

Former Atheist: How the Deconstruction of Your Christian Faith Can Actually Strengthen It

Best-selling author Lee Strobel, an atheist and investigative journalist who failed to disprove the resurrection of Jesus during two years of digging for evidence, believes Christians who properly “deconstruct” their faith as some are doing, strengthen it in the process.

An idea that’s caught on among some followers of Jesus, deconstruction attempts to test the truths of faith and beliefs many Christians have held for years.

Christian rap artist Lecrae recently tweeted that deconstructing faith is healthy when the Bible is the standard, and dangerous when culture is elevated above Scripture. Lecrae says he’s “reconstructed” his faith using Scripture as the blueprint.

With Lecrae, artists David Crowder and Skillet’s John Cooper have shared personal convictions for and against deconstruction, respectively. Having deconstructed his faith, DC Talk’s Kevin Max calls himself an “ex-evangelical.” There are other Christian leaders who have abandoned faith, including writer Paul Maxwell.

Strobel, using his journalism and law school training, investigated the claims surrounding the resurrection of Jesus after his wife Leslie came to faith through her friendship with a neighbor.

His examination of seven literary sources—six of them outside of the Bible—led Strobel to the Savior in 1981 and to his

fifth book at the time, "The Case For Christ."

"Whether you're deconstructing something or a skeptic looking at objections, when you do it within the context of trust in relationships and friendships makes all the difference in the world," says Strobel, the founding director of the Center for Evangelism and Applied Apologetics at Colorado Christian University.

Created by God with the DNA of a healthy skeptic, Strobel wrote his latest book and movie, "The Case For Heaven," The Case For Heaven Documentary Online ([link](#)) to refine biblical truth from myths about the afterlife—like the process of deconstructing faith.

There are similarities between skepticism and deconstruction over things Strobel calls "sticking points"—legitimate questions that deserve good answers.

"They deserve to be meditated on, prayed about, investigated and checked out. I applaud someone who is willing to check things out, to investigate and come to a conclusion," Strobel says.

People who follow Jesus authentically—giving more than mental ascent to His existence—may be in a healthy process of questioning their faith, he says.

"I want to encourage them and say, 'It's okay. It's good that there are sticking points. Let's get at them,'" says Strobel.

In speaking to churches, Strobel encourages believers to form what he calls spiritual discovery groups for skeptics who want to investigate faith.

"We have 1,100 believers now at our church through these groups. We track them over a period of years.

"What we found is that, non-believers who joined one of these groups and stayed in it, 80% of them came to faith in Christ.

Because, in the context of relationships, people are able to honestly open up about their lives, objections, emotions, psychological hang ups and so on," says Strobel.

He uses Leslie, his wife, as an example of someone who came to faith in Jesus through a relationship with a neighbor named Linda. She brought a plate of cookies to the Strobel's home in Chicago; Linda was a Christian and Leslie was curious.

"One day, Leslie came to me with the worst news an atheist husband can get: 'I've decided to become a follower of Jesus,'" recalls Strobel, who went to their backyard where he proceeded to mow down Leslie's flower garden, thinking all the while about divorce.

He has moderated debates between world-class Christians and atheists before thousands of people—something Strobel calls a good practice.

"I think more people find Jesus through friendships with the 'Lindas' who love them into the kingdom of God," Strobel says. "Are we willing to be open, honest and seek with people the answers they may not be equipped to find in their pursuits? It's a positive thing. I don't think it's a bad thing at all when Christians ask tough questions."

He points to John the Baptist as another example of a skeptic who had questions about Jesus.

"John should have been absolutely convinced. Then he gets arrested. Like Christians in tough times, doubts and hesitations came to John," says Strobel.

Rather than become angry at John's temerity in questioning his identity, Jesus tells His disciples to report what they've seen and heard: The blind receive sight; the lame walk; the deaf hear; the dead are raised; And good news is preached to the poor.

“Does this now disqualify John from the kingdom of God because he dared to ask a question? To express a doubt?

“No. After this incident, Jesus stands before a crowd and says, ‘among those born of a woman, there’s no one greater than John.’

“If you’re a follower of Jesus, then it’s okay to have questions. It’s okay to have some doubts, as long as you do what John did: pursue answers. Jesus is not surprised by your questions or doubts. I think the healthiest thing is to not suppress or deny them, or to pretend we’re more spiritual than we are,” says Strobел.

He had questions after losing his atheist brother during the COVID pandemic, and following his own health crisis at death’s door before Strobел’s doctor saved him. He wrote “The Case For Heaven” after the incident, based on his studies of life after death claims from multiple sources including the Bible.

“I don’t give up on praying for people. I’ve been on the edge of death. I know what that does to the urgency of knowing what happens in the afterlife. Nothing is more important. Maybe death is the impetus to turn to Jesus in those last moments,” says Strobел.

Fourteen million copies of Strobел’s 40 books and teaching materials follow an award-winning journalism career as legal editor at “The Chicago Tribune,” placing him on the “New York Times” Best Sellers List several times. {eoa}

Steve Rees is a former general assignment reporter who, with one other journalist, first wrote about the national men’s movement *Promise Keepers* from his home in Colorado. Rees and *Promise Keepers* founder Bill McCartney attended the Boulder Vineyard. Today Rees writes in his free time.