

JAPAN Winter 2006
HARVEST
Japan Evangelical Missionary Association



Trends and Topics 2006:

Mega-Changes and Mega-Opportunities *by Dr. Andy Meeko*

Equipping Workers for the Harvest

by the CPI Leadership Team

Reading the Culture

by Cheryl Kirchoff

**The Disciple's Heart:
Spiritual Health and Spiritual Maturity**

by Kelly Malone

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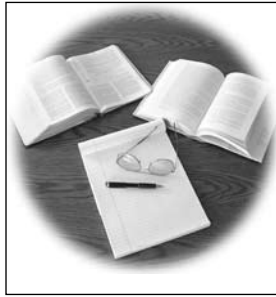
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Pray like there is no tomorrow.

Today is the day of salvation.
Hebrews 3:7





Ray Leaf has served as JEMA President since February of 2002. Ray and Ruth are church planters in Higashi Yomatoshi. The Leafs have worked in Japan since 1972 with SEND International.

Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight. Proverbs 3:5-6

Where there is no guidance, the people fall, but in the abundance of counselors there is victory. Proverbs 11:14

Last year the JEMA Executive Committee initiated an evaluation process of JEMA and sought out the assistance of organizational consultants. The Lord has provided the gracious assistance of two consultants who are on the USA staff of the Asian Access mission. The above two complementary verses from the book on practical wisdom serve as our guide points. First, the Lord's guidance should be before everything, including our own insights. Secondly, the Lord often uses the human instrument of counselors to give wisdom in times of need. We initiated this process with the purpose of sharpening JEMA's effectiveness in fulfilling our vision of networking and equipping our members to make disciples for Christ. JEMA is over fifty years old, and the Lord has used the association to serve the missionary community and the Church in Japan well. It is time to sit back and take a look at ourselves.

My own mission, SEND International, was formerly the Far Eastern Gospel Crusade and was started by American GIs and others after World War II. By the early 1980's it was clear that neither our name nor our previous organizational structures were adequate for the greater tasks that the Lord was leading the mission towards. The mission leadership initiated a similar evaluation process that proved to be very helpful in preparing the mission to expand into new areas—some of which were part of the former Soviet Union before it disintegrated. I have heard encouraging words from other missions that have undertaken the same type of evaluation process with very positive results.

JEMA's evaluation process will not be as extensive as that which a mission might undertake, and we are not looking to make changes just for change's sake. The process will include two days of interviews in the middle of January, with at least 26 different people representing a broad spectrum of member missionaries, JEA leadership, and non-members. The interview process is,

however, only the beginning. Following the two days of interviews, the two facilitators will share their findings with the Executive Committee and Chairpersons of JEMA commissions. These findings will be the basis for further discussion and possible actions to be recommended to the Plenary Session on Tuesday, February 21, 2006. Whatever actions or changes that may result will be the result of recommendations coming from JEMA membership. Whatever decisions may eventuate will be the decision of JEMA members. We are the ones responsible to pray for and seek God's will for JEMA in Japan in the twenty-first century. I feel confident that our Lord is guiding us towards a more effective role in the building of God's Kingdom in Japan. The Japan Evangelical Alliance (JEA) has also initiated an evaluation process as they seek God's will for the future. The mechanics are different, but the purpose is the same. Pray for both organizations.

As I write this President's Pen, another important event is being planned: the Mission Leadership Consultation day, which will take place the day before the Plenary session. Nearly five years ago, NHK commissioned the Gallup Poll organization to make a religious survey of the Japanese public. These results were never released, and will be outdated after five years. The Gallup organization has agreed to send one of their representatives to share this report with our JEMA mission leaders on Monday, February 20. I understand that these findings are quite surprising and of much interest to the missionary community. Encourage your mission leadership to attend the Mission Leadership Consultation day. I am sure that they will be glad that they did.

Finally, fellow workers in the Kingdom of God, as the Scriptures often tell us, love God and love one another and you will have done the most important thing. **H**

Ray Leaf, President



The Lion Triumphs Over King Kong

As this issue of *Japan Harvest* goes to press, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* has beaten out *King Kong* in US movie theaters over the New Year's weekend. That's certainly not due to the Christian allegory in the story, but it's good news for the Church as we wait for the March 4th release date of this blockbuster in Japan. Despite the surprise box office success of 2004's *The Passion of the Christ*, successful movies with positively Christian themes are far and few between.

The fact that *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* is a first-rate release by internationally respected media conglomerate Walt Disney Pictures in conjunction with Walden Media, and at the same time remains true to both the storyline and redemptive analogy of C.S. Lewis' original book, makes it both a blessing and a significant opportunity.

In our Fall 2005 issue, we listed a number of possible ideas for capitalizing on the ministry possibilities, and by now outreach materials from organizations like *Every Home Crusade*, *Japan Campus Crusade for Christ*, *Word of Life Press*, and *New Life League* should be coming available, so be sure to check out what materials your outreaches can best use in conjunction with the release of this movie. Passing out tracts at theaters can be a valuable way to touch people who may never be touched in another way, but don't stop there! As we know, there are a good percentage of Japanese who on an intellectual level are "receptive," or at least curious, about Christianity, but just viewing this movie by itself is not nearly enough to get them to interact on a spiritual level with the Christian message. The theme needs to be intentionally connected to the truth that lies beneath the analogy, as the average non-Christian moviegoer will not

automatically draw the connection.

Actually viewing the movie together with non-Christian friends and actively drawing out the parallels in conversation afterwards can open the door to deeper discussions about the nature of sin, God's redemptive love, and the way into God's Kingdom through Jesus Christ. Prayerfully seeking ways for our friends to be personally impacted by the Scriptural truths presented will in the long run produce lasting fruit. Be sure to refer back to our fall issue for more ideas for outreach.

But to move to what you have before you, in this issue of *Japan Harvest* we deal with a variety of topics, including alarming trends in Japanese society, the need for healing in the wounded hearts of Christian leaders, a new compassion outreach, and much more. If you'd like to comment on any of the topics discussed in this issue, or would like to see us deal with other specific areas, we want to hear from you! Please send your emails to editor@jema.org, or address your letters to the JEMA office.

Serving you in your love for the Japanese, 卍

J E M A S p e c i a l E v e n t !

WHAT: Japan—A Culture in Transition (First Official Public Presentation)
A Gallup Research Project . Conducted in 2001 by Gallup Japan. Comprehensive report highlighting research data and results complete with charts and diagrams. Data & materials will be made available at the presentation.

PRESENTER: William McKay
William McKay, Research Director of this project, came to Japan 15 times in a two year time span. He was involved in the design, data collection, and film production of the Japan research project for Gallup. A filmmaker, author, professional consultant and national researcher, he has a media and entertainment background that spans more than thirty years. Former CEO of the American Research Corporation, he is

currently the President/CEO of American Trademark Pictures, LLC.
www.americantrademarkpictures.com

WHEN: Feb 20, 2006 (Mon)

WHERE: Ochanomizu Christian Center (8F), Tokyo

EVENT #1: JEMA Mission Leaders Consultation (Bilingual)

TIME: 10am - 530pm (Gallup report until 3pm, Followed by JEMA business)

FOR: JEMA Mission Leaders (and future leaders) - cost ¥3,000 (includes lunch)

SPECIAL INVITATION: Japanese Christian Leaders - special price ¥1,600 (includes lunch. Until 3pm only)

RSVP required. For more information, call JEMA office.

EVENT #2: JEMA Evening Fellowship
Open to the Public (Bilingual)

TIME: 7pm - 830pm

FOR: Missionaries & Japanese Pastors
Limited seating. RSVP required. For more information, call JEMA office.

Events Sponsored by: JEMA
Funding through the courtesy of: The JESUS Film Project-A Ministry of Campus Crusade for Christ International

Co-Sponsored by: MJM Group



In the November 16, 2005 Executive Committee meeting, following as it did soon after the CPI Conference, a great deal of time was spent hearing Pioneer Evangelism Commission chairperson John Mehn's encouraging report regarding the direction of the Church Planting Institute and plans for the future. Although space in this summary does not allow for coverage of all of the details that were shared, John highlighted the fact that CPI is in transition from a conference-centered movement to an equipping-centered movement, with nine training teams preparing to hold seminars in the year 2006. The next national conference will be held November 6-9, 2007. This reporting time also brought into focus the need to clarify the organizational relationship between CPI as a part of the Evangelism Commission of JEMA and the JEMA Executive Committee, especially in relationship to the budgeting process of JEMA. This is a critical issue for CPI in that during this time of transition future obligations are very difficult to predict. In discussing the financial relationship of CPI to JEMA, the key question that arose was whether JEMA will seek compensation for office expenses as a budget item from CPI or receive CPI-initiated gifts to cover such expenses. This in turn generated discussion on the relationships of the commissions to JEMA and the Executive Committee. After considerable deliberation, the Executive Committee decided to ask CPI for a small amount of compensation for office expenses in the 2006 budget, and the larger budgeted figure that had been included in the 2005 budget will be reconsidered at the January Executive Committee meeting.

Ann Little reported that the Women in Ministry spring retreat will be held at the Karuizawa Megumi Chalet. The theme will be Radical Trust for Life's Impossible Challenges with guest speaker Lee McDowell. The WIM web page that is linked to JEMA's webpage has a registration form available.

The Liaison and Membership Committee submitted sixteen new Overseas Associate Membership applications, which were approved. Almost all of these members are either retired missionaries or relocated missionaries. This is a significant development for JEMA and a wonderful way for former members to have a continued impact in Japan as well as in their home countries.

The Publications Commission reported that 5000 copies of Operation Japan Third Edition were ready for the CPI conference and are now on sale. The Publications Commission has also appointed Gary Bauman to spearhead the formation of a "digital communications" working group.

Miriam Davis, Language and Culture Chairperson, reported on her involvement at CPI. "Being a language consultant surpassed my expectations as I was busy almost the entire conference." She also reported that the Language and Culture Commission is planning a language learning retreat at Lake Yamanaka November, 2006.

It was noted that in relation to the Karuizawa Summer Conference, 2006 is the 100th anniversary of the Karuizawa Union Church and the conference committee (now independent of JEMA) is planning a variety of events to celebrate.

Paul Nethercott reported on the very busy schedules of the member care guest consultants at the CPI conference. As a result, the Executive Committee voted to establish a temporary Care and Member Development Committee until the February 2006 Plenary Session. Paul Nethercott, Mary Esther Penner and Faith De La Cour were appointed as members of the committee, with Paul being appointed as chairperson.

The committee was commissioned to explore the following:

1. the posting of a referral list (of consultants) on the JEMA site.
2. the distribution of information and resources relating to care and member development to missionaries in Japan.
3. the creation of more opportunities for consultants to be available to help missionaries in Japan.
4. to develop even further the great concept of the CPI Consultation Center.

The next JEMA Executive Committee meeting is scheduled for January 25, 2006. ❖



Kotatsu

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.

John 3:16-18

I grew up in northern Iowa, USA, where winters were cold, but houses were warm. Now I live in Tokyo where winters are not all that cold, but houses are not all that warm. We don't have central heat, so only the room you are in has heat. We also don't have much insulation, so the heat escapes fairly quickly. Traditionally this heat came from a charcoal fire that was in a sunken section of the floor. Today it comes from either kerosene or electric heaters. One of the marvels of Japanese life (at least in the winter we think it's a marvel!) is the *kotatsu*. This short table with its heat lamp and heavy blanket is a wonderful place to sit and read, or watch TV, or carry on a family conversation. The only problem with the *kotatsu* is you never want to get out. It is important to have your hot coffee (in a thermos bottle to stay warm), the telephone, and your snack all on the table before you climb in.

As followers of Jesus, we live in a cold world of unbelief. Some of us may have family who are not believers, and all of us have friends and neighbors who have not yet personally met the Savior. There are a variety of ways that we try to stay spiritually warm in the spiritually cold world we live and work in. We can bundle up so that we keep our warmth to ourselves, hoping we will be able to stay warm. The most common way of doing this is to keep the warmth and power of the gospel hidden. This would be like staying bundled in bed in order to keep warm in a cold room. We don't talk to anyone about our faith, not wanting to offend others. Our Christian service consists of finding ways to keep our faith hidden while still doing ministry.

Another response we can have to the spiritual coldness that surrounds us is to live in a heated room. We only keep Christian friends who can encourage us and

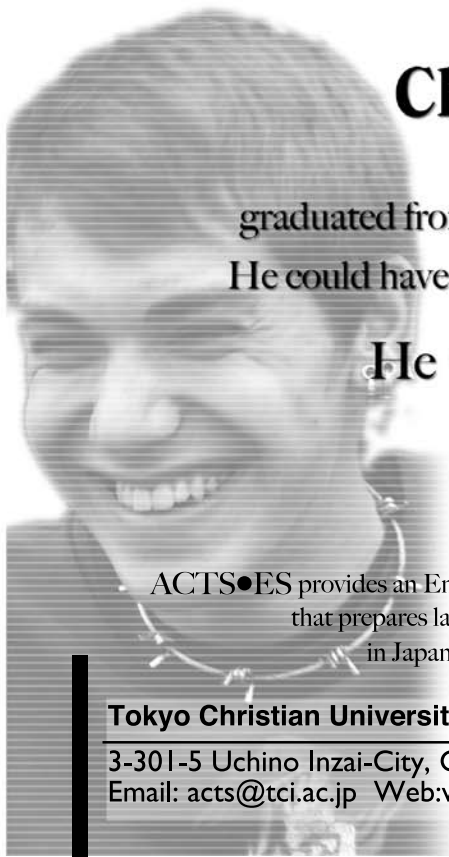
not challenge our beliefs. We pray for "those poor people out in the cold," but we are fearful of taking the gospel to them from fear of rejection or from fear of not being understood. The task seems too overwhelming, so we huddle with other Christians to keep us warm.

A better response is the *kotatsu* response. In this we realize that we cannot reach the entire world, but we can warm a small area and welcome others to enjoy the warmth with us. Responding in this way may take as many forms as there are people, but it always has the same power source—the Holy Spirit of God.

It is God's Spirit who by the love of the Father produces warmth in our hearts that motivates us to reach out to spiritually cold and hurting people. This is a love that does not condemn or judge. Rather it reaches out and says, "Yes, I too get cold but I know where there is warmth in abundance. Let me tell you about it and we can go there together." Then we relate not as the "perfect" showing the way to the "inferior," but as two sinners in need of God's love, forgiveness, and warmth.

