

The Deconstruction of Christianity with Alisa Childers and Tim Barnett

(January 26, 2024)

FRANK:

Ladies and gentlemen, are your Christian beliefs toxic? If you go online, you're going to see a lot of people saying they are. You may have people in your family who are claiming you're toxic. Have they left Christianity? Have they started to what some people call, deconstruct? Have they been deconstructing their faith? What does that even mean? And how do you respond? Because there are many people out there who have children who have walked away from the faith. They say they've deconstructed their faith. And some of these children have cut their parents (who are grandparents to their own kids), out of the family.

And there are places on the internet that are encouraging people to leave orthodox evangelical beliefs. What are we to do about this? What if this hits our own family? How do we respond? Well, help is on the way ladies and gentlemen. Because in just about a week, the brand-new book, 'The Deconstruction of Christianity: What It Is, Why It's Destructive, and How to Respond' is coming out by the great Alisa Childers and the equally great Tim Barnett. Many of you know Alisa. She's been on the program many times before. She has a great podcast.

You might also know Tim. Tim, in recent years, has developed something called 'Red Pen Logic.' And if you haven't been to the 'Red Pen Logic' YouTube site, you need to go because Tim, who works with Stand to Reason does some great work on Red Pen Logic. They're both on the program today, one hailing from Canada, and one hailing from Nashville. Let's start with the Nashville lady. That's the great Alisa Childers. Alisa, how did you get involved with Tim Barnett writing 'The Deconstruction of Christianity?' Why did you even want to do this?

ALISA:

Well, I have to say, that's the first time I've ever been called the Nashville lady. But I like it. It's got a nice ring. So, Tim and I started talking about this, I think a couple years ago. From my perspective, you know, I was really busy writing my second book. So, I wasn't even thinking about a new book yet. But I was thinking a lot about deconstruction, because I started to see a lot of evangelical leaders talk about it in a lot of different ways. And then I started noticing Tim, really honing in on that topic. He was posting about it on his social media. He was doing talks at youth camps. And I remember just seeing these posts going, man. Tim really gets this. I feel like we are really in sync with what we think this thing is, how to define it, how destructive and corrosive it is.

And so, one day, just out of the blue, Tim texted me and said, hey. Have you ever thought about writing a book about deconstruction? And I was like, no. I can't do that right now. I'm so busy writing my other book. And then Tim said something along the lines of, well, what if we co-wrote it? What if we wrote it together? And the minute he texted that, I thought, this is going to happen. So, I just texted him back something like, let's talk about this. I really like this idea. And



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so, after that, we just hit the ground running, and signed the deal, and started really digging into the research, and writing the book.

FRANK:

So, Tim, how did this become an area of interest for you?

TIM:

Well, as Alisa just said, there was a couple camps that I was doing. One in particular wanted me to speak Monday to Friday on this particular topic, deconstruction. So, I ended up doing something like, you know, five hours worth of material. It was like 15,000 words that I've kind of compiled in my research. And I thought, man. This has become an issue that Christians need to understand better. Part of the problem was at the time, everybody was using the word deconstruction to mean different things. Everything from, hey, I'm just asking questions, or maybe I'm doubting some secondary theological doctrine, all the way to, you know, Joshua Harris, the author of 'I Kissed Dating Goodbye.'

He says, while I'm gone. I'm out. I'm leaving the faith altogether. And so, there was so much confusion going on. And this is why they asked me to speak on it. What I was able to do was hey, let's step by step kind of walk through what really is this thing called deconstruction. And as we kind of worked through some of that research and walked through it, we found that man, most of the Church has no idea what's really going on in the deconstruction movement. And so, we wanted to kind of raise the alarm or provide that information, so people aren't blindsided by it when they hear that their loved one is deconstructing the faith.

FRANK:

And the internet, some people say, is where Christianity goes to die because there's so much skepticism, and so much enticing ways of thinking and feeling out there, that this deconstruction movement just snowballs. And Alisa, maybe what we ought to do before we really dive into the topic of the new book 'The Deconstruction of Christianity', is define what deconstruction is. Because for some, that's even controversial. Personally, I don't think it is, but a lot of people think it is. What is it?

ALISA:

Right. So, that's interesting you brought up that for some people it's controversial. Because there's one way that certain, maybe well-meaning evangelical leaders talk about it. But then as I've traveled around and I go to churches, it's like the people in the pews understand what's going on because they have loved ones who are in this process. So, there's a way it's manifesting broadly in culture, and as it's connected to its postmodern roots. And then there's kind of a way that some Christians try to almost baptize the word to mean something positive.

