

# Chang4Japan

*Making disciples of Jesus in Japan for the growth of the Gospel in Japan*

 **WORLDVENTURE**  
A Global Catalyst for Gospel Movements

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## **We know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. (Rom. 8:28)**

Today is the first anniversary of our move to Japan. Maybe you wonder how we doing, and what is our thought about living in Japan. As I think back what happened over this year, Rom. 8:28 popup in my mind.

I need God's word to constantly remind me, why God send us to Japan. For many people, when they look at the prosperity of Japan, they might think that living in Japan will be a wonderful thing. In some way and some degree, yes. Compare with most mission fields, Japan is a lot nicer and convenient and advance place. However, living in this advance place have a different kind of challenges.

Missionary in many countries has been view as a resourceful person. It is true that in many material needy country, missionary usually has more resources than the local, so people easily look up to the missionary for help. Japan is not the case. Japanese people, in most case, are materially abundant. Even though they have much spiritual need, the strong emphasis on privacy and the insider and outsider cultural mindset and the reality of overwork makes it hard to have a deep connection with people. Mission in Japan, in my own observation, feels like an upward battle. Is like a primary student tries to evangelize a Ph.D. professor. Even though we serve a mighty God, and it is not depend on our ability and resource to reach people for Christ. Humanly speaking, the first impression most people have is, is your religion better than mine? What can it do for me? How to show Japanese to see that they need Jesus is a difficult tasks.

In the first three months to the first half of the year, when we first came to Japan, everything was so fresh. Even though we encountered some difficulties, but because we are still in the honeymoon stage, we felt we are competence to overcome them. However, after 9 months of living in Japan, many culture shocks begin to emerge. As a Taiwanese family, we thought we will be fine with adjusting to Japanese culture, the truth is, you have to live here in order to understand it. Even though we are all Asian, there are a lot of differences. Over the past two months, several things happened to us, it makes me wonder why God send me to Japan. However, God used these incidents to, once again, teach me what it means to be humble.

One example will be language, I thought to myself, I have learned some Japanese in high school, and Japanese use a lot of Chinese character, so it shouldn't be too hard. I was wrong, although the Japanese language does use a lot of Chinese character but in many cases the meaning is different. For Chinese speaking in Mandarin dialect, in most case, the character has only one reading (some exception). Japanese Kanji (Chinese character) in most case have at least 2 or more different reading. In reality, knowing Chinese could give us a false assumption that we understand what it means, but in reality 1/3 of the time, the meaning is different. I have to become like a child and relearn everything again, it is painful. At first, it was interesting. Over time, it becomes a burden.

Another example, since we are Asian, Japanese assumed we know Japanese. It is quite different than western missionary, the expectation is different. Several times, when I am confused and can't understand what has been said, a small number of Japanese people will respond politely, but most of the time we will get an expression of impatient or disbelief. I thought Isn't the Japanese are very polite? Does this challenge me to reflect that do I love Japan and Japanese with my own human love or from the love of Christ? If people treat us nicely, it is easy to respond in a kind and loving manner. However, when people didn't respond in a nice way, we need Christ love to respond to them.

After one year of living in Japan, we have experience been cut in the line while waiting for the train, being pushed on the train, been cut-in at the parking lot and many more. If I don't focus on Christ love, it is easy to get frustrated and give up. In my weak human thinking, I begin to compare my life in the US and the life in Japan. I have been living in the US for 18 years and have been in full-time ministry for 7+ years. I enjoy a spacious house and living in a good middle-class neighborhood, with a steady income and growing ministry. I was living in the so-called "American dream". However, coming to Japan we have to let go all of that. There are times I doubt myself and questioning why are we here. Once again, when we gazed upon our Lord, we know that our life goal is not finding a more comfortable place to live but to obey God's calling and learn to serve and reach the "second-largest unreached people group." Coming to Japan is not to find my American dream in Japan, but to seek the heavenly dream for Japan. "all things work together" for God's people, including the big and small, good and bad things. Including I failed 5 times on the driving road test and going to do the 6th time, including the challenges that my children face in school, including much sleepless night on worry about many things. One year live in Japan, we experience a very distinctive of 4 seasons, (which is not as obvious when we live in California) just like the four seasons, our spiritual walk has four seasons. I experience my spiritual winter in the past 2 and half months, and after winter, the spring will come. As I turn my eyes to the Lord, let the spring come, oh Lord!

