

Facilitators' Handbook

Maize Plant Discipleship
MPD-HB (Version 0.1.6 – Author's draft)

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Maize Plant Discipleship Facilitators' Handbook
A Series of Discipleship Manuals Designed for Use in African Contexts

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

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In this Handbook

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

- **Discipleship** (chapter 2) explores biblical and missional perspectives of Christian discipleship.
- **Africa & MPD** (chapter 3) explains the background to the development of Maize Plant Discipleship as a resource for use in African contexts.
- **MPD Syllabus** (section 7.1) 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

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?

What is the primary principle of messianic discipleship? I believe it is set forth most clearly by the missionary apostle, Paul, when he writes these words in his second letter addressed to his own disciple, Timothy, words containing clear echoes of Jesus' words, in Matthew 28:

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

Here we encounter two vital aspects of messianic discipleship. Firstly, the knowledge of the Messiah is not a matter of human knowledge or philosophy: it is a spiritual reality, a divine relationship, mediated by the Holy Spirit. Secondly, this spiritual treasure has been entrusted to us and must be kept safe with the help of the Holy Spirit—by entrusting it to other, faithful followers.

Safe-keeping

This safekeeping does not imply trying to preserve our treasure by hiding it away. Rather, this treasure—of intimate, personal knowledge of and relationship with the Messiah—is to be kept safe by *carefully committing it to the stewardship and safekeeping of other faithful people*. Paradoxically, it is this committal of our treasure to others that keeps it safe, that keeps it from becoming unproductive.

Let us seek to understand this more deeply.

Seed and harvest

The metaphor of seed, and the harvest that comes from seed sown into the ground, is central to *Maize Plant Discipleship* (section 4.1). In agricultural 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 used for food—for *daily bread*—must soon be sown to produce another harvest.

In the same way, we discover that God is able to supply spiritual life to us: the *treasure* of experientially knowing the Messiah, in our daily living. 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, is the spiritual equivalent of *daily bread*.

Merely enjoying God's life for ourselves is, however, 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*.

And 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 sowing it into the ground in order to produce another harvest.

Sharing treasure

This is one of the secrets to living a truly *Messianic* life, alive to God, 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 sowing and sharing it with others, both within and beyond our own communities, that we encounter our vocation and authentic being.

Yet, while a farmer recognises that some seed may fall onto rocky or difficult ground, it is never his intention to sow the seed wastefully. In the same way, our spiritual treasure is not to be wasted or cast away carelessly. It is too precious to be squandered upon those who do not appreciate its value and will not use it wisely.

What is received must be shared with other people who are beginning to recognise its worth and value: its transformative power. This is what the parable calls good soil. People who will themselves be transformed through a personal knowledge and experience of the Messiah and who will continue to keep this treasure safe, by sowing it into more good soil: sharing it with other faithful people, who in turn, share it with other faithful people and so on and so on. *In this simple, straightforward way, a missional, discipleship movement begins to take place.*

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.

- Disciples committed to significant transformation.
- Disciples willing to work endlessly to turn vision into reality.
- Disciples who pursue their work as *co-workers*, rather than selfishly-ambitious *individuals*.
- Disciples who reproduce other faithful, active disciples, continually sharing the work, values and hopes of the vision.

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

As this community has spread out, it has significantly transformed the history of many of those nations and will transform many more in the days and years that are ahead. This dynamism can be traced to the Christian 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, this dynamism has ceased to exist. A church planted within a nation or culture, in a former season, is no longer 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 that has lost 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. It lacks the confidence to persuade either itself or others to forsake human idols and to wholehearted ally itself and themselves to the Messiah.

Renewal

By contrast, whenever a messianic community—be it a national or regional church, local congregation—seeks for spiritual renewal, reformation or revival, messianic, visionary discipleship must be at the core of its activity and spirituality.

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 people *serving God's purposes within the world* and its societies.

At its core, the messianic, new-covenant community is a movement of disciples called to serve God's eternal purpose, amongst

a world of lost, hurting, confused, oppressed, fear-filled, idol-bound populations.

- *Out there*, beyond congregational gatherings, among the corruption of society, among its filthy gutters, behind its social, political and religious walls, the Messiah is at work by his Spirit.
- *Out there* he is calling 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.
- *Out there* is where Christian disciples need to bring the light of Christ. Out there, amongst the people of the world, Christ's disciples are the light of the world.

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 him.

Charismatic derives from a Greek word, *charism*, meaning *gift of the Spirit*. Biblically speaking, the *charisma* of the Christian community comes from its anointing. Messiah, or Christ, essentially means *Anointed One*. The One Anointed with the Spirit.

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.

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*, as Jesus himself demonstrated. 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*.

Thus we end (this section) 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.

That is the heart of Maize Plant Discipleship.

CHAPTER 3

Africa & 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 Yaldia, cited in: Facilitating A Renewal of Discipleship Praxis Amongst Burkinabé Leaders and Learners, Clements, 2013*

3.1 Introduction

Maize Plant Discipleship is a 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.¹ 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 and reformulated, as the subject of doctoral missiological research, in conjunction with Fuller School of Intercultural Studies, in order to better serve the needs of missional leaders and learners within Burkina Faso, in West Africa.

