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Spring 2007

Japan Evangelical Missionary Association

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

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Karuizawa Union Church welcomes you to the cool, refreshing town of Karuizawa for a summer of spiritual renewal.

2007 Summer Conference at Karuizawa Union Church (Sunday July 29th ~ Sunday August 5th)

In these days of discouragement and frustration in ministry we all need to hear Words of encouragement from God. Dr. Lou Diaz will be sharing a very important theme of: "ENCOURAGEMENT FROM THE WORD" Dr. Lou Diaz graduated from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (M.Div.) and Talbot School of Theology (D.Min.). He serves on the Board of Directors of the Evangelical Free Church of America and has served on the Board of Regents of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and Trinity International University. Currently, he is Moderator of the Evangelical Free Church of America. Dr. Lou has been in the ministry for over 30 years and is currently the senior pastor of the Evangelical Free Church of Chico in northern California. Dr. Diaz is married to a HCJB missionary kid from Panama, Shirley (Hall) Diaz, and has two teenagers, Laura and Stephen. His hobbies include playing musical instruments and marathon/triathlon competitions. For more information, check out his church web site: Evangelical Free Church www.efcchico.org



Other events this week: Music–movie night–ladies luncheon–fellowship lunch–men’s breakfast–hymn sing–Youth conference. A concluding concert by Berndt and Ruriko Bohman is planned *details of dates and times for these events will be available in the summer Japan Harvest edition or contact the KUC chairman

The annual business meeting for Karuizawa Union Church will be Wednesday August 1st, 7 pm at the church auditorium. All registered members plus proxy voters have a voice. Yearly registration can be done by website address (see below) or you can request a registration form from the addresses below.



Karuizawa Union Church Summer Schedule (Sunday, July 22th- Sunday, August 26th)

Sunday Services:

Prayer Service: 10:00 a.m.

Worship Service: 10:30 a.m.

Evening Service: 7:00 p.m.

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

For more information regarding the conference, housing, directions or any other questions please contact:

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

You can also visit our website at <http://church.ne.jp/kuc/> or come to our church located in the famous city of Karuizawa, Nagano Ken. It is only one hour by the Joetsu Nagano Shinkansen from Tokyo Station.



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

For quite some time, one of the desires of JEMA members has been the inclusion of more from outside the English-speaking missionary community in JEMA's ministry. Several years ago, the Korean Missionary Fellowship (KMA) joined JEMA.

In February, four KMA leaders met with three JEMA Executive Committee members to discuss KMA's organizational structure and KMA's relationship with JEMA. As we heard of the history and development of KMA, we learned that as foreign missionaries, KMA members have needs and goals much like missionaries from the West. With a cultural orientation quite different from second or third generation Koreans born and raised in Japan, they find it quite important to relate to another foreign missionary society such as JEMA. While being treated to a delicious Korean lunch, we discussed ways in which JEMA can better help KMA members relate to JEMA and benefit from JEMA membership.

One of the barriers for many Korean missionaries is a lack of English ability. We talked about translating seminars into Korean. They expressed a desire for JEMA to help their missionaries learn English so they can be in tune with developments in the greater missionary community. Our *Japan Harvest* editor, Gary Bauman, initiated discussions on how we can better communicate with each other through JEMA's publications.

Another recent development is the addition of Gilberto Oliveira from Brazil to the JEMA Executive

Committee. Gilberto is very desirous of having the Brazilian association of missionary pastors become members of JEMA. JEMA can provide much needed training for pastors who often must work in factories in order to earn their living as well as maintain their ministries. There are 400 Brazilian churches in Japan, but they have no formal organization. Gilberto feels they can greatly benefit from networking and getting training through JEMA.

As with the KMA, the barrier for these Brazilian pastors and leaders in relating to JEMA is the English language. Gilberto says that in order for them to benefit and grow in terms of their missional vision they need help learning English.

The increase in numbers of non English-speaking foreign missionaries in Japan is a wonderful development and a new avenue of ministry for JEMA. I wonder if there are any reading this article who would like to be involved in teaching English to Korean and Brazilian missionaries with the aim of increasing their effectiveness and growth as God's servants? Please contact the JEMA office.

2 0 0 7 J E M A D A T E B O O K

| Event | Date | Time | Place |
|------------------------------------|-----------|----------------|-------------------------------|
| CPI Prayer Equipping Seminar | April 14 | 10 a.m.-4 p.m. | OMF Ichikawa Guest House |
| CPI Equipping Seminar | May 2 | | Shiga |
| Concert of Prayer | May 10 | 4:00-5:45 p.m. | OMF Hokkaido Center |
| Fresh Encounter with God | May 14 | 9 a.m.-noon | Agape Chapel, New Osaka Hotel |
| Coed Prayer Summit with Akira Mori | May 15-18 | | Okutama Bible Chalet |
| Culture Orientation Seminar | May 21 | 10 a.m.-2 p.m. | OCC |
| West Japan Prayer Summit | May 28-31 | | VIP Alpine Rose Village |
| Prayer Walk | July 2 | | Ginza |
| Concert of Prayer | July 12 | 4-5:45 p.m. | OMF Hokkaido Center |



Gary Fujino is a Strategy Coordinator and Trainer for IMB/Tokyo, working at planting house churches in the greater metropolitan area. Gary has often worked in cooperation with JEMA, CPI, and CLTC since coming to Japan in 1996. Last year, he graduated from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School with the PhD in Intercultural Studies. Gary and his wife, Lynn, live in Shibuya with their four children, Eiji, Ruth, Kimiko and Richard. They will celebrate 20 years of marriage this fall.

The House/Cell Church for Mission in Today's Japan

This issue of the Japan Harvest is dedicated to the living legacy of Dr. Paul G. Hiebert, who entered glory on March 11, 2007 after a long battle with cancer: faithful follower of Jesus, missionary anthropologist and writer extraordinaire, a true friend and teacher for this generation of world Christians.

Guest editor? Me? Writing here instead of Gary Bauman? Not what I had planned! But the Lord has a good sense of humor. “The Gary” is still behind most of this issue. My role is mainly limited to what concerns the house church articles. But my thanks go out to him as editor for generously allowing me to bring this topic to the table.

Why is discussing the house church important for all of us who are working to see Japanese come to Christ in Japan? Because this upstart phenomenon is already a noteworthy part of what we call Christianity in our world today. As Christians, as leaders, I believe this topic is something that all of us in Japan will eventually need to grapple with and address for our own lives and ministries.

“How should we ‘do’ church?” This is a tricky question. But that’s not what our writers for the house church section primarily chose to address. Instead, they asked (and answered) big questions like, “What is the Church?” Or, “What comprises the essence of the Church?” Or, “What are the purposes/functions/roles of those who make up the Church?” While emphasizing their various positions, each contributor focused on fundamental and significant themes: the unity of the Body of Christ—however it takes shape; the need for a balanced and irenic perspective toward diverse expressions within that same universal Church body; and, from both sides of the debate, some piercing yet positive critical evaluations on what really is important for us to “be the Church.”

Having said that, we *are* talking about house churches and/or cell churches, in contrast to more familiar church traditions in Japan. Worldwide, more and more people are moving toward homes as their chosen *location* for worshiping Christ. House churches have been a mainstay in China for a number of decades. Within the Anglican Church in Great Britain, revival via home group meetings has continued since the early 1970’s. A 2006 survey by pollster George Barna found that seven percent of Christians in the United States attend some form of house church on a weekly basis. These examples are only a sampling of similar global movements.

I am an advocate of the house church model. My mission, the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention (“IMB”), shifted to this form

for church planting in the late 1990’s. I myself have been involved with house church starts in the past five years and have experienced the realities of trying out this model in the Japanese context. But this edition of the Japan Harvest is not propaganda for one type of “doing church.” I have intentionally sought out contributors on different sides of the debate, and from many denominations, so that the issues are dealt with fairly and in a well-rounded manner. To my delight, though none of the writers saw the others’ work beforehand, there is amazing harmony as well as good contrast on all that is central to this discussion. You will see what I mean as you read. I am only sorry that we could not include more writers and more content because of space considerations. This is only a sampling, an introduction. Please be aware that not everything is “solved” within (or, between) the articles. You really will see more than one side. But the debate has been placed in a public forum for you to think through and begin to work out for yourself. There is enough here for both skeptics and proponents to be challenged and encouraged. Incidentally, there is no singular definition for “house church,” even among its advocates, so this must be taken into consideration as well.

Our opening article is written by Dr. Ken Cleaver, a church historian who writes insightfully and in non-technical language on what the house church looked like in both the Bible and in the life of the early church during its first centuries. John Mehn follows with a survey of the contemporary evangelical landscape in terms of church models as they relate to the indispensable essentials of The Church. A chart created by pastor Masaomi Sanada helpfully compares cell, house and contemporary models of the church by highlighting their differences. For those who want to hear from practitioners actually “doing it,” we have contributions from Chad Huddleston and Ben Armacost. Huddleston shares about his journey to house church planting in Osaka. The experience he draws from is an excellent case study of what one missionary is doing right now in this country. I asked Armacost, a fellow IMB missionary in Australia, to share his “pros” and “cons” concerning whether “house” is an “authentic expression” of the church. With this, the reader will observe the real issues and paths toward resolution that all of us who are advocates deal with in regards to the practical outwork-

ings of “being (house) church.” Then Dan Iverson gives a conciliatory biblical critique of the house church model as well as a consideration of the viability of its application to the cultural context of Japan itself. Last, but certainly not least, David Husby writes from his travels and living knowledge of house church movements in different parts of Asia. He objectively shares his observations on the strengths and weaknesses of these movements, as well as how culture and context have been integrated into these indigenous expressions of the larger church outside of Japan.

There are some important issues that could not be covered in this overview. One of them is “structure.” Practically speaking, how does a denomination, a mission, a church, deal with the concept of house church? Is the answer integration or synthesis? Incorporation of a “track”? Wholesale restructuring? Outright rejection? All the above propositions are not theoretical. They resulted from actual cases of real groups trying to deal with it on a policy and pragmatic level. Unfortunately,

though significant, this cannot be dealt with here. Another topic only lightly broached is that of context and culture. What does an indigenously pioneered Japanese house church look like? Except for pastor Sanada, all of our contributors are Westerners. But there are actual Japanese house churches and networks in Japan today that were started (and are being led) by Japanese only. For various reasons, they have not been chronicled in this collection of articles. Sociologically as well, how would multiplicities of lay-led house churches affect the societal structure of Japan itself? We have clues from modern Soka Gakkai, Roman Catholic “underground Christian” history, and the Non-church movement—but this must also wait for another time.

William Beckham, a cell church specialist, writes on the controversy caused by the “little churches within the church” movement (ca. 1670 AD) of Philip Jakob Spener, the father of Pietism. “[Spener] knew that reformation of theology had something to do with reformation of church form.” Similar voices are raising similar concerns

for the church today. History shows that Spener’s “pious gatherings” did capitulate eventually to the beckonings of the larger, established church. Martin Luther’s proposition for a “third kind of worship” (in the home) likewise never came to fruition. Just like these early expressions of the house church within the Protestant tradition, the same could be said of the contemporary global house church movement of the 21st century if not for sheer numbers (in tens of millions now) and the seemingly “spontaneous combustion” of Holy-Spirit led movements erupting regularly and in different parts of the globe even today. It is true that the future is undecided as to where this is all heading for the Japanese church—except in the mind and providence of our Lord. Regardless of our “style,” all of us can still pray for Japan that His kingdom come and His will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. To our God alone be all the glory.

Gary

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News Briefs

Two JEMA Member Care Workshops Held in February

The JEMA Member Care Committee hosted Dr. Lee Baas, Psychologist, in the Kanto area from February 17 to March 1. Dr. Baas first visited Japan as counselor with the Resource Center at the 2005 CPI Conference. He brings 30 years of experience in pioneer missions in Africa as well as administration and missionary counseling in the Philippines. On this visit, he gave two workshops on the “Five Secrets of Successful Servants” and spoke at the JEMA Mission Leaders Consultation on “Critical Issues for Mission Leaders.” Lee also met with a significant number of individuals during his visit.

One of the major issues Dr. Baas has observed through his interaction with missionaries is depression among men. At the Mission Leaders Consultation he said this could be a result of long-term stress and burn out. It was Lee’s contention that many missionaries (not only in Japan) do not have too much to do, but *don’t know how to do what they are supposed to do*. Without clear goals, people fill their schedules with things they shouldn’t be doing in order to prove to themselves they are busy.

Dr. Baas donates his time to serve the missionary community. He founded W. I. T. S. (Walking in Their Shoes) International nearly 10 years ago to provide psychological and spiritual care to missionaries around the world. Because he has no ties to any mission agency (other than his own), he is able to maintain complete confidentiality in his counseling relationships. Dr. Baas will be returning to Japan several times during the course of the next year. To inquire about making an appointment for a time when he will be in Japan, preliminary contact may be made by e-mail at witsinternational@yahoo.com. Announcements will be made through the JEMA Member Care Update e-mail regarding future visits.

Power for Living Campaign Stalls, then Takes Off

In January of 2007, the US-based Arthur S. DeMoss Foundation spent millions of dollars throughout Japan advertising the Japanese edition of the book *Power for Living*. This project included television commercials, newspaper inserts, posters in trains—a broad cross-section of Japan’s mass media.

The free book includes the Christian testimonies of celebrities well-known by the Japanese, along with a presentation of the *Four Spiritual Laws* used by Campus Crusade for Christ. To ensure freedom of access to public advertising channels, the Foundation avoids connections with churches and Christian organizations in each country it enters.

As a result of January’s advertising blitz, there was great awareness of the book. But many Japanese were hesitant to call the toll-free number—even with the promise that their contact information would not be used for any other purpose. This left a pent-up demand for the book all across the country.

In a mid-stream strategy change, missionaries and Japanese pastors were given the opportunity to order books for their churches to distribute. This gave Japanese people who had been afraid to order it through the call center the opportunity to obtain it from Christians around them.

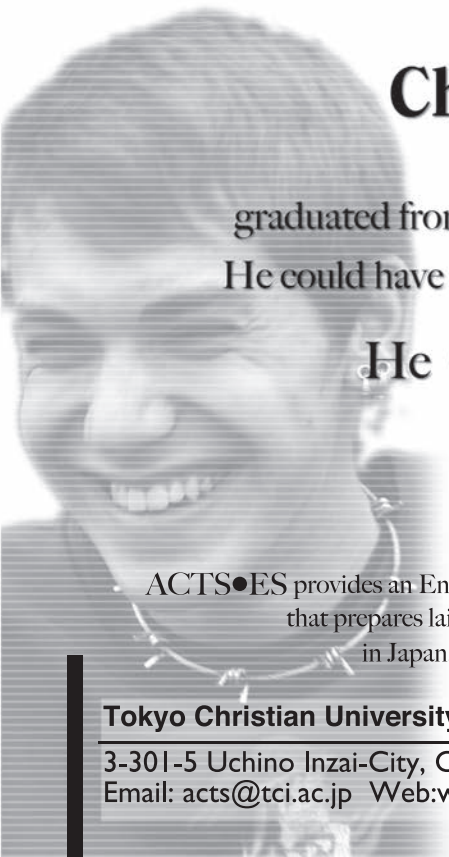
In the first six weeks, only 190,000 individual copies were distributed through the call center, 90% below expectations. After the strategy change, by the end of the first six weeks an additional 560,000 copies had been distributed directly by churches and Christian groups. As this issue of Japan Harvest goes to press, the original printing of 1,000,000 copies is gone, and a second printing of 500,000 books is being distributed.

