

Japan Update

Winter 2018 Number 74



Problems within Japanese families caused by intergenerational dependence

If you were to take a photo of a couple and their two children standing in a row, how would you expect them to position themselves? In the West, it may be common to see parents positioned in the middle and the children on each side. In Japan, the children will be in the middle with a parent on each side. This seems to symbolize the differences between families in the West and in Japan.

In Genesis 2:24 we see the essence of marriage depicted: “That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh” (NIV®).

According to this passage, a couple is meant to become one and parents and children are meant to eventually separate. It can be said that the way Westerners position themselves in a photo shows they have a more biblical “family view.” The parents in the middle holding hands will keep holding hands, but their hands stretched out on each side will let go of the children at some point.

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The Japanese saying *ko wa kasugai* translates as “a child is a bond between husband and wife.” This means a child keeps a couple together. In other words, rather than being directly bonded to each other, parents bond by cooperating in the care of their children. The way Japanese families position themselves in a photo seem to be just that. In the long history of Japan, the emphasis has been put on producing offspring, and the bond between parents and children has been prioritized above the bond between the parents.

This causes intergenerational dependence in even the Japanese Christian family, where the importance of intergenerational *independence* is not recognized—despite the fact

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that the Bible clearly states a person should “leave one’s father and mother.” Let’s take a look at some examples of the main problems caused by this issue.

A simple example is the issue of the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law relationship. Married Christian men who fail to gain psychological independence from their mothers are unable to apply the biblical value of leaving their mother and becoming one with their wife, thereby properly prioritizing wife above mother. Instead they try to gain favor from both sides to avoid any conflict. Wives are disappointed in such husbands, and may even despise them. This has a bad effect on the couple’s relationship as well as on the upbringing of their children.

The worst case is when parents don’t bring up their children to eventually stand on their own two feet. Instead the parents bring them up to follow their will and to keep them under their psychological control. The mother in particular may overprotect and excessively interfere in a child’s upbringing.



It is fairly common for a son to become attached to his mother, and that relationship affects the child’s personal faith. Instead of teaching the teenage son how to stand on his own two feet and build a personal relationship with God, parents pass on their faith by strength of will. The result is one of two extremes:

a Christian son who is unable to grow away from his parents, or a son who steps away from God as soon as he distances himself from his parents.

In some extreme cases, parents force their own values on their child, believing their decisions to be absolute based upon their own spiritual beliefs. The parents decide the child’s spouse and career, leading to a child that grows up without learning to make their own judgments, decisions, or to take responsibility for themselves. This then builds a codependent relationship between parent and child.

In Japan, where it is common for a man to get married without being able to take care of himself, the wife tends

to get fed up with the husband’s immaturity and looks down on him. In these cases, a mother finds more purpose in supporting children from their union. The mother finds self-worth, effectiveness, and social self-fulfillment in the mother/child relationship, which creates a dependency between mother and child. Bringing up a child becomes not a mission to be accomplished, but rather a way to ensure the child remains dependent, making the child a victim of such a relationship.

We can understand this better when looking at the relationship between Isaac and Rebekah: the childish father who because of his fondness for meat showed favoritism toward one of his sons, and the contempt of a wife toward her husband. From this stems the mother’s psychological attachment to her son. We see the marital division between the parents, the son who follows his mother’s will, and the mother who is responsible for her son’s actions. This son probably didn’t establish his faith in God until he separated himself from his mother and developed independence through his experience of tough life in regular society. This story has so much in common with Japanese families today.



The biggest reason Japanese Christians reject the light of the gospel is probably due to family problems. Unhealthy relationships stemming from intergenerational dependency tend to be reproduced from generation to generation. But the God who molded Jacob into a vessel of blessing can put an end to this domino effect. It is my desire that we stand firmly in the truth of God’s love, the love that never deserted God’s own chosen people, and that through the model of a healthy Christian family, we can enhance outreach into our communities and see churches grow.

Translated by Grace Koshino

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Wounded, reconciled, and healed

Atsuko Tateishi Assistant Editor of Japan Update

We all know nothing is impossible for God. But what about deep childhood scars inflicted by your own father? And a broken family as a result? Here is a testimony by a young pastor who dares to speak of hope.

