

**How to Share  
the Good News  
with Your  
Japanese  
Friend**

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# HOW TO SHARE THE GOOD NEWS WITH YOUR JAPANESE FRIEND

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*How to Share the Good News with Your Japanese Friend*

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# Introduction

## *The Opportunity and Urgency*

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Japan sends more students to the United States than any other country. The most recent reports tell us that more than 45,000 Japanese students temporarily live in the United States, and many are here with their families.

What a tremendous opportunity God has given us to share Christ's love with the young people of Japan who come to America to study! We have a great challenge before us: to befriend each one of these men and women; to serve them, no strings attached (in compliance with the code of ethics adopted by NAFSA: Association of International Educators); and, as we earn the right, to share the hope of Christ within us (as Scripture says, with gentleness and respect).

Yet this window of opportunity is open only a few short years. For once they graduate, these students and their families will return home—where less than one percent of the people are Christian.

The vast majority of international students from Japan come here as non-Christians. A few follow some form of their country's traditional religions, but for many others the rampant materialism and emerging individualism in Japanese society have squeezed out concern for spiritual matters.

Sharing the Gospel with these individuals, therefore, is a unique challenge. It is your lifestyle and genuine friendship, as much as your words, that will influence a Japanese student to consider Christ's claims.

This booklet will familiarize you with Japanese culture and customs and give you an understanding of Japanese people. It also offers helpful insights into being an effective Christian witness to your Japanese friend.

As you prayerfully apply the ideas and suggestions in this booklet, remember to seek service and obedience to God over success. If you follow His lead under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, He will honor your efforts.

If you would like more information about international student ministry, don't hesitate to complete the response section at the end of this booklet. We're here to serve you as you serve international students in Jesus' name.

International Students, Inc.

# Before You Start

## *Friendship First*

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Before you begin to witness to a Japanese student, you must first develop a friendship based on trust and communication. And, of course, it must be a friendship with no strings attached. However, if there is much of an age gap in the friendship, don't be surprised if communication and trust take much longer to build. This booklet is written with the assumption that you have already cultivated such a relationship with a Japanese student. This is very important, because much of the credibility of your witness will depend on what the student knows and thinks of you.

If you need to know more about developing relationships with international students, you may wish to obtain a copy of ISI's helpful booklet, *Becoming a Friend with an International Student*.

## *Live Out and Present the Gospel*

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This booklet offers many practical tips in sharing the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ with Japanese men and women. Of course, salvation, and the faith to believe in Jesus, are God's gifts. But since God has chosen to use human communication to spread His message (Rom. 10:14), we do have a charge to communicate the Good News as responsibly as possible.

In order to do this, this booklet portrays the Japanese perspective in social relationships and spiritual understanding. Some generalization is necessary for a presentation of an introductory nature. Your Japanese friend, therefore, may not have all the characteristics described here. Even Japanese society, which emphasizes homogeneity among its members, is increasingly showing signs of individualism.

The Japanese mindset is presented in social and spiritual frameworks not simply to inform the reader; as far as possible, one should communicate in a way most familiar to the Japanese. Indeed, the most effective Christian witnesses among the Japanese people are those who seek to live out and present the Gospel message in a way most befitting the Japanese.

To say, "Well, my Japanese friend is in my country now, so I'll live as an American and my friend will just have to learn the American way" is not a workable strategy on two counts. First, many years of talks on trade between the United States and Japan have shown that the Japanese simply do not respond to American communication techniques. The inability of the American government to reach mutually satisfactory agreements with Japan is in part because of America's insensitivity to Japanese values and communication patterns.

Second, not to respect your Japanese friend's distinct background is to part ways with the pattern illustrated time and again in the Bible. For instance, Jesus' example is to be a servant (Mark 10:45). And the apostle Paul, in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23, demonstrates his willingness to adapt to any cultural distinctive if it will help him communicate the Gospel.

### *Witness by Action and Word*

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We ought to be careful to model Jesus. He met the needs of others—physically, emotionally, and spiritually—with no strings attached. Remember, our Japanese friends will be watching us closely.

We must be available as a daily witness of God's leading in our lives. Our words and actions should provide natural opportunities to share our faith.

# Friendships with Japanese

## *A Natural Desire for Friendship*

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Most Japanese people desire friendship with people from other nations. As an island nation, Japan has been learning foreign ways and borrowing what it thought helpful for centuries.

For the most part, Japanese have a natural curiosity about other parts of the world and are eager to learn from other cultures. This is true even more so for those Japanese who have ventured to other countries as international students, visiting scholars, or businesspeople on assignment.

This desire for friendship, however, is not expressed in the way it would be in Western culture. For some Japanese living overseas, showing initiative toward friendship is difficult and would be considered presumptuous. The Japanese person, when first overseas, feels like an outsider. You must, therefore, be ready for a lot of unilateral social outreach. Social politeness often dictates two or three refusals before an offer is accepted. Don't give up too soon.

## *Practical Tips for Developing Friendships*

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Here are some practical tips for starting and maintaining friendships with Japanese.

- In planning a social contact with a Japanese person or family, make sure to plan *something* and to let your friend know the agenda when making the invitation. In Japan, social contacts are usually highly structured, especially at the outset.
- Take trips with Japanese people. The Japanese have a genuine fascination with the world, and they love to travel. Day trips to local areas of interest are often a good way to befriend Japanese.
- Arrange for a picture-viewing session. Whether slides, photographs, or videos, chances are that your friend has some visual record of places he or she has visited.
- If your Japanese friend has an interest in playing sports, an introduction to the local sports facilities and a friendly match of tennis or round of golf would be much appreciated. With regard to spectator sports, a trip to a professional baseball game makes a great outing, since baseball is extremely popular in Japan.
- Japanese women often enjoy cultural activities unique to the United States. Anything related to handmade crafts (e.g., quilt making or tole painting) is a particular favorite. Learning to prepare American foods is also appreciated.

- Japanese are, on the whole, more interested in various forms of music than Americans. If there are concerts or musical programs offered in your area, invite an interested Japanese friend to attend with you.
- The Japanese also seem to be more interested in flowers and plants than Americans. A trip to a local plant conservatory or botanical garden makes a hit with many Japanese.

### *Social Reciprocity and Gift-Giving*

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The Japanese are a gift-exchanging people. Early on in the friendship—often the first time they enter your home—they will bring a gift. You should express genuine thanks at the time you receive it and again when they are leaving the home. If you are invited to a Japanese home, make sure to bring a gift, however small, with you. In Japanese society, a gift given is to be met with a gift in return.

Gifts exchanged in Japan are similar to house-warming gifts in Western culture. Think of gifts that have great personal value rather than monetary value.

An extremely valuable gift is an introduction to someone you know who is studying in the same academic discipline or involved in the same line of business as your Japanese friend. Since the Japanese are typically hesitant to introduce themselves to people on their own and usually rely on go-betweens for making new relationships, these sorts of introductions are highly appreciated.

