

MEETING THE CHALLENGE IN JAPAN



INSPIRING TESTIMONIES
BIBLES TO CHINA AND NORTH KOREA
CAPTIVATING STORIES OF BIBLE COURIERS

by David Verwey

Having worked in Japan as missionaries since 1987, David and Sue Verwey have been meeting the challenge of bringing hope through sharing God's love among the masses of Japan.

The task is enormous! Most of the 126 million Japanese people have not heard the Gospel and there is a critical shortage of Christian workers.

This book is about Japan Mission and what a devoted team of workers has been doing to meet the challenge. It features many inspiring testimonies of how the Holy Spirit has intervened and transformed hearts.

Captivating stories of Bible couriers and Bible distribution in China and North Korea are also included.



David and Sue Verwey



JAPAN MISSION
CALLED TO SERVE

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Meeting the Challenge in Japan

Other Japan Mission Books

The Voice of Joy
No Greater Love
On All Bare Heights
On Eagles' Wings
Even Unto Death
On Dry Ground
Half a Century in Japan
The Lame Take the Prey
Strong Shoes for Rough Roads

Books Available Online

This book and other publications
are available at: japanmission.org

Meeting the Challenge in Japan

David Verwey

All Scriptures quoted in this book are from the
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by David Verwey

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DEDICATED TO THE MINISTRY PARTNERS

This book is dedicated to the countless number of people who have partnered with us over the decades to help make the stories in this book possible. Some have remained anonymous. Others have gone to be with the Lord and their names may have been forgotten, but God will reward each and every one. Thank you for helping us make a difference in the lives of many!

WORDS OF APPRECIATION

I greatly appreciate the many dedicated friends and family members who made this book possible. The meticulous process of writing, editing, proof reading, layout and publishing this book was accomplished through the hard work of many dedicated volunteers. Thank you very much!

David Verwey

Japan Mission

Called to Serve

Japan Mission seeks to evangelize the unsaved and assist the Bible-believing churches of Japan. Most churches are small and in need of assistance with literature, evangelistic programs, media development and help from well-qualified workers. The ministry is interdenominational, not planting churches, but rather linking those reached through various avenues of ministry to already-existing churches.

Japan Mission has about 50 people in its family of workers, 30 of whom minister in Japan, and about 20 representatives in various countries who play a crucial role by helping Japan Mission stay in contact with prayer partners and supporters in Australia, Canada, South Africa, the UK and the USA.

Faithful co-workers play a vital role through teaching, preaching, evangelism, counseling, Bible study, correspondence and the publication of literature. Japan Mission also works in partnership with key associates who have been making an impact in the lives of many for the Gospel in India and East Asia.

Areas of Outreach

- Bibles & Literature
- English Evangelism
- Media & Creative Ministries
- International Christian Schools
- Outreach to Hospitals & the Elderly
- Evangelistic Meetings & Counseling
- Disaster Relief & Short-Term Opportunities

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1

Why Japan? Why Japan Mission?

The Lord has enabled the Japan Mission to meet the challenge of impacting the lives of many with the Gospel.

Although church growth statistics for Japan are disheartening, we have been encouraged to see the Lord at work in the hearts of those around us. *“With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible”* (Matthew 19:26).

It is hoped that readers of this book will be blessed and encouraged by the testimonies, which are clear demonstrations of answered prayer and the persuasive power of the Holy Spirit.

Questions often asked by people who are contemplating whether they should stand with us in the work of Japan Mission are as follows:

1. With my limited time and resources, how can I make a difference in the lives of many through partnering with Japan Mission?
2. What is the primary focus of this ministry and how are they accomplishing this task?
3. How is Japan Mission allocating their resources and what have been the results?
4. How is the mission adjusting to changing times and planning for future success?

This book answers these important questions and more. The further you read, the more you will discover that the Lord has been doing some amazing things to enable us to see some remarkable results.

THE GREAT NEED

Reaching the 126 million people of Japan with the Gospel of Jesus Christ is an enormous task. One purpose of this book is to raise awareness of this incredible need. Most Christians are unaware of the extent to which Japan remains unevangelized.

The statistics bear out the pressing need:

- Of the 126 million Japanese, less than half of 1% are Christian
- 600,000 claim to be evangelical Protestant Christians
- 300,000 Christians regularly attend church on Sundays
- There is 1 church for every 16,000 people
- 22 cities and 522 towns are without a single church
- There is 1 missionary for every 64,000 people
- There are 34% fewer missionaries now working in Japan as compared to the 1980s
- The 126 million Japanese are the second largest unreached people group in the world (Source: Joshua Project)

With numerous competing interests in world missions, it seems that Japan has become a forgotten mission field. Retiring missionaries are not being replaced — resulting in a drastic drop in the number of missionaries. There is a serious need for Christians all over the world to mobilize and send workers, so that significant inroads can be made to spread the Gospel throughout Japan.

JAPAN MISSION

Japan Mission was founded by the late Neil and Peggy Verwey in 1957. David and Sue Verwey continue this work with a group of talented and dedicated workers. Their son, Alex, and his wife, Eri, are an important part of this team.

The Lord has done many miracles over the years to bless and sustain the work of Japan Mission in the following ways:

1. God continues to provide a dedicated team of gifted missionaries who are willing to work sacrificially as they live out their calling to share the Gospel.

2. Japan Mission has been blessed with a rich history, as countless lives have been touched over six decades. One of our great treasures has been the deep relationships forged with Japanese Christians across Japan. There have been many remarkable stories of salvation, and a dedicated devotion among the converts to share in the work.

3. The work of Japan Mission is made possible through the regular financial contributions of many. The Lord has graciously provided us with a multitude of friends who continue to faithfully pray and give sacrificially towards God's work. Some have supported the work into the second and third generation!

Japan Mission is a *faith mission* and does not make a direct appeal for financial contributions. As the Lord guides us in ministry, we rely on Him to work in the hearts of His servants, and inspire them to give towards His work — according to His perfect timing. We praise the Lord for those He has called to stand with us in this manner!

MEETING THE CHALLENGE

The motto of Japan Mission is “Called to Serve.” We have been called to serve the Japanese in various ways, *so that some may be saved* (1 Corinthians 9:22). The two-fold focus of our ministry is to share the Gospel with the unsaved and assist the small Bible-believing churches of Japan.

It has been said, “Don’t judge each day by the harvest you reap, but by the seeds that you sow.” One focus of the work is to share the Good News and tirelessly sow the seed.

The second focus of the ministry is to help the small churches of Japan, which are often struggling and in need of Christian workers, evangelistic programs, literature, media and educational tools.

Japan is in need of churches that are spiritually-thriving centers of hope that can meet the needs of those in their communities. Workers and resources, provided by Japan

Mission, help to build up and empower churches, so that they can grow as the body of Christ and reach out to the unsaved.

We are keenly aware that church growth cannot be produced by man. Paul pointed out, *I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow* (1 Corinthians 3:6, NIV). Only God can make the church grow. Only the Holy Spirit can cause men to recognize the absolute depravity of their sin and come to a true knowledge of Jesus Christ. Only God can create growth, waves of revival and spiritual receptivity among the people with whom we work. This is why we are utterly dependent on the Holy Spirit to guide us in this work.

A wise man said, “We must adjust to changing times, but still hold to unchanging principles.” Japan Mission has been challenged to remain true to its original purpose — in an ever-changing world. As trends changed, the Lord has guided us to change our methods and strategies. We have no control over the waves, but we can learn to ride them. We cannot direct the wind, but we can adjust our sails.

As the world changes rapidly, Japan Mission has been faced with new opportunities and challenges. Some of these include evolving social needs and swiftly-developing technological advances. Significant changes over the past few decades include the advent of the smartphone, social media and a world that has gone from zero to almost five billion Internet users!

As we carry on this work, we are encouraged to know that many Christians have been called to partner with us. Their faithful prayers and support have continued to help us make a difference in the lives of many. We praise God for renewed lives, the leading of the Holy Spirit and His faithful provision!

Please refer to *Chapter 13* to learn more about how you can partner with us in this ministry.

2

God's Faithfulness Even unto Death

Neil and Peggy founded Japan Mission in 1957. Neil arrived from South Africa in 1951 and Peggy arrived from the United Kingdom in 1952. They first met each other in Japan while working with the Japan Evangelistic Band, and were married after completing two years of Japanese language study.



Neil & Peggy Verwey

Following World War II, there was much poverty and malnutrition. As Neil and Peggy worked among the Japanese, they saw a great need, especially among the tuberculosis (TB) patients who were mostly unreached with the Gospel. The hospitals welcomed Christian workers to comfort the sick and dying, but many mission organizations were reluctant to allow their missionaries to be exposed to TB, since there was no known cure that was widely available at the time.

Neil and Peggy prayed earnestly about this matter, and the Lord led them to establish the work of *Japan Mission for Hospital Evangelism* in 1957. They located in the densely populated city of Osaka, where there were about 1,000 TB hospitals within a radius of 100 square kilometers. The Lord gave the young Verweys a vision to train 100 Japanese evangelists to reach these patients with the Good News.

A radio broadcast was started, called the *Voice of Joy*, and a tract featuring a testimony of salvation was published each month, called *Fountain of Joy*.

Tens of thousands wrote in for a free New Testament and for spiritual help. Souls were saved and a number of churches were formed as a result of converts who came together after being discharged from hospital.

HUMBLE BEGINNINGS

The Lord used Neil in mighty ways to impact countless lives for the Gospel. Little did people know how the Lord would use this young man of such humble beginnings to accomplish so much for the Kingdom.

Neil was born in 1927 and grew up living in tents in the Kalahari Desert of South Africa. His father was a government worker who drilled for water and built wells so that farms could be established.

Neil saw very little rain or water as a young child. Some of his fondest childhood memories were of those few special days when they did strike water. Water spewed into the air as everybody celebrated, and the children ran through the water and played in it for hours.

Neil's mother was a God-fearing woman who faithfully prayed for her children. Neil would often come upon her as she was praying on her knees in their tent.

As a youngster, Neil walked barefoot. He only owned one pair of shoes, which he put on when he arrived at church on Sundays. After church, he slung them over his shoulder and carried them back home. Such was the life of this simple lad who grew up in the Kalahari.

HOW NEIL FOUND THE LORD

The Lord brought some very special people into Neil's life to encourage him. Kosie Pienaar, who was a spiritual father to him, was one such person. He helped Neil find the Lord, while holding meetings for the Africa Evangelistic Band in 1946, in the desolate dusty town of Kuruman, located on the edge of

the Kalahari Desert in the Northern Cape province of South Africa.

"I remember that tent we pitched in Kuruman," Kosie shared. "Pieter Scholtz (a co-worker) and I stepped away from that tent to pray. As I looked at that tent, I said to him, 'If I lived in Kuruman and saw that scruffy looking tent, I'm not sure if I would come.' We were surprised when 25 people showed up that evening!"

Many in Kuruman had been dissuaded from attending the tent meetings, which had a reputation of spreading radical ideas and questionable beliefs. Despite these warnings, Neil told his girlfriend that he might attend. "You are crazy!" she responded. This made him even more determined to go. Neil later admitted, "One reason I went to the first meeting was to spite my girlfriend."

"During one meeting, a strong gale came up and caused quite a commotion, as parts of the tent flapped violently in the wind," Pieter shared. "Kosie stopped speaking and prayed. After he prayed, the wind subsided — making a tremendous impression on the people."

"At the end of the meeting, I gave an invitation to those who wanted to accept Jesus to come forward," said Kosie. "About ten people came forward, so I asked Pieter to pray with five of them and I prayed with the other five."

"On the second night the Lord impressed on me to give another invitation. About six people came forward that night. I asked Pieter to pray with three and I prayed with the other three. It was then that I noticed a slender young man, Neil. 'You came forward last night. What are you doing here again?'" he asked.

"I came forward because I don't think that anything happened in my heart," replied Neil. "I feel the same."

Kosie then shared an illustration to help Neil understand. "If I told you that I had some money to give you tomorrow, would you come to my house?"

“Yes,” Neil replied.

“Why?” asked Kosie.

“Because I know that you have money.”

“It is the same with the Gospel,” said Kosie. “Your feelings don’t change the fact that God did something in your heart. You must believe what the Bible says and know that it is true.”

If you declare with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved (Romans 10:9-10, NIV).

“After I shared that illustration with Neil, I could see by the look in his eyes that a light had come on and he understood,” Kosie shared.

Neil’s younger sister, Annatjie, also gave her heart to the Lord that night. She later went to the Democratic Republic of Congo as a missionary nurse and influenced many people for the Kingdom.

Later that evening, Neil knelt by a big stone near his house and prayed, “Lord, my heart feels as cold as this stone, but I believe!” That night – November 11, 1946 – was when he dedicated his life to the Lord, and when the journey began that led him to Japan.

Decades ago, two evangelists faithfully preached the Word in that small dusty town of Kuruman, and the Holy Spirit started a work in the lives of two young people — resulting in the salvation of many souls. Praise the Lord!

VISIT TO KURUMAN

In 1998, Neil and Peggy returned to the same place where Neil had prayed that special prayer. They brought their son, David, and his wife, Sue, as well as their three grandsons, Jesse, Alex and Chris.



The Verwey Family
(Neil, Peggy, David, Sue, Jesse, Alex & Chris)

Neil wrote the following about this experience:

It was one of my most cherished desires to bring my grandchildren to Kuruman and to kneel with them beside that rock where I found the Lord. I wanted to walk with them to the places where I took my first baby steps in Christ. Above all, I wanted them to meet Mr. and Mrs. Collen, my spiritual mentors, who were now in their nineties.

I phoned Mrs. Collen, and she told me that Mr. Collen had been affected by a stroke and could no longer speak. "Please ask uncle Johnny to hang on!" I requested. "I first want him to place his hands on the heads of my grandchildren and bless them before he leaves for his heavenly abode."

When we arrived, Mr. Collen placed his right hand on the heads of my grandsons and blessed them. He could no longer utter any words, but the emotion of those moments became sacred to us. Tears welled up in his eyes, telling us of the blessings he had imparted to Jesse, Alex and Chris. In that room with the Collens, and later at the place where I had found the Lord, with tears, we renewed our covenant with God.

Neil then shared this wonderful story about Mrs. Collen with his grandchildren:

It was in Japan in September 1965, when I woke up one morning feeling very ill. Peggy called a doctor and I was promptly hospitalized. Since I regularly visited TB hospitals, the doctor insisted on an immediate X-ray.

The doctor showed me an X-ray with a large inexplicable white mass that stood out like a lighthouse in my left lung. "It could be lung cancer, it could be a type of rapid TB or it could be pneumonia," he explained.

"I feel as sick as a dog!" I told Peggy when she visited me the next day. Three days later, as I lay desperately ill, I suddenly felt as though God had touched me. I told the nurse, "I believe the Lord has healed me." Alarmed, she thought that I was becoming delirious, so she ran off to find the doctor and brought him to my bedside.

"Doctor, I believe that the Lord has touched me and that I am well enough to leave." The doctor took my temperature, and after examining me he said, "Give me another three days, and we'll see what the new findings are." Three days later, I was discharged with a clean bill of health.

About ten days later, I received a letter from Mrs. Collen in South Africa. Many years before, she promised the Lord, "If Neil ever has a special need, please let me know and I will drop everything to pray for him."

When I was gravely ill in that hospital, God told her to pray for me. "Today you will have to get your own food," she told her children and withdrew to her place of prayer.

Afterwards, she wrote me a letter to inquire about my well-being. "I don't know what was wrong with you," she wrote, "but please let me know. Were you in any danger?" Her prayers had come at the very time when I was so sick that I could not pray for myself!

As we listened to Neil tell this story, we reflected on God's faithfulness over the years. We stand amazed at the tapestry of God's plan and how He continues to weave the remarkable story of the Verwey family.

A NEW WAY OF LIFE

When Neil and Peggy first arrived in Japan, they were faced with many unfamiliar customs and practices. Instead of the common handshake, everyone greeted each other with a bow. Neil had to learn to wear shoes to church and take them off to go inside.

Chopsticks took a while to master and eating raw fish, raw eggs, fermented beans and seaweed was a challenge. On some occasions Neil would pray, "Lord I will eat this, but please help me to keep it down."

Due to the scarcity of water in the Kalahari Desert, Neil learned as a child to wash his entire body with only a few cups of water. When bathing in Japan, one is expected to use plenty of water to first wash and rinse outside the bathtub and then enjoy a soak in the clean water. The water in the tub is then left for the next person who would come along to bathe.

The Kalahari was vast and sparsely populated. Everything in Japan was built to maximize space and crowded. On occasion, Neil experienced intense feelings of claustrophobia when he was pushed into a train by attendants during rush hour so that the doors could close. As people were pressed together and the air quality became humid and dank, some would light a cigarette. This would cause the entire train car to be filled with blue smoke as it sped along the tracks for the 30-minute ride to the center of the city.

A driver's license during the 1940s in the Kalahari was quite easy to secure. When Neil turned 16, he went to the government office to get a license. The fellow looked at Neil and asked, "Would you like one for a truck? That way you can drive any vehicle." The license was issued on the spot with no need to take a test. Getting a license in Japan involved tests and a lot more paperwork.

Such were the many adjustments that Neil and Peggy made as they struggled to learn the language and fit into the complexities of this foreign culture.

THE TWILIGHT YEARS

The Verweys' ministry was fruitful and exceeded their expectations. The Lord used Peggy to reach countless people for the Lord during her 56 years of missionary service.

All her life, wherever she went, Peggy distributed literature and talked to people. Until she was 87, she never left home without tracts for those who might cross her path.

Peggy went to be with the Lord in 2008 and Neil was promoted to glory in 2013. The Lord Himself took care of both of them in wonderful ways to the very end. *"Even to your old age and gray hairs I am He, I am He who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you"* (Isaiah 46:4, NIV).

Instead of a funeral, a thanksgiving service was held to celebrate Peggy's life. It was easy to plan her send-off because she left detailed instructions. She chose the Scripture readings and the hymns. She wanted it to be a time of rejoicing, so she requested that no one wear somber black clothes.

On an ordinary workday, some 180 people from all over Japan gathered in a church in Osaka for the occasion. Many of her friends shared some encouraging words of reflection.

Mr. Nakajima, a close friend of over 50 years, related how he had first met Peggy while he was in hospital as a TB patient. He thought Peggy looked most beautiful. He and his friends used to refer to her as Ingrid Bergman — a popular, charming movie star of that time.

"Because Neil and Peggy gave their lives to Japan, they introduced 28 converts to my church," he shared. "I was one of those people, and now I attend church with my wife, 4 children and 9 grandchildren!"

With tears in his eyes, Mr. Nakajima told of how one of his daughters had the opportunity to reach an influential lady for the Lord Jesus and introduce her to church. It was encouraging to hear how the work begun by Neil and Peggy was now being carried on by the younger generation!

Mrs. Hayashi was a writer for the Japan Mission. When she heard that Peggy went to be with the Lord, she said, *“Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.”* (Matthew 25:21).



Neil & Peggy Verwey

“I discovered the secret to Peggy’s fruitfulness many years ago while living at the Japan Mission headquarters,” Mrs. Hayashi shared. “My room was opposite the room that Peggy used for her quiet time. Hot, sweaty summer nights or icy winter days did not change her pattern. By 5:30 am, I would see the light go on in her window without fail.” During the bitter cold winters, with no heating available, Peggy kept a metal hot water container on her lap and wrapped herself in a thick blanket, before she started to commune with God.

“I knew her hidden life with the Lord was her inner strength, which went with her when she left her room to meet people,” said Mrs. Hayashi. “When special problems loomed, and Neil thought it was time to fast and pray, Peggy would joyfully join him.”

LIFE AFTER PEGGY

When Peggy died on December 5, 2008, Neil knelt before the Lord and inquired, “Lord, how can I go on without Peggy? She was such an important part of my life!”

While still in search of an answer, Neil picked up the daily devotional book that Peggy had penned, *The Lamb Take the Prey*. He started to read the portion for December 6. To his utter amazement, that reading was entitled, *How Can We Face Death?*

Neil wrote the following about this encouraging experience:
I read what Peggy wrote and it was about suffering and death. It was as if she was writing to me personally:

“It is not God’s intention that you should look down at the grave or down into the emptiness of your breaking heart, but rather to look up into the face of God and see there His love and purpose for your life. Never allow God’s work to suffer while you feel sorry for yourself, but put your grief into new energy for service. There are too many around us who are also suffering and in need of our help.”

When I dropped off to sleep, these words of comfort were still fresh in my mind, and they triggered a strange dream! In my dream, Peggy and I were still very young, fair and energetic. We invited two very special people over for brunch, and we wanted to give them the very best.

Peggy and I served our distinguished guests pancakes with golden syrup. One of our guests had already eaten a hearty breakfast before he came. While holding his stomach, he explained that he could not eat a single bite of our specially prepared pancakes! The other guest enjoyed them very much and could not stop talking about the wonderful brunch we had prepared.

Suddenly, in my dream, the guests and Peggy disappeared, and I was completely alone and so sad that tears welled up in my eyes. I was staring at the pancakes and golden syrup, feeling very sorry for myself.

Unexpectedly, there was a clamorous noise at the door. People wanted to come in, and I still had plenty of pancakes and golden syrup to serve them!

As I awoke, I was lingering in bed thinking about the meaning of the dream, when I realized that I still needed to serve heavenly pancakes and the golden syrup to many hungry people!

Some would be so engorged with what the world offers that they would not have any room for my heavenly pancakes, but some of them would be hungry for them!

The Lord clearly showed Neil that He still had work for him to do. Little did Neil know that three years later, the Lord would have him play a vital role as Japan recovered from the triple disaster of March 11, 2011 when earthquakes, tsunami and nuclear melt-downs devastated northeast Japan. At the age of 84, Neil traveled extensively throughout that region to encourage the Christians and witness to the unsaved.

WHY CANCER?

When Neil was diagnosed with cancer in November 2010, he slowed his activities down quite a bit, but continued to write and preach regularly. Neil desired above all to glorify the Lord until the very end. 2 Corinthians 12:9 became more precious to him. *"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness"* (NIV).

Shortly before Neil passed away, he preached on how the Lord had given him peace about his illness and how he was looking forward to seeing the Lord Jesus.

He gave a copy of this message to many, including a couple who owned a gasoline station. A while later, the owner's wife approached Neil and confided in him. "My husband has cancer and is scheduled for surgery. We are terrified! We don't have the kind of peace that you mention on that CD. What do we need to do in order to find the peace that you have?"

Shortly after, they visited Neil and David at Japan Mission and both accepted the Lord as Savior! The Holy Spirit used that message CD in a powerful way to transform their hearts!

Neil later received an encouraging letter from the owner's wife, who was just taking her first steps as a baby Christian:

Previously, I would not have uttered the word 'Jesus' or prayed. You have taught us so much! It is as though I found an irreplaceable treasure.

I think back to when you and Peggy would come to our gasoline station. My heart would often leap for joy, in anticipation of the

wonderful conversations we were about to have! Unfortunately, our place was always so busy and we could never take the time to talk for very long.

Words cannot describe the joy I felt in my heart when you and David invited us to your house to visit and talk. It was like a dream come true! It was at that time that I decided to receive the Lord and read the Bible.

Thank you for helping us find the peace that you have in your heart!

Neil was truly an inspiration to many. It has been said that true greatness can be measured by the extent to which a man has inspired and spurred others on to greatness. Neil's passion and mission in life was to encourage others to have a closer walk with the Lord.

Neil's final months were very difficult. He was sustained by the faithful prayers of many as he battled an aggressive form of lung cancer. Many prayed for healing, but it did not happen.

About a month before Neil died, he wrote the following to his friends:

With the searing pain of cancer spreading throughout my body, I am in a relentless fight for every precious moment of sleep. In my younger days, I imagined that death would be a simple passing from this life to the next, but this last stage is proving to be most severe.

*Often in a daze, I drift in and out of sleep and must constantly guard my thoughts. As I age, the fiercest spiritual battle is fought over my mind. As Christians, we are commanded to **take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ** (2 Corinthians 10:5, NIV). Please pray that I would continue to be given the strength to make every thought obedient to Christ, until the Lord calls me home.*

Some people asked, "Why cancer? Why so much pain?" In Neil's case it became clear why the Lord allowed these things in his life. As a result, he was able to share Jesus with those who also struggled with cancer.

While he was in the hospital, one patient was placed in the

bed next to him with inoperable late-stage cancer. He was very open to talk, so Neil shared Psalm 23 with him.

God called Neil in his youth to be a hospital evangelist and in this way, He enabled him to continue in this calling until the very end!

Neil also shared the Gospel with the many doctors, nurses and social workers who came to care for him. One of the doctors asked Neil what he could do for him. "I am now in a hurry to go to heaven to see Jesus and my wife Peggy," was his reply as he shook the doctor's hand. "If you believe in Jesus, you too can have this hope that I have!"

NEIL'S HOME CALLING

Several days before Neil breathed his last, he told his only son David, "Please pray that the Lord would take me now. I am so looking forward to seeing Jesus!"

Neil Verwey was 86 when he breathed his last on August 5, 2013 — exactly four years and eight months after Peggy died on December 5, 2008.

Over 200 people gathered for a service to celebrate his life. Much of the message from the Word was evangelistic because many non-Christians that Neil had befriended were present.

Hearts were moved as a Christian businessman, Mr. Nakajima, shared a short testimony and reflected on what Neil had meant to him and his business.

"I first met Neil in 1955 when I was hospitalized with TB. I decided to follow Jesus at one of the meetings that Japan Mission held in the hospital. After I was released from hospital, I met Neil in Osaka and reluctantly invited him to my place of business.

"The reason for my reluctance was that my father was the head of the business and had placed a number of idols and religious paraphernalia in various parts of the office. I was his only son and my father felt compelled to do what he could to appease the deities, with the hope that I would be healed of TB.

“Being a new Christian and deeply grateful for my father’s love and concern, I did not have the courage to tell my father that I did not appreciate such religious gestures.

“As Neil left, he assured me of his prayers. I thought that his offer to pray for me was simply a polite greeting, but to my surprise, Neil visited our office each month to pray with me.

“I then noticed that the idols and religious paraphernalia in our office gradually began to disappear! After many months, the Holy Spirit seemed to work in my father’s heart, because he eventually removed all the religious items! I was so surprised because I don’t recall that Neil ever met my father when he visited me or talked to him. What a miracle!

“As my faith grew stronger, I invited my father to church, and a number of years later he decided to follow Jesus. When my father agreed, we burned the family altar and renounced all ties with Buddhism.

“Subsequently, the Lord prospered our business and it is now an openly Christian company, which strives to impact people for the Lord,” Mr. Nakajima shared. What a wonderful testimony of changed lives and the power of prayer!

Many were moved as the Holy Spirit spoke to their hearts. After the service, a good friend and successful businessman shared with David that attending the service caused him to recall many things from his past.

“I remember when I was a child, my mother would not give me my weekly pocket money until I had attended Sunday School. The service today brought back many memories, and caused me to think again about reading the Bible and making a serious commitment to God.”

During the last month of Neil’s life, a nurse, Yuki, came to care for him for a few hours a week. The night he died at home, she came to help us clean and dress his body. As we were quietly talking, she asked about Neil’s life. David and Sue took her into

the next room and showed her the four computer screens where he had worked until May 2013.

She was amazed when we explained that Neil was in contact with thousands of people through his preaching, writing and e-mail ministry. She said that she would love to read something he wrote, so we gave her some Japanese literature and a copy of a book that was filled with testimonies.

Yuki later sent us a postcard, which read:

It has been about three months since Neil went to be with the Lord. I am slowly reading the book that you gave me when Neil passed away. Through it, I have come to know the beauty, purity and sincerity of Neil's heart.

It was only for a short while, but it was an inspiration to witness your precious family ties and the love you had for one another. Our hearts were refreshed and healed as we related to Neil.

I imagine that Neil is now faithfully doing some other work for the Lord in heaven. Please take care. Sincerely yours, Yuki.

Many were inspired through Neil's life and death. During his final months he wrote the following thoughts to his friends:

*We often pray that the Lord would be glorified in our lives. Perhaps we should also pray that He would be glorified in our death. **For this God is our God for ever and ever: He will be our guide even unto death** (Psalm 48:14, KJV).*

*It is wonderful to know that the Lord will be our comfort and lovingly guide us — even unto our death. This verse encourages us to trust in the Lord and not worry about the future. **Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you** (1 Peter 5:7, NIV).*

THE NEXT GENERATION

Like his grandfather, Alex also believes in the power of prayer. He often prayed with his grandfather before he left for work in the mornings and continued doing so until Neil went to be with the Lord.

Neil wrote the following about Alex when his grandson was only seventeen years old:

On September 9, 2003, Peggy and I were just about to go out quietly to celebrate our 50th wedding anniversary. On our way to the car, I happened to notice Alex, wiping the perspiration off his forehead as he was cleaning the grime out of an air conditioner.

“Alex, do you know what the real purpose for your life is?” I casually asked him as I walked by.

“To glorify God,” he responded with the most thought-provoking answer, and that while he was dirty with grime and grease! When I had flippantly voiced that question to Alex, I did not realize that, at his age, he would so quickly and accurately give me the reason why he was here on Earth.

*As we drove away in the car, and I saw Alex in the rear-view mirror concentrating on his dirty job, the following verse came to mind: **Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31).***

After being married in July 2008, Alex and Eri went to the USA to further their studies. Upon their return, Eri started to work part-time with Japan Mission.

Their first child, William, was born in July 2012. Neil’s heart



The Four Generations
(David, Neil, Alex & William, born in July 2012)



Alex, Eri, Will (7), Joey (5) & Nao (2)



David, Sue, Alex & Eri

was filled with joy as he became a great-grandfather for the first time. Alex and Eri were a great encouragement to him as he suffered from cancer.

Neil often prayed for the third and fourth generation, “Lord please ensure that there will always be a generation of Verweys doing missionary work in Japan!” The same month that Neil was promoted to glory, the Lord answered this prayer by guiding Alex and Eri to join Japan Mission as full-time workers.

The Lord later blessed them with Joseph, born in August 2014, and a girl, Naoko, born in July 2017. The Lord has opened up many avenues of ministry for Alex and Eri through their children.

Alex has a true desire to carry on in his grandfather's footsteps. David and Sue now work together with Alex and Eri, who are part of a younger generation of missionaries that are full of enthusiasm and new ideas.

Their heart's desire is to continue the work that was started by Neil and Peggy — to see souls saved!

3

The Great Need and Opportunity to Serve

Shinto and Buddhism are the two main religions of Japan. 84% of Japanese claim to adhere to both religions, but most are not regular worshipers and are unsure of their beliefs.

Shinto is a form of animism, where anything of significance is worshiped including the sun, moon, mountains, boulders, trees and people. Japanese Buddhism focuses on the afterlife, which is devoted to the worship of the spirits of the ancestors.

During the New Year's holidays, about 70 million people visit temples and shrines to pray for health, prosperity and a long happy life. It is believed that the first prayer offered in the New Year is of special significance and will be answered. Each shrine specializes in some special form of blessing. There is even a shrine for gangsters and thieves, where they can pray for success in their activities.

One unusual shrine, dedicated to the good fortune of divers, is located 18 meters (60 feet) underwater off the coast of Chiba prefecture. It is frequented by divers who venture into its icy waters, seeking protection and blessing for the year to come.

In contrast, Christians are assured by the knowledge that our source of blessing and hope comes from our precious Savior, with whom anything is possible — in the midst of a troubled world. *“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future”* (Jeremiah 29:11, NIV).

WORLD WAR II

There have been a number of periods in Japanese history when people have been particularly responsive to the Gospel. These periods have been characterized by times of upheaval and uncertainty.

One such period was after World War II, after the destructive power of two atomic bombs was unleashed. About five million Japanese were killed during the war, and the survivors experienced the collapse of their families and ambitions.

General Douglas MacArthur of the US Armed Forces made an urgent appeal for Christian missionaries to come to Japan. He recognized that this would be far more effective than including references to God in the new Constitution, which stripped the emperor of all authority and granted political power to the people.

Neil and Peggy Verwey were among those who responded to this call, and many came to know the Lord as a result.

HARSH SOCIAL PRESSURES

As the Japanese became prosperous, Christianity failed to take root in society and severe social pressures threatened to choke what remained — as written in Matthew 13:7, the *seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants* (NIV).

The Gospel can be freely preached in Japan without any restrictions, but harsh social pressures have severely impeded the spread of Christianity. Loyalty to one's group is considered paramount, whether to the family or company.

Forsaking this group for the sake of a personal belief has been the cause of much persecution. Japanese Christians often face the threat of being ostracized if they do not conform to cultural norms, such as pressure to work on Sundays, to worship and tend idols, to cheat on taxes or to participate in social drinking.

On one occasion, a sixteen-year-old girl, who had recently

given her heart to the Lord, returned home. Her father told her to go to the neighbor's house to pay her respects to the grandmother who had just passed away. This is the custom after someone dies, and involves offering incense and praying to the spirit of the deceased.

When the daughter refused, he furiously told her that her selfish devotion to Christianity would bring shame to their household, and therefore she was no longer welcome in their home!

Such situations are common. In this case, we were able to provide this girl with the necessary emotional support and temporary housing until she was able to be reconciled with her family.

Japan is in need of more Christian workers who are prepared to provide this kind of love and support to new Christians.

STATISTICS

The present-day state of Christianity in Japan is bleak. The vast majority of churches are small and struggling. Most are filled with the elderly and have an attendance of fewer than 30 people on a Sunday.

