

# Minority Groups in Japan

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Japan Harvest  
Spring 2017



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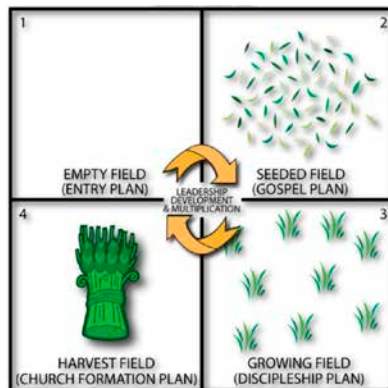


## April

### CPI Four Fields Training

April 20-23, 2017

Shibuya Evangelical Church, Tokyo



## May

### Kanto Prayer Summit

May 16-19, 2017

Okutama Bible Chalet (Ome, Tokyo)

Contact Bill Paris, wlparis49@hotmail.com

### Kansai Prayer Summit

May 22-25, 2017

Nosegawa Bible Camp (Hyogo Prefecture)

Contact Ken Reddington, doulos@kcb-net.ne.jp



## July

### Shepherds Gathering Prayer Event

July 3, 2017

ICA near Tokyo University

## October

### WIM Fall Day of Prayer

October 3, 2016

Rose Town Tea Garden, Ome

### CPI National Conference

October 25-27, 2017 (pre-conference 10/24-25)

The Heritage Resort, Saitama



Details about future JEMA events can be found on the JEMA website:

**jema.org**



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### Submissions

The editors welcome unsolicited articles.

Writer's guidelines are available at:

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

### Submission Deadlines

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# Meeting the Minorities

As an Australian in Japan, I'm a minority within the minority. Japanese people often assume my white-faced family is American and are shocked to hear we've never even been to America. Small things reinforce that our family is a minority among foreigners here in Japan. Our boys' school, Christian Academy in Japan, upholds some American traditions, like Thanksgiving, which is not celebrated in Australia, and so we feel a little on the fringes at that time. Our oldest son will graduate this summer, and people ask if he's going to college in the States. We've explained numerous times that, Lord willing, he'll be going to Australia for university. And, no, he won't be going in September, because the academic year starts in February.

When you're a minority you just don't fit in smoothly—others' expectations of you can be unhelpful and your needs are frequently overlooked.

I've loved putting this issue together. As a former occupational therapist, I've encountered some of the issues brought up in the two articles about sectors of the disabled population in Japan. These articles are especially helpful because two of the three authors are part of the disabled community themselves. It's been fascinating to learn about sports ministry, the deaf community, second-generation Japanese, and ministry to at-risk immigrant women. It's been challenging to learn about discrimination against relatives of a historically put-down sector of society as well as the LGBT community. I hope you savour the diversity of articles as much as I have.

Thank you for your responses to the reader's survey in the winter issue. We're working on collating the results and will bring them to you in the autumn issue.

This issue our team has been larger again: six editors, three designers, an advertising director, a proof-reader, two translators, and a fact checker. Thank you for your prayers. Please continue to pray for us, because this is a difficult job. As you may know, our team is unpaid. We also don't all live in the same prefecture—two of our team members don't even live in Japan. This all brings many challenges. Most of our team have other significant responsibilities, and it isn't easy to find time to reach the high standards we've set for ourselves. Our designers are particularly stretched. If you know someone who has print designing skills, can use InDesign, and might be willing to join our volunteer team, please let me know. If you'd like to pray for our team more specifically, please email me at [wmarshall@jema.org](mailto:wmarshall@jema.org) and I will send you our bimonthly prayer email.

As Gary Bauman, our executive editor, said at the JEMA Connect meeting on February 20, JEMA communications is also working to significantly improve our online presence. That especially means more articles that will be just online, not in the print magazine. We need people with digital skills to form a team to help Gary with this. Please contact me or Gary at [gbauman@jema.org](mailto:gbauman@jema.org) if you can help.

Finally, thank you to all the writers—not just for this issue, but everyone who has ever written for *Japan Harvest*. I know you are all busy in your respective ministries. Most of you don't consider yourselves writers. Yet you write and patiently put up with our finicky editing questions. By doing so, you bless others. Thank you!



Yours in Christ's service,  
Wendy  
*Managing Editor*

**The themes for the coming issues are:**

**Summer 2017:** Parachurch evangelism (submissions closed)

**Autumn 2017:** Experiences/first-person stories from missionaries here less than 10 years (submission deadline June 30)

**Winter 2018:** Missionary family life in Japan (submission deadline August 30)

## Real message behind “If You’re Happy and You Know it, Clap Your Hands”

*Christian Shimbun, December 18 & 25, 2016  
Translated by Nobue Tachiki  
Photos contributed by Christian Shimbun*

In the summer of 2016, 71 years after the end of the Pacific War, *If You’re Happy and You Know It Clap Your Hands—the Little-known Story Behind the Well-known Song*, aired on Japanese TV (NHK BS1). A drama special based on a true war-related story, it generated

tary School in Dagupan, the very city where the Japanese army had landed during the war. Kimura arrived unaware of what had happened there, committed to laboring alongside young Filipino YMCA members. Their work included tasks such as constructing a basketball court in the schoolyard, digging drainage ditches around the schoolhouse, and digging holes for simple toilets.

recalls: “Until then, I had never doubted that Japan had been fighting for the liberation of Filipinos, Indonesians, and Koreans from the US and UK. That’s what I had been taught at school. But when I visited the Philippines and heard about the truth for the first time, I was really shocked as a Christian. I couldn’t stop crying. I was truly sorry for my ignorance.”

### Attitudes matter

Nevertheless, young Kimura gradually became close to the Filipinos who he worked, talked, and worshipped God together with. They gathered twice a day to read Scripture and pray. One of the camp workers said to him: “We were ill-treated by the Japanese during the war. I had imagined that if a Japanese person came to our village we would have killed them.” The Filipino continued, “But the war is over now. I was wrong to think that way. We young people should love and forgive one another. We don’t need to fight anymore. We are friends in Christ.”

One day in the schoolyard, Kimura happened to encounter the village children singing and making hand motions to a Spanish folk song, and the words of Psalm 47:1 flashed through his mind: “Clap your hands, all you nations.” He reflected on how the villagers had expressed their kindness to him through their attitudes. This experience inspired him to write the lyrics for “If



a lot of public interest. The song itself, “If You’re Happy,” was sung by Kyū Sakamoto (best known outside of Japan for his international hit, “Sukiyaki”) in 1964, the year of the Tokyo Olympics, and it became well-known around the world. Yet few people know of its Christian origins.

### A visit to the Philippines

The lyrics of the Japanese version were written by Mr. Rihito Kimura (82), an emeritus professor of Waseda University and member of United Church of Christ in Japan’s Reinanzaka Church in Tokyo. He spent about a month in the Philippines in 1959 while a graduate student of Waseda University, representing YMCA of Japan by participating in a work-camp program sponsored by YMCA of the Philippines. He was based at Lucao Elemen-

Kimura was the first Japanese person to visit the area following the war, and this meant that he was exposed to great bitterness and hatred from the local people. The Japanese army had committed atrocities against Filipino soldiers and civilians alike. As many as 450 people were locked inside a church that was doused in oil and set alight, and those who tried to escape were shot. Over a decade had passed since this massacre, but the walls of city hall still had bullet holes, and anti-Japanese sentiment remained very strong. Kimura



# 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!”*

You’re Happy” to the Spanish melody. In his Japanese version one of the verses says, “If you’re happy, show it with your attitude.”

Back in Japan, he introduced the song on campus and at YMCA meetings, and it became so popular among college students that they sang it in music cafes and even at the Imperial Palace Plaza in Tokyo, where it caught the attention of singer Kyū Sakamoto.

In 2013, 56 years after his first visit to Lucao Elementary School, Mr. Kimura visited the school again with his wife. After a warm welcome he addressed the students, saying: “This song was born out of the suffering of war. Rather than fighting against one another, we need to work together for a peaceful future.” Then he joined with the children as they sang “If You’re Happy and You Know It, Clap Your Hands”. ■

## Modern day slavery in Japan

*Christian Shimbun, October 23, 2016  
Translated by Atsuko Tateishi  
Photos contributed by Christian Shimbun*

Long after the abolition of slavery in countries around the world, human trafficking, the modern version of slavery, is becoming internationally widespread. According to a 2016 estimate by Walk Free, an Australian-based human rights advocacy group, 45.8 million people are enslaved worldwide.<sup>1</sup> Mariko Yamaoka, Director of Not For Sale Japan (NFSJ)<sup>2</sup> and a member of Hijirigaoka Church in Tokyo, warns that human trafficking is emerging in various forms in Japan, not just distant developing countries. She urges us to take heed of what is happening.

“Human trafficking is defined as the exploitative practice of using deception, threats, or violence to force a person to

work,” explains Yamaoka. “It is a fast-growing criminal industry because of its lucrative nature.” Major types of human trafficking include labor exploitation, sexual exploitation, organ harvesting, child soldiers, forced marriage, and forced petty crime such as pick-pocketing and begging.

In a typical scenario of labor exploitation, an agent recruits people by telling them about an attractive job opportunity overseas. But as soon as the workers arrive in the foreign country they owe the agent a large sum of money to cover their airfare and a range of administrative fees. They are then forced to live and work in very poor conditions. In some cases their passports are confiscated so that they are unable to leave, or they are confined so that they cannot communicate with the outside world.

Yamaoka views sexual exploitation as a form of labor exploitation. “Some women are enticed overseas by a marriage proposal, but once they get there they are forced to engage in prostitution. Some are confined and forced to appear in pornography. Sexually exploited women suffer deep physical and emotional trauma that is very difficult to recover from,” she said.

Human trafficking is on the rise in Japan. In fact, “both the U.S. government and the U.N. have warned that the Japanese government is not doing enough to stop human trafficking,” said Yamaoka. One system susceptible to exploitation is the Technical Intern Training Program for foreign workers. Yamaoka said, “The intention of the program is for Japanese companies to accept interns from developing countries and teach them professional



skills. However, the reality is that many foreign trainees are employed in harsh conditions that Japanese workers prefer to avoid. The foreign trainees are forced to work long hours and paid below the minimum wage, but they are in a vulnerable position and most are afraid to complain.”

Cases of sexual exploitation are also on the increase in Japan. According to Yamaoka, “Women from Southeast Asia are forced to work in bars and clubs in Japan. Japanese high school girls searching for part-time jobs through social networking services are tricked into prostitution. Some young Japanese women are recruited for seemingly safe jobs, only to find themselves later forced to appear in X-rated videos.”

Yamaoka calls on Christians to learn more about the realities of human trafficking. “Once you understand the situation, ask yourself what Jesus would do about it. Then take action and let your light shine into the world.” ■

1. Walk Free, accessed Feb 1, 2017, <https://www.walkfree.org/>

2. Not for Sale Japan Facebook page, accessed Feb 1, 2017, <https://www.facebook.com/notforsalejapan/>

# Children of the outcastes

By Daniel Ellrick

**Burakamin, who are discriminated against because their ancestors were outcastes, pose unique challenges to those seeking to reach them with God's all-embracing love**

My wife Karen and I first learned about *burakumin*—descendants of Japanese outcastes—in 1994, while praying through *Operation World*. Two years later, I retired from the US Marines, and we began a trip through western Japan looking for a place to begin our second careers as missionaries.

## Looking for a place to serve

“Good luck finding a pastor with such a unique attitude.”

The words of the Japanese pastor shocked us. He had just given us a tour through a *hisabetsu buraku* (discriminated-against district) near his church. But our visit ended on a flat note when we mentioned we wanted to partner with a church to reach out to *burakumin*.

After several more disappointments, the Lord led us to a pastor who shared our heart. For the next six years we served as cooperating evangelists with Fukushima-chō Church, located in Hiroshima's largest *hisabetsu buraku*.

## Discrimination

Every human being is created in the image of God. Yet, discrimination remains a world-wide problem: the Dalit of India are outcastes, the aborigines in Australia suffer prejudice, the racially

divided cities of America sometimes erupt in riots.

