

JAPAN Winter 2007 **HARVEST**

Japan Evangelical Missionary Association



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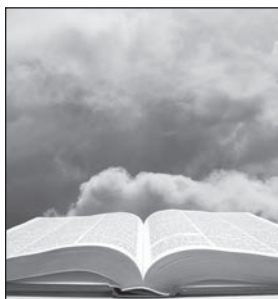
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*Japan Evangelical
Missionary Association
exists to network and equip
its members to make
disciples for Christ*

JAPAN HARVEST

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

In my autumn Pen, I ventured to raise my personal questions regarding the DVD, *God's Fingerprints in Japan*. Since then, missionary colleagues have informed me that the producer, Daniel Kikawa, is a Christian gentleman with a sincere desire to evangelize Japan. My recent brief correspondence with Daniel confirms their opinions. In the *Letters to the Editor* section of this *Japan Harvest* there is a letter Daniel has written in response to my last column that everyone should read.

I have also learned that Daniel visits Japan regularly to speak before Japanese pastors regarding his theory that the Shinto god, *Amenominakanushinokami* (天之御中主の神), is a proper name to use for the God of Creation and that this god has represented the God of Creation throughout Japanese history. Please note that this name as officially given also includes the term *Kami* (神).

Since the last issue of the *Japan Harvest*, I also have done more reading on this Shinto god and its background. I am more convinced than ever that Daniel's claim cannot be substantiated. Here in brief is why. The DVD, *God's Fingerprints in Japan*, states that this god is not part of the myriad of Shinto gods. It is true that this god is not listed in the generations of gods mentioned in the *Kojiki*. This god is spoken of as the very progenitor, the head of the Shinto pantheon. For those who can read *kanji* and have a computer with *kanji*, I suggest a Google website search using the *hiragana* for the name of this god. Websites in written Japanese are very informative. At one website, (<http://www4.ocn.ne.jp/~katonet/15sya/kamikiz.htm>) there is a chart with a list of the generations of gods beginning with *Amenominakanushinokami* and traced directly to the Emperor.

In Japanese, the word *Kami* (神) is a generic term with the basic meaning of being above or superior. It can be used to describe one's wife or a store customer; it can be used in cartoons; and it can be used for deity. The term *Kami* takes its meaning either from the context or from the adjectives used to specify its meaning, espe-

cially the *kanji* which go before it. *Kanji* usage is usually very specific in its meaning and solidifies a particular usage of a word. Nuances given to the same word are often designated by a different *kanji*. All Shinto names for deities use very specific *kanji* to designate their meanings. Change a *kanji* and you change its name. *Amenominakanushinokami* is very specific, as are the names for the other two gods making up the Shinto trinity. Each is a separate god with a specific meaning. These three gods came out of existing materials. They then gave birth to two other gods, and so it goes through the Shinto list.

I believe that the term Creator (*Sozounushi* 創造主 or *Tsukurinushi* 創り主) as given in the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures can describe the true and living God better than confusing Shinto diction. In the Scriptures the adjectives and the context tell the story. The God of the Scriptures is not a "Western God," but the God who revealed Himself through one chosen people, the Jews. The spread of Christianity in the West has faced the same kinds of objections as it has in the Orient. The Roman Catholic Church in South America christianized the Inca deities with the names of Saints and Mary, and Christo-paganism remains a terrible stumbling block in the Andes nations.

Much more can and should be said on this subject, but not in this column. I do not claim to be a scholar in the intricacies of Shinto's deities nor an expert in the cultures of the world. However, there is one Name above others and at the Name of JESUS all knees will bow and all tongues will confess that He is LORD. Fellow missionaries let's keep on lifting up His Name!

Coming Up in the Japan Harvest

Spring 2007 - House Churches: Latest Fad, New Testament Model, or Something In-Between?

Summer 2007 - Personal Evangelism in Japan: Roadblocks and Solutions

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Gary Bauman has served as managing editor of *Japan Harvest* since September 2005. Gary and his wife Barbara have worked in Japan since 1988 with *Asian Access*.

The Best Laid Plans... Are Subject to Change

When we originally started work on the Winter 2007 *Japan Harvest*, we thought we'd have several articles on funerals, weddings, and other "rites of passage" that can be opportunities for sharing the gospel with Japanese friends and neighbors. However, other issues came to the forefront, and ultimately our "passages" theme ended up consisting mainly of Peter Clift's excellent presentation on conducting Christian funerals in Japan. But what an important article it is! For a Japanese person, one of the more significant roadblocks that can get in the way of full commitment to Christ can be concern regarding what to do about funeral ceremonies. The intense pressure to conform to group expectations on such occasions can be overwhelming. Whether or not you agree with every single point of Peter's approach to funerals, he will help you think through the issues!

An event that contributed significantly to the postponing of articles on a passages theme was the May 2006 publication of a booklet by the Japan Evangelical Association, focusing mainly on the topic of the Christian's attitude toward war. Since this issue has been a matter of theological debate for centuries, Dale Little's article on evangelical theological methodology is a timely resource. The ten points he shares are a first step toward helping missionaries and tentmakers in Japan navigate potentially emotionally-charged theological discussions of all kinds, including the perennial tension between war and peacemaking and their relation (or lack of relation) to each other.

You'll also notice an expanded news section that follows a more traditional news format. Two books are mentioned among these news briefs, each having potential for significant impact in the Japanese world.

The first is a mass media Japanese art form. As you know, during this past decade the *manga* comic format has been sweeping the world by storm, not necessarily to everyone's greatest appreciation. When I received an English review copy of *Manga Messiah*, I wasn't quite sure what to expect. But as I found myself unexpectedly wiping away tears when John baptized Jesus at the Jordan River, I knew this medium for sharing the gospel was going to have a powerful impact. *Manga Messiah* is not just a simple translation of the Gospels into visual form, but rather a skillful re-telling of the life of Jesus that sometimes leads you into new perspectives as it brings up Scripture details you already know, but in unexpected contexts.

On another front, as this issue of *Japan Harvest* reaches your hands the distribution of the Japanese edition of the book *Power for Living* should be in high gear. In each country where it is made available, great care is taken 1) to find respected "celebrity" evangelical Christians with clear testimonies to publish in the book, and 2) to have no organizational relationships with any Christian group, thereby minimizing potential roadblocks to the purchase of advertising in secular media that will give people an opportunity to request the book.

Pray that God will lead people who receive this resource to churches in their area that can follow up.

You'll also note in this issue that we have an extended letters to the editor section, which brings me to a question for you, the reader:

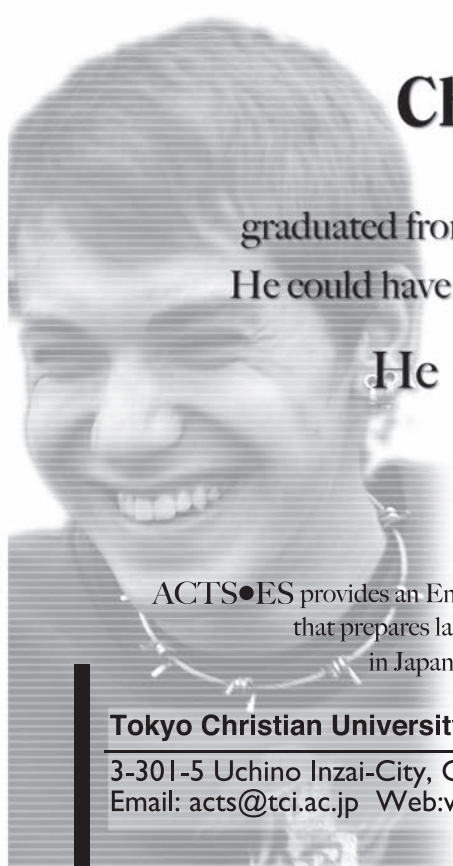
What guidelines would you like to see us follow in regards to editorial policy? Should we retain a more Western style, which encourages direct sharing of opinion and debate for the purpose of clarifying thinking? Or should we take a more Japanese approach of just stating the facts, avoiding direct confrontation, and expressing opinions cautiously, expecting that people will read between the lines?

To put this in context, some have said to me, "Be sure you include a section with letters to the editor. It makes the magazine interesting!" Others have said, "You need to respect the Japanese way of doing things. When Japanese read a magazine with confrontational opinions going back and forth, it will just reconfirm for them that you haven't been assimilated into Japanese culture, and you will never be respected."

I must confess, I hadn't thought about using a Japanese editorial approach to an English language magazine, but it did make me realize that we have multiple cultural backgrounds represented even in the English language readership of the magazine. We do want to hear your opinions about what is most helpful, because this magazine is for you. Drop me an e-mail at editor@jema.org with your thoughts. And don't forget the annual JEMA plenary session in Tokyo on February 26, 2007. You can talk to me directly then!

Finally, if you haven't yet responded to the JEMA communications survey that we've been encouraging our readers to complete, or you aren't on our e-mail list so haven't heard about it, please go to www.mupjapan.org/jh/JHReaderSurvey.phtml and take a couple of minutes to go through it. Your input is essential for us to know how to increase the effectiveness of our communications!

Your partner in ministry to the Japanese world,



Chris Triebel,

a missionary kid,

graduated from an International school in Japan.

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

Event	Date	Time	Place
Concert of Prayer	January 25, 2007	4:00 p.m.	OMF Hokkaido Center
Mini Prayer Summit for Tokyo	February 5, 2007	Morning	ICA near Tokyo University
JEMA Plenary Session	February 26, 2007*	10:00 a.m.	OCC Chapel
Japanese Prayer Summit	March 5-8, 2007		Shiga Doshisha Retreat Center
WIM Retreat	March 14-16, 2007	3:00 p.m.	Megumi Chalet, Karuizawa
Mini Prayer Summit for Church & Ministries	April 2, 2007		ICA near Tokyo University
Concert of Prayer	May 10, 2007	4:00 p.m.	OMF Hokkaido Center
Coed Prayer Summit with Akira Mori	May 15-18, 2007		Okutama Bible Chalet
Kansai Men's Prayer Summit	May 21-24, 2007		VIP Alpine Rose Village

Letters to the Editor



Likes and Dislikes

While the pictures looked nice [on the Fall 2006 issue], I would have to say I do not feel the word *ukiyoe* is appropriate, especially for a

Christian magazine. When my wife (who is born and bred Japanese, although she does have a B.R.E. from Prairie Bible Institute in Canada) heard the word *ukiyoe*, she immediately said the word had a bad connotation. It makes her think of Sharaku and his pictures of women, mostly geisha, and some in various shades of nudity. My wife did not grow up in a Christian family, so if SHE gets 'bad vibes' from the word *ukiyoe*, how about other Japanese Christians? This is probably not a "cut and dried" thing, but I wanted to let you know what we feel. That said, I really enjoyed what the article had to say. The "layered" explanation goes a long way in explaining how Japanese come to follow Christ (both before and after salvation). Western missionaries tend to stress a certain point as THE time when someone accepts Christ, but it truly is (even for most of us Westerners and especially for PKs and MKs) more a process of coming to know Him as your Savior.

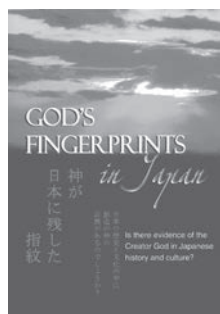
I also enjoyed Andy Meeko's article. His idea of group therapy was a new thought and it sounded very practical for Japan. The only "gripe" I had was that he seemed to be "mixing metaphors," starting out talking about marriages and ending up essentially talking about church growth principles. I am interested in both, but I think they deserved separate articles.

I can't tell you how MUCH I enjoyed Dale Little's article on how we report what God is doing to our supporting churches. The issues brought up in this article are something I think churches, especially in North America, need to think about. It has

gotten to the place that you almost have to have a split personality to make it as a missionary. It goes without saying that you should be able to do things the way they need to be done in Japan. But when you go back to North America, you have to forget all that humility and taking the lower part and come on strong and positive, almost like a clown. If you can regale the crowds and entertain them, they think you are "missionary caliber." For those who fit in well in Japan, it's not so easy to regroup and become "another person" to cater to the whims of the supporting church. It is true that the missionary must think about how they share what God is doing. But the church, too, must not expect that what works in North America, etc., necessarily works in Japan.

This time I REALLY enjoyed the Japan Harvest (not that I don't usually!). Keep up the good work.

*For Him and for His Cause,
Ken Reddington
Agawa-gun, Kochi-ken*



Point of Contact, or Syncretism?

Many have seen the DVD, *God's Fingerprints in Japan*, that Ray Leaf wrote about in the last edition. I concur with him that we need to be very careful

about seizing on this idea of *Amenominaka no Nushi* being the Lord God in Japanese guise. Japanese with historical and religious knowledge will know that this is the god of Mt Fuji, often invoked in mountain worship, and that as early as the 18th century there have been attempts to combine Christianity and Shinto, using this god's name. We could just as easily get excited about the three gods involved in Shinto creation mythology

as being the Trinity at creation. Points of contact in the culture we want, syncretism we do not.

*Mariana Nesbitt
Ichikawa, Chiba*

Apologies, the Creator God, Evangelism, and Love

First of all, I would like to apologize to Ray Leaf and any missionaries who may have felt offended by *God's Fingerprints in Japan*. This was certainly not our intent. I have taught missionaries on every continent, they are consistently the best Christians I have met and are my heroes. Concerning the apology in the film, I know that missionaries would not do anything to intentionally harm the people they have dedicated their lives to. At the same time, we are human and make mistakes. Our ministry started with Native Hawaiians. Although I was born and raised in Hawaii, had been "adopted" by Native Hawaiians, and teach about cultural sensitivity, I still had to apologize to my Native Hawaiian friends several times for something I said or did that hurt them. My worldview was still different from theirs. As missionaries, we are their example of Christ. If we, even unknowingly, do something to hurt them, I believe we should apologize. This helps keep Christ untainted by our shortcomings. We asked many Japanese what was their favorite part of the film. The vast majority of them replied that the repentance was, and that it was the part that touched them the most. I think this feedback is something we need to humbly consider.

In Japan, there is no other candidate for the creator job except *Amenominakanushi*. This name is much better and less confusing than using *Kami*, another Shinto term. Using indigenous names for the creator god is widely accepted missiology. For Wycliffe missionaries who translate the

Bible into new languages and missionaries to unreached people groups, using the native name for the creator, or even the best name available in their language, is a common and accepted practice. The Korean native name for the creator, *Hananim*, is used in the Korean Bible and the native Chinese name for the creator, *Shang Di*, is now being used in Chinese Bibles. CBN (The 700 Club), the largest Christian Television network in the U.S., has released a film much like ours called, *The Temple of Heaven*, showing the ancient Chinese worship of the creator god, *Shang Di*. To learn more, I recommend Don Richardson's book, *Eternity in Their Hearts*, a missionary standard with 230,000 copies in print. Don is my mentor and has endorsed *God's Fingerprints in Japan*.

We have received hundreds of thankful letters, emails, and phone calls about *God's Fingerprints in Japan*. If we use the accepted average of the advertising industry per response, in just one year, this tool has been used by missionaries and others to strengthen thousands of Japanese Christians in their faith, see hundreds accept Christ, hundreds of families reconciled, and hundreds of people become open to Christ when they were not before. Our universal response from Japanese Christians is that they wept when they saw the film. Why? Because it showed them that God really loves them, something they were not sure of before. Yes, we Christians of non-Western ethnicities accepted Christ and know He died for us and yet, we have not seen that He loves us as much as Westerners. It seems to us that He accepts Western culture but rejects our own. Even third and fourth generation Japanese American pastors and Japanese missionaries have told me that they felt they had accepted a foreign God who did not love them as much as Westerners. This is a tremendously important and critical issue if even Japanese pastors and missionaries feel this way. Now these people are excited and eager evangelists because they can share a God of love!

The purpose of *God's Fingerprints in Japan* is love. This is key to evangelism and making strong Christians because to love Him, we need to know that He first loved us.

