

What are Discover, Nurture, Act (DNA) Groups

A “DNA group” is a small group of people – men with men, women with women - who meet together two-to-four times a month to care deeply for one another and to foster growth as disciples of Jesus (disciple = someone who is learning to apply the gospel to every part of their lives). The ‘DNA’ acronym stands for three key components of discipleship: Discover, Nurture, and Act. The goal is to help one another to discover Jesus in the Scriptures, nurture the truths of the gospel in our hearts, and faithfully act on what the Spirit calls us to do. Discipleship requires life-on-life interaction, and can only happen in community. We grow primarily through the experience of life in a Missional 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 3:12-13). DNA groups 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, though hopefully all of that will happen! The goal is to challenge one another to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18). As disciples, we should experience transformation at every level, affecting our whole person: head, heart, and hands. The specific discipleship goals for a DNA group meeting can be understood by unpacking the acronym ‘DNA’:

- Discover: led by the Holy Spirit, the group will Study the Bible and Ask the Four Questions (Who is God? What has he done for us in Christ Jesus? Who are we as a result? How should we live out of our new identity?) The goal is to teach the head.
- Nurture: led by the Holy Spirit, the group will Repent and Believe in the gospel. The goal is to shepherd the heart.
- 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 (as well as the feet, the tongue and every other part of our body).

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 in their Missional Community.

What is the core teaching in DNA groups?

At its core, the DNA material builds us up in our trinitarian identity, to the extent that we not only know in our heads (Discover), but also believe in our hearts (Nurture) and live out in our daily lives (Act) who we are as a result of Christ’s finished work on our behalf.

Father, Son and Holy Spirit have been in relationship with one another for all eternity, and God cannot really be described other than in deeply relational terms (*John 10:30; 14:9; 15:26; 16:15; Acts 2:33; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 1:17; 2:18*). In one sense, God is His relationships. God the Father is the Father because he is the Father of the Son. God the Son is the Son because he is the Son of the Father. The Father is not just the origin of the Trinity in some impersonal way, but is eternally the Father in an eternal personal relationship with

the Son. In the same way, the Holy Spirit is a person who *is* the love that exists between the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit has a divine will of his own and an identity of his own and is not just the spiritual union of the Father and the Son.

Although God did not need to create at all, out of His unending love and mercy and generosity He chose to, as if the 'big idea' of the Universe was 'Wouldn't it be good to share what we have with others'. What we are being drawn into is this deep relationality within the family of God.

And so, it should not surprise us to discover that we find our true identity within the eternal Trinity of the Godhead. Naturally, there are three elements to this...

Firstly, we have been adopted into the Father's household as his sons and daughters. There is really nothing deeper than this. We were objects of wrath, deserving of death, and yet we have been made co-heirs of the Universe. The difference between these two extremes *is* the Good News, the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We have been shown extraordinary hospitality by the Father - we were strangers, but we have been 'taken in'. As our adoption *is* our identity now, we should also welcome strangers and show them extraordinary hospitality, because family is who we *are* now. Realising this deep truth of our identity means that once we understand this in our heads, and much more importantly, actually believe this in our hearts, we will not be able to help ourselves but live it out with our hands, our feet and our mouths, as it is our very identity, and we cannot help but be ourselves. Showing hospitality to strangers because it's what the Bible tells us to do, or because we believe it will be an effective strategy, or because we think it will make people like us, or any other lesser motive feels like filthy religion compared to the reality of it being our very identity.

Secondly, we are servants of our Servant King Jesus, who came to serve, not to be served. And so, our identity is also to be like Him – we are servants of the last, the least and the lost. So, we demonstrate the Good News by serving others with acts of kindness and service just as Jesus served us, putting others' needs before His own. This is who we *are* now – servants of the most high God. We serve others because He served us first. 'Whatever you do for the least of these..., you do for me...'

Thirdly, we are missionaries, as the Holy Spirit, who is the true and better Missionary - always proceeding from the Father and first on the scene long before we arrive - is the Sent One of God. So, we declare the Good News by listening to people's stories and earning the right to speak the Good News into their context, sharing our story, and sharing His story - The Story - as the Spirit leads us out from our safety and comfort, and leads us to descend into the darkness of people's lives with the light of the gospel. We do this because as messengers of the Good News that is who we *are* now.

In essence, discipleship is simply our need to understand our trinitarian identity in our heads, believe it in our hearts and live it out in our daily lives? This is what DNA groups are all about.