While less severe than in many places, discrimination is still a problem in Japan. Groups that suffer include Chinese and Korean residents, Ainu, Ryukyuan islanders, people with handicaps, and foreigners.<sup>1</sup> *Burakumin* also suffer. They are racially and linguistically the same as other Japanese, but are targeted because their ancestors were outcastes.<sup>2</sup>

## The history of burakumin

In the Edo Period (1603–1868), society was divided into four castes: samurai, farmers, craftsmen, and merchants. Below these were the outcastes—confined to ghettos and given “unclean” work, jobs involving dead animals or people. These were people such as executioners, undertakers, grave diggers, butchers, and leather tanners.<sup>3</sup>

The caste system was abolished in 1871, but poor living conditions and severe discrimination remained. So, in 1922, the National Levelers' Association was founded with

the objective of ending discrimination.<sup>4</sup> The Christian influence is obvious in their crown of thorns flag,<sup>5</sup> which is still used today by the Buraku Liberation League. These, and similar organizations, protested against the conditions in the ghettos and lobbied

the government for help. In response, from 1969–2002, *buraku* areas were designated as *dōwa chiku* (assimilation districts) and a series of government programs provided improved housing, educational assistance, hospitals, community centers, and more.<sup>6</sup> Large improvements were made, but some neighboring communities resented the assistance given to the *dōwa chiku*. After government assistance ended in 2002, many facilities built with *dōwa* program money ran out of funds. I recently visited four *dōwa chiku*; all their community centers were closed.

Despite considerable progress, discrimination has not disappeared. Incidents such as bullying of *burakumin* children, employment discrimination, and parents forbidding their children from marrying *burakumin*, continue. In the neighborhood we were minister-

ing in, while people were friendly and casual, there were serious complaints about discrimination. It was common to hear stories about people being turned down for a job or rejected as a marriage prospect just because of their address.

## It's a secret, or is it?

During our research trip in 1996, we stopped at the information counter in Okayama Station for a social experiment. In tortured Japanese, Karen asked, “Excuse me. I am researching human-rights issues. Can you tell me where your *dōwa chiku* are?”

Flustered, the young lady replied, “That is a historical problem that no longer exists. There aren't any of those areas in Okayama anyway.” She got a translator on the phone to make sure her meaning was clear.



Leather goods, including drum heads, were made by burakumin. One Osaka community celebrates their drum artisan heritage with custom bus stop benches



Crown of thorns emblem on the now-closed Osaka Dōwa Chiku Medical Center



Karen was about to give up when the Japanese urge to help kicked in. The young lady said, “Wait a minute!” and disappeared. She returned a minute later and gave Karen a slip of paper with the name of the city office for *buraku* issues. “Maybe you could ask there,” she said.

At that office, we talked with an official who worked with the 27 *dōwa chiku* in Okayama city. He spoke freely about reports of discrimination and the steps the city was taking in response.

Our experience at the information counter taught us that there is awareness of *burakumin* even though many prefer to pretend that discrimination does not exist anymore. In contrast, at the city office we saw that *buraku* issues can be openly discussed—in the right place.

### The challenge of low literacy

The harsh smell of a rendering plant processing animal remains engulfed me as I approached the next five-story apartment building—one of a dozen built in a row by a government housing-improvement project. I knocked and waited. After a minute, a flustered young mother appeared. She greeted me with a puzzled look.

“Good morning, I’m from the local church,” I said. “We’re delivering a small gift to everyone in the neighborhood. I’ve also brought you an invitation to a barbecue party in the park.” As I spoke, I offered her a Bible and a flier. She looked at the items for a moment and then scratched her head and gazed at my feet. “I can’t read,” she said.

The next year, we worked with our church to produce a cassette tape with a message, testimonies, and songs for our door-to-door outreach.

It is very rare to meet illiterate Japanese outside of *dōwa chiku*, but in these communities, adult reading and writing classes are often well-attended.



Now home in heaven, she was the first fruit of our door-to-door ministry. We never asked about her history; there is no benefit to asking individuals if they are *burakumin*.



Outreach activities, like this English and Bible time in our home, brought *burakumin* and other Japanese together, bridging differences.

### Ministering to *burakumin*

As Christians, we need to remove the beam from our own eye before trying to remove a speck from another person’s eye (Matthew 7:5). Discrimination may be worse in our sending countries than it is in Japan. We need to be careful with our own language use. Unless essential for explaining historical prejudice, we should never use words like *eta* (full of filth) or *hinin*

(non-human).<sup>7</sup> To many, even the term *burakumin* is offensive, although it is often used by anti-discrimination groups. The most widely accepted term is *dōwa chiku* (assimilation districts). Also, be aware that although some *burakumin* claim their ancestry with pride, many try to “pass” in society by keeping their background secret.

Helpful preaching texts that show that God is not prejudiced include Numbers 12 (Moses’ Cushite wife), Exodus 12:38 (other races joined the Israelites), Leviticus 19:34 (foreigners welcome in Israel), and the many stories when Jesus reached out to the lame, blind, lepers, Samaritans, etc. These all show that we serve a God who welcomes outcasts with open arms. **JH**



The church and short-term team preparing our custom cassettes



Close-up of the cassette and insert announcing that year’s BBQ

1. “Ethnic Issues in Japan,” accessed January 7, 2017, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethnic\\_issues\\_in\\_Japan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethnic_issues_in_Japan)
2. George Devos and Hiroshi Wagatsuma, *Japan’s Invisible Race* (University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1967), 10-12.
3. *Ibid.*, 20-23.
4. “Declaration of Human Rights in Japan,” accessed January 7, 2017, <http://www.hurights.or.jp/archives/focus/section2/2002/03/declaration-of-human-rights-in-japan.html>
5. “Keikanki,” accessed January 11, 2017, <https://ja.wikipedia.org/wiki/茨冠旗>.
6. “Burakumin,” accessed January 7, 2017, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Burakumin>
7. Timothy Boyle, “A Brief History of Buraku Discrimination in Japan,” accessed January 8, 2017, <http://www.konkyo.org/burakukaiho/news/burakuhistory.pdf>

*Dan and Karen Ellrick came to Japan as missionaries in 1996. Their current focus is resource development. Dan is also the Japan representative for International Ministerial Fellowship.*

Photos by Dan and Karen Ellrick

# MINISTERING TO THE HOMELESS

Three men moved from despair to joy when they discovered Jesus while homeless

By Mark John Bennett

Homeless people are a hidden minority group in Japan. They are found everywhere, but are frequently not acknowledged. While the number of homeless people appears to be decreasing (the government seems to be assisting as much as possible—the 2020 Tokyo Olympics may be a motivation), those of us who work with homeless people realize that even though fewer homeless are visible, their number may not have changed. Those caught in the cycle of homelessness find it difficult to escape—while it is possible, the road is long and hard.

Ministry with homeless people is challenging and yet ever so rewarding. There is satisfaction in seeing the soul beneath the soiled clothing, and that only happens when you spend time with them. Sharing a hot drink or meal is one way of loving them. But more importantly, through this ministry we are seeing homeless people coming to faith in Jesus Christ. Unlike most Japanese people, homeless people have time, and since their life is a lonely one, most are willing to chat. Most are open to anyone who will take the time to sit with them, listen, and converse. They are even receptive to new ideas and faith. We plant God's Word in their lives, and God brings about the harvest into his kingdom. They gain not just faith, but also the promise of a home with God forevermore.

The reasons for homelessness in Japan are many, but each individual has a unique story. Here are three.

## From despair to joy

Ryu came to Tokyo from Kyushu in March to commit suicide. His partners and family had let him down, betrayed him, and caused him to lose his business and all hope. He planned to take a bus from Shinjuku to Mount Fuji, climb as high as he could in the snow, and then freeze to death. But God had other plans for Ryu. When he went

to buy a bus ticket, he was informed the bus wasn't running because of snowy roads. He ended up in Yoyogi Park, where he was told that there were food distributions and Bible studies. He decided to join one of the groups as he was hungry. I met Ryu on March 16 last year, and he became a regular participant in the Bible studies and Sidewalk Chapels (twice weekly gatherings for worship on a sidewalk near Yoyogi park).

Ryu was filled with anger and hate. He had been hurt and was looking for a way out. But he was told of the love of God, the forgiveness of Christ, and how he could have abundant life. He began with simple prayers and continued to study the Word. He asked lots of questions and became a genuine seeker. He was even asked to pray at the end of one Bible study in April and, though he doubted his ability, was able to say a simple prayer. The grace of the Lord broke down the barriers of hate and hurt, and I baptized him on May 1.

Ryu has since read the whole Bible. He attends Bible studies almost every day, volunteers weekly at the Sidewalk Chapels, and is filled with joy. He always has a witness on his lips and a smile from his heart. Even after being transformed by God, he was still homeless, although recently he has been provided shelter for six months.

## From Sōka Gakkai to Christ

When he was only six, Yu was abandoned by his father. He was raised by his mother, who was a devout adherent of the Japanese Buddhist movement Sōka Gakkai. He too became a dedicated follower. He attended Sōka University and prayed earnestly many times a day, seeking enlightenment and healing for his broken heart.

The final blow came when Yu's mother was dying from a stroke and dementia. He cared for her and prevented her from committing suicide many times.

Yu even considered killing his mother to relieve her suffering. When she died of a stroke, he was alone in this world. He felt abandoned and hopeless. Yu became homeless and contemplated suicide.

Finding his way to Yoyogi Park, Yu joined the Sidewalk Chapel that meets every Saturday morning. There he heard of the love, forgiveness, and family that could be found in a relationship with Jesus Christ. He accepted Jesus as Lord and followed him in baptism.

In just a few years, Yu's English ability increased dramatically as he spent time in Bible studies and worship with people from many countries. Today, he is my partner—both leading and translating. He readily and boldly shares his testimony with homeless people. And yet he is still homeless.

### Immersed in the Word

When Mr. Masuda first attended Sidewalk Chapel in January 2015, he received a copy of John's Gospel. He read it that week and returned for more. This time, he was given a small New Testament, which he read in a few weeks. When he again asked for more, he was given a Bible, which took him about three months to read. Throughout this time, he participated in Bible studies in the park and attended Sidewalk Chapel and a church. Mr. Masuda said, "When I joined the Bible study, I could share my thoughts and questions. I was so happy." He continued, "Pastor Bae told me if I wanted to understand the Bible, I must pray . . . so

I did." He not only prayed for himself, but also rose early to pray for others.

About this time, Mr. Masuda developed a severe skin allergy. No medicine or doctor seemed to help, but he prayed, and after three months of prayer God healed him. "This is when I truly began to believe and came to faith in Jesus," he testified. Mr. Masuda was baptized on December 24 last year and now attends Bible studies and serves others at Sidewalk Chapels. He is always ready with his highlighted and annotated Bible. He always has a positive answer and uses the Word to speak for him: whenever he is asked a question, he searches his Bible and reads the answer from it. And yet Mr. Masuda is still homeless.

### Three transformed lives

Ryu, Yu, and Mr. Masuda are all members of the R2B (We are to Be) ministry team. They have been redeemed and seek to serve the Lord, and to love and serve others. They attend Bible studies (almost daily), serve at the twice-weekly Sidewalk Chapels (where they read the Word, pray, lead music, distribute food and facilitate small-group leadership), and boldly testify to God's greatness. **JH**

*Mark John Bennett (D. Min., Fuller Theological Seminary) has been with the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention since 1990 with his wife Sharon. They have served in various roles and are currently ministering to homeless in compassion/mercy ministries.*

Ministry photo by Mark Bello

Blue tarp background: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/88753292@N05/9505386507>



# SPORTS MINISTRY



By Levi Booth

## Playing sport is one way to reach Japanese men (and women) for Christ



There were a number of factors involved in my coming to trust in Christ. Key ones would be family, church youth group, and ultimate frisbee.

You may not have heard of ultimate frisbee—it's a sport. An actual team sport with its own World Championships. I started playing at university, and through it God influenced my life profoundly. It is no overstatement to say that without this sport I would not be a missionary in Japan.

There was a Christian senior frisbee player on the team, and through him I came to see the difference that a true grasp of the gospel makes on a person's life. I saw how salvation brings peace on the pitch when things get heated. I saw what sanctification looks like in a culture where peer pressure rules. His witness, and that of other sporting Christians, taught me about mission, fellowship, discipleship, and other aspects of the Christian life that had previously been mostly theoretical phrases.

It's been over fifteen years since I showed up at my first ultimate frisbee training. And whilst I might have now passed my athletic peak, I am as pas-

sionate as ever about the power of the gospel to change lives, and the potential of sport to bring the gospel to those who need it, especially Japanese men.

When I tell people about my passion to reach and disciple Japanese men for Christ, I hear the same question: *But how do you get to spend time with them?* One answer, which I greatly desire Japanese churches to consider more seriously, is *play sport*.

Ultimate frisbee is a very minor sport, especially within Japan. It's no stretch to say that ultimate frisbee players make up a minority group within the sporting world. So it's not surprising that you don't find many of them within the Japanese church.

