

## FROM THOSE WHO HAVE DECONSTRUCTED THEIR FAITH

*I'm sharing the stories below with permission from those who lived them. Please read them with empathy and a desire to understand better the heart and processes of those who have chosen the arduous task of peeling away the layers of a faith they thought they knew in order to uncover what lies beneath.*

*The accounts already included in my [blog post on this topic](#) are featured at the end.*

*(Note: I have not corrected the submissions, but left them as they were written.)*



For years I struggled with a relationship with God and that I didn't much care for what I thought He was. As I was on my journey to know who God truly was I went through many trials and temptations but I can truly say that God was faithful in His care of me and in His leading me back into a close redemptive work with His hand in mine! The God that I follow and that I want to point others towards loves me and them with a passionate love.



My parents encouraged us to delve deeper into what is going on with what we believe and in order to have a relationship with Christ that is truly our own we had to figure out what exactly we believed and why. This process started in late elementary school from what I remember.



I grew up with a lot of pressure to look good and not have people think ill of us. It extended past my active MK years as I attended a college with the same mindset. I reacted to this. For example, once I was finally allowed to grow a beard I quit shaving and have had one ever since (30+years). I also enjoy the freedom not to be bound by a doctrinal statement, knowing that if I change how I understand the Bible I'm not going to lose my job or have to leave the country. I think that growing up in such a structured environment made me a lot less likely to do, say, or think anything just because that's how I was brought up. So, I've raised my tribe of kids not to have such restrictions, and they have all chosen to follow my ways. But there's not much chance of any of them joining a mission organization, either. It would be like caging an animal.



I was in my mid 20's, post 1st divorce, and talking in the phone with my mom. She was telling me that I was a horrible mother and that that she was going to try to get custody of my kids because I was sleeping around. I had said something about needing to have surgery to repair my bladder from a sexual assault in high school, and she said, "you probably made that up too. No man would willingly want you. You have just been seducing these men since you were a little girl for the attention and to embarrass me, because you hate me. If you could just be more of a godly woman..." I responded with, "if you were what Christianity was to look like, neither me or my children would have any part in it." About 10 years and I had nothing to do with church or God. I was just mad at everything. Now, I have a gentle, loving relationship with God. I've spent years in counseling and have worked hard to recover, I know now that neither I nor God caused any of the sexual or mental abuse in my life. I trust very few "Christian" people, and have a superficial

relationship with my mom. I regret not raising my children in the church, but I believe that god knows them and will work in their life when He deems it is time.



I almost didn't answer because of your request to keep it as brief as possible. I'm weary of simplistic rationalization for this phenomenon. The briefest answer is: my divorce. That is, however, completely misleading. It's more that going through a divorce forced me to confront the abusive patriarchy inherent in the conservative religious system. And that thread began to unravel others. So saying the trauma or disillusionment of a divorce launched my deconstruction is false. It merely forced me to confront Truth, and seeking Truth led to my deconstruction process.



At the core, the faith I inherited was punishing and people pleasing. It deconstructed itself after producing physical and emotional illness, and after serving through two church collapses. My conservative roots have since branched so far that old friends have questioned my Christianity. What I know is that I am deeply loved. I have no longer have anything to prove.



My children are far more traditional in their faith than I am. They work through their own spiritual paradigms and resulting sense of identity without me pressuring them to perform. The more honest and open hearted my faith has become, the easier it seems for them to choose and flow in their own beliefs.



We went to church twice a Sunday and sometimes Wednesdays. Once I was old enough, I attended weekly and quarterly youth events. I had no clue how unequivocally churched I was. Uncomfortable in ways I couldn't fully express, my questions started. "What happens when babies die? Do they go to hell?" Their responses echoed, "God's ways are higher. Now let's move on."

By my 20s, youthful hubris and confident conviction embraced the dichotomy of all things "right" and "wrong." But Christian friends held beliefs I'd never considered right. God condemned interracial relationships? Only men initiated godly relationships, girls must wait in modest purity? Scripture didn't decry same-sex marriage? It was very confusing.

