

Introducing and Multiplying DNA Groups (Part 2)

Introduction

The Text

¹⁶ Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. ¹⁷ And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. ¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matt 28:16–20)

A Brief Summary of Last Time

- A. This is now part 2 of 3 in a mini-series we’re running entitled Introducing and Multiplying DNA Groups. Because each sermon is going to build on the last and lead ultimately to a call to action and involvement, it is important that we at least briefly summarize what we discussed last time.
- B. The text we just read in [Matt 28](#) really just sets up for us the broader subject I am wanting to deal with. It’s the issue of discipleship.
 - 1. But more specifically, what we come to find in these verses is the fact that disciples of Jesus ought to be busy making disciples of Jesus.
- C. Sadly, we recognize though, don’t we, that this is not always the case—perhaps even for us.
 - 1. Hoping all things, I mentioned last time that I do think at least part of the reason we are not busy with this work of making disciples is that we simply don’t understand what is involved in such a thing. It sounds nice as an idea on paper, but when once we dive in, we find ourselves not a little bit confused and wondering if we’re really cut out for it after all.
- D. What we are now calling DNA Groups are simply my attempt to help us cut through this confusion. My aim here is to provide us with an orienting vision and supporting structure that might help us in our discipleship to Jesus and promote a culture of discipleship here at Mercy Hill.
 - 1. I want it to be a normal thing here for people to be engaged meaningfully in each other’s lives, pursuing Christ together, and inviting unbelievers to join in on the journey.
 - a. What I’m putting forward certainly is not the only way to pursue discipleship as a church, but it is a way, and I hope you find it helpful. I hope it motivates and equips us to be disciples of Jesus who are busy making disciples of Jesus.
- E. Now last time I spent a great deal on the biblical and theological background that stands behind the idea for these groups. This morning I will simply sum it up in a sentence: Discipleship to Jesus has as its end conformity to His image.

1. Men and women were originally created in the image of God. We marred that image in our rebellion at the fall. Jesus, through His life, death, and resurrection makes a way for us to be renewed in that image once more. And we are being renewed day by day from one degree of glory to the next as we follow Him in discipleship.
 - a. Discipleship to Jesus has as its end conformity to His image.
- F. Now we're calling these discipleship groups DNA Groups for two reasons.
1. First, the name keeps before us this end goal of being fully renewed in our Father's image—we should have something of His DNA, in other words, and we should start to look more and more like Him.
 2. But second, this name does more than merely keep before us the end goal in our discipleship to Jesus, it also outlines for us the steps involved in getting there. Here is where DNA becomes our own acronym standing for this process of Discovering, Nurturing, and Applying Christ.
- G. Now this morning we're going to flesh these steps out in more detail, but let me once more locate them within the full definition we're giving to these groups: "DNA Groups are smaller groups of committed people who meet on a consistent basis to Discover, Nurture, and Apply Christ together until He is all in all."
- H. All I want to do now is simply unpack this definition bit by bit. I want to help us make sense of it and see how it is all grounded and exemplified in Jesus' own disciple-making ministry. That's it.

Unpacking the Definition

Discover, Nurture, and Apply

- A. Let me begin with those three key words that form the basis for our acronym: "DNA Groups are smaller groups of committed people who meet on a consistent basis to Discover, Nurture, and Apply Christ . . ."
1. As we approach this idea of Discovering, Nurturing, and Applying Christ, it might help you to imagine us going on a journey from head, to heart, to hand. Let's look at these one by one and you'll see what I mean.
- B. Discovering Christ simply means that we come to see more of Him—who He is, what He has done, what He teaches, what He promises. We uncover more of the glory of His person and work. We explore the width, breadth, height, and depth of His love for us at the cross. We get knowledge of Him in our heads.
1. Discipleship to Jesus really is first and foremost an expedition of discovery. We will never stop uncovering the riches of the glory of God in Christ. Not now. Not ever. Not during our years on earth. Nor through all eternity in heaven!

