Email from Asia

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It was a most interesting experience—reading over the original article for *TEACH* entitled, "It's not about me" (Volume 4, No 2, 2010), and to consider what has changed during the intervening period. It prompted some serious thinking. Is the title still just as apposite as it was back then?

Updating from last time: Meg* graduated at the end of that year, and went off to study overseas at the place of her dreams. From time to time she appears on '*that*' social networking site and shares bits of her fascinating journey of Christian growth within a secular university environment. It will be good to meet again sometime and explore her progress towards becoming "a thinker" rather than "a mere reflector".

My 'young' Christian colleague Jeffrey* recently decided, that after six years of teaching, the Lord was calling him to a different mission field. Right now his work is mainly doing translation, but his real passion is to become a Christian minister. He is already a lay preacher, and there is no doubt that God has something amazing lined up for him.

Jeffrey and I had often prayed for another Christian teacher to come to our school and, in time, those prayers were answered. For a year or more the three of us enjoyed sweet fellowship at our lunch and prayer times, and support was there for whichever one of us was "weak and heavy laden". But now, it seemed like it was all going to come to an end, as both of them announced their intentions to move on. Added to this, we (my wife Adele and I) also were in the middle of making the tough decision, about whether to stay or go. Eventually we decided to do "one last year". Each week we picked up the burden of encouraging each other to 'finish strong'.

> ***But I'll gladly exchange it all for a transformed life; a student who bravely steps out and makes a decision for God***



David with students

[Photograph: David Arthur]

It was about this time that, quite by 'accident', I discovered there are other Christian teachers at our school. OK, so maybe that sounds amazing to you, but in our situation, this kind of 'information' is not exactly trumpeted from the rooftops. Now the building of another small cell group has begun again—new people and a new dynamic. However, we need the same supportive fellowship and serious cultivation of the "we are not alone" slogan.

Life at school sometimes drifts lazily along, and sometimes it feels like the waters of a grade six rapid. Our team in my department gets a lot of satisfaction from helping to make students' dreams come true; dreams for further study in the 'land of heart's desire'. One of the challenges of trying to combine counselling and administration is the delicate balance between 'comforting the afflicted and afflicting the comfortable'. In classroom teaching, the main aim always is to teach the subject effectively and efficiently, but in the background the 'tune' is still the same: "Make a positive difference in your world, be the change you want to see, stand up for what you believe, and don't be afraid to be different". As for me, I'll cheerfully do a swap. You can have all the top grades, honours degrees, awards of various shapes and sizes, and recognition for what the world thinks is indispensable. But I'll gladly exchange it all for a transformed life; a student who bravely steps out and makes a decision for God.

Life outside of school (thankfully there actually is one!) has a lot of colour and variety—exploring new places on foot or by bicycle, building relationships with family and friends, doing the short walk to and from school through typical big-city suburbia, fixing all manner of broken things from toilet seats and lights to helping 'broken' people, going on holidays, coping with language problems, and being part of a very supportive home group. There is generally something new around every corner.

What does the future hold here, in this place? It's a bit of a mystery, but as long as we never forget that we work for the Master and not our boss, it will be the most satisfying and exciting thing we could do, and the best place to be right now. I'll keep you posted. Or should I say, 'emailed'.

Shalom, David. TEACH

*Pseudonyms