

PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY

INTRODUCTION

The materials in this file comprise part of the Language and Orientation Program at the OMF Japanese Language Center in Sapporo, Japan but have been adapted for general use by other mission personnel in Japan. There are 60 tasks ranging from general cultural activities (going to a noodle shop or onsen) to finding out about how people become Christians or how you could use Christian literature in evangelism. Tasks may be tackled in any order as you have opportunity.

Space is left on each page for you to keep a record of your observations. If you can be accountable to someone for these assignments you will gain much more from them.

If you have recommendations for new assignments please contact the OMF Language Advisor at la@omf.jp.or

Have fun!

Number	Task	Date completed
1	Facts about your neighborhood	
2	Onsen	
3	Sushi	
4	New Year	
5	Interview missionary 1st-2nd term	
6	Interview missionary 10 years +	
7	Day off	
8	7-5-3	
9	Christian Bookstore	
10	Christian Book	
11	Young people	
12	5 Christians	
13	Japanese Churches	
14	Favorite Bible verses	
15	Pastor/member relationships	
16	Advantage of being a Christian	
17	CS/Children's club	
18	Japanese Prayer meeting	
19	Worship	
20	Music	
21	Christian and TV	
22	Friendship Evangelism	
23	Missionary Wives	
24	Scripture for Non Christian	
25	Church evangelism	
26	Bible Study with non Christian	
27	Mission leader	
28	Interaction with community	
29	Japanese Christian workers	
30	Camp	
31	Bible school or seminary	
32	Hospital	

33	Shinto wedding	
34	Memorizing Scripture	
35	Christian wedding	
36	Ikebana & Tea Ceremony	
37	Christian Funeral	
38	Buddhist Funeral	
39	Baptism	
40	Butsudan/Kamidana	
41	Butsudan & Christians	
42	Festivals	
43	Primary School visit	
44	Primary School children	
45	Junior High/High School	
46	Prayer walking	
47	More Japanese churches	
48	Tracts	
49	Japan Harvest	
50	New Religions	
51	Local ministers and churches	
52	Proverbs	
53	Old people	
54	Flag & National Anthem	
55	Cell Church	
56	Values and Beliefs	
57	Obon	
58	Church AGM	
59	Businessmen	
60	A good day's work	

1. Find out as much as you can about your city, town or neighborhood. This can include geography, history, make up of population (old, young etc), social problems and availability of and types of employment. Resources you might use are websites (many cities now have English sites), local museums and people (prepare questions you can put to Japanese friends and acquaintances.) Note down important facts about the area and consider how these facts might affect evangelism and church growth.

2. Enjoy an 'onsen'. Where did you go? Do you understand why the Japanese like them so much?

3. Visit a sushi shop and watch the sushi being made. How many different kinds of fish can you count? How long has it taken the chef to acquire his skills?

4. Walk around your neighborhood at New Year and observe the decorations on doors and cars and in front of buildings. Ask about their significance. What customs are associated with New Year in Japan? Taste some special New Year dishes and learn how they are made. What do Christians do at New Year? Try out the New Year puzzle at www.omf.org/jlc (Click on Japanese Language Resources – Japanese Society – New Year Puzzle).

5. Interview a missionary in the second part of their first term (3-4 years after coming to Japan) and another in their second or third terms.(5-8 years in Japan). Ask such things as: “When you first came to Japan, what kind of ministry did you think you were going to do?” “How did your Language and Orientation program benefit you?” “What tips can you give on how to learn Japanese?” “What kinds of ministry have you personally been engaged in since coming to Japan?”

6. Ask a missionary who has been here 10 years or so: “Have you changed in your personal view of how to minister to the Japanese people during your years here?” “What do you see as the church in Japan’s need for missionaries?” “What ways have you found for making effective contact?” “What ways have you used in personal evangelism that might be helpful for me?” “What has been stressful in your ministry?” “What do you do to relieve stress?”

7. Describe a variety of ways you personally have used to have a good 'day off' and why this has worked for you.

8. Learn about 'shichi-go-san' (7-5-3) and '100 days' customs. What acceptable cultural alternatives to these could be introduced in the Christian church?

9. Visit a Christian bookstore. Find a tract and a book you could offer to the following:

- a non-Christian woman who has no real interest in the Gospel,
- a businessman struggling with pressure at work
- a thoughtful student curious to know what Christianity is all about
- someone whose has recently lost a close family member

10. What Christian books are available that you could give as an evangelistic gift to a friend ... about marriage relationships ... about raising children? What materials are there for beginners' Bible studies? What children's books ... Sunday School materials ... deeper theological books have you become acquainted with? What books have you given to others? Why did you choose them? Were they helpful?

11. Visit the downtown areas of a big city or wherever you live and note the lifestyle of the young people. How do they dress? What age group is most noticeable? How do they differ from e.g. university students you meet on campus?

12. Ask 5 Christians in your area or church how they came to Christ. Why did they come? What helped them grow as Christians? How did their families respond? How long did they feel pressure from their family to maintain the 'butsudan'.

