

Facilitators' Handbook

*Maize Plant Discipleship
MPD-HB (Version 0.2.7 – Reviewer's draft)*

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Contents

1	In this Handbook	1
2	Discipleship and MPD	3
2.1	What is discipleship?	3
2.2	Discipleship movements	6
3	Africa and MPD	11
3.1	Introduction	12
3.2	Doctoral research	13
4	MPD Syllabus	17
4.1	Maize Plant Metaphor	17
4.2	MPD Handbooks	24
5	Facilitating MPD	25
5.1	Facilitating role	25
5.2	Discipleship group format	28
5.3	Practical considerations	35
6	Publishing MPD	39
6.1	Books for African contexts	39
6.2	A new publishing philosophy	40
6.3	Publishing and distribution examples	40
6.4	Licensing	42
7	Further information	45
7.1	Translation	45
7.2	Contact and additional information	45

In this Handbook

This *Facilitators' Handbook* provides guidelines for people facilitating group exploration, study and discussion, using *Maize Plant Discipleship* resources.

- **Discipleship and MPD** (chapter 2) explores biblical and missional perspectives of Christian discipleship.
- **Africa and MPD** (chapter 3) explains the background to the development of Maize Plant Discipleship as a resource for use in African contexts.
- **MPD Syllabus** (chapter 4) introduces the metaphor of the maize plant and the sixteen modules of the *MPD Syllabus*.
- **Facilitating MPD** (chapter 5) provides practical insights and suggestions for facilitating group learning.
- **Publishing MPD** (chapter 6) examines practical issues relating to publication, including: licensing, translation, printing, distribution and economics.

CHAPTER 2

Discipleship and MPD

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 commanded you—Jesus, *Matthew 28:19–20*

Discipleship is the process of making disciples who themselves will also make other disciples. In a family where there is no birth there will be no continuity, so a church without disciples will not live for a long time. However, all church members are not disciples, yet the very objective is to make every believer a disciple. A mere believer is far from a disciple—*Burkinabé Pastor D. Ayoro, 2010, cited in Clements, 2013*

2.1 What is discipleship?

Messianic discipleship is a dynamic, generational process, empowered by the Holy Spirit.

To fully illustrate what is involved in this process, I want to link together¹ two crucial statements made by the apostle, Paul, in his second letter to his disciple, Timothy:

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*

Together they reveal three vital components of messianic discipleship.

1. The “great treasure” of the knowledge of the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

The personal, experiential knowledge of the Messiah is more than human knowledge or philosophy: it is “a great treasure,” a spiritual reality, 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 safekeep 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 (see Figure 2.1).

In the kingdom of God, treasure is kept safe, kept from becoming unproductive,³ by sharing it with others. Let’s try to understand this a little more.

¹There is good reason to link these two statements that are separated only by Paul’s emotional description of two disciples who failed to keep the treasure safe, by not standing by Paul at a critical time.

²John 16.7-15

³Matthew 25.14-30

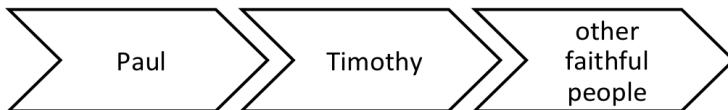


Figure 2.1: Generational discipleship

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

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 discipline and sacrifice—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,

⁴see 2 Corinthians 9:6-12

⁵Galatians 5:22

but in sharing and *sowing* it with others, both within and beyond our own communities, that we discover and realise our vocation.⁶

Our spiritual treasure, however, is not to be wasted or cast away carelessly. Even though some seeds inevitably fall onto unreceptive ground,⁷ like a farmer who never intentionally wastes his seed, 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.

2.2 Discipleship movements

The formation of faithful disciples was at the heart of the Messiah Jesus' life and work. The whole Christian movement, which today is spreading significantly throughout the whole world, began with one small, core group of disciples, formed around Jesus.

Discipling movements have the potential to change the world. Leaders, money, books and power all have their places within radical, popular movements. But, in a world in which people are continually effected by corporate experiences that are larger than the individual, it is people-movements that 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.

⁶Matthew 10:38-39

⁷Matthew 13:1-23

⁸Matthew 7:6

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.

Transforming nations

During the past two-thousand years, the messianic, new-covenant community has grown and developed through precisely this sort of dynamism. From its origins as an obscure, tiny, Jewish sect it has grown into an international, intercultural, multi-ethnic community, now existing, in some way or another, in practically every nation of the world.

The scripture citations below, from the book of Acts, illustrate a pattern. Examine the context of these verses in your own Bibles and reflect upon how each statement represents a conclusion to a significant period of church expansion.

- Acts 2:46–47
- Acts 6:7
- Acts 9.31
- Acts 12.24
- Acts 16.5
- Acts 19.20

We see from this pattern and the history that has flowed from this tiny beginning, that the whole expansive movement of Christianity begins with the multiplication of disciples.

The discipleship movement spreads out geographically and, more importantly, across ethnic and cultural boundaries. From its beginnings in Jerusalem, the movement expands throughout Palestine, Asia Minor, Greece and, finally, to Rome—the very centre and seat of worldly power, at that time.

Sh'aul remained two whole years in a place he rented for himself and continued receiving all who came to see him, openly and without hindrance proclaiming the Kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Yeshua the Messiah—Acts 28.30–31

Since then, it has continued to grow and spread throughout the world, significantly transform the history of many nations. It will surely transform many more in the days and years that are ahead. This dynamism can be traced to the Messianic Community operating as a movement of disciples, continually spreading out across geographical, social, ethnic, linguistic and cultural boundaries.

Cessation of movement

Nevertheless, in certain seasons, in certain places, history tells us, dynamism ultimately fades. A church planted within a nation or culture, in a former season, ceases growing and multiplying.

