

## How to Share the Good News with the Japanese

### Biblical Foundation: The Apostle Paul

In the Acts of the Apostles, the author shows how the Apostle Paul tailors his messages to his audiences. While in the synagogue in Pisidian Antioch, Paul tailors his address to his Jewish audience saying, “You Israelites, and others who fear God,” and later he says, “My brothers, you descendants of Abraham’s family, and others who fear God.”<sup>1</sup> Paul then continues as he contextualizes the message of Jesus’ resurrection in the Old Testament that his Jewish audience recognized as authoritative (Acts 13:14-52 NRSV). Paul refers to Jewish scripture to show how the Jewish people were in covenant with “the God of this people Israel.” Paul retells the history of the covenant starting with God delivering his people from Egypt and continuing until Paul’s present day. He then shows that God fulfilled the promises in the Jewish Scriptures by bringing to Israel Jesus, the Savior from the line of David.

Paul translates the same message very differently as he speak with a very different audience. While on Mars Hill in Athens, Paul tailors his address to his Areopagite audience saying, “Athenians, I see how you are religious in every way.” Despite Paul’s abhorrence of the Athenian’s idolatry, he starts his message showing respect to his audience. Paul does not dismiss his audience’s religious expression; rather, he recognizes it and uses it translate his message.<sup>2</sup> Paul continues as he contextualizes the message of Jesus’ resurrection in the Athenian philosophy that his Athenian audience held as authoritative (Acts 17:15-34). Paul uses Greek forms and the Greek worldview to communicate how “the God who made the world does not live in shrine made by human hands.” Here, Paul plays on the irony of humans making shrines for God and he plays on how most Athenians did not believe in the gods of the Pantheon. Paul also provides reason for his message by quoting from memory poetry that the Athenians recognized.<sup>3</sup> To this highly-educated Epicurean and Stoic philosophers, Paul leaves out many references found in the message to the Jews in Antioch. Paul does not name Moses, Israel,

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<sup>1</sup> In the synagogue, “others who fear God” could refer to the aforementioned Israelites or Gentiles among the Israelites. In Acts 13:26, the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) translates the Greek (*hoi phoboumenoi ton theon*) as “others who fear God,” while the Complete Jewish Bible translates the phrase as “God-fearers.” Since in Acts 13:43 NRSV, the author writes of “devout converts to Judaism,” the author seems to refer to “others who fear God” as the group also referred to as “God-fearers.” Scholars suggest that from the first century, “God-fearers” had a variety of meanings, which included Gentiles who worshipped Israel’s God and followed the Torah’s teaching. See Darrell L. Block, *Acts: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 386; I. Howard Marshall, A. R. Millard, J. I. Packer, and Donald J. Wiseman, *The New Bible Dictionary* (Downer’s Grove, InterVarsity Press, 2001), 976; Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Daniel J. Harrington, ed., (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1992), 230.

<sup>2</sup> John Finney, *Emerging Evangelism* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2004), 92-98; Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible’s Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 393-395.

<sup>3</sup> Paul may reference the Cretan poet, Epimenedes. See Diogenes Laertius, “Life of Epimenedes,” trans. C.D. Yonge, Peitho’s Web, <http://classicpersuasion.org/pw/diogenes/dlepimenedes.htm> (accessed April 22, 2011) in Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Daniel J. Harrington, ed., (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1992), 317.

Jerusalem, Galilee, Sabbath, David, David's poetry in the Psalms, nor the name of Jesus. In Athens, Paul did not even use scripture. In Athens and Antioch, Paul does not pray with either of his audience nor does he give personal testimony.<sup>4</sup> However, he did invite both audiences to make a decision – a decision based on his message.<sup>5</sup> John Finney writes,

“Paul adapted his message to his hearers. He took into account their education, their social background, their social standing in the Athenian community, their interest in philosophy and rhetoric, their ambiguous relation to the official religion of the day. Earlier when he had gone to the Jewish synagogue in Athens his message would have been much the same as the one he had preached in the synagogue in Antioch. Now, in front of the Areopagus, he proclaimed a very different message.”<sup>6</sup>

What would happen if Paul shared his Athenian message in Antioch and his Antiochian message in Athens? Perhaps, the powerful gospel message would not take full effect.

