



Worldview Transformation Series

Season Two ~ Disk 23
Death To Suicide ~ Samurai



Video Summary

Tokyo, one of the most developed and advanced cities of the world, is also one of the ancient cities of Japan. The history of Tokyo gives us a clear picture of how the city grew from a small fishing village into a major global city. The Edo period is known as the beginning of modern Japan history.

In 1603, Tokugawa Ieyasu, who emerged from the power struggle as the most powerful statesman in the land, established his shogun government in Edo - present-day Tokyo. To secure his domination, Tokugawa Ieyasu created laws that kept feudal lords under control for another 260 years.

The samurai (or bushi) were the members of the military class, the Japanese warriors. Samurai employed a range of weapons such as bows and arrows, spears and guns; but their most famous weapon and symbol was the sword. Samurai were supposed to lead their lives according to the ethic's code of bushido ("the way of the warrior"). Strongly Confucius in nature, Bushido stressed concepts such as loyalty to one's master, self-discipline and respectful, ethical behavior.

After a defeat, some samurai chose to commit ritual suicide (seppuku) by cutting their abdomen rather than being captured or dying a dishonorable death. In 1868, Japan's feudal era came to an end, and the samurai class was abolished. Although this sort of ancient behavior is officially frowned upon in modern day Japan, the spirit behind self-destruction is still very much alive and well in Japan. Feudalism and swordplay have been done away with, but the reality is that suicide is still considered to be an honorable option for a difficult life. Social, academic, or family stress, and bullying, are all factors that prey on the hearts of the young throughout Japan. Unfortunately many choose the ultimate escape. But there are those in this community who are reaching out and making a difference, sharing the hope and love of God with some of Japan's most-at-risk people - teenagers.

Source: <http://www.japan-guide.com/e/e2127.html>



Primary Lesson

Confronting the cause

This lesson looks deeply into the heart of culture in Japan, from interviews with those directly affected by suicide, and others who have decided to make a difference in their own lives and communities. From this, we see that teenagers are the same all over the world. Japan is no different than the US, as teenagers all deal with the very same thoughts and fears, while each culture has certain coping mechanisms in place to help them. Unfortunately, these ideas and strategies do not always work, encouraging some to take drastic measures to find hope and acceptance.

The relationship found in a true community, and the self-worth derived from this interaction, has an incredible impact on the psyche of a teen (or anyone) that is facing thoughts of suicide and isolation. When you provide a place of safety, hope and acceptance established in the Word of God and His plan for life, the changes seen are not only remarkable, but facilitate the removal and deliverance from self-destructive thoughts and habits. The ideas promoted and the solutions given are tested answers for a nationwide epidemic of teenage suicide.

Having listened to countless teens and adults while completing this piece, four key ingredients came up that led to the removal of any God given self-preservation mechanisms.

1. A breakdown of Family - this could range from a divorce, financial hardships, abuse of mother or father or children, an affair or loss of a sibling, lack of communication or lack of time to enjoy the family unit. Teens need reassurance that they are loved and appreciated, to treat them or any other member of the family, as a pet instead of a growing maturing member of society can be devastating.
2. Isolation - This can be a result of bullying, fear, insecurity, shame, guilt, and self-pity. The comic books, the pornography and social networking society gives teens access to a fantasy world where nothing is grounded in reality. This is part of the enemies plan for all people especially teens. If the teen can be isolated and cloistered away that is when the real attack begins. With no viable means of expression the emotions and thoughts begin to take their toll. Jesus mentioned this in Matthew 18:12 when he said that the wolf will entice the one sheep away from the 99 and that is when the danger is at its highest.

