

**Appendix 3**

## Testimony of Faith

We recommend considering the following questions, to help you prepare a testimony of faith that will help you when sharing the Gospel to friends, family and acquaintances. Certainly, having prepared your faith story in advance will be an effective help for sharing the Gospel with others.

1. What was my life like before I met Jesus Christ?
2. What led up to my accepting Jesus as my savior? When and why did I realize that I needed Jesus to be my Savior?
3. How did I surrender my life to Jesus? What did I have to release to Jesus?
4. After I believed, how did my life change because of my faith in Christ?

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## Preface

These days, more and more Japanese are going overseas and gaining experiences in foreign cultures. When returning home to Japan, many Japanese feel out of place or worse, have a difficult time adapting back to Japanese culture. This process is called “reverse-culture stress.” Reverse-culture “shock” is only a temporary process. Yet, it is not just “shock” that one experiences, because sometimes it takes longer period of time to readjust. The duration of the reverse culture STRESS period is different for everyone. For some it takes a few weeks, for others maybe a few months or years to readapt to Japanese living. Furthermore, for those who came to know and accept Christ abroad, living as a Christian in Japan is very challenging. We often hear stories about how young returning believers can’t find a church within a reasonable distance, or they aren’t sure how to share their faith with friends and family, among other difficulties of everyday life. This workbook has been put together from the desire to help and serve those who are preparing for the challenges that wait them upon returning home. We also hope it will effectively help those who were Christians before going abroad; we hope this workbook will help affirm the changes the Lord has caused in you through your cross-cultural experiences.

At JCFN, our mission statement is: “Equipping multi-cultural Christians for ministry.” We believe there are four essential factors for the development and preparation of healthy Christian believers, which are:

1. **Calling (Living out the calling of Jesus Christ daily)**
2. **Character (Being transformed to be more like Jesus Christ)**
3. **Community (Connecting and sharing with fellow believers)**
4. **Commission (Sharing the truth about Jesus Christ with the world)**

In short, the above four factors of Christian living are at the heart of the Christian mission. Through this workbook, it is our whole-hearted desire and prayer to help you discover and develop in these four areas:

**1. Calling:** Even after returning home, no matter where you are, overseas or in Japan, at home, work, etc., through your faithful obedience, you can be used by the Lord to expand the Kingdom of God – His family!

**May your Kingdom come soon. May your will be done here on earth, just as it is in heaven. (Matthew 6:10)**

**2. Character:** How do I daily become changed, forever, to become more like Jesus?

## Appendix 2

### Church Introduction Letter

This is a template letter that we use to introduce a Japanese Church to a returnee

Church Name:

Date:

Praise God’s Wonderful Name!

You might be surprised to receive this letter without advanced warning, please let us introduce ourselves. We are JCFN (Japanese Christian Fellowship Network). JCFN was established in 1990 by a group of Japanese students who had a heart for helping Japanese who started seeking God or were saved while away from Japan (in North America). Currently, our main office is located in Long Beach, California, with branch offices in Ochanomizu, Tokyo, Japan. One of JCFN’s top goals is to follow-up with those Christians who are returning to Japan by introducing them to other JCFN members and churches.

In this letter, we would like to introduce (returnee’s name), who will be returning to Japan soon. Below is some information about (returnee’s name), who will be making contact with you shortly.

1. Name:

2. Male / Female

3. Age : \_\_\_\_\_

4. Home Address (Japan):

5. Phone:

E-mail:

6. Information about their Current Spiritual Life

a. Seeking God

b. Became a Christian overseas

c. Has been baptized

7. Denomination / Church Name:

Pastor:

Church Address:

By all means, if you have further questions regarding (returnee’s name), please feel free to contact us! We are so thankful for your willingness help in this follow-up ministry. Praise the Lord!

Japanese Christian Fellowship Network

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**Appendix 1: LTG**

LTG (Life Transformation Group)

What is "LTG?" LTG is a system for a discipleship program based on three important points: confession of sin, reading through the Bible and intercession for each other. In groups of two or three, the LTG program is designed to help believers make goals for growing Christ, seeking His will, and encouraging each other. For more details please check out the following web link: <http://www.cmaresources.org/files/Cultivating-NeilCole-chap8.pdf>

1. How did you evidence the greatness of Jesus Christ, either in words or actions, throughout last week?
2. Have you been exposed to sexually alluring material and allowed your mind to entertain inappropriate sexual thoughts about another?
3. Has the desire for money, material possessions, or status at any time controlled your thoughts, conversation or behavior?
4. Have you been honoring, understanding and generous (with your time and /or money) in your important relationships?
5. Have you disrespected another person by your words, either behind their back or face-to-face?
6. Have you at any time given in to an addictive behavior or allowed your mind to be controlled by obsessive thoughts?
7. Have you continued to remain angry toward another?
8. Have you secretly wished for another's misfortune?
9. (Your personalized accountability question)
10. Did you finish the reading and hear from God? What are you going to do about it?
11. Have you been completely honest with me?

You can make your own personalized accountability question for the 9th question. If you want to have quiet time with the Lord, ask your partner to ask you if you have had at least a 15 minute devotional time every morning. If you care about controlling your weight, ask him/her to ask you if you have been able to stop eating before overeating at dinner. Please make up a questions that will help you grow.

**And all of us have had that veil removed so that we can be mirrors that brightly reflect the glory of the Lord. And as the Spirit of the Lord works within us, we become more and more like him and reflect his glory even more. (2 Corinthians 3:18)**

**3. Community:** Every single day you receive the unconditional love of God, but it's also important to share in a community and fellowship in love with a family of believers and grow together as one body.

**So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples."**

**(John 13:34, 35)**

**Jesus replied, "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" (Matthew 22:37-39)**

**4. Commission:** After receiving God's love, the story doesn't end there – we have to give it away. Becoming a disciple of Jesus is critical in becoming a person God can use to reach others!

**Jesus came and told his disciples, "I have been given complete authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit." (Matthew 28:18, 19)**

It is our hope that through this workbook, you will take this awesome opportunity to consider all of the wonderful things about following Jesus, the Lord of all, who transcends all cultures. Of course, this workbook does not have all of the answers to the questions and challenges that lie ahead. We believe, rather, that it is a key that can help you to solve the difficulties ahead, together with the Lord, based on Biblical principles. Only the Lord knows what sort of challenges lie ahead of you upon returning, but be joyful because Jesus has promised us all victory in every trial (Romans 8:37). This workbook was put together by a group who have traveled the road you are about to take, returning home to Japan, but don't worry – you are not the first one who go through this process, and after all, the Lord knows how to get you there better than anyone! (1 Corinthians 10:13). We are praying for you and we know that the Lord will lead and guide every step of your journey, after returning home to Japan.

