

DEEP SIX STUDY

October 11th, 2026

Awakening – “The Walk Away and the Walk Back”

MESSAGE HIGHLIGHTS *(You can view the full message online at capecodchurch.com/watch)*

Opening: In 2025 we told the story of the 1809 Cape Cod Awakening – how a spiritual movement swept over the Cape leading sleepy churches to true faith in Jesus. That awakening was spurred by the young evangelist Barnabas Bates – who would later leave his faith. This week we begin telling “the rest of the story”: how someone walks away from faith – and, hopefully, how they can find their way back.

1. Why We Walk Away

- When we hear the story of someone who has apparently strong and genuine faith walking away from that faith, the #1 question that arises is, “how can that happen?” It turns out that most stories of walking away from the Christian faith are similar, and they share some common reasons:
 - a. Questions Without Answers – Many people grew up with childlike faith in the Bible story but were later confronted with contradicting evidence and questions that they had no answers for.
 - b. Disappointment with God (and People) – Simple disappointment in God’s provision or his justice – and/or in the people who claim to serve him (i.e., the Church) – can make walking away easy.
 - c. The Pull of Success – Life can get “good” and busy, and a new path of life just develops for some – a path that no longer includes an active faith life, church participation, or reliance on God.
 - d. Alternative Good – The discovery that we can be “good” (do good things) without any religious faith leads us to question why we even need God to make the world a better place.

2. The *One* Reason We Walk Away: Broken Trust (Proverbs 25:19)

- Looking at the story of Barnabas Bates, as well as the stories of people we know who walked away from faith, we might boil all of the common reasons for walking away down to one: *broken trust*. Something or someone they trusted in to maintain their faith let them down and broke that trust.
- The trust that was broken may have been in God himself, in church leaders, in the scientific accuracy of the Bible story, or in the people who make up the church. It may even be in the Christian way of life itself – that it’s supposed to be a rewarding and prosperous way to live. When any of these let us down or are challenged, our trust can be broken, and we walk away from faith.

3. The Preacher Who Walked Away (Luke 22:59-61; John 21:1-5)

- Interestingly, the Bible seems to go out of its way to tell the whole story of most of its characters – including all the “ugly bits.” This is true even with (*especially* with) Jesus’ own disciples. Even his #1 disciple, Peter, denied him and ran away at the moment of Jesus’ trial and crucifixion. Peter had his moment of “broken trust” when Jesus didn’t seem to live up to the image Peter had trusted in.
- Peter’s response to his disappointment in Jesus was to walk away; John’s gospel tells us that he and several other disciples went back to Galilee and went fishing – their old way of life. But Jesus didn’t give up on Peter; he met him there on the beach and gently called him back to himself.

4. The Way Back (John 21:6, 12a, 15)

- In John’s story, Jesus doesn’t condemn or criticize Peter for walking away – he simply reminds him who he (Jesus) is and calls Peter back to himself. He gives him grace and a calling at the same time.

- The way back to faith most often starts with an encounter with *grace* – the grace of Jesus, demonstrated through the people of God. We (the church) are to be “people at the fence,” showing God’s grace to those who may have walked away and are being called home by God.

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURE

These passages may provide additional insights related to the subject of this week’s message. All verses are NLT unless otherwise noted.

Psalms 13:1; Jeremiah 17:9; Matthew 6:24; John 6:37; Galatians 1:11-12; Hebrews 4:16;

Video of the Week: [Exodus 34:6-7](#) by Bible Project

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. Does it surprise you to learn that Barnabas Bates – a young man with enough faith to start an “awakening” on Cape Cod – would eventually walk away from his faith? Why or why not?
2. Have you ever walked (or drifted, or wandered...) away from your Christian faith? If so, which of the four common reasons mentioned in the message would you say was the primary cause?
3. Why is it often so easy for “the pull of success” to lead us to walk/drift/wander away from our faith (or at least from living out that faith)?
4. Would you say that those who walk away from their faith because of “broken trust” most often had *misplaced* their trust in the first place? Why or why not?
5. As a church, what would you say is our most important role in helping those who walked away from faith walk back to their faith? Explain your answer.
6. As a follower of Jesus, what would you say is *your* most important role in helping a friend or family member who has walked away from their faith walk back to their faith? Explain your answer.