### *Japanese Commitments to Family*

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Family ties in Japan are much stronger than those in the West. Therefore, beginning a friendship with a Japanese means that you are beginning a friendship with that person's family. If family members visit, make sure that you show as much hospitality as possible. It's also a good idea to send a Christmas card and then a New Year's card to your Japanese friend's family back in Japan. Learn all you can about your friend's family and pray regularly for the family members.

Some Japanese experience pressure from their families not to become too involved with Christianity, especially first-born sons, who have the responsibility of continuing the worship of the ancestors. A friendship that has included conversations on spiritual topics may go through times when your friend simply will not open up spiritually. Or you may discover that your Japanese friend has little interest in spiritual matters. Be patient. It is important to respect your friend's spiritual comfort zone. A Japanese student is not likely to tell you directly that he or she is not interested, for example, in Bible study; the student will simply not show up at the appointed time. Silence or a lack of response should be read carefully as a possible negative

response. Be careful not to corner a student with an invitation so that there is no gracious, face-saving way to back out. Instead of saying “No,” Japanese students will often defer to another friend in the group to be the spokesperson since the friend will likely pick up their disinterest. If you detect their wariness, be a genuine friend and pray for God to provide the right opportunity.

### *Horizontal Versus Bertical Friendships*

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Japanese society is vertically stratified. This means that one defines one’s identity by the people above or below one in social status. Status may be determined by age, wealth, education, occupation, and family.

So stratified is this society that it even affects how one speaks Japanese. Japanese speakers constantly monitor their audience and change the pronominal forms and verbal endings, depending on whether one is speaking *up* to someone of higher status or *down* to someone of lower status. Relationships among Japanese are thus vertically oriented, and can be called “vertical” friendships.

When a Japanese goes overseas to countries with different social patterns, however, he or she is likely to anticipate some “horizontal” friendships, in which neither partner is concerned about status. Here are some practical steps toward developing horizontal friendship with your Japanese acquaintance.

- Learn how to pronounce your friend’s name. For the first several times you are together, ask for a brief check on pronunciation and for tips on how to say it better.
- Treat your friend with respect. If he or she has a Ph.D. or is an M.D., call him or her “Dr. \_\_\_\_\_” until your friend asks you to go on a first-name basis. If your friend wants to be called by a nickname, do so, but do not make your own nickname for the person.
- Invite your friend into your home, including both of your families, if possible. Japanese couples and families who are overseas seem to enjoy experiencing things together.
- Be sensitive about what food you serve. It is usually best to serve a Western dish, as opposed to something that fits your stereotype of Japanese food.

# Understanding the Japanese People

## *A Brief Overview of Japan's History*

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Like all nations, Japan's past deeply affects the identity of its people today. ISI's country profile on Japan can provide a brief, but helpful overview of the country's history and culture. For our purposes, a few historical points are especially relevant.

First, Japan's history has led to a strongly defined national psyche. The race of Japanese people as we know them are perhaps the result of intermarriage between Mongolians and Melanesian islanders. When this race settled Japan, it drove the aboriginal people, the Ainu, up to the northern island, Hokkaido, where a small colony still lives today. In ancient and modern history, through both cultural development and wars, Japan has distinguished itself from neighboring countries such as China and Korea.

Historically, there has been no love lost between the Japanese and the Chinese or the Koreans. If you wish to invite Asians from different countries to your house for a meal, inform each of them that guests from other Asian countries will be there.

A second implication of Japan's historical background is the homogeneity of its people. The United States takes pride in its nickname of "a melting pot of nations." By contrast, the Japanese, with a few exceptions, basically have a common ancestry, appearance, and culture throughout the four islands. Japanese consider uniformity to be a good thing and view nonconformity as a threat to societal harmony. This explains the common proverb in Japan: "The nail that sticks up will be hammered down."

If your Japanese friend gets involved in a church group and seems to have made a decision for Christ, pray for wisdom to know whether the decision is genuine or simply a move to feel at home in the group. No matter how much you accept the Japanese without regard to their spiritual condition, they will often feel as though they need to act like you simply to be a part of the group, or they may do so out of a desire to accommodate and please you as a friend.

Third, Christianity has been in Japan for a long time. There may have been Nestorian Christian missionaries in Japan as early as the fifth century (Nestorius taught the heresy that Christ had two distinct natures—human and divine.) We know that Francis Xavier (1506-1552), now canonized as a Roman Catholic saint, brought Christianity to Japan in the first half of the sixteenth century.

During this time period there was significant church growth, as certain feudal lords and their people converted to Christianity. These Christians also experienced severe persecution.

In 1639 the Tokugawa family closed Japan off from the Western world. The only official contact with the West was through one Dutch ship that was allowed to visit once a year on an island in the harbor of Nagasaki. Christianity therefore remained alive in Nagasaki among people now known as the “hidden Christians.” It is partially because of this legacy that Christianity is still considered a Western religion in Japan.

Special efforts must be made to show your Japanese friends that all Americans, British, or Canadians are not Christian, since many arrive here assuming the United States is a “Christian nation.” Also, emphasize that the Bible arose in cultures of the Middle East— cultures that have much more in common with Asia than they do with the West.

Christianity’s influence in Japan has been significant since the Meiji Period (1867-1911), when the Emperor Meiji led his country in a program of adopting Western culture. Japan reopened to the West in 1856, when Commodore Perry of the U.S. Navy was allowed to anchor off the coast of Japan and enter the country. In 1858, Japan and the United States signed a trade agreement (the first of many).

Under Emperor Meiji, Japanese were sent overseas to study and return with the necessary skills to educate the young people of Japan. Many of Japan’s intelligentsia of this time period took a clear stand for Christ and influenced Japan in their generation. Emphasize to your friend that there are fine examples of Japanese who served their country well while being Christians during this time.

Some examples of these Christians are: Niiijima Jo, who started a school in Gunma Prefecture; Nitobe Inazo, now pictured on the 5,000 yen bill, who studied at Johns Hopkins University and returned to Japan to teach at the Sapporo Agricultural School; and the famous writer, Haruko Koizumi Isomura.

A fourth point related to Japan’s history concerns its role in World War II. You should know that there were many Christians in Japan during the war who were imprisoned during this time of Japan’s militarism. There is one story of a Japanese Christian who led a Bible school and was asked by the government to place a picture of the emperor in his school and require his students to bow before it. This Japanese responded with a rough Japanese phrase that dynamically translated means: “The government can go jump in the lake!”

The Western stereotype of a Japanese nation unified to conquer the United States is simply misinformed. A militaristic group of leaders talked the peace-loving Emperor Hirohito into granting permission for them to pursue their policy. The war effort was pursued at a tremendous price. Starvation and personal sacrifice that resulted on the home front did not make for a unified following. Persecution against Japanese Christians was intense.

With regard to the war itself, please accept the following practical suggestions: 1) Do not bring up the topic of World War II in conversation; 2) Never refer to the Japanese people as “Japs.” This is an ethnic slur with very negative connotations.

