

Maize Plant Discipleship

Syllabus

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 metaphor for the basic pattern of multiplication lying at the heart of Christian discipleship.

The essentials of healthy plant growth—soil, roots, sunlight and rainfall—are also used to illustrate key elements of the Maize Plant Discipleship curriculum:

- **Soil and roots** represent the biblical, covenantal history of Israel, out of which the Messianic Community (the Church) originally grew (Module 1).
- The **dynamic growth** of the maize plant relates to the dynamic growth of the Messianic Community (Modules 2 - 9).
- This growth is sustained by essential **disciplines**—in the same way that a plant is sustained by **sunlight** and **rainfall** (Modules 10-16).



Soil and Roots of Messianic Community

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

Module 1—The Eternal Purpose of God

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** entering the soil—the biblical, covenantal history of the people of Israel—in order to die and ultimately produce a rich harvest of people—a Messianic Community—from amongst all the peoples of the earth.

roots of
God's eternal
purpose
(module 1)



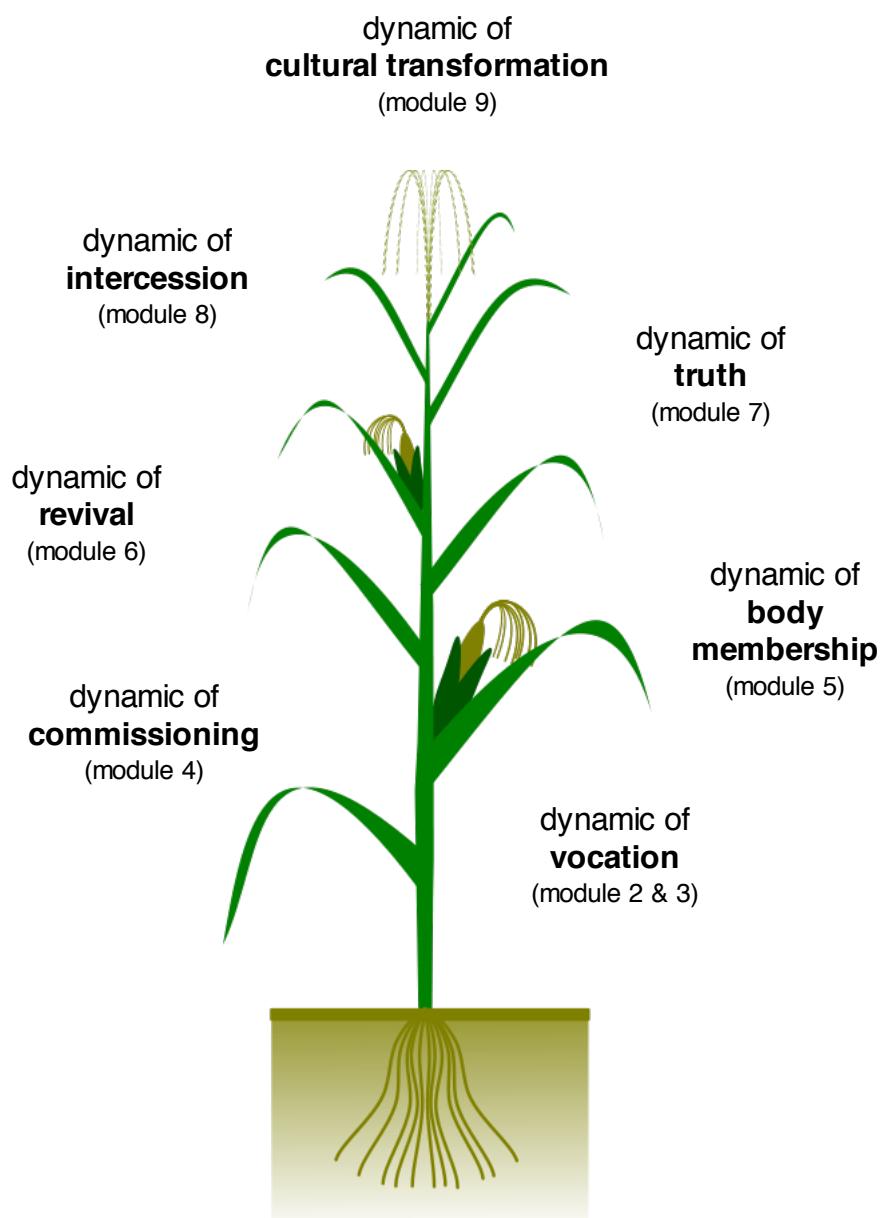
seed of
the Messiah
planted in soil of
biblical, covenantal
history