Beginnings

The origins of Maize Plant Discipleship are rooted in my own experiences of discipleship, which began amongst an international, Pentecostal missional community and network, in 1988. 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 us may be described as 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 steady 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

¹As well as being trialled in Texas, USA and Wales, UK.

our 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 evident appreciation. Afterwards, participants remarked not only upon a uniqueness of insight, but also the spirit of love, with 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, in 2008, I asked Burkinabé associates how I might make the resource more accessible and useful. They requested that I institute a regular training program *and* make my teaching notes available in textbooks.

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 a series of survey questionnaires, group interviews (discussion forums) and individual, in-depth interviews. In total, over seventy Burkinabé participants were consulted, a significant number of whom were national and, or denominational leaders, with significant experience of and responsibility for Burkinabé leadership training and development.

Findings

The application of qualitative data analysis methods, to the collected data, revealed a number of significant findings or themes, relating to discipleship, in general, and my discipleship training resource, in particular.

1. Participants identified strongly with the concept of discipleship and a need to freshly embrace *holistic, disciple-forming practices*.²
2. Participants firmly and lucidly validated the theological content of my training resource as *appropriate to Burkinabé contexts*, highlighting its biblical content, practical focus and cultural sensitivity.
3. Participants identified that contextually-appropriate teaching needed to incorporate: consistent use of graphical and analogical illustration; adequate time for reflection; discussion-based learning modes.
4. Participants expressed a hunger for appropriate literature to enhance biblical, Christian understanding. Textbooks are viewed as a much-needed accompaniment to leadership training, ideally tailored to facilitate (literate) leaders who work in oral contexts.
5. Participants identified a potential for translating appropriate textbooks into minority African languages, but highlighted significant logistical issues (printing, promoting, distributing) involved in making text-books practical and accessible.

These data analysis findings, combined with contextual missiological study,³ were used to define a set of characteristics—*practical, relevant, accessible*—that could be (and have now been) applied to the Maize Plant Discipleship resource, in order to make it appropriate to leaders and learners in Burkinabé contexts.

²In the Burkinabé context, discipleship seems to be appreciated as a concept imbued with dynamism. A dynamism driven by a sense of inward, personal responsibility, combined with a sense of outward, shared, communal responsibility. A responsibility to pass on the 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.

³Visit: <http://jbclements.wordpress.com/missiology> for further details of my doctoral research, including access to the entire dissertation.

Practical

Practicality implies a primary focus upon action, rather than theory. *Accordingly, an appropriate discipleship resource should:*

1. Encourage Burkinabé ownership of their responsibility to serve God's eternal purpose, amongst their generation.
2. Promote missional commitment, discipline and action.
3. Facilitate personal, communal, cultural transformation.
4. Facilitate generational formation of disciples.

Relevant

Relevance implies qualities and characteristics appropriate to Burkinabé culture. *Accordingly, an appropriate discipleship resource should:*

1. Provide a biblically faithful, missional theology, integrated with Pentecostal spirituality.
2. Be published as a series of short, topical, highly-(graphically) illustrated and (analogously) illustrative textbooks.
3. Facilitate group discussion and reflective learning.
4. Facilitate contextual adaption, especially for oral contexts.

Accessible

Accessibility means removing or lowering barriers likely to hinder access to the curriculum. *Accordingly, an appropriate discipleship resource should:*

1. Be linguistically and conceptually comprehensible.
2. Be readily-translatable into vernacular languages.
3. Be distributed with a free-at-source license.
4. Discriminate in favour of the economically poor.

4

CHAPTER

MPD Syllabus

John 12:24 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,

Paul, 2 Corinthians 9:10 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

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.

- Using maize to represent messianic community reminds us that we are called, like the Messiah, to live sacrificial, obedient lives in order to become a kind of *life-giving bread* to the peoples of the world (read John 6 & 20:21).
- The *Maize Plant Discipleship Syllabus* is structured to symbolically reflect the metaphor of a maize plant.

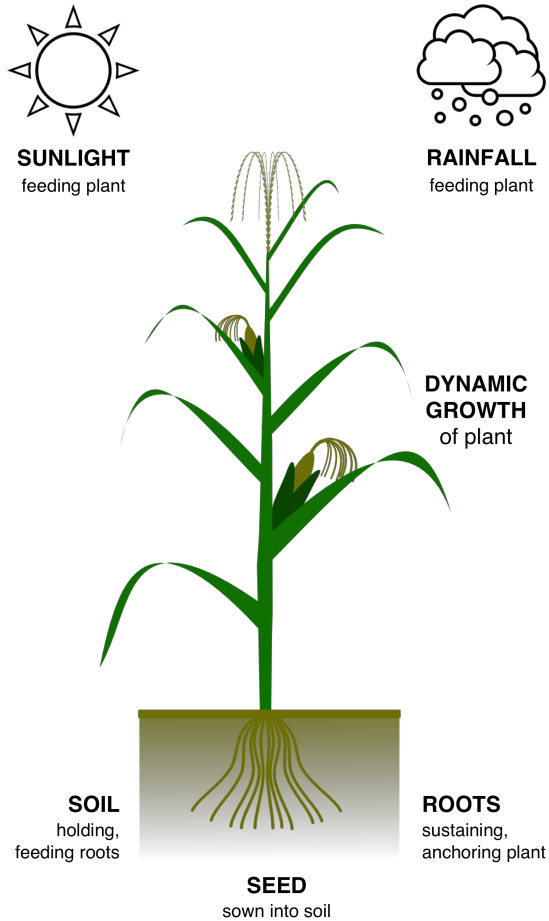


Figure 4.1: Maize plant metaphor

As illustrated, in Figure 4.1, there are three main components to the metaphor:

1. Soil and roots (section 4.1)

Plant growth ;

2. Sunlight and rainfall (section 4.1).

Soil and roots

Only seed sown into good soil produces a good harvest. This reminds us that discipleship communities need to be rooted in the biblical, covenantal soil of Messianic faith, allowing them to draw on essential, spiritual *nutrients* and the living water of the Messiah's Spirit, anchoring them against winds of false teaching and sustaining amidst the heat of trials, temptations and vocational responsibility.