In modern Japanese history, some cross-cultural ministers in Japan have shared the message of Jesus' resurrection in a way that the ministers understand and most Japanese do not. Some cross-cultural ministers have used categories and metaphors that are foreign to their Japanese listeners.<sup>7</sup> As a result, many Japanese have not heard the good news of the gospel in a way that sounds like good news. The powerful gospel message has not taken full effect. Like Paul, cross-cultural ministers in Japan minister among shrines made by human hands and to people who “have an ambiguous relation to the official religion of the day.” Also, the Japanese echo the words the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers said about Paul in Athens: “he seems to be a proclaimer of foreign divinities.” Many Japanese see Christianity as foreign while missing the irony that originally Buddhism was foreign to Japan.<sup>8</sup> How can Christ's good news be proclaimed by the Church in Japan without compromising the truth of the gospel? How can the Japanese recognize the gospel – not as foreign – but as good news for the Japanese? To share the message of Jesus' resurrection with the Japanese, the messenger must know the Japanese. Please carefully consider the section of this outreach packet entitled, “Basic Japanese Facts.” The following section expands on two key aspects briefly mentioned in the “Cultural Nuance” section.

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<sup>4</sup> Personal testimony is appropriate for certain audiences, as is sharing the name of Jesus and truths of Christian faith. Paul does share his personal testimony as part his defense in front of Felix and King Agrippa (Acts 24:10-21 and 26:2-23). Still, these examples reveal how Paul considered the particular context of his audience, without diminishing the truth of the gospel.

<sup>5</sup> Paul does pray with and for Christians and non-Christians. See Acts 20:17-36, 27:29, Ro 1:9-12, 10:1, 2 Cor 13:7-9; Eph 1:16-23, 3:13, 16-21; Philippians 1:3-5, 9-11; Col 1:3-5b, 1 Thess 1:2-3, 3:10; 2 Thess 1:11; 2 Tim 1:3; Philemon 1:4-6.

<sup>6</sup> Finney, *Emerging Evangelism* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2004), 97

<sup>7</sup> Joel B. Green and Mark D. Bakker, *Atonement in New Testament: Atonement in New Testament and Contemporary Contexts* (Downer's Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 153-154.

<sup>8</sup> Buddhism started in Nepal and made its way to Japan through China and Korea.

## Worldview and Audiences

Paul's word choice reflects how the Athenian's worldview differed from that of his Jewish audience in Psidian Antioch. One analysis is that worldview is "the deep-level assumptions, values, and commitments in terms of which people govern their lives."<sup>9</sup> Like Paul, cross-cultural ministers will communicate effectively by recognizing worldview differences between eastern audiences in Japan and Western audiences like those in the United States. Differing worldviews have positives and negatives and no country has a perfect worldview. People in the same country may have the same worldview and values, but they express them very differently through their actions. Assuming superiority or inferiority of another culture can cloud how the missionary experiences Japan. If missionaries focus on determining one culture to be better than another culture, these missionaries can miss how people in all cultures are made in God's image. The following are some worldview and culture differences to consider.

### A Few Reminders Regarding Japanese Audiences

#### *Collectivistic and Individualistic*

Japanese culture is collectivistic and has several key differences with Western individualistic cultures. First, Japanese audiences take their identity from the group more so than from being an individual. In other words, Japanese audiences view themselves more as interdependent than independent.<sup>10</sup> As a result, the Japanese value group goals over individual goals and the Japanese identity themselves more based on "we" more than "I." Much like Jesus' audiences, Japanese audiences also lay emphasis on belonging in groups. They look after people in the ingroup rather than just looking out for themselves. The Japanese support people in their ingroup to conform to the group's standards and they tend to apply different standards to their ingroup and outgroup. On other hand, individualistic cultures tend to value individual goals over group goals and they take their identity more from "I" than from "we." Individualistic cultures value self-realization, individual success, and individual initiatives. As a result, individualistic audiences tend to have a clearer self-identity and less of a group identity. Individualistic cultures also tend to think universally, where they apply the same standard not just to their ingroup but to all people.<sup>11</sup> Consequently, Anglo-Americans think that their way is the best way.<sup>12</sup>

#### *High-context and Low-context*

Both collectivistic and individualistic cultures use high- and low-context communication; however, collectivistic cultures tend to be more high-context while individualist cultures tend to

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<sup>9</sup> Charles H. Kraft, *Communication Theory for Christian Witness*, Rev. ed. (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991), 161.