And so, Tim, and I wanted to be really careful. In fact, our definition was the hardest sentence, I think, to write in the whole book. We worked it, and reworked it, and reworked it. And so ultimately, our definition, and this is the definition we put forward in the book and defend

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throughout the book, is this. Faith deconstruction is a postmodern process of rethinking your faith, but not regarding Scripture as the standard. And we think that really nails on the head what we see happening in the movement. But also, we wanted to be sure and put that word postmodern in there, because this word has a history in this context. And that is that it flows out of this postmodern philosophy that rejects the idea that absolute truth exists, or at least can be known when it comes to things like religion and morality.

So, in the deconstruction hashtag, in the movement, it is not about getting your theology right. It's not about pulling out your Bible and saying, okay, is what I believe biblical? Does this line up with God's Word? It's not about that. In fact, if you hold the Bible as your authority in this movement, they'll tell you you're not doing this right. And interestingly, Frank, part of the reason I started thinking about it this way is because I had my own faith crisis that I've been on the show before and talked about.

In my first book, I actually described what I went through as deconstruction. But after my research into what deconstruction really is, I don't use that word anymore. I actually correct myself in this new book and say, actually, I wanted truth. I sought after truth. So, that wasn't deconstruction. That was a faith crisis. It was a time of really agonizing doubt, years of rebuilding my faith. But it wasn't deconstruction, because deconstruction is ultimately a shift of authority from an external authority for truth to the self. And that's why we've defined it the way we have.

FRANK:

Now, Tim, Alisa just mentioned that there are some people who will say, particularly the proponents of deconstructing away from what we would call Orthodox Christianity. They would say that, on one hand, you can't tell anybody what to believe about religion. But yet, on the other hand, didn't they just tell Alisa that she couldn't stay in Orthodox Christianity? Isn't there a self-referential, self-defeating aspect of this?

TIM:

Oh, absolutely. And what you find is, when you start to listen to the thought leaders in the deconstruction movement, we call them the deconstructionists. What you find is, there's so many inconsistencies, and there's so many self-refuting claims that go on. For example, one pretty well known deconstructionist, he promotes it on his Instagram and on his TikTok is the Naked Pastor. Now, do not Google pastor. I'll get you into trouble, okay? But he's got over 100,000 followers on Instagram. And in one particular video, he says that he doesn't want people to reconstruct into a new theology. Well, why not? Because deconstruction is a never ending process. You're always deconstructing what you believe.

In fact, some of these guys will say, try not to hold any beliefs. Of course, anyone who's listened to your program knows, that's a belief in itself, right? And so, their belief is that you should never hold beliefs. And of course, they don't want you to reconstruct into a new theology because you'll have to deconstruct that. Well, if you follow the Naked Pastor or any of these other

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deconstructionists, you find, of course they hold a theology. I mean, just look at the content that they're putting out there. And so, over and over again, there are self-refuting inconsistent claims being made all the time.

FRANK:

We're talking to Tim Barnett and Alisa Childers. Their brand-new book comes out January 31, 'The Deconstruction of Christianity.' Go order it right now and I'll tell you why you need to order it right now before it comes out right after the break. You're listening to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist with me, Frank Turek, on the American Family Radio Network. Back in two.

If you're low on the FM dial looking for National Public Radio, go no further. We're actually going to tell you the truth here. That's our intent anyway. You will never hear 'The Deconstruction of Christianity: What It Is, Why It Is Destructive, and How to Respond' on NPR. You will hear it here on the American Family Radio Network. My guests today, Alisa Childers and Tim Barnett, brand-new, great book. I read it in one day, foreword by Carl Truman on this deconstruction movement and what you can do about it, especially if there's a loved one of yours that has come to you and said you're toxic. I can't believe what you believe anymore. Stay away from me. Don't call me. Don't contact me.

What do you do? What is this motivated by? Where did this come from? How can you respond? That's what this brand-new book will do. And I want you to go to Amazon or wherever you get books in advance and order it now. Because look, you're going to get it. I'm just telling you, you're going to get it. So, get it now. And the reason for that is, it really helps more people see the book if the book is highly ranked just prior to coming out. So, go to Amazon. If you get books on Amazon, or Barnes and Noble, or Christian book distributors, wherever you get it, order the book now. It'll be at your door in a week or so. And you're going to want to devour this.

And by the way, you're not just going to learn the deconstruction side of things. You're also going to learn Orthodox Christian doctrine when you read this book, so that's going to be a really big advantage. Tim, the reasons that you give for deconstruction in the book, I kind of really highlighted page 184 because it really succinctly says the two major categories of reasons why people decide that they're no longer Orthodox Christians.

And you write this. You say, sin can play a role in deconstruction in two ways. First, deconstruction is often a reaction to sin. And then second, deconstruction can be motivated by sin. Speak to the first one. How is deconstruction a reaction to sin? And then Alisa can take the second one.

TIM:

Sure. One of the challenges that comes up when people talk about deconstruction is evangelicals will be mocked by the deconstructionists. They'll say something like, well, you just think we just want to go around doing some more sinning. We just want to do a lot of sinning. That's why we left Christianity. And what we want to do is, we want to address that challenge.

