

Sean McDowell and John Marriott

SET ADrift

Deconstructing What You Believe
Without Sinking Your Faith



A PDF COMPANION TO THE AUDIOBOOK

ZONDERVAN REFLECTIVE

Set Adrift

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Lost at Sea



Reflection Questions

1. Have you related to the paddleboarder at any point in your faith journey? In terms of your faith now, are you sailing on calm and clear seas, sensing the fog set in, or feeling engulfed by it?
2. We mentioned three types of deconstruction. Which of these is most common among those you know?
3. Do you agree that young Christians today are more prone to deconstruct than previous generations? Why or why not?
4. Is it possible that your deconstruction is really a pretense to justify letting go of aspects of the faith you dislike? If so, what might they be? Are any other “hidden” motivations involved?
5. If you are in a season of deconstruction, have you told those around you? How did they respond? If not, how might they respond?

Delights and Dangers



Reflection Questions

1. How did you feel as you read Bart Campolo's story? What lessons about deconstruction might you draw from it?
2. Mark Karris traced the seeds of his deconstruction to an event at church that shook him to his core and made him ask hard questions about his faith. Have you had a similar experience?
3. What benefits do you believe can come from rethinking faith?
4. Think about your paradigm, the glasses you see the world through. Would you say it is flexible and able to incorporate new and maybe challenging ideas, or is it inflexible, not admitting ideas that might cause you to reevaluate secondary beliefs? Which—flexible or inflexible—do you think is more susceptible to a faith crisis?
5. How do you respond to the strong statements in the New Testament about the importance of correct doctrine? Why do you think correct belief mattered so much to the New Testament writers?

Who Do You Say That I Am?



Reflection Questions

1. Jesus has to be the foundation of any legitimate Christian deconstruction. Thus, seeking a better understanding of Jesus is important. What's the difference between seeking a better understanding of Jesus and deconstructing Jesus as the foundation?
2. What do you think of our claim that each person can have their own belief but not their own truth? Do you agree? What's the difference between belief and truth?
3. If you're a Christian, then Jesus has saved you, and that's good news! But sometimes as Christians we may not have come to terms with what it fully means to recognize Jesus as Lord. Do you think someone who believes in Jesus as savior but does not live like he is Lord will be saved? Why or why not?
4. Does the Bible have any issues that trigger your moral intuition and make you want to find a way to explain the problem away even if it means twisting what the Bible appears to teach?

5. Imagine that you are standing in the center of campus with Jesus and he has given a very unpopular speech on a number of controversial topics. A lot of people are offended and begin plotting how to cancel him. It's even too much for some of Jesus's acquaintances, who abandon him. In the middle of all this, he turns to you and says, "What about you? Will you also leave?" How might you respond?

Fences



Reflection Questions

1. Are you surprised to hear us say that not all doctrines are of equal importance? Do you agree or disagree with that claim?
2. What beliefs do you think are necessary to be rightly related to God? In other words, what must a person affirm to be saved?
3. Are there any beliefs that do not need to be affirmed to be saved, but that can't be denied? For example, you don't need to affirm the virgin birth of Jesus to be saved. But if you deny it, can you be saved?
4. Have you changed your mind about any doctrines that were handed down to you by your Christian community? If so, what are they and why did you change your mind?
5. Some people suggest that dogma provides fences to set us free? Do you agree, or do you think dogma limits our freedom?

Says Who?



Reflection Questions

1. After reading this chapter, which of the two versions we presented, the historic and progressive views of Scripture, are you more inclined toward? Why?
2. How important is your belief about the Bible in terms of the kind of Christian faith you adopt? How should we decide what to believe about the authority of the Bible?
3. The authors of the books of the Bible were influenced by their culture, worldview, and historical setting. Consequently, the books they authored have evidence of their historical situatedness all through them. Does this mean the authors got some things wrong? Why or why not?
4. What are your thoughts about using Jesus as a lens to determine which parts of the Old Testament are reflective of God and which parts are cultural distortions of the Israelites?

Know Your Culture



Reflection Questions

1. Do you agree that culture can deeply shape our beliefs? Why or why not?
2. Can you think of any examples from movies, the internet, advertising, etc. that reinforce the idea that being “authentically you” is of primary importance?
3. Do you think the idea of the age of authenticity accurately describes our cultural moment? If so, how might we resist the pressure to seek “authenticity” in unhealthy ways?
4. Did a part of you resonate with Adele, Demi, and the college student? If so, what might that reveal about how you have been formed by the culture?
5. How much of deconstruction is driven by the felt need young Christians have to be authentic to themselves? Is that a good reason to deconstruct?

Know Yourself



Reflection Questions

1. Did this chapter help you to discover a little bit more of who you are and what you value? How might this relate to your own faith journey?
2. Did you relate to Kate in any way? Why or why not?
3. What value and vice pairing do you tend to prioritize over others? How might that affect how you feel about the current expression of Christianity you were raised with?
4. How can knowing the values you prioritize help you read the Bible more faithfully?
5. Why is knowing your values so important in finding a Christian community to be part of?

Babies and Bathwater



Reflection Questions

1. What role does dissatisfaction with Evangelicalism play in the lives of those who deconstruct?
2. Were you aware of the history of evangelicalism and some of the good it has contributed to the world both in terms of spiritual and practical blessings? How did those details affect you?
3. Do you think it is legitimate to distinguish between little *e* evangelicalism and big *E* Evangelicalism, or are the two hopelessly intertwined? Another way of asking this is, Can a person be evangelical without being Evangelical?
4. Have you ever visited a church outside the evangelical movement? If so, what was your impression? What should we look for when seeking a church?
5. If you plan to throw out the bathwater and keep the baby, how do you figure out where the “bathwater” ends and the “baby” begins?

Dangers to Avoid



Reflection Questions

1. Which of the dangers listed in this chapter are you most vulnerable to?
2. Do you know others who have fallen prey to any of these dangers? What happened to their faith?
3. Why do you think it is so easy to build a straw man rather than a steel man? What does that tell you about our desire to believe what we want versus our desire to know the truth?
4. Why is it so hard to systematically evaluate beliefs, taking our time and doing so one by one? Do you fight this temptation? If so, how?
5. How will you go about building a steel man when you decide to reevaluate a particular doctrine?

Back on Shore



Reflection Questions

1. Why is it so easy to deceive ourselves about why we do what we do? Can you think of a time when you deceived yourself about something? What was the result?
2. In this chapter we cautioned against giving up the faith just because it is inconvenient or because you find it embarrassing. Ask yourself, “Could either of those reasons be playing a role in my journey?” If they are, what will you do about it?
3. Who are you in genuine dialogue with about your faith? If your answer is “no one,” do you think that is a good idea? Can you think of anyone you might engage?
4. On a scale from one to ten, with one being never to ten being always, how often do you think deconstruction is fueled by anger and bitterness? If that is what motivates some people, how should we respond?
5. If you are in the process of deconstruction, do you believe Jesus is deeply committed to you and wants you to return to the shore of Christian commitment?

Resources

Doubt: Bobby Conway. *Doubting toward Faith: The Journey to Confident Faith*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2015.

Spiritual Growth: Henri Nouwen. *The Return of the Prodigal Son: A Story of Homecoming*. Baltimore: Image, 1994.

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Culture: Russell Moore. *Onward: Engaging the Culture without Losing the Gospel*. Nashville: B&H, 2015.

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