

**Misled**  
**(A book survey of Allen Parr's "Misled")**  
**Cross Brand 9.17.25**

**CHAPTER 5**  
**WHAT DOES PROGRESSIVE CHRISTIANITY TEACH?**

**I. WHAT IS PROGRESSIVE CHRISTIANITY?**

It's not an official organization or denomination but rather an active movement of self-identified Christians and Christian groups characterized by a collection of beliefs and attitudes that set them apart from traditional Christianity, the gradual erosion of traditional Christian teachings, "Christian."

**II. HOW PROGRESSIVE CHRISTIANITY GOT STARTED**

The movement embraces some aspects of liberal Christianity, which can be traced back to both Enlightenment-era rationalism and the Romanticism of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The term *progressive Christianity* arose in the early 1990's with the founding of the Center for Progressive Christianity.

**A. Roots in Postmodernism**

The general idea behind the progressive Christian movement is that the church needs to revisit and adjust its methods, practices, and beliefs as the culture changes.

Modernists were highly optimistic that science and philosophy could unlock any mystery and explain just about everything.

Postmodernism is a reaction against that optimism.

- Postmodernists argue that everyone's perception of reality is radically and inescapably limited by their cultural context and individual perspective.
- Postmodernists believe the truth is relative, varying from situation to situation, from culture to culture, and even from individual to individual.
- Postmodernists reject even the possibility of a metanarrative, choosing instead to celebrate the idea that any culture or individual can craft their own narrative to create their own meaning and purpose.

- Postmodernists are suspicious of any claim to universal truth or reason and claim that objective truth is just a power play in disguise, an attempt to control and oppress others.

## **B. The Emergent Church and Progressive Christianity**

But in the early 2000s, a phenomenon known as the Emergent Church began to gain influence in evangelical circles and laid the groundwork for today's progressive Christianity.

Emergent aims to facilitate a conversation among persons committed to living out faithfully the call to participate in the reconciling mission of the biblical God .

This reveals several hallmarks of the Emergent movement:

- prioritizing conversation of conclusions
- valuing asking questions over claiming to have answers
- emphasizing the idea that doubt is healthy and compatible with faith

Alicia Childers writes, "Along with reexamining the methods of the church, some influential emergent thinkers began to reexamine the beliefs and doctrines of historic Christianity. No longer were they questioning only methods, traditions, practices, and philosophical approaches, they were also casting doubts on essential Christian doctrines themselves."<sup>1</sup>

### *1. Opening the Door to Deconstruction*

Many of them had neither the tools nor the community to correctly process their historic Christian beliefs. The result? Many Christians began a process called *deconstruction*.

"'Deconstruction' is . . . the process of questioning, doubting, and ultimately rejecting aspects of Christian faith."<sup>2</sup>

### *2. Don't Be Surprised . . .*

"The Holy Spirit tells us in plain words that in the last days some people will turn away from the faith. They will listen to what is said about spirits and follow the teaching about demons." 1 Timothy 4:1

"Watch out for false teachers. They come to you dressed as if they were sheep. On the inside they are hungry wolves." Matthew 7:15

“Many false religious teachers will come. They will fool many people and will turn them to the wrong way.” Matthew 24:11

### **III. WHAT PROGRESSIVE CHRISTIANITY TEACHES**

This movement can be alluring because it uses familiar biblical and theological terms and often aligns with the most powerful temptations in our culture.

#### **A. Tendency #1: A Low View of Christ**

They believe that Jesus isn't so much the divine Son of God, but rather just a moral example for us to follow.<sup>3</sup>

#### **B. Tendency #2: Inclusivism**

Progressive Christianity prides itself on accepting and loving people from all walks of life.

#### **C. Tendency #3: A Low View of Scripture**

Progressive Christianity, along with the other false doctrines presented in this book, claims the Bible as the source of their beliefs and practices:

Alisa Childers said,

“In the progressive church, the Bible is viewed more like an ancient spiritual travel journal than the inspired, inerrant, and authoritative Word of God. The Biblical writers are viewed as well-meaning ancient people who were doing their best to understand God in the times and places in which they lived, but they were not necessarily speaking for God. Scripture is also seen as contradictory, not internally coherent, and not authoritative for Christians.”<sup>4</sup>

biblical criticism and the unfolding knowledge of the relationship between culture, revelation, experience, tradition, and the witness of the Scriptures.”<sup>5</sup>

“All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness,” 2 Timothy 3:16 useful for inspiration According to that progressive church, the Bible must be interpreted in light of the evolving culture and experience.

#### **D. Tendency #4: A Relaxed View of Moral Issues**

Progressive Christianity takes a much more relaxed and accepting view of certain behaviors that have historically been viewed as sinful or immoral. Progressive Christianity allows the culture rather than the Bible to dictate what is moral and immoral.

#### **E.      Tendency #5: A Rejection of the Atonement**

Jesus' death is said to be simply the ultimate picture of self-giving love, "Not a sacrifice needed to gain approval or forgiveness by God." Progressives do not see what Jesus did on the cross as achieving God's forgiveness for our sins but rather as "a model for all to follow."