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Japan Harvest
Winter 2020



Seize the Day

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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 TBA

JEMA WIM Kansai Day Retreat

March 9, 2020

Location TBA



May

Kanto Prayer Summit

May 12-15, 2020

Okutama Bible Chalet, Ome, Tokyo

Kansai Prayer Summit

May 25-28, 2020

Nosegawa Bible Camp, Kawanishi, Hyogo-ken



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

jema.org

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



Japan Harvest

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Seize the day

In 2007, we had been in Japan seven years. I was knee-deep in parenting young boys—our eldest was eight, middle son at *yōchien* (kindergarten), and youngest still in nappies. My husband was very satisfied in his full-time work at CAJ, but I was asking God why he'd brought me to Japan. My biggest concern was that I was not measuring up to my expectations of what a missionary would be able to do after seven years on the field. Most especially, my Japanese was terrible. Language learning is not one of my gifts, and at that point I had neither the energy nor the motivation to work on it. All I could do was try my best to communicate in daily life with those around me, which at that time was mostly Japanese mums at *yōchien*. My question for God at this point in my life was: "Why did you bring me here and not gift me with Japanese sufficient to do ministry?" His answer came through a series of conversations, connections, and events over the next few years that led to the ministries I'm doing today. One way he spoke to me was through a song by Carolyn Arends called "Seize the Day" (see sidebar below for the chorus).

I was challenged to see if God was leading me to write (in English). I could do that, even surrounded by young boys—not write books, but just start to learn about how to write short articles, meet writers, explore publishing, and hone my skills. That is, seize the day, do what I could do with the abilities and situation God had put me in. Twelve years later, and I can say the journey has been rich and varied. But I'm glad that I "seized the day" back in our second term in Japan and have continued to do so.

Seizing the day now in Japan

The major international sporting events during these 12 months in Japan are what sparked this magazine's theme. We wanted to provide a forum for people to tell us what they are doing, to inspire us to get involved, and to encourage others to seize the day—whatever that looks like in their current situation.

We all know that "for everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven" (Ecc. 3:1 ESV). Now is the time for Japan to celebrate while the world watches.

In this issue we have articles that focus on events surrounding the international sporting events Japan is hosting in 2019 and 2020, as well as articles about sports ministries in general. Authors have written about how they've seized the day in their personal and ministry lives. One author has pointed out that globalisation in Japan provides opportunities here that we might not be aware of.

Some of our regular writers have seized the theme also: our Member Care article is about how we can live more in the moment, and our new Modern Tech writer, Daniel Rice, looks at how we can use YouTube for revitalizing our communication methods with our supporters.

It's an exciting line-up, and I'm looking forward to getting it into your hands. May God encourage you, inspire you, and equip you to do his good work at this time in Japan. Don't forget Mordecai's words to Esther: "And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" (Esther 4:14 ESV).

Chorus of "Seize the Day" by Carolyn Arends:

Seize the day / seize whatever you can
'Cause life slips away just like hourglass sand
Seize the day / pray for grace from God's hand
Then nothing will stand in your way
Seize the day

Rest of lyrics here: <https://genius.com/Carolyn-arends-seize-the-day-lyrics>

The themes for the upcoming issues are:

Spring 2020: Behind the Scenes

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

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

Winter 2021: Challenging Issues (submission
deadline August 31)



Blessings in Christ,
Wendy
Managing Editor

Church Multiplication Vision Festa

Christian Shimbun, July 21 & 28, 2019

Translated by Atsuko Tateishi

The Church Multiplication Vision Festa 2019 was held at Ochanomizu Christian Center in Tokyo on July 8 and 9. Started in 2014, and hosted in different cities each year, this was the fifth Vision Festa.

The event featured the “waves” of church multiplication in disaster areas, as well as in rural and urban churches in Japan. Pastors from diverse backgrounds presented on what the Lord has been doing in their respective churches. With the Rugby World Cup, the Olympics, and the Paralympics in Japan in 2019 and 2020, presentations on trends in sports ministry were also part of the program. Reports on trends in evangelism were shared from Asia and other parts of the world. Participants engaged in small group discussions exploring: urban and rural evangelism, unreached areas, sports ministries, prayer, human resources development, and ethnic groups in Japan.

Yoshiya Hari, a member of the steering committee for the event, spoke at the opening. He outlined the purpose of the gathering as providing a place for visionaries to get together and to share their visions of saturating Japan with the gospel through church multiplication.



Rural ministry

Naohiko Kakumoto was one of the presenters sharing what the Lord has been doing in rural settings. Originally from Mutsu City, Aomori Prefecture, Kakumoto became a Christian while studying in the US. After eight years of serving a church in Fukuoka Prefecture, pastoral difficulties led him

to leave the ministry. He worked at a citrus farm for three years, and then God called him anew. He moved to serve in Aomori Baptist Church.

On the first Sunday in Aomori, a man came running toward Kakumoto.

He was a seeker and wanted to be baptized the following Sunday. Kakumoto learned the new believer had been attending church only once a month, because it took two hours to get there. So he offered to go to the man’s neigh-



Responding to an invitation to faith, including Pastor Kakumoto’s parents

borhood to hold worship services. Thus began their worship at a restaurant run by a Christian, in Mutsu City, which also happens to be Kakumoto’s hometown. God added one believer after another in Mutsu. Over the period of a year the three-person worship service grew into a community of between 10 and 15 people.

Through connections he made at the Coverage Vision Seminar in Akita Prefecture in 2017, Kakumoto went to India for a week, where he observed how quickly people were being saved and churches were multiplying. He experienced a “paradigm shift.” He began to pray that his own churches would see the same growth as those in India.

In June 2019, a fifteen-person mission team came from Maranatha Vision Church in California to work for a week in three cities in Aomori and



Worship at restaurant in Mutsu

Akita Prefecture. As the evangelists in India do, they asked God for a child of peace in each household or group—someone who would invite their family and friends. Upon visiting each house and workplace, the team introduced themselves, sang praise songs, shared testimonies, preached the gospel, and invited people to receive Jesus. The team saw fifteen people accept Jesus, including Kakumoto’s parents. This convinced Kakumoto that God hears every prayer.

Kochi Prefecture

Pastor Makoto Saeki of Kochi Grace Church shared how God has been working in his church. In 1987 Saeki was appointed to serve Ochi Christ Church in Kochi Prefecture. Since then the population of Ochi Town has dropped from 9,000 to less than 5,000. In 1991, seeing that most of the church members were already over 60, Saeki decided to launch a church plant in Kochi City, the capital of Kochi Prefecture.

By 1994 the small gathering in Kochi City had grown to become Kochi Grace Chapel (now Church). As the Christian children in Kochi City grew to be young adults, Saeki’s primary focus shifted to Kochi City. The group in Ochi has now become a house church.

In 2016 Saeki’s church began to utilize “Train & Multiply,” a disciple-ship program of lay trainers teaching

(continued to right)

West News

How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, Your God reigns!"

Reconciliation the theme of East Asian graduates gathering

Christian Shim bun, August 25, 2019

Translated by Grace Koshino

The East Asia Graduate Conference (EAGC) took place at the National Youth Center in Tokyo from August 9 to 13, where 364 university graduates from across East Asia gathered to consider the theme of reconciliation through Biblical teachings and hands-on experience.

EAGC began in 1985 and takes place every three years. Graduates in various countries have hosted it over the years.

While looking to the hope of reconciliation in Jesus Christ, attendees discussed topics such as "defeat" and "conflict" on a personal level, within society, and between nations. The head of the conference's organizing committee said, "In this time of turmoil in East Asia, the role [of Christians] is the 'ministry of reconciliation' (2 Cor. 5:18 NIV)." Leading up to the conference, there were a number of conflicts within and between countries in East Asia, including political rifts between Japan and South Korea. The conference also focused on the importance of sorrow and "the journey"; the process of reconciliation; as well as discussing various types of reconciliation, such as between people

and God, at work, home, and church. Those attending were reminded that we are to transcend borders and race and to



Japanese and Korean leaders hug during closing session

be "new beings" redeemed by God.

In the opening session, Shigenori Ōshima (head of KGK, an evangelical ministry for university students in Japan) spoke of how "man had cut off their relationship with God [at the Fall], . . . and instead of seeking God's kingdom, they started seeking their own, and this is how conflict came about." Through Jesus Christ, the reconciliation between God and man was completed, "and although this world is still broken, man can once again take part in building God's kingdom."

On the second morning, Shoichiro Sugaya of OMF International touched on topics such as the importance of understanding each other's culture and background, caring for the environment and all creation, the pain within the church, and the need for repentance. He encouraged people by saying, "God has called us all to be part of the ministry of reconciliation."

As the conference neared the end, Chris Rice, a Christian author, encouraged attendees with the hope that reconciliation brings. He reminded everyone that we are all ambassadors of reconciliation.

During the closing session on the last evening, Barry Cheung, Director of Graduates Christian Fellow-



Offering praise and prayer together

ship of Hong Kong, asked attendees to pray for the current situation in Hong Kong, appealing for "the total withdrawal of the 2019 Hong Kong extradition bill, and that the Hong Kong government would humbly accept the current situation and repent. That the demonstrations would be carried out peacefully and without casualties."

In response they prayed for a solution "regarding the extradition bill and for healing for the people . . . and that Jesus' name would be exalted and many will come to know him. They prayed that churches in Hong Kong would be able to proclaim the truth, and that they can be the light in the darkness." ■

other believers. Since then, the church has seen four baptisms and nine restorations of faith. "Our church was on the brink of dying, but God breathed new life into it," recalls Saeki. "What has happened in our church can certainly happen in every local church in Japan." ■



Pastor Saeki shows a scene of T&M training

Riding the wave

This Japanese pastor has a huge vision for sports ministry to change Japan

By Marty Woods

I asked Pastor Keishi Ikeda, senior pastor of Hongodai Christ Church in Kanagawa Prefecture, about his experience with sports ministry in Japan. He's been the senior pastor of the church for five years, taking over from his father who pastored the church for 45 years.

Marty: How did you get involved with sports ministry?

Keishi: Before 2002 I had no idea about sports ministry. With the Soccer World Cup coming to Japan and Korea in 2002, I was invited to a meeting where I heard a vision for sports ministry. I thought, *Well, let's try it and see what is possible here in Japan.* I joined a team in Yokohama which ran a two-day soccer festival. We had 3,000 people turn up. Near the end of the festival, I watched the son of one of my church members run to his mother. "Mum," he said, "my friend got a copy of the Bible and received it with joy!"

I knew the boy was shy about his faith and didn't talk about being a Christian at school. Yet, because of this event, he was part of ensuring his friends received a Bible. This sports outreach enabled a shy boy to be an evangelist. From that moment I saw the possibilities of sports ministry.

Marty: What happened next?

Keishi: A missionary friend invited me to meet with a former national soccer player from Argentina called Ortega. He'd moved to Japan after a pastor he met on the street told him he had a word from God for him. Ortega told me that the pastor had said, "You have to go to Japan because there is something you have to do for God." So he came.



I couldn't believe it. I was amazed. He told me how he had said to God, "I want to do something for Japanese young people through the talent you gave me."

In May 2003 we decided to start a soccer academy called Esperanza.¹ It now has 350 boys, teenagers, and emerging professional players. Many are from non-Christian backgrounds. The coaches pray with the students before practice. One day a week, we have a small worship service. During Easter and Christmas, our church runs a larger worship service for them. On average 100 players have come to faith each year. We began a baseball ministry through a former major league American baseball pitcher, Mickey Weston, and have reached over 1,000 kids who play baseball. This baseball ministry is spreading out across Japan. We have helped produce a Baseball Bible and Rugby Bible with Fellowship of Christian Athletes.

Marty: How did this vision of sports ministry for Japan first come to you?

Keishi: At the 2013 International Sports Movement conference in Orlando, I was invited to a national leaders gathering during the conference. They asked me to share a national vision for sports ministry in Japan. I hadn't thought very much about it, so I shared the vision of the soccer academy to send Christian players to the professional world. One of the participants at the conference challenged me by saying that my vision was too small.

That night I prayed. The equation "10×10" came clearly to my spirit.

"What does this mean?" I asked God.

I then tried to press in with God. As I meditated, I felt God speaking to me in this way—"10 represents 10 years, 'times 10' means 10 times blessing. I will give Japan 10 times blessing."

"What is 10 times blessing?" I asked.

"Ten million followers of Jesus in Japan by 2024."

Wow! I thought I should not tell this to anyone, because ten million Jesus followers is a big vision for the church and pastors in Japan. If I was to say that in these next ten years God

will give us ten million believers, it might be viewed as silly, especially as I am just a young pastor. But I realized I was afraid. I called two friends, other church leaders involved in sports ministry, and shared it with them. They both said, “This vision is from God. We have to do it.”

So, we are committed to this 10x10 vision of 10 million believers across Japan. I met with the leader of a global sports movement. He said to me, “Don’t work just for 2020 but towards 2024 when the next Olympics is held. Build a legacy from the Tokyo Olympics.”

Marty: How do you think momentum can build for this coming Olympic year?

Keishi: We plan to train people over the next 12 months in festivals and sports ministries. We want to grow community festivals. As well as reaching out to the community, they are an effective way to raise up young lead-



ers. We will continue to run festivals for four years. We plan to train over 100 sports leaders to train and develop sports communities. Specifically, we want to work in 500 communities across Japan, each community reaching 2,000 people so we reach one million people in 2020.

We know it is important to build strong connections and networks through the churches. The Rugby World Cup has given us the valuable experience of hosting a major sporting event with many teams from around the world coming to serve local churches.

Marty: What is your dream for the Olympics?

Keishi: Imagine ten million Christians in Japan by 2024. This would change Japan. And not just Japan, for we could send teams from Japan into other countries as our passport is powerful. This is a wave; we need to ride it. The Rugby World Cup, Olympics, and Paralympics are significant events that God has been preparing us for. We want to ride this wave for as long as we can so we can reach as many people as possible. **JH**

If you would like to know about more sports ministry opportunities, contact Levi Booth at Levi.Booth@omfmail.com.

If you would like to know more about how you can specifically get involved in Olympic outreach, contact Hajime Okazawa at Japan International Sports Partnership (JiSP) at jisp2024@gmail.com.

1. Esperanza Sports Club: <https://esperanza-sc.com>

Marty Woods, an Australian, has been involved since 2000 in ministry at international sporting events.

Sports Ministry Map

The Japanese Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications did a survey in 2016 that showed nearly 70% of the population play sport or are involved with it in some way.² One helpful way to understand this in relation to the Japanese church is through the McCown Sports Ministry Map here.