### *Japanese Attitudes Toward Foreigners*

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There is a profound ambivalence in the Japanese attitude toward foreigners. This people has been borrowing from other cultures for centuries. Much of their language and culture has been borrowed from China. Buddhism, one of their major religions, has come from India via China. But at the same time, foreigners are never fully accepted by Japanese. When you go to Japan, you will never be “just one of the family” when you visit your friend’s family.

The Japanese people hold two attitudes simultaneously: a healthy curiosity in foreign things and a strong nationalistic pride. Therefore, be careful when beginning the friendship not to talk too much about the American way of doing things. Show a genuine interest in and plenty of respect for the Japanese culture and people.

Always be ready to accept the Japanese as individuals. When your Japanese friend first arrives here, he or she will have a significant amount of insecurity about getting along with Americans. This is why it is important that you accept your Japanese friend as an equal and show unconditional love.

American Christian women can have a special ministry in this regard. It is not uncommon for Japanese wives who have recently come from Japan to stay in their apartments or homes and not answer the telephone or doorbell for fear of not being able to communicate. You must therefore meet the family through the man of the household. Once an initial contact with the wife is made, offer to teach English once a week, or practice Western and Japanese cooking together. There are all kinds of things that the Japanese woman wants to learn about your country and about you, but you’ll have to take the initiative.

Japanese students and businesspeople typically go through a “honeymoon period” at the outset of their stay in the States. During this time, they will focus on the positive aspects of American life: the open spaces, the variety and low cost of food, the friendly people, and the convenience of living in the United States. When you hear remarks along these lines, do not agree too quickly. Always respond that Japan has good points not found in the Western world.

The “honeymoon period” will be followed by a time of increasing disillusionment with Western culture. Listen to your friend’s criticisms of life here without interrupting or defending your country. Then agree with the criticisms of American superficiality, selfish individualism,

consumer waste, and the impersonal nature of American society. Any defense of your own country, even if motivated only by a desire to help your friend enjoy his or her stay, will merely reinforce the negative attitudes already in your friend's mind.

Gradually, your Japanese friend will gain a more balanced perspective and be able to see both good and bad points to American society. This is the time when friendship can develop in the most genuine way.

### *Social Pressures on Your Japanese Friend*

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As you begin a friendship with a Japanese, it is helpful to understand the social pressures that your friend feels—in your friendship, in relationships in general, and with family back in Japan.

Americans derive their personal identity by being different from others. By contrast, the Japanese define themselves in terms of the groups to which they belong. The average Japanese therefore feels social pressures much more intensely than the average American.

By befriending a Japanese, you have placed the person in your debt. He or she will feel a need to reciprocate. It is of course important for you not to say or do anything that expects a response. The Japanese person will reciprocate when he or she considers it appropriate. The obligation to return favors is called *giri* in Japanese. A “response” to the Gospel may actually be tied to this sense of obligation. You should make every effort to be free of any expectations of a response.

In relationships in general, most native Japanese are very sensitive to what other people are thinking. The fundamental goal in Japanese relationships in public is to “save face.” This means that your friend wants to live in such a way that no shame will come on himself or herself. Always treat your friend with respect. Never joke in a sarcastic way, even if you are “just kidding.” Your Japanese friend may not understand this.

Relationships with Japanese are very rewarding. Japanese are an intelligent, artistic, fun-loving people with a zest for life. Friendships made with Japanese people often last a long time. Any time you spend cultivating a friendship with a Japanese will be well worth your time, both in this life, and in the age to come.

# The Religions of Contemporary Japan

Contemporary religions in Japan include Shinto, Buddhism, ancestor worship, and cults. A basic overview of these beliefs will help those who desire to share the Good News with a Japanese friend.

It is worth noting that many Japanese are beginning to take a greater interest in religion in recent years as they begin to feel the pangs of emptiness that materialism produces. Also keep in mind that many Japanese who follow traditional religions do so for cultural reasons as opposed to deeply held spiritual beliefs. The traditional religions tend to be so ingrained in Japanese culture that many Japanese people don't really understand the true extent of their influence on daily life and culture.

This booklet highlights spiritual predispositions distinct to Japanese. However, many Japanese (and especially those who study or work overseas) are very open to Western ideas. Your friend might be more influenced by Western materialism than by Shinto spirituality. Only sensitive, long conversations with your friend will determine what formative lenses have tinted your Japanese friend's spiritual vision. Make sure you find out what kinds of music your friend likes. If your Japanese friend is a devoted fan of a musical group that performs spiritually perverse music, you need to be alert to this. Pray and seek for openings that the Holy Spirit might give to let the pure light of Jesus Christ enter your friend's life. Your Japanese friends may come with all the spiritual baggage of unchurched Americans. In addition, they may have some of the Shinto or Buddhist ideas described in this chapter.

## *Shinto*

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Shinto is the one religion indigenous to Japan. It is essentially an animistic religion that worships gods and goddesses in various aspects of nature. The myth of Japan's creation through the sun goddess Amaterasu-o-mi-kami is a part of Shinto. The religious rites that the world viewed during the accession of the emperor in 1989 are Shinto, for the emperor cult is a part of the Shinto religion.

Traditionally, the Japanese observe Shinto wedding ceremonies and Buddhist funerals. (Christian weddings are becoming more common because they are considered fashionable, even if the couple has no interest in identifying with Jesus as Lord and Savior.) This mix of Shinto and Buddhist or Christian and Buddhist ceremonies illustrates a key point for understanding the Japanese people's association with religion. The Japanese are religious pluralists; that is, they engage in more than one religion.

Christianity's slow growth within Japan this century has not been simply because Japanese will not accept Christianity, but because they will not accept it exclusively. If one were to present Christianity as simply another "insurance policy" along with Shinto and Buddhism, it would meet with a ready response. As you share the Gospel with your Japanese friend, make clear the exclusive claims of Jesus Christ (John 14:6) and those who followed Him (Acts 4:12).

One way to emphasize the exclusive claims of Christ is to start with monotheism. This is a strange concept to the Japanese, since there are eight million gods and goddesses in Shinto. The best way to approach this concept is to explain the attributes of the one true God according to the Bible. Encourage your Japanese friend to read such texts as Exodus 20:3-6 and 34:6-7.

Because Shinto is animistic, it has profoundly influenced the Japanese to appreciate nature more than their Western counterparts. Contemporary Christian music in Japan contains more lyrics on nature as a display case for God's character than does Christian music in the West. Be sensitive to this appreciation for nature, and use it as a means to talk about the power of the one true God.

### *Buddhism*

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Buddhism entered Japan during the sixth century A.D. In 593 Prince Shotoku, a strong proponent of Buddhism, began to rule. The second article of his Seventeen Article Constitution expresses the need for people to respect Buddhist teachings. Prince Shotoku also wrote commentaries on Buddhist *sutras* (sermons of Buddha). The roots of Buddhism in Japan are therefore rather deep. To this day Buddhism is integral to the national identity of some Japanese.

Buddhism is a sophisticated religion. One can find perhaps as many varieties of Buddhism as there are Christian denominations in the West. If your friend is interested in Buddhism, you should listen carefully to the description he or she gives. Always try to understand before offering any answer or alternative to your friend's beliefs. Resist the urge to dispute a point before understanding it (Prov. 18:13).

