

"How to share the love of God with Japanese"

This is an older US focussed resource which nevertheless has helpful insights and resources for the modern reader.



The JapanNet

How to Share the Love of God with Japanese

THE IMPORTANCE OF REACHING JAPANESE FOR CHRIST	3
Expect Great Things.....	3
HOW, THEN, ARE THEY TO BE REACHED?	4
Window of Opportunity.....	4
Barriers.....	4
The Opportunity	4
How To Be Effective.....	4
HOW TO BE A WITNESS TO JAPANESE.....	5
Witness Through Your life	5
Witness Through Your Words	5
Being a Messenger	6
Upon their Return	6
THE IMPORTANCE OF THE GROUP	7
Create Your Own	7
Being First Born	8
POTENTIAL HINDRANCES TO UNDERSTANDING THE GOSPEL.....	9
GOD.....	9
SIN	9
GRACE.....	9
CHURCH	9

Pre-Evangelism Resource	10
POTENTIAL REASONS NOT TO EMBRACE THE CHRISTIAN FAITH.....	11
Obligation to the family	11
Peer Pressure	11
Negative Image of Church	11
Baptism.....	11
How-to-Counteract.....	11
A Timely Leader	13
Cultural Insights for Effective Ministry	14
BUILDING A BRIDGE OF UNDERSTANDING	15
Pray, pray, pray.....	15
When to bring up spiritual things.....	15
Use available materials.....	15
How To Describe Concepts Japanese Find Hard To Understand	15
Cultural Insights for Effective Ministry.....	16
Ie-Satan’s most powerful tool against Japan and the Gospel?.....	17
TURNING A CONVERSATION TO SPIRITUAL THINGS	19
BARCLAY BUXTON.....	21
CREATING AN ENVIRONMENT OF TRUST	24
ABC’s of Building Trust	24
What Builds Trust?	25
How to Relate Conversationally.....	26
INDEX	27

The Importance of Reaching Japanese for Christ

We know God has given us the Great Commission to obey and Japan is a part of that commission. Besides that though, it is strategic to reach Japan (and especially its young people) with the Gospel for the following reasons at a minimum:

1. 68% of the World's 5.5 billion people live in Asia and less than 1% know Christ as their Savior.
2. Japan is one of the most influential countries in Asia and the world economically, financially, politically, and intellectually.
3. Japan is the 6th largest country in the world with 126 million people which is $\frac{1}{2}$ the population of the U.S. But less than 1% know Christ.
4. Japanese students are rejecting their traditional religious backgrounds of Buddhism and Shintoism plus the materialism of their parents and and have a favourable image of Christianity.
5. 80% of Japanese pastors and 70% of Japanese laymen became Christians while they were in college or high school. Yet there is almost zero outreach to the 2 million college students in Japan.
6. Students are extremely positive toward Americans and American culture.

Expect Great Things

An American Christian led a talented Japanese university student to Christ a few years ago. After the student graduated from college he went to work for the national public television station in Japan. Wanting to reach his people for Christ he created two evangelistic documentaries that were shown on secular television. It is estimated that twelve million Japanese viewed the programs.

Please Pray

✚ For the faith, love, people, and organization necessary to evangelize the 3 million Japanese in the U.S. each year.

✚ For God's protection of the Japanese from the secular influences of our country.

After...

- 100 years
- 10,000 missionary lives
- \$10 Billion dollars
- Less than 1/2 of 1 per cent of Japan's 123 million people have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

HOW, THEN, ARE THEY TO BE REACHED?

In answer to perhaps hundreds of years of prayer by millions of believers, God has opened a...

Window of Opportunity

Since 1981 there has been nearly a 300% jump in the number of Japanese coming to the United States. This figure is made up of tourists, businessmen and students.

Barriers

Bewildering strands of a highly organized society, a difficult language, a highly group-oriented society, oppressive spirits promoted by the traditional religions, great physical barriers and more have contributed to the small spiritual harvest in Japan. For the sake of the group much of the freedom to think and do as you please, taken for granted in the United States, is denied the average Japanese.

The Opportunity

Put in an environment with a greater tolerance for differences, the personal spiritual interest many Japanese have is more able to surface—while in the U.S. In addition, the increased number of Christian resources, a slower pace-of-life, prayer support, the greater chance of multiple Christian friends (increasing beneficial peer influence) greatly improves the chance of Japanese coming to Christ while in the U.S. For those not making a decision while here, their increased spiritual receptivity is a great help to the Japanese pastor or missionary.

How To Be Effective

Many Japanese are fascinated by our culture, language and people. As a result to be effective doesn't require additional meetings and activities which can be wearying. Simply making the effort to include them in our daily social activities can be effective as they see Christ in us.

Strict Japanese societal guidelines and fast-paced lifestyles can limit who Japanese share their heart with. With an American it's easier to share their heart—if we make the time. This then becomes a window of opportunity as we tell and show God's love through our time with them.

“When an alien lives with you in your land, do not mistreat him. The alien living with you must be treated as one of your native-born. Love him as yourself, for you were aliens in Egypt. I am the Lord your God.” Leviticus 19:33, 34

How to Be a Witness to Japanese

God has given the Church two great opportunities to reach Japan for Christ during this century. The first came after World War Two. We largely missed this opportunity when we failed to mobilize even a tenth of the 10,000 missionaries Gen. Douglas MacArthur asked for from the West.

We're in the midst of the second. Surprisingly, because of an interest in our language, culture, people and natural resources, an unsurpassed three million Japanese visit our country each year for various reasons (100,000 of which live here).

As a result, we are uniquely positioned to communicate the message of God's love to Japan's next generation of leaders.

Being most effective as a "witness" for Christ involves more than just living a Godly life or sharing the words of the Gospel. It involves both!

Several principles if kept in mind can greatly enhance your "witness" for Christ.

Witness Through Your life

Because of the controlling nature of Japanese culture a relationship based on unconditional love can be a powerful stimulus to knowing Christ.

