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Japan Harvest
Autumn 2020

Strength
in
Weakness

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October

WIM Fall Day of Prayer PLUS

October 8, 2020
Rose Town Tea Garden, Ome, Tokyo



January

WIM Winter Day of Prayer

January 19, 2021
Matsukawa Place, Higashikurume, Tokyo



February

JEMA Connect

February 15-17, 2021
Ochanomizu Christian Center, Tokyo

March

WIM Annual Spring Retreat

March 3-5, 2021
Okutama Fukuin no Ie



WIM Kansai Christian Women's Conference

March 8, 2021
Venue TBD

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

jema.org

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



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Japan Harvest Staff

Executive Editor: Simon Pleasants
Managing Editor: Wendy Marshall (wmarshall@jema.org)
Associate Editor: Rachel Hughes
Editorial Assistants: Elena Kua, Jackie Peveto, Ariane Peveto, Jenn Bello
News Editor: Peter Swan
Layout Designer/Production Editor: Karen Ellrick
Advertising Director: Atsuko Tateishi
Fact Checker: Sara Wolsey
Proofreader: Ken Reddington

Printer: Printpac

JEMA Leadership Team

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Vice President: Paul Suzuki
Treasurer: vacant
Secretary: David Scott
Ministries Facilitator: Chad Huddleston
Communications Facilitator: Simon Pleasants
Membership Facilitator: Paul Ewing
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JEMA Administrative Assistants (part-time):

Atsuko Tateishi, Mayumi Penner, Michiru Pleasants, Grace Koshino, Ai Nightingale

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JEMA
2-1 Kanda Surugadai
Chiyoda Ku, Tokyo 101-0062
Tel: 03-3295-1949 Fax: 03-3295-1354
Email: jema-info@jema.org
Website: jema.org

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Strength in Weakness

This is a topic that we can all relate to. I haven't been shy in admitting my weakness in the Japanese language (see my editorial in the Winter 2020 issue). I believe that God prefers us to be in a weak position. It's then that he shines.

The classic example is Gideon. From the start, he admitted his weakness (Judg. 6:15), yet the angel addressed him as "O mighty man of valor" (6:12 ESV). Gideon went on to display an overwhelming level of doubt about God's call, even doubting that God was with the Israelites at all.

In chapter 7 of Judges, we see the story Sunday School teachers often tell: that God cut Gideon's force of 32,000 men down to 300 men. The reason God gave: "The people with you are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hand, lest Israel boast over me, saying, 'My own hand has saved me'" (7:2).

Throughout the story, we see that God is aware of Gideon's fear. God reassured Gideon several times that he would do what he said he would do and that he was with Gideon and the Israelites. Gideon had good reason to be fearful: the Midianites "lay along the valley like locusts in abundance, and their camels were without number, as the sand that is on the seashore" (7:12). God gave Gideon the plan but also reassurance: "But if you are afraid to go down, go down to the camp with Purah your servant. And you shall hear what they say, and afterward your hands shall be strengthened" (7:10-11). Of course, the end result was victory for God.

There are many examples in Scripture of God using weak people. Think of Joseph, a slave and prisoner; and Peter, who denied Jesus three times. We see King David, so talented in many ways yet also flawed and often operating from a position of weakness (e.g. pursued in the desert). Solomon and his weakness for women; Elijah, who was very alone in his ministry and also suicidal at one point; and Job, who suffered so much grief. Naomi, a widow; Esther, a minority; and Mary, mother of Jesus, single and young. God used all these people for his glory and told their stories to encourage us.

Are you feeling weak today? Ready to give up ministry? Well, we've got just the magazine for you. This issue is full of articles by people who have felt that way. You'll find God that used a short-term worker who came to Japan with no Japanese language, a young missionary whose church member committed suicide, and a man who passed out when speaking in front of others.

When we see God at work like this, we're forced to turn our eyes to Jesus and acknowledge that God was right when he said, "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isa. 55:9).

Paul says it well: "But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us" (2 Cor. 4:7).

Let's give praise to God as we read just a small sampling of the ways he has worked through our weakness to reach Japan. And may these stories embolden us all to boast in our weakness (2 Cor. 12:9) and tell others the stories that show our weakness and thus let God's glory shine through.



Blessings in Christ,
Wendy
Managing Editor

The themes for the upcoming issues are:

Winter 2021: Challenging Issues

Spring 2021: Pastoral Care (submission deadline Nov. 30)

Summer 2021: Japanese mindset (submission deadline Feb. 28)

Autumn 2021: Men, where are they? (submission deadline May 30)

Chapel for healing Lighthouse Coffee in Fukuoka Prefecture

Christian Shimbun, February 16, 2020

Translated by Tomoko Kato

Lighthouse Coffee is a café located in front of the main gate of Kyushu University. It's a four-minute walk from an entrance to Ōhashi Station in Fukuoka City. Hiroshi Horie, pastor of Lighthouse Church Fukuoka, is the manager of the shop. It's opened as a café from Monday to Saturday and is a church on Sundays. "It's six years since we started the café. Although it is indirect, this is missionary work as well," Horie says.

Lighthouse Coffee is a popular café and is open from ten-thirty in the morning to seven in the evening. According to Horie, "The busiest time is lunch, until around two-thirty." One online comment says, "When the automatic door opens . . . cheerful voices are heard. Most of the tables are full. Of course, most of the customers are women. The owner comes out from behind the counter and greets us cheerfully."

The exterior of the shop has a handcrafted look that is neither gaudy nor cheap. The interior also has a handmade touch that creates a pleasant atmosphere. Since it is in front of the university, you'd think that students would be their main customers, but most of their customers are women who are raising young children. Horie told the journalist, "The selling point here is our homely atmosphere. In a relaxed atmosphere, people can chat while eating or drinking. Some young mothers enjoy chatting for hours in our low-table area. They all need to have a place to relax and be healed."



More than 20 meals and soft drinks are on their menu and they are changed according to the season. Some items on their menu are offered only in limited amounts. When the Christian Shimbun journalist visited, the

café's lunch special was Gapao Rice, which is Thai nampla- or fish-flavored fried rice with ground chicken, onion, paprika, and basil (¥700, tax included). The writer expected it

to be spicy, but it was actually delicious—mild and wholesome. "This is the most popular item at our shop," Horie said.

The variation of sweets and soft drinks on their menu show that this is a well-regarded, high quality café. Their Koguma Latte is Korean-style coffee with a rich sweet potato flavor (¥450 hot, ¥480 iced) and the Pong-Pong Latte contains a blend of 17 ingredients and is topped with a *pongashi* puffed oat cake (¥500). The writer tried the iced Koguma Latte and found that it had a pleasant, mellow, sweet potato flavor. It should even be good for your health. In addition to these two lattes, and tea and coffee, they offer various other drinks such as rooibos tea and blended soy latte.

Horie started this café with a Korean missionary in 2013. They tried to create the image of a fashionable café in Seoul. "People who have been to Korea say 'Oh, it's just like Korea!' Japanese

customers who like Korea come here often." Since the missionary went back to Korea, Horie and a part-time staff member have run the shop and held worship on Sundays. Some regular customers to the café come to worship as well.

They also hold café events for parents, workshops on aromas and herbariums, and mini-concerts at the shop. "Some musicians come here and play music in their spare time when they come to churches in Fukuoka City for their own concerts. Night-de-Light and Saluki & Misa Kamiyama have held live concerts here. Some artists playing around Fukuoka Prefecture perform at our café, too."

The Christian student association (KGK) in Kyushu University uses the shop for their student meetings, and another church has a mission gathering there once every two months for people who struggle with entering church directly. Horie says, "We can offer food and drink, so we hope various local churches will make use of this space." ■

Lighthouse Coffee:
4-13-15 Shiohara Minami-ku
Fukuoka-shi Fukuoka-ken 815-0032
Tel: 092-555-8133
<https://www.facebook.com/CAFE.LightHouseinJapan>



Women enjoying chatting, Horie behind the counter

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!”

Tohoku pastors' testimonies Nine years on from the Great East Japan Earthquake

Christian Shimbun, March 29, 2020

Translated by Atsuko Tateishi

'United beyond differences'

by Yoshiya Kondō, coordinator, 3.11 Iwate Church Network / Pastor, Morioka Bible Baptist Church

I've served a local church in Iwate Prefecture, and have been involved with the 3.11 Iwate Church Network ("3.11 Iwate"), which was formed in the wake of the disaster. What have we learned since the 2011 earthquake? One of the things I perceive is that local churches have learned to overcome differences and gaps to be equal partners with their neighbors.

Following the earthquake, a number of Christian workers moved to Iwate Prefecture. Over time, the workers began to seek a shift in their role from that of outside helpers to equal partners with their neighbors. Local churches have also learned to share the good news with their communities as equals, instead of offering it from a superior position.

Equal partnerships are spreading into relationships between the local churches, too. Larger churches and organizations are often in a position to help those smaller than themselves. But when relationships are regarded as the stronger helping the weaker, there can be unhealthy manipulations of power. The Iwate churches have learned to discard such a relational view. Instead, they have adopted an attitude of get-

ting to know their neighbor churches as equal partners, sharing their pain, and helping to meet their needs.

New churches have been planted one after another in Iwate Prefecture over the last nine years. When we began disaster relief work in 2011, church planting was not our foremost priority. As Christians developed friendships with people in their community, prayers for church planting began. Some churches were born at the request of a local community. Prior to the disaster, I would often receive news about local churches in Iwate closing down or ministries discontinuing. Having gone through tremendous pain and sorrow, Iwate Prefecture is now experiencing God's profound mercy. God has revealed his hope through the churches. We are committed to overcoming differences and gaps, denominational or otherwise, as churches under one and the same master, our Lord.

'A picture of Fukushima today'

by Keiji Kida, former coordinator, Fukushima Christian Conference / Pastor, Kōriyama Evangelical Christ Church

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Fukushima Christian Conference (FCC) had to cancel the 3.11 Memorial Meeting that had been scheduled for March 3 this year. Kazuhiro Ishikawa, Director of Café de Fukushima

(311fukushima.org) was going to be the speaker. In place of the meeting, FCC live-streamed his speech entitled "Nine years from the nuclear meltdown—Fukushima today based on dialogue with 3,000 people for the last two years."

Ishikawa is a retired businessman from Miyagi Prefecture. Immediately following the 2011

disaster, he began to help those who were affected by the nuclear meltdown. He regularly visits the reconstruction housing complexes in Fukushima Prefecture to help residents.

During his speech, Ishikawa presented an overall picture of current Fukushima through a number of statistics, and then shared some of the people's stories he gathered through the ministry of Café de Fukushima.

Around 40,000 people are still evacuated from their homes within or outside of the prefecture. On May 1, 2018, there were 758 elementary and junior high school students in Fukushima towns and villages where an evacuation order was enforced and since canceled; just before the disaster there were 7,710. As of December 2019, the number of disaster-related deaths in the prefecture since March 11, 2011, totaled 2,286. This exceeds the number of deaths directly caused by the disaster in this prefecture, and is the largest among the three most affected prefectures (Miyagi, Iwate, and Fukushima). The number of disaster-related suicides in the prefecture is almost double that in Miyagi and Iwate Prefectures. The problem of solitary deaths among evacuees has been growing among the residents of the reconstruction housing complexes, as 40% of the residents are 65 or older.

Café de Fukushima has been trying to provide an inviting space for people to connect with each other. Ishikawa invites the residents moving into the new housing complexes and the neighborhood community residents to the café events so that they can mingle. Ishikawa believes that, when his team members walk side by side with the people who have been affected by the disaster, the name of the Lord is glorified right then and there. ■



3.11 Iwate meeting in February 2020 with several pastors and missionaries of newly planted churches.

Fruit born of isolation

Four lessons we can learn from Paul about ministering while in isolation

By Brittney Carlson

I arrived in Japan on March 26th this year for my second missionary term. After two weeks of “normalcy,” Japan entered a state of emergency. For the first couple of Sundays I was able to attend church, but then the government recommended—and my organization mandated—that we only go out for essential items and not interact with anyone outside of immediate family. As a single, that meant I spent the next two months predominantly alone. All the new partnerships, community building, and ministry-start dates were pushed back, temporarily put on hold, or indefinitely postponed.

I was frustrated, especially about not being able to go to church, as my Japanese-led church in Hakodate was still meeting. I was also uneasy as I had just arrived and was worried how my lack of attendance and participation at church and the school where I work would be perceived. Because I couldn't help with ministry, interact with the community, or form any kind of friendships with the people at work or at church, I was afraid I was not making a good first impression or giving a Christ-honoring testimony. However, as I started to hear about and see many churches and ministries coming to a full stop, God convicted me that many of us missionaries, as well as a great number of the Japanese churches and Christians, were thinking about and addressing the pandemic the wrong way. God brought Paul to mind, and I realized we can learn a lot from Paul and how he dealt with being in lockdown.

