

The Commissioning of the Messianic Community

Maize Plant Discipleship

Module 4 (Version 1.0.2 – Reader's draft)

DR JOHN B CLEMENTS

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Introduction

1.1 Topical overview

Module 1 explored *God's eternal purpose*: to call into being a messianic covenant community of people, blessed by God, to be a blessing to all the families of the earth.

Modules 2 and 3 explored *God's vocation calling* to the Messianic Community: to join him in gathering a *harvest of covenantal faithfulness* from amongst both Jewish and Gentile nations.

This Module, 4 explores *God's commissioning* of the Messianic Community, in these four, inter-related *Studies*:

1. The Commissioning of Messianic Community (chapter 2)
2. The Strategies of Messianic Community (chapter 3)
3. The Structures of Messianic Community (chapter 4)
4. The Expansion of Messianic Community (chapter 5)

1.2 Module Structure

Each *textbook* presents one *module*—of sixteen that form the *Maize Plant Discipleship Syllabus* (section 1.5). Each module incorporates four *studies* (chapters). Each study incorporates the following elements:

- **Topical overview**

Including *scripture readings*; *scripture memorisation*; *significant terms* and *sectional outline*.

- **Topical sections**

Between three and five *topics* and a *summary*.

- **Topical discussions**

With an option to discuss each topic (section) as completed, or as part of a series of discussions, after the whole study (chapter) is completed.

1.3 Facilitating discipleship

Facilitators will find useful guidelines on facilitating discipleship study and discussion groups in the *Maize Plant Discipleship Handbook*—available from the same source as this booklet – see Further information (section 1.6).

1.4 Maize Plant Concept

The structure of the *Maize Plant Discipleship Syllabus* is based upon the symbolism of the maize plant – see Figure 1.1:

- **Soil and roots** represent the biblical, covenantal community and vocation of Israel, out of 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* fuelling the growth of messianic community.

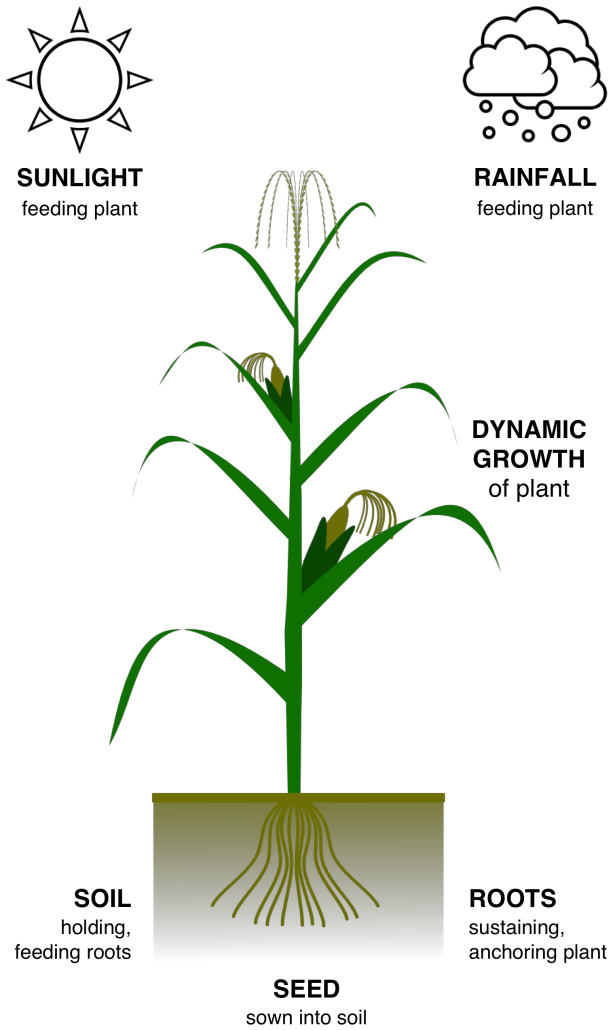


Figure 1.1: Maize plant metaphor

1.5 Maize Plant Discipleship Syllabus

The *Maize Plant Discipleship Syllabus* incorporates sixteen modules:

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

1.6 Further information

Further information about *Maize Plant Discipleship Resources* and the author is available online, via the world-wide web:

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

CHAPTER 2

The Commissioning of Messianic Community

2.1 Topical overview

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

Scripture reading

These passages are quoted from The Amplified Bible—a translation that amplifies (enlarges, expands, explains) the meaning of underlying Hebrew, or Greek ideas.