But seventy percent of all Japanese people are involved in sport in some way,<sup>1</sup> and so it would be odd if sporting folk as a whole were a minority within the church.

And yet they are.

And it's not as though people who play sport are especially hardened to the gospel or difficult to reach. Quite the opposite.

I've played on a few frisbee teams in Japan and have always been amazed at how quickly I am accepted as one of the team. For sure it involves an investment of time, energy, and money (and it has forced me to raise my game

with language study). But through this little-known sport that involves throwing a plastic disc around a field,

I have more conversations about life, faith, God, and Christ—on the sideline, in the onsen, at the *nomikai*—than through any

other ministry I'm involved

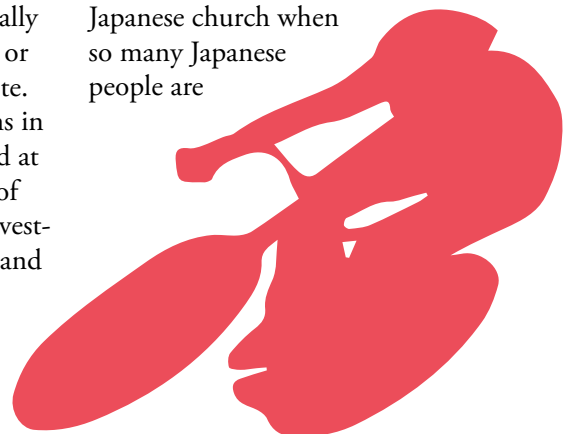
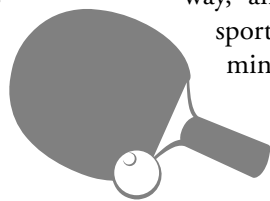
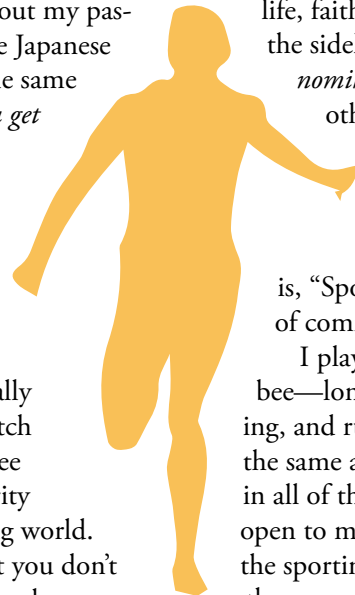
with in Japan. It's not for nothing that the unofficial slogan of ultimate frisbee

is, "Sport is the best means of communication."

I play other sports besides frisbee—long-distance running, boxing, and rugby mainly. I have found the same acceptance and openness in all of these groups. The door is open to make disciples of Christ in the sporting community. And with the upcoming 2020 Tokyo Olympics, and the 2019 Rugby World Cup also being held in Japan, these opportunities will surely increase.

### Sports ministry in Japan

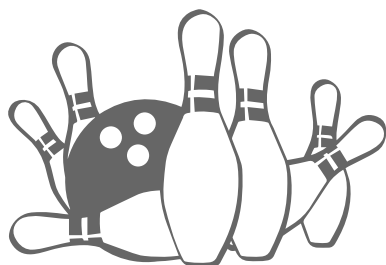
So why is sports ministry such a neglected sphere in Japan? Why do Christians who love sport comprise a minority within the Japanese church when so many Japanese people are





involved in sport in some form or the other? And more importantly, what can we do to change it?

My dream—and I use the word deliberately—is that soon Japanese pastors will respond with as much enthusiasm at finding out that a new church member is a qualified rugby coach or pro-level footballer as they would if that person were a qualified English teacher or concert pianist.

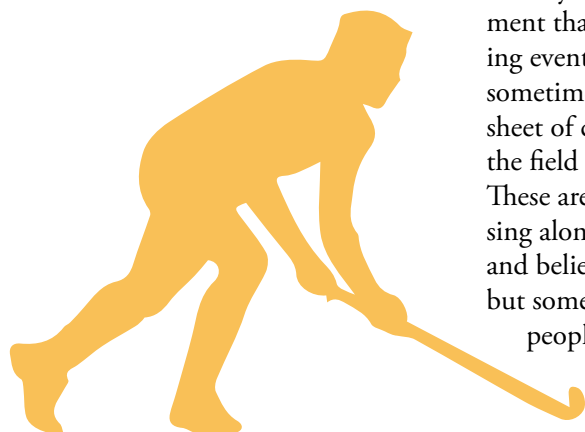


## So how can this happen?

Here are a few ideas:

### Contact-making: Join a sports club (or start your own)

If you live in one of Japan's major cities, then it's almost guaranteed that you can find a club to join in whatever sport you used to play, or have always wanted to play. And if you can't, then [meetup.com](http://meetup.com) is a website that allows people to sign up for and attend groups organized by anyone for anything. I'm planning on starting a group for touch rugby once spring starts.



### Outreach: Organize some low-key sports events

Football, dodgeball, snowboarding, hiking . . . the possibilities for sporting events are close to limitless. And remember, you don't have to be a professional athlete to run a tournament, you just have to know the basics. If you have contact with a Christian athlete, then you could ask them to give a testimony after the medal ceremony. If not, give a short talk linking sport to the gospel. Maybe, "What does God think about sport?"

### Discipleship: Buy some running shoes

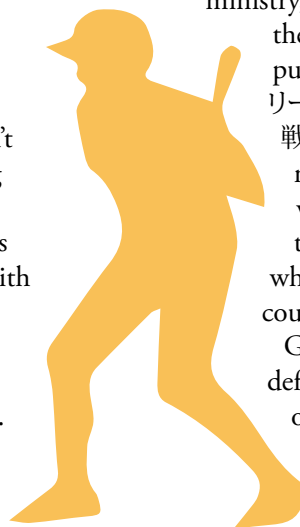
Sports ministry doesn't have to mean organizing a tournament or joining a sports club. It can be as simple as a weekly jog with a church member. And as you run, talk, pray, or simply build trust as you spend time together. There are some people who will be very happy going out for coffee, and that's a great way to talk about life issues. But there are others who would be more comfortable going for a jog. (And personally I've always found running to the side of someone a much less threatening setup than sitting across a table.)

### Church: Hymns, psalms, and spiritual chants

If churches are going to be places where sporting people feel able to engage, then we may have to adjust our worship styles. For instance, often people who play sport also watch sport. So they are used to the style of involvement that comes with going to sporting events. At baseball games, you will sometimes be presented with a whole sheet of chants for when players enter the field or when a home-run is scored. These are easy to remember and fun to sing along with everyone. I love hymns, and believe with time so will anyone, but some "spiritual chants" could help people ease into sung worship.



If you want to learn more about sports ministry, then Engage and TUV are some networks involved in organizing outreach for the 2019 Rugby World Cup and 2020 Olympics respectively. You can look at their websites for details about upcoming events and the like. And if you want to think more about sports ministry, or help your pastor to do so, then I'd recommend the recently published book *スポーツミニストリー ～人口70%への新しい挑戦～* It's only available in Japanese, but covers topics from why sports ministry is important right through to guides on what kind of sporting events you could run in church settings. Getting involved in sport does definitely require an investment of time, and probably also money. But I do believe it is an investment well worth making. **JH**



1. MIC (the Ministry of Internal affairs and Communication). Accessed Jan 20, 2017. <http://www.soumu.go.jp/english/index.html>

*Levi Booth* is a Brit working with OMF. His passion is to see Japanese men reached with the gospel of Christ. He also plays with Frisbees, hangs out in coffee shops, and reads manga.



# How to welcome people with disabilities

*The church should be a place where people with disabilities and their families feel welcomed and accepted*

By Josh Grisdale

There are 7.41 million people registered with some sort of disability in Japan—roughly 6% of the population.<sup>1</sup> But how many do you see on a daily basis?

When I first came to Japan with OMF, I was under the impression that the disabled were hidden away by their families because of shame. After I arrived, though, I started to feel this was a misjudgment and it wasn't that bad . . . until recently.

After a tragic attack that took the lives of 19 people at a care facility for the disabled in Sagamihara (July 2016), there was uproar in the disabled community because the names and faces of the victims were not released—mostly at the request of families because they didn't want others to know about their disabled relatives. While this is an extreme case, people with disabilities and their families face many challenges in Japanese society, just like everywhere else in the world.

Those with a disability that requires care at a facility often have to live apart from their families. Since there are not enough facilities, families go on a waiting list and jump at the first opportunity they get, even if it means that their family member has to go to a different prefecture.

Those who are more independent also face challenges. Some have trouble finding a job, while those who get

a job often find it unfulfilling as many companies hire disabled people (because they are obliged by legislation to employ a certain number of people with physical or intellectual disabilities<sup>2</sup>), but give them inconsequential work. Going out with friends can be frustrating since many cafés and restaurants are not accessible, and the person with a disability may feel awful that they've ruined a night out with friends when the restaurant everyone wants to go to turns out to be inaccessible.

I deliberately paint a bleak picture because it is an opportunity for the church to be an open door and a family to those in need. But it does require deliberate action by all of us.

## Be there for them

Sometimes people just need to know that someone hears them. As humans, we love to fix problems and offer solutions—but this can be dangerous. Often people with disabilities feel like no one really understands them, and if someone says “I know how you feel; I broke my toe once,” it can just reaffirm that feeling. Or when people make a big deal out of how “inspiring” people with disabilities are, it can feel awkward. Instead, show that you care about the person as you do any other person. I still remember a time over 20 years ago when I was going somewhere with a friend and he started to take the stairs but said, “Right, I forgot you were in a wheelchair”. He saw me for me, not my disability.

Be there for families as well. A child with a disability can mean a mountain of extra responsibilities that other families don't experience—numerous appointments clog the schedule, expensive equipment and renovations strain finances, and simple things take longer to do. Some mothers feel responsible for causing their child's disability or are even blamed for it by their mother-in-law. Show love and compassion and gently ask how the church could help.





## Try to make it about the person, not the disability.

you can, go above “within reason” when possible, to be a light to the community.

### Some practical ideas:

- Give parents a day to themselves or the opportunity to listen to a sermon in peace by looking after their disabled child.
- Let families know that their child’s disability was not their fault.
- Consider how you can include people with disabilities when you plan church events or allocate roles. I was very happy to be asked to help with the offering or to act as a greeter.
- Use your smartphone to Skype the sermon to people who physically cannot be present or make a video to send later. Facebook and Youtube both offer free streaming services, so all it takes is a few minutes to set up an account.
- Read about disabilities and learn some differences. For example, just because I’m in a wheelchair doesn’t mean I have no feeling in my legs.
- Try to make it about the person, not the disability. “That’s a cool wheelchair” is an easy icebreaker, but it focuses on my least-liked aspect. You wouldn’t say, “That’s a nice shiny head!” to someone who is bald.

### Accessibility

In my hometown, my family’s chiropractor had a step at the door, followed by a small porch with another door. They built a wooden ramp up the step to the door for me, but it had to be lugged out from a closet each time. When I asked why they didn’t leave it out, they explained that they didn’t have many disabled people come. My mom tried to convince them that there were likely many people with disabilities who would like to come but see a step and give up, since it looked inaccessible. It’s the chicken-and-egg dilemma.

Recently, an anti-discrimination law was enacted in Japan to promote access for those with disabilities. While not strict like the Americans with Disabilities Act, it does encourage public places to accommodate “within reason”.

Churches likely have tighter budgets restrictions than other public places, but my encouragement is to do what

### Suggestions to make churches accessible to all:

- If you have an accessible entrance that is not obvious, add a sign with a phone number for someone to call if they need assistance.
- If you cannot afford to renovate, send an email to the missionary community via JEMA asking for a Christian carpenter to volunteer to build a ramp.
- If you cannot build an accessible washroom, at the very least know where the nearest one is (almost all parks and train stations have them) and offer to show a first-time attender.
- When renovating or considering a new location, get the opinions of disabled people. (I’ve been left out of accessibility planning before and the renovated toilet wasn’t accessible in the end!)
- If your church is completely inaccessible, and it is out of your control to adapt it (e.g. you are renting a place), have a list of nearby accessible churches ready so you could easily introduce a person to another church if they ask.
- Remember, accessibility benefits everyone—elevators were first installed for the disabled but also benefit many others. Consider it an investment for yourself a few years down the road.

The list of possibilities for improving access is endless. But most importantly, ask someone with a disability.

