

DNA FOUNDATIONS

*A six-week process for
strengthening your group*



INTRODUCTION

We all need these DNA group relationships, and you're likely reading this guide because you are part of a DNA group and committed to these friendships. Yet, truly pursuing this kind of spiritual friendship can be hard. We often default to what's comfortable, being content to stay at a surface level and not diving into the depth God has for us. We can also get stuck in familiar grooves, happy with the give and take of these friendships, but never pressing into new territories of friendship and growth. Our hope is that this guide will help strengthen your DNA group, whether you've been together for years or only a few months. Our goal is to give you tools and rhythms that will benefit your group and let you experience the help and transformation these friendships can bring to your life.

Before we move forward, let's be clear. Discipleship is all about being with Jesus, becoming like Jesus, and doing what Jesus did. **The goal of these friendships is to become more like Jesus together.** And the only way you will be formed together into His image is if the Spirit does His work. So, the most important thing you can do is pray for each other. No real and lasting transformation will happen outside of the Spirit's work, and the Spirit loves to use our prayers to work in big and small ways. But as you pray....wow! Expect God to work in powerful ways. We cannot wait to hear what He does!

What is a DNA Group?

Even though you're already a part of a group, it's easy for us to forget what these relationships are designed to do. Here's a quick reminder. DNAs are groups of 3 or 4 men or women pursuing spiritual friendship with the hope of becoming more like Jesus together.

D.N.A is an acronym that stands for Discover, Nurture, and Act. DNA members help one another to know God, follow Jesus, and listen to the Holy Spirit through:

- **D** - Discovering truths about God and self together
- **N** - Nurturing one another toward true heart transformation
- **A** - Acting out repentance and belief through obedience and proclamation

DNA groups commit together to:

- submit to God's Word under the leadership of the Holy Spirit
- meet regularly to repent, share what they are learning and how they are growing as believers in Jesus
- care deeply for another
- bring accountability, encouragement, and challenge to one another's lives

DNAs are an opportunity to regularly process through your spiritual formation in close proximity with people who know your story, are aware of your struggles, and are committed together to looking at God's word for ongoing transformation.

6-Week Plan for Strengthening Your DNA Group

Week 1: Guidelines & Sharing Our Stories.....pg. 4-7

Week 2: Fruit to Root: Feelings & Needs.....pg. 8-11

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Week 1 / Sharing Our Stories

Catch-Up (5 min): Take a few minutes to catch-up on life together, but be careful to keep this short so you leave room for the intentional discussion you need during this time.

Pray for Your Time Together

Ask the Spirit to help you, build your friendships, speak to you through each other, and form you to look more like Jesus together.

DNA Guidelines (10 min)

Below are some guidelines to keep your DNA group helpful, edifying, and safe. Take some time to review these together.

Attendance

Show up. DNA is an environment where we practice together becoming like Jesus. Like scripture reading or prayer, DNA is a priority. Create a regular meeting schedule and plan to arrive on-time for meetings. If you will miss a meeting or be late, reach out to your DNA members to let them know.

Shared Leadership

If you don't already have a point of contact, choose one. DNA groups are meant to be a shared experience. There will be a point of contact for your group, but not necessarily a leader. In a DNA group, there is shared leadership where all members commit together to be responsible for their own spiritual development as well as their group members. This means each member will share in leading meetings, asking good questions, prayer, and following up with one another to the extent each member is able.

Confidentiality

The privacy of your DNA members is important. It is imperative the DNA environment be a safe space of mutual respect and trust. Do not share personal details with anyone outside your DNA, including your spouse if married. (If one of your DNA members discloses abuse, threats of abuse, neglect or harm of a child, thoughts of suicide, or other dangerous, harmful, or illegal situations, please immediately reach out to your MC Leader, your regional elder, or if the danger is immediate, call 911).

Sharing My Experience

Vulnerability is key. In order to be known and to know others, it's important to commit to sharing what you learn about yourself and your relationship with God with your DNA with openness, honesty, and vulnerability.

Respect

Be aware of your style of relating. In order to foster and maintain an environment of trust and vulnerability in your DNA group, avoid harsh or profane speech, minimizing pain, trivializing problems with simplistic advice, quoting scripture in unhelpful ways, or dominating the conversation.

Listening

Listen for the heart of your DNA members. Refrain from making things about yourself, making assumptions or snap judgements, or trying to fix people or their problems. Instead, draw one another out with questions, ask the Spirit to guide as you listen, and cover one another with prayer, gentleness, and love.

Full Participation

Your DNA members need your full participation. Understand that God has woven you together for a season and that God will use you in the lives (and vice versa) of your DNA members. Remember that you are not in DNA just for yourself only. As a member of this DNA, commit to actively love your DNA partners by showing compassion, encouragement, asking relevant questions, and confronting graciously. Sometimes you can best participate by not talking so as to allow others to talk.

Allow Discomfort

Discomfort can be good. There will be times of healthy discomfort in your DNA because sin and suffering can be hard to face. Steer away from trying to fix people's pain with well-meaning actions like physical or verbal expressions of compassion; these can sometimes suppress true feelings or give the impression that their pain is too much or unwelcome. Instead, let them know you are with them in their pain and pray that they would experience the powerful comfort of the Holy Spirit.

