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Japan Harvest
Spring 2015



Home Assignment

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Encouraging, inspiring, and equipping the members of the JEMA community

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

About the Cover

If you're a missionary you probably know the feeling: pull out the 'big' suitcase, rub off the odd spot of mold, pull off the old labels and stickers you were too exhausted to remove last time, and sigh. Where to start?! The simple sight of one suitcase can carry so many mixed feelings!

Cover photo by Greg Corey



JEMA Datebook

Event	Date	Place
WIM Fall Day of Prayer Plus	October 1, 2015	Rose Town, Okutama
Prayer Walk in the Diet Building	October 5, 2015	The Diet Building, Tokyo
LT Meeting	October 20, 2015	TBA

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

Preparing for Home Assignment

“Home assignment,” “home service,” “furlough,” or some other name: for most missionaries, periodic visits to their support base for face-to-face contact are a reality of life. Do we approach this portion of our missionary ministry with anticipation or dread?

Reducing emotional baggage

With good preparation, periodic returns to our support base can be an expansion of our ministry on the field. But before we go, we shouldn't neglect any unfinished business. In this issue, Dallman's RAFT article provides a way to discover relational areas that may need attention. Reviewing relationships with others on the field and having a process to address any issues discovered can reduce or eliminate unrecognized tension that may sabotage the positive benefits of a temporary ministry venue change. Taylor's article helps us reflect on inner struggles that we may have avoided and gives hints for resolution.

Having a good attitude

In addition to planning a healthy departure, we need to prepare our hearts for reentry into our passport culture. It may be important to devote some attention to reminding ourselves of the unique opportunities of spending periodic time in our passport cultures so that we don't view our time away from the field as a “ministry interruption.” Marshall's article on long vs. short home assignments can help us recognize the advantages of a particular type of home assignment in order to maximize the opportunities it offers.

Maximizing opportunities

There are at least four unique opportunities more effectively accomplished while in our passport cultures: recruitment, reconnection, reporting, and renewal.

Recruitment

There is no substitute for face-to-face contact with potential future missionaries. Does your mission organization have resources to help with recruitment? Make sure you take advantage of the tools they offer, and if they don't have materials, prepare your own. At a minimum, be sure you have a simple, clear statement ready regarding the need for more missionaries and how they can serve.

Reconnection

The longer we've been on the field, the less we know about the lives of most of our supporters. If we've been faithful in our communications, they probably know us far better than we know them. By focusing on asking questions and really getting to know what our friends have been going through, we can enjoy renewed relationships.

Yes, we have much we would like to share, but if we can save our deepest experiences for the select few who really understand our multi-cultural life, we can avoid unnecessary frustration. Many people are supportive, but even so, 30 seconds about our ministry may be the limit of what they can hear and process in one sitting.

Reporting

Depending upon your support base and the requirements of your mission organization (if you are a member of one), ministry reporting will take different forms. But it's a great privilege to share what God is doing when time and place are right. Whether given a five-minute slot during a morning service, twenty minutes in a Bible study, or forty-five minutes with a Sunday School class, share both victories and disappointments without apology.

Renewal

After several months—or perhaps weeks—of visits, we may feel the need to get back to Japan for renewal. However, if we deliberately schedule time at periodic intervals for renewal opportunities in our passport countries, we can find rest even during this time. **JH**

Yours for the Harvest,




Gary Bauman (Asian Access) has led the Japan Harvest staff since September 2005. He enjoys the Conductor's smile when he improvises on his alto and soprano saxophones in a worship band.

SPEND YOURSELF



CHURCH
OF GOD
ANDERSON, INDIANA



EVANGELISK
ORIENTMISJON



JEMS

Jesus to every Japanese, Jesus every day



GLOBAL
PARTNERS



Suomen Evankelisluterilainen
Kansanlähetys

Member
MISSIONS

SPEND YOURSELF

The Assemblies of God work in Japan actually started before the Assemblies of God came into existence! During the Azusa street revival in Los Angeles, which began in 1906 and eventually birthed the Assemblies of God, a German immigrant named Carl Juergensen felt a strong missions call to Japan. Carl was shocked when he sensed God leading him to Japan. He had planned to return to his native Germany to do mission work. "I am 50 years old," he told the Lord. "How can I learn Japanese and be used of God to reach Japanese people?" But the call was clear. In 1913, Carl traveled to Japan with his wife and three children. Although Carl never learned the Japanese language well, his children, especially Marie, quickly became fluent and interpreted for their father as he preached the gospel on the streets.

Carl joined the (U.S.) Assemblies of God after it was formed in 1914. In 1920, an Assemblies of God District of Japan was formed under the direction of missionaries. After World War II, the Japan Assemblies of God was formed in 1949 as a self-governing body.

The Assemblies of God Missionary Fellowship (AGMF) in Japan is part of the Assemblies of God World Missions (AGWM), which in turn is part of the U.S. General Council of the Assemblies of God. Currently there are 23 missionary units in Japan, with an additional four units in the U.S. on deputation or home assignment.

AGMF missionary units are spread across Japan from Tohoku in the north to Okinawa in the south. In previous years, there was also a missionary presence in Hokkaido until self-sustaining churches were established.

The Assemblies of God believes in the leading of the Holy Spirit for direction for ministry and the power of the Holy Spirit to accomplish ministry. In keeping with this emphasis, the AGWM allows their missionaries to follow the direction they feel individually led towards for the location

and type of ministry they will be involved in.

As a result, AGMF missionaries are involved in diversified ministries in Japan, including church planting, campus outreach, outreach literature ministry, Bible school teaching, and pastoring international churches. Some churches emphasize reaching out to all international people in a community, as well as to Japanese; and some, located near U.S. military bases, reach out to U.S. military personnel, as well as to the international community and Japanese people.

A strategic thrust of the Asia Pacific Region of AGWM (AP Region) is Spend Yourself. Spending ourselves, our time, energy, and finances to reach the unreached people groups across the Asia Pacific region is the commitment behind this major effort. Unreached people groups include remote ethnic peoples and victims of human trafficking. The entire nation of Japan, being less than 1% Christian, can be considered an unreached people group.

A strong emphasis in AGWM worldwide is the establishment of a strong national church. In keeping with this, the Japan Assemblies of God (JAG) was established in 1949. This group has national leadership; it is self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating. The AGMF works alongside the JAG in a cooperative and supportive role.

An important emphasis in keeping with developing a strong national church is developing Bible schools, to train national pastors and leaders. Because of this, Central Bible College (CBC), in Komagome, Tokyo, was established in 1950 to train young Japanese men and women called into the ministry. Since its inception, six hundred and forty students have graduated with plans to enter the ministry.

The AGMF has informal fellowship with missionaries from other national Assembly of God General Councils, such as Peru, Brazil, Great Britain, Australia, and Singapore. All missionaries from other national General Councils relate directly to the Japan Assemblies of God. **JH**



AGMF
(Assemblies of God Missionary Fellowship)



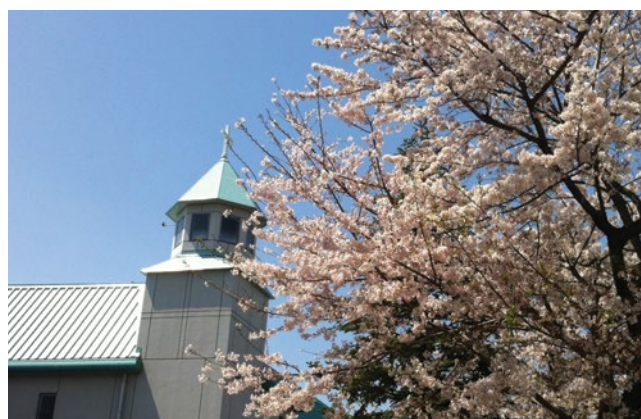
The Church of God Mission

The Church of God Mission in Japan is comprised of career missionaries and special assignment missionaries commissioned by Church of God Ministries whose headquarters are in Anderson, Indiana USA. “The Church of God began in 1881 as a movement emphasizing unity and holiness. Early leaders sought to forsake denominational hierarchies and formal creeds, trusting solely in the Holy Spirit as their overseer, and in the Bible as their statement of belief. These individuals saw themselves at the forefront of a movement to restore unity and holiness to God’s church. Their aim was not to establish another denomination but to promote primary allegiance to Jesus Christ and transcend denominational loyalties”.¹

Work of the Church of God in Japan was begun in 1908 by A.U. Yajima, a Japanese pastor who had traveled to the US for health reasons and found the church’s newspaper left on a train. Identifying with the emphasis on holiness and unity, Yajima contacted the church and soon returned to Japan with the vision of God’s people serving as one beyond the man-made barriers of sects and creeds. One year later in 1909, Yajima asked the church in America to send missionaries to help in the work. From the beginning, the work of the Church of God Mission in Japan has always been in direct cooperation with and at the request of the Japanese national church.

Presently, mission staff includes one career missionary and 6 special assignment missionaries. All are involved in educational ministries and all serve in local Japanese Church of God congregations. Career missionaries have been involved in congregational leadership and pastoring. Tamagawa Seigakuin Girls’ Junior and Senior High School in Tokyo is an important work of the church in Japan. There are 16 congregations of the Church of God in Japan from Okinawa to Hokkaido, along with two other congregations associated historically and currently in direct cooperation with the national church. Reverend Satoru Kanemoto is the elected chairman of the Japanese Church of God. **JH**

¹ <http://www.jesusisthesubject.org/our-history/>



More information about the church’s mission work can be found at:
<http://www.chogmissions.org/>

The Japanese Church of God website is:
<http://xn--u9j463geip7pa94cc38by5dpv1d.com/>



Roots and history

Evangelical Orient Mission started under the name “The Norwegian China Mission” as a result of a visit to Norway in 1889 by Hudson Taylor, founder of China Inland Mission (CIM). After CIM missionaries were expelled from China in 1950, our mission became independent from CIM and emerged as “Evangelical Orient Mission” on the Eastern Coast of Japan.