I remember reading the words of a priest who lamented the slow move to accessibility at churches in the US back when the Americans with Disabilities Act came into effect. He said it would be our greatest shame when places like taverns and shopping malls are accessible but our churches are not. Instead, let us inspire the community by how far out of the way we go to be leaders in accessibility rather than reluctant followers. **JH**

1. Cabinet Office, Government of Japan. [http://www8.cao.go.jp/shougai/white-paper/h25hakusho/gaiyou/h1\\_01.html](http://www8.cao.go.jp/shougai/white-paper/h25hakusho/gaiyou/h1_01.html), accessed Jan 11 2017.
2. “Employment Measures for Persons with Disabilities in Japan” by Ryosuke Matsui. Asia-Pacific Human Rights Information Centre, accessed February 23, 2017. <http://www.hurights.or.jp/archives/focus/section2/2008/12/employment-measures-for-persons-with-disabilities-in-japan.html>

*Josh Grisdale came to Japan from Canada with OMF in 2007 and served at Senkyō Church and Wheelchairs of Hope. He later became a salaryman. Now a Japanese citizen, he runs Accessible-Japan.com in his spare time.*

Photos provided by the author

# Delivering the love of Jesus

## Compelled to minister in the intellectually disabled community in Japan

Thirty-two years ago, my husband Leon and I came to Japan as missionaries. We were young and childless. After much thought and prayer, we decided to pursue adoption. As we talked with the adoption counselor we assured her we would take a boy or a girl, but we could not take a special needs child as that would hinder our ministry. God must have been laughing at us: *I will give them a special needs child and through him I will redefine their ministry.* And so, 29 years ago, our son Jeffrey came to our family and the changing began. God began changing our ministry. He began changing us.

It took many years for us to understand what we were to do. We struggled with many things, not the least of which was the autism which was part of our son. It took a long time for us to understand him and how God had made him. We had to believe there

was more than what we saw on the outside, and then we had to find ways to mine out the gold. It was painful and difficult, but so worth it to find the precious jewel God had entrusted to us. Once we believed there were great depths inside, our son began revealing himself.

As we progressed in this journey we came to know that not only was there gold in our son, but it was in others like him. Our hearts gradually opened to the needs of this community of the intellectually disabled. We saw young adults whose hurts went deep as society hid and ignored them.

### Starting ministry in this community

We started by Leon volunteering in daycare facilities. The first goal was to reach their families, but the daycare setting did not bring us into contact with the families;

it brought us into contact with the disabled. We were confronted by the fact that God loves them. He wants to save them. He can save them. But, “how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?” (Romans 10:14 KJV).

So, we began to enter the facilities with new vision. We spoke the name of Jesus wherever we could. We knew we were the only link for these dear ones to the gospel. Our job was to deliver the love of Jesus to these people who are pushed to the outside of “normal” society. We began to open the doors wider and try to minister in newer and more creative ways.

We are still learning what those ways are, but we have found that participatory events which engage their bodies as well as the mind are effective. Therefore, Gospel Hula, singing, and dancing are able to penetrate to their souls. So far the most effective is to meet them on level ground as friends. We give help as needed and

accept their help when they are able to give it, creating a mutuality of friendship.

### No measurable results possible

One thing we had to face was that while we could deliver the message, we may never know the result. Some of our friends are able to communicate. Others are unable to even remember what happened that morning. Yet we had to believe that God could use extraordinary ways of communicating his truth to their hearts. We had to be-







der-to-shoulder with our friends in our new bodies in a new heaven and a new earth.

Our son Jeffrey, a key player in the birth of this ministry, has limited speaking skills, and yet he is able to communicate in writing what is in his heart. God has enabled him to share his testimony through the written word before many audiences. Jeffrey has consented to share his vision for this ministry as part of this article. Here are his words:

### Jeffrey

I am different. I am weird. Face it! I make most of you uncomfortable. But I have an important message for you. I am not a mistake. I am not an embarrassing failure of God's hand. I, like you, am made in the image of God. My reality and yours are different, but mine is no less than yours.

God made me for a special purpose and work. Just as you must pursue the task God has given you, so must I. You have no more or less responsibility to be obedient than I have. God could have made me different from how I am. He could have healed me. He did not. Thus, I must take this gift of autism and use it for the glory of God. I must open my heart and let God's love flow from my heart to those I have been sent to minister. My vehicle of ministry will be different from yours. But we must all be faithful in sharing God's great salvation.

Those of us in the "disabled community" are often ignored or ridiculed. God, however, is not ignoring us. He is ready to encounter us.

He will find us and save us, because he loves the world. God wants to give hope to those who perceive no hope. God has let me open the door for my family to embark on this exciting ministry to our friends in the disabled society here in Japan.

This community is shunned and hurting, and we know it. It is hard for us to trust the "normal" society because it is often the cause of our hurt. God does not allow me to use my mouth to speak for the disabled community, but nevertheless he has commanded me to speak for them. This ministry requires me to seek to know the heart of God. He draws all to himself. He draws us with all our flaws, and then covers those flaws with his overflowing grace. Hallelujah! **JH**

*Leon and Cheryl Hill came from the US to Japan in 1985 as World Venture church planting missionaries. They live in Ibaraki-ken with their son Jeffrey, 29, partnering with Keisen Christ Church.*

Photos provided by the author

lieve that Romans 10:13 was absolute truth: "Whoever will call upon the name of Lord will be saved" (NASB). How they call on the name of the Lord may not always be known to us.

We may never be able to give a head count of those who have believed to our supporters. Yet we know, from our son, that God does his work in ways we cannot always understand. The goal is not for us to understand. The object is for us to be obedient and deliver the love of Jesus. God is perfectly capable of taking what we deliver and doing more with it than we could imagine.

### Prayer

Satan has long held the gates to this community. He does not give ground easily. We are going into his territory, and prayer is the weapon we choose. We are probably the only ones who are praying for these dear people, and we must remain faithful to the task. I have listed their names in my kitchen so I can pray for them regularly by name. We must go on in faith, delivering the love of Jesus, believing the gates of hell will not prevail here. We continue, in anticipation of the day we stand before God's throne, shoul-





By Anne Crescini

# LEARNING TO LOVE LIKE JESUS

## How God used my lesbian friend to change my heart

One of my close friends is a lesbian.

A few years ago, I never would have thought I would write that sentence. I have been following Jesus for most of my adult life, serving him in Japan as a tentmaking missionary for almost as long. I have been to seminary, led several people to Christ, and served in various leadership capacities in the church. I thought I knew God's heart. I thought I knew how to love like Jesus. But looking back, I see that in many ways I was just like the Pharisee who so infamously stated in Luke's gospel, "God, I praise you that I am not like this sinner" (Luke 18:11 my paraphrase).

### There are many LGBT people in Japan

Last year, God gave me a heart for the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual) community. It had to have been God, because I had never had a close gay or lesbian friend, and I didn't know anyone in Japan who did. Although one survey found that

7.6 percent of the Japanese population identifies as LGBT,<sup>1</sup> very few Japanese will tell you that they have a gay or lesbian friend or family member.<sup>2</sup> I started to wonder where all the LGBT people were, and why no one, neither in my church family nor among my unchurched friends, had any contact with them.

Not long after this, I met my friend Megumi. Like many Japanese, Megumi knew absolutely nothing about Christianity. The only thing she knew was that Christians do not like gay people.

Think about that for a minute.

She had never heard the gospel, never heard of the great love of Jesus, but she had heard that Christians reject the LGBT community. Because she knew that I am Christian, she was uncertain whether or not to tell me that she is lesbian, but I assured her that her sexuality was not a barrier to our friendship. And why should it be? Jesus hung out with all kinds of people that would be looked down on in today's society. And he loved them.

Contrary to how it might appear, we are surrounded by people who identify as LGBT in Japan. Although most people in Japan assume there are few gays in their communities, my friend Megumi assures me that this is most definitely not the case. I live in the middle of nowhere in rural Fukuoka Prefecture, and she informed me there are hundreds in the LGBT community here. If that is the case, imagine how many are living in metropolitan areas like Tokyo and Osaka.

We are surrounded by people hiding in the shadows, and while many in the LGBT community these days are being emboldened by small movements that are beginning to recognize their lifestyle, many more are still in the closet. Why, when most Japanese people have no problem accepting homosexuality, are so many LGBT people still uncomfortable coming out to their families and friends? I asked this and many other questions of my friend Megumi, and I learned so much from her.



It is not our job or responsibility as Christians to change people who are outside the body of believers. Our calling is to love others, to share truth with them, and pray that they will encounter Jesus.

## Shame

Japan is a shame culture. Simply put, Japanese people care way more what others think of them than those in the West do. What is right and what is wrong is not determined by a god, but by the opinions of others. And while many like my friend Megumi are not ashamed of their homosexual identity, they are unwilling to risk bringing shame on their families by coming out. Megumi told me, “I am comfortable with my identity as a lesbian and I am not ashamed of who I am. However, my mom is not as comfortable with who I am, and my coming out would bring trouble (*meiwaku*) on her.” She also told me that her mother is the only family member she’s told about her sexuality, and that her mom cried all night after she told her, blaming herself that her daughter turned out this way.

## Status

Another reason is status. Megumi told me that there are 10 times more gays than lesbians in Japan, and many have high status jobs such as doctors, businessmen, and lawyers. They are unwilling to risk their careers

by coming out, for while there is no moral opposition to homosexuality like you might find in Christian and Muslim countries, Japan is influenced by Confucianism, which values traditional families and having children. Of course, those following the LGBT lifestyle are both untraditional and unable to naturally produce children, so there are major cultural barriers to the full acceptance of the LGBT community in this traditional Asian country.

Interestingly though, until the Meiji era, homosexual behavior was not only accepted but even encouraged, and Koichi of [tofugu.com](http://tofugu.com), claims that many samurai and upper class men engaged in homosexual behavior.<sup>3</sup> Homosexuality only began to be looked down upon as Japan engaged with Western countries and sought acceptance by them.

## Life is difficult

Megumi told me that she wishes she could be straight because her life would be much easier. And while she personally doesn't want to get married, she thinks it would be a good thing for Japan to legalize same sex marriage. She doesn't hold a grudge against Japan for making it so hard for LGBT to come out of the closet, nor is she angry at people who disagree with her lifestyle. She told me that people are free to believe what they want, and that she respects that.

But when people publicly or privately disparage the LGBT community, it is hurtful. When her friends in high school talked about lesbians being gross, or when a customer talked about how weird they are, that hurt her. When she said this, the Spirit convicted me. How many times in the

past had I told my friends, my family, or my husband that gays were gross or disgusting or weird? I am pretty sure that not once did Jesus ever tell anyone that he was grossed out by them.

Regardless of our views on homosexuality, the LGBT community is all around us, and Jesus loves them. Jesus was, and is, a friend of sinners. It is not our job or responsibility as Christians to change people who are outside the body of believers. Our calling is to love others, to share truth with them, and pray that they will encounter Jesus. For when someone encounters Jesus, they cannot help but change.

So, when I pray for my LGBT friends, I pray simply that they will encounter Jesus, and that his love will transform their hearts just as it transformed mine more than 20 years ago. I was not any better or worse than they are. I was thirsty for grace, and they are too. I challenge you to pray the same prayer for everyone you meet—that they will encounter Jesus and be transformed by his grace. For in the end, that is what we all need—every day. **JH**

1. 「日本に同性愛者は951万人?! LGBTの割合は日本人人口の7.6%にも達しています!」 Updated Feb. 19, 2017. <http://lgbt.jpn.com/zinkou>
2. Kyodo staff report, “Survey finds 90% of Japanese parents would be accepting if their kids came out as LGBT” Japan Times, August 23, 2016. Accessed Feb 10, 2017. <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2016/08/23/national/social-issues/japan-survey-finds-90-parents-accepting-kids-came-lgbt/#.WH49CFArLIU>
3. Koichi, “The Gay of the Samurai,” September 38, 2015. <https://www.tofugu.com/japan/gay-samurai/>

*Anne Crescini is a writer, blogger, and educator from the US based in Munakata, Fukuoka-ken. She has lived in Japan for 16 years. For more info on her blogs and books about Japan, visit her website at [www.annecrescini.com](http://www.annecrescini.com)*

By Johnna Muniz



# Bridge building among Latinos in Japan

*There are a surprising number of Latinos living in Japan.  
Reaching them requires going beyond first appearances.*

When we walked in, everything looked and felt like a Japanese church. About 30 people in four rows of chairs facing the pulpit and a few were speaking Japanese. Almost everyone looked to be of Asian descent. Japanese song lyrics were displayed on the screen at the front. Water for tea was in electric pots near the back. Tables were laden with typical Japanese snacks and bags for burnable and plastic garbage underneath the tables. All our senses told us this was a mostly homogeneous group of Japanese people worshiping in a traditional Japanese way.

