



# One Page Sermon

## By Rev. Robb McCoy

### August 25, 2024

## Honoring the questions

Recap of sermon from August 25, 2024

Scripture: John 6:58-69

“This message is harsh”

Rachel Held Evans was a pioneer in Christian blogging, and rose to prominence about 15 years ago. She was one of the first to publicly criticize the evangelical fundamentalist landscape in which her religious life was seeped. Her first book was published in 2008, called *Evolving in Monkeytown*, which detailed her growing questions from the perspective of living in the town of the famous Scopes Monkey Trials. Her second book, *A Year of Biblical Womanhood: How a Liberated Woman Found Herself Sitting on Her Roof, Covering Her Head, and Calling Her Husband Master*, was published in October 2012

I met her at a conference in Fort Wayne, Indiana. I was one of the small group speakers, and she was one of the keynote speakers (my relationship with other friends of Two Rivers Heatherlynn and My Anchor Holds also began at this conference). When we met, she had written an article about why millennials were leaving the church.

It was a viral post that many consider to be the start of the “exvangelical” movement, a trend of conservative evangelical people questioning basic concepts and ultimately leaving the church. The “Dechurching” movement has extended past the evangelical wing of Christianity. A book released last year called *The Great Dechurching* (Davis and Graham) interviewed many people who once were regular part of a faith community, but have since left the church. They claim that in the last 20 years, 40 million people have “dechurched,” making it the largest religious movement since the Great Awakening. The question is why? And for many, the answer is “questions.” Rachel wrote in her article: What millennials really want from the church is not a change in style but a change in substance.

*“We want an end to the culture wars. We want a truce between science and faith. We want to be known for what we stand for, not what we are against.*

*We want to ask questions that don’t have predetermined answers.*

*We want churches that emphasize an allegiance to the kingdom of God over an allegiance to a single political party or a single nation.*

*We want our LGBT friends to feel truly welcome in our faith communities.”*

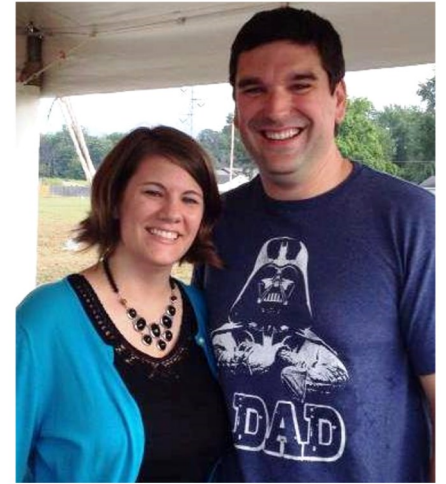
These were the stumbling blocks that kept Rachel, and many like her, from the church.

Jesus faced a crisis at the end of his Bread of Life discourse. In this week’s passage, the disciples (not the crowds, not the opposition, the disciples) were troubled. “This message is harsh... Who can hear it?” Jesus asks them, “Is this a stumbling block?” He honored their struggle. Still, some leave.

In the midst of “the great dechurching” I think it is important that we still honor the struggle. Christianity might be simple, but it can be difficult. Loving your neighbor, living generously, finding deep meaning in life is a wonderful thing, but it doesn’t always come naturally.

What is your stumbling block? For Rachel, and in many ways a whole generation with her, the stumbling blocks are easy answers, judgment for LGBTQ people, blatant partisanship, and science denial. These stumbling blocks are too much for people to continue to follow. For many I have talked to lately, other Christians who are mean-spirited are a stumbling block that they can’t get past.

There are many stumbling blocks to following Christ, but the best way to clear away the obstacles is to do it together. Connect with others who have the same struggles. Honor the question and the challenge. Walking together with Christ is much easier than trying to do it alone.



*Rachel Held Evans was a pioneer in what later became known as the “exvangelical” movement. She was the first author to come on my podcast, Pulpit Fiction, and for that I will always be grateful. Even though I only met her once in person, I still mourn her tragic death.*

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