

# Asia-Pacific Regional Discipleship

## Model and Explanation

### Preface:

The Asia-Pacific Region is geographically large and ethnically diverse. It spans most of Asia and all of Oceania, contains 40% of the earth's population, is a mix of both eastern and western cultures, and contains high numbers of Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, Animistic, and Secularists. Christianity is under-represented and there is an urgent and significant need for Christ-centered discipleship, which includes evangelism.

The Asia-Pacific Region of the Church of the Nazarene (APR) has nine strategic priorities, which each directly or indirectly relate to discipleship.

1. Ongoing Discipleship
2. Intentional Leadership Development
3. Cohesive Education Ministerial Preparation
4. Communication that Connects
5. Church Multiplication and Expansion
6. District Development
7. Member Care
8. Purposeful Compassion
9. Operational Effectiveness

Whether drawing people to Christ, helping them grow in Christ, helping them embrace a call to ministry, helping churches to grow and expand, or caring for the whole person at all stages of their faith journey, **discipleship is vital to a healthy and growing church!**

As such, the APR, through a collaboration of the Regional Director, the Regional sDMI Council, and the Re-envisioning Theological Education Think Tank, created a Regional Discipleship Model (RDM). Because of the Region's diversity, this RDM had to be broad enough to encompass the various differences in culture, language, and church structure, and focused enough to bring the APR together under **a common understanding and vision for ongoing discipleship.**

### Definitions:

It is important to have common terms and definitions to understand and speak about discipleship. We begin with a definition of what a disciple of Christ is. This provides a foundation for what it means to be involved in Christlike discipleship.

(**Disclaimer:** While we have sought to provide a comprehensive model, there are always additional items and ideas that could have been included, which would just as faithfully define what discipleship is. Additionally, the terms used, and their categorization, are interconnected and, therefore, somewhat interchangeable.)

## The “Being” of Discipleship

A Disciple of Christ is:

- Passionately worshipping the Triune God (**Exalting**)
- Filled with the Holy Spirit and continuously growing in relationship with God (**Experiencing**)
- Actively shaped by God’s Word (**Equipping**)
- Intentionally mentored in the faith journey and living a life of service with others (**Empowering**)
- Purposefully discipling others (**Engaging**)

The elements of **exalting, experiencing, equipping, empowering, and engaging** need to be further defined as they encapsulate a fuller understanding of what a disciple of Christ is and does.

**Exalting** – Disciples of Christ are passionate worshippers of the Triune God. Exalting, or worshipping, is offering our entire selves as living sacrifices acceptable and pleasing to God (Romans 12:1-2). It is submission, obedience, and faithfulness. We have been created by God to worship him (Isaiah 43:21); this is our purpose and calling. This calling is most clearly articulated in the Great Commandment—love God, love others (Matthew 22:37-40)—this is the fullest expression of holiness.

**Experiencing** – Disciples of Christ are filled with the Holy Spirit and continuously growing in relationship with God. The Holy Spirit works in and with the believer (1 Corinthians 3:16) in a life-long process of transformation into the image of God with ever-increasing glory (2 Corinthians 3:18). This is a personal experience that happens in the context of the believing community. The goal is becoming more like Christ (Ephesians 4:13), so that everywhere they go is holy ground where Christ is reflected to a watching world.

**Equipping** – Disciples of Christ are actively shaped by God’s Word. They daily grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ (2 Peter 3:18) and are equipped for service and the building up of the Body of Christ (Ephesians 4:12). As members of a royal priesthood (1 Peter 2:9), all believers are servants, called to be proficient in the Word and prepared for every good work (2 Timothy 3:17).

**Empowering** – Disciples of Christ are intentionally mentored in the faith journey and living a life of service with others. They are an empowered people. This empowerment is firstly by the Holy Spirit, but disciples are also empowered and held accountable by the Church to be stewards of the gifts and graces they have received (Romans 12:6). Disciples are mentored in their Kingdom service, guided by the truths of the faith and godly example (1 Timothy 4:6, 12).