Inevitably, behind its religious facades, such a church is marked by a lack of vision, a loss of communal vitality and a spirituality out of touch with its holy roots. Traditions, which may not be bad in themselves, have replaced the vitality of a living, reproducing body of people. Even though its religious institutions may remain dogmatic towards their creeds, the Christian community itself no longer exhibits authentic, biblical zeal for its vocation: its call to serve God's purpose amongst the nations.

In practice, such a church or community has become un-critical in its engagement with the societies and cultures in which it lives. Its testimony is compromised by idolatrous values. Its lifestyle is accommodated to ungodly influences. It has ceased to be different, ceased to be transformative, ceased making a significant, discernible impact upon its social, material, political and cultural environments.

In this case, the church has ceased to be a *movement*. Invariably, it has ceased making disciples, lacking the confidence to persuade either itself or others to forsake human idols and become wholehearted devoted to the Messiah.

Renewal

By contrast, any messianic community—whether national denomination, regional group or local congregation—that earnestly desires spiritual revival must place visionary, messianic discipleship at the core of its renewed spirituality and its practical reformation.

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 of society, besides its filthy gutters, behind its social, political and religious walls, the Messiah is at work by his Spirit. That is where he calls 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 and 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 him⁹.

The term *charismatic* derives 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.¹⁰

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.¹¹

⁹2 Corinthians 10:3-5

¹⁰Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22; John 1:32-34

¹¹Romans 6:3-4; Galatians 3:26-29; Hebrews 6:4

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!

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. That is the message of the cross. Only to the extent that we *die to ourselves*, do we truly become *alive to God*¹².

~

Thus we end where we began, with the foundational principle of transformative discipleship: the 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.

¹²Romans 6:4-13

3

CHAPTER

Africa and MPD

...Africanness and 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*

With this program (of Maize Plant Discipleship)...from what we see, people who offered their reaction, in my culture there is a saying that goes like this:

*When the sauce is tasty, you draw closer your stool,
nearer to the table, to eat!!*

So, from the teaching we have received from you, it just gives us a flavour! – *Pastor Samuel Yaldia¹

¹in Clements, J.B. 2012, "Facilitating A Renewal of Discipleship Praxis Amongst Burkinafabe Leaders and Learners." Fuller Theological Seminary, School of Intercultural Studies. Doctor of Missiology. 187pp.

3.1 Introduction

Maize Plant Discipleship is a training and learning resource that has been authored, written, taught, researched, formulated, revised and published with African leaders and learners in heart, mind and prayer at each point of its development. It originated as a *Mobile Academy of Mission*, taught itinerantly in Kenya and Burkina Faso.² As author and teacher, my goal was to emulate the apostolic model of mission by

Taking the teacher to the leaders, rather than bringing the leaders to the teacher, saving the precious resources of those least able to spare them.

Recently, the resource has been developed as the subject of doctoral missiological research, in conjunction with *Fuller School of Intercultural Studies*, following which it has been reformulated to more effectively serve the needs of missional leaders and learners within Burkina Faso and other African contexts.

Beginnings

The origins of Maize Plant Discipleship are rooted in my personal experiences amongst an international, Pentecostal missionary community. In that context, a personal calling to invest time seeking God in prayer led to involvement with a team of people who met regularly to intercede for God's purposes amongst the nations of the world.

What took place amongst that team may be described an intense, Spirit-led intercession that continued, in that way, for over a decade. Throughout, I exhaustively journaled words, shared between the group, of scripture, prayer, prophecy, inspiration, exhortation, encouragement and wisdom—many of which informed or inspired insights now incorporated within the Maize Plant Discipleship syllabus.

The Africa factor

Over time, a stream of African leaders, training or studying in the UK, joined with our prayer fellowship, almost invariably reporting how spiritually *at home* they felt with us. Later, back in Africa, memories of our

²As well as being trialled in Texas, USA and Wales, UK.

shared experiences in prayer prompted them to invite me to visit and teach in their contexts.

The first opportunity to do so came in 2000, through a former prayer team member working in Nakuru, Kenya. There, I presented five days of seminars on prayer, intercession and mission, which were received with considerable enthusiasm and appreciation. Afterwards, participants remarked not only upon a uniqueness of insight, but also the spirit of love, in which it was delivered.

Burkina Faso

The next stage of development came through a series of visits to Burkina Faso, between 2003 and 2008, during which I taught various conferences of leaders and learners:

- In Léo: Bible school students, pastors, church-planters and trainees, many of whom were living in missionary contexts, within Muslim-dominant villages.
- In Ouagadougou: associates of a national youth movement, incorporating university students, graduates, post-graduates, office workers and other young people.

Having established that a genuine spiritual dynamic was taking place, I asked Burkinabé associates how I might make my discipleship resources more accessible and useful. They requested that I establish a regular training program and form my teaching notes into textbooks that could accompany the teaching and be studied and used in trainees own contexts. To maximise the effectiveness of the books, particularly from a cultural perspective, I incorporated their development into a program of doctoral research.

3.2 Doctoral research

Between 2009 and 2013, I undertook doctoral research, guided by *Fuller School of Intercultural Studies*, with a view to analysing the practicality, relevance and accessibility of my discipleship training resource from an intercultural and scriptural perspective.

My field research involved collecting data through survey questionnaires, group interviews and in-depth interviews. In total, over seventy

Burkinabé participants were consulted, a significant number of whom were national and, or denominational leaders, with experience of and responsibility for leadership training and development.

Findings

Applying qualitative data analysis methods to my collected data revealed a number of significant findings or themes. Participants:

- identified strongly with the concept of discipleship and a need to freshly embrace *holistic, disciple-forming practices*.³
- consistently validated the theological content (section 3.2) of my prototype training resource as *appropriate to Burkinabé contexts*, highlighting its biblical content, practical focus and cultural sensitivity.
- affirmed the importance of incorporating graphical and analogical *illustrations* and adequate time for *reflection* and *discussion*.
- expressed hunger for appropriate *literature*, to accompany leadership training, tailored to facilitate leaders working in oral contexts.
- identified the value of translating appropriate textbooks into minority African languages
- highlighted significant logistical challenges (e.g. licensing, promotion, cost, distribution).