Numbers 27:23 Moses did as the Lord commanded him. He took Joshua and set him before Eleazar the priest and all the congregation and he laid his hands upon him and *commissioned* him, as the Lord commanded through Moses.

2 Corinthians 2:17 For we are not, like so many, like hucksters making a trade of peddling God's Word, shortchanging and adulterating the divine message; but like men of sincerity and the purest motive, as *commissioned* and sent by God, we speak His message in Christ the Messiah, in the very sight and presence of God.

Galatians 1:1 Paul, an apostle—a special messenger appointed and *commissioned* and sent out not from any body of men nor by or through any man, but by and through Jesus the Messiah and God the Father, Who raised Him from among the dead.

Colossians 1:25 For the sake of his body, which is the church... I have become its servant by the *commission* God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fulness.

Scripture memorisation

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

Significant terms

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*).

Sectional outline

1. Military commissioning (section 2.2)
2. God's commissioning (section 2.3)
3. Commissioned as disciples (section 2.4)

2.2 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. There may be many reasons why someone enlists in an army, but at some point they sense a calling towards it.

A calling is an awareness that a particular occupation represents an attractive, or appropriate, vocation to pursue.

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 discipline, teamwork, determination, competence and faithfulness to duty. 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 decide 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 and ready to fulfil their duty—which includes general soldiering, as well as a personal vocation, such as *infantry, chef, driver, engineer, medic, officer*.

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 enhanced responsibility.

– Option –

- Discuss *Soldiering* (section 2.6), or
- Continue to *God's commissioning* (section 2.3)

2.3 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 (YHVH) 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

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 mean breath, or spirit.

⁵See John 6:28, 14:12–17 and 16:7–11

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: *to join, or unite with a particular mission* (*co* means joining, uniting or sharing, thus, *co-mission*).
- 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 2.6), or
- Continue to *Commissioned as disciples* (section 2.4)

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

⁷John 16:5, for example

2.4 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

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 2.2), 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 the 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 services: becoming disciplined and skilled in the responsibilities of our calling.

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

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

¹⁰ Matthew 22:1–14

- This is what it means to be *chosen* by the Messiah: 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*.

– Option –

- Discuss *Selection* and *Faithfulness* (section 2.6), or
- Continue to *Summary* (section 2.5) and *Discussions* (section 2.6)

2.5 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 how

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

A community of disciples, called, equipped and chosen to serve God's eternal purpose.

¹¹Hebrews 12:11

¹²2 Timothy 2:20–21

2.6 Discussions

Soldiering

Related to *Military commissioning* (section 2.2)

Discuss how the rigorous discipline of military *soldiering* differs from the challenges of civilian life.

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

Commissioning

Related to *God's commissioning* (section 2.3)

Discuss one thing relating to the idea of *commissioning* that you have considered for the first time, during this study.

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

Selection

Related to *Commissioned as disciples* (section 2.4)

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 2.4)

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 3

The Strategies of Messianic Community

3.1 Topical overview

Scripture reveals a series of strategic steps empowering the mission of the Messianic community

Scripture reading

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

Scripture memorisation

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.

Significant terms

Commission *What* needs to be achieved;

i.e. a task, a goal, a trust, a duty;

Strategy *How* a commission may be undertaken effectively;

i.e. a method; a plan of action, directing choices and priorities.

Sectional outline

1. The strategy of praying (section 3.2)
2. The strategy of reaching (section 3.3)
3. The strategy of discipling (section 3.4)
4. The strategy of teaching (section 3.5)
5. The strategy of sending (section 3.6)

3.2 The strategy of praying

The foundational strategic step is *prayer* (Figure 3.1).

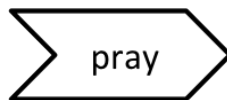


Figure 3.1: Foundational strategy: prayer

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.

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

Pray to the Lord of the harvest.

