

movie helped to create an awareness in the minds of many Japanese -- that the building of the ark and the flood were indeed historical events. It helped raise interest and curiosity concerning the true story of Noah.

Mr. Takahara recently seized on this opportunity and spent many hours studying Noah's ark. He built a 1/150 scale model of the ark (mostly from cardboard), as recorded in the Bible. This ark was designed to come apart -- one floor at a time -- revealing how Mr. Takahara imagined the inner-workings to be. The story of the ark comes alive as he explains where a vegetable garden might have been cultivated and points to a small pulley and rope with a bucket to show how water might have been drawn up to the different levels of the massive structure.

Armed with a folder of details and facts, Mr. Takahara now travels to many places to explain the story of Noah's Ark to non-Christians, Sunday School students and interested Christians. Educating people about the truths of the Bible is a critical part of his ministry and helps to open eyes to God's Truth.

Mrs. Takahara continues to help her husband with the audio-visual work, speak at ladies meetings and counsel people. She is also the official JM representative who deals with important legal matters, such as taxation and religious incorporation.

Pray for protection, wisdom and guidance for Mr. and Mrs. Takahara. **Pray** that the Audio-Visual Department would continue to be effective in meeting the needs of the small churches of Japan.

JAPANORAMA - PRINTING GUNS

Japan has about two gun-related homicides per year. The police are armed, but the very strict laws on firearms prevent most people from possessing guns. In May 2014, a 27-year-old college employee was arrested for making guns with a 3-D printer. No ammunition was found, but the guns were fully functional and made of plastic. This was cause for alarm because these guns would not be detectable by regular security equipment found at airports, leading to fears that they could be used by hijackers.

PRAYER REQUEST

David and Sue Verwey will be visiting friends and taking meetings in South Africa from January to March 2015. **Pray** for blessing and protection.

INFORMATION & INQUIRIES

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"Call unto Me, and I will answer thee" Jer. 33:3

THE THREAD OF GOD'S GRACE

Jan / Feb 2015

Misa was born in 1973 to a traditional Japanese family in Kyoto City. Her parents met while attending a Buddhist university and were very religious. As a child, Misa went to various temples and attended summer camps that were organized by the local temple.

Her father worked long hours and seemed to be away most of the time. When he was home, he hardly smiled or laughed and would often fight with her mother. He was a man of few words and rarely revealed his emotions or showed affection towards his family.

Misa knew that he worked hard to provide for them, but she felt rejected and lonely. The only time her father showed any signs of approval was when she did well at school. She studied hard and tried to be a good daughter, but she couldn't live up to his high expectations. Praying to the Buddhist gods to find peace left her feeling empty and wondering about the true meaning of life.

While in high school, Misa heard a Christian radio broadcast. A testimony was shared in that program of a lady whose burdens were lifted when she gave her heart to Jesus. They then shared the well-known *Footprints in the Sand* illustration -- of how Jesus carries us through the lowest points of our lives and how He never leaves us nor forsakes us.

That was Misa's first encounter with Christianity. Her curiosity was stirred and she wanted to attend church, but her parents were against it. One day she received an advertisement to study English at a local church and her parents reluctantly agreed to let her go.



Misa Shepard

UK - For Gifts / Gift Aid:

Payable to: 'Japan Mission'
"Pebyll-Y-Brig", 1 Y-Graig
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Tel: 01443-224757

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For Tax Deductible Donations:
Clearly mark for 'Japan Mission'
Payable to: 'DM Stearns Missionary
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CANADA

For Tax Deductible Donations:
Payable to: 'Society of Japan Mission of
Canada for Evangelism' and send to:
#30, 1601 Cloverbar Road,
Sherwood Park, AB T8A 5Y8

She later learned that the church had distributed 1,000 leaflets and only three new English students had come! She was one of those three!

