



Steve & Kathy Austvold, EFCA Mission Mobilizers Serving the NCD, NPD, and Beyond

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Dear Pastors and Mission Leaders,

On January 1, 1946, Emperor Hirohito himself denied his right to be worshipped as a deity. This resulted with a religious vacuum in the lives of the Japanese people. A devout Episcopalian, General MacArthur said to a visiting group of evangelicals that "Japan is a spiritual vacuum. If you do not fill it with Christianity, it will be filled with Communism. Send me 1,000 missionaries." He asked U.S. missionary societies to send "Bibles, Bibles and more Bibles," says [www.Hyperhistory.com](http://www.Hyperhistory.com). At that time less than half of that number of missionaries came to Japan. Japan never became the Christian nation that MacArthur had hoped for. The four years from 1946-1950 were the golden window of opportunity for missionary work, but few evangelical groups took advantage of the opportunity at that time.

Now the current disaster is taking a spiritual tone. Tokyo Gov. Shintaro Ishihara made a shocking spiritual statement. His exact statement as reported by Otaku Who News Radio was: *"The identity of the Japanese people is selfishness. The Japanese people must take advantage of this tsunami as means of washing away their selfish greed. I really do think this (the disaster) is tembatsu (divine punishment)."* On March 15<sup>th</sup> after being criticized for his remarks he said, "I will take back (the remark) and offer a deep apology," Ishihara told a news conference, adding he should have thought about the feelings of victims. His remarks are opening a public discussion on spiritual things.

From the book *Operation World* we can learn more about the spiritual state of the Japanese.

- Over 70% of Japanese claim no personal religion, but many follow the demands of Buddhism and Shintoism. It is difficult to formally disassociate from this connection in a land where conformity rules.
- 3% identify themselves as Christians. Evangelicals are .5% of the population.
- Ten percent said that they see Christianity as a viable religious option for themselves.
- Ten percent believe in the existence of a personal God; only 50% have ever desired help from God or gods.
- Church attendance is low with less than one-half of members who regularly attend.
- Women outnumber men in churches 7 to 1. Seventy percent of churches have an average attendance of less than 30 people.

➤ Japan is the largest unevangelized nation that is completely open to missionaries.

Things are happening now in Japan. One mission leader states that, “people are engaging in spiritual conversations with strangers. That’s just not typical.”

Here some things that you and your church can do:

1. Inform your congregation on what is happening in Japan. Go to the efca.org website for updates or go to Mark Lewis’ blog <http://efcacrisisresponse.blogspot.com/>.
2. Order the Help Japan bulletin insert.  
[http://www.efca.org/files/document/reachglobal/Japan\\_bulletin\\_insert.pdf](http://www.efca.org/files/document/reachglobal/Japan_bulletin_insert.pdf)
3. Pray for Japan. <http://www.efca.org/reachglobal/reachglobal-ministries/efca-touchglobal/crisis-response/urgent-needs/japan-earthquake-r-3>
4. For updated information and donations visit [www.touchglobal.org/japan](http://www.touchglobal.org/japan).

Help make a difference in Japan today and for eternity!

Blessings,

Steve Austvold