– Option –

- Discuss *Prayer* (section 3.8), or
- Continue to *The strategy of reaching* (section 3.3)

3.3 The strategy of reaching

The second strategic step is *reaching* people, reconciling them with God, through the Messiah (Figure 3.2).



Figure 3.2: 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 3.8), or
- Continue to *The strategy of discipling* (section 3.4)

3.4 The strategy of discipling

The *third* strategy is the formation of *disciples* (Figure 3.3).

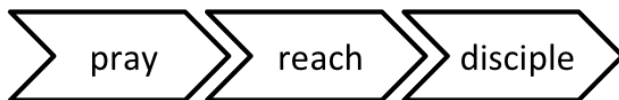


Figure 3.3: Third strategy: forming disciples

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 owned.
- 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 3.5), 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 3.8), or
- Continue to *The strategy of teaching* (section 3.5)

¹1 Corinthians 3:9

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

3.5 The strategy of teaching

The *fourth* strategy is *teaching* (Figure 3.4)



Figure 3.4: 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, *solid food*, 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 However, messianic spirituality is not *irrational*, as some of its opponents claim: it is *relational* and *revelational*:

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.

Full counsel of God

*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, where it has arisen, 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* of a particular nation or people group.

⁹Philippians 2:16

– Option –

- Discuss *Teaching* (section 3.8), or
- Continue to *The strategy of sending* (section 3.6)

3.6 The strategy of sending

The fifth strategy is *sending* disciples (Figure 3.5).

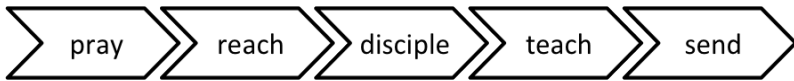


Figure 3.5: Fifth strategy: sending disciples

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, in two particular types of context:

- 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.

- It is typically highly-demanding, because of various risks and hardships related to living in and engaging with a different culture. It therefore requires specialist intercultural training, experience and understanding;
- Intercultural workers must particularly engage with challenges related to the significant linguistic and practical differences that exists between cultures, which profoundly effect how messianic community and vocation is translated into practice;
- Being sent inter-culturally is the vocation of *apostolic missionary teams* (section 4.5) .

Intra-cultural contexts

Intra-cultural mission implies being sent to and within our own cultural contexts, amongst our own people.

- How so? By identifying with and participating in God's sending of the whole messianic community, towards the nations of the world. 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 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 3.8), or
- Continue to *Summary* (section 3.7) and *Discussions* (section 3.8)

3.7 Summary

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

- A foundation of strategic prayer;
- Reconciling people with God;
- Spiritual formation of disciples;
- Biblical teaching of the mature;
- Intra- and inter-cultural sending of missional disciples.

As each generation of disciples follow these strategies, the cyclical process (Figure 3.6) establishes an expanding missional, *movement*.

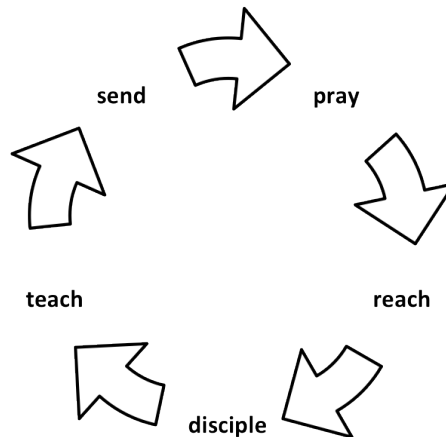


Figure 3.6: The strategic cycle

3.8 Discussions

Prayer

Related to *The strategy of praying* (section 3.2)

Discuss ways of making prayer into a strategic, practical priority.

- What difficulties have you previously encountered in making prayer a practical priority?
- Are you ready to commit to any of the strategic, practical actions that you have discussed?

Reconciliation

Related to *The strategy of reaching* (section 3.3)

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 3.4)

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

- Are you whole-heartedly committed to being available to serve God's kingdom purposes, in whatever way he calls you?

Teaching

Related to *The strategy of teaching* (section 3.5)

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 3.6)

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 4

The Structures of Messianic Community

4.1 Topical overview

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

Scripture reading

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

Scripture memorisation

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

Significant terms

Pastoral From *pastor*, meaning *shepherd*—implying care, safety, protection, provision—like 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.

