**DNA**

Part 1: The Mission

10/27/24

**Did you know that you are a miracle?**

It’s true! You are a crazy, amazing miracle created in the image of God. The same God who breathes out fiery, ferocious stars and hangs them in the sky is the same One who crafted and created you and me. As the psalmist said, we are fearfully made “in an amazing and wonderful way” (Psalm 139:14).

**Each of us began in our mother’s womb when God created a unique, never-before-seen guide for how He’d build us.**

Like a blueprint, our DNA contains all the information for how we look and function—from the color of our eyes and hair to the shape of our toenails.

* Our DNA describes exactly how God wanted us to be, and there’s never been and never will be another DNA code like ours. In all the history—and future—of the human race, there’s only one you, only one me.

Scientists have figured out that God’s DNA code for each of us is 3 billion characters long.

* And this DNA code is planted inside of every cell in our bodies, so all cells function and grow according to the same master plan.
* Our bodies have 37.2 trillion cells.
	+ If it sounds like a lot, that’s because it is. If we stretched out the DNA in all 37.2 trillion of our cells, it would reach all the way to the moon and back—150,000 times.
	+ But each of our cells contains our unique DNA code and each cell follows God’s grand design to make us exactly into who He planned us to be before we were even born!

**Today, we’re kicking off a new sermon series titled “DNA.”**

* And the goal of this series is to uncover God’s blueprint for us as a local church.
* To rediscover his grand design for us, so that we can be and do exactly what he has called us to do.
	+ This series comes at the end of a long journey of the leadership here at CCCOG.
		- For over a year, we walked through the Acts 2 Journey with our state pastor to ask some of the most basic, but most important questions for our church.
		- Questions like why we exist as a local church, what we value, where we’re headed, and how we will get there.
		- Over the next few weeks, these are the questions we’re going to try to answer.

So, why do we exist? The answer to this question determines the response to all the others.

And based on Scripture, we believe our mission is really simple.

* Honestly, it boils down to one thing and here it is:

**Cedar Creek COG exists to make, mature, and multiply disciples of Jesus Christ.**

* Church, that is our ultimate priority, our foundation, our God-given DNA.

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In John 17, Jesus prayed…

***John 17:4 NLT*** *[Father] I brought glory to you here on earth by completing the work you gave me to do.*

**In other words, Jesus said he had accomplished his mission.**

* In this same prayer, he said his mission was “to give eternal life to all whom [the Father] gave him.
	+ To offer redemption through his sinless life, through his sacrifice of atonement, and his victorious resurrection.
		- Sin dug a gulf in a relationship. The cross bridged it.
		- Sin resulted in estrangement. The cross reconciled it.
		- Sin made war. The cross made peace.
		- Sin broke fellowship. The cross repaired and restored it.[[1]](#footnote-1)

**Jesus was sent to offer eternal life through redemption by his blood and he completed the mission given him by the Father.**

And a couple of chapters later, Jesus said to his disciples…

***John 20:21 NLT*** *“…As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you.”*

**And the** **mission for which we’ve been sent as a local church, is to proclaim the gospel with the aim of making disciples.**

Our mission is recorded in each of the four Gospels and at the beginning of Acts.

* Mark 16:15, Luke 24, John 20, and Acts 1:8

**And the best known and most quoted expression of our God-given mission is found in Matthew’s gospel.**

* Everything Matthew has written leads to this application in chapter 28.
	+ The one Matthew has revealed to be the fulfillment of the covenant and prophecies of the OT, now is the center of a message to be carried to the ends of the earth.

***Matthew 28:18-20 NLT****Jesus came and told his disciples, “I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth.****19****Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.****20****Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”*

**According to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, our mission is to make disciples.**

* The mission given to the early church was not one of cultural transformation—though that often came as a result of their message…[[2]](#footnote-2)
* The mission given to the early church was more specific than common people doing uncommon deeds in their community.[[3]](#footnote-3)
* “Make disciples” is the mandate Christ gave to us.

PAUSE

The book of Acts literally describes how first century Christians lived out this commission from Christ.

* We could look at almost any chapter in Acts to gain insight for living out our mission, but I think Acts 13 and 14 provide a great example.

