

Mon Jan 1st 2024, 16:10 Tokyo time.

MAG 7.5 EARTHQUAKE



The Lord sits enthroned over the flood; the Lord sits enthroned as king forever. (Ps. 29:10)

On January 1, 2024, as everyone was celebrating the New Year, the house suddenly shook. Although it lasted a little longer than usual small earthquakes, it felt like an magnitude 3. Because there are many small earthquakes in Japan, I didn't pay much attention to it. As usual, I picked up my phone and turned on the TV to watch the news. Only then did I learn that a 7.5-magnitude earthquake had occurred in western Japan (Noto Peninsula). Although we are (Tokyo) located far South East, we also felt it about 3-4 magnitude. After watching the news for a while, it didn't seem like too many serious situations. However, almost every TV station turned into an "Emergency Evacuation" warning report. Newscasters frantically called on residents (in the Noto area) to evacuate to higher ground because a tsunami was expected. I wonder if that's too much of an exaggeration? I watched the screen for sometime (and I also begin to record) but didn't see anything. But after a while, the tsunami suddenly started coming, and we began to see people fleeing. (This Youtube might be shocking, but it gives you a sense of EQ)

On the live news, a whole neighborhood was on fire, but because the roads were narrow or destroyed by the earthquake, the fire trucks couldn't get in, and they could only watch the sea of flames burn down the whole area of houses. I wondered; The

fact that there are so many natural disasters in Japan could this be a reason that makes Japanese people more likely to think about life and death? Wanting to know more about it, I asked Japanese Christians during a Bible study.

They shared that Japanese people, in general, do not like and are afraid to discuss this topic. Before they became Christian, they were also afraid to talk about death. Now, they believed, although they know the promises of heavenly kingdom, they didn't think about it as much. It can be said that Japanese people care about living in the present more than thinking about what is after death. There is also a type of people who accept birth, aging, sickness, and death as a cycle of life. They accept it as a part of life, and because they don't know what happens after death and it's useless to think about it, so they don't think about it. Although Japan has many natural disasters and could face death at any time, this fact did not gives them the desire to seek "is there life after death?" This changed my previous understanding of Japan. On the surface, it seems that the Japanese don't care about the world after death, or because no one really explains to them the two worlds after death (heaven and hell), they just live in the present.

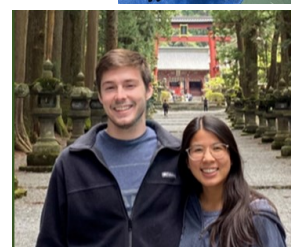
In Japan, there are various commemorative ceremonies every year, such as the commemoration of the Great Hanshin Earthquake (1995) and the 311 Japan Great Earthquake (2011). For the Japanese, the hope of living is to live for the un-lived part of the lost family member. Would it be possible to give them a greater and more significant meaning of hope? That is to live for the kingdom of heaven? We pray and ask the Lord to open the eyes of the Japanese; we pray that many more Japanese can come to know the truth of the heavenly kingdom.

On January 3rd, we had the opportunity to visit a shrine near our friend's house. This Jinja (Shrine) is crowded with people who take turns making wishes to the gods. Everyone buys a 500 yen "Ema" (it is said that real horses were sacrificed in ancient times, but because it was too expensive, it evolved into a small wooden board with wishes (prayer) written on it), writes this year's wishes on it, and prays to the gods. Many prayers are prayers for passing exams, good health, etc. Every time I see this, I thought about our prayer is free (because Jesus has paid it all for us), and we can pray anytime, anywhere because our God controls everything in the universe. For the Japanese, their gods are governed by regions, so they must go to the shrine to make wishes to the gods. "the Lord sits enthroned as king forever." Even if the floods flood, our God is in control of everything. Recently, several earthquakes of magnitude 5 in Chiba Prefecture, right next to (north) Tokyo. Please pray for Japan. Pray that the Lord will prepare the ways and open more doors so that many more Japanese people can realize that only Jesus Christ is the true and everlasting hope we need, especially amid fear of disaster and death.



