

The Commissioning of the Messianic Community

Maize Plant Discipleship

Module 4 (Version 1.2 – Copyediting draft)

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The Commissioning of Messianic Community

1.1 Précis

The Messianic Covenant Community has been commissioned to co-work alongside the Messiah in his mission

Topics

1. Military commissioning (section 1.2)
2. God's commissioning (section 1.3)
3. Commissioned as disciples (section 1.4)

Phrases

Commission To charge with responsibility for a task or duty, as when a military officer is given a specific rank and responsibility (e.g. *he was commissioned after attending the training academy*);

To grant authority to undertake a task or function, as when an architect is authorised to build something, (e.g. *the architect was commissioned to manage the project*).

Scripture

Read these passages aloud together.

- Numbers 27:23
- 2 Corinthians 2:17
- Galatians 1:1
- Colossians 1:25

Read and memorise these two passages, in time for your next meeting.

Matthew 22:14 For many are called (invited and summoned), but few are chosen

1 Corinthians 9:17 For if I do this work of my own free will, then I have my reward; but if it is not of my own will, but is done reluctantly and under compulsion, I am still entrusted with a sacred trusteeship and commission

1.2 Military commissioning

This section examines the experiences of a military soldier, in order to enlarge our understanding of what it means to be *commissioned*. It highlights three principal stages of becoming a soldier: calling, training and commissioning.

Calling

A soldier's life starts when they perceive a *calling* to a life of military service.

A calling is an awareness that a particular occupation represents a desirable, compelling, or appropriate vocation to pursue. There may be many reasons why someone enlists in an army, but at some point they sense a calling towards it.

Training

A soldier's calling is tested with a period of intensive, *basic training*, which potentially equips them for a lifestyle of military service.

Trainee soldiers experience all kinds of difficult trials and hardships that test factors including: discipline, teamwork, communication, competence, obedience, initiative, determination, loyalty. During this time, the capability and characteristics of each individual are either enhanced or exposed as inadequate.

At the end of this period, training officers assess whether each soldier has satisfactorily completed basic training. If they have failed they either undertake the training again, or leave military service.

Commissioning

A soldier's commissioning represents the beginning of their *active service*, as a member of a regiment, or division of the army.

They are equipped and authorised for military service: capable, ready and trusted to fulfil their duty—which includes general soldiering, as well as a personal vocation, such as *infantry, chef, driver, engineer, medic, officer* and so so.

In this new phase, soldiers continue to lead highly-disciplined lives and to experience difficult trials and tests. However, unlike the training phase, significant achievements are rewarded—generally, by receiving additional tasks and responsibility.

– Option –

- Discuss *Soldiering* (section 1.6), or
- Continue to *God's commissioning* (section 1.3)

1.3 God's commissioning

This section explores the origins of the word *mission* and its connection with *commissioning*, in order to understand how the messianic, new covenant community is united with God's mission.

The sending of God

The English word, *mission*, derives from a Latin word, *missio*, meaning *sending*. It was originally used exclusively to refer to God's *sending of himself*,¹ into the world, to restore it from the effects of human rebellion, idolatry and forces of chaos, darkness and evil.

- **The Old Testament² reveals God's covenantal presence**

In particular, the *Shekinah* (glorious presence of God), dwelling within the pillar of cloud and fire, during the exodus from Egypt, and within the *Ark of the Covenant*, visited by Moses and the Levitical high priests, during the annual *Passover*.

- **The New Testament reveals the Messiah, Jesus**

As the *Passover Lamb of God*; as *apostle* and *high priest* and as *the sole expression of the glory (Shekinah) of God...the perfect imprint and very image of God's nature*³—in every way, Jesus, the Messiah, reflects the reality that God the Father is a missional god.

- **The New Testament reveals the Holy Spirit**

As the *Breath*⁴ of the Messiah—sent by the Messiah, as the Messiah was sent by the Father—the Holy Spirit empowers and *sends* the messianic community, anointing us to do the works of God.⁵

The sending of God's people

Mission, having begun with God's *sending* of himself, is enlarged through the biblical covenants, as the people of God are united with God and his mission—his sending of himself—within the world.

- This is what *commissioning* means means: *to join, or unite with a particular mission* (co means joining, uniting or sharing, thus, *co-mission*).

¹*Missio Dei*—an increasingly widespread theological concept; broadly equivalent with God's *eternal purpose* (Module 1).

²Testament = covenant; the *Old Testament* documents the history of the covenant community descended from Abraham; the *New Testament* documents the early experiences of the messianic new-covenant community.

³Hebrews 4:14–16 and 1:1–4

⁴Hebrew: *ruach*, can means breath, or spirit

⁵See John 6:28, 14:12–17 and 16:7–11

- The messianic covenant community is *commissioned* by God: united with his mission to reconcile and restore creation to himself, through the Messiah.
- We have been called to be with him, to be prepared and set apart; blessed, anointed and sent towards the world, for the sake of the world; to bless the peoples of the world, in God's name.⁶

Joining the Messiah's mission

The *mission* of Jesus is the purpose for which the Messiah was sent into the world: to represent the Father and to do the works of God, forming and sending disciples, in his name⁷.

John 20:21 As the Father sent me, so I now send you.

The *commission* of the messianic community means being united with and sharing in the *mission* of the Messiah: representing the Father, joining him in doing the works of God, forming and sending disciples in his name. Thus:

Messianic commission Joining, uniting with the Messiah, in his mission.

– Option –

- Discuss *Commissioning* (section 1.6), or
- Continue to *Commissioned as disciples* (section 1.4)

1.4 Commissioned as disciples

This section explores parallels between soldiering and discipleship.

The metaphor of a soldier

The apostle, Paul, uses the metaphor of a soldier to emphasise that disciples of Jesus Christ must endure discipline, hardship and suffering.⁸

⁶See *Module 1, The Eternal Purpose of God*.

⁷John 16:5, for example

⁸Modules 10–16 explore the disciplines, hardships and suffering required, as disciples of the Messiah progress in their calling to serve God's eternal purpose.

2 Timothy 2:3–4 Take your share of the hardships and suffering which you are called to endure as a good, first-class soldier of Jesus Christ. No soldier when in service gets entangled in the enterprises of civilian life; his aim is to satisfy and please the one who enlisted him.

Called to serve

Military commissioning (section 1.2), explored how soldiering begins with discerning a calling to military service. Messianic discipleship similarly begins with a *calling*. This happens as we recognise that we are called to serve the mission of God, in some way: that we are being called to serve the eternal purpose of God—the *vocation* of the Messianic Community.⁹

Many are called, but few are chosen

Soldiers who hear and respond to a calling to military service progress to their commissioning only after satisfactorily completing basic training. Jesus' words, *Many are called, but few are chosen*¹⁰ confirms that hearing the call to serve God's mission is only a start.

- Like soldiers, disciples of the Messiah need to learn the basic disciplines and specialised skills required for vocational service.
- Progressing from *calling* to *commissioning* requires yielding ourselves fully to the demands of vocational service, becoming disciplined, skilled and faithful in response to our calling.
- This is what it means to be *chosen* by the Messiah: appointed and anointed to work alongside him, bringing in a *harvest of faithfulness*,¹¹ in the power of his Spirit.
- This is how we are prepared for useful service¹² and enabled to become co-workers with the Messiah in his mission.
- This is how we are *commissioned*.

⁹See modules 1–3, incorporating *The Eternal Purpose of God and Dynamics of Vocation*.

¹⁰Matthew 22:1–14

¹¹Hebrews 12:11

¹²2 Timothy 2:20–21

– Option –

- Discuss *Selection* and *Faithfulness* (section 1.6), or
- Continue to *Summary* (section 1.5) and *Discussions* (section 1.6)

1.5 Summary

This concludes the study, *The Commissioning of the Messianic Community*, which:

- Explored the metaphor of soldiering, including calling, training and commissioning;
- Explained that commission means joining together in mission, illustrating how the new covenant community joins with the Messiah's mission;
- Compared military service with messianic discipleship, highlighting similarities relating to obedience, faithfulness and reward.

