



# Missionary Family Life



## To Create Products Of Excellent Quality...

Miyoshi Oil & Fat was founded in 1921 as a manufacturer of soap for the textile industry.

In 1941, the Foods and Oils Division was established and Miyoshi began producing Margarine, followed by shortening, lard and other products. Today, Miyoshi produces more edible processed oils and fats than any other manufacturers in Japan.

While diversifying the applications of oils & fats, Miyoshi has remained true to the goal it set itself eight decades ago: **to create products of excellent quality.**



### Main Products

- Margarine
- Lard
- Whipping Cream
- Frozen Dough
- Shortening
- Powdered Oil & Fat
- Fillings

### MIYOSHI OIL & FAT CO.,LTD.

66-1, 4-CHOME, HORIKIRI, KATSUSHIKA-KU, TOKYO 〒124-8510

BRANCHES : OSAKA, NAGOYA, FUKUOKA

FACTORIES : TOKYO, KOBE, CHIBA



YAMAZAKI BISCUITS Co.,LTD.

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

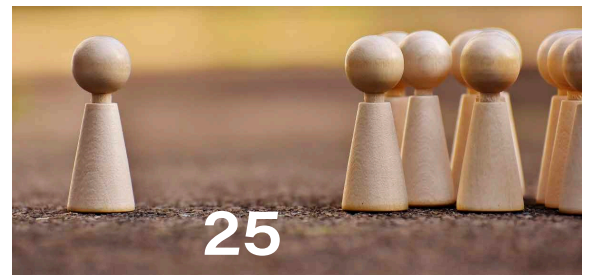
## Forward



- 4 Happenings
- 5 From the Editor
- 6 News

## General Articles

- 25 **Community is vital**  
*by Sue Plumb Takamoto*
- 28 **Marrying non-believers**  
*by Simon Pleasants*



## Feature Articles

- 8 **Ministry as a young mum**  
*by Henrietta Cozens*
- 10 **Something precious**  
*by Mike McGinty*
- 12 **Help. Thanks. Wow.**  
*by Yukiko Howard*
- 14 **Eight family rituals you can do**  
*by Sue Plumb Takamoto*
- 16 **Our unusual education journey**  
*by Luann Nakazawa*
- 18 **Make memorable vacations**  
*by Shelley Schmidt*
- 20 **Stop waiting—start celebrating**  
*by Karen Viljoen*
- 21 **A role in God's movie**  
*by Rachel Hughes*
- 22 **Combining family and church planting**  
*by Leo Kaylor*
- 23 **TCK Corner**



## Regulars

- 30 **Off the Bookshelf**  
*Recent publications for Bible study*  
*by Don Schaeffer*
- 31 **New Voices**  
*Spiritual warfare in Japan*  
*by Levi Booth*
- 32 **Language and Culture**  
*The early stages of language acquisition*  
*by Simon Pleasants*
- 33 **Focus on Prayer**  
*Why don't we pray?*  
*by Ken Reddington*
- 34 **Member Care**  
*The benefits of giving thanks*  
*by Eileen Nielsen*
- 35 **Good Writing**  
*Prayer letter inspiration*  
*by Wendy Marshall*
- 36 **Modern Tech**  
*Live broadcasting*  
*by Jared Jones*
- 38 **Voice of Experience**  
*Take time to listen*  
*by Dan Ellrick*

## February

### Shepherds Gathering Prayer Event

February 5, 2018

ICA near Tokyo University

### CPI Grace Week 1

February 19-23, 2018

Fukuin no Ie, Okutama, Tokyo

### JEMA Connect

February 26-28, 2018

Ochanomizu Christian Center, Tokyo



## March

### WIM Kanto Spring Retreat

March 7-9, 2018

Olive no Sato, Nikko



### Hokkaido Christian Women's Fellowship Day Retreat

March 10, 2018

OMF Hokkaido Center, Sapporo

### WIM Kansai Day Retreat

March 12, 2018

Kobe Union Church

## May

### CPI Grace Week 2

May 7-11, 2018

Fukuin no Ie, Okutama, Tokyo

### Kanto Prayer Summit

May 15-18, 2018

Okutama Bible Chalet

### Kansai Prayer Summit

May 21-24, 2018

Nosegawa Bible Camp



## July-August

### Refresh - the Karuizawa Union Church Summer Conference

July 29 - August 5, 2018

Karuizawa Union Church



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

**jema.org**

Also see our online magazine: **japanharvest.org**



Japan Harvest

Volume 69 No. 1  
Winter 2018

© 2018 Please do not copy any article, photo, poem, or report unless permission is granted. Contact Managing Editor.

#### Japan Harvest Staff

*Executive Editor:* Gary Bauman (gbauman@jema.org)

*Managing Editor:* Wendy Marshall (wmarshall@jema.org)

*Associate Editors:* Rachel Hughes, Simon Pleasants

*Editorial Assistants:* Jennifer Bello, Sharon Bennett

*News Editor:* Katie McIntosh

*Art Director:* Greg Corey

*Layout Designer/Production Editor:* Karen Ellrick

*Associate Designer:* Clayton McIntosh

*Advertising Director:* Atsuko Tateishi

*Fact Checker:* Georgina Anderson

*Proofreader:* Ken Reddington

*Proofreading Assistant:* Evangeline Kindervater

*Online Photo Library Administrator:* Stephanie Mikamo

#### Printer

New Life Ministries

#### JEMA Leadership Team

*President:* Nathan Snow

*Vice President:* Paul Suzuki

*Secretary:* David Scott

*Treasurer:* Carol Love

*Members-at-Large:* Gary Bauman, Hazel Yokota, Paul Ewing

#### JEMA Administrative Assistants (part-time):

Yuka Oguro, Atsuko Tateishi, Mayumi Penner, Kaori Cooke

#### Submissions

The editors welcome unsolicited articles.

Writer's guidelines are available at:

<http://japanharvest.org/submissions/>

#### Submission Deadlines

Spring issue: January 10

Summer issue: For 2018, March 10 (normally March 31)

Autumn issue: For 2018, July 10 (normally June 30)

Winter issue: August 31

JEMA Order Form: Page 39

Price overseas is \$30.00 (USD) per year.

Price in Japan is ¥2,800 per year.

Single copy is ¥750.

Postal Transfer: Account #: 00130-4-180466

Name: JEMA-Japan Harvest

#### Moving?

Contact the JEMA office so we can update our files!

JEMA

2-1 Kanda Surugadai

Chiyoda Ku, Tokyo 101-0062

Tel: 03-3295-1949 Fax: 03-3295-1354

Email: [jema-info@jema.org](mailto:jema-info@jema.org)

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

*Japan Harvest* is the official publication of the Japan Evangelical Missionary Association (JEMA). It is published quarterly. Individual articles or advertisements express the viewpoints of the contributors and not necessarily those of JEMA.

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

# Raising a family in Japan

My husband and I first came to Japan with OMF in 2000. We jumped straight into full-time language learning while juggling the full-time care of our 19-month-old son between us. From there, things only got more hectic: our second son was born during language school and our third son during our first home assignment. My experience of missionary life has been so intertwined with raising a family that I find it hard to imagine life in Japan without my husband and children.

I struggle to explain to people who have only lived in one place that, while I call Australia home, I've also created a home in Japan. It is where I've done most of my parenting. As a family, we have created most of our memories and feel the most settled in Japan.

As I read through the feature articles, two related themes stood out: life in a country that isn't your own is challenging, but, at the same time, the God who has called us here is faithful and sustains us.

Life can be tough when you are away from the easy and familiar, are separated from loved ones, and have to deal with many transitions. When life isn't easy, we look for support outside ourselves. When we look to God for that support, we find our relationship with him is enriched as we rely more and more on him.

I'm thankful for this issue's feature stories, in which writers have dared to tell you their experiences of family life as missionaries. I hope you too will be strengthened and encouraged by hearing how God has helped others along the challenging journey of missionary family life.

One of our general articles is by Sue Takamoto and is about how community helps new missionaries adjust to life in Japan. Developing community can make an enormous difference. The JEMA community is a very loose grouping of people. But—through sharing our stories here, online, and at the various JEMA events—we can develop a type of community that helps sustain not just new missionaries, but those of us who've been round a while longer.

## We need writers

I'm grateful to the writers who contribute to our regular columns each issue. I'm also thankful for the feedback, which we shared last issue, that our readers appreciate these articles. We continually need writers who've been in Japan less than five years for the New Voices article, as well as writers who've been here longer than twenty years for the Voice of Experience article. I'd love to hear from you.

## We need photographers

We also need quality photographs. I know there are lots of photographers in our JEMA community. Some time ago, we set up a *Japan Harvest* photo library. The easiest way to contribute photos is to add them to the *Japan Harvest* Flickr group (<https://www.flickr.com/groups/japanharvest/>). To do this, you will need your own Flickr account and upload your photos to it. Alternatively, you can email photos to us at [japanharvest\\_photos@yahoo.com](mailto:japanharvest_photos@yahoo.com). In the email subject, please include a keyword that describes the theme of your photos (for example, "prayer"). Please note that we do strive to credit the photographers whose work we use.

Upcoming magazine themes to consider are:

- Short-term missions
- Cultural understanding
- Renewal and revival
- Returnees

Photos we're always seeking include:

- Daily life in Japan
- Japanese culture
- Japanese church life
- Cityscapes
- Scenic photos

If you want to submit a photo of someone whose face is recognizable, please ask their permission first.

I pray this issue will encourage, inspire, and equip you for the work God's given you. If you'd like to pray for our magazine team, please send me an email and I'll add you to those who receive a short pray-for-Japan-Harvest email six times a year.



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

### The themes for the coming issues are:

**Spring 2018:** Short term missions (submission deadline closed)

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

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

## Connecting people of all ages

*Christian Shimbun, July 16, 2017*

*Translated by Grace Koshino*

*Interior photo <https://iabelog.com/en/kyoto/A2607/A260704/26020628/dt/phtolst/3/>*

*Other photos submitted by Christian Shimbun*

At the age of 25, Masako Tanaka left her job as a personal care assistant and moved to New Zealand. It was around that time that the devastating Great East Japan Earthquake occurred, and she felt helpless, unable to do anything.

“I started praying about what I could do for my country. I decided to follow God’s call to go back to Japan and tell people about him. In New Zealand, there are residential homes called Open Houses, in which elderly people live. They don’t lock their front doors, so people can freely come by for a chat or to help out with the cleaning, or caring for people. I wanted to create a place in Japan where everyone felt welcome like that, and I got the idea of starting up a café.”

“When I took the first step, God kept opening doors. I shared my vision with my friend, Shiori Asada, who was working in childcare at the time. I explained I wanted to create a place that welcomed people of all ages. She joined me as a business partner. But we had no background knowledge or skills. We started the café based on faith alone, and since it wouldn’t be a good testimony if it had failed, we started studying catering and business management.”



“We had no funds to refurbish the building we rented, so we decided to do it ourselves. A carpenter who saw us struggling to do the floors and interior was kind enough to give us a helping hand. Even the tables and chairs were donated; it was completed through the love of so many people. On the day we opened Café Lantana, church members, family, and others who had helped us gathered at the café and together we prayed for God’s blessings.”

---

## *We started the café based on faith alone.*

---

“Lantana” is the name of a flower which blooms in various colors, and they also change color as they mature, resulting in marvelous color combinations. Tanaka named the café “Lantana” in the hope that it could change and adapt according to God’s will, just like the flower.

Café Lantana, in Kizugawa, Kyoto Prefecture, celebrated its fifth anniversary in July.

“Eating is an important part of life. It is our hope to provide a place that enriches both body and soul,” says Tanaka. “We hope that God will continue to use Café Lantana, and that it will be a place where people can connect both with each other and with him.” ■



Café Lantana, located by the Kizu River on Route 24 in Kizugawa City, offers a variety of home-made dishes using local ingredients. These include Obanzai Lunch, which uses fresh, local vegetables, and the vegetable-rich Lantana Curry. They also serve freshly ground coffee and have a delicious breakfast menu. The hamburgers, made using specialty bamboo shoots sourced from the nearby town of Yamashiro, are a must-try, and the café’s Shiso Juice is a summer specialty.

Lantana Alpha, a popular delicatessen and lunchbox service co-located with Café Lantana, was started two years ago with the help of Tamiko Watabe, a qualified nutritionist.

The vibrant, young staff and their delicious food attract a wide range of customers to both businesses.

<http://cafelantana.com>



# 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!”

## Memories of Dr. Hinohara

Christian Shimbun, July 30 and August 6, 2017; Translated by Tomoko Kato  
Photos by Christian Shimbun

Doctor Shigeaki Hinohara, one of Japan’s most famous doctors, passed away on July 18, 2017 at the age of 105. Chairman emeritus of St. Luke’s International University and honorary president of St. Luke’s International Hospital, he had continued to see patients until just months before his death.

Dr. Hinohara dedicated his life to preventive medicine and terminal care. But he also encountered some dramatic situations in his lifetime. When doomsday cult Aum Shinrikyo released deadly sarin gas on the Tokyo subway in 1995, he worked to save more than 600 lives.

### Hijacking

He was also caught up in the Yodogō hijacking of 1970, in which radical communists seized control of Japan Airlines Flight 315. Soon after his flight departed Haneda for Fukuoka, where he was to attend a medical conference, nine members of the Japanese Red Army Faction, armed with samurai swords and pipe bombs, announced that they were hijacking the plane to defect to North Korea. They repeatedly threatened to blow up the plane in the four days before hostages were finally released.

During the hijacking Hinohara tried to keep calm by reading. From a collection of books offered by the hijackers, he chose Dostoyevsky’s *The Brothers Karamazov*. On the title page he found John 12:24—“Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls

to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds” (NIV). He wondered if the young Red Army members would understand the deep meaning of this passage if they read it after they landed in North Korea. The words of Dostoyevsky’s Father Zossima stuck with Hinohara—“Jesus Christ is always with you.”

Once a plan had been established—Japan’s vice-minister of transport, Shinjiro Yamamura, would board the plane in Seoul in exchange for the release of passengers and most crew members—the hijackers and the passengers had more opportunities to talk to each other. The young Red Army members, one of whom was just 17 years old, insisted that they would be part of an international revolution and bring down the bourgeois Japanese government. “People in Japan must listen to its young people and take them seriously in order to avoid this kind of



News article of Hinohara’s experience in the hijacking

situation,” Hinohara said. “In a way we felt hurt, much like their parents must have felt at being betrayed by their own children. [Ed. note: many young people in Japan around that time were attracted to communist ideology. Their parents were those who worked hard to rebuild postwar Japan.] Something more must be done for future generations in Japan.” Hinohara often recounted this as a life-changing experience, saying that he felt privileged to survive. “That’s when my real life, living just for God, began.”

### A life recognized

Prior to his death, Dr. Hinohara had been scheduled to be a main speaker for Love Sonata Tokyo Leadership Forum, a Korean mission event for Japan held on July 26. A video recording of his 2016 interview with music producer Tōtarō Wajima (VOICE FACTORY LTD.) was shown instead. According to Wajima, “Dr. Hinohara would say that relationships between individual people are more important than relationships at the national level. That is why we need to relate to each other in love.”

