



**Sharing  
the  
Good News  
with the  
Japanese:  
A Cross-cultural  
Consideration**

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## Introduction

God longs to communicate his good news with all nations. God has revealed his good news through many ways, including through people, events, tradition, and Scripture.<sup>1</sup> In the Old Testament, God communicated his good news directly to Abraham as well as to others through prophets, historic events, and radical displays of deliverance. In the New Testament, God communicated his good news through Jesus Christ, as well as through vivid apocalyptic revelation, through kingdom proclamation and demonstration, and much more. After the New Testament period, God continues to reveal himself to all nations. In this paper, I share insights about how cross-cultural ministers can partner with God as he reveals himself to the Japanese. I begin by illustrating the various ways God has already revealed himself to the Japanese. Then, I provide a New Testament model that shows how the Apostle Paul changed how he communicated the good news based on his audience. I continue by exploring how literature on cross-cultural communication can support cross-cultural ministers in effectively communicating the good news to Japanese audiences. Finally, I conclude with missiological implications, namely that culturally-specific, audience-centered communication is necessary for effectively communicating the gospel cross-culturally.

## God Revealing Himself to the Japanese

God has been revealing himself in Japan for many millennia. God creation shows the Japanese God's eternal power and divine nature (Rom 1:20). God has revealed himself in the beauty of Japan's snow-capped mountains, the gracefulness of the cherry blossoms, the splendor of the flowers of the Izu peninsula, and the honorable character of the Japanese people. God has also revealed himself through various people. By as early as the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, the *Keikyo* Nestorian Christians are believed to have come through India, China, and Korea and they are believed to have eventually established Christ-centered communities by the 5<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>2</sup> Then, in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, God continued to reveal himself with the missionary endeavors of the Jesuit missionaries. The Christian faith flourished especially as Japanese leaders became Christian.

During this time, God continued to reveal himself through the faithfulness of many Japanese Christians. Under persecution from the Tokugawa government, many Japanese demonstrated their faithfulness to Christ through martyrdom. One example is the 26 Christians who were hanged on crosses in Nagasaki on Feb. 5, 1597. After the Japanese government passed an edict forbidding Christianity, six Franciscans monks and twenty Japanese showed their solidarity with Christ and with each other as they surrendered their lives for their faith. One

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<sup>1</sup> Nathan P. Feldmeth, *Pocket Dictionary of Church History* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2008), s.vv. "general revelation," "revelation," and "special revelation."

<sup>2</sup> Don, Wright and Haruo Mitsumori, eds., *Operation Japan: A Prayer Guide for Japan*, ed. 2000 (Tokyo: Japan Evangelical Missionary Association, 2000), 14; Rob Gilhooly, "Religious Sites, Relics Indicate Christ Beat Buddha to Japan," <http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/fv20010724a2.html> (accessed June 18, 2011).

twelve-year old child and one thirteen-year old child were among the twenty Japanese.<sup>3</sup> A missionary remarked on the how the faithfulness of Christians affected other Christians in Japan:

“The astonishing fruit of the generous sacrifice of our 26 martyrs is that the Christians, recent converts and those of mature faith, have been confirmed in the faith and hope of eternal salvation; they have firmly resolved to lay down their lives for the name of Christ. The very pagans who assisted at the martyrdom were struck at seeing the joy of the blessed ones as they suffered on their crosses and the courage with which they met death.”<sup>4</sup>

Through the faithfulness of the martyrs, God revealed “the faith and hope of eternal salvation” and how Christ is worthy of total surrender.

Moreover, God has revealed himself through recent Christian endeavors. Over the last one hundred and fifty years, Protestant Christians have used various methods to communicate the good news with the Japanese. Many Christians abandoned the comforts of their hometowns and/or home countries to share God’s good news. Christians also established well respected learning institutions like schools and universities, and these institutions introduce students to the tenets of the Christian faith.<sup>5</sup> The Japanese showed interest in the Christian faith, especially after the devastation of World War II. However, the good news did not take root in the lives of many Japanese. Currently, the Japanese Christian population hovers around one percent.<sup>6</sup>

### **A New Testament Approach: The Apostle Paul**

In the Acts of the Apostles, the author shows how the Apostle Paul adapts his messages to his audiences’ culture. While in the synagogue in Pisidian Antioch, Paul’s word choice shows how he tailors his message to his Jewish audience. Paul’s Jewish audience rightly viewed themselves through Scripture’s teaching and rightly understood themselves as God’s chosen nation. Paul begins by addressing this audience saying, “You Israelites, and others who fear God,” and later he addresses them saying, “My brothers, you descendants of Abraham’s family, and others who fear God, listen. The God of this people Israel chose our ancestors...”<sup>7</sup> With

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<sup>3</sup> Samuel Lee, *Rediscovering Japan, Reintroducing Christendom: Two Thousand Years of Christian History in Japan* (Lanham, MD: Hamilton Books, 2010), 119-122.

<sup>4</sup> New Advent, “Japanese Martyrs,” *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09744a.htm> (accessed June 11, 2011).

<sup>5</sup> Erich Bridges, “WorldView: Japan - A Fourth Gospel Opening?” International Mission Board, <http://www.imb.org/main/news/details.asp?StoryID=9557> (accessed June 18, 2011).

<sup>6</sup> Kato Mariko, “Christianity’s Long History In The Margins,” *Japan Times*, <http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/nn20090224i1.html> (accessed June 4, 2011).

<sup>7</sup> In the synagogue, “others who fear God” could refer to the previously mentioned 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 the author writes of “devout converts to Judaism” in Acts 13:43 NRSV, “others who fear God” seems to refer to “God-fearers.” Scholars suggest that from the first century, “God-fearers” had a variety of meanings, which included

these words, “My brothers,” and “our ancestors,” Paul identifies himself as part of his Jewish audience. Then, to his “brothers,” Paul contextualizes the message of the good news of Jesus’ resurrection in the Old Testament that his audience recognized as authoritative (Acts 13:14-52 NRSV). Paul references the Old Testament to show how “the God of this people Israel” delivered his people from Egypt and continued to lead his people through the time of the judges, Samuel, King Saul, and King David. Paul then shows that God fulfilled the promises in the Jewish Scriptures by bringing to Israel Jesus, the Savior from the line of David. Paul supports his message by showing how the good news was written in the Old Testament Psalms and Isaiah. Paul ends his message by giving a warning from the Old Testament Prophet Habakkuk, a warning against not believing the good news.<sup>8</sup>

On the same subject of the good news of Jesus’ resurrection, Paul gives a very different message to a very different audience of a very different culture. In Athens, Paul addresses people who live in a city that was highly populated with idols. If Paul engaged with the people in the old Athenian market place, he likely saw the idols of Themis [the goddess of Justice], Eueteria [the goddess of Prosperity or Good Harvest], Apollo Agyieus [the god of the streets and gates], Hekate [the goddess of junctions], and Hermes [the great god of the roads].<sup>9</sup> From the market place, Paul could also see the massive Parthenon, which served as a place of worship for Athens’ patron goddess Athena. This place of worship crowned Athen’s Acropolis – the city’s high rock plateau.<sup>10</sup> Even the streets were crowded with smaller shrines. To Paul’s Athenian audience on the Areopagus, he tailors his opening address saying, “Athenians, I see how you are religious in every way.” The idols in Athens likely caused a visceral reaction in Paul by rattling his Jewish monotheistic sensibilities. Despite Paul’s abhorrence of the Athenian’s idolatry, he starts his message showing respect to his audience. Paul does not dismiss his Athenian audience’s religious expression; rather, he recognizes it and uses it to convey his message.<sup>11</sup>

Paul continues as he contextualizes the message of the good news of Jesus’ resurrection in the Greek philosophy that his Athenian Areopagite audience held as authoritative (Acts 17:15-34). For example, to the highly-educated Epicurean and Stoic philosophers in Athens, Paul plays on how Athenian philosophers like Plato, Aristotle, and Socrates influenced most Athenians during Paul’s time to not believe in the gods of the Pantheon. To this audience, Paul proclaims “the God who made the world does not live in shrines made by human hands.” Here, Paul also

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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* (Downers Grove, InterVarsity Press, 2001), 976; Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, ed. Daniel J. Harrington, (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1992), 230.

<sup>8</sup> Block, *Acts*, 448-467.

<sup>9</sup> Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission: Paul and the Early Church* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 1175; Block, *Acts*, 561.

<sup>10</sup> Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 91, 139.

uses Greek logic to play on the irony of people making shrines for a transcendent God. Paul then provides reason for his message by quoting from memory poetry that the Athenians recognized.<sup>12</sup> Interestingly, Paul leaves out many references found in the message to the Jews in Antioch. Paul does initially not name Moses, Israel, Jerusalem, Galilee, Sabbath, David, David's poetry in the Psalms, nor the name of Jesus. In Athens, it seems like Paul did not even quote scripture. In Athens and Antioch, it seems like Paul does not pray with either of his audiences nor does he give personal testimony.<sup>13</sup> However, he does invite both audiences to make a decision – a decision based on his message.<sup>14</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>15</sup>

What would happen if Paul shared his Jewish message with the Areopagites and his Areopagite message with the Jews? 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 but most Japanese do not. Some cross-cultural ministers have used categories and metaphors that are foreign to their Japanese listeners.<sup>16</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. For insights on how Paul's approach models Jesus' approach, please see Appendix 1.

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<sup>11</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>12</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/dlepimenides.htm> (accessed April 22, 2011) in Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, ed. Daniel J. Harrington, (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1992), 317.

<sup>13</sup> Personal testimony is appropriate for certain audiences, as is sharing the name of Jesus and the 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>14</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>15</sup> Finney, *Emerging Evangelism*, 97

<sup>16</sup> Joel B. Green and Mark D. Bakker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross: Atonement in New Testament and Contemporary Contexts* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 153-154.

## Parallels between the Athenians and the Japanese

Paul's experience in Athens provides several parallels with the Japanese context. Athens mixed a number of different religious beliefs – among them were Judaism, Greco-Roman mystery religions, and the emperor worship cult. Similarly, Japanese mixes Shinto, Buddhism, Confucius philosophy, and others. As Paul noted about the Athenians, the Japanese are religious in every way.<sup>17</sup> In the Japanese market place, idols are on display: idols like Hotei (布袋 god of abundance and good health), Ebisu (恵比寿 the god of fish and merchants), and Daikoku (大黒天 the god of wealth and guardian of farmers). Japanese market places also house good luck charms like the Tanuki (狸 the Japanese raccoon dog), the Beckoning Cat (招き猫), and Daruma (達磨 the monk attributed with starting Zen Buddhism). Furthermore, like Paul, cross-cultural ministers in Japan minister among shrines made by human hands. Small, medium, and large shrines are found inside and outside of the shopping districts of Japan's major cities. Also, religious sites like Tokyo's Meiji Shrine (明治神宮), Kyoto's Chion-in Temple, (知恩院), and Osaka's Shitennō-ji Temple (四天王寺) consume vast acreage of Japan's urban landscape.