89% of Japan's pastors are over the age of 50 and 71% are over 60, which will result in a severe shortage of ministers in the years to come, if nothing changes.

Of a population of 126 million, one half of one percent claim to be Protestant Christians — amounting to about 600,000 church members. On most Sundays, only 300,000 people attend evangelical churches nationwide. There are 22 cities and 522 towns without a single church. There is only one church for every 16,000 people. There are about 7,900 Protestant Christian churches in Japan, as compared to the 81,000 Shinto shrines that dot the country.

Japan continues to be one of the least-evangelized countries in the world. The vast majority have never heard the Good

News, and there are very few Christian workers.

Sadly, Japan seems to be a forgotten mission field. There are 34% fewer Protestant Christian missionaries serving in Japan now compared to the 1980s. There is one missionary for every 64,000 Japanese people! Retiring missionaries are not being replaced, resulting in a drastic drop in the number of missionaries.

Bibles are readily available, but the sad reality is that most Japanese have never heard the Gospel. This seems to be due to affluence, social pressures to conform, a reluctance of Christians to share their faith and a shortage of Christian workers.

According to one mission organization, Global Church Planting Network, Japan is one of the least-reached nations in the world. A study in 2015 of cities and towns that do not have a church found that, of 29 of Japan's 47 prefectures, at least 50% of the towns did not have even a single church. Two prefectures had no churches at all and only one prefecture had one church in every town.

Thus, they concluded that not only have a large majority of those in Japan never heard the Good News, but they have had little opportunity to hear the Gospel, since there are so many towns that do not have even one church!

This incredible need highlights what the apostle Paul wrote. *How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And HOW CAN THEY HEAR WITHOUT SOMEONE PREACHING TO THEM? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!'* (Romans 10:14-15, NIV)

Most Christians are not aware of the extent to which Japan has not been evangelized. Christians all over the world need to recognize this incredible need and mobilize to share in the vital task of spreading the Gospel throughout Japan. A movement of the Holy Spirit and much work is still needed in order for the Church to have a vibrant presence.

HOPELESSNESS

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

After the Japanese experienced the horrors of World War II and State Shinto, Emperor Hirohito made a public declaration that he was not a god. The combination of these things resulted in a profound sense of loss and betrayal, leaving deep scars on the psyche of the Japanese people and causing most to have no hope for the future. This is why a deep sense of skepticism towards organized religion and the government is still evident today.

The pervasive teaching of evolution, which concludes that human beings are no more than a coincidental part of the animal kingdom, has also been the cause of hopelessness — particularly among the youth.

Feelings of hopelessness and isolation have caused many to turn to suicide. Over 22,000 people commit suicide annually, amounting to 60 people per day!

Many feel empty and are in search of some sort of purpose and meaning in life. Japan has about 183,000 registered cult groups and is known as the cult capital of the world.

A moral vacuum has caused many to turn to living for the moment and indulging in lascivious pleasures, while in search of an escape. Alcoholism, drug addiction, video game and social media addiction are all causing severe social problems.

Pornography is rampant and abortion is commonly used as a means of birth control. Marital unfaithfulness is also a problem.

Families are breaking down as fathers work such long hours that their children may see them for only one hour per week.

What is the answer to this hopelessness? The solution can only be found in our Creator God. *I pray that God, the source of hope, will fill you completely with joy and peace because you trust in him. Then you will overflow with confident hope*

through the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 15:13, NLT).

OPPORTUNITIES ABOUND

In the midst of all this darkness, opportunities abound and Japan is ripe for the Gospel. When those in Japan were asked if they could choose a religion, 79% expressed the greatest interest in Christianity.

Japan is in urgent need of Christian workers who are teachers, preachers, musicians, artists, athletes, storytellers, puppeteers, and well-trained professionals in all walks of life. These people can play a vital role in pointing people to the hope that we have in Jesus.

Jesus said, *“The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest”* (Matthew 9:37-38). Please join us in this prayer!

We believe that there are those among the 126 million, whose hearts have been prepared by the Holy Spirit — who must hear the Gospel. *For He chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight. In love He predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with His pleasure and will* (Ephesians 1:4-5, NIV).

We can, therefore, confidently ask the Lord, “Please lead us to the seeking ones among the masses — whose hearts have been prepared by the Holy Spirit.” We have witnessed our gracious and sovereign Lord do many miracles to put us in contact with the very people who must hear the Gospel.

One such lady responded to a newspaper advertisement offering a free New Testament. She wrote to explain how she had lost all hope in the “nearby gods.” “Now I walk out every morning on my porch and pray to the *far-away* God.”

It was so wonderful when one of our workers could write to her, “We know this *far-away* God and would like to help you get to know Him better!” We sent her some literature and introduced her to a church where she found the Lord.

On one occasion, the Lord sent a number of people to our property who were meant to hear the Good News through a most unusual incident. One afternoon, our work was suddenly interrupted by a series of thunderous explosions that shook our buildings. As we ran outside, we saw a vehicle, engulfed in flames, plunge into our property!

We later learned that the driver was delivering oxygen canisters just up the road from Japan Mission when he noticed that a fire had started in the undercarriage of his vehicle. He drove out onto the main road, which was the only place he could find that was away from any buildings.

He turned off the engine and put his emergency brake on. He then called the fire department while trying to extinguish the flames. As fire engulfed the vehicle, the driver fled, and sirens could be heard in the distance.

Shortly after, there were several deafening explosions, violently blowing apart oxygen canisters and parts of the vehicle. It then started to slowly roll down the hill and gain speed, before it plowed into the parking area of our property!

A few fire trucks soon arrived and spent the better part of an hour extinguishing the blaze. Fortunately, no one was injured, and our property sustained minimal damage.

Representatives from the medical supply company flocked to the scene to apologize. They were dumbfounded by what seemed to be a freak accident.

This was our opportunity to show kindness and witness to those who came to clean up the property over the next few days. We handed out a number of tracts as we spoke with them of how wonderfully God had protected us all.

It was our hope that they would see Jesus through our gracious attitudes. We were keenly aware that *we* may be the only *Bible* that some of them may ever *read*. Days later, we were encouraged when we overheard our unsaved neighbors say, "Despite the horrific accident, nobody was hurt because their God protected them!"

Despite the bleak statistics, we are full of hope and stand amazed at the various ways the Lord continues to use those from all walks of life to accomplish His special task.

Mark Bercero joined Japan Mission from the Philippines in February 2018. He travels to several churches to serve as an English evangelism teacher, to help those churches reach their communities for Christ.

The Lord is also using Mark in another remarkable way. He is a trained medical nurse and was able to teach medical English to doctors in the Osaka area via the Internet, while still living in the Philippines. Now that Mark is in this area, these same doctors contacted him again to learn medical English.

When Mark shares his heart for this ministry, he often says that he feels called to *influence those who influence society*. The Lord Himself sent Mark to Japan to enable him to use his unique gifts to befriend and share Christ with these doctors!

The Lord sometimes uses the most unassuming people to sow the seed and do His bidding. Japan Mission workers prayed for an English student, Yoko, because her grown son was about to undergo brain surgery. As relatives gathered, her other son who was working overseas, flew in with his family from the USA and stayed in a nearby hotel.

It was during this time that Yoko's young grandson, who had attended Sunday School in the USA, took the Gideon Bible from the drawer in the hotel room and placed it in his grandmother's hands saying, "Grandma, we need to trust Jesus!"

The next week, Yoko shared with great relief that the surgery was a success and that her son was recovering. She then shared of how her grandson was such a great encouragement to her.

Our workers were astonished to learn how God Himself had used this little boy to comfort and sow the seed in the heart of his grandma!

THE JAPANESE WORLDVIEW

The Japanese people have a unique way of compartmentalizing life. This is because most value relationships and loyalty to their social group over the logical conclusions that they may have learned at educational institutions.

On the one hand, Japanese are highly educated and keen students of science. They are technologically advanced, and evolution is taught in most of the schools. Intellectually, this has served to undermine their belief in the spirit world and the afterlife, and has caused most to conclude that man is but an animal.

On the other hand, this intellectual understanding takes a back seat to the importance of relationships. Japanese are group-oriented and eager to perpetuate the traditions that bring them together.

This is particularly evident during the New Year's Season, when most families travel home to gather for the holiday. Visiting temples and shrines to pray for good luck during this time is a widely practiced family tradition.

In Japan, it is often considered rude to phone a friend on New Year's Day, because it is a day that is normally reserved for family — much like Christmas Day in Western countries.

Much of Japanese society is held together because the Japanese people place the highest value on loyalty to the group. Most do not adhere to Shinto or Buddhism because they are firm believers. The primary reason followers observe the rites and rituals is to maintain the social connections that stem from keeping in step with the long-standing traditions.

Buddhist funerals are social occasions, where members of the extended family are expected to gather to dine, while worshipping and offering incense to the spirit of the deceased.

Most Japanese are taught from a young age that everything of significance has a spirit and this belief is pervasive. When undergoing an abortion, there is very little discussion of whether a baby is a person or a fetus. Most Japanese acknowledge the

stark reality that they are taking a life and that this life has a spirit that will continue into the afterlife. These guilt-ridden women often frequent temples after their abortion to make offerings to the spirit of their dead baby, in hopes of easing their guilt and helping the baby to go to the Buddhist paradise.

Because the Japanese have a unique view of the world, we have found that there are effective ways to help them understand Christian ideals. The following are *five ways to influence the Japanese people for the Kingdom*, based on their unique worldview.

1. The Creator God – The Japanese are great admirers of nature. Their admiration of the intricacies of nature causes many of them to be open to a higher Being who created all things in a perfect and orderly manner.

Introducing a Japanese person to the *Creator God* as the only God we worship, is often a good place to start talking about God. *For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities — His eternal power and divine nature — have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse* (Romans 1:20, NIV).

2. A Gentle God Who Cares – A popular verse that moves hearts is Matthew 11:28-29. *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls"* (NIV).

Upon first hearing this verse, the Japanese are often surprised and confused. It is difficult for them to fathom finding rest for their souls in a loving and gracious God. All of their lives, they have been taught to fear and appease the gods, for fear of retribution and that some cruel fate might befall them. A glimpse of their fearsome and grotesque idols reveals the vengeful nature of their gods. Many have found peace as they come to understand the true meaning of this verse and the depth and gentle nature of God's love.

3. The Great High Priest – The Gospels and verses, such as John 3:16, can be difficult for the Japanese to comprehend. Their worldview is more in tune with temples and priests. Hebrews speaks of Jesus as our *Great High Priest*. Such passages can be useful when helping them comprehend the true nature of God.

There are some similarities between the Jewish and Shinto religions. At the Shinto shrine, the priest bestows a special blessing by waving a stick with dozens of white wool-like tassels over worshipers to purify them. This is much like the Jewish priests, who waved the hyssop over the offerings.

Sharing about Jesus as our *Great High Priest* can be an effective way to help the Japanese people understand that we can only be purified and redeemed through placing our trust in the *Great Mediator*.

4. Cleansing from Sin – The concept of cleansing oneself by washing in consecrated water at the entrance of the shrine before worshiping is a basic Shinto teaching. Japanese people often sense a profound need to be cleansed from their sin and improve themselves, so that they can live a good life. Many are frustrated because they know that they cannot do this in their own strength.

They are often drawn to the idea that Jesus can cleanse their heart from sin and give them the strength to live a good life. They are relieved and comforted when they discover that Jesus assures that the Holy Spirit will empower them so that they do not need to strive to be good on their own.

“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you” (John 14:26).

5. Residing in a Foreign Country – While living in a foreign country, most Japanese seem to be more open to the Gospel and prepared to embrace a new worldview. There, they are free from the spiritual and social constraints that hinder them from curiously pursuing their interest in Christianity. Many have

given their hearts to the Lord while studying or working abroad.

A renewed life, through the regeneration of the Holy Spirit, plays a critical role in changing one's worldview. The Japanese people are often polite and may show outward signs of agreeing with what we say. This may cause us to make the mistake of thinking that they have genuinely embraced our beliefs.

Such people often return to Japan and go back to their old ways of worshiping idols because they did not truly understand and turn from their sinful ways. If we suspect this, it is helpful to ask them, "Do you believe that God walked on this earth in the form of Jesus and died on the cross for your sins?"

Becoming a Christian is not joining a religion. It is about being born again through the renewing work of the Holy Spirit. Evidence of this renewal is the conviction of sin, repentance and bearing fruit — resulting in Christian growth, which often instills a desire in that person to tell others about Jesus.

When such people return to Japan, they often find it difficult to fit into society and need much help to adjust. Japan Mission has helped many such new Christians.

THE FAITHFUL REMNANT

While Japan has been experiencing a severe decline in the number of Christian workers, we are convinced that God will always leave a faithful remnant in place to continue to give hope to the hopeless. This can be observed throughout much of history — including the time of Queen Esther of old (Esther 4:14).

Japan faced one of its darkest hours during World War II, when Christianity was suppressed and Christians were imprisoned. Even at that time, there was a man that God appointed to openly preach the Word of God in Japan.

His name was Mr. Izawa, and he was born around 1900. When he was born, he was so disfigured that the attending physician told his mother, "This is not a human being. Let me

end his life.”

The unsaved mother replied, “No, the gods have some purpose in bringing a life like this into the world.”

At 12, he still could not walk and at 18, he went to a famous Buddhist priest and asked, “Why was I born this way?”

The priest answered, “It was because you were a very evil person in your past life, so now you have to suffer.”

Mr. Izawa thought, “If that is the case, then I should kill myself, and maybe the next time I might come back in some better form.”

He was sitting on a railroad track, waiting for the train to come and end his life, when he heard singing in the distance. Mr. Izawa got off the tracks and made his way to a place where Christians were holding a street meeting, and he heard the Gospel for the first time. He learned of the God who loved all people and sent His Son to pay the price for their sin. This is how Jesus came to live in the heart of this disfigured man.

In time, Mr. Izawa taught himself how to read and write, and was eventually able to enroll in a Bible school. After graduating, no one was interested in ordaining him. “*Who wants a freak for a minister with a speech impediment?*” he thought. “*All right, if no one wants me, I will serve God by myself.*” He went out and preached on the street for the next two years.

An outstanding young lady at the Bible school told the principal, “God has told me to marry brother Izawa.”

The principal replied, “Sister, you are a very gifted girl. All the doctors agree that brother Izawa will not live more than a few years, so don’t throw your life away by marrying a man who has no future.”

Undeterred, she later married him and they had five children—all of whom were brilliant and followed the Lord. One became a university professor with a PhD, two became ministers, and two became the wives of ministers.

When all the churches in Japan were forced to close during

World War II, because of his appearance, Mr. Izawa was never taken seriously, so the police left him alone and he continued to preach straight through the entire war!

After the war, Mr. Izawa became the minister of a very big church and wrote several books. He also became a traveling evangelist who helped many find Christ.

Mr. Izawa's life has been an example of God taking things that are despised by men and using them to show forth His glory.

But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong (1 Corinthians 1:27, NIV).

Praise be to God who works in unfathomable and mysterious ways!

4

The Harvest Our Methods & Purpose

A Bible verse that was most precious to Neil and Peggy Verwey was Jeremiah 33:3, “*Call to Me, and I will answer you.*” Whenever they faced difficult decisions, they called out to the Lord and He would answer them.

Now that Neil and Peggy are no longer with us, we have prayed a lot about the direction the Lord wants the Japan Mission to take. We realize that if we were not in the center of God’s will, many serious mistakes could be made. The Lord has shown us that no matter how good, or even how spiritual an opportunity seems, it may not be His will. We are frequently reminded that we need to seek His guidance and discern His will as we plan our activities.

I often tell our workers when they wonder if they should continue to serve with Japan Mission, “Don’t be moved by the need. God will raise up a person to meet the need. The important thing is that you seek and follow the Lord’s guidance.” *A man’s heart plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps* (Proverbs 16:9).

We have been assured that the Holy Spirit will continue to lead us on the right path as we remain faithful to Him. *All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth, to such as keep His covenant and His testimonies* (Psalm 25:10).

The first step for any Christian worker or organization is to prayerfully ask the Lord to make His will clear. As God spoke to Moses and the prophets, He gave them a mission. So it is for us. We must also incline our ear to hear what mission God wants us to engage in.

As we seek to do this, it is necessary to examine God's Word, to know what His will is for our lives.

JESUS AND THE HARVEST

Jesus speaks of the great harvest in John 4:34-38. *Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work. Do you not say, 'There are still four months and then comes the harvest?' Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest! And he who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. For in this the saying is true: 'One sows and another reaps.' I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored, and you have entered into their labors."*

Jesus said that the *fields are white for harvest!* I believe that Jesus would tell us that this is also true today — that opportunities abound because the Holy Spirit is continually at work in the hearts of those all around us! Someone nearby may have just been convicted and feeling guilty because they did something that bothered their conscience. Another person may be contemplating the God of creation as they view an awe-inspiring sunset. Yet another may have just been prompted by the Holy Spirit as they ponder a Bible verse that they read while walking past a church.

KNOWING GOD'S WILL

Our attitude should be like that of Jesus when He said in John 4:34, *"My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work."* Accomplishing God's will should be central to our lives.

Many people desire to know what God's will is for their lives. Our loving heavenly Father often guides us when we face important personal decisions, such as education, marriage and

a place of work. He often makes His *specific will* clear to us through the Bible, the advice of elders and circumstances in our lives. He is the one who opens and closes doors. The path God leads us on is different for each unique individual.

On the other hand, God's *general will* is the same for all Christians. The following are *four Bible verses* that help us understand this.

1. The Great Commission—The Lord makes it clear in Mark 16:15 that Christians are appointed to be His instruments. *“Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.”* He could have chosen to use perfect and sinless beings, such as the angels, but instead He chose to use us who often fail Him.

You may say, “I am but one person. What difference can I make?” We read in 1 Corinthians 1:27, *But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong* (NIV). God can empower anyone to be an effective instrument, no matter what their ability or level of education.

One minister eloquently stated, *“Moses had a stuttering problem. Gideon was afraid. Samson was a womanizer. Rahab was a prostitute. Jeremiah and Timothy were too young. David had an affair and was a murderer. Elijah was suicidal. Job went bankrupt. Peter denied Christ. The disciples fell asleep while praying. Zacchaeus was too short. Lazarus was dead. No more excuses! God can use you to your full potential. Besides, you aren't the message. You are just the messenger.”*

We should not underestimate what God can do through one inadequate person. *To the world you may be just one person; but to one person you may be the world!* Daily, we must be on the lookout for what He wants to do through our lives, and we will be amazed at what He can accomplish, if we are simply willing and available.

It may start by asking someone for water, as Jesus did 2,000 years ago when He met the Samaritan woman at the well. It may also start while visiting some priests at a temple or hitting

some golf balls at a driving range.

Ferris Liske was a retired Baptist minister from the USA, who worked as a volunteer with Japan Mission. He would often pray, “Lord help me to be willing to be willing,” as he visited the nearby temples to witness to the priests — who would sometimes tell him, “Go home!”

Ferris loved to play golf, so we encouraged him to hit some golf balls at a local driving range. He was reluctant at first, but then the Lord miraculously provided him with a set of golf clubs that someone had discarded!

While hitting balls into the distance, he would stop to talk to people and give them a tract. He had an opportunity to befriend a urologist in this way, and as he was sharing the Gospel, he asked him, “What are you doing to prepare yourself for heaven?” The urologist said that he was Buddhist and did not have an answer, but seemed interested and left with a tract in hand.

The Lord used Ferris to cause many to ponder their fate, and allow them an opportunity to come one step closer to knowing the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior. Yes, it is God’s will that we sow the seed and spread the Gospel wherever we may go — even at a driving range.

2. It is a Process – The second Bible verse that helps us understand God’s will for Christians is John 4:38. “*I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored, and you have entered into their labors.*”

We have been called to participate in the *process* of helping people come to know the Lord. One person might give them a tract, while another may befriend them and invite them to church, where someone else may lead them to the Lord. It is often God’s will that we *reap that for which we have not labored*.

This is illustrated by a missionary couple who felt led to share the Gospel with the residents of Oya, a small town in rural Japan. They rented a rundown hall and cleaned the place up. They then visited many of the residents and gave out leaflets

to advertise the evangelistic meeting.

When no one showed up for the 7:30 pm service, they started to pray. By 8:30 pm, their hopes grew dim that any would join them at all. However, at 9:00 pm, with their work finally done, the farmers and their families began to fill the hall. When the invitation to receive Christ was given, 17 adults – all grandparents – came forward!

There was a remarkable reason for this response. *Fifty years* earlier, a missionary on a bicycle had visited their village. He told the children the story of Jesus and went on his way. Various cults came, but the villagers were not drawn to those teachings.

Fifty years later, when Christian missionaries left literature in their mailboxes, they recognized the same Good News that they had heard as children and decided to attend that meeting.

It is often God's will for us to build on the work of others and to *reap that for which we have not labored*.

3. The Holy Spirit – The third Bible verse that helps us understand God's will for Christians is 1 Corinthians 2:14. *The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit.*

It is not our responsibility to save people. The Holy Spirit enables people to come to a full understanding of the Gospel. It is only through His work that men can be regenerated from within.

We need to be totally dependent on the Holy Spirit as we reach the unsaved. We waste valuable time and resources if we try to engage with people in our own strength. Corrie Ten Boom said, *"When I try, I fail. When I trust, He succeeds."*

We need to trust the Holy Spirit to guide us to those whom He wants us to speak to. At Japan Mission, we often ask, "Lord, please lead us to the seeking ones among the masses — those whose hearts that have been prepared by the Holy Spirit."

We have seen the Lord use tracts as a powerful means to put

us in touch with such people. One man in Osaka heard a voice in his head. At first, he enjoyed it because it would tell him jokes. Later it started to tell him what to do.

One day the voice said over and over, “Kill yourself, kill yourself,” so he took a bottle of sleeping pills. He was found alive, committed to a psychiatric ward, and then periodically hospitalized over two years.

A few days after being released, he was wandering through the streets of Osaka in despair and thinking, “What is going to happen to a poor man like me!” At that moment an elderly lady, visiting Japan from South Africa, put a tract in his hand.

He later wrote a long letter, telling us his story and asking us to thank that foreign lady who walked with a cane. We started to correspond with him and later introduced him to a church, where he gave his heart to the Lord!

It has been a true delight and an inspiration to meet those whose hearts the Holy Spirit has prepared!

4. Paul’s Flexible Attitude – The fourth Bible verse that helps us understand God’s will for Christians is 1 Corinthians 9:22. The Apostle Paul said, *To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some* (NIV).

Paul realized the importance of being *flexible* in his zeal to see people saved. We should also be *flexible* when relating to the unsaved.

Sometimes we are challenged to think outside the box. A certain lady was desperate and had no peace about the future. She was about to go overseas and had to make some important decisions.

She phoned to ask if Japan Mission could provide her with a reliable fortune-teller. “Yes, I can tell you about your future,” our worker replied after giving it some thought.

When the lady came, the worker explained the Gospel and what would happen to those who did not believe in the Lord Jesus. He continued to tell her about the book of Revelation

and how Christians know about the future.

This lady listened ever so intently and when she came back the next day, the worker asked her if she was ready to give her heart to the Lord. She replied, “I already have. I went home and did all that you told me to do, and my heart feels so much lighter!” Today she is married to a Christian and continues to walk with the Lord.

This worker’s willingness to be *flexible* when asked about a fortune-teller helped this lady find the Lord! Sometimes we are tempted to look with scorn on people who consult fortune-tellers or their horoscope. We should rather reach out to them in love. The Bible has much to say to those who have no peace about the future. We need to be willing to be *flexible* as Paul was.

At Japan Mission, we have embraced Paul’s *flexible* attitude. As trends change, the Lord has led us to employ different methods to reach people. As English became more popular, we began teaching English. As the population aged, we reached out to the elderly. As technology changed, we utilized the Internet and social media. And as natural disasters happened, we offered disaster relief to those in need.

A LINK IN THE CHAIN

Tirelessly sowing the seed has been at the core of what Japan Mission is all about. *Sow your seed in the morning, and at evening let your hands not be idle, for you do not know which will succeed, whether this or that, or whether both will do equally well* (Ecclesiastes 11:6, NIV).

A wise man stated, “Don’t judge each day by the harvest you reap, but by the seeds that you sow.”

Our calling is to make use of every opportunity to help someone come one step closer to becoming a child of God.

Billy Graham said, “It takes many people to reach someone for the Lord. The first one thinks he did nothing and the last one thinks he did everything, but they are both wrong! It is often a process for

someone to come to know the Lord."

One person may offer some words of encouragement, while another may share God's love through an act of kindness. It often requires the efforts of many, and is a step-by-step process that takes much patience and prayer.

One of our workers was driving up the hill towards the mission headquarters, when she saw a lady stumble and drop some groceries. She stopped to help her and gave her a tract, which had Japan Mission's information on it.

This lady later phoned to ask if she and a neighbor might come and study the Bible! A Japanese worker started to do regular Bible study with them and later introduced them to a local church, where this lady gave her heart to the Lord!

What was so remarkable was that our first contact with this lady was through a simple act of kindness. It was a vital *link in the chain*.

Japan Mission sends missionaries to teach English in various churches in the Osaka area. Many students eagerly come to learn English and make friends with a foreigner.

Mr. Harada attended such an English class because he wanted to go to the USA to study music. A group of Christian musicians later came from the USA to perform at that church. They shared their testimonies and challenged Mr. Harada to believe. Shortly afterwards, he gave his heart to the Lord!

He later went to the USA to study Christian music. When he returned, he started to help with the song leading at that church.

This all came about because one of our workers was willing to leave her country, and come to Japan to teach English in that church. She was willing to be that important *link in the chain*.

I remember one situation, in which I had no direct contact with a person, and yet I was instrumental in her salvation.

A man sent me an e-mail from the USA, because he wanted to introduce a Japanese girl to a church in our area. I was away from Japan for several months to take some meetings, so I sent him the particulars of a good church where I attended regularly.

Four months later, this girl introduced herself to me at that church. She said, "I wanted to find you to thank you for helping me find this church. Since coming here, I found the Lord!"

I was amazed. I did not even need to meet this girl in order to make a difference in her life!

The Lord showed me how important it was to be faithful in the small things, such as diligently checking and answering e-mail. I realized afresh what a difference we can make by being a small *link in the chain*.

Sometimes the Lord allows us to experience difficulties in order to put us in contact with people who need to hear the Gospel. That is when we are challenged not to grumble, but rather be sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit and to ask Him why He has allowed this hardship.

My mother-in-law, Earlene, worked with Japan Mission until she went to be with the Lord at age 67 on January 28, 2009. At her funeral, we had a wonderful gathering and one lady who shared was Mrs. Imagawa. She said, "If it was not for Earlene, I would probably not be alive today!"

Many years ago, Earlene was assigned to work with a church in rural Japan. Her housing was quite meager and had no bath or shower. Most people in such circumstances would have used the public bath. Even though these facilities were segregated, Earlene felt embarrassed and could not bring herself to use these bath houses.

Before long, she made friends with a lady in the neighborhood and asked if she could use her bath. For two and a half years, Earlene used this lady's bath, while befriending her and witnessing to her, and Mrs. Imagawa came to know the Lord

as a result!

It is important to be sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit when we are faced with difficult circumstances. The Lord may allow such hardships to come our way so that we can be that vital *link in the chain*. The Lord can use our most unlikely struggles to help someone come to know Him — even the need for a bath!

TWO-FOLD PURPOSE

The motto of Japan Mission is *Called to Serve*. We desire to serve the Japanese people in whatever way the Lord leads — *so that some may be saved*.

The primary focus of our ministry is two-fold:

1. The first is to *evangelize the unsaved*. Much time and effort is spent reaching those who have never heard the Gospel.
2. The second is to *assist the small, Bible-teaching churches of Japan*, which are often in need of Christian workers, evangelistic programs, literature and educational tools, to grow as the body of Christ and reach the unsaved.

Most of the 7,900 churches in Japan have an attendance of fewer than 30 people and struggle to survive. They are often surrounded by people who are in need of companionship, counseling, quality childcare, after-school programs and care for the elderly.

Japan needs churches that are spiritually-thriving centers of hope that focus on sharing God's love and meeting the needs of those in their communities. Workers and resources, provided by Japan Mission, help to build up and empower churches so that they can meet these needs and reach the people in their communities for Christ.

METHODS USED TO SOW THE SEED

The Lord has led Japan Mission to use three main methods to reach the unsaved and assist the churches:

1. **Literature** — Japan Mission publishes a monthly

evangelistic tract, which helps churches evangelize their communities. We also publish Japanese books to help seekers and Christians. We are also committed to making many thousands of Bibles available throughout China, southeast Asia and other parts of the world.

2. Evangelistic Programs – About 300 students hear the Gospel each week, as our missionaries teach the Bible and conversational English. The sick and elderly are being reached through our ministry in hospitals and retirement homes. Workers also reach out through camps, cafes, choirs, schools, childcare, cooking classes, and disaster relief work.

3. Media – Japan Mission assists churches with media production, social media and the development of web content. Evangelistic and Christian educational videos, audio Bibles and message recordings are also being produced and distributed. We also remain committed to making significant investments in Christian TV and radio broadcasts, which regularly impact the masses throughout Japan with the Gospel.

PRAYER IS ESSENTIAL

Japan Mission is in need of intercessors who will faithfully pray as we seek to evangelize the lost and assist the churches. *The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective* (James 5:16, NIV).

The following is the story of how God answered the prayers of many for Mr. Kodama's younger brother, Toshi — *after fifty-five years!*

Mr. Hiroyuki Kodama has worked with Japan Mission as an evangelist and writer for many decades. He made the decision to accept the Lord as Savior in 1962, while in hospital as a TB patient. After he was discharged, he shared the Gospel with his family, while many started to pray for the salvation of the Kodama family.

The family all came to Christ except for his younger brother

Toshi. No matter how much he witnessed to him, Toshi would not accept the Lord. He loved to gamble and drink, and eventually amassed debts of 8 million yen (US\$80,000) from loan sharks. Divorced and without a steady job, Toshi lost his home when the bank foreclosed on his house. He would often beg Mr. Kodama for money, so he would sometimes give Toshi small amounts for food, for fear that he would resort to crime if he had no money.



Hiroyuki Kodama

In 2014, doctors discovered that Toshi had cancer. Three years later, after a number of operations, the doctors told him that there was no hope. They discharged him so that he could be cared for at home. Too weak to walk, he went home in a wheelchair.

Two days later, he came to his senses. There was a place that he knew he had to visit, so he used the last of his strength to hurry out the door.

While facing certain death, he realized that there was an important truth that he had been ignoring for far too long. *It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment* (Hebrews 9:27). Toshi knew that his time to face judgement was near and that he had delayed the decision to accept Jesus' offer of salvation and eternal life for far too long.

He found a local church, and there he gave his heart to the Lord. A few hours later, he returned home and drew his last breath!

Fifty-five years later, the Lord faithfully answered the prayers of many who prayed for the salvation of Toshi!

Mr. Kodama is now comforted by the assurance that all his family members have given their hearts to the precious Savior and that they will be reunited in heaven. What a blessed assurance!

THE FOUNTAIN OF JOY

Mr. Kodama regularly writes columns for the *Fountain of Joy* and influences the lives of many readers. The *Fountain of Joy* is a colorful 4-page tract, which Japan Mission publishes and distributes each month. It always contains a Gospel message, a testimony of salvation and advice on family-related issues. About 24,000 of these tracts are regularly sent out to 1,000 churches, organizations and individuals throughout Japan and overseas.

One lady sent a postcard, thanking us for sending her this tract each month. She shared how her mother was encouraged by the content, which they were reading to her while she was bed-ridden in the hospital. She gave her heart to the Lord shortly before she died. Praise the Lord!

CONFINED TO A BED FOR 15 YEARS

Rev. Tamada has been a writer and editor of the *Fountain of Joy* since 2009, and was saved through the hospital ministry of Japan Mission. The following is the story of how he came to know the Lord.

From his birth in 1948, Koji Tamada was in very poor health. He was often pale, moved slowly, and lacked the strength to play like the other children.

Doctors discovered that he had been born with a serious heart defect, and to make matters worse, he contracted measles and whooping cough, which caused further deterioration. He would sometimes turn blue and have difficulty breathing. No one expected him to live very long.

Despite poor health, at age seven he was enrolled in school. Due to severe colds and pneumonia, little Koji was often absent for many weeks during the winter, and keeping up with his studies was very challenging. The Lord blessed him with an



Rev. Koji Tamada

unusual amount of determination, which kept him going.

In middle school, he contracted TB and was admitted to a children's ward. He spent the next fifteen years of his life lying in a hospital bed. He felt depressed and doomed to a life of confinement and suffering.

One day, while staring at the ceiling, overwhelmed by morbid thoughts of death, the monotony was broken when a stranger came to visit him. "I am Mr. Karasawa from Japan Mission. I would like to be your friend," he said.

Why someone would seek out such a miserable creature like himself he could not fathom, but this friendship was about to change his life. Koji felt that he had found someone he could honestly talk to about his constant fear of the gods and the severe punishment they had bestowed on him. He freely shared about the nightmares that he had endured and the dark thoughts that haunted him about the fear of death.

Mr. Karasawa returned each week to share wonderful messages of hope and eternal life. When he heard the incredible story of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, Koji wondered, "How could this be?" All the gods Koji knew seemed to be so lifeless.