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## How to Use this Workbook

The great thing about this workbook is that you can get effective results, no matter whether you use it by yourself or with a group of friends. You can work through this book sequentially, or, we recommend, that you progress from topic to topic in the order that interests you or your small group. There are a lot of ways to use this workbook, but no matter how you do it, we definitely recommend that you use it!

Some advantages to using this workbook on an individual basis are:

- You can take your time as you progress through the workbook
- You have the freedom to choose what order you work through each chapter

Some advantages to using this workbook in a small group are:

- Together you can positively encourage each other as well as share in ideas for handling the challenges ahead
- When you feel trapped by a difficulty, together you can pray and carry the burden
- You can learn together and grow by listening to each other's opinions

Everyone is different and may have a different way of using this workbook, but we pray that no matter how you choose to use this workbook, continually pray and ask the Lord to guide and speak to your heart as you use this resource.

We also recommend that perhaps you use a journal with this workbook in case you need more space to write your thoughts and the words you feel the Lord speaking to your heart. This can be a very powerful way of learning and growing in Christ.

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## Afterward

We are so thankful for all of the warm encouragement, prayers and cooperative hearts you all have for JCFN (Japanese Christian Fellowship Network).

It is our hope that we can make this workbook be a valuable resource for cross-culturally influenced Japanese Christians. If you have any comments, suggestions or ideas for helping us improve the content or format of this workbook, by all means, contact us!

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## Conclusion

Through your cross-cultural experiences, you have received grace and mercy from the Lord, in your own unique testimony. Perhaps you would have never received the grace and mercy if you had remained in Japan. Along with the amazing mercy that we have received also comes a great responsibility from the Lord.

Please think seriously about how you can be used by the Lord, considering all the knowledge and experiences you have gained through your travels abroad. This question is one that will continue, even after returning home, but will be answered in your spiritual life as you walk daily with Jesus. As you follow Him, you will continue to change, and He will constantly use you in new ways. Let's walk together as we continue to follow after the example of Jesus. Please feel free to write down your thoughts or impressions below.

Finally, let's expectantly pray that the Lord, who bought us this far on our unique journey, will continue to guide us, show us and help us to mature to be more like Jesus. Let's pray and give thanks for all that He has done for us. Amen!

**Dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice – the kind he will accept. When you think of what he has done for you, is this too much to ask? Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will know what God wants you to do and you will know how good and pleasing and perfect his will really is. (Romans 12:1, 2)**

**But we are citizens of heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives. And we are eagerly waiting for him to return as our Savior. (Philippians 3:20)**

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## Chapter 1: Calling - The Lord is Calling You!

**May your Kingdom come soon. May your will be done here on earth, just as it is in heaven. (Matthew 6:10)**

### 1-1. He drew you overseas

What is your reason for leaving home and traveling overseas? Some responses are: "Because I have an interest in foreign culture," "for business," "because my family was transferred." There are as many reasons as there are people. Some people left voluntarily while others were reluctant to travel abroad. Some people left with the feeling like they "escaped", while others are just looking for a change of lifestyle. Maybe sometimes you feel like you don't know why you left Japan, but we have great news for you! The Lord knows who you are and He has a plan and a purpose that is specifically made for you; and it was the Lord that drew you overseas.

To live in a place completely different from where you were born and raised is never easy. As you reflect back on how you were changed by your experiences away from home and what the Lord was doing in your life at that time, it's important to realize that through a foreign environment the Lord used many experiences to change your life for His purposes.

- A. What was your original purpose for going overseas? If you were a Christian before leaving Japan, discuss how you felt that the Lord was leading you.
  
- B. When you went overseas, did you have expectations, concerns or even fears about leaving Japan and arriving in a foreign place? Please take some time to share those expectations, concerns and fears.

### 1-2. You were called to Jesus

While you were overseas, becoming a Christian was by no means accidental. From before time, the Lord knew who you would be. He chose you, and led you from Japan overseas, in order to meet Him. Or, in the case of those who were already Christians, the Lord had plans to cause your faith to grow by allowing a foreign culture to influence your life.

How did you come to know Jesus and accept Him as your savior as a result of these cross-cultural experiences? Or, if you were a Christian prior to leaving Japan, how did the Lord use your experiences abroad to develop and change your spiritual life?

A. What was the trigger, or the chain of events that lead you to become a Christian? What is the relationship between those events and your leaving Japan to go abroad?

B. What are some of the things that have been instrumental in helping you grow as a Christian? (For example: “cultural differences”, “relationships”, “a new environment” are all topics you can discuss in detail)

Based on what we've just discussed, and later about how the Lord has changed your life, we (JCFN) would love to hear your faith story (testimony). Please refer to Chapter 4 on page 27 and appendix 3 for more details on how to begin writing your faith story.

### 1-3. The calling to Japan and returning home

#### 1-3-1. Being prepared for the challenges at home in Japan

Even though you are returning home to Japan, when you arrive you will certainly be faced with new experiences. From the standpoint that God has a special calling on your life, we hope that you will realize God has been training and changing your for this purpose. What is the attitude of your heart concerning your return to Japan? Are you concerned, insecure, even afraid to return? The problems you face and new challenges ahead of you are certainly all chances to develop and strengthen your faith.

A. Please take some time to consider and discuss your reasons for returning home to Japan.

B. How do you feel about returning home to Japan? (For example: are you excited, reluctant, returning as planned, etc.?)

**Since God did not spare even his own Son but gave him up for us all, won't God, who gave us Christ, also give us everything else? (Romans 8:32)**

Please consider this scripture that we have been given by the Lord. Will you allow Him to use you in the midst of you family, to share the Gospel with our families? Let's find out more about this command, and what it means, by reading the following passages of scripture:

**You didn't choose me. I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask for, using my name. (John 15:16)**

**All this newness of life is from God, who brought us back to himself through what Christ did. And God has given us the task of reconciling people to him. For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. This is the wonderful message he has given us to tell others. We are Christ's ambassadors, and God is using us to speak to you. We urge you, as though Christ himself were here pleading with you, "Be reconciled to God! (2 Corinthians 5:18-20)**

B. Please write down in your own words, what this command from God is, based on what you read in the above set of verses.