<sup>10</sup> William B. Gudykunst, *Bridging Differences: Effective Intergroup Communication*, 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2004), 56.

<sup>11</sup> William B. Gudykunst, *Bridging Differences: Effective Intergroup Communication*, 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2004), 46-47.

<sup>12</sup> Charles H. Kraft, *Communication Theory for Christian Witness*, Rev. ed. (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991), 164.

be more low-context.<sup>13</sup> Japan is predominantly a high-context cultural while Western cultures like the United States are low-context.

When compared to low-context cultures, high-context cultures tend to understate, speak indirectly, communicate ambiguously, and differentiate more between ingroup and outgroups.<sup>14</sup> High-context communication involves the speaker sensitively monitoring his or her own contextual cues as well as the listeners' contextual cues. Contextual cues are non-verbal and can include age, dress, posture, status, behavior, eye-contact, and facial expression. (Please note that the Japanese interpret eye contact differently than Westerners. The Japanese do not interpret eye contact to communicate honesty, openness, or confidence. In Japan, eye contact can communicate defiance or challenge. As a result, when compared to Westerners, the Japanese use eye contact for less periods of time. Also, keeping direct eye contact with superiors is impolite. Looking down when talking with a superior shows humility.)<sup>15</sup>

On the other hand, low-context communication is “direct, explicit, open, precise, being consistent with one’s feelings. Low-context cultures communicate primary through the words themselves, with less communicated through contextual cues.”<sup>16</sup>

#### A Few Reminders Regarding Post-modern Audiences

1. Post-modern audiences are moving from individualism to a communal understanding of human nature.
2. Post-modern audiences are moving from autobiographical justice to understanding human systems, which include the role of genes and family systems.
3. Post-modern audiences are moving from an autonomous view of humanity to a view of humanity in relationship to the cosmos and environment.<sup>17</sup>

#### A Few Reminders of the Gospel Message:

1. The gospel was for communal salvation, which included individual salvation, not vice versa. Salvation meant being included into the multiethnic community of God (Acts 2:37-47; 15:6-11).<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> William B. Gudykunst, *Bridging Differences: Effective Intergroup Communication*, 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2004), 57-59, 202.

<sup>14</sup> William B. Gudykunst, *Bridging Differences: Effective Intergroup Communication*, 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2004), 57-59, 202.

<sup>15</sup> Shelley, Rex. *Culture Shock! Japan: A Survival Guide to Customs and Etiquette* (Portland, OR: Graphic Arts Center Publishing, 1993), 120-121.

<sup>16</sup> William B. Gudykunst, *Bridging Differences: Effective Intergroup Communication*, 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2004), 57-59, 202.

<sup>17</sup> Joel B. Green and Mark D. Bakker, *Atonement in New Testament: Atonement in New Testament and Contemporary Contexts* (Downer’s Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 29.

2. New Testament scholars Joel Green and Mark Baker write that the New Testament's use of first century Mediterranean language provides five metaphors about the saving effects of Jesus' death: "the court of law (e.g., justification), the world of commerce (e.g., redemption), personal relationship (e.g., reconciliation), worship (e.g., sacrifice) and the battleground (e.g., triumph over evil)."<sup>19</sup> Each of the five metaphors provides unique insight to how Jesus life, death, and resurrection are good news for the Japanese and all nations. Using only one metaphor does not give a complete biblical view of God's work in Christ.
3. According to the Apostle Paul, the gospel predates Jesus' incarnation and was spoken to Abraham (Gal 3:8).

The following is written as a script, but is not meant to be read or memorized. The following suggests how the conversation can flow. Since the Japanese value relationships, the following conversational flow is recommended only in the context of respect, trust, and friendship.

### The Big Story<sup>20</sup>

I will share with you the basics of what two billion people believe now and billions have believed in the past. Great teachers engaged people in dialogue. Socrates and Confucius,<sup>21</sup> for example, asked and answered their students' questions. This conversation will be beneficial as you participate with you answers.

