

REACHING THE OTHER 99

church planting with you to reach the 99% in Japan

JUNE 2018 NEWS

Kevin & Kaori Laverman
CHURCH PLANTING IN KAWASAKI, JAPAN



➔ FAST Food Evangelism

Just in time for summer BBQ season, here's a recent way God used even hamburgers to get the gospel message out in Kawasaki. So, as you fire up your grill this weekend, take a minute to pray for us here, and for the 99.5% of Japanese still needing to taste and see how good the Lord is!



Freshness Burger, MOS Burger, Umami Burger, DomDom, and Becker's. Those Tokyo burger chains have served billions with a unique Japanese taste. But on one night in a hamburger joint in Kawasaki, one man took a big bite of the gospel instead. Here's how it happened...

H-san was hungry. Spiritually hungry. He had only come to church a few times, but I could tell through those early Sunday Bible studies together that he wanted to take the next step. He was practically asking me like the Philippian jailer, "What must I do to be saved?" But I wanted to check the depth of that interest. If God put the conviction there, it would keep a few days more. So, I encouraged him one Sunday to, "Go home and think about things. Let's meet this Tuesday night and I'll lead you through the next step."

Tuesday night came. I met H-san at the train station on his way back from work. He was eager to talk. But my usual coffee shop spots around the station were packed solid. We headed to a hamburger place. It was packed, too. "Wait. There's a table," H-san pointed. Indeed, there was ONE tiny 2-person table

open, but it was cramped with noisy people all around. This wasn't the quiet spot I wanted to share the gospel with him. "How will I even hear him?" I wondered. It's hard enough for me to listen to Japanese in a quiet environment. And this was practically a rowdy hamburger party room! I breathed a short prayer as I squeezed in across from him.

Now, most Japanese would be too embarrassed to discuss a sensitive topic (with a foreigner, no less) just inches from the ears of others. So H-san's spiritual hunger at the cost of a little embarrassment spurred a bit of boldness in me, too. I opened my Bible and material, and began to speak above the surrounding noise. And then a remarkable thing happened...

➔ continued on back

About the photo above

Japanese eat hamburgers, too. Lots of them. In fact, there are some 45,300 hamburger shops in Tokyo alone. That's MANY MANY times the number of churches! And that's a sobering picture of the spiritual state of things in Japan.

PRAY with us thru the week

- SUN** Pray for a good ongoing relationship with our church rental hall owner (see back) We have several improvement requests that will help us all.
- MON** Pray for several newlywed couples at Denen Grace Chapel. Whew! It's been a busy 2018 already. More to come.
- TUE** Pray for someone to catch the vision to come and teach conversational English at our church. Opportunities abound around us.
- WED** Pray for provision of church facility and housing for us in Musashi Kosugi. We have a desire to reach this growing neighborhood through a new church start.
- THUR** Pray for bold faith of several individuals in evangelistic Bible studies or preparing for baptism with us in late August.
- FRI** Pray for our partnership in church planting work with new missionaries (Mitchells) and Changs (arriving fall 2018).
- SAT** Pray for our July travel to and in the States. We will visit with several supporting churches, and hope to see you!

➡ continued from front

As I started to share the gospel, the room went quiet! It was as if everyone decided to take a few L-O-N-G bites of their avocado burgers at once. God simply adjusted down the volume knob of the room with a "Peace, be still!" And in that tiny miracle of quiet space, I shared (ironically) "Steps to Peace with God" (thanks, Billy Graham, for preparing this in Japanese, too!)

And now, a couple more remarkable things happened...

First, H-san prayed with me to receive Christ. I never get over how remarkable salvation decisions are in Japan. It moves me each time!

Second, the surrounding people -- who seemed to still be quietly busy with their hamburgers -- overheard VERY clearly the entire gospel presentation, AND his loud prayer of decision.

People in Kawasaki may have come that night to eat hamburgers, but they all got a big bite of the gospel, too.

Hey, Japan, hold the sesame-seed bun. The Bread of Life is much better! No money needed. Just "come, buy and eat" (Isa 55:1). ☎

H-san and I are now meeting weekly at that same table. He is attending church and reading the Bible voraciously. It's not always quiet in that burger shop, but it's always a divine moment. I am preparing him for baptism this summer.

➡ SLOW to be floored



BEFORE
Storage room floor



AFTER
Sunday AM equipment

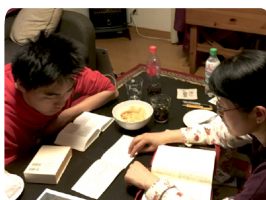
Not everything moves at the speed of a hamburger patty in Japan. When it comes to the church, things seems to take a long time. It takes years just to get conversant in the language. It takes many years to see people won to Christ and a small congregation built up. So if you want to church plant in Japan, you better have the patience of Job and lifespan of Methuselah.

For example, for 14 years we've used a basement rental hall for Sundays. For 14 years we've moved our equipment from the adjacent dusty, bumpy storage room and up the ramp to our rental sanctuary. After 14 years, we finally got the owner's trust and approval to make a game-changing improvement... put in a storage room floor.

It's true -- we were floored. And that's a good thing. Moving equipment was back-breaking work, even with things on wheels. (I've said it often: *Church planting involves moving heavy things.* Though I've never seen a chapter on this truth in any church planting textbooks.)

To be accurate, we were only half floored. Getting permission to do the other half...well, that might take another 14 years. But, it's Japan. Harmony is more important than hurry!

Here's a few recent examples...



It took Kaori's nephew 18 years, but Kaori just led him to faith in Christ! (It was over potato chips, by the way, not hamburgers).

In the photo, Kaori is sharing the *Four Spiritual Laws* with him. He prayed as a new believer a few minutes later!

VISION

to reach Japan

What 2020 Tokyo Olympics? Our vision for Japan is bigger than that! Could you take a few minutes to read through this link below that describes what we plan ahead?



Our 2020 Vision Booklet

↳ www.LavermansInJapan.org/vision

Would you consider standing with us in this vision? We are needing giving partners (see bottom form) in order to move forward in this plan for a new church in **Musashi Kosugi** and beyond. Thanks for being part!



It took 17 years of waiting, and months to raise support, but our friends Jay, Chandra,

and Penny, made it back to Japan for a few weeks of music ministry. Our church was greatly moved by their testimonies and music!



It took 4 years of prayerwalking and research, but we're finally at the cusp of a big step in

Musashi Kosugi as a new church planting location. We have a small breakthrough to share with you next time. For now, can we invite you to pray hard with us for "MuKo"? ☎

Pray for Musashi Kosugi (MuKo) -- nearly 50,000 have moved to this neighborhood just south of us in just the last 5 years -- to be fertile soil for the gospel seed in our church planting plans there. We covet your partnership with this effort.