These data analysis findings were combined with contextual missiological study 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.⁴

³In the Burkinabé context, discipleship represents a concept imbued with dynamism, incorporating a sense of both inward, personal and outward, communal responsibility: to pass on spiritual and practical disciplines of vitality, such as grace, knowledge, wisdom and maturity. Discipleship also helpfully blurs hard edges between formally-trained leadership and informally-trained workers.

⁴Visit: <http://jbcléments.wordpress.com/missiology> for further details of my doctoral research—including access to the dissertation: *Facilitating A Renewal of Discipleship Praxis Amongst Burkinabé Leaders and Learners*.

Practical

Encouraging and facilitating a focus upon purposeful actions—rather than classroom theorising.

- Awaken or strengthen contextual ownership of the call to serve God's eternal purpose amongst their generation.
- Promoting lifelong commitment to missional discipline and action.
- Envisioning personal, communal, cultural transformation.
- Emphasising the importance of a continuous, generational formation of disciples.

Relevant

An incorporation of qualities and characteristics appropriate to contextual culture.

- Providing a biblically faithful, missional theology, integrated with Pentecostal spirituality.
- Publishing short, topical, illustrative handbooks.
- Facilitating group discussion and reflective learning.
- Encouraging contextual adaption.

Accessible

Lowering or removing barriers that could hinder access to the curriculum.

- Linguistically and conceptually comprehensible.
- Facilitating vernacular language translation.
- Licencing republication and redistribution.
- Favouring the economically poor.

Theological content

My research led to a conclusion that a biblically faithful, missional theology, integrated with Pentecostal spirituality and appropriate to African contexts, should encompass not less than the following theological content or characteristics:

1. An holistic worldview;
2. A communal orientation;
3. An historical, missionary theology;
4. An Hebraic, covenantal, missional hermeneutic;
5. A theology of biblical discipleship;
6. A theology of suffering and overcoming;
7. A theology of spiritual revival;
8. A theology of intercessory prayer and spiritual power;
9. A theology of poverty and prosperity;
10. A theology of vocation;
11. A theology of Christ-centred servant-leadership;
12. A theology of cultural transformation.

Continuous improvement

These *practical, relevant and accessible* attributes have been used to define the Maize Plant Discipleship Resource.

After you have examined and used MPD resources, if you think we can improve upon these attributes, or our application of them, please contact us with your thoughts, via the MPD website:

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

4

CHAPTER

MPD Syllabus

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*

May he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness – *Paul, 2 Corinthians 9:10*

4.1 Maize Plant Metaphor

In the gospel of John, 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. Grown throughout sub-Saharan Africa, the maize plant provides a similar, highly recognisable metaphor.

Maize represents the “daily bread” of 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.

The Maize Plant Discipleship Syllabus is structured to symbolically reflect the metaphor of a maize plant. There are three main components to the metaphor (see Figure 4.1).

1. Soil and roots

Representing the biblical, covenantal community, context and vocation of Israel.

2. Maize plant

Representing the dynamic spiritual growth and multiplication of messianic community.

3. Sunlight and rainfall

Representing essential spiritual disciplines that stimulate and sustain the growth of messianic community.

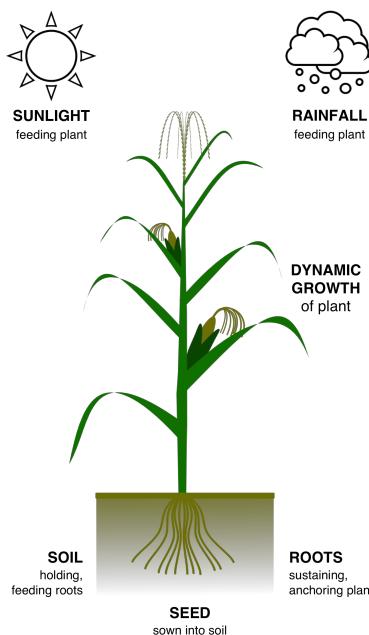


Figure 4.1: Maize Plant Metaphor

Soil and roots

Module MPD-M1¹—provides a study of the biblical, Hebraic soil and messianic roots of new-covenant faith, gradually unfolding a panoramic overview of the whole story of scripture, representing God’s unchanging, eternal purpose.

Only seed sown into good soil produces a good harvest. Discipleship communities also need to be rooted in good soil, allowing us to draw on essential, spiritual nutrients and the living water of the Messiah’s Spirit, anchoring us against winds of false teaching and sustaining us amidst the heat of trials, temptations and vocational responsibility.

MPD-M1-Eternal Purpose

In this foundational teaching (see Figure 4.2), the Messiah represent *the Seed* which enters the soil (of the biblical, covenantal history of the people of Israel) in order to die and to ultimately produce a rich harvest of people—a messianic covenant community—from amongst all the peoples of the earth.

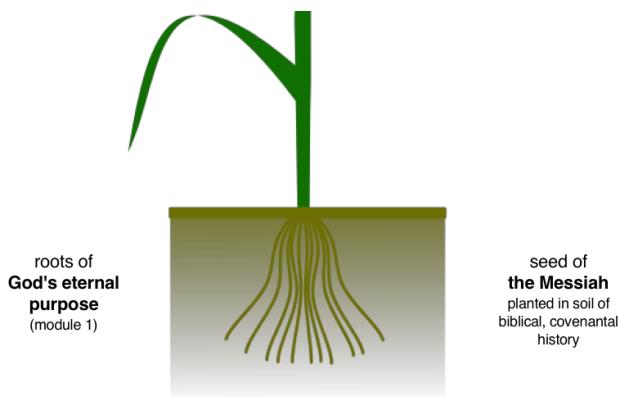


Figure 4.2: Roots

¹MPD-Mn refers to *Maize Plant Discipleship–Module n*, where n = module number.