Rev. Daniel Kikawa, B.S., Ph.M., Ph.D. (Intercultural Studies)
Producer, God's Fingerprints in Japan
www.alohakeakua.org Hawaii, USA

The Need to Reach Rural Japan

Lift up your eyes and look on the fields for they are white unto harvest. Let me introduce myself. I am a retired missionary—for it was my privilege to serve our glorious Lord in Japan from 1953-1994, 41 years of battle, victories and blessings. Hallelujah!

Today I am taking the liberty to write you to make a passionate appeal on behalf of Japan's still unreached millions "out there" in the villages and towns scattered across that land! After a five-year absence it was my joy to be able to get back to Japan this spring for 3 full months and once again my heart was impacted profoundly. As I traveled, I saw endless villages and rural communities and my heart was so, so heavy for I was painfully aware of the fact that in most cases they have still not been reached.

Then I was caused to remember dear Miura Ayako San who was used of the Lord to author 40 books! I used to ask folk in rural areas we were busy at saturating with gospel literature, "Have you read Miura-san's books?" Almost invariably their answer was the same, "Yes!" And so this spring as I traveled I was powerfully caused to think, "She passed away 5 years ago. Now is the time to reap the harvest from all the seed sowed through her! Multiplied millions have read her books!" May I be so bold as to ask if JEMA has taken steps to reap that harvest? From the bottom of my heart I want to encourage you to pray about it and with God's glorious help do all we can to reap as many of those souls as we can! Right?

This spring as I traveled from place to place looking out the windows my heart grew heavier and heavier! Oh, so many places, yes, all those towns and villages that have been bypassed by the Church of Jesus Christ. Then I was made to realize that the Lord never commanded us to go and plant churches! No! What He commanded was, "Go and preach the Good News to every person!" Go to every village, every home, every soul!

Sadly we seem to get bogged down and never fully obey His command. Right? Please do not misunderstand me, though. Churches will be birthed. As we take the Good News to every person there will be pockets where there is wonderful response. Those are the spots that will become organized churches. Hallelujah! And in going to

all we will reach every prepared, yes, waiting soul—even in rural areas. Yes! I could share stories to show that!

Beloved, my only reason for writing this is that I am profoundly burdened for Japan's still unreached—those difficult country villages and towns that are so steeped in Buddhism... darkness. Rural Japan is Satan's stronghold and I feel that it is imperative for us to focus on these areas if we ever want to truly "take the land" for Christ.

My prayer, my dream would be this: mobilize all the 50 mission organizations in JEMA and have each one choose villages and towns they will occupy for Christ—pray for, evangelize! What an awesome, exciting prospect. Uniting and together taking the land! I am reminded of Jebus, which later became Jerusalem and was God's chosen place from the beginning. Have you ever noticed the oft repeated phrase in Deuteronomy "the place I have chosen"? It took Israel 400 years to possess it—under David's leadership. Right? So here in Japan let's take our "Jabez" for the Lord. None of us want to have those millions of precious souls who were never told pointing their fingers at us on Judgment Day and wailing, "Why didn't you come and tell us?" Do we? No!!

God richly bless you!

Donnel McLean
Aromas, California, USA

Readers are invited to respond to articles published in the Japan Harvest, and/or express their thoughts and opinions on topics relevant to spreading the gospel to the Japanese. Submissions will be edited for clarity, appropriateness and length, and should include the writer's name, city, and prefecture (or country, if from outside Japan). They will be published at the editor's discretion as space allows, unless marked "Not for publication." E-mail submissions should be directed to editor@jema.org. Letters should be sent to the editor in care of the JEMA office.

News Briefs

Gallup Institute Corrects Percentage of Japanese Adults Identifying with Christianity

On July 7, 2006, the George H. Gallup International Institute issued a correction to a report earlier in the year that 6% of Japanese adults “are followers of Christianity.” According to George H. Gallup, Jr., “Our study indicates that 4% of Japanese adults identify with Christianity... not 6%, as reported earlier. This was a basic arithmetical mistake on my part, for which I take full responsibility.”

The Gallup-reported percentage of “followers of Christianity” is significantly higher than the percentage for weekly worship attendance at evangelical Christian churches in Japan, which remains at less than ½ of one percent of the population. According to Gallup, whether the survey-reported percentage is 6% or 4%, the results still indicate that the number of Japanese Christians is higher than expected.

Members of the missionary community in Japan have requested the text of the original Japanese survey questions in order to have a clear understanding of how the questions were worded, especially those relating to God. However, to date, the Gallup organization has not been able to find the actual Japanese survey questions, only English versions.

Alpha Asia Pacific Announces Plans for 2007

Alpha Asia Pacific chairman, Chris Sadler, was at the Palace Hotel in Tokyo on November 23, 2006, to share regarding the growth in Asia of the Alpha course, a basic introduction to the Christian faith that is being used around the world. The first Global Chinese Alpha Conference will be held April 2007 in Hong Kong with Rev. Nicky Gumbel, who developed the course. Although the focus of this gathering is the Chinese-speaking world, it is open to all who wish to attend. The hope is that many from Japan and other Asian countries will be able to join the conference. Over 3,000 are expected.

Andy Game, director of Alpha Japan, announced that a number of prayer break-

fasts are being planned throughout Japan during 2007 for input and advice, as well as to introduce the Alpha program to potential sponsors. A significant focus on young people is projected through the use of Youth Alpha resources. For more information about Alpha Japan activities, contact Andy Game at andy.game@alphajapan.jp or visit the Alpha Japan website at <http://alphajapan.jp/>.

Booklet “Fundamentalism: JEA Theological Commission Pamphlet No. 6” Raises Questions in Japan Missionary Community

In light of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks and the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq, in May 2006 the Japan Evangelical Association (JEA) published a booklet containing several articles relating to war, Christianity, and theological perspectives in the United States. The first printing of 5000 copies was quickly sold out. English translations of the Japanese articles will be posted at www.jtheo.net as they become available.

Some of the articles seem to be based upon secular media perceptions of “Christian fundamentalism,” rather than a firsthand understanding of the complexity of theological positions within the evangelical and fundamentalist Christian communities in the United States. Concerns have also been raised about questionable theological methodology used in several of the articles.

With these matters in mind, JEMA President Ray Leaf initiated a series of informal meetings with several interested missionaries to discuss a possible JEMA response to the booklet. After discussion, it was agreed that the missionary community should seek ways to productively contribute to the Japanese theological community, so that there might be a better understanding of the evangelical and fundamentalist Christian environments in America.

As a first step, dialogue has been initiated with some of the Japanese authors of the articles, and Dale Little has written a foundational article on contemporary theological methodology (see page 16 of this issue).

Media Campaign Offers Power for Living

For a one month period beginning January 6, 2007, an extensive media campaign using a wide variety of outlets including television commercials, newspaper ads and inserts, magazines, train posters, and billboards is offering people throughout Japan the opportunity to request a free book entitled *Power for Living* (パワーフォーリビング).

Power for Living presents the gospel through the Christian testimonies of well-known celebrities in Japan, including Trey Hillman (manager of the Nippon Ham Fighters), Sayuri Kume (the former Saki Kubota), Verbal (m-flo rapper), and Janet Lynn (former Olympic figure skater).

As in all countries where this campaign has taken place, it is being conducted independent of existing Christian organizations or churches for maximum access to secular media channels. For updates on the status of this outreach, check the news page at www.jema.org.

New Life League Japan Projects over Ten Million Bible Manga in Print by 2010

Roald Lidal, director of New Life League Japan (Shinsei Senkyodan), reports that one of his long-standing dreams, the use of the popular Japanese manga comic format to reach a new generation with the gospel, is coming to fruition. The first 100,000 copies of *Manga Messiah*, an English manga edition of the life of Jesus, have been printed for distribution in the Philippines.

A Japanese edition is due for release shortly, with translation into another 15 languages in process. Lidal's original goal was to see one million copies distributed annually during the next 10 years, but he says he will need to revise his goal upward, as one distributor alone has expressed the desire to distribute 10 million copies by the year 2010.

With *Manga Messiah* now in the initial release stage, three Old Testament books and a New Testament book are in process. According to Lidal, “Our goal is not simply to tell Bible stories, but to tell the story of the Bible.” For more information, contact nlljapan@gol.com or visit www.nlljapan.com.

Church Planting Institute Holds Three Fall Seminars

John Mehn reports that October and November were active months for CPI, as regional seminars kept them busier at times than when there was only one large national conference in the fall.

During October 11-13, eleven people attended an invitational Church Planting Network seminar conducted primarily in Japanese. Participants came from several different groups, with representatives from Hokkaido, Yamagata, Nagoya, and Kanto. Steve Childers (Reformed Theological Seminary) and Pastor Jiro Chida (Keisen Network and Japan Church Growth Institute) were the main presenters, with Pastor Hirohashi and John Mehn sharing case studies on leadership development systems for church planting. As a result of the seminar, several agencies are seriously considering forming church planting networks in their regions.

During November 3-4, two CPI training teams led a Renewal and Evangelism seminar in Hokkaido, with Japanese participants comprising nearly half of the 70 in atten-

dance. Many came with the expressed intention of supporting a CPI-related alliance for church planting in Hokkaido. One Japanese attendee said, "This was a meeting greatly blessed of God. I would like to teach it to all the pastors and lay people in Hokkaido."

On November 11, a one-day equipping seminar was held in Karuizawa on the topic "Focusing: Vision and Values." Five missionaries and seventeen Japanese were in attendance. One Japanese participant said, "I would like CPI to be introduced to other church pastors so that God's Kingdom and glory would become one in our area."

According to Mehn, these three events provided CPI with a gold mine of lessons on how to best equip people for ministry on the frontlines, and will have a profound impact on planning for future events.

Additional regional equipping seminars are tentatively planned for spring 2007. The next national conference will be held at the recently renovated Fuji Hakone Land, November 6-9, 2007.

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Missionary Woman's Memoirs Banned!

By Ruth Tucker

Those are the headlines of 40 years ago. Well, maybe there were no such headlines. But there should have been. Many Christians were very upset about a controversial book published in 1966—so controversial that some Christian bookstores refused to carry it. The title: *No Graven Image* by Elisabeth Elliot. The book was actually fiction, but it was Elliot's way of telling her experience as a missionary in South America through the life of Margaret Sparhawk.

So shocking were some of the stories Elliot wanted to publish that she dared not write them as an actual memoir. Yet, this memoir stands as a symbol of missionary writing from a feminine perspective.

In many ways, missionary men through the generations have had more professional status invested in their work than have women. Women historically have been sidelined in missions as in other ministries and professions. At various times in history they have outnumbered men and have conducted more evangelistic outreach than their male colleagues. But they have not been the main characters in the written histories and their work has sometimes been marginalized.

Without the "career-investment" that men have, women have had less to lose by telling the story of mission work like it really is. Indeed, a wide survey of missionary memoirs show women offering honest accounts of mission ministry that has otherwise frequently been sanitized by a veneer of God-talk.

These women writers one after another have allowed themselves to be vulnerable in painting a sometimes messy picture of their

own character and of their missionary work. These raw memoirs have much to say to us in the 21st century.

Isobel Kuhn sheds light on marriage—especially the struggles of two people in a remote area living together day after day without reprieve. She allows other women to dare share their behind-the-scenes stories—stories that say, "Hey, I'm not the only one that struggles in my missionary marriage."

Kuhn tells about a raging disagreement with her husband over employing household help. "Hot with temper," she writes, "I put on my hat and coat and walked out of the house down through the town and out onto the plain, angry resentment boiling within. I wasn't going to live in a house where a lazy servant was condoned and given preference over the wife! . . . For hours I walked blind as to direction, not caring what happened to me, but just determined to get away from it all."

There were other issues as well. Regarding ministry, Kuhn writes: "Part of the heartache of all missionary work is the bright promising convert who turns out to be a mere puffball, crumbling like a macaroon under the least pressure."

Dorrie Van Stone's memoirs tell the heartbreaking story of a young boy not adjusting to MK boarding school and the decision to leave the work in Irian Jaya because of that. "Burney still clung to me, and I had to pry him forcibly away," she wrote. "That was like pulling away a part of my life. Lloyd and I knew that such a decision could not be justified—how could we be separated from our children when they needed us most? . . . Yet

paradoxically, we also knew that God had called us to the Baliem Valley."

Helen Roseveare, missionary doctor to the Congo tells of being taken captive by the Simba rebels. She tells of the terror of rape—and the unexpected awakening to sexual desires. Mabel Francis tells of her desire for marriage—especially when the task seemed way too big for one person: "I thought, 'Well, now, if I was married, I could follow on with my husband.'" But the Lord spoke to her and "the whole thing passed out of my life like a cloud passing away. . . . The thought of marriage has meant nothing to me since that time—nothing."

Mildred Cable tells of how she and her two partners were ridiculed when word got out that they were requesting to be relocated for ministry in the Gobi Desert. "Some [were] saying in more or less parliamentary language that there were no fools like old fools. . . . To a good many people it had seemed just plain foolishness. Why leave this important and successful school work to go off on some harebrained scheme of roaming over vast deserts looking for a few isolated tent dwellers and remote villages, where there were literally tens of thousands of people near at hand, all needing to hear the Gospel?"

Missionary memoirs are not just fascinating reading. They challenge us as we struggle with issues in our own lives—and they also challenge us to write our own open and honest stories about family and ministry in faraway places.



Ruth Tucker makes her home in Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA, where since 2000 she has been a professor of missions at Calvin Theological Seminary. Previously she taught for 17 years at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and has taught part-time at Calvin College, Fuller Theological

Seminary, Moffat College of Bible in Kenya, and other schools.

*She was raised in Northern Wisconsin in a Christian and Missionary Alliance Church and now holds membership in the Christian Reformed Church. Her graduate degrees from Baylor University (M.A.) and Northern Illinois University (Ph. D.) are in the field of historical studies. She is the author of 17 books, including her Gold Medallion award-winning *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya* and *Private Lives of Pastors' Wives and Walking Away From Faith: Unraveling the Mystery of Belief and Unbelief*. She is married to John Worst, Professor of Music emeritus at Calvin College. She has a son, Carlton, and a granddaughter, Kayla.*

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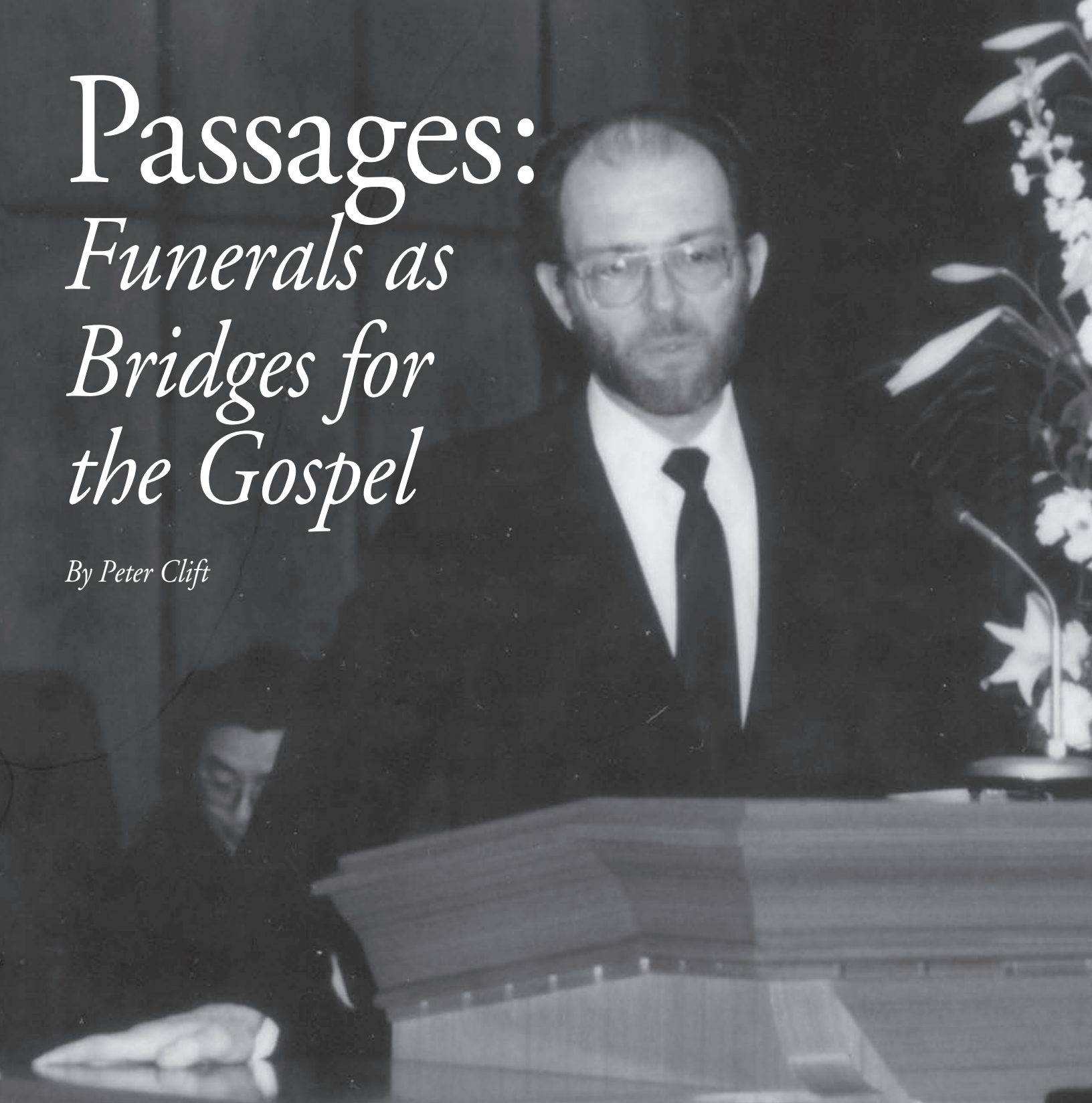
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Passages: *Funerals as Bridges for the Gospel*

By Peter Clift

The very thought of having to conduct a funeral in Japan can strike terror into the heart of many a missionary pastor, and for good reason. He knows that he will probably be dealing with non-Christian relatives at some stage of the preparations, and that their expectations probably won't match his own convictions. He knows that he will be dealing with a difficult language and culture. He

knows that there are set customs, language expressions and levels of politeness. He knows that he doesn't even know how much he doesn't know. Furthermore, he knows that he is Christ's representative, and that he must represent his Master's best interests as he understands them from his Master's Word. He does not want to compromise Biblical truth.

