



# Hikari! from Kevin & Kaori

Hikari means "light"

*Church Planting with the Lavermans in Japan*

Light up the Darkness! July 2010 Japan Partner Newsletter



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Tomohisa's daughter, Takako (L) with Kevin & Kaori (R) at her baptism

## Our God, Eager to Save

Tomohisa had reached a coveted status in Japan's vertically-ordered society: medical doctor. Along with the status came wealth, which he used to buy the affection of women and lots of booze. His drinking and infidelity broke his wife's heart and alienated his daughter. Eventually it took a toll on his body as well: terminal liver cancer.

For the daughter, Takako, it was a long road from pain and resentment to grace and forgiveness. Healing began when she found her Savior, Jesus, and was filled by the power of his Spirit. My joy was baptizing Takako and seeing her grow in her new faith. She was faithfully by his side when her father became bedridden in the final stages of the cancer. "My only desire now is for his salvation," she told me. We prayed and asked God to break down the spiritual resistance in his heart. I wondered to myself, however, whether there was enough time. Tomohisa's prognosis was not good: a few weeks at best. God would have to be pretty eager to save.

**Additional Support Needed:** \$539 per month

The following week a meeting in Tokyo brought me near his hospital. But I hesitated visiting. Takako told me Tomohisa didn't want to see any Christian pastors. "What good could my foreigner presence and stumbling about in Japanese do but increase his misery?" I reasoned. So, I shoved into the subway train and

headed home. Three stations later I felt strongly shoved out. God was doing the pushing, but I couldn't understand why.

Stepping out onto platform, I wondered what to do next. The answer seemed to come: "Find a place to make a call." I climbed the exit stairs to ground level where I could get a good signal. I scrolled through my address book, but I didn't have Takako's number. For me that was as good a reason as any to get back on the train home. That's when the phone in my hand rang. "Pastor Kevin?" It was the son-in-law. "My wife and I are here at the hospital. Tomohisa's situation is bad. He's crying for help. I don't know anything about the Bible. Can you come?" "Of course," I replied. "I can be there soon." Hanging up, I was stunned at the timing of the call.

But now it dawned on me how unprepared I was. I had no Bible with me. What could I share with him? That's when I heard it. Hymns! The sound was flooding out from a newsstand just up the street from me. This didn't fit into the local Tokyo scene. We have hamburgers and hiphop, but not hymns! Walking up, I was dumbfounded to see a logo for the Salvation Army. A uniformed woman (continued on back)

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### ▶ This Week in Prayer

**PRAYER FOCUS Thru-the-week:**  
*In August we will launch "Grace C.A.F.E." (Christ And Friendship in English) on Sunday afternoons at church. It is part of our larger strategy to reach and support the many thousands of Japanese returnees (Japanese who have lived abroad), international students and foreigners in our area. We will also offer a Returnee Gathering event in August. Pray that the gospel would penetrate this new demographic of people through this effort.*

#### Monday Partnership

Our work together with the Kondo family (new national pastor) during this critical first year for them continues to challenge yet encourage us. Please pray for unity in spirit and purpose as we put hands together in church ministry in the days ahead.

#### Tuesday New Believers

One single young man and a middle-aged woman placed their faith in Christ since our last letter. Pray for good follow-up study. The woman has many family issues and hurts.

#### Wednesday Housing

Pastor Kondo is looking to move into the church neighborhood, but rent is especially high in our area and our church plant can only provide so much. Pray that God would direct us to an affordable solution.

#### Thursday Baptisms

One young lady, a single mom, and a older lady in Denen Grace Chapel are considering baptism, but face opposition and struggles with their family. Pray that their families will understand and accept their decisions.

#### Friday Kids "English Bee"

Kevin will be doing a 3-day Kids English event at Denen Grace at the end of July. Pray for new contacts, physical strength in this hot weather, and opportunities to share Christ.



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"The [Japanese] people walking in DARKNESS have seen a great LIGHT." Isaiah 9:2

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(from front) greeted me, "Are you interested in some Christian material?" "Actually, I'm a missionary. I need a Japanese Bible for a hospital call," I replied. Smiling, she said, "Go to the second floor of the building behind us. The man up there will have a Bible for you." I went. Sure enough, he did. As I reboarded the train for the hospital, I was filled with awe at how God had been leading my steps.

The family was waiting for me at the hospital. Tomohisa was doubled up on the bed in discomfort, his estranged wife beside him. The doctor had just come to administer pain medication. I sat near and softly sang a verse of "What a Friend We Have in Jesus," then read from Psalm 23 and John 14. "Do you want me to read more?" I asked. He nodded. "Tomohisa, God wants to forgive your sin and has made a way for you to be with Him forever. Listen." I read from John 3. "Do you believe these things?" He nodded again. In his pain, he was almost beyond speech. "Why don't we pray and ask God's forgiveness in Jesus," I suggested. He surprised me by stretching out his hand to mine. As I prayed he moved his lips along with me. When I ended with "Amen" his face relaxed. He sighed softly and drifted off to sleep. The medication had eased his pain, but God had eased his soul. He may have been a respected doctor, an alcoholic, a womanizer, but now he was a child of God.

Tomohisa never fully regained consciousness, four days later passing into eternity, and into the arms of our Lord. I spoke at the wake and funeral. Done in a Christian (not Buddhist) way, it was a powerful testimony to the family. God received much glory for his work of salvation.

I left the Bible I read to Tomohisa in the hands of his wife. She is reading it now. I've no doubt that she, too, will soon find the grace in Christ that he experienced in the last moments of life. Why? Because God is moving heaven and earth to accomplish his salvation plan. Trains, missionaries, cell phones, newsstands and people might all be but small parts of it. Let's not forget that salvation is his business. God IS very eager to save! ■



Kevin on the move with the "black box"

## The Laverman Blog Spot

### THE BLACK BOX

posted on blog on July 11, 2010

Church Planting = transporting heavy objects. When you haven't your own church building you need to do a lot of carting things back and forth from home. The first years were especially backbreaking. The last six years we've had some storage at the hall we rent. Still, you name it and I've probably moved to or from church.

The latest of the heavy objects made its way to our church location this past Friday. In an effort to upgrade our PA system, I purchased a rack enclosure and audio components. It made sense to assemble it

at home, but then came the problem. It easily weighs 500 pounds after equipment is installed. There was no way this was going to be lifted into my vehicle, even with my sumo buddies helping out!

In the end it seemed best to simply roll this black beast all the way from our home to the church location, a distance of about 1 1/2 miles.

I've long since lost the ambition to completely blend in with Japanese society. I realize I stand out. But I've never felt like I stood out more than this past Friday. I felt the eyes of the community on me as I noisily bumped and rolled this massive black box down the streets. Past bike riders and pedestrians, past the local train station, through traffic, down the main shopping street, and in front of the police station. What a spectacle! Although no one was brave enough to ask, the common question I saw written on their faces was, "What is that foreigner doing with that huge metal black box?" Before the journey was done, I had the same question.

Although my sore muscles need more time, my pride has at least recovered. Still, I wonder what strange heavy thing I'll be moving next week. My neighbors are asking the same! ■

**My partnership** *with the Lavernans' work in Kawasaki #381* **Additional Support Needed: \$ 539 per month** **Clip & Send**

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