

1 Timothy 4:1-5

Introduction

1. Do you recognize any of these names, and know what they have in common?
 - Kevin Max of Christian band DC Talk
 - George Perdakis, co-founder of Newsboys
 - Marty Sampson or and Michael and Lisa Gungor (former worship leaders and song writers)
 - Abraham Piper, son of John Piper
 - Tony Campolo, famous author and former Southern Baptist pastor
 - Joshua Harris, former pastor and author of book “I kissed Dating Goodbye” (a Christian approach to dating and relationships)
2. The answer is they are/were all fairly well-known celebrity Christians who use terms like deconstruction, deconversion, and exevangelical to describe their rejection of historical Christian doctrines, or even faith in Christ completely
3. For the past decade or so, these terms have become more prevalent in the evangelical Church
4. Now, we have to be careful because some evangelical Christians have used the term deconstruction simply to refer to how they re-examined the Christian beliefs they were raised on to see how they compared to the Bible, and then bring them into a more accurate alignment with the Scriptures (in this respect, “deconstruction” is being used in a positive sense)

Ginger Duggar Vuolo: “Becoming Free Indeed”—while she doesn’t use the term, she went through a similar process to re-evaluate the unbiblical teachings of Bill Gothard and his Institute of Basic Life Principles that she was raised on

5. However, others have used these terms to refer to rejecting historical Biblical doctrines and principles, faith in Christ, and even belief in God altogether

Former pastor Rob Bell is one of the more popular deconstructionists in this sense and first used the term back in 2011 when he renounced the Biblical doctrine of Hell and published his book, Love Wins; once considered a pariah, he’s now gaining popularity, especially among millennials and GenZs, who look to him as a mentor in deconstructing their own faith (he’s got over 180,000 weekly listeners to his podcast)

6. We won’t find the words deconstruction, deconversion, or exevangelical in the Bible, but the Bible does warn us about such things:
 - a. In fact, it’s the main point of our passage today, 1 Timothy 4:1-5
 - b. Paul addresses the Who, What, Where, When, Why and How of apostasy

A. The Who, What and Where of Apostasy (READ 4:1-5)

1. Paul says that “...**some will fall away from the faith**” and this answers the who, what, and where of apostasy
 - a. Definition of apostasy: the abandonment or renunciation of a religious belief
 - b. In the OT, it’s described as a turning back or forsaking the Lord (Jeremiah 2:19)
 - c. In the NT, there are two different Greek words used:

- 1) apostasi'a which means to rise up in defiance, to rebel against, and even to start an insurrection
 - 2) ephistemi' (used here by Paul) which means to withdraw, depart, or fall away
2. Notice that Paul uses the definite article here—**“the faith”**—and in this context he’s referring to the doctrines and teachings of Christianity:
 - a. We see this spelled out in 1 Timothy 4:6): **“In pointing out these things to the brethren, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine which you have been following.”**
 - b. There are all kinds of people in the world who claim to believe in or “have faith” in Jesus, but that doesn’t necessarily mean they believe the Bible is true or accept the doctrines and teachings found within it
 - c. According to a new study by George Barna and the Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University, 69% of the U.S. population claims to be Christians, but less than 9% of those have a Biblical world view
 - d. In an interview when the study was released, George Barna said, “Two out of three Americans think of themselves as a Christian, and a majority think that Christianity is kind of about the Bible. But there’s a big gap between what (self-identified Christians) believe the Bible may teach, and what the Bible actually teaches.”
 - e. This is shocking enough, but Paul’s not necessarily talking about them; he’s talking about something much more disturbing
 3. So, we know the What—apostasy or falling away from the faith—but what about the Who? Who will fall away?
 - a. Paul simply identified them as **“some”** but the context here as well as in other places in the Bible make it clear that these are people who identify as Christians and fellowship with the Body of Christ
 - b. In addition, they are people who have at one time or another accepted the doctrines and teachings of the Bible, otherwise Paul could not describe them as **“falling away”**; you can’t fall away or depart from something you’ve never believed
 4. By answering the Who of apostasy we’ve also answered the Where of apostasy: the answer is the Church; it will happen from within our midst:
 - a. Jesus warned about this in the Olivet Discourse when He said that as we approach the end times and face increasing persecution, the love of many will grow cold and they will fall away
 - b. Paul also warned the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:29-30 that savage wolves would rise up from among themselves, not spare the flock, and draw away disciples after themselves
 5. This brings up the obvious question about whether or not these people were genuinely saved?
 - a. I believe a sound Biblical argument can be made that those who are genuinely saved will never abandon or depart from the faith; they cannot lose their salvation
 - b. However, in the Parable of the Sower, Jesus describes four different kinds of people (READ Matthew 13:18-23):
 - 1) The first type of person is the one who hears the Word but doesn’t accept it because he doesn’t understand it and the Devil snatches it away—this refers to much of the unsaved world around us
 - 2) However, the second and third types of people are those who hear and accept the Word, but ultimately fall away, either because they never develop any roots or they

value the world and wealth more than Christ—this refers to those who profess or claim to be Christians (or maybe did so at one time) but aren't truly saved

