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Summer 2015

Communication

Building Meaningful Connections in Modern Japan

JH Japan Harvest

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

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Welcome to this edition of Japan Harvest:

Communication!

Communication. We do it constantly, often badly and even without meaning to. The very quality of our daily lives is tied up in the quality of our communication with others around us. As Christians we have a life-giving message of God's love and grace that we keenly desire to share, so it makes sense that we would stop every now and then to consider how well we are communicating.

In this edition of Japan Harvest, we highlight a variety of aspects of communication from making the most of available technology, to communicating with God, and within Japanese culture. We even consider how to learn and grow from our miscommunications!

We're also excited to present selected statistics from the first report of Japan Missions Research (JMR) about overseas missionary engagement in Japan. It's interesting to see where missionaries are located, what ministries they're involved in, where they've come from, and how things have changed historically. I hope it will inform your prayers and be a source of encouragement. God is at work through his people, as each missionary represented in these statistics communicates God's love to the people they meet each day.

Acting as Managing Editor for this edition has been an eye-opening experience! I offer our sincere apologies for how late this 'summer' edition has become. It is with great relief that the Japan Harvest team welcomes Wendy Marshall (the real Managing Editor) back from home assignment, and Meg Willis and Karen Ellrick who are joining Greg Corey in design.

We hope these articles enrich your communication, encourage your hearts, enliven your prayers, and spark new ideas for your part in God's harvest in Japan.

Love,
Rachel

Member MISSIONS

ONEMISSION
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One Lord. One Life. One Calling.

WGM
DISCOVER MISSIONS™

CMS
AUSTRALIA

FREE WILL BAPTIST
INTERNATIONAL
MISSIONS

CMS (Church Missionary Society of Australia)

CMS (Church Missionary Society of Australia) is a fellowship of Christian people and churches committed to global mission. We work with churches to set apart long-term workers who cross cultures to share the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

CMS was founded in England by a small group of Christians with a passion for worldwide gospel outreach, including John Newton, who wrote the hymn "Amazing Grace", and William Wilberforce, who was a leader in abolishing the slave trade in England. A CMS outpost was set up in Sydney in 1825 to support work among Aboriginal people, and shortly afterwards the first missionaries arrived from England to serve in western NSW. CMS Associations were set up around Australia, and the first Australian CMS missionary, Helen Philips, sailed for Ceylon (Sri Lanka) in 1892.

Our current vision is for a world that knows Jesus. We aim to achieve this by:

- Reaching gospel-poor peoples for Christ
- Equipping Christian leaders for church and society
- Engaging churches in cross-cultural ministry

The current CMS Australia involvement in Japan began with Anne and Denis McIntyre (who went out as single people and married later). Since Anne arrived in 1971, there has been a continuous CMS Australia presence in Japan.

From January 2016, CMS Australia will have 15 missionaries, with 15 children, working in the Kanto and Kansai regions with Mission to the World (MTW), The Evangelical Alliance Mission (TEAM), Kirisutosha Gakusei Kai (KGK), and local churches. We aim to build up the body of Christ in Japan by focusing on ministry in Japanese under local leadership and to encourage and support Japanese Christians in evangelism. JH

FREE WILL BAPTIST INTERNATIONAL MISSIONS

FWBIM

(Free Will Baptist International Missions)

Free Will Baptist International Missions (FWBIM, of which Japan Free Will Baptist Missions is a part) has moved from pioneer-type work to facilitation and partnerships. Thirty years ago many of our workers went to places to pioneer the only existing evangelical church. Today we find ourselves talking with mature leaders from our FWB works in places like Brazil, Cuba, Cote d'Ivoire, India, Japan, Panama, etc. We are asking God to help us all reach farther together. We have moved from jack-of-all trade people to specialists who facilitate ministry by training, mentoring, and working alongside local workers.

FWBIM sent its first missionaries to Japan in December 1954. Less than two years later in August 1956, following language school in Tokyo, the Calverys moved to Abashiri, Hokkaido to plant a church. In 1961, they moved to Bihoro, and planted a church there too. These churches form the center for our rural outreach work in Eastern Hokkaido. The team of national pastors and missionaries has a vision that includes the unreached and under-reached towns and communities in this region of Hokkaido.

In October 1966 our mission started our first church plant in Sapporo. Sapporo and surrounding cities have become the center for our work in central Hokkaido. We have five national pastors and six churches partnering with our missionaries to reach out to the more than 2,000,000 people who live in this area.

Our mission efforts in our third main area, Kanto, began in 1961 and continue today. Several new missionary families have joined our veteran missionaries and national workers who have been faithfully working in Kanto. The new workers bring with them energy, talents, and vision for the future. We look forward to the good things God has in store for Kanto and Japan.

We exist to labor with the Body of Christ to fulfill the Great Commission.

At FWBIM, we realize we are not the only ones charged with the task of mission. We work alongside and in conjunction with other like-minded Great Commission Christians to take the gospel to the least-reached peoples of the world. We have dedicated the first 80 years of our existence as a mission (61 in Japan) to this task and the task hasn't changed. But we are adapting to current needs to be the best stewards of the resources God gives us, as well as striving to be strategic in our efforts in a new era for Christian missions.

In 2015 we have 16 career missionaries and 4 missionary interns assigned to the field of Japan. This is the largest number that we have ever had assigned to our field here. However we are not closing the door to others who might wish to join us in laboring with the body of Christ to fulfill the Great Commission. It is all for His glory. JH

ONEMISSION
OMS · ONE MISSION SOCIETY
One Lord. One Life. One Calling.

OMS (One Mission Society)

OMS Christian Mission Church began in 1901 when Charles and Lettie Cowman together with Juji Nakada started the work in Japan. Earnest and Hazel Kilbourne joined them the next year. Cowman, Nakada, and Kilbourne opened the Central Gospel Mission where they held services every night while also starting the Bible Institute (Tokyo Biblical Seminary). From its very beginning as the Oriental Missionary Society (OMS), Charles Cowman and Earnest Kilbourne's focus was training Japanese people to effectively share the gospel, with the goal of winning their own people to Christ. Juji Nakada established the Japan Holiness Church, and OMS has worked with them for 113 years.

Today we continue in this goal to empower the Japanese to reach their own people. In 2013, One Mission Society in Japan became the OMS Christian Mission Church. We still work in partnership with the Japan Holiness Church and Tokyo Biblical Seminary. The OMS Christian Mission Church was established to continue the task of evangelism, training and equipping, and releasing Japanese Christians to reach their own families, friends, and fellow workers.

We seek to reach Japanese people through English classes, cooking classes, craft classes, hula classes, an English fellowship and coffee ministry, and sports ministry. We are in the process of translating into Japanese and publishing a method of training potential Christian leaders called 'Train and Multiply' to help Japanese Christians reach their neighbours. They in turn would also train and equip those they reach for Christ to continue to reach the next group of believers. We hope to have level one of 'Train and Multiply' ready to be published later in 2015, and level two published in 2016. We desire to see Japanese believers trained in this way to reach their own people. We believe we will see the evangelism of Japan as the laity are trained to evangelize, disciple, and release those they lead to the Lord to reach their families and friends for Christ. This is the goal and focus of OMS Christian Mission Church. JH

OMS Christian Mission Church
OMS クリスチャン ミッション 教会

WGM (The World Gospel Mission)

The World Gospel Mission (WGM) website states, "World Gospel Mission partners with individuals and churches worldwide to make disciples of Christ and encourage believers to become missions-active through ministries that reach the whole person—physically and spiritually—transforming communities." This describes what WGM as an organization is doing as a whole, and in Japan through the years. In Japan, WGM has worked in two ways to make disciples: university student ministry and the Immanuel Church.

The first WGM missionaries arrived in Japan in 1952. David and Edna Kuba were Japanese-Americans with a deep desire to reach the people of Japan with the gospel of Jesus Christ. As they began to make contacts with people and churches, they discovered the Immanuel Church denomination. The Kubas felt it was not necessary to begin another denomination and that working with the Immanuel Church would be a good way to serve. In 1952 the Immanuel Church and the Wesleyan Church of America joined in a partnership called the Immanuel Wesleyan Federation (IWF). In 1954 WGM was invited to join IWF. Since that time, WGM has worked with the Immanuel Church in many different ways.

A few years after their arrival in Japan, the Kubas felt the Lord leading them into a ministry with university students. They began Bible studies and the Lord brought many university students to them. Through the Kubas' ministry, student groups were established at Rikkyo University and Keio University; and a campus Bible study was held at Tokyo University. Many students from this ministry went into full-time Christian work as pastors or missionaries. After the Kubas retired, the student ministry continued with Kevin Zirkle and Dennis Probst working on these campuses.

WGM missionary Zach Motts describes the ministry to university students, "We come alongside Christian students, and create open spaces for them to walk alongside non-Christian students. We open these spaces through Bible studies, hosting events, and being available to hang out."

WGM's work with the Immanuel Church has included a variety of ministries over the years. English Bible classes held at churches, preaching for evangelistic meetings and other special meetings, teaching at the Immanuel Bible College in Yokohama, and serving as the English secretary to the President of the Bible College are some of the ways WGM missionaries have worked to build God's kingdom in Japan.

Another way we work together is in outreach outside of Japan. The Immanuel Church has sent missionaries to work with WGM in Kenya, India, and Bolivia.

In the past few years, the Immanuel Church has emphasized youth ministry, particularly camps and youth activities. WGM has four young missionaries who are working with youth, both in the church and on university campuses.

Zach Motts came in 2007. He met Esther Ueki, a Japanese MK from Jamaica, and two years later they were married. Zach and Esther are currently in the States on an educational leave. When they return in 2016, they will be working with university students and young people in Immanuel Churches.

Holly Muehleisen arrived in 2010. She is in her second term and works with children and youth in three Immanuel Churches as well as with university students.

Brandon Kuba is the grandson of David and Edna Kuba. He arrived in the fall of 2014 and is currently in language study. He will be working with university students.