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And one of the claims we make in the book and argue for is that, actually, all deconstruction relates to sin in a couple of ways. One is, it's a reaction to sin. So, when someone deconstructs because of church hurt, because they have been hurt in a church that they've gone to. Whether it's legitimate abuse, and we heard tragic stories about that, or some kind of perceived abuse.

Often times, it's because there's an individual who has done something that sinful in the church or when you experience suffering. Virtually every deconstruction story that we listen to had some kind of suffering in it, someone trying to reconcile a good, and loving, powerful God with the suffering evil in the world. And of course, part of our worldview is there is suffering and evil in the world because of sin. So, there's a sense in which deconstruction, all these stories, are a reaction to sin. So, that's what we're talking about there.

FRANK:

Alisa, how are many of these deconstruction stories motivated by sin? What do you mean by that?

ALISA:

Well, in my opinion, you know, we took in quite a few deconstruction stories and got really deep into the online space there. And as Tim mentioned, sometimes they'll come on and say, it really frustrates them when Christians say oh, they say we just want to keep on sinning. But then what's interesting, is under posts like that, many other deconstructionists will come on and be like, but you know, actually, I really do enjoy getting to sleep with who I want to and things like that. So, sometimes they'll even admit it. But even the ones that don't admit it, if you really listen closely to the deconstruction stories, there is a moral undercurrent under absolutely every single one.

I cannot say that I have ever listened to a deconstruction story where it wasn't at least mentioned that the presumption is that the Christian sexual ethic is oppressive to LGBTQ people, or that the different roles that men and women have to play, that this is oppressive to women. So, it's not like they're saying, well, is this oppressive? Or is this correct theology? Or what is God's design for sexuality? That's not the question being asked. It's the assumption that it's hurting people, and it's harmful to people. And that will play a role in absolutely every deconstruction story. I really think that intellectual doubt, if someone's going through doubt, and it's purely intellectual, that gets resolved fairly quickly because there's just so much evidence out there.

So, what I have found, I was even talking with a lady who was in deconstruction. She was telling me all of what she thought were intellectual issues. All of them were moral, every single one of them. And I pointed that out to her, and I said, I actually don't think your doubt is intellectual. It blew her mind because she really thought that it was. But really, it had to do with suffering. It had to do with, why would a good God allow this? Or why would God do this in the Old Testament, and things along those lines, and questions about biblical sexuality, and what that does, and the fruit it produces in people's lives.

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So, I definitely think it's motivated by sin and rebellion in a lot of cases. Now, like Tim mentioned, there are the cases where somebody has just been so wounded by the Church. They're confused. They're scared. We acknowledge that and we have so much compassion for that. But very often, and it can be a mixture of both as well. But very often, it's really got this moral undercurrent to it.

FRANK:

People often ask me when I go to college campuses, what are the main objections to Christianity? And by the way, friends, I will be at Purdue University on February 1. Go to our website for more on that. February 1, we're doing I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist in West Lafayette, Indiana, as you know. Anyway, they'll ask the question, what are the top objections that people give to Christianity nowadays? And now I say, the top three objections are morality, morality, and morality. They're all related to morality. I hardly ever have anyone say, I don't think there's any evidence that God exists or the evidence for God.

You know, there's some atheist that will say that online. Or they'll say, you know, I just don't think there's enough evidence for the resurrection. It's always some sexual thing, or something God does in the Old Testament, or evil. These are all moral issues. So, Tim, do any of these deconstructionists, when you challenge them on what moral standard are you using to say that these things are wrong. Where do you get that from? What do they say to that?

TIM:

Well, I mean, it just depends on who you're talking to. What's fascinating is some of these individuals who have deconstructed, have now become moral relativists and will admit that.

FRANK:

If they say that, then they've lost all force for any of their objections to Christianity. I mean, if they think LGBTQ is good, it's only relatively good if relativism is true. How can they accuse you of being a Christian and being wrong if there's nothing really wrong with being against anything?

TIM:

I mean, it's important that we point that out. Is there a moral standard that's objective? If not, then what's your concern? Is it just personal preferences? You know, some people like Brussel sprouts, and some people don't. And so, some people think homosexuality is a sin and some people don't. So, that's all it comes down to is a preference claim. However, they might be doing more of an internal critique. You know, like, okay, I'm stepping into your worldview, Christian, and now I'm going to be in this moral universe where there is an objective standard, and then try to point out some kind of inconsistency.

