

Why I Left SGI and Turned to Jesus



– By Andrew Fisher

Forward by the Webmaster:

I was very surprised when my cyberspace Christian friend, Andrew from the UK, told me he was with Soka Gakkai for nearly 25 years! I asked him to write up his story. I met many Soka Gakkai people from time to time when I lived in Japan and can tell you they are some of the hardest people to share my faith in Christ with. For one thing, they try to proselytize me when I'm trying to convert them!

I have received the Lord Jesus Christ into my heart.

For almost 30 years I was a practising Nichiren Buddhist and a local leader in the UK of the lay Buddhist organisation Soka Gakkai International.

As many people are aware, Buddhism is a godless, atheist religion. To understand why I gave up being a practising Nichiren Buddhist and member of SGI we need to examine why I turned to Buddhism in the first place.

Until I was about 21 years old I was a Roman Catholic. Like many other young Catholics I had bit by bit relaxed my religious practice to the point where I never attended church regularly, took communion or made a confession. The pagan, maybe even Satanic, influences of rock music in the late 60s and 70s such as Led Zeppelin and Black Sabbath had slowly entered my consciousness and had begun slowly, but surely, to dull the soft words of the Lord.

As a child I recall speaking happily and directly to the Lord about everything in my life. But now as a young man I found myself one day in the confessional box. As I confessed to some minor sins, the priest absolved me as usual and gave me a small penance of 10 Hail Marys. As I silently recited the prayers, I was struck by the ludicrousness of the situation. Here I was chanting away to the Virgin Mary while in my heart of hearts I no longer believed in a God. The steady chipping away of my soul by Satan had finally worked...at least for a while.

I thought that Nichiren Buddhism held the answers to inner peace for me and

began many years of sincere practice. I began to notice as I taught many people about Buddhism that I was saying something that no other Buddhists said (or at least dared to say):

“If this practice fails to work for me personally, then I will immediately give up the practice of Buddhism.”

Nichiren Buddhism essentially believes that everything can be achieved (all earthly desires are considered as enlightenment) by chanting Nam Myoho Renge Kyo (devotion to the mystic law of cause and effect). The universe is subservient to this law and adjusts everything in harmony with the desire of the chanting Buddhist. Little did I know that there were challenges ahead of me that chanting could not overcome. As I slowly realised this was the case I began to acknowledge that chanting had not achieved my “earthy desires”.

So what happened to me? Simple! Like Paul on the road, but less painfully, I woke up one morning and I believed again in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord had filled the spiritual vacuum. I was that little boy once again being talked to in a comforting way with his dear heavenly Father. A natural and painless rebirth had occurred in my heart.

Now I found that there was a power infinitely greater than I had ever known before. Jesus was alive!

Over the next weeks and months, as I walked about in my new body, I determined to ask as many people as possible about their experiences of the Lord in their daily lives.

One of the first people I spoke to was my dentist. He told me that his grandfather had been a Methodist preacher in Argentina. He felt that, although many professed to believing in Jesus, in reality they lived godless lives.

A local young Muslim man who runs a grocery store near my home in Marbella and who has trouble finding the monthly rent and health insurance for his sick mother and brother showed me a YouTube video he was watching the as I walked in to his shop. The video was about the daily life of Jesus.

An experience that affected me profoundly and showed me I was truly walking with Jesus occurred one day as I spoke to my wife. My beloved wife is a practising Nichiren Buddhist. She often talks painfully about losing her dear brother to cancer when he was only 12 years old. For the 34 years of our married life I have often watched the tears roll down her face as she talks about the suffering of her brother as he died and of the pain of her parents as they cared for him in his last days in this world.

For years, answering as a Buddhist, I often spoke about her brother’s karma and reincarnation. Now, as a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, and for the first time in all those years, the correct words came into my mouth: “Don’t worry, my love. Your brother and your mother and father are in Heaven now. At rest and at peace.”

