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Japan Harvest  
Summer 2016

Reaching  
the youth

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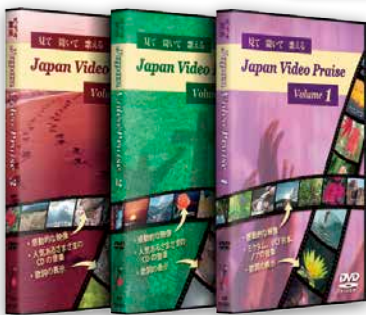
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# Summer 2016



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## September

### 6th Japan Congress on Evangelism

September 27-30, 2016  
Kobe Convention Center



## October

### WIM Fall Day of Prayer Plus

Wednesday, October 5, 2016  
Rose Town Tea Garden, Ome

## November

### Church Planting Next Step Seminar

Thursday, November 2-4, 2016  
Chiba (specific location TBD)



## January

### Winter Day of Prayer

Wednesday, Jan 18, 2017  
SEND Center, Higashi Tokorozawa



### Regular contributors

#### Good writing



**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.

#### Focus on prayer



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

We also welcome your submissions for other Regular articles without a standing contributor

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

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



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<http://www.jema.org/resources/JHWriters-Guidelines.pdf>

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# Reaching the youth of Japan

Japan exasperates me sometimes. Tourists breeze in and out of the country, raving about how it is so clean and the people are so efficient and friendly. This country does such a great job of presentation that visitors can't see beneath the surface. Only those who've lived here a while can see the difficulties, pain, and hopelessness.

## Youth suicide

The week I sat down to write this, we heard news that two 13-year-old girls had linked arms and jumped in front of a train in Tokyo. As the mother of a 13-year-old myself I find it horrifying to think of the grief that the families of these two young girls are going through. I've never been in a place so dark that I've contemplated suicide, so it's difficult for me to imagine how a child could feel there's so little hope in this life.

Sadly, rather than focusing on the contributing factors in the lives of the two girls, the article's focus was how this tragedy inconvenienced many people because the trains stopped on that line for a couple of hours. It is true that efficiency is highly valued in Japan, which is seen by the outside world as a noble trait. Unfortunately, the other side of that coin is that there is pressure on everyone in Japan not to disrupt the efficiency, not to inconvenience anyone. Perhaps it is also true of human nature that it's easier to consider the practical inconvenience rather than the human tragedy of two teenagers who took their lives.

In 2014 "suicide was the leading cause of death for Japanese children between the ages of 10 and 19. Among teens and young adults aged 10 to 24 there are roughly 4,600 suicide deaths in each year, and another 157,000 instances of hospitalization for self-inflicted injuries."<sup>1</sup> Suicide and depression cost the nation an estimate of 2.7 trillion yen (US\$32 billion) per year.<sup>2</sup>

The BBC published an article last August that provided a little bit of hope for the suicide problem in Japan.<sup>3</sup> They wrote about a librarian in Kamakura who had recently tweeted: "The second semester is almost upon us. If you are thinking of killing yourself because you hate school so much, why not come to us? We have comics and light novels." It was a controversial move for a city library to encourage children to stay away from school, but one that touched many hearts. The BBC reported that it was retweeted more than 60,000 times in 24 hours.

It's a great story of courageous compassion, but God can offer Japanese youth more than temporary refuge. That's why we're in Japan, right? Imagine what God can do when two or three youth gather in the name of Jesus Christ—lives could be extended not only on earth but for eternity with God.

## Reaching youth

Unfortunately, many Japanese churches have no young people involved. "The reality of the Japanese context is that nearly half of churches no longer have a regular children's ministry. This is partially due to the changing demographics of Japan's population that has steadily become silver, but in the church it is even more extreme."<sup>4</sup>

Yet, God is moving. As we've put this issue together it's been exciting to read about what's happening in Japan with churches and missionaries reaching the youth of this country. In this issue we hear about people working with Japanese students overseas seeking to understand how they can help returnees to remain in the church, a missionary building relationships with local young people by jogging daily, and a tool to help kids reach other kids. A missionary has written about how some churches are reaching out to young people. This issue also features two devotional books for young people that have been translated into Japanese, one of which has become a best-seller for Word of Life Press.

This quote from Ray Mercer's article on page 14 is pointed: "One Japanese pastor . . . encouraged me not to give up on reaching out to the youth because they are the future of the church. I am convinced that he was right. When we invest in the youth, we are really investing in the future of the church."



Yours in Christ's service,  
Wendy  
Managing Editor

1. "The mystery behind Japan's high suicide rates among kids," by Stephanie Lu, Oct 22, 2015, <http://wilsonquarterly.com/stories/the-mystery-behind-japans-high-suicide-rates-among-kids/>
2. "Suicide cost Japan economy \$32bn," posted Sept. 7, 2010, BBC News, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-11219492>
3. "Tackling the deadliest day for Japanese teenagers," by Mariko Oi, 31 August, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-34105044>
4. "First National 4/14 Window Conference for Japan," posted Nov. 30, 2014, <http://crashjapan.com/en/preparedness/first-national-414-window-conference-for-japan/>

## The changing face of funerals

*Christian Shimbun, April 17, 2016*

*Written by Katsuhiko Seino, translated by Grace Koshino*

*Illustration contributed by Christian Shimbun*

The Japanese funeral and burial culture that was formed during the Edo era is changing. Accompanying the postwar economic growth, the traditional family structure has gradually been dismantled over successive generations and there has been a trend toward nuclear families. The Great East Japan Earthquake broke up families and caused local communities to collapse. The great number of dead as well as missing and unidentified bodies has led to a review of funeral and burial customs in that area.

With the super-aging society fast approaching, Christian churches are considering how to deal with funerals and burials as one means of outreach. Churches are faced with challenges such as how to deal with funerals of church members, how to show consideration for their family members, and how to assist non-Christians who are troubled about funerals and burials.

### The changing face of funerals in Japan

Rites of passage in Japan are usually conducted in Shinto-style during a person's life and in Buddhist-style when they pass away. Recently, there's been a big shift in Buddhist-style funerals. Instead of being held at home or temples, they are increasingly being held at ceremony halls. In the same way, graves were previously located on temple grounds,

but are now being built in publicly owned graveyards and privately-owned cemetery parks. Funerals are becoming personalized, and there is a trend toward keeping a person's ashes in a personal grave rather than one belonging to the wider family.

The funeral and burial culture of Japan is expected to change even more drastically in the coming years due to the estimated rise in the number of deaths. In 2004, 1.02 million people died. The number has continued to increase and is expected to reach 1.66 million a year by the year 2039. For the next 50 years or so, 1.5–1.6 million funerals a year are expected to be carried out. Probably less than 1% of those will be Christian funerals.

### Mourning non-believing loved ones

Japanese churches hold funerals for church members but are not so likely to hold funerals for unbelievers. Some churches are reluctant about holding a funeral for unbelieving family members (even parents) of a church member. For this reason, people are under the impression that churches will conduct a funeral for Christians but not for non-believers. Isn't that shameful?

Shouldn't we as Christians be willing to hold the funerals of our beloved family members at church even if they weren't Christians?

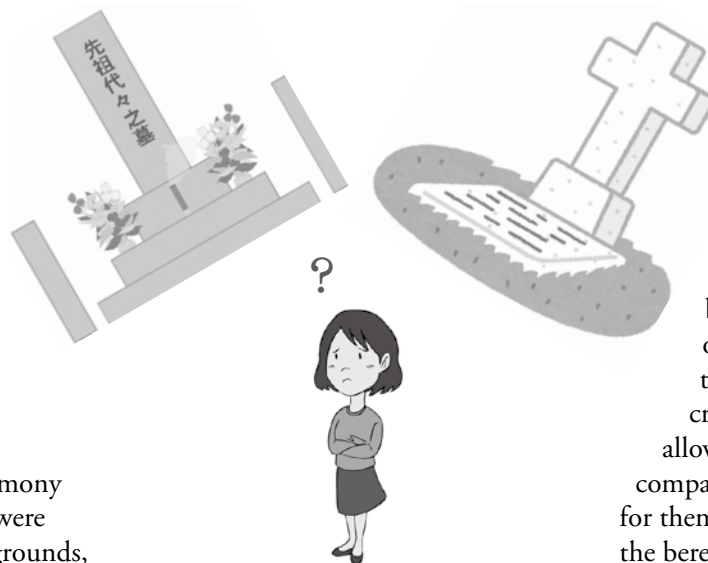
### Theological grounds for why churches should conduct funerals of non-Christians

What are the theological grounds for churches conducting funerals for unbelievers? The answer is probably funerals based on common grace. Common grace is a theological concept in which God shows astonishing favor towards people living in sin, and instead of bringing immediate destruction upon them, leaves them a chance of salvation.

In Matthew 5:45, Jesus says, "He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and unrighteous" (NIV). Here, we see God's amazing favor toward all humans, regardless of whether they are believers. In 2 Peter 3:9 we see God's amazing patience toward all people: "The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance." And in Jonah

4:11, we see God's gracious compassion toward "people who cannot tell their right hand from their left."

Would it not be right to say, then, that in the same way God is concerned about all Japanese people? Even for people who do not share in the bounty of special grace through our Lord Jesus, can't we accept them as those who have been created by God and have been allowed to live by God's gracious compassion? Can't we hold a funeral for them at church to bring comfort to the bereaved? ■



# 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!*"

## Passing down faith

### A major challenge of mission in Japan

*Christian Shim bun, April 10, 2016*

*Translated by Hiromi Kuichi*

*Photo contributed by Christian Shim bun*

Since 2013, Ochanomizu Christian Center (OCC) in Tokyo has been hosting a series of seminars on the theme, "Mission in Japan starts within families—families will become the foundation for blessing." The tenth seminar in this series was held on March 28. With general director of KGK (Kirisutosha Gakusei Kai) Shigenori Ōshima and his wife, Yuka Ōshima, as the spokespeople, the seminar dealt with a major issue in mission work in Japan—the passing down of faith.

### Bringing up a genuine one percent

The morning session focused on the passing down of faith within families. "While Japanese churches have worked hard to increase their numbers, many believers have abandoned their faith over time or have failed to pass it down to their children," Ōshima commented. "Instead of aiming to 'break the 1% barrier,' it is more important to bring up 'a genuine 1%'.<sup>1</sup> Without genuine Christians, nothing will change. I've worked with many students over the years and have felt that third- and fourth-generation Christians tend to be more stable in their faith. We need to wisely pass down our faith, taking advice from senior church members. Moreover, we need to be confident and proud of what we believe, and engage with the church as a family."

Referring to Mark 10:13–16, Ōshima said, "Jesus was indignant when the disciples rebuked those who brought children to him. If children belong to the kingdom of God, then surely they should belong in our church services. Since when have we

started distinguishing the services for children from those for adults?"

Looking back on his childhood experience, Ōshima shared 10 ways in which his mother passed down her faith to him. For example, she respected and followed his non-Christian father (this helped him build a healthy father image), shared biblical doctrines using her own words and through her own experiences, made all decisions based on faith, and demonstrated how important a parent's prayer life is for the passing down of faith. Ōshima concluded the morning session by stressing prayer, "There is no end when it comes to the passing down of faith. Whether we succeed or not will only be determined at the very end. We need to remember the reason we are standing firm in faith today is because somebody had prayed for us without giving up."

### Not methodology but willingness to draw near

The afternoon session dealt with the passing down of faith within a church. After explaining some reasons why the number of children at churches may be declining, Ōshima questioned whether

parents have left all of the passing down of faith to the church. Parents, pastors, and the church need to be committed to this matter together.

Ōshima continued by giving specific advice for different age groups. Elementary upper graders are the key in the process of the passing down of faith—they are at an age where they can verbalize their doubts and questions about their faith. Churches need to have Sunday school teachers who are ready and able to answer those questions and teach biblical doctrines in a way they can engage in. Since junior and high schoolers tend to drift away from church because of their busy school activities, it is crucial to have an early-morning service or evening service so they can still attend services and prioritize their relationship with the Lord. "There is no correct answer when it comes to the passing down of faith," he concluded, "it all depends on who is willing to be available for the children, drawing near to them and continually praying for them." ■

1. This "one percent" refers to the Japanese Christian population, a percentage that has not changed for many years.



# German Alliance Mission

Member missions

The German Alliance Mission (GAM; Deutsche China-Allianz-Mission) was started by the Swedish–American evangelist Fredrik Franson, who also founded TEAM and many other missions. In 1890, the first GAM missionaries left to work in China. They worked in association with the China Inland Mission, which was founded by Hudson Taylor.

GAM started to focus on Japan in the middle of the 20th century after being forced out of China by the revolution.

In 1953, a 47-year-old single lady, Maria Hardenberg, came to Japan as the first GAM missionary to Japan. Despite poor living conditions, she faithfully started her work, distributing tracts and sharing the gospel. Other missionaries followed her, and in 1956 the first church was started in the town of Hashima, Gifu prefecture.

