

The Witnessing Way of Life - Part 1

Sheri Rueter

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At the heart of the growth of our movement is each person's heart to reach out and convey the Principle to others. The following is extracted from Sheri Rueter's testimony about witnessing that she gave to members at a US CARP workshop on August 1, 1987.

A poem written by, Peter Bates, Sheri Rueter's spiritual son.

A long, long time ago
(another life almost, it seems)
you touched my eyes
and raised my face
to see a new beginning.

You prayed for me
and I was given life
and taught to pray.
You cried for me
and I learned to cry for others.

You sacrificed for me
and I learned the joy of sacrifice.
You committed yourself to me
and I became committed to True Parents and to you.

You loved me
and I finally began to understand love.

Sheri,
because you did these things for me,
I look to a wintry world
and feel the eager promise
of a warm and sunny breeze.

I look at Denise and
I know that soon our children will rule the world with love.

My heart will always weep
with gratefulness for life.

Always your son,

In True Parents Family,

Peter



Sheri with her spiritual son Peter Bates

My life is very rich because I have received the Blessing from True Parents; I have a loving husband and two beautiful children, and feel I have more than any human being could ever conceive of having, because somebody witnessed to me. Somebody cared enough to take a few extra hours of his time to pray that I Because of this, and because of my desire to in turn be an agent of salvation for others, to love and cry for them as I have been loved, I can never stop witnessing.

First of all, none of us brings success in witnessing primarily on the basis of our personal "magnetism" or spiritual merit. We witness on the foundation of the historical, providential work of our True Parents and Jesus. We are never alone. When we call out to Heavenly Father, True Parents, Heung Jin Nim, and Jesus, they are there to assist us. But in order to get their help, we have to bring our own heart to the level of desperation they feel in their hearts.

Once when I was the witnessing team captain in Oakland, California, I went for three anguishing weeks without bringing a single person to a lecture. I witnessed every day from seven am until five pm. If nobody came, I went out again until 10 pm, sometimes witnessing all night at the bus station. Putting in all that time with no one coming, I began to realize that my attitude had to change.

Finally, one day I was standing on a corner near Fisherman's Wharf in San Francisco when suddenly my spiritual eyes opened. The faces of the young people looked old and scarred. I felt they were crying, and I could see how much they needed Heavenly Father. I repented right there, saying to God, "I didn't understand what I was witnessing for. I'm sorry I wasted Your time the last three weeks, Father. I am not going home tonight. I'm not sleeping until I can find someone who will listen to the Principle." That evening I brought five guests for the dinner program. All five people joined.

It isn't just the hours we spend on the street that matter, but the depth of our heart to love God's children. We have to treasure the chance to give life to others. You may wonder to yourself, "Should I go up to that person or not? Will he respond?" You may feel drawn to him, yet a little bit afraid. In that moment of doubt, try reflecting on the gift of life True Parents have given you. Think, "How can I not witness to this person? If I don't give him a chance, he might never know True Parents' love."

We have to become as desperate and as crazy as Father. Can you believe that a 16-year-old boy had the

conviction and the willingness to sacrifice his entire life to save the world? Father thinks about his mission to restore mankind every single minute of every day. He eats it, he breathes it; he never stops. He went to jail in Danbury, and instead of feeling, "I can't believe this. I have to sit here for months!" (which is what I would have felt) Father took up the challenge and reached out constantly to his fellow inmates with love; he taught them by his example. Father always moves forward.

Witnessing is our greatest opportunity to understand God's longing heart and to grow to inherit True Parents' unconditional love. If ever I felt my heart closing, I would go back out on the street and witness. The more you witness, the more people you can bring; and the more experiences in loving people you have, the more your heart becomes stretched.

In the beginning I went out to witness only because I knew I should. But eventually, I reached the point where I would cry with Heavenly Father for His lost children. More and more desperation crept into my heart. Finally, I went out because I just had to witness. This is the point when you become successful in witnessing. Each person has his or her own course. Sometimes it takes a very painful experience to open your heart to feel God's desperation.

Witnessing can change your prayer and your entire life. You begin to experience what it's like to be a parent, learning to love, serve, and sacrifice for another human being. Two months after our first son was born, I told my husband David, "I don't think I ever loved anyone before. I can't remember at any other point in my life being so willing to get up three times in the middle of the night." Every aspect of a child's life is important to the parents, from where to put his potty to whether he should have carrots or squash for lunch. Now I realize that God cares that much about us! You and I are just as important to Heavenly Father. He is our parent and is concerned about every single detail of our life.

How to begin

You can start witnessing by making some basic condition. Don't make it so challenging that you can never fulfill it, but do make it something definite. I try to keep a simple condition at all times -- at least once a day I talk to someone about the Principle. In my current mission, I don't have so much time to go out on the street and meet people. But I do drive into gas stations, stand in line at the bank, and take the kids shopping. Therefore, at least once a day I witness to somebody. According to your personal situation, make a determination; God can work through it.

Half the reason we don't bring results is because we don't believe we will. In fundraising, if you think, "This is a bad area, I won't do well here," you won't. But if you think, "I'm going to do it, no matter what," you always will. It's the same thing in witnessing. Say to God, "I know the foundation I'm standing on, and I know Your chosen people are here or else I wouldn't be here. So I'm not going home without a spiritual child." If you have the courage to say that, you will ultimately find one.

One of the things I learned about prayer and the spirit world is that it's good to be specific. Pray for exactly what you want, and really want it. "Heavenly Father, I want to bring a righteous person who is going to make a commitment to True Parents and help save this nation." Sometimes we don't let ourselves want enough.

Once my son wanted a Mickey Mouse T-shirt like the other children at school. For three weeks all I heard was, "I want a Mickey. When's Mickey coming?" I thought I was going to go crazy, because I couldn't find one. Finally, my sister bought him a Mickey Mouse T-shirt. If I want a spiritual child, I should be asking God much more desperately than Jesse was asking me for a Mickey Mouse T-shirt. I should want it so badly that I would be pestering God all the time. Just pull on God's shirttails and say, "Give me a spiritual child! I want it, I want it, I want it!" Then you might be surprised. You will get it.