

It Doesn't Stop at Conversion!

‘Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.’

James 1: 2-4

When we look back on our journeys with God, we often see how he has used various trials and experiences to shape us to be more like Christ. This issue of JCL news is a special edition featuring the testimonies of Japanese Christians, all of whom bear witness to this fact that our journeys do not stop at conversion. To this end, we hope that these stories

will inspire believers and unbelievers alike. Feel free to share these stories with others and please get in touch if you would like Japanese translations, help with follow up, etc. Before beginning, I would just like to thank all the contributors for sharing their stories. Pray that God may use them to transform hearts and minds!

Joe Townsend, JCL Communications Editor

A Transformation of the Heart

Our first story is provided by Kanna Araoka, who came to know the Lord as an overseas student. Her experience taught her many things, particularly how true repentance from sin is a change in heart, and how we are to put God not only before ourselves but also before all of our relationships with all human beings, including family.

I was born and raised in Hitachi City, Ibaraki Prefecture. I enjoyed many things throughout my school life, but there were also difficult times. In such times I would look to



proverbs or sayings or inspirational lyrics, and would read self-help books. I knew that I was relying upon ideas that were not fully reliable, but since nothing is perfect in this world, that was the best I knew back then.

After graduating from University, in September 2015 I moved

to Norwich in England to study for a masters degree. Since I thought it would help me improve my English, I joined various events that were arranged by Christians for exchange students such as conversation groups, Bible studies, and visits to church. Through these gatherings I was given the opportunity to get to know Christians and to learn about Jesus. During the sermons at church a lady sat next to me and wrote notes in simple English so I could understand what was being said, and afterwards she would answer any questions I had. The kindness and unconditional love that Christians showed me was very appealing. At the time I didn't know what it was about them that made them attractive, all I knew was they were somehow different. But looking back now I believe that those Christians were filled with the Holy Spirit.

Every weekend I would have lunch with a Japanese Christian guy who was my age, shared many of my interests and was very clever. I eventually developed strong feelings for him and decided to ask

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him out. However, he didn't reciprocate. It was because I wasn't a Christian.

I was extremely shocked. If he had based his answer on what I believed, then we were living in two different worlds. All the positive attraction I had towards Christians crumbled away in an instant, and together with the shock of being turned down, I suddenly disliked Christians. I thought that I would never want to become one. However, although I had lost interest, I still went to Bible studies and church just so I could meet my friends. Furthermore, the guy that turned me down continued to be friendly to me.

A major turning point came in the following month at the Japanese Bible study. The girl that was leading the study said 'I know that this sounds harsh, but non-Christians are in a state as if they are drowning, and they cannot save themselves with their own strength. But as Christians, we have Jesus who saves us, and once he grabs hold of us he will never let go.' When I heard this, I thought, 'How rude!' I had made many mistakes in the past, but I was able to pick myself up, and besides, surely it is not only Christians that are saved? There's no way I'm drowning.

But at the same time I realised that I didn't have someone I could rely on at all times like they did. The reality was that the Christians had an unchanging God, and I didn't. From then on I started seeking God himself. I wanted to know why the guy that turned me down put this unseen God first, before anything else.

Around May, I was starting to see what Jesus was like, and I wanted to put my belief in him. Desperately I told one of my friends my thoughts. I told him that I was worried about my family as they were opposed to me becoming a Christian. He told me that my relationship with God was personal and that other people couldn't break it. Then he prayed for me. But although I believed the basics of the Gospel, that Jesus died for our sins and rose three days later, I still didn't believe that he was my personal saviour. When my friend told me that I had to pray to Jesus to repent of my sins and ask for forgiveness, I lied and told him that I already had done so. I couldn't accept that Christianity was the only truth, and because of my pride and because I wanted to get it over with, I lied. I didn't realize just how important repentance was.