3. A lack of Self-Worth - Emotional and verbal abuse have their way of eating away at the soul of a teenager. Being called stupid, worthless, or a burden can weigh heavily on the heart of a teenager. With no encouragement or acceptance this problem grows worse by the day eventually convincing the teen that they are better off dead and that the burden they bring their family or society will be relieved if they are gone.
 4. A Lack of Community - Most people won't talk about the core issues of suicide. Shame, pride, guilt and embarrassment persuade most to remain silent. Therein lays the problem. If no one talks about it, how can there be a solution? Survivor's guilt plays a strong role in enforcing this silent treatment. Communities do not want to admit there is a problem, while families and friends are not willing to bring into check their own relationship with the victim.
- The Samurai wore two swords (daisho). One was long; the other short. The long sword (daito - katana) was more than 24 inches. The short sword (shoto - wakizashi) was between 12 and 24 inches. The Samurai often gave names to their swords and believed it was the "soul" of their warriorship. The oldest swords were straight and had their early design in Korea and China. The Samurai's desire for tougher, sharper swords for battle gave rise to the curved blade we still have today. The sword had its beginning as iron combined with carbon. The sword smith used fire, water, anvil and hammer to shape the world's best swords. After forging the blade, the sword polisher did his work to prepare the blade for the "furniture" that surrounded it. Next, the sword tester took the new blade and cut through the bodies of corpses or condemned criminals. They started by cutting through the small bones of the body and moved up to the large bones. Test results were often recorded on the nakago (the metal piece attaching the sword blade to the handle).



Facts, Figures & Illustrations

- Worldwide there are more deaths due to suicide than to accidents, homicides and war combined.
- Japan has an official number of 35,000 suicides per year. The unofficial number is more than double, over 80,000 people per year.
- Seppuku (切腹, "stomach-cutting") is a form of Japanese suicide by disembowelment. Seppuku was originally reserved only for samurai. Part of the samurai bushido honor code, seppuku was either used voluntarily by samurai to die with honor rather than fall into the hands of their enemies (and likely suffer torture), or as a form of capital punishment for samurai who had committed serious offenses or shameful deed. The ceremonial disembowelment, which is usually part of a more elaborate ritual and performed in front of spectators, consists of plunging a short blade, traditionally a tantō, into the abdomen and moving the blade from left to right in a slicing motion
- Godzilla is a Romanization of the Japanese word "Gojira" which is a combination of two words, 'gorira' meaning gorilla and 'kujira' meaning whale. The combination is thought to relate to Godzilla's size, strength and aquatic nature. There are rumours that Gojira was a nickname given to one of the production hands of the film company responsible for filming Godzilla but it still remains to be proven.
- The Toho Film Company is credited with giving Gojira his now recognizable and familiar name. The name Godzilla is a transliteration of Gojira and was created when the first Godzilla film was released to western audiences.



Key Scriptures

(From NKJV, unless otherwise noted)

John 14:6 ~ *Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.*

1 John 4:7-13 ~ *Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.*

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 ~ *Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? 20 For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.*

1 John 4:7-13 ~ *Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.*

John 10:10 ~ *The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.*

John 11:25 ~ *Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live."*

John 14:6 ~ *Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."*

1 Kings 18:28 ~ *So they cried aloud, and cut themselves, as was their custom, with knives and lances, until the blood gushed out on them.*

Matthew 22:36-39 ~ *"Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" And He said to him, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the great and commandment. The second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'"*



Discussion Questions

1. Do you have friends or family members who have attempted suicide or are being tempted by it? What are the best ways to approach them?
2. Discuss the issues of shame and guilt as they relate to suicide, attempted suicide, and suicidal thoughts. Why is it that both young and old alike won't talk about it?
3. Discuss the fact that bullying is a real problem. Have you been bullied, or have you bullied someone else? What can be done to stop people from bullying others? What if a group of people rallied around or stood up for the victim to help stop the act itself?
4. How could a youth group make the Gospel available to those who are at greatest risk? Ask about ideas or initiatives that could be implemented in schools, sports programs and churches.
5. Discuss the influence of evil spirits and demonic influences and how they play a part in suicide and suicidal thoughts. (Hint: Ephesians 6:12-17) By simply taking authority over these things, the believer can not only resist these powers, but also stand in agreement for others who are struggling with suicide, insecurity, etc.

