

D. Min. Project Prospectus

Yoriko Yabuki

Equipping Japanese Women in America for Fruitful Ministry: Addressing the Opportunities and Challenges of a Shame-Based Culture

The Context

Currently, I serve as co-missionary and co-pastor for the international ministry at Central Assembly in Springfield, Missouri, alongside my husband, Daisuke Yabuki. This ministry grew from a Japanese women's weekly Bible study, which the Lord prompted me to begin at Central Assembly in 2006. Over the years, this ministry has expanded to reach a variety of international people and now includes an ESL program, International Sunday Morning Connections, a Japanese Bible study, international Women's Ministries, and a host family program. The leadership team has also grown and now includes thirty team members.

I also currently serve as vice president of the National Japanese Fellowship. I work with the various districts of the Assemblies of God (AG) to create Japanese ministry networks. I connect with local Japanese believers to help them conduct regional AG Japanese conferences. The goal of the conference is both to create the network and to equip local leaders to remain fruitful in ministry. After the conference, I conduct Skype meetings once or twice a week to mentor these leaders in their spiritual growth and in their work leading Japanese small groups within their local churches.

In addition, I speak at Japanese women's conferences conducted by STAND, an interdenominational women's ministry partnering with a national interdenominational organization called Japanese Christian Fellowship Network (JCFN) in different regions

throughout the United States. I speak at STAND conferences whenever God gives me the opportunity.

In February 2017, the National Japanese Fellowship appointed me director of the Japanese Women's Ministries department. On August 5, 2017, I plan to lead the first Southern California Japanese Women's Conference, partnering with Southern California Assemblies of God Women's Ministries as well as "STAND" Women's Ministries USA in Anaheim, CA.

In March 2018, I plan to lead the first Assemblies of God National Japanese women's conference, which will be held in Springfield, MO. Since I have led fifteen regional Japanese conferences in partnership with the Fellowship's districts over the past five years as well as connected with Japanese women at STAND conferences, I will invite female leaders from AG districts and other denominations to help organize, lead, and attend this conference as these women seek to grow more fruitful in their ministries within the United States.

Problem

Japanese women living in the United States hold tremendous potential for ministry, but unresolved cultural baggage often holds them back from getting involved. Researching how Japanese Picture Brides and War Brides overcame different kinds of challenges in America helped understand their cultural ways of thinking. These challenges came not only from people in America, but also from Japanese Americans and Japanese in Japan. These Japanese women faced several key challenges: (1) They felt isolated because of their identity as Picture Brides and War Brides in America. Their cultural and language barriers led them to their primary social network which may have included only other Japanese women. (2) They often carried a sense of shame that stems from the Japanese shame-based culture, which differs from a guilt-based culture; this shame-based culture influenced their core values. If they did not address their past

failures or painful experiences with a guilt mentality, they experienced shame, which negatively affected their self-worth and future behaviors. Their sense of inferiority fostered the unbiblical view that a woman's self-worth remains based on how she performs and produces. (3) The *Middle Way/Wa* Thinking, which gives wisdom and patience for Japanese women to remain with social pressures on them when they live in America. It also discourages people from standing out and urges women to blend in and remain average, preventing women from standing for Christ as servant leaders. (4) Finally, Japanese couples often held unbiblical views of headship and submission in marriage because Japanese culture emphasizes the wife's submission to her husband. In living this way, women often lacked joy in their lives. In church ministries, with the American tendency to promote hierarchical (top-down) leadership structures rather than servant-based leadership models, Japanese women have few opportunities to see healthy models of collaboration and teamwork as one of the servant leaders. When Japanese women identify, understand, and address these challenges, they can freely begin to experience abundant Christian living and fruitful ministry.

Purpose

This project will provide a six-hour Internet-based mentoring program (conducted via Skype every two weeks for three months) designed to equip Japanese women living in the United States to flourish in fruitful ministry by recognizing and overcoming cultural barriers that have traditionally kept them from thriving in ministry.

Definition of Key Terms

Fruitful in Ministry - to flourish in service to the Kingdom through using one's God-given gifting and temperament (personality).

