



JAPAN Spring 2006
HARVEST
Japan Evangelical Missionary Association

The Changing Face of Japan
with Dr. George Gallup, Jr.

**Choosing Educational Options
for Your Children**

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Marriage in Crisis

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Life in Sharper Focus

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*Japan Evangelical
Missionary Association
exists to network and equip
its members to make
disciples for Christ*

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Karuizawa Union Church (since 1906) This year is our Centennial!!!

Karuizawa Union Church welcomes you to the cool, refreshing town of Karuizawa for a summer of spiritual renewal. Come to enjoy God's blessing and celebrate with many missionaries who are planning to return from their retirement in their home countries to help us celebrate 100 years here in Karuizawa."

2006 Centennial Summer Conference at Karuizawa Union Church (Sunday July 30th ~ Sunday August 6th)



Dr. Robertson McQuilkin will be sharing in 6 sessions on a timely topic for missionaries.

Dr. McQuilkin served as president of Columbia International University for 22 years. McQuilkin's tenure at CIU was marked by growth in students, programs and facilities. McQuilkin now serves as president emeritus of CIU. McQuilkin is also known throughout the evangelical world as an authority on biblical ethics and world evangelization. Throughout its history, CIU has been known as a missionary training school, with more than 50 percent of its graduates serving in another country. Prior to assuming the presidency of CIU in 1968, McQuilkin was a church-planting missionary in Japan for 12 years and the acting president of Tokyo Christian College. His father, Dr. R.C. McQuilkin, was CIU's first president (1923-1952).

Events of the week: Reunion with former missionaries all through the week but a celebration on Friday
Children's program (in English and in German)
Music team and music worship
Youth conference (Monday ~ Wednesday noon for Jr. High through college)
Movie night, ladies luncheon with Mrs. McQuilkin, men's breakfast with Dr. McQuilkin

The BIG 100th Centennial Celebration:

Sunday afternoon at 3:00 PM, August 6th.

Dignitaries from various governmental offices of Japan

Greetings from former missionaries will be received via video, power points and photos during the week but displayed on Sunday afternoon

Brendt Bohman with his cello and his wife on the piano will be part of the celebration service.

There is a great program planned at the Gospel House with a renewed evangelistic outreach program starting this year. Come and be part of this ministry



Karuizawa Union Church Summer Schedule (Sunday, July 23th- Sunday, August 27th)

Sunday Services:

Prayer Service: 9:30 a.m.

Worship Service: 10:30 a.m.

Sunday School for English and German speaking children ages 4-12.

Evening Service: 7:00 p.m.

For more information regarding scheduling, housing, events or directions please contact:

Ron Stoller, KUC Board Chairman, email: Stoller@japan.email.ne.jp 090-1743-8158 or 0569-43-0141

Mark Magnusson, Summer Conference and Centennial Chairman, markm@interlink.or.jp or telephone 0561-72-1166

You can also visit our website at <http://church.ne.jp/kuc/>



We live near a busy road, and sometimes when a large truck goes by we feel a faint rumbling in the house. However, several times in the past year these faint rumbings were followed by a large jolt—an earthquake! One day, my co-worker and I were carrying a large load of concrete blocks in my van to the junkyard. I knew the weight of the blocks was too much for the van, but we planned to junk it in a few days as well, so I was just hoping we would make it safely to the yard. As the van started swaying violently back and forth I thought, “The van’s shocks can’t handle the load. It is going to collapse right in the middle of the street!” Then the swaying stopped and we went on slowly and prayerfully to the junkyard. Later I learned that there had been an earthquake. Faint rumbings followed by a jolt, a swaying van—oftentimes we don’t recognize the imminent signs of something big that is about to happen. We are fooled by past experiences. I think that I feel spiritual rumbings in Japan. This is not the first time that I have felt this way, and I wonder could this be the beginning of something big?

At the end of December, Sutto Kanto was held at Yodobashi Church in Tokyo. Although not directly related to JEA, this mission conference for young people was a follow up of the 2003 SEND ME conference at Aoyama University. That conference was nicknamed Sutto Aoyama. Although smaller, Sutto Kanto was just as enthusiastic and upbeat as Sutto Aoyama. The Church in Japan desperately needs an infusion of the vigor, energy, and daring faith of young people whose hearts are on fire for Christ. I have heard that forty young people dedicated their lives at the conference to serve in worldwide ministry.

Momentous changes are taking place within the nation and culture of Japan. Traditionalists are trying to draw the people back to old values and ways of thinking, but this is not the Edo era and the nation can no longer be isolated from outside influences. Unheard of crimes and increasing social breakdown is straining every aspect of life in Japan. There is fear that the society can no longer sustain its economic edge by producing dedicated and educated workers. *Freeter* is a new Japanese word used to identify young people who live from day to day, sponging off their parents and living totally for themselves. There is a vacuum in society that yearns to be filled with excitement and purpose, but what will fill that vacuum? Are these changes in society rumbings of something bigger to follow?

Nations that experienced the cruelty of the Japanese War Sword have not forgotten, and they will not let Japan forget either. China is swaggering around and daring its Asian neighbors to oppose

its might. After Taiwan, Japan is number two on mainland China’s list of antagonists. North Korea defiantly keeps its kidnapped Japanese hostages. Is Japan feeling the swaying of things to come?

Where do we in JEMA fit into the picture of what is going to happen in Japan?

The consultation process we just completed has given us input to help answer the question. I met Bruce Johnson for the first time at my interview, and I will honestly say that I was very glad that we had such a man of faith with a heart for missions and for Japan leading this process. Twenty-seven leaders were interviewed over a two-day period. Amazingly there was not one cancellation. These leaders represented the leaders of large missions as well as small missions; some were not members of JEMA. Some traveled a great distance to participate and some in the US were interviewed by telephone. Of course the interviewees included the present leadership of JEMA.

As Bruce Johnson and Elliott Snuggs shared their findings with the Executive Committee the following day, all of us were very encouraged and excited about the possibilities that lie ahead for JEMA and its members. To be sure, the hard work of implementation is before us, but thank you to all who took the time and expense to participate. We feel that we have direction from the Lord as to which way to go. On the next two pages you will read Scott Parrish’s summary of the results of the consultation, and plans for this next year regarding the direction JEMA should be going. Please read them over closely. We welcome your insights as well.

JEMA Organizational Assessment Report



More than a year ago, at the February 22, 2005 Annual Plenary Session, the JEMA Plenary Council directed the Executive Committee to proceed with an evaluation of JEMA's effectiveness for the 21st Century. Accordingly, over the course of the past year we have been working with a Christian organizational consulting firm to carry out this assessment. During this period, the consultants read relevant JEMA documents and had conversations with the Executive Committee. The process climaxed when the consultants interviewed 27 JEMA officers, commission chairpersons, and mission leaders along with two Japanese JEA leaders on January 16 and 17, 2006. On January 18, the consultants presented their observations and recommendations to the Executive Committee.

Much prayer was lifted up before and during this process. We were excited to see those prayers being answered. As a result of the consultants' observations and recommendations, God truly gave the Executive Committee a sense of direction that we believe will sharpen the focus of JEMA in its service to members and to the general Kingdom of God in Japan.

At the JEMA Mission Leaders Consultation (February 20, 2006) and the JEMA Plenary Session (February 21, 2006), we outlined the items reported by the consultants along with our conclusions regarding directions for action. Then we discussed this sense of direction and received feedback and clarification from the member missions in order to develop a shared sense of possibilities and direction.

First we reported the results of the organizational assessment:

JEMA's Purpose is Right on Track: Emphasis on Networking

1. All the interviewed people understood, agreed with, and affirm the value of the JEMA purpose statement: "JEMA exists to network and equip its members to make disciples of Christ." This is very encouraging, as it means that JEMA's direction is correct. It is clear, however, that we need to strengthen the way in which this is carried out.
2. Of the two stated purposes of JEMA (networking and equipping), the greatest felt need of the interviewed missionaries was networking. Equipping was secondary. Thus JEMA

should focus the majority of our energies on meeting the networking needs.

Existing Problems

The consultants identified a list of problems or issues that either currently limit JEMA's effectiveness or are possible future impediments. There was nothing surprising or unknown on this list, as most of these issues are known to the Executive Committee and to most members. In spite of this, having a concrete list of these issues is valuable and important in helping all of us keep these in focus.

1. Members do not have a strong perception of the value of JEMA.
2. JEMA is perceived as moving slowly on issues and being slow to adapt to new things.
3. Leadership energy is focused more on perpetuating the existing commission structure rather than thinking strategically.
4. Financial pressure is being felt. This is associated with declining membership and falling revenues from sales of publications (Harvest, Directory) and great reliance on revenue from advertising to support JEMA.

5. Awareness of JEMA's purposes, programs, events and resources offered is not strong.
6. Communication with member missions and individual missionaries is not strong.

Opportunities

1. Focus more leadership energy on improving the networking and communication possibilities for missionaries.
2. Strengthen networking opportunities for mission leaders.
3. Proactively work on appealing to the growing number of new audiences, e.g.
 - (a) Younger generation of missionaries.
 - (b) Non-western missionaries.
 - (c) Tentmakers.
 - (d) Geographically scattered missionaries (outside the Kanto area).
 - (e) Continuing termers (short-termers who continue for subsequent terms).
4. Exploit internet-based resources to promote communication, networking and delivery of resources.
5. Strengthen the JEA relationship. The two Japanese leaders interviewed both expressed a strong desire for a more active relationship with JEMA.
6. Seek to expand membership. Doing so serves the current members, and if done correctly will also serve the Kingdom of God in Japan by improving our oneness in Christ. Actively promote membership with improved service, publicity, and financial incentives.
7. Focus more leadership energy on developing strategic initiatives.

Following the report on the organizational assessment, the members of the Executive Committee recommended that the Plenary Council direct them to investigate the following three directions over the next year and present concrete proposals to the 2007 Plenary Council meeting.

Recommended Action

1. That JEMA learn what it means to be a Member Association and then implement steps to effectively do that.

Based on the consultants' feedback, we have a partial sense of what this means. At a minimum, it means two things: first, strengthening the value and services provided to members, and second, seeking to encourage an increase in membership.

The first one is an obvious and non-controversial step. In general, the current ideas that the Executive Committee will be pursuing include:

- (a) improving networking communications (JEMA publications, internet usage, etc.),
- (b) finding ways to better serve missionaries who are outside the Kanto area,
- (c) finding other ways to strategically serve member missions.

The second is less obvious, but we now see this as a strategic way to work on one more step towards the unity of believers (John 17:20-23). Possible actions include the following:

- (a) stronger advertising and promotion to non-members,
 - (b) deliberate pricing of services and events to make membership desirable,
 - (c) strengthening exclusivity of benefits for members.
2. That JEMA shift energy focus from maintenance of existing activities to development of strategic initiatives.

The consultants recommended that JEMA move from doing many things to endorsing many things, while focusing leadership energy on a few strategic initiatives.

We hope to get recommendations from member missions for five to seven strategic initiatives that JEMA can begin working on over the next three years. At least one of these should be to strengthen the working relationship with the JEA.

We will work on developing the concept of "endorsing activities." To some extent that is done today, but the implication of this recommendation is to strengthen the way this is done.

3. That JEMA develop a strategy for dealing with the financial challenges.

The Executive Committee would like to develop recommendations for

strategic directions to deal with the financial issues.

Following the report by the Executive Committee and the ensuing discussion, the area of communications (included as a subpoint in the first recommendation) was considered important enough to be specifically stated in a fourth point. In conclusion, the Plenary Council moved, seconded, and carried...

"...to direct the Executive Committee to investigate the following directions and present concrete proposals for implementation to the 2007 Plenary Council meeting:

1. That JEMA learn what it means to be a membership association and how to implement steps to effectively do that.
2. That JEMA shift management energy focus from maintenance of existing activities to development of strategic initiatives.
3. That JEMA develop a strategy for dealing with the financial challenges.
4. That JEMA develop an overall strategy for improving communication."

Further investigation and development work over the next year will result in concrete proposals to bring before the 2007 Plenary.



—compiled and reported by Scott Parrish, JEMA Executive Committee, Member-at-Large



E X C O M R E P O R T

The first meeting of the new JEMA year took place on March 22, 2006. The JEMA Executive Committee made the following appointments for Commissions and Committees:

Pioneer Evangelism

John Mehn was appointed as chairman, and Gary Fujino, Laurence Hiebert, Ken Taylor, Pat Hansen, and Dan Iverson as members.

Women in Ministry

Ann Little was appointed as chairperson, and Laura Harris, Elaine Mehn, Dorothea Langhans, and Lora Kleinjan as members.

Prayer

Bill Paris was appointed as chairman, and Akira Mori, Denise Rasicci, and Neil Hicks as members.

Liaison & Membership

Ken Taylor was appointed as chairman, and Wolfgang Langhans and David Scott as members.

Publications

Gary Bauman was appointed as chairman, and John Somers-Harris, Jim Rew, David Scott, and Karol Whaley as members.

Language & Culture

Miriam Davis was appointed as chairperson, and Elaine Loewen, Vera Laschenko, and Georgia Landis as members.

JEMAnet

David Scott was appointed as chairman, with Mizuko Matsushita and Ken Taylor as members.

The **Member Care Committee** appointed in November (Paul Nethercott - chairman, Mary Esther Penner and Faith De La Cour, members), was extended until the May Executive Committee meeting.

The office secretary was appointed as an official observer for all Commission and Committee meetings held at the JEMA office.

Meetings of the Executive Committee for the coming year were scheduled for the following Wednesdays: May 24, 2006; July 12, 2006; Sep. 20, 2006; Nov. 29, 2006; and Jan. 31, 2007.