**Engaging** – Disciples of Christ are purposefully discipling others. They are engaged in the mission of God, called and equipped to engage others by all means possible for the sake of the Gospel (1 Corinthians 9:22-23). As ambassadors of Christ, disciples are compelled by God’s love to embody a ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:14, 18, 20) and to make disciples in all nations (Matthew 28:19-20).

**Discipleship** is the means by which those who are disciples of Christ help make other disciples of Christ. To reiterate, a person must be a disciple of Christ in order to do Christlike discipleship. The reality is that we reproduce ourselves in the discipleship process. In the words of the Apostle Paul, "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1, NIV).

### The "Doing" of Discipleship

Christlike Discipleship is:

- **Exalting** the Lord with and before others
- Guiding others toward **experiencing** the saving and transforming work of the Holy Spirit
- **Equipping** others through the Word of God
- **Empowering** others for godly service
- Leading others in **engaging** the nations for Christ

### Further Explanation:

#### Institutional (Church) Statement

The Asia-Pacific Region is committed to **exalting** the Lord with and before others, by guiding others toward **experiencing** the saving and transforming work of the Holy Spirit, by **equipping** others through the Word of God, by **empowering** others for godly service, and by leading others in **engaging** the nations for Christ.

The following picture illustrates the RDM, providing a visual representation of both the being and doing of discipleship:



It is important to emphasize six foundational aspects of this model:

1. **Discipleship is Relational** – We have been created by a relational God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) to be relational beings (Genesis 1:26-27; 2:18). This is why everything about our faith journey is centered in relationship—first with God and then with others (Matthew 22:37-40). Being a disciple is entering into a relationship with God, with God’s church, and with God’s world. In other words, we cannot be a disciple of Christ in isolation. Being a disciple of Christ is always both communal and personal.
2. **Discipleship is Communal and Personal** – Discipleship is a “Body” activity rather than an individualistic activity. All believers, not only pastors, are called to be disciples and be actively involved in discipling others. They use their God-given gifts, talents, and resources to extend God’s Kingdom to others through the process of discipleship.
3. **Discipleship is Holistic** – The five elements of exalting, experiencing, equipping, empowering, and engaging represent a more holistic way of viewing what it means to be a disciple and what it means to do discipleship. Too often discipleship is relegated to the classroom, becoming only about what we “know.” Jesus’ call upon his disciples was to “come, follow me” (Mark 1:16). In the process of forming his followers there was formal teaching, but there was also mentoring and modeling. Jesus was living out his dynamic relationship with the Father before the disciples and inviting them to imitate him. Likewise, our discipleship must be holistic.
4. **Discipleship is Interconnected** – Within the diagram, the lines between the various elements are intentionally blurred. This is because experiencing, equipping, empowering, and engaging, while each having their own unique aspects, blend together and intersect at multiple points. However, exalting is intentionally placed at the center of the diagram (and first in the definition) because each of the other elements is an act of worship. This interconnected model invites people to enter into the discipleship process at different places (e.g., worship service, Bible study, service project, etc.).
5. **Discipleship is Inclusive** – We recognize that God is at the center of who we are and what we are doing; God is our core. No one is truly “outside” the circle of his grace and love. The church needs to meet people where they are and guide them closer to God.
6. **Discipleship is Continuous** – Discipleship does not have a stopping place. Christians are disciples of Christ for life and this means they must be continuously involved in the discipleship process—both being disciplined and discipling others.

## Integration with other APR Initiatives

### Vision 4.4.1

The Regional Director, Mark Louw, outlined a vision and goals for the APR, which has already begun and moves through till the year 2030. The RDM aligns with this vision and its goals. It is through implementation of this RDM that this vision and its goals will come to fruition.

- Vision 4.4.1 is based on the words of John 4:41 – “And because of [Jesus’] words many more became believers” (NIV)
- “Our Vision is to be a Spirit led, disciple making movement, wherein all are intentionally growing in their faith and confidence, equipped and empowered to disciple and lead at least one other to faith in Jesus within four years, and for each equipped and resourced local congregation to give birth to another every four years.”

### 5 Questions Approach

The APR, through the work of MKR, developed a set of 5 questions, which are part of a discipleship approach. This approach works alongside the new RDM, providing a set of practical questions that can help a disciple of Christ be more effective in their discipleship of others. This approach guides a disciple in any of the 5 RDM elements (exalting, experiencing, equipping, empowering, engaging). We should continually be asking ourselves these questions and looking to the Lord for wisdom and direction.

