

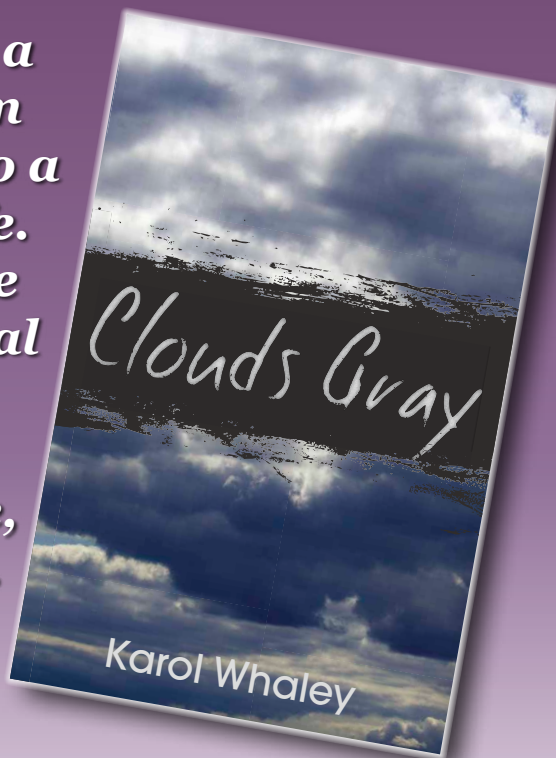


JH  
Japan Harvest  
Autumn 2017

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## October

### WIM Fall Day of Prayer

October 3, 2017  
Rose Town Tea Garden, Ome

### CPI National Conference

October 25-27, 2017 (pre-conference 10/24-25)  
The Heritage Resort, Saitama



Japan Harvest

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Writer's guidelines are available at:  
<http://japanharvest.org/submissions/>

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



## January 2018

### WIM Winter Day of Prayer

January 18, 2018  
Japan Alliance Mission Chapel,  
Higashi Tokorozawa

## February

### Shepherds Gathering Prayer Event

February 5, 2018  
ICA near Tokyo University

### CPI Grace Week

February 19-23, 2018  
Location Tokyo TBA

### JEMA Connect

February 26-28, 2018  
Ochanomizu Christian Center, Tokyo



## March

### WIM Kanto Spring Retreat

March 7-9, 2018  
Okutama Fukuin no Ie

### HCWF Day Retreat

March 10, 2018  
OMF Hokkaido Center, Sapporo

### WIM Kansai Day Retreat

March 12, 2018  
Location TBA



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

**[jema.org](http://jema.org)**

Also see our online magazine: **[japanharvest.org](http://japanharvest.org)**

## Adding depth to our story

What happens when a complex situation is reduced to a single storyline? We've all seen the misconceptions that occur: all Australians have broad accents and large knives, all Swiss eat cheese and chocolate, and all Japanese are quiet and live in tiny apartments. These can be mild assumptions, but they can cause larger problems.

I recently listened to a TED talk\* by Nigerian author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie called "The Danger of a Single Story". She talked about how our perception of a land or people group is often shaped and flattened when only one side of the story is told. For example, when she went to the US for college, her American roommate was shocked to find that she spoke good English (it's the official language of Nigeria) and had grown up in a middle-class family. In most Western countries, the story told of Africa is of poverty, war, and sickness. It is a flat story; a story that has dehumanised Africans.

So, I am encouraged as I look at the stories in this issue. We have missionaries' stories about failure and fears, about success and joy, about challenges and hope. Our seven feature articles by those who have been in Japan less than ten years give us a multi-faceted perspective on the missionary experience. When we tell these stories to one another we gain a broader perspective on what the missionary experience is like. It helps us to evaluate our own experience more realistically and hopefully guard against discouragement.

I often fear that people in our home countries only get one story about missionaries. They hear the success stories and see the posed-for-a-prayer-card picture. In her TED talk, Chimamanda said, "Show a people as one thing, as only one thing over and over again, and that is what they become." While we'd like people to see us as successful and joyous missionaries, that is a shallow view of who we are. It doesn't help in our desire to raise up prayer. It can also be a discouragement for anyone who feels called to be a missionary, but doesn't feel they can live up to the "perfect" image that is often portrayed of missionaries.

In the coming weeks, the stories in this magazine will be published online at [japanharvest.org](http://japanharvest.org). They will also be shared on JEMA's Facebook page (the page is called "Japan Evangelical Missionary Association"). Wouldn't it be great if we could all share these articles with our prayer supporters and friends, to add depth and shape to their understanding of what missionary life in Japan is like? It can be difficult to share our personal stories, but it can be easier to share someone else's story.

### Planning meeting

On August 7th, eleven of *Japan Harvest's* editing and design team met at the JEMA office for an annual planning meeting. Since our team is dispersed across several prefectures and two countries other than Japan, we rarely meet as a whole group. It was a real joy to meet face to face.

We discussed how to encourage one another in this ongoing task of putting the magazine together, what we're doing well, and how we could improve. We looked at the 2017 survey results and decided upcoming themes for the magazine.

One thing that came out of the meeting was a desire to continue to cover three fundamental topics—evangelism, prayer, and member care—regardless of the issue's overall theme. Also expressed was a desire to have more biblically-based articles. I'd like to encourage you to think about submitting articles such as these in the coming months.

### Survey report

We've spent considerable time compiling the results of our 2017 reader's survey for this issue. Please take time to peruse the report. Those who responded to the survey suggested many excellent article topics; however, in order for us to address these topics we need people to write. *Japan Harvest* doesn't have a pool of paid writers to do it—we rely on you, our readers, to contribute.

I pray that this issue will be a blessing to you in your life and ministry.



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

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

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

**Spring 2018:** Short term missions (submission deadline Jan 10)

**Summer 2018:** Cultural understanding (submission deadline March 10)

**Autumn 2018:** Renewal/revival (submission deadline July 10)

\* TED is a non-profit organisation devoted to spreading ideas, usually in the form of short, powerful talks that are shared via the internet and social media. The TED talk mentioned can be found here: [https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda\\_adichie\\_the\\_danger\\_of\\_a\\_single\\_story/](https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story/)

## A prayer for recovery one year after the Kumamoto Earthquake

*Christian Shimbun, April 30, 2017  
Translated by Atsuko Tateishi  
Photos contributed by Christian Shimbun*

The 2016 Kumamoto Earthquake was actually a series of quakes in Kumamoto and Oita prefectures, including two of magnitude seven (April 14 and 16). According to Kumamoto prefectural data, nearly 48,000 people are still living in temporary housing as a result. During a visit to the disaster area from April 14 to 16, 2017, houses reduced to rubble could still be seen in the hardest-hit town of Mashiki. Damage to the roof tiles and stone walls of Kumamoto Castle, a prefectural symbol, had yet to be repaired.



The first anniversary of the Kumamoto Earthquake fell on Easter weekend this year, and a number of memorial events were held at locations such as churches, temporary meeting halls, and facilities of Christian schools and organizations. On April 16, Easter Sunday, the Kumamoto Mission Network hosted an Easter charity concert at Kyushu Lutheran College, in Kumamoto City,

to commemorate the anniversary and pray for further recovery.

During the concert, Pastor Yōji Nakamura, Director of Kyushu Christ Disaster Relief Center's (KCDRC) Kumamoto Relief Base, expressed his desire to see smaller-scale

**"Jesus, who experienced death and triumphed over it, will surely be with us through all of life's troubles, anxieties, and fears."**

and more personal support activities continue on a long-term basis. Nakamura reported that a total of 6,400 volunteers had come from all over



the world to help during the past year. The KCDRC currently works in four of Mashiki's temporary housing sites, supporting activities of the residents' association. Nakamura appealed for a steady flow of volunteers and support for the KCDRC, before leading a time of prayer.

The concert featured gospel singer Yuri Mori, who lost her younger brother in the 1995 Great Hanshin Earthquake. She has since performed at a number of concerts in disaster areas to deliver a message of empathy and comfort, and this was her fourth visit to Kumamoto since the 2016 earthquake. Encouraging the audience to approach recovery at their own pace, step by step, Mori sang the hymn "Singing I Go." She also performed "Flowers Will Bloom," a song born out of the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake, as a prayer for true hope to bloom among the people of Kumamoto.

Yōsuke Kaneda, Pastor of Kumamoto Shinai Church, delivered an Easter message. He described how the despair of Jesus' followers after his death was



# uest 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!*"



transformed into joy and hope when they saw the empty tomb and realized that Jesus had risen. The same joy and hope are still available today, Kaneda preached, for

those who believe in the resurrection of Jesus. "The two big earthquakes struck Kumamoto suddenly, when no one was expecting them," Kaneda acknowledged. "That day changed our lives completely. It brought us pain, suffering, and sorrow. However, Jesus, who experienced death and triumphed over it, will surely be with us through all of life's troubles, anxieties, and fears." Kaneda concluded his sermon with a prayer for great comfort through Jesus, who turns sorrow into joy and despair into hope. ■



## Changes for Night de Light after 10 years

*Christian Shimbun, April 30, 2017  
Translated by Grace Kosbino  
Photos contributed by Christian Shimbun*

Night de Light is a four-piece rock band, formed in Hokkaido in 2006, that sings about hope. After releasing their fourth album, *SHIFT*, this spring, they embarked on a national tour, performing live at Inochi no Kotobasha (Word of Life Press Ministries) in Tokyo on April 1. It was a free concert, originally open to the first 100 people to arrive, but that quota was exceeded and the venue was packed with excited fans.

Night de Light celebrated their 10th anniversary last year, and the title of their new album, *SHIFT*, reflects their determination as they look to the decade that lies ahead. Leader and bassist, Hironori Nagasawa, said, "We spent our first 10 years together building a solid foundation so that the band would not be shaken, no matter what happened. I feel that we've achieved that goal, and this year is the time for us to move forward. We want to take on new challenges, exploring new areas and making changes. Hence the name of the album."

One thing that has shifted is their musical style. "In our new album we explored a wider variety of arrangement and performance styles, expressing our message in ways that we haven't done before," Nagasawa explains. Of par-

ticular note is the fifth song on the album, called "Let Every Nation"—their first song written in English, which they performed as part of the Israeli Independence Day celebrations last year. Lead vocalist Hirano sang it with all his

heart, as a prayer for peace. The sixth song on the album, "Haku-sui," was written based on the story of a father who froze to death trying to protect his daughter in a fierce blizzard. Many people who empathize with Night de Light's messages have supported

their activities through crowd-funding, which enabled the band to produce this album, their best one yet.

Another kind of shift has taken place in Night de Light's performances. They finished off their tour on July 30 with a performance at Zepp DiverCity Tokyo, a venue which can hold up to 2,500 people. It was the first time they had played independently to a crowd of that size. Before their performance, Nagasawa said, "It's the biggest step forward for us this year, as a band from Hokkaido, to play a gig in Tokyo on a much grander scale than we have before." ■





An unexpected question on a bus lead to an amazing conversation

# What does your faith mean to you?

By Christina Winrich

“What does your faith mean to you?” The young Japanese man sitting next to me showed me this question on his cell phone. I wasn’t in a Bible study or a philosophy class; I wasn’t even with someone who spoke English. I was on a highway bus on my way to a town in northern Hokkaido, and had Google Translate to thank for rendering this unexpected question into English.

I had woken up before six that morning to catch the bus. After ten months at language school in Sapporo, I knew enough Japanese to reserve my bus tickets, talk about my hobbies, and order dinner (though I always conveniently forgot the word for “bill” at the end of the meal) but I still found daily life in Japanese drained me. This weekend was my chance to put down my language textbooks and experience more of what God is doing in the land. I would stay with a missionary family for the weekend, visit their church, and experience a bit of their daily life—with its challenges and joys. While I was thrilled to be going up there, I also looked forward to the bus ride itself. For over three hours I could forget about conjugating verbs, recalling last week’s incredibly useful and immediately forgotten vocabulary, or navigating levels of politeness. I sank back in my seat with a contented sigh and sipped my coffee. Time to rest.

Rolling through a gray and sleepy Sapporo, we came to our first stop. With the bus half-empty I didn’t expect anyone to sit next to me. To my dismay

a young man had been given the seat next to mine. I muttered an apology as I moved my bag off the seat and tried to make polite conversation. In basic Japanese, we chatted about our jobs and about the rain and low clouds, and how we couldn’t see any of the beautiful mountains that must be just beyond the highway. Our

## God opened that door of conversation in a surprising way

short conversation over, I turned gratefully to the two pieces of reading material I had brought to pass the time; a Bill Bryson travel book (in English) and a manga about Jesus (in Japanese—it had *furigana*) and settled into a quiet journey.

