



# DNA Leader Equipping Guide

Gospel  
Community  
Church

# DNA LEADER EQUIPPING GUIDE

HIS DIVINE POWER HAS GRANTED TO US ALL THINGS THAT PERTAIN TO LIFE AND GODLINESS, THROUGH THE KNOWLEDGE OF HIM WHO CALLED US TO HIS OWN GLORY AND EXCELLENCE...

2 PETER 1:3

## DNA GROUP SUMMARY

Here at Gospel Community Church we believe that a disciple of Jesus is someone who faithfully gathers with the people of God, is growing in the likeness of the Son of God and is going on mission to share the Gospel of God, and one of the primary growing environments here at Gospel Community Church is our DNA Groups.

## WHAT IS A DNA GROUP?

The term "DNA group" refers to a group that ideally consist of three to four people – men with men, women with women – who meet together regularly. They seek to know and be known and to bring the Gospel to bear on each other's lives so that they grow to become more like Jesus.

DNA is an acronym that reminds us of three key components of discipleship: Discover, Nurture & Act.

## THE DISCOVER, NURTURE, ACT PROCESS

At each meeting, a DNA Group should walk through these three steps, and because we can only discover, nurture and act through the power of the Holy Spirit we must make prayer a priority throughout the process.

### DISCOVER

The foundation of discipleship is the revelation of the person, plan and promises of God, fulfilled in the Son of God, Jesus Christ, as revealed by the Spirit of God through the word of God.

The goal of this stage of DNA is to study God's word and ask good questions that teach the head and help one another grow in knowledge and understanding of who God is and what he has done.

A group should come together to discuss what they have discovered about who God is and what he has done from their time in the word?

### NURTURE

The goal of this stage of DNA is to shepherd one another's hearts. Ask questions that help people see that their wrong belief or lack of it is resulting in the fruit that is being realized in their lives. We seek to speak the truth in love as the Spirit leads, calling each person to repent of sin and believe the gospel.

### ACT

The goal of this stage is to listen to the Spirit together and obey as he calls us to bear fruit in keeping with repentance, while paying attention to what he might call us to do, and to who he might call us to tell.

# INTRODUCTION TO DNA GROUPS

## A WORD ABOUT MISSIONAL COMMUNITY GROUPS

Missional community groups (MCG's) are the primary structure for gathering, growing and going in our church. Disciples are made most effectively as we gather with the people of God in community, and by going on mission with the people of God together. Therefore, our focus is primarily on the health and growth of our MCG's.

## WHY SHOULD I BE IN A DNA GROUP?

As disciples who've been saved and made righteous Paul exhorts us to "be transformed by the renewing of our minds" (Romans 12:2). Discipleship requires life-on-life interaction that can only happen in community. We grow primarily through the experience of life in gospel community. A DNA group can be a key catalyst for growth and transformation in our lives.

One of the main ways this happens is by giving each other regular reminders of the truth of the gospel. Hebrews 3:12 warns, "take care, brothers and sisters, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God." We are often tempted to forget who God is, what he's done for us in Christ Jesus, who we are as a result and how we should live out that new identity in Christ.

Hebrews 3:13 then says, "but exhort one another every day, as long as it is called 'today,' that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." Every single day we need to be encouraged with the truth that we are deeply loved and accepted by the Father purely on the basis of what Jesus has done! Our new identity as sons and daughters of God shape everything about our life as disciples of Jesus.

Understanding this new identity also gives us the boldness and humility to be honest with our DNA partners when we are tempted to hide our sins or to blame others. Regular encouragement from our DNA partners can be a significant help in our battle against sin and against the lies of the enemy.

## WHAT IS THE GOAL OF A DNA GROUP?

The overall goal of a DNA group is to foster discipleship relationships that help each person to grow to become more like Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit. The goal is not merely to hang out and have fun, or even to build friendships, though hopefully all of that will happen! The goal is to challenge one another to "grow in the grace of knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18).

As disciples, we should experience transformation at every level, affecting our whole person: head, heart hands.