I struggled over whether I should choose my family or Jesus, but I finally decided to follow Jesus. For about three months, I spent a lot of time reading the Bible, praying, and repenting whenever I sinned. But I later realized that I hadn't repented from the heart. There were many things that I didn't want to admit. I didn't want to lose my own identity. I had made a lot of effort and been through lots of struggles. I hadn't committed any 'big' sins. My pride was hindering me from full repentance. Somewhere in my heart I had chosen Jesus for my good. I chose him for my life to

be fulfilled and so that I would feel good about myself.

But through a sermon one Sunday in September I realised that I hadn't fully repented of my own sins that I had committed against God, and that I hadn't been grateful for Jesus' death upon the cross for those sins. I was able to repent when God's holiness was revealed to me. God didn't accuse me of my sinful heart, nor did he deny my past life. Rather, he showed his love, his mercy and his holiness. I had previously thought of becoming a Christian as a means to make my life better and was just worshiping God superficially. But God cleaned my heart, and for the first time, I was led to true repentance, having understood that Jesus had taken my blame upon the cross.

'The kindness, hope and unconditional love that other Christians showed me was very appealing to me'

By God's grace, I am continually growing as a Christian. God has changed my heart radically. I had never wanted to live for the glory of an unseen God. But now all fear is gone and I look forward to the day I meet Jesus in heaven and worship him there

for eternity. I desperately want those that don't know him yet to come to know him. In the past when something went wrong I would get upset, but now I am able to stay hopeful and joyful no matter the circumstance. Before I would lie if it seemed convenient, but now I know that I should be honest. I learned to love people just as they are, to forgive them even when they seem unforgivable, and to apologise to those that I have hurt in the past. Rather than a change in my actions, God wanted a change in my heart. All actions come from the heart. Even after becoming a Christian, sometimes my old self will get in the way, but God is merciful and he will never forsake me.

I now regularly attend a monthly Japanese Bible study and have the opportunity to speak to Japanese friends about Jesus. Two months ago I had the opportunity to lead the study for the first time. I was worried to begin with, but I was able to trust God throughout the study. God

Rather than a change in my actions, God wanted a change in my heart

taught me that I didn't have to worry about what to say, because God would take care of growing the plants once the seeds were planted. I just had to pray and wait.

When I go back to Japan, I plan to speak to my parents about God. I first need to tell them that I am now a Christian. May God give me courage, and may I build a good relationship with my family and friends with a humble heart. Please pray that I may continue to trust in God and to serve him, even though I may have less contact with Christians and get back into a busier lifestyle.

During a recent Sunday service tears welled up in my eyes as I pondered upon the fact that Jesus, who is full of love, knew me personally. He died for me. The reason that many people put their faith in him to this day is because after his death, he was buried, resurrected, and ascended into heaven; and because he is the living God that rules Heaven and Earth, even today.

Purely Biblical Thinking

'Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will.'

Romans 12:2

Masaharu Ozawa, who lived in Oxford from December 2012 to March 2013, shares our next testimony. This story begins after Masaharu came to accept Jesus, and tells of how his cross-cultural experience helped him to develop a model for his faith that is not primarily Japanese, but is purely Biblical.

Before coming to Oxford, I was not familiar with overseas cultures. I didn't think much about my own culture either. I didn't realise how much culture affects the way we think and live. Coming to England, I began to see the extent to which Japanese culture has as its basis Shintoism, Buddhism, the tea ceremony, and the 'samurai spirit'. In contrast, British culture has roots in Christianity.



Masaharu and Richard Brash

The first time I ever attended church overseas, I met JCL Mission Partner Richard Brash, and then I was able to join various church groups. I was a Christian and was baptised before coming to England. But I wasn't aware how much my thinking was 'Japanese', rather than shaped by the Bible. For example, the Bible talks about 'love', but I understood 'love' in a way that is deeply influenced by Shinto and Confucianism – in other words, loyalty to family and preservation of 'harmony'. But now I was learning a new, Christian understanding of 'love'. I guess I had a double-layered identity with my Japanese-ness at the bottom and Christianity on top.