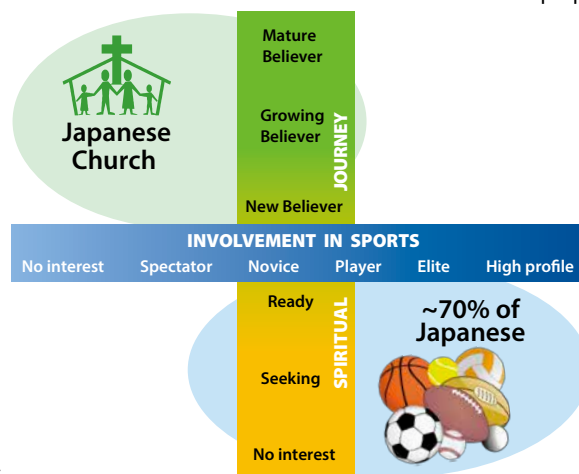
The horizontal axis is people’s involvement in sport, ranging from left to right from no interest and novice to elite and high profile on the right end.

The vertical axis is the Engel scale of people’s spiritual journey, from the bottom (having no interest in God) to the top (a mature believer).

This makes four quadrants mapping the relationship of one’s involvement in sport and spiritual maturity. Pastor Ikeda pointed out that the present reality in Japan is that the church is largely in the top

left, while 70% of Japanese are in the bottom right quadrant. Even if the Japanese sports population were to turn to Jesus all at once, moving into the top right quadrant, there would still be a significant gap between the established church and the sports population in Japan.

For this reason, the church needs to start “fishing on the other side of the boat,” to start reaching out into the sports world in ways that they can connect with. We heard about community festivals in the summer edition of Japan Harvest (2019)—an effective way to bridge the gap between the church and the community. This issue also contains ways to engage the people in the bottom right quadrant.



2. MIC (the Ministry of Internal affairs and Communication). <http://www.stat.go.jp/english/data/shakai/2016/pdf/activities2016.pdf> (accessed Nov. 11, 2019).

Reaching the unreached on

Japanese sports fields

By Will Thompson



God is opening new ways to use baseball and other sports to take the gospel to Japanese

Like many young boys, I dreamed of playing professional baseball. Thankfully, when God told my parents to move to Japan, he brought me to a country that loves baseball as much as I do. Both as a child and now as an adult, I have found living in Japan culturally, emotionally, and spiritually challenging. But a shared love of baseball has been a powerful connection between me and this wonderful country.

However, my plans were not God's plans. Scripture tells us that his plans are higher than ours (Isa. 55:8–9) and far beyond all we could ask or imagine (Eph. 3:20). I never got to play professional baseball, but as my college baseball career came to an end, God opened new spiritual and baseball doors for me in ways I had never imagined.

He has since allowed me to work with those who are living my childhood dream—believers playing professional baseball in Japan. God showed me that I'm better suited to supporting these players as a bridge to connect them to the church and community. We have been blessed with opportunities to work in various disaster areas (including Tohoku), visit schools, do baseball clinics for local youth teams, and hold charity fundraisers. A highlight was visiting a juvenile detention center. It

would normally be difficult for missionaries, pastors, or businesspeople to enter such a place, but because we visited with a well-known professional baseball player, we had an open door to share the hope of Jesus with those kids. We have heard the name of Jesus proclaimed in front of a packed crowd of 50,000 at Hanshin Koshien Stadium as well as in front of a group of just 40 Little Leaguers (when we began, we asked those young baseball players if any of them had ever heard the name of Jesus, and no one raised their hand).

A new way of thinking

The Great Commission (Matt. 28:18–20) is very familiar to us in the church, but I believe we need a paradigm shift in our perspective on it. Jesus calls us—commands us—to go to every ethnos, every tribe. We often think of ethnos as ethnic groups, language groups, nations, etc. But I propose that ethnos could mean much more. For example, I believe Japanese high school baseball players could be considered an ethnos, or a tribe; they have their own culture, language (phrases and way of talking), and way of life. The same is true for groups of musicians, artists, and businesspeople. The list goes on.

What tribe in Japan is God calling you to reach and make disciples? Have we in the church spent too long in the old paradigm of being holy, set apart people and waiting for people to come to us only on Sunday morning? Sunday is the very time when nearly 70% of Japanese people are playing sports! Jesus told us in the Great Commission to go to every ethnos—every people group—to make disciples. To me, that means we need to go and meet them where they are.

I strongly recommend that you read Marty Wood's interview with Pastor Keishi Ikeda on the previous page, along with explanation of the sports ministry map. There you can learn about the vision God has given for the unique opportunities of the 2019 Rugby World Cup and 2020 Tokyo Summer Olympics. Hongodai Christ Church is a pioneer in Japan for sports ministry; it runs Esperanza Sports Club as well as baseball, table tennis, and running ministries.

In the Summer 2019 issue of *Japan Harvest*, Marty Woods explained some ways that churches can reach out to spectators and novice players.¹ In this article, I describe how amateur and professional athletes and coaches can be reached. We call this the "in-sports



community”—they are often more than just interested in sports; many of them have grown up playing the sport they love. Their skill level ranges from novice to top class. Each group has its own challenges and opportunities.

Reaching in-sports groups is the full-time work of ministries such as the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Athletes in Action, Baseball Chapel, Unlimited Potential Inc., Christians in Sport, and the in-sports focus of the Japan International Sports Partnership (www.jisp2024.com). Here are some ways you can reach out to the in-sports community.

Camps, clinics, and tournaments

Since 2001, former Major League baseball players have been coming from the US to Japan and working with the Japanese church to reach the community by using their influence as former professional athletes. Their influence allows churches to access individuals, families, and communities that they otherwise might not be able to reach. Great ways to connect with these in-sports tribes are hosting or supporting

a baseball clinic; a sports camp; or a preexisting basketball, touch rugby, or futsal tournament.

Resources

Just like any unreached or unengaged people group, Japanese sports people need the Word of God in the language they can best comprehend. That is why we are working to create sports Bibles, tracts, and sports devotionals in the language of the people we are trying to reach and in ways they value. Many times, people who don't know Jesus aren't interested or feel intimidated to pick up a thick book with a big cross on it. But if they see the testimony of an athlete they admire, they may be drawn to explore more about that athlete's faith. Past examples include the Japanese Baseball Bible and the Rugby Edition Sports Bible. We also are working on future resources such as manga Bibles, devotionals, and reading plans for the YouVersion Japanese Bible App. The intention isn't to ignore the whole Bible, but rather to introduce Jesus and draw them into a relationship with him and an appreciation of the whole Bible. (Resources available at fcjapan.org or by emailing Japan@fca.org.)

Chaplaincy and small groups (huddles)

In Japan, a serious athlete has little opportunity to connect with a traditional church because Sundays are sports days. That is why in many other countries, chaplains minister to the spiritual needs of amateur and professional athletes and coaches. Likewise, small groups, or huddles, can be places of spiritual support and community for coaches and athletes who cannot attend a traditional Sunday

worship service. Please contact me at WThompson@fca.org if you want further information.

The Kingdom is at hand

Anyone can connect with the large percentage outside the church who love sports. You can do it by attending a game together, jogging or walking with those in your community, joining a recreational sports team, or just paying attention to the sports news and connecting with people in conversation about it. You don't even have to be an athlete or missionary!

Levi Booth wrote a great article a couple of years back giving suggestions for how to get involved in sports ministry.² My experience is the same as Levi's—Japanese people are open to gospel conversations when you meet them where they are and share a relationship and common hobby.



I've taken to heart the motto of my home church in the United States: "Never-changing message; ever-changing methods." We should never change our message—salvation through Jesus alone—but we should always consider new methods to reach every person, every tribe, and every ethnos for him. Let us all be willing to change our minds and perspectives on how and where we go to make disciples, because his Kingdom is at hand in Japan. **JH**

1. Marty Woods, "Bring celebration into your community," *Japan Harvest*, Summer 2019, 26–27.
2. Levi Booth, "Sports ministry," *Japan Harvest*, Spring 2017, 12–13.

Photos submitted by author

Will Thompson is the Japan director for Fellowship of Christian Athletes. He spent his youth in Tokyo, played college baseball in the US, and has a heart for using sports to reach the Japanese with the gospel.



Here and on left page: Matt Murton ministering to young athletes when he was a star hitter with the Hanshin Tigers

Sports ministry: Making the **vision** a *reality*

By Levi Booth

Let's commit to using sports to make disciples who can make disciples in Japan

One of my favourite Japanese songs is 栄光の架橋 (*Eikō no Kakehashi*; Bridge to Glory) by Yuzu. It became popular in Japan during the London Olympics. You'll understand why if you listen to it. It's the perfect song to go with a montage of sports footage: a dejected and broken-hearted athlete after a disappointing result; an alarm clock showing 5.30 am; slow, painful, but gradual improvement; a stumble and fall; childhood flashback; determined closeup; increased training . . . finally the athlete with tears streaming down their face as they receive the gold medal.

Maybe that's what you feel like you need after reading about the 10×10 vision (see pages 8-9 in this issue) for sports ministry and the opportunities the Olympics and Paralympics will offer. An inspiring song played over a training montage and your church is transformed from a gathering of weary Christians into a band of determined underdogs, ready to win Japan for Christ.

A crucial mind shift

But this is real life, and we don't just get an inspirational training montage for the win. In fact, tales of church growth around the world can make us feel frustrated and defensive. So how can we make the 10×10 vision a reality? Indeed, can we even hope for it to become a reality? Ten million Christians? In Japan? Does sports have that potential? I think it does, but we first need a mind shift—a small but crucial one.

Here it is: sports ministry is not just about evangelism, it's also about discipleship. It's about using sports to make disciples of Jesus who can make disciples of Jesus.

The harsh reality is that we are almost certainly not going to see nine million Japanese come to faith during the Olympics and Paralympics, no matter how many teams come to Japan, how many tracts we distribute, or how many outreach events we put on. Will those things have an impact for Christ? Absolutely, but it won't be enough to see the 10×10 vision reached. Nine million is just too many to reach. And when all the overseas outreach teams have left, the buzz of the Olympics has died down, and opportunities for large-scale outreach have gone, what then?

But what if we don't just focus on using sports to help churches hold outreach events or as opportunities to hand out tracts? What if we encouraged them to turn their regular involvement in sports into a bridge for them to show what it looks like to follow Jesus—through all the trials and triumphs of life? What if we equipped Christians to be able to share the good news with their teammates and training buddies? And what if we trained them to take opportunities to talk about their faith, share their testimonies, and invite their friends to read the Bible with them—in other words, to make disciples?

And what if we helped Christians who love sports to have the competence and confidence to then equip those new believers to pass it on?

If we do that, the 10×10 vision would indeed become possible.

And you probably don't even need to look further than your church to begin! Find the people in your church who love sports and equip and release them to make disciples through sports. Let's say there's only one such person in your church and it takes them two years to reach a single teammate with the gospel and train them to do the same: after two years, one becomes two; after four years, four; after six years, 12; after 8 years, 36; after ten years, 108. That's not just a ten-fold blessing, it's 100-fold!

Needed: realistic optimists

OK, so how do we do that? By coaching people, by cheering them on, and above all by pointing them to Christ. As the writer of Hebrews puts it: "Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles."

He exhorts us to "run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy that was set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat at the right hand of the throne of God." Finally, we are to "consider him who endured



such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart” (Heb. 12:1–3 NIVUK).

There’s something called the Stockdale paradox. It’s exemplified by British prisoners of war who endured the prisoner-of-war camps during the Second World War until they were rescued at the end of the war. Researchers discovered that those who held out to the end were those who were both brutally honest about their current situation and yet hopeful of certain rescue someday. In other words, they were both realists and optimists.

Christians who play sports live in that paradox—especially those in Japan, where they will probably be the only believer on their team. It’s tough to persist in praying for your teammates and to play in a way that honours God. And speaking the gospel in the face of the pressures you face when you are off the field requires strength of character beyond anything that athletics demands.

So we need coaches: people who will be the realists and show us the situation as it is, and keep us disciplined and focussed on playing for and speaking of Jesus. And we need cheerleaders:

What if we trained them to take opportunities to talk about their faith, share their testimonies, and invite their friends to read the Bible with them—in other words, to make disciples?

people who will be optimists and tell us what could be, and keep us from discouragement. And we need Christ: the one who helps us hold both these things together in tension. The one we keep our eyes fixed on as we keep on running the race marked out for us with endurance.

It’s simple, but it won’t be easy. It will cost time, energy, and money, and we will face criticism. There’ll be comforts to forsake and conveniences to give up. This is sports *ministry*—we’re not playing games here. Making disciples is hard work, and it can’t be done from a safe distance.

To be clear, I’m not saying we shouldn’t also use large-scale events. We’ve got teams coming from all over the world and great quality resources being made. The team at Japan International Sports Partnership (JiSP; www.jisp2024.com) will happily help you to run sports clinics, public viewings, festivals, etc. And if you feel that you need resources or training for discipleship,

JiSP will happily help in whatever way we can. That’s why JiSP exists: to equip and encourage Japanese churches in doing sports ministry.

But however big your church is, discipleship through sports is something you can do to prepare for those outreach events and to keep on moving towards the 10×10 vision after them. If you’re into sports, find people to be your coach and cheerleader, and to point you to Christ. If you’re not, then find people who are that you can coach and cheer on.

We don’t need to watch an inspiring sports montage; we need to commit to together using sports to make disciples who can make disciples in Japan. And if we do, then the 10×10 vision for Japan can—whisper it with me—*will* become a reality. And when it does, we can either be reading about it from the comfort of our sofas or we can be part of the crowd storming the pitch with our arms held high and tears streaming across our face as Jesus receives the glory he is due. **JH**

Levi Booth (UK) works in Kanto with OMF, making disciples of Jesus through sports, especially ultimate Frisbee. He reads a lot, writes a little, and also enjoys baking, trekking, good coffee, and bad action movies.

Advertisement

JEMA WOMEN IN MINISTRY
PRESENTS

2020 Spring Retreats

Kanto

March 4-6

Megumi Chalet, Karuizawa

Speaker: Debbie Adams
Theme: The God of the MORE
Theme verse: Eph. 3:20-21

Hokkaido

March 7th

Location TBA

Speaker: Michelle Jackson
Theme: Transformation
in the Desert
Theme verse: Deut. 8:18a

Kansai

March 9th, 9am~4pm

Location TBA

Standing firm in hard times

Sometimes seizing the day seems just too hard, and that's okay

By Debbie Adams

“Seize the day”—that phrase conjures images that portray strength, confidence, and boldness. I can see Moses standing on a rock, wind in his hair, staff outstretched in his hand, overlooking the Red Sea. Miriam is singing victory songs with a throng of others. This would be a great depiction of seizing the day. The phrase comes from *carpe diem*, which means to “enjoy, seize, make use of” the day.¹

But for me, that is not my day today. I am living through the most difficult journey that God has ever called my family to walk through. A year ago today (August 19, 2018), we said goodbye to our daughter Emily who was returning to college in Arkansas, a 16-hour road trip from our home in Georgia. Before she left, we stood in a circle as a family and prayed that God would keep her safe, that she would have a good school year, and that God would lead her steps.

Two months later, on October 4, 2018, Emily fell asleep while driving (we think), was hit by an oncoming pick-up truck, and died instantly. That day our family changed forever.

We felt broken, kicked in the gut, left lying on the sand trying to catch our breath. Hurt is not a strong enough word to encapsulate the feelings of grief that we lived through. Ten months later, I feel like I am able to stand—but my gut still hurts and my tears still flow.