My church taught God healed unwanted sexual attraction, bringing wholeness in marriage. The man I would marry confessed he "struggled with homosexuality." In starry-eyed naïvete, I discounted it. We married, had three children, and weathered stronger storms than I'd ever imagined. After a dozen years, Adam admitted his struggles hadn't ended; he might never want me. Ouch.

I'd depended on his defining me, his granting me self-worth, his calling me "good." I lacked awareness to recognize the emotional abuse. I'd learned the ex-gay mantra "you can change" was misguided, perhaps deceitful. Yet I loved Adam. I suspected I'd fail as a single mom. I feared judgment for not being woman enough to attract my husband, despite his disinterest because I was a woman.

That winter I filled journals with prayers borne of pain, confusion, fear. I cried out to God and heard, "Restoration." Through spring we chose our marriage. In summer Adam was diagnosed with glioblastoma. Eleven months later, he died.

Through the worst moments, ripe for a crisis of faith, I had no doubt God was near. After I was widowed—eyes opened to systemic injustice and unloving Christians—things changed. I glimpsed my marriage in truth. Words from God encouraged my submission to abuse so I'd be a better wife. Would God say that? Had I misheard?

My questions grew. What is God? Where is God? Is something out there? God? Aliens? Collective unconscious? Did God create humans or we God? What separates Christianity from Islam, Hinduism, Baha'i? Without full understanding, do we respond to what most deeply resonates?

Unwilling to continue sitting, counting breaths to ease anxiety, I quit attending church. I acknowledged my Evangelical upbringing groomed me for abuse. I couldn't pray. How can I pray to a deity I don't believe? I started lighting candles, trusting light to scatter darkness. I may return. Or not. A God of love is surely more pleased with authentic unbelief than feigned "righteousness."

Despite the cliché, I found myself. I'd thought I must fit in, disregard experience, ignore intuition, deny emotion. Others' views held more weight than mine. Anxious thoughts still carry shame for the inability to manage things outside my control. I thought faith was knowing the answers. As unknowns abound, faith requires wrestling uncertainty and finding peace. Struggling to reconcile doubt and belief nurtures stronger faith.



I'm a faith academy and John Brown University graduate. I wouldn't say there was one specific instance but rather the combination of seeing years of rank hypocrisy among spiritual leaders in my life. There are too many examples of "do as I say, not as I do" to list. Ultimately, I understood that my faith is exactly that. Mine and no one else's. It doesn't matter what others do or how they act, the only thing that matters to my faith is my relationship with God.



I'm an MK. What triggered my deconstruction was college. Though it was a very conservative Bible institute, it was my first exposure to theology outside my narrow experience. The notion that people of many denominations could still be called Christian shocked me. For several years I abandoned all ties to Christianity. It led me to a broader faith. I studied philosophy, theology, church history, etc. I still read them. I can also trace a number of deconstructions over the years. In fact, those types of shifts have become a normal part of my life. I don't panic when I don't have the answer or when others badger me for not being dogmatic enough. I don't need to play those games, and haven't for years.



For me, "deconstruction" is not a term I define for myself, but one rooted in [conscientization: manipulating vulnerable people to convert to a preferred worldview by influencing how they see their own experience. cf. Paulo Freire, my explanation not his.] So no, I did not deconstruct my own spirituality or that of my parents. I can however identify stages of faith, cf James Fowler, and recognize that genuine faith meets actual people in their whole life experience. I was a bit shocked to realize my parents, reared in 1940s America, had a high value on maintaining their cultural identity and passing it on to us (their progeny.) After all, they moved us to a whole new culture and loved people there unconditionally. Why would that be compatible with their childhood cultural values? But in my own way, I did somewhat the same. I just grew up in the whole different world to which they took me. My own faith has been

influenced by all my life experiences, whether conscious, conscientized, or unexamined altogether, and it still is today.