Evangelistic Scientific Lecture Tour Slated for June 2008

Dr. Werner Gitt of Germany is currently preparing to come to Japan from the end of May 2008 to the end of June 2008 for an evangelistic lecture tour targeting university students and academics. He received his doctorate in engineering from the Technical University of Aachen in 1971, and for the next 30 years was at the Federal Institute of Physics and Technology, where he served as director, professor, and head of information technology.

He has spoken on every major continent on the topic of “Faith and Science,” and since 1984 he has been a regular guest lecturer at the State Independent Theological University of Basle, Switzerland on the subject “The Bible and Science.” His evangelistic lectures in Japan are projected to center on the theme “Information” as discussed in his 256 page book *In the Beginning Was Information*, which may be freely downloaded from the English section of his website (<http://www.werner-gitt.de/>). The Japanese edition is expected to be ready by the end of 2007. However, the Japanese version of the tract “How Can I Get to Heaven?” is posted on Dr. Gitt’s website and is available for download.

JEMA member Juergen Boeck <juergenboeck@gmx.net> is coordinating the lecture tour and may be contacted directly in English, Japanese, or German for more information, including a Japanese translation of Dr. Gitt’s profile. If you are able to suggest a venue or make contact with a college or university in Japan about the possibility of scheduling a lecture, he would welcome that information as well.



Chris Triebel,

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Using Reflection to Leverage Results

*A sample coaching conversation illustrating the power of reflection, by Micael Essenburg
A meeting in a coffee shop near a convenient train station*



Bill: Hey, it's good to see you again, Michael! You know, after our conversation a couple of months ago, I made a real commitment to getting better results in my personal life and in my ministry.

Michael: What's happened since you made your commitment?

Bill: A lot. I've completed several projects, including preparing a set of lessons for the English classes I teach, sending out a newsletter, and updating my photo albums. I've organized several events—a concert, a workshop, and a surprise birthday party for a friend. And I've learned to say “no” to some requests, to respond to my e-mail twice a day (instead of throughout the day), and to start using calendar software to map out how I'll get my goals done.

Michael: Good for you!

Bill: Yeah, I feel pretty good. Focusing on results has helped me see that I really do have limited time and energy. I can't really take on more things, but I still want better results. What can I do to leverage my results?

Michael: Before I respond to your question, can you reflect on what you learned from getting projects done, organizing events, and

learning new things?

Bill: OK. As I said, focusing on results has helped me make better choices about how I focus my time and energy. Making a commitment to ministry results meant saying “no” to some requests—and now I feel OK about saying “no.” I realize I'm saying “no” in order to carry out the ministry God has given me. I feel less guilty and less stressed out about saying “no.”

Ask questions to help others reflect

- What did you learn?
- What insights did you have?
- What discoveries did you make?
- What was helpful?

In the following situations, what questions can you ask to help others reflect?

- An event your team organized is now finished.
- Someone you supervise is reporting on a project she has completed.
- Someone you coach is sharing the progress he has made on a personal goal.
- You've facilitated an all-day strategy meeting. Your organization now has a strategy statement that is clearer and more specific.
- You have just finished collaborating with other board members to identify your organization's core values.

Michael: Pretty powerful learning. What else did you learn?

Bill: That I can save time in the long run by taking time to learn new things. Like calendar software. It took me some time and frustration to learn to use it to map out my goals. But now my plans are a little better. And mapping out my goals helped me finish updating my photo albums.

Michael: What else did you learn?

Bill: I need to make a deeper commitment to achieving my priorities. When I'm not clear on my priorities and when I

haven't made a definite commitment to my priorities, I'm more likely to spend too much time on e-mail. I used the time I saved on doing e-mail to work on my friend's party and to get my newsletter done.

Michael: You've learned some key things. How can you use your learning to leverage your results?

Bill: I think I'll continue reviewing and documenting my priorities, making a plan for each priority, and entering each plan into my calendar. That will help me make sure I'll get the results I want. It'll also help me know how much time I have available to say “yes” to appropriate requests.

Michael: That sounds good. Earlier you asked me, “What can I do to leverage my results?” How would you answer your question now?

Bill: Oh! I guess I just answered myself, didn't I? I can leverage my results by reflecting on them and applying what I learn from my reflection. I need to do that all the time!

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Prayer Focus

By Karol Whaley

Pray in the Spirit at all times with all kinds of prayers, asking for everything you need. To do this you must always be ready and never give up. Always pray for all God's people.
Ephesians 6:14 (NCV)

In my last column, I shared the necessity of expanding our prayer efforts to include the people in our local area as well as the millions in Japan we've never met. This time I would like to discuss the attitudes we should have when we pray for the Japanese.

Brokenness – *“The sacrifice you want is a broken spirit. A broken and repentant heart, O God, you will not despise.” Psalm 51:17 (NLT)*

The thing I feel is most necessary in prayer for the Japanese is coming before the Lord in brokenness. When my husband and I first came to Japan we believed that reaching Japanese for Christ using the Japanese language would be easy if we applied ourselves to our language study and learned tips from those who were already on the field. We soon discovered that even our best efforts could not achieve the results we desired. We made mistakes in the language, and Japanese were not always open to hearing a gospel witness.

In those days we cried out to the Lord and admitted our weaknesses by saying, “We can't do this work. It's too difficult.” The Lord had been waiting for us to reach that conclusion so he could do the impossible through us. True to his Word, he made a way for us out of the wilderness and helped us to see small victories along the way.

Twenty-three years later, I would have to admit that this experience with God has reoccurred numerous times. We have had other times of saying, “This job is too difficult or too lonely.” There are so many lost Japanese, without hope and purpose in life, all around us. How can we reach them?

What can we do that we haven't already done? We found that when we lay our brokenness out before the Father, he reminds of our great need for his help. He gently shows us that he has a plan and he has the power to accomplish that plan. All we need to do is be obedient and trust in him.

Holiness – *“Long ago, even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes.” Ephesians 1:4 (NLT)*

Another thing I feel is necessary in prayer for the Japanese is our personal holiness. We need to come before the Father with clean hands and a pure heart. Are we harboring something in our hearts against a fellow worker or an acquaintance? Is there something hidden in our hearts that we haven't shared with our Father—perhaps disappointment or an anxiety concerning his timing? Sometimes we might need to confess a loss of passion or conviction that we will ever see Japanese come to Christ in great numbers.

Holiness is a personal issue between us and God. Only God truly knows what is inside each of our hearts. He wants us to confess our humanness to him – our imperfections and sin. He wants to remind us that we too needed his salvation when we were without Christ. As we pray for Japanese to experience his love and grace, we must show them that we, too, have experienced that same love and grace. Hopefully, they will see God's love and grace in our daily living through our speech and our actions, which will draw them to the Savior.

Faithfulness – *“Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.” Galatians 6:9 (TNIV)*

Lastly, I believe that faithfulness is necessary in prayer for the Japanese. We must not grow weary in well doing. Prayer is the way that God has provided for us to partner with him for the salvation of the Japanese. When we agree upon what the Father already has in his heart to do, it can impact our work in a tremendous way. Let's pray “big.” If we can ask the Lord for a new church to be started, why not ask him to start a multiplication of reproducing churches? Is one harder than the other for the mighty God we serve? Which one of these does his heart desire to see?

Prayer is the key to reaching Japanese for Christ. We need to be faithful to pray day and night for their salvation. We need to be faithful to thank the Lord for every small and big blessing that we see each day. We need to be faithful to bring the difficulties, the insurmountable obstacles before him in prayer repeatedly, asking him to show us his plan to move forward and make progress. We need to be faithful because the spiritual battle will defeat us if we don't stand and resist the enemy and his subtle ways.

Our attitudes are important as we pray for the Japanese. As we pour out our hearts to him with brokenness, holiness, and faithfulness in prayer for the salvation of Japanese, I believe we will see the great harvest that we long for!



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Worship in the Early Church: From Private Homes to Public Halls

by Kenneth Cleaver

In the centuries before Jesus came to the earth there was a dispute between Samaritans and Jews as to where the designated place was for God's people to worship. When a Samaritan woman asked Jesus about this issue, he responded, "The hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father... But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." (John 4:21-24, ESV)

For hundreds of years, God's people had been gathering in Jerusalem on a regular basis to celebrate the annual festivals. These celebrations were formal in nature with many specific practices dating back to Moses' giving of the law. Every Sabbath, however, those who lived far away from Jerusalem met in their own local synagogues. Their routine was less formal, and there was more of a community spirit present in the events of the day.

The Christian church in Jerusalem formally began on the Day of Pentecost as described in Acts 2. At first these Jewish Christians daily met openly in the city and in the temple itself and continued to fellowship from house to house (v. 46). Eventually, however, persecution from the Jews drove them out of the public areas and into more private settings such as homes and underground burial caverns. By A.D. 60 Christians in Jerusalem were having such difficulty surviving that they had to rely on funds collected from Christians in other parts of the empire (2 Corinthians 8-9).

The story was much the same for early churches among the Gentiles. Apostolic missionaries traveled around the Roman Empire spreading the gospel. It was customary for

these Jewish missionaries to first speak to local Jews informally, then in their synagogues. As newly converted Christians were persecuted by those in the synagogue who did not accept the gospel, they met apart from the synagogues in their own homes with fellow believers, both Jewish and Gentile.

Epistles were written to a singular "church" in each city, but this was usually comprised of several house churches meeting separately in the same general area. Some of the wealthiest houses had large rooms that could accommodate fifty people, but most local congregations were smaller. Most of the persecution of Christians sanctioned by the Roman government was local and sporadic, but later in the third century there were a few occasions in which it was empire-wide and systematic. Persecution tended to drive formal Christian meetings out of the public eye and into more private settings.

The first known Christian church as a building whose purpose was exclusively intended for formal worship and gathering of Christians was in Dura-Europos on the eastern edge of the Roman Empire. In the early third century, following a destructive military invasion of the town, a private house was remodeled into a church building complete with a courtyard, a sanctuary, and a baptismal. It was not until the era of Constantine in the early fourth century, however, that church buildings began appearing in areas where Christians were allowed to meet publicly on Sundays.

House churches, however, had fostered a less-structured environment. Christians felt less like they were "going to" church and more like church was in their living room. Attending church was not a duty but a part of their regular lives. While Christians were studying God's Word and worshiping Him, they were looking at family rooms, bedrooms, and kitchens; and they were smelling laundry and food. This atmosphere promoted Christian thought and behavior as a matter of everyday life. In this informal environment congregational participation in learning and worship was more common. Church was one's "home away from home" where the needy received help like a family member rather than a neighbor. There were regular prayers and songs that were recited, but these were merely suggestions for worship rather than rigid formulas necessary to

church membership.

While the lack of structure resulted in warm and friendly meetings, it had its problems too. With increased congregational participation and less formal ties to other house churches it was easy for heretical ideas to go unchallenged. Poor theology took longer to notice and address in these smaller congregations. With more leaders in smaller congregations the likelihood of proper training of the leaders was also a problem. This led, for example, to the type of embarrassing guidance Paul was obliged to give Corinthian Christians regarding incest, suing one another, and divorce in 1 Corinthians 5-7.

When Christians began meeting publicly in their own church buildings in the early fourth century, a number of things began to change. Sunday meetings became more structured. The hymns that were sung and the creeds that were cited were part of a weekly agenda each church kept on a regular basis. In the larger basilicas great, formal processions began and concluded worship services. The congregation stood, sat, and knelt at designated times during the worship services. Meetings were planned rigidly to maximize the worship experience of the larger congregations in a specified amount of time. With fewer leaders shepherding fewer, but larger congregations, they could afford to be better trained and to dominate the teaching and preaching in the regular meetings. This could protect the individual congregations from heresy, but it also had the potential of putting too much power in the hands of a single leader. The leaders of larger congregations had more influence over the inter-church councils that met to discuss church doctrine and polity. House churches in larger cities disappeared, and even the smaller rural churches came under the influence of the leaders of their nearest urban churches.

This pattern of church growth continued in other cultures and eras throughout the church's history with much the same results. When Christianity is first introduced to a new area of the world, churches first meet in private settings. Persecution of Christians tends to drive them into houses for their regular meetings. Eventually, when Christianity becomes an acceptable religion to practice in public, church buildings tend to breed more formalized practices and more

stable doctrine. Jesus was right: the time has come and is now that those who worship God worship Him in spirit and in truth. While the formality of the building and style of worship may vary, it is the same God Who is worshiped and the same truth that is taught.

Kenneth Cleaver (Ph.D. in Church History, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School) is an Associate Professor of Church History and Systematic Theology at Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia. He and his wife, Amy, have “four really neat kids”, Sarah, Gabrielle, Benjamin, and Joshua. Our thanks to Dr. Cleaver for writing this article on the house church in the Bible and during the first centuries of the Church especially for this edition of the Japan Harvest.

A Perspective on Church Models

by John W. Mehn

Today there is a growing understanding of the true nature of the church worldwide. There is a rediscovering, a recovering and a renewal regarding the doctrine of the church. In our rapidly changing world, many desire to see Biblical Christianity incarnated in the church and relevant in modern culture. As a result, there has been a renewed interest in the nature, essence, and the meaning of the church as it is expressed locally. This has caused many people to again search the Scriptures, study church history, rethink the church theologically, and engage in practical experiments with new models of the church.

New paradigms and perspectives on the church have led many leaders and churches to develop new models as contemporary examples of the local church. This reformation in the understanding of the local church as it has been traditionally understood and practiced often is accompanied by a renewal of church organization and infrastructure. The desire to achieve a healthy, culturally relevant, growing, indigenous, multiplying church has resulted in many shifts in emphasis and application.

Some shifts have placed more emphasis on the church as the people of God rather than the church as an institution. More

emphasis has been given to the church as an organism created by the Spirit rather than as an organization created by the work of man. Many have moved away from the cathedral or parish model of the church to more organic types of churches, especially in relation to the forms and structures of the church. In many cases, there has been a shift to a simpler and more basic type of church. Many are also rediscovering the missional nature of the church and the churches' missional commitment to its community and the world. This has resulted in different philosophical models of ministry, types of church structure, and styles of organization. These are affecting every aspect of the church—including its leadership, activities, and actual physical location.

Since the Book of Acts and throughout church history there have been many different types and models of the church. There are several newer models and paradigms which have developed in North America, Latin America, Europe, and Asia which have forced many pastors and lay people worldwide to rediscover the Biblical nature of the church. The end result has been the development by some of more missional models of the traditional church, such as the seeker-sensitive model or the purpose-driven model. Others have opted for a more basic organic model of the church, such as the cell church and the house church. There are several important points we should remember:

1. Our focus must be on Biblical principles, not models.

We should always be unified, majoring on Biblical principles and non-negotiable essentials of the Church. We should then minor on applications, examples, and models. Principles ultimately are central, not church models.

2. God loves and honors his Church no matter what model.

Rejoice in the variety that God has given to his Church, the Bride he deeply loves. No matter what type of church, as fellow believers and members of God's Church, accept them. God is working. In spite of our minor differences, God highly values the unity of his Church.

