

The Housekeeper

by Alison, SIM SE Asia, 29 June 2009

When we arrived in southeast Asia last summer, we had to spend the first two weeks looking for a suitable place to live. We were blessed to find a home that worked well for us and suited our needs.

One day, not long after we had moved in, we received a phone call from the landlord. She explained that the previous tenants had used a housekeeper, and that she now needed work because the previous family had moved back to Europe. At the time, I did not want to think about dealing with house-help while trying to set up home and adjust to all the changes in my life. I thought it would be better to wait and see what our needs would be, so I told her 'thank you, but I am not ready to hire anyone.'



Opportunity Knocks

About an hour later, as I was working in the kitchen, a woman and a teenage girl drove up on a motorbike. I thought, 'Who is this? And why are they here?' I stepped outside to greet them, and they politely introduced themselves as Nim and Ice. Ice, at age 16, was able to speak a little English, but her mother was not able to speak English at all. Just then, I got a phone call from the landlord again. She explained to me that Nim was the housekeeper she had spoken about. At this point, I was a bit confused, because I thought I had made it clear I did not want to hire anyone—definitely a cross-cultural moment!

The landlord urged me to consider hiring Nim for one month. If I was not happy with her, I would have a way out. I decided I would give her one month ...

The following Monday, Nim arrived at our home at 9am sharp. She set to work immediately, already familiar with the house after having worked in it for 5 years with the previous tenants. I could not speak a word of her language to her, because I had not yet started language school, and she could not speak a word of English to me. I thought, 'What in the world am I going to do?' I need to give some instructions about the house and laundry. I knew it would be downright comical to try and communicate by sign language.

To my surprise, Nim knew exactly what to do. She worked steadily throughout the morning, never stopping for a break. She cleaned the bathrooms, swept the floors, mopped the floors, collected the rubbish, started the washing machine, and hung the wet clothes out on the line, all before noon! I was definitely pleased and surprised. In the afternoon she ironed the clothes that had dried out in the sun, and then she began to wash windows. By this time I was floored. Never have I seen such a speedy, efficient assault on a house. I wondered if she could keep up such a pace, but it continued for the whole trial month. My husband Tripp said she was like a general in the house.

In time, I was able to ask her to prepare some meals for us and we learned that she was a great cook as well. I was hooked! When the month trial period was finished, I decided to take her on full-time. By this time, I had started language classes and my studies were filling my days. Having Nim take care of the house allowed me to concentrate on learning the new language and not housework.

Not just a housekeeper

Clearly, Nim is a superior housekeeper, but she is so much more. Nim is very, very special to me. As I have studied this year, she has helped me tremendously with learning her language. Over time, we have grown closer and closer as we have been able to communicate better and share woman to woman.

In December, Nim's ex-husband was killed in a car accident. Although he and Nim had separated a number of years before, he did help pay the school tuition costs for their teenage daughter. Upon his death, there was nothing provided for her future. Nim was left to manage the financial burden on her own. She began to open up to me more and more about her life, her frustrations, and her worries.

Her willingness to talk to me opened the door for me to share spiritual truth with her. I told her how much she was loved by God. I told her that God hears and sees and understands the trials we face. She was startled when I told her that God never goes to sleep! I told her that she did not need to carry the load by herself, because God wants us to give it to him.

One morning, Nim came to work and was clearly upset. She told me that her neighbour had committed suicide. As we worked together making the beds, I told her once again about the love of God. I spoke of the living God that I love and serve. I told her that man does not have to be consumed with worry and fear, because God is able to lift the burden. Nim stopped her work, looked me in the eye and said, 'I want to go to church with you.'

Decision time

It was time. The door was open wide for a clear explanation of the gospel. I had not yet learned the advanced vocabulary to be able to give a clear explanation of the gospel, but I did know someone who could. I told my dear language teacher at school about Nim, and her desire to go to church and hear more about God. My teacher is a committed Christian woman, and she has the heart of an evangelist. We decided that the three of us should meet together.

My teacher clearly shared the Gospel with Nim. When my teacher finished and asked Nim if she understood, she answered 'yes.' She then presented Nim with an option—she could wait and think about what was shared, or she could decide to follow Christ today. Nim responded, 'I'm ready, I'm ready.' My eyes filled with tears as I heard Nim eagerly follow in prayer after my teacher. God had graciously prepared her to receive His message of good news with gladness—there would be no more striving to make enough merit, in the hope of securing a better state in the next life. God gave her his perfect merit through his son, Jesus.

All of this happened just a few weeks ago, but Nim is already changing. Every week, my teacher comes to the house to disciple her. We have gone to a local church together the last two Sundays, and I had the privilege of sitting next to her as she took her first communion.

She is starting to read the Bible and memorise scripture. She began with Genesis ... reading for the first time that God created the heavens and the earth—this is all new news to her! She did not know that God was here from the beginning. She already senses that God is at work—changing her. She brings a ready smile and lots of questions to work!

Truly, this has been an amazing time for me to watch and see the goodness of God. I have loved Nim for a long time, but now she is family.

Pray

- Please pray for Nim to continue to grow in her faith and have a hunger for truth.
- Pray for Nim's extended family. She is eager for them to hear the same good news.
- Pray for wisdom to know when and how to approach other family members. Nim is already asking my teacher to talk to them.
- Pray that God will use Nim to see His kingdom come in her community.

Some of the names in this story have been changed.

0 comments

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Urgent Prayer Need

Pray for the country of Nigeria - for peace to be restored, and for the Lord's comfort for all those affected by the recent violence.