Key moments were moving to TX from CA at age 6, moving to CR and Venezuela at 12-17, attending secular university, evangelical seminary, secular clinical training, and inclusive Christian doctoral program in that sequence, with a side of exposure to my father's doctoral work on the Christology of Gustavo Gutierrez--a south american catholic liberation theologian. Each of these contexts/worlds and more since have made their contributions along with many significant relationships and life experiences. (I might add 15 years of exposure to Chinese worldview and religion in Taiwan in my 40s-50s as well as coming alongside internationals there of every type and persuasion. And now there is this Americanism of which some speak!)



The kind of Christianity I inherited did not meet my needs...or live up to the tenets... Have had a wonderful life of exploration in the world rejected by the religion & found God everywhere, not dogma. I need to add that where I'm at now, I understand the simple teachings of the Christ & seek to live them...& appreciate the whole story presented as the Bible.



My deconstruction happened, because living on a remote mission field can be a protective bubble for many. Except I was sexually molested, and when you know, deep in your soul, that isn't the way things are supposed to be, but you see everyone around you acting as if everything is fine, you start to second guess what people tell you is "true." I think they say discernment is a spiritual gift, but I'm not sure if it's one that I was born with or that arose out of my experience. I saw what other people didn't see. I saw the hypocrisy, the lies. And when my dad, the most kind and giving person I have ever known, was forced out of the mission for doing the right thing, I felt like all my sacrifices to "protect" his work were a big cosmic joke. Strangely, I never thought God was a joke, just the system. Deconstruction took a long time. Then a Jesuit priest I met said to me, "You clearly know what you don't believe. But do you know what you DO believe?" So I started reconstructing. I have faith, a lot of it in fact, but it was hard won and it looks different. Where deconstruction led me was to a place where I see God a lot of places, and I look for that. I don't try to give answers. I just know that I believe.



My deconstruction has a convoluted path. I grew up in Belgium part of a small Church community that functioned as a family. I went to Bible School in England then college in the states. Moving to the States was my first time living in a country that was openly Evangelical. At 12 I developed a medical condition that went undiagnosed because prayer would help. Over 15 years of dealing with it by myself I eventually discovered a book called the body keeps the score. That book published data on abandoned children and the high levels of PTSD. The doctor who wrote the book correlated PTSD as a major cause for why the vagus nerve malfunctions. Reading that book helped me look back and question how the people in my life had dealt with major traumatic events. It also helped me realize that I had no safe way to process emotions. As missionaries we were to be christ-like aside from the physical moving through different cultures brought me to churches with a lot of questions. Having advanced degrees in biblical studies and literature meant I was able to study texts cuz they should be studied and I was noticing how often preachers were isolating texts or ignoring contexts. Once I realized the level of education a person would

need in order to properly handle translations, original meanings, and cultural differences I found it hard to see the Bible as a book accessible to all. It began to make sense to me how it was so easily misinterpreted I also worked in the Caribbean for 5 years and watching mission trips show up and be so blatantly selfish for the sending country with actually very little consideration for the host country made me see how emotionally driven much of the religion was. I no longer believe because for me believing is unhealthy, it means I put my own needs aside. I have more concrete examples of all of this but for a paragraph I think this would do. I feel that the Bible has many beautiful passages, I feel that it has a solid read on many situations. But it is an obscure text, that is easily misinterpreted. I find Christ an incredibly compelling character. As well as Moses, many of the judges, and the creation story is an outstanding example of a peaceful creation with the expectation of community. It's very unusual for its day and age. Historically I think Christianity has done a lot for the world as has Islam and Buddhism and atheism and skepticism. I don't find that religion separates out good people from bad, rather the good and the bad are as mixed within the church as they are anywhere else.



My motivation for deconstruction of my faith was when the "bubble burst" on who I thought my missionary parents were. I was shaken as I had thought they, particularly my father, were basically "god" always knowing and doing the right thing. My journey was hard, but my faith became freer.