3. There is always much we can learn from each other, no matter what the model.

We acknowledge there is much to learn from other models even if it is not necessarily the model we would personally advocate. Taking a fresh look at the essential principles of the Church can and should radically affect your current practices. Each of us should take care with assumptions—especially over definitions of what constitutes a local church, leadership roles and qualifications, church activities and requirements, and physical locations of ministry. Cultivating this learning posture will protect us from potentially elitist and judgmental attitudes, which may lead to disruptiveness. Some people are trailblazers in applying Biblical principles more consistently. This may necessitate some patience with other believers who are not nearly as far along. For some believers some of these proposed changes can appear threatening to current church systems. In faith, we must learn and then embrace those principles and changes that are necessary to bring God glory in his Church.

4. Accept that one model does not fit every context.

We affirm that not every model or application is appropriate for every situation. Depending on the context, just as in the New Testament, there are many ways to “do church.” The church is not like a McDonald's franchise, where every church should be exactly the same. The true mark of a local church is that it should engage with its cultural context to transform it.

5. Understand that transitioning models is not easy, or sometimes even possible.

Many experts believe that it is nearly impossible to transition a more standard church model into a cell or house church. However, many of them advocate applying some of the principles found in these models to help bring renewal to the standard model. Experts also insist that a standard church can serve as an effective base in planting more simple cell and house churches. We must recognize that for various reasons some may not currently have the freedom to change or transition to another church model.

6. Realize future models will certainly look different.

Models and applications of the church do change with time. Therefore we must be open to what God may be doing in the future. Even though they are relatively recent, there are already several sub-models of cell churches and house churches that have developed.

The Japan Church Planting Institute (CPI) has always endeavored to focus on

Biblical principles and as a result CPI does not promote or teach only one model, style, or church methodology. Each year we attempt to present several models at the CPI conference and include them in our training manual and materials. Interacting with CPI facilitators and leadership can be a helpful way to come up with good examples of appropriate models in the various Japanese contexts we face. Three models, cell, house, and standard (purpose-driven) church,

will be presented specifically at the 2007 conference in two sessions in the Preparing Learning Track. The dream of CPI is to be a broad-based evangelical movement for church planting multiplication.

To help apply this in a concrete way, here is an example of one pastor's study comparing three of the most common local church models currently in operation in Japan.

| Item | Contemporary church | House church | Cell church |
|---|--|--|--|
| Concept | Building & program-centered | Small group = simple church | "Celebration" church and cells |
| Church purpose | An emphasis on growth of the church itself? | Rapid multiplication by division of cells | Multiplication of cells and church growth |
| Primary meeting place | Inside the church building | Homes. Wherever. | Believers' homes |
| Primary activities | Lord's Day worship; Sunday prayer meeting | Worship in homes. Daily fellowship. | Cell meetings; daily fellowship |
| Investment in buildings | Sizable | Almost nothing | Limited |
| Church membership | Formal, "official" | Informal, not required | Stresses trust within each cell |
| Primary methods of evangelism | Evangelistic meetings, tracts, seed sowing, evangelism (by bringing people to church) | Lifestyle witnessing (mission of the gospel), disciples | Each cell has its own strategic evangelistic plan. ("Go and make disciples") |
| Pastoring style | The ideal is one pastor caring for all members. Members are over-dependent? | Mutuality of pastoring, in accordance with gifting | Cell leaders take on pastoral responsibilities, hierarchical system of care |
| Clergy and lay differences | Marked. Clergy are specially qualified. Can laypersons be satisfied by attendance only? | None. There is only a difference of roles (principle of priesthood of believers) | Almost none. Differences of roles. The leadership of the pastor is needed. |
| Primary job of the pastor | Do good sermons. Lead the church. | Cultivate disciples from the "harvest" of unbelievers; multiply leaders/house churches | Be an example for the believer's lifestyle. Model. |
| Expectations for members (standard of evaluation) | Attendance in worship; tithing; doing ministry in line with the plan (program) of the church; knowledge of the Bible | Evangelism of neighbors, a total personal commitment to Christ | Evangelism of neighbors, a total personal commitment to Christ |

*Created by Masaomi Sanada
References: Rev. Ogasawara, Wolfgang Simson*

House Church Planting in Osaka: A Contemporary Case Study

by Chad Huddleston

The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.

Luke 10:2

A businessman gets church planting training, and a week later when a fellow businessman comes and shares some problems with him, he steps out on a limb and prays boldly with the man that Jesus would help him with these specific problems. Before the man reaches his home, he “just happens” to receive a call and one of his “insurmountable problems” is solved. Within a week he is baptized and one week later his wife is baptized. The two families come together to form a new community in their city.

A teacher takes a huge risk and invites seven of his students to “Changing Life Camp,” an intensive camp intended to help Christians be set free from sins, wounds and spiritual attacks and really begin living as disciples. Four of them get saved and a church begins meeting after school at McDonald’s and later at one of the student’s homes.

A single mom receives training and begins to pray for her city. She opens up her home and hosts a moms’ and kids’ English class with a Bible time. She leads two of her friends to Christ, and together they begin a new church in her home.

A teacher, after reading a Christian novel, is invited by a friend to visit a house church. She comes to church for the first time, and toward the end of house church during a time of one-on-one prayer she begins to cry. Later, over a late-night dinner she shares that during that time of prayer she felt like she “met God.” The gospel is shared and that same night at midnight, she is baptized in an apartment ofuro (bathtub). Within a

year she has started outreach on her school campus, has helped to lead several people to Christ, and is helping to lead a house church.

A businessman opens up his home and business for a church. His whole family is saved. Next, his sister’s children are saved and his sister opens up a room in her shop to be used as a place of prayer. In a short time two staff members are saved and a time of weekly worship is started right there.

All of these stories happened in Japan over the last two years as God worked through “regular Japanese” who opened up their lives, homes and businesses to him. Like a virus, spreading unseen along lines of relationships, God is raising up an army in Japan. Under the radar and unknown to many, there is a small, yet growing force of workers being raised up for his Kingdom. From Okinawa to Hokkaido, small communities of disciples are meeting in homes, offices, campuses, karaoke boxes, coffee shops, parks, anywhere to worship God, minister to one another and be the light of Christ to those around them. Known by many names – “house church,” “simple church,” “organic church,” or my favorite, just “church” - these small groups of disciples are uniquely positioned to be used by God to expand his Kingdom across Japan. I truly believe the harvest in Japan is plentiful but the problem is that there are too few people who see themselves as harvest workers.

Transitioning to House Churches

In August 1998, my wife, Jennifer, and I moved to Japan with a vision to start simple churches. However, because of many factors, including our own inexperience and lack of language ability, that vision was put on the back burner. By 2002, with five short-term teammates working with us, we had become a gaijin (“foreigner”)-led and centered fellowship. We had lots of big events and, by Japanese standards, had fairly good-sized numbers, including many seekers, coming to our Sunday worship. However, we were failing in the core areas of discipleship, leadership training and multiplication. We Americans were working hard at reaching out, and we were seeing some people come to Christ, but we weren’t seeing many (any!?) Japanese effectively sharing their faith. I could see the handwriting on the wall. We were on the path to being forever American-

dependent and were going to have to create increasingly entertaining worship times and events to keep people coming – none of which I had a vision or desire to do.

In the fall of 2002, God sent me on an intense journey of prayer, study and reflection to search the scriptures afresh asking, “What is church?” As I studied, I became convinced that Biblically, “church” has three interrelated meanings: (1) the body of Christ throughout the world, (2) the “City Church” (e.g. the church of Jerusalem, the church of Corinth) - a united body on mission for God in a given city or region, and (3) the church that met “house to house,” where real body life, teaching, fellowship and the use of gifts by all members took place. I felt a strong call to aim toward these latter two ideas of church. I was convicted that God was calling us to transition away from some of the ways that we had been working and focus on the basics of discipleship and starting house churches while aiming toward being a city church.

However, passing that vision on to others turned out to be a challenge. We made the transition to house churches in April 2003, just as our American teammates were leaving. The effect on the Japanese Christians and seekers was significant as we went from a (generally) vibrant weekly worship service with an international flavor to three small house churches that met at different times and were entirely in Japanese. Some people were intimidated by the change in expectations. Whereas before they could just come, sit, and listen, now they were expected to join in on discussions, prayer times and ministering to one another. It was a real time of refinement. We lost some of the people who were coming primarily for international fellowship and English or to hear an encouraging message. It was a very painful time as some of those whom we had spent the most time with began going to other churches or stopped coming altogether. For nearly a year, we did not see anyone come to Christ. Nevertheless, feeling confident in God and believing that he was calling us to go in this direction at this time helped to keep us going.

Not long after we transitioned to house churches, I met a young guy named Yuji Hara, who had a heart for house church planting and discipleship. At the time he was working with a church in another part of

Osaka. We both had a desire to see something happen in an area of Osaka called “American-mura,” where many young people hang out (an Osaka version of Shibuya), so we began meeting there weekly to prayer-walk. Over the course of a year, through times of intense prayer, fellowship and sharing God’s vision with one another, God united our hearts. He was released by his church for church planting, and together in the summer of 2004, we re-launched the church as a network of house churches, named “Be One.” Since that time God has, in amazing ways, brought other workers to this area who have similar visions and passions. Together, we have begun to increasingly focus on discipleship, intentional church planting, prayer and evangelism. Though we have yet to see many of our ideals and visions attained and we have failed many times over, we have tasted enough to be excited about what God is doing and to continue following him on this journey.

What Does a House Church Look Like?

When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church.

1 Corinthians 14:26

House churches are intentionally simple in structure, but can be surprisingly deep in content. Structurally they are simple because the hope is that any Christian would be able to see himself or herself as capable of teaming up with others to be sent out to start a new church. We want church to be transferable and easily multipliable. We do not want to model church in any way that makes it unnecessarily complicated. House churches have real potential for going deep because they take place where real life happens. It is harder to “fake it” when everyone comes into your home and you spend that much time in each other’s lives. House churches attempt to take Paul’s teaching that church is not intended to be led by some elite group of people, but that “everyone” should come with something to share. Many people hear this and assume that in house churches there is no teaching and no leadership. This is not the case. There is teaching and leader-

ship, but it takes different forms. One of the primary goals of leadership in this context is, rather than a top-down, “I-lead-you-follow,” it is a bottom-up attempt to empower people to discern God’s will for their lives and for their churches and begin to live it out.

There is a segment of the “house church movement” that is really more interested in home church rather than house churches. Some are coming out of a bad experience with a church, are throwing off authority, or feel they can “do it better.” In my opinion, these motivations will likely lead to the starting of a single house church full of malcontents. This is not at all what we are talking about and hoping for in Japan. We see house churches as a useful (and we think, Biblical) model of missions. We hope and expect the churches to grow, expand and multiply. In our situation, we gather the house churches in our network together several times a year for a large “Celebration” worship time, sometimes with other house church networks too, so that they will be able to understand that they are part of a bigger movement of God that is happening in this city.

“For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.” Matthew 18:20

No two house churches are the same. They all seem to have different characteristics, strengths and weaknesses. Generally, we are finding that in Japan five to twelve people is about the right size for openness and real heart-to-heart communication. More or less is possible, but once there are more than around 12 people, it becomes difficult for quieter people to share freely. Fewer than five can work if the people are really committed disciples; otherwise it is easy for this small of a group to lose heart and die.

House church tends to be rather casual. Much of the teaching of Jesus and the early church happened in the course of normal daily life – often around a shared meal. So in the house churches we often gather in a circle with drinks and snacks or a meal. We share “God stories”—stories of what God has been doing in our own and other’s lives. These stories hopefully help us to see how God is using others to reach out and share the gospel. We share our needs and hurts and pray for one another, asking God to give us words and wisdom for others. Depend-

ing on the group size, we often break down into groups of two or three people and pray for each other. We sing, if possible. Some churches use a guitar or keyboard, others just sing a cappella. Some churches meet in places where singing is not always possible, like a restaurant or café - in these cases they may use a creative approach of speaking praise to God or writing out praises in haiku or some other form. We read and discuss the Word together. Most often this is in the form of an interactive Bible study rather than one person teaching, though from time-to-time preaching may happen too. Some churches choose a book of the Bible and work their way through it week by week. This is especially good for young Christians who are facilitating. However, if there is something that emerges from the praise reports or conversation that needs to be addressed, then we can be flexible and open to an appropriate place in Scripture. The key to the Bible time is that we hear from God for our lives today. If it is just a time to increase our head knowledge, it will not be very meaningful to people. Our time in the living Word of God is meant to affect our real lives. We take the Lord’s Supper together to remember the real reason why we are gathered. We use the gifts that God has given us, including our spiritual as well as financial gifts for the building up of the body. Because we see each house church as a church, we empower them to baptize, partake of the Lord Supper and take up a collection, deciding themselves how to use the money.

“Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.” Matthew 28:19-20

Really, It’s About Disciplemaking

From my perspective, much of church planting is based on the “attractional” model: “Build it and they will come.” Set up an event and gather people. However, Jesus’ method was to gather people for a very limited time and then scatter them. He sent out the 12 disciples and then the 72 two by two. Later, he called on all of us to “go” and make disciples. He didn’t say to go and make churches, but disciples. Church is what happens when two or more of those disciples

come together in Jesus' name. Rather than trying to attract people to come to "our church," using simple church concepts, we can go, make disciples and begin churches right there in the new believer's setting, reaching out to people in their web of relations,

At the same time as we have tried to "lower the bar" of the structure of church, making it easier for people to see themselves helping to start and lead a church, we have tried to "raise the bar" of what it means to be a disciple. We teach that church is much more than a weekly meeting, but is something that should be on-going throughout the week as we interact and minister to one another. We encourage everyone to go through an intensive time of discipleship training, using materials originally developed by Mitsuo Fukuda of the RAC (Rethinking Authentic Christianity) Network. This training takes people through the basics of the Christian life all the way to challenging and training them to go and make disciples as well as preparing them to lead house churches. We also encourage people to be a part of an accountability group of two or three people (Life Transformation Group) that provides a place for continual spiritual growth and protection. And we challenge them to reach out to their friends and neighbors. Many of those who have been touched by God are taking up the challenge to live as disciples and are sharing their faith and even starting simple churches. Though not all,

some of the new Christians who do not have any experience of church outside of "simple church" are quickly out-pacing many others in their spiritual growth and willingness to be used by God. They have made the radical decision to be disciples.

We desire to see disciples who make disciples. Those of us who are enthusiastic about a certain model of church need to be careful not to get our priorities wrong. The primary emphasis must be on God and our need to obey him (be disciples), rather than on propagating a specific style of church. Our call is to convert people to Jesus and not to a model. Again, I believe church is the result of making disciples and not the other way around.

I believe God's desire is to see his Kingdom expand across this nation. As we see more disciples making disciples, and churches that have a vision to send out their people to start new churches, then, I believe we will begin to see this nation turned around and reached for Christ. Jesus is the answer for Japan! My belief is that the simple, multipliable, real-life structure of house churches can be used powerfully in seeing that great harvest become a reality.

Chad & Jennifer Huddleston are house church planting missionaries living in Osaka, working with "Be One," a network of house churches. They have been in Japan since 1998. They have 4 children: Anika, Josiah, Caleb and Katia.


House Churches: Are They Authentic Expressions of the Church?