There are several effective bridges between Buddhism and Christianity. From a historical perspective, you might ask your friend to review the teachings of the tenth century Buddhist priest Kobo Daishi. This priest returned from studying in China with a Buddhism that contained a heaven, hell, and salvation through the merit of another. It can be documented that there were Nestorian Christians in the Chinese city where he studied. The influence from Christianity on Kobo Daishi's form of Buddhism makes a helpful starting point for dialogue.

Philosophically, you might ask your friend to compare what he or she has learned about Christianity with the teachings of Pure Land Buddhism, or Jodo Shinshu. This branch of Buddhism has grasped the truth that humanity is incapable of attaining salvation with its own

resources. If Paul can quote a pagan poet's hymn to Zeus when describing God's existence to Athenians (Acts 17:28; quoting Aratus, *Phaenomena* 5), you can use applicable principles in Buddhism to illustrate the truths of how the one true God extends His kingdom in human lives.

There are two forms of Buddhism with which many Westerners have some acquaintance. Soka Gakkai is an aggressive Buddhist sect with a well-organized missions program. This group sends missionaries to the United States regularly. If your friend is involved in this sect, pray for spiritual protection for yourself, and pray that your friend will be supernaturally delivered from its grasp.

Zen Buddhism has a widespread impact on Japanese culture, affecting everything from music to gardening to cooking. This is a way of approaching reality that promises a release from the cares of existence with an enlightened view of the One-Mind, or Isshin. A helpful resource for the Christian who needs to know about Zen is Tucker N. Callaway's book, *Zen Way—Jesus Way* (Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Co., 1976).

### *Ancestor Worship*

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While not a religion itself, ancestor worship is a popular religious activity that is related to some forms of Buddhism. Ancestor worship may not seem to be a problem when sharing your faith in Christ with your Japanese friend. Your friend, however, may face extreme pressure to continue the tradition of worshipping at the family godshelf when he or she returns to Japan. (See "Issues Often Raised by Japanese People" in this booklet for more information on the family godshelf.)

Most Japanese families who travel abroad do not take their godshelves with them. But back in Japan, most families do have a godshelf where the spirits of deceased relatives are worshipped. As Christians, we believe this practice obscures one's relationship with God, our true Father. The worship that He deserves rightfully belongs only to Him (Exod. 20:3-6; Matt. 4:8-10; John 4:23). Also, one can observe that the fear exhibited by those who worship "departed spirits" is not a mark of people who are in the kingdom of light. For these reasons ancestor worship must be seen as an actual barrier to belief in Christ, and not simply a cultural expression of filial piety.

Generally, after a Japanese has fully connected with Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, the Holy Spirit will motivate the person to reject past habits of ancestor worship. Your first job is to pray toward this end. Even before your friend trusts Christ, pray that loyalty to the godshelf will not impede God's work of implanting faith in his or her life.

Also, ask about your friend's family. Is worship at the godshelf an expected ritual when your friend is back home? Families differ on the importance they attach to ancestor worship. Is your friend a first-born son? If so, the responsibility to continue ancestor worship will very likely be

placed on him. Pray that he will be able to break with his family's expectations and bow in worship only to Christ (Phil. 2:9-11).

Two present-day examples illustrate how vital this issue of ancestor worship is to Japanese considering Christianity. One example involves a Japanese man who trusted in Christ and made a clean break with ancestor worship. A first-born son, he asked his father to transfer his rights in the inheritance to his brother, since he would not continue the family's worship of ancestors. In God's time, this man's father and brother also became Christians, and the man and his brother are now pastors in Japan.

On the other hand, a Japanese man who is friends with an American Christian has seemed, at times, very close to making a complete identification with Jesus. But he refuses to be baptized, because he senses that if he takes this step, he will have to renounce his duties as first-born son to worship at the family godshelf.

Spiritual warfare is especially intense with some forms of Buddhism—and always with ancestor worship. Pray that God would deliver your friend into His kingdom.

### *Cults*

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There are a variety of cults in Japan. Religions American Christians consider to be cults are there, such as Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, and especially the Unification Church, which is often indistinguishable from Christianity in the minds of many Japanese. But there is also a plethora of cults unique to Japan, some of which offer healing or other supernatural powers.

The proliferation of cults may be attributed to a renewed spiritual hunger as well as to the dissatisfaction that the younger generation feels with the traditional expressions of religion in Shinto and Buddhism. Some new cult groups attract many highly educated young Japanese (e.g. Kofuku no Kagaku, established in 1986 and AUM Shinrikyo, the leader of which is Shoko Asahara, also established in 1986. This group became infamous because of its cyanide gas attack in the Tokyo subway in 1995.) Japanese people are afraid of "religion" because of this group and other cults' violent activities. Be sensitive to a possible interest that your friend or your friend's family may have in one or more of the fast-growing cults in Japan. Pray for spiritual protection for your friend and his or her family.

### *Spiritual Warfare*

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With regard to the cults and the classical religions of Buddhism and Shinto, the real issue is one of spiritual warfare. Pray for protection for yourself and deliverance for your friend who may have

had experience with these Christ-less religions. Opposition from the Evil One in Japan is different from some third-world countries, where confrontation occurs openly.

In parts of Japan the fox is worshipped as a part of Shinto, and this animal seems indicative of how the Enemy works in Japan; just as in rural America, you may spot a fox looking at you from a distance. But when you turn away and then look back, the fox might be gone. To try to lay your hands on the fox is very difficult. So it is in the spiritual arena of Japan.

Satan's influence can be felt in certain geographical areas; it can be observed in certain segments of society. But Satan and his forces seem to elude direct confrontation in Japan. This makes spiritual warfare difficult. Any spiritual battles won in your Japanese friend's life will occur after concerted prayer on his or her behalf. "Greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world," 1 John 4:4 says. Keep this firmly in mind and move forward in prayer and witness!

## Being an Effective Christian Witness

As you seek to share the Good News with your Japanese friend, there are some things to keep in mind besides the actual content of your message. This chapter presents three guiding principles to employ in your friendship.

### *Show Appreciation for Japanese Culture*

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As Americans, we take pride in the ethnic diversity in our country. But even with the emphasis on cultural variety here, we still feel out of place when we travel to other countries. Imagine how much more displaced your Japanese friend must feel overseas, since Japan emphasizes racial and cultural uniformity.

It is crucial, therefore, to show interest in and appreciation for Japanese culture during the first months of your friend's stay here. Daily, your friend may be painfully aware of how inadequate his or her English is and how little he or she knows about living in this country. Affirm your friend in his or her knowledge of business or the academic discipline studied, or simply for your friend's Japanese heritage.

### *The Importance of Sensitivity*

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As you encourage your friend, keep in mind that he or she has a different set of values and a different sense of humor than you do. The distinctives of your values and sense of humor, while a source of pride to your American individualism, might irritate your Japanese friend. James's advice is best: "Let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry" (1:19).