We are thankful for the new missionaries WGM has in Japan. We are excited to see how the Lord will develop the ministry of each one, working with university students as well as with children and youth in Immanuel Churches. JH

We come alongside Christian students, and create open spaces for them to walk alongside non-Christian students. We open these spaces through Bible studies, hosting events, and being available to hang out.

The Immanuel Church has sent missionaries to work with WGM in Kenya, India, and Bolivia.

Miscommunication & Servanthood

What is the connection between trying to order a sausage as a side dish at a pancake restaurant in Japan and servanthood? Would you say that they are totally unrelated?

I grew up in Japan many years ago, the daughter of missionaries, and returned ten years ago as a missionary myself. The fact that I came back to live and work here is evidence of God's grace and patience because, like many missionary children, I struggled with identity issues when I was a high-school student after my family had returned to the United States. I had no desire to become a missionary like my parents, particularly not one to Japan! I did teach English in Japan for a few years but without the label of missionary. Even so, I struggled to balance my identity as an American with trying to fit into Japanese society.

Over the past ten years, I have been able to live in Japan with a sense of freedom to be who I am, without needing to try to perfectly fulfill the expectations that I used to think applied to me. I have come to realize that my Japanese friends and neighbors, particularly those in the church, are much more willing to excuse the missteps and misunderstandings that I make as a foreigner than I had given them credit for. When I have done something that really offended someone, I have been able to ask for forgiveness and have been forgiven.

Within this new-found freedom, I have been able to relax in the face of the frequent miscommunications arising from my "fluent broken" Japanese. But the freedom to accept myself as a foreigner, without feeling guilty about not measuring up to Japanese standards, has led to a different miscommunication problem. It is very different from the kind caused by linguistic deficiencies; rather than failing to communicate a message, I communicate something quite plainly and later regret it very much. I do it not just through words, but also through actions and attitudes.

Which brings me to pancakes and sausages. In May, an American friend and I celebrated her birthday by going out for breakfast. Eating breakfast out is very popular in America, and we Americans are very attached to our way of doing breakfast. My friend suggested a very trendy pancake restaurant that opens at ten in the morning, which is early enough to classify as breakfast time for us.

Most of the menu items were dessert pancakes, but two or three items combined savory foods with pancakes, including one with a nice big sausage. That sausage caught my eye because in America sausages or bacon usually accompany pancakes for breakfast. So, when I gave my order—a custard pudding and a side of ice cream—I asked the waitress if I could also order a single sausage on the side. As I made that request, I was prepared to be turned down as I have found most Japanese restaurants are inflexible about their menus. But, I have kept on trying. It's been my little campaign to get restaurants here to do things the way restaurants do in my country.

The waitress looked surprised but replied that she would ask. She returned with the message that it would be possible. I was elated and told her how happy I was and how rare it was for a restaurant in Japan to be so flexible. But when my friend also asked for a sausage with her order, the waitress looked really taken aback and again said she would have to ask. When she left us, my friend and I looked at each other in amazement and wondered why it should be allowed for one customer but not the other. In the end, neither of us was allowed to order a sausage on the side.

We both had a good laugh about it, partly out of amusement, partly out of chagrin, and, I am ashamed to say, on my part, partly out something uncomfortably like scorn. We were genuinely puzzled about what had gone wrong linguistically, though we had both had similar experiences where we had seemed to be communicating but the end result was not what we had expected. The incident nagged at me for the rest of the day. It had definitely been awkward for the waitress and had made my friend and me feel very much the foreigners. I felt guilty. Some of the guilt probably came from residual "third-culture kid" issues that still occasionally pop up where I feel guilty for "acting American." At the pancake restaurant, I had acted like an American for sure. This example is probably more benign than some other cases where I truly offended people by showing my anger or being too direct in my criticisms. I have had to apologize on several occasions for such responses. In this case, we were able to smooth over the awkwardness with pleasantries.

However, I understood later that the main source of my guilt lay somewhere else. It had to do with servanthood. If I am here in Japan as a servant of Jesus Christ, how did I communicate my servanthood to the waitress? Or did I communicate instead an attitude that my country's way of doing things is far superior? In the Japanese context, surely my trying to persuade the restaurant staff to change their practices came across as arrogant or condescending. If I had had a different focus, perhaps I would have found a way to share, at least indirectly, a bit of the gospel with the waitress.

Communication is at the heart of what a missionary is all about. A missionary is a "sent one," sent out with a message from the King, the good news of Jesus Christ. Part of the message is illustrated when we show the love of God to people by demonstrating a servant's heart, just as Jesus "came not to be served, but to serve" (Mark 10:45).

I have the right to enjoy my own culture, to do things such as eating sausage with pancakes, but I also have the privilege of setting aside my own cultural needs in order to communicate as well as I can with the people of Japan. I can surely share the positive experiences of my culture with people as a way of sharing myself with them, but my attitude at the pancake restaurant was a demanding one, not a giving one.

I may not have gotten what I asked for that morning at the pancake restaurant, but I am glad for having had my eyes opened to see how my attitude toward my cultural identity is connected to servanthood. It is one more thing that I need to submit to the Lordship of Christ in order to be the best servant of His that I can. JH

Patricia Boyle. *Patricia spent eleven years of her childhood in Japan as the daughter of missionary parents. In 2005, she returned to Japan as a missionary herself. She lives in Amagasaki, Hyogo Prefecture.*

Communicating Meaningfully with a Japanese Audience

Words are fundamental to creation. In Genesis one, God spoke — and all things came into being. In John one, Jesus is described as "the Word" — the one through whom everything was created. To communicate with his creation, "the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us" (John 1:14). Words are also fundamental for us as God's children as we praise him and express his greatness. But words can be harmful: the serpent used words to tempt Eve and Adam away from trusting God, while James three warns us about the destructive power of the tongue. Throughout the Bible we see that words and how we use them are critically important to us as God's people. We need to take great care as we communicate.

Communicating meaningfully involves far more than simply choosing the correct words. Words don't operate in a vacuum; they carry culturally understood nuances and implied meanings. The context and manner in which words are delivered can drastically change the receiver's perception of a message. As a Christian worker in Japan, I've lately been pondering three aspects of communication: the rhetoric, the context, and the relational elements.

Communicating meaningfully involves far more than simply choosing the correct words.

Passionate communication

Aristotle developed the craft of rhetoric for persuasive speaking, and his three appeals of ethos, pathos, and logos still form the basis for public speaking today. Ethos refers to the credibility and rapport of the author or speaker and how they incline the listener to accept the message. Pathos refers to the power to evoke sympathy or compassion. It often involves the emotional and imaginative elements of a message such as a personal story or illustration. Logos means "word" and refers to the logical presentation of ideas. Most communication involves all three aspects, but different audiences are more receptive to different appeals.

You don't need to watch too much Japanese television or attend too many graduation ceremonies to observe that emotional appeals elicit strong responses from Japanese audiences (see, for example, Yang's *The Political Economy of Affect and Emotion* in East Asia[1]). An NHK documentary producer explained, "sentimental narrations are ethical not in spite of their emotional evocations but precisely because of them."[2] He believes that the emotional aspect helps the audience feel the authenticity of the story.

In contrast, many people from English-speaking cultures respond most strongly to the logos or rational–logical element of a message. As an English speaker, I logically conclude that to reach the heart of a Japanese audience, we need to rely more on the appeals of ethos and pathos. In concluding this, I am not saying that the logical content of Christian doctrine is unimportant, but that demonstrating how passionately we feel about doctrines will help a Japanese audience gauge their importance. And while sharing credentials and personal experiences may not come naturally (I am an Aussie after all), they may enable your audience to trust you and connect with your message. Because our content is vitally important, we need to communicate it with the credentials and emotions that would accompany an important message in Japanese culture.

Furthermore, education researchers have suggested that it "may be that for a Japanese reader what is hinted at is more important and acceptable than what is too bluntly presented".[3] Teaching important doctrine dispassionately, or too logically, may make it appear insignificant to a Japanese audience, or alternatively, may offend them by being blunt about something important.

Contextual communication

Have you ever read a question in a new language, understood each word, but still not understood the question? Then, once you clarified the question, you couldn't understand why it was posed? The problem might be that the question was formulated through a different thought process than what you're accustomed to in your primary culture.

To analyse thought patterns, Richard Nesbitt and Yuri Miyamoto asked people to describe various scenes and found that Japanese participants usually began by describing the context (such as a lake), and then each object in relation to other objects and their environment. On the other hand, American participants first described the main object (such as a fish) and then other objects independently. Later, Japanese participants retained more information about the environment and the relationship between various objects, whereas American participants retained information about the main objects in the picture. Nesbitt and Miyamoto concluded, "There is growing evidence to demonstrate that perceptual processes are influenced by culture. People in Western cultures have been found to organize objects by emphasizing rules and categories and to focus on salient objects independently from the context, whereas people in East Asian cultures are more inclined to attend to the context and to the relationship between the objects and the context".[4]

Other researchers claim that different thought patterns result from the different structures of languages.[5] For example, while

an English speaker might say, "The cat sat on the hat", a Japanese speaker is more likely to phrase it: "The hat was by the cat sat on." For this reason, Japanese speakers are more likely to pay attention to the contextual and relational aspects of what they perceive. Graham Orr also observed, "conversations, even public speeches, do not tend to be formed along the lines of logic . . . Rather, meaning is associated with events and happenings, with people and relationships."[6]

Suffice to say, whether for cultural or linguistic reasons, we think differently! We know from experience that direct translation doesn't produce the same meaning, so it's useful to think about the thought patterns that result from Japanese culture and language and how we can structure our communication to more naturally "gel" with how our audience thinks. Again, I'm not suggesting we should forget important content, but rather that we should consider how we present it. This might mean, for example, teaching the doctrine of perspicuity of Scripture through the historical story of Luther or through the biblical context of Paul and Timothy in 2 Timothy rather than as an abstract concept in a series on systematic theology.

