

Japanese Pride and American Welfare

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The Japanese are notorious for their sense of independence and refusal of aid in a time of crisis. On the surface this seems to be an admirable quality, but further consideration of this trait is disturbing.

Robert Nichols, an evangelist which Hueytown supports in Japan, recently wrote of this tendency in the aftermath of the Kobe earthquake. In response to American offers for aid, brother Nichols wrote:

“I understood their wanting to help but realized that this was not as simple in Japan as in lands with a ‘Christian’ background ... For some Japanese even the offer of help from a non-family member can be an insult. In 1993, when a death occurred in the family of recently baptized sister Ishida, an American Christian called her home to see if he could help. His offer was rejected and he was reprimanded by Japanese Christians for ‘interfering with a family problem.’ Sister Ishida has not been to worship since that death.

“Miss Yamada, who had attended a weekly Bible class for six months, regularly devoted the entire day of each Sunday to attending two worship services at Yamasaki and Osaka. In 1994 when her father died an American Christian telephoned to inquire about the family only to have a family member hang up on him. *This young lady who had been talking about baptism severed all connections with Christians.*”

Not only is cultural pride in evidence in brother Nichols’ observations, there appears to be a healthy dose of American resentment as well.

But at the other end of the spectrum lies the American welfare system and the large underclass that has become dependent upon it. The attitude of many in this country has become, “Society owes me a comfortable living beyond what I can provide for myself.” Thus Japanese pride cannot accept help when it is needed, and Americans are addicted to help that is often unneeded and undeserved.

God’s ideal for Christians is that they provide for themselves and their families (1 Tim 5:8; 2 Thes 3:10-12). But Christians can become victims of circumstances wherein they need the support of others to get by (2Cor 8:14; 9:12; Ac 4:32ff).

It takes humility to acknowledge both spiritual and material need. We must learn to accept the help of God and man and simply say “thank you.”