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Japan Harvest  
Autumn 2015

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

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*Cover photo supplied by Danielle Krammel*

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

## Top 10 Reasons to Study at Tokyo Christian University

by Randall Short, Associate Professor of Biblical Studies

1. You love Japan.
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7. You want to study subjects like philosophy, history, linguistics, anthropology, and education without ignoring the most important questions you have about life, faith, and God.
8. You want to go to a school of "big learning" (the literal meaning of *daigaku*, the Japanese word for college) without getting lost in the system.
9. You want to get a college degree without taking on debt that will take years and years to pay.
10. You want to network with today's and tomorrow's Christian leaders in Japan, and to work with them to solve problems facing Japanese church and society.

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# *Tadaima! (I'm back!)*

I'm glad to be back as managing editor. I'm thankful for all the volunteers who put this magazine together while my family and I were in Australia on home assignment. The break from the relentless intensity of the magazine cycle was refreshing, and I've come back with renewed energy. In September, I met with the various people who had worked on the magazine while I was away. It was great to find that, while they found the work overwhelming at times, they're still passionate about supporting you through this magazine.

There have been many changes in the magazine over the five years I have worked on it. I think one of the best changes has been the introduction of themed issues. I love seeing the various perspectives people write from as we explore various themes in *Japan Harvest*. While I deeply appreciate our regular contributors, I also enjoy seeing new people volunteering each issue to write from their ministry or personal perspective.

The *Japan Harvest* team has made another change that I want to draw to your attention. To assist our designers, we've developed an online photo library. This is set up for you to donate photos for the free use of our magazine and other JEMA publications. Our volunteer designers spend many hours each issue searching for photos to enhance the submitted articles. Because our budget is small, we try to use free photos as much as possible. We hope this new initiative will be another way that you can contribute towards encouraging, inspiring, and equipping other members of the JEMA community. All you need to do is send an email to [japanharvest.photos@gmail.com](mailto:japanharvest.photos@gmail.com) with your photos attached. In the email subject, please include a key word that describes the theme of your photo (for example, "prayer").

Ageing is a critical issue facing Japanese society today. Both politicians and the person in the street are concerned about it. Two articles in this issue report telling statistics: Dale Viljoen points out that currently more than 25% of Japanese people are over 65, while Andy Meeko tells us that more than 40% are over 55. Those are significant percentages. While this is a common problem throughout the developed world, Japan leads the world in ageing. Japan is thought to be the only country with more than 25% of the population over 65.

But you don't need me to tell you that. You see many elderly people as you walk around in Japan. Indeed, in the two places we've lived in Tokyo in the last ten years, our neighbours have all been elderly or have had elderly people living in the family home. Despite living close to a kindergarten, families with young children are sparse in our neighbourhood. The kindergarten our children attended allowed students, their siblings, and parents to hang around in their playground for a few hours after the end of class. This was because the community was ageing, and many young families at the kindergarten had no other young families close by. The kindergarten provided young families with a place to meet and play.

I'm pleased to give you this issue and pray it will encourage and inspire you in your ministry to Japanese people.

Yours for the Harvest,  
Wendy

- 
- **We've developed an online photo**
- **library for you to donate photos for**
- **the free use of our magazine.**



*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.*

# God Gave Me a Big Family

*Translated by Hiromi Kuichi*

CHRISTIAN SHIMBUN — June 7 & 14, 2015

*All photos contributed by Christian Shimbun*

A share house, a relatively new concept in Japan, is where several people rent a house and live together. Kazue Ishihara started a Christian share house called “Grace House” in Nagoya City, Aichi Prefecture, in the hope of providing healing for the loneliness that afflicts many people.

There are now three Grace Houses in Japan (Kazue is involved with two of them). Each serves not just as a home for residents but also as a meeting place for local Christian groups and organizations. Weekly Bible studies where people from various backgrounds come together to fellowship are held at each Grace House. It was Ishihara’s experiences living in Singapore and Shanghai that led her to start share houses in Japan.



## The Starting Point: Life in Singapore

Ishihara began working in Singapore in her late 20s. She encountered struggles with her new life, but found comfort and encouragement at the share house where she was living. Then, her boss at work developed a mental illness and began to depend heavily on her. Remembering Jesus’ parables, which she had heard when she attended a



Christian school, she started attending a Bible study at a colleague’s home with her boss in the hope of finding help there. There, she cried when she found out she was God’s creation and that He had a plan for her. Both Ishihara and her boss came to Christ through that Bible study.

Ishihara recalls those times in Singapore as “some of the most beautiful memories of my life, even now.” She continues, “My life was changed at a home Bible study; not at the Christian school or the church services that I attended. When you welcome people into your home, cook for them, listen to their stories, and share the Bible — you feel for each other. What I’m presently doing through the share houses had its starting point at that time in my life.”

After four years in Singapore, Ishihara’s desire to return home grew, but she was worried about living in Japan. Around that time, “the president of AT&T Japan (a large US telecommunications company) visited Singapore, and I was asked to show him around. When I mentioned my concerns about the future to him, he offered to interview me for his company. And that was how I began my career there.”

## Meals with Chinese Colleagues

Ishihara’s job at AT&T was busy. “For example, I was involved with providing a global network that supports the iPhone, so I gathered information from all over the world and presented it to customers in Japan. I woke up early to call and email people in Europe and stayed up late at night to communicate with people in the USA. I had no time to sleep, to the point that some days I felt I might die. I prayed and



One of the Grace Houses in Nagoya



# West News

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



cried out on Sunday nights, ‘God, I’m burned out. I can’t go any further.’ However, this experience also prepared me for my current work.”

Ishihara was first stationed in Tokyo. She moved into an apartment two to three minutes from Pastor Yasuo Atsumi’s church, Tokyo Megumi Church, because she desired to learn more about God. She welcomed the young people from her church into her home, eating with them and enjoying their company. Watching them spend time together, she realized “how fun eating in fellowship was and discovered the joy of cooking and showing hospitality to others.”

## Transfer to China

Three years after joining AT&T, Ishihara was transferred to Shanghai, China, to provide customer support for Japanese-owned companies. Actually, Ishihara had been praying for a transfer to China. “When I was in Singapore, there was a Chinese colleague I didn’t get along with, and I used to judge Chinese. When I became a Christian, I repented of that.” Ishihara asked herself, “What can I do so that Japanese and Chinese workers can get along and work together?” Her answer was to “take time to eat together, rather than

just doing business together.”

One of her Chinese colleagues came to Christ through Ishihara and began passionately evangelizing at work, causing a “mini-revival.” Five more people were baptized in a year through the house church meeting held at Ishihara’s home. “When people eat together, they get closer to each other. Their relationships at work improve as well as the actual business. I realized people need healing for their loneliness.”

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**When you welcome people into your home, cook for them, listen to their stories, and share the Bible — you feel for each other.**

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## Securing the Best through Persistent Prayer

After working four years in Shanghai, Ishihara returned to Japan. She first worked in Nagoya, near her father’s home for two years and then moved to the Tokyo branch. Every week, she traveled from Tokyo to Nagoya and back, attending the Sunday service at the Chinese House of the Japan Chinese Church. Feeling her mission at AT&T was accomplished, Ishihara resigned to “work for the Lord in Nagoya, my birthplace.” She established Grace House, the share house she had long desired and prayed for.

Ishihara believes she was given the best, a share house, because of persistent praying and crying out to the Lord amid hardship. “The Lord has given me — single and without family — the biggest family ever since my time in Shanghai. I am learning that the Lord is a God who listens to our prayers and gives us joy.” ■





# Member MISSIONS



**EÖM**  
*Evangeliska  
Östasienmissionen*





The Evangelical East Asia Mission (EEAM) formed through the merger in 1982 of two Swedish missions: the Swedish Evangelical Orient Mission and the Swedish Mongol Mission. The work of these two missions began in Japan in 1950. We were inspired by a strong appeal from the famous Japanese evangelist Toyohiko Kagawa: “Now when the doors to China are closed, please send your missionaries to Japan which is wide open for the Gospel!”

The Swedish Mongol Mission planted 11 churches, mainly in Hokkaido, which have now all joined the Japanese denomination Nihon Dōmei Kirisuto Kyōdan. All our first missionaries were former missionaries to China. Because they initially hoped to return to China, they didn't start any work of their own in the first few years but instead helped local churches. It was not until 1955 that they started planting churches. Our mission field was the eastern part of Shizuoka prefecture, south of Mount Fuji, in the area around Suruga Bay and the Izu Peninsula.

My wife, Kerstin, who came with her parents Johannes and Ingrid Aspberg in 1950, remembers six adults were baptised in Ohito (now Izunokuni city) in 1953; two of them later became pastors. Kerstin's father died suddenly in 1954, but her mother Ingrid, together with a Japanese pastor and his family, continued missionary work in that small town for almost 40 years. In 1958, about 1,000 people drowned in a devastating typhoon, but Ingrid survived and, together with other Christian organisations, did all kinds of rescue and relief work. As a result, many were added to the church.

We now also have churches in the cities Fujinomiya, Fuji, Numazu, and Mishima. Three World Horizons missionaries have been helping us with church planting and rural evangelism in the Izu Peninsula since 2000.

In 1986, EEAM handed over the property and church buildings to create a Japanese religious body, the Orient Evangelical Church. EEAM is currently only responsible for the church in Fuji, where we live and work. EEAM is a very small mission consisting of me (Bo Dellming), Kerstin, our son Daniel, who works as a missionary and teacher at Kwansei Gakuin University in Nishinomiya, his family, and Marianne Nyselius, a retired missionary in Okayama.

