

Under Construction

Week 1: Jesus and Deconstruction

Good morning! I hope you all had a good week. Maybe got to take a Sabbath Day. My buddy, Brian, was oddly quiet during our runs last week. I guess he didn't want to get roped into any more sermon illustrations.

When you walk through the front door of our house, you step into this large, open space. You've got the living room in front of you, and then to the right is the dining room and to the left is another little open space. And, the very first time we walked into the house to check it out, the first thing we saw was this giant pillar right in the middle of all this open space.

Amber saw it and was like, "We've got to do something with that!" But, what can you do? It was obviously a load bearing post. Why else would it be there? It was supporting the weight of the house.

Well, we moved in and quickly realized that we weren't the only ones that noticed the pillar. It was the first thing people saw when they walked into our home. We were constantly walking around it. Kids would come over and they'd want to grab it and swing around it. An unnamed child of ours walked into it one time when she wasn't paying attention. The pillar was the first thing people saw and it was always in the way.

But, again, it was structural. It's bearing the load of this wide open space, keeping our roof from crashing in to our living room. It had to be there...or so we thought. We had a couple over one day and the husband is a contractor. He and I got to talking about this weird pillar in the middle of this open space and how much we "dislike" it, but we live with it because it's load bearing. He looked at it and said, let's go downstairs. He took a couple of measurements and then peaked up into our attic. We happen to have a copy of the blueprints from when the house was built, so we pulled those out. After a little while, he looked up and said, "That pillar's not doing anything."

I watched as my wife's eyes lit up. There was a light that shined around her. I think I even heard the faint sound of angels singing. We had a structural engineer come out just to confirm what my friend was thinking and, sure enough, that large pillar in the middle of this beautiful, open space...the pillar that was the first thing people saw when they walked into our house and was always getting in the way...that pillar was a choice, not a necessity!

So, guess what's no longer in our house! I was able to remove the pillar because it wasn't in the design. Someone had put it there, but it was unnecessary and only getting in the way.

But, imagine if that pillar was necessary. If we'd looked at the blueprints, had someone come check it out, and they said, "Yep, that thing is bearing a lot of weight," but we were like, "Yeah...but we don't really like it, so let's remove it!" Tearing out a load bearing pillar is going to cause all kinds of damage. You'll start getting cracks in the ceiling, sagging trusses, roof damage,

water leaks when it rains, walls sinking in. It might take a while, but eventually, the house will become unlivable because we removed a pillar that the blueprint said was important.

I think the same can be true with our faith. When it comes to faith, we have a tendency to put up unnecessary pillars. Pillars that aren't in the blueprints of Scripture. Or maybe someone puts those pillars up for us and we just assume they're supposed to be there. And, like that pillar in our home, these topics or issues become the first thing that people see about our faith because we've kind of placed them front and center. People have to walk around them to get to Jesus.

And, when they start building their own faith in Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, the One, True Architect and Builder, we come along and say, "Hey, make sure you include these things, too." We add pillars to the blueprints of our faith and the faith of others.

And so we say things like, "Yeah, Jesus! But, Jesus AND...You can only listen to this kind of music now...You've got to stay away from *those* kinds of people...You've got to buy into these philosophical theories about race and social justice...You now align with this political party."

We put up these pillars that aren't in the blueprints. And, they might be good, well-meaning pillars, but we hold them up as if they bear the weight of our faith. And they don't.

But, the opposite can also be true. There are pillars in our faith that ARE in the blueprints, but we don't like the way they look. We don't like how they make us feel and they're not up to date with the latest cultural trends, so we tear them out.

So, statements like..."Jesus is the only way to the One, True God" sounds too exclusive, so we tear out that load bearing pillar and we say, "But, hey, your truth is your truth. Just believe in it sincerely and you'll be fine."

Or, "God's design for sex and marriage is between one man and one woman. He created us male and female." That sounds too bigoted, so we rip out that load bearing pillar about sex and identity and say, "Love is love. Be who you want to be. Follow your heart."

But, when we rip out these pillars that are in the blueprints, it's not long before cracks start to form and the entire structure of our faith comes crashing down.

So, as we build our faith, it's vital that we constantly consult the Architect and His blueprints to make sure we're not putting up pillars that don't belong, or tearing out ones that do.

We're starting a new series today called Under Construction. And, we're going to look at a term that you may or may not be familiar with: Deconstruction. And, as we dive in today, I want to define deconstruction, talk briefly about the ways people deconstruct their faith, and then close by looking at what Jesus can teach us about this topic. So, if you have a Bible or a Bible app, turn with me to Matthew 22.

What is Deconstruction? A simple definition is that it's this **Philosophical idea of rethinking your previously unquestioned beliefs.** It's looking at the pillars of your faith with a critical eye to determine whether or not they belong. It's often sparked by some kind of crisis of faith that causes a person to re-evaluate what they believe and why they believe it.

And, while deconstruction often times gets a bad rap, I think there actually **can be** a really positive side to it. **Positive deconstruction uses Scripture to critique the world's influence on your faith.** You allow Scripture to reveal those places where you've bought into the cultural narratives of the world around us.

When you allow Scripture to reveal the world's influence on your faith, you might find that your worldview doesn't look much different than that of your non-Christian neighbor who maybe has the same political or social beliefs you do...you just happen to go to church on Sundays. Or, you may find that the cultural narrative has convinced you that Jesus cares more about the prosperity of America than he does the people who are willing to risk their lives to cross the border into our country.