After a while, I started thinking about the young man next to me, Suzuki-san. He was from an even smaller town than the one I was headed to, and although he was Japanese, he had only been to Honshu twice in his whole life. He rarely made it down to Sapporo but said he liked to come at least once a year to have a change of scenery. I wondered if he had ever heard about Jesus. Did his town have a church? Did he have anyone in his life who knew Jesus? Finally, I prayed: *Lord, open a door for me to share with Suzuki-san, even to give him this manga, which tells Your story in his own language.*

The gray-shrouded, peaceful countryside rolled by, but our conversation did not resume. However, I no longer wanted my quiet, solitary journey; I wanted God to open that door. I kept reading, praying, and repenting for my earlier grumpiness. About 30 minutes from our destination, Suzuki-san



asked me what I was reading. Yes, the door was opening! I was so excited. In garbled Japanese I tried to explain what the manga was about, “It even has *furigana*!”

“I see . . . but what’s that other book, the English one?”

The door of opportunity was closing. “Oh, this is just a travel book about Europe.”

Suzuki-san turned back to his cell phone and our conversation was over. Well, Lord, it seems the door is closed. I don’t see how I can give him this manga now!

Just then, he held up his cell phone. He had translated a question into English: “What does your faith mean to you?” Thus began an amazing conversation. Suzuki-san shared that he trusted

in himself, in his own strength and goodness, but sometimes he felt that was not enough. I did my best to share my story of being in a similar place in my early 20s, when I realized I needed something stronger, better, and more stable than myself to trust. That’s how I had found Jesus.

I went back to his original question and tried to explain how my faith in Jesus meant everything to me. That faith is like a window I see every part of my life through; or a journey I am on, where each step of the way I am holding on to Jesus’ hand.

“Could I give you this manga? It explains much more about Jesus, in much better Japanese than mine, and it even has *furigana*!” He laughed at that last bit and said he would gladly take a copy of the manga. When we got off the bus, I introduced him to the long-term missionary that works in his area. He invited Suzuki-san to the church.

Long after that bus ride ended and we parted ways, Suzuki-san’s question still rings in my ears. What does my faith mean to me? What a beautiful question. God opened that door of conversation in a surprising way—he

**Suzuki-san shared that he trusted in himself, in his own strength and goodness, but sometimes he felt that was not enough.**

used an initially grumpy and sleepy person with very little Japanese ability to talk with someone from a remote region of Japan who, maybe hidden deep in his heart, had a hunger to know more.

I pray Suzuki-san will read that manga. I pray that he will connect with the long-term missionaries and visit their church. Above all, I pray that he will encounter Christ, and when he does, that he will discover for himself what faith in the living God can mean.

I pray, too, for myself and others like me, who feel weak, inadequate, underqualified, or under-gifted. May we experience God using us in our weakness. May we see God’s power and beauty moving through our fragile and flawed selves and sense God’s joy in us as we walk hand-in-hand with Him. **JH**

Photo provided by the author

*Christina Winrich (US) is a new member of OMF. She hopes to help equip the Japanese laity to reach their own people. You can often find her drinking coffee or eating sushi, though not at the same time.*



Christina Winrich

## Blast from the past

### From 1987..

Our Western way of doing theology is already being severely criticised by Asian (and other) theologians as resulting in theologies that do not speak to non-Western situations, questions and problems. The time may soon arrive when Japanese evangelists and pastors will realize that our discipling approaches were ill-conceived to replace the traditional Japanese worldview with a biblical one. We might hope and pray that this will be so because in the final analysis it is they who must assume the rather arduous task of getting back to biblical theology and initiating ways of communicating it. In the meantime, perhaps we as missionaries can provide some encouragement and stimuli, and, just possibly, some corrected models as well. From the perspective of my six years of direct and indirect association with the evangelical cause in Japan, it seems to me that this represents one of the greatest needs of the Japanese church today. **JH**

"Wanted: A Christian Worldview" (sic) by David Hesselgrave (page 9), Issue Number 2, 1987 of Japan Harvest

Timely words of encouragement from the Bible enabled me to overcome struggles with language learning and making friends

# Sufficient grace

By Liz Jeggo

I am not the kind of person you would expect to become a missionary. I do not have a gift for learning languages, I do not love trying different kinds of unusual foreign food, and I'm relatively shy. So what am I doing as a missionary in Japan? Well, I love Jesus and I love Japanese people.

## The path to Japan

When I first understood the gospel at 15, I desperately wanted to share this wonderful news with other people, but was painfully shy at the time and had no idea how to begin. A few years later, I joined a team reaching out to internationals in Cambridge, UK. Through that, and subsequent ministry which included working full-time in international outreach, I grew to love Japanese people. I realised their very real spiritual needs and gradually sensed the Lord was calling me to Japan. In particular, I saw that many of my Japanese friends who started seeking in the UK, and maybe even came to faith, drifted away from the Lord when they returned to Japan due to lack of support. As well

as reaching out to Japanese people in general, I longed to encourage these returnees to keep seeking or continue living as Christians back in Japan.

In 2006, I spent a week with OMF missionaries in Sendai and saw that their work was very similar to the international outreach ministry I was involved in—the main difference was that they used Japanese. I naively

thought, *After two years of language study my Japanese will be fluent and I can get stuck into outreach in Japan!*

## My struggle to learn Japanese

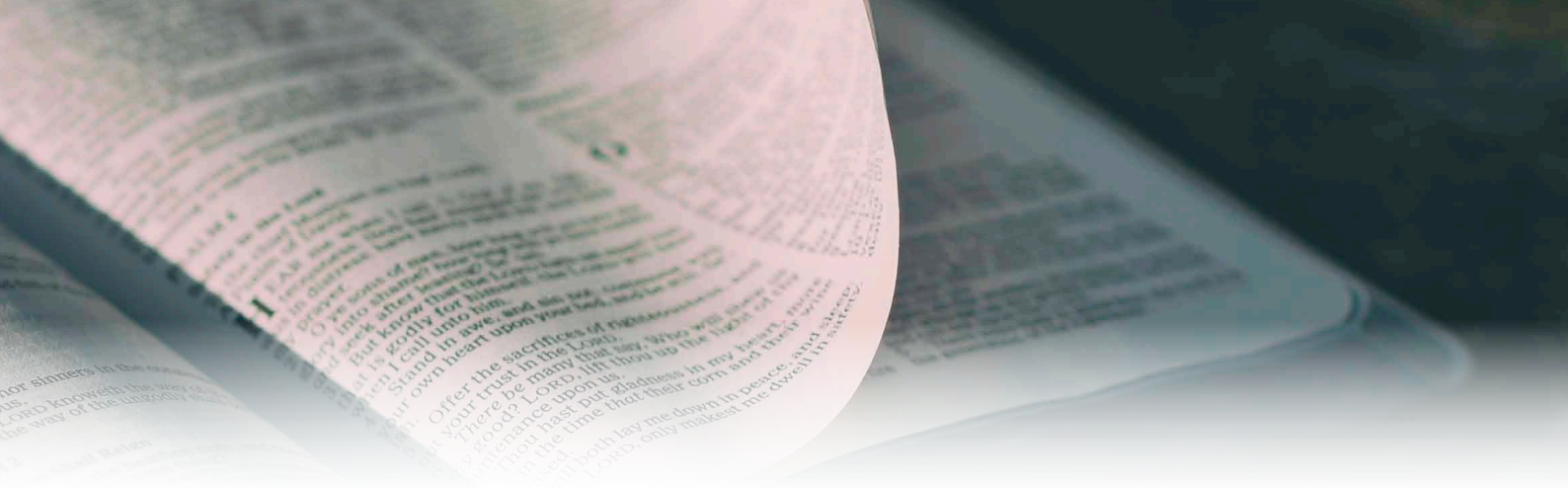
After starting language school in Japan in 2010, I quickly realised that Japanese was far harder than I expected and two years would definitely not be enough to become fluent. During my first year at language school, I struggled with homesickness—it was hard missing the birth of my first nephew and other family events. I was also frequently frustrated—like a baby who couldn't do anything for herself. I felt inadequate and feared I would never be able to ask for directions and understand the answer, let alone explain the gospel. What was the point in being in Japan if I couldn't communicate with people? I desperately wanted to return to the UK, where I could easily tell people about Jesus.

One day I cried out to the Lord in prayer—*Why I can't I just go home?* He reminded me of Philippians 3:7–11,

I felt inadequate and feared I would never be able to ask for directions and understand the answer, let alone explain the gospel.

especially verse 10: “I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death” (NIV). I realised afresh that, more than anything, I wanted to know

Christ and to walk closely with him. To go back to the UK would mean turning away from his call and hence from the Lord himself. I understood



then that I'd rather be with Christ in the place he's called me to than be living comfortably without him. That encouragement from the Lord gave me strength to persevere.

### The challenges of ministering in Tokyo

As I came towards the end of my language study, I had various fears about working for a church in Tokyo. For a start, my Japanese was still very basic. But my greatest fear was that I would not even be able to make Japanese friends, much less find anyone to do Bible study with.

Again, the Lord encouraged me through his word. This time through Matthew 6:25–34, especially verse 33: “But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.” If I could stop worrying that I might be a failure as a missionary and instead concentrate on living for his kingdom in my daily life, he would provide everything I needed to do what he was calling me to do. That included Japanese friends and language ability!

At first, I found it hard to build relationships with local people. In addition to struggling to communicate verbally, I found the culture confusing. If I invited a friend over for lunch and they said they'd bring their own lunch box, did they mean they would rather eat their own food than something I had made for them or that they didn't want to cause me

any trouble? Should I graciously accept their offer or was I supposed to insist that I'd be happy to prepare food for them? I felt I would never understand this indirect culture.

Exhausted after the birth of my third child, I was again tempted to give up. But the Lord reminded me repeatedly of his love for the Japanese, including returnees, and their spiritual need. He also spoke to me through 2 Corinthians 12:9: “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” He had called me and I had to trust that he had a purpose in me being here, however weak and inadequate I felt.

Gradually, my linguistic confidence and cultural understanding increased and I began to make friends, but still life in Japan was not easy.

Three years later, at the end of our first home assignment, I was reluctant to return to Japan. I had forgotten my Japanese and I dreaded starting again with new relationships. Then, a week before our return my beloved grandma died—I would miss the funeral. But in obedience I came, and I'm so glad I did.

### God's provision of friends and words

Two years later, I interact with Japanese people all the time and can't count how many Japanese friends the Lord has provided, including plenty who want to study the Bible—so many, in fact, that my current frustration is that there aren't more hours in the week

to meet with them all! Some are local friends, but many are returnee seekers who are keen to continue investigating or returnee Christians needing encouragement to persevere in their new faith in a very different environment. Truly the Lord has work for me to do here.

With friends has come a sense of belonging. I will never be Japanese and I still miss my family and friends in the UK, but this is where the Lord has called me and I'm genuinely content to live here.

Although my Japanese is far from perfect, many times when I talk about Jesus, the sentences seem to form themselves in my mind and flow out of my mouth, as if the Lord is giving me the words to say.

There are, of course, still challenges and discouragements. Although many friends are interested in the Bible and even seem to want to believe, many barriers have to be overcome, and all my efforts seem to produce little obvious fruit. Recently, the Lord encouraged me through Haggai 2:1–9, especially this part of verse 4: “Be strong, all you people of the land,” declares the LORD, “and work. For I am with you.” The context is that the people had become discouraged and given up rebuilding the temple. The encouragement for me is that the Lord has work for me to do and that he is with me. That's all I need to know; the results I can leave in his hands. **JH**

This is where the Lord has called me and I'm genuinely content to live here.

*Liz Jeggo and her husband came to Japan from the UK as OMF missionaries in 2010. Now based in Tokyo, they have a daughter of ten and two sons aged eight and five.*

Expectations influence our attitude and approach to ministry for better or for worse.

# Unaware of my assumptions

By Robert Adair

When I first came to Japan I often felt like I was dancing in front of a crowd, but didn't know my partner and couldn't hear the music. I thought I knew what I was doing, but was confused as well. For example, shortly after I arrived in Japan I ate curry rice with friends. I didn't understand why Japanese people around me were using spoons. I was determined to use chopsticks thinking, *I'm in Japan and Japanese people eat with chopsticks*. It was a happy day when I relented and started eating curry rice with a spoon like everyone else.

I keep running into my own false assumptions. Sometimes these false assumptions have been funny and harmless, yet other times they have unfortunately caused pain for myself or those around me.