Figure 4.2: Roots

In the Maize Plant Discipleship metaphor, *soil and roots* represent the biblical, covenantal community, context and vocation of *Israel*. From these roots emerges the messianic, new-covenant community and vocation, which is metaphorically represented by the maize plant itself.

- **MPD Module 1** (MPD-M1) relates to the metaphors of soil and roots

Note: MPD is shorthand for *Maize Plant Discipleship*, and MPD-M1 is shorthand for *Maize Plant Discipleship–Module 1*.

MPD-M1 – Eternal Purpose

Module 1 provides a study of the biblical, Hebraic soil and messianic roots of new-covenant faith, building up a panoramic overview of the whole story of scripture, in order to illustrate God's unchanging, eternal purpose.

Within this foundational illustration, the Messiah is the Seed e

Maize plant

The maize plant represents the central component of the MPD metaphor, so that the growth and multiplication of the maize plant represents the growth and multiplication of messianic community.

- The MPD Syllabus uses the word *dynamic* to refer to the processes that stimulate growth and multiplication.
- *Dynamic* comes from a Greek word, *dunamis*, meaning power. It refers to a force that stimulates change or progress within a system or process, thus:
- The *dynamics* of a maize plant refer to the unique characteristics that stimulate its characteristic development, growth, structure, shape and fruit.
- Similarly, the *dynamics* of messianic community refer to the unique characteristics that stimulate its characteristic development, growth, structure, shape and fruit.
- Eight modules, MPD-M2 to MPD-M9, explore these unique characteristics:

MPD-M2 – Dynamics of Vocation – Nations

MPD-M2 examines the historical development of intercultural mission movements and of the Messianic Community's understanding of their vocational mission to the nations of the world.

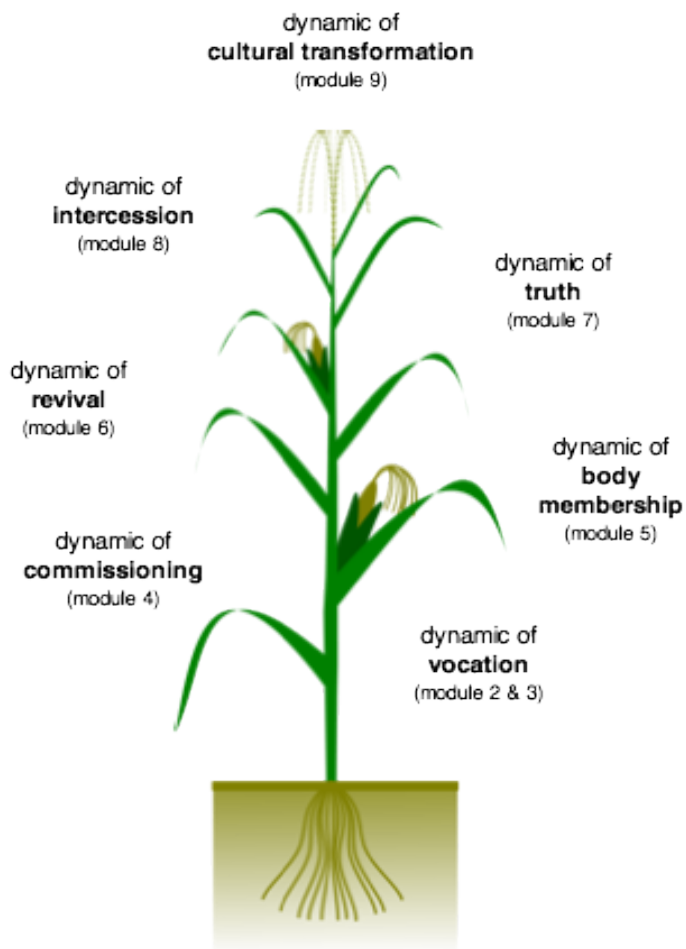


Figure 4.3: Maize plant dynamics

MPD-M3 – Dynamics of Vocation – Jews

MPD-M3 looks at the history of biblical Israel in the light of the covenants and prophecies of the *Tanakh* (Hebrew Bible; Old Testament), in order to demonstrate the significant responsibilities of the Messianic Community in regard to the Jewish people.

MPD-M4 – Dynamics of Commissioning

MPD-M4 explores the dynamic of messianic commissioning in terms of the five-fold strategy and biblical structure of the messianic community, relating them to the ministry-gifts of Christ, as taught by Paul.

MPD-M5 – Dynamics of Body Membership

MPD-M5 draws on parallels between the apostle Paul's teaching about patterns of growth, in his epistle to the Ephesians, and insights from the first epistle of John, in order to explore basic patterns of membership, commitment and spiritual maturity within the body of the Messiah.