The Dynamics of Messianic Community

Modules 2 to 9 explore seven characteristic **dynamics** of the Messianic Community, as illustrated and explained below. ‘Dynamic’ comes from the Greek word for power, *dunamis*, referring to a force stimulating change or progress within a system or process.

The dynamics of a maize plant are the forces, structures and patterns that stimulate and direct the specific changes that produce the characteristic structure, shape and fruit of maize.

Similarly, the dynamics of the Messianic Community are the forces, structures and patterns that stimulate and direct its development, producing its characteristic growth, structure, shape and fruit.



Module 2—The Dynamic of Vocation: Part A: The Nations

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.

Module 3—The Dynamic of Vocation: Part B: The Jewish People

Looks at the history of biblical Israel in the light of the covenants and prophecies of the *Tanakh* (Hebrew Bible; Old Testament), demonstrating the responsibility of the Messianic Community towards the Jewish people.

Module 4—The Dynamic of Commissioning

Explores the dynamic of the messianic commission 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 (Ephesians chapter 4).

Module 5—The Dynamic of Body Membership

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.

Module 6—The Dynamic of Revival

Reveals a cycle of core, spiritual activities representing a dynamic of revival, leading to a spiritual harvest. The dynamic is further explored in terms of three complementary encounters: starting with the 'allegiance encounter' (followed by 'truth' and 'power encounters,' in Modules 7-9)

Module 7—The Dynamic of Truth

Explores the dynamic of encountering truth, in terms of practical, covenantal faithfulness towards God's revelation and wisdom—as contrasted with dogmatic, or creedal adherence and religious institutionalism.

Module 8—The Dynamic of Intercession

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."