In summary, the study revealed that

The Messianic Covenant Community has been commissioned to co-work alongside the Messiah in his mission as a community of disciples, called, equipped and chosen to serve God's eternal purpose

1.6 Discussions

Soldiering

Related to *Military commissioning* (section 1.2)

Discuss how the rigours of military *soldiering* and its disciplines differ from the challenges of civilian life.

- How helpful is the military metaphor of *soldiering* with respect to Christian discipleship in the context of your culture and your personal life?

Commissioning

Related to *God's commissioning* (section 1.3)

Discuss one thing relating to the idea of *commissioning* that stood out to you, during this study.

- How might this idea help the development of the Christian community in your locale, or national context?

Selection

Related to *Commissioned as disciples* (section 1.4)

Discuss messianic disciplines and hardships that are equivalent to a soldier's basic training.

- How might a Christian disciple fail the equivalent of basic training?

Faithfulness

Related to *Commissioned as disciples* (section 1.4)

Discuss the importance of obedience, duty and faithfulness to a commission.

- How does the *duty* of a commission differ from the *discipline* of basic training?

CHAPTER 2

The Strategies of Messianic Community

2.1 Précis

Scripture reveals a series of five primary strategies empowering the mission of the Messianic community

Topics

1. The strategy of praying (section 2.2)
2. The strategy of reaching (section 2.3)
3. The strategy of discipling (section 2.4)
4. The strategy of teaching (section 2.5)
5. The strategy of sending (section 2.6)

Phrases

Commission *What* needs to be achieved;
i.e. a task, a goal, a trust, a duty;

Strategy *How* a commission may be conducted effectively;
i.e. a method; a plan of action, directing choices and priorities.

Scripture

Read these passages aloud together.

- Matthew 9:35–38
- Mark 16:15–18
- Luke 24:44–49
- John 20:21–23
- Matthew 28:19–20
- Acts 26:17–18
- Hebrews 5:11–14

Read and memorise these two passages, in time for your next meeting:

John 20:21 Peace to you! (*Shalom, alecheim!*) Just as the Father has sent me forth, so I am sending you.

Matthew 28:19–20 Go and make people from all nations into disciples, immersing them into the reality of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit... teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.

2.2 The strategy of praying

The foundational strategy of mission is *prayer* (Figure 2.1).

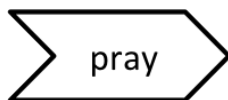


Figure 2.1: Foundational strategy: prayer

Strategic prayer

Strategic prayer is prayer that is not an afterthought, or a response to crisis. It is a forward-thinking, planned priority. As communities and as individuals, before reaching out towards others, we need to first spend time in prayer, so that God may begin to deal with our faults and empower us with his Spirit.

A plentiful harvest

Matthew 9:35–38 When he (Jesus) saw the throngs, he was moved with pity and sympathy for them, because they were bewildered (harassed and distressed and dejected and helpless), like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples,

The harvest is indeed plentiful, but the labourers are few. So pray to the Lord of the harvest to force and thrust out labourers into his harvest.

In the gospels, as Jesus proclaims the Kingdom of God, throughout Israel, he encounters crowds of bewildered people. Teaching his disciples, he uses a ripe, abundant harvest of crops, in nearby fields, as a metaphor for the people.

A harvesting problem

When Jesus likens bewildered people to a rich harvest, ready to be gathered, he is not describing a problem with the harvest. The problem he describes is a shortage of labourers ready and willing to gather the harvest. In other words: a shortage of trained disciples, ready to be commissioned into service.

How does Jesus' teach his disciples to respond to this challenge? He points them directly towards the foundational strategy of mission:

Pray to the Lord of the harvest.

– Option –

- Discuss *Prayer* (section 2.8), or
- Continue to *The strategy of reaching* (section 2.3)

2.3 The strategy of reaching

The second strategic step is *reaching* people, reconciling them with God, through the Messiah (Figure 2.2).



Figure 2.2: Second strategy: reconciliation

Reconciliation with God

Mark 16:15–18 As you go throughout the world, proclaim the Good News to all creation, whoever trusts and is immersed will be saved; whoever does not trust will be condemned.

Acts 26:17–18 I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.

Reaching people implies a holistic process of leading people into *reconciliation* with God and his eternal purpose. Unless people experience the transformative power of the Messiah, they cannot be liberated to serve him as disciples. This process of reconciliation incorporates:

- God's forgiveness and cleansing of our wrongdoings;
- Forgiving others for wrongdoings inflicted upon us;
- Deliverance from dominant sinful behaviour;
- Spiritually and practical cleansing from impurity;
- Deep renunciation of idols and idolatry;
- Establishing wholehearted allegiance to the Messiah and his rule in our lives.

Anything other than a complete change of direction, spiritually and practically, will cause people to stumble, sooner or later, and potentially fail to experience God's kingdom.

Being reconciled

Reaching *others* with a message of reconciliation and repentance challenges our own lifestyle and faithfulness. If we fail to exhibit kingdom values and priorities, while proclaiming God's kingdom to others, it corrupts our personal testimony and, potentially, that of the Messianic Community. Before reconciling others, we must ourselves be fully reconciled and submitted to God.

– Option –

- Discuss *Reconciliation* (section 2.8), or
- Continue to *The strategy of discipling* (section 2.4)

2.4 The strategy of discipling

The *third* strategy is the formation of *disciples* (Figure 2.3).

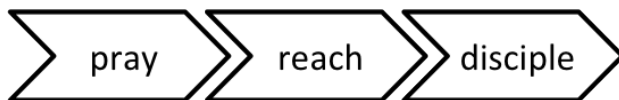


Figure 2.3: Third strategy: forming disciples

Discipleship is at the heart of messianic community

Matthew 28:19–20 Go and *make people from all nations into disciples*, immersing them into the reality of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you

The forming of disciples is the very heart and centre of messianic community and mission. We are called and commissioned to make people from all nations into disciples, by immersing–baptising–them into the reality of God's life, through the Messiah, by the Spirit.

Discipleship deals with our hearts

Discipleship deals with something deeper than the mind: our hearts, the centre of our being, the seat of our motivation, our willpower, our commitment.

- Authentic discipleship renews a person's heart, as new allegiances, loyalties and practical priorities are adopted and applied.
- Through discipleship we are challenged to become wholly aligned with God's eternal and vocational purposes and to serve a new Master.

Unless our hearts are challenged and renewed in this way, we remain merely *religious converts*—engaging in devotional, religious activity, whilst our will, character, allegiances, loyalties and lifestyle remain practically unchanged.

As we experience a process of formation into disciples of Jesus, we face the challenge of whether to make our whole heart available to God—or to shrink back from the challenge of Messianic mission. Only as we allow our hearts to be transformed by the Holy Spirit have we begun the life of a disciplined co-worker of the Messiah¹: one who has been authentically *co-missioned* with him.

The priority of discipleship

Because discipleship deals with the heart, it must be a strategic, practical priority that *precedes* concentrated biblical teaching (section 2.5), which is for the spiritually mature. Teaching deals with our minds—our understanding, conviction and belief—and excessive teaching of immature, undisciplined people risks *puffing them up with knowledge*—instead of *building them up with God's love*.²

– Option –

- Discuss *Discipleship* (section 2.8), or
- Continue to *The strategy of teaching* (section 2.5)

¹1 Corinthians 3:9

²1 Corinthians 8:1; Hebrews 12:7 (Proverbs 3:12)

2.5 The strategy of teaching

The *fourth* strategy is *teaching* (Figure 2.4)



Figure 2.4: Fourth strategy: teaching the mature

Solid food

Hebrews 5:12–14 In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God’s word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.