The problem with that is, we can now use the resources of a Christian worldview. And one of those, of course, is Scripture. And so, this is one approach. But you're right. I think, Frank, that, oftentimes, I think we assume, wrongly, that we're just logic machines. And so, if someone were to deconstruct, well, it must have been because of some logical or rational reason. But that's

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just not the case. I mean, especially in the 21st century, where it's not, I think. It's I feel. A lot of people are just motivated by their feelings, and that becomes a guide for them. And so, when there is some kind of challenge, or hurt, or whatever that comes along, it's their feelers (not their thinker) that's doing the guiding there. And so, as Christians, we point out that God has created us to be emotional creatures, to feel. Absolutely, and moral creatures. But there is something that we need to align with, and that is God's Word, what God has actually said. And that's the difference between deconstruction and what we talk about in the book, which is reformation.

FRANK:

Alisa, how often do you see people who deconstruct claiming. Well, they may claim it's evidence, but is it really about evidence?

ALISA:

I can't say that I've ever heard a deconstruction story that was purely about evidence. There are some that mask it really well. For example, Rhett McLaughlin from Good Mythical Morning. That was a famous deconstruction story that rattled a lot of Christians, actually, because Rhett took about three hours. He started with quite a bit of evidence. He went through the arguments for the age of the earth, and into theistic evolution, and the resurrection. And when he was talking, it sounded very evidential. But if you listen all the way through to the end, he starts bringing in issues of sexuality and how that's oppressive to people.

So, for the careful listener, it might sound like it's about evidence. But really, Tim, you just put that so beautifully. Because that's such a tough thing. Frank, your question to Tim being, well, if you point this out, what do they say? And often, I have found that when I've just interacted a little bit on these levels... I had a grown man on Instagram tell me that my questions, and I was asking questions like those Frank, trying to point out the logical inconsistencies. This grown man on Instagram said your questions make me feel unsafe, and he wanted to cut off the conversation. So, a lot of times when you point out the logical inconsistencies, that's actually perceived as attack. It's perceived as abuse. And it's perceived as toxic, these words that are being used.

So often, they will retreat away. And you can end up even pushing them away further, even though you're correct, even though, you know, if they could just see the logical inconsistencies and live toward truth. But that's not really the point. And that's the thing we hope people will understand, is that deconstruction is not a truth quest. It's not about getting your beliefs to be correct, or right, or being logical or rational.

In fact, many deconstructionists, we had some tell us this personally when we had private Zooms, that we're just stuck in the rationalism of the post enlightenment rationalism. We're stuck in that, and we need to let that go. And so, it's a really interesting animal because they do not care that they're illogical. In fact, they can even feel attacked if you point it out.

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FRANK:

Yeah, it was unsafe talking to Alisa Childers. We've seen Alisa in action when she's talking to a progressive Christian. And she starts asking questions, and we're going, oh. I wouldn't want to be on the other end of that. So, he just shut the conversation down, huh? That was it? Just to get out of it.

ALISA:

Yeah. He was suspicious that I was asking so many questions. And I was trying to get at the root. I was trying to get him to see the root of his logical inconsistencies. And he just said, your questions make me feel unsafe.

TIM:

Frank, we tell the story in the book. I used one of your questions in Texas. I was talking with somebody. And actually, we called this individual Frank because we got the question from you. And this guy, he told me he was on a truth quest. And he said, you know, I can't be a Christian because it's just blind faith. So, I'm talking about, well, here's the evidence from the Bible. Faith isn't blind. And I realize he's not on a truth quest. He's on some other quest.

FRANK:

Hold the thought. We're going to come right back after the break, and Tim is going to ask Frank a question. It's going to be revealing. You're not going to want to miss this. Get the new book, 'The Deconstruction of Christianity' by Tim Barnett and Alisa Childers. You will not be disappointed. It's going to help you, especially if you have a family member who's gone through it. We're back in two minutes.

Ladies and gentlemen, you get a knock at your door. You open the door, and there are two young men in white shirts with black ties, and little signs that say Elder Jones and Elder Smith. What do you do? They're Mormons. They want to talk to you and try and convince you that Mormonism is true, or they're Jehovah's Witnesses. How do you respond to these people? What do you do? When God puts somebody on your doorstep, you have a responsibility to interact with them and tell them the truth, but you might not know how. That's why you want to enroll in the brand-new online course. It starts February 5. Dr. Brady Blevins will be the instructor.

He's going to show you how you can evangelize Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, and even Muslims in this course. So, check out 'Conversations with the Faiths.' Go to CrossExamined.org. Click on Online Courses, you will see it there. And you can take the premium version and do all three. If you do, you'll be online on Zoom on several occasions with Brady for Q&A. You can also take the individual modules in a self-paced way. You can just study Mormonism, or Jehovah's Witnesses, or Muslims. It's all up on the website, CrossExamined.org. Click on Online Courses.

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Today, we're talking about a different kind of faith, a faith that leaves Christianity for a faith of the self. Instead of theology, it's more meology. That's what deconstruction is all about. And just before the break, Tim Barnett, one of the authors of this brand-new book, great book, 'The Deconstruction of Christianity,' he's also the creator of Red Pen Logic. Go to YouTube and find that. Tim, you were talking about you had an interaction with somebody down in Texas by the name of Frank. You could never trust Franks. What happened with Frank?