Then the time for greeting one another began. In stark contrast to Japanese culture, where people rarely touch each other but instead somberly bow in honor to each other, people came up to us with huge smiles and hugged us, even putting their cheek against ours. We had experienced this many times in countries like Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Belgium, and France, but never in Japan. They greeted us not with *konnichiwa* but with *tudo bem?* in Portuguese. We were welcomed as if we were old friends. We enjoyed the rest of the service, singing in Portuguese and Japanese and hearing a

sermon in Portuguese, translated into Japanese. Though we were at a church in Japan, we had just experienced a service for Brazilian *nikkei* (Japanese emigrants and their descendants).

Although not obvious at first glance, many Latinos and Brazilians live in Japan. Many of them are ethnically Asian, so it is only by talking to them that you discover their different backgrounds. Their parents and grandparents are of Japanese descent (often 100%), but they were born in countries like Brazil, Argentina, or Peru and then moved to Japan to live and work. They look Japanese but speak Portuguese or Spanish. On the inside, they feel much more Brazilian or Hispanic than Japanese. They eat *feijoada* and know how to dance salsa.

## Japanese in Latin America

Brazil is home to the largest Japanese community outside of Japan.<sup>1</sup> A migration agreement was signed between Brazil and Japan in 1907, and the first Japanese immigrants arrived in Brazil in 1908. The number of Japanese living in Brazil in 2009 was estimated to be 1.6 million.<sup>2</sup> The highest concentrations of Japanese people in Brazil are in the states of São Paulo

and Paraná. Liberdade is São Paulo's equivalent to Japantown in the US.

## Latinos in Japan

While Brazil's economy was troubled in the 1980s, Japan's boomed, and many Japanese Brazilians went to Japan as contract workers. In 1990, Japanese law was changed and descendants of Japanese citizens were eligible for long-stay visas, which encouraged more immigration from Brazil.

Latin Americans are the second largest group of immigrants in Japan after Asians. Most Latin Americans in Japan are Brazilian or Peruvian. The Brazilian community in Japan consists predominantly of those with Japanese ethnicity.

Japan has the largest number of Portuguese speakers in Asia. Portuguese is the third most-spoken foreign language in Japan, after Chinese and Korean, and is among the most-studied languages in the country.<sup>3</sup> Japan has two Portuguese-language newspapers as well as Portuguese radio and television stations. Brazilian fashion and *bossa nova* music are popular among Japanese. The highest concentrations of Latin Americans are found in Toyota in Aichi prefecture, Hamamatsu in Shizuoka prefecture, and Ōizumi in Gunma prefecture, where it is estimated that up to 15% of the population speaks Portuguese as their native language. Brazilians tend not to live in cities like Tokyo or Osaka, but rather in places with big factories.

## Our ministry to *nikkei* in Japan

We, an American, a Brazilian, and a three-year-old daughter, moved to Japan in July 2015 to work with the *nikkei* population, mainly Latino and Brazilian Japanese. We see ourselves as bridge builders: we look for ways to bridge the cultural and language barriers and also encourage our friends to embrace and get to know Japanese culture so they can thrive here.

When we first meet with people from these groups we have many questions: What is it like for this person to live in Japan? How might he or she be feeling unheard and unseen? How do Japanese people view this person and how does this person view Japanese people—with respect, disdain, or neutrality?

What are the family dynamics? Which language is spoken at home? If the parents don't speak Japanese and the children have not learned much Portuguese or Spanish, how is the family communicating? Do the children feel Japanese, foreign, or more like a third-culture kid (where their identity is found in a third category rather than one of the two dominant cultures)?

Lastly, what does this person need from us? A friend? Resources in their mother tongue? Connections with other people who understand where they are coming from? Reconciliation with Japanese culture or another culture? A stronger sense of identity?

And so our work begins. Each person represents a unique world—a set of relationships with distinct struggles and specific needs. There are many difficulties in the ministry, but we are encouraged as we learn about Jesus' ability to cross cultures and overcome language barriers. **JH**

1. <http://www.japan-talk.com/jt/new/6-biggest-Japanese-communities-outside-Japan> "Fact Sheet 3. Brazil - the Country and its People" (PDF). Embassy of Brazil in London - Schools' Pack, Brazil 2009. 2009. Archived from the original on December 26, 2011
2. <http://www.stat.go.jp/english/data/kokusei/2005/kihon1/00/06.htm> Statistics Bureau, Population Census
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*Johnna Hayward Muniz serves with the Evangelical Covenant Church as a cultural bridge builder, French and English conversation facilitator, speaker, and preacher. Married to a Brazilian with Italian roots, she has two daughters and lives in Fujisawa, Kanagawa.*

Photos provided by the author



**Each person represents a unique world—a set of relationships with distinct struggles and specific needs.**

# OPENING UP By Mark Penner TO A HIDDEN COMMUNITY

## Reaching Deaf people in Japan

### Entering a New World

“Wow!” my Deaf\* friend said, clearly amazed after a disability workshop. “I never realized that people with disabilities were also discriminated against. I thought it was just us Deaf.”

This is her world. “People with disabilities” and “us Deaf” are completely different concepts. Not hearing is a minor detail. Being Deaf defines her life.

It turns out there is a whole world of Deafhood, some 300,000 strong here in Japan, that most hearing people know next to nothing about.<sup>1</sup> It is scattered throughout Japan, though Deaf people tend to cluster in larger cities, particularly cities with deaf schools. Each prefecture has at least one deaf school, and regional varieties of Japanese Sign Language (JSL) grow up around these schools. Recently a “standard JSL” is emerging, though local varieties cannot be ignored. Like the rest of Japan, this community is largely unreached by the gospel. Unlike the rest of Japan, it is not for lack of interest, but rather lack of engagement.

Deafhood is not about disability and it’s more than an interest group. Deaf people use a different language

from the hearing community around them, and their cultural values differ too. These divides rip right through families, with parents and children often living in different worlds. Deaf people get more of their primary values and culture from peers and *senpai* (senior/superior) who share their language, than from parents and teachers who often don’t. When one is in the Deaf community, it all seems normal, and it’s the rest of the world that seems off.

From my friend’s perspective, what holds her back in life is the lack of willingness of the larger hearing community to understand her, accept her, learn her language, or even interact with her. When they do interact most just want to make her more like them—conform her to their own image. Oppression and discrimination, much of it well-intentioned, are the result. She has lived her whole life as a Deaf person in this hearing-run world, so when it’s “just us Deaf,” there is a palpable sense of relief.

I am hearing. Most people reading this are also. To Deaf people we represent all those, like teachers and bosses, who do not understand them but still try to fix them or run their lives. If we want to be in this community, recognizing who we are is step one. We also need to debunk some common myths and learn from history.

### Debunk common myths

#### Myth #1

Signing is a sub-human system of communication (*temane* or gestures) that, if used at all, should be kept well-hidden.

This is not overstated. You still hear it today even in a land like Japan where Deaf people appear on TV with their own shows in JSL. One friend remembers sitting at her father’s funeral with her Deaf siblings, steaming with anger and humiliation at her point of deepest grief. Despite all their pleading, relatives refused to allow sign language interpretation. Fear of public embarrassment overrode the needs of the deceased’s Deaf children.

So, they sat through the funeral totally in the dark. Linguists, however, have shown that Japanese Sign Language is a complex and robust language system capable of communicating the full range of human experience and thought. Deaf people use JSL to talk about anything from last night's supper to the complex theological nuances of the Bible or Plato's philosophy.

### Myth #2

Japanese Sign Language is just a set of hand signs that display the Japanese language visually.

Although JSL is a legitimate language on par with Japanese, it is completely different from Japanese, or any spoken language. Spoken Japanese uses mouth, vocal chords, and ears, but JSL uses face, space, hands, and eyes, and it has a whole new kind of grammar. Some people (often hearing or hard-of-hearing) do use signed Japanese, a system where each Japanese word takes a sign, but this is different from JSL.

### Myth #3

Deaf people can see, so of course they can read Japanese. They can be reached with the Bible and other literature.

First, Japanese is not their heart language. For most Deaf people, JSL is the first language they learned and the language of their heart. Japanese is a second language for many Deaf people.

Second, many Deaf people struggle with reading. One reason is that letters correspond to sounds, sounds that many Deaf people have never heard. Reading, to them, can seem more like looking at a list of phone numbers than words—not something that speaks to your heart.

The Deaf education system has suppressed JSL to promote the learning of Japanese. But in most cases this strategy hasn't worked. Not all students do well at second languages, and learning a second language that they've never heard is even more difficult.

Some Deaf people are gifted at languages and read Japanese well, but this is certainly not true of most.

Even for those who read well, their first language, JSL, is where life is lived—how they express themselves and develop relationships. As with any people group, this is the arena for engagement.

## Learn from History

The first big expansion for Christianity in the Deaf community in Japan was in the 1950s, but there are records of local churches and people involved in reaching Deaf people on a small scale long before that. Some of the early Deaf schools had Christian teachers and/or were started by Christians. Between 1–2 percent of the Deaf population is Christian.<sup>2</sup> Roughly half of these are in Deaf-led churches and half in Deaf departments of hearing churches. Some live full lives with growing faith, particularly now as more and more of the Bible is available in JSL. Still, many are tied down with a heavy burden of legalism (rules are the simplest concepts to grasp from a poorly understood second language) and a strict tie to the Japanese Bible even though it is poorly understood.

Another major barrier to faith in Christ is that church is seen as something for hearing people. Only Deaf people who are willing to engage with the hearing community will come to most churches. Even churches that are led by Deaf people "do church" just like the hearing. Some use only the Japanese written Bible and pray

## Deaf Christians have been working to get the Bible into their own language.

in signed Japanese as if God didn't know JSL.

Getting the Bible translated into JSL has been key. Worldwide, leaders are realizing that "no other group in the world of similar size lives under such 'Scripture Poverty'."<sup>3</sup> Beginning in 1993, Deaf Christians have been working to get the Bible into

their own language. In the early days, with VHS technology and limited funding, translation was slow. Today, 26 percent of the Bible is available in JSL on DVD, YouTube, and a smartphone app.

## Next Steps: Where Do We Go From Here?

Of course, Deaf people are the key to reaching the Deaf community. But there is a place for us outsiders too.

Information is a key commodity in the Deaf community. Aside from portions of the Bible, little exists of reference material in JSL. Churches are looking for people with Biblical knowledge, or even easy access to Biblical knowledge, who are willing to learn JSL and pass their knowledge on to the Deaf community.

Cross-cultural workers can also help. People who know (or will learn) JSL will sit down with Deaf friends and watch the JSL Bible with them, talking it through, leading them to faith, and then leading them deeper into that faith. **JH**

\* "Deaf" is capitalized whenever it refers to the cultural and linguistic community of Deaf people, and "deaf" when it refers to people who don't hear well but are not part of the signing community.

1. Gallaudet University Library. "Deaf populations overseas." Accessed Feb 10, 2017, <http://libguides.gallaudet.edu/content.php?pid=119476&sid=1061104>
2. Exact statistics are hard to find. Joshua Project says 1 percent but are not specific about their source or whether or not their figure includes Catholics. [https://joshuaproject.net/people\\_groups/19007/JA](https://joshuaproject.net/people_groups/19007/JA)
3. Rick Wood, "To see all believers equipped to disciple others, including the Deaf," *Mission Frontiers*, a Magazine of the US Center for World Missions, Jan/Feb 2014, 4.

For more information about the Japanese project visit <https://www.facebook.com/japandeafevangelmission/orj-dem.net>

For English information about the Japanese project visit <https://www.facebook.com/jslbible/orj-slbible.org>

*Mark Penner is a WorldVenture missionary based in Tokyo. As a SIL Sign Language Bible translation consultant, he works with the JSL and Thai SL Bible translation projects.*

# Christ + love + dance = Connection

Hip-hop dancing can be an effective way to connect with people and provide a way to share about Jesus

By JP Carvalho

Connecting with people was one of Jesus Christ's greatest missions on earth. He came to die for our sins and reconnect us to God, and he left us with the power to do the same mission so that people will know they can be connected to God through his Son.

We all know we must spread this good news, but the question is how.

Jesus used the gift of love to connect with people. When he talked to people he didn't just talk; he listened and related to their reality. Since saying yes to God's call to Japan in 2006, I've been learning from Jesus about how to connect with people the same way he did, how to fulfil his vision rather than mine, and how to accomplish what he wants (as expressed in Matthew 28:18–20) rather than what I want.