**At the beginning of Acts 13, Paul and Barnabas are sent out by the HS through the church at Antioch to fulfill their God-given mission.[[4]](#footnote-4)**

* They travel all throughout southern Galatia, and then they reverse direction and travel back through all the places they had ministered.
* Eventually, in Acts 14, they return to Antioch in Syria and share with their home church about all that God had done through them.

And the final section in Acts 14 is almost like the PowerPoint presentation that Paul and Barnabas must have shared with their home church.

* Here’s a picture…
* “This is how we saw God move. Here’s where we went and what we did.”

But in just a few verses, Paul and Barnabas show us what they believed to be their God-given DNA. Look at…

***Acts 14:21-23 NLT*** *After preaching the Good News in Derbe and making many disciples, Paul and Barnabas returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch of Pisidia,* ***22****where they strengthened the believers. They encouraged them to continue in the faith, reminding them that we must suffer many hardships to enter the Kingdom of God.* ***23****Paul and Barnabas also appointed elders in every church. With prayer and fasting, they turned the elders over to the care of the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.*

On their missionary journey, Paul and Barnabas aimed for three things: Making disciples, maturing disciples, and multiplying disciples.

**Making, maturing, and multiplying disciples of Jesus Christ isn’t just a catchy slogan from Pinterest.**

* It’s our God-given blueprint that tells us how to function as a local church.
* And in the rest of our time, I’d like for us to tease out what each of those words means…
1. **What does it mean to MAKE disciples?**

**For Paul and Barnabas, it meant the conversion of Jews and pagans.**

* It meant proclaiming the gospel so that unbelievers could come to faith in Christ have the same kind of conversion experience he had on the road to Damascus.

Paul uses the same Greek verb for making disciples that Jesus uses in Mt. 28:19.

* And in Mt. 28, the verb for making disciples is surrounded by three supporting verbs: “going, baptizing and teaching.”

**Now, I’m going to try my best not to get all nerdy with the Greek, but these three supporting verbs give us a clear picture of what Paul and Barnabas were doing in Cyprus, Antioch, Lystra, Iconium, and Derbe.**

* 1. **Go**

The first supporting verb in the GC is “go,” and it could be translated, “As you are going,” simply suggesting that the disciples were to make disciples wherever they were, in any context, and with any people.

* Whether in Cyprus, Derbe, or Greeneville, TN.
* For disciples of Jesus, living life is “going” with a purpose, every day.[[5]](#footnote-5)
	1. **Baptizing**

**The second supporting verb is baptizing.**

* Go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

In Romans 6, Paul said…

***Romans 6:3-4 ESV*** *Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?****4****We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.*

**Water baptism is a symbolic death, burial, and resurrection.**

* It represents how our sins are washed away through the blood of Christ…[and] demonstrates that we have died to sin and have been resurrected to new life in Christ.[[6]](#footnote-6)
	+ We have repented of our former sinful life and have come under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

PAUSE

**So, for Paul and Barnabas, making disciples in Galatia, meant preaching the same message as Jesus, calling people to “repent and believe the good news” (Mark 1:15).**

And while there may be confusion in our world today concerning the meaning and importance of repentance.

**Classic Christianity has always understood repentance to involve a complete abandonment of the life of sin.[[7]](#footnote-7)**

* Church, it’s not by accident that the GC explains baptism (a demonstration of death to sin and allegiance to Christ) to be a part of the means to disciple-making. [[8]](#footnote-8)
	+ Trying to make disciples without issuing a call to repentance is not in our God-given DNA.

**So, for Paul and Barnabas, making disciples included bringing people to the point of declaring their complete loyalty to Jesus Christ.**

* 1. **Teach**

The last supporting verb is: “teach” these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you.

Years ago, A.W. Tozer wrote, *“I must be frank in my feeling that a notable heresy has come into being throughout our evangelical Christian circles—the widely accepted concept that we humans can choose to accept Christ only because we need Him as Savior, and we have the right to postpone our obedience to Him as Lord as long as we want to!”*[[9]](#footnote-9)

* But church, it is impossible to ascribe to the beliefs of Christianity without obey Jesus as Lord.