By Benjamin J. Armacost

Are house churches actually churches, or are they merely imposters which have been invented to excuse believers from their responsibility to established churches? The groundswell of house churches in recent years, particularly in areas where larger congregations have been long established, has generated much controversy. Some people are embracing the new model, while others are becoming concerned that their Christian heritage is being compromised. In order to resolve this matter, one must examine carefully the compelling arguments on both sides of this hotly debated issue.

Support for House Churches

A growing number of people support the concept of house churches. Key proponents include writers such as Wolfgang Simson, Tony and Felicity Dale, Robert and Julia Banks, Neil Cole, and David Garrison. Support for house churches is based largely



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on the significance of these groups in early Christianity. As the New Testament church was primarily a movement of informal gatherings in homes, the house church remains a model that more closely resembles the gatherings of earlier believers than does the institutional model.

House churches gather in places where people already invest much of their time from day to day, reducing the compartmental nature of church services meeting in dedicated buildings. Paul Vieira has said, "God wants to meet every person in the place where they live."¹ People are more likely to be obedient to God if they exercise faith in their everyday world. Garrison stated that in the first centuries, "when the church left the home it left something vital behind: intimate contact with every facet of daily life."²

Participation is greater in house churches. In New Testament times, house churches incorporated entire households including male and female, young and old, masters and slaves, schooled and uneducated. It is the nature of house churches to provide a highly participative environment where people are more likely to be engaged in discussion and mutual learning.³ This level of participation extends to unbelievers who can safely explore the person and work of Jesus, particularly those who would be averse to attending a larger, formalized congregation.

Accountability is elevated in small, face-to-face settings such as house churches. Simson has suggested that Western patterns "allow people to gain intellectual control over things and then manipulate them according to their desire" as in a monologue, whereas the smaller environment encourages participation and raises the bar of accountability.⁴

House churches are simple and inexpensive. In an age where organizational leadership and finances are at a premium, these are desirable qualities for a church. But taken a step further, the undue emphasis on structures in the conventional church have led to the canonizing of the wineskin. Paul Vieira has stated it well: "In our Western grid of 'church,' we too are requiring unbelievers to first embrace our religious culture to find Christ. Church comes first, and Christ is second."⁵ The relaxed structure of house churches helps to keep the emphasis on Jesus rather than on the organization.

Pastors of mission-minded churches send the members of their congregations out to the community every week, urging them to share their faith and bring light into the darkness. House churches are physically a step closer to the community; this is increasingly important in the secular West where people are becoming progressively resistant to "going to church." Howard Snyder has asserted:

A small group of eight to twelve people meeting together informally in homes is the most effective structure for the communication of the gospel in modern secular-urban society. Such groups are better suited to the mission of the church in today's urban world than are traditional church services, institutional church programs, or the mass communications media.⁶

Following the incarnation of Jesus into the world, house churches put the gospel closer to those who needed to hear it—people who would otherwise never darken the doors of an institutional style church.⁷

A vitally important part of this discussion concerns church planting movements. The use of house churches is among the ten universal elements of a CPM, and a cursory look at any CPM reveals the importance of small gatherings with a simple style meeting in everyday places. Garrison observed, "House churches create an atmosphere that fosters Church Planting Movement formation."⁸ These churches are positioned to reach people at a high rate of speed, and they tend to reproduce quickly. This is largely due to the fact that they are not burdened with the maintenance issues that come with dedicated physical facilities. They are simple enough to be started and led by ordinary people. In addition, house churches take advantage of small beginnings; Jim Montgomery said, "Even a congregation of 20 adult believers filled with the Spirit and on fire for evangelism can impact a village of six or seven hundred people over a period of time."⁹ House churches are an important component of church planting movements.

Another advantage of house churches is their ability to remain relatively inconspicuous. This reduces anxiety for those not accustomed to formal church gatherings,

and in places unfriendly to Christianity, there is less susceptibility to persecution. Garrison has stated, "Christians living in hostile settings credit the fluid nature of house churches with helping them survive the ravages of persecution. Staying small, decentralized, and mobile allows them to remain a step ahead of their persecutors."¹⁰ The quiet presence of a house church is far more resilient to persecution not only because it can remain relatively inconspicuous, but because it can develop a stronger core of disciples who will be better prepared to face the difficulties of opposition.

Opposition to House Churches

While churches based in homes have a well-founded legacy and provide a multitude of benefits, the movement is not without criticism on a number of fronts. As one might expect, there is a general sense of suspicion and a lack of support for house churches among those who belong to conventional churches. First, there are negative connotations attached to the concept of the house church due to the reactionary nature of some home-based groups. Neil Cole has avoided the term "house church" because of the stigma of "angry, non-conformist people who isolate themselves from everyone."¹¹

Another point of contention is the perceived undoing of the church. J. Lee Grady has branded the simplified concept of church a "defective thesis."¹² More rudimentary expressions of faith seem preposterous to many who have been immersed in the fully developed structures of the established church. It is significant to note that misanthropologist Donald McGavran's writings are remarkably quiet on the issue of house churches. The church growth movement has leaned toward the larger-congregation model rather than that of the house church. This thinking continues to flourish among proponents of the megachurch and will continue to broaden the gap between institutional and simple church models.

Much of the opposition to the house church concept concerns its limited structure. Because of its simplicity, it is thought to lack the robustness of the traditional church. Many of those who support cell model churches, including Ralph Neighbour and Peter Wagner, have reservations about independent house churches. While their

endorsement of cell churches reflects many of the beneficial components of house churches, they are reluctant to support the maverick leadership of these groups.

An outspoken criticism of home-based churches is their apparent lack of accountability. Members of established churches appreciate strong lines of accountability with other churches and denominational bodies, while most house churches would be reluctant to claim any such affiliation. Opponents claim that people in house churches do not value Christian unity and apparently wish to remain disconnected. Another point of contention is related to this limited accountability: they purportedly lack the safeguards necessary to prevent heretical teachings. In this writer's experience, most participants in established churches tend to reject the idea of house churches on these grounds alone. Thus, the threat of heresy is one of the biggest barriers to the acceptance of this concept.

Steps to Resolution

At first glance, the vast tally of benefits makes a persuasive argument for accepting the validity of the house church. However, such an expression of the church should not be embraced blindly without considering the valid points made by its opponents.

Many house churches, particularly those which are geographically close to established churches, were formed as believers became disenchanted with their churches. Typically, these reactionary groups tend to be inwardly focused, reclusive, and sterile. Healthy house churches can be shaped through a process of equipping leaders to emulate the qualities of the New Testament church and keep evangelism on the forefront.

The opponents of house churches often resist their simple structure. Simplicity is beneficial and lends itself to reproducibility, allowing the Holy Spirit to work unhindered by manmade barriers. However, too little structure can result in a spineless church. Albert Einstein is credited with saying, "Everything should be made as simple as possible, but not any simpler." Leaders must avoid the temptation to oversimplify the church.

Accountability will always be an issue in house churches due to their relatively disassociated nature. House church leaders should be trained, seek mentors, and establish

accountability to apostolic leaders as well as to other like-minded churches. While the critics of house church fear the infiltration of false teaching, no type or style of church will avoid the problems of heresy completely. Paul G. Hiebert stated the case for churches to be self-theologizing, that is, allowed to engage in the Scriptures on their own.¹³ There must be a point at which people are given freedom with the Word of God. Neil Cole stated it well: "Perhaps the very thing we have been threatened by most—releasing the Scriptures into the hands of common Christians—is indeed the very thing that will slow the threat of heresy."¹⁴

In this writer's personal experience, house churches have offered marvelous benefits and a promising future. However, this does not contravene the need for formal churches. The house church issue is not a matter of "either-or" but rather "both-and." Established churches are here to stay regardless of the proliferation of home-based ones. In reality, it will take many kinds of churches to reach the multitudes in what has become a socially complex world, and there is room for many expressions of the Kingdom of God. In the end, what is most important is not model, but allegiance to Jesus and obedience to the Great Commission. Garrison has said it well: "Whether 10 members or 10,000, the church is best characterized—not by its size or forms—but by its passionate commitment to the Lordship of Jesus Christ and the fulfillment of his Great Commission."¹⁵

House churches have been an important part of the fabric of Christianity since New Testament times. In spite of their relative scarcity for many centuries, house churches have re-emerged throughout the world. With their rapid increase alongside established churches, many people are concerned as to whether these small, informal congregations are authentic expressions of the church. This question has resulted in much discussion and debate with valid points on both sides. However, there are many benefits in support of house churches, and the fact remains that they maintain a vital role in mission today. With accountability, training, and a passionate commitment to the Great Commission, the house church movement holds great promise in the fulfillment of Christ's mandate to make disciples of all the nations.

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Endnotes

1. Paul Vieira, *Jesus Has Left the Building* (Woodland Park, CO: Karis Publishing, 2006), 107.
2. David Garrison, *Church Planting Movements* (Midlothian, VA: WIGTake Resources, 2004), 214.
3. This is a significant quality of POUCH church training developed for Cambodian churches in the 1990s: Participative Bible study, Obedience, Unpaid leaders, Cell groups meeting in House churches.
4. Simson, 85.
5. Vieira, 92.
6. Howard A. Snyder, *The Problem of Wine Skins* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1975), 139.
7. Eddie Gibbs and Ian Coffey, *Church Next: Quantum Changes in Christian Ministry* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2000), 81.
8. Garrison, 192.
9. Jim Montgomery, *Dawn 2000: 7 Million Churches to Go* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1989), 81.
10. Garrison, 273.
11. Neil Cole, *Organic Church: Growing Faith Where Life Happens* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005), 23. This refers predominantly to house churches in North America, as it does not describe accurately the movement outside the Western context.
12. J. Lee Grady, "Fire In My Bones: George Barna's Dangerous Proposal," <http://forums.strang.com/viewtopic.php?t=7564> (accessed 12 December 2006).
13. Paul G. Hiebert, *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), 195-207.
14. Neil Cole, "A Critical Issue Article: The Threat of Heresy in the Organic Church Movement," http://www.cmresources.org/articles/keeping_heresy_out.asp (accessed 14 December 2006).
15. Garrison, 261.

The House Church Movement: Is it Biblical, and Does it Fit Japan?

By Dan Iverson

Even though I was asked to do an article critiquing the house church movement in Japan, I do not want to *oppose* the house church movement. I do praise the Lord for whatever good things he is doing in this needy land and around the world through the house church movement. I want to continue to learn, but also to raise some questions and concerns.

Positive things about the house church movement

There are many positive things about the house church movement. Who could oppose any of the ten characteristics listed by David Garrison, house church movement leader and writer for the Southern Baptists in America? (See *Church Planting Movements*, p. 172.) Extraordinary prayer, abundant evangelism, the authority of God's Word, lay leadership, local leadership, and "churches planting churches" are all things Christians everywhere should embrace.

In many traditional Japanese churches, there is an almost total absence of lay leaders involved in evangelism and discipleship with adults. Churches are small and the pastor *can* do it all for some years after a church is planted. Pastor and people often get used to that pattern and do not make the transition to "equipping the saints to do the work of the ministry" (Eph 4:12). We are grateful that the house church movement is addressing some of these unbiblical patterns.

Also, the idea of "churches planting churches" (multiplication) does not seem to be a concern of most churches in Japan. The house church movement's teaching that this vision and commitment needs to be in the DNA of a new church plant from the beginning is needed and appreciated.

Biblical Concerns

While appreciating and applauding much of what the house church movement is emphasizing, I do have some concerns. I want to be teachable as I critique and listen to feedback in response to my critique. I am not a mis-siologist, but a struggling church planting practitioner from Chiba prefecture east of Tokyo, seeking God for a church planting movement. Please remember that fact as you read what I have to say.

Methodology alone is not enough

Though I do not believe that brother Garrison believes that methodology alone without the Spirit's work can bring about a CPM (Church Planting Movement), as you read his book a strong message (perhaps unintended) is that "good church planting methodology (that is, a house church movement) can bring about a church planting movement."

Yes, he emphasizes prayer, and is historically orthodox, I am sure, in his view that God must do this that we long for. But Garrison's emphasis on the human-side responsibilities of kingdom advancement (*The Seventh Deadly Sin: Blaming God*, p. 255)—as if good house church methodology can replace the work of the Spirit—is out of balance, in my view. The church in Acts did not have his book or a laid-out methodology, but there was a CPM. The Korean Church and the Chinese Church both had CPMs not so much because of an intentional methodology, but because the Spirit was poured out from on high. There seems to be danger in running to where God's Holy Spirit has worked in special ways in China and Cambodia, developing a cookie cutter methodology from what the Spirit did, and trying to force it on every people group and into every cultural context. Each culture is very different, and the wind of the Spirit is not necessarily blowing in the same way (John 3:8). We all must acknowledge that this same house church methodology brought from Cambodia has not "succeeded" in Japan like it did in those places. "Until the Spirit is poured out from on high..."

Please, let no one hear me saying that our human-side methodology is unimportant. We need Biblical, diligent, smart, studied effort in this greatest of all human endeavors. But God must do it, because ultimately this

work is a divine endeavor.

"Do not lay hands on anyone too hastily" (I Tim 5:22)

Garrison rightly points out that the Apostle Paul seemed to appoint local elders and leaders in the church plants surprisingly early in the life of a church. The house church movement pushes for early appointment of leaders in order to have rapid reproduction of house churches. But the Apostle Paul is concerned that elders/leaders are not appointed too quickly (I Tim 5:22). He tells Timothy that they should not be new converts (I Tim 3:10). This is a command and warning to Timothy, a CPM leader. The Acts passages about what he did are descriptive, not prescriptive, an important distinction in Biblical interpretation. The Bible does not tell us how many years or months until we appoint elders but it does teach us the need for a certain level of maturity for leaders (Exodus 18:22-23; Acts 6:3; I Tim 3:1-14; Titus 1:5-9). As we see the danger in many churches of over-control, and not appointing lay leaders and delegating responsibility soon enough, there is the opposite danger also of doing it too soon. Related to this concern is what seems to be a general de-emphasizing of the leadership roles of elder (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5), deacon (I Tim 3:8), and pastor (Eph 4:11). Pursuit of the Biblical and noble endeavor of kingdom advancement, movement, and reproduction seems to take priority over some other Biblical concerns.

Pay close attention to... your teaching (I Tim 4:16)

While overemphasis on a potential leader's Biblical and doctrinal knowledge often inhibits CPM and church growth, there is also the opposite danger of underemphasizing it. Paul warns Timothy and us not to compromise this qualification for leadership (I Tim 3:2; Titus 1:9), even in the good pursuit of rapid reproduction.

Role of gifted preachers and teachers under-emphasized:

Christ has gifted his church with preachers and teachers (Rom 12:7). We are edified by gifted teachers like John Stott and John Piper. It seems that the over-emphasis on "the sermon" by "clergy" and the under-emphasis on lay-led ministry in cells by the traditional

church has pushed the house church movement to an opposite emphasis that denies believers and seekers the frequent blessing of teaching by the most gifted teachers.

Big meetings in the temple (Acts 2:46; 5:42)

It is clear from the Bible and church history that the early church had both big meetings (“in the temple”), as well as cells meeting from house to house. The traditional church in Japan has not properly emphasized the small group, the cell, the church in the house, partly because the whole church is small. However, it seems that in some ways the house church movement has overreacted to this error, and gone too much the other way, over-emphasizing the house church side, and making it a new test of church planting orthodoxy.