The *solid food*, or *strong meat*³ of God’s word is reserved for those who have become committed disciples, for whom biblical teaching:

- Provides a fruitful source of insight, conviction, trust, knowledge, wisdom and understanding;
- Develops and deepens their knowledge and appreciation of messianic life, spirituality and vocational service.

Spiritual revelation

The spirit and power of *revelation* plays a vital role with respect to the messianic teaching ministry—as the disciples experienced when they met the risen Messiah.

Luke 24:44–49 He opened their minds, so that they could understand the Scriptures, telling them *Here is what it says: The Messiah is to*

³ The translation, *strong meat*, from the King James version captures well the sense of maturity required to ingest and digest challenging scriptural teaching.

suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day; in his name repentance, leading to forgiveness of sins, is to be proclaimed to people from all nations.

Revelation is a gift of the Spirit that opens our understanding to spiritual truths and realities. The Spirit of God expands our human understanding to incorporate spiritual truths that are not obtained by, or received within our natural, rational minds, but are revealed to our heart, or spirit.⁴

Rational The natural mind of human beings is limited to *rational* knowledge, which is based upon human logic and reasoning;

Relational The Spirit bring us into a personal, *relational* knowledge of God, which is based upon knowing and being known by the Messiah;

Revelational Personal knowledge of the Messiah is rooted in *revelational* knowledge, imparted to the prophets and apostles, which is based upon historical, covenantal relationship with God.

This is why Jesus challenged his disciples to recognise that covenantal, relational life is vital to understanding his teaching; many do not understand God's ways, because they have no experience of, or desire to do God's will:

John 7:17 If any man desires to do God's pleasure, he will know, have the needed illumination to recognise and can tell for himself, whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking from myself and of my own accord and on my own authority.

The Word of God in its fullness

*The word of God in its fullness*⁵ incorporates two interrelated aspects that balance and complement each other: pastoral and prophetic.

⁴1 Corinthians 2:6–16

⁵Colossians 1:25; also Acts 20:27 ff.

Pastoral teaching

Pastoral teaching is effectively directed towards preserving and applying the accumulated wisdom, knowledge, understanding and traditions of messianic community,⁶ including:

- Studying and interpreting scripture (theology);
- Understanding the historical narratives and identity of messianic communities and denominations.

Pastoral teaching and theology can tend to become inwardly protective of tradition, as well as unhelpfully shackled to modern academic standards. This leads to spiritual sterility, generational inertia and a growing lack of effective engagement with those outside the Messianic Community.

Prophetic teaching

Prophetic teaching is directed towards interpreting the historical, contextual *signs of the times*⁷ that call for an appropriate response from messianic communities, including:

- Weighing and critiquing the culture⁸ of messianic communities and their response to God's historical, contextual, *missional purposes*, amongst the nations.
- Offering and relating *the word of life*⁹ to those outside of messianic community, including appropriately weighing and critiquing human culture, in the light of God's words.

Historically, prophetic teaching has tended to be treated as a threat to mainstream expressions of Christianity, leading to a marginalisation of new movements and a deepening of mainstream inertia.

⁶1 Timothy 3:15

⁷Matthew 16:3; see also 1 Chronicles 12:32

⁸We may think of culture as including the *activities, institutions, knowledge, traditions, values and motivations and thought-processes* of a particular nation or people group.

⁹Philippians 2:16

– Option –

- Discuss *Teaching* (section 2.8), or
- Continue to *The strategy of sending* (section 2.6)

2.6 The strategy of sending

The fifth strategy is *sending* disciples (Figure 2.5).

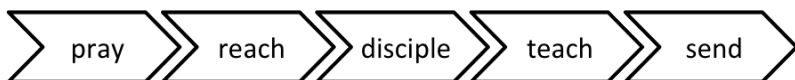


Figure 2.5: Fifth strategy: sending disciples

Culmination of strategy

John 20:21 *Shalom aleikhem!* (Peace be upon you!) Just as the Father sent me, I myself am sending you

Sending represents the culmination of the strategies of messianic community: as people who have been reconciled with God, formed into disciples and taught are sent to fulfil a vocational calling, within:

- Inter-cultural contexts;
- Intra-cultural contexts.

In each case, God is the one who equips, empowers and sends workers, by his Spirit. When a particular community sends workers into new contexts, it should be acting in step with the Spirit, enacting and upholding God's sending of those people.¹⁰

¹⁰See Acts 13:1–4, for an example of the Messianic Community and the Holy Spirit acting in harmony together, in sending Paul and Barnabas on a missionary journey.

Inter-cultural contexts

Inter-cultural mission implies being sent to significantly different cultural, ethnic and geographical contexts.

- Intercultural work requires specialist intercultural training, experience and understanding, because culture profoundly affects how messianic community and vocation is translated into practice.
- Intercultural work is typically highly-demanding, because of various risks and hardships related to living in and engaging with a different culture.
- Intercultural work is the vocation of *apostolic missionary teams* (section 3.5).

Intra-cultural contexts

Because God sends the whole messianic community towards all the peoples and cultures of the world, mission is not limited to crossing geographic, ethnic or intercultural barriers. *Intra-cultural mission* recognises that the messianic community is *sent* towards the people within its own original context.

- Intra-cultural sending implies co-operating with God's purposes and forming disciples *wherever* we are working: carrying vocational responsibility in ways that influence and transform homes, families, communities, workplaces and institutions.
- Whatever vocational role we occupy, each disciple should recognise how faithfulness to the Messiah's missional priorities creates opportunities to introduce messianic perspectives, biblical truths and spiritual power into our personal and vocational contexts.
- This includes participation in health-, wealth- and other worth-creating activities, such as arts, sports, media, civil service and government, which have historically been overlooked, or devalued, by some forms of Christian spirituality.

– Option –

- Discuss *Sending* (section 2.8), or
- Continue to *Summary* (section 2.7) and *Discussions* (section 2.8)

2.7 Summary

This concludes the study, *The Strategies of Messianic Community*, which explored five foundational, missional strategies:

- Foundational prayer;
- Reconciliation with God;
- Formation of disciples;
- Teaching mature disciples;
- Sending missional disciples.

As each generation of disciples follow these strategies, a cyclical process (Figure 2.6) begins to establish an expanding missional, *movement*.

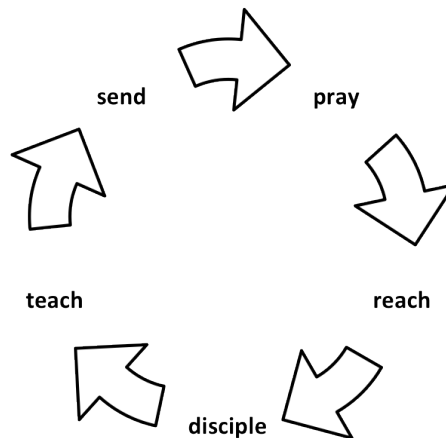


Figure 2.6: The strategic cycle

2.8 Discussions

Prayer

Related to *The strategy of praying* (section 2.2)

Discuss practical habits that could help prayer be established as a strategic priority.

- What difficulties have you encountered in making prayer a practical priority?
- What is your strategic response to the practical actions that you have discussed?

Reconciliation

Related to *The strategy of reaching* (section 2.3)

Discuss what it means to be fully reconciled to God and his kingdom purposes.

- Are you aware of outstanding issues that are hindering you, or your household or family, from experiencing peace with God?
- What actions are you going to take with respect to these issues?

Discipleship

Related to *The strategy of discipling* (section 2.4)

Discuss things to which you recognise your heart is devoted. Be honest.

- In what ways do you recognise you might be sidetracked from a whole-hearted commitment to serving God's purposes?

Teaching

Related to *The strategy of teaching* (section 2.5)

Discuss your personal experiences of what is referred to as the *strong meat* of God's word.

- How have these teachings affected your life?

