

Baylor seminary names 12 leading preachers among English speakers

The seminary's Lake Center for Effective Preaching surveyed homiletics professors and chose from more than 800 nominees.

by [Christian Century staff](#) in the [May 23, 2018](#) issue



Barbara Brown Taylor and Otis Moss III, file photos; Timothy Keller, photo by [Frank Licorice](#) via [Creative Commons license](#).

Baylor University's George W. Truett Theological Seminary has issued a list of the 12 most effective preachers in the English-speaking world, including Timothy Keller, Otis Moss III, and Barbara Brown Taylor.

"In a world where talk is cheap and there seems to be no end to it, the preacher has to recover the priority and power of the word," said W. Hulitt Gloer, director of the Kyle Lake Center for Effective Preaching, in a statement from Baylor. "The Hebrew understanding of words is that they both say something and do something. . . . Words are the tools of the preacher and that gives them incredible power."

The Kyle Lake Center made its selections from more than 800 nominees after conducting a survey of 179 homiletics professors from the Evangelical Homiletics Society and the Academy of Homiletics.

Homiletics professors had formed seven criteria to evaluate the preachers:

- Biblical exegesis, including “careful study of selected biblical texts, including an awareness of grammar, syntax, history, culture, literary, and theological aspects”
- Delivery in “a style authentic to the preacher and appropriate for the hearers, never superseding the content but enabling hearers to better understand it”
- Effective communication of “the text’s central truths with accessible language and effective images and illustrations”
- Orthodox theology, proclaiming “the truths of the Christian faith in keeping with Christian theological and ethical tradition”
- Personal ethics, defined as: “the preacher’s life and ministry should demonstrate authenticity, integrity, and commitment to the Christian faith so that the sermon is never questioned or compromised by the preacher’s character”
- Relevance
- Sermon form

The following (listed alphabetically) were named most effective preachers in 2018:

- **Alistair Begg**, senior pastor at Parkside Church in Cleveland, Ohio
- **Tony Evans**, founding pastor of Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship in Dallas, Texas
- **Joel C. Gregory**, professor of preaching and evangelism at Truett
- **Timothy Keller**, founding pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City
- **Thomas G. Long**, professor emeritus of preaching at Emory University’s Candler School of Theology in Atlanta
- **Otis Moss III**, pastor of Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago
- **John Piper**, chancellor of Bethlehem College and Seminary in Minneapolis
- **Haddon Robinson**, named posthumously, who died in July 2017
- **Andy Stanley**, founder of North Point Ministries and senior pastor of several churches
- **Charles Swindoll**, senior pastor at Stonebriar Community Church, in Frisco, Texas
- **Barbara Brown Taylor**, an Episcopal priest, professor, author, and theologian
- **Ralph Douglas West**, founder and senior pastor of the Church without Walls in Houston, Texas

Baylor conducted a similar survey in 1996. Long, Robinson, Swindoll, and Taylor were also named in that list.

Jared E. Alcántara, assistant professor of homiletics at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois, noted in the statement from Truett that the present and future is multicultural for many churches.

“To meet the demands before us, we will need the same biblical, exegetical, and theological proficiency that we have always needed in the past, but we will also need more improvisational, cultural, and intercultural proficiency than we have right now,” he said. “This historical moment forces us to learn how to preach timeless truths in timely ways before diverse communities.

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