

we don't
go to church
anymore

Week 1 - 02.11.24
not for me



Welcome to the *We Don't Go to Church Anymore* series! In a time when “dechurching” is on the rise – with millions of people choosing not to attend church anymore – it’s important for us to dive into why this is happening and how we can respond to it. Over the next four weeks, we’ll spend time unpacking four specific reasons why people aren’t going to church anymore and use this group time to share your personal experience with each other. It’s our prayer that your learning and engagement here will help you navigate these topics personally and with those in your Little Iowa.

Introduction

You may be entering with a certain sense of irony as you jump into a series called *We Don't Go to Church Anymore* when you’re one of the people currently going to church (and in a group)! But it’s possible you weren’t always in this spot. To help get to know the people in your group a little better, spend some time answering these questions:

- How long have you been going to church? Would you call yourself a “regular attender”?
- When you started going to church, what made you stick around?
- What’s one of your very favorite TV shows? (This one’s just for fun. 🎉)

Discussion

1. The book *The Great Dechurching* shares that “about 40 million adults (16 percent) in America today used to go to church but no longer do [...] more adults in the United States don’t attend church than attend church.” What’s your reaction to this statistic? Is it surprising to you? Why or why not?
2. Do you know someone (or multiple people) who are dechurched - no longer attending church at all? Do you know why? Without naming anyone specific, share the stories you know of people in your life who are no longer going to church. How does it make you feel?
3. Let’s go back to your story with church. Has there ever been a time when it seemed like church just wasn’t for you? You may not have been opposed or had a bad experience; you just weren’t interested. If you’ve navigated anything like this, share the experience with your group and what made church relevant to you.

4. Pastor John shared several encouragements for those who believe church isn't for them (feel free to revisit and read the referenced Scripture passages together as additional reminders):

- Church offers a rare mix of authenticity and optimism.
- It's ok to be stuck and don't have to stay stuck (Luke 19:10).
- There are no prerequisites to show up (Matthew 11:28-30).
- We're going to talk about "all the stuff" (Acts 17:22-23).
- Everything is truth **and** grace (John 1:14).
- The struggle is real – and it can be good (Romans 5:3-5).
- Journey alone and journey together.
- Your decision, not ours.

Which of these encouragements did you need to hear at one time? Which ones do you still need to hear today? Now think about those dechurched people in your life. Which of these would help create some interest or curiosity in church? Would any of these help meet their fears or concerns?

5. **Read 1 Peter 2:11-25.** While we live in a different context than the Apostle Peter, you may be surprised by how his lessons to those in a pagan society can still apply to us today. How could living in the way Peter describes create a different kind of influence in the lives of dechurched people around you? When you look over Pastor John's encouragements to people who think church isn't for them, how are (or how can) you model these same encouragements in your life?

Application

- **Keep digging into your story.** Your experience matters, and God will use it to help others. Don't be surprised when you run into someone in a spot you may have been in a few years ago. By reflecting and processing with Jesus, others, and/or counseling, you can become more confident and aware of your story's impact and opportunity.
- **Show up for your Little Iowa.** Don't underestimate the power of presence and a simple invitation. Remember, you're not responsible for the response; you're responsible for being obedient to the people, conversations, and opportunities God places in your way.
- **Pray for your Little Iowa.** Have conversations with God asking him to move in the lives of your dechurched people. Ask for them to experience a "holy discontent" or curiosity about what Jesus and church are all about. Ask for clarity on the role you may get to play in their story.
- **Consider purchasing and reading [The Great Dechurching](#).** It's a research-based read that offers specific data, trends, and insights about this growing trend. If you're up for a deep dive, this is a good one.