Maize plant

Modules MPD-M2 to MPD-M9 explore eight characteristic *dynamics* of messianic community (see Figure 4.3). These dynamics refer to the unique, spiritual forces² that stimulate the characteristic development, growth, structure, shape and fruit of messianic community.

MPD-M2-Dynamics of Vocation-The Nations

Examines the historical development the Messianic Community's vocational mission to bless the nations of the world.

MPD-M3-Dynamics of Vocation-The Jews

Examines biblical Israel, in order to demonstrate the significant responsibilities of the Messianic Community with regard to the Jewish people.

MPD-M4-Dynamics of Commissioning

Explores the dynamic of messianic commissioning, including a focus upon strategy, structures and modes of expansion.

MPD-M5-Dynamics of Body Membership

Explores basic patterns of membership, commitment and spiritual maturity within the body of the Messiah.

MPD-M6-Dynamics of Revival

Reveals a cycle of spiritual activities representing the dynamics of revival, leading to a spiritual harvest.

MPD-M7-Dynamics of Truth

Explores our encounter with truth, as we learn to walk in practical, covenantal faithfulness towards God's revelation, wisdom and direction.

²*Dynamic* derives from a Greek word, *dunamis*, meaning power and refers to forces stimulating change or progress within a system or process.

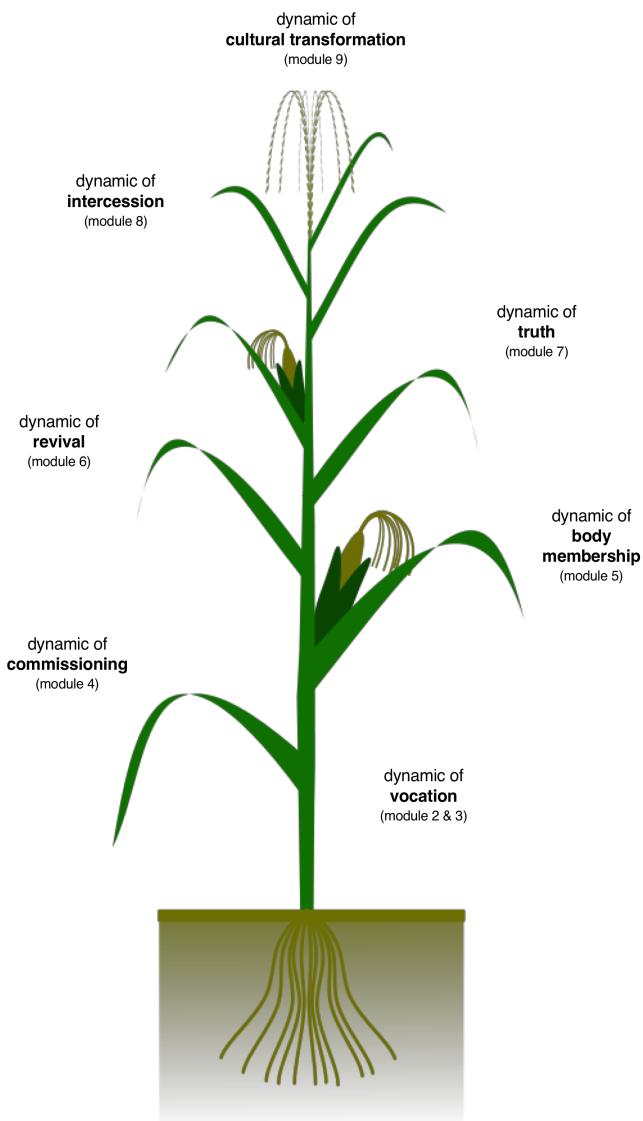


Figure 4.3: Maize plant

MPD-M8-Dynamics of Intercession

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

MPD-M9-Dynamics of Cultural Transformation

Examines our 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 MPD-M10 to MPD-M16 examine seven characteristic *disciplines* of messianic community (see Figure 4.4). In the metaphor of the maize plant, sunlight and rainfall are representative of messianic *disciplines*, which open us to receive the revelatory Light and sustaining Living Water of God's Spirit—without which we become spiritually weak and unable to produce good fruit or a plentiful harvest.

MPD-M10-Disciplines of Spiritual Maturity

Explores three stages of encounter, discovery and growth in spiritual maturity and discipleship: (i) pastoral, devotional; (ii) missional, vocational and (iii) apostolic, intercessory.

MPD-M11-Disciplines of Running the Race

Uses the metaphor of an athlete to examine the qualifications, disciplines and inner motivations necessary for living an enduring life of service and completing *the race marked out for us*.

MPD-M12-Disciplines of Pressing Toward Our Vocation

Explores how we can be sustained us in our personal vocations through a deepening of our relationship with the Messiah, including *prayer without ceasing*.