The Japanese are also accepting many new religious movements, one of the most popular is the Buddhist Sōka Gakkai sect.<sup>18</sup> According to the Sōka Gakkai website, Sōka Gakkai adherent seek to apply Nichiren Buddhism to daily life for “a better world through the empowerment of the individual and the promotion of peace, culture and education.” In 1958, Sōka Gakkai had one million members who were mainly Japanese. Currently, 12 million members in 192 countries are part of this Buddhist sect.<sup>19</sup> Japanese religious expression is not just isolated to Buddhism. Many Japanese adhere to a cultural Buddhist-Shinto syncretism. Many Japanese have their children undergo Shinto birth rituals while these same families have Buddhist funerals and attend a Buddhist temple during New Years. Before important events, some Japanese also pray at a Buddhist temple or Shinto shrine.<sup>20</sup> After World War II, the Japanese government instituted religious freedom and dismantled Shinto as the official Japanese religion.<sup>21</sup> Still, modern Japanese participate in Shinto and Buddhist religious ritual even though only a few view Shinto as a “formal religion to believe in.”<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> “The Japanese are among the most religious or least religious people on earth, depending on whom you talk to or how you define ‘religious.’” Malcolm B. Davis, ed., *Japan: Insight Guides* (Singapore: APA Publications [HK], 1992), 71 in Noriyuki Miyake, “A Challenge To Pentecostal Mission In Japan” in *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 9:1 (2006), 84.

<sup>18</sup> Peter Lewis, *The Learning Companion*, Vol. 6, Bk. 3 (Nashville: Southwestern, 1998), 145-146.

<sup>19</sup> Sōka Gakkai International, “Home,” Sōka Gakkai International, <http://www.sgi.org/> (accessed June 8, 2011).

<sup>20</sup> Kei Murakami, interview, April 2010.

<sup>21</sup> Edwin Oliver James, “Buddhism, Taoism, and Shintō in China and Japan,” *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, <http://www.britannica.com/naomi.fuller.edu:2048/EBchecked/topic/475922/priesthood/38744/Buddhism-Taoism-and-Shinto-in-China-and-Japan> (accessed May 14, 2011).

<sup>22</sup> Lewis, *The Learning Companion*, 145-146.

In addition, when referring to Christianity, 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 Jesus Christ was born in what is currently called Asia<sup>23</sup> and that originally Taoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism were foreign to Japan.<sup>24</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 good news of Jesus’ resurrection with the Japanese, messengers will benefit from knowing the Japanese and their worldview. The following section explores literature that distinguishes differences between Western and Japanese worldviews.

## **Worldview and Audiences**

Missionary anthropologist Charles Kraft writes that worldview is “the deep-level assumptions, values, and commitments in terms of which people govern their lives.”<sup>25</sup> Cross-cultural ministers will effectively communicate the good news by considering the differences between their worldview and the Japanese worldview. Three key differences that affect worldview are the differences found in collectivistic and individualistic cultures, high-context and low-context cultures, and shame and guilt cultures. These differences are gross oversimplifications and many variations exist. Still, these differences are helpful in enabling cross-cultural ministers to consider the broad similarities in the cultures they come from and are called to serve.<sup>26</sup>

### **Collectivistic and Individualistic Cultures<sup>27</sup>**

William Gudykunst studied cross-cultural communication as an Intercultural Communication Specialist in Japan with the United States Navy. He later received his PhD, became a professor in human communication, and specialized in intercultural communication. Gudykunst wrote about how Japanese culture is collectivistic and has several key differences with Western individualistic cultures. To begin, Japanese audiences take their identity from the

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<sup>23</sup> The birthplace of Jesus Christ is located in contemporary Palestine, which is located in the Middle East or Western Asia. During Jesus incarnated life on earth, the geographic boundaries of Asia differ significantly from the contemporary geographic boundaries of Asia.

<sup>24</sup> Taoism and Confucianism originated in China; Buddhism started in modern-day Nepal and made its way to Japan through China and Korea. See Higashibaba Ikuo, *Christianity in Early Modern Japan: Kirishitan Belief and Practice* (Koninklijke Brill NV Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2001), xxiii-xxiv.

<sup>25</sup> Charles H. Kraft, *Communication Theory for Christian Witness*, Rev. ed. (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991), 161.

<sup>26</sup> Paul G. Hiebert, *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1985), 112-113.

<sup>27</sup> “We-culture,” “tribal culture,” and “hot-climate culture” are other expressions connected to collectivism and “I-culture,” “urban culture,” and “cold-climate culture” are other expressions connected to individualism. See Sarah A. Lanier, *Foreign to Familiar: A Guide to Understanding Hot- And Cold-Climate Cultures* (Hagerstown, MD: McDougal Publishing, 2000).



group more so than from being an individual. For example, middle-aged and older Japanese often introduce themselves with their family name only. Or in business settings, the Japanese introduce themselves with their company name followed by their family name. In other words, Japanese often refer to themselves based on their group identity more than their individual identity. Also, the Japanese value group goals over individual goals and the Japanese identify themselves based on “we” more than “I.” However, as globalization influences Japanese society, the Japanese are adopting individualistic mindsets and the younger generations see themselves more as individuals.

Furthermore, Japanese audiences view themselves more as interdependent than independent.<sup>28</sup> Much like Jesus’ audiences, Japanese audiences also lay emphasis on belonging in groups.<sup>29</sup> They look after people in their 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. Japanese ingroup and outgroup boundaries affect friendship because relational boundaries are well-defined in Japan, more so than in Western countries. Consequently, friendship may take longer to develop in Japan. However, once a person develops a friendship with a Japanese person, the relationship is strong.

<b>Culture</b>	<b>Collectivistic</b>	<b>Individualistic</b>
Primary Identity	clearer group identity interdependent “we” e.g., introducing oneself with one’s company and/or family name first	clearer individual identity independent “I” e.g., introducing oneself with one’s first name only
Values	group success and group initiatives	self-realization, individual success, and individual initiatives
Goals	group goals over individual goals	individual goals over group goals
Standards	ingroup conforms to group’s standards different standards for ingroup and outgroup	universal standards for ingroup and outgroup

<sup>28</sup> William B. Gudykunst, *Bridging Differences: Effective Intergroup Communication*, 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2004), 56.

<sup>29</sup> Bruce J. Malina, “Collectivism in Mediterranean Culture,” in *Understanding the Social World of the New Testament*, eds. Dietmar Neufeld and Richard E. DeMaris (New York, NY: Routledge, 2010), 21-22.

On the 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>30</sup> Consequently, Westerners tend to think that their way is the best way for everyone where as the Japanese tend to think that their way is the best for their ingroup.<sup>31</sup> Individualistic culture began to emerge as early as the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and currently an estimated 20 percent of the global population is individualistic while an estimated 80 percent of the global population is collectivistic.<sup>32</sup>

I have found collectivistic characteristics demonstrated in congregation in Japan. Some Japanese congregations view themselves as tight-knit ingroups. Church members are highly committed to the congregation’s community and lives often center on the church. On the other hand, this tight-knit congregation can also view other congregations as outgroups. As a result, congregations can place a high barrier between their ingroup and the outgroup of other congregations. Many congregations also have limited involvement with other congregations.<sup>33</sup> Unfortunately, this ingroup-outgroup mentality may also inhibit non-Christians from scaling the high relational walls needed to join some Japanese congregations.<sup>34</sup> As Japanese congregations see the Japanese church as one ingroup, the walls will come down and the Japanese will flood into the church. As the Japanese church sees itself as part of the ingroup of the global church, the Japanese will be able to make their unique contribution to the global church and God’s global mission.

Moreover, in Japan’s collectivistic culture, the Japanese often belong before they believe.<sup>35</sup> Participation in religious events tied Japanese families and communities together. Participation in Buddhist events tied the family (家 *ie*) system and participation in Shinto events tied the village (村 *mura*). Interestingly, the tie was participation in religious events and not belief in religious teaching. Such a tie links religious thinking to a sense of belonging, which is central to identity in a collectivistic culture.<sup>36</sup> In light of this, Christians can invite Japanese people to experience freedom in Christ and God’s unconditional love by inviting people to participate in God’s community. This experience supersedes the need for teaching through

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<sup>30</sup> Gudykunst, *Bridging Differences*, 46-47.

<sup>31</sup> Kraft, *Communication Theory for Christian Witness*, 164.

<sup>32</sup> Malina, “Collectivism in Mediterranean Culture,” in *Understanding the Social World of the New Testament*, eds. Neufeld and DeMaris, 18-19.

<sup>33</sup> Jason Mandryk, *Operation World: The Definitive Prayer Guide to Every Nation* (Colorado Springs, CO: Biblica Publishing, 2010), 491.

<sup>34</sup> Miyake, “A Challenge To Pentecostal Mission In Japan,” 91.

<sup>35</sup> See John Finney, *Emerging Evangelism*, (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2004), 5.

<sup>36</sup> Miyake, “A Challenge To Pentecostal Mission In Japan,” 86.

words. The Japanese will intuit God's love by experiencing it.<sup>37</sup> Also, the Japanese experience truth differently from Westerners. Japanese Scholar Noriyuki Miyake writes that "Japanese accept or understand religious truth not by intellectual studying but by acting out rituals. Unless they can participate and experience something, they never believe in the truth."<sup>38</sup> Therefore, as the Japanese become part of Christian community, they can observe Christian rituals and eventually participate in them. As Japanese Christians welcomed other Japanese into Christian community, do Japanese Christians abandon sharing biblical teaching? To answer this question, let us consider how the Japanese employ high-context communication and westerners employ low-context communication. (For further theological reflections on collectivistic and individualistic cultures, please see Appendix 2.)

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

Both collectivistic and individualistic cultures use high- and low-context communication; however, collectivistic cultures tend to be high-context cultures while individualist cultures tend to be low-context cultures.<sup>39</sup> Japan is predominantly a high-context culture while Western cultures like the United States are primarily low-context cultures. Low-context communication is "direct, explicit, open, precise, being consistent with one's feelings."<sup>40</sup> Low-context cultures communicate primarily through the words themselves, with less communicated through contextual cues.<sup>41</sup> Contextual cues are non-verbal and can include age, dress, posture, status, behavior, eye-contact, and facial expression. On the other hand, high-context cultures tend to understate, speak indirectly, communicate ambiguously, and differentiate more between the ingroup and outgroup.<sup>42</sup> High-context communication involves the speaker sensitively monitoring his or her own contextual cues as well as the listeners' contextual cues. As a result, what a person does can communicate more than what a person says. Christians can communicate Christ's love, God's character, and God's mission through their actions more so than through their words. With the Japanese, actions often speak louder than words.

In addition, the Japanese interpret some aspects of high-context communication differently than Westerners. For example, Westerners interpret eye contact to communicate honesty, openness, or confidence. However, 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 in Japan is impolite. Looking

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<sup>37</sup> Theologically, the people God has given to Jesus belong to God. See John 17:13ff.

<sup>38</sup> Miyake, "A Challenge To Pentecostal Mission In Japan," 87.

<sup>39</sup> Gudykunst, *Bridging Differences*, 57-59, 202.

<sup>40</sup> Gudykunst, *Bridging Differences*, 202.

<sup>41</sup> Gudykunst, *Bridging Differences*, 57-59.

<sup>42</sup> Gudykunst, *Bridging Differences*, 57-59, 202.

down when talking with superiors shows humility.<sup>43</sup> I unfortunately learned this the hard way. My head pastor in Japan is Korean and he has faithfully served in our congregation for over fifteen years. In my experience, either Koreans also view direct eye contact with supervisors as impolite and/or my pastor acculturated to the Japanese understanding of eye contact. During sermons and personal conversations, I wanted to show respect to him. As a result, I always made sure to make eye contact with him. However, in retrospect, I suspect that I made him uncomfortable because Japanese and Korean young adult members limit their eye contact with him. I now conclude my use of eye contact showed defiance rather than respect. I now make sure to limit eye contact with Japanese and Korean superiors.