First lesson: seek how God can use you

Paul was arrested and imprisoned three times. He was first detained with another evangelist in Philippi in AD 49 for less than twenty-four hours (Acts 16:19–23). [Editor's note: there are

varying opinions among scholars about the exact dates in Paul's life.] An earthquake made it possible for him and the other prisoners to escape, but Paul chose to stay. I think this is the first lesson we can learn from Paul about isolation: we should not be trying to find the quickest way out of the situation, but we should be trying to see how God can use us in the situation.

Since I could not attend church, the pastor and I set up the option to attend the service via Zoom. Along with me, a young lady who had not been able to attend church for over half a year and another couple who had not attended for over a year began to attend weekly via Zoom. I was able to help the church create its own YouTube channel, Twitter account, Instagram account, and web page, as well as update and revamp its Facebook page. I could not do in-person ministry, but God allowed me to equip the church and its leaders for social media ministry, which allowed the church to expand its reach, and plant and grow seeds in many hearts.

At the school, COVID-19 also provided opportunities that previously didn't exist, including a LINE prayer group with the other Christian teachers.

Second lesson: God will bring people across our paths

Paul was then arrested and put under custody in Rome for five years from AD 58 to 63. After spending a little more than two years in a Caesarean prison, the apostle was escorted to Rome by a centurion and lived under house arrest, awaiting his trial and ultimate acquittal in the spring of 63.

During five years of detention, Paul had his first encounter with the Roman judicial system regarding his teachings, his first face-to-face meeting with Caesar, his first personal confronta-

tion with the Sanhedrin, and his first confrontation with the high priest as a Jewish heretic (all found in Acts 22–25). He also encountered Roman soldiers and Jewish people. The second thing we can learn from Paul is: even in isolation God will cause our paths to cross with others and open doors of opportunities to share and defend our faith.

Through our Zoom church service, God connected me with a young church member in her thirties who could not attend church due to work, as well as another in her twenties who was currently in the US. We began to have weekly Bible study and prayer times together. Our paths would not have connected had it not been for COVID-19 and the church's openness to using Zoom.

OMF Japan also began to hold weekly prayer meetings via Zoom. This allowed us to connect and pray with those we seldom get to see.

Through being at school without the students, God also allowed me to have more connection and conversation time with the teachers and staff that our normally busy teaching schedules would not allow for.

Third lesson: ministry must go on

Besides direct encounters and discussions with the people God brought across his path, Paul continued to minister to those who visited him and to encourage local churches via letters he wrote. Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon—Paul's four “Prison Epistles”—were written during this time. The apostle wrote his last epistle, a heartfelt letter to Timothy (2 Timothy), during his third imprisonment while awaiting a verdict. Imagine if Paul had just decided to sit and wait out his isolation period. What if he had never written these letters? What great

teaching would we Christians today have missed out on!

Which leads to the third lesson we can learn from the Apostle Paul about isolation: ministry must go on. Even if the form, method, and delivery changes, God's Word must continue to be proclaimed. God does not only create opportunities for new encounters while we are in isolation, he also creates new ministry opportunities.

In addition to what I've already mentioned, during this enforced time of isolation, I had more time to read, write, and do preparation for future ministry.

Fourth lesson: isolation allows us to equip and prepare others

Paul was arrested for the third and last time sometime during his final missionary journey in either late AD 67 or early 68. He was imprisoned in a jail cell in Rome where he was incarcerated until martyred by the Romans in mid-68. During this time Paul wrote a second letter to Timothy in which he forewarns and prepares Timothy for Paul's impending death.

The thing I most appreciate about Paul is his focus on encouraging and equipping local churches and believers. While Paul was imprisoned, the ministries he had started continued and, in many ways, grew because he

was removed and others had the chance to lead. The letter to the Ephesians is believed to have been delivered by Tychicus, Philippians by Epaphroditus,

their own studies, as well as holding one another accountable—calling and praying together on their own. The understanding that Bible study, prayer, and evangelism is not just to be done within the church walls by the pastor or a missionary, but also done outside the walls by all has taken root more strongly.

At the school the students also pushed forward, creating a student-led chapel every week and weekly volunteer activities. Now the school religious department works as a body and not just one person, and personal and schoolwide fruit can be seen from it.

The Bible records the Apostle Paul spent roughly five and a half years in custody in total. At the time of writing, I had spent roughly two months in social distancing and self-isolation. In this time, just like Paul, I also have seen fruit born of isolation. I hope and pray that you all have, too, and will continue to see it as we continue to navigate life and ministry during this difficult time. **JH**

Brittney Carlson is currently serving her second term with OMF International. Her ministries include teaching English, overseeing the YWCA Club, and giving chapel messages at Iai Women's Academy, as well as assisting Hakodate Nozomi Church.

We should not be trying to find the quickest way out of the situation, but we should be trying to see how God can use us in the situation.

Colossians via Tychicus and Onesimus, and Philemon via Onesimus. In Paul's isolation, Timothy and others stepped up and took on greater responsibilities and experienced more ministry roles. They pushed forward with spreading the gospel and growing God's Kingdom. Even during his isolation, Paul equipped them, encouraged them, and released them to do God's work. Which brings us to the fourth lesson we can learn about isolation from Paul: being removed allows us to equip and prepare others for God's work.

Though I brought up the idea of Zoom first, my church pastor caught on quickly and participated in many Zoom meetings. He took the lead and, with feedback from the church members, created the church website all on his own. With the lack of church-based Bible studies, the members initiated





Lost for words?

By Eivind Jåtun

My best learning experience as a leader has come from not knowing what to say

Returning to Japan after more than 30 years' absence, I literally found myself lost for words. It has created awkward moments and funny ones too. But I will treasure this time as perhaps the best learning experience I have ever had as a leader.

I was born in Kobe, and, having moved around in various locations in my early childhood, I spoke Japanese with a distinct Izumo dialect. My parents worried if I would ever know Norwegian at all. Well, seven years in Norway between the age of 7 and 14 took care of that, but unfortunately it also erased my Japanese. When I returned to Japan with my family in 1983 at the age of 14, the only word I knew was *hikōki* (airplane). Over the course of the next five years, my Japanese never really resurfaced properly.

After theological studies in Norway, my wife and I had the joy of serving in mission work in Kenya and Tanzania for ten years. Over that time, our Swahili skills went from a toddler's level to a decent grasp of the language.

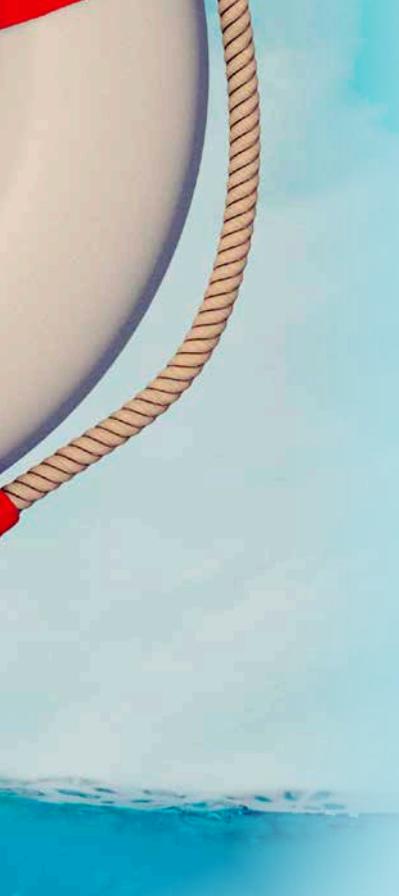
Fast forward to 2019. We had returned to Norway several years earlier, and I was working in the domestic ministries of the Norwegian Lutheran Mission (NLM). When NLM found itself in a squeeze for someone to take the task of resident representative in Japan, I was asked if I could step in and help out while the organization was looking for a more long-term solution.

I was rather hesitant. The prospects of once again living in Japan were extremely tempting. But I knew it would be a difficult task in many ways. Being a leader involves trust. Would the other missionaries accept me as a leader? Would the church body we cooperate with acknowledge me? My last name brings positive connotations in some circles because of my parents' long service in Japan, but for how long could I ride that wave? And, more than anything, what about the language? Retracing language skills that lie decades in the past is not easy, especially when another foreign

language has also invaded that section of the brain.

However, after prayerful consideration, we eventually accepted the challenge and arrived in Kobe in August 2019. I came here trembling, with a hypothesis that Japanese and Swahili have very little common ground. My hypothesis has been proven right. I don't know how many times I have responded in Swahili when I thought I was using Japanese words. They make for good laughs, though!

It only took a few days after arrival before I found myself in a meeting where the agenda involved sensitive topics. At first, I was a bit encouraged, because I thought I could pick out a key word here and there. I thought I had a fair idea of what was being said. And I did have translation help to grasp the essence of what was said. But when the meeting was drawing to a close and I was asked to give NLM's views on the matters discussed, it became clear that I had not seen the



to tell myself and those around me that my ability takes me so far, but no further. I need help.

Those three words are so liberating! *I need help.*

I don't know about you, but for me, it can be difficult to acknowledge my need for help. I admit I put a lot of pressure on myself to succeed without bothering others. Independence scores higher than dependence for most of us. The first one is a show of strength. The other one is failure. But knowing the cards I've been handed, trying to work things out by myself would be a foolish strategy.

In my case, help was close at hand. I have been blessed with some very competent colleagues who have stepped up and given time and effort to assist me. One of them, a native Japanese speaker, has helped me write letters in impeccable Japanese. Others have allowed me to lean on them for interpretation in meetings. I have stopped trusting the bits I picked up during the conversation, and instead I allow myself the luxury of depending on their words. All I really had to do was ask for help!

In our efficient-minded times we are used to responding quickly to all questions. Email lands in our inboxes, and immediately the pressure is on to answer. There is a message on our smartphones, and we know the sender is watching his own phone at that very moment, waiting for our response. I've had to distance myself from such expectations and force myself to spend time responding. If the question needs a longer answer, I will write it in English and have my Japanese colleague translate it into Japanese. She has to do that on top of many other chores, so the response is sometimes delayed by a whole day or even longer. But that gives me the confidence to be precise and know that the message will be clear from the very start. It is also my impression that waiting for a concise answer is better than getting a quick, confusing answer.

I do the same with oral reports. I have started to write them out and send them to the participants as a Japanese

translation. By doing so, we become more efficient in the meeting, as the facts are on the table ahead of time. And I know that my report is succinct.

Certainly, this has made it easier for me to make my mark as a leader. When people read my letters, they "hear" me speak. It takes a bit longer, yes, but perhaps a little waiting time is not so bad after all? I believe it has helped the leadership of the church to be more relaxed in their communication with me as well. They can send me their information in Japanese, knowing that we have organized a safety net that ensures I understand.

What has been the most rewarding aspect of this learning experience is to see how Peter's words in 1 Peter 4:10 are brought to life: "Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms" (NIV). We bring different gifts and talents to the table, and as one body we serve our Savior. It is important that limbs are reminded that it is only together that they constitute a body. The limbs have different functions and strengths, but the body has a wonderful ability to compensate for shortcomings somewhere with strengths from elsewhere. We visualize how the body of Christ is best expressed in the service we do for each other.

I have been able to share the decision-making process with competent coworkers. As a leader, I have had a taste of the blessing of dependency. And with me taking a step back, others have had an opportunity to take a step forward. Their gifts become visible and are appreciated. My mandate is to give direction and ensure good cooperation with the Japanese church. Had it not been for my gifted colleagues, I would have been a disaster at doing that. I can't thank them enough for what they do! I have found that depending on others is not a weakness but an empowering strength. **JH**

Eivind Jåtun spent much of his formative years in Japan with missionary parents. He and his wife served with Norwegian Lutheran Mission in East Africa and are now in Kobe as resident representatives of NLM.

whole picture. We ended up with some misunderstandings that have taken both time and effort to clear up and recover from.

I must admit that my spirit was not very high after those initial weeks. I had met my shortcomings in a very profound way. Over the years, I have been given leadership tasks on various levels, and I have grown accustomed to taking responsibility and executing the necessary processes. Here in Japan I found myself stuttering and sweating, feeling as helpless as I ever have. I came here to help give direction to the work we do, and instead my contributions brought confusion and misunderstandings. Words have always been my most important tool for leading, and now I was lost for words. On more than one occasion, I have asked my wife, "What have we done, coming here?"

But out of this colossal challenge came a valuable learning experience. I have had to humble myself and recognize my shortcomings. I have had

By Mike McGinty

Funerals and feasting



Suddenly called to perform his first funeral, this missionary wrestled with grief and learned the value of mourning

As a few of us solemnly gathered around the shrouded body of a church member who had just tragically taken his own life, I was asked, “Did you drive here in your van?” I thought it was an odd question considering the circumstances. Less than an hour later, I found myself driving that same van with a corpse wrapped in my old car blanket and a grieving widow sitting beside me in the front seat, numbly clutching her husband’s death certificate. This unusual scenario launched my initiation into performing my first funeral in Japan.

My immediate education began with assisting the undertaker in preparing the deceased’s body for burial. The body had to be washed, dressed, and the face even shaved as hair continues to grow for a while following death. Rigor mortis had already set in, which proved to be a problem as the casket was a bit small, requiring us to forcibly manipulate the limbs to ensure the body would fit.