TIM:

That's right. He actually sat front row during my talk and Q&A. The pastor was taking questions. They were being texted in, so I didn't know which one was Frank's question. But Frank shot up after I answered this question. He shouted at me, you didn't answer my question, and stormed off towards the door. Okay, so it's already heated. Well, he stuck around afterwards. We spoke for about 40 minutes. And he told me that he couldn't be a Christian because faith is blind. Biblical faith is a blind faith. So, I said, well, you know, I had some questions for him. But I wanted to show him that faith wasn't blind.

And so, I wanted to use an illustration. I asked him, are you married? He said, no. I'm divorced. Okay, I wasn't going to go that route. I said, do you have any kids? He said, yeah. He said, do you trust them? So, I'm going to now talk about biblical faith being active trust based on evidence. I said, do you trust him? He says, no. Okay. All right. Now, all of a sudden, now, what do we do? And so, you know, we went back and forth. I talked about John the Baptist and how that was faith, and yet there was doubt and it was based on evidence. Anyways, I realized I'm spinning my wheels.

So, I used the question that I've heard you say. I said to Frank, okay, Frank. If Christianity were true, would you become a Christian? And immediately he fired back, no. And then he actually physically took a step back, as if to think, wait a second. I just said I was on a truth quest, and I was following the evidence where it leads. But I just said if Christianity was true I wouldn't accept it. And then after a few seconds, he said, well, I'd become a Christian, but I'd never worship God. And I thought, wait a second. That's part of it. That's what a Christian does.

A Christian loves God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength. It became very clear that this person who was claiming to follow the evidence where it leads, and to be on the truth quest, actually was not on a truth quest. And so, I think it is a really helpful question that you've given to audiences to offer to audiences. This might help kind of get to the point. Is this about evidence? Is it an evidence issue or a heart issue? And for him, it was a heart issue.

FRANK:

Yeah, 99 times out of 10, as they say in Mississippi, it is a hard issue. It's not an evidence issue. And I love my friends in Mississippi. Actually, my friend, Richard Howe, from Mississippi gave me that joke. But it's true. It's not about the evidence for God's existence. It's really more about our resistance when you look at it. We don't want there to be a God. We want to go our own way. We want to be God over our own lives. And I think both you Alisa and Natasha Crain nail

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this when we do the Unshaken Conference. You talk about how it's a shift from the authority of God to the authority of self. By the way, we're doing an Unshaken conference coming up near Detroit. When is that?

ALISA:

Yeah, but let me look up the exact date because I don't want to get this wrong. But we've got Detroit and I believe the Pittsburgh area is coming up in March. Let me look here. People can go to UnshakenConference.com.

FRANK:

It's March 9.

ALISA:

That's right. Pittsburgh is in May. You can actually buy tickets now at UnshakenConference.com.

FRANK:

And not to derail this too much also, but Alisa, you and I, and Greg Koukl, and Jorge Gil, and John Ferrer, and Phoenix Hayes are going to be at the Fearless Faith Conference in Xenia, Ohio on February 16 and 17. Go to DaytonApologetics.com if you want to be a part of that. We're going to be talking about a lot of these issues there. It will help equip you to deal with so many of the challenges that Christians have today in our culture. That's the Fearless Faith Conference in Xenia, Ohio, near Dayton, February 16 and 17th.

But I want to play a little game from the book, the brand-new book, 'The Deconstruction of Christianity' by Tim Barnett, Alisa Childers. And we're going to play a little game. I'm going to start with Alisa first. This is on the bottom of page 103 of the book. Is this an objective fact or a subjective preference? Alisa, the average gravitational pull of the Earth is 9.8 meters per second squared.

ALISA:

That's an objective claim. I can't verify whether it's true because I don't know off the top of my head.

FRANK:

I think Tim probably put that in. You knew that didn't you, Tim? Because you have a degree in physics, don't you? [Laughter]

TIM:

That's right. [Laughter]

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FRANK:

So, Tim wrote that sentence. Okay. Here is the second one. This is for you, Tim. She-Hulk was the worst TV show of all time.

TIM:

That is subjective, absolutely. But I want to say it's also objective because I watched that series and it was painful. It was painful, but some people did like it, and it is a subjective claim.

FRANK:

It is important to know the difference between an objective truth and a subjective truth, ladies and gentlemen. That's what we're talking about right now. Ok Alisa, next one for you. Coke tastes better than Pepsi.

ALISA:

That is a subjective claim, although I would agree with that claim.

FRANK:

Okay. All right. And now Tim, number four. The Empire State Building is located in New York City.

TIM:

Even a Canadian knows that one. That's an objective truth claim.

FRANK:

This is the big one for you, Alisa. Number five, ZoeGirl is the best Christian band ever.

ALISA:

That is very subjective.

