

The STORY CHURCH

Personal & Group Study Guide - November 13, 2022

Message Series - I'M OUT: *Responding to Reasons People Give for Leaving Church*

Message Title: "I'm Deconstructing."

Series Intro: With every passing year, more and more Americans are walking away from their churches, and they're not coming back. In 2022, just 22% of Americans say they attend weekly worship services, while another 20% attend church "about once a month". Meanwhile, 56% of Americans say they "seldom" or "never" attend worship services.

Now consider this: as recently as 2009, the same survey yielded very different results. Just thirteen years ago, 48% of Americans said they went to church every week, 30% attended services about once a month, and just over 20% said they seldom or never attended worship services.

With this three-part series, we'll explore the underlying question: *"What are the reasons behind this seismic shift in our culture, and how should followers of Jesus respond today?"*

What are some of the reasons you've heard people give (or reasons you've given yourself) for walking away from Christianity and/or from Church? In your opinion, were those reasons valid or invalid, and why?

What do people usually mean when they say they're "deconstructing" their faith?

What are the origins of the philosophical term *deconstruction*?

Human beings - even faithful ones - are sometimes going to struggle in the space between belief and doubt. In Mark 9, a desperate father brought his afflicted son to Jesus -

Mark 9:21-24 - 21 Jesus asked the boy's father, "How long has he been like this?" "From childhood," he answered. 22 "It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us." 23 "If you can?" said Jesus. "Everything is possible for one who believes."

24 Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, "**I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!**"

Be honest here: when was the last time you felt like a believer and an unbeliever *at the same time*? What circumstances led you to feel that way, and how did you reconcile the tension?

The boy's father took his unbelief straight to Jesus with no fear or pretense. How does the "deconstruction process" often differ from this approach?

Given the philosophical origins of the term *deconstruction*, why might it be incorrect for *Christians* to say they're *deconstructing*?

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1 Corinthians 3:10-15 - 10 By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should build with care. 11 For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, 13 their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person's work. 14 If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. 15 If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames.

Many believers who claim to be “Deconstructing Christians” are actually DISCERNING Christians.

Philippians 1:9-11 - 9 And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, 10 so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, 11 filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.

What are the key differences between *discerning* and *deconstructing*?

For Christians, discernment is part of a process known as SANCTIFICATION, which literally means:

To _____ for a _____, or
to _____.

List some of the key differences between sanctification (or conversion for new Christians) and deconstruction (or deconversion for former Christians):

SANCTIFICATION vs. DECONSTRUCTION

What lingering questions or thoughts do you have after reflecting on this message and/or discussing it with your group?