

we don't  
go to church  
anymore

Week 4 - 03.03.24  
deconstructing



## Introduction

In a time when “dechurched” 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 four, we’re focusing on the largest group of dechurched people – people who stopped going for social reasons. Together we’ll share our experiences and explore how we can better understand and engage with “cultural Christians.”

## Discussion

1. This group of dechurched people (mostly 18-25-year olds) are referred to as “cultural Christians” because they accept the label of Christian even though many of their stated beliefs fall outside of orthodox Christianity. For example:
  - 53% believe in heaven; 40% believe in an actual hell
  - 22% believe that the Bible is the literal Word of God
  - 1% surveyed said they believed Jesus was the Son of God/God in the flesh sent to save us from our sin

When you think about this group of Christians, what’s your immediate reaction? What feelings get stirred up in you? Why?

2. Some cultural Christians begin examining whether or not they should leave faith completely in a process that’s come to be known as “deconstruction” – re-examining and/or dismantling what you believe because the foundations seem to be built on faulty assumptions. Do you know any cultural Christians or people deconstructing their faith in your life personally? If so, without naming anyone specifically, what does their engagement with church or Christians look and sound like right now?
3. For some, deconstruction can clarify or strengthen someone’s faith (like Pastor Jesse). For others, when they tried to dig deeper, they only found more cracks (or a lack of answers and openness) until the whole concept fell apart. Have you ever navigated a time of deconstruction or questioning your faith? Why or why not? If so, what was the experience like, what did you learn, and what changed for you?

4. **Revisit and read 1 Corinthians 2:1-5.** Our faith doesn't rest upon believing all the "right things." Our faith rests up on believing one thing – that Jesus died **for** you and how God's Spirit will use that belief to **change** you. When you experience Jesus' power win your heart, you'll rest from trying to win over anyone to anything else. Consider the cultural Christians in your life again. When you engage with or pray for them, are you wanting them to change their mind on certain issues or for Jesus to change their hearts? Have you ever witnessed or experienced Christians getting this backward? What was the result?

5. Pastor Jesse gave us five tips for relating to cultural Christians including:

- Acknowledge how you're perceived.
- Invite them into your life before inviting them to church.
- Quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger (Quick, Slow, Slow; James 1:19-20).
- Be prepared with gentleness and respect.
- It's 100% truth and 100% grace, but lean toward grace with this group.

What do the cultural Christians in your life need from you right now? Imagine you're going to see them tomorrow – how would you engage in conversation with them? What are they likely to talk about? What would you talk about? How would you grow a relationship with them while providing a picture of Jesus' love for them? Think of someone specific, and answer these questions with your group.

## 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 your dechurched people. Ask for opportunities for them to spend time with you and for you to relate to them in new ways that display God's grace and truth in a safe and welcoming way. 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.