

DECONSTRUCTING DECONSTRUCTION

A Presentation for the
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LEARNING OBJECTIVES



Participants will:

- Identify and comprehend the stages of faith identity formation and recognize their role in the lives of adherents.
- Analyze deconstruction and contrast current views of deconstruction with healthy faith identity formation in the stage of arrested faith with special consideration given to faith transforming events and their role in moving from one stage to the next.
- Identify and understand assessment skills aimed at determining a client's faith identity stage to be able to discuss deconstruction with them. These skills will include specific questions to ask as well as use of the Faith Identity Test.

AN EXPLANATION BY EXAMPLE

HOW FAITH DEVELOPS

Faith Development Theories

vs.

Faith Identity Theory

PROMINENT THEORIES – FOWLER

Fowler

1. Intuitive-Projective

This is the stage of preschool children in which fantasy and reality often get mixed together. However, during this stage, our most basic ideas about God are usually picked up from our parents and/or society.

2. Mythic-Literal

When children become school-age, they start understanding the world in more logical ways. They generally accept the stories told them by their faith community but tend to understand them in very literal ways. [A few people remain in this stage through adulthood.]

3. Synthetic-Conventional

Most people move on to this stage as teenagers. At this point, their life has grown to include several different social circles and there is a need to pull it all together. When this happens, a person usually adopts some sort of all-encompassing belief system. However, at this stage, people tend to have a hard time seeing outside their box and don't recognize that they are "inside" a belief system.

PROMINENT THEORIES - FOWLER

4. Individuative-Reflective

This is the tough stage, often begun in young adulthood, when people start seeing outside the box and realizing that there are other "boxes". They begin to critically examine their beliefs on their own and often become disillusioned with their former faith.

5. Conjunctive

It is rare for people to reach this stage before mid-life. This is the point when people begin to realize the limits of logic and start to accept the paradoxes in life. They begin to see life as a mystery and often return to sacred stories and symbols but this time without being stuck in a theological box.

6. Universalizing

Few people reach this stage. Those who do live their lives to the full in service of others without any real worries or doubts.

PROMINENT THEORIES - PECK

I. Chaotic-Antisocial

People stuck at this stage are usually self-centered and often find themselves in trouble due to their unprincipled living. If they do end up converting to the next stage, it often occurs in a very dramatic way.

II. Formal-Institutional

At this stage people rely on some sort of institution (such as a church) to give them stability. They become attached to the forms of their religion and become extremely upset when these are called into question.

III. Skeptic-Individual

Those who break out of the previous stage usually do so when they start seriously questioning things on their own. A lot of the time, this stage ends up being very non-religious and some people stay in it permanently.

IV. Mystic-Communal

People who reach this stage start to realize that there is truth to be found in both the previous two stages and that life can be paradoxical and full of mystery. Emphasis is placed more on community than on individual concerns.

CRITIQUE

- **Crises only show up in young adulthood?**
 - **And only once?**
- **Unilateral Direction**
 - **Only moving forward or stagnation**
- **Age-Graded Development**
 - **A purely developmental model does not leave sufficient room for spiritual development**

Faith Identity States – Idea Map

Mirror Beliefs
of Parents

Parents are
Believers

Apathetic
Faith

Parents are
NOT Believers

Assumed
Faith
(Belief)

Questioning

Assumed
Faith
(Unbelief)

Adopted
Faith
(Belief)

