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Autumn 2019

THRIVING
in
JAPAN

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October

WIM Fall Day of Prayer PLUS

October 10, 2019

Rose Town Tea Garden, Ome, Tokyo



November

CPI Pre-Conference

November 12-13, 2019

Tsumagoi Resort Sainosato

Takegawa, Shizuoka

Church Planting Institute

November 13-15, 2019

Tsumagoi Resort Sainosato

Takegawa, Shizuoka



January

WIM Winter Day of Prayer

January 14, 2020

Christian and Missionary Alliance Chapel,
Higashi Tokorozawa



February

JEMA Connect

February 25-26, 2020

Ochanomizu Christian Center



March

JEMA WIM Annual Spring Retreat

March 4-6, 2020

Megumi Chalet Karuizawa

JEMA WIM Hokkaido Day Retreat

March 7, 2020

Location TBD

JEMA WIM Kansai Day Retreat

March 9, 2020

Location TBD



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

jema.org

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



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The editors welcome unsolicited articles.

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

Submission Deadlines

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Summer issue: March 31

Autumn issue: June 30

Winter issue: August 31

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THRIVING *in* JAPAN

I'm writing this soon after our family's summer holidays in central Japan. Away from the big city, it was easy to see the evidence of a hot, wet summer season—vigorous green growth everywhere you looked. That is the image that springs to mind as I ponder this issue's theme: thriving in Japan. I long to see each one of you doing so well in Japan that people who know you are struck by a sense of well-being and healthy growth.

Japan is infamous as a place where missionaries struggle to thrive. Some have even dubbed it the “missionary's graveyard”. When my family first began our journey towards serving in Japan, a Korean missionary in Australia even tried to dissuade us from coming to this country because of this reputation. Japan Harvest and JEMA exist to try to prevent this mission field from being a missionary's graveyard. So it has been a joy to work on this issue, one that is focused on providing encouragement and advice about thriving in Japan.

The articles in this issue cover a range of topics, from very personal accounts of struggles people have encountered during their missionary service to accounts of strategies missionaries have discovered for staying holistically healthy while serving. We even have contributions by two missionaries who have each served for more than 50 years in Japan. There is also an article about singleness as a missionary based on a presentation given at the annual JEMA Connect meeting in February.

Barnabas International (barnabas.org) seeks to support global workers. They “are passionate about caring for global workers through going, speaking, listening, and giving. We desire each worker to thrive wherever they have been planted.” Two of their missionaries, Alan and Judy Steier, have visited Japan regularly in the last few years and have run the JEMA Refresh retreats. I went on the retreat they ran in May, and I highly recommend it to you all.

There are a number of other organisations running retreats around the world. A few you can look up are Alongside in the US, Breathe in Switzerland, and Wellspring Retreat in Thailand.¹ Thriveministry.org is a website that generates articles by “global women”, and they also run retreats for North American women. Velvet Ashes (velvetashes.com) is another group that seeks to help women serving cross-culturally to thrive—they publish online articles regularly, have a prayer wall, and host connection groups, book clubs, and online retreats.

JEMA's website has a Resources tab (<http://www.jema.org/resources/>) with many additional links and options for member care.

When we applied to OMF International in the late 1990s, we were given a recommended reading list, which included biographies of the likes of Hudson Taylor, OMF's founder. The sorts of struggles Hudson Taylor had with the first mission agency that sent him to China would scare most people away from serving as a missionary. The term “member care” hadn't even been invented then. I am indeed thankful to be serving in Japan in an era when member care is acknowledged as important.

Thank you for what you do.



Blessings in Christ,
Wendy
Managing Editor

The themes for the upcoming issues are:

Winter 2020: Seize the Day

Spring 2020: Behind the Scenes (submission deadline January 10)

Summer 2020: Ministering through Education (submission deadline March 31)

Autumn 2020: Strength in Weakness (submission deadline June 30)

1. Alongside: <https://www.alongsidecares.net/our-programs/upcoming-dates/>
Breathe: <https://catalystintl.org/conferences/breathe/>
Wellspring: <http://www.thewellintl.org/eventlog/2020/02/04/wellspring2020>

Life Champions

Christian Shimbun, March 3, 2019
Translated by Tomoko Kato

An evangelistic event called Life Champions was held in Tokyo (21st Century Christ Church in Shibuya; February 10) and Osaka (Mustard Seed Christian Church in Kita-ku; February 17). It was organized by a team of six Christians, which included one of the coaches of a top American football team in the National Football League (NFL) in the US.

At the meeting, singer-songwriter Junko gave her testimony. She worked on the production of “Delicate”, a music video by American singer and actress Taylor Swift. She said, “Taylor once asked me, ‘Why do you look so young?’ Although I didn’t have time to answer, I would have replied, ‘I sleep eight hours a day. Since I became a Christian, I leave all my anxieties and worries in God’s hands through prayer, and as a result I sleep well.’”

NFL cheerleader Sayuri, who had been baptized just a few days before the event on February 3, also gave a testimony. Talking about when she passed the audition and joined the NFL team—Tennessee Titans—in 2017, she said, “I was surprised that the Christian dance director respected the personalities of all the team members. And my teammates, most of whom are

Christians, helped anybody who was in trouble. They loved me as a family member; no one else did so during my stay in the US. I discovered how wonderful it is to believe in God and that it transcended culture and language. Our relationship with God is the center of our life. Since my teammates know that God loves them unconditionally, they can share their love with me.”

Rev. Rocky Setō, who was on the coaching staff of the NFL’s Seattle Seahawks when they won the Super Bowl in 2017, gave a message from Luke 19. He said, “Zacchaeus, who as a tax collector was hated by the Jews because he cheated them, climbed a tree to see Jesus. It reminds me of the wild excitement of millions of people in Seattle during our victory parade. They climbed up trees and buildings to see us; the whole city was at fever pitch.” He continued, “Why did Zacchaeus climb up a tree? Because, despite his great wealth, he wasn’t fulfilled. He had been waiting for someone to complete his life, and that person was Jesus. . . . Jesus was the only sinless person, but he was crucified.” Then he challenged the audience, “If you accept Jesus as Savior, your sins will be forgiven and your relationship with God will be restored. If you believe in Jesus as your Savior today, this day will become your new birthday. Just believing is enough.” ■



Transition into Reiwa: Concerns over religious aspects of ceremonies

Christian Shimbun, May 19, 2019
Translated by Grace Koshino

Emperor Akihito, who the first article of the Japanese Constitution stipulates as being the “the symbol of the State and of the unity of the people,” has abdicated and been succeeded by his son. A one-off bill was passed that allowed him to abdicate on April 30 this year and Naruhito to ascend to the Chrysanthemum Throne. Consequently, the era name changed from Heisei to Reiwa. The event was widely covered by the media, and the whole nation was in a jubilant mood. However, some Christians felt religious freedom and the separation of politics and religion were threatened, and they held meetings in several locations to question the imperial regime.

On April 30, the last day of Heisei, the Yasukuni Mondai Īnkai¹ of the National Christian Council (NCC) held a press conference at Shinanomachi Church in Shinjuku, Tokyo, to protest Emperor Akihito’s abdication ceremony, which they claimed was unconstitutional. Committee chairman Takuya Hoshide gave some context to their claim, “We believe that the Impe-



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!"

rial abdication ceremonies are being carried out in a manner that violates the Japanese Constitution, which is unacceptable. Of particular concern is the ceremony of passing on the sacred sword and other treasures, which will be conducted as a national affair. Those items symbolize the divinity of Amaterasu-ōmikami, and the ceremony has the meaning of passing on that divine authority. If we accept this, the old Shinto system will gain the upper hand and control Japan."

Theologian Ichirō Mitsunobu of the Society of Jesus read a written request to Prime Minister Abe, appealing for politics and religion to be clearly separated as mandated by the Japanese Constitution and to make a clear distinction between national affairs and imperial rites, which are private religious ceremonies of the imperial house. During a question-and-answer session, Sung Je Kim, the general secretary of NCC, stated the importance of the church holding its ground and making the issue clear, even if it means putting the church at risk. He said, "By doing so, we confess to God that sometimes in the past we didn't stand up for our faith, and we repent of our sins. I hope that people will understand the intentions of our actions." ■

1. A committee board that deals with the controversies surrounding the Yasukuni Shrine



(above) Ofunato Station area being rebuilt
(right) Reconstruction of a seawall



From Reconstruction to Church Building: Tohoku Ministry Project in Ofunato

Christian Shimbun, March 10, 2019

Translated by Hiromi Kiuchi

Eight years have passed since the Great East Japan Earthquake. Churches in the affected area are now entering a new phase in their ministry: church planting.

Ever since they launched the Tohoku Ministry Project in 2015, the Japan Alliance Mission has continued their relief and support work in Ofunato, Iwate. Mitsuru Saitō, the local leader for the project, commented on how ministry work in the Tohoku area has gradually shifted from disaster relief and support to church planting. Before the earthquake struck these areas were struggling with depopulation; this problem has become even more serious since the disaster.

Ofunato was greatly affected by the tsunami in 2011, losing 419 people and 5,592 buildings. Even today, there are empty spaces scattered among the newly constructed facilities and stores. Furthermore, several major factories have withdrawn from the area, causing many workers to leave. Still, Saitō believes Ofunato's recovery is proceeding well compared to other Tohoku cities such as Rikuzentakata. From his experience working for an international NGO, Saitō believes that continued, not just temporary, support is crucial for building strong relationships with the local residents. Using his overseas ties, Saitō has organized several international exchange programs at local high schools. He also continues to visit Nagahama Community Center weekly to encourage local residents in the activity

of *fumanetto* (an exercise that involves stepping between the webbing of a large net).

During our time there, a Singaporean family arrived through the EPJM (English Presbytery Mission Committee), organized by the Presbyterian Church of Singapore. The EPJM has continually sent support teams to Iwate since the Great East Japan Earthquake.



Finger knitting

This time, the family performed hymns in Japanese, shared Singaporean snacks, and introduced finger knitting techniques. At the end of fellowship, Silvia, the mother of the family, stood up and commented that this was her fourth time visiting Japan, and many people always ask her why she is determined to visit Japan so regularly. "I don't come to Japan for vacation. I come because I want to share God's love, to share that God loves each and every one of us."

The Tohoku Ministry Project currently holds regular services, English classes, and bead craft classes at their local church, Grace House. Their prayer is for this church building to become easier for local people to access. "There are many people who have difficulty arranging rides from their temporary houses to somewhere else," comments Saitō. "Coming to church is hard for them. So, we want to go out to them instead." ■

STRENGTH *to* FULFIL *the* CALL

By Hesia Dain

Building resilience is a key component to being good stewards of God's call on our lives

A young, gifted couple worked hard at learning the Japanese language, they served faithfully in their church, and diligently shared the good news of Jesus. But at the end of their first term they returned to their home country tired and near burnout. Sadly, they did not return to serve in Japan.

Is this a familiar story? Do you want to know what can make you more resilient, more able to cope with the challenges of life? Recently, I was able to attend a workshop on this theme. Tony Horsfall, freelance trainer and retreat leader, and Debbie Hawker, clinical psychologist and missionary support worker, led the retreat based on their new book: *Resilience in Life and Faith: Finding Your Strength in God*.

What is resilience?

Resilience is currently a popular concept. It is the ability to:

- recover from disappointment,
- stand firm during opposition,
- recover well from hurt or injury, and
- keep going to the very end.

These are helpful ideas, but for the Christian who knows that their strength is in the Lord, we also need to orientate our thinking towards God. Karen Carr provides a helpful definition: "Resilience is having strength to fulfil the call God has given us, even when it will be painful and difficult. Resilience is staying fixed on a higher purpose, motivated by love of God, our neighbor, and the world, and supported by friends. While others let us down, we are carried by the One who called us."¹

How can we increase our resilience?

Horsfall and Hawker advocate a model they call SPECS and argue that if we consider how to become healthier in five areas we can increase our overall resilience. I have found it a helpful tool for preparing for whatever life is going to throw at us next. What are these five areas?

Spiritual—connecting with God

We know that staying spiritually healthy is the foundation for our resilience, but we don't always act on that knowledge. The spiritual foundations we build as part of our daily lives are what help us to stand in the storm. How do you nurture your spiritual life? What helps you keep going spiritually? Do you make time and space in your life for these things?

If we are secure in our identity as children of God, chosen and forgiven, then we can stand secure in the knowledge that God is with us and holds us, even as the waves buffet us. Tony Horsfall tells the story of an 80-year-

old lady who absented for the first time from the roof of a traditional church building in order to raise money for a good cause. When asked, "Were you scared?"

She replied, "There is no need to be scared when you know you are safe, when you know you are being held." Are you secure in the knowledge that you are held by God?

How would you score your spiritual health out of 10?

Physical—looking after your body

We are created as physical beings and we know that our physical state affects our spiritual and emotional well-being—it's harder to be resilient when we are tired, in pain, or ill. However, some of us live with ongoing health issues or disabilities. Physical resilience is not about achieving Olympic standards, but about stewarding the bodies the Lord has given us to help our overall resilience. I'm sure that most of us know how to improve in this area, but maybe we need something to remind us or accountability with others. If we

really struggle for time to do these things, maybe it points to systemic issues that need addressing (see below).

Are you getting regular exercise? Sufficient sleep? Do you have a regular Sabbath and build margin into your week? Are there small steps that you could take that would make a big difference?

How would you score your physical resilience out of 10?

Hebrews 12:1-3 (NIV)

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

Emotional—managing your feelings

Your current issue may be ageing parents, a child not settling at kindergarten, or a colleague's insensitivity. We are all emotional beings with emotional struggles. Emotional resilience does not mean no emotions. Instead, it means having healthy ways of handling our emotions.

I find it helpful to journal to process what I am thinking and feeling. This has the added benefit of helping me remember both what I felt and how God helped me. The Bible is full of encouragements for us to be honest with God about our emotions and to remember what God has done for us. It's such a blessing to us when we do this.

What have been your predominant emotions recently? Do you take time to notice them? How do you handle disappointment? What helpful strategies do you have for coping with difficult emotions? Is it talking, crying, or recreation? Have you tried lamenting² or slow breathing? Do you need to seek help?

How would you score your emotional health out of 10?

Cognitive and creative—renewing your mind and using your creativity

We can build healthy cognitive habits by being conscious of what we are thinking. Take problem-solving for example. Are you someone who does your best to find solutions to problems and who sees God's hand at work? Or are you easily discouraged and tempted to see all the negatives?

Poor problem-solving skills and not maintaining a faith-filled perspective can lead to feelings of hopelessness and despair. Skills like identifying the problem early and understanding its root cause, as well as considering a variety of possible solutions, are all covered in the book and can help us avoid those destructive feelings.

Horsfall and Hawker include other areas to consider including mental flexibility, life-long learning and expertise, choosing to focus on Biblical truths, and challenging unhelpful thoughts.

Our Creator God made us creative beings and so it is not surprising that being more creative in our thoughts and actions can increase our emotional health. Hobbies such as drawing, singing, craftwork, or photography are not only beneficial in themselves, but they also release emotions creatively.

Our imaginations can also aid us in resilience. I liked the story of one missionary who served in a land-locked country but whose favourite way to relax was to go to the beach. She decided to take a bowl of warm water, put her feet in it, and imagine that she was at the beach! What creative solutions might help you?

How would you score your cognitive and creative health out of 10?

