

Facilitators' Handbook

Maize Plant Discipleship Handbook

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PRE-PUBLICATION DRAFT

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Facilitating Maize Plant Discipleship Learning Groups

What is Maize Plant Discipleship?

Maize Plant Discipleship is a learning resource, derived and road-tested in collaboration with Africans and formulated in response to contextual doctoral research in Burkina Faso, to be practical, relevant and accessible for use in African and other post-colonial contexts.

It is being published as a series of short, modular, low-cost handbooks:

- suitable for formal and informal modes of study,
- incorporating reflective learning and group discussions,
- reliant simply upon facilitators co-ordinating small learning groups,
- easily replicable, in terms of both republication and training.

It's goal is to facilitate biblical learning that continuously moves outwards, drawing whole communities into patterns of scripturally-based discipleship, in living dialogue with contextual culture.

Maize Plant Discipleship Learning Groups

Maize Plant Discipleship is intended to be an open, reflective, group learning process, in which leaders and learners alike participate together in discovering what the Spirit is saying, as Scripture is studied and related to contextual “*signs of the times*.”

Why Learning Groups?

There are many reasons to bring together a group of people to learn together. Some people would point to Jesus’ example and his gathering of twelve disciples. Certainly, for most people, groups represent a natural and lively place in which to learn. They bring together people with different experience, gifts, capacities and perspectives.

When we share our lives, we learn together and *learning groups* mirror this reality. Together, we experience and learn quite differently to when studying alone. Reflective discussion with others, in particular, provides a highly stimulating forum for learning. *For further discussion, see Maize Plant Discipleship Learning Process (section 4).*

Learning, not teaching?

Yes. Maize Plant Discipleship is principally a learning, not a teaching resource. Facilitating Maize Plant Discipleship provides an *opportunity* for learning, but the decision to actually learn rests with the student and depends upon many things, including desire, temperament, experience, opportunity, talent, time, energy, environment and so forth.

Accordingly, discipleship should be recognised as a form of learning that is *called out* of students or disciples, through the guidance and direction of a facilitator, mentor, educator or teacher. People in those roles come alongside motivated learners to assist, encourage, facilitate and call out the learning that is taking place within those being disciplined.

Understanding the Facilitator Role

A Maize Plant Discipleship Facilitator can help a group open up to the message of Scripture, to one another and, above all, to the leadership of the Holy Spirit. This section explores how.

Facilitating Spirit-led discipleship

Discipleship can never be reduced to an replication of information, from teacher or text books into students. We may have been taught this way in school; Spirit-led discipleship is different. It *forms*, as well as *informs*.

The intention is that through teaching, reflection and discussion, God's Spirit is able to speak to, lead, warn, direct, encourage, educate, challenge and exhort us personally and corporately. Since each person differs in gift, personality and development, at any time, each person may be learning something different from the Spirit.

Pause for thought...

The goal of discipleship is not to establish shared dogmatic belief or conformity to the convictions of a leader, mentor or facilitator, nor to church traditions, certainly not to every aspect of Maize Plant Discipleship.

The goal is conformity to the Spirit of the Messiah, Jesus, and obedience to the will of the Father.

Facilitating openness

Fostering an environment of learning and discovery, where debate and discussion is lively, yet relaxed and uncompetitive is essential. An ideal environment will allow strong and diverse views to be expressed, without creating conflict or conformity, so all present are comfortable to contribute views, burdens and questions.

Openness can be particularly challenging to foster in cultures where authority traditionally flows downwards and conformity is highly valued. Thus, facilitators should typically contribute to discussions as regular group members, never dominating or belittling the views of others.

- Allow discussion to ebb and flow, as people consider their responses and return to earlier discussions. Encourage others to contribute, especially quieter members, women, youth and elders.
- If discussion becomes harsh or factious, quieten the group, then invite a member with a harmonious or gentle spirit to summarise (not resolve) the tension, then move on.

Who can facilitate?

A facilitator needs to be someone who senses a calling to help others become faithful Christian disciples. This must motivate them to be humble, patient, flexible, warm, open and secure enough to allow others to explore personal boundaries of vocational understanding, experience and creativity, at their own pace.

A facilitator, or mentor, does not hold a position of authority over people. They simply facilitate the gathering of people into groups, for learning and discussion. Accordingly, a facilitator:

- may be a lay-leader;
- may be relatively young;
- may be a woman;
- need not have gone to bible college;
- need not be an established church leader;
- need not be an experienced mentor.

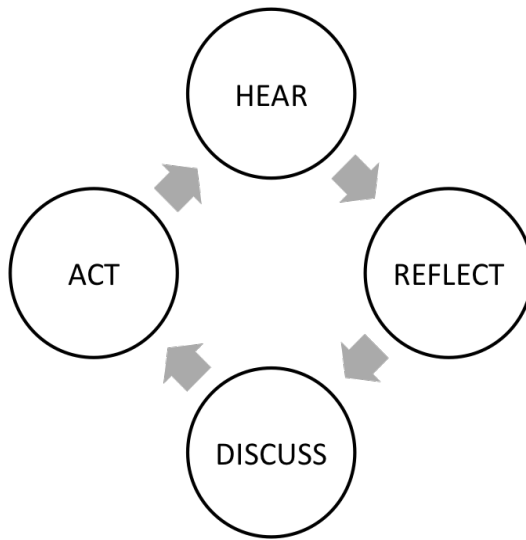
Of course, Maize Plant Discipleship can be facilitated by established leaders, mentors or disciplers, providing they are willing and comfortable to facilitate group discussions that are genuinely *reflective and exploratory*.

Maize Plant Discipleship Learning Process

Maize Plant Discipleship modules are structured to provide a *reflective learning process* incorporating practical, educational principles combined with practical, spiritual principles, drawn from Scripture. Reflective, group learning minimally incorporates four components:

- **HEAR**—hearing about other's experiences and perspectives; practice informing theory and theory informing practice.
- **REFLECT**—reflecting upon the interaction of old and new ideas and understanding.
- **DISCUSS**—testing understanding and sharpening conviction in conversation with others.
- **ACT**—integrating learning into praxis, within vocational contexts.

