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Japan Harvest
Spring 2014

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Encouraging inspiring and equipping the members of the JEMA community

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Feature Articles

- 8 Foundation Builders**
by Kazuko Kumada
- 10 Led by God**
Every Mission Field Should Have a Ken and Betty by Irelle White
- 12 Grace and Truth**
by Matthew Cummings
- 14 Blessings in the Mail**
by April Mack
- 17 A Funny Thing Happened...**
by Bob Shade
- 18 Mountain Pioneer**
by Michiko Yokoyama
- 21 The Anointing**
by Ken Joseph Jr
- 22 How I Got to Japan!**
by Bruce Helland
- 26 Apostles to Japan:**
Ralph Cox and Joseph Meeko by John Mehn

General Articles

- 28 The Gospel of Mr. Children?**
by Rutsu Iguchi

Regulars

- 4 About the Cover**
- 5 From the Editor**
by Gary Bauman
- 6 In the News**
- 30 Member Care**
How to Handle Interruptions by Eileen Nielsen
- 31 Good Writing**
Keep your Audience in Mind by Wendy Marshall
- 32 Language and Culture**
Social Structures in Japan by John Edwards
- 33 Pursuit of Excellence**
Define How You Work Together by Michael Essenburg
- 34 Modern Tech**
Mobile WiFi
- 36 New Voices**
Sick and Frustrated by Casi Brown
- 37 Off the Bookshelf**
Review by Don Schaeffer
- 38 Focus on Prayer**
Call on the Name of the Lord by Ken Reddington

*Japan Harvest publishes articles in either US English or Commonwealth English,
depending upon the author's primary English background.*

About the Cover



Our cover photo was taken in late 1891, shortly after the November 23 arrival of 15 new missionaries from the US (not all missionaries are shown). Within three months, the youngest of their number, Marie Engstrom, had succumbed to smallpox. Her funeral also served as the commissioning service for the other fourteen. Some of their story is told in words and photos on pages 8 and 9.

The work of these early missionaries served as the ministry foundation of the organization now known as The Evangelical Alliance Mission (TEAM). At the same time, missionaries from other agencies also spread across Japan. This issue's stories give just a taste of more than a century of ministry in this nation. We hope these accounts of sacrifice, God's provision, and providential guidance serve as an encouragement to your faith and ministry today.

JEMA Datebook

Event	Date	Place
Women in Ministry Fall Day of Prayer	October 1, 2014	Rose Town Tea Garden, Ome
Prayer Walk	October 6, 2014	Diet Building, Tokyo
JEMA Leadership Team	September 9, 2014	Ochanomizu, Tokyo
Next Steps Seminar	November 10-12, 2014	Honda Chapel, Chiba
Gospel Renewal Seminar	November 11, 2014	Honda Chapel, Chiba

To stay up-to-date, check out the calendar at <http://www.jema.org>

JUST DO IT

Nike's "Just Do It" campaign turned 25 last year. Three words. Eight letters. But its simple message has encouraged people to move ahead with activities as varied as business start-ups, marriage proposals, or just to get out of bed in the morning—all the while embedding the Nike brand name into the English-speaking world's subconscious. It's a message that turned a regional athletic shoe company into a global sportswear juggernaut, and it's a message that applies to the missionary as well.

Many missionary biographies inspire us with tales of how our forebears also "just did it." Hudson Taylor, Mary Slessor, Irene Webster-Smith . . . we all have our own heroes of the modern missionary movement who modeled that "can do" pioneering spirit.

What insights about those who've gone before us can we gain from these three words?

JUST

Meaning "only" or "merely" in this context, "just" reminds us not to stall. Our natural tendency is to come up with reasons we shouldn't move ahead. We begin to think twice. We make excuses: Maybe this isn't the right time. How can we pay for it? If only our team was better organized. Yes, at times we need to wait on the Lord. But too often we use our questions as an excuse to avoid action.

DO

Sometimes we can be paralyzed by the seeming impossibility of the task. We can't see the light at the other end of the tunnel, or even the view at the middle. But we can move one foot in front of the other. Yes, planning is important, but if you're like me, you often spend far too much time planning before committing yourself to forward motion. Many of us began ministry in Japan with a certain plan in mind. That's how God got us here. And many of us are doing something totally different than what we had originally imagined. But if we hadn't bought that first plane ticket, we wouldn't be here today.

IT

The vagueness of this word gives Nike's slogan its universal application, but for those who follow Christ, "it" is the unique purpose and dreams the Lord has given us. Hudson Taylor was driven to reach China for Christ. Mary Slessor was determined to reach remote villages in Africa. And Irene Webster-Smith was committed to reaching Japan. Did they know how God would put the details together? Well, no they didn't.

The personal stories of fellow laborers in this issue of Japan Harvest remind us that you and I are writing the missionary biographies of the future. Hudson Taylor, Mary Slessor, and Irene Webster-Smith each had their faults. So do we. But God's power is made perfect in our weakness.

Are you waiting for the "right time"? Are you preoccupied with the obstacles? Do you know what needs to be done?

Just do it.

Yours for the Harvest,




Gary Bauman (US) has led the Japan Harvest staff since September 2005. He and his wife Barbara have been in Japan since 1988 with Asian Access.

Letter to the Editor: Secrecy Act

by Sakae Kaminaka, Pastor, Kugenuma Holiness Church

Excerpt translated by Atsuko Tateishi

CHRISTIAN SHIMBUN — November 13, 2013

Editor's note: Following the publication of this article, the bill was passed on December 6, 2013, and put into effect on December 13, 2013.

Few Christians have spoken against the Bill of the Act on Protection of Specified Secrets (the Secrecy Act), except those in the media and press industries. It may be because people do not see immediately how the bill relates to life as a Christian. It is true that the Secrecy Act pertains to defense, foreign affairs, spying, and terrorism—four areas that Japanese Christians do not usually associate themselves with.

However, when we look back on the history of Japan, there was a time during World War II, when the Salvation Army was held suspect of spying, and the tenet of the Second Coming of the Holiness churches was labeled a terrorist idea. Both of these allegations and the ensuing persecution came as a surprise to believers in those days. Therefore, it may be worth taking a closer look at the bill so that we will not be caught by surprise again.

The one major concern about the Secrecy Act is that the government seems to have too much discretion in deciding what constitutes “specially designated secrets.” We need a system of checks and balances to prevent the people in power from abusing the law. Remember, when the Maintenance of the Public Order Act was amended in 1941, hardly anyone saw that it would subsequently be applied to the press and religious leaders as well.

The loose definition of “specially designated secrets” may also work restrictively toward freedom of expression. People would self-censor their work so they might not be accused of violating the Secrecy Act.

With pain, we must remember how Japanese Christians, in general, willfully obeyed the policies of the nationalistic government until 1945. Most church leaders of the day encouraged their members to exalt the Emperor, to cooperate in the war effort, and to pay respect at the Shinto shrine. So much so that those leaders turned their back to the Christians actually under government persecution.

Are we going to compromise our faith at some seemingly minor points, so that we will appear obedient to those in power and be safe? The Secrecy Act poses a temptation to us. ■

Gospel group from Kansai encourages boys saying “You can make a fresh start”

Excerpt translated by Tim Williams

CHRISTIAN SHIMBUN — December 1, 2013

On July 27, last year, “Without You” a gospel group from Kansai, was awarded a Ministry of Justice award at the Nara Reformatory. They are the first gospel group to be given

this award. In 2012 the Ministry of Justice Osaka Regional Correction Headquarters also awarded the group the 62nd “Campaign that Brightens Society” award. These awards come from the group’s endeavors to encourage the prisoners at reformatories and prisons through gospel music.

Without You formed 14 years ago and their passion is to bring hope to the broken-hearted. They share a message from God saying, “You are needed.”

How can one draw close to the wrongdoers? Their answer was gospel music. Tetsuho Nishiyama, the leader of Without You said, “The children in the reformatory distrust adults. When they were in need of help, there weren’t any trustworthy adults. So we represent society and say to them, ‘We support you, and we apologize for not being able to respond to your S.O.S. call. But now, a new story is going to begin. Life can have a fresh start. God has a wonderful plan for your life.’ ”

Written feedback from the inmates at reformatories they visited is full of gratitude and respect towards the group. Many of the boys had poor home environments. No one had ever said to them “you are needed.” But through Without You they can realize there are people out there who are supportive of them.



Photo contributed by the Christian Shimbun.

Invest News

How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, "Your God reigns!"

"Juvenile Law is becoming more punishment-oriented. A reformatory is essentially a rehabilitation facility. However, even though teachers on-site strongly desire to give good quality education rather than punishment for the boys, it is becoming a place of punishment, like a prison," Nishiyama explains.

Another member of the group, Tetsushi Yamasaki, stressed the need of society's acceptance saying, "The most important time is after the boys return to society." If they have no place or work to go back to, there is a high rate of repeating an offence.

"Society's trend is to isolate and monitor a person who committed a crime. I want to see a society where those who went astray can have a fresh start. What a person has done, and what his value is, are two different things. I want to learn from Jesus who welcomed the prodigal son."

Youichi Sakai, another member, says, "This ministry has been done with much guidance from God and prayer. I think each and every thought and prayer has led to this award." ■

Making a church along with a town

Excerpt translated by Tomoko Kato

CHRISTIAN SHIMBUN — December 22/29, 2013

Since the Great East Japan Earthquake, Rev. Yoshiya Hari (Saikyo Nozomi Chapel) and Rev. Makoto Yokoyama (Toda Evangelical Free Church) have been involved in a project with their local government in Toda City (Saitama prefecture).

Rev. Hari found, during the relief project for the earthquake in Miyagi prefecture, many local residents sincerely devoted themselves to their own towns. "I realized I was looking at the residents in the town I live in just as targets for mission. But what have I been doing for the town as a



Photo contributed by the Christian Shimbun.

good citizen?" He told a local government official of his interest in doing something for the town, and was introduced to two classes run by Toda city hall: "Making Local Regulations" and "Disaster Measures."

Rev. Yokoyama started his mission in Toda City in 2009 but thought, "though Jesus preached in the street and lived in the town, I talk to few local people except church members. Then just when I was seriously thinking about my town, my mission, the earthquake, and how I should live as a person, I discovered the work group for Disaster Measures."

Looking at serious problems such as declining birthrate and aging, or measures for great disasters in the future, Toda local government found that they could not provide enough services for the needs of citizens just by themselves. Therefore they started a project to make regulations in collaboration with its citizens. The classes for "Making Local Regulations" and "Disaster Measures" began in July 2012, developed into a work group, which became "the Citizen Council," which is expected to submit a basic plan for the local regulations to the city council in spring 2014. This council composed of 35 people—residents, representa-

tives of some resident groups, and local government officials. They elected Rev. Hari as chairperson and Rev. Yokoyama as vice chairperson. Now they work together for their vision to make good community systems for new-comers as well as existing residents in Toda City.

Yokoyama said, "I cannot say the number of church attendants has increased because of my participation in the project. But now we share the same themes with the local residents and pray for them. This is a great change."