C. In your own words, what are some definite ways that you can be used by the Lord in your family situation? Please try to write, in your own words, the answer to the question “what is His command to me?”

Please share your determination to grow in your spiritual life with Christian friends around you. Moreover, it is our prayer that you would be involved regularly with an accountability group in order to continue to strengthen and encourage your determination to pursue Jesus Christ.

2. When family members are believers:

A. In what ways do you think you can use your overseas experiences to influence the spiritual lives of believers in your family? Likewise, what do you think your role should be concerning your family?

Sometimes, after returning to Japan, maybe Christians face problems or even a crisis concerning their faith and the family. Sometimes you may feel like you want to quit following Christ. Whatever happens, the Lord speaks to us in the Scriptures to give us confidence. Let's read the following scripture together:

**If you love your father or mother more than you love me, you are not worthy of being mine; or if you love your son or daughter more than me, you are not worthy of being mine. If you refuse to take up your cross and follow me, you are not worthy of being mine. If you cling to your life, you will lose it; but if you give it up for me, you will find it. (Matthew 10:37-39)**

This scripture is not asking you to oppose or confront your family because of your Christianity. Nor is it saying that you should despise our family when they disagree with you about Christianity. Rather, from the start, you should strive to be a better son or daughter, one that cares for your family through respect, service and honor. According to the Bible, God gives us the command:

**Honor your father and mother.(Exodus 20:12)**

Now that you are a Christian you should not act in the ways of your old self, but act like Jesus by serving and honoring your family. Even when you cannot avoid conflicts concerning your faith, you will see God's glory through the painful experience. By seeing your unshakable faith in Christ, your family will probably begin to respect your God and become interested in learning more about the Gospel.

**Believe on the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, along with your entire household. (Acts 16:31)**

As you repeat your confession of faith, you are strengthening the promise of this scripture! We should pray that, when we face problems, the Lord will give us the best guidance, and that His glory revealed to us and others.

At this point, let's take some time to quietly consider and pray for the names that we wrote down earlier. Let's lift their names up to God in the holy name of Jesus.

Let's take a moment to really understand any insecurities, fears or concerns caused by returning home. What is the reason(s) you feel insecure about returning to Japan? What do you think are some good ways to deal with these concerns? In the table below are some examples, please take some time to really consider these things and come up with your own ideas.

<b>Fear, worry, concern</b>	<b>Reason</b>	<b>How can I overcome?</b>
Family relationships	I haven't told them about choosing to be a Christian yet	I want to go to Church, so I have to tell them. I'll pray. I need others to pray for me. I can witness through my actions and how I treat my family.
The way I think about things has changed		
Fellowship with other Christians		
Life at work, and living in Japanese society		
The way I deal with non-Christian religious events		

**1-3-2. Having a Firm Believe as you Returning to Japan**

What do you think the reason is that God has chosen you to use you in Japan? When the Lord, who will guide our every step, gives us a strong belief concerning His leading, the journey we take with Him is a powerful thing. Whether you are in the middle of a life crisis, or making the mundane choices of every day life, how are you going to choose to lead your life? Will you retain control, or will you submit your all to Jesus?

There certainly are a lot of books out there about finding the will of God for your life, but we want to take this opportunity to share with you some important Biblical principles for finding the Lord's will in your life:

1. Lord will often reveal His direction for you through His Word, the Bible  
**Your word is a lamp for my feet and a light for my path. (Psalms 119:105)**
2. The Lord will often speak to your heart as you spend time in prayer  
**I told you my plans, and you answered. Now teach me your principles. (Psalms 119:26)**
3. Many times the Lord will reveal his will for you through conversations with those He has placed in your life, around you.  
**Think of ways to encourage one another to outbursts of love and good deeds. (Hebrews 10:24)**
4. Sometimes the Lord reveals His will through the circumstances He has prepared for you to experience.  
**in my prayers at all times; and I pray that now at last by God's will the way may be opened for me to come to you. (Romans 1:10 NIV)**

Let's take some time now to quietly pray that the Lord will lead us as we make the journey home. If you have received a strong conviction about His will for you, either from a word the Lord has given you or through your experiences, please write those scriptures or experiences down in words.

If you haven't received the guidance you have been seeking yet, we encourage you to boldly pray to the Lord. When you do receive a word in prayer, please be sure to write it down in words for future reference.

When you have finished writing, you can then share these things with others who are partnering with you to pray for you; and your faith will be further strengthened and the Lord's leading will further be confirmed as you continue to pray.

- A. Where were some of the thoughts you had or the scriptures you received while you were abroad? When you were overseas, what were some of the experiences that helped to shape your faith?
- B. If you feel like you are still waiting for the Lord to give you experiences that will solidify your faith and belief in His calling on your life, please take some time now to write down a prayer, in your own words. Ask Him to reveal Himself to you and shape your life.

1. When family members are unbelievers:
  - A. Have you explained to your family that you are a Christian? Or have you already shared your faith with your family? Please circle one:  
  
I have shared • I haven't shared yet
  - Names of those you've shared with: ( )
  - Names of those I haven't told yet: ( )
  - B. If you have already shared your faith with your family, how did they respond when you told them you are a Christian?
  - C. If you haven't told your family yet, what are some of the reasons why? If you are insecure, afraid or concerned to share your faith, please explain those concerns?
  - D. What are some ways that you can address some of those concerns? And what are some of the ways that you can share the Gospel with your family (Some examples are to write them a letter, or have them meet your Christian friends, or invite them to a Christian event)

Sharing the Gospel with your family has nothing to do with whether you are returning from overseas or not. All Japanese Christians go through many similar circumstances. However, as ones who have also heard the Gospel and received Christ as Savior at one time, and experienced these challenges, we will be praying along side you as you continue forward. You don't have to face these difficulties alone; certainly you can share them with close Christian friends or your pastor, etc., who would be happy to pray for and support you.



**1. God:** The God who created everything in the Universe also created you and me so that He could give us His love. (Gen 1:1, John 3:16)

To the average Japanese, the meaning of “god” is pretty ambiguous. You can politely explain how the God of the Bible (created the world, about His character, His righteousness and love, etc.) is different from the common Japanese conceptions about gods (Statues of Buddha, elements of nature or ancestral spirits).

