

we don't  
go to church  
anymore

Week 3 - 02.25.24  
church hurt

## 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 three, we’re focusing on one specific group of dechurched people – those who’ve experienced church hurt. Together we’ll share our experiences and explore how we can love and help those in our Little Iowa who’ve experienced church hurt.

We also understand church hurt is sensitive and can be a loaded topic. Remember, what’s said in your group stays in your group. This is a safe place for you to be supported when you share thoughts and feelings you may otherwise keep to yourself. When someone in your group is willing to share vulnerably, honor them with your attention, encouragement, and confidentiality. Take time to pray before beginning your group time asking God for courage, guidance, and wisdom. We pray your group time is marked by empathy, understanding, and healing.

## Discussion

1. Pastor Chip clarified that there’s a difference between being offended and being wounded by the church. “Church hurt” is being sinned against in a significant way by pastors, church leadership, members, and/or other Christians. People typically experience church hurt in three ways:

- They weren’t loved well by the church or relationally connected.
- They were wounded by something the church, its leaders, or members did.
- Politics

Many people who’ve experienced this no longer want anything to do with the church. Have you ever considered church hurt and being offended by church as two different things? What does this differentiation clarify or challenge for you?

2. Knowing the difference between being offended and sinned against as well as these categories of church hurt, have you experienced church hurt before? Or are you discovering you’ve only been offended by church? If you’re comfortable, share your church hurt experience and its impact with your group and how you found your way back to church (or into a group).

3. Do you know someone (or multiple people) who have experienced – or are currently experiencing – church hurt? Does their hurt fit one or more of the three categories provided above? What's it like talking about church or faith with them? How does their experience, and your interactions with them, make you feel?

Pastor Chip taught that perhaps the reason why so many people with church hurt have dechurched is because they see very little evidence of Jesus' life and love in the people who claim to know him and believe that life may actually be safer outside the church.

4. **Revisit and read Colossians 3:1-17.** When followers of Jesus live in their old selves, people get hurt. When we put off our old self and crucify what our sinful nature wants to do, we live out a life that looks and loves like Jesus. Not perfectly, but consistently. When you reflect on your inward heart and outward behavior in this season, are you living out of your old self or new life in life in Jesus? Share where you are with your group and the kind of impact you may be having on those around you right now.

5. For those in your life experiencing church hurt right now, Pastor Chip provided three phrases we can use to love and help them:
- "I'm sorry. Please forgive me/us/the church."
  - "Life inside of a No Matter church is better than life outside of a No Matter church."
  - "Come sit with me."

Go back to the people you thought of and shared about from question three. Which of these phrases do they need to hear from you? What do you feel or anticipate when thinking about saying these to them? What's most likely to keep you from having these conversations when you feel you need to? What might change – for them and for you – by having the conversation?

## 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 experience the love and healing of God and fellow Christians. 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.