Speaking Up

Risk speaking your mind. Your DNA meeting is usually the best time to speak up about observations, discomfort, or concerns. It may be uncomfortable for you, but it is important to speak your mind in DNA rather than reserving your thoughts for private conversations with individual DNA partners later. This type of self-protective behavior often results in gossip and divisiveness.

Engaging in Conflict

Conflict can bring greater trust and vulnerability. There will possibly be healthy conflict in your DNA as you challenge one another. The Holy Spirit can use conflict to help you grow more Christ-like and more unified as a DNA. In light of this, try to remain engaged when being challenged and take responsibility for your own thoughts, words, and actions when you challenge someone else. Be curious when you or your DNA members become overly defensive. And, watch that you don't spend your time in fruitless arguments about irrelevant matters.

Limited Distraction

Be courteous and present. During DNA meetings it is good practice to refrain from texting, social media, or other disrupting and dismissive activities.

Sharing Our Stories (Read this together) (5 min)

What if we've already shared our stories with each other? Even if you have already done this, it will still be helpful to do this again. Learning to share our stories, with Jesus as the hero, is a practice we can all grow in. Indeed, doing this again will help you know each other better, love each other more, and ultimately will strengthen your faith in Jesus who works in amazing ways in our lives. So, unless you just did this together last month, we would encourage you to share your stories again with each other.

We share our stories as a foundation for true spiritual friendship. We want to cultivate openness, honesty, and vulnerability as we share our stories; making Jesus the hero of our lives. If we are going to help each other become like Jesus, we need to see each other's lives and be willing to submit to others speaking into our lives. Telling our stories is more than just telling of how we became Christians. It will include that, but it's much more. When you share your story, you are also helping each other learn through specific, tangible examples of your continued need for Jesus' work in your life.

Every story carries echoes of the Gospel story. Our stories have assumptions about our purpose (Creation), about our problems or barriers (Fall), about what we think will solve them (Redemption), and about what life will look like if all is right (New Creation). If we think about our own story, we can see how we had built our life around some kind of purpose or identity (or lack of purpose!), who or what we perceived as our real problem, how we tried to solve this problem, and we thought would make everything okay. Hopefully, too, we can also see how this story never really worked and how God opened our eyes to a much better, and truer, story.

So, as we think about sharing our stories, we want to learn to share our story in light of the Gospel...this Creation, Fall, Redemption, New Creation story-line (which is the story-line of the Bible, the Gospel).

CREATION → FALL → REDEMPTION → NEW CREATION

What was/is my identity? What was/is my purpose?

What was/is my problem? What are the barriers or threats? Who or what is to blame?

What was/is my solution? What will make everything okay?

What was/is my hope? What will life look like if all is right?

As we share our stories with honesty and vulnerability, making Jesus the hero, we will be able to celebrate God's amazing and gracious work in each other's lives and better know how to help each other become more like Jesus.

Over the next few meetings, plan to have one person share their story each time. This rhythm will be included in the guide instructions.

Discussion (20 min)

- Are there any parts of the DNA guidelines that you think you or your group need to grow in for a healthier group?
- You've been meeting as a DNA group for some time now already. Do you feel like you have real relationship, know each other's stories, and can be honest and vulnerable with each other? If so, celebrate that. If not, why do you think that is?
- Are there any parts of your story that you don't feel comfortable sharing with this DNA group? It's okay if you don't share them right now, but why do you think that is? (It does take time to build trust, and it's okay to acknowledge you're not there yet.)
- How can you move towards openness and vulnerability with each other while still acknowledging that sometimes it takes time to build trust? Are there ideas in the DNA guidelines that would help your group be more open and a safe place to be vulnerable?

Pray Together (5 min)

Close your time, asking God to use this process to deepen your friendships and strengthen your DNA group as you pursue formation together.

Look Ahead

Next week, we will begin sharing our stories. We will also learn how to do a "Feelings Check-In" and how this tool can help us get to the root of what is happening in our hearts.

Action Steps:

- Establish who will share their story next week.
- Everyone: Read "Fruit to Root: Feelings & Emotions" in preparation for next week.

Week 2 / Fruit to Root: Feelings & Needs

Catch-Up (5 min)

Take a few minutes to catch up on life since you met last time.

Pray: Start your time together in prayer. Invite a group member to pray for your time, asking the Spirit to build these relationships, and work through them to help you become more like Jesus.

Sharing Our Stories (25 min)

- The assigned person shares their story using the Creation-Fall-Redemption-New Creation story-line and making Jesus the hero. (15 min)
- The person sharing should invite the group to ask follow-up questions. (10 min)
- The person sharing should invite the group to pray for them, sharing specific ways they can pray.

Fruit to Root: Feelings & Emotions (10 min)

If everyone has pre-read this section, you might skip it and spend more time in discussion and practice. But, if any members haven't read it, please take time to stop and read together. Or, you may also find it helpful to read it a second time together.

As water reflects the face, so one's life reflects the heart. - Proverbs 27:19, NIV

As this proverb reveals, what's going on in our heart (the center of our being which directs all of our life) is revealed by our life. Another way of saying it is that the fruit of our life, our words, actions, and thoughts, reveals the root of our life, our heart-level trust, and worship.

Jesus says, "For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit, for each tree is known by its own fruit. For figs are not gathered from thornbushes, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush. The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks." (Luke 6:43-45, ESV)

According to Jesus, the only way to be changed and become more like Him is to be changed at the heart level. If our roots, or our heart, don't change, then our fruit will not change either. We can pretend and try to manufacture good fruit, but it will never last.

