

# Let the Prince Kiss the Bride: Functioning as Best Man

by Mitsuo Fukuda

*Editor's note: This article was originally presented at the Asia Society for Frontier Mission (ASFM) meetings in October 2015.*

Imagine this retelling of the classic story, “Sleeping Beauty.” At the end of my adaptation, we see three kinds of people surrounding the beautiful princess in her chamber: the prince, who is her future bridegroom; the fairies, who raised her until she was a teenager; and finally someone who does not appear in the original story, a doctor who was sent from a far country to save her. All are gathered around, expecting the poor, enchanted princess to wake up from her long sleep.

Now imagine that the girl has been getting better, but she is still not completely awake. She can hear the voices of the people around her, but cannot open her eyes. The fairies’ voices are the only ones which are familiar to her, and she is glad to be able to talk to them.

However, the doctor is a scientist and is too rational to admit the existence of fairies. He cannot see the fairies himself, and has diagnosed her as being in a state of confusion. He says to the girl, “Don’t listen to the fairies. You are suffering from an auditory hallucination. They are not real. Just listen to me. I am the one who can give you a solution.”

Then the doctor turns around and asks the prince. “Could you leave the room, please? I am quite an experienced doctor and I have the cure. There is no need to give her your magical kiss.” So the prince, who is expected to be the one person most able to solve the problem, is kicked out of the place where his bride sleeps.

## *Who Should You Listen To?*

Let me explain how an unorthodox fabrication of this story speaks to mission in Japan today. The sleeping princess is the Japanese people. The prince is Jesus. The doctor is a Christian worker who practices from an “excluded middle” in his theology, and who fails to acknowledge the activities of an

---

*Mitsuo Fukuda is an equipper of disciple makers, and the founder of the Rethinking Authentic Christianity Network, which has provided mission strategies and grass-roots training in Japan and other Asian countries. After finishing the Graduate School of Theology at Kwansai Gakuin University, he received a doctoral degree in intercultural studies at Fuller Seminary. His books include Mentoring Like Barnabas, Paradigm Shift in Contextualization, and Readings in Missiology: Japanese Culture and Christianity.*

unseen spiritual realm here in this world (Hiebert 1982, 40). The fairies are the deities and spirits which exist amidst the Japanese people. The doctor's mission should be to introduce the princess to the prince, but in the end his behavior prevented the prince from kissing his bride.

Christian workers who have a Western theology and worldview are sometimes part of the problem in Asian contexts. They are trained to logically explain the way of salvation to the Japanese people, that they might receive a good response from them one by one. However, in most cases, their persuasion does not work, because the Japanese people will trust more intuitive inputs, even those from the spiritual world, in determining their behavior. For most Asians, conversations with spirits and deities are their normal reality—and even become part of their identity. I believe God is using this Asian paradigm as his point of contact. It is actually an advantage for Asian people to receive messages from the spiritual realm, because God himself is also Spirit.

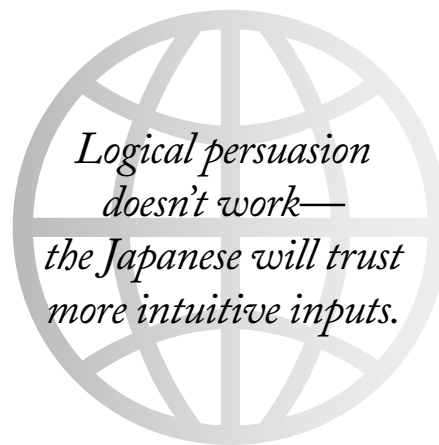
Looking back at the story, Christ is there just beside the princess. Yes, as the doctor said, it is dangerous for the girl to continue listening to the fairies. However, it is also a precious opportunity for the bridegroom to finally be able to speak to his bride. Don't disturb the sweet conversation between bridegroom and bride! As she talks with him, the bride will understand that he is the one that she is to walk with forever, as her husband.

