

**REACHING THE OTHER 99**  
church planting with you to reach the 99% in Japan

**FEBRUARY 2013 NEWS**

**Kevin & Kaori Laverman**  
**CHURCH PLANTING IN KAWASAKI, JAPAN**



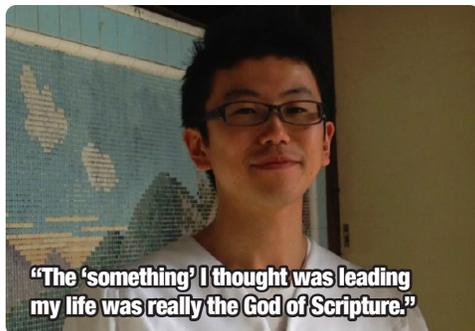
*Miyajima in Hiroshima, Japan*

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## ➔ From "Something" to Jesus

Japan, the land of "a million gods" struggles with understanding the God of Scripture. Yet God is at work, calling people here at Denen Grace Chapel through "the Gate" of his Son, Jesus. Mr. Ikko Watanabe shares his story below.



**"The 'something' I thought was leading my life was really the God of Scripture."**

"Before I came to Denen Grace Chapel, I thought that man's notion of God was the seed of discord. I decided that this world was simply filled with dueling religious views. History filled with violence and religious wars convinced me that God was simply a concept made up by man, and the reason such bloodshed continued.

But long before I came to this church, God was at work in me. The me that was a sinner, that denied God, and looked on everything as just a matter of fate. God was at work in that me.

I often had the sense that 'something' was leading me through life. I came to call that something my god. It seemed quite powerful. Up until I came to church, I lived according to the logic of 'do your best and hope for the gods' blessing.' But the day came when I realized that the

'something' at work in my life was God. On July 1st, I heard a message here from Genesis 42 on Joseph's reunion with his brothers. God had been at work behind the scenes in everything Joseph had been through. In the message, this work in a person's life was explained as the tapestry of God. Even though I cannot understand from the knots on the underside what God is doing, a beautiful design is being woven when viewed from the front side.

Hearing this, I was felt powerfully convicted that the 'something' I had thought was leading my life was really the God of Scripture. Suddenly, 'coincidences' that had led me to Denen Grace



**Ikko-san (front center) with Denen Grace Chapel members at his baptism celebration**

Chapel struck me as being His hand in my life. Each was a part of God's plan, woven together. And now, in that plan, I was being called to Him. ➔ **continued on back**

### About the photo above

Tens of thousands of "torii" like the famous one above are found throughout Japan. They are considered "gates" to sacred areas occupied by the gods. Jesus' counter declaration, "*I am the gate*; whoever enters through me will be saved" carries rich meaning in Japan.

**PRAY**

**with us thru the week**

**SUN** As you worship the Lord today, remember the group of new worshippers halfway around the world in Kawasaki. Ask God to bless, use and multiply our church work.

**MON** We're traveling to the States for 5 weeks from mid-Feb to care for immigration matters, visit churches and family. Pray we can reflect on ministry and encourage mission vision.

**TUE** Pray for the ongoing relief work in Tohoku, coming up on the 2-year anniversary of the 311 tsunami. Pray for new church starts.

**WED** Ask the Lord of the Harvest to raise up new workers for the ripe fields in post-311 Tohoku, Japan.

**THUR** Many Japanese become Christians overseas. Pray these returnees to Japan would connect with a church and grow in their new faith.

**FRI** Several of our young believers are struggling with marriage decisions and overwhelming work schedules. Pray they would set God-centered priorities in their lives.

Additional support: \$575 needed monthly. See our website to give online.



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➡ continued from front

Although I'd previously denied God, when I came to this church last Christmas out of curiosity and began to read the Bible, I was surprised by how easily I came to accept that it was God's word to me. The more I read, the more I felt God's nearness, and the more remarkable I came to think of Him to be—that he would even hear my prayer! Still, I struggled to respond to the call of John 3:16.

But on July 1st everything changed. The Holy Spirit convicted me that the message I was hearing was for me. And I was filled immediately with an overwhelming, but natural, desire to accept Christ as Lord. As Ephesians 1:4 says, 'He chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.' Before I even knew Him, I know



**Ikko-san (center) with new fiancée at their engagement ceremony in January**

that God had a plan and purpose of salvation for me. I am so grateful.

By God's grace and plan, I stand here today for baptism. This is the beginning. I surrender my life completely to God who, in all things and at all times, does what is right. I am thankful to all of you who have supported me. Please continue to pray that I can grow in my Christian life, and walk in a way to please Him. Thank you." 📧

**Thanks for praying! Big changes just keep coming for Ikko-san. Last month he was engaged to be married to a young lady in the church. The two will be wed this summer. The tapestry of his life will, no doubt, see some new threads in the days ahead.**

**We'd like to keep you updated!**

But we need your email address! We send out a separate email prayer update every couple months. To receive it, please register your email address here:

[www.lavermansinjapan.org/signup](http://www.lavermansinjapan.org/signup)

**➡ Japan 10% off**  
**Some restrictions may apply.**

It's true. Everything in Japan is 10% off. That is to say, the dollar is finally starting to rally a bit against the yen (after a 25% drop back in 2007~8) in the exchange rate markets, up nearly 10% from its lows just a couple months ago.

For us missionaries whose support comes from dollars, this makes things appear 10% cheaper. We're praying this isn't one of those "for a limited time only" deals and that the rally continues on. Thanks for your ongoing support!

**➡ Kevin graduates**  
**Heaven rejoices. Japan amazed.**

A few things like moving with family to Japan, learning a befuddling language, and starting a church in our home stretched his 4-year seminary plan into 15 years. Finally, however, in December of last year, Kevin finished the last of his projects for his two master degree programs from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. Buy him some cake.

**from the BLOG** **New Year House Shopping**



I'll never forget that sensible question. It was uttered by a little boy wandering about in the same aisle as me in our local home center around New Year's day.

His mom was right there next to him, keeping him busy while his father, no doubt, was checking out the power tool sales (New Year in Japan is like Black Friday with its big sales).

The boy took inventory of everything about him, touching and monkeying with whatever was within his reach. Then he abruptly stopped, looked curiously at an item up high, pointed, and asked mom, "What's that?" He'd probably

never seen a housing for a deity that Japanese typically use to decorate a *kamidana*, or god shelf, in their homes. This particular one was on sale that day.

His mom followed his finger to the do-it-yourself kit (roughly the size of a loaf of bread), and said, "Oh. Well, that's a house for god." The boy's response was priceless. He screwed up his face quizzically and said, "A house for god? Why would god need a house? That's dumb." From the mouths of babes! His mom was completely dumbfounded. She darted a sheepish glance my direction before scurrying the boy along.

Why limit the divine to a tiny decoration? Before pointing fingers at Japan's poor theology, shouldn't we perhaps ask how we've also limited God in many ways within our own faith? Perhaps not in the way of a do-it-yourself kit, but to greater degrees than we recognize and admit. A missionary colleague wrote a piece on this subject as it relates to Japanese New Year traditions. I have posted it on our blog. It will give you a sense of Japan's religious perspective and our challenges in communicating a Biblical worldview. Go ahead. Open your web browser. Think and pray!

**read more online** [www.lavermansinjapan.org/blog](http://www.lavermansinjapan.org/blog)