More new churches were founded, and they formed an association called Dōmei Fukuin Kirisuto Kyōkai, which is a member of the Japan Evangelical Association (JEA) and the Federation of Free Evangelical Churches. The association also has close ties with Tōkai Theological Seminary, an interdenominational seminary in the Nagoya area that teaches and trains new church staff and pastors; some GAM missionaries help with the teaching at the seminary.

GAM's goal has always been to establish Japanese churches through evangelism, counseling, and education so that ultimately the churches could stand on their own and be handed over to Japanese pastors. We also have two retreat-and-learning centers, which offer a variety of programs, including retreats and camps for young people and educational programs.

Currently, GAM has nine long-term and four short-term missionaries in Japan. Our missionaries work in teams with Japanese pastors, have teaching ministries, or plant new churches. Our young church workers teach language classes and support the local churches in many practical ways. Over the past few years, quite a number of these young people have become career missionaries, which is a wonderful blessing for our organization.

Since we are almost all located in the greater Nagoya area, it is easy for us to come together as a team. We value our times together and hold day-long



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In the Federation of Free  
Evangelical Churches of Germany

meetings, usually five or six times a year. In addition to the necessary business talks, we reserve time for God's word, fellowship, and prayer.

GAM missionaries tend to have shorter, but more frequent home assignments than in the early days. This can be a big challenge to the working situation, but we see the need on the supporters' side. We are deeply convinced that the prayers of our brothers and sisters in Germany are vital for our mission work here. In order to deepen our relationships with our supporters and involve them in our mission work, we travel back to Germany more often than we used to do.

This practice of constantly involving our support base with our ministry in Japan has led to some wonderful blessings. One outstanding example is the help we received for people in the disaster area after the great earthquake in March 2011. Money raised by our supporting churches allowed us to send a missionary family to join an international team in Tohoku. Other wonderful examples of the close relationships between our missionaries and their supporters include volunteer teams who come to help build or renovate church buildings or support us in our evangelism efforts in the local churches.

In autumn 2015, we launched a new project and invited a prayer team to Japan. For ten days, the team stayed in different churches and spent their time praying for and with Japanese Christians.

We feel deeply blessed having such a strong support base. May God continue to call people as missionaries to Japan for his glory and for the salvation of the Japanese people. 







# INTERACT

Fifteen years ago, three Swedish denominations (Orebro Mission, Free Baptists, and Holiness Union Mission), each with their own foreign mission, merged to become a single mission—InterAct or Evangeliska Frikyrkan (which means Evangelical Free Church) in Swedish.

Two of the missions had been in Japan since 1950. Orebro Mission started in Kansai and founded the Kansai Bible Institute (KBI) in 1961, where many Japanese pastors from various denominations are educated. The school is now located in Ikoma, Nara prefecture. The mission also started the Japanese denomination, Japan Evangelical Church (JEC), which now has 32 churches and about 20 branch churches in many prefectures.

The Holiness Union Mission started in Shirakawa in Fukushima prefecture, but now works in Tochigi prefecture, together with 11 Japan Evangelical Church of Christ (JECC) churches.

The work has always been focused on planting new churches and training Japanese pastors and leaders. There are very few missionaries now, just

**The work has always been focused on planting new churches and training Japanese pastors and leaders.**

the Edefors family in Shizuoka, the Bohmans in Tokyo, and the Kullbergs in Tochigi prefecture.

In our latest pioneer work in Ōgane in Nasukarasuyama city, we were able to purchase a wedding chapel that went bankrupt about 15 years ago. The chapel and its surroundings were in a very bad state. It was quite an adventure to buy it and convert it into an ordinary church. We are very happy to have this nice little church, which occupies 3,300 square meters and has a parking lot for 50 cars. Since we were able to buy it tax-free, it cost only about ten million yen to buy and fix the church. We also bought and renovated a building beside the church that had been used as a reception hall for wedding parties. That was

also an interesting major undertaking. We now live in half of that building; it is very practical living next to the church.

Our mission has had many short-term missionaries who came to our churches for one or two years to do outreach through English teaching. Many Japanese have heard the gospel for the first time in an English class. Other ways we reach out include cooking classes, choirs, weddings, concerts, and music therapy.

We are happy that JEC and JECC are now sending quite a few missionaries from Japan to many countries around the world. As missionaries, we can still do many things to reach the unreached in Japan, but the Japanese pastors are now definitely the main leaders in JEC and JECC, and we are very happy about that. **JH**

# InterAct Japan



# Youth With A Mission

Youth With A Mission, or YWAM, is a global mission movement of Christians from many cultures, age groups, and Christian traditions, united in a common purpose to know God and make him known through training, evangelism, and mercy ministries. When YWAM began in 1960, our main focus was on giving young people opportunities in missions. Today, we still focus on youth, but members are of almost every age group, and many of our short-term efforts have grown into long-term endeavors. We currently operate in more than 1,000 locations in over 180 countries, with a staff of over 18,000.

YWAM Japan began in Osaka in 1975 and presently has ten teams operating in Japan. They're located in Okinawa, Kyushu, Osaka, Tokyo, Chiba, and Nagano, with staff coming from more than 15 countries and ranging in age from early 20s to late 60s! YWAM Japan teams seek to know God by spending time in his word, worshipping, and in prayer and intercession. Servant leaders work with their teams to make God known by ministering from a biblical perspective and being relationship oriented. Our teams are:

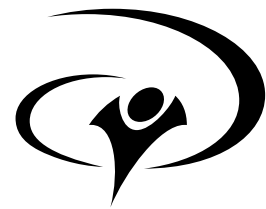
- visionary,
- broad in structure,
- decentralized,
- international, and
- interdenominational.

They are also committed to:

- championing young people
- valuing the individual as well as families
- practicing hospitality
- financial dependence on God
- communicating with integrity
- emphasizing the importance of practicing our faith before teaching it

All YWAM Japan teams are called to bring the gospel to the Japanese people and to see them equipped to spread the gospel both in Japan and abroad for God's glory and honor, whether through YWAM, another mission organization, or the local church. Evangelism takes place at university campuses, street corners, train stations, public and team facilities through Bible studies, cultural activities, and coffee houses. Teams are also involved in mercy ministries to the homeless, people involved in human-trafficking, and communities affected by natural disaster. Training in knowing God and making him known takes place in church-planting locations (Kyushu, Nagano, and Chiba) as well as in seminars and the five-to-six-month Discipleship Training School (DTS) offered in Okinawa, Osaka, and Tokyo.

Many of our short-term efforts have grown into long-term endeavors.



YOUTH WITH A MISSION

Satisfactory completion of DTS qualifies graduates to become missionary staff at any YWAM location globally. DTS is also the entry course required for acceptance to missions programs offered by YWAM's University of the Nations. Some graduates eventually enter world missions through YWAM or other mission organizations. But many graduates choose to return home to work or pursue studies and participate in outreach through their home church. DTS in Japan is offered in Japanese in Okinawa; Japanese or Korean in Osaka; and Japanese or English in Tokyo. The three-month lecture phase of knowing God is taught in weekly sections by guest lecturers from Japan and overseas. The two- to three-month outreach phase is located in Japan as well as various locations overseas (most recently East and Southeast Asia).

It is a privilege for us in YWAM Japan to be called alongside our brothers and sisters in churches and missions in Japan to see the Great Commission fulfilled! **JH**



**Top:** YWAM Japan National Staff Conference  
**Middle:** YWAM Azumino (Nagano) Church Plant (Shekinah Christian Fellowship) Worship Meeting (outdoors)  
**Bottom:** YWAM Okinawa Discipleship Training School Outreach Phase





# Det Norske Misjonsselskap

Norwegian Mission Society (NMS) is a mission agency with a long tradition in many countries. It was born in 1842, out of the mission revival in Europe in the first half of the 19th century. Its first missionary went to Germany for mission studies, but in 1844 NMS founded a school in Stavanger, Norway, which has grown into an established institution for education in theology, missiology, and international studies.

The first mission field was Zululand in South Africa, although early on our mission had most missionaries in Madagascar and Cameroon. In 1902, NMS started working in China, which became the springboard for work in the rest of Asia as the missionaries who fled from the communist regime ended up in Japan, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. Later, NMS started operating in the Mekong region, Pakistan, the Middle East, and Brazil. It recently started work in three European countries where the Christian faith is about to disappear. Our main focus has always been on evangelism and practical service.

The work in Japan started in 1951 in Kobe, Osaka, Wakayama, and Nara by missionaries who came from China. The missionaries used their homes as bases for evangelism. Initially, the home office of the mission was strongly opposed to building churches and employing local workers, since it wanted to keep costs down in Japan. But this didn't work out. The new Christians needed places of worship. Despite the economic situation being bad, churches were built and pastors were educated and employed. After ten years, these churches formed the Kinki Evangelical Lutheran Church (KELC), which now consists of 29 congregations in five prefectures in the Kinki area and has a membership of more than 2,000 (although probably about half that number are active church members).



Over the years, we have been engaged in many kinds of Christian work, with an emphasis on church planting and theological education. For many years, radio evangelism through the Lutheran Hour was a big thing, as were Bible correspondence courses and home and hospital visits. For ten years, we also had a ship, the Shinko Maru, which sailed around the Japan Inland Sea and the Kii peninsula taking the gospel to children and adults in small fishing villages. We also had a student center in Tezukayama, Osaka, which was very active. But the number of students dwindled when university campuses moved out of the city, and now Tezukayama is a regular small neighborhood congregation. Kindergartens have also been an important area of work for NMS—we started two kindergartens and two nurseries, which now legally belong to KELC.

In recent years the work has changed, and the number of missionaries has dropped from around 40 during most of the 1970s to 1990s to just two couples and three retired volunteers today. The older of the two couples pastors a local congregation and helps with outreach to homeless people in the area, giving about 40 people a hot meal at church every Wednesday. The other couple is finishing language school and plans to start a children and youth ministry from the fall of 2016. Everything we do is done with the approval of and in cooperation with the KELC, and, apart from the missionaries, we also contribute to various other projects that we have agreed on with the church.

We wish we had more missionaries sharing the gospel in Japan, because the need is so great, but looking back we see that the kingdom of God has been growing, and we feel so blessed and happy to be a part of his ministry in Japan. **JH**



# Norwegian Mission Society

# NEW BREED BELIEVER

By Andy MEEKO

## Taking “reaching” to the next level in youth evangelism

The decision was so brash, so seemingly reckless, it excited me. The time had come for another generation and Pastor Horiuchi Akira in Yao (Osaka) decided to unleash young lives.<sup>1</sup> He explained to the youth (junior through senior high) that they would be separated out of the regular worship to start their own fellowship. They were under the guidance of a church staff member, but basically they got to call the shots, own all the challenges and all the responsibilities. They rose to the occasion, naming their gathering “Youth Nation”. And suddenly growth started, spiritual and numerical. Over the years there were many ups and downs. But one thing for sure; they were never bored. In many fellowships, boredom could be fueling the exodus of young lives from the local church, but in Yao, they weren’t boring youth, they were launching them.

### Spiritual quantum leap

The greatest window of opportunity in a life may be the 4–14 Window, a still relatively unfamiliar term coined in like manner to the 10–40 Window to help strategically focus ministry resources. The 10–40 Window is geographical, while the 4–14 is demographic. Statistics say that 70%

of Christians respond to the Gospel between the ages of 4 and 14, so this time slot in life is viewed as the breakthrough decade of opportunity in ministry.<sup>2</sup> However, the average church only invests 3% of its resources in this group.<sup>3</sup> The questions we need to ask are: If our investment in that arena increased dramatically, what would the near, and distant, future look like? Do we want to change the spiritual climate in a society or nation rapidly? If we answer “yes”, then kids could be the greatest key to doing that.

For those in an “unreached field” or “unresponsive field” concentrating on the most responsive members of that region makes good sense. Big investments in the 4–14 Window can have huge ramifications for the church a decade or two down the road. If young people had been prioritized in the 80s or 90s in Japan, the church today would likely be significantly larger, far less gray, and not tottering on the cusp of a severe leadership crisis.

### Unleashing destiny

So, in light of the 4–14 Window, every ministry directed at reaching children is high priority on the Kingdom scale. If limited time, energy, and resources constrain us to reaching only one group, would it not be rational to prioritize this age group?

But I am not content to stop with that. Reaching kids is good, but I venture there is something better: kids reaching kids, young people actively embracing the privilege of reaching their generation.

This was my foundational premise when I began the GospelShare Series, a series of peer-reach-peer personal evangelistic booklets. I was convinced that the best person to reach an individual was someone most like them, someone who understood them and spoke their same language. Of course all evangelism is good, but for impact you can’t match personal peer-to-peer.

So when it came to making the GospelShare Kids Version (a pocket-manga titled *Treasure Hunt Challenge*), we needed a tool not only for reaching young people, but also for kids to reach kids. Part of the beauty of it is that kids also had a part in making it. We involved dozens of under-14-year-olds in the field test version before it was published.