In cultivating this kind of relationship you don't have to treat Japanese like "out of town guests", changing your schedule and expending much time, energy and resources. If you do you will quickly tire of the added burden and responsibility. Simply involve them in your usual weekly activities, i.e., church, shopping, leisure and recreational outings. The principle is you can most enjoyably and effectively reach them for Christ through your normal "life" activities as you love and accept them as Christ would.

Witness Through Your Words

The knowledge most Japanese have of Christianity is what they've learned in a comparative religion class. Consequently, few have heard the gospel. To be a Christian means "to go to church". Unfortunately, the image most Japanese have of "church" is unpleasant. It's more burdensome demands and expectations placed on them on their only day set aside for rest or family activities.

Therefore it becomes important you don't rely solely on the "witness" of your life but now on the "witness" of your words. Clearly explain what Christianity really is—simply a personal relationship with a loving God through faith, for the forgiveness of our sins. And don't be afraid to use repetition. Again, special emphasis should be placed on God's grace and unconditional love. Japanese hunger for this because of their "obligation" oriented society.

A personal testimony is effective in explaining the personal nature of Christianity. Emphasize how Christ has met your basic human needs of happiness, meaning & hope in a lasting way—under- stood and desired, worldwide.

Use verses in the bible that reveal the above as well as communicate the personal nature of His love for each person (John 3:16, 10:10, Ephesians 2:4&5).

It is helpful in moving from the Bible to an easy to present and follow Gospel presentation like the "Four Spiritual Laws" to acknowledge—because it is a "big book" it probably is hard for them to understand. Show them the Four Spiritual Laws (or comparable evangelistic tool) and explain that it is the basic message of

the Bible and ask if you can go through it with them. The bi-lingual Four Spiritual Laws is available for those unsure of their English.

From this point read to the bottom of page nine (16 if using the bi-lingual 4-laws). Then ask the questions printed there—allowing them to answer. Continue by reading the next page. Have them pray the prayer if they indicate they want to receive Christ. If not, give them the booklet telling them this is how they can receive Christ when ready.

As a follow-up, the Jesus video is effective in communicating the Gospel in an interesting and gripping way. Many love the opportunity to see something in their own language. It has a clear gospel presentation at the end. Consider splitting the showing due to length, 2 1/2 hours (Please contact The *JapanNet* to obtain).

Being a Messenger

It's important to remember after all is done and said God is the one who brings one to salvation.

Bill Bright, uses the following definition of successful witnessing to put the proper focus on our responsibility:

Successful witnessing is simply taking the initiative to share the gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit and leave the results to God.

Upon their Return

A valuable ministry you can perform, beyond what you already are doing, is to insure your Japanese friend you've led to Christ or who has become spiritually interested are not lost "between the cracks" when they return.

With the average church size only 25 you can perform a valuable service for the cause of Christ in Japan by arranging for a caring Japanese Christian or missionary to help them make connections with a good church.

This becomes even more important for your friend's spiritual growth in light of Japan's reputation of being one of the easiest countries in the world to "backslide" in.

Contact The *JapanNet* for help in identifying a good church in Japan.

The Importance of the Group

Japanese live in fear of being outside the group. This can lead to denying legitimate desires, needs and interests for the sake of the group, such as their need for purpose and meaning in their lives that only a relationship with God truly provides.

At times you'll find no matter how lovingly or how clearly you explain the gospel there still is a reluctance or disinterest to receive Christ in your Japanese friend. What can be done to mitigate this oppressive hold the group has on the average Japanese?

Create Your Own

In such instances use the "influence" of the group to your advantage. Many Japanese stick together only because it is hard for them to make American friends. Many prefer American friends. Because of this attraction create your own group for your Japanese friend from among your Christian friends.

Do this by becoming involved in evangelistic entertaining. Besides a heart for God the only ability necessary to do this is the ability to make friends.

Schedule activities in your home or elsewhere where you can invite friends who will interact with your Japanese friend.

This doesn't mean you change the way you would normally socialize if with just Americans. Simply do what you always do in a social engagement but include your non-Christian friend, as well.

The ongoing benefit of this can be heightened if:

- ✚ ahead of time you explain the purpose of the activity to those attending (even better plan it with them).
- ✚ the activity is one that encourages interaction with each other (and not heavily dependent on language) as opposed to just watching a movie
- ✚ they are of the same age, have common interests or are in the same field.

Our religious holidays can provide wonderful opportunities for gatherings. They provide a natural way to delve into spiritual topics in light of the background of the holiday. They also meet a need in many Japanese who are especially lonely and bored at this time of year.

But don't stop with these. Create your own such as a "Super Bowl Party" or invest in a table-tennis set and have an eternal impact.

These can be perfect activities to do together with your Sunday school class or action group on campus.

Take advantage, too, of the many activities the local church or local campus ministry has conducive for interaction between Christians and your Japanese friend—you don't have to plan.

Too often these activities become ends in themselves rather than strategically used to influence others for Christ and refocusing the vision of the body of Christ.

This perspective becomes even more valid when we realize the time Japanese and other internationals spend in this country is typically when they are most open and have the best opportunity to see, hear and feel the gospel.

In conclusion, remember the principle:

Japanese are influenced by what the group thinks.

Being First Born

In some cases the reluctance is because they are a first born son. In Japanese society, first-born sons have the responsibility of continuing the worship of the ancestors, a part of their Buddhist culture (though most Japanese are not personally religious).

The fear of parental disapproval and being alienated from Japanese society develops a satanic grip on their lives. Mobilize special prayer (and fasting) for your friend to remove this stronghold (2 Cor 10:3-5).

Ungenuine

It's important to note, though, there could be the opposite problem. Because of their cultural underpinnings of politeness, wanting to be accepted and a feeling of obligation to you for all you've done they might profess Christianity to please you without it being genuine.

If they really have come to Christ, as with any genuine Christian, they should have a desire to read the Bible, obey God and to make Him known.

A Support Team

As you are involved in your outreach to Japanese and other internationals may I challenge you to involve your friends with you. This more naturally encourages ministering as a group. It protects you from getting "burnt out" as well as gaining the benefit from working with others. An even bigger benefit is it adds someone else to the harvest with your vision.

