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Japan Harvest
Summer 2021

*Japanese
Community*

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Please note that event details are subject to change at this time of uncertainty. Please check with JEMA or organizers for confirmation.

Every other month

JEMA Online Prayer Gathering

The last Tuesday of each odd month in 2021:
July 27, September 28, November 30
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<https://forms.gle/3Q1G8nAVCc8oo2y27>



October

WIM Fall Day of Prayer Plus

October 5, 2021
Rose Town Tea Garden, Ome, Tokyo



January

WIM Winter Day of Prayer Plus

January 13, 2022

CPI National Conference postponed

The CPI conference previously scheduled for November 2021 will be postponed until 2022:



Nov. 9~11, 2022 (Wed.~Fri.)
(also a special early event on November 8th)
Tsumagoi Resort Hotel in Shizuoka

Details will be posted on jcpi.net when available.

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

jema.org

Also see our magazine online: japanharvest.org



Japan Harvest

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Japanese community

The word “community” doesn’t just mean “the people who live in an area”, but also “the feeling that you belong to a group and this is a good thing”.¹ All of us are in multiple communities—some are loosely connected or widely geographically dispersed, while others are knit together with close ties. It’s these communities that help to give us hope and strengthen our resolve to carry on. Which communities have meant the most to you in the last year? Whom have you turned to?

Community is essential

In February, we received the tragic news that a good friend of our eldest son had died by suicide after struggling for some time with serious depression. Our son is studying in Australia, and, though we couldn’t be with him at the time, we were comforted by the knowledge that our son belonged to a strong local Christian community. The young lady who died had also been a part of this community. So while they had been unable to prevent this tragedy, the members of this community were able to support one another in their grief.

Community like this is vital; it doesn’t matter where you live. God made us to live in community, and indeed he himself, as the Trinity, is a community. The Bible has a lot to say about community in the family of God. The writer of Hebrews included this exhortation: “And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near” (10:24–25 ESV). Towards the end of Jesus’s life, we see him pray for community, that the world might know God (John 17:20–26).

Culture influences how communities function, so it’s important for those of us who didn’t grow up in Japan to take time to understand community here.

Beyond superficial community

While writing this editorial, I came across this challenging quote: “Christian community is simply sharing a common life in Christ. It moves us beyond the self-interested isolation of private lives and beyond the superficial social contacts that pass for ‘Christian fellowship.’ The biblical ideal of community challenges us instead to commit ourselves to life together as the people of God.”²

Though this issue isn’t especially about missionaries, this quote makes me wonder about the missionary community in Japan, and especially the JEMA community. Are some of us settling for less than what God wants? As a missionary, it can be tempting to be something of a “lone ranger”. Have you felt that pull? Or have you resisted and invested in the lives of others and allowed them to invest in you?

Are you aware of the new initiative to more intentionally connect our JEMA community? It’s an online platform called JEMA Community (www.jemacommunity.org). It is a social media platform, but one that is private to JEMA members. It would be great to see many of our members join this online group and engage in developing our community by encouraging one another, sharing, and networking more regularly. It’s a place you can share resources or ideas, ask questions, or add an upcoming event that you think might be of interest to the community.



Blessings in Christ,
Wendy
Managing Editor

1. Macmillandictionary.com, “community,” <https://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/community> (accessed March 15, 2021).
2. Howard Macy, “Community: God’s Design For Growth,” May 29, 2011, <https://bible.org/article/community-god's-design-growth>

The themes for the upcoming issues are:

Autumn 2021: Men, Where are They?

Winter 2022: Technology (submission deadline August 30)

Spring 2022: Rest (submission deadline November 30)

Summer 2022: Mobilization (submission deadline February 28)

Gospel to Okinawa

Christian Shimbun, December 20/27, 2020

Translated by Grace Koshino

Gospel to Okinawa (GTO), a ministry designed to support church leaders, is gaining recognition. It's led by the Pillar Church of Okinawa. They work together with City to City Japan (CTCJ), which supports church planters and helps revitalize churches. The ministry often invites leaders to speak at their venue at Naha Baptist Church. They also host training sessions for potential church planters—drawing on experience from across Japanese churches—and provide ongoing support for colleagues planting a church with online materials.

in the United States that reach out to the US Marines. Pastor Ransom and Pastor Jon Simburger started church planting in Okinawan cities in 2016, with Booth as translator. Today, the church has around 200 members, most of whom are military personnel. GTO was established with the vision to plant two churches by 2022 and to become a bridge between Okinawa and the US.

Pastor Fukushima recalls that he was “quite suspicious to begin with.” When he was first approached by GTO, “it sounded too good to be true that they were willing to cover all the costs for

to do with a church connected to the military. But the more I found out about them, the more I felt that they could be the real deal.”

At that first GTO workshop event, when Pastor Fukushima was the only attendee, all the food prepared to welcome the expected attendees went to waste. He was touched by the sight of the people quietly clearing away the many chairs they had put out while concealing their disappointment. “I felt that they were true disciples of Christ. As I got to know the folk at the church better, I could tell that they loved Okinawa from the bottom of their hearts and truly cared for us. That meant a lot to me.”

Pastor Fukushima called out to other pastors and opened the way for others to join in. “GTO transcends denominations well and we endeavor to work together prayerfully.”

From 2020, a new study group for pastors' wives was formed, making the ministry even more fruitful. Booth says that “although there are many opportunities for pastors to study together, there are not many groups where pastors' wives can chat together and feel refreshed. It is my hope that GTO provides a worthwhile study for the pastors' wives.”

This year, a group of pastors will join together once a month to learn about gospel-centered preaching. To apply or make an inquiry, contact Satomi Booth. Tel: 080-3892-7255. Email: contact@pillarokinawa.com

Information for this article was also sourced from <https://pillarokinawa.com/mission/gospel-to-okinawa/> ■

“I could tell that they loved Okinawa from the bottom of their hearts and truly cared for us. That meant a lot to me.”

Today, around 30 pastors from different denominations from across Okinawa regularly gather to share church-planting experiences and practices together. But when GTO held their first workshop two years ago, there was only one attendee, besides group founder Pastor Jon Ransom of the Pillar Church. That attendee, Pastor Kazunari Fukushima, of Naha Evangelical Free Church of Japan, is now a member of the GTO committee. GTO's Coordinator Satomi Booth sent out emails and made phone calls to potential attendees. “But our church wasn't well-known, so I guess people were suspicious of us,” she says.

The Pillar Church of Okinawa is situated near Kadena Air Base. They are part of a group of churches

the ministry and didn't expect anything in return. Okinawa has had many bitter experiences resulting from ‘sweet deals,’” he says.

Historically, businesses would come over from the mainland to do a great deal of trading and would take most of the profit with them. Pastor Fukushima said, “Usually, people don't want much



Pastor Ransom in back row, middle. Fifth and sixth from the left in the front row are Pastor Fukushima and Pastor Simburger. Satomi on far right of front row.

Small groups as a key to missions in Japan

Christian Shimbun, November 8, 2020 Translated by Atsuko Tateishi

Three organizations joined forces to host a small-group online seminar on October 10, 2020. Seisho wo Yomu Kai (SYK) [Bible Study Group Ministries], Scripture Union Japan (SUJ), and Wycliffe Bible Translators Japan (WBTJ) organized the seminar based on the common vision that small groups would play a key role in mission in Japan. The seminar featured four keynote speakers, followed by a time of sharing in small groups.

Yoshiya Matsumaru, General Secretary of WBTJ, observed how God has spoken through different translations of the Bible in order to reach everyone in every language of every age. Mat-

sumaru believes that sharing the grace and mercy you have received through Scripture in your mother tongue can lead to deeper experiences of blessing. Takashi Fukuda, a missionary with WBTJ, and board member of both SUJ and the SYK, outlined the cur-

rent development of the small-group movement. The Bible values the leadership and gifts of lay members of the church. Fukuda believes that mobilizing lay members is urgent for

that small-group discussion not only allows you to grow in understanding of the Word, but also nurtures appreciation for the authority of the Bible. Sharing in a small-group setting often

The COVID-19 pandemic has driven Christians everywhere into small groups, where, by necessity, lay leadership grows stronger.

several reasons. In the non-Western context (where Christianity is not an established presence), ministry workers seek for low-budget means of mission.

Also, where there is persecution, people often get together in small groups at different places instead of gathering in a church building. The COVID-19 pandemic has driven Christians everywhere into small groups where, by necessity, lay leadership grows stronger.

Fukuda also shared some cases of churches in India and the Philippines where the small-group movement has contributed to church growth. Fukuda listed the four

keys to spiritual renewal: lay people, the Holy Spirit, the Word of God, and small groups.

Hiroataka Shimada, General Secretary of SUJ, spoke of the authority of the Bible in relation to group discussions of God's Word. Shimada said

shows you the gap between what you think and what the Bible says. By choosing to be obedient to the Word, you can impact group members positively in every sphere of life.

Isao Mizuguchi, Chair of SYK's board and Senior Pastor of Sakuragoka Christ Church, focused on the merits of Bible study in a small-group setting. In his church, members focus their small-group discussions on three topics: the sermon in the worship service, daily Scripture reading, and a book of the Bible (currently Romans) using a textbook by SYK. In a small-group setting, Mizuguchi has seen his church members come to think on their own, voice their questions, organize their thoughts, and learn from the other group members. When a pastor leads a small-group session, however, the members tend to become listeners, which can hinder their active involvement.

Mizuguchi aspires to see more Bible study groups in churches, workplaces, and schools. He envisions that non-believers joining a small group will be inspired by how believers share their thoughts on Scripture. Mizuguchi expressed his expectations for harvest through small groups. ■



Matsumaru



Fukuda



Shimada



Mizuguchi

Community, the key to introducing Japanese to Christ?

By Hoi-yan Shea

Japanese people are often drawn to Jesus through relationship first

In the winter of 2012, I had just been given my first placement in a small church plant in Sapporo. I was a new missionary, bursting with hopes and dreams and ready to share about Jesus with all of Japan!

But how could I even begin? As a foreigner in a new city, how could I start to befriend people and share Jesus in a nation known to be very reserved and suspicious of anything religious?

A timely opportunity came up to volunteer at the annual Sapporo Snow Festival to help build the giant snow sculptures. Coming

from Sydney, where one had to drive seven hours to get to the snow fields, I jumped at this unique opportunity.

Among the group of volunteers were people from all across Japan from their twenties up to their seventies. There was a lady from southern Japan who took time off work and paid for travel and accommodation to come specifically to volunteer at the festival each year. There was a man in his seventies who had been volunteering for over a decade and who brought photos to show us all the snow sculptures he had been involved in building.

We chiselled away at the giant snow sculpture in our ski wear and helmets in minus-10-degree-Celsius cold and slurped up hot steaming ramen noodles

cooked in the trucks of the Japanese Self-Defense Force during breaks. Despite the fact that we came from varied backgrounds and life stages, there was an almost instant rapport with the other volunteers. We were *nakama* (comrades), a community united by our common purpose—to see this 14-meter tall snow sculpture through to its completion.

Shared experiences make relationship-building natural and easy, even with generally polite and reserved Japanese people. I still keep in touch with two friends I met through volunteering, even though we all live in different prefectures now. By God's grace, during my time in Sapporo, they came to several evangelistic events and heard the gospel.

Sharing the gospel through the church community

Another distinct experience I've had of community was during my time at a Japanese church in Sydney before I came to Japan as a missionary. Even though I had heard many say that Japanese people take years to believe, that was not the case there. In fact, we regularly baptized Japanese people who confessed their faith in Jesus.

Japanese people are typically suspicious of any religion. Many would say that churches are *shikii ga takai* (literally: “the threshold is high”, or “difficult to enter”) and would never step into a church. Despite all this, what drew these Japanese people in? Was it the uplifting worship? Was it the enlightening sermons? Was it the scrumptious afternoon tea? These factors may



have had a part to play, but I believe that community was the key. Many of these Japanese people faced various challenges living in a foreign land with a foreign language. Having left their communities in Japan, many experienced loneliness. A warm and welcoming church community (as well as good food, of course) must have been irresistible for them.

In particular, I saw how God used one Japanese Christian couple, who ran a share house for Japanese women, to lead many to Christ. As they did life together,

many of the women came to church, and a number of them came to faith.

From my limited experience as a missionary, I see that Japanese people are often drawn to Christianity through relationships before its teachings. Therefore, I believe that an integral part of evangelism is creating community—a community where nonbelievers can not only *hear* the gospel but *see* its power by experiencing the love, forgiveness, and grace of God lived out by Christians.

The apostle John wrote to a Christian community, “No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us” (1 John 4:12 NIV).

Jesus himself states, “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:35).

Japan is largely a group-oriented society where an individual’s identity is closely tied with the community to which they belong. Japanese communities are often united by sameness and conformity. We have all heard the famous Japanese proverb: “The nail that sticks up gets hammered down.”

The Christian community, while sharing some features, is different to Japanese communities. We are not united by sameness but by Christ. Christ “is our peace” (Eph. 2:14). For this reason, we can celebrate unity with the diversity of the members. The church can be a place where individual uniqueness is welcomed and cherished,

rather than rejected or stifled. This alone can be greatly attractive, especially to those who struggle to fit in or find the local community groups intolerant and constraining.

The local church is where Japanese people can experience the true community that has been won for us by

In the safety of a warm and welcoming community, they are often willing to let their guards down and show their true selves.

Christ. It can be a community where people are accepted as they are and at the same time transformed into the likeness of Christ. It can be a community where they can experience genuine love, forgiveness, and harmony amid human weakness, sin, and suffering. It can be a community where Japanese believers—who are often a minority in their family, workplace, or school—can find fellowship, comfort, and encouragement to go out into the world and continue to be salt and light for Christ.

Connecting the Japanese people to Christ and his community

In 2019, seven years after my placement in Sapporo, I was placed in another church plant, this time in a small rural town called Yahaba in Iwate Prefecture, starting a church from zero. Work has been slow with seemingly little progress, but God has given my team opportunities to connect with people through involvement in volunteering, interest groups, and the local school. We have sought to create community by doing life together, hosting meals and BBQs, and doing leisure activities with our friends.

I met Eriko, a mother of two boys, when volunteering at a local childcare centre. “*Eigojin desuka?*” (Are you an English speaker?) her curious son asked.

“Yes!” I answered and explained that I was from Australia. Eriko and I

began chatting, and she shared that her husband was also a foreigner.