In 2005 Dr. Hinohara received the Order of Culture (*Bunka-kunshō*), Japan’s top award for contributions to culture. He was also recognized with a Japan Gospel Service Award (*Fukuinkōrō-shō*) from the Japan Gospel Promotion Committee in 2011. ■



# Ministry as a young mum

By Henrietta Cozens

There is a very real cost involved in raising children away from your home country, but God's faithfulness finds expression through the support of new relationships

I missed my mum when I had children in Japan. When I took my one month old for his first check up at the maternity clinic, other mums with their babies born the same day as mine were accompanied by their mothers (the babies' grandmothers)—all except me! I hadn't expected that. I felt neglected and lonely.

I also regularly missed my mum while hanging the washing out each morning on the poles on our veranda. I wanted to show her the different way it was done here and get her ideas on how my day should progress with the young child currently playing on the *tatami*. But when she did come to visit, she stayed some distance away (because our apartment was too small) and never saw me doing the laundry. We did have some funny and special times, but when she left, it was back to me and the baby on the *tatami* and the wet washing again—an experience I never got to share after all.

## Valuable advice from teammates

It's hard being a new parent without the normal guidance of ones close to us. For me, teammates became like family. I was lucky to have two slightly older mums on my team. They would share ideas of how they had managed their lives, living out Titus 2:4—the older women teaching the younger women how to love their husband and children. I learned that only one of them (the husband or wife) would “work”, while the other looked after the children. They told me how they would try and get out and about in



the mornings with the children and then stay home in the afternoons. They sometimes included washing dishes in their list of activities when I phoned up (as their team leader asking what they had done that day). My ways of thriving as a single missionary, such as meeting people for long coffees in Starbucks and racing around on my bike to language lessons, were no longer going to work—I needed their advice.

We brought our children with us to team meetings. We'd meet once a month in one of our homes, going through ministry plans, praying, and having lunch. Our little ones looked forward to these meetings; they had a few toys on the floor and a lot of love in the room. They saw the adults (who spoke their language) as aunts and uncles.

Two of the couples had school-aged children, and so we started a monthly Sunday meet-up too. These meetings were especially valuable to us while we were still in the pioneer evangelism stage. This meeting effectively became our church, although we weren't looking to draw others in, but to be equipped to go out and each start churches. We would spend the morning together in Bible study, prayer, and worship, while we would do fun activities, business, or training in missionary skills in the afternoons. The older children felt the younger ones should have more Bible teaching and so ran a little Sunday School for them, which was great. One adult team member and one child (usually not their own) was assigned to prepare in advance and then lead that each time.





### A Messy Church birthed through a Kindergarten

We sent our daughter to a Japanese Christian daycare centre from three years old. This gave her increasing fluency in Japanese. After a year, she was reasonably fluent and would love telling us her quizzes and singing her songs and quizzes in the bath each evening. We also advertised through the daycare centre for recruits for our new venture—a church for families with young children. It was based on the concept of Messy Church ([www.messychurch.org.uk](http://www.messychurch.org.uk)) in the UK and elsewhere. Quite a few families came from the daycare centre, and a mums' Bible study group came out of it. In the second year we had a baptism too.

I found it easier to teach people about Jesus once I was immersed and trusted in the group.

### A supportive mums' group

Another lifeline was a nominally international mums' group (but all the mums were Asian apart from me and most were Japanese). It provided a very easy way into a circle of mums that wouldn't draw me away from local people to a foreigners' safety net. These

lovely mums advised us about the best local primary school for our daughter, had no shame in prolonged breastfeeding (something my family back home found extraordinary and rather awkward when I visited Britain), and offered regular friendship. I went to stay with one of them when my husband volunteered in the Tohoku tsunami clean-up. I offered to teach an offshoot group the basics of Christianity for two months before my son was born. I even used my friends' house as the venues. I invited four mums who I thought may be interested, and then had another mum ask me if she could come too. I found it easier to teach people about Jesus once I was immersed and trusted in the group.

### A theology of family and priorities

Ultimately for me though, the desire for my parents to be more involved in our children's lives was one factor that led us to leave Japan last year. Although we are not home yet—we are now preparing others for long-term mission first—we are one step closer.

Other friends with children also left Japan unexpectedly early. They had arrived in Japan without children, but had found that bringing up children overseas was tough, causing stress, and involving loss (for example, not having a garden where the kids could play). It seems different with missionaries who move to Japan with children, as they seem to have already considered and counted the cost before signing up. But I know God works in good ways and has definitely been leading us.

The dilemma many of us face between desiring to serve and the cost to us and our families shows we need a

fresh theology of family and priorities. As a student in the UK, I developed that through personal searching of the Scriptures. I found solace in Matthew 19:29 that God would provide new family members if I left for Japan on his leading—and he did! Even my mum back in Britain is surrounded by children the same age as her grandchildren. New neighbours moved in next to her with children the same ages as mine—so she could chart their progress like they were mine. Through Asian culture I also became aware of the importance of honouring one's parents. I like this idea of respect and provision, which is not so obvious in my culture.

My children's lives have been richer for having lived in Japan. After we'd left Japan, God even provided my daughter with a homeroom teacher whose first degree was in Japanese. We have been out of Japan for 18 months, but there are diaspora groups overseas and for the first year I was in a Japanese mums' group here. It felt pretty similar to being in Japan: once again, I was the only foreigner, I was praying I could share testimonies, and God was with us. **JH**

Scrapbook elements by Freepik

*As a young mum, **Henrietta Cozens** did church planting in Kansai during 2006–2016 with WEC. She and husband Simon now train future missionaries and refresh furloughing missionaries at the Worldview Centre for Intercultural Studies in Tasmania ([www.worldview.edu.au](http://www.worldview.edu.au)).*

Missionary life often requires us to surrender what's precious to us, but we can trust God to look after our treasure

# Something precious

By Mike McGinty

Many years ago, when our two oldest children were preparing to return to boarding school for the start of a new term, I plucked up the courage to enter the “forbidden zone,” our kids’ playroom. I normally hesitated to enter this battleground strewn with toys, books, and half-eaten bits of petrified food. However, this day, our oldest son needed help packing his things for school, which meant sorting out the various “treasures” he had collected. He, of course, wanted to take them all with him, but I was assigned to help him separate the worthless stuff from the really worthless items that littered the room.

Among his prized possessions, I found old circuit boards, burned-out light bulbs, 137 dead batteries, broken speakers, tangled mountains of electrical wire, and countless unidentifiable objects. Much moaning and gnashing of teeth was expressed during this painstaking sifting through his

hoard. After a lot of negotiation, we separated it into three piles—a small pile deemed to be essential for the furtherance of scientific knowledge, a very large pile destined for the next trash pickup, and a third pile set aside for possible future experiments (but which mysteriously disappeared shortly afterwards!).

## A precious stone

In contrast to her more flamboyant brother, our daughter efficiently went about sorting her things for school. During a lull in the storm, she mentioned she had something precious for me to safeguard until she came back. She then opened her hand to reveal a rock crystal she kept in a fancy ring box. Although the stone was worthless, it obviously had great value to her, and I felt honored to be entrusted with its safekeeping. Time seemed to stand still at that moment for me. Sitting among the rubble of what my son considered “precious,” I couldn’t help but note the contrast in my children’s values. My thoughts moved to what I considered precious, and my heart ached at the thought of saying goodbye to both of them the next day. Such were the choices we faced in those days.

I have often thought about that stone, which lay in

my desk for many years and was then dutifully passed on to my daughter’s husband for safekeeping when I performed their wedding. It was a subtle reminder of God’s goodness in taking care of all I entrusted to him when faced with difficult decisions. The countless goodbyes and heartaches that accompany these separations continued to be painful, but God faithfully sustained our family in the midst of many unusual circumstances, which people back home rarely experience.

## Scratchy the turtle

Over the years, our children often begged us for dogs, cats, hamsters, rabbits, etc. But our missionary lifestyle and family allergies kept us from granting most of those requests. Then along came Scratchy the turtle. We found him making his way slowly across the highway on a warm spring day during our first furlough. Immediately, cries of “Can we keep him?” rained down upon me and my wife.

“Just for a few weeks!” I consented, secretly congratulating myself for having stumbled upon the perfect pet. No allergies, shedding hair, barking, messes, or vet bills. Best of all, it could be easily disposed of! When we arrived home, Scratchy was given reign over the entire backyard. It was quite a kingdom. He soon had his private pond (I hadn’t counted on that!) and numerous homemade houses to choose from, which usually disintegrated in the rain. On many occasions, I reveled in the wisdom of our decision as we watched the kids enjoy their new pet.



However, as our time back home drew to a close, we reminded the kids that Scratchy would have to return to his native habitat, just as we had to return to ours in Japan. Again, wise dad had anticipated the anguish this event might induce and had devised a plan. We would set our beloved turtle Scratchy free in a particular pond where we could “visit” him again in the future.

My oldest son accompanied me to the designated pond. I had worked this moment out with great care. My idea was to fish, and when we were preoccupied with this fun activity, we would let Scratchy slip off into this ideal setting. All seemed to be going according to plan as my son said goodbye to his beloved pet and let him loose in the water. However, I quickly discovered that I had underestimated the hold that little turtle had on my little boy’s heart. He crumpled in a heap on the shore, sobbing his heart out for a friend he would never see again.

### Parents’ tears

I cried that day too, not for a turtle but for a little boy who had had, and would continue to have, a disproportionate number of goodbyes in his life simply because he was a missionary kid. Family, friends, places, and things

had already come and gone many times in his brief life due to his parents’ transient lifestyle. Now, the only pet he’d ever had joined that ever-growing list. I’m sure

none of these weightier matters crossed the mind of my broken-hearted seven-year-old that day, but they weighed heavily on me. As we stood side by side at that pond’s edge, I received not only an insight into the past, but also a glimpse of the future.

Since that long-ago event, my wife and I have watched our three “turtles” leave the nest one by one, whenever they went off to school or later in life when they left for good to form their own nests. In each case, it was my wife and I who stood on the shore with heavy hearts, and we felt like the goodbyes would overwhelm us. At times, we found ourselves envying those back home. Like that little boy heading off to school so long ago, I wanted to take many of my treasures with me on this unique journey God has called us to as missionaries. They included grand-



parents, friends, holiday festivities, our home church’s youth program, takeout pizza, shopping malls, Little League Baseball, and a comfortable home.

It was not possible for us to hold on to such things (except for pizza!), nor would they have necessarily been good for us. Over the years, I’ve learned it can be hard to separate out the junk that creeps into our lives. It is tempting to cling to such things, but they can divert us from the greater purposes God has for our lives, families, and ministries. Separating our trash from our treasures is a constant challenge, particularly when raising a family in overseas circumstances where the choices can be radically different.

I continued to safeguard my daughter’s stone as the years slipped by as a reminder of far more precious things—my ministry, my personal walk with God, and, of course, my family. While that stone usually lay neglected and forgotten in my desk drawer, I take comfort from the fact that God’s concern for my family never waned. Through these and many other experiences, I learned I can trust him with whatever is precious to me. My little turtles and my treasures are in his care. That is all I need. **JH**

Photos provided by author  
Tortoise illustration by Freepik

*Mike McGinty has served with OMF International in Japan for 33 years as a church planter in Hokkaido and in various field leadership positions. He is married to Rowena and they have three children and seven grandchildren.*

*God’s concern for my family never waned.*





# Help. Thanks. Wow.

**The pressures of motherhood offer scarce opportunity for prolonged prayer, but God delights to answer our briefest cries for help**

*By Yukiko Howard*

Soon after moving to Japan, I confessed to a good friend how hard it was for me to find time to pray. Not only was I a new mom learning to cope with the excitement and exhaustion of motherhood, but I was also a new missionary learning to adjust to life in an unfamiliar city. Time for pause and reflection seemed in short supply. My friend, who knew my need only too well, shared with me prayers by Anne Lamott that consisted of the three short words: “Help. Thanks. Wow.”<sup>1</sup> It was the kind of prayer I could grasp in this dizzying stage of life.

## *Cries for help*

Motherhood can often feel like an uphill slog whose rocky trail weaves through mounds of soggy diapers, piles of dirty dishes, streams of runny noses, pools of spilled juice, and flurries of nagging demands that all begin with

the declaration “I want” and end with “Mom.” As much as we mothers love to be near our children and hear the sweet sound of their little voices, loving and caring for them leaves little time for us to stop and pray, except to cry, “Help!” But God hears these simple pleas or arrow prayers—short cries for mercy shot up in a desperate moment. And he answers. God doesn’t ask us for prayers wrapped in pretty bows. He wants children who hunger and thirst for him, who even faint, as the psalmist says (Psalm 84:2), for his abundant grace.

Many times during my first two years in Japan I cried out “Help!” in order to meet my children’s most basic needs. One time that stands out came soon after my husband started his new job, when it rained every day for two weeks. With no car, I was stuck in a two-bedroom apartment with a newborn, a one-year-old, and a brand-



new three-year-old. On one of those days, I ran out of diapers. So I strapped my baby to my chest, loaded the other two in a double stroller, and set out, pushing the stroller with one hand and holding an umbrella in the other. In the States, I would have buckled the kids into the dry car seats of my SUV and sped to the store, but here I was, braving the rain without a car. I was so impressed with myself. That is, until I discovered that my American double-wide stroller barely fit within the narrow aisles of the Japanese grocery store. My poor Japanese reading skills made matters worse. I ended up buying two brands of diapers hoping I got the right size.



*I quickly discovered that when you are chasing kids in all different directions, you don't have time to be embarrassed.*



***God's provision of friends and community***

I often joke to my friends that I cannot get past “help,” the first word of the prayer. But that is not always true. Our first Sunday in our new home in Higashikurume, Tokyo, a fellow mom stopped by with bug spray, a simple but important addition to any mom’s summer supply kit. She remembered me mentioning that I was at a loss trying to figure out what bug repellent was infant-safe. Her thoughtfulness humbled me. That day, God not only brought me child-safe bug spray, he also brought me a new lifelong friend. “Thanks. Wow.”

The community that has surrounded my family in Higashikurume is a gift, a continual reason for me to turn to God and say, “Thanks.” Leaving my friends and community behind in the States, I wondered how I was going to make new friends and, more importantly, minister to the community around me in Tokyo. I asked God to give me contentment if moving here meant my part of the ministry was to support my husband at home while he ministered outside our home. I prayed that God would give me opportunities to make friends, though I seemed to have little time or energy to spare. We happened to move to Japan when my eldest was at the right age to enroll into the local

Japanese kindergarten, and I began to see this as God’s answer.