If we are committing to transformation into the image of Jesus as a DNA group, then we need to pursue change in each other's hearts, the center of our beings. And one of the quickest ways to see what is happening in our heart is to pay attention to our feelings and emotions.

If we are growing to be spiritually healthy men and women, we will also grow to be emotionally healthy people. As Pete Scazzero shares, "It is not possible to be spiritually mature while remaining emotionally immature." (Emotionally Healthy Spirituality)

Our emotions and feelings reveal what is happening inside us. Rather than stifling our emotions or being owned by them, God invites us to bring our emotions and feelings to Him and trust that He knows what we need and can satisfy our desires.

Chip Dodd, in his book Voice of the Heart, gives us a helpful list of eight core emotions: Hurt -- Lonely -- Sad -- Anger -- Fear -- Shame -- Guilt -- Glad

These feelings are often the quickest route to see what is happening in our hearts. Each of these feelings connect to a need we have that is part of being human. We all need to be known, to be loved, and to belong. And our deepest fear is to be unknown, unloved, and unwanted.

When we are feeling these emotions, we can stifle and ignore them or we can become stuck in them; but both lead to emotional and spiritual unhealth. Behind each of these emotions is also a legitimate need, but we can often either ignore this need or seek to have it met by someone or something else that cannot ultimately satisfy.

As we stop to be honest about what we're feeling and what we need, Jesus invites us to bring our need to Him and trust that He can satisfy us. If we don't do this, our emotions will lead to impairment. For some of us, it will take practice to begin to discern what emotions we are feeling, and why we might be feeling them. This will become easier over time. For each of the Eight Feelings, there are two paths. We can either move towards Jesus to meet the need behind our feelings or we can move away from Him and either ignore our feelings or become consumed by them. When we do the latter, we become emotionally and spiritually unhealthy. The chart below demonstrates what this can look like.

The center column lists the Eight Emotions. If you move to the right, towards Jesus, you are entrusting this emotion to Jesus and trusting He can meet your real need. If you move to the left, away from Jesus, you are ignoring this emotion and the underlying need or seeking to meet this need apart from Him.

For example, if you feel hurt by someone, you can entrust this feeling to Jesus and look to Him to meet the need underneath this feeling; your need for His attention and healing. Or, you can ignore this feeling or sit in this feeling by yourself and move toward resentment and bitterness.

IMPAIRMENT	FEELING	NEED
SELF-PITY	SAD	COMFORT
DEPRESSION	ANGER	VOICE TO BE HEARD
CONTROL/ANXIETY	FEAR	REFUGE/SAFE PLACE
RESENTMENT/ BITTERNESS	HURT	ATTENTION/ HEALING
FALSE CONNECTION	LONELY	BE KNOWN/INTIMACY
TOXIC SHAME	SHAME	AFFIRMATION/ APPROVAL
TOXIC GUILT	GUILT	ACCEPTANCE/REST
SENSUALITY WITHOUT HEART	GLAD	CELEBRATION

Although we have a legitimate need and longing such as the need to be known or accepted, we often put our trust in other people or things to meet our needs and longings rather than in Jesus. **This act of trust is ultimately an act of worship. Our misplaced trust ultimately becomes misdirected worship.** Rather than trusting in Jesus to satisfy and worshipping Him as the only source of life, we trust in someone or something else to meet our deepest needs and longings; worshipping someone or something other than Jesus.

Spiritual health, and therefore emotional health as well, is only possible when we are honest about what we are feeling and then move towards Jesus to find our need and longing met.

Discussion

- What is your tendency for how you handle your emotions?
- How were feelings and emotions viewed and dealt with in your family growing up?
- Is it hard for you to think about your own needs? Why do you think that is?

DNA Practice: Feelings Check-In (20 min):

One of the best ways to help us see what is happening in our hearts more clearly is the rhythm of a “Feelings Check-In.” This will become a rhythm for whenever you meet together.

Try doing a “Feelings Check-In”

1. Go around and have each member share what they are feeling, choosing from one of The Eight Feelings listed in the chart above. (If you don’t feel anything, ask yourself why that might be? Is there something you’re avoiding or worried about? What might be behind the lack of feeling?)
2. Go back around and invite each member to share what may be behind their feelings. What happened that day or that week that is connected to that feeling? (Sometimes we don’t know what’s behind our feelings and that’s ok.)
3. Members should listen to each other with love and ask questions to help each person see the roots of their heart. Here are some questions you might ask:
 - What need(s) do you have that this feeling reveals? Sometimes, acknowledging our needs is the hardest part.
 - What are you longing for? To be seen, known, loved, accepted, something else?
 - Who or what are you trusting to help meet this need and satisfy this longing?
4. Go to Jesus. As you’ve identified what you’re feeling and what you need and are really longing for, move towards having your need and longing met by Jesus. Move to the right on the Feelings chart, asking Jesus to meet your needs and longings.

Pray Together

Close your time, as you will every time you meet, praying together.

Look Ahead

Next week, we will look more closely at how our fruit (actions, words, thoughts) reveal the roots of our life (our heart-level trust or worship).