This story was not first told in North American, rather this story was first told in the Middle East, where the East meets the West.<sup>22</sup> Still the story has implications for all people, East Asians, Southeast Asians, Europeans, Africans, and North and South Americans.

### Corrupted by Evil

As we look at our world, what do we see?

*We see individual corruption.*

On March 23, 2008, Masahiro Kanagawa stabbed eight people in Tsuchiura, Ibaraki.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Joel B. Green and Mark D. Bakker, *Atonement in New Testament: Atonement in New Testament and Contemporary Contexts* (Downer's Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 73.

<sup>19</sup> Joel B. Green and Mark D. Bakker, *Atonement in New Testament: Atonement in New Testament and Contemporary Contexts* (Downer's Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 23.

<sup>20</sup> This approach is based on James Choung, *True Story: A Christianity Worth Believing In* (Downer's Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2008). Choung expands the how the gospel message includes more than just a ticket to heaven. To hear Choung's explanation, please look at "The Big Story, Part 1" <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kCVeSiUUMhY> (accessed March 25, 2011) and "The Big Story, Part 2" <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p4V60n6KiB8&feature=related> (accessed March 25, 2011).

<sup>21</sup> The Japanese call Confucius 孔子(こうし) Cōshi.

<sup>22</sup> Ken Joseph, Jr. and Ken Joseph, Sr., *聖書の国日本 Japan's Christian Roots*, 365-366.

On June 8, 2008, Tomohiro Kato massacred seven people and injured ten others in Akihabara.<sup>24</sup>

*We also see systemic corruption.*

Systemic corruption which is interrelated with individual corruption includes social, economic, political, and spiritual corruption.<sup>25</sup>

*Social*

Minors commit murders<sup>26</sup> and children face bullying at school.<sup>27</sup>

Parent abuse their children. In 2008, 128 mentally- and physically-abused children were abused to death.<sup>28</sup>

Japan faces high rates of divorce, depression, alcoholism, suicide, and *karoushi* (death from overwork).

Japan also faces low birth rates, which creates a smaller work force and fewer workers to supply pensions.<sup>29</sup>

*Hikikomori* is almost totally limited to Japan.<sup>30</sup>

Current Japanese sex slavery corruptions<sup>31</sup> families, sexuality, and male-female relationships.

In America, we see a history of war and racism.

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<sup>23</sup> Kyodo News, "Suspect in Fatal Knifings in Ibaraki Pleads Guilty," The Japan Times, <http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/nn20090502a7.html> (accessed April 21, 2011); Kyodo News, "Warrant served on man over Stabbing Spree in Ibaraki in March," The Japan Times, <http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/nn20080414a6.html> (accessed April 21, 2011).

<sup>24</sup> Kyodo News, "Kato Sentenced to Hang Over '08 Akihabara Killing Spree," The Japan Times, <http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/nn20110324x3.html> (accessed April 21, 2011).

<sup>25</sup> Christopher Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 2006), 12.

<sup>26</sup> Jun Hongo, "Domestic Child Abuse in Spotlight," The Japan Times, [http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/nn20110308i1.html?utm\\_source=feedburner&utm\\_medium=feed&utm\\_campaign=Feed%3A+japantimes+%28The+Japan+Times%3A+All+Stories%29](http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/nn20110308i1.html?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+japantimes+%28The+Japan+Times%3A+All+Stories%29) (accessed April 21, 2011); Eriko Arita, "Kids Who Turn to Crime are Victims, Too," The Japan Times, <http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/nn20030819b6.html> (accessed April 21, 2011).

<sup>27</sup> Alice Gordenker, "Don't Wait till Bullying Hits Close to Home," The Japan Times, <http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/ek20030313ag.html> (accessed April 21, 2010).

<sup>28</sup> Eric Prideaux, "Kids' Group Home a Safe Respite," The Japan Times, <http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/nn20070320f1.html> (accessed April 21, 2011).

<sup>29</sup> Michael Zielenziger, *Shutting Out the Sun: How Japan Created Its Own Lost Generation* (New York: Doubleday, 2006).