Her face lit up and said, “Thank you for that.” For the first time in our

years together, I saw a peace finally descend upon her.

Praise the Lord and thank you!

Testimonial of a man who rose above afflictions and heartbreak

I was profoundly touched by this testimony of how a young man rose above Job like afflictions to become a wonderful witness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. At 23 years old he was afflicted with a flesh eating disease which led to his right arm being amputated, was blinded in one eye with low vision in the other, intense damage to his legs and organ failure. Ten months later the love of his life died in a car accident on Christmas Eve. Think you have problems? Listen to how he overcame bitterness due to his faith in God!

John Lennox Vs. Richard Dawkins Debate

John Lennox is an Irish mathematician and philosopher of science who is Professor of Mathematics at the University of Oxford. He's also a Bible believing Christian. I really enjoyed and appreciated his debate with famous atheist Richard Dawkins, author of The God Delusion. In that book Dawkins questions whether Jesus actually existed as an historical figure. In this debate he concedes that Jesus did exist.

Niigata to Kanto – dramatic 4th 2011 hitchhike adventure



Walls of snow along road in Japan

February 1, 2011: I started out very well with the first ride on my trip to Noda city in Chiba prefecture, just east of Tokyo. The purpose of this trip was to attend a fellowship meeting at 7 PM. It was good weather and I left home at a very good time, just after 10 AM. Tokyo is 300 kilometers away but it usually takes me less than 6 hours, only half a day. I found that weekends are best for hitchhiking, but today was a weekday, a Tuesday. I finally arrived in Noda at 8:25 PM!

After waiting only a minute, the first driver took me all the way to Sanjo city, the entrance of the Hokuriku Expressway. He kindly went out of his way to do so. From there I took a 180 bus ride to Sakae parking area on the Hokuriku. The preponderance of the traffic was local. Hardly anybody was going to the Kanto plain.

After waiting at Sakae PA in Sanjo for over 90 minutes, I accepted a ride from a young single couple to Ozumi parking area. This is further down the road but just past the Nagaoka junction going towards Joetsu city which is not the direction I needed to go. However I knew I could walk to the other side of the expressway and catch traffic that could go toward Kanto.

I found my situation at Ozumi even worse than it was in Sakae! There was much snow and ice in the parking area, and most of the traffic was going back in the direction I just came from. After waiting another hour and a half, I accepted a ride from a lady going to Nagaoka city. Normally I would not want to get off the expressway in Nagaoka, but the situation was so that my only hope was to hitchhike from Nagaoka down National Highway route 17 and get back on the expressway – this time the Kan’etsu – to catch a car to Kanto.

The lady took me only as far as National Highway route 8, too far to walk to route 17. Snow was piled up so high along the road I had very little room to stand between it and passing cars. A police car approached me and the officer said in very good English, “Don’t enter this road! There are many truck accidents here!” Oh my, things could hardly be worse! It was already past 2PM and I have yet 250 kilometers to go. I couldn’t walk further down the road without disobeying the police officer. The only option was to stand at a rather poor intersection with more room to stand hoping to catch a car. Cars whizzed past me. Drivers coming to route 8 from the road perpendicular to it were only 2 or 3 every few minutes.

Finally, after waiting there for about 20 minutes, an older man in a pickup

truck took pity on me and offered me a ride. He went out of his way to take me to route 17.

At route 17 I caught the next ride within a minute! The driver offered to take me to the Yamaya Parking area on the Kan'etsu. I had never been to Yamaya before because it is a rather small parking area with few cars. It took a while to find it. Snow in that area is one of the deepest in all of Japan. Walls of snow higher than our heads lined the roads everywhere making navigation harder than it would have been without them.