We need to understand the practice of spiritual activities of the typical Japanese worldview in order to find a new approach which paves a way for the bride to meet her bridegroom. Apostle Paul's promise to the Corinthians was "I espoused you to one husband, that I might present you as a pure bride to Christ" (2 Cor. 11:2). Our promise to the Japanese people should be the same.

### *A Princess Who Listens to Fairies*

Saigyō was a Japanese Buddhist priest and poet. One of his best-known poems expresses the spiritually-oriented worldview of the Japanese: *Nanigotono Owashimasukawa Shiranedomo Katajikenasani Namidakoboruru*— "Whatever thing there may be, I cannot tell, but grateful tears overflow." The poet could not define scientifically what there is "out there," but he feels something spiritual gently enfolding him and he cannot stop weeping.

Most Japanese people receive this kind of message from the spiritual realm. They often feel that they are protected by gods, deities, natural forces and spiritual essences. For example, Japanese



people say "*itadakimasu*" before eating. It means "let's eat," but many Japanese will think unconsciously, "I take this meal as a precious gift from someone or something bigger than I." Japanese people sometimes use another phrase, "*okagesamade*." It originally means "thanks to *okage* (shadow)," and is an expression of thanks for being under the umbrella of a spiritual fortune giver. Its usage has been mostly secularized nowadays, but sometimes Japanese people are conscious of the spiritual zone behind everyday events.

Japanese people understand the mystical life-giving powers around them as objects of awe and intimacy. They seek to harmonize themselves

with the world around them and to empathize with it. The cosmos itself is both familiar to them and at the same time absolute. People perform rituals of respect, veneration, propitiation and offering, seeking to gain access to the life-giving powers of spiritual beings. The actions and rituals of Japanese religion largely center on the development and maintenance of harmonious relationships with these life-giving spiritual beings (cf. Fukuda 2012, 87).

Another key concept of Japanese religion is that of "bad fortune consciousness," which provides explanations for their crises. Japanese have a fundamental fear that malevolent spirits might damage the living. It is believed that an unhappy spirit who was not cared for causes hindrances and problems to its kin until the necessary rituals are performed to pacify it. Counter-rituals with strong purification and exorcism themes are performed against the unhappy spirits, so that the hindrances may be removed and unhappy spirits may be soothed.

Japanese religious rituals are intended to ward off or decrease any misfortune, and to secure or augment the cooperation of the spiritual essence in promoting the happiness and peace of the individual and the community. Shrines and temples are recognized as the places where dangerous, polluting spirits are soothed, transformed or removed. Japanese need to cope with vast myriads of spirits and deities (*yaoyorozu no kami*), and to calm troublesome spirits and deities (*kami*) who have been offended by some impurity (Picken 1980, 53).

People in Athens in the Apostle Paul's era had a similar pantheistic worldview to today's Japanese. There were around three thousand public altars in that classical setting, and many private ones. This worldview is evident when Paul started to preach to philosophers on the Areopagus:

So Paul, standing before the council, addressed them as follows: "Men of

Athens, I notice that you are very religious in every way, for as I was walking along I saw your many shrines. And one of your altars had this inscription on it: 'To an Unknown God.' This God, whom you worship without knowing, is the one I'm telling you about." (Acts. 17:22-23)

Why did the people of Athens need to have one more altar when many deities were already represented in their city? They assumed that a god which had been offended and caused them a disaster was not any of the known gods of Athens, but one yet-to-be-known god (Richardson 1984, 9-25). Paul asserted that this God is Jesus. Although he did not accept the way in which the Athenians were spiritually manipulated, he used their fear of being attacked by a deity omitted from their worship as his point of contact.

The apostle did not blame the Athenians for their idolatry, but instead invited them to worship the true God who was at that time unknown to them. It is vital that the missionary to people with an animistic worldview not make a hasty challenge to cut off their relationship with their gods, but rather to invite them to start a new conversation with the true, real God. Once they feel that this new God is more faithful, powerful and wise, they will know the difference between him and their familiar deities.