Just to stand

I am standing, but some days barely. How do you even think about seizing the day in a time of deep grief, limited energy, and in the pain of sorrow? It is not humanly possible. I have come to learn that only by hanging on to God can I finally stand again. God sees our ordinary days and also our bad days. He can use both extremes and enters into both our joys and sorrows. We become more relevant to others because we know our days are made up of the mundane and routine, as well as deep anguish that must be endured.

What if God sees us seizing the day in a different way than our usual picture of strength and power? What if God sees us simply standing up and calls that victory? What if that is all he asks of us?

When I was a young girl growing up in Brazil as a daughter of missionaries, I had many opportunities to go to the ocean and play in the waves. We had big waves—in my young mind, at least, they were very big. There were times when I could barely stand in one place. The currents tugged at my legs and the waves crashed over my head. When the waves passed, I would land again on the sand. I would try with all my might to stand firm, but it was hard. That is how I've felt my life has been these past months. I am trying to stand in the midst of many moving parts: memories, emotions, grief, and yes, even regrets.

After Emily died, we spent time looking up verses that talked about death. The Lord led us to 1 Corinthians 15:54-58:

When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: ‘Death has been swallowed up in victory.’

‘Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?’

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain (NIV).

What were God's thoughts about death and how should we live in light of that reality? In that chapter we read about death being swallowed up in victory, but the author concludes by saying, “Therefore.” What that means to me is this: because of the fact that Jesus has conquered death, that our mortality will be clothed with immortality . . . therefore . . . God says, “Stand firm.” Don't let anything move you while you give yourself to God's work. And you do this because you know that it is not worthless because it's God's. There are those words again: stand firm.


When we are standing in the midst of our trials, we become an example to others who are watching us. People watch and wonder how one can make it through hard times and deep tragedy.

Our daughter's accident

That night ten and a half months ago, my youngest son and I were staying the night at my parents' house, where my sister also lives. Three policemen came knocking on the door a little

Family photo for 2018 prayer card





after one in the morning. My sister Lori and I quickly went to the door. There were many flashing lights outside—*surely there must have been a robbery!*

The blue-eyed policeman inexplicably looked straight at me and said, “Are you Debbie Adams?”

I sighed and said, “Give me a moment, please.”

I went to the bedroom and grabbed my robe and came back. The lights were on in the living room. The policemen were standing in the middle of the room. I sat on the couch.

“Is it Jordan?” We had left Jordan, one of our daughters, alone back at home.

There was no response. The officer was trying to say words that I am sure he had been formulating in his mind and rehearsing on the way over.

He said, “There is no easy way to say this. We have heard from Arkansas: your daughter has been in an accident and she didn’t make it.”

Time stood still. I remember getting up and holding my shaking hands together. I tried to swallow and said, “Well, let’s pray together.”

A week and a half later I heard that the blue-eyed policeman had been touched by my example of prayer. He had left shaken, thinking to himself, *I need to get my life right with God. I don’t think I could have handled that experience like that lady.*

The policeman

After a few months, we thought it would be good to contact the policeman again to see how he was journeying in his walk with the Lord. We also wanted to tell him more of the story of God’s preparation for Emily’s homegoing.

Our attempts were not working until two days ago when we had a small car accident. We were on the way home from spending a few days at our local lake. We were in our truck, towing a boat. A car crossed the double yellow lines in front of us; its side mirror scraped the side of our truck and knocked the spare tire off the boat trailer, sending it flying down the embankment. Through the back window, I could see sparks flying down the road

The happenings in our lives are never a surprise to God.

and then I saw the car coming to a stop. We’d been hit!

We were not injured in any way. But the sound of crunching metal and the emotional aftermath of the accident left me shaken and brought thoughts of what Emily’s accident would have been like.

Soon blue lights of police cars surrounded us, and cars were stopping. Many questions were asked. The police walked up and down the road. Time passed. We called our son who had just been with us at the lake and on his way home in his own vehicle. We had to wait for the investigative police to fill out all the forms.

Eventually, another policeman arrived, and I had seen those blue eyes before. Seeing him took me back to that dark night ten and a half months ago.

I said, “You are the officer that told me about our daughter Emily’s death.”

He said, “Yes, ma’am. That’s me.”

We found ourselves on the side of the road, next to the police car with flashing lights, with moments to revisit Emily’s story.

I told him that the day before Emily died, I was taking our youngest son Beau to church and we had stopped to pick up a pizza. We went to the cemetery to eat. It was the first time I had picked that spot for a picnic supper, but it was a peaceful place to stop.

As we sat on the bench I told Beau, “Death is a part of life. We don’t know when God will call us home. All we know is that God said he has ordained all our days before one of them came to be” (Psalm 139:16, author paraphrase).

After that I took him to youth group. The very next day, Emily died.

When I woke Beau up to tell him the news, I sat on his bed and said,

“Beau, do you remember what I told you at the cemetery? Well, last night God took Emily home.”

He got out of bed and, sitting on his knees, he put one arm around me and said, “This is really hard.”

As we went to the living room, Beau told us what he had learned during chapel service that week. The speaker had talked to the kids about how to walk through the death of a loved one.

God is walking with us

The happenings in our lives are never a surprise to God. Even the divine appointment with the police officer was God’s timing for us to meet that night. We are comforted and amazed by his love and preparation. We wanted that policeman to know that our all-knowing God is with us and with him too.

Together with God, we can seize the day. The days will look different, but in each situation that we face, we can walk in victory as we fully depend on him. Whether it be in moments of great victory or days of deep darkness. Sometimes our seizing the day may just be to stand firm. God has not changed—he is there with us and will help us overcome. To him be the glory, honor, and praise. **JH**

Debbie Adams will be the speaker at the Kanto and Hokkaido JEMA Women in Ministry retreats in March 2020.

1. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carpe_diem

Family photo submitted by author
“Police Car Lights” by flickr user Robert Kuykendall

Debbie Adams and her husband Todd have served with the Christian & Missionary Alliance since 1996. Their first term of service was in Mali, West Africa. They currently minister in Papua, Indonesia. Their ministry involves leadership development, youth ministry, and non-believers.

Seizing the opportunity offered by the Olympics

What part can we play in helping Japan to seek spiritual renewal at this time when the world turns its eyes towards this nation?

By Roger W. Lowther

The Olympics are coming to our neighborhood! Signs of it are everywhere. The promenade along the river in my neighborhood is being refurbished. Our apartment building is changing out the elevators to hold more people. One third of all taxis in Tokyo, as well as quite a few buses, are being replaced with larger, more eco-friendly models. Tsukiji Fish Market, the largest fish market in the world, has moved to its new home in Toyosu. Construction is going on everywhere. Twenty-one new residential buildings for 18,000 people are being developed in the Olympic Village, just blocks from our home. New train lines are being built from airports. And this past summer, large touchscreens for buying train and subway tickets were installed at some stations, with English as the main language.

A symbol of hope

The excitement and reconstruction now transforming the city hearken back to 1959, when Tokyo won the bid to host the 1964 Olympic Games, the first city in Asia to receive the honor. At that time, Tokyo looked nothing like it does today. The city was poor and still recovering from the ravages of

World War Two. Buildings were poorly made and the sewage system was atrocious. However, with the coming of the Olympics, construction projects inundated the city. The Tokkaido bullet train between Tokyo and Osaka opened the same time as the Games. Thousands of buildings, the Shuto Expressway, stadiums, hotels, and subway lines were constructed. And Haneda

Airport, complete with monorail access into downtown Tokyo, was modernized. Symbolizing resilience and hope for the future, Yoshinori Sakai—born in Hiroshima on the day the atomic bomb was dropped—lit the Olympic flame in the Opening Ceremony.

In the midst of the earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear disasters of 2011, Tokyo began its campaign to once again host the Olympics in order to “bring hope and realize dreams” in Japan through the power of sports. They won their bid in 2013.

The mascots, voted on by over 200,000 elementary school children, give a tangible shape to this message.

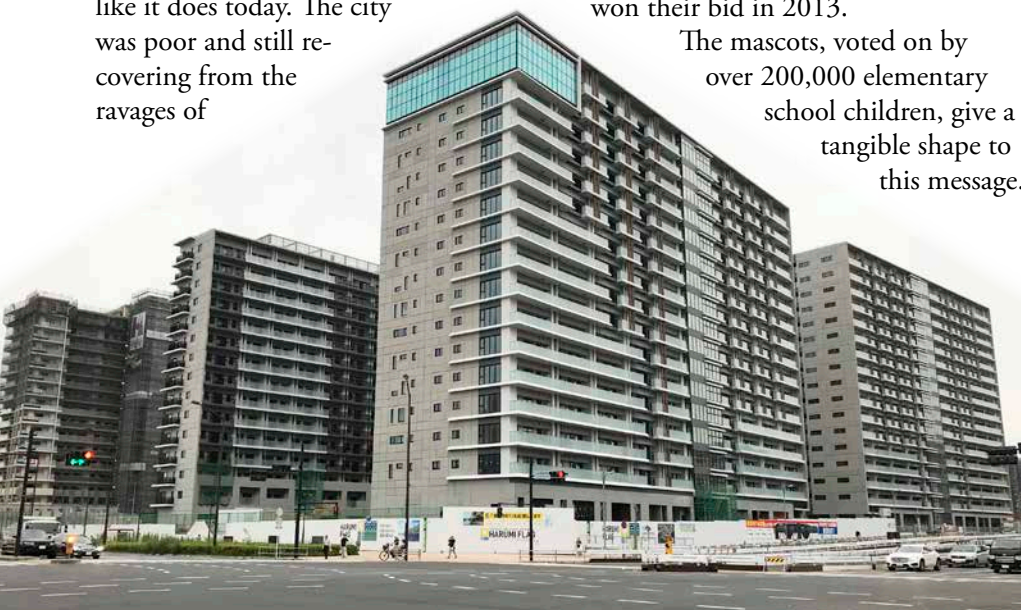
Miraitowa, the mascot for the Olympics, represents eternal hope for the future; and Someity (pronounced “So Mighty” in English), the mascot for the Paralympics, represents the “overcoming of all obstacles to redefine the boundaries of possibility.”¹ Because the name Someity comes from a popular version of cherry tree, Someiyoshino, it also reveals Japan’s soft spot for the

Now, for the second time in a decade, God is giving the church in Japan a unique opportunity to engage with our society and grow stronger.

“mighty” beauty found in fragility and weakness.

These are the “reconstruction games.” Baseball, softball, and soccer will be held in Fukushima, Miyagi, and Ibaraki, prefectures devastated by the disaster. The “Flame of Recovery,” made partly from recycled aluminum from temporary housing in Fukushima, will make its way to Minami Soma, the closest city to the broken nuclear power plant, on Day 1. From there, the flame will continue through every other region of Japan on its four-month journey.

The 2020 Olympic Games will run from July 24 to August 9, followed closely by the Paralympics from August 25 to September 6. Tokyo will be the first city in the world to host the Paralympic Games for a second time. The mission of the Paralympics is huge. It is a sporting event designed to change the world, promoting awareness and reducing stigma of disabilities. Though organizers may have had trouble filling stadiums in past Games, this is



not predicted to be the case in Tokyo. Event times were chosen so families can attend and prices are kept deliberately low. Tokyo promises to provide the best Paralympics Games ever.

A role for the church

I will never forget the flurry of activity surrounding the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake. The world's gaze was on Japan. There was a palpable urgency in our mission. People needed food, water, and supplies, and the Japanese church jumped into action to meet those needs. Nine years later, we still see the fruit of their labor. Churches engaged the communities around them in new and deeper ways, and relationships of trust were built between denominations in ways never seen before. The church in Japan had a new vision and pathway for renewal.

Churches from cities that hosted past Olympics and Paralympics tell me they saw similar fruit from ministries during Atlanta 1996, Sydney 2000, Athens 2004, Vancouver 2010, London 2012, and Rio de Janeiro 2016. Now, for the second time in a decade, God is giving the church in Japan a unique opportunity to engage with our society and grow stronger. Once again, the eyes of the world will be on Japan, and this time we have time to prepare. Ministries surrounding the Olympics are not just about one-time events, but about meeting very real needs in the city.

I've already noticed a feeling of alienation among Japanese people. Over 90% of those who applied for tickets weren't able to get a single ticket to even the least popular of sporting events. Although the Olympics motto is "Unity in Diversity," many do not feel that unity or inclusion. Churches, however, can invite people into their communities with the opposite message—*Come celebrate with us!* There is nothing more unifying in our diversity than the mysterious love of the Trinity expressed through our community. Ministries are working toward opening cafes and event spaces as ministry hubs around downtown Tokyo, establishing a deeper physical presence in the city where people can always find Christian community and learn about upcoming

events, modeled after Christian centers opened in the disaster area after 2011. Performers and speakers, many from overseas, will rotate through these locations with tremendous amounts of energy and activity. This collaborative network working together will provide a firm foundation for the next decade of church growth in Tokyo.

The Olympics also help us understand the gospel in deeper ways. What keeps athletes (and artists) going through all the blood, sweat, and tears? Why do they sacrifice so much for their sport in terms of injury, time, and money? What are they pursuing? Next year, on June 27, at the REACH International Arts & Sports Festival, many will gather to explore these questions in a festival of talks, performances, and art. We will also investigate how the Olympic Games inspire the human heart and create space for transcendence.²

The Paralympics push us to reach beyond our limitations and boundaries in a fallen world (like the mascot Someity) to catch glimpses of how Jesus has overcome the world (John 16:33 NIV). Triumph through suffering, overcoming insurmountable challenges, and the Japanese aesthetic of beauty in the wounded and broken all point us to Christ, who is the ultimate model of victory through weakness. More information on the conference can be found at: <https://communityarts.jp/festival2020>



A time to pray

"Seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper." (Jer. 29:7)

The most important role of the church is to pray. There is a spiritual battle going on for the life of our city.

In preparation for the 1964 Games, Japan far overstretched itself with building projects and debt. Many worry the same will happen this time. Enormous sums of money are being borrowed to bring hope to post-tsunami Japan. Taxes will rise. Property values will plummet as many new homes, apartments, and hotels flood the market.

Many plan to evacuate Tokyo during the Olympics to avoid crowds and nuisance. Expressways are already being shut down for short periods of time (I experienced this personally the other day) to test optimization of traffic for athletes and spectators. Tolls will be increased. Companies will have to stagger commuting hours or consider having their employees work from home. Already tired, overworked, and on edge, people will experience even more frustration and stress.

The GRACE2020 bilingual prayer app and website (www.grace2020.org) will lead people from June 9 until the last day of the Paralympics on September 6 in 90 days of prayer for Tokyo and the nation of Japan, bringing people together from around the world. OMF and Pioneers are collaborating on a prayer booklet of 30 key topics for Japan that will lead people in prayer long after the Olympics is over. May this city be filled with an abundance of God's grace through prayer as a foundation for the next decade of church planting in Tokyo and beyond.

