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# David Robison:

## It's Christmas time in the City

### Two weeks in December

In Tokyo, millions of people bustle through crowded train stations, flooding through department stores decorated with snowy, festive scenes, and lights everywhere; it would appear that Christmas has indeed arrived in Japan. However upon closer inspection, it can be discovered that something is missing. Underneath the flashy exterior, the heart and soul of Christmas is nowhere to be found. In Japan Christmas is not a holiday to remember Christ's birth ~ the day God came down to earth to bring us peace, joy and hope when all seemed lost - no, in Japan it is just another marketing gimmick, a western holiday that puts people in the mood to buy things. The whole holiday got off to a bad start, but it's a start none the less. The fact that Tokyo is virtually enveloped in Christmas trees, stars, fake snow and ornaments means that everyone knows that its Christmas, they just don't know what it is. One thing that the Christmas seasons of Japan and the West share in common is that it is a perfect time for the church to reach out to those who are lost, depressed, struggling and or seeking. This was one reason

I was in Japan for two and a half weeks in December.

The other was... well you see, there's this girl. In fact if you look over to the right you can see a picture of her next to me. In the US, we got engaged about six months ago, but in Japan, as seems to often be the case, they do things a little differently, and as you can imagine, their customs don't exactly match up very well with ours. So in an effort to make things fit as much as possible Tomo and I had an engagement ceremony at her home church while I was in town. This consisted of us getting all dressed up, and getting up in front of the church and promising our intention to get married and remain pure. There was some other stuff, but it was all in Japanese, so I don't remember it that well. In addition to that, I spent my first week in Japan hanging out with Tomo (who I hadn't seen in 5 months), her family, and my brother and his wife .

The second week was devoted to participating in a Jesus Film Project Christmas Outreach. Our team of 12 worked with Tomo's Church, and CCC



Japan, to distribute 16,500 multimedia CDs. This is the fifth time I have had the privilege of being involved in this particular project. It is very much a large scale outreach. The idea is to flood Tokyo with these little CDs, each one a small ray of light in a place wrapped in spiritual darkness. The CDs contain Christmas songs, and a tract which explains what Christmas is really about. When played on a computer, clips of the Jesus Film in Japanese can be

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A Japanese Christmas advertisement

# Christmas in Japan

by Tomo Takahashi

Christmas is a big deal in Japan. Everyone knows Christmas and everyone gets excited about Christmas. I spent last Christmas in the U.S. and noticed many similarities between the way people in America and people in Japan celebrate Christmas. Shopping malls and department stores put up Christmas decorations and start playing Christmas songs well before December, people are urged to spend money on Christmas trees, Christmas cakes, Christmas cards, Christmas presents, etc. etc., and children are told that Santa Claus will bring them presents on Christmas Eve while they're asleep if they're good. (And the same thing happens here; kids actually know who Santa is!)

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viewed. The packet also comes with an invitation to attend a Christmas Service or outreach event in the area it's given out.

Every year I hear about people who received the CD in a previous year, and since each year an entirely new CD is produced, they look forward to getting the new one. Through a project like this, I believe that God is working, little by little, to bring people to Himself. When only one in a 500 people are Christians, most people have little exposure to the gospel. Contrast this with the US where virtually every person is "exposed" to Christianity to varying degrees. Through this project, tens of thousands every year are likewise "exposed" to the gospel.

And right about there is where the two, seemingly unrelated purposes of my trip converge. It's all about spreading the gospel to people who don't know anything about it. I got to spend time in ministry, and I got to spend time with my fiancé. It was a small taste of things to come. I look forward with much anticipation to the day when Tomo and I will be married, living in Japan, and working alongside one another, the Japanese Church, and other Christians from around the world, to be a part of God's work of reaching the Japanese for Christ. This entire trip was amazing, even if it only serves to increase my desire to go back for more. I'm so very grateful that it is precisely in this direction that God is leading me.

You may wonder why a dominantly non-Christian country makes a big deal out of Jesus's birthday. To be precise, they are not excited about a Savior being born, not exactly. If it's not about Jesus, what are they all excited about? To be honest, I don't know. If you go up to a typical Japanese person who is getting ready for Christmas and ask what all the excitement is about, he or she will probably answer; "Why, that's a good question, I've always thought I was supposed to do all these things in December but why am I doing it? I don't even know! But it's fun and all so I don't care much either."

That was the biggest difference I noticed between American Christmas and Japanese Christmas. Most Japanese people don't know the meaning of Christmas, not even as a piece of knowledge. From my experience, most Japanese people know that it's a Christian holiday and some of them know it's a celebration for the birth of Jesus Christ. What they don't know is the significance of it. In Japan, Jesus Christ is very well known mostly as a very good person who founded Christianity. Very few people know that He is the Son of God who was born as a human being to be crucified on the cross in order to save the world from sin. For the majority of Japanese people, it is only some saint's birthday made to be an excuse to spend some money and have some fun.

Another difference I noticed was that while Christmas in America is more about families, it is more about romantic dates in Japan. As soon as you start noticing Christmas-related products and ads in town, you also start seeing magazine headlines like; "How to get a boyfriend / girlfriend before Christmas" or "Planning a perfect Christmas date", or even "A good way to lose weight before Christmas!". I hung out with my friends from high school a couple weeks ago and they complained that the world was making them feel like they're losers if they didn't have a date on Christmas Eve. I've heard that sometimes people get a boyfriend / girlfriend just for Christmas purpose and it usually only lasts till Valentine's Day, another time of the year when they need a date.

Without its true meaning, Christmas is degraded into a completely materialistic, maybe even hedonistic event. The true significance of Christmas must be made known in this country. And your support in this ministry is needed! Philippians 2:5-11

## Prayer Requests



- That many of the Japanese who received a CD during the Jesus Film outreach will attend Christmas services at a local Church.
- That wedding plans will go smoothly and that we'll be able to work out all the Visa issues concerning Tomo coming to live in the US after we're married.
- Pray for Tomo as she finishes up her senior year back at ICU in Tokyo
- Pray for more supporters. I'm behind in my support goals at the moment, so pray that God will give me lots of people to talk to and share this ministry with.

If you are interested in supporting me, please fill out a yellow promise card and mail it to:

SEND  
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Farmington, MI 48332

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