

Valley Bible Church - Sermon Transcript

“Go Therefore and Make Disciples of All Nations”

As I shared earlier, this is the Okada's last Sunday with us. Tomorrow Daisuke, Marcia, Nicolas, Noah, Nathan and Sophia will be leaving us to return to Japan to continue their ministry in Japan.

Will this be easy for them? No! This will not be easy for them. This will be hard for them. For they have been amongst us and have been a part of us for these past three years. The Okada children have particularly benefited from being a part of our children and youth programs. When the Okada's return to Japan, these ministries that they have been blessed by, will no longer be there for them in Japan. And this is just scratching the surface of the challenges that are awaiting them in their return. So ...

If the Okada's return will not be easy why are they **returning** to Japan and why would we be supporting them in the doing of it? They are doing this and we are supporting them in the doing of it, first of all, because:

We together have experienced God's love and in response to His love are seeking to live lives **pleasing** to Him rather than ourselves (Ephesians 2:1-10 cf. 2 Cor. 5:14, 15).

We once were dead in trespasses and sins, both the Okada's and ourselves, and living in a manner consistent with that deadness. We were not walking with God and therefore we were not enjoying the blessings of such a walk. Rather we were walking according to the course of this world under the direction of the ruler of this world and as the children of wrath, we were unable to find rest for our souls.

This is what the walk of unbelievers is like and it is all detailed for us in **Ephesians 2:1-3**. So let me read these verses for you and see if this is not so and this is what these verses say, **“And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, (2) in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. (3) Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.”** So based on these verses, could we say that both the Okada's and ourselves, during the time of our past unbelief were once dead in trespasses and sins and living in a manner consistent with that deadness and suffering the consequences of that deadness? Yes! Of course! This is what the scriptures teach.

But this is not where we are now is it? For we as an expression of God's love have been made alive together with Christ through faith in Christ. And having been made alive together with Christ through faith in Christ, we are now living in the blessedness of God's presence, to the praise of His glory.

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And this is all spelled out for us, NOT in **Ephesians 2:1-3** but rather in **Ephesians 2:4-9**. So now let me read these verses for you and what do these verses say? They say this, **“But God being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, (5) even we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ. (by grace you have been saved), (6) and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, (7) so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus, (8) For by Grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; (9) not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.”**

So based on these verses what can we conclude? We can conclude this: Yes, there was a time when both the Okada's and ourselves were dead in trespasses and sins and living in a manner consistent with that deadness and experiencing all of the consequences of that deadness, but that did not continue. For God being rich in mercy and because of His great love, sent His Son the Lord Jesus Christ into this world, to pay the debt we owed to Him because of sin, so that we through faith in Christ might be raised together with Christ. Thus making it possible for us to live in God's presence and in the blessedness of that presence both now and forever. What an amazing and glorious contrast; from where we were to where we are now.

I don't know when this happened for you, when you passed from death to life but I do know when this happened for Diasuke. He was sixteen years old and living in Tokyo, Japan, with an unbelieving Father and in a country that has been greatly resistant to the gospel of Christ, BUT God who is rich in mercy, working through his believing mother and a myriad of different circumstances, brought him to faith and therefore from death to life just as He has also brought us to faith and therefore from death to life.

So if this is something we truly believe, that God who is rich in mercy and abounding in love toward us has brought us to faith and therefore from death to life, how will we respond, both the Okada's and ourselves? It should be obvious. We will want to live lives pleasing to Christ, the very one whom God sent to pay the debt of our sin, so that we through faith in Him might be made alive together with Him.

Let me now read for you **2 Corinthians 5:14-15** and see if this is not so. And what do these verses say? They say this, **“For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; (15) and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.”**

So will those whom God has brought from death to life through faith in Christ, want to live for Christ or in other words, live a life pleasing to Christ? Yes! And hopefully this is exactly what each one here in this room this morning is seeking to do, for this is the engine that drives the Christian life and work of service.

