

UPDATE - NEW MISSIONARY TEACHERS

Three new English teachers have joined the English Evangelism Program in the past year. **Pray** that the Lord would help them to be effective in reaching out, as they travel to various churches to share Christ and build friendships with many non-Christians in the local communities.



Meljun Picardal



Samantha Shoner



Kim Ayars

There is an increased interest in Japan to learn conversational English as the 2019 World Cup Rugby and the 2020 Tokyo Olympics approach and the number of tourists increase. Most Japanese learn English for 6 years before graduating from High School, which helps to give them a good grasp of English grammar. The average High School graduate has a vocabulary of up to 2,000 English words. Give them a vocabulary test and many would pass it. They can write English, but struggle to speak it.

The problem seems to lie in the way English is being taught. There is very little opportunity for people to practice conversational English. Students are often embarrassed to speak for fear of making mistakes.

Many also feel that English is optional and not essential because their society is so homogeneous. This perception is gradually changing as multinational companies are starting to require some of their business meetings to be conducted in English and also paying higher wages to workers who can speak English.

This presents Japan Mission with a unique opportunity to meet the needs of those who desire to improve their English. **Pray** that the Lord would give those involved in this program wisdom and discernment, as we make use of this opportunity to share the Gospel with many -- from age 3 to 83.



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LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL - Part II

As Keiko continued to attend English classes and ladies meetings at her neighborhood church, she was eventually faced with the reality that she was a sinner. "I was deeply convicted and asked for forgiveness and accepted Jesus as my personal Savior."

Shortly after, her faith was severely tested when she became aware of an enormous debt that their family was burdened with. Her husband Hajime had agreed to be a guarantor for a loan for one of his former students. This student eventually went missing and Hajime was forced to borrow money from a loan shark in order to assume this responsibility. The first time Keiko heard of this was when the creditors were on their doorstep!

Keiko shared of how the Lord did many miracles and revealed Himself to them in precious ways as He delivered them from their troubles over a number of years. "My husband had to stop work and was hospitalized because he became neurotic, due to mental and physical exhaustion. When we got to the hospital, to our surprise the receptionist was one of my husband's former students. She guided us to a consulting room. Again we were amazed to learn that the doctor was the father of one of my husband's students. Upon hearing of our predicament, he kindly arranged for a private room for my husband and refused visitors in order to protect him from the loan sharks."



Keiko Hirabayashi

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It was during this time, with Keiko's encouragement, that Hajime picked up the Bible and started to read it. Although he had made a decision to follow Jesus as a university student, he knew that he had lost his way. He read the Bible for the first time with a heart that was truly broken and full of need.

"I sank into the depths of worry during this dreadful time," confessed Keiko. "I often wished that tomorrow would not come. My husband had no income. I was teaching English to children in the neighborhood to bring in some money, but with three small children, it was all I could do to support my family without the heavy burden of this debt. I knew God's promises, but my heart was overwhelmed with fear for the future. I desperately wished to be free from worry!

"I then read a book about how to overcome worry. I started to recite Phil. 4:4-7 out loud, but at the same time I murmured to God, 'Why would you tell me to rejoice at such a terrible time? How can I find joy under these circumstances?' However, when I reread these verses, my eyes were drawn to one verse. **Rejoice in the Lord always.** I meditated on this verse and after some time I finally found that I could rejoice because the Lord is my Father and Creator.

"I realized that it was impossible for me to rejoice on my own, but I could rejoice because my fate was in God's hands and I was His child. **Nothing was impossible with Him** (Luke 18:27). He gave me the assurance

that His protection and guidance in my life would never cease -- not even for one moment!

"When I thought about my future, it looked very dark and I felt as if I had fallen into a deep swamp. I desired to die in my adversity, but the following verses gave me hope and helped me to get up again:

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed in us (Romans 8:18).

"I recited these words again and again. In time I came to realize that my trial was the tiniest speck of dust compared with the glory prepared for me. My heavy burden became much lighter and my anguish turned to joy. I could see the light at the end of the tunnel.

"My children stayed with a number of Christian families when my husband was hospitalized. It was there that they learned how families prayed and read the Bible together during their family devotions. When they returned home, they taught me how to have family devotions. Special times of fellowship and watching the Lord answer prayer in the lives of my children was a great encouragement to me.

"The Lord led us to a person who worked at a civic advice center. We were very thankful because he gave us good legal advice and helped us solve many of our financial problems. I was amazed to find out that he was a Christian. He knew nothing about us, so of course he didn't know that we were Christians. It was the Holy Spirit that led us to this special person!

"After my husband came home from the hospital, he started to participate in our family devotions and attend church with us. He was moved to see how supportive the Church and Christians were and how the Lord had brought us so faithfully through this very difficult time. Our children often encouraged us to pray together with them about our problems. Hajime soon rededicated his heart to the Lord.

"Before long, we were able to cut our connection with the loan sharks by paying them off with the retirement money that my husband received when he retired. Even after that, we still had loans from friends and acquaintances and it took ten years for us to repay them fully.

"My husband was asked to teach again at various colleges and preparatory schools. He was later asked to be a professor at a college in Nagoya and worked there until he was 75."

Keiko, now 81, lives happily with Hajime, who turns 90 this year. "I have experienced severe trials in my life," shared Keiko, "but if I hadn't

experienced such hardship, I would not have known Jesus Christ so deeply."

"God gave me a new purpose in life: **Go home to your friends, and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and what mercy He has shown you** (Mark 5:19).

Keiko continues to attend the same church where she found Jesus and now plays a vital role in Japan Mission's English Evangelism Program, which is being held in her church. **Pray** for her as she shares her faith with the English students.

"I now have the opportunity to share the Gospel with the English students who come to our church. I want to make friends with them and share my testimony. Every time I leave home for class, I cry out for God's guidance and help. I pray, 'Oh Lord, please give overflowing grace to this empty vessel so that I can spread the sweet aroma of Jesus.'

"The Lord is faithful. He never fails to respond to my prayer. I always come home with a heart full of gratitude for God's blessings." □

UPDATE - ENGLISH EVANGELISM

Workers of Japan Mission teach English in 20 different churches to about 300 students weekly. Many in the local community, who would not come to church to attend a meeting, come to learn English and make friends with a foreigner. Each class ends with a short Bible Time, which is presented by the minister or a Japanese coworker. The Lord has provided us with some very dedicated coworkers who love the Lord, such as Keiko Hirabayashi, who partner with us to witness and reach the unsaved for Christ.

Pray that the Lord would grant wisdom and make those involved in this ministry a blessing to the students they come in contact with.