

we don't
go to church
anymore

Week 2 - 02.18.24
out of the habit



Introduction

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. In week two, we’re focusing on a specific group of dechurched people – those who simply got out of the habit. Together, we’ll share our experiences and explore how we can create a compelling and sticky church community that creates real connection, love, and peace.

Discussion

1. Have you ever been out of the habit of going to church? If so, share how you got out of the habit, the impact it had on you, and what got you back in the habit. If you’re currently in that spot, there’s no judgement here. Your experience may be really valuable to share with your group – for you and for them.
2. Do you know someone (or multiple people) who are currently out of the habit of going to church? If you do, what reason from *The Great Dechurching* did they have for leaving?
 - I moved to a new community (22%)
 - Attending was inconvenient (16%)
 - Divorce, remarriage, or another family change (15%)
 - COVID got me out of the habit (15%)
 - I didn’t fit with my congregation (14%)
 - I didn’t experience much love from my congregation (12%)

Since they left the church, what have your interactions with them been like? If you haven’t connected with them after leaving, why? How do you feel about your relationship with them right now?

3. Pastor Jesse taught that we can help keep people connected to a compelling church community by being a “sticky church” – one where people don’t get stuck, but they do stick together. **Read Romans 12 together as a group.** Which of these verses are the most compelling to you in envisioning a “sticky church”?
4. Pastor Jesse provided three specific aspects of a “sticky church” that can help you and the dechurched people in your Little Iowa feel truly connected to church:
 - **Real connection and belonging - when you serve one another (Romans 12:4-8).** If you’re currently part of a church team, share the impact of that team and your relationships from it with your group. How has your service helped you feel “stuck” to people at church?
 - **Love one another in action - by creating a home for one another (Romans 12:9-10).** How are – or how could you be – creating a home for those in your Little Iowa to feel loved? Who specifically would benefit from an invitation for a meal, drink, or catch-up with you right now?
 - **An oasis of peace - by loving our enemies in action and leaving the rest to God (Romans 12:18).** Picture the people who get under your skin. The people who’ve wronged you. Those you wish you didn’t have to see but are connected to every day. Without naming anyone specifically, what could you do to show them grace by doing something kind and helpful? What impact do you think it might make – for them and for you?

Application

- **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 the dechurched people in your circle. Ask for them to experience a “holy discontent” or curiosity about returning to church. 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).