**2. Sin:** Everyone has done something wrong at one time or another, so that we have to die and face God’s judgment as a result of what we have done on the earth. (Rom 3:23, 6:23; Heb 9:27)

It is difficult for Japanese to grasp the concept of sin. They usually think of it as same as “crime.” You may explain it to them using a term “self-centeredness”, which is the root of all kinds of crime and causes all the problems in human relationships.

**3. The cross:** Jesus was the one and only Son of God, who died upon a cross in order to take the judgment for all our sins so that we wouldn’t have to. Through Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross, the power of death was broken, and we can have new life in Him. (Rom 5:8; Isa 53:6, Rom 4:25)

**4. Salvation:** It is possible to receive eternal life by receiving Jesus Christ as our Savior into our hearts. (Rom 10:10; John 1:12; Eph 2:8-9; 1 John 5:13)

A. Have you ever shared the Gospel with anyone?

B. Are there people around you, friends or family maybe, who you want to share the Gospel with? Please write down the names of people you want to have the opportunity to hear the Gospel.

C. Perhaps you want to share the Gospel with others, but there are some obstacles or things holding you back. Please write down some of these obstacles.

Likewise, in what manner do you think would be the best to share the Gospel with others?

#### 4-3. Sharing the Gospel with your Family

When thinking about evangelism, probably the first thing that comes to mind is the most familiar thing to us – our families. However, maybe because we are so familiar with our family, that can make it difficult to share the Gospel. Let’s take some time now to really delve into and consider our relationships with our family.

#### 1-3-3. Receiving a Mission

The Lord has special plans for you. He wants to use you to reach your family, friends, coworkers, and even your church!

**You didn’t choose me. I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask for, using my name. (John 15:16)**

In order to really solidify your conviction about the mission God wants to give you, in light of the verse above, please consider the following questions:

1. Who was it that chose you?
2. What is His reason for choosing you?
3. What is the mission that He is entrusting to you?
4. In your own words, with regards to that mission, what does it mean to live out that mission? What are you going to do to accomplish that mission?

## Chapter 2: Character ~ Becoming More and More like Jesus

And all of us have had that veil removed so that we can be mirrors that brightly reflect the glory of the Lord. And as the Spirit of the Lord works within us, we become more and more like him and reflect his glory even more. (2 Corinthians 3:18)

Our most basic goal as Christians, as Disciples of Christ, is to become more and more like Jesus. Christians love the Lord and want to serve and obey Him. They love others and strive to serve people around them. Christians continually go through times of “Character growth” and “Spiritual growth”. Until now, being in a foreign culture that fosters this kind of growth, has been a great help to your spiritual growth. If we take a deeper look, Spiritual growth is something that, while you learned in one culture, the essence of which crosses over cultures. As we dig deeper you will know that it is possible to know how to continue to grow in your Spiritual life, even after returning home to Japan.

### 2-1. Growth and development cause by cross-cultural experiences

First of all, let's delve a little more into our experiences of daily life in a foreign culture, but let's also consider the aspects of how culture influenced our experiences. You can probably recognize things about you that have changed since traveling over seas. Compared to living overseas, you probably feel that life in Japan is totally different, especially because the people have a different culture and value system than you're accustomed to. When we are immersed in a foreign culture, we learn and absorb these things. As a result our own ways of thinking and values in life are influenced. Whether or not you are aware of the influence and change in your own life, odds are you are different now from when you left Japan. Whether you consider from the aspect of culture, faith or relationships, no matter what problems that arise from the difference in ways of thinking, there is always a way to properly handle these difficulties or re-entering Japanese society.

A. When you went overseas, how do you experience “culture shock”? For sure there were some good things and some difficult things you experienced. Please take some time to write them down. In the table below, also describe how you handled those differences and also about how long it took for you to adapt.

Culture shock	How I handled the difference	How long it took to adapt
Ex: : It's ok to have food or drinks while in class	I begun to have food and drinks in class	1 month
Ex: It's important to speak my opinion.	I begun to say my opinion at discussion.	About 6 months

## Chapter 4: Commission

### ~You are called to reach others for Him

“Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19, 20)

Before Jesus ascended to be with the Father, He gave His disciples a job to do. We call this job “the Great Commission” (Matthew 28:19, 20). As Christians we are all called to give the Gospel of Jesus to everyone possible while we live here on Earth. Now you get to be the one who carries the Gospel to Japan. From the time you go home to Japan, Japan becomes your mission field! How will you tell those around you, such as friends and family, about your coming to faith in Jesus Christ? It would be good to consider this now, because sometimes people will have many questions for you, and if you are prepared, it will be a more powerful witness to them.

**Instead, you must worship Christ as Lord of your life. And if you are asked about your Christian hope, always be ready to explain it. (1 Peter 3:15)**

### 4-1. Your Testimony is Powerful Evidence

In the first chapter, we talked a little bit about the events that led you to faith in Christ, but let's take some time to expand upon that now in order to put together your faith story (testimony). When thinking about the evidence of your salvation, try to consider the following four points:

1. What was my life like before I met Jesus Christ?
2. What led up to my accepting Jesus as my savior? When and why did I realize that I needed Jesus to be my Savior?
3. How did I surrender my life to Jesus? What did I have to release to Jesus?
4. After I believed, how did my life change because of my faith in Christ?

There is space for you to make some notes or write your testimony in the Appendix. Please write out only what you are comfortable sharing. Depending on your circumstances, some things are better left for trusted Christian friends. (You can find more on page 36, Appendix 3).

### 4-2. How can I tell Others about the Gospel?

What do you answer if someone asks you: “What do Christians believe?” There are many resources that you can obtain in order to help you know what to answer, but there are other factors to consider. Depending on the person or circumstance, how should you convey the Gospel? You should, in your own words, be able to sum up all of the essential points of the Gospel so that you can naturally tell others in everyday conversation. It is good to have some scriptures memorized ahead of time so that you can include the Word of God as well.

**3-6-2. Heart**

If there is something that you feel consumed by or joyful in doing, whether in church, family or business life – that's the passion of your heart. What are your areas of interest? What sort of things do you feel make your life meaningful or make you joyful? How do you think you can use those passions and pursuits to serve the Lord?