As this learning process is repeated, it becomes a *cycle*, which can be illustrated figuratively.



The *Maize Plant Discipleship Learning Process* builds upon this basic cycle, by incorporating a simple pattern, drawn from Acts 2:42:

They continued faithfully in the teaching of the apostles, in fellowship, in breaking bread and in prayer.

This provides The *Maize Plant Discipleship Learning Process* with *six* elements (in practice, it may not be possible to incorporate all the elements, each time a learning group meets):

1. **Hear** (listen, heed)
2. **Retain** (meditate, reflect)
3. **Open** (discuss, debate)
4. **Share** (celebrate, proclaim)
5. **Pray** (intercede, bless)
6. **Act** (work, serve).

HEAR... what the Spirit is saying



When we gather together as disciples of the Messiah, to hear biblical teaching, we are opening ourselves not only to human ideas or wisdom, but to spiritual words and truths, taught by the Spirit of God.

Now we have not received spirit that belongs to the world, But the Holy Spirit Who is from God, given to us that we might realise and comprehend and appreciate the gifts of divine favour blessing so freely and lavishly bestowed on us by God. And we're setting these truths forth in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Holy Spirit, combining and interpreting spiritual truths with spiritual language to those who possess the Holy Spirit—*1 Corinthians 2:12-13 TAB*

Pause for thought...

We listen in order to live more faithfully This type of listening is called *heeding*: listening with the intention to learn and follow, or obey.

We listen with our mind, but also with our heart in order to *hear what the Spirit is saying to his people* (Revelation 2:29, 3:6,13,23; Matthew 11:15, Mark 4:9 etc)—not to become *puffed up* with knowledge.

RETAIN... God's message inwardly



It is not enough only to hear God's message: we must learn to *retain* God's word inwardly, where it can begin to *dwell richly within us*. (Colossians 3:16)

The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time... The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful. The seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word and *retain* it, and by persevering produce a crop... yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown — *Matthew 13:18–23; Luke 8:15*

Pause for thought...

Think about how we receive and retain food chewing it, enjoying the taste, swallowing, digesting, inwardly retaining its vitality and goodness.

It's the same with God's word we must “chew it over,” meditating and reflecting upon its meaning and application to our lives, both as individuals and as communities, allowing it to settle in our spirit, where it can form and shape our convictions and renew our hope.

OPEN... hearts to other's perspectives



Discussion and debate is an opportunity to open our hearts to the perspectives and experiences of those around us and those who see things differently to ourselves.

- This requires learning to listen with the heart, as well as the head, in order to appreciate what others are sharing, rather than to win an argument.
- Discuss practical, *vocational* applications of the topical study. Think about how Maize Plant Discipleship teachings relate to the cultural contexts amongst which group members live.
- Allow plenty of time for this aspect of Maize Plant Discipleship learning!

Pause for thought...

Vocation is more than simply our job, or employment

incorporating all the responsibilities towards which God calls us, including workplaces and practices, families, communities and networks.

Consider traditional proverbs that relate to study topics

the *sweet talk* of proverbs can provide fresh insight and be helpful in discussing Maize Plant Discipleship with others, including elders and non-believers.

SHARE... our daily bread



The celebratory breaking of bread, in order to remember the Lord Jesus and his sacrificial obedience, is a significant symbol of new covenant and a profound way for discipleship groups to proclaim their shared devotion to the Messiah.

- Breaking and sharing bread is typically ceremonial, in modern forms of Christianity (*Eucharist, Holy Communion, Mass*). The early church, however, based it simply upon the Passover meal, like the one Jesus shared with his disciples, prior to his death.
- Sharing food together is therefore both a vital part of human fellowship and a practical way of celebrating and proclaiming God's covenantal provision and blessing.

Pause for thought...

Consider incorporating a simple meal perhaps once each month, into times of meeting together and prayerfully identifying it as a form of breaking bread.

If a meal is not a practical possibility consider sharing a small amount of bread together, as a symbolic act of shared hospitality and commitment to membership of the body of the Messiah.

PRAY...for God's kingdom to come



After discussion has taken place, invite the group to pray together, including intercession on behalf of neighbours, networks and communities and local and national rulers and governors.

- Allow the teaching to infuse prayer with fresh confidence concerning God's will and purpose, including personal and vocational concerns and challenges faced by group members.
- Bless one another, with blessings from Scripture, or as led by the Holy Spirit; speak a blessing over your community or nation, or with regards to a specific problem.
- Expect the power of God, to overcome all opposition, through the blessing of his overcoming life in us!

Pause for thought...

Pray for the gospel to deeply impact and transform individuals, communities, cultures and societies throughout your nation, Africa, Europe, Asia and the Americas; pray for unreached people groups.

Pray for the Maize Plant Discipleship Project that it will be used by God to edify and strengthen and bless the Messianic Community, within Africa ... and beyond!

ACT...in light of God's message



The purpose of our gathering to hear God's message is not simply to hear it, but to act upon it. As the epistle of Ya'akov (James) explains, we deceive ourselves when we listen to God's word, but do not do what it says:

Don't deceive yourselves by only hearing what the Word says, but do it! For whoever hears the Word but doesn't do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror, who looks as himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But if a person looks closely into the perfect *Torah*, which gives freedom, and continues, becoming not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work it requires, then he will be blessed in what he does — *James 1:22-25*