<sup>30</sup> Michael Zielenziger, *Shutting Out the Sun: How Japan Created Its Own Lost Generation* (New York: Doubleday, 2006).

<sup>31</sup> Shannon Devine, "Poverty Fuels Trafficking to Japan," *Herizons* (Winter 2007): 18-22. This article is also available at [http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_7554/is\\_200701/ai\\_n32209209/](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_7554/is_200701/ai_n32209209/) (accessed April 26, 2011).

## *Economic*

Japan's miracle post-World War II economy is sluggish.

In America, we see far-reaching selfishness from people like Bernie Madoff<sup>32</sup> can corrupt global economic systems.

Also in America, investors sued Countrywide Mortgage group for “massive fraud” and “predatory lending.”<sup>33</sup>

## *Political*

Japan's government has little internal accountability<sup>34</sup> and Japan has lost confidence in some politicians due to the politicians' questionable behavior.<sup>35</sup>

Practices of *Amakudari* (lit. “descent from heaven”), where retired government officials are given prestigious, high-paying positions in companies, are proving to show corruption between government and big business.<sup>36</sup>

In 1993, Shin Kanemura was arrested for tax evasion. Later that year, the *zenekon* (general building contractors) scandals exposed corruption in the Japanese construction industry and led to the arrest of the governors of Sendai, Miyagi, and Ibaraki.<sup>37</sup>

Transparency International names Somalia, Afghanistan, Myanmar, Sudan, and Iraq as those among corrupt governments.<sup>38</sup>

## *Religious*

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<sup>32</sup> Robert Lenzner “Bernie Madoff's \$50 Billion Ponzi Scheme,” *Forbes*, [http://www.forbes.com/2008/12/12/madoff-ponzi-hedge-pf-ii-in\\_rl\\_1212croesus\\_inl.html](http://www.forbes.com/2008/12/12/madoff-ponzi-hedge-pf-ii-in_rl_1212croesus_inl.html) (accessed April 25, 2011).

<sup>33</sup> Joel Rosenblatt, “Angelo Mozilo Settles Lending Suit for \$6.5 Million,” *Bloomberg*, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2011-02-02/angelo-mozilo-settles-lending-suit-for-6-5-million.html> (accessed April 26, 2011); Reuters, “BofA's Countrywide Sued, Accused of Massive Fraud,” *Reuters*, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/01/26/us-bankofamerica-countrywide-lawsuit-idUSTRE7007X820110126> (accessed April 26, 2011).

<sup>34</sup> Karel Van Wolferen, *The Enigma of Japanese Power* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), in Robert Neff, “Why Japan Won't Act to Save Itself,” *Business Week*, <http://www.businessweek.com/1998/20/b3578007.htm> (accessed May 1, 2011).

<sup>35</sup> Martin Fackler, “Japan Elects a New Premier, Fifth in Four Years,” *The New York Times*, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/05/world/asia/05japan.html?scp=1&sq=%22Naoto%20Kan%20Is%20Elected%20Prime%20Minister%20in%20Japan%22&st=cse> (accessed April 26, 2011).

<sup>36</sup> Roger J. Davies and Osamu Ikeno, *The Japanese Mind: Understanding Contemporary Japanese Culture* (Boston: Tuttle Publishing, 2002), 27.

<sup>37</sup> Kuji T. and Yokota H., *Seiji ga Yugameru Kōkyōjigyō* [The Government Distorts the Public Works] (Tokyo: Ryokuhukan, 1996), 16, in Roger J. Davies and Osamu Ikeno, *The Japanese Mind: Understanding Contemporary Japanese Culture* (Boston: Tuttle Publishing, 2002), 27.

<sup>38</sup> Los Angeles Times, “The World's Most Corrupt Governments,” *The Los Angeles Times*, <http://articles.latimes.com/2009/nov/18/world/la-fg-corrupt-box18-2009nov18> (accessed April 26, 2011).