Sending

Related to *The strategy of sending* (section 2.6)

Discuss what it means to be sent—including whether it is something that happens once, regularly, or continuously.

- What is the role of the Holy Spirit in sending the whole Messianic Community?
- How can we enact a lifestyle of being sent?

The Great Commission

Carefully examine Matthew 28:19–20: words of Jesus known as *the great commission*.

- How closely does it relate to the five strategies that you have studied?

CHAPTER 3

The Structures of Messianic Community

3.1 Précis

The messianic community has a God-ordained structure that uniquely equips it to fulfil the messianic commission

Topics

1. Introducing the trialogue (section 3.2)
2. Pastoral, evangelistic community (section 3.3)
3. Teaching and training centres (section 3.4)
4. Apostolic missionary teams (section 3.5)
5. Prophets, priests, mediators (section 3.6)
6. Structures and strategies (section 3.7)

Phrases

Pastoral From *pastor*, meaning shepherd—implying care, protection, provision, discipline and guidance—as a good shepherd with his sheep.

Evangelistic From *evangel*, meaning *Good News*—the proclamation that the Messiah, Jesus, is Lord, especially of his covenant community.

Prophetic From *prophet*—those appointed by God, to speak to human beings on behalf of God *and* to God, on behalf of human beings.

Apostolic From *apostle*, meaning *sent one*; referring to those sent as intercultural, missionary pioneers.

Structure Vocational communities organised (structured) according to purpose and function, e.g pastoral communities, teaching centres.

Scripture

Read these passages aloud together:

- Exodus 26:30
- 2 Corinthians 5:20–21
- Acts 13:1–4
- Acts 19:8–11

Read and memorise these two passages, in time for your next meeting:

Hebrews 8.5 But what they are serving is only a copy and shadow of the heavenly original; for when Moses was about to erect the Tent, God warned him: *See to it that you make everything according to the pattern you were shown you on the mountain*

Ephesians 4:11–16 His gifts were varied; He Himself appointed and gave men to us: some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers. Their task is to equip God's people for the work of service that builds the body of the Messiah, until we all arrive at the unity implied by trusting and knowing the Son of God, at full manhood, at the standard of maturity set by the Messiah's perfection¹

¹From NIV and CJB combined.

3.2 Introducing the trialogue

A *trialogue* comprises three overlapping circles. It is used to illustrate a dynamic interaction between three different, but related things.



Figure 3.1: Foundational messianic structures

Figure 3.1 represents a trialogue of the three foundational structures of messianic community:

- Pastoral, evangelistic community;
- Teaching and training centres;
- Apostolic, missionary teams.

These structures are designed to work together, in combination, as part of regional, or national missional movements, serving God's eternal purpose. In the following sections, each structure is explored separately, before considering some of the important outcomes that occur when these structures interact together, in obedience to the Spirit.



Figure 3.2: Pastoral, evangelistic community

3.3 Pastoral, evangelistic community

Pastoral, evangelistic community (Figure 3.2) has two functions:

- A pastoral, *shepherding* role;
- An evangelistic, *proclaiming* role.

Pastoral, shepherding role

In its pastoral, shepherding role the community reflects the affirming, self-less, humble, protective, overseeing care that the *Good Shepherd*, Jesus, has for his people. This is demonstrated practically through being both an *hospitable* and a *celebratory, worshipping community*.

An hospitable community

An hospitable community expresses hospitality–friendliness, kindness, warmth, welcoming, care, openness, acceptance and concern for the *alien and stranger* encountered by the community.

- A hospital is a place of healing and restoration, suggesting that practical *hospitality*, reflected in opening our hearts and homes to one another, represents a vital aspect of generating *healing and health*.²

²In English, *hospital*, *health* and *healing* share the same root meaning, which is related to wholeness and well-being.

A celebratory, worshipping community

A celebratory, worshipping community demonstrates the goodness, kindness and provision of God through regular celebrations.

- The covenantal feasts, prescribed in the *Torah*³, incorporate prophetic signs, pointing towards both the good things that God has done for his people *and* his call to faithful service. The annual *Passover* is the most significant Hebraic celebration.
- The new covenant, inaugurated by Jesus, provides a profound fulfilment of the *Passover*. The symbolic sharing of bread and wine, representing the body and blood of the Messiah, speaks of the *Passover Lamb of God*, who sacrificed his life to serve God's eternal purpose.
- Celebrating the Messiah's sacrifice reminds us of the devoted, sacrificial service to which we are called and commissioned, as members of the new covenant community.

Evangelistic, proclaiming role

In its evangelistic, proclaiming role messianic communities reflect their confidence that the Messiah, Jesus, is Lord—over the community and spiritual and natural powers influencing human beings. This is demonstrated by being an irresistible, *inviting* community and a compelling, *believing* community.

An inviting community

An inviting community reflects its evangelistic perspective by *inviting* those outside the community to join in giving *allegiance* (worship; service; faithfulness) to the Messiah.

- Being inviting implies something more than offering invitations to specific events. It means living in a manner that *invites interest* from outsiders through an expression of the mutuality of human community—which starts by caring for the interests of others.⁴

³The first five books of the Bible, accredited to Moses and forming the covenantal foundation of the nation of Israel.

⁴Colossians 4:6

- When a community is living a devoted, obedient, *celebratory* lifestyle that is open to and welcoming towards outsiders, its lifestyle and existence becomes a practical embodiment and proclamation of the Good News,⁵ which is practically irresistible to those who are seeking

A believing community

A believing community reflects its evangelistic function through being a believing community *and* a community of believers.

- Messianic Communities are bound together by a shared trusting faithfulness towards the Messiah: expressing confidence in what God has done through him and faithfully responding to our corporate, messianic vocation.
- Sharing our *daily bread* with others represents a form of *proclaiming the Messiah*, as our hospitality proclaims (announces; demonstrates) his victory over self-centred living.

One community, two roles

Evidently, the pastoral, shepherding role and the evangelistic, proclaiming role of messianic communities overlap with one another: our belief informs our actions; our caring for people provides proof that the Good News of the Messiah is real—because it has transformed our lives.

Note For some people, a form of *belonging* to a messianic community may precede *believing*; for others it may be the other way around. The order is insignificant—what matters is that people become messianic disciples.

Pastors and evangelists

It is the responsibility of those commissioned as pastors and evangelists to equip *the whole community* to express its pastoral and evangelistic nature. This is a leadership role, not a management role.

⁵1 Peter 2:12

- Pastors are not *called* for the purpose of continuous, comprehensive upholding every family and community member, through pastoral support (an impossible task!).
- Nor are evangelists solely responsible for reaching people outside the community (though both may do these things, at times).
- What they are called to be is inspirers, facilitators, catalysts and equippers, whereby a *whole community* learns to mutually support one another—with hospitality and pastoral care—and to evangelise those outside the Messianic Community.

Summary: Discipling into allegiance

Pastoral, evangelistic communities are called to be more than people who congregate for religious rituals. They are called to be a fellowship of people learning to share their lives and values in ways that practically express the Shepherding and the Lordship of Jesus, so that the whole community is working together towards a shared, primary goal:

Discipling people into faithful allegiance to God's Messiah, by facilitating and encouraging deep, lasting spiritual and practical expressions of faithfulness and loyalty, in homes, workplaces and communal arenas (Figure 3.3).



Figure 3.3: Discipling into allegiance

– Option –

- Discuss *Discipling into allegiance* (section 3.9), or
- Continue to *Teaching and training centres* (section 3.4)

3.4 Teaching and training centres



Figure 3.4: Teaching and training centres

Teaching and training centres (Figure 3.4) supplement the formation of disciples taking place within pastoral, evangelistic community (section 3.3). Their function is to equip mature messianic disciples for vocational service⁶—in two types of contexts: *intra-cultural* and *inter-cultural*.