Eriko seemed to be a typical busy Japanese mum—working full-time whilst running the household and serving as a PTA member at her son’s preschool. She seemed open to friendship, and we exchanged details. We

had lunch together, went to a local festival, and she came to our church BBQ. As we spent time together, she began to open up about her struggles with parenting and her marriage.

“When I spend time with you all, somehow

I feel calmer, and I can be kinder to my children,” Eriko messaged one Sunday after joining us for lunch. Later, when I asked her whether she would be interested in learning about parenting from the Bible, she responded with enthusiasm, “Yes, I’m interested!”

While my team and I do not know where this will lead, we are excited at the opportunity to read the Bible with Eriko and trust in the power of God’s word to accomplish his purpose.

Many Japanese people appear to have it all together. They don’t seem to have any pressing needs or struggles. Yet in the safety of a warm and welcoming community, they are often willing to let their guards down and show their true selves. Over time, they share with you their desires and dreams and their pain and struggles. I believe these are opportunities for us to humbly, lovingly, and meaningfully speak the gospel into their lives.

Here at YahaBible Network, our vision and prayer is that through our small and less-than-perfect church, people will experience something of God’s perfect and heavenly kingdom. And as a result they would desire to not only be part of the community of Christ, but to invite their family and friends to also join. **JH**

Photos submitted by author

Hoi-Yan Shea has served in Japan with OMF since 2012. She was born in Japan and grew up in Japan/Australia. She is currently doing church planting in Yahaba in Iwate Prefecture.

People on the Way

By Celia Olson

Hints for walking the Way of Christ with Japanese friends

Walking feeds the soul. In the first summer of COVID-19, my husband, Keith, and I rediscovered our passion for hiking. With many of our usual activities on indefinite hold, we turned to Hokkaido's vast wilderness areas for emotional and spiritual nourishment. God met us as we walked, talked, and enjoyed his creation.

On these expeditions, we also met friendly hikers eager to share their love of mountains with fellow travelers. I enjoyed this sense of community and camaraderie while marveling at their intensity and expensive gear—Japanese hikers' passion seemed to be on an entirely different level than those in my home country. *What is it about Japan, I asked myself, that produces this kind of single-minded devotion?*

The Japanese language expresses this ethos with the character 道 (*dō*), meaning “way”: walking as a metaphor for a way of life. One might walk the way of tea (*chadō*), swordsmanship (*kendō*), flowers (*kadō*), calligraphy (*shodō*), or any number of disciplines that we in the West would call hobbies. With the ethos of *dō*, however, the line between professional and amateur seems fuzzier than I am accustomed to, and the purpose loftier than killing time or being refreshed.¹ Rather than casual interests pursued on the side, these so-called hobbies provide a sense of identity and meaning.

The spirit of *dō* permeates other passions and pursuits without *dō* in their names. In addition to tea ceremony, I would include hiking² and music as *dō* that I walk. Today I am writing at my favorite neighborhood spot, Tokumitsu Coffee. Despite its location in an insignificant suburb of Sapporo, the coffee here is the best I've ever tasted.

Every time I come, I thank God for Mr. Tokumitsu's single-minded pursuit of coffee-*dō*.

Walking on the way

What does *dō* walking look like? The following conversations and others have shaped my understanding of *dō* while giving me a window into the hearts of my friends.

In conversation with my tea ceremony class—as we enjoyed tea and sweets, beautiful utensils, friendship, and a cozy charcoal fire—our teacher burst out in gratitude. “We are so lucky! Not many people understand how beautiful this is, but they are missing out! We are so blessed to know the value of tea ceremony!”

In conversation with a gifted amateur musician, I put out feelers to see if she might help me with concerts for overworked and burned-out people.

“Your job is stressful, right?” I ventured. “Does music help you recover?”

She shook her head. “You've got it backwards. Rather than music supporting my job, I work to support my music activities. Music is what I live for.”

In conversation with fellow performers at a post-concert party, I was asked, as a professional musician, what I thought about this band of amateur Baroque music enthusiasts. I answered that they seemed to be having fun, and that I was surprised and inspired by their skill and passion.

In response, the harpsichordist explained: “Why do we Japanese take our hobbies so seriously? It's because we are searching for a ‘way,’ and once we have found it, we stick to it tenaciously.”

What is *dō*? It is a calling, pursued with discipline, curiosity, and passion. It is deeply communal—teachers and

disciples, friends and rivals, walking together and spurring one another on to excellence and growth. It is the way we make sense of our lives—finding meaning and a place to belong. It is life lived together for a common purpose. This all sounds very spiritual because it is.

I am the way

The Bible also uses walking as a metaphor. “I am the Way,” said Jesus (John 14:6). Luke used the term “The Way” to refer to the early church in Acts.³ The Gospel records of Jesus's travels⁴ around Galilee and journey to Jerusalem embraced both the physical and spiritual aspects of walking as Jesus lived life with his disciples on the road and set his face towards the cross.

What if Japanese are looking for a “way”—a *dō*—not a religion? *Kirisuto-dō* (the way of Christ) rather than *Kirisuto-kyō* (the teachings of Christ)? An everyday, heart-soul-mind-strength, communal way of walking through life? My friend said, “We Japanese are searching for a ‘way’ and once we have found it, we stick to it tenaciously.” But not just any “way” will do. The direction, the traveling companions, and the destination all matter. There is only one way of Christ; the lesser ways that each of us walk may end as meaningless diversions, but when we choose to walk in step with Jesus, these *dō* will display God's glory through the diversity of his image-bearing human children.

There is only one Way, but there are many ways to walk in it. God has blessed us with a vast array of spiritual gifts, talents, personalities, physical attributes, interests, and passions; these all influence how each of us walks the multifaceted Way of Christ.

How, then, do we guide our Japanese friends onto the Way of Christ? How do we show them the beauty of this one Way? *We walk with them.* We join them in the *dō* they are already walking, delve deep, listen well, find places in which their *dō* reflects God's character, and build spiritual bridges that link their *dō* to the Way of Christ, trusting that God will grant us wisdom to become good traveling companions.

Walking in community

What might this look like in practice? Each person walks differently according to their gifts and interests, and each will find different spiritual bridges, but I offer this glimpse of my own walk.

Mountains were my inheritance as a child of Seattle, and I discovered my calling to play cello at a young age. After I arrived in Japan, tea ceremony became God's gift to me and my gift to others. My calling and identity as a missionary are deeply intertwined with each of these disciplines, and they give me a unique language of worship and evangelism as I interact with communities of both Christians and not-yet Christians.

While hiking, conversations about the beauty of creation lead to praise of the Creator. Concerts of sacred music declare God's glory; sacred concerts of wordless music make space to reflect, unburden, and heal. With friends in my tea room, I express the gospel through the rich symbolic language of tea ceremony. All of these interactions take place in the context of being in community and living life together day to day. I show my companions that my ultimate purpose is not excellence or belonging, important as these are; rather, I walk my *dō* in the service of Christ and for his glory. Jesus is my traveling companion and my goal.

To help us grow as traveling companions for our Japanese friends, here are some questions for reflection:

- How has God gifted you? How is he calling you to walk?
- How does God meet you as you walk this *dō*? What is it about your *dō* that is good and beautiful? How does it display God's character and gifts?
- How can you serve God and others as you walk this *dō*?
- What common points (spiritual bridges) can you find between this *dō* and the Way of Christ, and how can you communicate these with your friends?

I have discovered that if I cannot answer these questions about how I walk—if I join a certain *dō* only to make contacts rather than embracing it as a God-honoring way of life and an expression of worship—then my relationships will be shallow and my motives exposed. What's more, I will find no spiritual bridges by which to guide my friends onto the Way of Christ. I must be prepared to walk with diligence and respect.

While hiking in Daisetsuzan National Park, Keith noticed a cross-

shaped signpost off in the distance, and insisted that I photograph him walking towards it. Seeing the photo, one of my hiking buddies commented, "What mysterious scenery! What could be waiting at the end of the road?"

He couldn't see the cross, I lamented.

For those of us who walk the Way of Christ, we know where we are going—this is the Way that leads to life—and we know the One who walks with us. Without him, we go nowhere. If only all Japan would join us on the Way of Christ! "Once we find the Way, we stick to it tenaciously." How beautiful that would be! **JH**

1. My tea ceremony teacher likes to remind me that tea classes are not play but training (*shugyō*).
2. Unfortunately, 登山道 (*tozandō*) means "trail," not "Way of Mountain Climbing" as I would prefer it to mean.
3. See Acts 9:2, 19:9, 19:23, 22:4, 24:14, 24:22; the Shinkaiyaku 2017 translation uses the term "この道" (*kono michi*). See also Acts 16:17 (way of salvation), 18:25 (way of the Lord), 18:26 (way of God).
4. Jesus climbed mountains to be alone with his Father. The hiker in me wants to know which mountains, how tall, and if one can still climb them today.

Photo submitted by author

Celia Olson is from Seattle, USA, and has served in Hokkaido with OMF since 2009. A Japanese tea ceremony practitioner and professional cellist, her passion is to connect people to God and each other through art.



The journey from stranger to friend

By Edie Rose Town

*How faithfulness in friendships
strengthened my trust in God*

I have lived in Japan for 30 years, most of them as an army wife. One thing I've learned is that becoming part of a Japanese community and building trust and confidence in relationships takes many years and a variety of shared mutual experiences. Language was a barrier from the start for me, and I also needed to "grow into" this culture and learn to appreciate the many differences in our two lifestyles, history, roles, education methods, etc.

I now have many Japanese friends, but there is one who stands out as my forever friend! Ten years ago, Kikue became my first English student at our newly founded Rose Town Ministries. I gathered a group of ladies with an advanced level of English, and we decided on doing a book club together. We met twice monthly, and began with Anne of Green Gables, a story they all read when they were in high school.

This book is a good one to use as a discussion starter about our two cultures—mine British-Canadian and theirs Japanese. This story about

a red-haired, feisty, little orphan girl living on Prince Edward Island in the 1930s contains many lessons about truth-telling, respect for elders, self-worth, and friendship. All these themes are intertwined with Christian ideology and values. We discussed Anne's struggles to understand why God made her as she was and where her place in life was. They, too, shared about family and personal situations that were tricky, such as living with in-laws, caring for elderly parents, and dealing with adult children who stayed hidden in their rooms (*hikikomori*). We discussed how Anne's adoptive mother taught her to pray and take everything to Jesus, as well as how prayer is viewed in Japanese society (they believe in prayer but pray to many gods, not only Jesus). Their openness to discussions about Christianity surprised me, as did their reluctance to become Christians.

One consistent student

Our group changed members from time to time, but Kikue remained

consistent. She was faithful and never missed a lesson, even after we experienced the Tohoku earthquake and tsunami of March 2011. Kikue and I spoke almost daily by phone after the quake, me asking questions about the announcements on the public address system. She informed me of electrical outages, changes in train schedules, gasoline shortages, and supplies in stores that were being limited to one per customer. We grew closer as friends as my dependence on her increased and my "foreignness" to her diminished. I—the outsider, the sensei—needed her help in order to have even a breath of confidence in that situation.

One interesting aspect of this period was that her husband willingly drove her to our lessons since the trains were not reliable. He would drop her off in our parking lot but was too shy to come in and meet me. However, one day via Kikue, he presented me with a beautiful photo of our place taken from the bridge. He was a professional moviemaker and photographer, and although I never met him, I learned many things about him through Kikue. In November of 2011, he passed away from cancer. Through this, I came to understand better the Buddhist views on death. I tried to comfort her during her early days of grieving, and especially to be the friend she had so faithfully been to me.

When my family and I opened a tea shop in west Tokyo (Rose Town Tea Garden), I asked Kikue if she could help us for a while since she spoke both Japanese and English. She assisted us enormously with understanding Japanese rules and regulations when operating a restaurant. By that time, our friendship had grown to the point where I felt confident in asking for her



help. Although she was 74 years old and about to retire from her lifelong job of teaching English to junior high students, she agreed and joined us. We were only open two days a week at first, but the word quickly got out. Soon we had newspaper reporters and TV people at our door. Kikue, being a private person, hid away from the cameras when reporters came for interviews. After the program on us aired, we were suddenly busy. Kikue stayed with us awhile until it became too hectic for her to continue.

Precious English club friends

As the shop grew, our group class times dwindled; we went from weekly lessons to just once a month. Currently, we meet only when someone has a birthday celebration. The amazing thing is that they have never said, “That’s the end of our English club. Goodbye and carry on.” Whenever I bump into one of them on Facebook or other media, we always talk about getting together again. I have had so many wonderful American military friends over the years but none who have kept tabs on me the way these dear, sweet women have. I am indebted to them on so many levels.

In November of 2012, Kikue, her friends, and I—along with a group of women from America—had the rare privilege of joining Liz Curtis Higgs, a well-known Christian author, on a tour of Scotland for five days. Liz travelled to Scotland ten times while writing her novels based on the story of

Jacob and Esau (Lowlands of Scotland Series).¹ All 35 of the other women were Christians. Every morning before we got on our bus to go visit a site, Liz led us in a devotional centered around the story of Ruth. It was a little difficult for my Japanese friends to understand everything, but later on the bus or at another time, we would discuss the devotional more. One of the Japanese women recorded Liz’s talks as well as our guide’s so she could listen again when she returned home.

It was during this trip together that our friendship solidified even more. Being among a whole group of Christian women was something my Japanese friends had never experienced before. As non-Christians, they’d never been to church or witnessed Christian fellowship. They saw how quickly I made friends with women I had never met before but had an immediate affinity with because we all loved Jesus. Every night at dinner, Liz chose a different group of women so that we could all have at least one meal with her. This was so interesting and fun for my friends! All of us were assigned different seats each night so that we would meet everyone on the tour and get to know them a little better. This was more challenging for the Japanese ladies, especially when it necessitated communicating with Americans with strong accents. However, they all enjoyed their mealtimes with the other women and managed fine without my assistance. Kikue made a lasting friend, and they have continued in communication since 2012. Debbie sends Kikue her

long, annual Christmas letter as well as copies of Christian children’s books that she thinks she will enjoy reading, including an original story she wrote.