'It was no longer possible for me to separate my 'Japanese' thinking from my 'Christian' thinking'

The faith of the Christians I met in Oxford caused me to question this 'double-layered' existence. They seemed to interact more deeply with the Bible and were trying to think things through 'biblically'. As I learned from this approach, and listened to what the Bible was teaching, I realised that it shed light on my whole being. It was no longer possible for me to separate my 'Japanese' thinking from my 'Christian' thinking. I saw that deep, daily interaction with the Bible meant real application for all of my life.

The most important blessing I received in Oxford was learning about 'sin' (tsumi) and 'God' (kami). These words are not an exact match between Japanese and English. When most Japanese hear the word 'sin' they think of breaking the law. But in Oxford I learned that 'sin' is more than this – it is not letting God be God.

In Japanese, a 'god' is something to be revered, but in

English the word refers to the Creator of the Universe. Of course, he is to be 'revered', but he's much more than that. Even though most Japanese don't know this Creator God, many feel that they are somehow privileged to be 'made alive', but owe this not to God but to their parents and ancestors, and this makes them humble. But, not knowing God, they have no sense of sinning

against him, and so no sense of their need for salvation. Most people think they are alright because they are doing their best to live morally as humble human beings. But if you think like this, you will not see the solution Jesus offers for human sin. You will not see how much God loves us. Japanese who read the Bible will doubtless learn something of Jesus' teachings, but if they don't know who God really is and what sin really is, they may never understand the gospel.

In Japan, it is shameful to admit mistakes, so I didn't want my true self to surface. But, since Richard's Bible studies were based on the presumption that all humans make mistakes, I could be open and honest about sin. As we talked, Richard would ask me questions such as 'Where does your way of thinking come from?' and 'What does the Bible say about that?' rather than criticising my character

'Through my growing understanding of the gospel, I began to feel its enabling power to love the people that I met'

for my way of thinking. Through my growing understanding of the gospel, I began to feel its

enabling power to love the people that I met, a feeling I had never had before.

I would like to share with my friends what I have learned in Oxford, pass my faith on to others, and preach the gospel in Japan. I believe that preaching the gospel is not just 'transmitting knowledge', but sharing my testimony of salvation, and speaking about the love of God that is revealed in the Bible. I want to do all these things based on my knowledge of the love of God, not being conformed to the world, but seeking God's leading.

Workers Approved by God

In April this year, JCL Director of Operations Ian MacLennan joined a short-term mission trip to Grace City Church in Tokyo, following similar trips there in 2010 and 2014. GCC is a relatively young church which has already been actively involved in planting other churches and also hosts the 'Samurai' training scheme (see next page). Ian shares his experience of his latest trip to Japan...

Q: What made you decide to apply to join the short term mission trip to Japan in April 2017?

A: Between 2004 and 2014 I worked in a Japanese bank. At that time I learned how few Japanese people are Christian and how little is known about the gospel, the saving news of Jesus Christ, by the 130 million Japanese people both in Japan and in the expatriate community. The Lord has laid it on my heart to seek to share the good news of Jesus with Japanese people. The short term mission trip to Tokyo in April 2017 was one of many practical ways I have been led to do this.

Q: What were the highlights of the trip?

A: There were plenty! It was great to see how much Grace City Church has grown in both numbers and in maturity. Compared with the first mission trip I went on in 2010 there were many more church members who are attending lunch time meetings and evening community group Bible studies. It was very encouraging to meet new people who are contending for the gospel in their workplaces and among friends and family.

It was particularly encouraging to see how serious many of the church members are about studying, understanding and being able to teach God's word. A big part of the trip was given over to sharing how to lead good quality Bible studies. It was a privilege to be able to run a workshop with a large group who gave up a big part of their Saturday leisure time to meet and work through some detailed studies of God's word and how to teach it.

Q: What is unusual or interesting about the gospel outreach by members of Grace City Church?