I came to Japan in 2005 as a church planting associate with Asian Access. I was placed with a church in Minamata, Kumamoto to help with a church plant in the adjacent city of Okuchi, in Kagoshima. (On a side note, I think it is God's special humor that my first placement in Japan was in 大口市 literally "Big Mouth City.")

I have a clear memory of writing my vision in my Asian Access small

group: "To plant churches, that plant churches, that plant churches, that plant churches, that plant churches, that plant churches . . ."

This vision was shaped by my time in college ministry at Texas A&M University, which prioritized evangelism

**What I didn't realize was that deep down I thought my Japanese brothers and sisters didn't know what they were doing.**

and discipleship through multiplying small groups. With that college ministry, I went on short-term teams to Ibaraki Ken and Yamagata Ken in 2001, 2002, and 2003. During these trips we saw several

of our friends make decisions to follow Christ. Back at A&M, I was disciplined by my pastor and other leaders, and talked to the missionaries I knew. In addition, I read every book I could about Japan, cross-cultural ministry, and theology. I came to Japan excited to see God continue what I had experienced up to that point.

**More assumptions than I realized**

I had reflected on and explored my expectations about ministry. Short-term trips and other training had impressed upon me the importance of that. Therefore, I thought I had a pretty good feel for what to expect. Then one day I saw Japanese people working on the road and thought to



myself, “Huh, I didn’t expect that.” Until that point, most of my interactions had been with bilingual, highly-educated Japanese people in the US, and I had subconsciously transferred this expectation to the country as a whole. It wasn’t a huge revelation, but it showed a false assumption that I held.

A turning point for me occurred one time while listening to my Japanese pastor preach. My Japanese was finally at a point that I understood most of what he said and I realised it was a really good sermon. I found myself thinking, *Wow, that was a really good point.* Then I noticed my surprise. Convicted, I asked, *Why am I surprised? Why didn’t I expect to learn from my Japanese pastor?* Until that moment, I didn’t realize I felt that way. I was serving at the church,

## It is not my responsibility to “fix” this church, but to join in what God is doing here.

but I had no expectation that I would actually grow in my relationship with Christ as a result of the pastor’s teaching.

I didn’t realize my arrogance (arrogant people rarely do). I thought I was a humble missionary ready to serve the needs of the Japanese church. My thinking was—after decades of work and with less than one percent of the

population identified as Christians, the Japanese church needed help. What I didn’t realize was that deep down I thought my Japanese brothers and sisters didn’t know what they were doing. I assumed that if they just understood the Bible like I did and used the methods I liked, they would see revival in Japan.

The apostle Paul saw lots of fruit in some places and little in others. Yet, as a 27-year-old kid from East Texas who thought he had it all together, I figured that if people did things my way they would always see fruit. My intentions were good (desiring to see Japanese people turn to Jesus) but my arrogance and assumptions were ugly, misguided, and—if left unchecked—harmful.

I share this because God used this incident to fundamentally change me.

He revealed just enough of my arrogance to begin the process of convicting and humbling me. Before, I viewed Pastor Kamizono as the Japanese pastor with whom I worked. After that time, I began to learn what it means to be serving as a missionary in Japan with Pastor Kamizono as *my pastor*. That transition from thinking of him as “the pastor with whom I am partnering” to “my pastor” was subtle but significant. It moved me from a posture of thinking the church needed me, to a posture of trusting God to lead me through my local pastor.

## Still learning

In 2012, my wife and I came to Shiogama Bible Baptist Church in Tagajo, Miyagi. While vocational authority still comes through our organization, Ōtomo Yukikazu is our pastor. This fuller understanding of who our pastor really is has been tremendously helpful for me over the last several years. Although I don’t always agree with my church’s decisions, I understand that my pastor is the spiritual authority. It is not my responsibility to “fix” this church, but to join in what God is doing here. This change in posture has also freed me to consult with my pastor when I am personally wrestling with issues. I am grateful to partner with and serve under the spiritual authority of our Japanese pastor.

After nine years in Japan, I continue to discover false assumptions in my approach to life, ministry, and culture. Increasingly, though, I feel like I’m getting to know my dance partner and hearing the music more clearly. **JH**

*Asian Access missionary Robert Adair serves in Miyagi prefecture through a partnership with Shiogama Bible Baptist Church. He is husband to Roberta and father of two energetic boys. He enjoys spending time in the mountains.*

Bible storytelling is a great tool to introduce God's word to Japanese

# God speaks through stories

By Naomi Hyō

When was the last time you heard a good story? For me, it was probably a powerful missionary biography I have just finished reading. I've been influenced by many missionary biographies and love hearing the things God has taught others in their journey.

## Is Bible storytelling appropriate for Japan?

I've heard about people telling Bible stories using picture cards to share Bible truths, both from biographies and from previous experience in other places in Asia. However, I thought this seemed more relevant to people groups with low literacy rates. It seemed like a precursor to being able to read the truth clearly written in one's own language. I thought it hardly seemed appropriate for Japanese society which is so highly literate.

When I was at theological college, there was a lot of talk about telling Bible stories as a way to share the gospel in post-modern Western society. People said this generation doesn't want to be told the truth, they want to hear stories. They want to make their own conclusions about what is relevant to their own lives. I thought, *Japanese society hasn't gone through a modern to post-modern shift, so does this apply?*

The longer I've been here, though, the more I've realised how storytelling is very much an intricate part of Japa-

nese culture. From traditional forms of *kabuki*, *noh*, and *rakugo*; to manga, anime, and television dramas—storytelling is everywhere. Through these stories, deeper meaning is communicated.

Soon after I arrived in Japan I made a few friends whom I met with for language exchange. As the friendships deepened I sometimes shared verses of Scripture that were relevant to their situation or told them Bible stories. I was surprised that my friends engaged much more with Bible stories than reading verses.

I also used to think that telling Bible stories and discussing them was an uncomfortably indirect form of teaching. However, Japanese people are experts at indirect communication and reading between the lines. Being too direct could be seen as dishonouring to the listener, as imposing your own views too strongly. As such, stories may communicate truths implicitly and touch people's hearts more deeply than a didactic presentation of facts.

Of course, sharing testimonial stories from our own lives is also powerful. People I've met have wanted to know about how knowing God affects contemporary people before they want to carefully study what God says.

The Bible is filled with stories of real people grappling with real-life problems, making mistakes, responding to warnings, and receiving promises from

**I have been surprised how willing people are to not only listen, but also interact when I ask if I can tell them a story from the Bible.**

God. These stories appeal to people's imaginations, help them understand more of who God is, and draw them to want to know him more.

## ... stories may communicate truths implicitly and touch people's hearts more deeply than a didactic presentation of facts.

Bible storytelling is not new in Japan. A Japanese friend told me how she had heard many Bible stories from her Christian friend. When she heard about Peter's denial of Jesus, she thought: This Jesus knows everything about us, our weaknesses and even mistakes we will make in future. If he knows all that and loves us anyway, I want to know him.

### Using Bible storytelling in Japan

Last year I attended a training course about sharing the gospel. It included a storytelling component. In this training, we learnt to memorise stories from the Bible, retell them, and then facilitate some basic questions to get people to think about the story. We learnt how telling stories in chronological instalments also enables people to see the bigger unfolding story of the Bible as it is unpacked. It's still a difficult task for me to learn Bible stories in Japanese, but a great way to keep learning new words and grammar patterns.

I have been surprised how willing people are to not only listen, but also interact when I ask if I can tell them a story from the Bible. At Christmas, one friend noted from the story of the angel appearing to Mary in Luke 1, that for Jesus to be born of Mary by the Holy Spirit, he must be both God and human. She commented that he must therefore have both God's power and the ability to understand our human experience.

Our church planting team has also used Bible storytelling and discussion groups in a church setting. Discussion in groups provides the opportunity

to hear and talk about different people's ideas.

I've learnt a lot about people's values and perspectives as I hear their responses. Furthermore, sometimes

people are struck by important truths that I didn't even notice.

People seem to appreciate being asked, "What did you like about the story?" and "What questions might you or other people have after hearing this story?" They can usually think of a host of extra questions to engage more deeply: questions that lead us to imagine if we were there, consider interesting details, or imagine how we might have felt. It also helps people articulate ideas in order to understand more deeply. We don't immediately answer questions people raise, but instead encourage them to continue exploring these things.

Having begun with these open questions, people are often better able to answer the next questions: "What do we learn about people from this story?" and "What do we learn about God?" Sometimes, as I share my own reflections, I indirectly answer some of the questions people raise.

One of my non-Christian friends continues to ponder the Bible stories she hears, considering why people acted the way they did. She even shares the stories with her husband and asks what he thinks, then comes back with further questions.

In the last few months, my husband was involved in filming people telling a short overview of the Bible, a set of nine stories. It is a useful initial set to show people one story at a time and then use as a basis for discussion. This might be a more effective tool for me and my husband to use

I've been storytelling for thirteen years, but I often meet people who speak languages that I don't. Imagine if a Bible-overview set of stories could be available in as many languages as possible. And imagine if any Christian who speaks those languages could also be trained to tell Bible stories.

In 2016, I facilitated some evangelism training in Japan. We dared to dream. Seven months later we had the full set of nine stories (Adam and Eve to the resurrection) told by Japanese people. You can also now find inspiring stories, videos, and training posts on the Japanese section of the Storying the Scriptures website (link in main article).

Imagine if every non-believing Japanese was given the Youtube link for the videos. Imagine if your one-off opportunity was enough to intrigue them to listen to the full story set and then watch the Jesus film (linked from the last story).

**By Christine Dillon**

for now, as it's more fluent Japanese than we can muster just yet. We hope that over time other Bible stories that connect with particular Japanese values can be added to the YouTube channel. You can find the link to the YouTube channel as well as other storytelling resources on this website: [japanese.storyingthescriptures.com](http://japanese.storyingthescriptures.com)

It is an ongoing journey. We seek to be receptive to God's leading in the story he is unfolding in our own lives and willing to play the part he's given us in the lives of those around us. It's been great to see the opportunities he's bringing to us, as well as to learn from the wealth of experiences of missionaries serving here for much longer than we have. **JH**

*Naomi Hyō and her husband Alex are from Australia, and work in an OMF church planting team in Yokohama. Naomi enjoys reading, watching movies, and meeting up with women, especially over coffee!*

What would make a 57-year-old missionary to French-speaking Muslims of the Arab world move to Japan?

By Estelle Lee

# Lessons in time

The spark that started a fire in my heart for Japan and her people was a three-week visit to Japan in 2007 in my mid-fifties. This included a week in Sapporo with my Franco-German choir, followed by two weeks in Chiba with OMF missionaries—a couple from my home church in England. To my surprise, this set in motion a process whereby God led me to leave 25 years of ministry to Muslims in North Africa and France. Following that first visit to Japan, my mission, Arab World Ministries, suddenly offered me a sabbatical. I believe it was heaven-sent.

## How did I minister initially?

I spent 10 months of my sabbatical in Sapporo, from October 2008, ministering to Japanese people. I gradually met up with those I had met in 2007. I also went regularly to a doughnut café and the International Communications Plaza where I found folk who wanted to speak English or French. I even went weekly to “Let’s speak German”. Not that I speak German, but I tried anything to meet people, even cross-country skiing (at which I am a disaster!). By God’s grace, one of those German-speaking ladies became a friend and in 2012,

a Christian. A friend I met skiing is still my friend today, but we don’t ski anymore! During those 10 months, with minimal Japanese, I made several friends, taught English and French, and even taught the Bible.

You just never know where God will lead, nor where you will be after 25 years of ministry. God is the God of surprising blessings and challenges. Never did I think I would leave my ministry to North Africans. It is not so unusual for a missionary to change countries or even languages, but to change missions, ethnicity, and religious groups is a bit out of the ordinary.

## Learning Japanese in middle age

I still love the Arab world and pray daily for the persecuted church. I love the French language and I studied both Moroccan and standard Arabic. But Japanese, my friends, is a different kettle of fish entirely! I have found it far more difficult than even Arabic.

Learning Japanese was fun during my sabbatical, but once I became a full-time OMF missionary in 2010, I really had to knuckle down. I had always said

“Arabic is the language of heaven because it takes eternity to learn.” But

**You just never know where God will lead, nor where you will be after 25 years of ministry.**





my mind has indeed been changed on this issue. No, the language of heaven must be Japanese! I have concluded that it's a language you should embark on as a foreigner when you are 7, not 57 as I was.

