

JAPAN MISSION

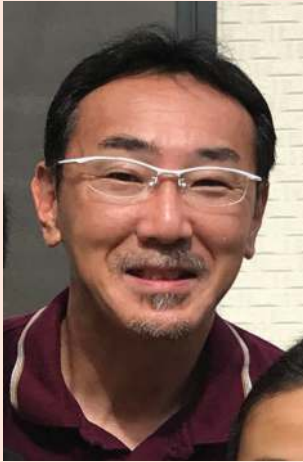
Called to Serve

RUNNING FROM GOD'S PLAN

Shinichi Goto was born in April 1968 and raised in Kyoto. His family had a Buddhist altar to honour the ancestors and a Shinto god shelf, but they were not particularly dedicated to their beliefs.

"My first contact with Christianity was when I was in elementary school and a friend invited me to Sunday School," Shinichi shared. "I enjoyed the fun and friendships, but was not really interested in Christianity. After a while, I became quite busy playing sports so I stopped attending Sunday School.

Much of my childhood was quite normal, but some things were not so. As far back as I can recall, I remember my parents fighting. I often saw my father hit my mother and he would sometimes hit me. I remember hearing my father boast of his relationship with another woman and threaten to leave our family. I knew that these things were not normal.



Shinichi Goto

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As I was growing up, I was regularly compared to other Japanese children. My family had lived in Japan for many generations, but we were actually of Korean descent. I was frequently reminded that **we Koreans had to make three times the effort to succeed in Japanese society.** I was often teased and experienced discrimination because of my Korean heritage. These things caused me to draw the conclusion that my worth was only one-third that of a normal Japanese person. When I reflected on who I was, I could not help but feel inferior.

When I was 16 years old, I was handed a leaflet at the entrance of my High School. It was an advertisement for English Classes that were being held at a nearby church. I was drawn to this advertisement as I recalled how the church had welcomed me when I had attended Sunday School so many years ago. I was also experiencing all kinds of conflict at home and was looking for a place of escape, so I decided to go with a friend to learn English.

The English class took place just before the Sunday worship service, which I was required to attend in order to participate in the English class. I started to make friends with many people who were kind and accepted me for who I was. After a short while, I found myself wishing that this church was my home and that the youth pastor was my father. I heard many messages and started to read the Bible.

I was struck by the story of the blind man in Luke: **Then it happened, as He was coming near Jericho, that a certain blind man sat by the road begging. And hearing a multitude passing by, he asked what it meant. So they told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. And he cried out, saying, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"** (Luke 18:35-38)

I started to realize that I was like this blind man – that my eyes were blinded to the Truth and the extent of my sin. I then asked Jesus to have mercy on me. I came to believe in the existence of God, that Jesus was the Son of God, the cross and the resurrection. That is how I came to start my new life as a Christian – six months after I first started to attend church. I was so happy to be God's child and be a part of the family of God. I felt a joy and peace that I had never experienced before. All things had become new!

When I entered university, all my time was taken up with activities at the university. The friends I made were full of ideas of how to succeed and they greatly influenced me. I found myself focusing on doing things

that would ensure my success in life. I stopped going to church and reading my Bible. I still believed in God, but the problem was that I did not truly believe that God's plan for my life was the best. I felt that I could devise a better plan and succeed on my own.

For two years I kept busy studying at university and felt confident that I was on the road to success. I then realized that this was not what I wanted for the rest of my life. I felt empty, unfulfilled and knew that I was missing something very important. That is when I dug my Bible out of a cardboard box in the closet and started to read Psalm 139. The following words became my prayer: **Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties; And see if there is any wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting** (Psalm 139:23-24).

I realized that my lack of faith in God's perfect plan for my life and the selfish way in which I was pursuing my own plans to succeed was wrong.

In my third year of university, I confessed my sin and surrendered my plans for success to the Lord and asked Him to guide me each step of the way – trusting that His plan would be the best for my life. This was the first time I made the decision to obey Jesus and accept Him as Lord of my life.

The Lord helped me to graduate with a Master's Degree in Education and I started to teach at a Christian school called **Kyoto International University Academy.** I have now been teaching at this school for the past 20 years and have had wonderful opportunities to teach and share the Word of God with the students. It has been thrilling to see how God continues to use the seeds that have been sown in the hearts of the students to cause them to grow and mature in their knowledge of our Lord Jesus.

God also led me to marry a wonderful Christian girl and He gave us two boys. God truly had a perfect plan for my life!

I now understand the value of following God's perfect plan, even though it may not always seem to make sense at the time. God has taught me that His plan may not always be the easiest, but in the end, it is the most fulfilling path to follow.