A: I was impressed by the desire on the part of regular church members to work hard at understanding God's word and to use this as the basis for their outreach. While we sometimes hear that ministry of the word in many Japanese churches can be restricted to pastors, this is clearly not the case in Grace City

Church Tokyo. There was a hunger to hear God speak to each one personally through his word, and enthusiasm to learn how to share it effectively with others. Pastor Fukuda, Thierry Richards (a JCL Mission Partner based at GCC) and all study leaders are actively encouraging all church members to share the gospel with others.

Q: What has been the impact of this to date?

A: Church members are being encouraged to meet with others either one-to-one, at lunch time gatherings or evening Bible studies. It was great to hear about members beginning to exercise their own ministries among friends, family and colleagues. Of course there is a long way to go, but the signs are very positive.

Fairly recently the leaders of evening Bible study groups decided to begin studying the passages which they are teaching themselves so that they can prepare their own questions, rather than being given questions to read out by Pastor Fukuda. This underlines their commitment to running high quality studies.

Q: Can you share a few points for praise and prayer in connection with Grace City Church?

- Praise God for the desire among church members to become workmen who do not need to be ashamed and who correctly handle the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15).
- Praise God for growth in maturity and in numbers at Grace City Church.
- Please pray that the Lord will send out more workers into his harvest field in Tokyo and more widely throughout Japan.
- Please pray for the Grace Church Planting Network, which aims to promote the planting of many Bible teaching, gospel centred churches. Pray for a spirit of unity to prevail within the network.
- Pray that God will provide the funding which is necessary to achieve this vision.

▼ *Evening Bible study meeting in Marunouchi*



The Lord Disciplines Those He Loves

GCC's 'Samurai Project' prepares young Japanese for lifelong gospel ministry, whether in so-called full-time ministry or in the context of normal life/the workplace. Takashi Kurachi was one of its students, led to enrol after he started to appreciate God's heart for Tokyo. Before calling Takashi in this way, God showed him how he uses our trials to discipline us, teaching us to rely on him in all walks of life, including in the workplace . . .

I wonder whether you find it difficult sometimes to find a balance between work and your faith. Many Japanese Christians find it difficult to maintain their faith while working, due to long hours and relationships within the workplace.

When I read Tim Keller's *The Prodigal God*, it mentioned how 'His (God's) love is like honey, or like wine.' I am very fond of wine. But as Christians, we have something that is sweeter than any wine: God's love. We are able to experience this love in the workplace as well. In the past, I didn't allow that love into my workplace, and so I missed out on its greatness.

Before I became a Christian five years ago, one friend told me that once I become a Christian, I would experience more trials than before. But I couldn't believe that such a thing would happen to me. I had heard that God only gives us trials that we can overcome (1 Cor.12:13), and since I was a weak person, I didn't think that God would give me difficult ones.

However, soon after becoming a Christian, I experienced the biggest trial of my life. A friend and I were running an online shop called 'Present Net', where we sold gifts such as flowers, knick-knacks, and pieces of art. The business was going relatively well, but after some time, the sales started dropping. We took every measure we could think of to get the sales back on track, but with no success. In the end, I was unable to pay the rent for my apartment and eventually had to move out.

I found it difficult to tell my Christian friends that I was struggling because I thought that failing in business made me a failure. But my pastor and friends figured out that something wasn't right, and tenaciously asked me what was going on. I opened up and told them the situation. After that, I felt relieved. Friends gave me advice, and some even helped me with my business. Because of my friends, I was able to stay rooted in the words of the Bible and face my problems.

Just as Abraham had offered Isaac to God in Genesis 22, I



felt that I was being told to put my job into God's hands. My success in work was like an idol that I could not let go of. Even after realizing that I had to let go and offer my job to God, I still made every effort to get the sales back on track with my own strength. However, I eventually reached my limits. Realising it was time to find another job in order to make a living, I decided to move on, and prayed: 'God, I have finally made the decision to quit my job. I put my future fully into your hands. I will do anything you tell me to. So now, please provide me a job that is of your will.'

