

# Land of the Risen Son

## イエス・キリストは日本を愛する

(Jesus loves Japan)



*Blackie the cat*

### Sorts of sweet...

We first met Wakana<sup>1</sup> one evening five years ago. She was walking her dog, and we were feeding our little cat who lives in the park, Blackie.

“Thank you for volunteering in the community,” she said that day.

“I’m sorry,” I said. “I don’t understand.”

“Volunteering—feeding the neighbourhood cats is volunteering in the community!”

Whenever our paths crossed, Wakana and I exchanged pleasantries and conversed for a few minutes. Before we returned to Canada for our year of work there, Blackie became very sick. We didn't think she would still be around when we came back.

We told Wakana of our travel plans. “I’ll look after Blackie while you’re away,” she said. “If she doesn’t get better, I’ll find a vet.”

When we returned, there was Blackie in her usual spot, waiting for us.

“Through the year you were gone, Blackie waited for you in that same spot every evening,” Wakana told us.

Floored by the love and devotion that Blackie had shown, we couldn't help wondering if perhaps Blackie's faithful love would remind Japanese people of the beloved story of Hachiko, the faithful dog.<sup>2</sup>

Later, we noticed that our relationships with several people in the community had substantially increased in warmth since our return. We hoped that one day we would be able to share with them about Jesus, who loves us so much more faithfully than even our little cat.

One evening Wakana brought us some vegetables from her garden. Her corn was the best we'd ever tasted in Okinawa! We waited a month or so, and gave her a return present: some lemon squares. So began about a year of receiving gifts from her garden, and giving ones from our kitchen. We continued to build up mutual indebtedness between us, the foundation for all relationships in Japan.

After a particularly large gift of vegetables, I baked a batch of gingersnap cookies. I'd not seen Wakana for a while, so I decided to drop them off directly at her house. She wasn't home, so I gave them to her husband.



### Interesting Facts



#### Giving Gifts

In Japan, giving gifts is an important element in relationship-building. It helps to establish a sense of “mutual indebtedness” and trust.



#### Omiyage

The Japanese give souvenirs, called *omiyage* (“oh-me-ah-geh”), to their friends and family whenever they return from another prefecture or country. *Omiyage* are often food, but can be anything unique to the prefecture or country the person has just visited. In Japan, pre-wrapped *omiyage* are easy to find, whether you're at the airport or a tourist attraction.



#### Other Gifts

Gifts are given as a sign of thanks or appreciation; and for weddings, funerals, birthdays, or new babies. It's customary for someone who has received a gift to give a return gift worth a percentage of the value of the original one.

**“I’VE BEEN LOOKING FORWARD TO ‘MUMMY & ME ESL’ ALL WEEK, AND FORGOT ABOUT THE LABOUR CLASS I’M SUPPOSED TO BE AT RIGHT NOW, AT THE HOSPITAL! OH WELL. THIS IS MORE FUN.”**

—Kathy Knight<sup>1</sup>, whose healthy second daughter was born this past month

In Okinawan culture, it's customary to wait anywhere from a few weeks to a month or so before returning a gift. That evening, however, Wakana came to our door within a few hours, bearing a huge package.

"Thank you so much for the cookies!" she gushed. "They're so good! I've already eaten six!" She thrust her bag of vegetables into my arms. "My husband loves them too. He's given me strict instructions to learn how to make them. Do you and your husband like Japanese food? Maybe we can have you over for dinner some time."

A few weeks later, I saw her on an evening walk with a friend. "Would you still like to learn how to make those cookies?" I asked.

"Yes! Who else will you be teaching?"

"Well, I was just thinking it would be you and me." I suddenly had a new thought. *Would she be uncomfortable with the undistracted attention of meeting one-on-one?* "But, if you'd like to invite friends, that would be fine too."

Her body language immediately relaxed. "Ok!"

When it came time to choose a date, she invited me to her house. We had tea, and a long chat. She even gave me a tour of her indoor garden, and presented me with a lovely Japanese teacup.

The following week, she arrived at our place with three of her friends. The five of us had a blast baking and chatting and having tea. At one point, we somehow got into talking about the time when Peter and I had first come to Okinawa, and I was bedridden for a year. I shared about how my relationship with Jesus made that time not only bearable but filled with victory and joy.

They've all expressed interest in coming again; next time they want to learn how to make lemon squares! May their hearts open to crave not only our tasty Canadian goodies, but also the sweetness of a life with Jesus.



Baking with Wakana and her friends.

<sup>1</sup> All names have been changed to protect privacy.

<sup>2</sup> In this true story, Hachiko waited daily for his master at the train station for the decade following his master's demise.

## This Month's Recipe

# Bacon Cheese Potatoes

*This is a favourite potluck contribution. It's simple and versatile because it can be made using either the crockpot or the oven.*

**Preparation & Cooking Time:** 3-4 hours

**Yield:** 6-8 servings

### Ingredients

1/4 lb. bacon, diced  
2 medium onions, thinly sliced  
4 medium potatoes, thinly sliced  
1/2 lb. cheddar cheese, thinly sliced  
Salt and pepper  
Butter  
Green onions (optional)

### Directions

1. Line crockpot with foil, leaving enough to cover the potatoes when finished.
2. Layer half each of the bacon, onions, potatoes and cheese in crockpot. Season to taste and dot with butter.
3. Repeat layers of bacon, onions, potatoes and cheese. Dot with butter.
4. Cover with remaining foil.
5. Cover and cook on high for 3-4 hours.

*Note: If you would like to make these in the oven, bake at 400°F for an hour in a covered 9"x13" dish.*



## Contact Information

### Thank You!

Thank you for your interest in our work. We send out newsletters every two months. If at any point you decide that you don't want to receive them anymore, just write or email us.



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