I praise God for the assurance He continues to give me that He will lead me according to His perfect way!"

Pray for this father of two, who has the opportunity to influence so many for Christ.

THE MISSION'S OUTREACH - "PRAY FOR US"

- Bibles and Literature
- Audio-Visual Outreach
- Student Outreach
- Hospital Evangelism
- English Evangelism
- Outreach to the Elderly
- Evangelistic Meetings & Counseling

OUR SINCERE APPRECIATION to friends who have made bank deposits and notified us, and especially also to those friends whose donations we were unable to acknowledge. We endeavour to acknowledge all donations where possible, but often the information on the bank statements is insufficient.

■ Please notify us if you did not receive an acknowledgement and also if your address has changed.

It will be a great help if the NAME as well as the TELEPHONE NUMBER is clearly written on the Bank Deposit slip or Debit order or Internet Transfer.

■ We gratefully acknowledge the following deposits and transfers for which unfortunately insufficient information appears on our bank statements:

STANDARD BANK:- 20/6/2018, 21/6, 30/6, 2/7, 3/7, 16/7, 20/7, 21/7, 31/7, 3/8, 6/8, 15/8, 16/8, 20/8, 21/8.

ABSA BANK:- 26/6, 28/6 Bibles, 1/7, 1/7 NLM, 2/7, 3/7 Willow Bridge, 11/7, 13/7, 16/7, 18/7, 23/7, 24/7 Heerengracht, 26/7, 27/7, 28/7 Bibles, 31/7 Citrusdal, 1/8, 2/8 NLM, 6/8 Cresta, 14/8, 15/8, 16/8, 18/8/2018.

■ Cheques can be made payable to JAPAN MISSION and crossed. It is however not safe to send cash by post. A deposit can be made directly into the Mission's banking account at any branch of the STANDARD BANK or ABSA BANK, or a debit order may be used.

MANY THANKS once again dear friends. May God bless you.

Name of account: JAPAN MISSION

STANDARD BANK, Acc No 010 333 126, Branch No 014-845

ABSA BANK, Acc No 090 161 334, Branch No 334-645

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(Art 21) Reg No 2006 /019264 /08

MINISTRY UPDATE - INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Japan Mission (JM) is involved in the ministry of two Christian International Schools. These schools are a tremendous way to influence many for Christ. **David Verwey** serves as Board Member of **Kyoto International University Academy** (about 300 students). **Renata Rossouw** serves as Board Member at **Kansai Christian School** (KCS, about 50 students).

Laura Swallow is a full-time teacher at KCS and is sponsored by Japan Mission. "God has continued to do great things through the ministry of KCS," Laura recently shared. "This year, many new Japanese families joined the school and we continue to have opportunities to share the love of God with them. I am teaching grades 5 to 10, with a focus on Bible in High School. I also help to lead a **High School girl's Bible Study** where we eat together, share a devotional and pray for each other. It has been a blessing to disciple these girls, digging deeper in the Scripture and teaching them how to have a closer walk with the Lord."

Pray for wisdom and discernment for Laura as she has many opportunities to influence the student and parent community for Christ.



Laura Swallow

MINISTRY UPDATE - ENGLISH EVANGELISM

Daniel Cho joined JM from California as an English Evangelism Teacher during May 2017. He now travels to many churches to serve as an English Teacher and help them reach their communities for Christ. Many who would not normally attend church, come to learn English and make friends with a foreigner. Each class ends with a Bible time and a time of fellowship over a cup of green tea.

Daniel is uniquely gifted and also leads the team at Kids Club, which is an outreach to a group of children

and parents - most of whom have never attended church.

"When I reflect on my past, I am blind-sided by how perfectly God prepared me for this task," Daniel recently shared. "It is a great joy to play a role in introducing many to the Gospel."

Pray for creativity and discernment as Daniel leads the team at Kids Club and has numerous opportunities to reach students for Christ.



Daniel Cho

MINISTRY UPDATE - MEDICAL ENGLISH

Mark Bercero joined JM from the Philippines in February 2018. He now travels to a number of churches to serve as an English Evangelism Teacher.

The Lord is also using Mark in other wonderful ways. Mark is a trained medical nurse and was able to teach Medical English to doctors in our area via the Internet, while he was still living in the Philippines.

Now that Mark is located in Japan, the same doctors want to again learn Medical English from him. We are now making arrangements to work in partnership with a local church in that area so that these doctors can frequent the church to learn Medical English and learn about the Bible.

A number of these doctors are brushing up on their English so that they can support the foreign athletes during the 2020 Olympics. Mark has been invited to join this team! **Pray** for Mark as he is uniquely gifted to befriend these doctors and share Christ with them.



Mark Bercero