

Alfie Silas: A Love Note for Japan

As Alfie Silas concluded her last concert in Japan Wednesday, her heart was full of love for the people she has met since the tour began Sept. 10. "This particular visit was to help in aiding those who were affected by the tsunami and earthquake in Sendai," said Silas, who has visited Japan on many other occasions.

"We really wanted to bring Christ's hope and His love to the people of Japan," she said. "Yes, to Sendai, but to all of Japan, because everyone was affected. This type of disaster knows no borders. We wanted to encourage people not just with their physical needs, but with their spiritual need, and lend our gifts and our hand of love—the love that Christ gives us to share in these types of situations."

One of the world's top session singers, Silas has recorded with artists such as Michael Jackson, Whitney Houston, Elton John, Rod Stewart, Diana Ross, Stevie Wonder and many others. In circles familiar with Franklin Graham Festivals, Silas is recognized as one of the talented vocalists in the Tommy Coomes Band.

Silas sang with Coomes at the Okinawa Franklin Graham Festival in 2006, and in 2010 she did pre-event concerts for the Kansai Franklin Graham Festival, in addition to performing during the festival itself. "These were wonderful crusades," Silas recalled. "The children's choir in Okinawa was amazing. The kids probably didn't know a word of English, but there they were, belting out gospel songs."

Her connection with Japan goes even further back, to her first tour in 1993 and subsequent visits with artists such as Deniece Williams. "I love the way that people are very kind

and gracious,” she said. “There is a politeness and a courteous way that people approach you and treat you. They take a certain pride in the way they do even the simplest things—there is an excellence to it.”

But it wasn’t until Silas began singing in Japanese churches that the love really took root. “As I began to visit different churches, I had the chance to develop relationships,” she explained. “I met some wonderful people.”

And the people seemed to cherish the bond they developed with Silas. “They would take it seriously,” she said. “It could be three years later and they would still be in that place, remembering what transpired. They would want to come back and give praise reports. People wanted to tell me what’s been going on in their lives.”

Silas thought, “This is so different. This is so refreshing.” She realized at some point that Japan didn’t feel so far away anymore. “I just felt an attachment,” she said. “I can’t think of another place I feel this way about.”

Ministering Through Song and Word

Because of her commitment to the nation, Silas was blessed to do a benefit concert tour this month in several Osaka-area churches and in various locations in Sendai, where people are recovering from the devastating March 11 earthquake and tsunami. On the six-month anniversary of that deadly day, Silas performed at a special Memorial Concert at the Osaka Christian Center.

In addition to ministering to the audience in song, Silas shared parts of her testimony and encouraged the audience to give their hearts to Jesus. But some of the sweetest moments of the evening took place after the concert ended. Silas took the time to plant seeds in one man who needed encouragement and prayed with a young lady who then accepted Christ as her Savior.

"I prayed with her personally because one thing that I have come to understand is that sometimes there is a process, a pulling back after someone first hears the gospel," said Silas. "I try to talk to whoever I think is in that valley of decision and try to help them understand if they might be hung up on some particular thing."

Silas enjoys finding out where people are: "I love to encourage people and I love to use the body of work that God has given me, not just my Christian ministry, but all my musical background." Often people will ask her, "How was Michael Jackson?" or "What was it like working with Elton John?"

Such questions give Silas a springboard into finding out more about the person. "God has given me a lot of 'ins.' I like getting in there and dropping some seed, maybe helping them to think of something they might not have considered."

In spite of the demand on her voice, Silas continues to spend time with people after each show no matter where she sings. "I feel it is important to avail myself to the Lord for Him to do what He needs to do," she said.

Used with permission from the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association.