Intra cultural contexts

Intra-cultural teaching and training equips messianic disciples and communities to live faithfully *within their own culture*, amongst their own people. Typical examples include: bible schools, conferences, seminars, workshops, the purpose of which incorporates:

- Researching, understanding, presenting and explaining the content of God's Word, in order to equip disciples with a *messianic worldview*—a way of understanding and relating to the world with a biblical, messianic perspective.

⁶Ephesians 4:12

- Edifying–encouraging, strengthening and correcting–the practices and self–understanding of messianic communities, enabling them to become *pillars and foundations of truth*,⁷ in the context of cultures shaped by different spiritual and moral values.

Intercultural contexts

Inter-cultural teaching and training equips disciples to live faithfully amongst people of a different culture. Typical examples include: Scripture translation; language learning; cross-cultural training; missionary trips, the purpose of which incorporates:

- Preparing and equipping disciples with spiritual confidence and practical resources to undertake *apostolic missionary work* in non-native contexts.
- Researching, presenting, explaining, understanding the *worldviews* of people from other cultures and religions.

Teachers and trainers

Messianic teachers and trainers are called to prepare mature disciples with an understanding of biblical truth that appropriately equips them for faithful works of service, in a variety of vocational contexts.⁸

- *Training* tends to emphasise learning from the experience of others, encouraging learners to be responsive and accountable to overseers, in specific contexts.
- *Teaching* tends to emphasise the value of knowledge and understanding, making learners responsible for evaluating, internalising and using knowledge, in multiple contexts.

Summary: Equipping with truth

The characteristic role of messianic teaching and training centres is to supplement the formation of disciples, taking place within pastoral, evangelistic communities, by:

⁷1 Timothy 3:15

⁸Ephesians 4:11–16

Equipping mature disciples with biblical truth, enabling them to fulfil personal, vocational callings, in a manner that expresses faithful allegiance to the Messiah, in a range of cultural contexts (Figure 3.5).



Figure 3.5: Equipping with truth

– Option –

- Discuss *Equipping with truth* (section 3.9), or
- Continue to *Apostolic missionary teams* (section 3.5)

3.5 Apostolic missionary teams

The function of apostles and apostolic, missionary teams (Figure 3.6) is highlighted by two significant metaphors: *ambassador* and *master-builder*.

Ambassador

International ambassadors are accredited diplomats, or emissaries, sent by a country as its official representative to a foreign country. Paul uses this concept to describe the apostolic missionary role.



Figure 3.6: Apostolic Missionary Teams

- Apostolic missionaries are sent by God, to represent him and his message, amongst people of other nations or cultures. Paul refers to this responsibility as being *ambassadors of the Messiah*.⁹
- Living and working inter-culturally, in non-native contexts, places significant additional demands upon workers, because of differences encountered in a whole range of experiences, including:
 - Language, climate and food;
 - Political, economic and bureaucratic systems;
 - Customs, social expectations and religious sensibilities.

Master-builder

Paul also compares the apostolic missionary role to that of a *skilful architect and master builder, laying a Messianic foundation*.¹⁰ Architects and master-builders are responsible for both designing buildings and supervising the completion of the construction, following which they hand over responsibility for the building to others.

- Apostolic missionary teams cross geographical and cultural boundaries in order to pioneer the formation and establishment of pastoral, evangelistic communities (section 3.3) and messianic teach-

⁹2 Corinthians 5:20–21

¹⁰1 Corinthians 3:10–15

ing and training centres (section 3.4)—particularly amongst people and places where there are no gospel communities.

- In these ways, apostolic missionaries lay a messianic foundation amongst ethnic people groups, or within a particular geographical region. Because they are laying a foundation upon which others will build, the quality of their work is crucial to the future of messianic community in those places.

First in the church

Through these *pioneering* roles, of ambassador and architect, apostles lay a foundation for the building of the whole messianic community and, in this way, are considered *first* amongst the Messianic Community.¹¹

Yet Paul, as one who experienced many trials and tribulations in his apostolic work,¹² identifies his apostolic, missionary service with being *put on display at the end of the procession*.¹³

- Paul is referring to the apostolic missionaries need to face and persevere in the presence of all kinds of difficult challenges—including embracing humiliation where necessary, for the furtherance of the message of the Messiah.
- Through such sacrificial dedication, endurance of suffering, embrace of humility and deep-seated reliance upon the power of the Holy Spirit, apostolic workers represent a profound example to the whole Messianic Community, of our *shared calling* to faithful missional service.

Summary: Pioneering in power

The characteristic role of *apostolic missionary teams* is to lay a messianic foundation, by:

Skilfully, resolutely, purposefully, sacrificially pioneering in the power of the Spirit, planting and establishing pastoral, evangelistic communities and teaching and training centres, in new geographical and cultural contexts (Figure 3.7).

¹¹1 Corinthians 12:28

¹²Read 2 Corinthians 4:7–12 & 6:3–10

¹³1 Corinthians 4:9–13



Figure 3.7: Pioneering With Power

– Option –

- Discuss *Pioneering with power* (section 3.9), or
- Continue to [*Prophetic, mediatory role*]

3.6 Prophets, priests, mediators

In his letter to the Ephesians,¹⁴ Paul describes five special leadership gifts, given by the Messiah to prepare his body for works of services. The gifts of pastor, evangelist, teacher and apostle are clearly represented by one or other of the three principal structures that we have examined (section 3.9), whereas the role of *prophet* is not. This section examines how the prophetic ministry functions within the *structural* perspective that we've been exploring.

Heart of Messianic Community

At the centre of the triologue (section 3.2) is a space where the three principal structures overlap. I believe this central space can be understood and identified as representing the *prophetic heart* of messianic community—as illustrated in Figure 3.8.

The idea of a central heart, interacting with and influencing each of the other ministry structures provides a profound metaphor for the prophetic

¹⁴Ephesians 4:11–12

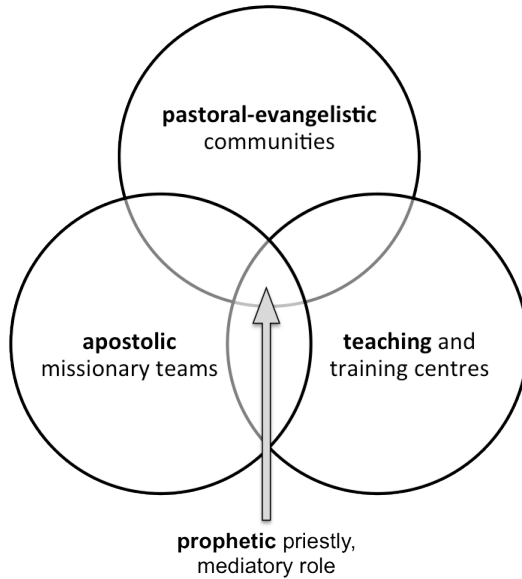


Figure 3.8: Prophetic Role

ministry. It confirms that the prophetic role is vital, influential and central—even though it functions in a relatively hidden, non-structural manner.

Interestingly, Paul describes the foundational significance of the prophet as second only to that of the apostle.¹⁵ My observation is that the prophetic role is easily misunderstood, reacted to, dismissed and under-appreciated, perhaps partly because of its somewhat hidden way of functioning.

Dual mediatory role

The prophetic ministry fulfils a dual *mediatory* role of both priestly and prophetic mediation, on behalf of the messianic community.

¹⁵1 Corinthians 12:27–31

Priestly mediation

Priestly mediation involves *speaking with God, on behalf of human beings*, based upon a purity of heart and faithfulness of life that is able to offer effective intercession on behalf of others.¹⁶

- Faithfully modelling, advocating and encouraging the vital mediatory work of *intercessory prayer*, sharing the intercession of the Holy Spirit.¹⁷
- Facilitating, with others, a fulfilment of the Messianic Community's calling to be a *house of prayer for all nations*.¹⁸

Prophetic mediation

Prophetic mediation involves *speaking with human beings, on behalf of God*, based upon a particular capacity and responsibility for *hearing what the Spirit is saying to the Messianic Community*.