Deconstruction can have a positive effect on our faith when we use Scripture to critique the world's influence on us. When we question what we believe and why we believe it and allow God's Word to reconstruct our faith and make it stronger. But, there's also a shadow side to deconstruction. **Negative deconstruction uses the world to critique Scripture's authority in your life.**

In this kind of deconstruction, a person diminishes the power and authority of God's Word and embraces the cultural narratives and ideologies instead. They unthinkingly accept ideas and philosophies that are full of contradictions and agendas just because everyone else is lifting them up. Often times, people in this camp find it easier to change their beliefs than to go against the current of our culture. A culture that **fiercely** preaches the message of tolerance, but will quickly cancel anyone who does not think exactly like they do.

Negative deconstruction might start off with good intentions, but I've seen so many people just shred up the blueprints along the way. So, instead of rebuilding a stronger faith, they often end up with no faith at all. Maybe you know someone who, that's their story. Maybe it's your story.

I went to school with a kid who everyone knew was a Christian. He was super active in his church, always invited other people to events. He led an FCA Bible Study in High School. He was the model Christian. When I became a follower of Jesus after we graduated, he was one of the first people I called and shared it with.

We lost touch for a while and got reconnected on social media years later. As we caught up through messages Josh said at some point during college, he started questioning his faith. He grew up in a pretty fundamental home and so, when he started having doubts, he didn't know what to do with them. A pillar in his faith that someone had put there was that true believers

don't have doubts. And, if you read through Scripture, especially the Psalms, you'll quickly find that pillar's not in there. But, he believed it.

So, instead of leaning into his Christian community and working through those doubts, he isolated himself. Stopped going to the campus ministry he was a part of, stopped attending church. He started questioning his previously unquestioned beliefs and just found it was easier to embrace the world's ideologies. And now, he's just walked away from his faith. He's no longer following Jesus.

But, I know another young man whose story starts the same, but has a very different ending. He went through a similar season of evaluating the pillars of his faith. He critiqued them through the lenses of Scripture and removed the ones that weren't in the blueprints. When he came face to face with doubts he'd never experienced before, he wrestled through them and sought the truth, wherever it might lead him.

Because of his deconstruction, this young man's faith is now his own. He believes, not because his parents believe, or grandparents. He's a follower of Jesus because he went through the hard, sometimes painful, process of owning his faith. His faith was under construction and now it's stronger than it's ever been.

My guess is there are probably stories that could be shared right here in this room today that start with deconstruction and either end in complete demolition or a faith that came out rebuilt and stronger than before. My guess is there are probably some of us who would say we're in that process right now. Your faith is under construction and you're not sure where it's going to land.

And, here's what I want us to know this morning...none of this is new. We don't have to be afraid of this topic. People have been deconstructing their faith and worldviews for centuries. The prophets were deconstructionists. The reformers were. Even Jesus. In fact, I think Jesus gives us the perfect model for how to deconstruct our faith.

In Matthew 22, Jesus is challenged by a religious leader who asks him, "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" In other words, "Jesus, what's the most important pillar in the blueprints?"

These religious leaders had put up hundreds of pillars, most of which were not in the design. They were the first thing people saw when they looked at their faith and they kept people from getting to God. And now, they're asking Jesus which one is most important, hoping he'll choose the one they put up. How does he respond? Not by pointing out the pillars they put up, but by reinforcing the ones God set in place...(READ Matt. 22:37-40)

That's it. Those are the two pillars. Love God. Love others. Love God. Submit and surrender to Him. Fear God and keep his commands. Love God by conforming your life to His ways, not distorting His ways to your life. Love God.

And love others as yourself. Serve them. Care for them. Work for their good. See God's image firmly implanted on them, even if you disagree with them, and graciously point others to Jesus. Don't get in the way of them finding and following Him.

These are the two pillars that rise above the rest. With this simple statement, Jesus deconstructed the faith of the religious leaders and he gave us the blueprints to construct our own.

So, as we close today, let me ask you...what pillars have you put up in your faith that aren't in the blueprints? What issue or position do you hold onto, even fight for, that's a nonessential, but it's the first thing people see when they look at your faith and might keep them from following Jesus?

Or, is there a pillar in the plans that you've removed? You know it's in God's design, but you don't like the way it looks or makes you feel and so you've taken it out, and now you're starting to see some other cracks form in your faith.

My challenge to you today is to spend some time this week evaluating the pillars you've put up or taken down in your faith. Look at them through the lenses of Scripture to see if they really belong and then have the courage to build a faith based on God's design, and nothing else.

And, you don't have to do this alone. If your faith is under construction right now, surround yourself with people who will point you to Jesus, not away from him. And, we've got a perfect opportunity for you...(show C/G slide).

Next week, we'll have our Connect Gathering in the Fellowship Hall. Wherever you are in life or faith, we've got a group for you, so go get connected with one.

I'll close with this...

May you allow God's Word to critique the pillars you've put up and the world's influence on your faith.

May you have the courage to remove the pillars that don't belong and keep the ones that do.

And may Jesus, the Architect of our faith, be the only pillar in your life that people see as He gives you the strength to love God and love others, like him.