Loving communication

"If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal" (1 Corinthians 13:1). It doesn't matter how well crafted your choice of words and flow of ideas, if your audience doesn't know you love them, you are not communicating the love of Christ. Expressions of love are culturally diverse, and a one-size-fits-all approach will not communicate love. As Tim Adeney and Stuart Heath explain, "If I want to love you by making you a coffee, I need to know what kind of coffee you like. With the best will in the world, I might make you an espresso, but if you only drink soy lattes, then my attempt to love you has failed."[7] They list regenerate hearts and Spirit-transformed minds as the basis for Christian love, and suggest developing practical structures (such as regular coffee times or home groups) and contexts (such as rosters for helping people in need of practical assistance) to enable the expression of practical love in each situation we encounter.

A helpful tool for discerning how to love is Gary Chapman's The 5 Love Languages.[8] Chapman describes five different ways that people primarily feel loved: words of affirmation, acts of service, receiving gifts, quality time, and physical touch. Although he originally wrote it as a marriage counselor, these categories have been expanded to apply to the communication of love in a wide variety of contexts. Thinking about how these types of love play out in Japanese culture can help us work out how to love the people in our audience.

For example, words of affirmation might be seen in compliments women give each other for their clothes and accessories, or cries of "*sugoi!*" (great!) on the sporting field or among a group of boys playing computer games. Japanese people take introductions and recommendations seriously and will often accompany you to meet a new dentist or mechanic, join a preschool, or get lunch at a sushi restaurant. This could be one way to express love through acts of service.

Gift-giving is also an important aspect of Japanese culture. If this is the primary love language of someone you want to communicate with, then it will be vitally important to follow the cultural conventions of gift-giving with that person in order for them to feel you love them.

When we initially joined our Japanese church, I was frustrated by the long hours of "just sitting around" that happened after lunch. I had failed to recognize a Japanese expression of spending quality time together. Physical touch is evident among groups of teenage girls, who might hold hands while they shop, or hug as they say goodbye. It's also seen on weekends as young Dads carry their toddlers around parks on their shoulders.

There are many other ways to think about expressing love. For example, Smalley and Trent suggest using word pictures to speak meaningfully with people we love[9] and their strategies can be adapted to a Japanese audience.

Whatever strategy we use, one point is clear: we need to learn to 'speak' the language in which our audience members feel loved.

We have a great commission; we have the greatest message ever to be told, so let's use our words wisely with passion, attention to context, and love to touch hearts so that more Japanese people might raise their voices in celebration of God and his wondrous love for us. JH

Rachel Hughes, *her husband, Dene, and their two boys live in Amagasaki. The boys attend a 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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7 Adeney, Tim and Stuart Heath, *Love & Wisdom*, Gospel Groundwork, 2013, p.101.

8 Chapman, Gary *The 5 Love Languages: the Secret to Love that Lasts*, Northfield, 2010. *http://www.5lovelanguages.com/*

9 Smalley, Gary and John Trent, *The Language of Love*, Pocket Books, 1991.

God's Tool Box

Jesus was brought up under the leadership and direction of his earthly father, Joseph, who was a carpenter by trade. The toolbox they used in their daily work probably contained rulers, markers, planes and compasses among other tools.

Right after Peter declared that Jesus was the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of the living God, Jesus said, "Upon this rock (the fact that He is the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of the living God) I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18). Carpenters of his day not only made furniture, they also built houses. If God is in the process of building His church, what kind of tools do you suppose He is using?

Let's take a look at what's inside His toolbox.

Believers

The first few chapters of Acts tell us that 3,000 believers were added to the original 120 (Acts 2:41) and that a few days later another 5,000 men were saved and baptized (Acts 4:4). The number of disciples increased so much that the original 11 could not handle all the responsibility of the work. So, deacons full of the Holy Spirit were appointed from the body of believers to take care of the needs in the church. Stephen was a regular guy, a believer through whom the Holy Spirit did great wonders and miracles. Church leadership, that is the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers have been given to equip (Ephesians 4:12) and prepare believers to go out and do the work of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19–20).

The believer is the most important tool in God's toolbox. Without you, God's command to go into all the world and preach the gospel could not be carried out.

The Holy Spirit

Like tools, believers can become rusty and ineffective if they are not used and taken care of properly. One definition of rust is "any growth, habit, influence, or agency tending to injure, deteriorate, or impair the mind, character, abilities or usefulness." The best way to prevent rust in a believer is to constantly apply oil.

Japan lacks natural reserves of oil, which is perhaps the most sought-after commodity in the world today. However, there is an unlimited supply of spiritual oil in Japan — the Holy Spirit. Speaking through the apostle Paul, God says to the Ephesian church, and to the Japanese church today, "but be filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18).

Communication

The word "communication" comes from the Latin word *communicare*, which means to share. Thus, communication is a meaningful exchange of information between people through sharing thoughts via messages, visuals, signals and/or behavior

We communicate by sharing meaning with our friends, acquaintances, spouses, and children. Did you notice the "uni" in the middle of the word "comm-uni-cation"? It signifies the unity of thought between believers. Psalm 133 celebrates this unity:

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!
It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments;
As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life forevermore.

Communication with God is called prayer. Prayer does not just involve presenting one's requests. David poured out his heart and soul to God at times. He shared his intimate feelings with God. You can let

God know in detail how you feel. This is your soul communicating with God. "Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us" (Psalm 62:8).

But communicating with God also includes making your requests known to him. God is a very favorable person. Through the apostle Paul, he says, "Be careful for nothing [don't worry about anything]; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6-7).

A key to communication with God is a thankful attitude. "Hey, God, thanks for taking time to listen to me. I'm so glad I could cast all my worries and concerns on you. Thanks for worrying for me." Giving thanks is God's will for you. Paul tells us to "Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).

There is another side to prayer, of which we Christians should perhaps be more aware. Genesis 3:8 tells us, "And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day." Adam and Eve both heard the voice of God with their ears. In other words, they understood His language. Today, God speaks to us through his Word, the gift ministries of the apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher, and the Holy Spirit. Simply put, God wants us to speak with Him, but He also wants us to hear what His Spirit is saying to the church. Communication with God is a reciprocal affair. Each of the seven addresses to the churches in Revelation 2 and 3 ends with a call to hear what "the Spirit says to the churches." How often do we give God a chance to communicate with us?

PAUL TELLS US TO,

"REJOICE EVERMORE. PRAY WITHOUT CEASING. IN EVERY THING GIVE THANKS: FOR THIS IS THE WILL OF GOD IN CHRIST JESUS CONCERNING YOU."

God uses believers, filled with the Holy Spirit, communicating together in unity, communicating with God by pouring out their hearts, making requests, thanking him and listening to him. These are the tools that God is using to build his Church. JH

Nils Olson, *Pastor/Missionary, Japan Bethel Mission Munakata Bethel Christian Center*

Short-Term Teams with a Long-Term Witness ~ via facebook ~

On the Train

"Hi!"

"Hello. Where from?"

"California."

"Why you come to Japan?"

"To make friends!"

The Japanese girl, in her grey-and-white school uniform, struggled with English, but Mike, the short-term (ST) team leader, gently encouraged her and soon they were laughing over his cellphone photos of home and church. As we neared our stop on the Osaka Loop Line, I offered to take their photo and got a good snap of their peace signs and smiles. I asked if she knew about Facebook and if it was okay to put the photo online where she and her friends could see it.

ST Missions Questions

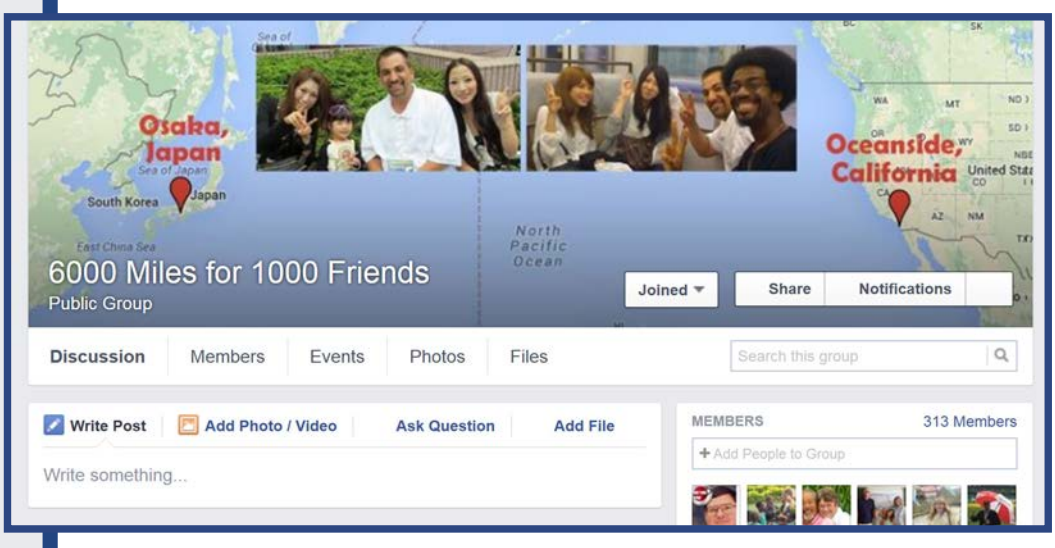
If you have hosted or sent ST missionaries, you have probably wrestled with questions like: How can ST workers have a lasting impact? And, how can we stay in touch with the contacts they make? I have struggled with these questions since hosting our first ST team in 1997, but now social media is providing new answers. I used to encourage our ST workers to send Christmas cards to their new Japanese friends in order to stay in touch, but, while talking with Mike about plans for his 2012 team, I asked, "Why not use Facebook?"

Using a Facebook Group

Mike's ST team responded enthusiastically. They created a Facebook group, 6000 Miles for 1000 Friends, and wore big nametags featuring the Facebook group name. From the moment they arrived, signing up new friends on Facebook became an integral part of their trip. On the second day, they signed up seventeen new Japanese contacts. By the end of their twelve days in Japan, their Facebook group had grown to over three hundred members. Some of these were church members or personal friends, but many were first-time contacts they had met on the trains and streets of Osaka.