I am so thankful to God for the way he brought Kikue and the other women into my life. Not only am I the richer for their faithful friendships, but I have also been able to share so many aspects of my life and walk in God with them. They appreciate and enjoy learning about Christianity, Christmas, Easter, having dinner parties at our home, making crafts, and hearing Bible stories. We have done some simple Bible studies together as well. Although I’ve presented the gospel in as many ways as I know, none have turned to Jesus to offer him their lives yet. They do not know that in the middle of the night when I cannot sleep, I pray for them, sometimes with tears, begging God, “PLEASE, don’t let me leave this earth without knowing that Kikue and her friends will be joining me in heaven!” Though I ache for them, I see now that their faithful friendships have led me in a process of growing my resilient hope and trust in the Lord for their sake. He is faithful and true, and his love never fails. We can keep loving others because he first loved us. **JH**

1. Liz Curtis Higgs, *Thorn in My Heart*, Lowlands of Scotland Series (Colorado Springs: Waterbrook Press, 2003). (Series of four books)


Photo submitted by author

Edie Rose Town is an army wife, mother of three, and grandmother. She owns a café, plays the piano, and loves Jesus. She’s been involved with the JEMA Women in Ministry since its beginning in 1993.

Community in the midst of a crisis

We experienced Japanese community in another situation when my husband suddenly received orders after the quake/tsunami from the US Forces, Japan, that he would be needed downtown in Tokyo at Ichigaya, the Self-Defense Force Headquarters. He worked with the Japanese military as the head US military person there for three months, helping with much decision-making and trying to work out details on how to proceed with the Fukushima nuclear power plant that was damaged in the quake. Each day he was hidden away for long hours in a large situation room with many Japanese Self-Defense Force members, working together to sort out

the various needs of Ishinomaki, Fukushima, Sendai, etc. In this unique work situation—while much of the country was under intense stress, disruption, chaos, and anxiety—he learned how to communicate with the leaders on both sides, US and Japan. I later learned that much candy was consumed during these stressful days, weeks, and months, helping them to keep their blood sugar level up, if not their energy! They had plenty of Japanese osembei snacks (rice crackers) and American jelly beans, Mars Bars, etc. He made friends with several of the officers and continues to stay in touch with them to this day, ten years later.



Life-on-life discipleship

By Rae-Anna Hedorin

*Deep, intimate relationships
create strong disciples who
make strong disciples*

In this time, when many may feel isolated, disconnected, and lonely, we pray that God will show us how to build deep, intimate relationships with the people he has placed in our lives. In times like this, people may find themselves susceptible to temptation. How can we be strong disciples who make strong disciples? What is life-on-life discipleship and what does it look like?

I began my Japan missions journey in singleness, so I have been seeking God's heart for the lonely. As I've been on my own journey with him, I've discovered that all I need is found in him. My passion is in the area of purity, which can be defined as learning how God can meet all our needs according to his ways. With the needs that may be found in a single woman's heart—to be found lovely, to be cared for, loved, and cherished—there is a temptation to meet those needs your own way. When I asked Jesus to be Lord over even this part of my life, I was saying that I trusted his way and timing, and that when I felt a lack, I would trust him

to fill that need. Each time I turned to him, he has met me unmistakably.

Deep desires of the heart are difficult to talk about, but meaningful relationships are built through sharing vulnerable things in your heart with one another. Vulnerability is key to building deep relationships—and scary! This is risky. You may get hurt. But wise, mutual vulnerability with those God brings into your life is so worth it. It's the difference between developing deep relationships or not. Most often, the profound conversations I've had in Japan began by me going deep first, and then the other responding in kind. Someone needs to start! Humans yearn for deep connection! We often feel alone in our struggle, even though many of us struggle with similar things.

The other day, a friend came to my home for the first time. It felt distinctly different from meeting at our usual restaurant. I felt a bit self-conscious over the imperfections of my home, but I pushed past it. It was an analogy of vulnerability: "Here is my life, my home. My home isn't perfect, nor perfectly

clean, but come in. Let's get to know one another. Let's walk this life together." In many cultures, and certainly in Japan, it's a common desire to invite someone in only when everything looks perfect, to present yourself as perfectly put together. But this is where we can learn the most from one another and grow the most. If you invite someone into your home—into your life—you can't hide. That friendship can be like a light in your life. The home is where friendship becomes like family.

Being disciplined

We cannot shy away from discipling and mentoring one another even in the tough topics. This requires an invitation into one another's life. We cannot expect someone to open up about the vulnerable topics if we don't also open our lives to them.

I am so thankful for the women God has placed in my life to fill this role. These women stand with me in my singleness as I seek God with all my heart. They've stood with me in prayer when I felt weak or discouraged. When

my thinking was not in line with truth, they have challenged me. We need one another! Single women need sisters. Single men need brothers. We need family.

Discipleship requires walking in the light. Sharing something embarrassing or shameful goes against the human inclination. “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin” (1 John 1:7 NIV). Confession is best in the context of relationship. Life-on-life discipleship is deeper than accountability. It requires walking together with one another, not just a one-off conversation.

Life-on-life discipleship is friendship discipleship—the opening up of lives to one another. I imagine Jesus had this type of relationship with his disciples, and they with one another. It would have been regular and consistent, throughout the ups and downs of life. When we are in this kind of close relationship it is hard not to be challenged and it is hard to hide our imperfections. Life-on-life discipleship includes meeting/communicating regu-

Most often, the profound conversations I've had in Japan began by me going deep first, and then the other responding in kind.

larly outside of formalized meetings, nurturing mutual vulnerability, sharpening one another, and bearing one another's burdens. It involves allowing the relationship to permeate all parts of life, so that it would not be possible for the person to be living a double life. It looks like intensifying the discipleship but simplifying the settings in which it can happen.

This life-on-life discipleship is beautiful when it's mutual, so no one is outside of a life-giving, sharpening relationship. Confession is best in the context of relationship. Life-on-life discipleship is deeper than accountability. It requires walking together with one another, not just a one-off conversation.

Discipling others

Jesus called all of his disciples to make disciples. In order to do that, we must know Jesus as that First Relationship. As a person who grew up in a Christian home, I missed out on this for years. I knew Jesus was important, but I relied on the community that surrounded me; I didn't realize I was only relating to God with another person in the middle. When no one was there, I felt utterly alone because I had not yet connected directly to his love for me. In his wonderful wisdom, he used difficult circumstances to teach me that he is always there and is sufficient for that First Relationship in my life. Singleness is a time where a believer can really come to know the sufficiency of God for them. Many women after marriage have to learn that their husbands cannot fulfill all their needs. Singleness is a time to learn this.

Once the love of God was firmly established in my heart—only developed through growing in my relationship with him—I was able to be strong in the Lord (Eph. 6:10). That is when I was able to disciple others while continuing to be disciplined myself.

Christ-centered community looks like deep relational connectivity first and foremost with Jesus and secondly with others. May one's community, even their Christian community, not take the place of or be an obstacle to going deep in their relationship with God, but to be what God intended. May we, as the church, know how to stand with and walk with one another in the beautiful way God designed for the body.

Deep relationships are built through consistency, vulnerability, and positive connection. My co-labourers and I are praying into how to model this in Japan—regular and deep connectivity through things like Discovery Bible (a discipleship tool which enables people

to read the Bible and discover what God is speaking through his Word) and sharing hearts with one another, and also eating and doing fun things together. This can be initiated by anyone among their own groups of friends. The ultimate goal in this is for singles to grow as healthy and whole disciples of Jesus, and in turn make disciples.

Practical application

1. Do you feel that you are part of life-on-life discipleship relationships? Who is God showing you to go deeper with?
2. If you are married, pray about a single or young person you want to connect with (on a regular basis, in a mutually deep way). The home is where the lonely are placed in your family (Ps. 68:6). And just as you would be a blessing to them, you can be blessed by their friendship!
3. If you are single, ask God to reveal someone in your life to “invite to your home”—to go deeper in friendship.
4. If you feel like you are surviving rather than thriving as a missionary in Japan, please don't wait until it becomes too heavy a burden to bear alone. Your heart is more important than your ministry. We at Onfire have developed bilingual Bible plans that are designed to do with a friend and connect vulnerably with one another.
 - a) 33 Minute Warrior—for men (English: <https://www.bible.com/reading-plans/21955-33-day-mens-challenge>; Japanese: <https://www.bible.com/ja/reading-plans/22026-an-ngo-no-ian-chiyarenci>), and
 - b) 55 Day PureHeart Challenge—for women (English: <https://onfire.jp/en/courses/55-day-pureheart-challenge>; Japanese: <https://onfire.jp/courses/55-day-pureheart-challenge>). **JH**

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Serving in a

By Tony Barrera

Some basic principles of how a foreigner can effectively participate in a Japanese church

Japanese church

How does a foreigner know if individual members of a Japanese church are effectively cooperating with each other? When we plan to support the work of that church, what are some things to keep in mind? More specifically, how can we become a contributing member of the church? We understand that the Japanese community within an established Japanese church has certain cultural differences from ours. Yet, what are some shared foundations for all citizens of heaven?

The power of the Word of God within the Japanese community

The more Bible-centered teaching a church community receives, the more Christ-like character the community can develop. The more the church community sees itself as a community of citizens of heaven (Phil. 3:20), the more the Word will permeate the culture of the church. We read accounts of this process within the early churches in the New Testament (e.g. Corinth, Ephesus, Colossae, Rome, and Thessalonica).

The Bible transcends cultural differences, philosophy, and history. This is one reason why it has been the most printed, given away, and sold book in the world. Therefore, when a church is established on the Word of God, the church members are equipped to fulfill the Great Commission—regardless of cultural differences. One example we see today is within the community of the Japanese church.

From a foreigner's perspective

For the last thirteen years, I have been serving as a preacher-teacher at

the Japanese church where I got saved 28 years ago. About 40 years ago the Kyoto Christian Fellowship Center was started by American missionary Berni Marsh and her Japanese ministry coworker Teruko Kawashima, along with three other people. Twenty-four years ago, the church was handed over to two Japanese pastors. It's still shepherded today by one of those pastors, Pastor Hiroshi Sōma. Over the years, through consistent preaching and teaching of the Bible, we have been constantly reminded how the Word of God is indeed alive and sharper than any double-edged sword (Heb. 4:12).

Our church focuses on discipleship and evangelism through equipping the

saints in the Bible (2 Tim. 3:16–17). The three points that I have found important for preaching-teaching are transparency, consistency, and reproducibility. In other words: being clear what is being taught, being consistent (using Scripture to understand Scripture), and working to the point that others are not just called to duplicate the process (2 Tim. 2:2), but are properly equipped to do so.

One result we've seen is that, although our church is a Japanese church, it serves as a fellowship center for internationals (residents and transients). This is not simply because, along with a normal Japanese language service, we offer a bilingual service. It



The author and Pastor Sōma

is because there is a focus on God's word while we engage as a church community (Eph. 4:1–6; Col. 3:12–17).

We've also seen a few of our Japanese brothers and sisters enter Bible study programs and seminary studies. Our church members have also started outreach programs such as The Little Lambs Club for preschool mothers, Bible Cafe for neighborhood women who have questions about the Bible, and the Silver Choir for seniors.

Our resident missionaries (Filipino, South African, Japanese, and Korean) use our church as a base of operations. One key thing they understand well is how hierarchy works in Japan. Vertical society (縦社会 *tate-shakai*) or hierarchical relationship (上下関係 *jōge-kankei*) are very important. It maintains order and helps keep harmony. Whether in the home, local community, school, place of work, or even the church, relationships are easier to establish and sustain when we understand our position within the group.

As a foreigner it's important to identify, understand, and respect the Japanese hierarchy mindset. This allows us to function within the group. It also strengthens our potential to contribute within the Japanese community. Equipping the saints to work as the body of Christ in discipleship and evangelism requires that we operate within the values of the community in which we are working. As the Apostle Paul wrote: "I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some" (1 Cor. 9:23 NIV). In order to fulfill this role, it is therefore important for us to understand the church community. One way of doing this is by communicating with the church leadership.

Specifically for missionaries

With years of experience working with missionaries from other countries, Pastor Hiroshi Sōma has some recommendations for missionaries when they



At the beginning of the worship service, the pastor (or the author if the pastor is not present) prays over each child of the church.

start to attend any church, especially a Japanese church:

Observe: How do you know if each member of the church is effectively cooperating with each other in the church? Consider the following questions when observing the church:

- Are they thinking about and building a missions program?
- Do they have a prayer program?
- Is the church body concerned about the salvation of every single soul attending church services?

Participate: If a missionary participates in a church, how can he or she support the work of that church? In the case of a small Japanese church, the church usually has a strong "family" relationship. Therefore, it is necessary to work within the prioritized policies of the church while being sensitive to the individuality of its members. If the missionary has additional spiritual gifts, they should ask the church leaders for their opinions on how the gifts can be used appropriately to meet needs within the church body.

Contribute: It is necessary to match the vision of each church. Before trying to do anything, approach and get consent from the church leadership where work can be done as a cooperating missionary. The value of report-

ing and communicating well should not be underestimated. In addition, while there are many types of tasks that can be done for the salvation of Japanese people, it is important to have a mindset of sharing the difficulties of Japanese missions together with others in the ministry.

Conclusion

The Japanese community, as observed within an established Japanese church, will have cultural differences to those of other countries, yet the Bible serves as a foundation for all citizens of heaven. Keeping in mind the power the Word of God has within the Japanese community, we must accept our role as foreigners from the Japanese community's perspective. Observe, participate, and contribute in accordance with guidance from the church leadership. As a foreigner who got saved in a church planted by missionaries, I know that there are many Japanese who are extremely grateful for your work today. **JH**

Photos submitted by author

Tony Barrera is originally from New York City. In 1992 he was saved at Kyoto Christian Fellowship Center where he currently serves in ministry. He and his wife, Kayoko, work at Kyoto International University, a Christian school.

Small churches

By Ken Reddington

God has ordained that a church grows organically, as one body, even a small one

I grew up as an MK in Yamanashi Prefecture. Each of the churches Dad started was very small, with numbers in the single digits. Then in college in Oregon, I was a member of a church with 2,000 people attending three worship services on Sunday morning.

I returned to Japan as a missionary, planting my first two churches in 1981 and 1982. Both are in the hands of Japanese pastors. One has almost 30 members, and the other is still in the single digits, just like the church presently meeting in our home.

So, having been involved with small churches in Japan and a large church in Oregon has helped me better understand what community is—especially in the context of the local church here in Japan.

