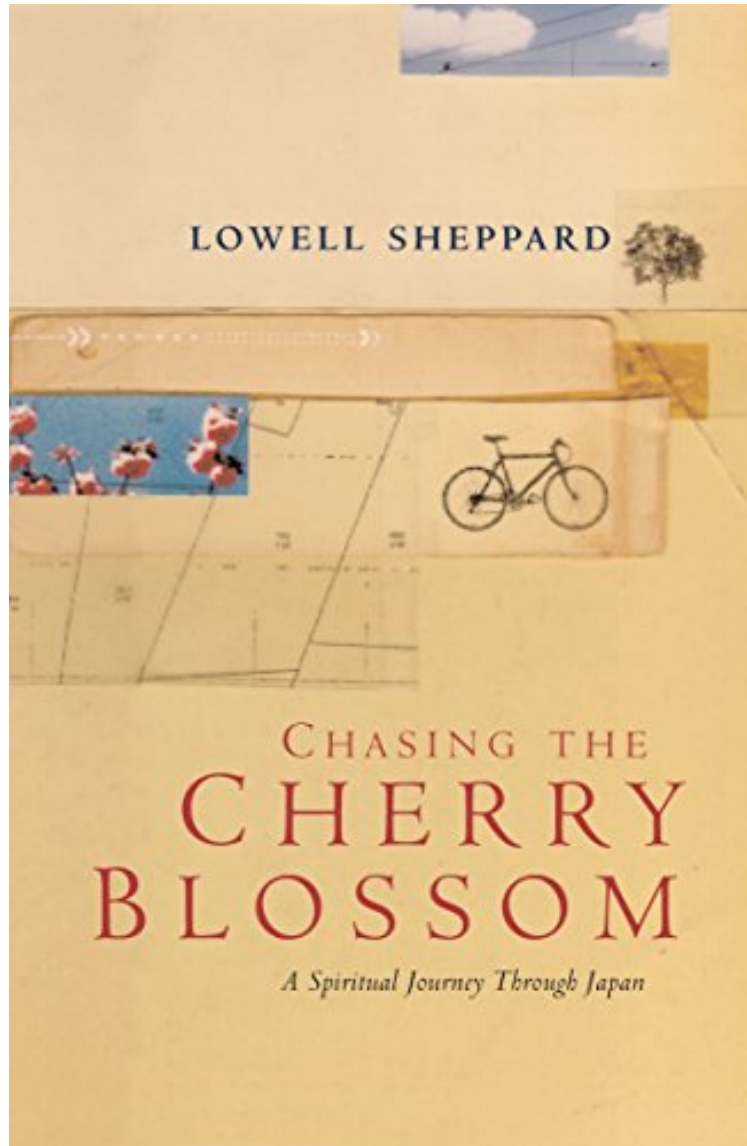


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## Chasing the Cherry Blossom: A Spiritual Journey through Japan

*Lowell Sheppard*

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**Lowell Sheppard : Chasing the Cherry Blossom: A Spiritual Journey through Japan** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Chasing the Cherry Blossom: A Spiritual Journey through Japan:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Cherry bombBy Blue Lake BoyAn engrossing and well written account of an unusual pilgrimage across Japan by bicycle, following the path of Japan's famous sakura, or opening of the cherry blossoms. As much a journey of self-discovery as gaining insight into his adopted homeland, Sheppard

writes with a poetic insight and curiosity that engages the reader every turn of his sometimes arduous trip. At times, I found his belief in the superiority of Christianity over Japan's native religions and beliefs a little grating, but as Sheppard is a devout Christian, this can be understood, and there was also a humility and appreciation in his writing that complemented the certainty of his righteousness. A journey worth taking and following.

The flowering of the cherry blossom is a powerful symbol of hope in Japan. The first buds open in March and within six weeks the whole country has celebrated the blossoms return as a signal of new beginnings. Intrigued by this unique national celebration, and by Japan's rapid modernization in the last 60 years, Lowell Sheppard sets out on a six week adventure through the 2000 mile length of the country, following the flowering of the blossom as it progresses north. Travelling on a bicycle, he experiences at close hand both everyday Japanese life and the glorious visual feast of the blossoms as he visits 100 viewing sites before the season is over. But when it ends, the sense of national disillusionment is tangible. This intimate encounter with the Japanese at their least inhibited reveals how they are coping with the transition from modernity to post-modernity and asks whether hope is to be found, or whether it is as elusive and fleeting as the cherry blossom.

About the Author **LOWELL SHEPPARD**, a Canadian, is a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society and recently completed a Masters dissertation on Japanese youth culture. He is a former Director of British Youth for Christ who since 1995 has worked in Japan for Youth for Christ International. With Gerard Kelly he wrote *Miracle in Mostar*, and was a columnist for the *Christian Herald*, as well as writing numerous articles for Christian magazines such as *Renewal*.