The driver, being a local man, was able to figure out Yamaya's location and took me to the back entrance. As soon as I got there, I saw a man and told him I needed to go to Kanto. He looked at me warily and asked me who I was, and if I didn't have anything dangerous in my luggage. He was a Yamazaki bread truck driver with a load of bread going all the way to Tokorozawa in Saitama and offered me a ride to Higashi Tokorozaka station. But because of company rules, he couldn't go any faster than 80 kilometers an hour which meant at least 40 minutes longer than most cars would take me. But in this case, it was a "bird in the hand" situation and I was happy just to get to Noda. It turned out being an hour and 25 minutes late wasn't such a big problem after all, for the meeting continued to 10 PM, and I had a good time and made new friends. The trip was worth the effort.

My return trip was the exact opposite of the previous day. It only took one car with hardly any waiting to get all the way back home. A 25-year-old man named Takuma who sells wasabi offered me a ride to Niigata station but then decided to take me a bit further to my area.

The first hour of our conversation was just asking him questions about his life and background. It didn't seem to be leading to anything deeper. I feel I owe to every driver who picks me up a message of Salvation in knowing the Author of life, Jesus Christ, but because Takuma wasn't asking me anything about what I do, I didn't see any openings to the subject of Biblical/spiritual things. Finally, I got the inspiration to ask him if he knew the story of the Garden of Eden. This worked and lead to deeper talk! Most Japanese are open to hearing bible stories, and Genesis chapters 1-3 is a good place to start because it explains so many things about why the world is as it is today.

[A Muslim's testimonial of conversion to faith in Christ](#)



A Muslim meets Jesus Christ, the Son of God, in prison!

I was really touched by this young man's message. I showed it to the folks who attend our Sunday evening fellowship meeting. Everybody was impressed. I hope you appreciate it too!

[Email exchange with a man who follows Darwinian evolution](#)



I get numerous emails about articles on my websites, especially the [Deep Truths](#) site, the one I worked the hardest on since year 2004. Rather than type up the same reply each time for this particular subject of Evolution verses Creation, I thought to document a typical email and my reply to it on this site. Hopefully it'll save me time in the future.:)

Hello

I read you website article ['The Big Lie! – Exposed'](#) with some interest.

I just thought that I could offer some advice.

When making comments regarding evolution and passing them off as fact, please make sure you get your facts right.

We have not evolved (Or de-evolved as you say) from Neanderthals. They are a different species which because they were not as capable of surviving on this planet at the same time as us became extinct.

There is much evidence of 'Missing links'. There is fossil evidence (you might want to look this word up) showing how reptiles evolved into mammals. This shows the multiple bones in the jaw (common in lizards) slowly drawing back to the ear and leaving just one bone in the mammals jaws.

These things are not open to debate. They are physical evidence.

I would defend your right to have different opinions to me that is your right. But don't make up information and then call this fact. You are either not educated enough to understand or you are deliberately being untruthful.

Please open your eyes and see what is going on in this world.

It is wonderful and beautiful and majestic and savage and mindblowing.

And please don't attack Evolution as you think it goes against God.

Wouldnt God create a world so amazing not leave some tricks for us to find?

Peace.

My reply:

Hi,

Thank you for your email. I'm sure we could go on endlessly about this subject, but I think it all boils down to one's worldview. My worldview is based on the Holy Bible. Your worldview is based on the writings of Darwin. You are giving me information that you consider to be fact, but there is other information I could give you that would refute that, and you would give me yet more information you *think* contradicts my information. And on it goes, ad infinitum.

How we see the world depends a great deal on our mindset, our paradigms of life, our worldview, our perceptions. Two people can look at exactly the same thing and come up with two totally opposite and opposing points of view. And I'm talking about two people who are not necessary at odds with each other, for example a husband and wife who love each other. Why is this? It's because what we see does not necessarily equate with reality. Ask a magician and the honest one will tell you a lot of their tricks have to do with manipulating perceptions. What you tell me you see is merely with you **think** you see. The same with me. Why do I therefore think I am correct? I have the Bible as a basis of my thinking, and the Bible tells me that God created man and all life, and that He did it all in 6 days. He created the sun the day **after** He created plant-life! This is plain in the Bible, and diametrically opposite of what Darwinian Evolution teaches. One can mock the Biblical account, and call

it unscientific if they want to, but I would consider them people who do not know the Author of the Bible – God – and have not done much research or study about it.