The average church in Japan has around 40 members (who may or may not be active).¹ But because Japanese believers give sacrificially, that is usually more than enough to financially support a pastor and his family. In fact, in my experience a church of around ten members can often pay for a pastor, including his rent and utilities. That is a far cry from churches in America. I have heard that many churches need two to three hundred members before they can start to think about supporting a pastor. We can be grateful for the giving nature of our members.

So I can imagine many missionaries coming to Japan may have a hard time adjusting their expectations of church size. But actually, we need to realize that not only large churches but also small churches can thrive, especially in Japan. Let's consider what community looks like in Japanese churches. And let's be grateful for the existing churches as we ask the Lord to raise up more churches, more pastors, and more missionaries in this needy country.

Community and koinonia

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines “community” as a unified body of individuals. They can be unified by interests, characteristics, profession, activities, etc. So, we could say the church as a whole is a community. But there may also be communities within the church—based on age group, ministry, emphasis, etc.

Though the word “community” is not found in the Bible, it can be likened to the Greek word *koinonia*, which is usually translated as “fellowship.” “Koinonia” is defined as: “communion, fellowship, sharing in common” (from *koinos*, common).² That would define a modern church.

God has ordained that a church grows organically, as one body. For that to happen, there needs to be a sense of community, koinonia as it were. But, we don't need to have multiple groups within the church. The main goal should be to nurture a true community in the church as a whole, then, as the church grows in size, other groups (men's group, singles' group, etc.) can naturally form. But the main emphasis should be the church body as a thriving whole. “The whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love” (Eph. 4:16 NASB 2020).

Spiritual gifts

Have you ever noticed that some people in the church seem to be doing everything? And often that person is the pastor (or missionary) or his wife? It would seem that

many pastors have not read Ephesians 4:11 and 12: “And [God] gave . . . some as pastors and teachers, *for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry*, for the building up of the body of Christ” (NASB 2020, emphasis mine). The role of the pastor is to prepare the saints to do the work of the ministry, not to do it himself.

For the saints to take their part in the ministry of the church, there needs to be an understanding of spiritual gifts. 1 Corinthians 12:11 says, “But one and the same Spirit works all these [gifts], distributing to each one individually just as He wills” (NASB 2020). Every Christian has a spiritual gift, but there doesn't have to be only one for each person. Since God is working through each church, we can expect that spiritual gifts in a small church will look different than in a



can thrive

large church. In a large church, there would be many members with the same gift while in a small church, each member would probably have more than one gift. As it says in Romans 12:6, “Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly” (NASB 1995). With each member exercising their gifts together, the body of Christ—no matter how large or small—will be built up.

The value of community in Japan

As we know, Japan is a group-oriented society. Though we might have come from a culture that is not, we all need to accept who and what the Japanese are so we can reach them effectively.

It has been said that: “In Japanese schools, students learn about being a part of a group and the importance of moving with this group. This type of education is what forms a

fear of acting differently from those around you. Of course, every person is unique in their own way, but Japanese are taught to be group-oriented at a young age, and many people think that following what others do is the correct thing to do. In general, the custom of Japanese people is to prioritize being unobtrusive to their surroundings as opposed to making themselves stand out. Many children develop this mentality through their education, and as a result they tend to continue adhering to this as adults.”³

Because the group is important in Japan, in a sense that makes it easier for us to nurture the group as a whole. People are looking for a group where they can fit in. If we can lead them to join our fellowship and find purpose, meaning, and value in the church, we are that much closer to leading them to Christ. Most Japanese find that being accepted in a group helps them to accept Jesus as their Savior.

The plurality principle

As a young seminary student, I studied about a plurality of elders (pastors)—the concept of more than one pastor in a church. My home church in Oregon was a good example: there were seven pastors/elders besides deacons. That was what I wanted. But when I came back to Japan as a church-planting missionary, I realized the situation here was vastly different from that in America. Here in Japan, most churches have only one pastor—and many have none at all. So how can we keep churches from being an unhealthy one-man show?

Even if it is impossible to have multiple leaders in the church, we need to develop an accountability framework for what we do. I had a men-

tor in another city on our island with whom I would talk on the phone for at least an hour every week. He also came every month to help me with my first two church plants, and his wife came once a month to do cooking classes.

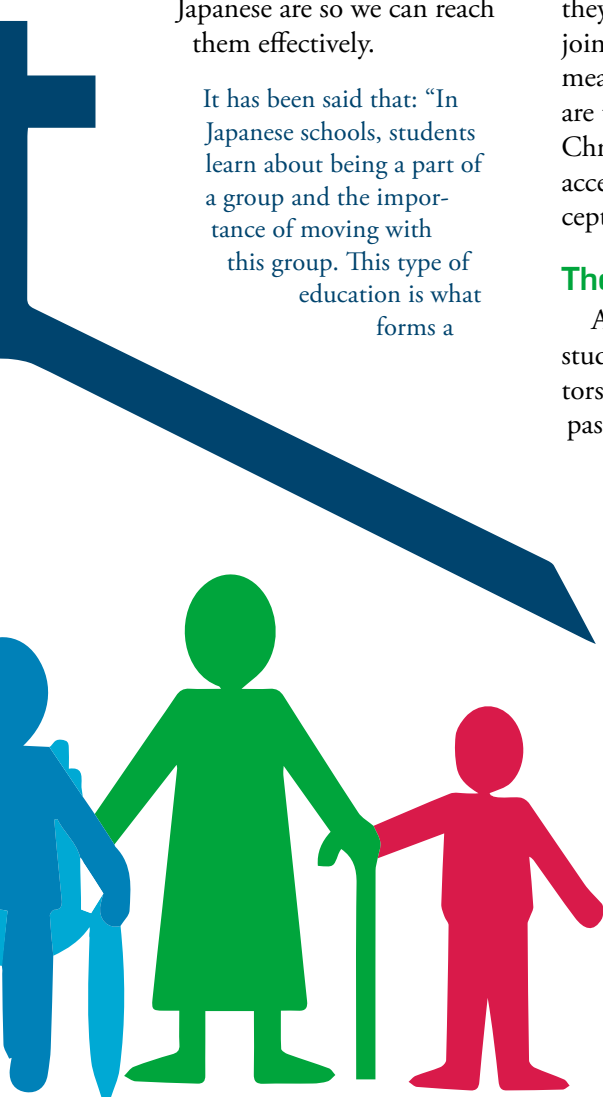
But even after that mentoring relationship had changed, I had other pastors to bounce ideas off of and pray together with. And, of course, I had my wife—she’s a very important part of my ministry. All these relationships of accountability keep us humble so we can do what God wants us to do the way he wants us to do it. So, even though Japanese churches don’t often have more than one official leader, we can offer support to leaders so that they are not left to function on their own.⁴

Small churches can thrive

Church growth seminars and books are fine, but we need to acknowledge the situation before us. In other words, we need to deal what we have (the realities) before we can think about what we want (our dreams). Our Lord said, “I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it” (Matt. 16:18 NASB 2020). May we take joy in his calling us to join him in building up the church in Japan. **JH**

1. In 2014, worship service average attendance was 39.9 people, but membership average was 62.7 people. From *クリスチャン情報ブック* [Christian Data Book] 2016 (Japan: Inochi no kotoba sha, 2015), 6.
2. Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, <https://studybible.info/vines/Fellowship> (accessed April 1, 2021).
3. Keisuke Tsunekawa, “6 Reasons Why Japanese Cannot Speak English According to a Japanese Local,” from *Tsunagu Japan*, <https://www.tsunagu-japan.com/6-real-reasons-why-japanese-cannot-speak-english/> (August 29, 2019).
4. For a good read about the plurality principle, check out the following article. Though it’s not about church-planting, it provides insight on a healthy leadership structure: <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/reviews/plurality-principle>

Ken Reddington and his wife, Toshiko, are church-planting missionaries in Kochi-ken. Ken is an MK who returned to Japan as a missionary from the US in 1978.



Loss of community in Japan

By Brett Rayl

How should missionaries approach Japan's "no-relationship society"?

Tetsushi Sakamoto already had a challenging job in Japan's cabinet, but it just got harder. Sakamoto, the Minister of State for Regional Revitalization and Minister of State for Measures for Declining Birthrate, is now also serving as Japan's first Minister of Loneliness. This new office is an holistic effort by the current administration to curb the recent spike in suicides.¹ The Japanese government recognizes loneliness as the central issue leading to disturbingly high rates of suicide, *hikikomori* (acute social withdrawal), dying alone (*kodokushi*), and other societal ills that plague Japan in the modern era.

All of these societal woes flow from a single reality—the loss of community in modern Japan. The term *muen shakai* was introduced in an NHK

documentary in 2010 and describes modern Japan as a “no-relationship society.” My colleague Dr. Takanori Oba (who first introduced me to the concept) describes this as the cutting off of blood ties, territorial ties, and company ties, which he associates largely with a growing loss of religious connection. *Muen shakai* developed in postwar Japan as society rapidly industrialized, urbanized, and individualized.

From a Western perspective, Japan may not seem to be overly individualized. There remains a strong collectiv-

ist culture, and as Matthew Taylor of Kinjō Gakuin University points out, “*Muen shakai* will seem especially striking in a country known (and not too long ago) for its filial piety and strong social ties.”² However, despite this history and cultural tradition, Japanese citizens are increasingly isolated from real, meaningful human interaction. The population in Japan is shrinking almost everywhere besides the biggest cities where young people move for work and entertainment. Work requires relationships, but these are contractual and the demands of company work often create obstacles to friendships, dating, marriage, and starting families. Lifelong employment is no longer the norm, which leads to greater social mobility but also less rootedness. Entertainment, which could seem to combat loneliness, is increasingly consumed alone and tends to exacerbate the isolation.

The Minister of Loneliness faces a seemingly impossible challenge as the pandemic further isolates and leads to more suicides, more people dying alone, and more work for the special cleaning people (*tokushu seisō gyōsha*) who care for the forgotten dead.

The role of missionaries

A no-relationship society poses major challenges for Japan's future, but missionaries are not surprised. Many missionaries knew of these societal woes prior to learning of Japan's spiritual needs, and many have been able to minister well to lonely Japanese neighbors through ministries focused on building community. At the same time, it is important to see that, even as missionaries have been able to serve within *muen shakai*, we may also inadvertently reinforce it. In certain ways,

missionaries have embraced this trend more than resisted it.

I will observe a few potential connections rather than offer a thorough critique. Just because our activities may contribute to a larger societal problem does not mean that we forsake our callings. However, if our activities may be contributing to one of the larger social problems facing Japan, it is helpful to reflect on our approaches. I will look at three examples of how missionaries may reinforce the loss of connection in Japan. Each of these deserves more attention for true reflection, and my hope is to encourage that kind of thoughtfulness.

Evangelism and individualism

A common approach to sharing the gospel requires Japanese to be converted to individualism first and Christianity second. Missionaries to Japan from the West often unknowingly possess an anthropology (an understanding of how humans work) of individualism. We became Christians when someone led us to the point of a personal decision for Christ. We became missionaries when we sensed a personal call to go. And we have been taught that personal freedom is perhaps the greatest fruit of the gospel. However, by living in Japan, many of us now realize that our anthropology is largely cultural and



not entirely biblical. That's not to say the Bible does not uphold the importance of the individual, but it's not the same as the Western anthropology of individualism.

When Western missionaries share the gospel, we instinctively press our Japanese friends for an individual decision. We imagine the disciples independently dropping their nets to follow Jesus, but perhaps forget that these disciples had families and coworkers (Mark 1:16-20). We remember the call of Christ for disciples to leave brothers and sisters and fathers and mothers (Mark 10:29) and perhaps overlook that the first mass healing in Jesus' ministry began with healing Peter's mother-in-law (Mark 1:29-33). Following Christ certainly involves an individual forsaking all to follow Christ, but within Scripture, as theologian John Frame has observed, "[The] principle is that God is gathering families, not just individuals, into his kingdom."³

Overly prioritizing the city

Missionaries to Japan have mostly served the largest cities. As of 2019, a large majority of missionaries were serving within the Tokaido megalopolis of Tokyo-Nagoya-Osaka.⁴ This is partially practical because a majority of the Japanese population lives in these metropolitan areas. However, there can be a tendency to aggrandize the city based on strategy (cities as centers of cultural influence) and even eschatology (the biblical narrative moves from a garden to a city).

While the city is populous and plays an important role both now and in the future, the modern industrialized city is not the New Jerusalem, and it does not exist in a healthy symbiotic relationship with the countryside. Rather, the ravenous modern city strips the countryside of people and natural resources as Hayao Miyaza-

ki loves to depict in his animated epics. It may be that culture trickles down to the country from the city, but it is also true that the modern city is a consuming vacuum that takes far more than it gives. Muen shakai has developed with the creation of giant cities where people are drawn to be lonely together.

For missionaries, the potential for impact in smaller towns could prove to be surprisingly strategic to resist the trend of losing connection. The populations are smaller, but social ties are more likely to remain intact, and the pace of life allows for more human connection. The government also wants to see revitalization in these regional areas, and this could provide more opportunities for outsiders to find a place to serve the community.

Liturgies of loneliness

Lastly, there is the issue of our own liturgies of loneliness. Here I follow James K. A. Smith's understanding of liturgies as "rituals of ultimate concern."⁵ Most of us are from countries that have some version of muen shakai at work. The first country to appoint a Minister of Loneliness was not Japan, but the United Kingdom.⁶ Suicide rates have been steadily rising in America for over a decade, even before COVID-19.⁷ We are not immune to the effects of urbanization, industrialization, and addictive entertainment that isolates us from organic community. When missionaries come to Japan to minister to lonely people, we bring our own loneliness and discover more loneliness upon arriving. Outside of ministry time, it is far too easy to "doomscroll" Twitter,⁸ hop on Instagram for a dopamine hit, or "Netflix and chill" in hopes that our loneliness will go away. But our rituals for escaping loneliness actually make us lonelier and less empowered to challenge the loss of connection.

A no-connection society provides a context for us instead to explore the Christian discipline of solitude even as we seek to encourage community. Richard J. Foster helpfully contrasts loneliness and solitude: "Loneliness is inner emptiness. Solitude is inner fulfillment."⁹ By learning to practice

solitude and silence, we forsake our coping mechanisms in search of inward gospel renewal, making us ready for deeper experiences of community. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer exhorted, "Let him who cannot be alone beware of community."¹⁰

The hope in all of this reflection is to spur us on to more missional consideration and discussion so that missionaries might better transform the situation surrounding muen shakai and not simply make the most of it. **JH**

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“You are the first foreigners I have ever known to do this job.”