Thirty-six missionaries, including short-termers, have been sent to northern Ibaraki Ken, Fukushima Ken, Miyako, Iwate Ken, and Tokorozawa Shi since 1951. Thirteen churches have been planted and handed over to Japanese pastors. Most of them have joined *Doumei Kiristo Kyoudan*, Japan Evangelical Alliance. Radio-work and a Christian Bookstore started at an early stage; later Iwaki City became the base of youth and children ministries through English Classes, camps and cafes.

Since 2009 we, Akira and Anniken Mori, are the only two EOM-missionaries left in Japan. Besides pastoring the independent Taira Christ Evangelical Church (“Global Mission Chapel”) in Iwaki and local work with English classes, art exhibitions and work for handicapped people, God has led especially Akira to work more and more internationally as a bridge between Japan and God’s servants from abroad. He has also been engaged throughout Japan to serve in “Prayer Summits” and the Church Planting Institute (CPI).

We are thankful to EOM for the freedom it has given us to minister wherever God leads us. Our Mission is engaged in many projects in China, North Korea and India with the motto of reaching the weakest and least reached.

Since the tsunami in 2011, our work has changed. In spite of being so close to the devastated reactors, Iwaki City, where we live, has fairly low radiation. We have around 30,000 refugees from the high-radiation areas, and 6000 of them still live in temporary housing.

One week before the disaster we had just finalized the purchase of a 3-story former pachinko parlor. Suddenly we found ourselves able to store and distribute a steady flow of supplies from our friends around Japan, and host an increasing number of volunteers from 40 countries.

In 2012 the NPO “Global Mission Japan” was established to help and encourage people affected by the disaster. We currently have six fulltime workers taking care of volunteers and visitors, serving the needs of the community, and refugees. Our “Cross Cafe” is open throughout the week.

Our church has 55 members. Our motto is to rejoice in the Lord and praise Him, to know the Lord and make Him known. The latest method of outreach has been Alpha-dinner meetings in our chapel. The course has finished, but now we have dinner follow-up meetings with seekers, before we start a new course.

We sense there is a new opening towards the Gospel in our area. Walls that were too high between the church and the world outside, have been torn down as have walls between different churches. We pray for His visitation and transformation among us to bring His life to so many in darkness and hopelessness. **JH**

More about our work:
<http://www.globalmissionchapel.com>



FLM
(The Finnish Lutheran Mission)

The Finnish Lutheran Mission (FLM)¹ is one of the official organizations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland (ELCF) channeling international work. FLM was founded in 1967 in response to a strong revival movement among young people in Finland.

One of the main ideas of the revival was a strong desire to share the Gospel where Christ is not yet known. Therefore, in 1968, one year after establishment, our first missionaries went to Ethiopia and Japan. In recent years, FLM has had about 80 missionaries in 13 different countries.

Today Japan is one of the FLM's priority regions for mission work. In Japan FLM cooperates with West Japan Evangelical Church (WJELC) in Kansai and Shikoku. We currently have 13 long-term missionaries and 2 short-term (1-2 years) missionaries aged between 27 and 70. Four of the long-term missionaries are former missionary kids, who were raised in Japan.

Within WJELC, we are responsible for three churches, in Nishinomiya, Kobe and Awaji Island. In addition, we support the Lutheran Hour broadcasts and provide workers for the Kobe Lutheran Bible Institute. Next year we will also become one of the organizations running the Kobe Lutheran Theological Seminary.

Our vision

Our vision is "to be a dynamic Lutheran movement which offers Christian fellowship, known for its strong emphasis on Bible teaching and sharing the Good News where Christ is not yet known". The foundation of our work is reliance on God's word. We aim to work in an unprejudiced way and in a spirit of cooperation. We do this because we believe that salvation is found in no one else (but Jesus), for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12).

In the future, FLM wants to continue to support the local church (WJELC) in reaching out to Japanese people. FLM still sees a need for long-term missionaries in Japan. Instead of simply sending money, we want to keep sending new missionaries to Japan. We also think that to survive in Japan, the Church needs to reach out to new generations. So we emphasize work among young people.

One of our challenges is the fact that international schools tend to be located in big cities. Although we would like to focus our work on rural areas, missionary families with school children prefer to live in big cities so their children can attend international school. This is something we have to take into consideration more in the future with our partner church WJELC.

We also want to be open to new approaches of doing mission work. Thus, we'll continue to review how we work, to plan new strategies and search new opportunities with our main partner WJELC. Through continual strategic work, we believe that we can make the best use of our resources in order to do the mission work in this beautiful - but in many ways unreached - country of Japan. **JH**

¹ <https://www.sekl.fi>





Global Partners is all about “amplifying local church mission for global transformation.” As the international missions department of The Wesleyan Church of North America, we minister in more than 80 nations, focusing on unreached people groups, assisting existing international churches to strengthen ministry capacity, and helping North American churches know the joy of global ministry.

Global Partners, formerly known as Wesleyan World Missions, first sent missionaries to Japan in 1919. In 1952, a partnership began with the newly formed Japanese holiness denomination, Immanuel General Mission.

Today, Global Partners continues to work alongside the Immanuel General Mission, as well World Gospel Mission, an interdenominational missions agency. This three-way partnership is known as the Immanuel Wesleyan Federation, and is a positive example of western missionaries and national churches working together to spread the gospel in Japan. It has also opened up the opportunity for Japanese missionaries to work in Wesleyan and WGM mission fields in other parts of the world, including Bolivia, Cambodia, Jamaica, Kenya, the Philippines and Zambia, strengthening the work of all three organizations throughout the world.

Global Partners currently has a small but active ministry in Japan. We work to encourage and help build the local church by building spiritual bridges within communities.

GP missionary Andrea Swarthout’s ministry is centered in Kyoto. She helps in a local church, teaches cooking classes, hosts special events in her home, and leads English worship services and Bible studies. She also guest-preaches at Immanuel churches throughout Japan, and has taught at the Immanuel Bible Training College in Yokohama.

Meanwhile, Robin White is our missionary in Nagoya, where he leads a growing English ministry. Through weekly English classes, monthly English conversation cafes, and special events, over 40 non-Christian students, as well as their families, are now connected with Nagoya Immanuel Church and are getting the opportunity to hear about Jesus. Several students have begun studying the Bible as well, and there is a sense of growing interest and openness. In addition to this English ministry, Robin is also involved in music, preaching and youth ministry. His long-term vision is to minister through the creative arts, especially comics/manga.

Global Partners is thankful for the partnerships and ministries God has given in Japan over the years, and we continue to pray that God will expand our team and our vision in the years to come. **JH**





JEMS
 (The Japan Evangelical Missionary Society)

The Japanese Evangelical Missionary Society (JEMS) is an organization committed to sharing Jesus with the Japanese in Japan. We also seek to reach Japanese people in other countries such as Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and the United States. Another commitment we have is to help Christ followers in the United States to deepen in their relationship with God. We seek to do so by reaching out to college campuses through Asian American Christian Fellowship (AACF) “retreat-type” experiences like Mount Hermon, and concerts/sporting events geared toward evangelism.

Based upon these two commitments, JEMS has a simple vision statement: Jesus to every Japanese, Jesus every day. Our international ministries, where we seek to share Jesus to the Japanese wherever they might be, are described in the first part of the vision statement. Our domestic ministries are captured in the second part of our vision statement where we provide various ministry opportunities so that Jesus might become an everyday part of a person’s life.

We began back in 1950, when a group of Nisei (second generation Japanese-Americans) pastors and lay leaders gathered at a conference center called Mount Hermon. After an extended time of prayer, God called the group to create JEMS. Since our incorporation in 1951, we have had many ties to Japan through anointed pastors such as Rev. Paul Ariga, Rev. Akira Hatori, Rev. Koji Honda, Rev. Yoshihiro Kishi, Rev. Nobumichi Murakami and others. JEMS continues to send support to many of these pastors due to their influence on the Japanese living in the US. We started sending missionaries to Japan and South America from the 1970’s. Currently we have 11 missionary family units as far south as Amakusa and as far north as Morioka.



Historically, we have always partnered with a Japanese church by providing an English teacher as a means of outreach. However, recently, many of the younger missionaries joining JEMS have a heart for church planting. JEMS also sends summer mission teams to Japan. Some are specialized like our hula or Black Gospel teams. Others include volunteers who help in Tohoku. Through our summer mission program, we seek to introduce churches in the US to ministries in Japan with the hope that a long-term relationship might blossom.

As far as what the future holds for JEMS, we want to send as many missionaries to Japan as possible. In the near future, our desire is to gather all the JEMS missionaries to meet and discuss what God is doing in and through their ministries. Then we will see what God is putting together in terms of a “plan” for Japan as it relates to JEMS. We are grateful for the various working partnerships we have with JEMA, CRASH, JCFN, Genesis College and various other Japanese churches. To find out more about us, please visit www.jems.org. **JH**



WEC Japan is a fun bunch of 40 missionaries from 10 countries and different denominations. We are here 'to see vibrant, indigenous and reproducing churches flourishing in Japan, transforming its society and mobilising for missions'.

We are based in Shiga-ken but our workers normally start in Kyoto for language study and then spread out to neighbouring prefectures.

WEC (Worldwide Evangelisation for Christ) was formed in 1913 by C T Studd, a Brit. God turned one man's crazy adventure into a movement that has since touched millions of lives in unreached countries. Our international slogan is 'Reaching People, Planting Churches, Mobilising Missions'.

Our first missionaries came to Japan in 1950. The team and churches grew rapidly in the early years. Japanese pastors were trained up. The churches later became known as the '*Sekai Fukuin Dendou Kai*' ('SFDK'), and WEC came to operate separately, but in close partnership. These days at the SFDK's annual '*sekai*', there are about 400 people. The biggest church has a congregation of about 100, the smallest about five. However, with many of the original pastors and just a handful of new young ones, there is a leadership challenge. As missionaries, we often talk about how to support existing churches while also growing pioneering work. Currently our workers are either: new workers, who spend up to two years in language study and then one year in a church placement; pioneer church planters, who work in multicultural teams to evangelise and set up new church plants of either traditional style or recently organic style; or pastoring churches or assisting Japanese pastors. We also have one worker seconded to KGK (*Kiristoshya Gakusei Kai*) and one to minister to tsunami survivors in Tohoku.

