



April 2017

Dear Praying Friends,

In the three months that we've been back in Japan, God has done so many things to show us how magnificently glorious He is. The fact that He is willing to use us in any way at all is a continual testament to His unending grace!

YOUTH CAMPS AND CONFERENCES



In the end of March, we took six of our teens to the annual youth conference in Kyoto, about 6 hours away by car. One of the teens was a girl named Sakuya who, although had not come to church before, was deeply interested in Christianity. One of the ladies in our church had been witnessing to her, and invited her to come to the youth camp. For her, it was very eye-opening to see so many Christian teens who loved and followed Jesus. While she didn't get saved at camp, I believe this was a significant step towards her salvation. I did have the opportunity to speak in one of the services, and was encouraged to see a young man from another church trust Christ during the invitation. According to his pastor, it was a HUGE answer to many years of prayer. God is so good!

Two weeks later, I headed to the Philippines to speak at a youth conference at Lighthouse Baptist Church in Catarman, where missionary Layne Jones has been pastoring for many years. The difference in the culture, as well as the reception to the Gospel was amazing to me. In the three days that the conference was held, there were at least 10 professions of salvation, and one young lady surrendered to go to their Bible College. I heard later that three other young people came to Pastor Jones after the conference expressing their desire to attend Bible College.



EASTER SUNDAY

I arrived back to Japan the day before Easter Sunday. Our church family had done an amazing job in preparing for our annual Easter event, and it was incredible to see the ever-increasing flow of people who came to the park where the event was held. God blessed immensely! We had 110 people attend the event, with 77 visitors. Several children and teens raised their hand indicating that they had trusted Christ during the invitation, and we're looking forward to following up on them. Several of the adults also came up to me afterward, thanking us for letting them come, and sharing how they understood for the first time how the resurrection of Christ was so key to Christianity. These are parents who, for the most part, have very little connection to Christianity, and so to hear them reflect on what they learned was so exciting to hear. Again, these are just the beginning steps toward salvation for them as we pray that not only their minds, but their hearts will continue to become open to the Gospel.



CHILDREN'S PROGRAM

The week after Easter Sunday was the official kickoff to our completely revamped children's program. Over the past year, we have seen an increase of grade-school age children attending. While Bethany, my mother, and another lady in our church have been doing a wonderful job of teaching the kids, it was clear that for the benefit of the children who were coming, and for the children who would be coming in the future, we needed to have help. So in early March, we held a "Sunday School Promotion Sunday," where we presented the new children's program to our church family in the hopes that they would be willing to have a part in training the following generation of children. The response was amazing! Something that was so encouraging to me and Bethany was that one of their main concerns was that they didn't want to miss being in the services. But we had enough adults and teens volunteer that we're now able to put them on a rotating schedule, which helps them to keep the consecutive number of missed services down to a minimum. I can't wait to see what God does through the children's program to draw more children to Himself, but also what He does through this to strengthen the faith and maturity of our believers who get to see God using them consistently to reach and train others.

SALVATIONS AND VISITORS

Throughout the past several months we have also been encouraged to see several new families start attending our church. The Takai family is a young couple with four young boys who moved from downtown Tokyo to our area in January. Mariko (Mrs. Takai) is a Christian, but Hiroki (Mr. Takai) is not yet, but loves being in church. They've been very faithful in attending the services, and it's exciting to see both of them listening intently to the preaching and teaching, as well as to see their boys participating in Sunday school.

One of our ladies, Elizabeth (she's from Peru) has been sharing the Gospel with her co-worker Mari for the last three years. Mari would come to church off and on as her work schedule would allow, but over the past several weeks, it was evident that her desire to understand the Gospel was increasing. During the last several mid-week prayer meetings, we were able to spend time with her, answering her questions and showing her what it meant to be a Christian. Last Thursday, she seemed to want to be saved, but still held back. So I invited her to think about what she had read and heard concerning the Gospel that night, and to put her faith in Jesus. Elizabeth followed up with her again later that evening. Sunday morning, Mari came to church, excitedly saying over and over, "I believe Jesus! I believe Jesus!" She had trusted Christ that Thursday night! Praise the Lord!!

UPCOMING EVENT

In the next several weeks, our church family will be preparing for yet another major outreach event, our church cookout, which will be held on May 3. This is one of the events where MANY unsaved friends and family members are willing to attend, and even listen to the Gospel being presented to them. It has consistently been an event that has allowed us to interact with and develop relationships with people who would have never been willing to step foot into a church building, yet have become more and more open to hearing and accepting the Gospel. Please pray with us that we will see friends and family members trust Christ through this event.

Thank you for all of your sacrifice: both in time praying, and in financial giving, that enables us to love and serve our brothers and sisters here in Japan, and to share the glorious Gospel with those who will hear. May God receive all the glory!

Serving Him,
The Carters to Japan