You don't have to be Eric Liddell to be a missionary involved in the Olympics. The church has an important role to pray for our city and nation. As the eyes of the world once again turn toward Japan, let's turn our gaze towards Christ and seize the day—identifying the needs of Japan and praying for God's presence to fill this nation. **JH**

1. Tokyo 2020 Olympics Guidebook, Tokyo Metropolitan Government <https://tokyo2020.org/jp/games/plan/data/tokyo2020-guidebook-en.pdf>, accessed Oct. 22, 2019.
2. Making Space for Transcendence in Secular Japan, *Japan Harvest*, Summer 2019, 12–13.

Photo submitted by author; logo from REACH website

Roger W. Lowther (US), director of faith and art at Grace City Church Tokyo, director of Community Arts Tokyo, and coordinator of MAKE Collective (international network of missionary artists), has served with Mission to the World since 2005.

Why

By JP Koch

action sports ministry in Japan matters

God has opened up a unique opportunity to reach a group of people who are unlikely to go to church on Sundays



Japan has the largest unreached action sports population in the world.¹ God has given us a great opportunity to reach whole communities with the gospel through action sports such as surfing, rock climbing, snowboarding, mountain biking, and skateboarding. These are people who likely would never set foot in a church building.

Church planting is pretty much done the same way today as it was in the 1950s except that the Bible messages are shorter and the music is a bit more upbeat. But the approach of using programs to attract people hasn't changed much. Why don't we try some new wineskins? Who knows? God might start a discipleship movement within the action sports tribe that could spill over to other sections of society and boost the wider church.

A growing tribe

There's a strange tribe living among us! Fanatical rubber-clad surfers brave the freezing waters of midwinter Hokkaido. After smearing Vaseline on their faces to prevent frostbite, they endure numb limbs and even put their lives on the line in order to catch good waves. On an average Sunday in summer, there are more Japanese in the ocean

surfing waves than Christians worshipping at churches.²

A bunch of tattooed skaters in their forties roll through skateparks in the big metropolitan areas. They're training the next generation of young skaters, who recently started to show up at international contests, stunning the other competitors with their sheer skill and claiming places on the winners' podium.

Indoor climbing walls are attracting young and old all over Japan. Japan has more indoor rock-climbing walls/gyms than the US.³ In the current 2019 World Cup bouldering rankings, Japanese men are first, second, and fourth, while in the women's division, Japanese ladies hold second and fourth places.

One of the most famous snowboarders alive (and style icon) lives just around the corner from New Chitose Airport near Sapporo. The word "Japow" (Japanese powder snow) sets every skier and snowboarder around the globe daydreaming. More and more mountain bike trails and pump tracks are opening, and the mountains in Niseko and the Japanese Alps are drawing more people every season. These are part of the growing tribe of action sports people in Japan.

An estimated 12+ million Japanese are involved in the snow, surf, and skating industries alone, which does not include other action sports. They are part of a huge global tribe: X Games, the annual extreme sports event, are the most watched event by youth, and more Americans skate than play baseball.⁴

Next summer, surfing, skating, and climbing will be introduced to the Olympics here on our doorstep, which could prompt a fresh influx of members to the action sports tribe in Japan.



Engaging the action sports community

As early as the 1970s, some surfing missions began to internationally engage with this unusual tribe. At first, the church struggled with these countercultural expressions. Could someone possibly be both a Christian and a surfer, skater, climber, or snowboarder? Similarly, action sports people struggled with the church. They associated church with rules, structures, and strange and conservative behaviour. But in recent times, the Christian faith has taken deeper roots in the action sports tribe around the world. American world surfing champion C. J. Hobgood; Belgian World-Games rock-climber Anak Verhoeven; skating icon Christian Hosoi; and American snowboarder Kelly Clark, who has won multiple world championships—are just a few high-profile Christian athletes who shine their light within the community.

But there also is a groundswell of unknown but influential action sports people who have adopted their skatepark, surf beach, or mountain resort as their congregation. They are bringing the church to where people are waiting to hear the good news and making

disciples who transform their communities. There's a new wave coming!

A unique opportunity

The church in Japan has a unique chance to creatively engage with this action sports tribe in all kinds of ways. Many are finding a new identity in the action sports tribe, and our God is the One who goes after the lost sheep, which this tribe so typifies.

God is waiting for us to use action sports to reach people with the gospel. He is inviting us to enter the tribe, where he's already at work in people's hearts. He's waiting for us to go and search for the lost sheep. If it's not you, is there someone you can send?

It is important to be willing to adjust to the subculture of the people you're trying to reach—that's the heart of incarnational ministry (biblical examples of incarnational ministry are found in the lives of Jesus and Paul as seen in John 20:21 and 1 Cor. 9:19–23). It is vital to take time to meet people where they are, to build friendships around a common interest, and become a part of the tribe. Riders gather at skateparks, surfers are out chasing waves, while others are climbing snow-covered mountains. They won't come to church, as they are out enjoying creation. To reach them, we need people who are willing to go and live authentic, Jesus-filled lives within the action sports culture. There they can find those who will be changed by the gospel, who will then change the whole tribe from within, one disciple at a time.

It might be a slow start, but we just have to keep reminding ourselves of the

yeast and mustard seed parables. We might need the odd ones, the misfits, the ones who can't sit still during a church service. Maybe we need the ones who struggle with ordinary church life—those who don't enjoy singing hymns, who aren't interested in long Bible studies, and who might not read this article. You could be their Barnabas. Action sports believers often feel alienated from their church community because of their passion for their sport.⁵ They can also feel alienated from their action sports community because of their faith. Action sports ministry supports and validates the believing participant as well as reaches out in mission to nonbelievers.

The vision of action sports ministries is to fulfill the Great Commission through making disciples of Jesus in and through action sports cultures. You might become a Jesus-honouring, action sports missionary. If not, please join us in praying for labourers, as the harvest is ripe.

ACTS (actionsportsministry.org) is a network of like-minded action sports mission organisations, churches, and individuals who initiated the GO-Japan action sports conference in October 2018 (see sidebar). The aim is to awaken the Japanese church to the needs of the unreached action sports tribes and to train and empower those passionate about these sports to combine their passion with God's purposes in mission. The dream is to mobilize an action sports mission

Since 2013, a network of action-sports mission organisations, churches, and individuals has been forming, which is now called ACTS. It is not an organisation, but a kingdom-minded network committed to making disciples of Jesus in the action sports culture. People in the ACTS network converge for conferences and gatherings, including a global gathering every two years. They validate the calling of action-sports Christians to combine their passion for their sport with God's purposes, recognising God has uniquely shaped them for this. ACTS shares resources of experience, training, strategies, and finances. All this works towards growing leaders and their resulting mission, whether formalised in a program or informally within their relationships in their culture. The ACTS network consists of over 45 partners representing some 12 different sports and many nationalities and organisations. This movement has recently committed themselves to focus on Japan as a priority nation as it is home to the world's largest unreached action sports culture as well as the 2020 Olympics, which will have the largest action sports focus in history.

movement in Japan. You can help by praying that:

- God gathers the right people for the third global ACTS summit, May 19–22, 2020 in Chiba. (It is followed by a Japanese action sports conference on May 22–24, 2020.)
- God births a movement amongst the action sports tribe within Japan.
- Vision and strategy emerge for the Olympics and action sports.
- God might raise up Japanese and overseas action sports missionaries. **JH**

1. The International Action Sports Coalition has identified Japan as the biggest unreached action sports population in the world.
2. There are about two million surfing enthusiasts in Japan. Nihon Keizai Shimbun (Japanese website) <https://www.nikkei.com/article/DGXKZO-89513960Q5A720C1MM8000> (July 20, 2015).
3. Japan Today, <https://japantoday.com/category/features/lifestyle/rock-climbing-opens-up-to-the-masses-in-tokyo>. April 7, 2008.
4. *Sports Spectrum Magazine*, Summer 2018 Edition.
5. When a young Japanese surfer friend was put on the spot by her church to choose either church or surfing, she chose her close friends and surfing. For many years, she thought that she was a lost cause and not good enough to be a Christian.

Photos submitted by author

JP Koch is married and has two kids. He's worked with OMF in Hokkaido for ten years and done action sports ministry since late 2018. He mainly focuses on snowboarding and surfing but is happy to disciple the elderly person next door as well.



Paralympics brings opportunities to Japan's churches

Christ's example inspires us to reach out to disabled members of our communities



By Soshi Yamamoto

The Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games will take place in 2020. While the Olympics is widely considered to be the pinnacle of sporting events in the world, the Paralympics is often seen as a mere supplement.

What if Jesus was here in Tokyo in 2020? It is possible he would be more passionate about the Paralympics than the Olympics.

Consider the kind of people Jesus associated with. According to Luke they included: “a man possessed by a demon” (4:33 NIV), “a man who was covered with leprosy” (5:12), “a paralyzed man” (5:18), “a woman who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years” (8:43). Luke 7:21-22 says Jesus healed those people and said, “The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear.” Jesus reached out to the people who were socially vulnerable.

As Christians who belong to the body of Christ, how do we view the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics? As disciples of Jesus, how do we utilize these events for the glory of the Lord?

The church is the body of Christ, and Christ is the head. Jesus promises us that “where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them” (Matt. 18:20). So we are not mere members of a church organization or people in a church building; we are the church of which Christ is our head.

Now, how can we—the church—take action in our neighborhoods? We should follow the example of Christ by reaching out to those who are needy. We must be aware that not only are the people with disabilities in need, but their families also struggle.

Begin by looking around you. How many people with disabilities are in your city, your neighborhood,

and your church? What are their lives like? Then, pray and ask how you and your church can reach out to these vulnerable people.

We need to remember that disabilities exist within society. Japanese law (Basic Act for Persons with Disabilities 1970) defines a person with a disability as those “who are in a state of facing substantial limitations in their continuous daily life or social life because of a disability or a social barrier.”¹ That is, disabilities and barriers in society limit a person’s quality of life, or ability, making their lives difficult. If people can reach out and love people with disabilities, the idea of “disability” will cease to exist. What a beautiful society that would be! I wonder if God allows disabilities in this world to demonstrate his power and bring his loving unity to the community.

Have you considered what it is like to be a Japanese person with a congenital disorder? They receive education in special needs classes or at a school set apart for them. After graduation, they work in special centers or welfare facilities. Some major companies hire them, but these companies usually have a special subsidiary company designated for them. We can be thankful for the services available to these people, which are better than many countries. But Japanese society does seem to be divided between disabled and non-disabled. In addition, parents of people with disabilities are burdened by the concern that they will die and leave their children to fend for themselves.

I believe we as Christians can change this division. What can we do?

1. **First, pray about what you can do.** Pray as a church. Seek God’s wisdom.
2. **Research the current welfare system for people with disabilities in**

your neighborhood. You can search online. Also, you can go to the information desk or the welfare division at the city office.

3. **Create opportunities for people with disabilities to come to your church.** Create a safe space for them. Improve access in your church. Learn about disabilities, and find solutions to discrimination and prejudice.²
4. **Invite speakers and singers with disabilities.** Hosting such events will be an encouragement and testimony for people with disabilities and their families.
5. **Host an All Ability festival with local churches.**³ You may be discouraged by the limits of your church’s ability to help those with disabilities. This could be an opportunity to serve together with other churches and others in the body of Christ. Also, it could be a chance to collaborate with the local government.

The Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games are just around the corner. Let’s begin with prayer. Let’s serve our community so that as many Japanese people as possible can meet Jesus. **JH**

1. “Basic Act for Persons with Disabilities,” Japanese Law Translation, <http://www.japaneselawtranslation.go.jp/law/detail/?vm=04&cre=01&id=2436>, last modified July 10, 2014.

2. See this Japan Harvest article by Josh Grisdale, about how churches can welcome people with disabilities: <http://www.japanharvest.org/how-to-welcome-people-with-disabilities/>, accessed October 22, 2019.

3. For more information on All Ability Festivals, see <https://www.jisp2024.com/allability> or contact JISP at jisp2024@gmail.com.

Translated by Shohei Ueki

Soshi Yamamoto is a pastor, a graphic designer, a sound engineer. He attended high school in New Zealand and university in Sydney, Australia. His passion is for social welfare for disabilities as he has mental illness himself.

Two Japanese Christian snowboarders

By JP Koch

Meet two young Japanese siblings who love the Lord and snowboarding

JP Koch interviewed snowboarders Rinoka (15) and Ryūsei (13) Yamada recently. Both live and train in Sapporo. They compete in the halfpipe.

JP: When did you start to snowboard?

Rinoka: I was seven.

Ryūsei: At the same time, when I was five.

JP: Faith-wise, when did that start for you?

Rinoka: From our childhood on, we went to church with our mother. But we got baptised when I was in second grade of elementary school, and Ryūsei was in first grade. Now we attend the little school which belongs to the church* and get a lot of support from the school and church.

JP: What is your dream to achieve with your snowboarding careers?

Ryūsei: I'd like to make it onto the Japanese snowboard team and then compete and train at the highest level, but ultimately I'm aiming for the Winter Olympic Games in Milan.

Rinoka: I'd like to be to be able to compete internationally and travel overseas.

JP: How do your church and school help you?

Rinoka: They pray a lot, like before we go to a training camp or competition, but also at school the teachers and students pray for us every day. I think

prayer is the best thing they can do for us.

JP: Many snowboarders don't know Jesus yet. What can we do for them?

Both: We think that prayer is the most necessary. For people in the snowboard scene who don't know Jesus and for the ones who do know him.

JP: You're still young, but have you had difficulties and challenges in your career so far?

Rinoka: I had a shoulder injury where I couldn't train for six months and wasn't even sure if I could snow-

board again. That was difficult. I can't train at the moment either—I have a knee injury. But it isn't as bad as the last injury, and I'm more positive about it.

Ryūsei: I was one of the two kids from Japan who got selected to compete for the one open spot on the Japan national snowboard team. When I lost against the other one, I was really sad about losing that chance. But I hope that I'll have another chance this year.

JP: Is there something else you'd like to share?

Ryūsei: We had some missionaries who came to our church and spoke about being a missionary in the future. They prayed for me and told me that I'll go overseas. That was a bit odd, but soon after that, I was invited to join the Hokkaido snowboard team to go with them to a training camp in the US. We didn't have the money to pay for that, so we were even more surprised when, without knowing our need, a Christian doctor contacted us and since that day has been a financial supporter. So I did make it to the camp.

JP: How can we pray for you?

Both: Please pray that we will be light and salt for Jesus in the snowboard world. As well for safety, and that God will provide what we need to push our careers further. **JH**



*Sapporo Fukuinkan Church

Seize the globalized day

The 2020 Olympics promise to bring the world to Tokyo, but the world is already here. This is good news for the church.

By Jay Greer

It's a game I always lose. Ironic, considering I made it up. The game is to try to find a subway car without an advertisement that reflects globalization in Japan. But invariably, hung on the wall or swinging near the air conditioner vent is a poster for an English school, language-learning software, or an upcoming concert featuring foreign artists. The signs of globalization are everywhere.

Since 1868, ideas, values, languages, goods, services, and, yes, people have trickled into Japan. The internet age has turned the trickle into a gush as Japan becomes more ethnically diverse and globally minded. All of this represents an opportunity for the church in Japan.