This New Year I challenge you to open your heart to those around you who are spiritually cold. Let the warmth of Jesus so warm you that you can then warm others.

Prayer: Father, forgive me for all of the times I have tried to either keep myself spiritually warm or have tried to keep Your warmth to myself. Warm my heart with love for You and love for a lost world. Let me not be content to merely pray for the world but let me share Your warmth with those You have put me in the midst of. ✠



Chris Triebel,

a missionary kid,

graduated from an International school in Japan.

He could have chosen any University in the world.

He chose T.C.U.

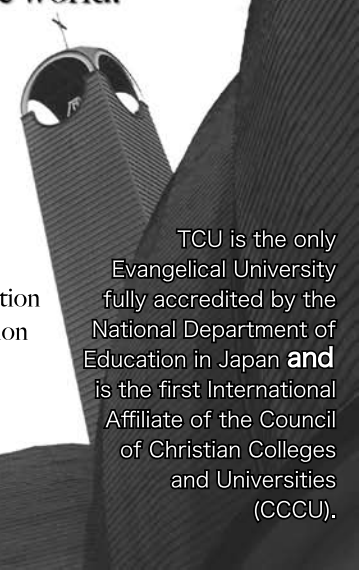


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Bestseller!

- God has been faithful even during the time when I am not able to pray, praise or even believe him. He is always there for me.

-Carol Cymbala

This is the story of the Brooklyn Tabernacle Church Choir and how their members and Carol Cymbala, the conductor and author of the book, overcame many trials.

We have also published three of Jim Cymbala's books:



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30-Day Prayer Guide*

Dear Co-Workers in Japan,

The key to great movements of God throughout church history has always been the persistent, passionate, and powerful prayers of His servants who long to see Him glorified. Below is a prayer guide that can be used as we earnestly seek God's heart for the Japanese. I believe 2006 will be a wonderful year as each one of us sees and experiences God's power at work among His beloved Japanese. He is faithful, and He will do it! Let's thank the Lord for the coming abundance of spiritual harvest!

*Blessings for the journey,
Karol*

1. Read Luke 1:11-20. Just like Zechariah, after many disappointments it is easy to begin to believe that the blessings will never come. Pray that we will believe God's words that it is His desire to save all nations.
2. Read Luke 1:21-25. When the Spirit of God moves and things begin to happen, pray that we will remember where the blessing has come from and praise Him.
3. Read Luke 1:38. Pray that we will submit to our Father with humility and awe that He would even use us to fulfill His plans for the Japanese.
4. Read Luke 1:76-79. Pray that we will prepare the way for the Lord to enter the hearts of the Japanese.
5. Read Luke 2:15. Pray that the Japanese will come to see what the Lord has done.
6. Read Luke 2:17. Pray that as the Japanese hear about Jesus, they will spread the Word.
7. Read Luke 2:20. Pray that the Japanese will return to their own people and neighborhoods glorifying and praising God.
8. Read Luke 3:6. Pray that all mankind will see God's salvation.
9. Read Luke 3:16. Pray that the Japanese will see beyond us to Jesus, who is more powerful than we are and who can baptize them with His Holy Spirit.
10. Read Luke 4:14. Pray that the news about Jesus would spread throughout the whole countryside.
11. Read Luke 4:38-39. Pray that as the Japanese are healed they will get up and begin to serve Jesus immediately.
12. Read Luke 5:4-5. Pray that we will be obedient and put out nets into "deep water" whenever the Lord calls us.
13. Read Luke 5:6-8. Pray that when the harvest comes we will be overwhelmed with humility in the face of God's awesomeness and undeserved blessing.
14. Read Luke 5:16. Pray that we will constantly withdraw from the crowds to listen to God speak to us.
15. Read Luke 5:26. Pray that the Japanese will be amazed at God's works and praise Him alone.
16. Read Luke 5:27-28. Pray that as the Japanese are called they will get up and leave behind everything that binds them to follow Jesus.
17. Read Luke 5:34-35. Pray that God's people will fast and pray for the Japanese to be saved.
18. Read Luke 6:9-11. Pray that both we and the Japanese will be repentant instead of angry when our sinful attitudes are pointed out.
19. Read Luke 6:35-36. Pray that we will love the Japanese no matter how we are treated in return.
20. Read Luke 7:18-23. Pray that when the Lord comes in a way we are not expecting we will not fall away in unbelief.
21. Read Luke 7:30. Pray that the religious leaders among the Japanese would not reject God's purposes for themselves.
22. Read Luke 7:41-48. Pray that the Japanese will have a right heart before Jesus and love much. All knowledge we can teach about Jesus is worthless if it does not produce a right heart.
23. Read Luke 8:15. Pray that we and the Japanese would with good hearts hear, retain, persevere, and produce a crop.
24. Read Luke 9:24. Pray that we and the Japanese will lose our lives for Jesus.
25. Read Luke 9:62. Pray that new Japanese Christians will not turn back.
26. Read Luke 10:2. Pray that God will send national Japanese workers back into the harvest field.
27. Read Luke 10:13. Pray that the Japanese will respond to the Lord's miracles in true repentance.
28. Read Luke 10:27. Pray that the Japanese will love the Lord with all their heart, soul, strength, and mind.
29. Read Luke 10:30-37. Pray that we will go out of our way to show mercy to Japanese people.
30. Read Luke 10:39. Pray that we would turn from our busyness and take time to sit at the feet of Jesus.

*30 Day Prayer Guide for Unreached People Groups by Sheila Flowers, IMB. Permission is granted to reproduce, duplicate, or photocopy. Contact tkwhaley@aol.com for a digital copy. H



Karol Whaley lives in Tokyo and serves as the Area Prayer Advocate for PacRim JO (Japan & Oceania) with the International Mission Board, SBC



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Dr. Robert Amess



Dr. David Olford

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Christian Shimbun
translated by
Mizuko Matsushita,
JEMA Executive Office
Secretary.

Family Focus Japan Celebrates Ten Years

Japan Harvest

It started with a desire to help families in Japan and a letter to *Focus on the Family* in the USA. The result was an invitation in late 1995 from Dr. James Dobson to start a *Focus on the Family* “Associate Office” in Japan. In February of 1996, the first *Family Focus Japan* newsletter was mailed out. Soon a volunteer committee of five members was busy updating Dr. Dobson’s video series, translating books, and editing a magazine. The following years saw the development of a radio broadcast, several new video series, a range of publications, a sexual abstinence curriculum, and eventually almost one hundred presentations on family issues per year throughout Japan.

The timing was none too soon. Japan is in the midst of a rapidly escalating social crisis, with divorce rates now having caught up to those of Western Europe, 25% of Japanese women having undergone at least one abortion, more than half of Japan’s youth having engaged in sex before the age of 20, and rates of domestic violence, juvenile delinquency, prostitution, homosexuality, and trans-sexuality skyrocketing yearly—all symptoms of a disintegrating family structure lacking a moral and spiritual compass. It’s no surprise then that Tim Cole, director of *Family Focus Japan*, asserts that widespread confusion and concern about moral standards “has made family issues one of the most effective gateways to the gospel available to the Japanese church today.” *Japan Harvest* recently talked to Tim, and asked him to give an update on what new changes are taking place at *Family Focus Japan (FFJ)*. Here’s what he had to say:

FFJ’s mission is to strengthen local churches and proclaim the gospel through family issues. The *FFJ* staff are passionate about serving the Church of Jesus Christ. What challenges face *FFJ* as it begins its second decade of ministry? First, *Focus on the Family* has recently changed its international outreach strategy from that of establishing “associate offices” to one of networking with “ministry partners.” Consequently, *FFJ* is transitioning into becoming an independent, indigenous Japanese ministry with only loose cooperative ties to *Focus on the Family*. In the months ahead you’ll be seeing *FFJ* adopting a new name, a new logo, a new website, and a new emphasis on highlighting Japanese Christian family experts. This change will eliminate the hesitancy among some Japanese to relate to an organization with close foreign ties. At the same time it results in financial challenges, as *FFJ* will no longer receive assistance from *Focus on the Family*.

Second, *FFJ* has a new office headquarters near Kamoi station on the Yokohama Line. Please make a note of the new address: 2-5-1 Kamoi, Midori-ku, Yokohama, 226-0003, Tel. 045-933-3875.

Third, *FFJ* expects to sharpen its ministry objectives. Specifically, it wants to equip local churches with

effective tools to reach their communities through dealing with family issues such as parenting, marriage, and sexual morality curriculums; it seeks to help Japan’s “mission schools” protect their students and share the gospel through the “*Ai to Sei to Ikiru Koto*” (*ASI*) abstinence program; it desires to make contact with the unchurched public through the “Family Column” radio broadcast; and it intends to continue helping families through Biblical and practical seminars in churches, conferences, and wherever else God opens doors.

Like other ministries in Japan, *FFJ* has a limited budget and staff (4 full-time, 4 part-time), but we echo the words of Jonathan, “Nothing can hinder the LORD from saving, whether by many or by few” (I Sam. 14:6). In that spirit, *FFJ* looks forward to continuing to serve you in the years ahead.

—Tim Cole, Director, *Family Focus Japan*

We here at the *Japan Harvest* wish the staff of *FFJ* well as they move into a second decade of ministry—with both significant opportunities and significant challenges in the immediate future. We encourage our readers to take advantage of *FFJ*’s resources as the ministry goes through this transition.

Journey of a Song

Christian Shimbun

Many people know the song called “*Shiawase nara te o tatako*,” or “If you’re happy and you know it, clap your hands.” It became popular throughout the world as a result of the 1964 Olympic Games held in Tokyo. However, there are very few who know the history of this song, based upon the Bible and the Spirit of Peace. The writer of the song lyrics is Mr. Rihito Kimura, a Christian and former professor at Waseda University. “I put a vow in this song. Let’s be pleased and enjoy the peace we have now, and show our happiness by our own attitude, so that we won’t experience the tragedy of war again,” he said. He took part in a work camp with Asian students that was held in a farm village in the Philippines in 1959. There were still marks and vivid memories of the

fierce fighting in the Pacific War, and strong anti-Japan feelings remained all over the Philippines. However, through his efforts of reading the Bible together with Filipinos morning and evening, they gradually started opening their hearts, showing kindness through their attitudes. He happened to hear a Spanish folk song melody sung by children of the village, which inspired him to write a song. After the work camp, on the boat back to Japan, he wrote a poem that went with the melody, to show his hearty gratitude to the Filipinos. It was inspired by Psalm 47:1 which he read on the boat one morning. "Clap your hands, all you nations; shout to God with cries of joy." Originally he wrote, "If you're happy, let us pray, amen!" but this phrase was left out of the version that became popular. First sung among Waseda University students, it became a favorite song among young people. Kyu Sakamoto, a famous Japanese popular singer, made it a hit song in the mid 1960s. The song was used as the entrance song at the Tokyo Olympic Games for the U.S.S.R. team. It then spread throughout the world and won great popularity. Mr. Kimura, now a Professor Emeritus of Waseda University, thanks the Lord that he could compose this

song. A letter from a former Hansen's disease patient was an especially big encouragement as he testified, "Singing songs has never given me happiness. However, when I sing this song now, I am glad that I am still alive. I cannot clap my hands because they have no feeling, but I can tap my feet. Thank you for the song you wrote."

Asia Pacific Alpha Conference Held in Malaysia

Revival Shimibun

On November 10 and 11, 2005, the Asia Pacific Alpha Conference was held at Petaling Jaya Evangelical Free Church located in a suburb of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The Alpha Course is spreading throughout Japan as an evangelism tool, and the conference offered an opportunity to learn the principles of the Alpha Course and to share about the experience of holding the course.

The November conference attracted more than 1,400 participants from twenty countries in the Asia Pacific region. Attending from Japan were Andy Game (director of the Alpha Japan Office) as well as eight others from Hokkaido, Tohoku, Kanto, and Tokai. Japanese Christians residing in Malaysia and Singapore also attended.

At the Japanese seminar on Alpha during the Conference, Tetsushi Hiruma of Singapore described his experience of holding Workplace Alpha through a tie-up with the International VIP Club. He related that courses are held during lunchtime, and people are receiving Christ's salvation through the Course.

The main speakers at the Asia Pacific Conference were Nicky Gumbel, who established the Alpha Course, and Jamie Haith, who has been chosen as one of the next generation of leaders.

According to Alpha Japan, the Alpha Course is held at over 150 churches in Japan today. Since 1999, Alpha Japan has focused on the translation and publication of the Alpha books, manuals and videotapes and the promotion of the course. In the future, Regional Alpha Advisors will create a network to support churches holding the Alpha Course. Alpha Japan will back up the Regional Alpha Advisor while concentrating on launching new courses that are already being held in other parts of the world, including Youth Alpha, Alpha in the Workplace, and Alpha for Prisons.

(Alpha Japan Office – Email: info@alphajapan.jp; Tel: [03] 3868-8775) ✠

2 0 0 5 J E M A D A T E B O O K

Event	Date	Time	Place
Concert of Prayer	February 2, 2006	4:00 P.M.	OMF Hokkaido Center
Prayer Walk	February 6, 2006	9:00 A.M.	Harajuku in Tokyo area
JEMA Mission Leader's Consultation	February 20, 2006	10:00 A.M.	OCC
JEMA Plenary Session	February 21, 2006	10:00 A.M.	OCC
JEMA WIM Retreat	March 8-10	3:00 P.M.	Megumi Chalet, Karuizawa
Prayer Walk	April 3, 2006	9:00 A.M.	ICU Campus
Concert of Prayer	May 18, 2006		Sapporo
Coed Prayer Summit	May 16-19, 2006	12:00 P.M.	Okutama Bible Chalet
Men's Prayer Summit	May 22-25, 2006	12:00 P.M.	VIP Alpine Rose Village

The Disciple's Heart: Spiritual Health and Spiritual Maturity

By Kelly Malone

One of my ministry activities involves serving as dean of the Christian Leadership Training Center (CLTC). CLTC was developed to provide balanced training in Japanese for developing Christian leaders by emphasizing growth of the heart and hands through spiritual nurture and practical training as well as development of the head through theological instruction. An unexpected challenge that we have found in dealing with the heart is the need for healing as well as growth. While those who come to CLTC for training have the capability to become strong Christian leaders, they also bring hearts that have been wounded as a result of living in our sin-infested world.