Yet he also knows that a brother or sister

from his church has gone to be with the Lord; he knows that relatives are hurting over the loss of their loved one; he knows unbelievers will come to the funeral in numbers that he could never expect to reach otherwise; he knows they will be watching and listening to everything that goes on with an attention they never give at a wedding, or even in church; and finally, he knows that he

has the perfect word of comfort for all who attend the funeral—the gospel of hope and love from the Living and True God of the universe.

If the deceased was not a Christian, the situation is trickier, since the missionary can't say publicly where the deceased is now. Nevertheless, the opportunity to show love and comfort, and to pray to the True God of Heaven and Earth for the mourning relatives exists. Out of the 15 or so funerals I have conducted, about half have been for unbelieving relatives of Christians in our church, and the families' reactions were uniformly positive.

What Do Japanese Expect of a Funeral?

My answer to this question depends upon two factors: whether we are speaking of the expectations of the deceased person or of his relatives, and what view of the afterlife each person holds.

Before his death, the typical Japanese person's wish is that his family not forget him. He believes he has been faithful in "worshiping" and caring for the memory of his own ancestors, and he expects that his children will not forget him—either at the funeral or after. The only way he can conceive of this care is if it takes the same form he gave to his ancestors. The form it takes varies according to the view of the afterlife each person holds, but still the deep instinct is, "Don't forget me!"

In the story of Lazarus and the rich man, our Lord tells us what the rich man wishes for following his death (and I paraphrase here): "I'd appreciate a little bit of human kindness. You can't do anything about getting me out of here, and I accept that. Don't worry about worshiping and remembering me now; just bend every effort to make sure my five brothers don't come to this God-forsaken place!"

Among non-Christian Japanese, broadly speaking there are three views of the afterlife, and hence three sets of expectations. The "True Atheist/Materialist" believes there's nothing after death but ashes, so all he expects is a decent farewell. Whether his wishes are known and followed depends upon his relatives.

The "True-Believer Buddhist," on the other hand, believes in reincarnation ac-

ording to karma. His status in the next life depends upon his efforts in the present life with the help of Amida Buddha, and he wants every bit of help he can get on his way to the next stage of the reincarnation cycle.

What he would like can be summarized as follows:

1) A Buddhist funeral at the biggest temple he or his family can afford, with as many officiating priests chanting *sutras* as possible.

2) The most expensive *kaimyo* (posthumous Buddhist name) he can afford, inscribed by the Buddhist priest on the *ihai* (funeral name plaque), which then goes into the *butsudan* (Buddhist ancestor shelf), to be the central object of veneration, prayers and memorials.

3) The assurance that his relatives will call the priest for memorial services on the 49th day, when his soul's destiny for the next reincarnation is finally settled. He also wants memorial services observed on the 1st, 3rd, 7th and 13th anniversaries of his death, and in much the same way.

4) He wants his descendents to remember him every morning with incense, the first water out of the tap and the first rice out of the pot, and with offerings of fruit, *omochi* and other items throughout the year.

5) He wants them to keep him up-to-date on the doings of family members.

6) He wants them to feel that he is always with them and interested in their lives. (At least that is how some Japanese have told me they envision their dead parents. Whether their parents are viewed as being actually able to do anything for the living is an open question.)

7) He wants the relatives to come and "worship" his memory at his grave at least twice a year at the spring and autumn equinoxes, when they will bring flowers, wash the tombstone and pull the weeds.

8) If possible, he would like his bones to be interred in the graveyard of the temple to which his family has been connected and registered since the Edo Period. This gives the assurance that the local Buddhist priest will provide perpetual care.

Regarding all these funeral customs, the anthropologist would say that he simply wants to be remembered. The Christian might say that he wants to be like Lucifer in Isaiah 14:14, or like Adam and Eve in

Genesis 3, who all wanted to be treated like God. Most Japanese, though, are not aware that the essence of sinfulness is self-will.

That leaves the third class of non-Christian Japanese: the "Irreligious yet Superstitious, Fearful, and therefore, Dutiful Person."

He claims to be irreligious, yet he unquestioningly goes along with the practices expected of him by family and society. He himself, 1) doesn't want to be forgotten, 2) wants to feel, "We did everything up right for old Grandpa, both before and after he died," and above all, 3) doesn't want others to feel any criticism with either old Grandpa's funeral and aftercare, or with his own. He therefore takes the way of least resistance, often grumbling about what a racket the whole business is.

What Image Do Japanese Have of Christian Funerals?

Christians, of course, in accordance with the first commandment of Exodus 20:3-5, view the worship of anything or anybody other than Jehovah, the Triune God of the Old and New Testaments, the Creator, Ruler, Savior and Judge of the Universe, as idolatry, spiritual adultery and disloyal treachery. In obedience to the Second Commandment, they neither make, worship, bow down to, nor serve any man-made image.

Naturally, this is where trouble develops in Japanese society. The problem has been exacerbated by some Japanese Christians who have stated their convictions in a rather harsh and unfeeling manner, but no matter how it is stated, the offense remains.

While the foreign missionary can objectively see the idolatry of ancestor worship, he doesn't personally feel the sting of rejection, either the Japanese Christian's rejection of his relatives' customs, or being rejected by them. Further, the missionary is more used to asserting his own individuality than his Japanese fellow-Christians are.

As a result, many Japanese people think of Christians as good people, but as being "cold," and "stand-offish" toward the deceased or the rest of the family—or disrespectful and dishonoring, lacking filial piety. I have heard some use the phrase *osomatsu ni suru*, "You don't do it up right!" (literally, "do crudely or roughly") applied to Christian funerals, while others say, more kindly,

“You don’t do enough.” Obviously these impressions can be used as an excuse for not considering the real claims of the gospel, but it’s still clear that we Christians have an image problem.

I believe I can honestly say to the nation of Japan:

It is we Christians who truly honor the dead. We do not simply line up to put a pinch of incense before the picture of the deceased, and then walk out and never give another thought to how he lived or died. We do not honor the dead only through certain rituals performed on certain days or in certain ways, and ignore him the rest of the time. We cherish our picture albums of Grandpa, and we seek to recall at the Christian’s funeral how dear old Grandpa lived, and we try to live constantly in a way worthy of how he would have wanted us to live.

Finally, we think it is unconscionable to live our lives heedless of Grandpa’s needs while he is still alive and to then come to his funeral, offer a money gift and *oshoukou* (incense), and think we’ve been a dutiful son or daughter. Rather, we have done all we could to take care of and please old Grandpa while he was alive, and we did that out of love for him, because our Lord Jesus Christ first loved us. Who truly honors the dead? Who truly loved old Grandpa? And who is doing his best to see that the younger generation is being loved and trained to walk in the ways of righteousness, both in society and before God? Simply because we refuse to go against our consciences to offer *oshoukou* (which most everybody else does merely as a form), are we to be judged unfeeling, disrespectful and *osomatsu*?

But defensive reactions like this are not enough. We have to show the Japanese there’s a better way to conduct funerals, and that’s my real purpose—to use a God-honoring funeral as a powerful tool for bringing both true comfort as well as salvation.

Possible Approaches to Christian Funerals in Japan

Given the attitudes that many in society have

toward Christians, how have Japanese Christians responded to both the Biblical strictures, and to Japanese customs, especially in conducting their own funeral services? There seem to be three general types of responses by Christians.

First, there are some I call “Rejectionists.” They feel that the whole set of Japanese customs described in the paragraphs above on Japanese expectations are indelibly dyed with idolatry, and are to be rejected wholesale. In the place of these customs, they substitute a very simple service that is consciously designed to not resemble a Japanese service in any way. One can agree with their basic motivations, but I have the feeling that they reject many things in Japanese culture that are morally neutral. They are exposed to the dangers of ending up culturally impoverished and at the same time being proud of their purity. This position does, however, serve as a reality check for the convictions and customs of all others. Ask yourself, “Am I doing this simply to conform to men’s desires, or to please my Lord? If I have to make a choice, which will it be?”

Second, some opt for “Total Conformity” to the surrounding society. They want to be tolerant, and they want to give no offense whatever, so they simply do many of the practices the general society follows, only they give these practices a Christian name. Some will offer incense and light candles, some will substitute a “flower offering” for an “incense offering,” but in either case it’s offered in worship to the deceased. They will write *goreizen* (literally, “before the spirit”) on their gift of money, and then place it before the picture of the deceased.

The third Christian position is what I call “Creative Adaptation,” or “Christian Substitution” and it is for the details of this position that I am indebted to Mr. Kitano of Maebashi. Basically, it boils down to two principles:

1) Do everything the family wants done.

2) Do everything in a completely Biblical way, with no compromise with idolatrous practices.

For example, do they want you to pray when the body leaves the house to go to the church or crematorium? By all means do so, but pray only to the Lord God of Heaven and Earth, and give thanks for the life that the deceased lived.

Do they want you to conduct a memorial service on the first anniversary of the death? By all means do so, but take along some of your church believers, sing “What a Friend We Have in Jesus” and other hymns, read from Scripture, give a meditation on the meaning of life, pray for the Lord to comfort those who remain, give thanks for the life which was lived, and eat a meal with the family afterward, if that’s what they plan. I always offer the “full-course” funeral, and have yet to be taken up on the whole process, but that’s their choice.

Obviously, with the two principles above, we are committing ourselves to a pretty extensive series of duties. We are also trying to walk a fine line between two extreme positions. That means there’s going to have to be a lot of room for variation here from church to church, so loving toleration within the limits set by Scripture is the order of the day.

Let me further explicate the guiding principles of this position:

1) Our manner of approach is critically important. We must be gentle, soft-spoken and polite, using correct terminology when explaining how we will conduct funerals. We need to understand where the family is coming from and what they expect. Confidence comes with experience, but the whole purpose of this article is to give you a running head start on gaining experience and to help you avoid giving offense. How often have good and right things been said in the wrong way!

2) We must have firm convictions from Scripture, and make them crystal clear to the family in a gentle way.

What convictions? We will not worship anything other than the Lord God Almighty. We will only bow to living persons, or to a Person. We will never even give the appearance of worshipping anything besides God Almighty; i.e., no *katachi dake* (just going through the forms, even when one’s convictions are otherwise). For example, relatives will say, “Yes, we understand you can’t worship Grandma in your heart. All we ask is that, for the sake of not creating a scene and disrupting family unity, you simply go through the motions of offering *oshoukou* and praying to her picture. Surely you can do that without compromising your faith.” No, the answer is that we cannot.

We tell the relatives (and the people who

attend the different parts of the funeral) that since the deceased has already left this world, we can do nothing either to or for him. We are here to comfort and pray for the living, and we will pray to Almighty God, giving thanks for the life that has just ended, doing our best to help the bereaved.

3) We want to do everything in good taste, and with good style. We want people to walk away from the funeral saying, “I really thought about Old Grandpa’s life today, and that was well done!” We have received this kind of feedback often, and it has encouraged us to think we were on the right track. Unbelievers have often said things like, “It was so bright in your church! The atmosphere was so different from a dark temple! I could actually understand the Bible readings! And the singing was wonderful—it took me back to school days when I learned, ‘What a Friend We Have in Jesus.’”

4) We want to give hope, joy and comfort to the family and all who attend. One perceptive missionary who attended a funeral I conducted for an unbeliever told me afterward, “Peter, preach less and pray more. I watched their reactions throughout, and your prayers of sympathy and for God’s comfort touched them far more than your message did.” Good advice! Christian prayers are totally different from other prayers, and this is where we beseech the Lord God to pour out his comfort on hurting people. They’re listening!

5) We want to have an attractive witness, to proclaim the gospel of salvation from sin and fear. We do not belabor human sin in a funeral, though we certainly don’t ignore it either. (After all, “the wages of sin is death,” and “The soul that sins shall die.”) But we do want to whet appetites for more truth and hope, so that they come to church next Sunday for more. Be aware that your audience is listening better at a funeral than at any other time.

6) We have already talked about how Christians are the ones who “really do it up right,” who truly honor (not worship) the dead. This reminds us that, to put it crudely, we have competition out there—the Buddhist temples and priests, and we want the contrast to show! We do not do funerals for the money, but to show Christ’s love; nor do we do them out of form, but out of a sincere heart that really believes what the mouth is uttering.

7) Finally, I want to be able to offer to conduct funerals for unbelievers, particularly where I have a personal relationship with the deceased or with his family. Perhaps I am dreaming when I think that this is one way of infiltrating Japanese society for Christ, but I am aware of a lot of disgust out there with the commercialization of funerals by Buddhist priests. I just pray that we, along with Japanese pastors, will be able to exploit this dissatisfaction to turn people to the True and Loving God, and his Son, Jesus Christ.

This article is excerpted from *“Uh Oh, What Now? I Have to Conduct a Funeral!”—Funerals as Wonderful Opportunities to Proclaim the Gospel of Hope* published in *The Unseen Face of Japan: Culturally Appropriate Communication of the Gospel*, the report of the 42nd Annual Hayama Seminar held in 2001. To download the full text of this presentation as published in the Hayama report, including a Japanese vocabulary list of relevant words relating to funerals and some helpful checklists, go to: <http://www.mupjapan.org/hayama/Samples/ChristianFuneralsClift.doc>

Peter Clift has served as an independent missionary in Japan since 1968 with Christian Missions In Many Lands. He and his first wife, Lois, started the Ikuta Christian Assembly in Kawasaki, and with his second wife, Mary, he is planting a new church in “Tera no Machi” Iiyama, Nagano-Ken. He holds the BA and BS from the University of Minnesota, and has authored two books, ひとあじ違う子どものしつけ (Child Training That Makes a Difference), and 結婚する2人のためのカウンセリング・ノート (A Pre-Marital Guide for Couples), both available in Japanese from いのちのことば社 (Word of Life Press).