However, I don't agree with Francis Xavier who reputedly said something about Japanese being invented by the Devil so no missionary could learn it. No, I believe that this language was developed by God's sovereign will and so it must be learnable. I defy the Devil to discourage me or put me

**If God calls, then  
he equips, so I  
will not let a poor  
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demotivate me.**

off. I refuse his lies and his tactics as I struggle. For struggle I must.

I have had to adapt both to this huge change in life and ministry and this language and culture learning curve. In the midst, I've had to lower my expectations and be prepared to study hard, persevere, and be strong. I think this challenge has been good for developing my dependence on God.

I have also concluded that working mostly through the English language is necessary for me. Living in a city where many speak reasonable Eng-

lish, rather than in a rural setting, was a good choice since I have been unable to master Japanese.

Do I still try to learn Japanese? Indeed I do. But despite this, now at 65, the honourable age of expected retirement, I have decided that I have not yet finished the task God gave me. So, by his grace, I am continuing a bit longer.

You can make friends at any age and God has, by his grace, helped me make more Japanese friends, as well as keeping my previous ones. Even though Japanese people tend to like to be with folk in their own age range, I think that perspective changes a bit with foreigners. I've found many who find practicing English a great motivation for them.

I currently work at Sapporo International Church where my ministry involves teaching English and French as doorways to learning the Bible in all three languages. I mainly work as an evangelist, bringing the good news to not-yet believers; but I also disciple, encourage, and teach Japanese Christians. I learn a lot from Japanese people, culturally and linguistically, though understanding their mind-set is something I struggle with.

If God calls, then he equips, so I will not let a poor grasp of language demotivate me. Indeed, a well-known apostle said that when he was weak, then he

was strong (2 Cor. 12:10). God uses me despite my fumbled Japanese. Lack of fluency can engender frustration but, as it often means relying on Japanese people or OMF missionaries for help, it also leads to shoving pride out the door. I believe also that God uses me to communicate his love and care. I pray he will keep me loving and caring, remove all pride and selfish desires, and use me to his glory for the sake of his gospel wherever I am. May he use you too in whatever capacity he has called you. He gives the gifts; let us use them with perseverance and faith. **JH**

Photo provided by the author

*Estelle Lee lives and ministers in Sapporo with OMF International. She teaches English and French at Sapporo International Church. She also translates and interprets for non-Japanese speakers at the church.*





This new missionary found creative ways to meet people in her local community

# Connecting with the community

By Margaret Rugira

## Dance team

The Yosakoi Sōran Festival is a week-long team dance competition in June in Sapporo. Over 200 sponsored and non-sponsored teams of anything from 40 to 200 members, dressed in colourful and unique costumes, dance to the music of “Sōran”, the work songs of herring fishermen from a century ago. I joined a non-sponsored Yosakoi Sōran team during my first year in Japan.

My team started rehearsing in September, but I joined in May; in time for a month of intense rehearsals. Despite being an informal, non-professional team, we rehearsed three to four times a week, including Sundays (though I could not join those) and up to five days a week just before the festival. My team was mostly young working people, as well as a couple of students and older folk. All would do a full day’s work, then come straight to rehearsal at 7 or 7.30 p.m.—most would not have had time for dinner. During rehearsal we only had a 10-minute break and didn’t finish until after 9 p.m. Some then travelled home for an hour or longer.

Although this was a great way to meet people whilst I was still learning the language, due to the intense rehearsal schedules there was never enough time to get to know people. It was not until the penultimate day of

the festival performances that opportunities came to talk to my fellow teammates. Later that day as we debriefed, one of the team members, whom I had hardly spoken to said, “Margaret, it’s your last day. So sad”. I wondered why she noticed it was my last day and why would she even care that I would not be continuing in the team? Reflecting back, I think that I had earned trust through faithfully attending rehearsals and performing with the team. This enabled me to continue to stay in touch with some team members, even after I quit the team in my last year of language study.

God enabled me to look beyond my ability, or lack of it, and to persevere and see what he might do with the opportunity he had given me in this group. This was just one team of 40 people, in which, as far as I know, I was the only Christian presence. What about the remaining 200 or so teams? How does the church reach out with the gospel of Christ to a large subgroup or subculture as this?

**How does the church reach out with the gospel of Christ to a large subgroup or subculture as this?**



### Kirie group

After graduation from language school I decided to join a craft group in my new local area in Hanamaki, Iwate. I found out from another missionary that there was a long list of circles posted on the local community page. I decided to try out a group called *kirie*—the Japanese art of paper cutting. *Kirie* consists of taking a black and white picture, sticking it on black card, cutting out the white parts of the picture; then sticking coloured papers behind it until the end result is a beautiful coloured version of the original picture, which can then be framed (or turned into a postcard).

I arrived at a building that looked like an old school. I entered the classroom in which the circle met, and immediately felt young. Everyone was in their 60s or older and many, I discovered, had been to school together. Strangely they were all seated on one side of the room and I was told to sit on my own on the other side. I discovered later that my side of the room was for newcomers; as a few weeks later I was joined by two others with whom I continued to sit with up to the time I left Hanamaki.

Many of the group were born and grew up in Hanamaki or Iwate Prefecture and most had never been abroad or travelled much outside of Iwate. The topics of conversations included other

people, food, and local festivals. Local festivals featured quite a bit in the pictures that they undertook. Apart from the lady I sat with, it was extremely hard to have any even vaguely spiritual conversation with anyone. I was not even able to share any personal testimony. There appeared to be no interest in such matters at all. However, I continued with the circle for the two years I was in Hanamaki and four or five of the group did come to my farewell church service—possibly their first time ever to set foot in a church, but I pray not their last.

### Sign language circle

While in Hanamaki I also joined a sign language circle which had a good mix of singles, married, and older people. The same day I joined, another lady, Mrs Fuji, also came to try it out, we continued in the group together. Not long after I started attending, I invited one lady to our English class (which had a short Bible message at the end). That evening she surprised me by bringing Mrs Fuji too. The two ladies seemed to enjoy the evening, and when I asked them whether they would continue, they said they would think about it. At the next sign language meeting the two ladies gave me a present of oranges and said, “Thank you for inviting us to the English class. Unfortunately we can’t continue. But we might start coming in April.”

Soon it was April, so I brought along the English class flyer and asked

if they would be joining. But they had committed themselves to something else and said they would not be joining. I was so disappointed. However, I did not expect what happened next. We broke for our tea time and Mrs Fuji started sharing about how she had enjoyed her time at the English class, and even seemed to encourage others to consider joining. Mrs Mori perked up and expressed her interest. A few weeks after that, her older child joined the kids’ English class. In the months following, her daughter occasionally came to the kids’ club and also read through three of the manga Bible-based books in just two or three weeks. Mrs Mori also occasionally joined the younger kids’ club too. Where there “seemed” to be no opportunity in one circle (*kirie*), God opened the door in this one.

As a church family we are in a community, a community of Christ. How can we get alongside the communities we live amongst and draw people, from all walks of life, into the community of Christ? **JH**

*Kirie photos provided by author.*

*Margaret Rugira (OMF) was born in Uganda but raised in England. She came to Japan in 2012 and after Japanese language and culture study spent two years in an OMF church plant in Hanamaki, Iwate.*





Unhelpful preconceptions can be debilitating. God views each person as an individual and so should we.

# Seeing beyond stereotypes

By Michaela Ziegler

I received a lot of advice from others, both while preparing to come to Japan as a missionary and after arriving. Although much of it was helpful, I discovered that many people harbored prejudices against Japanese people that were more of a hindrance than a help in helping me to prepare to minister in Japan. In particular, I was told that Japanese were friendly and polite but also reserved and hesitant in opening up to others and didn't like hugs.

## Wrestling with my fears

When I first came to Japan, my heart and head were filled with things I'd heard and learned about Japanese people and culture. Growing up in Germany, I never had much contact with Asians, and thus I was preparing to enter an unknown world.

I realized I had a growing fear of the Japanese, who are typically viewed as being shy, stiff, and fastidious about details. As a person who likes personal contact and hugs, a huge fear grew in me that Japan would leave me emotionally empty. How would I survive when even making new friends would be totally different from what I was used to? Would God be enough to meet my emotional needs, although I can't see or feel him? Would I feel totally lonely and isolated? I prayed that God would not let these thoughts take root in my heart, but it wasn't easy when others were confirming my fears.

I sought solace in the fact that I'd be working in a dormitory for missionary kids who go to a nearby German school. I'd thus be living in a German subculture and would be able to decide how involved I would be with the Japanese culture. That would allow me to ease my way into things.

## A pleasant surprise

To my surprise, when I came to Japan in September 2016 I found the Japanese people I met weren't afraid to talk to me—rather they were friendly, open, and happy to meet someone learning their language. Gradually, my fear of being rejected decreased because I discovered that they took me just as I was—a foreigner—and accepted that I might not act like them. This was



*A friend from church*

true, whether it was Japanese people at my international church in Yokohama, my language teacher, or women at my dancing classes. People have been interested and welcoming, and I've had great opportunities to try out the new words I've learned.

## A bout of culture shock

After living in Japan for about five months and feeling that I'd adjusted quite well, I was hit by culture shock. Before that, I had naively thought that since I hadn't been homesick, I might skip that phase of adapting to a new culture. I was utterly wrong! I started giving in to my anxious thoughts and also angry ones such as: Why are Japanese people so reserved? When I do something wrong in public do they talk about the stupid foreigner behind my back? Didn't some people say that Japanese don't like foreigners anyway?

It was a big step backwards; I even started doubting whether this was really the place God had called me to serve. If that weren't enough, I got a really bad cold and had to wear a mask in public. I felt like crying because I was sick and had to do something I didn't feel comfortable doing. I also felt like screaming—why would people expect me to wear a mask when I neither want to nor understand it? I felt like a little child.

## Love drives out fear

Feeling misunderstood and lost, I asked myself: Are these thoughts from God? Didn't he create the Japanese in his image and doesn't he love them just as he loves me?

God started opening my eyes to see that he views each person as an individual. He is not a fan of stereotypes, either. God doesn't think in patterns as I do. He reminded me of a common discussion in Germany: how to cope with all the refugees fleeing from their home countries. Some people are controlled by fear, superstition, and prejudices. But I've always hated that attitude because you reject others without knowing their story. Once you get



Zumba friends

to know someone personally, you can overcome that fear and just love them.

"There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love" (1 John 4:18 NIV). This verse states that fear has to do with sin. Fear comes when we haven't experienced how real God's love is. Am I frightened and draw back because of stereotypes others had told me, or I had read in a book, or I believed I had observed myself? God's love is bigger than my fear, and it helps me overcome this hesitation.

God has helped me to love this culture and people and is driving my fear away step by step by helping me get to know more about them.

## Other important lessons

I remembered someone pointing out that some Japanese people would probably like to meet someone who is more outgoing than they are. Who knows if some of them need a person with that type of personality to tell them about Jesus? Jesus would not hold back from meeting others out of fear he could not meet their expectations.

I also realized that I shouldn't expect Japanese people to be like me. I had to learn that it's not good to secretly think that my way is better than theirs. The most helpful piece of advice I received was to remember that things aren't better or worse—just different.

Another encouragement was my weekly Zumba (an exercise/dance fitness program) classes. (If you like dancing, I highly recommend joining a class so that you can both have fun and stay fit.) The class members surprised me with their joy. I never expected Japanese women to be so outgoing. In the beginning, I was shocked that we were all supposed to follow the teacher's steps, but suddenly one of them turned to me, smiled and danced with her back to the others, enjoying herself a lot. Was this the kind of person I was so afraid of? **JH**

Photos of people provided by author

*Michaela Ziegler is from Germany, is 23 years old, and about to finish her B.A. of Culture and Theology. She's with Liebenzell Mission and cares for missionaries' kids in a boarding home at the German School in Yokohama.*

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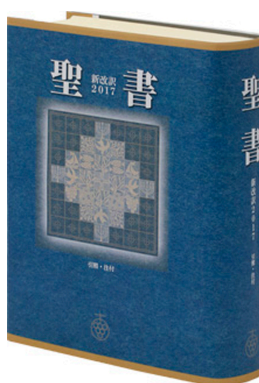


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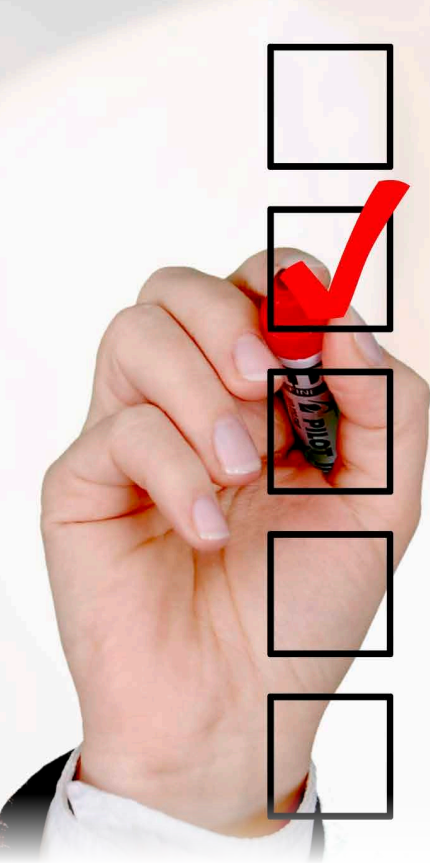
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# Results of the 2017 JEMA communications survey

By Japan Harvest staff

*What is the JEMA community interested in reading?*

In February and March 2017, JEMA's Communications Commission conducted a survey to assess the JEMA community's current communication and publication interests. It paralleled the one we conducted from February to May 2012, as we wanted to compare how the interests and concerns of the JEMA community may have changed over the past five years.