Points-To-Note

In your social involvements with Japanese keep in mind:

✚ Because Japanese seem aloof and untalkative does not mean they are not interested in having a relationship with Americans. In their culture asking personal questions of someone they don't know well can be considered impolite. It can also be because of an unfamiliarity with Americans and lack of confidence with English. Try to avoid activities or involvements that are highly conversation oriented.

Consider activities such as:

- ✚ Going to a baseball game.
- ✚ An evening playing table games.
- ✚ A cookie decorating party at Christmas or Valentine's Day.
- ✚ Watching or playing sports

Potential Hindrances to Understanding the Gospel

Though most Japanese are non-religious, understanding the background on some key religious terms can be useful in increasing the effectiveness of your witness to Japanese friends:

GOD

✚ The native religion is called Shinto, a polytheistic combination of legend, intricate ritual, ancestor veneration and spiritism. The Japanese have many kami, or gods. To describe their deities, the Japanese say yorozu no kami, literally translated as eight million gods. There is no one creator god. In this manner, the typical Japanese theology resembles Greek mythology in which gods are demigods who have faults, weaknesses and are neither omniscient nor omnipotent. These gods need to be appeased, and sometimes can even be manipulated by cunning men who dare to exploit the weaknesses of the gods.

While many, particularly young people will dismiss deities as superstition and folklore, they do not usually ignore the spiritual and supernatural. It may become an interesting and insightful topic of conversation if you ask your friends to tell you about folklores they know from their area. Some of these are reflected in certain festivals, such as Tanabata or Obon. Oshogatsu, or the New Year's celebration, has Shinto traditions.

SIN

✚ The word used for sin is tsumi. Unfortunately it means crime. To call someone a sinner in Japanese is to call them a criminal. This is not real effective in communicating the biblical idea of sin. Therefore you may want to first define and explain what you mean when you say sin. An emphasis can be made that sin is not so much an action as a state of being. Emphasize, too, the inner nature of sin from the passage in Mark 7:14-23. Using a bilingual NT guide your Japanese friend to read it for themselves.

GRACE

✚ The word for grace is megumi. To the average Japanese, however, this means good fortune and at times a blessing given by one of the gods. No one ever gets a free gift in the Japanese culture. There is always a reciprocal action. That is why gracious actions in your dealings with them can be a powerful witness. Have them read Ephesians 2:1-9 to understand God's gracious love of them through Christ.

CHURCH

✚ In Japan there are, among others, Presbyterian, Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist, Evangelical Free churches as well as the United Church of Christ. Many Japanese are confused with the diversity of Christian denominations. Often asked questions include: "What is the difference between your church and the Mormon Church?" "What is Catholic? What is Protestant?" "What is a denomination?" Having no other experiences, many think JW's, Mormons and "Moonies" represent Christian. It's important to clarify the difference.—article adapted from World Relief's Japanese Host-Family Packet.

“No one ever gets a free gift in the Japanese culture”.

Pre-Evangelism Resource

What do you do when your Japanese friend who you’ve tried so hard to reach remains indifferent to spiritual things? They don’t care to talk about Christ and aren’t interested in the Jesus video or attending church or evangelistic meetings. Their time remaining with you is waning. You know this is probably the best chance they’ll have to hear the Gospel and the freedom to make a decision. What do you do? You feel like the apostle Paul when he said, “Oh Israel, My people! Oh, my Jewish brothers! How I long for you to come to Christ. My heart is heavy within me and I grieve bitterly day and night because of you.” (TLB Rom 9:1-3).

In cases like this the following resource can be helpful in developing interest through leaving a positive impression. The book, *Shiokari Pass* by the widely noted author, Ayako Miura—is the powerful true story of a young Japanese man who discovers his own sinful nature as he tries to live a good life in his own power. This brings him to Christ. He ultimately has to choose between his life and others in a profound conclusion.

Many not ordinarily interested in spiritual things have shown great interest in this gripping story. Though not overtly evangelistic, for many Japanese—never having thought about the God of the Bible, the reading of this can plant a seed to be harvested at a later time.

It is available from the Japan Network for \$7.75. The movie version is available on video for rent, \$3.00.

✚ Pray for the Japanese to not turn to another idol during this time of duress but to God to satisfy as only He can (Matthew 11:28-30) [Ed.]

Potential Reasons Not To Embrace the Christian Faith

Obligation to the family

In families that observe the cultural religions of Japan, this is manifested primarily in family ancestor worship. Although young people may not be firm believers in ancestral worship, there will be pressure from the family not to embrace another faith since that practically means to turn their back on their family.

Such an act is considered as foolishness and carries the connotation of disgrace, shame and grief. Many Christians have been disowned and/or persecuted by their families when they let their faith be known.

This is especially true for the first-born son who has a special responsibility for ancestral worship.

Peer Pressure

Though fundamental changes are occurring among the youth, individualism still is not admired in Japan as it is here. When it raises its head it is quickly put down.

Japanese conform to this because of their *fear* of being cast out of the group.

The older Japanese are, the more prominent their attitude will be which honors the good of a group more than that of an individual.

Negative Image of Church

Being a busy, formal, duty oriented society, they are not attracted to the church because of the image it has of these same characteristics. For others they see it as a threat to their only day off.

Rather than take your Japanese friend to a formal worship service take them to a church social, recreational or musical activity that communicates warmth and something enjoyable.

Baptism

While baptism itself is not a reason for not embracing the faith, the Japanese view of baptism is noteworthy. It is viewed by both Christians and non-Christians that baptism is the final profession of one's faith and conversion.

When Japanese share with family members they've received Christ, it may not evoke as strong a reaction as when they want to be baptized in the local church.

Some parents who do not oppose their children becoming Christian may very well strongly oppose their being baptized. (article adapted from World Relief's Japanese Host-Family Packet, available from *The Japan Network*).

How-to-Counteract

Rarely can spiritual interest develop and grow in the face of such pressure.

Keeping in mind the following can help counteract this pressure:

✚ Don't minister exclusively by yourself.

✚ Enlist others to join with you in befriending your Japanese friend (s). An attractive substitute peer group makes it easier for Japanese to weather the

attractive substitute peer group makes it easier for Japanese to weather the pressure.

