

Kinds of People to Consider

As You Apply Scripture in Preaching (Tim Keller)

Here are the different kinds of people you may be speaking to. Does the text speak to any of them?

- **Conscious unbeliever:** is aware he is not a Christian.
 - **Immoral pagan:** Is living a blatantly immoral/illegal lifestyle.
 - **Intellectual pagan:** claims the faith is untenable or unreasonable.
 - **Imitative pagan:** Is fashionably skeptical, but not profound.
 - **Genuine thinker:** Has serious, well-conceived objections.
 - **Religious non-Christian:** Belongs to an organized religion, cult, or denomination with serious mistaken doctrine.
- **Nonchurched nominal Christian:** Has belief in basic Christian doctrines, but with no or remote church connection.
- **Churched nominal Christian:** Participates in church but is not regenerated.
 - **Semi-active moralist:** Is respectably moral but his religion is without assurance and is all a matter of duty.
 - **Active self-righteous:** Is very committed and involved in the church, with assurance of salvation based on good works.
- **Awakened:** Is stirred and convicted over his sin but without gospel peace yet.
 - **Curious:** Is stirred up mainly in an intellectual way, full of questions and diligent in study.
 - **Convicted with false peace:** Without understanding the gospel, has been told that by walking an aisle, praying a prayer, or doing something, he is now right with God.
 - **Comfortless:** Is extremely aware of sins but not accepting or understanding of the gospel of grace.
- **Apostate:** Was once active in the church but has repudiated the faith without regrets.
- **New Believer:** Is recently converted.
 - **Doubtful:** Has many fears and hesitations about his new faith.
 - **Eager:** Is beginning with joy and confidence and a zeal to learn and serve.
 - **Overzealous:** Has become somewhat proud and judgmental of others and is overconfident of his own abilities.
- **Mature/growing:** Passes through nearly all of the basic conditions named below but progresses through them because he responds quickly to pastoral treatment or knows how to treat himself.
- **Afflicted:** Lives under a burden or trouble that saps spiritual strength. (Generally we call a person afflicted who has not brought the trouble on himself.)
- **Physically afflicted:** Is experiencing bodily decay.

- The sick
- The elderly
- The disabled
- Dying
- Bereaved: Has lost a loved one or experienced some other major loss (e.g., a home through a fire)
- Lonely
- Persecuted/abused
- Poor/economic troubles
- Desertion: Is spiritually dry through the action of God, who removes a sense of his nearness despite the use of the means of grace.
- Tempted: Is struggling with a sin or sins that are remaining attractive or strong.
 - Overtaken: Is tempted largely in the realm of the thoughts and desires.
 - Taken over: has had a sin become addictive behavior.
- Immature: Is a spiritual baby who should be growing but is not.
 - Undisciplined: Is lazy in using the means of grace and gifts for ministry.
 - Self-satisfied: Has had pride choke his growth, is complacent, has perhaps become cynical and scornful of many other Christians.
 - Unbalanced: Has had either the intellectual, the emotional, or the volitional aspect of his faith become overemphasized.
 - Devotee of eccentric doctrine: Has become absorbed in a distorted teaching that hinders spiritual growth.
- Depressed: Is not only experiencing negative feelings but also shirking Christian duties and being disobedient. If a person is a new believer, or tempted or afflicted or immature, and does not get proper treatment, he will become spiritually depressed. Besides these conditions, the following problems can lead to depression:
 - Anxious: Is depressed through worry or fear handled improperly.
 - Weary: Has become listless and dry through overwork.
 - Angry: Is depressed through bitterness or uncontrolled anger handled improperly.
 - Introspective: Dwells on failures and feelings and lacks assurance.
 - Guilty: Has a wounded conscience and has not reached repentance.
- Backslid: Has gone beyond depression to a withdrawal from fellowship with God and with the church.
 - Tender: Is still easily convicted of his sins and susceptible to calls for repentance.
 - Hardening: Has become cynical, scornful, and difficult to convict.

(Tim Keller in *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism*, pages 289-292)

Found at: <http://www.leadershipresources.org/blog/list-for-applying-scripture>