Rev. Hari talked about the responsibility of Christians. "We pastors always think about the vision of our church and how to get church members to commit to it. Town-making is similar. Christians can show our values by attending community meetings. It is important to collaborate with the selected authorities first to follow what God tries to realize by using them. In the collaboration, when we say "we cannot agree with it because of our beliefs," it will have a great impact. I want more pastors and young church members to care about taking their responsibilities seriously as Christians." ■



Foundation Builders

On Nov. 23, 1891, 15 young missionaries arrived in Yokohama from the United States: six men and nine women. The youngest was 19 years old, and the oldest was 35. Most were in their late 20's. Among them, 12 were lay evangelists. They had all responded to the earnest call of Fredrik Franson, a Swede who was involved in evangelism around the world. (Fredrik Franson founded the Scandinavian Alliance Mission (SAM) in the US and several missions in Europe.)

All of them were first or second generation immigrants to the US from Scandinavia. They came to Japan from the western part of the United States. Their involvement in Japan was pioneer evangelism to unreached or very-hard-to-reach areas, rather than toward the mainstream population, or upper class Samurai, or their children.

While studying the Japanese language they resided in Tokyo, and started by ministering among slum areas or “red light” entertainment districts.

Death

Sadly, just three months after they arrived the youngest member of the group, Marie Engstrom, died. She had been taking care of a senior missionary who had been sick with smallpox when she also caught the disease and died on Feb. 26, 1892.

As a child Marie had said that when she became 18 years old she wanted to serve as a missionary in a foreign land. She was ready to go wherever God sent her, and so she joined the team to Japan.

While suffering from smallpox, she kept praying, “May many Japanese be saved through the missionaries and may God bless them.” She also prayed,

“When I meet Jesus, I would like to have many Japanese with me.” Her missionary colleagues said, “She has been called to God to pray for our work.”

Her funeral also served as the commissioning service for the other missionaries. Right afterwards the missionaries left for their own areas all over Japan.

Other missionaries from this group who also lost their lives early were Anna Danielson and Hannah Anderson. They worked very hard and gave their lives, damaging their health and dying young, in the difficult-to-access mountainous *Okuhida* area in Gifu. They went there in the Meiji era when local people had never seen foreigners. The people were filled with hatred for these evangelists for *Yaso*, a derogatory name for Jesus. They said, “They have beautiful eyes with blond hair, but act like devils. We do not



1



2



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4



5

- 1 Small letter by Franson on his 3rd visit to Japan (July, 1907) given to Mr. Genjiro Tamaru, an evangelist and the translator. II Timothy 4:5, I John 2:15, written both in English and Greek. (Submitted by Takayama Shukufuku Church.)
- 2 Kami-sanno town in Takayama City, Gifu Prefecture, still maintains the traditional streets. In the spring of 1899, the first church was born, and continued until 1986 when it moved to Isshiki machi.
- 3 June 3, 1906, first baptism by Furukawa Church. Hanna Anderson is second from the left. (Submitted by Furukawa church)
- 4 Old drums and tents that were used much for evangelism during Meiji, Taisho, and Showa eras. (Submitted by Furukawa Church.)
- 5 The grave stone of Marie Engstrom and her sister Christina Lindstrom, who died in 1937 after 46 years of service in Japan as missionary. Aoyama Foreigners Cemetery, Tokyo.

Previous Page

They took this picture right after their arrival in Japan and sent it back to the United States.

Front row: far right, Anna Danielson. Second row: second from right, Marie Engstrom; fourth from right, Hanna Anderson

want any foreign religion in our holy Buddhist lands.”

A foundation built

However, because of their labors, several churches were born which have produced many Japanese evangelists. The places where they lived have many big shrines and temples, and from their records we can feel the suffering they endured from local Japanese in those days.

The work of these unsung first 15 missionaries and the prayers of this

young 19-year-old girl are the foundation for the ministry by the mission now called The Evangelical Alliance Mission (TEAM). And also for the more than 200 churches in the Domei church association (Nihon Domei Kirisuto Kyodan—Japan Alliance Christ Church). Their early work has resulted in sending out many evangelists to Japan as well as Japanese missionaries to other countries.

Their spirit was characterized by simplicity, but also great patience, a

humble attitude and, despite some clumsiness, great earnestness and passion as they made inroads into unevangelized areas. If more Christian churches today, carry on in this same spirit throughout Japan, the ministry of the gospel in today’s Japan would be greatly enhanced. **JH**

Adapted with permission from *Gospel for the Millions*, November, 2006 issue, Heritage of Faith Series #8
Translated by Don Regier and Sachiko Niimi
Photos supplied by Yasuo Itoh

Led by God

Every Mission Field Should Have a Ken & Betty



God can use anyone, but perhaps a bullied schoolboy is not who you'd expect to end up in student ministry. The effects of the brutality of his peers, loss of his childhood home to fire, and the hardship of bankruptcy caused by the Depression were all imprinted on Ken Roundhill's sensitive nature. The 16-year-old carried these with him when the family moved from rural New Zealand to the city of Dunedin in search of work. Little did he realise how God would impact his life for eternity.

A battle was raging for Ken's soul. When asked by his new friends from the Baptist church, "Are you a Christian?" his glib reply, "Of course," masked the serious doubts disturbing his faith-roots. His spiritual complacency was seriously challenged when his communist workmate casually commented "People die, just like dogs!" Ken reasoned, "What's the point of life if there is no God?" Disturbed, he determined to read a chapter of the Bible every night to discover truth for himself. Jesus' words in John 10:27-28 resonated deeply within his soul: "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand" (NIV). In desperation he cried, "God, if there be a God, save me now!" From that moment a new relationship with the Lord began. Peace replaced turmoil and faith burst into flame.

An insatiable thirst for knowledge took him to

Bible college. A growing passion for young people was nurtured while serving as an army medic in the South Pacific where he was the unofficial chaplain to fellow soldiers. After the war, while in his role as travelling secretary for IVCF (Inter Varsity Christian Fellowship), he heard of a similar group starting at Waseda University in Tokyo. An inexorable vision was born for working amongst the students in Japan. Acceptance by WEC International for student ministry affirmed God's call, even though the mission had only worked in rural Kansai. Meanwhile Canadian teacher and student worker, Betty Slichter, was preparing for her work in Japan, heading for the Kanto Plains area.

Seven months passed before God "introduced" Ken and Betty in 1951 at Karuizawa. However, another five years would elapse before they felt God lead them to go ahead and marry.

A few years later the Holy Spirit seemed to be leading them to build a home for themselves in Kyoto. They were mystified, but obeyed; Ken's building experience from Dunedin days was stretched, but he expertly blended the Japanese building style with western ingenuity. It was custom-made for wall-to-wall student gatherings and overnight 'camps'. Their hospitality and Betty's Japanese cuisine became legendary. Known as 'Hebron House,' it became a home away from home for many new missionaries. It was a place of counsel and respite for those struggling in their faith and even at times a dating-cum-marriage bureau. It was also their personal refuge

from the demanding IVCF staff workers' schedule of weekly campus visits, Bible Studies, student meetings, and conferences. Out of several small fellowships of believers that met on weekends, three grew into WEC churches.

In 1957 Ken reluctantly accepted the Field Leader responsibility for WEC Japan. Over the next 14 years his servant leadership sensitively guided the transition of the group of WEC- planted churches to a Japanese-led model, renamed Sekai Fukuin Dendo Dan (SFDD). Blessed with an unassuming nature, Ken's heart was to see Japanese Christians in leadership, so when the student ministry renamed itself KKGK (Kirisutosha Gakusei Kai: the Japanese equivalent of IVCF) Ken called it "the happiest day of my life".

Knowing that prayer is paramount in any ministry, in the late '50s Ken initiated a monthly mission-focused prayer bulletin containing prayer points collected from various Japanese missionaries' newsletters. Printed at home, it was sent to the home churches of Japanese missionaries serving overseas as well as to other interested churches or individuals. It inspired pastors and their churches to 'think' international missions. Young Pastor Okuyama was one of the first to respond. Called to Indonesia he asked Ken for help in preparing for cross-cultural ministry. Always the visionary yet acutely aware of his perceived inadequacy for the task, Ken could foresee the need for a cross-cultural training programme for other would-be missionaries. It would take 11 years before his vision would be fully realized.

In the mid '70s, an independent church group proposed starting a missionary training school and invited Ken to be an advisor. When the Principal designate unexpectedly became unavailable, Ken was approached but was reluctant to accept. He reasoned that this new venture should be Japanese-led from the start. But after much prayer, Ken & Betty realised this work was indeed of God, and the new venue was to be their own Hebron House.

All who lived and studied there were challenged by the close community lifestyle, but this proved to be an ideal introduction to

cross-cultural ministry. "We had to give up our private life," said Ken. Their transparent lives, and devotion to God and to one another so deeply impacted the candidates that one commented, "We want to live like you, serving one another." Over the ten years they served there, 32 Japanese were sent to 16 countries. In 1985 they relinquished leadership of this ministry to none other than Pastor Okuyama.

Ken and Betty retired from Japan in their 70s. But God still had further plans for them. En route to Christchurch, NZ, a conversation on the plane with a young Japanese lass led to an open door of ministry to Japanese students in Christchurch. Bible studies in their home followed, and within a few years the Japanese Christian Fellowship (JCF) emerged. True to conviction, Ken and Betty soon entrusted this thriving ministry to Japanese leadership.

The DNA of this couple's ministry is summed up in Prov 16:9 "In their hearts humans plan their course, but the LORD establishes their steps" (NIV).

Their 59 years of ministry have left an immeasurable footprint on mission in Japan and far beyond. Their impact has crossed denominational, cultural, and age barriers and touched lives globally. Ken received his "well done" from his Lord in 2009, while Betty (93) resides in a rest home patiently awaiting her own home calling.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Ken and Betty have been spiritual mentors to me for over 53 years. I was a 17-year-old high school student when I first met them and they were instrumental in my call to work in Japan with WEC. I lived with them during my first year there and they have been like a mum and dad to me ever since. What a privilege it was to work with them and to experience their Christ-like qualities first hand. **JH**

Irelle White (WEC) was born in New Zealand. She served in Japan for 31 years and 5 years as WEC NZ Deputy Director. Now retired, she is on the leadership team of her church in Timaru, NZ.

Photos supplied by Irelle White



MR. (1950) and MRS. KEN S. ROUNDHILL

Field: Japan.



GRACE & TRUTH

A 200 member “mega-church” in Tokyo. Four daughters who love the Lord. The respect of an entire educational community. And, in retirement, a vibrant overseas ministry to the Ukraine – what sort of man bears such fruit? This query led me to investigate, among so many distinguished names, the life of Mr. Howard Blair.

Biography

A Philadelphia native and a pastor’s kid, Howard first encountered Japan as a young soldier in the U.S. occupational army. There he fell in love with teaching the Bible to fellow soldiers. So he returned to Japan with Phoebe, his wife, in 1953. Following a year of managing the dormitory, Howard assumed the headmaster position of the then fledgling Christian Academy in Japan (CAJ). After four years of administration he decided to return to the classroom, convinced his true gifts lay there, and went on to teach high school English and Bible for 27 years. As a teacher, he particularly excelled. Flossie Epley, former student, recalls, “There was a sense that he appreciated us for who we were and believed we had something to contribute. He was my favorite teacher and shaped the teacher I became.”

