

A story from Japan: God's leading from High School Teacher to Church Pastor

Kei Kainuma, final year student at Hokkaido Bible Institute, Sapporo, Japan shared his testimony with us at 10:30 on **Global Church Sunday**, 12th July 2026. Just a few days after his return to Japan, he became Dad to a baby boy, Isato, on July 31st.



"Today, I thank the Lord for the privilege of worshipping together with you all. I would like to share my testimony.

I was born in Miyagi Prefecture, Japan, and was raised by Christian parents. My paternal grandfather was a Christian, making me a third-generation Christian. From a young age, attending church felt natural to me; I grew up praying and singing praises together with others, without ever really questioning God's existence.

Then, when I was 14, I was baptized.

However, my faith at that time was less a "faith that responds to God" and more a "faith centered on my own thoughts." Even though I attended church, I felt I had the final say in my own path, and the central thought in my heart was not "living for God," but rather, "how to live my own life."

To someone like me, God revealed the Gospel through His Word. I wasn't saved because I had become a good person; rather, although I had turned my back on God, Jesus Christ bore all my sins on the cross.

Ephesians 2:8 says: *"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith."*

Through this Word, I came to understand that salvation does not come from my own efforts or the strength of my faith, but is solely by God's grace.

I realized that it was God who saved me and that there is absolutely no basis for my salvation within myself. Through experiencing this wonderful grace of God I longed to dedicate myself to God and respond to Him.

"I want to live my life putting God's will first" —that desire was further strengthened during my college years through fellowship with the Lord and His Word, as well as through prayer at church and encounters with many fellow believers and mentors. However, I did not know what form that would take specifically. I could not clearly see whether I would serve



the Lord as a pastor at a church or through my profession. I continued to pray for God to show me the way, but my circumstances did not change immediately.



After graduating from college, I worked as a high school teacher for seven years. In

Japan, Christians are a minority, making up less than 1% of the population. Walking this path as a teacher—while bringing great joy in my interactions with students—was also a daily struggle as I faced the challenges of living as a Christian.

The school where I worked was very busy; in addition to teaching classes and serving as a homeroom teacher, I also had to coach club activities on my days off. Because of this, I sometimes struggled to attend Sunday worship services. Furthermore, my Christian values were often misunderstood at work, so I walked through each day in prayer, wondering how best to express my faith.

Of course, seeing my students work hard and grow brought me great joy and a deep sense of fulfillment. Yet even amidst all that, I felt constantly challenged to ask myself, “What gives me life?” and “What do I value most?”

While evaluating students is part of a teacher’s job, teachers themselves are also subject to evaluation—both by their students and by their colleagues. In such a high-pressure environment, I was constantly plagued by the fear of not being accepted and by the temptation to prove my worth. I was also sometimes troubled with trying to put myself above God.

As I continued in this work, I felt a deep sense of loneliness. I lived far from a church, and there were almost no Christians at my workplace with whom I could share my faith.

In the midst of this, one Sunday when I was completely exhausted, I went to church. As

I prayed in a small, empty room while listening to the sermon, a mysterious peace filled my heart.

To me—who was consumed by the pursuit of results and recognition, and who was trying to prove my own worth—the Word of God spoke: “Stand not on what you have accomplished, but on what Christ accomplished on the cross.” Every time I felt my limitations at work and recognized my own powerlessness, I came back to the grace of Christ. Christ gave His life to save me, even though I had nothing to offer in return.

I still remember hearing the words in a church sermon one day: “We are sent out from the church to our respective places.” I learnt that church is where our souls are nourished, and although there are many difficulties in the workplace, it is the Lord Himself who sends us there daily. I realized that I was not alone—that the Lord was with me—and I was given the strength to walk by trusting in Him.

During my seven years as a teacher, I learnt to recognize my own limitations. But it was also a time when the Gospel spoke into my circumstances most deeply and taught me to walk by trusting in the Lord.

I also learned that there are many churches without pastors—churches that are “pastor-less”—praying for a pastor. Furthermore, there are many people in Japan who do not know the Gospel. Faced with this reality, the words of Scripture, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few,” began to carry ever greater weight for me.

I prayed for workers to be sent, while at the same time continuing to pray about my own response to the Lord. And the Lord gave me courage to walk in obedience to Him.

Until then, I had thought that dedication was a task I had to undertake alone. However, supported by the prayers of many people and inspired by the way Jesus sent out His disciples, I learnt that commitment is both a ministry the church shares together, and a work carried out by the Lord Himself. When I realized this, I entrusted the anxiety and fear I had been holding onto to the Lord, surrendered my life to Him, asking to be used as a vessel that pleases Him.

Two years ago, I resigned from my teaching position and moved to Hokkaido, Japan, where I am currently studying at Hokkaido Bible College.

Even now, I still experience moments of doubt and am faced with questions, but what remains unchanged is the fact that I did not choose God—rather, God chose me and redeemed me through the cross.

There are still many people in Japan who do not know the Gospel. And many churches are in need of workers. I would be grateful if you would pray for the churches in Japan and for the spread of the Gospel. I hope to continue standing firm in the grace of the Gospel, proclaiming the Gospel in Japan, and walking as one who serves the church.