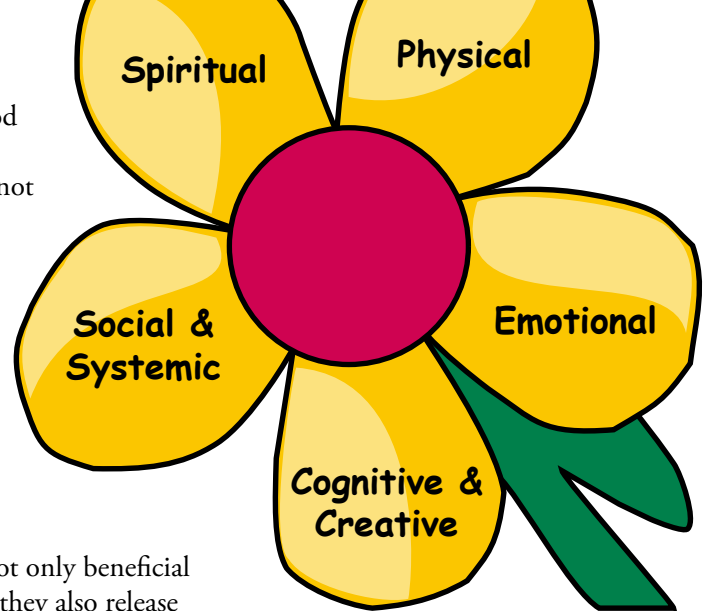
Social and systemic—building supportive relationships and modifying your environment

Have you ever been encouraged by a colleague who has brought you a meal or taken your kids out when you were sick? We all know that it's easier to be resilient when we have friends and/or family around who can help, whether practical or emotional. Resilience is also affected by social things—our relationships and environment. In a similar way the health of teams and communities of which we are part of can affect our overall health.

How well supported are you? Who do you turn to for help? What relationships need work, deepening, or healing?

In my own ministry and leadership, I've found it helpful to add a third "S"—strategic health. Do I know what I am doing and why? Does my organisation support what I am doing? Do I know where I am heading?

How would you score your social and systemic (and strategic) health out of 10?



How resilient are you?

On our first home assignment I was asked to draw a diagram to represent how healthy I felt I was in each of the five areas. I chose to draw a diagram of a flower with each petal representing a different area. At first, I drew my "emotional health petal" quite a reasonable size, but as I continued to think about it the size shrunk. Eventually I had a very small emotional petal, and I realised that if I was to thrive in Japan, or even return, I needed to take action so that my emotional needs would be met. I was able to put some things in place and I continue to learn how to build my resilience here in Japan.

I challenge you to take the time to consider your health in each of these areas. You could draw a bar chart, or copy my simple flower idea, to represent your relative health in these areas. What could you do to improve your health in these areas? If you prefer a more scientific approach, then I recommend the questionnaire at the end of Horsfall and Hawker's book.

In addition, the book also looks at how we can help our children be more resilient, as well as chapters on Biblical characters that display each of these areas of resilience. I highly recommend this book. **JH**

1. Karen Carr, "Personal resilience," in *Trauma and Resilience*, eds. Frauke C. Schaefer and Charles A. Schaefer (Condeo Press, 2012), 93.
2. Christina Fox, "The Way of Lament," May 6, 2016, <https://www.ligonier.org/blog/way-lament/>

Kesia Pain, with her husband Chris and four children, has been serving in Japan with OMF since 2007. She is involved in mission leadership and pastoral care, friendship evangelism, and ongoing language and culture learning.

Find *your* rhythm

By Joel Loewen

We need life rhythms that sustain long-term ministry

Rhythm can be defined as a recurring sequence of patterns or events. After 30 years in Japan I have learned some rhythms which keep me rejuvenated for long-term ministry.

Finding my rhythm during language school

When we first came to Japan, we went to language school five mornings a week in Ochanomizu. After arriving home from four hours of intense study, I was exhausted. I would take the afternoon to get out in nature or just do something different in order to rejuvenate. I did my studying later. That was a rhythm that fit me.

Different people have different rhythms, and discovering yours is important. There is a tendency to look at people around us to get our rhythm. We try to live up to others' expectations or the idealized expectations we place on ourselves. This can be detrimental in the long haul.

Early in our ministry, I experienced a physical limitation. I prayed and had others pray for it to be taken away but it lingered on. The best advice I received at that time was this: "Joel, you need to go at a different pace than others." For me, that meant a slower pace. A slower pace was okay. That one simple piece of advice liberated me to be who I am, even in my weakness. It wasn't permission to be lazy. It was permission to be real.

I also realized the value of taking breaks from language school. After the

first year of language study, we had two months off. During that time I approached a neighbor who ran her own yakitori stand. We were able to converse, and I was on cloud nine because she understood what I said! Even a small accomplishment like that felt so good.

Toward the end of our time in language school, we lost our first child due to miscarriage. That was a blow to our expectations, an interruption in rhythm. However, I have learned that language ability is not the most important thing in the world. My relationship with Jesus is. My relationship with my wife is. I needed to get those rhythms back on track.

Though the term "rhythm" was not used, our mission organization did help us keep a rhythm during our first term by encouraging us to focus on getting

the language. What they knew that we didn't was that language study would suck up our energy, and that additional ministry could create unnecessary stress. Their wisdom freed me to operate at a healthy pace in our first term.

Finding my rhythm in ministry

It took time, but I believe I have now found the place and the pace in which I thrive. This happened through understanding myself and my gifts, passions, and personality. Two workshops that especially helped were "Refocus" and "Personal Core Values."¹ I became aware of how God developed me to minister to people. I realized what is life-giving to me and what is not.

I was also relieved to know that it is okay to use what you enjoy doing for evangelism and discipleship. Till then I had been trying to copy others and how they were experiencing success. The truth is that evangelism and discipleship take a long time in Japan, so you might as well enjoy that process instead of being constantly agitated that people don't respond quicker.

My wife and I enjoy leading and participating in worship. Over the years, we have been able to use this gift together in ministry. This is one example of gaining a good rhythm by operating out of God-given passions. For four years we assisted a church plant in Tohoku. There, we were given the freedom to be creative in worship

Jesus
**had a rhythm
of resting in his
Father's love,
being vulnerable
with his disciples,
and ministering to
people's needs.**

leading. It was very life-giving. Most of the people coming to that church were not believers and had no background in church. Any song we sang was new to them. It was rejuvenating to share the gospel with them through worship.

I have also been given a love for preaching in Japanese. It gives me a great sense of fulfillment to speak in the “heart language” of the people. I learn so much while preparing sermons and find the Holy Spirit changing me. I’ve learned that just as important as getting the words right and the theological arguments correct is to portray how Jesus and the gospel is affecting me. So, through the rhythm of sermon preparation and preaching, the Holy Spirit is rejuvenating me.

Additionally, I love to build relationships with people in their “third places”—where people spend time other than at home or at work. It’s where they go in their free time, or where they develop hobbies. So, I have spent a lot of time at *onsens*, tennis courts, and restaurants. There, people relax, let their guard down, and open up a little. I’ve had many conversations about God in those places and seen several people respond to invitations to church events. Just recently I got to know a young man in a gospel choir I joined. He said that his favorite gospel song is: “Amaz-

ing Grace.” That led to a conversation about the song’s origin. I love such conversations. I’m tired afterwards, but it’s a good and satisfying tiredness.

Finding my rhythm in Jesus

Jesus is the original rejuvenating power. He is the life-giver! When I return from people’s “third places” and see no evidence of spiritual fruit, I need Jesus to fill me with his life-giving presence. I need the community of Christians to build me up in my weakness and discouragement.

Japan is a difficult place to minister in because spiritual interest seems next to non-existent. We are not able to progress quickly in discipleship and church-planting. We may begin to wonder, “What am I doing here?” We need to understand how Jesus dealt with those same emotions.

What was his rhythm? I see it in various places but especially before he went to the cross. Jesus spent much time with people, but he also made no apology for being alone with his Father or just with a few disciples. Right before he went to the cross, he was quite vulnerable with Peter, James, and John, saying, “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me” (Matthew 26:38 NIV).

Jesus had a rhythm of resting in his Father’s love, being vulnerable with his disciples, and ministering to people’s needs. How much more I need those essential elements as I seek to share Jesus. How much I need Jesus and other believers to help me regain my rhythm when I’ve lost my ability to thrive or doubt my calling.

It is possible to thrive in ministry in Japan over the long haul. It is a process of finding a rhythm of life where I can express the passions, vision, and gifts that God has given me. This doesn’t mean that ministry is easy. It means that ministry is fulfilling because I know what I need to thrive in body, soul, and spirit every day. It is a place where the gospel of Jesus changes me and I can express that with and to others.

How’s your rhythm? In what place do you thrive? What rejuvenates you? What do you see in Jesus’ rhythm of life that intrigues you? **JH**

1. “Personal Core Values” will be presented by Ken Taylor this November as a pre-conference workshop at CPI.

Joel Loewen and his wife Elaine are from the US and have been missionaries in Japan with SEND International since 1986. They are thriving as team leaders in Higashi Kurume. Their son Bradley lives and works in Tokyo.





FOUNDATIONAL ELEMENTS

that help me thrive

Close prayer partners, physical exercise, and a never-say-die attitude to learning Japanese can help sustain us

By Christina Eads

A friend back in California has commented more than once how she loves seeing me thrive in Japan. Now, she knows more than anyone that my life in Tokyo is anything but perfect. I am certainly not always composed and am rarely efficient. But I would like to share a few key elements I believe led my friend to say I am thriving.

Prayer support is essential

Sometimes the most obvious points can be overlooked or not used to their full potential. So I would like to begin with prayer. Like almost all missionaries, I have a regular prayer letter that I send to hundreds of faithful supporters. It is a blessing beyond belief to have so many people praying passionately for Japan. However, my newsletter is typically not very personal, which is appropriate for a large mailing list. While these precious prayer supporters have contributed to my well-being in Japan, I think it's the prayers of close friends that have really sustained me.

I would not have lasted in Japan without committed friends, both by my side in Japan and back in America, praying with me. I am talking about

women of all generations, but especially friends close to my age, holding me accountable to living a holy lifestyle, encouraging me in countless ways, and spurring me on in my relationship with Jesus. Since coming to Japan, I've had at least one friend in Japan and one friend stateside who have agreed to be there for me anytime. If my friend in America is sleeping, then I reach out to the one in Japan and vice versa. I am never alone. These are friends who can relate to how I'm feeling and are not only battling with me together in prayer but also know my struggles or have experienced similar challenges.

On top of that blessing, I also have women my mother's age and close to my grandmother's age interceding for me. They are available to get coffee with me, or at the very least to email or call. Those who have already walked through their thirties have priceless advice to offer. Every time I meet, talk, and pray with them, it's like God is bestowing treasures upon me.

It's vital to have people who know the details of what's going on in our lives and thoughts. Plus, it's a joy that helps sustain us in the long term to

bring our needs and the needs of close friends before a merciful God. Having friends alongside us will help us endure when we feel like we've prayed the same thing close to a million times. Being vulnerable in our prayer requests will help us walk well with Christ. We are not naïve—we know that Japan is a hard place and that none of us are immune to sin or discouragement. So let's continue making our needs, desires and weaknesses known to those who will pray with us.

The physical matters, too

While I'm sure we all mostly agree on the power of prayer, it may be tougher to convince some of the power of physical activity. However, exercise has played a huge part in maintaining my sanity while living in a foreign country. I truly believe getting a workout into our schedules is also a key to thriving in Japan.

Of course, exercise helps prevent all kinds of ailments and is fundamental for the healthy management of body weight. Beyond these more acclaimed benefits of working out, exercise has had noteworthy effects on my mental

health. I'm able to clear my mind of all the cultural mistakes, frustrations, disappointments, and countless other struggles that may come my way. In a sense, a good workout can feel like a reset button, preventing any stresses from overwhelming me beyond what I can handle. It can be a time to mindlessly focus on the exercise (forgetting my cares) or a time of deep reflection (sifting through my thoughts and feelings about those cares).

I know for some, developing a workout routine is the last thing they want to think about, but it can be fun! Running is certainly not for everyone, but walking or cycling are other great ways to enjoy nature and explore new places. Seeing cherry blossoms, hydrangeas, and autumn leaves are some of the most beautiful bonuses to living in Japan. My enjoyment of nature is multiplied when I take the time to get out and exercise in the midst of it, before the crowds come for picnics and pictures. There are also various charity events to motivate you to exercise for a good cause, and exercise can even be incorporated into travel. With friends, exercise can be a great time of discussion or even prayer. For me it has become a critical time of self-care,

which I must prioritize if I want to thrive in Japan.

The joy of Japanese

There has never been a time in my life when I wanted to quit as badly as I wanted to give up on Japanese language school. Trying to learn and use Japanese can be exceedingly intimidating and discouraging. But I can say with confidence that any ounce of success I've had persevering in life in Japan has been greatly impacted by my decision not to quit learning Japanese.

Many of my most rewarding moments here have been due to the fact that I improved my Japanese. There is something exhilarating about the process of growing in communication with other humans. When we remember the frustration of our language skill limitations, the transformation to meaningful conversations and relationships is astonishing. I typically think about how rewarding improving in Japanese can be in regards to sharing the gospel. That is, of course, invaluable, but my first realization of the ecstasy of improved language skills came from time with another believer.

I truly cherish the memory of my first time having tea with Mai. Initially,

because of my elementary Japanese, I found it much easier to interact with Christian friends who had studied abroad or grown up around missionaries. Mai had neither experience, and her English was extremely limited. She didn't let that stop her from getting to know me, though. Over the months, we got by with gestures and even exchanged letters at one point to get across what we really wanted to say. But before I knew it, there I was at a second-floor café on Nakamichi-dōri in Kichijoji, bonding with Mai. Admittedly, I think I misunderstood. If I recall correctly, she ended up having pasta, but I thought we were meant to just have tea! But despite months of confusing exchanges leading up to that moment, that day I had deep, heartfelt fellowship with my sister in Christ.

Times like this are priceless. I rode away on my bicycle in sheer joy. It was so deeply satisfying to have connection with a dear friend. Before, that bond had been hardly plausible, and when our relationship reached a whole new level, it felt like a dream come true. That was possible primarily because I didn't give in to the temptation to drop out of Japanese school. It was worth every tear to keep at it because it allowed me to get to know Mai in her native language, our only common language. Moments like this have carried me through the tough times, bringing a great deal of joy and delight into my life. I think it would be hard to thrive without those moments.

So while Japan can be a difficult place to live and minister in, we can certainly thrive here. This concept of thriving may be a fluid concept, and it doesn't mean we have it all together. But with prayer partners, exercise, and improving Japanese language skills, our friends will see that we're doing quite a bit more than just getting by in Japan. **JH**

Friends photo submitted by author

Christina Eads has been on staff with Japan Campus Crusade for Christ since fall of 2011. The beach in Chiba, running at Inokashira Park, friends, and the grace of God have kept her in Japan.

*I think it's the prayers
of close friends that have
really sustained me.*



Christina (center) with two close friends that she regularly runs with. During their runs, they also pray together and have great fellowship.

GOD

A serious illness at an inconvenient time gave the author a chance to see God's great goodness to her

at WORK!

By Janet Dallman

It all began with some uncomfortable feelings inside. Although not too serious initially, I gradually became more concerned and a colleague suggested a check-up. After the physical examination, the doctor explained that I needed major surgery. What? Surely I must have misunderstood. But no, that's what the doctor was saying, and she wanted an MRI, which fortunately (because this is Japan) I was able to have that same day.

At that point, it was just one month until we were supposed to be leaving Japan for one year of home assignment. I went home and began frantically packing everything we could manage without because if I needed major abdominal surgery, I knew I wouldn't be able to pack afterwards.

