

[CITY GROUPS X]

GUIDE TO DNA

Following Jesus isn't easy. It isn't simple or one-dimensional either. Don't let anyone tell you it is. Because we live in a world fractured by sin, nothing righteous is ever really that easy. It's kind of like walking across a frozen river that has cracks all across the surface: possible, but not easy. It's only possible because Jesus has first walked the path and can now lead us through it.

If you're a follower of Jesus, he's not only your savior (from the penalty of sin), but he's also your commander. He calls the shots. That's what it means to "live for Christ." It's being the person and doing the things that he calls us to be and do.

I've heard some people say, "God doesn't just want your afterlife; he wants your whole life!" It's true, the redeemed life of a follower of Jesus doesn't begin after you die; it starts here and now in this life!

The Commander has given his people a mission. Here's what Jesus says:

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt 22:37-39)

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And I will be with you always, to the very end." (Matt 28:18-20)

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13:34-35)

Additionally, the apostle Paul writes to Timothy, encouraging him to be immersed in scripture, and to be constantly applying it to every area of life as he follows Jesus:

"All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work." (2 Tim 3:16-17)

We're supposed to follow Jesus together; and we're supposed to be immersed in scripture together so that we can be fully equipped for the work that Jesus calls us to. At City Church, we do this primarily through DNA Groups, which are smaller groups within our City Groups.

Through DNA Groups, we can be equipped to be the people and do the things that God has designed us for.

Upward, Outward, Inward

At City Church, we really only do a few things. We usually gather together on Sunday mornings for time together in singing, learning from the Bible, and prayer. It's like a really intentional weekly family reunion. Anyone is welcome, but we really love to be with our family, learning from and worshipping our Creator. You could say that our Sunday gatherings are focused *upward*. It's our full family, together, looking up to God as one body.

We also gather throughout the week in different times and places for City Groups. We meet in homes, coffee shops, pubs, gyms, and just about everywhere else you could think of. This is like our immediate family. We usually come together for a meal, to catch up on life, and just to simply love on one another and enjoy time together. We want our City Group time to be really *normal*. It's not necessarily a time for deep study of the bible, or an intense time of teaching or prayer. We have other avenues for that. Those things do sometimes happen in a City Group setting, but for the most part, we're just doing what we would already be doing (eating, working out, watching kids, etc), but doing it together as a family. City Groups are also open to anyone who is not a part of the family, just like a family dinner would be open to friends and other guests. And like a friend at a family dinner, we want people who are visiting our City Groups to feel comfortable, not awkward or put on the spot. You could say that our City Group time is focused *outward*. We want our City Groups to be actively and intentionally engaged in the community around them, modeling for those outside of our family what it is like to live as someone who is loved by Jesus and his people.

Finally, we have our DNA Groups. If our Sunday gathering is our whole family, and our City groups are our immediate family, DNA groups are the one or two people in your family who you are really, really close to...like an extremely close brother or sisters who you tell everything to! You could say that DNA groups are focused *inward*. We spend time looking at scripture together, praying for one another, reminding each other of the good news of Jesus and how that good news should shape our daily lives.

What are DNA Groups?

DNA groups are groups of three same-gendered people who spend time together to study the Bible, confess sin, encourage and challenge one another, pray, and remind each other of the truths of the good news of Jesus.

DNA groups meet each week, separately from the City Group. They might meet in homes, or a restaurant, or a coffee shop, or at an office.

When DNA groups meet, they'll walk through three distinct steps: Discover, Nurture, Act. During these steps, groups will look at the bible, talk about their lives, and remind each other how to apply the gospel to the issues of real, everyday life.

Over time, DNA groups will become trusting, tight-knit relationships where each person knows the others' stories and struggles intimately and can lovingly speak truth into their lives.

Sometimes in a weekly City Group meeting, you may or may not spend much time together in the Bible. That's okay. But typically the Bible is central to DNA Groups.

"ALL SCRIPTURE IS GOD-BREATHED AND IS USEFUL FOR TEACHING, REBUKING, CORRECTING, AND TRAINING IN RIGHTEOUSNESS SO THAT THE MAN OF GOD MAY BE FULLY EQUIPPED FOR EVERY GOOD WORK." (2 Tim 3:16-17)

The Bible is nothing short of critical for the success of a DNA Group. Through scripture, we can see the perfect heart of God, and we can see where our beliefs don't line up with what God says is true. Together we can seek repentance, remind each other of the truths of the gospel, and move forward in renewed faith.