<b>Culture</b>	<b>High-Context (Collectivistic)</b>	<b>Low-Context (Individualistic)</b>
Direct or Indirect	tend to understate, speak indirectly, communicate ambiguously, and differentiate more between ingroup and outgroups	“can be characterized by being direct, explicit, open, precise, being consistent with one’s feelings” <sup>44</sup> ; differentiates less between ingroup and outgroup
Verbal or Non-verbal Emphasis	communication emphasizes contextual cues: age, dress, posture, status, behavior, eye-contact, and facial expression	communication emphasizes words; communication is primary through words

Furthermore, the difference between high-context Japanese communication and low-context Western communication may affect how Westerners view their relationship with the Japanese. Like all countries, the Japanese distinguish between their true self and their public persona. However, the Japanese move between their true self and public persona quite regularly in daily conversation because they value maintaining social harmony and do not want others to feel uncomfortable. As a result, they distinguish between the true self and public persona with *honne* and *tatemaie*:

[*Honne* is] an opinion or an action motivated by one’s true inner feelings and [*tatemaie* is] an opinion or an action influenced by social norms. These two words are often considered a dichotomy contrasting genuinely-held personal feeling and opinions from those that are socially controlled. *Honne* is one’s deep motive or intention, while *tatemaie* refers to motives or intentions that are socially tuned, those that are shaped, encouraged,

<sup>43</sup> Shelley, Rex. *Culture Shock! Japan: A Survival Guide to Customs and Etiquette* (Portland, OR: Graphic Arts Center Publishing, 1993), 120-121.

<sup>44</sup> Gudykunst, *Bridging Differences*, 202.

or suppressed by majority norms....[H]onne and *tatemae* are not actually opposites as these two values are relative to people and situations.<sup>45</sup>

In private, the Japanese are not likely to initially share their true intentions. Also in public, the Japanese avoid conflict so that people do not lose face. Due to the Japanese use of *honne* and *tatemae*, Westerners may think that Japanese are being shallow and insincere. However, overtime cross-cultural ministers can develop friendship with the Japanese, and the Japanese will share their true feeling.<sup>46</sup>

At the end of the last section, we considered the question, “Before Japanese become Christian, do Japanese Christians abandon sharing biblical teaching with the Japanese?” This section shows that in high-context cultures, Christ-like behavior communicates biblical teaching. Therefore, Christians in Japan communicate biblical teaching through their actions and not just their words. Certainly, as cross-cultural ministers invite Japanese to experience Christian community, the Japanese will expose themselves to verbal biblical teaching. However, for the Japanese, their experience in a community embodying biblical teaching is more powerful than just intellectual understanding of biblical teaching. The power comes from how the Japanese will personally experience the communal and personal effects of the good news, which can draw people towards God more than just understanding Christian belief. Also, as Japanese people become accepted and part of Christian community, they will inevitable want to know what the Christian community believes. At this point, the Japanese people are ready for Christians to more formally share biblical teaching. As we share, we can discuss how Christian faith frees people from unhealthy shame and guilt. Let us consider these topics from a Western and Japanese perspective.

### **Shame and Guilt Cultures**

C. Norman Kraus taught five years in Eastern Hokkaido Bible School in Japan (1981-86) with the goal of “training a new generation of leaders.”<sup>47</sup> While in Japan, Kraus wrote *Jesus Christ Our Lord*, which seeks to expand Western understanding of theology through considering Eastern concerns. Kraus defines shame as what “*is associated with concepts of sin as defilement or uncleanness*, and it is experienced as a sense of embarrassment or unworthiness in another’s presence (Isa. 6:1-5; Luke 5:8; 7:6).”<sup>48</sup> Kraus continues by writing that shame results from unfulfilled external group standards or unfilled internal personal standards. Kraus defines guilt

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<sup>45</sup> Nobuyuki Honna and Bates Hoffer, *An English Dictionary of Japanese Culture* (Tokyo: Yuhikaku, 1986), 94.

<sup>46</sup> Roger J. Davies and Osamu Ikeno, *The Japanese Mind: Understanding Contemporary Japanese Culture* (Boston: Tuttle Publishing, 2002), 104, 115-116.

<sup>47</sup> Norman Kraus, *Jesus Christ Our Lord: Christology from a Disciple's Perspective* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1990), 15.

<sup>48</sup> Kraus, *Jesus Christ Our Lord*, 206.

as what is “is experienced as a burden of responsibility that one must bear for what has been done.”<sup>49</sup> Kraus writes that guilt results from breaking a legal rule.

Kraus explains that Western theology has maintained an underdeveloped understanding of shame and guilt. From the 16<sup>th</sup> century, post-Reformation theologians viewed shame as resulting from the feeling of guilt; therefore, these theologians did not deal directly with shame. In fact, theologians considered shame as an inferior response to guilt. Kraus writes,

Theologically shame was associated with cultures of primitive groups having inferior ethical traditions. Its motivation was considered self-serving (face-saving), and thus it was assumed to be an ethical sanction far less worthy than conscience. Based upon such an assumption the latent conscience must be stimulated and guilt anxiety raised through the preaching of God’s law before the gospel of forgiveness could be effective.<sup>50</sup>

As a result, until recently, Western theologians did not consider how addressing shame could enable the gospel of forgiveness to be effective. This is despite how our Holy Scriptures reference shame more than twice as much as guilt. Asbury Theological Seminary President and Professor Timothy C. Tennent writes that “the term *guilt* and its various derivatives occur 145 times in the Old Testament and 10 times in the New Testament, whereas the term *shame* and its derivatives occur nearly 300 times in the Old Testament and 45 times in the New Testament.”<sup>51</sup>

Western anthropology also maintained an underdeveloped understanding of shame and guilt. Anthropologist Ruth Benedict’s *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* introduced Western readers to the distinction between shame and guilt cultures. In 1944, the United States government commissioned Benedict to describe the Japanese, “the most alien enemy the United States ever fought.”<sup>52</sup> Benedict popularized the term “shame culture” as she asserted that in Japan shame was the fundamental thread that tied all Japanese behavior. Recent literature continues to herald and critique her contributions. Critics point out that while she showed the prevalence of shame as a motivating force in Japan, her conclusions are still too dichotomous.<sup>53</sup> Recent anthropological studies point to how the Japanese experience guilt more so than

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<sup>49</sup> Kraus, *Jesus Christ Our Lord*, 206.

<sup>50</sup> Kraus, *Jesus Christ Our Lord*, 208.

<sup>51</sup> Timothy C. Tennent, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity: How the Global Church is Influencing the Way We Think about and Discuss Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 213.

<sup>52</sup> Ruth Benedict, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture* (Cleveland, Meridian Books, 1967), 1.

<sup>53</sup> David Lewis, *Unseen Face of Japan* (Tunbridge Wells: Monarch, 1993), 226-246; Kraus, *Jesus Christ Our Lord*, 205; Millie R. Creighton, “Revisiting Shame: A Forty-Year Pilgrimage,” *Ethos* (1990): 279.

previously thought.<sup>54</sup> The Japanese, for example, experience guilt when inflicting pain or harm on another.<sup>55</sup>

Kraus also shows that Western psychology continued on the same path as theology and anthropology by maintaining an underdeveloped understanding of shame and guilt. Nineteenth and twentieth century psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud collapsed the distinction between guilt and shame and he focused primarily on shame's relationship to sexual inhibition. Later, twentieth century psychologist Erik Erikson taught that shame was a less developed response to guilt. As a result, shame personalities and cultures were viewed as inferior to guilt personalities and cultures.<sup>56</sup>

Recent studies show that shame and guilt have similarities. Both are moral, self-referential responses that people usually experience in interpersonal situations. Also, the situations that evoke shame and guilt responses can be similar. For example, shame and guilt can both result from a person not fulfilling a standard. Still, shame and guilt maintain key differences. First, shame focuses on the self, while guilt focuses on the behavior. When a person does not live up to a standard, he or she may respond in shame, "**I** did something bad or wrong," or with guilt, "I *did something* bad or wrong." The reactions are very similar; however, shame evaluates the self while guilt evaluates the action. Second, shame and guilt are different experiences. Shame results in a loss of face while guilt results in a loss of innocence. With shame, people experience "shrinking, feeling small, feeling worthless, powerless; with guilt, people experience "tension, remorse, regret."<sup>57</sup> Third, shame and guilt have different responses. People respond to shame with a "desire to hide, escape, or strike back" while people respond to guilt with a "desire to confess, apologize, or repair."<sup>58</sup> Fourth, shame and guilt have different social concerns. Shame's social concern is how others evaluate the self while guilt's social concern with how one's behavior affects others. Fifth, the remedy for guilt and shame are different. Identifying and communicating with the person remedies shame. "Love banishes shame."<sup>59</sup> Appeasing through "propitiation through restitution or penalty"<sup>60</sup> remedies guilt. "Justification banishes guilt."<sup>61</sup> Propitiation and justification do not deal with shame; lovingly identifying and communicating with the person(s) deals with shame. For a furthered developed theological reflection on shame and guilt, please see Appendix 3.

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<sup>54</sup> ; Sociologist Wolfram Eberhard's *Guilt and Sin in Traditional China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967) also found that the Chinese experience guilt more than Westerners initially thought.

<sup>55</sup> Takie S. Lebra, "Shame and Guilt: A Psychocultural View of the Japanese Self," *Ethos* 11 (1983), 192-209 in Flanders, *Global Dictionary of Theology*, s.v. "shame."

<sup>56</sup> C.L. Flanders in *Global Dictionary of Theology: A Resource for the Worldwide Church*, eds. William Dyrness and Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press Academic, 2008), s.v. "shame"; June Price Tangney and Ronda L. Dearing, *Shame and Guilt* (New York: Guilford Press, 2002), 12-13.

<sup>57</sup> Tangney and Dearing, *Shame and Guilt*, 25.

<sup>58</sup> Tangney and Dearing, *Shame and Guilt*, 25.

<sup>59</sup> Tangney and Dearing, *Shame and Guilt*, 25.

<sup>60</sup> Green and Bakker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, 156.

<sup>61</sup> Tangney and Dearing, *Shame and Guilt*, 25.

<b>Culture<sup>62</sup></b>	<b>Shame</b>	<b>Guilt</b>
Definition	<i>Shame is associated with concepts of sin as defilement or uncleanness, and it is experienced as a sense of embarrassment or unworthiness in another's presence (Isa. 6:1-5; Luke 5:8; 7:6).</i>	<i>Guilt is experienced as a burden of responsibility that one must bear for what has been done.</i>
Focus: Self or Behavior	Focus on self: “ <i>I did something bad or wrong.</i> ”	Focus on behavior: “ <i>I <b>did</b> something bad or wrong.</i> ”
Experience	loss of face; shrinking, feeling small, feeling worthless, powerless	loss of face; tension, remorse, regret
Social concern	Concern with others' evaluation of self	Concern with one's effect on others
Response	desire to hide, escape, or strike back”	desire to confess, apologize, or repair
Remedy	Identification and communication Love banishes shame.	Propitiation through restitution or penalty Justification banishes guilt

Furthermore, culture affects shame and guilt. The Japanese shame experience finds greater refinement than the United States shame experience. For example, the Japanese further distinguish between embarrassment-shame and disgrace-shame. Embarrassment-shame comes from positive or negative public exposure where a person receives attention from a group. For example, a college student can experience embarrassment-shame by attracting the class' positive attention for getting the highest grade on an exam. Also, a factory employee can experience embarrassment-shame by attracting his or her company's negative attention for misplacing an order. In these two examples, the embarrassment-shame results from being the center of

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<sup>62</sup> This chart is an adaptation of charts in Green and Bakker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, 156; Tangney and Dearing, *Shame and Guilt*, 25; and Kraus, *Jesus Christ Our Lord*, 206; this chart also includes insight from Timothy C. Tennent, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity*, 191.



attention.<sup>63</sup> On the other hand, disgrace-shame results from public ridicule, condemnation, or vulnerability-exposure. Japanese sociologist Keiichi Sakuta further distinguishes between public and private disgrace-shame. A Japanese sales person can experience private disgrace-shame if the sales person does not meet his or her productivity expectation. This same person can experience public disgrace-shame if he or she does not meet the expectation of his or her colleagues.