## Ministry update

### New ministry center Formally breaking ground

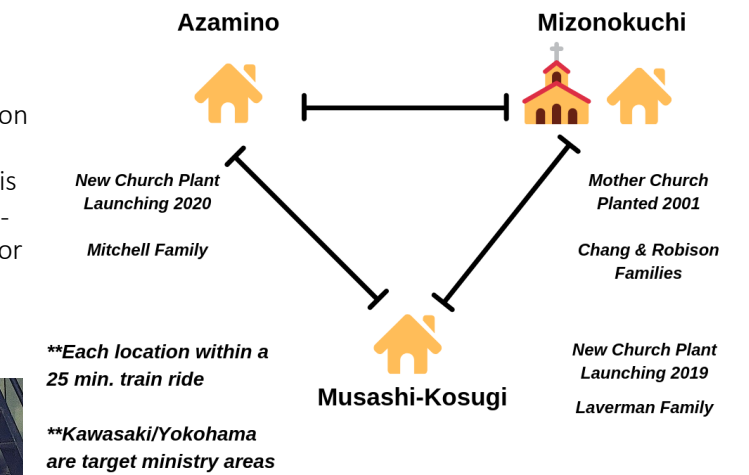
We mention about this in the previous newsletter. Our team leader, after many years of waiting and raising support, finally on July/30, the new out-reach center formally breaking ground. This new location is call Muko (Musashi-Kosugi 武蔵小杉) This area have very little Christian church, but has 120,000+ population. May the Lord bless this place and use it for His gospel. For more information, please take a look this website.

<http://www.lavermansinJapan.org/muko/>



**MUSASHI-KOSUGI CHURCH PLANT  
GROUND BREAKING CEREMONY (7/30)**

Pray for team unity-Our team have four families. We came from very different background. Our team leader has been in Japan for 20 years, and one family have been in Japan 7+ years, another family have been in Japan 3 years. We are the youngest, been in Japan for one year. It is God's grace that we can become a team, However, how to work together is what we need to learn. We need God's constant guidance and unity in the spirit. Please pray for us, so we can have good communication and be guided by the Holy Spirit, so we can have strategy and plan that really came from the Lord.



Church ministry-Our current priority is to learn the language and the culture. We have also involve in some church ministry. Jennifer get to serve in Children Sunday School and some children outreach. Gary get to preach in English every 6 weeks, and a Japanese co-worker translated into Japanese.



**Summer Children Outreach**



During the summer, many shrines in Japan have the various religious festival. The picture you see happened next to our home, it was very lively and crowded. When I saw these many people with such passion, our prayer is that someday their passion can be express to the one true God.

### Gary prayer request

- On Sep/30 we will be going back to Taiwan for 4 days to visit family, then we will be going to Thailand to attend a mission retreat prepared by Worldventure, then return to Japan on Oct/13. Please pray that we would have smooth travel and good spiritual nourishment.
- Previously, I mention that the past 2 months I have encounter spiritual winter, part of it is because our son encounter difficulties in his school.
- One of the reasons why we chose to live near the public elementary school, the goal was to hope that the children could integrate into the local culture and we can have the opportunity to build relationships with local residents. However, after more than 9 months of trials, it was far from what we expected, which made us very depressed.
- There are a lot of details that are difficult to explain, but basically he experiences bullied from time to time and was excluded by classmates. It saddens us, even though we have encouraged him many times. One day, during July, he came back from school and said he never want to go to school again, we feel sad and knowing what happened to him, it is not wise to push him back to that school. As his parent, we need to make the decision to take him out of public school.
- I have to rethink "what is the role of MK? " Are we using them to build relationships with local people, even though this is not wrong in itself? Or are they the victims of our decision to come to a foreign land? How can we lead them to have the perspective of God? Suddenly I felt that I didn't know what to do. We have to change our mindset.
- After two months of paused and seeking a new school for him, the Lord gradually teach us, kids or family should not be the sacrifices of the ministry. Even though God calls us to love Him more than family and anything. We have seen and read stories where the pastor's family falls apart and the need of the family been thrown to the end of the bus, just for the sake of ministry. Even though these missionaries heroes sacrifices a lot for the sake of the gospel, many of their children keep a distance from the Lord or disbelieve all together. Even though we cannot guarantee their salvation nor know for sure if they going to follow and serve the Lord or not, but this is what we fear. Our hope is to show them that God is the center of our life, and we can set a good example to encourage them to follow the Lord.
- Please pray for Jennifer and I, may God help us and give us wisdom to guide these two kids, may this mission journey can be blessing to their spiritual growth, when they look back, they would not say they have a terrible childhood, but they will be glad and have the love of the Lord to serve Him where ever God calls them.
- After 2 months of searching, we thank the Lord for providing a new school (see picture). This is a Christian Church school, they teach from a biblical perspective, and everything is taught in English. After about 3 weeks of attendance, Caleb enjoys school again and learning the subject, also making new friends. The only downside is, this school does not teach any Japanese. Therefore, Caleb does not have the opportunity to learn Japanese. We need to find new ways to help him learn some Japanese. Our hope is that he will not grow up in Japan but don't know how to speak Japanese.
- Because of my son's new school, I have to take him to school every day. It takes about one hour by train to go to school, so each day I spend about 4 hours on a train. I am no longer able to attend regular language school because language school requires every day (half day) attendance. For this reason, since July, I have stopped going to language school. I am using an online learning system and attend a local community class. Although there is no intensive study like a language school, I need time to take care of family need.
- We didn't expect that cultural and language adjustment will be this difficult for kids, after one year, it is still very hard. Please pray that we can have patients and find good ways for us all to learn.