MPD-M6 – Dynamics of Revival

MPD-M6 reveals a cycle of core, spiritual activities representing the dynamics of revival, leading to a spiritual harvest. These dynamics of revival are related to three significant spiritual encounters: allegiance, truth and power.

MPD-M7 – Dynamics of Truth

MPD-M7 explores the dynamics of encountering truth: learning to walk in practical, covenantal faithfulness towards God's revelation and wisdom and not merely dogmatic, or creedal adherence to religious institutions.

MPD-M8 – Dynamics of Intercession

MPD-M8 explores the power encounter of intercession examining: biblical roots and prophetic expressions of intercession; the eternal, mediatory ministry of the Messiah; the

Holy Spirit's role and the priestly vocation of the Messianic Community as a *house of prayer for all nations*.

MPD-M9 – Dynamics of Cultural Transformation

MPD-M9 highlights the powerful, spiritual struggle against evil and idolatry to which the Messianic Community is called. Whilst living amongst and on behalf of the peoples of the world, we are called to work towards cultural transformations that signal the presence of God's kingdom.

Sunlight and rainfall

Sunlight and rainfall represent essential spiritual *disciplines* that fuel the growth of messianic community.

Continuing the metaphor of the maize plant: *sunlight* and *rainfall* represent *messianic disciplines* capable of opening us to the revelatory light and living water of God's Spirit, by which the Messianic Community is sustained—and without which we become spiritually weak and unable to produce good fruit or a plentiful harvest.

- MPD-M10 to MPD-M16 examines seven characteristic disciplines of messianic community, as illustrated in Figure 4.4.

MPD-M10 – Disciplines of Spiritual Maturity

MPD-M10 Explores three stages of encounter, discovery and growth in spiritual maturity and vocational equipping:

- *Pastoral / Devotional*. Foundational stage of spiritual maturity
- *Missional / Vocational*. Secondary phase of maturity, marked
- *Apostolic / Intercessory*. Final stage of spiritual maturity,

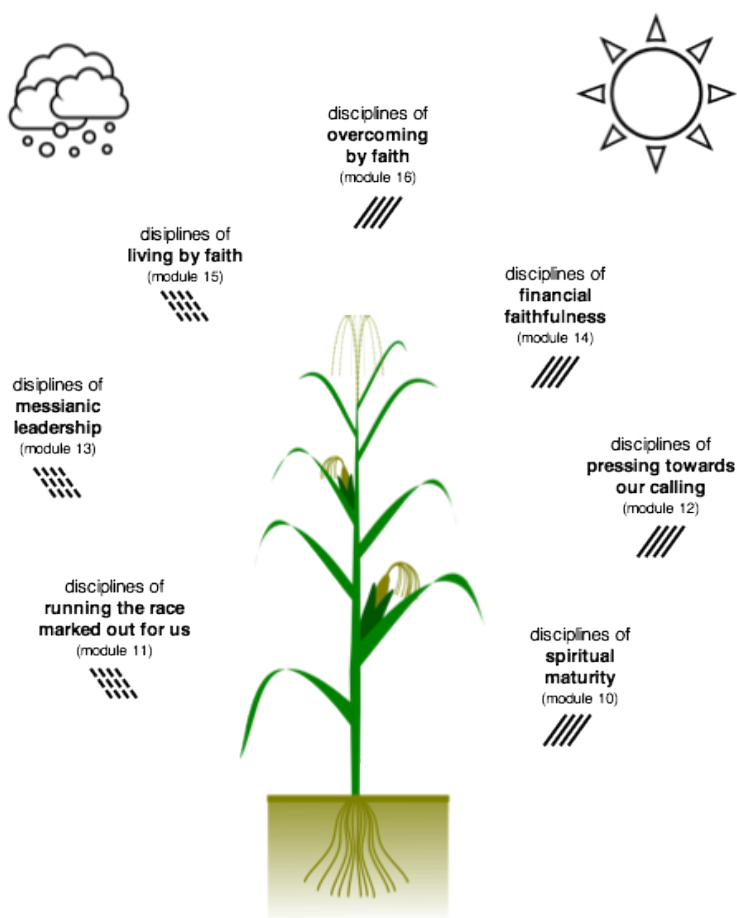


Figure 4.4: Sunlight and rainfall

MPD-M11 – Disciplines of Running the Race

MPD-M11 explores the apostle Paul's theme of athletes competing in a race; examining 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

MPD-M12 explores personal spiritual disciplines able to sustain us, as we sacrificially pursue personal vocations, including deepening our relationship with the Messiah, leading to a lifestyle of *prayer without ceasing*.

MPD-M13 – Disciplines of Financial Faithfulness

MPD-M13 study explores financial faithfulness, within the context of covenant relationship and messianic community, affirming that human beings are created to prosper, whilst highlighting biblical perspectives of wealth and poverty, which are radically different to those of the world.

MPD-M14 – Disciplines of Messianic Leadership

MPD-M14 examines the qualifications, motivations and characteristics that are the true marks of faithful messianic leadership and explores a model of leadership that balances achieving missional tasks, building missional teams and developing missional individuals.

MPD-M15 – Disciplines of Living by Faith

MPD-M15 explores how messianic faith is tested and purified through trials, until we learn to see with eyes of faith and major challenges—rather than forming a threat from which to retreat—become opportunities to experience God's providence and covenant faithfulness.

