



“Call unto Me and I will answer thee” (Jer. 33:3)

Called to Serve

BUILDING UP THE FAMILY NAME

“World War II changed the world as we knew it. All our belongings went up in flames,” Hiroyuki Kodama shared. “At 31 years old, my mother was widowed and had 5 children to feed. We fled to the countryside of Okayama and started a very poor existence. As soon as we returned from school, we went straight to the fields to help my mother work the land. As a 10 year old, I remember my mother telling me, “Your father is dead and you are the eldest. The responsibility to build up the family name now rests with you. We are all depending on you!”

My mother would sometimes speak of how she looked forward to the day when I, as the eldest child, would manage an inn or restaurant in the city to provide for my family. In my determination to succeed and rescue my family from poverty, I left home to work part-time while finishing Junior High and High School.

After graduating in 1954, I traveled to Osaka where I found employment with a company that sold snack foods. I worked hard and sent money home to my mother. After a while, the company entrusted a



Hiroyuki Kodama

shop to me. At first things went well, but then a big supermarket moved into the area and sales started to plummet. I was frustrated and my heart was filled with jealousy, anger and worry.

Before the sales were tallied at the end of the day, I would often take money out of the cash register for myself. After closing, I would go downtown to drink at a bar. As the emptiness in my heart persisted, I started to crave more stimulation from various forms of illicit entertainment. I found myself losing any sense of direction and purpose. I was eating less, drinking more and my purse was always empty. As I dragged my tired body into bed, my conscience would shout out— “This is not what I want!”

I was seeking something else, but I didn’t know what it was. As I went through the motions, it all became so meaningless and I felt very dissatisfied.

After 2 years, while still working hard, I began to feel very tired and developed a cough. This cough persisted and later I noticed that I was coughing up blood. I felt weak and collapsed as I experienced a lung haemorrhage. My colleagues helped me to get to the hospital where I was diagnosed with tuberculosis (TB) and immediately hospitalized. The surgeon found it necessary to remove a part of my lung.

At 21 years of age I started life in a TB ward. I hid the fact that I had TB from my family for one year, while hoping for a quick recovery. Five years later, I was moved from the critical care ward to the recovery ward.

One day a notice was handed to all of the patients, notifying us that a Gideon Bible would be handed out to those who wanted them. I was reading another book, so I ignored the notice.

A few days later everyone in my ward received a New Testament. The recovery ward was separate from the main building and contained 12 beds. The restrictions were relaxed and the doctors and nurses seldom visited us. There were people in this ward who were drinking and gambling. There seemed to be very few patients who were moral or serious about their recovery.

When I saw that all of these people were receiving a Bible, I felt that I had somehow missed out on something. I asked the person handing out the Bibles, ‘I didn’t order one, but could I have one?’ They told me that they had extra copies and handed me one.

I soon started to read the Bible. I’m the kind of person who likes to finish things that I start, so I read the Bible every day, morning to night. I learned that there was an Old Testament, so I asked the evangelist who visited me from

Japan Mission (JM) to bring me one. I went to the hospital library and read many of the books on Christianity.

I thought that I was a relatively disciplined and honorable person, but my conscience was pricked because everywhere I read, the Bible spoke of *sin*. I realized that I had done many wrong things and that even my illness was caused by my undisciplined and immoral lifestyle.

I was informed that those who gave us the Bibles would be visiting us to hold a meeting. About 20 Christian patients showed up to the meeting with two evangelists. This was the first Christian message I had ever heard. It was about the three crosses on Golgotha from Luke 23. Jesus was at the center, with a thief on either side. The one cursed Jesus and the other said, “**We are just getting what we deserve.**” Jesus then said to him, “**Today you will be with Me in paradise.**”

I was struck by the simplicity of the message and felt as though I was the thief who admitted his guilt. It was then that a bright light pierced the darkness of my heart. I was convinced of my sin and received Jesus as my personal Saviour at the end of the service. The Lord filled my heart with a deep sense of joy and satisfaction. That night my pillow was wet with tears streaming down my cheeks as I experienced an inexplicable peace and joy in my heart.

The moment of my salvation was so dramatic that it caused me to turn 180 degrees around. . . “**If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation**” (2 Cor. 5:17). I could not sit still as my heart overflowed with joy. The next day I walked through the wards and told many about what Christ had done for me. People were surprised at the change in my life. Many said, ‘Kodama became a Christian’ and the group of 20 that gathered for the meetings soon grew to be about 100!

I had all kinds of plans for when I was released from hospital, but then I started to seriously pray about becoming a hospital evangelist. Evangelist Karasawa from JM was the one who led me to the Lord and a true inspiration. I wrote him to ask what I needed to do to become a hospital evangelist.

My life was changed when I took that Bible in my hands in 1962. I could see the Lord at work in circumstances all around me. Ten months after I had become a Christian, I was declared well by the doctors and left the hospital. I joined JM in 1963 and attended Kansai Bible Seminary for 4 years, after which I served many years with JM as a hospital evangelist. I am now 80 years old and have dedicated my life to missions for the past 50 years and still work as an evangelist.”