General over-emphasis on rapid reproduction

Rapid reproduction is one of the ten commandments of the house church movement (Garrison, p. 172). Rabbits are held up as the ideal because they reproduce so quickly. Non-reproducing “mule churches” are bashed. *Rapid* reproduction seems to trump everything. Well, germs reproduce even faster, but I know we don’t want that! *What* is reproduced is also important. The Bible is concerned with quality, not only quantity.

I appreciate the emphasis on reproduction and multiplication. It is a much-needed emphasis for the traditional church, especially in Japan. But RAPID reproduction is over-emphasized in the house church movement, in my view, and the dangers of premature reproduction do not get much press, from what I have seen. *Rapid* is not the only goal. We need reproduction by reasonably mature churches that in turn reproduce churches that grow into reproducing mature churches that can impact culture and the world.

Practical concerns in the Japan context

Bigger gatherings have great benefits in Japan

Japan is a group culture. When I share about the need for cells, small groups, and house churches in Japan, I often share that people in a group culture need to be saved “*from a group to a group.*” But big groups, and big

worship, also helps in “the nail that sticks up gets hammered down” Japan. The big group helps non-Christians realize that “there are a lot of nails sticking up.” Not just me. Not just ten. This seems especially helpful for men. If the church in Japan averages about two-thirds women, there will likely be only two or three adult men in a ten-person house church. And those two or three men may be much younger, or older, or difficult to connect with for other reasons. Having “big church” *as well as* small church regularly also encourages the non-Christian that this is not some small, weird sect, as he looks around and sees many other people there who have believed. “Big church” also helps Japanese Christians to be encouraged, and to be bolder, as the book *Operation World* rightly lists “minority complex” as one of the struggles of the Japanese Church. “Big church” is also a great help for most teenagers who generally need and like larger numbers of people. The “Celebration/Cell” model seems to meet more of the needs of church planting in Japan, developing strong churches that can start healthy daughter churches.

The “Ojama shimasu” (“Sorry to bother you”) problem

Although hospitality and spending time in each other’s homes is not as common in Japan as in many other cultures, we have found that there are enough Japanese people willing to open up their homes for cells and house churches. The bigger problem is that for a high percentage of the Japanese population, *going* to another person’s house weekly is difficult. It seems like the one going is “being a bother,” breaking one of the cardinal rules of Japanese culture. Additionally, often the person going also worries about *giri* (reciprocal obligation), so that if he weekly goes to this person’s house, he will soon be expected to open his house for one of these meetings. We do believe that in the gospel people are set free from some of these concerns, over time. But it does take time. The Japanese expression *shiki ga takai* (the entryway door, step-up threshold, is high, difficult to enter by) is often used for worship and church. House church movement folks around the world often talk about the ease of going to someone’s house for worship over “church.” It is often true in Japan that

going to “church” the first time is very difficult. But sometimes the *shiki* of going into someone’s house over and over again is even higher, more difficult to enter. So, to reach all types of Japanese people at various stages, it seems wise in Japan to have many cells and groups that also meet in more public settings where the *shiki* is not so *takai* and difficult to enter.

Public places of worship fit the Japan context

Some in the house church movement have gone so far as to forgo the building or renting of church buildings because they are expensive and their perceived need slows down reproduction. While acknowledging that church buildings are not a Biblical necessity, and that zealous pursuit of land and buildings can be a great hindrance to CPM, we must also acknowledge the benefit of proper use of buildings. Japanese non-Christians who fear weird religions feel a little safer if there is a building. Buddhism and Shintoism are very much tied to a place. Having a place is a great tool in Japan, giving acceptance and *anshin* (security), in the heart. Our Toke Town house church only meets two Sundays a month, and joins the whole rest of the church for worship at our big “Honda Chapel” on the 2nd and 4th Sundays (we don’t call the building a “church,” for *we* are the *ecclesia*, the Church, and each cell is also the Church, regardless of where they meet). The non-Christian who comes to Honda Chapel for worship with his house church friends and sees the big group in the bigger place finds it alleviates some of his fears. While I readily acknowledge the danger of buildings, and that we will not be able to buy enough land and buildings to reach all of Japan, “by all means, we must use all means!”

The rural poor in Cambodia and the urban rich Japanese

It seems that rapid multiplication of house churches around the world has more often taken place in poorer, more rural cultures. Garrison (p. 77-78) acknowledges that the rapid church growth in wealthy, urban Singapore was more of the “celebration/cell” variety (i.e., big worship celebration, and small cell). It seems that Japan is more like Singapore than rural Cambodia.

Flexibility of the model based on the gifts of the leader

I think we are all glad that Rick Warren's denomination in America did not force him into the house church planting model, but allowed this gifted man to use his unique gifting from God to start Saddleback Church. Countless churches have been started around the world, and incredible blessings have come through this mega-church to the whole Church of Christ. Christ raises up all kinds of gifted leaders in all eras in all cultures. They should not be placed in an extra-Biblical constraining mold. Though foundational Biblical principles transcend culture and eras, models will differ from place to place, and leader to leader. Sometimes in the house church movement there is not so much flexibility of model based on the gifts and calling of the leader, as well as the particulars of the place/culture.

"No gaijin allowed"

The house church movement discourages foreign missionary up-front leadership in some cases. The zealous pursuit of indigenous leadership in the house church movement is good. We missionaries must pursue this better than we have in the past. But we should not go beyond the Bible. Missionary Paul preached and led up front (Acts 20:7ff). Modeling the public and private aspects of ministry is part of teaching and cultivating mature indigenous leaders, as Garrison himself says (p. 194). And Japanese culture in many cases gives foreigners ("gaijin") access and status useful for Kingdom work that is often not given even to Japanese people. One foreign researcher found that Japanese suffering from the hikikomori ("shut-in") syndrome were much more willing to talk to foreigners, while refusing to even go out of the house during the day for fear of meeting a Japanese person. Globalization seems to have affected who can be a leader. Sony and Nissan have foreign CEOs. In advertising, in baseball, and even in sumo, we see foreigners accepted, and doing well. Why not the church, too?

Are uneducated lay-leaders better, even in well-educated Japan?

The house church movement sometimes exalts the place of uneducated lay leaders. God can certainly use whomever he pleases.

He used uneducated disciples (Acts 4:13), and he used educated Paul. "Able to teach" is an elder qualification (I Tim 3:2). God uses "the foolishness of preaching" (I Cor. 1:23), not foolish preaching.

The need for continued, open discussion

I hope I have not been too polemic in this critique. Again, I appreciate very much my brothers in the house church movement, their zeal for Kingdom advancement, reproduction, prayer, pursuit of indigenous, lay leadership, and many other things. I know I have many more things to learn from this movement, and want to learn and change my methods where I need to.

I would also like to call on our house church movement brothers and sisters in Japan to tell us how it is really going. Many church planters in Japan are taking the risk and changing to this model. I personally feel that the "celebration/cell" model, or modified "hybrid" house church model fits Japan and most church planters better. But that is another article. Let's keep talking, seeking God, and pursuing, by his grace, a church planting movement in Japan, for his glory alone.

*Dan Iverson, together with his JPM/Mission to the World team, and in partnership with the Presbyterian Church in Japan, planted Oyumino Christ Church (www.oyuminochurch.com) in Chiba City in 1992. The church now has about 150 Sunday worshippers in 3 locations with over 30 cell groups (this includes one house church). Dan and Carol have 9 children, and like to say that they have now moved from the very difficult **addition** phase of biological church growth into the much easier **multiplication** phase, with grandbaby number three on the way.*

Spontaneous Church Expansion in Asia

By David Husby

Roland Allen served as an Anglican missionary from 1895 to 1903. This experience contributed to the content of his 1927 book, *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church (and the Causes which Hinder it)*.

"By spontaneous I mean something which we cannot control. And if we cannot control it, we ought, I think, to rejoice that we cannot control it. For if we cannot control it, it is because it is too great... The great things of God are beyond our control." (p. 13)

Eighty years later we can say that in many parts of Asia there has clearly been, and continues to be, a spontaneous expansion of the Church. Much of this growth has occurred without the input and direction of Western churches and missionaries. In some respects it can be said that the expansion of the church in Asia is out of human control, but never out of God's control.

I have been traveling extensively in Asia since 1999. If someone were to ask me to describe the most vibrant churches I have seen, I would say that the majority, though definitely not all, would fit under the category of house churches. I believe this explosion of house churches in various parts of Asia reflects what Allen was describing in his book. Wherever I go, including Japan, I am finding various forms of the house church either already flourishing or beginning to flourish. Since what I have to share in relation to the house church movement is more anecdotal than scholarly, I will write descriptively of house church related people I have met and some of my experiences.

China

It is estimated there were less than one million believers in China in 1976 at the end of the Cultural Revolution. Thirty years later, conservative estimates indicate there are more than sixty million believers in house churches.

An excellent book that chronicles the house church movement in China is *Jesus in Beijing*. One leader of a network of house churches shared with me how his network began a few years ago. Starting with one small gathering in Beijing, they quickly grew to more than 20 people. According to Chinese law, any gathering of more than 20 must be registered with the government. Not wanting to register, but wanting to obey the law, they split and formed a second house church. This happened nine times during their first year. The Church as found in Acts 2:42-47 is characteristic of this network of house churches. They love to gather together, and every time they meet there is an expecta-

tion that God will perform miracles in their midst. The leader shared with me that they have had very little training, but they have come to a few basic understandings of ministry and worship for their context:

- it is most natural and effective to meet in homes;
- worship, prayer, and Bible study should be done in the Chinese way;
- energy should be placed on bringing whole families into the church rather than individuals;
- the marginalized in society must be cared for;
- “outsiders” (non-Chinese) should not be leading the meetings;
- leaders normally will be unpaid lay people; and
- leadership development must be a priority, because new churches are starting all the time.

Despite having had almost no formal training, God has clearly given tremendous insight to this leader.

Bangladesh

For more than twenty years there has been a rapidly growing movement of people coming to Christ among Muslims in Bangladesh. Our mission entered into partnership with this group seven years ago. Historically, Muslims who have become followers of Jesus have been extracted from their families and communities, encouraged to move to a new location, and given a new Christian identity. The unfortunate result has been angry family members and community leaders who have come to perceive Christianity as a religion that divides families. Furthermore, when new believers have been extracted from their social networks, the witness and light of the Gospel has also been removed. However, in this current movement in Bangladesh, new believers are encouraged to remain in their families and communities and retain their cultural identity. Now when Muslims become followers of *Isa al Masih* (Jesus the Messiah), their transformed lives are on display for their families and the communities in which they live.

The believers in this movement generally meet in homes. In principle only whole families are baptized, not individuals. In practice

usually several families are baptized together and thereby form an instant community of believers. Leaders are usually chosen from among those who are already leaders in the community. These leaders are bi-vocational, receiving no salary from the national organization, and only small offerings from the local believers. Sometimes these offerings will take the form of rice or vegetables. The vast majority of the local pastors have had no formal theological education. These leaders are equipped by traveling leaders of the movement. Each local leader also has an assistant who is being trained by both the national and local leaders. Their main method of training is through inductive Bible studies. There is a strong belief among the leaders of this movement that the Bible needs to be the center of worship and training. But there is also a firm belief that when leaders gather around the word of God the Holy Spirit will be present speaking to all those who are diligently studying the Word. One weakness of this movement is that there are too few upper level leaders available to train and mentor the growing number of pastors.

India

A few weeks ago I met Dr. Victor Choudhrie, leader of a large house church network in northern India, at his home in Delhi. Several of the leaders of the movement had gathered to share what the Lord was doing in their respective areas. The stories were amazing.

The dead are raised. The sick are healed. Communities are being transformed. New communities of believers are forming rapidly. Although I cannot attest to the accuracy of the growth figures, this group reports that there are an average of 100 new house churches being started each month in one of the states of India where they are working. I have heard and read about similar reports of rapidly growing house church movements in other parts of India as well.

One of the Indian organizations with which we are partnering is headquartered in Bangalore. The mother church is also located in that city. This church would not be classified as a house church. It has a large center with Sunday worship services attended by more than 500 people. However, I see house church elements that have begun to emerge.

A couple of years ago the leader of this group said to me, “We have been going to

great efforts to get people into this building on Sunday mornings. However I have come to realize that we must bring the church to the people.” As a result, they have begun holding what they call “cottage meetings” in homes around the city. In reality, they are starting house churches. One thing that is holding back a more rapid expansion of this movement is the feeling of the leadership that each leader of a cottage meeting must be a person with some level of formal theological training.

Thailand

Our mission started work in Thailand about 30 years ago. The founding leaders, two Thai nationals and one American missionary, were discouraged by the slow growth of the Christian church in Thailand. They noticed that the church was quite Western in form and worship style, and that most Thai people perceived Christianity to be a Western religion. These three men decided to begin planting churches that were more culturally appropriate for Thailand. The churches that resulted are all house churches with non-paid pastors. Distinctives of this group of churches include:

- the use of worship songs written by Thai believers;
- the use of Thai traditional instruments;
- Thai dance used in worship;
- dialogical, rather one-directional preaching;
- the use of communion elements consisting of sticky rice and the juice of a wild berry rather than bread and wine or grape juice; and
- “string-tying” used as a custom redeemed from folk Buddhism to bless people at weddings, births, farewells, and other church celebrations.

Because these churches are so different from the more traditional Christian churches, the leadership has been hesitant to send their emerging leaders to traditional Bible schools and seminaries for training. Therefore they have sought to train their own leaders through on the job training. Leaders of the organization make periodic visits to the countryside to do training, and there are times when all of the leaders come to the headquarters for intensive training. One

weakness has been that there are not enough main leaders to train the local pastors, so as the churches have grown in number and the number of leaders has increased, there is not as much personal contact between those who are doing the training and the local pastors. I believe a direct result of this weakness has been that the growth of the movement has slowed significantly in recent years.

Other Parts of Asia

House church movements also exist in many other parts of Asia. Many house church movements have come about as a result of government restrictions on public gatherings, as in countries such as China. Although this restricts the gathering of believers for worship, many leaders in Asia see these sorts of government regulations as actually serving as fuel for the rapid expansion of the house church movement.

Dr. David Lim, a strong proponent of the house church movement in **the Philippines**, has told me that the two fastest growing house church movements in his country are renewal movements within the Catholic Church. Another significant house church movement in the Philippines is being spread through a community development organization that forms small groups among the poor and empowers them to begin small businesses. Bible studies take place in the small groups and eventually house churches are formed.

Earlier we mentioned a large-scale movement among Muslims in Bangladesh. Smaller scale movements to Christ among Muslims are taking place in **Indonesia**, southern Thailand, India, **Pakistan**, China, **Malaysia**, **Central Asia**, and **the Middle East**. Virtually all of these are house church movements.

In conclusion, I'd like to list what I see as some of the general strengths, general weaknesses, and best practices of house churches in Asia:

General Strengths

- Not dependent upon foreign funding.
- Greater participation of the laity in the ministry of the church.
- Greater emphasis on the Church as the people of God rather than on buildings and meetings.
- Greater emphasis on the study of the Word

and prayer.

- Greater emphasis on leadership development.
- Stronger sense of community.
- Easily reproducible.
- No religious buildings to sap financial resources and create an obstacle to non-believers.

