

## Daily Biblical Lesson ~ Remembering You Joy to Pray for One Another --- via Postcard

Michiko Umekita (Kagoshima)



The request to write about the ‘prayer postcard’ has reminded me of one spring morning 15 years ago.

Then I was at a loss, neither able to look after my mother --- I had left her matter completely to my brother ---, nor to find a place in church. Due to worsening health conditions, I left my job five years earlier than the retirement age in the previous fall. I took several vocational training seminars at the public employment security office, but there was no one to hire a 55-year-old woman with a health problem. I didn’t know what to do.

One early April morning, I woke up earlier than ever before. The next thing I knew, I was sitting at the desk, reading the Daily Biblical Lesson. Then, I somehow remembered the postcard I saw on the noticeboard of my church several years back. It was a ‘prayer postcard’ sent by Rev. M. “Maybe I can do that,” I vaguely thought. I jotted a line or two (don’t remember what I wrote) on the postcard in hand and posted it. Day after day, I somehow kept waking up early, contrary to my habit. I spent about an hour or so reading the Bible and the Daily Lesson, meditating and praying, and writing a postcard. One hour felt so short. After a while, I received a postcard from a church. It said, “We pray for you too.” I almost trembled with joy that came welling up in my heart.

Reading the Daily Lesson had been my custom but I just skimmed it before going to bed and thought I had read it properly. Writing

the postcards, however, I began to read the Bible over and over and to think thoroughly what it told me. There were a lot of passages too difficult for me, but thanks to the messages by the different pastors who authored the Daily Lessons, I was able to deepen my understanding of the Biblical word.

The names of churches in the book suggesting you pray them, didn’t mean much to me before, except for a little curiosity about its location. After I began sending postcards, however, I got back responses occasionally or received weekly or monthly news from several churches. Consequently, I began to feel closer to the churches that I knew only by name. It is also a pleasure to meet friends in faith at ‘Biblical Lesson Seminars’ and other gatherings.

Honestly speaking, I still feel awkward sending postcards like this, with my poor handwriting. I am also afraid to offend the recipients by writing unsolicited. Yet, nurtured by the Word and supported by the prayers of many, today I am in good health and able to write postcards.

I thank all of you who receive my postcards. I am also thankful that I am joined together with many brothers and sisters in the Lord. Thank you so much.

In Christ



## Hello, dear friends in Japan

Eimi Watanabe



Since my graduation from graduate school, I have worked quite a long time for the United Nations in the areas of development until my retirement. I now chair the World Bank's Inspection Panel in Washington D.C.

The Inspection Panel was established twenty years ago in order to address problems brought forward from citizens about projects sponsored by the World Bank which might cause trouble to villages, residents in the slums, and the environments around them.

We accept complaints directly from citizens, and assess damages or injuries, and degrees thereof. In case there are, in fact, damages or injuries, we inspect whether or not the World Bank is responsible in any way. The Inspection Panel is, therefore, quite independent of the main body of the World Bank and required to be completely impartial. So generally speaking, the staff of the World Bank do not really enjoy the role we play.

The cases we have accepted and inspected are quite varied. We have heard complaints from villagers who work at a coconut plantation in the Papua New Guinea; residents in South Africa who live in the neighborhood of a large power plant which have been harmful to the environment and the lives of the surrounding community; residents of slums in Nigeria who have been forced to leave their areas because of an urban development project; Kenyan aboriginal residents who were ejected from forest areas where they had lived since the days of their ancestors because of projects meant to protect nature. We visit these areas and we also hear from those involved in these projects.

In each case, the main purpose of these projects is development of economy and society. They may have brought about developments for society at large, but behind them are almost always victims of development, the poor and the weak. Most of these have been brought into our office because there was no other option for solution.

The process of the Panel goes as follows. First, we try to find out the causes of complaints (damages and injuries) and assess their degrees, then determine whether or not the projects sponsored by the World Bank have triggered them. We further decide whether or not there have been failures on the part of the World Bank to observe its own policies and regulations, thus causing damage and injury. Following each inspection, the World Bank offers a solution or solutions, which need the endorsement of the Board.

This might give the impression that the inspection process goes rather automatically, but at each stage of this process, we are required to make hard decisions, and we painfully feel the difficulty of giving fair judgements---all the more so as we repeat this process.

(to be continued)