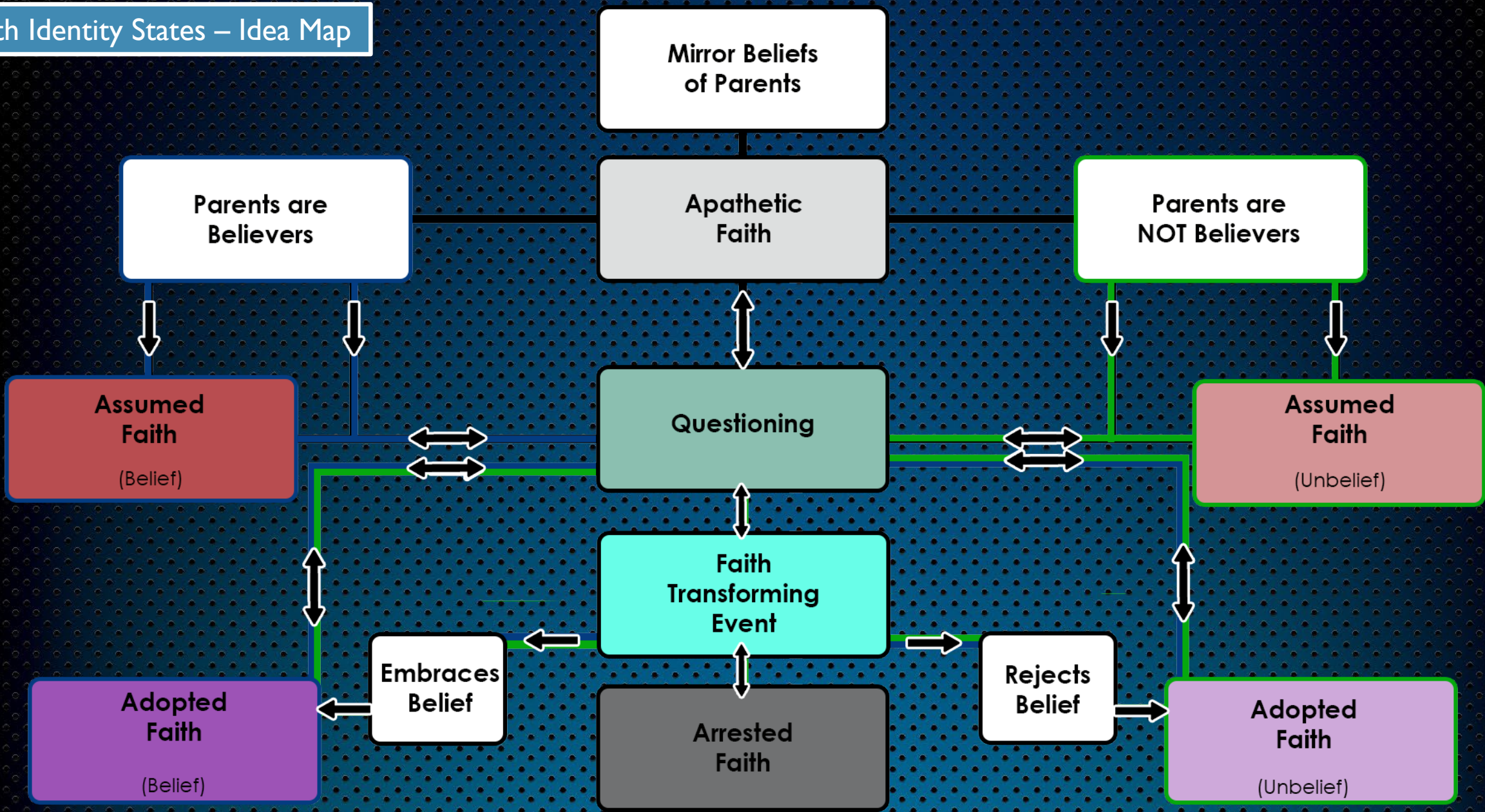
Faith
Transforming
Event

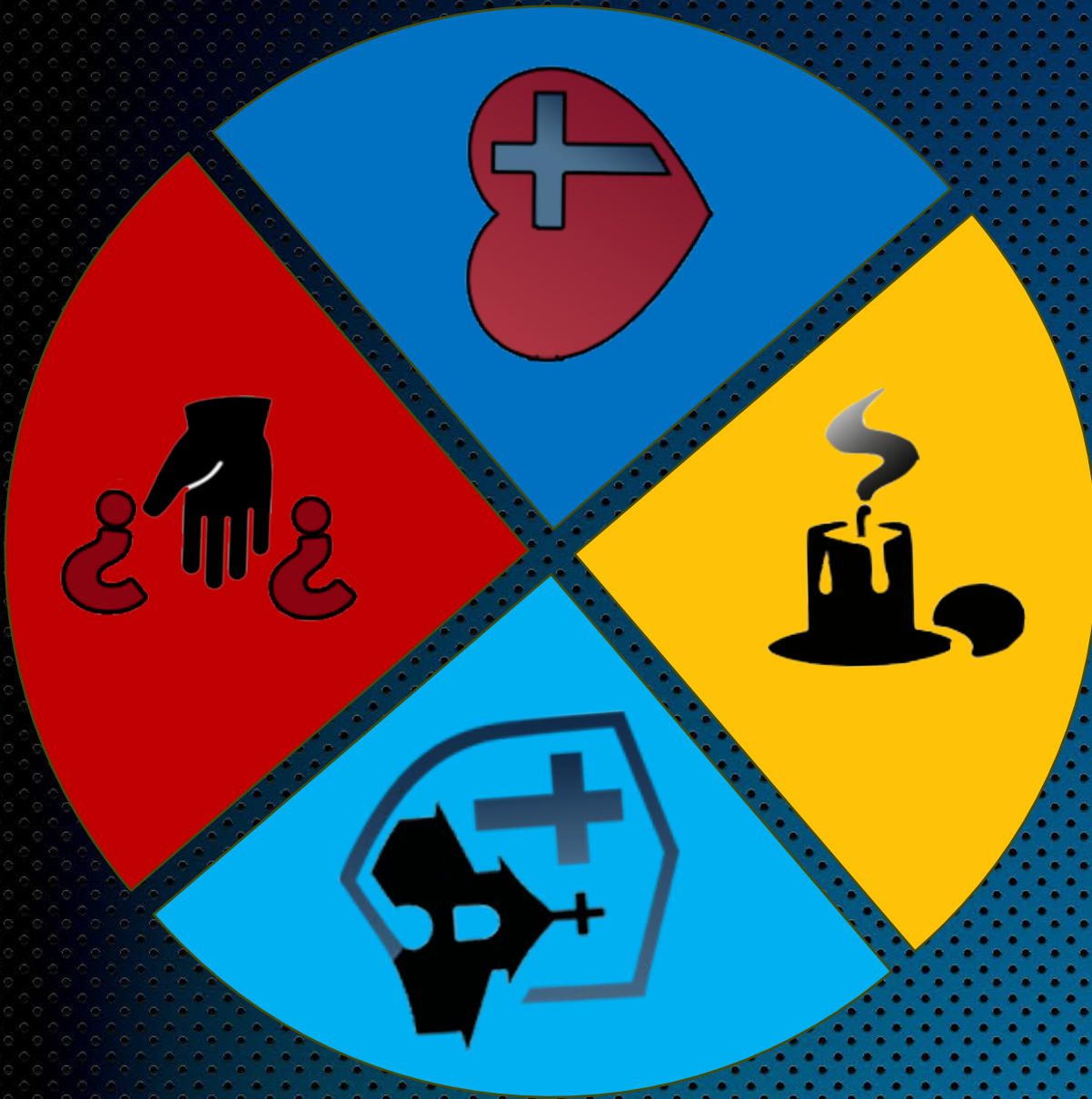
Adopted
Faith
(Unbelief)

Embraces
Belief

Arrested
Faith

Rejects
Belief





Faith Identity States



Apathetic Faith

Low Exploration
Low Commitment

This individual is not currently
concerned with things of faith.

And as he sowed, some seed fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured it.

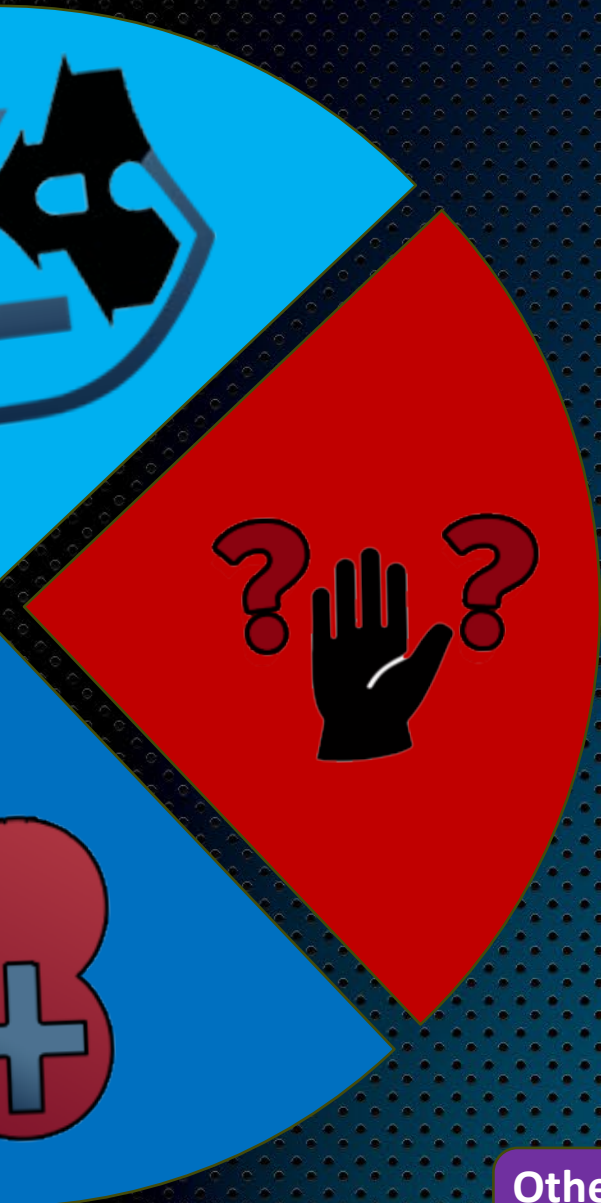


Assumed Faith

**Low Exploration
Stronger Commitment**

This individual has not experienced challenges to their beliefs.

Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil, and immediately it sprang up, since it had no depth of soil. ⁶ And when the sun rose, it was scorched, and since it had no root, it withered away.

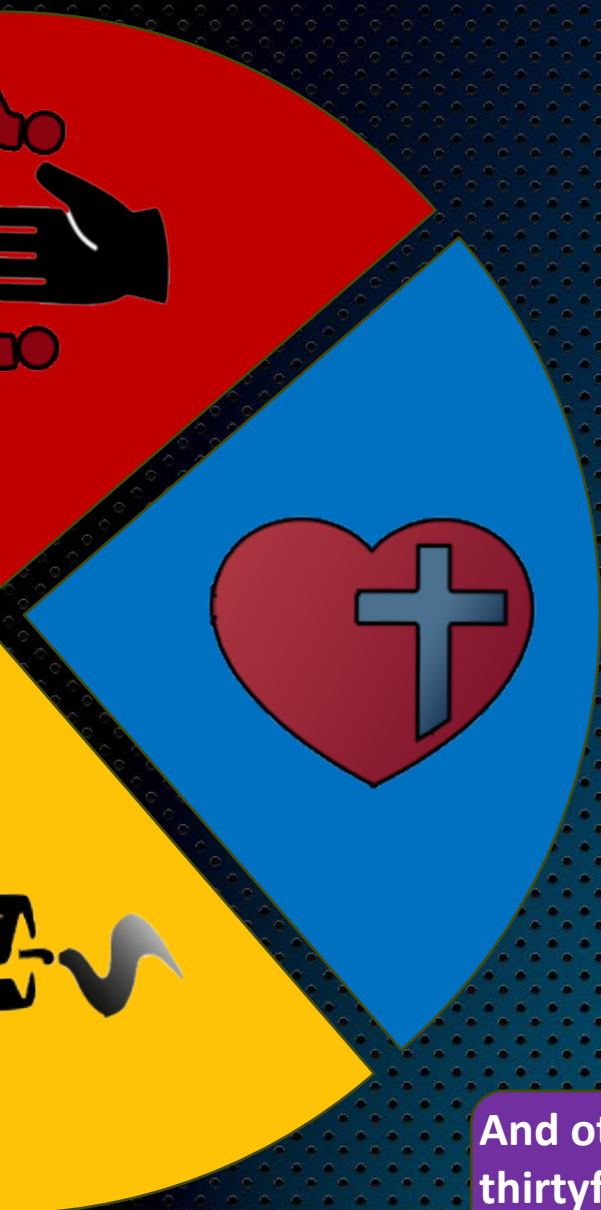


Arrested Faith

High Exploration
Reduced Commitment

This individual is struggling with prior held beliefs. They are actively exploring alternatives.

Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain. Mark 4:7



Adopted Faith

**Completed Exploration
Strong Commitment**

This individual has worked through their questions and holds strongly to their beliefs.

And other seeds fell into good soil and produced grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold.

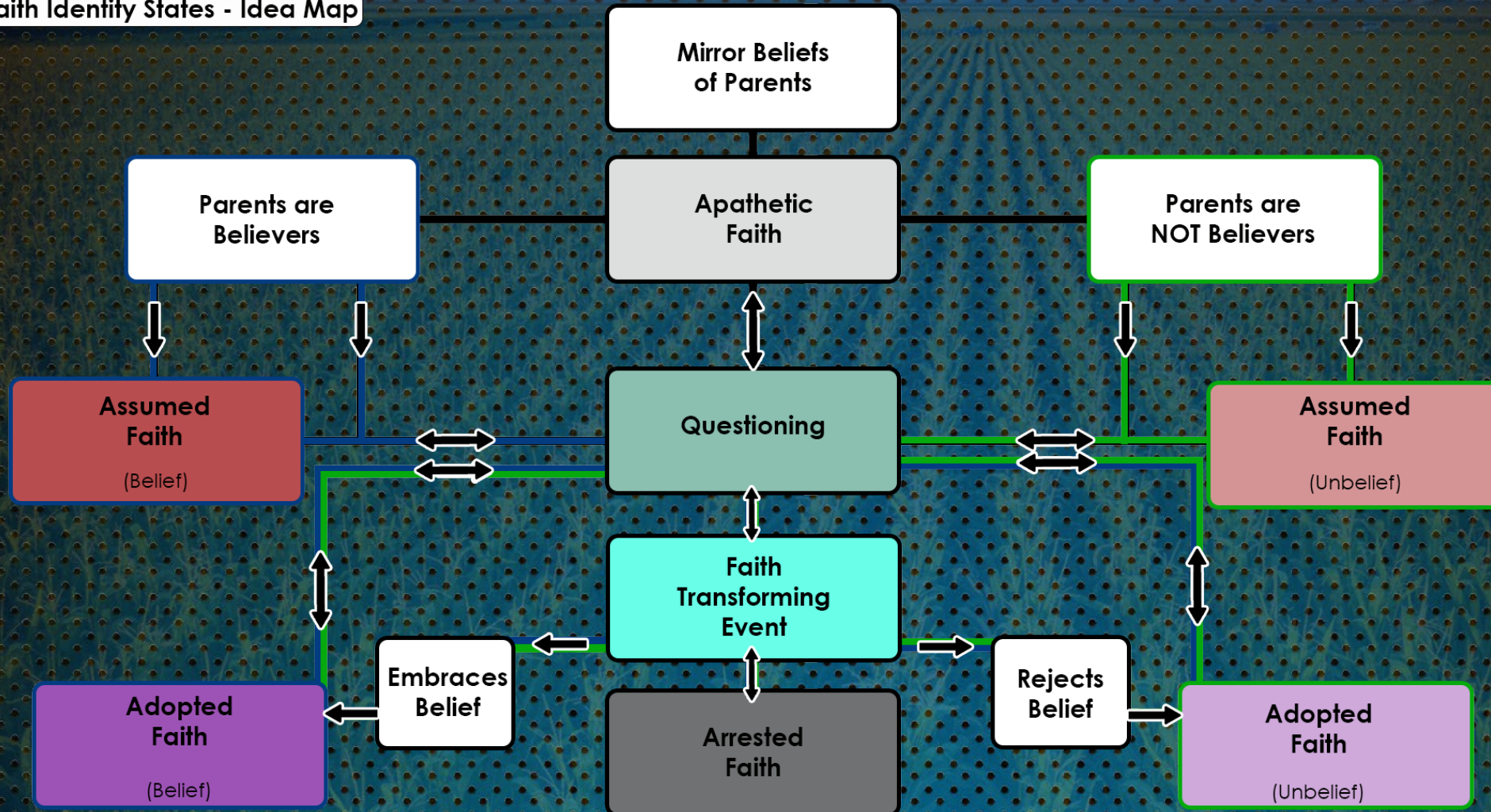
Mark 4:8

Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain.