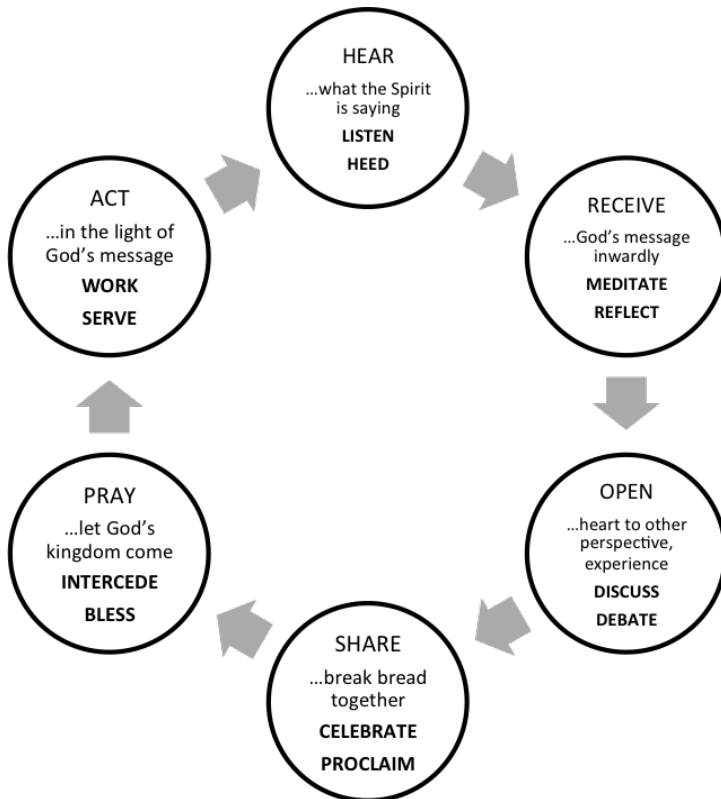
Pause for thought...

The goal of discipleship is to be transformed ourselves and to become a transforming influence in our homes and workplaces and communities.

As we are transformed as part of a growing, dynamic movement of disciples, we begin to fulfil our corporate vocation: to be *a messianic community blessed to be a blessing to the families of the earth!*

Maize Plant Discipleship learning cycle

Combining the six elements of our learning process together produces the Maize Plant Discipleship learning cycle.



Pause for thought...

The Maize Plant Discipleship learning cycle is a tool like everything else in Maize Plant Discipleship, intended to serve facilitators and learning groups. Allow it to stretch, but not to limit your learning and adapt it, where appropriate.

Practical Considerations

Facilitating a discipleship group will be most effective when practicalities are considered in advance and appropriate planning takes place.

Getting started

Maize Plant Discipleship is ideal for learning groups of 8–10 people. This is small enough to grow together with a degree of intimacy; large enough for group members to explore discipleship commitments at their own pace.

Pause for thought...

More than ten? How could you help others to facilitate additional learning groups? What problems might you face?

Involving others

Although a facilitator is responsible for convening gatherings, they may delegate responsibility for hosting, presenting the teaching, or moderating group discussions. Ideally, as many group members as possible should be employed, over time, in sharing responsibility. This avoids one person dominating or carrying too much responsibility.

Whoever is presenting a topical study should read through it carefully, in advance: absorbing, familiarising and reflecting upon the teaching and its lessons. If anything is unfamiliar or unclear, invite discussion about that area of the study, encouraging group members to bring forward their perspectives.

Replication

Replication is an important goal of Maize Plant Discipleship. It may not be necessary for a group member to complete the entire syllabus before facilitating another learning group—see the Maize Plant Philosophy of Discipleship (chapter 3) for encouragement about the importance of replication.

Location

Meeting together can take place in any appropriate location that can comfortably accommodate a group. A large room in someone's home, or a community hall is ideal.

Pause for thought...

Arrange seating to create an intimate, yet practical space, in which everyone can see everyone else during discussions.

Find out what works for your group by experimenting with changes of location; try meeting outside occasionally.

Adaption

Be prepared to adapt the teaching and the method of presentation, in order to create a helpful and culturally-appropriate learning environment. Take account of the abilities and capacity of each particular discipleship group.

Pause for thought...

Ensure literature is a helpful *servant* not a hard *task-master*, especially to oral learners. As far as possible, keep things simple and lighthearted.

Invite creative people to contribute by interpreting or celebrating the message of the teaching in song, drama or art.

Timetable

The entire Maize Plant Discipleship syllabus incorporates approximately 64 studies. When considering a timetable take into consideration the nature of the group availability. *For example, are members effected by the agricultural or academic calendar?*

Other learning forums

Maize Plant Discipleship handbooks can easily lend themselves to personal study, theological education or other forms of guided learning. In particular,

- Scripture references, within in the footnotes, provide a rich treasury of addition material for in-depth biblical study;
- discussion questions can be adapted for use as the basis for written answers, or even short essays.

Personal study

Incorporate reflective learning methods by submitting the fruit of personal study to the oversight of a mentor, or sharing it with a fellow student, for reflection, discussion and critical consideration.

Theological education

Bible school students should be encouraged to form and facilitate small learning groups, either within or alongside classroom contexts, and to reflect on their experiences together. This will provide highly valuable experience and momentum for facilitating Maize Plant Discipleship learning groups in their own vocational contexts.

Congregational teaching

With appropriate adaption, Maize Plant Discipleship studies can be used for congregational teaching. For example, if teaching were delivered to the whole congregation, it could then divide into discussion groups. Alternatively, small learning groups could meet on another occasion, to reflect upon and discuss the teaching and pray together.

Pause for thought...

In what other ways could aspects of the Maize Plant Discipleship Learning Cycle be adapted and incorporated into personal study, theological education and even congregational contexts?

The Maize Plant Discipleship Syllabus

THIS CHAPTER INTRODUCES the metaphor of the maize plant and the sixteen modules of the Maize Plant Discipleship Syllabus.

