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Japan Harvest  
Spring 2022

*Rest*

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## Forward

- 4** Happenings
- 5** From the Editor
- 6** News



## Feature Articles

- 8** **A Sabbath rest for the people of God?**  
*by Matthew Cummings*
- 10** **Rest in the face of pressure**  
*by Colin Noble*
- 12** **Four steps to finding spiritual rest**  
*by Shelley Carl*
- 14** **A monthly day of prayer**  
*by Kevin Ewing*
- 15** **Is a "what-not-to-do" list enough?**  
*by Judith Ricken*
- 16** **A lesson from a grandfather clock**  
*by Sally Strnad*
- 18** **In quietness shall be your strength**  
*by Karen Nakamura*
- 20** **When doing nothing does not equate to resting**  
*by Stephanie Schatz*
- 22** **Talking with a Japanese pastor about rest**  
*by Dene Hughes*
- 24** **Japanese onsen**  
*by Roger Lowther*
- 25** **Too much weight?**  
*by Susan Smith*
- 26** **I am not alone**  
*by Rae-Anna Hedorin*

## General Articles

- 27** **Review of *Staying Well***  
*by Alan Steier*
- 28** **The life cycle of a Japan Harvest article**  
*by Wendy Marshall*

## Member Mission

- 30** **ABWE**

## Regulars

- 30** **Off the Bookshelf**  
*Resilience: How Japanese Pastors Can Thrive in Every Season*  
*by Don Schaeffer*
- 31** **Language & Culture**  
*Lying in Japanese culture*  
*by Simon Pleasants*
- 32** **Member Care**  
*Rest is a person*  
*by Alan Steier*
- 33** **Voice of Experience**  
*Rest, relax, rejoice*  
*by Jack Garrott*
- 34** **Church Planting**  
*Shifting Paradigms*  
*by John Wm. Mehn*
- 36** **Modern Tech**  
*Improving your stream*  
*by Jesse Mark Cesario*
- 37** **Good Writing**  
*Cluttered writing*  
*by Wendy Marshall*



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## July-August

### Karuizawa Union Church Refresh Conference

July 31 - August 7, 2022  
Latest info: <http://www.karuizawaunionchurch.org>



## October

### WIM Fall Day of Prayer Plus

October 5, 2022  
Rose Town Tea Garden, Ome, Tokyo



## November

### CPI Conference

November 9-11, 2022  
Tsumagoi Resort, Shizuoka  
Latest info at: <https://jcpi.com>



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

**jema.org**

Also see our magazine online: **japanharvest.org**



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# Rest

It's no surprise to anyone who has lived here that Japanese people are sleep-deprived. A 2017 Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare survey said that a "significant portion of young working adults reported that they either did not feel properly rested or had no real sleep". Apparently nearly half of working adults reported that they got less than six hours of sleep each night.<sup>1</sup>

Rest is clearly a topic that many missionaries have thought about—we received many more proposals than we were able to publish! That should have been no surprise to me. We're all influenced by our environment, and there's no doubt that, in Japan, there's pressure to overwork. Added to that is the pressure we feel at the overwhelming task of reaching this populous nation with such a low percentage of Christians.

## Rest is multifaceted

Rest is more than just getting a set number of hours sleep each night, working fewer hours, or taking a holiday. Indeed, I often feel that dichotomy. I can exhaust myself physically or socially, and be refreshed in other ways at the same time. Yes, I need physical rest or time alone later, but we are complex creatures. We need rest and refreshment across a number of different spheres. I think that became obvious for some during the pandemic. We were travelling less and perhaps had more time to sleep or do restful things. And yet we still felt tired.

One medical professional has suggested we need seven types of rest: physical, mental, spiritual, emotional, sensory, social, and creative.<sup>2</sup> In August I talked about this with two of my closest friends—we discussed which of these we found the hardest to do. We are all busy mums of older kids, and we concluded that we often found it hardest to take time to be creative. But I think the answer to that question varies vastly for each person and across different life stages. For example, a parent of young children will find physical rest hard, but as their kids hit the teenage years, emotional rest is something that becomes difficult to find. A single person may struggle to rest mentally, because they have trouble coming home to a quiet house after work or ministry. And an extrovert can struggle to have good boundaries to ensure rest from their social life.

It's ironic that, in November last year, just as JEMA members moved into one of the busiest seasons of the ministry year in Japan, our team began to work on this issue themed "Rest." One of our favourite things about working with *Japan Harvest* is that we get to read and learn about the topics that the magazine covers. Thank you to all who have shared their thoughts and experiences on this important theme. It's been good for us to dwell on this topic, and I'm sure it will be a help to many of you.

## 70 year anniversary

I was at the JEMA office in early December to help mail out the Winter issue and saw what appears to be the very first publication by JEMA (then known as EMAJ). It was a short newsletter published in March 1952—that's 70 years ago. It's truly amazing that JEMA has been able to continue publishing *Japan Harvest* over such a long period. I thank all who have gone before me who have helped with the publishing "face" of JEMA and sought to be an encouragement to evangelical missionaries for all those years.



Blessings in Christ,  
Wendy  
Managing Editor

### The themes for the upcoming issues are:

**Summer 2022:** Mobilization

**Autumn 2022:** Evangelism in a shame culture (proposals due by April 30)

**Winter 2023:** Arts and Ministry (proposals due by July 31)

**Spring 2022:** Ministry in an aging society (proposals due by October 31)

1. Luke Mahoney, "Sleep deprivation wiping out Japan's productivity," *Japan Today*, <https://japantoday.com/category/features/opinions/sleep-deprivation-wiping-out-japan's-productivity> July 14, 2020.

2. Sandra Dalton-Smith, *Sacred Rest: Recover Your Life, Renew Your Energy, Renew Your Sanity*, (New York: FaithWords, 2017).

## 70th anniversary hi-b.a. conference

### Vision for all 47 prefectures

*Christian Shimbun, October 21, 2021 Translated by Hiromi Kiuchi*

Two missionaries, Ken Clark and John Meyer, started hi-b.a. Japan (high school born againers) in 1951, with the vision “to proclaim the gospel to every high-schooler in Japan.” In 2021 the group marks its 70th anniversary and held a memorial conference online on September 23.

The conference began by showing a short video to look back on their history. According to the video, “over these 70 years, earnestly running the race with the Lord was never uneventful. On that road were many trials and difficulties. Yet on each such an occasion (sic) we trusted in God, and continued to seek to stand at the side of the church of Japan. Our efforts have carried on this far because of the many prayers of support offered up to which God Himself has answered.”

The video was followed by greetings from Takao Nakadai of the hi-b.a. Board of Directors. Chieko Suzuki, Regional Development Coordinator, next reported on the progress of their vision to have regular meetings in all 47 prefectures by 2050. “Nine years ago, there were only 26 regular hi-b.a. meetings in the Kanto, Kansai, and Tokai regions. We now have Fukuoka, Ishikawa, and Hokkaido added to the list, and are praying and preparing for Tohoku, Okinawa, and Chugoku-Shikoku. Please pray with us for the Lord to send workers for the harvest.”

After the report, the present hi-b.a. staff members were introduced. Takashi Fukuda, a former staff member who currently works as a Scripture/church engagement officer for Wycliffe Japan, gave a word of encouragement to and

prayed for the current team. “It took 300 years for Christianity to be recognized officially in Rome. Only 150 years have passed for Japan, and we are still in the process of spreading our roots to every corner.”

Ken Clark, who is now in his nineties, gave greetings in fluent Japanese. “Seventy years? Can’t believe it! The method may change with time, but the message doesn’t. The Creator loves us and has given us this special gospel. Let’s follow Jesus Christ up to the day we die.”

A high school student from Hokkaido, where meetings started this April, gave her testimony at the conference. Samuella Soung, an alumna of Kashiwa hi-b.a., also presented a song written for this occasion. ■

## Tim Selander and broadcasting evangelism in Japan

*Christian Shimbun, October 31, 2021  
Translated by Atsuko Tateishi*

Contrary to his plan to work in Japan for only two years, Tim Selander has been here for 40. He now serves as Executive Director for the Pacific Broadcasting Association (PBA).

Born in the Chicago suburbs and raised by devout Christian parents, Tim went to a Christian college to study broadcasting and journalism. One day God spoke to him—“Use your skills for me. Engage in broadcasting evangelism.”

While there were numerous Christian broadcasting stations and programs in the US, their primary target was often Christians. “I thought broadcasting should be used to share the gospel,” said Tim. “In my country, I couldn’t find the kind of broadcasting evangelism that I would be interested in.” He pursued possibilities to work



Left: Former staff members  
Above: Ken Clark (left) speaking  
Below: Fukuda praying for the current staff members



# uest News

*How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, Your God reigns!”*

for a Christian broadcasting station overseas, but no door would open to him. Then a letter arrived from Japan.

Tim had gotten married while in college. His wife had grown up in



*Tim Selander*

Japan as an MK. Through that connection, Mr. Tygert, Director of PBA at that time, invited Tim to work in Japan for two years. Until then, neither he nor his wife had had any inter-

est in working in Japan. Tim accepted the invitation nonetheless, thinking he would gain experience for a future career somewhere else.

In 1981, at 23, Tim set foot in Japan. He worked on the production of a program about Japan in English to be aired in the US. As he observed how PBA worked in Japan, he noticed a significant difference from the way American broadcasting ministries worked. Most Japanese churches were small, and thus were financially limited, and yet, the churches shared the burden to support the local PBA programs (including Lifeline TV). They did so in order to evangelize the local community, and to follow up with the program audience. “I was impressed,” recalls Tim. “This was how broadcasting evangelism should be. I committed my life to it.”

He made it a point to mingle with his Japanese co-workers. One day, a Japanese pastor shared with him with tears in his eyes how the Lifeline TV program was helping him in local evangelism. When performing house-to-house visits in the community, the pastor would introduce himself as someone involved with the Lifeline program. This gave him credibility and many people would listen to what he had to say. “I was convinced then,” says

Tim, “that it was not PBA doing the evangelism but local churches. PBA produces programs and helps local churches. This model is so biblical. Once I return to the US upon retirement, I will perhaps teach this model to American churches.” ■

## 50 years of Lifeline in Japan

*Christian Shimbun, October 17, 2021  
Translated by Grace Koshino*

Inochi no Denwa, or Lifeline, was established in Tokyo on October 1, 1971 and in 2021 celebrated 50 years of being in operation. As of 2020, the organization had around 6,000 volunteers that work at 50 call centers across Japan. As demand for the call centers increased during the pandemic, volunteers are now finding it hard to meet the needs of their callers. Mr. Suematsu (Chairman) and Mr. Kōriyama (Chief Executive) shared the development so far, the current situation, and their visions for the future.

“In the beginning the staff was full of uncertainty, but once we started the phones didn’t stop ringing,” recalls Suematsu.

Ruth Hetcamp, a missionary from Germany, was one of the key founders of Inochi no Denwa. In postwar Tokyo, she worked for another operation, The Gate of Hope, Tokyo (Tokyo Nozomi no Mon), which aimed at helping young women in crisis.

Inochi no Denwa was modeled after other helplines that were already in operation overseas, such as the Samaritans in the UK and Lifeline in Australia.

Since their establishment, the group have worked with specialists in the medical field, such as volunteering doctors who provide medical consultation over the phone, or (until 2003) psychiatrists. Until 2011, they offered consultation via fax machine for those with hearing or speech disorders. In 2006, an online counseling service was started.

Mr. Sueyama said, “It’s important that you are sincere in trying to get to know the other person. Relating to them as a Good Samaritan is what matters.”

Consultants receive training for a year and a half before taking a call. They make sure not to hinder the consultation, or to act either overly superior or servile. Re-evaluation and re-training are also important and the staff is required to take part in a monthly group training course.

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly affected the operation. “In



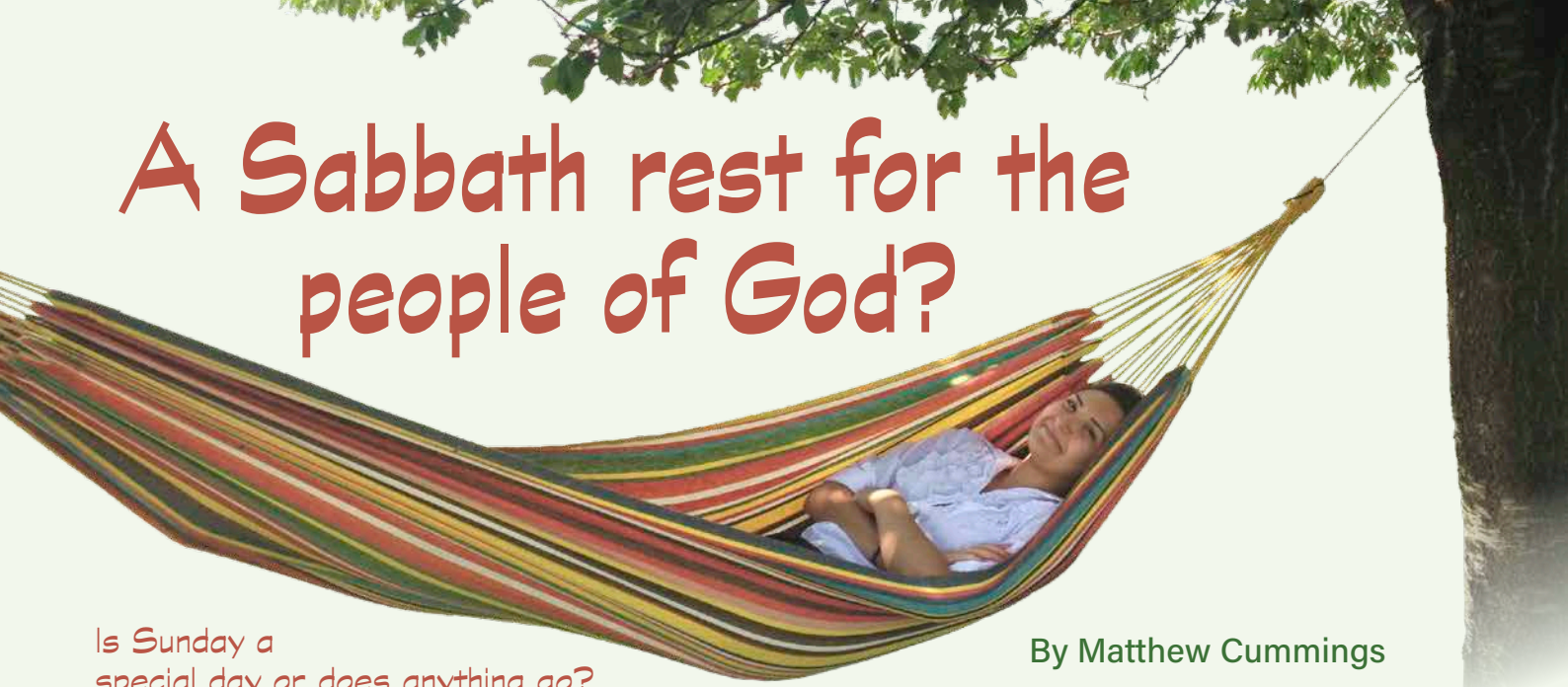
*Mr. Kōriyama (Chief Executive)*

*Mr. Suematsu (Chairman)*

the first half of 2020, more than half of the calls were related to coronavirus. Eventually, although still stemming from the pandemic, the calls became more specific, and involved unemployment, domestic violence, and disabled people who were unable to receive local support,” says Kōriyama.

Nowadays there are fewer calls from young people, as groups dedicated to offering help to them are increasingly common. On the other hand, calls regarding caring for the elderly or post-retirement years are on the rise. ■

# A Sabbath rest for the people of God?



Is Sunday a special day or does anything go? Thoughts on the Sabbath in the modern age.