**3-6-3. Abilities**

Abilities include the gifts that you were born with, or the skills you have. Some examples of abilities are aptness for music or English, basically the things you maybe can do pretty effortlessly or that seem second nature. What kinds of skills and abilities do you have? How do you think that you can use those abilities to bring glory to God?

**3-6-4. Personality**

God love's diversity and has created each and every one of us with a different and unique personality. Some people are social butterflies, others are introverted. Some people are fairly logically minded, while others just go with their gut-instincts. Some people are dramatic, others seem rather unemotional. One thing is for sure – there are no two people alike. Because you are unique and have your own characteristic personality, you have gifts and abilities that will affect others around you.

**3-6-5. Experience**

The experiences you have also can enrich your ability to affect and influence others. What was your family life like, what sort of upbringing did you have, what sort of jobs and ministries have you had, what sorts of pain or victory have you experienced. There are so many factors of experience that cause us all to be different and unique.

What are some of the experiences that have shaped you? Perhaps the time you have spent abroad is one of those experiences. A lot of the things we experience are not things we chose. Sometimes we have experiences that we wish we could forget. But you know what? Even those terrible things you have been through, God can use for a good purpose. Really! Certainly the Lord can use you to share a burden of someone who is going through a similar experience. You can encourage others who are going through the things you have gone through!

How do you think you would like to use your unique SHAPE to serve God when you return to Japan? (Example: Because of my experiences in an English speaking culture, I would like to serve by interpreting in a church. There are many things you can do, so please take some time to come up with some concrete ideas).

**Now there are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but it is the same Holy Spirit who is the source of them all. There are different kinds of service in the church, but it is the same Lord we are serving. There are different ways God works in our lives, but it is the same God who does the work through all of us. (1 Corinthians 12:4-6)**

- B. What did you learn from the "culture shock" experiences that you wrote down in the table above? (For example: how did your way of thinking or opinions change?)
- C. Did your cross-cultural experiences change your opinions concerning Japan? If this is the case, in your opinion, what does that change mean to you? What sorts of conflict do you think this change will bring about in your life after returning to Japan?
- D. Sometimes, because of these foreign experiences, we unconsciously lose our Japanese customs and pick up the mannerisms and customs of foreign culture we experience. Have those experiences changed your character, your opinions or your attitudes? Below are a list of some possible ways people have been changed, please check the boxes that apply to you.
- Since traveling overseas I have become a lot more direct
  - I have become able to express my own opinions more clearly
  - I have become more individualist, rather than prefer going with the flow
  - When I speak, I am definitely louder now than before I left Japan
  - When in class, I feel that eating and drinking is acceptable
  - I use a lot of hand gestures now when I am conversing with people
  - My Japanese has become noticeably influenced with English mannerisms and words
  - When talking about Japanese things, I immediately make a comparison to things in America or other foreign countries
  - I've started to sit with my legs crossed, rather than sit on top of them
  - My thinking has become a lot more flexible

If there are other noticeable changes that you have experienced, please take some time to consider and write them down.

E. You have probably experienced changes in your relationships and your lifestyle.

In the table below, let's briefly contrast and compare your circumstances before and now. Then let's consider the reasons for the changes we have experienced.

Area of change	Before going	Now	Reason
Ex: my relationships with my family	I didn't really talk to them	I've really started to talk a lot more	While overseas I came to appreciate my family more through my experiences
My relationships with my family			
My relationships with friends			
My joy and worth in life			
My value system			
My thoughts about Japanese			
My thoughts about Japanese society			

F. There might be things about yourself that you never really knew until you left Japan and traveled to a foreign culture. How do you feel about these changes that you've experienced, please take some time to evaluate them. How would you like to put these changes to practical use in your life? (For example: how do you want these changes to influence how you interact with your family, or work or marriage relationships in the future?)

2. Information about possible churches I can attend

Church name:

Pastor's name:

Address:

Telephone:

E-mail:

URL:

### 3-6. Spiritual Gifts, Blessing and Serving Others

So far we have talked about the importance of Christian fellowship, especially in order to receive essential encouragement. Finally, let's talk now about how you will be used to encourage and bless other Christians.

God has created you to be unique and special. Your gifts, abilities, and especially the things learned from your cross-cultural experiences are all things God has given you. You can use all of these things to serve God and others.

In the "Purpose Driven Life", each person's gifts fall into 5 categories; let's call your gifts, your unique characteristics that God has given you, your SHAPE, which means:

**S: Spiritual Gifts**

**H: Heart**

**A: Abilities**

**P: Personality**

**E: Experience**

#### 3-6-1. Spiritual Gifts

When you become a Christian, there are many "Spiritual Gifts" that God gives to each person. You might be wondering, "What in the world is a spiritual gift"? There are a few places in the New Testament which discuss these gifts (1 Corinthians 12:28, Romans 12:6-8, and Ephesians 4:11-13), please take some time to read these passages on your own. Some of the spiritual gifts God gives to us are: prophecy, service and special help, teaching, encouragement, giving, leadership, charity, prayer-language, healing, kindness, hospitality, teaching, and evangelism, among others. Have you received a gift or gifts? What are your gifts? Sometimes it can be difficult to understand some spiritual gifts, but there are many ways to test and validate each of these gifts. If you have questions or want to find out more about spiritual gifts, please feel free to contact JCFN.

a template letter from JCFN, which will help us introduce you to a church in Japan. If you would like JCFN to help you find a church in Japan, please contact us, we'd love to hear from you!

Furthermore, JCFN has a lot of various activities, geared up to help you continue to grow in your faith after returning home to Japan. If you are not a member of JCFN, please take this opportunity to get involved by filling out the registration form. You can register online at [http://jcfn.org/dir/index.php?option=com\\_wrapper&view=wrapper&Itemid=128&lang=en](http://jcfn.org/dir/index.php?option=com_wrapper&view=wrapper&Itemid=128&lang=en), and don't worry, there are no membership fees!). After becoming a member you can receive information about regional meetings, discipleship and small groups, etc. that are meeting in your area! For finding a small group, please e-mail at [smallgroup@jcfn.org](mailto:smallgroup@jcfn.org). Please fill in the network information you have received below:

#### **A. Information about Small Group near your home.**

Place of Small Group:

Contact Person:

E-mail:

#### **B. Information about persons who follow-up on you.**

1. Follow-up person's name:

Address:

Telephone:

E-mail:

2. Follow-up person's name:

Address:

Telephone:

E-mail:

