

# Japanese Mobster Bows to Christ, Pastors Church of Ex-Drug Criminals

They call him "Teacher." The gangster-turned-pastor joined the Japanese mafia when he was 17, CNN reports, but now baptizes hundreds in the name of Jesus.

"I know how bad I was and the bad things I had done," says Tatsuya Shindo. "At the same time, I know how much I was forgiven by God. So I wanted to engage myself in God's work."

Shindo pastors a congregation of about 100 in an old bar. Former loan sharks, drug dealers and more who are familiar with a life of crime comprise the parishioners.

"Before, we were in rival gangs, firing guns," Shindo says. "Now, we're praising the same God."

Prison bars held Shindo captive when he finally found the Lord. It was the gangster's seventh time in jail.

Ezekiel 33:11 captured the heart of the meth-addicted inmate who once ran in one of the most prestigious circles of the yakuza, or Japanese mafia.

"Say to them: As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live," the passage reads. "Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why will you die, O house of Israel?"

And turn he did. The pastor, sheathed in tattoos and missing a finger, has baptized more than 100 people, including his mother.

"They are seeking divine intervention," says Shindo. "They

want God to help them with their problems.”