Sectional outline

1. A combination of structures (section 4.2)
2. Pastoral, evangelistic community (section 4.3)
3. Teaching and training centres (section 4.4)
4. Apostolic missionary teams (section 4.5)
5. Prophetic mediatory role (section 4.6)
6. Structural dynamics (section 4.7)

¹From NIV and CJB combined.

4.2 A combination of structures

A *trialogue* comprises three overlapping circles. The model illustrates the dynamic interaction between the foundational structures of messianic community, which include:

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

These structures are designed to work together, in combination, as part of a regional, or national missional movement, serving God's eternal purpose (Figure 4.1). In the following sections, each structure is explored separately, in detail, before examining how they interact together.



Figure 4.1: Foundational messianic structures

4.3 Pastoral, evangelistic community

Pastoral, evangelistic community (Figure 4.2) has two functions:



Figure 4.2: Pastoral, evangelistic community

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

Pastoral, shepherding role

In its pastoral, shepherding role the community reflects the protective, overseeing care that the *Good Shepherd*, Jesus, has for his people. It is demonstrated through being 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 *inviting* community and a *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 by expressing 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

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

Pastors and evangelists are responsible for equipping *the whole community* to express its pastoral and evangelistic nature. Thus,

- Pastors are not, first and foremost, called to provide comprehensive pastoral support to community members. Nor are evangelists solely responsible for reaching people outside the community (though they may do these things).

⁵1 Peter 2:12

- They are, first and foremost, called to be encouragers, facilitators and equippers of community members, so that 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

Our exploration of pastoral, evangelistic community offers a significant evaluation of the true, biblical nature of what we call *local church*.

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 together the whole community is working towards a principal goal of:

Discipling people into faithful allegiance to God's Messiah

Facilitating and encouraging deep, lasting spiritual and practical expressions of faithfulness and loyalty, in homes, workplaces and communal arenas (Figure 4.3).



Figure 4.3: Discipling into allegiance

– Option –

- Discuss *Discipling into allegiance* (section 4.9), or
- Continue to *Teaching and training centres* (section 4.4)

4.4 Teaching and training centres



Figure 4.4: Teaching and training centres

Teaching and training centres (Figure 4.4) supplement the formation of disciples taking place within pastoral, evangelistic community (section 4.3). 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.
- Edifying—encouraging, strengthening and correcting—the practices and 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.

⁶Ephesians 4:12

⁷1 Timothy 3:15

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:

Equipping mature disciples with biblical truth

Enabling them to fulfil personal, vocational callings, in a manner that expresses allegiance to the Messiah, in a range of contexts (Figure 4.5).

⁸Ephesians 4:11–16



Figure 4.5: Equipping with truth

– Option –

- Discuss *Equipping with truth* (section 4.9), or
- Continue to *Apostolic missionary teams* (section 4.5)

4.5 Apostolic missionary teams



Figure 4.6: Apostolic Missionary Teams

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

Ambassadorial role

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.

- Apostolic missionaries are sent by God, to represent him and his message, amongst people of other nations and 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 role

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 their construction.

- Apostolic missionary teams cross geographical and cultural boundaries in order to pioneer the formation and establishment of pastoral, evangelistic communities (section 4.3) and messianic teaching and training centres (section 4.4) –particularly amongst people and places where there are no gospel communities.
- In these ways, apostolic missionaries lay a messianic foundation amongst an ethnic people group, 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.

⁹2 Corinthians 5:20–21

¹⁰1 Corinthians 3:10–15

First in the church

Through these *pioneering* roles, of ambassador and architect, apostles are rightly considered *first* amongst the Messianic Community.¹¹ Yet Paul identifies his apostolic, missionary service with being *put on display at the end of the procession*.¹²

- Paul, as one who experienced many trials and tribulations in his apostolic work¹³, is referring to the need for apostolic missionaries to be ready to persevere in the face of all kinds of difficult challenges, even embracing humiliation where necessary, for the furtherance of the message of the Messiah.
- Thus, through their sacrificial dedication, endurance of suffering, embrace of humility and deep-seated reliance upon the power of the Holy Spirit, apostolic, missionary workers provide a profound example, to the whole Messianic Community, of our shared calling to faithful missional service¹⁴.