- Providing discernment, direction and insight—when messianic communities are embracing the challenges and responsibilities of particular contexts and historical events;
- Providing exhortation, clarification and even rebuke—when messianic communities are failing in their vocational calling to serve God's purposes.

God's heartbeat

The prophetic role may also be referred to as *hearing God's heartbeat*.¹⁹ This idea communicates the spiritual intimacy that enables prophets to:

- Walk sufficiently closely with God to discern the thoughts, feelings and intentions upon his heart;
- Share in the intercessory ministry of the Spirit;

¹⁶James 5:13–19; Psalm 24:3–4; also *Module 8: The Dynamic of Intercession*.

¹⁷Romans 8:26–27

¹⁸Matthew 21:13, c.f. Isaiah 56:7

¹⁹See *Module 8: The Dynamic of Intercession*.

- Discern and share God's *kairos*²⁰ word for a particular context.

Note *Those gifted to walk prophetically with God are often sensitive personalities and may well be poets, artists, writers, visionaries or other kinds of imaginative, inventive or creative individuals.*

Summary: Picking up God's heartbeat

The prophetic role is easily overlooked or misunderstood, because of its relatively obscure, non-structural mode of functioning. It is essentially a mediatory role, requiring a sensitive, intimate, faithful walk with God that enables prophets to

Pick up God's heartbeat for the peoples of the world, interceding with the Spirit for the purposes of God and hearing and conveying what he is saying to the messianic community—especially during times of historical crisis and vocational opportunity (Figure 3.9).

– Option –

- Discuss *Picking up God's heartbeat* (section 3.9), or
- Continue to [*Structural dynamics*]

3.7 Structural interaction

Having explored separately the foundational messianic structures, this final section explores some of the vital ways in which the structures function in interaction with each other.

Structures and strategies

The Strategies of Messianic Community (chapter 2) illustrated and explored five foundational strategies—pray, reach, disciple, teach, send—that correspond closely with the foundational structures, explored in this study, as displayed in ??.

²⁰ *Kairos* is a Greek word, referring to a particularly opportune, favourable, suitable or appropriate moment—e.g. see John 7:6–8, 12:23; Luke 21:13; Mark 13:3; Acts 1:6–7; 1 Timothy 2:6; it contrasts with *chronos*, referring to fixed, measurable units of time.

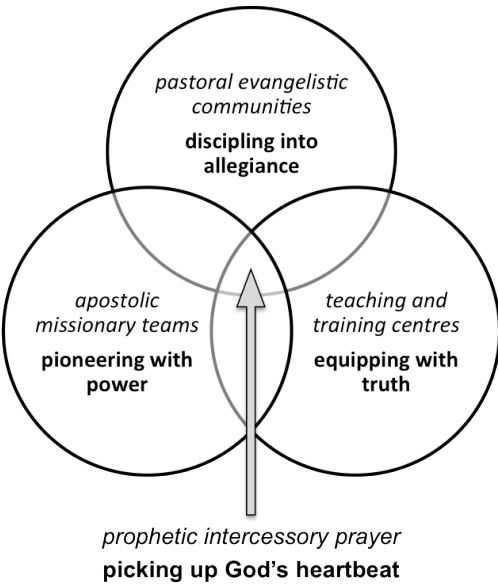


Figure 3.9: Picking up God's heartbeat

[Messianic structure, strategy and function]		
[Strategy]	[Messianic structure Function]	
pray prophetic mediatory role picking up God's heartbeat	-----	--- ---
reach, disciple pastoral, evangelistic communities discipling into allegiance		
teach teaching and training centres equipping with truth		
send apostolic missionary teams pioneering in power		

Structural interaction

An effective missional, discipleship movement becomes established as divinely-ordained messianic structures learn to function faithfully and interact dynamically with one another, in accordance with God's strategic design and purpose.

As Paul wrote to the Ephesians:

Ephesians 2:19b-22 You are...members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ him-

self as the cornerstone. In him the whole *structure* is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built spiritually into a dwelling place for God.

Some of the dynamic interactions suggested by such an integrated, holy movement are illustrated in Figure 3.10 and tabulated in ??.

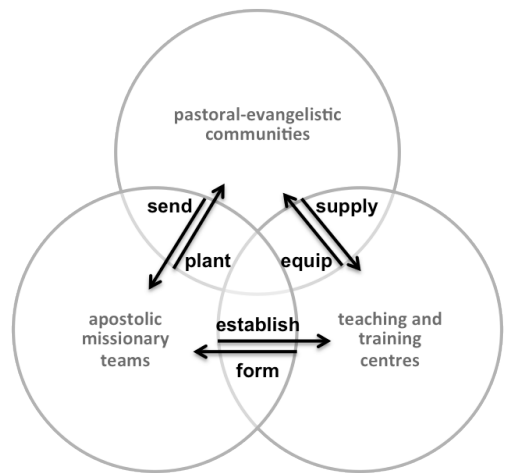


Figure 3.10: Structural interactions

[Structural interactions]	[table2]	Structure Dynamic Structure	-----
----	-----	pastoral, evangelistic communities supplying teaching and training centres	sending apostolic missionary teams
		teaching and training centres equipping pastoral, evangelistic communities	forming apostolic missionary teams
		apostolic missionary teams planting pastoral, evangelistic communities	establishing teaching and training centres
		prophets & intercessory prayer teams mediating on behalf of messianic community	sharing prophetic messages with messianic community
		messianic community upholding, receiving prophets & intercessory teams	

– Option –

- Discuss *Whole body working together* (section 3.9), or

- Continue to *Summary* (section 3.8) and *Discussions* (section 3.9)

3.8 Summary

This concludes the study, *The Structures of Messianic Community*, which examined the foundational structures of messianic community, including their relation to

- The five foundational gifts (pastor, evangelist, teacher, apostle and prophet);
- The five foundational strategies (pray, reach, disciple, teach, send).

The study revealed that:

The messianic community has a God-ordained structure that uniquely equips it to fulfil the messianic commission

3.9 Discussions

Discipling into allegiance

Related to *Pastoral, evangelistic community* (section 3.3)

Discuss how people typically experience a relational allegiance to the following groups: families; tribes; sports teams; nations.

- How are alliances and allegiances formed and upheld amongst your communities?
- What is the significance of being *in alliance* with the Messiah?

Equipping with truth

Related to *Teaching and training centres* (section 3.4)

Discuss how particular encounters with teaching or training have impacted your life.

- Why is it necessary to teach and train members of the Messianic Community?
- How are you passing on your experience and knowledge to others?

Pioneering with power

Related to *Apostolic missionary teams* (section 3.5)

Discuss your own or others' stories about challenges faced and experienced by intercultural workers

- Can an apostle pioneer new contexts alone? If possible, find examples in Scripture to support your views.
- What kind of qualifications (*gifts, talents, characteristics*) are needed by apostolic missionary workers?

Picking up God's heartbeat

Related to *Prophets, priests, mediators* (section 3.6)

Discuss your ideas of why the prophetic gift is not associated with a particular messianic structure

- How might the non-structural aspect affect the confidence of people gifted and functioning prophetically?
- How can messianic communities make appropriate room for prophecy and people fulfilling prophetic, mediatory roles?

Whole body working together

Questions associated with Structures and strategies (section 3.7).

Discuss practical examples, either from scripture or personal experience, of the dynamic interactions illustrated in Figure 3.3

- Which structural dynamic is most critical? Why?
- Which is presently least evident amongst your own communities? Why might that be?

CHAPTER 4

The Expansion of Messianic Community

4.1 Précis

The Messianic Community is intended to be a rapidly multiplying movement of disciples, constantly expanding into all the world

Topics

This Study compares and contrasts three forms of natural *reproduction* with the *expansion of disciple-forming movements*.