The Need for Healing

This situation is not unique to CLTC. A few years ago I was talking with two Japanese pastors about the need to train leaders for the local church. They told me that one of the

problems they face is that many people who enter their churches are unprepared to take on the challenges of leadership. They have been so beaten up and bruised by the world that they flee to the church to find rest and restoration in order to gain spiritual health. As George C. Hunter writes, "When a secular person suddenly shows up in church, she or he may bring expectations similar to those for a hospital emergency ward; they are looking for help now" (Hunter, 71). Spiritual maturity means little for someone who is in trauma.

People carry spiritual wounds that are in need of healing. Often these wounds are relational injuries that have been inflicted

by troubled families. Many families in Japan are more like individuals living together under one roof than real families. Spouses, parents and children are ineffective at communication with one another. Conflict resolution is nonexistent. When someone makes a mistake there is no forgiveness. There is little love, but there is obligation brought on by shame and guilt. The load can become unbearable.

In other cases, people suffer as a result of spiritual bondage due to sinful lifestyles. Addictive behaviors, such as alcoholism, sexual deviancy and gambling, ensnare people who are struggling with emotional and relational issues. The occult and spiritism offer solutions to life's questions, but lead down a dark road to a dead end. Ancestral practices and other forms of idolatry connect people to spiritual powers that enslave them rather than empower them for eternal life. The alarming thing is that most of these practices

are considered normal in Japanese culture. Is it any wonder that those who turn to faith in Christ come to him broken and shattered, in need of healing as well as training? They need Jesus to make them “new creations” (2 Cor. 5:17).

In 1 Corinthians 9:24-25, Paul compares the Christian life to running a race. No one, Paul says, competes without going through “strict training.” Every sports team has what is called a “training room.” This room is not used for strengthening and conditioning, but rather for mending bumps, bruises and broken bones. Only those who have been healed are able to lift weights, run and practice in order to train for athletic competition. In the same way, today’s Christians need healing as well as training if they are to become tomorrow’s leaders.

Missionaries often are uncomfortable with this emphasis on spiritual healing. There are two reasons for this. First, many of us have unhealed wounds in our hearts. We have been injured by the world, our families, our churches, and even other missionaries. Since we are not well, we have difficulty talking with other people about their need for spiritual healing. Second, we doubt that God will heal those we are trying to help. Our lack of faith prevents us from fulfilling our role in spiritual healing, which is to encourage people to trust in God who is the source of healing. We can encourage the spiritually wounded by investing time, energy and emotion in them. We can take them into God’s presence through intercessory prayer. And we can lead them to Jesus who will give them “rest for their souls” (Matt. 11:29).

I was reminded of this during a recent conversation with a young woman who was hurting. She had family problems that led to a wounded spirit. Fragile, lonely, and in pain, she had little hope that she could get better. I quickly realized that I really could not do much to help her. Only God had the power to provide the spiritual health and renewed life that she needed. So I led her to God’s throne of mercy in prayer. Has God healed her? I think that she is on the way, but healing of the heart sometimes takes a long time. God has His reasons for both the instantaneous miracle and the slow recovery. In either case, God teaches us to trust in him and to give him glory in every situation. We learn to

say with Paul, “I can do everything through him who gives me strength” (Phil. 4:13).

The Results of Healing

When our Lord restores health the results can be pretty dramatic. I am reminded of Jesus’ healing of the paralytic who was let down through the roof by four friends (Mark 2:1-12). First Jesus told the man, “Your sins are forgiven” (2:5), and then, “Get up, take up your mat and go home” (2:11). This man’s healing provided a dramatic testimony of Jesus’ power to heal both the spirit and the body. Those who witnessed this event praised God saying, “We have never seen anything like this” (2:12). As the people among whom we are called to serve experience Jesus’ healing power the world around them will take notice.

Spiritual healing brings about three results in the lives of those who experience it. First, spiritual healing brings about wholeness. To some extent, complete wholeness awaits Christ’s final victory over His enemies at the end of the present age (1 Cor. 15:25, 26) when “there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away” (Rev. 21:4). But those who have experienced the Master’s healing touch are no longer the broken shell of humanity they once were. “The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor” (Luke 7:22). To the extent that people are healed by God, whether physically, psychologically or spiritually, they are able to experience life in a way that they never could before.

This new life prepares the way for the second result of spiritual healing, which is becoming a dynamic witness for Jesus Christ. Only those who are spiritually healthy are able to reproduce new life in others (Easum, 87). The one who has been healed bears witness to Jesus’ life-giving power in both word and deed. And those who receive the witness not only hear about the meaning of salvation; they see it lived out before their own eyes!

People today tend to become “preoccupied with their own emotional wounds” so “they feel inadequate to help others” (Neumann, 103). However, those who experience God’s healing become God’s way of bringing

healing to others. This is the third result of spiritual healing. Those who receive God’s grace become God’s means of grace. They become “channels of blessing” and “streams of mercy” to a distressed, diseased and dying world. Those who have tasted of the water of life invite others to come to the fountain as well (Rev. 22:17).

There is more to the process of developing leaders than training them to pray, study God’s Word, witness, teach and serve. Along the way we must take the time to make certain that they have experienced the Savior’s healing touch. The new life that results from this work of God’s grace is the single most important quality of authentic Christian discipleship. And it is perhaps the quality most lacking in our churches today. Only those who have spiritual health can share the gospel with the ring of truth. Only those who have some degree of wholeness are prepared to be trained and to train others to become spiritually mature disciples. The spiritual health of the disciple’s heart determines how far he or she will be able to walk down the road towards spiritual maturity. ❖

Sources

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Kelly Malone and his wife, Molly, have served with the Southern Baptist International Mission Board in Japan since 1992. They have two children. Kelly is Academic Dean of the Christian Leadership Training Center. He has a Ph.D. in Systematic Theology from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He can be reached by email at ksmjapan@gol.com.

Equipping Workers for the Harvest

— *The Japan 2005 CPI Conference*

By the CPI Leadership Team



“CPI is not about any particular denomination or method; CPI is centered on Christ and His Gospel. It is phenomenal to see the unity of so many people from so many backgrounds and ministries all coming together to learn from one another in order that all may be more effective in sharing Christ with Japanese”

—participant at the
November 2005 Japan
Church Planting Institute Conference

As in past years, once again last November about 500 people gathered on the mountain to meet with God, network with each other, and discover together new ways of reaching Japan through the multiplication of churches. For every participant, the CPI Conference probably had a variety of blessings.

For some, the conference is networking for ministry. As an OMF missionary put it, “It’s an opportunity to have fellowship with

other like-minded Christians and be exposed to different ministry models.” A Southern Baptist missionary said that it involves “exposure to a variety of creative personalities, methods, visions—all that God is using to bring His Kingdom to this country.”

For others, it is resourcing for ministry. A SEND missionary said, “CPI put tangible/doable resources into my hands and helped me clear my head!” Some call it a “shopping mall for ideas” or “a smorgasbord of ideas.”

To many, a key aspect of the CPI conference is sharing in unity. The 2005 conference had representation from 64 mission organizations, 18 Japanese denominations and 4 individual Japanese churches. The clear message, as one missionary stated, was: “Affiliations don’t matter, as long as you are ‘affiliated’ with Jesus Christ.” An OMF missionary affirmed that “sharing in unity” was a ministry value he would take home with him when he spoke of a newfound “commitment to pray, and work together with the other churches

in my city.” We hope that this shared vision, in conjunction with networking, will lead to greater ministry effectiveness across a broad evangelical spectrum.

Gospel Renewal

The CPI Conference has a strong emphasis on Gospel Renewal. An Asian Access missionary put it well: “CPI is about the Body of Christ coming together, allowing ourselves to be transformed by the Gospel, and then returning home to reveal this transformation to both our church family and the lost.” This leads to spiritual refreshment, as one exclaimed, “It is the most focused and refreshing conference I’ve attended.” Another said, “It is like climbing out of slowly sinking quicksand and going into the spring of living water again.”

As a result, many people comment on personal change based on the Gospel’s power. When asked what area of their personal life would change, we see that God touched

many hearts. Here are just some comments, “I will stop wearing the mask of ‘I can do it all, I’m coping.’ I’m going to be free to do what I think is right before the Lord,”

“...a shift from a result-driven motivation to a Gospel-driven transformation process,”

“...applying the Gospel to the areas of unbelief in my life,”

“PRIDE - wow, have I been challenged by this rising issue in my life,” “I need to recognize daily the grace I stand in. I need to truly believe this and extend it to my teammates—my church and myself.”

“It helped me to see that what we need probably most in our denomination is the Gospel.”

“Idols. Heart issues. These are things that are stressed that I need to hear. The Gospel. Don’t stop talking about it!”

Kingdom Vision

But there is also another emphasis—a vision for the glory of God to be evidenced in an expansion of the Kingdom of God through the work of the Church. One Church of Christ missionary described it this way: “CPI focuses first on the Lord, second on our hearts, and thirdly on establishing vision for kingdom multiplication and equipping for that. It is renewing, challenging and necessary.” Another said, “The CPI conference gives a broad and unbiased vision for planting and discipling.”

The conference challenges many, then helps them implement the vision that God has given them. When asked, “What has CPI meant to you?” a Japanese pastor said, “CPI helped me open my horizon and strengthen my faith and encouraged me to continue my ministry here in Japan.” When asked, “What do you feel you should change?” another said, “Rethink different models of church planting—not be afraid to break out of the

standard model.” A BIMI missionary said about the CPI conference, it “provided a time to really look at and think about where I’d like to see the ministry I’m involved in be five years down the road.” A Lutheran missionary said, “I think I got some ideas to work more ‘target-minded,’ not just run our weekly

schedule.” A SEND missionary said, “Our approach to heading into plans for church planting will change. We have learned that much more pre-work is required.”

Part of seeing the vision is seeing what God is already doing in Japan. “I was so encouraged to see all the work God is doing around this country.... to hear so many stories of God moving here.... I get the big picture of what God is doing,” wrote a Presbyterian missionary. Another said, “I need a bigger vision for God’s work in Japan—not just my piece of the pie.” One Filipino missionary said, “CPI means vision, God’s vision—the reminder

that He is able and is working to bring Japan to Christ.” Another said, “No other forum exists for this.”

This all affects how we carry on ministry. When asked about what changes would result from this conference one Lutheran missionary said, “the church will change as God brings in new souls and old patterns are adjusted to allow further growth. I feel that a new wave of Holy Spirit-inspired repentance and appreciation of God’s grace will flood over our congregation of believers, inspiring them to bring their friends and family.”

Major Transitions

In faith, last January the CPI Leadership Team made a decision to make significant changes by moving away from a conference-centered movement to an equipping-centered

movement. Specifically, we want to be more of a help in equipping church planters to be effective in the ministry of multiplying churches. This has led to some major transitions in the CPI Conference itself. The 2005 conference contained significant changes in training delivery system, as well as more opportunities for reflection in the main sessions. Many people commented that this change was a real help to them personally and practically. It seems that people are more actively seeking God’s vision for their ministry and are praying for that end. One person commented, “Three sessions focused on the same subject allowed us to learn and use the material taught. Great idea.” The use of small groups was also appreciated.

Another transition was more focus in the training offered. This year there were seven learning tracks focusing on issues related to spiritual vitality and church planting. Nine intensive electives organized around *Vital Signs for Healthy Churches* also were developed during the preceding year and conducted by nine training teams. Apparently the training emphasis worked well, as the responses to ideas about ministry changes were more focused on specific areas as people talked about changing worship, prayer, coaching, evangelism, small groups, mercy ministry, and so on.

Other Growing Programs

This year we had an expanded consulting center. In addition to both English-speaking and Japanese-speaking professional counselors, the children’s education and Japanese language advisors were also very busy. There was also a missionary care luncheon attended by about 30 people. As a result of that luncheon, JEMA has already moved ahead with a missionary care committee. Again there were children’s and youth ministry programs. This year included the largest number of children, with 120 in attendance. In fact, the 36 youth had their own coffee house! The conference also boasted a well-attended Ladies Luncheon.

International Connections

At this CPI conference, there were several people who made a special effort to come with the purpose of seeing if they could develop something similar to CPI in their own countries. For the first time, we had an

CPI Regional Training Seminars

November 3 & 4, 2006
—Sapporo, Hokkaido

- *Witnessing – Networking and Evangelism (Outreach)*
- *Renewing – Personal and Corporate Gospel Transformation*

November 11, 2006
Karuzawa, Nagano-ken

Focusing – Vision and Values for Ministry (in partnership with Karuzawa Language School)

Please check the CPI website for regular updates at www.JCPI.net.

international breakfast in which we shared the history of CPI, its vision and values, and the dream that one day God would allow the Japan CPI to start such movements in other countries. There were representatives from Sri Lanka, India, Turkey and Australia. It seems that God may be moving in this direction in some of these countries.

More Equipping in 2006

In addition to the aforementioned changes in the CPI conference, major changes by the CPI Leadership Team also extend into 2006. How can all the great ideas and concepts taught through CPI be put into practice in ministry? The CPI Leadership Team believes that this cannot be done well at the conference, but can be better done at Regional Training Seminars. Our first major change was deciding not to have a CPI national conference in 2006. Our next national conference has been set for November 6-9, 2007. Mark your calendars now and begin budgeting and inviting people.

The original CPI vision was to have year-round training, not just one conference each year. In fact, 2006 will not be the first time CPI has had regional seminars—CPI has been conducting periodic regional seminars since 2001.

The seminars we are hoping to offer are not “mini-conferences,” but a supplement to the national conference. They will be concentrated on the specific areas of learning and application that are included in the *Vital Signs for Healthy Churches*: Worship, Instruction, Fellowship/Groups, Evangelism, Compassion Ministry, Vision, Leadership Development, Renewal, and Prayer. They will be bilingual, in greater depth, one day long, and probably on a Saturday or a holi-



day so that lay persons can attend. The cost will be about 3,000-5,000 yen. We anticipate 8 to 12 seminars from the spring of 2006 to the spring of 2007.