Serving as a *hanchō*

By John Edwards

Susan and I entered the gate to the local community center for a local festival. We greeted some of our neighbors and their children who were dressed in colorful yukata. A gentleman in a suit approached us.

“Are you Mr. Edwards?”

“Yes, I am.”

“So, you’re the *hanchō*, right? I’ve never seen a foreigner’s name on the list of *hanchō*.”

Wherever we’ve lived in Japan, there’s always been a *hanchō*, a person responsible for a small group of houses in their neighborhood. (This system varies by neighborhood, and many urban areas no longer maintain the custom.) A *hanchō* is a resident who serves for a term determined by that neighborhood—often for one year, although I’ve heard of six-month terms. Often houses are listed in a certain order, and when it’s your turn, someone in the house will serve as the *hanchō* for the given term. It’s not necessarily the head of the household, but they are the ones often listed on the official documents.

Twice in our years in Japan we’ve been asked to take this responsibility, both times just before we would leave for home service. The second time that happened, we were returning to the same house the following year, so the next household took our turn with the understanding that we would do it when we returned. My wife, Susan, served as *hanchō* from March 2017 to February 2018. The primary responsibilities are to collect neighborhood dues and

charity contributions, distribute the *kairanban* (explained further down in the article), attend monthly meetings, and find volunteers for community events.

Collecting money

In our neighborhood, Susan was responsible for 22 households, which were divided up into two groups of eleven. Early in her term of service, she had to go to each house and collect the annual fees—in our neighborhood it was 4,800 yen for home owners and 3,000 yen for renters. This was a time-consuming task as not everyone is home at the same time, so Susan had to go out several days at different times. But it did give her the opportunity to meet at least one person in every household.

Our neighborhood had an annual collection for the Red Cross. I think other neighborhoods collect for different charities such as the Red Feather Community Chest. Again, Susan was responsible to go to every household and ask for voluntary contributions and record the amounts given. This was not usually done at the same time as the annual neighborhood fee, so it was another good opportunity for Susan to meet people.

Distributing the *kairanban*

The *kairanban* is a clipboard, file, or folder with information pertaining to that neighborhood. In our neighbor-

hood this included announcements about upcoming events, newsletters from the local *jidōkan* (a child center run by the local council) and schools, and warnings if there had been any questionable people seen in the community (we think my brother who was visiting us might have been one such suspicious person mentioned). At one place we lived, there was a map with red circles indicating where dog poop had been found and a reminder to please clean up after your pets. There might be news of road construction or other work that might affect traffic. Occasionally there was an order form for purchasing items. Community leaders received packets of information every two weeks—once at the monthly meeting and once from a shed behind



the community center.

In our neighborhood, Susan divided the information packets in two and attached each bundle to a clipboard, one for each for group of eleven households. Every family name was listed in house-location order with a box be-

neath their name to sign or insert their personal seal (*hanko*) indicating that the clipboard had been received. In this neighborhood we also dated when we were passing the *kairanban* on to the next household. I suppose this was to identify if anyone habitually prevented the information from getting around to everyone in a timely manner (we now try to inform the *hanchō* or the neighbor before us if we are going to be out of town for more than a day or two).

Once the *kairanban* is read and signed, it is taken to the next household on the list. Some people ring the doorbell and hand it over, some put it in the mailbox, and others lean it by the front door. You learn what the next person prefers by asking them. The *kairanban* was usually passed around every two weeks, so we hoped that within 14 days, they would both end up back at our house so the next set of information could be prepared.

Monthly meetings

Susan attended monthly meetings of the *chōnaikai* (neighborhood association) at the local community center. When she arrived, low tables and *zabuton* (flat floor cushions) were already set up. At the head table were four or five people who led the meeting, and behind them sat several others. At the other tables sat all the *hanchō* for our *chō* (町) or section of Sendai. Often at each place was a bottle of tea or water, a printed paper with the agenda, and packets of information papers for the next *kairanban*. The leaders of the meeting then went through the agenda. Reports about events, appeals for volunteers for upcoming events, and financial reports were always on the agenda. As the other *hanchō* did not live in our immediate neighborhood, Susan was able to meet other people we would not normally see in our daily lives.

Finding volunteers

This was perhaps the most difficult task for Susan, the primary reason being that most of the community events were held on Sundays, specifically Sunday mornings. In that section of Sendai, the events included a disaster-prevention drill, a community *undōkai*

(sports day), a bazaar, and a festival. If we had not agreed to be the cooperating missionaries of a Japanese church and therefore come under the leadership of a Japanese pastor, we probably would have skipped worship service in order to be involved in some of these events. But Susan and I were rarely able to serve as volunteers ourselves, and so it was awkward to ask others to serve when we couldn't.

Fortunately, the *chōnaikai* was understanding, as were some of our neighbors whom Susan had befriended. These women often volunteered or

recognize each other out on the streets and at the stores. On a couple occasions, the residents invited Susan in for tea. She got to learn about their families and interests, and remembered that information for future conversations.

By serving as a *hanchō*, we demonstrated our willingness to serve the community in the same way that the Japanese people serve. We did not avoid the obligatory duties that the Japanese themselves usually accept. As foreigners and as Christians, it would be easy to make excuses. But by willingly taking on the job and being



helped Susan find volunteers. On one occasion, a woman at the monthly meeting, who was not even from our neighborhood, served as one of our neighborhood's volunteers.

Great honor and important responsibility

We've learned that renters are often not asked to serve in this way. Therefore, we believe that having been asked to be a *hanchō* is evidence of full acceptance of our belonging in the neighborhood even as foreigners and as Christians.

The responsibilities of a *hanchō* are significant, but the benefits are also substantial. Having to go to each house gave Susan a culturally acceptable reason to speak to people in every house. With that connection, they could

honest about our limitations (language, unavailable on Sunday mornings, etc.), our neighbors worked to accommodate us. Jesus said, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45 NIV). We consider it a great honor and an important responsibility to serve as a neighborhood *hanchō*. We are thankful for the experience and for the way our neighbors demonstrated their acceptance of us into their community and the way we could demonstrate the servant heart of Jesus. **JH**

Photos submitted by author

John Edwards and his wife Susan from the US have been in Japan since 1993 and are currently with SEND International. They are in Sendai leading the D (Discipleship) House ministry and working with Tsubamesawa Church.

How my Japanese church became family

By Kellie Nicholas

Four keys to building relationships with Japanese people

Before I left for my first term in 2008, many supporters expressed how brave they thought I was for going to Japan. Some of them had images in their minds of me shovelling snow by myself and getting depressed because of the lack of sunlight. I reassured them that neither was true in Kobe where I was going to live. My mission had lined up a good church for me, so I asked my supporters to pray that I would be able to build good relationships. Of course, I recognised that, as a single missionary, not getting to take any of my family with me was going to be hard.

I expected the first year to be difficult; I worked hard on my Japanese study and attempted to talk to people, but expressing anything beyond the superficial was usually beyond me. The people at my church were loving and patient and went out of their way to help me in so many ways. I couldn't wait for us to be able to share our stories and our lives. My second year rolled around, and I still felt so limited in what I could say. How on earth was I ever going to be able to build deep relationships and share about Jesus if I couldn't talk about much more than the weather?

Being an introvert, I don't need a lot of friends, but I do need some. So my strategy was to attend most things that my church had going on during the week, partly to see what kind of things were happening, but also to spend as much time with people from church as possible. Most of the time, it was hard for me to understand what was going on, let alone contribute anything to the conversation. And I felt completely drained afterwards.



A breakthrough

It wasn't really until the beginning of my fourth year, just before I left for my first home assignment, that I felt like I had a breakthrough. I didn't do anything special or even different to what I had been doing before, but I could feel a difference in my relationships. Of course, a big part of it was that I could now understand a lot more of what people were saying, but I also felt like there was a shift in the "vibe" of how we related. I realise now that I had probably begun to break through the barrier between the public face that people project (*tatemaie*) and their true thoughts (*honne*).

Before I left for my first home assignment, I was asked to share at church, and I wanted to give thanks to God for this new family that he had given me. I shared from Mark 10:29–30 (ESV) where Jesus says, "Truly, I say to you, there is no one

who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life." I had reached a point where I felt like God had provided family members for me in my Japanese church, and I was truly thankful.

Things I learnt

During those first few years, I learnt a lot of things about God, myself, and the world. Below I've summarised the things I learnt about building relationships with Japanese people. These are things that I continue to learn and am challenged to remember. My hope is that whether you have just arrived in Japan or have been here a long time, you will be encouraged to keep seek-

ing to be a part of God's family in your local church.

Presence: Being present is really important for relationships within and outside of the church. It doesn't matter how much you understand or whether you have anything to contribute, just turning up has a huge impact on relationships. This might be as simple as increasing the size of the small group from three to four, but also people will realise that you are serious about getting to know them.

Perseverance: For most of us, learning Japanese is hard and frustrating, and we have no choice but to just keep slogging away at it. For me the possibility of deepening relationships was most often what motivated me to learn the next kanji or grammar structure or to try again to understand the listening exercise.

Patience: Good stuff takes time. I've learnt that even with persistence in study and turning up, it still takes time to understand the culture and get to know your Japanese friends. God continues to teach me to trust his timing, whether it be in depth of relationships or people coming to faith. I try to rejoice in the little things and pray that God will help me to wait on his good and perfect timing.

Being present is really important for relationships within and outside of the church.

Perceptions: I learnt that things like friendship and hospitality look different in Japan. If you ask a Japanese person who their friends are, they can probably count them on one hand, maybe two. As an Aussie Christian, I could easily call someone I met at church last week a friend. I learnt not to just assume I'd be able to break into Japanese friendship circles, but to treasure it when it did happen. For example, in Australia, the way we usually welcome someone to church is by inviting them over to our house for lunch, often a barbecue. In Japan, getting invited to someone's house is a really big deal, and you may never get invited. But that doesn't mean Japanese people aren't being friendly and welcoming. I took time to learn how hospitality and friendship is expressed; of course, this will differ depending on where you live and whom you are working with.

A challenging year

Over the years, there have been many times when I have been thankful for this new family that God has given me. This has been especially true this last year with the COVID-19 pandemic causing pretty much everything I am involved in to be cancelled or go online. I am immensely thankful that friends from church allowed me to come over and play with their kids, even in the times of state of emergency. It might seem like a small thing, but going to their house for dinner and hanging out with them on Sunday afternoons was the only face-to-face contact I had with people for about four months. Even now, going to church on Sunday is the only real opportunity I have to enjoy in-person conversations with people. I am thankful that they include me in their lives and find it hard to imagine how I would have survived this last year without them. I am thankful for the way God has provided me with a wonderful Japanese church family and all the things he has taught me so far. ✨

Photo submitted by author

Kellie Nicholas is a CMS Australia missionary who works with the KGGK (university ministry) team in the Kansai region and has been in Japan since 2008.

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Japanese worldview: hierarchical structures

It's important to consider how to be a loving Christian within Japanese hierarchy

By Rachel Hughes

One of the first pieces of advice my husband and I were given about coming to work in Japan was, “You’ll need to learn to love *hōrensō* (spinach)!” This is an acronym for *hōkoku* (to report), *renraku* (to inform), and *sōdan* (to consult). The upward flow of reporting/checking and the downward flow of direction/instruction are the lifeblood of Japanese organisations—from the preschool mums’ volunteer group to businesses and government bodies that run the country. To many from Western cultures, the hierarchical nature of Japanese groups can come as a shock, but it has been a key aspect of the Japanese worldview for centuries.

Hierarchy in history

The feudal Edo period (1603–1868) was characterised by *bushidō* (the way of the warrior)—the mentality of self-sacrifice, loyalty, and respect for superiors.¹ Although the term *bushidō* was coined in the Edo period, the mentality it formalised had been fostered since the early fifth century when Confucianism was introduced to Japan. Its creed played a significant role in developing the ethical principles underlying societal and educational systems.

Confucian society was organized around five basic community relationships: lord–retainer, parent–child, older–younger siblings, husband–wife, and friend–friend. Practices of loyalty and obedience to superiors were firmly established.² The Tokugawa Shōgunate (ruling family government of the Edo period) reinforced this hierarchical consciousness in people’s thinking by

This is the last article in a series that investigates the historical development of three aspects of the Japanese worldview—collectivist identity, multiple-minded spirituality, and hierarchical structures—and the obstacles they pose for the growth of Japanese Christians and churches. This series is based on a dissertation written by a Japanese friend, who believes we need to address these three core elements of the Japanese worldview as we seek to contextualize the gospel for Japanese people. His goal is the effective discipleship of Japanese Christians, by helping them thrive in their walk with the Lord and with each other in the church. (The first article was published in the Winter 2021 issue of *Japan Harvest* and the second in the Spring 2021 issue.)

formalising a system of four classes—samurai, farmers, artisans, and merchants—plus the imperial family above and the outcastes below. They taught that it was impossible for a person to change their status.

Also during the Edo period, the educational network of Buddhist temples was developed and expanded, though it still only catered to the upper classes. This movement has been recognised as the foundation for modern education in Japan. *Bushidō* and Confucian ideologies were fundamental to the curriculum and method of teaching and learning, and they are still influential today. In a strict hierarchical relationship, students were expected to learn by watching and copying the teacher, and through repeated practice and failure.³ *Bushidō* also attributed virtue to completing menial tasks unrelated to the content being learnt, in the belief that hours of labour would make students fit for learning. These early schools were closely connected to the local Buddhist sect, where the status

of the teacher or founder of that sect was paramount.

But in 1867, the 15th Tokugawa Shōgun resigned, officially submitting to Emperor Meiji. A new era had begun, and Japan reopened to the world. As the members of society with the highest education and those most used to wielding authority, many samurai had roles as intellectuals and officials, but with the change in political leadership, many lost their basis for power. When the first Protestant missionaries came in the 1860s, and looked for converts who could study the Bible and become the new church’s leaders, they found many samurai, out of a job, but equipped to study and lead.⁴ This meant that many of the church leaders of the newly emerging Japanese church came from the culture and worldview of the samurai, and they brought their *bushidō*-based ideals for leadership and education into the church culture.