We announced the survey to JEMA members via several email announcements, the Winter 2017 *Japan Harvest* print magazine, and announcements at the 2017 JEMA Connect meeting in February and the JEMA Women in Ministry (WIM) Kanto retreat in March.

Members were given three submission options: complete the survey online, email it, or fax it. This time all submissions came in via the online survey. We received 122 responses—a little lower than the 150 responses we got in the 2012 survey. (For reference, there were 967 JEMA members in 2012 and 985 in 2016.)

The 2017 survey included a lower percentage of female respondents than the 2012 survey. The 2017 survey included 65 male (53%) and 52 female (43%) respondents (five respondents did not specify their gender), whereas the 2012 survey included 70 male (46%) and 80 female (53%) respondents. Of the 2012 survey respondents, 65% were married as compared to 83% of the 2017 respondents. Interestingly, the percentages of respondents who had been in Japan less than five years were almost identical in 2012 (17%) and 2017 (15%).

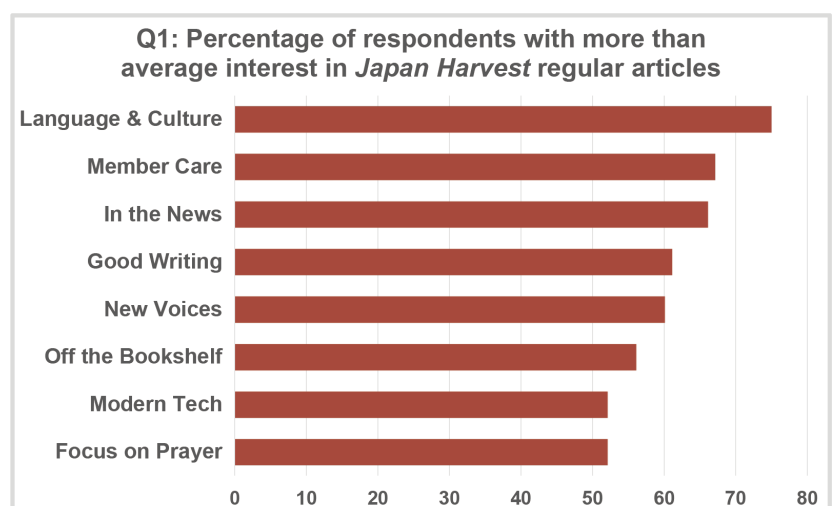
Both surveys had seven main questions. Some of the wordings and content categories were changed in the 2017 survey, but

the questions were essentially the same. Questions one through three majored on the content of *Japan Harvest* magazine, whereas questions four through seven majored on internet-related topics.

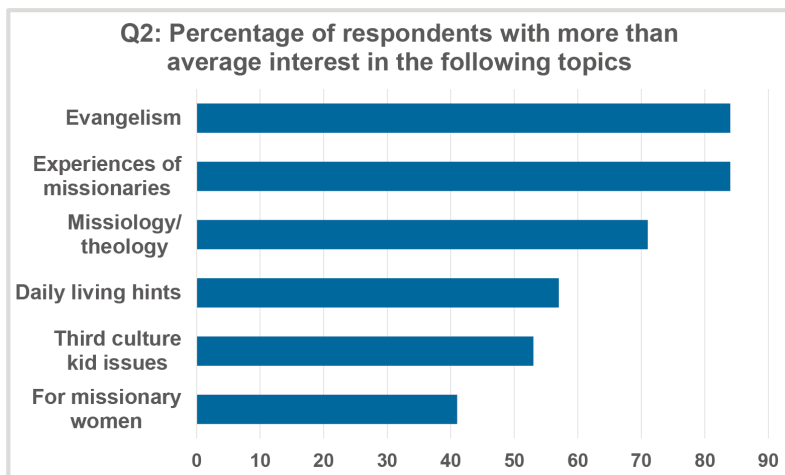
## Questions and answers

### Q1: How interesting do you find each of the following *Japan Harvest* regular articles?

Respondents were asked to rate the regular articles on a five-level scale from "Very" (5) to "Not at all" (1). All scored a #5 or #4 by more than half of the respondents (although in the cases of Focus on Prayer and Modern Tech, just barely). Language & Culture was a clear leader with 75% of respondents giving it a #4 or #5. Member Care rated 67% and In the News 66%. Good Writing 61%, New Voices 60%, Off the Bookshelf 56%, Modern Tech 52% and Focus on Prayer 51%.







**Q2: How interested are you in the following topics?**

As in the 2012 survey, evangelism came out on top (84% rated it a #4 or #5). Missionaries' experiences got the same percentage but a lower #5 percentage.

**Q3: List up to three topics you would like to see Japan Harvest address.**

Out of the long list of suggestions we received, there was especially strong interest in areas related to church, contextualization, evangelism, member care, and partnership or cooperation. We cover the responses to this question in greater detail in the second half of this article.

**Q4: Tell us which other print and online Christian publications you find interesting or useful.**

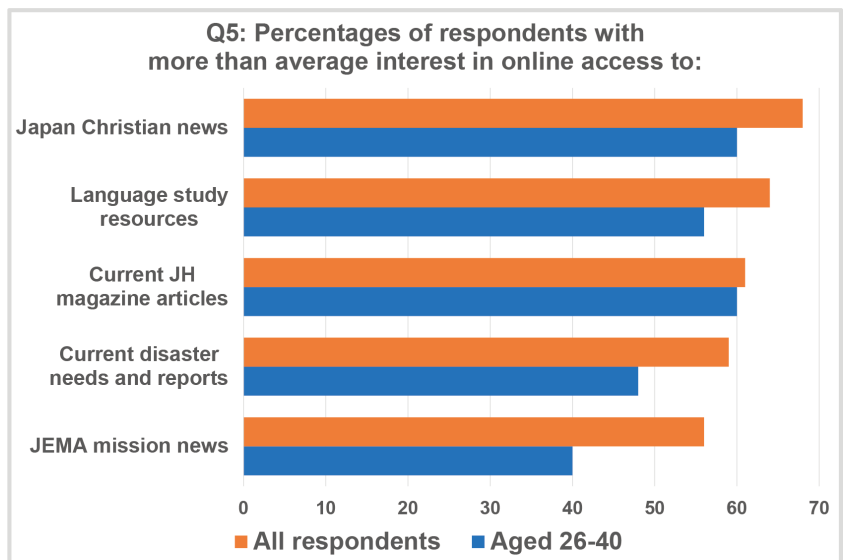
The US-based *Christianity Today* magazine and online website received 49 mentions, with *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* (EMQ) second at 31. Next came *World* (20 mentions), *Mission Frontiers* (15 mentions), and *Thrive Connection* (14 mentions). *Gospel Coalition* received 3 mentions, *Desiring God* and *Sojourners* magazine 2 each, and another 15 print or online publications received individual mentions.

**Q5: Tell us how interested you are in online access to: current Japan Harvest magazine articles, current disaster needs and reports, language study resources, Japan Christian news, and JEMA mission news.**

Comparing the responses of all 122 respondents to those of the 26–40 age group provides some

interesting data. (Note: all percentages in the next paragraph are the sum of the #5 and #4 percentages.)

Sixty-one percent of all respondents and 60% of those aged 26–40 gave a response of #5 or #4 for their interest in viewing Japan Harvest articles online. However, with disaster needs, the percentages were 59% (all respondents) and 48% (26–40 year olds). Interest in language study resources was higher in the younger group (64%) than in the entire survey (56%). Japan Christian news came in with 68% for all respondents and 60% for the 26–40 bracket. JEMA mission news interest was 54% for the whole group, but only 40% with the younger group.

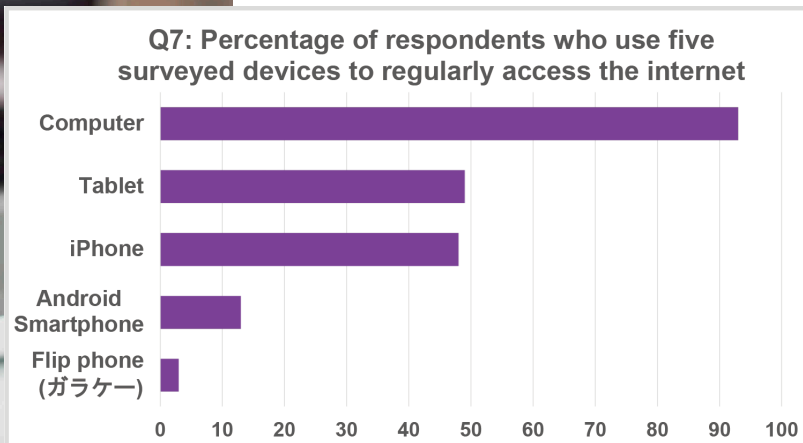


**Q6: How often do you access the internet for the following activities: read the news, research/information, and social networking?**

To read the news increased from 49% in 2012 to 60% in 2017. Research/information also increased, from 46% to 52%. However, social networking remained relatively unchanged, from 55% in 2012 to 57% in 2017.

**Q7: Which devices do you use regularly to access the internet?**

Not surprisingly, computers are still the primary access devices—93% of respondents indicated they regularly use a computer to access the internet. But now our members increasingly use mobile devices, as shown on the graph on the next page. Only 21% reported that the computer is their exclusive internet-access device, whereas in 2012 that percentage was more than 50%.



## Suggestions for topics to cover

Question three asked respondents to submit up to three topics they would like more coverage of in *Japan Harvest*. Out of the 122 respondents, just over half (63) submitted topics of interest. Over 100 separate items were submitted. After extensive processing of the data, we settled on 15 categories into which we grouped the responses. In alphabetical order, these are: case studies, church, contextualization, cultural understanding, discipleship, evangelism, history, language learning, member care, news, partnership or cooperation, prayer, recruitment, resources, and stories.

### Case studies

This area overlapped with many other categories, but specifically mentioned in this context was:

- studies of “cutting edge” Japanese churches and ministries, and
- leaders, both those involved in church planting and those with a vision for missions outreach.

### Church

These topics included:

- help for counseling Japanese people with challenging problems,
- holistic church ministry that extends outside the walls of the church building,
- difficult social issues, e.g. abortion and the church’s relationship to Japanese politics and social change,
- integration of Japanese returnees into the church,
- the aging of Japanese pastors,
- ministry to the elderly,
- how to deal with traditional Japanese religious rituals (funerals, ancestor worship, and folk religion),
- revival, and
- small or rural churches.

Church planting was mentioned numerous times:

- planting models, and
- church reproduction.

### Contextualization

Contextualization was mentioned many times from different angles. These included:

- analysis of the Japanese worldview; cultural and linguistic insights for missionaries [so that the message of the gospel is communicated with cultural sensitivity],
- deeper focus on Japanese culture, theology, religions, and the process by which Japanese come to Christ,
- how to communicate various biblical concepts to Japanese people,
- creative ways to contextualize the gospel, and
- worship and worship music from a Japanese perspective.

### Cultural understanding

Topics suggested included:

- ongoing updates about changes in the church and society,
- how to make and keep friendships with Japanese people,
- shame and honor issues in Japanese culture, and
- relations between Chinese/Koreans and Japanese people.

### Discipleship

Discipleship was mentioned several times. Two questioned whether accountability groups—especially in the area of sexual purity—exist for Japanese people. One respondent reflected that there seems to be a lack of training as to what sacrifice really means.