“CONFESS YOUR SINS TO ONE ANOTHER AND PRAY FOR ONE ANOTHER THAT YOU MAY BE HEALED...IF ANYONE AMONG YOU WANDERS FROM THE TRUTH AND SOMEONE BRINGS HIM BACK, LET HIM KNOW THAT WHOEVER BRINGS BACK A SINNER FROM HIS WANDERING WILL SAVE HIS SOUL FROM DEATH AND COVER A MULTITUDE OF SINS.” (James 5:16,19-20)

“WHERE THERE IS NO GUIDANCE, A PEOPLE FALLS, BUT IN AN ABUNDANCE OF COUNSELORS THERE IS SAFETY.” (Pr 11:14)

DNA Groups, if done correctly, will bring our sin to the surface. But it is here, in the light of gospel-driven community, that Jesus can heal our wounds and restore our ability to accurately reflect the character of God to the world.

Why do DNA groups exist?

When thinking about DNA Groups, it is important to remember that they are only one part of the equation. If a City Group is only focused outward (doing what Jesus calls us to do, but not being who he has called us to be), its people will get burnt out as they work towards completing the mission Jesus has given us. But if a City Group isn't looking outward, but only engaging inward (being who we are called to be, but not doing what we're called to do), then its people will become religiously prideful and closed off to the world around them. This a huge problem because Jesus calls his followers to be engaged with the world around them!

It's like DNA Groups are when we fill up the gas tank, and City Groups/Intentional Space is where the rubber meets the road. It would be silly to continually pump gas into your car without ever driving it. But you can't just keep driving without stopping to fill up the gas tank!

What do DNA groups do?

In a typical weekly time of DNA, a group will work through scripture together using the following format:

- Discover
- Nurture
- Act

Discover

In the Discover phase, you are looking at the bible together. As you group, you will want to choose a book of the bible to read together (or a reading plan, section, topic, etc). On occasion, you may also decide to read an extra-biblical book and study it together.

As you read a passage together, you'll want to ask and answer these four questions as a group:

In this passage:

1. Who is God?
2. What has God done?
3. Who are we?
4. If that's all true, how would we live differently?

Obviously, it is okay to ask other questions too. Spend time understanding the story or passage together. Research it if you like. Don't be afraid to ask others in your DNA group, "What does this mean?" Answering the four questions above will help you to see what the passage is about and how it applies to your life, and the lives of others in your group.

Nurture

After you've answered the four questions above, you'll spend time in the Nurture phase. This is where you start really applying what you saw in the Discover phase to your own lives. As you spend time with your DNA Group, you should really get to know them well and see how they are wired. You'll see one another's giftings as well as areas of frustration and sins you each struggle with.

When answering the fourth question, open yourself up to the feedback of others in your group. Don't just answer for yourself, but also ask the people in your group to answer *for you* too!

When you realize what the truth is in the passage you're reading, and you see how your life isn't lining up with that truth, it's time to really dig into your own heart. Ask yourself:

- If I was someone else, but watching my own life, what would I think that I believed was true about this topic?
- What am I believing that isn't lining up with what I know to be true according to the bible?

It's true that our actions stem from our beliefs. Right belief leads to right action. And wrong belief leads to wrong action. Another way to say it is "our doing comes out of our being." The bible says it this way, "**Out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks.**" (Matt 12:34) As you look at your actions, you will be able to see what you *really* believe, not just what you *say* you believe! It may be a difficult thing to do at first, but as we allow Jesus to draw it out of us, we will be more and more conformed into his image so that we can carry it, as his image-bearers, to every part of the world...just like we were told to do in the beginning of all creation!

Once you, along with the others in your DNA Group, have nailed down what it is that you're wrongly believing, it is important to:

- Acknowledge your sin in not believing what God has said is true. This is the same sin that Adam and Eve committed in the garden of Eden which first broke the relationship between man and God. They believed that God had lied to them and that he didn't have their best intentions at heart.
- Ask God to change your heart and help you believe what is true. Pray with your group for each other's hearts to believe the truth.

Act

After you've done the hard work of identifying areas where you don't believe what the bible says is true, and asked God to change your hearts, set concrete action steps that you can hold each other accountable to.

Each person in your group should answer the following questions:

- What am I going to do differently because of this?
- Who am I going to tell what I've learned?

Your DNA Group should write down each other's answers to these questions, and check back in with each other throughout the week to hold each other accountable.