I knew that being a kindergarten mom would be overwhelming, and I wondered if enrolling my daughter was the right decision. I also worried about how I would come across with my rusty Japanese, my inability to read *kanji*, and my constant frazzled state (“help!”). But I quickly discovered that when you are chasing kids in all different directions, you don’t have time to be embarrassed. I thought the other moms would laugh at me for the mess I was, but instead they laughed with me because we were all in the same boat. I realized we moms are all in this battle together. When my husband has to work late, my Japanese friends with late-working husbands come over and we make the best of it. It gets loud and maybe a little out of control, but letting loose is best in good company. I am “wowed” by the joyfulness of these loving mothers.

A couple of months ago, I fell ill and did not even have the strength to sit up. The timing was terrible, since I had planned to help throw an event for my children’s kindergarten. Discouraged, I prayed “God, give me strength to do your will and to find contentment in this situation.” My symptoms only got worse, and I had to face two of my fears: being unable to care for my

own children and having to navigate the medical system in Japanese. Thankfully, a friend who had come over to pick up supplies for the event called a few other moms from the kindergarten. Between them, they called an ambulance, lined up a translator to accompany my husband to the hospital, and cared for my children all day.

When we returned from the hospital, there was dinner prepared by some of my fellow kindergarten moms. “Wow! Thank you, Jesus.”

In this season, God has used my weakness to make my friendships more real. I haven’t had time to hide my insecurities, which has been a blessing in disguise as God used it to make me truly vulnerable with my new friends. I pray that God will continue to strengthen these relationships. If showing the abundant grace and mercy of Christ means not hiding the disheveled mess beneath a facade, then I pray that “I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me” (2 Cor 12:9 ESV) and them.

***God's grip our ultimate security***

Kevin Smith, my pastor back home, once used a sermon illustration about children holding hands with their parents. “Whose grip is tighter,” he asked, “the child’s or the parents’?” Our heavenly Father grips us so that we can cling to him. His firm grasp is the true source of my security, my deepest sense of fullness. He will never let me go, and he always hears this missionary mom’s cries for help. Confronted with such love, I can only say “Wow!” **JH**

1. *Help, Thanks, Wow: The Three Essential Prayers.* by Anne Lamott

Photo by Jannoon028 - Freepik.com  
Flourishes by Freepik

*Yukiko Howard is a Japanese MK, raised in South East Asia. She moved to the US for college. In the US she married and had kids, then moved to Japan in 2015 where her husband teaches at the Christian Academy in Japan.*

*I asked God to give me contentment if moving here meant my part of the ministry was to support my husband at home while he ministered outside our home.*



# Eight family rituals you can do



Some ideas for celebrating life with our families

By Sue Plumb Takamoto



One of my talents is finding unique ways to celebrate people I love, such as making a special cake for friends, organizing surprise parties, or planning wacky practical jokes. This interest plays out in my family. I love searching for effective ways to remember and celebrate who we are.

Rituals have long intrigued me; they even became a central theme in my graduate studies. Perhaps as a missionary and a mom of four, I'm drawn to rituals because of the need for continuity in this overseas lifestyle. With our extended families being a world away, we need to find our own ways of providing security and creating home. In addition, because our four children are all adopted, I especially desire to give them a strong foundation for feeling special and unique. I've found various rituals that help providing grounding for our family (perhaps as much for me as for our children!).

## Birth-day books

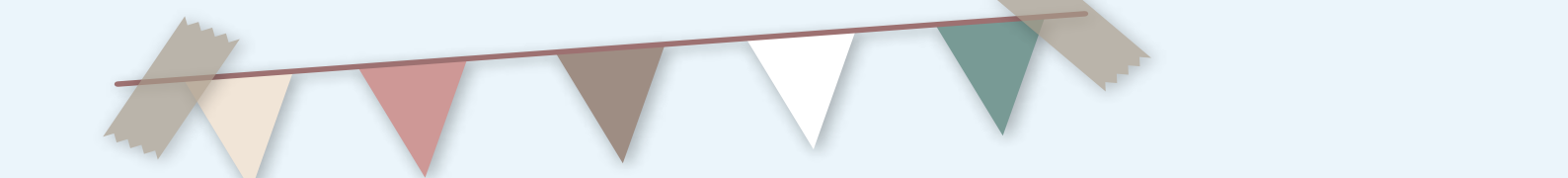
Each of our children's stories of birth and adoption is precious and unique. There was pain and trauma involved, but redemption as well. When we received each child, we bought a simple journal and have done our best to write the story of their early days. I've also attached some of the email announcements and other correspondence we sent out as well as some of my own journaling about the process.

Around the start of each year, my husband and I try to set aside a few hours to write in each of their books. We write about memorable events or funny things the child has said, character traits we have seen, and blessings for their future as we watch them growing up.

I recently pulled out the books because one of my daughters kept asking me what her first words were (funny how I forget so easily!). We laughed

and laughed over some of her early antics as I read them aloud! Then she asked me, "Mommy, would you still have remembered that every night I needed you to close the curtains, turn on the bathroom light and turn off the hall light if it hadn't been written in that book?" No. Absolutely not! Two kids and a lot of life later and I just don't remember these details. Thankfully, some of these early memories at least are in these books.

We've also had a "guest writer" or two. When my sister Beth visited us once, I asked her to write her impressions in the book of each of the children at that stage in their lives. I know some day they will treasure their books, which have been lovingly handwritten over the years by those who love them most in the world.



## Newsletter and Christmas card books

I have clear-file books for each of our children and update the books with a copy of all of our newsletters and the annual Christmas card we send out. Later, they will be able to go back through their own newsletter notebook and read their parents' perspective of our family history.

## Christmas card collage

Do you get a lot of family photo Christmas cards from loved ones overseas? I often take all of photo cards and cut out just the faces and bodies of our family and friends, layer them on a large poster board, and hang it up. Our kids have fun pointing out people from far away who they remember.

## Digital photobooks

I don't have time for scrapbooking, but I do try to create a simple US\$30 digital photobook most years. I also do smaller ones after major trips to the US or big experiences like a move. It's also a great way to help us remember our loved ones who live far away. Affiliate companies with Facebook and Instagram have now made it easy to create photobooks from your social-media postings.

## Birthday story

This tradition started with my own mom when I was little in my birthplace of Rhodesia. On the night of each child's birthday, they have a special mom time when I tuck them in and tell them their birth and adoption stories. As they have gotten older, I have included more information each year. They always look forward to this sweet time, as do I. It is often a chance, as we lay there in the dark and snuggle, for them to ask questions that maybe are harder to ask at other times.

## Letters to Jesus

We began a new tradition several years ago. On New Year's Eve, we gather and each one writes a short note to Jesus. The letter serves as a prayer,

asking him for help in an area of our lives where we need help this next year. This past year, one child asked for more self-control; another for patience, and our youngest asked for help not to be so afraid. We then sit in a circle and share our notes, and the person on the left prays for the person who just shared. This last year it was so sweet to see even our five-year-old praying for his big sister.

When we put away the Christmas decorations, we put our notes in our own Christmas stockings and pack them away till next year. It is fun to read our notes from the past year as we decorate for Christmas and realize how God has been at work in our hearts.

## Ten year journal

This ritual is one I made up. One of my favorite gifts over the years has been to give girlfriends a ten year journal. Available in most major stationery stores across Japan (especially near the end of the year), these journals have 365 pages, each with space for ten entries. In that space, I write down one significant memory, challenge, or triumph of that day. That allows me to keep records for a decade.

At first, I didn't think I'd be able to write an entry every night, but I've been doing it for 11 years now! I finished my first book last year, and now when I write in my new book, I often go back and read about the same day in my previous book. It's amazing to read short snippets about your life on one day over the past several years.

I also use this to:

- check for annual or past occurrences, such as when we usually pull out the winter clothes and heaters, when we had our first snow storm, when we bought our mini-van;
- record my one word and Bible verse for that upcoming year;
- keep track of gifts we've given;
- keep track of my weight over the years (for better or worse!);
- keep track of all of our family illnesses, shots, etc.

Through doing this I recently recognized an important pattern—our oldest son gets strep throat every year. I'd never realized that before, in the midst of six of us getting sick at different times.

## Mother/daughter journal

Last year, my sister gave us special journals that are shared between mom and daughter (we have one for each of our two daughters). There are pages and pages of questions and spaces to share and ask questions. My daughters and I this year have really enjoyed writing on a page and leaving it on the other's bed for her to comment and write in. I've found it a great way to find out what they are really thinking and to share in ways that we can't otherwise. There are numerous versions available online.

Long before we had any children, God put a verse on my heart as his promise to my husband and me: "Your children around the table will be like shoots from an olive tree." (Psalm 128:3 CJB). At the time, I had written next to that verse in my Bible, "God, can this be true for us?" Since those days of struggling with infertility, God has blessed us tremendously with four amazing olive shoots (we named our second daughter Olivia to remember his promise-keeping). It's a joy to find ways to remember and celebrate God's faithfulness to our family.

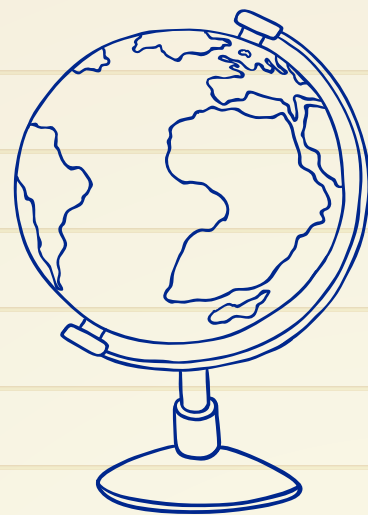
Each of our families and God's work in our lives overseas is unique and has God's special handprint on it. Let's continue to find ways to celebrate and ritualize all he is doing. **JH**

Scrapbook elements by Freepik

*Sue Plumb Takamoto and her husband Eric, missionaries with Asian Access, live in Ishinomaki, Japan and are partnering with Be One. Parenting their four children, church planting, and leading the Nozomi Project give many opportunities for creating new rituals.*



# Our unusual education journey



God has provided in remarkable ways for our children

By Luann Nakazawa

As a child, I feared changing schools and losing my friends. It was an irrational fear as my father was a farmer and it was very unlikely that we would move away from our family farm. Then, when I was only 12, my father passed away. It was devastating for our family and we had to move out of the farmhouse into town. Though my whole life was altered, I never had to change schools, and I graduated from high school with almost the same 60 people whom I'd entered kindergarten with.

The unfounded fear I felt as a child has served to give me more empathy for my children and their life paths, though their childhoods are vastly different from mine. Losing my father also taught me that children can be extremely resilient and that God is unchanging and always faithful. When I lost my earthly father, I decided to hold on to my heavenly Father as my rock.

## Surprising provision in rural Turkey

Turkey was our first field. We committed to staying three years, though we had never even visited prior to that. We ended up loving it and served there almost ten years. When our oldest daughter started school, we were living in a remote area with only a few options for schooling. Since she already had learned Turkish in preschool, we decided to send her to a private Turkish school about 45 minutes away by bus.

As third grade approached, I felt desperate because she still could not read or write much English. I had tried many homeschool books, but it was not working. I began to pray more. When we didn't know what to do, God led us to move her from the private school to a public school in our village. Many of our Turkish friends thought we were making a mistake, as public schools are not known for their high academics in rural parts of Turkey, but my husband and I had complete peace.

Her new teacher at the public school wanted the students to learn to enjoy reading, which was unusual. He required the students to read an hour a day at home before they could watch any TV. We asked if she could read in English, which he allowed! She was very motivated

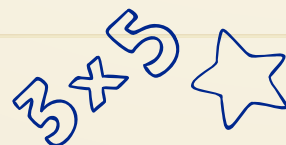
because it was an assignment from her teacher, not her parents. God provided perfectly and in the right time. Most days at 6 a.m., I would find her sitting on the couch reading a book before school. By the time we went to the States for her fourth grade year of school, she was almost at grade level—it felt like a miracle to me.

## An unusual choice in Japan

When we moved to Japan in November 2011, we put our older kids in the local Japanese school. I was studying Japanese full-time and my husband was staying home with the toddler, helping the kids with their Japanese homework. It was hard! We felt that our ministry work was on pause for about two years until we settled our kids, but it was all part of God's plan.

One way we saw God using this trial was to cultivate the artistic talents in my oldest daughter. Many times she expressed herself on a test with drawings when she did not have the words. Sometimes they were disturbing, but we were still encouraged.

When it came time for her to go to junior high school, we felt that she should choose. Her options were: home school, the local Japanese school, or an international school (but I really didn't want her to choose the first option). She chose the local Japanese school because her best friend was going there. I never imagined that I would have peace with that choice, but I did. As we prayed, we knew that was the place for her. (An added bonus was that, because





I was praying to God while taking my usual nightly walk, and I received clarity about our oldest son's education.

she had to wear a uniform, she saved a lot of time each morning not having to decide what to wear!)

Now, I don't think it is always right to allow your child to choose which school is right for them. If we had allowed one of our other children to choose, they would have quit school at the age of 10!

### The path to home schooling

I was praying to God while taking my usual nightly walk, and I received clarity about our oldest son's education. He was struggling in the local Japanese school, never able to catch up with the *kanji*. He also could not read or write much English. We kept having meetings with the school to figure out how to help him, but it didn't seem to be working. During that walk, I realized that, as his mother, I was the one to teach him. Usually I would argue with God that I am not a teacher and my kids are not home-school-type kids (whatever that means). But a deep

peace came over me. I knew that I loved my son more than any other teacher and that with that special love I was supposed to teach him.

The local Japanese school allowed him to attend art, physical education, and lunch at the school and then come home for the other subjects. He was happy he could still see his friends and be part of the class. Many people said that it was a miracle for the school to allow that. I agreed! When we went to America on home assignment, he was able to enter fifth grade without any English reading problems. We were overjoyed to watch him persevere and graduate from Japanese grade school on returning to Japan.

### Being open to God's leading

Before I was a missionary I would plan five to ten years in advance for important things in life and usually followed through with the plans. I decided which college to attend in fourth grade, applied only to that school, and I eventually graduated from that school. I have changed. I'm now okay with leaving options open and reevaluating the education plan year by year, or sometimes more frequently!

Our journey so far with our four kids has included public and private schools in three different countries and languages, and, more surprisingly, one year of home school! Prayer has been my main resource over the past 16

years of parenting, and God has been amazingly gracious. We have had a lot of successes, but even in the apparent failures (like my Japanese language proficiency!), God is still working and seeks to be glorified. **JH**

Photos provided by author  
School elements by Freepik

*Luann Nakazawa (US) lives in Tokyo with her husband, Shige, and their four kids serving with EFCA ReachGlobal as church planters. She loves a nice hike in Japan's beautiful woods, finishing with an onsen.*



## Blast from the past

### From 30 years ago...

Just very briefly, let me say something about the situation in Japan—comparing the 1950s to the 1980s. Then, we were talking about a Japanese generation whose country had been defeated, I believe for the first time in their history. Now, we're talking about a new generation for whom the war is simply a dim memory, if that. Then, there was a broken society in many ways, questioning even its very foundations. Now, perhaps deservedly so, a self-satisfied society riding on the crest of success. Then, the Western missionary could feel a certain cultural superiority. We came, in a way, as conquerors. Now, Japan is an economic power in the world, and with that we have resurgent nationalism and pride in being Japanese. Then, in the 1950s, missionaries came as real pioneers. Everything was in many ways fresh. There was opportunity to do many new things. Now, a missionary comes, and in many respects, is found to be filling the shoes of veterans who are leaving.

