

JH
Japan Harvest
Winter 2024



Discipleship

ミヨシの

SDFOODs

Sustainable Delicious Foods

おいしさ、ながもち。

まだ食べられるのに捨てられている食品を減らしたい。

ミヨシ油脂は、「食感」と「日持ち」の両面で賞味期限・消費期限の延長に寄与する製品を「SDFOODs (Sustainable Delicious Foods / エスディーフーズ)」と位置づけました。おいしさを長持ちさせて、食品ロスの削減を目指します。

ミヨシ油脂株式会社 〒124-8510 東京都葛飾区堀切4-66-1 TEL 03-3603-7023 www.miyoshi-yushi.co.jp



An elegant cracker for those special occasions

YAMAZAKI BISCUITS CO.,LTD.

Encouraging, inspiring, and equipping the members of the JEMA community

Forward

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



23

Regulars

- 30** News
- 32** New Voices
Taking a lower place: language learning and discipleship
by Christina DeCiantis Davison
- 34** Off the Bookshelf
by Don Schaeffer
- 35** Member Care
The value of reflection
by Michael Mason
- 36** Language & Culture
The collectivist nature of sin and the gospel
by Hoi-Yan Shea
- 37** Focus on Prayer
The power of prayer
by Ken Reddington
- 38** Good Writing
The power of simplicity
by Wendy Marshall

General Article

- 26** Not just surviving but thriving
by Sue Plumb Takamoto

Feature Articles

- 6** Learning to disciple like Jesus
by Caleb Eby
- 8** The versatile Word of God
by Joel Diffenderfer
- 9** Life-on-life discipleship
by Hoi-Yan Shea
- 10** Discipleship by modeling
by John Edwards
- 12** Spiritual formation and discipleship around tables
by Shan Reed
- 14** Our journey on the disciple "ship"
by Daniel Lau
- 15** Making faithful, reproducing disciples
by Matt Parsley
- 16** Summer camp: a launchpad for discipleship
by Evan Easom
- 18** What is multiplication discipleship?
by Jodi Davis
- 19** Discipleship in a busy world
by Jörg Eymann
- 20** Greater discipleship impact with Japanese learning styles
by Fuji Liu
- 22** Passion, vision, and system
by Andy Meeko
- 23** Resources for discipleship
by multiple authors



*Please note that event details are subject to change.
Please check with JEMA or organizers for confirmation.*

Every other month

JEMA Online Prayer Gathering

The last Tuesday of each odd-numbered month:
January 30, March 26, May 28, etc.
Includes breakout rooms based on language
To register, scan this QR code or go to:
<https://forms.gle/3Q1G8nAVCc8oo2y27>



January

WIM Kanto Winter Day of Prayer

January 17, 2024
Ochanomizu Christian Center, Tokyo



February

JEMA Connect

February 19–21, 2024
Ochanomizu Christian Center



March

WIM Kansai Christian Women's Conference

March 4, 2024
Mustard Seed Christian Church, Osaka

WIM Kanto Annual Spring Retreat

March 6–8, 2024
Olive no Sato, Nikko



April

Still Waters Spiritual Retreat

April 22–25, 2024
For further information, please contact:
Janet Dallman (jp.mca@omfmail.com)



May

Okutama Prayer Summit

May 7–10, 2024
Okutama Bible Chalet, Tokyo

Prayer Summit for Western Japan

May 20–23, 2024
Nosegawa Bible Camp, Hyogo



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

jema.org

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



Japan Harvest

Volume 75 No. 1
Winter 2024

© 2023 Please do not copy any article, photo, poem, or report
unless permission is granted. Contact Managing Editor.

Japan Harvest Staff

Executive Editor: Simon Pleasants
Managing Editor: Wendy Marshall (wmarshall@jema.org)
Associate Editors: Rachel Hughes, Ariane Peveto
Editorial Assistants: Elena Kua, Jackie Peveto,
Jenn Bello, Hallur Mortensen, David McIntyre
News Editors: Peter Swan, Ken Reddington
Art Director: Karen Ellrick
Advertising Director: Ai Nightingale
Fact Checkers: Sara Wolsey, Jocelyn Williams
Proofreader: Ken Reddington
Production Team Leader: Jocelyn Williams

Printer: Printpac

JEMA Leadership Team

President: Nathan Snow
Vice President: Simon Pleasants
Treasurer: Emerita Sakai
Secretary: David Scott
Ministries Facilitator: Chad Huddleston
Communications Facilitator: vacant
Membership Facilitator: Paul Ewing
Members-at-Large: Stephanie Schatz, Brett Rayl

JEMA Administrative Assistants (part-time):

Atsuko Tateishi, Mayumi Penner, Michiru Pleasants,
Ai Nightingale

Submissions

The editors welcome unsolicited articles. Non-JEMA members
are also welcome to submit.
Writer's guidelines are available at: japanharvest.org/submissions

Submission Deadlines

Winter issue: August 31
Spring issue: November 30
Summer issue: February 28
Autumn issue: May 31

Price overseas is \$30.00 (USD) per year.
Price in Japan is ¥2,800 per year.
Single copy is ¥750.

Postal Transfer: Account #: 00130-4-180466
Name: JEMA

Moving?

Contact the JEMA office so we can update our files!
JEMA
#204 OCC Bldg., 2-1 Kanda Surugadai
Chiyoda Ku, Tokyo 101-0062
Tel: 03-3295-1949 Fax: 03-3295-1354
Email: jema-info@jema.org
Website: jema.org

Japan Harvest is the official publication of the Japan Evangelical
Missionary Association (JEMA). It is published quarterly.
Individual articles or advertisements express the viewpoints of
the contributors and not necessarily those of JEMA.

Japan Harvest publishes articles in either US English or
Commonwealth English, depending upon the author's primary
English background.

Where are you placing your trust?

Our family is at one of those big junctions that happen in life, which, as most of you know, is made more complicated by our international lifestyle. Our youngest son graduated from high school in June. In July, I moved with my family to Australia for a 12-month home assignment. It was a big move. We moved out of our house in Tokyo and got rid of a lot of stuff and stored the rest because our plan is to come back to Japan in 2024 without any of our offspring. Then we flew to Australia and tackled all those tasks that need doing to establish yourself in another place.

Before we left Japan, my husband and I spent months working out how to cover our roles in Japan while we were gone because no one was available to replace us for most of the things we do. David is on the leadership team at the Christian Academy in Japan, and I am the managing editor for *Japan Harvest* as well as a content creator and team manager for OMF Japan's social media and blog. It was complex, but we made it through.

But now, it's very easy to forget how God helped us through those months. It's tempting to be consumed by the present and the challenges of life and ministry in Australia. While praying recently about a family situation that we couldn't see solutions for, I realised that six months ago, I couldn't see solutions for many of the things that have now happened, including finding a house in the midst of Australia's current housing crisis. God provided us with a house and a car. That's a simple sentence, but it doesn't give full recognition of the greatness of our God and his care for us.

I am often tempted to trust in my plans, in my personal networks, in money, even in my own abilities. And then I worry when I can't figure it out. I'm sure I'm not alone in this! But God tells us not to put our trust in anything else—not our plans, or our abilities, or other people—nothing and no one other than God. David wrote, "For who is God, but the Lord? And who is a rock, except our God?" (2 Sam. 22:32 ESV).

Are you in the middle of a season where you can't see how it's going to turn out? Are you facing crises that tempt you to despair? I encourage you to turn your eyes back to Jesus and away from the things that cloud our thoughts and weigh heavily on our shoulders. Let's remember that nothing can separate us from God. Our struggles are real, but so is God's care for us, and he won't let us go. As Paul wrote, "For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor heavenly rulers, nor things that are present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom 8:38–39 NET).

This magazine is a testimony to how God has worked out what seemed impossible to me at the start of the year. I usually have a part to play in all the stages of production from the acquisition of articles to the final proof. But this time, I've had limited involvement because of our home assignment commitments. I'm grateful to the various team members who have stepped in and taken on extra responsibilities, especially Karen Ellrick, Rachel Hughes, Ariane Peveto, and Jocelyn Williams.

Authors in this issue have given us much to think about as we consider discipleship in Japan. Please get in contact with them (most are in the JEMA Directory) if you want to know more.

While we're in Australia, we have many opportunities to talk not only about Japan but also about JEMA and *Japan Harvest*. We're encouraging people to pray for you, for Japan, and also for the ministry of this magazine.



Blessings in Christ,
Wendy
Managing Editor

The themes for the upcoming issues are:

Spring 2024: God at Work

Summer 2024: Reaching Kids and Teens (proposals due by January 31)

Autumn 2024: Listening to Japanese Christians (proposals due by April 30)

Winter 2024: Mental Health (proposals due by July 31)

Learning

to disciple

like Jesus

Discipleship principles in Matthew and Mark all believers can apply

By Caleb Eby



In Matthew 28, Jesus gave his disciples one of his final commands: to go and make disciples of all the nations. Many Christians know this, but not many know how to do it. Since Jesus is the master disciple maker, we must fix our eyes on him, do as he did, speak as he spoke, and make disciples as he made disciples. Mark 3:14–15 and Matthew 9:35–10:8 reveal some simple but crucial principles of making disciples like Jesus.

The model

Mark 3:14–15 shows us four reasons why Jesus called the twelve:

1. That they might *be with him*
2. That he might *send them out*
3. That they would be sent out *to preach*
4. That they would be sent out *to have authority* to cast out demons

All these things they learned through being with Jesus. They lived with him, traveled with him, and observed him in all that he did and said. Jesus was, in essence, reproducing himself in them.

They did not merely spend time with him, however. Jesus was always about his Father's work, and therefore the time the disciples spent with Jesus included a lot of time working "in the harvest." They learned how to do the works of Jesus and to preach his message by watching him doing it.

This principle of modeling for disciples is also seen in Matthew 9:35–10:8, and it reveals a few more principles as well that I've summarized under the words See, Pray, Work, and Train and Release.

See

Jesus modeled how to see as the Father in heaven saw things. He saw

the crowds with eyes of compassion. His heart broke for them. He saw them as precious sheep who were harassed and helpless.

Jesus also had eyes to see a plentiful and ready harvest (see also John 4:35–36). Jesus taught and modeled for his disciples to see beyond their circumstances. Jesus's only critique of the harvest was that there were not enough laborers! I am fully convinced that the same is true of Japan today; there is a profound lack of laborers to bring in an abundant harvest that the Lord has already prepared for us!

I've found that prayer walking is one effective way to practice this sort of seeing. As we walk and pray together, we notice things about the neighborhood, the city, and the people we pass. Prayer walking has led to meeting old acquaintances, to meeting seekers who later believed, to meeting neighbors

who have invited us to visit again, and even to seeing miracles of healing through prayer.

Once while prayer walking, we saw emergency vehicles rushing to a small train station. In the pouring rain, we went to see what had happened with other onlookers and discovered there had been an incident with a pedestrian and a train at the crossing. We had a long conversation with one young man who had witnessed the incident and prayed for him. He also opened up and shared about difficulties his family was going through.

Pray

Jesus was himself a man of prayer, and in Matthew 9:37–38, he tells his disciples to do the same—specifically, to pray for more laborers to be sent out. It was a prayer of faith based on the expectation that what Jesus said about the plentiful harvest was true.

Some of us have set our phone alarms to 10:02 (Luke 10:2) and others to 9:38 (Matt. 9:38). When the alarm goes off, we pause what we are doing to pray for more laborers. One young disciple observed us regularly doing this and began doing the same. In her boldness, she would even pause while spending time with her unsaved friends to pray, and a couple times, this led to sharing the gospel with them!

Work

Jesus didn't stop with prayer. He also went and *did* the work for which he prayed: "And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction" (Matt. 9:35, ESV).

Jesus didn't wait for people to come to him, but he went to them in their cities and villages. He met people in the conditions that they were in. The disciples observed Jesus touching and healing the lepers, delivering those oppressed by demons, eating with tax collectors and sinners, and even ministering to and proclaiming to the despised Samaritans.

While sitting and eating ice cream cones at a park with another disciple,

we overheard a couple talk about the distant prefecture that they had come from. This happened to be my friend's home prefecture. I encouraged him to use that as a conversation starter, but he was shy, so I initiated. The conversation went smoothly, and we discovered even more common ground. Afterward, the disciple and I talked about how to take notice of common ground opportunities and use them to initiate conversations. He was amazed at how well the conversation with the couple had gone and was inspired to try again!

Many others have been equipped by joining outreach at train stations, parks, or in-country mission trips. They start by observing how we approach people, how we transition to the gospel, and how we share the gospel itself. Then, little by little, they join the process until they are doing the whole process from start to finish. Finally, we pair them up with other believers to model the same process for them.

Train and release

After modeling for his disciples, Jesus then sent them to do the work. As they went out proclaiming the kingdom, they also had confidence to cast out demons and heal every disease and affliction because Jesus had given them *authority* in his name to do so. It is important to note that these disciples were still immature and among them was Judas, who would later betray him. Yet this did not stop Jesus from entrusting authority to them so they might do as he had done.

The believers we disciple also need us to release them with authority to go do the work themselves or they will always remain in our shadows. Like teaching a child to ride a bike, we have to let go. We entrust them to the Holy Spirit and are ready to encourage them, put them back on the bike if they fall, and celebrate all of their successes with them.

To this end, we strive to provide simple, biblical, and reproducible ways to get them started. Some of these include a simple testimony, a simple gospel presentation, and training to baptize and disciple new believers. We point them to their direct connection to the Father through Jesus by the Holy

Spirit in them. We direct them to their new identity in Christ and its implications for their lives. We model for them a simple way to study the Bible with seekers or new believers where the answers can be confidently discovered directly from the Word. We help them set goals of obedience and lovingly check back with them.

Through this process, one Japanese sister began regularly seeking ways to share the gospel. She would use her company's social time after work (飲み会) to talk about Jesus. Another time, she met a seeker at church and invited her home for tea, shared the gospel, opened the Word with her, and led her to faith in Christ. Additionally, one of the Christian friends that she discipled went on to disciple another person as well!

Conclusion

Let us take time to be with those we are discipling and to disciple them on the go. Model for them and train them to see as the Father sees. Show them what prayer looks like. Take disciples along when sharing the gospel and ministering to the sick and the down-trodden. Go with them to minister to their families and friends. Then entrust them to the Holy Spirit and send them out to be ambassadors of Jesus and make disciples.

As we read the gospels, Acts, and the epistles, let us continue to ask ourselves how Jesus and his apostles went about engaging with people. How did they proclaim the gospel and make disciples? How did they empower and release disciples to thrive on their own?

Jesus is our example. He is the master disciple maker. By the Holy Spirit through the Word of God, let's learn from him and follow his example until Japan is saturated with his disciples! **JH**

Caleb Eby, a Tokyo-born American living in Gifu City, is married and has two elementary-age sons. He partners with No Place Left, a network of believers seeking to build a discipleship movement in Japan.

The versatile Word of God

By Joel Diffenderfer

Utilizing biblical genres for effective discipleship

“What does Paul mean by ‘mystery?’” K-san asked me.

I sighed in my spirit. He was a smart young man, good at anything he put his mind to. I chose Colossians thinking it would be a good fit for our one-on-one discipleship, but it never seemed to connect with him.