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The Body of Christ: *Gifted for Growth*

By Kelly Malone

A seminar on evangelism took place in an inner-city Tokyo church. There was a lively discussion on how to share the gospel with co-workers, family and friends. A number of the participants commented on how much they learned in the seminar. They said they wanted to learn more about evangelism. And yet, to date few of the participants actually have tried to apply what they learned.

What I have described is symptomatic of a “teaching church.” In this kind of church emphasis is placed on the gift of gab: preachers and teachers who propagate and explain God’s Word. The responsibility of those who do not teach is to *sit* and listen to what is taught. They become merely “hearers of Word,” but not “doers of the Word,” ignoring the warning in James 1:22. Deeds which display Christ’s love remain undone. This church is spiritually crippled. It is like a Body that is only a mouth, without any hands or feet.

A second type of church is a Body that is all hands and feet, but no mouth. These people are in constant motion. They have a ministry to the homeless in the park, a preschool to help working mothers, teams to visit the sick in the hospitals and at home. This kind of church is constantly expending their spiritual energy for the sake of others. The people serve for a time with great enthusiasm, but eventually their vitality fades. This is because no spiritual nourishment is being taken in. The people are not being fed what they need through solid biblical teaching.

Healthy Churches Grow Healthy Disciples

Charles Colson writes that the purpose of a church is to “disciple men and women to

maturity in Christ and then equip them to live their faith in every aspect of life and in every part of the world” (Colson 1992:282). While I agree with the intent of what Colson is saying, I disagree with what he says about sequence.

Colson’s comment suggests that people

should reach spiritual maturity before they are taught to live out their faith. I think it is much more accurate to say that we encourage people to move towards spiritual maturity by helping them to live out their faith.

Spiritual gifts are about people living out their faith in community. Paul instructs those who have been given speaking gifts, such as apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, to “prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up” (Eph. 4:11, 12). In the Body of Christ, “God has arranged the parts . . . every one of them, just as he wanted them to be” (1 Cor. 15:18). When all of the parts have “equal concern for one another” (1 Cor. 15:25), each part is truly “honored” (1 Cor. 15:26) and encouraged to carry out his or her unique role in the church. When everyone is serving together in sync in accordance with their spiritual gifts, the results are “unity of faith,” “knowledge of the Son of God,” and spiritual maturity (Eph. 4:13). Bill Hull writes,

“Corporate teamwork exists among the body of Christ. Outreach occurs through different gifts of the entire church, rather than a small portion of the congregation . . . Unless a loving, care community exists to help newborn babes and heal the wounded, people won’t come to Him or stick around long enough to be trained. Love within the community of Christ is the most powerful of all the church’s evangelistic tools (Hull 1990:31, 32).”

A number of churches that have small groups have experienced rapid numerical and spiritual growth. One reason for this growth is people are able to serve on the basis of their spiritual gifts within their small groups. The teachers teach. The evangelists lead in verbal

witness. The servants do caring ministries to people both inside and outside their groups. The pray-ers pray and inspire others to pray as well. Still others take the lead in worship. With so many Christians taking leadership roles, their small groups thrive. The whole church grows through the growth of these small groups. This is only one example of how healthy churches grow healthy disciples.

Gifts of Grace

Spiritual gifts are usually thought of as endowments given by the Holy Spirit for the building up of the church. The Greek word translated “spiritual gifts,” *charismata*, is a derivative of the word *charis*, meaning “grace.” The word itself contains no explicit reference to the Holy Spirit, pointing rather to works of God’s grace in the midst of his people. Although they are not considered spiritual gifts, at various points in the New Testament, “salvation” (Rom. 6:23), “special privileges granted to Israel” (Rom. 11:29), “celibacy and marriage” (1 Cor. 7:7), and “deliverance from deadly peril” (2 Cor. 1:10) are referred to as *charismata* (Fee 1994:32, 33).

The *charismata* in Romans 12:3-8, 1 Corinthians 12:1-31, 1 Corinthians 14:1-25, and Ephesians 4:11-13 are, then, **expressions of God’s grace given through the Holy Spirit to build up the church.** Spiritual gifts are the means God uses to work through the church to accomplish his purposes. God provides teaching, service, encouragement, generous giving, evangelism, worship and a thousand other essential ingredients in the life of the church by uniquely equipping people to carry them out.

Through these spiritual gifts, the “incomparable riches of [God’s] grace” works out the results of salvation among his people (Eph. 2:7, 10; Fee, 33-34). While we tend to think of salvation individually, **God means for us to experience the results of salvation corporately through our shared life together.** This shared life is brought about by means of the mutual exchange of God’s grace through the exercise of spiritual gifts. In this way, salvation results not only in eternal life (Rom. 6:23), it also leads to putting on Christ’s character (Rom. 13:14) so that he lives out his life and carries out his purpose through us (Phil. 1:21).

When we encourage people to serve on

the basis of their spiritual gifts, we give God free reign in the life of the church. We allow the Lord Jesus Christ to exercise his authority as “head of the body” (Col. 1:18) so that he can accomplish his mission of reconciling “all things” to God (Col. 1:20) through us. Acting under the authority of Christ, we become his mouth, his hands and his feet. The church shares Christ’s love, not only with “words or tongue but with actions and in truth” (1 John 3:18).

Unleashing God’s Power

Recently, I led a retreat in which the participants were encouraged to identify their spiritual gifts on the basis of the categories of “SHAPE” provided in Rick Warren’s book, *Purpose Driven Life: Spiritual Gifts, Heart (Passion), Abilities, Personality, and Experience* (Warren 2002:227-48).

Using your shape is the secret of both fruitfulness and fulfillment in ministry. You will be most effective when you use your *spiritual gifts* and *abilities* in the area of your *heart’s desire*, in a way that best expresses your *personality* and *experiences*. The better the fit, the more successful you will be (Warren, 248).

While the discussion of “SHAPE” was initially planned to take only about six hours of the retreat’s program, we found it necessary to extend the discussion time by two hours to allow the participants extra time to process what they were learning. Their new understanding that God has designed each person for a specific purpose and that we find meaning and fruitfulness when we live out this purpose in the life of the church was exhilarating. They realized that doing what the Holy Spirit has empowered them to do released them from the burden of trying to serve Christ in their own strength. When Christians are allowed to serve on the basis of their spiritual gifts, God’s power is unleashed to work within the church and the world.

We can release God’s power at work within the church by helping people to discern their spiritual gifts and then encouraging them to serve on the basis of their giftedness. One simple way to begin this process is to lead the Christians we work with, both missionaries and nationals, through four guiding questions:

1. What are you passionate about?

When people desire to serve God, he gives them a desire to accomplish his will. Then God uniquely equips them to do his will. In this way, when a person desires to serve God, understanding their **passion** leads to discernment of God’s will.

2. What are your talents and abilities?

We distinguish between talents and spiritual gifts. A talent is a natural ability that a person has from birth. A spiritual gift is a supernatural ability bestowed upon a Christian by the Holy Spirit. However, both talents and gifts are given to us by God and should be used for his glory, to encourage other people to trust in Christ and grow in relationship with him. What we do well indicates the tasks God has prepared us for.

3. What do you do that has the greatest impact on other people?

When people act on the basis of their passion, talents and giftedness they will have an impact on others. When people are encouraged to do otherwise, the results can be devastating.

I remember a young man who interpreted his call to ministry as a call to preach because most people he knew in ministry were preachers (from “mouth only” type churches). He soon gave up, based on the sound advice of those who heard him “preach.” However, he went on to become a very effective youth minister and counselor. It was only through later reflection that he realized his initial assessment of his calling had not taken into account the passion, talents and giftedness God had given him.

4. What brings you fulfillment? When a person serves on the basis of their passion and abilities so that other people are impacted through him or her, the person will experience a great sense of fulfillment. Along with this, there also will be a profound sense of humility. The person will realize that it is only because of God’s grace that he or she is able to accomplish anything.

When a recent graduate of Christian Leadership Training Center (CLTC) realized that God had given her both passion and giftedness to lead in worship, she resigned from a teaching position and began a new ministry. This has led to both personal fulfillment and an effective new ministry as a worship leader. Through her service as a worship leader lost people have heard the gospel, Christians have been encouraged,

and spiritual growth has taken place. Her life is a testimony of what can happen when the power of God’s grace is allowed to work in the life of a person who is fully committed to him.

Growing Churches

Howard Snyder writes,

“One cannot really understand what the New Testament means when it speaks of the church unless one understands what it teaches about the gifts of the Spirit. Gifts are part of the essential ecology of the church as a spiritual organism . . . They are primarily a matter not of *individual* Christian experience but of the body life of the church. Gifts are given for, and in the context of, community (Snyder 1996:139).”

Spiritual gifts are endowments of God’s grace by which he empowers the church to impact their community and their world for Christ. Because God himself is at work through the spiritual gifts, when people serve on this basis they are relieved from the pressure of performance.

Their responsibility becomes **faithfulness** to what God has called and equipped them for. Their faithfulness leads to the possibility of every member contributing to the spiritual and numerical growth of the Body of Christ. As the church expands, new corners of Japan and the world are reclaimed for the Kingdom of God.

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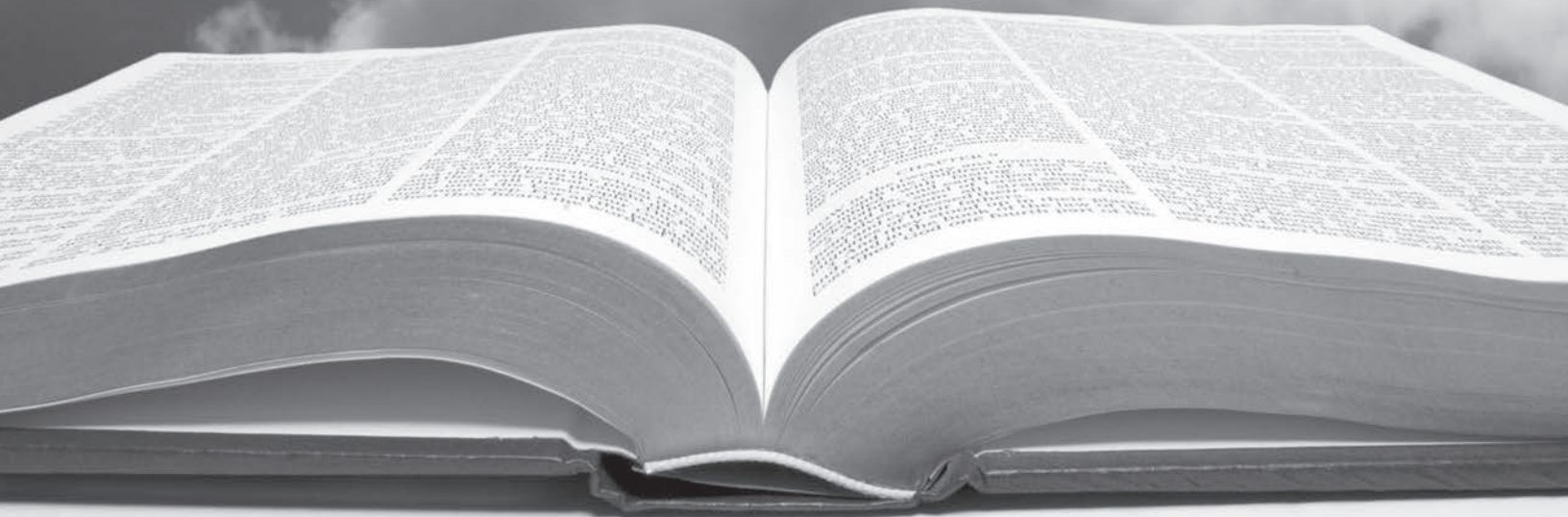
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Missionary Primer
on Contemporary
Evangelical
Theological
Methodology

Dale W. Little



Introductory Comments

Missionaries can find themselves reading evangelical theology which espouses positions we suspect are different than our own. For example, it may be that we notice an evangelical author does not hold to the inerrancy of the Scriptures as evangelicals have traditionally understood that doctrine. We sense that the author might be trying to reconstruct that doctrine for his or her own purposes. Or it might be that a millennial view expressed in a published article differs from our position. These kinds of differences are theological in nature. Other types of differences are also possible. For example, it could be that an author in the country we have adopted as missionaries describes the situation of the church in our home country in such a way that we do not recognize our homeland church in the author's description. We sense that perhaps misrepresentation is happening. These kinds of differences may be due to cultural or historical factors.

How should we personally evaluate and, if called upon, respond to these discrepant understandings of theology and history? This question is particularly relevant in light of the recently published theological pamphlet of the Japan Evangelical Association entitled, "Fundamentalism."¹ Several of the articles in the pamphlet seem to espouse or imply theological and historical/cultural understandings that probably lie outside the comfort zone of most evangelical missionaries in Japan.

One answer would be to do nothing by way of personal evaluation or public response. This is an easy solution for those who accept the postmodern idea that these kind of theological and historical differences simply reflect culturally determined under-

standings and local truths. Those who hold to this solution could reason that particular authors hold certain theological or historical viewpoints because of their cultural settings. Their understandings are determined by their personal context. Trying to argue for the soundness of a viewpoint not normally considered natural to that context is

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on some basic
methodological guidelines
the actual ensuing
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on the subject at hand.*

considered suspicious because such a move is seen as an imposition of a foreign, and therefore inappropriate, way of thinking. So the easy way out would be to choose not to engage in such argumentation. In our postmodern world this passive response to published theological and historical differences can be a comfortable response.

But for those of us who resist the relativism at the heart of postmodern thinking, our response is not so easy. Responding wisely to differing theological understandings is a complicated task. One necessary element of the task is to debate the actual content of the differences. For example, what is inerrancy? What kinds of positions can one hold on inerrancy and still be considered evangelical? How many nuanced levels of inerrancy are there? These kinds of questions thrust us directly into discussion about specific theological content.

However, as if discussing theological content is not enough of a challenge, there is also the equally important task of trying to identify the theological methodology used in any given theological discussion. Before "doing theology" participants would benefit from reflecting on how to do it. Theological methodology is a topic at the forefront of contemporary evangelical theology. Entire books are written on "prolegomena," literally, the "word before." For example, before diving into a discussion about inerrancy,

it is helpful first to clarify the theological methodology used in the discussion. If both sides can agree on some basic methodological guidelines the actual ensuing theological discussion stands a good chance of shedding light, not just heat, on the subject at hand.

The purpose of this article is to identify some aspects of an evangelical theological methodology which might inject a degree of health into theological discussions we as missionaries encounter. To try to accomplish this task in the short space of this article, ten methodological points are touched upon, and those only in an introductory manner. This, then, is but a primer on the important subject of methodology in contemporary theology.

Healthy Methodological Framework for Reading Evangelical Theology

A healthy but critical methodological approach to reading theology helps us keep our theological balance in the possibly confusing world of contemporary theology. Assuming that most missionaries find themselves in the position of responding at the personal level to published theological positions rather than in the position of actually writing theology, the methodological factors below are placed in the interrogative form in order to help us read theology in a somewhat critical manner.

Note that the following methodological list is not exhaustive. Much more could be written. Also bear in mind that the following discussion of methodology is not only applicable to the theological discipline of systematic theology. The methodological stance outlined below is also applicable to reading theological studies of the Old Testament, the New Testament, and church history.

1. Has the Theology Been Published Hastily?

Contemporary theology, including the evangelical variety, is being written and published at a fast rate. For the one who wants to keep up to date with contemporary theology this speed of production means there is always another publication to read or another theological website to check. The task of reading theology can be endless. For the one who writes contemporary theology, this speed of production means that most theological works published with the word "contemporary" in the title will likely be irrelevant

within a few short years. Only the outstanding contributions will have a long life span. This judgment applies to this article as well!

Sometimes this fast publication speed allows the authors to write their good ideas at a faster pace. However, in our hurried society the thoughtfulness, thoroughness, and care of a theological work can easily be undermined by hasty publication. If there is evidence that the theological work in question was hastily assembled, there is good reason to think that its quality has been negatively affected.