*The young do not know enough to be prudent, and therefore they attempt the impossible and achieve it, generation after generation.*<sup>4</sup> Pearl S. Buck

After the field test I would have been thrilled if half the the young people were optimistic, but was blown away that ninety percent indicated they wanted to share it with their friends! For decades we have wanted the right evangelistic tool for this age group. Now we have it and a ten-year old can easily lead a friend to Jesus.

This year we are even taking it a step further. We will be training youth to train kids to win kids—double discipleship of a new breed of believers.

### Breakout potential

For many years I was missing it. There was a lot more at stake here than reaching young people. But thanks to them instructing me, I began to see this age group as far more than mere targets for evangelism, but agents of the gospel itself. This gentle “instruction” kept popping up here and there, but it was in Fukushima’s nuclear zone that it became clear.

My work in the disaster zones centered on training people for emotional care of survivors. In the early weeks, a key approach was a hand massage that included cognitive-behavioral readjustments and PTSD screening, as well as praying with evacuees—complicated stuff, but made simple so average people could do it, average adults, or so I thought.

In Iwaki one day, I trained some pastors to be able to practice this method. But, there was an unexpected presence. One of the pastor’s daughters was there, in her junior high school uniform. She observed everything, and she came along. We headed for the evacuation center and there, in that gymnasium, she did just what every pastor did, touched people and impacted lives. I suspect she was just as effective as any of the professional clergy that day.



“Cool”, I thought, but then I was in for a bigger surprise.

One of my trainers did a training session south of the city of Fukushima. I re-emphasize: training adults to do emotional care. But one mother happened to have her kindergarten-aged son along. This little boy observed carefully what was happening in the training. Later when the trainees went to the evacuation center that boy stepped right in, taking the hand of survivors and giving a hand massage. To say it was heartwarming is an understatement. So did he do a perfect job? Not likely. Did he touch lives? You better believe it.

The funny thing is, although I wasn’t even there, I heard the report of this boy and it effected a change in my worldview. That change took root. Today, GospelShare Kids Version is in

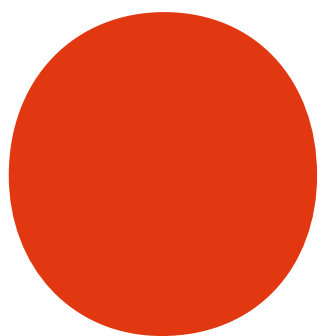
Japanese (トレジャーハントChallenge), and next year regional training sessions are being planned for mobilizing kids throughout the country. It is also published in English, and translated into Spanish, Chinese, Russian, even Khmer and Polish. Who is to say how far it may go and how many new-breed believers may come of it. I have a doctorate in spiritual formation, but the humbling reality is that I can trace this whole initiative back to the influence of a kindergartner following Christ in the nuclear zone. How unlikely is that? Maybe it shouldn’t be...JH

*Andy Meeko, D.Min., George Fox University (narrative therapy and spiritual direction in disability intervention), is a second-generation Japan missionary on the JBF Innovative Team, and Director of NewDayToDay (GospelShare series) and Tokorozawa Community Care Center (T3C).*

1. Grace Mission, an Evangelical Free church in Yao City
2. Compassion ministry video, “An Introduction to the 4/14 Window,” YouTube video, 2:59. Oct. 6, 2014. <http://tinyurl.com/4-14window>
3. Available from: [www.newdaytoday.net/gospel/](http://www.newdaytoday.net/gospel/)
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It's critical to reach young people since they are the church of tomorrow



By Ray Mercer

The season of life between the ages of about 12 and 22 is important. Young people make important life decisions in those years. They tend to be less set in their ways and more open about spiritual things. The school system forms and trains them. The values taught by their teachers and professors eventually become the values of the nation, as these students become law-makers, authors, entertainers, teachers, or other influencers in their communities. They are the future leaders of society. And the older I get, the shorter this opportune season seems to last; they don't stay young for long.

A classic example of the significance of reaching young people for Christ is the work of Professor William S. Clark, who remains a national figure in Japan to this day. He was only in Sapporo for eight months from 1876 to 1877, working at what is now Hokkaido University. But during his short time there, he prayerfully poured his life into a handful of students. These young men went on to influence Japanese Christianity and Japanese society for generations to come.

Sadly though, this key demographic is often conspicuously absent from our local churches today. One Japanese pastor, a mentor of mine in his 80s, encouraged me not to give up on reaching out to the youth, because they are the future of the church. I am convinced he was right. When we invest in the youth, we are really investing in the church's future.

#### Making the gospel attractive

A church in Tokyo creates a trendy atmosphere, which attracts young people. The church uses the same cutting-edge lighting and video that one would expect to see at a J-pop concert. Their leaders purposefully dress and talk in ways that appeal to young working professionals and university students. Before each service, hundreds of youth in their 20s gather expectantly and count down the seconds until the worship music begins. They are excited about their faith, and they show it in their enthusiastic praise-and-worship time.

Is it just the music and fashion that attracts these youth? In this Japanese *furoshiki* (wrapping cloth) culture, we

know that the wrapping is almost as important as the gift inside. So it's not surprising that Japanese youth appreciate an attractively packaged worship service. We do well if we engage young people where they are; whether it is through their music, on their campuses, or through life testimonies from their popular heroes. But engaging them with an attractive "wrapping" on the gift of the gospel is just the first step.

Young people may not express it out loud, they might not even be consciously aware of it, but what they are really hungry for is a deep connection with God. So how do we get them there? An article published by a church research company in the United States a few years ago claims that young people who have a personal relationship with a pastor are twice as likely to stay in church, and that those who have a mentor in the church are much more likely to stay in church than those who don't.<sup>1</sup> These relationships are important, and I think they are even more important in Japan than in many other countries. Building deeper relationships with our youth is the first step in moving them to a deeper relationship with God. So, like the Tokyo church mentioned above, our worship service "packaging" should be of high quality and attractive, but it is even more important in the long run to establish discipleship-centered relationships.

### Connecting with small groups

A church in Yokohama is reaching Japanese youth using small-group ministry. They have worked hard to make small groups simple and easy to lead so that young leaders can do the work of the ministry. Both outreach and discipleship happen through small groups. First, young believers pray for their classmates, friends, and relatives. They are encouraged to start doing this as soon as they themselves are saved. Brand-new believers are sometimes the most enthusiastic evangelists.

In these small groups, discipleship happens through discussion around what the church is learning from the

Bible and how it should be applied personally. Because young people are praying and encouraging each other to reach out, more young people are saved. As these newer ones are added,

### When we invest in the youth, we are really investing in the church's future.

the more mature believers learn how to mentor and lead them.

The first time I played in a school basketball game, I ran onto the court, received a pass, and started dribbling toward the wrong hoop! Fortunately, my teammates corrected me and turned me around before things got too embarrassing. Of course, I understood the game well in theory, but it was different when I was responsible for the ball in a real game. I know now that if that coach had not taken a risk on me, I would have never really learned how to play. All too often, in our churches, we have believers who sit through lots of teaching, but who have never really learned how to minister to others. We are in ministry today because someone took a chance on us and gave us some responsibility when we were younger. Shouldn't we also be prayerfully looking for young leaders to put in the game too? Even brand-new players become veterans with the proper mentoring relationships.

The Yokohama church took a chance on me when I was younger and that is why I am a church planter today. They now have 50 small-group leaders, but only because at some point someone took a chance on young people and empowered them to lead.

### Investing in young people is worth the cost

Working with future leaders takes a lot of time and energy. They can cause problems—especially the first time you try to put them in the game. Young people are naturally inexperienced and they do make mistakes. They might

need to be taken out and coached for a while before they become successful team players. I have had people tell me that you can't build with young people. Young people are irresponsible. Young people don't make as much money as older members, so we should focus on the ones who give more. Young people move away when it's time to go to college or after they finish college. Why not just focus on the more mature believers who are more stable?

Just imagine a sports team in which every player is only one year away from retirement. The team might look great now, but how is the coach going to look next season? He hasn't spent any time building the rookies and future stars. That coach would probably lose his job! I am convinced that the youth are the future of the church. If we begin to reach them now, revival in Japan is not far off. If we ignore them, we are only robbing from our future. It is vital that we pray and ask the Holy Spirit to show us how to build mentoring relationships with the youth that God has entrusted to us in our own context. Will you accept the challenge of equipping and empowering this next generation for the work of the ministry? They don't stay young for long. **JH**

*Senior pastor of Every Nation Church Yokosuka, Ray Mercer has lived in Japan for more than 20 years. He and his wife, Satomi, have a son and a daughter. His dream is to make disciples, train leaders, and plant churches all over Japan. His family website is [www.raymercer.net](http://www.raymercer.net)*

1. "5 Reasons Millennials Stay Connected to Church", Barna Group, September 17, 2013, <https://www.barna.org/barna-update/millennials/635-5-reasons-millennials-stay-connected-to-church>.



For many Japanese, Christian schools and campus ministry are their first point of contact with Christianity, and these ministries often bear fruit later in life

By Paul Tsuchido Shew

# Reaching the 99% through Christian education

Christian schools are among the most visible Christian ministries in Japan today, with over 100 Protestant establishments ranging from elementary schools to universities. Just in higher education, about 10% of Japanese college students attend a Christian university.

For many Japanese, their first encounter with Christianity is not at a church, but at a Christian school. I noticed this when I was a pastor at a church in Tokyo. Most of the church members had attended a Christian school at some stage of their education. Christian schools serve as a bridge, connecting secular society to the church.

## What is a “Christian school” in Japan?

Christian schools in Japan are sometimes misunderstood because the meaning and role of Christian education here differs from that of many other countries.

Japanese Christian schools have four distinctive characteristics.

First, Japanese Christian schools primarily provide Christian education for non-Christians. With the exception of a few schools, they are targeting the 99% of Japanese who are not Christian and do not attend church.

Second, “Christian education” is widely recognized in Japanese society as providing high-quality, value-centered education. Many Christian schools were started as an evangelistic outreach and to offer education based on Christian values. These schools are rooted in progressive and international Christian education introduced in the 19th and 20th centuries by missionaries and faithful Christians. The founding values are still important today for the schools and the families who send their children there.

Third, Christians have become a minority among the teachers and staff at most Christian schools in Japan. As

the schools have grown and matured, non-Christian faculty and staff have been hired for a variety of reasons. Unfortunately, this has led some schools to drift from their roots and become only nominally Christian. But most Christian schools maintain their Christian identity and character by requiring a majority of the trustees and leadership to be Christian.

Fourth, most Christian schools also have an active campus ministry program that includes regular worship and an ordained minister employed as chaplain. Most Christian universities also have a center for Christian activities with dedicated staff.

There is, of course, a lot of diversity, and the evangelistic commitment varies greatly. Schools with a vibrant campus ministry program usually have many Christian faculty engaged in ministry, but in some schools the chaplain is practically the only Christian left. The Education Association of Christian



Schools in Japan (Protestant), with about 100 member institutions, helps schools uphold and promote Christian education and ministry.

### Christian activities at the center of school life

One of the biggest differences between campus ministry in Japan and in the West is that, in Japan, the school itself promotes and administers campus ministry, rather than external ministry organizations. In Japanese schools in general, religious activities are governed by more than the limits of free speech. There tend to be restrictions on religious activities at public schools, and even more so at private schools. Christian schools tend to sponsor their own religious activities, and do not permit outside organizations to sponsor religious activities.

This perspective on campus ministry may seem strange to someone coming from the very open environment common on university campuses in North America, but it is essential to maintain the Christian witness and character of the institutions. If religious activities were completely liberalized here, then the Christian witness would be relegated to a tiny minority.

The challenges Christian schools face are to engage the non-Christian students with the gospel of Jesus Christ and keep Christian ministry and values at the center of school life.

### Campus ministry

Christian ministry takes many forms, but it mainly happens through regular worship, Christianity-related classes, and Christian activities such as Bible studies and service programs.

I attended a Quaker college as an undergraduate student in the US and then studied at Tohoku Gakuin University in Sendai as an exchange student. I can still remember my surprise when I learned that the latter not only had daily worship, but also took attendance. Regular worship is central to the ministry of Christian schools, and is used to sow the seeds of the gospel, teach the students about God's love and

grace, and help the students reflect on their own life in light of the Scriptures. At the primary and secondary levels, worship is integrated into the daily class schedule so that everyone attends, but at the university level attendance is voluntary.

At Aoyama Gakuin, where I serve now, we have daily worship in the elementary school, middle school, high school, and university (both campuses), plus three times a week in the women's junior college and once in the kindergarten, for a total of 30 worship services a week. Each week, we'll have over 4,000 students in worship, including about 1,500 university students.