We have recently spent time praying and waiting on God for how to bless and grow the church. The following strategy was agreed in January 2015:

1. Pioneering: Planting Churches

To plant reproducing churches that prioritise discipleship, in strategic and under-churched areas.

2. Training: Leadership Development

To raise up potential leaders and develop Japanese church leadership.

To train and equip Christians to minister and to be an influence in their community, work place and church.

3. Mobilisation

To promote world mission vision in churches.

To recruit workers for Japan and overseas.

To provide opportunities for ministry overseas and for missions training inside and outside Japan.

<http://www.wec-japan.org>

4. Partnership

To partner and network with mainly SFDK and other like-minded churches and organisations in church planting and in sending workers to develop and support churches and ministries, in line with the field vision.

At our annual field conference in May 2015 we will move onto discussing exactly how to do this, through goal setting (we have not yet got it all 'sorted!').

We have recently decided our values in the ministries.

1. Prayer

Prayer is our priority and the basis of every WEC activity.

2. Team-based Ministry

We aim to function in teams; multi-cultural teams whenever possible.

3. Effective Ministry

We aim to carry out effective ministries through:

Working strategically

Sufficient research and prayer

Persistent and committed ministry

Appropriate evaluation

Wise utilisation of resources

4. Member Care and Personal Development

We aim to provide training, support and accountability for missionaries so that they can fulfil their calling.

We recognise each individual's own responsibility for self-care and personal development.

We joined JEMA about ten years ago and value the training and networking opportunities. **JH**

WEC
(Worldwide Evangelism for Christ)



LOOKING BACK BEFORE MOVING AHEAD



Sometimes we don't realize the emotions bottled up inside us during our time on the mission field. Difficult cultural transitions and language barriers can force us to step out of our comfort zone, and we attempt to engage in ministry while still burdened by unresolved grief and unacknowledged pain.

I initially began to understand this as thirteen-year-old missionary kid, sitting across from my mom at a coffee shop. We had just returned to America from Hiroshima, Japan for our second home assignment. What began as a brief conversation about our experiences in Japan had quickly turned into a two-hour long, eye-opening discovery. As we began to process our previous term overseas, my responses to prior circumstances revealed a heart brimming with anger, shame, fear, and bitterness. Eyes wide, I stared at my mom, dumbfounded. I didn't realize the extent of the emotions I had carefully hidden in my heart while living overseas.

My journey of discovering and processing these emotions was painfully vulnerable. During the following months of my family's home assignment, I began to list every emotion I had felt during the past four years in Japan. I finally acknowledged my fear and anger at God and began to write letters to Him about my experiences overseas. I now realize that this process has a specific term: a 'personal debrief.'

As missionaries, reflecting and processing each term overseas is vital to our success on the mission field. George Murray, former president of TEAM, says, "The greatest issue facing missions today is missionary retention - not recruitment." Instead of stuffing our emotions deep inside or ignoring them as Idid, we must dig down, acknowledge what we're feeling, and allow God to heal our hearts in order to truly thrive on the mission field.

Organizations that offer Personal Debriefing for Missionaries

As more mission organizations recognize the need for personal debriefing, various debriefing programs are now available to missionaries on home assignment:

www.mti.org A week long debriefing program for missionaries entitled "DAR"

<http://bluerockbnb.com/healing/debriefing.html>
A five day debriefing process at Blue Rock Bed and Breakfast

www.missionary-care.org/ Skype or face-to-face missionary debriefing sessions

www.pottersinn.com/ Varied length retreats for pastors and missionaries

www.alongsidecares.net/ Two to three week retreat for pastors and missionaries

Where to Start

John Certalic, president of the organization Caring for Others, describes debriefing as “examining the recent past and what I’ve been through, and the impact it’s had on my relationships, all for the purpose of planning for the future and what God may have in store for me in the next chapter of my life.”

Debriefing starts with finding someone you can trust. My mom became this person for me during my personal debrief three years ago. She wasn’t afraid to be ‘brutally honest’ with me. She didn’t judge, and she chose to accept me and my mistakes.

“Debriefing is a bit like ballroom dancing,” Certalic says. As the missionary leads, the debriefer follows, allowing the missionary to go where they want. Acting like a guide, the debriefer then asks follow-up questions to “dig a little deeper to draw the missionary out.”

Why It Matters

Although there are many reasons why every missionary should consider a time of reflection on each term overseas, these top three reasons highlight the importance of debriefing during home assignment:

Debriefing allows time for our ‘souls to catch up with our bodies’.

This concept is taken from an African story written by Lettie Cowman. The story describes a group of workers who refused to continue their labor after being pushed beyond their limit the day before. They claimed that they needed time to allow their ‘souls to catch up with their bodies.’

Many missionaries are so caught up in the busyness of their ministry that they never take time to reflect on ‘why they are doing what they are doing.’ They rarely stop to re-examine their own personal relationship with God. Debriefing during home assignment allows for the rest and space to process our ministry and re-align our motives.

Debriefing forces us to talk about the hard stuff so that we can trust God more, not less.

Debriefing is never easy. It is a specific time to reflect on painful experiences. Debriefing exposes raw, unacknowledged emotions so that we can attempt to understand and then learn from them.

In the initial stages of my personal debrief, all I could talk and write about was my anger, sadness, fear, and regret. But as I continued to process, I began to see the joy and blessings that I had initially missed. I began to see God’s presence and guidance during times when I had previously felt alone. This deepened my trust in God significantly as He allowed me to see through a different perspective.

Debriefing brings healing.

“Personal debrief is particularly helpful in times of crisis or transition to help bring closure to an earlier chapter in your life and to help you leave behind any emotional ‘baggage’ that accumulated during that time,” writes Dr. Ronald Koteskey in his article, “*Why Missionaries Ought to Know About Debriefing.*”

Life on the mission field is an incredible opportunity to closely observe God’s overwhelming presence and strength, but it can also be difficult, painful, and scarring. Only as we reflect on our time overseas and surrender our fears and doubts to Him, can He help us discover the root of our emotions and begin to heal past wounds.

Debriefing requires us to step forward, to risk feeling exposed, and to acknowledge past mistakes. It requires openness and vulnerability. Debriefing our time on the mission field does not equal weakness or failure, but rather a chance to look back, rely on God’s strength, and see how God is using past experiences to prepare us for the future. **JH**

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Photo by Flickr user LabyrinthX-2; Creative Commons

SHORT *or* LONG?

Comparing the Lengths of Home Assignments

Animated, even heated, discussions can erupt when missionaries talk about why they take long or short home assignments.

How long you go on home assignment depends on why you take one. Other important factors include the policy of your organisation, your ministry, geography, finances, children, and personal factors. I asked a few missionaries with different experiences for their thoughts on each of these aspects.

Purpose

The main purpose of a home assignment can be to visit supporters, raise support, reconnect with family and friends, get some rest, or to have health checks. Of course, home assignments may include all these things. Taking home assignments could also be a requirement of your organisation. Before planning a home assignment, it is important to identify what you aim to achieve.

Policies of organisations

These vary. Some policies are strict (for example, missionaries accrue five days of home assignment for every month on the field but may not accrue more than six months); others are more relaxed.

Although independent missionaries don't have any organisation policies to follow, they may have to follow stipulations from their supporting churches (such as attending the church conference at least once every three years).

Sending or sponsoring organisations often want missionaries to connect with the home office. They may expect you to help out with home-side ministry, like speaking at events.

The US Social Security system now requires some US missionaries to be in the US for at least six con-

secutive months every six years or risk losing their social security benefits. Other countries may have similar requirements. It is important to be aware of those for your own country.

Ministry

You also need to consider what will happen with your ministry while you are absent from Japan. Does someone need to fill in for you during your absence? Is such a person available and, if so, for how long? Your organisation may be able to help with this.

Geography

Geography strongly affects how long missionaries need to spend in their sending country. A short home assignment will be easier for a missionary with one supporting church in Singapore than for one with support in all corners of the US or for an English-Australian couple with support in both countries.

Finances

As I interacted with missionaries, the importance of financial factors became obvious. One missionary said their family needed to spend an entire year for partnership development. But for some, even a year isn't long enough; in OMF, we know missionaries who've taken over a year to raise sufficient support to return to Japan.

Other missionaries said that a shorter home assignment was attractive because they could housesit or stay with family and save on financial outlay. A shorter home assignment also allows many to keep the same accommodation in Japan. This avoids the costs (including key money), stress, and inconvenience of moving house and storing goods.

Children

Families with school-aged children must consider education. Summer home assignments can mean that children are able to remain in the same school for many years, although this may be more difficult for families with children in Japanese schools.

Longer home assignments give children an experience of their passport culture that is difficult to get in a short visit.¹ “Having our children in our home country for a full school year has also helped them understand the reality of daily life,” says one missionary. “We have found ‘vacation’ mode where we just stay for a few weeks to be very different from ‘daily life’ mode where we have to readjust to the culture, make friends, fit in at school, etc.”

The emotional challenges that children face with home assignments are also a factor to consider. Changing countries, schools, and churches are big adjustments, especially for older children. But short home assignments are frequently a high-paced round of meeting people, which can also be stressful for a family.

Personal factors

Each missionary unit has different personal factors. If you have elderly parents, for example, you may prefer to go home every year. Your own health concerns may make a longer home assignment more suitable.

Personal preferences come into this too. You may not cope well with the travel and upheaval associated with home assignment. In which case, you may choose to go less often, if your organisation allows it. Or you might find that you need more frequent contact with family and friends to remain healthy on the field, and so choose to go to your passport country yearly.

I asked a husband and wife about how a medium-length home assignment has worked for them. In recent years, they’ve taken six-month home assignments every two or two-and-a-half years. They wrote, “When we took one year in four . . . that worked okay. But sometimes we noticed that about three quarters through our time, we felt like our work was done and we wanted to get back to Japan”.

My family

We currently have three school-aged boys. Education is thus a big factor, especially because the school year in Australia runs from January to December,

whereas their school in Japan, Christian Academy in Japan, runs from August to June.

Geography is a factor, as our extended family is spread out in Australia, and so it takes many hours of driving to see them all. Our support network is also spread over a wide area: it includes churches and supporters on both the east and west coasts of Australia (about 4,000 kilometers apart).