All nations in urban Japan

The increasingly international demographic is especially palpable in Japan's cities. Tokyo is now home to over 550,000 foreign nationals, and one in eight residents of Shinjuku Ward are foreigners.¹ The population of foreigners across the country is at an all-time high,² and Japan is expected to welcome more foreign workers in coming years to offset the shrinking Japanese population. In 2006, over 10% of marriages in Tokyo, Osaka, and Nagoya were international marriages, so it's no surprise that in the same year, 5.7% of children born in Tokyo were half Japanese.³ One researcher estimates that by 2039, 7.6% of Japan will have at least one foreign parent, and 9.2%

will have at least one foreign parent or grandparent.⁴ To put it simply, not only is Japan more diverse than it's ever been, it's trending towards greater and greater diversity.

The 2020 Olympics promise to bring the world to Japan, but the world is already here. We must be committed to the work of contextualization in Japan. But the context is changing. True contextualization will lead us to embrace diversity in the city. This is a

Diversity brings challenges. Challenges are an opportunity for growth.

cultural turning point, and the church has the opportunity to seize the day of globalization. Japan is no longer mono-ethnic, but the gospel never has been. Jesus' multicultural church should be at the front of Japanese society, leading the charge for unity in diversity.

The gospel for all nations

Christianity was multiethnic from the very beginning. The God of all the earth and all peoples decided to launch his church in Jerusalem on a day when people from "every nation under heaven" (Acts 2:5 NIV) had gathered in that city to unwittingly hear the gospel (Acts 2:1-41). Before the disciples became witnesses to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8), God gathered people from the ends of the earth into the city to hear his witnesses.

This new urban movement of disciples was a beautifully diverse community. But the ethnic diversity in the church did not come without challenges. As early as chapter six of Acts, racial tension appeared in the church as the Greek-speaking believers felt that the Hebrew-speaking believers were being shown partiality in the care of widows. One of the leaders of the Jerusalem church, James, would later write about the evils of partiality in the church (James 2:1), and the apostles took extra care to ensure that the church cared for people from a variety of ethnic and linguistic backgrounds (Acts 6:1-7).

Today, the ethnically diverse Mustard Seed Network churches in urban Japan have experienced challenges similar to those of the early church. One Sunday after a worship service, a Japanese church member told me, "This church doesn't care enough about Japanese people." This was certainly a troubling comment to receive as someone working to spread the gospel in Japan! However, that same week I received another complaint from a Filipino brother who said, "This church only cares about Japanese people." I took both comments seriously and asked for ways we could improve, but I responded to both brothers in the same way: "This church cares for all people. This church is not an American church, a Filipino church, or a Japanese church—it's a Christian church. Christian churches are for all people because God loves the whole world."

Any church that seeks to be diverse must be ready for the friction and challenges inherent in that endeavor. Clearly, the church didn't clean up all racial tension in Acts 6 because Paul continued to teach about the need for unity in diversity in many of his letters (Romans 14:1-15:13; Galatians 3:28; Ephesians 2:11-22; Colossians 3:11). I find encouragement from Tim Keller when he says, "If you're going to have an effective center-city church in these great global cities, they are going to be multicultural, and therefore people are always going to be charging one another with cultural insensitivity." He goes on to encourage us to be patient with these charges of cultural insensitivity.⁵ The apostles experienced this, and we will too, as Japan continues to diversify.

Everywhere the gospel goes, it reconciles different people to God and to one another in one body through the cross, and it kills the hostility between people of different cultures (Ephesians 2:14-16). The beauty of a diverse congregation far outweighs the challenges therein. We cannot allow our ministry strategies or missiological principles to rebuild the dividing walls of hostility that were torn down by the gospel.

Opportunities in an "all-nations context"

There are amazing opportunities for our global gospel in this globalized context.

1. An evangelistic opportunity

Not only are people coming into Japan, but ideas are coming in as well. Additionally, with the high value placed on travel by most modern Japanese, "returnees" are coming back to their homeland with transformed and globalized worldviews, making them far more open to the gospel! This is evidenced by the remarkable fruit in

international ministries to exchange students and returnees.

We have the opportunity to preach the gospel to many nations because they are gathered in the cities of Japan just like the situation in Acts 2. Over 75% of the people who have been saved and baptized at Mustard Seed Network churches have been Japanese. However, God also has also seen fit to save people from China, Indonesia, Pakistan, Vietnam, Australia, the USA, South Korea, the Philippines, and Brazil. Let's preach the good news to all people.

2. A discipleship opportunity

Diversity brings challenges. Challenges are an opportunity for growth. Any time someone in your church wants more partiality or preference to be shown for their group, we have the opportunity to ask them, "Why do you feel that way? How can you consider others better than yourself?" People in monoethnic church communities might never experience the sanctification that comes through the natural friction within a diverse community.

3. A learning opportunity

Urban Japan is becoming a globalized environment akin to New York City, London, Lagos (largest city in Africa), and Shanghai. Sociologist Saskia Sassen makes the case in her book *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo* that increasingly the residents of these cities are more like one another than they are like other residents of their own country. In other words, Tokyoites are more similar to New Yorkers than they are to their fellow countrymen outside of Tokyo. Many church planters in urban Japan gather inspiration and wisdom from "Redeemer City to City" resources and Tim Keller because of the contextual similarities found in cities across the globe.

Picture a church in a melting pot like London, Los Angeles, or Singapore. How would a church in those globalized urban contexts think about diversity in church leadership? They would make sure that a variety of people from different backgrounds are in visible leadership roles like the multiethnic leadership in Acts 13:1-3. We have the opportunity to learn from other churches who labor in the globalized cities of the world.

4. An opportunity for worship

All Christian churches welcome people from all nations. As our churches gather people from every tribe, people, nation, and tongue, we will begin to look like a preview of the great crowd that will one day worship before the throne of God (Revelation 7:9). The church in Japan has the opportunity to rehearse this worship event now. Let's seize this globalized day for the glory of Christ in Japan. **JH**

1. "The Changing Face Of Tokyo: One In Eight Shinjuku Residents Are Foreign Nationals," Feb 27, 2019, Nippon.com, <https://www.nippon.com/en/japan-data/h00398/the-changing-face-of-tokyo-one-in-eight-shinjuku-residents-are-foreign-nationals.html> (accessed Nov. 12, 2019).
2. "Record Number of Foreigners Living In Japan: 2018 Japanese Govt Survey," July 12, 2019, Real Estate Japan Inc., <https://resources.realestate.co.jp/news/record-number-of-foreigners-living-in-japan-2018-japanese-govt-survey/> (accessed Oct. 9, 2019).
3. "30人に1人 親が外国人 06年 日本生まれの子 厚労省調査 過去最高に". Tokyo Web (Japanese website). <http://s01.megalodon.jp/2008-0804-0927-48/www.tokyo-np.co.jp/article/national/news/CK2008080402000102.html> (published Aug. 4, 2008).
4. Michael Hassett, "How Many Japanese Are a Bit of Something Else?", The Japan Times, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/community/2017/04/05/issues/many-japanese-bit-something-else/> (accessed Nov. 12, 2019).
5. Tim Keller, "Why Cities?" address at *Lausanne Movement 2010 Cape Town*, <https://www.lausanne.org/content/world-faiths-what-is-gods-global-urban-mission-tim-keller> (accessed Oct. 9, 2019).

Photo submitted by author

Jay Greer is working to plant Mustard Seed Christian Church Tokyo. He was the pastor of MSCC Osaka since its founding in 2011. Jay and his wife, Caitlin, also served in Nagoya after moving to Japan from the USA in 2008.

By Daniel Rice



The Connect 2020 Plan: Bridging the gap

The Southern Baptists are partnering with others to leverage next year's Olympics to generate gospel conversations and spur the local church on in reaching Japan

Often when talking about the mission field in Japan I call attention to the activity of the church in Japan. God, in his grace, has gone before us and allowed his gospel to affect the hearts of men and women across the country. At the same time, even in places with larger Christian populations like Tokyo, it is easy to find large pockets of lostness with no Christian presence. This should alarm us and the church in Japan. What can we do and where can we start?

The Connect 2020 Plan offers an opportunity for the church to leverage the Olympic atmosphere to show God's love to the lost in Japan. It has three goals: connect Japanese to God, connect Japanese believers to other believers, and connect Japanese believers to the world. This plan has three main projects. The aim of each project is to foster gospel conversations, not merely gospel presentations. These projects would be impossible without healthy partnerships.

The ECHO Project

The first component of Connect 2020 is the ECHO Project. It will be a stationary space active during the Olympic Games and will offer a free coffee house, a stage space, play zones, and booths.

Key partners for this project are Daniel and Ronaele Hamilton and their US home church. The Hamiltons used the coffee-house model during the Nagano Olympics and saw an estimated 18,000 gospel engagements happen. The Hamiltons are playing a major role in the ECHO Project thanks to their experience and drive to see Japanese come to know Jesus.

Japan International Sports Partnership (JiSP) is another key partner for the ECHO Project. Many churches and

parachurch groups in Japan are looking to JiSP to help them answer the question: What are we doing for the Olympics? We are doing everything we can to help them answer that question. Hajime Okazawa, a staff member of JiSP, attends ECHO Project planning meetings and is one of many Japanese consultants that Connect 2020 looks to for help as we develop the project. Together, JiSP and Connect 2020 will provide training in evangelism, prayer, and discipleship; and the Connect 2020 projects will serve as a discipleship lab.

Open Crowd Festivals

The second project is Open Crowd Festivals.¹ Connect 2020 will use festivals to help local churches to engage their community and connect them to God by exhibiting Christian joy in a festival setting. We will work in partnership with Marty Woods of Fusion International. Marty and his team will help us identify locations for these events and train volunteers to serve at these events. Their goal is to hold Community Festivals in 500 communities between the start of the Rugby World Cup and the end of the Paralympics. The festivals Connect 2020 organizes will contribute to that goal.

Viewing parties

The third project, viewing parties, encourages local churches to engage their community by throwing parties to watch the sporting events together. At the parties, athletes, coaches, and other Christians will use natural breaks (i.e. commercials) to share their testimonies and initiate gospel conversations. Tokyo Baptist Church hosted several viewing parties on their premises during the Rugby World Cup. The model is simple and designed to be reproducible at other churches across

Japan. Tokyo Baptist Church invites local churches to learn more about the model and consider hosting parties. Connect 2020 desires to assist local churches in hosting parties by providing volunteer teams as well.

Another one of our partners, the International Sports Federation (ISF), has committed to help Connect 2020's international volunteer teams with logistics during the 18 days of the Olympics. ISF is also involved with all of our other partners; it is a joy to see how God uses this cross-networking to bring us all together for his glory! With ISF's help, volunteer teams will be able to maximize their time and resources during the Olympics when housing, travel, and other factors become nightmarish.

Empowering the church

To use metaphors from sports, the heart of Connect 2020 is that of a coach, water-boy, and cheerleader. From a coaching perspective, we hope to offer training and opportunities for the church in Japan to reach new potentials which the Bible says are possible. As a water-boy, we want to be a source of healthy support and refreshment for the local church as we work hard together in obedience to the Lord. Lastly, as cheerleaders, we hope the church will see the efforts it puts forth as worthwhile and be spurred on to keep fighting the good fight. **JH**

To learn more about the plan and how you can be involved, please visit: <https://www.Connect2020.net>

1. Marty Woods, "Bring Celebration into your Community" *Japan Harvest*, Summer 2019, 26-27.

Logo submitted by author

Daniel Rice and his wife Tara are missionaries serving with the International Mission Board (IMB) of the Southern Baptist Convention in Tokyo. They are coordinators for the IMB's Olympics ministry plan called Connect 2020.

A timely response to an urgent need

We have an amazing opportunity to meet it if we are willing to be “the nail that sticks up”
By Mark Annand

“What do you think? If a man has one hundred sheep, and one of them goes astray, doesn’t he leave the ninety-nine, go to the mountains, and seek that which has gone astray?” (Matt 18:12 WEB).

Notice the urgency of the man in this verse. He changes his plans because one sheep out of a hundred is lost and actively searches for it.

Here in Japan, the situation is pretty much reversed. Depending on which statistics you read, there may be only one or two “safe” sheep while “the ninety-nine” are lost! How much more urgent should we be in actively seeking so many who are in eternal danger?

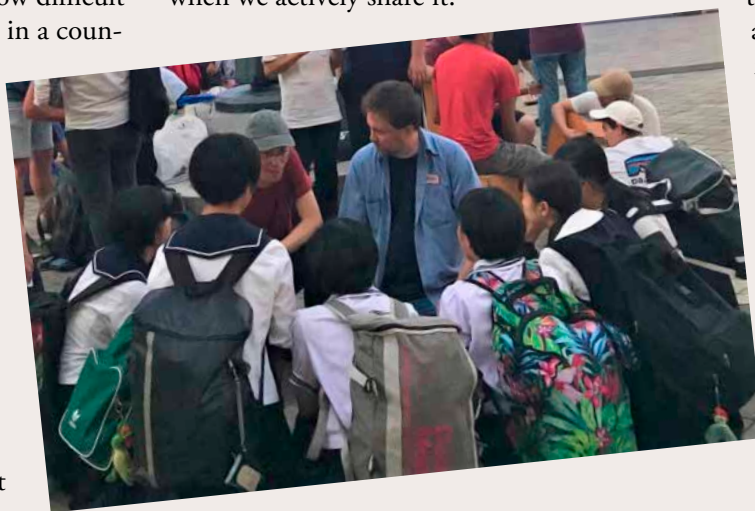
Sticking out for Jesus

However, it’s tempting to isolate ourselves in our churches and ministries—hiding behind excuses relating to cultural sensitivity and how difficult it can be to share the gospel in a country that says, “the nail that sticks up gets hammered down.” We need to remember that Jesus was literally nailed down because he stuck out. “He was despised and rejected by men” (Isa. 53:3). Very often I have despised being despised and rejected being rejected. So I’ve looked for a way to share the gospel without the awkwardness. It doesn’t exist.

I would much prefer to wait for a “divine appointment” where God surprises me and a fish jumps right into the boat. But I have realized that fishing for men is much like fishing for fish. Those who are serious about it get the proper tools, search for good locations, and go out for extended times of intentional fishing. I have found that when I do this, I experience many more divine appointments. We

must have regular times of waiting on the Lord, but God doesn’t want us to wait for him to bring the lost sheep back into the pen. When I get a toothache, I don’t wait for a dentist to call me for an appointment; I actively seek one. May God give us an ache to see souls saved so that we put feet to our prayers.

Some friends and I do evangelism every week in Ikebukuro, Tokyo. Quite a few people have been open to hearing about Jesus. We often talk to people in parks and restaurants because they are less busy and more willing to have a conversation. It still amazes me when a person tells me they have never heard the plan of salvation in a country that has so much technology and religious freedom. We never know whom we’ll meet, but God is always working behind the scenes to honor our faith when we actively share it.



