

# The Commissioning of the Messianic Community

*Maize Plant Discipleship*

*Module 4 (Version 0 – Author's draft –)*

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Handbook for Facilitating a Process of Maize Plant Discipleship 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

Authored by: John B. Clements Translated by: Published by the Eternal Purpose Network, 2011 Dedicated to: Absent Friends



## CHAPTER

# 1

# Introduction

MAIZE PLANT DISCIPLESHIP represents a learning resource, which has been taught, researched, formulated, written, revised and published with African leaders and learners in heart and mind and prayer at each point of its development.

## 1.1 Background

The body of teaching represented by this syllabus originated as a mobile school of mission taught itinerantly within Kenya and Burkina Faso. My goal was to

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

Recently, the teaching has been developed as part of a doctoral research program, with the aim of publishing a set of short, modular textbooks appropriate<sup>1</sup> to leaders and learners within Burkina Faso, West Africa.

### A book famine

Compared to the rest of the world, there has been a relative famine of book publishing within Africa, for many years. Resources that will serve to edify, disciple and inspire Christian communities have been particularly sparse within francophone Africa.

Books that are published are typically protected by a copyright strictly prohibiting reproduction. This protects the commercial interests of authors, book publishers, distributors and retailers. And it results in books being sold at commercial prices that discourage, if not prohibit, the economically poor from purchasing them.

This system also distances the entire process of publication from writers and teachers and so has little effect in encouraging new writers and teachers to seek publication of their own work.

### A new philosophy

The Maize Plant Discipleship Curriculum is being published in a different way, with a different philosophy at its heart.

It is not the product of a commercial publishing venture. Instead it is published with a philosophy that seeks to be consistent with the missional, vocational values espoused within the Curriculum. In other words, it's priority is to help in practically facilitating widespread Christian discipleship.

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<sup>1</sup>Implying both faithfulness towards Scripture and relevance towards Burkinabé culture.

Accordingly, these text books are being provided with a licence that freely allows anyone to reproduce the books without paying any licensing costs to authors or publishers.

The intention is to enable African leaders to take ownership of how the Curriculum is employed and, in this way, facilitate forms of discipleship training that are most appropriate to African contexts.

The license is printed in full at the end of the book.

It stipulates that in any reproduction, the original author, and translators, remain identified as such and that the licence remains part of the publication – this allows others to also take the decision to reproduce further texts.

In this way, the license respects and maintains the personal copyright of the author, but releases the grip on the publication process.

### **A related hope**

A related hope is that, once this model is practically demonstrated and proven, it may inspire others to think and act according to a new perspective: 1. Burkinabé churches, organisations and agencies may take initiative to reproduce MPD text books according to their own vocational purposes, including translating them into other languages; – Burkinabé teachers and writers will recognise a publishing model able to work for them; – Other cross-cultural teachers and writers may decide to release their own work under a similar, free licence.

## **1.2 In this Handbook**

This Handbook provides guidelines for persons organising and convening Maize Plant Discipleship (hereafter, MPD) processes, on behalf of a group.

- Chapter 1 explores the topic of discipleship, from a biblical and missional perspective;
- Chapter 2 introduces the Maize Plant Discipleship Syllabus;
- Chapter 3 focusses upon practical insights and suggestions for facilitating contextually appropriate groups and learning processes;

- Chapter 4 incorporates

# 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

### 2.1 What is discipleship?

What is the primary principle of 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 that contain a clear echo 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 discipleship. Firstly, Paul's exhortation that the knowledge of the Messiah is not simply human knowledge or philosophy. It is a spiritual treasure, to be entrusted to faithful followers. Secondly, this spiritual treasure must be kept safe with the help of the Holy Spirit.

### **Safe-keeping**

This safe-keeping does not mean keeping the treasure hidden away somewhere. Rather, this treasure, this intimate knowledge of the Messiah, is to be kept safe by carefully committing it to the stewardship and safe-keeping of others. Paradoxically, it is this committing of the treasure to others that keeps it safe. That keeps it from becoming unproductive.

Let us seek to understand this more deeply. The metaphor of seed and the harvest that comes from seed that is sown will be central throughout this process of discipleship. Seeds are usually only stored for a short time before being used. Whatever is not used for food, is sown in order to produce another harvest.

Here in Africa, you know that seed is a form of wealth. It is a type of treasure. And that seed is both shared and sown. In this way a natural harvest is reaped from seed sown into the ground and a spiritual harvest is reaped from friends, family and community with whom you share your harvest, your 'daily bread.'