Show sensitivity in your use of the English language and your humor. Speak at a reasonable speed (too slow may come across as condescending and thus offensive) and distinctly. Americans tend to speak louder than people from other countries. We also can mistakenly think that speaking louder will remove difficulties in communication. Speaking loudly may be interpreted as anger by your Japanese friend. Therefore, keep your volume down when speaking to a Japanese. Also, do not alter your pronunciation. To do so is analogous to using "baby talk" with an adult.

Give plenty of verbal and non-verbal affirmatives—frequent nods, saying "yes," and maintaining eye contact—as you listen to your friend speak. Listening partners in Japanese conversations give much more feedback than American listeners.

Monitor your use of idioms, and provide explanations when you use such phrases. If you say, for instance, that your car is a lemon, you might explain that the car is unreliable and constantly needs work. Most Japanese will appreciate learning the meanings of common American idioms.

Anyone who has studied communication knows the power of humor. When you choose to tell a joke in English, it is wise to preface it by saying, “Some people tell a joke . . . “ Then explain what makes it funny to someone from your culture. The Japanese have a different sense of humor than Americans. A major part of Japanese humor involves puns. If your friend is interested in learning English, you might want to teach him or her some English puns.

The Japanese are a forgiving people. Those overseas realize that they are in another culture and that misunderstandings are inevitable. Before each outing, ask God’s Spirit to guide you and help you to be a genuine friend. Then, before you see your friend, remind yourself that your primary agenda is to learn about your friend and his or her background and perspective, rather than to talk about yourself. To use the analogy of a turtle (*kame* in Japanese): Don’t allow the possibility of misunderstandings to scare you into your shell; keep your head out, eyes open, and keep swimming!

### *The Example of Servanthood*

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An excellent way to avoid misunderstandings is to *be a servant*. You and the Gospel will gain credibility as you show yourself to be a servant on behalf of your friend.

You can do this in many ways. In the early weeks of your friend’s stay, he or she will need to learn about transportation, whether it be public or personal transportation. Offer to help explain or accompany your friend as he or she takes the first bus ride or makes the first drive into town.

Shopping is another concern. In Japan, housewives may shop each day for that evening’s supper. Japanese women who want to do their own cooking in this country will want to know about the places one shops for groceries. Offer to take them along when you go shopping. Comparing Japanese and American methods of grocery shopping makes an excellent conversation topic.

Some Japanese would appreciate regular instruction in the English language or Western cooking. Offer to trade expertise on a regular basis. Some Japanese women would love to teach you flower arranging, Japanese cooking, or even piano. These sorts of lessons are fertile soil for developing long-lasting friendships.

Japanese men might appreciate visiting an American friend in the workplace and thereby getting to know more about American business practice. This may be especially helpful if the Japanese and American are in the same line of work.

Being a servant also means that you will deliver on what you promise. Consider the implications before you tell your friend such things as, “Don’t hesitate to call me if I can be of help.” A Japanese will often interpret a casual remark as a commitment.

### *Laying the Groundwork*

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When you follow these three principles—appreciating Japanese culture, being sensitive, and being a servant—you are laying the groundwork for a lasting relationship.

Good relationships take time to build. Credibility is gained over a period of time. But with patience and God’s help, your relationship will become one that bears fruit.

# Sharing Jesus Christ

As you share Jesus Christ with your friend, there are four themes to keep in mind that have special resonance with the Japanese.

## *God as the True Father*

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Much of the trouble that all of us have in our spiritual walk stems from our incomplete understanding of God. It follows, therefore, that when you start to share Jesus Christ with your friend, you will want to ask about his or her understanding of God. Then, talk about how the Bible presents God as the Creator-Father who has a claim on humanity.

Japan is a patriarchal and family-oriented society; the Japanese understand what it means to have a human father. However, in recent years in Japanese society, many fathers are seldom home because of their emphasis on work, and divorce is more and more common. Consequently, some Japanese may find it difficult to consider God as a father. Since the Bible describes God in this way, be sure to emphasize this point, and as necessary, be sure to distinguish clearly between God and an unloving earthly father, if that has been your friend's experience. Many Japanese are longing for the unconditional love of God the Father. The Shinto gods or various conceptions of Buddha do not have this theme of fatherhood.

## *Sin as Self-Centeredness*

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You may also emphasize that sin is a self-centered departure from one's true Father. While most Japanese do not have a clear idea of sin, they do acknowledge that self-centeredness is wrong. The problem of sin and self-centeredness has profoundly affected Japanese thought because of the widespread Buddhist influence in Japan.

You can explain the Fall as a self-centered move away from the true Father who took delight in creating and providing for humanity. This Fall is lived out in our own lives when we pursue self-centered ends instead of God. This explanation will inevitably entail an explanation of God's standards as shown through the Ten Commandments (Exod. 20:1-17; Deut. 5:1-21). The parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32) is also effective in illustrating this concept.

### *Jesus—the Ultimate “Go-Between”*

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Once the sin problem has been explained, you can go on to talk about Jesus as the ultimate “go-between.” Japanese society operates through mediators, sometimes called “go-betweens.” The biblical concept of Jesus as mediator, therefore, makes perfect sense to the Japanese, once the condition of human alienation from God has been accepted.

Texts such as Mark 15:37-39 show that an obstacle between humanity and God was removed through Jesus’ death. Even now, Jesus is our “go-between” in the sense of His priestly role. Hebrews 4:14-16 shows this well. The status of Jesus as “go-between” has significant implications for our response to God.

### *A Return to the True Father*

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Since humanity is in a condition of desertion from its true Father, and since Jesus is the “go-between,” our response to God should be one of dependence on the work of Jesus in His death and resurrection to bring us to God. 1 Corinthians 15:3 states that Christ died for our sins. This means that He took the punishment that believing sinners deserve (1 John 2:1-2). Our responsibility as runaway humans, therefore, is to place all our hope of reaching God in Jesus (Acts 16:31).

Since Jesus is God’s only Son, our only access to God is through Jesus (John 1:18; 14:6; Acts 4:12). While other religions contain aspects of truth about the human condition, only the Bible explains the way back to our true Father—faith in Jesus Christ. Only through placing our faith in God’s provision for covering our sin can we live with God (John 6:29; 1 John 4:10).

# Issues Often Raised by Japanese People

## *Can't I Believe in Jesus as Well as Other Gods?*

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Mabel Francis, missionary to the Japanese island of Shikoku, was once preparing for tent meetings in a town where she was doing pioneer evangelism. She asked a Japanese man from the area to write the Ten Commandments in Japanese as a visual aid for her meetings.

As he began to write, he exclaimed, "Teacher, you'll need to change this first one! It just won't work in Japan to say that people can have no other gods besides one." Mabel Francis answered him sternly: "I didn't come to Japan to change the Word of God. I came with the Word of God to change Japan!"

