

Ways To Build Relationships With Japanese

1. **GOING TO A CAFÉ** or eating out together is an easy way to start building a relationship.
2. **POLITENESS** requires Japanese to hold back. If you offer them something you'll probably need to ask them twice before they accept.
3. **GIFT GIVING** is an important part of Japanese culture, especially when visiting someone's home. Appreciation of friendship is often expressed by giving gifts.
4. **ASK** about their family or hometown. Look for common connections such as age, favourite foods or places you've visited.
5. **ENJOY** doing things together. Find out their hobbies. Offer to go for a walk or on a short trip to a place of interest. Arrange to play some sport together, go see a concert or a football match.
6. **BE COMPLIMENTARY** to them as they speak in English with you. Gently correcting big mistakes will be appreciated. Affirm how well they are doing living in a different culture.
7. **INVITE** them to your home; introduce them to your family. Ask to see their family photos. Show a few of yours.
8. **CELEBRATE** dates that are special to them like New Year. Ask them to celebrate Christmas or Easter with you. Explain them briefly.
9. **ASK THEM** to teach you something Japanese: origami, calligraphy, cooking, or simple words and phrases.
10. **PRACTICAL HELP** is indispensable in building trust. For ideas in helping them in various ways see the next section.

Practical Ways To Help Japanese

1. **HELP** them fill in forms for bank accounts, doctors or dentists. Help them choose Internet providers, or mobile phone services.
2. **OFFER** to teach them some English (you don't have to be qualified). Tell them of any nearby, free English classes.
3. **TEACH** them how to cook local food. Advise them where to shop; where to buy fresh fish. Take them shopping when they first arrive.
4. **HELP** them find Parent & Toddler groups. Advise them what to ask for in the hairdresser's.
5. **SUGGEST** you teach them something of local life and culture. Invite them to ask questions.
6. **CHECK** they know how to buy bus or train tickets. Tell them about cheaper tickets and discount bus/rail cards.
7. **HELP** them plan a journey if they want to travel. Suggest places worth visiting.
8. **OFFER** to give them an hour or two to help with whatever they need. Ask when is a good time to come.
9. **INVITE** them to your church. Tell them that anyone, not only Christians, can attend. Explain in non-religious words what happens in the service. Introduce them to one or two of your church friends.
10. With all these offers, Japanese may hesitate to accept at first, as they won't want to bother you. If you do offer be sure to follow up and actually do it.

Key Aspects Of Japanese Culture

1. **RELATIONSHIPS** are central to Japanese cultural attitudes. They take longer to establish, but good ones last forever.
2. **HARMONY** between people is highly valued. Japanese are polite and refrain from expressing strong opinion.
3. **TRUST** is foundational, established slowly by a sincerity and consistency of words and actions.
4. **TRADITION** carries a weight of authority. Japanese prefer to conform to the way things have always been done.
5. **RESPECT** is always shown to those in positions higher than oneself. Japanese defer decision making to those with more expertise, greater experience or who are older.
6. **MODESTY** requires Japanese speak deprecatingly of themselves and their family, and favourably of others.
7. **PUBLIC FACE** is given priority over personal opinion. Nothing is said that might cause others shame or embarrassment. “No” is avoided. “Yes” does not imply full agreement.
8. **RELIGION** is expressed through Buddhist ritual and Shinto ceremony but is not personal devotion. Funerals are very important.
9. **JAPANESE** overseas will adapt to local culture. You do not need to understand Japanese culture perfectly when meeting them abroad.
10. **ON RETURN** to Japan, cultural values acquired overseas will clash with Japanese culture. Readjustment is often a difficult and lonely period when returnees need our support. For more advice see the later section.

Obstacles To Overcome

1. **THE BIBLE** is little known, even less read. Explain its authors, languages (not English), historical setting and Jesus-centred message. Bilingual Bibles are available.
2. **GODS** are common but vague. Emphasize the personal Creator, the Almighty and all-knowing God. Introduce The Trinity later.
3. **ATHEISTIC** evolution is commonly accepted. Explain we are created by God in his image to relate to him.
4. **SIN** is not understood as a self-centred attitude but as criminal activity. Shame is an easier place to start.
5. **LOVE** is largely confined to sexual contexts. Explain Jesus' death as expressing unconditional, sacrificial love for others.
6. **FORGIVENESS** may be misunderstood as forbearance. Undeserved grace deeply touches Japanese hearts.
7. **REPENTANCE** is confused with mere apology. Emphasize a life changing decision to turn away from self and follow God.
8. **RELIGION** is seen as primarily ritualistic. We must model faith as trust in an almighty and wholly dependable God.
9. **SPIRITS** of ancestors are feared and revered. Carefully explain how the Holy Spirit is our Comforter and trustworthy Guide.
10. **SALVATION** is thought of as rescue from danger or ill health. Explain Jesus' death in terms of reconciliation to a Heavenly Father rather than justification before God.