The following day, the sales doubled! In the past, there had been other times when sales would go up every now and then, so I prayed to God once again. 'God, if it is your will that I work in this job could you show me by increasing the sales even more. If it is not your will, I am ready to find another job.' A few days later, the sales tripled from what they were at their lowest! At that time, I was convinced that this was the job that God wanted me to do after all.

Hebrews 12:6 tells us that 'The Lord disciplines the one he loves.' A year after this experience, God told me to leave this job. I realized that God wants to bless Tokyo through church planting, so I decided to pursue a vocation through which he could use me to this end. I found a place in Grace City Church's SALT (Samurai) Project in Tokyo. As a result of this project, and in order to prepare me for church planting,

I decided to enroll in Bible College in April this year along with one other Samurai. I am really enjoying my time in college, but we are in need of financial support and would really value your prayers.

Through prayer, many others have also felt the desire to start church planting here in Tokyo. As you may already know, there are very few Christians in Tokyo, and many people are living in turmoil. But at the present time, God is still blessing Tokyo. Please pray that a spiritual transformation will take place in this non-Christian city.

At the present time,
God is still blessing Tokyo

As Christians, we have
something that is
sweeter than any wine:
God's love

A Conference with a Difference

Have you ever wondered what happens at one of our Japan Weekend Conferences? Might the next one be for you or for a friend?

“I myself am convinced, my brothers and sisters, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with knowledge and competent to instruct one another.” (Romans 15:14)

This passage encouraged us when we learned that the anticipated main speaker for our Japan weekend gathering last July could not be with us. Pastor Akira Sato from



Attentive attendees captivated by Hiroko's testimony

Fukushima First Baptist Church had sadly fallen and sustained a very complex fracture that led to his hospitalisation for much of June to September. As time was short, and emboldened by the above scripture, we decided against seeking an alternative main speaker in favour of inviting greater participation from among conference participants. The Lord answered prayer and blessed our time together, resulting in lots of positive feedback even from those who confessed to being apprehensive at not having a main speaker, as would be our usual practice at these events. Indeed we are open to considering a similar format periodically in the future.

Another difference this year was that we hosted around 15 children, thanks to the willing and sacrificial help of Keiko Honda and two late-teens, Rina and Timmy. One young boy's mother said he'd had a great time even without the company of his mobile phone – and for today's youth, that's really something! Apparently, Timmy's parting comment was 'Why is this so short?'. As the Lord blesses us with sufficient, kind volunteers in the future, this is a tradition we would love to maintain.

If you have not been to one of these Japan weekends before, you may be wondering who comes, what our



Dinnertime discussions proved key for building networks

purpose is, and what they are like. As for who comes, about a quarter of this year's participants were Japanese, and about half spoke Japanese. Much of the singing and most of the main sessions were bilingual but there were some English only and Japanese only workshops from which to choose. Around a third of the participants were engaged in some kind of ministry or mission among Japanese, whether 'full time' or alongside other work. Some were there to learn more about things Japanese or how best they may be able to introduce Japanese friends to the Lord Jesus. Some were attending for the first time.

Our purposes behind organising these Japan weekends are several. We want to create an open and warm setting in which those interested in Japan or mission among the Japanese can meet, encourage and learn from one another. We also want to provide information and prayer fuel for those who want to pray for and support work among Japanese people. And then, of course, we want to encourage and support Japanese people themselves. This would importantly include helping prepare and connect new believers who will be returning to Japan with good Christian contacts and fellowship back home. Some Japanese who are investigating the Christian faith may also find these gatherings helpful both through having the opportunity to meet other Japanese who are Christians and through hearing about Jesus in their own language.



Friendly faces including a mix of regulars and first-timers!