General Weaknesses

- A tendency to be disconnected from the broader Body of Christ. There is great diversity in the strength of this tendency, but in general there are many groups that have little connection with other churches outside of their network.
- House church leaders sometimes distance themselves and their people from traditional churches.
- In many cases, small house churches seek to insulate themselves from "evil" society. In these situations there is no clear understanding of what it means to be the Church in the surrounding community.
- Many house churches in Asia reach out largely to individuals, and these individuals often end up being ostracized from their families and communities.

Best Practices

- The development of culturally sensitive and appropriate forms of worship.
- Reaching out to whole families.
- Holding celebration gatherings with other house churches.
- Seeking cooperation and fellowship with other churches in the network, churches in other networks, and with traditional churches.
- Seeking to enter into society in order to be a blessing to the wider community.
- Proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom in word and deed.
- Seeking justice and showing compassion for the poor and the marginalized.
- Leaders being bi-vocational (like the Apostle Paul).
- Leaders understanding that one vital role of leadership (if not the most important) is to develop new leaders.

Dave and Ronna Husby first came to Japan in 1983 as missionaries with the Evangelical Covenant Church and began serving as Asia Regional Coordinators for the ECC in 1999. They live in Higashi Kurume-shi, Tokyo, and have three daughters.



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Review: *Fundamentalism* by Dale W. Little

Japan Evangelical Association Theological Commission Pamphlet No. 6
(May 2006)

This Japanese publication of six articles is a short study of religious fundamentalism. Its purpose should be understood in the context of criticism directed against evangelicals by opponents of the Iraq War. In this setting, Japanese evangelicals are associated with American evangelicals who in general are seen to take a fundamentalist pro-war stance. To diffuse this situation, the pamphlet aims not only to discuss the nature of religious fundamentalism itself, but also to distinguish between American and Japanese evangelicalism by identifying the perceived theological distinctives which give rise to their differences about the Iraq War. So when a Japanese person incredulously asks, "Why have American evangelicals supported the Iraq War?" one possible answer by the authors of the pamphlet would be: "The theology of American evangelicals is different than that of Japanese evangelicals. It is fundamentalist, whereas Japanese evangelicalism is not fundamentalist."

Kiyoshi Ishihara of Tokyo Biblical Seminary argues that beneath American extremist Christian fundamentalism exist the problems of ethnocentrism and a slanted Biblical hermeneutic which takes America's election and mission to be parallel to Israel's election and mission in the Bible. These problems of extremist Christian fundamentalism in America play a role in leading America toward wars of aggression.

Yuji Sekino of Covenant Seminary cautions against importing American Christian fundamentalist and evangelical perspectives regarding creation science (a young earth view and an anti-evolution stance), dispensationalism, a simplistic and dualistic worldview of good versus evil, and a literalistic interpretation of the Bible. At the base of these kinds of problematic theological positions lies the American Christian fundamentalist understanding of the inspiration and absolute inerrancy of the Bible. These kinds of interpretations inherent in American Christian fundamentalism are said to generate the "self-righteous, bellicose posture" of America since 9/11.

Mitsuru Fujimoto of Immanuel Bible Training College and Aoyama Gakuin University unpacks the idea that humanity in general has a tendency toward fundamentalism because in the shadows behind fundamentalism lies the controlling and natural inclination to exclude others by

various means, such as constructing "us versus them" confrontational configurations. This exclusive mentality is a part of human identity formation and can lead to both fundamentalism and ethnocentrism. Fujimoto draws upon Miroslav Volf's *Exclusion and Embrace* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996) for his helpful study on theological anthropology.

Masanori Kurasawa of Tokyo Christian University critiques the idea that monotheism is considered to be intolerant, but polytheism tolerant. This idea has gained popularity in the wake of 9/11 and the Iraq War, because it is claimed that the war is a confrontation between two intolerant monotheistic religious factions, American evangelical Christianity and Islamic fundamentalism. Kurasawa surveys the polytheism of India, Japan, and the ancient Greco-Roman Empire to find that polytheism gave rise to violence because those polytheistic religions morphed into homogeneous theology and nationalistic religion. Such violence shows the intolerance of polytheism. Kurasawa's interesting study argues that, in contrast to polytheism, our monotheistic Trinitarian theology provides the basis for living peacefully in a complex world.

Hideo Okayama of Japan Bible Seminary claims that because the New Testament asserts non-violence the early church was pacifist but that since the fourth century the Western church has held to the just war position. The problematic points of American Christian fundamentalism are identified as nationalism, a simplistic dualism between good and evil, and a secularized pre-tribulation premillennialism. Okayama seems to be arguing that these problems combined with his understanding of the negative historical influence of Puritan theology in America provide the theological reasons for what he sees as the historical violence of Western Christianity, especially that of American Christianity. "The design of white Christians to destroy the pagans of colored races amounts to the indiscriminate killing of three million people." His concluding recommendations are that the Japanese church should be pacifist, should cooperate with American pacifist churches such as those with Anabaptist roots, and should take seriously its responsibility to "point out the foolishness" of a nation that "is possessed by the wild idea of conquering the

world through its military might."

Akira Watanabe of Tokyo Baptist Theological Seminary and Aoyama Gakuin University sympathetically describes the social context of America at the time of 9/11, reminding his Japanese readers that when society is shaken by a shock such as 9/11, and when people lose the stability of their daily lives as a result, fundamentalism gains ground. He concludes that at a time when both America and Japan are moving toward the right it is inadequate for Japanese to focus primarily on American fundamentalists. Japanese evangelical churches should focus (also) on the needs of their own country.

From the perspective of a non-American evangelical missionary in Japan, this pamphlet can be seen in both a positive and a negative light. The positive aspect is the pamphlet's contribution to understanding the nature of religious fundamentalism. However, the negative aspect is the pamphlet's attempt in places to sketch a Japanese interpretation of American evangelical history and theology which contrasts with the way many non-Japanese would understand American evangelicalism. It is possible this approach results in some misrepresentation of American evangelicals. Because a few of the articles at places employ an anti-American pejorative rhetoric, the probability of misrepresentation is increased. Such rhetoric and skewed interpretation might not be problematic for Japanese readers. But American evangelicals reading these portions of the pamphlet probably feel not only misrepresented, but also manipulated for the purpose of forging theological distinctions between American and Japanese evangelicals. For American readers, this negative aspect of the pamphlet might eclipse its positive aspect.

So perhaps the pamphlet has achieved too much. It has certainly emphasized perceived distinctives. But in places it seems to have done so at the expense of inflicting pain, however unintended, upon American evangelical missionaries in Japan who are in good faith trying to partner with Japanese evangelicals in reaching Japan for Christ.

If you are interested in making your own observations or drawing your own conclusions about this pamphlet and would like to read it for yourself in English, visit <http://www.jtheo.net>.



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CONTEXTUALIZING THEOLOGY IN JAPAN

By Kelly Malone

Once I met a Japanese Christian for dinner. As we fellowshipped together we talked about a number of issues related to Christianity in Japan. Our conversation turned to the issue of Christians visiting Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines on New Year's Day and at other times of the year.

"Christians should avoid going to temples and shrines," I explained, "Because 1 Corinthians 10:19-20 teaches that the worship of idols is actually the worship of evil spirits."

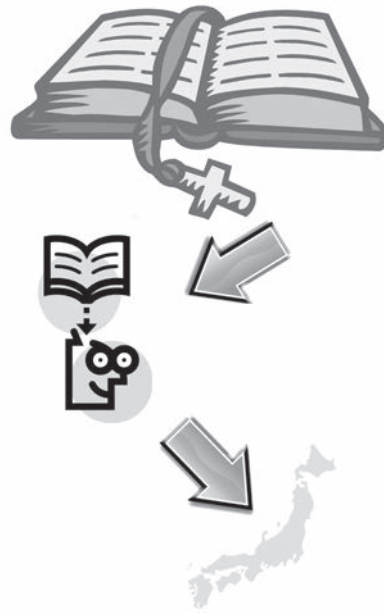
My dinner companion countered, "Most Japanese people do not consider going to temples and shrines to be a religious act. They think it is only a social custom. So it should not be a problem for Japanese Christians to participate as well."

This conversation illustrates the theological differences which often exist between American and Japanese Christians. In such a case, there are three theological perspectives that should be taken into consideration: the Biblical, the American evangelical, and the contemporary Japanese Christian. As missionaries, we must learn to deal with this kind of theological issue appropriately in order to encourage Japanese believers to grow into spiritually mature followers of Jesus Christ.

The Dangers of Theological Captivity

Missionaries usually make theological decisions on the basis of our own culture, training and experience. We use Western approaches to the Bible, philosophy, church history and systematic theology that we were taught in Bible college and seminary. In this way, our Western theology becomes a filter between the Bible and the form which theology will take in the Japanese context. As a result, we often try to yoke Japanese Christians in the twenty-first century together with theological formulations developed primarily to fit the mind-set of North American middle class Christians, in many cases in the middle of the last century.¹ Many of these theological abstractions were not readily understood by the typical American Christian twenty years ago, much less their Japanese counterparts today.

One example of this is the so-called



"German captivity" of Japanese theology.² Following World War II, Japanese theologians looked for a useful model for their own theological work. In many cases they turned to Karl Barth's neo-orthodox theology. This was not all bad because Barth's theological system was based on Scripture. However, Barth's theology also was based on the existential thought of the Danish philosopher, Søren Kierkegaard. So in adopting Barth as the model for their theology, these Japanese theologians became captive to Western existential theology.³

The danger of "captivity" is present whenever Japanese Christians adopt Western theology without evaluating it on the basis of Scripture and their own culture. This includes solid Western evangelical theology. Recently, some excellent volumes of Western evangelical systematic theology have been translated into Japanese. The theological systems represented by these works are Biblically sound and culturally appropriate for Western Christians. But as long as Japanese Christians rely on Western theology as the basis for their faith, Christianity in Japan will remain marginalized and will be unable to penetrate to the heart of the average

Japanese person. This theological "disconnect" between the Bible and Japanese culture has devastating results for Japanese Christians.

1. One result is an understanding of the

Bible that remains on the surface rather than taking root in the hearts of Japanese people. When the gospel is "preached at" people instead of shared with people, "no effort is made to relate the gospel to people's existential situation," and there is never any "real grasp of its contents."⁴ This produces surface-level Christianity while the worldview of Japanese believers remains unchanged. As a result, Japanese Christians may develop "banana theologies," which appear "yellow" on the surface but are really "white" beneath the surface. They become egg-Christians, who maintain a shifting mass of traditional views and assumptions on the deeper level beneath a thin shell of Western beliefs. Our goal should be to produce "mango Christians," whose theology and practice are both firmly Biblical and authentically Asian all the way through.⁵

When missionaries push for rapid growth at the expense of spiritual depth, we run the risk of developing Christianity in Japan that is broad but shallow. There is nothing wrong with rapid numerical growth as long as it is accompanied by corresponding growth in spiritual depth. For Christianity to thoroughly impact and transform Japan, its roots must be deep. Donald Bloesch reminds us that the task of theology is "faithful reflection on truth revealed by God in a particular time and place in history for the purpose of equipping the church in its apostolic task of preaching and teaching" (emphasis mine).⁶ Taking the time to make sure Japanese Christians develop sound theology will produce a healthy, growing Church in Japan.

2. A second result of this theological disconnect between the Bible and Japanese culture is theology that is grounded more in the local culture than in Scripture. There are two dangers here. One is theological relativism which so emphasizes the need for localized contextualization that there is no longer any standard for absolute truth. The other is what David Bosch refers to as the "absolutism of contextualism." In this case,

the adherents of each localized theology declare their own theological position to be the absolute standard that all others must adhere to in order to be considered orthodox, whether it be Latin American Liberation Theology, Korean Min Yung Theology, or the North American brand of evangelicalism.⁷

The aim of theological contextualization is to clarify the teachings of Scripture so that they are “intelligible” for Japanese Christians. Our aim is not to make the gospel “credible or palatable.” We do not want to develop a theology that so identifies with the local culture that all Christian distinctiveness is lost. When we clarify the gospel it will always be “scandal.”⁸ It is the offense of the gospel which convicts a person of sin, challenges him or her to believe in Christ, and then brings about spiritual growth through a commitment to follow Christ on a daily basis.

3. When biblical teaching fails to make its imprint on local Christianity, heteropraxy also results. In other words, there is a mixture of traditional religious practices with Christian worship, evangelism and ministry. A few years ago, I heard about a church that built a burial room to keep the ashes of church members who had passed away. The room was built adjacent to the church’s worship room so that the spirits of the departed saints could participate in the Lord’s Day worship with the church members. Although some argue that this way of thinking is supported by Hebrews 12:1, for me it seemed to go beyond the parameters of Scripture. If Japanese Christians are going to do what the Bible teaches, they must learn to understand the Bible in such a way that they can apply its teachings, not only within the context of Christian worship, but to their everyday lives as well.

4. A fourth result is the localized fragmentation of Christianity. This happens when believers focus their loyalty on their own pastor, church or denomination rather than on Jesus. This may result when personal experience rather than God’s revelation in Christ becomes the primary basis for Christian faith and practice. For example, a person may link his or her Christian identity to a relationship with a local church, small group or Christian school and fail to recognize the significance of the larger Body of Christ. Spiritual growth may be seen as following a particular missionary, pastor or teacher rather than as being

a disciple of Jesus Christ.

In order to avoid this danger of theological and ecclesial fragmentation, we must come to grips with the question, “Whose disciples are we making?” And we must encourage Japanese pastors and church leaders to grapple with this issue as well. Are we trying to enlist followers to build up our own churches and to accomplish our visions? Or are we calling men and women to follow Jesus? A well-balanced theology that is contextualized for Japan will challenge Japanese people to commit their lives to a vital personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

5. When Japanese people fail to understand the relationship between Scripture and their own culture, their lives, families, cities and nation remain untouched by the Gospel. Many people do not make a commitment to Christ, and those who do often exhibit weak and underdeveloped faith in Him. After over one hundred years of Christian witness, less than one half of one percent of Japanese people have experienced salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

Locating the Context of Theology

Theological contextualization in Japan demands that we learn to “disengage the supracultural elements” of Biblical truth from our own culture in order to “inculturate” them within the “cultural forms and social institutions” of the Japanese.⁹ We have a strong tendency to clothe the Biblical message in Western garb so that the Japanese, both Christians and non-Christians, are forced to cut through these wrappings in order to find the core of theological truth. We must help the Japanese as much as possible in this process. “Only a supracultural message disengaged from any cultural context is free to be inculturated in another.”¹⁰

We must understand enough about our own culture that we are able to distinguish between what is Western and what is Biblical. Only then can we encourage Japanese Christians to develop their own theology that is both thoroughly Biblical and thoroughly Japan, free from the constraints of Western theology. In order to accomplish this, we must genuinely reflect on three questions:

1. What is true in the Biblical context? This is very difficult to determine because we always look at the Scriptures through our Western evangelical Christian eyes (those

are the only set of eyes we have). In order to accomplish this, we must continue to have a “teachable spirit” (Jer. 17:9), approaching the Scripture with fervent prayer that God will reveal His truth to us. Furthermore, we should try to understand Scripture as a whole rather than looking at only individual texts that provide support for our perspective.¹¹

2. What is true in our context? If we fail to distinguish what is truly Biblical from what is “Western,” we may force Japanese Christians to believe what is, in reality, a “Western syncretized form of Christianity.”¹²

3. What is true in the Japanese context? The basis of Christian theology is God’s revelation in Scripture culminating in His self-revelation in Jesus Christ. However, this revelation remains abstract until it is thought out and applied in a particular cultural context. Even Jesus’ incarnation had historical and cultural particularity.¹³ Jesus was born, lived, died, and was resurrected as a Jewish man in the first-century Roman Empire.