After we finished Colossians, we turned to the gospel of Luke. K-san ate it up. He was more animated and less reserved when engaging with the stories about Jesus. There were fewer questions about what was going on and more observations about the greatness of Christ.

For the first time, I realized how the different genres of Scripture can be used for effective discipleship.

What are the genres?

With K-san, I initially missed what his love of Marvel movies said about his heart. He loves stories. So in hindsight, his resonance with Luke made sense. Rather than plodding through an argument about why Christ is great, he was moved by pictures of Christ’s greatness.

You can make a case for a dozen or more unique genres in Scripture, but you can also boil those down to three broad categories: narrative, poetry, and discourse. The distinction lies in how they convey truth. Narrative uses stories to convey truth. Examples include Genesis, Ruth, and Luke. Poetry deals primarily with images and emotions to convey truth. The Psalms are the clearest example of poetry. Discourse, like the New Testament letters, relies on arguments and logic to convey truth.

There is a lady at the same church, A-san, who is a methodical notetaker. She loved our sermon series in 1 Peter because Peter’s use of logic, a staple of discourse, showed her how Christ’s

people live as exiles in this world. Her faith and commitment to cling to Christ were strengthened by Peter’s encouragement not to lose heart because at one time there were only eight people in the entire world who passed through judgment unscathed (1 Pet. 3:20). Discourse benefited her more than it did K-san.

What’s the issue?

I started discipling K-san with Colossians because I had experience using Paul’s letters while discipling others in the US. I failed to realize how much of a bias toward discourse I had. I assumed that because it was fruitful for me, it would be fruitful for him. Even though I could cross the language gap, I was not fully able to cross the heart gap.

We need to set aside our preferences and consider the individuals we are discipling as well as our own implicit bias. Have you considered the different ways that the gospel is presented in Scripture and how they could speak to the individuals around you?

As a new Christian, I loved the gospel of John with its lofty prose. But I’ve found that Mark’s simple narratives reverberate with Japanese more than John’s philosophical discourse. John and Mark both share the same message about Jesus as

the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name (John 20:31b, cf. Mark 1:1), but the style of one gospel may resonate with one believer more than another.

What’s the aim?

Reading the Bible with K-san was only one part of our discipleship. I also preached and led music on Sundays. He came to our prayer and Bible study gatherings. In many different ways, I was able to expose him to the gospel and what it means to walk in light of the gospel. He surprised me yet again when the Japanese version of “Be Thou My Vision” became one of his favorite songs.

Think of the implications of 2 Timothy 3:16: “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness (ESV).” Narratives like Ruth and 1 Samuel give us examples of how to (and how not to) respond to the steadfast love of the Lord. Discourse like Ephesians helps root our lives as a response to the Lord’s love.

Poetry such as Psalm 1 paints powerful pictures of how to live out the fear of the Lord.

The beauty of Scripture is that we can bring the gospel to bear on any facet of life. Christianity is not merely the intellectual religion some Japanese shy away from. It is not merely

the emotional high that some churches are addicted to. It is not merely a story into which our story fits. Scripture is holistic in its presentation of the gospel, so let us use its many facets in discipling others. **JH**

Illustrations by author

Joel Diffenderfer and his wife, Misti, are church planters in Kagoshima Prefecture. You can find out more about them, read a comic about church planting in Japan, and get in touch at www.diffnotes.com.





Bridging head and heart

By Hoi-Yan Shea

Life-on-life discipleship

“I know I should forgive my parents but . . .” Mai’s voice trailed off.

Mai’s father is physically and verbally abusive. She resents her father for abusing her and her mother for not protecting her from his abuse. She did not visit her parents even for New Year’s Day and blames her parents for her struggles in life.

Yurusenai (unforgivable) is a phrase you hear not only in Japanese dramas and anime but in day-to-day life, even amongst children.

Forgiveness is hard. In Japan, I have noticed that it is a prevalent issue for both my non-Christian and Christian friends, leading to emotional and social disorders as well as strained or broken relationships.

Mai knew that forgiveness would be better than holding onto resentment. Nonetheless, she could not forgive. Shino similarly grew up with a father and mother who were abusive. Unlike Mai, she sees her parents every week. When her father was hospitalized, she immediately went to the hospital to see him. Why the difference? What can bridge this gap between knowledge and a transformed heart and life? I believe that life-on-life discipleship is the answer.

“Discipleship is not merely transmission of information,” Yoshito, a Japanese pastor, keeps reminding me. The disciple needs to see, experience, understand, apply, and receive feedback in the safety of a Christian community. MAWL is a helpful acronym for discipleship: Model, Assist, Watch, Launch.

Jesus did life with his disciples. As he ate, worked, travelled, and rested with them, he was teaching and modelling obedience to God in the face of temptations, opposition, and severe affliction. It was the life of Jesus and the Spirit of Jesus that radically transformed these ordinary men into extraordinary apostles who would lead thousands and fearlessly proclaim the gospel in the face of death. That is what we are called to. As we are discipled by Jesus, we are to disciple others (Matt. 28:19–20).

Jesus taught numerous times about forgiveness (Matt. 18:21–35, Matt. 6:12). Jesus not only taught it; he lived it before the disciples’ eyes. He loved them, prayed for them, and washed their feet, knowing that Judas would betray him and every one of them would abandon him. He prayed for forgiveness for his murderers as he

hung on the cross (Luke 23:34). It is no coincidence that Stephen, a disciple of Jesus, when being murdered by the Jews, prayed for their forgiveness as Jesus did (Acts 7:60, Luke 23:34). The New Testament’s teaching on forgiveness is founded on Christ’s forgiveness for us (Col. 3:13, Eph. 4:32).

Impossible, Shino thought when her pastor taught her the command to “Honour your parents.” She was a new believer but continued to hate her parents for not loving her as she had desired.

The pastor and his wife listened to her and prayed for her. Shino saw how they honoured their parents. When the pastor explained that her parents were sinners like her, she was able to accept that they were not perfect, just as she was not perfect. Instead of resenting her abusive father, she began to pity him. When her parents insulted her, she began to remember Jesus’ words on the cross, “Forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing” (Luke 23:34 NIV), and she was able to respond with compassion.

Shino was able to heal and forgive her parents because of the work of the Holy Spirit, the ultimate discipler, transforming her heart and life with

scriptural truths. Shino was able to heal and forgive because her pastor and his wife lovingly and patiently journeyed with her. They prayed, spoke the truth in love, and modelled obedience to Jesus.

Seventeen years after Shino's conversion, her mum, who was part of a cult and had attempted suicide, became a Christian. It was largely due to Shino's sacrificial love and faithful witness. "My mum changed in ways I had never imagined," Shino shared with a smile. The power of the gospel transforms and spreads as we do life-on-life with others.

Shino's testimony was deeply inspiring. When Mai shared about her parents, I listened and sympathized with her pain and anger. I prayed for her and with her. I shared with her my own struggles and how God gave me healing and enabled me to let go of resentment and forgive through his Word and his people. Mai listened. "Would you be interested in reading the Bible with me on the topic of forgiveness?" I plucked up my courage to ask her one day. Despite her indifference to the Bible, she agreed to meet with me to read the Bible. While my efforts are imperfect, I seek to love and minister to Mai so

that one day she, too, might receive the abundant life Jesus offers her.

Jesus calls us to be disciples who make disciples. How can you participate in the life-transforming work of the Holy Spirit in those around you? **JH**

Note: Abuse is a complex issue, and wisdom is required in helping victims so as to protect them from further abuse, and forgiveness does not necessarily mean trusting the abuser, especially if there is no repentance.

Hoi-Yan Shea has been with OMF since 2012 and is part of a church plant in Iwate. She has a burden to develop Japanese materials on forgiveness and would love to connect with anyone who is interested in the topic.

Discipleship by modeling

If making disciples is largely about changing behavior, we must demonstrate the Christ-like actions we desire to see

By John Edwards

When I was in high school, our health teacher gave a lecture about the dangers of smoking and told us that we should never take up the habit. One student stated, "But Mr. Franks, you smoke."

Words and actions must match to make the greatest impact. Discipleship is largely about influencing the behavior of others to be like that of Jesus Christ—behavior that is both godly and God-honoring. While discipleship does require correct teaching to set the foundation—the reasons for doing what we do as followers of Christ—discipleship is most effective when we model the behaviors we desire to see in others.

Effective daily practice

I grew up in a Christian home. I knew the importance of Bible reading from an early age. Occasionally I even tried to do it, especially after a particularly powerful message about it. It did

not stick, even in Bible college. Then I moved into the upstairs apartment at Ken Clark's house in New Jersey. (Ken Clark founded hi-b.a. in Japan in 1951.) Hi-b.a. emphasizes "quiet time" in their discipleship ministry among high school students. When I would head out most mornings to jog, I would pass by Ken's study. He was in there reading his Bible. Daily. Without fail.

Now my wife and I lead an internship ministry in Obanzawa, Yamagata. We want our interns to be grounded in God's Word, not just to be able to prepare sermons and Bible studies but to allow God to speak to them for their own benefit. Most mornings, I get up, sit at the kitchen table, open my Bible, and spend time with the Lord, learning from him through his Word. The interns who are up early see this.

My wife and I concluded that the most effective way to disciple young

people toward effective ministry in Japan was to invite them to live with us. We do have formal teaching three times per week, but what interns tell us in their evaluations is that it was not the content of our formal teaching but their observations of us living life in Japan as missionaries that impacted them the most.

Embracing everyday encounters

Connecting with people outside the church is an essential part of evangelism. We teach evangelism from God's Word and urge people to go out and do it themselves. Seeing it done is most powerful. My wife takes the interns to the grocery store to learn to shop in Japan. She talks with other shoppers or with the cashiers. I jog by the local schools every morning and greet people I see—the principal, the students, and others. When the interns run with me,

they see this. When they oversleep, I often tell them about my encounters that morning.

It is impossible to always be with the people we are discipling, all the more so when you are trying to disciple an entire congregation. Storytelling is a great way to model the behavior Christ desires from us. When our interns go out on their own, I love to ask them about their encounters. Who did they meet? What did they do or say? What did they learn? Their encounters become mutual discipleship to other interns and even to my wife and me. My coworker, Andrew, has been in Japan for just over a year. He's still studying Japanese and trying to learn Japanese culture. Often when he commutes an hour by train to Yamagata City for language school, he comes back with stories. He told us about asking his classmate from Taiwan out for lunch, learning about his family and being able to talk about his faith when asked about his purpose for being in Japan. That's just one of many stories he's told us.

I heard a story in my first term as a missionary. A veteran missionary was talking about how one short-term Christian worker was able to have many conversations with Japanese people. The veteran missionary asked, "How do you initiate conversations?" "Eye contact" was his simple answer. When I lived in Nara, I often rode the trains. Remembering this story, I would look for eyes. When I caught someone's eye, I would greet them. If there was an openness to further conversation, I would ask some sort of question. This short-termer I've never met disciplined me, drastically changing my behavior, especially outside the walls of the church.

Practicing the sabbath for yourself and others

I have long known that practicing the sabbath is one of the ten commandments, but I've rarely seen it modeled. My wife and I went to a retreat to be refreshed and renewed during our last home service. One of the lectures was

about the sabbath. The speaker spent a lot of time talking about how he and his family practice the sabbath. He told us that some people even wanted to take part in their sabbath practices, especially the Friday night meal that is the beginning of the 24-hour sabbath. For the first time in our lives, my wife and I are working at making the sabbath an essential part of our week. Our summer interns expressed gratitude at experiencing the sabbath as a normal part of the missionary lifestyle.

Who is watching how you live? Do they see or hear about you behaving in ways that reflect how Jesus behaved? Each day is an opportunity to model a godly life to those around us, and in so doing, we practice discipleship. **JH**

John Edwards and his wife, Susan, have been missionaries in Japan since 1993 (with SEND International since 2002). They currently do evangelistic work in Obanazawa, Yamagata, and lead the D House internship program.



Spiritual formation and discipleship around tables

By Shan Reed

Walking and talking with our sisters in Christ has helped us become more Christlike

As a young seminarian, I was introduced to spiritual formation in a first-year introductory course. Although my main area of study was educational ministries, I took classes whenever possible that helped me understand the transformation of my heart into Christlikeness. I had heard about spiritual practices, or disciplines, but did not really know what they were or how they could aid in my spiritual transformation. Each class I took helped me to understand more and to dig more deeply into my heart, Christ's home. Since that time, as I have grown in my understanding and practice, I pray that my life also shows an increasing Christlikeness.

Fast forward ten years, and I found myself part of a church-planting team in southern Osaka. As we prayed about how to reach out to our neighborhood, we also had the desire to journey with our Christian friends to be transformed to be more like Christ. Women's ministry was one of the first ministries we developed as the church began growing. Initially, we had events to foster fellowship among the ladies, not only

in our own church plant but also ladies we had met at other local churches.

The educator in me recognized these events as times when we could also incorporate learning together as one of the goals. My coworker and I had attended training by Entrust Equipping Women entitled "Developing a Discerning Heart," and we wanted to see how what we learned could be translated into our church-planting context in Japan. We began holding ladies' seminars to study how to develop a discerning heart together. (For more information, see page 25 in the resource section.)

Our approach to discipleship

From the beginning, our method of discipleship has been a relaxed time of study around tables that is steeped in God's word and conversation. The Japanese churches we have encountered place a high value on Bible reading, Bible study, and gaining information. We have also run across a shyness and propensity to defer to the teacher, who's seen as the expert. However, we have also encountered women who know

their Bibles well and have deep wisdom from their years of life experience. Our assumption was that if we took the focus off the front of the room and centered it on studying and discussing God's word in small groups, a deeper understanding of God's word and deeper relationships with fellow sojourners would develop.

Amazingly, this is what has happened! As time has passed, the women have been willing to share their personal experiences and knowledge with each other. During discussion and study times at the seminars, we often hear laughter and see tears. We see women encouraging one another, and we hear God's word being discussed with reverent awe.

Growth through study and conversation

The seminars include singing and direct teaching about the topic and how it relates to our transformation towards Christlikeness. We also spend time in groups of three or four studying what God's Word teaches us about the topic of the day, followed by a person from each group summarizing the group's discussion. Lunch and tea breaks are also included to foster fellowship.

We have learned that the women like to know what is going to be studied at the seminars, so we even give homework sometimes. When the ladies register for the seminar, we might give them a list of the verses we will study or some questions about the topic and how it relates to their own walk with Jesus. Having a chance to study ahead of time and think through some of the questions not only decreases stress levels but, more importantly,



deepens discussions during the seminars.

Transformation over information

Five years of biannual seminars brought us to the end of the curriculum we had studied about developing a discerning heart and sent us searching for how to continue. The ladies desired to continue meeting and studying together, and we sensed that God was continuing to transform lives.

About that time, I read a book by Stephen Smith called *The Jesus Life*. In it, he states, "Information and the amassing of information, no matter how true, does not lead to transformation."¹ Thinking about transformation as not just amassing information, we began to look for resources to help us combine the study of God's Word with spiritual practices that could aid in our transformation towards Christlikeness. At that time, we did not find much available in Japanese.