As for what these gatherings are like, what better than to allow some of this year's participants to answer that question:

- *“It was so encouraging to meet with other Japanese Christians. I'm so glad that I made friends with them.”*
Naoko Hibino
- *“It's been wonderful to hear various testimonies and to learn of the many ways God is working. Having prayer as a major focus has been great.”*
Lynn Wood
- *“It was great to hear stories from many people! Informative and encouraging.”*
Dave Skipper

If this article has made you keen to participate in our next conference in 2018, please find more details opposite!

What's New?

Save the Date - 2018 Japan Weekend Conference

Our next conference is set for 20th-22nd July 2018, once again at the beautiful setting of All Nations Christian College, just north of London. Our planned visiting speaker is Makoto Fukuda, pastor of Tokyo Grace City Church (see centre-page spread). Please contact us if you would like full details of the Japan Weekend when they are available.

NEW JCL PARTNERS

Katsutoshi and Yukiko Shimizu - We are very pleased to say that both Katsutoshi and Yukiko, previously JCL Network Partners, have now been confirmed as JCL Mission Partners with a view to devoting their main efforts to mission among Japanese in the UK and perhaps beyond after



Easter 2018, once Katsutoshi has completed his present course of Bible training.

Lisa-Rose Moller - Lisa-Rose has had two spells of living in Japan as an English teacher in the past and has been associated with us for many years, so we are now delighted to welcome her as a JCL Network Partner.

Originally from Scotland, she has now lived in Norwich for several years where she has been getting to know many Japanese students and looking into the Bible with them. Please ask the Lord to continue using Lisa-Rose and others in Norwich to bring the good news of the Lord Jesus to many more Japanese.



OTHER JCL PARTNERS' MOVEMENTS

Richard & Yuko Brash are JCL Mission Partners, and moved to Edinburgh with their two young children Kazuma and Isla over the summer after four years in Oxford working with St Ebbe's Church among Japanese and other internationals. Richard has begun studying for a PhD which will enable Richard to serve as a teacher of

pastors and evangelists in Japan. Pray that the family will settle quickly and also be able to continue some ministry among Japanese and other internationals in and around Edinburgh.

Tim & Ai Williams - Tim is also a Mission Partner, and he and his family have also moved but only within the London area. After two years of Tim participating in the Associate Training Scheme at St Helen's Bishopsgate, in central London, he has begun studying at Oak Hill Theological College in north London. Ai had already been looking at the Bible with several Japanese and both Tim and Ai will continue to be



involved with St Helen's as their placement church, working with internationals and in particular seeking to bring the good news to Japanese living and working or studying in London.

Emba Allison, who is a JCL Network partner teaching English in Japanese schools, moved from Ibaraki to Saitama earlier in the year. Thank the Lord that after difficult and challenging times in a number of locations and teaching situations in Japan since 2015, he has brought her into a much more settled teaching, living and church fellowship environment. Ask the Lord to make her a blessing to others in each of these environments.



Japan Christian Link UK Office/Bookshop

Japan Christian Link,
PO Box 68,
Sevenoaks, TN13 2ZY
Telephone: 01732 455453
E-mail: info@jclglobal.org
Web: www.jclglobal.org

JCL is also represented in Japan, the USA and Australia

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JCL – Who are we?

Japan remains one of the world's least-reached nations, but we want to help change that. We were founded as the Japan Evangelistic Band (JEB) in 1903. Since then, through God's grace, JEB's work has led to the establishment of over 150 churches and the Kansai Bible College in Japan. In 1999 the mission evolved into its current form, adopting the new name of Japan Christian Link. JEB work in Japan is now directed independently by our Japanese colleagues, supported by JCL missionaries as required, and we have partners elsewhere in Japan too.

JCL equips, mentors and encourages individual Christians in this country and in others to reach

Japanese around them. Our partners and volunteers also share the gospel with Japanese through full-time church work, "tent-making" mission work or informally with friends and colleagues.