While my attention was briefly diverted by a few important phone calls, a well-meaning Buddhist neighbor had convinced the deceased’s wife, who like her husband was a Christian, to surround her husband’s body with things that he would like to enjoy in the afterlife. Even though I was unfamiliar with such practices, this arrangement didn’t seem right.

A quick phone call to a local Japanese pastor confirmed my suspicions and gave me the confidence to persuade them to remove the objectionable items. Following this mini-confrontation, I was tasked with driving to the train station at 2:00 a.m. to meet the oldest son, who had just traveled from Tokyo to Hakodate on short notice. He was obviously in shock himself, and I did my best to comfort this grief-stricken man who had lost his father in unusual circumstances.

The next few days were a blur accompanied by minimal sleep as I undertook a crash course in Japanese funeral protocol and vocabulary, made countless funeral arrangements, prepared messages, and did my best to minister to grieving family and church members. I was totally spent and emotionally depleted.

In the midst of these frenetic preparations, I tried vainly to understand why a mature believer would end his

also got involved and voiced strong reservations to the idea of holding a Christian funeral, further complicating matters and further raising already high stress levels.

As a young and inexperienced missionary, I felt overwhelmed by the events swirling around me. On top of that, I was utterly exhausted and shattered by my own grief. There was little time to organize the chaos and even less time to process the heartache all of us felt. As I struggled to pull my thoughts together in the middle of the night for a message that would somehow convey hope in the face of so much loss, God led me to a Bible verse I had not known before. In Ecclesiastes 7:2, Solomon, the author of the book and the wisest man who ever lived, advised,

“It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting, for death is the destiny of everyone; the living should take this to heart” (NIV).

For it is only when we come within proximity of death that we are able to gain a healthy perspective of eternity.

life by drinking weed killer to protest a government injustice associated with his occupation. Embarrassed by the circumstances, high government officials

I lived in the house of mourning during those dark, distressing days. I mourned the loss of a member of my church plant who was under my care. I mourned my inadequacies as a missionary. I mourned my inability to comfort family and church members. I mourned my own sinfulness as I grappled with the nature of evil and its hold on areas in my own heart.

If granted a choice, I would have greatly preferred to linger in the house of feasting. But while I was forced to temporarily reside in the house of mourning, God spoke in powerful ways to me.

Alone with my thoughts, I was forced to recognize that we routinely live our lives trying to ignore the inevitability of death and its cold reality. We dress it up when forced to confront it at funerals. In our daily lives, we do our best to minimize death and pretend it isn't there, though it is always waiting for us, unseen around the corner. Some go out of their way to redefine death and attempt to tame it with New Age sentiment and terminology.

But Solomon would have none of that. He saw immense value in visiting the house of mourning in contrast to the house of feasting. For it is only when we come within proximity of death that we are able to gain a healthy perspective of eternity. On such visits, we are also given a glimpse of God's heavenly purpose in whatever days he has allotted for us.

In the midst of my personal storm, the confusion and sadness somehow melted away in a few quiet moments as I pondered that verse. Those incredibly stressful days became a precious time when I was granted the unique oppor-

tunity to reflect on the deeper things of God and this life.

In the midst of my sorrow and exhaustion, with many undone items still vying for attention, I sat by myself in our living room with the lights off, too tired to sleep. It was while I was in my own house of mourning that God graciously ministered to me through a song by Twila Paris called "Prince of Peace." The lyrics spoke to the depths of my soul and strengthened me greatly in my moment of weakness.

There is no hope for a world that
denies You
Firmly believing a lie
Hiding the hearts while the minds
analyze You
Cleverly choosing to die
Maker of All, we kneel interceding
Fighting for Your will
Father of Life, Your children are
pleading still

Prince of Peace, come and reign
Set Your feet on the mountain
top again
Take Your throne, rightful Lord
Prince of Peace, come and reign
forevermore

Several hundred people gathered in the house of mourning in the following days as we held a wake, a funeral, a brief service at the crematorium, and then one final ceremony for interring

the deceased's ashes. Those in attendance did not hear the words of death and hopelessness normally associated with Buddhist funerals. Instead, many listened for the first time to words of life and hope in a totally unexpected context. We did not speak to the spirit of the deceased as practiced in Buddhist rituals. Rather, we worshiped the Living God, who brings light out of darkness and life out of death through the miracle of the cross.

While I had been reluctantly residing in the house of mourning those few days, I was once again able to feast on who God is, what he has done, and, most important of all, what he will someday do. Death will one day cease to reign. Sin will no longer have dominion over us when the Prince of Peace returns to take his rightful place upon the throne.

While death and the many hardships of our present lives remain our immediate destiny in a broken world, an eternal feast ultimately awaits us. It took a brief visit to the house of mourning to be reminded of these important truths. **JH**

Funeral photo by Karen Ellrick

Mike McGinty served with OMF Japan for 34 years as a church planter and in various field leadership positions. He and Rowena have three children and nine grandchildren. They're now in Colorado, mobilizing and equipping new workers for Japan.



Language, weakness, and God's presence

God can use us in Japan
despite our perceived
Japanese language
inability

By Dale Viljoen

The eagerly anticipated letter arrived in Cape Town, officially typed on thin paper. The carbon copy remained in Sapporo, Japan. It read, “We have processed your Language Aptitude Tests and regret to inform you that your results are not at all good. We suggest that, instead of Japan, you consider going to the Philippines as missionaries. You may be better able to cope with the language there.”

Shock. Disappointment. Uncertainty. My wife and I were so sure that God had laid on our hearts a burden for Japan. The more we had prayed, the deeper this burden had been etched onto our hearts.

I remembered my extreme nervousness in Bible college, when preparing to preach for the first time before faculty and students as part of my homiletics course. The night before, I had received a note from another student, Exodus 4:10–12:

But Moses pleaded with the Lord, ‘O Lord, I’m not very good with words. I never have been, and I’m not now, even though you have spoken to me. I get tongue-tied, and my words get tangled.’ Then the Lord asked Moses, ‘Who makes a person’s mouth? Who decides whether people speak or do not speak, hear or do not hear, see or do not see? Is it not I, the Lord? Now go! I will be with you as you speak, and I will instruct you in what to say’ (NLT).

The sermon went well.

This memory encouraged us to continue to pray and write many letters to Japan. Finally, the OMF leadership in Japan gave us the go-ahead to come (reluctantly, I later heard). We arrived in Sapporo on March 3, 1979.

Our first term

After two years of full-time language study, we were assigned to take over a two-year-old church plant in Nagayama, Asahikawa. I preached three times a month and led the mid-week meeting—all in Japanese. Here are four memories from the rest of my first term.

1. Preaching

I only had enough time to prepare one sermon to be checked each month. For the other two messages I simply listed some English titles and words on the left side of the page, with painstakingly looked-up Japanese words on the right.

Yet I knew that Professor K, a not-yet-Jesus-follower who taught dialectical materialism (Marxism) at the local university attended the Sunday service once or twice a month.

Why would Professor K come to hear a 26-year-old foreigner mangle the Japanese language? Unbelievable! *Is it not I, the Lord?*



Viljoen family and Yip family (OMF coworkers) in Nagayama in 1982

Ultimately it is God who communicates the good news of the kingdom of Jesus through us – through words, attitude, and actions.

2. Counselling

I heard that a ramen shop owner in Nagayama wanted to talk to the “pastor.” I was reluctant and scared because of my lack of conversational Japanese. I prayed. *Now go! I will be with you as you speak, and I will instruct you in what to say.*

Once a week I went to this ramen shop mid-afternoon when there were no other customers. After handing me a bowl of ramen, Mr H would pour out his heart, in fast, sometimes incoherent, emotional words. I could not understand him but prayed for God to give me one verse for each afternoon. Time and time again, after reading this verse from the Japanese Bible, Mr H would say, “This is just what I need!”

To this day, I still don’t know what his problem was, but God did!

3. Bible studies

Mrs N had put her faith and trust in Jesus. Although her husband would not allow her to receive baptism at that time, I wanted to ground her in the faith. During a study about spiritual gifts, I asked her what she thought her gifts were.

In a typical Japanese fashion, she answered, “I don’t have any.”

“Yes, you do,” I replied. “Read this from 1 Peter 4: ‘God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another’ (vs. 10). What do you think your gift is?”

After a long pause, Mrs N said, “I know! I can understand what you are trying to say at the weekly women’s meeting and rephrase it so that all the ladies can understand.”

Exactly! Mrs N was my “Aaron”.

4. Nonverbal communication

Each Saturday morning, I attended the men’s breakfast hosted by the established sister church, followed by interaction with the Japanese pastor. I could not contribute much to the discussion but learned a lot, especially about non-verbal communication.

Often, especially in important conversations, what is verbalised is not always what is meant. God gradually allowed me to “feel” the meaning. *Who decides whether people speak or do not speak, hear or do not hear, see or do not see? Is it not I, the Lord?* Even today, I need to lean on God for heart understanding.

God who communicates the good news of the kingdom of Jesus through us—through words, attitude, and actions. The more we are in contact with Jesus—loving him and allowing ourselves to be loved by him—the more Jesus will connect through us, using our weakness for his glory. It is not primarily about our ability, but about God’s power and love.

Communicating in Japanese can be and is frustrating. Especially in my first term, I felt like I was in a black box with no light, trying to move the box forward by jumping and pushing one of the sides. God’s presence penetrates the darkness and seeming impossibility with light. “I will be with you as I was with Moses. I will not fail you or abandon you” (Joshua 1:5).

As it happens, I took over as Director of Language, Orientation, and Training at OMF’s Sapporo language center in 2000 (for six years). The first day I sat at my desk and opened the drawers. There, at the back of a drawer, was a file containing all the language aptitude test results. My result was in the 30 percentile, with the majority of workers in the 80–90 percentiles. Maybe God does have a sense of humour!

May our creator God who knows us intimately continue to encourage us all. His strength is made perfect in weakness! **JH**

Photos submitted by author



Mr and Mrs N at Café COEN recently

Ultimately, it’s about God’s power

Recently, someone said on social media that good Japanese ability is essential to communicate the gospel and is one of the keys to spiritual breakthrough in Japan.

I wonder.

While we should try and get the best Japanese ability we can, ultimately it is

Dale Viljoen came to serve in Japan in 1979. He is the owner of Café COEN / COEN English in Sapporo. He was sent to Japan by OMF South Africa and now serves with his second wife, Karen.

His mercies are

I'm writing today to encourage you

Dear fellow child of God, living and loving people in Japan,

Greetings from Miyagi Prefecture, my home where I live with my husband, three children, and one dog. My desire in writing is to encourage you—wherever you may be—to persevere, to hold tightly to Jesus, and to stay the course that he lays before you.

God's great faithfulness

I do not presume to have it “all together” (Phil. 3:12 MSG) or have any strength to keep going beyond what Jesus has given me. I know our Heavenly Father is generous in his love towards each of us. I also know he wants more Japanese people to know and experience this amazing love in relationship with Jesus Christ.

And so, God made a way for each of us to come to Japan, whether for a short season or a longer one. He has brought us to big cities and small country towns and to a variety of ministries. God brought us from all over the world, with our strengths and weaknesses, because he knows best and

knows where he can use our weaknesses and strengths to point people to himself. I asked God what might be a scripture or song that would encourage us all in this season, and he clearly brought the old hymn “Great Is Thy Faithfulness” to mind three different times within two days. Maybe you can listen to a recording, or read through the lyrics again, and be reminded of God's great faithfulness.

“Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness” (Lam. 3:22–23 NIV). This verse provides the framework for sharing some testimonies of God's faithfulness in my life and lessons I have learned.

Comparison with others never helps

In the course of living in Japan for over fifteen years, I have at times let my desire to “fit in” or “do things correctly” (at least what I thought was correct) have too much power. This has, in turn, created great stress—especially over time.

For example, as a young mom, I lived in a rental house in close proximity to our neighbors in a country area of southern Japan. All the women around me were awake and had their laundry hanging up quite early in the morning. So I thought as a “good missionary” I needed to adjust and do the same thing—after all, I had received good training about how to adjust to the culture. And the laundry wasn't going to get dry if it wasn't hung up early.

Some days I felt “success”—I got the laundry washed and hung up before the kids went to school. But most days I was left with that “I don't measure up and I'm not good enough” message running through my head. Eventually we found a coin laundry and took our laundry there to use the dryer, especially during the rainy season. (And now in 2020, we have one of those washer/dryers and a dehumidifier to help dry our laundry. But I still hang it outside on some days, depending on the weather.)

Over time I realized that how well I did my laundry or if I got everything right for school wasn't what was most important. My neighbors didn't ever

Be still, and know that

new every morning

scold me for how I did or didn't do my laundry. Neither did God. But I was certainly hard on myself for a time. I was comparing myself to others and you probably know that never helps—in fact it caused a lot of stress. But thankfully God helped me see myself for who he made me to be. And he continues to do that. I hope and pray you are learning to also view yourself through God's eyes of great love and grace.

God-given gifts

God has given us each gifts that are to be used for him. We know that because the Bible tells us. You may be like me and wonder sometimes if that gift is really a strength or a weakness, especially in your local context. But I can assure you that God has a reason and a purpose, even if we don't see it at the moment.