My coworker and I prayed through our own personal experiences with authors whose spiritual formation practices are deeply rooted in Scripture, writers such as Ruth Haley Barton, Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, Henri Nouwen, Richard Foster, Ken Shigematsu, and Dallas Willard. Then we developed six lessons to explore spiritual practices with our ladies as we continued to study God's word together. (For more information, see page 24 in the resource section.) We worked with the ladies from our seminars

and pastors from our Japanese denomination to discover spiritual practices that would enhance current teaching and encourage transformation.

"Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me" (Phil. 3:12, NIV). While we are on this earth, transformation is a continual

process. We are excited to see how God uses these practices and lessons to continue transforming us into the likeness of his Son, our Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ. **JH**

1. Stephen W. Smith, *The Jesus Life: Eight Ways to Recover Authentic Christianity* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2012), 21.

Photos submitted by author

Shan Reed has been a missionary in Japan since 2001 with North American Baptist Conference and is involved in church planting, women's ministry, youth ministry, and English ministry. She is originally from South Dakota in the US.

Advertisement

KANSAI CHRISTIAN WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

MARCH 4, 2024



REGISTER BY
FEBRUARY 11
TO SAVE ¥500



MORE INFO AND
REGISTRATION AT:



ALSO SEE JEMA
WOMEN IN MINISTRY
ON FACEBOOK

A LIFE TRANSFORMED: GROWING OUR VISION OF GOD

SPEAKER: MICHELLE JACKSON



TO BE HELD AT
MUSTARD SEED CHRISTIAN CHURCH
OSAKA

WIM
WOMEN IN MINISTRY
Equip—Empower—Encourage

Our journey on the disciple “ship”



By Daniel Lau

We invite our Japanese friends to join us in an exciting adventure as followers of Jesus Christ

Have you been on a journey recently? It is fun to ride on the Shinkansen or airplane to your holiday destination. One year in autumn, my family rented an RV and drove to Aizuwakamatsu in Fukushima Prefecture. We stayed inside the RV as we drove long distances, and it was a great experience for the family. Along the way, we saw lots of beautiful autumn foliage and thought, “The vacation is not just about the destination; it is about the journey as well.”

Similarly, our life as Jesus’s disciples is an exciting journey. As Christians, we have the wonderful privilege of spending eternity in heaven, but the Christian life is much more than that. It is living the abundant life as disciples of Jesus Christ. But first, what is a disciple? In simple terms, a disciple is a follower of Christ. Discipleship, then, would be the journey that we take as followers of Christ.

We know that the Christian life is important. How do we convey the importance of discipleship to the Japanese church? Discipleship is a word often used in English-speaking churches, but to some Japanese Christians, the same word in Japanese (弟子訓練 *deshi kunren*) conveys images of long, tedious training seminars. It is unfortunate that this word carries such connotations, and we should stress that while discipleship includes Bible teaching, it is not only that. It is a whole lot more. Discipleship is not a series of events but

an exciting journey of spiritual growth as followers of Christ.

I like to think of discipleship as the ship that disciples are on—we take a journey together as followers of Jesus Christ, hence “deshi-ship” (弟子シッフ, *deshi* meaning “disciple”). The Japanese can relate to that expression as they are familiar with words such as “friendship,” “partnership,” and “skin-ship” (a Japanese word for physical contact, not an English word)!

In the case of deshi-ship, we as disciples of Christ are in the boat together seeking Christ on life’s journey. A Japanese pastor once told me a great definition of discipleship: it is “aiming to be Christlike together” (イエス様に似ることを共に目指す). My personal definition is “seeking Christ together for life” (一緒に一生キリストを求め). Discipleship is a continual journey toward Christlikeness that carries on beyond conversion or baptism.

Jesus’s disciples encountered Jesus many times on a boat. The disciples witnessed Jesus perform miracles (such as catching many fish in Luke 5:1–11), saw firsthand his power over nature (Luke 8:22–25), and one even stepped out onto the water in faith (Matt. 14:22–33). All these incidents were vital in their discipleship process. We, too, will encounter Christ in our own special way as disciples of Christ. It may not be like the miracles we read in the Bible, but God speaks to us in our prayers, helps us in our troubles,

and gives us boldness in living out the empowered Christian life.

Discipleship includes seeking Christ by cultivating a daily relationship with God, reading the Bible and taking time to be still before the Lord in solitude and prayer, especially in the busyness of Japanese society. We should be intentional in developing a biblical worldview that addresses various social and cultural issues (e.g., ancestor worship, secular work practices, purpose of life). We should also assure one another of our eternal salvation and abundant blessings in Christ.

Discipleship is not smooth sailing (pun not intended), but it is what we are called to do as disciples of Jesus Christ. A ship is safest in harbor, but that is not what ships are made for. A ship is made for the purpose of journeying into open seas often beset with storms. Similarly, a disciple is called to brave life’s challenges as they follow Jesus. Therefore, let us encourage one another, especially our Japanese Christian friends, to be strong, take courage, and wait for the Lord (Ps. 27:14).

Whether we were baptized last week or have been a Christian for decades, discipleship is the same. The Christian life is hard, yet it is an exciting adventure. More importantly, we know that Christ is always with us, and we have our brothers and sisters in Christ to journey with us. We are on the same boat! Let us ride together on the deshi-ship! **JH**

Daniel Lau, working with OMF International, came from Singapore with his family in 2013 and worked to plant churches in Iwate and Miyagi Prefectures. He’s currently on home assignment.

Making faithful, reproducing disciples

Rethinking discipleship from a biblical perspective will lead to the multiplying fruit we hope to see among the Japanese

By Matt Parsley

In his book *The Only One: Living Fully In, By, and For God*, Curtis Sergeant describes three biblical priorities of discipleship integral to growing fruitful disciple-makers like the three legs on a stool: knowledge (or discovery), application (or obedience), and sharing.

Discovery

It's empowering when people discover truth for themselves versus being told what to believe. Jesus facilitated discovery by asking lots of questions. He often answered questions with more questions (Luke 10:25–26; 18:18–19; 20:1–4; etc.)! He used stories and parables to communicate truths about the kingdom, knowing that many would not immediately grasp the truths without pursuing him more deeply. Jesus knew the power of discovery.

A discovery approach to discipleship allows people to learn from God. In John 6:44–45, Jesus said, “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, ‘And they will all be taught by God.’ Everyone who hears and learns from the Father comes to me” (NET).

In facilitating discovery, we must believe that God can and will reveal his truth to seekers directly from Scripture. Therefore, leaders should facilitate rather than teach (in the traditional sense), trusting that the Holy Spirit is the best teacher (John 14:26; 16:13; Ps. 25:5). During COVID lockdowns, I facilitated a group studying the story of Jesus calming the storm. When asked “What does this

story teach us about Jesus?” a non-Christian participant said, “I think Jesus is God.” Wow! I didn't teach her that. God taught her that!

The cultural tendency to “depend on the expert” is a challenge we must address in discipleship. There is a “sensei” that Japanese need to depend on, but it's not us. It's Jesus. Right from the beginning, we need to present *him* as the expert, the source of all truth—truth they can access directly at any time.

Obedience

In Matthew 7:24–27, Jesus tells the story of a wise man and a foolish man. “The wise man built his house upon the rock . . .” You're singing along now, aren't you? In this story, both men heard Jesus's words; the only difference is one was obedient and one was not.

Teaching the Word without helping people obey is not true discipleship. And yet knowledge seems to be the focus in most discipleship programs and strategies I've seen. If knowledge without obedience leads to “utter destruction” and “being swept out to sea,” it's crucial we find a loving way to hold one another accountable to obeying Jesus.

Speaking of love, have you noticed how often John equates *loving* Jesus to *obeying* him? Check out John 14:15, 21, 23, 24, 31; 15:10, 14; 17:6 and 1 John 2:3–6; 3:24; 5:2, 3. Helping each other love Jesus deeply and thus obey him completely should be at the core of discipleship.

We can emphasize loving Jesus through obedience with this question: “How will you apply or obey what you've learned today?” This encourages the group to show their faith by their works (James 2:18) and to truly love Jesus more.

Sharing with others

In 2 Timothy 2:2, Paul exhorts Timothy to “entrust what you heard me say in the presence of many others as witnesses to faithful people who will be competent to teach others as well.” God's truth was never meant to be hoarded but to be passed on to others. This is a key factor to experiencing growth in Christ and seeing truth pass from one to another.

The word “evangelism” (*dendō*) tends to generate anxiety in the minds of Christians, particularly Japanese believers. This may be due to a strict understanding of evangelism as “sharing the full gospel in one setting and inviting someone to believe on the spot.” No wonder that scares us! We could encourage believers to simply share what they have learned, heard, or read recently from God's word. Asking the question, “Who else needs to hear this story?,” encourages participants to think of someone they can tell.

Striving to be faithful disciples

Returning to Sergeant's analogy of the three-legged stool, all three legs must be equal in length if the stool is to be useful. So it is with discipleship. If someone knows the Word and shares the Word but doesn't obey the Word, that person is a hypocrite. Someone who knows the Word and does it but doesn't share it is selfish. A faithful disciple knows the Word, obeys it, and shares what they know and do with others. **JH**

The Discovery Bible Study (DBS) is a tool we use to create an environment for facilitating these three practices among seekers, new believers, and long-time followers of Jesus (see page 23 for more information).

Matt Parsley and his wife, Christina, (US) did church planting in Japan for six years and now serve in Malaysia with Beyond. They seek to catalyze movements of multiplying disciples among the Japanese diaspora.



Summer camp: a launchpad for discipleship

Building relationships, connections, and stronger faith among high schoolers

Hi-b.a. (an abbreviation of “High-School Born Againers”) has been in Japan creating spaces for high school students to gather and get connected to God and each other since 1951. One special place we have seen this happen is at hi-b.a. camp. Some students hear about Jesus for the first time, some take steps in their faith, some make decisions to be baptized, and others commit their lives to ministry and mission. These are all works of the Holy Spirit, but camp seems to be a special place where God puts people in the right state for this work to happen.

In my own discipleship ministry, I have seen the power of camp over and over. Many of my deepest relationships with Japanese students have started at camp. One of our new missionaries was lamenting how hard it was to start and build relationships with Japanese students, and I told them, “Just wait for camp. That’s where it happens.” And it does! I could give you a whole list of students I got to engage with in a significant spiritual way from this last summer alone.

Personal connection

I had a student in my cabin who was a third-year high school student and baseball player who had just retired from his club. He was getting ready for university, and even though it was summer break, he told me he was studying ten hours a day for the entrance exams. We talked here and there the first couple

of days. Then one afternoon while the rest of our cabin napped, we talked for over an hour. We talked about sports, school, and his new spirituality. Hearing about the pressure he felt to study like he did, I lamented the fact that he was being sacrificed on the altar of cultural achievement. Why was he being encouraged more in his work for the sake of university entrance success than for growth in his faith? I exhorted him to seek first the kingdom of God. What good would it be to get into a good university and yet lose his soul? He listened, and we spent much of the rest of camp together. We played loads of sports, I taught him how to play tennis, and we left camp with a deep connection. We have continued to be in contact since, and I continue to encourage him in faith as well as his studies.

Intentional spaces for all students

It is not just Japanese students who come to camp. When hi-b.a. came to Japan over 70 years ago, the missionaries asked them to start programs for their children as well. This was the start of the international branch of hi-b.a. that I have been involved in since I came to Japan. Our international ministry is unique in that we seek to create a space specifically for TCKs (third culture kids) that is all about them, including international hi-b.a. camp every summer.



By Evan Easom

This year at international camp, we had four students place their faith in Jesus for the first time! They came from missionary families, so they knew all the answers and the gospel message, but they had never made their own profession of faith in Jesus. Since then, I’ve heard one of these students testify saying he experienced the love of God for the first time at camp and finally could taste and see that the Lord is good. I regularly see this start at camp, and then we get to walk with students in this faith journey until they graduate into the next chapter.

Continuing discipleship after camp

However, camp cannot be the only touchpoint if we want to make disciples who follow Jesus for a lifetime. This is where the weekly hi-b.a. clubs come in. In partnership with the local church, we strive to create safe places where high school students can experience Bible teaching, sharing, praying, and worship with their peers. These spaces also connect them to people who can disciple them and help them move from where they are to where God wants them to be.



Discipleship takes time, presence, commitment, and attention. However, it is really hard to get this with high school students because they are so busy and simply because they're high school students. But we get all of these things in abundance at camp. We are together for a few days and get heaps of time for relationship, sharing, and teaching. In this environment, they experience the benefits of these activities. For some students, this might be the first time they've gathered with other Christians their age in this way. This makes camp a key launchpad for spiritual growth by connecting students to spiritual communities that will help them grow beyond camp. This is also key for helping them see the need for spiritual community throughout life, which happens most clearly in the local church.

As we gear up for a new season of ministry with the start of the fall, we are excited to fan the flame that was lit at camp. May it burn bright for the glory of God and so that many might come and taste and see.

Soli Deo Gloria! Glory to God alone! JH

Images submitted by author

Evan Easom is from Texas (US) and has been in Japan for six years with SEND Int. serving with hi-b.a. He works with international and Japanese high school students along with coaching volleyball at Christian Academy in Japan.

Campsite renewal project

The main campsite, in Chiba Prefecture, has been around almost as long as hi-b.a. has been in Japan, much of it unchanged in the last 50 years. As we look ahead to the future of youth ministry in Japan, we recognize a need to update our aging buildings. Wear and tear, typhoons, mold, and high schoolers have taken their toll on the camp. This need to update is not just to be cool and relevant but for safety, comfort, and to allow space for more campers. This project will be a complete rebuild of the campsite, consolidating everything into one large building. However, this is a large undertaking. We are trusting God to provide the money required for such a project. We are also asking anyone who has been impacted by the hi-b.a. camp to consider paying it forward and being a part of seeing this ministry continue into the future.

To be honest, there are times when I see the price tag for such a project and get overwhelmed by the whole thing. But after the summer that we just had, I am convinced that we need to keep doing this! Four students placing their faith in Jesus, others tearfully repenting of sin, others committing to making a difference at their school, others finding Christian friends for the first time—this is worth it.

More information about the scope and timeline of the project, the building plans, and ways to support this renovation can be found on this page of the Japanese hi-b.a. website: <https://www.hi-ba.com/new-camp-building> The English part of the website does not have a campsite project page, but the general support page accepts donations by credit card. Thank you for checking it out and prayerfully supporting the future of youth ministry in Japan.



Plans for new camp facility

What is multiplication discipleship?

God's story could reach the whole world in 35 years

By Jodi Davis

As Paul instructs Timothy, we, too, are to pass on what we have learned to faithful people who will be able to teach others (2 Tim. 2:1–2). This is the ultimate goal of discipleship. As we look at the mission of discipleship before us, it may seem daunting, overwhelming, even impossible at times. How can we reach this world for Christ? How can we encourage those who do believe in Christ to follow Him in their daily lives as they work, grow families, and in turn reach and teach others for Christ? There are many great tools, methods, and opportunities in our world today.

Discipleship leads to growing in numbers

We understand that the work of becoming followers of Christ is only done through the work of the Holy Spirit, but we have also been given the charge of telling others the good news (Matt. 28:16–20, Rom. 10:14–15) and then coming alongside to help and train them in their walk with the Lord.

