



May 2018

The first half of this year has been such a flurry of events, administrative deadlines and ministry needs, it seems that we have had to rely on our Father to sustain us and uphold us through these last several months more than I can recall in recent years. And yet it is during these times that we again discover that His strength is more clearly seen in and through our weakness; His power is made more real in our frailty. In our struggle to keep our “heads above water,” we are reminded that it isn’t our frantic “paddling” that keeps us afloat. Rather, it’s the calm, sure, ever-present hand of our Father who holds us up.

FEBRUARY MARRIAGE CONFERENCE

The population of Japan has shrunk for the seventh consecutive year. Japan has now become the most aged society in the world, and it is primarily because of marriages, and the consequential low birthrate. One of the issues young Japanese Christians face is a very real struggle, first to find godly spouses, and then to know how to have Christ-honoring marriages. In February, several Baptist churches in the Tokyo area held a weekend conference to address these issues and to give Christian singles a Biblical understanding of how to have a Christ-honoring marriage and a God-glorifying home. I was asked to be the speaker this year, and was very thankful for God’s guidance throughout our time together. Please pray for these young Christians in this crucial time that will not only affect their immediate future, but quite literally the future of generations to come.



YOUTH CAMP

At the end of March, I was able to take a group of teenagers to youth camp about 6 hours away, where 15 Baptist churches throughout Japan gather for three days of preaching and teaching. This camp has always been a great encouragement and challenge for our teenagers. Think about this. If the average church size in Japan is between 25 and 30, how many of those who attend are teenagers? More than likely, just a small handful (This is true for most of the churches I know). For many of our teens, they know very few other Christian teens. They are often the only Christian they know of who attends their school. It is very easy for them to feel like Elijah did when he wondered if he were the only one serving God in the land. Can you imagine how much of an impact, how much vigor and strength it will bring your soul to see a hundred other teenagers who love Jesus like you do, all gathered together in one place, lifting your voices in unison as you sing praise to your Father, intently listening with you as the Word is being preached? It changes you. It opens your eyes to the fact that you aren’t alone, that you are actually a part of the Kingdom of God that is great, grand and glorious! As they head back to the rigorous grind of Japanese school, please intercede in prayer for these teens that they would keep glorifying God with their lives.



EASTER

The Sunday after we returned from camp, our church had our annual Easter event. For the past several years, we have gathered at a nearby park to hold the event, as it has drawn many more people than can fit at our church building. This year we had an attendance of 89 people. It has continued to be a time for people who have never been to church to not only bring their children to hear the Gospel, but to hear the Gospel themselves. I find it so encouraging to see moms and dads sitting next to their children listening intently to the story of Christ's resurrection. Please pray that the seed of the Gospel will grow and nurture as it is planted and watered in their hearts.



BARBECUE BAPTISM

In January, a lady named Kiyoko Shimizu called me and asked me if it was ok to come to our church. She had been part of the Jehovah's Witnesses, and in her study of the Bible, had recognized that their teachings concerning Jesus were wrong.



Since that Sunday, she had been coming almost every week, studying and asking questions. After talking with her at great length about her understanding of the Gospel, I had no doubt in my mind that she had clearly trusted Christ. Our church barbecue was approaching, so I asked her if she would like to be baptized in the river next to where we held our cookout. She wholeheartedly agreed. This year we had 90 people come to the cookout. Many of them were unsaved friends and family of our church family who have been coming to the cookout consistently for several years. I believe this year had a bigger impact on many of them as they got to hear a clear presentation of the Gospel, and then seeing the testimony of this dear sister in Christ.

TSUNAMI 7 YEAR ANNIVERSARY

March 11 was the seven year anniversary of the great tsunami disaster. After our service on that Sunday, several of our church family drove about 3 hours away to Fukushima to show our support for our Christian brothers and sisters who are still recovering from the nuclear meltdown. While it was a time of solemn remembrance of the many who perished into eternity, it was also a time of encouragement and strength for our dear brothers and sisters who continue to share the gospel with those around them. Please continue to remember them in your prayers: that God would continue to sustain them and uplift them as they shine the light of the gospel of hope to others.

On a personal note, we are greatly looking forward to having our family reunited again! This summer, our oldest son Tyler will be returning to Japan from college for a few months, and my parents will also be returning from furlough. Thanks so much for remembering us in prayer! The notes of encouragement, the quick emails to remind us that you are thinking about us are always such a great blessing to us!

Serving Him,
The Carters to Japan