

ESAKIS IN OSAKA

SUMMER 2016,



From the moment of my birth, I lived with pain at the center of my life. My only purpose in life was to find a way to coexist with intense pain.

Haruki Murakami, *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*

...It's what God had in mind all along, to crush Him with pain...so that he'd see life come from it. Isaiah 53:10

OSAKA AFTER ONE YEAR

In the above quote contemporary author, Murakami, voices what many Japanese feel.

At its worst, this pain manifests itself in suicide. Suicides, by jumping in front of subway trains, have become so prevalent and so disruptive in Japan that there are signs posted in the stations to inform people that they will be fined, along with their families, if they attempt such a thing.

Leading up to this feeling of despair can be: a spouses' death, chronic pain,

postpartum depression, sexual abuse, failed marriages, mental illness, drug addiction, and unwanted pregnancy.

Since we arrived in Osaka, we have met people who were touched by these. It gave us a chance to listen, and share how God inflicted intense pain on himself in order to win us back.

For us, who have worked in Japan for over 20 years, we find people more receptive than we ever thought. We don't know if it is Osaka, which is a different culture than Nagoya, or the

downtown crossroads where we live that makes the difference. Maybe it is that we have better tools from CityToCity church planting. Maybe it is our age; or that we are more prayerful; or just God's timing. Whatever the reason, we sense that the next decade in Japan will be very exciting.

...to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord be glory, majesty, power, and authority before all time now and forever.

Amen. Jude 25

LIFE IS A TAPESTRY—

I started weaving this year. My teacher told me to insert big slubs of wool and random strings along with the cross-wise yarn (woof) to make it interesting. I resisted at first, but then I found she was right. Without those lumps and bumps the weaving was smooth, perfect, and boring. In life's tapestry the slubs are the rocky relationships, perceived failures, and deep disappointments. It is the warp—lengthwise yarns—that keeps the weaving in place. In life the warp includes the answers to the big questions: What are we here for? Where do we come from and where are we going? What are humans meant to do? Where does our peace come from? To ponder these gives us equilibrium and it all holds.

In the last year, our college president resigned, and our church planter left our team to go to Kobe. We will come to see that God is making a beautiful tapestry out of it all.



Students and Genesis



Genesis Café continues with about 20 people each month, and two additional small groups. We are offering English conversation and friendship with

volunteers from churches in Osaka.

17 and pregnant

Life Hope Network, Nagoya, asked us to take in M-san, an Osakan woman, who wanted to keep her baby against her mother's wishes for abortion. One family took her for two weeks and she was to come with us for one month. We took her to Mustard Seed Church, a congregation of 100 mostly young people. M-san came to stay with us but eventually she and her mother had issues to solve and she left.



Pre-marital Coaching:

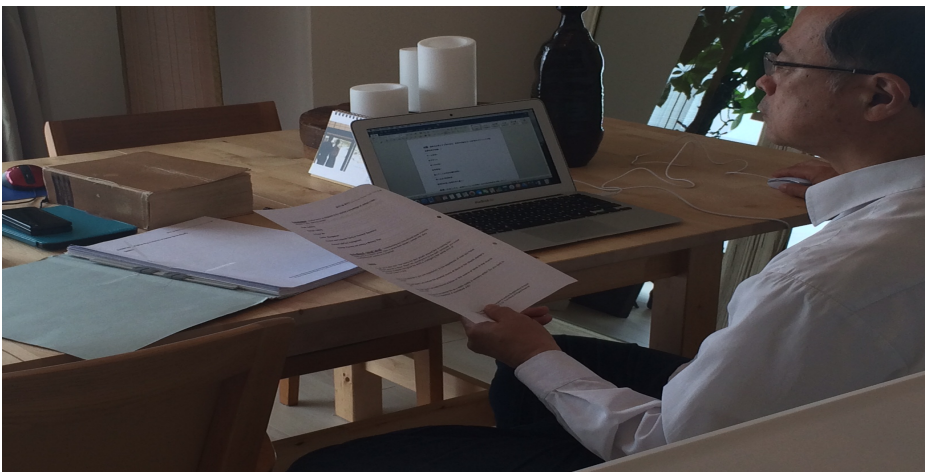
We were pleased to prepare this young couple for marriage with pre-marital coaching. Yuma is an employee at Genesis International College, and he studies theology with Koji every week. Sally helps us with Genesis Café. We called it pre-marital coaching because counseling has a negative connotation in Japan.

Another couple, Hasegawa-san and Iwata-san, our 5th floor neighbors, heard that we did pre-marriage coaching and asked if we would do it for them. **Please pray as we talk about marriage and faith.**



Our daughters came to visit and we had a wonderful time with them and with Asako, who lives in Gifu City by herself.

Please pray that we could find a renter for Asako's coffee shop (seen on the left). We praise God that she has a daily helper. A recent fall, with minor bruises, earned her this daily service from Gifu City. Praise God that she remains in good spirits.



Tools of the Translator

Thanks to your generous gifts, Koji just purchased a computer to continue his translation work for CitytoCity church planting materials. His first project is Coaching for Pastors and Church Leaders. These materials will be used to promote mentorship and taught through classes at Christ Bible Institute, the seminary in Nagoya. Koji will be a translator for the American trainer this fall.

The next chunk of the materials from CitytoCity for translation is much bigger, and requires coordination by many people in Tokyo, Nagoya and Osaka. It is this material that we wish we had 20 years ago. **Please pray that this work will be started this summer, to meet the needs of future generations in Japan.**