The purpose was serious, but the approach was light-hearted, "Hi, we're from California! We're only here for twelve days, but we're trying to make 1,000 new friends." Most young Japanese welcomed it as a fun game, sometimes even urging their friends to sign up also. The team members competed in boldly approaching people and inviting them to join the Facebook group. A tall, young African-American man was the most popular—all the Japanese girls wanted to get their photo taken with him and they were eager to sign up so they could share the photos with their friends.

In addition to sharing photos, the Facebook group became a natural place for posting Bible verses, prayer requests, personal news updates, and words of encouragement. When the ST team members gave their testimonies in our church with an interpreter, we made videos and uploaded them to Facebook for their new friends to watch.



Nearly everyone we asked knew about Facebook and seemed comfortable with having their photos posted on the group page, even if they weren't Facebook members. Some used their smart phones to join Facebook on the spot, and more signed up within a few days, using the information cards we gave them.

Long-term Witness

Months after the ST team returned to the States, members continued to post to the group, and three years later I am still posting event invitations, Scriptures, and more. The Facebook group provides a long-term channel to continue sharing about Jesus in a low-key and non-threatening way, and Facebook messages provide a simple way to contact individual group members when desired.

In many countries, ST teams provide medical or dental assistance, dig wells, or help with building homes or churches. In most of Japan, hands-on ministries like those are rarely an option, and it can be difficult to find ST work that has a lasting impact. Many ST teams coming to Japan focus on friendship evangelism, but this is also difficult when a team is in Japan for only a short time. Facebook and other social media platforms offer new options for making contacts and staying in touch long-term.

The Japanese school girl that Mike met on the train happily joined Facebook and is still in the 6000 Miles for 1000 Friends group. I pray that one day she will place her faith in Jesus and join a good church. Meanwhile, it's a joy to know that she and many others are able to see the Scripture postings and event invitations that we continue to share with the group.

Doing it Better

We are sharing about this approach with future ST teams from the beginning of the planning stages so they can recruit social media savvy team members and involve their support team in developing ideas and posting appropriate content. One church we visited last year hosted a discussion meeting for potential ST workers at which we proposed using Facebook, and the idea was very well received. We expect to host a team from this church in 2016 and are praying that the Lord will bring team members who are ready to build lasting relationships with the people they meet during their ST mission.

Facebook and other social media platforms have the potential to transform short-term mission activities and brief face-to-face encounters into long-term evangelism and discipleship opportunities. How will you respond to the challenge of using these new tools for the Kingdom of God? JH

__Dan and Karen Ellrick__ came to Japan as missionaries in 1996. Their current focus is resource development. Dan is also the Japan representative of International Ministerial Fellowship.

(All images are as posted on Facebook, each shot by its uploader, except the nametag photo by Karen Ellrick)

One year has passed since we started as Japan Missions Research (JMR). We are thankful that we can now present our first annual research report.

JMR was founded with the objective of "exploring the best practices of the Christian church in today's Japan through working in partnership with churches, organizations, and individuals engaged in missions in Japan; analyzing and researching the statistics of churches and missions in Japan; and providing radical and practical proposals regarding the imminent issues facing churches in Japan." As a fledgling organization, we humbly present a report of our research on the following two topics during the first year.

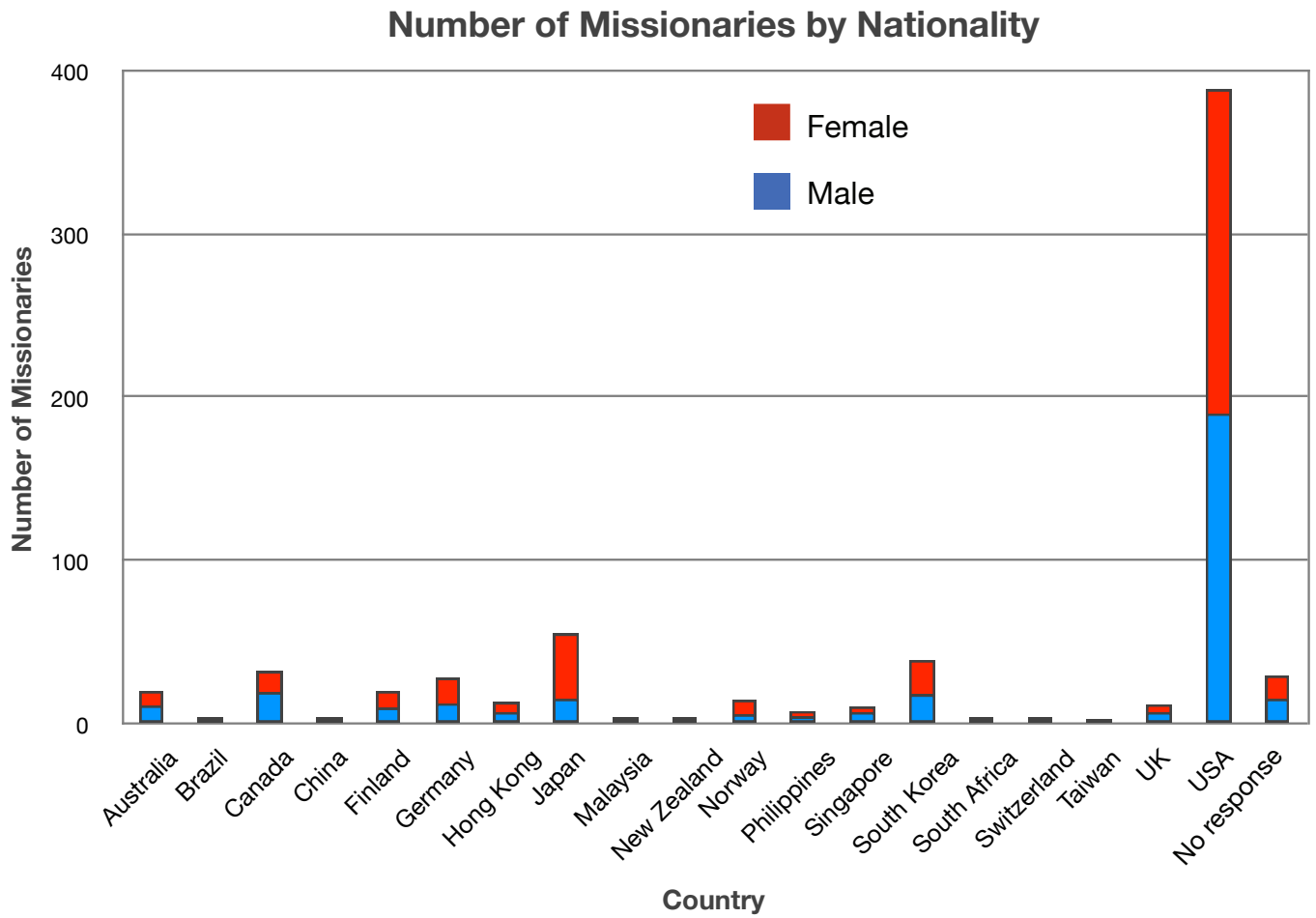
1. Statistics of Christian churches in Japan in 2013
2. Statistics of missionaries from overseas to Japan

In regard to the second topic, we are greatly indebted to Japan Evangelical Missionary Association (JEMA). We thank JEMA for their extensive assistance in our research.

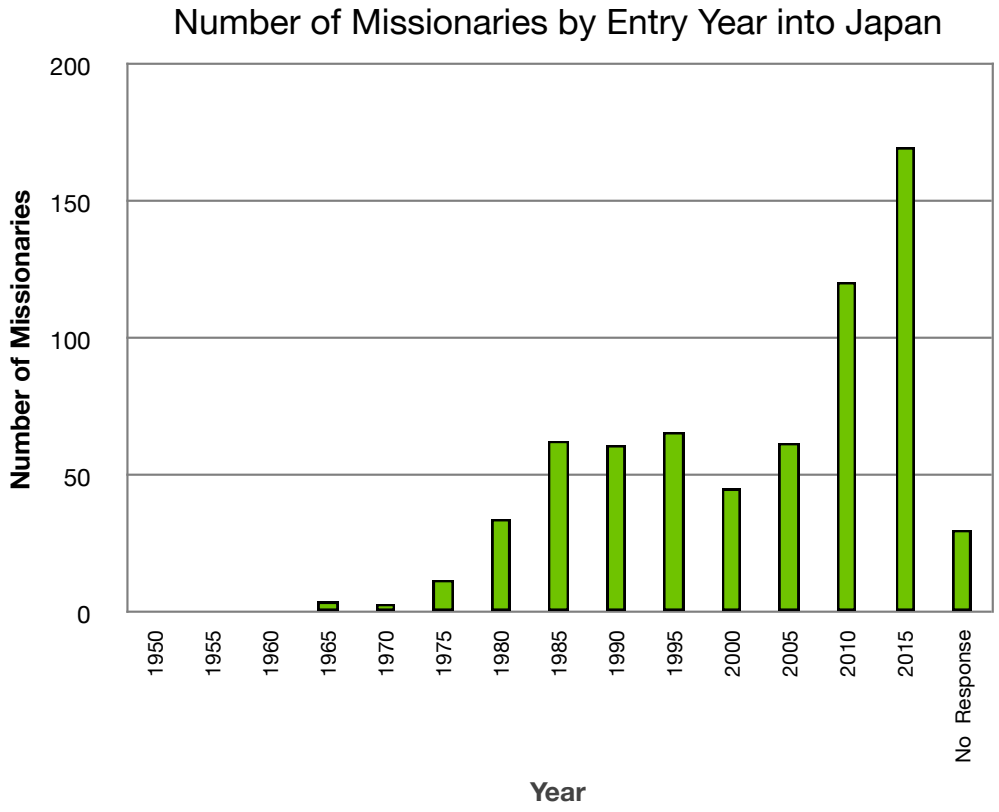
We sent surveys to each of the mission organizations listed in the 2014 JEMA Directory. We received responses from 32% of the organizations, which represent 37% of the total number of missionaries to whom we sent a survey request. As it is, we regret that our research was less than thorough, and that the data we gathered does not precisely represent the overall picture of missionaries in Japan. We hope, however, that this report is indicative to some extent of missionary statistics in Japan.