2 0 0 6 J E M A D A T E B O O K

| Event | Date | Time | Place |
|--|--------------------|------------|-------------------------|
| Concert of Prayer | May 18, 2006 | | Sapporo |
| Tokyo Prayer Summit | May 16-19, 2006 | 12:00 P.M. | Okutama Bible Chalet |
| Western Japan Prayer Summit | May 22-25, 2006 | 12:00 P.M. | VIP Alpine Rose Village |
| Prayer Walk | July 3, 2006 | 9:00 A.M. | Ginza, Tokyo Area |
| Concert of Prayer | September 14, 2006 | 9:00 A.M. | Sapporo |
| Prayer Walk | October 2, 2006 | 9:00 A.M. | Diet Building |
| CPI Regional Equipping Seminar | November 3-4, 2006 | | Sapporo |
| Retreat for Japanese Language & Culture Learners | November 2-4, 2006 | | Lake Yamanaka |
| CPI Regional Equipping Seminar | November 11, 2006 | | Karuizawa |

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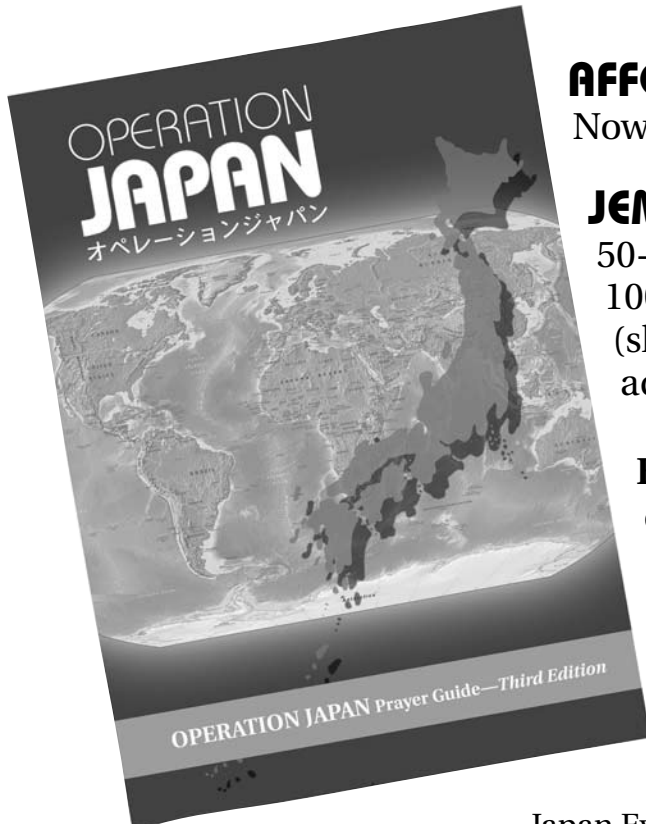
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2006 JEMA Plenary Session Highlights

Following on the heels of the comprehensive organizational assessment that had been approved at the 2005 Plenary Session, and the first public presentation of the Gallup Report (coverage beginning on page 16), future JEMA annals may well look back upon the February 21, 2006 JEMA Plenary Session as the beginning of a new era of strategic cooperative ministry. That is because at this Assembly the Executive Committee was tasked to develop proposals for moving from maintenance to strategic initiatives over the course of the coming year. In attendance at this year's meeting were 33 delegates from the 44 member missions, plus 3 independent delegates, for a total of 90 votes out of the maximum of 112 possible for the Plenary Assembly.

The meeting was convened shortly after 10:00 a.m. on the eighth floor of the OCC building in downtown Tokyo, following a time of worship in song.

One of the first orders of business was to accept WEC International and Japan Church of God Mission into JEMA as member missions, after which current JEMA president, Ray Leaf, brought the President's Report.

Mission Leaders Consultation

Following the President's Report, Scott Parrish reported on the previous day's Mission Leaders Consultation, at which he presented the JEMA Organizational Assessment Report. Scott again reviewed the results of that assessment for the Plenary Assembly.

A major portion of the Mission Leadership Consultation was taken up with the Gallup Report. The report included live audio and video addresses via the Internet from Mark Joseph and Bill McKay in the USA, as well as a report from George Gallup, Jr. on videotape.

JEMA Commission & Committee Reports

The Prayer Commission, Liaison and

Membership Commission, Publications Commission, Pioneer Evangelism Commission, Women In Ministry Commission, Language & Culture Commission, and JEMAnet Committee each presented their annual reports.

Russ Epley then presented the treasurer's report, and called attention to the overall loss for the year. He proposed a 2006 budget, along with several questions: How do we fairly allocate the office work expenses? Should we make the Japan Harvest a member benefit, and adjust the membership fees accordingly? How do we advise Commissions on setting event fees to cover their costs? What financial accountability measures should the Executive Committee use so that Commissions cover their costs? After some discussion, the proposed 2006 budget was approved.

Elections

Three JEMA positions were up for election, and were filled for 2-year terms (2006-2008) as follows: President, Ray Leaf (SEND); Treasurer, Russ Epley (TEAM); Member-at-Large, Sharon Smith (SB) – Kansai Representative.

JEA Reports

A general JEA Report was presented by JEMA President Ray Leaf, in which he mentioned his concern about a pacifist movement within JEA. During discussion following the report, it was mentioned that we do not send a JEMA representative to the NRA (Nihon Revival Association) which resulted a few years back from a split among the evangelical churches in Japan, and it was suggested that we might want to consider what JEMA can do to encourage unity among Japanese churches.

Reports were brought by JEMA representatives who attend meetings of the following JEA Commissions: Missions Commission, Social Issues Commission,

Theology Commission, Women's Commission, and Relief Commission.

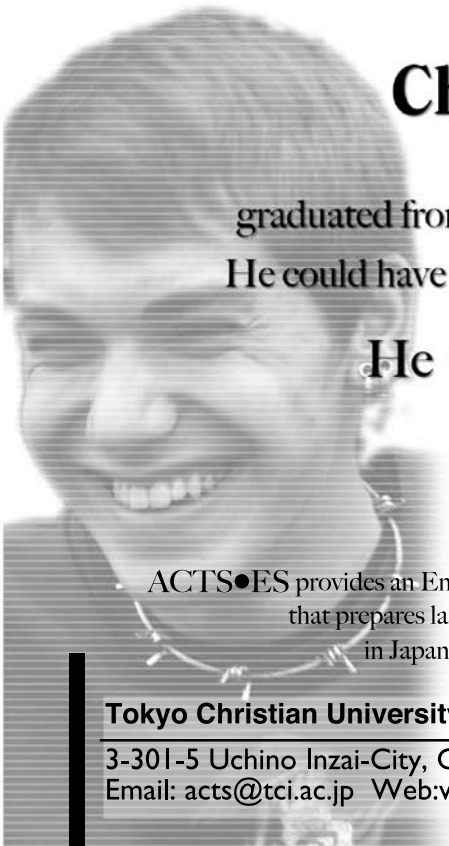
Discussion took place following several reports concerning specific topics related to the respective commission. One discussion was in regards to difficult challenges relating to cultic techniques that seem to be in use in some Christian churches in Japan. Following another report, concern was expressed about teaching on "a second chance for the dead" that is finding a hearing in some circles in evangelical churches in Japan. During the Women's Commission report, it was mentioned that JEA women would like to see some JEMA women attend the biennial JEA Women's Retreat. As representative to the Relief Commission, Jonathan Wilson expressed his concern about the slowness with which donated relief support is being distributed, but also acknowledged that JEA is struggling to accurately handle a huge amount of funds in an accountable manner. He mentioned that JEA's policy basically is to disperse received funds within one year.

Date of 2007 Plenary Session

It was agreed to hold next year's Mission Leadership Consultation and JEMA Plenary Session at the end of February 2007. (The dates: February 26 & 27)

The meeting was closed in prayer at 4:25.

On March 30 2006, JEMA Treasurer and TEAM missionary Russ Epley suffered a severe stroke while on his way to his office in Tokyo. As this Japan Harvest goes to press, his wife Flossie reports that the family is looking at a long road ahead, with no assurance that Russ will regain the ability to walk or speak. Please pray for God's clear intervention on Russ' behalf.



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a missionary kid,

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Factors to Consider in Choosing Educational Options for your Children in Japan

By Flossie Epley



What are you going to do about your child's education? The choices you make for your child have lifelong implications. It's worth carefully weighing the factors as you think through options such as homeschooling, international schools, small MK schools, on-line schools, boarding, and local Japanese public schools. We all want God's leading. Fortunately for us, God wants to lead us. Please pray and carefully consider these ten factors as you make your plans.

Long-term educational goals—

What do you want for your child when he graduates from high school? If you highly value your child being both bi-lingual and bi-literate, then he'll probably attain that best with some time in a Japanese school or *jukku* while conscientiously working on English skills. If you want your child to be able to go to university in your home country, then you need an educational system that will meet university requirements of your home country.

Spiritual development of your child—

Is your child's Christian worldview so firmly in place that he can recognize deception and handle being taught beliefs and values contrary to yours? Is the "hot house" environment of a Christian school an asset or a liability to your particular child's faith?

Location—

Can your child handle a long commute on crowded trains? Does your schedule have

the flexibility needed to drive your kids to school? Are you able to move close to the school you want your child to attend? If you homeschool, are you close enough to other English-speaking families for you to fellowship with them occasionally?

Learning styles—

Some children learn best by seeing (visual learners), others by hearing (auditory learners), and still others by doing (kinesthetic learners.) Most of us learn through a combination of these three. A child who loves rote memory is apt to do well in a Japanese school. A student who learns best through group projects will possibly thrive in a school like CAJ (Christian Academy in Japan). A homeschooling child who abhors sitting in a straight-back chair doing math workbooks will likely learn more effectively by multiplying fractions while making cookies with mom in the kitchen.

Mission regulations—

Some missions require that their missionaries

live in specific areas or use certain educational options. Be sure you fully understand your mission's expectations and the ramifications the expectations have for your kids' education.

Stress—

Does your child experience unusual negative stress by being in a competitive environment or does that bring out his best? Have you or your child had trouble adjusting to life in Japan and need something familiar in your lives?

Time requirements of ministry—

The educational option you choose has an impact on the amount of time you will have for ministry. Some homeschoolers find that by training their children to be independent learners, they have more free time for ministry than if they were transporting their kids to school each day. However, most homeschool parents find it is a major time commitment leaving little time for activities outside the home. Some parents think

sending their kids off to school will free up their schedules, but end up finding themselves spending hours every day trying to understand the notices that come home in Japanese or trying to help their kids understand their homework.

Financial Cost—

Is the option you are considering affordable? Have you realistically considered the specific expenses or just compared tuition costs? For example, using an online school full-time, you'll need a reliable computer dedicated to education with high-speed hook-up and computer support. Using a Japanese elementary school you'll need to provide a *randozeru* (a special backpack for students, with a cost equal to the total cost of curriculum for some homeschoolers), as well as pay small regular fees throughout the year. Using an international school involves tuition, entrance fees, miscellaneous fees, and possibly uniforms, boarding, and transportation fees. Homeschooling usually means you have to pay for everything from books to hands-on

resources to funding all your own field trips and supplemental lessons such as swimming or violin.

Do you have access to financial help with education expenses? Certain missions supplement or cover educational costs for their missionary kids. Some schools offer scholarships. CAJ's School Support Services has books, cassettes, CD-ROMs, videos, and unit boxes with educational materials that homeschoolers can borrow, reducing costs.

Special needs—

Do you have a gifted child that needs opportunities to grow in areas of knowledge and experience outside what a traditional school environment offers? Does your child have physical needs that can be better met in the less structured environment of home or a special facility with state-of-the-art equipment? Does your child's learning needs mean he will learn better with the individual help that comes with homeschooling or by being under the tutelage of a specialist?

Relationships—

Do you need some time to focus on the parent/child relationship or is your child ready for increasing independence? Is your child the only English-speaking child in your neighborhood? Is he being bullied at school? Does his being in school provide nurture or anxiety in your child's life? Does being with your child 24/7 cause strain in your relationship?

These are factors to think about when examining educational options for your child



Flossie Epley grew up in Japan as an MK and has been a TEAM missionary here since 1981. She has served as an educational consultant for families in Japan for over 20 years. She directs Educational Support Services at Christian

Academy in Japan providing support for teachers in Christian schools and families who homeschool or send their children to Japanese schools. Flossie and her husband Russ have two children in college in the US.



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MAKING GREAT COM

There is great diversity among evangelical Christians in Japan. In my capacity as academic dean of the Christian Leadership Training Center (CLTC) in Tokyo, I have the opportunity to interact with pastors, missionaries and lay people from churches large and small, traditional and contemporary, struggling and growing, subdued and supercharged.

Amidst this great diversity, I have found two things which we all hold in common. First, we are all followers of Jesus Christ. We have entrusted our lives and our eternities to the Lord Jesus. And while none of us follow him perfectly, we seek to grow in our relationship with him. Second, we seek to see this nation of Japan turn to faith in Christ. Particularly, we want to see those we know—family, friends, co-workers and acquaintances—become followers of Jesus.

We desire to obey our Lord's command to "make disciples of all nations" (Matt. 28:19)¹ in Japan. As we look with the eyes of faith, we see millions of Japanese included in the "great multitude that no one can count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb" (Rev. 7:9). The lingering question in all of our minds, however, is how do we get there from here? At present, Christians make up less than one percent of the population of Japan. The number of evangelicals is even less. How can Christianity grow from being a marginalized minority on the periphery of society to become a vibrant faith that is able to transform the nation?

There are complex issues, and I think that it will require the whole Body of Christ, praying together, talking together and serving together, to find solutions. All I hope to accomplish in this article is to lay one of those issues on the table so that we can move forward in our efforts at praying, talking and serving together. Simply stated, the issue is

this: What did Jesus mean when he said, "Make disciples"?

Fulfilling Our Lord's Command

In order to obey Jesus' command to "make disciples," we must understand what we are aiming at. The biblical word for *disciple* means "a pupil, a learner, one who follows a religious teacher and is involved in an intimate fellowship and relationship with that teacher."² Jesus has commanded us, then, to call people into an intimate loving relationship with him. We are to introduce people to Jesus so that they can know him (John 17:3), experience his love (John 3:16; 15:10-13), and follow him (Luke 9:23).