This story illustrates the difficulty that the Japanese have with monotheism and the exclusive claims of Christianity. It is the single biggest barrier to Japanese accepting Christ, because to do so is to go against Japanese culture. Be understanding, but point your friend to the truth of God's Word. Ask your friend to pray to the one true God that He will reveal Himself. Then keep praying for God's Spirit to work, and keep encouraging your friend to read the Bible.

## *Will My Social Relationships Change?*

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One's place in the tightly knit Japanese society determines one's identity. To follow Christ, who makes definite statements about what one can or cannot do in relation to others, is to place one's identity outside the influence of the secure norms of Japanese society. This raises a question concerning the actual changes that will occur in one's social relationships. These can be divided into family and work relationships.

### **Family Relationships**

Japanese who wonder what their families will think if they decide to follow Christ need to be encouraged that, in the long run, their family life will be better because of their relationship with Christ. If you are from a Christian family, introduce your Japanese friend to other Christians in your family. Or, if you know of other Japanese Christians in the area, introduce your friend to them. By modeling what it is like to participate in a Christian home, you can fill your Japanese friend with hope for change in his or her family.

Japanese will be especially concerned about their parents' reactions to their Christian commitment. You can head off some of these difficulties by cultivating a relationship with your

friend's parents and family members whenever possible. If any family members visit, host them warmly. Send your friend's parents a New Year's card or photographs of your times together. Such kindness assures them you are not out to "kidnap" their child into a cult, but rather that you seek to be a genuine friend to the whole family. Many parents fear their children's involvement in such cults and may assume that regular Christian fellowship has similar dangers.

Married Japanese women should be encouraged to trust in the Lord Jesus and then pray for their husband's salvation. 1 Peter 3:1-6 is especially appropriate in this regard. The married woman contemplating a decision for Christ should be shown that she will be supported in her Christian walk and will become a full member of the church family.

### **Work Relationships**

Japanese people cultivate their work relationships with long hours on the job and much socializing after work. Many jobs in Japan put pressure on the pattern of a cohesive Christian home life. As you begin to befriend a Japanese person, ask the Lord for discernment to understand exactly what pressures he or she will experience at work.

Some Japanese will recognize that their decision for Christ may affect how they conduct business, and may even hinder advancement. Share with your friend Jesus' claim that those who give up anything for Him in this life will be reimbursed now and in the age to come (Mark 10:29-31).

Introduce your friend to other Christians with similar professional interests. Pray that God would give your friend a vision of how it will be possible to serve as a Christian on the job.

Other Japanese, especially men, will feel pangs from their conscience when they think about continuing the heavy drinking and socializing that may occur with their colleagues after work. Model for your friend close and fun Christian relationships with others, so that he or she can see that Christian friendships can replace unhealthy relationships at work.

Others may wonder if they will lose their jobs or rapport with colleagues if they take a stand for Christ. Show your friend the accounts in Daniel (1:8-16; 3:1-30; 6:1-28) that demonstrate how God honors His reputation and works on behalf of those who take a stand for Him.

### ***Will I Lose My Identity as a Japanese if I Trust Jesus?***

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Certain traditions in Japan are strongly influenced by Buddhist or Shinto world views. Some Japanese, therefore, feel that their identity as Japanese will be lost if they follow Christ and discontinue past habits.

From the beginning, explain to your friend that Christianity is not a Western religion, but that it arose in the Middle East. Take every opportunity to show your friend points at which your Christian faith diverges from common American wisdom. Introduce your friend to other Japanese Christians and Christians from other countries.

Your friend may not realize what changes will need to be made in his or her life upon returning to Japan. The Holy Spirit will raise the issues pertinent to Christianity and Japanese traditions. The following pressure points are mentioned simply so that you may be informed of these difficulties for Japanese Christians, and be able to pray accordingly.

### **New Year's Traditions**

Every New Year is preceded by parties called *bo-nen-kai*, or “forget-the-year parties,” when groups of people from a given company or social club engage in heavy drinking. Show your friend how it is possible to celebrate New Year's and other holidays in a Christian way. One church in Japan plans “remember-the-year parties,” a Christian alternative to the drunken *bo-nen-kai*. At these times, people are encouraged to share in public how God has helped them in the preceding year. Thanksgiving is given to God, and the tone of the party is one of celebration.

On New Year's Eve and other times around the holiday, it is customary for families to visit Shinto shrines and pray for the blessing of the gods for the coming year. Show your friend how it is possible to depend on God and pray to Him for guidance and blessing when beginning a new year, or any new experience.

### **The Family Godshelf**

Ancestor worship continues to be a cohesive force in some families. The Holy Spirit will convict your friend of this practice and empower him or her to take a stand against it. Your job is to pray for your friend, be sensitive to his or her questions and concerns, and model what it means to have healthy relationships with family members.

Ancestor worship is considered to be an integral part of filial piety in Japan. Help your friend see that one can be a very loyal son or daughter without worshipping at the family godshelf. Model good family relationships for your Japanese friend. Invite your Japanese friend along when you go to place flowers on the grave of a loved one. Explain that your actions are a way of remembering the deceased person, but they do not involve the worship of that person's spirit.

If your friend wishes to explain his or her family's approach to the spirits of the deceased, be a sensitive and willing listener. At some point you may want to show your friend texts such as 1

John 4:1-4 that differentiate among spirits. Or you may point out texts such as 2 Corinthians 2:14 and Colossians 1:15-20, which highlight the supremacy of Christ over the spiritual world.

### ***Bon-Odori (Dance for Ancestors)***

Every summer the Japanese celebrate a festival related to the return of the ancestral spirits, with a dance held in the evenings. The expressed purpose of this dance is to honor the spirits of deceased relatives or friends, though some Japanese probably engage in it simply for fun. Japanese Christians themselves are divided on this issue.

As someone from another culture, be cautious and very sensitive about telling your Japanese friend to stop participating in this dance. If your friend wants to talk about it, ask questions that will help your friend understand the personal significance that he or she places in that dance. Pray together that God would guide your friend in a clear way about the *bon-odori*.

### ***In Summary***

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Ultimately, it is God's Spirit who will break through resistance related to these or other issues. The issues that your friend raises may seem insurmountable at first. But God is saving Japanese people! Trust Him; He shows Himself strong for those who depend wholly on Him (2 Chron. 16:9).

## Encouraging a Decision for Christ

In American culture, the appeal to trust in Christ may be made for a variety of reasons. We may appeal to truth, fulfillment in this life, or life with God in heaven. The following are appeals that may be particularly effective with a Japanese.

### *God Has the Final Claim on Humanity*

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For someone from a non-Christian family, the struggle with a spiritual separation from unbelieving family members can make the decision to trust Christ difficult. Remind your friend that the Bible presents God as the Creator of the whole universe. Humanity is created by God, to serve Him. Family and social relationships pale in the light of this eternal relationship.

If this view of God seems strange to your friend, be patient. Keep pointing your friend to texts in the Bible that show God to be the God of the whole world (for example, Acts 17:24-31). Ask your friend to pray to God that He would reveal Himself for who He is.