I tend to be empathetic and feel my friends' pain and sadness deeply, sometimes even for people I don't know. Once a friend told me, "Thank you for listening—I was really touched that you cried with me." She appreciated that I shared some of the pain with her. Another time a friend wrote me, "The church needs more people like you."

These voices affirmed my gifting and my choice to come alongside someone going through a hard time, even sharing tears.

Sharing tears in some cultures and contexts is seen as weakness and not welcomed. But God's given us John 11:35: "Jesus wept." Jesus shared in the sadness of the moment. And Jesus is the strongest one I know. I am so thankful this verse is in the Bible because it shows that Jesus understands our human emotions.

I've had the unfortunate experience of being corrected because of my tears, but even through that, God has held me and taught me much. He has faithfully affirmed my worth in him and how much he cares and understands. He's faithfully brought people alongside me or given me a song for that season. And he even continues to make ways for us to remain in ministry in Japan. There have been plenty of opportunities along the way for my husband and me to be completely discouraged and ask if God really wanted us here. At least for the time being, this is what keeps us here.

If you are going through a season that just doesn't make sense or seems like it is hard to minister in Japan,

please hold on. God knows and God cares. He will guide you step by step. He will make a way.

I want to leave you with the verse that God highlighted for me in the summer of 2016 when my uncle in the US was in the final stages of cancer. One day, after being very sick for many days, my uncle called us. He asked me, "What is the reference for the verse that says, 'Be still and know that I am God'?" My husband quickly looked it up, and from that day, Psalm 46:10 has been highlighted in my life.

The whole verse says, "Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth" (NIV). God is using you to exalt his name here in Japan. May we each be strengthened day by day for what is ahead. Thank you for loving God and letting him love others through you.

Your fellow child of God in Japan,
Rhonda JH

Rhonda Boehme (US) lives in Miyagi Prefecture with her husband, Erik, and three children aged 20, 17, and 9. They serve with Asian Access in a church plant.

I am God. Psalm 46:10a

Blessed are the broken

Kintsugi is much more than a beautiful finished product. Celia discovered God's grace in the process of mending a broken tile.

By Celia Olson

Running late, I fiddled with the last uncooperative string on my kimono as I eyed the heavy snow on my car. “Everything takes longer than I expect,” I complained.

“Doesn't it always?” quipped my husband.

I had prepared for weeks for this, the tea ceremony portion of a New Year Japanese culture day for new missionaries. This would be my first tea ceremony event beyond casually hosting friends at home. I had attended weekly tea classes; held strategy meetings with Kei*, my collaborator; practiced; chose utensils and kimono for the occasion; then practiced some more. Now, the morning of the event, I knew all that practice and preparation could not possibly substitute for a few more years of experience.

I pushed desks together to form a table for *ryurei*, a style of tea ceremony performed with table and chairs. *The students would be there in half an hour! Where was Kei?*

I set a heavy green and white Oribe tile in place to protect the table from the heat of the burner. This was one of Kei's favorite pieces of tea ceremony equipment, one of many she had inherited from her mother. As I waited for the water to boil, I scrutinized the placement of the table. Wouldn't it be better a little more to the left? I started to move the desks and *crash*—the precious tile shattered on the floor.

The organizer of the event heard my scream and rushed to my aid.

“Help,” I whispered, pointing to the shards of tile all over the floor. She got the vacuum while I carefully arranged the larger pieces on the desk. At least it was functional—the table would still be protected

from the heat. I set the hearth and burner on top.

Kei arrived. Red-faced, I explained that I had been in a hurry and failed to notice that the tile was positioned over the crack between two desks. She smiled; it wasn't all that important, she said.

The first group came in. “Is it customary to use a broken tile?” asked one eager student.

“No,” I answered through tight lips.

At my next tea ceremony lesson, I consulted with my teacher for advice on how to properly make amends for my failure. She walked me through the letter-writing process—there was a standard format—then sent me to her favorite shop to order a replacement for the tile. I checked the wording and grammar of the letter of apology with my Japanese teacher.

When the tile arrived a few weeks later, I delivered it with the letter. We talked and smiled, and I felt closer to Kei than before. She sent me home with a tea bowl in the same beautiful green color as the tile.

Meanwhile, the broken pieces of tile languished in the closet as I tried to forget about the whole experience. When my husband and I finished our first term and packed up for home assignment, the broken tile inexplicably got chucked in with the rest of the tea ceremony equipment bound



for storage. We returned to Japan ten months later, and out came the tile again. I cringed. Why were we keeping this reminder of a shameful episode? I shoved the box to the back of the closet and forgot about it.

Shortly after that, the pastor of the church we were serving unexpectedly left. As my husband and I tried to mend the broken pieces he left behind, we both burned out. I could not do any kind of church ministry for over eight months. In that dark place, God pursued me when I didn't have strength to pursue him. He spoke comforting words in the language of beauty and nature and art—*my* language—and I learned to keep my eyes open to find him in many places I hadn't thought to look before. I felt reaffirmed in my calling to Japan as I began to see God's love for me revealed in Japanese art forms like *kintsugi* and tea ceremony.

My long journey with *kintsugi*—the Japanese art of mending broken pottery—began at Tokyu Hands in downtown Sapporo.





“transparent urushi.” To my bewilderment, it wasn’t transparent; it was dark brown.

Painting urushi one broken edge at a time, I realized that God was doing the same kind of work in my life. Healing, like the art of kintsugi, is a long, slow process. God was not willing to skip the important step of cauterizing my gaping emotional wounds—the beautiful end product would come at the right time, not sooner. My prayer had no words; God and I sat in silence together doing the work of healing.

Two months passed as I waited for the urushi to dry and then waited for the motivation to continue.

To stick the pieces back together, I mixed flour, water, and urushi. The first two pieces clicked right in place, but as I added others, the edges got bumpy from the added bulk of the glue. I consoled myself with the thought that I couldn’t make the broken tile *more* broken, so I kept at it. I smiled as I remembered that God, the master craftsman, can be trusted with my healing; he’s not an amateur like me. He reassured me as I worked that he made me, and I was worth fixing.

I waited three more months until I found the courage to move on to the next step.

When I pulled the tile out again I saw that my haphazard glue job had not been a complete failure; no pieces fell off. I shaved off the excess glue with a razor blade and smoothed the edges with sandpaper. Chocolate-like crumbles of dried glue littered the kitchen table and the floor.

To fill the gaps left by missing shards, I mixed a paste of sawdust, cooked rice, uru-

shi, and some powder with an undecipherable name. “Aim for the texture of your earlobe,” read the instructions. “How can you tell when you can’t touch the poisonous stuff?” I grumbled. The lumpy paste clumped all over the surface of the tile, refusing to be coaxed into the gaps. Tufts resembling rusty metal, not gold or silver, protruded from all the seams, but when they were dry a month later, these, too, gave way to my razor blade and sandpaper. God was scraping off what was unnecessary in my life, I reflected, to make room for something more beautiful.

With trepidation lest I leave a bald spot or a drip, I painted a thin layer of red urushi over the seams, an adhesive for the tin powder (gold was too expensive for an early attempt and a project of this size). I waited thirty minutes for it to set.

After nearly a year of working and waiting, the big moment: tin powder shimmered in the air and coated the table. Tin powder got lacquered to my thumbnail. Some of the tin powder found its way onto the damp urushi. After it dried, I brushed away the excess to reveal what looked like silver emerging from the cracks, not simply applied on the surface—mended from the inside out.

We imagine kintsugi as a consolation prize for those who are broken, as if some people are whole, and others have been “fixed.” But we are all broken; we all need spiritual kintsugi. Our choice is whether we will allow ourselves to be fixed or whether we will stubbornly remain a pile of broken pieces forgotten in the back of the closet. God showed me that he wants to heal us; he will meet us in our brokenness and show his love in ways that are unique to each one of us.

The tile is finished, and I am in progress. I’m learning through this long process to be patient with myself and with God. No rushing or shoddy workmanship allowed.

Blessed are the broken, for we will be mended. **JH**

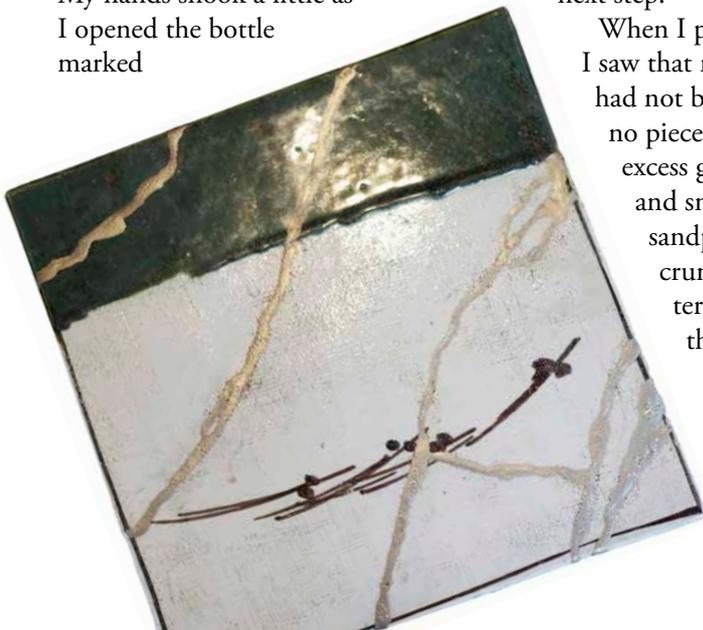
**Name changed for privacy*

Celia Olson is originally from Seattle, US. She has served in Hokkaido with OMF since 2009.

A humble cardboard box tucked in among the paintbrushes proclaimed that *anyone* could enjoy kintsugi. Images of molten gold and artisans with expensive equipment welled up in my mind. Kintsugi was something even *I* could do? Intrigued, I bought the kit. Maybe I could do something about that broken tile.

Kintsugi, I learned as I flipped through the instruction book, was much more than sticking together broken pottery with gold. The main ingredient was not gold, but Japanese *urushi* (a lacquer). The fine print on the side of the box contained a strict warning: the lacquer is made from a relative of poison ivy. Use this product carelessly, and you will get hurt. In the box I found two nail polish bottles filled with urushi, spatulas, rubber gloves, and an assortment of powders.

First, I had to seal the broken edges with urushi to keep the damage from spreading. I covered the dining room table with paper, checked the instructions, and pulled on rubber gloves. My hands shook a little as I opened the bottle marked



The fainting public speaker

God used my weakness and fear of public speaking to reach people for his kingdom

By John Edwards

In one of my early memories of public speaking, I remember gradually being enveloped in a fog and feeling dizzy as I spoke to my high school peers about friendship in a youth meeting of our church. I broke out into a cold sweat and felt nauseous. The 40 or so listening to me became blurry. Recognizing I was not doing well, my youth pastor had someone take me to another room to sit down. I suppose he took my notes and finished my talk.

I've always been very nervous speaking in front of others. I'm a quiet, introverted type of person. That experience in my youth group was the first of at least five times when I've had to stop speaking because I was on the verge of passing out.

On one occasion I was at a church to talk about ministry in Japan and hoping to raise financial support. I finished my last comment and then woke up sitting down. The assistant pastor had seen me swaying near the end of my presentation and had actually caught me as I was going down and dragged me to the chair. I don't remember any of that—just my nervousness before and during my talk.

I kept pressing on. I have received encouragement from many people: Prepare well, be confident in the message God gave you, don't forget to breathe,

get plenty of sleep and be sure to eat something. To get to Japan was going to require public speaking. In Japan, I would speak at camps, hi-b.a. clubs, and occasionally at churches. I would speak in both Japanese and English.

Some people have told me that my publicly spoken words have encouraged them. Some Japanese students in the Kansai hi-b.a. ministry even nicknamed me "Professor." All credit and praise belongs to God. I know I'm not a naturally talented speaker. I guess that's why I love the kingdom of God—so often, God uses our weaknesses to make the biggest impact.

I try to find ways to be with non-Christian Japanese on their turf. In December 2018, I discovered a Toastmasters meeting in Sendai that met at a time I was free. Toastmasters is a group for people who want to improve their public speaking. The Wednesday night Sendai Toastmasters meeting is a group who give speeches in English. I am absolutely amazed at the ability of the members of this group. Only three or four of the 40 members are native English speakers. And yet week after week the members give interesting talks on a great number of subjects from personal childhood experiences to politics to the first underground train in Sendai.

I decided I would make it known I was a Christian but would not preach. One man mentioned in one of his speeches that he did not like Christianity because it was similar to Communism and caused many problems in the world. Many people looked toward me when he said that. I simply smiled and took some notes.

When I touched on biblical stories and principles in a speech entitled "Jesus, the Kind Rebel," this same man said, "I really like to hear you talk about religion and Christianity."

Another person wrote in feedback comments on my speech entitled "Servant Leadership," "Your speech always contains meaningful and philosophic content with attractive delivery. I am deeply intrigued."