By Matthew Cummings

Growing up, I carried a slight dread of Sundays. After returning home from the church where my father worked, the afternoon stretched in front of my MK siblings and I, full of forbidden pleasures. We squirmed until dinner time, not being allowed to play sports or “non-Christian” games, while my tired dad often took a nap. After dinner we breathed a sigh of relief and settled into the more interesting routine of eating popcorn while a parent read us a Christian book.

After leaving my conservative upbringing, I encountered the Sunday culture in the broader US evangelical world. Sports were normal, even organized competitive ones. Everyone went out to eat after the service. And megachurches offered worship on various days of the week. Startled by the variety of views on what for me had been a special day, I began to wonder: *What gives? Is there a middle ground somewhere between burdensome rules and “everything goes”?* This article proposes a theology of the Sabbath, some reasons for the Sabbath, and practical applications for how to spend the day.

## A theology of the Sabbath

While some Christians observe a Sunday Sabbath, to rest from normal work and focus on God, others believe such a requirement does not exist for New Testament believers. In trying to develop an understanding of the issue, I have come to believe that, while

it must be freed from legalism and abuse, a Sabbath rest does remain. The following considerations have shaped this conclusion.

For one, the Sabbath is related to our position in redemptive history. While it is true that Christ has given us rest (Matt. 11:28), in another sense we do not have complete rest. With Paul in Romans 7 we struggle with the old man of sin, and creation itself groans in the pangs of childbirth until Christ comes again (Rom. 8:22). So by moving the Sabbath to Sunday (from the Old Testament’s Saturday) to celebrate the resurrection of Christ, we honor the “now” aspect of our redemption. However, because we do not yet have complete rest from our sins or the effects of sin on creation, the command to rest a day in seven remains.

Second, it is problematic to eliminate one of the 10 Commandments. In seminary, a fellow student joked that he “believed in all 9 of the 10 commandments.” He was making a point that, as Christians, few would say that idol worship, murder, stealing, or disrespecting your parents are okay. They are part of the respected “declogue”. But many believers minimize the fourth commandment though it belongs in the same list. Why?

A common argument against keeping the Sabbath is that Jesus repeated all the other nine commands in the New Testament, but not the Sabbath. However, Jesus did mention the Sab-

bath—in his clashes with the Pharisees—but the issue he addressed was how to keep the day, not whether to. Furthermore, he mentioned it positively in Mark 2, where he said, “The Sabbath is made for man, not man for the Sabbath.” Here, Jesus did not revoke the Sabbath but rather positively restored it as a day for refreshment and not burdensome rules.

In sum, observing a weekly Sabbath appears to be more than just optional, practical, or traditional. Due to our position in redemptive history of “now, but not yet”, and due to the importance of the 10 Commandments (of course in no way connected to our salvation), taking a weekly Sabbath is a matter of obedience to God.

## Reasons for the Sabbath

God does not give arbitrary commands, so let us note some benefits to the Sabbath rest. One reason to “do Sabbath” seems to be that, as humans, we need a day in seven for physical rest. Theologian John Frame, in his book on the Christian life, remarks how by Sunday afternoon his body seems to wilt.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps you too have experienced this: getting tired after six days of work in a row.

Another reason the Sabbath is important is that we need mental rest. This is one danger of the Japanese work culture: it does not give its workers the space to mentally decompress. Shelly Miller, in her book *Rhythms of Rest*,



states that one purpose of resting on the Sabbath is to “notice what bubbles to the surface of our thoughts.”<sup>22</sup> In order to survive and keep going, many of us submerge psychological trouble, be it relational or spiritual, throughout the week. However, these hidden problems can become the grain around which the dark pearls of unforgiveness, depression, rage, and even mental illness form. To process our issues, resting weekly helps.

Lastly, in doing Sabbath, we prioritize God. Whether or not you agree with Eric Liddell in *Chariots of Fire* for not running in the Olympics on Sunday, you have to admit, it was gutsy. And it gave Eric a chance to testify that love for God came before Olympic medals. When we take the time to worship on Sunday morning, perhaps skipping work or sports practices or community meetings, people notice. And when someone asks, we explain: I have a God to worship, and he is more important to me than all these things.

Finally, let us take up the question: If God wants us to set aside a day in seven, what does that look like, particularly as missionaries?

### The shape of the Sabbath

First of all, let’s be honest: Sunday is not restful for most of us. Preaching, hospitality, youth groups, and church meetings fill the day, and, if you are a parent of young children, childcare doesn’t stop. So, if Sunday involves work for you, the first principle is to ask yourself, when is my Sabbath? My wife struggles with this, and as I wrote this article, I also realized that I am really only taking a half day a week to completely rest. I need to find at least another half-day somewhere or try to take a full day off. We need it, and God designed it for our spiritual, mental, and physical well-being.

Second, the Sabbath should be restful. In the more than 150 biblical passages that speak of the Sabbath, over 80% speak of rest as the purpose of the day (author’s own research). How this looks varies from person to person. Get some exercise, watch a movie, go on a date, take a nap, spend some extra time with God. Do what is refreshing and restful for you. If you lead other Christians, encourage them to rest from work on their Sabbath and trust God with the outcome.

Third, the Sabbath should include some time of worship (Lev. 23:3, Rev. 1:10). Since many of us in ministry roles worship on Sunday but take our Sabbath on a different day, our situation is unique. But it can be refreshing to spend extra time with God while resting: listen to a sermon, worship, or talk with a friend and pray with them. If you are a leader of Christians, feed them spiritually on their Sabbath day.

Finally, let us remember the Sabbath was given for our blessing and not burdensome rules (Mark 2:27). This does not mean we forego the weekly day, but keep it as children of God, knowing that Christ has rested perfectly for us. **JH**

1. John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing Company, 2008), 541.

2. Shelly Miller, *Rhythms of Rest: Finding the Spirit of Sabbath in a Busy World*, (Bethany House Publishers, 2016), 61.

*Matthew Cummings, an MK born and raised in Japan, is a church-planting missionary in Sendai with WEC International. He and his wife, Annette, have five fantastic kids. Matt enjoys basketball, tennis, and relaxing with old friends.*



# Rest in the face of pressure

When the work before us seems overwhelming, we can find reminders in Scripture of the sustaining goodness of God

By Colin Noble

Working in Japan is not easy. That's true whether you're doing front-line missionary work or something more like Paul's tentmaking. Overcoming language and cultural barriers is part of the difficulty, and so is the sheer pace of twenty-first century life in Japan. What sort of reflection—right thinking about God—can help us counter the feeling of being on a treadmill in the work we do?

When the to-do list seems overwhelming, the promises of rest in places like Matthew 11:28–30 and Revelation 14:13 help me get perspective. But the pressure remains. And it can be felt whether we are involved in breaking new ground like Moses, sitting on top of an established infrastructure like King David, or at the end of our tether because the work seems to be going disastrously like Elijah.

## Breaking new ground: Moses

We might think first of situations of breaking new ground, perhaps opening up new avenues of gospel work. I've never had to confront an autocratic national ruler, but I can understand why Moses put up repeated objections like we read in Exodus 3–4. (And he hadn't even tried to master Japanese when he said he was unable to speak well!) But God's response to Moses's fears about being able to perform all the things demanded of him in a challenging and structure-upending context sets the tone for the whole Bible. God's response each time is to remind



Moses choosing the seventy elders

Moses of God's capacity. So that's a key point for us to bear in mind when we feel pressured in a new or potentially overwhelming context.

Yet we will run ourselves into the ground if we convince ourselves that doing everything in God's strength means carrying on as if fuelled by a nuclear battery that never loses power. Moses came to realise that truth courtesy of someone who knew him well, observed his work closely, and noted the unsustainability of it. Moses's father-in-law told Moses—"What you are doing is not good . . . the work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone" (Ex. 18:17–18 NIV). These are words worthy of consideration by people like missionaries in Japan.

Moses felt overwhelmed by the needs of the people, even though he did not have 125 million people before him whose mother tongue was

not his own. If the advice to share the load was good for Moses, pride in our own capacity, reputation, or calling ought not prevent us from following Moses's lead and finding others to share the load.

## Continuing the work: David

Perhaps the work you are involved in feels a little less like Moses's work of confront-

ing a kingdom and a little more like King David's work of defending and ruling a kingdom. You might be embedded in long-standing infrastructure that others built in the decades before you arrived in Japan. What might we learn from David, the shepherd turned king, the newcomer who became organisationally central?

If you are involved long term in the work of declaring the gospel in Japan, you might have days like David where



David spares Saul's life

you are sure there is someone out to get you and you need to be as wise as a serpent. You might even have exhibited David-like generosity of spirit and refused to cut down those who oppose you—either Japanese bureaucracy or colleagues with different approaches—even when the chance presented itself. Such generosity is particularly wearying when it is not reciprocated.

How do we not grow weary in the face of the responsibility we now bear after years of difficulty? What does David, the man with responsibilities that were probably greater than most of our own, have to teach us? His reflections are illuminating. In Psalm 23, he expresses trust in the Lord who provides all he needs, including when he's faced with opposition. So his strength, which we can make ours too, comes from his connection to God. Rest, for him, requires turning to God.

But David's reflections are also challenging. In Psalm 42 and 43, David encourages us to join him in turning to God, not human constructs, when life seems toughest. When downcast by the apparent resistance of Japanese culture and individuals to the gospel, do we long—with a deep longing like David had—for God? David's thoughts resonate with those of Paul to the worshippers of other gods in Athens: "In him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28). Nothing else can give us the rest gained from prayer when we remember the peace God offers.

### *Burning out: Elijah*

Then again, perhaps the reality you experience is more like that felt by Elijah. The work seems unfruitful, ears seem unhearing, the language barrier seems insurmountable. We're just plain tired and want to echo Elijah: "I have had enough, Lord" (1 Kings 19:4). Or when colleagues we value leave Japan, we might even feel "I am the only one left" (1 Kings 19:10) in this work.

When we feel overwhelmed and want to cry out like Elijah that tasks or people seem to be conspiring to kill us, it is good to remember God's response to Elijah. Elijah was not offered superhuman strength. Rather, he was reminded of the power of God, before

hearing a quiet word of encouragement. There might be times for us, like Elijah, to slow down and listen to the voice of God, in order to be strengthened and prepared to go on to the next task.



*Elijah fed by the angel*

So back to the starting point of our thinking together. Sharing the gospel in Japan is God-honouring, life-changing, and valuable, but it comes with the pressure of feeling urgent, critical, and relentlessly wearying. What sort of right thinking about God can help us counter the feeling of being on a treadmill in the work we do? When the workload seems too heavy as it did for Moses, or the weight of responsibility hangs on us as it did for David, or we feel isolated in our work like Elijah, what might we learn about rest from these people in similar situations?

### *Looking to Exodus: rest and reliance*

The narrative of Exodus offers us a couple of key points of instruction. The people, led by Moses, have worked hard in a foreign land. The commandment to rest in Exodus 20 is a key point in the narrative. But note that it is integrated into the story, not simply the fourth of ten commandments. It is preempted by Exodus 16, which teaches that not working, gathering, and harvesting is crucial for the people to realise they are reliant on God. So rest is targeted, not simply leisure. It

reminds God's people that they rely on him for strength and provision.

Why is stopping to remember our reliance on God so important? As we read more of the story of Exodus, we get a clue. It seems that the writer intentionally contrasts two things: stopping work regularly to remember that God is God and losing faith in God. Regular rest seems like the antidote to apostasy.

For example, the story of the golden calf, recorded in Exodus 32–34 is situated between reminders of the need to rest (Ex. 31:12–17; 35:1–3). Rest—that is, stopping to remember God's provision for us—seems to be an integral part of remaining God's people when the surrounding culture does not recognise God. Rest is so crucial that the Israelites are told that even when the harvest is ripe for the plucking, rest is not to be discarded in the name of urgency: "You shall rest; even during the ploughing season and harvest you must rest" (Ex. 34:21). This appears in the middle of God's response to people who have refused to hope in God. It directly challenges the frenetic desire we and others might feel to stay on top of everything.

There is a potentially great harvest for the gospel in Japan. Resting has the potential to stall productivity and endanger hard-earned reputations of success and reliability. And maybe that's the point—we are not to rest, so to speak, on our own laurels. So even though on home assignment we might, perhaps with good reason, want to cite Jesus's words about the harvest being plentiful but the harvesters inadequate in number, we do well to ponder carefully before we fall into the trap of thinking that we have to work nonstop to bring in that harvest. God calls each of us to rest, even when we know there is much work to be done, lest we forget that we are dependent on him, as he alone provides the strength for our work. ■

*Colin Noble lived in Japan for six years, experiencing the pressures of corporate Japanese life firsthand before teaching Japanese language and culture at Sydney University for fourteen years. He now works as a school chaplain in Sydney, Australia.*

We live in a culture where busyness is applauded, yet that busyness exhausts us. Here's a way to cope.

# Four steps to finding



By Shelley Carl

Several years ago, after relocating within Japan, I felt exhausted and wanted to just stop everything and get a true rest. Although that was impossible due to a busy ministry schedule, God gave me a coping skill that taught me how to rest spiritually. I share about it often because there is a great need for spiritual rest, especially among those in ministry.

Rest is a gift from God, and finding that gift is possible. Jesus said, “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls” (Matt. 11:28–29 ESV).

Rest for the soul is a spiritual rest. Surely you do not need one more thing to add to your to-do list. However, Jesus told us that we need to do something to initiate the rest. We need to learn from him. I learned this coping skill from him, and now it is my go-to method of rest. It uses the acronym REST and is an exercise for the mind that takes only a minute.

## *R is for Remember*

Discipline your mind to remember the goodness of the Lord and his faithfulness as the Word tells us to do: “Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me” (Isa. 46:9 NIV). Moses encouraged the Israelites not to forget, saying,

“Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them fade from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them” (Deut. 4:9 NIV).

When we remember, we look backward—back into the Word and into our own life, remembering that he is God. Remember the stories of God’s people as well as your own story. When remembering, avoid recalling the negative and purposefully focus on the positive and the victories. Also, do not focus on yourself and your pain or joy, failures and successes, but rather focus on God and his triumphs. When you remember what God has already done, you are ready to expect that he will do more.

## *E is for Expect*

After remembering specifics of what God has done, by faith we can imagine with expectation the great things that he will do. When we know who God is, we can expect that he will do even more than our minds can imagine.

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future” (Jer. 29:11 NIV). Imagine laying down the plans that you have for your life and re-

ceiving the plans that God has for you. At our high school graduation we were required to sing, “I Did It My Way.” God had called me to be a missionary to Japan only a few months before graduation, and I knew that doing it my way was never going to work. Even though I love to sing, I barely mouthed the words to that song while the others robustly belted it out. I determined in my heart that going forward, doing it God’s way was the only way for me.

God gave a promise to Abram that he would bless him with an heir and make him into a great nation. At first, Abram’s imagination didn’t take him far enough. He could not believe, and he did not expect that God could do the impossible. He could only imagine that his heir would not come from himself but would be a servant within his household. But God stretched Abram’s imagination by telling him to see by faith what he could not see with his eyes. God led Abram outside and told him to look at the stars in the heavens and count them—if he could. And then, “Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness” (Gen. 15:6 NIV). With God, we can believe, and we can expect the unexpected.

When we remember, we look backward, and when we expect, we look forward. Of course, like Abram, we must look with eyes of faith. Abram expected God to work, but it required personal surrender.

# spiritual rest



## *S is for Surrender*

To surrender is to stop resisting and submit. It involves self-abandonment, in short, to give up. Jesus himself faced that agonizing night of surrender in the garden of Gethsemane. His surrender, his giving up of himself, bought our salvation.

Jesus said, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me” (Luke 9:23 ESV). That is surrender. John the Baptist said, “He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30 ESV). That is surrender. To surrender is to give up control and give in to the will of God.

Surrendering breaks the bondage of sin. The prodigal son surrendered his sinful lifestyle, worldly pleasures, and carnal thinking. He returned to his father, who welcomed him with open arms and threw a party. His surrender brought not only rest for his soul but also restoration to relationships.