The Lord has taught me many things over the years about ministry in Japan. Here are six:

1. Get help from one another. A church should always work as a team. The Lord has been so good to me. I am very aware of my limitations but the Lord has provided us with talented people.
2. Be a humble pastor or missionary. Recognise your weak points and delegate to those who can do the job better than you.
3. The blessing of the Alpha course. Most of those baptised here in Fuji, including 30 Chinese, have come through the Alpha course.
4. Aim to be a church of small groups. We haven't got there yet, but we strive to bring everyone into a loving, caring, and intimate fellowship.
5. Become a serving church. Show love and mercy to your community. We have been trying to help and share the Gospel with homeless people over the past 10 years, but we wish we could reach out much more.
6. Love one another. A church united in love draws people like a magnet. A city with churches that work together in unity will have an impact. Missionaries loving and praying for one another will bear fruit.

We give much thanks for the fellowship we've enjoyed with JEMA people over the years, especially at the Church Planting Institute conferences. **JH**



# EEAM

(Evangelical East Asia Mission)

**MBMission**  
(Mennonite Brethren Mission)

**M**B Mission is the global mission organization of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America. The work of the mission in Japan began in 1950 when MB missionary Ruth Wiens was sent to Osaka. Other missionaries soon followed, and several churches were planted in the Osaka area over the next few years. In 1958, the Japan Mennonite Brethren Conference (JMBC) was formed. Today, the JMBC has 29 churches with 26 full-time pastors and an active membership of about 1,500 people. Most of the churches are in the greater Osaka area, but some are in areas around Hiroshima, Nagoya, and Yokohama. In addition, the JMBC has established a seminary (Evangelical Biblical Seminary) and a Christian camp (Nosegawa Bible Camp) in the Osaka area.

The initial focus of MB Mission in Japan was evangelism and church planting, but it has shifted to building up churches in recent years.

MB missionaries currently serve alongside local MB churches in outreach initiatives and discipleship. A primary ministry is conversational English classes, as they serve as an effective bridge between local MB churches and their communities. In addition to teaching English classes, MB missionaries are involved in various other ministries in the church according to their gifts and abilities.

In daily life and ministry, each missionary strives to live out the five core values of MB Mission:

- dependency on Jesus,
- risk-taking obedience,
- relational integrity,
- transforming community, and
- celebration.

Although MB Mission had a strong missionary force in Japan in the early years, the number has gradually declined. There are currently four long-term missionaries serving with MB Mission in Japan — Doris Goertz, Wendy Eros, and Cory and Masami Giesbrecht. In addition, many short-term missionaries teach English for one or two years or serve in MB churches on summer ACTION teams.

The current MB missionaries are grateful to the missionaries who have gone before them and have trained leaders in the church. Building on the strong foundation that has been laid, they now have the privilege of working with Japanese leaders and church members to help further the kingdom of God. Through the ministry of English conversation classes, God has allowed our missionaries to see fruit, for which they are thankful. Their prayer is that gospel seeds will be planted in the heart of each person who comes to the classes. Their desire is to see many Japanese people come to know Jesus as their personal Savior and to walk in faithful discipleship with him. **JH**





Liebenzell Mission was founded in 1899, born of spiritual revival in Germany in the late 1800's. It was initially the German Branch of the China Inland Mission, later branching out on its own under the name of Liebenzell, after the town where the mission set up its headquarters.

Work in Japan began in 1927, after Liebenzell's director of the South Pacific Islands department visited Japan the year before. He attended a missionaries' conference in Karuizawa, where he received a strong burden for bringing the Gospel to Japan. Upon returning to Germany the mission's council promptly accepted his proposal.

At the time, Germany had been defeated in World War I and the German empire collapsed. Prior to this, Germany's empire had included islands in the South Pacific. After Germany's defeat, these islands became a mandate of Japan.

The mission felt there was a need to have a center in Japan in order to negotiate with the Japanese government. That center (at Yokohama) quickly evolved into the headquarters of Liebenzell's mission in Japan.

Churches founded in the years up until World War 2 are now part of *Dōmei Kirisuto Kyōdan* and *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōdan*.

After World War 2, work restarted in 1951 at Nakanoshima, Kawasaki, where the center of LMI-Japan is still located today. The number of missionaries increased rapidly, most of them, according to the mission's policies, evangelizing in the unreached rural area of Ibaraki Prefecture.

From the 1960s onwards church planting further spread throughout Kanto, forming the *Ribenzeru Kirisuto Kyōkai Rengō*. In 1992 Liebenzell churches joined with many churches from three other church associations (founded by OMF, SEND, and TEAM), to form the Japanese Evangelical Church Association (JECA).

Today about 50 congregations have grown out of LMI's ministry. At present 18 missionaries serve in Japan.

Liebenzell's ministry aims to establish groups of believers and churches that ultimately will be self-propagating and self-supporting and also have a burden for world missions. We focus upon less-reached but rapidly-growing suburban areas.

Liebenzell's present ministries include:

- Church planting in areas not served by an existing church.
- Cooperating with churches that seek to do missionary outreach.
- Pastoral ministry at churches that do not yet have a Japanese pastor.
- Retreats and support services at the *Okutama Fukuin no Ie* (House of the Gospel).
- A boarding home for missionary children who attend the German International School in Yokohama.
- Continuing support of relief efforts in the areas affected by the March 2011 earthquake/tsunami/nuclear disaster, involving short-term "impact" teams.

Other ministries include student outreach, literature distribution, retreat programs, Sunday school, and Bible-teaching classes.

Liebenzell sets great value upon:

- Adhering to biblical principles,
- Working in partnership,
- Servant-mindedness,
- Cross-cultural sensitivity,
- Exemplary lifestyle, and
- Mutual esteem and encouragement. **JH**

# Liebenzell Mission



# The Navigators

The calling of The Navigators is “To advance the gospel of Jesus Christ and his kingdom into the nations through spiritual generations of laborers living and discipling among the lost.”

Being in Japan, those words “among the lost” hold special significance for us because our hearts burn with a desire to see Jesus Christ made known in the mainstream of Japanese culture and society. Our hope is that through our ministries, God would raise up Japanese laborers who have a solid foundation in God’s Word. We desire to see these laborers take the gospel into their existing families, neighborhoods, and workplaces in uniquely Japanese ways.

From the start we strive to be:

- relevant by entering into their culture and context,
- personal by giving time and energy through one-on-one interaction and discipleship, and
- missional by creating safe environments where believers and those who don’t yet believe can build genuine, on-going relationships.

Our team is made up of Japanese, Koreans, Americans, and Germans all working together under the leadership of The Japan Navigators. We’re predominantly located in eight major cities, but with a network that spreads throughout Japan. We seek to relate to and learn from our Japanese friends, on campuses, in businesses, and in community settings. We believe that as we journey together, God’s kingdom will be experienced both in our relationships and through exploring his Word together. The majority of those we relate to, at first, have no interest in the Bible. We often witness God move in amazing ways to draw them to himself, even at times impacting entire families and classes of students.

Our discipleship approach emphasizes that God, by design, has placed each person in unique relationships and circumstances to shine his light through him or her. As much as possible, we encourage people to remain in their specific context, culture, and relationships while trusting in the promises of God and the guidance of the

Holy Spirit. As their faith in Christ grows, they often become our teachers in understanding the scriptures from a Japanese perspective. Many of them have become leaders in local area churches and/or in their communities. Many continue to have fellowship with each other and their pre-believing friends through regular contact. Most have a growing desire to be used by God to carry Christ into their families. We feel honored to be on this journey with them. Please pray for us. **JH**

**Some verses that God often uses to guide The Navigators are:**

**1 Corinthians 2:2 (NIV)**

“For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.”

**1 Thessalonians 2:8**

“...Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well!”

**2 Timothy 2:2**

“And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.”

**Acts 17:26-27**

“From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us.”

**Isaiah 60:22**

“The least of you will become a thousand, the smallest a mighty nation. I am the LORD; in its time I will do this swiftly!”





# The Silver Harvest

AGING PEOPLE CAN MAKE VALUABLE CONTRIBUTIONS  
TO OUR MINISTRY.

“When he looked out over the crowds, his heart broke. So confused and aimless they were, like sheep with no shepherd. ‘What a huge harvest!’ he said to his disciples. ‘How few workers! On your knees and pray for harvest hands!’”  
(Matt. 9:36–38; *The Message*)

The Holy Spirit has drawn my attention to seniors who have more time for personal development activities such as studying English. Looking out over Japan, my heart is broken by the sadness and confusion of working people who sicken and sometimes die of overwork before they can be reached with the gospel.

Our monthly international potluck and Bible discussion attracts a wide age range—from people in their 20s to seniors. We recently have had an 82-year-old and 72-year-old in regular attendance. Naturally, each seems encouraged to see another senior present, and yet they eagerly enter into the lives of our younger members during our sharing time.

Sato-san is one of those seniors. She stands out in our neighborhood because she always wears a kimono as she walks up and down our steep street several times a day. One day this spring she saw me working in my yard and stopped to chat. Our conversation touched on the holiday children’s parties I’ve been holding since moving to this neighborhood in 2001. Sato-san said, “I’d like to help!” “Sure!” I said, always glad for extra hands to help with the Bible stories in Japanese, crafts and refreshments. A quick schedule check revealed that the children’s parties probably weren’t going to work out for her. However, she did start coming to the potlucks, bringing delicious homemade Japanese dishes.

Over the summer, I learned why Sato-san walks up and down our street so often: she teaches shamisen (traditional Japanese lute) and flower arranging, sings in two choirs, volunteers as a crossing guard for school children, and much more! Having attended a Christian kindergarten, she has no resistance to the Bible, and freely joins in the after-dinner Bible discussions at the potlucks. Furthermore, she draws out newer, younger members in a way I have not been able to. Although I speak, read, and write Japanese, I don’t expect to be able to relate to Japanese people as smoothly and naturally as one of their own. I am so grateful that God has brought someone with Sato-san’s wisdom, experience, care, and spunk into my life.

The other day I went to Sato-san’s house with a head count for Sunday’s potluck and to explain about an Indian dance class I had invited her to join—to watch, if not to

participate. She confessed that she’s reached her limit on activities, and we agreed that we could both use a rest that night, instead of a dance. I had been starting to see Sato-san as an invincible role model for aging vigorously; I now realize that she faces some of the same issues my working friends and I do—issues of over-commitment and limited physical capacity. I guess there’s no permanent escape from the trap

“The Holy Spirit has drawn my attention to seniors who have more time for personal development activities such as studying English.”

of letting the good become the enemy of the best.