From elementary school through university, most Christian schools require classes on the Bible or Christianity. At many schools, the courses are taught by ordained pastors. At the university level, I find teaching these courses to be both extremely challenging and rewarding. Challenging because the students come with absolutely no interest in the content; they take it only because it's required to

## Christian schools are planting seeds that often take many years to produce fruit.

graduate. But rewarding because we get 15 weeks to systematically break down their misunderstandings and negative perceptions about Christianity and open their eyes to the gospel. Helping students grow and being part of that intellectual and spiritual transformation is amazing.

Finally, Christian activities include multiple student organizations like choir and student Christian fellowship, as well as small groups, service projects, camps, and more programs than can be listed on this page.

Some students come to the Lord and are baptized. For students from non-Christian families, this tends to happen during the college years and after graduation. Christian schools are planting seeds that often take many years to produce fruit.

### Partnering for ministry

How can missionaries and churches partner with Christian schools in campus ministry?

1. Pray for the schools and their chaplains. The chaplains need support from the larger body of Christ—especially in smaller schools where they are alone. The chaplains are the front line in maintaining the Christian character and mission of the schools.

2. Offer to preach at chapel or help with a Bible study or Christian activity. Local pastors are regularly invited to preach at Christian schools. But don't be disappointed if they turn you down a few times. Cooperation with schools is based on mutual trust, and it takes time to develop that relationship.

3. Send Christian youth as students. Especially at the university level, Christian students are essential to campus ministry. But beware that not all universities have vibrant Christian ministry programs. However schools that accept Christian students by recommendation (キリスト教推薦入学) are actively recruiting Christian youth.

4. Provide a welcoming and attractive environment for youth at your church and regularly inform the school chaplain of church events for students. Schools are much more likely to send students to your church if they regularly receive information from the church.

5. Recommend faithful Christians to work at Christian schools as staff or teachers. This is the most pressing issue for Christian schools and the only way for the schools to continue impacting the world for Christ. **JH**

*Paul Tsuchido Shew is a missionary of the United Methodist Church serving as dean of religion and university chaplain (among other roles) at Aoyama Gakuin.*

Photo provided by the author

# RUNNING AS A MINISTRY By John Edwards

What started out as a morning jog to stay fit turned into something so much more.

Almost every weekday morning I jog past five schools (a middle school, an elementary school, a kindergarten, and two nursery schools). I experience a variety of reactions and comments from the children and others.

One little boy stops me and says, “Good morning. What did you have for breakfast?”

Two boys throw their hands in the air and loudly say, “Why, Japanese people?”

Many children call out, “John-san!”

It all started when we moved to Iwakiri in Sendai. I jogged to maintain fitness and learn my way around the neighborhood—I never envisioned jogging would become a ministry.

However, I’ve now been invited to the two nursery schools and met the principals of the junior high school, elementary school, and kindergarten. I’ve heard from a Japanese pastor and from some neighborhood mothers that I am well-known in the area. Even people who live far from the area have said to me, “You’re the guy who runs in Iwakiri.” When a policeman was called to our house because several guests had parked on the street nearby, he laughed on seeing me and said “You’re the runner!”

## Finding a route

Over several months, I tried to find a time and course that fit my schedule. When I took the garbage out, I saw grade school children walking to school. “Hmm, I think I’ll follow them one morning and find out where their schools are.” I said “*Ohayō!*” and “Good morning!” to some of them. I noticed their smiles and excitement when they saw me. I thought: *I should do this regularly to make their walk to school more fun.*

## Connecting with children and staff

Some of the children stopped me to ask questions—to practice their English or to find out about the foreigner.

Some joked, “Money, please,” and I responded, “Sorry, no money.”

Several times during the year, the students and staff at the elementary and junior high schools stand outside the gates in the morning for a week. When I asked why, I was told they were doing greeting duty. With this line of students on both sides of the sidewalk, I held up my hands like a basketball player being introduced before a game and high-fiving his teammates. Some of the greeters gave me a high five. So I incorporated that into my jogging—holding up my hands for any child to high five me. A couple of times small children surprised me and actually jumped up into my arms! And yes, I’ve also had to fend off some attacks to my more sensitive regions (I very much dislike this aspect of Japanese culture).

## Getting into the schools

I began to pause in my jog to talk to staff on greeting duty. During our second Christmas in the area, I went to the elementary school and asked the principal if I could dress up as Santa and greet the children. He gave me his permission and blessing (he’d already heard about me). At one of the nursery schools, the children would run to the fence to see me and I would stop and greet them. They asked questions or challenged me to *janken* (rock, paper, scissors). Teachers came to the fence, too. For a while, I carried business cards in my pocket and gave them to staff. I told the nursery school teacher I’d be willing to come do an English program if they were interested. They invited me, and I’ve been there multiple times.

Most surprising was how many of these children just want to be held. I’ve been there with my wife, daughter, and short-termers, and each time we’ve spend the last several minutes just giving hugs to children. (Some of the nursery children are now in elementary school, and they say, “You came to my nursery school.”)

We’re now heading back for home service. During my last week of jogging, I told many students and staff that I would be gone for several months. “Write to us!” “Bring me a souvenir!” “I’ll miss you!” they responded.

My desire is to take this further. I helped a local pastor hand out some flyers in front of the elementary school once because I’m well-known there among the children. When we get back to the area I’d like to work with the local church to hold some periodic special events at the community center for children. I’d like to get into the schools to talk about American culture (and the Christian influence on much of it).

Jogging as a ministry is still a new concept for me, but in less than two years I’ve become a widely-known and trusted member of the community with just a one-hour investment each weekday morning before breakfast. **JH**

*John Edwards (US), with his wife Susan, have been missionaries in Japan since 1993 (with SEND since 2002), working with hi-b.a. and with churches in Kanto, Kansai, and now in Tohoku (though they are currently on home service).*



Photo provided by the author

# Compelled to translate

*Early this year two devotional books for teens were published, the first of their type in Japan. This is the story of how it came about.*

By Yoko Buerki

I grew up in Monzen, a tiny traditional Japanese village on the Noto Peninsula. Monzen is home to the Sojiji Temple which used to be one of the most important temples of Zen Buddhism in Japan. After WW2 Clifford Leonard, who had been an American soldier in Japan, devoted his life to be a missionary to the rural area of Noto. My father became one of the first Christ-followers in Noto through Mr. Leonard. And so the highly unlikely thing came to pass: I grew up in a Christian home.

Arthur Hollands was a speaker at one of our church camps and he challenged us to give our lives fully to Christ. I felt called and ended up serving with OM, later with the Swiss Alliance Mission, and now with OMF.

Five years ago I was in Hawaii to visit some friends and to run the Honolulu Marathon. At the same time, I was praying that God would show me where I should focus my energy during the next stage of my life. It was there, in a Christian bookstore, that I came across a devotional book for girls written by Carolyn Larsen. I was touched by the author's straightforward language. Her ability to apply the Bible to everyday life in a simple but meaningful way really spoke to me.

That's when I started dreaming of having this book translated into Japanese. As my own children are teenagers I felt it would be wonderful if they, together with many other teenagers in Japan, could connect their world to the world of the Bible. It was my wish that this devotional book would function as a "door opener" to the Bible

and help young people to grow as disciples of Christ.

My desire to get this book translated grew even more when I discovered that there was absolutely nothing similar on the Japanese market. I started translating the book without knowing if any publisher would ever have any interest in publishing it.

I wondered how Japanese teenagers would feel about these devotions, so I printed some of the translated material just for internal use at our church. Seeing the reaction, not only of our teenagers, but also of their mums, really encouraged me. Many told me that the text really spoke to them. This encouraged me to continue translating the book.

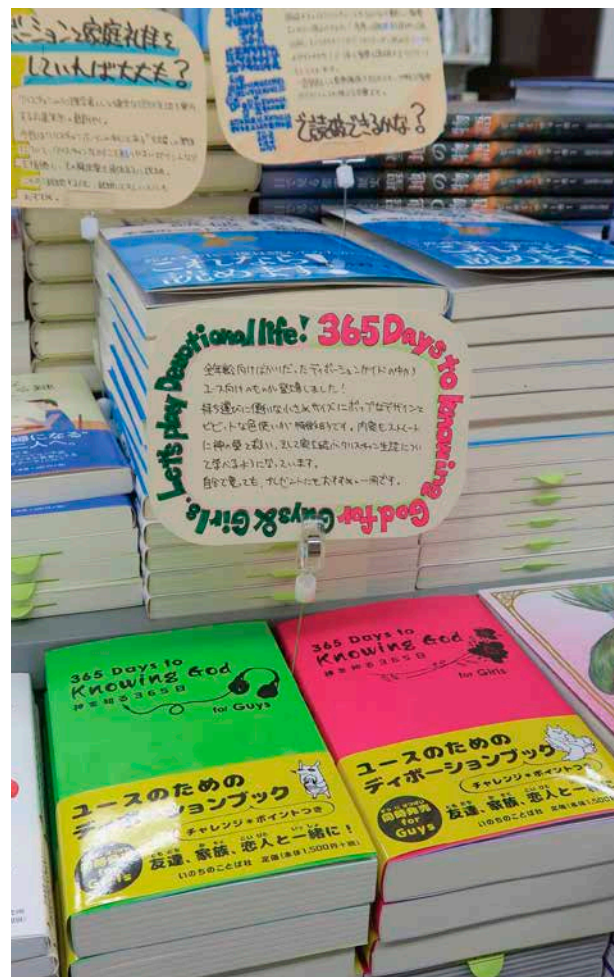
We approached Word of Life Press and were surprised when they told me last year that they would like to publish not only the devotional book for girls, but also the one for boys. Four stressful months followed as I worked to complete the translation.

It's my desire to see people of all ages impacted by the Word of God and to have a growing desire to read and to apply God's word to their own lives. I pray that the two books will be God's tools to touch young people's hearts with his love and vision for their lives! **JH**

*Yoko Buerki, is married to Matthias (Swiss) and they have three children. They work in Yokohama as church planters. She's served with OM and then with Swiss Alliance Mission and now OMF.*

To view a 30 minute interview (in Japanese) with Yoko (CGNTV) go to <https://goo.gl/XrTDnD>

Photos provided by the author



# Top 10 Reasons to Study at Tokyo Christian University

by Randall Short, Associate Professor of Biblical Studies

1. You love Japan.
2. You want to build lifelong friendships with Japanese and international students from Asia, Africa, Europe, and America.
3. You want to live in the Greater Tokyo Area, the world's most populous metropolitan area.
4. You want to speak Japanese fluently.
5. You want to understand Japan, Asia, and the world.
6. You want to learn deeply and widely about Scripture, theology, church history, and Japanese religion.
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.

Come join us at Tokyo Christian University! What reasons do you have to go anywhere else?

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# Meet more JEMA administration staff



## Ai Nightingale ナイティンゲール亜衣

**Where did you grow up?** In the middle of nowhere surrounded by rice fields in Saitama-ken.

**Previous jobs:** I worked at a Christian university as an administrator. I mainly served international students and teachers.

**What excites you about JEMA?** I get to see missionaries serving in Japan through various ministries. I like it when I meet missionaries face-to-face who were previously only names in our database.

**How many hours a week do you work for JEMA?** At the moment I work about three to six hours a week from home since I have a baby.

**Hobbies?** I like going to the park, walking, trekking, and picnicking—I like being outside!

**Something you'd love to do in the future?** Hiking in the mountains and in national parks around the world with my family.



## Kaori Kurasawa Cooke クック倉沢香織

**Where did you grow up?** In various parts of Japan and in Southern California, USA.

**Previous jobs:** Church organist, handbell director, piano instructor, choir accompanist.

**What excites you about JEMA?** I get to work in a completely different field from my previous jobs, learning new things while still getting to be in a Christian workplace, and using English.

**How many hours a week do you work for JEMA?** 10-12 hours.

**What other jobs do you have?** Teaching private English lessons and piano lessons.

**Hobbies?** Hobby time has been replaced by raising my three-year-old daughter.

**Something you'd love to do in the future?** Sing in a choir, direct a choir, play piano/organ in an ensemble, and play many great pipe organs around the world.

Atsuko Tateishi and Yuka Oguro continue to work as JEMA office administrators.

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# Why are we Losing Japanese returnees?

Suggestions on  
how to stem the  
high dropout rate

By Liz Godwin

Around the world, workers in ministries to international students work tirelessly to reach students who have gone overseas to study. Many international students come to faith while studying abroad. Twenty-four percent of the Japanese returnees that I met in Japan came to faith outside of Japan.<sup>1</sup> The Japanese Christian Fellowship Network (JCFN) estimates that of those who become Christians outside of Japan and are not followed up, about 80% fall away from the faith within three years of returning to Japan.<sup>2</sup> Why do we lose so many Japanese who profess faith overseas when they return to Japan? What is the point of helping them come to faith, if we lose them after they return? How can we stop this loss?

## Issues Christian Japanese returnees face include:

- difficulty finding a church,
- families don't want them to be Christians,
- busy personal and working lives,
- no Christian friends,
- not knowing how to share their faith,
- a very different atmosphere at church from their overseas experience, and
- no Bible study or fellowship group to go to.