Jesus tells us that leading non-believers to trust in Him and repent of their sins (which is marked by baptism), is followed by directing new Christians in the lifelong task of walking with Christ in obedience (which is accomplished through sound teaching).[[10]](#footnote-10)

* And the emphasis is not simply on acquiring head knowledge; the distinguishing feature is always that disciples are to conform their lives to the teaching of Christ.

**So, for Paul and Barnabas, making disciples meant preaching the same message as Jesus, calling for obedience to the commands of Christ.**

* All throughout the gospels, Jesus continually urges His followers to live in a manner pleasing to God.[[11]](#footnote-11)

In John’s gospel, Jesus said…

***John 14:21 NLT*** *Those who accept my commandments and obey them are the ones who love me.*

**Trying to make disciples without a call to obedience is just not in our God-given DNA.**

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**Again, Paul’s goal in Acts 13-14 was to bring unbelievers to faith in Christ.**

* And as a local church, we exist to proclaim the gospel so that unbelievers can be born again.
* This is the blueprint God gave us!

Second word: mature. We exist to make and mature disciples but…

1. **What does it mean to MATURE disciples?**

**For Paul and Barnabas, in Acts 13-14, it meant strengthening new Christians.**

* Helping them become firm and unchanging in their belief.[[12]](#footnote-12)
* Building them up so they could withstand the pressures of darkness.

PAUSE

Walking Katie back to her dorm room.

PAUSE

**For Paul and Barnabas, it was simple.**

After ministering in Derbe, they could have taken the shortest and safest route back home, but instead they retraced their steps, revisiting Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra (cf. Rom 15:16; Col 1:28; 1 Thess. 2:17–20).[[13]](#footnote-13)

* Why?
* So, they could spend more time with these new believers. So, they could strengthen and encourage them.[[14]](#footnote-14)
	+ So, they could teach them and instruct them in sound doctrine.
* Paul and Barnabas knew the challenges. They knew the obstacles and the persecutions and pressures that were going to come.
	+ They faced opposition almost everywhere they went in Acts 13-14.
	+ So, rather than taking the direct route across campus, they circled back to fortify new believers.

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Church, we need one another to continue in our faith. We need one another to help us not fall away back into our old lives of sin. We need one another for accountability, to have brothers and sisters that are close enough to give realistic and biblical warnings.[[15]](#footnote-15)

* To help us stay on the straight and narrow.
* This is our God-given DNA.

Jesus said in…

***Matthew 7:13 NLT*** *“You can enter God’s Kingdom only through the narrow gate. The highway to hell is broad, and its gate is wide for the many who choose that way.****14****But the gateway to life is very narrow and the road is difficult, and only a few ever find it.*

**Paul’s goal as a missionary was to make disciples, but also to circle back around and strengthen and encourage them in the faith.**

* Paul and Barnabas believed strengthening, encouraging, and fortifying one another was in the blueprint.

So, as a local church, we exist to make disciples of Jesus Christ, and as disciples of Jesus Christ, to help one another persevere and press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us.

Last word. Multiplying. We exist to make, mature, and multiply disciples but…

1. **What does it mean to MULTIPLY disciples?**

**For Paul and Barnabas, it meant establishing some leadership and structure so that the new congregations could move into the next spiritual generation.[[16]](#footnote-16)**

* They appointed elders in every church, prayed over them, and turned them over to the care of the Lord.
* And I don’t think Paul’s goal was to provide us with a theology of leadership, complete with policies and procedures.[[17]](#footnote-17)

The goal was to provide some leadership to equip and empower the churches to become effective disciple makers who could multiply disciples and reach the lost.

* This is our God-given blueprint.

**Paul and Barnabas were interested in multiplication, not just addition.**

I can still remember learning my multiplication tables in Mrs. Dye’s class. We started with 1 x 1 and then went all the way to 12 x 12.

* A pizza party awaited everyone who got them right.
* But the repetition drove those tables into my mind in such a way that I still know them decades later.

**Paul’s goal as a missionary was to make disciples who would make more disciples.**

The end goal of appointing elders was to multiply disciples of Jesus in Galatia.

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**And as a local church, we exist to be more than consumers. We exist to reproduce in others what God has produced in us.**

* This is our God-given DNA.