Alone, I am incapable of creating and delivering speeches like that. God has taken one of my weaknesses, allowed me to gain experience, sent many encouragers and positive models, and given me opportunities to boldly trust him to work. **JH**

John Edwards and his wife have been missionaries in Japan since 1993, initially with hi-b.a. and now with SEND International. They assist Tsubamesawa Church (formerly Seaside Bible Chapel) in Sendai and run the D House Sendai internship program.

What can this short-termmer do?

By John Edwards

Tim had no Japanese and no international experience and yet he would create a community for unbelievers to mingle naturally with a few believers

I didn't have high expectations for Tim. At 39, he was older than all of our previous interns. He did not know any Japanese and this was his first trip to a foreign country. His worldview was very American. And yet, God used him in remarkable ways while he was here.

For six years, my wife and I have been running an internship program. It provides a realistic experience of missionary life to English speakers interested in becoming involved in missionary work in Japan. However, how much can you expect from young people who speak little or no Japanese?

One day, Tim said to me, "John, I love how you run by the schools and greet the children. I'm going to do that with you." But after one morning jog with me, he hurt his knee and could not continue. Another day, he told me, "John, I really like how you engage with people and begin conversations with people wherever you go. That's what I want to do." But when I asked about whom he had initiated conversation with in the places he frequented every day, he usually hadn't talked to anyone unless they approached him. He sat in Starbucks with earphones in and a screen or book in front of him. He went to the gym and went through his exercise regimen without interacting with others.

I saw only his weaknesses.

When we volunteered at a *jidōkan* (a child center run by the local council) each week, a few of the children latched onto him. When he walked through the door they would call out "It's Tim!" Young and strong, Tim had great capacity to play hard with these children. As time went on, he asked if he could write a letter to these children's parents.

He wanted to let the parents know how wonderful their children are. He wanted to talk about how he came to know them. He wanted to talk about the love of Jesus. We received permission from the *jidōkan* staff, and Tim worked on a letter and prepared some small gifts including a Gospel of John.

On Tuesday nights, Tim went to an English conversation meetup at a café in Sendai. He showed up earlier and earlier and grabbed a seat right by the window nearest the door. Some came early to see him. Tim's questions went beyond self-introduction facts. He would ask questions like "How would you define love?" Several of the Japanese people enjoyed these new kinds of questions, and they liked Tim.

Over time, he learned about a new English meetup group on Saturday nights. When he went, several others were also there for the first time. Talking to them, Tim realized that several of them had come, not primarily to practice their English, but rather because they were lonely. Then he had

an idea. With permission from my wife and me, he organized a game night at our house and invited several of these lonely people over. A few came and brought friends (one of them helped Tim translate his letter for the *jidōkan* children's parents).

At the next Saturday English meetup, Tim announced he was going to go eat at a local restaurant afterwards and he would love to eat with anyone who wanted to come. Around eight joined him that first time. This became a routine during his final few weeks in Japan before COVID-19 forced him to leave Japan a week early. Since his departure, he has kept in touch with the group via LINE.

By involving myself and a couple other church-planting missionaries in Sendai in these relationships, Tim laid the groundwork to begin a Bible study with some members of the English conversation group. God chose to take a short-term missionary, with all of his weaknesses, to lay the groundwork for a new church plant in Sendai. **JH**



Tim (in gray) at an English meetup at the Segafredo Café (photo submitted by author)

Our God who connects random dots

By Bobby Caingles

God brought two singers together in an unlikely meeting in Japan

This article is an excerpt from the book: *Sukiyaki, Gospel, and Jazz: When God Calls Your Family to Japan and Cancer* (Chapter 17). It's about Ken and Bola Taylor, who served together in Japan for many years. Ken still serves in Japan and was JEMA's vice president for ten years until 2014.

The book's author, Bobby Caingles, writes: "Who would've known that my cousin would come to know Jesus after basking in the nightclub scene?

Who would've known I would give my life to Jesus after leaving the seminary and marching with Communists? Who would've known I would be writing my cousin's story after her death?"

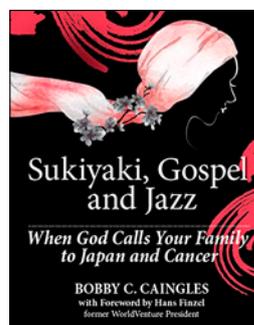
"God knew." These were words that Bola Taylor often spoke to her kids in 2015 when she was battling cancer. It's a lesson that many of us are still struggling to learn—how to accept that nothing happens by happenchance and that God is in the business of connecting seemingly random dots to draw an entirely new picture.

Among those seemingly random events that ended up connected was the visit of Sister Act 2 actress, Lauryn Hill, to Bola's deathbed. She just happened to be scheduled to do a concert tour in Japan at about the time Bola was to have her farewell concert in a popular jazz bar in Tokyo.

Available on Amazon.com - <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B08479T1JC>

Lauryn Hill's Sister-ly Act

In the background of everything that was happening from the day of Bola's birthday concert – up until the



end of October – was a lady whom many would describe as a powerful force of nature in R& B and hip-hop. She started singing for an audience at 13, developed into a composer, singer, rapper, record producer, and at 23, ruled the music charts. At 24, she broke several Grammy records

including the most number of nominations and being the first woman to win 5 trophies in one night.

She also happened to be the unforgettable young singing talent who, at 18, made her film debut in Sister Act 2. She brought an emotional depth to her role as a conflicted but talented young singer. And her unforgettable take of 'His Eye is on the Sparrow' and

her meteoric rise to fame. Many in media and among her fans have faulted her for this, describing her as suddenly becoming 'reclusive.'

Lauryn had read the Huffington Post article written and sent to her by Mark Joseph – "Bola Taylor's Last Concert: Singer Teaches Her Fans How To Live & How To Die." Mark wanted to encourage the Christian singer and let her know that God was using black gospel music and the musicale she had been a part of to plant seeds of the gospel in that part of the world.

Mark, an award-winning music and film producer, and the producer of Lauryn's song "The Passion" (from "The Passion of the Christ" movie soundtrack), had a hunch. He quickly checked Lauryn's schedule and his jaw almost dropped when he found out that she would be performing at MTV's Soul Camp 2015, in the 3,100-capacity Toyosu Pit event venue in Tokyo, and for other concerts in Osaka – at about the same time Bola

Two spirits united across the room, singing as one the classic hymn which Lauryn sang in Sister Act 2, "His Eye is on the Sparrow."

powerful intro to the movie's climactic "Joyful, Joyful" piece resonated loudly with the movie's viewers.

Amid the accolades, Lauryn had a spiritual awakening, started studying the bible, and applying the brakes to

was to have her birthday concert at Satin Doll.

Ever the producer, Mark hoped he could arrange for Lauryn to join Bola at her Satin Doll concert. But this was not to be. Lauryn caught a bad cold



Lauryn

For the next hour, she, Lauryn and Ken had an animated talk about Creation, Jesus being the fullness of the Godhead, spiritual warfare, the ‘sacred place’ God places performers in as they do what they are called to do, their life purpose and staying true to that calling, and the unique challenges of being in Hollywood (Lauryn) and being a missionary in Japan (Bola). “It’s been a while since I sat through a Philosophy class but that’s what it felt like. . . what a brain-and-heart-stimulating hour!” writes Bola.

Bola was fading fast and Lauryn noticed so they said their goodbyes. Lauryn was nursing a cold and so tried not to come too close to Bola. But Bola could not stop herself from asking for a hug, and so she did after putting on her mask. They hugged the way old, long-lost friends would: long and tight.

Later, Lauryn would intimate her reflections to Mark: “I could very well have been brought to Japan primarily for that meeting alone. . .”



Bola

during her flight and the singer was worried that she would compromise Bola’s health further if they meet. And so her appearance at Satin Doll was cancelled.

Failing this, Hill hoped to have Bola attend a subsequent show of hers but Bola’s farewell concert had so weakened her that she could no longer travel. A visit to Bola’s house was instead arranged.

Fans who had spotted Lauryn Hill at her Tokyo hotel hastily hailed a taxi and followed her car for an hour. The singer-celebrity had to step out of the car and sign autographs before proceeding to her next destination – the Taylors’ residence.

“Lauryn walked into my room wearing a mask as she had caught a cold in Japan. She reached out to touch me, wanting to hug, hold my

hand, or do something to connect but changed her mind to keep me safe. After we spent a few minutes of pleasantries, what followed was an unbelievable hour of God speaking to me through her,” Bola posted on her Facebook account.



What a night! Bola’s cup was full. But the experience would not be complete without one more thing. Bola said she could never forgive herself if she missed the chance to have Lauryn sing for her.

“How can I let the opportunity slip through my fingers?” Bola thought to herself. And so she asked, and Lauryn happily obliged.

Ken captured the moment on his phone camera – where two spirits united across the room, singing as one the classic hymn which Lauryn sang in Sister Act 2, “His Eye is on the Sparrow.”

Later on, Mark would write to Lauryn, “It tied together all our lives and work in Japan into a beautiful bow.” JH

Bola photo submitted by author

Photo of Lauryn Hill June 21, 2014 @ Sound Academy (Toronto) by Eddy Rissling for The Come Up Show

Bola and Lauryn scene from video by Ken Taylor
Book cover from Amazon

Bobby Caingles is a communications consultant in the Philippines. He and his wife Faith have visited Japan and are asking God to open doors of ministry for them here. He is Bola’s cousin.



Choosing contentment even in a pandemic

By Nancy Nethercott

The losses are real, but finding contentment is possible

During the months of having to “shelter-in-place” due to COVID-19, a friend mentioned that it felt like she was always having to say “no” to her kids. Things that were normally okay were now forbidden, dangerous, or not possible. We are used to the freedom of making choices. Not so in the midst of a pandemic where our choices are few and the response to so many options is “no!”

In many ways, the time of COVID-19 reminds me of 2011’s triple disasters in Japan. Within hours, life changed drastically. Store shelves were empty, schools and businesses closed, outdoor play was dangerous because of unknown radiation levels, and many people moved away for a time. For a while, it seemed as if each new day brought more bad news.

In February this year, I moved into a new neighborhood in the US and was looking forward to getting to know my neighbors, having church friends and students over to my place . . . you know, practicing hospitality like I did for years in Japan. But I didn’t have the freedom to do that for over three months. It was a real loss. Several of my English students flew back to Japan almost overnight—another huge loss because they were not simply my students but also my friends. My *only* Japanese friends in the area. It was as if I had left the country and people that I love all over again. What have you lost? What are people saying “no” to in your life?

How do we find contentment these days? I’ve been rereading the little book

of Habakkuk. It speaks deeply to my heart as I’m grieving various losses.

What could have gone more wrong for the Israelites in Habakkuk? They had been overrun time and again by enemy forces, the crops had failed, and livestock were either dead or had fled.

Habakkuk wrestles with God, but also pays attention to the losses and doesn’t sugarcoat them. He names them and voices his own grief and the deep grief of his people. In chapter 3 verse 17, we read what Habakkuk had to say about life at that time—it was grim. Everything was going wrong, and he names it pretty clearly:

“Even though the fig trees have no blossoms,
and there are no grapes on the vines;
even though the olive crop fails,
and the fields lie empty and barren;
even though the flocks die in the fields,
and the cattle barns are empty” (NLT).

But after grumbling to God and naming his losses (a good thing), Habakkuk *chooses* to make a declaration of faith and trust in verse 18: “yet I will rejoice in the LORD! I will be joyful in the God of my salvation!”

Then, in verse 19, he acknowledges who is in control, who gives him strength, and where his contentment should lie: “The Sovereign LORD is my strength! He makes me as sure-footed as a deer, able to tread upon the heights.”

While it is healthy to name and grieve our losses, we can find contentment in naming and celebrating those life-giving things that help us thrive. For me, in 2011 in Japan, cooking for disaster relief volunteers gave me purpose and brought contentment. Now, being able to teach ESL and Japanese,

and lead Spiritual Direction (virtually) are life-giving activities. Weekly cooking classes for my church kids via Zoom turned out to be a great way to keep connected with them, and to get to know them better! Daily prayer on Zoom with my church people has given a rhythm to my days and a connection with my friends, as well as an important way to prayerfully discern together how to move forward and find contentment. Instead of moaning about being stuck at home, I learned to treasure the space for silence, prayer, and time in God’s Word. Finding contentment comes in both expected and surprising ways as we keep our eyes on the Sovereign Lord, who is our strength.

A while ago, I used these verses from Habakkuk as a template to name my losses great and small; and then, in faith, chose contentment and rejoicing, naming those people and things for which I am thankful. Why not try that yourself or with your family or church people? We each have different griefs, but we have the same source of hope, peace, strength, and contentment!

Rachel Wilhelm, a Christian singer-songwriter, wrote a song entitled “I Will Take Joy” from these verses. I find it encouraging and have played it over and over again during this season. I share it with you here in hopes that it will help you give voice to not only your losses but also your faith: <https://youtu.be/J5oxsCCsSJM>

Praying for us all in this time of trial! **JH**

Nancy Nethercott served 30 years with TEAM in Japan. She is now based in the US and serves as Chaplain of The Robert E. Webber Institute for Worship Studies and as a Spiritual Director via Zoom.