Recent sumo scandal shows match-fixing, marijuana-use, illegal gambling, and unhealthy treating of younger wrestlers.<sup>39</sup> Also, former grand champion Asashoryu retired after allegations of drunken violence. Historically, Sumo has reflected Japanese classical values of honor and discipline.<sup>40</sup> Sumo also has many Shinto symbols of purity yet sumo has been corrupted with impurity.<sup>41</sup>

The Japanese-born Aum cult claimed to restore original Buddhism. However, on the morning of Monday, March 20, 1995, their sarin-gas attack on five trains heading towards Tokyo's government district instilled fear in many people.

We see both individual and systemic corruption, which are interconnected.

### Created for Good

Our God is a loving, patient, generous, Creator God;<sup>42</sup> God of the whole world. God identifies himself as “merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in love and faithfulness... (Ex 34:6).<sup>43</sup> God's people often referred to God in this way (Nu 14:18, Ne 9:17, Ps 86:15, 103:8, 145:8, Joel 2:13, Jonah 4:2, Nahum 1:3). Finite people are limited in describing an infinite God, and people are especially limited through language. Still, God has always intended to include people, which our language reflects. The Japanese describe the God of the Bible using words like, “Ten no Otōsama.”<sup>44</sup> Family titles are one of the primary ways God reveals himself. God reveals himself as Father. God shows his desire to include people as he calls people “his children.” However, our understanding of God as “our heavenly Father” and people as “God's children” is limited by our own experience. If we had a great biological father, then this will influence us to recognize God's goodness. However, if our biological father often failed our expectations because of character flaws, we may think God will fail our expectations because of character flaws.<sup>45</sup> Our story shows that God is a flawless and loving Father.

The story of the God of the Bible is unique. In the Bible, God created all the people that formed all nations, not just one nation.

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<sup>39</sup> Takashi Yokota, “Sumo's Big Bad Boys” Newsweek, February 13, 2011, <http://www.newsweek.com/2011/02/13/sumo-s-big-bad-boys.html> (accessed March 26, 2011).

<sup>40</sup> Takashi Yokota, “Sumo's Big Bad Boys” Newsweek, February 13, 2011, <http://www.newsweek.com/2011/02/13/sumo-s-big-bad-boys.html> (accessed March 26, 2011).

<sup>41</sup> The Japanese still consider the sumo ring – the *dohyou* (土俵) – sacred because of how sumo wrestlers previously fought on the sacred grounds of shrines and temples. Licensed-*gyoji* Sumo referees dress like Shinto priests in white robes and black hats. The semi-priestly *gyoji* perform Shinto purity and blessings rituals with salt, *kombu* (kelp), *surume* (dried squid), and chestnuts. See Tara Magdalinski, Timothy John, and Lindsay Chandler, *With God on their Side: Sport in the Service of Religion* (New York: Routledge, 2002).

<sup>42</sup> David Lewis, *Unseen Face of Japan* (Tunbridge Wells: Monarch, 1993), 241.

<sup>43</sup> Joel B. Green and Mark D. Bakker, *Atonement in New Testament: Atonement in New Testament and Contemporary Contexts* (Downer's Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 51-53.

<sup>44</sup> David Lewis, *Unseen Face of Japan* (Tunbridge Wells: Monarch, 1993), 295.

<sup>45</sup> Dale Ryan and Juanita Ryan, *Recovery from Distorted Images of God* (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press: 1990).

On Day 1, God created light and he said, “It was good.”

On Day 2, God created sky and water and he said, “It was good.”

On Day 3, God created dry land and plants and he said, “It was good.”

On Day 4, God created stars, moon, and the sun and he said, “It was good.”

On Day 5, God created fish and the birds and he said, “It was good.”

On Day 6 God created the beasts of the earth and he said, “It was good.”

But then later on Day 6, God created human beings in God’s image. And do you know what he said? He said, “It was very good.” We see God distinguishes between his view of human and animal creation.

God’s creation shows God’s divine attributes, but we do not believe the creation is divine itself (Romans 1:18-32).<sup>46</sup> Still, God called the world “good” and God called people “very good.” God created people and the cosmos in perfect hierarchy and harmony.

God created man and woman in his image. God creating humans in God’s image points to God’s desire for inclusive relationship with people. God’s image is clearly seen in the values of Japanese people. For example, the Japanese people value family. God values families to the extent that he reveals himself and his people using family terms like “Father” and “children.”