Maize Plant Metaphor

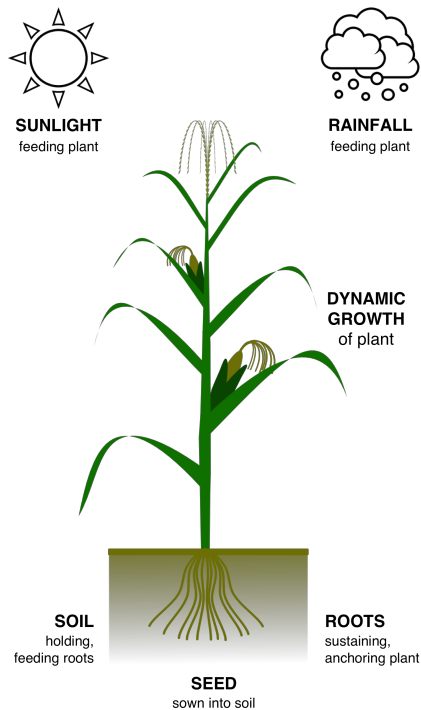
Jesus refers to his own mission using the metaphor of a seed that enters the ground and dies, in order to produce a large harvest.

I tell you that unless a grain of wheat that falls to the ground dies, it stays just a grain; but if it dies, it produces a big harvest — *Jesus, John 12:24*

Grown throughout sub-Saharan Africa, the maize plant provides a similar, highly recognisable metaphor. The Maize Plant Discipleship Syllabus is structured to symbolically reflect this metaphor of a maize plant.

- Good seed sown in good soil, stimulated by sunshine and refreshed by rainfall produces dynamic growth and a good harvest.

- Likewise, Messianic communities need to be rooted in good ground that allows them to draw on vital, spiritual nutrients, stimulated by the revelatory light and refreshed by the living water of the Messiah's Spirit.
- Strong growth anchors messianic communities against withering winds of false teaching and sustains them amidst the withering heat of trials, temptations and vocational responsibility.



Drawing on this metaphor, the Maize Plant Discipleship Syllabus is divided into three parts:

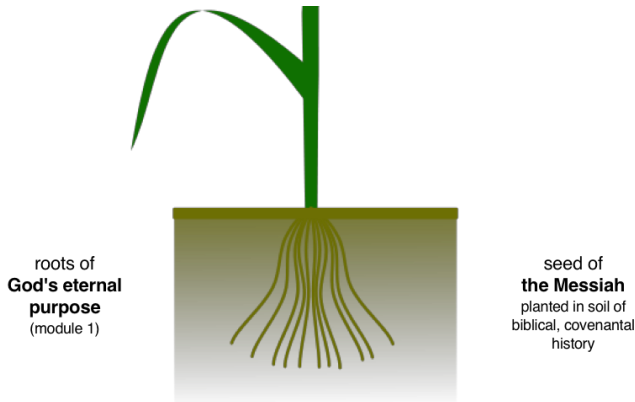
1. Soil and roots
2. Maize plant
3. Sunlight and rainfall

Soil and roots

Metaphorically, the roots of the maize plant represent the biblical community of Israel. The soil in which the roots grow equates to the historical, cultural and geo-political contexts of Israel's covenant vocation (such as Egypt, Canaan, Babylon and the Roman occupation).

- **Module 1, The Eternal Purpose of God**

A panoramic overview of Scripture, revealing God's unchanging, eternal purpose, in the scheme of which the Messiah is *the Seed* that enters the soil of the biblical, covenantal history of the people of Israel, in order to die and ultimately produce a rich harvest of people—a messianic covenant community—from amongst all the peoples of the earth. Module 1, thus forms a foundation for the entire syllabus.

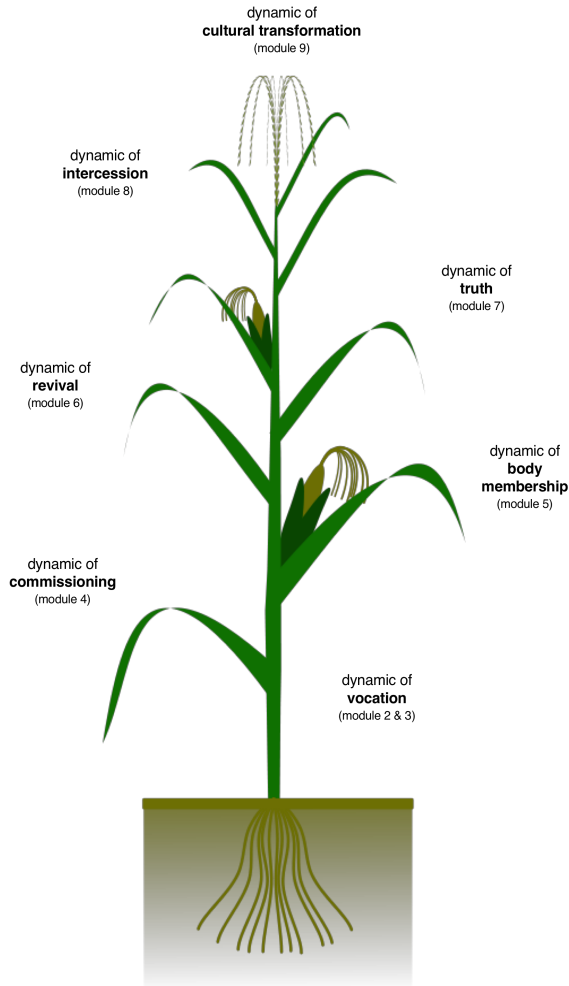


Pause for thought...

Maize produce effectively represents *daily bread* for millions of African people. The messianic community is called, like the Messiah, to become a kind of *life-giving bread* to the peoples of the world—see John 6 & 20:21.

Maize plant

Modules 2 to 9 explore eight messianic *dynamics*,¹ which are responsible for the characteristic development, growth, structure, shape and fruit of messianic community.



¹Dynamic derives from a Greek word, *dunamis*, meaning power and refers to forces stimulating change or progress within a system or process.

- **Module 2, Dynamics of Vocation, The Nations**

The historical development the Messianic Community's vocational mission to bless the peoples of the world.

- **Module 3, Dynamics of Vocation, The Jews**

The special responsibility of the Messianic Community towards the Jewish people.