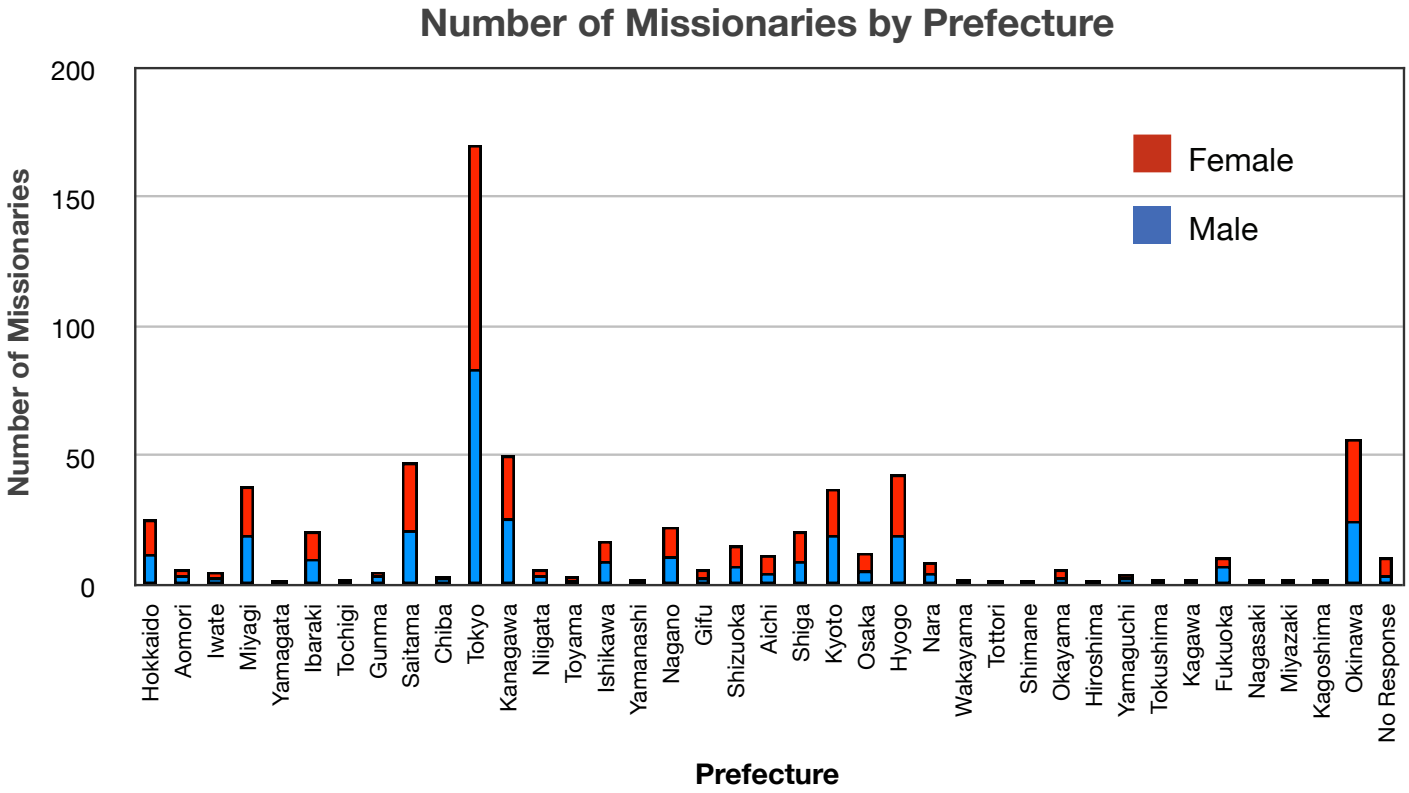
Yoichi Yamaguchi, Director
Hatsuo Shibata, Researcher
Yukio Hanazono, Researcher

A large number of mission organizations are recorded as working in Japan, with their member missionaries engaged in a wide range of ministries. In addition, a number of missionaries have been sent directly to Japan by overseas mission organizations, many of them from South Korea and Taiwan, and thus not systematically recorded as missionaries. No one seems to have exact figures regarding the total number of missionaries in Japan that include those directly sent by an overseas group.



Response: 37 **mission organisations representing** 672 **missionaries**





Missionaries were asked to choose which of the following six main types of ministry they were mostly involved in:

A. Church development and/or planting with a local church, a group of churches, or a denomination

B. Ministry to a target group such as children, students, business people, and workplace; ministry at a specific venue such as camp sites, hospitals, welfare facilities, and prisons.

C. Ministry through media such as newspaper, radio, TV, website, publishing, printing, music, and film; work related to production and sales of media content.

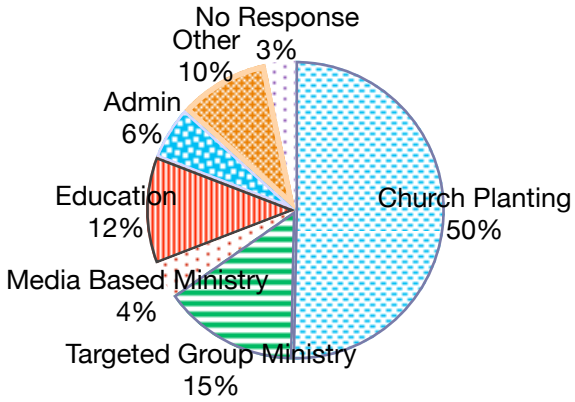
D. Educational ministry at seminaries, Christian Academy in Japan, Christian schools including kindergartens, English language schools, or missionary training facilities.

E. Administrative work related to overseas missions or international aide.

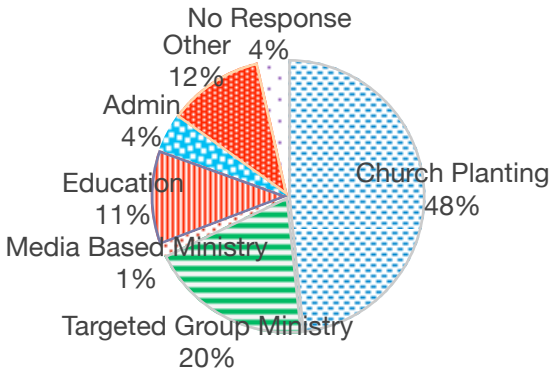
F. Other

A more detailed report from JMR is available on the Japan Harvest website: japanharvest.org

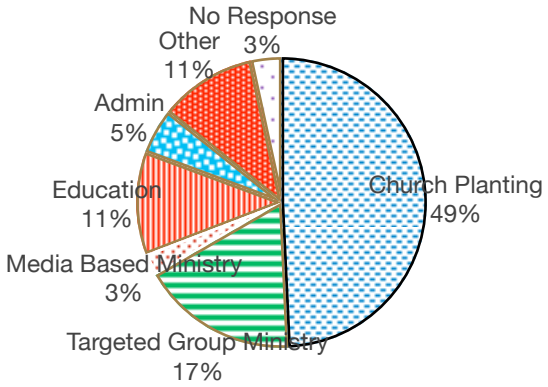
Main Types of Ministry（Males）

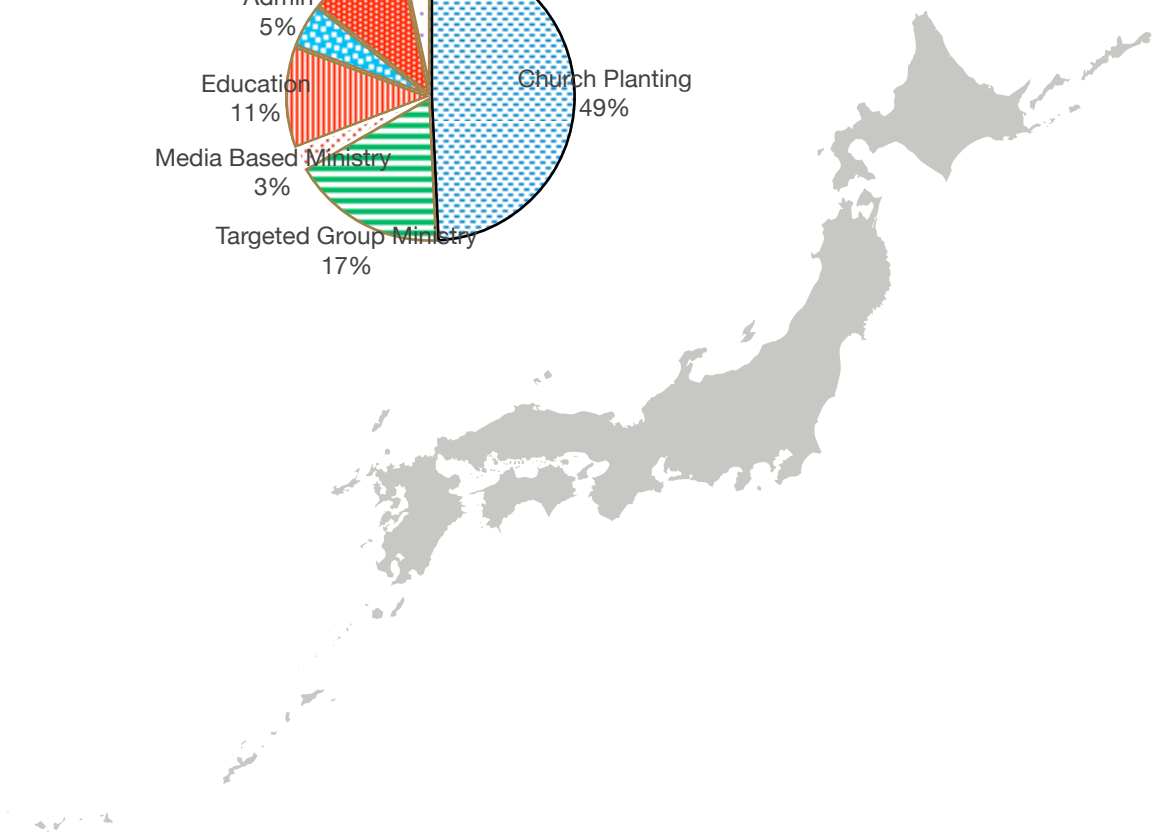


Main Types of Ministry（Females）



Main Types of Ministry（Overall）





Interminable Meetings and the Liberating Gospel

Japanese people seem to revel in meetings. You see it every day on television: company board meetings, special taskforce meetings, cabinet meetings, local community group meetings. An Australian friend said that one downside of his job as an overseas student coordinator at a Japanese university was the lengthy meetings at which seemingly unimportant details were discussed in depth.

