

日本

# Hikari!

from Hikari means "light"  
Kevin & Kaori  
*Church Planting with the Lavernans in Japan*  
Light up the Darkness!

May 2011 Japan Partner Newsletter



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Post-tsunami cleanup work in Shiogama involved removal of large amounts of all kinds of trash and mud

## In Japan "for such a time as this"

### Quake, tsunami, nuclear crisis...

"It's beyond a nightmare," said a Japanese friend of the apocalyptic scene in northern Japan. The 9.0m earthquake and 40 foot tsunami double punch left 20,000 dead or missing, and a half million homeless. Then came the nuclear crisis knockout punch. Then powerful aftershocks and utility outages. Then shortages of rice, foods and bottled water.

Here in Tokyo we wondered what might come next. We watched the mass exodus of foreigners and the panic buying. As we waited out the aftershocks, we also read your many emails of encouragement. We felt safe and secure in God's will to stay put and minister as He allows. The disaster has left much work to be done. Troubled times are opportunities to speak into the troubled hearts of Japanese that have been tightly closed. *"And who knows (Kevin & Kaori) but that you have come (to Japan)...for such a time as this?"* Esther 4:14

**Additional Support Needed:** \$429 per month

### Tsunami ground zero

As things have settled down, several of us missionaries have been taking trips into the tsunami area to help with ongoing cleanup.

If you knew that in 25 minutes everything around you would be taken away, what would you do or grab? As the tsunami sirens blared

away, families in Tohoku fled to safety with little more than the clothes on their back. And then the monster wave came. Those who hesitated lost their lives. Those who fled lost everything else.

We were overwhelmed by the enormous piles of people's once precious possessions, now just broken, muddled trash waiting to



Tsunami seawater turned prized items like Mr. Ai's piano into useless trash

be taken away. I was reminded again of the fleeting nature of the things of this world. At one home, we carried a priceless baby grand piano (*photo above*) to the curb. I felt so sorry for the piano teacher in the picture who lost his livelihood and his beloved treasure. At another home at which we scraped out mud, the owner was sorting a ruined collection of (*see back*)

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## Prayer for Japan

*Aftershocks for us are now nudges from above to pray harder for Japan. Would you join us in praying for a broken nation?*

These are historic times in mission work. Postwar Japan has never experienced so great a tragedy. Never has the nation looked so desperately for an unseen, unshakable hope. Never has the door been so dramatically thrown open to the gospel message. Would you pray that God would use us in the days ahead to comfort, heal and bear witness for Him. We need His wisdom and strength for the great task before us.

When a great earthquake struck the early church, it occurred during a prayer meeting (Acts 16:25-26). The doors of the prison were thrown open and the prisoners set free. 99% of our friends, the nation of Japan, are spiritually imprisoned. Please PRAY that by this earthquake the doors that have long held Japan prisoner would be thrown open.

## Close Call or Close God?

One of our church members was shopping with a non-Christian friend at the warehouse club, Costco, here in Machida, Tokyo immediately before the quake struck. The two were headed back up to their parked car, but her friend decided she needed a free refill on her drink for the ride home. Moments later the quake hit. The ramps of the parking garage pancaked on top of each other, trapping cars underneath. This is one of the few structures in Tokyo that received enough damage to make the news. Both were likely spared by the "need" for a refill (the hand of God). The non-Christian friend was pretty frazzled. She has been to our church. She told me in December when I gave an invitation to receive Christ's forgiveness at our Christmas service that she "wanted to put her hand up too." Pray that this close call would urge her to that spiritual decision.



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

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(from front) of home videos and cameras. "Toss it all...toss it all." he repeated. In an attempt to comfort him I said, "This is a sad time. But Shiogama will come back. I'm praying for you!" The man replied slowly, "Shiogama may come back. But I cannot. I've lost everything. I can't live here again." How great is the loss for those for whom the world is all there is!

### Gotta share Jesus!

A recent Sunday I shared a message on Lamentations in light of events. Afterward a woman told me excitedly, "I've gotta share Jesus. I've gotta tell my friends that He's coming again. Things are coming to an end someday." Among the confusion as to God's purposes for this tragedy, that kind of passion for evangelism is also bubbling to the surface in Christians. That passion in our hearts is also stronger than ever. I sense that a wave of spiritual awakening in Japan is coming that will be more powerful than any tsunami. Have *you* ever thought about coming to Japan? The harvest is ready! Would you pray and support us as we reach out to these people that need Him? ■

### ▶ Justen's Quake Adventure



Our son was at school when the earthquake hit. Students and teachers ran outside and waited out aftershocks with other frightened residents.

Then the problems came.

Cell phone and landline service was down. Parents couldn't be contacted. The train system had come to a halt. How were kids to get back home to worried parents?

The decision was made to drive the students home. They quickly became stuck in the worst traffic jam ever in Tokyo. After 3 hours with little movement, one of the teachers stayed behind in the vehicle while another left with the children. They joined the millions of other commuters on a massive Tokyo walk-a-thon. Convenience stores and eateries that weren't closed were quickly stripped bare. With little food, the kids managed a 3 hour trek back to that teacher's home in Tokyo to spend the night.

The teacher still driving arrived early the next morning. He was so exhausted that he fell down the stairway where the students were sleeping and needed taken to the hospital by ambulance. Needless to say, when Justen arrived safely back home the next day, he was worn out in many ways.

## The Laverman Blog Spot

### Seeing God's Mercy in Tragedy

posted on March 18, 2011 [www.lavermansinjapan.blogspot.com](http://www.lavermansinjapan.blogspot.com)

After WWII, our mission (WorldVenture) entered Japan and began intense church planting work -- not in heavily populated urban areas, but in the countryside of Japan in Tohoku! There the gospel was received readily. Churches were established quickly. More than 30 churches were started in the area now devastated by the earthquake and tsunami. This area has been among the most heavily evangelized by our mission.

Just as Nagasaki had the longest exposure to the gospel in Japan (500 years) before the atomic bomb fell, so Tohoku has had the longest spiritual opportunity in postwar Japan. And since then, the church there has really worked hard at evangelizing their towns. God has definitely left a witness!

In fact, while cleaning up a home in hard hit Shiogama, I came across a water-soaked Bible! It was a symbol to me of God's faithful testimony to these people. I believe He mercifully prepared the Japanese people in that area spiritually for this great tragedy. He sent his workers into that area 60 years ago to call his Tohoku



Our missionary relief team helped clean out the home of this family

people to himself. As Peter 3:9 says, "He is patient, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."

While volunteering in Shiogama after the tsunami, I was moved to see the response of the local church there. Shiogama Bible Baptist Church, started decades ago by WorldVenture missionaries, was now leading the charge in the relief effort. Daily they sent out teams of workers into the devastated community. Even though many had rejected His call, God was even now mercifully reaching out to his Tohoku people, bringing comfort and healing. ■

## My partnership

*with the Lavermans' work in Kawasaki* #381

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