It is easy for Japanese people to communicate with Jesus as Spirit. In the beginning stages, they might think of Jesus as simply one of their deities. We must run the risk of syncretism. It's reflected in the writing of Japanese author, Ryunosuke Akutagawa, when his main character says to a Catholic missionary: "Your Lord could also very well become a native of this land. China and India did. The West must change" (Akutagawa 2015). However, if the Japanese really have a conversation with Jesus, many will gradually come to realize that Jesus is unique and different from the other deities. We need to trust in Jesus who is

## *If the Japanese really have a conversation with Jesus, many will gradually realize that Jesus is unique and different from other deities.*

searching for his prodigal sons. We must take this risk and entrust the Japanese people to the love and power of Jesus who is able to speak with his loving children.

Returning to the princess in the fairy tale, the fairies' voices are familiar to her and listening to them is part of her identity. The doctor intended to stop her listening to them, but he didn't need to stop her at this stage. The most important step for the princess is to listen to the prince's voice. Once the channel of conversation with the prince broadens, other channels will fade away.

### *Failing to Understand the Bride and Bridegroom*

The Apostle Paul taught Timothy about who God is using these words:

He alone can never die, and he lives in light so brilliant that no human can approach him. No human eye has ever seen him, nor ever will. All honor and power to him forever! Amen. (1 Tim. 6:16)

No human can approach him or see him, much less bargain with him.

Sometimes, to the contrary, people treat God like a vending machine, assuming that they can manipulate him. They expect to receive good fortune from God by giving money and service. Can we buy blessings by our tithes and offerings? Can we control God like a programmer instructing a computer to execute a command? Japanese people bribe their gods so as to receive health, success, safe baby delivery and good marriage. Is the Creator God the same as the Japanese deities?

The Apostle Paul was deeply troubled by all the idols he saw everywhere in the city of Athens because he understood

the ignorance and arrogance of the idol worshipers. The transcendent God will do what he will do whenever he wants to. Every creature's fate is in his hands. He is the King with absolute control over the whole universe. "Should the thing that was created say to the one who created it, 'Why have you made me like this?'" (Rom. 9:20) A mere human being cannot argue with God.

Paul knew both God's incomparable nature and the Athenian misunderstandings, but he did not despise and criticize. Rather he searched for a point of contact and showed it to them, quoting the words of their own poet. His tone was not "Don't do it," but "Here is the better way to go." He did not show them a new approach to God, but rather God's approach to humans. He asserted that the real God has been with them all along (Acts 17:27-28), so that they can feel and touch him, if they respond to God's approach to them.

On the other hand, the doctor in the fairy tale cannot allow the princess to converse with the fairies, because he did not understand the transition period from animistic belief to Christian belief. Most seekers cannot cut themselves off from their old beliefs at a stroke. Many of them need a step-by-step process that narrows their polytheistic paradigm down to monotheism. The procedure which allows them to affirm the uniqueness of Creator God is the work of the Holy Spirit. The doctor did not need to stop the conversation with fairies by force, but rather to open up opportunities for the prince to talk with the princess.

Why couldn't the doctor understand this process? The reason is that he had no experience with fairies, miraculous healing, magical rites, sleeping curses, gods, deities, ancestors, evil spirits,

charms, or amulets, even though he understands the transcendent realm of the creator God. He wanted to start by teaching about the one and only non-negotiable God beyond the universe, someone whom the animists had never truly imagined. If an animist cannot understand the concept of an absolute sole God, he/she will not understand sin as rebellion against that God, nor the concept of salvation he offers from sin.

The doctor also did not understand two of the princess' primary emotions. First, there was her fear of spiritual attack, and secondly, her anxiety of losing her old identity. His method of treatment cannot stop her from listening to fairies, because it has been so natural for her to talk with them for such a long time; but, if he could somehow disconnect her from this intuitive communication, he would lose the point of contact. And if he succeeds in stopping her for a long time, at best he could convert her into a little Westerner. She would stay in her bed and dream about the life to come after she wakes up, but she wouldn't stand up and follow the prince.

