

may
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David Robison:

On the brink of something large

Partners.

And you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving, except you only. Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again. Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit. I have received full payment, and more. I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God. And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. -Philippians 4:15-19

Missions has never been an individual endeavor. I continually have to remind myself of that as I struggle through this process of raising the needed financial support to go to Japan as a missionary. Yet despite the difficulty it occasionally poses, this is how God designed it to work. Missions is a coordinated effort between all His people, serving in different capacities, with the common goal of reaching the entire earth with the message of the gospel. It is a

good thing that so large a mission is not laid on the shoulders of any one individual.

For my part, God is calling me to go to Japan, a country which desperately needs to hear the message of the gospel. The Japanese need to hear who Christ is, they need to hear what He has done, and of the salvation He offers. But given a random sample of 1000 Japanese, statistics tell us only two of them would know Christ. Certainly we would have to conclude that those two could use some help in reaching the other 998. And that's where we come in. I'll go, but in order for me to get there, I'll need perhaps hundreds of people partnering with me financially. When I step foot on Japanese soil, I will not be representing my own efforts, but those of Christ, and the hundreds He calls to partner with me. I believe that the spiritual rewards of the work I will do will be shared by the people who stay behind and send me off, while all the praise and glory will go to Christ, who has brought us all together in this purpose.

Some of you have already decided to partner with me. You're on my team so to speak, supporting me financially and pray-



ing for me. I can't thank you enough, and I have been so humbled to see your enthusiastic support.

To the rest of you, I'd like to extend this opportunity, to also join this team, and partner with us to reach out to as many Japanese people as God will put me in touch with, to give financially so that I can serve over there, and to join in prayer for the work that is going on, and for the souls of the lost.

15%

Promised Monthly Support

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%



Okuri-bi: sending fire

(Partners, contd. From page 1)

The reason I am not there now is because I do not have enough financial support for the mission ahead. This will be a long term assignment, quite likely for the rest of my life. Japanese society is nothing if not cautious. Discipleship and church planting is often a process that spans many years, and to move to Japan for that length of time I need a team of committed individuals giving on a consistent basis. SEND, the organization I will be going through handles this primarily by facilitating monthly giving. I am seeking many individuals and churches to commit to giving monthly. SEND with their many years of experience has determined the needed monthly support to keep a missionary in Japan in full time ministry. I would like to invite you to consider supporting me on a monthly basis.

Currently, I have about 15% of my needed monthly support. My goal is to reach 100% of my needed support before Tomo joins SEND next summer, after we are married. At that point, we'll have to raise additional support for her. Once that is done, we will go to Japan. In other words, as soon as we raise the needed support (or perhaps more accurately, as soon as God provides it), we're going to Japan. It's really as simple as that

Enclosed is a yellow promise card, which you can use to indicate your commitment to partnering with me. If you want to be a part of missions in Japan, please do so. Also, if you'd like to talk to me in person first, I would love to do that. In fact I will be trying to meet with as many people as possible, in person, before I go, so I may be calling you in the future to see if you'd like to get together. If you want to hear more, I would be delighted to meet with you or talk to you over the phone, or come speak at your small group or Bible Study group, just give me a call, or send me an email and I'll set something up. Thank you all again, I'm honored to have so many great Christian brothers and sisters to back partner with me in God's mission to reach the Japanese.

Summer in Japan

by Tomo Takahashi

August 15th is what we call Obon in Japan. It is said that the spirits of ancestors come back to this world on Obon, and people celebrate that by welcoming the spirits and then sending them away. In Japan, there has been a belief from the ancient times that the spirits of the dead are allowed to come back to this world during some time of the year and mingle with the living. Then a Buddhist sutra called Urabon was introduced from China and was incorporated into that belief. The Urabon sutra talks about one disciple of Buddha, who saw his mother suffering in one of the eight worlds in Buddhist teachings in which all beings keep reincarnating. The monk asked Buddha what he could do to ease his mother's pain, and Buddha told him to throw a feast for all the monks in this world. All the monks ate, drank, and danced, and the suffering mother in another world was able to get a taste of it. So basically, Obon is a time when the living remembers the dead, tries to feed them and make them happy.

The Obon festival starts on the 13th, when people burn some plants at each household to welcome their ancestors. This is called Mukae-bi, or welcoming fire. On the 15th, people have Bon Dance at local shrines or temples. This dance is said to have imitated the dance of the dead who are filled with joy of being able to come back to this world. Bon Dance is basically a line dance, where people make a big circle around a watchtower, on which a drummer is seated, and repeat a set of moves to various songs. On the 16th, people again have fire to send the spirits back to the worlds where they came from. This is called Okuri-bi, or sending fire. In some areas, Okuri-bi is just like Mukae-bi, where people burn some grass in front of each house. In Kyoto and Nara, the old capitals in the western part of Japan, people set many torches on the mountainside to make certain Chinese characters. These letters can be seen from many miles away, burning brightly through the night. In Nagasaki and some other areas, lanterns are floated down the river.

Also around Obon time, it is common to go back to the hometown and pay a visit to the ancestral tomb and pray to the family altar. I visited my grandparents last week, and my grandmother had fruits in front of the family altar as an offering to the ancestors. She used to make a horse with a cucumber and a cow with an eggplant as vehicles for the ancestors' spirits, but no longer does. Many other cultural traditions seem to be dying away as well. As a Japanese Christian, I have a mixed feeling about that. I cannot participate in these events and I know that these don't lead to salvation. But at the same time, I want these traditions to be preserved. Obon is a religious event but also an important scene of Japanese culture. I think it's a dilemma you would face anywhere in the world where the whole culture is based on something other than Christianity.

Prayer Requests



- That Japanese Christians will be able to wisely deal with conflicts between their culture and their faith.
- I've started getting in contact with a number of Churches, pray that they will support me, and/or allow me to come speak to their members about supporting me.
- Pray for Tomo as she finishes up her senior year back at ICU in Tokyo
- Pray that I will be faithful and diligent to spend time in the word and make God's glory my top priority.
- Pray that I'll have the courage to ask people to support me financially.

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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david@crossroadchurch.us • (949) 350-6412 • www.gloryspeaking.com

As contributions are tax-deductible, they are sought with the understanding that SEND International has complete discretion and control over the use of all donated funds. Each contribution for an approved program will be used as restricted with the understanding that funds received in excess of the amount required will be used where needed most.