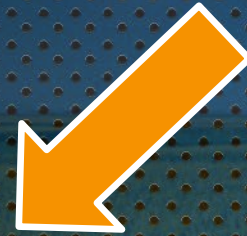
Mark 4:7

It's about the Crisis

Faith Identity States - Idea Map



Crisis



Faith Transforming Event



Faith Informing Moment

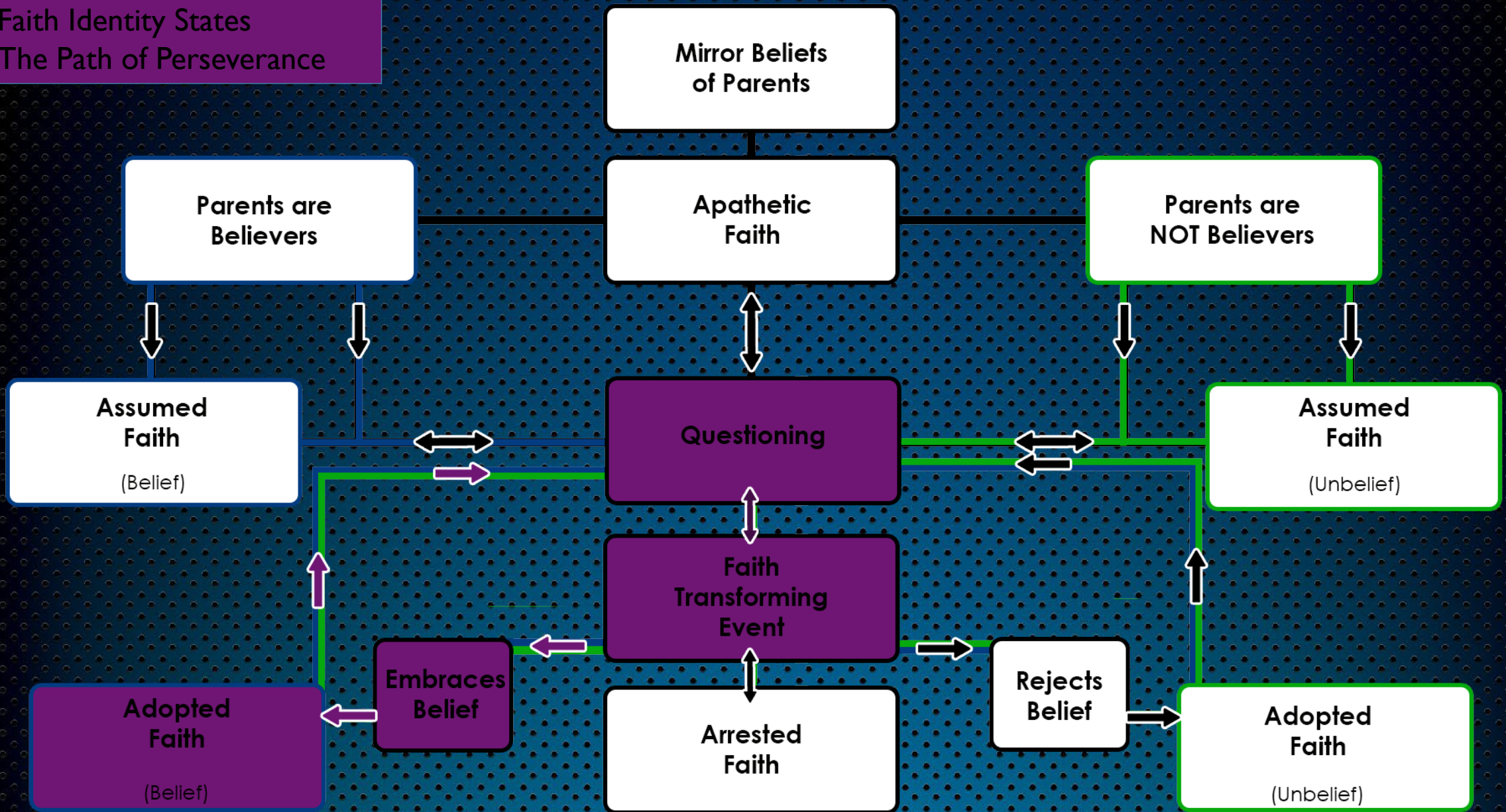
A **Faith Transforming Event (FTE)** is a *macro-transaction* where an individual is *no longer able to reconcile prior beliefs due to new information* the individual either *voluntarily discovered or involuntarily confronted*.

- Can happen at any time
- Always leads to questioning
- Can happen more than once
- Can happen through vicarious exposure