When we surrender, we look inward. David, aware of the wickedness in his heart, knew he had to surrender. He prayed, “Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Ps. 139:23–24 NIV). The joy of surrendering for believers is that we surrender to the winning side. We surrender to a God who is trustworthy.

## *T is for Trust*

Trust God and be confident in him. Trusting in God does not mean getting

our own way, but rather desiring his way. It does not mean asking God to bless what we want but rather to find out what he wants and to do that.

- “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding” (Prov. 3:5 NIV).
- “And those who know your name put their trust in you, for you, O Lord, have not forsaken those who seek you” (Ps. 9:10 ESV).
- “Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose trust is the Lord” (Jer. 17:7 ESV).
- “Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him, and he will act” (Ps. 37:5 ESV).

When we surrender, we look inward, and when we trust, we look upward. Look up to the heavens as Abram did. Look up at a God who does the impossible.

These four simple steps—remember, expect, surrender, and trust—are a coping skill to bring your mind to a place of rest.

Recently I put this coping skill into practice while flying across the Pacific Ocean. I felt exhausted physically and mentally after experiencing COVID-19 and its residual aftereffects, packing up my house to fly to America for a year of home assignment, and thinking about the upcoming year of traveling to speak in churches each weekend while studying for my PhD during the week. Here’s how I did it:

- R—Remember.** I remembered one by one the victories of the past five-year term and the faithful-

ness of God, even during the difficult challenges.

- E—Expect.** I began to imagine seeing friends and family on the other side of the world. I allowed my heart to expect great things for the unknown future.

- S—Surrender.** I confessed my fears and anxiety about the future, about my own inabilities, about all the work that was yet to be done, and surrendered all of it to God.

- T—Trust.** I determined in my heart that I was going to trust God with my schedule, relationships, studies, speaking engagements, and with all the traveling ahead that would soon lead me back to Japan.

Now it is your turn. Take a moment right now to look backward and remember two or three positive things from your life or from the Bible that God did. Then look forward and imagine even one thing that you believe God will do. Now look inward and surrender anything the Holy Spirit shows you that you need to give up. Finally, declare out loud that you put your trust in God and God alone. It is my hope that this exercise helps you to experience the gift of rest that Jesus promised you would find, even in the midst of your busyness. **JH**

*Shelley Carl is from Rochester, NY. She’s been serving the risen Son in the Land of the Rising Sun with the Assemblies of God World Missions since 1980 in Hokkaido, Toyama, Fukuoka, and Tokyo.*

# A monthly day of prayer



*Why not start next month with a day dedicated to extended communion and rest with God?*

As each month begins, there's a day on my calendar I eagerly await. This day feeds my soul and supplies much needed rest for my mind, body, and spirit. It propels me into another month of living and ministering in Japan. It's dedicated to extended communion with God. I wouldn't start a month without my day of prayer.

One thing is clear when I'm out among Japanese people each day—there is much work to be done. I see person after person who desperately needs the good news of Christ. I see scores of people who need an evangelistic-minded believer to pursue them relationally over a significant period of time with the steadfast love of Jesus. With this reality always before me, it's easy to get sucked into the “non-stop work” mentality. It's all too common for me to wake in the morning fixated on the list of tasks I must complete to make “my” contribution to the mission at hand. Like Martha, I find myself regularly “anxious and troubled about many things” (Luke 10:41 ESV). This mentality and heart condition is dangerous if left unchecked. It leads to exhaustion and a lack of dependence on God. I must continually recognize my need for God and my need for rest.

## Day of prayer

Our team's monthly day of prayer is held during the first week of every month. We dedicate eight hours on one day for prayer and refreshment. This

day is vital in helping us to acknowledge and align our hearts with the truth that only through God can much be accomplished in our lives and in the lives of our Japanese friends. It's a necessary reminder that we must look to God's strength and provision and not to our own efforts. No amount of work we put in will produce long-lasting fruit “unless the LORD builds the house” (Ps. 127:1). It is also crucial that we slow down for rest and refreshment in the Lord.

This time of rest recharges us and gives us a boost that hopefully leads to working with diligence and excellence. With our restful day of prayer at the beginning of the month, it ideally sets the tone for the whole month, giving us an awareness of our need to take breaks. This in turn helps protect us from over-exhaustion and burnout.

## Prepare in advance

It is helpful to prepare in advance for these days in order to maximize the time you have. This includes making a plan for what you will pray for, what passages you will meditate on, or what spiritual development resources you will read/listen to and pray through. You can also plan times of worship, silence, or prayer with others. A beneficial exercise I do during my day of prayer is to look back at the last month, look around at the present, and look ahead to the upcoming month. I take extended time processing and praying through these three things in regards to my relationship with God, my spiritual disciplines, my family and relationships, ministry in Japan,

and the world. Extended time spent in focused, intentional communion with God is life-giving and rejuvenates my soul. Having a plan allows me to stay focused on God during my day of prayer instead of figuring things out on the day.

Our team is encouraged is to do something refreshing on these days. Whether it's going to the bathhouse, to a coffee shop, on a nature walk, or to the golf range, there's much rest to be found when combining quality alone time in God's presence with doing something you love.

## Be flexible

Depending on the season you are in individually or as a family, you might have to be flexible and/or creative. We have two small children, so my wife and I take different segments of the day, one of us praying in the morning and early afternoon, while the other does late afternoon and evening. Usually we try to pray together when making the switch in the afternoon. There are times, though, when we are each only able to get in four to six hours of prayer, and that is okay. We recognize our season and the need to show ourselves grace.

A monthly day of prayer is worth implementing and protecting. I thank God for the wonderful times of intimacy and refreshment spent in his presence on these days. **JH**

*Kevin Ewing is the Tokyo City Director for Student Mobilization, a ministry focused on the next generation. Kevin and his wife Alyssa have served in Asia for 10 years (Japan since 2017). They have two children.*

# Is a “what-not-to-do” list enough?

By Judith Ricken

## *A journey towards resting well on the Sabbath*

I grew up in a Christian home and have attended church all my life. Early on I was taught the fourth commandment: “Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work . . . For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day” (Ex. 20:9–11 ESV).

According to my Sunday school teacher, that meant mainly not doing homework on Sundays. Trying to be a good Christian, I followed that advice. As I grew older, more and more items seemed to make the “not-to-do” list: laundry, housecleaning, and other chores.

When I entered full-time ministry, I was determined not to become one of these overworked missionaries I had often read and heard about. I decided early not to work on my day off during the week.

But nobody had ever told me what actually to do on the Sabbath, which left me in some confusion. Sometimes not doing any work caused me to be bored and lonely. Sunny days caused me to feel tense because on the one hand I wanted to go out and enjoy nature, but on the other I desired to stay inside and read a book. If this all sounds very immature, that’s probably what it was. Nevertheless I continued with this kind of pattern—schedule one day off a week and not working on that day.

Several years later, I heard from a friend that she “prepared for Sabbath” on Friday evening in order to have a proper sabbath on Saturdays. I had no idea what that meant and quickly dismissed it as weird and legalistic.

This changed when I discussed the Sabbath with students from Gifu University using a KGK booklet about work. A Chinese student explained that the kanji used for Sabbath (安息

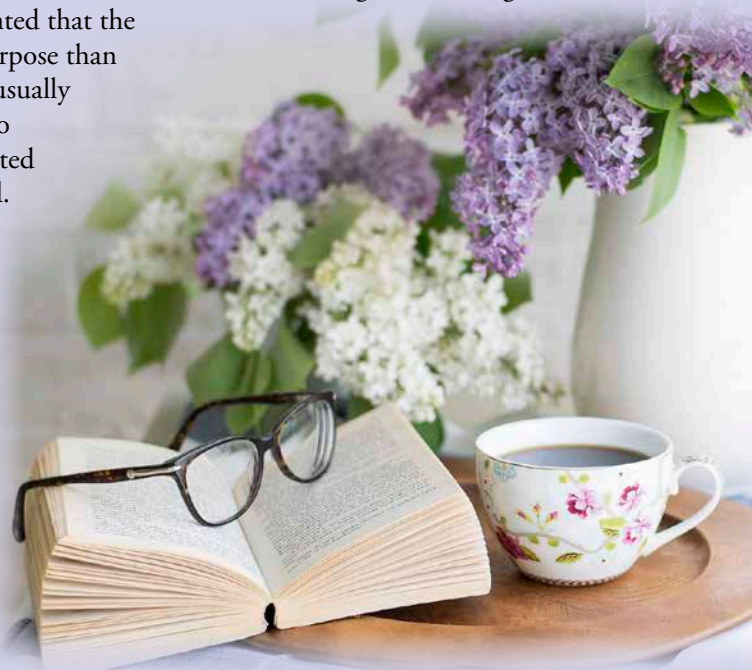
*ansoku*) is used to describe dead people in Chinese! That made me think: “Indeed, dead people do nothing!” As I reflected on it, I noticed that often people use the “day off” to finish up things they had not done during the week (e.g. exercise, grocery shopping, cleaning).

The KGK booklet hinted that the Sabbath has a deeper purpose than simply to recharge. We usually rest in order to be able to work again, but God rested without being exhausted. As we’re made in his image, there must be a meaning in rest itself. I decided to try a restful “do nothing day off.”

I prepared the day before in order for it to go well. I decided that it was okay to consume creations that others had made (e.g. enjoy nature, read a book, watch a movie), but I wouldn’t be productive in contributing or creating anything myself. That meant I had to cook in advance and make sure the apartment was tidy and the laundry was done so I wasn’t tempted to do those chores.

On that day I was surprised how strong the urge was to be “productive” and how difficult it was to simply enjoy. Although I thought it would be nice to have a “do nothing day off” once a month as a spiritual discipline, I haven’t kept it up. With the KGK and GAM Team, we read the book *The Emotionally Healthy Leader* by Peter Scazzero, in which he discusses how to create your own guidelines for the Sabbath. I learned that I longed for a regular day off. In my first term, I took one day off a week, but not the same day every week. Setting this regular day off has

meant that I sacrifice being involved in some important events, but it has been a relief to have that day already set aside. Although I don’t always plan it well in advance and am at times tempted to finish my to-do list, I’ve gotten good at “not working” and closer to understanding the meaning of rest.



What I learned in a nutshell:

- It’s not enough to have a not-to-do list; I need a to-do list too.
- There is more to the Sabbath than simply recharging; resting has meaning in itself.
- Trying not to be productive on that day helps me realize I’m worthy just by my existence, not because of what I do.
- To rest well, I need to prepare in advance.
- Reflecting on the Sabbath, making my own guidelines for how to spend it is one thing, but to stick to those guidelines is another! It takes work not to work! **JH**

*Judith Ricken is with the German Alliance Mission (GAM) and serves with KGK (student ministry) in Nagoya. She enjoys reading, hiking the Japanese mountains, and meeting friends.*



# A lesson from a grandfather clock

By Sally Strnad

*What can we, and especially singles, learn from a grandfather clock about rest?*

My dad loves grandfather clocks. A happy memory from my childhood is of my dad winding the clocks in my family's home every Saturday evening—and he still does it. If the clocks are not wound once a week, they will stop working sometime during the week. Just as the clock owner must be intentional in winding his clocks in order for them to function, so must we, as the stewards of our earthly lives, be intentional in building in times of rest in order to function in a healthy way. In the case of the clock, a five-minute process is sufficient for the whole week. But for us as humans, particularly ones who live in a cross-cultural context, much more than five minutes per week is needed.

We know that in the second chapter of the Bible, God rested, and then soon after we read his command of rest for his people (Ex. 20:8–11). There is a clear command from Scripture to take a day of the week to cease from work and set aside that day for rest and the enjoyment of God. But I would venture to say that one day a week, especially for those of us living overseas, is not enough. As stewards of our lives, we have the responsibility to also establish rhythms that contribute to living lives of rest on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis. On a bigger scale, we can even look ahead to quarterly, annual, or even lifestyle changes that are necessary for long-term recharging and longevity.

## *Unique challenges for singles*

These built-in rhythms are a good idea for everybody, but I have found

that there are some aspects of rest that are uniquely challenging for singles. In general, singles need to be more intentional. We are, in a sense, the only ones available for the job of winding the “rest clock” of our lives. We have no spouse observing a need for rest or creating space for those rhythms to happen.

Everyone has to be aware of unhealthy patterns of overworking or being too busy, but this can be harder to recognize as a single because they do not have a partner to observe daily patterns. Ideally, we will have a team around us with a leader who creates and models a healthy culture of rest and also provides accountability. But eventually singles will need to make sure those routines of rest actually happen. As a result, a beautiful opportunity to partner with the Lord is created. A single person has the opportunity to invite the Holy Spirit in to be an extra “set of eyes” to notice blind spots, and together create and maintain patterns of rest. It can also be a good opportunity for teamwork and friendship in enlisting help from a teammate or friend for accountability and encouragement in actually executing the rest.

## *Know yourself well*

Resting well requires self-study, reflection, and trial and error to find out what is restful and what is not, and this isn't easy. I've learned to ask myself “What do I need to be restored today (physically, spiritually, emotionally, relationally)?” And then take the initiative—ask for help or find the resources to make those things happen.



I've found that it's not always easy to know what I need or how to recharge. That is part of knowing oneself and being a good steward. I've answered this question by making lists of things that sound fun, keeping track of what gives me energy, asking others who know me well, and just trying new things. Through this process I've learned that I love searching for and trying new recipes and ingredients, taking walks along the ocean, and learning about the proper ways to make green tea.

Conversely, I've found that being aware of what makes me tired is just as important. In addition to the obvious drainers like lack of physical sleep or too much/not enough people time, I've learned to take note of what else drains me, such as long meetings in Japanese or complicated relational issues. Being aware of these things helps me to be gracious with myself, build in extra rest, and plan my days and weeks with enough margin and recharge time between sometimes unavoidable cross-cultural stressors.

### Living environment

For me, one of the biggest factors I've found that affects my general ability to be recharged or to be drained is my living environment. The truth is that living overseas is exhausting. Our home ideally needs to be a place where we can truly relax. Most rightly assume that couples and families will want their own place. But the ideal living situation for a single person is more complicated to figure out. They may need a wise team member to observe and challenge their way of thinking. The most important thing for each single person is to understand themselves and what they need to find rest where they physically live.

For my first four years in Japan, I lived with university students in a sharehouse near the university. This was a phenomenal opportunity for my language and cultural adaptation, but over time, I realized it was draining for me to have roommates changing yearly and

to not have a space of my own. I realized that although I place a high value on living and discipling among the lost, that didn't have to literally mean having the lost as my roommates.

As an extrovert, I was a bit apprehensive about how it would be living alone, but I soon realized having my own place was actually a capacity giver. I love hosting in my home, and I found that having the freedom to do that without needing to check with roommates was logistically simpler. I also found that having my own space at the end of the day provided breathing room that I hadn't even realized that I needed. I needed my home to be a haven of rest. With that in place, I could give more, invite more, and ultimately share Jesus better.

### Taking downtime is okay

Similarly, as an extrovert, my natural way of thinking is that being with people will recharge me. But actually because of the high level of initiation and the relational nature of ministry, as well as carrying the relational load of creating and managing all of my relationships, I've learned that recharging for me means having alone time.

**As stewards of our lives, we have the responsibility to also establish rhythms that contribute to living lives of rest on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis.**

Planning alone time in an evening used to make me feel lazy ("I could be spending time with people!"), but a teammate reminded me that just as families plan for family time or couples plan for a date night, it's ok for singles to think about that kind of time too. Couples and families spend lots of downtime together, and it can be easy for a single person to forget that. Downtime is part of being human, and it's a necessary part of recharging. For me, that's recognizing that I need a few evenings a week with nothing scheduled.