1. Honey bees (section 4.2)
2. Maize plant (section 4.3)
3. Commercial organisations (section 4.4)
4. Missional movements (section 4.5)

Phrases

Increase refers to numerical growth

Expansion refers to geographical enlargement, or extension.

Scripture

Read these passages aloud together:

Note Observe how each passage summarises a significant period of activity, during which early Messianic communities established a missionary movement of disciples.

- Acts 2:42–47
- Acts 6:7
- Acts 9:31
- Acts 12:24
- Acts 16:5
- Acts 19:20

Read and memorise these two passages, in time for your next meeting:

Acts 1:8 But you shall receive power—ability, efficiency and might—when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and all Judea and Samaria and to the ends—the very bounds—of the earth!

Acts 9:31 The Messianic community throughout Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace and was built up. They lived in the fear of the Lord, with the counsel of the Holy Spirit; and their numbers kept multiplying

4.2 Honey bees

A bee colony is a kind of *collective organism*, because individual bees cannot survive very long outside of a colony and, although there are clearly defined *roles*, there is no hierarchy or leadership. A bee colony may contain between 2,000 and 60,000 bees, including:

- a single fertile *queen bee*
- a few thousand fertile male *drone bees*
- several thousand non-fertile female *worker bees*



Figure 4.1: A swarm of bees

Increase

A colony grows as workers raise thousands of new bees, born to the queen. Usually, around a queen's second springtime, a colony will prepare to *swarm* (Figure 4.1). In readiness for swarming, worker bees begin preparing new virgin queen bees, one of which will take over the existing hive, by killing all of the other virgin queens, after the old queen leaves with the swarm.

Division

When it is time for the swarm to leave the hive, *scout bees* will find a suitable place for the swarm to gather initially and report this location to the colony. Shortly afterwards, about 6 out of every 10 worker bees in the colony—usually the the most vigorous ones—swarm around the queen bee. The swarm then leaves the hive altogether, moving directly to the scouted location.

Expansion

Scout bees must swiftly identify a suitable permanent hive location, so the swarm can form a new colony. This step is critical because swarming bees can survive on the honey in their stomachs for only 2–3 days.

Once a new hive is settled, the cycle of growth begins again. The old queen may not live long and must quickly start the process of repopulating the colony, including producing new virgin queens, ready to take over her role.

Summary

Thus, we observe the following characteristics of honey bees:

- **Increase and expansion** – organic, steady, cyclical; dependent on specialised roles (queen, drones, workers);
- **Harvest** – abundant honey, from plant pollen, used to feed the growing colony;
- **Risks** – swarming *divides* the colony, temporarily weakening both groups.

– Option –

- Discuss *Bees* (section 4.7), or
- Continue to *Maize plant* (section 4.3)

4.3 Maize plant

The maize plant is a rapidly-reproducing cereal crop, with a leafy stalk, typically growing two or more metres high (Figure 4.2).

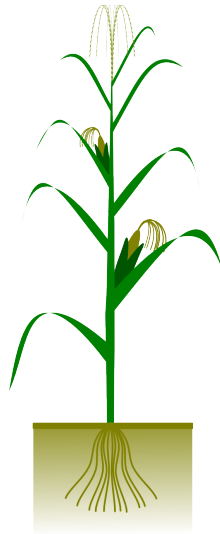


Figure 4.2: Maize plant

Increase

Maize plants grow from seeds sown into the ground. Growth begins when the seed's hard, outer shell breaks open, allowing the soft, inner kernel to access the moisture and nutrients within the soil. It immediately sprouts roots and a single stem that moves upwards, towards the surface of the soil.

Once through the surface, the plants leaves can begin photosynthesising sunlight, while its roots continue drawing on soil nutrients and moisture. In arid locations, typical of Africa, the most significant growth factor is a sufficiency of rainfall.

Multiplication

Each maize plant produces a number of ears, each of which typically contains 600–800 seeds. Thus, in one season, a single plant may produce thousands of seeds.

Expansion

Maize plants expand into new areas through redistribution of their seeds. Because of the way the plant has been cultivated, over hundreds of years, the intervention of farmers is required to effectively distribute seeds.

Summary

Thus, we observe the following characteristics of maize plants:

- **Increase and expansion** – organic, rapid, fruitful; each plant potentially produces a thousand-fold multiplication of seeds, often twice a year, depending on climate and soil conditions.
- **Harvest** – farmers harvest much of the seed for food, as well as for resowing.
- **Risks** – shallow roots make plants susceptible to poor soils, drought and severe winds.

– Option –

- Discuss *Maize* (section 4.7), or
- Continue to *Commercial organisations* (section 4.4)

4.4 Commercial organisations

Commercial, business organisations (including most charitable enterprises) seek to achieve *economic growth*, using profit and loss accounts as the primary indicator of success and failure, respectively.

A large corporation, such as a mineral company, can often grow to employ hundreds of thousands of people, in multiple offices, in many different countries, with a budget larger than some nations.

Increase

Organisational growth typically happens by a process of *duplication*, which essentially reproduces, in a new location, a *copy* of an existing, successful model. The aim is to build upon the proven characteristics of the original concept, in order to increase production and to establish a recognisable brand.

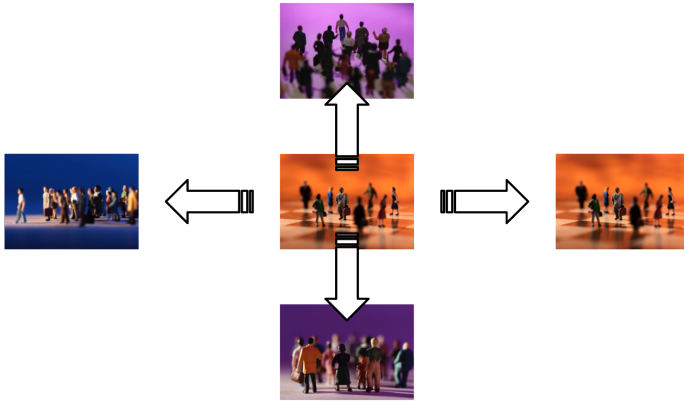


Figure 4.3: Organisational growth

Duplication

Decisions to duplicate organisational structures—such as offices, factories and shops—is usually determined and closely controlled by an hierarchical structure of *command-and-control*. Buildings, budgets, payrolls and management competition often play a significant role in such decision-making processes.

Expansion

Location, format, speed and cost of expansion are generally determined by a management hierarchy, working according to a central strategy. If a new structure does not function according to expectations, it may be closed down, without reference to local, contextual concerns.

Summary

Thus, we observe the following characteristics of commercial organisations:

- **Expansion** – inorganic, slow, expensive; closely managed, by hierarchically defined roles (management, workers, clients).
- **Harvest** – successful duplication leads to increased profits and more managers.

- **Risks** – duplication typically ignores or suppresses local insight and initiative and the effect of contextual differences on the establishment of new structures.

– Option –

- Discuss *Organisations* (section 4.7), or
- Continue to *Missional movements* (section 4.5)

4.5 Missional movements

A people movement represents an informally-organised grouping of people and organisations, dedicated to achieving shared political, social, or artistic ideas, ideals and goals.

A missional movement represents an informally-organised grouping of people and organisations, dedicated to serving God's eternal purpose.

Increase

Missional movements grow through the forming of disciples who make disciples, who make disciples (see *The Commissioning of Messianic Community* (chapter 1) and *The Structures of Messianic Community* (chapter 3)).

Disciples do more than simply *believe* in missional values: they *embody* core beliefs and values by realigning their lives, in order to affect their own contexts and futures – including making disciples... who make disciples... who make disciples and so on.

Reproduction

Within missional movements, as in nature, not all reproduction succeeds. Some individuals and groups fail to mature. Others reach maturity, but don't reproduce. Some start slowly, others rapidly. Some groups evolve a different sense of identity, purpose or form to their originating contexts.