I see a chance to walk with Sato-san through an important phase of her life. Six years ago she lost her husband; her varied activities have given her relief from her loneliness and loss. However, I’m yet to find a time to study the Bible with her. She has commitments most Thursday mornings, so we haven’t seen her at our Bible Discovery Group yet. My hope is that we can discuss our respective life situations, taking into consideration the natural limitations of our aging bodies, then pare down our schedules.

I hope to show up more often for the really important events of Kingdom value, like intercessory prayer. To do that, I need to let go of some meetings and other activities which have served their purpose for a long time, but which are now getting in the way of spending time with precious people like Sato-san. I would love to welcome her, either to Bible Discovery Group or to a private study of our own. Ultimately, I pray that she can find her rest in the Good Shepherd of the wandering sheep, slow down to enjoy the still waters of His presence, and mentor others to do the same.

Let’s get down on our knees and then rise up to welcome the silver harvest that is all around us! **JH**

*Ginger Tobin is celebrating her 20th year since moving to Japan and works with the Japan Navigators doing community ministry. She is from the USA.*

# Ageing Japan: What can the church do?

The ageing population in Japan is acknowledged by everyone as a significant problem. But what can we as Christians do?



## The Current Situation in Japan

“My church consists mostly of older people. I need missionaries to come and help us reach out to young people so that our numbers don’t continue to decline.” Many Japanese pastors have been saying this, often with a measure of desperation.

Japan’s population is shrinking (a birth rate of 7.93 people per 1,000, against a death rate of 9.51 in 2015).<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, Japan has the highest life expectancy of any major country (men 80.2, women 86.6 in 2013)<sup>2</sup>. Currently, 26.6% of Japanese are over 65,<sup>3</sup> and this is expected to rise to 39.9% by 2060.<sup>4</sup> Healthy life expectancy (HALE: the current number of years a newborn can expect to live in “full health”) was an astonishing 75 years in 2013.<sup>5</sup>

Cities are scrambling to cope with this rapid increase in older people. The workforce is being stressed by healthy 70-year-olds wanting to continue working, while the soaring costs of

medical treatment are bringing the health insurance system to its knees. More elderly Japanese are sick and need to be cared for. One-third of Japanese people die of cancer,<sup>6</sup> which often requires expensive treatment and long-term care. There are not enough trained caregivers. The use of health-care robots may further dehumanize the elderly.

“Every week I go to see my doctor because he takes time to talk to me,” said Mr. K. However, Mr. K’s Christian doctor told me that he struggles with the extra time needed to cope with the increasing loneliness of the elderly.

The respect traditionally shown to elderly people is disintegrating. “I feel abandoned by my family, who are so busy with their own lives,” says Mrs. M.

In 2009 32,000 Japanese died a “lonely death” (*kodokushi*);<sup>7</sup> most of these cases involve elderly people over 65. This trend is expected to increase. There is a lack of hospices and home

hospice care facilities in Japan. Only 10% of Japanese die at home, compared with 30% in other developed countries.<sup>8</sup> Japanese generally have a negative image of “hospices.” Spiritual care at hospices has only just begun to be considered in Japan.

Criminal offenses by Japanese aged 65 or over accounted for 16.9% of all crime in 2012.<sup>9</sup> “The elderly are

**“Every week I go to see my doctor because he takes time to talk to me,” said Mr. K.**

turning to shoplifting, as an increasing number of them lack assets and children to depend on. Some elderly, particularly men who have lost their wives, even commit crimes to be put in jail so they can be fed three times a day.”<sup>10</sup>



## Ageing in Japan: Problems and Opportunities from a Christian Perspective

Japanese politicians know that the present situation, especially regarding pension, care and welfare of older people, and the increasing cost of health care, will continue to spiral out of control. I believe that we as Christians need to pray that God will raise up politicians and bureaucrats who will have the wisdom to see the big, long-term picture, and especially have the courage to implement changes that are unpleasant in the short term but that will produce a stable society in 40 years' time.

### Some problems we as Christians face as we seek to reach out to the elderly:

- » Time and patience is needed to build relationships with older people, usually in small groups or one-to-one.
- » Concentration span can be reduced.
- » Communication problems can occur when speech is not clear.
- » Many older people have memory and reasoning difficulties.
- » A number of older people struggle with new technology, such as smart phones and computers.
- » Some older people have eye problems and are unable to read most of the small-print Christian literature that is available.
- » A good general working knowledge of illnesses and hospitals is needed to understand the physical and mental problems of older people.
- » With heart disease and stroke among the top four causes of death, the church needs to be ready to deal with sudden health crises among the elderly.
- » Abuse (neglect, poor care, and physical abuse) of people in old-age homes is more common than it was. An increasing number of old-age homes do not allow visitors who are not immediate family or approved friends.
- » In some cases, getting involved with an older person also means getting involved with the family, and the family problems, of the person.

### Opportunities we as Christians have as we reach out to the elderly:

- » Older people usually have more time to consider the meaning of life and the existence of a Creator God.
- » Many elderly are relatively healthy well into their 80s, and their wisdom and experience can be used by God to minister to others.
- » Due to the need for more helpers, the door is open for volunteer work through local ward, city, or town offices.
- » Christians are freely able to join in with recreational activities frequented by older people: park golf, hot springs, sight-seeing tours, *igo* and *shogi* clubs, etc.
- » Modern technology can be used for evangelism. For example, iPads can make reading the Bible and Christian books easier for sight-impaired people.
- » Sickness and grief open doors for loving Christ-centered care.
- » Funerals can be a great opportunity for evangelism.

### Some Personal Thoughts on Reaching the Elderly for Christ

- » The elderly should be reached through a local church (rather than through a parachurch organization).
- » Older Christians need to be encouraged to overcome the “I cannot do anything” barrier — to see that they have a vital role to play in the growth and vitality of the local church. The best way for the elderly to be reached for Christ is through the witness of elderly Christians who have experienced similar difficulties.
- » Preaching and teaching in the church should move from being logic centered with three points, to one-point messages that make good use of personal illustrations to teach theological truth. Messages need to be short (within 30 minutes), clear, and somewhat repetitive.
- » To allow older people to be baptized, the church may need to lower the bar in terms of not requiring a detailed knowledge of theology.
- » We need to teach church people how to really listen. In many cases, listening can be as effective as professional

counseling. How willing are we as Christians to spend time talking about seemingly non-essential things, to be Christ to the older person? Are we willing to take the natural opportunities that God will give us to share about Jesus and our Creator God?

- » The church needs to speak out against abuse in old-age homes.
- » The church could hold more seminars on “How to live each day with joy,” or “How to die with dignity and peace.”

Is it an understatement to say that Japanese elderly are, and will continue to be, the largest unreached group in Japan? Whether young, middle-aged or elderly, it is the Holy Spirit who reveals Jesus, convicts of sin, and gives faith to believe. Praise God for His work! **JH**

*Dale Viljoen came to Hokkaido from South Africa with OMF International in 1979. After church planting for 21 years, he served as director of language, orientation, and training until his wife's death. Dale subsequently married Karen Harless (formerly TEAM).*

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# WRINKLES & SMILES: PRIORITIES IN SILVER EVANGELISM

EVANGELISTIC OPPORTUNITIES ABOUND IN THE  
OVER-55 AGE GROUP IN JAPAN.



Forty percent of people in Japan are over 55.<sup>1</sup> And one in four is a retiree. Things have gotten very gray . . . well, silver. But could this evangelistic opportunity prove to be platinum?

Of course, the silver age group has its drawbacks. Yes, admit it, the more efficient-minded you are, the more likely you are to consider that the return on your investment may be smaller because their clock is winding down. This is not the '4/14,'<sup>2</sup> with receptive minds and whole lifetimes ahead. There is also that issue of 'teaching an old dog'—seniors are much more accustomed to a worldview and way of living that have been knitted together decade after decade. Some of them may not be very mentally on the ball anymore, either. Plus many seniors have a hard time understanding a typical gospel presentation, or even seeing the print—hey, at middle age some of those kanji are already bleeding into black blobs, even with my own bifocals!

All that said, we can't escape the fact that silver evangelism is the last chance opportunity—a rescue operation at the gates of hell. In the few years or months remaining, eternities will be forged forever unchangeable. The heart rending reality—this year in Japan; about 1.2 million will die not knowing Jesus. This season, this week, today, is the last glimmering hope they have for someone bringing the message to them.

I know there are challenges. My Japanese father-in-law was the eldest son of seven. His high sense of responsibility to the family kept the *butsudan* (family altar) securely installed in the household for decades. My mother-in-law prayed for him for 38 years. He heard the gospel many



times. But it took illness, pain, and discouragement to drive him to Jesus. At 80, he became the first male in the family to trust Christ.

So in what ways do we need to tailor our outreach to the silver crowd? Two come to mind: one is related to silver-life turning points and the other is silver-mind simplicity.

## SILVER-LIFE TURNING POINTS

Amazon's best-selling Japanese senior books indicate a specifically dreary outlook. The English translation of the title of the top seller is *Downstream Seniors: Impact of the Collapse with 100 Million Elderly*.<sup>3</sup> And if that's not a charming enough read, the number two bestseller is *Old Age Bankruptcy: The Nightmare of Living Too Long*.<sup>4</sup>

Japanese seniors live longer than anyone else in the world, and during their lengthy treks through life they face an assortment of struggles and anxieties. Typically they feel alone in facing these challenges; after all, the longer they live, the more loved ones they lose. Grief from loss not only stems from deceased loved ones, but also from loss of health, appearance, mental ability, mobility, finances . . . the list goes on. Their world is shrinking and the clock is ticking.