"New Missionaries in Old Wineskins" by Douglas Heck (page 6), Vol. 37, No. 4, 1987/1988 of Japan Harvest.

# Make memorable vacations

By Shelley Schmidt

Being away from extended family and the demands of ministry make it even more important to take vacations and create special memories there



The smell of blueberry muffins wafted through cabin 33 at Takayama.<sup>1</sup> The girls were called from their beds, “And don’t forget your bathing suits!” Café au lait was in the thermos, while there was hot chocolate for the girls. We packed boiled eggs, homemade fruit salad, and bread and cheese. The girls reluctantly got in the car, wondering why they had to leave all their friends at the “Tak” beach and go to the “secret beach” their dad had discovered.

We piled out of the car with all our beach and breakfast paraphernalia and trekked down a hill toward a long, deserted beach. Making a path through the overgrowth, we took balanced steps on the wobbly boards in the swampy ground. We walked as fast as we could, while the mosquitos enjoyed their meal before we did. It was the first Schmidt’s Annual Picnic Breakfast! Setting up our table and chairs, we sang a praise song to the Lord and enjoyed some good food. The early morning awakening was forgotten as we played in the

sand, threw a Frisbee, and enjoyed time in God’s beautiful nature. This annual time alone, with the same people and menu but at different venues, is one of the strongest vacation memories our three girls have.

## How we created special memories while on vacation

Vacations are a chance to enjoy a change of scene, leave work behind, have fun with each other, and be refreshed. We all looked forward to vacation time in Japan. Whether it was at Takayama, Karuizawa, or Hokkaido, the important thing was that we were together and established yearly traditions that strengthened our family bond. Being away from our extended family, without the support and close relationships that would naturally form, it was all the more important to make our time together memorable.

For us, blueberry muffin mix is one of the things that trigger good memories. Another, saved for vacation time only, was a box of Lucky Charms, a

hard-to-get American cereal with kids appeal. In those days, these desirable goodies were not readily available, so we planned ahead and had them hidden away for the upcoming break. When the children look forward to special times, it strengthens the memory and can build into a tradition.

As we got ready for vacation, we always packed the Family Notebook along with the proverbial kitchen sink. It contains our favorite summer recipes (written in scribbly children’s handwriting), the girls’ drawings of memorable times; write-ups of our vacations, and some photos. It also has new songs we memorized each summer. As my husband is a German-speaking Swiss, we used the time in the car and at a cabin to learn a new yodel or song in German. The family notebook became a mini scrapbook of our favorite family doings. On the front page is the inscription, “The Schmidt family’s continuous notebook of odds and ends, memories that make up ‘us’ . . . God is faithful, God is good.”



We loved the community family fun night at Takayama, especially the laughs, entertainment, and talent. The Swiss Schmidt Family Singers sang the songs we had learned or put on a skit we had written. When we did a yodel, my husband first got the audience to make sounds like they were on the Alps—the swishing of the wind and the mooing of cows—and then he broke into a Yoodolihoo!

Each summer, we would read a book out loud while the kids worked on a puzzle or a project or drew. As one daughter put it, it was a time to be creative. We also loved the lazy afternoons after coming back from the beach, when the five of us would each snuggle up with a book, enjoying each other's quiet company. The pleasant hours spent in fellowship and game nights with others was balanced with cooking together, playing favorite games, going on walks, and having cookouts.

### The importance of vacations and traditions

Ministry in Japan can be very demanding and draining. It is wonderful if you can take at least two weeks away. Get out in the fresh air, turn off your alarm clock, and have some uninterrupted family time. Devices, off; concentration on each other, on. The Lord will bring you refreshment that can bring new life and vision to your family and ministry. Years ago, some senior missionaries said that for them three weeks at a holiday home was ideal: during the first week they would wind down, the second they just enjoyed, and the third they started thinking about returning to their ministry.

Each family has its special characteristics, joys, and interests that make it unique. Take those and establish them into traditions that will bring your family together. As your family grows or gets older, different traditions will

stand out as ones you might want to build on. They will develop naturally as you spend time with your family and see what they enjoy. Traditions do not have to be grand to have an impact. Something special done year after year can build the strength of a cherished memory. Making traditions can just require simple things and a bit of planning, and yet can make a lasting impression on your children and bring the family together for years to come. For those without children, start a special personal tradition of your own that gives you joy.

### Including the third generation

When grandchildren come to visit while you are on vacation, there arrives the wonderful possibility of building fun and memories into their lives.

For example, grandparents can take their grandkids on a nature treasure hunt, even from a young age. As the years go by, the discoveries and depth of learning grows with their age. They can collect things, draw, take photographs, sing songs along the way, and go home to Google for more information about what they discovered. The experience of spending time with Grandma and Grandpa alone builds wonderful memories. And if the treasure hunt is topped off with ice cream, the memory is sure to be sweet! They will anticipate each unique hunt with joy.

It is not easy to be on the field while your grandchildren grow up in another

place. Even if you cannot have yearly vacations with them, the Lord will help you find things to add to your Grandparents' Notebook.

### A call to rest

Taking time away for vacation can bring us rest and restoration for our souls. Our Good Shepherd, the giver of time, calls us to rest by quiet waters; he makes us lie down in green pastures (Psalm 23:2). Come away.

On vacation we can step back and shut out the usual things that clamor for our attention. We can focus more clearly on listening to God while we take time with him. In families with little children, rejoice. The possibility of long quiet times and leisure will come as they grow. We read in Psalm 143:8, "let the morning bring me word of your unfailing love, for I have put my trust in you. Show me the way I should go, for to you I entrust my life" (NIV). May you take that time away to let the Lord bring you rest, rejuvenation, and lasting family traditions. **JH**

1. A coastal property near Sendai that has been leased to missionaries for over 100 years for the use of vacation housing. More than two dozen cabins are owned by missionaries and mission organizations on this property.

Plane element by Freepik  
Photos provided by author

*Shelley Schmidt, with her husband Dieter, have been in Japan for 28 years with OMF International. They now run the OMF Guest Home in Sapporo. They also work with internationals at Sapporo International Church. They have one granddaughter.*

# Stop waiting—start celebrating

Seasons when families gather to celebrate can be difficult times for singles. Here are some resources that helped me celebrate as a single.



By Karen Viljoen

Christmas and Easter can be difficult seasons for singles. They can also be times filled with expectation, worship, and joy in the Lord. Many variables influence whether a season is joyful or painful: one's background, age, season of life and ministry, mindset, etc. Here are some resources that helped me develop my own traditions while I was single, before I got married at age 47.

I grew up in a church-going home, but faith in Jesus was not an everyday reality. Holidays were centered more on tradition than Jesus, especially once my family stopped attending church when I was nine.

When I was in my early 20s and firmly established in my own church family, I had glimpses into some families' traditions and celebrations around the holidays. My self-talk often went like this: "I'm going to do something like that once I have my own family." However, as my 20s began to slip away, I seemed no closer to that family of my own. Then one day, I sensed the Lord speaking to my heart—*Stop waiting. Start celebrating!*

## Celebrating Christmas with an advent banner

Beginning my personal celebration journey, I bought a book I had seen in a family's home: *Family Celebrations: Meeting Christ in Your Holidays and Special Occasions* by Ann Hibbard.<sup>1</sup> The first activity I chose to do was make an advent banner. On the banner was a Christmas tree made of felt material and each day I added felt ornaments symbolizing the coming of the Messiah. Over the following years, that banner—along with Scripture and praise music—deepened my personal worship of the Lord. Using it gave me much joy during the hectic season of church outreach activities.

That personal preparation for Christmas spilled over into my public life and ministry. My joy was more secure, focusing on worship of my Lord rather than on the arrival of "the day" and the nostalgic feeling of Christmas we're supposed to feel. It helped me to have a more positive attitude. I was able to adapt some of my personal worship content into messages and teaching for church services and outreach events.

## Focusing more on the Passover and Easter

I later made an Easter banner—the road to Calvary (from the same book by Hibbard), using ornaments symbolizing Jesus' ministry, death, and resurrection. This banner also gradually made its way into my church as I used it for children's messages.

There was a time when I was quite disappointed by the Japanese church I was working with because Jesus' resurrection was barely celebrated. About the same time, one of my married TEAM sisters, Amy Barber, held a seminar on celebrating Easter (check out her website, *Amy's Free Ideas*, at [www.amysfreeideas.com](http://www.amysfreeideas.com)).

At that seminar, we considered this thought: If the gospel accounts record more content about the last week of Jesus' life and his resurrection than his birth, perhaps our celebration of Easter should reflect that. Perhaps we should take more time and effort to celebrate this season. This changed my celebration focus.

I began to put less time and effort into decorating and baking for Christmas, keeping it simple and worshipful. At the same time, I put more time and effort into celebrating the Easter season.

Another resource that helped me was *Christ in the Passover* (also published in



Japanese).<sup>2</sup> There is a YouTube video by David Brickner, executive director of Jews for Jesus, which I love to watch every year (<https://tinyurl.com/Christ-in-the-passover>). From these materials, I developed my own Christian *Seder* (meaning "order"), a program and meal celebrating Passover and how Jesus fulfilled it. I invited three friends to my home to celebrate with me and invited three different friends in each of the following years.

The Lord has expanded my Easter celebration. I have been able to organize a larger *Seder* meal for my 10-member fellowship group a few times, and twice my husband and I have led simultaneous ones for about 50 of our OMF colleagues: one kid friendly and the other on the quieter side.

I am so thankful to the Lord that he prodded me to stop waiting and start celebrating. How much joy I would have missed out on during those 20 plus years of singleness had I not listened to Jesus. **JH**

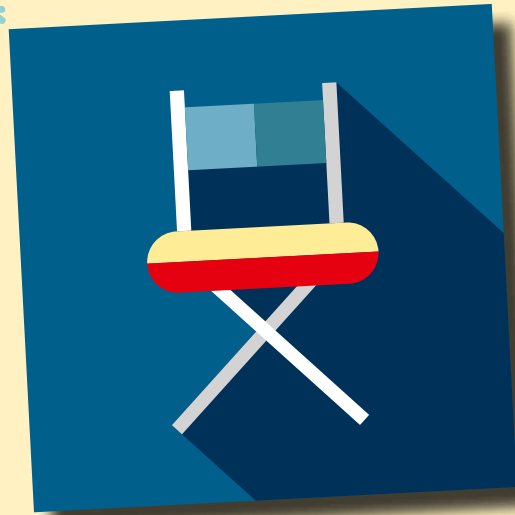
1. Ann Hibbard, *Family Celebrations: Meeting Christ in Your Holidays and Special Occasions* (Wolgemuth & Hyatt, 1988).
2. Ceil Rosen and Moishe Rosen *Christ in the Passover* (Moody, 2006).

Scrapbook elements by Freepik  
Photo provided by author

*Karen Viljoen (nee Harless) served as a single missionary with TEAM from 1992 to 2008. She married Dale Viljoen in 2008 and joined him in OMF International. Karen now serves as the short-term coordinator for Hokkaido.*

# A role in God's movie

Imagine your life as a movie... *By Rachel Hughes*



I was standing on the sideline of our kids' soccer field, chatting with a bilingual friend, when another Japanese mum we hadn't seen for a while came over to chat. It all seemed ordinary enough. But suddenly, in my head, it was like the world stopped to watch this one conversation. I pushing all other thoughts aside, I gathered up my tired brain cells to concentrate furiously on the conversation. If my life was a movie, the scene might begin like this:

The tension is high. My friend looks on in interest as the other mum serves up a question. My friend's eyebrows rise. We hear the commentary running in her thoughts: "Does she need clarification? Can she return this one?" After the slightest of hesitations, I spit out an answer and my friend lets her breath go—right answer!

And the game is on.

Question after question, I listen intently, grasp for familiar words, sense the flicker of understanding. I hazard answers; my friend smiles and nods, her thought commentary continues: "Yes! She got it back once again. She's having quite the match today!"

Finally, the mum has to go. The conversation is over. I'm exhausted but feel a sense of survival, whereas once I would have crashed and burned.

As you keep watching the movie, your ears are assailed by the pumping beat of the Rocky III theme song

"Eye of the Tiger." Flashback scenes roll across the screen, depicting a dramatic backstory. A classroom of students rapidly copy the teacher's writing from the board and repeat phrases in unison. The camera zooms in to a close-up of a test covered with red ink lying on the desk with a failed result next to my name at the top. It zooms out to my sigh of disappointment, followed by the straightening of shoulders and picking up the pencil once more. Next you see my friend and I laughing at my language gaffs as we're jogging. Then, the scene where I'm asleep on my *kanji* homework as my husband wrests the chocolate from my hand.

Now violin strings bring a contemplative tone as the movie explores emotional themes. You observe my grief, seeing photos of a Bible study group of friends whose lives have moved on and of a cousin's wedding with all my aunts, uncles, and cousins, but not us. I'm shocked at a photo of my ageing father-in-law and realise my sons haven't seen him since three surgeries ago. The movie then transitions to scenes of fights in our household as we all struggle to cope with the stress of life in a foreign culture using a second language. A close-up of a school newsletter, all in Japanese, pans out as you sense my estrangement and guilt while my sons wonder why I don't know what to do for their school events when all the other mums do. And the movie cuts to the inevitable scene of me crying in the shower, doubting the value of being sent here, struggling with the loss of identity, confused by God's plan, and ready to give up.

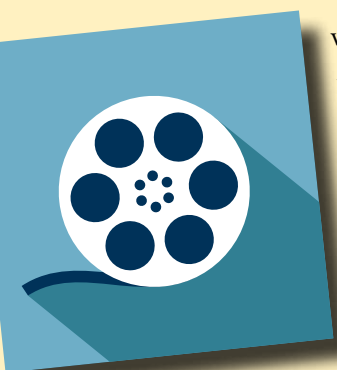
Returning to the present, the movie pans out from our conversation and over to the kids in their orange shirts playing soccer. It then cuts to scenes from soccer camp. Kids and parents, Christian and non-Christian, engage

in activities about the central story of the Bible. A dad ponders why Jesus—with all the abilities and powers of a superhero—didn't live like Tony Stark, but instead was a homeless friend of fishermen and kids, with time to care for sick women. In another scene, a kid hears about the cross for the first time and exclaims how unfair it was that Jesus, the good man, paid the price of all our failures and wrongdoing. You see a young boy from a non-Christian home humming praise songs during a farm outing. And the final scene shows our sons with a group of friends (some still in their soccer shirts) reading the Bible with my husband in our living room.