The results a week later showed that an even bigger operation was needed than the doctor had first thought. Amazingly, the surgery could take place the following week, but I needed more time to think about it. This was huge: major surgery, packing up the rest of the apartment, moving out, going to our missionary conference, and then going on home assignment. On top of all that, I was supposed to begin a new course of study within a week of arriving in Britain. How could it all work together?

However, after thinking, praying, and talking with doctors and others, I decided to go ahead. Within two weeks of the initial diagnosis, the surgery was done and I was struggling with post-operative pain and discomfort. Wow! We never know what's coming next in life, do we?

How God was at work

What I've told you so far are the facts of what happened, but what I want to tell you next is how God was

at work in and through my life in all this.

The day I was admitted to hospital—nervous, frightened, and overwhelmed—God gave me this verse: “Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way” (2 Thess. 3:16 NIV). The Lord of peace, Jesus, really could give me peace at *all* times and in *every* way, and that meant he could give me peace on that day.

The following morning—operation day—God told me what he told Isaiah: “For I am the Lord your God who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, Do not fear; I will help you” (Isaiah 41:13). I repeated that verse to myself as I waited for the operation, walked down to the theatre, and as they put me under anaesthetic. God was holding my right hand—I had nothing to fear.

Some time before, we'd been given a helpful devotional book by Sarah Young called *Jesus Calling* where the readings are written as if God is speaking. On the day of my operation, it said:

“I am involved in each moment of your life. I have carefully mapped out every inch of your journey through this day.”¹

It continued: “Because the world is in a fallen condition, things always seem to be unraveling around the edges. Expect to find trouble in this day. At the same time, trust that *My way is perfect*, even in the midst of such messy imperfection . . . As you trudge through the sludge of this fallen world, keep your mind in heavenly places with Me.”²

The following day, waking up from a night of pain, sickness, indignity, and having lain flat for 24 hours with pressure stockings on, God gave me the

phrase, “Relax in my healing.”³ I felt God's reassuring promise that he was healing me.

During day two post-operation when I was slightly better but still in pain and tempted to worry, my reading said, “When your focus is firmly on me, my peace displaces fears and worries. They will encircle you seeking entrance, so you must stay alert.”⁴

On day three post-op, I read:

“You have Me beside you and My Spirit within you, so no set of circumstances is too much for you to handle. When the path before you is dotted with difficulties, beware of measuring your strength against those challenges.”⁵

Young's words from *Jesus Calling* continued to speak to me: “That calculation is certain to riddle you with anxiety. Without me, you wouldn't make it past the first hurdle! The way to walk through demanding days is to grip My hand tightly and stay in close communication with Me.”⁶

Day five post-op was a Sunday, so I listened to one of my favourite sermons. Based on the storm on the Sea of Galilee, it struck home when the preacher asked, “Is there a storm in your life?” *Yes!* I screamed inside. The preacher reassured his listeners that in the same way that the disciples and Jesus survived the storm, so would we. I felt God's assurance that I would recover; I would go to the UK, and I would begin my course of study on time as planned.

On day seven post-op, I read:

“My Presence with you is a promise, independent of your awareness of Me. Many things can block this awareness, but the major culprit is worry.”⁷

Her words continued to hit hard: “Who is in charge of your life? If it is you, then you have good reason to

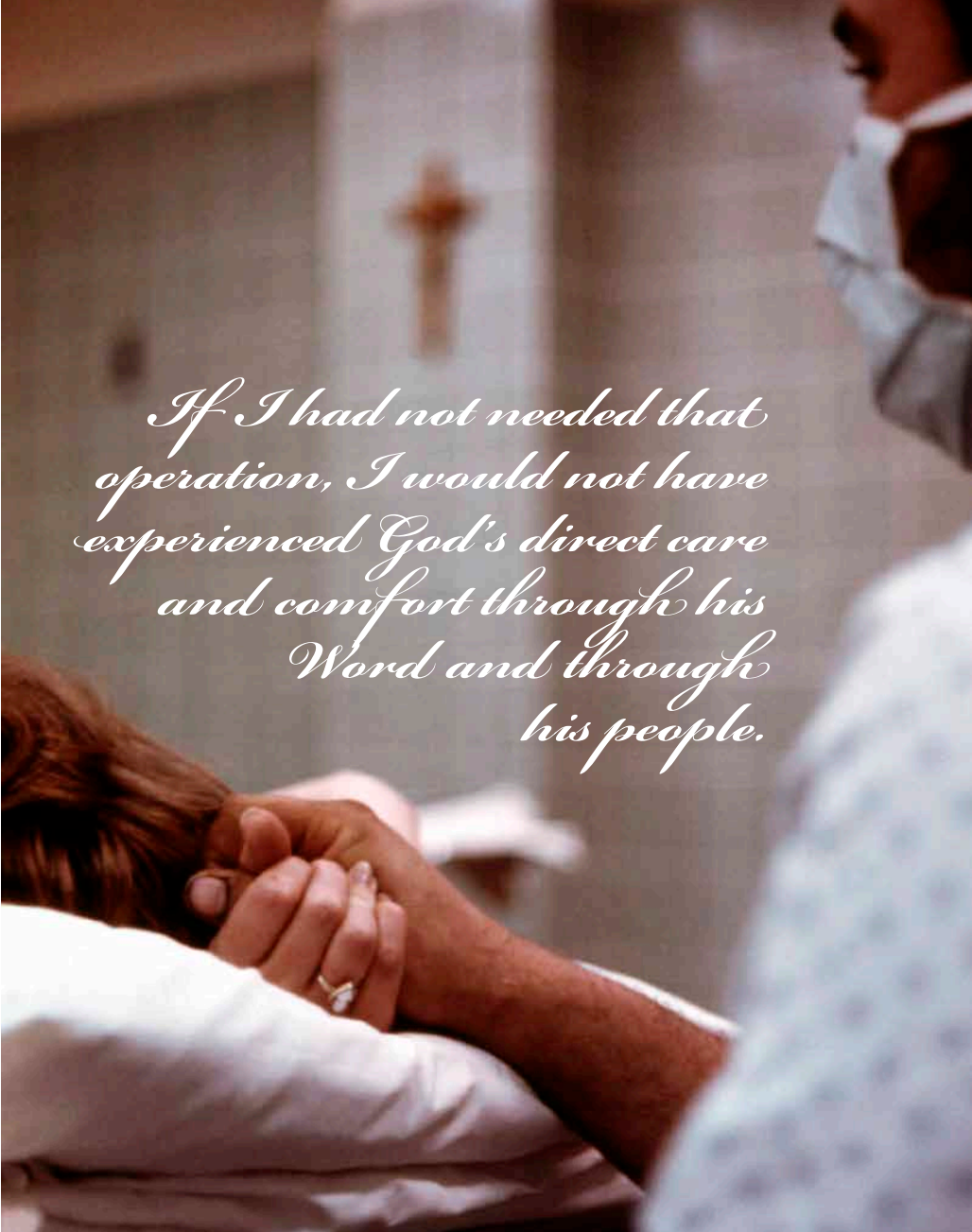
worry. But if it is I, then worry is both unnecessary and counterproductive. When you start to feel anxious about something, relinquish the situation to Me.”⁸

While I was in hospital, God was consistently at work in my mind and heart. He was at work through his Word, through my Bible reading notes, through my husband, my missionary colleagues, and Japanese church members. God also used the Japanese doctors and nurses to minister to me. The hospital’s name was Tenshi Hospital (“Angel” Hospital). God sent his angels to minister to me with real hands and feet and compassionate hearts. Not only that but God himself ministered to me. I am so grateful that while I couldn’t do much of anything, God met me in comforting and profound ways.

However, not only did I experience God’s work in me and for me in this unexpected and unwanted situation, but he also used me to show his love and witness to others while I was in hospital.

Also in my ward was elderly and very talkative Mrs Suzuki. She proudly showed me the enormous gallstone that she had had removed and told me that she belonged to Tenrikyo (“Heavenly Truth”, a Japanese “new religion”). I’d noticed the priest who came twice a day to pray over her. Although she overwhelmed me with the speed of her words and the intensity of her story, I prayed throughout our conversation and had the opportunity to tell Mrs Suzuki about Jesus and why I was a Christian. Before she left hospital, I gave her some Christian literature, and she assured me we would meet again one day. I don’t know whether we will meet again or whether Mrs Suzuki read the information I gave her, but I pray she will meet Jesus.

Likewise, I was able to speak to one of my nursing “angels”—Ms Takahashi, a graduate of the college attached to this Catholic training hospital. She told me trainees attended Mass and had graduation in the church building, but when I asked if she still went to church, she replied that she had no time now that she was working. It wasn’t much, but it was a small opportunity to speak for Jesus and encourage her to return to church.



If I had not needed that operation, I would not have experienced God's direct care and comfort through his Word and through his people.

The reality is that if I had not needed that operation, I would not have experienced God’s direct care and comfort through his Word and through his people. Neither would I have met either of these ladies or any of the other doctors, nurses, and patients in Angel Hospital. Maybe God not only wanted to show me his love and care but also wanted to use me to show his love and care to those around me.

As a postscript, by God’s grace I did fly to Britain and began my course of study as planned. I write this now three years on. I thank God for his work in my life and in the lives of those I met during my time in hospital.

What did I learn?

What lessons might I draw from this experience? God allows his people to struggle with sickness—he doesn’t

always choose to protect us from ill health. God’s timing is perfect—even when we don’t think it is. God can heal people—though he doesn’t always choose to. God will meet his people in dark times and places—through his Word and the spiritual and practical concern of others. God can use his people as his witnesses—even in the most unlikely or unwanted situations. **JH**

1. Sarah Young, *Jesus Calling* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2004), 160.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid., 161.

4. Ibid., 162.

5. Ibid., 163.

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid., 166.

8. Ibid.

Janet Dallman (UK), with her husband Peter, has been involved in church planting and caring for new missionaries through OMF for 21 years. She is OMF Japan’s candidate coordinator and pastoral and spiritual care coordinator.



A first-term emotional affair

By John Edwards

I thought I was well prepared to be a missionary in Japan, but an emotional affair almost destroyed my family and my ministry

I thought I was ready to be a missionary in Japan. I'd come to Japan in 1982 and lived with a Japanese family for a month. Then, in 1986, I returned to Japan to do short-term ministry with hi-b.a. for three months. Finally, in May 1993, I arrived in Japan as a long-term missionary with hi-b.a. along with my wife, Susan, and two young sons. I had a degree in Bible; I had done a ministry internship working with youth for over three years. We had raised full financial support and had the backing of our family. I had even taken a semester of Japanese in college and done well, so I was confident I'd thrive in language school.

We moved to Karuizawa for language school—actually, we were pretty much dropped off. Even though we loved the natural surroundings of Karuizawa, we knew no one and felt isolated. This was before the internet was commonly used, and we didn't even have a computer. Phone calls to the US cost over \$1.70 per minute. So we relied on letters for communication back home.

There was no one else in our mission in language school. We got to know other missionaries. Our school assigned us “helpers” who were further along in language school than us. One family from Europe helped us with the practicalities of life in Karuizawa, Japan. But we didn't have a sense that we belonged.

Certainly, the excitement of being in Japan carried us through initially. The first month or so of language school

was fine as it was review for me to learn *hiragana*, *katakana*, and early conversational vocabulary and grammar.

Life got hard

Gradually, though, life got hard. I don't know when it happened. Perhaps a turning point was our first Christmas in Japan when we were required to spend three days at hi-b.a. camp with our coworkers—they were all Japanese as there were no other foreign missionaries with hi-b.a. on the field at the time. For three days, we sat in a cold camp, not really knowing our coworkers well and definitely not having a level of Japanese to enjoy conversation with them. We returned to language school in Karuizawa feeling homesick and alone.

Susan and I had loved many aspects of doing youth ministry together in the US. We laughed a lot. With a limited budget, our early dates were sometimes doing laundry together at a laundro-

mat. Excitement, laughter, and joy—these were the kinds of emotions we communicated easily with each other.

However, sadness, fear, anger, and frustration were the kinds of “negative” emotions we had little experience sharing together. Both of us withdrew into our isolated worlds, experiencing our pain alone while maintaining a facade of a happy first-term missionary family.

That wasn't too hard to do. Member care consisted of a monthly phone call from Tokyo. “How are you doing?” our field director would ask.

“Oh, we're fine,” we'd reply.

“How is language study?”

“It's hard, but we're doing okay.”

“OK, we're praying for you. Talk to you in a few weeks.”

I yearned for friendship, for an intimacy of sorts. There was a Japanese woman in the community who spoke English. I would see her regularly in my daily life. Because she was fluent in English, we could talk about a great many things. And I did. I don't know when it moved from being a comfortable friendship to (on my part) something more. I began to write notes from time to time and she would reply to them. Once I snuck out at night just to walk past her house and another time to call her from a phone booth. My wife didn't know about any of this. The secrecy alone was a clue that this had become unhealthy.

Others must have known or at least suspected. I know one missionary woman left a note for me at my study spot letting me know that she appreci-

Secrecy is detrimental. Confess your struggles to someone and get help.

ated my ministry to her teenage children, that she was praying for me, and that I should be careful. She included a Bible passage.

Found out

One day I returned home from school. In fact, I think Susan called the school and requested that I come home early. I walked in the door and there on the kitchen table was the red box where I had stashed all the notes I had received. “Open it,” was all she said. I was found out.*

Now there was a new kind of pain we were forced to share together—the pain of guilt, of betrayal, and of failure. We called our field director and confessed our situation. We said we needed help. We visited a counselor for a session. He was a kindly gentleman who taught at a Christian university, but he figuratively patted our hands and said, “There, there, you’ll be fine.”

We insisted we were not fine to our field director so our situation was reported to the US office. We also contacted our home church, which had, just the year before, hired its first missions pastor. Communicating with this pastor, we learned about Tuscarora Resource Center (TRC), a counseling

center for those in ministry, located in Pennsylvania, US.

Taking positive steps

Six months after graduating from language school, we were back in the US to get help. We lived at TRC (now called Alongside and located in Michigan). Five days a week, my wife and I spoke to counselors—sometimes together but more often individually. You see, we are both from Christian homes, but we are also from broken homes. We naturally would have picked up the habits of our parents not realizing that some of those habits led to a breakdown (or were symptoms of problems) in their marriages.

In my parents’ case, towards the end of their marriage I don’t remember them arguing like they used to when I was younger. By that time, they were both excelling at their occupations and were highly respected in their workplaces. In hindsight, by that time they may have withdrawn from each other and moved toward work and work relationships.

My counselor proposed an analogy that my family was like a skyscraper that was tall and looked strong and beautiful but was actually corroding inwardly. Part of our homework was to talk to our siblings and parents. Susan and I learned to share the hard emotions like anger, sadness, and fear.

We concluded that I had had an emotional affair (which was likely one-way). My wife also confessed that she had relied too much on another person to share with, rather than try to communicate with me. We worked on communication skills.

After three months, we returned to Japan to finish out our first four-year term. The second half was better than the first. Oh, I wasn’t “cured.” Even over twenty years

later, I struggle to communicate well. I can go over the top emotionally, but I’m not usually trying to hide my emotions. Susan and I are much more proactive in recognizing and asking, “Are you okay? How are you feeling right now?” In fact, even as I write this, I’m experiencing some hard emotions about life and ministry in Japan. The best thing, though, is that Susan and I are talking about my current emotional state. I’m not suffering alone. I’m not withdrawing from her.

Why am I telling this story?

I tell this story because I know I’m not the only one. I have read that often people in ministry are among the most isolated or friendless people. Also, more and more of us missionaries come with baggage that was somewhat rare or well-hidden in decades past. Abuse, broken homes, even previous divorce, depression, and addictions are just some of the emotional difficulties many of us come with or develop.