The day Mr. Karasawa read Matthew 10:29-31 to him was an eye-opening experience. *"Aren't two sparrows sold for only a penny? But not one of them falls to the ground without your Father knowing it. He even counts every hair on your head! So don't be afraid. You are worth more than many sparrows"*(NIV).

The thought that an Almighty God, who would care for the universe with His infinite love, would stoop down to pay attention to him, a mere speck of dust in the vast creation, was incredible! He found it difficult to comprehend such a marvel.

He soon surrendered his life to Christ. At 22 years of age, Koji was still a hospital patient, but there was a different look on his face. He had the joy of the Lord in his heart! He knew that God would take care of him no matter what the circumstances.

When he confessed his sin and selfishness, begging for God's forgiveness, the Holy Spirit brought many things to mind that he had to put right. He remembered a time when he had stolen stamps from a fellow patient and could not dismiss it from his mind, so he wrote a letter to apologize.

This former patient was so impressed by the sincerity of Koji's letter that he visited him, and Koji introduced him to his Lord and Savior! Koji continued to witness to others about the wonderful miracle that God had done in his heart.

He began to realize that for every problem he faced, there was a solution in the Bible. He read about how Jesus healed the sick, and wondered why he had suffered for so long, even after he had asked Jesus to heal him.

At the age of 23, he began to see God answer his prayers for physical healing. The X-rays revealed great improvement in the condition of his lungs, and after a lengthy 2-year period of recovery, the doctors declared him free of TB! They could now perform the very complicated heart surgery that Koji so desperately needed.

In 1971, the night before his operation, Mr. Karasawa visited him and shared Deuteronomy 33:27 with him: "*The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms*" (NIV).

Koji looked out of the window into the sky and noticed how brightly the stars were twinkling. While looking at them, he pondered Genesis 1:1. "*The God who created all of those stars, He will indeed be able to give me a new heart!*" he thought to himself.

The operation was long and difficult, and when he woke up, the nurse quickly called the doctor. Koji was still on oxygen when the doctor asked him, "Do you see your hand? It is no longer pale, but full of color because your heart is now pumping blood through your system."

For the first time in his life, he had normal blood circulation. For fifteen years, he hadn't been able to walk or climb stairs

and the slightest breeze would cause him to shiver. Now, many miracles seemed to happen all at once, and even water tasted better than ever!

“We’ve done all that we can for you and now it’s up to you,” the doctor encouraged him. Koji started rehabilitation and learned to walk properly. The day he left the hospital, the workers held a party for him, and everyone was so glad to see the joy on his face.

“Up until now, because you were sick, you said, ‘I can’t do this and I can’t do that,’ but now may those words never cross your lips again!” one of the doctors said to him. “From now on always say, ‘Yes, I can do it.’”

He could heartily agree with the doctor, because while in hospital he learned to believe in the enabling power of Christ. *I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me* (Philippians 4:13).

Koji Tamada later graduated from Bible School and worked with Japan Mission for many years as a hospital evangelist.

We continue to marvel at the miracles the Lord is doing in order to provide Japan Mission with such wonderful and dedicated workers!

5

Disaster Relief

On March 11, 2011, Japan was struck by a devastating *triple disaster* that brought about a drastic change to the entire nation. A massive earthquake triggered a number of enormous tsunami, which caused three core meltdowns at a nuclear power plant.

The Lord did miracles as residents took steps to recover from these overwhelming events.

A group of volunteer builders came to Japan to rebuild a church. A Japanese carpenter noticed that these volunteers were different. They seemed content to sing and periodically gather to pray to their God. This carpenter, whose home was also damaged, was curious and drawn to their joyful spirit, so he decided to join them in their work.

“I could never become a Christian because I enjoy my *sake* (rice wine) too much,” the carpenter said, so the builders began to pray for him. Soon after, he went home and looked forward to sipping his *sake*. The first mouthful he took was inexplicably



Tsunami damage

bitter! He asked his wife to bring another bottle. It was also undrinkable! Quite perplexed, he realized that he could no longer drink *sake*.

Volunteers had gone around the neighborhood handing out Bibles, and this man's wife had received one. She told her husband how impressed she was with the teachings of the Bible, and that she was thinking of going to church on Sunday.

"If you are going, I will join you," he announced. The Holy Spirit worked in the hearts of this couple, and they were soon wonderfully saved!

OFFERING DISASTER RELIEF

Natural disasters are a common occurrence in Japan. It is home to 200 volcanoes — 100 of which are active. There is an average of three earthquakes per day that can be felt somewhere in Japan.

Powerful typhoons also strike from the months of June to October, when gale force winds and torrential rains bring the threat of much destruction, including landslides and flooding.

Offering disaster relief has become a regular part of our ministry. We have found it to be an effective way to reach victims with the Good News. This ministry has had a profound impact on the lives of many.

The Lord has helped Japan Mission strike a good balance between offering social assistance to the needy and sharing the Gospel. As we provide food, clothing and assistance, we are vigilant to not lose sight of the need to influence those we help for Christ. Physical and emotional help is important to rebuild lives, but it is also vital that we provide the necessary information and spiritual encouragement to help these dear people be prepared to face eternity.

ATTITUDE, INFORMATION & NEED

A wise missionary said, “There are *three things* we should be sensitive to when sharing the Gospel — *attitude, information and need*.” Being sensitive to these things can be helpful in reaching out to people in all walks of life.

1. ATTITUDE – The first is *attitude*. Acts of kindness can play an important role in influencing people’s attitudes. This is one reason why we collect food and clothing for the homeless, and offer disaster relief. It is much easier to share the Gospel with someone after we have established a rapport and won their respect. Our good deeds can help to establish this connection with people. Some refer to this as *pre-evangelism*.

It is God’s will for us to influence people for Christ through our good deeds. We are commanded, “*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven*” (Matthew 5:16).

Scripture says that the unsaved will take notice of our good works. Will they then praise us? No! The Bible states that the result will be that they will glorify our Father in heaven. Our good works can have a powerful influence, if done in such a way as to bring glory to God.

One of the worst disasters to hit Japan in recent history was the *triple disaster of March 11, 2011*. A magnitude 9.0 earthquake triggered huge tsunami, which in turn caused three serious melt-downs at a nearby nuclear facility. In some areas, the tsunami reached heights of 39 meters (128 feet) and traveled inland as far as 10 km (6 miles)! Hundreds of kilometers of coastline in northeast Japan were devastated. About 19,000 people were killed and 500,000 were left homeless. Entire villages and towns had to be abandoned because of the high levels of radiation.

In the beginning, when supporters prayed and sent donations, Japan Mission was challenged to help people in such a way that

would also make a spiritual impact in their lives. But truly, it was not the time to distribute tracts or share the Gospel. It was a time when people needed blankets, shelter, the mud cleaned out of their homes and a lot of encouragement. People were desperately attempting to recover, while more than 5,000 aftershocks pummeled the area for an entire year, the largest being magnitude 7.9.

We offered victims food, clothing and emotional support — a valuable first step in establishing rapport. *The Lord showed us that the best strategy was to partner with the churches in such a way that residents would perceive that the help was coming from the church in their community.* Many were thankful and attended church for the first time.

In one town, residents were told that supplies would be handed out every morning except on Sunday, due to the worship services. Some of the residents came on Sunday anyway. They said, “We did not come for supplies. We came to attend the service.” This sudden openness resulted in many coming to know the Lord!

One church in the town of Kesennuma had no converts in the year before the disaster, but 18 months later, 15 people were added to their small fellowship!

The Holy Spirit used our good works to transform the hearts of many. Our acts of kindness worked miracles to change people’s *attitudes* and helped them to come to know the Lord! Hallelujah!

2. INFORMATION – The second thing we need to be sensitive to when sharing the Gospel is *information*. Tracts, Bibles, message CDs and videos are all powerful sources of information.

A magnitude 7.0 earthquake struck beneath the city of Kumamoto in southwest Japan on April 16, 2016. This resulted in 140 aftershocks in two days. Fifty were killed, 3,000 were injured, 44,000 were evacuated, 180,000 homes were damaged, and 26,000 army reserves were mobilized.



Earthquake damage in Kumamoto

Japan Mission workers stood ready to jump into action with a truck and supplies. Alex Verwey led several teams to Kumamoto to reach the churches and their communities with relief and recovery efforts.

One exciting outreach of Japan Mission is the publication of the monthly Japanese tract called the *Fountain of Joy*, which always features a testimony of salvation. Because these tracts are distributed throughout Japan, it enables our workers to connect with many when visiting various parts of Japan.

As our workers arrived in Kumamoto, shortly after the quake, Alex was able to visit an unsaved lady, Mrs. Yamada. Her Christian relatives in Hawaii had arranged years earlier for her to receive a *Fountain of Joy* tract each month by mail.



Alex & Mrs. Yamada

She greeted Alex with a big smile. They were able to pray with her and encourage her to attend a local church. “Immediately after we prayed with her, she said, ‘Thank you, I receive your prayer into my heart,’” Alex shared. He could sense that the Lord had spoken to her through their visit.

The Lord had used these evangelistic tracts as a valuable source of *information* in the life of Mrs. Yamada, to prepare her heart and welcome our workers into her home, so that they could pray with her.

As we offer disaster relief, we have had the opportunity to share *information*, such as a tract or a Bible verse. The Holy Spirit has often used these things in a powerful way to speak to receptive hearts.

3. NEED – The third thing to be sensitive to when sharing the Gospel is *need*. When the Lord brings seeking people across our path with desperate needs, we need to be sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit. It is sometimes hard to know how to relate to such people. Often, the best thing we can do is to simply listen and sympathize with them.

Mr. Aoki was an elderly man who was a leader in his community. He lived in an apartment complex near the sea. His building was partially flooded during the 2011 tsunami, but remained standing because it was built out of concrete.

The parking lot next door was chosen as a place to hold the bodies of the dead. Whenever corpses of the tsunami victims were discovered, they were brought there and laid in rows, so that family members could identify them. The city of Ishinomaki was hit hard, and it wasn't long before that parking lot was filled.

Identifying the victims was a long and grim process, because many were horribly disfigured, since mud, rubbish and seaweed covered their eyes and mouths. Mr. Aoki took a rag and a bucket of water, and walked from body to body to wash their faces. It had a profound effect on Mr. Aoki as he stared into the face of death day after day. It broke his heart, and he suffered months of utter spiritual darkness.

The shadows began to lift when he heard music and laughter

coming from a nearby park. A group of volunteers, with whom Japan Mission worked, had spent a week cleaning up debris from the park and were inviting the neighbors to a barbeque. Mr. Aoki decided to join them and shared his story with them. He could sense their compassion as they listened to him.

The volunteers invited Mr. Aoki to a nearby church, and he started to attend regularly. A few months later, he shared that he had a dream in which he had seen the face of Jesus. “His smiling face was shining and radiating love. Now I understand why Jesus sent you to Ishinomaki!”

This caused quite a stir, and some did not know how to react, since most Christians cannot claim to have seen Jesus face-to-face, even in a dream! One of the volunteers astutely opened a Bible and read Acts 2:17. *“In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams”* (NIV).

Mr. Aoki’s heart was healed, and he found a new hope in Jesus! He found the Lord because volunteers took time to sit and listen to him, and invite him to church. The Holy Spirit transformed his heart by using those who were sensitive to his desperate *need*.

The Lord can also use us to inspire fellow Christians to walk more closely with Him, when we are sensitive to their *needs*.

Days after the triple disaster of March 2011, Japan Mission sent Bill Cook to northeast Japan with a truckload of supplies. He came across a Christian lady who was very distressed, because the earthquake had caused a small wooden shed on her property to



Bill Cook



Bill Cook with his winch

lean against her neighbor's house.

God had sent a man with the right skills and tools for the job. Bill used a winch and a chain saw to pull the shed away from the neighbor's house and demolish it. As he was removing it, he noticed that this lady had a well-tended Buddhist altar, which was used to worship the spirits of the ancestors.

Bill told her that he would be glad to also haul that away for her. She thought about it for a little while and agreed. A few hours later, when he came to get the Buddhist altar, the lady started to weep profusely.

"What happened in the next twenty minutes was a first-time experience for me," Bill shared. "This sister seemed to be a fine believer, but the devil had a strangle-hold on her like I had never seen. I warned, pleaded and coaxed her to give up the Buddhist altar, but she literally ended up lying on the floor at my feet in tears, begging me to sympathize with her dilemma. As I left, I assured her that I would be glad to come back if she needed my help.

"Two days later, she asked me to come and get that Buddhist altar. I don't know who was happier! I loaded that monstrosity onto my truck, hauled it away and burned it.

“This sister was so happy to be free, she acted like someone who had just been released from jail! I told her, ‘You are one of the most unusual women I have ever met. What Jesus did for you is a story like I have never heard! God brought me all the way from Thailand to your house in Japan, with the right tools to do the job — to help you be delivered from spiritual bondage!’”

The Holy Spirit used Bill in this unusual way to help this lady, who was in desperate *need*, take bold steps to glorify God.

ENCOURAGING REPORTS

The Lord did many miracles to restore the churches in northeast Japan.

Just after the triple disaster of March 2011, Rev. Minimishi wept because his congregation had just finished building a church on which they owed a tremendous debt and it was swept out to sea! “Oh, why did my God send the tsunami our way?” he grieved.

One year later, Rev. Minimishi said, “Our hearts are filled with praise to the Lord! Oh, thanks to God for the tsunami because it changed everything! Before the tsunami, we only had two additional members that year. After the tsunami, we already have 50 new converts! What is more, the Lord miraculously sent us enough money to wipe out our debt, as well as to build a new church on a beautiful site that the city offered to us. This time it is not by the seashore, but on higher ground!”

In spite of the disaster, the Lord caused all things to work together for good. *And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose* (Romans 8:28).

The following are some encouraging reports from the churches in northeast Japan, since the triple disaster of March 2011.

1. Efforts United – The disaster was of such a large scale

that the churches desperately did whatever they could to help each other and their communities. As believers from different denominations met and prayed, walls came down, and the churches started to unite in their efforts to share the Gospel and help people recover from the devastation. This unity continues to make an impact today.

2. Relationships Changed – After the disaster, the task at hand was so great that everyone had to pitch in together. It helped to break down the Japanese culture in the church, where the minister was expected to do most of the work and needed to be consulted about every decision.

Ministers and believers, including many who were critical of each other, started to set aside their differences and work together. Many of the churches still benefit today from the cooperative relationships that developed between ministers and church members.

3. Friendships Developed – The disaster was so far-reaching that people took whatever help they could get. Churches played a major role in helping people in their communities, and the friendships that developed between the church and local communities continue to make an impact for the Gospel today.

One missionary made repeated trips to various towns to give them food. As they opened their hearts, he set out to find those who would be interested in studying the Bible. Among those he helped, he found 50 such people, so he started many Bible studies throughout the area!

SPIRITUAL REVIVAL

(Sources: page 213)

At the time of the triple disaster of March 2011, northeast Japan was relatively untouched by the Gospel. Churches were few, with typically ten people or less in attendance.

This disaster was a *wake-up call* to the churches throughout

Japan. They reassessed their purpose, as God impressed upon them the need to serve the devastated communities. Many churches started to partner with organizations to provide disaster relief. As this happened, the Japanese communities began to acknowledge the significant contributions of the church.

Most Japanese know very little about Christianity and most do not likely know any Christians; but following the tsunami, when Christians were mobilized, many met Christians for the first time. The love of God was shared with them in very practical ways, which helped to establish friendships between the victims and the Christians.

Eight years since the triple disaster of March 2011, Christian leaders agree that there has been a spiritual revival throughout northeast Japan, as Christian ministry and church-planting activities have greatly increased.

After the disaster, Iwate Prefecture went from having no missionaries to over 30! Many villages in this prefecture had no churches before the disaster, but now it is reported that every city and village has either a church or some ongoing outreach.

The Miyagi Mission Network reported that before the disaster there were only 22 churches; but after the disaster, the number of churches and fellowships increased to a total of 60. Reports from a sample of just 30 churches showed an increase of 64 baptisms, 178 decisions and 219 people who became seekers. This amazing response rate has been many times greater than what we have seen in the rest of Japan!

The city of Ishinomaki, one of the largest cities in the region (pop. 150,000), experienced immense destruction and about 5,000 deaths. Before the disaster, the city had just 7 churches, and most of those churches had just 10 people in regular attendance. Today, there are 13 churches, most of which have had an increase in attendance, with some averaging over 30.

HIGH ABOVE THE STARS

The following is a testimony of a pastor, who was severely affected by the triple disaster of 2011. His church was one of many that Japan Mission helped to rebuild.

When the magnitude 9.0 earthquake hit northeast Japan on March 11, 2011 at 2:46 pm, Rev. Yukikazu Otomo, minister of a Baptist church in Sendai, was sitting on the floor at a table and sipping a cup of green tea.

What he experienced during the first five minutes of the quake begs description. The neighbors' dogs started to bark and howl as a deep rumble and roar from the belly of the Earth came up from a depth of 30 km to shatter and destroy everything!

Yukikazu was never so struck in all his life by commentaries and Bibles as when his bookshelf came tumbling down on his head! He narrowly escaped serious injury as the little table he was sitting at was crushed before his eyes! Moments later, he saw the ceiling cave in and realized that his church-home was unsafe, so he hurried down the staircase as it swayed from side-to-side.

Feeling his way through the suffocating dust and climbing over plaster and scattered books, he hastened past the sanctuary and through the splintered glass doors to escape from the building! Once outside, he tried to keep from falling, while stepping over rubble in the ever-moving road. The cross on top of the church was swaying like the mast of a ship in rough seas!

His first concern was for the elderly and the sick. A tsunami was triggered, with waves that struck his area as high as 10 meters (30 feet), whisking away cars, carrying away blazing buildings, factories, trains and railway stations in its wake! As he helped neighbors evacuate the weak and elderly, he thanked God that their church was on high ground.

Yukikazu's next concern was for Idohama, the town where he was born and raised. His mother of 87 was among the 100 families in that town and was still living on her own. A usual

journey of 30 minutes by car took many hours to navigate, and it gave him much time to contemplate his past.

Yukikazu grew up playing in the rice paddies, catching dragonflies and chasing colorful butterflies. Every year, he would join his parents for the festival at the local shrine to worship the deities. He was very curious about the contents of the innermost part of the temple where children were not allowed, so he once stole a peek through a bamboo hedge. He remembered how the sun shone in and lit up the heaps of shaven human hair, sacrificed by devotees. “Oh, how gross!” he thought.

A most memorable moment in his life was the first time he became aware of the Creator God. Still in high school, on a hot summer night, while he was lying on his back in the cool grass and looking up at the stars, he had an unexplainable deep impression in his heart that the true God did not live in the local shrine, but was living high above.

For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities — His eternal power and divine nature — have been clearly seen (Romans 1:20, NIV).

Following his graduation, Yukikazu joined a shipping company and studied to become a draftsman. He avoided going home since, more than once, he had to run for his life when his drunken father tried to assault him.

A fellow student urged him to attend the Shiogama Bible Baptist Church in a neighboring town. There he heard, for the first time, about the God of creation who sat on a throne above the stars. He wanted to know more about this Creator God and bought his first Bible at a second-hand bookstore.

During the ten years that he worked for the shipping company, he studied the Bible zealously. After much prayer



Rev. Yukikazu Otomo

and receiving a calling to preach from the Lord, the church elders decided to send him to seminary to prepare him for the ministry. When he graduated, he agreed to fill the vacancy at his church and became their minister.

When Yukikazu arrived in Idohama after a long drive, he saw the destruction that the earthquake and tsunami had left behind. He could hardly believe his eyes! Gone were the charming thatch-roofed houses and clean-swept streets. Rubble and dirt made it just about impossible to navigate the roads, and the well-tended rice paddies were replaced by a sea of debris.

Yukikazu was relieved when he found his mother. As the aftershocks continued, he helped her gather a few essentials and took her to an evacuation center.

He clearly experienced how unpredictable life was, and thanked God for His grace, that had sought and found him. Saved when he was 20 years old, Yukikazu never looked back! He is now 60 years old, and has witnessed the terrible devastation caused by earthquakes and tsunami, and is even more determined to walk the highways of God!

“Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed,” says the LORD, who has compassion on you (Isaiah 54:10, NIV).

Even when the mountains quake and the hills fall to pieces, God’s kindness will never forsake us!

Japan Mission and other volunteer groups came together to help Rev. Yukikazu Otomo rebuild his badly damaged church within three months after the disaster struck. This church then became a center, where many troubled people find their way to the foot of the cross.

6

English Evangelism

Teaching English has proven to be an effective way to reach the lost for Christ in Japan. In one survey, 40% of Japanese pastors said that their first contact with the Gospel was through an English class! We have seen entire church communities formed as a result of English evangelism.

Students who desire to learn English and make friends with a foreigner come back repeatedly to improve their English. Each time they attend class, students hear the Gospel because every English class ends with a word of testimony or short Bible talk.

Teachers are well-respected in Japanese society. This standing makes it easier to build a rapport with students and win their respect. Teachers invite students to attend the Sunday worship services, where the friendships begun in the classroom often continue at church as various believers befriend them.

The Lord has blessed Japan Mission with a talented team of dedicated English teachers. They commute each week to about 20 different churches throughout the Osaka area and interact with about 300 students. Their responsibilities include teaching, sharing God's Word, witnessing, counseling, singing, distributing literature and cultivating friendships.

STORIES OF GOD AT WORK

Many have found a renewed sense of hope as they participate in the English classes. Some have been encouraged by the Christian fellowship, while others have found the Lord as Savior through the Bible talks. It has been exciting to witness

the process whereby the Holy Spirit has transformed hearts!

Mr. Terada became very depressed after he lost his wife, but his spirits were lifted when he started to attend English class, make friends and read the Bible. He told everyone when we held a Christmas party that he had just finished reading through the entire Bible in one year. He now comes to church every Sunday and loves to discuss the Bible. He is 82 years old and one of the oldest students.

Another student asked many religious questions and spent time each week discussing the Bible with the minister. A few months later, he bought a beautifully-illustrated Children's English Bible at a bookstore. He brought it to class and asked the teacher to help him read it, and to make sure that his pronunciation was correct. Now, when his grandchildren visit, he reads this Children's Bible to them. We were amazed to hear how God was using this seeker to share God's Word with his grandchildren!

Yuka was an elementary school student when she started to study English. After learning English for a number of years, she wanted to learn more about the Bible, so she asked to meet once a week to read the Bible together in English. Months later, she decided to accept the Lord Jesus as her Savior. Her family was Buddhist and against her becoming a Christian or attending church on Sundays, so she now goes instead to church during the week to pray and study the Bible with the church members.

Nonoka started studying English when she was in elementary school. She showed interest in the Bible, so the church gave her one as a present. She was very excited to receive her own copy and started to read it eagerly. A few months later, she prayed with the minister's wife to accept the Lord Jesus into her heart.

God worked in the heart of Hisashi through the loss of his beloved dog, Angel, due to cancer. He had her for 13 years and he was heartbroken. As he mourned, he felt the need to pray to God for peace and comfort, so he came to English class a

little earlier than usual to ask the pastor to pray for him. As the minister counseled him, the Lord touched Hisashi's heart and he gave his heart to Christ then and there! Indeed, only God can turn heartbreak into joy, a trial into triumph, and a victim into a victor!

One woman started studying English about 20 years ago and then dropped out for two years. She started to face some serious problems that seemed to have no solution, so she went back to church to find the answers and learn more about the Bible. She later became a Christian and is now a faithful believer in that church! It sometimes takes years after the first seeds are sown for someone to come to know the Lord.

A former English student shared of how her life was very troubled, as she was facing divorce and the task of raising two small children. She did not have the courage to attend church, but decided to go when she found out that they offered English classes. There, she started to make friends and later accepted the Lord Jesus as her Savior!

FROM STUDENT TO CHRISTIAN WORKER

"As I was caring for my child, I would often walk by the church and read the literature and advertisements that were posted outside," Yasuko shared. "I would sometimes hear singing that would soothe my heart.

"I felt curiously drawn to the church, so I decided to join their English class. I enjoyed it very much and made many friends. The teacher was very enthusiastic and introduced some very interesting topics.

"I was introduced to the teachings of the Bible through the Bible talks. My heart was moved by the messages and the testimonies of various missionaries who visited and taught our class.

"I recently became a Christian and have much to learn, but I am now helping at the church with the children's English

classes. I sense God leading me as He shows me how I can use my gifts to help others find Him. I thank the Lord for blessing me through this opportunity to serve Him.”

The Lord transformed Yasuko’s heart — and she is now busy helping others in the English classes come to know the Lord!

POLICEMAN FINDS CHRIST

“One day at work, a Christian friend said to me, ‘I believe in the presence of God.’ Those words went on to change my life! With my Buddhist background, I could not fathom what he meant,” shared Masahiro, who worked in Kyoto as a police officer.

“As I watched my friend, I noticed that his values were different from mine. He stated his opinions with such certainty, that it made me wonder about his beliefs.

“I was deeply puzzled by his upright life, so I searched the Internet for information about Christianity, and started exchanging opinions with Christians all over Japan online.

“I felt the need to attend church to find out more, but did not know where to begin, so I set off to a church near my house. When I reached the church, my courage failed me and I turned around! This happened several times.

“One Saturday, I happened to walk past the church and noticed a poster advertising English classes, and the minister out front, watering some plants. I wanted to ask him about the worship service, but was reluctant, so I nervously said, ‘Oh! I see you offer English classes.’ His friendly reply and explanation gave me the courage to attend the worship service the next day.

“When I joined the English class, I came across something else that I could not understand. Why would the teacher, along with his family, leave a fulfilling life and job in his own country to come all the way to Japan and serve in a remote place like this? Why was he so dedicated to his God? I had no such faith! This motivated me to read the Bible even more earnestly in

search of an answer.

“By that time, I was attending all the meetings at the church, and the Lord spoke to me through a series of special meetings. I could not stop weeping as I confessed my sins.

“I wrote to my Internet friends and told them, ‘Jesus came into my heart!’ and they rejoiced with me.

“My father was against me becoming a Christian because he was afraid that I, as the eldest son, would no longer care for the spirits of our ancestors if I refused to tend the Buddhist altar. Now I pray for the salvation of my family, while claiming this verse.” *“Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved — you and your household”* (Acts 16:31, NIV).

THE GOLDEN RULE

Alex and Eri are an important part of the work of Japan Mission. This is the remarkable story of how Eri’s desire to learn English played a pivotal role in her salvation.

As Eri grew up playing in the countryside of Kyoto, she struggled to live up to people’s expectations and was very much afraid of being teased at school. When her school mates would annoy her, she would become frustrated and torment her younger sister.

“One night, while I was in middle school, I felt so disillusioned that I cut my wrist,” Eri shared. “My friends had rejected me, I felt hurt and miserable, and started to question the reason for living.

“*What would happen to me if I died?*” was the thought that struck my mind as I saw the blood dripping from my hand. The realization that I had no answer to that question suddenly made me very much afraid of death! I cried out to my mother for help, and she rushed me to a nearby hospital.



Alex & Eri Verwey

“Sometime later, I faced a turning-point in my life while riding a bus. A friendly-looking, English-speaking family sat behind me. I was curious about their culture and wanted to learn more about their lives, so I hoped that I would have an opportunity to speak to them.

“I heard a voice behind me saying, ‘Hi!’ so I turned around and nervously responded, ‘Oh, hi!’ I was embarrassed when I realized that the foreign man was talking on his cell phone!

“He was equally surprised by my response and started to talk to me afterwards, and invited me to study English at his church.

“The people at his church were very friendly and welcomed me whole-heartedly. I heard a different talk from the Bible each week after English class, but soon felt that I could not go along with their teachings. I thought that if I became a Christian, I would be labeled as a religious fanatic and would not be able to live up to my family’s expectations.

“I was determined not to become a Christian, so I tried to sleep during most of the Bible talks.

“As my English improved, I noticed that these Christians had something that I desired. They seemed to be at peace and assured that their God would help them when they faced difficulties in life.

“I understood the story of Jesus dying on the cross and shedding His blood for my sins, but struggled to believe that a man could rise from the dead.

“As I sought answers and faced various problems, I started to pray to the Lord Jesus and found that my prayers were being answered!

“This helped me realize that Jesus was alive, and that the resurrection was indeed a historical event. I then confessed my sins and asked Jesus to become my Lord and Savior when I was fifteen years old.”

If you declare with your mouth, Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved (Romans 10:9, NIV).

“I changed a lot since becoming a Christian. This became evident when my unsaved younger sister gave me a letter and a present, even though it was not my birthday!

“She wrote: *‘Dear Eri, I thought that you were the person that I hated the most, but you changed and are now showing such true concern for me. My feelings have changed from hating you to you really loving you!’*

“I not only committed the *golden rule* of Christ to memory, but I also committed my future to Him!” “*Whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them*” (Matthew 7:12).

THE THREAD OF GOD’S GRACE

This is the moving story of Misa Shepard, who started working with Japan Mission from February 2014. She is a dedicated and well-qualified worker, who came to know the Lord through the English classes that were taught at a church near her house.

Misa was born in 1973 to a traditional Japanese family in the city of Kyoto. Her parents met while attending a Buddhist university and were devout. As a child, Misa was taught to worship at various temples, and attended children’s camps that were organized by the temple.

Her father worked long hours and seemed to be away most of the time. When he was home, he hardly smiled 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 signs of approval and praised her 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.



Misa Shepard

Praying to the Buddhist gods to find peace left her feeling empty and in search of the true meaning of life.

While in high school, Misa listened to a Christian radio broadcast. A testimony was shared on that program of a lady whose burdens were lifted when she gave her heart to Jesus. They then shared the well-known illustration, *Footprints in the Sand* — of how Jesus carries us through the lowest points of our lives and how He will never leave us or forsake us.

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

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

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

It did not take long for her to accept the Jesus Lord as her 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 where she attended.

During her third year at Kobe City University, the magnitude 7.2 Great Hanshin Earthquake struck Kobe on January 17, 1995 — 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 the university in 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 required to care for the company shrine and asked to keep the finances in such a way that was dishonest. She realized that she would not be able to remain faithful to the Lord if she continued to work there.

Her unsaved parents and grandparents were unsympathetic and furious with her decision. Soon after, Misa became ill and was confined to bedrest for quite a while 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 earthquake in Kobe. She was overjoyed when they asked her to join the Evangelism Department and work 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, and 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 tentmaking missionary from the USA who attended the same church as Misa. The Lord led them to continue to serve at that church, while witnessing to Misa's family.

Misa joined Japan Mission in February, 2014 and has been a great help with the finances, correspondence, translation work and with various outreach opportunities, such as Kids Club.

"I was saved in a church where many missionaries served," Misa shared. "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!

"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 Japan Mission."

GOD'S LOVE IN ACTION

The following is a story of an English student who was saved and now helps with the English ministry at her church.

Yoriko Tamai was born in December 1953 in a small town near Osaka. She and her older sister grew up in a home that was staunchly Buddhist. Her first contact with Christianity was when she attended Sunday School and was enrolled in a local Christian kindergarten.



Yoriko Tamai

"My story of how I came to know God through studying English started over 50 years ago when I knocked on the door of a kind missionary couple," Yoriko shared.

"I went all the way to the next town to join a high school English class, where a missionary couple kindly welcomed me into their home, which also served as a church. I still remember their friendly smiles. I was enamored by the western decorations, pictures, furniture and even the fragrance of their home, which made it feel so cozy and comfortable. I remember feeling so nervous, as I sank into their deep sofa, because I could not speak any English.

"It took me about 20 minutes by bicycle to get to their home, but I continued to attend this English class without fail for three years. I did not attend their church, but went to their

Christmas meetings and started to read the Bible.

“The home-made cakes and cookies with coffee and tea were so delicious. Sometimes we learned how to bake cakes and make sweets. I thoroughly enjoyed the time I spent in their home.

“They encouraged me not to be shy, but to freely speak English — even if I made mistakes. I enjoyed it so much that I decided to study English at university in order to become proficient enough to go overseas.

“To my dismay, when I was 22 years old, this couple finished their term as missionaries and returned to the USA, but God was still at work.

“As a university student, I remember being assigned to read the Bible as one of my textbooks. I later realized that this professor must have been a Christian, and that God used him in this way to teach me more about Himself.

“I later moved to Osaka and forgot about my dreams of living overseas. Before I knew it, I was married and a busy homemaker with a 6-year-old son and a 3-year-old daughter.

“It was about this time that the missionary couple I had previously known wrote to me from the USA to let me know of a nearby church where I could study English.

“I took my children along with me to attend the English class, and found it refreshing to once again practice my English. Many teachers came to teach at this church over the years, but one teacher who made a special impression on me was Ginnie. She was our English teacher from 1986 to 1991. In her last year, she found out that she had cancer and was hospitalized.

“The pastor, members of the church and English students all took turns to visit Ginnie in the hospital. I visited her every Friday afternoon. It was during one of these visits that she spoke to me about Jesus. I promised her that I would do what I could to see her in heaven, and she passed away a short while later.

“Since making that promise, I started to seriously think about becoming a Christian. It was about that time that my neighbor,

who was one of my best friends, also started to think about becoming a Christian, so we both decided to attend a Bible study. As I studied the Bible, I reflected on my life and began to realize that I was a sinner and needed God's forgiveness. The minister soon led us both to the Lord.

"My sister, niece and a number of my friends also became Christians. My husband and two children are open to Christianity, but have not yet received the Lord. Please pray that they would become intensely aware of their need for the Savior.

