



"Men of Athens! I see in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. Now what you worship as something as unknown I am going to proclaim to you."

Acts 17:22-23

Pictures explained: (left to right, top to bottom) trying to shop in Harajuku, view of Mt. Fuji from Mori tower, watching the New Year's tradition of going to a shrine to pray, and of writing wishes on wooden blocks, Shinto gates, Student Impact's Christmas mass, thousand paper cranes at Hiroshima's Memorial Park

Merry Christmas!! and Happy New Year!!

OK, so it's a little bit late to be sending my season's greetings. But better late than never? I hope you all had a wonderful holiday season and I pray you'll have a blessed 2008! Read on for a belated, but full update . . .

Christmas, a time to celebrate

Christmas cake, Christmas lights, gifts, shopping, boyfriends and girlfriends, parties . . . that's what Christmas means to the Japanese students we've been interacting with - and honestly, sometimes to me too (except the boyfriend part!). Even as a believer in Jesus, I have a hard time keeping Him at the center of the holiday season.

But at least I know that Christmas is a time to celebrate Jesus' birth. As Christians, Christmas is the perfect time for us to introduce others to Jesus. As a missions organization, Student Impact ran their annual Christmas campaign which meant we invited groups of students into our homes for Christmas "home parties" (a tradition in Japan); passed out thousands of free Christmas CDs, had a HUGE Christmas party where we made gingerbread houses, played games, heard a testimony and Christmas story from one of the Christian students; had a Christmas "mass", sang Christmas carols at the Mitaka train station), and had a bigger push to intentionally share the gospel one-on-one with more students on campus and to form evangelical small groups.

Three students (Yumi, Asami and Mayu) prayed with our team to receive Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior this month! Each one of these girls has a neat story behind their decision and I don't doubt their sincerity in wanting to follow Jesus. But please pray for their new faith as each one of them are the only believers in their families and don't have many friends (yet) who know Christ. If you'd like to hear more about Yumi, Asami or Mayu's decisions, e-mail me or you can look at my online journal for more of the story.

Staff Conference, a time to connect and serve (December 26-29)

Feeling alone is one of the hardest parts about being a Christian in Japan. Being in full-time ministry in Japan can feel even worse - especially for the Japanese. The JCCC staff conference was a much-needed rejuvenating time to connect with the Lord and with other staff throughout Japan. For some of us STINTers and my family, it was a time to serve the staff by running the Junior high/High school program for the staff kids. I was reminded of why I love youth ministry so much! I was also reminded of how fun it is to serve alongside my parents and sister. I'm so grateful the Lord provided a way for them to come to Japan.

New Year's, a time to reflect

Traditionally, before New Year's Day, Japanese clean their homes to get rid of bad spirits. Then they'll visit shrines or their ancestors' graves to ask the gods for blessings for the new year. Being in Japan as a Christian, New Year's has been a good reminder for my own need to ask Jesus to clean out my heart since I can't do it on my own. I've been living life in the fast lane and when I get super busy, it's easy for my heart to become hardened and dirtied. Please continue to pray for my own relationship with Jesus to remain REAL and intimate. Thank you!

I'll especially appreciate your prayers this month as I'll be going to Thailand for our Mid-year conference (January 16-26). And next month (from February 13-March 6) I'll be taking Japanese students to Florida and California for Student Impact's homestay program. When I'm not in Thailand, I'll be preparing for that. Whew, a lot's going on. . . Thank you again for your prayers and support!

Love, Jessica Joy



Family in Japan



Cousins in Japan



Seikei University



Staff Conference '07



Christmas party



Jr. High/High School at conference



Home party



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