13. Visit three Japanese churches other than the one you regularly attend. Talk to one of the leaders. How long have they been at the church? How long have they been Christians? Who was instrumental in their becoming Christians? Where did they study? Where else have they worked? When did this church first begin? How many members were there then? How many members are there now? Do they think they still need missionary help? If so, in what capacity?

14. Ask 10 Japanese Christians for their favorite Bible verses. Make a list of the verses and whose favorites they are. Is this person a new Christian or one of long standing? Why have they chosen this verse? Record your answers.

15. Observe the relationship between the pastor and his church members. How does he minister to his people? What methods does he use that could be helpful to your future ministry?

16. Ask five Christians what they believe are the advantages of being a Christian.

17. Help in or observe a Sunday School or Children's Club. How often does it take place? Is it meeting a felt need among church families? How much childcare does it involve? How much teaching in age groups is involved among the children? What is the average attendance and what is the average length of time each child attends?

18. Attend a Japanese prayer meeting. Pray at it. How did you feel about it?

19. When you have opportunity, lead a worship service (or a prayer meeting, ladies' meeting, Sunday school class etc) in Japanese. What did you prepare? How did you feel about it? What was the response of the congregation/ listeners?

20. Help with music ... keyboard, guitar, singing etc. in your church.
What were your observations of the organization of the group ...
Japanese leadership ... response of the congregation?

21. Watch Lifeline (Hokkaido), Harvest Time or any other Christian TV program that is broadcast in your area and analyze its content and approach. Show or lend a video of a program to a non Christian friend and ask for comments.

22. Friendship Evangelism. Get involved with one or more people on a regular basis ~ meeting once every one or two weeks. What is your common ground for friendship? (Sports? English? Baking? Craft? Internet? Language Helper? Other?) What have you learned about friendships? How have you attempted to evangelise? What are your observations?

23. Talk with a number of missionary wives with small children to find out how they balance ministry with looking after a family. How are they solving the schooling issue?

24. Choose five verses of scripture you could use in talking to a thoughtful non-Christian to help them understand who God is. Memorize them together with their references. Which ones did you choose?

25. Attend a church evangelistic program.

Date: _____

Where: _____

What occasion? _____

How many attended? _____

How many were completely
new contacts? _____

How many were 'seekers'? _____

What form did the outreach take? _____

How did people respond?

26. Do a 4-week (or more) evangelistic Bible study with a non-Christian. What materials did you use? What was the response?

27. Invite a mission leader to your home for a meal. Get to know him or her. Ask questions about their vision, dreams, hard times and joys. Did they ever want to give up? What kept them here?

28. Ask three senior missionaries and three Japanese Christians how they arrange their lifestyle for maximum, meaningful interaction with their community.

29. Talk to three Japanese full time workers about life and ministry. Ask them what they think would make the church grow. What are the greatest obstacles in the preaching of the Gospel for them? What have they found most effective/helpful in reaching Japanese people with the Gospel? How does their ministry affect their family?

30. Attend a children's or youth camp. Who ran the camp and from which churches did they come? What differences did you notice between young people in your home country and in Japan? How was the camp organized? Who was the main speaker? What did the program include? Is there a place for missionary help in these camps?

31. Visit a Japanese Bible school or seminary and if possible, ask for an opportunity to share your testimony informally or at a chapel time. How many students are there and which churches and areas do they come from? How long have they been Christians? How do their families feel about their decision to enter full time Christian work? What do they hope to do after graduation?

32. Visit a patient in a Japanese hospital (perhaps someone from your church or a sick neighbor). What is it appropriate to say when you enter and leave a hospital ward? What is and what is not considered a suitable gift to take? What differences can you discover between Japanese hospitals and those you know in your own country? Prepare a verse of scripture to share and a short prayer to pray with the patient.

33. Watch a DVD or ask a friend to tell you about a Shinto marriage ceremony. If invited, attend a non-Christian wedding reception. What is the significance of the bride's traditional headdress? What is it customary for married women to wear to the wedding of a relative? How much does a wedding cost on average? What is the most common present to the new couple? What is appropriate for you to give? What other differences do you notice between this and a wedding in your home country?

34. Memorize five more verses of scripture to explain the meaning of sin and need of salvation. Review the ones you learnt before!

35. Attend a Christian wedding. What similarities and what differences do you notice between this and a Christian wedding in your home country? How did the couple meet? Did someone introduce them with a view to marriage or did they choose each other? How long have they known each other? How do their families feel about them having a Christian ceremony? If the families are non-Christian what has the couple done to help them understand and enjoy the ceremony and reception? Where will they live ~ by themselves or with parents?

36. Take some classes in flower arrangement, tea ceremony or brush writing or anything else you are interested in. If this is difficult find a Japanese person who goes to such classes and ask if you may go along once or twice with them. How long have the members been learning these skills? How long does it take to become qualified to teach them?

37. Attend a Christian Japanese funeral. How does this differ from any you have experienced at home? How many different events were you aware of? Who attended the funeral? How could funerals be used as an opportunity for evangelism?

38. Watch a video on Japanese funerals to help you understand what goes on. One example is ‘Soogi’, a video intended to help Christians identify what not to do at a Buddhist funeral. This is available at Christian bookstores. The movie ‘Oshooshiki’ is excellent for understanding non Christian responses to funerals (borrow from a video shop.)