Action Steps

- Establish who will share their story next week.
- Everyone: Read “Fruit to Root: Revealing Our Unbelief” in preparation for next week.

Week 3 / Fruit to Root: Revealing Our Unbelief

Catch-Up (5 min)

Take a few minutes to catch up on life since you met last time.

Pray: Start your time together in prayer. Invite a group member to pray for your time, asking the Spirit to build these relationships, and work through them to help you become more like Jesus.

Sharing Our Stories (25 min):

- The assigned person should share their story using the Creation-Fall-Redemption-New Creation story-line and making Jesus the hero. (15 min)
- Person sharing should invite the group to ask follow-up questions. (10 min)
- Person sharing should invite the group to pray for them, sharing specific ways they can pray.

Feelings Check-In (15 min)

1. Invite each member to share what they are feeling, choosing from one of The Eight Feelings listed in the chart on page 10.
2. Go back around and invite each member to share what may be behind their feelings. What happened that day or that week that is connected to that feeling? (Sometimes we don't know what's behind our feelings and that's ok.)
3. Members should listen to each other with love and ask questions to help each person see the roots of their heart. Here are some questions you might ask:
 - What need(s) do you have that this feeling reveals? Sometimes, acknowledging our needs is the hardest part.
 - What are you longing for? To be seen, known, loved, accepted, something else?
 - Who or what are you trusting to help meet this need and satisfy this longing?
4. Go to Jesus. As you've identified what you're feeling and what you need and are really longing for, move towards having your need and longing met by Jesus. Move to the right on the Feelings chart, asking Jesus to meet your needs and longings.

Fruit to Root: Revealing Our Unbelief (10 min)

If everyone has pre-read this section, you might skip it and spend more time in discussion. But, if any members haven't read it, please take time to stop and read together. Or, it may also be helpful to read it a second time together.

The “feelings check-in” we learned last week, and will practice every week, is helpful in acknowledging the emotion we’re experiencing and then moving towards Jesus to meet our needs and longings. And as we shared last week, understanding our emotions helps reveal the root of our heart. And when we get to our heart, we see more clearly who or what we are trusting. Are we trusting Jesus to meet our longing and need, or someone or something else? This “trust” is the same as “worship.” And we will only find true rest and life when our hearts are worshiping Jesus. As Saint Augustine writes, “we were made for You (God) and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in You.” (his Confessions)

On this same path to our heart, or the center of our being, is our mind. And if we are going to move towards trusting Jesus in our heart, we also need to believe Him with our minds. All of our disobedient actions and thoughts reveal the unbelief in our hearts and minds. It reveals where we have stopped trusting God for who He is and what He has done for us, and have instead believed a lie, or a false gospel.

Here’s a tangible example that highlights the unbelief beneath our sin and how crucial it is that we have people in our lives that turn us back toward belief in the Gospel. Imagine that you’ve just been caught in a lie at work. Your boss asked if you had finished a project and you quickly replied you had and would send it along shortly. In your mind, you know it’s not quite done, but plan to get back to your desk, finish the last few details, and then send it back to your boss ASAP. To save face and avoid the embarrassment of not finishing your work on time, you lied in the moment. Three days later, you’re sitting with your DNA group and asking for their prayer and help. You share what happened.

If every sinful action, attitude, and word is connected to believing a lie about God and the Gospel, then your “white lie” at work reveals that you’ve believed a lie about God...a false gospel. To go from the fruit, your “white lie,” to the root of unbelief in your heart, you need to ask “why?” Why did I lie? Maybe it was because you didn’t want to be seen as incompetant at your job. Maybe you felt embarrassed procrastinating on a project and mismanaging your workload. So, to avoid being perceived by your boss as failing in your work, you lied. Let’s ask why again. Why were you afraid of being perceived as a failure? Maybe it was because you’ve started to believe your worth is tied to your success at work? You believed the lie that you’re only loved because of what you achieve and your competency. Ultimately, you may believe that either God does not love you or that He only loves you because of what you’ve done.

A helpful way to trace the fruit of our actions to the root of our heart and belief is to ask these four questions¹: 1) What did I do?, 2) Who am I?, 3) What did God do?, and 4) Who is God? Here's what these questions may look like in the case of our example above:

What did I do?	Who am I?	What has God done?	Who is God?
I lied about finishing a work project in order to avoid being seen as incompetent and as a failure at work.	I only have worth if I succeed in what I do. If I fail, then I'm worthless.	If I'm consistent with what I've just said about who I am, then I may believe God has not done very much for me. He's waiting for me to prove my worth. OR, I believe that all God has done for me was based on what I've done to please him. And, I need to keep performing to earn/prove my worth.	Based on the last three answers, I may be believing that God is distant and demands I prove myself to be accepted. He's not gracious.

When we take the time to ask these four questions and be honest about what we really believe, we come to see where we may believe in a false gospel and/or an ungracious God. And, we have the opportunity to confess out loud what we have been thinking, believing, and/or doing, repent (turn from the lies we've been believing), and trust in the God we know from Scripture.

¹ These four questions are developed from Pastor Jeff Vanderstelt's book, *Gospel Fluency*. This would be a great resource for your DNA group to study together to grow in helping each other believe the Gospel.

In order to move from right belief in the Gospel to changed fruit, we answer these questions according to what God has revealed in Scripture: 1) Who is God?, 2) What did God do?, 3) Who am I?, and 4) What do I do?