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 contextually appropriate teaching and training centres, in new geographical and cultural contexts (Figure 4.7).

– Option –

- Discuss *Pioneering with power* (section 4.9), or
- Continue to *Prophetic, mediatory role* (section 4.6)

¹¹1 Corinthians 12:28

¹²1 Corinthians 4:9–13

¹³Read 2 Corinthians 4:7–12 & 6:3–10

¹⁴1 Corinthians 6:3–10



Figure 4.7: Pioneering With Power

4.6 Prophetic, mediatory role

In his letter to the Ephesians,¹⁵ 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 (section 4.9). The role of *prophet* is not.

Interestingly, Paul describes the significance of the prophet as second only to that of the apostle¹⁶. My observation is that the prophetic role is easily misunderstood and under-appreciated. This section examines how it fits with the *structural* perspective that we've been exploring.

Heart of Messianic Community

At the centre of the trifold model 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 4.8.

The idea of a central heart, interacting with and influencing each of the other ministry structures provides a profound metaphor for the prophetic ministry. It confirms that the prophetic role is vital, influential and central—even though it functions in a relatively hidden, non-structural manner¹⁷.

¹⁵Ephesians 4:11–12

¹⁶1 Corinthians 12:27–31

¹⁷1 Corinthians 12

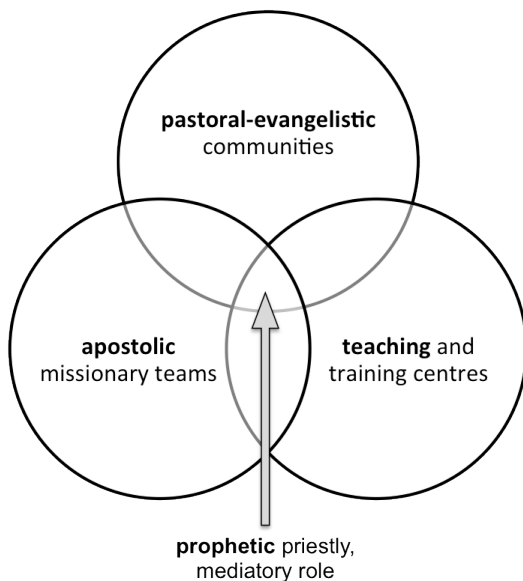


Figure 4.8: Prophetic Role

Dual mediatory role

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

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 others¹⁸.

- Faithfully modelling, advocating and encouraging the vital mediatory work of *intercessory prayer*, sharing the intercession of the Holy Spirit.¹⁹

¹⁸James 5:13–19; Psalm 24:3–4; also *Module 8: The Dynamic of Intercession*.

¹⁹Romans 8:26–27

- Facilitating, with others, a fulfilment of the Messianic Community's calling to be a *house of prayer for all nations*.²⁰

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*²¹. 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;
- Discern and share God's *kairos*²² 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.*

²⁰Matthew 21:13, c.f. Isaiah 56:7

²¹See *Module 8: The Dynamic of Intercession*.

²² *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.

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, hearing and conveying what he is saying to the messianic community, especially during times of historical crisis and vocational opportunity (Figure 4.9)

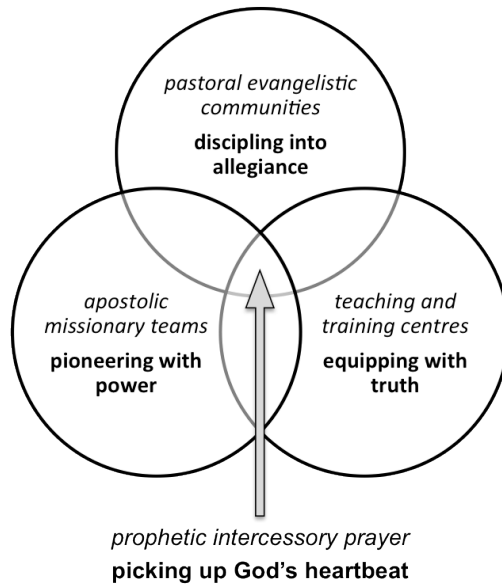


Figure 4.9: Picking up God's heartbeat

– Option –

- Discuss *Picking up God's heartbeat* (section 4.9), or
- Continue to *Structural dynamics* (section 4.7)