When we talk about becoming a follower of Jesus (a disciple), there are many people who only focus on evangelism. Of course, evangelism is extremely important, but this is only half of what Jesus meant when He tells His disciples to “go and make disciples of all nations . . . teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:19–20 NIV). These words imply that new believers should also “go and make disciples.” Paul shared a similar idea in the 2 Timothy 2 passage.

Elephant addition vs. rabbit multiplication

Think about discipleship this way: If you received 10,000 yen every week, at the end of one year, you'd have 520,000 yen. That's elephant-style addition.

Instead, what if you received 1 yen that doubled every week? After 52 weeks, you would have received 4,503,599,627,370,500 yen. That's rabbit-style multiplication.

So according to this principle of multiplication, if each person were to lead one person to Christ this year and teach them how to grow in faith—and repeated the process each year—in just 35 years, the entire world could be reached by God's amazing love story!

What discipleship looks like

To encourage more Japanese disciples to make disciples, there are great benefits to building confidence in the new believer's (disciple's) life. This can be done through reading scripture and sharing with others what they have learned from the Word of God in a daily quiet time, entrusting them with opportunities to serve, and guiding them through ministry experiences. These experiences help the disciple to find the gifts and talents that God has given them, and it also gives the disciple ownership of their relationship with God. Gradually, Japanese believers can grow in confidence in several areas:

- understanding their purpose and value before God
- serving in their local church
- meeting new people, both fellow Japanese and from around the world
- pursuing unique career opportunities
- facing present challenges and the future

Glimmers of hope in a seemingly dry land

I recently read a Google translation of an article in *Christian Today* about Japanese views of religion.¹ When Japanese were asked about their belief in gods and higher powers, only 3% of Japanese answered, “I believe in a god written in scriptures” (Bible, Koran, etc.), compared to the global average of 40%.

At first, reading this was discouraging—but it's understandable since Japan is the second largest unreached people group.² Thirty-eight percent said they “don't believe in gods, higher powers, or spirits of any kind,” while 34 percent said they didn't know, and 10 percent said they didn't want to answer.



My glimmer of hope is for the 34% that said they didn't know if there was a god or higher power. I wish there had been a follow-up question: “Do you want to know?” In my 23 years with Word of Life Fellowship in Japan and a small Christian school in Nagoya, there have always been people who didn't know but wanted to know.

The task is great, but God has called us to go and tell, plant and water, be faithful—and He will take care of the rest. **JH**

To read more about the discipleship curriculum used at Word of Life Fellowship, see page 24 in the resource section.

1. “In Japan, 3% say they believe in God. That's the lowest of 26 major countries. Their views on religion are also negative.” 日本、神を信じる人は3% 主要26カ国で最低 宗教に対する見方も否定的傾向, *Christian Today* (Japanese website), <https://www.christiantoday.co.jp/articles/32605/20230804/ipsos-global-religion-2023.htm> (August 4, 2023).
2. “Unreached People Groups: The Ultimate Guide,” *Pray 10/40*, <https://pray1040.com/unreached-people-groups-the-ultimate-guide/> (accessed October 20, 2023).

Photo submitted by author

Jodi Davis is a missionary with Word of Life Fellowship, a youth ministry that provides curriculum, training, resources, and youth events to equip the local church to evangelize and disciple youth. Seeing every teen everywhere hear the gospel from a friend is one of our highest goals.

Discipleship in a busy world

By Jörg Eymann

Sharing life together to grow Japanese Christians

“Wow, what a vision! We want to be a part of it! This is what our heart longs for!” That was our reaction in 2018 when our mission shared their new strategy to establish discipleship centers in strategic parts of the world: “The goal of discipleship centers is to bridge the sometimes wide gap between the spiritual life of a local church and formal theological education and to provide opportunities for Christians to grow together with other Christians and listen to God’s voice more deeply.”

Before this meeting, we had been leading a youth outreach center for 10 years. Out of this youth ministry came the Ai HOPE Church (愛ホープチャーチ), which we started in 2014 together with a young Japanese pastor.

One key focus of our ministry has been leading young people to Christ and helping them grow as Christians. We have used many different discipleship materials in many different types of discipleship groups. For example, we invested a lot of time in one-on-one discipleship groups (one disciple and one leader). We prayed together, studied the Bible, shared our struggles, discovered gifts, talked about visions for the future (job, partnership, etc.), ate and played together, and more. To sum it up, we shared life together. We witnessed young Christians growing in character and faith, investing their gifts in the church, and sharing their faith with friends and family. In a city sometimes called the “graveyard of missionaries,” more people than we expected became Christians. We are still a small group but with much potential.

Twice a year, we held a vision day as a church to listen more deeply to God’s voice and share ideas on how to meet the needs of the community and share

the gospel. As leaders, we shared more and more responsibility for the church with young Christians, culminating in some beginning to lead small groups and help with baptism classes. We also encouraged laypeople to give short messages. For our elders’ meeting, three new elders were appointed each year in an alphabetical rotation of the church membership (including the pastor and missionaries) so they could experience what it meant to lead the church for a year.



The “lap of God” chair

Through this kind of church ministry, we have gained experience and expertise in discipleship. At the same time, we have seen that specifically for Japan, what Jesus says is true: “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few” (Luke 10:2 NIV). We have seen that there’s a huge need for laborers, both laypeople and pastors, to bring in all the harvest out there.

One goal is to bridge the gap between the spiritual life of a local church and a Bible school education, offering Christians a program to help them listen quietly to God’s voice, teach them the richness of God’s word, and train them to live as authentic Christians in

their daily lives. After completing the year-long program, participants can continue to work with even greater passion in their home churches or begin a new chapter in their lives by attending Bible school to become a part-time or full-time minister.

In 2022, we had a half-year trial launch to see if Christians were interested in such a ministry. A total of eight Christians attended the trial program. We met once a month on weekends at different church locations to have a time of worship and sharing, to learn more about the topic “Who is the God of the Bible?”, to have an extended personal quiet time with God (e.g., while sitting on a red chair that symbolized the lap of God), and to reflect together on certain topics in workshops such as nine ways to encounter God, the Bible and art, and Christian life in the daily routine. We had a very blessed time. We saw that Japanese Christians are interested in a discipleship program like this, which we have named the Christian Seicho Center. In addition, we learned once again

that Japanese are very busy, and we need a lot of flexibility to create a program that Japanese Christians are willing to attend. (For more information, see page 25 in the resource section.)

Right now, planning is underway to launch the first one-year program in 2024. Please pray for the launch. If you know someone who might be interested in participating, please encourage him/her to do so. [JH](#)

Photo submitted by author

Jörg Eymann and his wife, Dorothea, have served in Japan with the German Alliance Mission since 1997. They lead the Ai HOPE Church in Inazawa, Aichi-Ken, and plan to start a new ministry, the Christian Seicho Center, in Fall 2024.

Greater discipleship impact with Japanese learning styles

By Fuji Liu

Teaching Japanese believers using four familiar methods leads to better understanding and sharing

What are Japanese learning styles? How do the Japanese receive and process information? These are the sort of questions that can help us as we think about making disciples and training people in evangelism in Japan.

At the same time, evangelism is a skill, which means the trainer should prioritize practical training and informal situations. To disciple Japanese people well, it helps to understand Japanese learning styles, which include observation, practice, proverbs, and visual learning.

Observation

Observation is an old way of learning, but it is still being used widely in many aspects of Japanese life. Observation allows a new disciple to see, process, and then explain a situation in the way they understand it, which then helps them share with others more easily. One of the reasons that observation is so highly valued in Japan is because it is a high power distance society where people regard leaders or teachers as knowledge sources.¹ Japanese people prefer to learn from a person directly instead of books. In addition, Japan is a high context communication society. People tend to use a lot of qualifiers such as “maybe,” “perhaps,” and “probably.” For students, it is often hard to fully understand just by listening, so observing how a teacher does something can be helpful. Through observation, a trainee can get a clearer understanding of what the trainer is intending to teach.

In traditional Japanese trades, an apprentice (*deshi*) spends a long time,

sometimes more than ten years, just watching what the trainer does. This is in contrast with many contemporary societies that teach mainly in the classroom. The Japanese apprenticeship system traditionally emphasizes watching how you live your life and what you say daily. For example, in the famous carpenter training school Akimoku, apprentices are required to stay with their teacher and watch what they do, how they talk, and how they relate to others for the first three years.

Application

A Christian trainee can observe their trainer to see how they address people, how they start a conversation, and how they change topics or manage the conversation. The disciple maker can then ask the trainees about what they observed. This is also an opportunity for the trainees to learn from one another.

Practice

A sushi chef knows exactly how much rice he needs because of many years of practice. A sushi apprentice has to learn from the sushi chef and practice for ten years before he can open his own sushi restaurant.

Japan is a country where perfection is pursued and mistakes are avoided. Practice makes perfect. Practice plays an important role in the training process in different walks of life in Japan.

In evangelism training, a trainee learns to do one thing for a long time and, through practice, gradually improves. Practice is not simply repeating something but reflecting on what the trainer did and then considering what things need to change to be clearer

when there is another opportunity to share the faith. It is important for the trainer to encourage this kind of reflection along with the repetition. As a trainer, create a long-term plan to help the trainee know that there is enough time for practice.

Application

In evangelism training, the trainer might encourage the trainee to share the gospel with five people instead of just one person. After each person, the trainee should have time to reflect with the trainer on how they did before moving on to the next person.

After sharing with five people, there can be further discussion about what was learned from these conversations. What things did they have in common? What was most difficult? What are the possible reasons behind that?

This is also an opportunity for the trainer to discuss ways of ending a conversation when difficulties arise or how to lead someone to Christ when they show a willingness to believe.

The hope is that once the trainee tastes the joy of evangelism, they will want to do it more by themselves.

Proverbs

Proverbs were coined by our ancestors based on their experiences and invoke the voice of collective wisdom rather than personal opinion.² They are short, compact, and contain deep meaning. In Japan, proverbs continue to greatly influence people’s thinking. Many proverbs that Japanese use in daily life are similar to Biblical teaching, which the trainer can use as illustrations. I am not suggesting the Bible conforms to well-known sayings but



rather that proverbs can help Japanese people understand Biblical concepts faster and better. Even the Apostle Paul quoted a poem from Athenian literature in a speech recorded in Acts 17:28.

As an example, we can look at Romans 8:28: “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose” (NIV). The trainer could quote the proverb 苦あれば楽あり、楽あれば苦あり (*ku areba raku ari, raku areba ku ari*). It means that suffering or hard times may well be followed by something good and beneficial. In contrast, when we have good times, something bad may be lurking that we cannot see. The proverb may not fully explain the meaning of Romans 8:28, but it may be helpful for a Japanese person to understand the meaning of the verse.

Application

A trainer could include Japanese proverbs as they seek to explain Bible verses, stories, and concepts. There is also the opportunity for the Japanese trainee to identify a Japanese proverb that better explains the point that the

trainer is trying to make. This process can also help the trainee learn to explain things in their own words.

Visual learning

Japanese people are visual learners. Kanji are word pictures, and visual learning is widely used to explain concepts. The popularity of manga in Japan is a great example of this. Japanese people understand manga or comics faster than words. A disciple trainer can encourage or teach their disciples to use visual learning in evangelism or teaching biblical principles.

Application

The use of hand-drawn pictures or comics may be helpful for outreach or teaching. Visual aids or diagrams, such as the Three Circles evangelism tool (you can find it on YouTube), can also be helpful for Japanese people who are visual learners. Using the Three Circles teaching tool as an example, the trainer can explain the meaning of each circle and the diagram, modeling how to draw the picture while speaking to someone (allowing the trainee to observe, the first learning style we dis-

cussed in this article). Then the trainee draws the diagram while explaining the meaning back to the trainer, and when they are ready, they find someone to teach using the diagram while the trainer watches (practice, the second learning style). Once they are comfortable with the process, the trainee can then teach believers or unbelievers using this visual learning method.

Conclusion

Observation, practice, proverbs, and visual learning are four learning styles commonly used in Japan. By understanding and using Japanese learning styles in discipleship, we can greatly impact those we are leading and training in their spiritual growth and in their outreach abilities. **JH**

1. Perry Shaw, Cesar Lopes, Joanna Feliciano Soberano, and Bob Heaton, *Teaching Across Cultures: A Global Christian Perspective* (Carlisle, UK: Langham Global Library, 2021), 80.
2. Craig Ott, *Teaching and Learning Across Cultures: A Guide to Theory and Practice* (Ada: MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2021), 100.

Fuji Liu (Tony) is from China and now serves as a missionary at International Christian Baptist Church in Gamagori City, Aichi Prefecture.

Passion, vision, and system

By Andy Meeko

Three essential factors behind spiritual breakthrough

“Some people see things as they are and say, ‘Why?’ I dream things that never were and say, ‘Why not?’”

Robert F. Kennedy¹

Things were not good before, and they appear to be heading south. In the five years between 2013 and 2018, Japan lost nearly 500 churches² . . . and we have yet to know the fallout from the pandemic itself. Yet

I am still optimistic. I still dream. I have no doubt spiritual breakthrough is coming.

Presently, however, a common mentality in churches seems to be about getting back to the old normal. But in that old normal we saw a shrinking church, an aging pastorate, a waning focus on the young, and 1.26 million dying every year without Jesus.³ Rather than getting back to status quo, a breakthrough may be our only viable hope.

How can we experience a breakthrough? Actually, I had the privilege of growing up in the midst of breakthrough. My parents’ church-planting work in Tohoku and Kanto saw rapid growth that was far outside the norm. Last year, as I was evaluating decades of experiences, a bolt struck me. I realized that the fruitful works I have seen had several factors present.

I call it the Triple Ministry Determinant (TMD). I admit, this is not a scientific analysis with a study to back it up. Nonetheless, when these three factors are robust, amazing things seem to happen.

Passion (心)

Passion is more than emotion. It is a deep drive and hunger that shows itself emotionally.

Have you ever noticed when somebody starts talking about their passion, how they change? They radiate enthusiasm. They spill over with excitement. How about when we talk about God? Do our eyes brighten? In the day-to-

day, it’s easy to just go through the motions and get anemic in passion for God and the lost.

How do you get passion? At the foot of the cross. When we really see the cross, everything changes; we can’t help but heartfully love him and the lost for which he gave his all.

The most vital question we might ask, then, is “How can we and those we work with deeply appreciate the cross?”

Vision (幻)

What is vision? It seems elusive. When it comes to vision, there is one word that comes to mind: big—bigger than self. And vision may not be rational, practical, guaranteed, or even safe. It is ironic how many churches are preoccupied with being safe. I have seen too many places where plans are made without vision; ambitions are doable and goals are affordable, and we wonder why things stay miniscule and mediocre.

Vision is what takes us beyond ourselves and opens the door for the improbable. It is the terri-

tory where God arrives . . . and that means breakthrough.

How do you get vision? I think of one word: creation. When we look at creation, we really begin to see the cosmos and the crisis. How big is your God? When we start to see how big God is and how big the need for him in this world is, vision unequivocally ignites.

The question we might ask, then, is, “How can we and those we work with open our eyes to see creation more vastly?”

System (仕組)

A system is a means to perpetuate Kingdom expansion. It ensures that the baton gets passed from person to person and that each person grasps the essence of discipleship.