We personally prefer longer home assignments, primarily because the disruption to our family is so big that we don’t want to do it often. Our decision is also influenced by my husband’s work as a teacher at the Christian Academy in Japan. It is a challenge for the school to accommodate frequent short home assignments, unless we go in the summer break. But, if we spend the summer holidays doing deputation in Australia, we come back to Japan exhausted—not a good start to the school year for teacher or student!

The stress can be worthwhile

There is no easy way to have a home assignment. No matter what length home assignment you choose, the time is stressful. The stressors differ: a short home assignment is often rushed but involves less packing, whereas a long home assignment, while more relaxed, involves greater emotional energy to settle more deeply into daily life in your home country.

Despite that, home assignments can be worthwhile experiences. One missionary said, “It has taken a lot of effort and purposefulness on our part to connect and reconnect with friends and our church each time, but through God’s grace and blessings we leave at the end of our home assignment with strong connections and a sense of ‘feeling at home’”. **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.

1. For further thoughts on this, see Neigh, M., Storrs, C., Stephens, L. “Long or short? What’s better in home assignments?” *Interact*, Vol. 13, No. 2, Spring, pp. 7–11, 2005. <http://www.missionarycare.com/dbFullArticle.asp?articleid=850>

When planning for home assignment:

- Pray
- Decide on your main purposes.
- List all the factors you need to consider.
- Weigh up the positives and negatives of various lengths (and frequencies).
- Talk to others.

A RAFT *To End Well*

Home assignments involve transitions and consequently they are often stressful. But before our first home assignment, we attended a two-week pre-home assignment workshop run by OMF International, which encouraged, inspired, and helped us to prepare.

One of the most valuable tools we gained was the simple mnemonic RAFT, which reminds us of the following four things we need to do when approaching the end of a term of service.

Reconciliation

I don't know if you've noticed, but relationships among missionaries and between missionaries and national Christians are not always smooth! We anger and annoy others, and others do the same to us. We sin and make mistakes and that affects others, and vice versa. We need to forgive and, in turn, ask for forgiveness from others.

Before we went on home assignment, we realised that we had unfinished business: a co-worker who had said something hurtful to us; someone had asked us to do a job, but we had not done it. "Who knows", we thought, "we might not return to Japan as planned, and then there would be no opportunity to be reconciled with this person face to face." Rather than leave a situation with bad feelings on both sides, how much better to be humble, admit our mistakes, and ask for forgiveness. What a deep and profound impact that could make for the Gospel! We made time with specific people to ask for their forgiveness. We also forgave those who had hurt us. Both were hard to do.

A summary of Colossians 3:13b I made for myself many years ago describes the dual definition of a Christian:

A Christian is someone who has been forgiven by Jesus.

A Christian is someone who forgives like Jesus.

A few minutes' thoughtful reflection is likely to bring to mind a number of people with whom you need to be reconciled. May I suggest you take that time

when you finish reading this article? Then set aside time with each person to restore those broken or strained relationships. Some of Jesus' last words on earth were words of forgiveness. Therefore, it's a good pattern for us to follow as we leave for home assignment.

Affirmation

Along with mending broken relationships, the end of a term is a great time to say thank you. Think about who has been special to you this term. Perhaps it's a mission leader who gave advice about a tricky pastoral issue, or a co-worker who encouraged you when you were down. Or maybe it's a Japanese pastor who mentored you, or a Japanese friend who shared their life with you. Perhaps it's someone who cared for your children, or who checked your sermons. Or someone who explained the cultural mistake you kept on making, so that you didn't make it any more. The list could go on; many people help us in many different ways.

How are you going to affirm or thank them? Write a letter or a note? Thank them in person or give a small gift?

One Japanese friend checked all my wife's talks, but didn't want to be paid for her work. So to thank her, my wife took her to a tearoom and treated her to afternoon tea!

Again, a bit of thought will bring to mind some people who deserve your thanks and affirmation. It may well be that some of the people with whom you have to be reconciled are also those you will want to affirm as well – such is the nature of working and living closely with each other. It leaves a good and godly impression if the last thing someone hears you saying is "thank you".

Farewells

Farewells are especially important in Japan. Companies, schools, and virtually every organisation have farewell parties or ceremonies. It's a strong cultural tradition.

We may want to leave quietly without any fuss,

but we need to allow churches, ministries and people with whom we have been involved to say goodbye to us. We have shared our lives with people, and they with us; we mustn't just walk out on them!

Often people who we've lost contact with or those with whom we've only had a passing contact will come to a farewell event. These times give us another chance to share an appropriate verse of Scripture, a special song, or a gospel message. What an opportunity for God to work in people's hearts!

Formal events create pressure to know what to say, but help is at hand. It seems that many Japanese people also don't know what to say, and so there are websites with example speeches for various events. Before our last home assignment, we were asked to give a greeting at the church we had been attending, and so I found an appropriate speech online and adapted it. Afterwards, the wife of the previous pastor said to me it was just what was needed for a farewell speech. Yes!

One friend of ours felt so overwhelmed with packing that she simply could not face organising any farewell events. So she asked a friend to help. Her friend helped her to say her goodbyes and to leave well.

Of course, saying goodbye to people is very important, but saying farewell to places can be helpful too. We've known families, who are planning to return to a different part of Japan after home assignment, to take a farewell tour to imprint memories. They go to places that are special to them, for example, places where they have taken family holidays. They take photos and tell the stories and create or recreate the memories. International schools like Christian Academy in Japan sometimes do something similar just prior to graduation, providing seniors an opportunity to travel around campus with cameras to capture memories of their school days.

Some of the mostly dearly loved passages of Scripture are basically farewell speeches. When we go on home assignment, what words could we leave behind that could have a deep and lasting impact?

We all know that it is hard to say farewell, but it is even harder not to say farewell.

Think ahead

As important as reconciling, affirming, and saying farewell are, we also need to do the work of praying, thinking, and planning for the future.

Of course, we will make plans about where to live, what work to do, who we will visit on deputation and which schools our children will attend. But there are

other things to think about.

Just as you almost certainly brought things from your home country to Japan to remind you of home, you will probably want to take some things to your home country to remind you of Japan. What might they be? A special book, a wall hanging, or something else? These should be things that have special meaning to you personally, not just items for deputation meetings.

For example, many families create a photo album for each child. This is made by the children themselves (with the help of their parents) to explain their life in Japan to other children in their passport country. The album may be full of blurred pictures of trains, cars and fire engines, but if that is what your child wants to show other children about Japan then that's OK!

Your support structures on home assignment will be different from those you have on the field. From whom will you get your support? Family? Home church? Friends? What if you will be based in an unfamiliar part of your home country or will be travelling a lot? On the field, we know our support structures, but it's important to know who you will pray with and be accountable to on home assignment.

People newly arrived from your home country—either those fresh from their own home assignment, or new missionaries—can be a great resource to bring you up-to-date with your home country. It will have changed for better and worse. Ask people from your country what they noticed, what they found difficult, and what they enjoyed.

Some missions hold reunions for workers on home assignment and some countries have interagency camps for third-culture kids. A highlight of home assignment can be to be with people who understand your experience. I encourage you to investigate such events for yourself and your children.

Adapting a quote by businessman Alan Lakein we could say, "Thinking ahead brings the future of home assignment into the present so that you can do something about it now."

Reconciliation, affirmation, farewell, and thinking ahead are the four logs of a RAFT to get you safely launched your on home assignment. **JH**

Peter Dallman (UK) works with his wife at the OMF Japanese Language and Culture Center (JLCC) in Sapporo, welcoming new OMF missionaries to Japan. Over five years they have welcomed more than 40 new workers.

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PRAYING *in* NATURE

“Nature created by God is the very place where we should pray.”
Kenderick B. Kellogg¹

Stone Church & Kanzo Uchimura

On the morning of December 26th, we marched through the snow to visit Stone Church. This magnificent example of organic architecture is also known as the Hoshino Wedding Chapel. We prayed and felt God’s presence in the beautiful sanctuary. In the basement of Stone Church there is a memorial hall dedicated to the life of Kanzo Uchimura (1861-1930), one of Japan’s most prominent Christians². Nature played an important role in the expression of his faith. He saw the beauty of nature as part of God’s creation. This is seen in his theological writings. In one of his Bibles, Uchimura wrote “There are Three Witnesses to the Truth...nature, man and the Bible.”³ The role of nature in discovering the truth is highlighted in Romans 1:20, “For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God” (NLT).

People Praying in Nature

Kenderick B. Kellogg, a US-based architect and innovator of organic architecture, designed Stone Church in 1988. Like Uchimura, Kellogg also saw the beauty of nature as part of God’s creation. He was deeply inspired by the beautiful nature of Karuizawa. So he created Stone Church based on the concept that “Nature created by God is the very place where we should pray.”⁴ Of course, as Christians, we can pray anywhere, but it’s interesting to note that Jesus often prayed in nature. For example:

- a solitary place (Mark 1:35) KJV
- a lonely place (NIV) or wilderness (Luke 5: 15-16) KJV
- a mountain (Luke 6:12) KJV
- the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36) NASB

Inspiration from God’s Creation

How about us? How often do we pray, praise or worship God in nature? British missionary Stuart K. Hine was inspired to praise and worship God in the mountains. “He was inspired to write his 1949 English

translation known as “How Great Thou Art” while on an evangelistic mission to the Carpathian Mountains in Ukraine”⁵. Consider Hine’s paraphrase of the second verse of this great hymn:

“When through the woods, and forest glades I wander,
And hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees,
When I look down from lofty mountain grandeur,
And see the brook, and feel the gentle breeze.
Then sings my soul, My saviour God, to Thee,
How great thou art, How great thou art”⁶

The late Rich Mullins, a popular Christian musician, also believed it was important to pray to and worship God in nature. In his Christian faith and music, Mullins often intertwined God and nature. He believed that God speaks to and touches us through His creation. His songs “Awesome God,” “The Color Green” and “Calling Out Your Name” are excellent examples of how Mullins saw God speaking through nature.⁷

The Benefits of Praying in Nature

Praying in nature is an ideal way to achieve spiritual refreshment. Whether we are on home assignment, ministering in Japan or ministering elsewhere, praying to God in nature is a valuable spiritual discipline to cultivate. It can draw us fully into communion with God. It also gives us a golden opportunity to take time out of our busy schedules and recharge spiritually.