In this dismal reality, the books of smiley-centenarian-Christian physician Hinohara Shigeaki sparkle: *Fifteen Ways to Make Life Fun*,<sup>5</sup> *Soul Smart Living*,<sup>6</sup> and *Plump Full of Life*,<sup>7</sup> Doctor Hinohara's approach is noteworthy—he understands that seniors face enormous struggles, but he keeps pumping his cheerful, positive tidings. And as he himself is 104 and still practicing medicine, and what he preaches, who can argue with him?

Today, Japan's seniors need such voices crying in their wilderness. When trying to determine a title for the silver version of our GospelShare Series, we took an ultra-positive approach and named it *The Best of Life is Yet to Come*.<sup>8</sup> I was recently told of a widowed lady in Fukushima who finding the title irresistible, eagerly devoured the booklet.

When the members of a church in Fukushima visited temporary housing units last year, they found that those who were left were mostly seniors—the young and able had gone. In this depressing setting, the words; *The Best of Life is Yet to Come!* chimed with hope. Evacuees read it over and over, and the church ended up sharing with people in approximately 700 cramped residences.

Silver-life turning points typically involve grief, helplessness, and hopelessness—all ripe ground for touching hearts. Will we be around when they get that diagnosis, when they lose another friend (or pet), when they are actually thinking about the meaning of their life and what lies beyond? For us who evangelize seniors, the vital impetus may be timing. My father-in-law held out until God-ordained suffering sent him to his knees. But as many already feel forlorn, perhaps a positive approach may be best? Might it be smarter to emphasize life instead of death? Not death and flames thereafter, but eternal life starting right now?

**LEFT:** 'Sharing a Laugh'. These are country women, very different from the sophisticated and splendidly dressed geishas seen elsewhere. This photo is from an album compiled in Japan of photos taken between 1914 and 1918.

## SILVER-MIND SIMPLICITY

When producing our *GospelShare Silver* version, we learned that in design and word, the bottom line was simplicity. In contrast to our *GospelShare Culture B* for blue-collar culture, which is vibrantly colored and graphically pulsates, the silver version looks reserved. Too many graphics is distracting for seniors.

My wife had an amazing experience this year. Sensing it might be the last time to see her elder sister's in-laws, she was determined to bring them to Christ. The only problem was both were moderately senile. Some days, they could not recognize their own son or grandchildren. My wife had to significantly simplify the message. Even our *GospelShare Silver* was too challenging at this stage of decline. Bordering on the miraculous, both were lucid for her visit. And even more supernaturally, both trusted Christ on the same day. (The frosting on the cake was that my wife also led their granddaughter to the Lord later that day—it is possible, even in Japan!) One item my wife used in sharing with them was, interestingly for a Baptist missionary, a rosary. The crucifix showing Christ's sacrifice was a simple picture to convey the reality, which was a challenge for faltering minds to grasp.

Perhaps related to simplicity is a simple memory. Given that seniors tend to have better long-term than short-term memories, connecting with something in their past is likely to be a good starting point. Old songs, old pictures, childhood stories, and past holidays; any of these woven into a message can help create a heart connection (see my article on *kokoro* connection on page 20–21 of this issue). *GospelShare Silver* starts with them remembering the night sky as a child, and wondering then if the stars were little diamonds stuck up there with glue. (See the presentation of *GospelShare Silver*<sup>9</sup> by searching the title in YouTube.)

In the words of Mark Twain, "Wrinkles should merely indicate where smiles have been." But for those who have wrinkles in the wrong places, we still have a chance to add the smile. At the end of an earthly life, what a platinum testimony this would be to God's glory. **JH**

*Dr. Andy Meeko is a second-generation missionary (US) on the Innovative Team of JBF. He is director of T3C (Tokorozawa Community Care Center) and producer of the GospelShare Series.*

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Image credit: 'Sharing a laugh' by Alan Davey © 1914, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/adavey/4943364660/sizes/l>

# Old Folks English

Teaching English to elderly people can be a great avenue of ministry.

At some point in their careers, most missionaries in Japan have tried their hand at teaching English. But I bet not many have taught English to a spunky 102-year-old!

At the request of a Japanese pastor, our team started doing a monthly English time at a local nursing home, which we affectionately dubbed “Old Folks’ English.” At first, we were not sure if it would go well, but to our delight it turned out to be a huge success. Not only was the class well attended, but also the staff added a tea time afterwards, which gave us a chance to get to know the staff and residents on a deeper level. We often stayed to chat for hours after the class.

While some of the residents suffered from dementia, many were quite “with it” and had no problems communicating at length. I enjoyed the English time, but my most precious memories were made during the tea times. I grew very close to one resident in particular who shared stories about her arranged marriage and wartime experiences. We were frequently invited to events at the nursing home such as festivals and karaoke time. As time went by, we truly began to feel a part of the nursing-home community.

In fact, following the birth of our daughter, they were the very first people I wanted to visit. The staff and residents cheered me on throughout my pregnancy and were eager to meet our daughter. They watched her grow up before their eyes and considered her their *gaijin* grandbaby. It was extremely difficult to say goodbye to them this past June when we left the mission field to return to the US.

So how did our 102-year-old student fare? To my surprise, she did wonderfully and managed to say, “How are you?” and “Happy!” among other

phrases. She often joined us for tea time and was a real ham. When asked to pose for a photo, she usually stuck her tongue out at the camera and didn’t stop giggling for at least 15 minutes.

I have a feeling that this kind of ministry is quite rare in Japan, but it is valuable and vital. I felt blessed to be able to combine my interest in teaching English with my passion for serving the elderly. Spending quality time with elderly folks is richly rewarding because they are eager to talk and it eases their loneliness tremendously. For those of you serving in Japan who enjoy teaching English, why not give it a try?

*“Spending quality time with elderly folks is richly rewarding because they are eager to talk and it eases their loneliness tremendously.”*

Here are some tips and ideas for teaching English in a nursing home:

- » **Make it fun** and simple and hand out objects or cards for everyone to hold.
- » **Shake hands and greet each resident with a smile**—physical touch is very important to the elderly.
- » **Use** songs with a strong beat that are easy to clap to.
- » **Ask** if it’s okay to stay on after the class to chat with the residents.
- » **Pray** that the staff and residents will see the love of Christ in you. **JH**

*Danielle Krammel (US) worked with her husband Matthias (Germany) with German Alliance Mission in Ishinomaki and Onagawa after the 2011 tsunami in partnership with Reach Global. Previously, they had lived in other parts of Japan.*



**Danielle Krammel:** How did English time help the nursing-home residents?

**Konno-san (nursing home supervisor):** I believe the greatest impact is that the residents rediscovered the joy of living. When a resident starts living with us, they typically feel lonely, being away from their family members. Most feel discouraged with their increasing inability to take care of themselves, and thus have difficulty in finding any hope in life.

However, once they began to actually speak English, a language they had studied all those years ago, I saw their brainpower become active again. It was a heart-warming experience for them to make friends with foreigners like you and to look forward to the birth of your baby. They welcomed your daughter as if she were their own grandchild. They were so happy!

To our “old folks,” having someone come to see them and love them truly became a source of energy. Even today, they sometimes look at your photos and wonder how you are doing.



# Japanese TV Helps Share the Gospel



**Journey With Asako**, Forest Books. Illustrated documentary on the life of Asako Hirooka (1849-1919), the model for the heroine of an NHK TV drama called "Asa ga Kita." A daughter of the wealthy commercial Mitsui family in Edo era Osaka, she was an entrepreneur who, during the Meiji and Taisho eras, developed financial services for women (when women did not engage in business) that eventually became an insurance company and a bank. She studied at a women's college in Tokyo and became a women's rights activist. At age 60 she became a Christian and promoted the YWCA and engaged in evangelism. B6\* size, 96 pp. ISBN 978-4-264-03311-0 (Asako to Tabisuru) (17190) ¥1,200+



**Embrace Words of Hope**, PBA. Listeners to Pacific Broadcasting Association radio and TV broadcasts write in questions like "Why me?" and "Is there meaning to life?" and other questions. They are answered with words from the Bible by 11 pastors who are speakers on the programs in 40 easy to understand short messages that reveal the abundant world of the Christian faith. "Listen to the voice of the Christ of the cross as he speaks to you." B6\* size, 112 pp. ISBN 978-4-264-03343-1 (Kibō no Kotoba o Daite) (28730) ¥286+



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**DTC (Dynamic Teen Company)**

**Efren Peñaflorida** is a founding member of Dynamic Teen Company. He is a Filipino educator and social worker. He offers Filipino youth/children at-risk a chance to pursue education through unconventional set-up, like the pushcart classrooms in poverty-stricken areas.

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# Kokoro Connection

## Maximize the Message Being Heard

**Debunking the myth that it takes a long time for hearts to open in Japan.**

The rainy days were the most depressing. Random evangelism on Tokyo campuses had enough challenges, not least being the lack of interest and response, but somehow the gray and the wet ate away at my already dwindling morale. I arrived at Tokyo *Roku Daigaku* (Tokyo's top six universities) brimming with zeal, only to get hit with reality. Few seemed interested in spiritual issues, and even fewer received the message. Month after month, and then year after year, I banged my head against the brick walls of Tokyo's Ivy League apathy.

But then I began to change my approach. After all, if the target is missed, it is not likely the target's fault. And after I changed, I started to see a response—a lot more response. For the next ten years, at least one person, but at times many responded at every event where I shared the gospel. That was despite my skepticism and disbelief. I once caught myself thinking, “Not today. Today is the day no one will say yes to Jesus.” But wouldn't you know, they said yes, even on that day!

In one unforgettable situation, a secular company invited me to speak to all the employees on the topic of Christian love (yes, the stuff of dreams). When I gave an invitation at the end, 16 of the 25 present accepted Christ. My wife Junko and I had to help lift each other's jaws off the floor.

What was the change I made? Basically seeking a *kokoro* connection. Simply put, a *kokoro* connection is a bond with heart, emotion, and deeper being. It is very powerful. In my years

in Japan, I have seen a lot of evangelism that never connects to *kokoro*, and a lot of *kokoro* connecting that never becomes evangelism. Both situations are unfortunate.