Not long into his teaching career, life took another turn. Mr. Nagase, accountant for CAJ, invited him to teach a Sunday evening Bible class at his house. Mr. Blair agreed, and six months later, Kurume Christ Church was born. Howard pastored it until his retirement in 1995, concurrently teaching at CAJ until 1981. Under the combined leadership of Howard and Mr. Nagase the church grew large, and today welcomes 200 in three services, pastored by Rev. Taizo Morimoto.

Mr. Blair and his wife also nurtured a lively family.

Phoebe was feisty and outspoken, Howard more reserved and philosophical. Together they raised four spirited daughters. His parenting methods were unusual for the missionary community of his day—he used a less hands-on approach to teaching spiritual truths than most. But God blessed their family; by God’s grace all their daughters follow Christ today.

Grace and truth

Certainly Mr. Blair had faults and weaknesses like all of us, for example, he could be passive in conflict, or lose patience in class. However, his life has borne remarkable fruit. Mr. Blair achieved a remarkable balance of God’s grace with His truth that impacted the lives of many.

Grace

Mr. Blair’s graciousness also showed itself to his family. Oldest daughter Ginny recalls that her generally reserved father displayed a different side in the home. “He was more relaxed, [and] funny. He would make rat-a-tat-tat sounds and chase us around the house,” she says with a smile. While Phoebe leaned more toward discipline, his tendency was to overlook and “take a more lenient stance.”

His grace was evident in the classroom. Rick Seely says, “He gave me things to do; he trusted me. He cared about students, and was a loving man.” Flossie Epley adds, “He accepted people and overlooked idiosyncracies. He had a welcoming personality full of grace.” By all accounts Mr. Blair’s students loved and respected him, and as a measure of that influence, he was invited to give the main address for the school’s 50th anniversary celebration. In addition, a prestigious writing award bears his name.



Grace also filled the atmosphere at Kurume Christ Church. As a boarding student at CAJ in the 1980s, I found myself looking for a church home. Not knowing anything about KCC, my first Sunday there I felt embraced by one of the warmest, most welcoming spirits of any church I had experienced in Japan. The bilingual sermons were also clear and understandable; I found myself returning week after week for more.

Truth

Truth has fallen on hard times in our day. It's fashionable to be tolerant, but not trendy to divide right from wrong. However, just as love sets limits, so grace sets the tone for truth. The second secret to Mr. Blair's fruitfulness, then, lies in not only his graciousness, but in his search for truth. "He challenged us. He wanted you to think about things, and not just accept them," says Rick. "In class he really listened and didn't just dismiss ideas but helped us think them through," adds Flossie. Mr. Blair simply says, "My goal was to . . . engage students in real thinking about the fundamental questions of life."

His own life reflected that engagement. He read widely in literature and theology. He also took voluntary college courses and attended lectures of theologians touring Japan. Mr. Blair attended basketball games to support the team—with his TIME magazine to read in the stands. His love for learning and interaction with a wide range of literature embellished his sermons.

Christ said to love Him with your heart and your mind (Matt. 22:37). Mr. Blair was one of those rare people who truly did, setting an example for others to do the same.

Take aways

So, a life well lived, a life mixing grace with truth. What can we take away?

Humble yourself before God. At critical junctures, Mr. Blair followed God's voice. These included coming to Japan in the first place, following a Japanese man's vision for a church and not his own, and leaving the CAJ teaching career he loved, to devote himself fully to KCC

Love your family. In the busyness of work and ministry, our families can suffer. However, when we take the time to love and nurture them, we reap a blessing later on.

Love the people you serve. This note sounds repeatedly in Mr. Blair's life. He was a deep thinker, an intellectual man, who nonetheless had a deep love and concern for those whom he taught, worked with, and preached to.

Think, think, think! One criticism of contemporary Christians is that we can leave our brains at the door of the church. We may know what we believe, but not know why. Or, we value feelings over thought. But as Mr. Blair shows, our faith becomes attractive when we engage our hearts and minds, our passions and intellects, in other words, our whole selves, in the service of God

Along with all else, Mr. Blair has long loved gardening and still tends plants at his Philadelphia home. As he loves plants, so also has he nurtured the garden of his life and borne rich fruit. In the same way, may grace and truth grow on the tree of our lives. **JH**

Matthew Cummings (US) serves in Shiga-ken with WEC International. An MK, he was born and raised in Japan. He enjoys tennis, good books, and playing with his five children.



Blessings in the Mail

Summer had been difficult—support had been low for months, allowing for little margin. Then Bobby came down with a fever and spots. Soon Ricky had the chicken pox, too. Just as they were getting better, Carol said one night at dinner, “Mommy, I don’t feel good.” By morning she was covered with sores.

Thankfully the baby had been spared. At the moment, she was babbling on the floor as her mother, Florence, wrote letters.

“Love, the Seelys,” she wrote. “Christmas 1957.” Florence looked out the window and watched leaves drift to the ground; winter would be here soon. She heard a whine and felt little Aileen tug on her skirt. Florence looked down to see the girl raising her hands up to her mother.

“Next month it’ll be your birthday. How did you get so big?” Florence picked the girl up, but she fussed and wouldn’t sit still. “Aileen, what’s the matter?” She brushed back Aileen’s bangs and noticed her eye seemed red and goopy. Florence did her best to keep it clean, but by evening it was looking worse.

“Art,” she said to her husband that night. “Aileen has some kind of eye infection.”

Art lowered his newspaper with a sigh. “More sickness?”

“I know,” she said. “We’ll need to treat this quickly.”

“Well, there’s not much we can do besides pray.”

“Of course we’ll pray,” she said. “But she’s not even a year old. The others might have been able to muscle through without doctor visits, but this could get bad.”

He pushed his glasses up his nose. “It’s not a matter of convincing me. If we could, I’d take her to the doctor tomorrow.” He put his newspaper down and folded his hands. “I went to the bank today.”

His pause made Florence nervous.

“How bad is it?” she asked. They had been as frugal as possible all summer, trying to stretch the money until the next quarter’s support arrived in October. When it did, it had been shockingly low.

Art pursed his lips, then said, “We have 50 yen to last us

until January 10th.”

For a moment she was speechless. “It’s only November.” “I know.”

Florence leaned back into her chair and shut her eyes. “Lord,” she began. “We trust You and know You will provide for our needs, big and small. We don’t understand why financial support has been so low, even as we are confident that You called us to minister in Japan.” She took a deep breath. “Remember us in our time of need—especially Aileen. Keep our spirits generous even though there is little to give. Bolster our faith when we are discouraged. And help us to honor You in all that we do, for the glory of Your Kingdom.”

“Amen,” Art said. He picked up his newspaper. “I’ll call the doctor tomorrow. Perhaps he can give some advice, even if we can’t afford an appointment.” He paused. “Will we have enough food to last us?”

“We have 50 yen
to last us until
January 10th.”

“We won’t be able to buy anything fresh, but I think I can make our canned goods last.” She chuckled. “If Jesus can feed 5,000 men from five loaves and two fish, He can certainly feed our family of six with what’s in our pantry.”

Art smiled.

The Lord’s provision

The next day, Art was hanging up the phone when Florence popped out of the kitchen.

“What did he say?” she asked, wiping her hands on her apron. She could hear their children upstairs and tried not to worry about them waking Aileen.

Art shifted in his seat. “He said we ought to use a certain salve from the American pharmacy downtown.” He sighed. “But I know the train ticket alone will cost 40 yen.”



The Seely Family

Florence sighed, too. “Well, we will continue to pray.”
 “Yes.” He stood up and shuffled toward the door. “I’m going to check the mail.”

She went back to washing dishes. There was something satisfying about scrubbing a filthy plate until it gleamed. If only she could fix other things as easily. *Help me to trust You*, she prayed. Aileen looked worse this morning. Please help my daughter.

She was still praying when Art came rushing into the house. “Florence,” he said, his eyes bright. “Look at this.” It was a Christmas card from his father, who sent a card and a monetary gift “for the children” every year—it had arrived earlier than usual. “Five dollars,” Art said. “That’s about 1,800 yen. We can use this to get the salve for Aileen.”

Florence didn’t smile. “But this money isn’t ours.”

Art pushed his glasses up and folded his arms. “Yes, it belongs to the children. But isn’t Aileen one of them?”

“Not all of this is for her.” She wanted to help Aileen, but she couldn’t steal their Christmas money.

“So, we’ll ask their permission. And pray the Lord will provide a replacement for it.”

She looked up at him. His face didn’t show any of the hesitation she felt. *Help me to trust, Lord*, she prayed silently. *If this is You providing for us, give me a spirit of gratitude.*

“All right,” she said. “But let’s pray first.”

They held hands as he prayed aloud for wisdom and provision. Florence also silently prayed for inner peace. Then they went upstairs to the boys’ room, where Carol, Bobby, and Ricky were playing. Florence sat next to her toddler, Ricky, and said, “Your father has something important to ask all of you.”

Art cleared his throat. “Aileen is sick and the doctor said to get some medicine. But we don’t have enough money to buy it.”

Carol glanced at Florence, who smiled reassuringly. “Grandfather sent his Christmas money to you early this year. Mommy and I wondered if we could use that money to buy the medicine Aileen needs. We’ve prayed that if you say yes, God would replace it, but you might have to wait until after Christmas for presents.”

Florence rubbed Ricky’s back and looked at her children’s solemn faces. They were all still so little. Carol, the oldest, was only five. Did they understand?

“What do you think?”

“Yes,” said Ricky.

“Me, too,” said Bobby.

“She can have it all,” Carol said. “If she will get better, we don’t need presents.”

Florence’s eyes welled up with tears. “Thank you,” she said, hugging them in turn.

Unexpected blessings

When Art came home from the pharmacy, Florence was cooking supper while verbally breaking up a fight between her boys. Carol was looking through a picture book with her fingers in her ears, and Aileen was lying on the couch and whining.

He hung up his hat and smiled at his wife. “I got the salve.” Then he pulled several opened envelopes out of his coat pocket and said, “And we got a few more surprises from my work mailbox.”

Florence turned the heat off from under the pan to flip through the Christmas cards as he hung up his coat. “These are lovely, but what’s the surprise? The fact that they’re early?”

“And that they included thirty-five dollars, which I cashed with Father’s five at the bank.”

Her eyes widened. “Forty in all?”



Art and Florence Seely

“That means 14,400 yen.”

Florence closed her eyes and pressed the cards to her heart. “Praise God,” she said. “Oh, praise God.” She laughed and hugged Art. “He is so good to us!”

The Lord had provided.
He had remembered
them in their time of
need.

Christmas cards continued to arrive in the mail. They received more letters that season than they ever had before or since, many from those who only sent that year. In total, they received over \$800 (¥288,000) from God through their generous supporters. With it they were able to meet all of the family’s needs. Aileen’s eye healed and the family was even able to celebrate her first birthday with a small cake, a luxury Florence had thought they’d have to go without.

On New Year’s Eve, once the children were asleep, Art and Florence sat in their living room, holding hands and quietly singing praises to the Lord. With all the bills paid, and their pantry and fridge fully stocked, they still had ¥25,000 in the bank.