Already there are 3 seminars listed at the JCPI.Net website. Two other unique seminars are in the planning stages: one on church planting networks and another for wives in ministry. There are several regions that are planning on having seminars next year, and we are talking to several organizations regarding partnerships for seminars as well.

The same emphasis on Gospel Renewal and Kingdom Vision will guide these seminars as well. One missionary recommends: “If God has called you to plant a church, CPI will challenge you to think through your values and equip you with principles

for implementing the mission given you by God. Above this, re-examining your heart for areas of sin is essential for us to be used by the Lord, and this conference encourages this self-examination and repentance.” Another missionary was more succinct: “Go! It will encourage your socks off!” **H**

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
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Back to the Bible's New Ministry in Japan

The year was 1939. Much of the world was surrounded by conflict and confusion. Country after country faced invasion. America itself was on the brink of war. People in the midwestern United States, as in much of the rest of the world, were struggling to overcome the financial crisis of the early 1930s.

A young preacher from Oklahoma ventured to Nebraska with a vision, \$65 and a Partner. On May 1, 1939, Theodore Epp brought *Back to the Bible* to the airwaves. His vision was to proclaim the Scriptures through a radio broadcast. His Partner was God.

Realizing that many Christians don't have much contact with the Scriptures between Sundays, and knowing the power of broadcasting to reach right into people's homes, he

recognized the need for such programming.

Over the years, *Back to the Bible* has followed that same formula in starting ministries in over a dozen countries: finding pastors that have a passion for the scriptures who are able to make Bible teaching programs in the heart language of their audience.

Last year, *Back to the Bible*, in a joint project with The Evangelical Alliance Mission (TEAM), started their newest international work here in Japan. TEAM gave its Christian cable and satellite channel, Friendship Radio, to the new project, and *Back to the Bible* is providing finances and leadership support. The mission of *BJapan** is to give Japan's Christians input from the Bible between Sunday services, and to do whatever it can to support the church in making disciples of their believers.

The first arm of the work, *Friendship Radio (FR)*, provides Bible teaching programs 24/7 on the Usen cable and satellite network. *FR* is also actively pursuing other possible outlets for the broadcasts.

Next, 'Church Support' will be a big part of *BJapan's* work. One idea would be to help pastor-less churches by covering expenses for travelling evangelists to speak at services, but other ideas would be welcome as well. Send an email to info@bjapan.jp to let us know what would help your church! With God's help, *BJapan* will do much to help strengthen the church of Japan—pray for them as they grow!

* Q: "So what's the 'B' of *BJapan*?" A: Bible!



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Whether you've read the Bible for years or are new to this best seller of all times, God always has something to say to you through the power of His Word. **BJapan** brings the ministry of **Back to the Bible** to Japan, via Christian cable and satellite radio station **Friendship Radio**, and more! Details a mouse click away on our homepage: www.bjapan.jp

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Fumie Ando

Front Cover Art

"My Cross"

Art piece by

Fumie Ando of

Sapporo, Japan

Tempera paint on drift

wood, with soil from

the artist's garden.

"This art piece symbolizes my cross from God. My life is like a piece of driftwood, useless. But, when the blood of Jesus covers me, I receive new life and become useful. Jesus saves and calls us to carry our cross as Jesus did."

Japanese Artist Finds God

How a painter comes to know Christ after experiencing catastrophic loss

"God is light, color is borne by light." Fumie Ando

For What and Why Do I Paint?

At home in Sapporo for the first time in years, I was intently pondering the sound of my sister playing the piano. It was an etude by Bach; it soothed and stilled my soul.

"For him, a sound is not something that disappeared into an empty sky but rises up as a dedication to God in an inexpressible praise."

Around the end of the summer of 1990, I came across the above statement written by Albert Schweitzer in reference to Bach. This idea was something very new and interesting to me. Until then, painting had only been to me a means to affirm my existence, something that I did for my own sake. What could it mean to "not create for oneself?" I found the idea of painting for something other than myself attractive. However, I could not imagine whom else I could paint for. After much contemplation, I dedicated the art work I was completing for my graduation to my family, who had raised me with much love and care.

Disaster

On November 17, 1990 I went to my studio as usual, but not a fragment of the studio I knew so well remained. The day my studio burned to the ground became permanently etched in my mind. I stood there, not comprehending what had happened. All the favorite tools I had used since my high school days, the pictures I had painted, the drawings, everything, had disintegrated into ashes—including my almost complete pieces for college graduation.

I wanted to go to graduate school, so those pieces were very important to me. With the deadline just ahead, I lost everything. The shock, despair, sorrow, and anger that I felt in my heart were something that is still beyond description today. I had no idea what I would do. The lights had gone out and I could not see a glimmer of hope. For the first time in my life, I understood the bitter reality that even things created with great effort can disappear in an instant. Everything seemed useless.

In the midst of an inexpressible feeling of emptiness and agony over which I had no control, I prayed for the first time in my life, "God, if you really are out there, please help me."

Eventually, with help, I managed to complete the artwork I needed in order to graduate and was accepted into graduate school. Yet I felt there was something missing. One day, a Christian friend told me of the book *The Wind Is Howling* by Ayako Miura. I didn't feel like


reading it, but as my friend was persistent, I halfheartedly started and quickly became engrossed. It seemed that there existed somewhere a love that was faithful and true, the very thing that I had longed for. I looked all around me, yet all I saw were others who had a self-centered, superficial love. In other words, people like me.

As I finished the book, I made up my mind not to demand the faithfulness of others but to become a faithful person myself. The next day, however, I caused a friend of mine to cry. He had been griping about his situation and wanted sympathy, which I did not give him. It was when he said, "Can't you understand?" that I realized I had been trying to change him with my words when all he wanted was understanding. How arrogant I was. I was standing where God should be seated, looking down on my friend. It was then that I realized the existence of sin in my heart. I had made the decision to be a faithful person one day, and judged someone the next. That was the person I really was. When I saw this reality, I felt as though I had fallen off a cliff into a bottomless hell.

A Decision

The following evening, it was brought upon me to make a decision, by someone whom I could not see. A voice spoke to me in my heart, "if you recognize your sin, and if you wish to be forgiven of your sin, stand up now, and confess your sin, and receive forgiveness through Jesus Christ." I had no idea what to say. The only thing that I could see was that I had tremendous sin that I couldn't bear anymore. Tears flowed. That day I accepted Jesus Christ into my heart as my savior, and gave my life up to him. From that day on, my life changed dramatically.

Fumie Ando is an accomplished painter who takes great joy in the creative process. She has held exhibitions at numerous galleries across Japan and continues to paint, teach, and quietly witness to her not-yet-Christian artist friends in Sapporo, Japan. She is involved with a dynamic group of artistic Christians called IAM (International Arts Movement). IAM web site: <http://www.iamny.org/>

Please post any comments relating to this testimony or the Imagine book review on the facing page to the blog located at <http://worshipandthearts.blogspot.com> 



Imagine reviewed by Paul Nethercott. Member of TEAM Japan since 1987, Paul is the Director of CAN (Christians in the Arts Network) Paul's ministry focus is on training, equipping and empowering leaders. He is involved in church planting, Member Care & Development and teaches at CLTC (Christian Leadership Training Center). His interests include tennis, walking, playing guitar and reading.



Imagine an expanding network of Japanese churches where creativity is embraced and enjoyed as part of what it means to be made in the image of God. People are energized as they explore their gifts and abilities, sharing them with each other.

Imagine expressive, creative worship services including a wide variety of art forms, where believers are deeply impacted, and where many not-yet-Christians are in attendance to see and hear what is happening as an authentic Japanese “voice” in worship is released.

Imagine a group of accomplished Japanese movie directors, who in addition are Christians, making major films for mainstream audiences. Their churches bless and affirm them. While the movies are primarily good entertainment, millions of Asians who see them notice a different viewpoint. Many begin to ponder the meaning of life and wonder if there really is a Creator God after all.

Imagine an army of visual artists, designers, writers, musicians, dancers, TV producers, radio announcers, actors and actresses, all who are Christians, producing some of the best work in the artistic world in Japan. They are “salt and light” in their circles of influence.

Can these things happen? Yes they can—and to some extent they already are happening (the late author Ayako Miura and contemporary painter Makoto Fujimura are two excellent role models) as a new generation of Japanese Christians put into practice a solid Biblical rationale for embracing their creativity and actively engage in mainstream culture, such as that provided in Steve Turner’s book *Imagine* (recently published in Japanese). In his view, far too many Christians isolate themselves from society due to a destructive, “dualistic” (sacred/secular) view of the world that is not Biblical. This results in a “Christian ghetto” syndrome in which the church becomes distant and isolated from society, unable to relate to others as human beings.

Imagine provides not only a sound rationale for connecting with mainstream culture, but examples of Christians who have successfully done so. Turner’s book is an exciting “roadmap” showing how we can effectively engage with mainstream culture without losing our integrity.

In easy to understand language, Turner successfully presents a vision for embracing our creativity as humans while living under the Lordship of Christ in a fallen world. While he strongly endorses the validity and value of art, he does not ignore the issues that have driven some followers of Christ to fear and reject it. He believes

that Christians should be involved in every level of the art world and in every media, for the glory of God.

The one regrettable part of this book is the subtitle “A vision for Christians in the arts.” The subtitle is misleading, as this book is a “must read” for all Christians, not just for those few who are professional artists. *Imagine* deals with the core issue of how humans, created in God’s image, can live God-honoring lives in a fallen world. For those of us involved in ministry in Japan, *Imagine* is an important and timely book that deals with critically important issues to each one of us.

“Evangelical Christians traditionally had taken redemption as their starting point to anything. Had the artist been reborn and was the artist singing, writing or painting about being reborn? For (Francis) Schaeffer, creation was the starting point. Everyone was made in God’s image and those blessed with artistic gifts couldn’t help but display that original image in some way.”

“The problem that has affected the church down through the ages with regard to art can be put very simply: How much of life is Christ to be Lord over? Is he only interested in that part of life we think of as religious or spiritual? Or is he interested in every facet of our lives – body, soul, mind and spirit? The sort of art we make as Christians will illustrate our answer.”

“It would be impossible to think of loving humans and yet hating human culture, of loving individuals and yet hating their music, songs, stories, paintings, games, rituals, decorations, clothes, languages and hairstyles. God made us cultural beings.”

“Love not the world” means neither “Don’t care for the planet” nor “Drop out of society,” but “Don’t embrace anti-God thinking.” H

—Steve Turner in *Imagine*

Trends and Topics 2006:



Mega-Changes & Mega-Opportunities

by Dr. Andy Meeko

“There is nothing so powerful in this world as an idea whose time has come” wrote Victor Hugo, and this adage seems to hold its weight now as well—when times and ideas match, matchless things begin to happen. The time, year 2006, is being foretold by numerous trends that are opportunities for new ideas. Following are three trends poised to shake the future of Japan.

Plummeting Population

The year 2006 will be the first year of Japan’s foretold population decline. Though much has been done trying to avert the situation, all has been to no avail. The problem of

shoshika (the trend of having few children) emerged in 1974, when the fertility rate fell short of 2.08 (the necessary number for the population level to be maintained).¹ It has been on the decline ever since, meaning that the percent of children making up society has dropped for a consecutive 30 years—Japan now possesses the fewest children per capita of any major country.²

Since 1974, the country has hit the “1.57 shock” of 1989, the “1.50 shock” in 1990, the “1.29 shock” in 2004,³ and today Tokyo has an inconceivable 0.99 birthrate—Tokyo couples don’t even replace one of themselves. By 2050 the current 130 million popula-

tion will have dropped 30% to less than 90 million. Some estimates indicate that if Japan keeps up its current level of antipathy toward parenting, the population will be halved by 2100.⁴ Already much of Japan has been experiencing declining population figures, with 25 of 47 prefectures in negative population growth mode.⁵ Japan’s breeding habits, or lack thereof, are flirting with a sort of self-extinction.

Oddly, with parenting a seemingly unpopular pastime, childcare magazines like *Tamago Club* and *Hiyoko Club* are still hot, while most other magazine markets are challenged. But perhaps “unpopular pastime”

is too charitable of a description. In a survey conducted by *AERA* magazine in 2001, 45% of parents responded, “parenting is a drag.”⁶ And a recent survey by *Mainichi Shimbun* showed that one in four don’t want children, and 23% of married women with children occasionally regret having children.⁷ Parenting is stressful business nowadays, and people are already having a hard time managing stress. Parenting is also expensive business, with the expense of raising one child costing 16.1% of the average family’s income.⁸

Parenting is getting a bad name, and the government is perplexed about how to improve the situation.

Tama City has given us a good example of this predicament. Since 1988, the number of students in Tama public schools has halved. In the last decade six schools have closed, and more are soon to follow. During this downward spiral, Tama has adopted roughly 200 measures to support child-raising households—yet none of the steps have served to reverse the decline.⁹ Going from bad to worse, there are estimates indicating that within the next 10 years, the number of universities nationally will need to be halved!¹⁰ Of course, all this means less and less new blood entering the work force and a dire shortage of enterprisers and taxpayers. Meanwhile, Japan persists in the annihilation of its future, performing an estimated 400,000 abortions annually.¹¹

The effects of the population plummet are huge. By 2014, one out of every four Japanese will be 65 or older,¹² and the rejuvenation of pension funds will take somewhat of a miracle. Japan’s future is burdened with caring for the elderly on a level that no society has faced in the history of this planet.

It is easy to foresee many outcomes of this trend. First should come major economic woe, and thus an increase in domestic stress. The question is—who will be helping people deal with increased domestic stress? Current helps are quite insufficient, and both the government and companies have begun cutting back support services already. What will increased stress and less support look like?

Another dynamic to be expected is

dishevelment. Think of massive vacancies in residential and office buildings, think of parks and streets with no maintenance; rust and overgrowth and abandonment. Some of this need can be addressed by robotics, but if people insist on not reproducing there is only

one other option; importing people. Japan has managed to keep its borders unwelcome to immigration (unless it is *yakuza*—gangsters—bringing in disadvantaged women), but now Japan has no choice aside from

opening its arms to Asia. Consider a huge

influx from China, Korea, the Philippines and Southeast Asia—and the “pure” Yamato race will be redefined. Christian influences are already growing in rural areas thanks to the prevalence of brides from Korea and the Philippines; this will now be magnified. According to a UN report from 2000, Japan needs to bring in a massive 343,000 immigrants annually until 2050, simply to prevent population decline¹³—this would mean that by 2050, thirty percent of Japan’s population would be foreign immigrants or their descendents! Like it or not, Japanese society is on the verge of being essentially reinvented.