This doctor's first and basic problem is his belief that he has no problem—only the patient has a problem. He assumes that his role is to diagnose the patient's problems and solve them. He does not have to learn from the patient. He has authority based on his studies in medical school as well as his medical license issued by the state, and so he thinks he is capable to diagnose the patient. Once he has found the problem and prescribed medicine, he can send the patient back to his home and have no further input in the patient's life, because he is neither the patients' friend nor their family member. He is a professional in the area of medical treatment. He doesn't have to share his life with the patient, and the private life of the patients, such as how they relate to their spouses, is not his business.

The doctor's effort is not only futile, but a stumbling block as well. The doctor is not the savior—the prince is. The doctor's desire to save the princess

is admirable, but if he really wants to help her, he needs to take off his white coat and, as a friend, prepare the way for the bridegroom. He needs to treat her fear by describing the prince as a stronger protector, and to soften her anxiety by sketching out her new identity as the wife of the prince. The happy end of the story is brought about when, through the kiss of the bridegroom, the bride will arise and leave with her husband. The doctor should not intercept what is between the prince and the princess. His existence will cause codependency with the princess and he will become an obstacle to her full and independent cleaving to her husband.

Let me share my story. Some years ago, I participated in a theological research



meeting in Japan. It was a frustrating experience, sitting there in a lecture hall at that venue. The principal of a theological school recalled the life of one Japanese pastor 100 years ago. That pastor was an apostolic figure, and his passion was leading him into frontier ministry in proclaiming the good news. He asked a senior western missionary if he could withdraw from his role as pastor in a local church. The answer of the missionary was negative. The eventual result was fruitlessness in the local church, and many Japanese lost the opportunity to hear the Gospel.

Hearing the presentation, I was angry at the inflexible church system, both then and now. When I got out of the

lecture hall, I met with a young theologian outside, who asked me how the lecture was. In spite of myself, I replied quite aggressively,

It was total nonsense! I was really disappointed. The church is a disaster for the Kingdom. The church ought to be a means of expanding the Kingdom, but in reality it has become an end in itself. It kills the Apostles and stops their apostolic works.

That very night Jesus told me, "Don't blame my bride." I repented and replied to him,

I am sorry, Jesus. I said a stupid thing. Blaming the bride makes the bridegroom lose face. I will never say bad things to your bride again. However, looking at your bride, she can neither walk nor eat by herself. She cannot even breathe without tubes. Allow me to fight against the forces weakening your bride.

I have not received permission to fight against them, but after this conversation, Jesus continued to encourage me to speak the truth. The following words resonate in my heart:

What I tell you now in the darkness, shout abroad when daybreak comes. What I whisper in your ear, shout from the housetops for all to hear! (Mt. 10:27)

### *A Bridegroom Who Stands at the Door*

The passage in Revelation 3:20 is often used in an evangelistic setting:

Look! I stand at the door and knock. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal together as friends.

Jesus is outside the house knocking and calling. I myself remember using this verse to invite non-Christians to open the door of their hearts and let Jesus in the house to start an intimate conversation together. However, the reality is that the person in the house is not a non-Christian, because this letter is addressed to the church in Laodicea. This means that Jesus is not

in the church and he is asking the Christians to let him in. How poor the church is! Jesus is not in the church.

Why is Jesus taking such a soft approach of knocking? He is the King. He could command the people or the door itself to open and let the people come out. I believe that at an appropriate time, Jesus himself will judge God's household. Peter wrote:

For the time has come for judgment, and it must begin with God's household. And if judgment begins with us, what terrible fate awaits those who have never obeyed God's Good News? (1 Pet. 4: 17)

Now is the grace period. Jesus is humbly calling the church to repent and inviting her to walk with him and to work together for his Kingdom.

What does it mean for us to work "with" God? Jesus is the almighty God. He is the person who caused the world to come into existence just with one word. Does he need our help? Perhaps there are times when we try to help but actually we cause a lot of trouble. But here is a story to show how Jesus enjoys working with us.

Once upon a time there was a pastor who loved gardening. One day as he was working, his young son said, "I'm going to help, too!" and he came into the garden. So they began to garden together, but the boy treated the plants so roughly that sorting them out after him meant that everything took twice as long. When they had finished everything, the boy ran back into the house and said to his mother, "I did it all!" But the man said to his friends later, "I really enjoyed working in the garden with my son" (Fukuda 2011, 51–52).

