



CALVARY

DISCIPLESHIP

DISCIPLESHIP AT CALVARY: VISION STATEMENT

Discipleship at Calvary Church, especially within DNA groups, is a Biblically rooted, Gospel-centered growth in imitating Jesus and listening to and applying what God is building in us. We grow in this sanctification through sound teaching, imitating others, and immersion in the body at Calvary. Our discipleship relationships are marked by an invitation to share life together, transparency that reveals the Gospel, challenge that leads to repentance, and love and prayer for one another. By Christ's power and authority, this culminates in a response to the call for disciples to make disciples for the glory of God and for their joy.

What is a disciple?

A disciple is a learner. A follower. Someone who has counted the cost by taking up his/her cross and responding to the call of Jesus. A disciple is someone who is learning to become who they already are in Christ (Romans 6). A disciple is someone who is growing in their love for God and others (John 13:35, John 17). If you are a Christian, you are a disciple who is called to make disciples (Matthew 28:18-20).

What does discipleship look like at Calvary?

Discipleship is a culture. Being a disciple is your identity, and everything else is a role. Discipleship is organic, discipleship is for everyone, and it finds its expression in many different environments. Some of those environments are our Sunday morning gatherings, Community Groups, Bible studies, etc. We also grow as disciples through mission in serving, church planting, missionary efforts, etc. Everything we do as a church and individuals from the smallest local environments to the largest world-spanning ministries is focused upon our growth and maturity as Jesus' disciples. In short, discipleship is about the regeneration of an unbeliever, his/her assured future glorification, and every moment of sanctification in between.

The culture of discipleship at Calvary also finds an expression within DNA Groups, which are small, same-sex groups of 2-4 people designed specifically to foster discipling relationships. DNA Groups are generally led by a trained leader and are given resources for guidance in the disciple-making process. Every DNA Group begins

with an 18-week study called Gospel DNA. This requires a strong commitment from each group member before they begin the study, because consistent involvement is vital to discipleship. Beyond the 18-week study, a group may continue to meet, form another DNA group, or dissolve naturally. Each group looks a little different (as people may be at different points in their maturity), but the focus of bringing God glory as we are increasingly transformed into his image is the unchanging constant in each DNA Group. We uphold this constant through shared language, intentional components of group dynamics, and varied learning environments.

DNA GROUP LANGUAGE

Discipleship is Gospel-centered – The good news of Christ’s accomplished work on the cross is the core component of discipleship. As disciples, we learn the gospel through teaching, relate in the gospel through life-on-life relationship, and communicate the gospel by going to make disciples. As we study the Bible and pursue Jesus together, we develop a gospel-centered theology that leads to gospel-minded mission. We recognize in increasing measure the daily relevance of the gospel even within the mundane. Gospel-centered discipleship language is a language of God’s grace and our response to that grace. One of the main points of DNA Group is to apply the gospel to every part of life.

Discipleship means attuning ourselves to God’s movement – As disciples abiding in Biblical truth (John 8:31), we are learning to grow in our mindfulness of the Spirit’s sanctifying work in our lives, the lives of others, and His church. Through intentional relationship and rhythms, we grow in our mindfulness of the Father’s plan of salvation, being conformed to Christ by the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit. As we learn to ever-increasingly walk by the Spirit and not the flesh, disciples do not only grow in our awareness of God’s activity, but also grow in our commitment to respond to God’s activity through obedience, repentance, worship, mission, etc.

INTENTIONAL COMPONENTS OF DNA GROUP DYNAMICS

Transparency – Different group sizes at Calvary include different levels of transparency. A Sunday morning worship gathering tends to require less individual transparency, whereas a DNA Group includes high levels of transparency. Life-on-life discipleship means living our

lives with Christ in front of, and in community with, other Christ followers. Without being transparent about our victories and joys, there is no room for thanksgiving and praise. Without being transparent and sharing failures, there is no room for the Gospel. By being open and honest, DNA Group members share Christ's work in their own lives and rejoice in Christ's work in others' lives.

Invitation – DNA Groups include high levels of invitation. Jesus invited his disciples to follow him, to watch, to ask questions. A DNA leader models this by giving access to his/her life as he/she follows Christ. DNA group members model this by inviting other members to share life with them. And everyone models this by being on mission to invite, invest in, include, and introduce others to Jesus who have not yet responded to the Gospel.

Confession and Prayer – Intentional discipleship is challenging. Repenting of our sin and idolatry must involve a constant cycle of confessing our shortcomings to one another, reminding ourselves of the Gospel, praying for one another, and moving forward (James 5:16). Through repentance, we learn to name the sin under the surface of the sins we battle, recognize those underlying sins as idols, and spur one another on in the belief that God is truly better than our sinful desires.

Love and Safety – DNA Groups are marked by intentional love and care. They are an environment of safety and grace, wherein a growing disciple can be genuinely loved, truthfully challenged, and constantly encouraged in their growth in Christ. Jesus calls us to love each other as He has loved us, teaching us that the world will know we are disciples by our love for one another (John 13:34-35).

DNA GROUP LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

Teaching and Study – It is clear from Scripture that our doctrine matters (1 Timothy 4:16). Our theology informs everything about how we live. Jesus spent much of His time teaching and explaining truth to His disciples, allowing them to ask questions and converse with Him. God has designed us to learn through teaching and study, so it is vital that DNA Groups teach sound, historically orthodox, Biblical truth. The Gospel DNA material includes an element of teaching and conversation geared towards growing in our knowledge of ourselves, our relationship to God, and His Word. But this is not a traditional Bible study. The DNA environment is not concerned with merely passing on objective Biblical truth (as important as that is).

Rather, we are concerned with the heart-level application of gospel truth as it uniquely relates to our personal areas of sin and unbelief. Therefore, our study of the text and its application to the deepest issues of the heart moves us to develop gospel-centered theology, which moves us to live gospel-saturated lives.

Watching, Imitating, Encouraging – The disciples spent a lot of time following Jesus around, sharing meals, walking together, fishing, watching Him interact with people, performing miracles, and so on. Following the example set by Paul, DNA Group leaders can say “Imitate me as I imitate Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1). This discipleship learning environment requires access to each others’ lives, which is why effective discipleship means more than an hour-per-week meeting. Just as children learn by constantly watching their parents, so disciples learn through apprenticing. Sharing life together throughout the week and encouraging one another through regular communication is an important aspect of reminding one another of the gospel.

Corporate Gathering – DNA Groups, although small and each having a unique relational dynamic, are nevertheless still vitally connected to the corporate body of believers. No single believer is an island unto him/herself, and no DNA Group can function healthily if disconnected from the corporate gathering of the church. Disciples learn best when immersed in the corporate worship of God through hearing His Word preached, singing together, sharing the Lord’s Supper, celebrating baptism, prayer, fellowship, and serving together on mission. By being constantly surrounded by other disciples, we are sharpened and encouraged in both our individual and corporate pursuit of Christ.