FRANK:

For those of you that don't know, that was Alisa's band. So, we have to know the difference between an objective and a subjective truth claim, or an objective and subjective truth. And Tim, are the deconstructionists looking at Christianity as if it's objectively true, or it's just a preference?

TIM:

Well, this became so clear during the process of writing the book. I often will travel around and do a test just like this, a truth test. I'll offer it to young people. We do ice cream versus insulin. So, ice cream, that's subjective. Insulin, that's objective truth claims. Well, I'll go through this whole process. And when I get to, say, abortion is wrong, overwhelmingly, the audience will say, ice cream. And now I ask them, what kind of claim is that? Is it a scientific claim? Well, science plays a role in whether the unborn is human or not. Okay, is it a mathematical claim? No. Is it a historical claim?

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No, it's a moral claim. When it comes to moral claims, those are objective claims. Now, what's interesting is a lot of people miss this. There are people who have reviewed videos of Alisa and I doing this kind of thing, these interviews. There was a couple of progressive guys who heard us talking about this. And they're like, well, people don't agree about abortion. You know, some people think it's okay. What they missed was the kind of claim it is. The kind of claim is an objective claim. I realize that there are people who disagree with me about abortion being wrong. I'm not asking if it's true or false. I'm asking what kind of claim it is, ice cream or insulin?

And what I would have said to those individuals was, okay, take slavery is wrong. Do you think that's objective or not? Of course, it's objective, or murder, things that they would agree with as being wrong. Of course, they're going to say...So, I'm not asking if it's true or false. I'm asking what kind of claim it is. Here's how this relates to deconstruction, because moral claims or religious claims, Jesus is the only way, or unless you believe that Jesus is God, you will die in your sins. Those kinds of claims are also objective. But these deconstructionists have pushed these kinds of claims into the upper story. We were talking about Francis Schaeffer, and his two-story, two-tier view of truth.

Upper story has preferences in it, while the world pushes all these claims that have to do with religion and morality into the upper story. And what do you do with an upper story claim that's just about preferences? Well, you can just get rid of them? No problem, because it's up to you. You are the man upstairs. You're the one who's the authority in the upper story. If you don't like chocolate and you like vanilla, fair enough. If you don't like Christianity, but you like something else, fair enough, too. So, this is where the connection is. A lot of the deconstruction stuff is really about personal preferences. It's not about objective truth. It's about ice cream,

FRANK:

Alisa, why is Christianity an objective world religion that isn't a matter of preference? It's a matter of fact.

ALISA:

Right. And this is the difference between how Christians, you know, view reality versus almost everybody else. Because most people in the world, when they think about religion, they're just thinking practically. Like, what works for me, cobbled together with some positive affirmations, maybe some meditation. Do some of the Buddhist Eightfold Path, whatever makes me feel good and have peace in my life. But Christianity is different than every other religion in that it makes claims about itself that you can test in objective reality.

And the Apostle Paul said, as you're very well aware because you say this all the time. In 1 Corinthians 15, he said, if Christ has not been raised, your faith is in vain, and you're still in your sins. So, Christianity has built into it, objective Truth. And in that, if you could prove that Jesus did not come out of that tomb, that Jesus stayed dead, then Christianity is false. You might as well throw your Bible out the window and find some things that work for you.

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But if Christ has been raised, then Christianity is true, which means it's true for everybody, which means it has eternal consequences for everybody. Christianity is not in the preference category, because God either exists or He doesn't. Jesus was raised from the dead or He wasn't. He is who He said he was, or He isn't. And if He is, and it is true, and God does exist, and all of this is true, then every single person on earth should take it very seriously because it's like insulin, like Tim mentioned.

If you have diabetes, and your opinion is that you know, Vitamin C will treat your diabetes, well, you're going to die. And Christianity is in that insulin category. You're not going to die if you don't like a certain flavor of ice cream. But you'll die if you have diabetes, and you don't take your insulin. And so, in the book we try to help the church see that, that your loved one who has deconstructed is not viewing Christianity in the insulin category. They have moved it into the ice cream category. Just what's your favorite flavor?

So therefore, when the Christian comes along and says, hey, you're going to die in your sins if you don't trust in Jesus. There's a place called Hell. Jesus is returning to judge. What they hear is like, why are you telling me not to like chocolate ice cream? And so, we have to help them understand, this is more like insulin, not so much like ice cream.

FRANK:

There's so much more that will be helpful in the book, 'The Deconstruction of Christianity' by Alisa Childers and Tim Barnett. You need to pick up your copy. Please get it before it actually releases on January 31. It will help the book get to more people. Check it out. We've got one more segment. Don't go anywhere, back in two minutes.

Welcome back to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist with me, Frank Turek, on the American Family Radio Network, website CrossExamined.org. I have two great friends and great apologists on the program today, Alisa Childers and Tim Barnett, 'The Deconstruction of Christianity.' And Tim is with Stand to Reason. And you know, we do a lot of work with Stand to Reason. Many of the Stand to Reason speakers come to CIA.