The Japanese value the environment. The Japanese impress foreigners with how they faithfully sort trash. The Japanese have burnable (燃えるゴミ - *moeru gomi*), non-burnable (燃えないゴミ - *moenai gomi*), recyclable resources (資源ゴミ - *shigen gomi*), large (粗大ゴミ - *sodai gomi*), hazardous waste (危険ゴミ - *kiken gomi*), and electronic waste (電気ゴミ - *denki gomi*). With Japan’s reverence for nature and natural beauty, Japan fittingly hosted the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which developed the Kyoto Protocol, the agreement where many industrialized countries agreed to reduce greenhouse gases.<sup>47</sup> In our story, God taught his people to take care of the earth and animals (Gen 1-2, especially Gen 1:26-28).

The Japanese valued orderliness. The Christian Bible teaches that God is very orderly (1 Cor 14:33). One example of how God demonstrated his orderliness is through the creation story above (Gen 1:2:3). The Japanese impressed the world as they remained orderly despite the March 2011 earthquakes and tsunami.

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<sup>46</sup> Christopher Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible’s Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 2006), 14.

<sup>47</sup> United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, “Kyoto Protocol,” United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, [http://unfccc.int/kyoto\\_protocol/items/2830.php](http://unfccc.int/kyoto_protocol/items/2830.php) (accessed April 30, 2011).

God gave people a mission: take care of the creation and fill it. He also gave instructions to humans.

However, humans disobeyed and brought shame in relationship to themselves, to their families, and to their communities. This shame could have caused man and woman to admit their mistake, but instead man and woman blamed others.

This man and woman – our ancestors – disgraced our Father God. We follow in the ways of our ancestors if we do give the honor that God deserves. This also dishonors our people, our nation, our communities, our families, and us.<sup>48</sup>

Their behavior brought impurity and shame into the world. Shame helps people know when they have done something wrong. However, as societies have developed, societies have blurred the line between helpful shame and false shame. False shame is based on the society notions of right and wrong that do not reflect God’s loving character.

#### Restored For Better

God does not want to exclude us but include us; God does not want to cut off communication with us but to restore us.

Christmas is made of two words: Christ and mass. *Christos*, a Greek word, means anointed one. The Greek word *Christos* came from the Hebrew word *Messiah*. The Hebrew word is where the Japanese get the word メシヤ (*Meshiya*) or メシア (*Meshia*). In the Old Testament, three kinds of people were anointed: priests, prophets, and kings. Crown Princess Masako went through a marriage ceremony, which included sipping sake.<sup>49</sup> Somewhat similarly, priest, prophets, and kings went through a ceremony where they had oil poured on their head.

*Missa*, a Latin word, means “mass.” Mass is a religious celebration.

Therefore, *Christmas* first meant the religious celebration of Christ, especially his birth. Christmas celebrates many aspects of God: his love for all people, his faithfulness in providing a savior, and inclusion for all people into his family.

Roman law prohibited Roman citizens to be crucified. Only insurrectionists, foreigners, and slaves could be crucified.<sup>50</sup> Jesus, God’s son, worked in perfect obedience to his Father God. He did nothing wrong. Still, Jesus experienced public shame and humiliation and “lost face” so that those who believe in him do not have to experience false shame. The Father experienced

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<sup>48</sup> Joel B. Green and Mark D. Bakker, *Atonement in New Testament: Atonement in New Testament and Contemporary Contexts* (Downer’s Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000).

<sup>49</sup> Michael Zielenziger, *Shutting Out the Sun: How Japan Created Its Own Lost Generation* (New York: Doubleday, 2006).

<sup>50</sup> Joel B. Green and Mark D. Bakker, *Atonement in New Testament: Atonement in New Testament and Contemporary Contexts* (Downer’s Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 163.

great anguish as he saw his son shamed, though he was innocent. Like loving family members, God experienced anguish and Jesus experienced shame out of great love for all people.

Jesus experienced shame his whole life: being from Nazareth, being from a poor family, working as a carpenter, being born out of wedlock. He experienced the shame of all people; he brought all shame to cross. He was falsely accused and crucified. False shame died with Jesus.