"As I reflect on my past, I can say with certainty that dedicated English teachers who sacrificed their lives for the sake of missions in Japan have made a deep impact on my life. Seeing their love in action has helped to convince me of the existence of God and His love for me.

"Japan Mission has been sending English teachers to our church since 1997. These teachers have been from the USA, Canada, Australia, South Africa, Northern Ireland, India and the Philippines. The friendships I developed with these teachers have been very special, and I have learned so much about the Christian walk from them.

"The one thing that they have all had in common has been a true dedication to share God's love and the Gospel with the students.

"English classes have presented a wonderful opportunity to help students become aware of their need for a Savior — as in my case. The messages from the Bible, shared by these teachers, have been well-received and have touched the lives of many."

Yoriko now works closely with the English teacher and the pastor of her church to help others come to know Jesus.

SURRENDERING TO GOD

This is the dramatic story of how a young woman from Canada dedicated her life to the Lord, and how she was led to serve with us as an English teacher in Japan.

Melanie Peter was born in 1984, and grew up in Vernon, British Columbia, which is 400 km east of Vancouver, in a beautiful part of western Canada.

She was raised in a Christian home, where she learned early in life about how Jesus came into the world to save us from our sins. She was involved in church and felt the support of an extended family of committed Christians, who nurtured her and were the backbone of her upbringing. They helped her realize the importance of following God and what it meant to have a strong faith.



Melanie Peter

“When I entered high school, many of my friends started to drink and party, and I was faced with some tough decisions. I realized that I had to make a clear choice as to who my friends were and what was important in life. Even though I did not have a personal relationship with the Lord at the time, I believe that He answered the faithful prayers of my grandmother and parents, and protected me from making foolish choices.

“People in school used to call me a good girl, but I knew that being good was not enough for God. When I turned fifteen, I found myself feeling empty as I struggled to make the right choices. I found myself going through the motions of attending church and doing what was expected of me, but I started to yearn for more. I longed to find something that would give my life true meaning and purpose.

“As I sought answers, I found myself in awe of those who spoke with conviction and had a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus. People around me were serving God wholeheartedly. I wanted to be like them, but I realized that I could not do these things in my own strength, so I decided to confess my sins and ask the Lord Jesus into my heart.

“I started to read the Bible and discovered many great truths.

I had read the Bible before, but now it was as though I was reading it for the first time. It became so real and applicable to every situation in my life.

“After high school, I started to attend a local university. This plunged me into a world that challenged everything that I believed in. I faced various temptations, and found myself drawn to a non-Christian boy who paid attention to me and made me feel that I was special. It was subtle at first, but I eventually realized that the deep feelings I developed for him had caused me to take my eyes off of God.

“I tried to bring him to church, but he was not interested. I found that our connection was having a negative effect on my relationships with my family and close Christian friends. As I continued to go to church, three of my close Christian friends helped me to realize that I was making the wrong choices. I then decided to break up with my boyfriend and put Christ first in my life.

“It was difficult at first. I struggled as Paul did with sin when he said, *For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do — this I keep on doing* (Romans 7:18-19, NIV).

“Thankfully, my grandmother, parents and church family were praying for me, and the Lord helped me to overcome my struggles.

“One day, while talking with my cousin, I remember saying, ‘Wouldn’t it be wonderful if I could be a missionary and an English teacher at the same time?’ I didn’t know if it was possible, but for me, combining my two passions seemed like the perfect job.

“I now realize that God was guiding me while I was at university. Even though I didn’t know what I wanted to study, He provided me with opportunities to meet international students, and created a desire in me to go to Japan. As I studied, my teachers encouraged me to pursue a profession as

an English teacher. Before graduating, I applied for a secular English-teaching job in Japan, but God closed that door. I was disappointed, but not without hope.

“One day, the minister of my church asked if I was still interested in going to Japan. I said ‘Yes,’ so he put me in touch with someone from my hometown who was working with Japan Mission. I applied and was excited when I was accepted!

“Meanwhile, while I was working at McDonald’s, a private investor took notice of my managerial skills. He raised my salary and even offered me an opportunity to be a manager. It was a true temptation to just settle for this life, but I felt that God had something far better in mind for me.

“After my acceptance to Japan Mission, I faced many uncertainties, but my mind was made up because I was assured that I was in the center of God’s will and the Lord encouraged me through His Word. *“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future”* (Jeremiah 29:11, NIV).

“The day I left for Japan, I was confronted by a security guard at the airport in Canada who searched through my bags. She came across a lovely plaque that my parents had given me with this Bible verse on it.

“‘What is this?’ the security lady asked. I explained that it was from the Bible. She then pulled a tattered piece of paper out of her pocket. She told me that someone had put this tract on her windshield, and she had kept it for the past two years. It contained the simple and clear message of salvation. I encouraged her and explained the Good News to her right then and there, and her face began to soften as she started to smile.

“I was so encouraged! I realized that rather than succumbing to impatience, I had obeyed the prompting of the Holy Spirit to be patient and not worry about catching my flight. Even before I arrived in Japan, I sensed the Lord teaching me of the joy and rewards of waiting on Him.

“My first month in Japan was very challenging. I found it difficult to know what to buy because much of the food was strange and everything was written in Japanese.

“I realized that I had taken my loving mother for granted, and now I had to learn how to do everything for myself. I was no longer surrounded by my supportive family. I found myself dying to self as God became more real to me. I learned to rely on Him instead of my family and friends for advice.”

Two months after Melanie’s arrival in September 2009, the Lord led Tsuguto to one of the churches where she was teaching. He enjoyed learning English, so she invited him to attend church with her. Tsuguto liked the bilingual service and was delighted to find such a friendly place where he could learn English.

He soon developed an appetite to study the Word of God and made a decision to accept the Lord as Savior on January 24, 2010 — just four months after Melanie arrived in Japan.

However, being from a non-Christian society, it took Tsuguto a long time to understand the Scriptures, and truly know what it meant to make Christ Lord of his life. He grew in his relationship with the Lord as he spent many hours studying the Bible with various Christian friends.

Melanie and Tsuguto became good friends while they regularly attended the same youth group and started to develop feelings for each other.

It slowly dawned on Melanie that Tsuguto may be the person she might one day marry. She was determined to honor the Lord in their relationship, so they spent time together with their Christian friends, while their relationship grew. She prayed and asked God to clearly guide and protect them.

“Since coming to Japan,” Melanie shared, “the Lord has helped me to grow from being a person who sought the approval of man to a person who desired to honor God.”

She reflected on one occasion of how the Lord had called

her to serve Him selflessly. “It was just after the triple disaster of March 11, 2011, when the I was thinking about serving as a volunteer, to share God’s love with the disaster-stricken people of northeast Japan.

“A number of people close to me tried to discourage me from going by saying, “There is radiation in the area and you are a young woman of child-bearing age who could be affected in many adverse ways. Leave it to the older people!”

“I prayed seriously about the matter and the Lord clearly showed me that it was His will for me to go. The Lord took care of me in every respect, and I was able to share God’s love with many.” *Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!* (Romans 7:25, NIV).

UNDER GOD’S WATCHFUL EYE

This story is about how Tsuguto met Melanie and came to know the Lord.

Tsuguto Nishioka was born in August, 1989 in Osaka. His father was a businessman who had very little knowledge of Christianity.

However, the Lord was at work in his mother’s heart before he was born. She had attended church before she was married. While pregnant with Tsuguto, she recalled praying and asking God to protect and use him one day.

She enrolled Tsuguto in a Christian kindergarten, where he learned to pray before lunch and sing worship songs with the other children. After graduating from kindergarten, Tsuguto had no contact with Christianity until he entered university.

During November 2009, while in his second year of study, he felt the urge to study English. His mother suggested that he find a church where he could learn English, so Tsuguto found a local church where they were teaching English, and Melanie



Tsuguto Nishioka

Peter, of Japan Mission, was the teacher.

“When I arrived at the church, they welcomed me, and the teacher seemed cheerful and friendly,” Tsuguto shared. “I had a lot of fun and started to attend regularly.

“Following each English class, there was short Bible talk. There were many new concepts that I could not understand because I had never read the Bible, so I started to read the Bible to satisfy my curiosity.

“I came to understand the concept of sin and realized that I struggled with pride. I was haughty and would often compare myself to others. Intellectually, I understood that I was a sinner, but my pride prevented me from accepting this in my heart. I understood what Jesus had done on the cross, but I could not accept Him as my personal Savior because I felt that I could be successful without God.

“As I attended church, I noticed that the members seemed to be full of joy and different from non-Christians. I struggled to understand the meaning of the Bible talks, but continued to attend regularly because I enjoyed the friendships and opportunity to improve my English.

“One Sunday after the service, I had lunch at church, and the minister asked me if I wanted to become a Christian. I was hesitant, but as he spoke to me the Holy Spirit caused me to remember my past.

“My mother had prayed for me before I was born and had placed me in a Christian kindergarten. It was because of her suggestion that I found this wonderful church where I made many friends.

“As I recalled these things, I felt a deep sense of shame because I had been so prideful, thinking that my success was only the result of my abilities and hard work. I then realized that I had always been under God’s watchful eye and that He had been guiding my steps and protecting me.

“It was then, for the first time, that I came to a deep realization

that I was a sinner and needed God's forgiveness. I talked to the pastor about this, and he prayed with me. I confessed my sins and accepted Jesus as my personal Savior on January 24, 2010.

"While I was praying, tears of joy flowed down my cheeks as I felt the heavy weight of sin lifted from my shoulders."

For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved (Romans 10:10, NIV).

"Before accepting Jesus, I often experienced anxiety over the future and felt pressure to perform. After becoming a Christian, I had a sense of peace and hope for the future. I could rest in the knowledge that God would lead me into a perfect future. All I needed to do was to surrender to His will, and He would guide me. It was so much easier than trying to do it all in my own strength!

"As time passed, I tried to be diligent about studying and reading the Bible because I wanted to know more about this wonderful and exciting walk with my Savior. At first it was easy, but after a number of months it became more difficult, and I found myself reading the Bible less and less.

"I realized that this was not good, so I renewed my commitment to read the Bible regularly. However, I found that the result was the same. As I struggled to be faithful in this matter, I started to doubt my salvation.

"One day, while praying and reading the Bible, I came across the same verse that the minister had read to me when I accepted Jesus into my heart. *Yet to all who did receive Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God* (John 1:12, NIV).

"I realized afresh that if I had accepted Jesus as my Savior, the Scripture assures me that I am a *child of God* and that I should not doubt this promise.

"It is wonderful that a sinner, such as I, can call the God of all creation my Father! I was overcome with feelings of joy, and

realized that reading God's Word was a privilege and not an obligation!

"I praise the Lord for continuing to work in my heart and for His mercy and grace!"

MELANIE & TSUGUTO WERE MARRIED

After Tsuguto gave his heart to the Lord, he and Melanie's relationship slowly developed over five years, as they grew in the Lord.

They were married in Japan on May 2, 2015 and many of us participated in this celebration. Melanie's family came from Canada and Tsuguto's non-Christian family and friends were present. It was a joyous occasion and a unique opportunity for them to share their testimonies with friends and relatives.

We praised the Lord as we realized that this joyous wedding celebration was the culmination of many answered prayers!



Tsuguto & Melanie Nishioka

7

International Christian Schools

Christian education has played a pivotal role in helping countless Japanese people find the Lord. This is where students have had the opportunity to come in regular contact with Christians who sowed the seeds of God's love into their hearts. Many who have been saved can reflect on a time when they attended Sunday School, a Christian school or an English class held at a church.

Japan Mission is involved in the ministry of two Christian international schools that serve the Osaka, Nara and Kyoto area. Both schools have a vision to reach the lost for Christ and are committed to employing only Christian teachers. These schools have made a tremendous impact in the lives of the students, parents and the surrounding community. One principal said, "When the students leave our school, most no longer doubt the existence of the Creator God."

Japan Mission has provided school teachers to both schools over the years. David Verwey serves as Board Member of Kyoto International University Academy, which has about 300 students. Alex Verwey serves as Board Member at Kansai Christian School (KCS), which has about 50 students.

KANSAI CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

In 1970, Japan Mission, under Neil's leadership, saw the need to establish a Christian school for the children of missionaries, who sought to reach the millions of people in the Osaka area. Kansai Christian School (KCS) was founded by Japan Mission

and four other mission boards at that time. David was one of the first students, starting in grade three. This is where he and Sue later met and became sweethearts.

Laura Swallow is a full-time teacher at KCS, who is sponsored by Japan Mission. “God has continued to do great things through this ministry,” Laura shared. “This year, many new Japanese families joined the school, and we continue to have opportunities to share the love of God with them.

“I am teaching students in grades 5 to 10, with an emphasis on Bible. I also help to lead a girl’s Bible Study, where we share a devotional and pray for each other. It has been a blessing to disciple these girls, while digging deeper into Scripture and teaching them how to have a closer walk with the Lord.”

PRINCIPAL OF KCS

The Lord blessed David and Sue with three children — Jesse, Alex and Chris. When they were of school age, there was a need for a principal at KCS, so David worked as a part-time volunteer principal, while also working with Japan Mission. This opened numerous opportunities to network with educators in the area.

One of the highlights of their lives was when David and Sue were able to invite many Christian educators and all the Japanese school principals in the area to KCS to share their Christian view of education and raising children. It was a wonderful opportunity to share concepts from the Bible and witness to them. As a result, David was asked to speak at several PTA meetings in their schools.

They were encouraged to see entire families come to know the Lord while serving at KCS. After David served as principal for about 7 years, the Lord led Tom Poole, from the USA, to replace him. Tom and his wife Barbara were sponsored by Japan Mission and were instrumental in helping many find Christ. Keiko Nelson was one such parent.

A QUIET VOICE

This is the story of Keiko Nelson and how KCS played a vital role in the salvation of her family.

Keiko was born to traditional Japanese parents and lived in the small town of Kikuma on the island of Shikoku.

One day, 10-year-old Keiko was on an errand for her mother, when she asked a question into the dark night. “God, why was I born into such a miserable family? What is the purpose for my existence?”

She heard a quiet and gentle voice reply, “*Your future will be good.*” For a brief moment, she had hope for the future.

Her father owned a bar-and-grill restaurant. He was a first-rate chef before World War II, but the war destroyed his spirit. When he returned, the once clever and fun-loving man no longer spoke to customers. “He must have closed his heart to happiness,” Keiko thought.

Over the next ten years, intestinal problems from heavy drinking kept Keiko’s father in and out of hospital for as long as six months at a time before he died. He was unkind and resentful towards her mother when it became necessary for her to take over his business to make ends meet. Keiko watched her mother struggle to keep the business afloat and pay the hospital bills, and felt that her childhood was miserable and hopeless.

She decided early in life that she would never depend on anyone or suffer financially. Becoming a successful career woman became her ambition.

Keiko knew that she would have to work at the family restaurant if she could not get into a public high school because they could not afford private school. It was through sheer determination that she was able to pass the difficult entrance exams.



Keiko Nelson

She excelled at mathematics, but soon lost her sense of purpose as she started to make friends with the wrong crowd at school and almost failed her classes.

Keiko then came across a magazine article that explained how to change one's life to become successful, so she decided then and there to change.

"Getting out of the habit of self-pity and rebellion was tough, but I decided to stop meeting with my friends who were a bad influence," she shared. "I simply refused to open the door when they would call on me. The next six months was difficult, but I was finally able to break the cycle."

After she graduated from school, Keiko felt sorry for her mother, who was deeply in debt, so she took on the task of reviving the bar-and-grill restaurant. They both worked very hard and were amazingly able to repay the loan in 5 years; but Keiko felt that it resulted in her becoming a slave to a vicious cycle of work, with no future.

Her dream was to attend university in the USA and study business, so she started to save money and studied English every night between midnight and 2:00 am. She was finally accepted to a junior college in California at age 25.

After graduating, she took an exciting job in Tokyo as a study-abroad consultant. Being determined to succeed, she also started to study at a university. Even though she worked part-time, she was an honor roll student.

Keiko met Henry Nelson while at junior college in California, and they courted for seven years. Keiko married Henry when she was 33 years old. Shortly after, they moved to the city of Okayama in Japan, and decided to have a wedding ceremony at a Zen temple — partly because Henry was a practicing student of Buddhism. This suited Keiko because she felt that it helped to calm her restless spirit.

After a while, their son Joshua was born, and Henry accepted a teaching position at Kinki University in Nara. The study-

abroad company in Tokyo offered Keiko a position in nearby Osaka.

Even though all seemed to be going well, Keiko experienced a longing in her heart. She had a thirst for love, peace and truth. “I wanted to raise my son with some kind of truth that was not simply based on my own values and experiences,” she shared. “Even though I had a good job, a wonderful home life and a kind husband, I still yearned for something else.

“One day, I was looking at Mount Ikoma from my living room as I pondered my life. I was overcome by a deep desire to find peace and to love my family. I then realized that it was more important to seek truth than pursue a successful career. From that day on, I sensed that something changed, and I started to seek God.

“I heard a quiet voice whispering repeatedly, ‘*I love you,*’ and God began to deliver me from the darkness that filled my heart.” “*You will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart*” (Jeremiah 29:13).

“When we decided to enroll Joshua in first grade at KCS, we also became involved with the missionary community.”

Tom Poole was principal of KCS at the time. His wife, Barbara, led a weekly Bible study where Keiko learned how she could have a relationship with Jesus, who died for her sins because of His profound love. The Poole family greatly influenced the Nelson family, as they often had dinner together and had three boys who were good friends with Joshua.

Keiko and Barbara spent precious times walking and sharing together as they hiked various paths on Mount Ikoma. “It was a golden time for me,” Keiko reflected.

“I became aware of God through the way missionaries selflessly served and prayed for others. I also wanted to pray in this sincere manner.

“Henry started to attend church, so I also went along. My old selfish ways often bothered me, and then I heard a gentle

voice say, '*Surrender.*' Little by little, the Lord changed me and my heart softened.

"I was particularly drawn to the story of the "Prodigal Son," who lived a self-centered life and tried to control his own destiny. In the same way, I knew that God was watching over me and had helped me through many difficulties. I confessed my sins and pride as I cried to God, 'I have nothing and am nobody without you!'"

God had spoken to Keiko's heart years before, as she called out to Him when she was only ten years old. She sensed God's presence and prayed to Him, but only found out about Jesus many years later!

Keiko became involved at KCS as a parent, and later served as PTA president, while pointing many to Jesus.

Henry and her son Joshua also received the Lord as Savior. Joshua graduated from KCS, studied theology in seminary and is now a Bible professor!

"My heart overflows with gratitude and joy as I recall what God has done for my family!" Keiko shared.

FREEDOM FROM FEAR

Another family that was influenced through KCS was the Imahori family. The following is the story of how the Lord touched the lives of Shizu and her family while David was principal.

Shizu was born in 1960 to a traditional Japanese family in Osaka. At a young age, she was taught to honor her ancestors by worshiping and offering incense in front of the Buddhist altar. She was also taught to appease the spirits that lived all around them by praying and giving offerings at various temples and shrines.

"As a child, I remember my eye catching a glimpse of something white passing by the window at night," Shizu shared. "I was convinced that I saw a spirit.

“I grew up being afraid of, but also strangely drawn to, the spirit world. While in elementary school, I went on a school trip and we spent the night at a temple on mount Koya. A number of my friends told me that they had seen ghosts in the form of fireballs, and I remember feeling terrified.

“When my grandmother passed away, I was taught that her spirit would always be around me and protect me.

“My belief in such things began to fade as I entered university, but then I went on a trip with my friends and stayed overnight at a temple. That night, I clearly remember hearing footsteps and feeling cold air flowing into my room, and sensing an evil presence watching me. Out of desperation, I closed my eyes and recited some Buddhist prayers. A while later, I felt relieved because I sensed that the presence had departed from me.

“After graduating from university, I became an English teacher. While teaching, I became attracted to Seiji Imahori, a science teacher. He was also born into a traditional family and was raised in Osaka. We had a lot in common and were married in 1986. We were happily married and had two daughters and a son. Shortly after each child was born, I was able to return to work because my mother cared for the children.

“While teaching, I met Cally from the USA, who was assigned to my class as an Assistant Language Teacher. She was a Christian, but could not speak about God in our public school. I sensed that she was a good person, so I asked her to come to my home to teach my children English one day a week.

“I became good friends with her and remember telling her, ‘I see God in you.’ She smiled and gave me a big hug. Our friendship was my first contact with Christianity.

“When she was about to leave Japan, she introduced me to



Shizu Imahori

Ginny, who was teaching part-time at KCS. Ginny came to my home once a week to tutor my children.

“Around that time, my oldest daughter, Mari, entered elementary school. She was having problems and not happy attending the local Japanese school, so I discussed this problem with Ginny, and she urged us to try KCS.

“I was worried about how well Mari would fit into this new school where the curriculum was all in English, but decided to send her there for one week. I remember how happy Mari was when she came home after her first week there, and was convinced that this was the best school for her. That is how Mari came to start first grade at KCS in 1995.

“The homework Mari brought from school was somewhat challenging, but I could understand most of it because I was an English teacher. Each week, the school would send a newsletter home with a Bible verse printed on it. This was the first time I encountered the teachings of the Bible.

“As time passed, we decided to send all three of our children to KCS. Sometimes they were assigned to memorize short Bible verses. I found myself pondering the meaning as I helped them memorize the words. I was moved by the moral teachings in the verses and started to believe that there was a lot of wisdom in these words.

“When I first attended the PTA meetings, I noticed that they would open with a prayer. I found this strange, but soon became drawn to their genuine belief that God would hear their prayers.

“As I learned more about Christianity, I came to understand that a core teaching was that of *love*. I was always raised to *fear* the spirit world and felt that I needed to appease the spirits. I felt that if I failed to do so, I might somehow be punished by the gods. The Christian teaching seemed so much freer and full of hope.

“Many of the parents at KCS were missionaries, so I could

ask them questions. I slowly found myself believing in Jesus, but could not bring myself to make a commitment.

“Then one weekend, KCS held a camp and the parents were invited to participate. I spoke to a missionary friend at the camp and asked, ‘Would Jesus forgive any kind of sin, no matter how bad?’ ‘Of course,’ he answered and prayed with me.

“As he prayed, I closed my eyes and saw a bright light and spontaneously said aloud, *‘I believe in You Jesus and receive you into my heart.’* I told him what I had just experienced and we both rejoiced in the Lord.”

If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God (1 John 4:15, NIV).

“After I confessed my sins, I felt an overwhelming sense of peace. I knew that God had delivered me from the fear of the spirit world that had haunted me since childhood.

“The Lord led me to attend a church that met at Japan Mission. There, I grew in the Lord and learned much about the Bible. Eventually, my three children also decided to accept Jesus as their Savior. My husband attended church for a while, but decided that the traditional Japanese ways were more suited to his lifestyle. Please pray that he would become keenly aware of his need for the Savior.

“During 2015, I was appointed to become the principal of a public elementary school. I cannot openly share the Bible with the students, but I can pray. I asked the Lord to make this school like heaven itself. He answered my prayer by sending four Christian workers — a security guard, two English teachers, and an assistant who was a pastor’s wife! The prayer and fellowship we have had has been a wonderful source of encouragement.

“Please pray for me, as I have been placed in a position to influence many for Christ. I often share Christian principles with my students when addressing them during the weekly assemblies and graduation ceremonies.

“There have been times when students, parents and teachers

have asked questions and I have been able to share a little about Jesus with them, as it says in 1 Peter 3:15. *Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have* (NIV).

“My desire is to be diligent in my work, as I relate to others and live out Christian principles in my life. At the end of my time as school principal, I hope to openly tell people that it was only through God’s grace that we were able to have such a wonderful school.

“I know that I cannot do any of these things in my own strength. Please pray that God would grant me the wisdom and courage to be a faithful servant.”

CONCLUSION

These are just a few of many stories that testify of God’s faithfulness and divine intervention. KCS has had unique opportunities to play a vital role in the transformation of many since its founding in 1970. David, Sue, Alex and many other graduates have gone on to serve the Lord.

KCS celebrates its 50th anniversary in 2020 and continues to remain true to its mission — to educate students and inspire them to love Christ.

8

Creative Ministries

The two-fold purpose of the ministry of Japan Mission is to evangelize the lost and assist the Bible-teaching churches of Japan. This chapter describes the various tools, programs and ministries that the Lord has led us to develop in order to help us meet these objectives.

POINT OF CONTACT

Jesus taught us the value of having a *point of contact*. With fishermen, He started by talking to them about catching fish. With the Samaritan woman who came to Jacob's well to draw water, He spoke of the *Living Water*. With those who had physical needs, Jesus started by healing them.

When we reach out to the Japanese people, we often start with something that they are vitally interested in. This is why missionaries often teach music, cooking, crafts or English. This helps to build bonds of mutual respect and creates opportunities to share God's love.

Christmas is a wonderful *point of contact*. Workers of Japan Mission become particularly busy during the Christmas season as we participate in a combined total of over 100 meetings, concerts, parties and events.

One of our missionaries was invited as a guest to a Christmas wreath-making event, which was organized by an English student. Even though she was an unbeliever, she spontaneously asked our missionary to share about the meaning of Christmas.

CHRISTIAN MEDIA

Christian media has been an effective *point of contact*. Japan Mission produces and distributes Christian DVDs, CDs and other types of media. *Origins* is a 6-part series of videos, which makes a powerful case for creation versus evolution. One man wrote us, *Thank you! I now believe in the miracle of creation. Watching these episodes has made it much easier for me to understand the Creator God.* Educational videos have helped many in the process of coming to know the Lord.

Another whose life was touched through a Christian movie was Toshi. He believed that he had found the answer to life through practicing Buddhism. When his mother found Jesus and he observed how her life had changed, he became confused but was not yet willing to embrace Christianity.

Buddhism lost its hold on Toshi when he started to concentrate on his studies. After graduating from university, he interviewed with various companies to look for a job. While wandering the streets of Osaka, he came across a friend who invited him to a movie they were showing at a church.

He was not keen to go, but did not have much else to do. That night he saw a Japanese Christian movie and was deeply moved. As he listened to the minister and thought about his mother praying for him, he decided to accept the Lord as his Savior!

Japan Mission seeks to help the churches of Japan through developing media and web content. Many may assume that because Japan is technologically advanced, the Japanese church is also making effective use of media. Unfortunately, most Japanese churches struggle to maintain engaging websites and media content that draws newcomers.

Most churches have an attendance of fewer than 30 people on a Sunday and the majority of those are elderly. With 70% of the pastors approaching retirement, churches often lack the

funding, talent or vision needed to utilize media to engage the next generation for Christ.

With virtually the entire nation online, Japan Mission is committed to helping churches create high-quality media content that enables them to promote their activities and draw people.

The Lord has blessed Japan Mission with a number of talented workers who have expertise and experience in developing media content. A number of videos have been produced and can be viewed on our website at: japanmission.org

Our team made one such video during April 2016, when Alex led a team of volunteers to help the victims of the Kumamoto earthquake. This video promoted the relief effort for the earthquake victims and churches, and helped to raise awareness for prayer, giving and volunteers. We were astonished to see that this video had over 30,000 views and over 3,000 volunteers were mobilized!

There are many churches in Japan that are in need of media assistance. Pray that the Lord would lead us as we pursue this ministry that has the potential to influence so many for Christ.

NOAH AND THE ARK

The story of Noah and the ark has been a wonderful *point of contact*. The Hollywood movie *Noah*, released in 2014, made a big impact in Japan. The inaccurate portrayal in this movie troubled the Christians, but it also caused many Japanese to become inquisitive about the *true story* of Noah and the ark.

Mr. Yukio Takahara, a Japan Mission worker, seized this opportunity and spent many hours studying Noah's ark. He built many scale models of the ark, based on the measurements and descriptions in the Bible. These models were built mostly out of cardboard and some were designed to come apart — one floor at a time — revealing how Mr. Takaraha imagined the

inner-workings to be.

Armed with a folder of details and scale models, Mr. Takahara now travels to many places to explain the *true story* of Noah's ark. He has been invited to speak at churches, schools, seminaries, universities, museums, retirement homes, and many other venues.

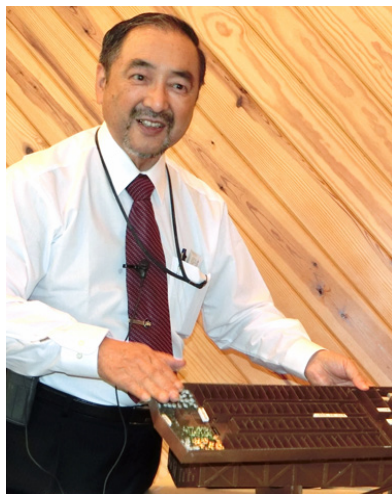
The story of the ark comes alive as he explains where a vegetable garden might have been cultivated or he points to a small rope and pulley, with a bucket, to show how water might have been drawn up to the different levels of the massive structure.

Mr. Takahara has had wonderful opportunities to explain about the meaning of the rainbow and our covenant with God.

"I will remember my covenant between me and you and all living creatures of every kind. Never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life. Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all



Mr. Yukio Takahara



Model of Noah's Ark

living creatures of every kind on the earth”(Genesis 9:15-16,NIV).

Most Japanese, who have never read the Bible, know about the flood and the ark through books, magazines and movies. Many are surprised to learn that this story is described in such detail in the Bible, and have started to read the Bible as a result.

The story of Noah and the ark is evident in the Japanese language. The character for *ship* is made up of *three different characters*. The first is *boat*. The second is the number *eight*. The third is *mouth*. All three arranged together make up the character for *ship*:

舟 (fune) + 八 (hachi) + 口 (kuchi) = 船 (sen)
 Boat + Eight + Mouth = Ship

Noah's Ark was the first great *ship* and it had *eight* passengers: Noah, his wife, his three sons and their wives — *eight* people with *mouths* to feed.

Japanese people are often stunned when they hear this explanation, and are amazed at the historical significance of their written language.

Educating people in this way has been a significant part of Mr. Takahara's ministry. The Holy Spirit has used these things to open the eyes of many to the Truth.

MUSIC MOVES HEARTS

Music has also proven to be an effective *point of contact*. One church we work closely with has a good relationship with the owner of a local restaurant and bar. This unsaved owner invited one of our missionaries to play music at their live concert events, where various musicians perform. He has had regular opportunities to play Christian music and share Jesus with the patrons.

Another of our missionaries shared, “In my English class, my

students swayed and clapped their hands as they sang, ‘*Go tell it on the mountain, over the hills and everywhere!*’ Even I could not keep up with their enthusiasm and keen sense of rhythm! I was surprised to find out that these dear ladies, who were singing so eagerly, did not even know the meaning of the words or the God the song was about.

“These ladies were part of a secular gospel choir called *Smile* and were preparing to sing in a concert at a big shopping center. I prayed that they would really find something to *smile* about!

“If a group of women love gospel music and want to improve their pronunciation, I am eager to help them and point out the meaning of the words. I have found that the Japanese often desire to experience the same passion and zest that they sense in this type of music.”

One of our missionaries was particularly gifted in music, so she was asked to teach and lead a gospel choir at a church. A number of non-Christians from the community responded to an advertisement. Many who would not usually come to church came to learn gospel music and hear the Bible talk that followed.

Some of the participants started to attend church regularly and made a profession of faith! This choir performed at the Christmas and Easter services. They also performed at several retirement homes, where the music moved hearts and a Gospel message was shared.

Music is indeed a powerful tool! Please pray that the Lord would raise up talented musicians to help us reach the Japanese people for Christ.

Another gifted musician and English teacher who worked with Japan Mission for seven years was Scott Kinoshita. Many found the Lord through his preaching and singing. The following is the story of one of Scott’s students, Miss Tani, whose life was forever changed through music.

“When I was 21, my younger brother, who had always been

so physically active and strong, suddenly died. His death was a great shock to me, and I suddenly became obsessed with the reality of death. Life seemed to be so fragile and uncertain.

“Three questions baffled me. *‘Who am I? Why am I living? Where will I go after I die?’* I became so introspective and engrossed in reading books to discover the true meaning of life, that I seemed to live in a separate world from my family. Every day, I desperately searched for answers, but the more I read, the more convinced I was that life was in vain.

“All I did seemed so pointless. In the past, I had always tried to improve myself, but now I saw no need for it anymore. I became very depressed, and for two years had to seek psychiatric treatment.

“My only consolation was music. Before I became depressed, I had joined a Christian singing group. While we were practicing a song about Bethlehem, I felt a strange peace come over me and my body started to tremble with emotion.

“The leader of the choir would often teach us the meaning of the words and also taught us to sing Scripture, so the truth of the Bible slowly started to sink in.

“I then went to a concert, where Scott Kinoshita of Japan Mission performed. The earnestness and sincerity with which he sang touched me deeply. He spoke to me afterwards and invited me to join his English class. I wanted to brush up on my English, so I joined his class and received a bilingual New Testament. I eagerly read the Bible, and every time I didn’t understand, I would ask Scott and he would patiently answer my questions. He would often encourage me to believe and confess my sins before God.

“One night after a busy day, I was tired, but as usual I read my



Miss Tani

Bible. I was struck by the authoritative words, *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God* (John 1: 1, NIV).

“These words gripped my heart and tears filled my eyes. When I saw Mr. Kinoshita again, I asked him to pray with me to accept Jesus as my Savior.

“I will never forget that day as long as I live! From then on, I could sing from the bottom of my heart:

*Oh happy day, oh happy day
When Jesus washed my sins away
He taught me how to watch and pray
And live rejoicing every day!*

“I am now actively involved in helping others find the true meaning of life through the English classes that Japan Mission is holding in our church.”