### *Join the Family of God*

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A major question is going through your friend's mind as he or she gets to know you and other Christians. In contrast to an American considering Christianity, the question of identity within a group is often of more concern for a Japanese than the question of ultimate truth.

Therefore, cultivate a relationship with your friend that includes plenty of group activities with other Christians. Perhaps you can help him or her become involved in a Sunday school class or Bible study for international students.

As you engage in group activities, be sensitive to how your Japanese friend feels around you and other Christian friends. Are you showing unconditional love to this person? Do you accept this person as a member of your group, or are you still looking on him or her as an outsider? How are others treated in your group? Even if you fully accept your Japanese friend, he or she may be offended if someone else is not treated well by group members.

If at all possible, take your friend to a Japanese church in your area. It is important that your friend meet other Japanese who worship Christ. This will give him or her a feel for what it might be like to be a Christian in Japan.

When your friend experiences misunderstandings from others or expresses concern about pressures from his or her family back in Japan, you may want to encourage him or her to join the family of God. Refer to texts such as Mark 3:31-35 or Luke 8:19-21, which describe Jesus' true family in different ways. If your own relationships within the family of God are a source of personal strength, your friend will be motivated to follow Christ and so join God's family.

### ***Solve Sin's Shame Problem***

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Social mores in Japan are enforced by shame. For example, we sometimes hear of bribery scandals in Japanese politics. Those implicated are usually not concerned with the moral guilt they have incurred by their crimes. They are rather impressed with a deep sense of shame for having marred the image of their political party or nation.

When you discuss the concept of sin with your friend, then, be sure to acknowledge the shame that sin causes. You can show from Genesis 2:25-3:21 how shame came upon humanity with sin. (Genesis 2:25; 3:5-11 are especially important verses.) If your friend wishes to talk, be ready to listen to how he or she understands moral evil and also the social force we know as shame.

It is your job to describe how God in Christ has delivered and is delivering you from sin and the shame it brings in your own life. The Holy Spirit will convict your friend of sin and perhaps bring some sort of true shame for this sin (John 16:7-11).

Point your friend to Romans 5:1-2; Romans 7:22-8:4; and Colossians 3:1-15. These texts show how the righteousness of God in Christ overcomes the problem of sin and the shame it brings. The Bible's teachings about freedom from shame may not be grasped immediately. Be patient, find other verses in the Bible, and show how this truth works out in your own life.

When your friend comments on being ashamed of something, encourage him or her to follow Christ and solve sin's shame problem! Your friend will be grateful for how you have pointed him or her to Christ and dealt with shame, a very real concern for Japanese people!

### ***Use Christian Literature Appropriately***

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When sharing your faith with a Japanese, it is best to leave your friend with a piece of literature so that he or she may refer to it and think about the claims of Christ. The *Knowing God Personally* booklet is helpful, but it may not be appropriate to use it as the primary tool in witnessing, as it is often used in the United States. First provide full background for the spiritual ideas in the Gospel message and present Christianity in a way appropriate to a Japanese, as described above. Once you have done this, then leave this or a similar piece of literature for your friend to read and consider.

## Conserving the Fruit of a New Christian

One study of Christian missions in contemporary Japan concluded that decisions for Christ are made in Japan at a rate not too much lower than other countries. What accounts for the very low church growth rate in Japan, according to this study, is the high dropout rate of people who have made decisions for Christ.

While it is ultimately God's faithfulness that makes decisions "stick" and Christian growth occur (Phil. 1:6), there are a few practical ways that you can help your Japanese friend to continue to follow Christ.

### *Find a Social Network*

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Once a decision for Christ has been made, it is crucial that your friend become plugged into a functional social network of genuine Christians in your area. At the same time, begin praying and preparing for placing your friend in a Christian network and good church back in Japan.

If your friend is single, pray that God would provide a Christian marriage partner. (Sometimes unbelieving family members put pressure on a single Japanese Christian to marry a non-Christian.) Tell your friend how you are praying, and invite him or her to ask God for His guidance in these areas.

Then find out where in Japan your friend plans to live upon returning. Once you have an address, contact International Students, Inc., and ask about ISI's Global Follow-up network. ISI may be able to match your friend with another Christian back home, or provide information on sound churches in the area. Your friend is much more likely to plug into a church back in Japan if you can provide an introduction.

### *Find a Place to Serve*

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Part of Japanese effectiveness in business and research is that those involved in a project feel and act as integral members of a team. The same is true for vibrant Japanese churches. Growing Japanese churches place each regular attender in a certain job at church.

Americans go to church to have their needs met. They look for what programs the church offers them and their families. Japanese Christians go to church in Japan to serve. They look for ways to function as members of Christ's body (1 Cor. 12:12-31).

From the outset of your Japanese friend's commitment to Christ, he or she needs to have a vital part in the life of the Christian body. Think about where you could put your Japanese Christian friend to work. If a certain ministry doesn't seem to fit after a couple of weeks, try another one. Be sensitive to your friend's business responsibilities or academic load, but allow him or her to give concrete expression to a newly formed faith.

### *Allow for Japanese Expression of Faith*

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As you seek to incorporate your friend into the life and community of a church here, be aware that people throughout the world worship God differently. Differences in spiritual expression are accentuated by Western culture's tendency to focus on surface appearances. A church soloist who you think did an admirable job may actually appear to be a "show-off" to a Japanese.

After spending a Sunday morning at your church, ask your Japanese friend what he or she liked or disliked about the service. Resist the temptation to defend the style of worship in your church. Listen in order to understand how your friend approaches the Christian privilege of public worship.

Try to introduce your friend to other Japanese Christians born and raised in Japan. (Don't confuse second- and third-generation Japanese Americans with Japanese peers. Their backgrounds differ greatly. They may look Japanese to you, but are very American in demeanor and, therefore, will not be accepted as Japanese by your friend.) If there is a Japanese church in your area, encourage your friend to get involved. Help your friend to express his or her faith in a way most consistent with background and temperament. Take steps to help your friend mature in faith and prepare for the time when he or she will stand as a believer in a non-Christian society.

The most important activity in your friendship with a new Christian is prayer. Pray for your friend, that God would reveal to your friend just who he or she is in Christ (Eph. 1:3-14). Also pray together that God would guide both of you in your Christian lives (Phil. 1:3-6; 2:1-18). Encourage your friend to pray in his or her own language.

A life that guides others to the liberating knowledge of Jesus Christ is exciting! God bless you as you share the Good News with your Japanese friend.

### *Baptism*

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It is my prayer that some of the friends with whom you share the good news of Jesus Christ will want to follow Christ in baptism. Japanese intuitively understand that baptism is a big deal. Japanese people might pray to ask Jesus into their lives simply in order to please you. But you

will know that the decision is genuine when they request to be baptized. If your friend is scheduled to return to Japan within the next couple of years and intends to live there, in most cases it would be best to suggest that your friend get in touch with a healthy Japanese church and get baptized there. The reason for this is that your friend and your friend's family need to be completely clear that this decision for Christ is not simply something done while in America, like an Irishman kissing the Blarney Stone while visiting Ireland. You must emphasize that baptism means that one will now follow only Jesus for the rest of one's life. If a Japanese intends to live permanently in Japan, it is best that the baptism occur there, where everyone can see clearly that this is a Japanese person who is choosing to live for Christ in Japan.