2. Does the Publication Display a Working Knowledge of the Diversity of Opinion on the Subject?

The speed with which theology is now published might also reflect the diversity of viewpoints within Christian evangelical theology. Due to technological advances all these viewpoints can quite easily be published, not only on paper but also on the internet. For instance, Alister McGrath's introductory textbook on Christian theology includes a list of theological websites.² The result is a veritable smorgasbord of published theological works. Some of the current hotspots of evangelical theology display this diversity of opinion: God (theology proper, Christology, pneumatology, Trinitarian theology, open theism, etc.), salvation (soteriology, theology of religions, etc.), and theological anthropology (gender roles in Christian homes and churches, evangelism and social action, etc.). Reputable evangelical scholars do not necessarily take the same positions on these kinds of theological subjects.

Diversity is also evident in theological methodology. One such example is the foundational issue of theological sources and their relative degrees of authority. That is, how are the Bible, Christian tradition, the church, and culture weighted in their authoritative importance for "doing theology"? Historically, one major difference between Protestant and Roman Catholic theology was that Protestants insisted on the priority of the authority of the Bible (rightly interpreted in its original autographs), whereas Roman Catholics understood the church to be the authoritative interpreter of both Christian tradition and the Bible itself. However, many contemporary Protestant, even evangelical, theologians seem to argue

that more authority should be attributed to the church as a source for doing theology. These writers see the church as the community for which theology is written and therefore seem to imply that theology should primarily be accountable to the church. The community known as the church thus becomes authoritative over theology itself. It is no accident that the title of the late Stanley Grenz' introductory theological textbook is *Theology for the Community of God*.³ Some contemporary evangelical theologians seem happy to attribute more theological authority to the church than evangelicals of yesteryear would have done. Diversity in theological methodology seems as prevalent as diversity in theological content.

So contemporary theological material is readily available. Christians who do not have an awareness of the breadth of options available, and who themselves have not read much theology, will quite easily be impressed with the first theological viewpoint they happen to read. If what they read happens to be well balanced, showing awareness of diversity on the subject, their faith will be enriched. But if what they read argues for a debatable point of view, with no awareness of diversity, readers likely will be unable to evaluate the position taken by the author. Even if missionaries cannot keep up with the publication speed of contemporary theology, it is helpful for them to know the basics of theology, including at least an introductory awareness of some of the issues in contemporary theology, in order to keep their theological balance.

3. Is the Opposing Viewpoint Treated with Care and Respect?

We who live in a postmodern era seem to like things that are new. Contemporary

theology displays the same positive attitude toward new ideas. However, there may be a high price tag attached to this inclination. That is, contemporary theology's search for new ideas leads it to take a critical stance toward historically held viewpoints and ideas. It could be that this lack of respect for historical theology generates the tendency within contemporary theology to describe the past using caricature. That is, contemporary theology tends to oversimplify the past in order to make a case for some new idea. Such shallow historical research can lead to revisionist historical theology. It seems that contemporary theology has a tendency to manipulate history in order to generate new and purportedly more attractive theological constructs. So contemporary theology seems to have a fascination with the new and a simultaneous suspicion or disrespect of the old. To be a contemporary theologian and

yet champion the old viewpoints can bring a flood of criticism.

Some evangelical theologians are pointing the way back to a deeper respect for the theological positions of yesteryear. Thomas Oden is one of these.⁴ Another one is Alister McGrath who believes history is important to theology. About thirty percent of his introductory theological textbook focuses on history.⁵ So in our postmodern context there is a certain degree of evangelical awareness that theology is done within a particular historical and cultural context.

Nevertheless, both theological and historical caricature remain evident in published evangelical theology. Caricature serves no positive theological purpose because it is manipulative. What is needed to make theology credible and therefore helpful is careful description and nuancing of the opposing side's position(s). Millard Erickson's *Christian Theology*,

...contemporary theology's search for new ideas leads it to take a critical stance toward historically held viewpoints and ideas... tends to oversimplify the past in order to make a case for some new idea.

which has become a standard introductory systematic theology text used in evangelical seminaries in the English-speaking world, is a good example of theology carefully done without caricature.⁶ Erickson is consistent in describing the landscape of any given theological topic. Following this, he points out what he sees to be the pluses and minuses of the possible theological options, and then gives his position. This kind of methodology is helpful for readers of theology because it displays a working knowledge of the relevant theological positions. It allows the reader to see the lay of the land so an informed decision can be made as to what theological position to hold. It treats the reader with respect rather than in a controlling manner.

When this kind of working knowledge about the diversity of opinion on any given theological subject is not forthcoming in contemporary evangelical theology, it is best to read the theology with a healthy hermeneutic of suspicion. Why has the theological context not been spelled out clearly? Is there some reason the author does not want the reader to know about alternative evangelical positions? These are healthy questions for readers of evangelical theology to bear in mind.

4. Have Both Friendly and Unfriendly Sources Been Accessed?

In the development of a theological position which uses caricature it is usually necessary for the author to rely on only friendly sources. This is because accessing unfriendly sources—sources which might count against the stated theological position—would lead the author away from a theology dependent on caricature. This in turn would make it difficult for the author to retain the theological position espoused.

Theology which does not access unfriendly sources leaves readers with the suspicion that they have not heard the rest of the story. Furthermore, readers of two differing theological views which both use

caricature—which do not access unfriendly sources—are left with the question of which caricature to accept. These residual doubts in the mind of the reader would be dispelled if both friendly and unfriendly sources were accessed. Selection of only friendly sources serves no positive theological purpose.

5. Are the Key Theological Points Made Using Assertions?

Assertions which are peripheral to a theological argument cannot be avoided because any given theological publication cannot always cover all the bases. Theology builds upon what others have done. If their arguments are sound, then it is sufficient to reference those arguments rather than repeating them. However, the key points in a theological discussion lose credibility if they are asserted rather than argued for. A string of assertions related to the main argument does not make good theology. Assertions are only convincing for those who do not know the lay of the land, who believe that those in authority making the assertions are never mistaken, who have not learned how to think about theology in a healthy and critical manner, or who do not want to be convinced otherwise because they already believe the assertions.

6. What is the Theological Agenda?

The evangelical camp now includes theologians who hold theological viewpoints outside the parameters of what might be called the traditionally accepted evangelical norm.

According to Millard Erickson, evangelical theologians can now be divided between the left and the right.⁷ The term “evangelical” is no longer understood in the same way by all theologians who claim it. There seems to be an identity crisis in some contemporary evangelical theology. As a result, evangelical theological writings can have an agenda which pushes a particular version of evangelical theology. It is possible the agenda might be hidden. However, hidden agendas

Theology which does not access unfriendly sources leaves readers with the suspicion that they have not heard the rest of the story.

are not conducive to healthy theological discussions. They work against the clarity being sought in the theological discussion. For the sake of clarity it is usually helpful for a theologian to clearly state a position and then argue for it. If such clear statement of intent is not readily available, the reader might want to read with care.

7. Are the Key Terms in the Discussion Clearly Defined?

Appropriate explanation and definition of the key terms used in the discussion makes for helpful theology. If the author does not do so, readers might supply their own definitions which might not match the thinking of the author. The result of such a mismatch is equivocation (same word, different meaning). Readers would be advised to discern the meaning of key words from what the author writes rather than reading their own meanings into the words. If those definitions are not available in the publication, the clarity of the theology is reduced.

This issue is particularly important for theological topics which are inherently controversial. For example, the reader of any theological position related to the issue of fundamentalism should ask whether the author has clarified the meaning of the word. If fundamentalism is confused with evangelicalism or if Christian fundamentalism is placed in the same category as radical Muslim fundamentalism, all without any clear definition of the terms used, the theological discussion bogs down in confusion before it has hardly begun. Heat may be shed on the issues at hand, but little light.

8. Is a Significant Amount of the Discussion Carried by Emotive Language?

In the English language emotions are often expressed in adjectives and adverbs. This is especially pronounced in the case of negative emotions. Extensive use of emotive language in theology tends to obscure the actual theological points under discussion, leaving the reader to sense the author’s feelings but not necessarily understand the author’s theological argument. Reliance on emotive language serves no positive theological purpose.

Culture influences the writing style used in theological publications. For example, theology written in Japanese makes frequent

use of what we would call adjectives and adverbs in English. This tends to give theology written in Japanese an emotional tone. This tendency is also evident in oral discussions of theology. I have been present at theological discussions with Japanese colleagues who at the outset of the discussion decided to carry on the dialogue in English rather than Japanese so that the Japanese participants would be better able to understand one another. So it seems that in the Japanese context care needs to be taken to reduce the emotive elements of theological expression. Translating Japanese theology into English helps to reveal the emotive language so that decisions can be made as to whether to keep or modify those emotional elements.

9. Is the Published Work Available in English?

The language of contemporary theology is English. In general, there is no important contemporary theological work which has not been written in English or translated into English. Whether a theologian is Japanese, Chinese, Indian, African, French, or German—if his or her work is considered important it will be translated into English or it will be written in English. If the work is not in English, it will not be studied by theological students around the world. This fact generates debate among academics who determine the graduation requirements for students of systematic theology at the academic doctoral level (Ph.D., Th.D.). A strong case can be made that it is no longer necessary to learn a modern language other than English in order to become proficient in contemporary theology.

The significance of this for readers of contemporary evangelical theology is that if the theology is not published in English, its sig-

nificance is restricted to the local level. This is satisfactory only for those who are content to carry out an internal dialogue insulated from outside critique. For most theologians this is inadequate. Most desire to have their theology read on a broader scale so that their theological formulations can be sharpened. If the work is not published in English there is a possibility it has not benefited from culturally external critique.

10. What is the Cultural Context for the Theology in Question?

Some cultural values work against healthy, critical theological methodology. In a culture or sub-culture which is top down and which believes that authority is not to be questioned, those who write theology often hold positions of authority. Their theological publications can therefore be expected to exemplify such characteristics as caricature, assertions, and emotive language. Such is the ethos of authority in a hierarchical culture.

In these kind of cultures the theological methodology suggested in this article is by definition counter-cultural. Japan may be one such culture.

Understanding this cultural stance can help the reader search for theological truth beneath the assertions, caricatures, and emotions. When reading theology it is therefore wise to inquire about the cultural context of the author so as to help in its interpretation. Understanding the cultural context of the author provides clues for interpreting the theology.

Concluding Comments

It is not unusual for missionaries to encounter a piece of published theology that is bothersome to them. If at that time they are able to apply only a few of the methodological suggestions above, then the purpose of this article will have

been achieved. Of course, it is entirely possible that this very article employs at points a methodology which runs counter to what the article itself espouses! If such is the case, the author will need to work further on aligning his own theological methodology with what he expressed here!

Notes

¹ 原理主義：JEA 神学委員会パンフレットNo. 6. (*Fundamentalism: JEA Theological Commission Pamphlet No. 6.*) Tokyo: Japan Evangelical Association, May 2006. As they become available, English translations of the Japanese articles within this pamphlet can be found at <http://www.jtheo.net>.

² Alister McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 589-92. This book is available in Japanese.

³ Stanley Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1994).

⁴ Thomas C. Oden, *The Rebirth of Orthodoxy: Signs of New Life in Christianity* (San Francisco: Harper, 2003). Oden is the co-editor of the *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, a series focusing on mining the biblical and theological resources of the ancient church.

⁵ McGrath, *Christian Theology*.

⁶ Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998). This book is now available in Japanese, comprising four volumes.

⁷ Millard Erickson, *The Evangelical Left: Encountering Postconservative Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997).

Extensive use of emotive language in theology tends to obscure the actual theological points under discussion, leaving the reader to sense the author's feelings but not necessarily understand the author's theological argument.



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Missionary Care:



Keys to Successful Adjustment

By Faith De La Cour

It was during the beginning of our second term that I began to notice. Many of our fellow language school students were no longer in the country. Since then, we have said “goodbye” to many of our fellow missionaries—with family issues, frustrations with language, private sins, public sins, restlessness caused by lack of visible results, and issues with sending organizations being some of the reasons for their leaving sooner than they had intended.

While we also had experienced losses and frustrations during those first two terms, it seemed that during our third term in Japan we turned a corner, both in fruitful ministry and personal satisfaction. It wasn't until a few years ago that this change in our perception began to make sense. My colleague, Sue Takamoto, in research for her PhD studied the missionary's process of adjustment to Japan. Sue discovered that,

“The average length of adjustment time for the missionary in Japan is 7.8 years, with men averaging 8.1 years and women 6.9 years of adjustment. Unfortunately, mission leaders interviewed in this study reported that seven to eight years is the average length of total service in Japan, after which many missionaries leave permanently.”

Sue goes on to discuss what factors assisted in adjustment for missionaries who stayed on beyond that eight-year mark. These included 1) mentors who empowered the new missionary, 2) developing a community, and 3) holding on to symbols that work—the Bible, worship and their calling. Reading through her dissertation, and through the comments of those she interviewed, I again wondered about the friends who had left

Japan discouraged and disappointed.

Did they find encouragement from others who were further along in ministry here?

Did their relationship with Christ grow stronger or was it weakened as they struggled with the dissonance between their calling and whatever reality it was that turned their hearts toward “home.”

Assessments and Resources for Missionaries

From the people who developed (SYIS) *Sharpening Your Interpersonal Skills* :

- Worksheet on Spiritual Vitality
- Brief Self-Esteem Inventory
- Download from:

<http://www.relationshipskills.com/articles.htm>

For a variety of brochures and e-books relating to issues missionaries face, visit: <http://www.missionarycare.com/>

If they had “hung in there” just a little longer, would they have begun to thrive in Japan?

Eight years is a long time—can the adjustment process be sped up significantly?

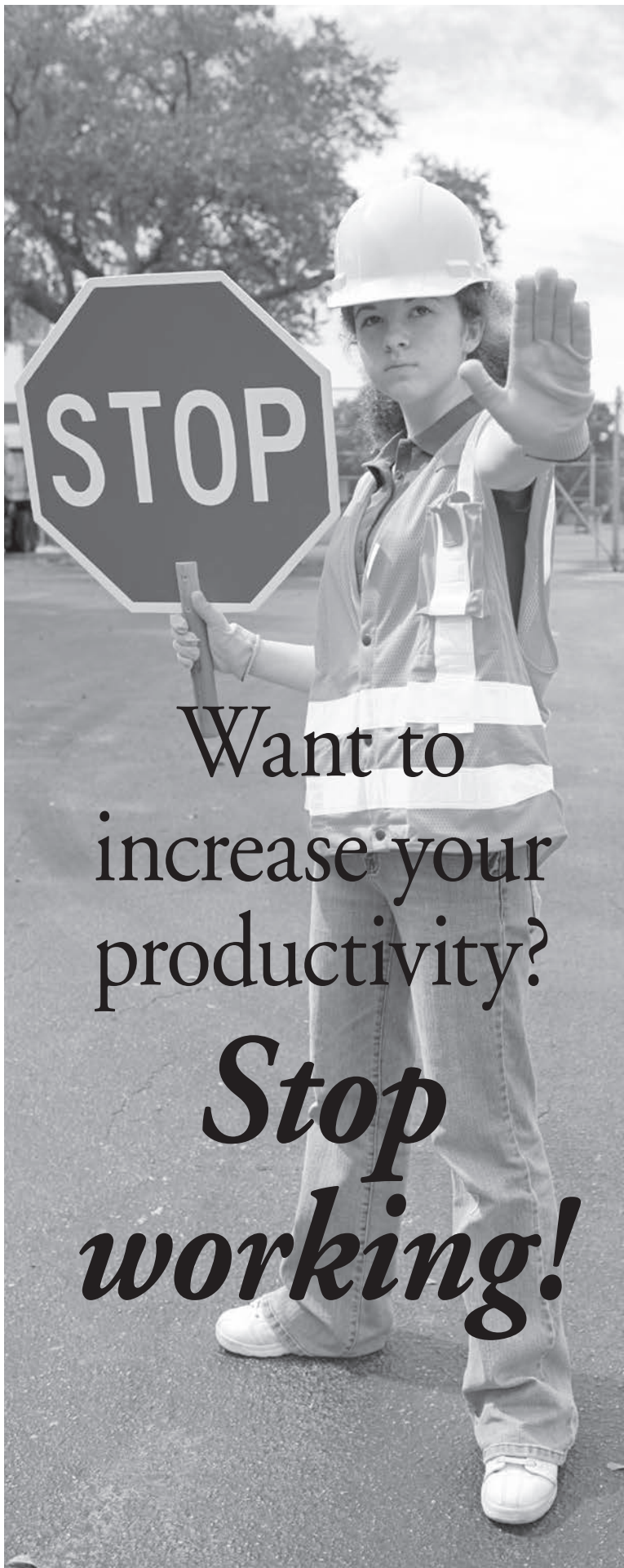
I have the privilege to serve as a Missionary Care Specialist in a mission that values the spiritual, emotional, physical and developmental health of its people. Our mission leadership has demonstrated this not only in their personal interest in our on-field missionaries, but in the allocation of resources. We have a psychologist who visits the field twice a year, meeting with each one of our missionaries. [For those who wonder, it IS a requirement to meet with him, and those who resisted initially do so no longer.] All

missionaries participate in a reentry program when they return to North America. We value life-long learning and encourage missionaries to attend conferences and training courses that develop them in their ministry, and in their personal lives.