The lifecycle of a DNA group

A DNA Group will usually follow a structured, predictable lifecycle. Sometimes DNA Groups will last years. Others may only last a few weeks. But within whatever timeframe a group exists, it should follow this pattern:

- **Formation:** Three guys or three girls decide they want to be in a DNA Group together. Sometimes this is natural. Other times, a City Group leader might help assemble DNA Groups if the natural groupings don't already exist.
- **C2R:** The first time a DNA Group meets, they should read through "Creation To Restoration" together and discuss it. This is the story of God from Genesis to Revelation. It is incredibly important because this story is the story of everything, including you and I! Everything a DNA Group does after this will all be rooted in this story. (C2R can be found at the end of this packet, or separately at citychurch.tv/resources)
- **Stories:** The DNA process only works if we know each other's personal stories. In order for this to happen, after a group goes through C2R together, they should then spend the next 1-3 meetings telling their personal stories using the resource called "Telling Your Story With Jesus As The Hero". This resource will help each person to do this in a way that shows how our stories are part of the greater (C2R) story. (Like C2R, this resource is also located at the end of this packet, as well as the Resources page of our website.)
- **DNA:** Once your DNA Group has read the Story of God and each person has been able to share their personal story, then you'll want to start the regular, weekly rhythm of DNA, as described above.
- **Grow:** At some point, when your group is established in the regular rhythm of DNA, you might start to consider inviting someone else to join your group. Don't ask for a big commitment. Start with, "Hey, me and a couple guys are having breakfast on tuesday. We will be looking at the bible together. Want to join us?" You're not inviting them to join you on a weekly basis at this point. If it goes well, you might consider saying, "So we actually do this every week. Would you want to start joining us regularly?" The idea behind inviting a fourth person into the group is to prepare the group to multiply into two groups who can each add another person.
- **Multiply:** Once you have four people who are in the regular rhythm of DNA, prayerfully decide how the group of four can become two groups of two who can each add another person. Then repeat the whole process!

Common questions about DNA groups

Are DNA groups for everyone?

No. DNA Groups are for people who are spiritually hungry, desiring to read the bible with others, and wanting to be changed by Jesus. It's certainly not for everyone, though if someone is following and being changed by Jesus, they should certainly want these things!

Do the people in my DNA group have to be in my city group?

Ideally yes, but it doesn't always work out this way. But being in a DNA Group with people from your City Group is extremely advantageous. It is much, much easier for the DNA Group to grow together if its members are seeing each other throughout the week in City Group and Intentional Space time.

What if I don't have time for a DNA group and a city group?

If you are at a point in life where you simply can't make time for both a DNA Group and a City Group, commit to the DNA Group. As life settles down and you have margin to engage with your City Group, do so. But DNA is so important that we should be willing to sacrifice other thing in order to make time for it.

What books of the Bible would you recommend using to start a DNA group?

Well, they're all good! But to get started, I would recommend the book of John, Mark, 1 John, or Colossians. These are all shorter books that are very focused on displaying who Jesus is and what he has called his followers to be and do.

DNA RESOURCES

C2R: Creation to Restoration

Creation

In the beginning, God created everything. After creating everything else, God created people. Genesis says he created man and woman **in his own image**, like mirrors made to reflect who he is to the world. Then he told them what to do: to multiply and **fill the earth with his image**.

Brokenness

But the people didn't believe what God said, and they broke their relationship with him. They believed that God didn't want what was best for them and that they knew better. So their ability to reflect the image of God was **broken**.

But God never gave up on his people. In fact, he made a **promise** to one day restore the broken relationship with them. The people had children. And their children had children. And their children had children. One day, God spoke to a man named **Abraham**. He made a special promise to Abraham, telling him that he would bless him and give him lots of children, so many that they would become **a great nation**. And through his nation, God promised to bring a man who would **restore forever** the broken relationship between God and his people. And **Abraham believed God**.

So Abraham's children had children. And his children had children. And his children had children. Eventually, they became **a great nation**. Sometimes the people believed God. Other times they didn't. Along the way God sent many **spokesmen** to remind the people of their **purpose** and of his **promise** to one day restore their relationship with him forever.

Redemption

One spokesman named **Isaiah** repeated God's promise to send a man to restore the broken relationship. Isaiah also said that the man would live **a perfect life** of faith and obedience, but would be **beaten, suffer, and die**, taking the penalty for the sins of people, the full weight of the broken relationship between man and God, on himself. So the people were excited to hear this, and they **waited** for the man to come.

And they **waited**.

And they **waited**.

And they **waited**.