Typical comments by Westerners working in Japan include, "Meetings are unproductive, inefficient, always painstaking, even for the most trivial of subjects, and there are lots of them"; "If there was a single bit of a doubt regarding the minutest of details on a proposal, it would be dissected, analyzed, and reviewed over and over again until every imaginable alternative had been exhausted"; and "I regularly have to sit in meetings that were initially scheduled for only one hour but drag on for two hours. In most cases at the end of two hours there have still been no conclusions or outlines to direct future activities."[1]

As shown below, meetings in Japan do have many commendable aspects that Westerners can learn from, but the fact remains that Westerners generally struggle with the frequency, length and scope of Japanese meetings.

Our experience: Church in Australia vs. in Japan

Not surprisingly, this aspect of Japanese culture finds expression in many churches. One of the greatest differences between the church my wife and I went to in Australia and the one we go to in Japan is the frequency of organisational meetings (as opposed to worship services, prayer meetings and small groups). In that respect they were polar opposites. The Australian church hardly ever had any organisational meetings — even its annual general meeting was a brief ten-minute affair. In contrast, our Japanese church often holds multiple meetings each Sunday, some of which run for a couple of hours or longer.

My wife (who is Japanese) has first-hand experience of this. Two years ago, our Japanese church formed a seven-person committee in September to plan that year's Christmas program. Each small group was asked to nominate one person to serve on the committee. In my group, no-one initially volunteered (probably because they knew what was involved) and there followed a long and painful process where we discussed who would be the best person to serve. Fortunately, I was let off the hook because of other commitments, but my wife was not so lucky — she was nominated by her group.

In the lead-up to Christmas, five committee meetings were held, each lasting between one to two hours. In these meetings, the logistics of the program were discussed down to the finest details. Since there were three Christmas events (a concert, a candlelight service and a fellowship lunch), it was decided to assign two committee members to each event. But this did not simplify the planning process, as it was still necessary for the committee as a whole to discuss all three events. There was even a sixth 'post-mortem' meeting to review how things had gone and suggest improvements for the following year.

In total about 60 man-hours went into planning events that lasted for approximately 6 hours. After our

"Using an analogy of tending a vine growing on a trellis, [we can] distinguish between two forms of ministry: trellis work and vine work."

experience in Australia, it struck us as overkill, but to other church members it was par for the course. (This process reflected our experience during our first year at the church; fortunately, the frequency of meetings has decreased considerably since then.)

The Trellis and the Vine

Clearly, both ways have advantages and disadvantages. The Japanese way means that events are very well planned and every eventuality is considered. As Proverbs says, "Without counsel plans fail, but with many advisers they succeed" (15:22, ESV). And "Where there is no guidance, a people falls, but in an abundance of counselors there is safety" (11:14).

But there is a cost involved. Church members often have to rush from one meeting to another and sometimes they don't even have a chance to eat lunch. Opportunities for deeper fellowship are lost and visitors to the church may get overlooked in the busyness. Furthermore, many members who have to work crazy hours during the week get little respite on Sundays.

I find the thesis of the book "The Trellis and the Vine"[2] helpful. Using an analogy of tending a vine growing on a trellis, the authors distinguish between two forms of ministry: trellis work and vine work. Trellis work is activities necessary to keep structures in place and things operating smoothly. It includes things like setting out chairs, operating the projector, and making coffee. Vine work, on the other hand, is the 'real' work of speaking God's Word to others. It includes activities such as giving the message on Sunday, singing praise songs, meeting up with a church member for a coffee, and doing a Bible study. The authors of the book believe that churches should seek to maximize vine work while doing just enough trellis work to ensure that the vine is adequately supported.

The Gospel confronts both cultures

But could this be a case of cultural imperialism? By advocating fewer and shorter meetings, could Westerners be accused of imposing our ways of doing church on Japanese churches? This is a legitimate concern. To avoid this danger, we need to understand both the dynamics behind the Japanese propensity to hold meetings and the ways in which the Gospel impacts culture in this area. While I don't fully comprehend either, I have a few ideas regarding them.

Japanese clearly value careful planning, especially when inviting outsiders to participate in special events. This is something Australians with their relaxed "she'll be right" mentality (it will be okay) could learn from. I also think it is very important to make decisions with the consensus of the whole group in Japan. This contrasts with our individualistic way of doing things in the West. If only a few select people were to make decisions in a Japanese group, it might endanger the harmony of the group. Thus, large meetings are necessary to ensure that everyone has an equal say on how things are run.

While this ensures that many different viewpoints are considered, it can make it very hard to make decisions. I recently heard of a progressive Japanese university that had dispensed with faculty meetings because it would often take many months to obtain approval to do things like hiring foreign researchers.

The Gospel simultaneously confronts our Western individualism and the Japanese need for everyone to have a say in each decision. In the West, the Gospel sets us free from our individual agendas and allows us to serve the community self-sacrificially. In Japan, the love generated by the Gospel provides the glue that holds the group together, allowing the group to entrust responsibilities to individuals and thereby reduce the need to hold long meetings.

I would love to hear about readers' experiences of meetings in a Japanese context and thoughts on how the Gospel impacts church meetings. Please write to me at docsimple111@gmail.com. JH

Simon Pleasants *works as an editor in the Tokyo office of a scientific publishing company. Originally from Wales, UK, he now calls Australia home. He helps maintain several Japanese-related websites, including Japanese Ministries Downunder:* www.japaneseministriesdownunder.org

[1] http://www.japantoday.com/category/opinions/view/japanese-company-meetings-getting-by-at-the-table

[2] Colin Marshall and Tony Payne "The Trellis and the Vine" Matthias Media (2009).

Meeting photo by Karen Ellrick.

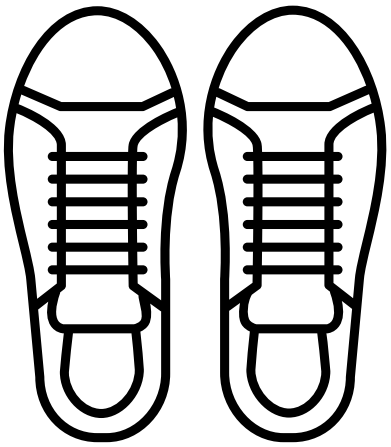
When in Rome...

Two considerations to help foreigners connect more effectively with Japanese (Part 2)

In my ministry, I seek to be more effective to reach 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 we contact closer to the kingdom of God.

Along these lines there are two concepts that I have found helpful to consider as I pursue my work. Last issue I introduced the concept of *itoguchi*, (literally, the starting point for unraveling a silk cocoon,) as the starting point of contact that can lead a seeker to relationship with God. The other concept I want to introduce is summed up in the Japanese word *shikī* (pronounced "she key ee").

The *shikī* is the threshold of an entranceway to a home or building. It has a special function in Japanese homes and sometimes also in churches. It is the place where a person steps up into the home, having removed the shoes, to enter the more intimate space. It is a boundary between public and private, of being outside or inside, of being a stranger or belonging. A person may come into the *genkan* of a home (the foyer just inside the front door) to talk to me, but until he steps up on the *shikī*, he is still outside. The Old Testament temple had a series of these, each *shikī* marking a boundary where the space became significantly more holy with each crossing of the threshold.



In Japan, this word also has taken on a symbolic meaning, and perhaps you can already see where this is heading. You may hear someone say about a group, "*shikī ga takai*," that is to say, "the step up is a high one," meaning the barriers to becoming an insider are forbidding. This may apply to a country club one wants to join, or to a company one wants to court for a sale. Or it may and often does apply to a church.

The shoes-on church removes a barrier, but then you don't have the advantage of assuming a certain level of intimacy to build on

In Japan, when we are putting up a new church building, we have debates about whether it will be a "shoes-on" or a "shoes-off" church! A shoes-off church will have a foyer where folks remove their shoes before stepping up and crossing the *shikī* to come inside. A shoes-on church may not have a visible threshold, and be more of a "public" building. Having the newcomer take off their shoes and come into the meeting room gains you a certain intimacy with that visitor that may allow you to assume their seriousness about seeking something from the church.

On the other hand, the seeker may be intimidated by the idea of showing up at a church meeting and be put off by the need to cross that threshold, because it seems presumptuous or is too risky to go right into that intimate space. The shoes-on church removes a barrier, literally, to make coming into the presence of God psychologically a little easier. But then you don't have the advantage of assuming a certain level of intimacy to build on. Taking shoes off and coming into the private place of someone's home is not done without invitation, and the invitation to come inside usually needs to be repeated two or three times, as it is not customary to enter someone else's home without a prior relationship. At any rate, there are plusses and minuses to either approach, and we have built both kinds of buildings, though my personal preference is shoes on!