Mushrooming Military

A little over two decades ago, the Japanese SDF (Self Defense Force) position was laughable. At the time, my brother Joe, a Lt. Colonel in the US Air Force, was teaching at the SDF Officers school in Ichigaya. Of course, the Soviet threat was still a serious consideration back then and the atmosphere was tense. At the time, Joe mentioned that if Japan was without US protection, and the Soviets decided to come down, Japan’s sov-

ereignty would come to a terse end. Within a mere twenty minutes the air force—and in a scant few hours the navy—would be thoroughly obliterated. By the end of two weeks, their ground forces would be gone as well. Japan would be decimated, and who in that part of the world would protest? After all, Japan was miserably short on friends.

But without much recognition, the Japanese military machine has steadily progressed. Interestingly, it has been encouraged to do so by friend and foe alike. The US has urged Japan to take a role in maintaining world peace that is proportionate to its status as the second wealthiest nation in the world. China and North Korea have blatantly antagonized, forcing Japan’s quiet development of military

might to become a matter of survival. For one thing, Japan Inc.’s lifeline of oil tankers are spaced every 20 miles or so from the Nippon Islands to the Arabian Sea. And of course this journey includes passing through the Taiwan Strait. In 1996, China “tested” ballistic missiles in the ocean off Taiwan and conveniently allowed a few to land near Japanese shipping lanes. China continues to remind the world of its “comprehensive national power” plan (here it might be better

to say “do let your imagination run wild”). More recently, in 2004, Chinese surveillance and reconnaissance vessels intruded into Japanese territorial waters 30 times¹⁴—a *Ni Hao Ma* in-your-face every ten days.

Meanwhile, the illogic and menace of North Korea is enough to dash anyone’s pacifism. Japan’s wild neighbor invaded Japanese shores in the 70’s and 80’s, abducting citizens at will. In 1998 it launched a Taepo Dong missile that flew over the main island of Honshu. And in recent years it has incessantly bragged and insinuated regarding its nuclear capacity.

But during these past twenty some years Japan has not been sheepishly gazing from its

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coastline; it has been at work. Today Japan has one of the largest military budgets in the world, spending an enormous \$1 billion dollars on missile defense alone, nine times what it spent from 1999 to 2003.¹⁵ The missiles likely provide coverage all the way to Taiwan. And beyond that? Japan's military machine is now superb, boasting (in a recent research paper sponsored by MIT and referenced in Air Force Magazine) the world's fourth largest air force, after the US, Great Britain, and France. Japan also has the world's third largest fleet—in fact, the aforementioned research paper states “Britain and Japan probably vie for second place.” That is not even to mention the fact that Japan's P-3 aircraft could devastate any East Asian nation. Asia's superpower has arisen—Japan is locked and loaded.

Numerous strategic moves have also been taken to widen Japan's military tour reach. The SDF began to stretch its arms with peacekeeping missions in Cambodia and Malaysia, then the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea, and recently in Afghanistan and Iraq. Each of these moves brings bigger changes in mentality than can be seen on the surface; many boundary lines have been systematically crossed.

Gargantuan power sits basically dormant, but history and reason indicate that it is only a matter of time. Those powers will be unleashed.

Paired with the present situation, in the back of many minds are the problems of the past. Along with the absence of serious apology to other Asian nations for war crimes, there has been a steady stream of visits by prime ministers and cabinet members to Yasukuni Shrine, where 2.5 million war dead, including Class-A war criminals, are enshrined. Just meters from the prayer point stands the Yasukuni Shrine Museum, which

likely nauseates anyone remotely familiar with history. The loud and emotional message reverberates: “Japan's efforts in Asia were the noble attempt to save its Asian brothers from the threat of the West.” No responsible mention of the rape of Nanking, the

slaughter of villagers in the Philippines, chemical/germ experiments conducted on innocent civilians, the 200,000 women forced into sexual slavery, the cowardly attack at Pearl Harbor... Most of the Imperial Forces criminals got away scot-free, re-entering the system, with many taking up important posts in industry, some even in politics. It is impossible to know how much of the arrogant racism that fed these historical events is still lurking in Japan—will it rear its head in the

future? Admittedly, those who wax nostalgic for Japan's imperialistic, militaristic era are few, but it only took a few to steer the nation into catastrophe in the past. The 60th anniversary of Japan's surrender was recently marked, and according to the *Mainichi Shimbun*, 43% think the war was inevitable.¹⁶ Inevitable... inevitable usually arrives uninvited, when you least expect it.

When will Japan be going to war? Will its closest neighbors make some stupid move soon? Will crisis-level circumstances force overnight changes in the constitution? Some in Christian ministry in Japan have been hoping for big changes to

increase receptivity to the gospel, but could many of the freedoms presently enjoyed be lost? If our current situation is the best we will ever have, how can we maximize the times?

Unstuffed Closets

Though the trend has already been going on for some time, a flurry of media attention surrounds the symptomatic traits of people avoiding *gaman* (endurance). People are frustrated with a system that fails to appreciate and reward them. For example, prevalent media topics in recent years have included *gakkyuhokai* (classroom chaos), *hikikomori* (agoraphobia, self-isolation, for which Japan leads the world), *tokokyohi* (aversion to school), and an assortment of mental ailments; especially *utsu* (depression).

Utsu is big. Not long ago it was being called *gendaibyo* (illness a la contemporain), but in an effort to address aversion to medication, one pharmaceutical company ran publicity calling it *kokoro no kaze* (common-cold of the heart). A five-year-old study by Gifu University, which still seems to be the standard information, puts the number suffering depression at one in seven, but with women between the ages of 18-34 it's an incredible 33%.¹⁷ A recent study, by Hokkaido University, indicates one quarter of junior high students suffer “latent if not full-blown clinical depression,” and bemoans

that, though teachers could be more help, too many of them are also depressed; in 2003 a record number of teachers took sick leave for psychological problems.¹⁸ But who isn't having problems? Last year a record number of workers applied for workers compensation related to mental problems caused by overwork.¹⁹ Depression is the result of poorly processing problems, and more problems are doubtless on the

horizon. We are informed that “consultation centers across the country are filled with

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people earnestly seeking help” for depression and difficulties.²⁰ So what will happen? After all, society seems at breakpoint already, closets seem on the brink of avalanche.

Tragically, many people with *utsu* head off the deep end. Suicide, another big media topic, is out of control. For eight years running the number has been over 30,000. It is Asia’s highest.

In the fall of 2005 I was sobered while speaking for a film shoot in *Aokigahara Jukai*, the “suicide forest” at the foot of Mt. Fuji. On average, someone commits suicide there every week of the year. Two years ago 100 victims were found. Locals are exhausted from participating in searches for bodies, and of recent, resist making the effort. In that thick and dark tangle, many more corpses likely lay undiscovered. And in every neighborhood, school, business, and train, nationwide; young and old, tired of stuffing, are looking for a way out.

One more obvious indication that people refuse to stuff stuff, is divorce.

Divorce has now climbed for 13 consecutive years,²¹ and made a 45% increase in the last decade;²² this means that of Japanese marriages today, nearly 40% will end in divorce.²³ Of course, many years back anyone could have seen this coming. Freedom and individuality were increasing in Japan, and the country had one of the highest marital dissatisfaction scores in the industrialized world.

Particularly troubling now is the fact that 1/3 of divorcees are those quitting during the first year of marriage.²⁴ In a land known for steel-tough fortitude, a generation has arrived who haven’t the stamina to hang in there for even one year, regardless of the fact that their parents dished out a possible 7,000,000 yen for wedding and fixings.

As is, people are not likely to stuff more into the closet; on the contrary, stuff will start to surface, all kinds of issues: hurts, insecurities, weaknesses, compulsions... and also dreams. While negative kickback is obvious,

such a scenario also brings potential for long-postponed emotional growth, and an assortment of good things. But who is going to be

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there to help people who are unstuffing? Trained counselors (*rinsho shinrishi*) are sparse; only 11,533 to be precise. (After all, despite the six years of degree-level and other training, the job is low status and the pay is poor. A counselor working in the public sector can get as little as 10,000 yen per day.)²⁵ Support groups are also hard to find. Take, for example, grief support groups for families of suicide victims. There are fewer than 20 nationwide. Professor Suzuki Yasuaki of Kokushikan Daigaku who organizes activities for the Tokyo Association for Death Education and Grief Counseling says, “People come from around the country to join our self-help group meetings...” There is no networking of such groups nationwide.²⁶ The question to us is clear: Who then will meet the needs of these people? They are looking for help—will we stand idly by while the self-help circuit, or the self-proclaimed psychics, or for that matter, the renewed flavors of Buddhism or Shintoism or New Religions that may evolve, all rush in?

The trend of unstuffing means a disruption to the social order. It will be an opportunity as society and individual lives are re-ordered. People are beginning to look for relief; they are opening up. Personally I have witnessed this in my seminars for emotional-relational growth. In every seminar where I give an opportunity to say “yes” to Jesus for the first time, people respond—in every seminar.

Yes, odds are good nowadays. The 2004 NHK survey (conducted every five years since 1973) showed that of those 16-19 years old, only 25% claim to be Shinto/Buddhist—the lowest figure since the survey began.²⁷ This means that 75% of youth are without anything. Also, the Elijah Conference (VIP Club) tells us that 8% of the population is interested in Christianity.²⁸ All things considered, if we Christians step up to

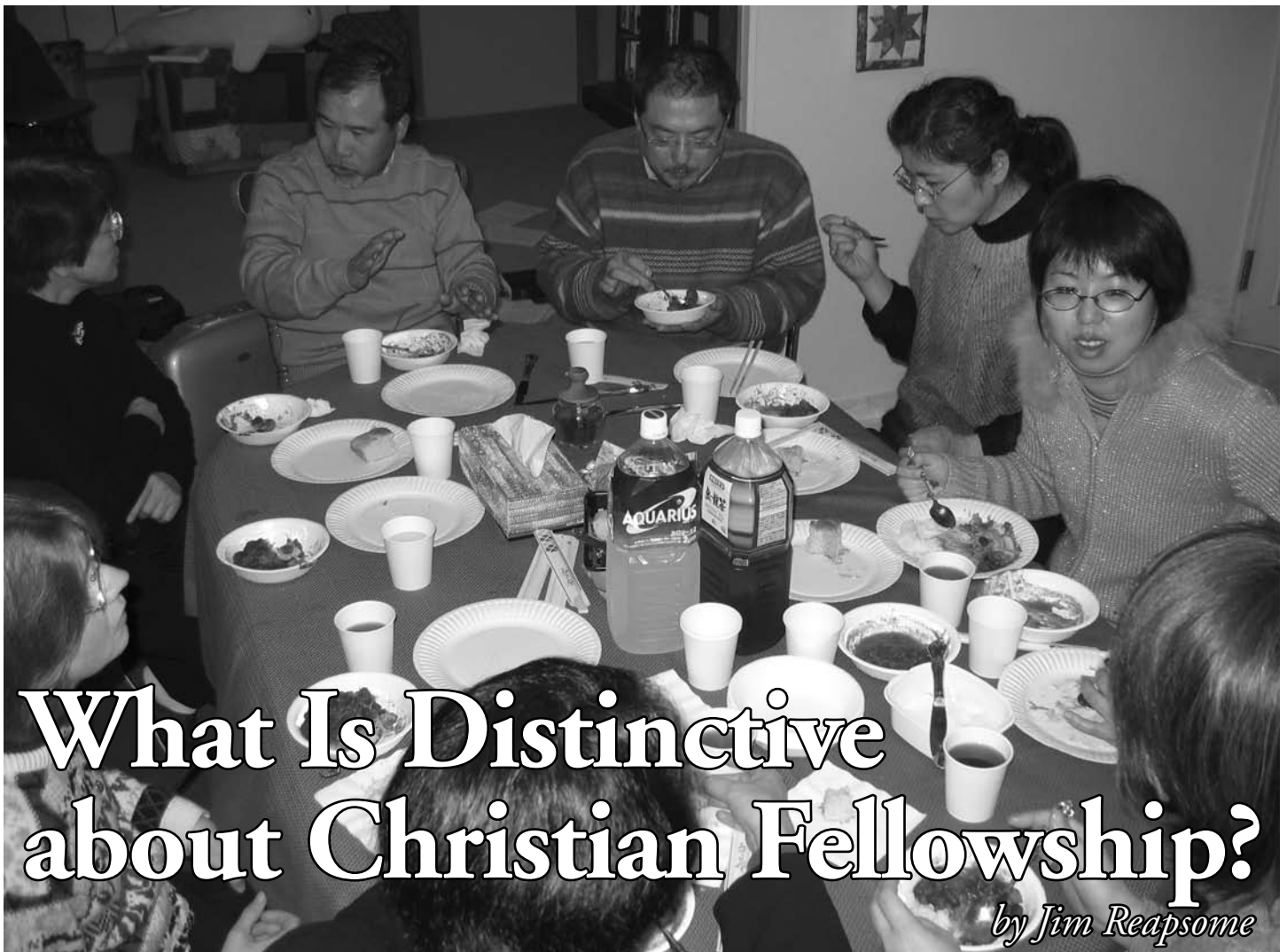
the plate, 2006 looks to be a really good year.
© by Dr. Andy Meeko

Endnotes

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- ³ *Japan Times* “House Husbands” 4-13-05
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What Is Distinctive about Christian Fellowship?

by Jim Reapsome

I enjoy wonderful fellowship with my wife just sitting in our family room together. We return from lunch or dinner with friends and are thankful for their fellowship. But does this describe what we mean by Christian fellowship, or fellowship in the body of Christ?

The Greek word for fellowship—*koinonia*—is used 12 times in Acts and the

Epistles. The root, *koinos*, means common. The Greeks used it to describe harmonious secular society. That was their ideal, their utopia. It was never realized, but the New Testament

reveals a new reality, a unique fellowship won by the blood of Christ. Our union with Christ overflows in our relations with fellow believers. It goes far beyond friendship. It describes an intimacy not possible in any other setting.