Representatives in Japan: DAVID & SUE VERWEY

7-40 MONZEN CHO P O BOX 30106
 IKOMA CITY, NARA KEN WONDERBOOMPOORT 0033
 630-0266, JAPAN Tel: (012)377-1533
 Tel: 0081-743731754 083 719 0227
 Fax: 0081-743731681 Fax: (012)377-1533
 www.japanmission.org sa@japanmission.org
 www.facebook.com/japanmission.jm/

If you desire to receive reports and prayer requests from Japan by E-mail, contact jm@japanmission.org

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- Bibles and Literature
- Audio-Visual Outreach
- Student Outreach
- Hospital Evangelism
- English Evangelism
- Outreach to the Elderly
- Prison Ministry
- Evangelistic Meetings & Counseling

OUR SINCERE APPRECIATION to friends who have made bank deposits and notified us, and especially also to those friends whose donations we were unable to acknowledge. We endeavour to acknowledge all donations where possible, but often the information on the bank statements is insufficient.

■ Please notify us if you did not receive an acknowledgement and also if your address has changed.

It will be a great help if the NAME as well as the TELEPHONE NUMBER is clearly written on the Bank Deposit slip or Debit order or Internet Transfer.

■ We gratefully acknowledge the following deposits and transfers for which unfortunately insufficient information appears on our bank statements:

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MANY THANKS once again dear friends. May God bless you.

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JAPAN MISSION, P O BOX 30106, WONDERBOOMPOORT, 0033
Tel/Fax (012)377-1533 E-mail: sa@japanmission.org

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Hiroyuki Kodama has authored a number of Christian books, and continues to write a monthly column for the Fountain of Joy magazine, an evangelist tract that JM publishes each month. **Pray** for wisdom and strength as Hiroyuki continues to reach many with the Gospel.

NEW OUTREACH - CHINESE STUDENTS & TOURISTS

We have long prayed and asked the Lord to show us how to reach the millions of Chinese visitors to Japan, where they experience a new-found freedom to worship without restrictions. The Lord recently answered prayer by leading JM to partner with a Chinese church. JM owns a centrally located four-storey building in Osaka. This facility is being used as an audio-visual outreach centre and is also used to evangelize the local community for Christ. Some renovations were made and this Chinese church started to meet there on Sundays. Many Chinese students and tourists now frequent the property. **Pray** that many will find Christ and influence others for the Lord as they return to China.

JAPANORAMA - FOX VILLAGE

Japan has many animal sanctuaries. There is an island entirely dedicated to rabbits and another to cats. There is also a Fox Village with 6 different kinds of foxes and 100 animals. It is more like a petting zoo where foxes roam freely in a preserve and visitors can feed them. Visitors are urged to be careful because these animals are not domesticated and may bite. Foxes are popular creatures in Japanese folklore and mythology. Some in Japan also believe them to have mystical powers. However, the main reason most people visit Fox Village is because they are just so cute.

NEED FOR ENGLISH TEACHERS

We are currently in search of well-qualified personnel to serve as English Evangelism teachers. This program presents workers with the unique opportunity to befriend and influence people of all ages for Christ. **Pray** that the Lord will continue to provide JM with effective workers of His choice.

MEDIA MINISTRY - MELJUN PICARDAL



Meljun Picardal

Meljun (Mel) Picardal joined JM during January 2016 from Hawaii. He has been helping with the English Evangelism Program. "Teaching English is a great opportunity for the church to invite the community for English education with a short Bible time at the end of class" Mel recently shared. "I work with about 30 students weekly, ranging from ages 5 to 71, from busy business owners to retirees. Most of them are non-Christian, yet they consistently come to church to talk about their week. I can't count how many times English class seems to change from a classroom, to a counseling session, to a casual conversation and even Bible study. It's amazing to see how open people are to sharing their life if we just allow them the space to do so. I find myself wearing two hats most of the time - a teacher's hat and a counsellor's hat."

Mel also has expertise in audio-visual production. In recent months, the Lord seems to be opening up the way for Mel to concentrate more on creating media content for JM and the local churches. During April 2016, the Lord led Alex and Mel to help the victims of the Kumamoto earthquake. They made a video to promote the relief effort for the earthquake victims and churches that were devastated. We were astonished when we saw the video had over 30,000 views on Facebook alone! This has played an important role by helping to raise awareness for prayer, giving and volunteering. Over 3,000 volunteers came. This video and our most recent Christmas video can be viewed on You Tube at: www.youtube.com/user/TheJapanmission

There are thousands of churches in need of media assistance that do not have the financial or technical resources. **Pray** that the Lord will clearly lead as we pursue this ministry with so much potential.

■ If you have not received a calendar for 2017, or need another copy, kindly contact our Pretoria office and it will gladly be sent to you.