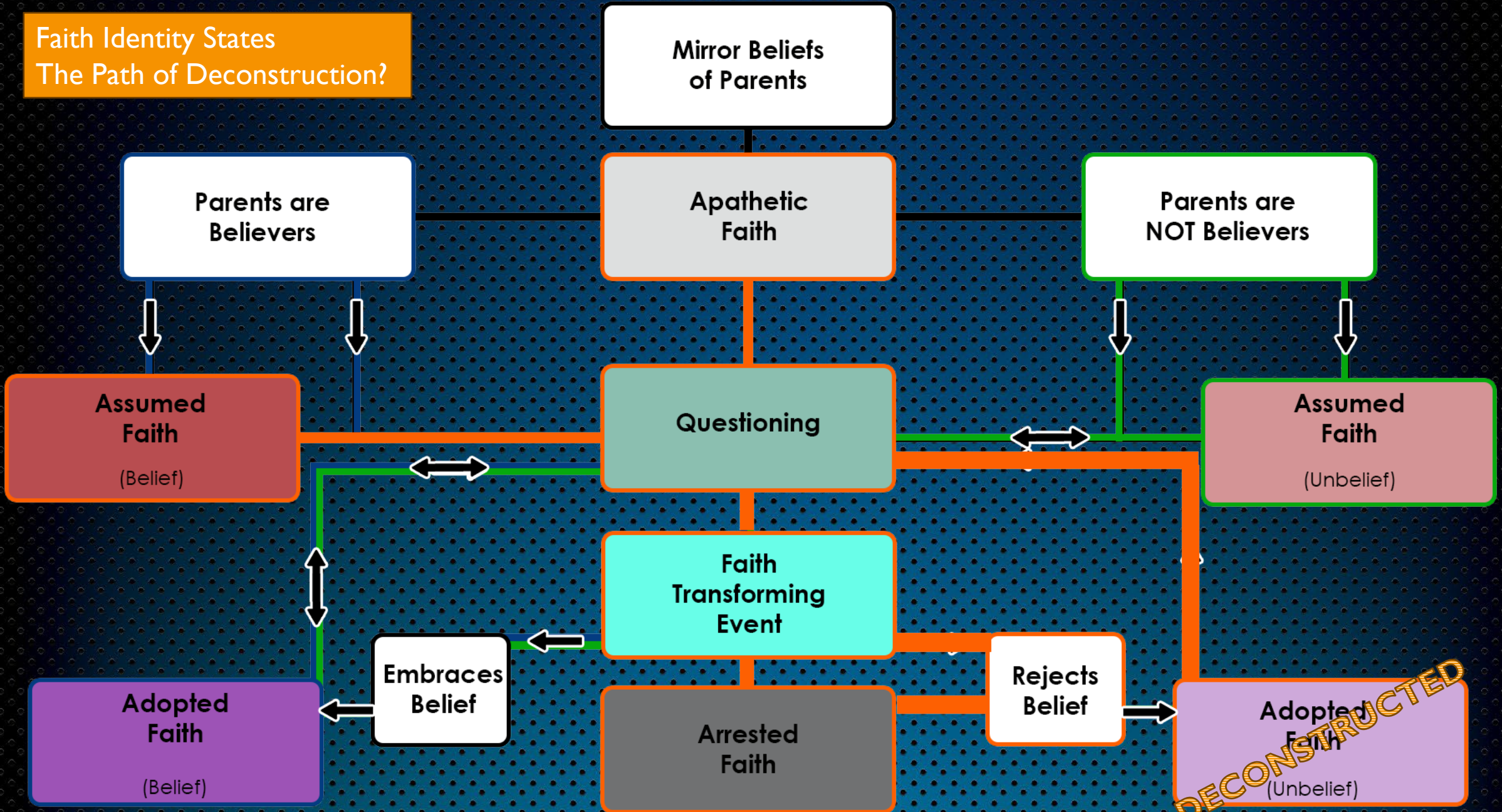
Faith Informing Moment – *micro-transaction* where an individual's prior beliefs are reaffirmed or confronted in ways that do not lead to questioning (hearing a sermon, praise song, story that either lines up with or subtly challenges current beliefs)

- Can happen at any time
- If enough occur, these can lead to questioning

Faith Identity States
The Path of Perseverance



Faith Identity States
The Path of Deconstruction?



DECONSTRUCTED

DEFINING DECONSTRUCTION

Three Views

DEFINING DECONSTRUCTION - DERRIDA

- Ideas first came to the US in the 1970s and taken more seriously in the 1980s
- What Deconstruction is not - an ideological entity unto itself
- What Deconstruction is - the argument that ideological entities should not exist

DEFINING DECONSTRUCTION - DERRIDA

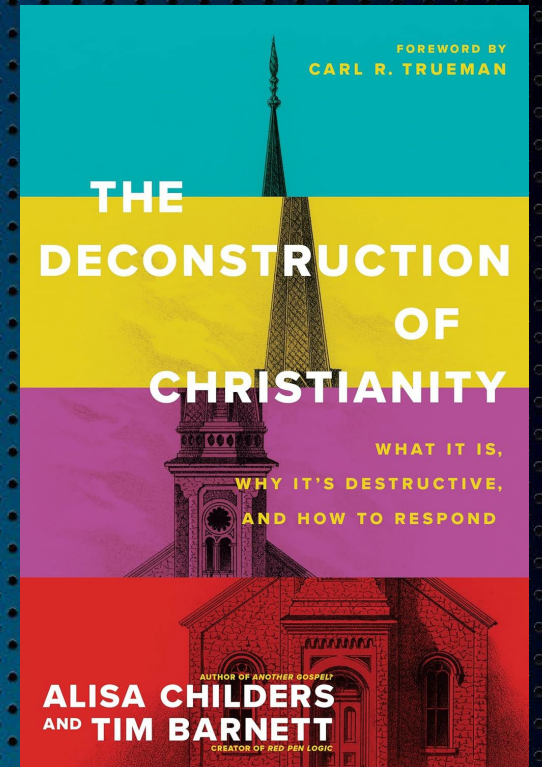
- If one is honest about a core ideology and its boundaries, as well as the influences of other ideologies on any particular chosen ideology, then one must conclude that no chosen ideology is pure enough in its construction to stand alone.
- Therefore, the best pathway forward is to stop looking at black & white constructions and live in the shades of gray.
- **This chaotic avoidance of ideological entity is at the heart of deconstruction.**

