

When you ask someone who just came back from a mission trip to talk about the troubles on the field, you might hear about the mosquitoes bites, showering once a week, walking through the jungles and mountains, and diarrhea. As you would probably expect, I can't relate to any of these. Our team stayed indoor most of days with plenty of air conditioning, showered every day, rode Pastor Kazuya's decked out Nissan Elgrand to get around the town, and was blessed with toilet seat warmers. However, the difficulties in Japan were much more subtle. After a long week of ministry, the 'fruit' that you'll see would be someone from the English class visiting the Sunday service once. Even so, God shattered my expectations and taught me important lessons that I never want to let go.

Before going on the mission trip, I was troubled by the facts about Christianity in Japan, where the Christians are a tiny minority (less than a percent). From the facts alone, one may even conclude that Japan is a nation that God has abandoned. Because of that, I didn't think there would be many authentic and bold Christians whose lives have been completely transformed by the grace of Jesus Christ. When I entered Toyohashi Hosanna Christ Church (THCC), God demonstrated how foolish and presumptuous I had been. The testimonies that I heard from several members broke down my stereotypes one by one. The Senior Pastor of THCC, Pastor Hayashi, gave up his job as a businessman to become a minister, even when his father threatened to disown him. And it's not just the ministers. One man that I met, named Uzo, gave up the high position in his company to help THCC, even though the corporate world means everything to a working man in Japan. Through listening to these testimonies along with many others, I was blown away as I saw lives marked with great passion for God. How wrong was I in thinking that God is not present in Japan? He is moving in THCC and He is moving in Japan.

The second lesson was shown through how THCC reached out and evangelized to the seekers and skeptics in Toyohashi. For the first two weeks of the trip, our team led English classes that were intended for the church members to connect with the non-Christians. What surprised me was how welcoming and loving the church members were to those who were there just to study English. Later I found out that many Christians enrolled in these classes not to improve their English skills but just to get to know and to share the good news. My pride as a teacher was hurt a little bit, but my appreciation toward the fellow brothers and sisters in Christ was enormous! God taught me through THCC members that evangelism in places like Japan, which is not much different from States, will be effective when an intentional and loving community embraces those who desperately need to hear the gospel. While this isn't something that I didn't know before in my head, but I definitely experienced in Japan and I felt God saying, 'be a part of that community here in Atlanta.'

Normally, you go on a mission trip to bless the people on the field. However, I came back far more blessed than I could've ever blessed THCC. God has shown to me that He is working in the hearts of many Japanese people, and although it was only for three weeks, I wouldn't have traded with anything else in the world. Thank you so much for your support and prayer.