

JAPAN

Lessons for Mission Minded Kids

Lesson 5

A Child's Life



Japan

Lesson 5: A Child's Life

Goals for Lesson 5:

- Children will compare their own lives to the lives of Japanese children.
- Students will be able to contrast the lives of children around the world, based on previous learning, and understand that the spiritual, emotional and physical needs of all people everywhere are basically the same, regardless of socio-economic status.
- Students will be able to apply the needs of their own lives to the verse for Japan, and understand how it applies to children in Japan as well.

Verse for Japan:

"The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else." Acts 17:24-25 (NIV)

Before Class:

- Read through lesson and decide what you will use according to your age group and time allotted.
- Prepare picture of children from the lesson cover and the pictures of the children traveling to school and learning kendo as power point slides, or print them and back them with card stock for stability.
- Read through "Japanese Decorated Branches" activity and prepare according to directions. Copy enough prayer cards on blue paper so that each student has one card. Make one copy of the verse shapes page for each student, on scrapbooking paper that is decorated on one side and plain on the other side, so that each shape will have printing on the plain side and patterns on the empty side.
- Make copies of Child's Kimono coloring page, with Japanese children coloring page printed on the back. If you will use them in class, collect markers or colored pencils.

Lesson Plan:

- Open your time together with a welcome, announcements and a brief prayer. (5 min.)
- Read or tell the story part of the lesson, stopping to discuss as necessary, and showing the pictures as indicated. (15-20 min.)
- Give each student a copy of the verse shapes, a pair of scissors, a branch and a blue square prayer card. Lay out yarn, cut in lengths between 6 and 12 inches, and help students to carefully cut out the shapes. Have students arrange the shapes in front of them in the correct order and say the verse out loud together. This can be done together as a group, or if you have students needing different amounts of help, have them arrange the shapes and then read them individually to you or a helper as they get done. Help students punch a hole in the top of each, and tie the shapes onto their branch. When students are finished decorating their branches, use them to make a prayer and praise parade, as described in the activity. (30-35 min.)
- Use the Kimono and Japanese children coloring pages to finish your time together, or send them home to complete later. (5-10 min.)
- NOTE: The Global Ministries Office has various kimonos that can be borrowed if your children would like to try them on.

Lesson 5 Story: A Child's Life

If you were growing up in Japan, many parts of your life might be very similar to your life here in the United States. As you listen, you will also notice some things that are different. In Japan, children might attend several years of Kindergarten, starting when they are three years old. Then when they are six, they will begin elementary school, which goes from 1st through 6th grades. Middle school would be grades 7-9, and then high school from grades 10-12.

(Show picture of preschool children) These children are in Kindergarten, which includes everyone under 6 years old. They are dressed up for a special parent's program. Most schools require their students to wear uniforms, often consisting of white shirts and dark pants, shorts or skirts, with a dark sweater or jacket. Children from the same neighborhood will often travel to school together in a group. Since there are no school buses in Japan, the children all walk or ride bikes to their school. If their school is far away, they have to ride the public transportation system with all the adults going to work. **(Show picture of students in their uniforms riding the subway)**

When the students get to school, they will take off their outdoor shoes and put on soft indoor shoes. They will all help to keep their school clean and neat and organized. Classes are often divided up into teams, with each team having their own jobs to take care of. Teams of students will sweep and mop hallways and floors, empty trash, rake and clean up the outdoor playing yard, and serve and clean up the school lunches, which they eat in their classrooms.

Children in the younger grades may have a shorter day, but by middle elementary school, most children are encouraged to join after school clubs. These clubs might only meet once a week during elementary school, but by middle school, they often meet several times a week or even every day. There are musical groups and art clubs and sports teams of every sort for children to choose from. Some clubs teach ancient Japanese traditions like the Tea Ceremony, Flower Arranging, Martial Arts, and Kendo, which is a Japanese form of fencing done in full kimono with long wooden swords. **(Show picture of children learning Kendo)**

Students in Japan spend a great deal of their school day learning to read and write Japanese. Japanese is a very complex language, with almost 6,000 letters known as kanji (kahn-jee). Each symbol represents a specific idea or thing. Since this form is so complicated to learn how to read and write, there are also two other alphabets. One is called hiragana (he-rah-GAH-nah), and is a simplified form, similar to the sounds of our alphabet, and the other is katakana (KAH-ta-kah-nah). This alphabet is used for any foreign items that are brought to Japan.

In Japan, all of the grades have homework almost every night. Not only do they need to learn all three of these alphabets, but, they also learn to write the kanji as an art form similar to calligraphy. This is called shodo and is done with a paint brush and black ink. Learning to read and write Japanese takes many years of hard work and lots of practice.

So with their school day, their after-school clubs, and their homework, Japanese children can be very busy. When they are home, they do a lot of the same things you do. They usually have chores to help their parents, just like you do. They like to watch TV and play video games, and they like to ride their bikes and play with their friends.

Since Japan has many people crowded into a small space, Japanese homes tend to be very small, using the same spaces for multiple activities. Recently they have built many high-rise apartments, especially in the cities. Even though the space is small, there is a kitchen, dining room, living room and bedrooms. In Japanese tradition, people use the soft bedding, called O-futon when they sleep.