Moreover, differences in shame and guilt cultures are seen in child rearing differences in Japan and the United States. Generally, Japanese mothers tell their children not to misbehave because “others will laugh of you” or because of “what the neighbors will think.” On the other hand, US mothers tend to say, “You shouldn’t do that.”<sup>64</sup> The Japanese mothers focus on social concerns while American mothers focus on how the behavior is wrong. Saying that people are going to laugh at you can create shame. Saying that something is wrong can create guilt. These child rearing differences greatly affect how the people within these cultures experience and interpret reality.

In my five years in Japan, I unfortunately cannot remember one Christian message about how the cross affected shame. However, I recently learned about the shame-removing power of Christ’s cross. I had never observed a sacrificial Lenten practice, but my friend inspired me as he gave up eating sweets for Lent. I gave up studying for class after 9 p.m. during the Lenten season. After 9 p.m., I decided to devote my extra time to worship, prayer, and studying about the meaning of Jesus’ cross. I found myself reading Joel Green and Mark Baker’s *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*.<sup>65</sup> I recognized my own shame, especially regarding not living up to my own standards. Green challenged me to see how Christ’s cross offers freedom from that shame. My father is American and my mother is Japanese and she was born and raised in Yokohama. As a result, I identify myself as half-Japanese and half-American. After considering Christ’s dying for my shame, I felt like my Japanese self was “saved” for the first time. In an evangelistic meeting, I shared what I learned with a group of Japanese college students. A number of students responded positively towards the message. To describe my experience using the language from this paper, I felt like the Apostle Paul who delivered the Athenian message to the Athenians.

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<sup>63</sup> Keiichi Sakuta, *Haji no Kozo (The Structure of Shame)* (Tokyo: Iwanami Publishing, 1967) in Lebra, “Shame and Guilt,” 192-209; and Paul Matsumoto, *The Missional Implications of Shame in the Japanese World View* (Master of Theology in Missiology Thesis, Fuller Theological Seminary School of World Mission, Pasadena, CA, 1985), 12-18.

<sup>64</sup> Davies and Ikeno, *The Japanese Mind*, 139-140.

<sup>65</sup> Green and Bakker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*.

## **The Message**

Considering one's audience and their worldview is important for effectively sharing the gospel. Let us consider several points about the gospel message. Then, let us consider how these points translate differently to United States and Japanese audiences.

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

In communicating the gospel cross-culturally, the Apostle Paul models audience-centered communication. We have considered a few differences between Western and Japanese gospel audiences. Now, let us consider several fundamental characteristics of the gospel message. First, the gospel message in the New Testament is described in a number of ways. 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>66</sup> Each of the five metaphors provides unique insight to how Jesus' life, death, and resurrection are good news for the Japanese and for all nations. However, until recently, contemporary Western theology has tended to focus more on the gospel in terms of justification, reconciliation, and sacrifice. As a result, contemporary Western theology had focused on only one, two, or three metaphors and therefore had not given a complete biblical view of God's work in Christ. Exploring the other biblical metaphors enables Christians to communicate with the Japanese in ways that address aspects of the Japanese worldview. For example, gospel metaphors like redemption and triumph over evil can sound like good news to the Japanese because they highly value the world of commerce and they have a supernatural mindset.<sup>67</sup>

Second, both the Old and New Testament provides a complete understanding of the gospel message. According to the Apostle Paul, the gospel predates Jesus' incarnation and was spoken to Abraham (Gal 3:8). As noted earlier, the Apostle Paul did not quote Old Testament scripture when speaking to the Greeks in Athens, yet still the Old Testament's teaching of God as the transcendent Creator did inform Paul's worldview and consequently his gospel message. Similarly, contemporary Christians' understanding and communication of the gospel will deepen as Christians develop a relationship with the God of Scripture, the God of the Old and New Testaments.

Third, since the good news deals with Christ's reversal of humankind's curse, a complete understanding of the gospel addresses freedom from shame and guilt. The Old Testament begins with creation stories in Genesis 1-2, and Genesis 2 ends saying, "The man and his wife were

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<sup>66</sup> Green and Bakker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, 23.

<sup>67</sup> Fukuda Mitsuo, "Developing A Contextualized Church As A Bridge to Christianity in Japan" (Fuller Theological Seminary, School of World Mission, D. Miss, 1992), 41.

both naked, and they felt no shame” (Genesis 2:25). With this sentence, the author sets up what happened next as resulting in shame. In Genesis 3, the man and woman disobeyed God. According to the shame and guilt categories written above, Genesis 3:7-11 is not just a guilt response but a shame response. Especially since public nakedness caused great shame in the Ancient Near East and in the Bible.<sup>68</sup> Shame shaped the worldview of the original audiences of the Old and New Testament. Understanding that the original audience heard scripture through categories of shame gives Westerners a helpful lens through which to read scripture. Reading Scripture through such a lens reminds us that the gospel message frees people from both shame and guilt.

Fourth, the gospel is for communal salvation, which included personal salvation, not vice versa. Salvation means being included into the multiethnic community of God (Acts 2:37-47; 15:6-11).<sup>69</sup> Sometimes Western evangelical approaches, which reflect Western individualism, focus on how Jesus Christ provides the individual peace and reconciliation with God. While this approach is true and is effective for some Western audiences, the worldview underlying this individualistic approach can sound foreign to collectivistic hearers. The biblical gospel does offer personal reconciliation; however, the personal reconciliation is within the context of communal reconciliation. For example, Paul told the Corinthians that God was reconciling the whole world to himself through Christ (2 Cor 5:19). Also, when Paul wrote to a city with Jews and Gentiles, he framed the gospel as being offered to nationalities - to the Jew first and then for the Greek (Ro 1:16-18). John continues with this communal understanding of salvation as he shares his visions of every tribe and language and people and nation serving God (Rev 5:9, 13:7, 14:6).

Fifth, sharing the good news supports people beginning or strengthening their relationship with the one living, loving God. Consequently, sharing the good news seeks have people encounter the Creator God through Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. We hope that people encounter the Triune God in such a way that people begin or deepen their relationship with God, even though people who encounter God may initially, temporarily, or continually reject God. Since we share the good news in hopes of people developing a relationship with God, sharing the good news is not just sharing a means to personal benefit nor is it just telling people about how to get saved, how to go to heaven, or how to access power to change the world. Receiving salvation, going to heaven, and accessing power to change the world are amazing benefits and these benefits alone point to how God deserves our total love and allegiance. Yet, God seeks not just to give people benefits; God seeks covenantal relationship with people. While this covenantal relationship includes the benefits of the covenant, covenantal relationship is primarily in the context of reciprocal love and devotion (Jn 14:15-31). Therefore,

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<sup>68</sup> Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis 1-11, The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 240.

<sup>69</sup> Green and Bakker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, 73.

as we introduce people to God, we do so by letting people know what the Triune God is like. While people can understand God's character by understanding his covenantal benefits, communication that focuses only on sharing covenantal benefits and forfeits sharing God's character can result in a shallow relationship with the Triune God. Also, since discipleship and sharing the good news are both about deepening corporate and personal relationship with God, discipleship and sharing the good news may look similar or identical.<sup>70</sup>

Sixth, the good news is universal (Acts 2:21, Ro 10:13). Jesus instructed his disciples to preach the good news to every creature (Mk 16:15) and to make disciples of all nations (Mt 28:19-20). Jesus' instructions assume that the good news is for every creature and all nations. If people or nations like the Japanese are not accepting the universal good news, perhaps the way Christians communicate the gospel should be addressed. Christians cannot control how the Japanese will respond to their message. Still, Christians can reevaluate how they present the good news. Japanese scholar Yoshiyuki Nishioka writes,

The problem is not that the Japanese are not open to Christianity, but rather that the culture of the church in Japan unconsciously excludes outsiders – “non-Christian” Japanese. A major task of missiology in this situation is to analyze the approaches of the church and to suggest new directions for Japanese church leaders.<sup>71</sup>

Similarly, Japanese scholar Noriyuki Miyake writes with the same conviction:

It is not true that Japanese do not want to believe in Christ, but they need some time to overcome their own worldviews. If we push them to decide right away, many of them cannot do so, and both we and they may have to give up.<sup>72</sup>

Both Nishioka and Miyake recognize that the current approach for communicating the good news is largely ineffective in Japan. Yet Japanese scholars continue to insist that the gospel is universal. Masao Takenaka insightfully writes, “While the essence of the gospel is universal, the ways in which it is interpreted and expressed are uniquely local.”<sup>73</sup> Therefore, let us now consider how Christians express the good news in the United States and how expressing the good news in Japan is different. Then, we can consider more specifically what to good news to share with the Japanese.

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<sup>70</sup> Stan Inouye and Cyril Nishimoto, personal conversation with author, Altadena, CA, November 19, 2012.

<sup>71</sup> Yoshiyuki Billy, Nishioka “Charles Kraft’s and Paul Hiebert’s Approaches to Worldview: Why Don’t You Build a Christian Shrine?,” in Charles Van Egen, Nancy Thomas, and Robert Gallagher, eds., *Footprints of God: A Narrative Theology of Mission* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1999), 174.

<sup>72</sup> Miyake, “A Challenge To Pentecostal Mission In Japan,” 91.

<sup>73</sup> Masao Takenaka, *God Is Rice: Asian Culture and Christian Faith*, The Risk Book Series; No. 30 (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1986), 72.

## United States Versus Japanese Gospel Presentation

Noriyuki Miyake contrasts how the good news is presented in the individualistic West and in collectivistic Japan. He writes that the gospel in the West is often presented in a way that people understand intellectually. He continues that people in the West hear the gospel, understand the gospel, and then believe the gospel.<sup>74</sup> This approach is often effective in the West where Western reason and logical progression are highly valued. While reason and logical progression are also highly valued in Japan, the Japanese rules of reason and logic are sometimes different than those of the West. Also, group belonging is generally more highly valued in Japan than in the West. As a result, Miyake suggests that Japanese belong, experience, and then believe. More specifically, the Japanese belong to the gospel community, experience the truth of the gospel in community, and then believe in the God of the gospel community.<sup>75</sup> As mentioned in the section on “Collectivistic and Individualistic Cultures,” the Japanese belong before they believe. In contrast, Americans often understand before they believe. Consequently, using the Western approach in Japan can feel foreign to the Japanese.<sup>76</sup>

The difference is the gospel-sharing approaches reflect differences in culture. On one hand, many Americans born in the United States take their primary identity as a singular person rather than taking their primary identity in a group. As a result, United States gospel presentation often invites people to repent of their sins so that they will go to heaven. This approach often focuses on the person, who repents of one’s personal sins for the personal benefit of peace and going to heaven.<sup>77</sup> On the other hand, the Japanese take their primary identity in the group – the family, the company, the school club, and so on. Also, the Japanese religious experience with Shinto and Buddhism is communal. Therefore, without addressing communal aspects of Christian faith, inviting a Japanese person to become Christian can sound foreign to the Japanese and can falsely perpetuate the idea that Christianity is a Western-only religion. In fact, the US gospel presentation of going to heaven by believing in Jesus could deter Japanese from wanting to become Christian. They could reason that they do not want to go to heaven – a place where their ancestors did not go because their ancestors did not believe in Jesus.<sup>78</sup> Personal salvation is biblical and important; however, personal salvation without corporate salvation is incomplete.