The primary characteristic of this kind of relationship with Jesus is obedience to Him. Jesus said that those who walk in his love will obey his commands (John 15:14). Discipleship is complete when we teach people to "obey everything" that Jesus has commanded (Matt. 28:20). This does not mean legalistic observance to external rules that guide our conduct. It is, rather, "obedience in one's life-style." A person's faith in Christ and love for God have been so imprinted upon the heart that they become "assimilated" into every aspect of his or her life.³ This results in a Christ-like love in the disciple through which other people can experience the truth of the Gospel and then be "spiritually reborn into the kingdom of God."⁴

In our haste to share the Gospel with the masses and expand the kingdom we may actually fail to fulfill Jesus' Commission. One reason for this is that we tend to substitute conversion for discipleship. In other words, we substitute one aspect of the Great Commission—evangelism—for the complete work of making disciples. Another reason is that we forget why we are teaching. We substitute *knowledge* about the Bible, theology, Christian ethics and other such issues for *obedience* to Christ. As

a systematic theologian, I do not want to minimize the importance of theological education. But I do want us to realize that theological instruction and practical training in ministry skills will be ineffective unless we also challenge people to become obedient followers of the Lord Jesus. This is because sound theology and ministry flow out of (rather than lead to) a close personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Beginning at Day One

The other day a missionary colleague raised the issue: "Some churches emphasize evangelism—trying to continually reach the lost in their surrounding communities, but failing to help those who are already in the church to grow. Other churches emphasize discipleship. They focus on taking care of their members and helping them to grow, but neglect the lost in their communities." While there are notable exceptions, I think that this is a perceptive appraisal of the condition of evangelical churches in Japan. There is a tendency to see evangelism, discipleship and leadership training as three distinct issues involved in starting and developing healthy churches. This is seen as a chronological process in which first we lead people to faith in Christ, then we disciple them, and, finally, we train them to become leaders.

A more biblical view is that evangelism and training are parts of the whole process of discipleship. This process actually begins before conversion when we make initial contact with a person and begin to guide him or her towards a personal relationship with Jesus. A person may make a number of positive responses to biblical truth before actually trusting in Jesus as Lord and Savior. Each positive response—"yes" to a sense of personal need in his or her own life, "yes" to participation in a group for Bible study, fellowship or prayer, "yes"

MISSION DISCIPLES

By Kelly Malone

to belief in God's existence, "yes" to recognition of personal sin, "yes" to the need for a new life, for example—are early steps in the process of discipleship. The key point is when the person actually trusts in Christ and becomes his follower. Without trusting in Jesus, real discipleship never occurs. Beyond this point, growth as a disciple continues until he or she is called home to glory.

Making disciples calls for long-term involvement, but that does not mean that we must be perpetually involved with only a small group of people until they reach spiritual maturity. We want them to become followers of Jesus Christ, not us. They will reach a point when we need to let them go and entrust them to the care of the Holy Spirit. My thinking is that people usually need to be encouraged to step out on their own much sooner than we are ready to turn them loose.

Jesus spent three years with the Twelve. Jesus taught them everything that he could during that time, but even Jesus did not remain with them physically until they knew everything they needed to know. As Jesus prepared to leave his disciples, he said to them, "I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth" (John 15:16, 17). Like Jesus, we will reach a point when we must say to those we are training, "There is much more that you need to know, but you are not ready to hear it from me. You need to learn to listen to the voice of God's Spirit. He will teach you everything you need to know."

Teaching people to discern the Holy Spirit's voice is crucial for growth towards spiritual maturity and development as a Christian leader. A young man I now disciple asked, "How can I be sure of God's will when I am not certain that he is speaking to me?" People

must be taught to discern the Spirit's voice in prayer, in the Scriptures, in the advice of other Christians, and in the experiences of life. This usually takes place in the context of a community of believers who encourage and support one another as they walk together with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Disciple-making Communities

We often think of Christianity as a balance between the individual and the corporate. A person becomes a Christian through personal faith in Jesus Christ. And spiritual growth comes about as a result of the individual's devotional life and obedience to Christ. The corporate aspects of Christianity include public worship, fellowship and ministry. In this dichotomy, there is a tendency to see the individual, personal aspect of Christianity as central and the corporate, communal aspect as peripheral. The church is seen as providing a supportive environment where the individual's spiritual transformation and growth can occur.

The New Testament ties these personal and corporate aspects of Christianity together into an indivisible whole. Roland Allen has written that in the New Testament Christians are seen as bound together into a spiritual unity in which the Head is Christ Himself.⁵ Since the church is the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12), it is through the church that we hear Christ's voice, see Christ at work through acts of service, learn to follow Christ through the example of other believers, feel Christ's love and compassion through fellowship, and experience Christ's glory through worship. In the Body of Christ, the healthy functioning of every cell is immensely important for the well-being of the whole body. This means that there is no room for believers merely to sit by and idly soak up the Sunday sermon. They must be encouraged to use their

spiritual gifts, abilities, and what they have learned through the experiences of life in service to others, both inside and outside of the church.

Churches become disciple-making communities when they extend along their "web[s] of relationships, friendships, and acquaintances for mission." They constantly use these relationships to integrate "not-yet-Christians" into the "Christian community" so that people can be introduced to Jesus and be transformed into his growing disciples.⁶

This continual pattern of expansion, integration and incorporation takes place when people experience, firsthand, the love of Christ through shared life with other believers, the kind of shared life which people can experience when they gather together in small groups for fellowship, worship, Bible study and prayer. In this setting, when Christians share openly about their own spiritual walk other people learn to trust in Jesus Christ, discern the Holy Spirit's voice, and then to obey Christ through acts of evangelism, ministry, prayer, worship and fellowship. In this way, the individual Christian living in the context of Christian community grows toward spiritual maturity.

Endnotes

1. All Scripture references are from the *New International Version*.
2. William L. Banks, *In Search of the Great Commission: What Did Jesus Really Say?* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991), 75-76.
3. *Ibid.*, 91.
4. Waylon B. Moore, *Multiplying Disciples: The New Testament Method for Church Growth* (Tampa: Missions Unlimited, 1981), 22-23.
5. Roland Allen, *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours?* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1962), 126-28.
6. Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come: Innovation and Mission for the 21st-Century Church* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2003), 47.



Marriage IN CRISIS

by Andy Meeko

The Hayashi's marriage wasn't that bad. But it wasn't particularly good either. Sure they lived together and functioned. They each faithfully did their duties. They didn't even fight much. But in reality they had both hoped marriage would be so much more. In the past they had big dreams. But after so many disappointments, they had given up putting energy into their relationship. Talk was shallow, mostly about money or kids or weather. They no longer talked from their hearts, never really connected. An unbreakable barrier to closeness loomed between them; they were stuck and the occasional mention at church of an ideal marriage only made them feel guilty. But what could they do?

The Kudo's marriage was wretched. It was also a big secret. They spent huge amounts of energy on their fights and also on keeping them hidden—after all,

everyone knows a pastor and his wife are supposed to have it all together. Mrs. Kudo had a significant anger problem going all the way back to childhood, and Rev. Kudo ignoring her needs only made it turn into magma. Usually the episodes erupted right before Sunday worship, and Rev. Kudo would step to the pulpit drained of power. Rev. Kudo had wanted to get help, but where could a pastor safely bare his heart? Mrs. Kudo wanted nothing to do with getting help herself, but was sure her husband needed to get his act straightened out. And so it swirled round and round, dragging them deeper. Meanwhile, their misery was doing deep damage to their children and their church, and the neighborhood that might have been reached sat securely in the enemy's clutches. What could possibly be done?

Many Christian leaders have not

woken up yet. Many do business as they did a decade ago. And many don't realize that marriages in Japan are in real crisis. Every year a new record is set for divorce. In just the last ten years the divorce rate has practically doubled in this country. Last year 567,812 people ditched their marriages—that amounts to a divorce every two minutes, 777 a day to be exact.¹ Of Japanese marriages today, nearly 40% will end in divorce.² 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. Anyone could have seen it coming, but did they?

Divorce will continue its record setting trend—with Japanese women gaining more and more freedom. In 2001, Japan finally recognized the problem of

spouse abuse and instituted laws to fight the problem, but it was the last industrialized nation to do so—decades behind its western counterparts. How relevant is the issue of spouse abuse? In 1999 the Cabinet Office did a study revealing that one in five wives experiences physical abuse, and one in twenty faces life-threatening violence.³ At a marriage seminar I did recently, a woman related that after 20 years of brutalization from her husband she was at the end of her rope. Once, in the early days of her marriage, she was knocked through a glass door while nursing her newborn son, showering her and the baby with the pointy shards. Now that baby is grown up, has entered his late teens, and is intent on killing his own father. Violence has come full circle in the family, and it's no wonder this wife is focused on getting out.

Divorce will continue its record setting trend—with today's Japanese youth having the notorious reputation of "being lax in character—not cut out for marriage." Hyper-tech entertainment is resulting in young people becoming increasingly socially inept. Japan leads the world with the *hikikomori* (withdrawal from society) disorder. And the careless reasons of many for marrying bring alarm. Today's *nantonaku kekkon* ("I guess I'll just get married") include reasons like; "it just ended up that way," "we didn't really have any other option" and "we were both about the right age for it." Contemporary young people seem clueless as to how to cultivate a relationship and lasting romance. Sexless married couples are now the norm—55% of readers in their 30's of *Josei Jishin* magazine admitted that they have no physical contact with their husbands.⁴

Various institutions are beginning to target the needs of marriages; some are merely psychotherapeutic approaches, while others are more bizarre. Kanayama Jinja in Kawasaki, like many other shrines and festivals around Japan, is filled to capacity with phallic symbols. Visitors pat and pray to these symbols, which are supposed to promote "marital harmony." But when will the Church

step in with the real answers?

Perhaps we fail to realize the magnitude of the ramifications divorce and marital turmoil will have on society, and especially on children. Currently, of the 954,900 fatherless households, most mothers are barely able to make ends meet financially or emotionally.⁵ Some months ago I counseled a couple to be married. Both were in their mid-twenties. Both had been divorced. Joining us for the counseling was the woman's two-year-old daughter. When I met them I immediately liked them. I could also detect the pain they had suffered in the past. (I once heard a divorcee describing the experience of divorce as "flesh ripping.") During the counseling I had them read from 1 Corinthians 13 ("The Love Chapter.") The three sat close together, little girl sandwiched between, and for the first time in their lives they touched with their fingers the living Word of God. As together they held the Bible, I thought, "How many other couples need a chance like this?"

This land has Bibles everywhere; most people have seen a Bible at some point. But few are able to connect those words to their lives, their hurts, their needs. Yet surely the Church has sensed the crisis of marriages, and is bringing God's word specifically to meet this need. Surely the Church could see this need coming long ago and is well along in answering it. Surely the Church can see what lies ahead if the needs of marriages are neglected. Unfortunately the answer to all those statements is still... not yet. Not yet... but hopefully soon, for we should have been there a very long time ago.

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Footnotes

1. *Spa!* 9-7-04
2. *Time* "Getting Out" 4-5-04
3. *Japan Times* "Battered Wives Battle Conspiracy of Silence" 2-27-02.
4. *Josei Jishin* 12-17-02
5. *Japan Times* "Single Moms Find Favor with Ministry" 10-31-03.



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Jim lives in Japan and pastors a Japanese church. To not jeopardize his continued frequent ministry in other Asian countries with less religious freedom than Japan, Japan Harvest is not publishing his identity.

Does the AIDS Epidemic Have Anything to Do With Me?

Should Christians in Japan be responding to the AIDS epidemic? Should I be responding to the AIDS epidemic? When Jim sent me this letter, I immediately had two thoughts. Number one—as God’s children, we Christians in Japan also have a responsibility to respond to this worldwide crisis. Number two—maybe this topic should be the theme for an entire Japan Harvest issue. But this is such an important topic that I decided not to wait that long before publishing Jim’s thoughts. In fact, information on AIDS is not easy to come by in Japan, because it’s one of those problems we’d all like to deny exists. Be sure to send any information or comments to editor@jema.org as we all pray about what God may be calling us to do.

—Gary Bauman, editor

If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.

1 John 3:17-18

“They also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?’ ‘He will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’”

Matthew 25:44-45

Dear Friends,

I attended a conference on HIV-AIDS at Saddleback Church at the end of November 2005. Please don’t hit your mental delete button—I would like to share what I learned and what I sense God is saying to his Church.

I am sure that most of you have the same response as I do when you hear something about AIDS. In the past, when I heard news about AIDS I thought, “This is really not a personal issue for me—it is not related to my life. I am too busy and already over-committed to important ministries. AIDS is generally under control in the U.S. and is mainly a problem in African countries.” Probably at a deeper level I thought, “This is someone else’s problem. I don’t have the time or energy to open my heart or mind to this issue.”

I can’t say that I am really very knowledgeable or involved in this issue now, but I would like to share with you my experience and how my thinking has begun to change. Let’s start with some statistics that were repeated at the conference and that are also in much of the literature about HIV/AIDS. The statistics alone should shock us and move our hearts.

There are more than 40 million people in the world infected with the HIV virus. Twenty-three million people have already died of AIDS and more than three million die each year. This means that nearly 8,500 people die from AIDS every day! This would be the equivalent of 20 jumbo-jets full of people crashing everyday with no survivors! This daily loss of life makes 9/11 seem small by comparison.

AIDS is the greatest health crisis the world has ever faced. It has spread to every country in the

world. Fourteen thousand (14,000) people are infected every day and this number continues to increase with each passing year. Since people can be HIV positive for years without showing symptoms, no one really knows how big the problem is. And since most people have never been tested, millions of people who are HIV positive are not included in the above statistics. This problem is far greater than we perceive it to be and will undoubtedly affect the world far more than we can imagine.

I sensed that God was leading me to attend the AIDS conference at Saddleback for a number of reasons. I travel to a different country in Asia almost every month so I really did not want to take another trip just to attend this conference, but a few things caught my attention. A few months ago I started reading a book entitled, *Sex Slaves*. It is written by a woman named Louise Brown. She is a professor of Japanese history at the University of Birmingham in England. She researched and personally observed the various sordid aspects of the sex industry in Asia.

One of the striking revelations of this book is that the visible and well-known sex industry famous in Thailand, the Philippines and other tourist areas, is only the tip of the iceberg. Sex is flaunted and sold openly in these places, with the appeal being almost exclusively to foreigners. What most people do not know, and it is difficult to see, is that sex is sold in almost every town and village in all Asian countries, not to foreigners, BUT TO LOCAL MEN. The nightclubs in Bangkok and Manila that brashly lure foreign tourists to buy sex are only a drop in the bucket of an industry that involves millions and millions of men and women in Asia.

