

Russell Moore: How Christians Should Respond to Those Who Fall Away From Jesus

Over the past year, several high-profile Christian leaders have abandoned or seriously questioned their faith in Jesus—so how should Christians respond?

On July 26, former purity advocate Joshua Harris said he was no longer a Christian, and several weeks later, Hillsong worship artist Marty Sampson admitted his faith was on “incredibly shaky ground.”

Russell Moore says it's important believers respond with “compassion and mercy” to these “deconversion” stories instead of judgment and criticism.

“The first thing I have to do is to deal with a sense of anger,” he says. “Sometimes my reaction is to act almost as though someone has betrayed me. As though Christianity is some sort of a tribe or a village or a political party, and you were supposed to be with us, and you walked away. And I've gotten angry about that, and sometimes shocked. How could this happen?”

But this attitude of shock and anger isn't appropriate for Christians, Moore says. Sometimes believers may find it easier to have compassion on people who are “truly lost” such as the prostitutes and tax collectors of Bible times. But people who are struggling within the church need that same compassion.

“In most cases, somebody who falls away is somebody who's been through a lot of pain. Maybe it's someone who's been through a lot of suffering in life. They can't understand where God is in all of that. Maybe it's somebody who kept drifting further and further and further away from the Lord until they're in

the middle of this sort of dark night of the soul and they don't know how to get home.

"Sometimes it's people who have awful situations with Christianity or with churches. I've seen people shredded by the church."

Moore says the Bible doesn't speak as harshly toward the "wandering sheep" as it does toward "the wolves that come in pretending to be sheep."

While it might be hard to make that distinction, Moore points to 1 John 2:19 as a helpful guide: "They went out from us, but they were not of us, for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have remained with us. But they went out, revealing that none of them were of us."

Watch the video to learn how believers can effectively reach out to their wandering brothers and sisters. {eoa}