

Email from Asia (September)

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Do you still get excited about starting a new school year? (Maybe if you don't, perhaps it is time to give it away and do something else!) It could be the fulfilment and challenge that comes with new subjects and new responsibilities, meeting up with returning students and old friends on the staff, or meeting new staff and students, or just continuing to do something you love doing; perhaps all of the above.

After a long holiday, mostly abroad, it was time to get down to business again. Graduates from last year began dropping in for advice on what to do next, especially if their results were below their expectations. New students came to chat about subject choices and beyond. Our counselling office was a hive of activity for the first few weeks, then it began to settle a bit, and finally those of us in the office who are part-time teachers felt able to give our full attention to some 'real' teaching. Along the way newly arriving teachers at the school became new friends, and we helped with their orientation to school and city.

The exciting thing is that now the Fellowship of Believers has grown—in fact the group has doubled in size! We have met new people—real, down to earth, born-again people who came from different parts of the world to this place. It leads us to remind ourselves that it was not an accident that they ended up here; in fact it had been a long time in the planning. They each had an inspiring story to tell.

The interesting thing was how we found out about them. In each case it was a 'chance' meeting or a tip-off from someone. Our hope is that more will be added to the group as the year progresses.

As often happens, graduates from former years call in during their summer holidays and give an update on what they have been doing since their student days. They are all grown up, even more independent and self-assured than before, and we enjoy a deeper relationship. Although in my situation of teaching senior students, it was never really like teacher-student, but rather more like a coach-athlete. Here are a few of their stories.

Anita* bounced into the office one day and it was obvious that something had changed. One of the last times I'd seen her was when she was very dejected over missing out on her 'dream school', and having to settle for a less desirable alternative.

But this time the beaming face betrayed her—it was not like that now. She told me how she had become a *believer* during the year, and we agreed that it was *providential* that she missed out on the original dream. We chatted for some time about life's purpose, how we only see part of the big picture and if we had full knowledge, our choices might likely be very different. We were humbled to consider the thought of a Master Plan for each of us. So exciting!

Tiffany* graduated, went on to study at a prestigious foreign university, and then returned to a banking career. One day we were chatting about life issues and priorities, and she told me that after looking around her and seeing the burned out, frazzled hulks of the young (usually male) career bankers who seemed to spend most of their lives working, she had stopped trying to climb the corporate ladder. She had rebalanced her life so that what was really important to her now commanded most of her time. It all sounded so refreshing, yet so unusual in our very materialistic environment. Committed to what really matters. So exciting!

Just recently Lydia* came after one of our Economics classes, bubbling over with some news. During the holidays she had been for a short service trip to one of the poorest countries in the world, following in the footsteps of that well known lady who spent most of her life looking after the poor in one of the big cities there. With great excitement she told me about her experience, and how deeply she had been affected. Her new appreciation of the plight of so many others once unknown to her has changed the course of her life, and it will be extremely interesting to keep in touch with her in the future. So exciting!

And so the routine work of school is accomplished, but more importantly, lives are influenced, and by more people than before. We talk one-to-one with students and stand before our classes with a different attitude compared to most of the other staff. We realise that what is happening here is about the supernatural, the eternal. It's not just about exams, books, theories and subject matter. Far from it. The fortunes of individuals, families, the school, the country, maybe even the world could be changed by a student sitting in our class.

We'll keep you 'posted' on developments. **TEACH**

*Pseudonyms

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