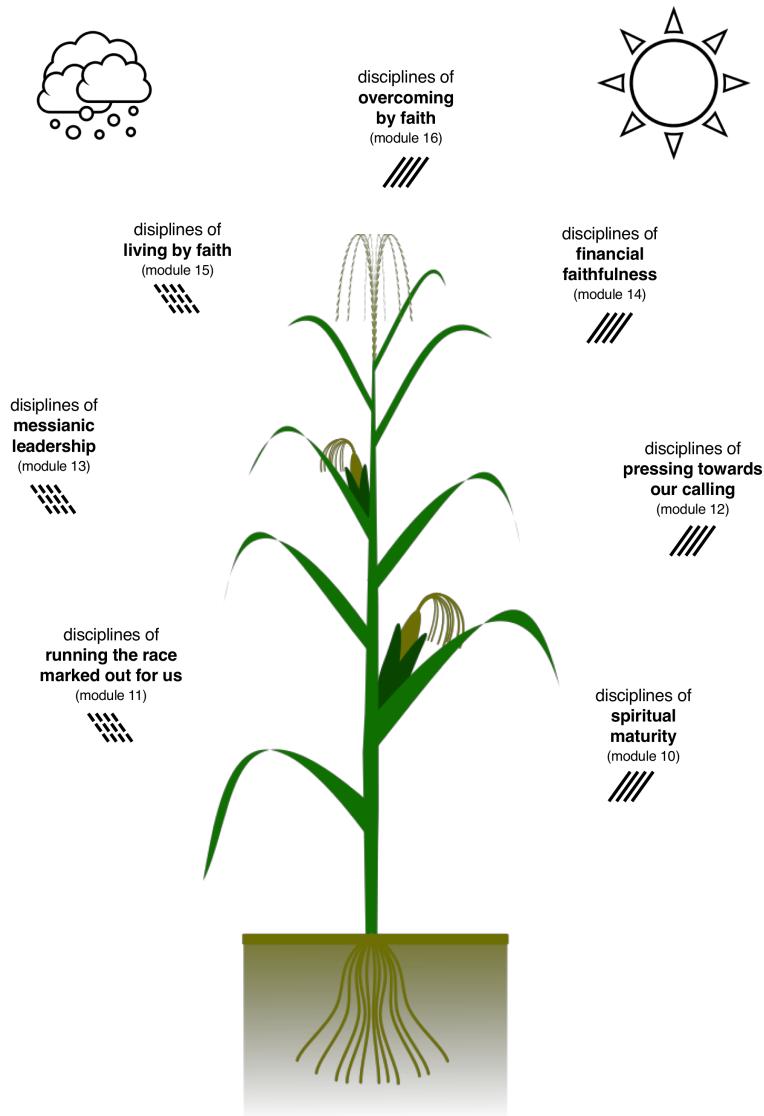


Figure 4.4: Sunlight and rainfall

MPD-M13-Disciplines of Financial Faithfulness

Explores financial faithfulness in the context of covenant relationship and messianic community, highlighting biblical perspectives of wealth and poverty radically different to those of the world.

MPD-M14-Disciplines of Messianic Leadership

Examines qualifications, motivations and characteristics of faithful messianic leadership and explores balancing the needs of task, team and individual.

MPD-M15-Disciplines of Living by Faith

Explores the testing and purification of messianic faith, seeing with eyes of faith and embracing challenges as opportunities to experience God's faithfulness.

MPD-M16-Disciplines of Overcoming

Employs the analogy of a sporting arena to represent spiritual confrontation and conflict with cultural idols and strongholds, discerning strategies that make room for a transformative encounter with God's overcoming power.

4.2 MPD Handbooks

Each MPD module *Handbook* contains four interrelated *Studies*, each of which incorporates:

- A Précis, Scripture Readings
- Topical Sections and a Summary
- Questions for Group Discussion

The format is designed to facilitate reflective group learning–so that Maize Plant Discipleship resources rely not upon the presence of a qualified leader, teacher or theologian, but upon facilitators willing to co-ordinate study groups and discussions– see Facilitating MPD (chapter 5).

5

CHAPTER

Facilitating MPD

...the word of God increased; and the number of disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith—*Acts 1.6–7*

I have received a valuable teaching which I would like to use to impact the life of people in my neighbourhood and in my church. I would like to see this teaching be the flame of the Spirit of God which will help the ministry to grow more—*Pastor Benao, 2010*

5.1 Facilitating role

Facilitating MPD differs from much teaching and training, because it does not encourage rote learning, but is an intentionally open, reflective, group-orientated learning process, in which all kinds of leaders and learners are invited to participate together in discovering what the Spirit is saying.

Facilitating Spirit-led discipleship

Holy Spirit-led discipleship is about participating in a process through which the Spirit of Christ is able to lead, warn, direct, encourage, teach and exhort us all, individually and corporately.

- Discipleship is never a matter of pouring out information from a teacher or from text books, in order to fill others with the same knowledge. This may be how we learned in school, but Spirit-led discipleship is different.
- 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—and certainly not to every aspect of MPD.
- Each person differs in gift and personality and stage of development, thus group members need to be empowered to learn in their own particular way and at their own pace.
- The aim is to allow MPD to be a vehicle for God's Spirit to disciple people—recognising that MPD itself represents just one part of a whole process through which the Messiah may be discipling people.
- The goal is conformity to the Spirit of the Messiah, Jesus, and obedience to the will of the Father!

Facilitating openness

When meeting together for MPD the aim is to foster an environment of learning and discovery, where debate and discussion is lively, yet relaxed and uncompetitive. An environment in which all members, even the youngest and least experienced, are comfortable to openly contribute their views, burdens and questions.

- Openness, difference and diversity of views will not stifle the true unity of the Spirit, which is based on love and mutual respect.
- Forced conformity, however, will typically erupt, sooner or later, because people need to feel that they have been heard and listened to—especially those presenting a different perspective.

By encouraging open debate, it is possible for members to learn how express strong and diverse views, without creating conflict or forcing conformity. However, openness can be particularly challenging to foster in cultures where conformity is highly valued and where traditional authority flows downwards from the top.

Here are some practical suggestions that may help establish openness and diversity of opinion:

- Facilitators should contribute to discussions as a regular group members; they should never abuse their position by dominating a discussion or belittling other views.
- A facilitator should normally resist the temptation to rehearse teaching, affirm particular views or summarise discussions. Doing these things can undermine the discovery and learning taking place.
- If discussion becomes harsh or factious, facilitators should resist furthering the confrontation. Instead, quieten the group and then consider inviting a member with a harmonious or gentle personality to summarise (rather than resolve) the tension.

Facilitating relationship

Discipleship represents a form of learning that is *called out* of students or disciples, under the guidance and direction of a facilitator, mentor, educator or teacher. People in these roles come alongside motivated learners, not to direct them forcefully, but to assist, encourage, facilitate and draw out the *learning-through-living* that is continuously taking place within those being discipled.