God gave me the gift of hip-hop dancing. I use dance to establish common ground with people; it is a bridge to connect. This might seem insignificant, but it has improved my interaction with people and given me the chance to help them understand who they are in Christ. Through dance, I become friends with people who attend my weekly gospel dance classes in Shinjuku and Ochanomizu in central Tokyo.

The Shinjuku classes are the first point of contact. Each week, about 15 to 35 people attend, most of whom have never been to church before. I openly tell participants that the classes are a church-related project and that their purpose is not so much to make money but to create a healthy dance community. I also explain that we use gospel hip-hop music.

I always invite those who come to the Shinjuku classes to join the dance practices we hold at the church I attend—New Hope Tokyo in Ochanomizu. In the Ochanomizu classes, we follow up participants and strengthen relationships.

I invite participants in the Ochanomizu classes to attend our Sunday youth and main services. Praise the Lord, we have had people who came to the church services and events through the dance classes. Some have performed at church events, even though they are not Christians. Some attend the church regularly, and a few are showing interest in the Bible.

Through dance I try to share the gospel, but I keep it very simple. I introduce new songs every week and explain the lyrics to my students. I stay in

touch with everyone via a LINE group and invite them to church services and events. I also dance at both Christian and non-Christian events and build relationships with non-Christian event organisers and performers backstage.

I'm not just dancing around and making friends. It is a form of friendship evangelism—as I connect and make friends with people through dance, I gain their trust and help them become more open to Christianity. Dance is not the main thing. I try to be sensitive to God. He is the one who brings growth and fruit, and I must know which season he is working on. His Spirit is my guide.

His mighty power is at work within us. His mighty power is at work in Japan.

Let us use our God-given gifts to connect with people so they will know they can be connected with God. **JH**

If you would like to get involved or know more about our gospel hip-hop dance ministry, please get in touch. See [www.vimeo.com/omfjapanlink](http://www.vimeo.com/omfjapanlink) and [www.omf-link.tokyo](http://www.omf-link.tokyo)

*JP came to Japan with OMF in 2010 from Brazil. He is a Gospel street and hip-hop dancer, teacher, and choreographer. He works in partnership with New Hope Tokyo Church as a youth leader.*



Photos provided by the author



# SERVING

# AT-RISK

Ministry with people who are in risky situations is tough, but God provides all that's necessary

By Devorah Umipig-Julian

# MIGRANTS

The room was bright, clean, and cozy. Outside the window, flowers bloomed in pots. To me this is a little bit of heaven, and to the residents this is a safe home. This is a place where residents are taught to appreciate the finer things in life. It also provides an atmosphere in which it is impossible to keep from thinking of God.

## Nikki

This is the crisis center for women victims of domestic violence. I was there to meet Nikki (not her real name) and her eleven-month old boy, who became residents of the home for a couple of weeks before they moved to long-term housing. Many tragic things had happened to her family back in Poland—her dad was killed in a car accident and they lost all their family possessions. For years, she and her younger brother, with their elderly mother, lived on money provided by a nephew, but it made her feel like a pauper.

She came to Japan with a university scholarship. Soon after graduation, worried about her visa status, she married a Japanese man who was emotionally unstable. She ended up enduring physical abuse. For years the abusive relationship created a feeling of hopelessness and threatened her ability to escape.

But God is good; he connected her with us. Her first and most important desire when we met her was for her and her baby's safety, for she feared for her life. Mother and child were brought to safety within twenty-four hours of connecting with us. We provided post-traumatic counseling sessions, though it may take a long time to re-adjust and cope. At the time of writing she had been approved for welfare assistance from the government, providing a mother and child allowance, as well as help for housing and medical care.

I remember in one of our sessions, she asked me: "Sensei, can I ask you a question?" "You can ask me anything you want."

She took a deep breath and nervously began scribbling notes. "Why did you help me?" she asked. "I'm such a mess; I don't

belong to the same faith group as yours. Will you require me to join you in church?"

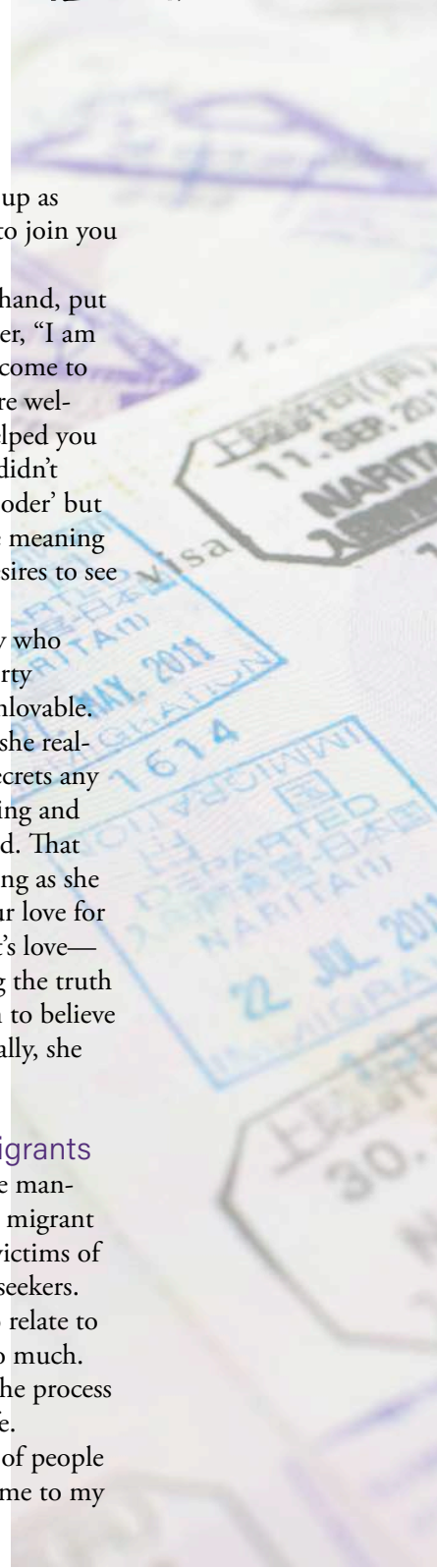
I smiled, reached for her hand, put her pencil down, and told her, "I am not going to require you to come to my church. However, you are welcome to come anytime. I helped you because you needed help. I didn't assist you just to be a 'do-gooder' but because service is tied to the meaning of our faith in God. God desires to see everybody loved and safe."

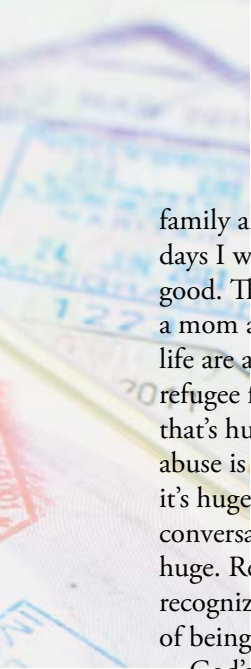
Nikki grew up in a family who taught her not to "air our dirty laundry" for fear of being unlovable. But one day, in the session, she realized she couldn't keep her secrets any longer, so she bared everything and I assured her that she is loved. That moment became faith-shaping as she began to understand that our love for her is an extension of Christ's love—freely given despite knowing the truth about her. Slowly, she began to believe that Jesus loved her, and finally, she felt worthy and lovable.

## Ministry with at-risk migrants

My ministry includes case management with dysfunctional migrant families, women and child victims of physical abuse, and asylum seekers. It is often difficult for me to relate to these people who struggle so much. But helping them through the process has helped me appreciate life.

Ministry with this group of people is tough. Some days I go home to my





family and feel like a superhero, while on other days I wonder if I've accomplished anything good. This used to bother me, but then I became a mom and I learned that the small victories in life are actually some of the greatest. When a refugee family gets a special visa to stay in Japan, that's huge. When a woman who is the victim of abuse is able to decide for herself confidently—it's huge. When you are able to translate the conversation for someone in Japanese—it's also huge. Rejoicing over small victories helps us recognize God's hand at work. May we never tire of being grateful.

God's gifted me with a compassionate heart. But still sometimes I get exhausted from caring so much. Constantly taking care of the needs of others is draining, and my compassion bucket sometimes feels like it's becoming dry. But then just when I thought I was out of compassion, God always fills it back up again. He's always leading

me on to maturity in Christ. I love these words in 2 Peter 3:17-18, "You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness, but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity" (NASB).

If you are serving people who are emotionally struggling, let me encourage you. You are doing a great job. Sometimes it doesn't feel like it, but you are. May your involvement in the church and mission grow you as a follower of Christ. And may you be surprised at how he is using your situation to better equip you to love and serve those around you, just as he is with me. **JH**

If you come across those who need this ministry, please contact me at [devorahanne@yahoo.com](mailto:devorahanne@yahoo.com)

*Devorah Umipig-Julian was born in the Philippines and moved to Japan with her husband in 2001 with the United Methodist Church, USA. She's a social worker and her husband serves with Mission to Seafarers. They have two middle-school-aged boys.*

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# Top 10 Reasons to Study at Tokyo Christian University

by Randall Short, Associate Professor of Biblical Studies

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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.
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# CHANGING LIVES

Japan Helpline started with four missionary kids in the 70s

By Ken Joseph Jr.

We were just four missionary kids, born and raised in Japan—kindergarten at Grant Heights, Narimasu; and the rest at Christian Academy (CAJ) in Tokyo. Then came college in the States. Not knowing where to go, we four just stuck together and ended up at the same college, in the same dorm quad, facing each other. We were scared stiff, in a new country we didn't know anything about.

Every day was a new experience from figuring out how to use the telephone, to learning how to ride the bus and more. After a life in Japan we thought differently, laughed differently, and probably smelled different, too! But we were determined to become American.

Then, just as we were getting close to not sticking out too much, we got a call from home: the son of the local bike shop guy was in Los Angeles and needed help.

Without hesitation, we drove down and found him with car trouble. We fixed the car and put him up for a few days in our quad. Word got around and it seemed every time we wanted to take a shower there was a Japanese kid or two already having beaten us to it. Within a short time we were called into the office and informed that while the school was happy that we were helping Japanese in need, it was an educational institution and we could not continue.

## BRANCHING OUT ON OUR OWN

So, we left the dorm and rented a tiny apartment near campus where anyone could come, and every Japanese kid in Los Angeles seemed to be sleeping on the living room floor. Homesick for Japan as we were, it was nice to have Japanese people there; along with their various problems they always brought food and all kinds of stuff from home.

One day we got a request from Chicago. A Japanese kid had been hurt and needed help.

What to do?

We checked around and found that a fellow graduate from CAJ was going to school in the Chicago area at Wheaton, so we called him and asked him to help.

By word of mouth it seemed Japanese were hearing about us and we began putting together

a notebook of Japanese connections in various cities. Little by little the list turned into a database and things started going crazy.

One day it was three in the morning when we got a call from a very upset Japanese man.

"My car broke down on the highway—where are you?" he demanded.

We got up in the middle of the night and drove way out, almost to the desert. And there he was.

"What took you so long?" was his response.

Annoyed that there was no "thank you" or anything, I was bummed out.

Seeing this, one of the kids said, "Kimbo, if you are going to do this kind of stuff you need to learn a new word: "agape." It means the love of God. When the guy calls at three in the morning and you go pick him up, it is that love."

One day we had a hitchhiker, Rick, who had been out in the rain and looked terrible. We took him in for a night, but he stayed and stayed and stayed. Exasperated, we told him he would have to leave.

That night, I was doing an all-nighter and happened to turn and see our guest sprawled out on the sofa, long hair, dirty jeans, and t-shirt. Suddenly the thought came into my mind that if Jesus would have come today he would look just like him—long hair, beard and all. In the quiet of the night I heard the words, "It's me."

I woke up a few hours later consumed by the thought that Jesus was there. I thought if it truly was Jesus that had showed up, we had to treat him right. When he woke up we had a beautiful breakfast prepared. He looked at it, figuring this was the last before we kicked him out, and ate like there was no tomorrow.

Watching him, I realized that "Jesus" was in the same t-shirt and dirty jeans he had worn when he first came. Saddened that we hadn't even realized it, we took him to a department store and had the lady take all his clothes away, underwear and socks included, and got him a brand new pair of everything.

After all, it was Jesus and he deserved the best.

Rick couldn't figure out what was happening, but he sure was happy and a few weeks later he moved on. We'd had the honor of hosting Jesus in our tiny apartment in Los Angeles.



