

# 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."

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**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?"*

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**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?

# The STORY CHURCH

Personal & Group Study Guide - November 20, 2022

Message Series - I'M OUT: *Responding to 3 Reasons People Give for Leaving Church*

Message Title: "I'm not feeling it anymore"

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**What are some of the reasons you've heard people give (or reasons you've given yourself) of why they're "not feeling it" when it comes to church and Christianity? In your opinion, were those feelings valid or invalid, and why?**

**Why is it important to realize that the feeling of God being absent is a universal problem? What proof do we have?**

**What is the danger of completely removing feelings from faith? What is the danger of making feelings the most important thing in your faith?**

## Psalm 13:1-6

1 How long, Lord? Will you forget me forever?

How long will you hide your face from me?

2 How long must I wrestle with my thoughts  
and day after day have sorrow in my heart?

How long will my enemy triumph over me?

3 Look on me and answer, Lord my God.

Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death,  
4 and my enemy will say, "I have overcome him,"  
and my foes will rejoice when I fall.



Feelings are \_\_\_\_\_, but they are not \_\_\_\_\_

How can we test our feelings to make sure they align with God?

There were four questions we asked about discerning why we feel distant from God. How could you answer these questions:

- Are you Busy?
  
- Are you Bored?
  
- Are you Blind to unconfessed sin?
  
- Are you a Believer?

**John 15:4,9-11**

“Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me... “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

Dilan mentioned Worship and Community, but how do you personally abide in Jesus?

What would you say to a friend or family member who told you, “I am just not feeling it anymore”



**Personal & Group Study Guide:** November 27th, 2022

**Message Series:** I'M OUT: Responding to 3 Reasons People Give for Leaving Church

**Message Title:** "The church is full of hypocrites"

**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.

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What are some of the ways you've experienced hypocrisy when it comes to church and Christianity? What obstacles have you encountered in your faith because of these past experiences?

Why is the (true) statement: "the church is full of sinners", not an excuse for Christian hypocrisy?

*Pass through, pass through the gates! Prepare the way for the people. Build up, build up the highway! Remove the stones. Raise a banner for the nations.*

- Isaiah 62:10

**Stone #1: Obstacles about \_\_\_\_\_**

**We remove this stone by \_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_ and  
\_\_\_\_\_.**

Read John 20:24-27. How did Jesus respond to Thomas' doubts? How should this shape our response to the questions & doubts non-religious people have about scripture?



Read Isaiah 11:10 & John 14:6. Who is the banner that Isaiah references in Isaiah 62:10? Why is it important that the church's mission ultimately ends with Jesus?

What are the dangers of only teaching parts of the Bible we find convenient?

**Stone #2: Obstacles about \_\_\_\_\_**

**We remove this stone by \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.**

In what ways does comfort breed hypocrisy, and how do you feel led to challenge your comfort?

Why is it important to pursue our faith in community with others? (Hebrews 10:24-25 & 1 Thessalonians 5:14-15)

**Stone #3: Obstacles about \_\_\_\_\_**

**We remove this stone by \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.**

Which parts of your story makes God's act of redemption powerful in your own life? (Psalm 107:2-3 ) Why is it important to include the confession of our current sin in our story? (James 5:16)

The power of the Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead is alive and at work within us! (Romans 8:10-11) How does this encourage & motivate you to participate in God's mission for believers?

Read Matthew 23:13, 28:19-20. How does living missionally counter hypocrisy, and why is it significant for the Christian life?