I've also learned to find friends who don't require much emotional energy to spend time with, because I am often tired from relational ministry. In other words, finding the people who do recharge me or at least don't "take much" from me. British pastor and author Sam Allberry, in his book *7 Myths about Singleness*, says, "having people to do nothing with is quite important for singles. There are times when I feel emotionally tired but really want company, so it's great to have friends you see often enough that you don't need to spend time together just catching up."<sup>1</sup> At different times in my life I've had greater need for these kinds of friendships. I've found that God cares about even that need in my life, and I can ask him and trust him to provide these types of relationships.

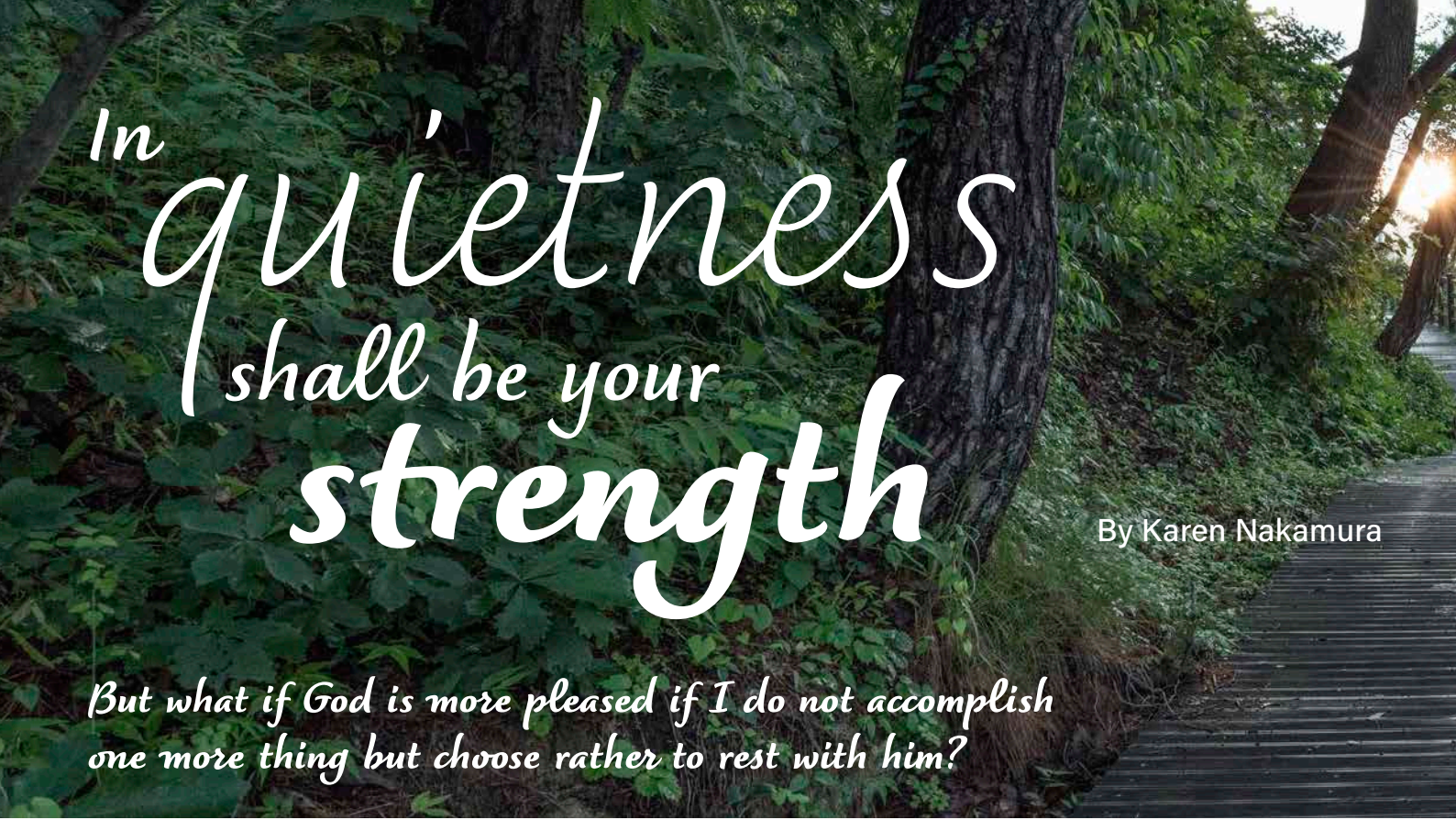
### True rest is in Jesus

While looking at rest through the lens of physical, emotional, and relational categories is important, ultimately our true rest is found in Jesus. This is not unique to the single person, but perhaps a single person gets to experience it in a deeper way. For us, there is no spouse to see the tears on our hardest days or to share the laughter of inside jokes late at night, but there is a closeness to Jesus that can be our greatest treasure. Our aloneness has the potential to be the very thing that brings us close to him.

Jesus is calling out for us, the weary and heavy laden, to come to him for rest, and he even promises rest for our souls (Matt. 11:28-29). What a great and precious promise for all of us, but for the weary single who is alone and seemingly always initiating, this is a precious gift. It is the gift of intentionally winding the clock of our souls, giving us what we need to love him and love others well. **JH**

1. Sam Allberry, *7 Myths about Singleness* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019), 133.

*Sally Strnad serves with the Navigators in Shizuoka Prefecture. She moved to Japan seven years ago and enjoys finding rest in drinking green tea, baking adventures, and walking along the ocean.*



# In quietness I shall be your strength

By Karen Nakamura

*But what if God is more pleased if I do not accomplish one more thing but choose rather to rest with him?*

As I sat typing in the word-processing department at Campus Crusade's (Cru) headquarters, I struggled with my thoughts: *I am not as good as the campus staff. All I do is sit here in the office and type.* But I also thought, *I have the brains to do something more important than just typing in names and addresses all day.*

## *A valuable early lesson*

As a young college graduate, I had wanted to work full-time in the campus ministry, sharing Christ with and discipling students. But I was asked to work at headquarters for my first year or two. I typed in the name and address of a donor, pushed the button to print out the letter with the donor's name inserted, and waited to type in the next name and address.

Since my work had small breaks between typing each name and address while the letter printed, I made the most of my time by memorizing Philipians. Through that, the Lord spoke to my heart. Concerning my thoughts that I was too good for such a lowly job, he reminded me that Jesus, though he was Almighty God, humbled himself to become a man and die on the cross for me (Phil. 2:5–8). Yikes! Who was I to complain that I was too good for my so-called lowly job?

Then my heart was deeply convicted by Paul's words that all his accomplishments in life were "as rubbish" compared to "the surpassing value of knowing Christ" (Phil. 3:8 NASB). Wow. Just knowing Christ is way more valuable than anything I might accomplish. He cares way more about who I am—my heart—than what I do.

This was a huge lesson that would be foundational and one I have been reminded of repeatedly throughout my life.

## *The full, busy years*

After two years at headquarters, the Lord graciously allowed me to work in the campus ministry in the US and then to work in campus ministry in Japan. Very active, busy, fulfilling years. But since I enjoyed it so much, I had a tendency to overdo, to overschedule, and work to exhaustion.

I clearly remember some Mondays (our day off), sleeping late, waking to eat breakfast, and going back to sleep again, unable to do anything else. I neglected my weekly cleaning chore because I could hardly drag my body up. I'm sorry for my dear roommates for all those chores I neglected!

Fast-forward to marriage and three kids—fun and fulfilling years. Over the years, I learned and relearned how

to balance work and rest, to prioritize time with God and family over ministry activities, sometimes failing, sometimes getting it right.

## *Called to rest*

Over the years, as our children grew older and more independent, I began taking on more ministry responsibilities than I had when they were small. Especially during the pandemic when meetings went online, it was easy to schedule back-to-back meetings. Some days I had one or two meetings in the morning, one or two in the afternoon, and then one or two at night. If there wasn't a meeting, there was always preparation work for the next day's meetings or email communications to do after dinner. One night, though, I didn't have anything pressing I needed to do. After dinner, I thought, *What shall I work on? What do I need to accomplish now?*

The next day I decided to go to a park. It was my monthly day with the Lord and I just walked around and asked him what he wanted to say to

*Many times, making the  
to some activity proved*



me. As I walked, these thoughts came to mind:

Last night, why did I feel like I had to accomplish some kind of work? I don't think it was because I'm trying to gain my self-worth from my accomplishments. Or am I? I thought I had a good handle on the fact that I am very loved just for being his child, not for what I do. I really do enjoy my work. And it does feel good to accomplish one more thing on my to-do list. Of course, the Lord wants to use me to reach and disciple and train people. But what if he is more pleased if I do not accomplish one more thing but choose rather to rest with him?

That last thought hit me like a ton of bricks. Really? He would be more pleased if I did not accomplish one more thing?

Why did that surprise me so much? Does the Lord not call us to come to him and rest (Matt. 11:28–30)? Didn't he want to gather us under his wings as a hen gathers her chicks (Matt. 23:37)?

*hard decision to say no to be more meaningful.*

Didn't Jesus tell Martha that Mary had chosen the good thing by sitting at his feet and listening instead of running around serving (Luke 10:38–42)?

### *Benefits of adding margin*

I decided to make some changes in the way I schedule my days. If I had meetings scheduled for morning and afternoon, I would not put in something in the evenings. Or if I had an evening meeting, I would leave either morning or afternoon open. I would try not to schedule meetings back-to-back.

One day, I had things scheduled for the morning and evening. I was asked to do something in the afternoon. I really wanted to help but reluctantly refused. It turned out that, because of the free time in the afternoon, I was able to spend a little longer time—very meaningful time—with my morning appointment.

As part of my efforts to befriend non-Christians, I am a part of a multilingual club, which has various meetings in different places. One evening, I could choose between being super-rushed at dinner to attend a face-to-face meeting or eating relaxedly with my husband before attending a different online meeting. I chose the latter. At the online meeting, I was

able to briefly share my testimony when my new friends there asked why I had come to Japan. I was able to share a little of how God had changed me from being super shy to enjoying meeting new people when he showed me his unconditional love. There have been many other times when I could see later that making the hard decision to say no to some activity proved to be more meaningful.

I have begun to participate in a group for Japanese Christian workers, practicing times of quiet reflection and meditation.<sup>1</sup> This has also deepened my awareness of self and God.

The Lord says, “In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and in trust shall be your strength.” Then Isaiah tells the people, “But you were unwilling” (Isa. 30:15 ESV). Oh, I pray that I would be willing. I am still learning and have far to go. But I am grateful for how he has continued to be faithful to teach me and work in me that I may find rest in him. **JH**

1. CLSK クリスチャン・ライフ成長研究会 (translated as Christian Life Growth Study Group/Research Society) <https://clsk-ss.blogspot.com/p/clsk.html>

*Karen Nakamura, from California, USA, lives in Tokyo. She and her husband Mitsu work with Japan Campus Crusade for Christ. They have three children in their 20's. Karen loves to talk and pray with friends..*

# When doing nothing does not equate to resting

*Finding rest in God requires us to change the way we think, not just find new scheduling techniques*

By Stephanie Schatz

Two-and-a-half years into my first church partnership, I realized I had a problem—I couldn't say no to any invitation I received. If college students texted that everyone was going for a late-night jog, I was there. Full disclosure: I hate jogging. But who knew if tonight might be the night spiritual breakthroughs happened? I was young, single, and often lonely. All the more reason to go. However, being out past midnight and out the door again first thing in the morning had me on the fast track to burnout. When I was finally forced to realize I needed time away from ministry, I still didn't find rest. In the stillness of my apartment, I was confronted with what drove me to exhaustion wasn't a busy schedule but a busy heart.

## At the root of a busy heart

As I look at my own story, I see several key contributing factors to my restlessness:

**Proving my worth.** To my sending churches and supporters, I wanted to demonstrate that I was being faithful with the funds provided for me to be a missionary in Japan. To high school teachers and distant relatives, I wanted to show that I wasn't throwing my life away. I didn't need to have a professional degree in order to find success in

life. Faithfulness and pride were mixed motives that left me finding my value in what I did.

**Seeking approval.** I was often haunted by the questions: Am I accepted? Am I enough? Any misunderstanding or disagreement was proof that no one understood or loved me for who I was. My insecurities only deepened every time I compared myself with others. No number of texts or events on my calendar could quench the longing to be accepted and to belong.

**An overblown sense of responsibility.** I often thought, *If I don't do \_\_\_\_, who will?* In a small church plant, there wasn't a lot of extra help. My failure to stay on top of everything would inconvenience others. Furthermore, control brought with it a sense of security that I needed. Self-deception regarding my own importance kept me from asking for help when I needed it and rejecting it when it was offered.

**Running from many fears.** Fear of failure, fear of missing out, fear of rejection, fear of being unloved, fear of my own insignificance . . . the list went on and on. Since I couldn't face my fears, I couldn't see what was driving me. The only way I saw to fight fear was a slavish effort to avoid the worst-case scenarios my fears convinced me were imminent.

**Grief.** Within five years of arriving in Japan, I lost my grandpa, father, and grandma in unexpected and tragic ways. Some of my biggest protectors, providers, and encouragers were suddenly gone. Separated from other grieving family members, the losses took a lot longer to sink in. When it did, busyness kept the sadness at bay. But in silence, the doubts rushed in uninvited: "God, do you see? Do you care?" In the aftermath of loss, doubts kept me from seeking God, who "is our refuge and strength" (Ps. 46:1, ESV).

Do any of these sound familiar to you? If so, take heart. There is a way out.

## Entering God's rest at the end of striving

About the time I hit rock bottom and considered leaving the field, I attended a mentoring program run by my mission organization, Pioneers. In that mountain retreat, two significant things happened that changed the course of my life. First, I finally turned to face God with the grief, disappointment, and frustration that had built up in the first several years of being a missionary in Japan. I learned to be honest and vulnerable before God. The second was learning what God intended for us when he gave us the Sabbath. Mark

Buchanan's book *The Rest of God* significantly changed the way I view rest—it opened my eyes to the life-giving nature of God's commands, which is rooted in his loving, generous character.

### Why God commands us to rest

#### *Our value comes from God alone.*

Our work easily becomes the source of our value and meaning. Rest forces us to acknowledge that our value is attributed to us by God's work, not ours. He created us; he saves us. We deceive ourselves if we think our obedience adds anything to his finished work. Everything we receive is an act of his mercy and grace. I can stop striving to earn God's approval or love, because he has already lavishly given them to me.

#### *Rest recalibrates our view of God.*

When my view of God is too small, I act like it's up to me to control the world. I know I am not alone in this. When God finally reveals himself to Job, a man who lost everything, God says, "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding" (Job 38:4). This is followed by 58 rhetorical questions, each showcasing God's sovereign rule over the world (Job 38:5–41:14). Like Job, I walk away from those questions with a restored vision of who God is. Therefore, "If God can take any mess, any mishap, any wastage, any wreckage, any anything, and choreograph beauty and meaning from it, then you can take a day off . . . Either God is good and in control, or it all depends on you."<sup>1</sup> Rest is a gift that acknowledges God's sovereign control.

*Rest transforms our thinking.* Rest gives us a chance to notice the world around us and give thanks. While a slave to fear, I never had much to be

grateful for. As I grew in assurance of God's "perfect love [that] casts out fear," the way I saw the world changed too (1 John 4:18). Gratitude led to a deeper awareness of God's love and provision, which in turn led to more gratitude. Gratitude provides a different lens to see life's circumstances. "Under God's economy, nothing really changes until our minds do. Transformation is the fruit of a changed outlook . . . God is more interested in changing your thinking than in changing your circumstances."<sup>2</sup>

In the most heartrending losses of my life, I could begin to glimpse God's protection and presence. The Father of the fatherless would provide me a home in Japan, not through the typical means of a husband and children, but through my brothers and sisters in the body of Christ.