But as I mentioned already, like the *itoguchi* concept, the *shikī* concept also takes on a figurative meaning. And all too often, the barriers we have erected, sometimes inadvertently, sometimes brazenly, make it more challenging to newcomers and can be really formidable! These may involve everything from inadequate lighting and amenities, to poor practices in greeting and seating folks, to codes of etiquette and dress that put people off, to using music and vocabulary that is foreign to "outsiders." We have many ways of sending the message to people that they do not belong. Sometimes this may involve something as simple as using a phrase like "justification by faith" without explaining it, or even a word like "congregation." Where is that word ever used outside of a church? Do people who have no church experience know it? If you think this example is silly, you're not grasping the extent of the problem! Is the facility "user-friendly"? Do we imply that people need to learn a new language before they can pray? Does the order of worship flow and make sense so that people know what's expected? Does the "dress code" and style of music create space for people of all kinds who may come into the service so that they're not distracted by these peripheral things and can come into the presence of God and hear his word of invitation to believe the good news?

Too often, we in the church tend to go on doing what we've always done while the culture around us heads in a new direction, and the tendency is always for that *shikī* to get higher and higher. Change is hard, and the church is by its nature a conservative institution, making this an even bigger challenge for us. We may come to different conclusions about the shoes-on/shoes-off issues or about the traditional/contemporary/new praise and worship/blended worship style. My plea is for us to be very self-conscious about knowing why we do the things we do and to examine carefully what these things imply to the newcomer or what message they send to the seeker. Our purpose is to draw folks to the throne of grace where they hear the word of salvation.

Georg Lichtenberg, an 18th century German scientist (and preacher's kid) said, "Even truth needs to be clad in new garments if it is to appeal to a new age."[1] We are talking about the garments here, not the truth itself, which does not change. At the same time, we need to ponder Marshall McLuhan's observation that the medium can become the message,[2] and we need to be cautious lest the media we use to communicate actually end up warping the message. I urge us to think deeply about the barriers we erect that make the *shikī* problematically high for newcomers. When we think, "he's not one of us," or maybe even voice it, or imply it as we play "bingo" with last names and peg people by finding out if they're related to anybody we know but then act disappointed when they're not, when we are unwilling to stretch our comfort zones to make room for the widows, orphans and strangers that God sends our way, we are in danger of creating stumbling blocks for the "little ones" who are precious to their heavenly Father. That is something we surely want to avoid!

Two suggestions to help lower the barriers are to increase lay leadership in worship and to expend more effort on hospitality (fellowship meals, etc.). Making worship more participatory and eating together are two powerful ways to create more intimacy among those at worship and seem to have been key areas in the life of the early church that made it so attractive to their neighbors (see Acts 2:42-47). Using more people in worship leadership shows that others besides the pastor and musicians have roles to play (and uses the gifts of more of God's people) and lowers the distance people may feel towards the pastor and the Lord. Mealtimes facilitate conversation, affirmation, and reconciliation, and have been used by the Lord God in this way at least from the time of Abraham (and likely from the beginning).

I say all this is in regard to those who are showing the initiative by coming to us! I've hardly even begun to address the matter of going out to them in the highways and byways!

Finding the *itoguchi* and considering the *shikī* problem are two keys areas to think deeply about in order to make us more effective at winning people for Christ and bringing them into his kingdom. JH

Lawrence Spalink *is the Japan Team leader for Christian Reformed World Mission. He's served in Japan since 1981.*

1 Georg Lichtenberg, Aphorisms, Notebook C #33, 1772-1773.
2 Marshall McLuhan, Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man, 1964.

Photo provided by the author
Sports shoes graphic by Oly Ozi from the Noun Project

When God is Silent

We have all experienced times when we pray and God doesn't seem to respond. David expressed that frustration in the Psalms, asking God why He wasn't answering, why He was silent (e.g. Ps. 10:1). But it is God's prerogative to speak or be silent when He chooses. There are also times when God asks us to be silent: "Be still, and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10, NIV).

When God doesn't seem to answer, it does not mean that He has left us or that He doesn't care. We need silence; it brings us to where we can think quietly. Our lives are not really about efficiency and goals reached.

Life is about our relationship with God and out of that we gain His perspective on things and learn what He wants for all men. Prayer is not about what we can get from God. Instead, prayer begins with worshipping God and delighting in Him. If we don't begin there, God becomes just a vending machine or an ambulance when we find ourselves in a tight spot.

Many Christians find God again when He is silent. Often, He just wants us to be content with who He is. But for the surrendered Christian, life is more than just being happy and successful. It's about living a holy lifestyle that gives glory to God.

When we don't sense God answering our prayers, it is not because He doesn't have an answer, or that He is angry or His grace has reached its limit. Neither has He been caught unawares or at a loss to know what to do. When God is silent, we have an opportunity to think over what we ask Him. What is really on our hearts? In the silence, we may realize our requests are inappropriate or come from selfish motives. We may even realize that were God to actually give us what we asked, it would bring us and maybe others harm.

Abraham was promised many descendants. But he couldn't see God fulfilling that promise. So he listened to Sarah and tried to fulfill the promise on his own. We are still feeling the effects of that decision today. Our biggest challenge when God is silent or seems to delay answering is to not make our own plans.

Saul did not wait for Samuel at Gilgal but offered the sacrifice himself, which only Samuel could do. His troops were leaving him, so fear caused Saul to make his own plans. Failing to wait on God cost Saul the kingdom God had given him. Saul was hindering God's work (1 Samuel 13:7–14).

When God is silent, remember:

- Don't make your own plans; wait. Stay where you are.
- Ask yourself if what you have asked God for is really important. Will it bless you and others if He grants it?
- Remind yourself that God will surely answer in His timing.
- Do what is clearly in God's Word as well as what God has told you to do before.
- Keep reading the Word. Don't run to others to get a prophetic word or revelation. If God gives that, fine, but we should still test it. Testing a word or revelation doesn't mean that you don't believe it; instead it helps you to be sure that you have heard and understood God correctly.
- Remember that God is our Father, and He will take care of us. We are not His children for what we can get from Him, but for who He is. Allow God to give you a deeper understanding of Himself.

Let's stand before God in hope and faith, knowing that He hears us and will answer our prayers. His silence doesn't mean that He won't answer. Instead, it means that He is busy working out the answers so that they will bless others, the Kingdom and us.

May His silence draw us closer to Him. JH

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

> "Is prayer your steering wheel or your spare tire?"
>
> *Corrie Ten Boom*

Words to the Wise:

Simple Steps to Learn to Communicate Well

At a recent marriage counseling session, it was clear that, despite trying very hard, the husband and wife weren't successfully communicating with each other and needed help. What was going wrong? Here are some simple steps to improve your communication skills in general, not just in marriage.

The first step to good communication is to consider your audience and how to engage with them. Most of us try hard to say the right thing, often selecting just the right words that we hope will communicate our message. Therefore, we're surprised when we find our message is misunderstood because we've misjudged our audience's reaction.

We've all had the experience of being stuck next to a person who buttonholes people and starts a monologue during a party or meeting. Our eyes glaze over, and we can only think of escape. Good communicators know they need to engage their listeners if they are to communicate well. It's important to ask questions such as "What do you think? Do you get what I'm saying?" at regular intervals as you speak and wait for the listener's response. Their input will let you know if you need to adapt your message to be better understood.

Good communicators are not just listening for words, but also watching for nonverbal clues. Things like lack of eye contact, shifting in the seat, and turning away are all telltale signs that your message is not getting through and that you need to adjust.

The second step to good communication is to avoid aggressively pushing an agenda. Many people feel that good communication means your audience must be persuaded to agree with you. But if you use a "my way or the highway" approach when speaking, you will shut down communication. Think of the pushy salesperson at the store who hounds you when all you want to do is look. In the same way that you leave the store without buying anything, so the listener of a high-pressured speech is often not only unpersuaded, but also irritated. And just as the shopper avoids the store in future, the listener may well avoid the speaker.

The third step to good communication is to be a good listener — a skill most of us who have lived in Japan for a while have learned well. The Japanese are experts at this skill. A Japanese listener will indicate ascent by doing things such as nodding or giving some form of verbal acquiescence. If they don't, then the speaker will pause and ask "Are you listening?" The same thing can be done in any language. Nodding, giving small prompts and making eye contact are all effective tools in our listening skills.

In marriage, as in any relationship, good communication is important. But we don't necessarily need to go to counseling to learn skills. By observing the above three steps, it's possible even for the most inept communicator to become skilled in communication — something that's especially important for those of us in ministry, where good communication for the sake of the gospel is essential. JH

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 eileenpnielsen@gmail.com.*

Good communicators are not just listening for words, but also watching for nonverbal clues.

WINTER DAY OF PRAYER

DATE: Tuesday January 19, 2016
PLACE: SEND Center, Higashi Tokorozawa
TIME: 9:30-10 Mingle and enjoy homemade goodies and coffee
10-12 Program followed by lunch
(bring your own or buy obento nearby)
COST: ¥500 (Facilities/Program)
For details and directions visit jema.org

SPRING WOMEN'S RETREAT

March 2-4, 2016
Location: To be confirmed
Cost: around ¥20,000
Details & registration on jema.org

REGIONAL EVENTS

Hokkaido: Saturday March 5

Kansai: Monday March 7
(Contact Erika Grabowski for details. erika.grabowski@gmail.com)

Women in Ministry

Retreat Guest Speaker
Carol Miyake

"Being Renewed"

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the RENEWing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. Romans 12:2

Guest Speaker Carol Miyake

Carol Miyake is a licensed Christian Counselor at Asian American Christian Counseling Service (AACCS) in the Los Angeles area. She and her husband were former missionaries in Japan and provided member care for JEMA missionaries. As a counselor at AACCS, Carol helps train therapists to provide member care to field workers throughout the world. Carol, who has a passion for seeing lives transformed, is looking forward to all that the Lord has in store for our retreat.

Getting Smart with Phones

A missionary friend of mine was recently shocked to discover that his phone bill was five times its usual amount. The culprit turned out to be a picture message that a friend had sent him. The charge was exorbitant because my friend's plan had a very low data allowance.

