



Reinforcing Your Faith

Zoom Bible Study
led by Mary Lowman

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Reinforcing Your Faith – Session 1

Introduction

This six-week study comes from the book *Another Gospel?* by Alisa Childers. The subtitle to her book is “A lifelong Christian seeks truth in response to progressive Christianity.”

“Progressive Christianity” may be new to you, but whether you have personally faced this attack on historic and biblical Christianity or not, you and I need to be knowledgeable so that we can recognize it, help others to see it, and stand firm in the truth of God’s Word. The purpose of this study is to reinforce your belief that historic Christianity can stand up to this new onslaught which wants to deconstruct your faith.

This was the definition you saw in the video:

Progressive Christianity

A recent movement of Christians who are open to redefining and rejecting core doctrines of historic Christianity, including biblical authority, the substitutionary atonement of Jesus, and the existence of a literal hell. The heart of the gospel message for progressives is not necessarily sin and redemption but instead a secular understanding of justice.

Lisa points out in the first chapter of her book “that today most popular Christian authors, bloggers and speakers are progressive” (pg. 8). Does that surprise you? Would you recognize this new progressive Christianity and its teaching if it were in your church, or some people you know seem to be leaning that way.

Here are some of the questions that Alisa was forced to confront in her own soul as she was exposed to progressive Christianity:

- Is God really on a mystical throne somewhere out beyond the expanses of space?
- Is he even aware of me?
- Is everything I’ve ever believed about him a lie?
- What happens when we die?
- Is the Bible really God’s Word?
- Is religion really just the opiate of the masses?

What are some questions you may have had or still have about God and the Bible?

People today talk about finding “their truth.” Do you remember the encounter Jesus had with Pilate before his crucifixion?

John 18:37 – 38a: *Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.”³⁸ Pilate said to him, “What is truth?”*

“What is truth?” Pilate cynically asks. When everyone is allowed to have their own versions of truth, then we say with Pilate – “what is truth?” It’s worthless. It’s meaningless and deceptive.

Jesus came into the world to tell us *the* truth, and he is totally qualified to do so because he is the truth:

John 14:6: *Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."*

And the Gospel message is totally opposite to this progressive Christianity that many are following.

Matthew 10:39: *Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it.*

So, with the messages that bombard us day in and day out, telling us that historic and biblical Christianity are passe, we have to learn to assess information that comes our way and come to reasonable conclusions.

Alisa told you about how her former pastor introduced her to this progressive Christianity teaching. She writes, "I learned that Jesus wouldn't be caught dead identifying as a Christian if he walked the earth today" (pg. 22).

As Alisa puts it, "We can't allow truth to be sacrificed on the altar of our feelings. We can't allow our fear of offending others to prevent us from warning them that they're about to step in front of a bus" (pg. 11).

Here are five signs your church or some people you know may be leaning or heading toward progressive Christianity:

1. There is a lowered view of the Bible

Historically, Christians have viewed the Bible as the Word of God and authoritative for our lives. Progressive Christianity generally abandons these terms, emphasizing personal belief over the biblical mandate.

Comments you might hear:

- The Bible is a human book...
- I disagree with the Apostle Paul on that issue. . .
- The Bible "contains" the word of God...

2. Feelings are emphasized over facts

In Progressive churches, personal experiences, feelings, and opinions tend to be valued above objective truth.

Comments you might hear:

- That Bible verse doesn't resonate with me...
- I thought homosexuality was a sin until I met and befriended some gay people...
- I just can't believe Jesus would send good people to hell...

3. Essential Christian doctrines are open for re-interpretation

Progressive Christians are often open to re-defining and re-interpreting the Bible on hot-button moral issues like homosexuality and abortion, and also cardinal doctrines such as the virgin conception and the bodily resurrection of Jesus. The only sacred cow is "no sacred cows."

Comments you might hear:

- The resurrection of Jesus doesn't have to be factual to speak truth...
- The church's historic position on sexuality is archaic and needs to be updated within a modern framework...
- The idea of a literal hell is offensive to non-Christians and needs to be re-interpreted...

4. Historic terms are re-defined

There are some Progressive Christians who say they affirm doctrines like biblical inspiration, inerrancy, and authority, but they have to do linguistic gymnastics to make those words mean what they want them to mean. Another word that tends to get a Progressive make-over is the word “love.” When plucked out of its biblical context, it becomes a catch-all term for everything non-confrontative, pleasant, and affirming.

Comments you might hear:

- God wouldn’t punish sinners—He is love...
- Sure, the Bible is authoritative—but we’ve misunderstood it for the first 2,000 years of church history...
- It’s not our job to talk to anyone about sin—it’s our job to just love them...

5. The heart of the gospel message shifts from sin and redemption to social justice

Many Progressive Christians today find the concept of God willing His Son to die on the cross to be embarrassing or even appalling. The idea of blood atonement is de-emphasized or denied altogether, with social justice and good works enthroned in its place.

Comments you might hear:

- Sin doesn’t separate us from God—we are made in his image and he called us good...
- God didn’t actually require a sacrifice for our sins—the first Christians picked up on the pagan practice of animal sacrifice and told the Jesus story in similar terms...
- We don’t really need to preach the gospel—we just need to show love by bringing justice to the oppressed and provision to the needy...

Conclusion

We shouldn’t be surprised to find some of these ideas infiltrating our churches. Jesus warned us, *“Watch out for false prophets”* who *“come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves”* (Matthew 7:15).

What does deconstructing your faith really mean?

Here’s what Alisa wrote:

“It becomes a rite of passage in this new and flourishing movement: deconstruction. In the context of faith, deconstruction is the process of systematically dissecting and often rejecting the beliefs you grew up with. Sometimes the Christian will deconstruct all the way into atheism. Some remain there, but others experience a reconstruction. But the type of faith they end up embracing almost never resembles the Christianity they formerly knew. Traditional understanding of the Cross, the Bible, and the gospel get taken out with the trash” (pg. 24).