**Cedar Creek COG exists to make, mature, and multiply disciples of Jesus Christ.**

In the 1950’s NT scholar George Ladd wrote:

 “How are we to know when the mission is completed? I answer, I do not know. God alone knows the definition of terms. I cannot precisely define who “all the nations” are. Only God knows exactly the meaning of “evangelize.” He alone, who has told us that this Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a testimony unto all the nations, will know when that objective has been accomplished. But I do not need to know. I know only one thing: Christ has not yet returned; therefore, the task is not yet done. When it is done, Christ will come. Our responsibility is not to insist on defining the terms of our task; our responsibility is to complete it. So long as Christ does not return, our work is undone. Let us get busy and complete our mission.”[[18]](#footnote-18)

1. Thomas Oden, 401. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/the-mission-of-the-church/ [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/the-mission-of-the-church/ [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. John R. W. Stott, [*The Message of Acts: The Spirit, the Church & the World*](https://ref.ly/logosres/bstus65ac?ref=Bible.Ac12.25-13.4a&off=6951&ctx=onary+service%3b+they+~were+%E2%80%98sent%E2%80%99+by+the+S), The Bible Speaks Today (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 218. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Weber, [*Matthew*](https://ref.ly/logosres/hntc61mt?ref=Bible.Mt28.18-20&off=3124&ctx=+of+Jesus%E2%80%99+meaning.+~The+point+is+that+we), 484–485. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. https://www.jesusisthesubject.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/04Ordinances.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Oden, *Classic Christianity*, 573. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Hans Kvalbein, [“Go Therefore and Make Disciples ... The Concept of Discipleship in the New Testament,”](https://ref.ly/logosres/themelios13-2?ref=Page.p+52&off=2329&ctx=n+Christian+baptism%0a~We+have+noticed+that) *Themelios* 13, no. 2 (1988): 52. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. A. W. Tozer, [*Discipleship: What It Truly Means to Be a Christian--Collected Insights from A. W. Tozer*](https://ref.ly/logosres/dscplshptozer?ref=Page.p+61&off=355&ctx=+in+my+feeling+that+~a+notable+heresy+has) (Chicago, IL: Wingspread, 2018), 61. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Lawless, 18. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Morris, [*The Gospel according to Matthew*](https://ref.ly/logosres/pntcmatt?ref=Bible.Mt28.20&off=614&ctx=with+a+way+of+life.+~As+we+have+seen+thro), 749. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. William J. Larkin Jr., [*Acts*](https://ref.ly/logosres/ivntcact?ref=Bible.Ac14.21-22&off=928&ctx=ot+properly+stored.%0a~Paul%E2%80%99s+purpose+is+%E2%80%9Ct), vol. 5, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Westmont, IL: IVP Academic, 1995), Ac 14:21–22. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Allison A. Trites, William J. Larkin, [*Cornerstone Biblical Commentary, Vol 12: The Gospel of Luke and Acts*](https://ref.ly/logosres/cstonecm63lu?ref=Bible.Ac14.21-28&off=2270&ctx=+disciples+(14%3a21).+~Since+Paul%E2%80%99s+goal+in) (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2006), 514. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. I. Howard Marshall, [*Acts: An Introduction and Commentary*](https://ref.ly/logosres/tntc65acus?ref=Bible.Ac14.21-28&off=246&ctx=e+hostile+atmosphere~+which+they+had+left), vol. 5, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1980), 254. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. I. Howard Marshall, [*Acts: An Introduction and Commentary*](https://ref.ly/logosres/tntc65acus?ref=Bible.Ac14.21-23&off=762&ctx=naries+were+able+to+~encourage+the+young+), vol. 5, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1980), 255. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. William J. Larkin Jr., [*Acts*](https://ref.ly/logosres/ivntcact?ref=Bible.Ac14.23-25&off=1671&ctx=Tim+1%3a12%2c+14).+Such+~leadership+will+take), vol. 5, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Westmont, IL: IVP Academic, 1995), Ac 14:23–25. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. William J. Larkin Jr., [*Acts*](https://ref.ly/logosres/ivntcact?ref=Bible.Ac14.23-25&off=27&ctx=dation+(14%3a23%E2%80%9325)%EF%BB%BF*+~Paul+and+Barnabas+co), vol. 5, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Westmont, IL: IVP Academic, 1995), Ac 14:23–25. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justin-taylor/when-will-christ-return/ [↑](#footnote-ref-18)