DEFINING DECONSTRUCTION - DERRIDA

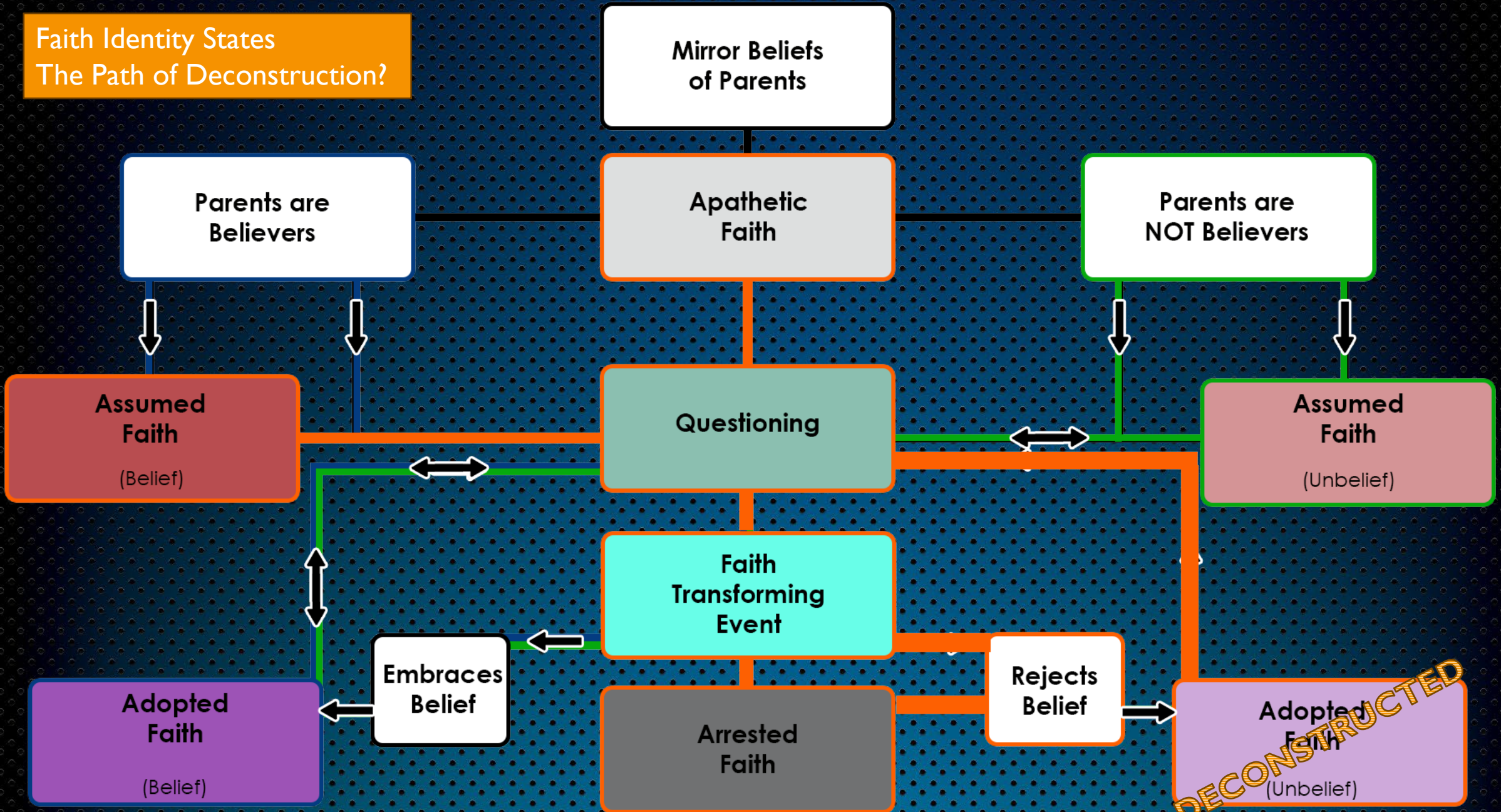
- The problem of the ideal
- Within Faith Identity, One can imagine faith identity as it should be and recognize a comparison to one's own faith identity as it is - at its core, separate from the ideal.
 - For Derrida, this separation demands deconstruction
- The significant underpinning here is that there exists a separate other, perfect ideal in the person of Jesus Christ and the authority of His Word. This objective ideal is a standard, THE standard, by which faith identity must be measured, and thus grants Him authority over construction as the "author and perfecter of our faith."

DEFINING DECONSTRUCTION – MCDOWELL AND MARRIOTT

- They start by addressing three definitions
 - Derrida
 - **#exvangelicalism (idea of toxic religiosity leading to “Toss Everything”)**
 - Their core definition
 - “A process of analysis that Christians who want to follow Jesus engage in because they “doubt the faith they've received is the fully refined good that God intends and are seeking to sift out the dross and keep what is most precious.”



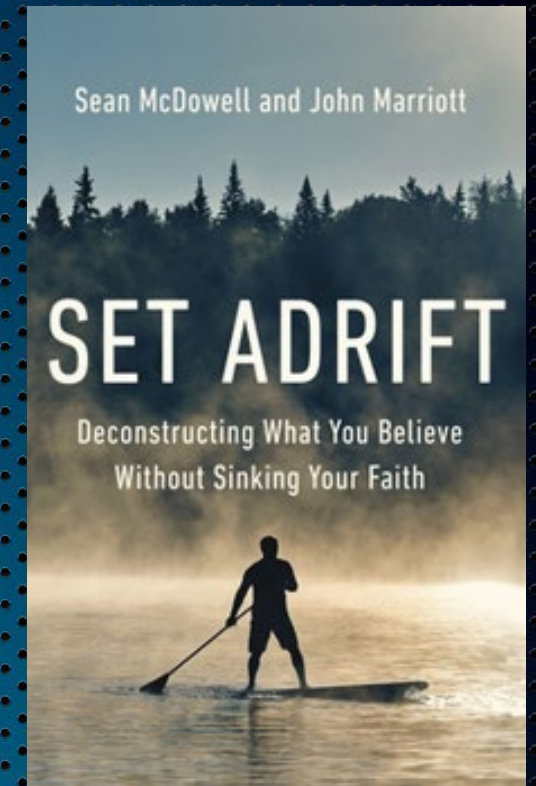
Faith Identity States
The Path of Deconstruction?



DECONSTRUCTED

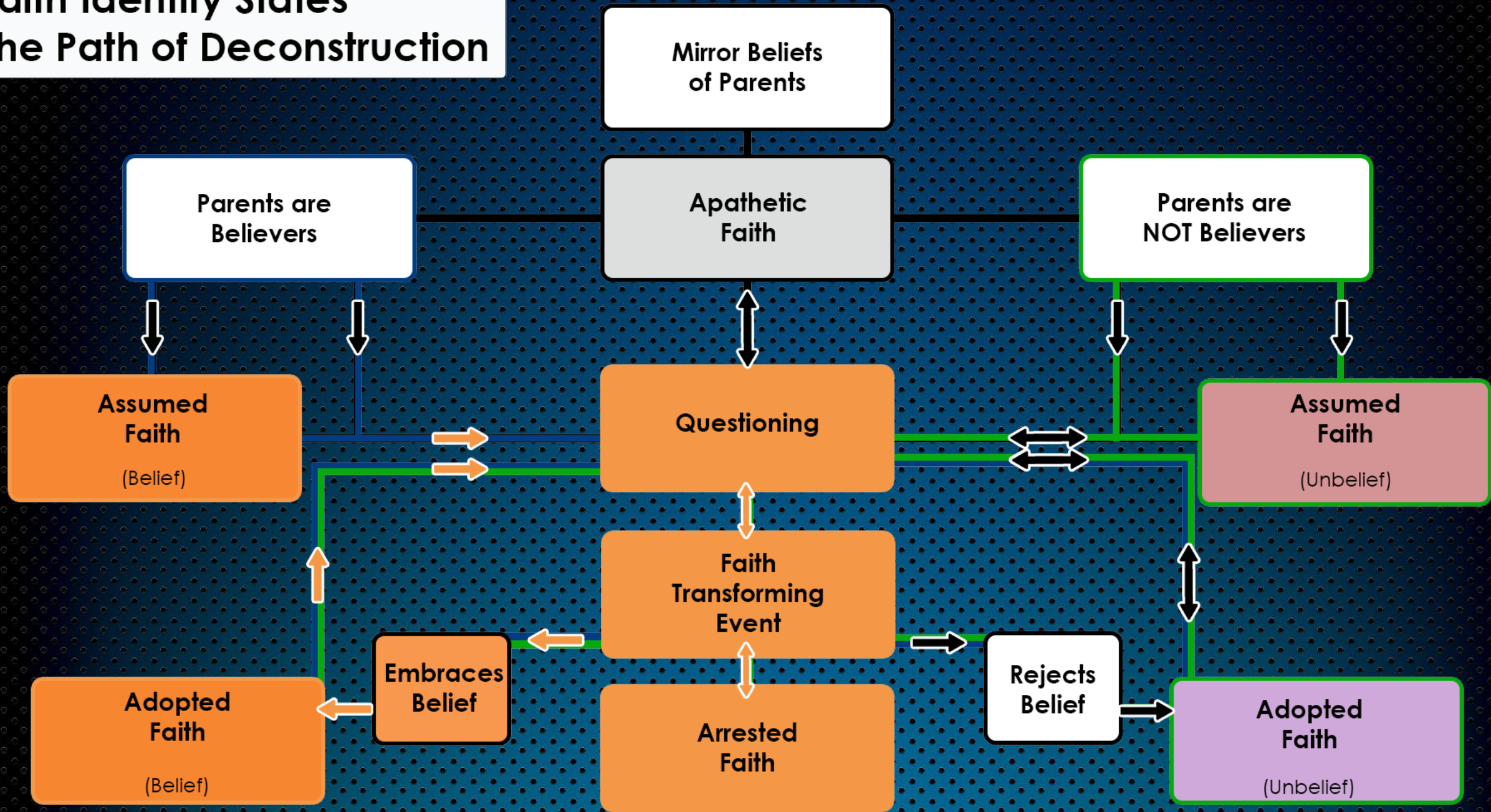
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Faith Identity States