HOSPITAL EVANGELISM

Hospital evangelism continues to be a vital *point of contact* with the sick. Before people are hospitalized, they often have very little time for God. When they are suddenly brought to a standstill, we need to be there, not just to sympathize, but to bring the message of Christ to them.

One patient sent us a most unusual request, “Please send me a catalog of your crosses.” Some may have set such a letter aside, but the lady handling our correspondence had true spiritual insight. She sensed a spiritual need in this desperate question. This man did not know enough to ask, “Please tell me about the true and living God who sent His Son to die for my sins.” So, she prayerfully wrote him a letter, explaining the Gospel in such a way that he could understand.

For those who do not know Christ, facing death is extremely lonely and hopeless. Buddhist priests do not often visit the sick because they are only considered useful for funerals and the afterlife. If patients happen to see a Buddhist priest in the

hospital, their reaction is often, “What are you doing here? You are too early!”

Sue Verwey had an opportunity to witness to a medical doctor, who had studied Buddhism for eight years and did an internship in a Buddhist monastery for three years. “I realized after all that time that I had no words of hope to offer the dying,” he confessed. “That is why I sometimes ask my Christian friend to offer words of hope and encouragement to my terminally ill patients,” he shared, while studying the Christian literature that Sue gave him.

Buddhist priests do not have a message of hope for the sick, but it is not so with Christians! The Lord has shown us how important it is to make the best of such opportunities to minister to the sick and dying.

OUTREACH TO THE ELDERLY

Outreach to the elderly has also been an important *point of contact*. The 126 million people of Japan are facing some unique challenges, as those age 65 or older exceed 25% of the population.

About 30,000 Japanese die a *lonely death* each year. This amounts to *three people dying alone every hour*! This figure is set to rise, as projections indicate that 40% of the population will be age 65 or older by 2050.

More and more people are dying alone at home. This phenomenon is so common that it even has a special name, *kodokushi*, meaning *lonely death*. Teams of cleaners, known as Lonely Death Squads, clear houses where the elderly sometimes lay dead for months. Police remove the deceased, while clean-up crews are faced with houses filled with rubbish and insects.

“In present-day Japan, people do not socialize as much in their local communities; so, deceased people are quite often found rather late by their neighbors, when the body is already decomposing,” explains a cleaning company manager.

About 6 million Japanese seniors live alone, with half of them being economically vulnerable. Many have lost contact with their extended family, which heightens their feelings of loneliness and isolation. *Kodokushi* often happens to those with poor family connections and no one available to ask for help.

“Some of the reasons why family relationships have become so fragmented are rooted in the past,” explains Dr. Kudoh. “When Japan’s economy was booming in the 1960’s and ’70’s, there was a labor shortage, so people were relocated to various sites to work on civil engineering projects. Since the 1990’s, less and less work started to cause financial hardships, and those who relocated without their families eventually lost contact with them, leaving them all alone to face old age.”

Many of the elderly have become helpless and destitute. Some have even turned to crime, seeking the security offered in the prison community, as compared to the desperate lives they would otherwise be forced to lead.

Japan Mission has shared the message of hope with countless numbers of elderly people over the years. Tracts have been distributed as workers have befriended them in their homes, hospitals and retirement homes. English classes and other outreach opportunities have offered a chance for the elderly to socialize and build connections as they experience the love of God.



Sunette Hugo with the elderly

There are *four* large retirement homes within walking distance of Japan Mission, where we have held special meetings and befriended the residents. One of these retirement homes invited us to teach English and crafts to the elderly. We agreed, with the condition that we could also share God's Word with them. Some of the residents showed interest in Christianity and started to attend a local church.

The Lord led us to Mr. Hano, who lived in our neighborhood and was in his 80's. He told us that he had cancer and was told by the doctors that he only had a few months to live. He gave us the keys to his house, and told us to call Social Services if his newspapers started to pile up, since he lived alone and was making preparations for his final days. We were able to encourage him as we shared God's love and some encouraging Scriptures with him.

"Even to your old age and gray hairs I am He, I am He who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you" (Isaiah 46:4). Pray that God would open hearts and minds as we share the message of hope and God's love with the elderly.

REACHING CHINESE PEOPLE IN JAPAN

Outreach to Chinese students and tourists who visit Japan is another significant *point of contact*.

According to the Japan National Tourism Organization, about *8 million* Chinese tourists visit Japan each year. Statistics also indicate that about 740,000 Chinese live in Japan.

This has been a golden opportunity to reach literally millions of Chinese for the Lord. We can now supply them with the Word of God in Japan, with the hope that they will take the Bibles back to China.

One day, a Chinese man came to the Japan Mission in search of a Bible. He found our details on the Internet. His wife sent him out that morning saying, "Don't come back without a Bible."

She had Christians in her family, but he had been struggling in his heart with Buddhism. He was a seismologist from Beijing, and his government had sent him to Japan to study how to predict earthquakes.

We introduced him and his family to a good church. They attended the meetings regularly and later gave their hearts to the Lord. They introduced several of their Chinese friends to the same fellowship and they were also saved!

The Lord has led us to work in partnership with a Chinese church. Japan Mission owns a centrally-located four-story building in Osaka. This facility is being used as a media outreach center and is also used to evangelize the community.

A Chinese church meets in this building on Sundays, and many Chinese students and tourists frequent the property. This has been yet another opportunity to sow the seed and spread God's Word.

KIDS CLUB

The Kids Club ministry has been a fruitful *point of contact*.

One of the exciting things we have witnessed on the mission field is how the Lord uses our daily needs to open opportunities to witness. As we have gone about our regular activities, the Lord has brought people across our path whose hearts are open to hear the Good News.

This is the way Kids Club started. When our grandson, Will, was old enough to attend kindergarten, the Lord opened the door to a new ministry. Will immediately drew attention because of his foreign appearance, and many of the parents asked if we could teach their children English.

The result was Kids Club, which was started in September 2016. We have been excited about this ministry because it has enabled us to reach many families who have never heard the Gospel.

Japan Mission workers interact with the children in English,

while teaching them Christian songs and Bible stories. The parents often stay and participate. Our aim has been to create a space where children and their parents can encounter the love of God and find Jesus, as they develop a deeper relationship with our workers.

Many contacts have been made through Kids Club. The wife of a Buddhist priest joined our English Class, while her son attended Kids Club. Her husband joined the English Class a month later. Even though he was a priest, he was eager to learn about Christianity.

We have seen the Lord do miracles in order to put us in touch with those who He wants at Kids Club. While visiting the USA, David and Sue spoke at a church in Santa Barbara (California) where they showed a video about the Kids Club ministry.

After the service, they met the Moriyama family. David and Sue were amazed when the mother, Megumi, told them that she recognized a mother and child in the Kids Club video, and that they were good friends! This unsaved family, with two small children, happened to be visiting the USA from our area of Japan!

The timing was miraculous because this was the last Sunday that they were going to be in Santa Barbara before returning to Japan. A few weeks later, we learned that one of their children had joined Kids Club. We praise the Lord for the way He enabled us to contact this family, even while in another country!

During 2017, the Kids Club ministry was growing to the point where we had to limit the number of new children. We began to pray for a safe space to play outside, since the only space available was a small concrete area outside our main building.

The Lord answered our prayers when we approached Mr. Kaisaka, a retired neighbor, who was the owner of a large garden just below our property. He told us that he wanted this land to



Japan Mission property and garden below

be used by the community. He even put in some swings, slides and other playground equipment for the children.

We later invited Mr. Kaisaka's family and the Kids Club families to a barbeque in honor of Mr. Kaisaka, to thank him for his generosity.

Our relationship with Mr. Kaisaka goes back to 1995, when he used to send his daughter, who was in kindergarten, to Japan Mission to learn English. He knew Neil and Peggy very well and immediately took a liking to Alex, who was a teenager at the time. Alex is now in regular contact with Mr. Kaisaka and their friendship continues.

We have seen the Lord at work for many decades in the Kaisaka family. Now the daughter, who used to come to learn English, has three children of her own and is sending them to Kids Club, where they listen intently to the Bible stories. It has been exciting to see the Lord is at work in the hearts of three generations of this family!

One five-year-old boy at Kids Club was like a sponge when we taught the children to pray and thank God at snack time.

He soon started to pray on his own at home before meal times, with his bewildered parents looking on.

One day, a boy came up to Alex's wife, Eri, who teaches at Kids Club and asked, "You taught us last week that God created the world. Why did He decide to create everything?" Eri was surprised by the depth of the question and how much he had been paying attention. "Because it made God so happy to have a creation to love," she replied.

On another occasion, Eri was preparing for Kids Club when she accidentally knocked over a small mirror and it cracked. She planned to clean it up, but forgot about it until one of the kids pointed it out. She quickly took care of it before she rushed in to do the Bible lesson. In that moment, she felt convicted and the Lord prompted her to share this with the children.

She said, "I had something else planned for today's Bible lesson, but I want to tell you about this mirror." She explained that she had accidentally broken it earlier, but instead of mentioning it to anyone, she had planned to get rid of it, with the hope that no one would notice, "and that was wrong of me!" she said.

The group of children listened in silence as they sensed the tension. "It wasn't my mirror, and even if others would not have known, God knew that my heart was more concerned with making myself look good than apologizing for breaking something that did not belong to me." She apologized to the team members in the room, and this left everyone with a valuable lesson.

That same evening, as the children were leaving, one boy accidentally broke one of the Christmas lights that was set up outside. All the missionary teachers had left, and the mothers were ready to leave when the boy saw one of the missionaries return. The boy then timidly confessed that he had broken the light. The missionary assured him that it was fine and that, most of all, God was very happy with his decision to confess what he had done.

It has been encouraging to see these children learn spiritual lessons and embrace a faith in a loving Creator God, through a genuine relationship with the teachers.

We have been excited to see how the Lord has also been using Kids Club to communicate God's love to the parents. One missionary in the area, who often helps us with Kids Club, decided to adopt two Japanese babies with Down syndrome.

The unsaved mothers were deeply moved when they learned that this missionary couple had intentionally adopted these babies with serious disabilities, because such orphans require a lot of care and are often neglected.

Some of the mothers wondered what would cause a couple to commit to a lifetime of personal sacrifice to raise these babies with disabilities in a country that was not their own.

This was a wonderful opportunity to share of God's love and explain how every child is precious in God's sight. As the Holy Spirit has been using such examples of Christ-centered living to speak to the hearts of the parents, some have expressed an interest to incorporate Christian values into their lives.

It has been a slow process to help the parents understand the truths of the Bible, but we have seen them make steady progress. We have been able to introduce several families to various local churches. It has been encouraging to see them make friends with other Christians as they attend church regularly.

We praise the Lord for the manner in which He has prepared the way as we started this exciting ministry in faith. *"The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged"* (Deuteronomy 31:8, NIV).

CAFE MINISTRY

The cafe ministry has proven to be an effective *point of contact*. Japan Mission started CAYA Cafe in March 2018. It

has been hosted out of a gazebo, located in the garden that Mr. Kaisaka made available to us, and is surrounded by beautiful cherry blossom trees.

On most Saturday afternoons, up to 40 visitors from the community join us for fun and fellowship over a cup of coffee. Visitors can choose their preferred roast from a variety of different coffee beans, which workers then grind and brew to taste.

The purpose of CAYA Cafe is to create a space where workers can share God's love and connect with the community. *CAYA* stands for *Come As You Are*. In Japanese society, there are few places where people are accepted just as they are, but that is what the grace of God does for us. It embraces us just as we are.

As the news spread, some have been driving 30 minutes or more to bring their families to CAYA Cafe. When the unsaved leave, we sometimes hear them say, "It was delightful to be here. We feel as though we stepped out of Japan and experienced a foreign culture." They eventually come to understand that there is something different about this place because they are experiencing the love and joy of the Lord.

One family learned about CAYA Cafe, because their children attended the same kindergarten as Alex and Eri's children. They came to the cafe and several special events, including our English camp. They then started to show interest in Christianity, so we introduced them to a local church where they now attend regularly.

PARTNERSHIP WITH CHURCHES

Japan Mission does not plant churches. We use various methods to reach the lost and connect them to local churches.

Rev. Yoshida is the pastor of one such church, who often comes to CAYA Cafe. "As a child, my mother made me attend a church that seemed quite legalistic, so I ended up believing that being a Christian was mostly about keeping a set of rules," he shared. "This is one reason why I have a burden to



Rev. Yasutaka Yoshida with Alex Verwey

welcome families with children to our church and find ways to communicate God's love to them. Once a month, we hold a special Sunday service for children, where the parents participate as we do crafts, tell Bible stories, sing songs and play with the children."

Japan Mission has introduced Rev. Yoshida to many who have been reached through the English classes, Kids Club, English camp and the CAYA Cafe ministry, and some have started to attend his church.

Rev. Yoshida sometimes uses graffiti art to communicate the message of God's love. When we invited him to share at our English camp, he tied an enormous white canvas between two trees. He invited the parents and children to draw on this canvas with many colorful watercolors. He then skillfully drew colorful Christian messages on the canvas. After he shared his testimony, they cut the colorful canvas into many pieces, so that the children could take them home. That was a memorable event for children and parents alike!

GRAFFITI ARTIST FOR JESUS

The following is the extraordinary story of Rev. Yoshida, and how the Lord transformed the heart of this graffiti artist to become a pastor.

Yasutaka Yoshida was born in December, 1985 and raised in Osaka. He was the oldest of four boys.

“I had barely started elementary school when I remember crying in my bed on the second floor of our run-down apartment that reeked of mold,” Yasutaka shared. “My parents were getting a divorce and they were quarreling.

“There was one quiet night when I was lying in bed and heard my mom and dad fighting. I can still remember it now.

“Ever since I can remember, my mother took us to church on Sundays. We attended a church that seemed quite legalistic. We were taught that on Sunday we could not watch TV, play sports or go to McDonalds, so I concluded that being a Christian was mostly about keeping rules.

“I became obsessed with judo and became quite good in my weight-class. I was consistently in second place in Osaka and went to the finals twice.

“When I was a senior in high school, I was at a loss as to what to do about my future. I could either keep doing judo in college or find a job. My family was poor and I knew that if I went to college, I would have to accept money from my mother. I no longer wanted to attend church and live a life according to her expectations, so I decided to leave home and join the Japanese Self-Defense Forces.

“When I was younger, I prayed that my father would return home, but he didn’t. This caused me to doubt the existence of God. I started to feel that there was no sense believing in something that was unreliable and uncertain, so I eventually became an atheist.

“I enjoyed listening to different kinds of music, so the Self-Defense Forces and music became my life. I started to read all kinds of magazines and saw pictures of parties in foreign countries. It looked like a lot of fun and there were pictures of people smoking something, but they weren’t cigarettes. It was marijuana and presented as *a ticket to having an awesome life!*

Other messages read, *Live everyday like it's a party!*

"Some of my older colleagues in the Self-Defense Forces liked music too. One day we started talking about drugs. Then one of the guys said that he had some, so I tried smoking marijuana and I was immediately hooked.

"I could not hold down liquor very well, so from that day, I started smoking a lot of weed instead. I found the phone number of a dealer and we would sometimes order it off the Internet. I felt like I was starting to live the dream, like what all those magazines illustrated. My older colleagues and I would sometimes get high and speed down the highway.

"One summer break, a colleague called me saying, 'Yoshida, the commander wants to speak with you. I know you're on break, but it looks like he wants you to come back.'

"When I arrived at the garrison, I went to see the commander. 'Listen up, Yoshida, I'm going to ask you something very important,' he said. 'Drugs. Have you ever smoked marijuana?'

"Yes,' I answered, and the commander yelled at me saying, 'Leave right now! The narcotics control investigator is here.' After he was finished, I was fired.

"I was 19 years old when I was thrown into solitary confinement in Osaka Prison. I was later confined to a very small cell and deeply saddened to see the disappointment and tears in my mother's eyes.

"After 3 months, I was released. I was determined to stop smoking weed and clean up my life. I did not want to disappoint my distraught mother again, so I tried to do everything I could to make a fresh start.

"I went to visit my mother during the New Year holidays and she took me to church. That is where I first met Junko — the girl I would later marry.

"One day, I was drawing in a notebook while riding on the train when a graffiti artist spoke to me. He showed me his notebook and I was really impressed. We became drawing

buddies and he showed me some of his graffiti.

“He would use spray paint and markers to draw graffiti on walls throughout the city. It was intense. He had even drawn on the side of a train. I wondered how he had pulled that off!

“I decided to give it a try, and the world became my canvas. ‘Who knows? It may even make me some money and I could become famous,’ I thought. I went from drawing on paper to city walls.

“Just like when I practiced judo, I was very competitive and hated to lose, so I tried to be the best at what I did. I tried to find places to draw that would be visible to many people. I also drew in my own unique style, so that people would recognize my work.

“I wanted a place where I could belong, since I didn’t have a father and my mother was very busy. I felt empty, and I wanted people to respect me. The more I drew, the more people loved what I did. Whenever the girls would see me drawing, they would scream, ‘Wow, that’s so cool!’

“Of course, it was a crime and I could have been arrested if I were to draw graffiti in broad daylight, so I went out at night and had a lookout watch for the police. Before I knew it, I was sleeping during the day and staying up all night.

“There was nothing better than hanging out with my friends, but whenever we weren’t together, there was a hole in my heart. The emptiness inside of me grew deeper and I went crazy trying to fill it. This led me to become more obsessed with perfecting my graffiti.

“The promise I made myself to stop disappointing my mother began to fade. I made an acquaintance who would give me marijuana for free and I would sometimes sell it to make some money. I finally felt like I was living the good life.

“I changed part-time jobs a lot. The most fun I had was delivering pizza. I would get on a motorbike, armed with spray paint and permanent markers and drive all over town, filling

orders and drawing graffiti along the way.

"I became friends with even bolder graffiti artists. We would dare each other to draw in places where there were security cameras and found ourselves on the news! The Osaka Police were searching frantically for us, but we managed to evade them. As the news media ran stories about how the city was being defaced by graffiti, we felt a sense of pride, because people were noticing our work.

"We got together practically every night to draw. One night, we decided to draw on a sign that was located on the rooftop of an apartment complex. It was a place that was visible from the platform of a train station. We jumped from building to building to get to that rooftop. Falling would have meant certain death, but that did not deter us because we were all determined to draw in that highly visible place.

"All four of us drew at the same time without a lookout and the strong smell of spray paint quickly filled the air. We suddenly heard voices from below. Some people had come out of one of the bars saying, 'Hey, they're drawing something! It's graffiti! Call the police!'

"We jumped across to the next building and ran down the emergency staircase. I hid under a car for the longest time. After the police left, I called my friends and found out that one of them had been arrested.

"A few days later, one by one, my friends were arrested. One morning, the police woke me up when they forced my door open and shouted, 'You're Yasutaka Yoshida aren't you? We've got a warrant for your arrest!' I tried to lie my way out of the situation, but they forced me to go with them.

"My new home was a small jail cell with an unenclosed toilet. For the first three days in jail, I was not allowed to see anyone, but I could receive things people sent me. I was taken into custody right after they woke me, so I was still wearing my pajamas and it was cold.

“Before sending me clothes, the first thing my mother sent me was a Bible! ‘At least send me clothes first! Like I’m gonna read this!’ I thought as I threw the Bible across the room.

“My mother soon visited me in jail and brought me some money and clothes. She also brought Junko, the Christian girl from her church that I had previously met. They encouraged me to read the Bible and Junko later wrote me some encouraging letters.

“I had no phone and I couldn’t see my friends or go outside. After two months, I became so bored and frustrated that I finally decided to open the Bible.

“The Lord spoke to my heart as I read Romans 6:23. *For the wages of sin is death*. I realized that I would go to hell if I died and knew that I needed to repent.

“I was sometimes allowed to go to the recreational room, where there was a small window and the sunlight would shine in. In that room, we were allowed to smoke two cigarettes per day. One day, I was watching the smoke from the cigarettes flow out through the small window.

“The plumes of smoke and dust particles were clearly visible in the bright sunlight. ‘This room is filthy!’ I thought. Just then, it was as though God was showing me how filthy the inside of my own heart was. Even though I was surrounded by people, I felt like I was alone and on a big stage. The sunlight shone on me — the man who had led such a selfish life!

“It was as though everything I had done up until then was being played back to me in a movie, and all I saw was the countless specks of dust and sin. As I came face to face with my sin, I gasped for breath and mumbled, ‘God, if you’re there, please save me!’

“I then remembered the words that my mother had told me as a child. ‘Yasu, please read the Bible. Everything written in it is true!’ I went back to my jail cell, picked up the Bible and read the entire book in search of answers.

“I was struck by these words. *If you declare with your mouth, Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved* (Romans 10:9-10, NIV).

“I realized that I had to say it out loud, so I said, *Alright, I'll say it! Jesus, I'm sorry. Please forgive me for everything I've done. I believe in Jesus Christ.*’ The Lord helped me see my sin, and I asked Him to forgive me.

“I felt an indescribable sense of peace and joy come over me. For the first time, I felt free of guilt, and from that night on I could finally sleep well.

“I developed a strong urge to tell others about Jesus about the time when an old homeless man was assigned to share my cell. He was arrested because he kept stealing food. He smelled terrible from the moment he entered the room. I had never smelled anything so disgusting, but I toughed it out at first.

“When I received Jesus into my heart, I decided to be nice to everyone, but I couldn’t stand the stench and soon let him know about it. ‘Hey old man, don’t come over to this side of the cell on my *tatami* (straw mat)! Stay on your *tatami*. Here’s the line between our mats.

“You better listen up carefully! We’re both sinners here, but I’m already saved and you aren’t, so you need to believe in Jesus! Everything written in the Bible is true! No one who has sinned can go to heaven, so the Christ, who is God, took our place and died on the cross. Let’s go to heaven together!’ I didn’t let my body cross over the line that I drew, but I took out the Bible and spoke to him like I was a lot better than him.

“The old man just stared at the wall in silence.

“I figured that it was not my fault that he smelled so awful, and tried to get some sleep. As I lay there thinking, I remembered the words I had read in the Bible, *Love one another*.

“Have I ever even loved the people that said they liked me?’

I wondered. ‘Wasn’t I just using them for my own benefit? I always expected something in return, so that wasn’t love, was it? I can’t even be nice to this old man, just because he smells bad.’ I began to realize that there was no love in me.

“As I closed my eyes, a voice gently prompted my heart. *‘Why did you draw that line and keep that old man on the other side? I crossed that line and I loved you.’*

“‘Why?’ It rang out in my heart. I then realized that even though Jesus Christ was God, He came and lived on this earth. He crossed that vast chasm that we had no possible way of crossing. He didn’t just reach out His hand. He was nailed to a cross and gave up His life for someone with a desperately selfish heart like me, but it didn’t just end in death. He rose from the dead!

“I finally understood and thanked God for showing me that Jesus came to save someone with a filthy heart like me — filthier than the homeless old man that I shared the cell with. After that, I shared my cell with drug addicts, black marketeers and a man who ran over and killed someone with his car.

“I thought that these people were really bad, but I came to realize that in God’s eyes I was no different. It was a matter of the heart. I had never killed anyone, but I had hated a lot of people.

“I remembered saying prayers as a child and used to think of prayer as simply reciting some lines, but God taught me that prayer was a conversation. Tears started to flow as I prayed and came to the realization of the depth of God’s love for me. I was filled with a sense of joy and became strangely content with my circumstances.

“I was released in September 2007, after serving eight months in jail and started to attend my mother’s church. I became friends with Junko, the Christian girl who had written me encouraging letters while in jail, and we were married two years later.

“I found a job at a retirement home, and while caring for the elderly I started to think, *‘What is going to happen to these people when they die? Where will they go?’* I realized that there would be no hope for such people if I did not become a person who could explain the Gospel to them.

“Soon after, the Lord led me to attend Bible school for three years. After graduating, the Lord opened the door for me to become a minister of a church. God also opened some



Rev. Yasutaka Yoshida with his graffiti art

wonderful opportunities for me to use my drawing skills to reach young people for Christ. I now draw Christian graffiti on giant canvases as I share my testimony.

“Before, I used to live life according to what I thought was good. Now I want God to use me according to His plan.”

“You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit — fruit that will last — and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you” (John 15:16, NIV).

“I praise the Lord for the depth of His love. He patiently persisted and found me — a man deeply mired in sin. He transformed me from being a prisoner of sin to a servant of Jesus Christ!”

9

Bible Distribution

The statistics and incredible stories in this chapter have been compiled from the first-hand accounts of many trustworthy sources who have visited numerous parts of China. Some names have been altered and details omitted in order to protect the identity of those who continue to risk their lives. (Sources: page 213)

Stories abound of those who have been thrilled to receive their first copy of God's Word. A 23-year-old man in China had been a Christian for eight years, but did not have a Bible. The church would occasionally receive Bibles, but there were never enough. After eight years of waiting, he finally received his own Bible and his heart was filled with joy.

Ten students of a Bible school in China were without Bibles, so they prayed earnestly and rejoiced when Bibles arrived for them six months later.

Supplying Bibles inevitably generates a need for even more. It is common for one Bible to result in several converts within months, as it is shared. There was a case in the early 1990s, where a single Bible in China resulted in 10,000 conversions within three years of its arrival!

BURGUNDY BIBLES

Japan Mission has been working with New Life Ministries in Japan for many decades. This association has helped us supply Bibles that are printed very cheaply. New Life Ministries purchased a top-of-the-line printing press for the express purpose of printing Chinese Bibles. This Mistubishi web offset

press prints a full 1,000-page Bible every 2.2 seconds, and often runs 24 hours a day. That is 27 Bibles per minute! The cost of printing one full Chinese Bible with a burgundy cover is about US\$2.50 or UK£2.

A Bible courier contacted a minister in rural China for the first time. This minister was a unique person with an extensive ministry. He told of how he always gave a Bible to new converts whenever they had any, but they normally experienced a severe shortage.

When asked where they received their Bibles, he said that he had some contacts who sent them to him. These contacts received them from someone else, so he really didn't know where they came from.

After talking for a while, the Bible courier brought out two suitcases full of Bibles and proceeded to give them to him. As he opened the first suitcase and saw the *burgundy* covers, he cried out, "These are the same Bibles we have been receiving for many years! Where did you get them?"

The Bible courier then told him that the Bibles were printed in Japan. Someone had given money so they could be printed, and others had carried them across the border.

The minister's face beamed like the sun as tears came to his eyes. "Oh to think," he said, "that we have brothers and sisters whom we don't even know, who give and work in order to provide us with Bibles!" He immediately started to praise God and thank Him for all the Bibles they had received over the years.

We praise the Lord for the resources He has provided to enable us to meet this critical need. The regular financial contributions of many have helped us provide this priceless gift to countless people who could not obtain a Bible by themselves. Please pray for wisdom and safety for those involved in the printing, transport and distribution of these Bibles.

CHINA

The population of China is 1.4 billion people. The economic expansion of China has been phenomenal. The metropolises have been transformed over the past 30 years through the proliferation of skyscrapers and neon lights. Hundreds of millions of people have been lifted out of poverty as they joined the middle-class. Many have been given special freedoms and privileges in exchange for their loyalty to the Communist Party. However, the majority are still very poor and have been restricted to living in the rural areas.

We regularly receive reports from China of literally millions of Christians who do not have a Bible. The vast majority have very little chance of obtaining a copy unless it is supplied to them by others.

A church planter in northwestern China wrote us the following letter of thanks:

I have been working in this area for about ten years. I received Bible school training from one of the house church movements and was sent to plant churches in this region ten years ago.

As a minister, I should have my own Bible, but every time I get one and know others are in need, I give it away. I often borrow a Bible from others, and wish I had one of my own.

I recently received 200 Bibles for my area, and within two days they were all given out. This time, I was able to keep one for myself. There is no way we can get Bibles in this area, so it was a real answer to prayer! Thank you for your precious gift!"

A grateful believer wrote us the following letter of thanks:

Thank you for providing me with a Bible! I live in a small town in the northern part of China. The winters are very cold here. I became a Christian when I was in my last year of middle school.

A classmate, who is a Christian, shared the Gospel with me, so I started to attend a house church with him. Three months later, I gave my heart to the Lord Jesus.

Our church has always lacked Bibles. Sometimes the minister

would get some Bibles and give them away.

I always wanted to have my own Bible, but there was no place where I could buy one, so I waited many years for the minister to give me one.

Five months ago, the pastor gave me a small package after the Sunday service.

He said, "This is a gift from God."

I asked him what it was.

"I know you have been waiting for so long to have this," he said. "Thank you for your patience. This book is yours."

When the minister said "this book," I knew that it must be a Bible! My heart was filled with joy as tears came to my eyes. I gripped the pastor's hand and asked him to pray for me — that I would have wisdom to understand the Bible when I read it. Today, after five months, I have read through the Bible two times. Thank you!

Several major covert suppliers of Bibles to the house church networks of China report that all their best efforts combined, meet far less than half of specific requests from Chinese churches. They can often only fulfill a mere 10% of the present need.

Paul Hattaway, who is a Christian author and an expert on the Chinese church wrote the following during 2018:

In the past year, the need for Bibles has become greater than at any time in our history. The massive persecution that is underway has made it even more difficult for Christians to access Scriptures, as the government cracks down on every aspect of Christian life.

A decade ago, we knew of a dozen or more mission organizations that were helping to provide Bibles to China's house churches. One by one, we have seen those ministries stop this crucial activity. Some have been intimidated and expelled from the country. Others have been compromised in one way or another, and have been forced to close or move on.

All Bibles printed outside the control of the government-approved

church are considered illegal. Those involved with their publication or distribution continue to risk arrest and imprisonment without trial.

Despite the economic boom in various parts of China, people in rural farming communities remain extremely poor, and their plight has been exacerbated by the soaring cost of living. Millions of house-church Christians remain unable to afford Bibles, even if they were able to access them. These factors have resulted in millions of believers being starved of God's Word.

Thus far, it has not been dangerous for foreign tourists to take Bibles into China. China's number one priority has been foreign trade, so they don't want to cause any international incidents. If a tourist gets caught carrying Bibles into China, custom officials politely confiscate the Bibles and give them a receipt. When they leave China, two hours before departure, they are required to go to the lock-up to retrieve their Bibles and take them home.

Although taking Bibles into China is not risky for foreigners, the transfer of Bibles to the local people can be very dangerous. Great care needs to be taken, under the watchful eye of authorities, when transferring the Bibles to Chinese nationals.

STRICT CONTROLS

The Chinese government strictly controls the publication and distribution of Bibles. Portions of the Bible are strictly censored and not available on the Internet.

In recent years, the ban of online sales of Bibles has been more strictly enforced and it is illegal to sell Bibles in bookstores. A bookstore owner was given a six-year prison sentence for selling Bibles and Christian books that were legally printed and intended for the members of the registered church. This kind of strict enforcement has led to an increase in demand for Bibles from outside of China.

The Chinese authorities have allowed a limited number of

Christians to worship in registered churches in order to keep tight control over them, while demonstrating to the international community that China is indeed tolerant of religion.

In recent years, the authorities have become more controlling because of their fear that religion would prevent the Communist Party from thriving. Only one printing plant in all of China is authorized to print and distribute legal Chinese Bibles. The number of Bibles that are printed is tightly controlled, and in recent years this amount has decreased by about 30%. These legal Bibles are only for members of the registered church and cannot be easily obtained by others. To try to buy more than a few copies could be perilous.

One believer went to Nanjing, where he heard that he could purchase 1,000 *legal* Bibles for Christians in his area. He bought them and headed home. The police followed him, handcuffed him, suspended him from the ceiling and interrogated him — demanding to know where the Christians lived and who their leaders were. The intense struggle for millions of believers who long to own a copy of God's Word is profound!

The threat that the Chinese government has perceived from Christianity has been growing in recent years. A number of well-known ministers have been arrested and prominent churches have been closed or torn down. The authorities have gone to great lengths to stifle the spread of Christianity, including a ban on all Christmas and Easter services. They have also taken steps to ban retail outlets from displaying anything related to celebrating Christmas, including Christmas lights and trees.

REPORTS FROM CHINA

Reports coming from Christians in China confirm the following:

1. Persecution continues and is not a thing of the past.
2. China continues to experience a massive revival.
3. The need for Bibles continues to be overwhelming.

The legally-registered churches in China are under tight control, and those attending such churches are required to show proof of identification. Video cameras with facial-recognition technology have been placed behind pulpits, facing the congregation, and on the walls above church entrances.

The majority of believers gather illegally in the underground church, under the threat of severe persecution. If discovered, officials often bulldoze the buildings and torture members to get information about the underground network, and the names of other believers and foreign contacts.

Many Christians have experienced police raids, interrogations and imprisonment. In two churches, police broke up their Christmas services. All 150 people in one congregation and 80 people in another were questioned by the police and threatened against continuing their *illegal* church activities.

In another incident, at a training center (a secret Bible school), 50 policemen arrived on the scene. The 45 elders who were there for training were questioned for 3 hours. All of their Bibles were confiscated and the school was declared illegal. Fortunately, one of the brothers knew a person of high rank in the police force, and this connection seemed to hinder anybody from being arrested.

RESTRICTIONS IN CHINA

The level of persecution, restriction and control is on the increase. Children's meetings and Sunday School have been forbidden in registered churches, and all gatherings outside registered church buildings have been clamped down on.