Smartphones used to be the most expensive option among two-year *keitei* (mobile phone) contracts, but their prices have dropped significantly as companies compete for market share. The rise of smartphones is causing headaches for people who have conventional phones with low data plans. This is because many people with smartphones and large data plans tend to make fewer phone calls, while using email, texting and social media more. Consequently, recent phone plans are more focused on data, and smartphone users are gradually changing the way they interact with others as a result – the picture message story above is one example. Surprisingly, a cost effective way out of this predicament is to consider getting a smartphone yourself.

Smartphones can do many things your PC or home phone can do. For example, you can use smartphones to talk with family, friends and supporters back home via Skype or FaceTime. And the data networks in Japan are so fast you can do this on the go—you can show your grandkids the rice-planting machine at work down the street or your supporters the view from Skytree as they contemplate praying for the vastness of Japan. These calls are either free (as they use data) or much cheaper than a regular phone call.

If you enjoy texting, why pay ¥100 per text back home when you can do it for free with WhatsApp, iMessage or Line? These are all free apps that offer free messaging since they use data.

A few other things I regularly use on my phone that I now find indispensable:

- Facebook—great for keeping up with family, friends and supporters in far-flung places
- Maps
- Taking and sharing photos
- Checking and writing email
- Drafting documents
- Using GPS to record my cycling; my wife records her running routes and times
- Calendar
- Storing contact details and sharing them with my wife's phone
- Shopping on Amazon

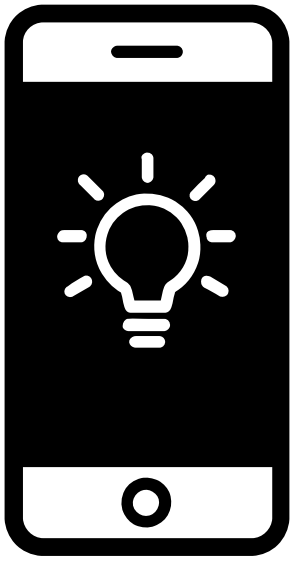
A couple of dangers to be aware of:

- The first two years are likely to have a significant discount—ask what the monthly rate will become after the two years. Since ours is set to double, we'll be changing companies for another round of discounts.
- You may need to exercise self-control as smartphones can be dangerously addictive if they are always with you and switched on. Whereas now you might check Facebook once a week, you may be tempted to spend every spare moment on it when you get a smartphone! The same goes for games. Turning off notifications can be very helpful as it lets you control when you look at certain apps.

It's worth finding out what's available because there have never been so many good options for communicating at a competitive price. It's also worth upgrading our own wisdom, too, as our culture morphs around this powerful technology. JH

Dene Hughes *and his wife Rachel have been in Japan since 2012, studying Japanese and gradually increasing involvement with KGK (a university student ministry)*

Smartphone by misirlou from the Noun Project



It's also worth upgrading our own wisdom, too, as our culture morphs around this powerful technology.

Focus on Details

Often we have so much to say we overwhelm our audience by trying to cover too much ground. Sue Nichols writes, "Missionaries try to portray too much of their work in one letter. 'One of our patients, Phillippe, is showing an interest in the Christian faith. He has asked for a Bible. Another one. . .'"[1] But Nichols implores us not to rush on to the next point: "show us Phillippe. To you he is a person. To us he is nineteen vague words. Help us see him, too."[2]

It is better to paint a close-up picture, even just a tiny one, to help your readers experience what you're trying to communicate.

Examples

Search for specific details that give your audience the feeling of being there. Instead of, "We distributed tracts to locals," try, "While distributing tracts on a gloomy day, we met a young man, Tomo, who asked what we were doing. We gave him a tract and arranged to meet next week for coffee."

Here's another example, from a missionary family reporting on some of their home assignment activities: "We have been to the zoo, an indoor swimming pool, numerous playgrounds, and walked in the Aussie bush. Bruce* was finally able to eat a long-awaited Aussie hamburger complete with beetroot and egg!"

They could have merely said, "We've been busy enjoying our time in Australia." But that doesn't help you understand what they've been doing, neither does it grab your attention like trips to the zoo or beetroot and egg on a burger!

Go for a close-up view

Including interesting details, rather than just giving a quick overview, increases our chances of grabbing our audience's interest.

One way to get into this habit is to ask questions your audience might have. How old is Phillippe? What does he look like? Why is he in hospital? What does he sound like?

When space is limited, we should act like a photographer and go for close-ups with our words rather than a large, blurry image. JH

*Not his real name.

1. Nichols, Sue. Words on Target, Victory Press, 1970, page 37.
2. Ibid.

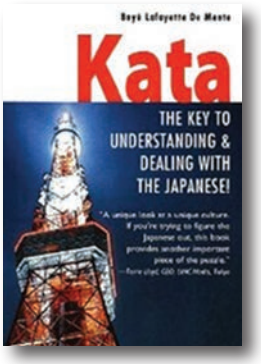
Wendy Marshall *is the managing editor of* Japan Harvest. *She's learnt most of what she knows about writing from her international critique group, Truth Talk. She's Australian and works with OMF International.*

Selected Book Reviews

by students at JLCC

(OMF's Japanese Language and Culture Centre)

Kata – The Key to Understanding and Dealing with the Japanese
by Boye Lafayette de Mente



The author suggests that the secret behind Japan's economic success - despite being resource-poor and going through World War 2 - lies in its *shikata*, its "way of doing things." These *kata* emphasize form and order in virtually all aspects of Japanese life - from day to day living, to art, poetry, suicide, tea ceremony, in the workplace, government, foreign policies, etc. Essentially, says the author, the Japanese have the culture of *kata* so deeply ingrained in them - for the sake of harmony and group identity - that they cannot operate without them, which can place tremendous pressure on Japanese to conform.

However, although the author tries to be objective he tends to see Japanese culture negatively. The book also fails to go deeper into the worldview of the Japanese. But this book makes good, light reading for someone who wishes to have some understanding of why the Japanese behave the way they do.

Review by Linda Han

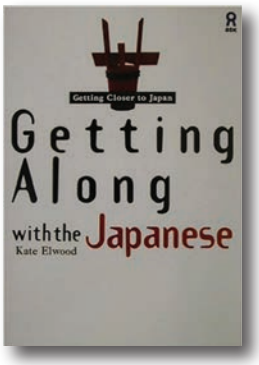
早口ことば *(Tongue-twisters)*
by Nagata Mikako

This book contains some traditional or well-known Japanese tongue twisters, and is divided into five levels so you can challenge yourself. It is easy and fun to read, and helps train the tongue in speaking Japanese. It can also help you understand and remember a little bit more Japanese. The book also states that speaking *hayaguchi* helps train your right brain, your facial muscles and burns fat!

I read this book with my son and found that it was easy and fun for little kids to remember and say the phrases. Primary school textbooks in Japan also use rhymes to help children learn. In Hong Kong, we have some rhymes with gospel content, so if we could develop some tongue twisters with gospel content, it might be a good way for kids to remember the gospel.

Review by Karen Kwok

Getting Along with the Japanese
by Kate Elwood



Moving cross-culturally can be unsettling because often we are not familiar with the language, culture and worldview of the country to which we are moving. This book introduces readers to the key values of Japanese people and how these values shape how they think and behave in a variety of situations, and provides advice on how to respond appropriately in those situations. The topics covered in this book range from everyday activities such as non-verbal communication, eating out or visiting someone's home, to formal rituals and ceremonies, such as etiquette regarding weddings and funerals. This book is easy to understand, aided by simple illustrations and useful vocabulary relevant to the topic being described.

Review by Iryaku Hyou

New Venue

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Develop Practices that Reflect Your Core Values

This article is part three 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.

The next time you're in someone's office, get to know that person in an unusual way. How? By noticing things like what's on the walls and the desk, the furniture arrangement, and any personal memorabilia.

Offices are set up to help a person get work done, so it makes sense that what an office looks like reflects the things that a person values. For example, someone who values collaboration will have extra chairs in her office. It's harder for a person to be productive when an office doesn't reflect what that person values (imagine trying to collaborate with others if there's only one chair in your office).

The same principle applies to ministry—the things you do and the practices you use should reflect what you value; they should help you live out what's important to you.

What does this look like in leadership? Imagine that as a ministry leader, you value empowering others; you might establish the practice of asking team members to submit powerful questions and then discussing those questions during meetings. Or imagine you value focusing on the mission; you could require that all proposals include a written response to the question, "How will implementing this proposal help us achieve our mission?" Or if you value growth, you might initiate the procedure of having each team member set annual growth goals.

Question: As a ministry leader, how can you develop practices that reflect your core values?

Here are six suggestions:

1 Use your values to guide you when recruiting new team members. During interviews, ask questions designed to help you learn how comfortable with and committed to the values the candidate is. A new team member who fits the values can help your team move forward, whereas one who doesn't can cause frustration.

2 When orienting new team members, explain what each value means, including describing what it does and doesn't look like. Emphasize how the core values help you do ministry. Ask new team members how they could implement the values.

3 At team meetings, regularly focus on one value for 5–15 minutes. For example, you could do a devotional on it, celebrate its implementation, read an article about it, or discuss it by asking questions like, "How does living out this value impact our ministry?"

4 Use your values to establish meeting guidelines. If you value community, make the participation of everyone a meeting guideline. If you value learning, make listening in order to understand (rather than to criticize) a meeting guideline. If you value focus, make a guideline about the use of smart phones, tablets, and other screens. If you value joy, make celebrating progress a meeting guideline.

5 When planning an event, establish the practice of asking, "How can living out our core values help us?" Or include on your planning template how you will live out your values.

6 Help others understand what your ministry team values. How? By featuring your values on your website, on your promotional materials, and possibly on your business card.

The point?

In your ministry, make sure that you live out what's important to you. Developing practices that reflect your core values can help.

What about you?

1. What are your core values?
2. What's comfortable or uncomfortable about developing practices that reflect your core values?
3. On a scale of one to five, to what extent have you developed practices reflecting your core values?
4. How much do you want to establish practices reflecting your core values?
5. What will you do? JH

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

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