## A SUMMER AT AGAPE HOUSE

Meanwhile the word had gotten around, and *Asahi Shimbun* did a story about the American kids who were taking care of Japanese in need overseas. Someone at NHK read the story and we ended up with an NHK crew filming us while we tried to go to school and take care of Japanese people 24 hours-a-day. The program that they broadcast on the NHK Special program—the Japanese version of "60 Minutes"—got the highest response in the history of the program and crashed the switchboard at NHK.

It was called "A Summer at Agape House."

## THE JAPAN HELPLINE

Shortly after that, a phone line in Japan for non-Japanese that had been going since 1975 was incorporated into the Japanese hotline service and renamed The Japan Helpline. This year The World Helpline (for Japanese traveling, living, and studying abroad) and The Japan Helpline (for the international community in Japan) celebrated 40 years of 24-hour operation. If you open up any Japanese guidebook or telephone book, The Japan Helpline number is listed under the police and fire numbers. We attend regular meetings with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a monthly meeting with other help providers at the US Embassy, and weekly meetings at the Diet and Tokyo Metropolitan Government Building to provide follow-up for those in need.

After all these years, the network still includes the same missionary kids, plus many others who have left Japan and now live throughout the world, friends of Japan, retired missionaries,

and others. This list has nearly 22,000 members overseas and about the same number in Japan. In 1989, following the San Francisco Earthquake, a team of students went to help and the Japan Emergency Team was born—the first Japanese disaster team to leave Japan in history. At the time of writing, the team was on its 89th disaster relief project assisting refugees leaving Iraq and Syria.

## SMALL NUMBERS, BIG IMPACT

A group of lonely missionary kids, loving people like Jesus loved them.

At a recent meeting at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, various organizations were making pitches for their assistance projects. We came last.

"And who are you?" the minister asked. Before we could say anything, his assistant said to him, "These are the Christians—even the UN and the Red Cross cannot come close to their worldwide reach."

What a proud moment.

Agape House is not alone. As we look back at what the gospel has done in our beloved Japan we see many schools, universities, hospitals, and senior homes were started by those who love Jesus.

Stand proud, dear missionary, our numbers may seem small, but we stand in a long line of those who've made a positive impact in Japan and with Japanese worldwide with the love of Christ. **JH**

*Ken Joseph Jr. directs The Keikyō Institute which researches the history of Christianity in Japan and Asia, founded by his father in 1951.*  
[www.keikyō.com](http://www.keikyō.com)

# God's strength in our weakness

*At my lowest point, God taught me to rely on him and the strength he provides*

On first arriving in Japan in February 2015, I was expecting to do many things—learn Japanese, eat *okonomiyaki*, join a church, build a snowman, and make friends with very patient Japanese people. While I have done all these things (some more successfully than others), I have been surprised at the spiritual lessons God has also taught me—lessons in humility and weakness.

I remember talking with an OMF leader about his time at language school. His remark was telling: “At language school, I learned that I was a great, big sinner.” I can entirely relate! I’d entered a cross-cultural context where I couldn’t communicate, had to adjust to huge social and cultural change with a young family, and was constantly tired. This brought out sin, weaknesses, and character flaws.

Instead of living out the fruit of the Spirit, I more often than not sighed in confession, “What a wretched man I am!” (Rom 7:24 NIV). Often, my heart cry has not been for the Lord’s strength to be shown in my weakness, but rather “I just want to be able to do it myself.” I recall going for a prayer walk one evening when I was especially frustrated at learning Japanese. I cried out to God in great annoyance, “You did a really good job at Babel!” Yet ironically it was something I did in English that brought me to my lowest point.

Last year, I preached in English at an international church. I love preaching and did so regularly when I was working at my home church in Australia. I was very grateful for the opportunity, I prepared my sermon, but afterwards I felt it had not gone well. Later that week, I sank to a new low. If I couldn’t

do anything well in English, what hope did I have in Japanese?

It is often at our lowest points that the Lord teaches us the most important lessons. That week, as I sat on our apartment balcony in (rather depressed) prayer, the Lord spoke to me with clear and powerful words. It was true—I would never do anything well for the Lord, regardless of the language, if I did it in my own strength. It was a paradigm shift that hit me like a bolt of lightning.

Without humbly and prayerfully seeking and submitting to the power of God in our lives and ministry, we will never produce lasting fruit. As Paul proclaims: “My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God’s power” (1 Cor 2:4–5).

This is an age-old lesson, of course, but God needed to bring me to my knees to force it from my head to my heart! And on our knees is surely the posture we need to maintain. As church historian Earle E. Cairns reflects: “Prayer ranks first in the coming of revival . . . There cannot be revival unless Christians pray for it.”<sup>1</sup> How we long for revival in Japan. But revival surely starts within us, as we humbly and prayerfully render our hearts and ministry to God. **JH**

1. Earle E. Cairns, *An Endless Line of Splendor* (Wheaton, Ill: Tyndale House Publishers, 1986), 340-41.

*Paul Jessop arrived in Japan in February 2015 and has since been studying at the OMF language school in Sapporo. Paul is married to Melissa and they have three girls, Heidi (5), Pippa (4), and Annie (1).*

I would never do anything well for the Lord, regardless of the language, if I did it in my own strength.



# My favourite language apps

There are lots of apps out there for studying Japanese. Here's a list of the ones I find most useful.



Tablets and smart phones are powerful platforms for language learning. Here are some of my favourite iOS apps for studying Japanese. Most of them are free, while a couple cost very little.



**Japanese** (free, by renzo Inc.): This is my Japanese–English dictionary of choice. It offers three ways to input kanji (including writing by hand). Many words come with sample sentences, so that you can see how they are used in various contexts. Words you have looked up can be saved in lists and you can then test yourself on them later.



**StickyStudy** (price depends on what packages you want): This flashcard app is helpful for memorising kanji and vocabulary. It's particularly useful if you're studying for one of the JLPT exams. Vocabulary has audio so you can hear how words are pronounced. You can set goals (e.g. learn all vocabulary for the N2 JLPT exam in six months) and the app will set daily targets for you. It also includes sample sentences that show how words are used in context.



**iBooks** (free): This is my preferred app for reading books in Japanese. Two touches are all it takes to look up unfamiliar words you encounter in a Japanese–English dictionary. The iBook store offers a wide range of books at all levels, from picture books and manga to novels for adults. For all books, you can download free samples of the first 20 pages or so, which are great for getting free reading practice in Japanese before deciding whether to purchase the book or borrow it from a library.



**SmartNews** (free): This app is good for reading news in Japanese. Again, it's simple to look up words by simply highlighting the word and se-



lecting “Define.” Newspapers such as Mainichi and Yomiuri post content on it, as do many local newspapers. Articles vary in size from a short paragraph to about a dozen paragraphs. It gets updated regularly during the day.

**Accordance** (app is free, but the *Shinkaiyaku* costs US\$25): While not my favourite Bible-reading app, this is the only one I've found that uses the *Shinkaiyaku*. By using the split-screen view, it's possible to create a parallel bilingual Bible with your preferred English version. Unfortunately, it doesn't have an option for displaying furigana (hiragana over kanji to indicate pronunciation), so you have to copy and paste unknown words into a dictionary app to find their pronunciation and meaning.



## Other Bible Apps:

- Olive Tree's **Bible Study** has the *Shinkyōdōyaku* (*New Interconfessional Translation*), usually for US\$10.
- Faithlife's **Logos Bible** has the *Shinkaiyaku* in its PrePub program—you can hasten its development by placing a pre-order for it.
- Life.Church's **Bible** has the *Japanese Living Bible*, with audio when connected to the Internet, and the *Kōgoyaku* (*Colloquial Japanese*, 1955) version, both for free.



**iTunes** (free): If you have a Japanese credit card, the iTunes store is convenient for renting or buying Japanese movies and songs.



**Podcasts** (free): Podcasts are good for improving listening comprehension. There are many Japanese-learning podcasts available as well as many for a Japanese audience.

If I've missed an app that you find very useful for studying Japanese, please let me know, and I may include it in a later issue. **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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# Seek God's face, not His hand

*Sometimes it's good to spend time just praising God for who He is*

I've been involved with prayer summits since the first one was held in Japan in 1994. Not being much of a pray-er, I was initially attracted to prayer summits because they had been started by my seminary president in 1989 and one of the facilitators was from my home church in Oregon. But it was totally different from anything I had experienced before. I had no idea what a prayer summit was. The announcement said, "This is a four-day gathering with no set agenda other than to spend time with God," but since it was a prayer summit, I wondered how I could pray for four days and what would I pray for all that time.

When I arrived at the summit, the facilitators were talking about a new concept to me—seeking God's face. What does that mean and how is it connected to prayer?

## What does it mean to seek God's face?

As the title implies, seeking God's face is juxtaposed with seeking God's hand. We seek God's hand when we ask Him to do something for us or give something to us. Of course, there is no problem with that. Our Lord Himself told us, "ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you" (John 15:7 NASB).

To seek God's face, on the other hand, is very different. It is turning away from our needs and problems and looking up to God. We seek His face when we look at who God is and what He does, not for our own purposes, but for worship, praise, and adoration of the only One who is worthy "to receive glory and honor and power" (Revelation 4:11). I often tell people that if they want to seek God's face, they should not use the word "please" when praying since "please" denotes a request. When we seek God's face, we do not ask Him for anything—we sit at His feet and just drink in who He is.

Yes, I know that some people have the gift of intercession to pray for others. Those with that gift sometimes have a hard time at prayer summits because summits are deliberately unstructured. Yes, intercessory prayers are im-

portant; pastoral prayers offered from the pulpit are usually intercessory. But prayer is not just intercession. Philippians 4:6 talks of "prayer and supplication" to emphasize that prayer goes beyond just asking God for things—even good things.

## The biblical perspective

We often call Psalm 27 "the summit psalm." Verse four says "One thing I have asked from the LORD, that I shall seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD and to meditate in His temple." Wouldn't it be wonderful if we were like David? What's great is that we can be—right where we are, in our own homes! Verse eight says "When You said, 'Seek My face,' my heart said to You, 'Your face, O LORD, I shall seek.'" God desires that we seek His face; may we respond as David did.

In other passages, we are told to "acknowledge [our] guilt and seek [His] face" (Hosea 5:15), to "humble [our] selves and pray and seek [His] face and turn from [our] wicked ways" (2 Chronicles 7:14), and to "seek His face continually" (Psalm 105:4).

## Putting it into practice

I believe we all need to at least spend some time regularly seeking God's face, whether alone or with others. For starters, I recommend making a list of God's attributes and then seeking His face by praising Him for who He is. Nowhere in Scripture are we told to seek His hand, but we are often told to seek His face. May you get to know Him more and more as you seek His face. Only He is worthy! **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 in 1978.*



**“If you seek God's hand, you will miss His face. If you seek His face, you will get His hand also.”**

*— Daniel Henderson, president of Strategic Renewal International —*

# Comparison is good and bad

*John the Baptist's response to comparison can keep us from responding negatively when we compare ourselves to others*

Many of my younger clients lament that they are not as thin, smart, or popular as others. In spite of the fact that comparing themselves with others makes them miserable, they find it hard to stop. They are not alone. Comparing ourselves to others is innate to human beings.<sup>1</sup> Comparison can be helpful, but more often than not, as in the case of my younger clients, it can make us unhappy and lead to sin. Below, I consider some benefits of comparison and then discuss how to deal with the negatives.

According to social comparison theory, the first purpose of comparing ourselves with others is to estimate “the abilities of ourselves and others [which] is key for survival, guiding decisions about which social groups to join and whether to attack or retreat.”<sup>2</sup> Adolescents are evaluating where they fit into society, and so it is understandable why they are hit so hard by this issue. But everyone compares themselves.

A second purpose for comparison is “that [it] provides motivation to improve.”<sup>3</sup> In comparing, “humans have a tendency to compare themselves to others that have achieved more, perhaps in an effort to find out more about what is possible.”<sup>4</sup> This type of comparison abounds in sports—any athlete will tell you that competition spurs them to do their best.

Third, comparison can teach us what we value and highlight our priorities.

However, “the problem with these comparisons is that they are usually triggered when people find that they already lack something.”<sup>5</sup> Examples of things that people lack include a better car, house, spouse, life. This is called upward social comparison. It occurs when we want what someone else has, and rarely produces positive results.<sup>6</sup>

“Comparison is the thief of joy!”  
— Theodore Roosevelt —

The Bible abounds with such comparisons: Cain and Abel, Esau and Jacob, Joseph and his brothers, etc. All are examples of people who compared themselves with others, which lead them to becoming miserable, angry, resentful, and jealous. Some even committed murder.