In this one conversation, just like a championship match, there is so much going on behind the scenes. Living as a missionary family in Japan is full of scenes like this every day. Each scene has enough related activity that it could be a whole movie! Although I struggle with exhaustion, I'm reassured that our heavenly Father oversees each scene, knowing how much more is going on, not just in the past but also into the future. He sees how each scene plays into a far larger movie that is glorious and majestic in every way. I can't wait to see that movie! I'll be there with my boys saying, "Wait, wait, watch . . . pause there! Do you see us? There, in that scene, we were part of God's plan!" **JH**

Movie elements by Freepik

*Rachel Hughes lives with her husband and two sons in Mukonosō near Osaka. They are Australians with CMS and work with university, junior high, and elementary school students; younger and older women; and two-year-olds who like to dance.*



# Combining family and church planting

Language learning and home schooling are some of the challenges we faced as missionaries, but God's grace has extended to multiple generations

By Leo Kaylor

I had a deep desire to share the gospel with Japanese people when I arrived in Japan in 1951 at the age of 20. I met Phyllis, who was also with the same mission, about six months later and we married in 1953.

We faced all the overwhelming challenges that first-time missionaries face—a new culture and customs, and the seemingly impossible Japanese language. We initially worked through an interpreter in our church planting efforts, but soon realized the limitations of this approach. I was determined to learn Japanese, and so, in 1957, I went to a local grade school and got permission to attend two classes a day at the fifth and sixth grade levels. I wanted to learn the language the Japanese kids were learning. I experienced the joy of communicating directly with people in life and ministry. To this day, I constantly study to improve my language ability.

## Home schooling and beyond

We endeavored to put God first and our family next. Ministry was interwoven with these priorities. As our children reached school age, their education became a major issue. We didn't want to send them away to a boarding school, and so we chose home schooling. But, back in the 1960s, home schooling was comparatively unknown.

Phyllis was the teacher, and she tried to make sure the children applied themselves to their studies, which wasn't easy because they were normal kids! But Phyllis was persistent, and she slowly prevailed. We found there is no easy way to do home schooling. Phyllis realized from early on that it was necessary to take one day at a time. She said in essence, "With God's help, today will be a success. I will face tomorrow's challenges tomorrow." For my part, as husband and father, I stayed closely

connected to the schooling and was an encourager to them all.

Family and church planting go hand-in-hand. When we had special events in our ministry, we closed the school books and the children helped us in many ways. Those were the days of street meetings and small gatherings in community halls. The children got a taste of seeing lives changed by the power of God.

In this way, over 25 years, we home schooled all six of our children from the first grade through high school.

On graduating from high school, each of the children enrolled in Portland Bible College in Portland, Oregon. At first, Phyllis was concerned how the children would fare in relation to the other students, but all six graduated with honors.

## The next generations

As we look back over our 66 years of ministry in Kyushu, we continually rejoice for all of God's goodness to us, our 6 children, 25 grandchildren, and 17 great grandchildren.

Three of our sons responded to God's call to minister in Japan. Our eldest son and his wife are lead pastors of a church in Kumamoto Prefecture, Kyushu. Our second son and his wife started a church in 1991 in Nishi Funabashi, Chiba Prefecture. They continue to pastor this thriving church with their family and pastoral team. Our fourth son Joel and his wife Kelly went to Osaka in 2009 to pioneer Life Church. A fine team of pastoral leaders joined them in pioneering that church.

Tragedy struck our family in 2016 when Joel, then 44, was suddenly taken from us. His pulmonary artery from the heart to the lung burst, bringing his life to an abrupt end. Joel's passing was a great shock to us

all, but we confess in our sorrow that God makes no mistakes. Life Church continues to prosper and expand under the leadership of Kelly and the pastoral team.

Some of our grandchildren are also involved in ministry: one grandson and his wife are assisting in the pastoral leadership of a church in Quincy, Washington; another grandson and his wife are involved in the leadership team of Life Church; and a granddaughter with her husband is assisting with pastoral leadership responsibilities at a church in Funabashi.

Our vision is to see churches planted in Japan that will continue to grow until Jesus returns. Over the years, we have been blessed to see fruit that remains. The churches now have many three-generation and four-generation Christian families. We have seen many Japanese young people saved and answer the call to ministry. These leaders have likewise caught the vision of seeing healthy churches birth healthy churches. We believe the future is bright for the churches of Japan. **JH**

(Phyllis and I have written about many of our experiences in our autobiography *Unto a Land that I Will Show You*. It is available on Amazon.)

Photo provided by author  
Scrapbook elements by Freepik

*Leo and Phyllis Kaylor are affiliated with City Bible Church, Portland, Oregon and are members of Ministers' Fellowship International. They have worked in church planting ministry on Kyushu Island for over sixty years.*



Standing from left to right: Steven, Melodee, Joel, Nathan, Joyce, Robert Seated: Phyllis and Leo Kaylor

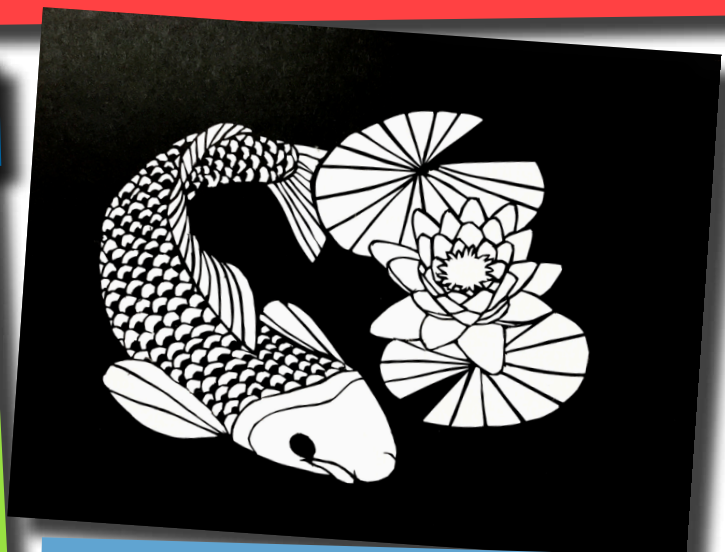
# TCK Corner

## Winter Word Search



- WOOLLY HAT
- FIREPLACE
- MITTENS
- SNOWING
- ICE
- BLANKETS
- SNOWMAN
- WINDY
- GLOVES
- COLD
- DARK FROST COATS

Play this puzzle online at:  
<http://thewordsearch.com/puzzle/998/>



**“Koi with lily” by Sarah Bello**  
 Style: *Kirie*, the Japanese art of paper cutting  
 Medium: paper  
 Inspiration: On my walk to school, I cross a stream which has many *koi* gathered under the bridge, waiting for people to feed them.

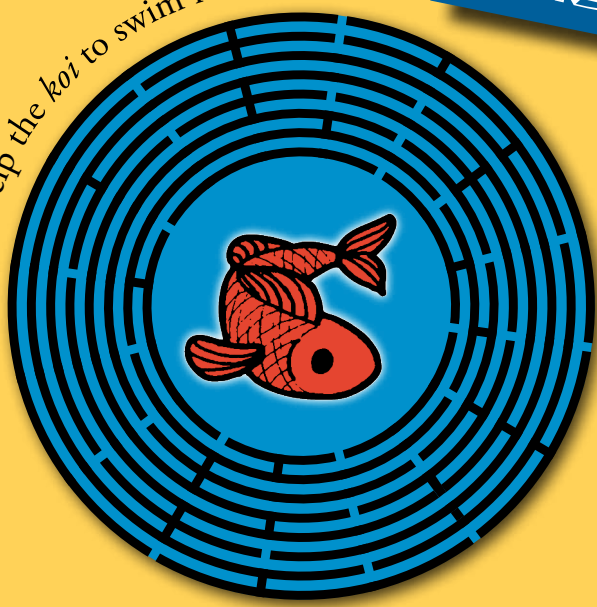
1. **What’s your name?** Sarah Bello
2. **How old are you?** 15
3. **Where do you go to school?** Christian Academy in Japan
4. **What Japanese foods do you enjoy?** *Ochazuke*, Japanese teas, and Japanese white rice
5. **What is your passport country?** United States
6. **What food do you miss from your passport country?** Spanish rice
7. **Tell us one of your fondest memories of time with your family.** I most enjoy the times when we watch movies or play games together as a family, because we laugh and enjoy each other’s company.
8. **What do you miss most when you are away from Japan?** The freedom to get around town by myself safely.

## Scripture Verse

“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.”  
**Joshua 1:9 (NIV)**

## Maze

Help the *koi* to swim its way out!



## Women in Ministry

## 25th Annual Retreat

Where:  
Olive no Sato,  
Nikko

Speaker:  
Patricia Niednagel

When:  
March 7-9

Register online  
now at [jema.org](http://jema.org)


One Day Retreats:  
March 10 : Hokkaido Christian Women`s Fellowship, Sapporo  
March 12: Kansai Women in Ministry Retreat



# Manga Outreach Tools

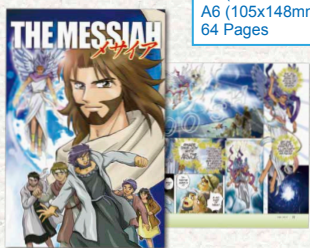
A variety of resources for your outreach needs

(+81) 49-296-0727  
 info@newlifeministries.jp  
 newlifeministries.jp

宗教法人 ニューライフ ミニストリーズ  

**新生宣教団**  
 New Life Ministries

### The Messiah


A5 (140x210mm)  
A6 (105x148mm)  
64 Pages




A Biblically faithful manga illustration of the life of Jesus, weaved together from the four Gospels.

 English, Japanese, Chinese, French, Korean, Swedish, Urdu, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish

### Manga Mission




Presenting both the beginning of Genesis and the story of Jesus, Manga Mission depicts the fall of man and the saving grace of Christ.

 English A5 (140x210mm) / 64 Pages

### The Manga Bible Storybook




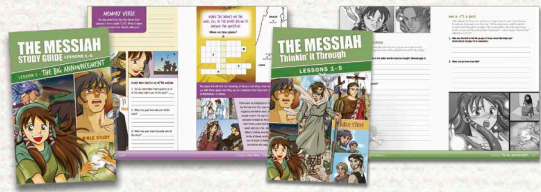
An excellent tool for teachers wanting to increase scripture engagement with their students through manga illustrations of 16 special Bible stories, plus Bible references, themes, story points and memory verses related to each story.

 English A5 (140x210mm) / 64 Pages

---

### The Messiah Study Guide Set (2 Booklets)

 English




A two-part study guide specially designed to help readers walk through the pages of The Messiah through reading exercises, fun games and review questions.

A5 (140x210mm) / 48 Pages

### Manga Manger

A perfect tract for Christmas, this manga booklet covers the life of Jesus with a specific focus on the true meaning of Christmas – the birth of our Lord Jesus!



 Japanese, Thai, and Mongolian A5 (140x210mm) / 64 Pages



# Community is vital

*It is notoriously difficult for outsiders to be accepted in Japanese groups, but communities where everyone is new can be a key entry point*

“I want so much to belong. Sometimes I think I kind of belong and then I realize that I really don’t belong. The scary thing for me is that I don’t belong in America. I go back to America and I am totally out of it and I don’t feel like in America that I belong. So it’s like I don’t belong anywhere. Oh, not belonging is the hardest thing to deal with in my 19 years here.” (Female missionary)

While much of dissertation research can be, quite frankly, rather boring, the outcomes can be incredibly useful. For my PhD, I analyzed the individual journeys of 40 missionaries from 16 mission agencies and discovered noteworthy and often surprising patterns of how they adjusted to Japan.<sup>1</sup> I found that, on average, it takes 7.8 years for missionaries to feel like they’ve adjusted to Japan. This is discouraging, since many “career missionaries” stay for only two terms, meaning they leave just as they are about to experience adjustment.

The good news is that certain factors can greatly aid this adjustment process, and understanding these can help new missionaries and those of us who coach, train, and mentor them. Here, I examine the important role that communities known as *communitas* can play in helping missionaries to adjust.

## Cultural struggles of the adjusting missionary

One method I used in my research was metaphor analysis. People often resort to metaphors when they don’t have the right words to describe their feelings or a process. I analyzed the metaphors missionaries commonly used during interviews about their adjustment to Japan. Three images were frequently repeated:

- Being “outside the club.” Missionaries feel outside before adjusting.
- Acceptance/gaining entrance. Adjusting involves moving from the outside to the inside. Once adjusted, missionaries feel “on the inside.”
- Guest/home/key: Adjustment involves going from living outside a home to being welcomed into the home.

Missionaries who are adjusting feel like they are on the outside and are not welcomed into a deeper experience of Japanese culture. The extreme differences between Japanese culture and a western missionary’s culture contribute to the sense of isolation during adjustment. Here are three cultural challenges for western missionaries.



By Sue Plumb Takamoto

### 1. Strong group mentality

Group mentality is foundational to Japanese society. One missiologist states: “social relationships always take priority over individual relationships.”<sup>2</sup> The group mentality and dependence on group members are instilled during early childhood socialization and continues to extend through adult society. Thus, being on the inside of a group is critical to Japanese. Although most Japanese have no conscious desire to exclude missionaries from belonging, the island-nation mentality does not resemble the values of the “melting-pot” way of living seen in places like America and Australia. It is no wonder, then, that missionaries seeking to find a home with security, identification, and connectedness have such a great struggle in Japan.

### 2. Indirect and hierarchical systems

The Japanese system of building relationships through hierarchical structures often goes against western standards of fairness and rational thinking. Missionaries come to realize that invisible laws govern how relationships form. One missionary said, “You want to be so nice, and you don’t quite know how to do it because there is a whole different set of rules.”

For missionaries seeking to build relationships for evangelism or wanting to find a place to belong, it is disconcerting to discover that the rules differ greatly from the ones they know. Male missionaries, in particular, expressed frustration at being unable to form deeper relationships with Japanese men. The strong value westerners place on equality clashes with the Japanese system of inequality in relationships.

### 3. Form over function

Missionaries struggle with the Japanese emphasis of appearance over truth, of form over correctness. Foreigners in Japan will not only initially be outsiders, but they will usually not understand the socialization process that Japanese have learned since childhood. While individualistic cultures permit fluid boundaries and the entry of new people, collective cultures like Japan find it much harder to admit new people into groups, particularly those who do not know the rules. The need to follow a certain form, which may not make sense to a western missionary, can cause excessive stress and prolong the missionary’s sense of being on the outside and of not knowing how to get inside.

## Japanese churches

As a result, many new missionaries are surprised to find that, while their assigned Japanese churches initially are welcoming and helpful, over time they begin to feel isolated within their church context. This difficult experience is exacerbated by the surprise many experience because they hadn't anticipated this problem. Many linguistic and cultural challenges make it difficult for missionaries to adjust to established Japanese churches, as well as the difficulty for any outsider to be accepted by an established group. This doesn't make Japanese churches bad or insensitive, but the situation is simply a cultural reality that can create challenges for missionaries.