The faith tradition I grew up in had too many dogmatic litmus tests that I failed if I allowed myself to think critically ("If really believe the Bible, then you MUST believe such-and-such"). Young Earth Creationism was a big factor here. It led me to a much broader and freer faith that has more room for grace and less fear of others.

I started deconstructing in May 2020, because of Covid and the way the American evangelical church was so brutally polarized, and racial tension + riots. I've come to a much more progressive and, in my flawed human opinion, loving view of humanity, God and the church. Today, the biggest terminology differences in my faith would be I consider myself an affirming, egalitarian Christian and I no longer call myself Baptist. Key in my deconstruction were my close friends who went through similar questions at the same time as me.



It started with my husband & I both having an overwhelming desire to get out of the southern Baptist church.

For me, I recently saw a video of a woman that was once part of one of the most popular churches & creators of worship music. She exposed the deep manipulation that went into it & it felt like a gut punch. I have since read & seen NUMEROUS stories of people sharing the same thing. I still 100% have my faith in Christ, but my eyes are open & my heart guarded when it comes to church.



I had a good childhood despite boarding school. I look back on it with overall happiness. However, #1 My parents were with Conservative Baptists. I chose a Free Methodist college to go to in U.S. I came to

respect the humility in their leadership. That seemed new to me in the church. #2 Heard a sermon once about Adam and Eve. The scripture was read in a way that I actually heard that when Eve picked the fruit and ate it she then gave it to Adam WHO WAS WITH HER!! Wow. It wasn't just the woman who brought sin into the world. #3 I grew up thinking I needed to look good all the time (and was mostly successful) watching the movie "Fiddler on the Roof" one night with my husband and school age daughter, when it got to the end I started crying and couldn't stop for about an hour. Finally figured out I identified too closely with the Jewish families being separated as they moved to different areas in the U.S.



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Yes I did go through a deconstruction. Not placed on me by my parents but by the mission school where I boarded from 1st to 11th grade. I actually felt guilty going through the deconstruct because I felt as though I was going against the organization my parents were choosing to serve. When I was in my mid 20's I began dating a guy who was super sweet, but I could tell wasn't sharing everything with me. So I went to what I thought was the worse possible scenario which was, "Were you married before?" He answered yes and I was not sure what to do. I had been taught that you did NOT get divorced, and that you did NOT get remarried if you did get divorced. That God hates divorce and will not bless you anymore if you go that route. In fact a coworker of my parents who was single, chose to marry a divorced man and I can still hear the clicks of tongues of the missionaries when they found out. Mom and dad were both very supportive of her because she knew God had brought her husband together, but everyone else's responses were what made me think mom and dad were just being friendly to her. That she was in fact wrong. I remember in my mid 20s I announced that I was saving myself so God would honour me and bring me someone who was also saving himself. My dad yanked the rug out by asking me, "What if that is not what God has for you, would anyone else God brings to you be less?" I was speechless. For all of my life it was ground in us that this way of life was God honouring. anything less meant we would be living in sin. Well, as God would have it, He brought this fellow in my life and after his answer I spent so much time in Bible looking for the verses that told me I was wrong for dating this man. I could not find any. I prayed and prayed and was filled with complete peace regarding our dating and could not explain it. While we did not date long I believe God used that to spark my interest and curiosity about what else I had wrong. I asked my pastor about the verses saying that God only chose the husbands of one wife to set up the church, and that I was taught that He would not bless someone who had had a divorce. He took the time to sit me down and discuss the actual context and culture of that time. It totally reshaped my mindset. It changed the way I viewed so many things. When I asked my dad about it, he had said he did not know that what we were being taught is school was so, domineering. And while he apologized for not being aware I was actually very grateful. It showed me that I needed to not depend on man's word or opinion, but I needed to let GOD convict me. I believe this helps with raising my two children. My husband and I both agreed that my children needed to make their own choices to follow Christ, not because we did but because they wanted to. We would never sit down and scare them into heaven. That they would come to a decision when they were ready. We are very open and when we answer questions they have, we walk through it with them.