Without a system, most people don’t know where to begin, what to aim for, or when they have arrived.

Japanese writing is one of the most complicated in the world, but almost every Japanese person is literate. How? A system. No one is expected to figure it out on their own. Meanwhile, spiritual formation in churches is often haphazard. It is a hodgepodge of good things going in a lot of directions, but lacking intentional, comprehensive development.

Where do you get a system? You either find one or make one. The bottom line might be this: get a good system and continue to make it better.

The wrap-up

From what I have seen, one must have all three determinants in order to see breakthrough. One or two determinants are good, but instead of breakthrough, we may still perpetuate the old norm of anemia and regression. However, when all three determinants are present and strong, awesome things can begin to happen.

What do I do personally? I pray daily that passion and vision come. I pray that more of God's people in this

country get on their knees and really begin to see the cross and creation. And I prepare daily. Over the last decade, we have designed the NewDayToDay system with hundreds of Japanese people field-testing evangelistic and discipleship tools.

When it comes to Japan, things are still not good, yet the worse they appear, the more convinced I am that good stuff is coming. So I continue to dream of things that never were, smile, and ask "Why not?" [m](#)

1. A famous paraphrase of a quote from George Bernard Shaw's *Back to Methuselah*, Robert F. Kennedy, "Remarks at the University of Kansas," March 18, 1968, University of Kansas, transcript, <https://www.jfklibrary.org/learn/about-jfk/the-kennedy-family/robert-f-kennedy/robert-f-kennedy-speeches/remarks-at-the-university-of-kansas-march-18-1968> (accessed October 30, 2023).
2. 「フォーカス・オン」教会の持続可能性それでも教会が生き続けるために, Christian Shimbun (Japanese website), <https://クリスチャン新聞.com/csdb/?p=39782> (April 3, 2022).
3. A conservative estimate based on statistics from "Population Collapse? Number of Japanese Households with Kids Falls to Historic Low," WION, <https://www.wionews.com/world/population-collapse-number-of-japanese-households-with-kids-falls-to-historic-low-612123> (updated July 5, 2023).

Andy Meeko is the founder of NewDayToDay and T3C (Tokyo Community Care Center), author of Gospel Venture and Miracle Every Day, and creator of the Treasure Hunt Project. He has a doctorate in spiritual and mental health and serves with JVenture.

Resources for discipleship

Useful tools shared by members of our JEMA community

Discipleship and evangelism training guides

Discovery Bible Study

(written by Matt Parsley)

Discovery Bible Study (DBS) is a tool developed by David L. Watson and Paul D. Watson that helps us focus on making faithful disciples who discover truth in God's Word, obey what God teaches them, and pass these truths on to others. This becomes the disciple "DNA" that gets passed on from one spiritual generation to the next, leading to movements of multiplying disciples! The study uses the following format:

To begin, each person answers these questions:

Introduction

- What are you thankful for today?

- What is a stress or struggle for you right now? Is there anything this group can do to help?
- Do you know someone who is facing a difficult time right now? Is there anything this group can do to help?

After the first session, the review step is added:

Review

- What was the Bible story from last time?
- How did you apply/obey what you learned?
- With whom did you share the story?

New Story

- Read the new Bible story two to three times and then have the group retell the story without looking (or act it out dramatically).
- Optional: What do you like about the story?
- Optional: What do you find hard or challenging in



this story?

- What does this story teach us about God?
- What does this story teach us about people?

- What will you do to apply/obey what you've learned?
- Who else needs to hear this story? When will you share it with them?

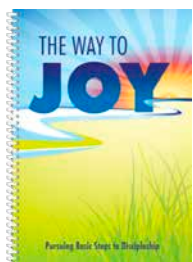
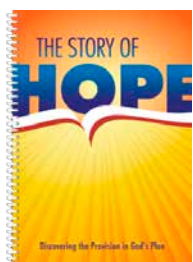
Contact me at mattrpar@gmail.com for more resources on Discovery Bible Study (including Japanese language resources), recommended story sets, and equipping opportunities for using and teaching DBS in your context. More information about DBS can also be found at dbsguide.org.

The Way to Joy

(written by Jodi Davis)

When we paired students with full-time and intern staff at Word of Life Fellowship, it allowed everyone to be actively involved in the discipleship process, helping both the mentor and mentee. As Proverbs 17:17 stresses, “Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another” (ESV).

We use a curriculum published by ABWE/Good Soil that is concise, written for those for whom English is a second language, and biblically based.



Word of Life has used *The Story of Hope* in our four-month Bible Survey course and *The Way to Joy* as our discipleship course. For two months, our staff were able to meet one-on-one with students and discuss the theme for the week. The ten lessons in *The Way to Joy* include an overview of God's redemptive plan, assurance and

security of salvation, and many other topics such as prayer, personal holiness, witnessing, the local church, and God's plan for our lives.

Unlike some books of this type, *The Way to Joy* provides provocative questions to stimulate discipling-type conversations between the leader and the learner. The books are beautifully illustrated with customized full-color visual illustrations. In addition to the 64 pages of discipleship content, a set

of Bible memory verse cards is included in each book.

Having this special time encouraged our students, and it challenged and stretched all our staff. Some of our young Japanese staff said this was their first time having the chance to encourage, challenge, and pray for someone “under their watch and care,” and they also mentioned that they grew through the process. Even better news is that these books are in the process of being translated into Japanese!

ABWE/Good Soil Website:
<https://www.goodsoil.com/resources>

NewDayToDay

(written by Andy Meeko)

The NewDayToDay system is 100 percent made and funded in Japan.

And though it was not my intention, it is currently expanding into over 30 languages. If you don't have a system for discipleship and evangelism training, I encourage you to get familiar with NewDayToDay—it was kitchen-table-grown and is now a high quality resource.



There are three parts in the system:

- Help everyone tell their Jesus story powerfully via My Miracle.
- Help everyone share God's gift beautifully via GospelShare.
- Help everyone disciple others effectively via GospelVenture (adults) and Treasure Hunt Venture (kids).



See newdaytoday.net (Japanese website with some English website links).

Biblically-Based Spiritual Formation

(written by Shan Reed)

Matthew 22:37–39 and Romans 12:1–2 have been the foundation of our women's ministry. We desire for the women in the church to love God and their neighbor with all their heart, soul, and minds and to be transformed to be more Christlike. We believe that when we live these out in real life, others will be drawn to Jesus.



These six lessons are a result of our prayers for the women in our ministry to grow in these truths from Scripture. Spiritual formation is not a term commonly used in the Japanese Christian circles with which we interact. To help the body of Christ in our context connect with this phrase, we steeped the lessons in God's Word to help them understand spiritual formation is not a Western idea, but an idea grounded in the Word of God to help us become more like Christ.

The topics covered in the lessons include the following: “What are spiritual disciplines?”; “What is the current condition of your heart?”; “You are not alone: community and the Holy Spirit”; “I'm no good at prayer”; “Worship”; and “Developing soul rhythms or a rule of life.” Some of the spiritual disciplines that are explored are *lectio divina*, breath prayer, reflection, silence, spiritual friendship, meditation, and prayer walking.

Because my coworker and I tend to study and read in English and then teach in Japanese from English notes, we have written this curriculum in English. We are planning to have it translated into Japanese. If you are interested in finding out more about

the curriculum, please contact me at shaninJapan@mac.com.

Developing a Discerning Heart

(written by Shan Reed)

Developing a Discerning Heart is the second in a four-module training system by Entrust Equipping Women. Entrust is a ministry that began in 1979 to equip men and women to lead interactive small groups. It was started to help train those for whom formal seminary training was not an option. Their mission statement is “To multiply church leaders through accessible, locally-owned, reproducible training systems.”

Entrust Equipping Women is one arm of the Entrust training system and equips women in the local and global church to nurture, develop, and mobilize others for kingdom impact. They have training hubs around the world, including one in Thailand for women leaders in Asia.



I attended two of the modules at the training hub in Thailand. The first module, Facilitating Relational Learning, helped me to ask better questions and to listen more openly as I sought to lead transformational Bible studies with the women at our church. Developing a Discerning Heart, the second module, helps us to understand our heart more deeply, exploring our identity in Christ, our thoughts, our will, and our emotions. Although I have not experienced the other two modules, Discovery Bible Study and Equipping Women to Serve, I have talked with women who were impacted by the training and have been implementing their learning in ministry.

The training hub in Thailand is always looking for women who desire to grow in their leadership and mentorship. If you are interested in more information or in attending a training module, visit entrust4.org for more

information. (Much of the information in this article is from the website.)

Training programs

Christian Seicho Center (CSC)

(written by Jörg Eymann)

The Christian Seicho (growth) Center is a disciple-making ministry that bridges the gap between the spiritual life of a local church and the formal education of a Bible school. It offers a program that supports the spiritual growth of Christians who are actively seeking to live as disciples of Jesus.



This program helps participants enter God's presence, quiet themselves before the Lord, and listen to his voice. It also provides the opportunity to study the Bible together with other Christians and to learn from the expertise of other Christians in workshops.

In cooperation with local churches, it provides opportunities to put the Word of God into practice. This ministry trains the participants to live an authentic Christian life in their daily routine. In addition, it encourages the participants to passionately follow Jesus and serve Him in their home church or as a part-time or full-time minister in the worldwide kingdom of God.

For more information, visit the CSC homepage at csc-christian-growth-center.com or mail to christianseichocenter@gmail.com.

CRASH Japan

(written by Helen Kwak)

CRASH stands for Christian Relief, Assistance, Support, and Hope. Though most known for its work in mobilizing and coordinating the evangelical volunteer relief ministry in the wake of the 2011 triple disaster in



the Tohoku Region, it has continued to serve churches, communities, and volunteers in Japan in a variety of ways, including resource development.

CRASH currently has several training programs available and is working to create more to serve your church, mission, or community needs.

Keichō and Community is a workshop series on how listening can revitalize your community from the inside and is a good introduction to the world of communication, connection, and emotional competency (keichō means “listening closely”). This series can be tailored to your specific needs.

Survivor Care Training is a two-hour workshop designed to help volunteers be prepared to care for the heart needs of survivors.

Disaster Response Chaplaincy, based on the Southern Baptist Disaster Response curriculum, is a two-day course that equips individuals to serve as chaplains during disaster response.

Emotional and Spiritual Care in Disasters is a review of the materials originally presented in Narita by Kevin Ellers on how chaplains can coordinate with other first responders during disaster deployment. This course requires an understanding of concepts of critical incident stress management for individuals and for groups. These prerequisites can be met through training offered in collaboration with PSV Japan. You can read more details on their website: psv-japan.org

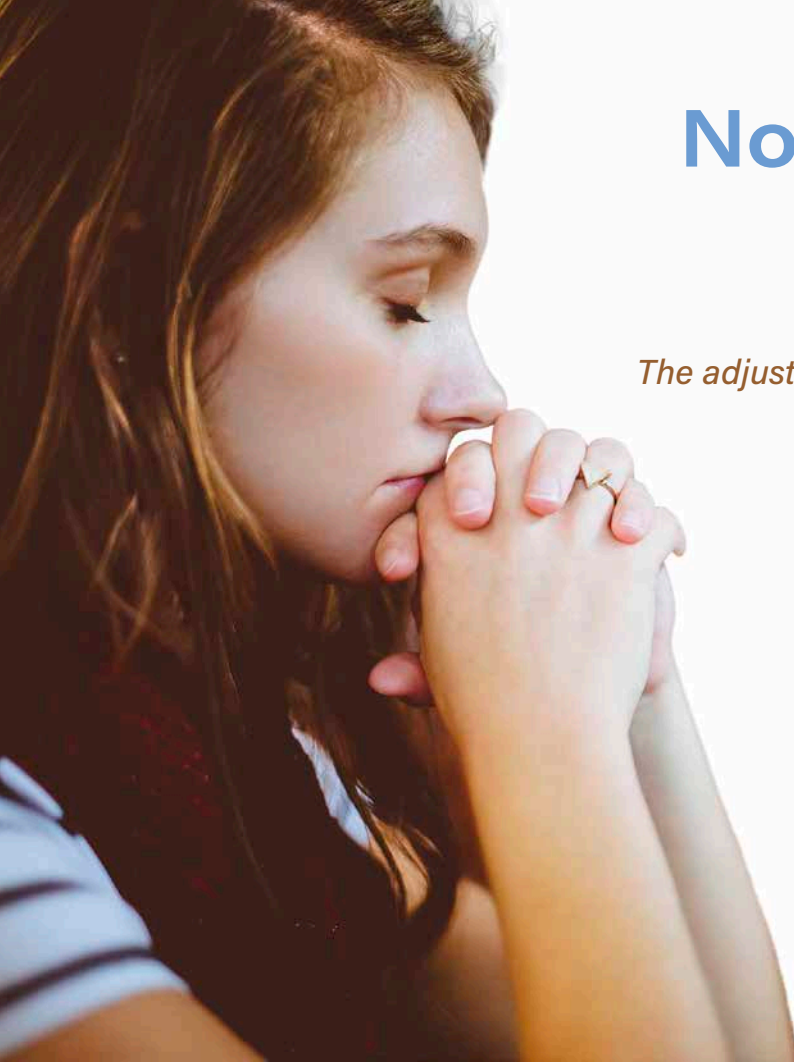
Disaster Ready Church is a walk-through of a short manual that will help your church think through what disaster readiness looks like for your church or organization.

Programs currently in development:

Crisis Leadership looks at how good leadership practices during crisis can help strengthen communities; **Muck-Out** is training in the core competencies for cleaning flooded properties; and **Work Leader Training** covers the basics of managing volunteers on-site during disaster response deployment.

For more information, please contact me (CRASH Care Coordinator) at care.coordinator@crashjapan.com. **JH**

Images from cited websites or submitted by authors



Not just surviving but thriving

The adjustment process for missionary women in Japan

By Sue Plumb Takamoto

and practical support they experienced in their roles as mothers and wives. Missionary mothers with young children find that while their husbands generally are able to engage in either full-time language study or ministry, they remain “stuck at home,” unable to move forward in the adjustment process. Meanwhile, many single women leave strong support bases in their home country only to find that, in Japan, being over thirty and single seems to be an anomaly. One single woman writes about her challenges:

Not having someone to be completely honest with on hard days . . . not having a built-in teammate in the midst of transitions . . . the oddity of being older and not married. In this culture, at least, people feel very free to tell me that I am too old now to get married, and aren't my parents worried?

Adjusting to life in Japan as missionaries is hard! For women, there are some particular challenges that make it difficult, including caring for family and children and the loss of community while in a bewildering life season.

But there is hope. While it takes many years to adjust to Japan, a missionary and their sending community can facilitate this process by understanding some of the needs of women during this time.

In my 2003 PhD dissertation, “Liminality and the North American Missionary Adjustment Process in Japan,” I analyzed the stories of forty missionaries from sixteen different mission agencies to see how they adjusted to life in Japan. The statistics show that it takes 7.8 years on average for a missionary to adjust to Japan! The women surveyed faced particular challenges to surviving and thriving in new locations. They often found themselves juggling the expectations and needs of children and family, and they were unable to find community or healthy ministry opportunities.