#### **C. Information regarding possible churches to attend**

1. Information about possible churches I can attend

Church name:

Pastor's name:

Address:

Telephone:

E-mail:

URL:

## **2-2. What is "Reverse Culture Stress"?**

In different cultures our lifestyle becomes broadened, and to that end, the more we internalize the customs and culture of that different culture, the greater the "out of place" feelings we experience when we return home to Japan. In addition, because of your cross-cultural experiences, other people may not accept you, so you will further feel "out of place". As a result, even though Japan is our homeland, we begin to feel that the country of Japan is not our own homeland. (Nate Mirza. Home Again. Spring, CO: THE NAVIGATORS, p33-34, 1993)

In this manner, after having experienced life in a foreign culture, upon returning home to Japan there is a stressful process called "Reverse Culture Stress". There are many representative signs of reverse culture stress: you unconsciously make comparisons between Japanese and foreign culture you experienced; perhaps you feel as though you want to escape; you feel that you would like to return to that foreign country because it was more comfortable; or maybe you truly want to return to that country overseas. No matter what stress you are feeling, don't worry! This is not something you are experiencing alone, because you're not alone! There have been and will be many Japanese, Christian or non-Christian, who have experienced, to varying degrees, these distressing feelings. Moreover, as a Christian, included in the period of reverse culture stress are many trials, which we know are opportunities for us to grow and be affirmed in our faith in Christ!

**And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.**

**(Romans 8:28)**

There are many different kinds of reverse culture stress, but we would like to pick a few representative items that you might experience. Please think about how you would respond in each of these cases. After each question we will give an example coping method, please participate!

#### **A. Vertical and Horizontal Societies**

In America, people of different ages or students and teachers, for example, exchange opinions pretty much as equals, but Japanese society is different. You must show respect for elders, seniors, teachers, etc.; casually calling a superior by their first name would never be acceptable. With regards to these kinds of differences in society structure, how do you feel? Moreover, how do you think you should deal with the changes that you have undergone in a foreign culture?

**Example coping method:** I will take another look at the differences of people in society, and bear in mind that I should have a positive and submissive attitude when I come into contact with others. Moreover, I need to be considerate of the things I say as I am becoming more informal in my relationships.

**Obey the government, for God is the one who put it there. All governments have been placed in power by God. (Romans 13:1)**

**B. Directness versus Indirectness**

American culture is one where you must clearly express ideas in order to be understood. However, Japanese culture is somewhat opposite. You would normally avoid being frank, attempting to sort of guess the other's thoughts. In order to be polite or humble your way of speaking would be fairly indirect. How do you feel about that difference in communicating your thoughts or understanding someone else's thoughts? What are some ways that you can deal with the difference in communication methods?

**Example coping method:** "I need to be extra careful not to hurt the other person's feelings. Especially when the other person's opinion differs from mine; I should take plenty of time to listen and validate their opinion, and be casual when expressing my thoughts to others—rather than debating with them. As much as possible, I need to resist the temptation to feel that "it's your fault because you did not verbalize it."

**C. Individualism versus Group-Mentality**

Comparatively, in America, the opinion of the individual is respected and everyone takes responsibility for their own actions, but Japan is different. In Japan, while listening to all of the ideas around you, the group eventually comes to a consensus, and the responsibility for actions is taken by the collective group. How do you feel about this difference between cultures? How do you plan to deal with this difference once you have been changed by it?

**Example coping method:** When I am making a decision, I should take the time to take the advice of those around me. Or when I am deciding to do something, I should make an effort to consider the effects my actions will have on those around me.

**There is encouragement in the Word of God!**

Believe it or not, the Bible contains encouragement to help us as we go through the difficult times of reverse-culture stress. Let's read some of these scriptures:

**Don't be selfish; don't live to make a good impression on others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourself. Don't think only about your own affairs, but be interested in others, too, and what they are doing.**

(Philippians 2:3, 4)

**Though he was God, he did not demand and cling to his rights as God. He made himself nothing; he took the humble position of a slave and appeared in human form. And in human form he obediently humbled himself even further by dying a criminal's death on a cross. (Philippians 2:6-8)**

**3-4-2. For those who belong to a church in Japan, and those who have visited a church while visiting home**

- A. If you belong to a church in Japan, or attend one while visiting home that you thought was a pretty good church, please tell us about it. Please let us know what about the church you thought was good (for example: the worship style, the pastor's message, the church's activities, the church's location, the size of the congregation, the demographics of the church's members)
- B. Do you have any concerns or reservations about attending that church again? If so, what are some of those concerns?
- C. Even if you have some concerns about attending again, what are some ways that you can deal with or overcome those concerns?

If there are things in the church life that cause concern or insecurity, or if you have doubts or think something should be changed, please pray a lot about it. One idea is to discuss it with the pastor or a fellow churchgoer that you can trust. Be careful to be sensitive to how you might come across when discussing your concerns. If you don't really know the pastor or anyone at the church, it's probably safe to say they don't know you. Therefore, it would be wise to speak positively, and please try to make as many friends as possible. Another idea is to take some time where you can leisurely discuss with the pastor, one on one, about your spirit life experiences overseas.

Finally, when you are facing a multitude of problems, don't forget that God is always with you and there are people who are praying for you!

**3-5. Creating a Network**

Before returning home to Japan, please make use of the JCFN (Japanese Christian Fellowship Network) Follow-up Ministry, which works to create a network between churches and connect Japanese Christians who are returning with Christians that have already returned. JCFN is active in creating a network of individuals and churches all over Japan, to help returning Christians continue their journey of faith after returning home. JCFN can offer you plenty of usefully information about churches in your area as well as individuals who can offer follow-up support for you when you return.

Likewise, we believe that if you can be introduced to a church beforehand, through JCFN's network, in an effort to get plugged into a church in Japan, it usually makes it easier to build relationships once you return. Things always seem to go smoother when you don't have to go it alone. You don't have to feel obligated to find a church or fellowship through JCFN, it's even a great idea to write a self-introduction letter in an effort to build a bridge before returning. JCFN would love to contact some reliable believers in your area, in order to help you get plugged in! Please refer to Appendix 2,

Especially in Japan, where Christians are in short supply you definitely need to be attending a church, in order to receive critical encouragement for your faith!