That's because Christians share a common life in Jesus Christ. This makes Christian fellowship something quite distinctive from other kinds of human fellowship.

I don't belong to any private or civic clubs, but many people do, and they join because it meets their social, intellectual, and business needs. The only thing I join is the Wheaton

Senior Men's Golf League. I enjoy good times with the men I play with every week, but it is qualitatively different from what I enjoy with my fellow members in the body of Christ.

What makes the difference? My relationship to my fellow believers in the body of Christ.

The church is an organism, a living body. It has life. The church is not a collection of unrelated people drawn together because

of religious interests. The church is Christ's body. It is an organism because we all share his life-giving power. All of us who have been born again by faith in Christ have received his life. He infuses the whole body with life. He makes one body out of many different people. That is the foundation of authentic Christian fellowship.

If we are to achieve what Jesus has in mind for our fellowship with one another, we must build on these facts about the church, based on 1 Corinthians 12:12-26.

1. The church is one body comprised of many members.
2. All believers in their diverse parts are baptized into one body.
3. Even though they are different parts, they all belong to one body.
4. The body is not one organ.
5. Each part needs every other part. Each one must have the same care.

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It has life.*

But look at a typical congregation. Is everyone alike? Not at all. The body includes men and women of different ages, interests and vocations. Some work and some are retired. It includes married and single believers. Some have children and some don't. Some have academic degrees and some don't. Some have considerable wealth and some don't. Some hold down high positions and some don't.

What then does our oneness in Christ look like? Before we explore the distinctives of genuine Christian fellowship, we must look at some New Testament stories about what destroys fellowship.

These stories show that our fellowship can be destroyed by independence, withdrawal, monopoly, discord, greed, hypocrisy, backbiting, gossip, slander, holding grudges, and so on.

The fellowship of the twelve apostles was destroyed when James and John sidled up to Jesus and asked for the chief places in his kingdom. In the early church it was

ruined when Ananias and Saphira pretended to give more to the church than they really did. Some of the widows in Jerusalem complained that they were not getting enough food. The church at Corinth split into factions built around certain church leaders. The apostle Paul said the Galatians bit and devoured one another. James said wealthy Christians took the chief seats in church and looked down their noses at the poor.

Some of the Corinthians got drunk and ate too much at their love feasts. Some of them took their fellow believers to court. Some of the law-keeping Jewish converts tried to impose circumcision on the Gentile converts.

These examples show that the apostle Paul knew what he was talking about when he used the interdependence of our body parts to guard against the destruction of our fellowship in Christ's body. (1 Cor. 12:12-26.)

What then does fellowship in Christ's body look like? Paul compared it to how the body works together: The eye needs the hand. The head needs the feet. The weaker parts of the body are indispensable. Each part has equal concern for the other parts. If one

part suffers, every part suffers. If one part is honored, every part rejoices.

What a gorgeous picture of true Christian fellowship in action.

What's required of us if we're to have a body working like this?

1. Mutual acceptance of each other's gifts, differences, weaknesses, strengths, joys, and trials.
2. Recognition that Christ lives in each one of us. What we have in common is Jesus Christ. He transcends our differences, our peculiarities, our failures, our weaknesses. We have to get over looking at the flesh and instead look at Jesus in one another.

We've looked at some things that destroy our fellowship? What keeps it going, thriving,

growing? Here again we have some profitable examples from the early church and the writings of Paul.

In the book of Acts we learn that Christians devoted themselves to the

apostles' teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayer. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts. (Acts 2:42, 46.)

Worship, Bible study, prayer, communion, and sitting down together in the temple and in their homes marked their fellowship. Without united worship, fellowship disappears. We can't be Lone Ranger Christians. If we try, we'll die. In addition to Sunday services, we have to get into each other's homes.

Further, the Jerusalem believers were united in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had. Money was distributed to anyone who had need. (Acts 4:32, 35.)

Fellowship means giving. We do this privately as well as corporately. Our giving is not just for church expenses, but for people whose lives we can touch financially—in our own communities and around the world through our missions programs. We can't buy fellowship, but sharing our common life in Christ means sharing our goods, our money, and our time.

Fellowship means using our gifts for the overall good of the body. Each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts: serving, teaching, encouraging, contributing to the needs of others, leadership, showing mercy and practicing hospitality. (Rom. 12:5-8, 13.)

Fellowship means not judging one another. "Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way." . . . "Make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification." . . . "Accept one another just as Christ has accepted you" (Rom 14:13, 19, 15:7).

Fellowship means exercising kindness, compassion, and forgiveness. It means singing and making music together in our hearts to the Lord. It means submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. (Eph. 4:32, 5:19-21.)

Fellowship means topping off everything with love for one another. "Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity" (Col. 3:13-14).

Christian fellowship is incomparable, because it is rooted in Christ and nourished by him. When we go deep with Jesus, we can go deep with one another, building each other up into the dwelling place of God, which we are.

The biblical word for fellowship means to hold and share things in common. We do this in ordinary times, in good times, and in tough times. What we hold in common is our Lord Jesus Christ. Our faith in him draws tight knots of faith, hope, and encouragement that cannot be loosened. We rally around those who suffer illness, pain, and loss. We cheer each other's victories. We act like one body. ❖



Jim Reapsome is associate pastor of Western Springs (IL) Baptist Church. He was the editor of *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, 1964-97, and of *World Pulse*, 1982-97. He is the author of *Final Analysis (EMIS, 1999)* and numerous Bible study guides. He and his wife Martha live in Wheaton, IL.

*...sharing our common life
in Christ means
sharing our goods,
our money, and our time.*



Thinking Theologically about Church Planting

Making Salvation Accessible by Clothing the Gospel with Community



by Dale Little

Some contemporary evangelical theologians in the English-speaking world have proposed the idea that salvation's parameters are broader than traditionally portrayed by evangelicals. Newbigin hinted at this idea in his description of the freedom of the Spirit among religious others.¹ In his earlier writings, Pinnock contended for a salvifically optimistic postmortem encounter with Christ for those who have not heard the name of Jesus and defended a Logos Christology.² More recently, however, he has proposed that salvation is globally accessible by rejecting the *filioque* clause when describing the Trinitarian procession of the Spirit and by arguing for an all-encompassing Spirit Christology which portrays salvation as a universal work of the Spirit freed from Christological constraints such as those found in the gospel.³ Yong, inspired by Pinnock, posits a pneumacentric reassessment of salvation and of theology of religions in general so that traditional categories of special and general revelation become malleable.⁴ Yet another recent addition to these voices comes from Tiessen who argues for the universal sufficiency of God's grace such that at least on one occasion in a person's lifetime salvation is accessible through a kind of faith determined by the kind of revelation given. He understands ecclesiocentrism to be the traditional

evangelical understanding of making salvation dependent upon belief in the gospel, proclaimed by the Church.⁵

These kinds of theological attempts to make salvation widely accessible to all humanity have previously not been a major influence in the evangelical domain. These formulations flow, in part, from a question about which the Bible traditionally has been interpreted by some evangelicals to be silent or ambiguous: What is the fate of those who have not heard the gospel? The answer usually provides only a theoretical possibility for salvation, but nevertheless leaves the salvific door open a little.⁶ Despite a traditionally cautious evangelical stance on this issue, the evangelical writings exemplified in the first paragraph above optimistically suggest that a large number of people will be saved in such a manner. Evangelical contemporary theology is under reconstruction.

However, missional ministry and motivation derive from the clear Biblical teaching that salvation is for those who believe the gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul made salvation accessible through proclaiming the gospel and founding local churches. This is gospel-centered thinking, not ecclesiocentrism. It results in the birth of local churches which make the gospel, its Author, and his salvation visible. Under this Biblical model, the

local church is significant only as it remains subservient to Jesus Christ—proclaiming his gospel and being shaped by it.

Contemporary church planters have the task of making salvation accessible to those who have never heard the name of Jesus by proclaiming the gospel and then clothing it with a local community of believers who have experienced the power of God unto salvation in the gospel. This gospel-centered missiological understanding of salvific accessibility follows the major contours of Scripture more closely than some of the new evangelical proposals. May our gospel-centered church planting make salvation accessible to many people in our part of the world!

Dale Little, PhD 



Dale and his wife, Ann, serve in Japan with the Evangelical Free Church of Canada Mission. They live in Higashi Kurumeshi, Tokyo and are church planting in Tomioka-shi, Gunma. Dale was born and raised in Japan as an OMF and then an

EFCMJ missionary kid. He is a lecturer in theology at Japan Bible Seminary in Tokyo and at Tokyo Christian University in Chiba. He holds a PhD in systematic theology. This series of articles can be found on his website: <http://www.cpttheo.net>.

¹ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978, 1995) 137-39, 174-83, 187.

² Clark Pinnock, "The Finality of Jesus Christ in a World of Religions," in *Christian Faith and Practice in the Modern World: Theology from an Evangelical Point of View*, ed. Mark A. Noll and David F. Wells (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988) 165-67. Clark Pinnock, *A Wideness in God's Mercy: The Finality of Jesus Christ in a World of Religions* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992) 77-78, 103-04


³ Clark Pinnock, *Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1996) 23, 61, 63, 73-74, 80-82, 93, 111, 161, 163-64, 187-89, 193, 196-97, 212, 277.

⁴ Amos Yong, "Discerning the Spirit(s) in the World of Religions: Toward a Pneumatological

Theology of Religions," in *No Other Gods Before Me? Evangelicals and the Challenge of World Religions*, ed. John G. Stackhouse (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001) 39, 48-51.

⁵ Terrance Tiessen, *Who Can Be Saved? Reassessing Salvation in Christ and World Religions* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2004) 104, 163, 230-58, 493-97.

⁶ D. A. Carson, *The Gagging of God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996) 308-11; David L. Edwards and John Stott, *Evangelical Essentials: A Liberal-Evangelical Dialogue* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1988) 327; Millard J. Erickson, "Hope for Those Who Haven't Heard? Yes, But..." *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 11 (April 1975) 122-26; Millard J. Erickson, *How Shall They Be Saved? The Destiny of Those Who Do Not Hear of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996)

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Christmas. Aslan is like Jesus. This tract has pictures from the Disney movie and is for those who have already seen it or read the books. (Narunia: Kakukareta Monogatari) #44001 pack of 50 for ¥630



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Real Tears

As you start to read this, think about this question. “If my computer were to stop working right now, how much important stuff would I lose?”

In the last few days, I’ve helped three different people with serious computer problems. My first question to each of them was, “Do you have a current backup?” In all three cases, my question was met with a blank stare! None of the three people even knew *how* to back up their files, and all three had that capability built into their computers. In two of the three cases, I was able to get everything back, but in one case, everything on the computer was lost—including the only copy of their wedding pictures, which a friend had taken with a digital camera. I saw real tears.

Most of us don’t back up our computers because:

1. It takes time
2. We don’t have a good way to make backups
3. We don’t know how.

When you back up your files, you don’t need to back up most of what is on your computer, just the data files. For most of us that means three things: your e-mail, your “My Documents” folder (on Windows computers), and your address book. If you have these things, backed up and the worst happens, you can re-load your programs from the original disks, and then restore your data. Since you’re only backing up your data, the back up won’t take up very much storage space.

Most people could burn their data to CD disks. A CD will hold 700mb of data. If you have lots of pictures, or music files, you could still get everything onto one DVD disk. However this takes time, and many people don’t know how to burn disks.

These days I think most people should invest in an external hard disk. They are available in any computer store, and depending on the size, sell for about ¥10,000 and up. Most hard disks connect via newer computer’s USB 2.0 port. (*Ed. note: The identically shaped USB 1.1 port on some older computers is intended for slower access devices, so these computers may alternately have an IEEE 1394 port—also called FireWire by Apple, and i.Link by Sony—that is designed for hard disk access speeds. Confirm the available ports on both your computer and proposed external hard disk!*) If you’re on a tight budget, and you have a spare hard disk, you can buy an external case and reuse your old hard drive. That’s what I did for our mission’s camp last week. They were not backing up their files, so I bought an external USB drive case for ¥4,000 and put in a 30 gig hard drive that I had taken out of my computer when I bought a larger drive.

Once you have an external hard drive, you can use any backup software to schedule automated backups. I use a free Windows program called “Replicator.” It’s

available along with lots of other useful utilities at www.karenware.com. When you first use Replicator, you create a “job” and then schedule when it will run. You have to tell it what files to back up, and then when to do it. If you use Outlook Express for e-mail, click on “Tools” “Options” “Maintenance” and “Store Folder” to find out where your e-mail files are stored. Then tell your backup program to save that folder. Be aware that your address book is not in the same place. To find out where the address book is stored, open the Address Book, and then click on “Help” and then “About Address Book.” Tell your backup program to save that file.

To make the scheduled backup work, of course your computer has to be on, and most programs closed. If Outlook Express is open, your e-mail files can’t be backed up. If you don’t leave your computer on all the time, you can create an icon on the desktop, and just click it when you want to back up.

One of my fellow computer geek friends once said, “A computer’s hard drive is like a light bulb. It’s not a matter of if it will fail, only a matter of time when it will fail.” Also, your hard disk doesn’t have to fail for you to lose all your data—any virus, or corruption of the operating system can do it.

One of the people I helped lately was my daughter. Suddenly, the last two years of her e-mail disappeared from Outlook Express (of course, no backup). She had about seven years total, but only the last two were gone. I think the problem occurred because her hard disk was full, and she started getting weird errors. Anyway, I downloaded a program called OE-Mail Recovery (www.oemailrecovery.com) and it recovered everything. Since there are several programs for sale to do this same thing, it must happen fairly regularly. This was the best \$27 she spent all year!

That’s it for this issue; send questions or ideas to missionarygeek@yahoo.com 📧

Sleeping Giants come alive at OBI!

Thanksgiving at our Fifteenth Anniversary Day —By Dr. John Masuda, President

On November 21, 2005, we celebrated our Fifteenth Anniversary Day. Guests, board members, teachers, graduates, students and staff members gathered in significant numbers to celebrate and give thanksgiving to the Lord for what He has done in our midst.