## What we knew and what we learned

My husband and I went to Japan for two years to learn about the cultural barriers that hinder returnees from entering a church in Japan.

We knew that international churches can be a better fit for Japanese returnees. Returnees are third-culture kids—they want to keep their English fluency, and international churches are often closer to what they experienced overseas.

Many of us have heard that the threshold to entering a church in Japan is six feet high. In other words, in the Japanese mind, you can't just walk into a church, because it is considered foreign and also because you can't enter an already formed group without an introduction. We knew that introductions were important in business, but we didn't realize that they are also important for entering a church.

When I asked Japanese why they don't invite people to church, they said that it is a social boundary that they aren't supposed to cross. However, non-Japanese people

in Japan can easily invite their Japanese friends to their churches, and their friends will usually attend with them. This is one reason why international churches can be more welcoming than Japanese churches.

The returnee follow-up model of International Students, Inc., assumes that its US staff have the time and money to follow up and visit their returnees every four years or so.<sup>3</sup> However, most staff members are busy with the next group of new students arriving, and they don't have time to follow up all their returnees.

## Strategy modification

Other models for follow up include:

1. Take future returnees to a Japanese church in your country before they return to Japan. Their re-entry process will be helped if they learn how to worship in Japanese and experience a Japanese church before going back to Japan.
2. Introduce them to a regional JCFN fellowship where they can meet other Japanese Christians.<sup>4</sup>
3. Introduce them to another returnee in Japan who is growing and attending church.
4. Introduce them to an expat contact you have in an international church in Japan. Have your contact invite the returnee to an international church in their area.

## Returnee-friendly churches

I have been investigating churches in Japan since 2000. I wanted to help the church in Japan by sending returnees to them. It quickly became evident that it was returnees that we needed to help. They needed to find a church that would welcome them, include them, and give them freedom to serve the body of Christ. Churches that returnees are looking for often had the following characteristics:

- international,
- bilingual,
- inclusive of newcomers,
- lively worship,
- intentionally welcome newcomers at the door,
- invite newcomers to socialize with the group, and
- encourage newcomers to use their spiritual gifts to serve the church body.

I have created a list of returnee-friendly churches. These are a wide range of evangelical churches that major in the

majors and minor in the minors. They are mostly international churches, but there are a few Japanese churches that returnees have recommended to me.<sup>5</sup>

### Our findings on the first steps to faith:

- Japanese will attend a church with you because of the relationship. Our church in the US has an English conversation program where international students can practice English and learn more about US culture. It gives us a relationship to work from and provides opportunities to find seekers and invite them to a Bible study.
- Many Japanese people are lonely and seek acceptance into a group. Japanese seekers often come to faith through the experience of community, not because of logic of the gospel or apologetics.
- Japanese society is not good at accepting people into pre-existing groups. This includes the church.
- A mix of foreigners will tend to break up the traditional Japanese hierarchies that creep into church from society, which is a good thing.
- Foreigners easily invite their Japanese friends to church.

By 2020, the number of Japanese studying abroad is predicted to double to 120,000. Reaching Japanese outside of Japan is a wonderful opportunity that many are en-

gaged in, but it is a great ongoing tragedy that many who find faith outside of Japan don't get involved at a church in Japan when they return and subsequently fall away. Hopefully, we who work with Japanese students outside of Japan and you who work in Japan can find better ways to cooperate to realize a better outcome in the future. **JH**

*Liz and her husband Paul have worked with international students in the Seattle area, US, for 30 years. From 2013, they undertook a two-year project in Japan (seconded to TEAM), researching returnees, churches, and student ministries in Japan.*

*Disclaimer : This article contains guidelines for connecting returnees to the church in Japan. But they are generalities, as everyone one is different and everyone's circumstances are different.*

1. During our two years in Japan I gathered information on 150 returnees that I knew, were referred to me, or whom I met in various places while living in Japan, this is obviously not a survey without bias as most of my networks are Christian-related. The 24% chose to call themselves Christians even though I found that some were not attending church.
2. Returnee Seminar, Presenter: Hiroko Higashi (JCFN), Toyoake, Japan, Fall 2009.
3. International Students, Inc., exists to share Christ's love with international college students. Since 1953, it has been training Americans to meet international students' needs. These Americans befriend international students and help them adjust to American culture. <http://www.isionline.org>
4. The JCFN website will help you find regional fellowship groups, they can also help finding churches, and providing follow up. Contact them via <http://jcfn.org>.
5. For a list of returnee-friendly churches, email Liz at [lizgodwin1955@gmail.com](mailto:lizgodwin1955@gmail.com).

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Japanese seekers often come to faith through the experience of community, not because of logic of the gospel or apologetics.



Photo courtesy of Abide CC Osaka

# Common myths about hikikomori

Improving understanding about this mysterious social phenomenon

By Simon Pleasants

The chances are that you've never met a person with hikikomori (although you may well know someone who has a family member in this category). This hidden nature of hikikomori makes it difficult to separate fact from fiction, and consequently several myths have sprung up regarding it. Tamaki Saitō, the psychologist who first publicized the phenomenon of hikikomori, defined sufferers of the disorder as "those who withdraw entirely from society and stay in their own homes for more than six months."<sup>1</sup> Here, we explode four of these myths while considering the partial truths they contain.

## Myth 1: Japan has a million hikikomori sufferers

The secluded nature of people with hikikomori behaviour makes it notoriously difficult to even roughly gauge their number in Japan. This difficulty is reflected in the huge range of estimates given in the literature: anywhere between 200,000 and 1,000,000—a five-fold difference.<sup>2</sup>

The figure of 1,000,000 is often bandied about in the popular media in regards to the number of sufferers in Japan. This is due to the influence of Saitō. In his clinical experience, he encountered similar numbers of people with hikikomori and people with schizophrenia (who make up about 1% of the population).<sup>2</sup>

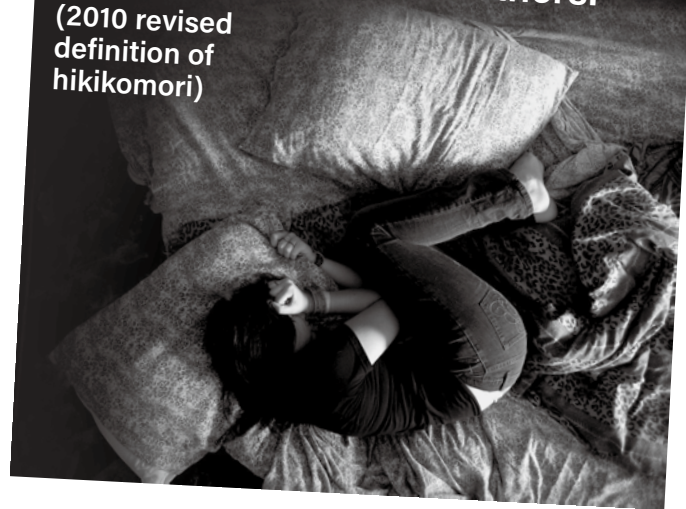
But this is most probably an overestimate. Andy Furlong notes that labour force statistics indicate that about 640,000 people in the age range 15–34 are economically inactive.<sup>2</sup> Based on this figure, he concludes that "there is no credible basis for any upper level estimate that exceeds half a million and it would be surprising if more than half the inactive [i.e., 320,000] could be described as hikikomori."

On the other hand, a national survey by the Japanese government estimated that about 696,000 people under the age of 40 are hikikomori sufferers (including those who only leave the house for specific reasons).<sup>3</sup> So the actual figure probably lies somewhere in the range 300,000–700,000.

Needless to say, even the lower estimates represent a major social problem that has large economic and social repercussions. It also has important implications for evangelism—a significant proportion of the Japanese population cannot be reached by traditional means (see the next article, on page 26).

**"A phenomenon in which persons become recluses in their own homes, avoiding various social situations for at least six months. They may go out without any social contact with others."**

(2010 revised definition of hikikomori)



## Myth 2: Hikikomori is a uniquely Japanese phenomenon

English borrowed a Japanese word to describe the phenomenon, which was first reported in Japan. Both these facts have led to the myth that it is unique to Japan. But evidence of hikikomori-like cases has been found in other countries. A telephone survey suggested that 1.9% of young adults (12–29 years old) in Hong Kong had been socially withdrawn for more than six months and 2.5% had experienced social withdrawal for less than six months.<sup>4</sup> One study sent two profiles of typical hikikomori sufferers to overseas psychiatrists and asked whether they had encountered similar cases in their countries. Psychiatrists in all the surveyed countries (Australia, Bangladesh, India, Iran, Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, and the US) reported that they had.<sup>5</sup>

Even though Japan might not be the only country to have hikikomori, there does seem to be something about Japanese society and culture that makes it particularly conducive for young people to escape the problems of life by secluding themselves.



### Myth 3: People who suffer hikikomori never venture out of their homes

The popular image of a person with hikikomori behaviour is that of a young person shut up in their home, spending almost all their time in their bedroom. This image is reflected in Saitō's definition quoted above. In 2010, a work group supported by the Japanese government modified this definition to, "A phenomenon in which persons become recluses in their own homes, avoiding various social situations (e.g., attending school, working, having social interactions outside of the home etc.) for at least six months. They may go out without any social contact with others."<sup>6</sup>

"If they go outside, they won't talk to others," notes Roseline Yong, a Christian community health specialist who researches hikikomori sufferers. "There's another pattern: they might go to a library or convenience store, but if the same librarian or shop assistant is always there, then they'll probably stop going."

### Myth 4: Hikikomori sufferers have poor social skills

Along with the image of these people being shut up in their bedrooms, they are often viewed as having low social skills. But based on her experience with people in hikikomori situations, Yong says "Some of them have very highly developed social skills. In fact, I find that unless they are co-morbid with developmental disorders such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder or pervasive developmental disorders, they normally have very good social skills."

The reality behind hikikomori is more complex than popular notions of it. "I think people have one kind of definition when they think of hikikomori [sufferers]. They tend to view them as people who are stuck in their rooms and who can't communicate with others at all. But it seems like it's much more complicated than that. There are different kinds of hikikomori [sufferers]," Yong adds.

This brief look at the phenomenon of hikikomori gives a sense of how complex a problem it is. Hikikomori sufferers represent a sizeable group that desperately needs the love and support that the body of Christ can give. **JH**

*Simon Pleasants works as an editor in the Tokyo office of a scientific publishing company. Originally from Wales, UK, he moved to Australia in 1988. He helps maintain several Japanese-related websites, including Reaching Japanese for Christ: [www.rjcnetwork.org](http://www.rjcnetwork.org)*

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# Hikikomori ministry in Tohoku

Japan Harvest talks to Roseline Yong about her ministry to hikikomori sufferers.

By Simon Pleasants

I suspect that ministering to hikikomori in rural Tohoku is probably pretty close to the bottom of the pecking order of desirable ministries. From a human perspective, the hurdles seem too great. For a start, how would you begin to make contact with people who hole themselves up in their bedrooms almost all the time and shun contact with others? Even if you were to succeed in making contact, the time and love you would have to pour into each individual to win their trust would be immense. And there would always be the threat that they might again retreat into their self-imposed exile.

But that's exactly the ministry in which Roseline Yong is engaging. She's not your typical missionary—currently an assistant professor at Akita University, she lectures on public health and environmental medicine as well as researches hikikomori, Internet addiction, and suicide prevention.

JEMA asked her some questions about her ministry to people who suffer hikikomori.

**JEMA:** *How did you become interested in hikikomori?*

**Roseline:** In 2006, I was praying about Japan and about what I could do. I was thinking of studying more about Japan and its social problems. At that time, hikikomori was featuring a lot in the news. So after consulting with my professor at my university in Hong Kong, I decided to start researching it.

**JEMA:** *When did you first meet a hikikomori person?*

**Roseline:** My first encounter was in 2005 when I visited Japan on a short trip, before I had started to think about research. I was staying with WEC missionaries in Shiga and someone told me that there's a young man staying there who doesn't speak to people. But he talked to me and helped me make a bagel for breakfast. It was only afterwards that I realized he was a hikikomori sufferer.

**JEMA:** *Please tell me about a bit about your hikikomori ministry. Are the other staff all Christians?*

**Roseline:** No, they're not. Apart from me and another lady, Midori, the staff are all hikikomori sufferers or ex-hikikomori sufferers. We decided that people who avail themselves of the ministry have to become staff because we want them to feel that they belong. Hikikomori sufferers don't have any attachment to a school or company, making it difficult for them to hang out somewhere. They stay in their rooms because they feel they don't belong anywhere. By getting them to help out, they become attached to the ministry and eventually begin to feel that they belong.

**JEMA:** *How many people with hikikomori are you ministering to?*

**Roseline:** About 20 in total. Usually roughly a dozen come to the centre, but others come once in a while or I go to see them.