A new opportunity awaits

God also works in ways that are more obvious. I don’t believe it’s an accident that the Rugby World Cup and the Olympics are being held back-to-back in Japan. God has given Japan another window of opportunity to respond to the gospel. The eyes of the world are on this nation. Many churches and ministries are doing amazing things in this season, and my wife and I want to

be a part of what God has planned. We are on staff with Youth With A Mission in Tokyo, and our base has sensed a call to begin by focusing on training Japanese Christians to share the gospel and to be lovingly and politely aggressive in evangelism. For this purpose, we have started a ministry called A Million Lights. We’re asking the question, “What if each believer in Japan decided to share their light with someone else?” We’ve been conducting evangelism seminars in various parts of the country with the call: “Hey, the world is coming to our doorstep! Let’s get ready!”

But God’s plan for Japan is much bigger, and we believe the worship of Jesus in Japan will overflow to the point where Japan is known as a missionary-sending nation. Imagine churches multiplying in homes and ramen shops, Japanese artists worshipping the Lord in public places, and a huge increase in Japanese missionaries going to other parts of the world!

Jesus is the King of Kings and the ultimate ruler of Japan. He’s the One who gets to define what it means to be truly Japanese. He’s the One who tells Japanese Christians and all other believers to “preach the Good News to the whole creation” (Mark 16:15).

Let’s ask the Lord for urgency to go after “the ninety-nine.” Let’s embrace the awkwardness and be willing to stick out. **JH**

If you’d like an A Million Lights seminar in your area, please visit: <https://ywamtokyo.org/million-lights>

Photo submitted by author

Mark Annand and his wife Dayle worked in youth ministry for over ten years in Minnesota before spending another ten years in Guatemala helping to pioneer a YWAM base. They moved to Tokyo in 2016.

Kingdom purposes for Tokyo 2020 Olympics

By
Shelley
Carl

Sometimes God calls us to things we never imagined we could do

If Tokyo gets the Olympics, it's for kingdom purposes. Those were the words I heard from the Lord in 2013, the night before Tokyo's winning bid for the 2020 Summer Olympics was announced by the International Olympic Committee.

I was skeptical about Tokyo's winning chances. However, when I heard those words from God, followed by the announcement on television the following morning, I knew somehow that not only had my missionary career gotten an upgrade but my mission in life had as well. I felt as if I was being catapulted to places I had never dreamed of going to.

When I returned to the States for fund-raising in 2015 I spoke at over 100 churches, calling them to pray for the Tokyo Olympics. My prayer cards featured a logo that said "Tokyo 2020 Vision," although I had no idea what that vision looked like. I found myself praying for things I had never known to pray for before, because I had never been involved in sports evangelism, or any other evangelism on a massive scale. God began to lead me into that unknown world, and it was all birthed in prayer. In particular, I began to pray on the 20th of every month for the 2020 Olympics. Little by little that prayer movement has been growing, and as prayer increases, God is opening new doors.

Door one: Reach Out 2020

I was unexpectedly contacted about working with Lay Witnesses for Christ International (LW-FCI) about their evangelism plans for Tokyo called "Reach Out 2020 Japan."



The founder and director Dr. Sam Mings, who is also known as the founder of sports evangelism, has already led Reach Out evangelism movements at the past nine summer Olympics, spanning close to 40 years.¹ Athlete of the 20th century, Carl Lewis, serves on the board of LWFCI and will be in Tokyo for Reach Out 2020 along with other former Olympians and famous athletes.

Reach Out 2020 Japan will hold evangelistic meetings at interested churches in the Tokyo area during the days of the Olympics to highlight local churches and pastors. They will organize Right Track meetings (drug, alcohol, and violence prevention program) for children and youth; and evangelistic meetings for adults. Athletes will be spinning basketballs, riding unicycles, etc. to attract people to the churches. There will also be an "Evening With the Olympians" featuring Carl Lewis and other athletes. According to Dr. Mings, the media follows athletes and therefore he expects to bring media attention to the churches. These athletes are coming for the purpose of proclaiming that we are "Stars for Christ," a slogan on the back of every uniform that will be worn not only by the athletes but also by the involved pastors.

Reach Out 2020 Japan will also provide a place for athletes participating in the 2020 Olympics to have access to world-class athletes who are coming to spread the gospel. Christian athletes who

aren't competing in these games, as well as those who have finished their events, will use their platforms of fame for the sake of the kingdom of God, and share the need to reach for "More than Gold" through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

To make Reach Out 2020 a success, we are in need of housing in Christian homes, volunteers to assist with translation and transportation, and churches who are open to evangelistic meetings.

Please contact me for information or involvement: Shelley Carl, Japan Coordinator for Reach Out 2020.² Also please join us in prayer for unprecedented media attention for the kingdom of God during the Tokyo Olympics.

Door two: World Sports Mission Japan



As plans for Reach Out 2020 Japan progressed, I was invited to be a board member of World Sports Mission Japan (WSMJ).

WSMJ is serving as an umbrella ministry to coordinate three areas of outreach for the Tokyo Olympics:

1) Creating a master list of who is doing what and where. Christian groups will be coming from around the world for this unprecedented opportunity to touch Japan for Jesus, and WSMJ is working to network these groups. As part of the networking efforts, WSMJ is searching for churches and Christian individuals who can provide housing, and is coordinating with incoming groups here to do evangelism (who are not connected with Reach Out 2020) regarding their housing needs.

2) Working with Athletes in Action to coordinate providing chaplains for the Olympic athletes.

3) Creating a master list of churches in Tokyo and surrounding areas that have services in languages other than Japanese. This will be provided to tourists looking for church services during the Olympics.

If you can provide assistance in any of these three areas or have questions relating to WSMJ, please contact John LaDue³ or check out the World Sports Mission Japan Facebook page.

In addition to those three primary goals, I am working with WSMJ to focus on prayer during the Olympics. We are creating an email list to encourage pastors to lead their churches in prayer for the Olympics on the 20th of each month. We are also planning to host prayer events on the 20th of each month beginning January 2020. You can join us in praying—by receiving updates via email, or by attending or hosting a prayer event. Please contact me if you are interested.

Door three: *Wounded Tiger*

As the above two doors are now swinging wide open, a third door is becoming evident. I was recently

contacted by missionary Timothy Boyle regarding a project he is involved with that includes the upcoming Japanese translation and future movie release of T. Martin Bennett's riveting book *Wounded Tiger*.

Boyle reminded me that August 15, 2020 is the 75th anniversary of the end of WW2. "*Wounded Tiger* is a true story of how . . . Mitsuo Fuchida—the man who led both the planning and the execution of the Pearl Harbor raid—became a Christian evangelist after the war." Boyle said the book "beautifully weaves together three strands of the story: Fuchida himself; Jake DeShazer, who came to faith while suffering horribly in a Japanese POW camp; and a missionary family by the name of Covell, whose daughter played an integral part in God leading Fuchida to the Christian faith."⁴

The goal is to have the Japanese translation published in time to coincide with the Olympics. Bennett believes that "this amazing true story could be a catalyst to cause many to consider Christ in a way they may have never done before." He is working on



finding those with a vision to get this book out to others and with the financial means to help.

If you have further questions or would like to help with this project, please contact Timothy Boyle.⁵

It has been said, "We need all hands on deck in 2020."

These unprecedented times for the nation, along with unprecedented open doors for evangelism during the Olympics, call for unprecedented efforts from the missionary body in Japan, with the joint vision of seeing the gospel declared. Tokyo got the Olympics for kingdom purposes. **JH**

1. See <http://www.lwfcireachout.com> for the Reach Out website.
2. Contact the author at shelleycarl@msn.com or 090-1634-8439.
3. Regarding World Sports Mission Japan (WSMJ), contact John LaDue at johnladuestr@gmail.com or 090-3572-7055.
4. See <https://www.woundedtiger.com> for more information on *Wounded Tiger*.
5. Email za3t-byl@asahi-net.or.jp to contact Timothy Boyle.

Images submitted by author

Shelley Carl is from Rochester, New York and has been serving in Japan since 1986 as a missionary with Assemblies of God World Missions. She has been in church planting ministry in Hokkaido, Toyama, Kyushu, and Tokyo.

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Three spiritual warfare principles

By Ginger Tobin

As we cheer on the Olympians, we may also find some useful strategies for engaging our enemy and celebrating our own victory in Jesus Christ.

Do you like to lose? Who does? Just like athletes, Christians are called to train hard for victory: “You’ve all been to the stadium and seen the athletes race. Everyone runs; one wins. Run to win. All good athletes train hard. They do it for a gold medal that tarnishes and fades. You’re after one that’s gold eternally” (1 Cor. 9:24-25 MSG).

The Tokyo 2020 Olympics invites us to both hone and take joy in our competitive strategies and disciplines in our war against our enemy, the devil. As we watch, we, too, can be “like a champion rejoicing to run his course” (Ps. 19:5 NIV). Athletes study videos to learn from their competitors and also to spot weaknesses. Although I’m not an athlete or even a big sports fan, I do love to win, and I’ve also gleaned helpful lessons from cinema.

In *First Knight*, a movie based on the British King Arthur legend, Richard Gere stars as Sir Lancelot. Marveling over Lancelot’s dazzling swordfighting skills, an opponent he’d beaten asks him, “How did you do that? Could I do it? Tell me; I can learn.”

Flashing a self-assured smile, Lancelot replies with three things he considers necessary to win a fight:

“You have to study your opponent, how he moves, so you know what he’s going to do before he does it.”

“I can do that,” the man says with a confident shrug.

“You have to know that one moment in every fight when you win or lose, and you have to know how to wait for it.”

“And I can do that,” the man responds again, looking curious to hear the third clue.

“And you have to not care whether you live or die.”

The questioner just stares, speechless.

We find these three universal strategies clearly laid out in Scripture for us to apply to our daily needs:

Principle #1: Know the enemy

We’re “not oblivious to [Satan’s] sly ways” (2 Cor. 2:11 MSG). In 2010, when asked by a pre-believing friend to pray for her in her dire domestic straits, I was disappointed that she did not choose to invite Jesus into her life to help her. Still, attempting to honor her request, I began binding adverse spirits through prayer. However, I came up with a list too long for my journal, so I started a spreadsheet. That spiritual inventory now contains the names of 284 spirits which I, and the friends who have partnered with me, have

identified and annotated with Scriptures that we use to identify and to immobilize incoming attackers. The first couple who completed it together were faced with a family situation that was causing my friend to awaken in the night in tears. Counseling was not resolving the impasse. But when the three of us believers sat down to identify and bind the attacking spirits based on the inventory, they experienced freedom which enabled them to then pray likewise on behalf of the family member they were in conflict with. Within three days there was a breakthrough, and that friend is now using the inventory to help a friend of hers through a family dilemma. We need to be clear about who the enemy is and help each other to become be aware of his schemes.

Principle #2: Timing

“There is a time for everything” (Ecc. 3:1 NIV). I watched a movie about the samurai Musashi. At one point, he squares off against his enemy, circling silently for hours on a snowy night. Both are waiting for the moment when the other is off-guard. In the same way, victory comes to us when the Spirit says, “Now!” and we obey. This is the second revision of this article which I have written. The first did not include a mention of the spiritual inventory. But now, as we prepare to present Japan’s first four-day Heart-Change Workshop here in Shizuoka (beginning September 13) we will need to be a bit more aggressive in countering enemy attacks if we are to attain victory. Today, September 10, I invited some of my colleagues to run through the inventory with me. It’s important to be sensitive to the Spirit about timing.



Principle #3: Not caring whether we live or die

Not caring whether we live or die frees us to experience the victory Jesus has already won for us, knowing that whatever happens to our physical bodies, we are safe with Him. Though sorely tested, Job was able to declare of his Lord, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust him” (Job 13:15 KJV). Several of us on the workshop staff are dealing with medical issues that could be distracting or potentially debilitating. To win deliverance, salvation, and healing for the four-day workshop participants, we need to keep our eyes on Christ our Healer who alone has the power over life and death.

Are these three principles adequate to guarantee us a win every time? No, but thanks be to God, we have the master military manual in our hands. It is the sword of the Spirit and includes many other essential principles of warfare. For example, since the spiritual war occurs in our minds (2 Cor. 10:4–5), it is there that we must win every battle, as Jesus did in the Garden of Gethsemane before facing the cross. An excellent book by Steve and Wendy Backlund recommends daily declarations for building our faith.¹ The Bible tell us: God is on my side. Therefore, I declare that I cannot be

defeated (Rom. 8:37; Ps. 91; Phil. 4:13). In order to win every battle, we must believe that because of Jesus’ completed work on the cross, we cannot be defeated unless we simply give up.

In the war between good and evil, the stakes are much higher than on the Olympic field. Despite his brilliant battle strategies and celebrated moral rectitude, Lancelot, and Camelot with him, fell on principle #3. He forgot that death should have been preferable to the fleeting pleasure of violating his liege lord’s wife, Queen Guinevere. Ultimately, the victory Jesus won for us at the cross is not merely over the enemy of our souls, but it is the rewarding transformation of our own fallen human nature into the likeness of Christ. Taking Job as our example, may we each declare in triumph, “When He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold” (Job 23:10 NASB). See you in the Winner’s Circle! **JH**

1. Steve and Wendy Backlund, *Igniting Faith in 40 Days: The Power of Hope, Declarations, and Negativity Fasts* (Igniting Hope Ministries, 2012), 42.

Ginger Tobin has served in Shizuoka since 1995. She works with House of Myrrh Ministries and Aijalon Ministries International, bringing HeartChange Workshops from her native Oregon, USA, to Japan and other countries.

New prayer booklet for Japan

By Lorna Ferguson and Sarah Chang

Encouraging prayer for this nation for the next decade

Mission agencies OMF and Pioneers are collaborating on a prayer booklet for Japan that will be published in spring 2020, in time for the Tokyo Olympics. This booklet will cover 30 key topics of prayer for the next decade.

“I believe it will only be known on the last day how much has been accomplished in overseas missions by the prayers of earnest believers at home.” These were the words of J.O. Fraser, missionary to the Lisu people in southwest China and Burma a hundred years ago. This challenges us to change our thinking—could we be doing more to encourage prayer?

The journey

In 2014, OMF published a booklet called *31 Days of Prayer for Japan*. This booklet has had three print editions for a total of 7,000 copies, with requests for more. It has also been translated by demand into five additional languages. The intention for the booklet was that it would be relevant for five years.

Since 2018, Sarah Chang from Pioneers Japan has been partnering with OMF Japan in prayer ministry. We’ve continued to hear various reports that God is mobilizing people and prayer for

Japan from around the world. Therefore, the idea for a new prayer booklet emerged.

Earlier this year we invited the JEMA community to participate in a survey to suggest prayer topics as well as writers for the new booklet. We’re very thankful to all who responded and were encouraged by the many insightful suggestions. We also invited various Japanese leaders and others to help determine the final 30 topics to be included in the booklet.

The goal

Our goal is to have the booklet available from spring 2020, so that we can start distributing it before the Olympics. When the booklet is available for preview and pre-orders, we will send an email to the JEMA community.