The Path of Deconstruction



DEFINING DECONSTRUCTION – MCDOWELL AND MARRIOTT

- In other words,

Deconstruction \neq Deconversion

DEFINING DECONSTRUCTION – MCDOWELL AND MARRIOTT

- Deconstruction involves a “re-forming” of faith
- Benefits
 - A Healthier Faith
 - A Genuine Faith
 - A Truthful Faith

DEFINING DECONSTRUCTION – MCDOWELL AND MARRIOTT

- Deconstruction involves a “re-forming” of faith
- Risks
 - Apostasy
 - Heresy
 - Demolition

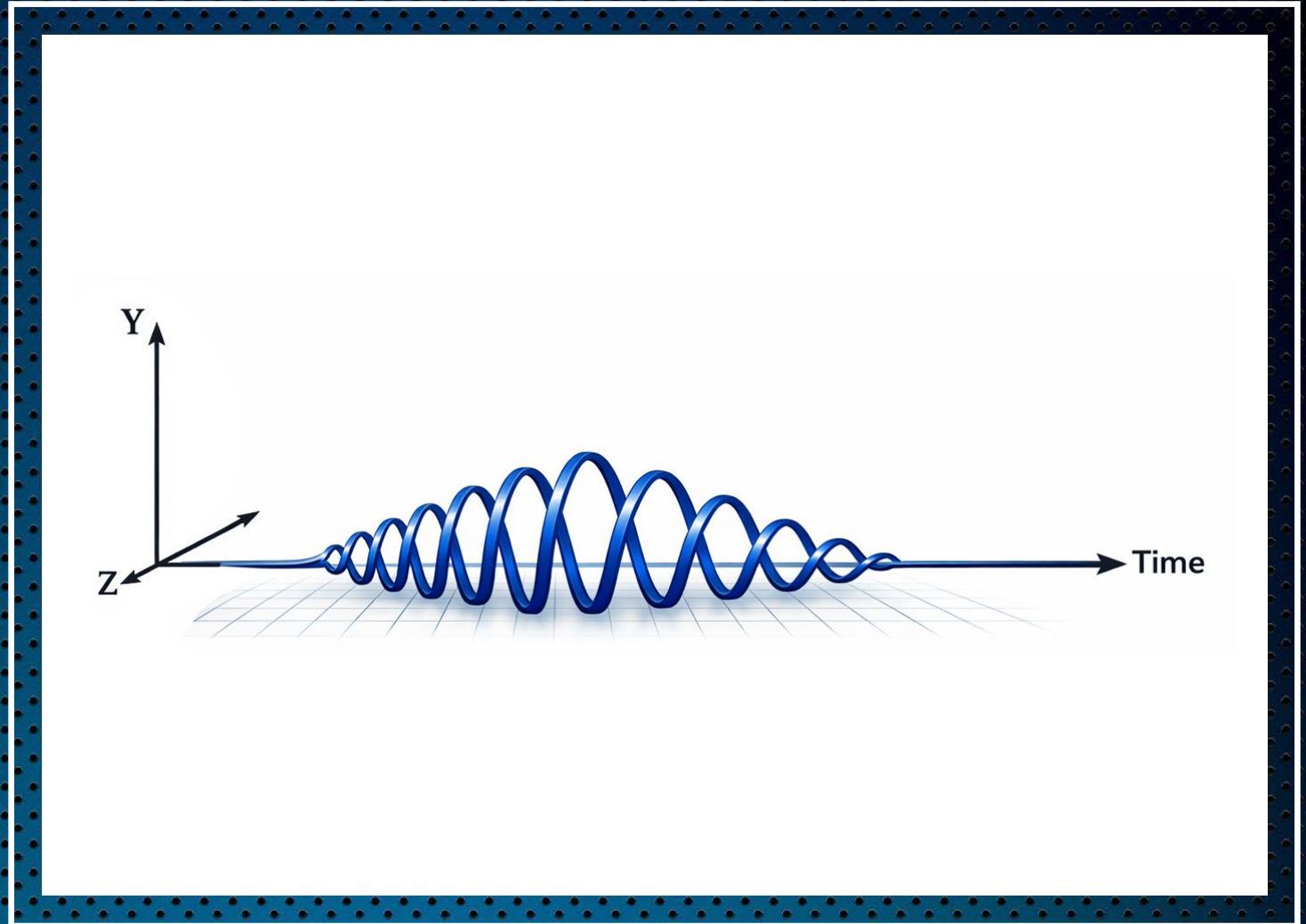
DEFINING DECONSTRUCTION – MCDOWELL AND MARRIOTT

- Deconstruction involves a “re-forming” of faith
- This involves a couple key variables
 - Cognitive Dissonance
 - Emotional Unrest
- This begins the move toward Paradigm Shift

PARADIGM SHIFT – MY MODEL

Stages of Paradigm Shift

1. Ignorant Unconcern
2. Curiosity (Initial FTE)
3. Heightened Curiosity (Crisis expands)
4. Cognitive Dissonance
5. Emotional Unrest
6. Questioning (Exploration increases)
7. Choice Selection
8. Cognitive/Emotional Consonance
9. Sated Curiosity
10. Informed Unconcern



DEFINING DECONSTRUCTION – MCDOWELL AND MARRIOTT

- The authors emphasize the importance of rightly understanding Jesus's identity.
- p.35 - “Your conclusions about the identity of Jesus are the most important thing about you.”
- The main argument here is that any deconstruction or reconstruction of Christianity must retain two basic components - A right understanding of Jesus as Son of God, and a right understanding of Jesus as Lord. Getting either of these wrong moves one outside the bounds of Christianity.