- ✚ Motivated Christian friends from similar backgrounds, age groups and/or interests are more attractive.
- ✚ Consider starting a regular *coffeehouse* in your home or church providing an interactive, fun atmosphere. Soon you'll notice a growing trust and increased openness.

A Timely Leader

General MacArthur and the Emperor

We don't always know how God will choose to answer our prayers for the salvation of the people of Japan. One such answer was Douglas MacArthur—a leader from an unexpected arena. God used him to set in motion the laying of a spiritual groundwork that has made possible the salvation of thousands of Japanese over the last fifty years. Might this chronicling of historical events encourage you to continue to believe God for extraordinary spiritual influences upon the Japanese.

The war ended and General MacArthur signed the unconditional peace treaty with Japan aboard the USS Missouri.

MacArthur was of such a stature that he well eclipsed the Emperor, who came to him hat in hand and in essence said, "I am responsible for all the political and military decisions made. You do with me as justice in your country decides"—which was offering up his head on a platter. But at the same time it was throwing himself on MacArthur's mercy.

MacArthur did have mercy on the Emperor, though the Emperor was required to give his disclaimer of deity. MacArthur asked a missionary to meet with the Emperor. "What does the West think God is?" was the Emperor's question to the missionary. The missionary, Vorrhies answered, "Well, of course, He is the only true God of creation. He created the heavens and the earth".

To this the Emperor said humbly, "Well, I didn't do that." So he could honestly say, according to that standard, he was not *that* God.

A Call for Bibles and Missionaries

MacArthur issued a call for 5,000 missionaries and 10 million Bibles by telegrams and letters in 1950. One such letter was to the Gideons:

"I have publicly stated my firm belief that Christianity offers to Japanese a sure and stable foundation on which to build a democratic nation. Japanese are becoming increasingly aware of fundamental values of Christian religion and appreciate its spiritual and moral blessing. Your assistance will be of inestimable value. Copies of Holy Scriptures, especially New Testaments, both English and Japanese, are essential for the success of the Christian movement. Your representative is welcome to Japan to make firsthand survey of the situation. I assure you of my deep appreciation of your interest in spiritual rehabilitation of the Japanese people." Douglas MacArthur

A True Leader

General MacArthur exemplified all the qualities of a true leader. He was not only leader of the entire Supreme Command of the Allied Personnel, with all the soldiers from England, New Zealand, Australia and America, but he was a leader of ideas with an over-all vision. He not only got a peaceful occupation of Japan, but also made it possible for Japan to become open to the Gospel.

Can you imagine the meeting of the two leaders, when the Emperor, in effect, asked MacArthur what to do? "If you like, I can give an order on the radio to all my subjects to accept democracy and your Christianity."

MacArthur answered, "Democracy, of course, but let me think." After a minute he said, "Constantine ordered the baptism of 300,000 soldiers but that didn't work." Then after another pause, "Revelation 3:20 says, Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man (not nation) hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and fellowship with him." No, keep it on a personal basis."

The wisdom of MacArthur is amazing. The wisdom of our God in raising up this man as a leader—at such a critical time— should cause us to praise Him (and excel still more in our prayers for this people) as we still reap the benefits fifty years after the war—adapted from *The Japan Harvest, written by Kenny Joseph, Fall '95*

Cultural Insights for Effective Ministry

Seen from the perspective of social anthropology, Japanese family life presents distinctive characteristics in comparison with those of other societies. In the American family the most important room in the house for each member of the family is one's own individual room. One's room is one's castle. In the American family we find a strong consciousness of autonomous individuality. The living room or dining room is a common gathering place for the family to eat, to talk and socialize, and perhaps to discuss personal ideas in a semi-public place. However, individuals always have a room where they can go to collect their thoughts in private.

In the traditional Japanese pattern, each household is a distinctly isolated unit of its own, complete with walls and high fence around the house to insure privacy. Yet, inside, walls consist of sliding doors made of paper so that privacy is kept to a minimum. The family stays together most of the time and moves from one place to the next, depending on whether it is eating, relaxing, playing or sleeping. Although this pattern tends to create family unity, it widens the gap between the family and outsiders.

Insight:

- ✚ The group holds great influence over the individual's interests and decisions.
- ✚ Appealing to the individual alone is generally ineffective in creating lasting change. Include all members of the group in your witness or place the individual into a conducive group of your own (see lead article).

Building a Bridge Of Understanding

Pray, pray, pray...

Pray that God would bind the spirits of darkness, confusion, ancestor worship and fear. Pray that he would grant you wisdom, and your Japanese friend understanding. Pray for a spirit of trust to quickly develop.

When to bring up spiritual things

It is not necessary to wait till the end of their stay to share spiritual things with them. Look for natural opportunities to communicate the Gospel even if it's only the second day of their stay with you. By sharing the Gospel, you give them the framework by which to understand a lot of things they will observe in America and in your life. Most Japanese see spiritual things as a valid topic and are not offended at all.

Use available materials

Because of the language and cultural barriers, written materials can greatly enhance the communication between you and your Japanese students. Even those who have little ability to speak English can often understand a great deal more if it is presented in writing (adapted from World Relief's Japanese Host-Family Packet, available from the Japan Network).

Building a Bridge of Understanding

How To Describe Concepts Japanese Find Hard To Understand*:

Concepts Foreign to Japanese ////////////////Japanese Understanding ////////////////Christian Explanation