Crisis provides chances

Responding to a prompting from the Holy Spirit, Amy reached out to her friends with her testimony

By Amy Li

After coming back to Japan (Tokyo) from the global conference earlier this year, I got a fever and a cough. On the one hand, I was afraid that I had been infected by COVID-19, but on the other hand, God also encouraged me to write my personal testimony and share with friends that I had had dif-

ficulty sharing with and are not yet believers. This was really a big challenge for me and it was hard to start. However, God encouraged me many times through devotions and Bible studies. So, I finally finished my Japanese testimony in late February and grabbed the chance to send it to my not-yet-believer friends when they sent me birthday wishes. In two months, I have already sent it to 25 friends!

Some friends didn't reply, but other told me their thoughts, and some even said they want to think about Christianity again.

I'm thankful God let me share this opportunity I had with my Bible study and church's cell group members. Through sharing and inviting them to pray, it helped them think about what they can do for God. Thanks to God for his guidance, which let me share the gospel to not-yet-believers, and also walk with Christians—these are the two missions God gave me in Japan.

Recently, I read this in a devotion: "If the surrounding environment is bright, why do we need to be a light on the path? We have to be the light because the world is dark."¹ This is also how God first called me to serve as an intern missionary in Sendai years ago!

Let's shine for the Lord in this dark world. **JH**

1. Translated from Erdaoizhijian, "A legend accomplished," Facebook, March 31, 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/erdaoizhijian/posts/2502607539987062>

Amy Li is from Hong Kong, serving at the headquarters office of Japan Campus Crusade for Christ. God called her to serve with the gifts he gave her and share the gospel to the Japanese.

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See jema.org for more information or contact wim@jema.org

Winter Day of Prayer

When:
Tuesday, January 19th
10:00-2:30
Refreshments at 9:30

Where:
Matsukawa Place,
Higashi Kurume

Spring Retreat

When: March 3-5

Where: Fukuin no Ie,
Okutama

Kansai Day Retreat

When: March 8



Japanese children's ministry resources

Did you know that there are many great Japanese resources out there for kids ministry?

By Helane Ramsay

Have you had that feeling of excitement and relief when someone else takes over a task you'd been dreading? Maybe it was jump-starting your car, baking a birthday cake, or making a speech. For me, it was creating kids' ministry resources in Japanese. I started googling to find out what was out there online, and I was thrilled to discover lots of great resources created by Japanese people for Japanese kids. In this article, I want to showcase some of the best of what's available online. In the coming years, I hope you can use these songs, ideas, and lessons in your ministry to keep on passing on the gospel to kids in Japan.

MEBIG— Make Everybody Believe In God or MEMory+BIble+Game

Kids' worship music

It's exciting to see a group of kids singing passionately about Jesus; they seem unstoppable. So hearing these songs performed by skilled musicians and written in lively, expressive Japanese with a strong sense of fun thrown in was a huge joy to me. These guys put out albums often and also publish PowerPoint slides and sheet music so you can play their stuff in your church! MEBIG aims to run seminars in all the prefectures of Japan to encourage great children's ministry everywhere. You can purchase directly from their online store or download the songs from a streaming service such as Apple Music. Check them out on YouTube to see what all the fuss is about.



► http://www.mebig.com/chapel_worship.html

LUMO

Multimedia Bible experience

Imagine being able to hear the Bible read to you in simple Japanese while visual dramatizations and appropriate sound effects for the stories play in the background. This is what LUMO offers, and the quality is excellent. Japanese friends who saw it were excited at how easy it was to understand and quickly shared it with friends who don't know Jesus yet.

For missionaries whose language is still developing, this resource offers a step in between running a Bible study in

English and preaching in Japanese. It could also be great to use for family worship or small groups too. LUMO may also reach Japanese people for whom reading the Bible is too difficult, putting God's word into their hands.

► <https://onehopejapan.net/lumoproject/>

4/14 Window movement Kids' ministry movement

Since many people make decisions to follow Christ between the ages of 4 and 14, this window is a key time for faith formation. In a 2016 survey in Japan, 51 percent of

Japanese Christians said they were saved before the age of 18. However, churches often spend very few of their resources reaching children. The 4/14 Window movement wants to see that change here in Japan. They want to equip and inspire churches to reach and rescue



kids, root them in the gospel, and release them for ministry. They run seminars and forums throughout the year, which you can connect with through their website. I am especially excited to see kids released for ministry. I am convinced that children are well placed to reach children and should grow up expecting to share their faith boldly rather than having to learn to overcome embarrassment as adults when social pressure has already become a motivating force in their lives.

Connect with the 4/14 Window movement and share the great quality videos they've made with your church to encourage an increase in church resources allocated to kids' ministry.

► <https://414window.net>

Bible memory song (聖書覚え歌—踊るポンポコリンversion)

This is just one song, but I want you all to see it because it combines many of my loves: equipping kids to use their Bible, using a popular song to increase fun, intergenerational worship, and protecting kids' identities online. I'm not fast enough at Japanese to keep up with the lyrics yet, but I'm

inspired to get there. I'd love to see much more of this kind of thing!

► <https://youtu.be/Yz08z8VwFvk>



One Hope Japan

Kids' tracts, apps, and manga

One Hope Japan researches and produces resources for reaching children and youth with the gospel, including the previously mentioned LUMO. They're supporting local churches to reach communities. You can order free boxes of books (you pay only for shipping) to give out to kids within your network. They seem to be really listening to youth and children and tailoring their materials towards them.



On their site, you can find The Bible App for Kids, an interactive retelling of the Bible in easily understood language with cute animations. There are also story boards (*kamishibai*) available that use the same illustrations. Also on the website are the other publications the group creates and promotional videos explaining the context for the resources.

► <https://onehopejapan.net>

Amy's free ideas

Crafts, games, Bible lessons

From celebrations to games to Bible lessons and parenting tips, Amy has lots of ideas! I like the way her Bible lessons bring so many elements together to teach the Bible in diverse, creative ways. She has a lot of experience in teaching kids in Japan and brings it all to bear on the material she creates. Many of the pages are available in English and Japanese.

► <https://amysfreeideas.com>

JEA Kodomo Project (JEA 子どもプロジェクト)

Resource sharing website

The Japan Evangelical Association has Kodomo Project, a website that brings together a lot of resources: campsites, games, songs, curriculum, media, and more. You can also submit your own online resources to be added to this site.

► <https://jeakodomo.weebly.com>



Seichō (成長, growth)

The Seichō curriculum aims to teach kids the whole Bible over three years. The materials are written according to five different levels of development so each child can learn at his or her own level. The illustrations are cute and appealing. The creators also run seminars to train kids' ministry workers.

► <http://www.wlpm.or.jp/seicho>



Future Possibilities

I'm excited by what I've found and still more excited to see more resources created and shared. Please share all the great Japanese resources you've discovered, too! I want to see even more resource sharing so that churches aren't reinventing the wheel each week.

I want to see resources that teach the big story of the Bible and more media resources that tell the stories of the Bible. I would also love to see it all coming together in lessons that teach a big idea through games, songs, lessons, and crafts that all drive towards the same teaching point. I want to see seminars on how a church can connect what they do on Sundays with mid-week programs, events, and camps to comprehensively welcome new kids into their churches. If you want to collaborate, please get in touch with me. **JH**

All images supplied by author

Helene Ramsay is church planting in Chiba City, together with her husband Adam and three kids. They were sent by CMS (Church Mission Society) Australia to partner with MTW (Mission to the World). Helene.Ramsay@cms.org.au

Top 10 Reasons to Study at Tokyo Christian University

by Randall Short, Associate Professor of Biblical Studies

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

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Missionary, you are called to weakness

We often come to the mission field with high expectations, but we forget that God's view of us is different

It's natural for missionaries to have high expectations when arriving in their new host country.

There is an expectation of competency: many missionaries have been trained, whether by their sending church or mission agency. Many have received post-high school education—bachelor's, master's, or even doctoral degrees. Recognizing the challenges of language acquisition, many have invested time learning their host country's native tongue. Missionaries tend to be a resourceful bunch.

There is an expectation of results: although this is becoming less of a trend, there is still the inherent expectation from supporters to hear about the results of your ministry. You are expected to share what God has done through your ministry—on furloughs, in newsletters, or via updates on social media.

Finally, there is an expectation of understanding your role: you may have been presented with a plan for ministry by your superiors or mission agency that has since been changed. Or perhaps appreciation for your role is not expressed in ways you're accustomed to, whether by teammates or the nationals you're ministering to. So, it's natural to begin questioning your role, feeling underutilized and discouraged.

We, as new-ish missionaries, have had these expectations too. And for most of us serving overseas, we don't realize we have these expectations until frustration surfaces. We're too far down the road of frustration in our own minds and hearts. So, we must learn through struggle, heart-break, tears, anguish . . . and hopefully God's Word. How do we, as innately proud, self-sufficient, and educated individuals called to the mission field, allow our hearts to interact with these expectations in a healthy and, most importantly, biblical way? It starts with recognizing we are weak.

That's right. You and I are weak.

The Apostle Paul writes about this concept of weakness in one of his letters to the Corinthian church. He begins by identifying where true strength resides: "But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us" (2 Cor. 4:7 ESV). Paul calls us believers in Jesus Christ "jars of clay." In the ancient world, this was a common metaphor used to describe human weakness. Paul, considered to be one of the most godly Christians we know in church history, says he'd been made weak.



What do we do with weakness? Typically, we say, "I'm fine," when someone casually asks us how we're doing. We fret and anguish on the inside, while outside being smiley and buttoned-up. We look to problem-solve before praying. We seek the counsel of human (albeit godly) individuals before seeking the counsel of our heavenly Father and his Word. But how did Paul respond? He embraced weakness (2 Cor. 4:10–12). Paul recognized that though we are born again in Christ, we still live in the flesh. And this flesh is weak, regardless of position, educational achievement, resumé, etc. We are weak, broken, frail, and sinful.

Yet, at the same time we are alive in Christ. This is the paradoxical reality of the believer's life. We have died to sin through faith in Christ, and it is no longer we that live but Jesus Christ who lives in and through us (Gal. 2:20). As his church, we are in possession of the same life that Jesus possesses through his resurrection. We are made weak so the strength that only God possesses can be fully manifested through Christ who lives in us.

Amidst the COVID-19 crisis, the language-learning valleys, team-chemistry struggles, hurt received from a Japanese person you're ministering to, or feeling insecure about your role within your ministry—remember to return to the gospel. We are weak. He is strong. We are sinful. He has defeated sin. And there is tremendous relief in seeing this gospel reality. God's strength will shine through our lives as we embrace the fact that we are weak.

Let us temper our expectations on the mission field, or in any ministry for that matter. We must die to ourselves; this includes our competency, desire for results, feeling secure in our roles, and a myriad of other expectations we carry on our shoulders. To such weight, Jesus' response is this:

"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matt. 11:28-30 ESV).

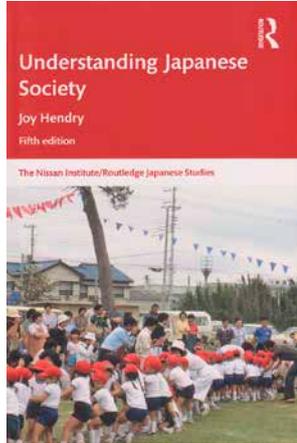
May the words shared from Scripture turn our hearts Godward, encourage our downcast spirits and secure our footing in Christ Jesus. **JH**

Justin Mitchell, from Virginia (US), has served three years with his wife Lindsay at Japan Baptist Fellowship, church planting in Yokohama/Kawasaki. Justin is the staff pastor at Denen Grace Chapel. They have three children: Clark, Mollie, and Bear.

Understanding Japanese Society

5th edition. Joy Hendry (Routledge, 2019). 316 pp.

I used the fourth edition of this book for a course on Japan I taught at a Bible college in 2016. British anthropologist Hendry has updated this excellent introduction to Japanese ways of thinking. This edition is 81 pages longer and includes the contributions of 12 scholars who have written short pieces from the field on the topics of the book. Hendry moves “from a discussion of small social units, such as the family, school and neighbourhood, experienced by any member of Japanese society . . . to larger institutions like companies,



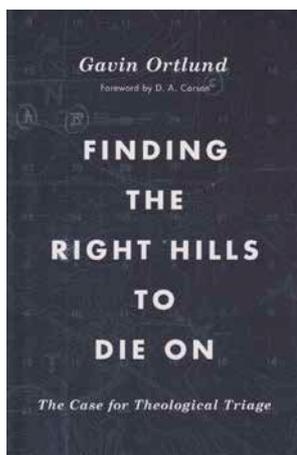
places of amusement, parliament and courts” (p.3). Each chapter ends with suggestions for novels, films and further reading. Hendry wants “to provide details about life in Japan, which all Japanese know because they were brought up here.” She looks at “the symbolic aspects of Japanese behavior, the non-verbal ways in which members of Japanese culture communicate with each other, and particularly the ritual behavior in which they participate” (p. 5). Hendry has devoted a lifetime to anthropological discovery in Japan. This is the book to read if you want a deeper understanding of the Japanese people. **JH**

Reviewer rating is 5 of 5 stars ★★★★★

Finding the Right Hills to Die On: The Case for Theological Triage

Gavin Ortlund (Crossway, 2020). 163 pp.