### Evangelism

Suggested topics included:

- spiritual warfare as it relates to Japan,
- various evangelism focuses were suggested, including children, youth, cities, cults, men, and unchurched regions,

- creative evangelism approaches:
  - the arts (painting, dance, music, and writing),
  - Christian cafés,
  - business as mission,
- ministries that fall outside normal mission channels,
- opportunities, challenges, and trends for outreach at a big-picture level, and
- theological and pragmatic issues.

## History

Several areas were suggested:

- Christian history in Japan,
- mission agency history in Japan,
- the work of schools founded by Christians with statistics on the long-term impact of these institutions, and
- histories of Japanese figures relevant to Christianity.

## Language learning

Requests for:

- resources for all levels of learners, and
- a list of suggested Japanese language schools.

## Member care

A wide range of topics were suggested relating to self-care and accountability:

- time management,
- burnout,
- support networks,
- renewal,
- self-motivation,
- spiritual formation, and
- member care issues unique to Japan.

Practical areas:

- living economically,
- writing better newsletters, and
- coaching in various practical areas.

We also had a request for articles that acknowledge the increasing number of missionary kids who have one Japanese and one non-Japanese parent, often go through the Japan educational system, and don't really identify as third-culture kids.

## News

Specifically mentioned were requests for a calendar of upcoming conferences and seminars in the Christian community. Appreciation was also expressed for news articles translated from Japanese.



## Partnership or cooperation

In 2012, networking was a significant topic, but in 2017, partnership and cooperation seemed to take its place. This included partnership or cooperation between missions and Japanese denominations at the organizational level as well as between individuals coming from different cultural perspectives.

## Prayer

Clear testimonies of answered prayer in Japan were mentioned as possible article topics. One person suggested a series on how to pray for Japan.

## Mobilization

Topics suggested included:

- mobilization of future missionaries by missionaries working in the field,
- mobilizing Japanese laity, and
- short-term missions.

## Resources

We already publish reviews of books in English of interest to missionaries in Japan, but it was suggested we also publish:

- reviews in English of books only available in Japanese that would be useful for our JEMA community, and
- provide information about newly published books and tracts.

## Stories

Various topics were suggested:

- testimonies by missionaries in both “frontline” and “support” ministries,
- testimonies by Japanese Christians, and
- stories of missionaries who changed their perspectives toward particular issues or experienced significant paradigm shifts.

## In conclusion

Thanks to all who responded. We haven't been able to cover everything mentioned, but be assured we have read every response and have your thoughts in mind as we seek to improve the JEMA Communications Commission.

Your responses were used in our annual Japan Harvest planning meeting in August. If any of the topics listed in this report are about an area you can write about, we'd love to hear from you. Submit your proposal to our managing editor at [wmarshall@jema.org](mailto:wmarshall@jema.org). **JH**

# Reaching Japanese through YouTube

By Kenji Higashi

*After a 20-year absence from the ministry, God opened a new door*

It's hard to put me in a box. I was born to Japanese parents and grew up in Japan, but I'm not a Japanese national. I pastor a church in Takarazuka-city, Hyogo Prefecture, but I'm not a conventional Japanese pastor. I have a US passport, but I am not affiliated with any American church and I consider myself a missionary. Have I confused you?

In 1978, my father's company transferred him and our family to a little town in Michigan in the US, where I attended an American high school. My high school friends invited me to their church. At first, I couldn't understand English or Christianity very well, but I eventually became a Christian. After graduating from a college in the US and working at a company for a few years, I studied at Dallas Theological Seminary. While a student there, I attended a Japanese church in Dallas and became its assistant pastor. I was married to an American woman at that time, but then she divorced me. That made me feel like I was a total loser and a disgrace. I thought that God didn't want me to serve him, so I left the ministry and returned to the business world.

God, however, did not forget me. Seven years ago, twenty years after I left the ministry, Jesus appeared in a dream and said to me, "Feed my sheep." I immediately quit my job and came back to full-time ministry.

## An audience of one blossomed into a thousand

When I returned to full-time ministry, I didn't know where to start. I attended a Japanese church in Chicago, where I became a Sunday school teacher and a church committee member. Jesus had told me to feed his sheep, but that didn't mean that I could approach my pastor and ask him to leave the church so that I could be his replacement! I prayed and asked my girlfriend in Japan (now my wife) about my ministry. She said she wanted to hear my Bible mes-

sages. So I posted one of them on YouTube for her to listen to. That was how my YouTube ministry began (<https://www.youtube.com/user/yabaikenji>).

A few months after posting my first YouTube message, I received an email from a Japanese man living in rural Philippines. He was a Christian, but there was no Japanese church in his town. So my YouTube messages became his only way to learn about the Bible in Japanese.

I subsequently received many other encouraging messages from Japanese people. Over time I discovered that, like me, many Japanese had become Christians overseas. That's because Japanese are a very group oriented, and so they are more easily influenced by Christians and accept Christ when living outside Japan. In contrast, it's much harder to reach non-Christian Japanese in Japan. Most Japanese belong

to traditional social groups such as their family and *chōnaikai*—neighborhood groups that, among other things, organize *matsuri* (traditional religious festivals). Japanese are very loyal to these groups, which makes it hard for them to leave them when they become Christians. My YouTube messages seem to have become an important way to learn about Christ for Japanese who find it hard to leave these groups and attend a church regularly. They can watch my YouTube Bible messages in the privacy of their own homes.

My YouTube messages average about 1,000 views each and some messages have been viewed about 10,000 times. In Japan, it is difficult to find churches with more than 1,000 people, but my weekly Bible messages are reaching more than 1,000 people. They are reaching non-Christian Japanese. I have received many emails and phone calls from non-Christian Japanese all over Japan who watched my YouTube messages. As I challenge them to trust in Jesus for salvation over the phone, many do accept Christ. My biggest challenge is finding good churches for them so that they can belong to a local branch of Jesus' family.

**But then I realized the gospel is not dependent on human effort or tactics; it spreads by God's mighty power.**

## A tip for finding good Japanese churches<sup>1</sup>

Some Japanese churches are liberal and their preaching is not based on the Bible. Instead of focusing on Christ, they may focus on political issues. Some Japanese pastors believe in evolution rather than creationism. Many evangelicals view liberal churches as being Christian only in name. Since I am an evangelical and believe in the inerrancy of Bible, I want to introduce new Japanese converts to evangelical churches. The question then is how to ascertain the theological orientations of individual churches. Due to the uniqueness of Japanese Christian history, the name or denomination of the church does not help much.

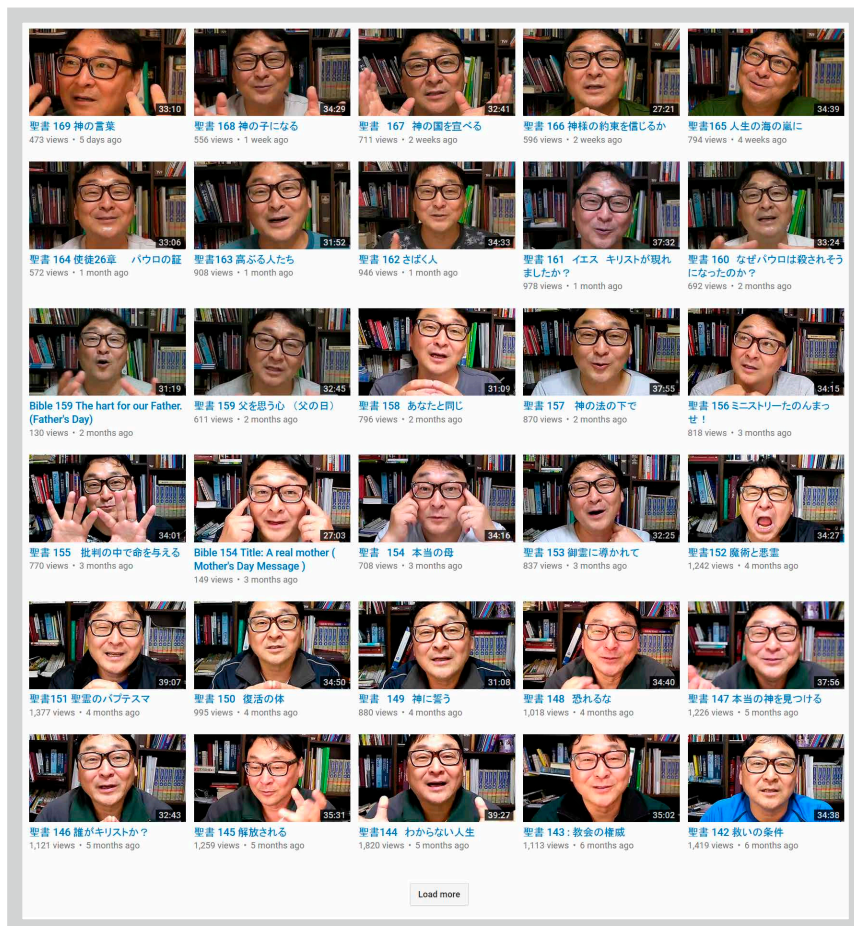
However, one way I've found to get an indication of the theological orientation of a church is to check the Bible translation they use. There are several Japanese translations of the Bible, but almost all Japanese churches use one of two translations: the *Shinkyōdōyaku* (New Interconfessional Translation) or the *Shinkaiyaku* (New Japanese Bible). A church that uses the *Shinkyōdōyaku* translation is more likely to be inclined toward liberal theology, whereas one that uses the *Shinkaiyaku* is more likely to be evangelical. Of course, there are exceptions to this rule, but I think most liberal churches would not use the *Shinkaiyaku* because it was translated by evangelical Japanese scholars. Since most Japanese churches lean toward ecumenicalism, ordinary Japanese bookstores (that is, non-Christian bookstores) generally stock more *Shinkyōdōyaku* Bibles than *Shinkaiyaku* ones.

There are many differences between the two translations. For example, in the *Shinkyōdōyaku*, the Greek word “magi” in Matthew 2:1 is translated *sensei jutsu*, which means astrologer or horoscope expert, whereas in the *Shinkaiyaku* magi is translated *hakase*, which means scholarly expert, doctor, or wise man. I personally think the word “magi” should be translated as “wise man” or remain as “magi”. This is just one example, but I prefer the *Shinkaiyaku* Bible as I think it is more faithful to the original Bible languages.<sup>2</sup>

I think it is important to find a church that provides Bible-based, Christ-centered messages, and so I recommend new Japanese Christians go to a church that uses the *Shinkaiyaku* Bible.

## Planting a new church

For many years, I did not know how to tell others about Christ. But then I realized the gospel is not dependent on human effort or tactics; it spreads by God's mighty power. Evangelism is futile without God calling his people. I believe there are many Japanese yet



to be called, and we need more workers to lead them to Christ.

At first, I was worried about starting a church as I was afraid that no one would come. But instead of depending on my instincts, I prayed and trusted our gracious Lord to lead me. I rented a room by the hour, and we held our first worship service on Easter Sunday in 2015. The church is called Takarazuka Fellowship Church ([tfc-church.com](http://tfc-church.com)).

Planting a church turned out to be easier than I thought. We have about twenty to thirty people coming to our Sunday worship services. Many who come have told me that they found me on YouTube and they liked the Bible-based, Christ-centered messages I provide.

I, who once left the ministry and did not know how to reach people on my own, am being used by our loving and gracious Lord to reach Japanese. I will continue the YouTube ministry and be faithful to God's calling. It is an overwhelming joy for me that God has allowed me to serve him for his glory. Your prayer for this ministry is very much appreciated. **JH**

1. Note that this discussion is the personal opinion of the author, not of JEMA.
2. For fuller discussion and different perspective on the history and use of various Japanese Bible translations, see two articles from 2010 that can be found by searching for "Bible translations" on the *Japan Harvest* website: <http://japanharvest.org?s=bible+translations>

Screenshot of <https://www.youtube.com/user/yabaikenji/videos>, Sept. 3, 2017

*Kenji Higashi* is a US citizen and the founding pastor of Takarazuka Fellowship Church in Takarazuka, Hyogo, Japan. He reaches Japanese with Bible messages on YouTube, which have about 1,000 subscribers.

## At Home Ministry: The Spiritual Journey of Homeless People in Tokyo

Akira Watanabe (YOBEL, Inc). 144 pp.  
Translated by R. Murakami and M. Bost

Watanabe, a pastor at Tokyo Baptist Church (TBC), wrote this heartwarming book about TBC's ministry to the homeless. He shares stories based on interviews with TBC members whose lives have been impacted through church ministries. In the final chapter, Watanabe looks at a theology of a banquet based on Luke 15 and other Scriptures, and outlines a message that he gives to those living on the streets. Watanabe, who also teaches Sociology of Religion at Aoyama Gakuin University, gives a helpful picture of how TBC is reaching homeless people in Tokyo. **JH**

Reviewer rating is 3.5 of 5 stars ★★☆☆☆

## The Tech-Wise Family: Everyday Steps for Putting Technology in Its Proper Place

Andy Crouch (Baker Books, 2017). 221 pp.