4.7 Structural dynamics

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

Structures and strategies

The strategies of messianic community (chapter 3) illustrated and explored five foundational strategies (pray, reach, disciple, teach, send), which correspond closely with the foundational structures of messianic community, explored in this study. This correspondence is displayed in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Messianic structure, strategy and function

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

Structural interactions

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

An effective missional, discipleship movement is established on a biblical, messianic foundation as the divinely-ordained structures of messianic community function faithfully and interact dynamically with one another, in accordance with God's strategic design and purpose. Some of the dynamic interactions suggested by such a movement are tabulated in Table 4.2 and illustrated in Figure 4.10.

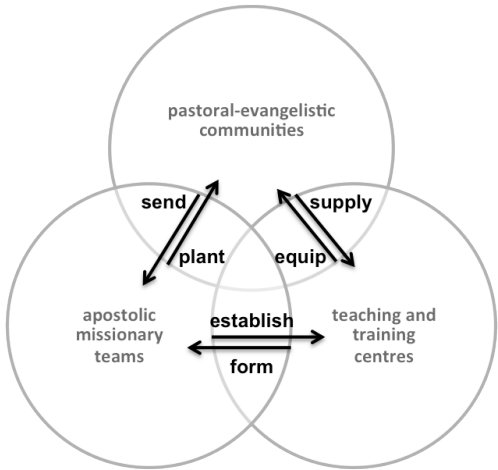


Figure 4.10: Structural interactions

Table 4.2: Structural interactions

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 4.9), or
- Continue to *Summary* (section 4.8) and *Discussions* (section 4.9)

4.8 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).

In summary, the study revealed that:

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

4.9 Discussions

Discipling into allegiance

Related to *Pastoral, evangelistic community* (section 4.3)

Discuss how people typically experience a relational allegiance to family, tribe and nation

- How are alliances and allegiances formed and upheld amongst your communities?
- What does it mean (to you) to be *allied* to the Messiah?

Equipping with truth

Related to *Teaching and training centres* (section 4.4)

Discuss how particular teaching or training courses 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 4.5)

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 *Prophetic, mediatory role* (section 4.6)

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 Structural dynamics (section 4.7).

Discuss your experiences of the different dynamic interactions illustrated in ??

- What examples can you give, from scripture or experience of the various interactions?
- Which of the illustrated structural dynamics is most critical?

CHAPTER 5

The Expansion of Messianic Community

5.1 Topical overview

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

Scripture reading

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

Scripture memorisation

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

Significant terms

Expansion growth, increase in size, enlargement, extension, development; spread, proliferation, multiplication

Sectional outline

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

1. Honey bees (section 5.2)
2. Maize plant (section 5.3)
3. Commercial organisations (section 5.4)
4. Missional movements (section 5.5)

5.2 Honey bees

A bee colony is a kind of *collective organism*, because individual bees cannot survive very long outside of a colony. Each 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*

Growth

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 5.1). 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.

Reproduction

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.



Figure 5.1: A swarm of bees

Relocation

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

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.

Characteristics

In summary, we observe the following characteristics of honey bees:

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

– Option –

- Discuss *Bees* (section 5.7), or
- Continue to *Maize plant* (section 5.3)

5.3 Maize plant

The maize plant is a rapidly-reproducing cereal crop, with a leafy stalk, typically growing two or more metres high (Figure 5.2).

Growth

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 the sufficiency of rainfall.



Figure 5.2: Maize plant

Reproduction and relocation

Maize plants multiply by a redistribution of their seeds. Each plant produces a number of ears, each of which typically contains 600–800 seeds. Because of the way the plant has been cultivated, over hundreds of years, the intervention of farmers is required to effectively distribute seeds.

Characteristics

In summary, we observe the following characteristics of maize plants:

- *Expansion* – organic, rapid, fruitful; each plant potentially produces a hundred-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 sowing.
- *Risks* – shallow roots make plants susceptible to poor soils, drought and severe winds.

