

Did Christianity Influence the Samurai?

Are there similarities between Christianity and the Samurai?

In his exclusive Beyond The Article interview with Charisma Magazine Online, Doug Stringer uncovered the unique commonalities between the Christian faith and the work of the samurai in Japan.

When it comes to the Bushido code of ethics of Japan, which is respected by the samurai, Stringer says much of it aligns with biblical values and principles.

“Although many claim it comes from Shinto or Zen connections, I believe they are biblical Scriptures that really give credence to them,” Stringer says.

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It is values of Bushido like courage, hard work, respect and honesty that make up the core of the samurai teachings. The samurai saw in these virtues a reflection of the teachings of the Bible, particularly in Scriptures such as Ephesians, Proverbs and 1 Corinthians.

“The samurai were called to show support and honor of their lords or of the emperor and so when you look at this, and they try to live by this code, I began to look back and realize that rectitude or things like in Ephesians 6:14, Isaiah 26:7, Proverbs 14:34, courage, we see that in 1 Corinthians 16:13...”

One of the most striking aspects of this influence is the concept of showing honor amid disagreement. In Japanese culture, there is a strong emphasis on respecting authority

and showing honor, even to those with whom one disagrees. This principle is evident in the way people conduct themselves publicly, maintaining a sense of decorum and respect even in the face of opposing views.

Not only are there parallels between the Christian faith and the samurai code of ethics, but there are plenty of samurai who ended up following Christ after Jesuit missionaries came from Portugal. However, things were complicated when it came to where their highest allegiance lied.

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“Christian samurai were often torn between their loyalty to their overlords and their loyalty to God,” Stringer writes in his feature article of Charisma Magazine Online.

Because the influence of Christianity in Japanese culture isn’t a relic of the past, it has allowed Stringer to have interactions with people open and willing to receive the gospel message.

“I’ve prayed with people and leaders all over the country, and I’ve seen how abiding by these virtues and represent[ing] them as a Christian has opened great doors of opportunity for me to know how to minister to them, and they begin to receive the Word that I begin to speak to them in the name of the Lord,” Stringer says.

So while most people may not think of Japan or the samurai as a place or a people group open to the gospel, Stringer’s message provides hope that God is after all people, from all generations in all parts of the world. {eoa}

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