

Thought for the Day 18th June - John Thew

SWEET POTATOES AND GOSPEL FELLOWSHIP

Submitted by John Thew

This prayer letter comes from CMS couple SAM AND SHAN-SHAN with Jasmine (5) and Elijah (2) serving the Lord in Taiwan. They arrived in Taiwan just last year, where they are preparing to work with Taiwanese university students. They write:



We've read in the news that some churches in Australia & NZ are slowly being able to meet together again in small groups. Thank God for this opportunity! Taiwan has gone over 56 days without a local case of coronavirus now, and restrictions are slowly easing up for us.

Here's a short reflection from Shan-Shan about what growing Taiwanese vegetables has taught her!

ON Our first day in Taiwan, some locals gave us a bag of sweet potatoes. I put them in a box by our kitchen and forgot about them. Not long afterwards, sprouts started to grow. So we decided to grow a sweet potato vine!

In Taiwan, sweet potato leaves are as common as lettuce. Lots of people grow it, and everyone loves eating it as a leafy green. It's our kids' favourite vegetable right now.

The first step is to cultivate these sprouts from a mature sweet potato. Once the sprouts are a few inches long and have put out some leaves, they're ready to be twisted off. But you can't plant them directly into soil yet!

Secondly, you need to place them in a jar of water for the rooting process. This is an important step, because, in order for the sprout to survive, it needs the ability to take root in the new soil.

Lastly, once the roots are ready, it's time to transplant the baby plant into its new soil. This is a touch and go time for the sprouts. Extra care and watering are required to gently nurture the new sprouts as they become accustomed to the new soil.

My pot of sweet potato sprouts took many months to settle down. We arrived in Taiwan during summertime, and the daily high temperatures persisted into autumn. These were harsh conditions for fragile sprouts with little root and leaves to withstand. Initially, their growth was stunted, and they started to wilt and lose leaves. But I persevered in caring for my little vine, and eventually new leaves shot out. After all that, we recently harvested our first lot of sweet potato leaves and it was very exciting!

The journey of growing our sweet potato vine feels a lot like our journey with CMS. Our Christian community in Australia is the mature sweet potato that grew us. Our time at St Andrews Hall and deputation was the rooting process that prepared us. And Taiwan is the new soil we've been planted into.

So who's the gardener in this story? Who picked us out and sent us to St Andrew's Hall? Who has cared for us throughout this process? Who has watered us and provided for our needs?

God, of course – but He has done this through you, our CMS supporters! As a fellowship, you picked us out and sent us. You gave us time at St Andrews Hall learning how to take root and flourish in our new soil. And then you sent us here to this new patch of soil, and continued to care for us – through prayers, messages, emails, video calls, packages, cards and visits!

Your words of encouragement have been like shade from the sun. Your giving has been like the water that we need to stay alive in this new soil. And your prayers are what God has used to sustain and grow us. We are still “baby seedlings” learning and growing in our new cultural soil. We have a long way to go. But we pray that under God, our partnership in the gospel will bear a harvest of glory to God.

Well Friends, be encouraged as you continue with what might seem like the daily mundanities of living the Christian life. Our prayers and support and efforts and fellowship all align with God’s works of grace that he has planned and purposed for us to be part of, from before the beginning of time.

To God be the glory.