Around the same time, the Meiji government instituted Shinto practice and emperor worship as a required demonstration of loyalty and patrio-



tism for all citizens. So as the education system expanded to become a public system for all people, schools were separated from Buddhist influence, but were required to teach the ethics and practice of Shinto, not as religion, but as respect for the Emperor as kami (god).⁵ Most Christian leaders of the time complied with this expectation. The Meiji government may have moved away from the feudal class system, but hierarchy was now nationalised and institutionalised, with their god-like Emperor at the top.

Hierarchy today

While class distinctions and discrimination are frowned on in modern Japan, social organisations remain strongly hierarchical. This often has positive results for society. For example, even from preschool years, older children are expected to take on responsibility and authority for looking after younger children. Through schools, clubs, universities, and even into working life, partner relationships of *senpai* and *kohai* (senior and junior) encourage older-younger relationships of support and mentoring. However, these relationships are also imbued with expectations of top-down instruction, assistance, and friendship, which should be met (by the junior person) with gratitude, loyalty, and respect. This can result in a power imbalance that is easily and often abused.

Furthermore, the worldview resulting from a history of Confucian-based bushidō and Shintoist emperor worship engenders a tendency to glorify leaders and founders, a sense of exclusive allegiance and loyalty within social organisations, and blind trust (following direction without seeking under-

standing). These pressures from both within and outside the church can have a disastrous impact on Christians. The position of power invested in a pastor can make it difficult to share authority with lay leaders in the church. Allegiances can make it difficult for churches to work together. And the passive participation of members can repress growth in understanding and personal maturity of faith. Outside the church, those in authority and the demands of work and education often compete for a Christian's loyalty and effort.

Hierarchy of love

Of course, abuse of authority by those in leadership in the church is an appalling problem in myriads of churches worldwide. But each instance of failure in the church must be understood within its cultural framework if we hope to understand what has gone wrong and how to return to the path of love. The book of Philemon is helpful for understanding the Japanese context since Paul addresses a social situation within the Greco-Roman hierarchical culture, which was similar to that of Japan. In this letter, Paul writes of himself as occupying every possible level of the social hierarchy. He also gives directions for how authority should function within the church—for the growth and development of believers and the glory of God. He appeals to Philemon regarding Onesimus, “on the basis of love” (Philemon 1:9 NIV).

Fellow workers under God

The first difficulty for the Japanese church resulting from the historical development of hierarchy is the status attributed to leaders. Since many of the first Protestant Japanese leaders

had grown up in higher classes and attending the bushidō-based education system, they naturally established a hierarchical and exclusive culture within the church, which has continued in many places. Titles like *sensei* (teacher) and *hirashinto* (ordinary/lay believers) indicate the social structure that implies a suitable level of respect for the pastor, so the pastor's opinions are considered absolute and their requests are prioritised.⁶ As a consequence, many pastors may expect church members to follow their direction without questioning. It also may not feel natural for pastors to share authority with others. Many churches have “home gatherings” during the week, but rather than designating leaders, often a pastor visits every gathering to give a short message. The shared assumption is that members cannot study the Word of God correctly unless a pastor interprets it for them. This limits the growth of congregations: the average congregation size in Japan has been estimated to be around 40, which may well reflect the maximum number of people whom a pastor is able to manage and provide pastoral care for in this way.⁷

Paul sets a very counter-cultural example. He doesn't hand down instruction to be received with gratitude by those below him, according to the expected behaviour. He flips the expectations by expressing gratitude to Philemon for his love, partnership, and care for those in his church. Paul acknowledges Philemon as a dear friend, fellow worker, and brother. Philemon is a disciple of Paul, but Paul also describes him as a partner and commends him for refreshing the church. The flow of gratitude and direction of loyalty is reversed.

Perhaps because the hierarchy of that day carried expectations of obedience, Paul makes very clear that, while he was in a position to command Philemon, he forgoes this authority. In verse 19, Paul states his authority to make such an outrageous request as freeing a slave: spiritually Philemon is indebted to Paul and, unlike the monetary debt, he cannot possibly repay the price of his life. Within the social structures, Paul is due some benefit. But Paul's intention was to remind Philemon that his indebtedness and gratitude is ultimately due to Christ. Paul intentionally places himself under Philemon through phrases such as "Paul—an old man and now also a prisoner of Christ Jesus" (v. 9) and "if you consider me a partner" (v. 17). When he makes his request, he indicates that the authority to decide is up to Philemon, and that it should be voluntarily decided out of love. In this Christian hierarchy, actions are not motivated by blind trust in a human leader but by a deep personal conviction of the spirit.

Allegiance to God's kingdom

Another obstacle of hierarchical structures resulting from the historical value of loyalty to a certain group and its leader is sectarianism, or a tendency to give allegiance only to one's own church. Japanese churches have been described as "pastor-oriented" congregations, being more concerned about which pastor preaches or leads a congregation than the health of the church itself as the body of Christ.⁸ Paul famously criticised this kind of attitude in the church in Corinth and reminds them they are one under Christ: "One of you says, 'I follow Paul'; another, 'I follow Apollos'; another, 'I follow Cephas'; still another, 'I follow Christ'"

(1 Cor 1:12). When pastors demonstrate that spiritual growth—evident in loving relationships among church members—is more important than growth in size of the congregation, they can move from a hierarchy that glorifies men to a family of God's kingdom that glorifies God.

In Colossians 4, Paul describes those travelling with Onesimus and gives an update on who is working in his geographic area; he also asks Philemon and the others in Colossae to greet the churches in Laodicea and at Nymphas's house, and to exchange letters. He describes people from various different groups as coworkers, fellow servants for the kingdom of God, and brothers and sisters in Christ. Clearly, he assumes that churches have an interest in the well-being of other churches and that those nearby would be in close contact and provide mutual encouragement.

Mature disciples

The third obstacle for growth is a tendency to passively wait for direction from pastors or leaders. This attitude hinders Christians from studying the Word individually and leads them to follow leaders without thinking. Traditional bushidō-style educational values also lead many pastors to expect members to grow through serving in the church and participating in activities. Unfortunately, many Christians do this without understanding biblical reasons or motives for these programs, without personal Bible study, and without connecting Christian belief to everyday life. Once a person becomes a Christian, they may be obliged, like apprentices in feudal times, to serve at a number of events and work in various ministries before understanding their meaning or maturing in faith. Soon the

joy of salvation is lost and they get tired of serving the church without grasping the purpose.⁹ When they encounter pressure from other authorities, they are not able to stand against the demands because there is no root to their Christian service.

The short time that members remain in Christian community is one of the serious difficulties of the Japanese church. Statistics show that there are many who once joined Christian fellowship, but left within a few years. Japanese Christian academic, Furuya Yasuyo, writes of one survey from a church in Tokyo that found the average period Christians attend their fellowship is only 2.8 years. Phrases unique to Japan such as "a graduate follower" and "a dropout follower" demonstrate that a church can be considered an institution similar to school. This perspective doesn't see the Christian community as a place to belong forever; they graduate and leave sooner or later.

It's vital for Japanese Christians to grow deep roots of faith to maintain their relationship with God. Paul clearly encourages Philemon to have a self-motivated mindset to think and act on the basis of a deepening understanding (v. 6). Paul said a true disciple of Christ should follow the lifestyle of Christ out of love for him. Paul writes, "I did not want to do anything without your consent" (Phil. 1:14). Paul entrusted the authority for the decision of Onesimus' status to Philemon. If Paul had given an order and Philemon had obeyed, it would not change Philemon's heart and could even result in bitterness. However, if Philemon could internalise Paul's perspective on Christian master-slave relationships, he would handle the matter voluntarily with a change of heart. Paul expected Philemon to exercise



his freedom in love rather than out of obligation or duty.

Teaching someone to understand the motive and purpose of what they're learning is very different to the "sensei approach" to education. It requires a close relationship of two-way communication, an environment in which questions can be fearlessly asked and graciously answered. It also involves ongoing support from a teacher as the student puts into practice what they've learnt, and provides the freedom to fail without shame. To help Philemon navigate his negative experiences with Onesimus, Paul gives practical support by promising to cover Onesimus' debt (vv. 18–19). To free a runaway slave was an unthinkable action and might ruin a master's reputation, causing further loss. The decision had to be self-motivated, as Philemon would not be able to follow through with the decision unless he was acting on his conviction. At the same time, Philemon needed the reassurance that Paul would support him and encourage

him to maintain a godly perspective. Paul's intention was not just to bear the past liability of what Onesimus owed Philemon. Rather, his commitment was covering any future possible cost so that Philemon would feel secure to take a step of faith. Even if it cost Paul societal kudos, he would continue to support Onesimus as a fellow worker in Christ. This style of discipleship could transform Japanese churches.

Conclusion

The Christian worldview establishes a loving hierarchy of servant leadership, headed by Christ our God who leads by example of relinquishing authority and inviting us to join him in establishing his kingdom. As Christian leaders, it's vitally important to help Japanese Christians grow deep roots of understanding God's Word and its application to daily life, including our relationships. Together with our Japanese brothers and sisters, let's demonstrate our reverence for Christ by serving one another nationwide, with caring sup-

port, and in growing understanding of his love. **JH**

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Rachel Hughes and her husband are from Australia and have served with CMS since 2012.

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March 7, 2022





zoom: a crash course

A mini-tutorial to help us all be more effective with this online communication tool

By Karen Ellrick

“Why can I only see one person at a time?”
“You said you put something in ‘chat’—where’s that?”
“How can I use breakout rooms?”
“Music sounds terrible on Zoom—can that be fixed?”

I have heard these questions many times since Zoom became a common tool for church-related meetings. I use Zoom frequently to guide people through activities on their computer, because its screen sharing is more flexible than Skype. I also get asked on Zoom for help with Zoom itself. It is designed to be easy to use, but anything with lots of features can be confusing.

There are other video conferencing apps—Skype, Google Meet, WebEx, etc. But Zoom is by far the most popular and, in my experience, the most reliable.

Zoom 101: Joining a meeting

Every Zoom meeting has a *host* (who starts the meeting) and one or more other *participants*. If someone invites you to join a Zoom meeting, they will provide an *invitation link* like this: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/{some-numbers}>. Simply click/tap it to open it in your web browser, and that will start your Zoom app for you (if the app is not installed, it will guide you through installation). You might need to respond to prompts to allow the app to use your device’s mic and camera, but that’s it.

Your host’s invitation might also include a *Meeting ID* and *Passcode*, which can be entered in the Zoom app manually, but it’s the same information as in the link. Contrary to popular belief, you can use the link on most smartphones just like on a computer.

If you have joined the same meeting before, you can also open Zoom, click “Join,” then click the ∨ symbol next to the Meeting ID field to pick from a list of recent meetings.

Either before or after joining, you can change what name appears with your face during the meeting. If you aren’t logged into an account, your name will initially be something generic, like your device model—it’s polite to change it to your actual name (or whatever the meeting leader requests).

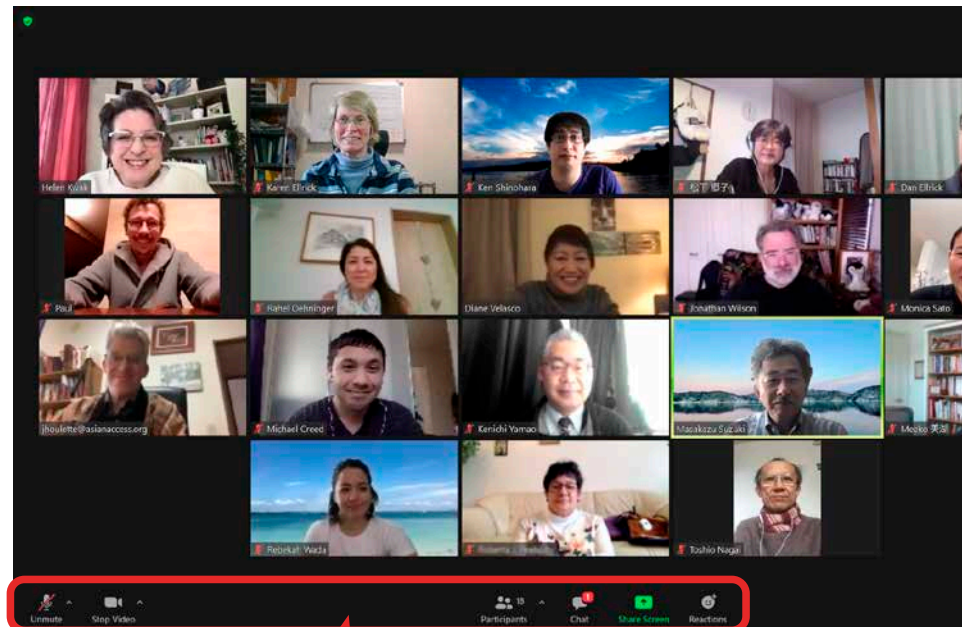
Zoom 102: Participating

Once you’re in the meeting, the most important things are the *view mode* and the *controls*.

There are two view modes: *Speaker View* and *Gallery View*. In Speaker View, the person who is talking is shown in a

large box and others either in very small boxes (computer) or not shown (phone). In Gallery View you see a grid with multiple people on the screen—up to 25 people on a computer and up to 4 on a phone.

On a phone, Zoom typically starts in Speaker View, which sometimes confuses new users. To change to Gallery View, swipe the screen to the left. If there are more than four people, keep swiping to see more “pages” of people. To switch views on a computer, click the “View” icon in the top right corner.



18 people in Gallery View on a Windows PC

The controls are icons along the bottom of the app’s display (on a phone, you might need to touch the screen for them to appear). If not all the icons fit, you’ll see a “More” icon on the right. These are most commonly used:

- **Mute/unmute:** Change whether others can hear you or not.
- **Stop/start video:** Change whether others can see you or not.
- **Participants:** View a list of everyone in the meeting.
- **Chat:** Send messages to everyone or to one person. See all the messages sent to you. You can even send/receive files.
- **Reactions:** Show an emoticon for a few seconds next to your face.

In addition, on computers, some icons have a little ^ next to them—each opens an additional menu with related options. (On phones, everything else is on the More menu.)

Zoom 201: Hosting a meeting

You don't need a Zoom account to participate, but you do in order to host a meeting. A free Zoom account lets you host meetings with one other person (e.g. discipleship, counseling, or just a chat) for any length of time, and meetings with more people for up to 40 minutes. Meetings started by someone with a paid (Pro) account are unlimited in duration, even if the Pro account holder makes someone else the host and leaves the meeting.