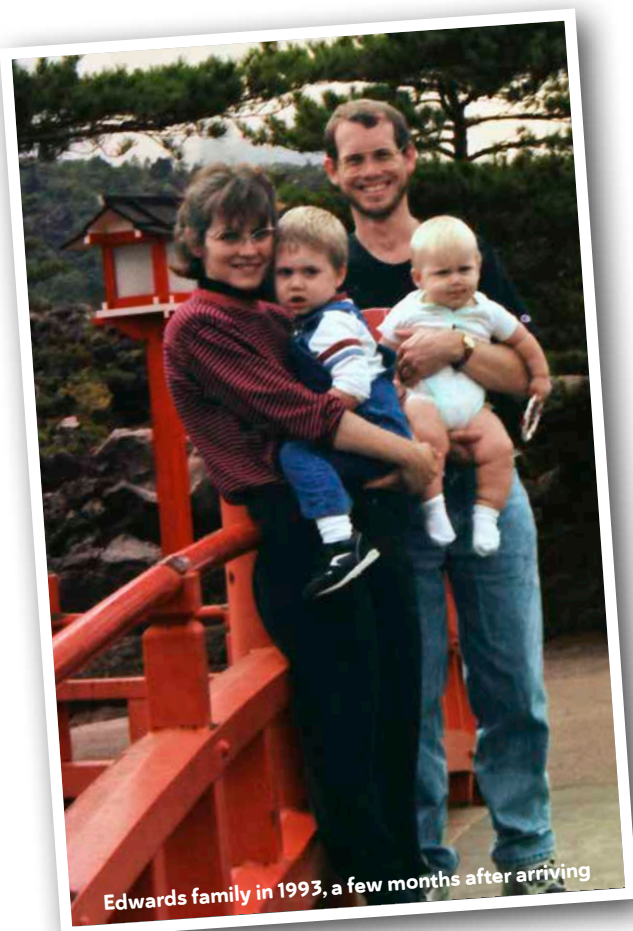
First, I want to assure you that you are not alone in your pain and struggle. Second, I want you to know that there is help out there. There are a number of places you can get help; Alongside is just one. Third, secrecy is detrimental. Confess your struggles to someone and get help. Some of the bigger missions in Japan even have member care specialists, and JEMA can direct you to some of those people.

At the time of writing this, Susan and I are days away from celebrating our 30th anniversary. In May, we celebrated 26 years of ministry in Japan. It could have all ended back in the mid-1990s, but fortunately my problem was discovered and my wife and I got help. I urge you to also get help if you are struggling in any way—for your sake, for your family’s sake, for the kingdom’s sake, for the sake of the Father’s glory. **JH**

* My wife has her own story of how she also struggled, but there is only room for my story here.

Edwards photo submitted by author
“Shame” image by Flickr user frankieleon

John Edwards and his wife Susan have been missionaries in Japan since 1993 and have been with SEND since 2002. They live in Sendai, where they lead the D House internship ministry and cooperate with Tsubamesawa Church.



Edwards family in 1993, a few months after arriving

Caring and mourning FROM AFAR

By John Houlette

Honoring our parents at the end of their lives when we live far away can be challenging, but we can learn from others who have walked that road

It's the middle of the night. You get the call. One of your parents has suddenly entered the end-of-life stage or has just passed away.

The call came for me at 3:30 a.m. in California. My father-in-law had passed away in Sendai. That call began a blur of activity for the next several hours as I re-booked tickets for my family, got a black suit, and headed to the airport. Welcome to mourning from afar.

When our parents face declining health issues we can struggle with how to care for them. How do I provide support from a distance? Who will provide local care? How often can I afford to visit? What arrangements need to be made for the funeral, burial, or cremation? Who is the trustee of the estate? The questions are many and the answers range in complexity, and are influenced by family dynamics, finances, distance, and faith. My wife and I dealt with all of these issues with both of my parents in the United States and my father-in-law in Japan as their earthly journey came to an end.

I will explore this idea of caring and mourning from afar through the lens of an Old Testament character, as well as through my own experiences and the lessons I've learned about graceful caring.

Joseph

Joseph faced a huge challenge when his father Jacob was near the end of his life's journey. Genesis 50 tells us that Jacob gave his son specific directions for the location and method of his burial. Once Jacob found out that Joseph was still living, he traveled to Egypt in his old age with his other sons to be with Joseph, but he desired to be buried in the tomb he had built for himself in Canaan over 300 miles away. Joseph's story is akin to a missionary's

parents visiting the mission field to be with their son, and then when one of them dies, the son takes their remains back home to be buried.

The burial instructions included embalming, a process that took 40 days. The mourning period in Egypt was 70 days, and another seven days were added once Jacob's remains were returned to Canaan. Joseph obtained permission from Pharaoh to travel to Canaan to bury Jacob. I am impressed by the acts of an obedient, loving son and the unhurried processing of grief.

Joseph's journey to becoming a missionary is fascinating. He was betrayed by his brothers, sold into slavery, slandered by the wife of his master, put in prison, and then restored to authority under Pharaoh due to the hand of God and his ability to interpret dreams. He was a strategic leader of Egypt, master-

mind the deliverance of the peoples of both Israel and Egypt from extreme drought. Joseph was a missionary uniquely sent from God to achieve a wonderful kingdom purpose. But now he had to leave his work and home to fulfill his father's burial wishes.

In honoring his father, Joseph dealt with Jewish and Egyptian cultural differences both great and nuanced. He faced family dynamics of envy gone wrong. The chain of command from Jacob to Joseph was clear, but sibling issues surfaced again after the mourning period was completed. Joseph's words to his brothers are powerfully restorative and great reminders to us of how to navigate family dynamics when a parent dies. In Genesis 50:20 we see how his words focus on God's mercy, sovereignty, and forgiveness: "As for you, you meant evil against me, but



Joseph and His Brothers Carry Jacob Back into the Land of Canaan To Be Buried in the Cave where Abraham and Sarah Were Buried (illustration from the 1897 *Bible Pictures and What They Teach Us* by Charles Foster)

God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today” (ESV).

My experience

My own journey includes caregiving and officiating the funerals for both of my parents. Timing and location varied in each scenario. I was with my parents when my mother died, in Japan when my father passed, and in the United States when my father-in-law graduated to heaven.

As my mother’s health declined, we arranged to live closer to my parents during our year-long home assignment in 1995-96. When my mom died two years later, I asked my dad if I could officiate my mom’s funeral as a way of honoring her before family and friends. It was emotionally draining, but it was also a blessing to reflect on her life.

My father’s last year on this earth was cause for humor, sorrow, and—ultimately—peace. He had become seriously ill the summer before, and I spent several nights at his bedside, sleeping in a recliner and listening to his labored breathing. His doctor told us that he probably had only a few days to live. When he was conscious, we had my siblings, many grandkids and great-grandkids Skype in to express their love for him. I prayed and read Scripture with him.

The questions are many and the answers range in complexity, and are influenced by family dynamics, finances, distance, and faith.

His best friend was celebrating his birthday, so I thought my dad would want him to have the Rakuten Eagles baseball cap I gave him several years before. A few days later, my dad miraculously came back to health! One day he saw that his friend had his hat, and he promptly snatched it back. I had to buy another hat and apologize to the both of them on my next visit! I took a picture of the two smiling with their matching hats. All was forgiven.

In the summer of 2018, I faced a challenge. My dad’s health was failing again and his 95th birthday was coming up. I had visited him two to three times a year for the past three years. Should I go again? Phone calls with him usually ended with him saying, “I sure miss you. When are you coming next?” It was an easy decision. I went. I bought a birthday hat, balloon, whistles, apple pies, and ice cream to celebrate his birthday with his friends. It was a wonderful party and would be the last time I would see him this side of eternity. Two weeks prior to his death as we talked on the phone, he said, “You’re the best!”

He died in December due to complications from surgery. He had two memorial services, one at his veterans home and one at the veterans cemetery chapel. I listened to the staff, chap-

lain, and his friends share about his life in the morning, then officiated the chapel service in the afternoon. I visited his grave on his birthday recently.

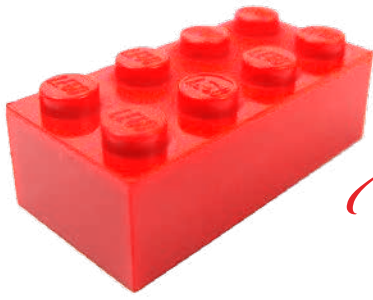
My father-in-law was my Japanese father who had become a Christ-follower after my wife and I got married. He loved his grandkids. The first night we arrived in Japan to attend his funeral, we slept in the room where his coffin rested as a sign of love and respect.

The commitment to honor our aging parents while serving cross-culturally provides opportunities to show loving grace through their end-of-life journey. It begins with a decision to provide more intentional care, then moves on to life reflection, end-of-life preparation, celebration, mourning, and healing. It is a path of surprising twists and turns, and it is best traveled with others. **JH**

John Houlette (US) and his wife Eriko serve with Asian Access. They do church revitalization and church planting in Fukushima. John also provides clergy care and leadership development in Asia. They have four children and two grandchildren.

Tips on how to care for loved ones while serving overseas and mourning from afar

1. Share the hope and comfort of Christ with them, read Scripture and pray with and for them.
2. Pray and meditate on God’s word. God is the great comforter and can give us wisdom and kingdom perspective in all matters.
3. Communicate with the remaining parent and siblings. Each of us have different relationships with our parents. Recognize and understand your birth order, for example, I am an oldest son but the baby in the family. Use video calls and take notes for funeral planning. Clarify and be flexible. Listen, pray, and speak up.
4. Have no regrets. Visit as often as you are able. Make the most of your visits. Remember there are others you will meet who need the encouragement of your presence as well. Try to stay with friends or a supporting church nearby if needed. Let supporters know if you have a need.
5. Think of practical ways to honor your parents including granting their wishes. For example, we invited my dad’s former guitar teacher for his 90th birthday.
6. Write down and pray over your needs.
7. Do what is important to you. It will help you to find closure.
8. Get copies of the death certificate. It is often needed to change tickets or obtain refunds.
9. Ask questions of your parents, listen to and record their story. My dad loved riding motorcycles and owned 14 of them during his lifetime. He was able to recall each make, model, and color. We found photos of them online and made a poster for him.
10. Find intentional and unhurried ways to mourn the loss and celebrate the life of your mom or dad.



Helping *single missionaries* thrive

By Rosanne Jones

Issues to consider when caring for singles on the field

We single people like it when married friends and leaders show a rich understanding of singleness from the Bible. You've probably heard or even preached heaps of wedding sermons on Ephesians 5 and so thought about how married people display God's glory. Now, how do single people display God's glory? How about this for a start: "If marriage was designed to show off Christ's love and devotion to the church, then singleness was designed to show off the church's love and devotion to Christ".¹

Marriage is not a reward for good behaviour. Early on in my time in Japan I heard a sermon from a mission leader that strongly implied that people are single because we haven't prayed enough yet! That is wrong and immensely damaging. I was able to laugh it off but I cringe at the hurt done to others in church that morning. And there's no need to "reassure" us that "You're so lovely, I'm sure the Lord has someone . . ." Yes, I'm lovely—so lovely that perhaps the Lord plans to keep me for himself!

Singleness is not (necessarily) a problem to be fixed. There will be lots of concerned people in our churches here who want to "fix us up". This may be more a problem for single men—with daughters, granddaughters, or acquaintances with a dubious commitment to Jesus being offered up for consideration. *Appropriate* introductions may indeed be great! The listening ear and praying heart of an older, genuine friend will be appreciated at times. Everyone else's assumptions and speculation—not so much! Where you can, maybe have a quiet word to stop that kind of behaviour.

A member care director on the sending-side in my mission researched

factors that would help single missionaries thrive.² Her conclusion was that the key factors were:

- realistic expectations,
- appropriate boundaries, and
- a strong spiritual life.

No great surprises there, not even anything unique to singles, but it is a useful checklist. If you are a part of a mission that cares well for *all* its members, these things will be in place to a degree. In place right from the enquiry stage where expectations are initially set, and questions are asked about the candidate's spiritual life and their ability to order life and ministry within the flexible boundaries appropriate to a servant of Jesus. But whether you're in the perfect mission, or here independently, let me raise a few organisational issues with particular reference to single missionaries.

Living situation

We hear both happy and tragic stories of single missionaries "way back then" forced to share accommodation. In some cases, deep hurts remain for a long time. Living alone seems more common now, but it's good to be creative in what will work for different personalities and stages of life and ministry. Some of my happiest years here were in a flat-share with three Japanese church members. A share-house? Living with a family? Moving in with an elderly widow or widower, as appropriate? An arrangement I think I'd hesitate over is having a single woman living alone at the church building, but in the right circumstances that could be OK too.

Planning time off and holidays can be hard work on your own, even without the hassle of finding companions with compatible schedules and inter-

ests. It's good to consider other times that are particularly hard, like Sunday evenings or getting back to an empty home after a retreat or trip. Or for people with flatmates, a "buffer" time alone may be needed before interacting with them after a busy day.

Ministry placement

Personally I have found it harder to be in churches where pretty much everyone comes as families and all the ministry is focussed on children. But for some people, that is exactly the right place! If we're to reach every community in Japan of course some of us need to be in more isolated places, but we need to make sure time and money are gladly made available to keep up with nourishing friendships elsewhere. Other questions to consider might be: Where and how is the single female missionary going to meet with the male pastor or missionary she's working with? How is she going to navigate the relationship with his wife, who may be fully engaged in the church's ministry or may be focussed on the kids, or working outside the home?

Spiritual encouragement

There *might* be a greater temptation to self-pity, an unhealthy independence, or even selfishness. Unhelpful addictive behaviours *might* be more easily hidden. But again, it's not only single missionaries who need encouragement to repent regularly and turn eagerly back to Jesus, alone or with trusted brothers and sisters! At the same time, being asked to share prayer points can also be off-putting. What does a single missionary do when a group is sharing prayer points for "your family"? Talk about family back home? The people we're sharing a flat with for

now? Or our local church? That final one might actually be the right answer for any of us.

Then there are missionary gatherings! Some of the fiercest complaints I have heard relate to being asked to share rooms at conferences when every effort is made to give couples a room of their own and not split them up into single-sex rooms. Prayer meetings and meals can also be a real struggle—where to sit, who to talk to. Again, this is not unique to single people. I know mums of small children often feel isolated too. Wouldn't it be great if we could work together to make sure no

one left a gathering feeling more lonely than when they arrived?

Finally, there is a missional edge to all of this. If we can respond to some of these challenges for single missionary friends, we may be better equipped to build bridges to other single people around us. With around one in four men and one in six women in Japan never-married at age 50, that's quite an opportunity. **JH**

Books we've found helpful are *Families at the Crossroads*, Rodney Clapp; *The Single Issue*, Al Hsu; *7 Myths about Singleness*, Sam Allberry, but there are lots out there!

This article is adapted from part of the presentation given at the February 25, 2019 JEMA Connect meeting in Ochanimizu, Tokyo. This event included a session about helping single people flourish in life and ministry in a mission context.

1. Brooks Waldron, "Singleness with Purpose," <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/singleness-with-purpose/>, (November 17, 2010).
2. Beverlea Parkhill, "Self-Care for Single Mission Workers within OMF International" (MA diss., Redcliffe College, validated by University of Gloucestershire, UK), 2018.

Rosanne Jones (UK) has overseen the training and development of OMF Japan members since 2015. For 10 years before that she was involved in student work and church ministry in Kanto and Tohoku.