## **WHAT CAN I EXPECT FROM A DNA GROUP?**

The members of a DNA group should be committed to meeting together regularly, usually for 60-90 minutes. These meetings consist of sharing personal stories and struggles, asking questions, listening to each other, reading scripture, praying, speaking the truth in love, repenting and confessing sin, listening to the Holy Spirit, and submitting to one another.

Beyond the weekly meeting, however, DNA groups should seek to build trusting relationships by sharing everyday life together.

## **HOW ARE DNA GROUP'S STRUCTURED?**

In our experience as a church family, we have found that three-four is an ideal size for a DNA group.

By having multiple people engaged in a DNA group:

- o A more dynamic exchange typically occurs.
- o It is much more difficult for one person to dominate the conversation
- o There are two sets of ears filtering everything that is said, providing two unique perspectives in response.
- o There's a much greater potential for learning and development. Each person is unique and brings something to the table.
- o There are two people loving and supporting each person in the group. No one is bearing one another's burdens alone.

Also, by having multiple people in a DNA group:

- o Each person can contribute significantly to the group.
- o No one can "hide", remaining silent for very long before someone asks, "What do you think?"
- o Each person has an ample opportunity to share at each group meeting.
- o Meetings are more easily scheduled and do not last multiple hours.

## **WHO SHOULD THE DNA GROUP CONSIST OF?**

An MCG is defined as "a family of servant missionaries going together to make disciples." While MCG's seek to live as a family, the reality is that the level of intimacy with the people in our MCG's will vary. As a result, it is helpful for our DNA groups to consist of people from the same MCG. This will help ensure another regular touch point with some of the people in your MCG outside of your regular MCG gathering.

It will also allow you to share your heart and your life with a few of the people with whom you are on mission. When DNA groups are made up of people from the same MCG, it greatly strengthens the MCG and helps advance the mission of making disciples who make disciples.

There will be times when a DNA group will not be made up of men or women in the same MCG. An MCG may have recently multiplied, or perhaps the DNA group wants to wait before transitioning, and sometimes people want to continue pouring into a particular discipleship relationship before entrusting them to someone else. The key is to follow the Spirit's leading and to keep in mind the goal of growing as disciples.

## HOW OFTEN SHOULD A DNA GROUP MEET AND WHERE?

First of all, since the DNA group is typically a subset of an MCG, DNA groups should connect on more than just a formal basis. DNA groups should be engaged in as much everyday life as possible. Ideally, gospel friendships will form, and people will enjoy hanging out together in all kinds of ways.

As far as more structured meetings, DNA groups should plan to meet weekly if possible for about 60-90 minutes (though sometimes go longer!). If a group only connects every other week, the busyness and unpredictability of life (travel, sickness, holidays, schedule conflicts) will often mean long stretches between solid meetings.

Meetings usually happen in coffee shops, restaurants, homes etc. Focus is a key factor to consider. It's hard for three moms to have a DNA group meeting while their kids play at the park or for three commuters to talk on a crowded bus. Meet in a place where everyone is comfortable and that is reasonably free of distractions.

## DNA GROUP LEADERSHIP

The nature of group dynamics reveals that every group will have a leader. Acknowledging this reality will help DNA groups function in a more healthy manner.

Each DNA group's make-up will be unique. The nature of the group will determine the type of leadership that's needed. For some groups, where all participants have similar experience and maturity, the leader will simply be the person who makes sure the group meets. For others, the leader will clearly drive the discussion.

Regardless of who initially plays the role of leader, each member of a DNA group should get experience leading within the group. Ideally, over the course of a year or so, each person will spend a few months leading the group. As disciples, each person should be equipped to guide a group of at least three people through a discussion that is centered around Jesus. A DNA group provides a great training ground for disciples to learn the basics of leading in a group setting.

### **LEADER NOTE:**

The investment you make in your DNA group is the most strategic discipleship investment you will make. Be prayerful and very intentional with who you invite into your DNA groups and in how you use your time together.