Sex Slaves is worth reading, although very troubling. The book describes how young girls (many of them as young as 12 with the premium age being 13-16!) are forced into prostitution through trickery, deception, kidnapping, poverty, and in many cases sold by their own parents. It is estimated that there are 100,000 foreign sex workers in Japan (many are from Thailand and from the Philippines). There are more than 100,000 Nepali girls who are forced to provide sex in brothels throughout India. There are hundreds of thousands of Burmese women in Thai

brothels. It is hard to grasp the scope of this industry. For example, the book states that 60,000 to 80,000 men buy sex in Calcutta every day! Most of the millions of girls and women involved in the sex industry across Asia are literally sex slaves.

As I thought about how AIDS has devastated Africa and then reflected on what I read in *Sex Slaves* I thought, "If even half of what she states in that book is true, there will probably be an explosion of AIDS throughout Asia beyond the worst nightmare of the worst horror film out there." This is one of the reasons I felt I should go to the conference.

Rick and Kay Warren became involved in the fight against HIV/AIDS about three years ago and are now passionately calling the Church to action. I believe that they are speaking a prophetic message from God. I wish that I could convey the passion they spoke with and communicate in more detail the information that was presented so well at this conference.

Most of the speakers were top experts in their various fields and almost all of them were excellent communicators. The conference covered many aspects of the HIV/AIDS pan endemic including information about the disease itself, testing, treatment, care, and prevention. We were also made aware of many other related issues, of which there are many. One very good book I picked up while I was there is called, *Skeptics Guide to The Global AIDS Crisis*, by Dale Hanson Bourke. (I recommend this book for a good introduction to the subject. It lists many valuable resources and websites.) It

gives very clear answers to basic questions about AIDS for people like myself who do not know much. In the book the author states, "AIDS is not just a medical issue. It is a political, legal, religious, economic, cultural and historic issue." Indeed, there are so many complex issues related to the HIV/AIDS crisis.

Rick Warren declared that the Church is the only group big enough to deal with the AIDS pandemic. Governments, hospitals and non-profit organizations cannot deal with the enormity of the problem we face even now. For example, it was reported that there are more than fourteen million (14,000,000) orphans due to AIDS in Africa alone. It is estimated that there will be twenty-five million (25,000,000) AIDS orphans by the year 2010. I am wondering if AIDS is not a sleeping giant in Asia that may even dwarf the worst projections. In any case, I believe that Rick and Kay Warren are right and that we need to heed the call to become involved. We need to do something.

I have not had that much experience or contact with people who have AIDS, but will share one story from Myanmar. Last year (in September of 2004) after our leadership session, we visited a small village that is located about three hours from Yangon (formerly Rangoon). It is a very poor village. Most of the people are illiterate. Women work in the rice fields for about 20 cents a day. I could share a few sad stories from our time there. When we were leaving the village we saw a line of people marching in procession and asked what was happening. Our host explained, "A fifteen-year-old girl has

died. She was forced to marry a man and found out later that he had AIDS. He died one month after the wedding. Now she has also died from AIDS."

Unfortunately this sad story will probably be repeated throughout every town and village across Asia in the coming years. What can we do? I believe that most of you, my friends, are walking with Jesus. You are busy loving and serving people, sharing the gospel and already carrying a heavy load. It may seem overwhelming just to think about HIV/AIDS, but I think we have to. I believe that the Church must see the magnitude of this problem and how it will dramatically impact society. I believe that this is especially true in Asia.

Actually, at the conference they did suggest practical ways to become involved in the fight against HIV/AIDS. I do not have the space to go into the details, but I think the beginning is to begin to care and to hear from God. God cares about people with AIDS and for all of those who have been impacted by it. Do we care? We need to be aware that when we stand before Jesus he will say, "Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me."

Your Friend,



Jim

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A Gallup Survey

The Changing Face of Japan

Campus Crusade for Christ 2001-2006

February 20, 2006 had finally arrived. The atmosphere on the eighth floor of the Ochanomizu Christian Center building in downtown Tokyo was electric with anticipation. The results of the extensive George H. Gallup International Institute survey on Japan begun in 2001 were to be presented for the first time publicly. Dr. George Gallup, Jr. himself was scheduled to address the crowd through a video that had been specially recorded for this occasion. Mark Joseph, president of a California-based media company and son of long-time missionaries to Japan, Kenny and Lila Joseph, would speak live from Los Angeles by way of video conference, providing an overview to the survey results and the way the project came together. And William McKay, filmmaker, author, professional consultant and national researcher, who had come to Japan fifteen times during a two-year time span in conjunction with the survey, was slated to present the materials in person to the JEMA Mission Leadership Consultation.

Unfortunately, McKay was grounded by sudden illness just before making the trip. But the raw data for his talk had already arrived as a set of PowerPoint slides, so the presentation went ahead in the form of telephone interview with McKay followed by JEMA vice-president Ken Taylor leading those in attendance through the PowerPoint material. Some of the survey results did not come as a surprise to missionaries in attendance, but other data was nearly unbelievable. Six main areas related to Japanese society were discussed in the course of the presentation: roles and goals, social relationships, morals and ethics, spiritual beliefs and practices, paranormal experience, and religious involvement. Dr. George Gallup, Jr. provided his initial analysis and comments relating to the data in the following abridged version of the video address he gave that day.

Spreading the Gospel in Japan: Severe Challenges, but Exciting Opportunities

By Dr. George Gallup, Jr.

In my 50 years of polling, there has been no study that I would concede to be as important as this one, because it not only provides you with new insight into a fascinating culture (and one that is mysterious to outsiders in some ways), but also because the survey findings point to ways that evangelistic strategies can be put in place. As a survey researcher, I am of course dedicated to total objectivity in question wording, and other aspects of survey research. As a Christian, I am keenly interested in the prospects of spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ in Japan. I believe that the most important discovery one can make in life is the discovery that one can have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, and it is my constant hope and prayer that every person in the world will come not only to know about Jesus Christ, but to know him as his Lord and Savior.

The findings from this extensive and in-depth study underscore the huge challenges and severe obstacles to the spreading of the gospel, but at the same time, certain shining opportunities.

I would like to discuss the challenges and opportunities as revealed by the findings of this study. I will be dealing with only broad trends—there is a mass of survey data to be examined and assessed, both in terms of overall national trends, and in terms of key sub-groups within the national figures.

Identifying “Seeker-Sensitive” Strategies for Evangelism

A strategic objective of the study was to try to understand the current thinking of the Japanese people about themselves and the world around them, particularly toward spiritual issues, that would provide a framework for drafting “seeker-sensitive” strategies for evangelism. By better understanding not only the attitudes of the Japanese people toward spiritual issues (and particularly toward Christianity and Jesus Christ), but also their interests and emotional desires, it is possible to fashion strategies and concerns—specifically the following:

1. Identify the “truth” that Jesus answers for the Japanese people.
2. Gain the attention and arouse the interest of the Japanese regarding Christianity and Jesus Christ.
3. Appeal to the perceived needs of the Japanese, emotionally and spiritually.
4. Point the Japanese toward the gospel as the basis for dealing with all of life.
5. Equip Christian leaders and workers in Japan with ways to help them present the gospel effectively to the Japanese people.

Before attempting to shed light on each of these areas, I would like to note that, despite the supposed inscrutability of the Japanese, survey respondents were fully open and honest and candid in their response about themselves and their behavior.

I believe it would be useful before discussing challenges and opportunities to look at the overall mood of the Japanese people at this time, more than half a century after World War II, as revealed in this study.

The Overall Mood of the Japanese

The findings of the study show that the populace is somewhat insular, uncomfortable with diversity and “outsiders,” and possibly, in some small degree, “racist.” In terms of reaching out to help others, the focus is primarily on one’s own family group and not on persons outside these groupings. Broader altruistic motives are not so apparent.

Most Japanese, judging by their responses to scales on happiness, are neither “very happy,” nor “very unhappy.” Their responses tend to fall between these two extremes. In earlier Gallup International surveys, responses for many nations fell more heavily in extreme positions than is the case in Japan.

While at least moderately happy, many Japanese seem resigned to being caught up in “the system” or “the cycle of life.” There is a degree of fatalism in their somber mood. Teen’s perspectives on life tend toward a sense of nihilism to an alarming degree. A note of hopelessness is found in the responses to a

number of questions. And there is little evidence of eternal hope, although a considerable number do believe in some form of afterlife.

Widespread Ethical Relativism

Like much of the rest of the world, the Japanese tend to take a relativistic view on ethical matters. There is little belief in “absolutes,” and this is true across all generational groups. In the “hierarchy of crimes” (things that are wrong), those related to economic and family matters far outweigh those related to sexual activity. (David Lewis, author, scholar and well-known expert on Japanese history and culture, points out that the Japanese tend to believe that misdeeds that are self-inflicted and hurt the self are not as bad as those that hurt the group.)

This is a broad-brush picture of the mood of the Japanese population in the twenty-first century, as a backdrop to the challenges and opportunities that present themselves in the efforts to spread the Gospel of Jesus in Japan.

Knowledge Lacking about Christianity

Perhaps the first and obvious challenge is overcoming the widespread lack of awareness and knowledge among the Japanese regarding Christianity and teachings of Jesus Christ.

Seven in ten among adults, and half of teens, say they do not know enough about Christianity to express a favorable or unfavorable opinion about this religion.

Correspondingly, seven in ten adults and half of teens say they do not know enough about the teachings of Jesus in order to give an evaluation. Clearly, all out efforts should be made to increase the awareness and knowledge of Christianity and the teachings of Jesus Christ—through schools (as part of the study of world religions), television and radio, the internet, newspapers and magazines, churches, and other ways.

Christianity Losing Favor

Coupled with these efforts should be those that are directed toward casting Christianity and the teachings of Jesus in a favorable light.

Among those who express an opinion on “Christianity,” favorable views outweigh unfavorable ones by a ratio three to one. Among teens, however, about equal percentages say favorable or unfavorable.

Turning to evaluation of the “teachings of Jesus,” favorable opinion among adults outweighs unfavorable opinion by two-to-one. Among teens, on the other hand, equal proportions say favorable and unfavorable.

These are worrisome findings, both in terms of the lack of knowledge of Christianity and the teachings of Jesus, but also in terms of unfavorable views, particularly among teens.

It would be important to explore the reasons adults and teens view Christianity and the teachings of Jesus in an unfavorable light, perhaps through in-depth interviews. The current study, however, shows that most feel a person can be Japanese and a Christian at the same time. So this does not appear to be a major factor in unfavorable attitudes. Nor are negative views pronounced in terms of “switching” religions.

Importance of the “Spiritual Life” Ranked Relatively Low

The majority of the Japanese people claim to have no religion, but this rarely means that they do not have any religious beliefs or practices at all.

Yet very few in the survey say the spiritual life compared to other aspects of life, is “extremely important.” Far ahead of spiritual life in importance are family, friends, and education. Relatively few, in addition, place trust in religion’s leaders.

Challenges to the Spread of the Gospel

So, then, we see challenges or obstacles to presenting the gospel in a number of ways: in the insular feelings and somber mood and feelings of hopelessness of the Japanese people; in the relatively little importance they give to religion compared to other aspects of life, yet at the same time their attraction to other religions (namely Shinto and Buddhism) and “new religions,” as well as their

attraction to the paranormal; in their lack of awareness of Christianity and the teachings of Jesus Christ, coupled with a high level of unfavorable views about the same, particularly among young people.

In some respects there seems to be a solid, impenetrable wall that could prevent the spread of the gospel in Japan. Are there any possible openings in this wall? Let’s look at the survey data in terms of possible opportunities for breaking down this wall of indifference and negativity.

Certainly an all-out education effort—through the media and the schools and in other ways—could pay dividends.

How Many Claim Christianity?

Let’s look now at the “bottom line” question: How many Christians are there in Japan?

Three in ten adults and two in ten teens claim they have a religion.

Of the thirty percent of adults who claim to have a religion, three-fourths are Buddhists. About one adult in eight of that thirty percent describes himself or herself as a “Christian” (4% of the total sample).

Now, let’s look at teens. And here we find some stunning and encouraging news, particularly as we look to the immediate value.

Two in ten Japanese teenagers claim they have a religion, and one-third of these who do so (7% of the total sample) describe themselves as “Christians,” especially female teenagers.

Nearly 30% of Japanese Interested in “Religion”

Furthermore, despite the fairly high level of indifference to learning more about religion (and specifically, about Christianity and the teachings of Jesus), as many as three in ten adults (and a similar percentage of teens) are interested in learning more about religion, or are already doing so.

How would these people want to learn more? Most say books and magazines, while others say “in talking to friends, colleagues, or a parent,” or other responses.

A Roadmap to the Japanese Soul

Nine years ago George Gallup was a guest on my NHK talk show (see my interview at <http://mjmgroupp.com/gallup.htm>), and I was immediately impressed with the depth of his convictions. We stayed in touch, and two years later I called him with an unusual request—would he be willing to survey the Japanese people about their views on God, spirituality, religion and other related issues? He not only said yes, but to my surprise said he had an office in Japan which did just such research.

As a missionary kid, I often heard the figure “one half of one percent” tossed around when it came to identifying the Christian population of Japan. I also heard rumors of a poll that allegedly claimed that 35% of Japanese would choose Christianity if they were told they had to choose a religion. I had long thought that any missionary strategy would best be built on a solid foundation of research that captured the heart and soul of the Japanese people.

I think that George and our entire team have accomplished just that with this survey. The data is insightful, intriguing and often surprising. I was particularly struck by the fact that of the 20% of youth who claimed to have a religion, 36% said they were “Christians.” That is an almost unimaginable figure. Overall, this survey puts the “Christian” population of Japan at 6%. I can already hear the question: “Are they truly Christians?” The answer is, of course, nobody can say for sure. Others will rightly conclude that some Japanese are saying yes to all three religions—claiming that they’re Shinto, Buddhist and Christian. But whether or not these represent true believers or not, it’s nonetheless significant that they’re willing to tell a Japanese interviewer that they are Christians in such high numbers. It’s also interesting to note that while those youth who claim a religion claim the Christian faith in almost three times the numbers that they claim to be Buddhists and Shintoists, adults are almost exactly the reverse, claiming to be Christians in far fewer numbers.

George Gallup Jr., America’s premiere researcher and pollster, says that this survey is the most important one he has ever participated in, period. He believes, and I believe, that in the data there is a roadmap to the Japanese soul that needs to be explored. We hope that many of you will pick up the baton and use this research in ways that we can’t even imagine.