## The good news: preventing alienation by creating *communitas*

When missionaries arrive in Japan, they quickly realize that who they were in their home country doesn't matter very much. In a sense, they have to start over again. The inability to effectively communicate, read, or write strips missionaries of any feeling of self-importance. They are thrust into situations where their past relationships, formed within the structures of their home society, are no longer significant in defining who they are, and they must form new relationships from scratch.

Missionaries adjust most quickly and effectively when given a chance to belong. Because the challenges of belonging in Japan are high, adjusting missionaries need to appreciate their need for community and be intentional about seeking it.

The word *communitas* is used to describe what happens when a group of people together adjust to a new unstructured environment and are put in a position where they are stripped of normal hierarchical structures. An example of this is when an army unit is sent overseas or a group of freshmen start college together. Based upon my research, I suggest that if new missionaries can become a part of something new, they will have a much better chance of finding acceptance, belonging, and hence adjusting to Japan. Below, I consider several such places where missionaries can find acceptance.

## *Communitas* with other foreigners

### Language schools

Although considered grueling by many missionaries, language schools are often where many missionaries initially experience *communitas*. Many courses are full-time and consist of other expatriates who have recently come to Japan and are experiencing similar surprises, difficulties, and joys in adjusting to Japan. Most importantly, all have been stripped of their previous status, so that there is a level playing field for bonding to happen. I remember fondly the amazing friends I made from Brazil, Germany, and China during my first nine months of language study. We laughed, cried, and bonded together over our struggles with the language.

# Appreciating the need to place new missionaries into *communitas* can make a huge difference in helping them adjust to Japan.

### Missionary small groups

The small-group experience (with other missionaries, expats, or Japanese) is a vital place for *communitas* to happen. The two most significant qualities of these experiences for the missionaries I interviewed were forming relationships with others "in the same boat" who could go "through the fire together," and finding a place of belonging, acceptance, and encouragement. These types of relationships are crucial for the missionary's growth and progress.

Paul Tournier wrote: "Jesus himself sought support from three of his disciples when he faced the greatest renunciation in his life, the acceptance of the Passion and the cross. He did not ask for their advice. . . . He asked them to watch with him, and pray . . . I am often amazed at the progress that can be made by a [person] when he finds real support."<sup>3</sup>

Missionaries search for connectedness and acceptance. Because the adjustment process lacks structure and status, spiritual oases and bonds formed with like-minded people can be life-giving for many missionaries, who might otherwise face a life crisis.

## *Communitas* with Japanese

### Missionary moms with young kids

Interestingly, *communitas* can occur when missionary moms who send their children to Japanese preschools and kindergartens. In Japan, the kindergarten (*yōchien*) system is complex, expensive, and time consuming for parents. Many moms new to the system find the process to feel like a full-time job: needing to prepare just the right snacks and lunches, dressing their child in the uniform each day, and attending all the meetings, functions, and school trips that happen regularly.

Yet many missionary moms have found unlikely *communitas* among the other moms. "They [the young Japanese moms] made us feel a part of everything . . . I didn't end up feeling lonely because they made a real point of making us feel like we belonged." Japanese and missionary moms are thrown together into a new life stage where, like their children, they are new and learning together. This *communitas* serves as a bridge for the missionary mother into the wider Japanese community and as a means for learning more Japanese language and culture. It also provides an entry point into the usually tight-knit community.

## Church-planting teams

Church-planting teams provide a unique opportunity for new missionaries and Christian Japanese to bond together as they are thrown together into a new situation.

“[These three women from my church] were helpful and encouraging and hospitable and we just did so many fun things together—it was very precious.”

“[Involvement in cell groups] . . . it was a lot of sharing—this person’s pouring out their heart and I have no idea why they’re crying—and it’s a good motivation for learning Japanese to really understand their hearts, so when you felt like you could bond with this people—that’s when I started adjusting—feeling like I had my community in Japanese people.”

The process of Japanese and foreign members joining together in a new project throws everyone together from the beginning. Church-planting teams form ideal settings for missionaries to learn language and culture, and find adjustment, since from the start they are on the inside of a group that has not jelled yet.

## Other *Communitas* Options

There are other options for missionaries working in churches that are not church planting. Several missionaries I interviewed talked about finding belonging through other community gatherings such as a volleyball club or by joining the school’s PTA. During our first two years as a married couple in Japan, my husband and I worked with a large church in Sendai. As we began meeting our neighbors, we

started an evening English class in our home. This became much more than just a class—we had frequent barbecues, informal tea times with the ladies, and long times of fellowship and sharing into the night. We discovered that many of our neighbors were isolated and did not belong somewhere else; these gatherings became a place of identity and bonding for all of us. More than at our established church, we found this gathering time to be a wonderful place for experiencing *communitas*, learning language, and forming wonderful friendships. Two of our neighbors became Christians during that time.

## Conclusion

Missionaries adjusting to Japan face significant challenges, with the formidable task of moving from the outside to the inside. The best way for missionaries to find significant adjustment is by intentionally being part of an experience in which hierarchical structures are removed and everyone is starting something new together. Appreciating the need to place new missionaries into *communitas* can make a huge difference in helping them adjust to Japan. **JH**

1. Susan P. Takamoto, *Liminality and the North American Missionary Adjustment Process in Japan*. (Fuller Theological Seminary, PhD thesis, 2003), 378.
2. Clark Offner, “A Foreign Christian’s Struggle with Japanese Concepts of Respect, Honor, Veneration, Worship” in *Incarnating the Gospel in the Japanese Context*, ed. Fritz Sprunger (Tokyo: Hayama Missionary Conference, 1988), 162.
3. Paul Tournier, *A Place for You* (London: SCM Press, 1968), 180.

*Sue Plumb Takamoto and her family live in Ishinomaki, Japan, and are part of the Be One church planting team. Sue found community during her early years in Japan by starting a discipleship group for young women, and a bit later by joining a group of much-older women in her Sendai community who taught her aizome (the art of indigo-blue dyeing).*





# Marrying non-believers

*Many Christians in Japan end up marrying non-Christians. Here, we consider the problem from biblical and pastoral perspectives.*

By Simon Pleasants

“I’m going to get married!” My wife and I rejoice with them at the happy news. But when we enquire who the lucky man is, we discover he’s not a Christian.

This scene has been replayed for us at least seven times over the past decade. Our experience has been that many Japanese Christians, especially women, date and end up marrying non-Christians.

The biggest surprise has been that almost no one, often not even the pastor, raises an eyebrow. The consensus seems to be that ideally a Christian should marry a believer, but if a suitable Christian is not available, then marrying a non-believer is the next-best option.

This problem is not limited to Japan, but it’s exacerbated by the fact that women usually greatly outnumber men in Japanese churches and the low percentage of Christians in Japan. Also, the expectations of non-Christian parents may play a role.

Some may object that you will search the Bible in vain to find the command “Thou shalt not marry an unbeliever.” It’s thus important to consider what the Bible teaches regarding the matter.<sup>1</sup>

## Marriage in the Old Testament

The Old Testament repeatedly warns Jews against marrying outside the covenant community.

Abraham made his servant “swear by the Lord, the God of heaven and God of the earth, that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell, but will go to my country and to my kindred, and take a wife for my son Isaac” (Genesis 24:3, 4 ESV). In the next generation, after Esau displeases his parents by marrying Hittite women, Isaac charges Jacob saying “You must not take a wife from the Canaanite women. Arise, go to Paddan-aram to the house of Bethuel your mother’s father, and take as your wife from there one of the daughters of Laban your mother’s brother” (Genesis 28:1, 2).

Before Israel enters Canaan, God commands them regarding its current inhabitants: “You shall not intermarry with them, giving your daughters to their sons or taking their daughters for your sons, for they would turn away your sons from following me, to serve other gods. Then the anger of the Lord would be kindled against you, and he would destroy you quickly” (Deut. 7:3, 4).

When the Jews break this prohibition after the exile, Nehemiah rebukes them in the strongest terms:

You shall not give your daughters to their sons, or take their daughters for your sons or for yourselves. Did not Solomon king of Israel sin on account of such women? Among the many nations there was no king like him, and he was beloved by his God, and God made him king over all Israel. Nevertheless, foreign women made even him to sin. Shall we then listen to you and do all this great evil and act treacherously against our God by marrying foreign women? (Neh. 13:25–27)

Ezra confesses the people’s sin of intermarriage in a heartfelt prayer to God (Ezra 9), and the people go as far as sending away their foreign wives and the children they had by them (Ezra 10).

While Moses and Boaz married foreign women, both Zipporah and Ruth joined the covenant community. Thus, it’s clear that God’s people were not free to marry outside the covenant community in the Old Testament.

## Moving to the New Testament

At first sight, the New Testament seems to lack any such restrictions about whom Christians can marry. Certainly, with the Gentiles being incorporated into God’s people, interracial marriage is no longer prohibited. But a couple of places make it clear that Christians are expected to only marry Christians. Paul says that a widow “is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord” (1 Cor. 7:39). Likewise, he asks: “Do we not have the right to take along a believing wife as do the other apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas?” (1 Cor. 9:5). While, in context, these verses apply to the special cases of widows and apostles, they surely admit broader application to all believers.

The passage that makes the strongest case against Christians marrying non-Christians is where Paul tells the Corinthian Christians to “not be unequally yoked with unbelievers.” He then asks: “For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? What agreement has the temple of God with idols?” (2 Cor. 6:14–16). There is some debate about what relationships this passage excludes (for example, does it imply that

Christians cannot become business partners with non-believers?), but if it means anything at all it must surely apply to the closest relationship two people can have: that between a husband and wife.

I take it then that the Old Testament principle that God's people are not to marry outside the covenant community applies also to the church. The only thing that has changed is that the community is no longer a national one but includes all who believe in Jesus.

## Pastoral responses to the problem

The ultimate solution is to address the underlying issue of why men are under-represented in Japanese churches. But in the meantime, there are some helpful responses.

We should be praying for the singles in our churches that God would lead them to godly partners who will support them in their walk with Jesus. We could also actively seek to introduce them to other Christian singles. Churches, both in Japan and our home countries, could cooperate in this. *Omiai*-style introductions (traditional Japanese introductions that may lead to marriage and that involve both sets of parents) may even be beneficial.

Most importantly, there needs to be clear teaching both from the pulpit and during counselling that Christians are not to marry non-Christians. And since the main purpose of dating is to see if a couple is suited for marriage, I think the same principle applies to dating non-Christians.

Seekers who are considering becoming Christians need to be told that this is a part of counting the cost of following Jesus. Also, unbelievers who are considering marrying a Christian should be clearly told what they're getting into. They need to hear there's a third person in the relationship—that Jesus has first place in their prospective spouse's heart and that Christians love Jesus far more than they will

ever love their spouse. The unbeliever needs to know that faith touches every aspect of life, including money, time, priorities, and the discipline of children.

Christians who are married to unbelievers can play an important role here by giving a realistic assessment of difficulties people in unequal marriages can experience.<sup>2</sup>

As sensitively but as persuasively as we can, we should try to dissuade Christians dating non-believers from continuing the relationship. And when a Christian announces that they've become engaged to an unbeliever, we should encourage them to take the difficult step of breaking off the engagement. But if they chose to ignore our counsel and go ahead with the wedding, I think there is a point at which we should embrace the couple and offer them all the support that we can, praying that, in God's mercy, the unbeliever will come to know and treasure Jesus. Certainly, after the marriage has occurred, the couple should receive our full support and encouragement.

## Conclusion

I'm very conscious that this is a difficult and contentious area and that I don't have all the answers, but it's one that urgently needs addressing in a biblically informed and loving manner. **JH**

Further reading:

1. <https://www.9marks.org/article/can-christians-marry-non-christians-a-biblical-theology/> "Can Christians Marry Non-Christians?: A Biblical Theology" by Mike Gilbert-Smith
2. <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/dont-take-it-from-me-reasons-you-should-not-marry-an-unbeliever> "Don't Take It from Me: Reasons You Should Not Marry an Unbeliever" by Kathy Keller

*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*

**The unbeliever needs to hear there's a third person in the relationship—that Jesus has first place in their prospective spouse's heart.**

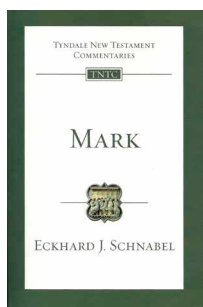


# Recent publications for Bible study

## Mark (Tyndale New Testament Commentaries)

Eckhard J. Schnabel (InterVarsity Press, 2017). 441 pp.

This will be the first commentary I turn to when teaching and preaching from the Gospel of Mark. Schnabel,



professor of New Testament at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, is the editor of this third series of Tyndale NT Commentaries, the premier series for evangelical readers of the Bible. After a 13-page select bibliography, Schnabel has a short (30 pages) but substantial introduction looking at Mark among the Gospels, characteristics and origin of Mark's Gospel, theological emphases, and the structure.

Each major section begins with a helpful one-paragraph description of the context, followed by comments on the passage, and a summary of the theology. Schnabel, who has written commentaries on Acts, Romans, and Corinthians (the latter two in his native German), writes clearly and with theological sensitivity (see his moving comments on Mark 15:33-39). The simplicity of his style masks remarkably deep study. For example, he writes, "The angel's message in chapter 16 calls the women, and through the women, the disciples, to faith in the crucified Messiah Jesus, who is the risen Jesus, to perseverance in restored discipleship, and to an obedient participation in Jesus' mission which now extends to all the nations" (p.441). This outstanding commentary belongs on the shelf of every missionary studying and preaching this gospel. **JH**

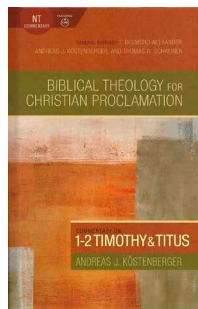
Reviewer rating is 5 of 5 stars ★★★★★

## Commentary on 1-2 Timothy and Titus (Biblical Theology for Christian Proclamation)

Andreas J. Kostenberger (B&H Publishing, 2017). 605 pp.

This fine commentary by Kostenberger, professor of New Testament and biblical theology at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, is now my first go-to resource on these letters of Paul to his apostolic delegates. Kostenberger, from Austria, builds on his previous study of and writing on these letters and especially focuses on the biblical-theological dimension in this work.

After a 54-page introduction to the three letters (which offers a solid defense of Pauline authorship),



Kostenberger gives a full exposition of each letter. A distinctive of this new series is a section devoted to the biblical and theological themes of the books. Kostenberger focuses on seven themes: Mission; Teaching; God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, and Salvation; the Church; the Christian Life; the Last Days; and these Letters and the Canon. Kostenberger's reflections on the themes and how they relate to the Bible as a whole are penetrating and thorough (evidenced not least by a 29-page Scripture index!). Meticulously researched, Kostenberger's commentary will help all those who study and seek to practice the principles Paul teaches in these letters. **JH**

Reviewer rating is 4.5 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.*

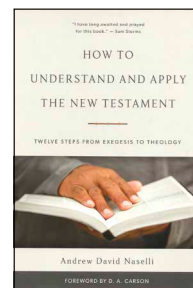
## How to Understand and Apply the New Testament: Twelve Steps from Exegesis to Theology

Andrew D. Naselli (P&R Publishing, 2017). 384 pp.