### 3-4-1. I have never been to a Church in Japan, even once!

- A. Do you have insecurities or worries about going to a church in Japan? If this is the case, what are some of the issues you are concerned about? (For example: I am insecure because I am unfamiliar with the atmosphere of churches in Japan, and I don't really know anyone)
- B. We received the following advice from Christians who have already returned to Japan and experienced the process for themselves. As a sort of reference, the following list was created. Please check each of the boxes for each of the things you can do to prepare to return home to Japan. We will continue to come to grips with those things that you leave unchecked, from now or even after returning to Japan.
- While overseas, I can get involved with a group of Japanese speaking believers
  - If possible, I can attend a Japanese speaking church before returning home to Japan
  - I can gather information about Churches in the area I will be returning to in Japan. (Please contact JCFN! We have many resources and can introduce you to some great church in your area of Japan!)
  - Perhaps before going home, it might be possible to have a local pastor or friend write a letter to a pastor or Christian friend in Japan, introducing you, asking them to help take care of you by introducing you to church, and plugging you into a network. It is also fine to write a self-introduction letter to send ahead of yourself.
  - You should know as much as you can about your church's doctrine and beliefs before returning home. Knowing these things will be useful when you go to a church in Japan and serve as a foundation to help you make wise choices.
  - You should read the Bible in Japanese, in order to learn some of the lingo Christians use (e.g. God's will, Holy Spirit, etc.).
  - You should pray in Japanese.
  - Make the most use of temporary visits home, if possible, visit as many churches as possible to get a feel. Then you can process your thoughts and feelings with Christian friends before you return home for good.
  - Try to find someone that you can have pray for you, someone you can rely upon to continually pray for you.

**This means I am not bound to obey people just because they pay me, yet I have become a servant of everyone so that I can bring them to Christ. When I am with the Jews, I become one of them so that I can bring them to Christ. When I am with those who follow the Jewish laws, I do the same, even though I am not subject to the law, so that I can bring them to Christ. When I am with the Gentiles who do not have the Jewish law, I fit in with them as much as I can. In this way, I gain their confidence and bring them to Christ. But I do not discard the law of God; I obey the law of Christ. When I am with those who are oppressed, I share their oppression so that I might bring them to Christ. Yes, I try to find common ground with everyone so that I might bring them to Christ. I do all this to spread the Good News, and in doing so I enjoy its blessings. (1 Corinthians 9:19-23)**

These passages emphasize the points of “a servant’s heart” and “a humble attitude”. When we return home to Japan, we are not called to just live out our life in whatever way feels good. As Christians it should be our aim to influence others by living a godly life. These things are important to consider because they are vital in becoming more like Jesus.

Sometimes it can be really difficult and even painful to follow Jesus’ example in this area. When we believe in and follow Christ, when we receive God’s love and give it away to those around us, we are able for the first time, to have “a servant’s heart” and “a humble attitude”. Through our experiences in foreign cultures, we have become “cross-cultural Christians”. Being a “cross-cultural Christian” doesn’t mean that you are someone who has been influenced by two or more cultures, and therefore don’t belong to either. On the contrary, no matter what culture or country you are in, you will not only adjust to it, but also learn to serve the Lord and people and live an abundant Christian life!

**“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16)**

The love that God has for us was clearly shown through Jesus on the Cross. As the understanding of His love grows within your heart, you will better understand what it means to serve and to be a servant. Those two things are exactly the manifestation of Jesus’ life in us: the overflow of the Love of God and the desire to be a servant.

### 2-3. The Nature of a Growing Spiritual Life

Well, let’s think about the type of spiritual life that we experienced in culture outside of Japan. All of the scriptures and things you’ve learned about Christianity, they were learned through culture, but the essence of such things have been universal for over 2,000 years. Therefore, the faith that you have learned so far, even after returning to Japan, needs to be developed and continually strengthened. At this point, let’s take a look at the spiritual life you have experienced so far.

A. In your spiritual life so far, what are some things that have been very helpful for your spiritual growth? (For example: a church youth-group, bible studies, Sunday worship services, etc.)

B. In order to grow spiritually, what are the factors in your spiritual life that serve as a basis for growing? That is, when you return to Japan, is it possible to get what you need to continue to grow in Christ? If you can't find these things when returning, how will you improvise in order to continue to grow?

Effective activity	Why the activity is a basis for spiritual growth	In Japan, how will you find or get involved with these activities, or improvise if you can't be involved?
Example: bible study	Through the Bible itself, I come to know God better	Invite my Christian friends that we should have a bible study together and buy the necessary study materials

In the "Purpose Drive Life" (Rick Warren) , in order to growth as a healthy Christian the author gives five indispensable aspects of Christian life: 1. worship, 2. fellowship, 3. discipleship training, 4. service, and 5. evangelism. In your walk, are the above five things perfectly produced in your life? Please consider what things you can add in order to better obtain a balance of these five important aspects of the Christian life.

**E. Healing:** Among a family of believers, when we have weakness or sin, when we confess in honesty, we are able to receive healing and restoration.

**Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and wonderful results. (James 5:16)**

What can you do to find a fellowship of believers, where you can receive such things? Or perhaps you might be spending time, once arriving home, searching for such a church. As you continue to think about life after returning home to Japan, please consider the following things:

A. When you return to Japan, is there anyone, a believer, who is close enough to get together and share the issues that you will face?

B. Are you taking measures to search for a church or fellowship of believers that you can join, before returning to Japan?

Don't worry, you don't have to have answers to the above questions right now. The important thing now is to realize that being involved with a body of Christians is essential. By all means, if you haven't started already, from now on you should pray that the Lord will prepare your way and lead you to a fellowship of believers in Japan. Moreover, there are many Christian groups, such as JCFN regional meetings and conferences, for example, that you can get involved in. Please search for opportunities to join in Christian communities where you can get plugged in.

Furthermore, finding Christian friends in Japan can be a difficult matter, but you shouldn't just wait for them to come to you. You should take positive measures on your own to go and start a fellowship that you can regularly be involved with. There are some questions in Appendix 1, titled "LTG, Life Transformation Group", at the end of this workbook (page 34). These questions are designed for 2 to 3 people to meet on a regular basis, confess their sins and struggles, examine their faith, and cultivate spiritual growth together. Meeting with one or two people regularly can be simple to start, and can be done basically anywhere you decide.

In order to help you start a small group, JCFN can help introduce you to other returnee Christians in your area as well as Bible study materials you can delve into together. If you are interested in learning more, please contact us (a contact card is attached to the back cover of this workbook).