#### *Rest doesn't mean doing nothing.*

As a child, I remember reading about a legalist church in bygone times that made children sit on hardwood benches and read the Bible until dark on the Sabbath. Nothing sounded more boring to me at the time. But has our view of Sabbath really changed? Buchanan's points out the fourth commandment is one of the few that is a positive imperative and that we should see it for so much more than just prohibiting us from work.<sup>3</sup>

Just as Ephesians 4:28 reveals that laws don't only prohibit evil but also reveal the good we are to do instead, the Sabbath teaches us to "Cease from what is necessary. Embrace that which gives life."<sup>4</sup> What that looks like will be different for each person. For the sedentary office worker, physical activity and being outside isn't work, but it could be for a farmer. Hosting another dinner party might be work for a busy

mom endlessly in the kitchen, but refreshing to a single person with limited opportunities to serve others in this way. How has God wired you? What fills you with enjoyment and gratitude for what God has given? Where do you notice his presence? In music? Nature? Creativity? Socializing? Solitude? Answering these questions might be key to discovering what restores your soul.

#### *Restlessness fuels our search for God.*

Our restlessness directs our hearts to search for true rest, which will only be realized finally in God's presence in heaven. Buchanan puts it this way, "The truth is, we're always a bit restless. We're supposed to be. This is not a flaw in our faith, it is faith's substance . . . If ever we achieved perfect Sabbath here, unbroken rest and restfulness, then the eternal rest that Sabbath hints at would become irrelevant."<sup>5</sup> Notice the purpose in unfulfilled longings, loneliness, and brokenness that continue to plague us through life's journey. They remind us we haven't reached the destination yet.

Finding rest apart from God is impossible. We may enjoy leisure or have a really good nap, but in a little while, we will always need more. While we may enjoy many of his benefits here on earth, it is when we are finally with God himself that our satisfied souls will be at rest. **JH**

1. Mark Buchanan, *The Rest of God: Restoring Your Soul by Restoring Sabbath* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2006), Kindle, chap. 4.

2. *Ibid*, chap. 2.

3. *Ibid*, chap. 8.

4. *Ibid*.

5. *Ibid*, chap. 14.

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# Talking with a Japanese pastor about rest

By Dene Hughes

*A missionary interviewed the Japanese pastor at his church and discovered some interesting factors*

Our Japanese pastor is known for being “good at rest,” so I interviewed him to find out why.

**Dene:** Considering pastors in Japan, and “rest” . . .

**Pastor Matsuda:** They can’t rest, they hardly rest at all. You see, they fundamentally don’t think of “rest” as a good thing.

**D:** Rest not being good—is that influenced by Japanese values, do you think?

**M:** Yes, certainly that’s one factor. Japanese people think of themselves as a working people. They believe that working is a fundamental good, and so then rest is not good.

Another important factor, though, is many pastors sense that their church is not “running well” and that they are not fulfilling their pastoral role well enough. In that context, they cannot take a break—they feel they aren’t doing their job well enough to rest even when a day of rest is scheduled for them. And if the church is not running so well—because they’re overwhelmed with concern about their quality of their work—even if they took a break, their mind would not be at rest.

**D:** Is this concern magnified by what a pastor fears his congregation may think of him? Or is it also wider—like what does the surrounding neighborhood think of that pastor and church?

**M:** Yes, what other people may think is likely a factor. Japanese people do feel quite concerned about what others around them will think. Compared with, say, the US or Australia, Japan is known as a place where the eyes of others, the thoughts of others, are a

pressing concern. And those thoughts are influenced by a very long history of seeing rest as a bad thing. To work hard with all your heart is good; to rest is not so good. This mentality is firmly established in Japan.

But it’s also true that more recently, with great increases in mental illness, we’re hearing more voices encouraging workers to make a priority of rest: “you should take a break” and “resting is good for you”.

Compared to the old traditional Japanese lifestyle, today’s culture has much more stress, and this is being recognized. Without rest, modern stresses cannot be reduced. This encouragement to rest is a positive change.

You can see this societal change in the understanding of the work week. When I was young, Sunday was considered the only day of rest for a regular worker. Now two days a week (Saturday and Sunday) are considered rest days across much of Japanese society.

**D:** So society is shifting towards valuing rest a bit more, which is a good thing. In Australia, I think the value of rest and how it relates to stress are also being better understood.

But it strikes me that the fundamental motivation to rest in our societies (as a technique to better handle stress) is different from why a Christian might think that rest is a priority. I mean, within Christian doctrine, it seems that rest is a good thing in and of itself; the Bible commands us to rest as if it is a good thing. So the motivation we might have to rest compared to our culture . . . there’s a bit of a gap there.

**M:** Yes, but it’s a really good thing that society has moved in this way—there are so many people suffering from

overwork. I’m thankful for this change even if it comes from a different place.

All that being said, Japanese pastors are still not taking a break! The culture has shifted to value rest more, but pastors still cannot rest—they rarely take time off.

Let’s say pastors in other countries work on Sunday and so take Monday as their day off. Well, a Japanese pastor may attempt the same, but Monday for everyone around them here is a work day, so there’s a feeling of awkwardness if they take time off while people all around are working. I’m sure that factor of caring a great deal what others think of them comes into play. And then, as I mentioned, perhaps they don’t feel their church is going so well, and so to rest from work actually would increase their anxiety.

**D:** Sensei, you don’t feel that anxiety yourself?

**M:** Not much at all, to be honest.

**D:** I’ve really been wanting to ask you about that—you are known as a pastor who is “good at rest” and enjoys leisure. Is that your personality, do you think? Or is it that you were born in Okinawa?

**M:** Of course, personality and where I’m originally from are a factor, but the main thing is that we’re blessed with a really good church!

Everyone in the church has a cooperative spirit. The pastoral team, missionaries, elders . . . for example, the way the eldership is conducted is not about voting between a majority and minority—they work hard to communicate well, consider the opinions of everyone, and come to unanimous decisions.

Not just the eldership, but you’ll also see this in the AGM with all the church

members—not a struggle between parties but people seeking to understand each other and moving together.

You have to understand—this is a really rare thing in Japanese churches. It wouldn't be unusual to have an elder committee trying to move forward with significant disagreement, and it isn't surprising at some churches to see a quarrel at a general members meeting.

To have such cooperation is a great gift. Even the children at our church have a helpful attitude—you see them distributing drinks in preparation for lunch time. Everyone seems to want to help the church, support the church.

All that to say, there's very little trouble, and so I can take time for leisure without anxiety.

Being from Okinawa—certainly there's something in that as well. To Okinawan people, living life merely for work is no good. Life is to be enjoyed.

**D:** I also wanted to ask what influence your theology has on how you think about rest.

**M:** Theology is actually a really big influence. You'll remember that as I preach, I often bring out my favorite diagram regarding the place of works in a Christian's life. The theology of the gospel teaches us that we are saved 100 percent by God's grace, and that the good works we do are a thankful response to being saved.

But many Japanese Christians still treat their works as fulfilling a quota, fulfilling a duty, as opposed to thinking of works as a normal, thankful response to God's grace.

In my case, before I became a Christian, I was much like Paul when he was a Pharisee—a legalist, a perfectionist. So it was exactly at that point that I needed a radical change of thinking, and God broke down that thinking in me. We are not achieving goodness, but we are given it by God's grace, and then the good we do is not about fulfilling a quota or being motivated by fear.

So, having been convinced of this early on, I'm often repeating this idea at church, that we do good works not out of fear of God's discipline or duty but because we are thankful to have received so much mercy from God. Church members aren't to do minis-

try to fulfil a quota, but as saved and thankful people. They should not push themselves beyond their capacity but rather respond willingly to God.

I think the atmosphere of our church speaks to this—it's not a place where people are constantly judging each other or feeling judged. If people are behaving out of duty or to reach a quota, then they're responding to fear.

As a result, the church is easy to manage, and so when I rest, I can rest wholeheartedly.

When I take a break, church members aren't looking badly on me for that. They know I like my leisure time.



**D:** So what kind of things do you do for leisure?

**M:** For example, twice a week, I participate in sports. Yesterday, I played table tennis at the sports center. I'd say that most pastors aren't doing that—they don't have the space in their lives for that. Additionally, I often include people from church. For example, I often go fishing with people from church. This is actually really important for an organization like a church that relies on healthy teamwork—the pastor and congregation need to communicate well, so they should hang out and play together.

**D:** If that were me, I'd feel like it was work!

**M:** Not me! I really enjoy time with them, and it's helpful for my work. For example, last week, I went out for lunch with the Uchida family (both names in this paragraph have been changed). The week before, I went fishing with Mr. Kuroda. I often stay with different people a night or two from Sunday evening down at that campsite we use for youth events. We go fishing, eat, and play together. It's really good for my refreshment and for building a sense of unity with the church. That's a unique thing about our church culture, I guess.

But I was like this with them from the beginning. The couples that are now in their forties, when they were in high school and university, I used to hang out with them at church three or four afternoons a week. At that time, I pastored through play and leisure, so it continues that way in the atmosphere of the church.

**D:** Just going back a little to talk about the theological basis for resting—you were talking about fulfilling a quota, doing things from a sense of duty—those result in fear of punishment, fear of being looked on badly, and that we should think of our Christian service as a thankful response. Is resting a “work” in the same way? For example, do you engage in rest with a thankful heart in response to God's grace—is that how you think of it?

**M:** With thanks to God, I rest. That's how I think of it. Rest is another thing that God gives by his grace. So I take it happily, with thanks.

I mean, in ancient times, like at the time of Abraham, they worked hard while the sun was up, so they naturally lived perhaps a more restful life. Nowadays with electricity and all other kinds of developments, we can work nonstop into the middle of the night. Before these days, including early Japan, there was naturally a time in the daily rhythm to be home with family, resting.

**D:** When you're fellowshiping with other pastors and you're talking about life and ministry, I'm sure the idea of time off and rest is mentioned. What

kinds of things do they say about you? Do you feel criticized for enjoying rest?

**M:** No doubt I'm known as a pastor who knows how to enjoy time off! They likely think, *Most pastors are working with every ounce of energy, but Matsuda Sensei likes to play, doesn't he!* But at the same time, it's not thought of in a critical way. I'm okay with them thinking that about me.

And I might say to other pastors, "You should do the same!"—I mean, I'm often saying that to various people, but Japanese pastors somehow just don't rest.

**D:** When you're talking to younger pastors about this, do you take a different tone at all?

**M:** Among the older pastors I know well, they are already thinking, *I'd love*

*to be able to rest like Matsuda Sensei, but . . .* And for various reasons that we've talked about, they just can't. But with younger pastors, I talk in more detail about why they should rest—like for the sake of their family.

Without that coaching, they just won't rest. So I'm purposefully advertising the need for rest to younger pastors. I'm like an evangelist for taking time off!

I enjoyed hearing Pastor Matsuda share about how his understanding of the gospel leads to a church environment which encourages rest for him and avoids overwork for the congregation. As Aussies who really love our time off, this has been a great gift to our family. And as foreigners who make lots of mistakes, we find that because

the pastor we work with doesn't imagine God looking down demandingly on him, he as our pastor then looks graciously on us. He helps us feel like God's forgiveness is a tangible thing.

The interview didn't conclude here. But I will share the rest in a follow-up article in the next issue. In the second half of the interview, we talked about how to preach the gospel not just in our church but towards today's Japan. He had a lot to say about cultural shifts and the difficulty missionaries and pastors across Japan are experiencing in communicating God's message of grace. **JH**

*Dene Hughes with his wife Rachel and two sons, came to Japan 10 years ago. Their mission agency (CMS Australia) has them formally linked with the student ministry KGK, but over time, they've become more involved with their local church.*



## Japanese onsen

By Roger Lowther

A symbol of the true rest to come

of physical and mental relaxation, offering recovery from both fatigue and stress. The hot water helps the body recover from injury. Dissolved minerals heal the skin. Whether you are overworked, sleep-de-

prived, sick, or in constant pain, onsen can help you enjoy time with friends and family without a care for the passing of time.

in God, each other, and the world. On that day, we can at last enjoy the "hot spring" of perfect rest that flows from the throne of Jesus.

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28 NIV).

The blood of Jesus is the pre-onsen cleansing shower that allows us to enter the rest that God offers. Jesus brings us back into the Garden of Eden, a place of intimate community close to nature and free from sickness and injury. Jesus brings us into the New Jerusalem, a place full of things that point to the beauty and glory of God. Onsen are not an escape from this world, but a place where human activity is interconnected under the shalom and lordship of Christ. Oh, that we could now enter this eternal rest that God offers!

True rest may only be found in heaven, but in the meantime, we can go visit a Japanese onsen. **JH**

The Lord replied, "My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest" (Ex. 33:14 ESV).

Japan is full of onsen hot spring resorts: Hakone, Atami, Kusatsu, Beppu, and so many others. These steaming mineral-rich waters and beautiful surrounding landscapes are soothing and healing for both body and soul.

Onsen facilities are often built with natural elements. Walls rise with wood and bamboo rather than concrete. Pathways stretch out with rocks and stones rather than tile. Pools fill from falling waterfalls and streams rather than faucets, flooding the air with the sound of running water.

In Japan, nothing to me represents rest more than onsen. They are places

Nothing in Japan is perhaps closer to the Garden of Eden, where you can literally walk around naked and unashamed and enjoy the world as it was meant to be. Rest in this world points to the deep eternal rest that is to come. Our true onsen is found in heaven.

"Then angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb" (Rev. 22:1 NIV).

I look forward to the day when we will sit in pools along the river of the water of life with all our closest friends, free from fatigue and illness, delighting

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Reevaluating our burdens as missionaries  
can ease the heaviness and pressure



# Too much weight?

By Susan Smith

I had been in Japan a year. My husband and I had studied Japanese for that time and then moved south to Kyushu to finish a second year of language learning. We came to the field with a one year old, and now I was pregnant again. It was during this stressful time that I found Matthew 11:28–30. Sure, I'd heard sermons on it before, but this time it ministered to me in the trenches: "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (v. 28 ESV).

## What is my burden?

When our first furlough came, our family had grown to three children under the age of five. We traveled each Sunday from church to church, giving our report of the work in Japan. One night after finishing our presentation, a lady approached me and asked, "And what do you do there?" I stumbled around, trying to explain my meager offering to the work in Japan. That night in bed, I felt extra burdened. What did I do to further the gospel? How was I effective in reaching the masses?

The burden pressed heavily on me until Jesus whispered in my ear, *My burden is light*. That caused me to consider. How could Jesus' burden be light when it felt so heavy? Then it hit me—perhaps I was carrying a burden Jesus didn't intend for me to carry. It begged the question: What burden had Jesus given me? I realized that my most important priority had to be my relationship with him. And at this point in my life, caring for my children was very important. I had three tiny disciples! Supporting my husband in the work God had called him to do was another priority. Could I be satisfied in these? Yes!

## Jesus' yoke is easy

Over the years, I've listened to coworkers, church members, and other Christian acquaintances hint strongly about ministries I should be undertaking, ways I should be more outgoing, or people I should be reaching. I have struggled with knowing how to hear what they say and evaluate these suggestions in light of what God wants from me. Jesus said, "My yoke is easy" (Matt. 11:30). A yoke is intended for physically hard labor, but it also signifies togetherness. When the person on the other side of my yoke is Jesus, I don't have to wonder who is doing the most significant work! Being yoked together with Jesus means I follow his lead, add my puny effort to the strength he provides, and then give him all the glory for a job well done. Where's the burden in that?

Unfortunately, it's all too easy to feel more responsible for ministry than I should. I feel that if I'm not here, things would crumble. It's hard not to feel like a failure when the person I'm investing in decides to take a U-turn away from following Christ or when we invite people to an event and only two people show up. Too often I've beaten myself up for not saying things "right" or missing an opportunity to share Christ.