LEGO story

By Selina Lin

Before I came to Japan, a former missionary said every missionary is like a piece of Lego; by ourselves we cannot accomplish much. We need to be assembled and connected together to construct something meaningful.

I started learning Japanese in a small class at OMF language school in Hokkaido. Every day after school I was very tired. The first month, I had no Internet or TV. I felt very lonely. Sometimes I sat on the sofa, staring at the ceiling, tears rolling down my face. Did I make the right decision to leave everything just to end up sitting here staring at the ceiling, overwhelmed by loneliness? I doubted it. I prayed to God for friends. I was like a single Lego brick.

God did not answer my prayer until two years later. I struggled through language school but now I

am very grateful for the experience. I know God was training me to rely and trust in him before I was ready to work with others. Like a Lego brick, I had to be molded by God before being used by him.

I struggled again in my first year serving in ministry with the elderly in a Tokyo church. I could not understand their formal Japanese, so conversation was like playing a guessing game. There was another missionary working in the same church, but I could do so little compared to her. Every day I battled negative thinking. But God is good. He taught me to trust in him. When I shared my struggles with other

missionaries, I was encouraged that everyone faces the same challenges.

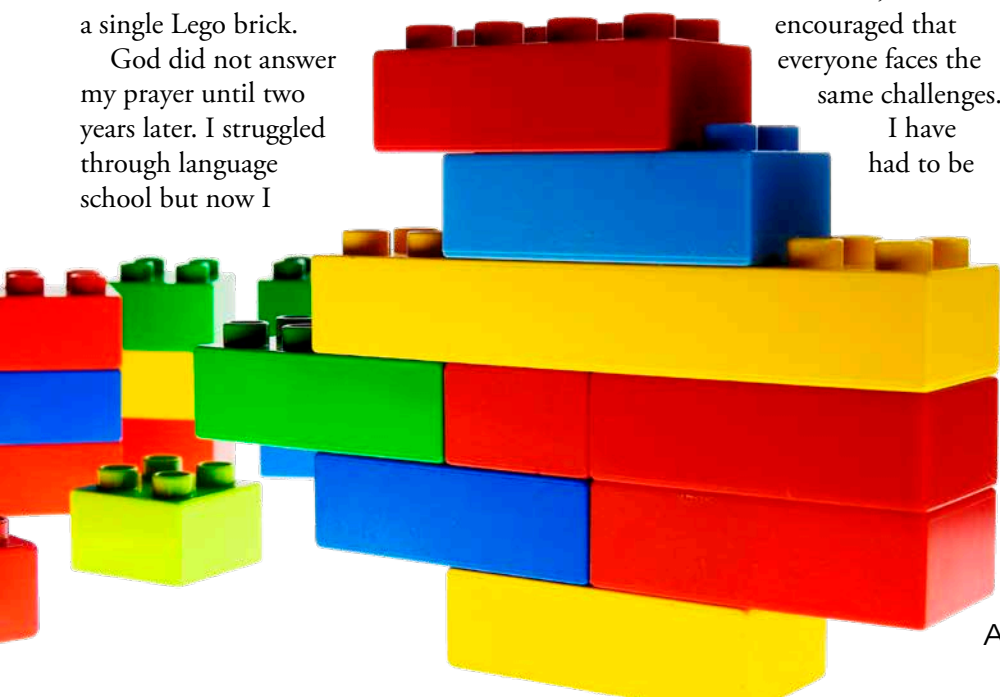
I have had to be

patient and trust God has a plan for me. With help, this single Lego brick started to work with others to do things that please God. I met a fellow missionary here in Tokyo and realized many single missionaries struggle alone. They need support and fellowship of other missionaries, to not be an easy target for Satan.

Recently I've found great encouragement in socializing with others—singles and families. We also need people to share and pray with in deeper relationships. As missionaries we experience spiritual warfare. We need to watch out for each other, to be willing to trust our brothers and sisters in Christ by asking for help and prayers. I used to think missionaries were spiritual heroes, but now I know missionaries are only human!

While we all come from different mission agencies, we are serving the same God. Let us work together, mutually caring for each other's ministries by supporting and listening. Let's build our Lego bricks together for the purpose of building the kingdom of God. **JH**

Selina Lin (sent from Canada) is in her first term with OMF Japan. She is currently training in a Japanese church in Kanto. Her work is focused on serving elderly both inside and outside of church.



Top three SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLES



By Sara Wolsey

Being fervent in faith and prayer and being wise in our finances are keys to thriving in Japan

Since a Japanese scholar in the 17th century published his opinion of the three most scenic views in Japan (日本三景 *Nihon Sankei*) in the 17th century, the Japanese have had a fascination with “top three” lists of various sites and attractions across Japan.¹ The most famous is the original list:

1. Matsushima in Miyagi
2. Amanohashidate in Kyoto
3. Miyajima in Hiroshima

Another well-known list is of Japan’s famous castles (三名城 *Sanmeijō*). In March 2019, Sora News 24 published a list of the top ten castles for the year. The top three in this list were Himeji Castle, Osaka Castle, and Matsumoto Castle.²

While prayer walking around Osaka Castle and reflecting on these lists, I was led to create a “top three” list of spiritual principles that have helped me to thrive in Japan. They are:

1. Fervent faith
2. Fervent prayer
3. Faith-filled finances

Fervent faith

There are countless biblical examples of people with fervent faith, such as the sick woman in Matthew 9, the two blind men in Matthew 20, the paralysed man and his friends in Mark 2, and the beggar in Acts 3. They all had fervent faith—faith that heats up, bubbles up, and boils over; it never wavers nor doubts. As a result of their faith, they were supernaturally healed by Jesus.

At church, I serve on the after-service prayer team. In January 2018, Ms L. from Uganda asked me and another team member to pray for an emergency situation. It was 16 days before her visa expiry date, and she was still jobless. With Matthew 17:20 in mind, we prayed that God would move

a mountain and provide Ms L. with the right job so that she could continue to minister in Japan. Two weeks later, she came to us overjoyed and in awe of God’s power. He had provided her with a job at the eleventh hour just a few days before her visa was about to expire!

Fervent prayer

Fervent faith leads to fervent prayer, so these two spiritual principles go together. One book about faith and prayer that has had a great impact on my spiritual life is *Living Faith: Willing to be Stirred as a Pot of Paint* by Dr. Helen Roseveare, a missionary doctor who ministered in Africa from 1963 to 1973. My favourite story in it is about a hot-water bottle. Dr. Roseveare recounts how she needed a hot-water bottle in the summer for a newborn baby of one of her patients. So she prayed along with the local orphanage children. One child prayed with deep, unshakable faith. Soon after this, a box arrived from the United Kingdom with a hot-water bottle in it! Dr. Roseveare was amazed. This box had been packed long before this need.³ The Christians who packed it were probably not really sure why a hot-water bottle was needed in the hot African summer, but God knew, so they simply packed it in faith!

Faith-filled finances

Our finances belong to God. We are just stewards of his money, and he has entrusted it to us to use wisely. Using it wisely, giving generously and regularly to God’s kingdom work, and practising fervent faith and prayer will result in supernatural blessings from God.

In July 2017 at Osaka International Church, freewill offerings totaling 31,000 yen were given at the last min-

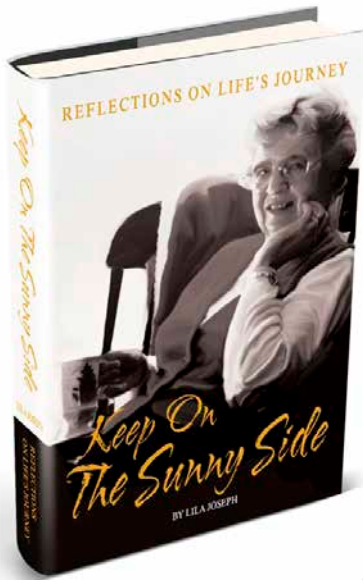
ute for some of the expenses of a visiting ministry team from Hong Kong. This need was not widely advertised, but a few church members trusted God to provide for this team, and he did in his own timing! Several weeks before this, Ms K., a missionary at another church, contacted my friends and me with a prayer request for funds to cook meals for the Hong Kong ministry team. Ms K. bought the food in faith and didn’t know how much God would provide. Our freewill offering and Ms. K’s receipts crossed in the post at around the same time. I was amazed when I received the receipts. The cost of the food was just slightly under 25,000 yen. We had sent 25,000 yen in response to the Holy Spirit’s leading! Rev. R. W. Schambach’s book *Miracles: Eyewitnesses to Some of the Greatest Miracles of Our Time* has further stories of faith and finances that will increase readers’ faith.

Conclusion

When these three spiritual principles are earnestly practised simultaneously on a regular basis, supernatural results occur. I encourage you to practise these three spiritual principles regularly and see what God does in your life. **JH**

1. “Three Views of Japan,” Wikipedia, accessed August 1, 2019, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Three_Views_of_Japan&oldid=871223956.
2. Casey Baseel, “The 10 best castles in Japan, as chosen by experts and fans,” Sora News 24, 26 March 2019, accessed August 1, 2019, <https://soranews24.com/2019/03/26/the-10-best-castles-in-japan-as-chosen-by-experts-and-fans/>.
3. Helen Roseveare, *Living Faith: Willing to be Stirred as a Pot of Paint* (Fearn, Scotland, UK: Christian Focus Publications Ltd., 2007).

Sara Wolsey first came to Japan from the United Kingdom in 1998 as an Assistant English Teacher in public schools. As well as teaching English in Kansai, Sara is the secretary of the Osaka International Church Council.



Living, loving, and serving in Japan

An extract from the biography of a long-serving missionary in Japan

By Lila Joseph

“Well, one thing I know is, I never want to be a missionary!” I told my mom when I was 16 years old. She patiently and lovingly countered by asking why I

felt that way. I replied that I felt like they were people who couldn't get any other job. “I don't feel that way at all,” she said. “They have to be able to do so many different things.” Little did I know that I would soon regret my words and up spending 60 years of my life as a missionary!

In June 1954, upon arrival in the Yokohama, we were welcomed and taken to TEAM Center. Someone in our group said, “Hey, look, there's a sink.” Nobody took responsibility for that statement, but I guess seeing running hot and cold water and everything so modern was a pleasant surprise. After all, Tokyo had been severely bombed, so we really didn't know what to expect.

We boarded a train and headed for the mountains to a little village called Karuizawa, where TEAM sent new missionaries for language study. Learning Japanese before coming was discouraged back then. We lived in a big, two-story house which we quickly dubbed “The Girls' House.” There were spent many special days, and lifelong friendships were established. We studied from a course which was taught to American girls, and quickly learned sentences like “*Tabako wa doko desuka?*” (Where can you buy cigarettes?) Mr. and Mrs. Yamamoto were our helpers in this big house, and we were especially grateful for them since we didn't know enough of the language to even shop.

One day Mt. Asama erupted and we all ran out to see what was going on. Down below were some Japanese people looking up at us trying to tell us something. We stood there mute not knowing what was going on until Pat Junker, always the daring one and anxious to use her newfound Japanese, said to them, “*Wakarimasen keredomo, tabun shirimasen,*” which means something like “we don't know what you're asking, but we probably don't know the answer anyway, even if we did understand.”

Karuizawa had not been hit by the war, so it was a delightful little place, with luscious greenery all around. During our time there, we rode bicycles everywhere. We usually studied with a teacher and by ourselves for about eight hours a day. The evenings found us very tired but not too tired to have lots of fun and excitement.

Karuizawa Union Church was the gathering place for Sunday morning services and I loved singing there. I also played the piano or organ for meetings here and there.

In time, our Girls' House members scattered around Japan and in August of 1955 I married a fellow missionary named Kenny Joseph. I remember the first time Kenny came by for me, he took me to one of the few nice restaurants in the area, and when we arrived, the waiter handed each of us an aspirin. I never figured out why, but I can only guess that they took one look at us and thought we needed something!

As we developed our ministry in Tokyo, we began holding church in our home. You might think it's simple to have a home-church, but I discovered it was a big job. To turn our living room into a church every Sunday meant a lot of work! Welcoming people with open arms and making them feel at home was very important. This also included listening to people's problems, and trying to help. Sometimes we would have a good turnout, and other times just a few. One day I thought to myself, “Oh God, *you* can't even save Japan!” And that very day, in walks a Japanese lady doctor whom I led to the Lord many years before. It was as if the Lord reminded me that it was *His* business, not mine, how He chose to work in Japan.

God's not finished with me yet, and I intend to use whatever time He has left for me to serve Him with all my strength. Through it all, I've found that we can either be dragged down by life or rise above the challenges we face. Three hundred sixty-five times in the Bible God encourages us to “fear not”—one for each day. I've found that love and optimism and hope have provided me with great strength to face the challenges God has allowed in my life, and through it all, He has been faithful. **JH**

This article is excerpted from her book, *Keep On The Sunny Side: Reflections on Life's Journey* (Ripe Books) available at Amazon.com. Her website is www.Lilajoseph.com

Lila Joseph served with TEAM and REAP Missions in Tokyo for 60 years. She currently lives in Southern California where she continues to minister and write.

It was as if the Lord reminded me that it was *His* business, not mine, how He chose to work in Japan.

Lo, I am with you always

A testimony of God's faithfulness by an 86-year-old missionary

By Richard Goodall

"Who is like unto You, O Lord among the gods? . . . Glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" (Exodus 15:11 NKJV).

God got our family out of "paradise" (New Zealand) miraculously, without passports! Japan delayed our visas, but Satan failed to stop 59 years of Japan's evangelisation by eight Goodalls.

God gave me a good wife, Connie. Wherever we planted a new church she allowed her home to be used as the church, vital for seekers and saved. Connie braved barbarous bathhouses. Once the owner came in to open a tap and slipped, so he grabbed the nearest thing which was Connie's bare shoulder! She survived, barely!

Presently a NZ group lets us send 60-word prayer and praise items every three weeks to over 500 email intercessors including whole churches. Praying partners are our secret key to thriving.

God set the NZ/Yen exchange rate so that at age 29 I was able to buy a home in Hakodate for 430,000 yen! (US\$1200). The NZ dollar is now 69 yen, fallen from 504!

I enjoy unpolished rice and wholemeal bread. Our children went happily to Japanese schools, saving us a mint of money, and the children can interpret for missionaries and minister themselves in Japanese. Russell, our son, appears on *Nep League*, the Japan-wide TV quiz program.

I never got to Bible School, but Dad's rigor and Mother's Bible teaching made missionary trials and tests tolerable. Imagine ferocious bulls, a mad cow

gone dangerous, and on my 16th birthday sobbing, unable to plough with a horse. Still 16, I bought a very tall draft-horse at an auction and led it home 16 miles on Highway One. Dad called us every day either side of 4 a.m.. Later too, in Japan, Sister Tanaka had me up early, tracting Tokyo schools. This taught me to tract widely. Films made giving out invitations easier. "Come and see a film."

My senior missionary Stuart Caldwell (later with the help of Marion, his wife) has almost completed 70 years of loving labour! Stuart taught me to find spare land, find its owner, rent it, pitch a tent, get temporary electricity, and later, giving the owner some money.

Hokkaido's six-month cold (minus 41°C) is daunting but relieved inside by heaters. Our summers are pleasant, like New Zealand's!

God disallowed David from building the temple but commended him. Aim for where the need is great, and whether He lets you go or not, hear God's voice, like David: "You did well that it was in your heart" (2 Chron. 6:8 NASB). However, David contributed for the temple more than the fortunes of Ford, Rockefeller, and Edison!