MPD-M16 – Disciplines of Overcoming

MPD-M16 employs the analogy of a sporting arena to represent spiritual confrontations and conflicts with cultural idols

and strongholds, whereupon it becomes necessary to discern the fresh, strategic direction in order to make room for a transforming encounter with God's overcoming power!

4.2 MPD Handbooks

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

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

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

The following sections provide an overview of the content of each module.

CHAPTER 5

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 Discipleship groups

Maize Plant Discipleship is essentially intended to facilitate a dynamic movement of intentionally self-reproducing discipleship groups.

This doesn't mean these studies can't be used for congregational teaching, or devotional study, or within theological and leadership training centres. However, if you are using the curriculum in these contexts, why not think about how you could incorporate discipleship groups?

Freedom to multiply

Why focus upon discipleship groups, rather than, say, church growth strategies? Let's remind ourselves of the foundational principle of biblical dis-

cipleship: *Keep safe the great treasure entrusted to us by sharing it with others who will be faithful to the teaching and in sharing it with others.* For discipleship to reach its full potential, it is essential that disciples find effective ways to share their experience with others, so that everyone is involved in forming disciples. One of the most straightforward way is to encourage discipleship groups to multiply.

Outward movement

When authentic, biblical discipleship takes place in one context, the enthusiasm it generates naturally creates a pressure to move outwards into other contexts.

For some, this pressure will be released as they share the fruit of their discipleship within their homes, families, communities and workplaces. Environments in which they can begin influencing others towards being authentic disciples of the Messiah, yet without necessarily forming a discipleship group.

For others, this pressure will only be released as they step out and facilitate fresh discipleship groups themselves. For those who feel called to this, it is important that they are not discouraged from doing so. This is how multiplication takes place.

Failure to multiply

If multiplication isn't allowed to happen, two things happen. Firstly, the enthusiasm and fresh experiences of discipleship fails to be converted into fruitful, practical expressions. If freshly-discipled people are not encouraged and facilitated to move outwards and make disciples, what they have learned becomes theoretical and generated momentum easily wasted.

It also risks inflaming selfish ambition. This happens when disciples aspiring to positions of leadership and prominence begin to compete against each other to demonstrate who is the more committed (read Mark 10:26-45).

Multiplication within Acts

Look at the pattern represented by these scriptures from the book of Acts. Examine the preceding sections in your own Bible and see how

each statement represents a conclusion to a significant period of church expansion.

Continuing faithfully and with singleness of purpose to meet in the Temple courts daily and breaking bread in their several homes, they shared their food in you and simplicity of heart, praising God and having the respect of all the people. And day after day the Lord kept adding to them those who were being saved—Acts 2:46–47

So the word of God continued to spread. The number of disciples in Yerushalayim increased rapidly and a large crowd of priests were becoming obedient to the faith—Acts 6:7

The the Messianic community throughout Y'hudah, the Galil and Shomron enjoyed peace and was built up. They lived in the fear of the Lord, with the counsel of the Holy Spirit; and their numbers kept multiplying—Acts 9.31

But (in spite of persecution) the word of the Lord went on growing and being multiplied—Acts 12.24

Accordingly, the congregations were strengthened in the faith and increased in number day by day—Acts 16.5

Thus the message about the Lord continued in a powerful way to grow in influence—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

The power of multiplication

The potential of a freely-multiplying discipleship movement can also be illustrated numerically. A group of ten disciples who each faithfully disciple another ten... who each disciple another ten will produce... not one hundred disciples, but one thousand disciples.

That's right: after just two 'generations' of discipleship 1000 disciples can be made. Five discipleship-generations of faithful multiplication are potentially capable of developing a million disciples!

If it's that powerful, why don't we see it happening more often?

Old wineskins

In actual fact, rapidly-multiplying discipleship movement are being established in many places around the world, using models similar to this. Nevertheless, most churches simply don't make discipleship a priority. They either fail to address discipleship altogether or they limit its impact by fitting programs awkwardly into existing congregational structures.

This is similar to the problem Jesus' described in Luke 5:36-38. Like new wine in an old wineskin, discipleship is a disruptive reality. It disrupts the status quo, the normal, natural flow of things. It challenges lukewarm allegiances to Christ. It disrupts predictable, cyclical patterns of development.

By contrast, church congregations tend to reproduce and multiply only when numbers are large enough to plant another congregation, or when there is sufficient budget for a church building to be constructed. New congregations are often required to be a certain distance away from the first. This kind of growth may be more stable, but is generally less dynamic, with multiplication much slower. (See Module 4, for further exploration of these dynamics.)

Out there

Yet, discipleship doesn't need to take place in church buildings. It needs to take place out in the homes and workplaces, amongst the families and communities with whom we live and work and share our lives. Out there, a disciple of Christ can influence tens, maybe hundreds of people who may never visit or join a congregation.

Existing structures

Each facilitator will need to decide the most appropriate way to relate to existing Christian groups and structures. Christian discipleship should not be a threat to surrounding congregations and church groups; it should seek to complement and serve them appropriately, in the spirit of the Messiah.

Some movements may view discipleship groups as church plants. Whatever larger structure or vision into which discipleship fits, the important thing is that it takes place—and that discipleship groups are able to reproduce and multiply relatively freely.