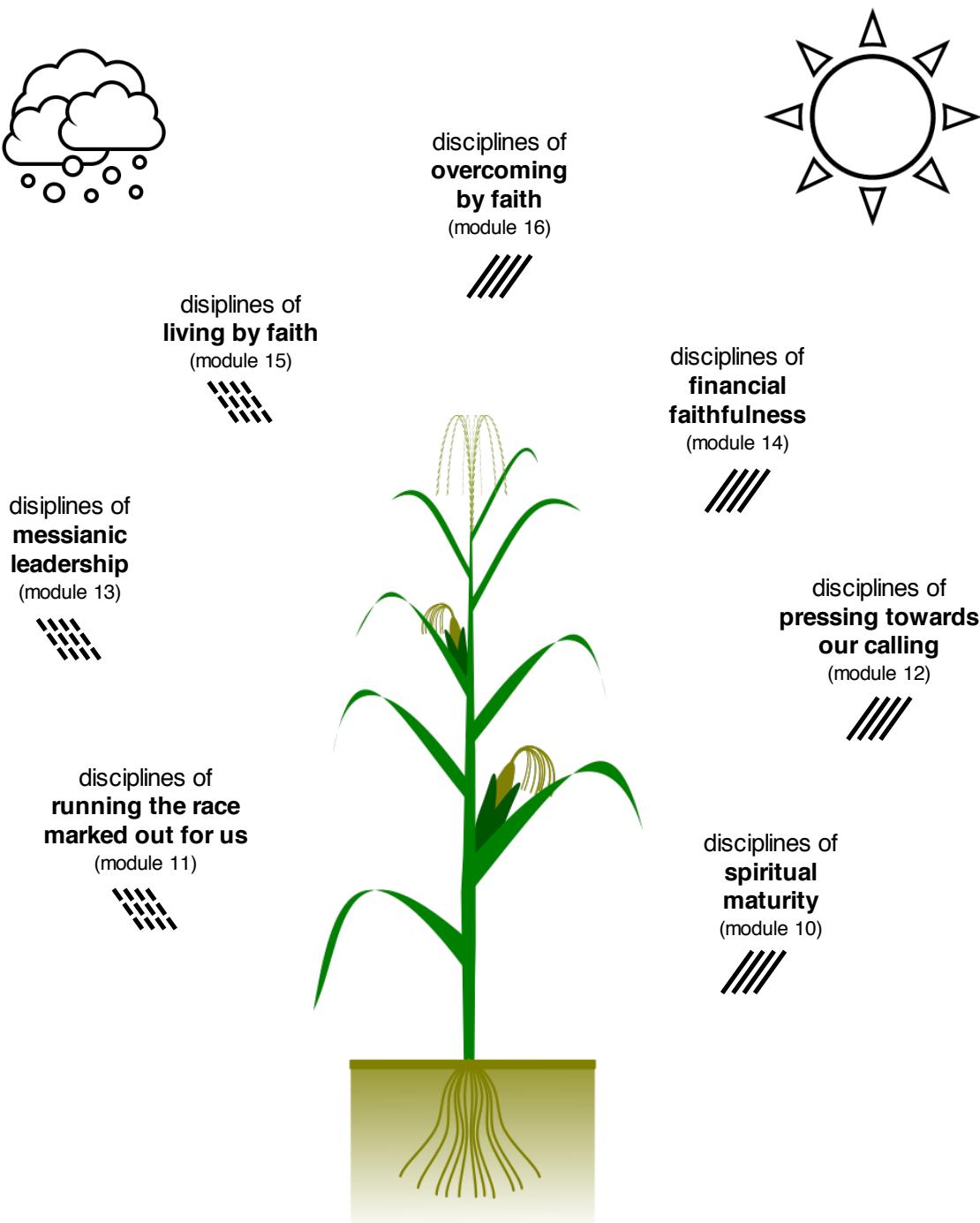
Module 9—The Dynamic of Cultural Transformation

Highlights the spiritual struggle against evil and idolatry that is to be fought by an intercessory Messianic Community living amongst—yet on behalf of—the peoples of the world, in order to sustain a kingdom-orientated dynamic of cultural transformation.

The Disciplines of Messianic Discipleship

Modules 10 to 16 examines seven characteristic **disciplines** of the Messianic Community, as set out in the diagram below.

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 the 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.



Module 10—The Disciplines of Spiritual Maturity

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

- **Pastoral / Devotional.** Foundational stage of spiritual maturity: transitioning from ‘dominion of darkness,’ into the kingdom of God; breaking the spiral of spiritual defeat; and encountering the narrow pathway leading to life.
- **Missional / Vocational.** Secondary phase of maturity, marked by: a deepening dependency upon the Messiah’s Spirit; discernment of spiritual evil and an availability and equipping for mission and ministry.
- **Apostolic / Intercessory.** Final stage of spiritual maturity, marked by: an apostolic and intercessory burden; spiritual vision and a commitment to mentoring and discipling others, as part of a multiplying movement of Messianic communities.

Module 11—The Disciplines of Running the Race Marked Out for Us

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.”

Module 12—The Disciplines of Pressing Toward Our Vocation

Explores personal spiritual disciplines able to sustain us, as we sacrificially pursue personal vocations, including deepening our relationship with the Messiah, leading to praying “without ceasing.”

Module 13—The Disciplines of Financial Faithfulness

Human beings are created to prosper, but biblical perspectives of wealth and poverty are radically different to those of the world: this study explores financial faithfulness, within the context of covenant relationship and messianic community.

Module 14—The Disciplines of Leadership

Examines the qualifications, responsibilities, 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 people.

Module 15—The Disciplines of Living by Faith

Explores how messianic faith is tested and purified through trials, until we learn to see with the 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.

Module 16—The Disciplines of Overcoming in the Arena of Spiritual Conflict

Employes the analogy of a sporting arena to represent spiritual confrontations and conflicts with cultural idols and strongholds, whereupon it becomes necessary to discern fresh, strategic direction in order to make room for a transforming encounter with God’s overcoming power!

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