The 2020 prayer booklet will be broad enough for any Christian or mission agency to use; it will not focus on any specific mission, ministry, or location. It will initially be published in English, with possibility for future translations.

We hope this resource will be helpful in mobilizing God’s people around the world to informed and committed prayer for Japan. We believe that prayer is vital for missional breakthrough, and that God eagerly desires his people to persist in prayer for his glory and work of salvation in Japan. **JH**

Lorna Ferguson serves as the Sector Leader for Personnel with OMF. **Sarah Chang** is a Pioneers missionary serving with OMF in prayer mobilization.



Mobilizing Japanese lay workers

Training and sending Japanese believers to make disciples among their existing relational networks has been producing encouraging results

“And He [the Lord] was saying to them, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest’” (Luke 10:2 NASB).

This prayer is simple but brilliant. Jesus was preparing the disciples to pray for workers—the most critical element for realizing a plentiful harvest.

From early in his ministry, Jesus called others to partner with him in the mission to expand the kingdom. All along the way, he modeled a strategy which he then sent others to imitate.¹ The same pattern was carried on by the early disciples in the book of Acts. Often in the gospels and Acts, the call to faith included a call to join the mission.² The gospel message was rapidly spread far and wide by new followers of Jesus. And mobilizing others continued to be important for spreading the gospel in other regions.³

A surprising response

I have now worked in West Tokyo for four years with a small team. Each member has personal goals to share the gospel regularly, both with people they know and strangers. And we are finding people interested in following Jesus. However, we spend most of our time training Japanese lay people to make and multiply disciples with the aim of forming new faith communities.

Over the last year, we’ve collected data with a view to celebrating what God is doing and to identify areas where we can improve. At each follow-up training, we ask the group to identify how many people

- they have attempted to share the gospel with (in various contexts),
- have heard at least a simple gospel presentation that included a request for a response,
- have chosen to believe, and
- were willing to set up another meeting to learn more.

We also tracked how many new discipleship or discovery groups formed as a result and whether anyone chose to receive baptism. While we are careful to encourage every participant that any attempt to share the gospel is a win regardless of the result, we classify a “successful” response as someone wanting to confess Jesus as Lord and to begin following him, or someone exchanging contact information, or setting up a follow-up meeting with a desire to learn more. We’ve seen 18% of interactions result in someone at least willing to set up a follow-up meeting. This statistic is pretty staggering. I have been tracking the growing number of gospel movements all over the world for about six years now,

and in some of the fastest gospel movements in India right now, the response rate, as defined above, is close to 12%.

Empowering Japanese lay workers

We were astounded when Japanese lay workers reported a 50% success rate (same definition as in previous paragraph) at a recent training event in Yokohama. Each of them (including two teenagers) had attempted to share the gospel with at least one relative or friend in the previous month. Two people who had heard the gospel indicated a desire to follow Jesus, two new discovery Bible studies had been formed, and a handful of people had demonstrated a desire to learn more. This statistic confirmed a trend that we had already been seeing—namely, that the most successful evangelists by far are Japanese lay people.

I have been praying for years for the Lord to send laborers to specific segments of the population—particularly elderly people and business people. By God’s incredible grace, we have seen Japanese come to faith from both segments, but it was not because anyone from our team entered those spheres. Rather, it was because we trained Japanese believers in those spheres.

This strategy is not a new one in Japan. I cannot fully explain why we are seeing these results, but the openness to the gospel is overwhelming. And there don’t appear to be enough workers to gather the fruit. The primary missing element today is the same as it was when Jesus told the disciples to pray—workers. Every Japanese Christian in every gospel-believing church is a worker. And so many only need to be trained and sent. And with each one that is sent a greater harvest is reaped. The time is short. Would you pray with me that the Lord would send these laborers into this plentiful harvest? **JH**

1. Matt. 9:35; 10:1–8; 28:18–20; Luke 8:1, 4–15; 10:1–12; John 4:1–2.

2. Mark 1:17; Luke 9:59–60; Acts 22:12–16.

3. Acts 13:49; 19:9–10; 20:4; Col. 1:5–8.

David Cervenka (US) lives in Fuchu, Tokyo, and serves as a strategic coordinator with No Place Left Japan, an extension of the No Place Left global movement (<https://noplaceleft.net>).



Missionary YouTube channels

Videos can enhance the age-old tradition of missionary newsletters

The beloved newsletter

Newsletters have been a staple of missionary culture for about 2,000 years. From the Apostle Paul to modern missions, we look back on and delight in thought-provoking letters from missionaries. Newsletters from eras past reflected the most advanced communication technology of the day: pen, paper, and the post. Imagine how much more we would know about the ministries and lives of past missionaries if we had video and audio recordings!

In recent decades, technology has dramatically changed communication. What took months now happens in seconds. Comments, direct messages, and the sharing of posts multiply the reach of information. We can now convey more than words and photos alone. I want to encourage you to consider the possibilities afforded to us now.

In the early 2000s, YouTube took off. What began as a place for people to share home videos has morphed into a mass-communication tool where anyone with an internet connection can access videos uploaded by anyone else, and these videos can be preserved for antiquity. There are now professional “YouTubers” who earn a living producing and uploading content. YouTube is a major storytelling platform that fosters engagement from its community. You can tell any story you want, just like you can with a written letter, but richer.

Video blogs, known as “vlogs,” and topical video series are some of the most successful types of channels on YouTube. Most vloggers post videos regularly and frequently. The typical missionary newsletter could conceptually fall under the vlog and/or topical series categories. Like these categories, our newsletters describe major events, daily life, unique ideas, or situations in a regular and predictable fashion.

Why video newsletters?

The advantage videos have over letters is the level of context. With video, you can hear tone of voice, see facial expressions, and much more than what you can with just words on a page.

As advocates for the lost in Japan, we have the responsibility to maximize our communications. Sharing videos is an effective way to do this. Through video, we can more accurately represent those with whom and to whom we minister. We can communicate the sights, sounds, and emotions better than all the synonyms in the world can capture. These stories inform our networks, encourage those who support us, and may even inspire future generations of missionaries.



On the receiving end, our families, home churches, and supporters often enjoy seeing videos of you and your life. They will feel more connected and relate more easily to you. Video updates help those who are investing in your ministry to understand more fully what their support (prayer and financial) has helped to accomplish through you. Videos are also a fun way to include the whole family. Family is a major avenue for the gospel in Japan, so why not include them too?

You have the tools

We all know the challenge of managing a regular newsletter: write it, add some photos, and send it out to a mailing list. For those of us who try to keep to a regular schedule, you might relate to the feeling when a newsletter is due tomorrow and you throw it together at one hour to midnight. We put pressure on ourselves to send out these expert letters that require quality stories, polished formatting, and catchy headings. What if all you had to do was to record a short video and click “upload”?

These days many of us have access to a smartphone. These typically have pre-installed applications that can turn simple footage into a great video. Consider: if you were to capture a few recordings throughout the month, take a quick video of yourself explaining what happened that month, and stitch that together in an app, do you think you might be able to say more with less effort? Your month could be summed up in a two- to ten-minute video. Compare that to the experience of writing a two-page letter. Through YouTube and other social media platforms, such as Facebook groups and Instagram, you can also do livestreams and engage viewers in real-time. That livestream is saved and can become a regular video on your account or channel as well.

To help you get started, on my YouTube channel I’ve created a playlist of videos of YouTube professionals explaining the basics of how to create videos on your phone, recording how-to’s, and simple editing:

<https://bit.ly/2VEMpAK>

If you want to learn more, you can always search for tips in the YouTube search bar or click on related videos that YouTube suggests. **JH**



Daniel Rice and his wife Tara (US) serve in Tokyo with IMB (SBC). They produce a YouTube channel sharing about life and ministry: <https://youtube.com/TheRicesInJapan>

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by Randall Short, Associate Professor of Biblical Studies

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Multiplication movements

What is needed for these to happen in Japan?

Our shared dream is to see Japan “filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea” (Hab. 2:14 NIV). Only a movement of God can make that happen.

CPI (Church Planting Institute) has cast the vision of “mentoring leaders to be a part of a movement that is multiplying churches that are multiplying disciples.” What would a church planting movement look like if it happened in Japan? We would see followers of Christ virally sharing their faith, growing as disciples, and transforming society as they multiply congregations of believers.

Historically, Japan has seen periods of incredible movement towards Christ. About 100 years ago, the Japan Holiness church had rapid growth, outstripping all other Christian groups; it grew from 1,600 believers to over 19,500 in just 16 years!¹ Today we are seeing reproduction in some places in Japan and multiplication in other areas.

Church history around the world has stories of remarkable movements like the Methodist movement in the 18th century. China and India are two modern examples of movements, where hundreds of thousands have become disciples, and tens of thousands of churches were planted in just a few years. Missiologists are currently tracking over 990 known Kingdom Movements around the world.² (Kingdom Movement is an umbrella term that includes Church Planting Movements and Disciple Making Movements.) Unfortunately, we have not yet seen these true disciple making and church planting movements in Japan.

Church planting and discipleship making movements

Nearly 20 years ago, several mission practitioners gathered to describe the phenomenon of these worldwide movements. David Garrison described a Church Planting Movement (CPM) as “a rapid and exponential increase of indigenous churches planting churches within a given people group or population segment.”³ They also listed ten universal elements of these CPMs that included rapid mobilization of lay people, simple churches (house/cell/micro models), and the priority of planting churches that plant healthy churches.⁴

Many early CPM workers sought more emphasis on obedient discipleship and began church planting focused on the early stages of evangelism and discipleship. They began to use the term Disciple Making Movement (DMM). A DMM is born out of gospel-sowing that leads to believing disciples who, in turn, multiply themselves, growing disciples beyond four generations that continue to multiply.

The terms CPM and DMM are currently used interchangeably. While a DMM emphasizes “disciples making disciples,” a CPM emphasizes “fostering and multiplying churches.”

Principles leading to movements of disciples and churches have been taught in Japan for many years by Training for Trainers (T4T), Jonathan Training (OMF), Train & Multiply (OMS), Ten-nai-gai, Four Fields, etc. Currently, in over a dozen networks, workers learning these approaches are applying them to Japan with some success.

The hindrances to multiplication

One of key factors in seeing disciple making and church planting movements take place is to understand the hindrances.

Three big hindrances in Japan are 1) dependence on church buildings, 2) reliance on formal theological training for leadership, and 3) insistence on full-time, paid clergy. These are not wrong; however, they are expensive and difficult to obtain, thus making spontaneous movements difficult.

I’ve observed some church leaders in Japan move away from the status quo. They’ve seen the Word of God has authority to confront Japanese culture and church traditions, then changed their approach. They redefine church, the role of clergy and laity, and the requirements for church multiplication. These leaders develop creative and innovative approaches to deal with meeting places and qualified leadership.

What is needed for Japan?

What would be necessary to have church planting movements in Japan as seen in other countries? Here are a few key areas that missiologists have identified:

1. **Abundant evangelism**—that is ongoing, relational, and engaging.
2. **Discipleship redefined**—by faith and obedience, not merely by activity.
3. **Mobilized laity**—by training all believers to evangelize, disciple others, and plant churches.
4. **Enlarged leadership training**—beyond formal school education to include non-formal training and informal mentoring approaches.
5. **Prayer for the nation**—that God would make all of this possible.

Imagine if we addressed the first four, and covered it all with prayer? We would see viral evangelism, obedient disciples, communities changed, and congregations multiplying. Movements would happen. **JH**

1. John Wm. Mehn, *Multiplying Churches in Japanese Soil* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2017), 55-57.

2. *Mission Frontiers*, Sept-Oct 2019, cover.

3. David Garrison, *Church Planting Movements: How God is Redeeming a Lost World*. (Midlothian, VA: WIGTake Resources, 2004), 21.

4. *Ibid*, 172.

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.

Live for today

Don't dwell on "what ifs"

"The present is the only time in which any duty can be done or any grace received."¹

C.S. Lewis

The expression *carpe diem* might be loosely translated "live for today." It's a great motto to live by. But for most of us, living for today is difficult because we're worried about tomorrow.

Even though the statistics say 80% of what we worry about will never happen, we often find ourselves anxious and apprehensive. Missionaries are no exception. In fact, missionaries often feel they have more to worry about than most. We're concerned about transitions and separations, children's education, making language and cultural mistakes, financial support . . . the list goes on and on.

Here are helpful hints on how to let go of worry and live for today.

Control worry, don't let it control you

In a recent counseling session, a woman shared with me that she worries about everything. When I asked her what worry did for her, she responded, "At least I feel like I'm doing something." Unfortunately, in the case of worrying, the opposite is true. Worrying only gives us a false sense of control. One helpful way to stop a worrisome thought is by asking the following questions: What is the worst thing that could happen? Is this outcome likely? Is the outcome a real problem? If it is a likely outcome and a real problem, make a list of solutions. Evaluate each solution, then choose the best one for this problem.²

Differentiate realistic concern from worry

A realistic concern is self-explanatory. It is something actual and concrete. It could be a situation that you are facing without all of the resources you need to deal with it—like transitioning to a new ministry, your children adjusting to a new school, or juggling language study and a ministry. These are all causes for realistic concern. Worry, on the other hand, is something that might or might not happen with little or no evidence that it really will happen. People who live for today realize that if they worry about whether something "might" or "could" happen, it's probably worry rather than a realistic concern.³

Don't let your "what ifs" escalate

Like that proverbial snowball, worries often escalate, getting worse and worse over time. For example, raising

kids cross-culturally is a big challenge. Common concerns for missionary parents include: Will my kids be normal? Can they adjust back to their home country? Will they resent their parents for raising them overseas? To prevent your worries from escalating, stay away from imagining all the worst-case scenarios. Instead, stay in touch with the most realistic possibilities. Follow some good advice: deal with "what is," not "what if."⁴

Put boundaries around worries

We missionaries often find ourselves second-guessing past decisions. If only we had tried harder, prayed longer, or strategized better!

Then this or that person would have gotten saved, the church would have stayed together, the church members would be further along spiritually, the kids would not have left their faith . . .

This is an all-too-common cycle of regret that missionaries find themselves rehashing over and over. Learn to put a healthy boundary around those past decisions by saying, "I made the best decision I could under the circumstances." Also, by remembering God is in control, the practice of looking back at the past can become one that comforts rather than one that leads to worry.⁵

Missionaries have many concerns that can lead to worry. But they don't need to stay stuck there. The best solution for worry is contained in the familiar verse from the Sermon on the Mount, "And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life?" (Matthew 6:27 NASB). Or put in simpler terms: live for today. **JH**

1. C.S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses*. (HarperSanFrancisco: 1980), 59-61.
2. Drs. Leslie Sokol and Dr. Marci G. Fox, "How to Put Boundaries Around Worry," beliefnet.com/Health/How-to-Put-Boundaries-Around-Worry.aspx (accessed Oct. 16, 2019).
3. Ibid. Sokol and Fox.
4. Ibid. Sokol and Fox.
5. Ibid. Sokol and Fox.