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I don't like the term deconstruct. I'd like to use the word refining what I believe after attending boarding school with individuals of many different denominations and understanding that there is a broad interpretation of some scriptures. The best way to determine this is to seek scripture on your own while reading other books, consulting with others and seeing what life really is. I still don't criticize anybody with beliefs that may be contrary to the ones I'm following unless they clearly contradict scripture.

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I consider myself an agnostic these days.

I still have moments where I'm a theist but I think that's because I grew up as a Christian. There's a lot of reasons behind my deconstruction and eventual loss of faith. I didn't set out to lose my faith, I wish I hadn't but it's intellectually dishonest to pretend I still believe. There have been many times I have wished I still had faith and longed for the comfort it brings to many people I love.

Why did I lose my faith? It was a slow process starting in my teens. By age 14 I knew I was attracted to other women. I didn't want to be. I prayed and prayed for God to take that away. I tried to fake interest in boys in the hope that would kick start some heterosexual feelings. I begged and bargained with God to give me a sign it was OK to be gay or better yet make me straight. Answers came there none. So I hid who I was for the next 20 years from everyone. I confided in no one. I stayed single, celibate and miserable.

I still tried to cling to my faith even tho that had put a large dent into it.

I also struggled to reconcile the poverty I saw Christians living in when we were abroad to the wealth and comfortable lives of Christians I saw in church back in the UK. Christians in the west were crediting God for good grades, or good financial deals compared to the Christians I'd grown up about whose prayers were for much more serious matters like persecution, deaths from preventable diseases etc.

At 23 I got very sick, survived against the odds but left with crippling chronic pain for the rest of my life. Had prayer kept me alive only for my life to be limited and so hard. Was this a punishment from God? Would a loving God spare me only to give me a life where I had to abandon my long term goals and dreams? Another big blow to my faith.

The last 10 yrs my family have experienced many painful losses. My sibling lost two children to stillbirths. These children were longed for loved and desperately wanted. It seemed so cruel and unjust to see them suffer so when I knew them to be kind, loving, decent Christians.

The final nail tho for me was the death of my mother. My mum had a horrific childhood but found God in her late teens. She didn't want to be a missionary but felt called that it was what God wanted from her and my dad so she obeyed. She endured much pain, struggle and sacrifice to bring about the bible translation that she and my father were working on. She retired in 2014, finally time to be with her children and grandchild. Six months later she was diagnosed with breast cancer. She beat it but the radiotherapy led to the discovery of a far greater threat. Pleural mesothelioma from exposure to asbestos. When was she exposed? Before she had kids, before her mission calling, before God called her to send her kids to boarding school, before calling her to return to the mission field and miss her first grandchild as a baby and toddler. She died in October 16. I cannot understand how a supposedly loving God would knowingly allow such sacrifice in his name knowing she had a ticking timebomb inside her. She

did everything she felt God asked of her. Even when it wasn't what she wanted and her reward was to die a painful death as soon as she was reunited with her kids.

That killed any remaining faith I had. That is not the work of a loving or kind God.



A series of southern Baptist pastors in the United States led me to a point where I no longer attended church. Also a divorce from a Christian worship leader music husband. I still believe and go to a woman's Bible study.



I grew up. I knew what the Bible said. I knew the contradictions. I knew also that many, maybe most, of those who claimed to follow it didn't know what it said, or were maybe willfully ignorant. I did research on the early church and modern evangelical Christianity doesn't seem to have much to do with it, let alone with what Jesus taught. Ticking off a box by going to church on Sunday and trying to not swear too much felt shallow.