- **Module 4, Dynamics of Commissioning**

Strategic and structural dynamics of messianic commissioning and community growth.

- **Module 5, Dynamics of Body Membership**

Membership, commitment and spiritual maturity within the body of the Messiah.

- **Module 6, Dynamics of Revival**

The dynamics of revival and a spiritual harvest of covenant faithfulness.

- **Module 7, Dynamics of Truth**

Encountering truth, as we walk in practical, covenantal faithfulness towards God's revelation, wisdom and direction.

- **Module 8, Dynamics of Intercession**

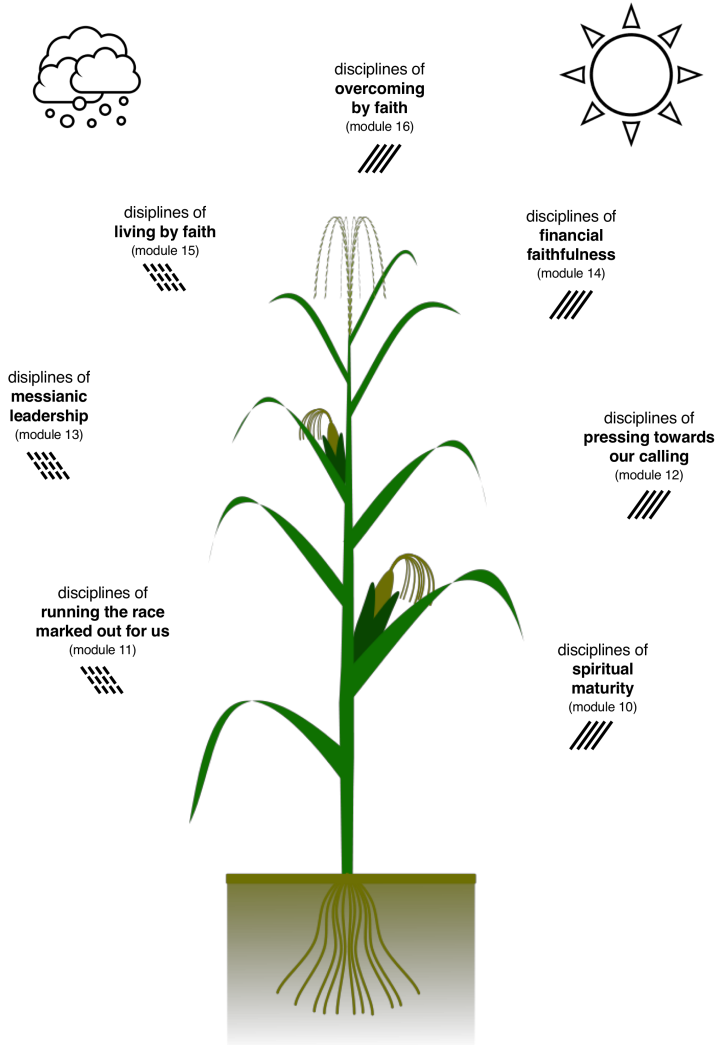
The priestly vocation of the Messianic Community: to be *a house of prayer for all nations*.

- **Module 9, Dynamics of Cultural Transformation**

The call to work amongst and on behalf of the nations, towards cultural transformations that signal the presence of God's kingdom.

Sunlight and rainfall

Modules 10 to 16 examine seven characteristic *disciplines* that enable messianic communities to receive the revelatory *light* and sustaining *living water* of God's Spirit, without which we become spiritually weak and incapable of producing good fruit or a plentiful harvest.



- **Module 10, Disciplines of Spiritual Maturity copy**

Three stages of encounter and growth in spiritual maturity of messianic disciples and communities.

- **Module 11, Disciplines of Running the Race**

Motivations, qualities and disciplines for living an enduring life of service.

- **Module 12, Disciplines of Pressing Toward Our Vocation**

Identifying and excelling in our personal vocation, through a deepening of our relationship with the Messiah.

- **Module 13, Disciplines of Economic Faithfulness**

A biblical perspective upon economic faithfulness, wealth and poverty, radically different to that of the world.

- **Module 14, Disciplines of Messianic Leadership**

Qualifications, motivations and characteristics of faithful messianic leadership.

- **Module 15, Disciplines of Living by Faith**

Seeing with eyes of faith enables us to endure times of testing and purification and to embrace challenge as an opportunity to experience God's faithfulness.

- **Module 16, Disciplines of Overcoming**

Confronting idolatrous, cultural strongholds in the power of the Spirit and discerning strategies that make room for a transformative encounter with God's overcoming power.

Module handbooks

Each syllabus module is incorporated into a Maize Plant Discipleship *Handbook*, containing four interrelated *Studies*, each of which incorporates:

- Scripture Readings
- Topical Sections and Summary
- Questions for Group Discussion

Illustrations are provided throughout the Maize Plant Discipleship handbooks. Where possible, reproduce diagrams on blackboards or in other ways that allow all group members to see and understand their relevance to the topic.

Scripture versions

Throughout the MPD Syllabus Handbooks, scripture references, rather than quotations, are provided. Where a quotation is incorporated within the teaching, the following abbreviations indicate the version from which the quote is taken:

- CJB — The Complete Jewish Bible
- NIV — The New International Version
- TAB — The Amplified Bible

Pause for thought...

Mother-tongue is the natural language of the heart thus, mother-tongue Scripture translations may be encouraged and utilised as much as possible, including during discussions and particularly for reading and memorisation.

Significant terms

The following terms are used throughout the The Maize Plant Discipleship Syllabus (chapter 2).

Messiah

the promised Jewish deliverer... Jesus, the Christ... the Messiah

Messianic

- Messianic Cf. “Christian”
- Messianic Community
- Messianic, New-Covenant Community
- messianic community or communities

Vocation

-

Maize Plant Philosophy of Discipleship

THIS CHAPTER EXPLORES the biblical and missional perspectives of messianic discipleship that undergird Maize Plant Discipleship.