In the same way, the Holy Spirit's help is encountered not in hoarding the treasure of his life and his communion with us, but in sowing and sharing it with others, both within and beyond our own community.

Like natural seed, this treasure is not to be given or cast away carelessly. It is too precious to be wasted in any way. It is not to be wasted upon those who do not appreciate its value and will not use it wisely. What is received must be shared with other faithful people. People who will also keep safe this treasure, sowing it in 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 way, a discipleship movement begins to take place.

## 2.2 Discipleship movements

Discipleship was at the heart of the Messiah Jesus' life and work. Today's worldwide Christian movement began with one small, core group of disciples, formed around him.

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

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

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

In this way a 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.

~

During the past two-thousand years, the messianic new-covenant community – the body of the Messiah, the Church – 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 other, 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 it 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 dynamic movement has ceased to exist. A church planted within a nation or culture, in

a former season, is no longer growing and multiplying.

Inevitably, behind religious facades, such a church is marked by a lack of vision, a spirituality devoid of vitality and a character largely unfaithful to its holy roots and traditions. Although such churches typically remain dogmatic towards their creeds, the Christian community no longer exhibits authentic, biblical zeal for its true vocation amongst the nations of the world.

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 compromised by idolatrous values. Its lifestyle accommodated to ungodly influences. It has ceased to be different, ceased to be transformative, ceased to make any 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 required to persuade either itself or others to forsake human idols and to affirm wholehearted allegiance towards the Messiah.

## **Renewal**

By contrast, whenever a national church, local congregation or Christian leader seeks for spiritual formation, renewal, reformation or revival, Christian discipleship must form the core of its activities.

Disciples must be invited, formed and sent forth as part of a world-facing movement. The goal is much greater than bolstering the church-as-an-organisation, greater even than serving the church-as-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 the congregational gatherings, among the corruption of society, among its filthy gutters, behind its social, political and religious walls, Christ is at work by his Spirit. And out there he is calling co-workers ready to be alongside him in his 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, Christian discipleship provides a unique ingredient that other philosophies, ideologies and faiths do not and cannot: the dynamic of the indwelling Spirit of Christ.

With the Spirit, the new-covenant community becomes 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 derives from its anointing. Messiah—Christ—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. 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 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. Out of our grasp.

Indeed, it is not something that can be grasped, as Jesus himself demonstrated (Philippians 2). Instead the pathway to life is through dying. Only to the extent that we die to ourselves, do we truly become alive to God.

So we finish (this section) where we began: recognising the foundational principle of transformative discipleship is that of the seed that does not remain a seed alone, but which is 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 this Discipleship Curriculum. As we embrace a practical form of discipleship incorporating a daily dying-to-self, we learn how to truly become alive-to-God.

These are the dynamics that are explored in the Maize Plant Discipleship modules.

# CHAPTER 3

## 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

### 3.1 Metaphor of the Maize Plant

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 rain—fall—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).

**Figure 1 – The Maize Plant**



Figure 3.1:

## **3.2 Soil and Roots of Messianic Community**

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 the winds of false teaching and sustaining them amidst the heat of trials, temptations and vocational responsibility.

### **Figure 2 – Roots**

#### **1–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

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Figure 3.2:

story of scripture, in order to illustrate God's unchanging, eternal purpose.

Within this foundational illustration, the Messiah is the Seed entering the soil—which represents 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.

### **3.3 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 directs its development, producing its characteristic growth, structure, shaper and fruit.

#### **Figure 4 – Dynamics**

##### **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 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.

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Figure 3.3:

### **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.

### **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.

### 3.4 The Disciplines of Messianic Discipleship

Modules 10 to 16 examines seven characteristic disciplines of 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 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.

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Figure 3.4:

### **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 the ‘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 a lifestyle of prayer 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 Messianic Leadership**

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.

### **Module 15—the Disciplines of Living by Faith**

Explores how messianic faith is tested and purifies 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.

### **Module 16—the Disciplines of Overcoming in the Arena of Spiritual Conflict**

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

## CHAPTER

# Facilitating

...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

### 4.1 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.

## **4.2 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.

# CHAPTER 5

## Licensing and Translation

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

### 5.1 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 requires 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

## 5.2 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>

## 5.3 Licensing

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- Note: This license is incorporated into all Maize Plant Discipleship text books.
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