Who is God	What did God do?	Who am I?	What do I do?
God is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and rich in steadfast love. (Psalm 145:8)	He accepts us, not based on our performance, but because of the work of Jesus Christ in our place. He says we have worth and "in Christ", He is well-pleased with us.	I am accepted and loved by the Father, not based on my performance and success, but based on Jesus' success. I am broken and often fail, but am still loved and accepted by God.	I can be honest when I fail and don't need to hide. I can confess my failure and know that I'm still accepted by God. So, when my boss asks if I finished a project, I can be honest and seek to grow in my work management and character.

Do you see how these four questions can help us get from the fruit of our lives to the root of our unbelief in the heart and mind? If we don't get to the root, then change won't really happen. For example, what if after you confessed your "white lie" to your DNA group, they responded with mere moral advice and promises of accountability? They say, "You shouldn't lie!" "No matter what, lies are never okay and always make things worse." And, "Next time, will you send us a text when you're tempted to lie so that we can hold you accountable?" While these statements seem good at face value, they can actually reinforce the real problem happening in your heart and make it worse. If you're lying to your boss so that you won't be seen as a failure, then you might stop lying to your boss only to avoid being seen as a failure by your DNA group. You haven't actually dealt with the root, and have just changed out the fruit. Instead of helping you, your DNA group is actually reinforcing your unbelief. It is so important to learn how to help each other see Gospel distortions and lies about God that you believe when you sin so you don't just offer each other moral advice and pro-tips to "do better."

These DNA relationships are crucial in our transformation to become more like Jesus. We need each other to help us remember who God is and what He has done for us. We need brothers and sisters who truly know us and can lovingly remind us of the truths of the Gospel in specific and tangible ways. Will you be committed to lovingly helping each other see the areas of unbelief in your hearts and calling each other back to trust in the Gospel?

Discussion

1. In the past, how have you primarily pursued change in your life? Have you focused primarily on behavior modification, knowledge acquisition, or heart-level transformation?
2. Have you ever had people in your life that helped you get to the root of your heart and unbelief? What did that look like?
3. What is the danger of offering each other good advice without understanding the root of their heart? How is biblical spiritual shepherding, like we're learning here, different than good advice?
4. Our hope is that as you continue meeting, God will use this group to help you see the distortions you have believed about God and the Gospel and believe what is true. It's okay if you don't have an answer to this question yet, but what do you think may be some of the most common lies you believe about God and what He has done? What fruit shows up in your life from the root of this heart-level unbelief?

Pray Together

Close your time, as you will every time you meet, praying together.

Look Ahead

Next week, we will talk more about how to listen and speak in love.

Action Steps

- Establish who will share their story next week.
- Everyone: Read "Listening & Speaking in Love" in preparation for next week.

Week 4 / Listening & Speaking in Love

Catch-Up (5 min)

Take a few minutes to catch up on life since you met last time.

Pray: Start your time together in prayer. Invite a group member to pray for your time, asking the Spirit to build these relationships, and work through them to help you become more like Jesus.

Sharing Our Stories (25 min):

- The assigned person should share their story using the Creation-Fall-Redemption-New Creation story-line and making Jesus the hero. (15 min)
- Person sharing should invite the group to ask follow-up questions. (10 min)
- Person sharing should invite the group to pray for them, sharing specific ways they can pray.

Feelings Check-In (15 min)

1. Invite each member to share what they are feeling, choosing from one of The Eight Feelings listed in the chart on page 10.
2. Go back around and invite each member to share what may be behind their feelings. What happened that day or that week that is connected to that feeling? (Sometimes we don't know what's behind our feelings and that's ok.)
3. Members should listen to each other with love and ask questions to help each person see the roots of their heart. Here are some questions you might ask:
 - What need(s) do you have that this feeling reveals? Sometimes, acknowledging our needs is the hardest part.
 - What are you longing for? To be seen, known, loved, accepted, something else?
 - Who or what are you trusting to help meet this need and satisfy this longing?
4. Go to Jesus. As you've identified what you're feeling and what you need and are really longing for, move towards having your need and longing met by Jesus. Move to the right on the Feelings chart, asking Jesus to meet your needs and longings.

Listening & Speaking in Love (10 Min)

If everyone has pre-read this section, you might skip it and spend more time in discussion. But, if any members haven't read it, please take time to stop and read together. Or, it may also be helpful to read it a second time together.

Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ... - Ephesians 4:15

The growth of the body of Christ is dependent on brothers and sisters “speaking the truth in love” to one another. Last week, we were reminded of how important “speaking the truth” is and that we desperately need one another to remind us of who God is and what He has done. But this can only be done “in love.” To speak truth to each other with any other motive betrays the very Gospel we are seeking to share with each other.

And before we can speak the truth in love, we first need to learn to listen in love. Imagine if your doctor comes into the room, asks you no questions, and simply diagnoses your problem and prescribes a solution without even speaking with you. That is what we often do with each other when we assume we know what is happening in the hearts of our brothers and sisters. Maybe we assume because we project our own struggles onto them. Or maybe, we just love to solve problems and have started viewing our friends as problems to be solved instead of brothers and sisters we love. It is only when we truly love our brothers or sisters like Jesus loves them, and slow down to truly listen to them and understand their hearts, that we will be able to help them grow to become more like Jesus.