They were filled with awe and gratitude. The Lord had provided. He had remembered them in their time of need. Fat tears rolled down Florence’s smiling cheeks, as she and Art sang together. When they finished, she wiped her eyes, laughed, and said, “Praise God. Oh, praise God.” **JH**

April Mack (US) is the granddaughter of Art and Florence Seely, and the daughter of Aileen and Tim Selander. This story is based on true events. April and her husband, Dusty, work at CAJ. Their two young sons are the fourth generation in her family to live in Tokyo.

Photos supplied by April Mack



Florence and baby Aileen

A funny thing happened...

Chocolate communion

I had a sudden inspiration on our way to worship service and the Lord's Supper at the infant Kamiooka Bible Church in south central Yokohama. "Today let's have one loaf of bread instead of the usual bits of bread, symbolizing our unity in the body of Christ" (1 Cor 10:17). So I asked Kay to duck into the shop and buy a loaf of bread. She was in a hurry and just had time to snatch a package of buns off the shelf. Kind of small, but then we were a small church and there would easily be enough for everybody.

But when the moment of truth came as I pronounced the words (in Japanese of course), "This is my body, broken for you," and broke the bun, my fingers were sticky—with chocolate goo. My wife had failed to read the label "Choco Pan." There was nothing to do but distribute the gooey chocolate bun. People back home would have broken out in laughter but our Japanese congregation only smiled and emitted a few stifled titters. Mr. Itoh asked me with a broad smile after the service if we could serve it with coffee next time.

"Asobimashoo!"

It was our second term and we were now helping Vic and Ann Springer in a new church plant we called Shirayuri (White Lily), the name of the local housing area.

My wife Kay went out shopping one day and asked me to keep an eye on three-year old Amy, our youngest, who was happily playing in the bath. I was immersed in studying for a message or perhaps I was trying to decipher one of the half dozen notices that our older girls brought home daily from elementary school.

The next thing I knew, Kay showed up at the door and I was in big trouble. She demanded, "Do you know where Amy is?"

"In the *ofuro* (bath)?" I suggested.

Kay had found Amy down the road with Mrs. Baba, the local barber. Amy had slipped out of the door and gone down the street, turned a corner, and knocked on the glass door of the barber shop, pleading, "*Asobimashoo!* (Let's play!)" Stark naked. Just as Mrs. Baba took her by the hand to lead her home, Kay had returned and was able to lead her naked urchin home.

The "setting up chairs" gift

This is a story Ralph Cox told me. It serves to illustrate something I have often observed, "Every good idea or noble truth is soon overextended and overapplied."

The Coxes through the years had many short-term workers in Japan that we called "Helping Hands." Ralph in Takamatsu and Jim Frens in Nagoya were the pioneers of this program even before short term missionary programs became popular throughout churches and missionary agencies. I remember Ralph seeking recruits for this program at Dallas Seminary in the mid-60s. But there could be problems with Helping Hands, both major and minor.

One time Ralph asked a young man, one of his "Helping Hands," to help him set up chairs for a meeting. The young man informed him that he "did not have the spiritual gift of setting up chairs." **JH**

Bob Shade and his wife Kay, who is now in heaven, were TEAM missionaries in Japan 1969 – 2003.

MOUNTAIN PIONEER

This article is an excerpt translated with permission by Ken Reddington, Mae's son.

The original article (雪山の聖歌 “Yukiyama no Seika” A Hymn in the Snowy Mountains) was written by special correspondent Michiko Yokoyama and published in the February 1951 issue of “Te no Hikari” (magazine for Japan Agricultural Cooperatives, now known as JA), pp. 24-31.

A Maid from Heaven

“There is a young woman from America living deep in the mountains of *Koshu* (the ancient name for Yamanashi Prefecture). She lives her life in a ministry of love and evangelism to the village people. She is loved by all in the village as an angel come out of Heaven.” (Source unknown.)

Deeply moved as I read this, I wanted to hear her story. So I rode the train until I could see the majestic form of Mt. Fuji etched against the sky. I got off at Yamura-machi Station, planning to take a taxi or bus to the mountaintop village. But the locals said, “You can’t take a taxi. It’d never get there with these bad roads. The bus takes three hours, but only goes partway. And then it’s a two hour walk to where the American woman lives.”

So instead I got a ride on a truck taking some things into the village. It made its way up the mountain road, bouncing me around with its shaking. Finally, I saw a light in the valley below.

I asked, “Is that it?”

“No, that’s just the bus terminus,” the driver said. The road had become completely dark.

Gospel Crusade

The road flattened. We drove along a river into Doshi Village in Minamitsuru Gun, Yamanashi Prefecture, the longest village in Japan (28 km, or about 17 miles). The truck picked up speed. Suddenly, the truck’s headlights revealed a raised hand as we drove along the snowy road.

“Stop! Please give us a ride.” It was a group of young women. The driver asked, “You have a meeting?”

“Yes, we do.” These girls were going to the American woman’s house. I was glad to have company.

The truck stopped at a little one-story Japanese house. “Welcome!” came a greeting. Then, as we sat on *tatami* mats, I wondered, “Is this really the American woman who has been in Japan less than a year?” Her hair and eyebrows were black, like a Japanese woman. She was beautiful, with long eyelashes, big eyes, and purposeful lips.

“What do you like about Japan?” Mae thought for a while. Then she broke the silence with a single word, like a jewel being dropped, “The children.”

As we gathered around the *kotatsu* she said, “There are no tables or chairs and no bed either. Everything is Japanese . . .” Her *meishi* (name card) was in Japanese-style vertical print. It said, Mae Vincent . . . Far Eastern Gospel Crusade. What a formidable title! But I fell in love with this young woman with the soft rosy cheeks.

Her Japanese teacher, Mrs. Toshiko Tanaka, said, “Mae-san studies a lot, so she has

improved rapidly.” This innocent girl had a self-reliant American spirit.

“Why did you come to this lonely backwoods mountain village?” I asked.

“My headquarters told me that being in the mountains like this would be difficult. They discouraged me from coming. Others will go a convenient place, but who will come to a place like this—an inconvenient place in the middle of the mountains?”

Her simple Japanese was easy to understand. I saw Mae’s strong personality and her sacrificial spirit. Then she added, “And also, I like Doshi!” I nodded. I felt a radiant joy as I thought of young Mae’s motivation for choosing this place hidden in the mountains to start her evangelism ministry in Japan.

Then I asked, “What do you like about Japan?” Mae thought for a while. Then she broke the silence with a single word, like a jewel being dropped, “The children.”

For a moment, I was awestruck. I thought she would say the scenery, the customs, etc. But this American woman just loved children. This is a great bond between Japan and the US.

“And what don’t you like about Japan?” Mae didn’t answer right away, then said, “I . . . well, I’m not going back to America. Tokyo . . . big! Stores, people, many . . . I don’t like it!” So, Mae is living a life of service to the people of this village in the mountains where they have so little.

It was the young girls who were first touched by seeing Mae walking the long road doing evangelism, even in the middle of a storm with no umbrella, just boots. “When I saw her, I knew that I would never be lonely again,” said a village girl, tears welling up in her eyes, as if Mae’s love had melted her heart.

“Mae is like the village doctor. Whenever a child gets burned or cuts themselves with a sickle, they say, ‘Mae-sensei’ and run to her. To get to the doctor you have to go 12 km (8 miles),” said Mrs. Tanaka, a mother and

a schoolteacher. She appeared to trust this young woman like a saint.



A Bird in the Snow

Finishing the meal, I asked them to start the meeting. It would do no good for the meeting to be sacrificed because I had come.

They started by singing a Christmas carol. There were seven young people: four men and three women. The Christmas carols they sang seemed to fill the night air. Their prayers were beautiful, like petals falling from the flowers of love in their pure hearts. I closed my eyes. My heart was full.

Mae got up and began to pray for those sick and in pain. Her words, though foreign to me, overflowed from a pure heart. It sounded like beautiful music, soothing my heart.

Mae came to Japan in November 1949. After studying Japanese for about a month, she had visited the village over the New Year. Deciding to live here, she came back on March 1, bringing a small trailer house to live in those first few months in that mountainous village. Men in the village built the house she was now living in, for this young servant of God from another nation. It was finished in July 1950.

“At first, everything was brand-new. The kids would follow me wherever I went,” she cheerfully reminisced. “Everything was new to me—the *irori* (fire pit for cooking), firewood, *futon* (it was hard to sleep well at first), etc.” Now, she’s completely adapted, even walking in *geta* (wooden clogs) when going down to Yamura town.

When the village children wake, they gather, calling out “Mae-sensei.” Mae enjoys having the children in her home. She has dolls, puzzles, picture storybooks, ping-pong and other games for the children to enjoy.

“The children sometimes give me candy with their dirty hands. It’s really cute!” Since the children have gotten to know Mae-sensei, they have stopped singing crude songs,

replacing them with hymns. Even stealing has gone down. They say that when Mae joins them for a school field trip, they are happier than if their own parents come along. Once, when a child became sick, Mae, instead of the teacher, carried the child on her back.



Mae takes time to check on a young man who had tuberculosis. The villagers fear tuberculosis, so they shun him. In his pain and loneliness, he tried to commit suicide, thinking life wasn't worth living, even if he got better. But Mae comforted him, cheered him up and gave him hope. Her doctor in America sent her streptomycin in good faith that she would use it properly.

Through rain and even snow, Mae is like a beautiful mountain bird echoing her song of love in the mountains, bringing the golden fruit of the tree of love to the hearts of the people.

Seeds from Heaven

"Going to work, I saw Mae-sensei and had to talk to her." That young man wanted to learn English from Mae. He also might have felt like he had seen an angel in an unexpected place. This wonder led to an awakening of sincerity in the young man's heart. "I have come to believe that God is most important for mankind," he said as he went back to his work. He said he works much harder now.

"Whenever Mae-sensei comes to where we work, everybody tries to get her attention. Fifty guys work here, but when she comes, everyone tries to get her to sing a hymn with

them, or take a picture with them, etc. Then we really work hard." It was like an angel from heaven had come down and awakened beauty in their hearts.

Mae holds meetings in four locations and she teaches English . . . besides her ministry with the children. The strength and breadth of what she was accomplishing caused me to think more deeply about the meaning of life.

Though Mae's work was exciting, weren't there some times when she was sad? "Well," she said, "The children are so poor." She wanted to do something for them.

So Mae wrote her cousin in America. Soon, a package arrived with children's socks, handkerchiefs and flannel in bright colors to make shirts with. Mae told me about her cousin and her eyes brimmed with tears. Her cousin was just a college student with no income. But she sold her blood to send these things to people she hadn't even met in a faraway land. Mae said she felt the warmth of the blood of Christ flowing around her. Even in a serious and heartwarming conversation, Mae's voice seemed to echo with friendliness akin to music. Her heart overflowed into ours.

"Good Night! See you later!" The young men and women made their way home, some going four km (2.5 miles), others 8 km (or 5 miles) or more in the deepening night.

The next morning, the sun shone on the snow. The children began to gather. It was Sunday. With the children crowding around Mae, it seemed like a scene from old Japan, as I saw this lady with the long black hair in a yellow sweater.