With 65% of churches in Japan not seeing a single conversion in a year, it's easy to think that Japanese society, culture and hearts are resistant to the gospel. However, decades of evangelism with Campus Crusade in Japan has indicated that a basic, personal presentation of the gospel in Japan will result in one in ten responding—a similar response rate to what I have seen in many developed countries. So one might ask, how much evangelism are churches really doing? Or, how appropriately are they doing it?

Perhaps we all might do well to consider in what ways we could make a solid *kokoro* connection with individuals we hope to reach.<sup>1</sup> There are a myriad of ways to help move people deeply and each is deserving of careful consideration, but in this article I will consider just three: music, story, and touch.

### Music

In my limited understanding of music, I have been awed at its power to capture and bond to a heart. I was once in Milan with my wife on her birthday. Though I loathed opera, what choice did I have? Despite my ignorance of the dynamic Italian lyrics, I left with something pulsating forcefully in my heart. I had gotten a taste of why in films you see hardened Mafia bosses weeping uncontrollably at the opera house.



But perhaps too often we get caught in using music for a message, instead of just allowing it to create the *kokoro* connection. Perhaps the music doesn't always need to carry a message. I recall a small church dedication I participated in in Yamagata. A man from the neighborhood played an old folk song of the region on the *shakuhachi* (traditional Japanese flute). His performance opened up deep memories and connections, so much so that the pastor couldn't help jumping in and crooning the words of the song. Though it had no spiritual message, it deeply resonated with spiritual possibility. For in that moment, people's hearts were wide open.

## Story

Jesus was a master at the craft of story. When I did chapel weddings many years ago, I knew of chaplains who aimed to use their eight minutes of message time to clearly get across the points of the gospel and hope it might make its mark. I took a different route. I tried Jesus' method and decided to tell a story that might move people at the heart level, leaving them curious and hungry. The story I employed most frequently was about an elderly couple struggling with Alzheimer's and finding love in heartbreak. I would choke up myself, and over time I saw hundreds with tears in their eyes.

A good story is not easily forgotten. A few years ago I produced a *manga*, RiskRide ([www.riskride.net](http://www.riskride.net)). It is a story to initiate a *kokoro* connection. The *manga* merely hints at the gospel. But the seven questions that follow the story open up a raw and wounded place in the reader's heart. Many reports have come in of deep *kokoro* connections having been made. Lonely people, damaged people, people ready to give up—and their hearts opened like lotus blossoms to Jesus.

## Touch

Japan is notorious for being a place of very little touch, aside from experiences on crowded trains. But meaningful touch, though scarce, is greatly longed for. Touch may be countercul-

tural, but if handled well and timed appropriately, it can create a powerful *kokoro* connection.

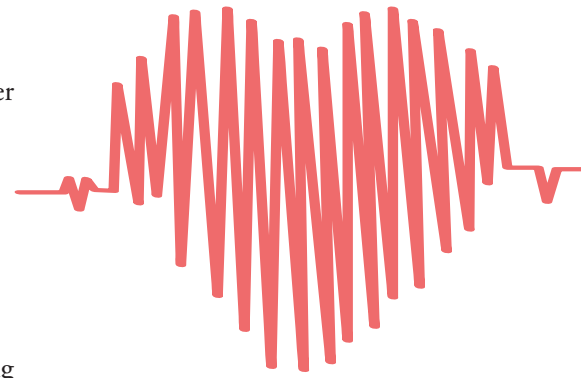
I witnessed this often in post-disaster Tohoku. In the shock phase following the disasters, I mobilized teams of hundreds of volunteers to offer *kokoro* care under the guise of stress-relieving hand massages. Though wary at first, I found it was obviously a God-thing. People in shock, grief, and trauma needed a touch, but so few were getting it, especially nuclear evacuees. In that context, a Christian volunteer would take their hand, listen, help them breathe right, think straight, release them to weep, and then offer to pray for their protection and blessing. I was amazed as I saw average Japanese volunteers making remarkable *kokoro* connections all around me. They too were awestruck. It worked so well that we employed the method many times back in Kanto at our community-care center, T3C, for those suffering from anxiety. In many settings, I have seen the myth debunked—that it takes a lot of time for hearts to open in Japan. If you go about it correctly, 15 minutes can be as potent as six months.

In producing the GospelShare

**“What must we do to fascinate, to intrigue, to move deeply? The path may be simpler than we think.”**

Series,<sup>2</sup> we sought to offer the gospel in the most appropriate terms for different types of people: white collar, blue collar, seniors, kids, etc. But in our training, we emphasize that before sharing this highly tailored approach, it is important to establish a *kokoro* connection. Not hard to do, but tragically easy to forget.

Too often evangelism follows an unfortunate course: not really capturing a person's interest or attention, struggling to get across a list of logical points, trying to get some kind of fundamental change of heart or mind, and coming away empty-handed.



Been there, done that.

What must we do to fascinate, to intrigue, to move deeply? The path may be simpler than we think. Perhaps to start we need to find *kokoro*, perhaps we need to feel.

Long ago, I studied tea at the University of Hawaii. In the garden of the tea house is a pond. Unless you see it from above, you don't realize that the pond is in the shape of the *kanji* for *kokoro* (心). To get to the tea house, one must pass through *kokoro*. It's a good reminder. There, I learned from Okakura's Book of Tea<sup>3</sup> that, "We have good and bad tea, as we have good and bad paintings—generally the latter." Precisely. And that is my great hope—that my evangelism will not fall into the latter category. **JH**

*Dr. Andy Meeko is a second-generation missionary (US) on the Innovative Team of JBF Director of T3C (Tokorozawa Community Care Center) and Producer of the GospelShare Series.*

1. I've long suspected that contemporary Japanese people are not looking for truth or drawn to rational, logic approaches. I view Japan as being neither post-modern nor modern, but likely pre-modern (that toyed with modern)—which looks a lot like post-modern. We may try to give the gospel in modernistic terms, but perhaps what Japanese people want most is an experience; they want something that feels good. That feeling may be our best starting ground.
2. GospelShare, [www.newdaytoday.net/gospel](http://www.newdaytoday.net/gospel)
3. Kakuzo Okakura, Book of Tea (Dover Publications, 1964)

# Evangelism at the Family Altar (*Butsudan*)

**Let's disciple and teach new believers how to bear testimony to their faith while remaining with their unbelieving family.**

“Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household” (Acts 16:31, NIV). This is the hope of every Japanese person who comes to Christ for salvation. They long to see their loved ones—their household—believe in Christ too. However, all too often they are counseled to forsake their families because their families remain enmeshed in familial religious rituals that run counter to Christ.

I believe Scripture tells us that believers in Jesus Christ shared in the triumph of their Lord over worldly powers and demonic principalities when he humiliated them at the cross (Col. 2:8–16). In verse 16 of this passage, Paul writes, “Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day” (NIV).

So could it be that God would have new Christians who have the Holy Spirit dwelling in them remain at family gatherings, thereby gaining a natural venue to share their testimonies with their families?

## Discipleship Guidelines

Christians who desire to stay in close fellowship with their family as they gather must be strongly grounded in the Word of God and be able to appropriate the full armor of God (Eph. 6:10–18). They must be skilled in using the sharpened sword of the Spirit through regular practice. Such believers need to be sure that no one except the one and only Almighty God is to be worshipped. Though they participate in family gatherings and meals as well as some rituals, they must never trust in or expect blessing from any other than Jesus. Familiarity with the Holy Spirit's presence is also a strong safeguard against deceiving spirits that would try to waylay believers from steadfast devotion to Christ.

A new believer is just learning how to follow Christ. Sometimes there is great enthusiasm mixed with much ignorance. How can we teach them to honor both Christ and their parents and ancestors? A key passage is the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20:3–17.

The first commandment tells us we are not to have any other gods in place of the Maker of heaven and earth (Ex. 20:3). The second commandment is similar in that it commands us not to make any idol or choose any likeness of nature to worship (Ex. 20:4).

I also make it a habit to discuss Hebrews 9:27–28 early in a new disciple's walk with Christ:

“Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him” (NIV, 1984).

These verses show that deceased ancestors cannot harm or bless those who remain among the living. Prayers to the deceased cannot be effectual. They are to be honored for their previous help to us, but they cannot be given the glory and praise that belong to the one and only God.

The distinctiveness between worshipping God and honoring parents and earlier forbears is best understood and internalized through honest discussion in an atmosphere of acceptance and love. This can happen in the church or in a discipleship relationship.

Churches can set aside a specific day of worship to focus teaching on Exodus 20:1–12 and include testimonies of appreciation from members for their deceased parents. Other activities might include salvation testimonies focused on newfound hope.

## Vital testimony

A new believer who continues living in close proximity to his or her family members can powerfully display the grace of God through their transforming life.

To do this, though, they need to explain their faith to their family with gentleness and respect (1 Pet. 3:15–16). The content of this testimony should include the distinction between the obligation to honor one's parents and the first commandment to worship the one true God only.



For example, “I love and honor you (my loved ones) and my father and mother. My God commands me to honor my parents, and I want to do it because I love you and want to be with you. But I can worship one God only. He is the maker of heaven and earth, and he has provided a way for me to have everlasting life in fellowship with him. I would like to be with you when you honor our relatives, but I will worship Jesus alone.”

As family members experience the love of Christ through the participating Christian, some will slowly, or in some cases suddenly, display an openness to knowing more about this transformational God who has changed their loved one. That’s when evangelism of the lips can happen.<sup>1</sup>

If accepted by family members, such a testimony can open the way to share a lifestyle testimony at family gatherings. By being filled with the Spirit and putting on the armor of God, a Christian can demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit and distinguish when to and when not to participate in family activities. Clearly religious activities like lighting incense might be best eschewed, whereas other activities that have an honoring rather than a religious focus may be participated in.

Here, the church can also have a role. Cultural insiders with a mature faith can help new Christians delineate exactly where participation would maintain a clear Christian lifestyle testimony and where it would muddy the waters in terms of knowing the one and only God.