- C. Nurturing Christ takes the things discovered about Him and attempts to draw it all down into our hearts. We are not satisfied merely knowing truths about Christ with our heads, we want to relate to Him, trust Him, love Him, worship Him with all of our hearts.
 - 1. Here is the place where we repent of our wanderings and our idolatries and our false alliances, and we re-root ourselves by faith in Jesus. Here is the place where we cry out with that man in [Mark 9:24](#): “I believe; help my unbelief!”
- D. As a side-note—though, as I said, we will always be discovering more about God, His glory, the gospel, and so forth—I am convinced that it is this Nurture piece that is often the big issue in our discipleship to Jesus.
 - 1. O sure, when you first start following Jesus there is much to learn, much that you don’t know about the basics of sin and grace and salvation and things. But as we carry on in our discipleship to Him, we can be prone to think that the problems we still deal with are a result of a lack of knowledge of some sort on our part. We need new truth, a new verse to memorize, a new book to read.
 - a. But, often, it seems to me at least, this is not the case. Often the real issue in the matter is not that we lack some knowledge of God’s accomplishment or promise. It is rather that we have failed to properly, deeply, wholly embrace the things we already know of Him, the things we already know He has said.
 - i. O we’ve discovered the truths of Christ with our heads but have we nurtured them in our hearts? Here is where the real battle is waged.
- E. To give you an example, how many people in this room have struggled off and on this past week with a sense of anxiety and fear? I dare say all of us in one way or another.
 - 1. Now, without knowing the nuances of our situations, I can at least in simplistic terms lay out for us what we need. And for most of us it’s not new knowledge of Jesus.
 - a. We know what the Bible says in [Heb 13:5-6](#): “⁵ [God] has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’ ⁶ So we can confidently say, ‘The Lord is my helper; I will not fear . . .’” We’ve read this text. We’ve heard sermons on this text. Some of us have probably memorized this text.
 - i. And yet still we fear. Why? Because there is breakdown between what we know and what we believe. There is often an awfully large gap between our heads and our hearts.
 - (1) And this Nurture piece attempts to bridge that gap through repentance and faith and prayer to Christ for help. “Why am I not embracing this? What am I looking to for comfort and security instead? How can Jesus come to my rescue in this? Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!”

F. Applying Christ looks to move all of this out into our lives. True and vibrant faith in one's heart leads to love and obedience in one's life. *"Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit" (John 15:5).*

1. If I truly believe that God is my ever-present helper, then I will not be afraid, then I will have peace even in the face of formidable circumstance, then I will be able to move towards others in love instead of always caving in with self-concern and self-pity. It will change my life.
 - a. We are not satisfied to only know Christ with our heads—that would be mere intellectualism.
 - b. Nor are we satisfied when once His truths have reached our hearts—that would be mere sentimentalism.
 - c. The full range of religious motion should move from the head through the heart to the hands.
 - i. Remember: Discipleship to Jesus has as its end conformity to His image. He doesn't save us by grace so we can remain in sin. He saves us to renew us. Grace transforms. As we follow Him we start to reflect Him—we start to look more and more like Him.

G. Now I want to show you briefly how Jesus models this process wonderfully for us in His own disciple-making ministry.

1. He begins with a call to discover Him: *"Follow Me" (Luke 5:27; cf. Matt 4:18-22; John 1:43).*
 - a. In other words: "Come, see, listen, discover who I am."
2. And as the disciples come to discover many things about Him, Jesus is not satisfied with letting it all remain intellectual and external. He attempts to move it all towards their hearts: *"But who do you say that I am?" (Luke 9:20).*
 - a. In other words: "It is not enough to know about Me intellectually, you must know Me personally. Now that You have followed after and discovered much about Me, who am I to you?" Here is the call to nurture Christ.
3. But even a profession of faith—*"[You are] the Christ of God" (Luke 9:20)*—is not the end goal for Jesus. The embrace of Him as Christ by faith in one's heart effects a change in one's nature that will start to work out in one's life. The disciples were not called and saved merely to remain as they were. They were called and saved to be conformed into the image of the Son. And this has practical implications: *"As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you" (John 20:21).*
 - a. In other words: "All that you have seen in Me is what I now want to do in and through you." Here is the call to apply Christ.