Which by the way, is coming up in August, the CrossExamined Instructor Academy. It's just opened up for applications. Go to CrossExamined.org if you want to come to the CrossExamined Instructor Academy. But Tim, you guys for years now have been doing these Reality conferences. I know I've spoken there. Alisa's spoken there; many others have. You've got one coming up in Dallas. When is it?

TIM:

That's right, February 23 and 24th. And people are going to want to sign up quick, because I think their capacity is 2500 to 3000. I know they added seats this year, and we've already got 2000. So, we're in pretty good shape to sell out again in that location.

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FRANK:

And these are for young people, right?

TIM:

We don't check IDs at the door. Anyone's invited, but they're tailored to probably the 11 year old to the 20 year old. You know, in that kind of area. And it's really fun. We hit them with a ton of information, but we have a lot of fun. If you have a young person, youth group, whatever, go to RealityApologetics.com and you can get more information.

FRANK:

RealityApologetics.com, there'll be more coming up later in the year too. You can look forward to those, but the one in Dallas comes up. Cottonwood Creek Baptist Church, great church there in Allen, Texas. So, you guys anywhere in that area, or even you can travel there, obviously, you want to be a part of that Reality conference. A lot of great information, and as Tim just said, a lot of fun. Now, we're talking about the book, 'The Deconstruction of Christianity.' And Alisa, you have a whole chapter in here, you and Tim do on exvangelical. First of all, what is that? They talk about some reasons that people should leave Orthodox Christianity. Maybe we can get into some of those reasons they think you ought to get. But first of all, what is exvangelical about?

ALISA:

Exvangelical is a hashtag that was started in 2016 by a guy named Blake Chastain. And then he went on to formulate the Exvangelical Podcast, where he invites people to come on and share their deconstruction stories. And so, what people need to understand about the exvangelical hashtag is that it's used synonymously with, and definitely alongside the deconstruction hashtag. They're almost, you could say, interchangeable in a sense. And so, it's not just like we're leaving the evangelical church. And what I mean by that is, you don't tend to see maybe somebody who grew up Presbyterian, and they convert to Roman Catholicism. They're not going to be using the exvangelical hashtag.

So, in the mind of the exvangelicals, what they're really leaving is what they perceive to be as toxic theological beliefs. And by the way, Frank, when I shared earlier that I called my process deconstruction, when I started to talk about that publicly, the deconstructionists themselves would say, you didn't deconstruct because you still hold these evangelical toxic beliefs. And so, exvangelical means leaving whatever their definition of evangelical is. The problem with that is that the word evangelical is really hard to define. There's really no agreed upon definition of what evangelical is. So, Blake Chastain, the guy I mentioned a minute ago, wrote a blog post where he said, here are the things we are leaving.

And so, he mentioned things like heteronormativity of the evangelical church, the assumption that homosexuality is sinful. They're leaving that. They're leaving what they're calling patriarchy. They're leaving what they're calling a literal reading of the Bible. And there were a couple other ones in there I can't think of off the top of my head. But essentially, what they're leaving, in

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many cases, is Orthodox Christian beliefs. But there are some other things sprinkled in there as well.

FRANK:

And especially this being an election year. They don't like that Christians vote conservative.

ALISA:

That's right. Yeah. In fact, that was one of them. The conservative politics, yes.

FRANK:

Yeah, because we wouldn't want to save babies from being murdered. That would be wrong if we did that. Now, Tim, in a certain sense, people don't seem to realize (it seems to me) that when they're deconstructing from one set of beliefs, they're automatically reconstructing another set of beliefs. If they're going to reject the fact that men and women were made for one another, and that's the proper way that society should get along, and individuals should get along, and not two men, or two women. Now you have these polyamory and polygamous relationships. If we're going to say it's normative to be men/women, aren't they automatically, to a certain extent saying, no, that's wrong and here's the right view now? So, they've reconstructed another view, haven't they?

TIM:

Absolutely. And this is what you see. Here's what's interesting. There are certain doctrines, we just refer to as sound doctrine. There are certain sound doctrines that are being rejected. And so, that's one category. But then there's this other stuff that is being rejected, and we're not necessarily opposed to it. Like, you know, we take on the idea of the Bible. Do you read the Bible literally? Well, it depends on what you mean by literally, right? We take it literarily. I mean, there's poetry. So, there's that too.

So, when we address this in the book, we talk about, hey, are they exvangelicals because they're leaving something that's sound doctrine? Or are they leaving something that's just a Christian belief that wasn't sound to begin with and needs to be properly understood? So, you're exactly right. You do end up with a new sexual ethic. If it's not the, what we would call Jesus sexual ethic, the biblical sexual ethic, one man, with one woman, becoming one flesh for one lifetime, we didn't come up with that. That's Jesus. And by the way, Jesus, He's talking about divorce there. But He goes back to the created order. And this is where Genesis says, and a man will leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife.