This excellent introduction to studying the New Testament is a delight to read and will profit all who want to understand and apply the Bible. As D.A. Carson, Naselli's doctoral mentor at Trinity, says in his foreword, Naselli combines "an attention to little details with an eye on the big picture." Naselli, assistant professor of New Testament and Theology at Bethlehem College and Seminary in Minneapolis, writes with clarity and simplicity so that even those with little or no formal theological training can profit from this book.

The first eight steps focus on exegesis: genre, textual criticism, translation, Greek grammar (the book's most advanced and technical chapter), argument diagram, historical-cultural context, literary context, and word studies. The final four steps focus on theology—biblical, historical, systematic, and practical theology. Each chapter ends with key words and concepts, questions for further reflection, and resources for further study (with perceptive comments on each resource).

It is well organized and has helpful figures throughout. Naselli's excellent



illustrations and examples are an added bonus. He looks at the theological message of each book in the New Testament; shows how the whole Bible progresses, integrates, and climaxes

in Christ in his rich chapter on biblical theology; and explains theological triage. Two appendices distill Naselli's wisdom on how to organize one's library and "Why and How to Memorize an Entire New Testament Book." This book will help every reader "look at *the* Book more carefully and responsibly" (p.333). **JH**

Reviewer rating is 5 of 5 stars ★★★★★

# Spiritual warfare in Japan

*While the spiritual battle is less obvious in Japan than other countries, it is just as real*

Of the various lessons I've learnt during the three years I've been in Japan, the biggest one has been about spiritual warfare. In particular, I have been surprised by how real and how normal it is.

During my mission's orientation, people who had worked in remote tribal villages in countries like Thailand and the Philippines shared stories of how real the spiritual battle can be. But the battle in Japan seemed much less obvious, much more behind the scenes, and much more vague—people saying they found the gospel difficult to believe or family pressure against those wanting to be baptised. I expected to encounter a general atmosphere of opposition in Japan rather than specific spiritual battles.

But after only a few years of missionary work in Japan, I am convinced spiritual warfare is as real here as it is in any shaman-led village in the jungle. By "real", I mean there are specific battles, not just a general war. I can look back on some experiences and say, "That was a spiritual attack." I'm not talking about apparitions or nightmares. I have felt the struggle against my spirit rather than my body.

The warfare is real, but it is also normal. Let me explain in terms of three domains: discouragement, distraction, and disunity.

## Discouragement

By discouragement, I don't just mean that disappointing things happen, but rather the way these events affect our hearts. The enemy can make us feel helplessly weak and so rob us of courage (i.e. *dis-courage* us). Sometimes when I've gathered with my team before an outreach event, we have all been uncharacteristically pessimistic about whether anyone would come to it. Though nobody dared say it, the unspoken consensus was that we shouldn't expect too much to happen. In some prayer meetings, it is a struggle to gather the faith to ask God for anything more than that maybe someone might take just a small step towards knowing him more.

## Distraction

Things will always be occurring around us that can take our eyes off the goal, but the battle happens when we become side-tracked by things that are unimportant or are important but not the main task at hand. I know I'm facing spiritual opposition when I find myself unable to focus on a task that needs immediate attention because I'm overly concerned about something coming up—often something I have no control over. Similarly, spiritual attacks can come during times of prayer and devotion, which I know are crucial for my soul and ministry, through constant whispers of "I wonder what's happened with . . ." or "Maybe I should check my email again, just in case . . ."

## Disunity

Perhaps disunity is the most overt indication of spiritual warfare. Of course, it is normal to disagree with teammates on various things. But we lose our unity when we succumb to the negative, accusatory thoughts that arise in our hearts such as "They did that on purpose" or "They always say that, but I know they mean. . ." In this way, Satan can use simple misunderstandings—or even just mishearing—to incite jealousy, bitterness, rivalry, or whatever he can use to set us against each other. He then feeds the self-righteousness in our hearts until both parties are convinced that there's no point seeking reconciliation because they're sure the other person is too proud to admit to being wrong.

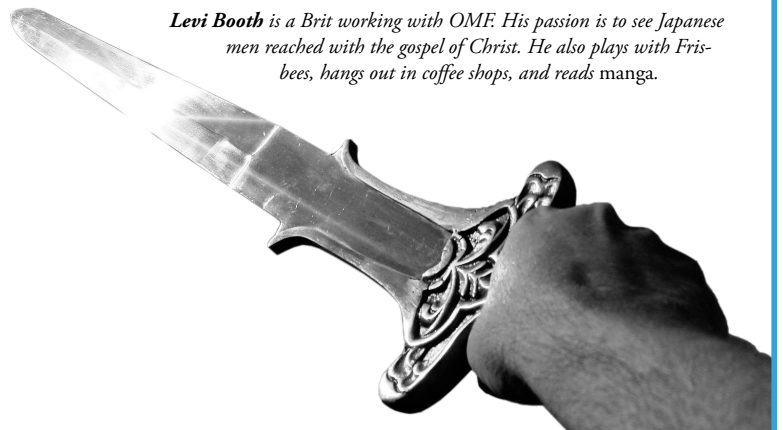
## The underlying connection

The common factor with all these attacks is their link to Satan's character. He is the father of lies, who has been a murderer from the beginning (John 8:44). He lies and makes us believe our work is useless, and so he destroys our dreams. He lies and tells us that something else is more important, or that our work is so important we should leave it till tomorrow when we're rested, and so he destroys our dreams again. He lies and makes us believe we are in competition with our co-workers, and so he destroys teams. In this normal spiritual warfare, demons aim to take from us what we need to get our work done: courage, traction, unity, and anything else we allow them to steal.

C. S. Lewis put it well in *The Screwtape Letters* when he showed that the work of demons is to make us believe the thoughts in our head originate with us. For we fight against these thoughts when we recognize they are from the enemy. Normal spiritual warfare can be the most powerful form of spiritual warfare, so we need to take a stand against it.

How do we fight? Of course, prayer is crucial. But I am learning that preaching is too—preaching the gospel to myself and allowing others to preach it to me. The gospel grants us true, unshakable courage, keeps us focused on the goal, and gives us unity with those who may even have become our enemies. **JH**

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



# The early stages of language acquisition

*Strategies for battling discouragement and feeling of being overwhelmed during the initial stages*

Each stage of language and culture acquisition has its own challenges. Probably the greatest battle in the early stages is against the feeling of being overwhelmed and discouraged. The goal of fluency can seem very distant (*I'm never going to make it*), and progress can feel painfully slow or non-existent (*I'm not getting anywhere*).

The classroom is an artificial environment created to make the learning process manageable—vocabulary is restricted mostly to words that the students know, new words are introduced gradually, and the teacher speaks clearly and slowly. But step outside the protective bubble of the classroom in Japan and you're immediately confronted by native speakers communicating with a full range of vocabulary and at speed. It can feel like you've been airlifted from the paddling pool and dropped into the ocean!

Here are a few strategies that may help.

## Be realistic in your expectations

When you signed up to do cross-cultural ministry in Japan, you accepted one of the hardest mission assignments, if English (or another European language) is your first language. The Foreign Service Institute classes Japanese as a language that is “exceptionally hard for native English speakers,” and also indicates that Japanese is “usually more difficult for native English speakers to learn than other languages in the same category”—in other words, Japanese is the hardest of the hard.<sup>1</sup> So realise the magnitude of the task and don't expect to be fully fluent after spending two years in language school.

Furthermore, Japanese people are infamous for their inscrutability, and Japanese culture has a reputation for being opaque to Westerners. So becoming familiar with the culture is no small undertaking.

## Admire the view and celebrate small victories

After you've been climbing Mount Fuji for several hours the summit doesn't appear to be any closer than when you started out, but the view below becomes more expansive. The same is true with language and culture learning: the goal may even seem to recede with effort, but you can see how much you've progressed compared to a few months ago. Take some time to admire the view by flicking through earlier chapters in the textbook and previous assignments you've done.

Also, celebrate each “first” you achieve: the first time you order something in a restaurant (and the first time you get what you ordered!), the first time you understand a response when asking for directions, and the first time you introduce yourself to a Japanese speaker at church. While

these may seem like small things, they can be valuable spurs to continue studying.

## Make things easy for yourself

Try to lower the bar as much as possible when communicating with native speakers and when reading and listening. Speak one-on-one with a native speaker rather than joining a group. Choose quiet places to converse. Spend time with people who are easy to understand and who can adjust their speed to your comprehension level. Avoid talking on the phone when you can speak to someone in person. When reading, choose material that you can read comfortably without a dictionary. Watch programs and listen to podcasts that are pitched at your level.

## Set small goals in overwhelming situations

When you find yourself in a situation in which the language usage is over your head, it can be helpful to set small goals. The brain is equipped with a self-protection mechanism by which it will zone out when overwhelmed with too much information. Thus, the natural tendency is to tune out when listening to someone talking at a level that is too hard for you understand. But while you can't hope to understand all the content of what is being said, you can listen for words that you do know and look up words that you're not familiar with. Likewise, if the only reading material you have available is too hard for you, look for characters and words you recognize.

## Depend on God

Most importantly, depend on God and his grace, and draw comfort from the assurance that you are always at the level he wants you to be at the moment. Remember that he is always able to use you irrespective of your language ability. One missionary I know has been in Japan since the 1950s but has never attained proficiency in Japanese to the point that he can preach without an interpreter. However, God has used him greatly to bring Japanese to Jesus and to encourage believers. As you depend on God in prayer, he will take you to the level that you need to be. **JH**

1. Language Difficulty Rating, “Effective Language Learning” <http://www.effectivelanguagelearning.com/language-guide/language-difficulty>



**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)



# Why don't we pray?

*Some thoughts on what to do when we don't pray because of lack of time or faith*

I'm sure we have all gone through periods when we don't pray that much. That doesn't mean we don't pray at all, but sometimes our prayer life can become a meaningless round of perfunctory platitudes. Prayer almost seems like a futile exercise. Jesus told us that we "ought to pray and not to lose heart" (Luke 18:1 NASB<sup>1</sup>), but we often do lose heart and stop praying. What can we do about it? Here are some thoughts on two reasons why we don't pray (there are many more) and suggestions on what we can do about them.

## Lack of time

"You do not have because you do not ask" (James 4:2). In other words, you don't pray. That is, sometimes we just don't take the time to pray. Oh sure, we say a rushed prayer at mealtimes, and we might start the day with a short prayer and end the day with a mumble of thanks to God. But too often, we don't carve out a time and place to pray. We need to look at why that is. Some of us spend too much time on social media, which crowds out time for really being with God in prayer. Or maybe we go to bed too late to get up early enough to pray before things start happening. We need to look at our particular situations and see what we can do to allow us to pray as we should.

One solution is found in Matthew 6:6. Jesus told us to "go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father." That is, we are to choose a time and place where and when we will not be bothered by other things—called distractions. That takes discipline, but a re-energized prayer life is worth it.

Also, as Paul said, we are to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17). That means we are to be in a prayerful attitude at all times. We don't always have to be in our

**"You can do more than pray after you have prayed, but you cannot do more than pray until you have prayed."**

— S. D. Gordon —

"prayer closet," kneeling in prayer. But if our hearts are attuned to God all through the day, we can be in prayer as we do other things.

## Lack of faith

Not praying may show us our actual attitude toward prayer. Perhaps we are not praying because we don't believe God will answer. If that is what we believe, then of course we won't pray. Just as a little child will run to its mommy or daddy because they believe they can do something, we too must believe that God does hear and answer our prayers.

One reason we lack faith is because we have gotten prayer all wrong. God is not some cosmic vending machine, dispensing what we want at the push of a button. He is "the LORD, the Creator of heaven and earth" (Psalm 121:2 NET). "Nothing [is] impossible with God" (Luke 1:37). And as such, He is worthy of our faith and our prayers.

One solution to lack of faith is to acknowledge it and follow the example of the father of the demon-possessed boy with epileptic-like symptoms by saying, "I do believe; help my unbelief" (Mark 9:24). Another is to think back on how faithful God has been in our past. As David says in Psalm 103:2, we are to "forget none of His [past] benefits." "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (Hebrews 13:8), so we can trust Him for our future and we can trust Him to answer our prayers.

So let's pray. Let's set a time and a place so that we can really pray as God wants us to. Let us, "in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let [our] requests be made known to God" (Philippians 4:6). As we do, we will find unlimited riches in following Him. **JH**

1. All Scripture quotations from NASB unless cited.

**Just as a little child will run to its mommy or daddy because they believe they can do something, we too must believe that God does hear and answer our prayers.**



**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.

# The benefits of giving thanks

*Developing the habit of being thankful can have a transformative effect on your life*

Paul exhorts us to “in everything give thanks” (1 Thess. 5:18 NASB). Here, I consider some of the benefits that can flow to us through following this exhortation.

## Dispelling negative emotions

Being thankful can sweep away negative attitudes and feelings. It’s impossible to be both grateful and angry or depressed. Thankfulness releases the hold negative emotions have on our lives. “All happy people are grateful. Ungrateful people cannot be happy. We tend to think that being unhappy leads people to complain, but it is truer to say that complaining leads to people becoming unhappy.”<sup>1</sup> Having an attitude of gratitude leaves little room for anything negative.

## Improving your physical well-being

The mind and the body are connected. Thankfulness is the switch that changes our negative attitudes and emotions into positive ones, with physical benefits. The authors of the book *The Psychology of Gratitude* note that in “a sample of adults with neuromuscular disease, a 21-day gratitude intervention resulted in greater amounts of high energy, positive moods, a greater sense of feeling connected to others, more optimistic ratings of one’s life, and better sleep duration and sleep quality, relative to a control group.”<sup>2</sup> Turn the thankfulness switch on and you will find positive emotional and physical results.

## Developing a habit of gratitude

Giving thanks doesn’t always come naturally. Motivational speaker Ralph Marston says, “Make it a habit to tell



“No duty is more urgent than that of returning thanks.”

— James Allen —

people thank you. To express your appreciation, sincerely and without the expectation of anything in return. Truly appreciate those around you, and you’ll soon find many others around you. Truly appreciate life, and you’ll find that you have more of it.”<sup>3</sup> Thankfulness can be learned and, over time, becomes a healthful habit.