Now that we have considered the gospel message and different cultural approaches to sharing the gospel, let us consider more specifically the content of what to share.

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<sup>74</sup> Miyake, “A Challenge To Pentecostal Mission In Japan,” 91.

<sup>75</sup> Miyake, “A Challenge To Pentecostal Mission In Japan,” 91.

<sup>76</sup> Miyake, “A Challenge To Pentecostal Mission In Japan,” 91.

<sup>77</sup> Soong Chan Rah, *The Next Evangelicalism: Freeing the Church from Western Cultural Captivity* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 39-41.

<sup>78</sup> Akiko Sugimori, personal conversation with author, Pasadena, CA, September 4, 2011.

## The Big Story<sup>79</sup>

The following models one perspective on sharing the good news with the Japanese. The following is written like a script, but it is not meant to be read or memorized. Much information is included as examples of what one can share. However, much information is not included for the sake of memorization or for the sake of using all the information in a conversation. The following also suggests four aspects about the good news. These four parts include how the world is corrupted by evil, how the world was created for good, how the world was restored for better, and how we are sent into the world to heal. Since the Japanese value relationships, the following conversational pieces are recommended only in the context of trust, respect, and friendship. In the high-context culture of the Japanese, one's words will access great power and credibility when the speaker's life matches the speaker's message.

### Introduction

Let us consider the basics of what two billion people believe now and billions have believed in the past.

Great teachers like Socrates and Confucius engaged people in dialogue.<sup>80</sup> Our conversation, too, will be beneficial as we ask and answer important questions.

The following story was not first told in North America, rather this story was first told in what today is called Asia.<sup>81</sup> Still the story has implications for all people, East Asians, Southeast Asians, Europeans, Africans, and North and South Americans.

I share this story with you because the Japanese are religious people. While some Japanese may not consider themselves religious, we all notice the Japanese have kept Shinto and Buddhism tradition for over a thousand years. Also, many millions of Japanese go to shrines and temples on New Year's Day and the Japanese maintain many beautiful religious shrines and temples.<sup>82</sup> Currently, the Japanese often have Shinto birth ceremonies, Buddhist funerals, and even Christian weddings.

The Japanese seek for peace, blessing, and harmony and this is a story about such things.

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<sup>79</sup> This approach is based on James Choung, *True Story: A Christianity Worth Believing In* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2008). Choung expands 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=kCVcSiUUMhY> (accessed March 25, 2011) and "The Big Story, Part 2"

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p4V60n6KiB8&feature=related> (accessed March 25, 2011).

<sup>80</sup> The Japanese call Confucius 孔子(こうし) Cōshi.

<sup>81</sup> Ken Joseph, Jr. and Ken Joseph, Sr., *聖書の国日本 Japan's Christian Roots* (Tokyo:?), 365-366.

<sup>82</sup> Meiji Jingu, "Daily, Monthly, Annual Ceremonies," Meiji Jingu; <http://www.meijijingu.or.jp/english/ceremonies/1.html> (accessed August 31, 2012).

## Corrupted by Evil

Our story starts with an important question: as we look at our world, what do we see?

We see many beautiful things, like advances in science, the discovery of cures, the expansion of technology, the creation of beautiful art, the many tremendous stories of overcoming, and so much more. However, we also see great corruption.

*We see personal corruption.*

On March 23, 2008, Masahiro Kanagawa stabbed eight people in Tsuchiura, Ibaraki.<sup>83</sup>

On June 8, 2008, Tomohiro Kato massacred seven people and injured ten others in Akihabara.<sup>84</sup>

*We also see systemic corruption.*

Systemic corruption, which is interrelated with personal corruption, includes social, economic, political, and spiritual corruption.<sup>85</sup>

*Social Corruption*

In Japan, minors commit murders<sup>86</sup> and children face bullying at school.<sup>87</sup>

Parents abuse their children. In 2008, 128 mentally- and physically-abused children were abused to death in Japan.<sup>88</sup>

Japan faces high rates of divorce, depression, alcoholism, suicide, and *karoushi* (death from overwork).<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>83</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>84</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>85</sup> Christopher Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 2006), 12.

<sup>86</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>87</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>88</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>89</sup> Makota Ishida, "Death and Suicide from Overwork," in *Labour Law In An Era Of Globalization: Transformative Practices and Possibilities*, Joanne Conaghan, Richard Michael Fischl, and Karl Klare, eds. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 219-231.

Japan also faces low birth rates, which creates a smaller work force and fewer workers to supply future pensions.<sup>90</sup>

*Hikikomori*, a phenomenon where people isolate themselves from society, is almost totally limited to Japan. Japanese psychiatrist Dr. Tamaki Saito, one of the first clinicians to openly discuss the phenomenon, estimates that over one million Japanese suffer from *hikikomori*. Of these Japanese, approximately 80 percent are males.<sup>91</sup>

Current Japanese sex slavery corrupts families, sexuality, and male-female relationships.<sup>92</sup>

In countries like America, we see a history of war and racism.<sup>93</sup>

### *Economic Corruption*

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

In America, we see how far-reaching selfishness from people like Bernie Madoff can corrupt global economic systems.<sup>94</sup>

Also in America, investors sued Countrywide Mortgage group for "massive fraud" and "predatory lending."<sup>95</sup>

### *Political Corruption*

Japan's government has little internal accountability<sup>96</sup> and Japan has lost confidence in some politicians due to the politicians' questionable behavior.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>90</sup>Michael Zielenziger, *Shutting Out the Sun: How Japan Created Its Own Lost Generation* (New York: Doubleday, 2006).

<sup>91</sup> Zielenziger, *Shutting Out the Sun*.

<sup>92</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).

<sup>93</sup> Beverly Daniel Tatum, *Why are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?: And Other Conversations About Race* (New York: Basic Books, 2003).

<sup>94</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>95</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>96</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>97</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).



Practices of *Amakudari* (lit. “descent from heaven”), where retired government officials are given prestigious, high-paying positions in companies, are showing corruption between government and big business.<sup>98</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>99</sup>

Transparency International names Somalia, Afghanistan, Myanmar, Sudan, and Iraq as countries with the most corrupt governments.<sup>100</sup>

### *Religious Corruption*

Recent sumo scandals show match-fixing, marijuana-use, illegal gambling, and the unhealthy treatment of younger wrestlers.<sup>101</sup> Also, former grand champion Asashoryu retired after allegations of drunken violence. Historically, Sumo has reflected Japanese classical values of honor and discipline.<sup>102</sup> Sumo also has many Shinto symbols of purity yet sumo has been corrupted with impurity.<sup>103</sup>

The Japanese-born Aum cult claimed to restore original Buddhism. However, their behavior did not reflect a restoration of original Buddhism. 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.

Social, economic, political, and religious systems are made of persons. The systems affect the persons and the persons affect the system. When we look at our world, we see how personal and systemic corruption is interconnected.

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<sup>98</sup> Davies and Ikeno, *The Japanese Mind*, 27.

<sup>99</sup> Kuji T. and Yokota H., *Seiji ga Yugameru Kōkyōjigyō* [The Government Distorts the Public Works] (Tokyo: Ryokuhukan, 1996), 16, in Davies and Ikeno, *The Japanese Mind*, 27.

<sup>100</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).

<sup>101</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>102</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>103</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).

## Created for Good

While we see evil and corruption in our world, our story shows that God created the world for good. God is a loving, patient, generous, Creator God; God is the Supreme Being, the God of the whole world.<sup>104</sup> God identifies himself as “merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in love and faithfulness... (Ex 34:6).<sup>105</sup> God’s people often refer 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).

God created the world in perfect harmony and hierarchy.

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, the 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.” With this statement, we see God distinguishes between his view of creation before and after he created human beings. After God created human beings, he declared that his creation was “very good.”

God’s creation shows God’s divine attributes, but we do not believe the creation is divine itself (Romans 1:18-32).<sup>106</sup> Still, God called the world “good” and God called creation with people “very good.” God created people and the cosmos in perfect hierarchy and harmony. God taught his people to take care of the earth and animals (Gen 1-2, especially Gen 1:26-28). People were under God and under God’s appointed people were the earth and animals.

The Japanese, too, are very good.<sup>107</sup> Where do you see the goodness of the Japanese?

The goodness of the Japanese is seen in how the Japanese people value family. The Japanese honor and respect elders and they highly regard family relationships. God, too, values families

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<sup>104</sup> David Lewis, *Unseen Face of Japan* (Tunbridge Wells: Monarch, 1993), 241.

<sup>105</sup> Green and Bakker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, 51-53.

<sup>106</sup> Christopher Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible’s Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 2006), 14.

<sup>107</sup> Gen 5:1-3, Gen 9:5-6, 1 Cor 11:7, and James 3:9 affirm that after Adam and Eve disobeyed God in Gen 3, man and woman are still made in God’s image. Veli-Matti Karkkainen, “Theological Anthropology” (lecture, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, CA, August 8, 2012).

to the extent that he reveals himself to his people using a familiar family term: God reveals himself as “Father” and he calls his people “children.”

The goodness of the Japanese is seen in how the Japanese value the environment. Foreigners in Japan are often impressed with how the Japanese 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 waste (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 (UN) Framework Convention on Climate Change.<sup>108</sup>

The goodness of the Japanese is seen in how the Japanese value orderliness. The Christian Holy Writings teach 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 disastrous March 2011 earthquakes and tsunami.

In our story, God gave people a mission: take care of the creation and fill it (Gen 1:28). He gave the people a wonderful garden and gave instructions to the people. He told the man to not eat the fruit that was in the middle of the garden (Gen 2:16-17).

However, the people did not obey God and they tried to act like God. By disobeying God, people disrupted God’s perfect harmony and hierarchy and the harmony and hierarchy of the whole world. Disharmony started in people’s relationship with God, people’s relationship with each other, people’s relationship with nature, and people’s relationship to themselves. God created people so God know what is best for them. However, people began not to follow God’s ways or teachings. God created people and land for harmony, but people began harming nature and nature began harming people. God created people to live in harmony with each other but people began harming each other. God created people to live in harmony with themselves, but people began hurting themselves.

Also, when the people disobeyed God, they brought shame to themselves. This shame could have caused man and woman to admit their mistake and seek to restore their relationship with God, but instead man and woman blamed others.

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<sup>108</sup> The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change developed the Kyoto Protocol, the agreement where many industrialized countries agreed to reduce greenhouse gases. See 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).

This man and woman – our ancestors – disgraced our Father God. If we do follow God’s ways of harmony and hierarchy, we follow in the ways of our ancestors by dishonoring God. Not honoring God dishonors our people, our nation, our communities, our families, and us.<sup>109</sup>

This man and woman in our story 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. Helpful shame is based on God’s loving character and results in people restoring their relationship with God, others, creation, and themselves. False shame is based on the disharmonious notions of right and wrong that do not reflect God’s loving character. Unfortunately, every society is imprisoned by false shame.

