



A Publication of the San Lorenzo Japanese Christian Church
"Growing together and reaching out in the love of Christ"

Firmly Rooted

"Just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in Him, rooted and built up in Him." Col. 2:6a

Vol. 22, no. 2

February 2012

Live Life ... Love

A December, 2011, article in USA Today analyzed a surge in a class of Americans called the "spiritually apathetic." They aren't atheists. Instead, according to the article, "They simply shrug off God, religion, heaven, or the ever-trendy search-for-meaning and/or purpose. Their attitude could be summed up as,

"So what?"

Previously in the week I had read another article which stated,

"People are happiest when they feel embedded in something larger than themselves."

One group did not care about meaning in life and the other searched for it. How did these two groups come to such contrasting views of life? I think age was a major factor. The "So what?" attitude were college students from Baylor University and the second was of the 50+ age group.

A primary concern for a majority of young adults is, what am I going to do with my life? As one grows older, time and relationships are more valued than what is accomplished.

In the end, isn't life about love? What does it matter if you have all the riches in the world if you have no one to share it with? This is what the richest man in the world once said,

"I have seen all the works which have been done under the sun, and behold, all is vanity and striving after wind."

These are the words of King Solomon the wealthiest and wisest man of his time. He understood life is vain, empty, if it is just about

acquiring wealth. Solomon recognized living was about love -- not just any love but God's love, for God is love.

This year 2012 will be a monumental year for my wife and me. We have two daughters, both are engaged to be married. They are in love with and marrying two outstanding young men who love the Lord.

Those of you who are my age and older understand how quickly time seems to have passed. When I think about our girls, I recall the days of diaper changing, first steps, walks to school, learning to ride a bike and drive a car, discussing boys, moving away for college, traveling overseas for missionary work, and returning home.

Now, this year, both of them will leave home to establish their own families. I love my daughters. I wish I could hold on to them forever. It is difficult letting them go because I love them so much. It wouldn't be sad if there was no love. But God has shown me that true love sometimes means letting go.

As tough as it is to let my girls go, I cannot imagine God's heartache as He let go of His Son Jesus. God not only released Jesus from His heavenly home, He allowed Jesus to die a cruel and painful death, to give us the gift of eternal life with Him.

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life." John 3:16

Life happens when we hold on to God and let go of the world.

Live life... love.

-- Pastor Brian

A Life Changed

By: Glen Toji

"The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it." Psalm 24:1

Everything belongs to God according to this passage in Psalms and that includes me. I realized it's time that I admit this undeniable truth. I belong to God and He is in control of everything.

I grew up in San Leandro and actually came to San Lorenzo Japanese Christian Church (back then it was called San Lorenzo Holiness) when I was about 12 or 13 years old. My parents were Buddhist, but somehow my grandfather converted to Christianity late in his life and wanted to bring me to a Christian church. My father didn't want to go along with it, but because my grandfather was the patriarch in our family, he allowed me to go to a Christian church.

My grandfather lived down south, so my church attendance wasn't consistent. It was easy to drift away. I remember that Lester and Yumi Fujii used to bring my youngest sister to church when she was about seven years old -- this was while I was in the military.

I went to the military service in 1962 and was away from this area for about three years. Through those military years, there were religious services but we were not required to attend. I knew some Christian chaplains, but I don't recall ever hearing about the gospel. I didn't give Christ and what He had done for me much thought.

When I look back now, I can see that God's hand was always upon me. There were many times when I should have been injured or killed, but something happened and I always came out okay. People say I was lucky, but I know it wasn't luck. It was God who protected me.

He helped me when I came back from the military too. I wasn't sure what I should do, but He led me to a job, working for the City of Oakland. I was a gardner for the City for 38 years. I received many life lessons and learned about different people throughout those years.

My father passed away about 19 years ago. My mother passed away about five years after I retired. I ran into a situation and feelings that I had never felt before. I had grieved when my father died, but



Glen was baptized by Pastor Rod on Nov. 13, 2011 and became a member of SLzJCC.