If you host a similar type of meeting regularly (e.g. Bible studies or committee meetings), rather than using your Personal Meeting ID, click "Schedule", enter an appropriate topic (you can ignore the date/time), and check the "Recurring meeting" checkbox. Save the meeting and use it over and over. The topic label is also helpful for clarity if you view reports on the Zoom website of all the meetings you've hosted.

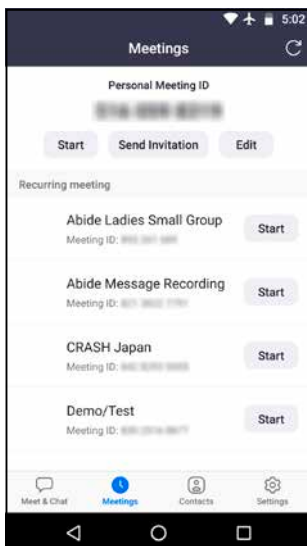
For conferences or other large meetings, the host can create *breakout rooms*—places where small groups can talk. Small groups return to the *main room* when the host closes breakout rooms or the people return on their own. The host can either assign people to rooms or let them choose rooms. You can watch or read tutorials for more on this.

Zoom 301: Share Screen

Another control function is the green button in the bottom-middle called "Share Screen"—it deserves a little more explanation. Hosts can always share, and they can choose whether to allow others in the meeting to share. This function shows other participants your device's screen—good for PowerPoint, videos, photos, and even getting help with a computer issue.

When you click "Share Screen," the next popup lets you choose what you want to share: your whole screen, a specific application window, a "whiteboard," or other options. On a computer, the selection popup also has two checkboxes: "Share sound" (necessary for audio or video) and "Optimize for video clip" (important for video). Once you start sharing, if you're on a computer, the area being shared will have a colored border to remind you what the participants are seeing. Zoom controls and participant faces will become floating bars that are only visible to you, and you can slide them around if they are in your way.

While sharing, you can also *annotate* (on a phone, it's a pencil icon on the bottom left). This allows you to draw,



List of my recurring meetings (as seen on Android phone)



highlight, add text, etc.—great for teaching! Viewers can also draw on the same screenshare unless the person sharing the screen prevents it. At any time, you can undo, erase, or clear drawings.

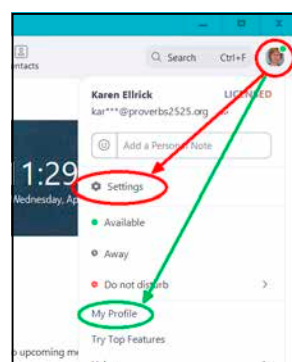
When someone else is sharing, the computer app will show the participant faces in small size to the right. If you want to see less of the shared screen and more participants, you can drag the boundary between shared screen area and participant area to adjust sizes. On a phone, you can't see both areas at once, but you can swipe to switch between areas.

Tuning your Zoom experience

I cannot describe all the available settings in this short article, but you can explore on your own. Some settings are found in the Zoom app: click on your profile pic/initials in the top right corner and select "Settings" (on a phone, look for a gear icon at the bottom right). You will find loads of additional settings on the Zoom website in your profile area (<https://zoom.us/profile/setting>). I highly recommend that you take time to look at the options and set them as you please.

Here are two lesser-known but helpful settings:

- If you play an instrument or sing over Zoom, in Settings -> Audio, check the checkbox "Show in-meeting option to enable 'Original Sound.'" Then when you want to play music, click "Original Sound" in the upper left corner to disable noise suppression and other effects that are helpful for normal talking but not for music.
- When joining meetings on a phone, you have to manually connect your audio every time. If you find that annoying (as I do), go to Settings -> Meeting -> Auto-Connect to Audio, and change from "Off" to "Call Over Internet."



PC app's home window: clicking profile pic

I have just scratched the surface, but you can learn by experimenting or checking online tutorials. This pandemic will not be here forever, but if it has taught us anything, it's that online communication can be an effective option for some aspects of ministry. Tools like Zoom are here to stay, and it's worthwhile learning how to use them well. JH

Caveat: All screenshots and instructions in this article are from the most up-to-date Windows and Android apps. Mac and iOS apps might differ.

Images submitted by author; trademarked images follow guidelines on <https://zoom.us/docs/doc/Zoom%20Brand%20Guide.pdf>

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Floating toolbars when annotating

If reading or watching *Silence* by Shūsaku Endō left you somewhat perplexed, depleted, and confused, here are three books I recommend as a follow-up:

Silence and Beauty

Makoto Fujimura

Born to Japanese parents in America, Fujimura spent his childhood switching between America and Japan and became a Christian in Japan through the influence of missionaries. He studied Japanese painting, *nihonga*, at the Tokyo University of the Arts and reflects in this book on Shūsaku Endō's work *Silence*. He writes how there can be (and is) beauty in silence, how God's silence isn't silent at all. Japan has what he calls a "fumie culture"—as in *Silence*, even today, Japan society forces you daily to tread on what you actually cherish in order to perform and exist in society.

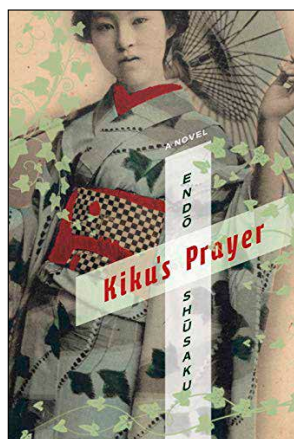
Yet the gospel can be redeeming for Japan and overcome fumie culture. Fujimura dives deeply into the history and culture of Japan, explaining many different influences. I was greatly encouraged by his certainty that the gospel could bring peace and freedom to the Japanese. However, his thoughts and statements are sometimes hard to follow and have a certain ambiguity to them. I recommend it be read in a group with discussions. **JH**

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

Kiku's Prayer

Shūsaku Endō

This book is set about 200 years after *Silence*. The hidden Christians have persevered without a church, the Bible, or missionaries. Foreigners, who had recently entered Japan after the fall of the shōgunate, needed a church, so two priests moved to Nagasaki. They're strictly forbidden to serve any Japanese. Nevertheless, one of them had heard of the hidden Christians and goes to search for them. It takes years but finally he finds them. As he starts serving



them secretly—holding services and baptizing infants—the authorities begin to persecute the Christians once more.

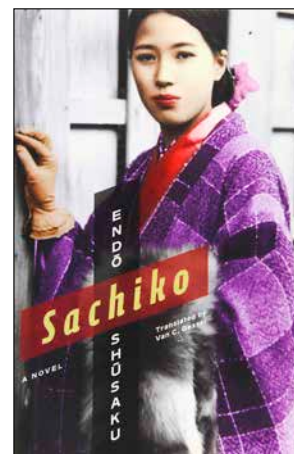
Kiku, not a Christian herself, falls in love with Seikichi, a Christian. As the people of the village, Urakami, are severely tortured and relocated to a distant prefecture, she starts to pray for him. She pours her heart out to the statue of Mary in the church in Nagasaki. Kiku does all she can to support and help Seikichi. A Japanese official deceives her by promising to take aid to Seikichi; he takes advantage of her body, but he never passes on any help. Unknown to all of them, this second wave of persecution would have a major influence on Japan's interactions with foreign nations. A greatly encouraging book on how persecuted Christians, who felt forgotten, changed history. **JH**

Reviewer rating is 5 of 5 stars ★★★★★

Sachiko

Shūsaku Endō

This book is a follow-up to *Kiku's Prayer*. Two generations later in the 1930s, Sachiko, a Christian, hears the story of Kiku, the cousin of her grandmother. In 1930, some Polish priests had started work in Nagasaki, and Sachiko met one of them, Father Kolbe. The book also follows him after he returns to his homeland and is placed in a concentration camp. In Japan, Sachiko falls in love with Shūhei, also a Christian, who undergoes psychological torture when he is forced to enter the army, which went against what he'd been taught his whole life: "You shall not kill." A question that is asked throughout the book is how he should think and act on this dilemma. The church does not help people like Shūhei who are suffering. Sachiko doesn't know how deeply troubled he is, yet she prays for him, as her ancestor Kiku prayed for the man she loved. Shūhei finds a way out of the dilemma so that he can keep a clear conscience, yet it brings suffering to others. Please note: The book includes detailed descriptions of the horrors of Auschwitz Concentration Camp. **JH**



Reviewer rating is 5 of 5 stars ★★★★★

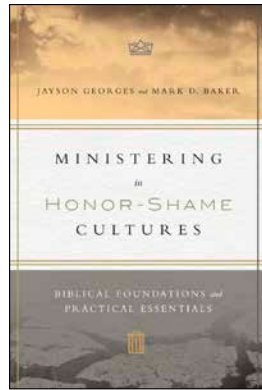
Cover images from Amazon

Judith Ricken, currently in Germany on furlough, works with the GAM (German Alliance Mission) and KGK in Nagoya. She loves reading, hiking, and meeting with friends.

Viewing the Bible through honour and shame

Honour and shame can provide new insights into the Bible

One book that has given me a fresh perspective on Japanese culture is Georges and Baker's *Ministering in Honor–Shame Cultures*.¹ As a guide for showing how honour–shame cultures affect relationships and ministry, I cannot recommend it highly enough. But it also gave me something I hadn't bargained for—a fresh viewpoint from which to interact with the Bible.



The authors make the point that the cultures in which the Old and New Testaments were written were honour–shame ones. Thus, in some important ways they are closer to the Japanese culture than to Western cultures, which are predominately innocence–guilt cultures. In particular, Westerners tend to read the Bible through individualistic eyes and are more attuned to the problem of guilt than that of shame.

Georges and Baker claim that the honour–shame perspective is more than just a helpful lens to view the Bible with; it affects the central message of the Bible: “Honor and shame . . . are not merely external lenses modern interpreters apply to read the Bible, but are the core foundation of the biblical testimony” (p. 103). From a Western perspective, God saves us mainly from the guilt of our sin and clothes us with his righteousness. Whereas from an honour–shame perspective, he primarily dispels our shame and crowns us with eternal honour. The two perspectives aren't in conflict; rather they are complementary ways of looking at the same good news of the gospel. The authors liken the gospel to a multifaceted diamond, and they seek to rotate the diamond to provide a more full-orbed view of the gospel.

A biblical tour of honour and shame

Georges and Baker devote two chapters of their book to a brief biblical theology of shame and honour by going through the Old and New Testaments. This overview shows how honour and shame are key themes that run from Genesis to Revelation. “Honor and shame,” they say, “are foundational realities in God's mission and salvation that flow through the entire Bible” (p. 81).

For me, highlights of this guided tour are when the authors take an extended passage and bring out the aspects pertaining to honour and shame. They work in this fashion through the fall, the story of Mephibosheth, the book of Ruth, the anointing of Jesus by the sinful women at Simon the Pharisee's house, and the parable of the prodigal son.

In each case, they revealed things I had never seen. For example, by staying outside and not joining the celebration of the prodigal son's homecoming, the elder son was publicly insulting his father, but still the father condescends to go out and plead for him to join the party.

Other resources to explore

Recently, several commentaries have been springing up that take a book from the Bible and analyse it in terms of shame and honour. Many belong to the Honor and Shame Paraphrase series edited by Georges (honorshame.com/hsp/). Inspired by Georges and Baker, I recently read Jackson Wu's *Reading Romans with Eastern Eyes*.² I really liked the concept behind the book, namely that a knowledge of today's Eastern cultures can help us interpret biblical books because they share aspects in common with the cultures of biblical times. Wu applies that principle to the whole of Romans and brings out a collectivistic viewpoint and honour–shame aspects of the text that Westerners might overlook. (While this was helpful, I shared the reservations that Worthington and Clark have expressed about Wu's support of the New Perspectives on Paul, which is a doctrinal shift in the field of Biblical studies.)³

Exciting implications

All this has exciting implications for studying the Bible with Japanese people. The usual assumption is that Western missionaries come to Japan with a firm grasp of the Bible and just need to find culturally appropriate ways to communicate its message. But I think Georges, Baker, and Wu would argue that we can gain fresh insights into the Bible by studying it together with Japanese people since they are more attuned to the concepts of honour and shame. That makes Japan an exciting place to study the Bible. **JH**

1. Jayson Georges and Mark D. Baker, *Ministering in Honor–Shame Cultures: Biblical Foundations and Practical Essentials* (Downer's Grove: IVP Academic, 2016), (page numbers on quotes in text cited from Scribd version).
2. Jackson Wu, *Reading Romans with Eastern Eyes: Honor and Shame in Paul's Message and Mission* (Downer's Grove: IVP Academic, 2019).
3. Jonathan Worthington and Elliot Clark, “Engaging *Reading Romans with Eastern Eyes* by Jackson Wu,” *Journal of Global Christianity* Vol. 6.1 (2020): 14–29. <https://trainingleadersinternational.org/jgc/122/engaging-reading-romans-with-eastern-eyes-by-jackson-wu>

Cover image from Amazon



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.

Give thanks

“When we seldom pray, we seldom see God at work and seldom give thanks. When we often pray, we often see God at work and often give thanks.”¹

Daniel Henderson

Giving thanks to God should be an important part of our prayer life. Recently, I was impressed that Jesus gave thanks before breaking the bread and feeding the 5,000: “Jesus then took the loaves, and after giving thanks He distributed them to those who were reclining; likewise also of the fish, as much as they wanted” (John 6:11 NASB 2020).

And Daniel prayed three times a day, giving thanks: “Now when Daniel knew that the document was signed, he entered his house (now in his roof chamber he had windows open toward Jerusalem); and he continued kneeling on his knees three times a day, praying and giving thanks before his God, as he had been doing previously” (Dan. 6:10 NASB 1995).

We are also told to bring our petitions to God with thanksgiving: “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.” (Phil. 4:6 NASB 1995).

What do you have to be thankful for?

Giving thanks for the good

“Give Thanks” is a well-known song written by Henry Smith in 1978, the year I came back to Japan. But I didn’t know about it for quite a few years. When I heard it, though, it resonated with me. It encourages us to have a grateful heart, to give thanks because God is holy and because he has given us Jesus Christ.² Yes, God is holy; it’s His nature. And to meet the righteous requirements of His holiness, as well as to show His love for us, He had to send His Son to die on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins. What love! It’s no wonder I should be grateful for what He has done for me, for you.

There is a whole raft of good things that we can thank God for. The apostle Paul said “that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the favor bestowed on us through the prayers of many” (2 Cor. 1:11 NASB 1995).