Smaller Groups

- A. Going back to our definition: “DNA Groups are smaller groups . . .” DNA Groups, for the most part, will be intentionally kept small (typically 2-4 people).
- B. Because these groups aim for renewal in Christ at the “molecular” level, each member of the group must have space to Discover, Nurture, and Apply Christ for him/herself.
 - 1. There is a deeply personal aspect to our faith. It is my head, my heart, and my hand that must be realigned with God. If each member is to personally engage with one another and the Lord at this deep level, the groups must be kept small to provide both the time and intimate atmosphere appropriate for such work.
- C. Jesus, again, is our model at this point. Certainly, He ministered to large crowds at times (Luke 6:17-19), but He specifically gave His attention to the twelve (6:12-16) and, even more narrowly, to the three (8:51; 9:28).
 - 1. He understood that if He was to get into His disciples’ hearts and see real fruit in their lives, He would have to get them into smaller, more intimate groups.

Committed and Consistent

- A. “DNA Groups are smaller groups of committed people who meet on a consistent basis . . .” Committed and consistent. We must face here the simple fact that, unless this small group of people is committed to and consistent with one another, little growth can take place.
- B. You recall, perhaps, that when Jesus called His disciples there could be no shuffling of the feet.
 - 1. Those who tried were met with sobering words: “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:62).
 - 2. Far better were those disciples who, when called, seemed to sense the majesty of the One calling them and immediately left everything to follow Him (5:11, 28).
 - a. Jesus knew that commitment and consistency were required for true and lasting discipleship and conformity to His image to take place.
- C. Obviously, we are not calling for commitment and consistency to a DNA Group with even remotely the same kind of severity, but a principle is here established for us and it is worth our consideration: If we want to grow as a disciple towards Jesus, we must meet to pursue Him together on a regular basis.

Together

- A. “DNA Groups are smaller groups of committed people who meet on a consistent basis to Discover, Nurture, and Apply Christ together . . .”

- B. With this word “together” I have something quite important in mind. Too often, in my opinion, with discipleship there comes this sort of top-down, one-way approach, where one person is “making a disciple” of the other and not the other way around.
1. While, certainly, discipleship does involve more mature believers pouring into younger ones, to say that this is merely a one-directional process is a gross oversimplification and even a dangerous reduction of what Jesus intended.
 - a. Far better, I think, than the “me-over-you” model of discipleship is the “me-with-you” model that we see in the Scriptures. We are co-travelers—young and old, novice and mature, fresh and seasoned—behind Calvary’s King. I am not making you my disciple. I am inviting you to follow along with me as His disciple!
- C. What this means is that every member of a given DNA Group should be operating within what I call the three relational dimensions of discipleship: Leaning, Learning, and Leading.
1. By Leaning, we understand that no Christian is an island, that each member of Christ’s body needs the other. No one stands alone.
 - a. Even the great apostle Paul, we could say, “leaned” in on those whom He was discipling. He shares burdens, asks for prayer, and speaks of being personally ministered to and refreshed by others.
 - i. Look at [Rom 15:30-32](#), for example: “³⁰ I appeal to you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf, ³¹ that I may be delivered from the unbelievers in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, ³² so that by God’s will I may come to you with joy and be refreshed in your company” (cf. [1 Cor 16:18](#); [2 Cor 1:8-11](#); [Eph 6:18b-20](#); [2 Tim 1:16](#)).
- (1) “I need your prayers. I need you to refresh me.” That’s Paul talking. If Paul the apostle is saying that to those whom he is leading to Jesus, how much more should we? He may be their father in the faith, but he still calls them brothers and sisters in Christ. He is in this discipleship to Jesus thing together with them.
2. By Learning, we understand that every Christian, however mature in the faith, still has much to learn. Others have knowledge, experiences, and gifts that we don’t. The moment we think we have nothing to learn from another is the moment we prove ourselves to truly be the fool: “[Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise](#)” ([1 Cor 3:18](#); cf. [Rom 12:3, 16b](#)).
 3. By Leading, of course, I have the other side of this in mind. Every Christian, however new in the faith, has something to offer. Paul would say it is often upon the parts of the body we think insignificant and unimportant that God bestows the greatest honor ([1 Cor 12:21-25](#)).