What we believe largely has to do with our will. I choose to believe the Biblical account because the Bible works for me and has made me what I am today. I'm 60 years old have have no regrets for choosing the path of faith in the Bible. My life has been an adventure traveling the world and meeting all sorts of people and cultures, learning new languages. I wouldn't trade it for anything.

Peace,
James

(end of reply)

I find replies like this are very effective. They cannot argue against it, for the very argument only proves further the person is merely holding on to his or her own particular paradigm and unwilling to see the other person's viewpoint. Of course, you could very well say the same thing of me as well. But if you do, please remember this: I didn't go out of my way to find you and invade your privacy. You invited me to come into your PC and read what I had to say of your own volition. □

[Hitchhiking to town](#)



Kazuko

June, 21, 2009: Today is my 59th birthday. I went to one of my favorite traffic lights to hitchhike to downtown Niigata City to meet a friend to do some street evangelism. The first day of summer was a hot one, about 31 C. Though there was a lot of traffic waiting at the red light, everybody was

ignoring me.

After about 10 minutes I heard a voice calling from a distance behind me. A lady turned the corner and drove to an adjacent road about 10 meters parallel to the road I was on. She was offering me a ride!

The lady's name is Kazuko, 31 years old. We established an immediate rapport when she told me she went to a Christian high school in the area, Keiwa Gakuin, the same school that one of my friends sent his children. We talked about the deep things of life, love, unselfishness, giving, sharing, the [paradox of hedonism](#) etc.

Kazuko's hobby is photography. She took my photo with an old Nikon F1 35 mm film camera.

[Adventure from Niigata to Hamamatsu City in Shizuoka](#)



The red line running from the north to the southeast shows my proposed journey. Click the image to see an enlargement.

I hitchhiked to Hamamatsu city in Shizuoka Prefecture to bring a laptop PC to my friend Maria and teach her how to use it. It's a Windows Vista PC which she is unfamiliar with. To hitchhike such a long distance (about 560 kilometers) passing through Tokyo is a real challenge for me. I calculate what time I should be at certain points to see if I can realistically reach my destination the same day. The hardest part of this trip is figuring out how to get on the Tomei Expressway which runs from Tokyo to Nagoya and passes by Hamamatsu.

At 9:00AM I got off to a bad start. The first driver took me only a few

kilometers and to an area off the main highway. Lesson learned: Make sure of the drivers destination before boarding!

To get back toward the main highway I had to walk a couple kilometers. A kind man from [Gosen city](#) stopped and took me to route 8, a major road that passes close to Sakae Parking area on the Hokuriku Expressway. I now had a much better chance to get a good ride out. The driver told me that Gosen city has some of the best natural water in Japan. "Gosen" literally means "five springs."

The third driver was going to Sanjo city and went out of his way for me to take me to Sakae Parking Area. This helped gain some of the time I lost with the first ride.

The fourth driver was going all the way to Narita Airport to meet his Thai wife returning from her home country. He took me as far as Takasaka Service area in Saitama area just before Tokyo. From there two men going to Yokohama took me to the entrance of the Tomei expressway at Yoga Interchange.

I thought there was a parking area at Yoga and walked in vain 30 minutes to find it. I remembered that I hitchhiked from Yoga a few years ago standing close to the entrance ramp, and I hoped I wouldn't have to do it again. At Yoga I have to stand on the narrow divider area between two lanes in the middle of the road to make my intention known to the drivers. I knew the police would scold me and kick me out if they saw me standing there. So I prayed desperately for a ride. I knew it would have to be a car without any traffic in back of it in order for the driver to stop safely.



Yuko and Thomas

After about 15 minutes a lady stopped for me, a real miracle! Her name is Yuko and she delivers curry dishes with her American husband. I asked Yuko if her husband wouldn't be angry for her to pick up a strange man hitchhiking, and she said, "No problem, he already knows!" Thomas was following from behind in another vehicle.