1. God	Undefined force; not personal	He is above all other gods; He is the creator; he is kind, just personal, all-knowing. He demands loyalty and desires love from his children. Jn 17; Gen. 1:1; Ps. 103; 139:1-6; James 4:8; Matt 22:36,37; Isa 40:12-31
2. Fallen Man	Man is naturally good; worldly attachments are bad; the ideal is to empty oneself of selfish desires	Man was originally created in God's image but since the fall, all persons are evil and imperfect by nature (Gen 1-3; Rom 3:2)
3. Sin	Japanese word for "sin" is the same word as "crime"...very few Japanese commit "crimes"	Sin is a "crime of the heart" (I Sam 16:7, Matt. 5-6; 15:18-21; Isa. 64:6)
4. Forgiveness	If a wrong has been	There is no way for us to make

	done, restitution must be made. If not possible, then endless shame must be borne by the individual as well as the family. It is a virtue to continue on in spite of being wronged but not to forgive (harmony).	restitution to God. Forgiveness is offered to us because of God's mercy through Christ's sacrifice. Forgiveness restores us to the same relationship as before the wrong; since God is our primary superior, we should imitate mercy (Eph 2:1; Matt 6:15; 1 John 1:19; Jer 31:34)
5. Individual decision/responsibility	The large group or family is always most important; one should not stray from the thinking of the group or do anything to harm the group.	God is creator of all persons; we are His family; Jesus died for His people; He made the ultimate sacrifice for His people (John 12:24-26; 15:13; Rom 5:6-8)
6. Exclusive God or Religion	There are many paths up the same mountain. There is resentment against being forced to make a commitment	God, Himself, told us not to have any other paths; the resurrection of Jesus Christ gives us proof that He is God thus giving us certainty we can trust the message of the Bible that there is no other way (Exod 20; Isa 45:6, 18, 22; John 14:6)

*Adapted From the Japan Christian Fellowship Network

Building a Bridge of Understanding

Cultural Insights for Effective Ministry

The following Japanese cultural method of communication can lead to misunderstandings between yourself and Japanese your ministering too.

Honne (opinion/action motivated by one's true inner feelings/opinion) vs. **Tatemae** (opinion/action influenced by social norms)

These two words are often a dichotomy contrasting genuinely-held personal feelings and opinions from those that are socially controlled. Honne is one's deep motive or intention, while tatemae refers to motives or intentions that are socially-tuned, those that are shaped, encouraged, or suppressed by *majority norms*.

For example, an accepted code of tatemae, "Be kind to everyone," may be broken in order to justify the honne that one's own children are not expected to make friends with slow learners. However, honne and tatemae are not actually opposites as these two values are relative to people and situations. For instance, when a liberal is asked to tell his tatemae he may say that armament is unnecessary and so is the state. When he is asked to tell his honne, however, he may say that he recognizes the necessity of a state. On the contrary, a conservative's tatemae is that a state is an evil because it can lead to the outbreak of war. In spite of these obvious discrepancies, Japanese people continue

to use these forms of communication and they switch from *tatemae* to *honne*, or vice versa, according to the context. Consequently, an inexperienced listener may find it difficult to distinguish, for instance, whether a host is really expressing a sincere invitation to dinner, or whether he is merely paying lip service.

Socially-skilled guests, however, are expected to determine, by the tone of the voice and other nonverbal clues, the depth of the host's intentions. Another dimension of this dichotomy is that *honne* is expressed privately while *tatemae* may be openly professed. Observing the formalities of a business meeting, a person tends to follow protocol. Later, while enjoying conversation with his colleagues over a glass of beer or sake (rice wine), the same person will frankly express his *honne* regarding the issues raised at the meeting. Aiming at peace and harmony, the public self avoids confrontation, whereas the private self tends toward sincere self-expression. (Taken from an *English dictionary of Japanese culture*).

Insights:

- ✚ Be aware that what they say might not be what they believe *especially* regarding spiritual things. For example, most Japanese say they don't believe in God. Yet, oftentimes in private conversation you'll find they do believe in God and have real spiritual interest.
- ✚ Avoid putting Japanese on-the-spot regarding their belief in God. Don't ask them if they believe in God or want to become a Christian in front of a group unless you know it's favorable towards spiritual things.
- ✚ Japanese who feel indebted to you might say yes to an invitation to receive Christ *from you*—without meaning it.

Prayer the Only Hope

The Persistence of *ie* in Light of Japan's Modernization—Hitoshi Fukue (excerpted and adapted)

Ie-Satan's most powerful tool against Japan and the Gospel?

Ie is defined as a unity stretching from the distant past to the present occupying a certain position in the status system of the village or the town. It was conceived as including the house and property, the resources for carrying on the family occupation, and the graves in which the ancestors were buried. The *ie* in that sense was far more important than the individuals who were at any one time living members of it, and it was seen as natural that the individual personalities of family members should be ignored and sacrificed if necessary for the good of the whole.

In spite of the unprecedented social transformation of post-war Japan, which brought about urbanization and the deterioration of the traditional *ie* system, its principal values have not disappeared, but rather they are alive in the Japanese consciousness and in Japanese social and economic organizations. Such cultural characteristics as rank consciousness, group orientation, emphasis on harmony, and exclusivism are rooted in the traditional *ie* system and are closely interrelated. They generate a positive impetus toward social order, collective power, solidarity and individual security. These same principles also have a negative side, hindering the development of egalitarianism, individual autonomy,

democratic criticism, and philanthropic concerns. It is probable, however, that these *ie* principles will persist in the Japanese psyche for a long time to come. [ed. note—this *ie* system is being used by the forces of darkness to spiritually deaden Japan through the loss of individual autonomy and democratic criticism and the deification of the group. Pray!]

25 years after suicide, Japanese writer's taboo eases

Extreme views, spectacular death were embarrassing

by Laura King Associated Press, 11-24-95, excerpted

A quarter century after his spectacular ritual suicide, novelist Yukio Mishima is still committing the ultimate social sin in Japan: He embarrasses people.

What set the author at odds with Japan was a classically Japanese act.

On the cold, sunny afternoon of Nov. 25, 1970—25 years ago tomorrow—Mishima and four followers from his private “army” of ultrapatriotic youths stormed into army headquarters in central Tokyo.

Dressed in a military-style tunic and a headband with the rising-sun emblem, the 45-year-old author stepped onto a balcony and delivered a harangue against Japan's no-war constitution, urging soldiers to rise up and revolt.

Some of the officers and enlisted men listening in the courtyard below responded with hoots of derision. But Mishima wasn't finished.

Barricaded inside the commanding general's office, with the general shouting at him to stop, he stripped off his tunic, sat on the floor, and plunged a samurai sword into his belly.

A young disciple delivered the ritual coup de grace, lopping off Mishima's head before killing himself as well.