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And this brings us back to our question. Why would the Okada's be leaving us and why would we as a church be supporting them in this endeavor, if leaving us and going to Japan is going to be so very difficult for them? The answer based on what we just considered would be this. They are going back to Japan and we are supporting them in the doing of this because we together believe, along with them, that their return to Japan will be PLEASING TO GOD AND THIS IS EXACTLY WHAT EACH OF US IS LIVING OUR LIVES TO DO IN LIGHT OF ALL THAT GOD HAS DONE FOR US THROUGH CHRIST.

But why would we, together with the Okada's, believe that their return to Japan would be pleasing to God in light of the many difficulties that they will be facing? This is why:

We together believe that we have been commanded to make **disciples** of all nations (Matthew 28:18-20). And this is why we believe together with the Okada's that their return to Japan, in spite of the many difficulties and challenges they will be facing, will be pleasing to God.

So now let me read for you **Matthew 28:18-20** and see if this is not so **“And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. (19) Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, (20) teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’”**

When we look at these verses it might appear that there are multiple commands. But there is truly only one command found in these verses and that is **“to make disciples of all nations.”** We know this because the verb **“to make”** is the only verb in this set of verses that is in the imperative mood. All the other verbs (“go,” “baptize,” and “teach”) that might appear to be commands are simply participles that were introduced to describe certain activities associated with the process of disciple making.

So what have we been commanded to do according to **Matthew 28:19**? We have been commanded, **“to make disciples”**. And because we want together to live lives pleasing to Him, the One who loved us and gave Himself for us, this is something that we will together want to do.

So how are Disciples of Christ made? A disciple is a follower. So how does one become a follower of Christ? A person becomes a follower of Christ or in other words a Disciple of Christ when they in response to the gospel of Christ and as an expression of their faith in Christ embrace Christ as their Lord and Savior, thus acknowledging not only Christ's right rule over their lives, but also their desire for Him to do so. This is how a disciple of Christ is made.

Hopefully everyone in this room this morning is a Disciple of Christ. And what have the Disciples of Christ been commanded to do according to **Matthew 28:19**? We have been commanded as we **“go”** wherever we might **“go,” “to make disciples of all nations.”** And

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would this include the United States of America? Yes! And would this include Japan? Yes!

For most of us here this morning, our ministry of disciple making, as we are “**going**,” will be focused on the United States of America, which would hopefully mean that as we go back to school this will be our focus, that when we go into the homes of our families and friends this will be our focus, when we are interacting with our neighbors this will be our focus. When we go to work this will be our focus or in other words we will be continuously looking for opportunities to share the gospel of Christ with the hope that some of those we are sharing with would, by God’s grace, become Disciples of Christ. So where in this room will most of us be focusing our disciple making? We will be focusing our disciple making in the United States of America, and even more specifically here in the Antelope Valley.

But this will not be true of the Okada’s will it? For they, in their “going” will be going to Japan, to a nation of 127,000,000 people, who is largely a nation of unbelievers still dead in trespasses and sins and spiritually speaking still under the rule of Satan. This obviously will not be an easy place for the Okada’s to do their work of disciple making, but this is where God has been leading them and we are more than happy to support them in the doing of this. We support them not only because we together have experienced God’s love and are therefore together seeking to please Him, not only because we have been commanded by God to make disciples of all nations, **BUT ALSO BECAUSE:**

We together believe that God is now in the process of opening a **door** of ministry to Japan through the Okada’s that is for us unprecedented in its scope and its potential impact (I Corinthians 16:9).

We began our ministry to Japan in 1990, through a partnership with Hamadara Bible Church in Osaka, Japan. Initially our ministry focused on homestay tours where Japanese high school age students would be sent to us by Hamadara Church who would then live with us in our homes as well as participate in our church over a period of four weeks.

From 1990 to 2000 our church hosted over 200 mostly unsaved Japanese students. It was a great time and there were several professions of faith that resulted from this ministry.

We also sent over to Japan individuals from our church to Hamadara to teach English classes hoping that through contacts within the unsaved community surrounding the Hamadara church that the church might continue an ongoing ministry to them. Those we sent to live in Japan were Randy and Rebecca Thompson and Andrew Darley. And this also was a great time of ministry.