Examples & Results of Praying in Nature

Japan is a country of rich, stunning nature. Even in the large cities of Tokyo and Osaka there are many lovely parks to enjoy. One way to escape the busyness of life and enjoy God’s creation is to do a farm stay on an organic farm through WWOOF (Worldwide Opportunities on Organic Farms)⁸. Many countries have national WWOOF groups. I have enjoyed several WWOOF farm stays in Japan and was spiritually refreshed by them. A farm stay is also an ideal opportu-

nity to meet seekers of the Christian faith. A few years ago at a farm in rural Wakayama where a Japanese friend and I stayed, one farm staff member in her twenties asked us for a Japanese Bible. We gladly gave her one, answered her questions about the Christian faith and prayed with her.

Conclusion

May we be inspired by God’s beautiful creation like Kanzo Uchimura, Kenderick Kellogg, Stuart Hine, and Rich Mullins were. May it inspire us to spend time praying in nature, recharge spiritually, and help us in our evangelistic endeavours to reach the Japanese with the Good News. **JH**

Sara Wolsey first came to Japan from the UK in 1998 as an Assistant English Teacher (ALT) in Japanese public schools. As well as teaching English in Kansai, Sara is currently the Chair of the Osaka International Church Council in Tamatsukuri, Osaka.

1. <http://www.kendrickbangskellogg.com/>
2. Daniel Ellrick, missionary to Japan, referred to Uchimura in his article about the influence of Confucianism on Japanese culture in the Autumn 2014/Winter 2015 of Japan Harvest
3. La Fay, Michelle, “Uchimura Kanzo’s Use of Japanese Thoughts and Ideas in his Faith.” *Journal of the Graduate School of Letters*, Vol. 3, p.82. (Hokkaido University, 2008), Web. Accessed February 27, 2015, http://www.academia.edu/1089794/Uchimura_Kanzos_Use_of_Japanese_Thoughts_and_Ideas_in_his_Faith.
4. “Welcome to Hoshino Area” Bilingual Tourist Brochure, p.2 (no date).
5. “How Great Thou Art,” accessed December 29, 2014, [http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/How_Great_Thou_Art_\(hymn\)](http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/How_Great_Thou_Art_(hymn)).
6. Stuart K. Hine, “How Great Thou Art” (No. 4) in *The Hymnal for Worship & Celebration* (Word Music, 1986).
7. “Rich Mullins,” accessed March 15th, 2015 <http://richmullinspiritually.blogspot.jp/2011/03/god-became-microscopic.html>
8. WWOOF Japan, accessed February 28, 2015, <http://www.woofjapan.com>

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NO MISSIONARY IS AN ISLAND

“No man is an island.” You may think of the poem, song or film when you hear this phrase, but have you ever stopped to consider it? Do you think it is true? In my family, we do. Life and ministry on these Japanese islands can feel isolated with turbulent waters dangerously crashing in on all sides, threatening to leave us secluded and cut off from the life-giving support of those at home. As missionaries, my family used to be an island. But we aren’t anymore.

Missionaries can easily become like islands because, like Japanese culture, we strive to look OK on the outside even when we’re crumbling on the inside. Or sometimes mission culture can leave us stranded between here and there, somewhat disconnected from both. Whatever the reasons, we missionaries often find ourselves alone and vulnerable. My husband and I experienced “island life” years ago when we were sick with little ones underfoot and no one to lend a hand. We experienced it when we couldn’t share teammate struggles with our missionary colleagues. When a family member died and when marriage issues left us wishing we could call a pastor for counsel. We needed a safe place to be heard and to hear input. We needed a PAC Team.

A Prayer, Accountability, and Care Team is a small group of pray-ers, listeners and encouragers from our sending country who meet with us via Skype each month (our mission now calls them “Home Ministry Teams”). We send e-mails often with personal and family prayer requests. We ask for input when we are making decisions and share health issues and temptations. We are honest about disagreements with leadership and hurt feelings within Japanese friendships. It is a safe place to be real, and to be really supported.

At the beginning of one home assignment, we sent out a letter of explanation to three couples asking them to think about being part of this support network. These friends all lived in our hometown but didn’t all go to our home church. We asked if they would meet to talk more about what a PAC

Team is. We then met monthly throughout our home assignment to get to know one another better. At the end of our home assignment, we asked if they would commit to being on our PAC Team just for the next term. Seven years later, they, and we, are still on board.

Little by little, as we’ve shared with our PAC Team the nitty-gritty of overseas ministry life, their worldview has broadened and their understanding of missions has grown. They read a chapter of the book *Serving as Senders*¹ each month to learn about how to practically support missionaries. They have helped us while we are in Japan in numerous ways, such as getting our home-side mail and sending us care packages and birthday cards. They have also represented us at church prayer meetings and shared prayer requests at our adult Sunday school class. On home assignment, they helped us get furniture and borrow a car. They bought us groceries and picked us up at the airport. While we are on home assignment, they listen as those who have grown to understand the struggles missionary families face, moving back and forth across the ocean.

Even though we would claim all the blessings, this Prayer, Accountability and Care Team would contend that they have been blessed too. They learned about missions in a very unique, intimate way and have been blessed by the fellowship and prayer time with each other. When our home church pastor heard about our PAC Team, he said that each of the missionaries from our home church should have one. He realized what we have come to own: “No missionary is an island.” **JH**

Susan Driscoll, along her husband Tim and their 3 sons, have been church planting in Japan with OMF International since 1995, most recently at Saitama International Church. She started her blog 7 years ago to help friends and supporters in America understand more of their family’s missionary everyday life. <http://memoirsofamissionarymom.blogspot.jp>

¹ Pirolo, Nick. (2012) *Serving as Senders-Today*. Emmaus Road International.

WHAT IS MISSIONARY SUCCESS?

As we missionaries come to the end of a term and reflect on its ups and downs, we often wonder whether it has been a good term and if we have been successful.

My wife and I are currently nearing the end of our fourth term in Japan with OMF International. We have done three home assignments and are facing our fourth relatively soon. We have also pondered the above question before each home assignment.

However, through reading a famous missionary biography and the Bible, I think there are a couple of key criteria for evaluating missionary success.

A missionary to a different country, in a different age

The question “What is missionary success?” surfaces throughout my favourite missionary biography. He was a single missionary in a culture that expected religious people to be married. Not a good start, but he was certain that God had sent him.

He spoke the language really well, but the people did not grasp what he was saying. He spoke simply using appropriate stories and illustrations. He contextualised his message, but his foreign ways confused some and angered others. Like us, he encountered spiritual blindness on every side and even demonic activity.

He did just one term of service and even that was shorter than those of most long-term cross-cultural workers these days. For the most part, his small church loved him, and he served them faithfully. But his sermons were either really short or rather long.

For me, one of the most moving incidents of his life occurs towards the end of his term. The biography tells of him agonizing with God in prayer about whether his term could be extended. Some of us have been in a similar place.

He did all that God asked him to do. But if you look at what he left behind immediately after his one term on the field, by most methods of evaluation, you could not really say he was a great success as a missionary.

The missionary’s name? Jesus of Nazareth.

In the gospels, we often read of Jesus having a sense of being a missionary, of being sent from

heaven to earth to proclaim—and indeed to be—the gospel. But in John 13, it seems that Jesus is particularly aware that he will soon be going back on home assignment to heaven.

So what might that passage sound like if we updated it and reworded it to take in this “Jesus the missionary” perspective?

Jesus knew that his home assignment was coming and that he would go back to his home country. Having loved those on the field, he loved them to the very last breath of his term of service.

At Jesus’ farewell meal with his church leaders at a local restaurant, the devil had already prompted one of those leaders to betray Jesus.

Jesus knew that, by God’s grace, he had great influence on this field and that he had come from the true home country and was returning there, so he got up from the meal and went out into the kitchen with the other waiters. He took off his tie, hung up his suit jacket and put on a dirty apron that another waiter had used.

Jesus then returned to the table and began to clear away each of the church leaders’ dirty dishes and plates. He also got down on his hands and knees and wiped up the food they had dropped.

Was Jesus a missionary failure? Of course not.

Why was he successful? From John 13, we can say that Jesus was a successful missionary because he loved sacrificially and served humbly.

This is how we should evaluate missionary success. It is not fantastic numbers, impressive results, or great cultural understanding, but sacrificial love and humble service. May our lives, wherever we serve, have these qualities in abundance. **JH**

Peter Dallman (UK) works with his wife at the OMF Japanese Language and Culture Center (JLCC) in Sapporo, welcoming new OMF missionaries to Japan. Over five years they have welcomed more than 40 new workers.

2015 Inaugural Women's Conference in Kansai

With great anticipation, I travelled to Higashinada Baptist Church to attend my first women's conference since coming to Japan 3 years ago. It was so exciting to see almost 50 women coming together for Bible teaching, fellowship, singing, and prayer. It was a rare opportunity to be encouraged in our first language – how joyful, to sing from the heart in English!

Our speaker, Judy Dyer, is the mother of a long-term missionary in Japan and so had experience and wisdom to understand some of the challenges faced by her audience. Based on the book of 1 Peter, she encouraged us to consider the 'clothing' we were wearing in our lives. In the same way that we wouldn't go to a job interview straight from the gym in our work-out clothes, we need to be dressed appropriately as God's children. Judy reminded us to clothe ourselves in hope and holiness, with humility and joy.

The hope described in 1 Peter 1 is not a feeling of something that may or may not eventuate but a living hope with 100% certainty - no chance that this inheritance will perish, spoil, or fade! But in times of fear, despair, and loneliness it's easy to lose hope. Like Elijah, defeated, discouraged, depressed, hiding in a cave, God ministers to us in our dark place with compassion and sustenance. He restores hope and eternal perspective, and gently sends us back to the difficult place. To the work he has prepared for us to do.

