

"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matt. 11:28)

When I was a child, I often heard a commercial that said, "Rest is for the long haul." Man needs Rest because God created man with this need in mind. Even God Himself rested. He made everything, but on the seventh day, He rested from all His work. Although we know that God does not need to rest, He did so to set an example for humanity. This ad seems to make sense, but it still has a different meaning than the biblical word Rest. Because the basis of this saying is still based on "work." The purpose of Rest is to do more work. But the biblical word for Rest is more about fellowship with God.

Speaking of fellowship with God, during my four years in Japan (although I like Japanese hymns), I did not worship in my mother tongue (Chinese) at all. Something seemed missing. Although I sometimes worshiped in English with other co-workers, it was not Chinese after all. Why is it important to worship in the mother tongue? Because some of the nuance and deep emotions are hard to carry over. Especially some words of understanding will be different depending on the language. This is why cross-cultural missions require a lot of time to learn another language—also trying to build bridges so the gospel can make sense in other languages and cultures. This is easier said than done. I have lived in English-speaking countries for 30 years, and although I know English, it is still challenging for me to explain an abstract theological concept clearly in English, let alone Japanese, which I have only learned for a few years. Although there are some similarities between Japanese and Chinese, Japanese culture is still very different from Chinese culture.

Even though I have learned quite a few Japanese and improved my conversation during these four years, it is still not easy to serve and share the gospel in Japanese 100%. We know Chinese and can often guess the meaning of some Japanese words. The truth is that many Japanese characters have different meanings and are pronounced differently, almost always with more than one pronunciation. I am ashamed to say that learning a language sometimes feels like an unbearable burden.

Another burden is 'ministry development. From a human perspective, we all want to see results and progress. However, ministry development is very slow in Japan. Sometimes, we experience burdens in things like reduced financial support, challenging situation, personnel communication, team bonding, cultural difference, children's education and adaptation, and all kinds of difficulties. It is easy to feel frustrated and want to give up when we are under constant pressure.

But I thought about Jesus' saying, "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." These words are often used in an evangelistic context, but these words are addressed to all Christians. Rest does not just stop working; take a break. It is fellowship with the Lord. In the next verse, Jesus says, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." This yoke is the same wood placed in the middle of two oxen pulling a cart together in ancient times. But why is it so easy for us to feel that this yoke is heavy and difficult? Because it is too easy for us to pull it off by ourselves. The Lord called us to follow Him with this yoke because He is pulling, and we are cooperating, not we are pulling. In the next verse, Jesus explains that this burden is easy and effortless. We must realize that this work is not mine but the Lord's. The past four years in Japan have been bumpy for us, but the Lord has given me this verse to reflect on our relationship with Him and practice rest in Him.

It is not that we can accomplish anything but that the Lord calls us to follow Him faithfully. It is not that we can save people's souls but be a conduit for the gospel and point people to Jesus. Only God can change lives and save people, and only He can make lives grow.

In the last newsletter, I mentioned missionaries typically serve for four years, and usually, they would return to their home country for debriefing and recharging. Due to the pandemic, we have postponed our home assignment. But recently, we were reminded to take this time to recharge in the Lord. Our bodies, minds, and souls need a refresh. Therefore, we have decided to return to the United States next year. In this coming Christmas season, let us think about the mission of Jesus' coming. Not only to fulfill the salvation of humanity but also to give us true and eternal rest. It is the rest in the Lord that we can experience starting from now. Pray that the Lord would work in the hearts of the Japanese so that more Japanese would hear this gospel and experience the true and eternal rest in Christ.





Ministry Update:

- This year, in November, we attended a biennial church planting conference for the first time. It was also our first time in Shizuoka Prefecture. The conference was started over 30 years ago by a few missionaries who shared that it was God's answering of prayer that today they can see hundreds of missionaries working together in Japan. We thank the Lord for the wonderful fellowship of people coming together to inspire and learn from each other.



- Gary co-led the "Japanese Bible Study, Book of Romans" Bible study, and we had a great learning experience. After 9 months of online meetings, we could finally meet physically in October. Praise the Lord.

- Gary was invited to preach at another church in October. Thank the Lord for the opportunity. Please pray for this relationship building.



October Harvest Festival outreach at our garage & Jennifer's card-making activities at our son's school & school fall market.



Family update and prayer request:

- Japan's borders are finally open. We thank the Lord for leading brothers and sisters in Christ to Japan. We are very encouraged by their visit.
- We will visit my (Gary's) parents in Taiwan for three weeks in mid-December. We haven't seen each other in over four years.
- Jennifer's health is still a little bit off, and her medical examinations have not revealed any reason. Please continue to pray for her physical health.
- The move next year is now confirmed, but it has been postponed. We expect to move at the beginning of August next year. And we will be moving next door to Caleb School. This arrangement will save us the trouble of finding a house and keeping the budget as before for now. We are thankful for God's provision.
- Although the move is only a few months away, Caleb's long daily commute during peak hours is still causing him a lot of stress. His digestive system is not doing well either, probably due to stress. Please pray that the Lord will strengthen him.
- Please pray that Abby will be able to build wonderful memories at her current school (3+ months) before she moves. We plan to host a farewell party for her and her friends at our home at the end of March next year. We hope to take this opportunity to share the Gospel with her friends one more time. Please pray for this preparation.
- Please pray for our relationship with the current ministry team and church. May God bless the rest of our time together, and have a good farewell before we return to the US.
- Due to the move, our ministry might have some changes. Please pray for God's guidance in this process.

Next Year plan:

- We plan to return to the U.S. in early April next year for a home assignment. We will be in the U.S. for about 4 months. We will be living in the missionary apart located in Pasadena. Welcome to visit us.
- During this time, we will also do some home-schooling; please pray for the children and us. May the Lord help us to make good use of this time.
- We also plan to visit supporting churches and wish to see you all in person.
- We will be returning to our mission headquarters in Colorado to recharge and renew. Please pray that the Lord will help our family to be strong again. Also, preparation for the next mission term.

Important Update:

- Due to our head office computer system upgrade, the old Email system no longer works properly. I can still receive emails on chang4japan@worldventure.net, but it is not stable. For security purposes, please do not send emails to that address again.
- You can contact us by using chang4japan@gmail.com (my personal e-mail account, which I used the most) or
- g.chang@worldventure.com (official e-mail)



Financial Update

- Please visit this website if you feel called to partner with us financially. <https://www.worldventure.com/chang4japan>
- You can also send in checks please make payable to
- **WorldVenture**, and **memo #4000-275 WorldVenture**
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