Healthy Shame – the healthy feeling that one has done something that goes against his or her core values and beliefs and feels bad about that. According to Dr. Brene Brown, it is guilt.¹ This feeling can lead to positive behavior and the chance to do differently in the future.

Middle Way - the Japanese value of moderation, which promotes the importance of blending in and not standing out either in good or bad ways. It is the idea that one should practice common sense and true humility and seek to remain average. This stands in stark contrast to Western values that encourage people to rise above the crowd and be a star, to make a name for oneself.

Picture Brides – Japanese women who were matched with Japanese immigrants in Hawaii and the West Coast by exchanging their pictures through their relatives in the late nineteenth century.

Shame Based Culture – a culture in which most people harbor toxic shame.

Toxic Shame – lowered self-esteem and see themselves worthless being. “It’s an emotion with physical symptoms like any other that come and go, but when it’s serve, it can be extremely painful. Strong feelings of shame stimulate the sympathetic nervous system, causing a flight/flight/freeze reaction.”²

Wa - the Japanese value of maintaining unity and conformity among those within the Japanese culture. *Wa* refers to the importance of “fitting in” and opposes the Western concept of individuality.

¹ Robert Weiss, “Guilt=Good, Shame=Bad: Shame Neither Encourages nor Motivates Positive Behavior Change,” *Psychology Today*, January 6, 2014, accessed June 13, 2017, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/love-and-sex-in-the-digital-age/201401/guilt-good-shame-bad>.

² Darlene Lancer, “What is Toxic Shame?” *Psych Central* (2015), accessed on June 13, 2017, <https://psychcentral.com/lib/what-is-toxic-shame>.

War Bride – A Japanese woman who got married to an American GI after World War II and emigrated to the USA.

Description of Proposed Project

Scope

The first step will include research for the biblical-theological literature review and the general literature review to address the challenges that keep Japanese women from ministering in the United States. Research will explore how these women can overcome each challenge with God's truth.

The second step of the project will include planning and teaching six, one-hour Skype sessions, held every two weeks for three months. The classes will address the following topics: (1) planting—an examination of Ruth, who overcame isolation in a foreign land yet pursued fruitful ministry; (2) cultivating—a biblical teaching about healthy shame and toxic shame, and dealing with past painful experiences that create unhealthy emotional core values; (3) growth—a biblical teaching about individualism and groupism in the context of understanding *Middle Way* and *Wa* thinking; (4) blooming—a biblical teaching of headship and submission in marriage; and (5) reproduction—an examination of women in ministry and servant leadership as found in Romans 16; and (6) dreaming—presentations by each participant with new goal in their ministries. Class materials will include a detailed facilitator's guide, meeting outlines, participant handouts, PowerPoints, and videos.

To qualify for participation in the Skype sessions, individuals must have demonstrated a faithful commitment to Christ and have regularly attended their local churches for at least one year. The selected group will commit to participating in all six sessions and agree to carry out all

the work assigned during the sessions. For each session, I will provide a meeting outline for each participant.

Prior to the start of the session, participants will complete a pre-session survey to assess their levels of knowledge and understanding of key issues that Japanese women encounter in the United States and how those issues impact their having fruitful ministries. Each of the six sessions will have four parts. The first ten minutes will address each challenge that Japanese women encounter in America. In the next twenty minutes, the women will learn biblical and theological principles to apply to each challenge. For the following twenty minutes, they will then discuss two questions that will help participants digest this knowledge. In the final ten minutes, participants will pray and ask the Holy Spirit to break each barrier in their minds and hearts to have practical, fruitful ministries.

Following the sixth class, I will ask participants to take a post-session survey to evaluate the entire class including any changes in their knowledge and understanding of key issues. I will also ask for their feedback by way of a course evaluation on the value of each session to make improvements for future presentations.