Ask Good Questions

We need each other to lovingly ask good questions and draw out how we’re feeling, what we need, what we’re longing for, and where we’ve placed our trust. We need good questions to help us see the lies we have believed about God and the Gospel.

Think of how God approached Adam and Eve in the garden after they had rebelled and eaten the fruit. God asked them, “Where are you?”, “Who told you that you were naked?”, “Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?”, and “What is this that you have done?” (Gen. 3:9-13) God knew exactly where they were, what they had done, and what was happening in their heart. Yet, like a loving Father, he asked questions to lovingly draw out their hearts and bring them to repentance. If God, who knew their hearts, still asked these questions, how much more should we, who don’t know the hearts of others, ask loving questions? We need to be careful not to go into conversations assuming we know what is happening in someone’s heart.

The questions you have learned through the “Feelings Check-In” and “Four Questions” practices in previous weeks will be key in your ongoing conversations. Ask your questions with love, genuine interest and care, and led by the Spirit.

Listen for the Heart

As you listen to one another, listen with love and be fully present, seeking to understand the heart of your brother or sister. This means that you're not simultaneously thinking about what you're going to say in response to them, but you're actually listening to them and present with them. Remember to look at them, not interrupt them, and be ready to ask follow-up questions to help draw out what they're feeling and thinking. Additionally, remember that the Holy Spirit is there with you; as you listen, pray that the Spirit would give you wisdom, discernment, and the affection of Jesus for your friend.

Speak the Truth in Love

After asking loving questions and listening for their heart, the Spirit may lead you to speak the truth in love. When done in love after truly listening, this is a powerful tool that the Spirit will use to bring real change in each other's lives. We will all grow in this over time, but here are a few reminders that will be key as we do this:

1. **Point to Jesus.** Jesus is the hero of our story and the only real solution. Lasting transformation will only happen when we look to Jesus as the one who meets our needs and deepest longings and trust who He is and what He has done for us.
2. **Be specific and tangible.** Point to Jesus in specific and tangible ways. Try to help each other see God meeting their specific needs and longings (see *examples in the chart below). Help them see the Father grieving with them and hurting for them. Help them see Jesus as the one who will meet their longing and is present with them in just the way they need. It will help to point to specific stories in the Gospel that help each other see Jesus in tangible and concrete ways.
3. **Don't just quote Scripture at each other.** Scripture isn't meant to be used as a sledgehammer that bludgeons the heart, but as a scalpel that carefully cuts to the heart, reveals our unbelief, needs, and longings, and then heals us through the good news of Jesus in specific and tangible ways (see the previous point).
4. **Again, this isn't the same as good advice.** While good advice and pro-tips are helpful, they're not the same as speaking the truth in love. Good advice can help you know how to leverage your network for a job search. Speaking the truth of the Gospel in love will help you face the anxiety you're experiencing in the midst of job search. While DNA group relationships can also be a source of good advice for life, our goal is that these relationships are a catalyst for real transformation at the heart level.

*The chart below offers some tangible examples of Jesus meeting the needs behind some of our feelings. These may be helpful as you point each other and yourself towards Jesus.

FEELING	→	NEED	→	JESUS MEETS NEEDS
SAD		COMFORT		Jesus comforts His disciples as they face the sadness of his coming death. John 14:1 (see also 2 Corinthians 1:3-4)
ANGER		VOICE TO BE HEARD		In the parable of the persistent widow, Jesus reveals His heart to hear the cries of His people for justice. Luke 18:1-8 (See also Psalm 34:17)
FEAR		REFUGE/SAFE PLACE		Jesus welcomes the children to come to him, giving them refuge in a scary world. Mark 10:13-16
HURT		ATTENTION/ HEALING		Jesus hears the cries of pain from Bartimaeus, even as no one else would pay attention to him. Mark 10:46-52
LONELY		BE KNOWN/INTIMACY		Jesus touches the hemorrhaging woman who had been left alone for years. Luke 8:43-48
SHAME		AFFIRMATION/ APPROVAL		Jesus truly sees the Samaritan woman at the well who was "shamed" by all around her. John 4
GUILT		ACCEPTANCE/REST		Jesus welcomed the guilty Zacchaeus, who was despised by all for his greed and oppression. Luke 19:1-10
GLAD		CELEBRATION		One day, Jesus will welcome His people to a joy-filled feast where there will be no pain, sorrow, or tears! Revelation 21:1-4

Discussion

1. Do you find it hard to listen to others with love and understanding? What does that look like for you?
2. What is at the root of your struggle to listen with love?
3. Does asking good questions come easy to you? Or do you struggle with knowing what to ask? Share your experiences with having someone ask you good questions and/or being a thoughtful question asker. What did you notice?
4. How does asking good questions fit with “listening with love?”
5. Do you feel equipped to “speak the truth in love?” How can you grow in this so that you can better help each other?

Pray Together

Close your time praying together, asking God to use this DNA group to help you become more like Jesus.

Look Ahead

- Next week, we will continue in our “feelings check-in rhythm” and practice asking the 4 questions together.

Action Steps

- If anyone has not yet shared their story, have them be ready to share next week.
- Everyone: Preview the content and practice for next week so that you come prepared to engage with each other.

Week 5 / Exercise 1: Practice Asking the Four Questions

Catch-Up (5 min)

Take a few minutes to catch up on life since you met last time.