5.2 Facilitating Discipleship Groups

Discipleship represents a form of learning that needs to be ‘called out’ of students or disciples, under the guidance and direction of a mentor, educator or master-teacher. People in these roles come alongside learners not to direct them forcefully, but to assist, encourage, facilitate and draw out the learning that is taking place within them.

This type of learning takes place when people encounter together the questions and trials that stretch and test their faith, knowledge, wisdom and understanding. This intimate, informal, personal process of mentored learning and discovery is an essential element of the process of discipleship.

This kind of practical discipleship is rarely neat and tidy, like formal, classroom learning. However, done properly, it is a highly effective method and mode of learning. It allows practical experience to inform theory, as well as theory to inform practical experience.

Facilitating role

The following sections describe and suggest some significant ways that facilitating a discipleship group can differ from traditional leadership roles. The open approach that is described may lead to the question: Who is discipling whom?

In answering this, each particular facilitator needs to use wisdom in accordance with their personal experience and context. For example: those who gather for discipleship may be comfortable recognising an established leader as their mentor or discipler. However, it is equally possible for an individual to facilitate a process of discipleship, using a

curriculum like this one, without the group perceiving them as the experienced mentor who is discipling them.

Responding to these issues of leadership will not cause us to stumble if we humbly embrace the reality that the Spirit of Jesus is the real discipler. The Messiah is discipling us, by his Spirit, throughout the whole of our lives and this curriculum forms one small part of the process of discipleship that he is taking us through.

Who can facilitate?

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

A facilitator may be a lay-leader; they may be relatively young; they may be a woman. It is not necessary to have gone to bible college, or be an established church leader in order to facilitate a discipleship group, or to mentor others. This is because a facilitator does not hold a position of authority over the discipleship group. They simply serve the group by facilitating a shared discipleship process in which all are being discipled and taught by the Spirit of God.

- Note: Facilitators need to be sensitive to expectations that may be raised by their actions and take appropriate responsibility for their impact upon others. In particular, if you are a committed member of an existing movement, be respectful of its traditions and work to maintain good working relationships with members of the leadership. Honour the unity of the Spirit and the body of Christ.

Facilitating the Spirit

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 this curriculum.

Discipleship is about participating in a process whereby the Spirit of Christ is able to lead, warn, direct, encourage, teach and exhort all of the participants. The goal is conformity to the Spirit of the Messiah, Jesus, and obedience to the will of the Father.

Unlike classroom learning, discipleship is not a matter of pouring out information from text books or from a teacher, in order to fill others with

the same knowledge. Everyone has different gifts and personality and are at different stages of development, so group members need to be empowered to learn in their own particular way and at their own pace.

Facilitating openness

When meeting together the aim is to facilitate 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.

By encouraging this kind of debate, it is possible to produce an atmosphere that is comfortable with strong, differing views. In which the group does not feel it necessary to always achieve a consensus of opinion. Ultimately, this openness will produce a stronger spiritual unity. Whereas, a forced conformity of views usually erupts, sooner or later, into divisiveness. Simply because people need their views to be heard and listened to.

This can be especially challenging within cultures where where conformity is highly valued and traditionally authority comes from the top downwards. However, if you afford this liberty of open discussion, it will allow fresh spiritual growth.

******Don't be afraid of it!

Facilitator responses

Some suggestions:

- A facilitator should contribute to discussions simply as a member of the group. They mustn't use their position to belittle the views of others or dominate a debate.
- If someone introduces a note of disagreement, rather than stating their own views directly, it may dampen lively, dissenting discussion. If this happens, consider inviting other members to give their views of the issue.
- When it is time to move on, a facilitator or teacher should normally resist the temptation to summarise discussions, to affirm particular views or to rehearse the teaching. Doing these things risks undermining the discovery and learning process that is taking place.

- Particularly where a facilitator or presenter is an established leader, these practical expressions of humility and openness set a very important example, providing a practical reminder that we are all disciples of the Messiah together.

Facilitating relationship

Discipleship needs to incorporate companionship and friendship, as an integral part of a process of learning and discovery. Time for fellowship-ping together and encountering one another's pain, trials, tests, dreams and yearnings.

Regular discipleship groups are the ideal way to begin fermenting this kind of interpersonal interaction, but these meetings need to be supplemented by informal exchanges and interactions between disciples and facilitator. Working together on practical tasks is a good way to let this take place.

One way or another, time for personal interaction and mutual listening must be found, or the process of discipleship risks becoming impersonal, disjointed and too theoretical.

Format

They continued faithfully in the teaching of the apostles, in fellowship, in breaking bread and in prayer—Acts 2.42

The earliest experience of the followers of Jesus, described above provides us with a simple pattern that can be incorporated into any discipleship group. A pattern of teaching, fellowship, breaking bread and prayer.

In the curriculum's modules, this basic pattern is incorporated into a pattern of Study, Discussion and Empowerment.

Study

The following elements are included in each Module or Study.

- Précis – single paragraph introducing a topic.
- Overview – short summary of the topic, showing how it fits with broader themes; including key scriptures that may be used as 'memory verses'.
- Study – detailed, biblical study; may be divided into sub-topics.

- Discussion /Study Guide – guidance for group discussions and, or questions for further study.

In advance of gathering a discipleship group, the person responsible for presenting the Study should go through it carefully: absorbing, familiarising and reflecting upon the teaching and its lessons.

