

December 2014

ADAIR UPDATE



The view from
our home with a
symbol of God's
promise

DISCOVERING JESUS TOGETHER

Giving and receiving in friendship

A few times a month, my beach friend, her daughter, and I (Roberta) meet for lunch. She is one of my best friends here, and I believe she is in the process of becoming my sister. In addition to hanging out, playing with Joseph, and eating together, we usually read a Bible story from John.

We first listen to a passage about one of Jesus' miracles then look at it in the manga version of the Bible. This last time, we read the story of the resurrection of Lazarus. Although we got into some confusing theological waters ("Let's pray that I'll be able to meet my deceased son when Jesus resurrects him"), my friend also commented on Jesus' compassion, power, and love. I asked her what else she's been learning about Jesus from the stories we've read together over the last few months. She said something along the lines of, "Jesus can turn water to wine, feed a huge crowd, heal the poor and the powerful, and walk on water. And he can raise the dead?! Amazing - he's the most powerful!"

What I "give" in this relationship is simple. I prepare a simple lunch (she always brings something, too), pick out a passage, and keep conversation flowing. What she gives is her availability (a true treasure), sweet friendship, encouragement in language and in mom-ing, and fresh eyes when looking at scripture ("Jesus found the 5,000 people *grass* to sit on! What a nice guy!"). We occasionally shrug our shoulders and smile when we don't get what the other is trying to say, but we love and pray for one another. She is my friend, and I am eager for the day when she publicly identifies as a daughter of our Heavenly Father.

We see her as a leader in the beach community. First and foremost our friend, we also believe that she is a person of peace who God may use to help reach a community of people. Please pray for us as we continue to meet and for her as Jesus continues to reveal himself to her, to her family, and to the beach community.



Joseph Clifford is 6 months

He is so much fun! Quite the people person, he seems to love attention from everyone. Although we are thankful for his capacity to be out at various meetings and events, we need wisdom in finding an appropriate ministry/family balance. (We really had no idea how much we would enjoy being mom and dad to this little dude!)

UP, DOWN, AND EVERYWHERE

It's the most wonderful (and challenging...) time of the year

This time of year in Japan is puzzling. There are carols playing in stores, beautiful Christmas ornaments (even an occasional nativity scene!), impressive light displays, and massive signs wishing people "Happiness Christmas" by train stations. Yet we hear people mention that Jesus is an American, Santa was one of the wise men, and all sorts of boggling things. For most of our friends, Christmas is a recently-imported consumer holiday celebrated by eating KFC and a fancy Christmas cake. For me (Roberta), this time of year is characterized by great opportunities as well as significant struggles.

The good

Christmas is the easiest time of the year to talk with our friends about who Jesus is and why he came. On Tuesday, friends in my English class and I read through the Christmas story. It was so fun to talk about Jesus openly and to hear their questions. I especially loved sharing about the symbolism of the 3 gifts from the wise men and facilitating discussion about gold ("Jesus is King - he is ruler of the world!"), frankincense ("Jesus is Priest - he prays for us and teaches us what a life of worship looks like"), and myrrh ("Jesus is Savior - he saves us from our impurity").

The ladies were also amazed by God choosing sheep keepers to be the first people to worship his Son. What fun! I hope this will continue in the weeks ahead and into the new year. Please pray for wisdom to know how to continue to give opportunities for our friends to hear about and to meet Jesus. Please pray that

they would have deepened curiosity and an eagerness to discover who Jesus is.

The bad

I don't want to be a Scrooge, but I also don't want to give a false impression that everything is just fine. A few heavy things from the past few months:

- A misunderstanding with a friend who accused us of some hurtful and untrue stuff (this is now mostly resolved, but rebuilding trust will take time).
- Slow movement regarding things we feel God has called us to. How and when are we to initiate and be counter-cultural versus acting with restraint and waiting for change in a culture where change happens very slowly?
- Friends with dysfunctional relationships, dealing with depression, struggling with being over-worked (80-100 hour work weeks aren't uncommon for many of our friends), experiencing mounting pressure from families because of their faith, etc.

The ugly

I confess to struggling at times in trusting God. I get overwhelmed by problems that I see around me - in Japanese society, in the church, and in our friends' lives.

Also, despite this time of year usually being one of my favorites, late November through February have been really difficult for me these last 2 years. With the cold weather, people are



less available. As darkness creeps up earlier in the day, my attitude darkens, too ("Does any of this matter? What are we doing here? Why can't we just...?"). I often lack hope, a positive attitude, and patience - not to mention having loads of the grumbles. Please pray that I/we will seek God's presence even more so in these darker, colder, lonelier months. Pray that I will cultivate gratitude and hope. And pray that instead of complaining and withdrawing, I/we will "let the Spirit excite us as we serve the Lord" (Romans 12:11).

Advent - waiting for His coming

We appreciate you persevering with us as we continue to adjust to life and ministry in Japan. Thanks for your prayers for Christ's Kingdom to come to northern Japan, to our community, and to our friends and their families. We are grateful for you and your partnership, and we wish you a special advent season celebrating the coming of Christ - then, now, and in the future.

- R&R

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Specific Prayer Points

- Growing in our roles as Mom and Dad
- Japanese language acquisition
- 1:1 and small group discipleship relationships
- Various Christmas outreach events (parties, concerts, lunches) to be effective
- Robanokai (young adult small group) to love God, love each other, and love the lost well

Contact Info

Robert radair@asianaccess.org
Roberta roberta@asianaccess.org

Address: Robert & Roberta Adair
985-0835
Miyagi-ken, Tagajo-shi
Geba 1-11-18, Japan

Web: www.adairupdate.com