First it led me out of the evangelical church. It took me to the Catholic Church where I embraced social Justice. From there I met a priest who was maybe more of a universalist and one of the most loving and caring humans I know. One who put action to his words. Not action as in preaching at people, but action as in feet on the ground helping others in their real physical needs. So much so the church ran him off for "giving away too much". He felt the church shouldn't sit on Money and assets while those in the church have mortgages or heavy bills. He left, new priest came in, I left. Currently my "church" is outreach to those living on the streets. It's 6 days a week. I get Thursdays off, sometimes. It gave me an easy excuse to not go to church on Sunday, as did the pandemic. But I found it much more fulfilling and loving to try and work towards making this current world less of a hell for people than to worry about some future life. Do I still believe in a higher power? Yes. Do I wonder why they aren't doing a better job protecting women from being raped nightly or children from being hurt? Yes. Do I miss church? Absolutely not. Not even a tiny bit.



Six factors got me to question things:

- 1) God didn't heal my mother who left the field due to cancer... she died 8 months later
- 2) I didn't think it was fair that most of the billion people in India would be born into poverty, live a difficult life and then die & go to hell
- 3) I observed that certain natural mixes of brain chemistry and personality type thrived in church while others struggled to fit in and eventually found the local pub more welcoming
- 4) The Evangelical response to issues raised by Donald Trump (starting with the Refugee Ban in 2017) caused me to question if the Holy Spirit was actually living inside of a large percentage of evangelicals. This also caused me to resign from the Republican Party.
- 5) The failure of my marriage despite trying to do everything right since childhood
- 6) A loving father shouldn't put the burden of a relationship as a puzzle for children to solve... with only a small percentage succeeding in the quest ... nor would he stand by and allow so much trauma...God was too silent/absent to be considered loving, healthy or reliable.



Result: I consider myself a Christian agnostic who is wary of the hatred at both ends of the political spectrum.



What caused me to deconstruct my faith was my father's hypocrisy and remembering my dorm father's rapes. God protected me until I was old enough to process - and He gave me a Godly counselor to help me. God gave me a precious time with Him. I pictured myself in God's lap, facing Him. I was throwing a most major temper-tantrum in His lap. I was pounding His chest, leaving red marks all over Him, kicking and screaming out the anger I had in my heart at Him. God had His arms lovingly around me, to protect me from me - so I wouldn't hurt myself in my rage. When I was finally done, I took the courage to look into God's face, which was full of love and compassion and understanding. I marveled to Him, "You still love me!! My father would have given me the worst whipping in my life if I'd ever done this to him!!!"



When I was in graduate school (English/literature in my mid-twenties), I realized that if I was a "creation" (of God), my natural, irresistible inclination to question and investigate was built into me by the creator. How, then, could it be evil to honor this inclination, unless the creator is a cruel game-player? And if the creator is basically cruel, why would I want to have anything to do with him?

Ultimately I realized that I would find it abhorrent to deal with my fellow humans and other sentient beings the way the Christian fundamentalists' god is purported to deal with us, which wiped out my received beliefs that that god is God. And I haven't tried (or found it necessary to try) since to replace my obsolete, received beliefs about God with anything. I'm open to insights and truths as I experience and encounter them, whatever their source.



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When I was in my mid 20's I began dating a guy who was super sweet, but I could tell wasn't sharing everything with me. [I found out he was divorced.] I had been taught that you did NOT get divorced, and that you did NOT get remarried if you did get divorced. That God hates divorce and will not bless you anymore if you go that route. I remember in my mid 20s I announced that I was saving myself so God would honour me and bring me someone who was also saving himself. My dad yanked the rug out by asking me, "What if that is not what God has for you, would anyone else God brings to you be less?" I was speechless. For all of my life it was ground in us that this way of life was God honouring. Anything less meant we would be living in sin. Well, as God would have it, He brought this fellow in my life and I spent so much time in Bible looking for the verses that told me I was wrong for dating this man. I could not find any. I prayed and prayed and was filled with complete peace regarding our dating and could not explain it. While we did not date long I believe God used that to spark my interest and curiosity about what else I had wrong.

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to make their own choices to follow Christ, not because we did but because they wanted to. We would never sit down and scare them into heaven. That they would come to a decision when they were ready. We are very open and when we answer questions they have we walk through it with them. This is part of my story. I hope it helps in your research.



