

Japanese are among the largest unreached people groups of the world. Most of the 126 million people have never come in direct contact with Christianity.

Out of 692 large cities, 86 have only one church. 10 large cities have no church at all. There is one missionary for every 56,000 Japanese!

Shinto and Buddhism are the main religions, which are widely practiced but not widely believed.

Japan is ripe for the Gospel. When asked if they could choose a religion, 79% expressed the greatest interest in Christianity.

Pray that the Lord would raise up many dedicated workers and help us to make use of every opportunity to share the Gospel.

UPDATE - EARTHQUAKE RELIEF

A series of powerful earthquakes, including a M7.0 earthquake struck the city of Kumamoto in southwest Japan on April 16, 2016 — causing much devastation. Within days, a team of JM workers were able to visit the area to help local churches and their communities with the relief and recovery effort.

We saw many in northeast Japan come to know the Lord after the disaster of March 2011, as residents were filled with gratitude and showed a sudden interest to attend church. **Pray** for the opportunity in Kumamoto to influence many for Christ.

One exciting outreach that JM continues to be involved in is the publication of a Japanese evangelistic leaflet (tract) called the **Yorokobi no Izumi** (Fountain of Joy). A team of writers, cartoon illustrators and office personnel continue to be busily at work to make this monthly publication possible. About 24,000 of these attractive and colorful tracts are printed and distributed to about 1,000 locations across Japan, as well as overseas.

Because these tracts are sent throughout Japan, it enables JM workers to make contact with many. As JM workers arrived in Kumamoto (500 km or 300 miles away), they were able to visit some who receive this monthly tract. One non-Christian lady Alex Verwey was able to visit was Mrs. Yamada, whose relatives had arranged for her to receive this tract for many years. She welcomed him with big smiles. They were able to pray with her and urged her to attend a local church. Alex was encouraged, saying, "Immediately after I had prayed with her she said, 'Thank you, I received your prayer in my heart.'" **Pray** for Mrs. Yamada as we continue to make contact with her and send her this Gospel tract.

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FAITH IN THE UNSEEN

Yoko was born on May 28, 1950 and was one of four children who were raised near the big city of Kobe. Their family did not seem to have any religious beliefs, but she learned about the Bible while attending a Catholic kindergarten and innocently believed what she was taught.

"In elementary school the kids made fun of me and told me that my belief in God was childish," she shared. "I then started to doubt and feel that all I had learned up until then was just make-believe. I decided that God may have created man, but religion was for the weak.

"As I became older, I wondered why I had been born and tried to find meaning and purpose for my life. I found no answers and was confused. My heart was sad and empty. I came to believe that people were just like the animals and all would simply end when I died. If all ends with death, then it would not matter if I died right now, I thought as I contemplated suicide. I was overwhelmed with feelings of loneliness and hopelessness, and soon found myself getting depressed.

"I studied to become a nurse, because I thought that this would give me some sort of meaning and purpose in life. I found some fulfillment through helping and caring for others, but still felt that life was meaningless and had a deep sense of emptiness in my heart.

"On my 20th birthday, I purchased a book by a well-known Christian author. After I read a number of books by this author, it changed my view of religion. I realized how weak and helpless I was, and how much it would help me if I believed in a 'higher being'. I became interested in reading books about religion and the afterlife, but resisted the urge to go to church.



Yoko Tamada

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“It was at this time that God arranged things in such a way that I became roommates with a Christian co-worker. We became good friends and she gave me a Bible and invited me to church. I did not understand the message very well, but my friend encouraged me by saying, ‘Try going for a while and you will start to understand.’ I was seeking something to fill the emptiness in my heart, so I decided to go.

“The first time the words of the Bible leaped into my heart was when I read 1 John 4:12-16. It was difficult for me to believe in a God that I could not see, but this Bible verse shone into my heart like a beam of light in the darkness:

No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us. This is how we know that we live in him and he in us: He has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God. And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. (1 John 4:12-16).

“I want to put my trust in Him **IF** there is a loving God out there, I thought. One year later, I went to a youth camp for the first time. On the way there, while on a boat, I met a girl who was eagerly sharing the Word of God. I asked her, ‘What if

the Bible, which is foundational to Christianity, is wrong? What then?’ She then shared 2 Timothy 3:16 with me: ***All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.***

“This Bible verse spoke to my heart and helped to ease my doubts and fears. I started to believe that the Bible did contain truths that I could count on. That evening at the camp, the message was about how there was nothing good in me and how sinful I was.

“I had previously heard about how Jesus died for my sins to save me, but I felt as though it was too simplistic to just believe and be saved. It was hard to believe that the solution to my problem was so simple, but when I thought of my sin and selfishness, and helplessness to change; I realized that Jesus was the only answer. At age 29, I confessed my sins and accepted Jesus as my Redeemer and Savior.

“After receiving Him into my heart, the feelings of loneliness, emptiness and hopelessness went away. I found a new meaning and purpose in life and was filled with joy and hope for my future. I had a deep desire to learn more about God and the Bible, so I attended Bible school for one year. There I grew in my faith and learned how to share God’s Word with others who had no hope.

“The fear and reluctance I had towards marriage before accepting Jesus disappeared, and I began to seriously pray about the joys of being

part of a Christian family where Christ was at the center.

“Three years later, while working as a nurse at a Christian hospital, one of my colleagues introduced me to a hospital evangelist who was working with Japan Mission. The day I met Koji, I knew that I was to spend the rest of my life with him. He shared very openly about how he had to undergo surgery for a heart condition and had spent many years in hospital due to tuberculosis. There was something refreshing about his honesty and openness, and I could clearly see that God was at work in his life.

“We were married when I was 33 years old and God blessed us with a child when I was 35. Until my son was born, we went together to do hospital evangelism among the patients. We then started a church in our home and had the opportunity to share the Gospel with many in our community.

“As I reflect on our 33 years of marriage, my heart is full of gratitude. Life has been challenging, but God has truly ***caused all things to***



Koji & Yoko Tamada

work together for good! We have come this far, only by God’s mercy and grace. ***And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus*** (Philippians 4:19).

“Koji and I currently work with Japan Mission as part of the team which helps write and edit the monthly evangelistic leaflet called the ***Yorokobi no Izumi*** (Fountain of Joy).

Pray for strength and protection for Mr. & Mrs. Tamada as they continue to play a critical role in reaching many for Christ. □

THE PROBLEM OF HOPELESSNESS

A serious problem facing all ages of society in Japan is hopelessness. Many feel helpless and have no sense of purpose. 11% of Japanese wish that they had never been born. 85% of young people wonder why they exist.

After World War II Emperor Hirohito declared to the nation that he was not god. This resulted in a deep sense of loss and betrayal, which caused most to feel utterly hopeless and skeptical of putting their trust in any god or religion.

Hopelessness is also the result of the teaching of evolution in the schools and the conclusion that men are no more than part of the animal kingdom.

The solution to this hopelessness can only be found in our Creator God. **Pray** that God would comfort the hopeless and give them a true revelation of Himself. **Pray** that workers of Japan Mission would be sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit as we seek to help those without hope.