



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
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No Greater Love

When referring to love during the month of February, it is typically associated with couples. Expressions of love for one another come by way of gifts, dinners, or cards. It is a fun time if there is someone to be your Valentine or if you are a Valentine to someone else.

Maybe it is because of recently getting to know the culture of Japan that I have become more aware of how difficult or even painful occasions like Christmas and Valentine's Day can be -- especially for those who are not in a relationship.

A Japanese student even told me he did not like Christmas because it made him feel lonely. It was not until he received Christ Jesus this past year did Christmas have any meaning or there was any reason to celebrate.

In Japan, Christmas is for couples. In America, Valentine's Day is for couples. Both are really a celebration of love.

Jesus said to His disciples, *"This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you."* Christ-followers are instructed to love one another. It is not a choice or an option. It is not dependent upon a month or holiday, or whether you are in a relationship, it is a command.

Jesus continues, *"Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends."* Love requires sacrifice. It is more than a feeling it is active and intentional.

Jesus sacrificed immeasurably for you and me. He emptied Himself of divine privileges, He laid down His life. Jesus is the ultimate expression of love. We celebrated Christmas to recall God's love through the birth of His Son.

It is good to celebrate your relationship this month. Enjoy the special friendship and bond you have, but how about including others?

Remember those who may not be in a relationship, someone who is homebound, those who might be in need, etc. A card, phone call, or e-mail might be just enough to let someone know they are loved and thought of. This may mean sacrificing your time, maybe some finances, or even your own desire to indulge upon yourself. Let Jesus be your example.

February, the month of love, could be your best opportunity to share the greatest love, the unparalleled Valentine the world has ever known, Christ Jesus, your LORD.

-- Pastor Brian

A New Life in Christ

Ryuichi Koyama, a student from Japan, came to the U.S. to attend CSUEB. Little did Ryuichi know that God had a plan to draw him to Himself while he was in the states. He attended the International Student Fellowship events, Bible studies and attended SLZJCC on Sundays. Ryuichi accepted Christ as his Lord and Savior and was baptized on Sat., Dec. 12, at our church. Ryuichi went back to Japan on Jan. 7, beginning a new life with Christ ...

By: Ryuichi Koyama

Until I came to the U.S., I was very unsociable and felt scared to talk with anyone, including my parents. In middle school, I hoped everyone would ignore me so I would not be teased. I pretended to be comfortable being alone, keeping everyone at a distance. In my heart, I felt so lonely and longed for relationships.

When I was in third grade, I was physically weak and chubby so my classmates teased me. They slapped my face every day, stole my shoes, and threw my hat into the dirty river. I kept this from my parents, but my mom found out. When my teacher visited my house to talk about this, I overheard him say to my mom, "The reason why Ryuichi is teased so much is due to his character. If he cannot gain confidence and change his appearance, there is no solution to save him." After that I was trained by my mother to study and take first prize in any subject to gain respect from my peers. Her strategy succeeded. Once I was recognized as a clever student, the teasing stopped. This taught me the wrong lesson; results and performance are the most important reasons to live.

I then entered the best junior and senior high school in my prefecture. Once I belonged to such a school, I felt so disappointed in myself. I could not get any outstanding scores. I felt I didn't deserve to be recognized by my classmates because I did not contribute in any area. I felt uncomfortable every where, at school and at home.

After high school, I got accepted into a middle level university. Although my parents were disappointed at my major and university, I felt relieved. I dreamed about making good friends. But it did not go well.

I tried to hang out with peers and do what they did, such as drinking and staying out late. It was fun, but I still felt lonely and empty. I didn't have friends who even thought about the reason why we live or how we behave. I wished I could find someone to help me understand the purpose of my life.

Finally I decided to come to Hayward and attend CSUEB. I expected a new culture could transform me. Surely, having English skills would make me more confident and sociable, but I felt more horrible than ever. I could not understand a lot of things. Also my poor social skills gave me a lot more pressure.

I didn't want to speak in English or meet new people until my friend, John, invited me to a Yosemite trip, which was an ISF (International Student Fellowship) activity. When I participated on that trip, I received a lot of love.



Even though I could not speak well, they didn't ignore me and showed how they were concerned for me. I was surprised by such kindness. On the last day of this trip I went to church for the first time. I couldn't understand what it was like at all. I just felt everyone coming to church looked so happy and kind. Their songs were so beautiful although I didn't know the meaning.

After this awesome trip, I went to ISF (on Fridays at Neighborhood Church). At first I just liked the kind, safe atmosphere as nobody discriminated against me in terms of my nationality, appearance or character. It also helped me improve my English. But I still wondered about the purpose of life.

In the beginning of summer quarter, God gave me a fateful meeting with Jay, who later became my Bible Study leader, going back to my dorm from ISF. Jay told me how he felt before he became a Christian. He had the same dilemmas I did and he was looking for genuine relationships. His story moved me so much, I wanted to cry. I wanted to know how God saved him.