In the same way, by his mercy, Jesus invites us to help, and so we also can enjoy working with him. I believe that Jesus is knocking on the door today and inviting the church to work with him.

However, the wedding day of this bride and bridegroom will come. The

**T**he most important factor in the culmination of this fairy tale is that the prince is already there and is ready to kiss the princess.

virgins will stand before the bridegroom, and he will ask some of them, "Why did you call me Lord, Lord, and did not do as I said" (Mt. 7:22-23)? The church needs to prepare for that day, praying and watching like the five prepared virgins. On that day, Jesus will no longer be knocking at the door, but the door will be locked before the sleeping virgins are able to come back to the gate (Mt. 25:10).

Wolfgang Simson, author of the *The Kingdom Manifesto*, insists that the vast majority of Christians do not follow Christ's law and the constitution of the Kingdom.

They essentially follow the laws and principles of the world, particularly in the areas of money, sex, power, religion. Most Christians have been taught and raised in churches to do what their churches told them to do: visit services, pay taxes and tithes, and participate in religious programs, none of which Christ has told anyone to do. They dutifully look up to their "leaders," pastors, founders, set-men and their own board of directors, just like Israel looked up to the Saul they had elected themselves. And this is how the same thing happened in Christianity that happened with Israel. Humans are on the throne, while God is denied to rule his own people. (Simson 2015, 4)

The church must discern the times and obey everything Jesus commanded the disciples (cf. Mt. 28:20). The doctor in the fairy tale needed to obey what the prince commanded him to do. But, actually, he kicked the prince out of the room and tried to apply his own remedy to the situation. His action and his existence are not a solution, but rather he is part of the problem. In the future, he will have to face the prince again who stands ready to judge everyone, both the living and the dead (cf. 1 Pet. 4:5).

### *The Instructions for the Doctor*

The most important factor in the culmination of this fairy tale is that the prince is already there and is ready to kiss the princess. The bridegroom is speaking directly to the bride, calling her himself. We are moving into the climax of the story. I believe the new season has come since 2011 in Japan, too. Lots of Japanese people have already met the bridegroom in visions, dreams, miracles and healings.

The disasters which hit the Tohoku region on March 11, 2011 changed the physical landscape of Japan. But it is becoming clear that they also marked a change in the spiritual landscape of the country. A man showed up at the house of some Christians who moved there right after the disaster and said, "Jesus appeared in my dream and told me to come to you." Another man, when he talked about his experience, said that God pulled him out of the water when he got swallowed by the tsunami. As he said the word "God," he pulled out a necklace that he had on. It had a cross. The combination of "God" and the cross is extremely unusual in Japan. Obviously, he recognized that the God who pulled him out of the water had something to do with the cross (cf. Yoshimoto, Cozens, Fukuda et al 2014, 1).

How can we respond to this new environment? The traditional assumption of evangelism is that missionaries know the truth, and their task should be to explain the truth to the unbelievers. But if Jesus is there and he is speaking to the unbelievers directly, might not the missionaries' explanation be a hindrance to direct communication between Jesus and the unbeliever?

The one who should repent is not the unbeliever but the missionary. A similar story is found in the Acts of

Apostles chapter 10. Before Apostle Peter arrived at Caesarea, Cornelius had already met Jesus (or an angel) and he received this message: “Cornelius, your prayer has been heard, and your gifts to the poor have been noticed by God!” (Acts. 10: 31) Luke reported that “even as Peter was saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who were listening to the message.” (Acts. 10: 44) Cornelius had no need to repent, but Peter did. Peter needed to repent of his favoritism.

The first thing that missionaries need to do is to follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit who is leading them to repent. Missionaries tend to think that people repent as a result of their message. In many occasions, both the content of the message and the method of delivering it are beside the point.