Here, I'll summarize some of the findings concerning what women in particular have found difficult as they seek to adjust to life in Japan. More importantly, I will also share some habits and helps to navigate the process of feeling at home in Japanese culture.

Problems facing women missionaries

Support

An overwhelming 82% of the married women interviewed in my research talked about the lack of emotional

Communication

Women, more than men, expressed great frustration in the inability to communicate in their new culture. Women tended to define their previous identity based on their communication abilities, independence, and ability to build successful relationships. One missionary wrote this haiku about her adjustment journey:

Wants to speak her heart
Feels like a mute that can't talk
Frustrated, lonely, despairs

These areas of identity formation can quickly feel invalidated by the inability to effectively communicate in Japanese:

- “My whole view of myself was turned upside down with that.”
- “I think that was very difficult for me and did a number on my self-esteem that I think took a long time to recover from.”
- “When I would go to church, I would become very withdrawn and that's not my personality naturally.”

Alienation and loneliness

Most missionary women generally enter some sort of period of isolation as a result of their new setting and inability to communicate; the longer this season lasts, the more frustrating and lonely the experience becomes. Some mis-

sionary women move toward lifestyle choices of seclusion that further alienate them from the culture in which they are ministering; others find their journey toward cultural engagement long and difficult. Those with small children in the home already tend to feel isolated and withdrawn, and loneliness for single missionaries is often more pronounced in a new culture where they have not yet established deep relationships.

Insignificance

When the expectations and hopes that we have upon arriving in Japan do not happen in our desired time frame, the missionary finds herself asking such questions like “Why am I even here?” Women raising families tend to find their feelings of uselessness pronounced, as often their husbands are more quickly able to go out and have effective ministries while they are at home caring for children:

- “I felt like I could do nothing . . . a feeling of total uselessness.”
- “I battled feelings of jealousy—what am I doing here? I’m stuck. Horrible feelings came up.”
- “Am I worthwhile? Did God really call me? Does He really want to use me over here with these limitations?”

And for all women, the challenges of Japanese culture and language can lead to pronounced frustrations. A single woman shared that it took her twenty years to find a position in which she could find long-term effectiveness; until that point, she was not content and did not feel adjusted.

The search for identity—who am I?

Moving to Japan involves a complete pulling up of roots—people, location, job, and identity—which is particularly challenging for women. Women tended to choose metaphors like “rip” or “tear” to describe their feelings of adjustment from their home country to Japan. One woman began her haiku by simply stating: “Identity lost...” The process of establishing roots is long and arduous and often means a struggle of identity for women: “We hadn’t developed that root system and that network of support and so forth and we needed to be nourished.”

Moving toward adjustment

Transformation

The process of adjustment to Japan has led most women missionaries through a passage that has brought about personality transformation and different ways of thinking and doing. The majority of women who successfully adjusted to Japan experienced both a personality shift from being less self-reliant to being more resilient and open as well as a profound change in where their self-worth was based—no longer defined by accomplishments but rather in a deepening relationship with a personal God.

Adjustment and identity

The way women described their feelings once they had adjusted to a new culture were consistent: connected rela-

tionships, feeling purposeful/significant, and the ability to communicate. My research indicates that the majority of women missionaries in Japan thrive best when they have connected relationships and purposefulness. So it is no great surprise that a female missionary is often extremely frustrated during her early years in service! Without language ability, most of her options for building meaningful relationships and making a significant mark on the world are out of reach. It is only by “getting through” the language learning, isolation, young children, cultural issues, and rebuilding her web of relationships that she is able to redefine herself in the new environment.

Adjustment: How to get there

Success in the small things

It is unfortunate that many missionaries apparently do not have a taste of feeling successful or useful on the mission field until their second or third term! Many missionaries unfortunately leave Japan before they have found places in ministry that help them feel adjusted. I have found that those who are given even small ministry tasks early on in which they are successful can adjust more smoothly. Some positive experiences shared by first-term missionary women:

- “I was kind of like her sidekick in all of that and she just really, she wouldn’t let me just stay in my house and feel sorry for myself.”
- “She had some English things that she needed help with and I could help her. So I had some feeling that I had given something to her.”
- “But at that time thankfully I was working with students—as an outreach—and that’s the only thing that allowed me to make it through language school.”

Supervisors can help by putting all missionaries from the very start into positions where they can experience even small measures of success. This includes those in full-time language study who need ministry outlets, even if just once a week. And women can also take responsibility for their own self-growth. In my first few months living back in Japan, I forced myself to attend the twice-monthly fabric-dyeing women’s circle in my community where I could learn and build new relationships.

Finding community

Women need community, which includes safe confidants who can listen and understand. Relationships help women find their voice, which is central to a woman’s identity. Carol Gilligan’s research concludes that women approach life through the connection of a web of relationships, which holds everything together.¹ Finding life-giving community needs to remain a high priority for women living overseas.

For missionary moms, this often involves other women in similar situations as themselves and may be as simple as weekly meetings at a local McDonalds or playgroup. It is also worth noting that many missionary moms have found early learning settings to be places where they found not only significant community but also an inroad to adjustment. The missionary and Japanese moms are thrown together into

a new life stage where, like their children, they are starting something together. This setting then serves as a bridge into the wider local community, a means for learning more language and culture, and provides an “in” into the usually tight community. For single women, finding like-minded friends remains highly significant; some have found that Japanese roommates can serve not only as important friends but also as cultural guides and links into the community.

Starting something new

An interesting correlation emerged in my research that pointed to the importance of missionaries being part of something new in order to be allowed on the “inside” of a group in Japan. A new church plant, a new local volleyball team, a new group of *yōchien* moms, starting a neighborhood English class—these group examples in which missionaries and Japanese partner together in any kind of new ongoing activity can give the adjusting missionary the opportunity to be inside the group, which is extremely helpful in a society that clearly but invisibly demarcates those inside and outside the group. Being on the inside of a group can speed up the whole adjustment process, including language and cultural learning and building strong relationships.

Mentors and guides along the way

Effective mentoring² can come in numerous forms and remains significant to the successful adjustment of new missionaries! A missionary coach is the most important type of mentor, giving help by *believing in* the emerging missionary. Goodwin’s principle of expectation best describes this mentor: “Emerging leaders tend to live up to the genuine expectations of leaders they respect.”³ Missionaries reflected on what this encouragement looked like:

- “He believed in me and so he created opportunities.”
- “He stuck his neck out for me.”
- “He had confidence in me.”
- “She would correct me very gently.”
- “He gave me a good experience.”
- “He was really just a cheerleader.”
- “They didn’t treat us like . . . children, but like peers.”
- Made me feel that he was saying, ‘I’m alongside of you—I’m taking you into my confidence.’”
- “She ‘poured into me.’”

This type of life-giving encouragement can come from Japanese or Westerners in spheres of influence, from a supervisor or more veteran missionary.

Cultural guides can model and/or teach Japanese language, culture, and everyday living by providing a safe environment of learning for the missionary. These mentors appear to play a necessary role during the first years of adjustment and each time another major adjustment takes place (i.e., moving to a new location, having a baby, etc.).

Finally, missionaries in all seasons of life also greatly benefit from finding extended “family” on the mission field. These individuals or families are able to provide for needs such as serving as “surrogate” grandparents to a missionary family’s children or providing a comfortable home that allows them to experience what they are missing back home.

Member care specialists tend to agree that the main thing all adjusting missionaries need is ongoing support, monitoring, and mentoring. Seasoned missionaries, officially or unofficially, can play significant roles by choosing to fill these roles for those still adjusting. Missionary leaders should proactively look for missionaries with gifts of mentoring, encouragement, and/or cultural aptitude to help newer workers. Providing ongoing small-group communities for missionaries will also allow some of these mentoring relationships to form in a natural way.

Opportunities for ongoing learning and reflection

Missionaries need opportunities for reflection and on-field learning. While many missions emphasize pre-field training, often little is being done to guide on-field reflection and growth. Providing retreats, conferences, and home assignment learning opportunities can bring perspective and enlightenment to a struggling missionary. In addition, reflection is essential for transformation and adjustment to occur. The missionary and the agency leadership need to be proactive in seeking opportunities for ongoing reflection, learning, and transformation. Understanding the needs and challenges of adjusting missionary workers can be a lot of work, but the agencies and individuals who proactively look for opportunities to meet those needs will be a huge benefit to the missionary!

Some concluding thoughts

The missionary experiences of adjustment to Japan generally reflect a period of great disorganization in a woman’s life. Yet this season also gives the gift of transformation.

It has been my privilege to meet and know many amazing missionaries in Japan who have emerged from their adjustment period with humility and greatness rolled into one. Along the way, they have had seasons in which their faith has faltered, they have failed vocationally, and they have struggled with loneliness and insignificance. Yet their perseverance and God’s faithfulness has resulted in beautiful and meaningful relationships, fulfillment in ministry, and a deeper and more integrated faith. **JH**

1. Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women’s Development*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).
2. Referencing J. Robert Clinton and Richard W. Clinton, *The Mentor Handbook* (Altadena, CA: Barnabas Publishers, 1999). Clinton and Clinton look at mentoring in broad strokes, defining it as various acts of empowerment. I have simplified some of their and my own research for the sake of this article.
3. J. Robert Clinton, *Clinton’s Biblical Leadership Commentary* (Altadena, CA: Barnabas Publishers, 1999), 690.

Sue Plumb Takamoto and her husband, Eric, have recently relocated to the US after over 22 years of living in Japan. They are continuing their ministry with A3 (formerly Asian Access) and continuing to raise their four children.

Study how to pray and share the gospel in Japanese in 2024!

Our Online Prayer and Gospel Communication courses are for missionaries who want to use Japanese Christian language in various settings in the field.

Our gospel course will enable you share the gospel smoothly and simply. This covers topics such as creation, the Fall and Salvation.

Our prayer courses 1 and 2 starting from elementary level will enable students to pray in a way that touches people's hearts in their mother language.

Student's Voice

I have deeply appreciated the Prayer 2 and Gospel courses online at Connect, not only for the content that has been thoughtfully and prayerfully prepared but even more for the spiritual growth that has occurred as I have learned in this context.

On several occasions in the Gospel and Prayer 2 courses, I've been moved to (healing) tears by the process of articulating things in Japanese which have helped me process some of the spiritual struggles that I face in language learning and serving in this context.

Our teacher was extremely patient in answering questions regarding vocabulary, grammar, and in encouraging us. The curriculum used was helpful in helping to stimulate the use of certain grammar structures, Christian vocabulary, and equipping us to understand and serve in our Japanese churches and friendships."



Yukie-sensei collaborating with local evangelist Ryuunosuke sharing the gospel with kanji

connect

JAPANESE CLASSES

JEMA

Endorsed Ministry

Connect Japanese Classes is a part of Connect Mission Support Center



Online Prayer and Gospel Communication courses will be available in 2024!

Please see here for details and to apply:
<https://nihongo.connectenglish.jp/japanese-missionary-courses/>

Olives

Resource for your life and ministry in Japan

2023 Winter vol. 26



Christmas items to help celebrate the birth of Christ. 2024 Calendars, Gifts, Cards and Stationeries. Some have Bible verses in English and Japanese and make great gifts for your supporters and prayer partners.



Contact for orders.
FAX 03-5341-6928
mail cr@wlpj.or.jp

Web catalog is here:
<https://www.wlpj.or.jp/actibook/olives26/?pNo=1>



Gospel Rakugo at church

With Gospel-tei Pauro and Handai Ochiken

Christian Shimbun, July 9, 2023 Translated by Grace Koshino

On June 25th, a gospel *rakugo* event, Ishibashi Rakugo-kai, was held at the Mennonite Brethren Ishibashi Christ Church in Ikeda, Japan.

Before the coronavirus pandemic, the church had occasionally invited members of the local Rakugo Society of Osaka University (*Handai Ochiken*) to hold rakugo events in the church building. Amateur rakugo storyteller Gospel-tei Pauro and the Rakugo Society were invited to the church's first post-pandemic rakugo event.

The opening act was Pauro's lecture on rakugo for beginners, where he explained the roots and difference between *kamigata* and *edo* styles of rakugo. He also showed how one would typically use their *sensu* (Japanese fan) and *tenugui* (hand towel) as part of their storytelling. Once the audience had warmed up, Pauro, who also happens to be a disaster prevention

trainer, went on to tell a story, asking, "What if an earthquake in the Nankai Trough were to hit now?" Through the eyes of the characters of the story, a clever boy and his not-so-bright mother, Pauro comically explains how one can prepare for such an event and how to act if an earthquake were to occur.

Osaka-tei Danbō, a sophomore student at Osaka University and a member of the Rakugo Society, told a classical rakugo story, "*Tegami Mubitsu*." Osaka-tei Gaito, also a sophomore student, then told the story "*Kasago*."

In closing, Pauro told a gospel rakugo story, "The lady that was forgiven her sins," and the church hall filled with laughter. One person who attended said that the performances made them feel "warm and happy."

On July 15th, Pauro performed at Wakayama Prefecture Worker Welfare



Hall Plaza Hope for a peace-themed exhibition. His story was titled "My Name is *Daigo Fukuryū Maru*," and it is based upon the true story of a fishing boat that was bombed by a thermonuclear weapon near Bikini Atoll in 1954.¹ The story of the boat is well known, and a film has been made of it titled *Lucky Dragon No.5*. The title is a direct translation of *Daigo Fukuryū Maru*. Pauro performed the story with a desire to promote world peace. ■

1. "*Daigo Fukuryū Maru*," Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daigo_Fukuryū_Maru (accessed October 24, 2023).

Missional practices of the Orthodox Church

Christian Shimbun, July 9, 2023 Translated by Atsuko Tateishi

The Japan Missiological Society (JMS) held their 17th National Symposium in Tokyo on June 24, 2023, under the theme of "Considering missions in Japan—developing a Christian identity in our global Japanese society." JMS is an interdenominational body with members from mainline and evangelical Protestant denominations as well as Catholics.

This year, JMS invited a keynote speaker from the Orthodox Church for the first time. Shigenobu Ono, hieromonk of the metochion in Japan for the Moscow Patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church, gave a presentation on the missional practices of the

Orthodox Church. He did so by tracing Archbishop St. Nikolai Kasatkin's ministry in Japan.

Ono began his speech with an overview of Kasatkin's life (1836–1912). Kasatkin was born the son of a deacon in a village church in Russia. During his last year at the St. Petersburg Theological Academy, Kasatkin was accepted as bishop in residence at the Russian Consulate in Hakodate City, Hokkaido.

Ono noted that, from the very beginning, Kasatkin envisioned mission work all over Japan, not just in Hakodate. On the way to Japan, Kasatkin was encouraged by the archbishop of Kamchatskaya and Alaska to translate

the Bible and prayer books into the local language and to contextualize Orthodoxy for the people. Kasatkin took this advice to heart.

When Kasatkin set foot in Japan in 1861, it was before the Meiji Restoration, and Protestant mission had not started in earnest. While working for the Hakodate Consulate, Kasatkin interacted with Japanese visitors and studied Japanese language and history, Shintoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism.

In 1868, Kasatkin baptized a group of people in Hakodate who would become the first Japanese members of the Orthodox Church. Among them was Takuma Sawabe, who had been a Shinto priest in Hakodate. During the following year, Kasatkin urged the Russian Orthodox Church to establish

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!"

