DEEP SIX STUDY

November 1st, 2026

The Walk Away and the Walk Back – "Disappointment and Deconstruction"

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

Opening: Barnabas Bates, the young preacher who sparked the Cape Cod Awakening of 1809, eventually walked away from the faith he had preached so fervently. His "walk away" started with lingering doubts and questions that he had about what he believed. But his doubt wasn't the whole story of his eventual denial; he was also being pulled by the allure of wealth and fame, and *pushed away* by his harsh, loud, legalistic critics – critics who confirmed for him that he wanted nothing to do with their version of faith.

1. The Walk Away – Disappointment and Deconstruction (Psalms 73:1-14)

- By far, the most common reason that people walk away from church and faith is their disappointment with people – the leaders of churches and the people within the church whose behavior is far from Christ-like. How they were treated and what they saw drove them away from their faith and church.
- When surveyed, many who had at some point walked away from church and/or faith rationalized that – like the psalmist Asaph complains in Psalm 73 – if God allowed unChrist-like "church people" to prosper, thrive, and have power then perhaps God wasn't really in control of the whole church "enterprise" after all. And so they left, preferring <u>no</u> church to the injustice they saw <u>in</u> the church.

2. The Way Back – Tough Talk and Good Walks (Psalms 73:15-21, 23-36)

- But Asaph didn't give in to his frustration with how "the wicked" seem to thrive. Instead, he looks in the mirror and admits (v. 21) that perhaps his own attitude was part of the problem.
- Owning my behavior doesn't mean I approve of yours. We can't let other people's bad behavior let us off the hook for our own behavior. As Asaph might say it, "Don't let your disappointment with people rob you of your responsibility for your own behavior – because you'll never get things fixed if you do."
- As he begins his "walk back," Asaph takes a critical step (v.17): he goes "into your sanctuary." In other words, he takes a bold step back into his faith and allows God to work in his life to regrow his faith – despite his disappointment with people and his (temporary) disappointment with God's justice.
- Something unique and powerful happens when we gather together in church to hear the preaching of God's Word, in fellowship with God's people, and when we worship the Creator of the universe together. If you're struggling with doubt and disappointment, being in a church that does those things is key to "the walk back."
- Walking back (and re-entering church life) doesn't mean your circumstances will suddenly change – and it doesn't mean that those you are disappointed with will suddenly change, either. But it *does* mean that – if you honestly seek God – he will change <u>you</u> so that you'll be able to see his work and his plan more clearly
- God's grace is truly amazing; his Word clearly tells us that he actually holds on to *us* because he knows that there will be times when we struggle to hold on to him. Our salvation isn't dependent on our behavior (thank God!), nor on the behavior of someone else – it's solely dependent on the finished work of Jesus Christ. When all of life goes south and nothing else makes sense, that's the truth that he invites us to "walk back" to.

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURE

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

Proverbs 4:23; Luke 17:3-4; Colossians 3:13-15; Ephesians 4:30-32; James 1:19-21; 1 Peter 5:5-7

Video of the Week: Justice by Bible Project

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. Do you have a "walking away" story of your own? If so, what was the primary reason you walked away (or thought about doing so)?

2. It's relatively easy to find "church hurt" and disappointment with "church people" in just about every church. If that's true, then why do you think some people walk away (from church and/or faith) but others choose to keep walking faithfully?

3. Read Psalm 73:21 again. After complaining about the perceived injustice he saw, Asaph turns his focus inward and sees that his own bitterness is part of his problem. In your experience, what does it take for that "focus shift" to happen – for us to realize that we own some of our disappointment with people?

4. In your view, what role does forgiveness play in our "walk back" from church-hurt and disappointment with the people who claim to represent God?

5. If we've been hurt by the church and are disappointed with "church people," is it really feasible that we would choose to go back to church? Why or why not?

6. It's been said that every time we walk away from something, we're walking *toward* something else. If we choose to walk away from church and our faith, what might we be choosing to walk toward?