*JEMA: Do they live in the centre?*

**Roseline:** No, they visit the centre. Only Midori and I live at the centre.

*JEMA: How do you make contact with hikikomori sufferers?*

**Roseline:** They usually first hear about the ministry by word of mouth. Some hear about us through mental health care professionals. Sometimes we are featured on the local TV news. A local publishing company produces advertisements that help us let people know that we're here. We don't get crowds coming, but each time an article is published or we appear on the news, we generally get one or two newcomers.

These people deliberate for a long time before coming—quite a few took a year or so before visiting. We have a blog (<http://h4j-hikikomori.blogspot.jp>) to help them get to know us. When people in a hikikomori situation discover the blog, they keep reading it until they eventually decide to come to the centre. Once they come and find that they fit in, then they start coming regularly.

*JEMA: What kinds of activities do you do?*

**Roseline:** We talk a lot. Other people would probably call it counselling, but it's really free talking. There's no pressure; each person can speak as much or as little as they want. As they become more comfortable, they're able to open up. It's very difficult to set a topic and then stick with it because people who are socially withdrawn generally don't talk very much. I think that's because they haven't really communicated with others for a long time.

We also have study groups. Even when we have themes for study groups, the aim is the same: we encourage them to talk about themselves. At first, one or two will talk just to me. But since the space is quite small, even people who

are not initially part of the group see what's going on and as they observe, they gradually feel safe and are able to join in.

We also focus on art therapy. By drawing a picture, they subconsciously express feelings that they have long been suppressing. Everyone then looks at the drawings together and we take turns talking about how we feel about the pictures. From that starting point, we explore the things that make them feel that way. It builds up a sense of mutual trust and promotes self-discovery.

Through these activities, participants open up their hearts. As they gradually become used to the activities, they start to participate in special events, such as meals together. For example, Christmas and New Year parties provide opportunities to mingle with each other and organise activities together. We encourage openness, so that even outside of their homes, they become able to show their real selves and speak their minds.

*JEMA: Is there any way that people can be praying for your ministry and supporting it in practical ways?*

**Roseline:** Yes, there are lots. Recently, I've been seeing lots of improvements in the lives of people we're involved with. The speed of improvement has really exceeded my expectations. Sometimes it's like everything just clicks and we see explosions of self-esteem and self-confidence. However, many of them still have areas in their lives that they not willing to open to us yet. I always feel that that's the Devil's influence. He's trying to hold them back. I think only prayer can enable them to feel safe to open up.

I'd also love it if people would consider "adopting" one of our staff members. I've been thinking about this for a long time. They could pray for them and their needs. And maybe write postcards to them. **JH**



Photos provided by the author



# It's all too much!

## God doesn't leave us to struggle alone

By Janet Dallman

**I**t's all too much!" Have you ever said these words? You might have said them to yourself, to others, or to God. But I'm guessing everyone reading this article will have felt like this, probably not just once, but many times. I certainly have. Perhaps you even feel this way right now. The Old Testament prophet Elijah certainly felt like this. Let's take a look at his story.

Elijah bursts on the scene in 1 Kings 17 and we see a period of intense closeness to God. In the power of God, Elijah predicts the weather, is fed by ravens, is the means of life-sustaining food for a widow, and raises the dead! He confronts King Ahab, calls down fire from heaven, prays for rain, and runs faster than any Olympian. Elijah has a dramatic and "successful" ministry.

But then along comes Jezebel who says, "May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely, if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like that of one of them" (1 Kings 19:2, NIV). (That is, like the prophets of Baal who had all been killed.) "Successful" Elijah is terrified and runs for his life. How things can change—even in an instant. We join him as he sits under a tree and cries out to God, "I have had enough, LORD," he said. "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors" (1 Kings 19:4).

In my first year as a missionary, I prayed like this more times than I can tell you. I cannot count the number of times I told my husband that I had to leave Japan. I just couldn't figure out how to do it honourably! It was a desperate time and I thought up some pretty desperate schemes.

Another missionary shared with me his desire to run on a particularly disastrous Sunday morning as he tried to manage his children, sort out the church and the people in it, and preach a sermon in another language. He wondered, What am I doing here? Why don't I just stalk out the door and never come back? He told me he turned to his wife and mouthed the words, "I can't go up there and preach!" She mouthed back, "You have to." With no apparent chance of escape, he bowed his head in the 30 seconds left and prayed for help. Elijah is in just such a place in this chapter.

What about you? Perhaps you have witnessed to someone more times than you can remember, but they still refuse to listen. Perhaps you feel your ministry has achieved nothing. If that's the way you feel, you aren't the first.

But look what happens next. Elijah is asleep in the desert, without a soul for company—just his tortured thoughts and his fear. But God does not leave him like that. He sends his angel to Elijah to bring him life-sustaining food and drink—not just once, but twice. Not only that, the angel gets a fire going, which brings Elijah warmth and comfort in the chilly desert night.

God knew exactly where his servant was, and exactly what he needed. And God met those needs—of warmth, comfort, food, drink, encouragement, and company. Perhaps we could also say that part of God's meeting of Elijah's needs was in granting him rest and sleep in the first place. I certainly don't find it easy to sleep when my mind is disturbed. Please be encouraged—cry out to God like Elijah. He knows where you are, what you struggle with, and how to best meet your needs. Allow him to minister to you—perhaps through others, perhaps even through angels.

Once Elijah is physically strengthened—restoration part one—he meets with God at Horeb. So begins restoration part two. This time God meets Elijah's spiritual needs and recommissions him for the task ahead. 1 Kings 19:9b: "What are you doing here, Elijah?" asked God. God graciously gives Elijah the opportunity to explain his dilemma—as if God doesn't already know. So Elijah responds, "I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too" (1 Kings 19:10). Elijah expresses his frustrations to God—he'd done everything right, but things had gone wrong. Have you ever said something like, "But God, I've done everything you've asked, but people aren't listening. It isn't making any difference and now look at the state I'm in?" God wants to

Let me encourage you to choose to believe that God knows you and cares for you, and wants to minister to you—just like he did to Elijah.

hear from you—he wants to hear your frustrations and your fears. Talk to him like Elijah did.

God then graciously and magnificently reveals himself to Elijah; not in the tornado-like wind, not in the trembling earthquake, and not in the raging fire. “After the fire came a gentle whisper” (1 Kings 19:12). That gentle whisper or still small voice was the very presence of God in that place.

I am left wondering why God didn’t show himself in the wind, the earthquake, or fire. Perhaps it’s because Elijah had seen God stop rain and bring rain. He had seen God raise people to life. He had seen God’s fire. Elijah had seen the dramatic stuff. Dramatics isn’t what Elijah needs at this point. I think God chose to meet with Elijah in the gentlest and most personal way possible—God knew he needed the personal touch.

Elijah shouldn’t really have been at Horeb but God, being the gracious God he is, met Elijah there. Not only that, he met him with gentleness, practical care, and a re-calling to do his work. “The LORD said to him, ‘Go back the way you came’” (1 Kings 19:15).

Sometimes we too find ourselves feeling like Elijah. We too may feel that it’s all too much. When those times come, let me encourage you to choose to believe that God knows you and cares for you, and wants to minister to you—just like he did to Elijah.

### Interact

1. Meditate on 1 Kings 17-19 and make a note of points of similarity and difference between Elijah and yourself.
2. Read CS Lewis’ *The Horse and His Boy* especially chapter 11 “The Unwelcome Fellow Traveller”.
3. Meditate on a psalm of lament (e.g. Psalms 4, 6, or 7). Write your own psalm to God based on your own experiences and feelings.
4. Read John 21:15-18. Thank God for his care for Elijah, for Peter, and for you—for his physical care, his spiritual care, and his complete restoration.

5. If you need to, consider talking to a trusted friend or colleague—don’t suffer and struggle alone with fear, depression, or feelings of failure.
6. Consider if you need to take some time off for holiday or spiritual renewal. Take steps to make it happen.

### Prayer

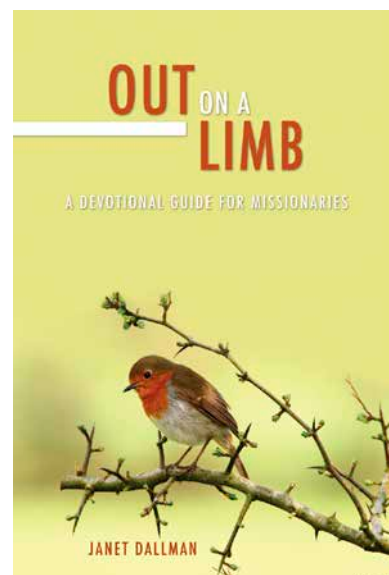
Thank you Lord that you met Elijah at his point of need. Thank you that you didn’t leave him all alone. Thank you that you gave him physical and spiritual refreshment. Lord, please meet me at my point of need. Sometimes I don’t even know what I need, or what is best for me. Lord, in those times, help me to trust in you and in your gentle love for me. In Jesus’ name, amen. **JH**

*Janet Dallman, with her husband Peter, has worked with OMF International in Japan for 18 years, based in Sapporo. Janet currently serves as the OMF Japan Pastoral & Spiritual Care Coordinator.*

Images provided by the author



*Excerpt (edited) taken from *Out on a Limb: A Devotional Guide for Missionaries* by Janet Dallman, published by Xulon Press and available from Amazon as an e-book or paperback.*



# The accidental missionary

*Sometimes God puts people on the mission field without them realizing it.*

As we packed our bags in Indianapolis and said our final goodbyes, I was certain that I was heading to Japan for a life of leisure. No longer able to work full-time and completely illiterate, I was looking forward to the long, leisurely days ahead of unpacking, reorganizing, and reassembling my life on Japanese soil. For an extrovert like me, being reduced to *arigatō gozaimasu* was both incredibly frustrating and completely liberating. Gone was the need to say anything or, for that matter, be overly concerned with the masses of people around me. I was content to just be.

Even if I wanted to tell people what I know about Jesus, I thought, I couldn't. I was certain that my extremely limited Japanese would make me sound like a raving lunatic. I had already tried to explain to my Japanese teacher the concept of St. Patrick's Day leprechauns to no avail, and so I was certain that talking about the Trinity was completely out of the question.

Then, on one fateful Sunday morning, Matt Murton, the famous red-headed outfielder for the Hanshin Tigers baseball team, came to the podium at Kobe Union Church and announced that he was leaving Japan after a successful six-year career. "I've tried to share Jesus," he said, "and let people know that Jesus loves them. And now it's up to you. We're all missionaries!"

Did he say "we"? I wanted to look around to see how everyone else was taking the news. What did he mean by "we"?

My family and I had moved to Japan on a corporate assignment from Indianapolis, Indiana—a city right in the middle of America's Bible Belt—where we attended New Horizons Church—right in the middle of the bustling city. Everyone you met

either already attended church or had seriously considered it, so evangelism was just a matter of a simple invitation. I had never thought about the Great Commission, and it had never crossed my mind to go to the mission field. Yet, here was Matt Murton,

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**"And now it's up to you.  
We're all missionaries!"**

*Matt Murton*

on an otherwise pleasant Sunday morning, telling me that is just where I was: the mission field.

Okay, Matt. Touché.

After the sobering wake-up call from Matt, I began to pray for people all around me and support the work of ministry wherever I could. God opened a door for me to work for Chastity Stemmons Enterprises as an international fashion reporter, and I began meeting more new people than ever before.

People started to ask me about my life, and the Lord gave me the opportunity, in broken Japanese and awkward English, to share my testimony with others, tell them about the power of prayer, and show them love.