Atsuko (A): Please tell us a little about yourself.

Takanori (T): My name is Takanori Oba, and I am the pastor of a Presbyterian church in Yokkaichi, Mie Prefecture. I also serve as Dean of Students and as a professor at Christ Bible Seminary (CBS) in Nagoya. I am married and have two children. My son is eight years old, and my daughter is eighteen months old. Naturally, we have to do a lot to take care of our kids.

A: I understand you grew up in a family where your relationship with your father was strained. What painful childhood memories are still with you?

T: My father was an alcoholic. During the few years until I became ten, his alcohol abuse escalated, along with his physical abuse. I was the primary target of his violence. When I was ten, we escaped from my father. My mother, my older sister, and I walked out of the apartment one day and began to live with my grandmother.

One of the most painful memories of my childhood took place in the middle of the night when I was eight. We were living in a large five-story apartment complex in Yokohama. That night, something deeply upset my father. I fled out of the apartment and crawled underneath a car parked near the complex. From my position of safety, I saw my father come out to the landing with a fan, and in his rage, throw it down to the ground. The sound of the fan shattering carried far into the night. Then I saw lights turned on in one apartment after another in the complex. I was overwhelmed with shame.

Another time, my father hit me and I fell to the floor. Then he stepped on my face. He was grinning. That scared me the most.

There were a number of incidents like that, and my mother as well as our neighbors called the police many times. It was impossible to hide what was going on in our family from our neighbors. Even kids would say to me something like, “I can’t play with you because my mom tells me not to.” I felt I belonged nowhere. I had no one to turn to, either.

A: Your father passed away eventually. Please tell us how you experienced God’s grace during the years leading up to your father’s death.

T: For 17 years after walking out from my father, I never saw him. I believed in Jesus when I was 15. Later, I got married, and became a seminary student at CBS. One day, my wife and I drove to Tokyo to attend a church conference. On our last

day in Tokyo, we decided to postpone our return trip by one day, so we could stay with my wife’s friend. That very afternoon, I received a call from my mother. She asked me to drive my father to the hospital. I was shocked to learn that my mother had been keeping in touch with my father during all those years of separation.

In the end, I agreed to go to my father’s apartment. I stood in front of the entry door, trembling so much that I couldn’t open the door myself. By then, an ambulance had also arrived, and the ambulance crew almost pushed me into the apartment. There I saw my father who had fallen down as the result of dizziness caused by Meniere’s disease [a disorder of the inner ear]. Two Scripture passages immediately came to my mind: “love your enemy,” and “He has made everything beautiful in its time.” I found myself empty of accusations against my father.

During the last eight years of his life, I saw my father once or twice a year. He had stopped drinking. Moreover, my mother was reunited with him a few years after his falling incident. For the first time in 20 years, my parents, my sister, and I were able to sit at a table as a family. Even though my father could not remember the details of what he had done to me, he apologized. I was rather glad that he did not suffer from guilt. My father and I never became close, but we were reconciled to each other.

A: Now that you are a father yourself, do you face any challenges in your own family? Who and what resources do you consult regarding your family?

T: So far, I have no challenges in particular. I sometimes catch myself trying to become the father I wanted to have. I thank my children for being my son and daughter. I give them hugs. Each time I do things like that, perhaps I become healed a little more. I believe my wife and I are doing well as a couple. I can ask for help and advice from the pastor of my mother church. Michael Oh and the other missionaries at CBS also serve as good examples for me.

A: Finally, do you have any wisdom or insights to share with people with difficult family backgrounds?

T: Reconciliation is a gift from God. When I was reconciled to my father, my parents were also reconciled to each other, and my whole family was reconciled. Our loving God is at work today in bringing forgiveness and reconciliation. He knows the perfect timing to do so. I challenge you to dare to hope. God is bigger than your wildest imagination.



Rev. Takanori Oba

A Guide to Family Ministry Resources in Japanese

Resources compiled by Kiyoshi Mizutani, Sonoko Maruyama and Atsuko Tateishi

1. プリペアー・エンリッチ・ジャパン

Prepare-Enrich Japan

(Psychological Assessment / Counseling Program)

This is the Japanese version of the most widely used premarital and marriage assessment in the USA. Japanese facilitators are also available in many local towns in Japan. Results of the assessment can provide an objective look at the strengths and weaknesses of a couple's relationship and give them concrete principles and methods upon which to build a better marriage relationship.