Hundreds of years later, a man was born whose name was **Jesus**. Jesus was the man that God had **promised** to come and fix the broken relationship between people and God forever. In fact, Jesus was God, who became a man! He lived **a perfect life** of faith and obedience to God. Even though he was completely innocent, like Isaiah said, he was **beaten, suffered, and died** to pay the penalty for the sins of people. After he died, he came back to life to show that **even death couldn't stop God's plan** to restore his broken relationship with people forever.

After this, he left earth to return to heaven. But before he went, he charged his followers with the same **mission** God had given all people when he created them: to take the image of God, **which now they had seen perfected in Jesus**, and to **fill the earth with that image**. And that's what they did! They lived their lives as image-bearers of Jesus, **following him and helping others to do the same**. Over and over throughout history, Jesus followers have continued to do this, even until today!

Restoration

Because Jesus lived **a perfect life** of faith and obedience, and because he has experienced and overcome death, anyone who trusts and follows him can also have **a restored relationship** with God forever.

One day, Jesus will come back and **recreate** the whole world with no brokenness. No pain, no death, no fear or disease. No sadness or loneliness. **Everything perfect**. And all of his people will be in a perfect, loving, real relationship with him forever.

This is the story of God.

Discussion Questions

1. When God created people, what was their identity? What was their purpose?
 2. What was the root cause of the broken relationship between man and God?
 3. Why did God make a promise to restore the relationship with his people?
 4. Why was Jesus qualified to restore the broken relationship between God and his people?
 5. Compare these three things and answer the questions that follow:
 - a. The world (and people) as God originally created it.
 - b. The world (and people) as it exists today.
 - c. The world (and people) after God has restored everything.
- What are the differences?
 - What are the similarities?
 - What is most interesting about the created world (a)?
 - What is most discouraging about the broken world (b)?
 - What is most exciting about the restored world (c)?

Telling Your Story With Jesus As The Hero

The story of God is the story of everything, which includes you and I. We each have a story, and our small story has a place in the greater story of God. Using this resource, you can find and share how your personal story fits into God's greater story.

The following outline uses the same structure as the Creation To Restoration story. Use this to share your story with Jesus as the hero!

Creation

In this part of your story, you will talk about your early life, your origin, and some of the fundamental influences in your life.

1. Where are you from?
2. What was happening in your family at the time you were born?
3. What was your family like?
4. Early in life, what or who were some of your biggest influences?
5. What did you believe about God?

Brokenness

In this part of your story, you will discuss how you begin to see brokenness in your world and in yourself. You'll talk about some painful moments from your past that have shaped you into who you were and who you are today.

1. What were some of your most painful experiences growing up?
2. What things in your life were broken? Relationships? Family? Health? Your personal behavior?
3. Who was to blame for the brokenness?
4. What things did you do to try and fix the brokenness?

Redemption

Here you will talk about how Jesus rescued you from brokenness (and how he is still redeeming brokenness in you currently).

1. How did you come to know about Jesus?
2. How did Jesus fix brokenness in your life that other things or people couldn't?
3. In what areas is Jesus still fixing brokenness in your life today?

Restoration

Finally, shift the focus to today-into-the-future.

1. What things in your life are you looking forward to Jesus fixing and restoring?
2. How is your life coming into alignment with the identity and purpose that God gave people in the original creation?
3. What part of the restored world are you most looking forward to?

DNA Quick Start Guide

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Discover: Read the Bible and ask the following questions:

- Who is God?
- What has God done?
- Who are we?
- If that's all true, how would we live differently?

Nurture: Apply what you've discovered to yourselves.

Our beliefs lead to our actions. The nurture phase is about discovering what our hearts truly believe. After answering the questions in the Discover phase, discuss the following questions together:

- If I was someone else, but watching my own life, what would I think that I believed was true about this topic?
- What am I believing that isn't lining up with what I know to be true according to the bible?

Once you, along with the others in your DNA Group, have nailed down what it is that you're wrongly believing, it is important to:

- Acknowledge your sin in not believing what God has said is true. This is the same sin that Adam and Eve committed in the garden of Eden which first broke the relationship between man and God. They believed that God had lied to them and that he didn't have their best intentions at heart.
- Ask God to change your heart and help you believe what is true. Pray with your group for each other's hearts to believe the truth.

Act: What are you going to do differently?

Once you've worked through the Discover and Nurture phases together, answer the following questions and commit to hold each other accountable throughout the week:

- What am I going to do differently because of this?
- Who am I going to tell what I've learned?

Grow and Multiply: After establishing DNA as a regular rhythm, go to the DNA Guide packed at read about how to Grow and Multiply (Lifecycle of a DNA Group).