After I heard that story I met Tien Pham and Jessica Tekawa. They dropped by my room too. Tien also shared his story spontaneously. His story was beyond my anticipation. I could not imagine how he was before he had Christ in his life. All I saw of him now was a totally friendly person and so mature. These two stories encouraged me to join Bible studies. The reason why I joined was because I was interested in their experiences and how they were transformed.

Learning from the Bible, I often would be confused. I came up with a lot of questions and doubts about God. I could not be convinced easily. I was annoyed and struggled continuously about how the Bible relates to my life. I was so relieved to be able to ask questions about things I could not agree with or about how I could have a relationship with Jesus. Jay, Tien and my friend, Ben, never got angry listening to my honest opinions.

In the fall, I started to change. I realized I didn't have to put on a performance and it did not matter what people thought of me. If I felt scared to meet people, I thought about how I felt people's love in the church. I wanted to be like the people I met at church and ISF because they have strength from God. I saw how God was with them and helped them in difficult situations.

If they made a mistake, they have a chance to confess their sin. After I realized this good news, I tried to believe that God was with me. But ironically the more I looked for evidence of God's existence, the more I felt He was far from me. I expected God to come to me, but I didn't feel any change. I was wrong and was making excuses – in fact, He has already come. Every night I prayed for Him to give me courage to trust Him easily. He reminded me how He was so generous to me through ISF and people at church.

I found out He had already forgiven me and that all I had to do was accept Him. I was prepared to make a decision, when I had the opportunity to talk with Pastor Rod and Pastor Brian. They gave me the chance and courage to declare my decision to follow Jesus.

Now that I identify myself as a Christian, I am so excited because I am saved from sin. I don't have to worry about who looks down on me or what I can achieve. Now I have eternal life and only He has the authority to judge me.

In the future I want to be a teacher, but I cannot anticipate what will happen. One thing I am sure is God will lead me in the right direction, and He will use me in any occupation. I want to continue to study the Bible to learn who He is more and more. Japan is a pretty hard environment for Christians to live in. It is not easy to share about our faith. I do want to share about Jesus with my family and friends. Please pray for me that I will have confidence to tell them about Jesus and my new life in Him.

**2010 Holiness NorCal
Missions Conference
WORLD MISSIONS TODAY
Sat., Feb. 20, 9 a.m. – 3 p.m.**

**Santa Clara Valley
Japanese Christian Church
40 Union Ave., Campbell**

**Speakers: Carol Hart with Zoe
International Ministries**

Erin Kawaye, OMF World Missions

Pete and Jen Oh, Pioneers in Hiroshima

**Come and hear these inspiring
missions talks, enjoy worship,
fellowship, refreshments and lunch.**

**Registration is \$10 at the door
Sign up at our church**

**GOD'S FAITHFUL SERVANT
Rev. Arthur Tsuneishi**

Feb. 14, 1920 – Jan. 11, 2010

***"Well Done Good and Faithful Servant ...
Enter into the Joy of Your Master."
Matthew 25:23***

Rev. Art Tsuneishi, former beloved pastor at SLzJCC, from 1967-78, went home to the Lord on Jan. 11, 2010. Rev. Art would have celebrated his 90th birthday on Valentine's Day. He is now celebrating with His Lord and Savior whom he dedicated his lifelong work to since 1953.



Rev. Art is survived by his wife, Sally of 61 years; sons, Jonathan, Mark (DeeAnn), Chris (Janice), daughters, Koko (Rev. Rod Yee), Gail (Fred Wagner), Lani (John Fredricks), Carol and Julie (Wyatt Loo) and 14 grandchildren.

There will be two "Celebration of Life" services. One at the Journey of Faith Church in Manhattan Beach on Jan. 29, 11 a.m., and one at SLzJCC on Sat., Feb. 27, 2 p.m. If you plan on coming to the service at San Lorenzo, you are welcome to bring finger food for the reception that will follow.

Rev. Art inspired and touched so many lives through his gentle, humble spirit and his deep love for Christ. We were privileged to have he and Sally and their family at our church for 11 years. We are still blessed to have Rev. Rod, Koko and Annie serving at SLzJCC – a part of Rev. Art's strong legacy that continues on. Please keep the family in prayer during this time and for the planning of the two services.

**Everyone is invited to the
Valentine's Day Dinner**



Sat., Feb. 13

5 p.m. to 7 p.m.

**Catered by Minami Sushi
at the church**

Devotion led by Pastor Eric

Cost is: Children 3 and under -- free; ages 4-12 -- \$10, 13-64 -- \$20, 65+ -- \$15. Childcare is available (children will eat Japanese food too!).

Sign-up at the church