

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

JUNE 2013 NEWS

Kevin & Kaori Laverman
CHURCH PLANTING IN KAWASAKI, JAPAN

Martyred Christian gravestones near Yonekawa, Japan

www.lavermansinJapan.org



➔ The end...of the beginning

“Unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.” John 12:24



With Pastor Minegishi in front of the Prayer Center & relief goods storage facility

I've been reflecting anew on the truth of this Scripture lately. Sometimes God must bring things to an apparent end, before he can create a new beginning through which he plans to do an even greater work.

Last month I visited tsunami-struck northern Japan again, driving along mile after mile of brown, empty coastline. If anything seemed like a tragic end, this certainly did! And yet out of that end, God is beginning a great work of revival.

Consider Pastor M above with whom I visited on this trip. He pastors a small church (20 members) in Kesenuma that's part of our association in Miyagi prefecture. The tsunami claimed everything: newly-dedicated church building, his personal home, and all his possessions—including a prized collection of books. His family narrowly escaped the waves.

Now, two years later, we stand together at ground zero. He practically glows with excitement as he shows me about the new “Prayer Center” in the former church location. Then we go up a hill, safely away from the ocean, to see the land the church just purchased. He points out the space for a new parsonage, a volunteer center with community space, a Christian retirement home, and a new church facility—with room for 150.

I had to ask him to repeat that number. A church that would grow that large in rural Japan is unheard of. But Pastor M sees God working all around and has a dream. New beginnings.



At the memorial stone for Goto-san in Yonekawa, Japan May 2013

Or, consider J Goto, whose gravesite I visited above. He became a Christian leader at a time of brutal persecution in

➔ **continued on back**

About the photo above

Christianity was a forbidden religion in Japan during the 17th & 18th centuries. Thousands of Christians paid dearly for their faith, including those above. See our website --> about Japan --> halfway down the page for the complete story.

PRAY with us thru the week

SUN As you worship today, pray for our work at Denen Grace Chapel. We are slowly phasing out our roles here and praying toward our next church planting possibility in the area.

MON We're planning a 5-6 month home assignment from this fall to visit with churches and supporters in the States. Pray for us to finish well and prepare the church for our absence.

TUE Pray as Kevin does baptism prep with Mrs. N. this month. Pray for the baptism decisions of six other new Christians in the church.

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

THUR Kaori has begun taking a new oral med for her hepatitis B. Pray for her liver and body to respond well and for good blood test results.

FRI Pray for an evangelistic Bible study we are doing with Mr. T (no jokes please). Pray for him and six other seekers in the church to make faith decisions. God is at work!

Additional support: \$515 needed monthly. See our website to give online.

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➡ continued from front

Japan's 17th century. When ordered by his feudal lord to abandon his faith and evangelistic work, he responded, "Most humbly and with proper formalities, I am filled with gratitude for my lord's favor, but Jesus Christ's favor is far more immense than my lord's. I will not be able to please your lordship at this time." (This is the way Japanese say 'Nuts!')

In the ensuing crackdown by regional authorities, Goto's converts were brutally slaughtered. Surely they supposed this was an end to Christianity in the area! But driving away from the Goto gravesite and through the next town, I spotted a large Baptist church overlooking the river where the slaughter occurred. I wondered aloud whether, in God's grand scheme, some of those church members might just be descendants of Goto's converts.

Or, consider Mrs. E who passed away just this spring. When she first visited our church plant back in 2010, she made it clear where she stood. Her exact words to me (in English, no less) were, "I am not a Christian. I do not plan on becoming a Christian. I just want to hear [the] words of God, pray and sing a hymn."

But soon afterwards a critical illness softened her thinking. Even as her world seemed to be coming to an end, God was opening up a brand new beginning for her life. She placed her faith in Jesus and was baptized this past winter. No one in our gospel workshop at church sang with more fervor than her. No doubt she was ushered into eternity with the name of her precious Savior still on her lips.

Apparent endings. Our missionary work is full of them. No doubt so is your life. Trust God to create new beginnings! ☞

Days after my visit with Pastor M, his storage facility for relief goods burned to the ground in an accidental fire. Another setback. Another end. But not if I know God! Keep praying for his work in Kesenuma.

We need your email address!

We send out a separate email prayer update every few months. To receive it, please register your email address here:

www.lavermansinjapan.org/signup



➡ **Here & There**

If you follow our work, you know that we have a great love for returnees (Japanese who placed their faith in Christ while abroad, and have now returned home).

We began *Returnees in Kanagawa* to encourage and connect newly returning Christians. At our fellowship in June, I

asked the man next to me to share his story. His company sent him to Australia. While there he began to feel less and less satisfaction in his job, and more and more loneliness. He accepted an invitation to church where he found a community to belong to and a purpose to live for.

Mr I's testimony follows a pattern I've heard repeated by returnees. When Japanese live overseas, away from home:

- 1) They feel isolated and lonely and yearn for some friendship and community.
- 2) They reflect on their lives and spiritual situation more easily and seriously.
- 3) They are *much* more open to an invitation to church, and to faith in Christ.

This creates a missions opp for you. Are there Japanese in your church, work, or school? Reach out! You'll find them reaching back to you and up to God. ☞

LIFE IN JAPAN

When Garbage Refuses to Die

Sometimes garbage just refuses to die. And you know the situation is bad when even the recycle shop and trash collectors refuse to give it a final resting place.

The problem is a matter of simple physics. An unlimited amount of matter cannot occupy a limited amount of space at the same point in time. And our tiny Japanese home is, well, pretty limited! Like most Japanese houses, we have no basement, no attic, no garage, not even a large hall closet. Sending an unused item to storage limbo is not an option. So we continually and ambitiously get rid of things. But sometimes things refuse to leave you.



After my "generous" offers of gently used items are rejected by friends, I turn to the local recycle shop for hope. Now, my castoffs are generally of such a pathetic nature that the recycle shop only takes on my case pro bono...out of pity...and perhaps a little amusement. And I've appreciated their mission of mercy. But I may have exceeded my limit. These days they want original packaging, instruction manuals, dent-free and scratch-free quality, and (of all the nerve) they want for the item to actually work as it was intended! My humble offerings are rarely up to that kind of scrutiny. And the clerks, in the gentlest Japanese way possible, have apologetically asked me to take the item back when I leave.

On the ride home, my thoughts turn to how to throw the unnamed item away...easier thought than done in Japan. I glance at the item on the seat next to me. It's now aware of my intentions for its demise. It smirks at...

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