God might let you support His work financially. Study Isaiah 54 and Revelation 7 verse 9. Our future with God and countless other fellow-saints is brilliant! **JH**



Just before coming to Japan in 1960

Richard Goodall and his wife, Connie, came to Japan in 1960. They pioneered four Hokkaido churches, which God multiplied into fourteen. After Connie passed away, he married Yuko. He has six children and thirteen grandchildren.

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A new horizon: pray for Reiwa

We have a unique window of opportunity to pray for the Emperor and Japan prior to his deification ceremony to be held in November

By Steve Town

On April 30, 2019, Akihito, Japan's emperor for 30 years, formally announced his abdication. He is the first Japanese monarch to abdicate in two centuries.

It's well known that historically the Japanese people have believed their emperor is a god. According to tradition, Emperor Jimmu ("Divine Warrior"), said to be a direct descendent of the sun goddess Amaterasu,¹ became the country's first emperor in 660 BC.

Crown Prince Naruhito, the eldest son of former Emperor Akihito, assumed the throne on May 1, 2019 ushering in the Reiwa Era. But the enthronement ceremony will not be complete until a deification, or thanksgiving, ceremony called *Daijōsai* (literally "big harvest festival"), scheduled for November 14-15, 2019, has been concluded.

Unprecedented opportunity

One of the keys to opening the door to Christianity in Japan is the person of the emperor, whose deification could be linked to the nation's many spiritual strongholds. Likewise, there may be a correlation between the lifting of imperial deification and the freedom of the gospel.

This event represents an unprecedented window of opportunity in the "Land of the Rising Sun." By praying for and sharing Christ with the Japanese, believers can have a part in ushering in a spiritual awakening that the country hasn't seen since Jesuit missionaries brought the gospel to Japan in the 16th century. More than 300,000 Japanese embraced Christianity at that time.² But Christianity was banned in 1614, Christians were heavily persecuted, and thousands were executed.

To understand Japan's resistance to the gospel, I believe we may need to look at the emperor's enthronement ceremony. Traditionally, the incoming Japanese emperor performs a secret ritual in which he contacts his dead ancestors, announces to them his ascendancy, and invites them to enter into him. The ceremony also unites the emperor with the sun goddess. It is said that he leaves the ritual possessing divine qualities.³

God's time for Japan?

I believe this is God's time to reclaim Japan from centuries of spiritual oppression. He has clearly told us: "Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, [pastors and missionaries] too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ" (Col. 4:2-3 NIV).

Let's unite our hearts and persevere in the spiritual battle over Japan—to come "against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Eph. 6:12).

Matthew 16:19 says: "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." God gives us authority to bind the spirits that are invoked during the deification ceremony and to release his Spirit of truth, holiness, and redemption over Japan.

The importance of prayer in seeing God work in situations and people cannot be overemphasized. We are especially called to pray for those who are in leadership. Every day they are called on to make decisions that affect the lives of many. Paul reminds us that we should pray and lift up "kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness" (1 Tim. 2:2). With the deification ceremony scheduled for this November, let's pray for an overwhelming outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Japanese people. Considering what we've learned above, some of you may feel led to pray that the deification ceremony will not take place at all. Let's trust God to work in ways that far surpass the horizons of our imaginations in this land of the Risen Son. **JH**

1. Takamitsu Kōnoshi and Minako Ōba 神野志隆光 大庭みな子 *Shinchō Koten Bungaku Arubamu 1 Kojiki Nihon Shoki 新潮古典文学アルバム*.

2. *Nihon Daihyakka Zensho 2001 vol. 7 日本大百科全書2001 7* [Encyclopedia Nipponica 2001 vol. 7] (Tōkyō: Shōgakukan, 1986), 124-127.

3. *Nihon Daihyakka Zensho 2001 vol. 14 日本大百科全書2001 14* [Encyclopedia Nipponica 2001 vol. 14] (Tōkyō: Shōgakukan, 1987), 413.

Steve Town works with his wife at Rose Town, a parachurch ministry in Ome, Tokyo. The son of C&MA missionaries, he returned to Japan in 1990 with the US Army and retired from service in 2012.

Multiplication: the ultimate game-changer

Finally, a 100% made-in-Japan discipleship series

By Andy Meeko

For more than thirty years of ministry, I have wanted something that would help me in the grand task of making disciples in this land. It has been a long journey of procrastination. Well, maybe not procrastination but distraction—there were always many other things keeping me preoccupied. A lot of wonderful things for that matter. Then finally, about five years ago, I began to re-chart the course to the core of cores: What precisely is discipleship? And what should it look like in this country?

Focusing on discipleship in Japan

It's common knowledge that Christendom in Japan is in crisis. Churches are not expanding but rather regressing. The new trend is fewer-churches-this-year-than-the-previous-year, and the forecast is that this trend will likely continue for years to come. Leaders are vanishing. The average pastor's age is in the 70s, and half of the churches are on the brink of "no-pastor" status.

What is the reason for all this? I had my suspicions even 30 years ago, and, after decades of ministering in churches and making my share of mistakes (and some successes) in ministry training of all sorts, I came to a conclusion—Japan's Christianity crisis is not because of lack of evangelism, a deficiency in the quality of evangelism, or even a lack of tools and methods of evangelism. It is deeper. I am convinced that the crisis of the church in Japan is the outcome of a dire lack of discipleship. Fortunately, in recent years there seems to be a lot of buzz about "discipleship" in Japan. Things look hopeful.

What is discipleship?

So what exactly is discipleship and how do you do it? Without clarity here, we end up busy doing a lot of great ministry but often miss the real core of everything. That was exactly my situation.

Although I had been deeply involved in discipleship since my University of Hawaii days, I was doing a lot of evangelism, teaching, healing of hearts, even mentoring, but not much discipling.

What I arrived at is that a disciple is someone who follows Christ, doing what Christ does. And in order for that to happen, we need disciplers—those who do as Christ did—to personally, systematically, and comprehensively guide others in the grasp of the Word, growth in character, and development in ministry skills. Intentionally cultivating disciples—not in a classroom, or a church, or workshop—but in a personal relationship.

After examining various guide material options, I couldn't find anything particularly suitable for Japan. Not that there wasn't great material; the issue seemed to be the fact that the material wasn't made in Japan. If something was made in Japan, it seemed like it might have the capacity to maximize the amazing qualities of the Japanese for discipleship. I will mention just one quality.

Japanese loyalty

Two years ago, I stood at the memorial at Nishizaka in Nagasaki. This hillside is the site where the 26 martyrs were crucified. Most of them had been arrested in Kyoto nearly 700 km (430 miles) away and, with a portion of their left ears cut off to humiliate them, they were marched for a month in the winter cold behind a placard that told of their imminent crucifixion in Nagasaki.¹

Of the 26, three were mere boys. Anthony (his Christian name) was only thirteen. Upon arriving at Nishizaka, the magistrate did not want to crucify children and gave Anthony the opportunity to choose a less gruesome death. But Anthony replied that since Jesus died on a cross for him, he could not refuse to do the same. So, in February of 1597, along with 25 others, Anthony was crucified. From the cross, the boy sang praises to God out of the Psalms before a crowd of 4,000 until a guard speared him in the side. If discipleship is doing what the Master does, then Anthony is a matchless example of what a disciple looks like. And Anthony was a Japanese boy.²



Anthony's is only one story. There are countless thousands more. During Japan's holocaust against Christians, Japanese followers of Jesus wrote the book on discipleship with their own blood even before America was a country. Thus, to import a discipleship plan from North America, or anywhere else for that matter, would tragically leave out the faithful journeys of many and the amazing connections that Japan has had to the God of the Bible.

History has proved that when it comes to loyalty, the Japanese are platinum grade: *kamikaze*, *seppuku*, and even the 442nd (a US army regiment mainly made up of Japanese Americans in WW2).³ Just imagine when believers in Jesus here say, "I will follow you all the way, Jesus. I will go the distance." Doubtless, it will shake the world.

The importance of discipleship

Just how important is discipleship? Jesus knew how effective discipleship was for impacting the world. True discipleship incorporates multiplication. Let's make the comparison of multiplication vs. addition in growing the church.

Addition is one person going out and sharing the gospel day after day. Now say he or she leads one person to Christ every single day of that year. If they haven't burned out, they would see 365 salvations. Nice!

Now instead think of multiplication. Say someone disciples two people during one year (not twelve, just two). In that year, he or she would have easily led two people to Christ. Not so impressive. But the next year, those two people each disciple two other people (seems doable, right?), and those people each lead one to Christ. Now imagine both the addition-focus side and multiplication-focus side go on for some years. For a while, discipleship by multiplication lags way behind. Then things make a radical shift.

After fifteen years, the addition side has seen 5,475 salvations, but the multiplication side has seen around 65,000

salvations. At the 20-year mark, addition sees 7,300 salvations, but multiplication is now over two million saved. Remember, this all started with someone discipling only two people and helping them each disciple two—totally the recipe for revolution.

So why don't we see these kind of results? Probably two simple reasons. First, we rarely really disciple people. Second, the people we disciple don't disciple people. Bottom line, they drop the baton.

It has taken years, but finally we have finalized a discipleship series that seeks to address these issues effectively. GospelVenture aims to make it easier to disciple people and harder to drop the baton. And now it is finally available.

Do you want to see real impact in Japan? We don't so much need more Bibles, videos, books, or tracts. More seminars or outreach campaigns aren't needed either. We really need more disciples, those who will disciple others and so on—a handful of people who do all they can to initiate and perpetuate multiplication through discipleship may be all this country needs. It's very doable. It's that simple. It's that hopeful. **JH**

See everything at www.newdaytoday.net.

1. Paoline Laudate, "History of the Catholic Church in Japan" (Japanese website), <https://www.paoline.or.jp/historyofchurches/history03.php> (accessed August 26, 2019).
2. "Twenty-six martyrs museum home page", <http://www.26martyrs.com/> (accessed August 26, 2019).
3. "What was the 442nd Regimental Combat Team?" 442nd Regimental Combat Team, <http://www.the442.org> (accessed August 26, 2019).

Images submitted by author

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Overcoming the first of many challenges

How a statement by a veteran missionary is reflected in my life

“In your first term, you struggle with language; in your second term, you struggle with culture; in your third term, you destroy everything you have been working for so far; and in your fourth term, you finally bring fruit.”

It was MTW church planter Dan Iverson who said that. It puzzled me when I heard it several years ago. I couldn't decide whether it was meant to be funny or if it was indeed a reflection on his experience in ministry. Maybe it was a mixture of both.

However, as I've entered my fifth year in Japan, at least the beginning of the statement seems to hold true for me. Initially, I did struggle with language a lot but not so much with cultural differences as I didn't understand much. Language learning is difficult for me in general. Even learning English was hard despite English being the closest language to my mother tongue, German.

When I asked experienced Japanese learners how long it would be before I'd be able to have a normal conversation without thinking about vocabulary or trying to find the right ending for a verb, they often said five to six years. Full of beginner's enthusiasm, I thought: *Surely that's not true. If you work hard enough, I'm sure you could get there faster.* To make a long story short, I did not get there faster. And it didn't help reading in the newsletter of friends who had gone to Tanzania: “After half a year of language study, we started working with the church.” Not being able to speak the language well for such a long time was very frustrating. Below, I give some perspectives that have helped me.

It seems pretty obvious, but trying to not compare myself with other learners has been helpful.

Another help was when someone told me, “God knows exactly how much Japanese you need for the situations you're in, and he'll use you accordingly.” That takes the pressure off. It also counters the false narrative that God can only use me when I speak Japanese well—this false narrative should be fought at all times. God is sovereign, and he equips and empowers the ones he wants to use for his service.

Plus: language is not everything. I have heard about missionaries who apparently never managed to speak the language well, but their heart and attitude came across, and people loved them nevertheless. By stating this, I'm not saying you shouldn't work hard on language. I think it is the most important medium of communication but not the only one. Loving the people you work with and giving them a smile is also very valuable.

One time, when I shared my frustration of not being able to express myself in the way I'd like to, another missionary told me, “Trust in the translating ability of the Holy Spirit.” However grammatically wrong your statement is, it can still make sense to the other person through the work of the Holy Spirit. I learned to trust in God rather than my own abilities.

Sometimes, seeing other missionaries apparently communicating fluently can be discouraging. But it can also be encouraging: it is possible to learn this language. Yes, it takes time and patience, and you will be frustrated many times, but if you keep pursuing it, the day will come when you can speak without thinking about every word and searching for the correct verb ending the whole time. The day will come when you will understand most of what is said in the Sunday morning message. The day will come when you can have a five-hour team meeting without being utterly exhausted at the end. The day will come when you will actually give your testimony or share the gospel in Japanese!

“In your second term, you struggle with culture,” was the next part of Dan Iverson's statement. Now that I finally do understand roughly what is being said, I find that I struggle with cultural differences more than ever before. I did not expect this. I thought the worst culture shock would be in the first term, but it is dawning on me that that might not be true. However, just as I overcame the hardest part of language learning through relying on God's strength, I am now encouraged that one day the cultural differences will become easier, too. **JH**

Photo submitted by author

Judith Ricken is a GAM missionary who came to Japan for the first time in 2013. She works in Nagoya with K GK, helping students to see how amazing the gospel message is. She reads a lot, enjoys hiking, and is still learning Japanese every day.



Top 10 Reasons to Study at Tokyo Christian University

by Randall Short, Associate Professor of Biblical Studies

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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.
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CPI celebrates 25 years of God's grace

No one planned for this to happen, and many were unsure it would work

In October 1994, 29 people gathered for the first CPI (Church Planting Institute) event. Steve Childers presented his church planting materials, and it was an incredible event that I think anyone who was there will never forget.

This had come about because Dan Iverson, impressed by Steve at a US church-planter-training event, invited him to come to Japan and help us out. But Steve hesitated; he'd never trained people outside of the US. We had no idea what God would do with those first baby steps. Years later, in this, its 25th year, CPI has trained 3-4,000 people, from over 90 mission agencies and 60 Japanese denominations. They've come from practically every prefecture in Japan and over 30 foreign countries. No one planned for this to happen, and many were unsure it would work.

That first gathering was a tremendous event in my life in several ways. First, I had been church planting for quite a while, but I was very discouraged and I had lost direction. I was overworked and approaching burnout. That first CPI seminar rekindled my vision for God's kingdom and a passion for evangelism. So much of what was part of my early Christian life was re-

vitalized and reborn. Second, what I learned there continues to guide my ministry to this day. I was very familiar with church planting materials at that time and I had taken lots of church planting training in the past from very notable trainers and teachers. After one CPI session, I approached Steve Childers and asked him about the difference between his church planting training and a famous training notebook.

I will never forget his answer. He said the big difference between that notebook and what he was doing was two words: "the gospel." Since that time I have learned more of what it means to be "gospel-centered"—to be Christ-centered and grace-based in all aspects of ministry: worship, service, discipling, leadership, evangelism, and fellowship.

CPI vision

Vision has always been a very important part of CPI. Early on in our movement we plastered the CPI vision statement all over the conference venue: "Advancing God's kingdom by mentoring leaders to be part of a movement that is multiplying churches that are multiplying disciples through the power of the gospel." We

want to be about advancing the kingdom of God, not just our denomination, organization, church, or network. That has led many people to cross denominational and agency lines to work together and assist each other in the planting of churches and other ministries. We also want to see disciples, leaders, and churches multiplied. Many believe that these multiplying church movements are the answer, not just for Japan, but for the entire world.

It is thrilling to realize that over the last 25 years of CPI, by God's amazing grace, there has been unprecedented unity and partnership built around this grand vision. Majoring on the majors has drawn many of us together who would not necessarily have worked with one another otherwise.