Judy explained that, as God works in us, we recognize how holy he is and our own unholiness comes into focus—discontent, ingratitude, impatience, pride, irritability, competitiveness, criticism, and so on. But 1 Peter 1:16 orders, "be holy, because I am holy". Christ-like behaviour is not an optional extra, but something we need to pursue with

humility and concern for others, and also with joy. As Peter writes in 4:12-13, joy is related to suffering. When we have grief and trials, we need to seek our Lord who fully understands us and offers us the promise of eternal glory. And so we can go out with joy - loud joy, even - in the midst of suffering, because our hope is certain and our God cares for us.

After a tasty lunch and great conversation, we met again for prayer and praise as Flossie Epley led us in a moving prayer time of praise, confession and intercession. We sang joyfully to our God, our strength, and clothed in hope, returned to our ministries. **JH**

Rachel Hughes, her husband, Dene, and their two boys live in Amagasaki. The boys attend local elementary school. Dene works part-time for KGK and Rachel attends language school and volunteers as an editor with Japan Harvest.



Interview with Sam Chan

It's August. The sticky heat sapping my energy, the kids sick of being confined to the tiny but air-conditioned apartment, we eagerly escape to the mountains of Karuizawa. As the cool forests and beautiful mountain streams refresh our tired bodies, fellowship and time in God's word refreshes our souls.

Our whole family looks forward to each year's Karuizawa conference – my husband and I love the opportunity to sing, pray, and learn together in English with other missionaries from all over Japan, and our kids love the youth program, where they fellowship with other missionary kids and grow in God's word together.

I'm particularly excited about this next conference in 2015 because the guest speaker, Sam Chan, is one of my favourite lecturers from seminary! It will be exciting to catch up with him and his wife, Steph, meet their 3 boys, and once again learn through Sam's engaging and

challenging teaching style.

I asked Sam some questions to help you get to know him.

RH: Where are you from?

SC: I grew up in Australia, mainly in Sydney. I was born in Hong Kong, but my parents moved to Australia when I was 6 months old. So that makes me 1.99 percent Chinese!

RH: Where did you and Steph meet?

SC: Steph and I got to know each other through Christian friends in Sydney. We'd see each other at conferences, socials and church. We gradually drifted together—and slowly, but surely, fell in love.

RH: What's your work?

SC: I began working for City Bible Forum, in Sydney, in 2015. City Bible Forum creates ways for people and their friends to hear about Jesus, while working in the city. My job is to give public talks in coffee shops and conference rooms.

RH: You first trained as a doctor, why

did you leave medicine?

SC: I love working as a doctor, and still work one day a week as a doctor. So I haven't totally given it up. But my reason for leaving full-time medicine was because I had so many opportunities to give talks about Jesus. I couldn't juggle both being a full-time doctor and a full-time evangelist.

RH: What will you talk about at the conference?

SC: I will give two sets of talks. One set will be expository talks from Philipians. The second set will be topical talks where we look at life's big existential questions. **JH**

Rachel Hughes, her husband, Dene, and their two boys live in Amagasaki. The boys attend local elementary school. Dene works part-time for KGK and Rachel attends language school and volunteers as an editor with Japan Harvest.

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Only One First Term

I must have been emitting “*I’m new here*” vibes. With our 11-month-old in a carrier on my back and her 3-year-old brother in a stroller, I ventured forth from the chaos of unpacking after moving to pick up some essentials at the grocery store closest to our new home. Fresh out of language school, we were up to our eyeballs in Japanese community life and wondering what God had in store during this two-year ministry internship.

You know how it is when you’re learning a new supermarket layout, scanning and searching high and low for items on your list. You have to wander up and down every aisle, often more than once. Kids are not particularly patient with this process.

As I rounded a corner (perhaps for the second or third time), a middle-aged woman stopped me and asked how long I’d been in town and if I had any friends. “Just a few days and not many yet,” I responded.

“Good,” she said, “you can be friends with my daughter-in-law.” She proceeded to give me contact information, and just like that, I was looking forward to getting in touch with a potential new friend. I thanked her and continued with my shopping. As the kids and I finished at the register, I saw the woman again, and she motioned me to come over. She then handed me her phone, and I was suddenly chatting with her daughter-in-law and promising to text her later that evening!

Much is made of the challenges that first-term missionaries in Japan face: the language is hard, the culture is inscrutable, and the people are not interested in Christianity. But I’m discovering there are some real advantages to being a newcomer.

For example, perceived (or actual!) helplessness attracts helpful people. The woman I met at the supermarket pegged me right away for a lonely newbie in need of friends. Our new neighbors carefully explained the local garbage collection protocol to us. Members of our new church helped with sewing and other tasks to get supplies ready for our son to start kindergarten.

If I were in my second or third term, people might expect more of me. They might expect better language skills or a more nuanced understanding of nonverbal communication. They might expect me to know the ropes of Japanese school culture. But since I’m still (relatively) new, I am afforded grace upon grace.

As much as I want to demonstrate my own competence, I must admit that I really do need help. My situation requires humility and vulnerability. These character traits draw people not only to me, but also to our Savior, whose gentle humility drew people from all walks of life.

Another advantage is not necessarily limited to first-termers, but I’d wager many of us experience it. Our young children are attention magnets and provide instant connections to other moms. My children keep me from studying Japanese as much as I’d like, keep me from sleeping as long as I’d like, keep home from being as tidy I’d like. This is an exhausting season of life. But there’s no easier way to strike up a conversation with a stranger in public than to wheel up beside another stroller-pushing mom and compare the ages of our respective cooing cherubs.

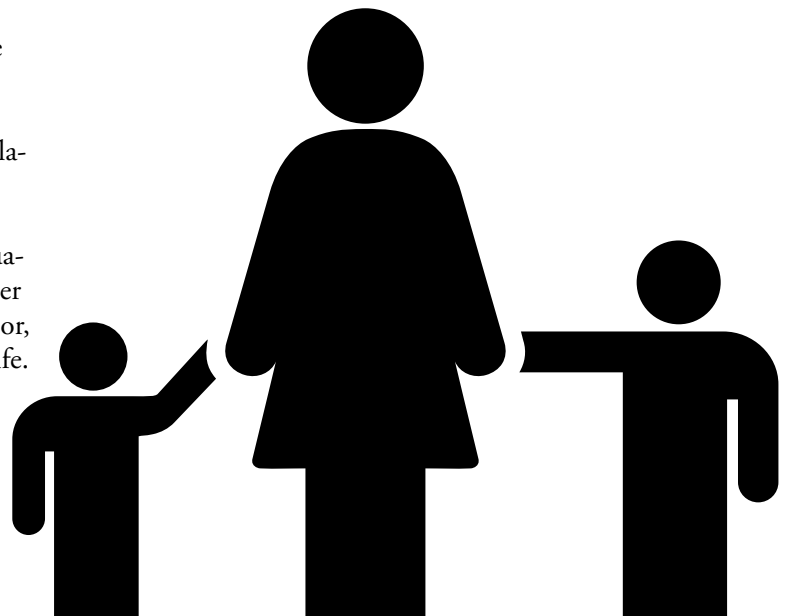
Once our kids are all school-aged, I’ll probably have more free time and more sleep. But I will have lost the camaraderie of the league of bleary-eyed mothers of wee ones. These few precious years afford opportunities to establish long-term friendships unlike any time to come.

So, yes, having young children and being in our first term as missionaries in Japan is hard. So hard. I’m always tired and frequently frustrated by my still-developing Japanese skills. Most days, I have to choose whether to spend my time engaging with Japanese people or keeping the house from falling apart. I misunderstand both subtle social cues and explicit announcements and instructions. I look forward to the day when reading notes sent home from school requires less time in the Japanese-English dictionary and more time just checking the family calendar to avoid scheduling conflicts.

However, there is also a singular sweetness of these years that will ebb the longer we’re in Japan. Certainly the Lord will bring new joys as we continue to serve Him here, but I don’t want to miss the privileges of newness that we can experience for just a short while. Please remind me of this the next time I’m collapsed in a heap, worn out from spending all day communicating in Japanese and keeping my children clothed and fed. We get only one first term. **JH**

Audrey Eusey and her husband Evan serve with OMF International in Saitama prefecture. You can usually find her close to home, reaching out through Bible-storying or working in her garden. Audrey blogs at www.yuushii.net

“Mother” graphic designed by Aha-Soft from thehenounproject.com



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by Randall Short, Associate Professor of Biblical Studies

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When in Rome...

Two considerations to help foreigners connect more effectively with Japanese (Part 1)

“When in Rome...” Everyone knows how the phrase ends! It is a bit of folk wisdom that has gotten some new applications recently. For example, the US Department of State advises Americans abroad to blend in to avoid advertising their nationality and thus endanger themselves or make themselves a target for those who want to cause harm to US citizens. Similarly, a wise salesperson heeds the adage: learn how your buyers think. Knowing what buyers want, how they make decisions, what they find offensive or attractive, etc., makes the sale. It is advice we find from yet another venerable source: the Apostle Paul in I Corinthians 9! Paul challenges us to use our freedom in Christ to engage with others where they are.

In my 30 years of mission work in Japan, I have tried to apply this teaching. When I first arrived, I wasn't competent in the language or familiar with the customs. It pains me to think of instances when I offended people I was eager to win, and I'm certain there were many more instances I'm still unaware of. This awareness spurs me on to seek to be more effective in reaching out in culturally appropriate ways, never compromising on the message, but working hard to package the message in attractive forms that will draw my friends and those who come into contact with us closer to the kingdom of God.

There are two concepts that I have found helpful to consider as I pursue my work. The first concept, which I'll discuss in this issue, is from the silk industry, and the second, which I'll discuss in the next issue, comes from architecture. The words are *itoguchi* and *shiki-i*.

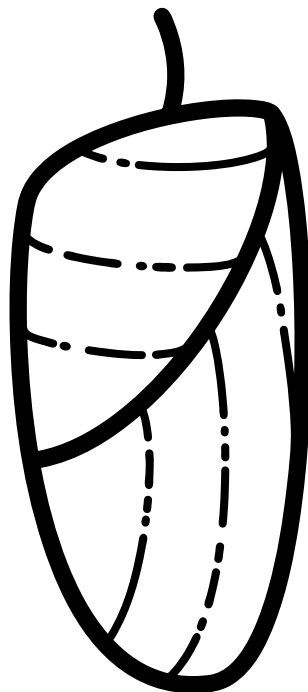
A silk worm spins its cocoon from a single strand of filament that may be as long as 600 to 1500 meters. The key to accessing that thread is to find the *itoguchi*, the place where the worm began to spin. If you can succeed in gaining that foothold, you can unravel the whole cocoon. Then you are on your way to weaving a lovely necktie or kimono.