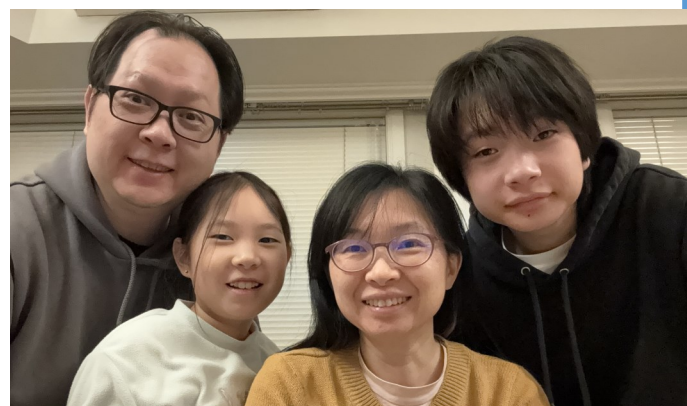
Ministry Update:

- Thank the Lord. It has been half a year since we entered the new terms, and we have gradually become more involved in ministry. Gary's main ministry is to preach once a month on average. Although he still preaches in English (co-workers translate Japanese), he hopes to be able to share in Japanese one day.
- Gary has recently joined the praise group and plays the Cajon drum. He hopes to have enough Japanese ability to lead worship in the near future. Please pray for his Japanese ability to grow.
- He also continues leading the book of Roman Bible study. Please pray for the spiritual growth of the Japanese Christians who participate.
- Recently, Gary also started to participate in the ministry of "Wheelchair of Hope." This ministry was started by the predecessors of our mission around the year 2000 (please see the website <https://k-kurumaisu.org/en/>). The primary purpose is cleaning, repairing, and sending wheelchairs to needy countries. Many volunteers, some of whom were not Christians, also came to help. In this way, we build relationships and witness the Christian mission to the community.
- In March this year, Noah & Tiffany McMillan, mid-term missionaries (one year) from Southern California, will join our team. Please pray for a wonderful partnership and their adjustment. Last Sunday, Caleb also helped with the decoration with two other teenagers from the church. The apartment they are about to move into.
- This year, there will be many opportunities to participate in various associations, exchange, and learn with other Japanese ministers and missionaries. Please pray for the safety of all gatherings, fellowships, and comings and goings this year.
- Jennifer is about to start participating in the children's and snack ministry. Please pray for her Japanese language skills to improve. She also participates in school parent activities and parent craft groups. She hopes that craft activities will give her more opportunities to build relationships with parents and share the gospel.



Family update and prayer request:

- Previously, we shared that Caleb often suffers from stomachaches, and one of the reasons is due to Helicobacter pylori infection. Thank you all for your prayers. After the treatment and examination, there are no bacteria in his system, Praise the Lord. He feels much better now. Caleb will graduate from middle school in June and go on a graduation trip to Kyoto on March 14-15. Please pray for his safety.
- He will enter high school in August 2024. Please pray that the Lord will guide and lead him as he thinks about his future, college, Job, life direction, etc.
- Abigail adjusted well to the new school, and she made many friends, several of whom are also missionary kids. She also participates in the school choir. Please pray for her physical, mental, and spiritual growth.
- It was the first time in the five and a half years since we came to Japan that a family member (Gary's brother's family) came to visit us. In mid-March, Gary's parents will also come to Japan to visit us for the first time. Thank God for the opportunity, and please pray for an upcoming trip for Gary's parents.
- Jennifer suffers from frequent headaches, and this might be due to entering menopause. Please pray for her physical, mental, and spiritual health.



Financial Update

- We are grateful to many brothers, sisters, and churches for your prayers and support. Due to various factors, some donation have stopped, and coupled with inflation, we are still short of **US\$500 per month**. If the Lord leads you to partner with us financially, please visit the following website to start a donation account or increase your giving. Thank you so much for your partnership. <https://give.worldventure.com/>
- You can also send in checks please make payable to
- **WorldVenture**, and **memo #4000-275 WorldVenture**
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