Although Japanese overwhelmingly reject Mishima's fanaticism, they can identify with his belief that Japan's prosperity is destroying it's soul. Earlier this year, when a doomsday cult staged a nerve-gas attack on the Tokyo subways, commentators zeroed in on the theme of spiritual barrenness.

MODERATION AND MEDITATION SUPPLANT GAUDY EXCESS AS PARTY ABRUPTLY ENDS

A New Trend: Individuality

by Yumiko Ono The Wall Street Journal, 12-23-92, excerpted

Throughout the late 1980's and early 1990's, Japan's younger generation lived one long party.

Abroad, they heard that Japan was No. 1. At home, profit from the great “bubble” economy—

inflated by soaring land and stock prices—kept roaring in. Japan—and they—seemed unstoppable. So when the recession hit in 1992, and the economy lurched to a halt, people in their 20's, 30's and early 40's ran smack into a new reality. Suddenly this group, which missed the rough years after WW II and had only known affluence, is discovering limits. Having ridden Japan's economic wave to the crest of excess, the material generation is suddenly growing reflective.

Instead of shopping, a Japanese woman says, she meditates. An insurance executive says he's forswearing the high life for “self-discovery seminars”.

The times were garish and gauche, says a mortified Mayumi Shiratsuchi, 36, who works in an ad agency. The bursting of the bubble “was a judgment from heaven for Japan”, she believes.

Turning a Conversation to Spiritual Things

Make it your goal to get your Japanese friend thinking. Young people today are generally apathetic, materialistic, and live in the here and now. They don't question. Once you start a conversation where they have to think deeply, it won't be hard to bring in the spiritual aspect.

Japanese are surprised by many things in our culture which are ordinary to us. Some of the most often mentioned are:

- ✚ The role that husbands and fathers play in the American Christian family;
- ✚ How friendly and outgoing Americans are;
- ✚ How important religion is in day to day life.

These things and more can be used as platforms to get conversations going. You may be helping your Japanese friend explore more widely and think more deeply than they ever have.

Finally, even though our worlds are so different, there are some points of contact that the Bible makes that can specifically speak to Japanese. Some of them are:

- ✚ Shame vs. Guilt (shame worldview is found in Gen.3 and Leviticus = "unclean")
- ✚ Compare original sin to family shame
- ✚ Compare Son of God to authority of the son of the emperor
- ✚ Sin means you can't look at the Father in the face
- ✚ Compare Jesus to hari kari to remove shame from the family
- ✚ Compare Jesus to cherry blossoms (died in prime or strength—not from weakness)
- ✚ God's family and adoption into the family
- ✚ Jesus=light (Buddhists seek enlightenment)
- ✚ Love vs. Obligation
- ✚ The Biblical instructions for marriage

Also many Japanese are without hope. They may not express this, because they are not encouraged to nurture their spiritual side in Japan. However, if one can get them to a point of examining their own beliefs, then hope, love, and complete forgiveness will meet their spiritual felt needs.

The practicals of this will be examined in the following article.

Turning a Conversation to Spiritual Things—The How-to's *

On Family

What does your father do at home?

How does he help your mother?

How does he play with you and your brothers/sisters?

Does he go grocery shopping?

Does he cook, clean the house, bathe small children, etc.?

How do your father and mother show affection to you and to each other?

For example, we kiss and give each other a hug. We *celebrate anniversary and birthdays*.

Transitional phrase example:

“Christian husbands are usually different because the Bible instructs them to love their wives in a very special way...”

“The Bible is the greatest book on love! Would you like to see what some of it says?” “Love is patient, love is kind,...1 Corinthians 13”

On Friendliness

How do Japanese show friendliness?

How about hospitality?

Do you invite your friends home?

Do you let them stay overnight?

Are there home stay programs in Japan for foreigners?

Ask your Japanese friend to show you his/her passport or driver’s license. Is it true that they don’t smile when photographed for official purposes? If so, why not?

Transitional phrase example:

“Jesus teaches us how we, Christians, ought to be toward each other. Can I show you some principles in the Bible? For example, Philippians 2:3-11; 1 John 4:7-13; Matt. 5-7.

On Religion

What are your religious holidays?

How do you celebrate them?

What are their meanings and significance in general and for you and your family?

Share the gospel and your own testimony (what God has done in your life) as you explain *your way of life, what it is and why it is so*.

Transitional phrase example:

“Have you ever thought about the purpose of your life? Do you think each person has a purpose, first to know God, and to serve Him.”

“Have you ever heard any stories about Adam & Eve? Noah & the ark? Jonah & “the whale”? The birth of Jesus?”

Discussing holidays and explaining their significance are great ways to share the gospel.

Christmas—birth of Christ

Easter—Resurrection

Thanksgiving—Pilgrims thanked God for His provision
Halloween—an evil night honoring Satan instead of God.

On Social Issues

What are your dating customs?

What is important in marriage?

One recent survey indicated that more women would choose high income, certain height and no responsibility for in-laws as the top three criteria for their marriage partner. Is it true?

What are some important current social issues in Japan? The environment? Abortion? Women's issues such as women in work place? (These are rather delicate topics which require some sensitivity, but it may allow you to have a deep conversation with them. See the example below.)

Transitional phrase example:

“As a Christian it is very important to me that my marriage partner share the same faith.”

“Christians are concerned for the environment because when God created the Earth, He gave mankind ‘dominion over it’—made mankind responsible for taking care of it...” (Buddhism does not believe that mankind has a special position in the creation as taught in the Bible.)

* - for context please see the previous article.

A Model to Follow

Barclay Buxton

Instantaneous conversion and the filling of the Holy Spirit

Barclay Buxton, was a man used of God to powerfully impact Japan. He brought methods of evangelism and emphasis on the Holy Spirit not liked by all when he came to Japan in 1890.

But people could not argue against his holy lifestyle and the results of his ministry. Within several weeks after his arrival over 700 people were attending his gospel services. By the end of the first year seven churches had been founded in the Matsuye and Yonago areas where he served.

From Yonago, bands of young men went from village to village on ten-day “gospel treks,” some times leaving one of their number behind in a village to give further instructions, Buxton, would guide them and instruct them as they traveled. Untold numbers were being touched by the gospel. From 1890-1900, Buxton averaged 40 baptisms a year and added 300 members to his church in Matsuye.