Mark Joseph
President, MJM Group

In seeking to reach people for Christ, the Christian message of hope and reassurance in times of darkness would likely be paramount, the survey suggests. Also vital, of course, is the conviction that the teachings of a religion are “the truth.” In this respect, evangelistic efforts should remind prospective converts of the discovery made by countless numbers of Christians over the ages that often “faith comes before, not after understanding,” as well as the discovery that “belonging comes before believing.” Relationships should be developed prior to indoctrination. Gallup research shows that people with close friendships in their church are very satisfied with their congregation, less likely to leave their place of worship, and have a strong relationship with God.

Reaching Different Target Groups within the Population

The current study will help those involved in evangelism target particular groups within the population, defined by age, education, sex, and many other characteristics. The sharing of stories and living the example of Jesus in government, in business and in other major sectors of society can, of course, greatly stir hearts among the populace. In China, writes David Aikman, persons in authority often do not discourage Christianity in the business community because Christians are found to be honest and law-abiding.

The challenge for those who seek to spread the gospel is not only to reach those who do not know Jesus Christ, but also to reach those presently within churches: to remind church members that it is incumbent upon them to share their faith; and to remind Christians of the need to harness the power of their God-given gifts in service to God’s Kingdom. Many Christians are unaware of God’s plan for their lives. When people discover their gifts and talents, and use these to serve God’s purposes, there is no telling what God can accomplish through them.

David Lewis wisely reminds us that evangelistic approaches to the Japanese should be those of “accommodation”

rather than “imposition,” and that sensitivity should be shown toward the spiritual perspective of the individual being approached.

Young People a Key Target

The focus of evangelistic efforts should be on young people. They are the future leaders, and will set the moral tone and direction of the nation of Japan in the immediate years ahead. Young people in Japan are desperately in need of the healing hand of Jesus. Compared to their U.S. counterparts, Japanese teens are extremely bleak in their outlook on life.

Twenty-two percent of U.S. teens, but eighty-five percent of Japanese teens say they often wonder why they exist.

Seventy-six percent of teens in the U.S. say they always see a reason for their being on Earth, but only 13% of Japanese teens say this.

Seventy-six percent of U.S. teens say they would choose their life the way it is right now, but only half (48%) of their Japanese counterparts give this response.

Twelve percent of U.S. teens wish they were someone else, but three times this percentage, 36%, of Japanese youth respond this way.

And finally, three percent of U.S. teens would go so far as to say they wish they had never been born. But more than three times as many Japanese teens (11%) give this startling response.

Approaches should be made not only to teens, but also to preteens. This younger group, in fact, is far more likely than that of their elders to have a sense of a personal God. And there is also evidence in this survey to show that preteens may be more sensitive to an inner voice of conscience.

Every effort possible should be made to help these preteens move into the teenage years with a strong sense of a personal God to whom they are accountable. The development of small Bible study and prayer groups among preteens, as well as teens, might prove fruitful.

The challenges of bringing an ever-growing number of people to the point of conversion or transformation

are huge, but not, one could maintain, insurmountable.

A Historic Moment of Opportunity?

In many nations of the world there is a deep and growing desire for an experience of God. This may be true of the Japanese as well, who while not religious, are sensitive to a spiritual dimension to life. And at a time of what appears to be a “dark night of the soul” for many Japanese, when they may have “reached bottom” in their psychological and emotional state, the people of this nation may be ready to receive the hope and reassurance that Jesus Christ brings.

Today could well be a historic moment of opportunity to “seize the day” and bring the people of Japan to an ever-growing awareness of the life-changing and life-saving message of Jesus Christ.

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Thinking Theologically about Church Planting

Church Planting Located Between Gospel and Culture

by Dale Little



One of the tasks of churches is to engage the culture with the gospel of Jesus Christ, or perhaps better, the gospel which is Jesus Christ. The gospel engages culture when fundamental cultural values are challenged by the gospel. For instance, when it is demonstrated that personal meaning and purpose are best discovered and experienced within the kingdom of God and therefore within those microcosms of the kingdom which we call churches, the gospel has challenged the cultural understanding that personal fulfillment is found in such items as individual wealth and pleasure. The gospel is in a position to engage culture because, among other reasons, the gospel is distinguishable from culture. Churches manifest the gospel, and the God of the gospel, by clothing the gospel with community. These communities or churches therefore acquire the essence of the gospel, making them distinct from the culture and therefore able to prophetically address the culture.

Yet all congregations birthed by the salvifically powerful gospel, though each sharing in the essential elements of the gospel, also bear some of the marks of the culture in which they are located. Cultural diversity affects the look and feel of congregations even though the gospel is at the center of these congregations. In other words, all churches can be located somewhere between gospel and culture in the sense that churches reflect both the essential characteristics of the gospel and the incidental aspects of their cultural context.

When churches become too much like their culture they can no longer engage the culture because they have nothing distinct to offer. It has been argued that this is precisely the conundrum in which North American churches find themselves. They are no longer taken seriously by the culture. Their credibility has been undermined because they share the same malaise and dysfunction of the culture itself. One proposed solution is for churches in North America first to disengage from their culture then to engage the culture once again,

this time with a freshly birthed vision of the transforming salvific power of the gospel.¹

But expatriate church planters in Japan face a different scenario. Our church planting can appear so foreign as to be unable to relate to the culture. We ourselves can be so far removed from the culture that the churches we plant might seem out of place in the culture. We indeed might have something distinct and fresh to offer. So it certainly cannot be said of us that we have become indistinguishable from the culture. But what we have to offer might be irrelevant because of its cultural remoteness. This is a sobering thought because the long term fruit of our ministry, especially its continuation after we leave the scene (as most expatriates seem to do), is quite dependent upon its reproducibility. Culturally remote ministry will not likely survive the test of time.

There are at least two suggestions to ponder when we combine the idea that church planting resides somewhere between gospel and culture with the realization that expatriate missionaries in Japan are by definition culturally remote from those to whom they minister. First, we would be wise to avoid unilateral ministry initiatives even though we feel those initiatives might be needed and might make our creative juices flow. Such initiatives might look good to our supporting constituency and to executives of mission organizations in the

West. However, from the perspective of Japanese church leaders, they might appear irrelevant at best, and paternalistic at worst. Second, we would do well to try to plant churches alongside our Japanese brothers and sisters, both pastors and laity. Working together would likely include respectful, but not always easy, discussions about how churches in Japan might at times give precedence to culture over gospel. The missionary church planter who partners in this manner shows respect for Japanese churches and their cultural context.

Though beyond the scope of this short column, these suggestions might be applicable to missionaries in Japan other than church planters. But if you are a church planter in Japan, may your awareness that your church planting ministry lies somewhere between gospel and culture provide you with a fresh way of thinking about your ministry. And may you be wise in your Christocentric, cross-cultural church planting.

Dale Little, PhD

1. Douglas John Hall, "Ecclesia Crucis: The Theologic of Christian Awkwardness," in *The Church Between Gospel and Culture: The Emerging Mission in North America*, ed. George R. Hunsberger and Craig Van Gelder (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 203-06. See also the Gospel and Our Culture Network, <http://www.gocn.org/>.

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May 31st 2004 — A Long Awaited Day

by Miriam Davis

Years of earnest prayer and hard work had gone into the search for a new building for OMF International's Center in Hokkaido, which would also accommodate our Japanese language school. Now, at last, it was dedication day. As 100 Japanese brothers and sisters poured into the building for the ceremony, we heard exclamations of amazement from every side, 'It's so beautiful!' 'What a contrast to the old building!' 'I never imagined it would be so big!' Even, 'Can this be OMF?' 'It's so high tech!' All eyes were drawn to the theme of mission to Japan and the world. This is illustrated by the illuminated fluffy dandelion head sculpture in the entrance and up the first flight of stairs as painted dandelions spread seeds to a hand-carved relief map of Japan. 'Dandelions? But they are just weeds!' may be your instinctive reaction. Yet how prolific they are in seed-bearing and reproduction! Our lives too, like the dandelion, may be of little intrinsic worth, but we are of inestimable value to God and, under His loving direction, have infinite potential for seed-bearing.

On up another flight, and there were gasps of wonder as eyes took in the meaning of the Japanese characters for 'man' which march up the wall towards the second relief map of South East

Asia. Each transparent large character stands out in relief and is filled with different kinds of seeds or beans, symbolizing the call to carry the Gospel to the ends of the earth.

Bearing fruit with patience

Come now to the second floor and the Japanese Language Center. As you walk into the bright students' lounge your eye is captivated by a colorful design on the wall. The colors of the rainbow depict the many nationalities, church backgrounds, gifts and personalities that our students represent. Add our 8 Japanese teaching staff to this mix and there is great potential for friction—particularly in the first 2 years of cultural and language adaptation—when insecurities and frustrations can surface only too easily in people stripped of their normal sources of satisfaction and self-worth. But as we go about our daily life in the Language Centre, this wall is a constant reminder to us that by the Lord's grace we can 'bear fruit with patience' as the words say—fruit that will be colorful and beautiful even though students are, as yet, severely limited in terms of ministering to Japanese people.

Bright future?

Now walk with us round the 7 classrooms and marvel at the different colors. One teacher, Motoko-sensei, loves pink, so how could we put her anywhere but in the strawberry room! Round the corner and we come

to a classroom that accommodates 6-8 desks. 'But,' you say, 'I thought classes at JLC were all one-to-one'. Well, yes, they are, on the whole, but to be versatile in our teaching and to keep costs down for students we also have the option of group classes. JLC operates most of the year round, including through the summer months. People come for any period of time from a week upwards. Help can often be given with accommodation needs. Our aim is to help provide language support and training for any Christian who desires to serve the Lord in Japan. We tailor the classes to individual needs and ministry objectives.

Japan still needs seed-sowing Christians. OMF Japan Field Director, Wolfgang Langhans, issued a challenge at the dedication ceremony. He said, 'If you come back in 3 years time and look again at the seeds and beans in the 'man' characters on the walls, they will be just the same as they are now. Why? Because they have not been taken out and planted. What about us? Are we getting the seed of the word of God out into people's lives, or is the seed lying lifeless, fruitless and unplanted somewhere inside us?'

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Web sites: www.jp.omf.org/jlc (Japanese Language Centre) www.jp.omf.org/langres (Japanese language resources) Email enquiries: rd-lo@omf.or.jp (Dale Viljoen; Director) la@omf.or.jp (Miriam Davis; Language Advisor)



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Life in Sharper Focus

By Jim Reapsome

How often have you said to yourself, or to your spouse, “Yes, I’m going to get my body, my finances, my work, my relationships, my studies, my life into better shape”? The Holy Spirit speaks and says, “It’s time to get your life into sharper focus.”

Focus relates to physics, optics, and geometry. It also relates to a person’s concentration or single purpose. That meaning of “focus” derives from an earlier meaning, which was the burning point of a lens. Focus is a scientific word that now applies to people. So, for example, politicians and advertisers convene focus groups to find out what people are thinking.

We talk about people whose lives are out of focus. They can’t seem to get on track. Their lives are messed up, or blurred. Their lives don’t have a burning point that sets everything else on fire.

Our lives are supposed to have a sharp focus, something that overrides everything else when we make our choices. We are supposed to be focused people. We’re supposed to be a focused church.

Sometimes churches get out of focus. Their purposes appear to be blurred rather than sharp. They try to do too many things and lack concentration on any one of them. They do not seem to have an overriding organizational principal that helps them to make effective decisions.

My wife Martha and I went to a matinee one Saturday afternoon. We liked the music at the end, so while most of the other people filed out we sat and listened and watched the credits roll by. That’s sort of like watching the water plunge over Niagara Falls. Suddenly the credit line for “focus pullers” leaped off the screen at me.

I asked a friend of mine whose company produced commercial films what a focus puller actually did. The focus puller looks over the chief cameraman’s shoulder and manually makes the necessary adjustments on the lens so that the shot is perfectly sharp.

I was struck by the spiritual analogy that fits my life, and, I suspect, yours as well and also that of your church. I need a focus puller to get my life into focus. So do you. So does our church. Actually, the more I thought about it, the more I discovered that God has packed the Bible with focus pullers.

Who are these focus pullers in the Bible, who will help us to keep our lives focused? There are many of them, of course. Abraham, Moses, Joshua, David, Isaiah, Daniel, and obviously Jesus, Paul and the apostles. I’ve chosen just two for this article—Joshua and Paul.

Joshua, the Focus Puller from the Old Testament

Faced with the cowardly spies who returned from Canaan and urged the Israelites not to occupy God’s promised land, Caleb and Joshua stood their ground and boldly challenged the people to move ahead, despite the giants in the land.

The people refused and brought God’s judgment: 40 years wandering in the desert. At last on the verge of Jordan, their heroic leader Moses anointed Joshua to take his place.

The rest of the story proves that he fully obeyed Moses and the Lord. Now, at the end of his life, at age 110, Joshua the focus puller challenged Israel. He has conquered the land, but he knows



Israel’s spiritual battles will never end.

Fresh from victory, he declares to the gathered assembly: “Now fear the Lord and serve him with all faithfulness. But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the river, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord” (Joshua 24:14-15).

In our day, as in Joshua’s, there are more than enough idols to go around. Every day we make choices. God must be the focus of our lives, nothing else. God had commanded Israel, “You shall have no other gods before me.” Jesus commanded, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength and mind.” “You cannot serve two masters,” he said. We must choose. When Satan offered Jesus the kingdoms of this world, Jesus had to choose. When Jesus entered Gethsemane, knowing full well what was coming, he had to choose. “Not my will, but yours,” he said to his father. Jesus was a man totally in sharp focus. He never got out of focus.

“We choose to serve the Lord” is a spiritual benchmark that will help you to decide which way to go, and what to choose. Everything else in our lives must be secondary to serving the Lord. That means living according to his explicit moral commands and to the moral and ethical principles of the New Testament,

from the Ten Commandments, to the Sermon on the Mount, to the injunctions of Peter, Paul, James and John.

This story is not about movie cameras, but about a different kind of focus. One summer we were vacationing in Maine and we very much wanted to visit Islesboro Island for a clambake with some friends and their kids.