A final caution regarding evangelism at the family altar: Christians will lose their saltiness if they don’t make a clear

declaration of loyalty to Christ (Matt. 5:13–16) and they participate in family gatherings that are at least partly religious. In the Old Testament, a key component of God’s plan for the people of the world is that every one of them has a chance to know that there is only one God over all (Gen. 12:3; 1 Kgs. 8:41–43; Ps. 67; Isa. 42:1–7, 45:6; Dan. 3:29; Rom. 1:18–32).

The most powerful testimony to the reality of God and his great love for us is a believer who cultivates intimacy with Christ through the Bible and Holy Spirit.

Let’s remove human barriers to the harvest God wants to give Japan. Let’s disciple and teach new believers how to bear testimony to their faith while remaining with their unbelieving family. Let’s trust the Holy Spirit in new believers and support them with prayer and encouragement, believing their families can be reached with the good news of Jesus Christ. The sword Jesus said would come to families will undoubtedly appear sometimes, but a gentle and respectful approach can turn aside much wrath and it may result in whole households being won to Christ. **JH**

*Michael Wilson (US) served in Japan from 1994 to 2014 with Asian Access, specifically serving as their mission’s church multiplication catalyst. He has a doctorate in missiology.*

1. Masumi Toyotome, *Enjoyable Personal Evangelism* (Missionary Strategy Alliance, 1974)



**A final caution regarding evangelism at the family altar: Christians will lose their saltiness if they don’t make a clear declaration of loyalty to Christ and they participate in family gatherings that are at least partly religious.**



# Being Renewed

## How can we get refreshed daily?

I received my call to missions during a 10-week short-term missions trip in 1980. Then in 1989, married with two daughters aged one- and three-years-old, my husband and I left Los Angeles and arrived in Japan with expectant hearts and dreams. Life in Japan was rough during our first three years. Having a Japanese face but not being able to speak Japanese was a challenge. There were many unfulfilled expectations and disappointments. I experienced role losses on a multitude of levels and at times felt isolated and discouraged.

After a year of home assignment we returned to Japan refreshed and renewed for our second term. This time around, I made it a priority to take time for self-care spiritually, emotionally, and physically in the midst of busy ministry.

I found my niche in ministering (member care) to missionaries with my professional skills as a Christian therapist. After serving for over 10 years, the Lord called my husband and me to return to the Los Angeles area to serve as a pastor and Christian counselor respectively for the past 17 years.

The theme for the upcoming Women in Ministry Retreat is “Being Renewed.” This is taken from Romans 12:1-2. How desperately at times I needed renewal, but didn’t know how to get it. Instead, sometimes I felt offended and resentful at others and even God. Looking back, I realize I had many false beliefs in my mind about myself, others, and God, which pulled me down and made me feel stuck.

Do you feel stuck? Do you want your life to be renewed?

### How do we get renewed?

Renewal is defined as a change of heart and life. What does this look like practically?

Paul writes in Romans 12:2, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what

is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (KJV). This renewal of the mind, which Paul shares about, is an ongoing process of re-charging. I have found that instead of choosing to run on empty and complain, I need to daily choose to refuel and be replenished by the Lord. We are told God’s loving-kindness and compassions are new every morning (Lamentations 3:22-23). Thus, I try to make time daily to search for his tender love.

If I’m proactive in looking for God’s tender love throughout the day and give him thanks despite my circumstances, I’m refueled and replenished. In fact gratitude studies suggest that practicing gratitude brings a person more positive emotion, better health, stronger relationships, and greater life satisfaction.<sup>1</sup>

In the midst of busyness, the Lord reminds me of the importance of spending unhurried time in his presence. To be in a place where he can speak to me from his Word. Not just for the sake of studying a passage in preparation for a Bible study or a message, but being in a position where I worship him simply for who he is.

The Lord speaks to me through his creation and creatures too. Whether it is listening to the birds chirping or standing under a huge maple tree and noticing the sun shining on the resplendent lime green leaves, I feel his joy. I’m reminded that this awesome God who created all these things and me, is with me and loves me. So I ask the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, to help me be sensitive to him throughout my day. I ask for his perspective and the ability to be grateful.

### Make space for God

Becoming renewed is about making space for God in our hurried lives. How do we do that? What does it look like in our daily lives? However you make space for him, it can bring renewal and refreshment to our spirit, soul, and body.



Ann Voskamp says in her book, *One Thousand Gifts*, that too often “we live like life is an emergency,” but it isn’t. Each moment is a gift from God to savor. When I’m feeling stressed or overwhelmed, I can choose to release these moments of pressure to God and ask him to reveal his truths into every part of my being. I can ask Jesus to help me view myself, others, and even our Heavenly Father, from his perspective. As I do this, I feel his peace.

*Lord, thank you for your steadfast love that is new every morning. Help us to be sensitive to your Holy Spirit this day. Please touch the eyes of our hearts daily to have your heavenly perspective. May you activate our*

*senses so we can observe your loving-kindness and express our thanksgiving to you with a heart of gratitude. JH*

*Carol Miyake is a licensed counselor at Asian American Christian Counseling Service in Los Angeles. She is the speaker for the Women in Ministry's retreat, March 2016. Carol and her husband were formerly missionaries in Japan.*

1. Emmons, R. A., and Mishra, A., “Why gratitude enhances well-being: What we know, what we need to know.” in *Designing the future of positive psychology: Taking stock and moving forward*, ed. Sheldon, K., Kashdan, T., & Steger, M.F. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 248-262



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# WIM

Women in Ministry

## SPRING WOMEN'S RETREAT

March 2-4, 2016

Location: Fukuin no Ie, Okutama

Cost: Around ¥20,000

Details & registration on [jema.org](http://jema.org)

### REGIONAL EVENTS

Hokkaido: Saturday, March 5

Kansai: Monday, March 7  
(Contact Erika Grabowski for details.)

[erika.grabowski@gmail.com](mailto:erika.grabowski@gmail.com)

## "Being Renewed" Guest Speaker Carol Miyake

Carol Miyake is a licensed Christian Counselor at Asian American Christian Counseling Services (AACCS) in the Los Angeles area. She and her husband were former missionaries in Japan and provide 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 the Lord has in store for our retreat.

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



Our Facebook page for WIM is a great way to stay connected and a place to post prayer requests, needs /questions, or words of encouragement.

# WINTER DAY OF PRAYER



**DATE:** Tuesday, January 10, 2016  
**PLACE:** SEND Center, Higashi Tokorozawa  
**TIME:** 9:30-10 Mingle and enjoy homemade goodies and coffee  
 10-12:00 Program followed by lunch (bring your own or buy an obento nearby)  
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# Unworthy?

IN A LAND WHERE THEY ARE A VAST MINORITY,  
JAPANESE CHRISTIANS NEED TO UNDERSTAND  
GOD'S GREAT LOVE FOR THEM.

My heart was deeply moved as I talked with an elderly Japanese woman. She had served the Lord and matured in their faith during her fifty years of service to the Lord. She also shared testimonies of churches that had been started and strengthened. I loved hearing her pray softly and reverently in her mother tongue. What happened next, though, still brings grief to my heart. The woman confessed she was uncertain whether she was worthy enough to enter heaven.

In a performance-driven culture like Japan, the unspoken expectation of every area in life is perfection. People who do very well are acceptable. Those who don't are expendable. Individuals who don't perform well in school, or descend from a less than perfect ancestral line, are doomed to live outside the mainstream of society. In this worldview, Christians are near the bottom of the "successful" list.

In a country where 99% haven't heard, or would rather not accept, that the creator God made them in his image, the value of life is diminished. The truth is that Jesus Christ came to earth with love for all people everywhere. He died for the past, present, and future shortcomings of each person, and rose again to provide salvation and an eternal home in heaven for all who believe in his name.

Many people who become Christians in Japan struggle with their decision to be baptized and become part of a local church. A "good" church member must be there on Sundays for several hours of activities following worship. For most Japanese people, Sunday is their only free time. But school clubs and neighborhoods also plan required activities, making it difficult for Christians to observe a Sabbath rest. People who can't be one hundred percent part of something are considered unfriendly, selfish, and unworthy.

Japan is an easily accessed, wealthy country with freedom of religion and, yet, evangelical Christians are still a tiny minority. In light of this, how will Christians, as valued sons and daughters of Almighty God, live out their purpose to glorify the Lord where they live and work? How can we who are sharing the gospel with them make a difference?

We can entreat the Lord to help both Japanese believers and missionaries know without a shadow of doubt, how wide and long and high and deep God's love is for them (Ephesians 3:18). If we truly know this, it will fill the body of Christ in Japan with overflowing joy and rock-solid peace as we look forward to spending eternity with our Lord-who gave up everything to have us by his side in heaven!

"The Lord your God is in the midst of you, a Mighty One, a Savior [Who saves]! He will rejoice over you with joy: He will rest [in silent satisfaction] and in His love He will be silent and make no mention [of past sins, or even recall them]: He will exult over you with singing" Zephaniah 3:17 (AMP). **JH**

*Karol Whaley and her husband, Tom, are emeritus missionaries living in southern California after having served for 26 years in Japan with the International Mission Board. Karol can be contacted at [jkotoba@aol.com](mailto:jkotoba@aol.com).*

# Adjustment Struggles

A sleepless night filled with nightmares, wet beds, and tears didn't help our morning. We were rushed and tired as my husband headed off to language class and I headed off to the hospital with my two preschool-aged daughters in tow. We trudged through the snow, caught the train, trudged through more snow, then waited. I was four months pregnant and needed some blood work done. We waited for over an hour to see the doctor (while I entertained and mediated between the tired, irritable girls). I gave the girls some snacks and spoke to the doctor. About two minutes later she sent me home with instructions to come back next week when the other blood results were in! I had been to the hospital about five times in five weeks, and this was the last straw. As I fought back the tears I wondered, "Why is everything so hard?"