Ortlund, pastor of a Baptist church in California, begins by looking at two opposite errors (doctrinal sectarianism and doctrinal minimalism) to give a framework for thinking about the importance of doctrine. He shares his personal experience of changing his thinking on several doctrines, including baptism. The virgin birth and justification by faith alone are two examples he discusses of primary doctrines worth fighting for. Ortlund says we need wisdom and balance as we navigate the complexity of secondary doctrines. These doctrines are not essential to



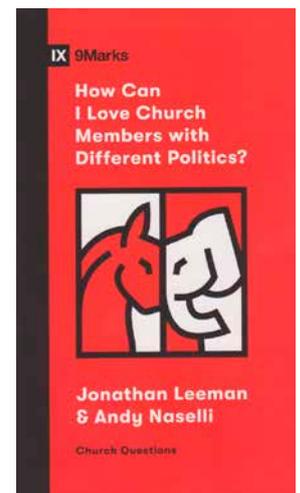
the gospel, but they are often important enough to justify divisions at the level of a denomination or church. For examples of these doctrines, he looks at baptism, spiritual gifts (continuationism vs. cessationism), and complementarianism vs. egalitarianism. In his chapter on why we should not divide over tertiary doctrines, he looks at the millennium and days of creation. He has words of challenge here about being strong enough not to fight on these issues. He concludes with a call to theological humility. This is a helpful guide on how to exercise godly judgment on what the Bible teaches as matters “of first importance” and where we should allow for differences of opinion. **JH**

Reviewer rating is 5 of 5 stars ★★★★★

How Can I Love Church Members with Different Politics?

Jonathan Leeman & Andy Naselli (Crossway, 2020). 63 pp.

This short booklet is packed full of wisdom. Christians often disagree on political matters. How do we respond to those to our right or to our left on the political spectrum? Leeman and Naselli remind us that our basic (fallen) posture is to always think we are right, to think that our cause is just: “Christians might agree on a biblical or theological principle but disagree on which policies, methods, tactics, or timing best uphold the principle” (p. 18). They have six practical recommendations on how to get along with those who have different politics. Although written from a North American perspective, this booklet will help all who differ with others as we remember to humbly listen to those who have a different perspective. They list 16 ways pastors can work for unity in politically divisive times and end with some recommended resources. They have also written an article for church leaders on the topic available here: <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/themios/article/politics-conscience-and-the-church> **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.



A shame-based culture

Issues relating to shame and honour permeate Japanese culture, strongly affecting the way people relate to each other

At the beginning of this year, NHK's *Taiga Dorama*, a historical drama that screens on Sunday evenings over the course of a year, was delayed by two weeks. The cause of the delay was that last November, one of the leading actresses, Erika Sawajiri, had been found in possession of the drug ecstasy, and so they reshot all her scenes using a replacement actress. One can only imagine the trouble and expense that entailed.

This demonstrates Japan's zero-tolerance policy towards drugs. But it also reflects the fact that Japanese society is very much a shame-honour culture. A reputable broadcaster such as NHK couldn't risk being associated with an actress whose drug use had become public knowledge. Sawajiri's reputation will be permanently tarnished, and her acting career may never recover. This is in stark contrast to the guilt-innocence culture of the West, where an offender's debt to society is usually considered to be paid once they have paid a fine or served a prison sentence.

Two books dealing with shame

Two Japanese novels that I read recently have driven home the shame aspect of Japanese culture. In both novels, shame wasn't restricted to the offender but enveloped their immediate family.

The first book was *Tegami* by Keigo Higashino.¹ The older brother of the main character broke into a house to steal some money, thinking that the old woman who lived there was out. When she discovered him, he panicked and killed her. Not surprisingly, he was sentenced to a long prison term. The rest of the book is about the discrimination his younger brother experienced because of his older brother's crime.

Despite doing all he could to distance himself from his brother and to make a life for himself, the younger brother was unsuccessful. He lost two jobs and was demoted in another job, was forced to leave a band when it started becoming successful, and was rejected by his girlfriend's family, so that they ended up separating. He was ostracized by neighbours, who had been friendly until they discovered his secret. The breaking point for him was when his young daughter was shunned by other children.

The second book was *Nozomi* by Shūsuke Shizukui.² The book opens with the discovery of a high-school student's murder and that three fellow students have been missing since the night of the murder. The book focuses on the family of one of the missing students. Even while police were still investigating the case and it wasn't clear whether their son was one of the perpetrators or another victim, the family experienced discrimination from others

in the community. The husband, an architect, was informed by the builder whom he had been working with for years that he would no longer accept work from him. A couple whose house he had started designing, phoned up to say they were going to hire another architect. And his older brother told him that if his son turned out to be guilty, he would break off all relations.

Both novels depict how the shame of a crime can powerfully impact a person's life in Japan, even if they were an innocent party.

A ministry book about honour and shame

Another book I've found incredibly enlightening for understanding shame-based cultures and how they differ from guilt-based ones is *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures: Biblical Foundations and Practical Essentials*.³ It has three sections.

The first section considers how the lens of honour and shame colours relationships and how actions are viewed through this lens. The second section gives a brief biblical theology of honour and shame and notes that cultures in biblical times were honour-shame based. A highlight for me was the retelling of the parable of the prodigal son through an honour-shame lens, which brought out many new insights that tend to be hidden from those who live in a guilt-based culture. The last section suggests practical considerations for ministering in honour-shame cultures. I plan to write more about this book in future articles.

The good news of the gospel is not just that Jesus has forgiven us our sins and given us his righteousness, as wonderful as that is; he has also lifted us out of our shame and bestowed unimaginable honour on us who deserve to be shamed eternally. That's terrific news for me, as I often feel like I'm drowning in shame. And it's terrific news for Japanese people, who are much more sensitive to honour and shame than those of us who grew up in guilt-based cultures. **JH**

1. 東野敬語 手紙 (文藝春秋 2016). Keigo Higashino, *Tegami* (Bungeishunjū, 2016).
2. 栗井脩介 望み (角川 2016). Shūsuke Shizukui, *Nozomi* (Kadokawa, 2016).
3. Jayson Georges and Mark D. Baker, *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures: Biblical Foundations and Practical Essentials* (IVP Academic, 2016).



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.



“you hold firmly to the word of life....”
 Philippians 2:16

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Japanese church thrust into digital space

COVID-19 has given us opportunities to explore ministry from different perspectives

This year, 2020, has not been the year of promise we had hoped. COVID-19 has exposed our dependency on in-person interactions, our technological anxieties, and a variety of interpretations by Christians on how to faithfully minister in the turmoil of it all. A major challenge facing Christians has been how to continue Christian activities via online fellowship and ministry. There was little time to find and set up substantial alternatives to in-person engagement. Encouragingly, the church has responded, adapted, and entered into what I believe is a new realm for Christian ministry that has been largely untapped until now, uncovering new strengths and potential.

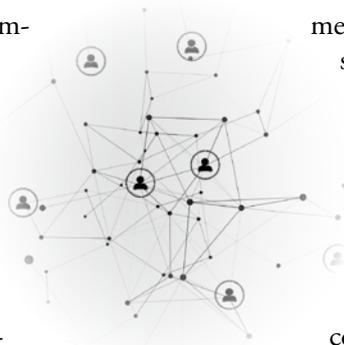
In Japan, you may have observed the perceived technological powerlessness felt by both the missionary and the local believer. To both, in-person activity is a critical component to ministry; this seems especially true in the Japanese context. The closeness created by any mode of communication outside of meeting in-person will never match that of sharing a table. This is a legitimate and appreciable reason why fellowship and engagement in the digital space has not been explored more fully until now. Along with that, technological literacy (largely influenced by demographic factors) has led to the preference for non-digital practices.

A growth moment for the gospel in Japan?

As the church found itself with no option to physically meet together to fulfill what God has designed the church to do in form and function, there were only two feasible options: wait until we could meet again or find an alternative. The overwhelming alternative has been to use video chat, livestream, online giving, and other online-based avenues to function. What was a typically distrusted and avoided ministry space became a lifeline.

COVID-19 has also had constricting effects on other aspects of life. Work life, parenthood, and schooling are just not the same as they were. Families have spent unprecedented time together. Individuals have been given more margin in regard to work expectations. For a period, students were unable to overcommit to clubs and cram schools. The generally negative social rhythms that Japan is infamous for were scaled back overnight, freeing up mental and spiritual capacity for individuals to more clearly consider their heart and spirit.

This situation has carved out new missional opportunities that I will summarize in one word: accessibility. The freeing up of schedules and release from social obligation



means unprecedented access to gaps in Japanese societal rhythms for believers and nonbelievers alike. Online communications also mean personal accessibility is even higher. Most everyone has access to some form of communication tools (i.e., phones and computers with Wi-Fi), so excuses are technically decreased.

There have been interesting results as a consequence of this new accessibility. For some churches, increased accessibility has led to increased demand for new small groups and Bible studies. Forced downtime has also led to an increase of new and more regular online video chat-based prayer meetings. People are getting creative with gospel engagement as well. Since video chat can be done from anywhere, people are developing ways to incorporate other believers from across Japan and around the world into their conversations with nonbelievers, thus globalizing the evangelistic task.

Lasting effects of the COVID-19 crisis

We have experienced firsthand how the digital space fits in the cracks of demanding Japanese life patterns. It has exhibited our availability and accessibility to others in times of crisis. It has shown us that we have fewer reasons to “neglect meeting” (Heb. 10:25 TPT).

We believers have been given a unique time to cultivate the digital side to ministry. Whether by force or joyful embrace, the concessions made to COVID-19 have had us looking to the digital space to express our Christian faithfulness. We now have ways to be engaged in the church or ministry even when we can't be physically present. This is true for many unreached segments of society we engage with, such as the isolated elderly, the overworked salaryman, and the inundated student. When many of those we are trying to engage are overwhelmed themselves, the accessibility and consistency supported through digital platforms is a viable option—in moderation.

Having been plunged into the digital communication world, we have been introduced to new tools. The digital space will continue to be an ever-increasing viable platform for the church expand into. We also now have a great option to pivot towards when events like this happen again. **JH**



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

Ministering in prayer

*"Prayer is not monologue but dialogue; God's voice in response to mine is its most essential part."¹
Andrew Murray*

King David decided to bring the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem to show that he wanted to seek the Lord, in contrast to the days of Saul (1 Chron. 13:3). But it seemed he did not know Levitical law well, as he had the ark placed on an oxcart, and when the oxen stumbled, Uzza touched the ark as he tried to steady it and God struck him dead. Afraid, David left the ark where it was, at the home of Obed-edom (1 Chron. 13:7–14).

After that, the Lord established David as king. He defeated the army of the Philistines, and the LORD brought the fear of David on all the nations (1 Chron. 14). Finally, David figured out what he did wrong and had the Levites carry the ark (1 Chron. 15:2), which had been at Obed-edom's house for three months (cf. 13:14). Chapter 15 describes the elaborate preparations David went through to bring the ark to Jerusalem. Things were finally ready.

When the ark was placed in its tent and all the sacrifices and offerings had been presented to the Lord, David gave presents to everyone there (1 Chron. 16:1–3). And then comes this verse: "He appointed some of the Levites as ministers before the ark of the LORD, even to celebrate and to thank and praise the LORD God of Israel" (1 Chron. 16:4 NASB).

I think this verse can help us as we seek to minister before the Lord in prayer—as we celebrate, thank, and praise.

The Hebrew word translated as "celebrate" is used often in the Old Testament. It is most often rendered as "remember." What were they to remember? Of course, they were to remember the recent events, but also the whole history of the people of Israel from time immemorial. What do you use to help you remember when you come before the Lord? Do you have things written down so that you can refer to them from time to time?

The word translated here as "thank" is a word that means to confess (both who God is and my sins), to praise, or to thank. He confessed that God is "the LORD God of Israel." He is LORD, Yahweh, the everlasting One. He is the only God there could ever be. There is no other. He is also their personal God—the God of Israel. What a God! Then David continued to thank Him in verses 8 to 36 (chapter 16). This psalm of thanksgiving includes parts of what we know as Psalms 96, 105, and 106. What a legacy! Only God is worthy of all our thanks. I know you pray and ask God for things. But do you then remember to thank Him when He answers your prayers? I hope so!

"Praise" here means to shine a light, to boast, to commend, and to praise adoringly. When we say "Praise the Lord" (and maybe shorten it to PTL), we really should give reasons for why. To do this, we can shine a light on a particular attribute of God or a particular situation that shows us more clearly who God is. Often the phrase "Praise the Lord" means little more than "That's great!" But we can change that. We can really praise the Lord by declaring who He is and what He does.