The day we chose was very foggy and our hopes sank as we approached the ferry dock. But yes, we could board, so off we went with our picnic baskets loaded with lobsters, clams, corn on the cob, onions, potatoes, and of course matches for our roaring fire on the rocky coast. We could not see a thing. But we could hear the clanging of the buoy bells all the way across the narrow inlet. The sound of those bells gave our captain the focus he needed to get us safely across. He stayed the course because of his undivided attention to the buoys in the rocky channel. Like Joshua, the ancient focus puller, we must serve the Lord with singleness of purpose and he will guide us through the rocky shoals of life.

Paul, the Focus Puller from the New Testament

Listen to the apostle Paul and see if you can discover the sharp focus of his life. “For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:2).

What does the sharp focus of Paul’s life do for us? It forces us to look at our lives and ask, “What am I really doing with my life?” It forces us to refuse to live lazy, mediocre Christian lives. It forces us to put everything else, except our commitment to Jesus Christ, on the back burner. It forces us to put everything we do in the right perspective. It forces us to ask, not just is this right, or wrong, good or bad, can we afford it or not, but above all, will it help me to get and keep a sharper image of Jesus in the camera of my life?

All of life boils down to the singular essence of knowing Jesus Christ. Nothing else really matters. Whatever happens, we must not lose our focus on Jesus. We must allow absolutely nothing

to blur his image in our minds and hearts.

What a great help this focus puller is. Paul tells us where to concentrate our thoughts and works, our time and energy, our money and our ambitions. For our church, it helps us to sort out our priorities, programs and policies. If we look to other resources, even good and respectable ones, we are doomed to lose our focus on Jesus.

Sometimes when we stray too far from this single purpose, and the images in the lens of our cameras become fuzzy, our divine focus puller uses events and circumstances to get our lives into sharp focus again. In fact, I believe this is a consistent pattern of our lives.

When life is easy, we risk losing our focus on Jesus. Some strategic interventions are necessary. A friend of ours, an elderly gentleman whom I’ll call Frank, has been a powerful demonstration to us of a Christian who has kept his focus on Jesus, no matter what. When we first met Frank, his wife was dying of cancer. Later on, we helped Frank and Jean, his second wife, to get together. We had known Jean for a long time. She was considerably younger than Frank, and we talked about what might possibly lie ahead for her. Their marriage was intensely sweet and beautiful. We enjoyed many good times with them. Then Jean came down with dementia. Alzheimer’s had claimed a victim in her early 50s. Once again Frank was called on to love and serve a wife in crisis. We still have them over for meals. Frank’s single-minded focus on Jesus is keeping him strong, despite his 80-plus years.

An important part of Paul’s focus was his emphasis on the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Is the cross of Christ the focus of our lives, our messages, and our personal testimonies?

It’s so tragically easy for other issues to sidetrack us from this focus on Jesus nailed to the cross. I mean good things, honorable causes, profitable things, but we must not allow these things to subvert us and to divert us from our focus on the supreme, the incomparable, the overwhelming importance of the cross of Jesus.

So many people have helped me over the years. God has led me to so many really fine leaders in the church and world missions. One of them was Dr. Harold John Ockenga, long-time pastor of Park Street Church in Boston and president of Fuller Theological Seminary. He was powerful in the pulpit, sharp in board meetings, and gracious with advice to young men. One day he gave me this warning from his own experience.

“Jim,” he said, “the worst temptation I face in the pulpit is to water down the gospel. Try as I will to make it clear, somehow I always feel under pressure toward the end of my sermons to cut it short and tone it down.”

The enemy does not want us to focus on the cross. You can talk all you want about Jesus, but Satan doesn’t want us to make the cross the focus, the central issue, the burning point. That’s because the cross is the only way to salvation and to Satan’s defeat.

We need these focus pullers from the Bible because God is our wise and loving focus puller. He knows how hard it is for us to be single-minded, bold and passionate about serving him alone and his Son, Jesus Christ. He knows how many important, necessary things crowd our agendas. He wants them to be secondary.

Here’s a story from long ago that will help us. When I was a kid we loved raking leaves into huge piles and jumping into them. Better yet, we could set fire to them and watch them smoke and burn. Sometimes, to prove how smart we were, we used a magnifying glass to start the fire. We knew how to catch the sun and focus its rays through the lens, which became the burning point.

Like boys playing in dry leaves at the curb, we need to get our magnifying glasses, hold them to the sun—Jesus Christ, the Son of God—and focus them on our lives, so we will catch fire for Jesus and set some fires for him in our homes, communities, and the world.

Choose this day whom you will serve. “As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.” Resolve to know nothing except Jesus Christ and him crucified.



By Dan Rudd

A number of years ago our Missionary Geek went on home assignment and asked me to write one of his articles for him. He is not on home assignment now, but he has asked me again to write another article on what is new in the world of Apple Computers.

News from the World of Apple

MacIntel

The biggest news out of Cupertino, California these days is that Apple has started shipping computers with an Intel processor in them. How did Apple decide to use one half of the dreaded Wintel system in their computers? That is a long story. The short of it is that Apple has been disappointed over the last number of years about the lack of progress on the advancement of the PowerPC chip. As long as Apple was committed to using the PowerPC chip, they were not able to deliver the speeds they wanted and promised. This past January Steve Jobs announced the release of two Intel Macintosh computers: the MacBookPro, a slick newly engineered laptop, and the new iMac. This is just the beginning. There will be more to come. In fact, if the rumors are true, Jobs did not announce some of the best developments, as Apple did not have enough supplies in place at the time of the MacWorld keynote address.

Software

Apple continues to have the idea that they want to provide the “digital hub.” They want to be able to have you use your Macintosh computer to help you with all your digital needs. Their iLife software (now updated with iLife '06) contains everything you need for the digital lifestyle. Then there is iTunes for your music. You can download music off of the iTunes Music Store. You can “rip” your music off of your own CDs. You can manage your music and create playlists of your music and you can burn your own CDs all from iTunes. iPhoto gives you the same ability with your digital photographs. You can import your photos directly off of your camera. You can edit, crop, and enhance your photos. You can create any number of photo albums. You can share them by burning to CD, sending them through e-mail, printing the ones you like, and even creating photo books. iMovie gives you a chance to edit and create your own movies. iDVD lets you take those movies and burn them onto a DVD. Garageband allows you to create your own music. (My son has been using this successfully for a while.) One new thing in Garageband is the ability to create Podcasts. You record what you want into Garageband and then export the file and create the podcast feed. Podcasts are the communication tool of now and the future. You can make podcasts of your church service, your classes, or even just messages to your supporters or to family.

iPod

To say that the iPod is big is almost an understatement. Almost everyone has one. I just heard that the Missionary Geek has one of the new video

iPods. The iPod is currently the most popular MP3 player on the market today. Apple sold over 14 million iPods last year alone. And Apple has come a long way from their first iPod. The units have gotten smaller and the capacity has gotten larger. They can now store and play video. The iTunes Music Store has all kinds of videos that can be purchased for your video iPod. There are music videos, television shows, movie trailers, and movie shorts. There are three versions of the iPod right now. There is the small iPod Shuffle, that is built around flash memory (the kind built into the little USB memory sticks). There is the iPod Nano, that is “impossibly small” yet holds 1000 songs. And there is the Video iPod, that comes in either a 30 GB or 60 GB version, enough to store hours of music and hours of video.

Digital Appliance

Apple’s philosophy seems to be to provide the digital appliance. You buy a telephone, a television, a dishwasher and it just works. You really don’t think too much about it. It does what you want it to. There may be some programming involved in it, but it just works. The folks at Apple seem to be thinking along the same lines with their computers. They want them to just work and do what you want, just as you would expect with a phone or TV. They are trying to make the computing experience as easy and painless as life with a dishwasher. When the Apple team designs a product, whether hardware or software, they work to make it as easy and as intuitive as possible. They are not all the way there yet, but they are getting close. If you are tired of having to work so hard to get your computer to do what you want, then go out and buy a Macintosh.

Elizabeth Palmer Enters Glory

By Ray Leaf



Born in Leicestershire, England on Oct. 17, 1914, of Christian parents, Elizabeth, at age 13, claimed John 3:16 and came to assurance of salvation.

Until age 47, she worked in an insurance office in London. Feeling the call to full-time Christian service, she quit her job. The Aizu Christian Fellowship in Wakamatsu, Fukushima gave her the call "Come over and help us as soon as you can." This came to her as God's call, confirmed by Scripture. There she worked for eight years until the Aizu Fellowship disbanded. She returned to the UK for one year, after which she

returned to Aizu Wakamatsu as an independent missionary, depending on God for her daily needs. God provided and no tentmaking was necessary. She did all she could to win people for Christ, serving, witnessing and teaching God's word. She said she was never lonely and had good Christian fellowship. She never took a rest or holiday to England until Sept. 26, 1995 when she retired.

Elizabeth had been corresponding with Finborough Court, a retirement home, but there was no vacancy for her. Elizabeth was not concerned about this when she left Japan. While in flight, one of the bungalows became available. Prayers had been answered, strengthening further the total trust she had in her Lord.

Said those who knew her at Finborough Court:

"She rarely thought of herself and I feel sure she missed many meals as she visited and supported many. She would be with them into the night and back

again early next morning if they needed her."

"She was gracious and accepted whatever happened to her as the Lord's plan for her life."

During her years in Aizu, Elizabeth had a powerful impact on many people, including Keiko Utagawa and her family. It is through Keiko that we received the information on Elizabeth's life. Elizabeth's pastor, Rev. Merzfield, wrote, "Elizabeth was obviously a keen Christian and a real Prayer Warrior. Her own prayer folder was always bulging." Though we knew her only briefly during 1972, she kept in touch regularly with us until about 10 years ago when she was too frail to write.

Elizabeth Palmer entered glory at 1 a.m. Dec. 16, 2005. Her cremation was Jan 3, 2006 at Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk, England. This was followed by a memorial service at Hitcham chapel in Stowmarket. Arrangements were made by her nephew, Bruce Rayer.

Stories That Touch the Heart & Soul



You Were Born to be Loved from Ji Sun Lee Burn Survivor, from Despair to Hope. Ji Sun tells her moving story

*"We Love You, Ji Sun" Testimony at Yodobashi Church December 29, 2005 Ji Sun Lee (Korean) Etsuko Matsuda (Japanese)

*"The Mirror in the Heart - Ji Sun Lee's Miracle" Drama with Hyun Ju Kim portraying Ji Sun Lee. Dubbed into Japanese (Naoko Takahashi)

Ji Sun Lee's first lecture in Japan and the Reenactment drama. **Public Use** #49777 VHS ¥7,980 #49778 DVD ¥7,980 **Personal Use** #49775 VHS ¥3,990 #49776 DVD ¥3,990 DVD with Japanese captions- No English She was an ordinary Korean college student full of hopes & plans for the future, when she met with a car crash. Her life was miraculously spared, but body over 55% burned. Beautiful face & hands as well as her life & dreams were gone. Ji Sun says "perhaps the true miracle is that I am happy now". Her story has been featured on the Fuji TV program "Kiseki Taiken! Unbelievable"



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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.

"We were called to reach a sight and sound generation with the gospel of Jesus Christ through music, theater, and film."—Tom Newman

Newman spoke these words twenty years ago, long before digital devices opened the floodgates to readily available media. Newman had foresight; he understood that effective communication of the Good News of Jesus Christ must include redemptive, creative use of media. After producing a number of smaller projects, Newman released the feature length film, *End of the Spear*, in January 2006 in the US.

End of the Spear (<http://endofthespear.com>) tells the true story of the Ecuadorian tribe that killed missionary Jim Elliot and four other missionaries who were trying to make contact with them in 1955. Although not showing in Japan, I have been told by friends in the US that it is a powerful story. The outstanding cinematography is also frequently mentioned by those who have seen it. However, others report that while it is a good movie, it falls short of reaching the highest levels of artistic quality. A common complaint is that unless you already know the story, the movie is hard to follow. These factors, along with relatively weak promotion, resulted in it doing poorly at the box office. Accordingly, the possibility of *End of the Spear* being released in theaters in Japan is quite remote.

However, even if *End of the Spear* is less than a masterpiece, Newman has accomplished an incredible feat by completing this production. Moreover, his ideas about using media to reach people with the message of Jesus Christ are brilliant. Japan is one of the media centers of the world. What is our vision and plan for using media to reach the huge number of Japanese who are its voracious consumers? In his essay, "Engaging a New Generation through Media," Tom Newman presents a compelling vision for using media to reach this generation with the good news of Jesus Christ.

Engaging a New Generation through Media

By Tom Newman

Twenty years ago, I led a group of young people on a tour through England with the stage show *Toymaker & Son*. After performing on a makeshift stage in a packed room at a local YMCA, I felt inspired to take the microphone and communicate a vision that had been emerging in my life. I still remember the curious looks my wife and several close friends gave me as I proclaimed that "we were called to reach a sight and sound generation with the gospel of Jesus Christ through music, theater

and film." Pretty bold words for the assistant principal of a Christian school in Oklahoma, USA. Now, after three internationally touring live shows, two documentary films, over fifty television commercials, two internationally broadcast children's series, two feature-length movies and the current theatrical release of a new film, I look back in wonder that I'm still here, pursuing that same vision.

Of course the cultural, political and spiritual landscape of the world has changed since that day in England. However, the need to reach a sight and sound generation has not. Saying that today's culture is consumed and controlled by media is overstating the obvious. From films, books, television and videogames, media and the art of storytelling have become the currency of culture and influence in our world. And though it's often an unconventional method within the body of Christ, I can't think of a greater place to communicate the stories and truths of God than through these mediums.

Two thousand years ago, Jesus chose some unconventional means of his own to communicate his message. He toured the countryside and told stories. Though it hardly seemed like an effective means of communicating such important truth, there he was talking about farmers, wedding banquets, wineskins and mustard seeds. Of course our modern Bible translations with their comprehensive footnotes can tell us exactly what each of these stories meant. But the meanings weren't that clear for those who were actually there, not even for the twelve disciples. So with a message so important, why not just come out and tell people exactly what he meant? In the Gospel of Mark we find the disciples asking Jesus a similar question to which he responds, "You've been given insight into God's kingdom—you know how it works. But to those who can't see it yet, everything comes in stories, creating readiness, nudging them toward receptive insight...All my stories work this way" (Mark 4:10-13; *The Message*). Philosopher and literary

critic Kenneth Burke says that “stories are equipment for living.” From his ministry on earth, this seems to be an idea that Jesus understood quite well. And it’s a remarkable thing that the God who incarnated himself as a man also chose to incarnate eternal truths through an equally unexpected means.