The anniversary message was brought by Dr. Akira Hatori, former OCC Board Chairman, initiator of the idea of educational outreach in the 1970's, and current Honorary President of OBI. He challenged us to press on to realize the Lord's vision in our lives with the motivation of Christ's compelling love (II Cor. 5:9-21). A celebratory address was given by Dr. Nobuhiro Iijima, outstanding Christian CEO of the Yamazaki Bakery Company, Ltd., and strong OBI supporter, who has high expectations that OBI will by God's help be used to trigger a layman movement bringing about a breakthrough in the stalemate we are up against in Japan. Dr. Nobumichi Murakami, now Chairman of the OCC Board, spoke of significant areas of contribution already made by OBI as its graduates are making differences in church outreach, upgrading the quality of ministry.

The service was followed by a luscious buffet lunch and further words of celebration and encouragement in an exciting and cordial spirit. Indeed it was a day in which we gave our heartfelt praise and glory to our gracious Lord for His goodness.

Our Future Perspective

Furthermore, this year marks the beginning of a new step in our history-making journey with Him and for Him. As if to endorse this new step forward, the night before this celebration in my devotions, the Lord impressed in my heart a verse from Isaiah, saying: "Enlarge the place of your tent, stretch your tent curtains wide, do not hold back; lengthen your cords, strengthen your stakes (Isaiah 54:2)." "Enlarge," "stretch," "lengthen" and "strengthen" are not easy words to follow.

But by faith we have gone into this year endeavoring to reach out to those in distant places by means of the internet. This will provide opportunities nationwide to study and equip His potential servants so as to become His workmen. At present, ten courses are being made available. Eight people are registered in these online studies. We pray that this is just the beginning of new adventure in our ministry for further meaningful progress in strengthening the Lord's churches in Japan.

A Reality to Face in the Church

Thanks be to God for the 148 students who have graduated and now are serving Him as pastors, assistants, secretaries, missionaries, S.S. teachers, lay leaders and in other capacities. Yet, one U.S. seminary president has described the hard reality that: "In some congregations, the pastor serves as a block to the ministry of the whole people of God. He or she is so concerned with being the pastor-in-charge that they forget the scriptural model of the body of Christ with every member as a vital functioning part with the crucial role in ministry to fill." As our lay training progresses we face such a reality—a situation in which a new direction and orientation needs to be given to include and incorporate trained lay leaders into the ministry of the church. We pray our graduates and students will become persuasive models, giving a new direction in this reality with their spirit of humility and service.

A New Trend to Face in Society

The mass media has been alerting us concerning the approach of the baby-boomer generation retirement. It is already happening. And it affords us and churches with new opportunities to integrate their God-given gifts into the ministry. We had one classic example of such a case. As this person applied to OBI, he shared with us a profound insight: "When I became president of a subsidiary company, the second stage of my life began. Now that I am retired to come to OBI, the third stage of my life will begin—which is to serve the Lord!" It is quite interesting to note again from the words of the seminary president regarding what is happening in his institution: "Twenty years ago, 90% of the students felt called to preach in the church—now 48% are laypersons who want to be useful tools for kingdom work." The age of the lay people with their tremendous resources of gifts and abilities is here with us, challenging us to widen our horizon into the future of His church.

So, here at OBI we are grateful that we can be meaningfully used as God's instrument to launch ourselves into the future with hope and faith. We offered our heartfelt thanksgiving for all that He has done for us and in us, as we celebrated our Fifteenth Anniversary Day. May we ask you to join us in prayer that He will continue to help us accomplish His will in us for His praise and glory.

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Reading the Culture

By Cheryl Kirchoff



“I don’t believe, but I visit temples and shrines.”

On September 2nd, 2005, this headline introduced a survey on religious thought and practice in the *Yomiuri Shimbun*¹. I read the survey with interest and wanted to share it with others who may not have seen it.

In response to the question, “**Do you believe in a religion?**” 22% said “*I believe*,” whereas 75% said, “*I don’t believe*.” But when asked, “**Do you regularly (at least once a year) go to a shrine, temple or church?**” 81% said “*yes*.” The paradox of Japanese religious thought and practice! It seems to be a characteristic of the culture that many Japanese deny any particular religious affiliation, yet regularly participate in religious activities.

Those of us who are interested in bringing the gospel across cultural barriers can benefit from studying recent information about the Japanese worldview. Cultural sensitivity develops through making an effort to understand the other’s thinking patterns. A person’s worldview, their unconscious set of beliefs about life, makes some things “feel right” and other things “feel wrong.”

The aforementioned nation-wide survey on religious thought and practice was conducted on August 6th and 7th, 2005. Three thousand people 20 years or older were interviewed in 250 locations, and 1798 answered fully:

Why do you go to a shrine, temple or church?

- because I believe in the religion 8%
- for funerals or memorials 64%
- for events such as New Year’s or festivals 66%
- because it might bring benefit 15%
- because I like viewing historic buildings and statues 15%

A lack of faith and an abundance of events are noteworthy in Japanese religious practice. Event-oriented religion is even more pronounced in the religious thought and actions of young people. Those surveyed who were in their twenties had the lowest rate of belief, with only 11% saying they believed in

a particular religion. At the same time, 74% in this age group said they go to shrines, temples, or churches at least once a year. During *oshogatsu* (the New Year’s holiday, and one of the main traditional times for shrine visits) they tend to go to large shrines and temples (not small local ones)—leading Koku Gakuin University Religion Professor Kenji Ishii to comment, “It’s just an event” for them.

“What’s strange about lightly sampling various religious practices?”

Is it odd to have a Buddhist altar and a Shinto “god shelf” in the home?
—86% said “no.”

Is it odd for non-believers to go to temples or shrines at New Years?
—92% said “no.”

Is it odd for those who are not Christians to celebrate Christmas?
—83% said “no.”

Foreigners often find it strange that Japanese plan *Shinto* ceremonies for their child, devotedly honor the dead at Buddhist ceremonies, and enjoy Christmas celebrations. The *Yomiuri Shimbun* survey shows that in the Japanese view of religion, sampling various practices for personal or social benefit is accepted.

Most Japanese religious practices are associated with seasonal events or the remembrance of deceased family members. These practices are often based more on social convention than personal faith. Because Japanese try to conform to social convention it is difficult to say they have a specific belief.

“Sometimes I have wanted to lean on a god.”

Have you ever had a desire to cling to a god or Buddha?
—53% yes,
—49% no

Over half the respondents (58% of women and 50% of men) admitted that at times they have felt a desire to lean on a higher spiritual being. Even among those who said they do not believe, 47% said they had wanted to cling to a god at some point in time.

These figures reveal that those who say they do not believe in a religion are not necessarily atheists. The survey results show that Japanese avoid religious affiliation and deep involvement, yet at least half of them do acknowledge having wanted to be able to trust in a higher spiritual being.

The core of Japanese religious faith has been summarized as a combination of ancestor worship and following social convention so as to receive benefit in this life. When Japanese are introduced to Christianity, a religion of high commitment in which personal faith is based upon the written word and exclusively worshipping **one** God, it just doesn’t “feel right.”

Can we open wide the “event” window into our Christian communities so Japanese can experience more events in a Christian context? Of course, Christmas and wedding celebrations are important, but are there other events we can create that would be obligation-free, festive, and give participants a taste of the living God?²

Can we open wide our hearts and accept the Japanese need to participate in various religious practices for social convention?³ Can we withhold criticism of cultural practices until the young believer can lean on the Lord?

Footnotes

¹ 信じないでも神社や寺へ *Yomiuri Shimbun* (2 Sept 2005): p. 17. A brief English summary was in the Daily Yomiuri on 3 Sept, p. 2. Survey questions and results are in italics.

² Some examples: memorial services for those who have gone to heaven, new home blessing events, and new baby celebrations.

³ After Naaman professed faith in the Lord, he asked Elisha for understanding because social convention would require him to attend temple ceremonies. Elisha responded, “Go in peace.” II Kings 5:17-19. Paul also showed understanding of culture in his handling of food, slavery, and circumcision. †



Darren Polischuk and his wife Minako serve in Japan with the Christian & Missionary Alliance of Canada and the Japan Alliance Mission. They live in Higashi Kurume-shi, Tokyo, and are developing Greatest Gift Ministries—holistic ministries focused on compassion and sharing God’s gift to the ends of the Earth. Darren is a former employee of Samaritan’s Purse and the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association in Canada.

A little over a year ago I found myself looking for help in trying to communicate with my deaf Japanese neighbor. He is proficient at Japanese lip-reading—but I don’t speak Japanese. He is well-versed in Japanese sign language—another shortfall in my skill set. So in my pursuit to find a way to communicate with my neighbor, I was introduced to a couple whose faith has led them into some unique ministries.

Mark Penner is involved in language translation. But it’s not quite what you would think. He and a dedicated team of deaf people are working to translate the *written* form of the Bible into the language of the Japanese deaf—a *visual* form. They are currently one-fourth of the way through the translation and filming of the book of Genesis in Japanese Sign Language, and have already finished Mark, Acts, and several of the Epistles—about 9% of the entire Bible. In comparison, the American Sign Language Omega Project in the U.S., which started 25 years ago, is about halfway done.

Mark’s wife Mary Esther, besides being a supporter of her husband’s work with the Japanese deaf community, also is busy with a project of her own. You see, Mark and Mary Esther have a son, Daniel, who has never walked one day in his twenty-four years of life. Daniel grew up in a wheelchair in Japan. Through their experiences over the years with Daniel and social services in Japan, they discovered an interesting fact about wheelchairs for children. The Japanese government helps pay for a new replacement wheelchair for children every four years, and in many cases the old chairs are simply discarded.

When Joni Eareckson Tada (Joni and Friends) came to Japan a few years ago, Mary Esther had the chance to speak with Joni. That sparked a desire in Mary Esther to do something with these used chairs that still had plenty of life in them. As her burden grew, and the relationship with Joni and Friends developed, Mary Esther was encouraged to start an NGO and put together a board of directors who would then be able to work to help find a home for the many wheelchairs that were being destroyed.

Mary Esther proceeded with shipping several chairs to a few other countries, but she continued to have a burden to do something more. She had been challenged with a method for getting to the next level, but she didn’t know how to set up an NGO, and she didn’t know the first thing about establishing a board of directors.

How many of us have been at this point in the journey? God has laid a burden on our hearts or planted a vision in our minds, but for one reason or another we are unable to move beyond a certain point. What are we to do in those times?

Mary Esther chose to pray—she prayed that God

would provide solutions in the area of compassionate ministries. In response, God sent people—people with fresh perspective, sharp vision, and encouraging words—and Mary Esther began to develop a vision for the next stages of ministry. One year later, Mary Esther found herself sharing a meal with a roomful of people in celebration – people whose lives had been blessed to be a part of the growing ministry that Mary Esther has embraced—a ministry called *Wheelchairs of Hope*. She hasn’t yet established an NGO, and has no board of directors, but she is faithfully putting one foot in front of the other—actively collecting used wheelchairs in Japan, getting men in churches involved in cleaning and refurbishing the chairs, and then sending them out with individuals who are delivering those chairs to needy children. God has blessed her efforts with wheelchairs from total strangers, with divine appointments in transportation arrangements for the chairs, and in connections with willing recipients whose hearts are open to hearing about why they are being blessed. God is using Mary Esther and the team that God is providing to make a difference in the lives of children in Asia.

However, that’s not the end of the answers to her prayers. With involvement in compassion ministries being one of the vital signs of a healthy church, Mary Esther also felt the need for a concrete response to this insufficiently addressed component of Japan Church Planting Institute training. And this year she saw an initial answer to this aspect of her prayers in the assembling of the first team in the history of CPI to focus on the Biblical principles and practical outworking of compassionate ministries through Christ’s Body, the Church.

Mary Esther and Mark Penner are two of a growing number who are responding to this fresh wind of change—a breeze of compassion carrying a new fragrance of Christ that is beginning to turn heads and open hearts in response to the holistic gospel message.

As Eli Stanley Jones, Methodist missionary to India for sixty years once said, “It’s not our responsibility but rather our response to His ability.”

To contact Mary Esther or Mark Penner email: mepenner@worldventure.net or penner@worldventure.net ❧

Would YOU Like to Buy a Very Profitable Tent-making English School Where Many Students are Finding Christ?

Let me introduce to you Pat and Holly Bell. Their story was featured in *Japan Harvest* (Winter 2003). Ten years ago, they came to Japan thinking that they'd be here for only a year to pay off their Wheaton College Grad School debts. God had other plans for them!

Pat and Holly moved to the historic city of



Pat Bell Family

Hagi at the west end of Honshu (Yamaguchi Prefecture) to teach English, yet also to serve the local Christian churches. Before long, Pat and Holly became managers of the two schools, with 59 students in Hagi and 27 in nearby Nagato City.

At the time, they couldn't find a single young Christian in either Hagi or Nagato!

However, Pat and Holly poured their lives into the people of Hagi. As the 2003 Harvest article indicated, the harvest yielded fruit only slowly, but through their outreach, many people began to hear for the first time of their need for a Savior. The reputa-



Pat and Pastor Masaomi baptize a young believer

tion of their school continued to grow, as did the number of students.

In 2000, Pat and Holly formed their own Japanese company and bought the schools, becoming the sole owners. God has done a great work both inside and outside of their school, giving them a wonderful reputation in Hagi among city officials, all the local public schools, and the general community. National English chain schools, with their big advertising and marketing budgets, tried to muscle their way into the Hagi market, but made no headway and eventually gave up completely. But the Bells gave credit where credit was due: "The Lord gives us favor."

In 2003, the Hagi school moved to a beautiful new American-style office building and now has



The Bell kids lemonade stand at the Hagi School



The Bell School Staff

over 200 students. Nagato school has over 100 students; together, the schools generate revenues of over ¥28,000,000 a year. Pat and Holly don't teach in their schools now, but have 3 full-time teachers and one part-time teacher responsible for all the classroom instruction.

Each school has its own bilingual secretary. The Bells have only hired Christian teachers who have been tremendous lights in their community over the years and have planted many seeds of faith.

After 4 years in Hagi, Pat and Holly saw the first person commit his life to Jesus. Two more followed in the subsequent two years. In the last 5 years, there have been at least 18! The last three who came to the Lord were all young men – after an extended period of prayer and fasting! Now there are various Bible studies and outreach events that draw in younger people from all over the city. These young believers need discipleship by mature Japanese believers. Also, there are so many seekers who long for meaningful friend-

ships and spiritual direction.