Our mission is also committed to community. We work hard to build and maintain that caring community through semi-annual gatherings, conference and individual phone calls (often free, through Yahoo BB Phone and Skype), and personal visits. We pair new missionaries with those who have longer experience in Japan, and we are constantly refining our training materials to help in those mentoring relationships. We also value one another's gifts and abilities and cross-train in our various specialties, coaching one another. Our missionaries meet regionally and regularly to share in the Word, Prayer and Worship.

Even within community, each of us has to do the work of caring for our own spiritual, emotional and physical health. We must nurture that Love relationship with Christ, the One who called us to himself, and who called us to serve in Japan.

I recognize that not all missions and missionaries have the same opportunity to receive systematic “Missionary Care.” For this reason, I am grateful to be a part of the JEMA Member Care Committee (JMCC). We exist to equip JEMA-related missionaries to be effective by providing information, training, networking, and counseling. The JMCC has several initiatives planned for 2007—you will be hearing more from us soon!



That's right. To increase your productivity, stop working.

- You have 167 unanswered emails in your inbox? Stop answering email.
- You're planning 3 major projects? Stop planning projects.
- You're planning meetings with your team, your staff, and your clients? Stop planning meetings.
- You have 34 urgent tasks? Stop working on urgent tasks.
- You have 25 more reports to assess? Stop assessing reports.

Just stop. For 30 minutes. Each week. Yes, I know you were hoping to stop working. You can, if you want to. The choice is yours. But I recommend that you keep working and that you stop for a minimum of 30 minutes each week—30 minutes. That's 1.25% of a 40-hour workweek—1.25%.

Stop for a minimum 30 minutes each week. And do what? Reflect. Why? Well, reflection is like...

- Putting air in your bike tires so you can ride efficiently. (How efficiently can you ride on tires that don't have enough air in them?)
- Changing the oil in your car so the engine will run well. (How well will your engine run if you don't change the oil?)
- Using a filter when making coffee. Using a filter is an extra step, but using a filter means good coffee with no grounds in it. (Do you like drinking coffee that has grounds in it? I don't.)
- Taking a hot shower after a tough day. Afterward, you feel refreshed. (If you don't wind down after a tough day, what happens to you?)

So what can you do during your 30 minutes? You can pray, consider questions, find a better way to work, and get coaching. Let's take a look at each of these 4 options:

During your 30 minutes, you can pray:

1. Ask God what he wants you to do, how he wants you to do it, and by when. (Remember, it's God's work. He has the master plan. Your task is to join God in what he's already doing.)
2. After you ask, listen. Quietly. For God to speak.

During your 30 minutes, you can consider 5 questions:

1. What's the mission?
2. What's the definition of mission achievement?
3. What's my role in contributing to mission achievement?
4. What did I accomplish this week?
5. What do I need to keep doing? Start doing? Stop doing?

During your 30 minutes, you can find a better way to work:

1. Instead of responding to your 167 unanswered emails, define your communication system and the role email plays in it.
2. Instead of planning projects and meetings, check your goals. Define them more clearly. Then, decide which projects and meetings are pivotal. Plan these. Only these.
3. Instead of completing your 34 urgent tasks, assess your time allocation for good things (urgent tasks) and best things (non-urgent tasks). Build in time for non-urgent tasks. Even if it means not getting some of the urgent tasks done.
4. Instead of assessing your 25 reports, assess your goals. Then determine your system for assigning reports and your criteria for assessing reports.

During your 30 minutes, you can get coaching. Your coach can

help you:

1. Think bigger and more clearly.
2. Think outside the box.
3. Get more focused and stay focused.
4. Get organized.
5. Get the support, encouragement, and accountability you need to reach your goals.

In summary, during your 30 minutes you can pray, consider questions, find a better way to work, and get coaching. What will you do during your 30 minutes each week?

You: But you don't know how busy I am. You don't know what my reality is like.

Me: The real reality is that you can't afford not to stop and reflect. If you don't stop and reflect, you increase the likelihood that:

- You'll feel that it's your work and it's God's privilege to join you. In reality, God is already at work, and it's your privilege to join him. Remember, God can do it without you.
- You'll overestimate what you can accomplish in 1 year, while underestimating what you can accomplish in 2 years. This means you will strive to get 2 years' worth of work done in 1 year. Not a good idea.
- You'll work hard, without maximizing your God-given strengths. This will make you tired.
- You'll finish developing a program, but it won't be sufficiently exemplary, sustainable, and replicable. Ouch.
- You'll plan forwards, instead of backwards—meaning, you won't plan with the end result in mind. Not good.

What do I do? I reflect on a daily and weekly basis. Each day, I reflect as I pray about God's work.

1. I ask God for guidance.
2. Then I go for about a 15-minute walk. During my walk, I listen for God's voice. I listen for God to tell me whom he wants

me to talk with, what he wants me to write about, and what projects he wants me to keep doing, start doing, or stop doing.

In addition to reflecting daily, I reflect weekly for up to 2 hours.

1. I use up to 75 minutes to process ideas, determine progress toward key goals, and identify and schedule tasks for the coming week.
2. I use 30 minutes to meet with my coach.
3. I use up to 15 minutes to review my schedule of tasks in light of my coaching session.

What happens during my coaching session? My coach asks me crucial questions like:

1. How are you doing on your goals?
2. Are you staying within your goals?
3. How's your life balance?
4. How did you equip people this week?
5. How can you more effectively equip people?

My daily and weekly reflection times help me stay focused, organized, encouraged, supported, and accountable. My daily and weekly reflection times definitely increase my productivity. To accomplish my God-given mission, I can't afford not to reflect on a daily and weekly basis.

Imagine if you and everyone on your church staff, tentmaking staff, mission staff, or school staff spent 30 minutes each week in quiet, focused reflection. How would this impact the achievement of your mission?

Work smart. Stop working and start reflecting for a minimum of 30 minutes each week. Increase your productivity. Start today.

Michael B. Essenburg, member of the Christian Reformed Japan Mission, serves as coach and consultant at Christian Academy in Japan, a school for the children of evangelical missionaries in Japan. To learn more, please visit <<http://closethegapnow.org>>.

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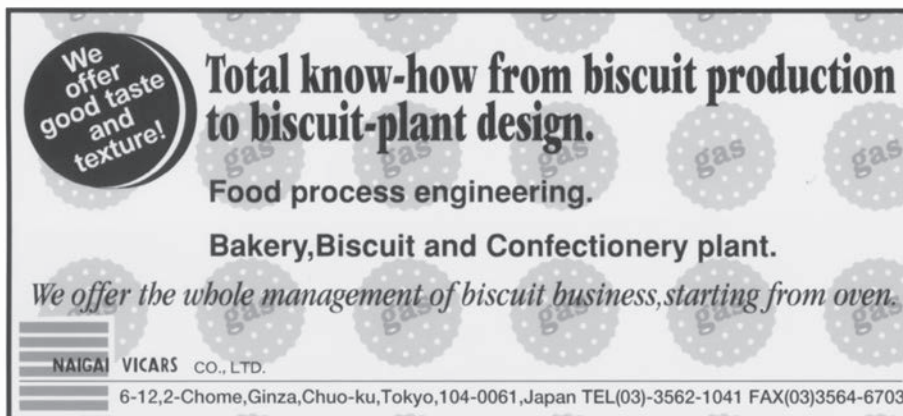
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Reflections on the first JEMA Japanese Language Immersion Retreat

By Miriam Davis
JEMA Language and Culture Commission Chair

Why plan such an event?

Thirty-five people (16 volunteers and 19 missionaries) took part in the first Japanese language retreat held at SEND Yamanaka Chalet from November 2-4, 2006. The expressed aim of the retreat was “to provide intensive but informal conversation practice and to build confidence in speaking in Japanese in a relaxed and supportive atmosphere.” “But,” said a colleague, “surely missionaries in Japan have enough opportunities for conversation just by living here, don’t they?” This made me think about the value of a two-day language immersion retreat as opposed to the daily immersion in Japanese language that comes simply by being a resident in Japan. I concluded that while in daily life, Japanese language is a tool to build bridges to Japanese, this usually has to be done on their terms in whatever faltering language we have; whereas a language retreat is an opportunity to focus intensively on language on our terms supported by sympathetic volunteers helping each individual to reach their

own personal goals in language acquisition. Japanese speakers also shared with us how the unique history and geography of Japan has created a national character which makes it difficult for the average Japanese to readily adopt Christian faith. Some participants wrote honestly about how the retreat was for them.

Participant feedback

The first night I was really wondering if I shouldn’t just go home. I really felt over my head when it came to the game we were asked to play, all in Japanese, and I wondered if I’d even survive the night. But I did! Although I’ve studied Japanese off and on since 1987, and have lived in Japan a total of six and a half years, I’ve only had three months of “full-time” study where I had little responsibility other than studying Japanese. And even though I like to play around and joke in Japanese, I’m really not at all confident in my Japanese-speaking abilities.

It moves me deeply when I consider that so many Japanese people came on their own, on a three-day weekend, to help us. And the Lord was truly there. There were definite spiritual gifts in operation, including a great deal of encouraging as well as teaching and serving. Undoubtedly, there were a lot of instances where the gift of mercy was in operation, too. Certainly so in my case, as the more

exhausted I got, the more my Alabama/Kentucky accent came out! The facilities were just excellent and I’m so thankful both for SEND’s vision and the money and time SEND has spent to have the Yamanakako Chalets, to make the property available to us, and for how warm and beautiful and quiet each cabin is.

It was a really tiring “retreat.” But I’m thankful I went and hope I can take part in something similar again in the future.

—John Martin, missionary from the USA serving in Kanagawa-ken

It was helpful to be in a situation where the nationals were leading and we were following and had to do everything in Japanese. This way it helps us understand what it feels like to try to follow our direction or teaching from one (the missionary) who speaks a different language and is approaching matters from a different cultural view. The talk about how crowded living conditions cause Japanese to develop particular character traits that may differ quite drastically from Westerners and how they had to adapt to survive those conditions humbled me to see that for me to insist on the “American way” is arrogant and not very compassionate. Also the lecture about the History of Christianity in Japan was very interesting and challenged me to pray even harder for the Japanese to be saved.



This language retreat was wonderful and I recommend it to anyone serious about becoming proficient in the language and to anyone striving to understand the culture in order to share the gospel in ways that will speak to the Japanese heart.

—Barb Dunbar (USA and Hyogo Prefecture). Barb has lived in Japan for 13 years, five of which have been as a full time missionary.

As far as the objective of making progress with the language went, I personally felt much more confident, and that the nihongo was starting to “flow” more naturally by the end; I’m sure it was similar for others too. (Any plans for a week-long camp in future?! Then we might really see “quantum leap” progress!)

—Dawn Bolton, UK, with Japan Christian Link and working in Kobe. She has been in Japan about 7 years.

Have you ever done anything you thought was really crazy, like “why am I doing this to myself” kind of crazy? When I signed up to attend the JEMA Japanese language retreat, this is the thought that lingered in the back of my mind. It seemed to me that going to a “Japanese speaking only” retreat, and enjoying myself would be an oxymoron. I love living here, but squeezing in time to study and improve my language among all other responsibilities doesn’t always happen. I felt I had hit a plateau language-wise, and wanted to start the journey upward to improving my Japanese. Thus I decided to attend. I must admit that I expected only to push myself hard, and come home with a major headache from thinking so hard.

I almost forgot what lay ahead of me after the first night of games, played in Japanese of course. It was fun! I found myself among other missionaries, like myself, who were a bit unsure but there willingly. I found myself also among Japanese volunteers who had come to listen to us, and to help us where we wanted and needed help. As we guessed at the meaning of certain Kanji, tried to play “Taboo” in Japanese, ate together, and had times of prayer and worship together, I found the time quickly flying by and the atmosphere light. I was even excited about having Japanese roommates, which was one of the

highlights for me because I couldn’t turn the Japanese language off. I really enjoyed the fellowship in Japanese most of all.

The volunteers who came were eager to talk with me, get to know me, and help me with questions I had about Japanese. We joined together in group times of studying the History of Christianity in Japan, proper ways to get yourself out of uncomfortable situations using Japanese, (boy, did I need that one!!) and being culturally sensitive while sharing the Gospel with the Japanese. I found myself still thinking in Japanese as I returned to my family, and upon returning home spent the evening talking “at” my husband about what a helpful, challenging weekend it had been for me. Attending this retreat has “warmed up the engine,” and I am newly motivated to improve. I certainly hope that you will be encouraged to come when this is offered again, and see what this is all about. It will be worth your time!

—Lynn Fujino, in Japan for 10 years

Volunteer feedback

And how was it for our Japanese volunteers? From the amount of laughter that rang out from all over the Yamanaka Chalets, it would seem that they, too, had an enjoyable time. Mrs. N. in her late 60’s came up at the last meal especially to say how much she had appreciated the retreat. “I had no idea what to expect” she said, “but came because I thought my experience as a teacher of Japanese as a foreign language could be used in some way to help missionaries. But it surpassed my expectations! I came as a volunteer but will go home with a heart filled with gifts and blessings! It was lovely to see how everyone opened their hearts to each other from the second day on.” Without Mrs. N and the 15 other Japanese volunteers’ willingness to commit time and effort, this weekend could not have taken place.

We asked our missionary participants if they would recommend a retreat like this to others in the future. Everyone without exception said “yes” and many added “most

definitely!” Additional comments were:

“Yes, even for more confident speakers. Just the chance to practice, laugh, and be was great!”



“It was exactly what I needed to help me improve my spoken Japanese. It was also a great opportunity to have fellowship with others who are seeking to

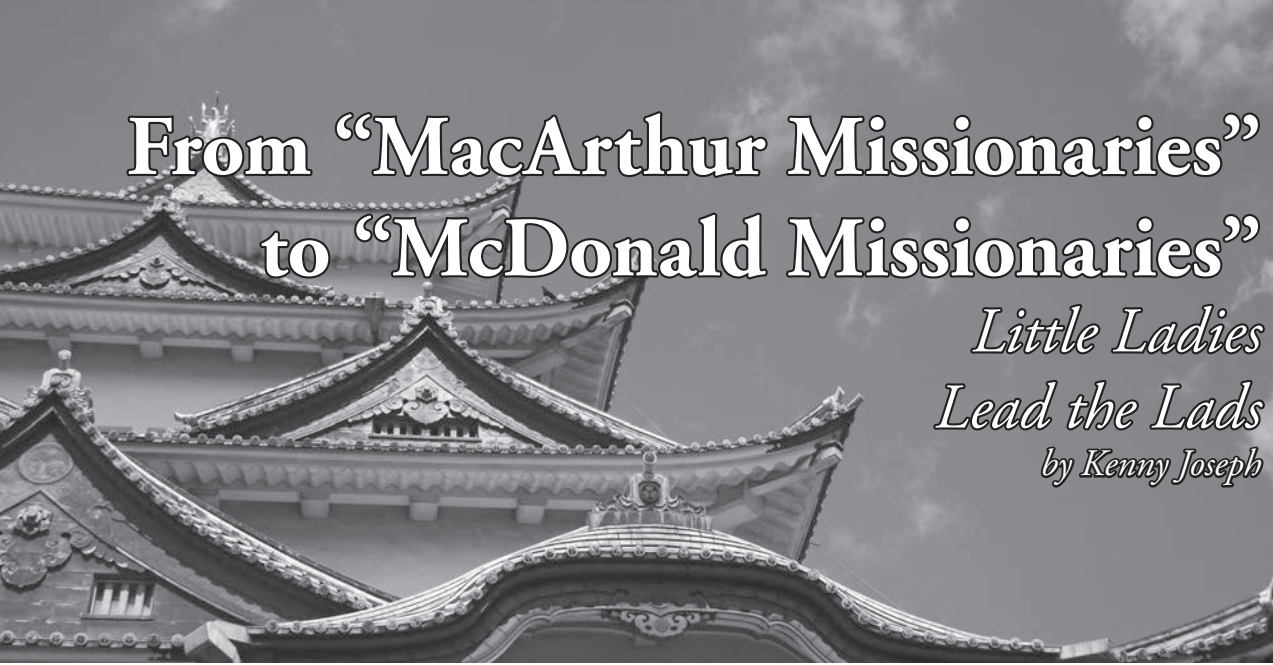
reach Japanese people for Christ.”