**3-4. Church-life in Japan**

In order to grow as a Christian in Japan, church is something you cannot go without. There are some people who say, "Oh, I don't need to go to church", this isn't arrogance, so much as it's ignorance. Look what the Bible says concerning the importance of fellowshiping with believers at church:

**Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. (Ephesians 5:25)  
Upon this rock I will build my church, and all the powers of hell will not conquer it. (Matthew 16:18)**



You may be surprised that the religious population is larger than the actual populations. It shows one of the views Japanese have toward religions that they do festivals at Shinto shrine, funerals at Buddhist temple, and weddings at church. It seems only natural that, when returning to Japan under the current circumstances, life as a Christian in Japan will be different than that experienced overseas. The number of Christians and Christian churches are overwhelmingly small in Japan. Finding Christians who are the same generation as you, in the same area might be difficult.

In such a severe environment, the Church in Japan is striving to serve the Lord and others around them. They certainly have the same desire as Jesus Christ, praying everyday that the Lord would bring in a harvest of believers, and praying for serious change in Japan. You will be returning to Japan in the midst of these circumstances.

In Japan today, because the number of Christians and Churches is low, as well as understanding, you might have a strong inner struggle after returning home to Japan. Christian friends and church family provide, from the standpoint of spirituality and faith, irreplaceable in your understanding and accepting of your faith.

**Let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage and warn each other, especially now that the day of His coming back again is drawing near. (Hebrews 10:25)**

### 3-3. Accountability Small Groups

Fellowship is essential for us! Fellowshiping with a family of believers who share our faith is something we cannot lack! Below are some of the things we receive from being in fellowship with other believers:

**A. Encouragement and comfort:** We never have to face trials or difficulties alone, we can share the burdens with fellow believers

**Two people can accomplish more than twice as much as one; they get a better return for their labor. If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But people who are alone when they fall are in real trouble. And on a cold night, two under the same blanket can gain warmth from each other. But how can one be warm alone? A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer. Three are even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken.**

**(Ecclesiastes 4:9-12)**

**B.Help:** In the midst of believers, you can receive help when you need it and answers when you have questions you can't answer.

**Never abandon a friend – either yours or your father's. Then in your time of need, you won't have to ask your relatives for assistance. It is better to go to a neighbor than to a relative who lives far away. (Proverbs 27:10)**

**C.Growth:** Being in a community of believers we receive good influence and encouragement for growing in godliness.

**As iron sharpens iron, a friend sharpens a friend. (Proverbs 2:17)**

**D. Evidence and doctrine:** When in fellowship at a Church we learn how to evidence our faith and strengthen what we believe.

**Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.(John 13:35)**

### 2-4. Living in Japanese Society

Well, next let's consider what problems we will face, living as a Christian in the Japanese culture. We want you to be careful, because there may not always be a 100% correct answer for many of the many problems. It's important to learn what Bible says about the problems and challenges we will be faced with, before we experience them.

When considering the following challenges, let's think of how we can use the opportunity to develop in the five areas: 1. worship, 2. fellowship, 3. discipleship training, 4. service, and 5. evangelism. If there is a situation that you are not sure how to deal with, or if you are facing a problem alone, by all means, please talk to a mentor Christian or a pastor you can trust to partner with you in searching for answers.

- A. Your family has a shrine, where you always used to offer incense or other offerings. When you return your family might expect that you would naturally like to offer incense upon arriving home.
- B. Your looking for a job and you've found a really great company, but they want you to work on Sundays, the only day that you can attend church.
- C. You have a girlfriend/boyfriend in Japan who is non-Christian. You really want to share the Gospel with them, but it seems obvious that this would threaten your relationship, especially if they desire a sexual relationship.
- D. You have to attend a Buddhist style funeral service. As a Christian, how should you respond, what should you do?
- E. You've gone to check out many churches, but you can't find ones like the ones you experienced in America. They don't sing the same style of praise songs and even though their certainly Christians, it seems as if their faith and spiritual life is different that what you've experienced.
- F. Your family is opposed to you going to Church. It seems that there is always tension and conflict with your family concerning this topic. Should you stop going to church if your family wants you to?

G. You are so busy during the work week that when it's time to go to church you are completely wiped-out, and when you have a day off you want to use it to take a break and rest.

H. When you tell your friends you became a Christian, their facial expression changes and after that, they break off contact with you.

The above situations are all just a tiny part of the problems you may experience, as they have been experienced by Christians who have gone through them before.

Let's read the following passage from God's Word:

**Then the LORD told Abram, "Leave your country, your relatives, and your father's house, and go to the land that I will show you. I will cause you to become the father of a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and I will make you a blessing to others. I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you. All the families of the earth will be blessed through you." (Genesis 12:1-3)**

From Abraham's example, we can see that whenever the Lord calls us to go to a foreign place, the Lord promises to each of us that He will certainly provide us with blessings, even when the place that God is calling you to is not what you expected or hoped for. But don't be afraid, you can expect that God will be with you when you go, wherever you go, so let's pray during this time of preparation for returning home to Japan. The Lord is going to bless us, in every place that He uses us!!!

## Chapter 3: Community

### ~ Receiving encouragement through fellowship

**So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples." (John 13:34, 35)**

**Jesus replied, "'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" (Matthew 22:37-39)**

#### 3-1. Fellowship is Essential

In the journey of faith, there is nothing you can do by yourself. We all grow in the midst of community, loving each other, and through God's love growing together as Christians. Let's take a little while and consider how your spiritual life has been greatly affected through fellowship with other believers.

- A. Who has been the most influential person in your spiritual life so far? In what ways has the Lord really poured out His grace and mercy in your life through that person?
- B. Is your spiritual life being supported by being involved with a fellowship (or a small group)? What sort of impact has a small-group had on your spiritual life and your growth?

#### 3-2. Living as a Christian in Japan

When we return to Japan, we become separated from the lifestyle filled with the close and warm fellowship with Christian friends and our host-family that we experienced in America.

It is said that since the end of the War, the Christian population in Japan has been pretty steady at just less than 1%. The Japanese entire population in 2008 is approximately 127 millions, and here are statistics regarding religious populations (Operation Japan, 3rd edition, 2005)

109 million: Shinto

96 million: Buddhist

1.5 million: Christian

10.5 million: Sokka Gakkai or some other newer religious group