What is messianic discipleship?

Maize Plant Discipleship approaches messianic discipleship as a dynamic, generational process, empowered by the Holy Spirit. Two crucial statements made by the apostle, Paul, in his second letter to his disciple, Timothy, help to fully illustrate what is involved in this process:¹

Keep safe the great treasure that has been entrusted to you, with the help of the Holy Spirit, who lives in us... and the things you heard from me, which were supported by many witnesses, these commit to faithful people, such as will be competent to teach others—2 *Timothy 1.14 and 2.2*

¹The two statements are separated only by Paul's emotional description of two disciples who failed to stand with him at a crucial time.

Together they reveal three key components of messianic discipleship.

1. The great treasure of knowing the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

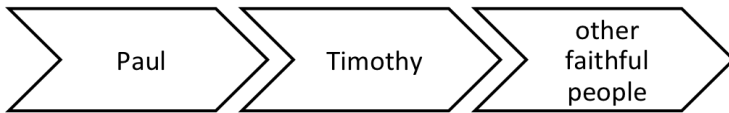
The real, personal, experiential knowledge of the Messiah is more than human knowledge or philosophy: it is *a great treasure*, a divine relationship, mediated by the Holy Spirit.

2. The vitality of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit provides an intimate source of divine help to messianic disciples.² It is he who mediates the reality of the Gospel and the Presence of the Messiah amongst his people and it is he who helps them to safeguard this reality.

3. The necessity of generational formation.

Timothy has received an impartation of the reality of the Messiah through Paul, something of great worth that he must now safeguard by *committing it to the stewardship and safekeeping of other faithful people*. This is generational discipleship.



Generational discipleship

Generational discipleship is how, in the kingdom of God, treasure is kept safe, from becoming unproductive.³ The importance of this principle can be understood by examining the importance of seeds.

Seed and harvest

In farming contexts, seeds are a form of wealth—a type of treasure. Yet seed is generally stored only for a short time before being used. Whatever is not required for food, *for daily bread*, must soon be sown to produce another harvest.⁴

²John 16:7–15

³Matthew 25:14–30

⁴2 Corinthians 9:6–12

In the same way, we discover that God is able to supply spiritual life to us—the *treasure* of knowing the Messiah. This experience of being alive to God, experiencing the grace of the Messiah and the love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control of the Holy Spirit,⁵ is the spiritual equivalent of receiving daily sustenance—*daily bread*.

Enjoying God's life ourselves, however, is not the whole purpose of our relationship with him. In fact, as we will explore in this resource, the Messianic, New Covenant Community (the whole body of the Messiah's people) has been called to know God in order to become his *Servant Community*. This means that we are called to give ourselves, our lives, to *serve his purposes*. This requires sacrifice and discipline—that is what it means to be a disciple.

This sacrificial, disciplined giving of ourselves in service to God is the equivalent of taking precious seed that could be used for food, for ourselves and instead sowing it into the ground to produce another harvest.

Sharing treasure

This is one of the secrets to living a truly *messianic* life, which many people seem never to properly discover or experience: it is not in hoarding the treasure of our knowledge, relationship and communion with God, but in sharing it with others, both within and beyond our own communities, that we discover and realise our vocation.⁶

Spiritual treasure, however, should never be wasted or cast away carelessly. Although some seeds inevitably fall onto unreceptive ground,⁷ a farmer never intentionally wastes his seed. Likewise, our treasure is too precious to be deliberately squandered on people who spurn its value.⁸ It must be shared with people who recognise its worth and who make room for its transformative power to change them.

This is what the parable calls *good soil*. People willing to be transformed through a personal knowledge and experience of the Messiah, who will share it with other faithful people... who share it with other faithful people... and so on and so forth.

⁵Galatians 5:22

⁶Matthew 10:38–39

⁷Matthew 13:1–23

⁸Matthew 7:6

Discipleship movements

The formation of faithful disciples was at the heart of the Messiah Jesus' life and work. The entire historical and now-worldwide Christian movement began with one small, core group of disciples, formed around Jesus.

Discipling movements have significant potential to impact and transform. Leaders, money, books and power all have their places within radical, popular movements. But, people-movements are most capable of producing deep, wide, enduring change.

Two things are essential to transformative people movements: *vision* and *the formation of disciples*. Visionary leaders must impart a hope that is powerful, challenging and instrumental. A vision capable of gripping the hearts of others and forming them into faithful, active disciples:

- committed to significant transformation;
- persistent and determined to turn vision into reality;
- operating as co-workers—not selfishly-ambitious individuals;
- actively forming other faithful disciples.

In this way a visionary, discipling movement is developed. A movement of focussed, inspired, dynamic people. People deeply and profoundly allied to a vision, a cause and a purpose larger than themselves.

Pause for thought...

The book of Acts provides a powerful illustration of the dynamic growth of a messianic, discipling movement. Examine the context of these verses, in your own Bibles, to see how this growth takes place.

- 2:46–47, 6:7, 9:31, 12:24, 16:5, 19:20, 28:30–31

This dynamic movement spreads geographically and, significantly, across ethnic and cultural boundaries. From its beginnings in Jerusalem, the movement expands throughout Palestine, Asia Minor, Greece and finally to Rome—the current centre and seat of worldly power.

Intercultural movement

Since its birth in the first century, over the course of two millennia, the messianic, new-covenant community has continued to grow and develop dynamically. From its origins as an obscure, tiny, Jewish sect it has grown into an international, intercultural, multi-ethnic community, now existing, in some form or another, in practically every nation of the world, impacting peoples, stories and cultures, throughout the world. It will surely effect many more in the days and years that are ahead. Its dynamism can be directly traced to its operation as *a movement of disciples*, continually spreading out, across geographical, social, ethnic, linguistic and cultural boundaries.

Renewal of movement

Thus, any messianic movement or community, whether national, regional or local, that earnestly desires spiritual revival or renewal must place visionary, messianic discipleship at the core of its spirituality and its practical formation.