## Changing my expectations to match God's

However, I'm learning that I often expect the wrong things from myself. Also, I allow others to lay expectations on me that weigh me down. But I'm finding that understanding and

accepting what God expects from me replaces these burdens with his rest. For instance, I am encouraged when I remember that Jesus promised his disciples that if they would follow him, he would make them fishers of men. Remembering that I am part of the body of Christ gives me freedom to serve God and others in a way that is uniquely my own, not mimicking someone else's ministry. Jesus promises that those who abide in him will produce much fruit, and that apart from him we can do nothing (John 15:5). No matter what others say, I will stand or fall before my own Master, just as they will. And I "will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make [me] stand" (Rom. 14:4). If all of that isn't enough, Jesus also promised to be with us always, to the end of the age.

My human nature pushes me to make a name for myself, to prove my worth as a missionary. But that is not the message I receive from Jesus at all. In his grace, I am already accepted by him. I am blessed, deeply loved, redeemed, forgiven, adopted into his extensive family, chosen, justified, sealed with his Holy Spirit, and no longer condemned. All this was made possible by the work of Jesus for me. He understands my frame, and he offers me his easy yoke and light burden. Why would I choose anything else? **JH**

*Susan Smith (US) and her husband, Norman, serve in Kumamoto with ABWE, focusing on disciple-making. They have been in Japan since 2003.*

By Rae-Anna  
Hedorin

# I am not alone

*I finally began to enjoy  
rest as a single person*

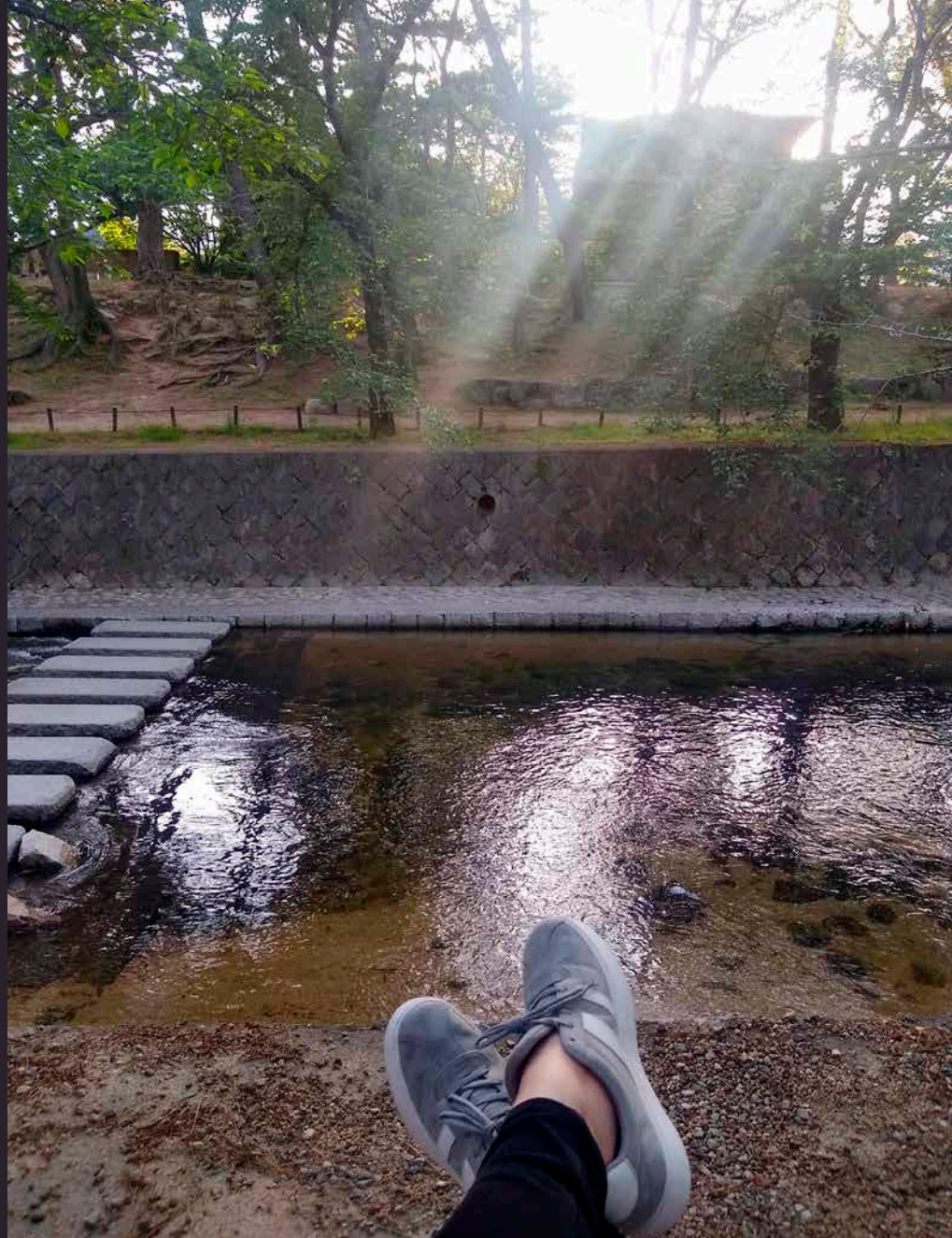
Over the last two years, I have finally begun to understand how to enjoy rest as a single person.

When I first moved to Japan nearly four years ago, Saturdays, my day off, were especially difficult, mainly because I imagined that everyone was with their own family, and I was alone. I had not yet learned to enjoy rest with my First Companion (time alone with Jesus). Though I looked forward to a day of rest after a busy week, it was a day I also dreaded, knowing that loneliness would show up.

Learning to enjoy rest began with understanding his love for me in deeper ways than ever before. Trying to believe the statement “I am not alone” shifted into unshakeably knowing that it is true. My heart no longer waited to be refilled through the next time with a friend; my heart found itself secure and continually steadfast because of the love from God. And so when I am with people now, it’s a joy and blessing, but it’s not my heart’s sustenance.

As with most things worth having to this extent, it didn’t come easily.

Looking over my life, I could see areas where I struggled to believe that God was enough for me, and as I laid down various things to give him first place in my heart, he showed me over and over that he is more than enough. He longs to show us any area where we



believe he is not enough for us. And last year, it was in the area of rest. I wanted to discover how his companionship (not just during times of work and ministry, but during times of my rest) could truly satisfy my heart.

At the end of 2021, I saw tangible evidence of the work God has been doing in my heart. My birthday, specifically my birthday evening, is the most special time of my year. Last year, because of some changes in my friends’ lives, it was looking like I was going to celebrate with people during the day, but everyone was busy for the evening. So I planned a trip to northern Japan to ensure I would not be alone. But I felt him prompt me to stay in my city this year. I said yes. *I will stay here, and I trust you that you will somehow bring someone so that I won’t be alone.*

I shared this decision with my friend, and she responded: “What if he asks you to spend your birthday evening with him alone?” *No way! He wouldn’t do that! He knows how important this day is for me.* But I felt him move in my heart. The next day, my heart had changed completely on the issue. I realized that I didn’t want to be with anyone else this birthday night except for my best friend. And I was able to say with all of my heart that he is that Best Friend. **JH**

I wrote about the full journey in Part 5 of the 55 Day PureHeart Challenge: “Satisfied (by His Love)” (<https://onfire.jp/en/55daychallenge/>).

*Rae-Anna Hedorin is originally from Canada but was raised in Nepal as an MK. She lives in Nishinomiya, Hyogo, serving with Onfire Japan. Her primary focus is in the area of purity.*

# Review of *Staying Well*

*This new book specifically addresses the struggles of ministering in Japan and helps readers identify hazards and strategies for health in their personal context*

By Alan Steier

You may have heard it said that “Japan is the graveyard of missionaries”—a dramatic but sadly true description. Over the decades, many of those who felt called to Japan have found themselves unable to endure the challenges of living and serving here. *Staying Well: Highlighting Hazards, Highlighting Health for Missionaries in Japan* provides a valuable contribution to the discussion of missionary retention and attrition.

Janet Dallman’s desire to see missionaries thrive motivated her to pursue a master’s in member care in England, her homeland, and to share her discoveries. She states, “This book arises out of my long-held desire to encourage and care for missionaries, and out of my own experience of struggling to stay and ‘stay well’ in Japan” (p. xix). Janet knows firsthand what it is like to live and work in a country where less than one percent of the population are believers, having served in Japan with her husband Peter for more than 20 years.

The book has three parts. Highlighting Hazards notes factors that have caused missionaries to leave the field. Highlighting Health deals with factors that have helped keep missionaries engaged in ministry for the long haul. These two parts include worksheets that can be used for self-assessment of both hazards and health. Recommendations & Reflections for Self-care & Agency Member Care offers suggestions to missionaries and sending agencies for achieving better retention and greater missionary health.

Janet also provides several appendices, including data from her survey and interview questions, an explanation of the Japanese context, and a glossary of terms. In sharing survey results from a broad range of former and current missionaries to Japan, as well as personal interview quotes, the book brings the reader face-to-face with real-life issues that missionaries experience as they seek to share the gospel in a culture that has been quite resistant to the message of Christ. Janet’s honesty in sharing her own struggles while ministering in Japan enhances the quality of her research and results.

As I worked my way through the book, I appreciated the effort Janet expended in researching relevant literature, surveying a broad range of people, interviewing former missionaries, compiling data, and reflecting on

the results. Her recommendations and suggestions for missionaries and sending agencies therefore come from informed research and not simply opinion. Her grasp of the relevant literature is broad and well documented throughout the book, providing a wealth of resources to investigate further.

The workbook pages in the book will be valuable for both individuals and mission agencies. Greater awareness of hazards may highlight significant issues to be addressed, and implementing some of Janet’s practical suggestions may help missionaries enjoy more fulfilling ministry.

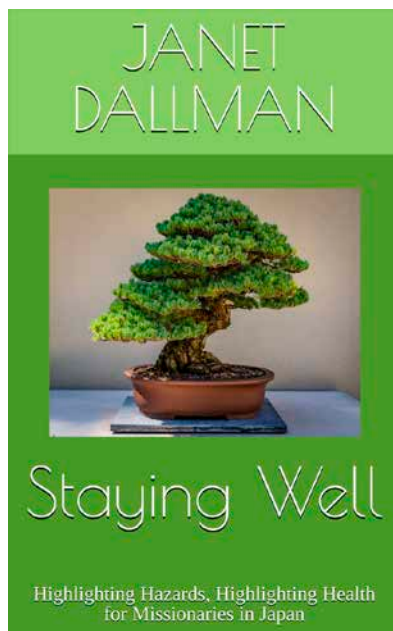
While Janet has done a good job of reporting the basic information from her study, it does feel a little academic at times. An expanded discussion of specific hazards missionaries face could have been a nice addition to the book. For example, the issue of conflict on teams, which has been pointed out as a major contributing factor in attrition by another researcher.<sup>1</sup> I also would have appreciated having more in-depth interviewee stories sprinkled throughout the book or perhaps more case studies in the workbook sections, although I realize that may be tough to do while maintaining confidentiality. With that said, the facts she shares are still very important to the overall focus

of the book and provide evidence for the best ways to keep missionaries healthy and resilient.

All in all, Janet Dallman has made a wonderful contribution to the discussion of missionary attrition and retention. Her discoveries, reflections, and recommendations give missionaries and their agencies valuable tools they can use to help extend the careers of missionaries in Japan. For those who are experiencing the struggle of ministry in Japan, or even those who are thriving, I would highly recommend *Staying Well* as a resource from which to draw significant assistance and inspiration. **JH**

1. In her research study on attrition, Andrea Sears notes the factor of team conflict as a major contributor to missionaries leaving the field. <https://themissionsexperience.weebly.com/blog/team-factors> (accessed August 26, 2021).

*After time in Japan as a missionary, Alan Steier (D. Min.) was a pastor in the US for 22 years. He and his wife, Judy, have been with Barnabas International since 2012. They are the leaders of JEMA’s Member Care Ministry.*



# The life cycle of a Japan Harvest article

*Publishing a magazine is a complicated process—our managing editor explains how we do it*

By Wendy Marshall

What happens to an article after you write it and submit it to *Japan Harvest*? Today I want to demystify the process. But let's start a little earlier.

## Planning the magazine

This Spring magazine issue began its journey two years ago when our editorial team decided on a theme. Then, in October 2021 I sent an email via the JEMA email list asking people to submit proposals.

We first ask for proposals rather than completed articles for three main reasons:

- **To shape the magazine in a way that best serves our audience.** Based on what people plan to write, we can prioritise content that's written from a Japan-based context and is most relevant to our readers. We can also work to avoid repetition. For example, if we have two proposals about the same topic, we can either direct authors towards different angles on the topic or turn down one of the proposals. If necessary, we can also give potential authors more information about our audience to assist them in writing.
- **To avoid wasting your time and ours.** It's easier to shape an idea before someone writes an article than it is to change it afterwards. So I often give people some guidance about their proposed article before they write it. For example, if someone proposes to write about a large topic, I might suggest a smaller focus.
- **To help with planning.** If we don't have enough people planning to write, our team can find more articles before the due date. If we've received too many article ideas, I can save some people time by telling them we don't need them to write this time. I also give guidance to authors about the length of their article. For example, since we had many proposals for this issue, I was able to ask four people to write one-page articles (around 800 words), instead of longer ones. That way we were able to fit more into the magazine.



We generally receive around the right number of proposals for a 40-page magazine. We usually publish about 8 regular columns and 10–16 feature and general articles. Features are about the issue's theme. This article is a "general" because it's not on the issue's theme. On occasion, we receive too many proposals and must reject some. I said no to five article ideas for this issue.

Everyone who sends a proposal gets a reply. If we can potentially publish their article, we tell authors when to submit it, how long it should be, and provide other guidelines like the ones I mentioned above.

## Editing stage

After the article is submitted, I read through it before sending it off to one of our seven-member editing team. I include information to help the editors with their editing, like whether the author is writing in American or non-American English. If necessary, I make suggestions to the editors, like "this is too long" or "it needs subheadings."

The article is edited by two different people, one after the other. They look at a range of things, from the big picture issues (does the article make sense, is its structure sound, is it biblically accurate and in accordance with JEMA's statement of faith, is the tone appropriate), to issues like grammar, spelling, and word choice.

Sometimes an editor will ask me to contact the author. The reasons could be to ask for a rewrite, to seek more information about a certain point, or to expand an introduction or conclusion.

## Referencing and fact checking

It's an author's responsibility to provide references for material they quote or facts they refer to in the text that aren't widely known. We reference because:

- We want people to be able to look things up further if they wish.
- It shows integrity. We are careful about this because the magazine reflects the Japan Evangelical Missionary Association.

Our referencing style is based on the *Chicago Manual of Style*. You can see more in our online *Japan Harvest* style guide.<sup>1</sup> We are not an academic or theological publication, therefore we try to keep referencing to a minimum while still meeting the above goals.

A fact checker also examines the article. This person looks at what Bible versions are quoted and ensures that any quotes used are correct. They check names, measurements, terms, websites, and if there are assumptions that need confirmation. It helps us if the author does their best to double-check their own references and facts, this includes indicating which Bible version(s) were quoted from.

## Checking with the author

After these three people have completed their jobs, they send the article back to me. I read it through carefully to check for anything amiss. I also make sure it adheres to our style manual (capitalisation, punctuation, romanisation of Japanese terms, etc.).

I ensure that the article has a suitable title and stand-first. These are at the top of each magazine article and their purpose is to hook the reader. It's important that they are informative and attractive and also that they aren't repetitive (it's best not to have several similar titles in the same magazine).

Six to eight weeks after the author submits the article, I email a "clean" copy to the author for approval. By "clean," I mean the author sees the final edited text. I keep a copy of the text that has all the details of changes editors made, which is something I can refer to if there are questions about the editing. However, it is usually best for an author to first look at the plain text. If the author is concerned about a specific change, they may ask me about it. Editors don't have time to explain every edit, but if an author has a specific question, we should be able to explain.