My deconstruction began as a child, when I would say to myself that isn't true, but I never talked about it. I followed the evangelical doctrine through my 50s. In my 60 I chose to be honest with myself. If I did not agree with a doctrine I dumped it. Truth is what I was seeking. 2. It lead me to leave evangelicalism and lead me to a love God who loves me unconditionally and everyone else. He loves and cares for all even when they deny him. It has given me freedom and joy. Life became wonderful, not a struggle to please the god of the evangelical doctrine, a judgmental god.



I was embarrassed. [Deconstruction] led to freedom from guilt. To the non-christian educated world, when you talk about Jesus the son of God dying, resurrection, hell, inerrancy of scripture, sin, that I have the truth and that they are wrong and that they will most likely rot in hell longing for just a drop of water to ease there eternal pain, Adam and eve, 7000 year earth, etc.....is embarrassing to my mind, but it was what my heart had been instructed to say, the hard tough truth. Embarrassing...No bitter feelings though. I've mellowed and realized how little I really know.



*The accounts below were included in the original blog post.*



The impetus for me to look at the brand of Christianity from my childhood was 1. Christian leaders using Scripture to control others in order to keep their positions of authority and 2. Christians who are locked in the Christian mindsets of the 1950s and 1960s who think those cultural norms are, in and of themselves, Christian. Any other than that way of thinking or being or acting is ungodly. Somehow the trappings of North American Evangelicalism are considered Gospel and the teachings of Jesus are completely ignored.



What caused me to deconstruct was that the VERY people who said they were there to love and save the people who were lost were the ones who abused, neglected, and hurt me the most. This disconnect has led me to disillusionment and confusion with missions, God, religion, and life. I've still not fully deconstructed, though. I at least have a tiny bit of hope left that things will make sense as I heal and mature in the future.



I deconstructed because of the simple realization that I didn't like God very much. He was misrepresented in significant ways by people in my childhood. But being honest about that led me to discovering firstly that he is absolutely wild about me. The faith I was taught had much shame and little love, but the God I follow is actually a God of much love and no shame.

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[I deconstructed my faith because of] hypocrisies I perceived at my mission-run boarding school. I did not believe that what was being preached was being practiced. This led me to examine more closely what was being preached, to examine how practices that seemed contrary to my understanding of the Christian faith were being justified, and it just didn't seem to hold water.

[I learned] the history of colonialism, once I started university. I wondered why the history of the country of my childhood had been concealed from me--especially my parents' mission agency's complicity in the oppression and marginalization of the country's people. I began doubting other things I had been led to believe. I could not see a way to be a practicing Christian without affirming the well-documented anti-Christian behaviour of people I had been raised to revere as model Christians.

What I'm describing took place over twenty years ago. This time of crisis which has now come to be called "deconstruction" is, for me, a brief episode in a long story. A crucial episode to be SURE, but to relate that episode absent the larger context could lead to some rather misleading conclusions. Today, I am an ordained minister serving in a Christians mission organization, so there has \*obviously\* been some movement since those days of "deconstruction."

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Here are some of the reasons I started a journey of what some are calling "deconstruction." 1) The Church's response to abuse. 2) The Church's manipulation of Bible translation choices and resulting intimidation tactics for those who question them as the Bereans did. 3) The Church's pressure and intimidation at both ends of the political table.

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I started deconstructing in 2016 after I was working my way out of a toxic church environment in the US. It was the last straw. So many years seemingly wasted on a "calling" to a ministry whose leaders were abusive and toxic. I had seen behind the curtain of too many churches growing up in Mexico, only to find heaps of division, politics, infighting, and power grabs among the leaders that were revered by their congregations as saints.

As I quickly learned in my adult years living in the US, churches here were all the same, just with more gaslighting and manipulation. I went from extremely involved in church leadership to zero involvement in a day. This was around the same time Trump was running for office and the hypocrisy, sexism, and white nationalism in the church ran so deep and became so much louder that I couldn't ignore it anymore.