It reminded me of the night before when we were sitting around the kotatsu. One of the group had said they didn't understand God very well yet. Mae said in a loud voice, "God is everywhere. He's here, right here," as she pointed around the room. The firmness of her conviction was amazing.

I got on the truck to leave. Mt. Fuji was standing regally over the pure-white mountains, a landmark in this promised land. Going down the mountain, I prayed that the seeds that were sown in the hearts of each child would blossom forth with life as flowers from Heaven. I thought of this new world I had seen. I felt I was floating, and my heart was light. **JH**

Photos supplied by Ken Reddington



The Anointing

One of the greatest joys in serving Christ is those special times when you sense that the Holy Spirit is with you in an extraordinary way. One day I was invited to speak at a Buddhist university. I debated with my manager whether I should go.

The university assured me I could speak freely, that there would be no restrictions. They told me that as a Christian and a minister I would be free to talk about Christ.

When I arrived at the venue, I found an assembly hall filled with nearly 1,000 students. A kind man met with me briefly about the schedule and then left.

As I stood up on the podium to speak I felt the presence of Jesus in a way I had not sensed for some time. I found this particularly strange as I was speaking at a Buddhist university, but as I began to speak the anointing became stronger and stronger. The presence of the Holy Spirit filled the room and I could sense that God was there.

I finished and had a wonderful opportunity to share Christ as well as keep the attention of the notoriously difficult student crowd.

Puzzled, but of course rejoicing at the presence of the Holy Spirit, I was driven to the station and boarded the train home.

On the train my cell phone rang. It was the man I had briefly met and who apparently had arranged the event. He apologized, "I am so sorry I couldn't see you before you left," he began. Then he told me an amazing story.

"Thank you so much for coming today. I am a believer. A few years back I received an invitation to work at the Buddhist university and I struggled with it, but felt God calling me to be a witness for Him. I am so sorry I missed you, but the whole time you were speaking I was directly behind you praying as you spoke."

Tears flowed down my cheeks, as I finally understood the "anointing!" Here was a believer in Christ, called by love to serve his mission field at a Buddhist university, and then God moved.

We never know where God will put us for His glory, and in His plan.

The "anointing" comes, even at a Buddhist university! **JH**

Ken Joseph Jr., *directs The Keikyo Institute which researches the history of Christianity in Japan and Asia founded by his father in 1951. www.keikyo.com*

How I got to *Japan!*

Through the bus window and with misty eyes I viewed the familiar landscape of my small rural hometown of Juda, Wisconsin, as it faded into the distance. I was fast feeling alone on a bus taking me to the Naval Station Great Lakes Boot Camp north of Chicago in 1952. Just one year earlier, my life was filled with great promise. I had a good job, I married the girl of my dreams, my wife had a job, we had a nice apartment, a car to drive, and we were building our bank account...everything looked rosy.

But after six months of married life, Maxine, my wife came down with lupus erythematosus, then incurable. It was heart-rending to see this lovely young lady deteriorate into a living skeleton. Within nine months of married life she was taken from me. Suddenly I was single again, and because of the Korean War I soon got a notice from my draft board to report for an Army physical. It just so happened that I had no desire to be in the Army, so I instead enlisted in the Navy. On January 3, 1952, that bus was taking me farther and farther away from all that was familiar.

After three months of Boot Camp I was off to California where I boarded my assigned ship, the USS Los Angeles, a heavy cruiser.

Experiencing my wife's death at such a young age was perplexing; many questions flowed through my mind. *Why me? Why so young? What is the meaning of life? Who is in control?*

I was a nominal Christian, baptized at twelve, and I went to church regularly. But I didn't really know the Controller of the Universe. One afternoon I left the ship by myself with no destination in mind, but I needed to think through some of the issues that were occupying my heart and mind. As I walked I saw a sign on the sidewalk that said, "Christian Servicemen's Center, Free Coffee & Donuts, a Home away from Home."

That looked interesting, so I climbed the stairs to the second floor, and, in this Home Away from Home, I found my Savior, accepting Christ as my Lord (John 1:12-13), and became a child of God. As I read the Bible daily, I began to find answers to the questions that before seemed to have no answers. Truly, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor. 5:17, KJV).

It just so happened that my ship was assigned to the Far East and soon we crossed the Pacific to Yokosuka, Japan, the largest deep-water port in the Far East. Missionaries before me had established a Servicemen's Center in Yokosuka, and whenever my ship was in port, this became my next "Home Away From Home." Later I was stationed at the Yokosuka Naval Base and became the Servicemen Center's Board Chairman. On Friday evenings the Center had special speakers, and missionaries serving in Japan came to present the gospel and challenge servicemen to consider missions as a calling. Here I met Jim & Kay Beasley, Barbara Dean Knoble, Delna Goertzen, and many other missionaries. Delna and I got along well and we became interested in each other.

As a new Christian living in Japan, I became concerned about the paucity of the Christian witness in this great land. In the US there were churches on every corner, the Good News was proclaimed by radio and TV daily. But Japan was

just the opposite. The teachings of Buddhism and Shinto were woven so deeply into the Japanese fabric that most Japanese couldn't move away from them.

My enlistment ended December 1955, I was flown to California to be discharged and entered Moody Bible Institute in Chicago the next month.

In March 1956, Delna's father succumbed to his long battle with Parkinson's, and Delna rushed home to Mt. Lake, Minnesota, for his funeral.

In May, I traveled to Mt. Lake to see Delna. I proposed to her and we were married July 6, 1956.

Japan was deeply in my heart by then, but I never publicly said, "I am going to be a missionary to Japan." However, Moody had a Mission Conference and after hearing the challenges to give all for Jesus, I told Jesus that I believed He was calling me to Japan as a missionary. When I got home that day I told Delna and she was overjoyed. From that moment on we made plans to return to Japan.

Delna was already a TEAM missionary and I enjoyed the fellowship with other TEAM missionaries, so it was easy to become a TEAM Candidate. I always felt unqualified to be a missionary for it seemed that they were high up the spiritual ladder and I could never reach their level. However, as I got to know many missionaries I found out that they were just normal people with the abnormal goal of reaching the lost for Christ.

I went to the TEAM Candidate School and, although there are many things I no longer remember, one phrase that the Chairman of our Mission said fifty-eight years ago is still with me. "When you get to the

mission field," he encouraged, "If you can't do anything good please, please don't do anything bad." I thought to myself, *I can do that!* Somehow this gave me confidence that I too could be a missionary.

One day at my folks' home, as we were preparing to go to Japan, Delna and my mom were in the kitchen doing dishes. Mom said to Delna, "I am not happy that you and Bruce are going to Japan. We will never get to see you." Delna with great wisdom said to Mom. "Oh Mom, don't feel that way. You can come to visit us in Japan." Mom said, "Fat chance I will ever get to Japan."

Yet, Mom saved her own money. When they wrote and said that Dad was getting his needed shots we knew they were really on their way to visit us. After this visit and Delna's weekly letters, Mom and Dad became very happy that we were missionaries to Japan.

In early 1960, after I graduated from Moody, we began our deputation, and on September 11, 1960, fully supported, we thankfully left Seattle aboard a freighter bound for Japan.

Following two years in language study we were invited by Bill and Elsie Thornton to work with them in Nagano City. And there we remained for 30 God-blessed years. We helped start three self-supporting

churches that are today witnessing for Christ in this city of 400,000 lost souls.

There are as many different stories as there are missionaries. But this is how God led me here. This is how I got to Japan. To God be the Glory! **JH**

Bruce Helland (TEAM) grew up in Wisconsin and ministered in Japan for more than 30 years in Nagano City. His wife, Delna, went to heaven in 2007. He returned for four and a half more years. He is now retired.

Japan was deeply in my heart by then, but I never publicly said, "I am going to be a missionary to Japan."

Apostles to Japan:

Ralph Cox and Joseph Meeko

As a missionary myself, I had repeatedly heard of Joseph Meeko and Ralph Cox. But what really got my attention was when Japanese leaders kept referring to them and their combined influence on church planting in Japan. Joseph Meeko and Ralph Cox were among the first generation of missionaries after World War II. Their legacy continues to this day in the churches and lives they touched decades ago. I met Ralph Cox many times, but I don't recall ever having the privilege of meeting Joe Meeko. However, due to their influence on Japanese leaders, I felt I knew these two men well. Many Japan Harvest readers may know them far better than I do, yet I think it is worthwhile to explore their ministry principles.

Ralph Cox arrived in Japan in 1953 as a TEAM missionary whose ministry spanned over 50 years! Ralph primarily focused on church planting in Kagawa prefecture on the island of Shikoku.

Joseph Meeko left Seattle, Washington, and arrived in Japan in 1947

with the Conservative Baptist Foreign Mission Society, now called World-Venture. He worked in Yamagata Prefecture in the Tohoku region, as well as the Kanto area. Joe first served just 12 years, returning to the US in 1959, but he accomplished much in that short span of time. He later returned to Japan from 1972-79.

With the help of others, Joe started at least 12 Japanese churches in 5 years and Ralph started at least 88 during his ministry. Both were exemplary in reproducing churches.

While either man would merit a book-length study, here we will concentrate on just one crucial aspect of their ministries: reproducing churches. These post-war missionaries show us that certain ministry principles were effective in reproducing the church in Japan. Even

though their era of Japanese missions differs from our own, we can learn much from them. The principles underlying their

ministry are still relevant today.

What most impressed many Japanese leaders was Ralph and Joe's intense

commitment to establishing local churches. These two pioneers took the apostolic role of founding and birthing churches. Often they were the first missionaries to visit a rural village. They gave priority to evangelism, making disciples, and developing leaders, which is as important today as ever. Many places and peoples in Japan still need this pioneer work, with at least 25 cities and 1,800 rural areas without a single church. Today, as was true in their day, many areas and people-clusters need pioneer ministry.

Ralph's and Joe's emphases are also vital today. Missionaries need to partner with Japanese pastors and lay people to equip and facilitate existing churches to reproduce. In some sense, Ralph and Joe did both pioneering and facilitating work. They were successful in casting vision and developing systems of church multiplication. Through them many churches were planted and many Japanese leaders developed vision for more church planting.

Of the many insights available from studying the ministries of these two missionary statesmen, let us examine three distinct lessons.

Their legacy continues to this day in the churches and lives they touched decades ago.

1. Cultivate God-sized vision

Joe Meeko took a Japanese leader up on a hill that overlooked several villages. He then asked some challenging questions. “See those lights down there, what do you think those people are doing? Do you think they know Jesus? When will they have a church?”

Joe loved large vistas and overlooks where he would often take others to “see” what God wanted to do in establishing churches. Joe hoped others would catch God’s vision, as indeed they have. One missionary still has the map Joe Meeko drew with strategic church plants along the Musashino line in Tokyo. Today there are churches in those locations.

Ralph, from Wyoming, thought big and developed visionary plans for whole areas. He worked with five Japanese pastors on one ten-year plan to expand the number of churches from 7 to 14. These plans would challenge others to engage with what was on the heart and mind of God. Ralph believed church planting to be the practical application of the Great Commission. He used New Testament principles enabling church planting to be done by non-professionals and over a wide area. Partnering with Japanese leaders in church plants meant intensive collaboration and utilizing their cultural expertise to develop healthy Japanese churches.