- a. To put it bluntly: If you are not willing to lean on or learn from the other members of your DNA Group, you certainly are in no place to be leading them! True movers and shakers in the kingdom of God lead from down low ([Mark 10:42-45](#))!
- D. We see something of this even in Christ's own disciple-making ministry, do we not?
 1. No doubt, we could say that He leans in on and shares Himself with His disciples in many significant ways (cf. [Matt 26:38](#); [Luke 8:3](#); [John 15:15](#)).
 2. And though, "[in \[Him\] are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge](#)" ([Col 2:3](#)), He holds it with such humility. He doesn't speak over His disciples, but rather listens to them and hears them out.
 3. And when He does speak He says just enough, with meekness and tenderness. He leads from down low.
- E. But, having said this, we still understand that disciple-making for us is of a different category altogether than it was for Jesus. He could simply say, "[Follow Me](#)"—full stop. And it was enough. He is, after all, as Thomas would say, "[\[our\] Lord and \[our\] God](#)" ([John 20:28](#)).
 1. For us, on the other hand, it is not so much ours to say, "Follow Me" as much as it is to say: "Follow Him with Me." We are in this discipleship thing together.

Until He Is All In All

- A. "[DNA Groups are smaller groups of committed people who meet on a consistent basis to Discover, Nurture, and Apply Christ together until He is all in all.](#)"
- B. Too often, I think, we segregate our religious/spiritual lives from our normal/everyday lives. As such we are prone to reduce what salvation and discipleship to Jesus really means.
 1. We get that the gospel covers our past sins and failures, we are assured that the gospel secures our future entrance into the gates of heaven, but we are often at a loss for how the gospel really touches things in the here and now.
 - a. O sure, we talk and think of it on Sundays, but we have really no idea how it connects to our Mondays.
- C. Here is where we must remember that God's redemption is co-extensive with His creation.
 1. By this I simply mean: His redemption will one day encompass everything—from soul, to body, to nature; from marriage, to family, to friendship; from sleep, to work, to hobby; etc. There is no divide in our lives between things that are "sacred" and things that are merely "secular," between things that Christ cares about and things that He doesn't.
 - a. He cares about it all. He died to bring transformation to it all.
- D. Christianity is not merely another religion, it is a new way to be human (cf. [2 Cor 5:17](#)). And we take this new humanity with us into everything that we do. This is why Paul can say to the Corinthians in [1 Cor. 10:31](#): "[\[W\]hether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.](#)"

1. There is nothing in your life beyond the bounds of Christ's kingdom. There is nothing in your life so mundane, so menial, so commonplace that it cannot be redeemed in Christ and handled in such a way so as to bring glory to God.
 - a. Every aspect of a disciple's life ought to be increasingly brought under the Lordship of Jesus and transformed by His Spirit and grace.
- E. So DNA Group members get into each other's lives and ask: What does this "all" Paul speaks of look like for you?! "[W]hatever you do, do all to the glory of God." How can Christ be all in all?!
1. How can Christ be glorified when you're working in a cubicle, or changing a diaper? How does the gospel change the way you sit in rush hour traffic, or relate to your neighbors, or drink a cup of warm coffee on a cold morning? Discipleship to Jesus should touch and transform every part of our lives!
 - a. DNA Groups exist to help us make these connections that we might integrate our lives into a composite whole united and marching under the banner of God's glory.
- F. Think of Christ's disciple-making ministry again. Jesus didn't merely offer His disciples doctrines to be believed or rituals to be performed or Sunday meetings to attend. He offered them back their humanity. And that is why His discipleship ministry took the shape that it did.
1. Certainly He shared Scripture with them, prayed with them, visited synagogues with them, did ministry with them;
 2. but He also walked dirt roads with them, laughed at good jokes with them, wept in the face of loss with them, ate bread with them, drank wine with them, slept under the stars with them, and did ordinary everyday stuff with them.
 - a. He showed them not just how to do the spiritual stuff for the glory of God, but how to do it all. He showed them what the new humanity looks like in every sphere and context. He showed us that true discipleship is not satisfied until Christ is all in all.

Conclusion

What about You?

- A. Now I know that you still have questions about what these groups are—how they function, what they do, how you can join or facilitate one—that sort of thing. More details will follow the Sunday after our family service.
1. For now, I simply want you to continue praying about your own place in being a disciple who's busy making disciples of Jesus.
 - a. Are you already doing this sort of thing? Are you even interested in it? What part is God calling you to play in rolling out of these groups? Are you open to pursuing Jesus together? Are you willing to risk in calling unbelievers to consider the claims

of Christ for themselves? O I assure you there is no grander mission you can be on then this!