

DNA FAQ'S

WHAT IS A DNA GROUP?

The term “DNA group” refers to a group that ideally consists of three people - men with men, women with women - who meet together weekly. DNA Groups provide a structure for us to care deeply for one another and to foster growth as disciples of Jesus. DNA is an acronym that reminds of us three key components: Discover, Nurture, and Act. The goal is to help one another to discover what God has revealed in the Scriptures, nurture one another with the truth, and faithfully act on what the Spirit calls us to do.

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 your minds” (Romans 12:2).

Discipleship requires life-on-life interaction, and can really only happen in community. We grow primarily through the experiences of every day life in gospel community. A DNA group can be a key catalyst for genuine 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 live out of our new identity. Hebrews 3:13 says one of the major ways to prevent this “falling away from the living God” is to “encourage one another daily...so 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 shapes 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 sin 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 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, although hopefully all of that will happen! The goal is to challenge one another to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18).

As disciples, the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit leads us to experience transformation at every level, affecting our whole person: head, heart, hands. The specific discipleship goals for a DNA group meeting can be understood by unpacking the acronym:

Discover: The group will study the Bible. The goal is to **teach the head**.

Nurture: The group will repent and believe in the gospel. The goal is to **shepherd the heart**.

Act: The group will listen and obey as He calls us to bear fruit in keeping with repentance. The goal is to **empower the hands**.

WHAT CAN I EXPECT FROM A DNA GROUP?

The members of a DNA group should be committed to meeting together regularly, usually for about 90 minutes or so. These meetings consist of reading scripture, sharing personal stories and struggles, asking questions, listening to each other, praying, speaking the truth in love, repenting and confessing sin, encouraging one another and reminding each other of the truth of the gospel. Beyond the weekly meeting, however, DNA groups should seek to build trusting relationships by sharing everyday life together.

WHO SHOULD LEAD A DNA GROUP?

The nature of group dynamics reveals that every group will end up having leadership of some kind. 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. Sometimes, the leader will essentially form the group by inviting them together, and other times the group will need to work together to clearly identify the leader.

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.

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

HOW MANY SHOULD BE IN A DNA GROUP?

In our experience as a church family, we have found that three is the ideal size for a DNA group. It's also something that we see Jesus doing with the twelve and the inner three of Peter, James and John.

If you are accustomed to one-on-one meetings, there's a number of reasons to add a third person:

- A more dynamic group exchange can occur
- It is much more difficult for one person to dominate the conversation

- There are two sets of ears filtering everything that is said, providing two unique perspectives in response.
- There's a much greater potential for learning and development.
- Each person is unique and brings so much to the table.
- There are two people loving and supporting each person in the group. No one is bearing another's burdens alone.

On the other hand, if you are accustomed to small groups of 4-8, there's a number of reasons to limit it to three:

- Each person has an ample opportunity to share and contribute at each group meeting
- It's harder for someone to "hide", remaining silent for very long before someone asks, "What do you think?"
- Scheduled group meetings don't last multiple hours

Though three is the ideal size, circumstances will sometimes dictate that a group be larger than three. Schedule conflicts and other things can lead to 4, 5, and even 6 meeting together for a time. While not ideal, these options are usually better than only two people meeting on a consistent basis.

WHO SHOULD THE DNA GROUP CONSIST OF?

An MC is often defined as "a family of missionary servants, sent to make disciples." While MCs seek to live as family, the reality is that the level of intimacy with the people in our MCs will vary. As a result, it is helpful for our DNA group to consist of people from our MC. This will help ensure another regular touch point with some of the people in your MC outside of the weekly MC 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 MC, it greatly strengthens the MC, 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 MC. An MC may have recently multiplied, and perhaps the DNA group wants to wait before transitioning. Sometimes

people have longstanding relationships they really value, or they want to continue pouring into a particular discipleship relationship before entrusting them to someone else. The keys are to follow the Spirit's leading and to keep in mind the goal of growing as disciples. If people are not being challenged and transformed, it is almost certainly time for a change.

HOW SHOULD A DNA GET STARTED?

The formative stage of a DNA group is very important. The first few meetings will set the stage for how the group will interact in the future. Reviewing the gospel in some way is a great way to begin (3 great options linked below). God's Story reminds us that everything is about Him; that our stories are actually His story; that our understanding of who we are - our identity - should flow from this story. Reviewing the truths of The Gospel and getting this perspective as a group will establish a solid foundation on which the group can build together.

- <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/a-six-point-summary-of-the-gospel>
- <https://www.crossway.org/articles/what-is-the-gospel-2/>
- <https://www.esv.org/resources/esv-global-study-bible/gods-global-plan-of-salvation/>

After reading and discussing the truths of the gospel story revealed in Scripture, each member of the group should start by sharing a 10-15 minute version of their own personal story, this is usually at the initial meeting or it may be good to do this when adding someone new to the group.

Sometimes listening to a person's story can be 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). So learning how to use active listening is a really important part of learning how to lovingly disciple one another.

Sharing our stories has the potential to reveal where we have exercised faith in Jesus (gospel alignment), as well as where we 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 as well.

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 empower us to love and listen well is crucial because our hearts are prone to be focused on ourselves rather than others.

HOW OFTEN SHOULD A DNA GROUP MEET? AND WHERE?

First of all, since the DNA group is a subset of a MC, 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 together in all kinds of ways.

As far as a more structured meeting, DNA groups should plan to meet on a weekly basis for about 90 minutes (though often they may go longer!). If a group only plans to connect every other week, the busyness and unpredictability of life (travel, sickness, holidays, schedule conflicts) will often mean long stretches between solid meetings.

DNA's usually take place in a variety of places and settings but 'focus' is a key factor to consider. For example, 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.

HOW DOES A DNA GROUP HANDLE GROWTH, MULTIPLICATION AND TRANSITIONS?

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, MC 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.