Yuko took me to the Kohoku Parking area and there I met her husband, Thomas. I was surprised to learn Thomas is ethnic Vietnamese. I told them about a website I made that has Vietnamese literature, [starsandpearls.com](#). Thomas said that he can't read Vietnamese but will read the English that is next to it. Both Yuko and Thomas seemed impressed with how I live and travel. I told them that it's only because of God's care that I can live in such a way. Thomas was raised a Roman Catholic. He said that it was amazing to meet me at this time because that very day at a coffee shop he had got into a deep discussion with a friend about the [meaning of life](#). Yuko speaks good English but said she usually speaks in Japanese with Thomas at home.



Young man who works with an insurance company who took me from Kohoku to Ebina Service area on the Tomei Expressway.



Ashigara Service area at sunset with Mt Fuji in the background.

From Ebina a 31 year old man on the way to Numazu City took me to Ashigara Service area in Shizuoka Prefecture. I had a good view of Mt. Fuji which kept me inspired while waiting a relatively long time of about an hour to catch the next ride. An older couple returning home to Tsuruga in Fukui took me the rest of the way to Hamamatsu. Tsuruga is relatively close to Obama, the town made famous due to Barack Obama's election to U.S. President. In all it took 9 cars and 11 hours to travel 560 kilometers from my home to Hamamatsu City.

The return home

May 28: It's extremely windy at 10:00 AM when I set out. After only a short wait, Mr. Matsui, a veterinarian, took me to the Nihonzaka Parking area on the Tomei expressway. I've been picked up by doctors before, but this is the first time to meet a veterinarian when hitchhiking. I told him that in 1981 when living in Noda city in Chiba prefecture, a veterinarian gave my cat a free operation to sew up his torn abdomen. It was caused by fighting with the local tom cats!



Mt. Fuji taken in Feb. 2004 from a highway as I travelled. The clearest views of the volcano are in the winter.

At Nihonzaka, I had to wait an hour for the next ride. The wind was so strong it nearly knocked me off balance once and blew my hat off twice! Policemen entered the parking area a few times in their squad cars, but they didn't seem interested in me. Mr. Someya came and rescued me taking me to a larger service area, Fujikawa which is not far from Mt. Fuji, where I had a better chance of getting a longer ride. It wasn't nearly as windy at Fujikawa, but it started to rain a bit.

After only a few minutes, a middle aged man took me all the way to Shinkiba station in Tokyo From there I took a train to Fujino station in Saitama which is close to the Miyoshi Service area. I knew there is a bus I could catch but rather than wait for it, I started to walk in what I thought was the right

direction. After a few minutes, I realized I was lost and walked up to a car waiting at a traffic light to ask for directions. Two ladies were sitting in the car, and older lady named Michie and the younger one who is Michie's daughter, Akiko, the driver. Akiko told me I was walking the opposite direction from Miyoshi offered me a ride! It's not very common to be offered a ride in this manner. Akiko and Michie were glad to go out of their way for me.

From Miyoshi Service area of the Kan'etsu expressway, another lady took me to Takakaka Service area, and from there two men took me to the border of Gunma to Kamisato Service area. It's now already dark a little after 7PM.

Once a few years ago after dark I waited three long hours for a ride at Kamisato! I certainly hoped not to repeat that experience. It was getting colder and I was dressed in a short sleeve shirt with only a thin wind breaker jacket over it. After only 15 minutes a man stopped and offered me a ride to Echigo Yuzawa in Niigata! From there I could catch a train the rest of the way back home, but I was short a few hundred yen for the fare for that distance of about 100 kilometers. I told the man, Akio, that rather than take me all the way to Echigo Yuzawa, he could drop me off at the Akagi Kogen service area in Gunma from where I could catch a ride going further. But Akio was insistent that he take me to Echigo Yuzawa! From my cell phone I looked up the next train leaving to be 8:30 PM, and we knew we would arrive in plenty of time for me to catch that train. But because I didn't have enough money for the fare, I kept trying to convince Akio to drop me off at the parking area in Gunma. Akio then said he would give me 1000 yen and asked me if that would be enough. "Quite enough!" I replied. Aren't the Japanese kind to strangers? This isn't the first time I've received gifts of money when hitchhiking. I never ever ask them for money, they offer.

