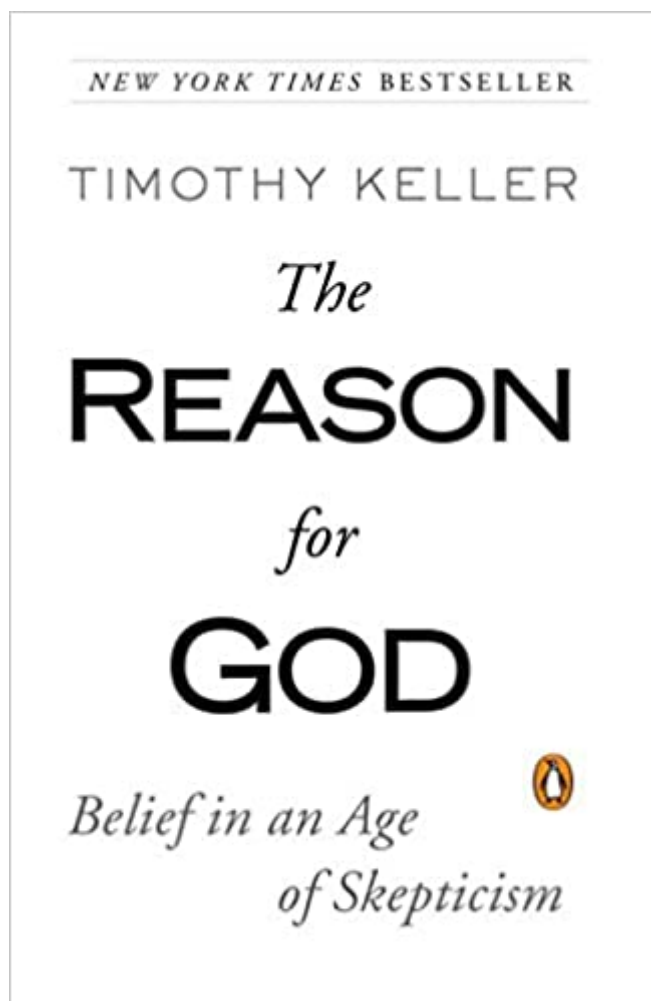


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# The Reason For God: Belief In An Age Of Skepticism



## Synopsis

A New York Times bestseller people can believe in by "a pioneer of the new urban Christians" (Christianity Today) and the "C.S. Lewis for the 21st century" (Newsweek). Timothy Keller, the founding pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City, addresses the frequent doubts that skeptics, and even ardent believers, have about religion. Using literature, philosophy, real-life conversations, and potent reasoning, Keller explains how the belief in a Christian God is, in fact, a sound and rational one. To true believers he offers a solid platform on which to stand their ground against the backlash to religion created by the Age of Skepticism. And to skeptics, atheists, and agnostics, he provides a challenging argument for pursuing the reason for God. Look out for Timothy Keller's latest book, *The Songs of Jesus*.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In this apologia for Christian faith, Keller mines material from literary classics, philosophy, anthropology and a multitude of other disciplines to make an intellectually compelling case for God. Written for skeptics and the believers who love them, the book draws on the author's encounters as founding pastor of New York's booming Redeemer Presbyterian Church. One of Keller's most provocative arguments is that all doubts, however skeptical and cynical they may seem, are really a set of alternate beliefs. Drawing on sources as diverse as 19th-century author Robert Louis Stevenson and contemporary New Testament theologian N.T. Wright, Keller attempts to deconstruct everyone he finds in his way, from the evolutionary psychologist Richard Dawkins to popular author Dan Brown. The first, shorter part of the book looks at popular arguments against

God's existence, while the second builds on general arguments for God to culminate in a sharp focus on the redemptive work of God in Christ. Keller's condensed summaries of arguments for and against theism make the scope of the book overwhelming at times. Nonetheless, it should serve both as testimony to the author's encyclopedic learning and as a compelling overview of the current debate on faith for those who doubt and for those who want to re-evaluate what they believe, and why. (Feb. 14) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