Expansion

John 3:8 The wind blows (breathes) where it wills; and though you hear its sound, yet you neither know where it comes from, nor where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.

Ultimately, the Holy Spirit is responsible for governing the wild, haphazard growth of a missional, discipling movement capable of impacting and transforming whole communities, cities, regions and nations.

- It is the Holy Spirit who is able to direct how and where to establish our efforts and energies.¹
- It is the Holy Spirit who takes hold of a community, implanting a missional vision, larger than any individual or single organisation.

Throughout the world, within every people group, wherever willing hearts and available hands are found, the Holy Spirit is working to establish a community that manifests God's heart. The dynamics and disciplines that we are studying in this syllabus illustrate and demonstrate how he works amongst us, moving us onwards, towards this goal.

Summary

Thus, we observe the following characteristics of *missional, discipling movements*:

- **Increase and expansion** – produces disciples who produce disciples who produce disciples and so on; momentum increases sporadically as it ripples out from originating centres; property, budgets and payrolls, if not altogether redundant, are secondary.
- **Harvest** – transformation of individuals, households, communities, societies, cultures, nations; membership exhibits wide variety of charisma, talent and contextual influence.
- **Risks** – unpredictable results; difficult to measure and assess accurately; groups that lose focus and faithfulness to foundational values, slow the pace of change and expansion—yet are difficult to identify and reform.

¹Witness the role of the Holy Spirit, throughout *Acts* (see Scripture readings, section 4.1)

– Option –

- Discuss *Movements* (section 4.7), or
- Continue to *Summary* (section 4.6) and *Discussions* (section 4.7)

4.6 Summary

This concludes the study, *The expansion of Messianic Community* (chapter 4), which explored various kinds of reproduction, in order to compare and contrast them with the expansion of messianic, discipleship movements.

The study highlighted characteristics associated with the growth, reproduction, relocation, harvest and risks of swarming bees, maize plants, commercial organisations and missional movements. In summary, the Study explored how:

The messianic community is intended to be a rapidly multiplying movement of disciples, constantly expanding into all the world, in order to bless the peoples of the world

4.7 Discussions

Bees

Related to *Honey bees* (section 4.2)

Discuss the collective nature of bee colonies, including the various types of bees, and the phenomena of swarming.

- If bee colonies are considered to be a metaphor for Christian community, what can we learn from their characteristics?

Maize

Related to *Maize plant* (section 4.3)

Discuss how maize plants have become dependent on farmers for reproduction.

- If maize plants are considered to be a metaphor for Christian community, what can we learn from their characteristics?

Organisations

Related to *Commercial organisations* (section 4.4)

Discuss the duplication of commercial organisations with which you are familiar.

- If commercial organisations are considered to be a metaphor for messianic community, what can we learn from their characteristics?
- What benefits and risks would you associate with following the principles of commercial organisations?

Movements

Related to *Missional movements* (section 4.5)

Discuss both the risks and benefits associated with establishing discipleship movements.

- On balance, are discipleship movements a worthwhile investment?
- What are you prepared to invest, what are you prepared to renounce, in order to help the establishment of a discipleship movement?

CHAPTER 5

Information

You have completed *Module 4: The Dynamic of Commissioning*.

Well done!

5.1 Maize Plant Concept

The *Maize Plant Discipleship Syllabus* is structured to symbolically reflect the metaphor of a maize plant (see Figure 5.1), whereby:

- **Soil and roots** represent the biblical, covenantal community, context and vocation of Israel, from which emerges the messianic, new-covenant community and vocation;
- **Plant growth and multiplication** represent the *dynamic* spiritual growth and multiplication of messianic community;
- **Sunlight and rainfall** represent essential spiritual *disciplines* that fuel the growth of messianic community.

Representing messianic community with maize reminds us that the Messianic Community is called, like the Messiah, to become a kind of *life-giving bread* to the peoples of the world (read John 6 & 20:21).

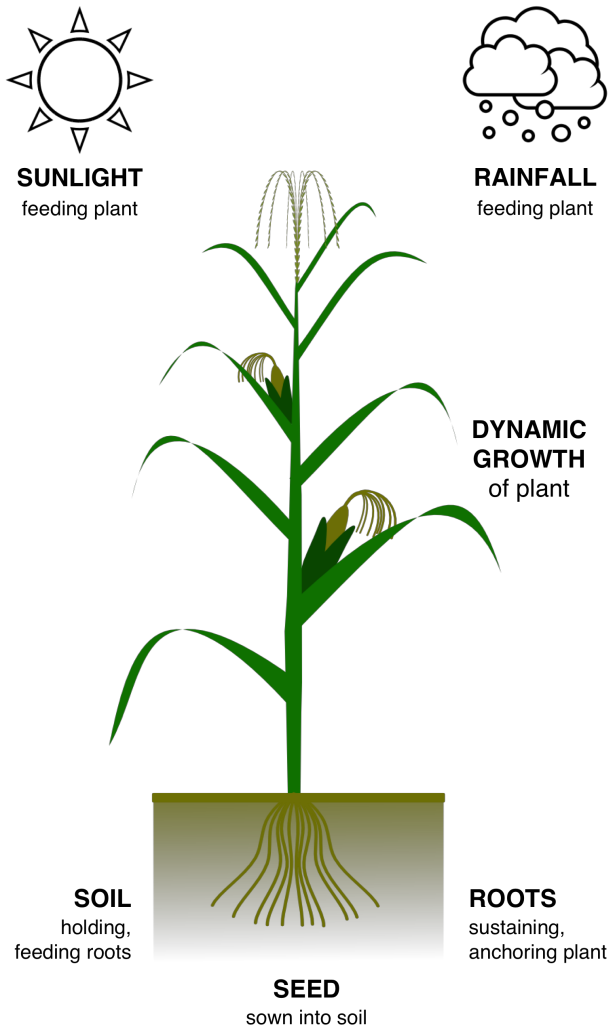


Figure 5.1: Maize plant metaphor

5.2 Maize Plant Discipleship Syllabus

The *Maize Plant Discipleship Syllabus* incorporates sixteen modules, with a corresponding handbook:

1. The Eternal Purpose of God
2. Dynamics of Vocation, The Nations
3. Dynamics of Vocation, The Jews
4. Dynamics of Commissioning
5. Dynamics of Body Membership
6. Dynamics of Revival
7. Dynamics of Truth
8. Dynamics of Intercession
9. Dynamics of Cultural Transformation
10. Disciplines of Spiritual Maturity
11. Disciplines of Running the Race
12. Disciplines of Pressing Towards our Vocation
13. Disciplines of Economic Faithfulness
14. Disciplines of Messianic Leadership
15. Disciplines of Living By Faith
16. Disciplines of Overcoming in the Arena of Spiritual Conflict

5.3 Maize Plant Discipleship handbook

Maize Plant Discipleship handbooks are primarily intended to facilitate group learning and discussion, based upon a series of scripture readings and topical studies.

- Each handbook, or module, incorporates four interrelated *Studies*.

- Each study incorporates: a précis; scripture readings; three to five topical sections and a summary.
- Each study has a corresponding set of questions to facilitate group discussions, either topic-by-topic (section-by-section), or when the entire study (chapter) is completed.

Accordingly, Maize Plant Discipleship resources don't rely upon the presence of a qualified leader, teacher, or theologian—but rather upon facilitators willing to co-ordinate study groups and discussions – see section 5.4.

5.4 Facilitating discipleship

The *Maize Plant Discipleship Facilitators' Handbook* includes guidelines on appropriately facilitating discipleship study and discussion groups, as well as valuable information about the origin and background of Maize Plant Discipleship. It is available from the same source as this booklet – see section 5.5.

5.5 Further information

Additional information about *Maize Plant Discipleship* is available via the following websites:

- **Resources** <http://maizeplantdiscipleship.wordpress.com/>
- **Author** <http://jbclements.wordpress.com/>