There are many cases where Joe or Ralph inspired a prominent Japanese church leader to seek God’s vision. This God-sized vision would grow in the leader’s heart and then also become the basis for using lay people in church planting to develop vision within them. Vision is something caught by people, then embodied by them. It should then become the DNA of a new church and, hopefully, of any subsequent church it reproduces. There are many examples where vision was caught by the next generation and then passed on to succeeding generations. Vision was caught via on-the-job ministry training.

Joe and Ralph also determined the next practical steps. What would it take?

They did not begin with vision only, but by practical planning saw the vision accomplished.

2. Create emergent opportunities

Joe was a great proponent of what he called “strawberry evangelism.” Even before the fruit ripens, a strawberry plant sends out runners to develop new plants. Joe encouraged Japanese people to start other churches even while nurturing a new church plant. This analogy worked well within Japan.

Ralph also advocated starting more than one church plant at the same time. Because establishing any church takes time, it is important to get started and encourage momentum toward each new congregation to come. Both men believed more in multiple opportunities than in singular situations. Some people never get started as they wait for perfect conditions. Planting churches rapidly and simultaneously can get messy, but it also creates more opportunities. Joe and Ralph never shirked from doing necessary planning to get a new church off the ground. But each also considered it essential to get the next plant moving.

They believed in ministry in many locations, using ministry partners, often covering wide areas. Ralph believed in emulating the Apostle Paul’s practice of laying a foundation which believers could then build on (1 Cor. 3:10).

They also believed in enhancing new church ministries while cutting out certain common delays. Ralph listed several hindrances to establishing churches in Japan. “One church, one pastor; a church’s first goal is to secure its own land and building; laymen can’t pastor; another church can’t be started until the first church is self-supporting and has its own building.”¹ Instead he proposed beginning churches where lay people could cooperate and nurture the new church toward stability.

Both Ralph Cox and Joe Meeko found it possible to simultaneously reproduce and grow many church congregations in the soil of Japan. Of



Joe Meeko strategically planted churches along the Musashino line.

course you can’t really take advantage of opportunities in widespread locations all on your own, so investing in other people is always vital.

3. Invest yourself in people

This is probably the biggest lesson I learned from them. One missionary shared how Ralph encouraged him through a weekly telephone appointment to talk through church planting. He was not the only one to have Ralph’s personal encouragement and practical help. One Japanese pastor told with much affection of how he traveled around with the Meeko family in the US. Clearly Ralph and Joe both believed in the principle of investing in individual lives. Though Joe Meeko had a big church planting vision, as one missionary said, he was very much “a one-on-one type of guy. He invested in the person he was with right at the moment.”

These men often used local workers and raised up harvest workers from the harvest itself. Joe Meeko’s early church plants used teams of people, including seminary students, veteran pastors, college students, and businessmen. Joe and Ralph believed in using lay people in central roles in the establishment of churches, often alongside seminarians and professionals. Both of them taught lay leaders through on-the-job training to lead ministries and churches. They knew that, especially in Japan, it was not practical to wait for highly trained and credentialed professional clergy. They were



Ralph Cox believed in the principal of investing in individual lives.

not afraid to entrust ownership of the ministry to lay people. For Ralph and Joe, entrusting ministry to lay people meant allowing them to make real

decisions while Ralph and Joe were still available for advice and counsel.

Ralph and Joe recruited both Japanese nationals and foreign missionaries. Between them they recruited many of today's TEAM and WorldVenture missionaries. Early on, Ralph embraced the new concept of short-term missionaries and helped to develop it into a smooth running system.

Both men were tenacious, optimistic, and faithful. They both loved Japanese people. We could go on to discuss whether all of their specific methods work as well today as decades ago, but these are three principles we can all apply in our own ministries.

Today we still need pioneer workers and church planting facilitators. These

two men applied timeless principles of ministry that Jesus, the Apostle Paul, and others have used. I am still learning from these great missionary exemplars. They challenge me to find a God-sized vision and pass it on to others, to work in teams to multiply opportunities, and to invest myself in local people. These three principles surely work in concert with each other.

Father God, thank you for these faithful workers and their modeling effective ministry. May we walk in their footsteps and may you multiply these kinds of leaders in the future. JH

1. Stella Cox, *One Man's Vision for Japan* (Bloomington IN: Crossbooks, 2013), 88.

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The Gospel of Mr. Children?

As I listened to some friends who are fans of the pop group Mr. Children, I got the impression that they were not merely fans, but actual worshippers of Mr. Children. One friend once declared that she saw the band's composer, Kazutoshi Sakurai, as "the founder of a new religion." What sort of position did Mr. Children really occupy in their lives? And what is the vital difference between Mr. Children for them and the gospel for Christians? Above all, what principles should guide Christians who reach out to Mr. Children fans?

The Church and culture: the gospel and Mr. Children

When the church reaches out to people such as Mr. Children fans, contact is made between the church and the surrounding culture. The church ought to spread the gospel in a way that maintains its integrity while also respecting the cultural forms and worldview that are important to the recipients.

And so as church members engage contemporary Japanese non-believers, what should they make of cultural aspects? Modern Japanese culture, in particular pop music and *anime*, contains many unbiblical elements. Mr. Children is an example of a trend in Japanese thinking that is deeply influenced by existentialism, romanticism, and New Age thinking. Certain themes in their music may initially seem to harmonize with some Christian ideas, but most actually oppose the clear truth of the Bible. To find keys for reaching out to Mr. Children fans, we need to analyse their responses in more detail.

What does Mr. Children's music evoke in their fans?

To understand what Mr. Children means to their fans I conducted focus group research with six fans over the age of 30. I discovered the messages under-

lying the music and the way they interpreted the lyrics. Below are listed some keywords that may help us understand the characteristic themes of the group:

Inspiring positive feelings These fans stressed that listening to the lyrics makes them feel encouraged and more positive about themselves. They feel supported, courageous and energetic, and better able to identify their own hopes and dreams.

Skillful expression The lyrics express emotions in a way that is easy to empathise with, which seems especially appealing to these fans. Lyrics seem open to multiple interpretations allowing listeners to place their own feelings, background, and experiences into the songs.

Broadening horizons Fans feel that Mr. Children serves to broaden their horizons and invites them to see things from various perspectives. In particular, to see positive elements not just the negatives in their own situations, inspiring yet greater positiveness.

Looking deeper Mr. Children encourages fans to seek the main issue in an existential search for hidden truth.

Storytelling Mr. Children's songs and albums often contain stories, and fans are keen to follow the central story of the band as it unfolds from one album to the next. Mr. Children seek to take fans along on a narrative journey.

One's own story At the same time, another story is that of the listeners themselves. Fans reported "I felt that Sakurai-san wrote that song just for me." Fans felt that Mr. Children united their

own past stories with that of the band, forming a beautiful whole and presenting a singular, future oriented story.

These fans felt themselves and their pasts were accepted and beautified. They became heroes of their own stories, and were invited by the band to help create a new story. We may see this as a kind of self-deification.

Using Akihisa Miyoshi's "folk religion model"¹ and "Trinitarian religion model", we can summarize the differences between the faith of Mr. Children's fans and that of true Christians:

	Mr.Children Fan	Christian
Emphasis	Personal/private	Corporate/public
Source of Support	None/Self -fulfilment	Triune God
Motive force	Oneself	Triune God
God	Oneself	Triune God
Direction	Upward, deification	Downward servant nature
In other words...	One's own story. "Religion"	God's story. "Mission"

A Question for the Church

But isn't it sadly the case that in too many of our churches we see this "Mr. Children" style of faith rather than a biblically faithful practice? In Japan, where they are a distinct minority, Christians focus excessively on protecting their own personal faith. As their horizons thus shrink their faith may become more focused on the personal/private domains. They may still go to church on Sunday and listen to a sermon, but that sermon all too often deals with the narrow area of personal encouragement. One member of the focus group said:

I think Christians receive words like those in the Bible for their own encouragement or to teach them how to live their lives. I think it's the same for Mr. Children fans. I'm not a Christian but maybe in a sense I'm a "Children-ist." . . . Mr. Children's words are my religion, because they really encourage me. They're my Bible.

This fan views Christians as having a folk-religious faith that deals primarily with personal, emotional problems and is disconnected from their bigger story

of the Christian church.

Christians claim they are living in God's missional story, but can forget their position as servants in God's bigger story when the personal dimension of their faith increases disproportionately. They can also become the heroes of their own folk religion, and consider that God's mission is just one more good idea. They see mission not as a downward motion from God to man but as an upward motion, turning "the success of the mission," "personal sanctification", or "trying to look missional" into idols. Their eyes descend from the object of their faith, Christ Himself, onto themselves; this is simply idolotry.

Conclusion

We set out to find keys to evangelising Mr. Children fans, but I believe the priority is for Christians and the Church to keep the focus not on "my story" but "God's story." Mr. Children fans believe in the idea of "new creation", and strive to bring that about. But only God's people, living a Kingdom lifestyle and taking their place in God's story, can demonstrate the reality of new creation. A church that is living out its mission as salt of the earth and light of the world in a Kingdom lifestyle, is the embodiment of the very qualities Mr. Children fans long for. When Christians live like this, Mr. Children fans will be encouraged to see to the real heart of the matter. When the church lives out its calling in the missional Gospel, fans of every false hope might better observe and accept the invitation into God's mission story. **JH**

Rutsu Ikuguchi was born in Himeji. She attended Osaka University of Education before studying at Kansai Seisho Shingaku. She is now an evangelist with the Nihon Jesu Kirisuto Kyodan (JCCJ) at Kobe Central Church. This is a translation of an excerpt of her research project report (translator: Simon Cozens).

1. A. Miyoshi, "Festivals and Sunday Worship", lecture notes, Kansai Seisho Shingaku, Missiology course (no date).

Who are Mr. Children?

It is a Japanese pop rock band formed in 1988. They have sold over 50 million records, making them one of the most successful artists ever in Japan. They have won many awards.

How to Handle Interruptions

For those of us in full-time ministry, or simply for those with busy schedules, interruptions are a reality of life. The demands on our time make interruptions stressful enough but modern technology makes things worse. In the past, the main distraction was the telephone. Now notification alerts come from everywhere: cell phones, computers, iPods etc. This article offers some helpful advice on how to work with these unwelcome intrusions.

Embrace Your Fear

Sarah was often anxious about finishing her work at the mission's office since missionaries who needed help with translation regularly interrupted her job. The fear of not being able to finish caused Sarah to feel resentful. "What if I can't finish this?" caused Sarah to feel tense and annoyed. Instead of reacting negatively, Sarah decided to accept interruptions as part of her everyday life, "embracing her fear".¹ This helped her to be less ruffled when interrupted, and move quickly to take back control of her time.

Delegate And Postpone

Mike found that in spite of having a competent church staff, he was expected to drop his work to answer every needy phone call or walk-in. Instead of getting angry, he applied the "delegate and postponing" technique the next time he was interrupted.² He took a moment to find out if the interruption was an emergency. If it wasn't, he asked if he could postpone what the interruption seemed to demand until he had time to answer, or better yet, he delegated it to his staff. Though initially resistant, his staff actually became good at applying this technique themselves, which helped the atmosphere become less stressful.