My family and I moved to Japan from Australia eight months ago. We have a four-year old, a three-year old, and a newborn. My husband Paul and I are both full-time language students trying to adjust to life as a family in this new place we call home. The road has not been easy, and we've faced many challenges, one of which is parenting.

While we knew that transition would not be easy for our children, it has been so much harder than we could have imagined. People mentioned that it can be a hard time for kids, but no one really expressed how that (of course) makes parenting a whole lot harder. The kids have faced so many changes in a very short space of time: they miss family, friends, and our life in Australia, but are unable to explain the complex things that they feel. Volatile emotions, sleepless nights, and exasperating behaviour are now normal. The line between discipline and grace is very blurry these days, and there have been numerous times when I've shouted out in desperation, "I've got no idea what to do right now!"

Obviously part of the challenge has been my own struggle with transition. Being tired, stressed, and emotionally drained creates the perfect storm of impatience, low energy, irritation, and frustration. Not exactly the best combination for good parenting—the struggle for godliness in the midst of this has been real.

We've also struggled with what I like to call the "relationship gap". We left behind many dear friends and family, an extremely supportive church, and other smaller communities. While we have made new connections and friendships, naturally those relationships take

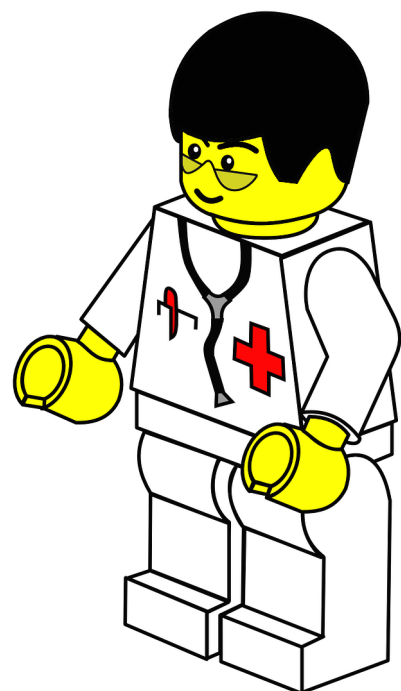
time to develop and deepen to the level of those we left behind. Time is the main reason for the 'gap' between what we have and what we've left behind. All we can do is wait, which is difficult. Also the busyness of our lives here limits the time we have to spend with people, which means new relationships take even longer to build.

We have struggled to find a good balance in our lives. Full-time study, family, adjusting to life here, church and so on—so much is happening all the time! This doesn't even include time to relax, exercise, spend time with the Lord, meet new people, enjoy family time, go on the occasional date, and stay connected with special people from Australia. We just can't do it all.

I know that these challenges are faced by many people all over the world and are not confined to the Japanese context. Yet being overseas and in transition make these general struggles all the more complicated and acutely felt.

In all of these challenges though, we are truly thankful to be here and look forward to growing, changing and adapting . . . and being patient with ourselves in the meantime. **JH**

*Melissa Jessop (OMF) arrived in Japan from Australia with her husband and three daughters on Valentine's Day this year. Language study takes up a lot of her time, as do kindergarten forms, changing nappies, and avoiding cultural misunderstandings.*



*New Voices is by missionaries who have been in Japan for less than five years. We welcome your submissions for future issues.*



# Japanese Culture

## Ethics

*This article is the fourth in a four-part series based on interviews with Japanese unbelievers about Japanese culture. Earlier articles appeared in the Spring 2014, Summer 2014, and Autumn 2014/Winter 2015 issues.*

Debates about abortion, gun ownership, same-sex marriage, care of refugees and immigrants, and military action are making news in my home country, America. Some of these topics are also being debated in Japan, along with local issues. Ethics is a key area for helping us understand Japanese culture. This article focuses on Japanese axiology or what Japanese people consider to be morally right and wrong. To probe the ethical beliefs of the Japanese, I posed the following two questions when I interviewed nine Japanese unbelievers:

1. How would you describe a good and a bad Japanese person?
2. How do you determine what is good and bad?

### A good person

Much of what the interviewees regarded as good came as no surprise. A good person helps others, is patient, works hard, has good manners, and is serious. One woman listed *seiza* (kneeling) as a mark of a good person (which disqualifies me!). Another characteristic of a good person is not overly expressing emotions. Conservation and saving were two good things one woman remembered her father emphasized when she was growing up; he scolded her for making long phone calls and for leaving the lights on.

### A bad person

Of course, those who kill others were considered bad. However, bad speech was most often listed as a mark of a bad person. In particular, angry words, speaking your mind, dirty and unkind words, and even misusing *keigo* (polite language; something I'm guilty of!) were characteristics of a bad person. Being unkind to strangers and exhibiting *sabetsu* (discrimination) were other immoral behaviors.

One woman concluded that Japanese are becoming apathetic because they do not care for the hungry or those living in war zones. She contrasted that with Americans who give to charities and adopt orphans. A young man stated that not being internationally-minded is bad. To be a truly peaceful nation, he reasoned, one must be able to communicate well with other nations.

### The basis for these judgments

What was the basis for these moral judgments? Those I interviewed gave a great many answers. One woman argued that it is self-evident. She said, "Everyone thinks the same about good and bad." Similarly, the young man believed that "people have the same heart" and want a quiet and peaceful world. Another thought ethics are passed down, although she conceded that there are generational differences and differences of opinion.

One woman, whose son married an American girl, thought that what was truly important was seeking to understand others and why they are that way. She thinks her daughter-in-law is a "bad" person, but her upbringing (her mother is now on her fourth husband and her father was an alcoholic) must be considered. This Japanese mother admitted that although she cannot love her daughter-in-law, she was able to accept her because she understood how she became who she is.

The young man stated that the standard is peace. To him, the most basic determination of what is wrong is something that "harms another person or makes them sad."

A mother of young children seemed to agree. She saw Japan changing for the worse. She thought schools and parents are not teaching right and wrong, because they're fearful of upsetting relational harmony. Instead, individual satisfaction is replacing the pursuit of peace and harmony.

The topic of ethics is a wonderful area to explore when seeking to understand Japanese culture. It also presents opportunities to talk about our biblically-based understanding of what is right and wrong. **JH**



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

# Praying with Others



Acts 12 gives us a powerful example of praying with others. Peter was arrested and put in jail. The believers were praying together for his deliverance in the home of Mary, the mother of John Mark. Rhoda, the servant girl, heard someone knock on the door. She asked who it was and found out it was Peter, freed by an angel sent from God. This was a direct answer to their prayers. But Rhoda was so shocked that God had answered that she left Peter standing at the gate. The other believers said she was out of her mind, but they eventually went to check, and there was Peter!

God commands us to pray together. Here are some thoughts about that.

## Praying alone

But first, let's look at what it's like to pray alone:

- Praying alone is more personal because you don't have to worry about other people listening.
- You can cry, be angry, or show other emotions in private prayers that you might not with others present.
- With no one else around, you are less likely to be pretentious.

Scripture commands us to pray alone as well as with others. But there have been times when I haven't been able to "break through" a feeling, situation, or sin by myself. I needed someone else praying for me.

Every month, pastors in Hirakata, Osaka, and Kochi meet for what we call a 'Fresh Encounter with God' (the Fresh Encounter in Osaka proper is on hiatus now). This is a prayer meeting connected with the Prayer Summit for Western Japan. I have found this to be a valuable time.

At the Prayer Summit, when we need prayer from others we we put a chair in the middle of a circle (we call this "sitting in the Father's lap") so we can confess our sins, etc. and

have others pray with us. Praying alone, we might not find release from a struggle. At those times, we need others to pray with and for us.

## Praying with others

What are some other benefits of praying with others?

- It is easier to focus on praying and not let your mind wander.
- Other people have different insights, which can help you pray more effectively. You can "pray till you pray" as we often experience in our Fresh Encounters meetings.
- Your shared love for the person you're praying for can deepen your prayers. You might feel empathy where there was no empathy before.
- If you pray conversationally, praying back and forth, you can go deeper into one prayer request.
- Your burdens are lifted and you have more joy.
- There is accountability for sin when you pray with others.
- You're not as rushed when you pray with others, because you have set aside time to pray with them.
- You hear others' prayer requests and can experience joy in the Lord when their prayers are answered, maybe even through you.

Jesus said, "For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst" (Matthew 18:20, NASB). James 5:16 tells us to confess our sins to one another and pray for one another so that we may be healed. This means we must pray out loud. God promises to hear us when we do.

So, let's pray with and for each other. God commands us to do so. But what if you're afraid of praying aloud in front of others—especially

in Japanese? Well, since God has told us to do so, He can help us do it. So let's rely on Him. And you might be surprised to find out that people don't care as much about how you pray as about the fact that you cared enough to pray with them. In fact, your stumbling prayers will come across as refreshing and sincere. **JH**

**“The angel fetched Peter out of prison, but it was prayer that fetched the angel.”**

— Thomas Watson —

Photo by Karen Ellrick.



**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.



# Misconceptions about Aging

## Growing Older Well

Whether we like it or not, we're all getting older. And our attitudes about aging have a lot to do with how we grow older. According to psychologist Maggie Scarf, misconceptions about old age abound. In her meticulously researched and carefully documented book, *September Songs*,<sup>1</sup> Scarf debunks some of the more common myths regarding aging. Here are three:

### Myth 1: Older people are depressed and cranky

Contrary to popular belief, most people in their 50s, 60s, and 70s are happier than their younger counterparts and normally “enjoy a subjective sense of peace and well-being.” Scarf calls this “the paradox of age.” As we age, the importance of our career and status fall away, and most older adults find themselves in secure living situations, both financially and relationally. This stability brings with it a “sense of well-being”. And though some physical and mental capacities can begin to wane, one’s emotional life generally stays intact and can even improve with age.

This feeling of peace is actually a physical reaction to growing older. Recent tests using magnetic resonance imaging have shown that changes in the brain’s prefrontal cortex in older individuals allow them to exert “greater selective control over negative emotions.” This ability to regulate one’s emotions increases rather than lessens with age.