Regular discipleship groups are a good way to begin fermenting interpersonal interaction, however they usually need to be supplemented by informal exchanges that allow mutual exchange, encounter, openness and listening. Time for companionship and friendship, during which we can share both painful realities stretching or testing our faith and hopes and dreams sustaining us.

Without this, learning groups risk feeling too impersonal, theoretical or disjointed from daily life. However, unlike formal, classroom learning, this sort of practical, interpersonal, *open-to-the-other* kind of learning is rarely neat and tidy and may even seem chaotic at times. It is, though, potentially highly effective.

Who can facilitate?

A facilitator needs to be someone with a passion and sense of calling to help others become faithful Christian disciples. This passion must motivate them to be humble, flexible, warm, open and secure enough to allow others to explore personal boundaries of vocational understanding, experience and creativity.

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, MPD 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.

5.2 Discipleship group format

MPD modules are structured to provide a *reflective learning process*, which incorporates practical, educational principles married to practical, spiritual principles, drawn from Scripture.

Reflective Learning

Figure 5.1 illustrates a *reflective learning process*, of the kind that might be encountered within progressive educational or training contexts.

To learn, we gather to *hear* new ideas. As we listen, we *reflect* upon those ideas: filtering them through our current understanding, old and new thoughts sometimes conflicting, sometimes harmonising. In *discussion* with others, we broaden and deepen our understanding and sharpen our convictions about the most appropriate way to *act*, when we disperse and return to our contexts of work and vocation.

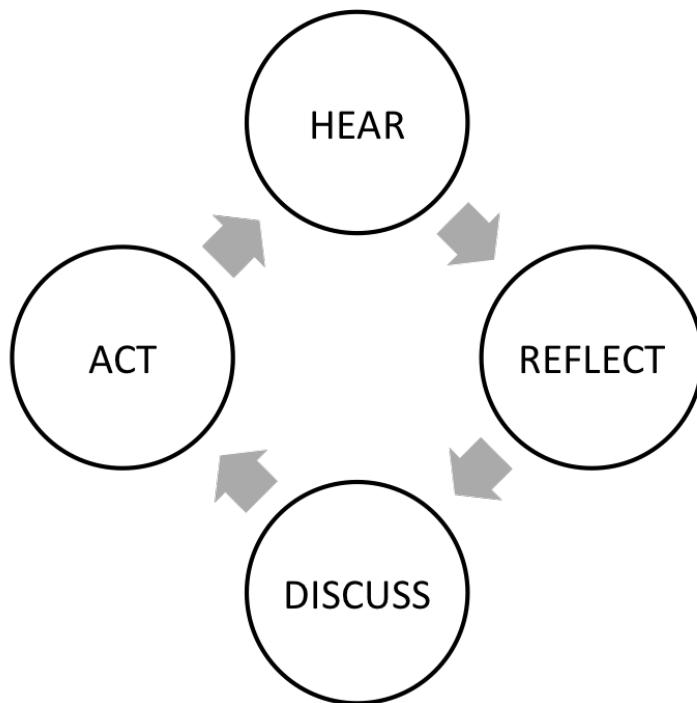


Figure 5.1: Reflective Learning Process

Acts 2:42

I want to suggest how this reflective learning process, or cycle, may be adapted and applied to Maize Plant Discipleship groups, by combining it with a simple pattern of teaching, fellowship, breaking bread and prayer, drawn from the example of the early church:

They continued faithfully in the teaching of the apostles, in fellowship, in breaking bread and in prayer—*Acts 2:42*

The combined MPD learning process that I am proposing incorporates six elements: Hear – Receive – Open – Share – Pray – Act

Hear

When we gather together as disciples of the Messiah, to hear biblical teaching, we are not opening ourselves only to human ideas or wisdom, as Paul explains to the Corinthians:

We have not received the spirit of this world but the Spirit of God, so that we might understand the things that God has so freely given us. These are the things we are talking about when we avoid the manner of speaking that human wisdom would dictate and instead use a manner of speaking taught by the Spirit, by which we explain the things of the Spirit to people who have the Spirit.¹



Figure 5.2: Hear

Our goal, therefore, is not only to listen with our minds, but also with our spirit—our heart. Not to become “puffed up” with knowledge, but to *hear what the Spirit is saying to his people.*² And we listen in order to live more faithfully. This kind of listening is called *heeding*: listening with the intention to learn and follow, or obey.

Receive

Hearing God’s message to us, either as a body of people, or as individuals, or families, is the beginning; it is not enough only to *hear...*

¹1 Corinthians 2:12–13

²Revelation 2:29, 3:6,13,23; Matthew 11:15, Mark 4:9 etc.

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.³

The key to obedience is in receiving God's word inwardly, through meditation and reflection. This allows the word to begin to "*dwell richly within us*"⁴.



Figure 5.3: Receive

Think about how we receive food: chewing, enjoying the taste, swallowing and digesting it, enables the body to receive the food's 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. Then we must allow it to settle in our spirit, forming and shaping our convictions, or holding it in our hearts, even before we fully understand all that it means to us.

It is not always easy. God's word can be like honey on the lips, but bitter in the stomach!⁵ This is a way of saying that it may be pleasant and joyful to receive God's word when we first hear and 'taste' it, but faithful obedience always forms a testing and difficult path.

³James 1:22–25; see also Hebrews 3:7–19

⁴Colossians 3:16

⁵Revelation 10:9–10; also Ezekiel 3:1–14

Open

In fellowship with others, we must learn to open our hearts to the perspectives and experiences of those around us and those who see things differently to ourselves.