Disciples must be invited, formed and sent forth as part of a *world-facing* movement. The goal is much more than the maintenance of the church-as-an-organisation, greater even than serving-one-another, as part of messianic community. The goal is to be part of a movement of disciples called to serve God's eternal purpose, amongst a world of lost, hurting, confused, oppressed, fear-filled, idol-bound populations.

Amongst the corruption in society, behind its social, political, economic and religious walls, besides its filthy gutters, the Messiah is at work by his Spirit. From there he calls his co-workers to come alongside him in his work of redemption and transformation of individuals, families, marriages, partnerships, communities, organisations, structures, workplaces and working practices.

Anointed community

To make possible such an otherwise impossibly-high calling, messianic discipleship provides a unique ingredient that no other philosophy, ideology or faith can provide: the dynamic of the indwelling Spirit of the Messiah.

Through the Spirit, the new-covenant community is transformed into a charismatic community. A group of people endowed with spiritual gifts that are profoundly shaped to liberate human beings from idolatry and

every other allegiance and falsehood that competes and sets itself against God and the knowledge of him.⁹

Thus, the Messianic Community is a body of people anointed with the fragrant oil, or presence, of the Holy Spirit, having been brought under God's authority, through baptism into the Messiah. It is a body learning to walk in the footsteps of Jesus: learning to exercise its God-appointed mediatory, intercessory role, under the direction of the Spirit of God.¹⁰

This community of disciples is a messianic, charismatic people called into covenant relationship with the Father, through the Son and sent into the world to bless the nations in the power of the Spirit!

Pause for thought...

Charismatic from *charism*, Greek, meaning *gift*; the *charisma* of the Christian community comes from its spiritual anointing

Messiah essentially means *Anointed One*; the One Anointed with the Spirit to rule God's people (Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22; John 1:32-34)

Life... through death

God's intention is that this messianic, charismatic, covenant community co-works in partnership with him, using the strength, the power, the spiritual life, the anointing that he provides.

Too often though, that power, that anointed-life-of-Christ-within-us, seems to elude us. It seems out of our reach. Beyond our grasp. Indeed, it is not something that can be *grasped*. Instead, the pathway to life is through dying. Yielding ourselves to God the Father, through the Messiah, by the Spirit. That is the message of the cross. As we *die to self*, we become *alive to God*.¹¹

⁹2 Corinthians 10:3-5

¹⁰Romans 6:3-4; Galatians 3:26-29; Hebrews 6:4

¹¹Romans 6:4-13

The heart of discipleship

Thus we end where we began. With the foundational principle of transformative discipleship: seed sown into the ground, in order to produce a harvest.

I tell you that unless a grain of wheat that falls to the ground dies, it stays just a grain; but if it dies, it produces a big harvest—*John 12.24*

This life-giving spiritual reality is at the heart of Jesus' own life, mission, ministry and pain-filled death. And this same principle forms the foundation and wellspring of Maize Plant Discipleship:

As we embrace a practical form of discipleship, incorporating a daily dying-to-self, we learn how to truly become alive-to-God and equipped to serve his eternal purpose.

That is the heart of Maize Plant Discipleship.

Discuss Topic 1: Questions for reflection and discussion

- How is discipleship valued in your context?
- How faithfully is it practised?
- If there is a gap between what is believed and valued and what is practised, discuss why you think that is.

Africa and Maize Plant Discipleship

This chapter explains the development of Maize Plant Discipleship as a resource for use in African contexts.

Introduction

Tite Tienou, a Malian who grew up in Burkina Faso, encapsulates, below, a highly significant aspect of the philosophy that has driven the development of Maize Plant Discipleship: African voices need to determine the theology that is of practical relevance to African contexts.

Africanness and (theological) correctness should not be measured in either dissimilarity or similarity to the West. The way forward is to measure the Africanness of any theology purporting to be African by the degree to which it speaks to the needs of African's in their total context. Quite naturally, the needs of African Christians should be taken seriously when determining these needs — *Tite Tienou, The Uphill Road: Indigenous African Christian Theologies, 1990*

African roots

Although Maize Plant Discipleship is authored by an outsider to Africa, it could and would not have developed without the indispensable missional encouragement and critical input of Africans, at each stage of its formation. Quite simply, it has been

- authored exclusively in response to requests from African leaders and learners;
- road-tested in collaboration with African leaders and learners, throughout its development;
- formulated in response to contextual doctoral research carried out in Burkina Faso, with translation into African languages a primary goal.

Pause for thought...

Romans 4:17 describes Abraham as a man whose faith *called into being things that did not exist*. Although I have authored and formulated the handbooks, I believe that it is true to say Maize Plant Discipleship has been *called into being* by the trusting faithfulness of Africans, acting in response to the needs of African contexts.

Doctoral research

Following a series of visits to Burkina Faso, between 2003–08, doctoral research,¹ carried out between 2009–13, enabled an in-depth consultation of Burkinabé leaders and learners on a wide range of concerns and questions relating to the appropriate biblical and practical formulation of discipleship and leadership training resources.

It involved collecting opinions, perspectives, information and insight, following prototypical Maize Plant Discipleship seminars delivered to conferences in Léo and Ouagadougou. Data was collected through multiple survey questionnaires, group interviews and in-depth interviews, conducted with national and, or denominational leaders, responsible for leadership training and development.

¹Via Fuller School of Intercultural Studies—see <http://maizeplantdiscipleship.info/research>

Pause for thought...

Over 70 Burkinabé participants were consulted, drawn from members of the *Assemblée Evangélique de Pentecôte*, *Assemblée de Deus*, *Association Nationale pour la Traduction de la Bible et de l'Alphabetisation*, *Mouvement des Jeunes Serviteurs de Dieu* and *SIL*.

Findings

Applying qualitative data-analysis to the collected data revealed a number of significant *findings*, or themes, relating to issues of discipleship, leadership training, theology, culture, intercultural relations and literacy.