(<https://prepare-japan.com/>)



2. 健全な家庭を築くカギ

Kenzen na katei o kizuku kagi (Keys to a Healthy Family)

Author: Shinya Maruya

Publisher: The Life Planning Center Foundation

健全な夫婦になる鍵

Kenzen na fufu ni naru kagi

(Keys to a Healthy Marriage Relationship)

Author: Shinya Maruya

Publisher: Word of Life Press Ministries

The author is a counselor and a pastor. With rich clinical examples, he discusses family problems in Japan, shows what a healthy married life following biblical principle looks like, and provides help in how a couple can bring restoration to their marriage.



3. 家族の危機管理

Kazoku no kiki kanri (Family Crisis Management)

Author: Masahiro Matsuzaka

Publisher: Word of Life Press Ministries

Most families experience a marriage or parenting crisis at some point in time. However, not many people recognize they are in a crisis, or know how to manage it in a biblical way. This book introduces concrete and practical examples of ways to take care of your loved ones.



4. 牧会相談の実際

Bokkai sodan no jissai (The Practice of Pastoral Counseling)

Authors: Akira Fujikake, Asako Obuchi, & Junko Murakami

Publisher: Amen-do Publishers

Clinical cases, not necessarily family problems but cases caused by family or life history, are presented in this book. The case interviews and comments by clinical psychologists can be used as practical models. The books recommended by 25 pastors are also good learning guides.

5. 親子共依存

Oyako kyo izon (Codependency between parents and children)

Author: Naoki Ogi

Publisher: POPULAR Publishing Co. Ltd

The most famous Japanese specialist in education writes about unhealthy relationships between present-day Japanese parents and their children. Ogi introduces real Japanese young people who do not rebel against their parents as adolescents—who in fact, like their parents so much that they are not interested in falling in love. He explains that this kind of psychological lack of separation from parents will cause young people various problems such as a delay of sexual independence, or the failure to establish their own identities.



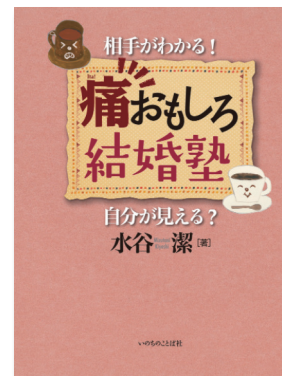
6. 痛おもしろ結婚塾

Ita omoshiro kekkon juku (Oh, So That's What Marriage Is!)

Author: Kiyoshi Mizutani

Publisher: Word of Life Press Ministries

Various problems that are likely to happen in the married life of a Christian couple are introduced with a good sense of humor. This book aims to help couples understand the opposite sex, accept their partner's struggles, take an objective look at their own responsibilities, and overcome barriers in their marriage.



7. 日本同盟基督教団教育部 家庭教育部ホームページ

Nihon Domei Kirisuto Kyodan Katei Kyoiku-bu Homepage
(Japan Alliance Christ Church Educational Institutions)

<https://www.edu-domei.net/> 家庭教育部 /

This home page provides information about marriage, parenting, and support of the elderly to lay the foundations of Christian homes. Concrete advice, books, DVDs, and seminars regarding the above three areas are introduced, as well as a Bible guide for family worship, family ministry practices, information about various church activities, and networks related to families.



8. 傷ついた心をいやす旅

Kizutsuita Kokoro wo Iyasu Tabi (Journey for Healing the Wounded Heart)

Author: David L. Thompson

Publisher: Japan Holiness Association

Originally entitled "God's Healing for Hurting Families," the author, a seminary professor and pastor, shares about the pain his family experienced and how God's healing mercy was poured into them. He then offers solid biblical principles for recovery, which can be applied to any family.

Translated by Tomoko Kato



Enactment of the “Anti-conspiracy” Law and Christian Tasks for the Sake of the Kingdom of God

The bill to revise the Act on Punishment of Organized Crimes and Control of Crime Proceeds was passed on June 15, 2017, after overnight deliberation in the House of Councillors. It came into effect on July 11, 2017.