### **Restored For Better**

In our story, even though the world was created for good and the world was corrupted by evil, God restored the world for better. We see this in Christmas.

*Christmas* is made of two words: *Christ* and *mass*. *Christ* is the title for Jesus.<sup>110</sup> *Mas*, comes from the Latin word, *missa*, which 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 fulfilling his promises, his presence with people, his restoration of all things for good, and his restoration of divine harmony and hierarchy. How did Jesus restore things for good? How did Jesus restore divine harmony and hierarchy?

Jesus did so living in divine harmony and hierarchy with God. Jesus was very good but unlike our ancestors Jesus did not disobey God. In perfect filial piety to the Father God, he kept perfect harmony and hierarchy with God. Jesus so completely obeyed the ways and teaching of God, Jesus could claim that he himself was the way to God (Jn 5:19, 14:6-7). Also, knowing Jesus is knowing God because Jesus is God’s son and in Jesus is the essence of God (Col 2:9).

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<sup>109</sup> Green and Bakker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*.

<sup>110</sup> The word *Christ* comes from the Greek word *Christos*, which means “anointed one.” The Greek word *Christos* came from the Hebrew word *Messiah*. The Hebrew word is where the Japanese get the word *Meshiya* (メシヤ) or *Meshia* (メシア). In ancient Christian Scriptures (the Old Testament), three kinds of people were anointed: priests, prophets, and kings. For many years, the people of God were expecting the special anointed one – the Christ, the Messiah – who was supposed to bring the world peace, blessings, and harmony. The Christian Holy Writings shows that Jesus was the anointed one that God’s people were waiting for. Jesus was definitely anointed: he was a priest, a prophet, and a king.

Japanese religion also has ceremonies with priests. For example, on November 22 and 23, 1990, Emperor Akihito went through an ascension ceremony after becoming Japan’s emperor, the high priest of Shinto. This ceremony, which is called the daijōsai (大嘗祭), uses rice. See Stuart D. B. Picken, *Essentials of Shinto: An Analytical Guide to Principal Teachings* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994), 82-87.

Jesus also restored divine harmony and hierarchy through the victory of good over evil. During Jesus' life, he healed people who were demon-possessed. He called out the hypocrisy of the religious power brokers. He taught people to forgive and love each other. He challenged prevalent economic injustice, which denied the dignity of impoverished people. He exposed how the government monopolized oppressive power. He challenged all people to live in divine harmony and hierarchy. Today, when we know and follow the Way, Jesus, we participate in the restored divine harmony and hierarchy.<sup>111</sup>

Jesus also showed good over evil as he challenged those who chose evil or those who were blinded by evil. To those choosing the way of evil, Jesus confronted them with the way of good – the way of love, forgiveness, and reconciliation. To those who were obsessed with power, Jesus challenged them by his example that showed that godly power came through serving others instead of serving oneself. To those blinded by evil, Jesus confronted them with their freedom to choose the way of God. Some of these people ended up following the Jesus. Some of these people rejected him and they insisted that Jesus be put to death.

Christmas shows us that God restored us for better by the victory of good over evil and the restoration of divine harmony and hierarchy. While Christmas celebrates Jesus' birth, an equally important holiday celebrated by billions around the world is Easter. For 2000 years, Easter celebrates Jesus Christ coming back to life after he was dead. Do you know what symbol captures this event?

Jesus Christ coming back to life is symbolized in the cross. Many Japanese people wear crosses for jewelry and Japanese church buildings have crosses. What is the origin of this symbol? For Romans in the first century when Jesus lived, the cross represented shame. During Jesus' time, crucifixion was shameful because the crucified person was publically executed in front of his community. Crucifixion so shamed the crucified person, Roman law prohibited Roman citizens to be crucified; only insurrectionists, foreigners, and slaves could be executed through crucifixion.<sup>112</sup>

Again, Jesus Christ, God's son, lived in perfect humility and in perfect filial piety to his Father God. Even though Jesus did nothing wrong, he experienced public shame and humiliation and "lost face." Jesus died a shameful death so that those who believe in him do not have to experience false shame.

Today, 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

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<sup>111</sup> Through the restoration of divine harmony and hierarchy, Jesus inaugurated a new humanity (Ro 5:18, 1 Cor 15:22, Col 3:9-11, Gal 3:28-29). In the past, priests, kings, and prophets were anointed. Because of Christmas, Jesus enables those who follow him to also be anointed with something more than oil; Jesus enables us to be anointed with the same Spirit that empowered Jesus (Jn 14:26; 15:26, 16:7).

<sup>112</sup> Green and Bakker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, 163.

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 from this hometown, you are not good enough.” “Unless you are the best, you are not good enough.” False shame disrupts divine harmony and hierarchy because false shame hinders our understanding and experience of God’s love. While God loves us the way we are, false shame falsely challenges this love.

We can also react to other’s 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.” “I come from this family, so I am better than other people.” “I am from this hometown, so I am better than other people.” So with these thoughts, we falsely shame and exclude others. Falsely, we say that others are not good enough or smart enough or hard-working enough. When we think of ourselves as more valuable than others, we do not show love to those that God loves. As a result, we disrupt God’s divine harmony and hierarchy.

Jesus experienced shame and knows the shame we go experience. Jesus Christ not only experienced shame on the cross, he experienced shame his whole life: being from Nazareth (John 1:46), working as a carpenter (Mt 13:55), socializing with the poor and outcasts (Mt 9:11), and being born what people considered a disgraceful marital circumstances (Matt 1:19). He was falsely accused and crucified. Why did God do this? Why did Jesus experience such shame?

God’s love expels shame.<sup>113</sup> Jesus experienced great shame to show us the love that God has for all people. In order to show this love, the Father God experienced great anguish as he saw his innocent, pure, and holy son shamed. Jesus Christ, too, experienced great pain as he experienced shame and execution. However, the Father God and Jesus Christ experienced this pain out of great love for all people. As a result, the cross went from a first century symbol of shame to an eternal symbol of God’s love for all people. Now, God offers people a paradox – as we humbly give our lives back to God and follow God’s ways, we experience the God’s perfect love.

Jesus teaches people to repent. Repenting means turning or returning. When we repent, we return to harmony with God, with others, with creation, and with ourselves.<sup>114</sup> Repenting can include changing how you think about yourself and others; repenting may be viewing yourself and others as God sees you: as creations made in God’s image. Through God’s love shown in Jesus Christ, people can fulfill their original intention of reflecting God’s glory and living in harmony.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Green and Bakker: *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, 163.

<sup>114</sup> Rob Bell, “Beginning in the Beginning,” (lecture, Poets, Prophets, Preachers Seminar, Devos Performance Hall, Grand Rapids, MI, July 5-7, 2009).

<sup>115</sup> Kraus, *Jesus Our Lord*, 217.

Since Jesus restores divine harmony and hierarchy, Jesus purifies us and removes our uncleanness and impurities.<sup>116</sup>

### **Sent Together to Heal**

In our story, the world was created for good, the world was corrupted by evil, and the world was restored for better. Also, we were sent us into the world to heal. In relationship with God, God restores us— physically, emotionally, relationally, and spiritually. In relationship with God, he restores others through us. He sends us to heal others and to heal systems of brokenness. God heals through us, even if his people just begun a relationship with him and even if his people have only begun to experience God’s healing.

The world’s problems are so big that we need Jesus Christ and his resources to overcome these problems. The world’s problems include poverty. We have enough food for every person; however, people die every day of starvation or sickness. The world’s problems include slavery. Award-winning journalist David Batstone’s book *Not for Sale* 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>117</sup> In Japan, sex slavery is multi-million dollar business.

When Jesus lived on earth, he demonstrated authority when he healed people who were sick (Mt 9:35, 12:22), he controlled nature (Mk 4:39), and he freed people of evil spirits (Mk 5:1ff, Lu 8:27ff). After Jesus was resurrected, Jesus Christ says that all authority on heaven and on earth has been given to him (Mt 28:19). Since Jesus Christ has authority on heaven and earth, his children can call on Jesus Christ’s authority and minister like Jesus Christ (Mt 28:18-20, Lu 10:1ff). We access Jesus Christ’s resources when we do what Jesus Christ taught, we live in harmony with God, and we seek to heal others.

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

Billions have joined this movement to bring healing to the world. Up to more than a million Japanese joined this movement, even before America was established.<sup>118</sup> After America was established, Japanese like author Miura Ayako, religious philosopher and writer Uchimura Kanzo, social activist and peace leader Kagawa Toyohiko, and educator Nitobe Inazo joined the

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<sup>116</sup> David Lewis, *Unseen Face of Japan* (Tunbridge Wells: Monarch, 1993), 240.

<sup>117</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>118</sup> Joseph, Jr. and Joseph, Sr., *聖書の国日本 Japan’s Christian Roots*, 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), Lee, *Rediscovering Japan, Reintroducing Christendom*, 119-122.

movement.<sup>119</sup> Scholars who joined this movement include Botanist Oga Ichiro, economist and University of Tokyo President Yanaihara Tadao,<sup>120</sup> political scientist and University of Tokyo President Nanbara Shigeru, son of a samurai and founder of Doshisha University Niijima Jō,<sup>121</sup> Major League Baseball Player So Taguchi,<sup>122</sup> and professional golfer Tsuneyuki “Tommy” Nakajima. Will you consider joining the movement?

### **Mission Reflections**

We have just considered a gospel message tailored to the collectivistic, high-context, shame-based culture of Japan. The importance of tailoring the good news to Asian cultures opens up significant opportunities. Asia currently provides residence for about four billion people.<sup>123</sup> When classifying land masses into seven continents, Asia is the largest.<sup>124</sup> About two thirds of the thirty seven least evangelized countries are in Asia.<sup>125</sup> Many of the thirty seven least-evangelized countries are governed by concepts of shame more so than guilt.<sup>126</sup> In light of these facts, the opportunity for developing atonement that addresses shame is also tremendous.<sup>127</sup> Doing so, would reflect the witness of Scripture, which mentions shame more than guilt. As quoted earlier, Timothy C. Tennent, President and Professor of Asbury Theological Seminary, writes, “the term *guilt* and its various derivatives occur 145 times in the Old Testament and 10 times in the New Testament, whereas the term *shame* and its derivatives occur nearly 300 times in the Old Testament and 45 times in the New Testament.”<sup>128</sup> The radiant saving significance of the cross can be dimmed if the Church corners atonement into an interpretation of only guilt and not shame.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Nitobe Inazo’s face was pictured on Japan’s D Series 5000 yen bill.

<sup>120</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>121</sup> Doshisha University, “About Us,” Doshisha University, <http://www.doshisha.ac.jp/english/information/overview/about.php> (accessed April 22, 2011).

<sup>122</sup> American Trey Hillman, coach of the 2006 Japan Series champions the Hokkaido Nippon-Ham Fighters, also joined the movement.

<sup>123</sup> Population Reference Bureau, “2008 World Population Sheet,” Population Reference Bureau, [http://www.prb.org/pdf08/08wpds\\_eng.pdf](http://www.prb.org/pdf08/08wpds_eng.pdf) (accessed March 7, 2012).

<sup>124</sup> The World Factbook, “World,” The Central Intelligence Agency, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/xx.html> (accessed March 7, 2012).