A Japanese leader at one of the earlier conferences really appreciated CPI because it had two things: a mission

spirit (宣教スピリット) and a gospel spirit (福音スピリット). The same vision for church planting multiplication and gospel renewal is obvious to all who attend.

The gospel

Our CPI vision statement says, "through the power of the gospel." The emphasis is that the gospel was not only for the conversion of those who did not yet know Jesus, but also for the empowerment of every Christian in any Christian ministry. The same gospel we declare is the gospel that motivates and empowers us.

I remember one particular evening message at a conference—we were challenged to understand our heart idols and see the sin beneath the sin in our lives so that we could ask Christ to deliver us and grant us more freedom. Afterwards as we were dismissed to small groups, I overheard someone say, "Does this mean we're going to our groups and everyone has to repent?" I do not know that I directly answered that statement, but I sure thought—*That couldn't hurt.* We are always need of learning to be "chief repenters" (see 1 Tim. 1:15).



1999



So CPI has offered the “gospel track” with a manual published in 2013 entitled “Walking in the Gospel.” More recently CPI has added Grace Week, an intensive one-week course in gospel renewal. Thus far we’ve held one in Japanese and five in English. God has touched hundreds of people who have attended CPI over the years and have been blessed with the gospel content and the refreshment that it brings.

Movement growth

Growing from 29 people in 1994 to over 600 at the 2017 CPI Conference has been exciting and challenging. In many ways, the exponential growth of CPI mirrored what we wanted to happen with Japanese churches. It seemed like every two years we would outgrow a conference venue and have to find a bigger place. In 2019, for our 25th anniversary, we decided to take a risk and move to another prefecture, Shizuoka, and meet at a larger venue—the Tsumagoi Resort.



Risking change

After CPI had grown for several years, some consultants advised us to not meet nationally every year but to convene every other year so that we could devote some of our energies into smaller training courses with more accountability and mentoring. So we took the risk, and in 2005 we began regional training throughout Japan. And we changed to only having a national conference every two years. Some years we had quite a few regional seminars and the total number attending those seminars was larger than a national conference. We are able to reach even more by working in this way.

When CPI was almost canceled

If you were in Japan on March 11, 2011, you remember the triple disaster in the Tohoku region. We were already planning for the next 2011 CPI conference in the fall, but every one of our leaders was heavily involved in disaster relief ministry for their organizations. There was discussion of whether we would have enough leaders and workers to be able to put on the 2011 conference. The discussion did not go on very long before we realized that the one thing that was most needed after a disaster like Tohoku was a Christian presence through healthy, growing, and multiplying churches. I think everyone who attended



The same gospel we declare is the gospel that motivates and empowers us.

that conference was encouraged that we did not cancel it, because many of them were weary from working in the disaster and needed new focus, new energy, and a reminder of core priorities.

The future

Over the years many have commented on their event evaluations how helpful CPI has been. We know participants have been blessed by God through a renewal experience—understanding more deeply the gospel of God’s unconditional love, learning healthy rhythms, and gathering ideas and tools for effective ministry. All aspects of church planting training will lead to a larger vision, more focused application, and a confirmation of their strategy.

I will never forget one couple’s transformation. As I sat at my dining room table reading through the evaluation forms to glean new lessons for the future, one brought tears to my eyes. One couple wrote that they had been about ready to quit ministry, and the CPI conference was the last chance they were giving God to change them. Well, God got a hold of their hearts and they were going to stay. I thought all the work and effort for that one couple was worth it.

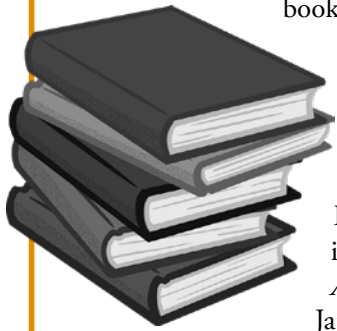
Only God knows how many people have been touched and blessed through CPI. One of the most encouraging things I heard from the last several conferences was from the three-year-old son of one of our key trainers. Every morning this little boy would pray, “God, please don’t let CPI go bye-bye.” I pray that God continues to equip and encourage those in ministry, that the power of the gospel would be evident in the lives of all the workers, and that Christian ministry would transform them and their communities. If CPI continues to help build the kingdom of God then we praise God and thank him for his faithfulness. **JH**

John Wm. Mehn from Chicago has served in Japan with Converge since 1985 in church planting and leadership development. He has a D.Min. in Missiology from Trinity International University.



Cultural insights through books

When the writer of Ecclesiastes complained that “there is no end to the making of books” (author paraphrase of 12:12), he could have been referring just to books on Japan! A plethora of books analyze Japan from every conceivable angle. Such books are a source of interesting insights into Japanese culture and the factors that have moulded it. Here are four English-language books I’ve read in recent years (all except *Bending Adversity* can be borrowed from the Japan Foundation Library in Yotsuya).



*Japan and the Shackles of the Past*¹

Written by a professor of international political economy, this book seeks to give a comprehensive overview of Japanese society, including its history, politics, economics, and culture. The first part surveys Japanese history, while the second part shows how historical developments affect Japan today. The author makes a case that it is impossible to understand Japan and the problems it faces today without a grasp of the country’s history. At the end of the book, he contrasts Prime Minister Shinzō Abe, whom he is quite critical of, with the inspirational ice skater Yuzuru Hanyū, and he yearns for the day when a leader like Hanyū will arise and lead Japan to a better future.

*Showa Japan: The Post-War Golden Age and Its Troubled Legacy*²

This book starts from the 1950s and considers developments up to 2008. The Dutch author lived in Japan from 1950 to 1974 and again from 2003, and the book is an interesting mix of his personal recollections and analysis based on other sources. He contends that many Japanese look back at the Showa era with nostalgia, viewing it as a kind of golden age for Japan characterised by “hard work, clear goals, unparalleled economic success and regained national pride” (p. 5). In the final chapter, he describes the three main challenges he believes Japan faces: encouraging independent, unshackled thinking; coming to terms with the past, particularly the part Japan played in the Pacific War; and addressing the problems caused by a plummeting population.

*Japan: The Paradox of Harmony*³

The authors consider various aspects of Japanese culture and society through the lens of social harmony, or *wa*, which they see as a key characteristic of Japanese society. They point out the positive aspects of harmony such as honour, self-reliance, orderliness, and loyalty. But while these qualities have served Japan well in the past, the authors fear that the negative sides of harmony will hinder Japan from advancing. They note that Japan’s harmony

discourages traits like innovation, flexibility, diversity, and openness.

*Bending Adversity: Japan and the Art of Survival*⁴

I enjoyed this book the most. The author lived in Tokyo between 2002 and 2008 as the foreign correspondent of the Financial Times. Despite having only lived in Japan for six years, he has a deep appreciation and knowledge of Japanese culture. He notes that Japanese people are resilient in disasters and is thus upbeat about Japan’s ability to overcome the challenges it presently faces.

Some reflections

Japanese aren’t unique

Sometimes Japanese people are viewed as being completely different from people of other countries. While Japanese culture is distinctive, each characteristic of Japanese people falls on a spectrum. For example, Japanese people tend to be highly group-orientated, but so are people from other cultures, to a lesser or greater degree.

Japanese culture is changeable

I found the historical perspective of these books helpful as it shows how historical factors influence Japanese people today and that the Japanese psyche is continuously changing. What was true of Japanese people today will not necessarily be true in a couple of decades.

The greatest need for Japanese society is the gospel

Most books analyze the problems Japanese society faces today and propose ways to overcome them. I’m often struck by the fact that the gospel is the ultimate answer to the many challenges facing Japan. Robots, greater intellectual freedom, and immigration may all help, but only the gospel can meet the deepest needs of society. While we should be concerned for the salvation of individuals, the gospel also has the answers to big problems facing every society. **JH**

1. R. Taggart Murphy, *Japan and the Shackles of the Past* (Oxford University Press, 2016).
2. Hans Brinckmann, *Showa Japan: The Post-War Golden Age and Its Troubled Legacy* (Tuttle, 2008).
3. Keiko Hirata & Mark Warschauer, *Japan: The Paradox of Harmony* (Yale University Press, 2014).
4. David Pilling, *Bending Adversity: Japan and the Art of Survival* (Penguin Press, 2014).



Simon Pleasants works as an editor in the Tokyo office of a scientific publishing company and is the Executive Editor of Japan Harvest. Originally from Wales, he moved to Australia in 1988.

Technology for the young learner

Here are apps and devices that can expand your homeschool experience



As a homeschool family, we have found technology aids in the classroom help teach our children new concepts, reinforce their primary curriculum, and give them the ability to learn a range of new topics outside of traditional book content. With the aid of technology, the world can become the child's classroom and educational horizons can be expanded. Here are some tips and suggestions for using technology with your elementary-aged learners.

Learning with a tablet

Pre-K and early elementary learners are growing up in a world where app-based learning will be the new norm. The first tablet these children touch may not be the chalkboard type, but the iOS or Android type. There are lots of apps out there that teach letter recognition, pronunciation, writing, and even basic math concepts. One that has stood the test of time for our family is the TeachMe series by 24x7digital (teachmeseries.com). Beginning with Pre-K, a straightforward “touch the right answer” teaching method asks the learner to simply tap the correct letter, color, or number that the teacher says. After a number of successive correct answers, the game rewards the learner with a sticker or coin. Parents have the ability to set the number of answers needed for the reward, and you can also track progress using the parental controls. As learners advance they are introduced to letter writing, Dolch sight word recognition, and math concepts.¹ The TeachMe series are not free apps, but they are not subscription-based. They work in offline mode, and there are no ads or videos within the app that may distract a learner. These features are especially important to consider when looking for apps for beginning learners. ABCmouse, Hooked on Phonics, and Starfall Learn to Read apps are also good alternatives for those who are okay with subscription-based learning. Paired with Screen Time and other parental controls, tablets can be used for both entertainment purposes and as a valuable learning tool for beginners.

Leveling Up

As a learner progresses, you may consider investing in one of the many peripheral devices available that expand the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) learning experience. Two devices our family have used and love are the Osmo series (playosmo.com/en) and Square Panda's (squarepanda.com) interactive phonics learning system.

The Osmo curriculum spans spelling, creative art, coding, and many other fun activities that engage learners with pieces placed before them. The app utilizes the

camera on the device to “read” letters, drawings, or coding parameters that become instructions for the app.

Square Panda's letter reader playset is also a fun way for growing learners to reinforce letter learning, letter sounds, and spelling. There are a variety of Square Panda games that utilize the Bluetooth-connected base and accompanying letters. While the accessories for Square Panda and Osmo require an initial investment, the accompanying apps are free and the library of games is constantly expanding.

Advanced Levels

In the near future it is quite possible that a good portion of instruction will be done solely through online technology. Even now there are great curricula that can be purchased for elementary-aged learners that provide a full educational experience either through video instruction and traditional homework or through full online engagement assessed through online tests. For homeschoolers especially, video instruction could be a great way to give your child access to seasoned teachers for each subject. Many schools, like Bob Jones University, tie their subjects to biblical concepts and also have wonderful Christian history lessons taught throughout.

If you are simply curious how your student would do in an online course and are interested in seeing what that future may look like, check out Khan Academy Kids and Khan Academy apps at khanacademy.org. The apps are polished and updated regularly with new content. Khan Academy sees education as a fundamental right and uses technology to provide a comprehensive learning experience for all grade levels and all learners for free. The curricula they provide use proven methods and align with the current educational assessment testing used in US public schools. If you are interested in introducing your current elementary learner to an online course or if you are looking for reinforcements to their current studies, Khan Academy can fulfill that role.

Technology is the future of education. Giving young learners opportunities to engage with technology early on could help them on their learning path well into the future. Hopefully these tips will help you navigate the ever-expanding world of technology-driven learning. **JH**

1. Dolch sight words is a list of frequently used English words compiled by Edward William Dolch, it was first published in 1936. It contains 220 words.



Jared Jones (US) has served in Japan since 2009. He looks for new ways to use technology and social media to spread the Good News. He and his wife Tara have six children and live in Gunma.

Two common TCK struggles

Rootlessness and restlessness are challenges that continue into adulthood for TCKs

The TCK's life has many challenges. But one of the most demanding moments comes when asked: Where are you from? A TCK, or third culture kid, is a child "who grows up in a culture different from the one in which his or her parents grew up."¹ This leads to divided loyalties and causes them to struggle with the question: Where is home? They become adults who struggle with rootlessness and restlessness.

Rootlessness

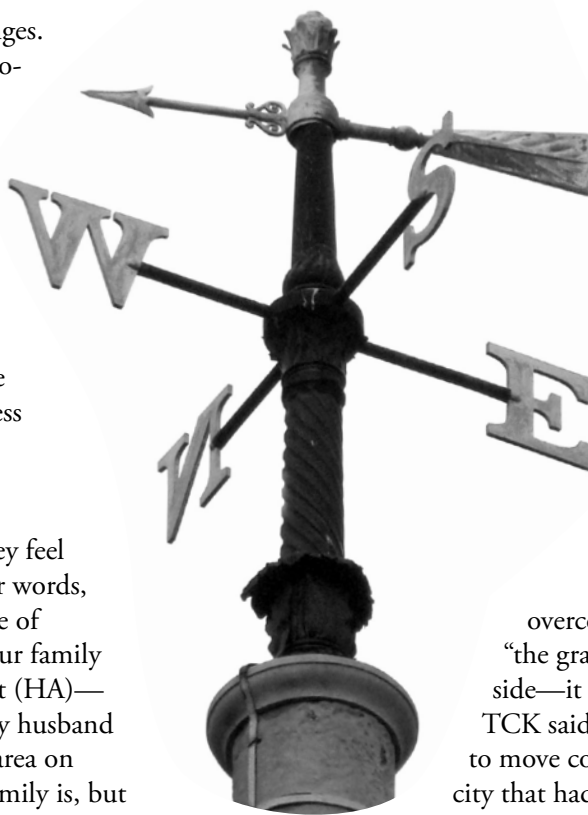
Most TCKs will tell you that they feel most at home in airports—in other words, on their way somewhere. This sense of rootlessness comes up every time our family prepares to go on home assignment (HA)—not only are my kids TCKs, but my husband is too. We have gone to my home area on every HA. This is not just where family is, but also where our friends and many supporters are. Additionally, most of our supporting churches are there, too. But this question always comes up: "Why do we have to go there?" My response is always the same: "Where else would we go?" This question is never answered, and the truth is: they don't know.

For the TCK, "home connotes an emotional place—somewhere you truly belong."² Since most TCKs spend their lives away from their passport country, it doesn't feel like home at all. An easier question to answer is: Where are you going for Christmas? This is usually anywhere their parents live. For the TCK, home is not a location as much as it is a relationship.

Rootlessness is an intrinsic third culture kid characteristic. One said she needed to challenge what made being rootless so hard to let go of. It became clear over time that she was afraid of losing her TCK identity. She now says, "Settling down and adapting does not undo my TCK identity, it just allows it to show up in different ways."³

Restlessness

Most TCKs say that being content is difficult. They have what is known as a "migratory instinct." Years of moving regularly as children causes them to be ready to move happily at a moment's notice. My family anticipates "moving at any moment" so positively that it's become a competition among them to see who can get the most in a suitcase the fastest and keep it under the 50 lb. weight limit for airplane travel.



This restlessness has been glamorized by using such synonyms as "wanderlust" or "global nomad."

These might be defined as "that longing feeling deep rooted (sic) somewhere inside of us that forces images of travel and freedom on our day dreams (sic)," but the downside is that "the day-dreams of these moments keep us from being present with the moments in front of us."⁴ Many TCKs are completely unaware of this characteristic, often assuming they will settle down when they find "the ideal experience."