Risa & Rie's Online Concert—Motivated by COVID-19

Christian Shimbun, July 9, 2023 *Translated by Tomoko Kato*

Rie and Risa Kimura, twin pianists who are both blind, held an online concert on June 17. They had longed to share their music widely again since COVID-19 had given them little chance for a live performance. They shared the broadcast from home and hosted 97 participants, including more than ten visually impaired audience members. The concert included "Eine Kleine Nachtmusik" by Mozart, arranged by Risa and Rie, as well as J. S. Bach's "Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring" from the cantata *Herz und Mund und Tat und Leben*. Their friendly chat between the performances made for a very relaxing atmosphere. The concert was delivered without images. Without watching the musicians, participants could listen carefully and catch each note distinctly, even the sound of the musicians' breathing. Actually, waiting for the start of their performance without pictures helped the audience to appreciate their music much more clearly.

Risa and Rie, who want to have another online concert again in the autumn, shared some of the behind-the-scenes work: "We set the admission fee for the concert as free. But if we had provided a video feed, we would have needed to ask sighted people to operate



cameras and visual delivery software, which would have cost a considerable amount. We can go without any of that software using Zoom."

"Some participants seemed to be worried about noises from computer systems or screen readers¹ that may have disturbed other participants. Although Zoom's built-in keyboard shortcut includes a mute function, audience members using a 6-key input² system cannot mute their microphones so easily. Meanwhile, as screen readers are stopped by the system during the performance, we could not see the issues identified by visually impaired audience members. In the future, we may be able to use Zoom together with sighted people who can support us with the mute function."

"When the handicapped contract COVID-19, no helper can visit them.

As antigen test kits and instruments to measure blood oxygen saturation do not have built-in voice functionality, we visually impaired can never use them."

"Our church changed our online worship from YouTube to Zoom to make interactive communication possible. This way, we can see who is missing from the worship and visit them at home to ask how they are. This care is planned to continue for as long as possible. But barriers always exist, even online. We heard of an incident where a church prepared programs and screen subtitles for their Christmas Eve worship but forgot to include the voice announcements that had always been given. It is still difficult for some service providers to understand what is needed by some of their users."

"Without supporters beside us, the handicapped tend to be left behind while online. The church should listen to these people and improve their systems to support them." ■

1. Screen readers: a system to have words on the computer screen read aloud for the visually impaired

2. 6-key input keyboard: a system using a keyboard's S, D, F, J, K, and L keys with the index finger, middle finger, and fourth finger of both hands to input the six dots that make up the Braille letter cells.

a mission in Japan, and the Patriarchal Representation was established in 1870 with Kasatkin as its archimandrite (superior abbot).

Meanwhile, Sawabe and other Japanese believers shared Orthodox teachings with a group of samurai from the Sendai feudal domain who were visiting Hakodate. More than ten people, including some former samurai of Sendai, were baptized by Kasatkin in 1871. Some of them then returned to

Sendai and were engaged in mission as catechists (denkyōsha).

What intrigued Ono's audience was the role played by the catechists. They were not ordained priests but lay leaders who were involved extensively in mission work. While a limited number of priests were qualified to offer common prayers, a number of Japanese believers were trained as catechists and dispatched to various frontlines of mission within Japan.

The audience, both Catholics and Protestants alike, regretted the insufficient mobilization of lay leaders in their own respective churches, even though they have been aware of the potentially great roles that lay believers could fill. Ono's presentation on the significant role of Japanese catechists in the early years of the Orthodox mission in Japan was surprising and impactful to his listeners. ■

Taking a lower place: language learning and discipleship

*“Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you.”
1 Peter 5:6 ESV*

For centuries, missionaries have gone out from their homes to places near and far, taking the Gospel to those who have not yet heard and encouraging those who have received Christ. Since every missionary is human, every missionary has made mistakes, making humility and the ability to admit fault necessary in every field. This is especially clear in the area of language learning. Often painfully slow and discouraging, learning a new language is not for the faint of heart at any age, and many missionaries may chomp at the bit, longing to make it through the prelude so they can “begin their real ministry.” But language learning can open doors for ministry from day one by putting the missionary in a position to ask for help. This is part of God’s good design.

If God wants us to be quick to hear and slow to speak (James 1:19), then in his mercy it is a good gift to have to learn a new language! As those of us who study Japanese read the Bible, the catechism, and other sources to learn how to talk about God’s kingdom, we have two important opportunities: to increase our understanding of how Japanese receive and understand the Gospel, and to examine how we ourselves view God and the Gospel. And since God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble (James 4:6), we can eagerly expect his grace to be poured out on us as we faithfully labor in learning.

At times, operating in a second language can be frustrating and embarrassing. I have to communicate like a child and read children’s books. I need help to do the simplest thing over and over until I finally learn to do it for myself (like a bank transfer at the ATM). Sometimes people give up on conversation with me because they aren’t willing to put in the effort, and sometimes I make mistakes that cause inconvenience to others or myself. But this is a

beautiful thing if I use this place of weakness and humility to ask for help, receive it, and express gratitude, all with the mind of Christ in me. He taught the lawyers and Pharisees that when they are invited to a feast, they should take a humble place at the table so that their host has the opportunity to show them honor by inviting them to move higher (Luke 14:7–11). He set the example of humbly counting others more significant than ourselves (Phil. 2:3). And he can give us the strength to take the humble position of learner, allowing his grace to turn even our failures and mistakes into opportunities for the Gospel to shine.

As my family nears the end of our first term in Tokyo with MTW, I have been taking stock of my language learning journey and reflecting on the opportunities God has given me to watch Him work in the lives of those around me. Some of the most precious relationships I have built with Japanese believers have been with my language teachers and helpers. By taking the humble position of student and asking for help, I have been able to enter into partnerships that resulted not only in language learning but also in mutual encouragement and building up in the Lord. In my experience, most Japanese people are happy to be asked for help, especially in a way that shows respect for and desire to understand their language and culture. In fact, in situations where my failure to understand could cause problems or be perceived as *meiwaku* (annoyance), humbling myself and asking for help is often disarming and smooths over conflict. Perhaps this is one of the ways that “Love covers a multitude of sins” (1 Pet. 4:8). Hierarchy and knowing one’s proper place is very important in Japanese culture, and taking a lower place or asking for help can allow missionaries to show honor to their neighbors and invite them into a relationship.



When we arrived in Japan, my husband was a true beginner who did not even read hiragana yet, so we had to prioritize his learning by getting him into full-time language study as soon as possible. We were encouraged to do our best to find a way to get me into a similar full-time program and coordinate our schedules so that we could both study and trade off time with our children, but despite our best efforts, we could not find a way to do so. I began searching for alternatives to the traditional language school route that would fit our family's unique needs. I started part-time courses at a school not far from our home, but the pandemic and my chronic health problems presented challenges to that plan as well. As a result, most of my progress has been the result of one-on-one engagement with teachers and coaches.

One of my first consistent language helpers was Mana*, a married lady with no children several years older than myself. She had become a Christian while living in the United States for her husband's work, and her pastor introduced her to me by email as a returnee who had a desire to help missionaries learn Japanese. She lives about an hour and a half away from me in a neighboring prefecture, so we connected via Zoom. As a new Christian, she was enthusiastic about being of help to our family in any way she could, patiently talking with me and with my children to help us practice conversational Japanese. As I improved, I began to take up challenges like reading through the catechism in Japanese, which I brought to our lessons. The catechism itself was a new concept for her and prompted good conversation about church history and tradition as well as Scripture. We went on to talk about holidays, hymns, sermons, and mercy ministry together. She asked important questions and I did my best to answer, all the while learning from (and often laughing at) my mistakes. Over the years, our friendship has blossomed into one of mutual encouragement. She finds my passion for the Japanese language inspiring, and I love her curiosity and delight in knowing God more deeply.

As my health improved and pandemic life gradually began to find a "new normal," I was connected to two new language helpers: Ai, a long-time professional Japanese teacher, and Yukiko, a Christian lady who is gifted in translating poetry and hymns into Japanese. Both have been

Christians for a long time and have extensive knowledge of the Bible. Ai focused our lessons on textbook learning geared toward the JLPT but spent at least half of most lessons engaging me in conversation, often about church events, denominational meetings, and my opinions on church issues. These conversations were a terrific challenge both to my language skills and my cultural understanding. Our conversations often ended in the exchange of prayer requests. Yukiko, who agreed to coach me in hymn translation and songwriting, became as much a prayer partner to me as a teacher. Inspired by my enthusiastic attempts at setting Psalms to music, she began writing her own songs for the first time in a while.

When my family's schedule could no longer accommodate my lessons with Ai, God provided a new language helper through our local church. A young couple with a baby close in age with my youngest had begun attending. They had met while working at a language school, and as a new mom, Akane was now seeking to build a business as a private language tutor. She is young in the faith and a truly excellent teacher, and we begin lessons by reading Scripture together to work on my Biblical vocabulary. I requested that we study our church's liturgy for communion together, and when she and her husband decided to join the church and have their infant son baptized, we also studied through the liturgy and vows that would be used. She is excited to find Bible words that are as new to her as they are to me and thankful that her job as a teacher provides extra motivation and opportunities for her to read the Bible, both on her own and with fellow Christians.

Wherever you are in your language learning journey, my prayer for you is that you never stop learning. I view my study of the Japanese language as a life-long pursuit, and I never plan to be "finished." I pray that God will fill you with wonder at the language and communication of the people you serve, and that you will be flooded with his grace as you walk humbly with him. He opens doors and sends forth his Word in ways we could never expect. **JH**

* Names of teachers in this article have been changed to protect their privacy.

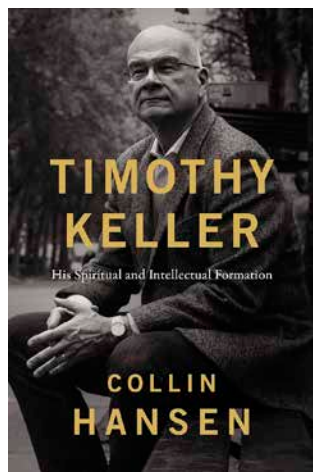
Christina DeCiantis Davison (BM Violin Performance, MA Musicology) is an MTW missionary from the US serving in Tokyo since 2019. She seeks to share the love of Christ through music and equip hymnwriters and other artists to serve the Japanese church.



Timothy Keller: His Spiritual and Intellectual Formation

Collin Hansen (Zondervan, 2023) 320 pp.

How was Tim Keller discipled? Who were the mentors who helped him grow? Hansen, vice president of content and editor-in-chief for The Gospel Coalition, gives the story of how God shaped the life of Timothy Keller through people and books. Part 1 (1950–1972)



looks at Keller’s upbringing in Pennsylvania. We learn about the woman who taught him to study the Bible (an IVCF worker). We meet Kathy, who would become his wife and the most formative influence on his life. Part 2 (1972–1975) introduces us to the Kellers’ time at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and to Elisabeth Elliot, one of their teachers at Gordon-Conwell.

Keller learned how to disagree without being disagreeable from Roger Nicole, who also shaped Keller’s views on substitutionary atonement. Richard Lovelace’s course on spiritual dynamics and Jonathan Edwards shaped Keller’s views on the church and ministry. Part 3 (1975–1989) details Keller’s ministry in Virginia, where he first pastored, and highlights Edmund Clowney, who mentored Keller and invited him to teach at Westminster Theological Seminary and taught Keller how to preach Christ from all of Scripture. Part 4 (1989 to Present) looks at Keller’s ministry at Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City and more recent influences on Keller. For those who want to know what made Keller the preacher and pastor he was, this is the book to read. **JH**

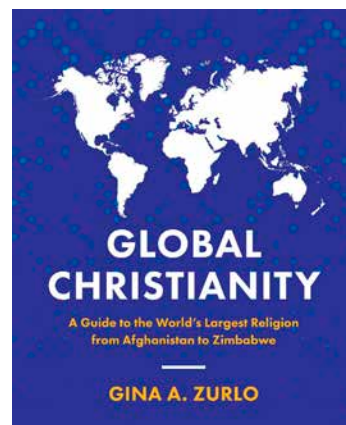
Reviewer rating is 4 of 5 stars ★★★★★☆

Global Christianity: A Guide to the World’s Largest Religion from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe

Gina A. Zurlo (Zondervan, 2022) 352 pp.

Zurlo, co-director of the Center for the Study of Global Christianity at Gordon-Conwell Seminary, gives a very helpful guide for exploring Christianity in every corner of the world. Zurlo, who also co-authored the third edition of the *World Christian Encyclopedia* (2019), gives a brief history of Christianity, general religious trends, and information on

the church in every country in the world in one- or two-page summaries. Unlike the prayer guide *Operation World* (2010), Mormons and Jehovah Witnesses are included as Independent Christians, since the book bases its numbers on those who “self-identify as Christian but are independent of historic Christianity” (p. xviii). Readers need to remember this as they look at the numbers. For those looking for up-to-date statistics on the church around the world, this book is the place to start. **JH**

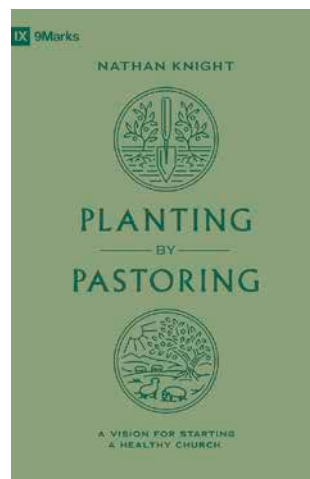


Reviewer rating is 4 of 5 stars ★★★★★☆

Planting by Pastoring: A Vision for Starting a Healthy Church

Nathan Knight (Crossway, 2023) 176 pp.

Knight, pastor of Restoration Church in Washington, DC, outlines the basic work of church planting and focuses on what a church is and what a church



does. He emphasizes the character of the church planter and looks at what it means to be a pastor. For those wanting to cultivate a community of believers who treasure Christ, this book gives practical advice on planting churches. “Part 1: Church-Planting Residency” begins with Jesus, the Prince of Planters, and looks at the importance of developing a Christ-

like character. “Part 2: Church-Planting Mobilization” looks at the team of the planter, the mission of the planter, and what success means. This is a great book for church planting teams to read and learn from. **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.

The value of reflection

In the midst of the busyness of life, take time to experience the blessings of being still before the Lord

“Be still, and know that I am God.”
(Psalm 46:10 ESV)

Psalm 46:10 is a favorite verse among Christians. You may even have a coffee mug or magnet somewhere around the house with this well-known verse. And yet, as much as Christians like this verse, it presents us with a bit of a challenge: it is hard to be still.

Taking time to be quiet with our thoughts sometimes seems like such a waste of time. Making it even more difficult is an inner voice that constantly reminds us there is so much to be done. And when we do have a few moments of downtime, it is so easy to reach for our smartphones and scroll through our Facebook or Instagram feed.