The instructions that Jesus gave his 72 disciples when he was sending them out to all the towns are excellent guidance for correcting missionary misunderstandings. Let’s imagine that those who were sent in pairs by Jesus are missionaries to Japan—or even Japanese Christians—with an excluded middle paradigm, and that the “person of peace” is a local non-Christian leader, the ‘sleeping beauty’ in this paper.

The first instruction is:

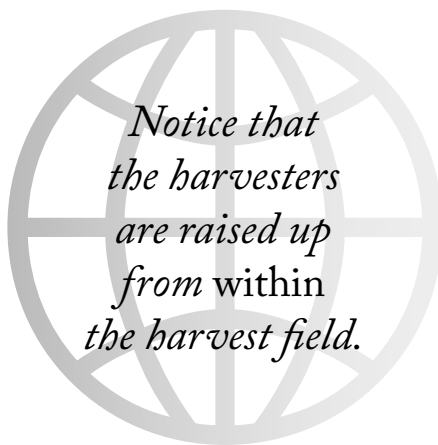
The harvest is great, but the workers are few. So pray to the Lord who is in charge of the harvest; ask him to send more workers into his fields. (Luke 10:2).

Notice that the harvesters are raised up from *within* the harvest field. The local leaders are needed to initiate the project, and it is they who are in charge of the harvest. The missionaries are cheerleaders and encouragers. Through this first instruction, Jesus led the 72 disciples to focus on the workers inside the community. What the locals put their heart and soul into needs to be respected.

The second instruction is: “Now go, and remember that I am sending you

out as lambs among wolves” (10:3). The disciples are heading to dangerous places where enemies are watching for an opportunity to kill them. They are expected to follow the King at the risk of their lives. No heavenly help, no survival. The disciples are learning how to depend on God, not on themselves in their mission fields. If they don’t depend on spiritual guidance, but lean on the rational theories that they learned at their theological schools, the Japanese field will become their graveyard. They’ll end up saying “Japan is too hard a soil to plow” at their farewell party.

The third instruction is: “Don’t take any money with you, nor a traveler’s



bag, nor an extra pair of sandals. And don’t stop to greet anyone on the road” (10:4). Again, notice that the resources for the missionary enterprise already exist in the mission field, so the disciples did not have to bring anything with them. Missionaries should not bring any baggage from the culture of their classrooms; in fact, their former experiences and studies will not transfer to the new field. The disciples must concentrate simply on what Jesus is saying to them. They have no time to greet anyone on the way and must stay focused on this mission alone.

Fourth, “Whenever you enter someone’s home, first say, ‘May God’s peace be on this house’” (10: 5). Just

as Paul was very upset to see the city of Athens full of statues of gods, we can anticipate elements within the house that can be judged or criticized. However, the disciple’s role is not to look down on them, but to bless them. As Paul recommended,

Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise. (Phil. 4:8)

As the house receives the peace, these negative things will eventually fade away, just as darkness disappears when the light comes.

Fifth,

Don’t move around from home to home. Stay in one place, eating and drinking what they provide....Eat whatever is set before you. (10:7-8)

Concentrate on one family. Don’t distribute tracts to all the houses in the town. God provides this house as the first piece of the domino effect. Eating whatever is set before them means accepting their culture and their current existence. It is an expression of becoming part of their core fellowship. It is not adopting an academic approach to them. Eating is life. In this life-sharing community, the locals will share what they really feel. Listen to the emotions of the people. If you want to help them, be quiet and listen (cf: Sirolli 2012, xv).

Finally, “Heal the sick, and tell them, ‘The Kingdom of God is near you now’” (10:9). The disciples can exercise the authority of the Kingdom. The disciples are followers of Jesus who turn from their selfish ways, take up their crosses daily and follow Jesus (cf. Luke. 9:23). The power for healing does not come from the disciples, but from heaven. Healing is a sign of the Kingdom’s power. It is like an invitation into the Kingdom for the household of peace. If they accept the invitation, they will experience fuller power of the Kingdom.

### *The Doctor as Best Man*

The main characters of the fairy tale are the prince and princess. I have introduced the doctor as a supporting actor. The doctor needs to know his role and he should not play the leading actor. He should not stand in the main actor's way. If this doctor discerns his role and performs it faithfully, he will be rewarded by the creator of the story.