I was working and busy. It was easy to get back into the daily grind of work and not think about things.

When my mother passed away, since I was retired, there was no work to keep me busy. I felt lost and I was left to deal with my grief on my own. Everything I had before -- my job, most of my friends and acquaintances were gone. I had very little support.

I came to San Lorenzo Japanese Christian Church seeking help for the grief I was feeling. That was my purpose in dropping in at the church. I came to receive Christ as my Lord and Savior, with the help of people at the church. On Nov. 13, 2011, I was baptized and became a member of SLzJCC. I wanted to seek God more and to acknowledge Him as my Lord and Savior.

Even though I've gone my own ways many times, I know God has never left me. I know God has been protecting and helping me all along. Before coming to church, I never volunteered to do anything. I always would think, "What was in it for me?" I wouldn't do anything unless I was compensated for it. Things are completely different now.

Now I want to give of my time in any way I am able to, all because I know God has helped me in so many ways. I want to do more for others now than for myself. I am also more at peace with myself. I seldom lose my temper or become impatient with people like I used to. I relate to people much better. God has also helped me in my relationships with my family. I am thankful to become a part of our church and part of the family of Christ.

Equipper Conference “The Kingdom of God Within Us”

“Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them, “The kingdom of God is not coming in ways that can be observed, nor will they say, ‘Look, here it is!’ or ‘There!’ for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you.”

(Luke 17:20-21 ESV)

–Theme verse of Equipper Conference, 2011

The Equipper Conference is a Japanese speaking Christian conference held in Murietta, CA. The focus is to “equip” (*Ephesians 4:12*) Japanese who met Jesus overseas for their eventual return to Japan as ambassadors of Christ. On December 27th – January 1st, Todd, Jayne, Jeremy, and Ayumi Fong, Saori Fukai, Eiji and Yuya Kono, and Yumi Shimada from SLzJCC, attended the Equipper Conference. Jason Rodriguez and Jordan Torio from Fremont Asian Christian Church also attended.

God gave each of us different reasons to attend the conference. Some people wanted to learn more about Christ and some went to serve. However, God used the conference to encourage and challenge each of us to become Kingdom builders, people who would bring glory to the Lord wherever we are placed.

This year about 300 people attended EC. The Lord provided friends, teaching, fellowship and changed people’s lives. We are grateful that we could attend and were able to be a part of and witness His wonderful work.

Thank you for supporting us with your love and prayers. If you would like to hear more about how God moved at Equipper Conference, please feel free to talk to us. Also, there will be a newsletter soon which will include everyone’s input. God bless!

-- Yumi Shimada



Yumi Shimada (second from the left) was acknowledged with other leaders on-stage. Yumi served as the Director of the Youth Program.

I went to the Equipper Conference thinking, "Wow there are so many Japanese Christians here!" This really surprised me because it's hard to find Japanese Christians, especially my age. It also amazed me how people from Japan, Hawaii, and states even on the east coast, would attend this retreat and we were all brought together for one cause.

I felt moved when the pastor said to be a Christian meant we were to build God’s kingdom, not for a ticket to heaven, but out of love for Him. Most of us set our priority to get to heaven but it's God's plan for us to build His kingdom, the heaven part will follow.

-- Eiji Kono



Eiji (right) prays with one of his small group members

2012 NorCal Missions Conference *Making Missions Personal*

Japanese Christian Church of Walnut Creek, 1955 Geary Rd., Walnut Creek
Saturday, Feb. 11, 2012, 8:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Speakers include: Paul Gizzi, Seahorse Soccer; Erin Kawaye, OMF International;
Naomi Pruitt, OMF International; Richard Nakamura, Send International

Also featuring: Bruce and Val Satow, JEMS Special Camp

Nikole Lim and Annie Yee, Freely in Hope

Refreshments and Lunch are provided

\$10 Registration fee