The term *itoguchi* has a figurative meaning in Japan. It is the point of contact or entry into a person's heart. You may ask, what was your *itoguchi* for developing your love of chess, or golf, etc. What was it that captured your attention so effectively to draw you into this line of work? What was the first point where you became aware that the Lord was drawing you to himself and into his church?

Let me illustrate. Mr. A and Mr. T were both drawn into the circle of the church through architecture. A young architecture student, Mr. A saw from the train a church building going up. Curious about how this “Western building” was constructed, he made his way over to the site and engaged in conversation with the young Japanese pastor. Mr. A became an elder in that church. He then designed and built two subsequent edifices for that congregation as they grew. Mr. T's experience was a little different. Attending a wedding ceremony in a Catholic church, he was moved by the sights, sounds and smells, he encountered there and felt a strange sense of peace. This was his *itoguchi*. Mr. T recently became a member of Mr. A's congregation. Why? He says, “I wanted to learn more about what the Bible teaches.” I say, “You've come to the right place!”

Mrs. M and Mrs. F had a different *itoguchi*. For them, it was concern about their children. Mrs. M's husband abandoned her and their two middle school aged boys. She was devastated and anxious about how she would manage. A friend suggested that she seek

strength and wisdom in a Bible study I lead. Mrs. M and one of those boys were later baptized. For Mrs. F it was a little different. When her little girl left for school in the morning, she found herself overwhelmed with anxiety. She was desperate to find some assurance that her little one would be protected and come home safely. Many Japanese people purchase talismans for themselves or their



• The key to accessing the silk thread is to find the *itoguchi*, the place where the worm began to spin. It is also the point of contact or entry into a person's heart

loved ones from Shinto shrines, but Mrs. F was led to the church, where she was introduced to the one who sends “his angels to watch over you,” the one who cares deeply for the little ones, and who is almighty and ever present to keep his people.

Mrs. K was struggling with a husband who had been unfaithful, and Mr. K struggled with guilt about his own unfaithfulness. Mr. & Mrs. S had deep intellectual curiosity about the scripture and faith of Christians whose influence pervades so much of the Western literature they loved to read. Mr. N lost what he treasured most when his teenage son developed severe schizophrenia. Mrs. H was seeking a connection with the Creator she somehow knew existed. All of us have our own stories about how the Lord tugged at our *itoguchi*.

God is always a step ahead, drawing his children to himself. Facilitating that process is much easier if we discern how he is attracting them. Finding the *itoguchi* is often a key to helping us deepen friend-

ships and develop intimacy. We don't want to become manipulative salespeople, but there is wisdom in forming life-changing relationships that help people come much closer, more quickly to the Lord, where they will happily hear his Word and respond. Think about how God reached out to draw YOU to himself. Think about how God may be drawing those in your circle of acquaintance to himself. The *itoguchi* is a key concept to help make us more effective evangelists, salespeople for Christ. **JH**

Lawrence Spalink is the Japan Team Leader for Christian Reformed World Missions

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Home Assignment:

The Good, the Bad, and the Hard for the TCK

“Home Assignment” has always been one of those hot button words in our family. In our case, I can’t wait to go. My husband can’t wait until it’s over—the big difference being that he’s a Third Culture Kid (TCK). This article will explain what causes this kind of reaction in the TCK and in the process, give some insight and encouragement for those of you who are dreading home assignment, as a TCK yourself or for the TCKs in your own life.

Many TCKs dread home assignment. Even with promises from parents about meeting loving grandparents, eating your favorite foods, or even going to Disneyland, the TCK still feels anxious, confused, and unsettled. A recent seminar on TCKs highlighted three themes that all TCKs have in common no matter what the field: loss, loss, and loss. The dictionary defines the word “loss” as “the experience of having something taken from you or destroyed”. Rarely is this feeling more poignant for the TCK than when going on home assignment, where home, school, and relationships are all left behind for the great unknown.

It’s confusing for the parents of TCKs to find that it is often children—who adapted well to life overseas—who struggle the most when returning to their passport countries. My children adapted pretty well to life in our small town in Japan, where we spent the first few years of our ministry. It meant when not in school, we lived in a Japanese neighborhood, worked at a Japanese church, and spoke primarily Japanese. When going through Los Angeles International Airport on our first home assignment, my young son nervously whispered to us, “There are foreigners everywhere”. My husband often shares memories of leaving the close relationships he developed

with other MKs in the school dormitory, who were like family, to arrive in the States where he was expected to feel connected to cousins he barely knew. In both cases, home assignment wasn’t hard because of poor adjustment overseas, but rather because of good adjustment.

Home assignment is often a big change in the TCK’s life which intensifies all other losses. The losses that occur after these transitions often accumulate, since most TCKs feel they should be happy to be “home”. Accumulated grief often surfaces at transitional times, such as rights of passage, e.g. going off to college, choosing a career, etc. One TCK recently remarked in a counseling session, “I feel overwhelmed a lot.” Hearing statements like this leads parents to feel they have somehow “damaged” their kids. It takes wisdom and patience for parents of TCKs to not only allow kids to voice negative feelings about losses when they happen, but let them feel it’s “OK”, even normal, when upcoming transitions deeply affect them.

Life has a lot of losses, especially for the TCK. And not surprisingly, the impact of such losses seems to multiply in the transitions of home assignment. Allowing ourselves and our TCKs to express their sadness will go a long way toward managing other emotions further down the road. In spite of the losses, one TCK summed up the positive side of being raised overseas by saying, “I think I see the world rotating on its axis, not around some small town”. **JH**

“Travel” graphic designed by Elliot Verhaeren from thethenounproject.com



• **One TCK summed up the positive side of being raised overseas by saying, “I think I see the world rotating on its axis, not around some small town”.**



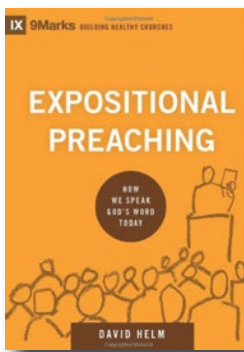
Eileen Nielsen and her husband, Jim, are church planters who have been working in Tohoku doing survivor care. Eileen has a masters in counseling and is available for Skype counseling. Contact her at eileenpnelsen@gmail.com.

Building Healthy Churches

Reviewed by Don Schaeffer

from 9Marks

Mark Dever, senior pastor of Capitol Hill Baptist Church in Washington, DC, and president of 9Marks Ministries¹, and Jonathan Leeman, editorial director for 9Marks, have edited an excellent series of practical books for those who want to help build healthy churches. They are short (almost all of them under 120 pages), readable books on what Dever has called the nine marks of a healthy church. Here are the books published so far by Crossway:



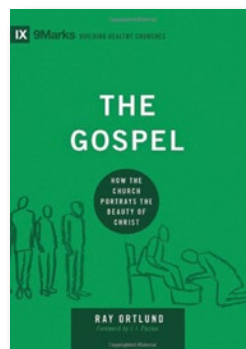
Expositional Preaching: How We Speak God's Words Today by David Helm (2014)

A wonderful primer on preaching that all preachers (both new and experienced) should read.

Sound Doctrine: How a Church Grows in the Love and Holiness of God by Bobby Jamieson (2013). Jamieson shows how sound doctrine nourishes holiness, love, and unity in the church.

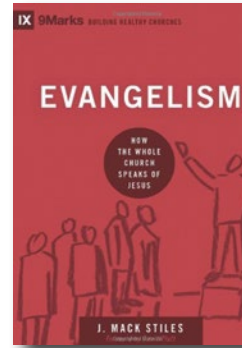
The Gospel: How the Church Portrays the Beauty of Christ by Ray Ortlund (2014)

This book should be required reading for all Christians. Ortlund shows how gospel doctrine must lead to a gospel culture in the church. The gospel must be the defining center of the church.



Church Membership: How the World Knows Who Represents Jesus by Jonathan Leeman (2012)

One of the best books I have read on what it means to be a church member.



Evangelism: How the Whole Church Speaks of Jesus by J. Mack Stiles (2014)

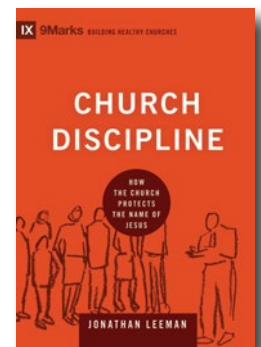
Stiles shows how evangelism can become part of the church's culture. Don Carson says this book "deserves to be read, pondered, and implemented."

Church Elders: How to Shepherd God's People Like Jesus by Jeramie Rinne (2014)

Rinne gives a concise, biblical job description for elders and shows who is qualified to serve. He shows what an elder is and does.

Church Discipline: How the Church Protects the Name of Jesus by Jonathan Leeman (2012)

Both biblical and practical, this book has real-life case studies of how churches should deal with common situations. The appendix lists mistakes pastors often make in practicing discipline.



Still to come are books on the marks of biblical theology, conversion, and discipleship. All books have helpful indexes (general and Scripture) and are very well written.

These extremely practical books are ideal for missionaries wanting to equip church leaders. They will also help church members grow in loving their church.

As the series editors remind us, "Local churches exist to display God's glory to the nations. We do that by fixing our eyes on the gospel of Jesus Christ, trusting him for salvation, and then loving one another with God's own holiness, unity, and love." **JH**

Don Schaeffer and his wife, Hazel, serve with the Christian & Missionary Alliance and came to Japan in 1984. They have planted churches in Saitama Ken and served in mission leadership.

¹ See 9Marks.org for more information about this ministry.

Correction: The previous edition of *Off the Bookshelf* mistakenly showed five stars when the reviewer gave it four stars.

