

# Cultural Baggage

## READING

Acts 15

*What would Christianity look like if it had started in Japan?*

**H**ere is a question that might help us separate things. (It's also a question you need to be asking regularly if you're a missionary in Japan).

What would Christianity look like if it had started in Japan?

Apart from little things, like communion would probably be rice and sake... If we had church buildings, they would probably be much more "in tune" with nature, peace, meditation, ... kind of like the old Shinto temples and their park like surroundings.

Japanese people love festivals, (matsuri), so most likely there would be some kind of Spring festival, maybe Easter, and some kind of End/New Year festival. With some kinds of amazing, special foods.

Church music would be pretty different. Not just because of the instruments. But what would the lyrics be like? More poetic? Deeper?

Prayer... would probably be more serious, more devoted. We would probably have prayer retreats, more like our Korean brothers and sisters do. And meditation would probably be a bigger part of Christian life than it is in the West.

Church meetings on Sunday would almost certainly revolve around food and fellowship together. And Japanese respect teachers very highly. So perhaps there would be more emphasis on teaching that just on singing and music.

But Japanese are way more concerned with unity and conformity. So I suspect there would be ONE Japanese church, not hundreds of denominations.

Church government would be more hierarchical, more Biblical. Not "democratic" where the least mature Christians have the same say as the wisest and most spiritual.

What would evangelism look like? Less forceful, less intrusive? And the stories and illustrations? More spiritual I think, but still based on farming, fishing, natural life.

And discipleship? More serious I think. But probably more "official". There would probably be several levels of disciple. With certificates and maybe graduation ceremonies for each. Fancy becoming a 3rd dan black belt disciple of Yeshua? Cool.

And spiritual warfare? A real thing. Modelled on Samurai and real warriors. Real. Common. We would all know that we **are** in a spiritual battle. And we would train for it. We would fight in it. We would win.

These are just my own thoughts, based on my own observation of Japanese culture. Maybe yours are different. The important thing is that you're asking the question.

But Christianity didn't start in Japan. It came to Japan via the West and has been heavily influenced and corrupted by the culture it has been filtered through.

So if you're a Japanese pastor... how much of what you have inherited from the missionaries who taught you was just their cultural baggage? How much of that needs to be discarded?

If you are a missionary to Japan. How much of what you are presenting as Christianity is just culture? What do you need to let go of? How can you re-interpret real Christianity, Biblical Christianity into the Japanese culture?

For either of you, pastor or missionary. How would you start again, and how would you do Japanese Christianity now if you had the freedom to redo it from scratch?

How would you make Christianity Japanese?