**\*Starred Review\*** Keller has just made life harder for preaching atheists such as Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, and Christopher Hitchens. For with this tightly reasoned defense of faith, he challenges the evangelists of doubt on their own ground. One by one, the arguments for unbelief fall before Keller's unrelenting logic. The claim that science has disproved religion comes in for particular scrutiny, as Keller deflects the antireligious syllogism that converts evolutionary theory into an obituary for orthodoxy. Keller even turns the tables on rationalists, adducing compelling evidence for scriptural doctrines, including the physical resurrection of Christ. And although Keller frankly acknowledges that inquisitors have justified atrocities as religious duties, he nonetheless traces the modern concept of human rights back to religious roots and exposes the fragility of such rights when shorn from those roots. We start down the road to Hitler's death camps and Stalin's gulag, he warns, whenever we refuse to recognize in fellow humans the divine image of God. But by recognizing that image, Keller affirms, we open sacred possibilities not only for redemption in the hereafter but also for social justice here and now. Readers expecting Keller to deliver the usual pious bromides may experience a profound shock to their spiritual and social complacency. --Bryce Christensen --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

I have been disappointed by so many Christian books I read- especially those that try to "prove" God. Being well acquainted with logic and rhetoric, the blatant logical fallacies often times presented as "proofs" is an embarrassment to Christian intellect. Then I read this book. Tim doesn't try to "prove" Christianity or that God exists- no one can do this. But he makes excellent, well articulated and reasoned arguments for why it is reasonable to believe in God. If you are looking for theology, this is not your book (this book is much more philosophical if anything). But if you are looking for a book that argues the rationale for belief in God from a reasonable perspective, this is your book! Very highly recommended!

I read this from the library last year and it was in the top five of all the books I read for 2015 (~40). In fact, I'd recommend it for Christians and non-Christians alike; Tim Keller does a marvelous job of talking through why it is intellectually honest to believe in God. What I like about this book (and Tim Keller in general) is that he doesn't claim to be making a foolproof argument--he gives thoughts for you to consider and ponder and put together on your own. I purchased this because I wanted it as part of my home library and to re-read again. I'd strongly, strongly recommend this book.

Timothy Keller is a reasoned civil voice representing reason in the Christian faith. He has a humble but direct approach to difficult questions that believers and non-believers alike often struggle with. While the book primarily presents his arguments which are rational and reason based, he also acknowledges the need for Christians to demonstrate Christ's love to all regardless of their beliefs. This is, in my view primarily what Jesus calls us to be, people who are genuine in their love and service to others.

I found the book refreshing in that it approaches the issue from a skeptic's viewpoint, even if the author is a minister. It then proceeds to answer the logical questions raised from a rational perspective as opposed to a faith-based perspective. Definitely an interesting read.

It seems appropriate to say, "Wow! This book is so incredibly well written!" Furthermore, you don't have to be a philosophical genius to understand the author's profound insights. Chapter 12, especially, was quite a blessing! It's been over a dozen years since I've highlighted so many parts in one chapter as I did in chapter 12 of this book! It spoke so well and convincingly of the sacrifice Christ made for us by forgiving our sins and of the sacrifice we make when we forgive the sins of our neighbors. Every Christian (and every Christian-to-be) should have a copy of this book in their personal library!

I find myself making a lot of deep connections with this book in daily conversations as I'm reading it (I read only a couple of chapters a week). I haven't found myself balking at anything in it yet, which is rare for me with this kind (faith defence) of book.

I believe it was in 1988 when I attended a weekend conference in New Jersey where Tim Keller was the speaker. He was then telling people about his plans to move to New York City, to Manhattan, to start a conservative Presbyterian church there. He felt called to minister to a large city population at