Momentum is building in both the schools and their ministry.

Now, however, Pat and Holly believe that

the Lord is calling them out of Hagi into ministry elsewhere. They also have three children who now need an international school environment. The Bells deeply desire to have Christians who would take over the schools and continue the ministry that is now bearing fruit.

That is why Bell English School is now up for sale. The price is ¥28,000,000 (just under one year's revenue). It can support at least 5 fulltime teachers (at ¥250,000 each—remember, living costs in Hagi are much lower than large urban areas in Japan!)

This is an ideal opportunity for various kinds of people to pursue:

- a mission agency that wants to set their staff up in a viable tentmaking ministry
- a missionary couple on support who can continue to run the school as a Christian business
- a Japanese and American couple partnering to run the school and extend the ministry
- a Christian entrepreneur who wants to run a profitable business, yet have a long-term spiritual impact in the community

Pat and Holly will provide full training. Following their departure from Hagi, they will remain available to offer periodic consultation.

If you're serious about owning an English Conversation School, or you know someone who might be, this is the ideal opportunity. You can contact Pat or Holly at 090-5377-0920, or write them an email at rainman_japan@ybb.ne.jp. They would appreciate your discretion that you don't share this information with people in Hagi at this time—they don't want the rumors to start flying just yet!

— Roger Hederstedt (*I am a long-time missionary in Japan with CRM who has consulted with Pat and Holly extensively and fully endorse their heart for God and service to His Kingdom.*
E-mail: roger.hederstedt@crmladers.org)

Radical Faith in Times of Fear

By Lee McDowell

“Do not be afraid” is the most common admonition in the Bible. And yet the most frequently diagnosed mental health illnesses in America are anxiety disorders—an increasingly serious problem in Asia as well (National Mental Health Association website, 2005).

Unless caused by an organic or biochemical malfunction in the brain, anxiety and faith seem to be in opposition to one another. Jesus admonishes us, “...do not worry about your life...Life is more than food, and the body more than clothes...do not worry about it. For the pagan world runs after all such things and your Father knows that you need them. But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well (Luke 12:22b-23; 29b-31).

In spite of the many exhortations *not* to fear, in the church we rarely associate fear with our concept of sin. In fact, when our Christian faith becomes an organized system, fear is often rewarded. The system offers control for those in management and for those who compliantly participate. It is a control which is often unconsciously interpreted as living by formulas for success. If “A” is believed and practiced, then God

will deliver the “B” of blessing. However, we forget that while standing on a hill in Galilee, Jesus said, “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.” What could Jesus have possibly meant? Isn’t the abundant life he promised inconsistent with suffering and hardship?

Following his being diagnosed with a brain tumor, my late husband Clyde wrote the following words in a booklet entitled *Reflections on an Unexpected Journey*: “As a leader of a Christian organization, I would like to think I have some control over what is happening with the institution...however, this experience is a profound reminder that I have very little control over events in my life or the institution...Am I ready to accept this challenge? On the other hand, my personal response to these unexpected events is something I can, in fact, control.”

Since “there is no fear in love...perfect love drives out all fear” (1 John 4:18a), perhaps St. Ignatius of Loyola has offered us an enhanced understanding of that which separates us from God. He framed sin less as an act of rebellion than as the consequence of not knowing and deeply trusting the love of God—a love which brings with it the assurance that God’s plan for my life is superior to

anything I could create, manipulate, or even just settle for.

It is very popular today to speak of an intimate love relationship with God, and yet few are as honest as David Benner, a psychologist and spiritual director, who asks, “If this is the deepest longing of my heart, what holds me back? Why is it that I invest so much energy in maintaining the kingdom of the self while giving lip service to a desire for the Kingdom of God?” (*Conversations: A Forum for Authentic Transformation*, Fall 2005)

As a counselor, mentor, and coach, beneath the language of orthodox belief I often encounter fear: fear of being wrong, fear of rejection, fear of displeasing others, fear of failure, and ironically—fear of being unworthy of God’s love. Even among those in cross-cultural ministry, I have observed that frequently a gap exists between formal and functional theology, between religious rhetoric and true spiritual experience. A. W. Tozer wrote in his classic work, *The Pursuit of God*, “We talk a lot about God, but settle for surprisingly little direct experience of God.”

Fear is about holding on. God is calling us to let go. Too often we seek to retain control over ourselves, others, and even God. Fear of

losing this control is at the heart of our lives. According to James Houston, "This is what sin does to us; we cannot bear the thought of self-surrender." "For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it" (Lk.9:24)." This is the Paschal mystery: true life comes only through journeys of death and rebirth wherein we experience who God is for us. Letting go is the nature of all true spiritual transformation. This pattern is evident in the lives of Abraham and Isaac, Joseph, Moses, Job, Ruth, Peter, Paul, and most significantly, Jesus.

As a young Russian Christian contractor visited my home a few days ago, we talked about my neighbor who had introduced us. I said, "I miss Chris." Chris was a 40-year-old husband, father, and member of my church who was killed by an escaped convict who robbed a bank and was fleeing the police. Victor then told me his father had died suddenly two months ago and that while driving to his father's funeral, his uncle was killed in an automobile accident. Victor and his wife then lost their baby in the fourth month of pregnancy. That afternoon I spoke to a single mother who is battling stage four breast cancer. Her only child has an inoper-

able brain tumor. And the next morning I sat with another single mother whose 32-year-old daughter recently died in a climbing accident.

What do these godly people and their experiences have in common? Life has suddenly spun out of their control. Why do good people, yes, even Christians, face impossible challenges which test all of their ability to trust God? Some of life's challenges seem to pale in comparison to these, but appear no less impossible. The first church to which God called Clyde and me out of seminary was a very depressed and dying ministry. In tears I said, "I know God wants us to go there and I don't want to. It looks impossible!" J. Hudson Taylor, the founder of China Inland Mission which is now OMF International said, "I have found there are three stages in every great work of God: first it is impossible, then it is difficult, then it is done."

Having been invited by two hospital social workers to speak to their patients on the seemingly impossible topic of "Managing Stress during Life-threatening Illness," One wise counselor said, "At the end of the day it is all about presence." She seeks to under-

stand what I hope to convey to these people.

James Houston in *The Transforming Power of Prayer* said it best, "Paradoxically, it is at times when we sense God's great mystery that he seems to be present with us in the most intimate way possible." For Moses, God's presence was the essential thing he sought as he faced the impossible challenge of leading the children of Israel. "If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here (Exodus 33:15). And the Psalmist recognized that in God's presence there is fullness of joy regardless of one's circumstances.

Fear is predictable when God is doing something new and mysterious in our lives. Do not the words, "Fear not" precede almost every theophany in the Bible? We hail the heroes of the faith who acted with the courage to trust God when faced with impossible challenges. Facing the mystery of the dramatic interruption of our ministry and family life brought on by a brain tumor, Clyde wrote, "I trust that in suffering, God's presence, and yes, even His blessing, will be as evident as when I was experiencing obvious ministry success. This is my new journey of faith." And so it was. H



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Ann Little email:ann@ritoru.net

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Hokkaido retreat:

Date: March 11, 2006 Time: 9:30-4:00

Place: Sapporo International Church

The contact persons are:

E-mail: Beth Pethalsky

bpethalsky@yahoo.com

Telephone: Annet Bakker tel. 011-782-8266.

**(Register early for the Hokkaido retreat and
win a prize!)**

**For current information on WIM activities, check out the WIM website at
jema.org Women in Ministry—Helping to Equip, Encourage and Enhance
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Miriam Davis came to Japan in 1975 from the UK and taught English in schools and universities in Nara Prefecture, Nagoya and Osaka for 8 years. In 1986 she joined OMF International and moved to Sapporo to do church planting and English teaching. Since 1990 she has been Language Advisor to OMF.

The Canary that Forgot its Song

By Miriam Davis (la@omf.or.jp)

Watching a Lifeline program on TV recently introduced me to a famous 童謡(どうよう) or children's song by Saijoo Yaso (西条八十) 1892-1970.

うた わす
歌を忘れたカナリアは後ろの山に棄
ましょか(throw away)
いえいえ それはかわいそう

歌を忘れたカナリアは背戸の小藪
(small bush) に埋めましょか (bury)
いえいえ それはなりませぬ

歌を忘れたカナリアは柳の鞭 (willow
whip) でぶちましょか
いえいえ それはかわいそう

歌を忘れたカナリアは象牙(ivory) の舟
に銀のかい(oar)
つきよ 月夜の海に浮かべれば 忘れた歌を思
い出す

Exploring the internet led me to a number of sites where the title of the song is quoted to illustrate the view that current Japanese society has lost its way. It is, for example, used in the title of a book currently on sale called

「日本流—なぜカナリアは歌を忘れたか。」

Another site explains it is the song of the canary that gives this particular bird its unique value in relation to other birds.

容姿 (body) とともに鳴き声が美しい小鳥だから、カナリアはペットとしてかわいがられますが、もし、きれいな鳴き声が聞かれなくな

ればただの鳥。たちまちカナリアの存在
価値は失われ、優雅に家の中で飼われるど
ころか裏山に捨てられてしまうよ、という
童謡の一節です。

The moral of the song is that if the canary loses its song it is not worth its existence so it should make the most of the gift of song it has been given.

カナリアにとってきれいな鳴き声は他の
小鳥にはない付加価値 (value added) な
だから、それを生かすようにしなさい、という
教えを読みとることが出来ます。

The writer goes on to say that businesses are the same. They should not forget the purpose for which they were created. Companies and individuals should press on single-mindedly with the tasks they are given, however mundane they may be.

What none of the web pages told me, and the Lifeline program did, however, was that poet and hit song writer, Saijoo Yaso, was a Christian. And indeed, that his famous canary song was, in fact, inspired by his Christian faith.

One day in church Saijoo raised his eyes and noticed that one small bulb in the chandelier hanging from the ceiling was not shining like the others. He imagined the bulb feeling lonely and longing to be replaced so that it could shine again like the others. He went on to meditate on the fact that it is only the Maker that can relight the light that has gone out in people's hearts. Sin that divides us from God makes us lose our song of praise but when our relationship with God is restored through the death of Jesus on the cross, a new song of praise is born in our hearts. God makes those who have lost their song able to sing again (歌えるようにしてください) just as the canary finds its song again in the reflection of the moonlit night on the silver oar of the ivory boat.

All this is a far cry from the contemporary interpretation of the poem which seems to say simply 'gambarimasho' in your own strength.



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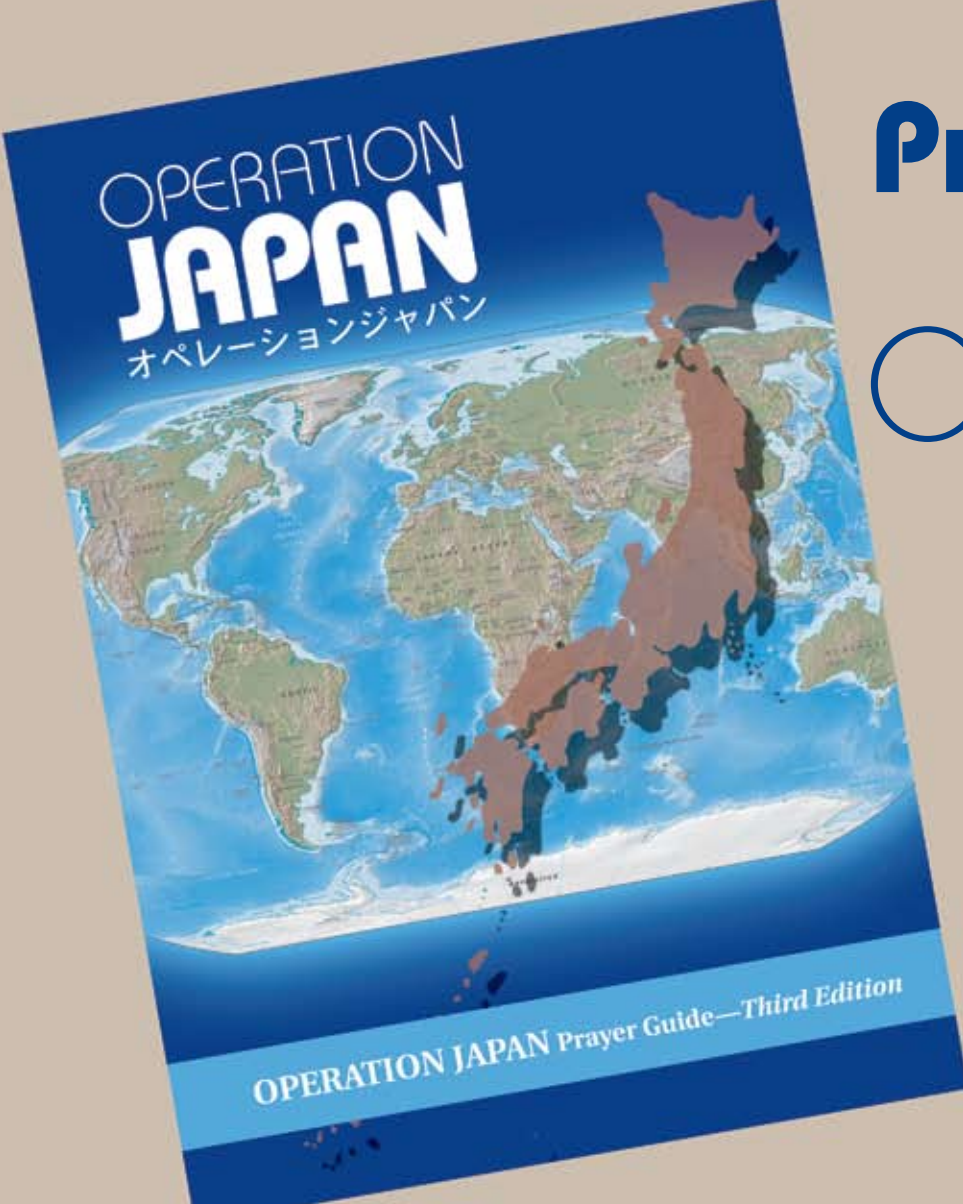


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