I found that if I would just be obedient, willing, and available, then "the Lord God would cause righteousness and praise to sprout up before the nations" (Isaiah 61:11; NKJV), even in my glorious inadequacy to serve. I only hope that while I'm here

I can be like Matt, sharing God's love with everyone I meet and encouraging all believers to see themselves as his ambassadors. As Matt so eloquently reminded us, "If we are here and we are Christians, we are called to be his missionaries." Indeed. **JH**

*Robin Shaw is an international reporter, licensed attorney, and freelance writer. She serves as Women's Ministry Leader at Kobe Union Church. Robin is married to Brian Shaw and has two children, Brian and Robert.*

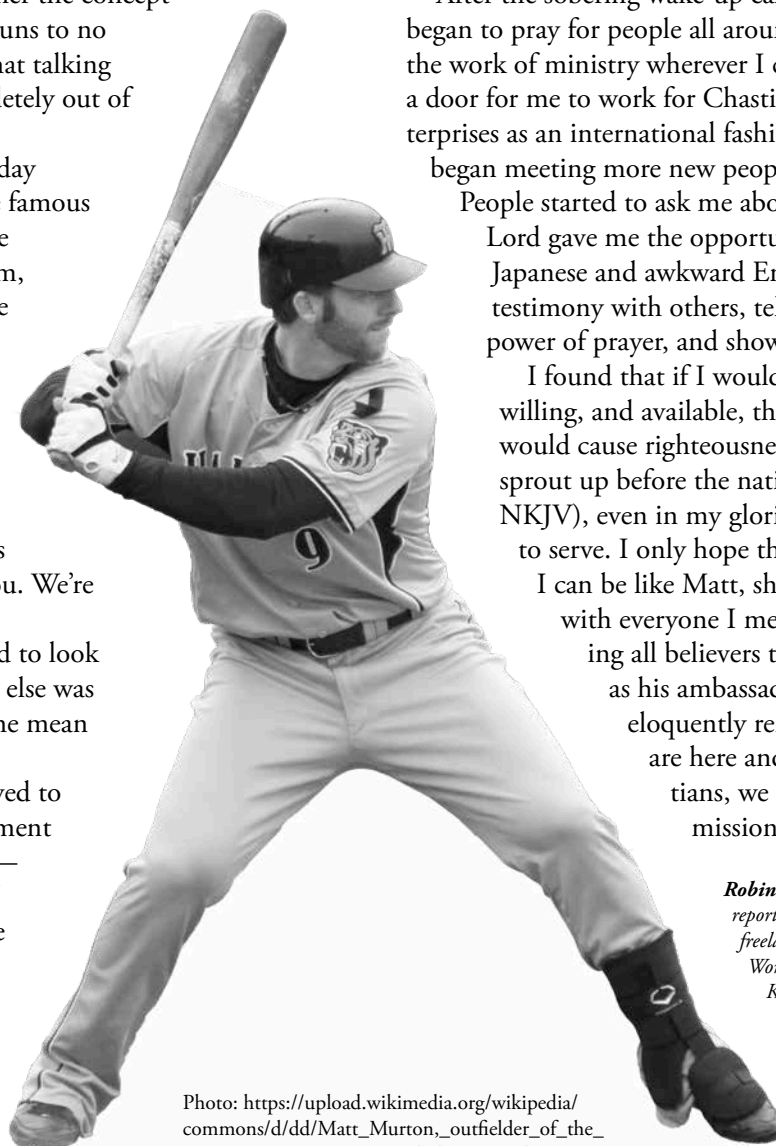


Photo: [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/d/dd/Matt\\_Murton,\\_outfielder\\_of\\_the\\_HANSHIN\\_Tigers\\_,\\_at\\_Yokohama\\_Stadium.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/d/dd/Matt_Murton,_outfielder_of_the_HANSHIN_Tigers_,_at_Yokohama_Stadium.jpg)

# Youth ministry resources

## Gospel-Centered Youth Ministry: A Practical Guide

*Cameron Cole and Jon Nielson, eds.  
(Crossway: Wheaton, IL, 2016, 214 pp.)*

This book shows how to lead a youth ministry that brings lasting change in the lives of young people. Cole, Nielson, and 12 other contributors cast a vision for youth ministry rooted in the gospel, while also providing a practical guide on how to do that ministry. The book gives a solid theological foundation and shows how to implement the basics of everyday ministry.

Part One explores seven foundations for effective youth ministry: gospel centrality, discipleship, expository teaching, relationships, community, partnering with parents, and generational integration. The first section of each chapter shows how the gospel shapes specific categories of ministry. Then each author explains how to practically implement the gospel in that area of ministry.

In the first chapter, Cole shows how the gospel must be at the heart of youth ministry. He outlines two central themes in ministry, “We long to see God heal, redeem, and free young people as they trust Jesus personally, and we long to see God birth something beautiful and redemptive in this broken world through their lives as they bear witness to their Savior” (p. 24). Cole looks at the fundamental problem in people by going to Genesis 3 and seeing what it teaches. He then looks at the solution found through Jesus defeating sin on the cross. “God can accomplish the purpose of ministry to youth (lasting change) through the gospel as they believe in Jesus and follow him forever” (p. 31).

Part Two looks at practical applications focusing on small-group Bible study, volunteer training, music, retreats, and events. Nielson shows how to help students personally engage with the Bible and how to equip youth for ministry. He gives some excellent practical considerations for leadership training in youth ministry.

Part Three discusses the fruit of a gospel-centered youth ministry, offering guidance on leading students



in evangelism, serving the poor, and conducting short-term missions. Elisabeth Elliott gives some helpful guidelines for how short-term mission teams that go overseas and serve in a fruitful manner.

Each chapter ends with several resources on the topic of that chapter. There are links also to the Rooted Ministries website (<http://rootedministry.com>), as Cole and other contributors are advisors for this ministry.

While written from a North American perspective, this book will help any youth worker or volunteer. It should also be read by all in ministry to see what a good model for youth ministry looks like. **JH**

Reviewer rates it 4.5 out of 5 stars



## Brief reviews of other resources

### *Global Youth Ministry: Reaching Adolescents around the World*

*Terry Linhart and David Livermore, eds.  
(Zondervan, 2011, 256 pp.)*

This book gives perspectives on different approaches used for reaching youth around the world based on the context in which they live. In the chapter on youth ministry in Asia, Yoshito Noguchi (youth pastor in Osaka) has a helpful short essay on a youth church model in Japan.

### *A Sociology of Japanese Youth: From Returnees to NEETs*

*Roger Goodman, Yuki Imoto, and Tuukka Toivonen, eds.  
(Routledge, 2012, 216 pp.)*

This book addresses youth issues in Japan (from the 1970s to the early 2000s). Its eight chapters focus on bullying, *otaku*, returnee children, compensated dating, corporal punishment, child abuse, social withdrawal, and those not in education, employment, or training (NEETs). Drawing on fieldwork, the authors explain why particular youth problems appeared when they did and what we can learn from these problems. Japanese has a rich vocabulary to describe the problems of young people, but the authors point out the frequent distortions that tend to infect the ways issues are handled. **JH**

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

# Experimenting with *tadoku*

*For one month, I tried a high-volume reading strategy that doesn't permit looking up words in a dictionary.*

As its name suggests, *tadoku* (多読) is a reading strategy that encourages reading lots of material. It has three simple rules:

1. Choose books you find easy to read.
2. Don't look up words in a dictionary; rather, skip over words and phrases you don't understand.
3. If you don't find a book interesting, start reading another one.

I usually break all those rules when reading Japanese books. I generally choose books that are above my reading level because they're the most interesting. My strong perfectionist tendencies compel me to look up a word in a dictionary even when I'm 95% sure I know what it means! Finally, once I start reading a book, I usually persevere to the bitter end.

## Taking the plunge

I decided to try *tadoku* for a month. The first challenge I faced was finding books that were interesting but not overly difficult. I visited the local library and borrowed some children's books. I also salvaged some light novels that my brother-in-law was throwing out. Finally, I went to a second-hand bookshop and picked up some manga (safe in the knowledge that I could resell them later on).

Armed with these books, I started reading with my dictionary safely out of arm's reach. I found the experience of reading without a dictionary a lot like riding a bicycle without training wheels or swimming without armbands—it was simultaneously liberating and a bit scary. On the one hand, I could read a lot faster and consequently became more engrossed in what I was reading. On the other hand, I experienced nagging doubts when I encountered unfamiliar words—maybe I was missing out on some crucial information that would affect my understanding of the book.

But in the end, the benefits won out. I realized that I could roughly guess the meaning of many words from their context. Some passages weren't critical to plot or character development, and so it didn't matter if I had a full understanding. Also, some passages that I hadn't fully understood at first became clearer as I read on.

The freedom to stop reading a book that I found uninteresting was helpful. Because I wasn't locked into finishing, I could start reading several books until I found one that was engaging and at the right reading level.

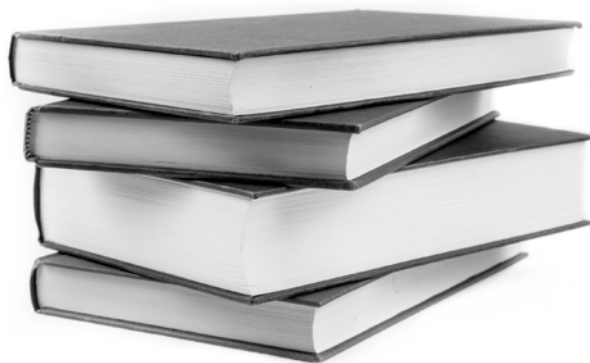
## Some reflections on *tadoku*

I think the basic premise behind *tadoku*, namely reading as much as you can without getting bogged down in understanding every word, is very helpful and liberating. After all, that's how we learned to read as children. Also,

when native adult readers encounter words they don't know, they usually glean the meaning from the context rather than look them up.

Another advantage of *tadoku* is language learning by full immersion. The use of a bilingual dictionary involves making connections between Japanese and English, whereas guessing meaning from context encourages thinking in Japanese.

However, I suspect that there is value in reading at a variety of levels depending on purpose, concentration level, and environment. For example, if you're preparing



a sermon in Japanese, you'll probably want to know the meaning of all the words in the passage you're going to preach from, but if your goal is to become familiar with the Japanese Bible, you can read it without looking up every unfamiliar word. If you're feeling alert, you could read a book that stretches you, whereas if you want to relax after a long day, you could read at a level that you find comfortable (I found manga are good for this).

After the month's experiment, I decided to incorporate some of the elements of *tadoku* into my regular reading patterns. I've settled for reading books that are slightly above my reading level in the iBook app on my iPad as it allows me to quickly look up words by just touching them. Even so, I try to guess the meanings of words from their context as much as possible and skip others that I think are not critical.

If you've never tried *tadoku*, I'd encourage you to give it a go. Most importantly, keep experimenting until you find a reading strategy that suits you.

To find out more about *tadoku*, see  
<http://tadoku.org/en/vision>  
<http://joechip.net/extensivereading> **JH**

*Simon Pleasants* works as an editor in the Tokyo office of a scientific publishing company. Originally from Wales, UK, he moved to Australia in 1988. He helps maintain several Japanese-related websites, including *Reaching Japanese for Christ*: [www.rjcnetwork.org](http://www.rjcnetwork.org)



# Silent prayer

*What does the Bible say about praying silently?*

Do you think it is biblical to pray silently? The Bible does not specifically mention silent prayer, but does that mean that it is any less valid than praying out loud?

I don't think so. We know that God can hear our thoughts just as easily as He can hear our words. Psalm 139:23 (NASB) says "Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts." And in Jeremiah 12:3, it says "But You know me, O LORD; You see me; and You examine my heart's attitude toward You." Jesus knew the evil thoughts of the Pharisees (Matthew 12:25). Nothing we do, say, or think is hidden from God. He does not need to hear our words to know what we are thinking. And He listens to anyone who prays to Him, whether their prayers are spoken or not.

Of course, the Bible does mention praying in private (Matthew 6:6): "But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you." But it doesn't say whether it should be done aloud or silently. After all, you're alone, so it doesn't really matter.

There are circumstances where only silent prayer is appropriate. For example, praying for something that is only between you and God should be just that—between you and God. Also, praying out loud for someone who is present might not always be best. We need to be sensitive to the situation and the person(s) involved. Take the case of Nehemiah, for example. When the king asked him why he was sad and what he wanted, it says that he "prayed to the God of heaven" (Nehemiah 2:4).



**“The greatest tragedy of life is not unanswered prayer, but unoffered prayer.”**

— F. B. Meyer —

That was definitely a silent prayer. The king was waiting for an answer. Nehemiah, as the cupbearer, needed to reply immediately. He couldn't leave the king's presence, get down on his hands and knees and plead with God in a loud voice. But he could still pray, and he did—silently.

Of course, there are other times when it is best to pray aloud. There is nothing wrong with praying silently, provided we are not doing it because we are too embarrassed to be seen praying.

Perhaps the verse that best shows the validity of unspoken prayers is 1 Thessalonians 5:17: "Pray without ceasing."

To pray unceasingly obviously cannot mean that we are to be praying out loud all the time. Rather, it means we are to be in a constant attitude of prayer, where we take every thought captive to Him (2 Corinthians 10:5) and bring every situation, plan, fear, and concern before His throne. Unceasing prayer means that our prayers

will be spoken, whispered, shouted, sung, and offered up silently as we direct our thoughts to God in praise, petition, supplication, and thanksgiving. **JH**

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

# Keeping it real: stress management

*"It's not stress that kills us, it is our reaction to it." – Hans Selye*

Stress is a part of our everyday lives as cross-cultural workers. According to research, there is a relationship between our outlook on life and how we handle stress.<sup>1</sup> Our outlook can affect both our mental and physical health. This article explains what kind of outlook is most beneficial, plus some hints on developing a balanced outlook.

Our outlook is the most important way to handle stress, though perhaps not quite in the way we might think. For many years, an optimistic outlook was touted as the best approach for coping with high stress levels. Pessimism leads to poor mental health, while optimism is a sign of good mental health. But according to psychologist Suzanne Segerstrom, "When pessimists encounter difficult situations, they're likely to disengage. Optimists are likely to keep working," even if it is detrimental to their health. A better approach is an outlook of optimism tempered with realism. The optimist can burn himself out "convinced they would thrive no matter what." On the other hand, the more realistic optimist, who shows a moderate amount of skepticism, is likely to be the healthiest.<sup>2</sup>

## The three sets of behavioral responses and their challenges

This balance outlook is important in managing stress, but challenging to maintain in different ways for each of the personality types.