- 3) It's only the fourth type of person who is genuinely saved; he/she is the one who hears the Word, accepts it, and "**indeed bears fruit and brings forth some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty.**"
- 4) It's these second and third groups that Paul is referring to; they look, talk, and act like Christians for a time but ultimately fall away from the faith because they were never truly a part of the body of Christ
- 5) John described this in his first letter (1 John 2:19): "**They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us.**"

B. The When of Apostasy

1. Look at the beginning of v. 1 again: "**But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times...**"; this gives us the When of apostasy
2. This phrase "**later times**" is an interesting one because our first assumption is to think that Paul was referring to something far off into the future
3. However, this phrase and ones similar to it are used throughout the Bible in at least three different ways:
 - a. It was used to refer to Jesus' day and the time of the early Church (1st century):
 - 1) 1 John 2:18: "**Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have appeared; from this we know that it is the last hour.**"
 - 2) Hebrews 1:1-2: "**God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, 2 in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.**"
 - 3) 1 Peter 1:20: "**For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you.**"
 - b. Paul and Peter used it to describe a future time within the Church age:
 - 1) 2 Timothy 3:1: "**But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come.**"
 - 2) 2 Peter 3:3: "**Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts...**"
 - c. It was also used to refer to the final days of God's redemptive plan when He will not only judge the wicked but reward the righteous:
 - 1) John 12:48: "**He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day.**"
 - 2) James 5:3: "**Your gold and your silver have rusted; and their rust will be a witness against you and will consume your flesh like fire. It is in the last days that you have stored up your treasure!**"
 - 3) John 6:44: "**No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.**"
4. With all this in mind, the context of this passage suggests Paul is using "**later times**" as a specific reference to his current day, but it applies to the entire age of the Church:

- a. As one scholar wrote, “Paul is speaking about a present phenomenon [something happening in his day] using emphatic future language characteristic of prophecy” (Knight, p. 189)
- b. We know this is the case because what Paul introduces next was happening at Ephesus in his day; if fact, it was one of the primary reasons he wrote this letter to Timothy
- c. However, as history has born out, this wasn’t just a first century phenomenon; it has continued throughout the past 2000 years

C. The Why of Apostasy: “**paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons,**” (4:1)

- 1. Paul now moves on to the Why of Apostasy; why do people fall away?
- 2. The answer is simple: it’s the result of “**paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons**” (4:1):
 - a. We see this phrase “**paying attention**” four times in this letter and in each case it implies more than simply listening or paying attention; it’s more akin to committing or devoting oneself to something:
 - 1) The false teachers were committed to myths, endless genealogies, fruitless discussions, and false teaching regarding the Law (1:4ff)
 - 2) Deacons were not to be given to or “**addicted**” to much wine (same word; 3:8)
 - 3) In 4:13 Paul calls on Timothy to “**devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching**” (ESV)
 - b. Paul didn’t pull any punches here when he described the source of the false teaching that leads to apostasy: “**deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons**”:
 - 1) Just as Satan tempted Eve through deceit, the same is true today of God’s people
 - 2) Peter warned that Satan “**prowls around like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour**” (1 Peter 5:8)
 - 3) One of the ways he does this is by introducing destructive heresies into the church through false teachers which leads to the How of Apostasy

D. The How of Apostasy

- 1. How does apostasy happen? It happens by means of false teachers (READ 4:2)
- 2. This is such an apt description of false teachers:
 - a. They are hypocrites, pretending to be shepherds but they are wolves in sheep’s clothing
 - b. They claim to speak and teach truth, but they are liars spewing deceit
 - c. Their consciences have been seared, which means they can no longer think or reason clearly
 - d. In 2 Timothy 3:5 Paul describes them as “**holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power**”
 - e. Peter adds that they are those who “**secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction on themselves**” (2 Peter 2:1)
- 3. Paul gives an example of such men in v. 3-5 (READ)

Takeaway: How do we protect ourselves and others from apostasy?

- 1. First, we need to be able to recognize false teaching:
 - a. This means we need to be good students of the Word of God

- b. The only way to truly evaluate whether something is Biblical is not to weigh it against what we already believe or what we've been taught; that's a good place to start but we ultimately need to weigh it against what the Word of God says which means WE need to know what it says
2. Second, we need to be able to recognize false teachers:
- a. This is a lot easier to do when we're good at #1
 - b. Ultimately, a teacher shouldn't be evaluated on how well he says something, how good or reasonable it sounds, or on how popular he/she is, but on how it aligns with the Word of God

Sarah Young: five books in the top 10 at Grace

3. Finally, neither of these will ultimately matter unless we are completely devoted to loving the Lord with our whole heart, soul, mind and strength, and demonstrating this through obedience to Him:
- a. Sound doctrine is critical to the right relationship with Jesus and helps protect us against apostasy
 - b. But, sound doctrine alone won't protect us from apostasy
 - c. This is because apostasy is ultimately a matter of the heart, not just intellect or knowledge