Eileen Nielsen is the Member Care Facilitator for TEAM Japan. She is a counselor at Tokyo Mental Health Clinic. She leads seminars on using MBTI for team building, conflict resolution, and personal development. Email: eileenpnelsen@gmail.com



Narrative arcs in nonfiction

What is a narrative arc? Every story—even a brief non-fiction one that you write for a magazine or your prayer letter—needs a start, middle, and end.

At the start you need to set the scene. For example, in a prayer letter you might write, “A few weeks ago at the women’s Bible study I lead at my church, we had a seeker join us.” You’ve imparted lots of information in that one sentence. It’s the start of a story.

Then you need a middle. “She’d heard about Jesus at the Christian kindergarten she went to as a child. But she hadn’t thought much about him since then. In the last year, both her husband and only child had died suddenly, and she was thinking about Christianity.”

You might go on to explain more about how she found your church, what her questions were, or more details about her struggles. Or perhaps if she’d told you about a confrontation she had with someone in her family about going to a meeting at the church, you could share that (but keeping her identity private, of course).

Then there is the resolution. This can be hard in such a story as the one above, especially when you don’t know the final outcome of

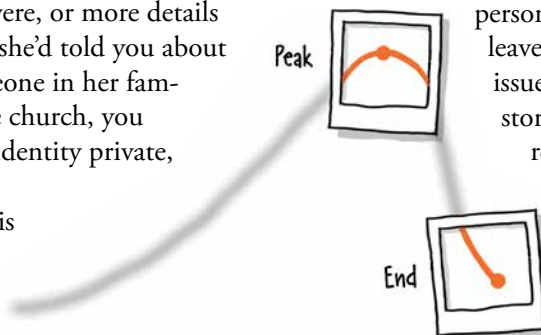
her searching. However, maybe it is something like, “She’s been at Bible study every time since she first came and is starting to understand more about Christianity, even saying, ‘I might be able to believe in this one day.’”

We see narrative arcs every time we read a good fiction book or watch a good movie. Setting the scene, a confrontation (or problem that needs to be overcome), and resolution. A classic example is Cinderella.

Depending on how complex the story is and how much space you have, you can get more creative than the basic chronological structure above. However, it is worth keeping the narrative arc in mind when you’re writing nonfiction. Your reader will always want to hear some sort of resolution. It is not kind to tell them of a

person or situation, outline the problem, and leave them hanging. As I wrote in the Spring issue last year, by delaying the end of the story, you can create suspense and draw your reader in. But don’t ultimately leave them in suspense. **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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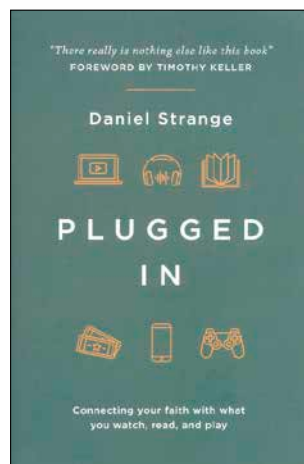
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Plugged In: Connecting Your Faith with What You Watch, Read, and Play

Daniel Strange (The Good Book Company, 2019) 191 pp.

Missionaries who want to seize the day will benefit greatly from Daniel Strange's book on how to do cultural analysis as a Christian. The author is a college director and tutor in culture, religion, and public theology at Oak Hill College, London. In his book he shows how to identify a culture's answers to the big questions of life. He demonstrates how to "both critique those answers and yet



affirm the basic aspirations, and how to redirect people toward Christ as the true fulfillment of their quests and the true answer to their questions" (p. 8). In seven very readable chapters laced with humor and engaging examples, Strange explains what culture is and how we are to engage it as Christians. He looks at the role of culture within the Bible's big storyline and shows that we are both culture build-

ers and culture destroyers. Jesus is the one who rescues us from ruin and restores and renews culture. In the chapter, "Can I watch...?" Strange reminds us of the importance of holding biblical truths in tension and gives helpful filters through which to measure our cultural consumption and creation. The gospel both confronts and connects, and he shows how Paul does this in Acts 17 at Athens. Strange gives a helpful four-step model for how to engage with culture—enter, explore, expose, and evangelize. The book ends with examples of Christian cultural analysis, including ones on adult coloring books, birdwatching, and the Japanese domestic toilet. **JH**

Reviewer rating is 5 of 5 stars ★★★★★

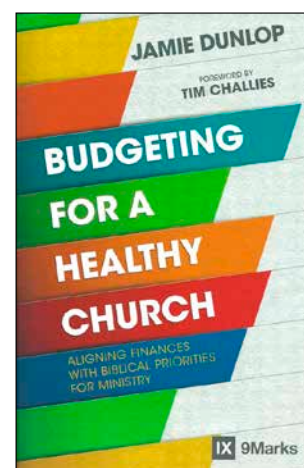
Budgeting for a Healthy Church: Aligning Finances with Biblical Priorities for Ministry

Jamie Dunlop (Zondervan, 2019) 169 pp.

While focused on the local church, Dunlop's book will be a great help to all who work with budgets and money. Dunlop, associate pastor at Capitol Hill Baptist Church in Washington, DC and former businessman, has written a practical book that helps us consider what budgets say about our priorities and values. He wants to broaden our understanding of budgets and finances and show how we can use them to equip people to be better stewards. He works from Scripture to help us understand principles

for supporting staff, funding programs, and investing in missions and outreach. There are worksheets and checklists to help one apply the principles learned. Every missionary who works with budgets and finances will find wise guidance here. **JH**

Reviewer rating is 5 of 5 stars ★★★★★



Saint Peter's Principles: Leadership for Those Who Already Know Their Incompetence

Peter A. Lillback (P&R Publishing, 2019) 596 pp.

Lillback, president and professor of historical theology at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, focuses on the life of Peter and gives 128 insights from his life and letters. The first principle is "Every leader must confess with St. Peter, 'I am a sinful man' (Luke 5:8)." Playing off Laurence Peter's famous book, *The Peter*

Principle, Lillback reminds us that we do not rise to our highest level of incompetence. That is where we start. The question is not "Are we competent?" but "Have we authentically seen our flaws, our failures, and our weaknesses that interpenetrate even our greatest strengths and our most notable successes?" (p. 4). Each chapter ends with "Spiritual Exercises"—questions to help one apply the principle. This is a

book not to be read alone, but in community with other friends and leaders. We begin with incompetence and seek to learn wisdom in the midst of that incompetence. This is a book full of wisdom to be digested slowly. **JH**

Reviewer rating is 5 of 5 stars ★★★★★



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

Let's praise God!

*"Keep praying, but be thankful that God's answers are wiser than your prayers!"*¹ William Culbertson

The simplest pattern for prayer is a "praise sandwich" (see p. 33, *Japan Harvest*, Winter 2017). But what does it mean to praise God?

I was in college in the 1970s, at the tail end of the Jesus Freak movement when large numbers of hippies came to know the Lord. In that era, Christians would often run around saying, "Praise the Lord." I even had it engraved on the belt I wore! And we went so far as to abbreviate it to "PTL!" The problem is that just by saying "Praise the Lord" or "PTL," we were not really praising the Lord. When you think about it, used like this, the phrase is really a command. It's just like saying "Close the Door" and maybe even abbreviating it to "CTD!" No matter how many times you say it, if no one actually closes the door, it is just a meaningless phrase. So I would try to remember to actually praise the Lord when someone used that phrase. Sometimes I would even praise the Lord in front of the person who had said it.

What does it mean to praise the Lord? I learned a definition back then which has stayed with me since. To praise the Lord is to focus on who He is and what He does.

Solomon's prayer

In I Kings 8, King Solomon dedicated the temple in Jerusalem. He prayed a long prayer that shows us ways to praise as we pray (verses 23 to 53). He referred to God as the "LORD [Yahweh], the God of Israel" (v. 23, NASB). He continued to praise God saying, "There is no God like You in heaven above or on earth beneath, keeping covenant and showing lovingkindness to Your servants." I am so grateful for that.

He reminded the people that God fulfils His promises (v. 24). Solomon realized that God was bigger than the heavens and, of course, the temple he had built (v. 27). Solomon acknowledged that He is a God who hears and forgives (v. 30). Solomon praised God by

telling the people that not only does God judge His people and condemn the wicked, but He also justifies the righteous (v. 32). God is really worthy of all our praise and thanks.

Supplication as praise

In this prayer, Solomon uses the word "supplication" nine times as well as other similar words. Supplication in the Bible means a request or petition. It shows us that Solomon realized that he could not do what he was asking God to do. There were so many situations that required God's intervention, such as sin, famine, captivity, or war with the enemy. Thus, he had to plead with God to answer his requests. In so doing, he was actually praising God for His omnipotence.

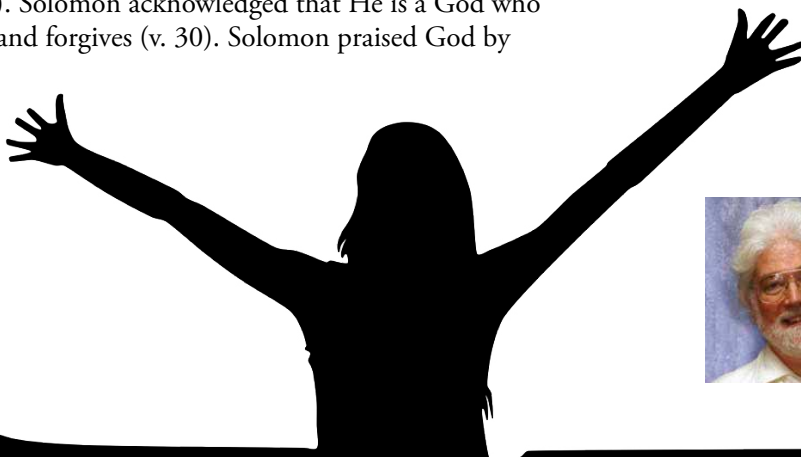
If God's people sinned against Him, but repented and turned back to Him (v. 33), Solomon was confident that God would hear in heaven and forgive their sin (v. 34). What a kind and merciful God we have.

He acknowledged that God alone knew the hearts of all men (v. 39). And Solomon knew that God's name would even be known to foreigners (v. 42). So he asked "that all the peoples of the earth may know Your name, to fear You" (v. 43). I am so glad that even we, though Gentiles, have been allowed into His presence.

Solomon praised God as a God who maintains the cause of His people (v. 45). When they repent, He will forgive them "and make them objects of compassion" (v. 50). His eyes are always open to the supplication of His people (v. 52). What grace! What mercy!

This God is our God! He is the One to whom we pray. You can take almost any portion of Scripture and use it to praise God. All you have to remember is the simple formula: praise is telling who God is and what He does. So let's praise Him! **JH**

1. The Westminster collection of Christian quotations, (Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 287.



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.

The art of apology

Saying sorry is important when relating to Japanese people

When I started reading the detective novel *Masquerade Hotel* by Keigo Higashino, I was just expecting an entertaining read.¹ But the more I read, the more I became aware of certain cultural issues.

I was struck by how often the characters apologised to each other—it seemed like someone was always saying sorry to someone else! I counted 85 apologies (an average of one every six pages). It is partly due to the novel's setting: a high-class hotel in central Tokyo. The hotel staff apologise whenever a customer is slightly inconvenienced or mildly disgruntled. (A Japanese tutor who had worked in a hotel told me that staff are taught to apologise whenever a customer is unhappy, no matter what the cause.) But other people apologise too—peers to peers, underlings to bosses, and vice versa.

An apologetic culture

You don't have to live in Japan for long to notice how frequently people apologise here. A friend will say sorry for keeping you waiting even when they've arrived before the agreed meeting time. There are apologetic announcements when a train is running a few minutes behind schedule, even when the cause is beyond the control of the rail company (such as a passenger taken ill). Newscasters apologise and bow when a *kanji* in the subtitles is wrong. A company board of directors holds a press conference to give a formal apology for some mistake, bowing deep and long while camera shutters fire like crazy.

Cultural differences

These observations were confirmed in an article about the cultural differences between Westerners and Japanese when it comes to apologizing.² Rochelle Kopp notes that Japanese people often complain that their foreign coworkers don't apologise when they do something wrong and don't take responsibility for their mistakes; rather, non-Japanese people tend to blame circumstances or others. She contrasts Western and Japanese typical responses to turning up late to the office: "In countries other than Japan, upon arriving at the office one might breezily say: 'Sorry I'm late! There was a big accident and traffic was really backed up.'" Here, "circumstances outside of the employee's control, such as the traffic, are pointed to—even if, in reality, the fact that the employee left home a little on the late side not leaving much slack for unexpected delays was a contributing factor." Kopp notes, however, that, "the Japanese employee who is late would be expected to bow their head and apologize profusely, might not mention the traffic jam at all, and would likely offer a plan for avoiding the same thing happening again, such as 'I'll leave home earlier in the future.'"

Practicing *hansei*

Kopp observes that when something goes wrong, Japanese are expected to practice *hansei*, which roughly translates as "reflection" or "introspection". She sees it as a two-stage process. The first stage involves reflecting on what one has done wrong. In this stage, "your typical Japanese employee will immediately acknowledge that the problem was their fault and take responsibility for it by verbally apologizing for it (in some cases, apologizing even if the problem was not strictly their fault)."³ The second stage is outlining concrete steps to ensure the same thing doesn't happen again.

Kopp gives an example of *hansei* in action. A technician accidentally stepped on and killed a lab rat that had escaped from its cage, and the American team leader was placed in the unenviable position of having to explain what happened to the Japanese pharmaceutical company that had commissioned the experiment. It was a delicate situation with potentially serious repercussions. But the team leader was familiar with Japanese culture. So he drafted a letter in which he took full responsibility for the accident and explained that if a rat ever escaped again, the technician in question was under strict orders to stand still and call for help from other team members. The approach worked, and the Japanese company accepted the apology.

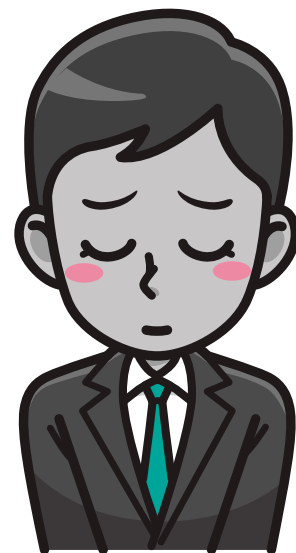
Be quick to apologise

Given the importance of apology in Japanese culture, we should be quick to apologise when relating to Japanese people. An apology acts as a form of relational lubricant—it can quickly diffuse situations that could become tense. It may be appropriate to say sorry even when we don't feel that the fault lies mainly with us. It would also be good to think of ways to avoid a reoccurrence (*hansei*). **JH**

1. Keigo Higashino, *Masquerade Hotel* (Shueisha Bunko, 2014) (Japanese-language novel).
2. Rochelle Kopp, "Nobody's perfect, but an apology really helps at a Japanese company," *Japan Times*, <https://japantimes.co.jp/community/2019/04/24/how-tos/nobodys-perfect-apology-really-helps-japanese-company> Apr 24, 2019 (accessed 09/09/2019).
3. Ibid, Kopp.



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.



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