Misa was sixteen when she first read the Bible and attended church. She was deeply moved by the love and kindness of the missionaries as they spoke to her in their broken Japanese. She soon learned of how deeply Jesus loved her.

It did not take long for her to accept the Lord as Savior. Overwhelmed by God's love and peace, she was able to forgive her father and overcome her feelings of resentment and inferiority. Misa found true meaning and purpose when she discovered that God had a plan for her life.

It was sometimes difficult for her to face the strong opposition of her family, but she served joyfully at church and even started a Bible study group at the university she attended.

During her third year at Kobe City University, the Great Hanshin Earthquake struck on January 17, 1995 -- measuring magnitude 7.2, leaving more than 5,200 dead, 30,000 injured, 300,000 homeless and 110,000 buildings damaged!

Misa and her family lived in Kyoto, so they were largely unaffected, but transportation to and from Kobe became impossible. The Lord then led her to volunteer at a Christian hospital in Osaka to help victims of the earthquake.

After a year of volunteer work, she was able to resume her studies and graduate from Kobe City University

with a degree in International Relations. She was hired by a company in Kyoto, but resigned within a month because she was expected to care for the company shrine and do things that were dishonest. She felt that she would not be able to remain faithful to the Lord if she continued to work there. Her parents and grandparents were furious with her.

Misa became ill and spent time in bed because of the intense pressure and anxiety, but Jesus answered her persistent prayers in an amazing way. She received a phone call from the Christian hospital where she had volunteered after the Kobe earthquake. She was overjoyed when they asked her to join the Evangelical Department and help in the hospice.

She served as an assistant to the chaplain and was able to share Christ with many. After one year, she was given the responsibilities of receptionist and office worker. She worked there for the next 15 years.

The Lord then led her to marry Kevin Shepard in the summer of 2011. Kevin was a dedicated tent-making missionary from the USA who attended the same church as Misa.

The Lord led them to continue to serve at the church while witnessing to Misa's family.

Misa joined JM in February, 2014 and has been a great help with the finances, correspondence, translation work and with various outreach programs.

"When my husband first came

to Japan as a missionary 20 years ago, he received a visa from Japan Mission," Misa recently shared.

"I was saved in a church where many missionaries, including my future husband served. I worked for a Christian hospital in Osaka which was founded by medical missionaries, so I can see that I am the fruit of the love and faithful labor of missionaries."

"I see the thread of God's grace running through my whole life!"

"I'm so thankful to work with wonderful people who are full of God's love and joy. Thank you for your prayers.

Please pray that my family would come to know Christ and that I would continue to grow and serve God effectively through my work with the local church and JM." □

UPDATE - AUDIO-VISUAL OUTREACH

Most churches in Japan are quite small and have few resources. They often rely on outside organizations to provide them with literature, audio-visual materials and evangelistic programs. Japan Mission (JM) provides such materials as well as an English Evangelism Outreach Program to help churches reach their local communities. Many churches have found these to be helpful and effective tools.



Mr. & Mrs. Takahara

Mr. and Mrs. Takahara were both saved through the JM Hospital Evangelism Ministry and joined JM -- he in 1964 and she in 1968. They were later married in 1973 and felt a burden to communicate the Gospel through audio-visual media. Because of their vision, many thousands of Christian DVDs, CDs and other media have been distributed over the years throughout Japan.

Origins is a 6-part DVD series that makes a powerful case for Creation vs. Evolution. One man sent us a postcard saying, "Thank you! I now believe in the miracle of creation. This explanation made it so much easier for me to embrace Christianity." Educating the desperately lost and hopeless has led to the salvation of many who seek to know the truth.

Mr. Takahara leads workshops and seminars to train Christian workers to use audio-visual media to communicate the Gospel effectively. He also preaches at evangelistic meetings and lectures at Bible Colleges.

The Hollywood movie **Noah**, released in 2014, made a big impact in Japan. The inaccurate depiction of the story of Noah was not helpful. However, this