<sup>125</sup> In Central Asia, these countries include Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan; in South Asia, these countries include Afghanistan, Bhutan, Maldives, Pakistan, and Bangladesh; in East and Southeast Asia, these countries include Japan, Cambodia, Thailand, Mongolia, and Laos; in the Middle East, these countries include Yemen, Iran, Turkey, Syria, Iraq, Israel (Palestine), Azerbaijan, Oman, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia. See Patrick Johnstone, *The Future of the Global Church: History, Trends, and Possibilities* (Colorado Springs, CO: Biblica, 2011), 165.

<sup>126</sup> Bruce Nicholls, “The Role of Shame and Guilt in a Theology of Cross-Cultural Mission,” *Evangelical Review of Theology* 25.3 (2001): 231-241; Tennent, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity*, 227-229.

<sup>127</sup> D.R.W. Wood, *New Bible Dictionary*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Leicester: IVP, 1996), “Shame”; Lowell Noble, “Shame Versus Guilt: A New Framework for Evangelism and Fellowship in Wesleyanism,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* vol 16 no 1, 55; John W. Ellison, *Nelson's Complete Concordance of the Revised Standard Version Bible*, rev. ed. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1972), s.vv. “Shame,” “Shamed,” “Shameful,” “Shamefully,” “Shameless,” “Shamelessly,” “Shames.”

<sup>128</sup> Tennent, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity*, 213.

<sup>129</sup> Baker and Green, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, 110-111.



Asians who are part of honor-shame societies have many assets for considering the salvific work of Jesus Christ. One asset among the many is the ability to interpret New Testament scripture through a lens that is similar to the first century's shame-influenced worldview. First century Mediterranean society held honor as one of their central values. As a result, shame, which works in tandem with honor, greatly influenced first century Mediterranean society.<sup>130</sup> In order to interpret the significance of Jesus' death and resurrection, understanding honor and shame is extremely helpful.<sup>131</sup> Many Asians have such an understanding of honor and shame. Another asset of Asians is their collectivistic worldview, which was the worldview of the Old and New Testament authors and their audiences. Asians from collectivistic worldviews can understand aspects of Scripture's original authors and audience because they share similar ways of interpreting the world. Interestingly, approximately 80 percent of the global population is collectivistic. Most of the 20 percent of the population that is individualistic is from Northern European and Northern European immigrants in the US, Canada, and Australia.<sup>132</sup> Collectivistic cultures were the only cultures, until individualistic culture arose as early as the sixteenth or seventeenth century.<sup>133</sup> However, much theology has been formed by people in individualistic cultures. Consequently, theology from collectivistic cultures can aid the global church in understanding our Holy Scriptures. Will the global church come along side the people of the least evangelized countries and walk with them as they consider the saving significance of Jesus' death and resurrection?

### **Further Research**

This paper looks primarily at the three major cultural differences between Japanese and American culture. Future research outlining cultural differences between Korea and Japan will be a helpful study, especially since Koreans are the one of the largest minority groups in Japan and several hundred Korean missionaries minister in Japan.<sup>134</sup> Though Korea and Japan are both neighboring East Asian countries, Korea and Japan are on different points on the cultural spectrum. Using the categories used in this paper, for example, Koreans are generally more collectivistic than Japanese, even though both are collectivistic cultures.<sup>135</sup> The church in Korea and Japan will greatly benefit from future research that outlines current Korean and Japanese cultural differences as well as their implications in sharing the gospel with the Japanese.

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<sup>130</sup> Richard L. Rohrbaugh, "Honor the Core Value in the Biblical World" in *Understanding the Social World of the New Testament*, Dietmar Neufeld and Richard E DeMaris, eds. (New York, NY: Routledge, 2010), 110-113;

<sup>131</sup> Dietmar Neufeld and Richard E DeMaris, *Understanding the Social World of the New Testament*, xii-xiii.

<sup>132</sup> Malina, "Collectivism in Mediterranean Culture," in *Understanding the Social World of the New Testament*, eds. Neufeld and. DeMaris, 18.

<sup>133</sup> Malina, "Collectivism in Mediterranean Culture," in *Understanding the Social World of the New Testament*, eds. Neufeld and. DeMaris, 19.

<sup>134</sup> In 2000, approximately 450 Korean missionaries ministered in Japan and approximately 350 Korean churches gathered in Japan. Further research in determining the current the number of Korean churches and missionaries in Japan would also be helpful. See Wright and Mitsumori, *Operation Japan*, 202.

<sup>135</sup> Gudykunst, *Bridging Differences*, 316.

Further research also includes sharing the information in this paper with Japanese people. After writing this paper, I met with Fuller Evangelism Professor Richard Peace to discuss the next steps for this paper. I sought Dr. Peace's feedback because he heavily influenced this paper through his class, "EV525 Contemporary Culture and Evangelism."<sup>136</sup> Dr. Peace recommended that I hold focus groups with Japanese Christians, where I could hear their thoughts on the material in this paper. He also recommend I find a Japanese non-Christian conversation partner to get their impression about the world being corrupted by evil, the world being made for good, the world being restored by better, and us being sent to the world to heal.<sup>137</sup> In addition to the Japanese people consulted for this paper, I look forward to hearing more from Japanese people about their thoughts on this paper's content. I also look forward to the feedback of others committed to the good news being preached to every creature.

## **Conclusion**

God longs to communicate his good news to all nations. When communicating the good news, the Apostle Paul's word choice reflects how the Athenian's worldview differed from the worldview of his Jewish audience in Psidian Antioch. 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. These worldviews are influenced by three key differences: collectivistic and individualistic cultures, high-context and low-context cultures, and shame and guilt cultures. Differing worldviews have positives and negatives and no country has a perfect worldview. Also, people in the same country may have the same worldview, but they express the worldview very differently through their actions. Assuming superiority or inferiority of another culture can cloud how cross-cultural ministers experience Japan or any nation. If cross-cultural ministers focus on determining one culture to be better than another culture, these ministers can miss how people in all cultures reflect God's image. However, ministers will benefit by recognizing the differences between their culture and the other cultures. By doing so, ministers can effectively communicate the good news of Jesus Christ through culturally-specific, audience-centered communication.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Peace has also heavily influenced global Christian thought with his prolific writing. Peace's books have been translated into Korean, Chinese, Spanish, Portuguese, Afrikaans, Zulu, and Sotho. See Fuller Theological Seminary, "Faculty," Fuller Theological Seminary, <http://www.fuller.edu/academics/faculty/richard-peace.aspx> (accessed December 24, 2012).

<sup>137</sup> Richard V. Peace, personal conversation with author, Fuller Theological Seminary, April 25, 2012.

<sup>138</sup> A special thanks to editorial comments of Don Wright, Peter Chun, Derrek Moore, Nick Timoshuk, and Rie Manabe-Kim. I also appreciate the insightful feedback of Stan Inouye and Cyril Nishimoto.

## **Appendix 1: What About Jesus' Example?**

The Apostle Paul follows Jesus' example of audience-centered communication. To the Pharisee Nicodemus, who understood salvation based on birth or conversion into the people of Israel, Jesus told him that no one can see the Kingdom of God without being born from above (John 3:3). To the woman at her ancestor's well, Jesus presented himself as the living water (John 4:10). To those whose staple food was bread and whose ancestors received manna from God, Jesus presents himself as the bread of life (John 6:35ff). To his disciples who were facing the night, Jesus said I am the light of the world (John 9:5ff, see also John 8:12ff). To Martha, who inquired about the resurrection in relation to her brother Lazarus' death, Jesus presented himself as the resurrection and the life (John 11:25). To Thomas, who was asking the way to where Jesus was going, Jesus presents himself as the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6). To those living in an agrarian culture, Jesus presented himself as the gate for the sheep (John 10:7), the Good Shepherd (John 10:11ff), and I am the true vine (John 15:1).<sup>139</sup> Jesus Christ again employs audience-specific communication in Revelation 2-3. Instructed by Jesus Christ, the author of Revelation John writes to seven churches in Asia, churches in different circumstances. Christ tailors his message to his audience, even though the letters to the churches use a similar format.

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<sup>139</sup> Eric Christensen, "Jesus Christ and Audience-centered Communication" (lecture, Fuller Seminary, Pasadena, CA, April 5, 2011).

## Appendix 2: A Theological Reflection on Collectivism and Individualism

God made human kind in his image (Gen 1:27). Perhaps one aspect in which human beings reflect God's image is how we reflect the Triune God's community and personhood. God is communal in the sense that God is one and God is three persons – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In other words, the three persons of the Trinity comprise a holy community and the three persons in the Trinity have distinct personhood. Similarly, God designed human beings in the image of God – as distinct persons in community.

With the Triune God as our example, true community necessitates personhood. Therefore, a person deviates from their divine image when a person loses his or her personhood - either by sacrificing personal identity or communal identity. When a person only maintains group identity, the person loses their distinct personal identity. As a result, the community defaults from true community because true community necessitates people with distinct personhood.<sup>140</sup> On the other hand, a community comprised of people with only personal identity is not true community. A true community requires people with both corporate and personal identity.

Japanese collectivism often sacrifices personal identity while Western individualism often sacrifices corporate identity. Concurrently, some Western philosophers perpetuate an ever-increasing extreme individualism as some western philosophers do not uphold concepts of personhood and community that are rooted in the Trinity. Rather, some Western philosophers perpetuate extreme individualism, which is created in the image of the unholy trinity, “me, myself, and I.”<sup>141</sup> For Japanese and United States communities to fully reflect God's Triune image, persons must balance their corporate and personal identity; cultures must balance aspects of their expressions of collectivism and individualism.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> I do not write that human beings reflect God's image through communal and *individual* identity. I use the word *person* instead of *individual* because *individual* misconstrues how God created human beings in community. Rather than *individual identity*, the words *personal identity* better captures how God created persons in community. Also, community affects a person's identity and a person's identity affects communal identity. While I distinguish *person* and *individual*, Rah uses the distinction *individuation* and *individualism*. See Rah, *The Next Evangelicalism*, 31-33.

<sup>141</sup> Rah, *The Next Evangelicalism*, 28.

<sup>142</sup> Damian Williams, personal conversation with author, Pasadena, CA, November 7, 2011.

### Appendix 3: A Theological Reflection on Shame and Guilt

Developments in a theological understanding on shame and guilt have been done by a number of scholars.<sup>143</sup> For example, theologian C. Norman Kraus challenges his readers to see how God provides a standard for shame and guilt that transcends cultures. Since people are created by God, God calls his people into relationship and accountability. God creates the standard of relationship and accountability, which is founded on God's holy, just, loving, merciful, and graceful character. God reveals his character and standard to people through scripture. Consequently, Kraus reasons that shame and guilt are not based on subjective standards.

Furthermore, theologian and ethicist Lewis Smedes draws the distinction between healthy and unhealthy shame.<sup>144</sup> Smedes suggests that healthy shame is a voice from our true self calling us to align ourselves with the divine design and dignity that God created in us. In contrast, unhealthy shame is a voice from our false self calling us to false ideals. These false ideals come from sources like secular culture, graceless religion, and unaccepting parents. Smedes writes that people do not deserve to experience unhealthy shame.<sup>145</sup> Using Smedes' distinctions and Kraus' observations, I add to the conversation that healthy shame and guilt develops from breaching relationship with God. God created people to be in relationship with him. Using Smedes' wording, God created our "true self" to be in relationship with God. However, people veer from their true selves as they veer from the covenantal relationship God established with people. God's people breach their covenantal relationship with God by placing above God priorities like fame, family, money, success, and human relationships. God lovingly outlines the covenantal agreements that facilitate relationship with him. God does so because he longs to be in relationship with people and because he is holy and he calls his covenant people to holiness. Therefore, healthy shame and guilt is designed to draw people back into right behavior and right relationship with God, others, self, and the environment. Still, unhealthy shame and guilt can develop based on human standards.<sup>146</sup> To distinguish between God's standards and human standards, let us turn to scripture.