I'm not against the use of social media, but since we desire to grow as disciples of Jesus, we need to be mindful of the invitation of scripture—the invitation to reflect. The most common examples of this are found in the book of Psalms. The psalmists write things like “We have *thought* on your steadfast love, O God, in the midst of your temple” (Ps. 48:9) and “I *meditate* on all that you have done; I *ponder* the work of your hands” (Ps. 143:5). Even Jesus invites us to slow down and “*consider* the lilies” (Luke 12:27).^{*} Part of the life of a disciple includes taking the time to slow down, quiet our hearts, and think deeply about the Christian life. This is the art of reflection.

“Why should I take time for reflection?” you might ask. While the benefits of reflection are many, here are a few reasons that make the effort worthwhile:

- **Reflection helps us process what God is doing in our lives.** It aids us in being able to step back and see the bigger picture of what God is up to. This might be especially true during times of transition and decision-making.
- **Reflection moves our learning from the head to the heart.** It is great to read Christian books or listen to podcasts. But as growing disciples, it is vital that we always be moving from filling our heads with theological truths to practical application that affects our daily lives.
- **Reflection puts us in a position to hear from the Lord.** In the quietness of our thoughts, the Holy

Spirit begins to whisper to us the things that are on God's heart.

- **Reflection results in a deeper walk with God.** As the psalmist reminds us, stillness leads to knowing God and a closer relationship with Him.

There is no doubting the benefits of regular times of reflection in our Christian lives. So what kinds of things can we reflect on? Here are a few ideas:

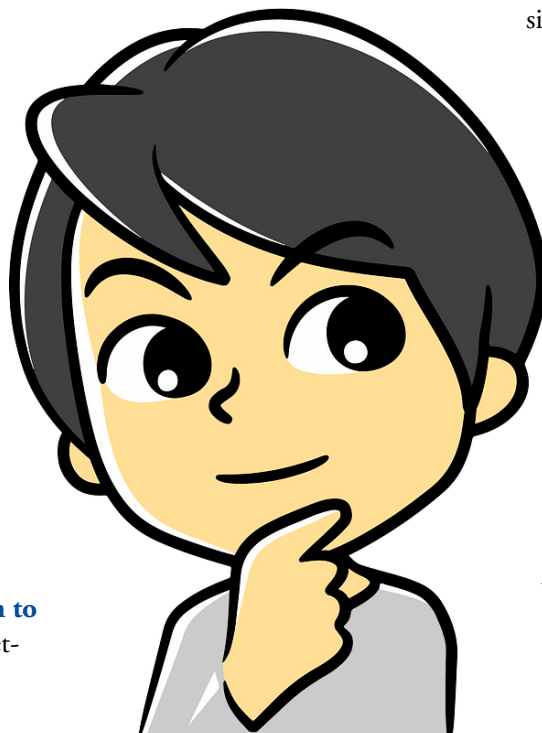
- **God's word.** The writer of Psalm 1 meditates on God's law, and we can do the same. This could be from our personal Bible reading or from the sermon we heard (or preached!) on Sunday.
- **The greatness of God.** Taking time to consider the many wonderful characteristics of God is always a good option.
- **The death and resurrection of Jesus.** The gospel is not just something we tell to nonbelievers. As Christians, we need to remind ourselves of the good news on a regular basis.
- **Our relationship with God.** How is our current spiritual condition? Are there any actions or attitudes that the Lord may want us to correct? Consider this a kind of spiritual checkup.
- **What God is up to.** God is often at work in our hearts and lives, but we don't notice it because we don't take time to reflect.

Reflection will look different for each person. One person may like to reflect while out on their morning walk, while another will do it while sitting at their office desk. Some will reflect with pen and journal in hand, while others will find that reflection fits nicely into their time of personal prayer or worship.

However we implement the art of reflection, spending just a few minutes a couple of days a week could potentially produce much fruit in our walk with the Lord.

Are you ready to give it a try? **JH**

* All emphases mine.



Michael Mason (US) and his wife, Chris, have been in the Kansai area for 26 years. Michael serves in a house church in Izumiotsu and also does member care with his mission organization, Japanese Evangelical Missionary Society (JEMS).

The collectivist nature of sin and the gospel

In Japan, the repercussions of infringing on social norms often extend further than the individual who committed them

“Your brother has chosen the path of social death, and he didn’t think about how much suffering it would cause you,” the company CEO explained to Naoki after his demotion at work. “In other words, we need to discriminate against you.”¹

The novel *Tegami (Letters)* by Keigo Higashino recounts the life of Naoki Takejima after his older brother, Takeshi, was imprisoned for murder and robbery. Naoki faces countless incidents of prejudice and discrimination simply because his brother is a criminal. When he is demoted at work despite his good performance, he resents the injustice and yet is resigned to his fate.

“[Your brother’s] act cannot be overlooked simply as an impulsive mistake,” said the CEO. “Your affliction is part of the punishment for your brother’s sin . . . your resentment towards us is misdirected . . . If someone commits a crime, it affects their family too. Criminals need to know that.”² In his conversation with Naoki, the CEO essentially justifies the company’s discrimination against Naoki even though he is innocent.

This mindset exists not only in the world of fiction. A junior high school student told me recently, “My whole class wasn’t allowed to do a science experiment because several boys were misbehaving.” It was not the first time I had heard of such cases. In Japan, when one or a few behave inappropriately, the whole group is punished.

This practice of group accountability was strengthened during the Edo period. Gillespie describes the rule of accountability imposed by the shogun: “[If] someone committed a crime, not only that individual but also his or her family and sometimes neighbors were prosecuted.”³

Having grown up in an individualistic Western society, this collectivist thinking challenges my sense of justice, but perhaps there is something to learn from the Japanese worldview.

While the horror and evil of discrimination should never be justified, the CEO’s words highlight the serious social repercussions of Takeshi’s sin not only for himself but for Naoki. The CEO does not even mention the impact on Naoki’s character, emotion, and relationships. Sin profoundly impacts the perpetrator as well as those associated with them, sometimes for generations. I realized how lightly I view sin.

The Bible speaks of this reality. When God reveals his glory to Moses, he proclaims his justice and grace. God speaks of showing “steadfast love for thousands” but also

punishing the “children and the children’s children, to the third and the fourth generation” (Ex. 34:6–7 ESV). Reward and punishment are given to people by means of association to their fathers.

In fact, our fate is determined by those we are associated with. Scripture describes the consequence of sin and death for all humanity not only due to our disobedience but our identification with Adam and his disobedience (Rom. 5:12). Nonetheless, the Bible does not deny the importance of individual responsibility (e.g., Deut. 24:16) but rather holds in beautiful tension these two seemingly contradictory truths. The Japanese viewpoint can help restore the balance

for those of us who emphasize the individual aspect.

Praise God that, in Christ, condemnation is not his last word. Paul expands in his letter: “For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous . . . where sin increased, grace increased all the more” (Rom. 5:19, 20b NIV). Just as we are condemned and punished through Adam, so we are justified and saved through our identification with Christ.

The multifaceted gospel is good news to those with an individualistic worldview as well as to those from collectivist cultures, for it speaks of a new group identity. Through Christ, we become “a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession” (1 Peter 2:9a NIV). There is neither Jew nor Gentile, slave nor free, male nor female, because in Christ, we become one (Gal. 3:28).

What if Naoki had had a Christian friend who had told him about the new identity we can have in Christ? What if he had heard that identification with Christ trumps all other identities, whether ethnic, social, or gender? What if he had understood that Jesus died on the cross to bear all his shame and guilt so that he can be clothed with Jesus’s glory and righteousness? What if Naoki had not only heard but experienced God’s unconditional acceptance and grace through his community? I wonder how that would have changed Naoki’s life and destiny. **JH**

1. Keigo Higashino, *Tegami* (Chiyoda, Tokyo: Bungeishunju, 2006), 271. All quotes are the author’s personal translation of the text.

2. *Ibid.*, 271.

3. John Gillespie, ed., *Japan: A Short History* (Japan: ICG Muse, 2001), 41.

Hoi-Yan Shea has been with OMF since 2012 and is part of a church plant (Iwate). She has a burden to develop Japanese materials on forgiveness and would love to connect with anyone who is interested in the topic.

The power of prayer

“The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.” (James 5:16b NASB 1995)

The power of prayer

I want to recommend the book and movie called *War Room*.¹ In this case, the book was based on the movie, not vice versa. Personally, I prefer the book because it puts into words what people are thinking and feeling. A movie can't always fit that kind of thing in.

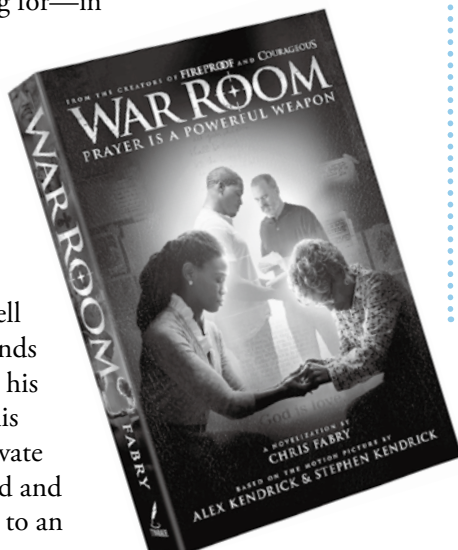
It took me only four days to read all 404 pages. I couldn't put it down and ended up with less sleep than usual! I saw the movie, produced by Alex and Stephen Kendrick, on a plane, and we have the Japanese version on DVD, which was retitled *The Power of Prayer* (祈りのちから).

The story

I don't want to share too much, so let me give you the gist. The main characters are a married couple—Tony and Elizabeth Jordan. He's a successful pharmaceutical salesman, and she's a real estate agent. They have a ten-year-old daughter, Danielle. They seem to have it made—with a nice house, good jobs, and a beautiful daughter. But under the surface, there is tension. Tony is stealing from the company, and when he's home, he always argues with his wife. Their daughter would like to be closer to her father, but he basically ignores her. They usually go to church, but it doesn't seem to affect their lives.

One day, Elizabeth visits the home of a potential client, Clara Williams (usually called Miss Clara, as is normal in the U.S. South), who is thinking about selling her home. Elizabeth becomes uncomfortable when Miss Clara asks her about her faith and her marriage. But she is intrigued to see Miss Clara's prayer room. Though not prepared to take Miss Clara's suggestion to make her own prayer room, she soon comes to see her need to spend more time in prayer—for herself, her husband, and her daughter.

As tensions mount at home, Elizabeth realizes that her family is worth fighting for—in prayer. In faith, she puts her family in God's hands, and she sees God at work. Due to Elizabeth's earnest prayers, her husband can't cheat on his wife as he had planned (I won't tell you how!), and Tony ends up being found out by his company and fired. This gives him time to cultivate a relationship with God and his daughter that leads to an



interesting finish—second place in a Double Dutch jump rope contest. The rest you'll have to find out for yourself!

A prayer closet

I'm not all that fond of the term “war room” since there has often been a war room in the White House, which is something far different from what the book and movie are about. But in the book, Miss Clara calls the room where she prays her “war room.” It is a regular closet she had cleaned out and where she puts up the names of the people she is praying for and specific requests for each person. As she says, “God loves to answer specific prayers.”

I think most of us know why it's called a “prayer closet.” The King James Version for Matthew 6:6 says, “But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.” Of course, most modern translations have it as “your room” or “your inner room.” The Japanese could be translated as “your hidden room.”

When I designed our house 28 years ago, I planned my study to be where I spent my time with God in prayer. That ended up being a bad idea. For one thing, though the verse says “close your door,” there was no door! It was connected to our master bedroom. Also, being the study, the room now has two computers (for me and my wife), two printers, a copy machine, a scanner, and a few hundred books. If I were to try to pray there, there are a million and one ways for me to be distracted! Matthew 6:6 is not instructing us to literally pray in a closet (though that's fine, and I know people who do) but somewhere we can concentrate on God, His Word, and prayer. That's why it's much better for me to pray in the church room. Do you have a prayer closet?

God answers prayer

It's true that *War Room*, both the book and the movie, is fiction. But what is shown is not some fantastic story. It's something that can remind us of how God has worked in our own lives. It's very believable—even the stinky feet. I came away weeping over not only this story but also the memories I have of how God has worked in answer to prayer in my own life—like being fired leading to the best job possible or arriving in Japan with \$3 in my pocket. Only He is worthy! **JH**

1. Chris Fabry, *War Room* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2015).

Ken Reddington, an MK, returned to Japan as a church-planting missionary in 1978. He is on the Servant-Leader Team of the Prayer Summit for Western Japan and secretary for the Kōchi Citywide Pastors Group.

The power of simplicity

Speak powerfully to your audience by expressing the core of your message

Simple ideas are powerful. It's easier to remember a compact phrase than a complicated paragraph. When we write, we do well to seek out simple ways to express our core message. If we can do that, people will more easily understand and remember what we've written.

Knowing your audience is vital when you write. You need to pitch your language so that it's understood and appreciated by your readers. Many of you have written theological, research, or academic essays or theses. That type of paper demands a certain type of writing and has a narrow audience. Prayer letters and articles for *Japan Harvest* have different, often broader audiences.

We each have expertise in particular areas. This means we know a lot about a certain topic and understand the complexity and nuances embedded in the topic. But we often forget what it's like not to know what we know: "At that point, making something simple can seem like 'dumbing down.' As an expert, we don't want to be accused of propagating sound bites or pandering to the lowest common denominator. Simplifying, we fear, can devolve into oversimplifying."¹

I have found, though, that if an expert can communicate their complex ideas in simple ways so that I, a non-expert, can understand them, I appreciate their skill even more—as an expert as well as a communicator. So we needn't be afraid that writing with simplicity makes us look dumb. But one thing to keep in mind as we seek to write simply is that we're respectful to our audience and don't treat them as ignorant or simple-minded.

In a group recently, I shared a portion of the story of how I ended up as an editor. Someone said, "I loved your story. You shared your passion." That person found the essence of what I'd shared, even though I hadn't explicitly stated it, and it spoke powerfully to them.

When you write about a topic, seek out the core of your message and don't let the details distract from that core. Try to find a way to simplify your main point down to just a few words. Your audience will appreciate it, and more people will be able to read and remember what you've written. **JH**

1. Chip Heath and Dan Heath, *Made to Stick: Why Some Ideas Survive and Others Die* (London: Arrow Books, 2007), 46.

Wendy Marshall is the managing editor of Japan Harvest. She's Australian and has been in Japan with OMF International since 2000 with her husband David. She also does mobilisation for OMF using social media.





SPRING Retreat

Find us on Facebook




“Michelle Jackson served in Kobe, Japan in church-based ministry for 12 years before returning to Australia in 2020. She now works for CMS Victoria (Church Missionary Society) in pastoral care and mobilization. She is married to Brad and has three children. She loves browsing recycle shops, walking her dog and teaching God’s Word”

WIM WOMEN IN MINISTRY
Equip-Empower-Encourage

Annual Spring Retreat

Speaker: Michelle Jackson
Theme: A Life Transformed, based on the life of Moses

Date: March 6th-8th, 2024
Location: Olive no Sato, Nikko

Supporting missionary families today. Preparing the next generation of missionaries for tomorrow.





Equipping students to serve Japan and the world for Christ



caj.ac.jp
Phone: 042-471-0022



Good Day, Good Bread.

YAMAZAKI BAKING CO., LTD.
3-10-1 Iwamoto-cho, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo, 101-8585



www.yamazakipan.co.jp