The way truth *is determined* varies with each of these contexts. This may be hard for us to swallow because we have been brought up to believe that our way of conceiving the truth about something is the Biblical way. Allow me to illustrate this. Western evangelical Christians emphasize the individual aspect of Christianity. A person becomes a Christian through an individual decision to repent of sin and believe in Christ. Then spiritual growth takes place primarily through the individual’s daily walk with the Lord, including devotional life, personal evangelism and ministry. The corporate aspect of Christianity intersects with this understanding primarily as a means of encouraging the individual’s spiritual growth. On the one hand, there is Biblical support for this individualized understanding of Christianity. On the other hand, it falls far short of the corporate nature of Christianity taught in the New Testament. For example, most of us have never dealt with the issue of how being the “Body of Christ” (1 Cor. 12) relates to evangelism, salvation and discipleship.

Doing Theology with the Japanese

In order to develop strong Japanese Christians who can impact their nation for Christ, our theological method should adhere to the following points.

1. Theology should be based on the Bible

and the work of the Holy Spirit. Rational arguments do not induce faith in Christ or deepen faith in Christ. It is only the hearing and application of God's Word which "kindles faith" in the unbeliever and brings about a "dramatic reordering of life" in the believer.¹⁴ This kind of personal transformation does not result merely through proclaiming, hearing, teaching and studying God's Word. It is the work of the Holy Spirit in the person's heart that accompanies hearing and studying God's Word that allows Christ to indwell and change the person.¹⁵ The role of the Holy Spirit is that of "witness," taking the truth of Christ and bringing it to life in us (John 16:13, 14). As I have noted in my book, *Hearing Christ's Voice*, "When the Spirit is finished, what was cold is now warm; what was not moving now has a pulse; what was dead is now very much alive and will be alive for all eternity. The Spirit does all of this by using the truth of Christ to move the human heart. This is something only God can do!"¹⁶

2. Theology should take into account both Eastern and Western expressions of Christianity. With the rapid growth of Christianity in Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, the center of world Christianity is shifting rapidly from "West" to "non-West." Non-Western missionaries are taking on an increasingly important role in reaching their own nations, other non-Western countries, and even formerly Christian Western nations with the Gospel. I am reminded of this when I visit the campus of Christian Academy in Japan in Tokyo and see how many "missionary kids" from Asian countries are enrolled. It will not be too many years before Asian missionaries outnumber their North American and European counterparts in Japan. As a result, their non-Western theological perspectives will gain increasing influence within the church in this country.¹⁷ This is one result of the globalization of Christianity. Rather than being defensive and encouraging Japanese believers to base their faith on our Western perspectives, we must teach them to filter all of these theological perspectives through the more important standard of Biblical teaching.

3. Theology should respond to local issues in a way that engages the heart of the Japanese. A contextualized theology will "challenge the presuppositions, values,

ideals, standards and lifestyle" of the people, "restating the gospel in a way which resonates with them and which offers them a viable and attractive alternative."¹⁸ Some of these issues may seem theoretical for Western missionaries, but for both Japanese believers and nonbelievers these are *heart issues* which must be dealt with in order for spiritual transformation to occur.

One very important issue in Japan is *spiritism*. The Japanese worldview assumes the existence of a wide variety of spiritual beings, known variously as *kami* (gods), *hotoke* (Buddhas), and a myriad of other names. Even most Japanese who do not participate in the traditional religions of Shinto and Buddhism assume the existence of a spirit world which in some way influences their everyday lives. They attempt to interact with these spirits through a variety of means, most commonly through astrology, fortune-telling and other forms of the occult. If we are going to engage the heart of Japanese people, we must help them develop a Biblical understanding of the spirit world that takes into account the activity of evil spirits and points to the ultimate authority of Jesus Christ.

4. Contextualized theology should be transformational. We must encourage Japanese Christians to move beyond mere theological study and understanding to theological application in worship, evangelism, and ministry in everyday life. A contextualized theology results when theory and praxis inform one another through the process of "hermeneutic circulation." Theology forms the basis for faith, ministry and Christian living which, in turn, inform the process of theological formulation.¹⁹ People live out their personal faith in Christ, and as they live out what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ, their faith deepens.

5. Theology should be done within the context of the community of faith. This is theology done *with* Japanese Christians rather than theology done *for* them. Stanley Grenz reminds us that the church is a community formed by God's Spirit who speaks to people through God's Word, calling them to faith in Jesus Christ. This community is the "interpretive framework" in which theology is done, on the basis of God's Word under the leadership of the Holy Spirit.²⁰ For theology to be meaningful in the lives of Japanese Christians, they must be included as

active participants in the task of developing theology. The role of the "professional" is to mentor and guide rather than to exclusively teach one's own views. These Christians have the same Scriptures and the same Holy Spirit that the theologians, pastors and missionaries have. We must learn to maintain the difficult balance between telling them what to believe and leaving them totally on their own so that they do not gain from the benefit of our theological training and experience. Left totally on their own, local believers will develop a syncretized theology based more on their own culture and experience than on Scripture.²¹ The aim is to help Japanese Christians learn to evaluate and rearrange their beliefs and values in light of the "higher values given in Christian revelation."²²

A Theological Conversation

Let's return to my conversation with the Japanese Christian alluded to at the beginning of this article. How should missionaries respond to Japanese customs such as going to temples and shrines at New Years and other times of the year? First, we should ask for the Holy Spirit's guidance as we and Japanese Christians seek to understand truth based on Scripture and apply this Biblical truth to everyday life. Then, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we should read and discuss passages of Scripture related to participation in the worship of other gods. Next, we should consider how Christians in other countries have dealt with this issue.

There is a history of dealing with polytheism that begins in the Bible and extends to both the West and the East. In order for Christianity to flourish, polytheism must be rejected as inappropriate for Christian faith and practice, even when participation in polytheistic practices is only considered to be a matter of local custom. For example, by the first century emperor worship had become primarily a matter of social custom in many areas of the Roman Empire. But early Christians rejected participation in emperor worship as inappropriate for Christians.²³ This led to persecution early on, but eventually Christianity grew to become the dominant faith in the empire.²⁴ In China where Christianity is growing rapidly, many Chinese believers adhere to some form of "folk Christianity," in which faith in Jesus is mixed with elements of traditional Chinese

folk religion. For example, Jesus may be seen as only one of the traditional gods or merely as a substitute for the gods of Chinese folk religion. Chen Yongtao writes that for Chinese Christians to maintain their unique identity there must be a stronger emphasis on the uniqueness of Christ as the only Lord and Savior. "It is to Christ that we must witness, Christ we must preach," Chen writes, "to make a better witness to Christ in the cultural situation of China and to better preach the gospel."²⁵

At this point, we should discuss the implications of these theological truths for our personal faith and behavior. If a Japanese Christian does not see how Biblical teaching and theological truth apply to his or her life, change will not occur. But when the person understands and acts on the truth in the power of the Holy Spirit, the person grows as a follower of Jesus Christ. Spiritual transformation occurs when theology is done with Japanese Christians in the context of the community of faith.

Notes

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³ Toshio Sato, "The Second Generation," in *A History of Japanese Theology*, ed. Yasuo Furuya (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 53-56.
⁴ Donald G. Bloesch, *A Theology of Word and Spirit: Authority and Method in Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1992), 225.
⁵ Warren Beattie, "Mission Possible or Impossible? Learning Lessons from Theology's Engagement with Globalization," in *One World or Many? The Impact of Globalization on Mission*, ed. Richard Tiplady (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2003), 217; reference is made to Hwa Yung, *Mangoes or Bananas: The Quest for an Authentic Asian Christian Theology* (Oxford: Regnum, 1997).
⁶ Bloesch, 134.
⁷ Bosch, 427-28.
⁸ Bloesch, 229.
⁹ James O. Buswell, III, "Contextualization: Theory, Tradition and Method," in *Theology and Mission*, ed. David J. Hesselgrave (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978), 90.
¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 103.
¹¹ Larry Owens (pseudonym), "Syncretism and the Scriptures," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* (January 2007): 78-79.
¹² *Ibid.*, 77.
¹³ Bloesch, 114.
¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 128.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 191.
¹⁶ Kelly Malone, *Hearing Christ's Voice: Living and Proclaiming the Gospel in an Embattled World* (Garland, TX: Hannibal, 2006), 206.
¹⁷ Beattie, 219.
¹⁸ John R. W. Stott, "Theology: A Multidimensional Discipline," in *Doing Theology for the People of God*, ed. Donald Lewis and Alister McGrath (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996), 13-14.
¹⁹ Bosch, 425.
²⁰ Stanley Grenz, *Renewing the Center: Evangelical Theology in a Post-Modern Era* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2000), 315-16.
²¹ Paul G. Hiebert and Eloise Hiebert Meneses, *Incarnational Ministry: Planting Churches in Band, Tribal, Peasant, and Urban Societies* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 164.
²² Bloesch, 230.
²³ James S. Jeffers, *The Greco-Roman World of the New Testament Era: Exploring the Background of Early Christianity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1999), 100-03.
²⁴ Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity: How the Obscure, Marginal Jesus Movement Became the Dominant Religious Force in the Western World in a Few Centuries* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1997), 6-13.
²⁵ Chen Yongtao, "Christ and Culture: Reflections of a Chinese Christian," *Chinese Theological Review* 19 (2007), online at <http://www.amitynewservice.org>.

The True Story Needs to Be Told

The No. 2 movie in Japan in 2006 was *The Da Vinci Code*, based on the best-selling novel with characters twisting the account of Christ and the Christian Church. Its influence continues through the sales and advertising of the DVD. Confusion reigns for many Japanese who cannot discern truth from fiction in the story. Be ready with tools telling the truth.



Da Vinci Code Fact or Fiction: A Critique of the Novel by Dan Brown, Hank Hanegraaff & Paul Maier. A theological apologist and a history scholar explode the myths of the novel and show the reliability of Scripture, the divinity of Christ, and the historical facts about the Priory of Sion and the Knights Templar. 128 pp. ISBN 4-264-02430-7 (Da Binchi Kohdo: Sono Shinjitsusei o Toh) (01680) ¥1,000



Manga History of Christianity, Part 1
 Illustrator: Masakazu Higuchi; History editor: Satoshi Nakamura
 The story of the Christian Church in exciting comic book style (manga) for children, youth and adults. This volume summarizes the Bible and then tells the story from the apostles to 1453, when Constantinople fell to the Turks with manga stories and illustrated prose sections. Complete time-line. Forest Books imprint. 256 pp. Trim Size: 8.7" X 6.1" Paperback with jacket. ISBN4-264-02467-6 (Manga Kirisutokyoh no Rekishi: Zenpan) (24360) ¥1680



Breaking the Da Vinci Code, Grizzly Adams Productions, David Balsiger producer. Authors and scholars show the historical inaccuracies of the novel and affirm the historical accuracy of the Jesus presented in the Bible, while clarifying what really happened in church history. (Da Binchi Kohdo Za Toruusu)
 Home use DVD (49791) ¥13,990
 Library Use VHS Japanese dubbed (49792) ¥10,500
 Library Use VHS Japanese captions (49793) ¥10,500
 Library Use DVD (49794) ¥10,500



Manga Bible Story
 Illustrator: Masakazu Higuchi; Story editor: Noboru Yamaguchi. Comic book style story of the entire Bible. 880 pp. ISBN4-264-01798-X (Manga Seisho Monogatari) (24320) ¥2500



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From “MacArthur Missionaries” to “McDonald Missionaries”

My Calling to Japan
by Kenny Joseph

In this installment I tell my story of coming to Japan, as it is typical of the “MacArthur Missionaries.”

It was the late '40's. I was at Bob Jones University in Greenville, North Carolina when I was invited to go to Mission Prayer Band. The group met after breakfast. I said, “I'm sorry. I just play the piano. I wouldn't fit into your band.”

That's all I knew about missions. Then Oswald J. Smith came. He preached at chapel and asked those who wanted to volunteer to be missionaries to raise their hands. I didn't. “Those who are willing to be missionaries, please raise your hands.” I didn't. His last call was, “Those who are willing to be made willing, raise your hand.” I couldn't get out of that, so I raised my hand with fingers pointing downward saying, “Here am I, Lord, send my three sisters. They'd be good missionaries.”

Called to Japan

But after that, everything I read, heard or saw seemed to say, “Japan.” At a Youth for Christ conference at Winona Lake, Indiana, Bob Pierce, Bob Cook and Billy Graham gave the missionary thrust: “Let's go to Japan as a Gospel Team.” I met an earlier teammate, Eddie Reece, there and we decided to put some fleeces on the ground to see if we should go. I was into my Master's Degree program then. At Christmas, praying on the white sands of Florida (as close as I could get to a white Christmas), a telegram came

from Franklin Robbie, director of Montana Youth for Christ, saying, “Can book you 22 straight nights. Reply by wire.”

I called Eddie and we agreed to go. We bought a \$92 Chevy. I was ordained in a Southern Baptist Church in Hendersonville, N.C., where I had led Youth for Christ for three years while a college student. We were on our way to Montana... and Japan.

We arrived in Lustre, Montana, with 16 cents between us, but gas cost 18 cents a gallon. So we said, “Fill it up to 16 cents.”

At our first meeting, the first of 22 Youth for Christ one-night stands, many souls responded and they gave us \$33—mostly in silver dollars. Eddie said, “Let's go to the bank and exchange this for real money.” Now I hear that one silver dollar is worth \$90!

We raised our \$125 monthly support in 2 months, mostly in \$5 monthly pledges. We booked a ship to Yokohama, even though Eddie's passport hadn't come through. It would be waiting for him in Japan, he was told. We had unlimited baggage, plus whatever we could fit under the cabin bed. And there was unlimited food and unlimited solitude (there were only 10 other passengers!) in which we had 2 weeks to pray, catch up on letters, write and sleep. For \$325 one way. Now you can fly from Los Angeles in 9 hours, but you don't get 12 days of eating meals with the captain.

Arrival

Upon landing, 62 Japanese customs officials

and one American military police came up. The captain had warned Eddie that not even President Truman could get off that ship without a passport!

Eddie had visions of going to jail, but the passport did come and we entered Japan safely. Our bumpy drive from Yokohama to Tokyo was a sobering, stunning experience. War reminders and poverty were everywhere.

After a brief stay at TEAM Center, six of us were to drive to the language school and our home for the next year in Karuizawa. Armed with a small GI phrase book, we were told by an old China hand, Mr. Carlson, “No problem! Just go to 40th Avenue, turn left on “A” and drive straight up to Karuizawa.”

Eight hours later we got there. The only phrase I knew was, “*Koko wa doko desu ka?*” (Where are we?) But after asking the question and showing our map to Japanese along the way, I couldn't understand the answers. I saw a great need for a missionary language handbook, because all we had was one for military personnel with too much about cigarettes and beer.