One helpful recommendation to overcome restlessness is to remember that "the grass is not always greener on the other side—it is greener where you water it."⁵ One TCK said, "I'm so restless. I feel like I need to move countries. It turns out it wasn't the city that had to change, it was me!"⁶ Those who continue to learn and develop personally wherever they are will find they are able to tame the "wanderlust-monster"⁷ more easily.

Rootlessness and restlessness are both results of being raised somewhere other than your passport country. The way each TCK experiences rootlessness and restlessness will be different. But in spite of the challenges, most TCKs will tell you that they wouldn't have it any other way. **JH**

1. "What Is a 'Third-Culture Kid?'" Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/words-at-play/third-culture-kid> (accessed August 14, 2019).
2. David C. Pollock, Michael D. Pollock, and Ruth E. Van Reken, *Third Culture Kids: Growing Up Among Worlds* (London: Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 2017), 191.
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Image: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Weathervane-NW12BJ.JPG>



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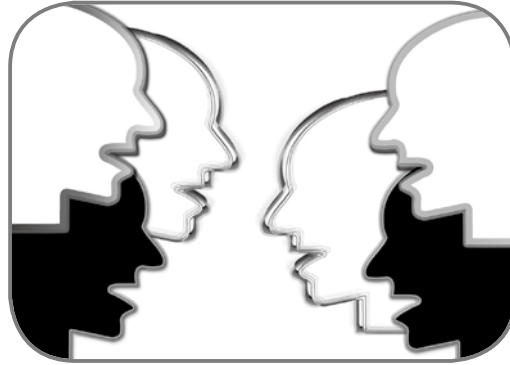
Writing workshops

Have you ever attended a writers' workshop? Or been able to get honest feedback on your writing from other writers? It takes courage to do this, but if you are passionate about communicating well, attending a writers' workshop is a wonderful thing.

My first experience of a writers' workshop was at a week-long event held by our mission in Hong Kong in 2010. It was an amazing week. I met others who were serious about writing. We laughed together and learned together. That week, I spent about 20 hours writing in silence. Our three boys were all under 12 at that point, and I hadn't had such a lengthy period for writing for more than a decade. It invigorated me and left me wanting more.

I came away from that workshop with a vision for helping missionaries write their own stories. At the time, I couldn't see a way to make that happen, but now I look back and see that it has happened anyway. Through this magazine and through the work I do with OMF's website, I've been able to use my editing skills more than my writing skills to help many people tell the small stories that make up the fabric of life.

One of my favourite aspects of a writers' workshop is getting live feedback from other writers. This is a rare



experience, but one that can be valuable. Therefore, it's something that I incorporated into each of the writer's workshops I facilitated for JEMA between 2011 and 2014.

Have you ever thought about doing a writing retreat? Or getting together with other writers for the purpose of writing? You can do this in a lot of simple ways, ranging from taking a day away from your usual routine to write at a coffee shop to gathering for a weekend with a group of two or three writers who can help you stay accountable.

Taking time out of a busy schedule to write is hard to do. A writing workshop or retreat helps you set this time aside. Perhaps it would get you started on a project that you've been wanting to do for some time but can never squeeze into a daily routine.

I noticed in this year's JEMA budget that there is still money allocated for running writers' workshops. I'm wondering if anyone might be interested in attending if we organised one. Please let me know if you are. **JH**

Wendy Marshall is the managing editor of Japan Harvest. She's Australian and has been in Japan with OMF International since 2000 with her husband David. She also does mobilisation for OMF using social media.

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Women in Ministry Presents

Fall Day of Prayer PLUS

Rose Town Tea Garden, Ome

October 10, 2019

Refreshments at 9:30am Program begins at 10:00am

Speaker Flossie Epley

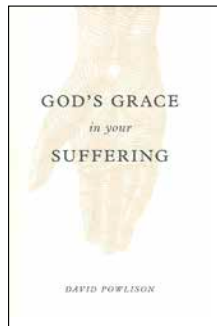
Register at JEMA.org

*Also mark your calendars for the Winter Day of Prayer on
January 14, 2020 in Higashi Tokorozawa*

God's Grace in your Suffering

David Powlison (Crossway, 2018). 127 pp.

Missionaries who want to thrive must learn how to deal with suffering in a godly way. Those who learn to suffer joyfully, trusting our wise and loving heavenly Father, will thrive and draw others to Christ.



Powlison, who died in June 2019 after a battle with pancreatic cancer, was a counselor and former director of the Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation. He reminds us that God never promised that life would be safe, easy, peaceful, healthy, and prosperous. We will experience danger, hardship, turmoil, ill health, and loss. God speaks and acts through suffering

and affliction. Powlison wants us to anchor our experience more deeply in God's goodness.

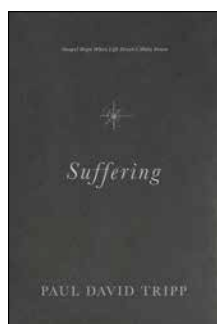
In his book he weaves together Scripture, experience (his and ours), and the hymn "How Firm a Foundation" so that we learn to see God's grace at work within suffering. He reminds us that God's answer to our suffering will be better than we could ever imagine because God answers with himself. This book teaches us how God comforts us when we face trouble and pain. Each chapter ends with a section for personal application. Often our initial reaction to suffering is "Why me? Why this? Why now? Why?" Powlison shows how God steps into our suffering and sees us through and carries us even in the most difficult situations. This book on suffering is balm for the soul and will help those in the most trying circumstances to persevere and thrive. **JH**

Reviewer rating is 5 of 5 stars ★★★★★

Suffering: Gospel Hope When Life Doesn't Make Sense

Paul David Tripp (Crossway, 2018). 216 pp.

Tripp, a counselor and speaker, reminds us that suffering is spiritual warfare. He writes to help us "with the war beneath the battle," to alert us to fight for our own heart and to help us see how the Lord meets us in the battle (p.



46). He deals with different traps we face—fear, envy, doubt, denial, and discouragement. He reminds us of the comfort of God's grace, his presence, his sovereignty, his purpose, and his people.

The perspective and theology we bring to our suffering shape the way we see and understand it, and the impact suffering has on us. The central battleground of suffering is

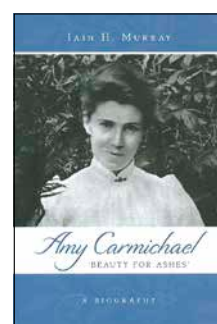
not physical, financial, situational, or relational. It is the battle of the heart. When fear rules our heart, we don't see life accurately. Our distorted vision causes us to come to wrong conclusions and make bad decisions. There is hope for all who suffer. That hope is a person and his name is Jesus (p. 208). Tripp shares his own experience of suffering and battles he has faced. This book will help as we fight the traps we face when we suffer. **JH**

Reviewer rating is 4 of 5 stars ★★★★★☆

Amy Carmichael: Beauty for Ashes

Iain Murray (Banner of Truth, 2015). 168 pp.

Murray has written another vintage biography, this one about Amy Carmichael who spent over 50 years serving in India. She spent her last 20 years in great physical pain after suffering an accident. "The school of suffering became



the richest school of her life" (p.

102). She wrote 13 books after her accident, seven on what it meant to live with Christ in all the trials of life. She learned that faith is the key to the Christian's happiness. Whatever the trials, they are not greater than God's love. Amy Carmichael is a missionary who learned to thrive in the midst of pain. God's grace in her life taught her to "accept the unexplainable . . . the delays, the

disappointments and reverses" (p.134). Her story will strengthen every reader as she reminds us that the travail of the journey is not worthy to be compared with the glory that will be revealed to us. **JH**

Reviewer rating is 5 of 5 stars ★★★★★

Further recommended reading on suffering:

D. A. Carson, *How Long, O Lord?: Reflections on Suffering and Evil* (Baker, 2006, 2nd edition)

Tim Keller, *Walking with God through Pain and Suffering* (Dutton, 2013)

John Piper, *Lessons from a Hospital Bed* (Crossway, 2016)

Elisabeth Elliot, *Suffering is Never for Nothing* (B&H Publishing, 2019)



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.

Remembering God's grace

Recalling our prayers allows us to thank God for answered prayer

In Luke 17, ten lepers cried out to Jesus for mercy (v. 13). In a sense, you could say that they prayed. Jesus responded immediately by saying, “Go and show yourselves to the priests” (v. 14, NASB)—if a leper was cleansed, it had to be verified by a priest (Leviticus 14).

Without hesitation, the lepers obeyed Jesus. They believed and were cleansed as they went. What faith! Yes, all were healed, but one did something more. Realizing he had been healed and knowing who had answered his prayer, he turned around and showed gratitude and worship to Jesus (vv. 15-16).

We need to remember our prayers so we can thank God when He answers. It's interesting that this man was a Samaritan, a foreigner (vv. 16, 18). God is “no respecter of persons” (Acts 10:34 KJV). He is willing to answer anyone's prayer.



Our prayers and God's answers

God does answer our prayers, but not always as immediately as He did with the lepers. Here is a personal example.

In 1978, I had asked God to meet all my needs while I was preparing to come back to Japan. But at the start of December, I still didn't have the money for my final payment of \$35 to the seminary. I had sold my bike, stereo, and almost everything else except my books, but I didn't have enough money. Then, in Student Missionary Union chapel, they announced that every semester a student planning to be a missionary was awarded a small amount of money. And that semester, the student was Ken Reddington. I received \$50.

Maybe you would have just received it with thanks. But I asked God, “Why the extra money?” However, I needed to get from Portland to San Francisco for my plane to Tokyo. One of my roommates, going to southern California, offered to take me to the airport. He asked for \$12 in gas money. So I landed at Kochi Airport with \$3 in my pocket (¥1,080 at the time). God had met all my needs, even the ones I didn't know about.

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

— F.B. Meyer —

God does answer our prayers. But often, He is more concerned with changing me than He is in changing my circumstances. And sometimes, God's working in our heart is so subtle we can barely tell that He is changing us. But when we do realize His work, we must fall at His feet in thanksgiving and praise.

Remembering what God has done

“Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget none of His benefits” (Psalm 103:2 NASB).

We tend to forget that God is behind every good thing. So how can we remember better? In Joshua 4:19-24, it says Israel often made monuments to remind them of what God had done for them. But it doesn't have to be a pile of rocks. It can be a tree, a flower, a book—whatever you choose.

We can also write our prayers in a notebook. Then when He answers, we write the date and how He answered. Of course, sometimes He changes our hearts so we don't want what we asked for anymore.

With our children we can, as the Israelites did, make our prayers and God's answers a part of our family history, or even our own personal history (see Josh. 4:24), by continuing to tell the stories of how God answered our prayers.

Thanking God for what He has done

As we remember our prayers, we can thank Him. We can even thank Him before He answers—when we pray (Phil. 4:6). Then, we can thank Him when He answers—if it's recorded, that's easier to do so. And we can thank Him after He answers—by remembering.

So let us pray—let us remember and let us thank God. We need to remember our prayers so we can thank Him. It will increase our faith and help us to know God better. **JH**



Ken Reddington, an MK, returned to Japan from the US as a church-planting missionary in 1978. He is on the Servant-Leader Team of the Prayer Summit for Western Japan, and secretary for the Kochi Citywide Pastors Group.

God still controls the storm

A mother's prayer changes the course of a typhoon

We have marvelled at the amazing story of Jesus calming storm on the Lake of Galilee. And we know that even today our Lord controls the storm.

In late August 1957, I had been ministering with a team of Japanese men in an OMS project called Every Creature Crusade (now Every Community for Christ). We had visited homes door-to-door across Hyōgo Prefecture, presenting a small gospel booklet called *Anshin no Michi* (The Way of Peace).

Then my field director asked me to prepare to open the ECC Ministry in Okinawa. The express train took us to Kagoshima. We arrived at the harbour in heavy, driving rain. High waves were rocking the ship as we walked up the gangplank. Knowing it would be a rough three-day voyage, we fortified our stomachs with Dramamine. The trip was rough, but we arrived safely in Naha Harbour. A week later, we heard "the rest of the story."

In a small farmhouse in southern Ontario, Canada, my mother had turned on the radio the morning of our departure from Kagoshima (evening in Japan). The announcer reported items of world news. Then he turned to a weather

update, saying, "A fierce typhoon is churning the waters south of Japan and will pass just south of Kagoshima this evening." My mother heard this news with deep concern. "My son is on those very waters," she thought. Turning the radio off, she quickly went upstairs to her prayer room. Kneeling, she cried out to God for a miracle. After a few minutes of earnest intercession, a wonderful calm settled over her.

Next morning, she turned on the same radio. She heard the same announcer giving his world news report. Then he turned to the weather and said, "Remember the major typhoon we reported yesterday that was heading to the waters south of Japan? Well, I cannot explain it, but for some incredible reason, the storm suddenly turned and went out to sea!" My mother, with tears of joy, bowed her head and said, "Thank you, Jesus." The same Lord who calmed the Galilee tempest had changed the course of a 20th century typhoon in the Pacific. Our wonderful Lord still sustains his servants today in times of storm! **JH**

Stanley Dyer ministered in Japan with OMS International for 26 years. He also taught at Tokyo Biblical Seminary. He served as Executive Director of OMS-Canada from 1990-1999. He currently lives in Canada.

JEMA staff introductions

In Summer 2016 we introduced you to the staff we currently had working for JEMA. Atsuko Tateishi continues as the office manager, but there have been staff changes. Ai Nightingale left the office for a time, but has returned. We asked our new staff some questions about themselves:



Michiru Pleasants プレザンツ みちる

I grew up in Fuchu and Kokubunji in Tokyo. I've also lived in Australia.

I currently teach private piano lessons and am an accompanist for vocal lessons. I've also worked as a childcare worker. At the moment I work about six hours a week for JEMA, mainly at the office. In the future I'd love to visit countries and cities I've never been to, such as Greece, Vienna, and Versailles.

Hobbies? I like going to Japanese gardens and parks. I especially like to be refreshed by walking and praying in green surroundings in the morning.

What excites you about JEMA? I get to be involved in the mission field in Japan and get to know about their ministries.



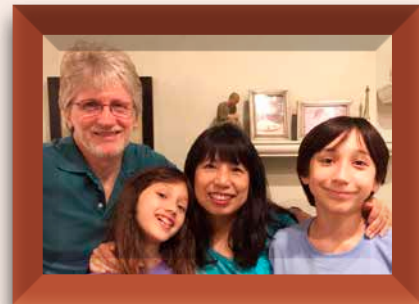
Grace Koshino 越野グレース

I grew up in a small town called North Tawton in Devon, England. As a child I enjoyed going to the butcher who gave me sweets!

As an adult I worked in sales and marketing for a Japanese company in London. I currently work 4.5 hours a week for JEMA. In the future I'd like to visit castles across Japan with my family.

Hobbies? I enjoy baking, traveling, sewing and chatting with my friends.

What excites you about JEMA? Working with friendly people and getting to know missionaries serving in Japan.



Mayumi Penner ペナー真由美

I grew up in Saitama Prefecture until I was 17, then moved to the United States. I also spent about 1½ years in different countries in Europe.

Currently, I homeschool my kids who are 12 and 11 years old. I've previously worked as a translator. I work for JEMA about three hours per week from home. In the future I would love to travel with my family and show the kids places we have studied about.

Hobbies? I can spend hours online searching for good homeschooling curricula.

What excites you about JEMA? I have heard a lot about JEMA from friends, so it is fun to be able to finally meet the many people I have heard about.

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