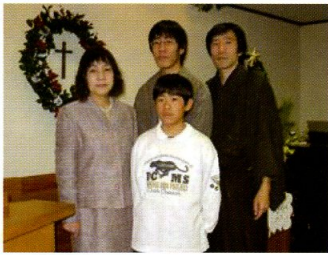


# The English Page with Excerpts

## Premarital Counseling

Interview: Rev. Ken and Hiroko Mizuno



Where Japanese are divorcing at the rate of one couple every two minutes, premarital counseling is needed more than ever. There is also a great need in the church too, but there are still

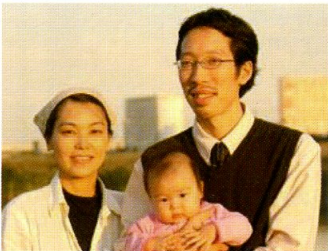
relatively few pastors who are qualified.

Ken, who pastors Hirakata Community Chapel in Osaka, has written three helpful books on marriage. The first is a guidance manual for the Christian marriage counselor, the second for those who plan to marry and the third for those who are already married.

In this interview, Ken and his wife Hiroko share about their own struggles and challenges they faced in the early years of their marriage, and how that experience has led Ken to speak on marriage and offer counseling.

## Courtship by Snail Mail

Interview: Shimon and Yumiko Seino



In this fast-paced age of email and instant messaging, Shimon and Yumiko decided to get to know each other the old-fashioned way of hand-written letters and to let the Lord bring them

together if it was His will. It's a refreshing testimony that encourages youth to let God lead as they pursue God-honoring relationships.

Shimon says that while still single, he realized that marriage had become an idol for him. While there is nothing wrong with marriage, when that desire became too strong he couldn't focus on the other important things in life. So he shelved the idea of marrying until some of his close friends said that they were praying for him and wondered if he wouldn't be interested in a certain girl.

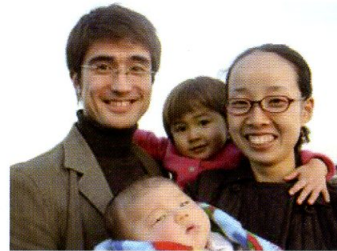
"We decided that we would write letters to each other and didn't exchange email addresses or telephone numbers until after we were engaged. Hand writing our letters allowed us to think through everything we communicated to each other."

"We wanted to treat each other as brother and sister in Christ, just like we would any other young person in the church. And this was the basis of our relationship."

"We decided that we wouldn't even hold hands until after we were married. We wanted to save all the pleasures for after we were married since there was no guarantee that we would be married until after the wedding."

## Father's Betrayal Turns Into A Blessing

Interview: Rui Kiriya



"When I was in the tenth grade my father said that he wanted to get a divorce. He had found another lover and had already had a child by her."

"My father had betrayed me and I felt I couldn't trust people anymore...I think I had mentally cut off my father, but it only left a void and a hunger in my life. So when I was invited to church and heard that there was a heavenly Father who cared, there was a great attraction there."

"My father never opened his heart to us children while we were growing up. He was there for us and gave of his time but he was aloof and we felt no heart-to-heart connection. In fact, I never saw him express sorrow or anger...yet after my own marriage and raising my own children I found myself behaving just like my father, treating my own children the same way...I realized that I was reaping the seed that my father had sown and my own children would reap the same seed that I was sowing."

"God showed me my sin, that sin of being bitter and not honoring my father...I repented and now God has liberated me to love my father and expect God's blessings through my father."

"Our church is located where we have a lot of broken homes in the neighborhood and about half of the children who come to Sunday school are from divorced families... But God is now using my own experience to bring hope to these children."

"He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to the fathers..." Malachi 4:6

## Marriages of Famous Christians

by Rev. Satoru Nakamura



Rev. Nakamura has written fifteen articles for our Family Forum magazine for the last four years. This is his last article, and he has



chosen to share the testimony of his own marriage which had a rough start.

"I told her, 'I am going to be a pastor, but would you be willing to marry me?' At first she said, 'I don't know' to my proposal but I continued to press her for an answer and finally she said 'yes' with tears in her eyes which I took as a sign of her joy. She later told me that those were tears of regret...

I gave her a book-reading assignment after our engagement, to prepare her to be a minister's wife and required her to write a report on each book..."

The Nakamura's first years of marriage were rough, as he was busy with pastoral ministry and did not give much attention to their marriage relationship. However, God opened the door for them to study at a seminary in the United States where they were mentored by a couple and learned the importance of putting their marriage relationship first. This was a turning point in their lives.

#### Naito Sensei's Q & A



Q: I recently attended the wake and funeral of a non-Christian relative. I managed to avoid offering the incense, but it was very uncomfortable with all the chanting by the Buddhist priest. I know I will probably have to attend such ceremonies in the future again which is a depressing thought to me. I don't drink sake and so the meal time later was awkward as well. Is it really necessary that a Christian attend Buddhist funerals?

A: Naito sensei gives reasons for attending, such as comforting of the relatives and committing the deceased to God. Then he shares from his own experience explaining that a Christian can be a blessing at funerals.

#### Father's Influence

by Mitsuo Fukuzawa



Growing up in a dysfunctional home where his father drank and threw things around, one day Mitsuo, who was a teenager at the time, became so angry with his father's behavior that he took up a large kitchen knife and was ready to kill him.

His pleading mother was the only thing that held him back.

At seventeen he was introduced to a church which led to his accepting Christ. Mitsuo decided to become a pastor and soon married a lovely Christian girl. But because of his rough upbringing, he knew nothing about showing love to his wife and even lacked the basic manners of

living in a home. He relates how by God's grace and with his wife's help he gradually learned how to become a good husband and a father to his children.

This story gives hope to those who struggle over their upbringing and family past and is a powerful testimony of how God can save whole families.

#### Movie Review: The Nativity Story

by Tim Cole



Are you looking for a good movie that you can take your family to? The Nativity Story, produced by New Line Cinema (titled "MARIA" in Japanese) and showing from December 1st of this year, is one we recommend.

Talking of movies on Christian themes in Japanese theatres, "The Passion of the Christ", directed by Mel Gibson, is the most recent one that comes to mind. However, unlike "The Passion" which was so real that there was a lot of debate whether to watch it or not, this Christmas movie is very family-friendly. The story is basically faithful to the Bible account, and has no surprise twists.

If you are taking your family, I recommend you first to read the account in Matthew and Luke. And then after watching the movie, have a discussion time on the comparison between the Scriptures and the movie.

#### Helping Your Children Find Direction

by Jon Benedict



"The problem was that we were looking around at other families and imitating what they were doing, oblivious to our child's lack of talent in that area."

"Now we try to find what each child's leaning is rather than imposing our expectations and have found that each has unique talents that God has given them. But we didn't always discover it overnight. For some it's simple to find what they want to do in life, but for others it's not so apparent and you have to spend time with them and talk to them. It may even take several years to find out. Unfortunately, life is busy for all of us these days with families rarely able to sit down at a meal together. On top of that, if both parents work, you often never get around to noticing your child's interests or abilities. Then, before you know it, they are grown and gone, perhaps to college, but still without knowing what they want to do with their lives."