Perhaps Akio was kind to me because I really tried to help and encourage him. Akio said that he has been afflicted with depression from two years ago and was just returning home after seeing a doctor. The doctor told him that drugs will not cure him, only relieve the symptoms. He then said that he went to a woman mystic who told him that he is afflicted with the spirit of a departed person who committed suicide at his workplace! She said that two other people committed suicide at the same workplace. Akio immediately remembered that there were two people who took their lives where he works, and learned later that there was indeed a third person. When I heard that, I immediately started to pray out loud in the Name of Jesus and I told the spirit to leave Akio and go elsewhere! Depression and mental problems are often caused by [spiritual forces](#). I was very glad that Akio knows that too. Half of the way toward victory is identifying true cause of the problem.

Hitchhiking during Golden Week, 2009



Hirosaki Castle the beginning of
May

I had a fantastic 10 day trip traveling 1460 kilometers in 28 vehicles during the Japanese holiday season from April 29 to May 5th known as "[Golden Week](#)".

April 30th: It took me over two hours and 6 vehicles just to get out of Niigata City! A lady took me as far as Toyosaka on the edge of Niigata City. She said her 29 year old daughter lived one year in Montana. After that a Russian man took me as far as East Port in Niigata and after that a lady with her mother took a me a few kilometers further up route 113 to the middle of nowhere somewhere between Niigata city and Murakami city. It was a less than desirable spot to catch a ride with few cars passing through a forested area, but I had a scenic view of the Sea of Japan on my left that kept me inspired. After a long wait a young man who works in a travel agency who says he is a Christian and whose father is from Nagasaki took me to route 7 in Murakami. In all it took 16 cars in all to get to Akita City 270 kilometers down route 7 arriving at 7:30PM, but the last driver took me to the very area where I spent the night with friends.



Chieharu and Jun

May 1st: It took two hours just to get out of Akita city. After waiting at least 30 minutes on route 13, a lady who works in a kindergarten took me about 10 kilometers to a point close to route 7. From there an elderly man took me a short ways to a gasoline station on route 7 but from there I had to walk a long distance of nearly an hour to get to a good traffic light. The third person was a truck driver who took me all the way to Odate in Akita Prefecture. The 4th car was a young couple, Jun and Chieharu who took me all

the way to the very door of my destination in Aomori City! They actually went a hundred kilometers out of their way to take me because their destination was Hirosaki city, about 50 kilometers before Aomori City. They were on their way to Hirosaki Castle Park to see the cherry blossoms. I had a lot of time to share my faith in Jesus with Jun and Chieharu. They happily prayed with me to [receive Christ as their Savior](#).



Koinobori

May 5th: This is the last day of the Golden Week holiday which is called “*Kodomo no hi*” which means “Children’s Day”. Everywhere there are waving flags in the shape of Carp that are called “[Koinobori](#)” meaning “Carp banner”. I left Aomori to go to Chiba in the Tokyo area, nearly 700 kilometers due south. Previous experiences in trying to catch a ride from a driver entering the Tohoku the expressway from Aomori have been difficult with long waits of over an hour, but today I caught the first ride within a minute! The driver was a policeman who flashed his badge at me after riding with him for a few minutes. I was glad to meet a friendly officer of the law, for I told him on April 15 I had been [stopped by two policemen for hitchhiking](#) and was detained for 10 minutes in their patrol car. He smiled sympathetically. I asked him if hitchhiking is illegal in Japan or not, and he replied that it is not. The officer took me up to Hanawa Service Area in Akita Prefecture. The area was crowded with parked cars and people.