Internet Safety – Resources

This article is the second installment of a two-part series

Every electronic device with access to the Internet should have safety controls implemented. Whether you're single or a family with kids—or if the device is a computer, a tablet, a game console, or a phone—everyone should have safety features implemented on all of their devices, because everyone is at risk.

In the last issue of Japan Harvest we talked about three major Internet dangers: pornography, torrenting sites (illegally downloading media), and online predators. We discussed how people of any age or gender are at risk of temptation or breaching security. Then the Bible gave us some clear instruction on guarding against impurity and sin, as well as keeping ourselves and each other accountable.

Now what?

Let's start with the bad news first. While we still stand by our belief that every device should be protected, some devices don't have a lot of safety features available yet. Game consoles (such as Wii, Nintendo 3DS, PSP, PS Vita, PlayStation 3, Xbox 360, etc.) in particular don't have an easy solution for Web filtering. Usually kids won't want to browse the Internet on these devices because the browsers aren't very good. But if they're determined, they can use them to visit questionable sites.

So, it's important for parents to be in regular communication with their kids and to supervise what they're doing on their game consoles (including monitoring what games they're playing; the Internet isn't the only place unsavory material exists). Common Sense Media's¹ parent's guide to game content may help to assess a game's suitability.

How about phones and tablets?

On Apple devices—including iPhones and iPads—you'll need to disable Safari, the preinstalled browser, via the Restrictions menu (found in Settings > General). Then you'll need to either disable "Installing Apps" or set the age limit to 12+ (Allowed Content > Apps; this disables 17+). All browsers except kid-safe ones (browsers with built-in safety controls) are marked 17+ specifically for this reason. There are various kid-safe browser options, but one we like is called "K9 Web Protection Browser" by Blue Coat Systems, Inc. (App Store² for Apple devices; Google Play Store³ for Android devices).

Alternatively, you can leave Safari enabled but set Allowed Websites to "Limit Adult Content" (this won't block everything) or "Specific Websites Only" (Allowed Content > Websites). You should also look around at the other settings under the Restrictions menu and implement any safety features appropriate for you or your child. Remember, "kid safe" doesn't mean "just for kids." Sometimes it's easier to hide what you do on your phone than what you do on your computer, so it's easier to get

into trouble there. It would be wise to create a built-in pause to make you aware of your decisions, so you don't visit unhealthy sites out of habit or by following a dicey rabbit trail of links.

As for non-Apple products (such as Android phones), they vary too widely to be able to cover them in this short article. Research your specific device to find out how to set safety options and restrictions.

Computers

Now we've reached the good news—there are lots of resources to protect your laptop or desktop computers. First, all Windows users should have antivirus software installed on their devices—no exceptions. We recommend this for Mac users as well, though since there are fewer viruses for Macs, it's not as imperative. You can search online for some options, using reviews to guide your research. You may want to consider Norton AntiVirus⁴ (paid; Windows, Mac), Panda Security⁵ (free version is Windows only), or Avast⁶ (free version available for Mac).

Second, we recommend installing an ad blocker on your preferred Internet browsers. This prevents malware from harassing you with pop-up ads, and also allows you to hide unsavory or annoying ads. We use Adblock Plus⁷, which works for most browsers.

Third, we recommend that everyone install content-blocking software and/or accountability software, based on your usage needs. Content-blocking software, sometimes referred to as Web-filtering software, restricts access to certain sites or content. If a site is on the blacklist, you won't be able to see it. Accountability software doesn't necessarily restrict your access, but it does report to someone else (of your choice) everything that you do, flagging potentially unsavory activities for their review to help keep you accountable.

Both content-blockers and accountability programs can block or report pornography, as well as sites where you can illegally download content. For example, if you get a letter from your Internet provider saying someone in your household is doing something illegal, you can look up the computer's activity history via the software—even if the browser history was erased—so you can guess who did it and can talk about the issue with them. Accountability software can also track where you or your kids are spending a lot of time, so if a parent notices their

continued on page 33

Point of View

We often see photographers angling for just the right position, the right point of view. It is important in writing too. Point of view is the perspective from which something is written. It affects the tone of your writing or speaking. It can engage your readers, or it can turn them off.

I am writing this paragraph in first person point of view. It's written from my perspective. First person uses pronouns like "I" and "we". First person is considered intense, subjective, and emotional. It is a good point of view to use when telling a personal story or writing a prayer letter.

Second person point of view uses pronouns like "you". This point of view is often appropriate when you write emails, messages, presentations, and articles. You might find it is easy to slip from first person to second person when you're writing or speaking. But it is better to stick to one point of view. This paragraph is written in second person.

Third-person point of view is common in fiction and academic writing. Pronouns like "he", "she", "it", "they", or a name are used. It can sound less casual, but also can be cold and aloof. It does provide flexibility to the author, as there is more distance between the speaker and the audience.

Readers can become confused if we switch point of view. For example: "Whenever a person enrolls in Bible College, you get a book list." This should more clearly read either "students who enroll in Bible college will receive a book list" (third person) or

"when you enrol in Bible college, you get a book list" (first person).

Readers may also feel targeted if point of view changes. I sometimes find that I start something in first person, for example, narrating an experience I've had. Then in the conclusion I move to language that's directed at my audience (second-person). That can be off-putting to the reader because it sounds like I'm suddenly instructing them, when they merely started reading a story about my experience.

To determine the point of view in a piece of writing, look for a direct statement of opinion:

"I rely on prayer," (first-person: writer's point of view).

"Your prayers are valuable to us," (second-person: directed at the reader).

"It is fantastic that people are praying," (third-person: told from an outside narrators point of view).

Stick to one point of view. You'll avoid confusion. **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.

Internet Safety – Resources continued from page 32

daughter spending a lot of time in a certain chat room or forum, they can talk about what she's doing, who she's talking to, and what's being said.

Unfortunately, neither content-blockers nor accountability programs are foolproof. A determined person might be able to find ways around them, but the programs are a helpful first line of defense. You'll want to search online for the best options for you, but here are some examples: K9 Web Protection⁸ (content-blocking; free), Covenant Eyes⁹ (accountability; paid; available for phones and tablets, too), RescueTime¹⁰ (a productivity tool that records all action on a computer, not just in browsers; free).

Most of the Internet is a great place to explore, and these tools can help protect you and your family against online dangers. Stay smart, be safe, have fun, and enjoy being online! We'll see you there. **JH**

Dusty and April Mack (US) have been in Japan since 2010. Dusty is a technology coordinator at CAJ and has a degree in computer information systems. April has a degree in professional writing.

1. <https://www.common sense media.org/game-reviews>
Common Sense Media has a lot of information to help you decide if a game (or movie, book, etc.) is suited for your child, but be aware that the age suggestions by other parents and kids in the user review portion are unreliable. Also, the site uses its own rating system and doesn't list official game ratings. For official game ratings, go to <http://www.esrb.org/> (US) or <http://www.pegi.info> (EU).
2. <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/k9-web-protection-browser/>
3. <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.bluecoat.k9.android>
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6. <https://www.avast.com/en-us/free-mac-security>
7. <https://adblockplus.org/>
8. <http://www1.k9webprotection.com/>
9. <http://www.covenanteyes.com/>
10. <https://www.rescuetime.com/>

Need the basics?

For tips on basic Internet safety, like choosing a good password or safeguarding your privacy, go to <https://www.google.com/safetycenter/> for details.

Lead from Your Core Values

This article is part two of a four-part series, based on the following: In your ministry, make sure that you live out what's important to you by (1) identifying your core values and increasing your understanding of them, (2) leading from your core values, (3) developing practices that reflect your core values, and (4) assessing how well you are living out your core values.

I want two things. First, I want to live out my core values. My core values flow from how God designed me and from the life experiences He has given me. I want to honor what God has done by living out my core values in all parts of my life, including ministry. Second, I want to be an authentic, consistent, and inspiring ministry leader. (I don't want to be a fake, inconsistent, and boring ministry leader.) My guess is that you want both of these things, too. I've found that leading from my core values helps me achieve both.

Four reasons you should lead from core values

Reason 1

If you lead from your core values, you'll be living out what is important to you as you do ministry. What's important to me? Empowering others. So as part of my leadership style, I strive to listen (instead of talking), ask questions (instead of issuing directives), encourage (instead of criticizing), and help others solve their own problems (instead of solving their problems). And I talk about this core value with others and encourage them to empower the people they work with.

Reason 2

If you lead from your core values, you'll be yourself. And being yourself helps you be authentic. Those who know me know I value working smart. They know I focus on doing right things before focusing on doing things right. They know I value documenting goals, tracking progress, and determining next steps. And they know I schedule time for big goals first, then schedule time for small goals (like email). Simply put, being me means finding ways to work smarter (not harder). Wherever I go, I look for ways to do this—just ask my wife! If I stopped doing this, those around me would know I was faking, that I wasn't being me—neither of which is good for ministry leaders to be. (After all, who wants to work with a fake?)

Reason 3

If you lead from your core values, you'll be more likely to behave consistently and make consistent decisions. For example, one of my values is focus—more specifically, focusing on the mission. I strive to talk about the mission in casual conversation, to know what it takes to achieve the mission, to explain how daily activities contribute to achieving the mission, to know the current level of mission achievement, and to focus on closing the gap between current and targeted levels of mission achievement. And when making decisions, I ask, "How does this help us achieve our mission?"

Reason 4

If you lead from your core values, you'll have a way to inspire others. I want to inspire others, in part because inspired people are happier, more committed, and more productive. A good way to inspire others is to cast vision that will encourage a core value. One of my core values is growth. I like to cast the vision by asking questions: What might happen if Christian leaders in Japan were growing and thriving? What might happen if they worked together more effectively, collaboratively using their God-given gifts? What might happen if mentors helped young leaders grow by believing in them and encouraging them? And what might happen if leaders took responsibility to define, commit to, and achieve their own goals?

The point? In your ministry, make sure that you live out what's important to you. Leading from your core values can help.

What about you?

1. What are your core values?
2. What's satisfying/unsatisfying about leading from your core values?
3. How could leading from your core values help you?
4. How can you increasingly lead from your core values?
5. What's next? **JH**



Michael B. Essenburg (US; Christian Reformed Japan Mission) is involved in leadership development.

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