But there is a way to keep comparison from leading to sinful results. The solution can be seen in the life of John the Baptist.

Before Jesus started his ministry, John was the rabbi everyone flocked to. But then Jesus started his ministry. On hearing of Jesus' popularity, John could have reacted



## Comparing ourselves to others is innate to human beings.

with envy. Instead, he responded in a way that is helpful for us today. John said of Jesus, “He must increase, I must decrease.” John, in humility before God, was able to react positively rather than negatively to what could have been a very disappointing situation. Secular counseling calls this “removing your ego” from a situation, whereas the Christian term is “humility.” Comparison tempered by humility gives us a proper view of ourselves in relationship to others, which can keep us from falling into sin.

People inevitably compare themselves with others. At times, it can be helpful, but comparison can lead to unhappiness and sin. The Bible shows us how a humble attitude can keep us from becoming miserable, or much worse, leading us into sin. **JH**

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6. Cherry, “What is social comparison theory?”



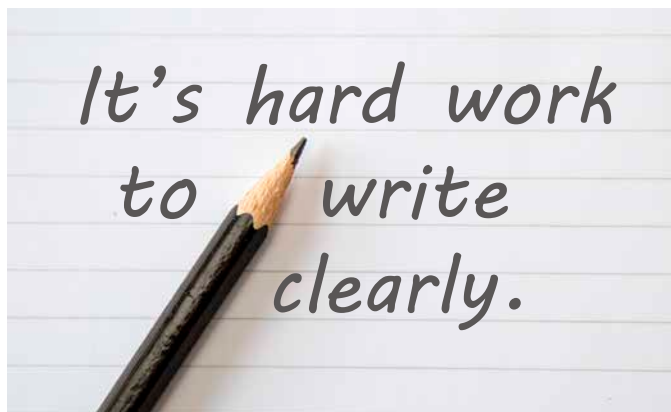
*Eileen Nielsen and her husband live in Tokyo. Eileen is the Member Care Facilitator for TEAM and has a private counseling ministry. If interested in meeting for counseling, contact her at [eileenpnelsen@gmail.com](mailto:eileenpnelsen@gmail.com).*

# Use familiar words

*Readers appreciate writing that's easy to understand*

In a book about writing, Jerry Jenkins asks: “Is there an objective standard for good writing?” His answer: “Probably not, but like most people—I think—I appreciate clean, concise, uncluttered prose that’s easy to read and understand. The most common comment I get is that my writing reads too easily. But that’s intentional. It’s hard work to write clearly.”<sup>1</sup>

Judging writing is a subjective art. What one person considers good, another person may think is rubbish. I encounter this when editing *Japan Harvest*—sometimes two editors disagree about the best way to express an idea. Authors and editors periodically clash too.



One issue we’re discussing at *Japan Harvest* is our policy of using US or Commonwealth English spellings and standards depending on an author’s background and preference. Because we are not based in an English-speaking country and have an international audience, there is no clear answer to this problem. US authors may object to “maths” being used in place of “math” in their writing, just as Commonwealth-background authors might protest about “cilantro” replacing “coriander” (the leaf, used in cooking) in something they’ve written. Therefore we encourage, wherever possible, the use of common words, that is, words that are universally understood.

As Jenkins says, most people like writing that is easy to read. This is difficult, especially when you have an international audience, but it’s a worthwhile goal. You can’t assume that, just because you write something about an important topic, people will read it. You need to make it easy for your audience to access, otherwise they will probably move on to something else. **JH**

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

1. Jerry B. Jenkins. *Writing for the Soul* (Cincinnati: Writer’s Digest Books, 2006), 105.

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# The importance of face in Japan

*It's important to be there and to be careful what emotions we show on our face*

## The importance of showing face

I remember attending my first pastors' retreat 36 years ago in Hokkaido with JECA pastors and OMF missionaries. My Japanese was limited, the topics challenging, and I floundered. While enjoying the public bath that evening, I was so amazed that Pastor K took the time to talk to me while we were scrubbing together that I forgot to rinse off all the soap from my back before I entered the bath. Imagine my chagrin when bubbles of soap floated to the top of the water and Pastor K quickly exited the bath to leave me alone!

I thought to myself while driving back to Asahikawa: *Why did I attend this pastors' retreat? I got nothing out of it and made a fool of myself.*

Since then I have attended many Japanese pastors' meetings. When serving in Hakodate I would leave home at 3 a.m. to attend a meeting in Sapporo and return very late that same evening. Was the time and energy worth it? Gradually, I came to the realisation that my contribution at meetings (very limited in my early years in Japan) was not as important as my presence. Showing up, showing my face, enabled my Japanese colleagues to trust and value me.

I would like to encourage younger workers: It does not matter how much you understand or are able to say—just being with Japanese pastors at the various meetings is vitally important. Over time you will earn the right to contribute to the discussion and be heard.

## The importance of not showing face

Have you noticed that when talking about serious matters, the faces of many Japanese become almost expressionless? Or when angry, the language becomes politer and the annoyed person's face does not express their inner emotion? This helps the relationship by allowing the other person not to lose face.

Often, what we foreigners (outsiders) are thinking and feeling is easily read by Japanese. Our faces become open books; anger is shown by our facial expressions and raised voices.

Voice of Experience is a recent addition to Japan Harvest. It is by people who have been in Japan more than 20 years. The authors give advice to those who have been here for less time.

We need to try to keep emotions from our faces to avoid being rude, especially when disagreeing with another person or being given a special delicacy to taste. The brief grimace, or turned down mouth, is correctly understood to mean that we dislike the words or the food. Of course we don't need to lie by saying, "What you say is good," or "This is delicious." We can simply and calmly say, "This is very interesting . . ."

## The importance of the smiling face

Sometimes a Japanese person smiles to cover their embarrassment or guilt (sometimes even grief). Realise that the smile does not undermine or reduce the actual felt emotion.

Usually smiling is good, especially when it comes naturally from a heart and mind filled with Jesus' joy. David writes of Jesus, "You have shown me the way of life, and you will fill me with the joy of your presence" (Acts 2:28 NLT). The word "presence" is *prósōpon* or *Πρόσωπον*, meaning "presence; face; countenance."

As members of God's Kingdom, we are living out his kingdom way of life and experience the joy of Jesus' face and presence. We do not need to be like Moses who had to cover his face so that the Israelites would not see God's glory fading away (2 Corinthians 3:13). May our faces shine with the radiance of Jesus so that those around can know the reality of our living faith! **JH**

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





### Why bother with church? And other questions about why you need it and why it needs you

Sam Allberry  
(The Good Book Company, 2016)

This short, delightful book explains from the Bible what the church is and why we need it. Allberry looks at what makes a good church, how a church is run, and how to be a good church member. He considers why there are so many denominations and other practical questions. This is an excellent, well-written primer on the church that all Christians should read. **JH**

Reviewer rating is 5 out of 5 stars ★★★★★

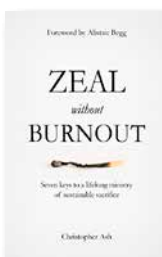


### Discipling: How to Help Others Follow Jesus

Mark Dever  
(Crossway, 2016)

Dever looks at what discipling is, when we should disciple, and how to disciple. He ends the book by telling how he has worked to find, encourage, and raise up leaders in his church. He gives nine steps for training leaders and reminds church leaders that this is one of their particular obligations. Every follower of Christ will benefit from this book. **JH**

Reviewer rating is 5 out of 5 stars ★★★★★



### Zeal without Burnout: Seven keys to a lifelong ministry of sustainable sacrifice

Christopher Ash  
(The Good Book Company, 2016)

The author reminds us that we are frail and fragile creatures of dust. Unlike God who neither slumbers nor sleeps, we need sleep. Putting aside time for sleep, sabbath rests, a weekly day off shows we are trusting God to work. We also need time with friends and the inward renewal of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Ash tells us that nothing we do for Christ will be in vain. The sacrifice is worth it even when there seems to be little fruit. We must learn to rejoice in grace rather than gifts. This is a book for every Christian worker to read and learn from. **JH**

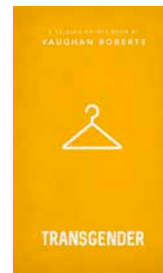
Reviewer rating is 5 out of 5 stars ★★★★★

### Transgender

Vaughan Roberts  
(The Good Book Company, 2016)

This is the first book in Talking Points, a series of short books to help Christians think and talk about current issues and to relate to others with compassion, conviction, and wisdom. Roberts helps us think about gender identity issues in light of the story of the Bible—creation, fall, and rescue. He reminds us from Genesis 2 that only God has the authority to define what is good and what is evil: “All of us are broken. All of us are disordered” (p. 47). The final chapter suggests applications of Bible truth to circumstances we face. He looks at how a church should respond and what we should do when those close to us struggle with transgender feelings. Roberts ends with hope for those who trust in Christ: “God has begun that transformation in us which will continue until completion, when at last we’ll be put back together—body and soul perfectly integrated for the glory of God” (p. 74). **JH**

Reviewer rating is 5 out of 5 stars ★★★★★

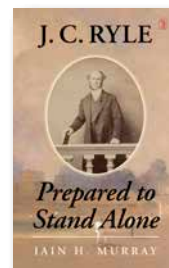


### J.C. Ryle: Prepared to Stand Alone

Iain H. Murray  
(Banner of Truth, 2016)

This biography of Ryle (1816-1900) is full of ministry lessons. Ryle, Bishop of Liverpool, is well-known for his book, *Holiness*. Murray chronicles the story of this remarkable man who did not pray or read his Bible till he was 21 but became a Christian “bold as a lion for the truth of God’s Word and his Gospel” (p. 213). “Preaching Christ was the main substance of his ministry” (p. 224). Murray’s biography of this great saint will encourage and challenge all believers. **JH**

Reviewer rating is 5 out of 5 stars ★★★★★



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

# Spring cleaning your computer

*Computers need some loving attention every now and again to ensure they operate at their optimum*

Each spring, my family goes through the grueling process of sorting through mountains of clothes. We pack away last season's clothes, get out the next season's, figure out what fits and what doesn't, and then try to find a place to put everything. While frustratingly slow, this much-needed spring cleaning helps our family keep everything on track as our children grow.

This might be a good time to give your computer a spring cleaning as well. Without the occasional spring cleaning, computers can become bogged down through juggling unneeded tasks and files. Below are some tips for keeping your computer running smoothly and restoring the speed it once had.

## Eliminating cookie monsters!

If you spend quite a bit of time browsing the Internet on your computer, you have likely built up a huge "jar" of cookies and other information that websites install on your browser. Cookies are used by other websites to see where you have been, what you have purchased, and what you have put in your cart. This data allows sites to provide you with ads or information related to those websites. While some cookies are useful (for example, the language setting for the website), others just end up being unwanted fat that your browser will spend time reading each time you visit a new website. To fix this, most browsers have a built-in option to clear browsing data. This will remove many of the excess files that are being used to track you. If you have not done this in a while on your primary Internet browser, you may have accumulated hundreds of megabytes of data. Doing this will not only free up hard drive space; it will also speed up browsing, as your computer will use fewer resources to read unneeded files.

## Removing Windows update files

Many people do not think to clean previously installed Windows updates off their hard drives. These automatic updates are great because they provide security you need. However, the installation file also hangs around and takes up space. Starting

the Windows program Disk Cleanup and selecting "Clean up system files" will remove these extra files and recover disk space.

## Removing duplicate files

If you import a lot of pictures, music, or videos, chances are you have imported a few of them more than once. Photos especially seem to spontaneously duplicate over time on my computer, as different phones and cameras are plugged in. There are a lot of great programs that remove duplicates, but the one with the best reputation is dupeGuru (only available for Mac). You simply check the folders you want to compare for duplicates, wait for the scan, and then select the files you want to delete. You can also move duplicates to another location rather than deleting them.

Best of all, dupeGuru has a failsafe measure that prevents you from mistakenly deleting both copies of duplicate files.

## Cleaning your hard drive

While there are tons of tools that can clean up your hard drive, CCleaner is one of the easiest to use and is available for both PC and OSX (the free version works fine). It quickly analyzes your computer and finds the most common places where cookies and cache files are stored. Out of the box, the basic settings will clean your computer of most junk. If wanted, CCleaner can keep a watch on future build-up of files. For Windows users, CCleaner can clean your registry and remove links to old programs and, most importantly, unused firewall exceptions. Intuitive enough for novice computer users, CCleaner is a great program for your spring cleaning needs. **JH**



*Jared Jones lives and works in Takasaki, Gunma 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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