May we be like David and celebrate, thank, and praise the Lord. Only He is worthy! **JH**

1. Andrew Murray, *With Christ in the School of Prayer* (New York: Fleming H. Revell), p. 116.



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



God wants us to depend on him

*"Real true faith is man's weakness leaning on God's strength."*¹ ~Dwight L. Moody

Missionaries are people just like everyone else—with flaws, weaknesses, and failings. But when we receive our call to missions, we feel like we need to change. "The world cries for men who are strong; strong in conviction, strong to lead, to stand, to suffer."² This is the typical image of a missionary. Somehow, we become deluded into thinking we are able to handle anything. Fast forward to being on the field where something as simple as trying to figure out food labels at the store can be exhausting. In pre-field orientation, we aren't taught how to handle life when our strength gives out, and unfortunately, "there is no such thing as transformation by aviation."³ We need a training manual on how to be strong when we find ourselves weak and overwhelmed.



Lesson 1: Growing in faith

Hebrews 11 might be considered that training manual on how to do great things in weakness. It is a chapter on the heroes of the faith from David to Elijah. The theme of the chapter is that the most important thing is not ministry, but faith. "By faith" is repeated 19 times (ESV), which shows us that God is serious about growing our faith. Daniel in the lion's den, Noah building the ark on dry land, and so on—all are stories of weak people relying on God to make them strong in the most difficult of circumstances.

Lesson 2: God uses anyone

The second lesson from Hebrews 11 is who does God use in his training program. Prostitutes to kings are in-

cluded in this list. It's clear that there is no special group that God uses, and that includes missionaries. God can use anyone who depends on him when they are weak, and this dependence produces strength.

Lesson 3: Weakness is part of God's plan

The third lesson of the Hebrews 11 training manual is that growing our faith through weakness is part of God's plan. The key is found in the middle of the chapter. It says, that many, including Gideon, Samson, and David, "through faith . . . were made strong out of weakness" (Heb. 11:33-34 ESV). God often put these heroes in impossible situations for this very reason. For those of us who have been working hard in our own strength, it might be hard to accept that if you "deny your weakness . . . you will never realize God's strength in you."⁴

The secret on how to be strong is to admit we can't do it without God's help. In other words: admit our weakness and depend on God. "Missionaries must intentionally pursue intimacy with Christ and learn to abide in Him."⁵ In fact, God actually intended our weakness to be the tool that grows our faith. "Spiritual maturity is a deep, well-tested relationship to our triune God through our Lord Jesus Christ, and a quality of relationship with both believers and unbelievers that embraces concern, sympathy, warmth, care, wisdom, insight, discernment, and understanding."⁶ This faith grown through weakness produces a quality in our lives that attracts believers and non-believers to Christ.

We get misled by the myth that missionaries are supposed to be strong. But being strong in God's plan is to be weak. As our faith grows through dependence on God, people will see it and be drawn to Christ. This, after all, is the purpose of missions. **JH**

1. Emma Moody Fitt ed., *Day by Day with D.L. Moody*, (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1977) June 3.
2. Elizabeth Elliot, *The Mark of a Man* (Grand Rapids, MI: Revell, 2006), 15.
3. Paul Akin, "The Number One Reason Missionaries Go Home," <https://www.imb.org/2017/05/25/number-one-reason-missionaries-go-home/> (May 25, 2017).
4. Joni Eareckson Tada, "Maryland Rehab Center", <https://www.joniandfriends.org/maryland-rehab-center/> (February 21, 2018).
5. Paul Akin, "The Number One Reason Missionaries Go Home".
6. J. I. Packer, *Finishing Our Course with Joy: Ageing with Hope*, (Nottingham, UK: Inter-Varsity Press, 2014), 94.



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

God's power is made perfect in weakness

Our frailty gives God the glory, as he expands his kingdom through us

During elementary school in the little town of Reeds, North Carolina, I received weekly piano lessons from Mrs. Myers. She was a kind old lady who had probably been playing the piano since before my parents were born.

Soon after I began lessons, Mrs. Myers held her annual recital where all of her students played a piece they'd been practicing over the past few months. I was her newest student and had little time to prepare. We settled on that classic piece entitled "Chopsticks." I remember feeling a little embarrassed about how easy it was compared to other students and also nervous about messing it up. So Mrs. Myers eased my fears by suggesting that we play a duet.

Before the recital, she said, "Remember, we'll play this piece together. If you make a mistake, just keep going. You and I will be the only ones to ever know, and even the mistakes will become a part of our song!" When it was my turn, I sat down and began to play my simple tune. As Mrs. Myers joined in, the arrangement became complex and beautiful. Our notes blended together to make a wonderful song that brought joy to everyone in the room. Of course, everyone knew that Mrs. Myers was the one who was impressive. Her skill behind the piano allowed her to weave everything together on the spot to create beautiful music. Even my mistakes couldn't hold her back!

Recently, I've been reflecting on how that duet with Mrs. Myers reflects the way we work alongside the triune God to advance his kingdom here in Japan. I've now served as a pastor for almost twenty years, and most of that time has been spent at some stage of church planting. I have learned hard lessons and grown in dramatic ways, but I can also say that I am more conscious of my own sin and personal limitations than I was at my ordination service in 2001. I have come to realize that heart idols like reputation, comfort, and success are more powerful influences in my daily life than I want to admit. Consequently, I'm growing in confidence that the good news that Jesus welcomes repentant sinners is not just for others—it's also for me!

Gina and I came to Japan with our three sons in October 2012. We imagined that we would spend two years mastering the language before beginning a new church planting project in Nagoya.



To make a long story short, things did not go the way we imagined. God brought new expressions of sin and weakness to light that had not been factors in the past. Our failure to master Japanese is just one example, and it sometimes seems like an insurmountable obstacle for effective ministry here. But it is also a window that displays God's power working through our weakness.

Either cross-cultural missions or church planting are enough to unmask glaring weaknesses in any Christian. When the two are combined, there are daily reminders of our personal weaknesses and plenty of ongoing fuel for sin. Who is sufficient for either task? No one! Friends, that's the point.

Scripture reassures us of the good news that God is the strong one. Christ declared, "I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt 16:18 ESV). Paul reminded us that God gets glory by using weak men and women to accomplish his purposes in this world (1 Cor. 1:26–31). We are like fragile clay pots that house a priceless treasure (2 Cor. 4:7). When we, clay pots, don't shatter under pressure, it points to the fact that our true strength comes from God. As he expands the boundaries of his great kingdom through weak people, he is displaying his own power and glory. He is like a master musician who can incorporate all of the notes perfectly into his masterpiece of redemption, and even our missed notes become an integral part of that beautiful song.

As Mrs. Myers played, she displayed her expertise on the piano. However, as she did so, she was also building deep trust and confidence within her student. Our heavenly Father also invites weak people into his worldwide church planting work. As his power and majesty are put on display for all to see, our own sense of trust and confidence in his

loving care blossoms. Has that been your experience recently? If not, why not?

So, cheer up—you're probably even weaker than you realize. But don't despair—God's grace and power is greater than you've previously dared to hope! He is with you, and his strength really is made perfect in weakness (2 Cor. 12:9). **JH**

Jeremy Sink is a US missionary with Serge and a member of CPI's Leadership Team. He and his wife, Gina, have three sons and have been serving in Nagoya since 2012.

Keep it simple

My teenagers are currently into online memes. The genius of memes is their succinctness—they convey much in a few words, or no words at all. We can learn from that.

Michelangelo is credited with saying, “Take infinite pains to make something that looks effortless.” We admire politicians, scientists, and preachers who can explain complicated things clearly. But when they communicate in such a way that their ideas are the main thing we remember, then their communication is exceptional.

“You may not consider yourself a ‘writer,’ but to strengthen your writing, you don’t have to be. Good writing shouldn’t be reserved for English majors or professional authors.”¹ Most of you didn’t graduate as English majors. I didn’t. However, you don’t need a writing degree to be a skillful communicator.

Here are some ways to make your writing stronger:

- Replace adverbs with strong verbs (e.g., use “watch” or “monitor” instead of “continuously check”).
- Avoid the passive voice (e.g., use “The church distributed the flyers,” instead of “The flyers were distributed”).
- Think twice about using intensifiers and modifiers that may be unnecessary (e.g., “very,” “sometimes,” and “immediately”).
- Substitute single words for wordy phrases (e.g., use “now” instead of “at the present” and “to” instead of “in order to”).
- Avoid long lists of examples. Three are often enough.



- Opt for common words (e.g., “concise” vs. “breviloquent”).
- Swap nouns for verbs (e.g., use “decided” instead of “made a decision”).

Here are some tools that can help you identify ways to strengthen your writing:

- Dictionaries and thesauruses are available online if you don’t have paper copies.
- The “Find” function in Word is useful (type Ctrl-F on PC or Cmd-F on Mac). I use it to help identify an excessive use of constructions like “ly” or “ing.” You can search for words like “very,” “is,” or “that” and use it to identify repetitive use of a single word. Removing these will often make your writing stronger.

Greg Ciotti, a writer and marketing strategist, says, “Whether your job is to write support emails or novels, [all good writing] is humble. Hiding your toil is the final gift you must give your audience.”² So let’s take the time to revise our writing so that it communicates clearly. **JH**

1. Ali Mese, “Write to Express, Not to Impress,” Medium, <https://medium.com/swlh/write-to-express-not-to-impress-465d628f39fe> (23 September 2019).
2. Gregory Ciotti, “Easy Reading is Damn Hard Writing,” Help Scout, <https://www.helpscout.com/blog/damn-hard-writing/> (3 September 2015).

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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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God can use anything

How can God use a missionary's illness for ministry?

When we arrived in Ōmura, Nagasaki Prefecture, in 1981, Cathy and I were in our mid-30s, and our daughters were in elementary school. We expected God to use us in many ways right away, since I was a Japan MK and Cathy had known since she was 13 that she was called to be a missionary in Japan. We had previously spent two years as a family in Japan, mostly in Sasebo, and we all felt like we had “come home.” However, God’s ways are not our ways, and that’s a good thing.

Each set of medical issues opened doors of opportunity to touch so many lives we could not have met otherwise.

Being an independent missionary has the advantage of no bureaucracy but the disadvantage of no finances. We didn’t even have a “sending church.” Cathy and I both taught English, and I was blessed to get in right at the beginning of Nagasaki Rehabilitation College. Initially I taught English conversation but that progressed to medical English since I also taught at a nursing school that was part of the same organization. At that time, we had no way of knowing how God was opening up medical doors for us. In 1988, we were granted permanent residency, which freed us up to do almost anything a Japanese citizen can. It was good timing because shortly after that, I was cut from full-time faculty and had to go on the general national health insurance instead of the private school employee insurance that was much more generous.

Then in 1993, Cathy started passing out at odd moments. We know that angels can drive because one of those times she was driving and “came to” nicely parked several hundred meters from where she started after turning at an intersection! Tests revealed ventricular tachycardia, and she was started on medication, which thankfully was fully effective for her.

In 1998, she had to have her gallbladder removed. In 2002, an MRI revealed a small tumor in her brain, so from that point she had annual MRIs.

Each set of medical issues opened doors of opportunity to touch so many lives we could not have met otherwise. In 2005, Cathy was diagnosed with essential tremor, which runs in her family. Then she was hospitalized with acute diverticulitis (2005), fell in the house and broke her back (2006); and was diagnosed with Sjogren’s Syndrome, an autoimmune disease (2012).

In May of 2013, Cathy was diagnosed with pre-diabetes, so she got serious about losing weight. However, three falls in fairly short succession led to a diagnosis of Parkinson’s Disease that July. She hadn’t had essential tremor after all. Starting on medications for that made a huge difference in her quality of life.

In March of 2015, she was diagnosed with lumbar canal stenosis, a side effect of having a degree of scoliosis from childhood. The resulting pain from pinched nerves had her go from using a cane to being wheelchair-bound in a few months. She had surgery to correct the back issue in two stages, and thankfully, it was a grand success.

During all this time, the tumor in her brain had been growing. In February of 2016, we were told the time had come to take it out. A few days after the surgery, she was sitting up to eat breakfast and completely froze. The nurses were very thankful I came in at that moment: my looking in her eyes and telling her I loved her brought her out of the seizure. Because of that, she was put on a medication for epilepsy. Unfortunately, a side effect of that medication greatly increased her Parkinson’s tremor, so she had to take a special pill for that for three months.

Since then, she has had cataract surgery in both eyes and a second back surgery. In all of this, she has continued to go to rehab three times a week when not in hospital. People at the various clinics she has attended, as well as medical technicians, have stated that she is a good example for teaching how to care for this or that medical problem. It has also been said by many, “Your God is strong!” Virtually everyone who knows her admires her, and they know it’s because of God. **JH**

Jack Garrott graduated from Carson-Newman College and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He’s married to Cathy; they have two daughters and have lived and ministered in Ōmura since September 1981.



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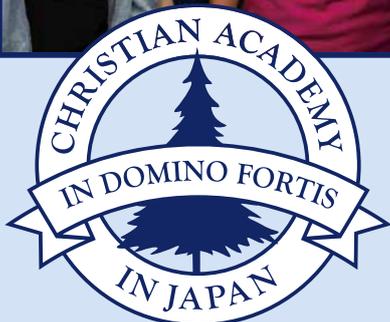
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