### Type A behavior pattern:

The aggressive, impatient, and competitive Type A individuals have trouble sitting still. They are most likely to develop heart disease and high blood pressure. But because they tend to be successful in whatever they undertake, they are praised and celebrated for the qualities that are most harmful to them.<sup>3</sup>

For Type A individuals to become realistic optimists means slowing down with things like hobbies, meditation, etc. Staying connected is also essential.<sup>4</sup> Developing solid relationships where they can share and have their beliefs challenged is a way that people with this behavior pattern can gain perspective and develop a balanced outlook.

### Type B behavior pattern:

Laid back, tolerant, and relaxed Type B's are highly imaginative and creative. Unlike Type A individuals, they have lower levels of anxiety. They don't stress about meeting deadlines, aren't competitive at work or play, and rarely worry about doing things in a timely way.

Type B individuals seem tailor-made for the realistic optimistic viewpoint, but they also have weaknesses. Being optimistic actually takes effort. And when met with dif-

**Our outlook is the most important way of handling stress, though perhaps not quite in the way we might think.**

ficulty, relaxed B will not always have the problem-solving skills to solve these challenges, seeing failure as an acceptable alternative. B types have an advantage in that they often already have the patience and flexibility to learn the skills necessary for problem solving. And since most B's are already optimistic by nature, they are ahead of the two other common personality types, needing only to work on being more realistic in their expectations.

### Type D behavior pattern:

Hostile, cynical, and gloomy Type D individuals are always expecting the worst. They are unexpressive and tend to keep their emotions hidden. They are four times more likely to have heart attacks and often struggle with depression.<sup>5</sup>

There are many challenges for D types in order to develop a healthy outlook but the first step is for them to overcome their fear of rejection, which keeps them from sharing what they feel. Like Type A individuals, developing social support will help them have a place to open up and gain perspective.

Stress is part of everyone's life, but scientists have discovered that it can actually boost our immune system and make us healthier. In the past, professionals advised avoiding stressful situations in order to realize optimum health. But what is really detrimental to our health is extreme, constant stress over a long period. Certain amounts of stress can actually make us healthier. It's important to remember that our outlook on stress is important. Any personality type that combines optimism with realism can turn low levels of stress into something that makes us stronger. **JH**

*Eileen Nielsen and her husband live in Tokyo. Eileen is the Member Care Facilitator for TEAM and has a private counseling ministry. If interested in meeting for counseling, contact her at eileenpnelsen@gmail.com.*

1. Paul Raeburn, "A Case for Double-Edged Optimism," *Psychology Today Magazine Online*, May 1, 2006, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/articles/200605/case-double-edged-optimism>
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3. Saul McLeod, "Type A Personality," *SimplyPsychology*, 2014, <http://www.simplypsychology.org/personality-a.html>
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5. M. Farouk Radwan, "Type D Personality", 2015, [http://www.2knowmyself.com/distressed\\_personality/type\\_d\\_personality](http://www.2knowmyself.com/distressed_personality/type_d_personality)

# More confusion to avoid

*How to use apostrophes and hyphens correctly to make our meaning clear to readers.*

Last time we considered how commas can confuse. Apostrophes and hyphens are punctuation marks that can also cause confusion if used incorrectly.

## Apostrophes

*The butler stood at the door and called the guests names.* This sounds like the butler might lose his job because he's name-calling. The correct punctuation is: *The butler stood at the door and called the guests' names.*

We use apostrophes with nouns to show belonging. So *houses* means more than one house, but *house's* means something belonging to the house.

Apostrophes are also used to show something is missing, such as when we leave out letters in contractions like *I'm* for *I am*.

Sometimes people confuse *it's* and *its*. *It's* is a contraction that means *it is* or *it has*. *Its* means belonging to, for example, *The dog was eating its food.*

Another common mistake is adding apostrophes to words that are plural like *the 1980's* or before the "s" in a decade: *80's*. But it is correct if there are numbers missing, for example, '93 for 1993.

## Hyphens

The right use of hyphens is important too. Look at the difference between these two phrases: Is this a *man eating dog* or a *man-eating dog*? Hyphens are generally used when two or more words form a compound adjective describing one noun.

This is the same for ages. For example, *I have an 11-year-old boy*. The phrase "11-year-old" describes my boy. However, if I wrote *My boy is 11 years old*, hyphens are not needed because the age phrase is no longer before and directly modifying the noun.

Hyphens can be difficult; if you're unsure about whether to hyphenate a word, the safest thing to do is look it up in a dictionary. There is also a difference between Commonwealth English and US English with hyphens in prefixes. Commonwealth writing tends to insert clarifying hyphens in words like co-ordinate and no-one.

It's easy to feel that grammar is something studied at school and we don't need to concern ourselves with it as adults. But we need to be careful not to confuse our readers. **JH**

*Wendy Marshall is the managing editor of Japan Harvest.*

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# Online safety

*Best practices for staying safe on the World Wide Web.*

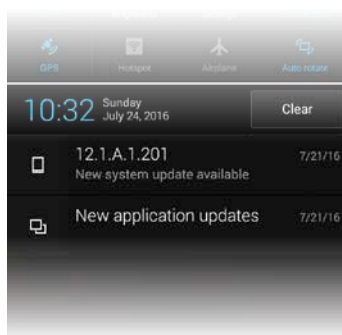
Everyone desires safety, as it enables people to thrive. Local and national governments enact security measures to ensure the safety of citizens. Physical safety is one aspect, but safety online can be more complicated. On the Internet, anyone with a connection can interact with you, and not everyone has noble intentions. Viruses, malware, and ransomware written by nefarious individuals and even countries roam the Internet looking to prey on the unprotected. Your online safety is in your own hands. Below are some suggestions to help prevent you from falling victim to these traps.

## Pop-up danger

Almost everyone has encountered pop-up windows as they browse the Internet. Some pop-ups seek to confirm identities, gather information, or sell a product. Problems arise when new species of pop-ups flash on the screen at unexpected times. A simple rule is: “If you don’t know what it is, don’t click it.” Modern operating systems and browsers have built-in protection that require confirmation from the user before allowing an app or connection that could jeopardize security. Many types of malware try to trick the user into giving permission to do things outside of these protections. Malware will often try to redirect your browser to sites masquerading as the real site you wanted to go to, so that they can steal your identity or passwords. While ad blockers, HTTPS Everywhere ([www.eff.org/https-everywhere](http://www.eff.org/https-everywhere)), and other security browser extensions can help mitigate many of these attacks, the user is always the weakest link. Remember, if you don’t know what it is, don’t click on it.

## Secure your locks

Another area where bad guys often try to attack is through software security holes, or exploits. No software is perfect, and hackers are always looking for ways to “pick the lock.” Companies sometimes have time to fix exploits before news spreads, but other times the door has been open for a long time, and they have to scramble to patch it up. Either way, the lock needs to be fixed. Whatever device you use, if you stay up to date on software patches that will help keep your systems secure. OS X, Windows, Android, and Linux all have the option of automatic updates that can fix any problems for you. But with more and more

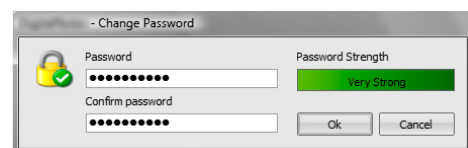


devices connecting to the Internet, it takes diligence to keep all fronts secure. For example, routers can be major targets for exploits; so make sure you find out how to keep yours up to date.

While companies usually work hard to fix broken locks, they also want you to upgrade your device. This is a huge issue, because you may have older devices that function fine but no longer receive updates, because the manufacturers no longer support them. Bad guys are aware of this and sometimes prepare exploits to unleash when a device becomes unsupported. Although it is not practical or cost effective to upgrade every time a new model of device comes out, if you value security, your Internet device should at least support the most current operating system. If you have a PC and have not upgraded to Windows 10 or a Mac and have not upgraded to at least OS X 10.10, I highly recommend you do so. If your device is older than this, it might be time to consider upgrading.

## Good password practice

In the end, no matter what locks companies install on their devices, the user holds the keys. Your password (or better still, passphrase) is the key to its security. One of the biggest mistakes a person can make on the Internet is to reuse a key in multiple places. Bad guys who access databases of stored passwords will often try them with other accounts. So no matter how complex your password is, it is worthless if you use it like a master key to all of your locks. There are many great programs, such as LastPass ([lastpass.com](http://lastpass.com)), 1Password ([1password.com](http://1password.com)), KeePass ([keepass.info](http://keepass.info)), that can generate and remember long passphrases for you. If you are guilty of using the same password multiple times, I highly recommend you pick one of these tools and begin to upgrade your Internet security.



With a little diligence by the user, it is possible to be safe on the World Wide Web. Tools are available to help you, so take the time to survey your security measures and begin to upgrade weak links. If there’s ever anything I can do to help, don’t hesitate to write to me at [techie@impactjapan.net](mailto:techie@impactjapan.net). **JH**

*Jared Jones lives and works in Takasaki as a church planter for the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention. He and his wife, Tara, have been in Japan for nearly ten years and have four children.*



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# Ensure everyone understands

*This article is part three of a four-part series, based on the following: An effective ministry leader (1) builds Christ-centered community, (2) focuses everyone on the purpose, (3) ensures everyone understands what's happening and why, and (4) encourages everyone to grow.*

## People want to understand

Why? Because they want to thrive, which tends to happen when they understand. And because they don't want to be frustrated, which tends to happen when they don't understand. For example, people get frustrated when they aren't told far enough ahead about activities and also when plans change without a good explanation. They also feel frustrated when they don't know why a given behavior—like showing up for meetings five minutes late—bothers the group.

Effective ministry leaders know that people want to understand what is happening and why. Because they know this, they make sure everyone understands.

You're probably thinking: "Here we go again. Another 'good thing' I'm supposed to do with my team. I've already got a lot going on. The team is busy. Just how important and doable is this?"

Those are good questions. I recommend that you reflect on understanding what is going on and why, and that you share your reflections with your ministry team. To get started, use these three questions:

**1) How important is it to understand what's happening and why?** I think it's very important. When I understand, I can prepare for and carry out my responsibilities, effectively help others, and know when not to bother others because they are busy. When I see the bigger picture, I feel inspired—it's easier for me to realize that a mundane task (like setting up a room for a meeting) is actually an opportunity to carry out the ministry purpose and live out the ministry values.

Confirming that people are on the same page is especially important in a multicultural or multilingual

context. One of the frustrations of working in such contexts is that often team members don't understand the motivation for a particular action by a team member from another culture.

**2) What helps you understand?** Things that help me include:

- having access to the team's online calendar(s),
- reflecting with others on the importance of "why" (see [http://www.ted.com/talks/simon\\_sinek\\_how\\_great\\_leaders\\_inspire\\_action](http://www.ted.com/talks/simon_sinek_how_great_leaders_inspire_action)),
- having a documented purpose statement,
- having a documented set of values (like community, empowerment, and growth), and
- abiding by norms for meetings (like starting with devotions, listening without interrupting, and having everyone participate).

**3) How doable is it to help others understand?**

Six doable things are:

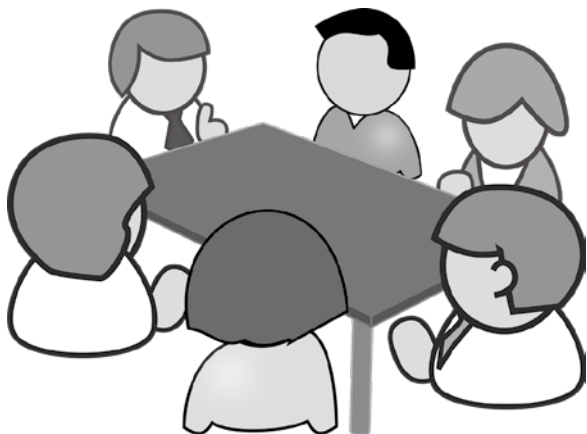
- reviewing upcoming tasks at team meetings,
- reflecting on our ministry purpose and values,
- discussing how we are going to realize our ministry purpose and live out our ministry values as we complete a task (say, planning an outreach event),
- debriefing after each meeting by discussing the extent to which we abided by our meeting norms,
- having access to the job descriptions of other team members (so we know who does what), and
- answering the following question in my annual evaluation: What would help you understand even better what's happening and why?

Bottom line? Be an effective ministry leader by ensuring everyone understands what's happening and why.

## What about you?

1. What's one of your ministry activities?
2. What excites or concerns you about ensuring everyone understands what's happening and why?
3. How important is it to understand?
4. What helps you understand?
5. How doable is it to help others understand?
6. What's next? **JH**

*Michael B. Essenburg (Christian Reformed Japan Mission) serves at Okinawa Christian School International. Time permitting, Michael works with missions.*



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