

CITY CHURCH DNA DEVOTIONAL – WEEK 2

DNA Day 7 - Grace-shaped church part 1

Friday 20th January 2023

There's no such thing as a solo Christian. Grace does more than just bring about our own personal salvation – it invites us to be part of God's family, knitting women and men from all walks of life together into the beautifully diverse tapestry of His church. Grace gives us a new purpose, a new calling, and a new identity as part of His people.

In his description of the body of Christ, the apostle Paul writes this to the church in Corinth:

*Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. **1 Corinthians 12:12–13.***

It doesn't matter where you're at in your journey of faith. If you have put your trust in Jesus, His grace enables you to experience total acceptance, belonging and inclusion in His family. Grace releases you from the burden of performing and pretending that you've got your life sorted. It frees you to be totally honest about your flaws and failures, confident that you are surrounded by sisters and brothers who are committed to seeing you live in all that God has for you.

Pray

Lord Jesus Christ, thank you that your body was broken so that I could be made whole, and that you invite me to take my place at your family table. Fill me with fresh wonder that I am part of your bride, the Church, and show me how I can serve the body of Christ.

DNA Day 8 - Grace-Shaped Church Part 2

Saturday 21st January 2023

How does grace shape how we relate to one another and contribute to the life of our church?

Look to Jesus. At the cross, He reconciled us to each other and to His Father in Heaven; through His life, He provides a perfect model of how we are to live together as His redeemed people, the church. Even though He enjoyed all the riches and privileges of heaven, He chose to serve rather than be served. This is how the apostle Paul describes the example and mindset of Jesus:

*Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross! **Philippians 2:6–8***

Of course, there is nothing we could do to earn or reciprocate His sacrificial love. But, just as Jesus laid Himself down for us, so we are to lay ourselves down for our sisters and brothers. This is why Paul encourages us: "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves" (Philippians 2:3).

So, when we show up to a church service on a Sunday morning or head to our connect group, the first thing on our mind shouldn't just be, *What can I get out of this?* Instead, we should ask, *How can I serve and build up the body of Christ, sharing with others the grace that I have received?*

Pray

Lord Jesus, thank you that you humbled yourself by becoming obedient to death. Help me to show that same sacrificial love to my brothers and sisters, and to use the gifts that you have given me to serve your people.

DNA Day 9 - Grace for the City – Part 1

Monday 23rd January 2023

When God takes hold of our lives, He leaves no stone unturned. Grace changes everything about us, overflowing into every crack and crevice of our lives and transforming us ever more into the image of Christ. Grace gives us a new purpose and new priorities: no longer do we live to serve our own agenda and build our own little kingdoms, but to serve God's agenda and Kingdom purposes. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus famously commanded us:

*But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. **Matthew 6:33***

Whether you've just moved to Bristol or have lived here all your life, this is the reason why God has placed you here. He has called you to this city for so much more than to just advance your career, build your family or complete a degree – as good as all these things are. He has called you here to make known His glory, proclaim His message of grace, and carry His transformative power to every street corner.

So, ask yourself: in which contexts has God placed you in order to "make known...the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27)? In response to God's grace to you, what part will you play in helping Bristol believe?

Pray

Father, thank you for calling me to be part of your Kingdom purposes. Break my heart for the things that break yours, and help me seek your Kingdom where you have placed me.

DNA Day 10 - Grace for the City – Part 2

Tuesday 24th January 2023

Yesterday, we made the bold statement that God has called you to be part of His Kingdom purpose of helping Bristol believe. That's an incredible calling, but it also sounds impossible. You might be thinking, *How can I make a difference in a city of thousands of people, most of whom seem resistant to Jesus?*

Just as God saved us by grace, by grace He provides exactly what we need to do what He has called us to. By ourselves, we are totally weak and powerless to achieve any lasting impact for the Kingdom. But, wonderfully, that's exactly how God has chosen to work out His Kingdom purposes: by graciously empowering His people with His Spirit to make known His glory to the world.

When He commissioned the first disciples to go and share the gospel, Jesus promised that they would receive power from the Holy Spirit:

*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. **Acts 1:8***

Seeing Bristol reached with the good news of Jesus isn't about you and your ability. He asks only for our humble obedience. By His Spirit, He equips us with everything we need to do what He has called us to. He honours our small steps of faith and fills them with His power.

Holy Spirit, thank you for empowering me to do the work that you have called me to. Fill me afresh with your power to go and share Jesus with those around me.

DNA Day 11 - Grace for the World Part 1

Wednesday 25th January 2023

Throughout this series, we've seen how it is only God's grace that has the power to truly transform the human heart. But God's Word is also clear that it is only God's grace that can truly transform our broken world, too.

In Romans 8, we are told that our adoption as God's sons and daughters is just the "firstfruits" (verse 23) of what He is going to do in the whole of creation by the power of His Spirit. Paul gives us a beautiful vision of a future day when our broken world will be redeemed, renewed and restored. In verses 19–21, he explains that:

*...the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God. **Romans 8:19–21***

One day, Jesus will return to judge the living and the dead, establishing His righteousness and justice across the world. On that day, He will make all things new, doing away with sin, sickness, evil and injustice, forever (see Revelation 21). We will enjoy life in unbroken relationship with Him for eternity. This is an incredible hope – the only true and certain hope for a world that looks for hope in things that will never ultimately deliver. Rejoice in this hope again today; and go, share it with those around you.

Pray

Father God, thank you that you have promised to make all things new, and that you have made me a new creation. Help me fix my hope only on you, and give me opportunities to share this hope with those around me.

DNA Day 12 - Grace for the World Part 2

Thursday 26th January 2023

Over the last fortnight, we've considered what grace means for us personally, for our friends and family, for our workplace, for our church, for our city and for the wider world.

As we conclude our series on the value of grace, consider for a moment the world we live in. All around us, people are desperate for purpose, meaning and identity. So many of them are searching for it in things that ultimately lead to disappointment and destruction, rather than the peace and satisfaction that they promise: romance, careers, success, wealth. All of these can be good things – but when we worship them as gods that will fulfil our deepest desires, they will always fail and disappoint us.

By God's grace, we have received life that truly lasts; and with it, true joy, peace, satisfaction and purpose. This life is on offer to all who, in faith, repent of their sin and confess Jesus as Lord. This is life that our world is longing for. It is received only by grace, through faith. Amazingly, God has called us to be part of His purpose to make known this message of grace to the world:

*Then Jesus came to them and said, "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, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." **Matthew 28:18–20***

Today, God challenges us with the same question that He posed to the prophet Isaiah hundreds of years ago: "*Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?*". In faith, will you say, "*Here am I. Send me!*" (Isaiah 6:8)? Will you live and speak for Jesus, so that the watching world might know that true life is found only in Him?

Pray

Father God, thank you for saving me by sending your Son, and for renewing me by your Spirit. Give me courage and boldness to go and tell the watching world about the message of life that is found only in you, received through grace, by faith.