Crouch, executive editor of *Christianity Today*, has written a practical book that every family will find helpful. The Barna Research Group helped Crouch document the role technology plays in American families and the concerns held by parents and children.

Barna gives ten “tech-wise commitments” for a healthy family life with technology. Crouch spends almost half of the book on the first three choices—key decisions of a tech-wise family.

1. Choosing character: “we develop wisdom and courage together as a family” (p. 47).

2. Shaping space: filling the center of the home with things that reward skill and active engagement.
3. Structuring time: “one hour a day, one day a week, and one week a year, we turn off our devices and worship, feast, play and rest together” (p. 83).

Commitments four to eight relate to daily life with suggestions such as:

- “We wake up before our devices do, and they ‘go to bed’ before we do” (p. 111);
- “We use screens for a purpose, and we use them together, rather than using them aimlessly and alone” (p. 139);
- “Car time is conversation time” (p. 155);
- “Spouses have one another’s passwords, and parents have total access to children’s devices” (p. 165).

Crouch ends with the two biggest tasks we are made for: to worship God and to care for one another. He suggests: “We learn to sing together, rather than letting recorded and amplified music take over our lives and worship” (p. 183); and “We show up in person for the big events of life” (p. 197). Crouch ends each chapter with a “Crouch Family Reality Check,” an honest look at how his family is doing on each of these commitments.

Russell Moore, in his endorsement of the book, notes that one of the most important questions of discipleship in the digital era is how we relate to our technologies. This is a wise and humble guide to help us learn patterns of life that will prevent technology from taking over our lives. **JH**

Reviewer rating is 4 of 5 stars ★★★★★

## 12 Ways Your Phone is Changing You

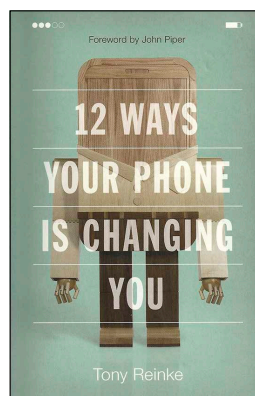
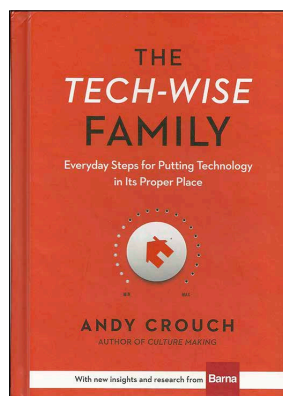
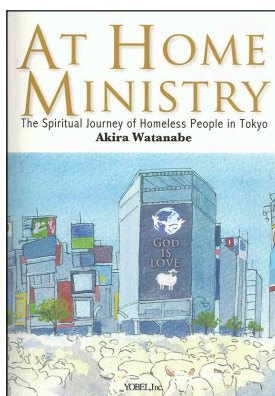
Tony Reinke (Crossway, 2017). 224 pp.

Reinke, a journalist and senior writer for *desiringGod.org*, gives a biblically informed and theologically rich study of how to live smartphone-smart (the Scripture index is four full pages!). Thoroughly researched and informed by interviews with theologians, historians, philosophers, ethicists and others (transcripts at [tonyreinke.com](http://tonyreinke.com)), this book is one to savor and ponder. The question Reinke aims to answer is: “What is the best use of my smartphone in the flourishing of my life?” (p. 20). Reinke “centers on diagnostics and worldview more than application” (p. 23). He helps his readers to think carefully about how to respond wisely to the digital age.

Reinke warns of addiction to distraction, ignoring our flesh and blood, and craving immediate approval (chapters 1-3). He also warns, “We get comfortable in secret vices,” “we lose meaning,” “we fear missing out,” and “we become harsh to one another” (chapters 8-11).

But Reinke does more than just warn us: he “commends 12 life disciplines we need to preserve our spiritual health in the smartphone age” (pp. 189-190). He gives 12 incisive diagnostic questions to help us think about how we use our phones (pp. 197-198) and 12 boundaries to live smartphone-smart (pp. 199-200). “Apps can help me stay focused on my Bible reading plans and help me organize my prayer life, but no app can breathe life into my communion with God” (p. 194). Reinke has written a book that every smartphone user should read and digest! **JH**

Reviewer rating is 5 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.

# Wrestling with God

*Called to walk alongside someone who is struggling to comprehend God*

It's painful when you're sharing the gospel with someone and the longer you talk with them, the further away they seem to fade. We meet Saturday mornings in a trendy-sounding French café near Umeda, in central Osaka. K-san is in her sixties, and a new student to me. She wants to brush up on her English. Her goal is to organize an art exhibition space at an American university in honor of her son who died while attending classes there.

When our English lesson time is over, she asks me some Bible questions. She has been to church before and has even been baptized. To her, the idea of "God as Creator" is obvious, but she's not sure about Jesus as God. She says she agrees with about 99% of Christianity, but some things are hard to grasp.

She asks, "Why did Jesus have to suffer so much to compensate for sin?"

Wow! Encouraged by the question, I grab a little scratch paper for notes and start pulling out some passages and tying in atonement analogies from Japanese culture and history. But here and there she starts to hedge. She admits that the percentage she agrees with drops to 90% and then 80%. I'm wondering where it's going to bottom out. Her idea of "God" is abstract and impersonal and it's hard for her to feel a sense of sin. Jesus seems more like an optional add-on.

I press on to try to make headway, but I worry. . . *Am I explaining things too intellectually, like a fancy-pants Westerner in a philosophy classroom? Am I throwing in too much Scripture?*

We keep at it, working our way deeper, then we hit something solid. The ever-looming question: What happens to those who die without Christ? What happened to my son?

I pray to somehow be more pastoral in my words and careful now as I lay out a few passages.

"What about reincarnation?" she presses. "Can't the Bible somehow allow for it so people without Christ can have a second chance?" This is what it seems to come down to for her. "If Christianity doesn't allow for that, even the possibility of it hidden between the verses," she says, "maybe I have to abandon Christianity."

At some point I look up at the clock. Looks like no bell will be coming from some referee. I propose we continue this discussion later and we make plans to meet again.

As I take the train home, I sullenly second-guess myself. Even with a friendly sumo match, a draw like that leaves everyone feeling a little underwhelmed. I'm sure Jesus would have had a dramatic story to sidestep her questions, catch her off-balance, and find her opening—that spot sore and bruised from death's sting—and press his salve onto it.

The next time we meet, she looks tired. She tells me that rather than working on the exhibition idea, she's been binge-watching videos from Pastor Kenichi Nakagawa,

trying to make sense of the Bible. I'm stunned. I finally realize that it's not me she's wrestling with, but God.

I'm reminded of what that means—to agonize with him, as with Jacob, to get the blessing of his favor and protection. Or trying to squirm against his hold in the case of Jonah. The struggle could leave one

crippled for life or flung down into the depths. Who can strive at all against the Almighty if God did not also give them the strength to do so? It's the same for a patriarch, a prophet, or a grieving mother in Osaka. But in the end, if we persist, we can confidently confess his name, and receive a new name, and rest in his blessing. **JH**

*Daniel Morgan was sent from his home church, Church in the Center, in Houston, Texas in 2013, and is currently helping out at Abide Calvary Chapel Osaka.*

**Who can strive at all against the Almighty if God did not also give them the strength to do so? It's the same for a patriarch, a prophet, or a grieving mother in Osaka.**



# Evaluating strategies for building vocabulary

*Learning new words is never easy, but there are some principles that can help vocabulary stick*

One of the most onerous aspects of language learning is building vocabulary. At first it can be fun to learn new words in another language, but it's not long before the sheer magnitude of the task becomes apparent. I sometimes feel like I forget two words to make room for every new word I learn!

I don't know of any magical methods for making words stick, but there are certain principles that can help.

## Principles for learning vocabulary

**Repetition:** Reinforcement through repeated exposure is probably the most critical aspect to learning new words. The reason it can be so hard to remember the name of a person you meet for the first time is because you hear their name once but then generally don't hear it again. Any strategy for remembering vocabulary must include a way to review new words.

**Context:** Hearing or seeing how new words are used in context is also helpful for learning their meaning and usage. Adults often learn a word in a second language by connecting it to a similar word in their first language. But this has two problems. First, it hinders fluency in the second language by tying it to the first language. Second, it fails to account for the fact that one-to-one correspondence doesn't always exist between words in two languages. In contrast, children pick up words from context, which is a more effective long-term learning strategy. Sample sentences can be valuable for seeing words in context.



**One of the best ways to make a new word your own is to use it, either in conversation or writing.**

**Seeing and hearing:** To reinforce connections between the spoken and written language, it helps to see a spoken word and hear a written word. Listening to audio books while following the text in a written book and reading Japanese subtitles for Japanese TV programs and movies are two ways of doing this. Also, many apps allow you to listen to the pronunciation of words and sentences.

**Finding connections:** All kinds of connections exist between words in a language. Finding these links can be

fun and reduce the amount of memory work needed. For example, when learning an adjective (e.g. pretty), it can be helpful to connect it to its opposite (e.g. ugly). Learning words that share the same *kanji* is another way to connect words. In Japanese onomatopoeia is frequently related to conventional words (e.g. きらきら[sparkle] is derived from the verb きらめく[to sparkle]).

**Using new words:** One of the best ways to make a new word your own is to use it, either in conversation or writing.

## Evaluating strategies for learning vocabulary

**Using bilingual lists or flash cards:** One of the most common ways to learn vocabulary is to use bilingual flash cards or word lists. By themselves, flash cards and word lists are probably not very effective, but they can be more effective if they are supplemented by a good review system (one that prioritises reviewing words you don't know well), sample sentences, and audio.

**Reviewing words encountered during the day:** One of my favourite ways to practice vocabulary was to look up new words that I encountered in everyday life on my electronic dictionary. I would then use the review button to review them later and read example sentences. This allowed me to both recall words and see how they were used. Many apps now fulfill this purpose.

**Tadoku:** This is a reading method that involves reading a lot of material in Japanese without using a dictionary to look up words (see *Japan Harvest*, Summer 2016, p. 32). While it doesn't involve active memorisation of words, I think it's a powerful method for learning new words because it satisfies the principles of repetition (you encounter words at the same frequency as they are used in books) and context.

I'd encourage you to evaluate the methods that you're using for learning vocabulary in light of the above principles and consider whether your methods could be improved or exchanged for other ones. **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*: [rjcnetwork.org](http://rjcnetwork.org)



# Praying for unbelievers

*How should we pray for those who don't yet know God?*

When we think about praying for unbelievers, we first need to look at what God has done and is doing for them. He gives many of the same things to all people—both saved and unsaved. He has provided this earth on which to live. “He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous” (Matthew 5:45 NASB). The list could go on. He also sent His Son to die for all people (1 Timothy 2:6).

When we pray, we are to pray according to God's will (1 John 5:14). But what is that will in regard to unbelievers? Two verses make that clear: God “desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4) and He is “not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). So the first and foremost thing we should pray in regard to unbelievers is that they be saved. It's what God wants.

You say: “I do pray for the salvation of my neighbors, friends, and co-workers who don't know the Lord. But so often, they don't become Christians. What's happening? Am I praying in a wrong way? Is there something more I have to do for God to answer my prayers?”

Well first, let us realize that God hears every prayer we pray (Psalm 34:15, John 9:31). If He does not answer in the way we want, it's not because He doesn't hear us. He does. But there is more at work than just His will and His hearing us. When we pray for someone else, they are involved too.

When we pray for an unbeliever, God begins to work in their heart and life. He wants to answer our prayers and for people to come to know Him through His Son, Jesus Christ. But the person we pray for might resist



**Prayer changes  
who we pray for  
and it changes us.**

“Don't think God is listening to your prayers? Indeed He is. But He may have higher plans.”

— Max Lucado —

what God is doing in their life and might even reject it completely. That is sad, but each person is responsible for their own response. As the one praying for them, I am not responsible; neither is God. God will not ride roughshod over someone against their will. He will work mightily in their lives, but the ultimate decision as to whether to trust Him or not is up to that person themselves.

So when we pray for the salvation of an unbeliever, we can be assured that that is God's will, and we can expect Him to work in their lives. They might not become a Christian, no matter how hard we pray. That is their choice—to believe or not.