However, using a bed is becoming normal. Things in Japan have become increasingly Westernized now. The kitchen and cooking area might be very small, with one larger room for the family to use for eating and sleeping. At night, the soft bedding, called o-futon is taken out and unfolded for the whole family to share the floor of the big room. In the morning, the kids will fold it all back up and slide it into the storage space to make room for the low table where the family will sit on cushions to eat their breakfast together.

Breakfast is becoming more westernized as well. Traditional breakfast used to be miso soup, rice and green tea. Now many children eat eggs, toast and ham. After dressing in your school uniform, you slip on your outdoor shoes at the door, bow to your mother, and then run off to join your friends for the journey to school. When you get to your classroom, you will put your outside shoes on a shelf and slip on your inside shoes. At lunch time, you will help to serve the lunch of soup and rice and fish, and then help your classmates clean up the lunch and the classroom.

After school, you will attend your club and then travel home in time for supper with your family. Once again, you will have soup and rice, but this time there will be many small dishes of vegetables and pickles and little fishes to go with the rice. After your meal, there will be time for homework and a little bit of television before it is time to pull out the bedding and get ready to sleep.

As you can see, some parts of life in Japan are very similar to your life here in America. Our verse says that God gives life and breath to everyone, whether they were born in Japan or America or somewhere else. No matter who we are, none of us can live without God's help. Remember to pray that the children of Japan will learn about the God who made them and

gives them life and breath. He wants to know them as His children, just like He wants to know you.





Japanese Decorated Branches



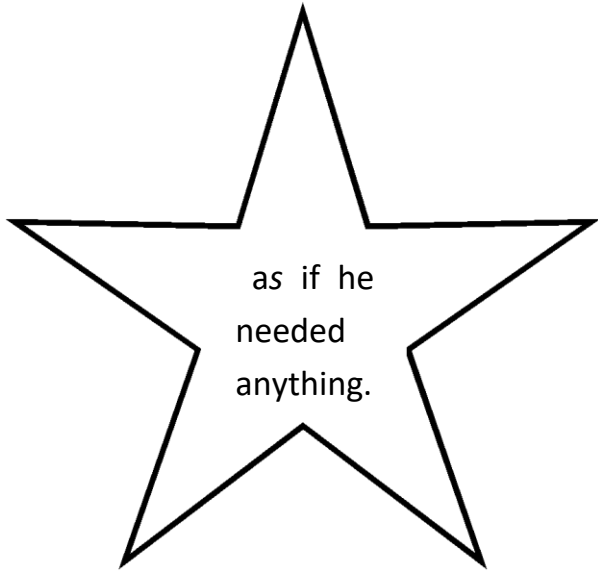
Before Class: Cut a bamboo, willow, or soft pine branch for each of your students. Each branch should be at least one foot long and should have several smaller branches or twigs, with or without leaves. Print the verse shapes on the plain side of decorative 8 ½ x 11 " scrapbooking paper. Gather scissors and hole punches for your class. Cut colored yarn or string into various lengths, with enough pieces for each student to have seven. Make copies of enough Japan prayer cards to give one to each student. Print these on blue paper, and cut them apart into the squares beforehand. Each student will get one sheet of verse shapes with patterned paper on the back, and one pre-cut blue square prayer card.

During Class: Tell your students, "In Japan, children decorate branches with pretty paper shapes to celebrate their "Star Festival", Tanabata. They write wishes (Tanzaku) on pieces of paper and tie them on the branches, and then have a parade, waving and swishing their decorated branches. Today we have our verse and our prayers for Japan on our shapes of paper to tie on our branches. We will make a prayer parade to ask God to help the Japanese people learn about Him."

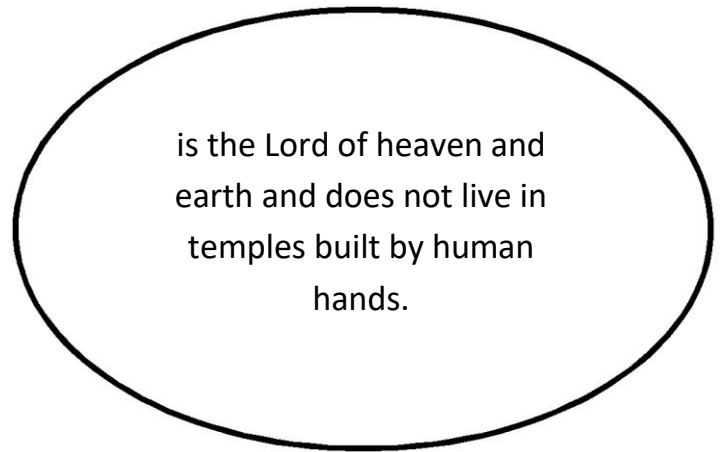
Give each student a page of the printed verse shapes, and one blue prayer square. Hand out scissors, hole punches and pieces of yarn, pre-cut into 6" to 12" lengths. Help students cut out each shape and punch a hole at the top. Have students lay out the verse shapes in front of them on the table in the correct order. Read the verse together out loud.