### Myth 2: Older people are lonely

Social psychology research shows that older folk tend to have fewer relationships by choice. Sensing that time is limited, people begin to rethink their lives, especially their relationships. Though older people may seem to have fewer friendships because many of their friends have passed on, this is actually not the whole truth. Most older people go through a “proactive pruning” process in which they cut non-essential and toxic relationships out of their lives. All that remains are the relationships they value, that is, close friends and family. Into these relationships they pour all their time and emotional energy. The reason why grandpop spends

so much time talking about the grandkids is because close family ties are central in his life.

### Myth 3: Older people’s marriages are stale and stagnant

Scarf interviewed many couples on the subject of marriage for her book *Intimate Worlds*<sup>2</sup> in the 1990s. Now 20 years later she reinterviewed them for her new book to see how their marriages were doing. The results surprised even her. The couples that seemed headed for divorce during her original interviews, but who had decided to stay together, were not only happy but felt their marriages were better than ever. The biggest surprise was the couples who had chosen divorce. By and large, these couples, now singles, were dissatisfied with their lives and regretted getting divorced. She found that “divorcing, on average, failed to improve the emotional well-being of unhappily married people.” One surprising statistic was “almost 8 out of 10 who avoided divorce were happily married five years later.” The reality is that people who stay together are happier in their marriages the longer they are married.

Getting older is not for the faint of heart, but by debunking myths about it, we can come become less apprehensive about aging. Indeed, aging can even be an enjoyable and enriching process. **JH**

1. Maggie Scarf, *September Songs: The Good News about Marriage in the Later Years* (Riverhead Books, 2008).
2. Maggie Scarf, *Intimate Worlds: How Families Thrive and Why They Fail* (Ballantine Books, 1997).

Photo “Sweethearts” by Flickr user Patrick:  
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/adwriter/257937032>



“The best is yet to be, the last of life, for which the first was made.”

— Robert Browning —

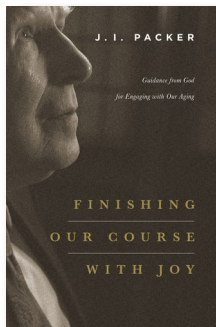


*Eileen Nielsen and her husband, Jim, are church planters who have been working in Tohoku doing survivor care. Eileen has a masters in counseling and is available for Skype counseling. Contact her at [eileenpielsen@gmail.com](mailto:eileenpielsen@gmail.com).*

# Selected Book Reviews

## Finishing our Course with Joy: Guidance from God for Engaging with Our Aging

**J. I. Packer** (Crossway: Wheaton, IL, 2014). 106 pp.



British-born Canadian theologian Packer wants to see believers run the last lap of the race “flat out.” He gives practical help for those who want to finish well. He urges his readers to make sure they are ready to meet Christ. One of my favorite quotes is the description he gives of heaven: “an unknown country with a well-known inhabitant” (p. 26). He warns of the wrong way that the world tells retirees to live—“practice self-indulgence up to the limit.”

In four brief chapters (in 14-point font) packed with wisdom, Packer writes for those who recognize that “aging is not for wimps; and who want to learn, in a straightforward way, how we may continue living to God’s glory as we get older” (p. 14).

Packer challenges senior believers not to live as “though spiritual gifts and ministry skills wither with age . . . What happens, rather, is that they atrophy with disuse.” While remembering that senior believers have less strength, churches “should at the same time seek to cherish and continue to harness the ministering capacities that these Christians displayed at earlier stages of their lives” (p. 64). He encourages lifelong learning and leading (in a broad sense, including influence) for aging believers. “Maintaining zeal Godward as our bodies wear out is the special discipline to which we aging Christians are called.” Memory weakens and energy levels keep going lower, but zeal should be unflagging all the way (pp. 76-77).

His last chapter, “We look forward,” reminds us of the hope we have as believers. Packer distills four truths from 2 Corinthians 4:16-5:10 to help us recover the hope of glory awaiting believers.

Packer, now 89, practices what he preaches. (See the videos of Packer here: <https://www.crossway.org/jipacker/> and the new biography of his life by Leland Ryken).

Here is a book for everyone to read, both young and old, so we all finish well. I wish I could put this book in the hands of every Japanese believer!

Reviewer rates it 5 out of 5 stars ★★★★★

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 • description [Packer] gives of  
 • heaven: “an unknown country  
 • with a well-known inhabitant.”

## Nearing Home: Life, Faith, and Finishing Well

**Billy Graham** (Thomas Nelson: Nashville, TN, 2011). 181 pp.

Evangelist Billy Graham, at 97, writes that, “old age is not for sissies.” But he reminds us of the hope and joy that “can be ours once we learn to look at these years from God’s point of view and discover His strength to sustain us every day.” He wants us to “learn to grow older with grace and find the guidance needed to finish well” (p. ix).

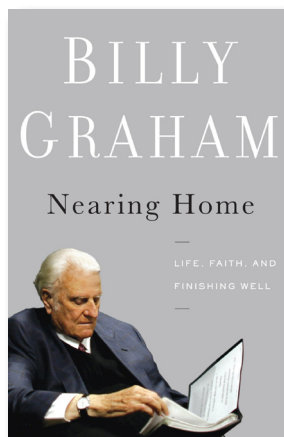
In this 2012 Christian Book of the Year, Graham has some moving stories and great quotes. He shares the story of the last will and testament of the banker, J. P. Morgan who died in 1913. Morgan reminded his children where he stood with Christ and wrote in his will: “I commit my soul into the hands of my Saviour, in full confidence that having redeemed it and washed it in His most precious blood He will present it faultless before the throne of my Heavenly Father” (p. 68).

“He quotes John Newton: “I am still in the land of the dying; I shall be in the land of the living soon.” Graham shows us that

the last chapter in life can be the best as we turn our heart toward our heavenly home.

Here is another book to ponder and learn from.

Reviewer rates it 5 out of 5 stars ★★★★★



*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.*



# Finish Well

## How to finish a piece of writing well.

You've succeeded in hooking your reader and keeping their interest all the way through. But if you finish badly, your reader's left wondering, "What was that all about?" or worse, "Why did I waste my time reading that?" If readers don't like the ending, chances are they will transfer that dislike to the whole piece.

You can use different ways to finish a piece of writing, but it's important for the ending to be consistent with the structure, topic, tone, and audience of your writing.

The conclusion of a piece of nonfiction writing can be a concise restatement of the main ideas, but it should be more than a plain summary. If you reiterate the main ideas of what you've written in a creative and engaging way, you'll give good closure to the piece.

Ensure you give your reader whatever you 'promised' them — don't leave them with unanswered questions.

Play the 'so what' game. When you read your conclusion, ask yourself, "So what?" or "Why should anybody care?" If your ending doesn't give good answers to these questions, it needs to be reworked.

You may need to edit out your last few sentences. Most writers, including me, tend to overwrite conclusions.

If you're really stuck, let your ending marinate. You might

think of something in the bath or while out riding!

The ending should:

- Tie up loose ends.
- Give the reader something to think or wonder about.
- Connect to the reader.
- Link to the ideas presented at the start.

The ending could:

- Present an unusual twist.
- Give the reader something to take away and act on.
- Contain a quote, if the article includes an interview.

The ending should not:

- Use unnecessary phrases like "in conclusion" or "in summary".
- Introduce new material.
- Confuse the reader.

Just as it is hard to write a good beginning, it can be tough to finish a piece. Thoughtful writers will put the effort into finishing well. **JH**

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

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# How Well Are You Living Out Your Values?

*This article is part four of a 4-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.*

## You want to honor God.

He designed you and gave you particular life experiences; both of these serve as the foundation for your core values. So you're wondering how you can honor God by more effectively living out your core values in all parts of your life, including your ministry.

Something I've found helpful is to assess how well I'm living out my core values and use my findings to plan improvements. You can do this whether you work alone or as part of a ministry team.

## If you work alone and not as part of a ministry team, do four things:

First, develop questions you want to think about, for example: What are my core values? What are some ways I live out each of my core values? What excites/concerns me about how I am living out my core values? How well do I understand each of my core values? On a scale of 1-5 (5 being high), to what extent am I living out each of my core values? In my ministry, what helps me live out my core values? What hinders me? What will I do to more effectively live out my core values?

Second, think deeply about each of the questions you have developed. You could journal about them (my wife likes this option) or talk about them with a friend or a coach (I like this option).

Third, identify and document the action steps you are going to take.

And fourth, set up a schedule to review your progress and to make new action steps.

## If you lead a ministry team, do four things:

First, collect examples of how the team lives out the core values. How? By setting aside time to brainstorm during a team meeting or by including this on the annual performance review.

Second, use a survey to explore the team's perceptions regarding how well they understand and are living out the values. When developing your survey, remember to keep it short, use a rating scale (for example, strongly agree, agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, disagree, strongly disagree), and include an open response item so team members can share their thoughts in writing. (I recommend using Google to do a survey.<sup>1</sup>)

Third, analyze the extent to which team ministry

practices reflect core values. Here's how: List your ministry practices, for example, new team member recruitment, new team member orientation, event planning processes, and meeting guidelines. Next, consider questions like: To what extent does each practice reflect one or more core values? What do we need to keep/start/stop doing?

And fourth, collaboratively develop the action steps the team is going to take to more effectively live out the core values. Be sure to also collaboratively set up a schedule to review progress and to make new action steps.

## The point?

In your ministry, make sure that you live out what's important to you. Assessing how well you are living out your core values can help.

## What about you?

1. What are your core values?
2. What's satisfying/unsatisfying about how you're living out your core values?
3. What's important about determining how well you're living out your core values?
4. How can you find out how well you're living out your core values?
5. What will you do?

## Want to learn more?

Read *Values-Driven Leadership: Discovering and Developing Your Core Values for Ministry*, in which Aubrey Malphurs outlines how to develop, implement, and preserve core values. **JH**

1. <https://docs.google.com/forms/>



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