It is also wise to pray for wisdom regarding the family of the baptismal candidate. Suppose that your friend is a high school student who wants to get baptized while in the States. It would be best to encourage this person to wait and get baptized upon returning to Japan. But if the student is adamant about being baptized in the States, then you should make sure that the student has the family's approval before acting on the student's wishes. A pastor or international student minister might think that one has great freedom to work with such a young Christian while the Christian is away from family in Japan. But that is not entirely the case. For someone still under parental authority, one must always inform the parents of any developments occurring in the life of their child and respect the parents' wishes. For adults who must be baptized in the States, it is still very important that you make sure they contact their families and tell them about their decision to be baptized before the baptism occurs. To short-circuit the lines of communication with family systems and networks of friends back in Japan is to hamstring other Christians' opportunities for communicating God's truth and love to Japanese back in Japan. Your outreach to internationals here in the States is not a race to get as many baptized converts as you can; it is rather about opening windows through the Japanese you meet so that God's love and truth may transform whole family systems and networks of friends associated with your Japanese friend here. These windows will remain most open if you can present baptism as a joyous, intentional, Christian (NOT American) act of discipleship that your Japanese friend chooses to follow, rather than a ceremony that American Christians do to hoodwink visitors. So the two general guidelines are: 1) encourage your friend to be baptized in Japan; and 2) make sure your friend gets baptized with the full knowledge of family and friends. (In the case of Japanese under age 21, make sure your friend has parental approval.)

## For Further Information

### *General Information about Japan*

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For additional help with ministry to the Japanese:

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Fax (303) 730-4221  
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### ***Materials to Enhance the Christian Witness***

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### ***Materials Available from ISI***

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#### ***Booklets:***

#### **Friendship**

*Becoming a Friend with an International Student*

#### **Evangelism**

*Knowing God Personally tract*

*How to Share the Good News with Your International Friend*

*How to Share the Good News with Your Muslim Friend*

*Reaching Students from the People's Republic of China*

*How to Share the Good News with Your African Friend*

*How to Share the Good News with Your Japanese Friend*

#### **Discipleship**

*How to Study the Bible with Your International Friend*

## **Re-entry/Follow-up**

*Preparing Your International Friend for Life Back Home*  
*Think Home*

### **Handbooks:**

*An American Friend Handbook*  
*How to Survive in the U.S.: A Handbook for Internationals*

### **Books:**

*Healing the Broken Family of Abraham*  
*The World At Your Door*  
*The Compact Guide to World Religions*

### **Bible Studies:**

*I AM*  
*Jesus the Liberator*  
*Discovering God*  
*Walking with God*  
*Putting God First*  
*Sharing God with Others*  
*Meeting God*  
*Growing Strong to Serve*  
*The Way to Life* (Available in English, Contemporary Chinese and Traditional Chinese)

### **Country Profiles:**

*People's Republic of China*  
*Japan*  
*Taiwan*  
*India*  
*South Korea*  
*Malaysia*  
*Hong Kong*  
*Pakistan*  
*Thailand*  
*Indonesia*

### **Religion Profiles:**

*Buddhism*  
*Animism*  
*Islam*  
*Hinduism*  
*Marxism*  
*Shinto*  
*Judaism and the Jewish People*  
*Secularism*  
*World Religions Overview*  
*How Can I Know the Bible is the Word of God?*  
*Is Jesus the Only Way to God?*

### ***Videos:***

*Getting Started with ISI* (15 minutes) tells you how to begin your own ministry to international students.

*New Beginnings*, (15 minutes per program), a series of seven lessons designed for small-group study with new Christians. Discussion guide also available.

*Sharing Your Faith through ISI* (44 minutes) provides awareness of and practical help for addressing the variety of issues that arise when sharing your faith with international students.

*The Church and ISI* (4 minute or 7.5 minute format) is designed for use in churches to share the vision and recruit volunteers for your ministry. It also includes a segment with leaders from ISI and partnering organizations challenging viewers to become personally involved in the task.

*Welcome Home* (18 minutes) shares the stories of several returnees and the difficulties they experienced when going back home. Practical awareness and advice for returnees.

*You Have a Friend in ISI* (6.5 minutes) is designed for a student audience, sharing how ISI can help students when they first come to the U.S.

*Friendship Partner Training* is for the person who wants to train a group to be Friendship Partners. This package Includes a 55 minute video, a complete trainer's manual, and a power-point presentation.

*Friendship Partner Individual Training DVD* is for the person who can't attend a Friendship Partner Training in a live format. You will receive the training needed to be an effective friend to an international student in your area.

### ***About the Author***

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The son of missionaries Rollin and Esther Reasoner, Mark Reasoner was born and raised in Japan.

Dr. Reasoner holds a bachelor's degree from Bethel College, a master's in New Testament and a master's of divinity degree from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, and a doctorate in New Testament and Early Christian Literature from the University of Chicago.

Mark Reasoner lives in Minnesota, where he is Associate Professor of Biblical and Theological Studies at Bethel College, in St. Paul, MN. He and his wife Wendy have three children. His two favorite areas of activity are his family and his work.

### ***About International Students, Inc.***

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Founded in 1953, International Students, Inc. (ISI), is a nondenominational, non-profit Christian ministry that exists to serve international students studying here in the United States.

Working in cooperation with local churches and others, ISI seeks to enlist, educate, and coordinate the ministry efforts of evangelical Christians to befriend international students and, through friendship evangelism, share with them the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

In addition, ISI promotes Bible study and other discipleship programs for international students, helping to equip them to become effective Christian servants when they return to their home countries.

Headquartered in Colorado Springs, ISI coordinates more than 150 field staff members strategically working in more than 285 campus-based and church-based ministry locations in the United States. Affiliated ministries are located in Canada, Europe, and Asia.

If you would like more information or assistance, please contact:

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Colorado Springs, CO 80901

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*Phone:* (719) 576-2700; *Fax:* (719) 576-5363

*Email:* [team@isionline.org](mailto:team@isionline.org); [www.isionline.org](http://www.isionline.org)

*For students:* [www.internationalstudents.org](http://www.internationalstudents.org)

### ***ISI's Mission***

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ISI exists to share Christ's love with international students and to equip them for effective service in cooperation with the local church and others.

# Your Response

**YES!** I'd like more information on international student ministry!

- Please send information on how I can become involved in the ministry of ISI.
- I'd like my church or group to view the ISI video, *The Church and ISI*.
- I'd like to explore the possibility of inviting a special speaker from ISI to challenge my church.
- Please send me a complete list of ministry materials available from ISI.
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

Name (Rev., Dr., Mr., Mrs., Ms., Miss): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone (work): (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ (home): (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Best time to call: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_

Email address (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_

Please cut and mail to: International Students, Inc., P.O. Box C, Colorado Springs, CO 80901