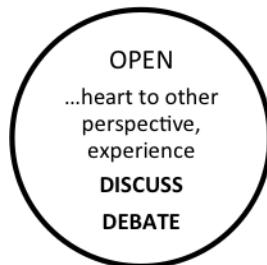


Figure 5.4: Open

Within meetings, group discussion represents an important form of fellowship. The following suggestions may help group discussions to be lively, invigorating and spiritually satisfying.⁶

- 1. Invite and allow free-moving debate relating to the study topic.**

It may take a few sessions for the group to get used to the freedom of this format; make sure younger people and women are included. (See also: Facilitating openness (section 5.1)).

- 2. Discuss traditional proverbs that relate to study topics.**

Use of the *sweet talk* of proverbs will provide fresh insight. This can also help to provide unexpected, yet welcome opportunities to discuss what you are learning with elders and others, outside of the gathered group, including non-believers.

- 3. Discuss practical, vocational applications of the topical study.**

Vocation is more than simply our job, or employment: it incorporates the whole of the responsibilities towards which God calls us, including workplaces and practices, families, communities and networks, as well as personal vision and service.

⁶Facilitators are invited to incorporate and develop their own ideas.

4. Allow discussions to ebb and flow.

Give time for people to consider their responses and return to earlier parts of the debate, where appropriate.

Share

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



Figure 5.5: Share

Breaking bread was originally fashioned, by the early church, upon the weekly *Sh'bat* (Sabbath) meal of the Jews—a time of thanksgiving for God's deliverance of Israel from the oppression of Egypt.

Although breaking and sharing bread has typically become ceremonial in modern Christianity, it is possible to incorporate a simple meal into times of meeting together and to identify this prayerfully as a form of breaking bread together.

Sharing food together is a vital part of human fellowship and a practical way of celebrating and proclaiming God's daily provision and blessing. Where a meal is not practical or possible, consider sharing a small amount of bread together, in a symbolic act of shared hospitality and commitment to membership of the body of the Messiah.

Pray

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.



Figure 5.6: Pray

Pray for the gospel to deeply impact and transform individuals, communities, cultures and societies throughout your nation, all of 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!

Finally, send one another forth in mutual prayer and the power of God's blessing, using what has been studied to infuse prayer with fresh confidence concerning God's will and purpose—including personal and vocational concerns and challenges faced by group members.

- Speak a blessing from Scripture, or as led by the Holy Spirit, towards a group member, a person, community or a specific problem.

Expect that the power of God's word and the blessing of his life in us will overcome all opposition!

Act

The purpose of our gathering to hear God's message is not simply to hear it, but to act upon it!

Everyone who comes to me, hears my words and acts of them... he is like someone building a house who dug deep and laid the foundation on bedrock. When a flood came, the torrent beat against that house but couldn't shake it, because it was constructed well...

Whoever hears my words but doesn't act on them is like someone who built his house on the ground without any foundation. As soon as the river struck, it collapsed and that house became a horredous wreck.⁷



Figure 5.7: Act

The goal of discipleship is to be transformed ourselves and to become a transforming influence in our homes and workplaces and communities – *a messianic community blessed... to be a blessing!*

MPD learning cycle

Placing these six learning elements together produces the MPD learning cycle (Figure 5.8)

5.3 Practical considerations

Facilitating a discipleship group will be most effective when practicalities are considered and appropriate planning takes place. This should be done in advance, in order to grain the most from the group interaction.

⁷Luke 6:47-49

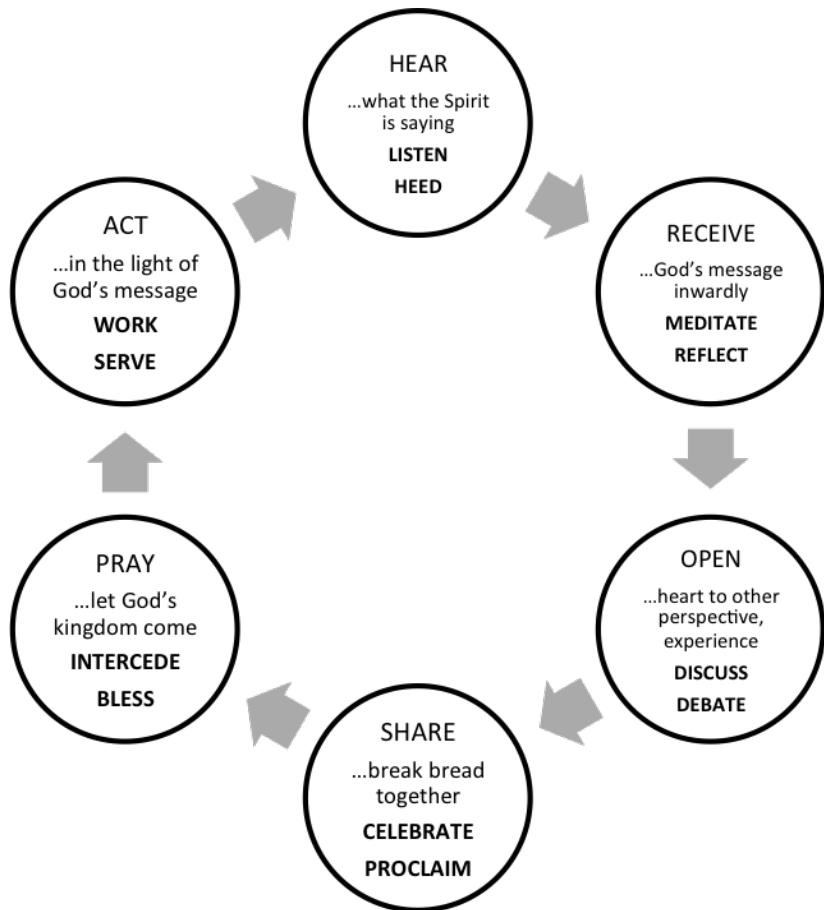


Figure 5.8: MPD Learning Cycle

Getting started

Maize Plant Discipleship is probably ideal for discipleship groups of between eight to twelve people. This is small enough to grow together with a degree of intimacy; large enough for group members to explore discipleship commitment at their own pace.