Christians have used the term *canon* of scripture to identify the writings they recognize are authoritative for Christian faith and practice. *Canon* comes from the Greek word meaning

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<sup>143</sup> Flanders in *Global Dictionary of Theology*, s.v. "shame"; Lewis B. Smedes, *Shame and Grace: Healing the Shame We Don't Deserve* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1993); Lewis, *Unseen Face of Japan*, Green and Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*; Tennent, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity*.

<sup>144</sup> The first century Mediterranean societies also distinguished between healthy and unhealthy shame. See Rohrbaugh, "Honor the Core Value in the Biblical World" in *Understanding the Social World of the New Testament*, Neufeld and DeMaris, eds., 112-113.

<sup>145</sup> Smedes, *Shame and Grace*, 31-44.

<sup>146</sup> "Toxic shame," "false shame," "undeserved shame" are another helpful ways to describe unhealthy shame. See Smedes, *Shame and Grace*, 37.

“standard” and the canon of scripture teaches the standard of Christian faith.<sup>147</sup> In the canon of scripture, God’s standard of shame and guilt undergirds entire collection of canonical writings. In the Old Testament, God clearly outlines his standards of shame and guilt in the Israelites social and religious teachings, with the Ten Commandments as the central teachings. When people break God’s commandments, God intends his people to experience guilt and shame. God intends the shame and guilt to cause people to turn away from being disobedient and to turn people away from the prohibited and damaging behavior. This shame and guilt is healthy because it reorients God’s people towards him and turns people away from evil. For example, when a person breaches God’s teaching, God instructs the Israelites to deal with the resulting taboo.<sup>148</sup> The Israelites usually do so through excluding the tabooed person for some specified time period. For more severe breaches, God requires more severe actions. When a person commits murder, for an extreme example, the community takes responsibility to ensure that the murder realizes that he or she is shamed and guilty before God. Then the Old Testament teaching gives specific ways to bring shame and guilt on the murder, namely purging the evil from the community through capital punishment. Since God intends his law to facilitate his reign over his land and people, healthy shame and guilt results from breaking God’s standard. Let us note that the Old Testament covenantal responses to breaking God’s standard only annul shame and guilt but do not forgive them. Also, Old Testament reactions to breaking God’s teaching are not to earn grace; rather, obedience to God’s teaching is an expression of being in a covenantal, grace-filled relationship with God (Deut 7:7ff).

The New Testament reaffirms God’s standards of healthy shame and guilt by reaffirming the Old Testament’s teaching. The Gospel writer Matthew demonstrates how Jesus Christ reorients God’s people to the covenantal relationship that God intended in the Old Testament. Jesus Christ does so by declaring that the entire Old Testament law is summed up in two relational commands: love God and love people (Mt 22:37-40; see also Mark 12:30-31, Lu 10:27). Jesus Christ also addresses how religious rulers missed the point of God’s teaching by focusing on the letter of law rather than the spirit of law. For example, in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5-7), Matthew shows how Jesus Christ interprets some of the Ten Commandments. Here, Jesus Christ states that he does not come to abolish God’s law but that he has come to fulfill it.<sup>149</sup> Through fulfilling the law, Jesus Christ again points to the intentions behind the commandment. Though the New Testament affirms the Old Testament’s healthy shame and

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<sup>147</sup> Stanley James Grenz, David Guretzki, and Cherith Fee Nordling *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1999), s.v. “canon.”

<sup>148</sup> “Taboo” translates the word often translated into English as “unclean” or “impure” because the Hebrew word *טמא* carries the nuance of presence rather than lack. See John Goldingay, *Numbers and Deuteronomy for Everyone* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press), 205.

<sup>149</sup> Among the various interpretation of Jesus’ statement, “fulfilling the law” cannot be interpreted as abolishing the law. Such an interpretation goes against the way Jesus prefaces his statement.

guilt, the New Testament clearly offers forgiveness while the Old Testament only offered annulment of shame and guilt.<sup>150</sup>

Moreover, Jesus employs healthy shame and guilt to those who break the intention behind God's covenant. Again, shame addresses the person while guilt addresses the action. Soon before being crucified, Jesus Christ addresses both the Pharisees and the Pharisees' behavior. In Mt 23, Jesus addressed them as he calls them "You hypocrites"; "You blind guides"; "You snakes! You brood of vipers"; "For you are like whitewashed tombs." Jesus also addresses their behavior by showing how the Pharisees love to be called "Rabbi," love the place of honor at banquets, and how everything they do is for people to see. Like an Old Testament prophet, Jesus Christ uses seven woes that bring judgment on the Pharisees. Like Old Testament prophets, Jesus Christ does so that the Pharisees will repent and the woes will not come true.

In Revelation, Jesus Christ again employs shame- and guilt-inducing language when addressing the Laodiceans. Christ severely criticizes them by calling them "wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked" (Rev 3:17) and he addresses their behavior by speaking against their prideful self-sufficiency. Christ recognizes that they have shame and they should cover it (Rev 3:18). He does not treat shame like an inferior response to guilt nor does he view their experience of shame as primitive. On the contrary, Jesus exposes how the Laodiceans should be experiencing shame and they are not. Jesus intends to shame them so that they will repent (Rev 3:19).

Jesus' approach with shame and guilt is summed up well in James' Epistle: "God is opposed to the proud but gives grace to humble" (Ja 4:6 NRSV). To cause people to turn to God, Jesus shames people and exposes the guilt of the proud and unrepentant. To those who humbly experience shame and guilt, Jesus shows grace and comforts them. For example, one criminal on the cross comes to Jesus in contrition and Jesus promises the criminal that he would join Jesus in paradise. The other criminal mocks Jesus and Jesus does not appear to invite this criminal to paradise (Lu 23:43). Twentieth-century rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel's words characterize Jesus' approach to people as a rabbi. Rabbi Heschel is quoted as saying that the job of the rabbi is to "comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable."<sup>151</sup> Rabbi Jesus' ministry seems to employ this job description.

Ironically, Jesus experienced great shame, both by following God's standards and by breaking human standards. The religious elite tried to kill him, his hometown rejected him, his family was embarrassed by him, one of his disciples rebuked him, and one of his disciples betrayed him. The ultimate shame, however, was dying on a cross. The cross was indeed

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<sup>150</sup> The New Testament also shows that God fulfill his promise of a new covenant (Jer 31:31, Heb 8:8, 9:15, 12:24; Lu 22:20, 1 Cor 11:25, 2 Cor 3:6).

<sup>151</sup> Neshamah Center, "R. Abraham Joshua Heschel, z"l," Neshamah Center, <http://www.neshamah.net/2010/01/r-abraham-joshua-heschel-zl.html> (accessed September 1, 2011).

painful, yet its pain was not exclusively physical. Part of the cross' pain was the social dishonor of the cross (Du 21:22-23). The deemed criminal hung exposed and immobile, except for uncontrollable bowel movement, which stained the crucified person's lower extremities. Due to the shame of the cross, slaves, foreigners, and insurrectionist were crucified, Roman citizens were not.<sup>152</sup>

In addition, the Apostle Paul follows Jesus' example of using healthy shame and guilt that was based on God's standards. The Apostle Paul shows how God uses shame, and how God's shame differs from human reasoning. Referring to the cross, the Apostle Paul tells the Corinthians that God shamed those who were wise and strong in the worldly sense (1 Cor 1:27, 29). In his reasoning, Paul shows how God's ways differed from people's ways, namely that the cross did not fit with Greek or Hebrew understanding of divinity. For the Jews, it was a stumbling block that God could become man. For the Greeks, it was foolishness that man could be God (1 Cor 1:23).<sup>153</sup>

Contemporary Japan and ancient Israel have a number of cultural similarities. Kraus notes that in the Bible, "[t]he concepts of ritual purity and uncleanness rules for the segregation of social classes and foreigners, attitudes towards women and sexual relationships, views of disease and death, exile as a form of punishment-all point toward a shame rather than a guilt orientation."<sup>154</sup> Similarly, the Japanese view shame and guilt as resulting from contaminating themselves and their communities. The Japanese also have values that reflect God's standards. They are diligent, conscientious, and they seek to honor their family. The Japanese also value taking care of the environment. As a collectivistic society, they often regard others before themselves as they place group goals above individual goals.

However, they veer from God's standards on a number of issues – idol worship, work environment, alcoholism, abortion, divorce, and much more. For example, in Japan work and academic performance often determine personal value. As a result, school and work environments breed stress and rob peace. The result of this stress is becoming evident in medical literature. In 1982, Japanese physicians published research which used the term, *karoushi* (過勞死), which is translated "death from overwork." Death from overwork is a rising phenomenon in Japan. Exactly how many are affected by *karoushi* is difficult to determine. However, in 1998, lawyers and physicians established the *Karoushi Hotline*. During the first four years, the hotline

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<sup>152</sup> Green and Bakker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, 163.

<sup>153</sup> Veli-Matti Karkkainen, personal correspondence, November 19, 2011.

<sup>154</sup> Kraus, *Jesus Christ Our Lord*, 214.



received close to 5,000 calls, almost half of which dealt with death.<sup>155</sup> Certainly, at times, the Japanese work ethic has degraded into being unethical.<sup>156</sup>

As Japan deviates from God's standards, they use unhealthy shame to conform their society to their human standards. This shame alienates people who do not conform to the unhealthy standard. Alienation is particularly poignant in a collectivistic society where personal identity is primarily derived from group identity. Alienation removes the person from his or her primary source of identity.

What is the good news for the Japanese? One aspect of the good news is that Jesus Christ knows the shame they experience. He was excluded from his family; he was abandoned by his followers; he suffered a violent and shameful death after being tried on false charges. Jesus experienced the shame that the Japanese experience so that they do not have to live in unhealthy shame. Jesus dealt with unhealthy, alienating shame by taking it to the cross. However, God showed his defeat over alienating shame by raising Jesus from the dead. Therefore, God calls the Japanese to turn to him, which includes viewing themselves as God sees them. A divinely influenced self-image may differ greatly from a self-image formed by Japanese society. God calls the Japanese to see themselves through the revelation of divine love, namely that the Japanese are made in God's image. God did not give us his image as if he would take it away. Our fundamental essence is being created in God's image. As God's image bearers, the Japanese fulfill "God's standard" by accepting his unconditional love for us. While Japanese society excludes people who do not meet human standards, God is radically inclusive. Scripture uses inclusive family language, like calling God "Father" and his people "children." God is also radically inclusive in that he entrusts his Holy Spirit to those who follow him, and he includes us in his mission of love. As the Japanese accept God's invitation into the divine family, the Japanese can become truly Japanese because they fulfill the way in which God designed them.

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<sup>155</sup> Ishida, "Death and Suicide from Overwork," in *Labour Law In An Era Of Globalization: Transformative Practices and Possibilities*, Conaghan, Fischl, and Klare, eds., 220.

<sup>156</sup> Arthur Rouzer, "The Old Testament Writings Addressing Uncertainty in Japan," Final Paper for "OT500 Writings as Introduction to the Old Testament" (Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, CA, 2011).

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