

Doug Stringer Sees Change Amid Japan Crisis

Somebody Cares about Japan. And that somebody is Doug Stringer.

Doug Stringer, the half-Japanese, half-American founder of Somebody Cares America, is leading a team that's actively working on the ground in Japan. Stringer's philosophy: teamwork across racial and denominational lines makes an impact.

"Crises draw people together, but some groups, even Christian groups, want to get their five-minute sound bite or 15 minutes of fame and they no longer really work together," says Stringer, who is shipping 10 truckloads of water, food, hygiene items and medical supplies to Japan through partner organizations and groups. "It's like a fishing pole catching one fish rather than a fishing net woven together to catch a lot. We need to work together."

A Somebody Cares team landed in Japan three days after the earthquake to connect with partners in Sendai and Nagano and headed back to Japan on Monday. A large infusion of evacuees are expected to flee from some of the hardest-hit areas to Nagano, and Somebody Cares and its partners have been receiving them with physical and spiritual help.

"We're going to be doing training and encouraging leaders to persevere in leadership through all these difficulties and traumas," Stringer says. "We're partnering with Victim Relief Ministries to teach pastors in Japan to how to deal with the stress level and to live life beyond the moment. Our desire to win must be greater in our moments of pain."

Japan has been through moments of pain during its history—and rebuilt. After experiencing devastation in World War II, Japan

rose to become an economic power and a U.S. ally. Stringer believes Japan, the nation in which he was born, will rise once again. In fact, he is believing the Land of the Rising Sun, a moniker for Japan, will meet the Hope of Glory through God's people expressing the compassion and love of Christ—and become the Land of the Risen Son.

Japan has a population of about 130 million. The majority practice Shintoism and Buddhism. Only about one percent of Japan is Christian. But it wasn't always that way. Portuguese missionaries brought Christianity to Japan in the mid-1500s. Because the Portuguese also brought gunpowder that opened foreign trade doors, the Japanese tolerated the missionaries, who won a large number of Japanese to Christ. But a change in rulership in the late 1500s banned Christianity.

"I believe we can turn it around again in Japan for Christ. This is our opportunity to go to that one percent," Stringer says. "We can see a nation of very honorable, but proud people in a desperate situation receive the love of Christ through God's people in a very tangible way. They will see the living Christ and meet the Hope of Glory because of it."

Stringer has received personal prophecies over his life that he would reach the royal family and government of Japan; that he would minister to them and revival would break loose in the country. Although his natural mind doesn't grasp it—he's forgotten how to speak Japanese—he is beginning now to see the possibilities of reaching the nation by reaching missionaries and pastors in Japan who need encouragement in the wake of this tragedy.

"We must leave a lasting equity for churches, pastors and missionaries—the Christians in Japan—so that out of this tragedy we can see lasting transformation," Stringer says. "I don't know if I will have the opportunity to personally see those changes, but I want to empower believers in Japan to get past their differences and become part of something bigger

than themselves—to see history in the making as hearts become open to the Gospel message.”

Stringer and his wife and daughter (who have been learning Japanese using the Rosetta Stone language instruction program) are considering moving to Japan long-term to be part of the anticipated transformation. He has purchased a two-year contract on a cell phone in Japan and is exploring other options for places to stay.

“This is going to be a long-term recovery,” Stringer says. “With the uncertainties of radiation on top of the destruction, it’s a long-term process.”