim's meager salary in Hopewell didn't include a book budget. But friends and family gave him Banner of Truth titles for Christmas, and he read them throughout the following year. His favorite authors included Thomas Brooks, John Owen, and Charles Spurgeon.



Banner of Truth Trust. Used with permission.



Tim (back row, third from left) joined the faculty of Westminster Theological Seminary in 1984 and took over his mentor Edmund Clowney's courses on preaching and pastoral leadership.



Harvie Conn served as Tim's department chair in practical theology at Westminster Theological Seminary. Conn's emphasis on contextualization paved the way for his colleague Keller to plant a city center church in New York.

Jack Miller was Tim and Kathy's pastor for five years, from 1984 to 1989, at New Life Presbyterian Church in Glenside, Pennsylvania. Before the Kellers planted Redeemer in New York, New Life showed them how a culture of gospel renewal applied to social justice, worship, evangelism, and missions.







New York in the 1970s and 1980s earned a reputation for high crime levels, which discouraged many Christians from moving there to evangelize and start churches. Early Redeemer members prayed for the renewal of the city and believed those prayers were answered as the city prospered in the 1990s.



In June 1989, the Kellers moved to Roosevelt Island in the East River and have never changed apartments. They found on the island a relatively quiet place in the city to raise their family.

Silence descended over New York after the initial cacophony of planes crashing, towers collapsing, and ambulances racing. Not long after the Tuesday attacks, Tim's mind turned to his Sunday message, which was heard by nearly double Redeemer's normal attendance.



Overseen by Kathy Keller, the fundraising brochure for what would become Redeemer Presbyterian Church touted the opportunity for ministry in this capital of finance, education, politics, and art.

The leader of the PCA's church planting project in New York is Timothy Keller. A graduate of Bucknell University (B.A., 1972), Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (M.Div., 1979), and Westminster Theological Seminary (D.Min., 1983), Dr. Keller began his ministry career while still in seminary as an associate staff member of Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship. During a nine-year pastorate in Virginia, Dr. Keller saw his own church triple in size and supervised the successful planting of 24 churches in the middle Atlantic states.

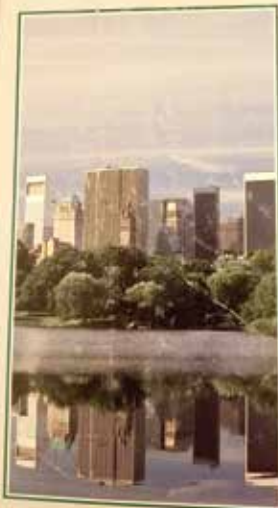
For the past five years Tim Keller has been a professor at Westminster Seminary, teaching communication, ministry and leadership. While in Philadelphia, he was involved in ministries to the business, homosexual and Muslim communities, for urban singles; and to college, graduate and foreign students. He has also been involved with several other church planting projects in the Philadelphia and New York areas. Dr. Keller has served as the Director of Mercy Ministries for Mission to North America. He also chaired the steering committee of Tenth Presbyterian Church's ministry to AIDS victims in Philadelphia.

Dr. Keller's latest book, *The Ministries of Mercy*, calls churches to obey Jesus' command to minister to the needy in their communities. Tim, his wife Kathy, and their three sons will live in Manhattan.



## New York City

A ministry strategy for the future



**What can you do?** You may live in New York City within reach of one of our congregations. In that case, we invite you to join us if you are not committed now to an evangelical church. Contact us to discuss the details of the vision we have outlined.

You may be able to contribute financial resources personally, or to encourage your congregation to do so. Financial cost is an unavoidable ministry issue in New York. The expense of working and living in the city has discouraged many churches and ministers from laboring here. We need a great deal of financial support, but the spiritual return of this project will dwarf the expenses.

You can pray for us and with us. On September 1857, a lay minister on Fulton Street in downtown Manhattan started a noontime prayer meeting for spiritual revival. Though only six people came that day—and all of them half an hour late!—by the following year, more than 10,000 businessmen in New York were praying together daily, the churches were overflowing, and the New York press was flabbergasted. In the next two years, over one million people were converted across the United States as a direct result of that prayer meeting. What more could we accomplish if you remember to pray for God's work in New York City? We invite you to join us.



Yvonne Sawyer (bride in white) served as the first leader of Hope for New York, Redeemer's mercy ministry. In the only wedding ceremony Tim ever included in a regular worship service, he preached his famous message "The Girl Nobody Wanted."



When Redeemer Presbyterian Church opened the \$50 million W83 facility in 2012, it was the first new Manhattan church building in forty years.



As cofounder and vice president of The Gospel Coalition, Tim drafted its theological vision for ministry, which was debated and adopted by the full council of pastors at a 2007 meeting on the campus of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School north of Chicago.

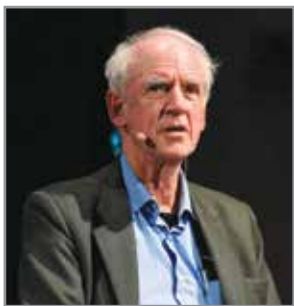


Tim and Kathy share a lighthearted moment as they participate in a panel about the roles and gifts of men and women during The Gospel Coalition's 2014 women's conference in Orlando, Florida.

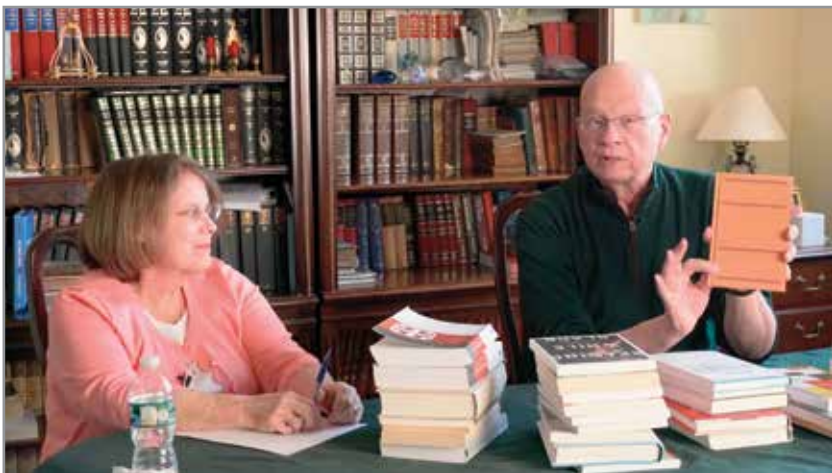
During The Gospel Coalition's inaugural 2007 national conference, Tim delivered a message on "gospel-centered ministry" in which he extolled Jesus Christ as the "true and better" fulfillment of God's redemptive plan.







Charles Taylor became a staple influence on Tim's thinking, writing, and teaching after 2013. Keller read Taylor's monumental book *A Secular Age* twice, line by line, in two years.



Tim's diagnosis of pancreatic cancer in 2020, along with the COVID-19 pandemic, kept him largely confined to his Roosevelt Island home with Kathy. Not since seminary had the Kellers spent so much time together, and Tim continued to recommend his favorite books, new and old.

Tim (left) joined author Collin Hansen at Samford University in Birmingham, Alabama, after lectures on pastoral ministry and faith and work on Election Day, November 8, 2016.