In particular, participants:

- identified strongly with the concept of discipleship and a need to freshly embrace holistic, disciple-forming practices;
- consistently validated the missiological content (see below) of a prototypical training resource as appropriate to Burkinabé contexts, highlighting its biblical content, practical focus and cultural sensitivity;
- affirmed the importance of including graphical and analogical illustrations and allotting time for reflection and discussion;
- expressed desire for appropriate *literature*, tailored to facilitate leaders working in oral contexts;
- identified the value of translating appropriate textbooks into minority African languages;
- highlighted significant logistical challenges relating to publication—e.g. licensing, promotion, cost and distribution.

These analytical conclusions were used to define a set of *practical, relevant and accessible* attributes that could be applied to the formulation of training resources appropriate to Burkinabé leaders and learners.

Practical

Providing a focus upon intentional action

1. Awakening or strengthening contextual ownership of the call to serve God's eternal purpose, amongst their generation.
2. Promoting lifelong commitment to missional action and disciplines.
3. Emphasising generational formation of disciples.
4. Envisioning personal, communal, cultural transformation.

Relevant

Embodying qualities and characteristics appropriate to contextual culture

1. Providing a biblically faithful missiology, integrated with Pentecostal spirituality.
2. Publishing short, topical, illustrative handbooks.
3. Facilitating reflective learning and group discussion.
4. Encouraging contextual adaption.

Accessible

Lowering or removing barriers that hinder access to the curriculum

1. Linguistically and conceptually comprehensible.
2. Facilitating vernacular language translation.
3. Licensing republication and redistribution.
4. Distribution favouring the economically poorest.

Missiological content

The research recommended a biblically faithful missiology, integrated with Pentecostal spirituality and appropriate to African contexts would incorporate:

1. A holistic worldview;
2. A communal orientation;
3. A historical, covenantal, missionary interpretation of Scripture;
4. A missiology of
 - biblical discipleship;
 - suffering and overcoming;
 - spiritual revival;
 - intercessory prayer and spiritual power;
 - poverty and prosperity;
 - personal and corporate vocation;
 - Christ-centred servant-leadership;
 - cultural transformation.

Continuous improvement

These *practical*, *relevant* and *accessible* attributes, extracted from data gathered from Burkinabé participants, are those which have defined the Maize Plant Discipleship Resource.

Pause for thought...

After you have examined and used Maize Plant Discipleship resources, if you believe we can improve upon these attributes, or their application, please contact us with your ideas.

- <http://maizeplantdiscipleship.wordpress.com/contact>

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

- Do you think it's important that African Christians decide upon what is theologically appropriate to African contexts?
- Has this happened historically in your contexts? If not, why not? If so, what has changed?
- What theological issues are important to you and others in your context?
- If they are not covered by this syllabus, what will you do?

Republishing Maize Plant Discipleship Handbooks

This chapter examines practical issues relating to publication, including licensing, translation, printing and distribution.

Books for African contexts

Over the past three-to-four decades, the African Christian community has multiplied and expanded hugely, such that the global Christian community's statistical centre of gravity is now located in Africa. Yet, while this extraordinary numerical growth has taken place, there has been a relative shortage of book publishing within Africa. Resources serving to edify, disciple and inspire Christian communities have been particularly sparse within Francophone Africa.

Books imported into Africa for theological education have typically been written for Christians in western cultural contexts and translated as an afterthought. Accordingly, they are concerned with a quite different set of questions, cultural values and missiological convictions to those concerning African communities. In short, many textbooks used in African leadership training are contextually inappropriate.

Added to this, books are published and distributed in a manner designed to protect the commercial interests of authors, publishers, distributors and retailers. Thus, many books are practically unattainable to those who are economically poor—including many leaders hungry for resources to enrich their vocational work of forming Christian disciples.

What kind of books are needed?

Doctoral research, carried out in Burkina Faso, in 2010, identified a series of practical, relevant and accessible characteristics applicable to textbooks intended to be appropriate for pastoral and missional leaders and learners in Burkina Faso.¹

One of the research's key findings was that many leaders in Burkina—and in Africa and the Majority World, in general—typically mediate between the two cultural worlds of orality and literacy respectively. Accordingly they need textbooks that:

1. facilitate, rather than hinder, mediation between these two 'worlds';
2. are readily translatable into mother-tongue languages;
3. can be republished in a low-cost way, which energises mission and encourages rapid multiplication.

Pause for thought...

A Burkinabé theological educator, on examining the concept of Maize Plant Discipleship and a prototype booklet, said:

I think you are touching something that is not already existing. If we talk about evangelism, it may well be a new way of approaching evangelism, but we already have many methods of evangelism. But (a series of books on) discipleship is something that is really an innovative thing.

¹See Chapter 4, Africa and Maize Plant Discipleship, Doctoral Research (section 2).

A new publishing philosophy

Maize Plant Discipleship has been formulated and published to meet these kind of contextual needs. With a missional, rather than commercial, philosophy, intended to practically foster and facilitate a widespread adoption of Christian discipleship praxis, led by African leaders and learners.

Accordingly, Maize Plant Discipleship resources are being licensed for reproduction under the terms of a *Creative Commons* licence (section 4), which

- allows MPD resources to be republished, translated, distributed and sold.
- respects and maintains the copyright of the author and translators, whilst releasing the traditionally tight, commercial control of copyright owners and publishers.

Translation

The text books of the Maize Plant Discipleship Curriculum have been intentionally formulated to be readily translatable. If you would like to discuss translating MPD resources, for printing and distribution in another language, please get in touch.

Pause for thought...

A 52 page handbook printed double-sided, on A4 paper, folded, stapled and trimmed to produce A5 booklets, with a single-colour printed cover, can be produced for approximately \$2.

For some missional leaders this cost may still be too high. An agency organising republication, on behalf of a number of other organisations, may be the most appropriate way to economise on cost. A creative economic model could then subsidise costs for some individuals and, or groups.

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