If I wanted to convince or educate an audience of the terrible dangers that great white sharks pose to beach-going vacationers, I could probably deliver a moving speech packed with relevant facts and startling statistics. And I might actually persuade a handful of people to spend their vacations away from salt water. But in 1975 a director by the name of Steven Spielberg devastated the beach tourism industry with his thrilling story *Jaws*. Consider also: *Bambi*, which tells of the evils of hunting; *Cider House Rules*, which persuades that abortion is a humane and necessary practice; and *Mary Poppins*, which reminds busy fathers to spend more time with their children. It seems that a well-told story is the greatest way to make an idea—be it true or false—come alive.

Last year I co-produced the film *End of the Spear* with Every Tribe Entertainment, which was released in theaters 20 January (2006). The movie is based on the true story of the five martyred missionaries made famous by Elisabeth Elliot’s book, *Through Gates of Splendor*. Countless sermons, news articles and books have told the story over the last fifty years. From the beginning of the creative process, it was our desire to incarnate the eternal truths of forgiveness, sacrifice and love within a well-told story uniquely suited to film. Most people have heard the story from the viewpoint of the missionaries (Jim Elliot, Pete Fleming, Ed McCully, Nate Saint and Roger Youderian), but through the direction of veteran film maker Bill Ewing, executive producer Mart Green, and director Jim Ha-

non, we approached the story from the virtually unknown perspective of the violent Waodani tribe who killed them. Not many know that in the few years after the missionaries’ deaths, the Waodani changed from being the most violent tribe in documented history to a peaceful people. Even today, many in the tribe call themselves “God followers.” When I look back, I don’t think we could have found a better way to encapsulate the truth of God’s power to change the human soul than through the story of a tribe who lived through such an incredible transformation. After screening the film with critics, church groups and prominent Christian leaders, we were overjoyed with the predominantly positive response. Of course there are some who might have preferred that the film include more references to God or more detailed information on how a sinner can become saved. But as the filmmakers and storytellers for *End of the Spear*, our focus was just that—to make a film and tell a story.

In recent months C.S. Lewis’ *The Chronicles of Narnia* entered the cultural landscape with a huge presence. Much has been said of Lewis’ belief that a story can sneak truth past what he called “the watchful dragons” of a hardened heart or unreceptive audience. Judging by book sales and movie receipts from *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, one could probably say that Lewis not only sneaked past these “dragons,” he also slayed them. I hope this will serve as a reminder to other Christian artists, authors and filmmakers who desire to express eternal truth to this generation.

In 1988 and 1989, our company, Impact Productions (www.daretomakecontact.com), was given the remarkable opportunity to slip past the “watchful dragons” of Communist Russia with the live dance show *A ToyMaker’s Dream*. Before we came, I made sure to clearly outline the symbolic, biblical

meaning of our show to the Russian officials who would allow us entrance into their country. I even told them that our reason for coming to Russia was to tell the Soviet people that God loves them. Their response was surprising: “Do you think we are stupid? We could see all that from watching your show. But you cannot say those kinds of things in our country. Do you understand?” Of course we gladly accepted an offer that allowed us to demonstrate the love of Jesus through a story, rather than just telling the Soviet people about it. To this day, I am still amazed at the warm embrace we received from this strongly atheist nation.

As Christians, our countless rapture stories and bath-robed sermons have left a funny aftertaste in people’s mouths. We often pack so much message in our stories that they are stripped of enjoyment and effectiveness. Though such heavy-handed efforts have been applauded in years past, in many ways it has only encouraged others to tell even more stories through such ineffective means. John Akers, publisher of *Christianity Today*, bluntly asks, “Where are the creative men and women—the writers, artists, filmmakers—who will capture the imagination of our confused world in the name of Christ?” I pray that many young people will begin to answer this call to the media and engage a new generation with well-told stories. Only when this happens will we reach a sight and sound generation.

Tom Newman is founder and president of Impact Productions, (www.daretomakecontact.com). As a producer his work includes the feature film *End of the Spear*, the children’s series *Pahapahooy Island* and the holiday film *Christmas Child*.

This article first appeared in February 2006 issue of Lausanne World Pulse. Used by permission of Lausanne World Pulse, Wheaton, IL 60187, (www.LausanneWorldPulse.com).

Our Apologies

A great big “Sumimasen deshita!” to the author of “Reading the Culture” in the Winter 2006 issue of Japan Harvest. The correct spelling of her name is Cheryl Kirchoff. Sorry Cheryl!

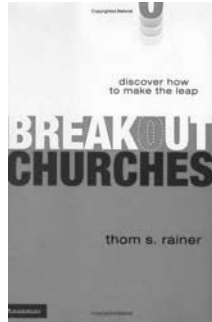
New Name

In our last issue, we announced the pending name change of Family Focus Japan. As of April 1, the ministry’s new name has become **Family Forum Japan**.



Breakout Churches

Reviewer: Tim Clark lives in Sapporo, and serves as the Asian Access Church Multiplication Team Leader for Hokkaido. He has been on staff since 1989. Tim is also an Alpha Course Advisor.



Breakout Churches

Discover How to Make the Leap
Thom S. Rainer, Zondervan, 272 pages

Thom Rainer believes that Satan “has a weapon even more lethal than church splits and the moral failures of church leaders” (p. 75). That weapon? The slow erosion common to many churches.

In *Breakout Churches* Rainer examines key issues we must face to lead churches in sustained growth. I highly recommend this book to all who long to see their church grow in new ways.

Rainer started with data on 52,333 churches. He and his research team looked for congregations that had experienced decline followed by breakout growth followed by at least five years of increased worship attendance – all under the same pastor’s leadership. Just thirteen of the churches met these requirements.

An additional 39 congregations were included as comparison churches. Rainer’s project was based on the book, *Good to Great* by Jim Collins. Although Rainer’s research was completed in the US, the results teach important lessons to all who are dedicated to seeing God’s kingdom more greatly populated by helping congregations grow.

Rainer does not seek to give a formula for church growth. Rather his research points to applicable principles common to congregations that transitioned from decline to unprecedented growth.

Rainer writes of an ABC moment, a wake-up call in which churches realize that change is desperately needed and begin to deal honestly with their current situations. ABC stands for:

Awareness – Leaders acknowledge that their church is not all that God intended it to be.

Belief – They confront the facts of the church’s current reality with faith that God will lead them in change.

Crisis – As they begin to move towards growth a crisis takes place in the leader and/or the attitude of members towards the leader.

Leaders in comparison churches were unaware

of their congregations’ realities. Many spoke of steady growth and evangelistic fruitfulness while church records reflected persistent decline.

Rainer’s chapter titled “The ABC Moment” brought to mind John 8:32 where Jesus tells Jewish believers, “You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.” Perhaps one of many ways we experience the truth of this verse is that as we face difficult truths of all kinds we find freedom. As we confront undesirable realities of our churches, we find freedom to change and to begin to grow again.

Of Rainer’s many relevant findings, the following three also stood out to me.

Leaders of breakout churches have decided to love the difficult people in their congregations. How I wish it were enough to politely ignore them or simply put up with them! But breakout pastors actively live out Jesus’s teaching to love the difficult people.

Longevity is key. The average tenure of pastors in the US is just 3.6 years. In Rainer’s comparison churches it was 4.2 years. But in breakout churches it was 21.6 years, an even greater difference than expected. Pastors of breakout churches persisted through challenging times when other leaders resigned or were fired.

The most highly developed leaders, called Acts 6/7 leaders by Rainer, have visions for their congregations beyond their years. Their visions extend beyond the time of their ministries or even into years beyond their life expectancy.

In keeping with its subtitle, *Breakout Churches* is full of wisdom for making the leap into more fruitful ministry—wisdom readily applicable across cultures.

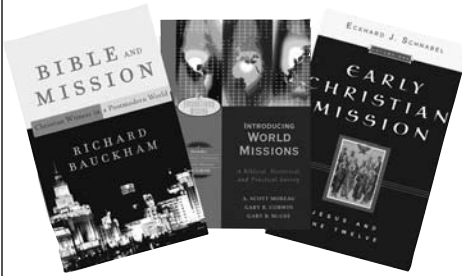


Bible and Mission: Christian Witness in a Postmodern World

Introducing World Missions: A Biblical, Historical, and Practical Survey

Early Christian Mission

Reviewer: Don Schaeffer with his wife, Hazel, serves with the C&MA planting a church in Kawaguchi. Don and Hazel came to Japan in 1984.



Bible and Mission: Christian Witness in a Postmodern World

Richard Bauckham, Baker and Pater-noster, 2003, 128 pages

Introducing World Missions: A Biblical, Historical, and Practical Survey

A. Scott Moreau, Gary R. Corwin, and Gary B. McGee, Baker, 2004, 349 pages

Early Christian Mission

Eckhard J. Schnabel, InterVarsity, 2004, 1928 pages

Even missionaries can find it hard to keep up-to-date with books on missions. Many excellent books have come out in recent years and it is helpful to be aware of the wealth of literature on missions. It is particularly encouraging to see New Testament scholars writing in this area. As I. Howard Marshall says in his recent *New Testament Theology* (IVP, 2004), “New Testament theology is essentially missionary theology.”

Richard Bauckham, Professor of New Testament Studies at the University of St. Andrews, has written many important works on the New Testament and theology. Responding to postmodernism that rejects any form of universal truth, Bauckham shows how universal blessing comes through God’s work in one particular geographic location (Israel) and through particular individuals. “God never singles out some for their own sake alone, but always for others. So the church should be the community from which the blessing of Abraham, experienced in Jesus, overflows to others.” (p.49) “Paul’s account of the cross as the critical test of the content of the church’s witness is also...an account of the cross as the critical test of the form of the church’s

witness.” (p.102) Postmodernism presents both opportunity and challenge for Christian witness that calls us to continual repentance and holiness, faithfulness and discernment. For those who want to read a stimulating theology of mission from a provocative NT scholar, this is a good book to read.

Scott Moreau (missions professor at Wheaton College Graduate School and editor of *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*), Gary Corwin (associate editor of *EMQ* and special representative with SIM) and Gary McGee (professor at Assemblies of God Theological Seminary) have teamed up to write an excellent introduction to missions entitled *Introducing World Missions*. The book is the first in a projected series of 8 books, *Encountering Mission*, to be published by Baker. The textbook is divided into 5 parts: Encountering Mission... in the Scriptures; in History; as a Candidate; as a Sent One and as a Sender; and Missions Encountering the Contemporary World. The book includes numerous sidebars, charts, and questions for reflection and discussion. I found it a helpful resource for an adult class on missions I taught at my home church while on home assignment. The book also includes a CD-ROM of the *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, with more than 1400 articles on mission. This is a book that newer missionaries will be reading as they prepare to go overseas. It is also a very profitable review for more seasoned missionaries. (The second volume in the series, *The Changing Face of World Missions: Engaging Contemporary Issues and Trends* was published in the fall of 2005.)

Like another missionary colleague in Japan, I am still working through the monumental and massive 2 volume work by Eckhard Schnabel. Schnabel, originally from Germany, teaches New Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and previously taught at Asian Theological Seminary in Manila. Originally published as *Urchristliche Mission in Germany* (2002) and translated by the author, *Early Christian Mission* seeks to look at all the evidence

relevant to the missionary practice and geographical expansion of the early church. Schnabel gives a unified and detailed picture of the rise and growth of early Christian mission. The book is divided into 7 parts. Volume 1 (Jesus and the Twelve) begins with a helpful introduction. Part 1, Promise, looks at Israel’s eschatological expectations and Jewish expansion in the Second Temple Period. Part 2, Fulfillment, considers the mission of Jesus. Part 3, Beginnings, looks at the mission of the Apostles in Jerusalem and Part 4, Exodus, details the mission of the Twelve from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth. Volume 2 focuses on Paul and the Early Church. Part 5, Pioneer Missionary Work, has an excellent overview of the mission of the Apostle Paul. Part 6, Growth, looks at the consolidation and challenges of the early Christian churches. Part 7, Results, deals with the identity, praxis and message of the early Christian mission. Each part ends with an admirable summary. Not only is the English translation excellent, the book includes interaction with secondary literature both in German and English. This is truly a landmark work, the first comprehensive study of early Christian mission since Harnack’s *Mission and Expansion* over a century ago. Don’t let the size of this work overwhelm you! Schnabel’s rich biblical insights will inform and refine your thinking and involvement in missions.

There are many helpful works on mission to guide us as we serve and to recommend to others.

More books on missions:

David J. Hesselgrave, *Paradigms in Conflict: 10 Key Questions in Christian Missions Today*. (Kregel, 2006).

Mike Barnett & Michael Pocock, editors, *The Centrality of Christ in Contemporary Missions* (EMS 12). (William Carey Library, 2005).

Lay Church Planting Conference Draws Participants to Snow-Covered Gotemba

By Kelly Malone

Wade and Barbara Akins emphasized that the key to evangelism and church planting is for Christians to have a vital relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. In this relationship, Christians must yield to the work of the Holy Spirit. "It's all about him and a relationship to him," Wade Akins said. "What we need is to know him in a deep way so that he can live through us and produce his fruit in our lives."

The Akins served for many years as missionaries in Brazil with the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention. During that time Wade developed Pioneer Evangelism, a curriculum designed to train lay people to plant churches. He led training conferences throughout Brazil with the result that thousands of pastors and lay people were trained in Pioneer Evangelism and thousands of new churches were started.

Subsequently, the International Mission Board asked the Akins to lead Pioneer Evangelism conferences in other countries. During the past five years they have taught in forty-eight countries. About 50,000 people have received training through these seminars. Wade and Barbara Akins led a recent training conference on lay church planting, held January 6-8, 2006, at the YMCA's Tozanso Retreat Center in Gotemba, Shizuoka Prefecture. In spite of snowy weather in Gotemba that weekend, which made getting in and out of Tozanso difficult, about twenty-five people came to learn, to share ideas, to fellowship and to pray for the salvation of Japan.