Before even getting into the details of the Act, objections arose both inside and outside the Diet regarding the overall policy and the ruling bloc’s accelerated procedure to adopt it. Various Christian groups have issued protest statements, among them a joint statement by the Japan Holiness Church (JHC) and the Brotherhood of Christ Church (BCC), both of which had suffered pre-war oppression under the Maintenance of Public Order Law. In consideration of this history, the following statement has been written by one concerned party concerning the viewpoint Christians and churches should take in the current situation:

“Determination Derived from a History of Suppression”

By Makio Kodaira

Brotherhood of Christ Church Board Chair

In 1999, the JHC and the BCC signed The Statement by the Brotherhood of Christ Church and the Japan Holiness Church on the Joint Historical Examination of the Division of the Former Japan Holiness Church. Based on that statement, the following year we completed the Cooperative Approved Testimony to Holiness Beliefs of the JHC and the BCC, the very fruit of our repentance for the past involvement of both groups in the United Church of Christ in Japan (UCCJ), our reconciliation across the gulf that had been caused by our division, and our determination to partner in testifying to Holiness beliefs. As one of our concrete, cooperative ministries, the JHC and BCC have committed to a “Joint Historical Examination.” We also held a Convention Commemorating the Persecution of Holiness Churches, where, along with other UCCJ-related groups sharing the same origin, we learned from our predecessors’ faith.

Since both of our groups have experienced the Taisho/Showa-era revivals, the arrests of pastors, and the dissolution of churches under the Maintenance of Public Order Law and the Religious Organizations Law during WWII, we wish to jointly express our prayer and resolve by faith concerning the “Anti-conspiracy” law.

In the spirit of The Cape Town Commitment issued

by The Third Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization, with robust endurance we who love the Lord accept suffering and even death for the sake of the gospel.

It is our privilege as Christians to experience suffering, persecution, and martyrdom in mission. At the same time, as a people waiting on God’s Kingdom and hoping for the salvation of others, I believe it is our duty to make every effort to ensure freedom of religion for all people.

Regarding the “Anti-conspiracy” law, we find it intolerable not only in its substance, but also in its unusually swift enforcement. We will keep speaking up for its abolition. Surveillance, intimidation, and deterrence by force do not produce true safety or peace. Rather, they are accompanied by apprehension, betrayal, anxiety, fear, and even persecution.

In an age reminiscent of apocalypse, we will confess Christ as our Peace as we continuously strive to pastor and evangelize, encouraged by Scripture that peacemakers will be blessed. We will raise our voice against all hindrance to our faith in our Lord when needed. We will continuously pray: “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”

Christian Shimbun, July 2, 2017

Translated by Nobue Tachiki

East Asia Conference on Creation Care

The East Asia Regional Conference on Creation Care and the Gospel was held in Hsinchu City, Taiwan, on July 24–28, 2017 and was hosted by the Creation Care Network of the Lausanne Movement



and the World Evangelical Alliance (LWCCN). It was one of a series of regional conferences the LWCCN has been organizing around the world following the Global Consultation on Creation Care and the Gospel in Jamaica in 2012. The majority of the 150 participants were from East Asia and included 13 from Japan, as well as a few from Southeast Asia, North America, and Europe. The group was comprised of a broad spectrum of attendees including theologians, staff members of ministry and mission organizations,

business people, NGO personnel, and other Christian leaders and influencers. They were there to explore the significance of creation care for Christians as one of today's most pressing issues.

Norio Yamaguchi, Research Fellow at Kyoritsu Christian Institute, Tokyo Christian University, observed in his report on the conference that two convictions support the LWCCN initiatives: 1) creation care is a gospel issue; and 2) creation care is an issue that demands urgent action by this generation. Yamaguchi then summarized Dr. Richard Bauckham's three biblical plenary lectures on creation, reconciliation, and eschatology.