This isn't just descriptive. This is prescriptive, because Adam and Eve didn't have a father and a mother in the context there, right? So, what's it referring to? Well, obviously, this is how God has designed marriage to be. Now, if you don't like that, okay. Now it's time to deconstruct to something that I do like. But notice what's going on there now. It's your preferences that are doing the work, not looking at what is truly revealed by God.

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FRANK:

Let's talk about looking at the Bible in a literal way or interpreting it in a literal way. I mean, when people ask me, do you interpret the Bible, literally? I say, when it's meant to be taken literally, right? Sometimes it isn't. What are some examples, Alisa, where we don't take it literally? We realize that there are figures of speech or certain types of genres where it's not meant to be taken literally.

ALISA:

Right? Well, I think virtually every Christian I've ever talked to would agree that when Jesus said that He's a door, that He's not made of wood and has hinges. You know, we all understand that to be a figure of speech. And so, I think there are things like that where we get called sheep. Obviously, we don't have woolly coats. That's a figure of speech. But I think taking the genre into account is really important. And this is the interesting thing, Frank. So, most Christians do this instinctively. We understand that there are general principles of wisdom, which are the Proverbs. There's a little bit of allegory in places. There are metaphors. There's different figures of speech. There's a lot of simile.

And the deconstructionists would accuse us of being literalists, but they are often the most wooden literalists when they're trying to prove the Bible wrong. They will say like, here's what the Scripture says. And then they'll take it flatly, literally. And one of those examples is when they'll say often, well, if you still wear mixed fabrics in your clothes and you eat shellfish, then you're disobeying the Bible.

And you're thinking, okay, when did you become such a wooden literalist where you're not employing the tools of hermeneutics to understand that that was Old Covenant versus New Covenant, and how that all works together. And often also, they don't recognize what Tim mentioned, descriptive versus prescriptive. They'll take a descriptive verse and say, look how immoral your Bible is. But then they'll also say, you're the ones that are taking it literally. So, it's a bit of a double standard there.

FRANK:

Yeah, in fact, you guys even talk about it. I think there's a story in Judges 18 or 19. I'm trying to remember the guy's name, starts with a J. Tell that story and how it's descriptive, not prescriptive.

ALISA:

Right. Well, there's a story in the Old Testament about this guy Jephthah, who makes this claim to God and says, whatever comes out of the door of my house, I will sacrifice to the Lord. And well, it's his daughter that comes out. And so, he goes through it. Now, there's some debate over whether or not he actually burned her as a sacrifice or dedicated her to the temple, because that word can kind of mean both. But either way, God never told him to do it. And there are laws instituted in the Old Testament against human sacrifice.

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So, that's not something God would have wanted him to do anyway. And so, this is something that is describing something that happened in the Old Testament, but it's not necessarily something that God approves of. And it's not certainly prescriptive for anyone else. But that story often gets brought up as an example of how immoral the Bible is, or you know, how God "behaved badly" in the Old Testament.

FRANK:

Ladies and gentlemen, we're not going to get through the entire interview that we wanted to do here today. I want to get to what advice both Alisa and Tim have if you have somebody in your family or a friend who has left Christianity, but we're not going to have enough time to do that. We're going to do that on the midweek podcast this coming Tuesday. For those of you that listen on the American Family Radio Network, that show will not be broadcast on AFR. You have to go find the I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist podcast to hear it, and you're going to want to hear it because that's probably why you're listening anyway.

You want to know, if this is in my family or my friends, how do I deal with it? So anyway, friends, look up the I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist podcast if you want to go further. Tim, what general advice would you give people? And we'll unpack it in the next podcast. But what general advice would you give people if, say, their daughter or son comes in and says you're toxic? I don't want anything to do with you. What do you do?

TIM:

Well, here's the first question. You want to find out what they mean by the words they're using. So, the first question I have is, what do you mean by deconstruction? What do you mean by deconstructing the faith? Or in this case, you mentioned toxic. What do you mean by toxic? Because this is going to help facilitate the conversation. It's going to help you navigate what direction this conversation is going to go. And so, for starters, you need to ask the question, what do you mean by deconstruction? If they mean like, I just have some questions, or I'm just experiencing some doubts, or I'm rethinking some doctrine. Absolutely. Let's sit down and talk about it. They might mean something else though. And this is where we'll give you more advice in the next podcast.

FRANK:

Yeah, in the next podcast. You don't want to miss it. This midweek podcast on Tuesday, we're going to talk about some advice on how you can deal with this if it does approach your family or friends. Get the book in the meantime, 'The Deconstruction of Christianity' by Alisa Childers and Tim Barnett. And Lord willing, we'll see you here on Tuesday. God bless.

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