1. **What am I doing here?** – This is a question of **purpose**. Disciples of Christ are called by God and invited into God’s mission in the world. We must live lives of purpose, which includes being disciplined and discipling others.
2. **What’s in my hand?** – This is a question of **passion**. God has given each person specific talents, desires, and gifts. This makes each of us unique! We shouldn’t try to minister the exact same way others do; we should trust God’s leading and design and find ways that uniquely fit us.
3. **Who’s in front of me?** – This is a question focused on **people**. We are always interacting with others, and we should be intentional about “loving people to Christ.” This requires that we take notice of people, value people, and follow the Lord’s leading about when and how to share Christ with them.
4. **Do I know God’s presence is with me?** – This is a question of **power**. Not our power but God’s power within us through the Holy Spirit. We must be confident about who we are in God and aware of his leading in us. We must also recognize that we bring God’s presence and power with us into the world and should move forward in boldness and confidence.
5. **What if everyone disciplined the way I do?** – This is a question of **perspective**. This question is not meant to bring shame or guilt. Instead it is meant to provide us with perspective and challenge us to live in God’s purpose, based on our passion, focused on people, and guided by God’s power. Remember, God wants to change the world through us, the church, the Body of Christ.

## **The Emmaus Model (Approach)**

The APR has formed a Re-envisioning Theological Education Think Tank of leaders and educators from across the Region to think through how we train our pastors and lay leaders. This team adopted a model created by Bruce Allder, which is called the Emmaus Model. This model, which is specifically meant to guide our many theological colleges and training centers, aligns with and is part of the RDM.

While some may naturally see the Emmaus Model fitting in the “Equipping” element of the RDM, it is much broader than this. It adopts all five elements of the RDM as an overarching guide for how it looks specifically at theological education.

- The Emmaus Model (Approach) has been developed as a response to the need to find a coherent educational system on the Asia Pacific Region that will take a person from discipleship in the local church right through to the higher education academy. The outcome we desire to see is a disciplined discipler of Christ with an emphasis on formation in Christlikeness in mission. Such an approach to education relies upon an intentional partnership between the local church, District and educational institution. Discipleship is understood as a journey in relationship with others allowing for coaching, mentoring, peer learning and experiential learning. This moves discipleship away from a content driven-ness to formation with Scripture as the scaffold for making meaning of our experiences.
- The implications for pedagogy are profound. The disciple’s context will be a source of the curriculum as well as the milieu in which learning takes place. Relationships become essential in the outworking of this educational perspective and form the basis for a missional model of discipleship. If such an approach can be built into the DNA of a faith community, this can be sustained into the formal academy allowing for a coherence in pedagogy and curriculum.

## **Starting Implementation of the RDM:**

### **Region Next Steps**

1. The Region will provide training at the Regional Conference on the RDM. This training is specifically designed to help churches and leaders understand the model. This will include an informational packet and brochures to help explain the model to others. Additional training may be provided subsequently as needed.
2. The Region has created a resource website ([vision441.org](http://vision441.org)), which it will be continually updated with teaching materials and project ideas for each of the five elements of the model at each age level.
  - a. The best resources will include all five elements, be relationally grounded, and be both knowledge and application based.

### **District Steps**

1. Districts send their representatives to the Regional Conference to help them understand the new RDM
2. Districts develop written discipleship recommendations that includes all the elements of the RDM

3. Districts enhance local churches with discipleship development and multiplication
4. Districts promote and implement region and field discipleship plans/visions
5. All district leaders will model the being and doing of Christlike discipleship multiplication

### **Local Church Steps**

1. Churches send their representatives to the Regional Conference to help them understand the new RDM
2. Churches develop a written discipleship plan that includes all the elements of the RDM (This should align with your district's and region's plan)
3. Churches train and equip every believer to make disciples
4. Churches monitor, measure, and evaluate the ongoing results of their discipleship plan
  - a. Questions to consider:
    - i. How many new disciples do you have?
    - ii. How many people are making disciples?