

# 3 ESSENTIAL DISCIPLESHIP STRUCTURES

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## 3 ESSENTIAL DISCIPLESHIP STRUCTURES

Each structure is unique. Each structure is essential. Each structure is complementary to the others. Each structure is limited though, in its ability to accomplish everything needed to make a fully-formed disciple.

And, certain things happen in each structure at a head, heart, and hands level that can only happen in that unique environment. So, if any of the 3 structures is missing or lacking in our discipleship approach, there will be significant things lacking in the lives of our people.

### SUNDAY GATHERINGS

Usually approximately a 1½ to 2-hour meeting. Unique relational, emotional, and even learning dynamics happen when a larger group of people is together talking, listening, learning, singing, and praying. There's more encouragement, excitement, and motivation possible when a larger group of like-minded people are trying to learn to love God and love others together.

Sunday gatherings are also a place where the Bible can be taught, encouraging stories of life change can be told, needs of the congregation can be shared, and corporate prayer can be experienced in unique and powerful ways. There's also more gifting, personality, experience, stories, and resources available with a larger group of people, which creates the potential for greater influence. The Sunday gathering also provides a context for more people to serve and learn to use their gifts in ways that cannot happen in the same way elsewhere.

### MISSIONAL COMMUNITY

This is a group of disciples living a committed life together. An MC is not a meeting, but a series of connecting points and experiences throughout the week that foster a family-like dynamic, as well as a missional lifestyle. Those in an MC are going to be spending more time together over the course of a regular week than the average Christian who attends Sunday morning and maybe a small group Bible study.

Life in a Missional Community is also a different quality of experience and relationship, because it's happening in the context of normal life together and is largely experiential rather than formal. Also, because of the smaller size, usually 8-14 adults, there is an intimacy and depth of relationship that cannot be experienced on Sundays.

MC's see each other as family, support each other like family, communicate as you would with family, know each other in deep and vulnerable ways like a family, and work together for the health and growth of the MC, as a family would. There's a different level of ownership and responsibility.



MC's, because they are smaller in size, deeper in relationship, and more focused in their purpose, provide a more flexible and creative context to be able to live much life together around the table, in homes, at parks, coffee shops, and other public spaces. It also makes it easier to organize things, because it's a manageable size.

An MC is also a critical discipleship structure, because so much of discipleship and becoming a mature Christ follower can only happen through modeling and experience. At the Sunday and DNA meetings, the spiritual formation happening is largely at the head/mind level and at the heart level. An MC provides regular opportunities to be working out our faith, putting it into action, as we love and serve others together. It's the environment to regularly be "doers" and not just "hearers" of the many things Jesus has encouraged us to do in following him.

## **DNA GROUPS**

DNA stands for Discover, Nurture, and Act. Some churches use other names for these like Gospel Triplets and Life Transformation Groups (LTG's), but they have the same function. DNA's are usually a 2-2 ½ hour meeting. These smallest of groups of 3-5 women or 3-5 men are unique because of their size and because they are gender specific. There are many things that get talked about in deep and vulnerable ways that will only be discussed if just women are present or just men are present, because of their sensitive nature.

Because of the small size of the DNA's, everyone has a chance to talk and to ask questions, so there is much greater participation even compared to a small community of 8-14 adults. With greater participation from each person, this means that everyone is going to grow in their ability to think, speak, and pray rightly about the Gospel. It's almost impossible to "hide" and to not get involved in this environment. All personality types, especially quieter ones, are able to flourish and be known and heard.

## **HOW PEOPLE LEARN AND GROW**

As we think about these 3 essential discipleship structures, it's always important to keep in mind what we know about how people learn and how people grow. Here are some important principles to consider.

There is a Head component, Heart component, and Hands component to growth and learning. The head is what's going on in the mind and how a person thinks. The heart is the motivation/conviction/belief center, that ultimately determines how we actually live our lives. We live out of the overflow of convictions and beliefs of the heart. The hands are how we choose to put our convictions, beliefs, and priorities into action. The activities and relationships we believe are most important from a heart perspective, then get worked out through our hands and feet.

How do the Head, Heart, and Hands actually change and get formed into a Christ-like lifestyle?



- **Teaching:** Biblical truth that is consistently applied to every circumstance and detail of life.
- **Modeling:** A Christ-like lifestyle that can be watched closely in normal, everyday experiences.
- **Experience:** Opportunity for hands on practice doing the things that have been modeled.
- **Reflection (Coaching/Shepherding):** Discussing the learning that is happening through the hearing of Biblical truth, the modeling of that truth, and the experience of living it out.
- **Supernatural:** The Holy Spirit is always desiring to influence and shape the head, heart, and hands. He is the Spirit of truth that is always teaching, reminding, and revealing things to grow our minds. He is the Spirit that changes hearts, convicts, and counsels to grow our hearts. He is the missionary Spirit that is always sending us to love, serve, and bring healing to others to grow our hands.

