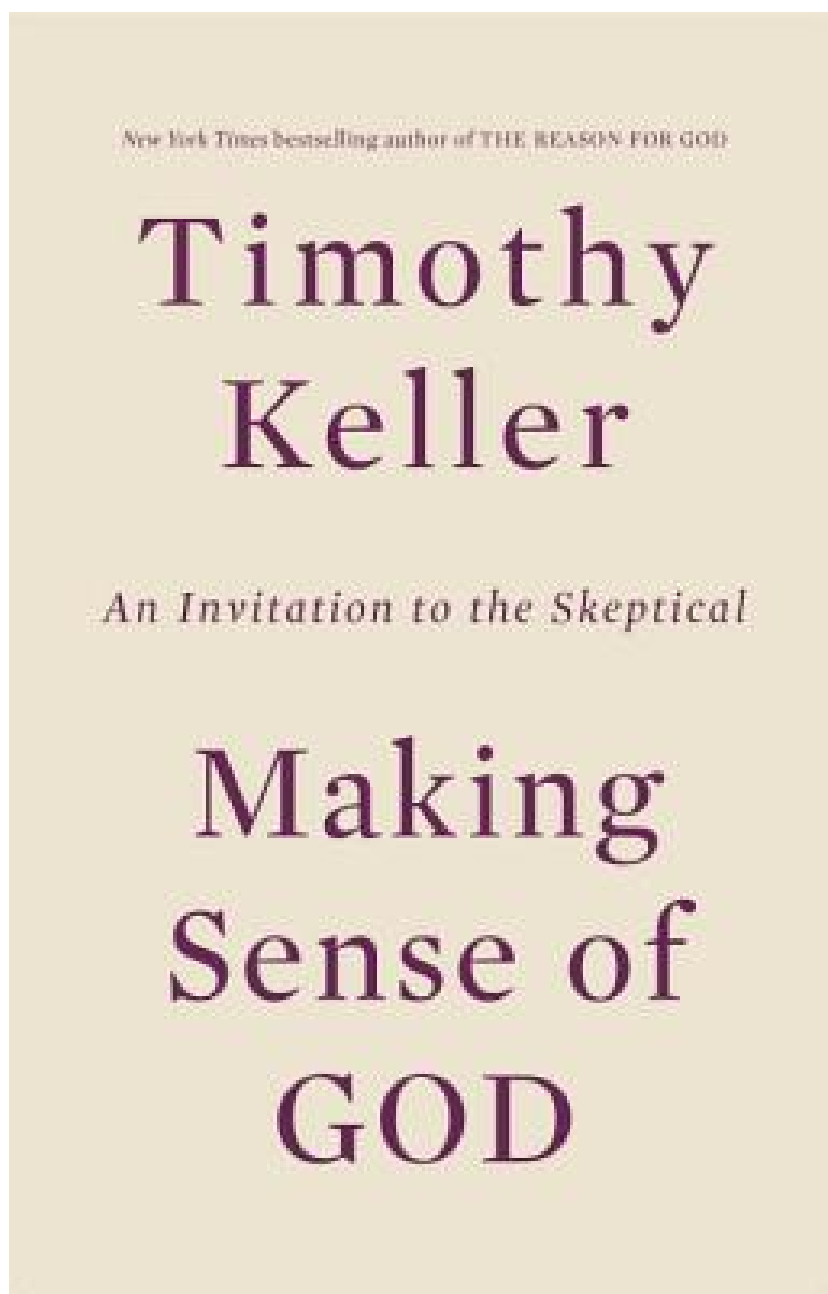


Making Sense of God: An Invitation to the Skeptical Book PDF Download



By:
Timothy J. Keller

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What people Say:

Phil Aud

I'm not big on reformed theology. I'm not big on apologetics, either. Still, I really like Tim Keller. I don't agree with everything he says, but there is much to learn from this seasoned pastor and author.

Making Sense of God is an apologetic (hence the subtitle An Invitation to the Skeptical). Like I said, I'm not big on apologetics, but Keller's approach is very generous and "like his other books" a pleasure to read. Whatever else one can argue about Keller, he's a fantastic writer.

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As to the actual content of this work I have three review comments. First, Keller is well researched. Sixty-eight pages of endnotes points to this fact. He references great scholars, lays out his material in a very clear and concise manner (again, great writing), and engages many current issues in a way that is easy to read.

Second, this book is not necessarily for every skeptic. I've read some who critiqued Keller's The Reason For God for being overly simplistic in its content. The irony is that I know other people who thought it was a very difficult read. I believe that we can look at the different reactions and conclude that Keller is writing for a relatively specific audience. I would categorize that audience as being well to very well educated, but not necessarily highly educated in the specific field he is writing about. In other words, they might be doctors or lawyers, but probably not philosophers. This is not a dissertation or an attempt to make a mark in the philosophical world but is rather a work geared towards those who are well educated but have taken much of their worldview for granted. When I said earlier that his apologetic is generous, I mean that it is pastoral. He is not (thank God) like the in-your-face want-to-be apologists that post videos on Facebook. He's a New York city pastor who is dealing, conversationally, with issues that matter to people (or the sub-issues which they haven't yet thought through). In my opinion, he does this really well.

Third, if you are familiar with Keller's previous work you will recognize a lot of the material in this book. This is not to say that this book is simply a rehash of previous books, but there are traces of it

there. This isn't necessarily negative, though, since all of the thoughts fit well in the overall structure, but it's noticeable.

Overall I enjoyed this book and am grateful for Keller's wise pastoral voice in our day.