Crosses have been torn down and many unregistered churches have been leveled. The authorities have replaced Christian symbols inside registered churches with pictures of the President and the Chinese flag. There is even discussion of a new Bible translation, which is to be more in line with communist and Chinese ideology.

Arrests of leaders, who seek to obey God rather than man, have been on the increase, and our contacts in China tell us that they need to be much more careful than before. In many cases, the Chinese have been warned that they will be arrested if they meet with foreigners.

Stricter monitoring has led to more harassment and persecution. Since 2018, a list of nine rules have been strictly enforced in registered churches:

1. No one under 18 years of age is allowed to attend church.
2. Communist Party members are not allowed to attend church unless they have been dispatched to work at one.
3. No one is allowed to host any overseas speaker without permission.
4. No one is allowed to conduct or participate in any unapproved meetings or gatherings.
5. No one is allowed to conduct or participate in any religious activities in any unapproved location.
6. No one is allowed to hold or participate in any religious activities outside of registered church buildings.
7. No one is allowed to possess illegal religious books, magazines or goods.
8. No one is allowed to post illegal religious wordings and pictures on the Internet.
9. No one is allowed to post religious signs on the streets, along roads, etc.

ARRESTED AND JAILED

One Chinese Christian was arrested four times for his evangelistic activities. The pastor of the church to which he belonged was imprisoned for printing Bibles. He had seen foreigners bringing Bibles into China and thought, "Why don't we print them ourselves?" He collected the necessary funds and started the printing. When the operation was uncovered, this minister was arrested and sentenced to three years in jail. Several

of those who helped him were also beaten and imprisoned.

In another province, a Christian was arrested and received a two-year prison sentence for receiving three boxes of Bibles. After he was freed, he was regularly threatened and harassed by the police, who monitored his activities.

Once, when he was called to the police station for questioning, he told the police, “You can threaten me as much as you like. Yes, you can even take my life, but I will never stop proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ. You can never force me or anyone else to keep quiet, even if you put me in prison again!”

This is the kind of boldness that is behind China’s revival. Of course, our Chinese brothers and sisters are not super-human. They experience fear and anxiety just like we do. Yet, in spite of human limitations and very difficult circumstances, they boldly proclaim the Good News. New churches are springing up in the countryside and in the cities. *Surely, LORD, you bless the righteous; you surround them with your favor as with a shield* (Psalm 5:12, NIV).

CHURCH PLANTING IN CHINA

Despite the strict regulations and the threat of persecution, the number of believers continues to grow at an unprecedented rate. It has been reported that the revival is spreading from the countryside to the large cities, where countless students, intellectuals and professionals are also accepting Christ.

One Chinese evangelist told of 1,500 eager young believers who were receiving Bible training over a three-year period. Each student was urged to plant three new churches during their time of study. Only after completing this task could they receive their diploma.

The new churches were again taught to be responsible for themselves and plant one new church in their area. “Of course, it is not a matter of buying land and building church buildings with crosses on them,” the evangelist shared. “That would be

impossible. Instead, someone opens up their home for services or they rent an apartment. In this way, the Gospel goes forth and new disciples are constantly being won for God's Kingdom."

One contact started twelve secret Bible schools in different provinces, where young people are receiving training and taking the Gospel to all of China and beyond. They have sent a number of missionaries to closed Islamic countries and many more are preparing to go.

CHURCH GROWTH IN CHINA

An evangelist from China wrote: *It took 1,800 years before the Gospel reached China. Many missionaries endured hardships and sowed the seed with tears. They didn't see much fruit — not until our day and time.*

When the communists came to power, they set out to eradicate religion. During the Cultural Revolution, churches were burned, ministers were imprisoned, Bibles destroyed, and gatherings banned. This did not stop the growth of the church. It spurred it on! An unparalleled revival started to sweep across the country.

Today China has 160 million followers of Jesus Christ, and that number is growing by one million every month.

Frankly, no one knows for sure what the real figures are, but we do know that multitudes are turning to Christ every day, and that over 70% of all Christians in China belong to the unregistered, underground church.

This is not the result of great campaigns or famous evangelists. It is simply a matter of believers sharing their faith and winning others to Christ, through the work of the Holy Spirit.

"This great revival has left millions of Christians without the Word of God," shared one Bible courier. "I have met many of them and heard their pleas for more Bibles. I have seen their tears of joy when they received their very own copy of God's Word, and I have seen their disappointment when there were no more Bibles left."

REPORT FROM A BIBLE COURIER

A Bible courier shared that despite stricter restrictions, he was able to make contact with believers in a remote area and deliver the precious Word of God without incident. He related the following story after his travels to China with a large group, who helped to transport the Bibles.

“We were delighted to provide Bibles to eager recipients, but were disappointed when we discovered that we had forgotten to pass on several hundred Bibles in one of the suitcases. We had no way of contacting the church leaders we had just given the Bibles to.

“We prayed and asked God for direction and help. The thought of returning with Bibles that we knew were so sorely needed was painful. The following day, when we met with our travel agent, we learned that he needed Bibles for his mother.

“She had traveled several hours by train from her village, in hope of finding some Bibles that were desperately needed for her church, but she had no idea where she was going to obtain them.

“That evening, we passed on our left-over Bibles to her. She smiled with the biggest smile you can imagine as she repeated over and over, “Thank you, thank you!” It was a joy to see how the Lord led us to this woman, and how He redeemed our mistake in order to meet the critical needs of this village church.

“God then reminded us that with Him there were no mistakes!” *A man’s heart plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps* (Proverbs 16:9).

A HEART FULL OF ANGER

The following is the story of Chen, a young minister who is responsible for seven churches in one of China’s largest cities.

Chen is living proof of the power of God’s Word. He grew up in rural China and his family was very poor. His father had

to go far away for work, so Chen, his brother and younger sister only saw their dad a couple times a year. When Chen lost his mother, he was eight years old, and the three children had to live alone and take care of each other most of the time.

After the death of his mother, Chen grew bitter and was filled with anger. On the street, he was ridiculed and harshly mistreated. After 7th grade, Chen quit school and started living on the streets. He became a bully and got into countless fights.

His older brother, on the other hand, went on to higher education. Once in university, someone gave him a New Testament, and years later this became an instrument that would change Chen's life. His brother had gone on to study in the USA, and there he was given a similar New Testament. He thought that this could also help his younger brother, so he urged him to find the one he had received years earlier.

Chen dug it out of a box containing old schoolbooks, and thought it could not hurt to read this book his brother talked so much about. He started reading, but understood very little. One night, when his anger was about to boil over and cause him to engage in another street fight, the words he had read came to mind. It was as if he heard a voice saying to him, *"Do not judge, or you too will be judged. Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?"* (Matthew 7:1, 3, NIV).

There was no fight that night. Instead, Chen went back to the humble and dirty place he called home, and started reading the New Testament with renewed eagerness. The anger and bitterness left him and peace flooded his heart. He read of Jesus who died on the cross and accepted Him as his Savior.

Those who knew him soon noticed the transformation in his life. He started telling them about his new faith and they also believed in Jesus. They started to gather to read from the New Testament and pray together. They soon met other believers and learned that the same thing was happening all over China.

Chen has led thousands to Christ. The seven churches he ministers at now have about 100 members each. Many whom he has shared the Good News with also accepted Christ, and they shared with others, who again shared with others — all because of a single New Testament, which was given to his brother years before. The Word of God is indeed powerful!

THE POWER OF ONE BIBLE

One Chinese man shared of how he had received a book from a stranger. He started to read this book and had a hard time understanding it, but when he was about two-thirds of the way through, it became more interesting. The main character in that part of the book was amazing and caught his attention. His name was *Jesus*.

He said that he read the four Gospels several times because they were so interesting, and then went on to read Acts. The man had never heard of Jesus before. He had never met a believer, never heard a Christian song or a sermon. Yet, the Word of God touched his heart!

After a few weeks of reading, this man prayed a simple prayer to Jesus and was filled with an overwhelming sense of peace and joy. He said that he felt as though *Jesus had literally moved into his heart*.

This man was a judge with a high position in a district court and was influential in his community. The joy and peace he experienced was so fantastic that he couldn't keep quiet. He shared the Gospel with his co-workers and friends. He even told defendants in his court about his experience with Jesus and read portions of the Bible to them.

It wasn't long before he was arrested and interrogated for several days. He was told that he could not talk about God in the courtroom and it was forbidden for him to share his religious experiences with others. His interrogators threatened him repeatedly and tried to convince him to renounce his faith,

but the judge refused.

After being held in detention for four weeks, he was released and stripped of his position as a judge.

Today, this former judge is a private lawyer and a member of a house church in Beijing. He is an eager disciple, who often shares the Gospel with the people he encounters.

One Bible from an anonymous person can transform hearts and accomplish much for God's Kingdom!

LEADER OF A GANG

Some years ago, a group of believers were evangelizing an area of Jiangsu province. They were bold servants and people started to accept Christ.

One person who was not happy about this was the gang leader in town. One evening, when the evangelists were out on the street, the gang leader and his men showed up in their car. He took his gun, held it to one of their heads and said, "If you don't stop, we'll kill you all!"

The evangelists were frightened and wondered what to do. After some discussion and prayer, they decided to continue their ministry. They were afraid, but agreed to trust the Lord to protect them.

At the end of the week, they gathered in a home to teach the new believers. They challenged them to come back the next day and bring a friend. Some were able to do just that, and that evening several people received Christ. One of them was a lady, who turned out to be none other than the wife of the gang leader!

When the evangelists heard this, they began to worry. They prayed more than ever for the Lord's protection. Days went by and nothing happened — until one night, there came a knock on the door where the evangelists were staying. When they opened the door, they saw the gang leader standing outside.

"What have you done to my wife?" he said. The evangelist was

not sure what he meant. “She’s totally changed!” he continued. “She used to yell and always gave me a hard time. Now she is kind, loving and wonderful, and she always talks about a man named Jesus. Please tell me more about him.”

The evangelists were shocked! They expected threats and violence, but certainly not this! They invited him in and started to tell him about Jesus. The gang leader came by their house several evenings to hear more, and after a couple of weeks he accepted the Lord Jesus as his Savior.

This happened some years back. Today, this former gang leader is an evangelist and pastor! He has planted 160 churches and his wife, sons and daughters-in-law are all actively involved in preaching the Gospel and planting churches.

A Bible courier visited one of these churches, which was in the countryside and had over 200 people in attendance. He brought some Bibles, but learned that every single believer was in possession of a *burgundy* Bible that was printed by New Life Ministries!

“It works!” the Bible courier later reported. “Your distribution system works!” He was so thrilled to see that the Bibles were distributed through different channels to the believers in China — even to this church in such a remote area. So, the Bibles he brought were taken to another place where they were in short supply.

SISTER CHANG PREACHES IN PRISON

When God spoke to Sister Chang, a house-church leader from Henan, He told her to do something that made no earthly sense. He told her to go and preach the Gospel on the steps outside the local police station.

Such an action was a sure way to invite severe punishment, but the more Sister Chang prayed about it, the more clearly the inner voice of God continued to tell her to do it. Finally, she felt compelled to obey.

Standing on the top step outside the police station, she boldly proclaimed the Gospel to astonished onlookers. Within a few minutes, several officers dragged her inside and placed her under arrest. To the human eye her obedience looked foolish, but God's ways are not our ways and His thoughts are not our thoughts (Isaiah 55:8-9).

Sister Chang was sentenced without a trial and sent to the local women's prison, where she was placed alongside thousands of spiritually lost souls. As she boldly and lovingly proclaimed the Gospel to her fellow prisoners, the light of the Gospel spread like wildfire. Within just three months, 800 women believed in Jesus! The entire atmosphere of the prison changed, and new sounds of praise and worship were heard echoing down the prison hallways.

The prison warden was greatly impressed with the change that had taken place, and was able to trace it to the preaching of Sister Chang. He brought her into his office and said, "You have made my job easy! There is no more fighting between the prisoners, and the women have become gentle and obedient.

"We need more people like you working here. From today, we will pay you 3,000 yuan per month." He continued, "We will also give you a car and a driver, and will find you comfortable housing."

Sister Chang briefly considered the offer and then replied, "Twenty years ago, I became a disciple of Jesus Christ and He has faithfully taken care of me. I don't believe your offer of a car, driver and salary is in line with what Jesus would want, and I belong to him. All I want to do is to tell others about my God."

Despite her rejection of his offer, the warden released her from prison and she continued her ministry.

What God is doing in China is indeed awe-inspiring!

SYRIA

As Japan Mission has worked with various organizations and Bible couriers, we came across a great need in the Middle East. Syria is a nation where more than 5 million people have been forced to flee the country. Most are now living in inhumane conditions in overflowing refugee camps. It can truly be said that these multitudes are living with no hope for the future. Their situation is incredibly tragic.

Japan Mission has been involved in various projects to provide Bibles to Syrian refugees in Jordan. One minister in Jordan shared of how God opened a wide door for the Gospel in the Middle East. Just 10 years ago, this situation would have been unthinkable.

One day, a Muslim woman dressed in a burka came through the doors of his church in Amman. This was most unusual. A Muslim woman simply does not enter a Christian church, especially by herself. She was quick to say, "Please don't look at the way I am dressed."

She then proceeded to tell how she had seen a man in a dream. He was dressed in white and had told her to go to that street and that building, where she was going to receive help. She and her family were refugees from Syria.

This incident was the beginning of an outreach effort from that church to Syrian and Iraqi refugees. Around 800 families, with about 5,000 members, receive help every month. As the church has shown the love of Christ in action, the refugees have opened their hearts, and many have received Jesus Christ as their Savior.

The refugees have fled from war and incredible atrocities, and faced life-threatening danger in an attempt to find safety. They have not only left their families, their homeland and all that was dear to them, but they have, to a large extent, also left their religion, so many are open to the Good News.

The provision of Bibles has given light, life and eternal hope to thousands of people living in hopelessness and darkness.

10

Bible Couriers

The statistics and thrilling stories in this chapter have been compiled from the first-hand accounts of trustworthy sources. Some names have been altered and details omitted in order to protect the identity of those who continue to risk their lives. (Sources: page 213)

Distributing Bibles to those who do not have a copy, is made possible through Bible couriers who risk their lives to transport Bibles into areas where it is illegal to possess a copy of God's Word.

A pastor wrote the following after receiving Bibles from a courier in a remote area of southeast Asia:

A wonderful change has happened in my church through the Bibles you gave us. There are now 105 families, totaling 657 members in my church.

Before we received the Bibles from you, we had only one Bible in the entire church. The members never read the Bible or even held it in their hands for fear of destroying the only Bible in our possession.

When our church received 120 free copies from you in March 2015, my members cried out to the Lord and praised His name! Now they read the Bible, memorize verses and read the responsive reading at every worship service.

Before we received the Bibles, we only had about 80 people attending our Sunday morning worship services. Now we have a big problem because there are not enough seats in our church!

During 2013, the following report came from a courier who had just returned from delivering 1,000 Bibles in northern Myanmar, near the Indian border.

“These people have never had a copy of God’s Word before this day! There is a tremendous lack of Scriptures in this area, but in another area of Myanmar, we found the lack of Bibles to be even more astounding. Before we came with Bibles, the pastors in that area did not even have one.

“I asked the local believers how the ministers could preach. The answer was that they used a Christian leaflet that was published once a month. It sometimes contained a Biblical teaching, but was mostly full of testimonies. Sometimes a teacher with Bible training would visit their area to hold a seminar for the pastors. They would then impart those teachings to their congregations.”

Just as the need for Bibles seems to be satisfied in one area of southeast Asia, another is found. During 2018, Bible couriers discovered a great need among the Khamniungan people. They are a tribal people, numbering about 700,000, who live mostly near the border of Myanmar and India. Many profess to be Christians, but their need for Bibles is simply staggering.

“97% of the churches in this area did not even have one Bible,” shared one courier. “One church told us that they had been praying for 52 years for Bibles! The Christians who received the Bibles praised the Lord and said that this was one of the greatest days in the history of the Khamniungan people.”

“Even though I have been a pastor since 1996, I have never had my own Bible,” shared one minister. “I prayed earnestly for 23 years and today God answered my prayers. It is like a dream!”

“I prayed 13 years for a Bible,” shared another pastor. “Now, this very day, God has placed a precious copy of His holy Word in my hand. What a wonderful blessing!”

Unfortunately, there are still many such dear people living in southeast Asia — brothers and sisters who long to possess their own copy of God's Word. Many are living in parts of the world where it is illegal to possess a Bible or gather in a home to hold a Christian meeting. Many countries in southeast Asia have opened their doors to trade, but continue to preserve their autocratic forms of government, which severely limit religious freedoms and invite the persecution of Christians.

The following is a letter of thanks from a man in Myanmar, who received a Bible after waiting many years:

My name is Saw. I was born in 1934. I am now 82 years old and I am part of the Karen tribe. I was raised in a Buddhist family.

Because of the war between my people and the Burmese military, my family was forced to move from place-to-place during my childhood. When I was 12 years old, my parents were killed by the army and I was completely devastated. The foundations of my life were suddenly destroyed and my existence felt meaningless.

At my lowest point, I was invited to stay with a pastor and his family from the Karen tribe. I will always be indebted to their kindness.

In 1952, when I was 18, I accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. He transformed me from the inside out and for the first time I felt the peace and joy of the Holy Spirit in my heart.

I attended church regularly and was an active believer, but our congregation did not have any Bibles, except the minister's personal copy. I had never even touched a Bible, because I thought they were so rare and precious that only the pastor of a church had the right to touch one.

Since 1952, I often dreamed of possessing my own Bible so that I could study and follow God's Word. After 64 years, the Lord answered my prayers through your ministry of love! I tried to pay for it, but was told that it was a free gift!

What a joy it was to be able to help this man obtain a copy of the precious Word of God! Without God's Word, it is easy for believers to go astray. False teachings can flourish where Bibles are scarce.

GOD'S POSTMAN

Bill Cook has been a Bible courier in southeast Asia for the past 20 years. He first joined Japan Mission in 1982, and was involved in various aspects of the ministry in Japan, while being greatly inspired by the reports of things happening in China.

He learned that, although the greatest need for Bibles was in China, the most difficult country at that time was Vietnam. There was one place in Vietnam where five churches had only one Bible!

They would have a meeting, and then someone would get on a bicycle to take the Bible to the next village, so that they could hold their service. In that way, the five churches shared one Bible.

With this desperate need in mind, Bill bought a one-way ticket to Vietnam in 1998 to help supply Bibles to these Christians. The Lord then opened the door for Bill to base his operations in Thailand. From there, he was able to take Bibles into Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar. He has led many teams over the years on some very dangerous missions to deliver countless backpacks full of Bibles.

"In many parts of southeast Asia, believers had no access to the Word of God unless someone transported the Bibles over rugged terrain to them," Bill shared. "It has been an enormous privilege to have been God's postman."

When he traveled to Laos, he contacted an influential pastor. He reported that they were seeing between 10 to 15 new churches started each month! Each church had about 50 people and they needed many Lao Bibles. The minister said that in most places they only had one Bible for every ten believers.

“We have witnessed the living church in these countries reproduce at a phenomenal rate!” Bill shared. “In this part of the world, we have found that there are *four links* to God’s chain of life, working together to see many thousands saved.

“The *first link* has been those who give to help finance the work, and the *second link* Bible printing. The *third link* has been logistics, namely those who carry the Bibles to where they are needed, and the *fourth link* the team of local believers who preach the Gospel and distribute the Word.”

MESSAGE TO BIBLE COURIERS

Several years ago, Bill was speaking to a large team who had come from the USA to bring Bibles into Vietnam and Laos. He began his message by saying, “I want to talk to you about *three abilities*. The three abilities that are the object of God’s search are first *availability*, secondly *dependability*, and thirdly *expendability*.

“The first one is obvious. It is imperative that a person be *available*. Unfortunately, there are very few people who are. Most of us are busily engaged in our own agenda and are not open to anything outside of what we have in mind. But if the will of God is a higher priority than our agenda, that makes a person *available* for God to use them.

“The second is *dependability*. Paul summed it up when he said, *Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful* (1 Corinthians 4:2). Only a fool would put confidence in a man who was not faithful to perform an important task. To do His work, God must have *dependable* servants whom He can trust.

“The third is *expendability*. This is not highly regarded, but we are coming to a time in missions when being *expendable* will be basic for anyone on the cutting edge of advancing God’s Kingdom. If a person is not *expendable*, this means he is not available for a mission that might cost him his life.

“Jesus paid with His life to save us, and He commanded His servants to follow Him. To those who heard Him say those words, that message had a singular meaning. When a man *picked up his cross*, there was no need to be concerned about safety. His future was settled. His next stop could very well be death — not deliverance. God is looking for people who are willing to be *expendable*!

“I was sitting in a restaurant in Laos one morning, when a man came over to shake my hand and said, ‘I understand you are Brother Andrew [the Dutchman who founded the group, God’s Smugglers] and the bravest man in Laos.

“I replied, ‘I’m sorry, sir, but you have been misinformed. I am not a great mission leader but a simple donkey. And I am not the bravest man in Laos. I am simply one of the most expendable turkeys in the Lord’s inventory.’ The fact that the Lord called me to be *expendable*, has enabled me to do things that would have otherwise seemed to be impossible.”

BEING EXPENDABLE

The following is the story of how Bill and a team took Gospel tracts into Laos, and illustrates what he meant when he said that he was called to be *expendable*.

“In 1998, some fellows who had been working in Laos, came up with a scheme to blitz Laos with the Gospel through a massive scheme to distribute tracts during a brief three-hour period. They printed about 800,000 tracts and were hoping to send in 200 workers to distribute all these tracts. They asked me to be the coordinator for the main area. I knew it was a suicide mission, but agreed to do it.

“When I left Japan, I told my friends that, in all likelihood, I would not be coming back, and if I didn’t, my remaining possessions would be theirs. Laos had the reputation at that time for being the fourth most dangerous nation in the world for Christianity.

“When I arrived in Thailand, they told me that their plan had been leaked and they had to revert to plan B. That was for me to take a team to the small town of Salavan, in Laos, and distribute 40,000 tracts, to attract the attention of the police down there, so that other teams could go in the next day to the towns further north.

“My team, consisted of myself, two Mennonite girls and a boy. We crossed into Laos with a combined total of 100 kg of tracts in our backpacks. We arrived without event that evening in Salavan. I rented a motor bike and rode around town to learn the layout so that we could formulate a plan to plant our tracts.

“In Laos, passing out tracts was an automatic invitation to be arrested. The only way to distribute tracts was to put them in a box, under a blanket or hide them in a book where they would later be discovered. It was best if you could be out of that town by the time someone discovered the tracts.

“Salavan was an unusual town. There was no central business district where markets and buses converged. It was a rural town, and everything seemed to be spread out. There was only one guest house and foreigners were extremely rare.

“After riding around town for an hour, I returned to the guest house for a meeting with the rest of the team and announced that it was impossible. After some discussion, we decided to go out at 6:00 am and try to get rid of the tracts in time to catch the bus at 10:00 am. There were only two buses leaving town — one at 6:00 am and another at 10:00 am.

“We all went out at 6:00 am to walk the desolate streets in town and returned to the guest house an hour later. I didn’t get rid of a single tract! I hardly had ten seconds when there weren’t curious eyes peering at me. Phil had the same problem, and the girls came back terrified saying, ‘We have been discovered!’ They had placed a tract under a rock and a child had picked it up and run around showing it to everyone.

“We had proven that the mission was impossible. There were only three options left. One, was to carry all our tracts back to Thailand. The second, was to dump everything in the garbage and hope no one found them until we got out of the country. The third, was to get three people out of town and leave one behind to do the job.

“We all agreed that the third plan was the best, so I took them to the bus terminal to catch the 10:00 am bus. I told them, ‘When you get back to Chiang Mai, please call Japan and tell them what happened to me, and please cancel my plane ticket out of Bangkok.’

“When that bus pulled out, I was overcome by the most abandoned feeling of my life. It was as if I was standing on the face of the moon, while watching the rocketship go back to Earth and leaving me stranded! But then a tremendous peace came over my heart. For the first time, I didn’t have to worry about getting caught. I had already made that decision, and the only question was, how much could I get done before being arrested.

“I rented a motor bike again and drove through town, while passing out all of my tracts. It was the easiest thing I had ever done! It was like passing them out to a vacuum cleaner. People virtually fought for them as I drove by. I even passed them out to the police! I made many trips back to the guest house to get more tracts. By 3:00 pm, my backpack was empty and I had passed out 100 kg of tracts — and didn’t get arrested!

“I was so excited that I could hardly sleep. I got up at 4:00 am and was about to leave the guest house at 5:00 am, when I was confronted by one of the employees with the guest book who demanded, ‘Sign!’ Phil had signed in for all of us three days before, so they didn’t know who I was. I foolishly signed a different name and changed my passport number. He then demanded to see my passport and became suspicious when he noticed the discrepancy.

“Several plain clothed policemen showed up and kept me under house arrest at the guest house for three hours, and then started to interrogate me.

“Jesus told us that at such times, the Holy Spirit would speak for us.” *“But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you”* (Matthew 10:19-20, NIV).

“The lead interrogator started out by shouting, ‘You’re a Christian!’ I roared right back, ‘Of course I am a Christian! Why don’t you become a Christian? Jesus would bless you and give you eternal life!’

“What happened after that was utterly amazing. He was suddenly speechless, and it was like letting air out of a balloon. There were about eight secret policemen there to interrogate me, but all of them were visibly intimidated. No one wanted to talk to me. The only thing they kept repeating was, ‘Do you have any more books (tracts)?’ I said, ‘No, I’m sorry. I don’t have any left, but I can get some more.’

“After 15 minutes, they handed me my passport and said, ‘That is all.’ I shook hands all around the room and promised to return. I threw my empty backpack over my shoulder and went to the bus terminal to catch the 10:00 am bus.

“I returned to Thailand to debrief the men who had sent me on the mission and they were surprised, saying that nothing like that had ever been done before. A few days later, I was safely back in Japan.

“I was back in Salavan twice after that, and made friends with the director of the secret police. Years later, I met a lady in Thailand from Salavan. She told me that there were four churches and about 1,000 Christians in that town! The church was underground, and to openly evangelize was still illegal, but I was thrilled to learn that God’s Kingdom had been extended to that part of Laos.”

BIBLE LOGISTICS MIRACLES

“In 1998, when I first began working in southeast Asia, I had a great interest in Laos,” Bill shared. “People told me that it was illegal for foreigners to take a bus to the town of Phonsavan and the only way in was by air. I didn’t have the money for a plane ticket, so I simply went to the bus station in Vientiane and bought a ticket for Phonsavan.

“Through a string of mishaps and miracles, where I lost and found my backpack with all my belongings in it, the Lord led me to a man named Sang, who owned a travel agency. We became good friends and he drove me to his village, which was the largest Hmong community in Laos. As we were walking around, I looked up and was startled to see a bamboo cross on a building.

“Is this a church?’ I asked.

“Yes.’ Unbelievable! I was standing in front of a Hmong church in northern Laos.

“Soon, a large group of people curiously gathered to see this foreigner. I was finally able to identify a man who seemed to be their leader. I was curious to know what they believed, but communication was difficult, so I asked if they would sing a song for me. My heart melted as they started to sing, “*Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing*.” Oh Hallelujah! I had found them. They were my people!

“I asked the pastor if they had any Bibles. He said that he had four. ‘How did you get them?’

“A foreigner brought them here four years ago,’ he shared. They were probably the only Hmong Bibles in that part to Laos.

“Would you like some more?’ I asked.

“Yes, most definitely!’ he answered.

“Do you have a driver’s license?’ I asked Sang.

“No,’ he replied.

“What would it cost to get one?’ I asked.

“\$100,’ he said.

“Before I left Japan, Neil Verwey had given me US\$100. I reached in my waist pouch, pulled out the money and gave it to Sang. I told him, ‘You are going to become a member of this church and get a driver’s license, and drive us all over northern Laos to help us distribute Bibles.’

“That was the miracle of a lifetime! God had provided Sang to help me distribute the much-needed Bibles. This was one of the greatest break-throughs in Bible logistics that I was ever part of.

“A week later, when I returned to Thailand, I told the Christians the story of how the Lord had opened the route to get Bibles into northern Laos, and they were stunned. They said, ‘We have been praying for years that the Lord would open up some way for us to get Bibles into that area.’ That proved to be the most effective route we had for the next several years to supply many thousands of Christians with copies of God’s Word.”

“Three months after the Lord miraculously opened up that route in northern Laos, we had a group of students come from a Bible school in the USA to help us transport Bibles,” Bill shared.

“When smuggling Bibles, there are certain guidelines that we always followed. To violate them would have involved enormous risks and invited disaster. Unfortunately, I was not able to contact Sang, who was our key liaison in Phonsavan, to coordinate the Bible transfer. Under normal conditions that was an automatic no-go, but these students would soon be leaving, so we decided to take the risk and trust the Lord to coordinate things for us.

“The trip went as planned, and it was a treacherous three-day bus and van ride. The road was so bad that when we got to the last 30 km, the drivers refused to go any further. There was a stretch of 200 meters of mud so deep that it was impossible for

cars to go through. As we were discussing what to do, a large flat-bed steel truck came along. Our drivers negotiated with the truck driver to take our team of ten people, with their heavy backpacks, on the back of his truck.

“It was late afternoon when we finally arrived in Phonsavan. The first task was to locate Sang. The head of the travel agency, which Sang owned, told us that he had gone up to the mountains with his relatives to plant rice and wouldn’t be back for three weeks. We didn’t know what to do, so we acted like tourists and hired a guide to take us around the next day.

“As we walked around, desperately praying and racking our brains, I finally said, ‘We’ve got to stick our necks out on this one.’ I did an absolute no-no and told the guide exactly who we were and why we had come. I asked him to take us to the church, so that we could transfer our Bibles.

“Fortunately, he turned out to be a good man. He wasn’t a Christian, but did not report us to the police. It was too dangerous for him to take us to the church, so he took us to the house of a Christian he knew instead.

“When we asked the Christian man to help us, we got an immediate ‘No.’ Could we leave the Bibles at his house? ‘No.’ Would he call the pastor? ‘No.’ After an hour of futile pleading, as we prepared to leave, I asked if we could have a word of prayer.

“After I prayed, this man’s attitude suddenly changed. His wife was going to have a baby in two weeks, and he desperately wanted God’s blessing on his family. I don’t recall much about the prayer, but as soon as I was finished, it was as though he had a revelation from God and became very enthusiastic to help us. ‘Please come back for breakfast tomorrow,’ he said.

“While we were eating breakfast at his house the next morning, Sang walked in!

“This man had driven all night to the mountains to get Sang for us!

“Sang said that he would get his van to take us to the airport and then take the Bibles to the church. The Lord had coordinated things for us in a miraculous way, and the Bibles were safely delivered!”

ARRESTED IN THE LINE OF DUTY

“Each time I have been arrested has been a wonderful blessing,” Bill shared. “The first time I was arrested was in Salavan. The second time was when we were in the small town of Monte, in the extreme northwest part of Vietnam. Oh, that was an experience!

“They held us at a small remote army post on top of a mountain. They confiscated our passports, and there wasn’t any way we could escape, so we had the free run of the place. The soldiers knew everything about us, so there was nothing to hide.

“One soldier had a guitar, so the first night we had a terrific praise time and the Vietnamese soldiers loved it!

“The third time I was arrested was in Cambodia. The team leader proposed one of the poorest plans I had ever heard of and I almost didn’t go. Taking the Bibles into Cambodia went exactly as I had anticipated, and we wound up at the police station.

“The chief of police was loyal to the Khmer Rouge and was one of the meanest men I had ever met. But the man who arrested us at the border was so polite. He apologized for arresting us and said, ‘If you hadn’t been so blatant, I would have let you go.’

“I told him, ‘Your only problem is that you are a good policeman, doing exactly what you are supposed to do.’ He pleaded with me to come home with him because he wanted his family to meet me. I was later able to give him a Bible while on another trip through that area.

“Every time I have been arrested, I sensed God at work, and the things that came out of my mouth completely surprised me.”

“The most remarkable arrest story I ever heard was that of Rita,” Bill shared. “She was taking a large team into central China. The Bible run was successful, and the transfer went smoothly, but on the way back the bus they were riding was involved in a serious accident with a truck. Some of the team members had to be taken to the hospital, so Rita put the rest of them up in a hotel.

“That night, the police came to their room and asked, ‘Who is your tour leader?’ They took Rita and four women to a room in the basement of the hotel to interrogate them. ‘What are you doing in China?’ they asked.

“Oh, we are just tourists traveling around and buying souvenirs,’ the ladies responded.

“At first, the police were firm but polite. Then suddenly they changed, banging their fists on the table and shouting, ‘What are you doing in China? Your suitcases are empty! Tell us what you were bringing into China!’

“At that point none of the ladies knew what to say. Rita then suddenly started to speak fluent Chinese. As she spoke, the atmosphere in the room changed and the police relaxed and began to smile. They stood up, reached into their pockets and gave her 1,000 Yuan (about US\$120) each while saying, ‘Thank you for coming.’

“When they were back to their hotel room the other ladies were deeply impressed and asked Rita, ‘What in the world did you say?’

“She replied, ‘I have no idea. I don’t speak Chinese. It was all the Holy Spirit!’

“I don’t know what Rita said,” Bill shared, “but it probably was that they were taking food to starving children in China. That certainly was true, but the food they were carrying was different from what most people would consume!”

