Deconstruction

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*Consider Dan’s story about Courtney. She grew up going to church with a solid church community. She was homeschooled, and then transitioned to a Christian school for high school. During this transition, she realized inconsistencies in how students lived out their faith. She graduated high school and went to a secular university. She was assigned a lab partner – Hammad, from Saudi Arabia. She was awed by his kindness, respectfulness, and devout Muslim faith. Courtney started to deconstruct. Her belief system – all people are sinners and need a savior. Hammad’s kindness put her in a state of crisis.*

**Deconstruction in the church is the dismantling of beliefs.**

* Deconstruction is asking, “what do I really believe?”
* Deconstruction is questioning assumptions of faith, reality, and what is true and justifiable.

**What shapes our beliefs?**

1. Core beliefs
* Core beliefs are given to us from our family, parents, siblings and those in our familiar space.
* We start to have these beliefs at an early age.
* We learn what thoughts and practices are permissible.
1. Beliefs that come from our experience
* We form beliefs early about properties around us
* We form beliefs through experience and intuition
	+ i.e.: We learn that the property of fire is hot
1. Cultural beliefs
* We absorb beliefs from the culture around us.
	+ The culture around us is constantly formulating ideas about ultimate reality.
* Sometimes we absorb these beliefs ***consciously***, but sometimes we absorb these beliefs ***passively***
* i.e.: Our culture largely assumes that the purpose of life is personal happiness, and that happiness is defined by pleasure.

Our moral beliefs can be right beliefs, incomplete beliefs, or inaccurate beliefs.

Right beliefs are true in how they interact with reality.

See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ. – Colossians 2:8

**Deconstruction**

* **Deconstruction is the activity of evaluating your assumptions and thinking deeply about your core beliefs.**
* One looks at their core beliefs and asks:
	+ “Is this system working?”
	+ “Is what I believe consistent with what I see around me?”
	+ “Do I really believe this?”
* Culturally, people – Christian and non-Christian – are starting to ask the question “Is this system of personal pleasure and personal happiness through pleasure really working?”

**What’s the process of deconstruction?**

1. Crisis moment – a crisis of beliefs
* This is different than moments of doubt that we have in moments of Christian faith
* Be merciful to those who doubt – Jude 1:22
1. Skepticism – crisis leads to a place of skepticism
* Begin to ask questions
* i.e.: “Is this the right practice?”
1. Deconstruction – work to get to the foundation of what you believe.
* Ask questions about the nature of a thing
* People who deconstruct are searching for a foundation.
* i.e: Courtney begins to ask a question about the nature of good and evil.
1. Reconstruction
* What will you rebuild on?
	+ Prayer, the way of Jesus, the kingdom of God

**What do you do if you are deconstructing?**

1. Recognize that this is normal
* It’s good to test and question our beliefs
	+ This is sanctification
1. Be honest – what are you deconstructing
* Are you deconstructing your practices? Secondary beliefs? Ontological beliefs or the nature of that which you believe?
1. Reconstruct on a sure foundation
* Prayer, scripture, seek wise counsel – look at the way of Jesus.

**What do you do if you know someone deconstructing?**

* Don’t try and correct them.
* Listen to understand
* Walk alongside them and be a friend in that moment
	+ Be compassionate and empathetic.
* Gently question the questions they are assuming.

Resources

* [Deconstructing and Reconstructing the Atonement with Mako Nagasawa](https://gravityleadership.com/podcast/deconstructing-the-atonement-with-mako-nagasawa/)
* [A.J. Swoboda: Deconstructing Without Losing your Faith](https://gravityleadership.com/podcast/a-j-swoboda-deconstructing-without-losing-your-faith/)
* *When Everything’s on Fire: Faith Forged from the Ashes –* Brian Zahnd
* *After Doubt: How to Question Your Faith Without Losing It –* A.J. Swoboda
* *Searching for Sunday: Loving, Leaving, and Finding the Church* – Rachel Held Evans
* [The What and Why of Deconstruction](https://www.crosspointwi.com/blog/the-what-why-of-deconstruction-part-1) – Mac McCarthy
* [How to Accompany People Through Deconstruction](https://www.crosspointwi.com/blog/how-to-accompany-people-through-deconstruction-part-two) – Mac McCarthy