### Jennifer prayer request

- Thank God, although my daughter thinks it would be best if she can stick to mummy every day! But I can see that she likes kindergarten very much. God has prepared a few good friends and good teachers for her. Also, allow me to become friends with some Japanese mom.
- During this summer vacation, we had the opportunity to have a children's outreach program, one of Abby's classmate came. We are so glad. Of course, we have tried to invite many more friends, but most of them gently deny our invitation. We are thankful at least one family came. Because we know In Japan, even a thousand flyer maybe no one will come (we actually did that during Christmas). We ask the Lord to work in people's heart, let the seeds of the gospel sprout in their hearts.
- One of the most common words I said in Japan this year is "I'm sorry, I don't know Japanese." I study Japanese twice a week, for about 8 months. It doesn't work very well for me, so I will go to the language next month for one term. One term lasts for three months (four and a half hours a day, 5 days a week). Please pray for me that the Lord will give me the strength and the mental ability to study, so I can be more effective in building a better relationship with many mummy friends.
- Please also pray for Gary, during this time, he has to become a nanny to take care of house work, and Pick up and drop off kids.



### Caleb prayer request

- Caleb was an outgoing and talkative kid. When he first entered public school, everything seems fine for the first three months. Many Japanese kids are curious and want to practice English with him. However, over time when people know they are not able to communicate with him, he begins to be alienated. He is not able to make any friends. We thank the Lord for brining another missionary family to join the team. This family have 4 kids, and two of them is around Caleb's age. They become friend, we are thankful that God provide friends for him.
- The new school has a Bible course and he likes it too. We can see that he is learning and enjoying his new school.
- Please pray for his new school and learning, also pray for his growth in the Lord.



### Abby's prayer request

- Even though kids learn faster. We remember we never really taught our kids English, but when they start going to kindergarten they pick up English very quickly, and English becomes their primary language. We carry such a mindset and came to Japan. Even though Abby was only four years old, we thought she should be fine. However, the reality is very different. After one year in Japan, Abby can only speak a few words of Japanese. (Maybe Japanese really is harder than English?) Anyhow, although she goes to local Japanese kindergarten, she still could not understand. I think, if we do not intentionally provide for her a way to learn Japanese, it is very hard for her to really know the language. (We cannot really teach her, even though my (Gary) Japanese level is higher, still not good enough to teach kids.)
- Because of this, we begin to have serious thought, is Abby able to continue school in the Japanese environment?
- Japanese is a Chinese character system language. However, unlike Chinese, Chinese characters used in Japanese generally have more than two readings, and Chinese characters in Japanese sometimes have different meanings. I remember when I grow up in Taiwan, how we write the Chinese character over and over, and make a sentence, in order to learn the meaning and the usage for the Chinese word. This is not the way they learn English. When I pick up Caleb 4th grade Japanese textbook, I cannot make sense from the poem that is written in Japanese. It is difficult. When Abby speak to Caleb, they speak in English, when she speaks to us, she speaks in mandarin Chinese, and now she goes to school where Japanese is the primary language. Well, it will be great for her know and use three languages, but it seems pretty difficult. The difficulty we face is that she only understand very little Japanese. Please pray for us, we need wisdom on what to do and search some ways for her to learn.



### Financial Situation

- We thank the Lord for your faithful partnership. There are 8 churches and over 60+ brothers and sisters long termly supporting us.
- In this new term, we are facing new challenges as children change to new schools, plus Japan will raise the tax, for these reasons our monthly budget is short of \$1000 USD per month. We understand that this is not a small number, we sincerely invite you to pray and consider partner with us, so we can continue to be witness in Japan.
- If you would like to support us, please click the following link, for information on how to donate. If you have any questions, feel free to contact us.
- <https://give.worldventure.com/partner/PartnerCommunity>

### Partner with us to reach Japan for Christ:

- *You can also send a check to Worldventure, please make payable to*
- **WorldVenture, memo write #275**
- **20 INVERNESS PL E ENGLEWOOD, CO 80112-5622**

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