The seminar began with an emphasis on the spiritual life of the church planter. "The character of the church planter," Wade said, "is the most vital part of church planting. The church planter must know God, walk with

God, and have dependence on the Holy Spirit." The Akins believe that human strength, ingenuity and ability are inadequate unless the church planter experiences the empowering of the Holy Spirit. The power which God desires to give the church planter through his Spirit is sufficient to accomplish God's purpose. "God wants to do the impossible in us, through us, and in the lives of lost people," Barbara Akins said. "In order for the Holy Spirit to work through us we must submit to his will every moment every day." While it is the Christian's job to proclaim the Gospel, it is the Holy Spirit's job to convict lost people of their sinful condition and reveal the truth of God's Word to them.

Wade and Barbara Akins encouraged participants to become involved in training lay church planters. This training should include both biblical principles and practical ministry training. The Akins emphasized that the biblical principles for lay church planting can be applied equally well using four models of church: the traditional model, the satellite church model, the cell church model, and the house church model. What is essential is to train mature believers who feel called to participate in church planting. This approach is based on Jesus' method: gather disciples, train them and send them out. This is most effective when those who engage in church planting are sent out as teams in which each person is able to use his or her spiritual gifts.

The pastor's primary role in this process is to equip lay people to be involved in ministry. Paul writes, "It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up" (Ephesians 4:11-12). Training should take place on a weekly basis and should include three parts. Each training session should begin with hearing reports from the church

planting team on what occurred during the previous week. This is followed by a time of discipleship through Bible teaching. The goal of this second part is to give team members a solid doctrinal basis for Christian life, evangelism and church planting. The final part includes practical instruction in a ministry skill and the opportunity to practice using this skill together before the team members go out. The Akins taught that it is important to get the members of the church planting team involved in ministry as soon as possible. "Do not try to do all of the training first before you send them out to do ministry," the Akins said. "Follow a regular pattern from the beginning of 'gather, train, send, gather, train, send.'"

Wade Akins emphasized that the goal is to plant growing churches. These churches will be characterized by prayer, praise, evangelism, discipleship, fellowship and good administration. Each church will be self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating. Growing churches should have a vision for both multiplying disciples and multiplying churches. The process of training lay church planters takes time, the Akins said. At the beginning many pastors and church leaders will be reluctant to empower their laity. Also, lay people should not be released to start new churches too soon, before they are spiritually mature. "Teach well so that those you are training can understand and apply what you are teaching," Barbara said.

At the close of the Saturday afternoon session participants gathered on a hilltop with a beautiful view of Mt. Fuji as their backdrop to pray for Japan. They prayed not only for the salvation of Japan and



the discipleship of Japanese believers, but also for the multiplication of the number of Christians and churches throughout Japan. In short, they prayed that God will do what only he can do to bring salvation to Japan. This wonderful time of prayer closed as participants joined hands, hearts and voices lifted up to the

Lord in praise in the words of the simple chorus, "Alleluia."

If you are interested in more about mobilizing lay people for church planting, contact Charlie Williams at cwilliams@readmail.biz or Kelly Malone at ksmjapan@gol.com.



Fifth "Reaching Japanese for Christ" Conference in USA Gathers over Two Hundred Participants

By Don Wright, RJC Committee Chairman

- *We were thrilled and encouraged to be at the conference and to see God at work for Japan.*
- *I found the sessions that I was able to attend to be very enlightening and encouraging.*
- *A great place to meet people who share a similar burden for the Japanese*
- *I have a new vision and excitement for my campus ministry*
- *I received the passion of all the people who participated at the conference.*

Good reports continue to come in from the fifth Reaching Japanese for Christ conference. It took place on February 17-19 at the Northshore Baptist Church in Bothell, Washington, USA. Over 200 people came from 16 states across the US (including Hawaii), as well as Canada and Japan. They gathered around the RJC vision statement, "To glorify God by partnering together to give the approximately half million Japanese who (temporarily) reside in North America an opportunity to hear the gospel and become disciples of Jesus Christ!"

People came together from a variety of backgrounds. Several came seeking God's leading for possible missionary service in Japan. Others were on their way to serving in Japan. Some arranged their home assignment schedules to attend and serve. John Mehn, Baptist General Conference missionary and director of the Japan Church Planting Institute (www.jcpi.com), was one of the main speakers. Japanese pastors, laypeople, and even new Japanese believers came.

The first RJC conference took place in 2001, and each year the Lord has increased the numbers and impact of the time. Plenary speakers have included Steve Hoke of Church Resource Ministries; Hiroyuki Yonai, pastor of Kokubunji Baptist Church in Tokyo and board member of JCFN; and Daniel Kikawa of Aloha Ke Akua Ministries. This year, some of the new themes included:

- An emphasis on networking and partnership. This primarily took place in a pre-conference study led by Dave Hackett from Visionsynergy.
- An expansion of the workshops. Some focused on fundamentals, and others on leadership. Several were in Japanese. One Japanese elective was for Japanese pastors to study the returnee problems that confront Christians going back to Japan. Another was for training Japanese in evangelism.

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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 was a former employee of Samaritan’s Purse and the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association in Canada. Darren can be reached via email: exusia@shaw.ca

This past November I had my first opportunity to visit the Philippines. I went to help distribute Gift Boxes to children in a squatter’s community and to spend a few extra days meeting people and establishing new relationships. What an eye opening trip and somewhat uncomfortable experience.

I have walked amongst the rich in the corporate world of North America and I have spent time amongst poor and dying people with HIV/AIDS in Cambodia, but I have never seen the two mixed together as I saw in the Philippines. The contrasts and mental gearshifts one must make when stepping from one world to the other surprised me a little, but the imagery reminded me about the parable of The Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31). The thing that bothered me the most though was what happened when I met with an elder from one of the richest churches in Manila.

I explained to him why we were in the Philippines and showed a video of poor children in Africa receiving Gift Boxes. This man became very animated and saw great potential for this ministry in the Philippines and asked when they could get started. As I explained that we were there exploring how to get Gift Boxes shipped into the country, he stopped me and said, “When can you come back and share with our congregation about making Gift Boxes and sending them to Vietnam with a team of people from our church?”

For a very long moment I sat there not believing my ears, thinking, “You want people to make and send Gift Boxes to Vietnam when there are people living in recycled garbage homes struggling for their daily existence within a stones throw of your own church?” Then that small still voice which prompts me from time to time softly whispered, “What is wrong with this picture?”

When culture and the gospel conflict with each other, which takes precedence? Can we actually learn to exchange our cultural worldview glasses for a pair that allow us to see the world as God sees it?

After another trip we made to Cambodia in January 2005, a Japanese man who went with us came up to me and said, “Before I went on this

trip I was blind. Since I have returned I have noticed things I’ve never seen or thought about before. The homeless man that I must have passed two times a day for the last ten years – I want to see his face and look him in the eye. The single mother with two small children, a stroller and several bags of groceries as she struggles to get up and down the train platform stairs – I am ashamed when people ignore her or worse when they get mad at her because she is in their way – and no one stops to help – not even me. The woman who sat crying on the busy train and no one even acknowledged that she was there – and the look of anger from people around her, when I handed her a pack of tissues near the end of her crying - grateful she started crying again.” There is something in this man’s confession that speaks of opened eyes and an opened heart.

When I was in Bible College, I was asked to write a paper on how I would reach out to my Muslim neighbor to proclaim the message of salvation. As I considered how I would approach this assignment, my heart began to become extremely heavy and I was given a vision and a purpose as I began to write the entry in my journal that day. This was the point at which my eyes and heart were opened...

Journal of Darren Polischuk

November 2001

I cannot in good conscience pursue a message geared towards other cultures while the world culture where I live crumbles around me. I must speak out. God has put a burden on my heart to make disciples of all men – how can I go and tell a Muslim brother to remove the splinter from his faith, which separates him from God, when a log of gargantuan proportion exists in the people of my faith, which separates them from God!

*I shared the joy of the Lord in my life
And people were encouraged.
I smiled a genuine smile
And other faces lit up with joy and recognition.
I prayed with people
And they embraced a new hope.
I cried out to the Lord in despair
And He brought counselors to my side.
I earnestly sought to hear the voice of God
And he waited until I was still.
Then He spoke to me clearly
Without hesitation or reservation.*

*A simple dialogue
Simple words
Simple purpose.
The important fact began to take possession of me
All men are one
Their needs are one.
All men need Jesus regardless of label.*

*I will not speak of Westerners or Easterners
Or of Muslims or of Castes or of cultures.
I will talk with people
Of people
In the same basic human need.
Anywhere and everywhere.*

My Salvation in Christ has brought me to the right hand side of the throne. Standing beside my Lord and looking out upon a lost world, I am overwhelmed...and I begin to weep. As I look up into His eyes, the tears are streaming down His face, He says to me,

"The tears of the Lord are the beginning of understanding my compassion for these, my children. How can I bring judgment on these lambs for they have not heard the shepherd's voice? How can they hear when no one is speaking for me? Who shall I send to them? Who shall be my voice of truth and compassion? Who will embrace my Love and let it flow from them unto all my children?"

*Lord I am unworthy of the gifts you have given me.
My tears fall on dry ground
And yet fail to make a difference
To the seeds planted there.
Teach me oh Lord
To love like you
To weep like you
To be like you.*

*Oh heart of my heart
Soul of my soul.*

*Breath new life into me that I may be made pure
And holy in the sight of your children.
For I live for your purpose
I weep for I am in awe of your majesty
And my heart aches to the point of breaking
For my lost brothers and sisters.*

*There but for the grace of God am I.
Here because of the love of the Lord I am.
Wherever I may travel there He will be.
Whomever I shall meet there He will be.
I have wept with the Lord
And He has shown me His heart.
How could I ever be anywhere
But in Him
And He in me.*

*Walk a mile in a man's footsteps
And you will begin to appreciate Him.
See the world from the right hand of the throne
And your heart and soul will mourn for the lost.
Weep a while in God's presence
And you will never look at the world the same again.*

*Embrace humanity
For she is crying out to the Lord.
Love all her children
For they are made in the image of Him.
Weep and laugh and be with them
For they long for the fragrance of God.
Be that light
Be that hand
Be the cup and the bread
In this hurting world.
And seek ye the face of God in everyone you meet.*



...Oh, and in case you are wondering, we hope to work with the church in the Philippines to make and take their Gift Boxes to Vietnam, because just as the people in Japan are experiencing when taken outside of their comfort zones – they will learn to see the Kingdom of God at work and choose to become willing participants in it – all to His glory!



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. la@omf.or.jp
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Hiragana Times

The *Hiragana Times* has been published since 1986 and has readers in more than 90 countries. As well as interviews with internationals, *Hiragana Times* features articles such as “Festivals of Japan”, “Hot Spots”, “Japanese Culture Now”, “Japanese History Makers” and “Close-Up Japan”. Information pages such as “Visa Q&A” introduce the latest trends, events, books and new products. Apart from content, the main advantage of *Hiragana Times* is that it is published in both Japanese and English with *furigana* above each *kanji* to do away with the need for a *kanji* dictionary. However, both the Japanese and English texts are written at native speaker level as regards grammar and vocabulary level. A PDF version of *Hiragana Times* is also available. It contains exactly the same contents and layout as the printed magazine. You can purchase it from anywhere in the world. The PDF version costs less than the printed magazine and you can print out just the pages you want. The magazine can be viewed page by page on the web and enlarged or reduced simply by clicking on the screen.

How can you purchase the *Hiragana Times*? It is on sale on the 5th of every month in Japan at bookstores stocking foreign books. The price in Japan is 390 yen. Outside Japan the price varies. You can find more details on the different ways to subscribe on the *Hiragana Times* website at <http://www.hiraganatimes.com> This site has even got pages like ‘Daily Topics (In Hiragana)’ and ‘Daily Topics in Romaji’ and a host of other interesting pages on Japan in English. Well worth checking out. Sadly, the magazine *Nihongo Journal* came to an end in spring 2005 but *Hiragana Times* is a good alternative.

Japanese Reading Materials Bank

http://language.tiu.ac.jp/index_e.html

Click on the above and you will find yourself at an English page introducing ‘Reading Tutor’ designed to help learners of Japanese improve their reading skills. On this page are links to level checks, dictionary tools, reading resources bank and quizzes on reading comprehension. Reading passages are starred according to the 4 levels of the Japanese Language Proficiency Test. When you have chosen a text you can click on *kanji* or vocabulary items that you don’t know and get the readings and English explanation alongside. The materials on the site seem to date mostly from the year 2000. Nevertheless, it is worth taking a look to see if there are topics that interest you here.

Grammatically graded readers

みんなの日本語初級1 & 2初級で読めるトピック25

These texts are written to follow the order of grammar introduced in the elementary level textbooks, *Minna no Nihongo Shokyuu*, Books 1 and 2. New vocabulary is introduced with translation in 5 languages including English, Chinese and Korean. As there are few materials for reading at a basic level these texts are to be highly recommended. *Furigana* is on all *kanji* words but below instead of on top. Simple reading tasks are set after each reading passage to check comprehension.

Devotional Reading Material

元気の出る聖書の言葉

<http://blog.mag2.com/m/log/0000095740>

I was introduced to this site by a reliable Japanese Christian acquaintance but readers will have to judge for themselves the appropriateness of the content. The author is Iwamoto Enoku (岩本遠徳) who is both a pastor and lecturer in linguistics at the Kanda University of Foreign Languages. (You can find Iwamoto’s profile and testimony on his web site <http://homepage2.nifty.com/enoch/> if you would like to know more about him.) On the first site you will find a daily devotion in Japanese designed to be read in one minute (by native speakers!) You can either read online (back numbers can also be accessed here) or register to have it sent to you every day, Monday to Saturday, by e-mail. Just click on <http://homepage2.nifty.com/enoch/melmagareg.htm> on the home page. If every day is too much, then how about downloading one devotion per week for reading practice? Online the font size is a little small for inexperienced readers. If you have the ability on your computer to add *furigana*, but have difficulty in reading, try adding *furigana* to your downloaded text yourself.

‘Simplified Bible Stories for Japanese Language Learners’ Digital version

There are 20 illustrated Bible stories in this *Seisho Monogatari* resource graded from very easy to intermediate (i.e. equivalent to levels 3 and 4 of the Japanese Language Proficiency Test.) *Furigana* is on many *kanji* although not repeated when a word has previously appeared. There is a Japanese/English word index at the back.

Seisho Monogatari is available by request from the JEMA office at jema@jema.org. It is free to JEMA members and ¥500 for non-members. The resource can be sent to by e-mail or on a CD by post at a slightly higher cost to cover postage. Payment should be made to the JEMA postal account.

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