Attack Procrastination

Joel was easily distracted by the many less important parts of his ministry, so he was often frazzled by small interruptions during his sermon preparation time. He decided to attack procrastination and his tendency

to get off task.³ He set a timer for 90 minutes, to see how much he could get done in that time. He was pleasantly surprised at how much he could achieve when he focused.

Batch Outputs

As the director of a small but busy campus ministry, John found himself running in so many directions that he rarely got anything done. He found success by batching—grouping similar activities and getting them all done at once.⁴ He was able to get his work done more efficiently by making lists of what he needed to get done, including an accompanying time limit and action steps.

Explain Your Schedule To Others

Allan worked from home. He found his family's demands often kept him from getting his Bible study preparation done. Allan needed to learn to occasionally let them know he would be off-limits for a time, except for emergencies, without feeling guilty. He also needed to learn to set a realistic schedule, and stick to it.⁵

Start With The Main Point

Allison loved working with young people but couldn't keep up with her Japanese study because of their continuous calls and texts. She found one helpful technique to manage these kinds of interruptions was to kindly but firmly ask them to explain the main point of their call or text.⁶ This direct approach gave her the information she needed to make a decision quickly, and get back on task.

In conclusion, Murphy's Law holds true when it comes to getting a task completed, "If anything can go wrong, it will." With this in mind, expecting interruptions, and even planning on them in your daily schedule, will help you stay on course. Remember "divine appointments" are often disguised as interruptions. **JH**



Eileen Nielsen and her husband, Jim, are church planters who have been working in Toboku doing survivor care. They are currently stateside. Eileen has a masters in counseling and is available for Skype counseling. Contact her at eileenpnelsen@gmail.com.

1. Seth Simonds, "9 Ways to Handle Interruptions like a Pro", March 8, 2010, <http://www.lifehack.org/articles/lifehack/9-ways-to-handle-interruptions-like-a-pro.html>
2. Simonds, Ibid
3. Simonds, Ibid
4. Simonds, Ibid
5. Simonds, Ibid
6. Simonds, Ibid

Keep your Audience in Mind

When we talk face-to-face with people we automatically adjust what we say. But we don't always make this adjustment well when we write.

Therefore it is vital to keep your audience in mind. This seems obvious. After all a letter to your sister would be different from a prayer letter to your supporters. But it is surprising how easy this is to forget.

Before you begin writing, ask yourself:

1. Who is my audience?
2. What do they need or want?
3. What do they value?
4. What might they already know about my subject?
5. What is most important to them?
6. What impression do you want to convey to your audience?

Another question I find useful is, "What questions might my audience have?" We sometimes assume the readers know more than they do, especially when we're writing about things we know well. Have someone else read your first draft and you'll probably find out some of the questions your audience will have.

When you write for a magazine or other official publication, you should always check to see if they have Writer's Guidelines. These should tell you who is the standard audience and answer some of the above questions.

I recently received an email about a prospective article for this magazine. In it the author wrote, "What do the Japan Harvest readers want or need?" Before the article was even written, this writer was thinking about his audience. He'd already identified his audience, but he was thinking more deeply than just the "who" (question 1 above). He was asking those essential "what" questions (2-6 above).

Remember your audience whenever and whatever you write.

Key Tips:

- Before you write, think about who your audience will be.
- After you've finished writing, read it aloud, trying to put yourself in your reader's shoes.
- Ask someone else to read your work to give you a reader's perspective. **JH**



Wendy Marshall is the managing editor of Japan Harvest. She's learnt most of what she knows about writing from her international critique group, Truth Talk. She's Australian and works with OMF International.

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Social Structures in Japan

This article is first in a four-part series based on interviews with Japanese unbelievers about Japanese culture.

Family. Coworkers. Neighbors. Strangers. Foreigners. How do Japanese people connect? How does that affect their behavior and even their belief systems?

Case Studies

I asked several Japanese people two basic questions to give me insight into Japanese culture:

1. Tell me about the neighborhood where you grew up.
2. I've heard that in Japan there is a concept of *uchi* (insiders) and *soto* (outsiders). What kind of people are in your *uchi* and *soto* groups?

Mrs. M grew up in a *danchi* (group of apartment buildings) in Tokyo consisting of four 14-story buildings with 31 apartments on each floor. Her mother had only two friends in the entire complex.

Mrs. T grew up in a *tonarigumi* (a group of 10-12 homes in the country in the middle of rice fields) in Kyushu. She remembers neighbors helping each other (but not the people in the next *tonarigumi*).

Mrs. I grew up in the countryside and remembers her neighbors celebrating festivals together and gathering in the community center each month to drink and talk. These neighbors would congratulate Mrs. I and the other children on their various "accomplishments and ceremonies." However, all this was largely motivated by *gimu* (obligation) and once the children grew up and moved away, these relationships ended.

These were the social structures of these women when they were children, but many Japanese people do not continue to live where they grew up. Mrs. M now lives in an apartment complex in Tokyo with her husband and two young sons after two years in the USA. She has no local friends and is very lonely. Hers is not an isolated case.

The most stable social structure for participants in their 40s and 50s was their family—those who share the same residence—whether a nuclear family or an extended family.

Connecting with Japanese people

As Christians we seek to connect with Japanese people and build up the Japanese church. How might Japanese social expectations shape how we do ministry in Japan with those in their 40s and 50s, how we present the gospel, and how we build a local church?

It's also good to be aware of our own social structures. Foreigners might be viewed as friendly and sociable because of our culture. I remember an old gentleman I greeted daily along the river in Niiza as we passed. One day I stopped to chat and he said he really liked Americans because they are open. Our friendliness may be attributed to our nationality rather than to our faith.

There are also pitfalls to avoid. Mr. T, a grad student, said Japanese people have become "materialistic," measuring potential friendships in terms of personal benefit from the relationship. Another woman, Mrs. W, grew up regarding anyone outside of her immediate family as an outsider. This mindset is not uncommon; some people in Japan are wary of strangers seeking friendship.

These perspectives ought to challenge us to explore our motivations and methods for building relationships. Do we just act like the foreign culture in which we grew up? Is our pursuit of relationship only utilitarian—for success stories for our prayer letters? Does our relationship with Jesus impact our social structures? Does or should Christian relationships look different from those of the general culture?

Considering Japanese experiences of social relationships can help us to consider how we pursue relationships in ministry.

Practical ideas:

1. Study what the Bible has to say about social structures.
2. Conduct your own interviews with Japanese people in your community about their past, present, and hoped-for social connections.
3. Evaluate your current evangelistic and discipleship strategies. **JH**



John Edwards (US), with his wife Susan, have been missionaries in Japan since 1993 (with SEND since 2002), working with h.b.a. and with churches in Kanto, Kansai and now in Tohoku. johnjapan@gmail.com

One person confided that Japanese people have become "materialistic", measuring potential friendships in terms of personal benefit from the relationship.

Define How You Work Together

This article is part of a 4-part series, based on the following: Members of a ministry team that functions well (1) share and articulate a common purpose, (2) know how each team member contributes to the purpose, (3) know how they work together, and (4) talk effectively about difficult issues

Tom's team

That was helpful, but something's not right, reflected Tom after he joined the leadership development team. He was thinking about his meeting with Jongwan, the team leader. They'd met to talk about the team's goals, how he could help them pursue those goals, and other team members' responsibilities, prior to Tom's first team meeting.

At his first team meeting, they discussed an upcoming conflict resolution workshop that they were leading in Nagoya. Jongwan noted that workshop would be a challenge for the team, as it involved several "firsts"—first time they'd led conflict resolution training, first time to use Peacemaker Ministries' material, and first time to do a workshop in Nagoya. He also noted that everyone needed to be clear on his or her responsibilities. Tom was assigned responsibility for all the travel arrangements for the team.

Tom was puzzled that travel arrangements were his only responsibility, but since he was new, he thought it best not to question this. He quickly arranged their travel, and everything worked out well.

After the workshop, the team had a debriefing session. Everyone else seemed pleased with how the workshop had gone, though it had taken a lot of effort. As he listened to others, however, Tom again thought, *something doesn't feel right*. Then Jongwan said something that caught Tom's attention. He said that he was pleased how the team members had helped each other finish their tasks. Tom thought, *I wish I had known I was expected to help others*.

Stacy's team

Something doesn't feel right. They're not accepting my offers of help, thought Stacy. She wanted to help the youth ministry team serve effectively so was glad her team leader, Bill, had talked with her about their goals and tasks. "We're counting on you to help us design promotional materials," said Bill.

So, Stacy focused on promotional materials. As she gained experience, she found that

she sometimes had extra time available. On Monday, she had 15 minutes, so she asked Rob if she could help him with anything; Rob declined. On Thursday, she had 30 minutes, noticed that Carla was busy, and offered to help with photocopying; Carla said she was fine. And on the following Tuesday, she again had 15 minutes, so she asked Rob once more if she could help him; Rob said he didn't need any help.

Finally Stacy consulted her team leader about her interactions with others. "I'm glad you're getting your own work done and want to help others," Bill commented. "I can see why you are a little puzzled. However, in this team we expect each person to get the job done, mostly on his or her own. We're pretty independent. Seems to work. Does this help?"

The point?

How team members interact with each other naturally varies based on personalities and past history of the team. Members of Tom's leadership development team were expected to help each other, functioning much like a basketball team working together to score points for the team. However, members of Stacy's youth ministry team were expected to carry out assigned tasks individually, functioning more like a track and field team. In this case members compete in separate events, during which they can receive no assistance, in order to score points for the team.

Bottom line?

To help your ministry team function well, define how team members work together.

What about you?

1. What's one ministry team you are on?
2. What's satisfying/unsatisfying about how team members work together?
3. How clear are team members about how they work together?
4. What would help team members work together even more effectively?
5. What will you do? **JH**



Michael B. Essenburg (US; Christian Reformed Japan Mission) serves as a coach, consultant, and trainer at Christian Academy in Japan. Time permitting, Michael works with missions.

Mobile WiFi

One consequence of the 3/11 earthquake and tsunami is that so many of us now commonly travel to Tohoku for ministry. It is great to be used by the Lord there, to encourage people and to help them rebuild their lives. But one difficulty we may find as we travel is maintaining full digital communication. Yes, we have our cell phones, or even smart phones that allow us to communicate through cellular phone networks. But to connect to a more functional WiFi hot spot can be difficult. This article explores two effective ways of connecting fully while traveling to Tohoku or anywhere else.

Mobile WiFi Devices

All major Japanese cell phone providers, Softbank, au-KDDI, and NTT- Docomo, can provide you with a pocket WiFi device, essentially a cell phone dedicated to providing its own WiFi hotspot. Turn on the WiFi device and then through it connect your laptop or up to five separate devices to the Internet. Alternatively, consider a device that plugs into a computer's USB port to connect that computer

to the Internet through the cellular network. As with any phone or cellular device make sure that you understand the terms and conditions of the plan as costs will apply accordingly. Here are three website addresses you may consider, depending on services you already have.