I'm still deep in the deconstruction/reconstruction process but I currently do believe strongly in God and that He's good. I hold the words of the Bible extremely loosely and try to live by the basic principles that Jesus preached and that's about it. I'm both comforted and saddened that so many are in the same spot as I am. Grateful for the community and horrified at the religious harm that got us here.

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For me, the deconstruction started when I saw how few professing christians were actually demonstrating Christlike love. I saw so many christians full of baseless hate for the "other" that I grew tremendously discouraged in the church, especially as an institution.

That has brought me to a place, I think, of renewed desire to actually live out the faith I was taught.

Seeing the failures of the church (as an institution) and the tribalism of so many "christians" gave me an increased motivation to actually live out our scriptural directives to speak justly, love mercy and walk humbly without God.



Having been born in and loving a Muslim country, I questioned how a loving God would send whole people groups to hell. Trauma also caused more of my deconstruction, when I found my faith wasn't big enough to heal wounds from boarding school separations and sexual abuse... I needed psychology too.



For me, deconstruction was incremental. As a newly-on-my-own teen, I did not want to bring shame to my missionary parents, and so decided to continue my faith journey, trusting that it was indeed true. But the rest of my life (I am 63) has been a progressively more thorough deconstruction, at the deepest level, largely spurred by disappointment with God's people (and to be honest, with Him at times). Funny enough, at the end of it, I find myself doing much the same thing I did at the beginning - "God, I don't get a whole lot, but if I don't hang onto you, there isn't anything else - so I am going to hang on with all my might." And honestly, He seems to have never let go of me. Still in process...

Our son reacted differently. It got me to the core when, in 2014, he admitted to me that he no longer considered himself to be a Christian. My wife and I love and are proud of C and J (and let them know that). He also knows that we long for renewed spiritual life in them. They have spent their lives living lean, reaching out to the poor, homeless, and hopeless, including the last ten years in Africa. And we have hope, but until then we share, embrace, and love.



When my first child was two months old, unexplained anger surfaced in me. When Andrew cried too long, I felt like throwing him against the wall and bashing his head in. That's when I first realized I needed counseling. I didn't know the counseling would uncover deep childhood losses and boarding school injuries. The Bible taught that God loves me, but I didn't know what that meant. My dad said he loved me, but he sent me away to boarding school and was too busy for me during the weeks I was home.

Now I'm seeking to find where God was in my lonely childhood. Wondering if I need to forgive more or if someone needs to ask me for forgiveness. Is forgiveness just another F word? As I blog about my journey to find healing, I'm connecting with other MKs and finding mutual encouragement and inspiration along the way. And a renewed faith in a God who loves me abundantly. ([debbiejoneswarren.com](http://debbiejoneswarren.com))



What caused me to deconstruct my faith:

- I saw massive inconsistencies between lives of scandals and touted doctrine.
- I saw complete irrelevance of Western doctrinal pillars and evangelical values in being a global worker myself as an adult in an eastern culture.
- And finally, Complex-PTSD reared its ugly head (without my permission!) to reveal my own unhealthy dysfunctional coping mechanisms, the direct fruit of spiritual beliefs forged by anxiety, scarcity mindset, and threatened egos that are rampant in conservative, fundamental white evangelicalism.

Where did it lead me?

- To stand in awe of how Jesus saw and honored women. To unashamedly embracing myself as a woman made in the image of God who is equal to men.
- I'm grounded now, embracing my body as my ally instead of hating it as a dirty thing.
- I care about this planet because I pray God's kingdom *come to earth* as it is in heaven instead of waiting to ditch this world thinking it will all blow up anyway.
- It led me to realize the Holy Spirit is active and alive, God speaks to us and cares about all this intimately--speaking now experientially (not just head knowledge).
- I also now want to have children, TCKs, myself... Before all this I could only see heartache and pain in a TCK's childhood. God has done a good work.