If there are areas of the study that are unclear to the presenter /facilitator, don't ignore them: share them with the group. This will help to produce a lively discussion about that area of the study, encouraging others to bring forward their interpretation of the topic. Be humble; we are all always learning.

Discussion

These are suggestions. Facilitators and teachers may develop alternatives.

1. Invite and allow free-moving general discussion. It may take a few sessions for the group to get used to the freedom of this format; give it time. Make sure younger people and women are included.
2. Discuss traditional proverbs that may speak to this area of discipleship. Use of the “sweet talk” of proverbs can open up fresh insights. It can also provide an unexpected, yet invariably welcome way to discuss what you are learning with elders and others, outside of the gathered group, including non-believers.
3. Discuss practical, vocational applications of this area of discipleship. Recognising that our vocation is more than our employment: it is the whole of our responsibilities towards which God has called or is calling us. Including workplaces and practices, families, communities and networks, as well as our personal vision and ministry.
4. Allow discussion to ebb and flow. Give time for people to consider their responses and return to earlier parts of the debate, where appropriate.

Empowerment

Empowerment contains three elements: breaking bread; intercession and sending. It is not necessary to incorporate all three into every meeting of a discipleship group. Be led by the Spirit.

Break bread The celebratory breaking of bread, in order to remember the Lord Jesus and his sacrifice, is a sign and symbol of the new covenant and a profound way for a discipleship group to proclaim a shared devotion to Christ.

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

Although breaking bread has become more of a ceremony in today's churches, it is possible to incorporate a simple, shared meal into the routines of discipleship and to recognise this as a practical form of breaking bread. Sharing food together is a vital part of human fellowship and a practical way of sharing God's daily provision to us.

Where sharing a whole meal is not practical or possible, consider breaking bread together in a symbolic act of shared hospitality and commitment to membership of the body of the Messiah.

Intercession Intercession directs our vision and our compassion beyond ourselves and our own needs. Discipleship groups should incorporate intercessory prayers on behalf of neighbours, networks and communities, as well as local and national rulers and governors.

- 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. If any member of the group has access to information about unreached peoples, incorporate it appropriately.
- Please consider praying for this Maize Plant Discipleship Curriculum. Pray that it will be used by God to edify and strengthen and bless the Messianic Community, within Africa ... and beyond!

Sending Finally, those who have gathered for discipleship should send one another forth in prayer and the power of God's blessing.

- Encourage disciples to use that day's teaching to infuse prayer with fresh confidence concerning God's will. Include personal and vocational concerns and specific challenges faced by members of the discipleship.
- Bless one another by speaking a blessing, either from Scripture, or as led by the Holy Spirit, 'over' a person or a community or a

specific problem, expecting that the power of God's word and the blessing of his life in us will overcome all opposition!

Practicalities

Facilitating a discipleship group will be most effective when practicalities are considered and appropriate planning takes place. This planning should be done in advance, in order to allow both discipleship students and facilitators to prepare themselves appropriately.

Getting started

'Maize Plant Discipleship' is ideal for discipleship groups of between eight to twelve people. This group size is small enough to allow members to grow together with a degree of intimacy and large enough to allow members space to explore discipleship commitments at their own pace.

If you begin with a group of more than twelve people committed to participating in discipleship training, consider how you could facilitate more multiple groups. Begin the process of making disciples right away, delegating and sharing responsibility for the discipleship process.

Involving others

Whilst a Facilitator will usually be responsible for convening gatherings, wherever possible, others should be invited to host and, if appropriate, moderate gatherings. Likewise, different people should be made responsible for presenting the teaching and moderating group discussions.

Sharing these responsibilities avoids one person dominating proceedings. If that happens, it tends to stifle creativity and freedom of thought. Ideally, as many group members as possible should be employed, over time, in sharing responsibilities. This is discipleship in practice.

Timetable

Facilitator need to plan a suitable timetable for undertaking the whole course of studies, taking into account the nature of the group and availability of time.

- Is a group affected mainly by the farming cycle?
- Is it based around school terms?

The MPD Syllabus currently comprises sixteen modules. Within each book, depending upon the topic, there are typically between two and five divisions, that can be used for separate sessions.

Location

Discipleship can take place in any appropriate location that can reasonably comfortably accommodate the group. A large room in someone's home, or a community hall, with access to some light refreshments, is ideal.

A church building may be unhelpful if it causes people to have a *church-meeting mentality*. However, if one is used, think about rearranging some of the seating and the way the space is used, so that people are facing one another. This will provide a practical forum for discussions and a more intimate space in general.

Think about changing the location occasionally. Sometimes outside environments may be helpful in producing a liberating interaction. Experiment to find out what works for your group.

Adaption

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

Here are some ideas to think about; you may have others:

1. Consider oral learners – it is part of a teacher's responsibility to ensure literature is a tool, a servant and not a task-master.
2. Allow creative people to contribute by interpreting or celebrating the message of the teaching using drama, art or song.
3. 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.

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 several decades, the African Christian community has multiplied and expanded significantly. So much so that the effective centre of gravity of the global Christian community can now be located in Africa.

At the same time as this extraordinary growth, there has been a relative shortage of book publishing within Africa, over an extended period. Resources serving to edify, disciple and inspire Christian communities have been especially sparse in Francophone Africa.

With regard to books that are distributed, two issues are significant. Firstly, many are imports or translations of books written for Christians in different (generally Western) cultural contexts, where quite different questions and cultural values are considered significant.