So in this final section, I wish to give the reader an illustration of a new approach that clarifies this role. I will share how I am supporting those people in Japan who have begun to make conversation with Jesus.

A lot of Japanese business persons are now accepting Christ as a result of being guided to make conversation with God. Many of them are eager to know their "*tenmei*," their mission from heaven. We sometimes ask them if they want to know their mission from heaven, and most say "yes."

Then we challenge them to receive spiritual guidance from Jesus who will give them their mission and lead them to fulfill it, and we ask them if they want to open the channel to Jesus. Most say "yes."

After that, we would explain about Jesus for 15–20 minutes from Genesis to Revelation and ask them again,

Jesus died for your sin on the cross and to show you a way to get to know your mission, guide you and give you a new true identity. Do you want to receive this invitation and enter into the way?

Many say "yes," and confess to follow Christ as Spirit.

Maybe they will listen to other spiritual voices in their initial stage, but this is fine, because they will discover the difference eventually. If the missionary prohibits them from listening to other spiritual voices at this initial stage, they will stop listening to Jesus as the Spirit. Don't throw the baby out with the bathwater.

**W**e challenge them to receive spiritual guidance from Jesus who will give them their mission and lead them to fulfill it.

We provide three pieces of guidance for them immediately after this step of conversion. The first guidance is to open the channel of conversation with Jesus. It is a very simple 10-minute exercise and most of the new converts begin to talk with Jesus from that day on (Fukuda 2014).

The second piece of guidance is to share their experience with others. We ask them how they felt the previous day, and how they feel after talking with Jesus. There must be a difference. For example, one lady said to me, "I wanted to blot out my own existence, but now I want to know myself more." I gave her one biblical word: "You are precious to me. You are honored, and I love you (Isa. 43:4)." I trained her how to share her experience of Jesus in 90 seconds, including that biblical passage. Then I encouraged her to share it with others.

The third piece of guidance is to become part of a life-sharing group. We don't explain the entire system on their first day of conversion, but just appoint them to participate in an existing group or start a new group. When they become a member of a group, they will know what to do in and with the group.

The idea is to enlarge the channel of communication, so that the new converts know Jesus personally. We need to trust Jesus who is the parent, the coach *par excellence*, and leave the new converts in his hands.

I have a friend who met Jesus personally without going to church or reading the Bible. She actually had not yet met a Christian when she encountered Jesus. She said,

The heavenly information was downloaded from Jesus to me for some minutes and after the download, I understood immense things. Then Jesus told me to go to my mother-in-law to apologize for my inappropriate attitude to

her. So I went to my mother-in-law in a hurry and said to her 'I am sorry,' so she forgave me and now our relationship has been transformed. Then Jesus told me to share my experience with my husband and two children. I followed this guidance and they are now following Jesus with me.

Until this point, no Christian had helped her. Jesus alone had been guiding this lady. I expect that soon we will hear stories like this all over Japan.

However, Christian workers have something to do. First, their job is to encourage the Japanese to listen to Jesus more; secondly, to make a graceful exit, so that the ministry can flow from the new converts—that is, to train them to witness about their new life in Jesus; and thirdly, to connect them to the Bible and to the Christian community so that they understand their personal experience as part of the larger biblical narrative, as just one of the stories in the lives of fellow Christ followers.

My earnest wish is to be at the wedding ceremony of two Js: Jesus and Japan. As a Japanese, I myself am part of his bride. But I hope to have another function at that ceremony along with my loving fellow Christian workers (which includes many missionaries from all over the world). That function will be the role of the best man.

John the Baptist is our model.

"'I am not the Messiah. I am only here to prepare the way for him.' It is the bridegroom who marries the bride, and the best man is simply glad to stand with him and hear his vows. Therefore, I am filled with joy at his success. He must become greater and greater, and I must become less and less." (John. 3:28–30)

What a privilege the best man has! Take off the white coat, abandon the status of a doctor and, as the best man, let us prepare the way for the bridegroom! **IJFM**

## References

Akutagawa, Ryunosuke

- 2015 *The Smile of the Gods*. Akutagawa A Week: 2015: JAN 15. <http://akutagawaaweek.tumblr.com/post/107266689108/the-smile-of-the-gods>.

