

Making new friends through hitchhiking



With another man also hitchhiking! His partner with him took the photo



Mr. Tsubokawa

I walked about 20 minutes to the main highway to hitch-hike to town. My eyes have been hurting me as my near-sightedness has progressed to the point of needing a stronger prescription of eye glasses. (On my to-do list.)

I thought it good to exercise my eyes by taking off my eyeglasses while walking and focusing on the horizon of the flat terrain in Niigata. If you have ever been to Japan, you know that there are very few areas that are noticeably flat. Niigata is one of them. It's a pleasure to look at a distant horizon – something that the poor folks in Tokyo don't often experience.

As I got to the main highway, I put my glasses back on and looked at my jacket. It was really dirty! I thought, "My goodness, I can't go out in public looking like this! I've got to go back home and change!" And so I walked back home which took another 20 minutes.

After changing my coat to another one, rather than walk yet another 20 minutes back to the highway, I rode a bicycle and parked it in a shopping area that is close to the highway. After waiting only a few minutes at the traffic light, a driver waved to me and asked where I wanted to go. He told me he would take me after meeting a friend at the local Mr. Donut coffee shop. I accepted his offer. His name is Hideo Tsubokawa.

Mr. Tsubokawa treated me to a donut and a cup of coffee. I met his friend, Mr. Takeishi. Both Mr. Tsubokawa and Mr. Takeishi have some knowledge of the Bible having read it while studying English at a Lutheran church.

At the donut / coffee shop I learned that Mr. Tsubokawa is from the same neighborhood of another friend of mine, Mr. Ohno, who he knows from

childhood! And not only that, Mr. Tsubokawa is even a closer friend with another one of my friends, Mr. Kawakami! I met **every one** these men through hitch-hiking!

I knew Mr. Kawakami was currently in a local hospital for a minor operation. That very morning I thought to go and see him but was unsure how to get to the hospital. Mr. Tsubokawa offered to take me. Boy, was Mr. Kawakami surprised to see us both together later that day!

This is one of the many miracles that God does for me when I reach out to others. Hitchhiking is the best way I know how to do this in Japan.