“Never once did I worry about how I sounded, or using proper Japanese. The volunteers were very, very good.”

Of course, there are many areas to improve on. Sadly, we were only able to find one male Japanese volunteer although 9 missionary men joined us for this time. Some participants would have liked more correction of mistakes and advice on how to improve their Japanese in the future. Some Japanese volunteers would have liked the opportunity to go to an onsen! These are things to work on in the future.

Work or “Waza”

Volunteer Mr. Yamanaka shared with us from I Corinthians 15:58 at our final morning’s worship. “Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.” “Work” is translated waza, which can be represented by 2 different kanji – 業 and 技. The first kanji refers to working with a purpose in mind while the second refers to technical skill or ability. In 1 Corinthians 15 waza appears in hiragana, but Mr. Yamanaka challenged us to think which kanji would best represent our work for the Lord – the one that refers to human and natural skills or the one where the purpose is the glory of God and we work in His strength. May our language learning be the latter kind of waza, not merely the learning of the skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking, but a labor that expresses our dependence on God and on his enabling, helps us to grow more like him and brings him glory in the process.



From “MacArthur Missionaries” to “McDonald Missionaries”

*Little Ladies
Lead the Lads*
by *Kenny Joseph*

In most missionary work and reports, what you read in prayer letters and what really goes on on the field, are sometimes very different. Japanese say “zenzen chigaimasu.”

Most missionary prayer letters and magazine reports written by men usually tell of conquests, numbers, statistics, buildings and churches built. Women are more specific and personal, telling about the different interpersonal activities of individuals. However, they tend to get bogged down in details so that we don’t get the big picture.

So far we’ve heard about the great MacArthur giving great calls to great men overseas to come over with great amounts of Bibles and missionaries. But as I dig into the history of what happened right after Hiroshima and Nagasaki were atom-bombed (thus saving a million American and Japanese lives and preventing perhaps two million being injured), I find a story of two quiet little ladies who knew how to pray and move Heaven. These ladies were Mabel Francis and Ann Dievendorf. Mabel Francis wrote a book about her experiences. The reason Japan let them stay was that they probably figured these two little old ladies couldn’t do any harm. Bless their hearts, they were later the ones who got the incoming Christian GIs and missionaries on their feet and set up!

Here I quote from Millie Moorehouse who wrote an “in-house” book, *A Branch Made Strong*, for the Far Eastern Gospel Crusade (FEGC), now SEND International. “Japan’s Tokyo and Yokohama were in ruins in August of 1945. American bombers’ fire and destruction to wooden houses and buildings left only a few skeletons of concrete

structures to mark the once prosperous port city. Tokyo Bay was filled with American and allied battleships when formal surrender terms were signed on September 2 aboard the USS Missouri. As troop transports unloaded at Center Pier, GIs were cautious. Devastation and rubble spread all around them as they fanned out over the city in jeeps and trucks on their missions of occupation.

“But as they drove away from the pier area, some of them noticed a church, still intact, that had somehow miraculously survived the bombing. It was the Yokohama Kaigan Church, the first organized Protestant church in Japan. It marked the start of the Protestant movement in 1859 that eventually covered all of Japan. Those GIs hurrying by didn’t realize that this same Kaigan Church was about to play an important role as the starting point for a new movement for the evangelization of postwar Japan.

“In the ensuing weeks and months of the occupation a unique drama began to unfold. Conqueror and conquered alike found themselves drawn together in many new roles and relationships. For an active group of Christian GIs, thrilling spiritual adventures were about to alter their lives.

“Japan lay devastated and broken. Air raids destroyed nearly all major cities and the nation’s industrial capacity. Transportation was crippled and equipment in precarious repair. Millions of city dwellers were evacuated to the countryside. Japanese colonists began to stream back from the broken, defeated remnants of the once far-flung empire of Japan. Military men came back to civilian life, but there were no jobs or homes to come

back to. An estimated eight million people crowded back into economically crippled Japan in the three years following the defeat.

“After years of wartime propaganda, Japanese were afraid of what the occupation Army might do. But on the whole, the veterans who came in during the early days of the occupation were tired of war and didn’t cause much trouble.

In the first few days of occupation, very few civilians were seen, and especially no children. But eventually a curious youngster would peek out from behind some rubble and a GI would smile and toss him a chocolate bar. These bars were lunch rations for GIs on the move, and little by little the chocolate bars won over their fears.”

My wife Lila’s oldest brother Clarence was a chaplain assigned to the 383rd Infantry Division, which waded in from a landing ship and arrived in Aomori. They found the cities deserted as people were fearful for their lives with this incoming movement of foreign troops. He remembers reaching the top of a hill, and there on the other side was a Japanese woman standing with bowed head. She obviously “hadn’t gotten the word.” How relieved she must have been as the 5,000 uniformed men simply marched silently past her, with only the sounds of their boots hitting the road.

To prove that God has a sense of humor, he used Mabel and Ann to launch post-war missionaries to Japan. The little lads, led by the little ladies, were the occupation troops who landed in 1945, the week after the atom bomb fell and Japan surrendered. These born-again Christian young men, who on their leave (with no help, in fact hindrances sometimes from the powers that were), did the work of evangelism, because there were no bona fide, full-time foreign missionaries in Japan from Aug. 15, 1945 to at least 1947. The only ones here were some Japanese pastors, the ladies and GI lads.

These fellows scrounged empty buildings for GI Gospel Hours, inviting their buddies

who were indulging in wine, women and song, being far away from home. They were held on Saturday nights and patterned after the American Youth for Christ rallies. Thousands of Japanese young people also were attracted to these English-only rallies.

Quoting again from *A Branch Made Strong*:

“Having been blessed by stirring G.I. Gospel Hour meetings in Manila, the chaplains and GIs prayed that they could hold similar meetings in Japan. The first GI Gospel Hour in Japan met on September 15, 1945, at the Sagami-hara Arsenal near Fuchinobe, about twenty miles outside Yokohama. This was exactly one month after Japan’s unconditional surrender.

“And now the Kaigan Church became the first Yokohama Chapel Center. On October 7, it held the first Yokohama GI Gospel Hour. Chaplains L.E. Sweet and D.D. Wilson advised the GI group.

“The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect towards him (II Chronicles 16:9). God gave this promise to Miss Mabel Frances immediately after the war as an assurance of his care and leading in those difficult days. She and her sister, Mrs. Anne Dievendorf, had both been missionaries with the Christian and Missionary Alliance in Japan for over 30 years. Along with Mrs. Laura Mauck, a Brethren missionary, they had chosen to stay in Japan during the war rather than accept repatriation. They wanted to be on hand to minister to Japanese as soon as hostilities ended.

“They were interned with other foreign women in a Franciscan hospital near Kuhonbutsu in Setagaya, Tokyo. As Tokyo slowly came back toward normal life, they were waiting on God for direction and provision. The Japanese were in desperate need. These ladies could communicate in Japanese. They had the gospel message. But they needed help. They, with three other missionaries, were only six people in a city of seven million. Where should they start?

Mabel Francis wrote in *One Shall Chase a Thousand*:

“They didn’t have to wonder very long. An American soldier in the occupation forces and his Christian buddies were on a crowded train in Tokyo. They saw the American

lady—but it wasn’t until she smiled that the light dawned. ‘She’s got to be an American missionary,’ the leader of the GI group said. So when Mrs. Dievendorf pushed her way out of the train, the four American soldiers were right with her.

“‘Are you a missionary?’ they asked. And when she told them who she was, they were excited. ‘We didn’t know how to get hold of an American missionary, but we’re looking for a place where we can meet and go right on with our gospel hour which we started in the Philippines,’ they told her.

“She took the young men to the Japanese pastor of the first Methodist Church, located right on the Ginza, Tokyo’s main street. He was delighted with the idea. The church had a big hole in the roof from a bomb, but those gospel groups were glad for that hole in the roof because the happy singing sounded out all over the center of that war-sick city.”

In this way God brought together the three major elements in his plan for doing a new thing: war-weary and needy Japanese, GIs eager to serve God, and veteran missionaries capable of directing the GI energies to meet the needs of the Japanese people. Each element alone was incomplete, but God brought this unusual combination together to accomplish his purpose. The Japanese were disillusioned and desperate for some soul-satisfying message. Among the GIs God was doing a work of awakening and reviving, and these young men and women needed channels of ministry both inside and outside the military community. As members of the occupation forces, Christian GIs had access to goods, time to serve, and hearts on fire with love for Christ. The missionary ladies were dedicated and capable workers, but without resources, energy or finances to meet the needs for which they were burdened. Until the Christian and Missionary Alliance decided to reenter Japan, Miss Francis and Mrs. Dievendorf were available. God worked all these factors together for mutual good. A new branch was being formed to carry the life of the True Vine out into new areas.

“As the occupation troops moved into the various cities of the Japanese empire, new GI Gospel Hour meetings sprang up. During 1946 there were 15 GI Gospel Hours in Japan. Most carried on despite the 100% turnover every six months.

‘The Saturday night Gospel Hour may

have been the most noticeable activity, but it was not the only one carried on by the GIs. The Yokohama group was the first one organized, and being located in a busy central area, it had a full schedule of activities:

“Saturday night - GI Gospel Hour at Kaigan Church.

Sunday - In addition to regular chapel services, “We prayed about Sunday night, for many of the chaplains felt that there should be a united evangelistic effort. It was not long before the GI Gospel Hour was invited to hold a Sunday evening meeting at the spacious Red Cross Canteen. We couldn’t have wished for a better answer to our prayers, for more than 15,000 souls in Khaki and blue went in and out of that canteen every day. We had the whole fourth floor where several hundred crowded into each meeting. Our GI choir sang to the accompaniment of two Red Cross pianos. The songs of Zion filled the air, the saving Gospel was told, and heaven was brought to earth as the prayer room became filled with those who sought and found the Lord,” by the Grace of God.

Monday night was set apart for personal workers who gathered for prayer and study. Then they went out into the highways and byways to witness.

Tuesday was prayer meeting night, with testimonies from many, including those saved during the previous nights of evangelism.

Wednesday was Bible study night, usually led by a chaplain.

Thursday night the GI choir rehearsed, about 30-40 strong, and from about as many denominations.

Friday night was Christian life classes.

Only young, fired-up Christians could maintain a schedule like that!

“Many GIs were in ministries to the Japanese. President Sakata of Kanto Gakuin in Yokohama agreed to let the school be used for Youth for Christ meetings three times a week to reach Japanese young people. Weekly meetings were held later at Honcho Primary School near Sakuragicho. Hundreds of Japanese teenagers heard the Gospel through these meetings. Another group met in Shinkoyasu in northeast Yokohama. In the spring of 1946 a Youth For Christ meeting in a tsurumi primary school drew 400 young people, and was later divided into two meetings.

“Contacts made through the GI Gospel Hour and YFC meetings resulted in Bible classes and Gospel meetings in many places. God had scattered Christian GIs throughout Japan, and ministries sprang up in many areas simultaneously. Reports came of meetings and classes in Kobe, Osaka, the cities of Kyushu, as well as Sendai, Sapporo and other cities in the north.”

Some of the bravest missionaries were not even soldiers; they were DACs—Department of Army Civilians. The Fittzes helped in the Yokohama Chapel Center, with the GI Gospel Hour on Saturdays, and also ran a church in their home. The Sherrills and Banny Cilaberto worked with them. The U.S. Army paid them all to work in procurement and repairs, even though they were actually civilians.

My wife, sons and I were often invited to

go there to preach on Saturday night, stay overnight, preach at Sunday worship and have good food and fellowship. These DACs did the work of missionaries. Now they’re called “tentmakers.” We trust they’re making tents with the people they work with, but it’s nothing like the Fittzes and Sherrills who made their big home a “home away from home.”

The big U.S. Navy was docked in Yokosuka and when one aircraft carrier came in, for instance, there would be 5,000 American men on the streets. The Japanese government turned a blind eye to the organized yakuza (mafia) who were the experienced “private enterprise” that Japan insisted were in charge of the sex slaves recruited from other Asian countries. It took one lonely lady researcher in a library in Kyoto to uncover the fact that Japan’s military organized the wartime sex

slaves. So now the yakuza had a new job to find prostitutes to head to the bases. Even in 1951 when Eddie Reece and I as a Gospel Team went to speak at the GI Gospel Hour in Yokosuka, as we walked from the station to the hall we were accosted by at least 20 Japanese prostitutes. I asked the Commanding Officer how this could be allowed and he said it was out of their hands—that the Japanese mafia knew exactly when the ship was coming in, how many were on it, and they had the girls waiting. A well organized “fleet” to meet the fleet.

But it was in this empty space in 1945, ‘46 and ‘47, when a missionary couldn’t come into Japan without military permission and mission organizations had to have a pre-war history to get in—under this umbrella came marching a small beachhead troop that became an army from 1947 on.

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By the Missionary Geek

Making Life a Little Easier for English Speakers in Japan

Unless you grew up in Japan as an MK and/or have spent a great deal of time in intensive language study, you sometimes (often?) struggle with living here because you are not completely bilingual and fully literate in Japanese. In this article I'm going to give you some hints on how to make life a little easier using technology, primarily the Internet.

Getting Around

You're probably very familiar with the train lines in your area, but sometimes you need to visit someplace new. There are several online sites that will give you the best route, what time the trains leave, and even how much it costs. My favorite is www.jorudan.co.jp/english/. One very helpful feature is that you can enter the arrival time, and it will calculate what train you need to catch to arrive on time. Another good one is www.hyperdia.com.

If you drive much, you've probably noticed that most of the streets here have no name! And sometimes the same name is given to several roads (how many Tokorozawa Kaidos ARE there?). There are several on-line maps like <http://map.yahoo.co.jp/> but it's hard to know the best route to take to get from A to B. I can't find a free site, but you can download a free one-week trial of Mapple Online at <http://m-online.mapple.net/leisure/>. This is of course all in Japanese, and I thought the interface was difficult to navigate, but you can put in your present location and destination, and it will map out a driving route for you. If you want to keep using it, the cost is ¥1,980 per year. The best solution is to buy a good Car Navi. The new models allow you to input a phone number or postal code, and you'll be directed by the best route. Each company's interface is different, and of course it's all in Japanese, but a couple of hours spent learning the basics will really help you find your way.

Banking

I hate going to the bank when I have to pay bills. I freeze up at the ATM when the line begins to form behind me and then I make mistakes that take even more time. One suggestion is to use the post office banking system. The advantage is that every ATM has an "English" button. This will turn all the menus into English and you can withdraw money, pay bills etc. Also the Post Office ATMs will allow you to access your US bank account to withdraw money. I just set up our postal account to be able to do on-line banking from home. You have to get an application at the post office, fill it out, and in about 10 days you'll get log on information. The on-line system is all in Japanese, but you can take your time as you sit at your computer. Even if you only use it to check the balance in your account, it's helpful.

Shinsei Bank www.shinseibank.com/english/ also has on-line banking, but in English. I've never used this bank, but others have recommended it to me. Their ATMs also have an English menu, and they offer many services in English.