Pray: Start your time together in prayer. Thank God for what He has already done in each of you through your first four weeks together. Ask for His Spirit to continue working through these relationships.

Sharing Our Stories (25 min):

- The assigned person should share their story using the Creation-Fall-Redemption-New Creation story-line and making Jesus the hero. (15 min)
- Person sharing should invite the group to ask follow-up questions. (10 min)
- Person sharing should invite the group to pray for them, sharing specific ways they can pray.

Feelings Check-In (15 min)

1. Invite each member to share what they are feeling, choosing from one of The Eight Feelings listed in the chart on page 10.
2. Go back around and invite each member to share what may be behind their feelings. What happened that day or that week that is connected to that feeling? (Sometimes we don't know what's behind our feelings and that's ok.)
3. Members should listen to each other with love and ask questions to help each person see the roots of their heart. Here are some questions you might ask:
 - What need(s) do you have that this feeling reveals? Sometimes, acknowledging our needs is the hardest part.
 - What are you longing for? To be seen, known, loved, accepted, something else?
 - Who or what are you trusting to help meet this need and satisfy this longing?
4. Go to Jesus. As you've identified what you're feeling and what you need and are really longing for, move towards having your need and longing met by Jesus. Move to the right on the Feelings chart, asking Jesus to meet your needs and longings.

DNA EXERCISE #1 ON NEXT PAGE...

DNA Exercise #1: Asking the Four Questions (20 min)

Our goal is to learn how to help each other get to the root of their heart-level unbelief and to remind each other in specific ways of the truths of the Gospel. This will become a sterile and impersonal exercise which doesn't really help anyone if you don't come to this conversation with love for each other and dependence on the Spirit. Instead of treating it like a formula, use it as a framework to start your conversation. Begin the hard, messy work of repenting of unbelief and once again trusting in the good news of Jesus.

1. Ask if someone would be willing to open up to the group about sin they are seeing in their life so that the group can help them begin to see the root and unbelief. Give them time to share what they've done.
2. Once they've shared, pray for them before you move forward. Thank God for them, for their vulnerability, and for their desire to change. Ask the Spirit to help them turn from their unbelief and sin and believe the good news of Jesus.
3. Next, lovingly walk through the four questions together starting with "What did you do?" and ending with "Who is God?"

What did I do?	Who am I?	What has God done?	Who is God?

4. Once they have been able to identify the lies they have been believing about God and what He has or hasn't done, ask them if this is the God of Scripture. Now, walk through the four questions again starting with "Who is God?" according to what Scripture says. Lovingly help them remember key and tangible realities about God and His character that they may need to hear.

Who is God?	What has God done?	Who am I?	What do I do?

5. Take time to pray with them. Ask for the Spirit's help to trust the truths about God and the Gospel that you have discovered together.
6. Thank them for their honesty and openness. Commit to continue praying for them as they wrestle to believe what is true.
7. If time allows, have someone else share a sin or struggle and go through the same process. It's important that each member commit to be honest and open about their own sin and seek the group's help in tracing it to the root, discerning unbelief, and pointing one another back to Jesus.

Pray Together

Close your time praying together. Take time to pray specifically for those who opened up and asked for help tracing the fruit of their life to the root of the heart. Pray for the Spirit to help them believe the Gospel and to trust Jesus to meet their deepest needs and longings. Pray for His continued work in their lives.

Look Ahead

Next week, we will discuss the D.N.A. process for reading Scripture together and talk about our regular rhythms as a group moving forward when this guide is complete.

Action Steps

- Everyone: Preview next week's content

Week 6 / Exercise 2: Transformative Bible Study

Catch-Up (5 min)

Take a few minutes to catch up on life since you met last time.

Pray: Start your time together in prayer and ask the Spirit to work through these relationships.

Sharing Our Stories (25 min):

- The assigned person should share their story using the Creation-Fall-Redemption-New Creation story-line and making Jesus the hero. (15 min)
- Person sharing should invite the group to ask follow-up questions. (10 min)
- Person sharing should invite the group to pray for them, sharing specific ways they can pray.

Feelings Check-In (15 min)

1. Invite each member to share what they are feeling, choosing from one of The Eight Feelings listed in the chart on page 10.
2. Go back around and invite each member to share what may be behind their feelings. What happened that day or that week that is connected to that feeling? (Sometimes we don't know what's behind our feelings and that's ok.)
3. Members should listen to each other with love and ask questions to help each person see the roots of their heart. Here are some questions you might ask:
 - What need(s) do you have that this feeling reveals? Sometimes, acknowledging our needs is the hardest part.
 - What are you longing for? To be seen, known, loved, accepted, something else?
 - Who or what are you trusting to help meet this need and satisfy this longing?
4. Go to Jesus. As you've identified what you're feeling and what you need and are really longing for, move towards having your need and longing met by Jesus. Move to the right on the Feelings chart, asking Jesus to meet your needs and longings.

DNA Exercise #2: Transformative Bible Study (Read This Together) (20 min)

We don't just want to be hearers of the Word, but doers of the Word because we really trust it in our hearts (James 1:22). Your DNA Group can be a really helpful space to study God's Word together and be transformed by it. To do this, we encourage DNA groups to engage Scripture with a D-N-A process.

The D-N-A process provides a holistic Head-Heart-Hand approach to Bible Study. It engages what we know in our minds, what we entrust in our hearts, and consequently what we do with our hands.

