

## Turn our eyes back to Jesus during difficulties

Our family is at one of those big junctions that happens in life, which is made larger and more complicated by our international lifestyle. As you know, Jamie graduated from high school in June last year. In July, we went to Australia for a 12 months home assignment. It was a big move. We moved out of our house in western Tokyo, giving away and throwing away a lot of stuff and storing the rest, because our plan was to go back to Japan in July 2024 without any children. We flew to Australia and tackled all those tasks that need doing to establish yourself as living in a place.

Before we left Japan we spent months working out how to cover our roles in Japan while we were gone because no one was available to replace us for most of the things we do. It was complex. But somehow we made it through and were able to release those responsibilities to others.

It's very easy to forget how God helped us through those challenges. It's tempting to be consumed by the present and the complexities and challenges of life and ministry in



The coast south of Newcastle

Australia. Twelve months ago we couldn't see solutions for many of the things that have now happened, including finding a house to live in in the midst of Australia's current housing crisis, and then finding housing for both Doug and Jamie. That's simple to write, but doesn't give full recognition of the greatness of our God and his care for us.

I am often tempted to put my trust in my plans, in my personal networks, in money, even in my own intellectual or other abilities, and then I worry when I can't figure it out by myself. I'm sure I'm not alone in this!

Let's not put our trust in anything else

—not our plans, or our abilities or other people—nothing and no one other than God. As David wrote, “For who is God, but the Lord? And who is a rock, except our God?” (2 Sam. 22:32 ESV).

Are you in the middle of a season where you can't see how it's going to turn out? Are you facing crises that tempt you to despair? I encourage you to turn your eyes back to Jesus and away from the things of this life that cloud our thoughts and weigh heavily on our shoulders.

It seems simplistic, but let's remember that nothing can separate us from God. Our struggles are real, but so is God's care for us, and he won't let us go. As Paul wrote, “For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor heavenly rulers, nor things that are present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom 8:38–39 NET).

By Wendy, adapted from an editorial she wrote for the Winter 2024 *Japan Harvest*.

### What do you love about living in Japan?

This question was asked of OMF missionaries in Japan for sharing via OMF Japan's social media channels. The most common answers were: good service, health care, safe, beautiful nature, clean, people, delicious food, onsen (hot springs), public transport, and convenience.

We would agree that it is a very nice place to live, though some of these things (like health care) are complicated by language challenges and others we have mixed feelings about, or are challenging and different, but we've gotten used to them.

### What is challenging for you living in Japan?

So we're glad that OMF also shared this question. Answers from OMF missionaries included making friends, language, bureaucracy, church life, loneliness, distance to friends and family, recycling, earthquakes. There is a lot of brokenness in Japanese society (like any society) and that is challenging. We are saddened by things like overwork, discrimination, suicide, alcoholism, sexualisation of girls, materialism, pressure to conform, and mental illness.

We encourage you to pray for Japan. In many ways it is an easier place to live than many others in the world, but that does not mean that the Japanese don't need Jesus just as much as every other nation.

### Question corner

### Plans for 2024

We are about to take two months of long service leave and will return to deputation ministry from late May.

Our plan is to return to Japan in mid-July to much the same ministries. We plan to move into an apartment near the school.

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## On the home front

### Prayer points

- That our support would remain 100% throughout 2024.
- For safety and refreshment in our long service travels over the next six weeks.
- For strength, wisdom, and resilience.
- For Doug and Jamie as they settle into life independent from us, and us settling into life without them.
- For jobs for Jamie and Doug, and that Jamie would settle into study well.
- Pray that Doug would find some social connections in the community.
- That each of our boys will continue to mature and know God better.
- That in all we do, think, and say, we would glorify God.
- For good health.
- For Easter outreaches in Japan and protection over Easter baptisms.
- Japanese society tends to run on an April–March calendar, so this is the time of year when churches have AGMs. Pray for God’s wisdom and guidance for these meetings.

### Praise points

- For Wendy’s generous parents lending us their motorhome for two months.
- That Doug and Jamie’s moves went well.
- For encouragement from the conferences we attended in March.
- For God’s ongoing faithfulness towards us.



**Left:** Rainbow Lorikeets at the Australian National Conference in Collaroy, north Sydney.

**Right from top:** sunset near Nobby (Wendy’s retreat), Pioneer Lookout on Thunderbolts Way (west of Taree), Bradman Oval, Uralla Show-grounds (first night of our motorhome trip).

Thank you for praying. March has passed in a bit of a blur. We’re writing to you from Canberra, just before we head off on a long road trip for our long service leave.

The first part of the month was a transitional time as Doug and Jamie settled into their new places and we started to discover how little food is required for just the two of us! **David** helped **Doug** get his final driving hours in. **Jamie** and **Doug** came “home” for a short while to vote in the local elections (having moved after the deadline for changing your address with the electoral commission).

**Wendy** went on a two-day retreat with two close friends in early March.

We’ve continued our Sunday afternoon Marshall-family gathering, in various forms depending on where we are. The last couple of weekends of March, we’ve joined them via video call from southern Australia as they gathered in our house in Springfield Lakes.

In mid-March we collected Wendy’s parents’ motorhome and set out for Sydney and Canberra. In

Sydney we attended two OMF conferences and in Canberra we visited a long-time supporting church. In both places we caught up with long-time friends.

So far in our travels we’ve enjoyed seeing some of rural and coastal NSW. We stopped at the Bradman Museum in Bowral for an afternoon and soaked up some cricket history there. But after all this, by the time we got to Canberra we were too tired to do much tourism, so have mostly been resting.

Thank you for praying for us during March. We will not write to you again until the end of May when we’re back from our travels. If you wish to follow us along in our travels, Wendy plans to blog about our trip as we go: [www.mmuser.blogspot.com](http://www.mmuser.blogspot.com).

*In Christ, David and Wendy*