<http://mb.softbank.jp/en/products/data_com/>

<<http://www.au.kddi.com/english/mobile/product/data/>>

<<http://www.nttdocomo.co.jp/english/product/relate/index.html>>

Smartphone Tethering

A different means of connecting your laptop to a WiFi network utilizes your smartphone. Both the Apple iPhone and the Samsung Galaxy can be set up this way in a process referred to as tethering. Remember that with tethering you will still be using your smartphone's data plan. So minutes and bandwidth used will be charged to your data plan. Here are two online helps if you want to consider this option.

Costello, Sam. What is iPhone Tethering? <<http://ipod.about.com/od/iphonesoftwareterms/g/iphone-tethering-definition.htm>> "How To" Tethering—Samsung Galaxy S3. <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CNoO2JDeYp8>>.

Remember that although these mobile WiFi devices are convenient they probably should not replace your home DSL- or cable-based Internet connection. You will always get better service and speed using your home service. However, when you are in a situation where you cannot access your regular Internet provider using one of these mobile WiFi devices is a good alternative. **JH**

Dan Rudd (TEAM), a technology coordinator at Christian Academy in Japan, came from the US with his family in 1988 to work with missionary kids.

Remember that although these mobile WiFi devices are convenient they probably should not replace your home DSL- or cable-based Internet connection.

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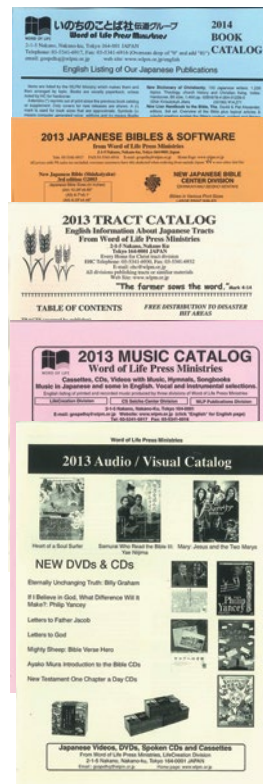
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Sick and Frustrated

We were prepared for many cultural differences when we moved to Japan. Our attitude was to be flexible and we were to remember that even if things are different that doesn't mean they were wrong. But even with this positive outlook, there were still surprises. One of the biggest and unexpected challenges was dealing with illness.

We arrived in Japan in late October. The weather was slowly getting colder. Our adult southern Californian bodies were not ready for it, but our daughters had an even harder time adjusting to the cold. It left them more susceptible to illnesses. By January Ryli, then one and a half years old, had bronchitis and Abbi, almost four years old, had a respiratory infection too.

Because the girls were so sick we were at the doctors more than anticipated. This brought many unexpected challenges. The most obvious challenge was the language barrier. The thought of navigating through the paperwork, doctor's visit, and pharmacy seemed nearly impossible. We're thankful for God's provision of a church who provided helpers to take us to all of our appointments.

One particularly bad week we were at the hospital three times, and these were scheduled doctor's visits. An unexpected frustration was the difference in healthcare style. In America I was used to taking my daughters to the doctor, and getting antibiotics for 10-14 days. When we got our first prescription in Japan it was for two days. We had to come back to see the doctor for more a couple of days later. I remember thinking, "My girls are so sick, surely two days of medicine won't be enough. They don't want to come back to the hospital and neither do I!"

After one of the doctor's visits our pastor's wife empathized with my predicament. I told her about how I was used to getting a prescription that lasted longer, and gently asked why it is

different here. She helped me by explaining the Japanese philosophy towards medicine.

I've reflected on why all this illness seemed so frustrating to me, and why I still sighed every time I know we have to go to the doctor. I'm left with the question, "Do I trust God to care for me and guide me through the unknown, or am I still trying to rely on myself?"

Living life in a foreign land is challenging at times, but God has used those frustrations to expose what is happening on a much deeper level in my heart. I continue to pray that God would keep showing me the heart issues behind my frustrations.

I'm left with the question, "Do I trust God to care for me and guide me through the unknown, or am I still trying to rely on myself?"

We have now been in Japan just over a year. There have been many appointments since then for us, our daughters, and our third child who is due next month. In each circumstance I can look back and see God's provision, but I still find going to the doctors challenging and even frustrating at times.

As I write this, I am sitting, once again, in an emergency waiting room for my husband, Daniel. Thankfully, it doesn't seem too serious. Thankfully too, we were able to come to the hospital by ourselves today, with a friend on standby if we needed to call for help with translation. A friend is watching our girls for us. This is all welcome evidence of God's care for us. **JH**

Casi Brown is an Asian Access Missional Partner Associate, serving with Rifu Christ Church Oasis Chapel near Sendai. She and her family are from the United States.

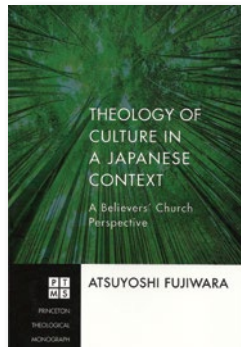
Theology of Culture in a Japanese Context

A Believers' Church Perspective

Atsuyoshi Fujiwara, professor of theology at Seigakuin University and founding pastor of Covenant of Grace Church in Tokyo, looks at the relationship of Christ and the church to culture in this excellent work, part of the Princeton Theological Monograph Series. The book originates as Fujiwara's PhD dissertation at University of Durham, England. This makes the first two chapters somewhat difficult to work through as he lays his theoretical framework, examining both Niebuhr's transformation approach and Yoder and Hauerwas' Anabaptist or believers' church approach.

But every *Japan Harvest* reader should study the final three chapters where Fujiwara gives an excellent overview of Christianity in Japan. Chapter 3 looks at 16th and 17th century Catholicism and has some moving accounts of what the early missionaries and believers suffered. From the 1612 edict until the lifting of the ban in 1873, "Christians in Japan lived under constant threat of martyrdom" p. 169. Japanese Christians learned that suffering was part of being a Christian. Fujiwara writes passionately and prophetically: "If we seek to avoid suffering, we move toward painless, elegant, and abstract cultural Christianity without concrete repentance and without concrete affirmation of the Lordship of Christ in our lives" p. 185. The author shows how Christian charities attracted many people to Christianity and served as entrance points toward Japanese inquirers becoming Christians p. 187. In contrast to these early Christians, "Protestant Christians seemed to come to the church when Christianity fit with the times and to serve their purposes; they left the church without a sense of guilt when being a Christian was no longer convenient for them" p. 206. He wonders how many Japanese Christians today have as clear a Christian identity as the early Kirishitans (16th and 17th century Catholic Christians).

In chapter 4 Fujiwara looks at the period from 1859 to 1945 when the Protestants became most



dominant. He asks why Christianity in this period failed to penetrate the soul of the Japanese Christian and argues, "Japan has failed to produce . . . a believers' church, and suggest[s] that because of this the church has compromised with Japanese culture and consequently has had little impact on it" p. 209. Church growth seemed largely dependent on Japanese acceptance of Western culture. "Unlike Kirishitan Christianity which accepted suffering for Christ as part of Christian identity and was rooted in community of faith, in the 1930s and 1940s, survival became the churches' supreme goal. Christianity in this period had acquired a more theologically abstract mindset and a more accommodating attitude to Japanese culture, in addition to be less demanding about the unchanging truth" p. 242.

The final chapter looks at Christianity in Japan after the war (1945 to 1985) and discusses the perspectives of major Japanese theologians on the church's relationship to the world. He gives special attention to Kazoh Kitamori, and to two of his own senior colleagues at Seigakuin: Yasuo Furuya, and Hideo Ohki. In this chapter Fujiwara argues that although Japanese Christians have overcome the compromise of the pre-war period, they have "still sought to establish for the church a major status at the center of society. Such Christianity, what I have called 'magisterial Christianity,' confuses church and society and fails to offer alternative models to society" p. 274. He says this elitist Christianity has often failed to practice evangelism and mentions Furuya's criticism of "Japanese Christians' tendency to value 'quality over quantity.' 'Quality' means elite Christians with academic theology and high social status" p. 308. To the contrary, Fujiwara is looking for a church that will critique Japan's religious culture.

While not easy reading, the book will richly repay all who read it. The 21-page bibliography shows Fujiwara's wide and deep reading in both English and Japanese sources.

Japan Harvest readers should also note Seigakuin's monograph series, *A Theology of Japan*, which attempts to theologically critique problems that Japan faces. Fujiwara is on the editorial board and a contributor to the most recent monograph, *Post-disaster Theology from Japan* (2013, vol. 6). **JH**

Reviewed by Don Schaeffer



The reviewer rates this book 4 out of 5 stars

Call on the Name of the Lord

Most believers have a “Quiet Time,” sitting quietly before the Lord, reading our Bibles, and praying. At such times we usually study His Word to discern the will of God and share our requests with the Lord. Making this a habit in our daily lives is wonderful, even essential to spiritual growth (2 Tim. 3:16-17). But by making it our habit we risk it becoming an empty ritual, our eyes just following the letters along the page of the Bible and being preoccupied with just going through lists of requests in our prayers. And beyond that, often we get so busy in the rest of our lives that we don’t feel we can even spare the time for a “Quiet Time.” So we end up with our thoughts not really turning to God all that much.

We must understand that the essence of devotional time is fellowship with God Himself, welcoming the Lord into our daily lives. And that can be done in an instant. We don’t always have to have a formal time when we are quiet. We don’t even have to say any set prayers. At any time, in any place, we can call on the name of the Lord just by saying something as simple as, “Oh Lord!”

When Mary Magdalene heard the Risen Lord say, “Mary!” all she said in reply was, “Rabboni!” (which means, Teacher)” (John 20:16, NASB). But in that circumstance her very short exclamation was a fine and proper prayer. She couldn’t say anything more, nor did she need to.

Or take the example of Nehemiah. When King Artaxerxes asked him why he was sad and what he wanted, the Bible says that he

“prayed to the God of heaven” (Nehemiah 2:4). The king was waiting for an answer. Nehemiah did not have time to go into his private room, get down on his knees and beg God to show him His will. But he still prayed. And God marvelously answered his prayer!

As for myself, there have been times when I have come home totally tired out from trying to meet the needs of various people, especially on Sundays. I also might be discouraged because I worried that I said more than I should have or perhaps didn’t say the right thing. At times like that, I don’t have the energy or motivation to think about what I’m saying, whether in prayer or not. So I just flop on my bed and cry out, “Oh Lord!” But then I experience the Lord ministering to me as I ‘sit in His presence.’ He has heard me!

A simple and heartfelt “Oh Lord!” may be the shortest way to pray, to call on the name of the Lord. But that is also true fellowship with our Father. His desire is always to be with us and for us to be with Him (John 14:3). May that be our desire too.

Oh Lord, without my even realizing it, I’ve made prayer and Bible reading a thoughtless ritual and an obligation. You are always waiting to have fellowship with me. May I always remember. Thank You for being there—for me. JH



Ken Reddington and his wife, Toshiko, are church-planting missionaries in Kochi-ken. Ken is an MK who returned to Japan as a missionary from the US more than 35 years ago.

“Prayer is not overcoming God’s reluctance, but laying hold of His willingness.”

Martin Luther

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