Secondly, copyright prohibits reproduction. This protects the commercial interests of authors, book publishers, distributors and retailers, but results in books being practically unattainable to the economically poor—including many pastors, who are hungry for resources to enrich their vocational work.

6.2 A new publishing philosophy

The Maize Plant Discipleship Curriculum is published with a missional philosophy at its heart, with the intention of practically fostering and facilitating a widespread adoption of Christian discipleship praxis. Accordingly:

- It is not a commercial publishing venture. Rather, the MPD content is made available with a free-at-source license, which allows books to be reproduced without breaching copyright...
- The licence (section 6.5) stipulates that in any reproduction, the original author, and translators, must remain identified as such and that the licence must remain part of the publication...
- In this way, the license respects and maintains the personal copyright of the author, yet releases the traditionally tight, commercial grip of copyright owners and publishers, upon reproduction and printing.

The goal of this licensing arrangement is to enable African leaders to decide how the MPD resource is employed, facilitating forms of discipleship training that are most appropriate to African contexts.

6.3 Publishing and distribution examples

Because the text books can be reproduced freely, principal costs will be related to printing. Each group is free to determine which and how many books to print and distribute, according to their own training purposes and budgetary constraints.

Because the licence allows commercial use of the text books, agencies that organise the printing and distribution of the text books may sell them for a profit, in order to raise funds for further text books.

This allows for a variety of methods by which the text books could be distributed. Four examples are set out below.

- Based on text books of 25 A4 pages, printed double-sided, folded to A5, stapled and trimmed, with a single-colour printed cover.
- In the first examples, a cost price of 1000 CFA per text book is assumed (approximately \$2, or £1.33).
- In the last three examples, based on a larger volume of printing, a cost price of 800 CFA is assumed.

Module-by-module

In this example, a church, or denomination organises printing of:

- 50 copies, of two text books, at a cost of 100,000 CFA
- These books would be distributed at cost-price, 1,000 CFA each, at discipleship seminars
- Funds from these sales would be reinvested in printing a further 100 books, for distributing at future seminars.
- If seminars took place 4 times a year, the entire series of books would be distributed over the course of two years, at a cost per year per subscriber of 8000 CFA.

Advantages

1. Comparatively low start up costs.
2. Comparatively low cost per person per year
3. Steady progress through curriculum

Disadvantages

1. Relatively slow to publish whole curriculum
2. Requires frequent seminars or other method of distribution

Whole curriculum

In this example, a denomination organises printing of: - 25 sets of whole curriculum (17 books per set), at total cost of 340,000 CFA - Sets distributed to bible school students and, or leadership seminars - Sold at subsidised price per set, of 7000 CFA - Funds raised from sales of 175,000 CFA, towards repayment of up-front costs or future printing

Advantages

- Whole curriculum available at one time
- Subsidised cost to students
- Provides profit for future printing

Disadvantages

1. Requires large up-front payment
2. Some groups may require sponsorship
3. Considerable organisation of printing

Whole curriculum

In this example, an NGO organises printing, on behalf of a number of churches and agencies:

- 50 sets of whole curriculum (17 books), at total cost of 680,000 CFA
- 25 sets are distributed, at cost price, to organisation A, for 340,000 CFA
- 15 sets are distributed, at cost price, to organisation B, for 204,000 CFA
- 10 sets are distributed, at cost price, to libraries, translation and other agencies and individuals, for 136,000 CFA

Advantages

1. Whole curriculum available at one time
2. Costs spread across several groups

Disadvantages

1. Requires up-front payments from groups
2. Some groups may require sponsorship
3. Considerable organisation of printing
4. No profit for future printing

Commercial

In this example: - A business entrepreneur or social agency prints a large stock of 50 sets of the whole curriculum, costing 680,000 CFA (13,600 CFA per set; 800 CFA per book) - 25 sets are sold to organisation A at 20,000 CFA each, generates 500,000 CFA - 250 books sold to individuals and agencies at 1500 CFA each, generates 375,000 CFA - Total sales 875,000 CFA - Gross profit 195,000 CFA - Remaining Stock value 140,000 CFA (cost) /x,000 CFA (assuming 800 CFA per book)

Advantages

1. Commercially profitable
2. Helps churches and Christians

Disadvantages

1. Large start-up costs
2. Relies upon good sales
3. Needs commercial experience

6.4 Translation

The text books of the Maize Plant Discipleship Curriculum have been intentionally designed to be readily translatable.

If you would like to discuss translating MPD resources, for printing and distribution in another language, please get in touch: <http://jbclements.wordpress.com/contact>

6.5 Licensing

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Further information

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

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

7.1 MPD Syllabus

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

1. The Eternal Purpose of God
2. Dynamics of Vocation, The Nations
3. Dynamics of Vocation, The Jews
4. Dynamics of Commissioning
5. Dynamics of Body Membership
6. Dynamics of Revival
7. Dynamics of Truth

8. Dynamics of Intercession
9. Dynamics of Cultural Transformation
10. Disciplines of Spiritual Maturity
11. Disciplines of Running the Race
12. Disciplines of Pressing Towards our Vocation
13. Disciplines of Economic Faithfulness
14. Disciplines of Messianic Leadership
15. Disciplines of Living By Faith
16. Disciplines of Overcoming in the Arena of Spiritual Conflict