## DNA GROUP GROWTH, MULTIPLICATION AND TRANSITION

A DNA group should be more than a once a week meeting. The members of the group should share everyday life together. Hopefully, relationships will form that “stir up one another to love and good works” (Hebrews 10:24). All DNA partners should experience intimacy with each other, and some may even find friendships that continue long after they have transitioned into another DNA.

Occasionally, DNA groups may stay together for a few years. Others may sense that after a significant time of growth, God is leading them to make strategic discipleship investments in other people, that they need to “multiply” their efforts as a group. Still others will be forced to navigate the inevitable changes that life throws their way – people losing interest, people moving away, MCG multiplication – with grace and the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

The bottom line is that there is no formula for growth and multiplication of a DNA group. Relationships are beautifully complex and must be handled with care and sensitivity. Every situation is different, and the group members must be willing to submit to the Spirit’s leading. The members of a DNA group should enter the relationship expecting long-term commitment to one another, even if the exact nature of the relationship changes over time.

## DNA GROUP FORMATION

The formative stage of a DNA group is very important as the first few meetings will set the stage for how the group will interact in the future. Working through the Story of God is a great way to begin every group as God’s story reminds us that everything is about Him; that our stories are actually His story and that our understanding of who we are (our identity) should flow from this story.

Reviewing our story as a group will establish a solid foundation on which the group can build together. After reading and discussing the Story of God together (GICT: Chapter 1), each member of the group should share a 10-15 minute version of their own personal story. See **\*How To Share Your Story Supplement** to help each person prepare to share their story in a way that highlights the work of Jesus throughout their life.

As each member of the group shares their story, the other DNA partners will listen. But they won’t just listen for the sake of showing empathy and compassion, though that is vitally important. Each person will also be listening for the heart for “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks” (Matthew 12:34). See **\*Listen for the Heart Supplement**.

Listening to a person’s story is kind of like examining a fruit tree. Jesus said you will know a tree by its fruit. Typically, a person’s story will clearly reveal some of the fruit that is hanging on their tree (financial difficulty, sexual sin, marital conflict, anger etc.), but the real action is under the surface, in the root structure of the tree. According to Jesus, actions and words reveal the heart, and the heart is of primary importance because the heart is the seat of faith. “With the heart a person believes” (Romans 10:10).

A person’s story has the potential to reveal where they have exercised faith in Jesus (gospel alignment), as well as where they have replaced Jesus as the only right object of faith (gospel distortion). Jesus is the only one who can save, and we regularly look to created things instead. These false saviors will often be revealed in our stories.

**\*Supplements are found in DNA Supplement Guide.**

Learning to listen for the heart will be a major focus of the Nurture Step in the DNA process. Praying and asking the Spirit to give the group ears to hear is essential.

Take the time to lay a solid foundation. Gain a clear understanding of how Jesus is the hero of each person's story, and of the areas where they are still struggling to believe the gospel. These struggles will undoubtedly resurface over and over again as the group moves forward together.

We would encourage every group to start by working through Growing in Christ Together as this material will teach the principles of Discover, Nurture Act from which we believe every group will benefit.

## **DNA GROUP PROCESS**

### **DISCOVER**

After working through Growing In Christ Together, a group is free to pick what they will work through together. There are many great tools to use in studying God's word, but whatever tool is used it needs to allow for a person to be saturated with the word of God.

Whether a group chooses to use a guided study, a bible study like [www.openthebible.com](http://www.openthebible.com), or a particular study method (precept, four questions, S.O.A.P. etc), the goal is to discover what the word of God says about who God is and what he has done). Every meeting should be focused on the goal of discovering something about God from his word, point us directly to our need for Jesus and encourage us to apply the gospel to our lives in practical ways.

As you study on your own consider using a journal to capture key thoughts and insights that the Spirit brings to mind. Group members should come to a weekly meeting ready to share what they have discovered about God through that week's reading.

**\*See Study & Ask Guide for Further Help.**

### **NURTURE**

Led by the Holy Spirit and in light of what has been discovered about God the group will repent and believe the Gospel. The goal is to shepherd the heart so that each person is experiencing repentance and renewed faith every time a group meets.