UNUSUAL METHODS

“I have delivered many Bibles throughout southeast Asia with Rita’s husband, Jake,” Bill shared. “One time, when Jake was in northern Vietnam, he befriended a man who could speak English very well. Jake had a burden to see him saved and told me about him on several occasions.

“While traveling across northern Vietnam in a jeep, we stopped at a small village in the mountains and got out to see the village. Curious children ran up and started to swarm all around us. As we were walking, Jake simply walked into a house as if he owned it. I was stunned, but followed him. So did 30 other children! Jake said, ‘Get these children out of here.’

“So, I pretended to be a monster and chased them all over the village. Mothers came out and were amused to see this foreigner who was chasing the children and making strange noises.

“When Jake was alone, he went into the bedroom and placed a Bible under the pillow.

“When we got back into the jeep Jake said to me, ‘The man I was telling you about — that was his house.’

“This was one of the most unusual Bible deliveries I was ever a part of.”

“The greatest Bible smuggler I ever met was Bob Sawyer,” shared Bill. “He worked out of Hong Kong for nine years. There was no one as street-wise, courageous and legendary.

“He told me of one time when he was in Tibet passing out tracts in a market. When the people in the market saw that, they mobbed him for tracts. There was such a crowd that he feared he would be crushed. To save himself, he threw all the tracts he had in the air to get rid of the people.

“Needless to say, a policeman showed up upon hearing the commotion. Since Bob was the only foreigner standing in the market, it didn’t take long for him to figure out what was unusual.

“The policeman confronted him and demanded to see his passport. It soon became evident that this policeman couldn’t figure out what had just happened and could not understand a word Bob was saying.

“As the policeman stood there studying the passport, Bob asked him, ‘Am I under arrest?’ The policeman stood there with a puzzled look on his face. Bob reached out, grabbed the passport out of his hand and walked away.

“He knew that it would not take long for the stunned policeman to come to his senses. As soon as he turned the corner, he took off running with a few policemen in hot pursuit.

“While dashing through the market, Bob spotted a low table with a blanket over it, and an old Tibetan man sitting behind it, smoking a pipe. With no introduction, Bob dove under the table. The old man never moved. Seconds later the policemen came running by. The expressionless old man continued to sit there as if nothing had happened.

“The police knew they had him cornered in the market, but couldn’t find him. Bob peered out from under the table from time to time and saw the feet of the policemen running by. After a half an hour, the police gave up and Bob crawled out from under the table.

“He caught the bus to the guest house about 20 km away, where he and his partner were staying. His partner asked, ‘Did you have any trouble at the market this morning? About 8:00 am, while I was praying, I saw a black cloud hanging over you and felt a strong urge to pray for you for the next 30 minutes.’

“‘Yes,’ Bob said, ‘that was when I was under the table!’”

11

Associate Missionaries

The Lord has led Japan Mission to partner with devoted Christian workers who have had remarkable ministries. This chapter details the activities and stories of four such workers.

The Lord has used them in extraordinary ways, as we have sponsored their activities.

Alone we can do so little, but together we can do so much —
Hellen Keller

BILL COOK – EVANGELIST & BIBLE COURIER

Bill Cook joined Japan Mission in 1982 as a full-time missionary from the USA. Before the Lord called him to be a Bible courier in southeast Asia, he was involved in various aspects of the ministry in Japan including evangelism, counseling, church-planting and constructing churches.

Shortly after joining Japan Mission, he went shopping for an oven. The manager of the store quickly befriended him. She was impressed that Bill was a former fighter pilot with the US Air Force and introduced him to many of her friends. “The phone was ringing daily with calls from her friends,” Bill shared.

That was how Bill came to meet Yasuhiko (Yasu) Hirota. He was very much into airplanes, and had been to the USA to get a pilot’s license to fly small aircraft. When he heard that there



Bill Cook

was a former pilot from the US Air Force living in the area, he was eager to visit and talk about airplanes.”

Yasu was the eldest son of a wealthy director of a company. He was spoiled as a child and had no shortage of money. His father had come from Taiwan as a teenager before World War II. After the war, his father started making toys out of discarded Coca-Cola cans. He gradually built this business into a large company that made electrical components for Sharp Electronics Corporation.

Yasu started to visit Bill regularly to talk about flying, so he invited him to church. Spending time with him turned out to be quite draining because he was a night owl. Every Sunday evening, he would visit Bill’s house after church and talk for hours.

One Sunday, Bill left church without Yasu and rushed home. He turned off all the lights and went to bed. There was a knock on his door about half an hour later. Bill came out in his pajamas. Yasu said that he wanted to come in, but Bill said, “Sorry, I am going to sleep now.” Yasu looked at him with great disappointment.

The next week he didn’t come to church and Bill was convicted. He repented and prayed, “Lord I don’t care if I sit up all night. Please send him back.” The Lord heard that prayer, and the next Sunday Yasu was back, and they sat up most of that night talking.

Yasu was interested in airplanes, but Bill’s interest was to lead him to Christ. As they talked, Yasu revealed his curiosity about various religious beliefs and soon wanted to know more about Christianity. Several months later, he gave his heart to the Lord.

About this time, Yasu brought Miyuki to Bill’s house. She was also friends with the store manager where Bill bought his oven, and was in search of a reliable fortune-teller. This store manager had previously had a bad experience with a fortune-teller, and told Miyuki that Bill Cook was the best fortune-

teller she knew.

When Miyuki came, Bill asked her, "What do you want?"

"I want someone to give me advice about what road to take in life," she replied.

"You have come to the right place," said Bill. "I know the best One to guide you!" He then explained to her about sin, judgment and the provision Jesus made for man through His shed blood on the cross.

She was on her way to New York to run a Japanese restaurant for the next six months, so he told her to come see him every day before she left. Bill planned to lead Miyuki to the Lord the next day.

When he asked her if she was ready to accept Jesus, she said, "I think I already have."

"When?" asked Bill.

"Last night, I did all that you told me to do," said Miyuki.

"Did any change take place?" Bill asked.

"I don't know, but my heart feels much lighter," she answered.

As he spoke to her, he realized that she had truly received Jesus into her heart.

Shortly afterwards, Miyuki departed for New York. Yasu had feelings for her, so he would often write letters to her.

He frequently traveled to the USA for work, and on one such trip, when he was finished with his business, he was torn between returning to Japan or visiting Miyuki. His heart won out and he cancelled his flight back to Japan, so that he could see Miyuki for a few days.

The airline ticket he cancelled was for the infamous Korean Airline flight that was shot down by Russia, off the coast of Japan on September 1, 1983, killing all passengers! Yasu flew back to Japan a week later, with a fresh gratitude for God's faithfulness and protection.

When Miyuki finished her contract in New York, she returned to Japan and eventually married Yasu. His father had warned



Yasuhiko & Miyuki Hirota

him, "If you marry that girl, I will cut you out of my will!"

His father was a frightening man who terrified everyone, including Miyuki. He did not want his son to marry an ordinary girl like her, but Miyuki was determined to honor and obey the Lord by

being a good wife.

Shortly after they were married, Yasu's mother was diagnosed with cancer and they were able to lead her to the Lord on her deathbed. She had a clear and joyous testimony of how the Lord had saved her and given her a new hope.

Miyuki's mother would often go early in the morning to the mountains to worship idols. When Yasu's mother died, Miyuki's mother had to travel quite a distance to attend the funeral. This was the first time she had met Miyuki since she was married.

After the funeral, Miyuki was surprised to learn that her mother had given her heart to the Lord! Miyuki often wrote her, and it was through these letters that she was able to convey enough about Jesus to help her mother receive Him into her heart. Her mother had never been to church or met another Christian, but she had given her life to Jesus, stopped worshiping idols and was reading her Bible!

One of their greatest triumphs was when Yasu's fearsome father yielded his heart to the Lord. He was a tough businessman, but years later the situation had changed when Yasu and Miyuki had to care for him when his health was failing. Until then, he was extremely hard-headed and very resistant to the Gospel, but he found himself being led along like a little lamb by his daughter-in-law as she took good care of him.

Yasu's father was eventually hospitalized, and he realized that he was dying. One day, one of the nurses asked Miyuki,

“Does your father practice religion?” When Miyuki asked why, the nurse replied, “Your father refuses to eat any food until he has prayed to Jesus.” This was the first indication that his heart had changed.

Shortly after, some relatives heard that he was on his deathbed, so they brought some idols from Taiwan. He threw them out, saying that he only desired to worship Jesus.

It was a tremendous occasion when they laid his body to rest, knowing that they had seen both Yasu’s father and mother safely off to heaven!

Yasu and Miyuki are now in their 70s, and Miyuki is showing the same loving care for Yasu as she did for his father, and Yasu is a loving and faithful provider. Together, they have proven the grace of God, as they have overcome so many struggles throughout the course of their lives.

But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:57, NIV).

Bill Cook now lives in Chang Mai, Thailand and the Lord continues to use him in amazing ways to reach people through his involvement in Bible distribution, preaching and work with orphans.

The following is the story of how Bill led the director of a kindergarten in his neighborhood to the Lord.

“When it came down to accepting Christ as Savior, Singha, the director of the school surprised me with a problem,” Bill shared.

“If I become a Christian, that will be the end of our school!” he said.

“As with every school in Thailand, there was a large idol in the school yard and a certain amount of Buddhist meditation and worship took place each morning. He knew that if he became a Christian, this would have to stop.

“Who is going to close you down?” I asked him.

“The Thai government,” he said.

“In order to get a permit from the Department of Education, they had to sign a contract, promising that they would operate the school according to Buddhist tradition. If they broke with Buddhism, they risked losing their registration as an authorized kindergarten.

“We had a very interesting discussion for the next 30 minutes. ‘I have no idea what to say, but God is bigger than the Thai government,’ I told him. ‘I believe Jesus has an answer. If you follow Him, I am sure He can help you get past this problem.’

“That night this director gave his heart to Christ.

“Before we parted ways that evening, Singha talked about the possibility of closing the school and starting over again as an independent Christian school.”

The Lord answered prayer, and now, years later, this kindergarten is going strong and the Lord opened a way for them to reach the children for the Lord, as Bill visits it weekly to teach English and share Bible stories. *Jesus said, ‘Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these’* (Matthew 19:14, NIV).

During his years of work in southeast Asia, Bill came to know many people. In 1998, the Lord miraculously put Bill in contact with Sang, during his travels through Laos. He became a key contact who helped Bill deliver countless loads of Bibles to many places. Sang’s father-in-law was General Tran Dam.

“One of the most astonishing stories of conversion I have ever heard was that of this general,” Bill shared. “During 2005, I stayed in the home of General Tran Dam in Saigon, Vietnam.

“This in itself was unusual because it was illegal for foreigners to stay with native Vietnamese people. The police did not bother him, and he told me to consider his home my home while in Vietnam. He used to be a MIG jet fighter pilot, and we traded

many stories about flying.

“He was the commanding general of the North Vietnamese army when the final assault was made on Saigon, and the Russian T-54 tank crashed through the gate of the presidential palace, ending the Vietnam war in 1975.

“The general related a wonderful story to me of a helicopter pilot from the USA, who had a very bad experience during the war. He never wanted to return to Vietnam, but then he was saved and heard of the ministry of carrying Bibles into Vietnam.

“He entered Vietnam with a team of Bible couriers, and attended a very moving service where they held a foot-washing ceremony. This North Vietnamese general knelt and washed this American pilot’s feet, and he in turn washed his North Vietnamese brother’s feet.

“While I stayed with him, the general also shared the incredible details of how he found the Lord. On Christmas day 2001, General Tran Dam died of cancer as an unbeliever in a hospital. He went out into eternity and came back from the dead as a born-again Christian!

“I was on a blacklist in Vietnam at the time and couldn’t get in to talk with him about this incredible experience. Four years later, I was able to enter Vietnam, so I spent a week in his home.

“The general had a unique testimony and I was interested in writing a biography of his life. I asked him if it would be OK and he replied, ‘Yes, I have witnessed to everyone I know and don’t care what people will say.’ This was remarkable, because the reputation of most Vietnamese officials was deeply intertwined with their proud Buddhist heritage.

“While living with him, I asked the details of how he came to know the Lord. He told me that his wife had been led to the Lord by another lady in the market. He was furious when she would no longer worship or offer incense before their Buddhist altar, but he let her stay.

“A year later, he found out that he had cancer. He had been

in and out of hospital for treatment, and it was obvious that he was near the end in December of 2001.

“On December 17, a Vietnamese pastor visited him in the hospital. The general knew very little about Christianity, but knew that Christmas was Jesus’ birthday and that this was the most celebrated religious holiday worldwide. He had heard of how Jesus had healed people, so he commanded the pastor to pray exactly as he told him to. The minister dutifully prayed, ‘God, if you are truly God, this general wants to be healed on Christmas day. If You don’t heal him, then he says that he will know You are not God.’

“He later tried to arrange for another surgery on Christmas day to save his life, but was told that this day was a holiday and that no surgeons were available.

“On Christmas morning, a Vietnamese pastor visited him at 7:45 am. At 8:00 am, a nurse making the rounds found him dead and thought that the minister may have killed him. They put out an arrest warrant for him, but he could not be found.

“The hospital then panicked. They had let a top general in Vietnam die without doing everything they could to save him! To save their reputation, they found an inexperienced doctor to do what he could to revive the general.

“I asked the general what happened after he died. He told me that when his soul left his body, it was like he had gone out into an empty space. He saw a light in the distance and started moving towards it. He then heard a voice saying, ‘Open your eyes and take back your life.’ He tried but couldn’t do it. While moving on, he heard the voice for a second time. Again, he tried but couldn’t. While moving towards the light, he heard the voice saying to him for a third time, ‘Open your eyes and take your life back.’ As he did so, the first voice he heard said, ‘It is finished.’

“Two hours had passed. It was now 10:00 am. The doctor had done what he could and said to the nurse, ‘It is finished.’

“With that, the general opened his eyes and said, ‘I want to go home.’

“The doctor was astonished to see this dead man speaking to him and replied, ‘You can’t!’

“The general persisted, ‘I want to go home!’ So, they loaded him in an ambulance and took him home.

“Two weeks later, he had completely recovered and was riding his motorbike around Saigon. He became a very outspoken Christian and wrote 120 letters to many of the top men in the Vietnamese government.

“While I stayed with the general for a week in January 2005, he told me that the president of Vietnam had phoned him a few weeks before on Christmas Day to ask him how he had enjoyed the church service.

“The general wanted to start a church in his home, and I happened to have the privilege of preaching the first message in that church.

“He went to be with the Lord a number of years later, after many were inspired by his incredible story.”

After Bill Cook turned 80, he shared, “It’s been a good life. Jesus has given me a life that has been radically different from the average person. I have done everything from flying supersonic jets to being a tree topper. I have built dozens of houses and churches and taught others carpentry. I have been the director of a Japanese language school, pastored two churches, taught in several Bible schools, and taught English to everyone from little children to police officers.

“I have served the Lord in east Asia for over six decades and been in nearly every country, from Siberia to Nepal. It has been my great privilege to help the underground Christians of southeast Asia for the past 20 years. My goodness, what more can you ask? Thank you, thank you Jesus!”

HORACE AND KEIKO WYATT

MISSIONARIES TO PAKISTAN & INDIA

Japan Mission has sponsored the ministry of Horace and Keiko Wyatt for many decades.

While serving with Japan Mission during the 1970s, Keiko was clearly guided to minister to the poor, so she decided to attend Bible school. The month before her graduation, a team of Christian workers visited Japan, while on their way to the USA from Pakistan. When they heard of Keiko's calling, they agreed to help Keiko become a missionary to Pakistan.

After receiving more training, she entered Pakistan in 1988. She studied the Urdu language while teaching flower arranging at the Japanese consulate. She formed good relationships with many of the Baloch people, and started teaching English in a village. As a single woman, she faced various difficulties in this Islamic country, but she was able to share Christ and pray with many.

It was in Karachi where Keiko first met Horace and his co-workers, who were reaching out to the Baloch people. Horace was a dedicated Christian worker from the USA, with an education in cardiovascular physiology. He first entered Pakistan in 1984, and was a professor of physiology at a medical college in Karachi. Three years after they met, God led Horace and Keiko to get married in February 1992. They then shifted their work to Quetta for 19 years, where they were able to reach many for Christ.

In 2010, when it became more dangerous to work in Pakistan, the Lord led Horace and Keiko to move to Delhi, India. They sensed a continuity in their ministry, when the Lord opened the door for them to work with Afghan refugees, as they had previously done in Pakistan.

These Afghans were very responsive to the Gospel. Horace disciplined the believers and taught them the Bible, while Keiko

taught the women Bible and literacy. Most of the women could not read, because the Muslim influence prohibited the education of women. "It has been exciting to see women read the Scriptures for the first time in their lives!" Keiko shared.



Horace & Keiko Wyatt

They have also been involved with work in an orphanage and among the poor in the slums of Delhi.

Since Horace and Keiko work in a part of the world where it is *illegal* for missionaries to do evangelism, they have found creative ways to reach out to people. With Horace's medical background, they have been able to offer course studies in Chronic Disease Prevention to those who suffer from diabetes and heart disease, while also sharing God's love. Please pray that God would bless their ministry and help them point many to Christ!

The following is the inspiring story of how Keiko found the Lord and embarked on this unusual journey.

Keiko grew up in Osaka in a family with four girls. She remembers their frequent quarrels and how her father scolded her for being so stubborn. She tried to change, but often failed, no matter how hard she tried. This experience left her frustrated and empty, feeling that there had to be something more to life.

Thoughts of God never really entered her mind, but she remembers receiving a Gideon Bible while in high school. She did not read it, but kept it because she liked to collect books.

As she became older and pursued her studies, she felt a strong desire to become a better and stronger person, but realized that

she could not change on her own. She visited several temples and became interested in the teachings of a prominent Japanese Buddhist monk, Shinran, who lived in the 12th century.

A Japanese friend told her that he had found God and was now a Christian. Keiko thought that this was good for him but not for her. If she considered anything, it would not be a foreign religion, but rather Buddhism.

While Keiko was studying the Japanese art of flower arrangement, her teacher encouraged her to go overseas to participate in various flower arranging exhibitions. She soon found herself living in London for a year to demonstrate and improve her skills.

Her friend, who had found God sent her a Japanese Bible, but she was not interested, so she did not read it and eventually gave it away.

This friend later wrote her a couple of letters with a few Bible verses. Keiko was quite impressed and especially struck by the words of Matthew 6:25-34. *"So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ... But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own"* (Matthew 6:31, 33-34, NIV).

It was at this time that she met a family who would change her entire outlook on life. It was a "chance" meeting on a street in London when she asked for directions. They started to chat and before the conversation ended, she was invited to their home for a meal. This was the first of many pleasant visits, even though they could barely communicate without a dictionary!

Their home had an atmosphere which she found difficult to describe, but it made her feel at peace. She felt at home with them, despite their differences. She noticed the love and unity of this God-centered family, and began to wonder who their God really was.

Until that time, she had no concept of one God, but only of different spirits. This family's kindness to her, a total stranger, made an impression on her. She became curious about Christianity and accompanied them to church.

When Keiko returned to Japan, her friend who had sent her the Bible, gave her the information of a church in her hometown. She started to attend this church and felt encouraged by the teachings of the Bible.

At first, Keiko was not conscious of the need to surrender her life to God, because she thought that only weak people were dependent on religion. As she learned more about Christianity, she realized that Jesus offered forgiveness for sin and the assurance of eternal life. She searched the teachings of Buddhism, but found no such assurances.

Her growing interest in Christianity caused her to buy a big Bible. As she read it, she learned for the first time that everyone needed the Savior because of their sin. *For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God* (Romans 3:23, NIV). The stark realization that it was also her sin that put Jesus Christ on the cross, finally brought her to true repentance. Tears filled her eyes as she prayed to accept the Lord Jesus as her Savior in 1975.

She was overwhelmed by a sense of peace, as she realized that she did not have to try to be good in her own strength anymore. She had no more anxiety about the future. She was assured that the Holy Spirit would lead her and help her live a good life.

During this time, Keiko was still going to the temple on Saturdays to continue with her flower arrangement activities, while attending church on Sundays. The Lord clearly showed



Keiko Wyatt

her that she must choose between the temple and church. Soon after, she gave up her flower arranging career and started to work with the church.

She quickly developed an interest in missions and started to work in the office at Japan Mission. She answered many letters from those seeking spiritual help, and rejoiced in the numerous opportunities she had to tell others of how her encounter with God while in London had forever changed her life.

Who knew at that time what a casual meeting with a stranger in London would lead to! May the Lord help us to be more conscious of the needs of those around us.

DR. KIICHI ARIGA – EVANGELIST



Dr. Kiichi Ariga

Japan Mission has sponsored the work of Dr. Kiichi Ariga for many decades. The following is the remarkable story of how he found the Lord, and how he was called to be a powerful evangelist who influenced many for Christ.

Dr. Kiichi Ariga was born in June 1933 to parents who were deeply religious. “As a small baby, my parents took me to the Shinto shrine where I was dedicated,” Kiichi shared. “They purchased an *omamori* (good luck charm) at the shrine, which they attached to my clothing.

“As I grew older, I slept with my good luck charm under my pillow, believing that it would help me get better grades at school. The *omamori*, which my parents purchased at the temple annually, was supposed to protect me from theft, fire and sickness. I was told that the gods would protect me, even if an earthquake killed all my friends.

“Superstitions haunted me, and I had never heard of the

true God or the cross of Calvary. I was taught to light a candle and offer rice and miso soup to the gods every morning. I also offered the same things at the Buddhist altar, to worship the spirits of my dead ancestors.

“When I was twelve, my parents encouraged me to save my money to buy a bicycle. When no one was looking, I took the money from my savings to buy candy, go to the movies and buy toys. One day, my mother found out that the money I had been saving was almost gone and confronted me. She believed me when I lied and blamed the theft on a mischievous boy in the neighborhood, and she told others about this boy.

“My conscience bothered me, and I did not want to incur the wrath of the gods for lying to my mother, so I woke up at 5:00 am to sweep the yard at the Shinto shrine. I thought that I could gain favor with the gods in this way. After I finished, I bowed my head and clapped my hands in prayer, but I felt no peace in my heart. *The gods were silent.*

“One day, a classmate and I went to see a Japanese wrestling match. Upon returning home, this thirteen-year-old friend suddenly became sick with a very high fever and died the next day! I was very sad, because he had been my best friend.

“At his funeral I saw him lying in the coffin, dressed in a white kimono. In his right hand was a long stick, which was meant to help him on his long journey to the Buddhist heaven.

“‘Where did he go? To heaven or to hell?’ Then I wondered, ‘where would I go if I suddenly died?’

“I felt that I would go to hell because of my sinful lying heart. I was overcome by darkness and fear, as I pondered this sobering reality.

“I made pilgrimages to the shrines, meditated and listened to lectures by the priests. A Shinto priest even imparted a special blessing by waving a staff over me to purify me, but I still had no peace and the *gods remained silent.*

“Many thought that I was very religious. The school principal

even gave me a special certificate in honor of my faithful work at the shrine; but in reality, I was driven to do these things to satisfy my deep urge to appease the gods, and be cleansed of my sins through my good works.

“After two years of meditation, I went to the priests and asked them to give me a word of acknowledgement for my devotion. To my amazement they replied, ‘Sorry, but you will only know the result after you die.’

“I could not believe it! I did not want to die like my friend, not knowing where I was going.

“I became depressed and felt that the only solution left for me was to commit suicide. I wrote a farewell note to my parents, asking them to forgive me, and went to the nearby railway line.

“I threw myself in front of an oncoming train, but to my utter amazement, it passed over me and I was unhurt! I had fallen between the two tracks and the train didn’t even touch me. I went home, utterly discouraged. I concluded that even the god of death disliked me!

“I made my way to the Shinto shrine on New Year’s Eve, in hope that my first prayer prayed after midnight would be answered.

“As I walked along the dark lonely street, someone tapped me on my shoulder. I was surprised to see a classmate of mine. ‘Where are you going?’ he asked.

“‘To the shrine,’ I replied.

“‘Come to church with me,’ he said.

“‘No, I don’t want to go to a Christian church!’ I replied.

“He insisted and twisted my arm. He was the leader of our debate team and was also good at judo, so I reluctantly agreed.

“He took me to a meeting that was held in the home of Mr. Nakamura, who was a poor tailor and the acting minister. He spoke of how he had suffered during World War II and how an America bomber had dropped a bomb on his home, killing his wife, his only son, and two of his three daughters. He

shared how life would not have been worth living if God had not sustained him.

“It was my first time to enter a church. It was a New Year’s Eve prayer meeting, and the Christians began to pray aloud.

“Suddenly, to my surprise, someone started to pray for me by name. Then the others joined in until the whole church was praying for my salvation!

“For the first time, I came to understand the love that Jesus had for me on Calvary and of my need to repent of my sins. As tears filled my eyes, Mr. Nakamura encouraged me to confess my sins and I accepted Christ as my Savior. Afterwards he quoted Matthew 9:2, “*Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven*” (NIV). I was born again by God’s Spirit and became a new creature in Christ Jesus!

“I never did get to the Shinto shrine that night. I did not need to, for I had met the true and living God. I prayed and He had answered my prayer! *God was not silent!* My heart was at last filled with the peace that I had sought for so long.

“After returning home, I witnessed to my parents and apologized for my sinful and disobedient conduct. I also apologized to my mother for lying to her about the bicycle money.

“My parents were horrified and refused to accept my decision. For the next seven years, on Wednesday and Sunday nights, when I returned home from evening church meetings, all the doors would be locked.

“I would knock and the voice on the inside would say, ‘Who are you?’

“‘Your son, Kiichi,’ I would reply.

“Then the voice of one of my parents would say, ‘Since you became a Christian, you are no longer our son! If you stop going to church and renounce your faith in Jesus, we will let you in.’

“I replied, ‘Jesus Christ died for me, so I will die for Him.’

“Then the voice would say, ‘Stay outside!’

“I had five rabbits, so I would often sleep outside in the small shed with the rabbits.

“Some months later, I was asked to become a Sunday School teacher. After church, I went to the same shrine where I used to sweep the yard and held an afternoon Sunday School class for thirty boys and girls.

“So great was my love for Jesus that I felt compelled to tell others of His love. One of those who came to know the Lord was the boy that I falsely accused of stealing my bicycle money. I apologized to him and he accepted Jesus as His Savior.

“When I told my friends at school about the Lord, many of them teased me and called me, *Kirisuto* (Christ). They laughed at me when I prayed before lunch and read my Bible at school, but they could not silence me.

“About this time, a missionary came to my town and started an English Bible class in his home. I learned English and became his interpreter. Seventy of my schoolmates were also drawn to his home. Many came to learn English and later found the Savior. Three out of these seventy students became full-time workers for the Lord.

“Soon after, I was inspired by a Swedish missionary to China who was visiting Japan. The Japanese soldiers arrested her during the Chinese-Japanese War and accused her of being a spy for the Chinese. They tried to force her to renounce her faith because she had told them that Jesus was the true God and not their human Emperor. They used some unspeakably cruel methods of torture, but she remained true to Jesus.

“Years later, her testimony was carried by a large English newspaper in Japan. A soldier who had helped to torture her read the article and wrote a letter to her. I traveled with her to his home and saw him beg for forgiveness on his knees.

“She explained the way of salvation to him and prayed with her former enemy. Only the love of Christ could cause such love to be manifest. Jesus said, “*Love your enemies*” (Matthew 5:44),

and that is exactly what she did. I was deeply moved, and began to seriously consider dedicating myself to full-time ministry.

“One day, while praying and fasting, the Lord gave me a vision. It was a vision of Christ asking Peter three times if he loved him. With tears in my eyes I cried out, ‘Yes, Lord, I love you more than anything!’

“Revelation 2:10 then came to mind, *“Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.”* I was then convinced that God was calling me into full-time ministry.

“I had just passed all the entrance exams to the prestigious Tokyo University, when the Lord led me to attend Bible school instead. My parents were furious with my decision. They asked, ‘Are you going to become a religious beggar? If you need money in the future, don’t come to us begging for help. We won’t give you anything!’

“I used part of the money I had saved for university to enter Bible school.

“A family emergency then arose. My older sister, who was expecting a child, had to have surgery and her baby died during the operation. My sister and parents did not have enough money to pay for this operation, so I sent them the remainder of my savings. This left me without money for Bible school. After speaking to the head of the Bible school, and much prayer, the Lord miraculously provided the \$40 per month that I needed, so that I could finish my four years of Bible school.

“After graduating, the Lord led me to plant a church in the town of Otawara, where there was no church. We began a one-week evangelistic crusade, put up posters and went from house to house to distribute tracts, and invited people to the meetings. Forty-five people made decisions to follow Christ that year.

“The Lord brought one young mother of two, whose husband had been hospitalized for four years with TB. She worked hard to nurse him back to health. When he recovered, he divorced her, married a pretty nurse from the hospital and took their two



Dr. Kiichi Ariga

children with him.

“She was so despondent that she drank some poison, but vomited it back up. She tried to drown herself in the river, but was rescued. She returned home and closed the shutters. She cried and screamed for days in the dark. The neighbors referred to her as *the crazy woman in the devil’s ghost house*.

“Amid her despair, she heard my voice announcing the meeting, as I stood in the street. She came with dirty, matted hair and wore a filthy kimono. She looked like a deranged person.

“When the invitation to receive Jesus was given, she and five others came forward. I felt led to put my hand on her forehead and prayed, ‘In the name of Jesus, devil, leave this woman.’

“She fell to the ground exhausted. The congregation sensed that something extraordinary had taken place. I then said, ‘Your sins are forgiven!’ She then rose from the ground with a radiant face and joy in her heart.

“The Christian ladies took her, cleaned her up and combed her hair. She then began to work for Jesus by bringing six of her cult friends to church. Like Mary Magdalene, the devils had been cast out and she loved the Lord. She began to visit TB patients at the hospital and two of them made decisions to follow Christ. Her experience showed us that is devil was a hard taskmaster, but that Jesus is the giver of peace, joy and happiness.

“After 7 years, my mother became a Christian. After another 7 years, my father, my brother, my sister-in-law, two sisters, two brother-in-laws — all of them became Christians. Today, 55 of my family members are Christians! Praise the Lord!”

The Lord later called Dr. Ariga to further his education

and to become a full-time evangelist. As the people of Japan face many problems, he now goes around boldly teaching and preaching the solution: 1) Repentance, 2) Reconciliation, and 3) Revival.

One of his ministries is that of reconciliation. After World War II, people in various countries, including China, South Korea, the USA, the UK, Canada and Australia, had bitter feelings towards the Japanese people.

When Dr. Ariga visits churches in these countries, he often starts by bowing deeply on his hands and knees, as a representative of Japan, saying, "I want to repent from the bottom of my heart for what the Japanese people have done. Please forgive us for what we have done to your people!"

Many are moved to tears by his sincere apology and start to pray for the salvation of souls in Japan, as their hearts are also healed.

Dr. Kiichi Ariga has been a dear friend of Japan Mission. He has spoken at some of our evangelistic events, and we have supported his ministry for over 50 years.

Pray that the Lord would bless and strengthen Dr. Ariga, who is still going strong and maintains a busy schedule of meetings and speaking engagements at age 86!

12

Outreach to North Korea

The statistics and heart-wrenching stories in this chapter have been compiled from the first-hand accounts of knowledgeable and trustworthy sources, including those who have escaped from North Korea. Some of the names have been changed and details omitted in order to protect the people who continue to risk their lives. (Sources: page 213)

There are 25 million people living in North Korea who have been ruled by three generations of the Kim dynasty. The country's first leader, Kim Il-sung, came to rule the North in 1948, after the end of Japanese rule in 1945 split the region. He started the Korean War in 1950, in an attempt to reunify the Korean Peninsula.

In the 1980s, Kim developed a cult called *Juche*, which combined communist ideals with a fierce determination to be an independent and self-sufficient country. This belief has been at the core of much of the decision-making, which has been passed down to his two successors — his deceased son Kim Jong-il and grandson Kim Jong-un, who is the current ruler.

A personality cult, fixated on the Kim family, is maintained by forcing multitudes of people to participate in regular demonstrations of enthusiastic praise and devotion. Propaganda starts in nursery school and a large proportion of the curriculum for all students, even at university, is dedicated to memorizing the history of the Kim family.

State media provides a constant stream of myths about the Kim family, and glorifies the sacrifices they have made for the people. Millions of labor-hours that could be used to advance

the economy are spent idolizing the Kim family.

Although the North Korean constitution states that it allows the freedom of religion, this freedom simply does not exist. There are no known official statistics of religions in North Korea. Officially, North Korea is an atheist state. Based on historical estimates, North Korea is mostly non-religious, with the main religions being Korean shamanism and Chondoism. There are also small communities of Buddhists and Christians.

Organized religion is seen as a threat to the regime, so nothing, apart from token churches built as a display of religious freedom for foreign visitors, is allowed.

Hundreds of thousands of Buddhists and Christians have been purged and persecuted. People caught practicing or spreading religion in secret are severely punished.

LIFE IN NORTH KOREA

Half of the 25 million people struggle to find food and provide for their basic needs. Millions of malnourished children, pregnant women and nursing mothers bear the brunt of the shortages. This has left an entire generation of North Koreans with stunted growth and a higher susceptibility to health problems.

Arbitrary arrests, lack of due process and public executions are the norm. The death penalty can be levied for distributing pornography, watching South Korean movies, professing Christianity, or possessing a Bible. Whole communities, including children, are brought to watch executions, which are intended to instill fear amongst the people.