Having been out of the country for many years, in 1937 he received 3 separate calls to return to Japan for one last missionary effort at the age of 75.

Beginning in Kobe, he spoke 125 times in 153 days in 19 areas of the country. Wherever he spoke, hundreds and even thousands were gripped with his call to holiness and the power of the Holy Spirit to evangelize the nation. Crowds that began at 200 would soon increase to three or four times that size.. Even Catholic priests began clamouring to have him speak. In Kyoto and Tokyo thousands came out to hear. Even members of the cabinet came to these messages. Revival seemed to have broken loose. It's interesting to note that this was all done in English through translators.

Buxton's Great Contribution

For most of missions in Japan, the going is slow, the results few, and the loss of missionaries great. What made Buxton so successful? *What can we learn for our own ministry?* The answer lies in three basic themes in his ministry:

1)He taught that the ministry of the Holy Spirit was the most important aspect of the Christian life. He held the deep conviction that that which is done must be done in the power of the Holy Spirit or it was all futility. An example of this was in 1893 he organized a conference in Nagasaki and invited the great missionary statesman, Hudson Taylor, to come and give the message, "How to be filled with the Holy Spirit".

2)Buxton believed a man could be genuinely converted to Christ at the very first hearing of the Gospel. Many people believe that evangelism must be done through prolonged periods of study with the individual.

Buxton did not believe in teaching the Gospel but rather preaching the Gospel to unbelievers. From the book of Acts, he taught that though a man had no prior knowledge of anything "Christian," he could be supernaturally touched by the Holy Spirit at the first hearing.

Year after year, Buxton's ministry saw scores of previously untouched Japanese receive Christ. While other missionaries criticized Buxton, Buxton simply built new churches.

3)*Buxton believed every Christian should be a leader and disciple of his own.* His belief in the "priesthood of all believers" developed many Japanese Christian leaders who established hundreds of their own churches. He constantly taught new believers to be leaders and organizers for the Gospel. He taught his disciples to establish their own churches. As a result, when he left Japan, Buxton left behind literally hundreds of Christian believers.



Sometimes no matter what you do or say you find your Japanese friend not interested in spiritual things. What do you do?...

Creating an Environment of Trust

Evangelism includes many phases. We tend to only consider reaping as evangelism, but in fact, evangelism includes preparing the soil, selecting and sowing appropriate seeds, watering the seeds, discerning the ripeness of the fruit, and finally harvesting the fruit. For your particular student the phase of evangelism you may need to concentrate on is preparing the soil. You've shared the Gospel often—explaining it flawlessly, keeping in mind cultural obstacles, but still there seems to be no interest. This may mean at this stage in your Japanese friend's life, God wants you to focus on developing trust—not only talking about spiritual things.

Their indifference may be an expression of their unease in stating disagreeing thoughts. Seek to create an environment where the differences of opinion and questions about your belief can be freely expressed and accepted. And this kind of environment is gradually created as you build trust with your friend. Failing to do so could result in withdrawal and alienation in your relationship and greater resistance to the Gospel.

What you say about the Lord has the most impact when you have already won the trust of your Japanese friend. This is not to mean we should wait months for trust to be established before sharing the Gospel, the first time. Many would come to Christ, today, if told. The comments here are for those who've resisted or shown indifference to your witness.RS

ABC's of Building Trust

Even hosting a Japanese student in your home doesn't insure trust will be developed if certain ABC's are not observed:

- 1) A warm smile with eye contact and more than just a "Hi. How are you? Nice to meet you."
- 2) A question or two about their personal feelings about what it's like to be in a foreign country; a comment that reflects some sympathy for their language or adjustment difficulties; an expression of respect for their courage and hard work.
- 3) An offer (and action) to help in a practical way when that need is either obvious or expressed.
- 4) A genuine offer to "be there" for them for anything they need; then when they call or drop by, be ready to listen over a cup of tea or coffee.
- 5) Allow for silence in a conversation; don't just chit chat to fill the room with words.
- 6) Wait for them to initiate a question or comment—don't always be first.
- 7) When they bring up a serious or personal topic, stay with that topic until it is exhausted, resolved, or at least partially tackled with a plan of action. If

distracted by circumstance, be sure to find time and opportunity to get back to it or set up a time to talk again.

8) When someone confides any personal information, keep it to yourself unless you have their permission to tell a certain person about it. Don't just promise to keep confidentiality when requested; make it a practice to keep it even when it isn't requested. As soon as they become aware of your ability to keep quiet, they will entrust more to you.

9) Respond to "what do you think?" with honesty, encouragement, acceptance and support. When giving an opinion about a decision they are making, say "This is my opinion, but I will respect and support you in whatever you decide."

10) If the students know that you personally believe in Christ, they may not be able to state a different opinion or belief at the personal level because it 's face threatening to you. But they may be able to discuss the difference of beliefs at a general level. In this case, questions such as "What do Japanese believe?" would be more appropriate than, "What do you believe?"

11) Plan dedicated times for communication to occur or shared experiences to happen—don't just assume they will.

12) If not a natural question asker or conversationalist prepare for your times together (see RS vol. 2, issue 4).

13) Realize God is more concerned than even you about your friends need for salvation. Learn to look to God—being patient, waiting for Him to act. Interest can't be commanded; it must be stirred by the Spirit of God.

14) They need to know that my friendship is based on a genuine interest in them as a person, and they are not a cross-cultural project.

15) Trust is often at risk in cross-cultural relationships because the very cues that would build trust in one cultural context may jeopardize it in another (see sidebars)

16) Remember the definition of successful witness: Take the initiative to share the Gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit and leave the results to God! RS adapted from an article by Grete Shelling with Inter-Face ministries, a cross-cultural counselor

What Builds Trust?

"KEEPING YOUR WORD" Answer: "To me, keeping your word - i.e., do what you say and say what you'll do - is primary foundation of trust." Yet this simple approach to trust is not as easy as it seems. It is affected by our listening styles and our cultural preferences. The key is how we interpret what we hear. When someone speaks to us, we put their message through a number of filters that are further affected by our level of skill as a listener. The results can be disastrous.