Mail

The post office has a very good English web site www.post.japanpost.jp/english. One hint—the postage rates are hidden in the "payment methods" menu. They also have a phone number for English speakers 0570-046-111, which is answered 365 days a year. However this is one of the "NaviDial" numbers, so you cannot dial it using YahooBB. There are a few numbers like this, so for Yahoo BB users you must dial four zeros, and then the number i.e. 0000-0570-046-111. This "turns off" your BB Phone for this call only. You also have to do this on Yahoo BB for toll free (0120-) calls.

Translation

Here are two free sites that allow you to paste in Japanese text and get an English translation. The translations are not perfect, but might allow you to get the gist of the message: www.world.altavista.com and www.csse.monash.edu.au/~jwb/wwwjdic.html. If you have Japanese text that you just want the readings of the kanji, copy and paste the text into Word, and under the "Format" menu, choose "Asian Layout" and then "Phonetic Guide." This will allow you to have the furigana (which Word calls "Ruby") appear in your text. Finally, if you're trying to read a Japanese web site that has too many kanji that you don't know, go to www.hiragana.jp/en and type in the site web address, and the furigana will appear on the site you're trying to read!

Weather

The Yahoo Japan web site has a good weather section at <http://weather.yahoo.co.jp/weather/>. It's all in Japanese but at the top you can input your postal code, and get the forecast for your area. Since the forecast is mostly symbols, it's easy to understand. Tokyo Broadcasting System has an English weather page at www.tbs.co.jp/weather/top-e.html, but the English translation is a little lacking.



Jonathan Wilson and his wife Rie have served as independent church planters in Japan since 1989. Jonathan currently pastors Grace Christian Fellowship in Ome-shi, Tokyo and is the principal of Grace Christian International School. He also directs Christian Relief, Assistance, Support and Hope, a network for disaster relief in Japan known as CRASH. Jonathan serves as an advisor and board member for various compassion ministries in Japan and as a JEMA observer for the JEA Disaster Relief Commission. Jonathan can be found on the worldwide web at gracejapan.com.

Where is Japan Bleeding?

Most people in Japan are unaware that they need a savior, but they are acutely aware of their personal needs. The point where our compassionate love meets their open wounds is the place where they can find Jesus. One only has to pick up the newspaper to find out where the country is bleeding. One recent article read,

“At Hachioji-Higashi high school in Tokyo, 181 of 320 third-year students had not been taking the ethics course required for graduation. The public school had falsely reported to the Tokyo education board that it planned to make that subject compulsory for all students. The school asked the students to buy the textbooks for the class, and made up grades for the course on the students’ report cards. The practice has been going on for at least six school years, the Tokyo education board said.”

Students in Japan feel betrayed by the institutions that are supposed to serve them. If schools and teachers are lying and cheating then how can they be trusted? Other articles tell of junior high school students crying out for help in the form of suicides, actual and threatened, because of bullying at school. At the time that I write this 42 suicide letters have been received by the Ministry of Education. Meanwhile school principals are setting the example for them to follow by committing suicide themselves.

All of these events point to the fact that something is seriously wrong with the education system in Japan. It is Japan’s children and families that are suffering. For each child who writes a letter or attempts to kill themselves, there are hundreds if not thousands more who are tempted to do so. But what can we do to relieve their pain?

Giving Hope

The most important thing that we can do right now is to give them hope. Bullying has been a problem in Japan for a long time and won’t be solved easily, but the reason for the recent rash of young students committing suicide is despair. The students have concluded that their teachers and schools don’t care about them. They don’t think that anything will change and see suicide as the only way out. However many of us in the missions community are involved with youth in schools, churches and families that we minister to. We need to show the youth that we come in contact with that we care about them and can give them the help that they need. It helps to spend time with any youth, but in particular, be aware of the warning signs that might mean that a youth is suicidal and needs special attention.

Suicidal Warning Signs

- Overwhelming Pain: Remember that this is from their perspective and the most recent event might be the “last straw” in a whole chain of events.
- Hopelessness: “Things will never get better.”
- Powerlessness: “There is nothing I can do.”
- Worthlessness: “No one cares.”
- Declining Appearance, Performance and Interest

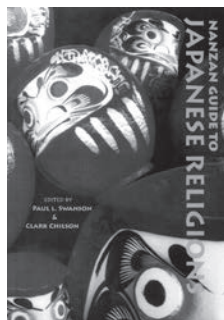
How Can You Help?

- Take it seriously: Youth are often looked down on as children and told that they are “just going through a stage.”
- Don’t wait to help: Get involved as soon as possible.
- Listen: By simply listening compassionately you are helping to dispel the thoughts of worthlessness, powerlessness, and hopelessness.
- Ask: Don’t be afraid to ask if they have thought about suicide. It shows that you care.
- No Secrets: Part of the person is afraid of more pain and asks for confidentiality. But another part of the person wants to stay alive and that is why they are telling you about it. Let them know that you will help them find help.
- Refer: There is help available, but very few youth have the resources to find it for themselves.

We might not be able to solve all of the problems in the education system or families in Japan, but we can make ourselves known as caring and compassionate Christians who are willing to help. Youth are looking for adults whom they can trust and respect. They are looking for men and women of integrity who will care about them. They are looking for men and women like us who can lead them to Jesus.



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



Nanzan Guide to Japanese Religions

Paul L. Swanson and Clark Chilson, eds. University of Hawaii Press, 2006. xii+466 pages.

“Of making many books there is no end,” the Teacher said long ago, and that proverb can be applied to books written about Japan. An avalanche of books related to Japan, both popular and scholarly, are published each year. The Nanzan Guide to Japanese Religions is one book that missionaries to Japan should buy and read.

In the introduction, the editors give a helpful summary of what the book is. It aims to “help both beginning students and seasoned researchers navigate the field by providing overviews of scholarship in different subfields, different time periods, and

on select themes, and by offering practical techniques for accessing relevant information.” The 23 contributors include six Japanese and another five scholars who live and teach in Japan. Each essay includes a bibliography of relevant literature, both English and Japanese, and many chapters provide helpful suggestions for those wanting to do further research.

The book is divided into four main sections. The first section, “Traditions,” includes essays on Japanese religions: Shinto, Buddhism, Folk Religion, New Religions, and Japanese Christianity. The essay on Japanese Christianity by Mark Mullins, editor of the excellent *Handbook of Christianity in Japan* (2003), gives a helpful historical orientation, looks at the impact of Christianity on Japanese society, and concludes with Japanese responses to Christianity and patterns of appropriation.

The second section, “History,” has six essays giving an analysis of religion in Ancient Japan, the Classical Period, the Medieval Period, Early Modern Japan, the Modern Period, and Contemporary Japanese Religions. Duncan Williams, in his essay on Early Modern Japan, notes how the Buddhist parish system, “originally established as a method to monitor Christians, ended up as the basic organizational structure for Japanese Buddhism into the contemporary period.” (p. 191)

The third section, “Themes,” addresses specific issues in Japanese religions, including Ritual Culture, Literature, the State, Geography (pilgrimage), History

of Thought, and Gender. Robert Morrell’s essay on literature is especially incisive. Richard Payne notes how “in one form or another the Japanese state attempted to control religion right up to the declaration of religious freedom in the twentieth century.” (p. 249)

The fourth section, “Research,” will be especially helpful for graduate students. The essay on Japanese Reference Works, Sources, and Libraries by Makino Yasuko is an invaluable guide. Essays on Using Archives in Japan and Conducting Fieldwork in Japan provide wise advice for those wanting to dig deeper.

A 36 page Chronology of Religion in Japan focuses on events from the Jomon period up to 2004. The book includes a 29 page index, but unfortunately, no author index.

Updates, including a bibliography of works on Christianity, are at the Nanzan Institute homepage (<http://www.nanzan-u.ac.jp/SHUBUNKEN/publications/publications.htm>).

Some of the essays are more technical and difficult than others, but all give helpful overviews of key issues. Missionaries who want to better understand the religious climate in Japan will find this introduction a valuable guide. Having been an avid reader of books on Japan since coming here 22 years ago, this book ranks near the top in its importance and relevance for missionaries preaching the good news in this society.



Paul Nethercott has been a 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.

Missional Art: Two Churches in Tokyo Creatively Reaching Japanese for Christ

Assumptions:

1. Everyone has God-given creativity so “missional art” can be a part of every ministry.
2. The greatest obstacle to creativity is close-minded, rigid thinking that tightly clings to “the way things have always been done.”
3. Change is hard, but the choice is to either embrace change (growth), or experience slow death.

While there are many “signs” that significant numbers of Japanese are interested in the gospel, most churches in Japan are not thriving. But, there are “hot spots” where vibrant churches are effectively reaching Japanese with the gospel. Why some churches are thriving and others are not is an important question that deserves careful thought and research. I believe that one of the characteristics of thriving churches in Japan is their use of “missional art.” Missional art is the creative use of a variety of artistic expressions to effectively communicate the gospel in a particular cultural context.

Nakano Baptist Church

When Pastor Kazumi Saito started pastoring this fifty-year-old congregation in 1999, it was an older congregation that had made few changes in forty years. Today Nakano Baptist is full of life with children, youth, and young moms from the community taking part in a variety of creative ministries. The church space is unusually warm and friendly due to a small café in a back corner of the sanctuary. Saito says the café “is my favorite area of ministry, I love doing it.” This summer the church ran a highly creative kid’s camp that drew many children from the community. Artistic flyers, newsletters, and posters are part of what draws people to the church.

One indication of change in this congregation is that the church is equipped with quality music and video equipment. Saito incorporates scenes from mainstream movies and self-produced video clips into his messages. Because Saito is keenly aware of what is happening in mainstream Japanese culture, he is able to communicate on a level that “connects” with those who do not know or understand the Bible.

Nakano Baptist plans to build a 250-seat multi-purpose “community space” that will be used for worship services, concerts and other artistic events designed to attract unchurched Japanese. It will include a café and state-of-the-art sound, lighting and video equipment.

Jesus LifeHouse (JL) Church

A group from Australia, led by Pastor Rod Plummer, established Jesus LifeHouse in August of 2002 with youth

as the target group. On Easter Sunday, 2006, attendance at JL was 450. This church has baptized an average of 90 people per year, most of whom were young people in their late teens and twenties. The arts are important to the leaders of JL. Associate Pastor Ryuta Kimura says “art is good, God is an artist... normal people should be able to accept it and relate to it... young people don’t really care about the history of art... just that it looks good.”

The attractive JL web site (<http://www.jesuslifehouse.com/>) draws fifty visits a day and 30% of visitors to the church come after viewing the web site. A Japanese social networking site called mixi (<http://mixi.jp/home.pl>) is one important means of connecting with youth. According to Kimura, seventy percent of Japanese youth use mixi, making it a natural “space” for people to “meet” and communicate with each other. “Our people make connection via mixi through their friends and people they know. For example, if someone makes a comment on a blog [written by someone attending JL], then there is a connection, and the person can be invited to church.”

The biggest artistic outreach JL has had to date took place during the summer of 2005 when they partnered with five other churches to host Hillsongs “United” band in Tokyo. Over 2,500 attended two concerts with 50 decisions to follow Christ. Kimura said it built vision; “they [the Christians involved] realized we can do more of this.”

In May of 2006, JL hosted award winning DJ Andy Hunter (<http://andyhunter.com/>) for a worship/dance gig that drew over two hundred youth. JL is one of the only churches in Japan with boundaries wide enough to embrace Andy and his singular approach to leading worship to a dance beat.

Conclusion:

Both general revelation and special revelation are God’s artistic masterpieces revealing who he is. In the same way, our creative expressions naturally reveal what is in our hearts. If more churches in Japan utilize creativity through “missional art” to engage people in winsome conversations about God, we will see many more “hot spots” that are effectively communicating the gospel.

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Miriam Davis came to Japan in 1975 from the UK and taught English in schools and universities in Nara Prefecture, Nagoya and Osaka for 8 years. In 1986 she joined OMF International and moved to Sapporo to do church planting and English teaching. Since 1990 she has been Language Advisor to OMF. la@omf.or.jp
www.jp.omf.org/langres

Podcasts in Japanese Language Learning

Never before has it been so easy to find lots of Japanese listening materials at a variety of levels of ability which can be downloaded free onto a computer, iPod or MP3 player. Type "Japanese language" into the search box at <http://www.podcast.net>; click on <http://www.nihongojouzu.com/audio/index.html>; or try out some of the home pages introduced below.

For Beginners

- www.JapanesePod101.com
This site is highly recommended for beginner through intermediate learners with its daily podcasts on a variety of topics from culture to grammar to news and survival phrases. It is topical, user friendly and the recording quality is excellent. The user guide at <http://www.japanesepod101.com/help-center/user-guide/> lists the free materials (all audio files) and the many supplementary materials for self-study that you can subscribe to.
- mp3japan is an archive of mp3 files from the NHK audio series *Basic Japanese for You* and *Brush up your Japanese* which are only available in streaming form on the NHK site. 100 and 50 episodes respectively, 3-4Mb per episode. <http://www.hickorytech.net/~nic111/> There is a considerable amount of explanation in English from a non-native.

For Intermediate to Advanced Students

- <http://www.voiceblog.jp/nippon/>
This site seems to be aimed at non-Japanese and transcriptions of the Japanese text without *furigana* are on the web site. The speaker reads clearly at a moderate speed. It is helpful to be able to read and listen at the same time. Indeed, these podcasts can be an aid to learning *kanji* as you read and listen at the same time. There are some interesting topics related to Japanese life such as *Tofu*, *Setsubun*, *Geisha* and *Maiko* and authentic sound effects. Podcasts are around 5 minutes in length. Sadly, nothing seems to have been added to this site since March 2006.
- <http://www.njuku.com/>
This blog provides casual reading material with audio for intermediate and advanced students of Japanese. "Narrator Rieko discusses common mistakes and areas of improvement garnered from her efforts teaching her American husband to speak Japanese. The material is relevant and practical - for example, how to accept compliments, what pronoun to use when talking about yourself. Each podcast is short - all are under six minutes and most are under three - making them perfect for when you don't have a lot of time. Sound

good? There's more - the companion blog has full transcripts of each podcast and for those too lazy to install *rikaichan* or *LiveDictionary* the transcripts come complete with vocabulary lists of the meatier expressions." (quote from www.nihongojouzu.com)

- <http://www.voiceblog.jp/amane/>
This is a voice blog and is not aimed at Japanese language learners, so be prepared for fast speed and a variety of topics. The recordings are of high quality but are almost too short to make it worth downloading them. The blog is added to several times a week so the best use of this site might be for those in need of repeated listening to the same material at the speed of normal Japanese speech.
 - <http://podcast.yomiuri.co.jp/>
"Listening to the news is great, but when you have to leave the house what do you do? Download the *Yomiuri Shimbun News Podcast*, stick it in your portable mp3 player and listen to the news on the go. The podcasts are 20 minutes long and daily, but suffer from a small time lag—reporting on the news of the previous day. Even so, this is a perfect resource for intermediate to advanced learners." (quote from www.nihongojouzu.com)
 - If 20 minutes is too long for you, try NHK radio news online at <http://www.nhk.or.jp/r-news/>. There are four broadcasts daily, 10 minutes at 7 a.m. and mid-day and then 15 minutes at 7 p.m. and 10 p.m. The speed at which the broadcasters speak can be adjusted to slow, normal or fast, making it handy for repeated listenings.
- ### Very advanced
- 365日物語 (365 Days of Stories) at <http://eureka-i.jp/365/> is a series of three-minute readings from the book (1,500 yen) of the same name by Haruyama Yoichi (晴山陽一). It is suggested you read the book together with the podcasts. Each episode takes one day of the year and introduces an important event in world history that took place on that day. A great way to learn world history while improving vocabulary, listening and reading skills in Japanese.
 - Japanese Classical Literature at Bedtime at <http://eloise.cocolog-nifty.com/rodoku>
This is a non-commercial site with Japanese classical literature audio books read by Kasumi Kobayashi. It includes readings from such famous texts as the *Genji Monogatari*, *Ki no Tsuraki* (Tosa Dairy), *Hojiki* and *haiku* by Matsuo Basho.



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