- More than twelve? Consider forming more than one group and to begin forming disciples right away, by helping others to facilitate a group.

Involving others

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

Whoever is presenting the topical study should carefully read it through in advance: absorbing, familiarising and reflecting upon the teaching and its lessons. If areas are unfamiliar or unclear, don't ignore them. Instead, allow a lively discussion about that area of the study, encouraging others to bring forward their interpretation of the topic.

Timetable

Plan a timetable for the whole syllabus of – approximately 64 – studies to be completed, considering the nature of the group and availability of time. For example, are members effected by the agricultural or academic calendar.

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.

Consider how the seating can be used to form a more intimate space for the group. It is important that people are able to see one another, in order to provide a practical forum for discussions and a more intimate space in general.

Experiment with a change of location occasionally. Outside environments may be helpful in producing a liberating interaction; to find out what works well for your group.

Adaption

Be prepared to adapt both the teaching and the method of presentation, to create a helpful and culturally-appropriate learning environment. Take into account the abilities and capacities of each particular discipleship group. Here are some suggestions to consider.

- Ensure literature is a helpful servant, not “a hard task-master,” to oral learners in particular.
- Invite creative people to contribute by interpreting or celebrating the message of the teaching using drama, art or song.
- What other ways might it be appropriate to organise the time and the group in order to ensure the learning is culturally appropriate, relevant and practical?

Think about these things as you progress throughout this discipleship experience.

6

CHAPTER

Publishing MPD

I think you are touching something that is not already existing... For example, if we talk about evangelism, it may well be a new way of approaching evangelism, but we already have many methods of evangelism. But discipleship is something that is really (an) innovative thing!—Burkinabé theological educator, 2010

Freely you have received, therefore freely give—Jesus, Matthew 10.8

6.1 Books for African contexts

Over the past three-to-four decades, the African Christian community has multiplied and expanded massively, such that the global Christian community's statistical centre of gravity is now located in Africa.

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.

Furthermore, many books are imports or translations of books written for Christians in different, generally Western, cultural contexts—wherein quite different questions, cultural values and theological imperatives are

considered significant. In short, many Christian textbooks used in African leadership training are contextually inappropriate.

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

These leaders typically mediate between the two cultural worlds of orality and literacy respectively. Consequently, their need is for textbooks that

- facilitate, rather than hinder, mediation between these cultures.
- are readily translatable into mother-tongue languages.
- can be republished in a low-cost way that energises mission.

6.2 A new publishing philosophy

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

Accordingly, MPD resources are being licenced for reproduction under the terms of a *Creative Commons* licence. This allows MPD resources to be reproduced, re-published (e.g. translated) and re-distributed within a particular context, without breaching copyright—providing any reproduction identifies the original author (and translators) and retains the licence as an integral element of the republication.

This respects and maintains the personal copyright of the author and translators, while also releasing the traditionally tight, commercial grip of copyright owners and publishers.

6.3 Publishing and distribution examples

Under this licensing arrangement, any missional group, denomination or agency wishing to publish MPD handbooks is permitted to—without any licensing cost—providing they keep to the terms of the licence.

The licence permits textbooks printed under licence to be sold or otherwise distributed by agencies that organise *translation, printing and distribution*, according to their own priorities and budgetary constraints. This allows for a variety of methods by which MPD text books could be distributed.

- Example A : Training Seminars
- Example B : Denominational Bible School
- Example C : Interdenominational NGO
- Example D : Commercial Enterprise

All four examples are based on textbooks of approximately 25 A4-sized pages, of double-sided printing, folded to produce 50pp, A5-sized booklets, stapled and trimmed, with a single-colour printed cover.¹ Entire MPD syllabus = 17 textbooks.

Exam- ple	No of modules	No of copies	Cost /book	Total cost	Selling price
A	3	50	1000	150,000	1000/ book
B	17	25	800	340,000	7000/set
C	17	50	800	680,000	800/ book
D	17	50	800	680,000	1500/ book

The following sets out the advantages and disadvantages of these examples.

Example A : Training Seminars

Church or denomination reproduces 50 copies of 3 MPD textbooks; total cost 150,000 CFA; distributed to trainees at *cost-price*, providing funds for another 3 x 50 books; repeated 3 times a year, for two years.

Cost per trainee: 3000 CFA /seminars (9000 /year)

¹Example A assumes a cost price of 1000 CFA per text book (~\$2, or £1.33). The other examples, based on a larger volume of printing, assume a cost price of 800 CFA. The commercial selling price is an estimate.

Example B : Denominational Bible School

Denominational bible school reproduces 25 sets MPD syllabus (17 books); total cost 340,000 CFA; distributed at 50% *subsidised* price.

Cost per student 7000 CFA.

Example C : Interdenominational NGO

Interdenominational NGO reproduces 50 MPD syllabus sets, on behalf of a group of churches and agencies; cost 680,000 CFA; distributed at cost price + 10% (~15,000 CFA per set):

- 25 sets to organisation A @ 374,000 CFA
- 15 sets to organisation B @ 224,400 CFA
- 10 sets to libraries, translation agencies, other groups and individuals @ 149,600 CFA.

Example D : Commercial Enterprise

Entrepreneur, or NGO, prints 50 syllabus sets; cost 680,000 CFA (13,600 CFA per set); distributing at cost price + 25%:

- 25 sets to Bible school @ 425,000 CFA (17,000 ea.)
- 250 books to individuals, agencies @ 375,000 CFA (1500 ea.)
- Total income: 800,000 CFA
- Gross profit: 120,000 CFA
- Remaining stock: 175 books, valued @ ~140,000 CFA (880 ea.)

6.4 Licensing

Maize Plant Discipleship by John Clements is licensed for distribution within Burkina Faso, as follows.²

²Permissions beyond the scope of the license may be available at <http://maizeplantdiscipleship.wordpress.com/contact>.

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Further information

7.1 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 via the Resources website.

7.2 Contact and additional information

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

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