However, three days later God raised Jesus from the dead. False shame died with Jesus. You do not need to live with shame.

False shame has many sources and many voices. “Unless you graduate from this school, you are not good enough.” “Unless you get certain grades, you are not good enough.” “Unless you look a certain way, you are not good enough.” Unless you work for this company, you are not good enough.” Unless you come from this family, you are not good enough.” “Unless you are the best, you are not good enough.”

We can react to shame with pride. We can say, “I got into this school, so I am better than other people. I got these grades, so I am better than other people. I look a certain way so I am better than other people.” So with these thoughts, we falsely shame and exclude others. Falsely, we say that they are not good enough or smart enough or hard-working enough.

God offers a paradox – we give our lives to God and God gives us eternal life.

God’s love expels shame.<sup>51</sup> People in Japan and other countries wear crosses as jewelry. The cross is a powerful symbol of God’s love that expels false shame.

Repenting means turning, and repenting can include changing how you think about yourself and others; repenting may be viewing yourself as God sees you: as God’s image bearer.

With God, we can stop living in fear of exclusion and its anxiety.

False shame never provides the same power as living free from it!!!

Jesus purifies us and removes our uncleanness and impurities.<sup>52</sup>

### Sent Together to Heal

In relationship with God, God restores – physically, emotionally, relationally, and spiritually. God sends his people to heal individuals and systems. God uses his people to heal, even if his people just begin a relationship with Him.

The world’s problems are so big; Jesus is alive and we need Jesus resources.

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<sup>51</sup> Green and Bakker, 163.

<sup>52</sup> David Lewis, *Unseen Face of Japan* (Tunbridge Wells: Monarch, 1993), 240.

The world's problem includes poverty. With increased agricultural technology, we have enough food for every person; however, people die every day of starvation or sickness.

Award-winning journalist David Batstone's book shows that "Human trafficking generates \$31 billion annually and enslaves 27 million people around the globe, half of them children under the age of eighteen."<sup>53</sup> In Japan, sex slavery is multi-million dollar business.

In our story, Jesus has been all authority in heaven and on earth. When Jesus lived on earth, he demonstrated authority when he healed people who were sick, he controlled nature, and he freed people of evil spirits. Since Jesus has this authority, his children can call on Jesus' authority and minister like Jesus.

We partner with God's Mission by learning his teaching in the Bible and doing his teachings in the world.

Billions have joined this movement to heal. Over a million Japanese joined this movement, before American was established.<sup>54</sup> After America was established, Japanese like author Miura Ayako, Uchimura Kanzo, social activist and peace leader Kagawa Toyohiko, and the 5,000 yen's Nitobe Inazo joined the movement as well. Scholars who joined this movement include Botanist Oga Ichiro, Economist and University of Tokyo President Yanaihara Tadao, and<sup>55</sup> Political Scientist and University of Tokyo President Nanbara Shigeru." Son of a samurai and founder of Doshisha University Nijjima Jō.<sup>56</sup> Will you consider joining the movement?

People who join this movement gather to worship God, studying his teachings in the Bible, develop relationships with other Christians, and invite others to join the movement.

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<sup>53</sup> David B. Batstone, *Not for Sale: The Return of the Global Slave Trade-- And How We can Fight It* (San Francisco: Harper, 2007), back cover.

<sup>54</sup> Ken Joseph, Jr. and Ken Joseph, Sr., *聖書の国日本 Japan's Christian Roots*, (Tokyo?:?), 362. See also Ken Joseph, Jr. and Ken Joseph, Sr., "Jizo and Jesus in Japan," R.E.A.P., <http://www.kennyjoseph.com/products3.htm> (accessed April 19, 2011).

<sup>55</sup> Moriyuki Abukuma, "A Life of Tadao Yanaihara," Asahi, [http://www.asahi-net.or.jp/~hw8m-mrkm/nonch/abukuma/yanaihara\\_en.html](http://www.asahi-net.or.jp/~hw8m-mrkm/nonch/abukuma/yanaihara_en.html) (accessed April 26, 2011).

<sup>56</sup> Doshisha University, "About Us," Doshisha University, <http://www.doshisha.ac.jp/english/information/overview/about.php> (accessed April 22, 2011).