*I review many books at

Dave Courtney

I think Making Sense of God: An Invitation to the Skeptical is Keller's best work yet. He has gone on record stating that Making Sense of God is a sort of prequel to his best selling The Reason for God. The reason he gives for such a prequel is that he felt the need to offer a well-reasoned position as to why people might (or could) be motivated to consider a reasoning for God in the first place. In other words, why should we care about bringing the question of God into the picture in the first

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Peaceful and Methodical

I found the book very methodical in its approach and his arguments well laid out. It feels quite the opposite to some of the older style apologetics, which at times tend towards a penchant for creating strawman arguments. Keller is not at war, nor is he wanting to create a war. His motivation is to open the door for peaceful and helpful dialogue, and so he is careful not to dismiss or belittle any of the arguments he confronts. He simply wants to shed light on the struggle that exists between belief and unbelief.

It is worth noting that he does speak, at least partially, from a layman's position. That is to say, his depth of experience with the questions he pursues in the book are centred on his experience with being a Pastor to many who have taken this journey either towards or away from faith, and faced these struggles themselves. I find him to be very good at navigating this middle ground, between his obviously well-researched position on religious and philosophical grounds (the depth he brings to the endnotes and references is worth the price of the book alone) and his understanding of the personal struggle that can (and does) exist for many of us in the everyday commonness of trying to do this thing called life. This is where he finds his sweet spot.

The Skeptical and the Nones: Making Sense of the Target Audience

It is a book that has been suggested as being marketed to the skeptical (as warranted by the title). I might take this a step further and suggest that his true market is the so-called "nones", to which he references in the book as those who claim no affiliation with a denomination and/or religion, nor a strong affiliation with stringent forms of atheism. I would wager that strident atheists and believers (who have made up their mind on either side of the fence) might not appreciate the book or might otherwise abuse/misunderstand the ideas he represents. This would be unfortunate, but it would also be expected. It wouldn't surprise me that some might dismiss his arguments as already "tried and found wanting" without much need for further consideration. The truth is, Keller doesn't fit perfectly into either mode. Being a (unapologetic) professing Christian who takes equal aim at abusive forms of conservatism and dishonest forms of atheism does limit the scope of his audience. But hopefully the audience that he does manage to captivate can be more adept at bringing both reason and experience, thought and faith into a more well-balanced discussion of the religious motivation (both for and against).

Classic Keller with a Twist

Keller's interest in writing *Making Sense of God* should be nothing new (for those familiar with his previous work and his sermons), but the concise way that he brings together his thoughts allows this to feel fresh, and his commentary on the current state on the Church feels important and relevant. He meanders through much of the secular humanist/materialist/atheist reasoning in an attempt not to show them as moral denigrates or dangerous monsters (quite the opposite in-fact), but rather to show the limits of their reasoning in the realm of honest philosophical consideration. To admit the limits of secular humanist reasoning, for Keller, is a place that every good and honest thinker must start, whether one is religiously inclined or not, when making sense of God. For as much as religion must face its own limitations (and accept that it has its own set of problems), so does atheism, and a thorough examining of history can prove this continues to be the case. Perhaps admitting these limitations can help us understand that these two ideologies (or worldviews) should not be at war. Rather, they should want to be in constant dialogue.

Keller goes on in his early chapters to consider a shocking analysis of the religious front. Contrary to the view of popular culture, Keller insists that the data and the evidence shows religion is not waning or dying out, but simply reorienting itself within certain dying factions, while other factions are actually gaining in strength. The great fallacy of our time, or the great misunderstanding of religion, begins with the false idea that there are no intellectually honest, rationally concerned and yet still religiously committed forms of the Christian Church and practice available. That the entirety of Christianity (and atheism for that matter) has been placed under a single, unfortunate stereotype is a part of the problem on both sides of the fence. Keller doesn't say as much, but certainly his work at Redeemer is an example of a decidedly different kind of Church, one that happens to be flourishing without the aid of popular technique or flashy stages, and one that is encouraging a new kind of urban witness and style of conversation for our modern landscape, one that is not afraid to embrace the Christian traditions or the questions at the same time.

Chazzle

The book is less about apologetics than I expected, although that element is still featured. Generally, the book was "up and down" for me. Some chapters were pretty interesting and others were much less so. For me, the good parts were chapters on 1) whether it's ok to do anything you want as long as it doesn't hurt anybody, 2) whether a secular viewpoint can explain how man can be a moral animal with a conscience, 3) the author's conception of what heaven is like, and 4) the ending epilogue on w

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Overall, the book is tough sledding, made more difficult by the numerous quotations from other writers. So it's tough to get a continuous reading rhythm going. Arguably, the book is more challenging than convincing in its apologetics. But good points are made.

It's three stars all day and all night.

Luke Evans

Good stuff. Not much that is new.

Keller in so many ways serves as a gateway into high-level philosophers, cultural critics, and theologians. Perhaps his greatest gift as an author is making the ideas of these thought leaders accessible.

This book is inherently very narrow in its focus - it is written for the skeptical, educated, urbane cosmopolitan person...which is Keller's mission field.

Huge portions of it will not be very relevant to someone not in that world, however.

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Very good for me to read as a pastor.

Lynn Joshua

This book is such an encouragement to me as a believer to remember the riches we have in Christ, and that the Christian view of reality "makes the most sense emotionally, culturally, and rationally". Keller has a gentle, compelling way of communicating some profound truths as he takes the reader through six things we cannot live without and shows the beautiful way that these needs are only met fully and coherently in Christianity. Highly recommended for everyone.