"BEING STRAIGHT FORWARD" Answer: "Trust is built by being honest, being straightforward and not devious." Sounds simple. But that is a Western perspective. Being honest and straightforward about a situation may be a very untrustworthy thing to do in non-Western cultures because it can cause loss of face and shame. Many Asians learn to be indirect as a grace and kindness, not a matter of deviousness.

“BEING ON TIME” Answer: “When a person is on time and keeps his or her appointments.” But to those who are event oriented, priorities are centered around relationships, not time. They do not see how it actually disturbs relationships to some people if they are late. To the event oriented the modern phenomenon of Daytimer’s is a product of task- oriented Western culture. Daytimer users often can be driven by a schedule; people aren’t important enough to just drop in and be entertained at leisure.

How to Relate Conversationally

There are many interesting features in Japanese communication, three in particular stand out: [understanding them will help in the process of establishing trust-ED.]

1. Indirectness,

When you think of Japanese ways of communication, what comes your mind first? Perhaps indirectness. The principle behind indirectness in Japanese society is avoidance of conflict. For instance, disagreements are the conflict of opinions, so people who are not close to each other do not state their disagreeing thoughts directly. Therefore, Japanese people can be very direct with their disagreements when their is trust or closeness in a relationship.

2. The listener responsibility for understanding the meaning,

The Japanese tend to consider the listener, rather than the speaker, more responsible for getting the meaning out of what was said. In the socialization process, the Japanese are trained to consider the intention/feeling of the other and act accordingly when it was not directly stated. Therefore, if something was said, and if we do not understand it, rather than holding the speaker responsible for the unclear message, we tend to hold ourselves, the listeners, responsible. What does this mean in your relationship to your student? I am not asking you to be a mind-reader of your student. But I am asking you to try to take an active role in understanding what your student tries to communicate. In what concrete way can you take an active role? I suggest that you give feedback to what you are hearing. In English you have things like, “Uh-uh,” or “I see” to signal to the speaker that you are attending to what is being said. The equivalent device in Japanese would be nodding. I also suggest that if you did not understand what was said you add “Sorry” to your request for repetition. For example, “I’m sorry, but I didn’t understand what you said. Could you say it again?” You may also try to paraphrase what you heard by saying something like, “Do you mean _____?” Your student may have already been feeling bad because of their limited capacity in communicating in English. This kind of accommodation on your part may make your student feel better in communicating to you. It is also one way of applying James 1:19, “Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak.” And Proverbs 18:2, “A fool finds no pleasure in understanding but delights in airing his own opinions.”

3. High tolerance for silence.

The last aspect in Japanese ways of communication discuss is high tolerance for silence in conversation. Among acquaintances, Americans tend to have very low tolerance for silence in conversation. Whereas Japanese tend to have high tolerance for it. During your interaction with your students, you may experience a lot of silence regardless of their proficiency in English because they are more used

to silence in conversation. Instead of filling the silence with your talk or questions, try to remain silent, and wait for them to talk, and very importantly, pray silently while waiting. I will bet silence will make you very uncomfortable, but it is not as uncomfortable to your student as it is to you. The students have to listen to lectures and their American classmates all week, and they may enjoy silence when they are with you. Your silence, in fact, may communicate a lot to your student. Job's three friends expressed their empathy, agony, and compassion when they first saw him in his suffering and remained silent for seven days and seven nights (Job 2:19). Now, I do not mean that you should spend the first seven days with your student in silence. My point is that, as you sit silently with your student, your student may sense your acceptance of and compassion for them. RS

True Love Waits

True Love Waits is a beautiful, new, 32 page, two color manga (Japanese comics) done by Madoka Mako to spearhead the worldwide True Love Waits campaign in Japan. It is available in Japanese or English for one dollar. The tract is designed as an appeal to junior and senior high school girls to abstain from sex until marriage (but can be useful with older girls, as well). Recently it has been revealed that thousands of young girls are being recruited as prostitutes for older men who fear the AIDS virus that professional hookers may be carrying. They are willing to pay several times the fees paid to regular professionals. With less than 1% of the population in Japan making any claim to being Christian, these young girls have no moral teaching. They learn the physiology of sex in school but not the consequences of immorality. The aim of the Manga True Love Waits is to acquaint young people with the facts which the movies and their sex education omit, namely the heartache and eternal consequences of sin. To order these Manga tracts or for more information, please contact The JapanNet. RS

INDEX

Baptism, 15

Barriers, 9

Buxton, Buxton, 34

church, 4, 5, 6, 7, 12, 13, 15, 16, 34, 36, 40

Cultural Insights, 25

e. *See effective ministry*

do what you say. See vol 3, issue 1

Effective

Effectiveness, 9

Effective Ministry. See cultural insights,

Emperor, 24

Environment of Trust

creating, 37

event oriented. See being on time

First Born, 7

GOD

Japanese view of, 12

group, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 15, 16, 26, 28, 29, 30, 31

HARD TO UNDERSTAND

concepts for Japanese, 27

Hindrances

Japanese spiritual, 12

Honne, 28

Host, 11

How-to-Counteract

Reasons not to believe, 15

le, 29

Japanese family life. See cultural insights

Jesus Video

ministry tool, 10

Kobe Quake, 10

Locations for Japanese Students

top ten, 11

MacArthur, 5, 24

Messenger, 6

Mishima, Yukio, 30

News, 25, 29, 36

Obligation to the family, 15

Opportunity, 9

OPPORTUNITY, 9

Peer Pressure, 15

Points-To-Note, 8

Premiere Edition, 4

question asker. See RS v2, issue 4

relationships

priorities, 38

Resources, 13, 17

Shinto, 12, 23

silence, 39

SIN, 12

straightforward, 38

task- oriented

western culture, 38

Tatemaie, 28

Timely Leader, 24

True Love Waits

resource, 40

Trust

building, 37

Web, 40

Why Japan, 4

witness, 5

Witness, 5

Witness Through Your life, 5

Witness Through Your Words, 5

yorozu no kami, 12

Your life, 5

Your Words, 5