Suggestions When Making Disciples

1. Attention must be given to three relationships:
 - a. Your relationship with God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
 - b. The disciple's relationship with God.
 - c. Your relationship with the disciple.
2. Your own pattern of early discipleship will influence how you disciple another. Continue to be discipled by someone yourself.
3. Your relationship with God models authentic, ongoing Christ-like transformation, illustrative of God at work but not prescriptive.
4. Your relationship with a disciple is unique and better served by one-on-one dialogue than a set program.
5. Your aim is a deepening of the disciple's relationship with God, not a cloning of your own.
6. You accompany the disciple, helping them to deepen their relationship with God and encouraging them to disciple others.
7. Help the disciple understand the Biblical text as it applies to their own relationship with God and their everyday life.
8. Discern how the disciple's conversation reveals their view of God's character and the dynamics of their relationship with him.
9. Expose the disciple to a range of biblical material; narrative and poetry, prophesy and parable. Show how each genre develops a different aspect of our relationship with God.
10. Encourage active involvement in church life. Help them to learn from and influence others in the Body of Christ.

Issues To Address With Disciples

1. **WHO AM I? My identity in Christ.** It is important to root the disciple's identity in relationship with God. Many Japanese will tend to find their identity in their relationship with you the disciple maker.
2. **FORGIVENESS. I am forgiven and forgiving.** Since human relationships are so important to Japanese, this area is crucial for personal growth and dynamic Christian witness.
3. **GUIDANCE. How do I make decisions?** Japanese follow decisions made by those above them. They are likely to defer to your opinion. Teach them how to discern God's voice and follow him.
4. **FAMILY LIFE. How should I relate to my parents?** Most Japanese who have become Christians abroad return to Japan apprehensive of their parents' reaction. Discuss what the Bible means by 'honour your parents'.
5. **RELATIONSHIPS. Questions about marriage and singleness.** Expectations are different from the West though marriage breakdown is increasingly common. Introduce Biblical principles and allow open discussion on facing marriage and singleness.
6. **CHURCH. I belong to a new community.** Compare the biblical view of church with the disciple's experience abroad. Prepare them to transfer to a new, Japanese church community that may well have different dynamics.
7. **CULTURE AND RELIGION. Religious customs concerning death and the after-life.** Examine the biblical view of honour and respect for the dead. Discuss religious practices in Japan that venerate the dead. For more help contact Japanese Christians or OMF Diaspora Returnee Ministries.
8. **HOW I USE MY TIME. Understanding Biblical principles of work and rest.** A key factor in reverse culture shock and one of trepidation for many returning Japanese. A biblical perspective can greatly ease the transition.
9. **MONEY AND POSSESSIONS.** Materialism is a great temptation in Japan. Encourage returning Japanese that God is the great Provider. Gently challenge them to contribute generously to his kingdom in Japan.
10. **YOU SHALL BE MY WITNESSES. How can I tell others about Jesus?** Discuss the many ways we can share our faith in Christ. Excite returnees with the opportunities for witness in Japan and across the world.

These 10 areas are those approached cross culturally in the **International Discipleship ID Course** available as Leaders Notes and Student Notes from www.friendsinternational.org.uk. Highly recommended.

Challenges Returning To A Japanese Church

1. For a returnee disciplined largely in English, it is difficult to read the Bible, pray & understand Christian jargon in Japanese.
2. Returnees find it takes longer to form trusting friendships back in Japan. People are reserved and returnees feel them less warm and welcoming.
3. Returnees struggle to readjust to a formal, hierarchical society; in church, for example, pastors would never be addressed by their first name.
4. Reentry to a group-oriented society is a shock. Relearning how to 'read between the lines' and say things that do not disrupt group harmony requires fresh attention and patience.
5. Returnees baptized abroad are discouraged when told by Japanese pastors that their baptismal preparation was insufficient to equip them to live as a Christian in a secular world, permeated by Buddhist & Shinto ritual.
6. Some churches distinguish markedly between church members and non-members. Returnees are initially considered the latter and can feel isolated and marginalized.
7. In Japanese churches where few members have lived abroad, returnees often feel ignored when the richness of their experience abroad is not recognized and they are required to conform to the same patterns as everyone else.
8. Those disciplined overseas enjoy a broader understanding of church. In Japan having to show strong denominational loyalty can feel oppressive.
9. Returnees well involved in a Japanese church overseas are frustrated with the slow process of being re-accepted to lead ministry back in Japan.
10. Reverse culture shock is exacerbated by the scarcity of Christians in Japan (1% officially, 0.3% evangelical). It is highly beneficial for a returnee to be linked up with a returnee Christian near where they will live back in Japan.

Ways To Get Involved Now

1. Pray that the LORD will give you one Japanese friend.
2. Greet Japanese people, be welcoming and show hospitality. Simplify or slow down your English if necessary.
3. Join a group praying for overseas Japanese – or talk to your pastor and start a group in your church yourself.
4. Start learning a few basic Japanese phrases.
5. Suggest a language exchange with a Japanese person. You teach them some English first, then they teach you some Japanese.
6. Get in touch with a mission that works amongst the Japanese.
7. If you have a spare room, offer a homestay to a Japanese person in your area. It could be a few days, or longer if that suits.
8. Read books about Japan – maybe start with A Christian's Pocket Guide to the Japanese (OMF/Christian Focus) or Not So Secret (IVP).
9. Buy some suitable bilingual or Japanese tracts/manga/scripture portions or CDs to give to Japanese contacts.
10. If you are in regular contact with Japanese and have ongoing ministry to them, get in touch with the OMF Diaspora Returnee Ministry team and ask about becoming a co-worker.

For further information and contact details for OMF International and OMF Diaspora Returnee Ministries see:

www.omf.org

www.omf.org/asia/diaspora