Getting Started

The 1950 missionaries had a can-do, gung-ho aggressive spirit of “the time is short, let's evangelize, not fossilize.” My second day in Japan I was on a Youth for Christ Gospel semi-truck giving my testimony to 800 people in Shibuya in front of the dog (every Japanese knows the story of loyal Hachiko!) where Youth for Christ held daily meetings.

I saw the fearful lack of good interpreters, and the more pitiful lack of good preaching material and sermon illustrations. There I launched a full-time effort into putting out the *Missionary Language Handbook*. I collected 8000 proverbs and condensed them into 800, believing if you understand the proverbs of a nation, you understand their hearts and thought patterns. (Mitsuzo Goto, Russell Stellwagon and I worked on what became two books, but is now published as one, *The Combined Language Handbook*.)

In language school there were two types of students: "the pencil points" and the "sponges." The pencil points wanted to know why—what *kanji* was used to write *douzo*, and what it meant. The sponges just picked it up and used it like a year-old child. After a million-dollar survey and experiment on what's the very best way to teach and learn a language, Yale University with Berlitz concluded that the best way was exactly as God has ordained for children to learn. Adults can learn, too. No child asks what the *kanji* for *douzo* is. He just says *douzo*, or *mama*, or whatever he can repeat. And that was the triumph of the "Romaji boys." Three years later the language school was taken over by the "Kanji group" of Japanese teachers who didn't have the first clue of what preaching is about.

Evangelistic Campaigns

Even in the middle of my evangelistic campaigns (as a bachelor, I went on the road with my Gospel Caravan for seven months, meetings every afternoon and night and made a complete tour of Honshu, Kyushu and Shikoku), every morning from 9 to 12 we studied Japanese and wrote illustrations picked up from the grass roots, feeling the pulse of the everyday person. This was Japan's golden evangelism day. Even the liberal NCC group had their evangelists. Besides Kagawa, there was Larry LeCour and his wife and singing group who toured.

I learned to play the accordion. I could play any song in either the key of C or in three flats. Rather than the hip-hip-hurray Youth for Christ gospel choruses, before I would preach from the back of my Gospel Caravan I would ask the Japanese what their favorite song was. Can you believe, they were all dark, dismal, minor key songs and their favorites were Stephen Foster's "Old Black

Joe, "Oh Suzannah," "Beautiful Dreamer" and "*Kojo no Tsuki*," about the poor damsel who sees the moon out of the castle window. This reflected the negative, downcast, pessimistic postwar mood.

But every night after the Bible slide show and preaching, we would give an invitation and have two highways, one for the children and one for adults who wanted to get saved. They would kneel on the ground while I counseled and led them in the Sinner's Prayer, autographed ¥100 Bibles and answered questions.

The Greatest Thrill

Though I've preached in over 7,000 meetings in Japan, all by invitation, and in 33 other countries, I'm like all other evangelists. After the invitation is given, after decisions are made, on the way home I still wonder, "Did they really understand what I said?" But one day, in the middle of a prolonged invitation singing all four verses of "Jesus, I Come," the Lord gave me a comforting verse, saying, "This is my work; you do your part and I'll do mine, for 'the Father seeketh such to worship Him.' (John 4:23)" He is the One who is seeking the sinners. Sinners are not seeking the Lord any more than fish seek to be caught on the hook.

Someone asked me, "What was the greatest thrill among the 7,000 meetings you held?"

It was not preaching at the world's biggest church in Korea, nor was it preaching at the world's biggest Bible conference of 125,000 people in India. It was preaching at a Youth for Christ rally in Osaka to 8,000. On my left was Michio Fuchida who was one of the lead bombers of Pearl Harbor. He got saved through reading a gospel tract at the Shibuya Youth for Christ PTL meetings. On my right was Jacob DeShazer, an American Jimmy Doolittle pilot, who was shot down over Tokyo and got saved in prison when somebody got a Bible to him. Here were former enemies now embracing each other, testifying to being saved by Jesus. That day I preached on the love of God. Hundreds came forward to be saved, many in tears. There is no greater thrill than seeing God at work!

"This is my work; you do your part and I'll do mine, for 'the Father seeketh such to worship Him.'"



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“My Husband Beats Me”

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.

These are words that every pastor dreads to hear. According to the Cabinet Office’s Survey on Domestic Violence (2002) over 15% of women in Japan have suffered physical assault from their spouse or boyfriend. As in many countries around the world, the situation in which someone seeks help from a Christian minister regarding domestic violence is far too common.

The first law in Japan to protect victims of domestic violence was enacted in April 2001. It has provisions for a six-month restraining order, and the ordering of a separation of domicile for up to two weeks. The law also mandates that each prefecture set up domestic violence support centers, of which there are currently 103 across the nation. This is certainly a step in the right direction, but leaves most victims with very few real options. So how can we help those who come to us for counsel?

I recently wrote in my book *12 Lessons for a Happy Marriage*¹ the following advice for couples who are struggling in this area.

Husbands who have committed domestic violence should go to see a pastor or counselor as soon as possible. Don’t assume that it was just a lapse of temper and try to deal with it oneself. Wives who have been battered, even once, should leave the home temporarily with their children. There are three reasons for this. First and foremost it is for the safety of the woman and children. Secondly it is to make it very clear that physical violence is not acceptable under any circumstances. Thirdly it becomes more difficult to hide, and easier to get help as others are made aware of the situation.

Kiyoshi Mizutani, of Chiisana Inochi wo Mamoru-kai, and the author of the book, *Talks on the Sexes We Usually Don’t Hear*² responded to my advice regarding domestic violence (DV) on his blog saying,

Jonathan’s teaching is very accurate, Biblical and realistic. Attitudes such as “Don’t let others know,” “If only I can endure it,” and “As a Christian we must keep up an appearance that nothing is wrong,” only worsen the situation and destroy the relationship between husband and wife. Naturally, the children are negatively influenced... I was disappointed by some churches that deal with DV in questionable ways. I see the light of hope in the content of this book. I sincerely hope that these kinds of principles about DV will take root among Christians.

For more information regarding domestic violence in Japan please refer to www.dvcenter.jp.

Notes

¹「しあわせな結婚レッスン12」: いのちのことば社

²「ちょっと聞けない男女のおはなし」: いのちのことば社

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exists to network and equip
its members to make
disciples for Christ***





By the Missionary Geek

Technology on a Tight Budget

Quick, what liquid in your house costs about ¥400,000 per gallon? Kerosene *has* gone up this year, but not that much. The answer is, the ink in your printer's ink cartridge. There's about 30ml of ink in each cartridge, so go ahead and do the math. In the US, Kodak has announced that they're going to start making printers that use low cost cartridges (\$10 for black and \$15 for color). Hopefully this idea will catch on with other manufacturers as well. In the meantime, you can try to refill them yourself if you have the patience and time. Better wear your old clothes, too!

My winter project has been to scan all our old family 35mm negatives into my computer so I can convert them to digital photos. Our pictures from 25 years ago are getting pretty faded, so I thought this might be a good way to preserve them.

I started by looking for a cheap scanner that would work with negatives and/or slides. There are two types: a specialized scanner that does only slides and negatives, or a normal flatbed scanner that has an attachment for negatives and slides.

I found an Epson flatbed scanner with a film attachment at a "Hard Off" recycle shop in their "Junk" section. I paid ¥1,500 and it works beautifully. At this price there was no instruction manual or CD-ROM with drivers. But after a little searching on the Internet I found that this scanner is sold under a different name and number overseas. Once I figured that out, I was able to download the English manual and driver software. You place one strip of negatives in the special film holder, put that in the scanner and then start up your digital editing software. I tried six different editing software packages, including the one that Epson supplied. For my Windows PC, the easiest to use is the free "Picasa" program that I downloaded from Google (www.picasa.google.com). While you're at it, take a look at the other free tools that Google has available for download. After you start your digital editing program, you "import" the photos from the scanner. If necessary, you can rotate, take out red-eye, lighten or darken, and even crop them. Then you just save them to your hard disk. It's going to take me months to finish, but it's a fun trip down memory lane.

If your phone's not ringing enough, maybe it's because your kids or friends overseas don't want to

make expensive calls to Japan. My friend Scott Ponzani signed up for one of the lower cost Lingo plans (www.lingo.com) from the US (a few other country options are also available). Lingo sends a phone adapter that you attach to your phone line (it works in conjunction with your broadband internet service) and assigns you a phone number in the local area of your choice—in case of the US, almost anywhere. When your kids call the local number, they get charged for a local call, and your phone rings in Japan. It costs about \$8 a month after you pay a setup fee. Ask Scott about it, use him as a referral and you'll both get a discount (look him up in the *JEMA Directory*).

If you'd like to get an English e-mail from the Japanese Prime Minister each week, talking about his schedule and what's going on in Japanese politics, go to www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/m-magazine/ and sign up. It's pretty interesting.

A useful website that I look at almost everyday for a summary of local news is www.japantoday.com. The forum discussions are also sometimes interesting.

If you'd like to know a little more about the life of the people around you, go to the home page of the Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training (www.jil.go.jp/english/index.html). You'll find several articles about labor law in Japan and you can download the newly published *Japan Working Life Profile 2006/2007*. Probably a lot more information there than you want, but it's a fascinating look at the working force in Japan.

That's it for this issue. Send me an e-mail with things you'd like to read about, or even problems you're having with technology issues.

missionarygeek@yahoo.com



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.

The *Manga Messiah* Cometh

Telling the Gospel Story Through Japanese Eyes

The new "Bible Manga" series is a contextualized communication of the gospel by Japanese artists that is reaching an international audience.

An interview with Roald Lidal, General Director of New Life League, Japan (NLLJ)

Why "Bible Manga" and why now?

The original vision for our *manga* project was to reach Japanese youth for Christ. This has since been expanded. Our goal now is to use the extremely popular Japanese *manga* genre to reach youth worldwide with the gospel. Our plan is to publish five books in the *Manga Bible* series – three from the Old Testament and two from the New Testament. We wanted to start with what we consider the most important part—the gospel story—so *Manga Messiah* is our first publication in the series. We believe young people today are open to questions about why they are here, what is the meaning of it all, and where they are going. The *manga* books give them the answers in a form they will read and understand.

What do you mean by "youth?"

The target audience is middle and high school students. However, we believe our *manga* books will be read by university students, by younger kids, and by their parents.

How long have you been working on this project?

We started working on this project over two years ago, and the English version of *Manga Messiah* was completed a few months ago. The first 100,000 have been distributed in the Philippines. Translation is going on in at least 15 languages and more are being added. We are very excited over the tremendous response we are receiving and we are looking forward with great anticipation as to how the Lord will use this unique tool of evangelism.

When will the Japanese version be published?

The Japanese version of *Manga Messiah* will be out by late summer of 2007, and the next book from the New Testament as well as the first book from the Old Testament by the beginning of 2008.

Is it correct that the original language is Japanese?

Yes, everything was first written in Japanese and then translated into English, which then became the base for all other languages.

Who are the artists, and how did you find them?

God led us to the artists through a series of events. Shinozawa-san (the main artist) became a Christian while attending art school in New York. She returned to Japan and didn't want to continue drawing the kind of materials she had worked on as a non-Christian. That's when we heard of her and she was delighted to start working with us. In fact, she said it was an answer to prayer. Atsuko Ogawa is the assistant artist and Kumai-san is a professional scriptwriter with whom we got in contact through a friend of a friend. Likewise, God really led us to the Old Testament artist, Azumi-san. We are also partnering with Nate Butler of COMIX35. He functions as a consultant, and he is one who knows the worldwide scene of comics.

What challenges are you facing?

We face the issue of financial support for substantial development cost. Next, we have the challenge of Biblical and historical accuracy, avoiding religiosity, and centering on *the Story* of the Bible. We desire to make an evangelistic tool, not simply to tell Bible stories. Since we are talking of worldwide distribution, we are facing numerous challenges, like which publishers to choose, translator issues, and cultural differences. Finally, we have the question of marketing to publishers, organizations, and readers.

How do you plan to market/distribute these books in Japan?

The marketing plan in Japan is still in the development stage. While we naturally want to sell the books through both Christian and mainstream channels, we are also working with mission and outreach organizations with the goal of them using the Bible-based *manga* books in their programs. In addition, we want to make use of the Internet and any possible channels [it provides] to get these books into the hands of young people.

The Manga Bible website is being developed at www.nextmanga.com. Be sure to visit it for a tantalizing taste of cutting edge technology targeting today's visual generation.





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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

The Tiger in the Painted Screen

By Miriam Davis: la@omf.or.jp; www.jp.omf.org/langres; www.jp.omf.org/jlc

I have a friend in the UK who intends to move to Japan when her husband retires. As a result, she is currently zealously studying Japanese. One day she phoned and excitedly shared what she had been learning from a Japanese friend. "Do you know the Ikkyu stories?" she asked. I was ashamed to admit that I didn't, especially when I subsequently discovered they are familiar to every Japanese child. Therefore I was very interested this past December to read the *Daily Yomiuri* column "Musings" (*Henshu Techo*). In relation to the request from Jinja Honcho (Association of Shinto Shrines) that shrines refrain from allowing online worship because divine spirits do not exist on the internet, it quoted a poem written by Ikkyu, a legendary Zen-Buddhist monk who lived from 1394-1481.

Here is just one of the famous stories about Ikkyu taken from *Terebi Karaa Ehon Dai 45 Kan*. Ikkyu's famed wit has reached the ears of the local lord who decides to give Ikkyu a test. He calls Ikkyu to the castle and commands him to tie up the tiger in a painted folding screen. Read on to see how Ikkyu deals with this impossible demand.

ある日のこと、おしょうさんと一休さんは、
お城に招かれました。

「ほう、そちが、とんちの一休か。これ
一休、そちに、このびょうぶのとらをしぼ
ってもらいたいのだが、できるかの？」

おやおや、大変なことになってしまいました。
おしょうさんは、心配して一休さんを止
めようとしました。

ところが一休さん、
「はい！ 承知いたしました。」

と、立ち上がったではありませんか。

それから、キリリとはちまきをして、庭へ
出ると、

「それでは、見事とらをしぼってみせまし
よう。けれど、暴れると困りますから、まず
とらを追い出してください。」

「な、何じゃと、とらを追い出せと・・・。」
お殿様は困ってしまいました。やがて、

「むむ、なるほど・・・うまい！ 一休、あ
っぱれじゃ、あっぱれじゃ！」

こうして、一休さんは、お殿様の難しい
注文にこたえたのです。その後、一休さん
は、「一休禅師」という、偉いお坊さんにな
ったそうです。

Vocabulary:

| | |
|----------|------------------------|
| ほう | oh, well |
| そち | you |
| とんち | quick witted |
| びょうぶ | a folding screen |
| とら | a tiger |
| しぼる | to tie up |
| おやおや | oh, dear! |
| おしょうさん | the head priest |
| 承知いたしました | certainly (my Lord) |
| キリリと | tightly |
| はちまき | a headband |
| 見事 | splendidly; completely |
| 暴れる | to become violent |
| 追い出す | to chase out (of) |
| 御殿様 | the lord |
| 困る | to be perplexed |
| なるほど | really; indeed |
| うまい | good; clever |
| あっぱれ | Well done! |
| 注文 | an order; request |
| 禅師 | a Zen priest |
| お坊さん | a Buddhist priest |

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