Help students tie each of their 7 shapes to their branch. When each student has the six verse shapes and one prayer square tied to their branch, have them line up with their branches. Make a parade around the room or up and down the hallway, waving the branches. Sing a song together if you want. End by joining the beginning and the end of your line to make a circle. Use the verse shapes to help you say the verse out loud together, or have the boys say it and then the girls, or any other method of practice. Then go around the circle and have each person pray the prayer that is tied to their branch.

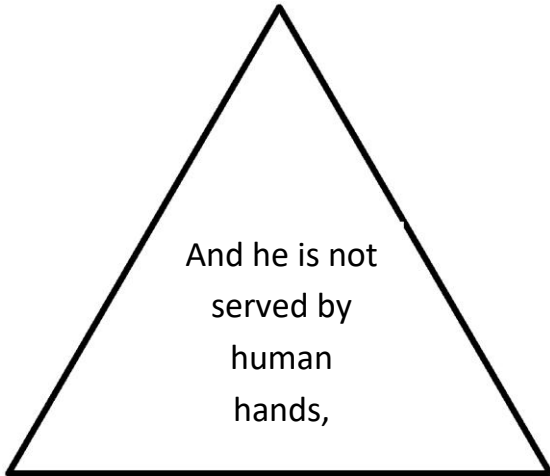
Take the decorated branches home to remember to pray for the people of Japan.



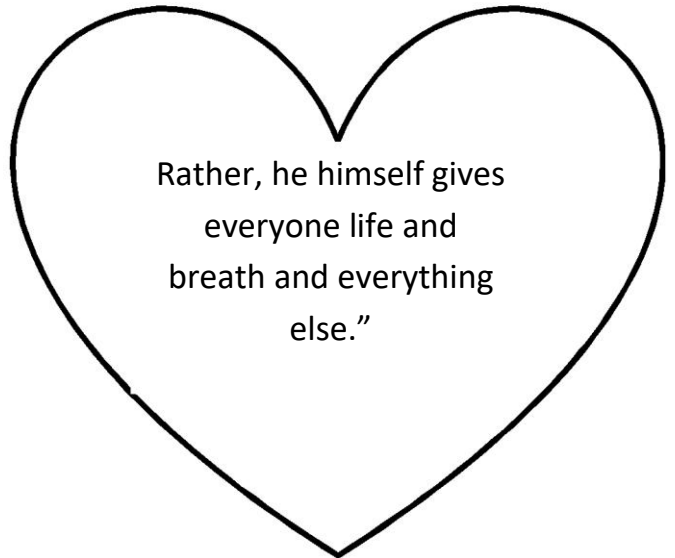
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needed
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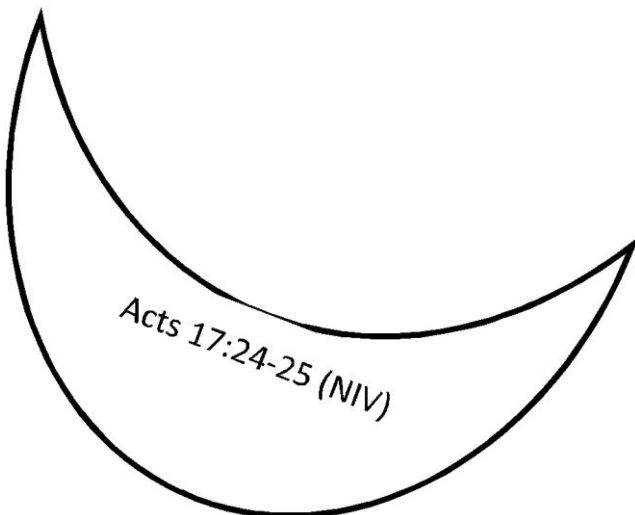
is the Lord of heaven and
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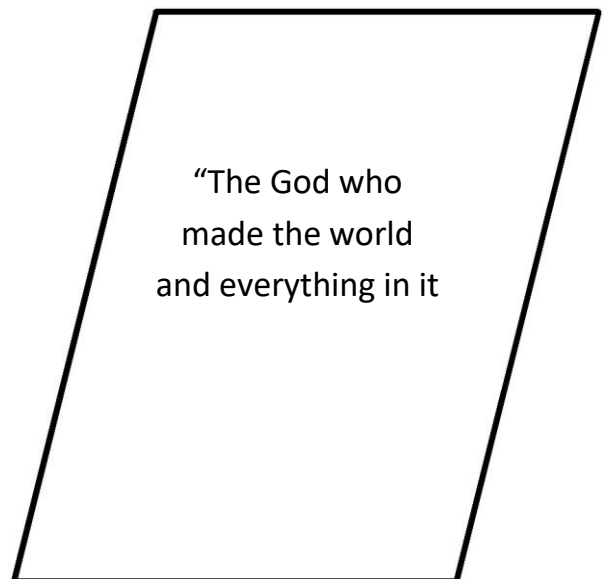
And he is not
served by
human
hands,



Rather, he himself gives
everyone life and
breath and everything
else."



Acts 17:24-25 (NIV)



"The God who
made the world
and everything in it