Criticism of the leadership, if reported, is enough to make the perpetrator and their family disappear from society and end up in a political prison camp. In North Korea, if someone is found guilty of a crime, then three generations of their family are also often punished. The aim is to remove the whole family unit, to prevent any dissent from emerging, and also to deter

martyrs who might sacrifice themselves for a political cause, but would not want to sacrifice their entire family.

Political prison camps hold about 200,000 people. Many who are imprisoned are not guilty of any crime, but are related to someone who has been found to have committed a crime. Often, they have no idea what that crime was. The children who are born in these camps are raised as prisoners because their *blood is guilty*.

Forced labor, brutal beatings, rapes and death are commonplace. The regime denies the existence of these camps, but many testimonies of survivors have been corroborated by former guards, as well as satellite images. Camps with the most horrendous conditions are reserved for those who have been disloyal. As many as 40% of prisoners in these camps die of malnutrition.

It is illegal to leave North Korea without state permission, but every year thousands of North Koreans risk their lives by escaping into China, due to a lack of freedom and economic hardship. If caught trying to escape, or if detained in China and sent back, they are at risk of harsh punishment including brutal beatings, forced labor, forced abortions, torture and internment in prison camps. Those suspected of having had contact with South Koreans or Christians while in China, receive the most severe forms of punishment.

North Korean refugees in China live in a precarious situation. Many do not have the resources or contacts to leave China. Their illegal status leaves them vulnerable to exploitation by dishonest employers, since they have no recourse to the authorities.

Many North Korean women who escape to China become victims of sex trafficking. China's lack of marriageable women has created a demand for North Korean women who are at risk of being forced to work in brothels or online sex chat rooms, or are sold as wives. North Korean women have been sold for as little as a few hundred dollars in China.

Bribery and the arbitrary enforcement of laws is commonplace. Guards, soldiers and those with political power often suffer from a lack of nourishing food, adequate medical treatment and the necessary resources to meet their daily needs. This has caused many to rely on bribes to supplement their meager existence.

The North Korean regime claims that it provides universal healthcare for its people. In reality, health services and medicine are only available to the privileged. Ordinary citizens are, therefore, afflicted by easily preventable or curable diseases related to poverty, such as tuberculosis and cataracts.

Most only receive a few hours of electricity per day and have no power at night.

Government permission is required to own a computer, and the Internet is strictly censored. A government-controlled radio is issued to all businesses and households, which can only be turned down and not turned off.

It is illegal to wear jeans. In the cities, women are not allowed to wear pants or ride bicycles, and women's skirts must cover their knees.

Only 28 styles of haircuts are approved. Men can choose from 10 different styles, while women have 18 different options.

Workers enjoy virtually no free time. They work six days a week, and the seventh day is spent doing assigned "volunteer work."

SONGBUN POLITICAL SYSTEM

The North Korean regime has invested an incredible amount of time and resources to create the *songbun* system, which ascribes each citizen with a level of perceived political loyalty points, based on their family background. Their particular *songbun* level (there are 51 of them) then restricts one's life opportunities, including where they can live, their occupation, educational opportunities, access to medical care and food supplies, and treatment by the criminal justice system. Any

perceived political infractions by a family member will often lead to their *songbun* also being reduced.

The *songbun* system helps to separate people into three different classes, depending on the level of loyalty they demonstrate towards the Kim regime over multiple generations:

- **Loyal Class** – Privileged class, earned by showing fervent and unwavering loyalty
- **Wavering Class** – Mostly poor peasants and farmers in rural areas
- **Hostile Class** – Those under scrutiny or those with relatives who have been suspected of being disloyal

One way to earn a living and improve one's *songbun* level is for able-bodied family members to consent to be dispatched to work overseas. Such workers are sent to work in various parts of China, Cambodia, Laos, Russia, the Ukraine and many other countries, where they are contracted to work a variety of jobs.

They are expected to work long hours for a very small wage, without days off. Most of the money earned is sent directly to the North Korean government, from which a small amount is paid to the family members who remain in North Korea.

Serious injury and death are common, due to poor and unsafe working conditions. If a worker dies, the North Korean government pays a small amount of money to the family to express their sympathies. This system of contract labor allows the North Korean government to derive vast sums of foreign currency from the estimated 100,000 workers who are sent to work overseas.

Japan Mission is involved in sponsoring the work of missionaries who travel to Russia, the Ukraine and other countries to make contact with North Korean defectors and workers who have been dispatched to these areas. This presents a unique opportunity to impact these people with the Gospel. Christian workers often provide them with food, clothing and medicine, while sharing God's love and the message of hope.

CHRISTIANITY IN NORTH KOREA

From the late 19th century until the Korean War in 1950, North Korea was a Christian country, and its capital, Pyongyang, was considered the *Jerusalem of the East*. Things took a turn for the worse when communist ideals were embraced and the Kim family started to rule.

Despite efforts to eradicate Christianity, reports indicate that the church in North Korea is growing. Some reports indicate that there are about 500,000 Christians, amounting to 2% of the population. Other organizations report far higher numbers, but it is very difficult to know how many Christians live in this secretive and heavily-controlled society.

North Korea is considered by many to be the most oppressive place in the world for Christians, who are considered to be imperialists that promote teachings that threaten to overthrow the government. Those caught practicing their faith are arrested, imprisoned, tortured and sometimes put to death.

A famous saying in North Korean culture is, *The walls have eyes and the fields have ears*. Christians go to great lengths to hide their faith. They often worship in secret and are very wary of family members, friends and neighbors turning them in, since all citizens are required to spy on each other. Christian parents often refrain from introducing their children to Christianity until they are older in order to protect the family.

Parents brave enough to share their faith with their children or extended family are known to gather in darkened rooms of their homes, where they can only whisper their prayers and hymns. Their Bibles are often scattered pages, in order to disguise them.

North Koreans are sometimes granted permission to visit China, where some gain access to *illegal* Bibles and Christian literature, which they smuggle back in at their own peril.

MINISTRY OPPORTUNITIES

Although the work of Japan Mission is primarily focused on Japan, the Lord has led us to also help the destitute people of North Korea. Japan Mission sponsors Christian workers who are involved in the following ministry opportunities:

1. Manna Project – Balloons are regularly launched into North Korea at night, carrying food, medical supplies, and CDs, USBs, flash drives and tracts that contain portions of the Bible. Various areas are targeted by calculating the wind direction and making a number of small holes in the balloons, so that they slowly deflate as they pass over the border in the dark. Many have been impacted by the Word of God in this manner.



Launching balloons into North Korean

2. North Korean Rescue Mission – Refugees crossing from North Korea to China face the constant fear of arrest and repatriation. Rescue workers provide immediate assistance to such refugees.

3. Resettlement Support – Emotional and spiritual support is offered to North Korean refugees arriving in South Korea to help them adapt to life through counseling services, retreats and Bible studies. Many have found the Lord through this ministry.

4. Orphanage – Helps meet the desperate needs of orphaned Chinese-North Korean children born in China, who have lost their mothers due to deportation, abandonment or execution.

Children born to North Korean refugee mothers and Chinese fathers can face difficulties obtaining household registration papers, because of their mother's illegal status. This can leave children stateless and deprived of basic rights, such as access to education and health care. Children are taken in by the orphanage and acclimated into mainstream society. They are also given the opportunity to obtain rights as Chinese citizens.

Pray that these children will find comfort in the Great Shepherd.

5. Merchant Ministry – Provides spiritual and financial support for the pastors of the underground church in North Korea. It provides materials for the development of micro-businesses. For example, with some basic supplies and equipment, ministers can start their own pottery business to make and sell pots, bowls, plates, cups and vases. This helps to empower them, as they seek to discretely influence their surrounding community for Christ.

6. Supply Support Ministry – North Korean Christians who visit shelters in China often transport food, clothing, medical supplies and media devices containing the Word of God into North Korea. Pray for the protection of these workers, whose lives are often in great danger.

NORTH KOREAN REFUGEES

Bill Cook, our associate in Thailand, shared how he and his friends have been able to provide Bibles to North Korean refugees. "Some of the refugees are Christians and greatly appreciate the Bibles. The North Koreans who cross into China often pay traffickers to smuggle them into Thailand through Laos. If caught in Laos, they are often sent back to North Korea, but once in Thailand they can go straight to the police and declare themselves as refugees.

"The Thai police are set up to receive them, and about 20 refugees arrive this way each week. The police keep them in

a detention center, where they stay for up to a week, before turning them over to the South Korean embassy. From there they are transported to South Korea.”

Such refugees often face a difficult time adjusting to life in South Korea.

TRUE FREEDOM

Workers of Japan Mission have been in contact with a number of North Korean defectors and have been deeply moved by their testimonies. The following is the remarkable story of how Chun made his way to South Korea, and the struggles he faced as he found the Lord.

“While growing up in North Korea, I do not remember ever being told by my parents or those around me that they loved me,” Chun shared. “I was repeatedly told that I was loved by the Kim family, who were our rulers.

“My earliest childhood memories were that of being constantly hungry. Food was very scarce, and the suffering was difficult to bear. This took a heavy physical and emotional toll on me. As I grew older, I remember times when I would give up everything for just one meal.

“My father worked for the government, and when I was nine years old, he was taken away by the authorities and I never saw him again. Because of this, our family was criticized, shamed and shunned. I was regularly teased and bullied.

“As I grew older, we were bound by strict rules, taught to revere the Kim family and required to show unwavering loyalty. I felt as though my heart was empty and my soul was being pushed to the brink of death. That is why I decided to escape from my homeland.

“In 2008, I left my wife, mother, siblings, relatives and friends behind because I knew that it would be a very dangerous journey. It involved crossing the Tumen River to enter China. I knew that from the moment I stepped into the river, the North Korea soldiers would treat me as a traitor and a criminal.

“If caught in China, I could be arrested and sent back to North Korea. Then not only I, but also my family, would be punished and forced to face unbearable suffering and possible execution.

“After crossing into China, I sold myself to a broker who told me that he could help me get to South Korea. I worked hard and when my debt to the broker was paid, he arranged for my journey to South Korea.

“A guide took me on a very round-about route, and we walked most of the way so that we would not get caught, while facing life-and-death situations each day.

“I finally arrived in South Korea about one month later. There, I learned for the first time what it felt like to be loved, have dignity and experience freedom. The South Korean government provided me with a place to live and money, so that I could start a new life. I was overwhelmed by the abundance of food and the ability to freely choose.

“In South Korea, there was nobody watching me and I spent a lot of time alone, so I struggled to adjust to these freedoms. In North Korea, I was assigned to work long hours and was under constant surveillance, as government monitors would regularly come to check on us. If I dared to disobey them, I knew that I could have faced severe punishment or certain death.

“Even though South Korean society was free, it did not quiet my heart, which was still brainwashed by the dictatorship I had been born under. I was confused and under great emotional stress. I missed my family and felt very lonely.

“When I thought of my family and friends who were suffering under that cruel dictatorship, it was hard for me to control my anger. I felt intense guilt and sorrow for escaping and leaving them behind. I started to experience nightmares and lost my appetite.

“Even though South Korea embraced me, my heart did not feel free. I felt miserable and emotionally scarred. The pain

was so deep that it felt as though my heart was dying. I was in desperate need of something to revive my soul.

“In order to satisfy my spiritual hunger, I decided to attend a Christian camp. That is where I realized that there was another freedom besides the one I had been seeking when I fled North Korea. It was the freedom and comfort that come from knowing our Heavenly Father, as is written in Matthew 5:4, “*Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted*” (NIV).

“On the third day of the camp, the minister spoke on forgiveness. I had never wept or cried out for help in my whole life, but that day, for the first time ever, I cried out to God in a loud voice. ‘Oh God, my father was sent to a prison camp when I was nine. Because of that, my siblings and I were ostracized, bullied and suffered greatly. I was separated from my wife and they sent my sister and cousins to a prison camp. God, how could You tell me to forgive these people?’ I cried out while writhing in agony, ‘Father God, please explain this to me!’

“At that camp, I cried for the first time since I was nine years old. After I had cried as much as I needed, I finally felt peace in my heart. On that day, I received true comfort from the Holy Spirit for the first time in my life.

“God then spoke to me through some Bible verses that I had never read before: *Vengeance is Mine, I will repay* (Romans 12:19). “*But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you*” (Matthew 6:33).

“I decided to entrust everything to God and accepted Jesus Christ as my Savior and Lord. I finally found true freedom, joy and fulfillment in life. I came to realize that true freedom was to receive God’s gift of eternal life, become a citizen of heaven and live in His presence. I never had nightmares after that day.

“I found out that Christianity wasn’t just a religion, but the Truth itself. Jesus Christ became everything to me.” “*You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free*” (John 8:32, NIV).

Chun was later miraculously reunited with his wife and now serves the Lord by helping defectors find comfort in the Savior.

HOPE IN THE GLORY TO COME

The following is the heart-wrenching story of Min and how God delivered her from desperate and miserable circumstances.

Min grew up in North Korea, was married and had two children. During 2004, there was a terrible famine and conditions in North Korea became so unbearable that she decided to cross the heavily-guarded Chinese border at the Tumen River in search of work to support her family.

“I came across a company that gave me a job with ties to South Korea,” she shared. “I worked while suffering from hunger, and counting the days when I would be reunited with my children.

“While working in China during 2008, an elderly Korean woman shared the Gospel with me. I began to attend a Korean church, but I had been so thoroughly brainwashed to worship our dictator that I was unable to comprehend the Bible.

“One day, while I was singing a hymn, I began to weep uncontrollably as I thought of my five-year-old and three-year-old daughters, whom I had left behind in North Korea. That day my heart was filled with the Holy Spirit and faith began to burn within me as I listened to the sermon. I asked God to come into my heart and forgive me for my sins. I also prayed and entrusted my family in North Korea to Him.

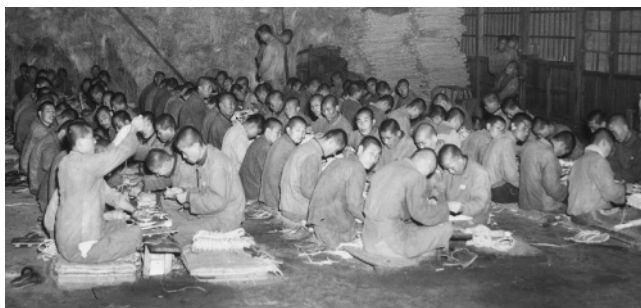
“At that time, when my heart was so weary and I had no one to depend on, the deacons of that church showered me with the love of God. I will be forever grateful to them!

“During 2009, the Chinese security forces suddenly raided the company where I was working and arrested me. I was forcefully repatriated to North Korea and sentenced to 4 years in prison.

“While in prison, I suffered in ways I cannot put into words and there were times when I complained to God about it. ‘Lord, I left the family I love to risk my life in order to make money to send to my starving family. Now on top of all of that heartbreak, You have made me go through this horrible punishment!’

“Nevertheless, God was with me during my suffering. He helped me to sing praises to Him, as I came to realize that He was always with me. The only comfort I had in prison were the hymns and prayers I had learned at my church in China.

“North Korean prisons are so horrific that words cannot describe them. At night, 50 to 60 people had to sleep on the floor in one small room that smelled so bad because of the stench from the toilet.



North Korean prison

“The food we were given was something that animals would not even eat. To stave off starvation, we would pick up scraps of cabbage or grain when we found them lying on the ground on the way to work.

“The guards forced us to labor under terrible conditions during the day, and at night we had to sit through lectures intended to brainwash us.

“I became weaker as I lost weight, and felt as though I was on the verge of a mental breakdown. I was filled with sorrow and anguish, and was losing all hope. I became so sick that I was able to get medical leave from the forced labor in the fields.

“When I went to my room to rest, I noticed someone lying on the floor under a worn-out blanket, moving up and down slightly. There were several people in the room at that time who were also sick. None of them knew what the person under the blanket was doing, but I did. I was sure that she was praying.

“I was shocked to realize that there was someone else in the prison who believed in God. Her body was black and blue from being beaten by the guards. Despite this, she continued to lift up her prayers to the Lord. I felt that she was in danger, but I was afraid that someone might find out that I was a Christian, so I didn’t approach her that day.

“A few days later, on New Year’s Day in 2011, I noticed her praying under her tattered blanket, and I went up to her and said quietly, ‘I pray in Jesus name.’ She was surprised by my words and we began to talk quietly.

“Her name was Kim and she was a North Korean evangelist. She had trusted the Lord in China, was arrested by the Chinese security forces while studying the Bible, and was forced to return to North Korea. She had received a five-year sentence for defecting to China.

“After a short time of fellowship, we held hands, wept together and thanked the Lord for allowing us to meet and encourage one another amid so much darkness.

“Kim was very weak when I met her. Although she couldn’t work, the guards would often kick and beat her because she was not able to walk straight. During those times, all she could do was to cry out to God. She would ask me to pray with her, while telling me that if we prayed without ceasing, God would help us overcome this evil.

“It strengthened my faith to see that, despite the horrible suffering that Kim endured, nothing could rob her of the joy in her heart. In the midst of her pain and suffering, she never once complained, but endured it all through prayer. Kim continued to witness for Christ in that dangerous and evil environment, where no one could be trusted.

“The most shocking thing I witnessed in prison was to see Kim come back into the room after being tortured for sharing her faith with someone, and then without any fear, again pray and boldly continue to share of God’s love with another prisoner.

“Only a few prisoners seemed to accept the Lord, but she

continued to faithfully share the Gospel. Other prisoners would coldly stare and spread wicked rumors about her.

“I noticed how dangerous things were getting for Kim, so I spoke to her in secret. ‘Kim, things are really bad now, so I’d like you to stop sharing about Jesus for the time being. If you don’t, you’ll be killed. Let’s just serve out our sentences and leave this place and escape together to China!’

“I still have a lot of work left to do in this place where God has sent me,’ Kim replied. ‘If we are not discouraged and endure to the end, our Lord Jesus will surely protect us and save us.’ She took both of my hands in hers and sang the chorus of a hymn, *“Do not fear, be strong and courageous. Do not be discouraged and do not despair. The Lord is near.”*

“In the end, Kim was accused of being a Christian spy and sent to a prison camp for political prisoners, from which it is said that very few prisoners ever get out alive.

“Through the things I suffered, and through the blessing of knowing Kim, my faith grew and I came to understand what Paul meant when he said, *For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us* (Romans 8:18, NIV). I learned to put my hope in the glory to come.”

By God’s mercy, Min’s four-year sentence was reduced to two years. After her release, she escaped once again to China across the Tumen River. From there, she eventually made her way to Thailand and then to South Korea. She left her husband, two daughters and a mother behind in North Korea, and has had very little contact with them since. All are unsaved, so please pray for their salvation.

Min now lives in South Korea and is involved in helping ministries that seek to spread the Gospel to North Korea. Pray for Min and the Christian workers who are using various methods to reach the needy people of North Korea.

TRAFFICKED IN CHINA

Kan was born into a poor family in rural North Korea, the fourth daughter of six children. “When I was eighteen, my mother and older sister died because they could not find enough food to eat and became sick,” she shared. “No matter how hard we worked, we could not escape the misery of poverty.”

“I then learned from a friend that there was an opportunity for employment in China, so I crossed the Tumen river into China, during the bitter cold winter of 2003. I planned to earn enough money to help my family for one month and then return home.

“Unbeknownst to me, this employment opportunity turned out to be one where they trafficked women. When I arrived, they took me against my will and sold me to a Chinese family that was in search of a wife.

“This family was so afraid that I would escape that they even followed me to the toilet! I spent most of my days crying because I was angry and very upset that I could not escape or earn money to support my father and siblings, who were depending on me.

“One day, I was very humiliated when all the relatives gathered, and the family members removed my clothes to see if I was normal and able to bear children! I was then told to be the wife of the son in the family.

“I felt so violated and demoralized that I lost all hope and became depressed. I tried to commit suicide three times but failed. I was not even allowed to die, so I felt as though my only choice was to go along with this dreadful situation. I was made to work in the fields and care for the farm animals.

“During 2005, almost 2 years since I left my home, I gave birth to a baby girl. As I cared for my baby, I was given some freedom to go shopping and leave the house.

“A neighbor invited me to attend a nearby church. I was not a Christian, but the members and elders of the church were

very kind and gave me various things for my baby, including a stroller. I was deeply grateful for the love that they showed me and was curious about their God.

“I was involved in idol worship for many years, and perhaps it was the influence of evil spirits, but whenever I would enter the church, I would get terrible headaches and feel sick.

“One day, while the elders were praying, God miraculously healed me. The severe pain and feelings of nausea left me, and I felt cleansed from the evil presence. I then started to attend church regularly, but could still not fully comprehend how Jesus, who walked this Earth, could be the Son of God.

“Soon after, I heard that the police had come to our area in search of North Koreans who may have fled their country. I prayed together with another North Korean lady that we would not be discovered. We were later very relieved when we heard that the police had left.

“God used this frightening experience to show me that He would answer my prayers and take care of me if I placed my trust in Him. That was when I decided to accept Jesus as my Savior.

“Shortly after, I was faced with an agonizing trial. My one-year-old daughter came down with pneumonia, and the doctor said that she might only have 15 days to live! I was so disheartened that I went to the church. I laid my daughter at the foot of the cross in the front of the church, as I broke down in tears and cried out to God.

““Lord, why do you keep giving me these experiences that fill my heart with sorrow? Why did you give me this little girl, just to take her away? I did not want her in the first place and now I have to bear the heartache of parting with her!”

“I then looked up and could not believe what I saw. My daughter, who had been lying there with no energy, started to call out ‘mama’ and walk around!

“I was so surprised that I took her back to the doctor, and he could not find anything wrong with her! I told him what had happened, and he started to attend church and received Jesus as his Savior!

“My daughter was well and was running around as if she had never been sick! I was so grateful to God that I gave her another name, *Haun*, meaning “the grace of God.”

“I was worried that I would eventually be discovered by the police, and that they would arrest me and hand me over to the North Korean authorities. I knew that I would then be separated from my daughter, so I eventually found a way to escape from the family who had bought me.

“I traveled with my daughter to a town in China, close to the North Korean border and found work as a travel guide. Raising Haun by myself was tough, but God sustained me through the difficult times, and I felt that He was protecting and blessing us.

“A while later, I went to the doctor and was told that I had uterine cancer. I felt the urgent need to receive medical treatment so that I would not die and leave my helpless daughter to fend for herself.

“I was told that the best treatments were available in South Korea, so I left little Haun at an orphanage and told her that I would return in one week. I then set off for the long journey to South Korea in 2007.

“Three days later, I was arrested on the Mongolian border. The Chinese authorities detained me and repatriated me to North Korea, where I spent three months being interrogated and severely tortured in a detention center. I still bear the scars today from the horrendous treatment I received.

“I was then placed in police custody and raped. Women are often victims of this type of treatment, because they are considered to be traitors and of very little value to society.

“I became pregnant as a result and was forced to endure an excruciating abortion without anesthesia.

“While still in severe pain, I was transferred to a prison camp where it was bitterly cold. I was sentenced to three years, and endured many days where I felt that I could hardly walk and would rather die. I saw many around me die of starvation and disease, and their bodies simply discarded like garbage.

“All I could do was to rely on God to help me through each day, which felt like hell itself. I sought the Lord as I saw others starving and being beaten by the guards. I asked God to help me during the many days that my eyes filled with tears as I experienced pain and sorrow.

“My heavenly Father comforted me and gave me strength during these difficult times. My knowledge of the Bible was very limited, but God miraculously brought the following words to mind, which spoke to my heart. *No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it* (1 Corinthians 10:13, NKJV).

“I was encouraged to press on as I pondered these words, but I could not remember where I had heard them.

“I was able to witness to eight of my fellow prisoners about God’s mercy and grace. We would often come together to pray when things became unbearable.

“Three years later, I was released from the prison camp and reunited with my family in North Korea, where I was able to tell them about Jesus.

“Six months later, during 2011, I again made the dangerous journey to China by crossing the Tumen River in the middle of the night in search of my daughter. God protected me each step of the way and I arrived safely.

“I was finally able to find a Bible and search for those words that came to mind while in prison. I was overjoyed to find the words in *1 Corinthians 10:13* and somewhat surprised to learn that it was truly a Scripture in the Bible!

“I went to a hospital in China and was examined on two occasions by the doctors. They could not find any trace of the cancer and I knew that God had healed me!

“I had left my daughter, Haun, at the orphanage when she was only two years old, while telling her that I would only be gone for a week. Five years later, when I was finally able to get back to her, she was already seven years old. The feeling of joy and relief that overwhelmed my heart when I was finally able to embrace her was indescribable!

“One year later, after I earned enough money to pay a broker, a guide helped us escape to Thailand. From there, we made our way to South Korea, where I found a job and worked hard to fit into society.

“This new lifestyle caused me to depend less on God, and He seemed to be more distant, as my love for Him waned.

“Two years later, God used a group of North Korean escapees to speak to my heart. The love and fellowship that I experienced while with them helped me to renew my love for the Lord and understand why I needed to be completely dependent on Him.

“The teaching I struggled the most with in the Bible was forgiveness. The Bible teaches us to forgive our enemies, but I vehemently resisted.

“I wondered how it could be possible to forgive those who imprisoned me, starved me and treated me so brutally. I felt intense anger and hate as I recalled these things.

“I eventually realized that I would only be free if I chose to forgive. It was a struggle, but I forgave each person as I recounted each incident.

“I forgave the cruel man who beat me while interrogating me. I forgave the guard who struck me until the blood ran when I stole two red peppers while I was starving. I also forgave the man who had brutally raped me.

“I was able to forgive these people after God clearly showed me that Jesus died not only for their sins, but He also came so

that *my* sins would be forgiven. He was innocent, but willingly gave His life by being tortured and shedding His blood so that a sinful person such as I could be forgiven.

“Who was I to tell God that I could not forgive the sins of others? I placed all my bitterness and resentment at the foot of the cross, and was released from my intense anger and hate.

“My life was changed, and I now live each day with my thirteen-year-old daughter, experiencing true freedom and joy through the grace that only God can give.

“My heart goes out in prayer for the 25 million people of North Korea. I have a deep desire to help them know the Lord Jesus as I do. God has placed many refugees like me in South Korea, and has called us to spread the Gospel and the Word of God to those in the North.”

FROM CAPTOR TO EVANGELIST

Yun was deceived by a broker with an offer of honest employment. After she crossed from North Korea into China, she was sold to a Chinese family. She could not understand their language and was forced to marry a man she did not know. She was required to take care of the household and do many chores.

The only thought on her mind was to escape to a country that would accept refugees. If caught, she feared that the family would beat her severely, so she knew that she would have to get as far away from them as possible.

Yun realized that she would need to learn Chinese in order to escape. She learned the language quite fast, since she heard it spoken quite often, but acted like she did not understand. She did not want the family to suspect that she was capable of escaping.

One day, while contemplating her escape, Yun was walking down a street when she heard singing. She had never heard such peaceful music in North Korea. The words of encouragement in

these hymns spoke to her heart, as she started to frequent the church. After a while, she learned of Jesus and accepted Him as her Lord and Savior.

Her life up until then had been as if she were locked in a very dark room, until Jesus opened the curtains and let the light in. As time passed, God gave her a love for her husband, whom she had previously despised.

Up until then, Yun learned Chinese so that she could escape, but the Lord used her language ability to help her show love towards her husband. She told him about the Bible and started to earnestly pray that he would find God.

Yun, who was sold by a broker into this family, had become a loving wife, through a miraculous transformation that only the Holy Spirit could bring about. As her husband witnessed the miracle of how God had replaced her feelings of bitterness with genuine love towards his family, he soon accepted the Lord Jesus as his Savior.

He repented and felt true remorse for the way they had treated Yun, and soon started to share the Gospel with those caught up in similar circumstances, who had escaped from North Korea.

He later crossed into North Korea to share the Good News, while realizing that this could cost him his life!

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who proclaims peace, who brings glad tidings of good things, who proclaims salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns!" (Isaiah 52:7).

13

Partner with Us

This book has detailed the various methods used by Japan Mission to share the Gospel through the many opportunities we have encountered.

You may ask, “How can I help or share in this task?”

Please remember the incredible needs. The oppression that Christians are experiencing in China, North Korea, southeast Asia and in the Muslim world is unimaginable.

Countless numbers are waiting for someone to provide them with a Bible because they are simply unavailable or unaffordable.

Most of the 126 million people in Japan have never heard the Gospel, and there is a tremendous lack of Christian workers.

The following are *four ways* you can partner with us in this vital work.

PRAYER

Partner with us through your prayers. Japan Mission is in need of intercessors, who will faithfully pray as we seek to evangelize the lost and assist the churches. *The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective* (James 5:16, NIV).

Pray for the persecuted Christians of China, North Korea and other parts of the world.

Pray that the Holy Spirit would convict and lead those we share the Gospel with to a true knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Jesus said, “*The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest*” (Matthew 9:37-38). Please join us in this prayer, for more workers to join us in the harvest for souls.

Please pray as follows for the workers of this harvest:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| • Holiness and sanctification | • Love and servant's hearts |
| • Wisdom and discernment | • Discipline and dedication |
| • Patience and flexibility | • Boldness and courage |
| • Fruitfulness and success | • Health and strength |
| • Protection and safety | • Family and loved ones |

FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Partner with us through your regular financial contributions. The work of Japan Mission is made possible through the faithful donations of many, who give sacrificially towards God's work.

You can help us make a difference by funding various evangelistic projects and supporting the efforts of Christian workers. Donations make it possible for us to publish evangelistic literature and supply many with the precious Word of God.

Additional funding would help us make a greater impact in the following areas:

- **Bibles & Literature Publication & Distribution** – Japan, China, North Korea, southeast Asia and other countries
- **Evangelistic Activities** – Chinese students and tourists, camps, cafes, children's ministries and special meetings
- **Christian Workers** – Funding for missionaries, writers, counselors and evangelists
- **English Evangelism** – Helping small churches reach their communities through teaching English and evangelism
- **Media Ministry** – Helping small churches connect through the development of media and website content

Japan Mission is a *faith mission* and does not make a direct appeal for financial contributions. As the Lord guides us in ministry, we rely on Him to work in the hearts of His servants, and inspire them to give towards His work — according to His perfect timing. We praise the Lord for those He has called to partner with us in this manner!

JOIN OUR TEAM

Partner with us by making the need for devoted Christian workers known.

How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And HOW CAN THEY HEAR WITHOUT SOMEONE PREACHING TO THEM? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" (Romans 10:14-15, NIV)

The Japanese people are in need of thousands of Christian workers who will befriend them and share the love of Jesus. Seeing our lives in action may be the only opportunity people have to be exposed to God's Word.

People from all walks of life including, artists, athletes, linguists, nurses, childcare workers, teachers, professors, dancers, musicians, story-tellers and puppeteers, are all needed to live out the Word as they relate to the lost.

We stand amazed at the ways the Lord continues to use all sorts of people to help us spread the Good News. The Lord once moved in the hearts of a cycling team from South Africa to visit us in Japan. Their vision was to ride through Japan, while distributing tracts and covering the nation with prayer. Japan Mission became their base of operations and we provided them with free tracts.

You can partner with us by becoming such a Christian worker. You may say, "I am but one person. What difference can I make?" Please do not underestimate what God can do through one person. God can empower you to be an effective instrument, if you make yourself available to Him.

Wondering if Japan is for you? – Why not visit Japan and volunteer as a short-term worker? There are many opportunities for English teachers, childcare providers, and those who can help with maintenance and all kinds of practical work.

Japan Mission is able to help qualified and devoted Christian workers find work and get acclimated to life in Japan. Contact us at: **jm@japanmission.org**

MAKE USE OF OUR RESOURCES

Partner with us by making use of our resources to reach the Japanese you and your friends encounter. Japan Mission is committed to making its resources available to those who desire to share the Gospel. There are many ways we can help you in this task.

1. Are you able to befriend Japanese people who live in your area? Japanese tourists and business people travel to most parts of the world. Find out whether there are Japanese people living in your area. We could send you tracts and Christian literature to help you share the Gospel with them.

2. Would you like to host a Japanese person in your home? Japanese people love to travel and are often open to staying with someone who will help them experience the local culture.

3. Do you have a Japanese friend moving back to Japan? We can help by introducing them to a good local church.

4. Are you traveling to Japan for a short visit? We can send tracts to any part of Japan where you may be visiting, so that you can be part of the effort to spread the Gospel.

5. Do you have a friend in Japan? We can send them Christian literature and help them get in contact with Christians in their area.

Valuable resources such as testimonies, tracts and videos are available on our website at: **japanmission.org**

LIST OF SOURCES

Statistics from Church Information Service, Japan (CIS) – Chapter 1
 Saying: Adjusting to changing times – by Jimmy Carter – Chapter 1
 Underwater Shrine by Japan Probe – Chapter 3
 Statistics from *Yomiuri News* – Chapter 3
 Statistics from *Asahi News* – Chapter 3
 Statistics from *Mainichi News* – Chapter 3
 Statistics from Church Information Service, Japan (CIS) – Chapter 3
 Contributor: Bill Cook – The Faithful Remnant – Chapter 3
 Statistics from: *Multiplying Churches in Japanese Soil* by John Wm. Mehn – Chapter 5
 Contributor: Roald Lidal of New Life Ministries – Testimonies & Stories – Chapter 9
 Contributor: Roald Lidal of New Life Ministries – Testimonies & Stories – Chapter 10
 Statistics & Facts from the Internet – Chapter 12

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