The tendency for all of us is to follow the world's paradigm. The World's Paradigm is expressed in the phrase: I am what I do.

THE WORLD'S PARADIGM: OUR DOING = OUR BEING

If we study our Bible with this paradigm, we will make the Bible all about us and what we must do. It will lead to a form of works-righteousness that is devoid of God and God's power.

As we've already seen in this guide, movement of the Gospel narrative doesn't begin with us and what we do. It begins God, who He is and what He has done, leading to who we are as a result. So, we want to study our Bibles in light of a Gospel Framework.

The **INDICATIVES** lead to the **IMPERATIVES**

The Indicatives are what is true no matter what we do.

The Imperatives are what we do because of what is true.

Discover (Head)

The D-N-A process starts with Discovering the truth from God's Word. As we look at a passage of Scripture, we should invite the Holy Spirit to guide us into all truth as we ask three indicative questions and one imperative question (note that these are the same four questions we have already learned to ask).

Indicative

- Who is God? (Look for the attributes and characteristics of God)
- What Has He Done? (Look for the activity of God – most specifically in Jesus Christ)
- Who Are We? (Look for how this informs our identity)

Imperative

- What Do We Do? (What would we do if we believed this?)

Nurture (Heart)

Now it's time to get to the heart. The tendency for all of us is to let a Bible Study be just that: A study. However, the Bible is meant to accomplish much more than that.

For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account. (Hebrews 4:12-13)

At this point, we want to Nurture the truths of God's Word into one another's hearts through the process of confession leading to repentance and belief in the Gospel truths.

Reconsider the fourth question and turn it into a personal Confession: **What have I done?** And, what does this reveal about what I have been believing about God and self?

When we do this with our DNA group, we invite the Spirit of God to remind us, through God's Word and one another, of the truths found in Jesus. As we confess our beliefs and sins to God and each other, we can experience forgiveness, repentance, and belief (1 John 1:8-9; James 5:16).

We also need to confess what we are feeling – our emotions. This is why we need to regularly do the "Feelings Check-In" we have been practicing and want you to establish it as a regular rhythm during your time together. When we are honest about our feelings, we can be honest about our needs, longings, and gospel distortions and can bring those to Jesus to address.

Act (Hands)

Gospel-centered transformation and repentance always produces action. When our beliefs about God and self are aligned to what is true, we experience repentance. The fruit of repentance is a transformed heart that produces humble and grateful obedience.

A Gospel-informed Bible study should bring about Adoration, Thanksgiving, Confession and Gospel informed and motivated Application. (You may know this as ACTS.)

We not only know the good we ought to do, but we also want to do it in light of **Who God Is** (Adoration), **What He Has Done** (Thanksgiving) and **Who We Are in Christ** (Confession).

During this part of our DNA process we ask: In light of what God's Spirit is showing me and doing in me, **What Will We Do** (Application)? First in me personally? Then collectively in my MC? And, missionally with unbelievers?

PRAY

A great way to end the D-N-A Process is to turn our time in God's Word into prayer using the four questions:

- Adoration (In light of what we learned about Who God Is)
- Thanksgiving (For What God Has Done)
- Confession (What We Have Done based upon wrong beliefs)
- Supplication (Ask God to empower us by the Spirit for What We Will Do)

D-N-A PRACTICE

Let's practice the D-N-A process for transformative Bible study together.

Read this passage together two times slowly.

Philippians 4:4-7:

4 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. 5 Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; 6 do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Discover

What truths about Who God is, What He Has Done, and Who You Are in Christ is the Spirit impressing on your Heart?

Nurture

What have you done and what does this reveal about what you have been believing?

What are you presently feeling as you think about this passage? What needs and longings do you see under these feelings?

Act

In light of what the Spirit is revealing to your head through God's Word, and is doing in heart, what will you do?

THE GOSPEL PARADIGM OUR BEING = OUR DOING

Now that you have helped one another identify what the Holy Spirit is revealing to you individually, ask how you can support each other in believing what God has done and obeying what you believe God is now prompting you to do. Make sure to follow up the next time you meet for an update. It's so easy for us to say we'll do something, but let it slide; your DNA group can lovingly encourage you toward being a more faithful doer of the Word.

Pray Together

Before you move on to deciding the logistics for your next meeting, spend some time praying about what you've discovered together today.

Look Ahead | Next Steps: Where Do We Need to Go as a Group?

After using this guide, we hope your group is strengthened and you feel equipped with the foundation and tools to deepen these DNA friendships and pursue becoming like Jesus together.

Now, take time to discuss where you will go together as a group, especially focusing on what rhythms you need to intentionally engage in when you meet.

What rhythms should be part of our regular DNA meetings?

We recommend every DNA group incorporate the following rhythms as part of their regular meetings:

1. Catch-Up (a few minutes at the beginning of each meeting)
2. Feelings Check-In (use the tool you've already learned and practiced)
3. Learn and pursue transformation together
 - If you haven't already, we highly recommend you use a spiritual formation guide (www.doxa-church.com/formation) together (Silence + Solitude, Prayer, or the latest one to be released)
 - OR do some Transformative Bible Study together. Top help with this, you can find sermon discussion guides from the previous Sunday's sermon here: www.doxa-church.com/guides.
4. Pray Together