What should Christians avoid doing at a Buddhist funeral? What can Christians do to show their concern for a bereaved family?

39. Attend a baptismal service. Interview three Christians and ask them how they came to faith in Jesus and when they were baptized. What was the reaction of their family to this step? Did they wait for them to understand? What did baptism mean to them? What does it mean in the eyes of the church and of the Japanese community? What preparation did they have for baptism? In your opinion what are the indicators that a person is ready to be baptized?

40. Look around a department store at the Butsudan and Kamidana. Ask several non-Christians whether they have either or both in their homes. What significance do they have in the family ~ to grandparents, parents and children? When and why do they make offerings or pray there?

41. Talk to three Christian friends about the place, if any, of the Butsudan within their own extended families. When they became Christians how long did it take for family members to accept that they no longer wished to worship there? What have they done to show they still care for their relatives?

42. Which festivals take place in your area and what do they celebrate? Which are unique to this district? Is it possible for Christians to participate in any of these? Why or why not?

43. Spend a day at a primary school. What are your impressions? How big are the classes? How long do children spend in school each week? Ask a teacher about school discipline. Are there ever problems with 'ijime' (bullying)? If so, how do they deal with them? What part do the parents play in the running of the school? What is the function of the PTA?

44. Talk to some primary-school children. Do they belong to school clubs or societies? Which ones are popular? What do they do in out-of-school time? Have any of them attended children's activities in a church?

45. Talk to some junior-high or high school pupils. What pressures do they face? How far do they travel to school? What clubs or societies do they belong to? How much homework do they have? Do they go to 'juku' (cramming schools)? Or have a home tutor? What are their dreams for the future? Do they plan to go on to university?

46. Go on a prayer walk in your area. Ask the Lord to show you things to pray for, maybe things you have never noticed before. Write down and think about what you felt as you walked and how you felt the Lord speaking.

47. Visit some more Japanese churches, if possible some that are not of the same denomination as yours. How many are there in the congregations and of what ages? What is the form of service? How did the work begin? How do they go about evangelizing their neighborhood? What have they found most helpful in making contact with men? What are they doing to reach young people? The elderly? People on the fringe of society? Which churches are growing? To what do the leaders attribute this?

48. Study two or three tracts suitable for different ages and interest levels. Give them to people you know and ask for their response/reaction to them.

49. Read Japan Harvest and Japan Update regularly and attend a JEMA Church Planters' Institute. What articles and talks have been the most helpful as you prepare for ministry? Comment on them.

50. Read about Soka Gakkai, Risshoukouseikai, Reiha no Hikari, Koofuku no Kagaku and other 'new' religions, especially any that are prevalent in the area where you are living. What is it that attracts adherents to them? What do these say about the common Japanese claim that "We Japanese are not religious"?

51. Make opportunities to get to know some of the full time church workers in the area. (You may be able to do this by attending a pastors /missionaries retreat or an evangelism conference). Ask them about their encouragements and disappointments in ministry. How long has their church been in existence? How many of the original members are still in the church? How many have been baptized in the past year? How many of the members are men?

52. Find a Japanese saying or proverb you can use in evangelism and use it. What is it? How have you used it? What was the response of those who heard you?

53. Japan has an aging population. Find out about facilities for old people in your area. Are there old people's homes and if so how many people are resident in them? Can you visit one? What day-care or home help provision is there? How does your church help its elderly members or attempt to reach this sector of society?

54. Many Japanese Christians feel strongly about the reintroduction of 'Kimi ga yo' as the national anthem and of the 'Hi no Maru' flag. Find out why this is so.

55. Visit a church operating on the cell church model. How long have they been working in this way? How many people are attending each cell regularly? Are they multiplying in number or staying about the same as before? What advantages and what, if any, disadvantages do you see to this way of working?

56. Choose at least 3 (preferably non Christian) Japanese (more if possible) and ask them about some of their values and beliefs. You can add your own but here are some suggested topics.

- Sense of worth. Who values you most and why? Who needs you most? How do you feel about these people valuing or needing you?
- What do you feel is the most important thing in life? What are your ambitions? What things are of most lasting and permanent value in life?
- Friendship. What are the qualities of a close friend? Who are the people you trust most? Why?
- Relationships. A Japanese psychologist said that relationships are more important to Japanese people than truth. Do you agree with this and what do you think about it?

57. Visit a cemetery at Obon and take note of what is happening. What difficulties do Christians encounter at this time of year? What cultural substitutes do churches have to help believers who have lost loved ones?

58. Attend a church Annual General Meeting (sookai) and make notes about the procedure. Ask the pastor what meetings and visitation, if any, preceded the AGM. Why were these done?

59. Find three businessmen in the local church and ask what it's like to be a Christian in a Japanese company. Try to find men who work for different companies. What difficulties do they experience? How do they seek to witness to their colleagues?

60. Think about what constitutes a good day's work as a missionary. How will you attempt to evaluate the way you use your time? What dangers and temptations do you foresee in this area?