Editing is mostly an art, not a science. Some things that are changed are clearly right or wrong, e.g., a capital letter at the start of a sentence. Many other things aren't so clear-cut. Often when an author comes to me with a disagreement about something that we've changed, I'm usually willing to change it to what the author suggests.

At this point, I also ensure that we have a short bio from the author and ask them to agree with our rights statement: "I grant to JEMA *Japan Harvest* first rights, multiple use permission, and electronic rights for the use of this work." And I also confirm that anyone who is recognisable in photos they've submitted has given their permission for the photo to be published.

## Design and proofreading stage

Once I've got the author's approval, the article is sent on to our designer, who uses Adobe InDesign to create

the final magazine. She often has questions for me about the text, but hopefully by that stage, they are easy questions like, "Why is 'rest' italicized in this sentence—it doesn't look like it should be?" She also asks questions like, "Can you get me a larger photo/different photo from the author?"

Then we go into the final stage of checking: our proofreader reads through every article and makes comments. I make final decisions on all these comments. Our designer makes those changes and creates a full electronic version of the magazine.

Using that version, both the proofreader and I read through the whole magazine one last time, looking for final errors. It isn't unusual for us to find more than 50 errors in this last stage of checking. This still astounds me—since at this stage the article has been seen by two or three editors, a fact checker, the author, designer, and proofreader!



People often tell me that the magazine looks good these days. I always thank them and credit my team. Together we produce a better publication. We also wouldn't be able to do this without people who are willing to write. We don't have a team of writers who can write about all topics. We rely on the JEMA community to write for us and are thankful that you continue to do so. **JH**

1. *Japan Harvest Magazine*, "Referencing"  
<https://japanharvest.org/guideline/referencing/>

Photos by Karen Ellrick

*Wendy Marshall has been the managing editor of Japan Harvest for ten years. She also does mobilization using social media for their mission. She's Australian and married to David. They've served with OMF International since 2000.*

The Association of Baptists for World Evangelism (ABWE) launched its first team to Kyushu in 1953. That first team planted churches that are now indigenous. The mission has conducted a multifaceted approach to gospel ministry: preaching, teaching Sunday school and Bible school classes, distributing Christian resources, and participating in personal evangelism. Outreach ministries have included ministry to children, youth, and deaf people. We've done ministry with groups who have interests in soccer, taekwon do, remote control cars, and motorcycles.

The team is currently working through strategic planning and prayer to sharpen their focus going forward. Here is a summary:

### Recognizing the need

Because there are so few workers in Japan, the greatest need is to make biblical disciples. Many people have never heard of the one true God and his Word. The spiritual darkness that reigns without knowledge of or a relationship with Jesus has led to a nation where there is no hope.



### Knowing our purpose

As ambassadors for Christ, we exist to be and make Biblical disciples, uniting believers with local churches who serve their community and light Japan and the world with the gospel of Jesus Christ for the glory of God.

### Objectives

1. Personal spiritual growth
2. Prayer
3. Intentional disciple-making
4. Biblical teaching/training
5. Integrating into the community
6. Seeking like-minded partners

ABWE has fifteen missionaries serving in Kumamoto, Kagoshima, and Miyazaki Prefectures. Most recently, ABWE has two missionaries in Chiba, with a plan to build a new team in the Kanto region. There are currently five missionaries who are either pre-field or waiting for a new visa. **JH**

Off the  
Bookshelf



## Resilience: How Japanese Pastors Can Thrive in Every Season

John Houlette (Three Stream Ministries, 2020). 175 pp.

John Houlette, Asian Access missionary and director of Three Stream Ministries, provides a practical guide for navigating transition through ministry. The book is divided into four parts: Departing Well, Arriving Well, Leading Well, and Finishing Well.

John has served in Japan since 1985, planted churches, led a mission organization, and now provides clergy care, training, and consulting for pastors and churches. This book will help pastors (and missionaries!) thrive and finish strong in life and ministry. John shares personal illustrations, interviews with Japanese pastors, surveys and stories of transitions, and a case study of Nehemiah. His love for Japanese pastors and churches shines throughout the book.

In part one, John reminds us that we must leave somewhere or something before we can arrive at a new location. He looks at identity in Christ, call, and seasons of life and

ministry. Each chapter ends with discussion questions that can be used with an elder board or with other pastors. The final section introduces guidelines for pastoral succession for elder boards. John discusses the importance of writing a personal ministry plan for leaving well.

As my wife and I start our final term in Japan before retirement, John's book was an instructive guide to think through how to finish well. The book has been translated into Japanese (the title is 牧師のレジリエンス), published by Word of Life Press. John has helpful resources to go along with the book on his website (threestreamministries.com). This is a book that I will be giving to Japanese pastors. **JH**

Reviewer rating is 4 of 5 stars ★★★★★

*Don Schaeffer and his wife Hazel serve with the Christian & Missionary Alliance and came to Japan in 1984. They have planted churches in Saitama Ken and served in mission leadership.*

# Lying in Japanese culture

*Japanese tend to lie out of consideration for others*

Have you ever found yourself wondering what a Japanese person is really thinking? Japanese people are renowned for being inscrutable, and they will often say one thing while meaning something totally different. Even Japanese people themselves can have a hard time interpreting what a fellow countryman is saying.

The best way to get to know them and understand how they think is to spend lots of time with them, observing how they react in a wide range of situations. Over time, you begin to develop a sense for what Japanese people are thinking. But even then, you have to infer their thoughts from their words and behaviour; spending time with Japanese people doesn't provide direct access to their thoughts.

## Reading minds by reading novels

But there is a way to peek inside the heads of Japanese people without becoming a mind reader or performing brain scans—reading novels written by Japanese authors (either in Japanese or translation). Admittedly, the people in question are fictional characters, but their thoughts will generally be those of typical Japanese people. This is one advantage that books have over movies: the

thoughts of characters are often explicitly described, exposing their inner motives and true intentions behind their words and actions.

The thoughts of characters in novels can be revealing. One thing I've noticed is how often characters will tell lies. These lies can be about small things, such as reasons for not accepting an invitation to have a meal, or they can be about big things, such as telling a person diagnosed with an untreatable condition that there's nothing seriously wrong with them. My impression is that Japanese tend to lie more than Westerners.

## Lying differently

But I think there's a fundamental difference in why Japanese people lie compared to Westerners. Westerners tend to lie to cover up feelings of inadequacy or embarrassment when the truth doesn't reflect well on themselves. Japanese will often lie for the same reasons. But Japanese also lie out of consideration for the person they are talking to. While Westerners also do this on occasions, it is particularly characteristic of shame-honour cultures, as Jayson

Georges and Mark Baker point out: "Words are for the purpose of managing relationships and social identities, not presenting information. Harmony takes priority over ideas. Truth in communication is defined relationally not logically. Being truthful means being loyal in your relationships, respecting others, and helping preserve face."<sup>1</sup>

One example of this is from the novel *I Want to Eat Your Pancreas*. High school student Sakura only has a year to live because she has pancreatic cancer. But she doesn't let anyone outside of her family know, even her best friend Kyoko, as she doesn't want to cause them concern (the following is an excerpt of a conversation with a classmate who discovered her secret.)

"Have you told anyone else [about you having pancreatic cancer]? For example, what did you say to Kyoko?"

"I told Kyoko that I'm in hospital for an appendix operation. And the hospital staff have agreed to play along with that story. She's quite concerned about me, which makes it even harder to tell her the truth."<sup>2</sup>

Here, Sakura lies about her condition because she wants to avoid making her best friend anxious.

This also ties in with my experience. For example, I was chatting with a keen jogger at church, who would often go for a run for several hours on weekends. His wife asked me if I liked jogging, and I replied it was something I did for my health rather than because I enjoyed it. She responded that I was honest to a fault; the implication being that I might have hurt her husband's feelings since he loved jogging so much.

## Implications

This different attitude towards lying raises all kinds of challenging questions. For example, how should we teach James's teaching to "let your 'yes' be yes and your 'no' be no" (James 5:12 ESV) in a Japanese context where ambiguity and white lies are considered virtues? I think part of the answer is to emphasize the second part of Paul's directive of "speaking the truth in love" (Eph. 4:15). We can't compromise on the truth when talking to others, but we can develop a greater sensitivity to the effect our words have on others and seek to speak as lovingly and considerately as possible. **JH**

1. Jayson Georges and Mark D. Baker, *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures: Biblical Foundations and Practical Essentials* (Downer's Grove: IVP Academic, 2016), page 66 in Scribd version.
2. 君の膵臓を食べたい 住野よる (双葉社; 2015), 271.

*Simon Pleasants works as an editor in the Tokyo office of a scientific publishing company and is the executive editor of Japan Harvest. Originally from Wales, he moved to Australia in 1988.*

# Rest is a person

*Jesus was never in a hurry—how can we learn from him?*

John Ortberg tells the story of a traveler visiting Africa who hired a group of carriers and guides. On the first day, they made wonderful progress, but on the second day, the others remained seated and refused to move. The traveler asked the leader what was wrong. There was nothing wrong, noted the leader. He simply said on the first day they had traveled far too fast, and now the carriers and guides were simply waiting for their souls to catch up to their bodies.<sup>1</sup> Have you ever felt like those hired carriers and guides? The pace you set is hard and fast, maybe because you feel there is so much to do and so little time to do it. But a pace like that will soon require a cost, a cost that may impact you and your ministry.

When Judy and I traveled to Japan pre-pandemic, we often facilitated a spiritual and physical renewal retreat called Refresh. This retreat was designed in response to a member care survey we did in 2017, where we discovered that the majority of missionaries in Japan desired most “an experience of rest and spiritual renewal.” Participating in a retreat is certainly one way to receive the longed-for rest and renewal one finds hard to discover as a missionary. But it is certainly not the only way. The key is not mainly in looking for the *what* or the *where*. Rather, it is looking to, longing for, and living into the *who*. Rest is a person.

## Jesus was never in a hurry

When you read the Gospels, you quickly find that Jesus was never in a hurry—never driven by anything but the mandate to do the Father’s will. We find this clearly in statements Jesus made, such as John 4:34: “My food is to do the will of my Father who sent me and to accomplish his work” (ESV). Or note John 5:19: “Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise.” And finally John 8:28: “When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me.”

It is not hard to see how in tune God the Son was with God the Father. In response to this reality, there is a little phrase we often use in Barnabas International circles when encouraging missionaries: “Jesus was never need-driven.” His work was the natural overflow of the relationship Jesus

had with his Father in heaven. Of course, Jesus met needs. Indeed, he met many of them, but always out of a sense of purposefulness and intentionality. It was the way he lived.

Might I suggest that this is the model we can follow when it comes to life and ministry? This way of Jesus teaches us how to live and work differently from the way the culture or society may expect us to. But when we do, it can only result in a more peaceful and restful experience.

## Four steps to finding rest

In the book of Jeremiah, the prophet tries to get the people to understand that a relationship with their God is the only way to find true rest. He gives them four simple steps for finding soul rest. In Jeremiah 6:16 we read, “Thus says the Lord; ‘*Stand* by the roads, and *look*, and *ask* for the ancient paths, where the good way is; and *walk* in it, and find rest for your souls” (emphasis added by author).

First, we are to stop and evaluate where we are in our lives and ministry. Pain and burnout demand that we stop in our tracks and take inventory of our soul. Second, Jeremiah says that we need to look. Another way to say this is that we pay attention, seek out the good direction, observe others who may have found rest and know what that way is. The third step is to ask others who have been down the road a bit. In other words, find mentors who can help point the way to the good paths. Finally, once we commit to the good way, we need to walk (not run) in that direction. Sadly, the people in Jeremiah’s day refused to heed his direction and experienced severe consequences. How much better to pursue the Father in relationship and love. We respond to his loving initiative with our hearts pointed toward him.

There is a reason Jesus says in Matthew 11:28, “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Rest is a person, and he is waiting for us to follow his leading. It is then we will find rest for our souls. **JH**

1. John Ortberg, *Soul Keeping* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 130. Original author of this African story was Lettie Cowman.



Sketch by Rembrandt of Jesus walking with two disciples

After time in Japan as a missionary, **Alan Steier** (D. Min.) was a pastor in the US for 22 years. He and his wife, Judy, have been with Barnabas International since 2012. They are the leaders of JEMA’s Member Care Ministry.



# Rest, relax, rejoice

*How can we serve God in his strength?*

In 2010 we had just entered the Advent season and I was, as usual, already tied in knots. Every year, sadly, I dread Christmas. Having been in official ministry since 1978 the idea of a quiet, relaxed, family Christmas is a distant memory.

The reading for my devotions that day in 2010 was from Isaiah 43, and the part that struck me was verse eight, along with the first part of verse nine—“Lead out those who have eyes but are blind, who have ears but are deaf. All the nations gather together, and the peoples assemble.” The Shinkaiyaku translation that I use gives the last sentence here as a command: “Cause them to assemble.” (In my daily devotions I use the SOAP system developed by Wayne Cordeiro—Scripture, Observation, Application, Prayer.)

My Observation from that began: “There is a song that says, ‘There is none so blind as he who will not see.’<sup>1</sup> This is an endemic problem with mankind. An ironic proverb proclaims, ‘My mind’s made up. Don’t confuse me with the facts.’<sup>2</sup> God puts His attributes, His love, mercy, power, and the rest on display, but we are remarkably adept at not seeing it for what it is.” For Application, I wrote, “There are times when I feel this passage is my personal commission!”

## We try to serve in our own strength

I’m sure there are many who can identify with my feelings. We easily burn out, trying to serve God, knowing in our heads that we can do nothing on our own but still try to do it anyway. It’s interesting that working for God can distract us from him!

That devotional time percolated in my heart and spirit, and three days later I preached a message on “Rest, Relax, Rejoice.” I started out the message by pointing out that God has had a plan from before creation, and man can’t mess up those plans (Ps. 33:10–11). Further, those plans are good, and he provides everything necessary for their fulfillment. None of these things are new to us, yet (in practical ways) we forget them. We feel like we must come up with everything we need and do everything that needs to be done, in the process blocking the flow of God’s Spirit through us.

The Sabbath was given to us as a day of rest. Jesus himself pointed out that priests “break” the Sabbath by taking care of all the things involved in allowing others to keep the Sabbath. That’s why we need to be careful to focus on God, so that we can receive his rest. Too often

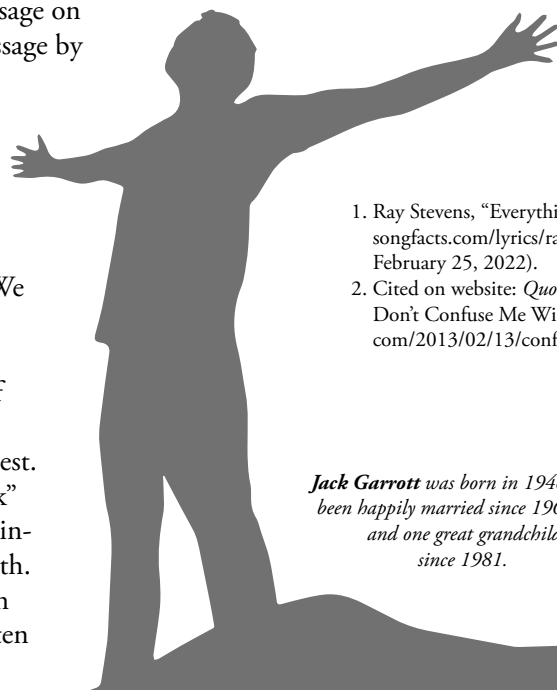
we focus on the work at hand to the exclusion of the One who assigned that work to us and enables us to do it.

## How can we relax?

All of this is very pointed for me, because my parents were missionaries from before WW2. My father hardly knew what “vacation” meant. As a result, he didn’t wake up from heart surgery at age 64. He had essentially worked himself to death. I greatly admire my father, and the Lord’s timing in allowing that meant that he didn’t have to “retire” from Japan, a prospect he had been dreading. However, he was in the middle of a project producing a fresh, more readable Japanese translation of the New Testament, and there were many other ways the Lord was using him as well. I want to be able to serve God for longer than my father did.

