

Q When did you first know God was calling you to the mission's field?

Ken: In 1997 I moved to the United States from Okinawa, Japan. I started an internship at a local church. While I was going through the discipleship training, I knew I had to go back to Japan to share the gospel.

Rachelle: When I was 12 years old, I attended a youth retreat and there was an 80-year-old missionary sharing her heart for Asia. She asked us who would be willing to go and share Jesus there. I went up front and joined her upcoming mission trip. We traveled to several countries in Asia including China, where we smuggled in Bibles. After that trip, I would work 2-3 jobs to save my money and during every school break, I would volunteer to help in different countries on short-term mission trips.

Q Who is someone that influenced you in your decision to serve as a missionary in a cross cultural setting?

Ken: Pastor Duane Connor. He told me so many different stories of God's miracles on his mission trips to South America and South Africa. He is also the one who took me to an international missionary conference where I met my wife.

Rachelle: I would say my mom. Even though she had 5 kids, she would still travel overseas when she could. She always encouraged us to follow where we felt the Lord calling, no matter how young we were. She also brought us to many prayer meetings, and to yearly mission conferences. We were able to hear stories and updates from the missionaries from around the world and then could sign up to help support them.

Q How long have you been serving as a missionary?

Ken: 19 years. I have been serving here while living in the US and also serving in Japan when I do short-term mission trips there.

Rachelle: At 13, I went to China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and the Philippines. Then at 15, I went to Mexico, and at 16, to Fiji. At 18, I went to Israel and then at 19, attended YWAM DTS (Youth with A Mission Discipleship Training School) at the University of the Nations in Kona, Hawaii. While there, I served in Japan and the Philippines. Then at 20, Ken and I were youth directors and took a team of youth to Jamaica. Since then, I have been involved with inner-city ministry and have taken teams of youth to help with local missions. We have also been a part of several Japanese Bible Studies and Japan Nights, which reaches the foreign exchange students at our local colleges. Over the years, we have been back and forth to Japan for short term mission trips.

Q What life experiences did you have that helped you prepare to go overseas?

Ken: I started serving in a local church as a janitor, then administrative assistant, and then on the worship team. I have done street outreach, like prayer walking, handing out sodas and tracks to people. I've reached out to local colleges and started Japan Night/Bible Studies. I've had the privilege to interpret for evangelists from Japan visiting the US as well. My wife and I worked with gang members and under privileged children in the city of Omaha. I worked at the Nebraska Correctional Youth Facility for three years. This was probably one of the biggest challenges. We were advised not to evangelize to inmates but I prayed and preached the Gospel to them every opportunity I had.

Rachelle: Growing up with a brother with spina bifida really helped me have a heart to help others. We grew up volunteering at wheelchair basketball camps, puppeteering and clowning for the handicap. We were always volunteering at churches and community events. I also learned several instruments growing up and played on many worship teams. We worked at an inner-city ministry called the Hope Center for Kids for almost 8 years and had a wonderful time working with a large team, several interns, and lots of volunteers. I started an AWANA program in our city and have organized all types of community events for years. We have also always had a heart for the Japanese. We have been building relationships with the Japanese college students, connecting with Japanese pastors, and holding prayer meetings for Japan for years.

Q What initial fears/concerns did you have about serving as a missionary overseas?

Ken: I am only concerned for my wife and children. I grew up in Japan so I know what to expect, but I think there might be some culture shock for the rest of my family.

Rachelle: The only fear I would say I have is how my children will adjust and how their schooling will go. I am not afraid of the food, culture, or lifestyle since my husband is Japanese and we eat Japanese food almost every day, and my kids love the language and the people. It would just be how they will adjust to school.

Q What is something that would surprise others about mission work or the people you are called to serve?

Ken: Ancient Japan was called “Yamato.” In Hebrew “Ya’ Umato” or “Ya’ Mato” for short meaning “God’s people” (referenced from the

book, *The Biblical Hebrew of the Origin of the Japanese People*). There are festivals that celebrate biblical stories in Japan yet the people do not know the origin or reason for why they do what they do. My hope and desire is that they will know God the Father who created them and receive salvation through the Son that loves the Land of the Rising Sun. We want to see the manifestation and power of the Helper, the Holy Spirit!

Rachelle: Japan has a very low Christian population of less than 1%. We feel called to the unchurched and unreached people group. Depression and suicide is very high in Japan, along with broken marriages. We have a heart to reach out to couples, go outside the walls of the church, and volunteer in the community. We plan to share our story about adoption and hope God opens doors to minister to mothers. And since there is very little Japanese Christian music, we would like to reach out to young musicians and raise up a passionate worship team.

Q What advice would you give to those considering overseas missions?

Ken: Do mission work where you live! Go help the widows and the orphans. Find an after school program, homeless shelter, nursing home, or just go prayer walking and pick up trash! There's so much you can do here in the US before going overseas. King David started out caring for sheep. Small tasks are important to God. It builds character. Learn the language and culture of the country you are going to while you are serving here. If God has placed a passion in your heart for another country, in due season you'll be there. Do your best and God will take care of the rest!

Rachelle: I would say to get involved in your community as much as possible! You will want as much prayer covering and support as you

can get. Also volunteer, volunteer, and then volunteer some more! You can never do too much outreach! And if you can go on some short-term mission trips first, then I would. It will help your heart narrow down to exactly what country and people group you feel called to!

Q How can people pray for you?

Ken: First, please pray that the veil will be removed from people's eyes so they can receive the gift of salvation and the Holy Spirit. Second, please pray for my family—for health, friendships, and the ability to learn the language quickly. Third, please pray that God will give me wisdom and discernment.

Rachelle: Pray that many will come to know Jesus in Japan! We want to see Jesus lifted high! We want the Holy Spirit to lead us in creative ways to reach the lost. Also pray for protection over our marriage and family, for our children as they adjust to school here in Japan.