Fukuda, Mitsuo

- 2011 *Mentoring Like Barnabas*. Gloucester, UK: Wide Margin Books. [http://www.amazon.com/Mentoring-Like-Barnabas-Mitsuo-Fukuda-ebook/dp/B005GFJ3KC/ref=tmm\\_kin\\_swatch\\_0?\\_encoding=UTF8&sr=8-1&qid=1435625476](http://www.amazon.com/Mentoring-Like-Barnabas-Mitsuo-Fukuda-ebook/dp/B005GFJ3KC/ref=tmm_kin_swatch_0?_encoding=UTF8&sr=8-1&qid=1435625476).

- 2012 *Developing a Contextualized Church as a Bridge to Christianity in Japan*. Gloucester, UK: Wide Margin Books. [http://www.amazon.com/Developing-Contextualized-Church-Bridge-Christianity-ebook/dp/B007C3X2W6/ref=sr\\_1\\_1\\_tw\\_2\\_kin?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1435305818&sr=1-1&keywords=Developing+a+Contextualized+Church+As+a+Br](http://www.amazon.com/Developing-Contextualized-Church-Bridge-Christianity-ebook/dp/B007C3X2W6/ref=sr_1_1_tw_2_kin?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1435305818&sr=1-1&keywords=Developing+a+Contextualized+Church+As+a+Bridge+to+Christianity+in+Japan)

- 2015 *Upward Outward Inward Training Video* (Digital Download). Wide Margin Books, Gloucester: UK. <<http://www.wide-margin.co.uk/content/upward-outward-inward-training-video>>

Hiebert, Paul G.

- 1982 "The Flaw of the Excluded Middle." *Missiology*, January 1982. Vol. 10, no. 1, pp. 35–47.

Picken, S. D. B.

- 1980 *Shinto: Japan's Spiritual Roots*, Tokyo: Kodansha International.

Richardson, Don

- 1984 *Eternity in Their Hearts*, Ventura, California: Venture Books, Revised edition, pp. 9–25.

Simson, Wolfgang

- 2015 *The Kingdom Manifesto – Prepare for what comes after Christianity*. Simson Media <<http://simsonmedia.com/free-ebooks/>>

Sirolli, Ernesto

- 2012 *How to Start a Business and Ignite Your Life: A Simple Guide to Combining Business Wisdom with Passion*. Square One Publishers. NY: Garden City Park.

Yoshimoto, Hiroko, Simon Cozens, Mitsuo Fukuda, Yuji Hara, Atsuko Tateishi, Ken Kanakogi, Toru Watanabe

- 2014 "A Post-3/11 Paradigm for Mission in Japan" (unpublished manuscript presented at SEANET in 2014).



**CALLED TOGETHER.us**  
CONNECTING GLOBALLY-CALLED SINGLES

## Are Your Singles Struggling with Loneliness or Isolation?

The CalledTogether network exists to connect globally-called singles. Single workers often struggle from loneliness, and they have few opportunities to connect with peer community. Whether your singles are looking for friends, teammates, pen pals, or a like-minded spouse, we want to provide them with a place where they can connect with others who share their calling.

"After 32 years of never dating anyone seriously, it took precisely two days on CT (and would have been less if I had actually checked my messages) to find someone amazing with a very similar calling, and we are now officially in a relationship. Strong work, CalledTogether!"

—Barbara (one of many recent success stories)

[www.CalledTogether.us](http://www.CalledTogether.us)  
[CalledTogether.us@gmail.com](mailto:CalledTogether.us@gmail.com)



The one who finds a godly spouse finds a good thing! Please help us spread the word about this new tool to the godly singles in your sphere of influence.

For information about agency partnerships and discounts, or to request free marketing materials to pass out to your singles, e-mail [CalledTogether.us@gmail.com](mailto:CalledTogether.us@gmail.com).