Nurture primarily involves discipling the heart. The word heart is used over 850 times in the Bible and is used to describe the very center of our being. It includes our mind, our emotions and our will. In Romans 10:10 Paul says that it is the part of us that exercises faith, "for with the heart a person believes."

In Luke 6, Jesus says the fruit of a person's life – their words or actions – are an indicator of what is present in their heart. "Each tree is known by its fruit." "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks" (Luke 6:44-45). So regardless of what we know in our heads, the fruit of our lives is determined by what we believe in our hearts. We may know God is great and gracious, sovereign and powerful and yet we worry because what we know does not align with what we believe in that moment.

When we worry, we're placing our hope in something other than God. We're believing that something other than Him is in control and can give us security. Paul's assessment of this misplaced belief is that we've "...exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator" (Romans 1:25). By placing our faith in something other than God to give us what only he can give, we are actually engaging in false worship, in idolatry.

DNA Groups are designed to help identify these areas of sin and idolatry in our lives. Nurture is about ensuring what we know aligns with what we believe and is focused on the heart of the person and not simply the problem.

Regarding listening to the heart, Paul Tripp says, "we can focus on the problem and miss the person in the middle of it. Biblical personal ministry certainly includes problem solving, but it must be person focused. God's work of change certainly involves changes in situation and relationship, but it has radical personal transformation as its core goal." (Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands, p. 126).

It is possible to be overzealous in our desire to root sin out of one another's lives. Nurture is not a witch hunt or a game of "whack-a-mole", where we wait anxiously with a big mallet, smacking down every little indicator of sin and unbelief as it pops up in people's lives. In reality, we should be even more quick to point out evidences of grace than we are to call out sin or to start poking around, looking for evidence of unbelief.

However, the fundamental assumption is that within a week's time every believer is going to sin, and therefore needs to...

- o Confess our sins to one another (James 5:16)
- o Repent Before God (Revelation 3:19)
- o Turn back towards faith in Jesus (Hebrews 12:1-2)
- o Experience the ongoing forgiveness and cleansing of Jesus (1 John 1:9)
- o Observe the fruit of the Spirit being produced in our lives as a result (Galatians 5:16-25)

## **ASK GOOD QUESTIONS**

How did God respond to Adam and Eve immediately after they sinned and hid? How did He respond to Cain after He was angry at Able because his sacrifice had been rejected? How does Jesus often engage both the Pharisees and his disciples?

When people share their struggles with us, the temptation is to offer simplistic advice or quote scripture in a moralistic manner. We want to help fix people's problems! Responding with questions is another way to reinforce the value of the person over the problem: "I care about you, not just about fixing your problem."

We've all experienced well-intentioned advice givers offering simplistic answers and quick fixes. Usually, these words bounce right off our hearts! Questions are so valuable because they lead to self-discovery and implication. In order for real change to occur, the Holy Spirit must bring conviction of sin (John 16:8).

**\*See Ask Good Questions Supplement for Further Help.**



## **SPEAK THE TRUTH IN LOVE**

As we shepherd and nurture each other, we will need to speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15, 25). This truth should be centered on our identity much more than on our actions. Avoid simple advice or quoting scripture in a way that is unhelpful. If a DNA partner confesses worry, it probably won't help to remind them that Jesus said, "do not worry" three times in Matthew 6. Rather, focus on their identity as a beloved child of the Father (who Jesus mentions 10 times in Matthew 6) who can rest because of his perfect love, care, and provision for them.

Again, the leadership of the Holy Spirit is essential. Pray and ask the Spirit to speak through the group. Ask Him to produce the fruit of love in each person so that truthful words are presented with care and grace.

It's important to ask a lot of good questions before speaking the truth in love. A rule of thumb we often employ is to ask 10 questions for every pronouncement. And often it's helpful to ask permission before making a pronouncement: "Can I tell you what I'm seeing?" This ensures that the person is open and ready to receive. However, the Spirit will sometimes prompt very direct communication even in the context of nurturing. As long as the Spirit is prompting it, and it is spoken in love, we need to be obedient to say what the Spirit is leading us to say.