The question then is—how are we to relax? The world offers all sorts of things for “relaxation,” however, the real key is refusing to be anxious. There are lots of Bible passages on that, but Matthew 6:31–34 is justly famous. It does no good to take a vacation if we are worried the whole time! And God also wants us to rejoice. Again, there are countless Scriptures, but 1 Thessalonians 5:16–18 stands out.

One familiar passage sums it all up—“Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:4–7 NIV). **JH**



1. Ray Stevens, “Everything is Beautiful,” 1970. <https://www.songfacts.com/lyrics/ray-stevens/everything-is-beautiful> (accessed February 25, 2022).
2. Cited on website: *Quote Investigator* “My Mind Is Made Up. Don’t Confuse Me With the Facts,” <https://quoteinvestigator.com/2013/02/13/confuse-me/> (posted February 13, 2013).

*Jack Garrott was born in 1948 in Fukuoka of missionary parents. He has been happily married since 1969 and has two daughters, four grandchildren, and one great grandchild. He has been serving in Omura, Nagasaki, since 1981.*

# Shifting Paradigms

*Church multiplication is already happening in Japan*

A prominent Christian leader in the US asked me recently: “How is the church in Japan is doing?” I have consulted several missionaries and mission organizations, and it is a mixed report (even before COVID). The number of Christians and churches in Japan has plateaued and begun to decline. Eighteen cities and 1,640 rural areas still do not have a church.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, there is ample positive news about missional churches, networks, and models that are increasingly planting and growing multiplying churches.

In my book *Multiplying Churches in Japanese Soil*, I outlined characteristics of the common model of church in Japan. This church model is often clergy-centered, dependent on a building or meeting place, and focused on the Sunday worship service. Its evangelistic pattern uses a direct front-door attraction model for evangelistic meetings. This church model tends to be time-consuming, expensive, and often unsustainable. It seldom involves the laity, and it is not very reproducible nor can it multiply.

We are seeing a fork in the road where the common model of church in Japan continues to be ineffective, yet others have taken the other fork leading to evangelism, discipleship, and growth of leaders and churches. Since the triple disaster in 2011, we have seen more opportunities, results, and encouraging ministries, but not yet a spiritual breakthrough leading to movements. However, it could come sooner than we think.

We need new types of churches and new models for ministry. We need a change in basic assumptions about what a disciple, leader, and church are. What is required is not a mere tweaking, or implementing a novel approach or program, but rather a paradigm shift in what is important

based on reflection of the scriptures and reality. We must see the resources of God and, in faith, train leaders and workers into a process that leads to reproduction.

## Towards reproduction

For many, it is tough to think beyond the decline of the church; of the 7,000 or so churches in Japan, 16% are currently without pastors.<sup>2</sup> Instead of the status quo of addition, we require transformation to reproduction of ministry that grows disciples and nurtures leadership.

In my original research (for *Multiplying Churches in Japanese Soil*), I was surprised by how many times some churches had reproduced. The Japanese leaders of those reproducing churches thought about the church quite differently. Their concept was not an organization as much as a living thing, the body of Christ. Not a building, but a people. They view the church as a dynamic sending community.

Just recently I heard one church in Hyogo Prefecture has been growing into eighteen congregations. By means of training all their laypeople in evangelism and discipleship, they continuously locate new communities to reproduce their body. These believers have a new way of thinking of reproduction, leading to multiplication.

## Towards multiplication

For churches to reproduce themselves is not enough—we want to see churches multiply. The annual Japan Church Multiplication Vision Festa started in 2014; each year over 100 workers have gathered to consider church multiplication throughout Japan. Dreams have grown about reaching all of Japan by saturating each community



with a local church. If we consider that there are over 50,000 convenience stores in Japan, to saturate each community in Japan with a local church, this country would need at least 50,000 churches. This number is serving as a rule of thumb for the ongoing dream of a broad-based evangelical movement to focus energies towards saturating Japan with churches as we look towards the Seventh Japan Congress on Evangelism (JCOE7) in 2023.

It would be enormously challenging to find 50,000 church planters, but others faced similar challenges in the past and used risk-taking faith and innovation to address their issues. How can you multiply leaders for so many churches? Vision Festa has considered various “on-ramps” for leadership development, including formal education in schools and institutes, nonformal education in seminars and workshops, and informal education in mentoring and modeling. Believing in the priesthood of all believers, laypeople can be mobilized for leadership in evangelism, discipleship, and church planting. To reproduce and multiply means new perspectives towards movement thinking.

## Towards movements

What we all truly yearn for are movements of God like in Acts where the Holy Spirit changes things faster than we can understand, let alone control. Movements are beyond great events, beyond systems and organizations, and even beyond church multiplication. Several years ago, I heard a story that still shocks me today—one church, in Kochi Prefecture, multiplied into three new churches in two years! I thought if this kind of multiplication could happen in Kochi Prefecture, then it could happen anywhere in Japan.

In just a few years, several key Japanese leaders have trained others who have been applying these principles in their churches from training in personal evangelism, disciples making disciples, and church multiplication. Train and Multiply (T&M)<sup>3</sup> was developed by George Patterson in Honduras and has been effective in places like

India, Iran, and Indonesia. Several are proving this training to be highly fruitful in Japan with multiple trainers and over 1,000 people from 700 churches trained since 2016 throughout Japan. That is up to 10% of all churches in Japan! I encourage many of you to investigate T&M because it might be helpful to your ministry partners and your future ministry.

## Conclusion

Many Japanese workers and leaders are tired of the status quo. They have adopted major paradigm shifts to see reproduction, multiplication, and movements resulting in disciples, leaders, and churches.

In 1917, the Japan Holiness denomination had 1,600 members. Just 15 years later, their denomination had grown to nearly 20,000 members, a multiplied growth of over 12 times.<sup>4</sup> Like the leaders of the reproducing churches I researched for my book, the Holiness Church leaders mobilized the laypeople for evangelism, and the leader equipped and released them to evangelize and disciple. Many churches were multiplied as a result.

Do you believe God can multiply his church again in Japan? If you are committed to multiplication, then whom are you developing? Whom are you training, equipping, and to whom are you delegating authority? And then how are you getting out of the way to let them serve with the Spirit? **JH**

1. From correspondence with Dawn Birkner and the Japan Rural Church Planting Network's 2021 study of rural churches.
2. From a Powerpoint presentation at Ochanomizu Christian Center at the Church Multiplication Vision Festa on unpastored churches by the head of a “muboku network” (11/26/2021).
3. <https://tam.oms.training>
4. John Wm. Mehn, *Multiplying Churches in Japanese Soil* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2017), 55.

*John Wm. Mehn served with Converge Japan Mission for 35 years. He is currently with its Asia Impact Team. This is an edited excerpt from his upcoming book The Japanese, an Unreached People Group: Focusing on Finishing the Task.*



# Improving your stream

*The art of capturing video on a budget*

The pandemic has changed the way the church engages with culture. Through necessity, we have been forced to embrace new formats to communicate the gospel, teach the church, and create fellowship. At Tokyo Baptist Church (TBC), where I'm in charge of tech, we are broadcasting more than ever. We were fortunate to have enough equipment, knowledge, and people already in place to easily make the jump to streaming our services, Sunday school, classes, celebrations, and even the Lord's Supper. All of these are important to enable us to participate corporately.

For large group events, we use YouTube, but for smaller fellowships, we use Zoom. A hybrid of combining online events with face-to-face interaction has been necessary. Recently, though, we have noticed it is hard to make Sunday school work well if we have it simultaneously in-person and online. Online participants are just not engaged. So now we start with broadcasting the in-person teaching and worship first, then have discussion and sharing using Zoom.

Yet for the in-person events to serve our online participants, we have to provide sufficient quality so that it is not a hardship to watch. Furthermore, nonverbal communication for speakers, teachers, and preachers is certainly part of the presentation used by the Holy Spirit so what people see when they tune in online is important.

Here are ways that can improve your video stream and keep your viewers from falling asleep or sneaking away.

## Come to the altar

First, make sure your camera is up close and personal. I have watched events shot on an iPhone placed on a music stand at the back of the church with half the ceiling showing! While I was thankful I could participate, it was hard to see anything. A great improvement would have been if a tripod was used and placed strategically near the speaker. Starting from about ¥1,500, Amazon Japan has 130 cm tripods with camera mounts that will work great. Just having this around for both streaming, recording, and even photos is a big win.

## Lights, camera...

Lighting is key to seeing the subject. In our sanctuary, we have stage lighting. But often we have used clip-on spotlights that give the subject more light. Light makes a big difference—literally night and day.

If you are using a good computer to stream, you can use a different camera to capture live video. Both the video and

audio can be changed through Zoom, YouTube, and other apps including Messenger. The software's options to select a different video and audio source are in various places but can be found with a quick web search.

What sort of camera should you use? A webcam (one example is the camera built into your computer) can work, but this kind of camera does not have the quality and options that will make your live capture look professional. The best camera is one that has a “clean HDMI out.” This means it has a live high-definition output port that can connect to a device, transferring exactly what the camera sees. In the camera's specifications, look for “clean HDMI out” with a resolution of 1080x1920 (also called 1080p) or higher. A few other important features in a camera are optical zoom, a tripod mount, power connection, controlled power-saving mode, and quiet focusing. If possible, an external mic connection would be nice. A few good budget cameras—costing around ¥35,000—that have a “clean HDMI out” are the Panasonic HC-V360MS or HC-V480MS and the Sony HDR-CX470.

Then you will need a way to connect the camera to a computer. An easy way is to use an adapter that will convert the camera's output to a USB

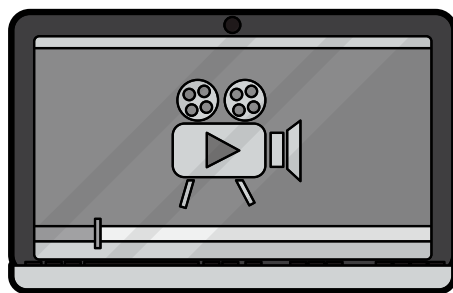
for a computer to be able to input what the camera sees. These adapters are called “USB 3.0 capture cards” or sometimes “video capture dongles”.

At TBC, we currently use a range of setups to transfer the video from the camera—from a ¥2,000 USB video capture dongle for our children's ministries to a professional live broadcasting setup. The difference is in how well the device compresses and passes that video information to your computer. You may have success with cheap USB dongles or capture cards for games; however, the most stable options for providing the best quality are internal PCI HDMI cards. They are worth the extra money and are better designed for live streaming.

## Action!

With a tripod, good lighting, and camera, combined with a video capturing device, all that is left is to take action—get on the digital platform and start streaming. These improvements will help you foster better engagement and improve communication to better serve your people. **JH**

*Jesse Mark Cesario is the pastor of maturity and discipleship and manages all things tech at Tokyo Baptist Church (TBC). He is saved, married, and raising three children by the grace of God through Jesus Christ at TBC.*



# Cluttered writing

*How do we avoid words that distract from our message?*

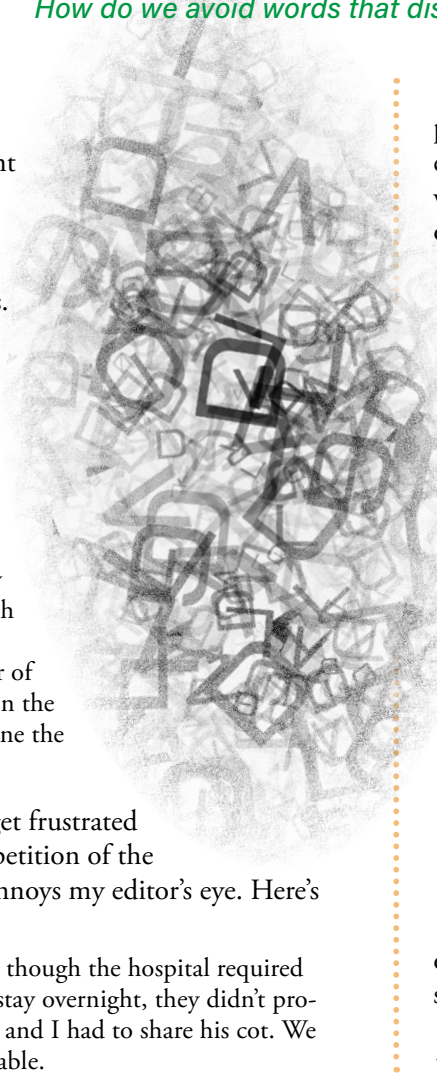
Cluttered writing is like a garden full of weeds. The weeds disrupt the enjoyment of the viewer. Words and phrases that distract your reader from understanding your message are like weeds. They can also be annoying.

For example, this is a paragraph about my toddler's hospitalisation (written many years ago):

What I didn't initially realise was that I'd have to sleep in the same cot as my son! Granted it was a largish cot and I am not a largish person, but . . . still neither of us was used to even being in the same room at night, let alone the same bed.

Now I look at that and get frustrated by its awkwardness. The repetition of the messy word "largish" also annoys my editor's eye. Here's my rewrite:

At first I didn't realise that, though the hospital required parents of sick toddlers to stay overnight, they didn't provide separate beds. My son and I had to share his cot. We fit, but we weren't comfortable.



Now that's quite a different paragraph. The rewritten paragraph is smoother and clearer. And I think it is more elegant. However, at least two of our *Japan Harvest* editors would have kept the word "largish" but reworded the rest quite differently.

Writing and editing require an intuitive feel for language. These skills are more art than science, as our *Japan Harvest* team demonstrated above. There are some black and white grammar and punctuation rules that we should all follow. But no formula for writing exists, which makes crafting phrases difficult and sometimes time-consuming. It's good to take time to reduce clutter in your writing.

For example:

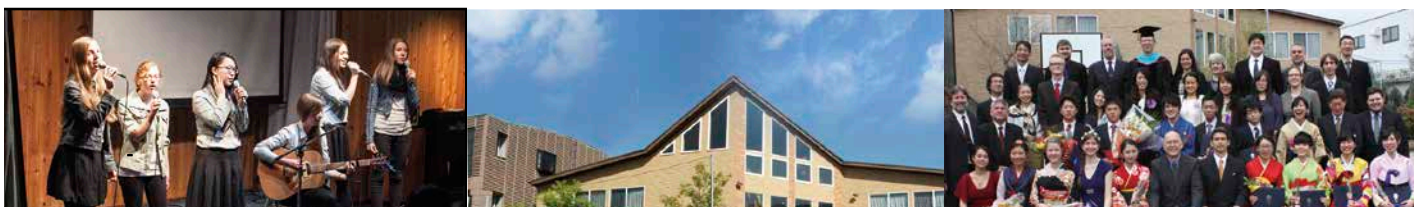
- Instead of "he directed his aim of the garden hose towards the car", write "he aimed the garden hose at the car".
- Instead of "we got everyone together for the purpose of discussing our agenda for the annual conference", write "we met to discuss the annual conference agenda".
- Instead of "the very small insect came to rest on the quite large, purple-coloured pulpit", write "the tiny insect landed on the large, purple pulpit".

Look out for "weeds" in your writing. With an economy of words, you'll keep your audience engaged and say more. **JH**

*Wendy Marshall is the managing editor of Japan Harvest.*

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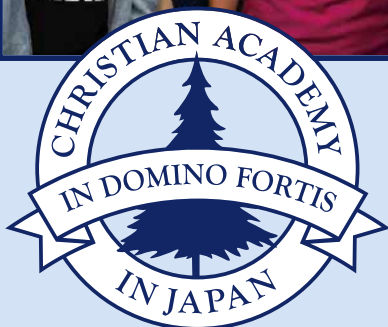
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