In his lecture on creation, Bauckham questioned the popular view that human beings are the guardians of



other creatures, which suggests a superior position of humanity over creation. Instead, he proposed a perspective that stresses interdependency between humanity and other creatures within the created order. The second lecture addressed the scope of

redemption. Through a careful study of the "Christ Hymn" in Colossians 1:15–20, Bauckham concluded that through Jesus Christ, all things are reconciled to God. This reconciliation takes effect not just between humans and God but also between humans and other creatures. Bauckham pointed out that humans need to ponder their relationship with other creatures, not just their relationship with God. In his third lecture, Bauckham maintained that the new heaven and new earth are not a replacement for this current creation, but its renewal. By respecting and caring for the "here and now" creation, we share in God's love for creatures, and demonstrate our ultimate hope for the final redemption of all things. In all, Bauckham persuasively established that non-human creatures assume a significant position in all three major theological topics: creation, redemption, and eschatology.

A number of breakout sessions were organized under three categories: God's Word, God's world, and God's work. The Japanese delegates presented a few breakout sessions, including Dr. Tomoyuki Dobata's on the comprehensive care of human beings in local communities (not medical facilities) as members of God's creation, Kenji Ishihara's on the theological ethics of food, Hyungwoo Lee and Masaru Aoki's on environmental conservation in northeast Asia, and Aoki's inclusive approach to creation care. Hiroshi Sumita and Makoto Ogawa delivered a plenary talk about a consortium in Japan working toward a sus-

tainable society, and proposed an alternative lifestyle centering not on greed but on biblical principles. Also on the plenary stage, Paul Yokota expressed thanks to the international community for their assistance in the wake of the 2016 Kumamoto Earthquake, and called for the development of a theology of relief work.

Yamaguchi and Aoki concurred in their respective reports that creation care represents an arena where both Christians and non-Christians can work together. While Aoki hopes for a greater creation care network among businesses, churches, and individuals, Yamaguchi would like to see Japanese churches get more actively involved in creation care initiatives.

Christian Shimbun, September 3, 2017

Translated by Atsuko Tateishi

JEA Mission Forum in Kobe

After one year since 6th Japan Congress on Evangelism (JCE6), JEA Mission Forum in Kobe was held in Sannomiya, Kobe on September 25-26, 2017. About 70 church and ministry leaders (pastors as well as lay persons) gathered and heard annual reports from 14 JCE6 projects and Kobe analogia groups and discussed how we could collaborate even further to advance the Kingdom of God in Japan.

Rev. Masahiro Nakanishi, JEA Board member and the Chair of JEA Mission Commission (MC), talked about restructuring MC into three parts - Mission Forum Team, Mission Research



Team, and Cross-Cultural Mission Network Team - in order for JEA to better function as a mission infrastructure. Mission Forum Team is tasked to oversee the JCE6 projects and plan and host annual mission forums in different cities to keep the JCE movement going. Mission Research Team gathers information and data about various mission topics and researches effective mission practices in order to provide useful directions for JEA member denominations and organizations. Cross-Cultural Mission Network Team seeks to provide a meeting place for cross-cultural mission groups such as Japanese churches/ministries overseas as well as various ethnic churches/ministries within Japan.

Please pray for Japan

1. That more families in Japan will be touched by the healing power of the gospel, freed from intergenerational dependencies, and come to know Jesus personally.
2. That various family ministries will be used by God to reach out and transform families in Japan.
3. That more churches and parachurch organizations will collaborate together to make a Kingdom impact in their local communities.
4. That God will raise up the next generation of Christ-centered, gospel-driven leaders among young Christians in Japan.

JEA-related schedule

<u>DATE</u>	<u>EVENT</u>	<u>PLACE</u>
April 23	JEA 50th Anniversary	Tokyo
May 21	Mission Research Summit	Tokyo
June 4-6	JEA Annual Plenary	Kakegawa
Sept. 24-25	JEA Mission Forum in Nagoya	Nagoya
Nov. 22-24	2nd Youth Mission Congress (NSD2)	Tokyo

Editorial

As I myself come from a divorced family, the issues of broken families are very close to my heart. The feature article talks about one of the most common symptoms of Japanese families. So many people are suffering from this and therefore it provides a good gateway to reach the hearts of Japanese people. We also have compiled a list of family ministry resources available in Japanese so that you can introduce these resources to your Japanese friends.



Kenichi Shinagawa, Editor in Chief

<https://jeanet.org/>

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