**\*See Speaking The Truth In Love Supplement for Further Help.**

## **ACT**

Led by the Holy Spirit, the group will listen and obey as he calls us to bear fruit in keeping with repentance. The goal is to empower the hands so that, in light of their repentance, each person knows what to do and who to tell every time the group meets.

Once we've discovered the truth about who God is and what He's done, and once we've repented of our sin/unbelief and renewed our faith in Jesus, we need to ask the Spirit to guide us in changing the way we live. Our repentance must have some practical impact on our lives.

When John the Baptist was baptizing people, preparing them for the arrival of the Messiah, he exhorted them to "bear fruit in keeping with repentance," meaning, "demonstrate through your life that your repentance is legitimate."

Legalism has left a bad taste in the mouths of so many followers of Jesus that talk of works and actions can sometimes be dismissed. While the "you-are-what-you-do" mindset has certainly caused a great deal of damage in the church, the New Testament clearly calls us to change our behavior in light of the gospel.

The book of Titus is one clear example. Titus 2:11-12 says, "For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age..." Experiencing God's grace motivates us to say "no" to sinful actions and "yes" to godly actions!

**\*See Listen & Obey Supplement for Further Help**

If the Spirit leads someone to repentance, either outside of the group or during the weekly meeting, spend 5-10 minutes praying and listening together. Ask the Spirit to speak. Be quiet and listen, waiting for Him to answer two specific questions:

1. What do you want me to do?

As followers of Jesus, we have already been transformed. We are a new creation! (2 Corinthians 5:17) But we are also called to "be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Romans 12:2). Repentance will lead to change, and when we ask, the Spirit will call us to do something.

2. Who do you want me to tell?

Jesus gave his followers his Spirit so they could be his witnesses (Acts 1:8). He wants us to bear witness to the reality of His work in our lives. When we ask the Spirit, "who do you want me to tell?", He may lead us to talk to both believers and not-yet-believers. He may want us to tell our spouse, our kids, our friends, or another member of the church family. He may also want us to tell a coworker or a neighbor.

We often wonder how to share the gospel with our not-yet-believing friends. And yet, every time we experience the conviction of the Spirit and the forgiveness of Jesus, we have an amazing story to tell about how Jesus is saving us today.

When a neighbor asks, "How are you?", we can take the safe route, or we can be vulnerable and share a recent struggle with anger or worry or pride, pointing to Jesus yet against as our only hope.

## CONCLUSION

In Revelation 2, Jesus is addressing the church at Ephesus. After giving them a good deal of specific encouragement, he says, "But I have this against you, that you have left your first love" (Revelation 2:4).

When we worship and serve created things instead of the creator, when we place our faith and our trust in anything other than God to save us, when the affections of our hearts are set on earthly things, we have, at least for a moment, left our first love. We lose sight of the cross, God's clearest demonstration of love for us, and our hearts quickly wander away. As the old hymn says, "Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it, prone to leave the God I love."

Jesus' stinging diagnosis is followed immediately by His prescribed cure: "Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first" (Revelation 2:5). The DNA process seems to align with Jesus' prescription.

In the Discover step, the goal is for each person to learn or be reminded of the truth about who God is, what he's done, who we are, and how to live. Being reminded of the truth of the gospel on a regular basis is key to maintaining our love for Jesus. "We love, because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19).

In the Nurture step, the goal is for each person to be brought to repentance and renewed faith in Jesus. Over and over again in the book of Revelation, Jesus calls believers to repent. Martin Luther famously said, "When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, 'Repent' (Matthew 4:17), he willed the enter life of believers to be one of repentance."

In the Act step, the goal is for each person to listen to the Spirit and obey as he prompts them to do and to tell in light of their repentance. Jesus is calling his church to return to works of faith that flow from a heart that's filled with love for him. After all, Jesus "gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works" (Titus 2:14).

May the Holy Spirit lead every DNA group to Discover, Nurture and Act in light of all that Jesus has accomplished, to the glory of God the Father.

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