a time when many churches were fleeing to the suburbs. Dr. Boice, the then senior pastor of Tenth Presbyterian Church in downtown Philadelphia, had a similar commitment to large city ministry and I have often wondered if he had influenced Keller in his decision. I don't know the answer to that question. On the other hand, many wondered at Keller's decision. Probably not because of any lack of perceived need but rather because of the magnitude of the task. He wasn't proposing to join an already established conservative, evangelical ministry (there probably wasn't one, all of the old ones had already left), but rather to start one in downtown Manhattan! I moved to Wichita in 1990 and have heard very little of Keller since then. This book, *Reason for God*, is the first book of Keller's that I have read. I was delighted to read it not only because of the content (more below - this is a review!) but also because it has filled in the details of his Manhattan ministry. He has apparently been wildly successful in his endeavors! I learned about this book from Lauren Green on the Fox News channel, Green being a member of Keller's congregation. This book is based on Keller's ministry and experiences with the skeptical residents of Manhattan. What are the real questions that people are asking? What answers does the Christian faith have to offer to those questions? Just how relevant is Christianity to this modern world? How best can Christianity be presented to skeptical enquirers? Is this the Apostle Paul in Athens or in Corinth? No, it is Keller in Manhattan! According to *New York* magazine: "With intellectual, brimstone-free sermons that manage to cite Woody Allen alongside Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, Keller draws some five thousand young followers every Sunday. Church leaders see him as a model of how to evangelize urban centers across the country, and Keller has helped 'plant' fifty gospel-based Christian churches around New York plus another fifty from San Francisco to London." Keller encourages his readers to doubt, Christians as well as unbelievers. In the Introduction he writes: "People who blithely go through life too busy or indifferent to ask hard questions about why they believe as they do will find themselves defenseless against either the experience of tragedy or the probing questions of a smart skeptic." "Believers should acknowledge and wrestle with doubts - not only their own but their friends' and neighbors'." "My thesis is that if you come to recognize the beliefs on which your doubts about Christianity are based, and if you seek as much proof for those beliefs as you seek from Christians for theirs - you will discover that your doubts are not as solid as they first appeared." And with this he sets the stage for dialogue about serious questions. Throughout the book he uses this approach. Have you really understood the Christian message? If you doubt it, upon what are your doubts based? Are those doubts justified? For example, in Chapter 1 he discusses doctrine and how many think that doctrine is harmful and that what really matters are the teachings of major religions that seem similar. He responds as follows: "Ironically, the insistence that doctrines do not matter is really

a doctrine itself. It holds a specific view of God, which is touted as superior and more enlightened than the beliefs of most major religions. So the proponents of this view do the very thing they forbid in others."Granted that at least some evil in the world does pose a problem, but I think Keller's take on it is a good one. He writes in Chapter 2: "Tucked away within the assertion that the world is filled with pointless evil is a hidden premise, namely, that if evil appears pointless to me, then it must be pointless. Again the reasoning is, of course, fallacious. Just because you can't see or imagine a good reason why God might allow something to happen doesn't mean there can't be one.

[Remember Job.] Again we see lurking within supposedly hard-nosed skepticism an enormous faith in one's own cognitive faculties. If our minds can't plumb the depths of the universe for good answers to suffering, well, then, there can't be any! This is blind faith of a high order." Later in the same chapter he displays the fallacious logic of the atheist concerned with justice: "On what basis, then, does the atheist judge the natural world to be horribly wrong, unfair, and unjust? The nonbeliever in God doesn't have a good basis for being outraged at injustice, which, as Lewis [C.S. Lewis] points out, was the reason for objecting to God in the first place. If you are sure that this natural world is unjust and filled with evil, you are assuming the reality of some extra-natural (or supernatural) standard by which to make your judgment."Reminiscent of Phillip Johnson's lecture at Princeton University "Can Science Know the Mind of God?", Keller writes in Chapter 8: "if we can't trust our belief-forming faculties to tell us the truth about God, why should we trust them to tell us the truth about anything, including evolutionary science? If our cognitive faculties only tell us what we need to survive, not what is true, why trust them about anything at all? . . . If we believe God exists, then our view of the universe gives us a basis for believing that cognitive faculties work . . . I want to demonstrate that you already know that God does exist . . . belief that we cannot prove but can't not know."This is a good read, not only for Christians who want a better understanding themselves of basic issues of faith and to be able to give better answers to those who ask, but it is also a good read for non-Christians who are asking questions.

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