



Dear family and friends,

We are all aware of the terrible and deeply saddening events that occurred in Japan this past March. For a lot of people living in Hawaii, myself included, they struck a chord in a way that other disasters have not, no doubt having largely to do with how closely Japan and Hawaii are tied together. Like many others, I was riveted by the news coverage in the following weeks and struggled with what my response should and would be.

While all of this was going on, God had been moving in the lives of some friends of ours from our church, Blewater Mission. Late last year they had received a word from God through dreams and prayer that they were to pick up everything and move to Japan to care for an elderly aunt of theirs. On the surface it seemed rather ludicrous. They were actively involved in the church here, had recently adopted a young boy from Asia, and most importantly were not even asked by their aunt to come. They prayed over the situation for weeks, trying to find some way out of it, but in the end they rented out their apartment, sold many of their things, and this January followed God to Japan with no clue as to why He was asking them to go or for how long.

In March things became suddenly much clearer for them. They immediately understood that God had sent them to Japan because He knew that He would need faithful servants there to do His work. Even as many Americans departed Japan in the wake of the nuclear disaster, our friends were contacting local churches to find out how they could help. As the weeks passed they found opportunities for helping hands and began asking for those willing to serve to come to Japan to bring aid, and more importantly, to represent to the Japanese people that God and His people had not forgotten them.

I am part of a group of people from our church who have chosen to answer this call. We are traveling to Japan in several waves this summer, and indeed some have already gone. There will be around ten of us going in total, with most of us staying between one and two weeks. Our task is a simple one - to help out wherever we can in whatever way we can. I don't have a lot of details about what specifically we will be doing - I do know that it will almost certainly involve cleaning out debris, perhaps delivering supplies and helping feed people living in shelters, and undoubtedly praying for and with the survivors and being Jesus to them. We will be located in the city of Iwaki, which is in the Fukushima Prefecture, just outside of the evacuation zone for the stricken nuclear reactors.

When confronted with a mission like this questions arise immediately. Would it not be better to donate the money being spent to an organization like the Red Cross that has the resources to use it better? What can a small band of untrained workers really hope to accomplish in so short a time? I have struggled with these questions myself, and if I am being completely honest with you, if we were looking at this purely from the perspective of disaster relief, there wouldn't be very many good answers. I can tell you that the expense is not tremendously high - airfare to Japan is reasonable at this time because few people are traveling there, and we are staying in shelters while there for a nominal fee, which puts our total lodging costs per person at under the cost of a single dinner out back home. We are each able to make this trip for well under \$2000 per person, and that includes food and transportation from Tokyo to the affected areas and back.

More important than all of these logistical details is the opportunity that we have to bring Christ to Japan as never before. Japan is less than 2% Christian and less than 1% Evangelical, and has one of the highest suicide rates among developed nations (see joshuaproject.net). From what I have heard from our



friends and another missionary we know in Japan right now, the northeast has had one of the higher suicide rates in all of Japan. But things are changing. People are open in ways that they never were before this disaster struck. They are looking for answers, and more importantly they are looking for hope.

Because we are partnering with local churches in the area, we are confident that our impact will last long after we are gone, despite the brief amount of time we have there. As the people see this steady stream of servants pass through their area bringing whatever help we can bring, it makes the jobs of the local pastors that much easier, because they can point to us as living proof that God has not forgotten them and loves them more than they know.

How You Can Help

What we need, as with any mission trip, are two things: financial help and prayer. Because this was a mostly grassroots development, the way the finances are being handled is that we are all paying our own way and the church will reimburse everyone once all the trips are completed, so despite the fact that some team members are already abroad we will all share an equal financial burden. We welcome any support that you are able to give us to help ease this burden. All gifts are tax-deductible.

Our prayer needs are simple, but we would appreciate whatever time you have to give to pray for us:

- For safety for all involved, especially as there are still numerous aftershocks in the area
- For health and stamina to handle the physical labor
- For the hearts of the Japanese people, who have endured so much
- For the witness of the local church, that it would be strengthened by our example
- For God to move among us while we are there

Thank you for taking the time to read this and consider partnering with us. You will find enclosed a response slip that you can use to let us know if you can support us financially. Checks can be made out to Bluewater Mission, with "Japan" written in the memo line. You can also donate online at <http://japan.bluewatermissions.org>.

If you want to follow along with our adventures, our host (the friend I mentioned earlier) maintains a blog at <http://familymcd.wordpress.com>. He has already written briefly about the first arrivals. I will also be writing about what is happening on our personal blog, at <http://www.instafamily.com>. I suspect that I will be too busy and tired to write much while we are there, but I am sure that I will have much to say upon our return. My own personal dates of travel are June 9th - 17th.

Because He calls,

Keith Hamasaki