Phases (Methodology) and Timetable

Phase	MM/YY Beginning	MM/YY Ending	Details/Comments
Research – Chapter 3	6/15/2017	7/31/2017	Complete reading and research for General Literature Review. <i>I have already completed research for several of the four topics during the Biblical Theology of Women in Leadership class as well as in the Embracing the Person You Want to Become class.</i>

Writing – Chapter 3, Sources, and any appendices	8/1/2017	8/30/2017	Write General Literature Review.
Research – Chapter 2	9/1/2017	10/30/2017	Complete reading and research for Biblical-Theological Literature Review. <i>I have already completed research for several of the four topics for the Biblical Theology of Women in Leadership class as well as in the Embracing the Person You Want to Become class.</i>
Writing – Chapter 2, Sources, and any appendices	11/1/2017	11/30/2017	Write Biblical-Theological Literature Review.
Planning	12/1/2017	12/31/2017	Create material for six sessions with instructor's notes, participant's notes, and PowerPoint presentations. Create pre-session survey questions to assess participants' knowledge of the six challenges being addressed in the seminar. I will select ten people, send invitations, and select dates. Then I will arrange to conduct the mentoring program.
Implementation	1/1/2018 1/6/2018 1/20/2018 2/3/2018 2/17/2018	3/24/2018	Administer pre-session survey. Conduct online learning program with Japanese American women. Evaluate results of pre-session survey. Introduction Session 2 Session 3 Session 4

	3/3/2018		Session 5
	3/24/2018		Conclusion
	3/24/2018		Administer post-session survey and course evaluation.
Evaluation	4/1/2018	4/3/2018	Evaluate results of post-session survey.
	4/4/2018	4/6/2018	Compile and assess course evaluations.
Writing: Chapter 4	4/9/2018	4/30/2018	Write Chapter 4, Description of Field Project.
Writing: Chapter 5	5/1/2018	5/5/2018	Write Chapter 5, Project Summary.
Writing: Chapter 1	5/6/2018	5/10/2018	Write Chapter 1, Introduction.
Writing: Any additional Appendices	5/10/2018	5/20/2018	Write any additional appendices. This section will include research conducted, surveys, interviews, course materials, and additional materials relative to the project.
Writing: Front Matter (Title Page, Contents, Abstract, and Acknowledgments)	5/20/2018	5/30/2018	Develop the Front Matter.
Speaking in Japanese Conferences in LA and Hawaii, going back to Japan.	6/1/2018	6/30/2018	
Itinerate in Assemblies of God churches in Japan	7/1/2018	8/15/2018	
Check D. Min Project/add anything	9/1/2018	9/30/2018	Submit any final items to Dr. Lois Olena by October 1.

Biblical-Theological Literature Review

I will review key biblical texts and theological works in the following categories:

Fruitful Women of the Old Testament

- Ruth, Who Overcame Isolation in a Foreign Land for Fruitful Ministry
- Authenticity in God's Value (Gen. 1:26; Jer. 1:5-6; Eph. 1:4)
- Biblical Theology of Healthy Shame and Toxic Shame

Fruitful Women of the New Testament

- Women Who Were Authorized by the Apostle Paul for Public Ministry in Romans 16
- Headship and Submission in 1 Corinthians 11 and Ephesians 5
- Biblical Theology of the Individual and Groupism in Light of *Middle way* and *Wa* Thinking
- John 15

General Literature Review

I will review key contemporary literature works in the following categories:

- **Overcoming Isolation in the United States**
- **Overcoming Toxic Shame for One's Emotional and Spiritual Health**
- **Overcoming Japanese Middle Way and *Wa* thinking**
- **Overcoming Cultural Views of Headship and Submission in both Marriage and Ministry**

Contribution to Ministry

Developing Japanese women's ministries materials is critical in helping Japanese women to be healthy and fruitful in ministry in America. As Japanese women understand the differences between Japanese cultural expectations of their gender roles and God's expectations in their lives, they can overcome the many challenges in America they encounter as they strive to be fruitful in ministry for God's glory.

This project will prove helpful on several levels. First, the research and class will help Japanese women recognize all the bondage they have been under from the teachings of the Japanese culture. Second, this class will give them the opportunity to pray and dream for their specific future fruitful ministry. Third, the project will serve the Assemblies of God Japanese Fellowship Women's Ministries and other denominations in identifying the best practices needed to empower their relationship between Japanese women and others to witness for Jesus.

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