DEFINING DECONSTRUCTION – MCDOWELL AND MARRIOTT

- **Dogma and Doctrine** play a necessary role in Deconstruction
- **Dogma** is a needed (outer) fence. Outside this fence, one is no longer truly a Christian because what they believe, no matter how sincerely they believe it, is beyond reasonable historical orthodoxy
- **Doctrine** is the Christian pasture. People can disagree on doctrine and both still be Christians.

**ASSESSMENT: DETERMINING
WHO IS AT RISK?**

DETERMINING WHO IS AT RISK

- Faith Identity Test score – Identifies State
- Ask about Faith Transforming Events
- Explore Current State (where they are)
- Explore prior experiences w/ questions (how they got there)

FAITH IDENTITY TEST

- Developed ~80 questions dealing with commitment, exploration, and faith transforming events
- Divided questions into groups based on type of commitment vs. exploration (Emotional, Spiritual, Cognitive, Volitional)
- Narrowed down to 16 questions for initial study
- As result of study, dropped to 10 questions

FAITH IDENTITY TEST

Factor Analysis in SPSS revealed 2 Clear Factors after Varimax Rotation

- The factors were clearly divided by question type
- The Exploration and Commitment emerged as the factors

KMO and Bartlett's values indicate sufficient strength to conduct a factor analysis and that data are normally distributed.

	Component	
	1	2
E14	.866	
E12	.847	
E16	.812	
E5	.745	
E7	.645	
C13		.853
C9		.852
C11		.783
C4		.727
C6		.703

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.783
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	782.010
	df	45
	Sig.	<.001

FAITH IDENTITY TEST

Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

- ___ 1. I have surrendered my life to God.
- ___ 2. I have had a time when life's struggles caused me to question my faith.
- ___ 3. I obey God even when it's not popular.
- ___ 4. I have experienced a crisis of faith.
- ___ 5. Based on my behaviors, my peers would identify me as a committed believer.
- ___ 6. I have had doubts about my views about God.
- ___ 7. There has been a time when my doubts caused me to wonder if God is real.
- ___ 8. The trials in my life have given me more confidence in my faith.
- ___ 9. At some point in life, I have questioned my beliefs about God.
- ___ 10. I regularly demonstrate my faith by my actions.

FAITH IDENTITY TEST - SCORING

Scoring and Results



Faith Identity State		Exploration	
		HIGH	LOW
Commitment	HIGH	Adopted Faith	Assumed Faith
	LOW	Arrested Faith	Apathetic Faith

- Each Subscale has a minimum score of 5 and a maximum score of 35
- Scores from **5-20** equate to **LOW**
- Scores from **21-35** equate to **HIGH**

FAITH TRANSFORMING EVENTS

- Explore what prior FTE's have been experienced
- Be sure to inquire about the process of exploration
 - Who did they talk to?
 - How did they respond?
- This comes back to exploring their current location
- It also comes back to understanding their previous experience

WORKING: WHAT DO WE DO?

I. PRAY FOR YOUR PEOPLE

And, Normalize the Questioning

2. HELP THEM BEWARE

McDowell and Marriott bring up Four Good Points:

1. Beware of fooling yourself - this has to do with intellectual dishonesty tied to confirmation bias
2. Beware of rejecting faith for shallow reasons - this has to do with leaving the faith altogether because remaining faithful is burdensome
3. Beware the temptation to go alone - this has to do with talking oneself out of faith without seeking counsel from others
4. Beware of anger becoming bitterness - this has to do with the fact that deconstruction often starts due to hurt and that the anger one feels isn't appropriately dealt with but has become a residual bitterness that hurts self and others.

3. GUIDE SAFE EXPLORATION

Providing a non-judgmental space to entertain deep questions.

How did you react a moment ago when I talked through babies and bathwater?

FAITH IDENTITY TEST - APPLICATIONS

CCCU University

- Could be given to all incoming freshmen
- Useful in identifying best fit for Introductory Spiritual Formation class

FAITH IDENTITY TEST - APPLICATIONS

Academic Research

- Short instrument to divide faith members into groups
- Useful in difference research (groups)
- Subscale scores could be used in Correlation research

FAITH IDENTITY TEST - APPLICATIONS

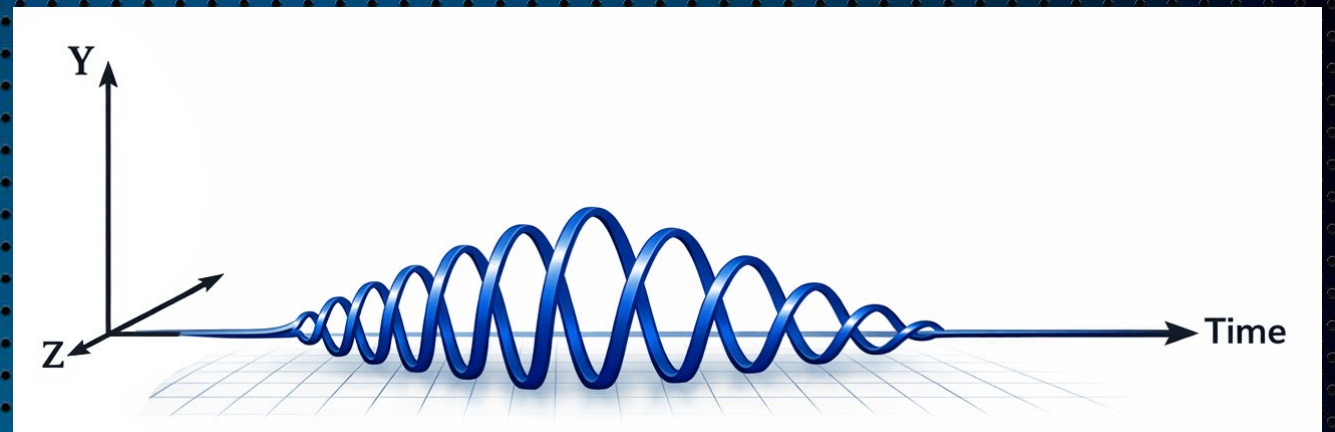
Therapy Practice

- Could be given to as part of intake
- Useful in informing client's spiritual "location"
- Especially beneficial if client is struggling with spiritual matters (vocabulary to talk through FTEs; normalize questioning)

4. RECOGNIZE RETREAT MODE

If emotional unrest gets too big, it can short circuit the process.

This anxiety-ridden pause might be someone's location when they show up in your office.



5. TRUST THE HOLY SPIRIT

It's never our job or responsibility to talk someone into or out of the faith.

Trust the Holy Spirit to bring conviction where He's working.

Our role is to aid in exploration.

THANK YOU!

Questions?