

Maize Plant Discipleship Learning Process

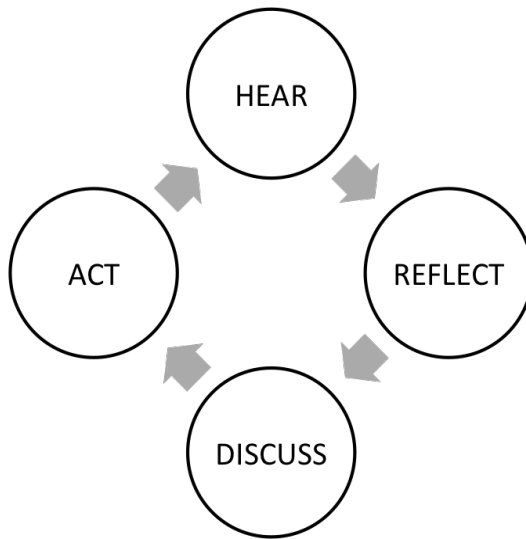
THIS CHAPTER PRESCRIBES the reflective learning process intended to underlie presentation of the Maize Plant Discipleship syllabus.

Reflective Learning

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

- **Hearing** — about others' experiences and perspectives; practice informing theory and theory informing practice.
- **Reflecting** — upon the interaction of old and new ideas, concepts and perspectives.
- **Discussing** — understanding and sharpening conviction in conversation with others.
- **Acting** — integrating learning into practice, in vocational contexts.

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



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

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

The passage inspires some adaption of the reflective learning elements, whilst prayer and the breaking of bread provide two unique, additional elements. Thus, altogether the *Maize Plant Discipleship Learning Process* has six elements:

1. **HEAR** ... what the Spirit is saying
2. **RETAIN** ... God's message inwardly
3. **OPEN** ... hearts to others
4. **SHARE** ... daily bread together
5. **PRAY** ... for God's kingdom to come
6. **ACT** ... in the light of God's message

1. HEAR What the Spirit is Saying



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

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

Pause for thought...

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

We listen with our mind, but also with our heart — in order to *hear what the Spirit is saying to his people* (Revelation 2:29, 3:6,13,23; Matthew 11:15, Mark 4:9 etc)—never in order to become *puffed up* by knowledge.

2. RETAIN God's Message Inwardly



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

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

Pause for thought...

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

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

3. OPEN Hearts to Others



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

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

Pause for thought...

Vocation is more than simply our job, or employment — it incorporates all the responsibilities towards which God calls us, including families, workplaces (and practices), communities and networks.

Consider traditional proverbs that relate to study topics — the *sweet talk* of proverbs can provide fresh insight and be helpful in discussing Maize Plant Discipleship with others, such as elders or non-believers.

4. SHARE Daily Bread



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

- In modern forms of Christianity, breaking and sharing bread is typically ceremonial (*Eucharist, Holy Communion, Mass*). Yet, the earliest messianic communities based it simply upon the Passover meal, like the one Jesus shared with his disciples, immediately prior to his arrest by the Jerusalem authorities.
- Sharing food together is therefore both a vital part of human fellowship *and* a practical way of celebrating and proclaiming God's covenantal provision and blessing.

Pause for thought...

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

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

5. PRAY for God's Kingdom to Come



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

- Allow the teaching to infuse prayer with fresh confidence concerning God's will and purpose, including personal and vocational concerns and challenges faced by group members.
- Allow the Holy Spirit to lead you in speaking blessings, rooted in Scripture, over one another's lives and over your community or nation, or with regards to a specific problem.
- Expect the power of God to overcome all opposition, through the blessing of his overcoming life at work in and through his people!

Pause for thought...

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

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

6. ACT in the Light of God's Message



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

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

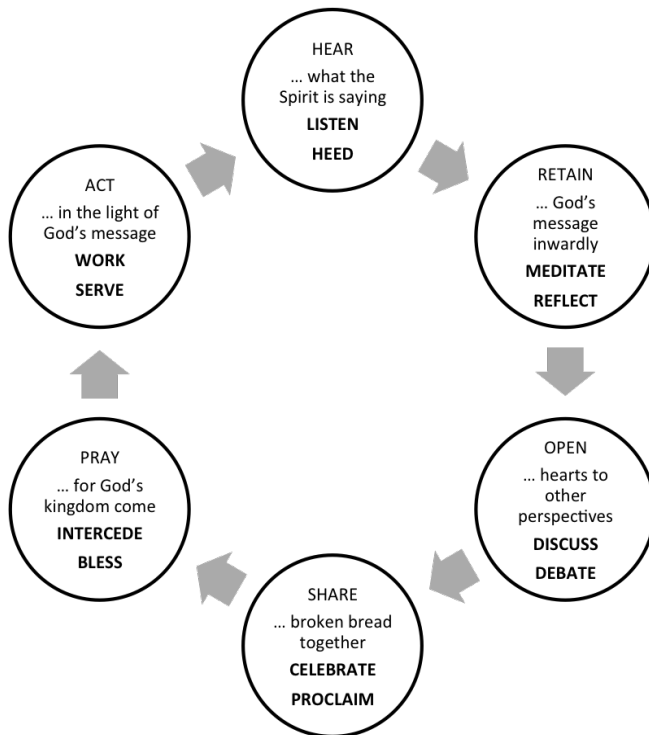
Pause for thought...

The goal of discipleship — is to be transformed ourselves and thus a transformative influence, in our homes and amongst our workplaces and social networks.

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

Maize Plant Discipleship Learning Cycle

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



Pause for thought...

The Maize Plant Discipleship learning cycle is a tool — its purpose is to facilitate, not control learning and it may not be essential to incorporate every element, every time a group meets. Allow the cycle to stretch, but not to limit. *Where appropriate, adapt it.* For example, groups could incorporate two (or more) studies into a single gathering, repeating the first three elements of the cycle, before moving on to the final three.