So we have done a lot over a long period of time in Japan and have been blessed for it. And one of the most significant of those blessings was the relationship we developed with Daisuke Okada, who God brought to America, as a film student from Tokyo, but whom God in His sovereignty redirected to Master’s seminary. This ultimately led him to become connected to

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our church, which was directly related to our long term relationship and ministry with Hamadara church.

During this time he assisted us greatly in supporting our various ministries in Japan. He also brought us into contact with a young lady named Marcia who is now his wife whom he married while still with us.

As Daisuke was finishing seminary and preparing to go back to Japan with his wife, we decided as a church to set him apart as a deacon of our church so that he might represent our church and support the ministry of our church in our ongoing partnership with Hamadara.

And this he did faithfully along with his wife from 2000 to 2012. This also was a time of blessing. The gospel was being proclaimed and the word of God was being taught there in Osaka, Japan. And we were a part of that, "Praise God!"

But God in His sovereignty was about to redirect Daisuke, and therefore His family, to a much different type of ministry that we believe God has already begun to bless and that we together believe has incredible potential for impacting the whole of the nation of Japan for Christ.

This ministry is called "JBA" (Japan Bible Academy). This ministry has actually been formed and launched while he has been here with us here at Valley Bible Church over these past three years beginning in 2012.

So why was this ministry formed? In Japan there is a lack of biblical instruction. There are very few churches in Japan and the pastors of those churches have not been trained and therefore the messages tend to be weak and ineffective, which leads to a weak church.

So how does JBA address this problem?

In an attempt to address this problem, others have tried to get people within the churches of Japan who may be interested in getting further instruction to go to them. Daisuke has formed this ministry on the premise that biblical instruction needs to be brought to people who are interested in further instruction by going to their churches with that instruction rather than trying to get the people to leave their churches so that they can try and go to some other location to get their instruction.

The initial phase of this instruction consists of a very intensive 14-hour lay leadership class that takes place over the span of a weekend.

So how has this model been working?

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During the three years while Daisuke has been here completing his Doctorate of Ministry Degree in Expository Preaching at Master's Seminary, he has been forced because of his visa to make periodic trips to Japan. During these trips he has conducted his very intensive 14 hour lay leadership classes in three different host churches spread out over the length of the Japan. In the north of Japan he went to Sapporo and had 11 students. South of Sapporo he went to Sendai with 46 students. (This is the church that we through Diasuke sent a very large amount of money after the Tsunami). And then in the southern part of Japan he went to Kagoshima where he had 15 students. What is particularly exciting about these classes is that there are some within those classes who are interested in one day pursuing seminary level training, which Daisuke would like in the future to provide as this ministry continues to develop.

This will obviously require help and God is already at work in providing that help. Many of you know Laney and Sarah Stroup, for they have been with us for quite awhile. And if everything works out according to plan they will be joining Daisuke and Marcia in Japan at some point in the future to not only to support the lay leadership classes, but also the seminary level training that this nation so badly needs.

We as a church over these past 25 years have had the opportunity to minister to the nation of Japan and God has blessed us in that ministry. But now we believe that God is in the process of opening a **door** of ministry to Japan through the Okada's that is unprecedented for us, both in its scope and its potential impact.

CONCLUSION

So why are the Okada's leaving us to go to Japan and why are we supporting them in the doing of it when we both know that will be difficult for them? This is why:

We together have experienced the Love of God and therefore want to Please God.

We together believe that we have been commanded to make disciples of all nations.

We together believe that God is now in the process of opening a **door** of ministry to Japan that is for us unprecedented in its scope and its potential impact.

This is why the Okada's are leaving us to go to Japan and why we are supporting them in the doing of it. And how can we support them in the doing of it?

There are numerous ways we can support them. We can support them through communications, through our prayers and through our financial support. In fact the present time they are 15% short of what we have determined to be a reasonable amount of money to live on in the Tokyo area where they will be working and ministering.

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If you would like to give toward their support, we have a fund set up in our church for the Okada's. So all you have to do in order to support them is designate an amount of money for them in addition to what you may already be giving to the church.

May God pour out his grace upon the Okada's as they return to continue their ministry in Japan and may we by God's grace effectively and faithfully **support** them in their work.