In every other situation, though, we can pray for them just like we would for someone who believes. We can pray for God to heal them if they are sick. We can pray that they get a job, if that is what

they need. But, just like with all of our prayers, God will only grant our requests if it is His will.

Prayer changes who we pray for and it changes us.

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6,7).

So let's pray. Pray for everyone: “First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men” (1 Timothy 2:1). That includes unbelievers. But let's also remember that though it is God's will that all be saved, some will not come to Him. That shouldn't stop us from continually praying that those around us will come to Him. May His will be done on earth as it is in heaven. **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.

# How to improve multigenerational organizations

*Reduce conflict in the workplace by understanding generational differences*

The employees at many organizations range in age from 18 to 80. Because of this makeup, generational differences in values can lead to conflict through misunderstanding and miscommunication. Below, I highlight the values of each generation and give some advice on how to help your organization run smoothly.

**Baby Boomers** (born between 1946 and 1964) are currently the largest generation. They tend to be micro-managers. They have high expectations and push hard to achieve their goals.<sup>1</sup> Boomers are reserved in communicating and prefer to talk face-to-face. They feel work should stay at the office and evaluate it by the number of hours worked.<sup>2</sup>

**Gen-Xers** (born between 1964 and 1980) are cautious and conservative. They tend to be highly educated, self-sufficient, and able to adapt quickly to new situations.<sup>3</sup> They value flexibility, a more informal workplace, and sharing information in a group. They prefer work that provides personal and professional growth.<sup>4</sup>

**Millennials** (born between 1980 and 2000) are highly ambitious, idealistic, and tech-savvy.<sup>5</sup> They long to be heard, preferring texting to talking face-to-face. They need to feel valued and are respectful if they feel respected. They look for a sense of accomplishment and community through their work.<sup>6</sup>



“What you value determines how you behave.”

— Betsy Allen —

training. Rather than a classroom format, engage your Millennials by offering the more interpersonal coaching-style of education.

4. **Don't be defined by office hours:** The Boomer likes to keep work at the office, whereas a Gen-Xer or Millennial can be just as productive working from Starbucks. With both Gen-Xers and Millennials appreciating flexibility, work should be measured by how much gets done, not how many hours are put in.
5. **Use mixed teams:** For the best results in any group, make your teams intergenerational. Don't think in terms of differences but in terms of being complimentary. Play to each other's strengths.

There's no perfect workplace but, by understanding the differences in generational values and using them to advantage, an organization can become not only more harmonious but also more productive. **JH**

## How to keep harmony between generations

1. **Be cautious about stereotyping:** Criticizing differences can be polarizing and often leads to conflict. Don't think of a colleague in terms of their generation but in terms of their individuality and gifts.
2. **Accept different styles of communication:** Communication lines can stay open when we acknowledge that each generation has their own style of sharing information. Sending text messages to Millennials communicates as much as a face-to-face talk for Boomers.
3. **Provide flexible training:** The Boomers and Gen-Xers in your organizations are comfortable with a classroom or teacher format in continuing education opportunities. It's important to include other approaches in how your organization provides

1. Jasmine Gordon, "Understanding Baby Boomers at Work", April 11, 2016, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/adp/2016/04/11/understanding-baby-boomers-at-work-fast-facts-for-chros/>
2. Allen, Ibid
3. Gordon, Ibid
4. Allen, Ibid
5. Gordon, ibid
6. Allen, Ibid



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# Protecting the privacy of others

*Honour one another above yourselves*

I've gotten myself in trouble a couple of times by not respecting people's privacy online. On social media and even in emails it's easy to make mistakes that we later deeply regret.

Have you considered how you need to protect the privacy of others in your prayer letters? Imagine if everyone you write about was going to read your prayer letter? Would they be okay with what we write about them?

## What should we do?

- Obtain consent. It's best to ask before revealing someone's identity or including their photo in your prayer letter. The same thing applies if you take their photo and intend to put it on Facebook or your website.\*
- Alter identifying details. Change names, places, or other characteristics when you are writing. I do this all the time on my blog, so that my friends aren't worried about talking with me about private matters.
- Ask: Is it necessary? How important is it to include this level of detail in your prayer letter? You can be vague about someone's identity and still make your point.
- Apply the "if it happened to me" test. Imagine a missionary from a different religion wrote about you or included a photo of you in one of their publications. How would you feel?

Writers in our passport countries are concerned about litigation, but I think a more important concern for us here is to show love to others. Paul tells us to "be devoted to one another in love. Honour one another above yourselves" (Romans 12:10 NIV). Let's honour others by respecting their privacy. **JH**

\* In Japan people have been prosecuted for publishing photos of people taken in public, so it's wise to take care.

<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/community/2017/01/22/how-tos/recording-public-places-japan-privacy-portrait-rights-come-play/>

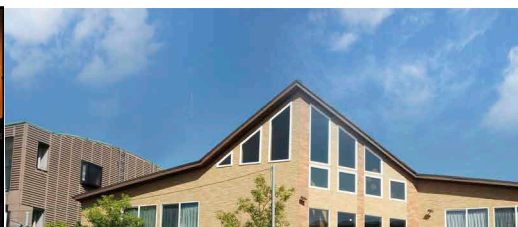
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# Taming your inbox

*Drowning in email? Here are some tips for reducing the time you spend checking your email.*

Email has been around since the '70s. At first, its use was limited to the military and other professionals, but today billions of users send billions of emails every day. I have more email accounts than I care to count: work accounts, ministry accounts, personal accounts, and junk accounts. Chances are you have multiple accounts too. Checking multiple mailboxes can be time consuming without the right tools and techniques. Here are a few tips for taming your mailboxes to free up your valuable time.



## Unsubscribe

Your email inboxes can become cluttered if you browse the web, purchase from online stores, or create online accounts with your email address. Your information is a valuable marketing resource that companies are willing to pay well for. I often end up on mailing lists because I forget to select the “opt out of email newsletters” option in the fine print. Gmail has a great feature that searches your emails to find unsubscribe links and helps you get off lists you did not intend to sign up for.

## Consolidating accounts

If you have a lot of email accounts, you can consolidate them into a single master mailbox service. For example, Gmail and Outlook allow you to add another email address you own. You receive the email and can respond from your secondary email address, but the master email account filters spam, applies your rules, and protects your privacy. A second benefit is that you don't have to set up those accounts if you switch phones or email programs. Another reason for consolidating accounts is when you have several accounts that you hang on to because the email addresses were printed on something years ago and there is a remote possibility someone will try to contact you through them.

## Focused inbox

A fairly new feature is the focused inbox. Inbox by Gmail and Microsoft Outlook both support this technology. Emails sent directly from people are automatically prioritized, while ads and other non-pressing emails are put to the side. It can serve as a first line of defense against cluttered mailboxes.

## Setting up rules

A second tool for tackling inbox woes is setting up good rules, which most email programs and online email hosts offer. If you agree that not every email needs an immediate response, or even needs to be read straight away, you can reduce the amount of time spent checking email. For example, you can create a rule that directs emails from important people to a special folder or highlights them a certain color. Chat logs, purchase receipts, sale ads, and other non-pressing emails can be automatically sent to a read-once-a-week folder. A focused inbox divides your email into primary and secondary levels, while a good set of rules can color code or split your email even further so that the most important emails get your attention first.

## Using recipes and flows

If you are really interested in cleaning up your email, check automation sites like IFTTT, Zapier, Microsoft Flow, or Workflow on iOS, which allow you to create more interesting rules for email. For example, email can be automatically converted to PDF files or sent to a Kindle reader. Sites like IFTTT can make checking email fun again.

Hopefully, these tips will help reduce the time you spend sifting through emails and free you to be with people. No matter how many emails we send and receive, life-on-life ministering is one of the greatest works in Japan in which we can be involved.

## Useful links

Gmail: Adding another email account

<https://support.google.com/mail/answer/6078445?hl=en>

Gmail: Instructions about unsubscribe button

<https://www.digitaltrends.com/computing/google-adds-an-unsubscribe-button-to-spam-mail-in-gmail/>

Microsoft: Focused inbox

<https://goo.gl/nhNzs9> (shortened link to page at support.office.com)

Inbox by Google (if you sign in with Gmail account it will just take you to that site)

<https://inbox.google.com/>

IFTTT

<https://ifttt.com/collections/> **JH**



Graphic: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/cardkarma/5990183098>

*Jared Jones lives and works in Takasaki, Gunma. He's a church planter for the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention. He's been in Japan since 2009 with his family. He and his wife have five children.*

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# Gift-giving in Japan

*Engaging thoughtfully in gift-giving is important in Japanese culture*

In Japan, the custom of gift-giving is a big deal. For newcomers, it can be rather daunting and might seem unimportant. In fact, perhaps because they really didn't understand its significance, my parents said they wouldn't be a part of gift-giving in Japan. They said it was just a vicious circle; if you give a gift to someone who gave something to you, they will give you a gift in return—a never-ending situation. So, they received gifts but never gave anything back. That didn't sit well with me.

Japanese people seem to love giving gifts. But it is more often an obligation than a joy. As an important custom here, though, we as missionaries should seek to understand gift-giving and consider how to thoughtfully practice it.

We may not practice gift-giving to the extent many Japanese people do. It is said that the average Japanese businessman spends over US\$2,000 a year on gifts.<sup>1</sup> That may be more than we can afford, but we should at least know when gifts are appropriate, how to give and to receive them.

## Omiyage

The main type of gift is *omiyage* (お土産), often translated as “souvenir.” But *omiyage* is much more than the normal souvenir. It is given when you go to someone's home, whether for a meal or just to visit. If you are invited for a meal, a food gift is suitable. It doesn't have to be expensive or fancy. But Japanese are brand-conscious, so if you buy it at a department store or a locally-known store, bring it wrapped and in the bag from that store. That adds to the value.

Another type of *omiyage* is one you buy on a trip. If you return from your home country, a small memento is fine. When Japanese people go on trips overseas, they often receive *senbetsu* (饞別, a send-off gift). If you receive *senbetsu*, you should bring back a souvenir, called *okaeshi* (お返し, a return gift), worth about half the cost of what was given.

## Ochūgen and oseibo

Other important gifts are *ochūgen* (お中元) and *oseibo* (お歳暮). *Ochūgen* is a mid-year gift. *Oseibo* is an end-of-the-year gift. Both are given to people to whom you are indebted in some way—doctors (in private practice), coworkers, managers, parents, relatives, matchmakers, and teachers, etc.<sup>2</sup> It's easiest to buy a gift at a local store and have them send it directly to those people. Yes, your local supermarket, convenience store, and department store will have items or a catalog of items you can send. But you can also deliver it by hand. For example, we (in the name of our church) give a gift to the orthopedist next door for allowing us to use his parking lot on Sundays and evenings. Because these gifts are for services rendered, there is no



*okaeshi*. Both of these gifts should come with a *noshi*, a special paper with the name of the sender.

## Other gift-giving occasions

There are many other occasions when gifts are required. Money gifts are to be given at weddings, funerals, and memorials. Odd numbers are auspicious in Japan, so most Japanese are careful not to put an even number of bills in their envelope. On these occasions, it is normal for *okaeshi* to be given.

## Giving and receiving gifts

The proper way to give and receive a gift is with both hands. One hand means you are looking down on the other person. And if giving a gift in person, you should say something humble like “This is not much of a gift.” When receiving a gift, it is polite to refuse it at least once (often twice is normal) and then humbly accept it. It is not polite in Japan to open a gift you receive in front of the giver, unless you ask first. It is rarely done, so the giver will often say no.

Japanese keep long accounts, so the next time you meet someone who gave you a gift or did something for you (even a year before), you should thank them for “the other day.” That will help keep your relationship on a good level. There are many websites that you can consult if you don't know what to do. I found over 14 million on a recent search. The basic rule of thumb in gift-giving in Japan is this: when in doubt, bring something. When receiving a gift, be grateful and think of how you can express this gratefulness by returning the favor. **JH**

(A longer version of this article is available on our website: [japanharvest.org](http://japanharvest.org))

1. Javon, “The Art of Gift Giving/Zoto,” <https://www.onegreenbicycle.com/2017/01/theartgiftgiving/>, January 9, 2017.
2. Mishima, Shizuko, “Oseibo and Ochugen: Learn About These Traditional Japanese Gifts,” <https://www.tripsavvy.com/japanese-gift-giving-customs-1550765>, August 5, 2017.

Photo: <http://www.kadena.af.mil/News/Photos/igphoto/2000825981/>

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