– Option –

- Discuss *Maize* (section 5.7), or
- Continue to *Commercial organisations* (section 5.4)

5.4 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.

Growth

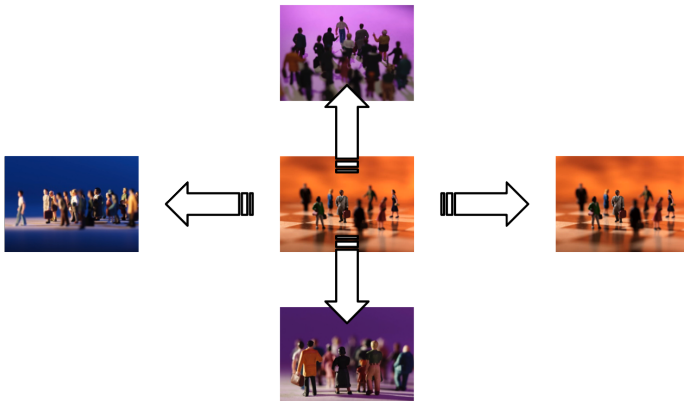


Figure 5.3: Organisational growth

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.

Reproduction

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

Relocation

Location, format, speed and costs of reproduction 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.

Characteristics

In summary, 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 5.7), or
- Continue to *Missional movements* (section 5.5)

5.5 Missional movements

A *missional movement* represents an informally organised group of people who are dedicated to achieving shared political, social, or artistic ideas, ideals and goals.

- Whereas commercial organisations invariably exercise *hierarchical control* over their assets—including management, brand identity, reputation and property, in particular—
- A movement must focusses upon *equipping* and *sending* people that are able to operate autonomously¹, mostly without significant assets, based upon agreed, shared values.

Growth

Movements grow endlessly, organically, *wildly* as new members are disciplined not only to *believe* in core values, but to *realign their lives* accordingly and *allowed opportunity* to effect their own contexts and futures.

Thus, within a missional movement, member groups are essentially

- Self-governing (*including theology & missiology*),
- Self-financing and
- Self-reproducing.

Cooperation and assistance is shared between member groups, but with no individuals or organisation exercising hierarchical, structural authority over another. Accordingly, resources, including buildings, typically need to be shared, recycled or sacrificed altogether.

Reproduction

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.

Within missional movements, as in nature, not all reproduction succeeds. Some groups will fail to mature. Others will reach maturity, but won't reproduce. Some will begin slowly, others rapidly. Some groups will evolve a new sense of identity, purpose or form as they outgrow dependence upon their original contexts—sometimes too hastily, sometimes with greater success.

Ultimately, the Holy Spirit is responsible for governing the wild growth of a missional movement:

¹In a self-governing fashion, making decisions based upon local, historical, contextual factors.

- It is the Holy Spirit who takes hold of a *community*... that receives and takes hold of a *vision*... that launches a missional movement.
- It is the Holy Spirit who is able to direct how and where to establish our efforts and energy².
- A Spirit-led, missional, disciple-forming movement is capable of transforming an entire nation, or region, such as the *10/40 window*, or like *East, West, North, Central*, or Southern Africa*!

Relocation

Throughout the world, within every people group, wherever willing hearts and available hands are found, the Holy Spirit is working to establish a community manifesting 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.

Characteristics

In summary, we observe the following characteristics of *missional, discipleship movements*:

- *Expansion* – produces disciples who produce disciples who produce disciples and so on; growth manifests in different form, method and personnel; momentum increases sporadically as it ripples out from originating centres; property, budgets and payrolls are secondary—if not redundant.
- *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.

²Witness the role of the Holy Spirit, throughout Acts, e.g.

– Option –

- Discuss *Movements* (section 5.7), or
- Continue to *Summary* (section 5.6) and *Discussions* (section 5.7)

5.6 Summary

This concludes the study, *The expansion of Messianic Community* (chapter 5), 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

5.7 Discussions

Bees

Related to *Honey bees* (section 5.2)

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 5.3)

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 5.4)

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 5.5)

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 in helping to establish a discipleship movement?

CHAPTER 6

Completion

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

Well done!