God’s favor to us in providing all we need for life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3) is cause for much thanks. Only he is worthy!

Giving thanks for the not-so-good

The song was written at a time when Smith had trouble finding work after graduating from university and his eyesight was failing due to a degenerative condition. The cho-

rus of the song exhorts the weak to say they are strong, and the poor to say they are rich. At his church in Virginia, his pastor had inspired him with how Jesus made himself poor to make others rich through Him.³ So, even being jobless (poor) and becoming blind (weak) could not stop him

from thanking God. Why? Because He is worthy of all our thanks and praise. Giving thanks is not for just the good things but also for that which is not so good.

We can also thank God that through all the mayhem connected to COVID-19, the church has finally seen its mission as not only within its four walls but beyond. Because of online worship services and other gatherings, some churches have seen a dramatic rise in the number of those who participate in church activities. It is really true that “God causes all things

to work together for good to those who love

God, to those who are called according to His purpose” (Rom. 8:28 NASB 2020).

Giving thanks in all things

We are told to be thankful for everything: “In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus” (1 Thess. 5:18 NASB 2020), also “always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to our God and Father” (Eph. 5:20 NASB 2020). While not everything that happens to us seems good, God has provided it to us so that the end result will be for our good and for the good of those around us.

May our prayers be full of thanks to God for who He is and what He has done. There is always reason to show Him our gratitude through prayer. **JH**

1. Daniel Henderson, “Danielisms for Daily Living,” Strategic Renewal, <https://www.strategicrenewal.com/danielisms-daily-living/> (accessed February 25, 2021).
2. “Give Thanks (Smith),” *Hymnary*, https://hymnary.org/tune/give_thanks_smith (accessed May 20, 2021).
3. “Give Thanks with a Grateful Heart,” *Wikipedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Give_Thanks_with_a_Grateful_Heart (accessed February 24, 2021).



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.

TCKs and loss

Practical ways missionary parents can nurture their TCK kids through grief and change

My son, Luke, was born in Japan and attended an international Christian school in Nara for 12 years. He also grew up in the international church that my husband and I have served at as missionaries. His experiences of growing up in Japan have been rich and diverse, and if asked today, he would say that he would never trade his experiences as a missionary kid for a more mainstream lifestyle in the States. Those years in Japan have given him an international perspective on life and Christian service. His life has been enriched with friends from around the globe from places like South Africa, Australia, Finland, and Taiwan as well as friends from Japan and the United States.

However, during those 18+ years, he has also faced many losses and disappointments. The international community in Japan can be a revolving door of “hellos” and “goodbyes.” It is not easy for a missionary kid to say goodbye to someone he has grown to love deeply and to lose precious relationships routinely on a yearly basis.

Missionary children are a subset of a larger group known as Third Culture Kids (TCKs). A TCK can be defined as a child being raised by parents who are living in a culture that is not their home culture. TCKs are diverse and unique and can include military kids as well as children being raised by expat parents. We can call them global nomads due to the wide range of travels and cultures they routinely encounter.¹ They generally do not feel rooted to their parent’s culture due to their formative years being spent elsewhere.

One plane ride across the ocean can lead to the loss of friends, family, culture, language, housing, familiarity, and more. This unusually high level of loss can cause TCKs to experience much grief and stress. These constant changes and losses can impact a child well into adulthood.

Here are some practical ways parents can help TCKs deal with loss and be able to acknowledge their grief in healthy ways.

Safety

TCKs need a place of safety. Providing a constant place of safety and stability at home can help the child deal with the stresses faced daily in a foreign culture. Whatever difficulties your child may face from day to day, providing a place of safety at home will be a constant anchor of security for the child who feels insecure in the culture. Often children act out bad behaviors when they are afraid and insecure. Being at home with family should be a safe place where they can be real, be themselves, and be loved unconditionally.

Express feelings

Provide a place for TCKs to safely express their feelings. Teach children how to identify their feelings, both good and bad, and express them in a safe, appropriate envi-

ronment. Children have a wide range of emotions from euphoria, excitement, and happy anticipation to anxiety, anger, frustration, and even depression. But they often do not have the skills to navigate these hard, complex emotions and need supportive adults to help them develop skills to process these sometimes larger-than-life feelings.

Helping your child learn how to express their feelings appropriately will help them to become healthy, whole adults who are better equipped to handle the stresses life brings.

Creative outlet

Provide a place for TCKs to express themselves creatively as an outlet for their stress and grief. This can provide much emotional relief. Things like art, hobbies, playing a musical instrument, creative writing, poetry, song writing—anything that will allow the child to express themselves in an enjoyable way will be beneficial to their emotional health.

Physical outlet

Sports and exercise can be a wonderful cure for stress. Getting outside and exercising can boost positive emotions. Sun and fresh air have enormous healing properties. Physical activities will help to calm the child down and provide an outlet to blow off steam.

Positive spiritual foundation

Provide a place for TCKs to grow spiritually and rely on God to help them through difficulties. Teach them their identity in Christ. Do not put the responsibility to disciple your child on your church or school. The spiritual impact a parent can have on a child is tremendous and long standing.

Parents play an important role in helping their child adjust to all the unexpected changes that take place in the life of a TCK. Let us all rise to the challenges of raising a healthy and happy TCK in a place like Japan. **JH**

1. Barbara Schaetti, “Global Nomad, Third Culture Kid, Adult Third Culture Kid, Third Culture Adult: What Do They All Mean?” *Families in Global Transition*, https://www.figt.org/global_nomads (accessed April 15, 2021).

Chris Mason and her husband, Michael, have been serving in Japan with JEMS (Japanese Evangelical Missionary Society) since 1997. They currently minister at Oasis Church in Izumiotsu City. Chris is from Los Angeles, CA. Chris is part of the JEMA Member Care Committee.



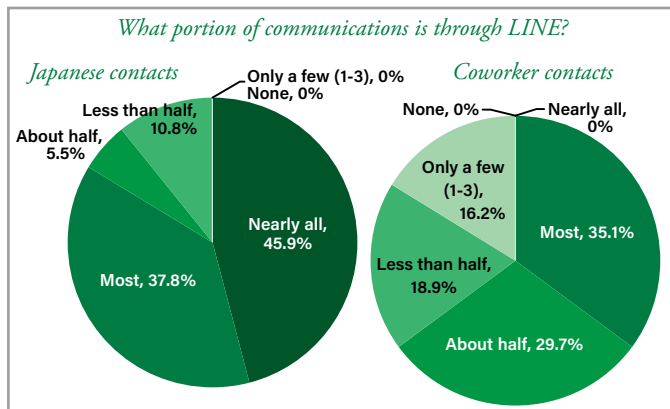
Online communication tools, part 1

What communication platforms are JEMA members using?

In February 2021, I sent a survey to JEMA members asking how they are using LINE and other communication platforms for life and ministry and how God has worked through these platforms.

Results for LINE users

Of the total 50 survey participants, 74% primarily use LINE to develop community with Japanese people and/or ministry coworkers, while the remaining 26% prefer other communication platforms like Facebook and Zoom. Of the 37 respondents who primarily use LINE, 84% use this platform with most of their Japanese contacts and 65% with most or about half of their ministry coworkers.



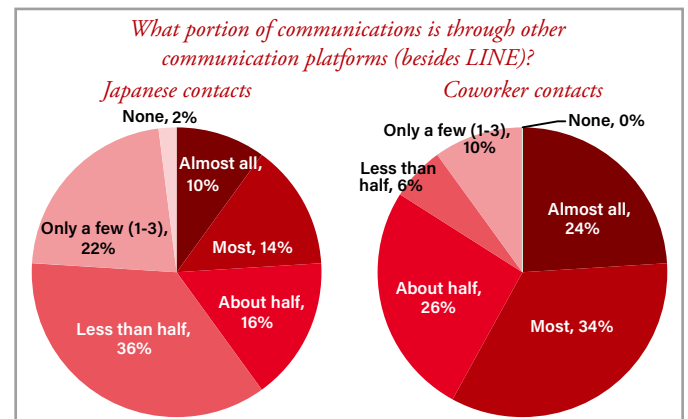
Those who primarily use LINE utilize it to develop community by scheduling in-person meetings, posting volunteer rotations and sign-ups, and having follow-up conversations with Japanese people they meet. These people use LINE for ministry activities like simultaneous translation during meetings, sharing prayer requests and answers, ministry training sessions, and coaching touchpoints. Rachel Hughes said she belongs to groups in LINE for music class, school moms, youth group leaders, soccer moms, Bible study group, and a community band. She said, "It seems like you're not a real group until you're LINE official!"

Users of other communication platforms

Everyone tends to utilize multiple communication platforms. Besides LINE, Facebook (including Messenger) and Zoom were the main platforms used by survey participants to communicate with both Japanese people and ministry coworkers (see chart to right). Overall, those surveyed said that Japanese people typically respond best to LINE, with Facebook being common too. Regularly-used features not available on LINE were screen sharing and live streaming. The pie charts show the significant difference in proportion

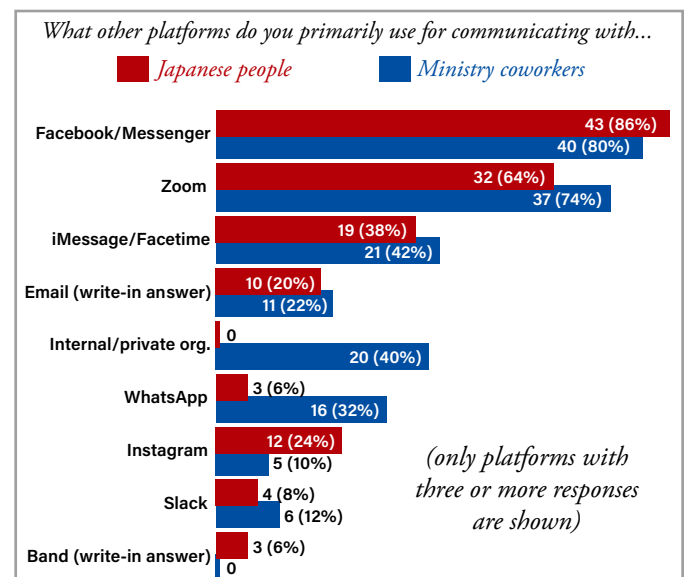
of use of communication platforms by different contacts. JEMA members communicate with coworkers far more often on platforms other than LINE.

Brittney Carlson said she uses Zoom for KGK (a university student ministry) and hi-ba (high school ministry) Bible studies, gatherings, and retreats. Bernard Barton's mission introduced a weekly Zoom meeting that would have never been considered prior to the pandemic. One respondent commented that a combination of Mailchimp, Facebook, and Zoom has been useful for continued engagement with supporters. Other platforms respondents said they used for ministry were Meetup.com and the Band.us/home app. These were noted as being useful for coordinating and keeping records for in-person activity plans, feedback, and development of ministry.



Interesting findings

Daniel Culwell's church in Tokyo uses a LINE account as an information center, and people connect to this account with a LINE QR code. Charles Seelen said that one



Working with an editor

10 tips to make the most of the help of an editor

Have you ever worked with an editor? Some people are nervous about that prospect. So I do my best to put people at ease when their work comes across my desk. I strive to be “both an enthusiastic supporter of the author and a faithful advocate for the reader.”¹

Here are my top 10 suggestions for working with an editor:

1. Remember: an editor is not your enemy. This isn't personal to them. Be professional in your interaction with them. Editors want to make your work shine; work with them to help that happen.
2. View an editor as your “first reader.” Their job is to catch things that will puzzle or bother your readers. They can give you a fresh perspective.
3. Trust their experience. The editor probably understands your audience better than you do (this is especially the case for magazines).
4. Understand that your work is not perfect. When you give it to an editor, they will make changes.
5. Welcome rewrites. Trust the editor if they ask for one.
6. Take note of deadlines, word limits, and other instructions an editor gives you. If you're having trouble meeting a deadline, let the editor know sooner rather than later.

7. Communicate succinctly with the editor. They are busy with many authors, and multiple emails/texts/phone calls from you may muddle the communication.
8. Be accurate—make sure you check your facts and sources. The integrity of your writing depends on you to verify these things.
9. If you make any changes when an editor sends you edited content, make sure you note where you made the changes (e.g. by using Track Changes in Word).
10. Be aware of style guides. Many magazine and other publications have them, and it will save the editor time if you've paid attention to the guidelines in those carefully compiled documents.

I gladly submit my writing to an editor I trust, because I know that they will make my writing better. Editors help your writing communicate clearly and shine brightly. Do your best to work with your editor—together you will achieve the best result for your writing. **JH**

1. Richard A. Swenson, *Margin*, (Colorado Springs: Navpress, 2004), 11.

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.

of his “colleague[s] has a bedtime story time which allows moms and dads with their kids to join in a time to learn and listen to English.” One participant said that their church services have some attendees in the building and others on Zoom, and that Zoom attendees are shown on a projector screen so that everyone can interact and see each other in real time.

The chief concern respondents had with LINE was that it is typically used more by younger people (also true to varying degrees for other web-based tools). Older generations still tend to prefer email, phone calls, and fax. Survey respondents' live communication experiences were marred by poor data connections and other challenges experienced during video or audio chats, especially in shared home spaces.

People across the board agreed that online community is no replacement for in-person activities, but that it has served as a placeholder and a supplement. One respondent agreed, saying, “We have had some new people get saved through our new emphasis on streaming over the past year, and they would probably have never entered the church otherwise.”

God stories and more

In the next issue of *Japan Harvest* I will include some of the testimonies participants shared of how they've seen God at work while using LINE and other online platforms. I will also explain some of the less-well-known features of LINE (Beacon, translation accounts, money transfer, polls, event scheduling, and OpenChat).

I want to extend a huge thanks to those who participated in the survey. Praise God that he is still at work despite the obstacles to community! If you would like to share or hear more stories like these, check out the new JEMA Community space at jemacommunity.org. **JH**



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

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by Randall Short, Associate Professor of Biblical Studies

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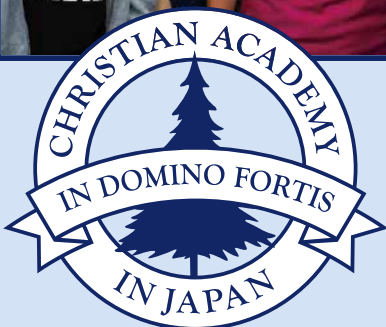
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