



Updates from Ray and Shelley Kwan



Spring time in Japan

Konnichiwa!

Dear Family and Friends,

Happy GW! It is Golden Week (GW) in Japan now, which means several days of consecutive holidays. We are enjoying the window of good weather between the cold winter and hot, humid summer. We thank the Lord for these kind blessings, as well as your continued support of our ministry. Here is our latest update:

TEACHING IN JAPANESE

Ray has begun teaching in Japanese! He led a home Bible study at a Hatta Nishi Church members' home in March. This week he will teach his first lesson for the children's Sunday School. Please pray that he will be able to communicate clearly and for our continued growth in language learning.

TIME WITH FAMILY

In April, we were blessed to spend time with family from both sides. We met up with Ray's cousin and his wife during their visit to Osaka. Shelley and Masanobu also flew to Hong Kong to spend time with Shelley's extended family. After a few days, Shelley's parents and sister flew to Japan and stayed with us for a week. We were glad that they could interact with many Hatta Nishi members as well.

FELLOWSHIP WITH YOUNG ADULTS

The young adult group at Hatta Nishi is small but growing. There is one young man who has been coming to church since Christmas, and a young lady who recently moved back home after graduating from college. Please pray for the young adults to grow in faith, find Christian spouses, and glorify God in their jobs.

UPCOMING MISSION TRIPS

"If the Christian mission were something to be played, communication would be the name of the game."

- David Hesselgrave, *emeritus professor of missions at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School*



Osaka, Japan

Highlights



Props for Ray's Sunday School lesson on creation.



With Ray's cousin Daniel and Iris in Osaka.

We (and Hatta Nishi) are looking forward to hosting two mission teams this summer. A team from Redeemer's Grace Church in San Diego will be here from July 1-10 to help with Bible and English classes for adults. Our home church, Immanuel Bible Church, will also send a team from August 3-12 to assist with the annual Joyful Kids VBS program. Please pray for these teams and Hatta Nishi as we prepare for a faithful ministry.

We thank the Lord for your interest and partnership in building up the church in Japan. May each of us keep pressing on to know Christ and make Him known!

By His grace,

Ray, Shelley, and Masanobu Kwan

WOULD YOU CONSIDER FINANCIAL PARTNERSHIP?

Thank you for making it possible for us to serve the Lord in Japan! Would you please prayerfully consider partnering with us financially on a regular basis?

For those interested in giving online or using a credit card, here's an easy way for you to do that on the IBC website: <http://www.ibcbible.org/missions/kwan-missions/>

Thank you for your consideration!



Celebrating Shelley and her sister Melissa's April birthdays.



Visiting Wakayama Castle with Hatta Nishi young adults, Shelley's family, and IBC friend Stephen.

Silence (Chinmoku)

Movie by Martin Scorsese, novel by Shusaku Endo

Review by Ray

Martin Scorsese's movie adaptation of Shusaku Endo's novel *Silence* (published in 1966) was released in December last year. I wavered back and forth on whether to watch it or not, but I decided that I should see it after one of my Japanese conversation teachers brought it up during one of our meetings. Though Americans might not have known about the story until Scorsese's movie was released, it's a fairly well known story in Japan. The average Japanese person on the street might not know very much about it, but it is somewhat likely that they have at least heard of Endo's work.

Historical Background

Just in case you don't know what *Silence* is about, here it is in a nutshell. The setting of this historical fiction novel is 17th century Japan, when the country was, for the most part, closed to the world except to Dutch, Chinese, and Korean traders. The only way into Japan at the time was through Nagasaki. Christianity came in about a century earlier but the Shogun (military dictator) saw it as a threat to the Japanese way of life and decided that it must be eradicated from his country. Thus a persecution of Christians took place, and Japanese Christians went into hiding.

Movie Plot

The movie is about how three Catholic missionaries handled the



Welcoming Kaori back from college.

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PRAYER REQUESTS:

1. Ministry in Japanese: That we would communicate the gospel effectively, continue to build relationships, and grow in our knowledge of Japanese language and culture.

2. Upcoming Mission Trips: For faithful ministry with teams from Redeemer's Grace Church and Immanuel Bible Church.

3. Japanese Young Adults: That they would grow in faith, find Christian spouses, and glorify God in their workplaces.

persecution. One of these missionaries, who happened to be the mentor of the other two, went to Japan first. It was rumored that he had apostatized from the faith. The other two go after him and soon realize how severe the persecution is. One of these missionaries dies while trying to save someone who was essentially being tortured to death. The remaining priest eventually discovers that the rumor regarding the apostasy of his mentor is true. He as well, at least outwardly, renounces his faith in an attempt to save others from torture.

Things to Ponder

While watching *Silence*, many questions came to mind. Since it would take far too much space, I will make no attempt here to answer any of these questions. I will simply list some of them:

1. How should we view God's apparent silence when Christians are persecuted? How should we view suffering and persecution?
2. Were the Japanese converts of these Catholic priests truly saved? Can a Catholic truly be saved? What makes one saved?
3. Does stepping on a picture of Jesus (the method of renouncing the faith that the persecutors used) really amount to true apostasy?
4. How should we handle someone who has apostatized and wants to return to the church?
5. What is true repentance? What is true forgiveness?
6. What presuppositions in the Japanese way of thinking need to be dealt with before (or when) telling them the gospel?
7. What should Japanese Christianity look like? Which Japanese traditions and customs are permissible in Christianity and which ones are not?

Recommendation

Overall, I agree with the critics (Rotten Tomatoes: 85%, IMDB: 7.3), that *Silence* was a good movie from a secular standpoint. But more than that, though the writer and the main characters were Catholic, I believe Evangelical Christians can also benefit spiritually from watching the movie. It's not that the story gives solid biblical teaching (though there was one very interesting philosophical discussion between the head inquisitor and main priest), but the story does an excellent job of confronting its audience with harsh realities found in history and experienced in life. I recommend *Silence* to anyone who is willing to be challenged in his or her thinking, especially with regards to God, Japan, persecution, and suffering.



We reconnected with Shelley's supervisor from her time teaching English in Shimane prefecture nearly 15 years ago.



Giant slide at a park for a Hatta Nishi children's event.

Did You Know?



Japanese moms throw away pain instead of kissing a wound and making it all better.

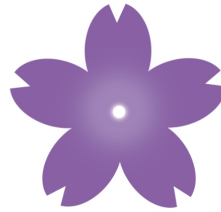


Cats in Japan say, "Nya nya," instead of "meow."

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