We are Interdenominational, with many of the main Christian traditions represented, and we are International, with workers from several different countries. We are also Inclusive, seeking to work with other organisations too. Our aim is to see a significant difference in the progress of the gospel among the Japanese people over the first half of this century. Find out more about JCL from our website at

www.jclglobal.org

Global God, Global Family

Throughout her life, Hiroko Nakashima has frequently had to move to new towns and even new continents, either due to her father's or her husband's work. Initially struggling to understand God's will when she could never settle down, God gradually used these experiences to lead her to him and show her his will . . .

Although I had no Christian background at all, as a teenager I often read books by a Christian author named Ayako Miura, and first learned of the Christian God through her book 'Hyoten' ('Freezing Point'). In one of her books, it said that 'God loves us just as we are'. This astonished me. I had always imagined that God was to be feared. I didn't understand why God would love me just as I am and not because of what I had done. But in Ayako Miura's books, I read of how people's lives had changed by putting their faith in God, and how joyful they were. I desperately wanted to be like them.

I grew more interested in Christianity during time spent in the USA, first when I home-stayed with a Christian family in Oklahoma for a month during my second year of university, and again when I later got married and moved to Lexington, Kentucky for my husband's work. There were around 200 Japanese companies there, so despite being a small city, there were around 3000 Japanese residents. I soon met some Japanese Christians at a gathering for expatriate wives at the local Baptist church. I was invited to a Bible Study where I read the Bible for the first time. I felt happy to be prayed for every week by the pastor and the members. This made me feel joy and peace, and I wondered to myself, 'This must be the peace Ayako Miura was talking about.' Eventually, I started attending Sunday services and started to believe that there was a God.

About seven months later, one pastor shared that he had shoplifted in the past. Upon hearing this, I wanted to confess my own sins. When I was four, I had stolen a colouring pencil from a friend, despite knowing it was wrong. I was scared that someone might find out, so the next day I lied to my friend saying that I had found it outside the window. I still remember to this day how terrified I was. I never thought of disclosing this secret to anyone. But all of a sudden I had this urge to confess my past mistake and shared it to everyone in tears. People



No Matter where I live in this world, God has been very gracious in providing me brothers and sisters who are part of His family

were surprised, but they prayed for me. Having confessed my sins, I felt incredibly refreshed, as if I had been released from my past guilt. That night I had this intense feeling of wanting to get baptized, so the following morning I called the pastor.

I lived in Kentucky for six years, but we later returned to Japan and eventually started attending a church there. But just as I was getting to know the ladies there very well, my husband got a job transfer to England. I was upset that

once again I had to say goodbye to new friends. I couldn't understand God's will. But then during one Sunday sermon, I felt God had given me an answer through the following words from Hebrews 12:6 '*... because the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son*'. and Hebrews 12:11 '*No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.*'

In 2013 we moved to Nottingham and joined a Japanese group called 'Hitomi-Kai'.

As it happens, another member of the group, 'Libai Lin', was one of the exchange students I knew from the Japanese church in Kentucky! When a Japanese Bible Study group (JBS) was set up with the support of Trent Vineyard Church, God answered my prayers by sending many Japanese Christians, who became my family in Christ in Nottingham.

In February this year, we were transferred yet again, this time to Budapest, Hungary. Although there is no Japanese church, I did find an international one. As I was filling in the welcome card on our first visit, a lady suddenly asked me in fluent Japanese 'Are you Japanese?'. She had lived in Japan twice for a total of six years because of her husband's work. I now go to that church every week. It is difficult to follow the sermons in English, but I plan to attend the English

Bible studies and enjoy fellowship whilst improving my English. My prayer is that we can start a Japanese Bible study group here in Budapest! Please pray that we will be provided with helpers for this.

My greatest joy in being a Christian is that no matter where I live in this world, God has been very gracious in providing me brothers and sisters who are part of his family. One of my British sisters said 'You are Jesus' special ambassador in Budapest now.' I am only a small vessel, but may God use me abundantly.

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