After waiting only a few minutes at Hanawa, a couple, Mr. and Mrs Nagata with Kawasaki license plates stopped to pick me up. I rejoiced because I knew they would take me over 95% of the rest of the way to my destination of Noda City in Chiba! This must be the longest I’ve ever went in a single vehicle for it was at least 600 kilometers.



Takaaki, Atsumi, Minori
and Ryota

Mr. and Mrs. Nagata have been married for 16 years but have no children. Mrs. Nagata told me that they would like to adopt a child, but Japanese law makes it difficult to adopt unless you already have at least one child! She would need to be a registered kindergarten teacher to qualify.

The travel time from Niigata City to Aomori city of 480 kilometers was 17 hours averaging 29 kilometers per hour in 20 vehicles. By comparison, the trip from Aomori to the Tokyo area only took 3 cars and 8 hours to go 670 some kilometers, and this was in spite of traffic pileups on the expressway during the last day of Golden Week. It was 3 times faster to travel on the expressway than the regular road.

May 9th: The sweetest people who picked me up on the way back home were four young people on the way to Numazu in Gunma Prefecture, Ryota, Minori, Takaaki and Atsumi. Their average age was 25 years old. One of the girls, Minori, often touched my arm showing affection. They all visited the USA for a month a few years ago and spoke some English. One of the young men, Ryota, gave me his pen that he said he used in his university.

From Akagi Kougen Service area, Mr. Katou took me as far as Koide, a small town between Kawaguchi and Muika Machi. He travelled all the way from Shizuoka to visit his mother for mother's day which was the next day.



Truck driver who took me to Koide in Niigata.

From Koide I opted to take the low road to Ojiya knowing that few cars would be entering the expressway from that point. A Suntory Juice truck picked me up. The driver said that he had never picked up a hitchhiker before. I told him, "congratulations!"

A sweet middle aged couple took me the rest of the way back to Niigata. They were on their way to Nakajo to see their son.

[Hitchhike adventure to Ikebukero](#)



Ikebukero is one of the large commercial centers in Tokyo with one of the busiest train stations. I intended to spend the night with a friend in Ikebukero so that I could easily go from there the next day to the American Embassy to renew my passport. It's been ten years since I got the passport in Hawaii.



Typical night scene in Ikebukero, Tokyo

The first driver was a off duty policeman who specializes in the Japanese mafia known as the "Yakuza". I hear these days the Yakuza are not very powerful. I hardly see them anymore. The Chinese and Russian mafia have taken over.

I talked to the policeman about my experiences with the Yakuza – usually OK. They normally don't bother the common people. I've been treated to lunch by at least two of them. One thing that strikes me about mafia type of people is that they usually think they are pretty righteous and that society is wrong, not them. The policeman agreed with that point. I then brought out that man in general has this same attitude toward God. It's called "self-righteousness". We often think we know better than God. Many people even think they are "gooder" than God! But in reality, we are all sinners and criminals in God's sight. Only Jesus did no sin and therefore paid the price for our crimes of ungratefulness toward God and unloving actions toward our fellow man. He paid the price with His own death!

The concept of "sin" is pretty clear in Western cultures, but very vague in the Japanese mind. Even Japanese who have come to know Jesus Christ and are still young in faith don't understand very clearly what sin means. The policeman identified with what I had to say about the average criminal, but did not include himself as a "sinner" in his relationship with his Creator.

Unfortunately many church people in America seem to equate sin mainly with sexual pleasures, or even any type of pleasure while at the same time justifying truly horrible crimes in the eyes of God such as the occupation of Iraq! But Jesus didn't condemn the drunks and harlots. In His eyes, the self-righteous **religious leaders** of His time were the real sinners!

I forgot my hat in the policeman's car without giving him any way to contact me. I don't think he even knew my last name. Somehow he figured out where I live and brought the hat back!