## Becoming more spiritual

Being thankful is sometimes hard. But if God has commanded it, we can be sure he will give us the grace to do it. And thankfulness doesn’t have to be half-hearted—a godly perspective always points us to the good in any situation and helps us be thankful. According to Jacob Justiss, giving thanks can help us spiritually. “If we were more thankful our lives would be more spiritual; we would triumph more easily over affliction; and the darkest of our defeats could

---

**Having an attitude of gratitude leaves little room for anything negative.**

---

be used as a basis for greater strength. Rather than robbing God of praise, trials should add thereto.”<sup>4</sup>

Giving thanks can do wonderful things in our lives. For Americans, November is Thanksgiving season, but giving thanks should be a year-round celebration for Christians who want to enjoy good emotional, spiritual, physical, and mental health. **JH**

1. Dennis Prager, “A Simple Truth about Happiness” June 16, 2009, <http://our-28class.blogspot.jp/2009/06/simple-truth-about-happiness-by-dennis.html>
2. Robert A. Emmons and Michael E. McCullough, *The Psychology of Gratitude* (Oxford University Press, 2004).
3. Robert Marston, “Brainy Quote” 2001–2017, <https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/r/ralphmarst163841.html>
4. Jacob Justiss, “Are you Thankful?” November 1960, <https://www.ministry-magazine.org/archive/1960/11/are-you-thankful>



*Eileen Nielsen is presently a middle school and high school counselor at CAJ, as well as Member Care Facilitator for TEAM. If you are interested in meeting with her for counseling, you can contact her at [eileenpnelsen@gmail.com](mailto:eileenpnelsen@gmail.com).*

# Prayer letter inspiration

*Practical tips for overcoming writer's block*

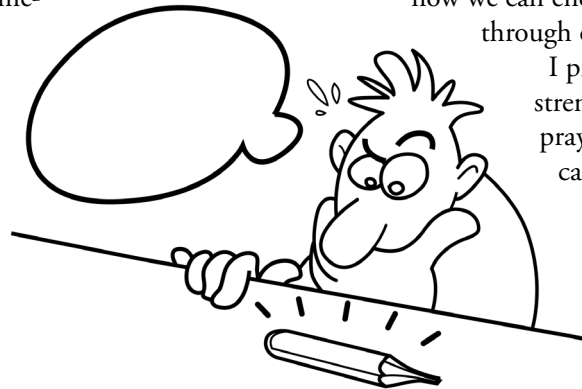
Google “writing inspiration” and you’ll get millions of suggestions. Finding inspiration can be a problem even for full-time writers. So here are some ideas for next time you don’t know where to start on your prayer letter:

- Pray. Read your Bible. Listen to worship music. This should be the first place to start. Ask God what he wants you to share.
- Recall a recent conversation with a Japanese person or a colleague that has stuck in your head. Write about it or why it has remained with you.
- Consider writing about something you’ve read recently related to your ministry or Japan. If you can’t think of anything, try looking through your favourite reading material (e.g. blogs, magazines, or the Facebook page of someone who shares good articles).
- Look back over your previous prayer letters. Can you give an update on something or someone? Have there been answers to prayer?
- Look at photos you’ve taken over the last month. Are there any you’d like to include? Could you write about one or two?

- List what’s coming up on your schedule. Is there something you could explain in further depth? Anything you especially need prayer for? Or a decision that needs to be made?
- Take some exercise: go for a walk, run, swim, ride. Whatever you prefer. Ideas often come when we go away from our blank computer screen or paper.
- Ask for advice. Email someone who prays for you regularly and ask them what they’d like to know about your life and ministry.

Paul wrote to Philemon: “I always thank my God as I remember you in my prayers . . . I pray that your partnership with us in the faith may be effective . . . Your love has given me great joy and encouragement” (Philemon 4–7 NIV). Something else to consider is how we can encourage our prayer partners through our prayer letters.

I pray God would help you strengthen the partnership with your prayer supporters as you communicate with them. **JH**



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

Advertisement



**KIU**  
KYOTO INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Live, work, and serve in tomorrow’s world

Your international degree starts here



**Kyoto International University**  
[www.kyotoiu.ac.jp](http://www.kyotoiu.ac.jp)

TEL: 0774-64-0804 Email: [info@kyotoiu.ac.jp](mailto:info@kyotoiu.ac.jp)

- The mission of KIU is to educate individuals from a Biblical worldview in the western-style liberal arts tradition.
- KIU has 7 partnership universities in US, Canada and UK.
- KIU credits are transferable to complete degrees in most universities/colleges in the US and Canada.
- Affordable tuition and fees.

KIU : ¥960,000

Public Univ. (US) : ¥1,800,000

Private Univ. (US) : ¥4,000,000

Source: <http://www.statisticbrain.com/average-cost-of-college-tuition/>



[www.facebook.com/KIU.ac.jp](https://www.facebook.com/KIU.ac.jp)

KIU and KIU Academy (Grades 1-12) are eager to serve you.

# Live broadcasting

*Some great tools enable you to spread the gospel by live broadcasting events to the world*

These days, anyone with an Internet connection can broadcast live to the world. Here, I share some live broadcasting resources you can use to impact Japan with the gospel. Facebook Live and YouTube Live are the easiest to start with. Both have mobile applications that turn your phone into a global broadcasting station in seconds.

## Facebook Live

No matter what the size of your church or ministry is, having an online presence is an essential part of reaching the current techy generation. You can quickly create that presence by starting a Facebook page. Once you've signed up for an account and created your page, you can begin sharing its link as part of your outreach plan.

A Facebook page allows you to tell the world about your group, share upcoming events, and point people to other useful information. It also enables you to live broadcast to anyone in the world who wants to tune in.

All you need is a phone connected to the Internet with the Facebook app installed. In the app, touch the "Post" or "Publish" button, then the "Live Video" or "Go Live" button. If you have not given permission already, the app will prompt you to allow it to access your camera and microphone. A preview of your stream will appear on the screen. Before going live, you can add a description to the video. If you look closely, you will see an area under the name of your page where you can set the range of your audience. Setting it to "Public" will make your stream available to anyone who wants to tune in. Hit the red video button to start broadcasting live.

You can see who is tuned in during a live event (and can chat with them if your hands are free). Anyone who has liked your page or follows you will notice you have gone live and see it in their Facebook feed. If you have scheduled the event in advance, those interested will be able to tune in. Also, Facebook encourages users to watch what their friends are watching.

When you've finished your live event, hit done and the video will be saved to your Facebook page videos. You can go in later and edit the description, add details, and download it so that you can publish it in other places.

As your audience grows and you post more events, those events will be visible to anyone in the community in the "Discover events near me" section of Facebook. And as more people view and like your videos on your Facebook page, your audience will grow and the good news will go forth.

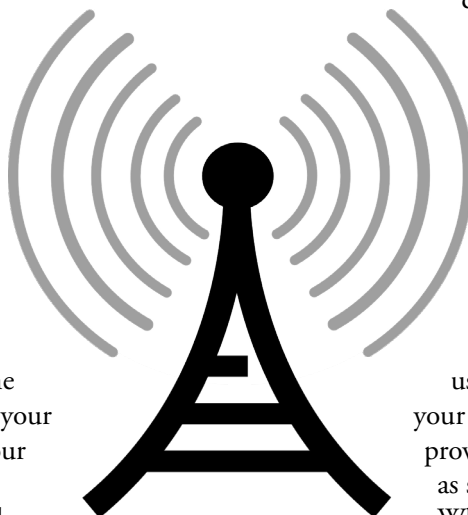
## YouTube Live

YouTube Live is one of the greatest additions to YouTube. If you intend to make live broadcasting a more permanent feature of your media footprint, then consider using YouTube Live. Compared to Facebook and many other media platforms, it is easier to find videos and has a wider audience. YouTube also integrates well into most websites and other media platforms, which makes sharing your message even easier. And the ability to pair Google Analytics\* with your YouTube Channel enables you to get a wealth of information on your audience that can help you to shape future offerings.

Getting started can be as simple as picking up an app like Wirecast Go on IOS or broadcasting directly from the YouTube app on Android 6.0+ devices. To take live broadcasting to the next level, use a desktop application like Open Broadcast Software Studio or Wirecast Play that run on PC and Mac and that can be configured to stream directly to your YouTube Live Channel. These more advanced studio applications have options like adding text to your stream, switching between multiple cameras, and using other very cool effects. These make your stream look more professional and can provide useful information to viewers such as scripture references and other live links. While their learning curves might be a bit steep, there are plenty of video tutorials that can assist you in getting things set up. The sky is the limit with YouTube Live, and with enough time and talent you could have a 24/7 live channel spreading the good news.

Live streaming is a wonderful tool to add to your ministry's media footprint. Over a billion people view these platforms daily. Getting the gospel out there for them to access has never been easier. Let's impact Japan together as we live stream the great things God has done for us and is doing in Japan. **JH**

\* If you'd like more information about Google Analytics or other details mentioned in this article, please contact Jared at [tech@impactjapan.net](mailto:tech@impactjapan.net)



*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.*

# Top 10 Reasons to Study at Tokyo Christian University

by Randall Short, Associate Professor of Biblical Studies

1. You love Japan.
2. You want to build lifelong friendships with Japanese and international students from Asia, Africa, Europe, and America.
3. You want to live in the Greater Tokyo Area, the world's most populous metropolitan area.
4. You want to speak Japanese fluently.
5. You want to understand Japan, Asia, and the world.
6. You want to learn deeply and widely about Scripture, theology, church history, and Japanese religion.
7. You want to study subjects like philosophy, history, linguistics, anthropology, and education without ignoring the most important questions you have about life, faith, and God.
8. You want to go to a school of "big learning" (the literal meaning of *daigaku*, the Japanese word for college) without getting lost in the system.
9. You want to get a college degree without taking on debt that will take years and years to pay.
10. You want to network with today's and tomorrow's Christian leaders in Japan, and to work with them to solve problems facing Japanese church and society.

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

## TOKYO CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

SPONSORS

### ACTS-ES



The Global Meeting Place for Christian University Students

- A Bachelor of Arts degree, fully accredited by the National Government of Japan.
- Liberal Arts based.
- Instruction in English. Japanese as a second language.
- Amazingly low cost in comparison with fully accredited evangelical colleges and universities in the United States or with other private universities in Japan.

TOKYO CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY, ACTS-ES ADMISSION OFFICE

3-301-5 Uchino, Inzai City, Chiba 270-1347, Japan  
E-mail: [acts@tci.ac.jp](mailto:acts@tci.ac.jp) Website: [www.tci.ac.jp](http://www.tci.ac.jp)

# Take time to listen

*Patient listening and good questions will make us better missionaries*

When I do premarital counseling, I tell couples to listen, listen, listen to each other. In Japanese, I write *kiku*, the verb for listen, three different ways, きく、聞く、聴く. In *hiragana*, *kiku* has a soft feel. This points to the need to listen to the emotions behind words. The second way of writing *kiku* also means to hear or to ask. This reminds us to make sure we have heard correctly and to ask if we are not sure. The third *kiku* means to make a conscious effort to listen deeply, focusing on the details while also contemplating the whole context. It is how a lover of classical music listens to an orchestra performing Bach. Only after we listen, listen, listen are we able to understand how we should respond.

Listening is very important for good relationships and for effective ministry. Often, we feel eager to speak and explain, but unless we first take time to listen, we will not know what is in the hearts of the Japanese people we want to share with. This principle applies widely—to culture, beliefs, rituals, and relationships. For example, when a Japanese person asks to get baptized, we naturally want to immediately celebrate and give thanks to the Lord, but if we ask a few questions and then listen, the person will often say more, sometimes sharing critical information that might otherwise have been missed. Here are a few examples from my experience.

A middle-aged woman told me that she wanted to be baptized. I invited her to sit down and I poured us some coffee. As we made small talk, I noticed that she seemed anxious. After about fifteen minutes she told me that she had cancer and said, “I want to get baptized in preparation for death.” I sipped my coffee, stalling as I prayed in my heart, then answered, “Baptism is preparation for life, not death.” That started a dialogue about the meaning of new life in Christ. Not long after, she was baptized with great joy. By the Lord’s grace, the medical treatment she received was effective, and she is still serving in the church and praising God.

Another time, a young Japanese woman said she wanted to be baptized, but her parents were against it. As we talked, she said she was not sure why her parents were opposed, so I encouraged her to ask them.

She came back and said, “My mother asks, ‘If you get baptized, who will you marry?’ and my father wants to know, ‘If you get baptized, who will bury you?’” They weren’t anti-Christian; they just loved their daughter

---

**Only after we listen, listen, listen, are we able to understand how we should respond.**

---

and were doing their best to protect her future. To them, finding a good marriage partner and having children to lay one’s ashes to rest were essential for happiness. A year later, they gave permission for her baptism and her mother even came to watch.

In both cases, a process of listening, asking, and listening led to a better result than might have come from reacting quickly.

Sadly, I have met two Japanese men who received baptism without believing in Jesus. One was baptized because a missionary had helped him and he wanted to show his gratitude. Another just wanted to experience what it felt like to be a Christian. More questions and deeper listening might have led to real decisions of faith.

Over the years, I have made some progress at learning to listen, but—as my wife knows very well—I still have a lot to learn. However, over the years I have been blessed to meet a few expert listeners who have inspired me to try harder. Have you ever met an expert listener? An hour after you meet them you realize that they know all about you and you know very little about them. All because they asked a couple of questions and then listened with deep interest.

I believe we would all be more effective missionaries if we would learn to truly listen and hear what is in the hearts of those Jesus has given us to love. It isn’t easy, but it is worth it. Listen, listen, listen—you will be glad you did. **JH**



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

# JEMA ORDER FORM

All items postage paid.

## Membership Dues

Includes JEMA Directory, *Japan Harvest*, and membership discounts.  
(Not a member? Go to [jema.org](http://jema.org) and click "Join" for an application.)

	Qty	Subtotal
¥6,300 Single	_____	_____
¥7,500 Couple	_____	_____

## Japan Harvest Magazine

One year subscription for non-member

¥2,800	_____	_____
US \$30.00 overseas	_____	_____

## JEMA Directory

¥1,500 Member	_____	_____
¥2,000 Non-member	_____	_____
US \$25.00 overseas	_____	_____

**Grand Total** \_\_\_\_\_

To order, email to [jema-info@jema.org](mailto:jema-info@jema.org), call the JEMA office at 03-3295-1949, or fill out this form and either fax it to 03-3295-1354 or mail it to:  
JEMA, OCC Bldg, 2-1 Kanda Surugadai,  
Chiyoda Ku, Tokyo 101-0062 Japan

## Payment Methods

### Paypal:

Go to [paypal.com](http://paypal.com) and send money to:  
[payment@jema.org](mailto:payment@jema.org)

### Postal Furikae:

00130-4-180466 JEMA-Japan Harvest  
If you itemize your order on the *furikae* in the "This payment is for:" column, it is not necessary to mail the order form separately.

## Moving?

Contact JEMA office so we can update our files!

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



*Loving God, serving others*  
**Christian Academy In Japan**

[www.caj.or.jp](http://www.caj.or.jp)

042-471-0022



# Good Day, Good Bread.

YAMAZAKI BAKING CO., LTD.  
3-10-1 Iwamoto-cho, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo, 101-8585



[www.yamazakipan.co.jp](http://www.yamazakipan.co.jp)