

The Life of Dr. Young Oon Kim - Unification Church Missionary to the USA

From an interview with Cheryl Smith
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Left Sun Myung Moon - Right Young Oon Kim - Date unknown

Born in North Korea during the period of Japanese occupation and raised in a family that had "nothing to do with Christianity," Dr. Young Oon Kim's involvement with the Unification Church came after a lengthy period of personal struggle concerning the purpose of life. Because of her family's lifestyle, Dr. Kim never attended church as a child, but as she grew older, she began seeking answers to spiritual questions, especially how things in existence could be connected to God. Sometimes she would climb up a mountain and stay there for hours, crying out, "If there is a God, please show yourself to me."

Early one summer day, as she was meditating on top of a favorite rock on a mountainside, a clear voice came and said: "He loves you. The Bible says so."

That was all! There was no one around -- she looked about anxiously but she was completely alone, sitting under a tree -- but there was no denying that a voice had come to her. It was so strong in her mind and felt so bright.

She did not know what to do, and therefore did not change her plans to play tennis that afternoon. But the deep yearning to know about the purpose of life did not leave her for a moment; in fact, it increased. Although her life continued with the happiness of a child, she felt very lonely inside -- the kind of loneliness that couldn't be assuaged by a human relationship.

Days later, when she was again meditating in a peaceful surrounding, the same powerful voice came from within, this time accompanied by an action inside the earth. "Go to church," it said.

At this time, going to church was a remote idea to Dr. Kim, but when the voice came a third time and told her again to go to church, she did. She went to a Japanese Methodist church, since Korea was occupied at the time. The Wednesday night prayer meeting was small, consisting of only five or six people, but when the minister led off the meeting with hymn singing, Dr. Kim began to feel deep inspiration. The first hymn was about God being a Shepherd who was looking for His lost lambs, and as Dr. Kim sang quietly, she felt something rushing inside of her and her emotions became full with anticipation. All of a sudden, the voice came and said, "It is not you who have been seeking me, but I who have been seeking you." Completely overwhelmed, Dr. Kim's eyes filled with tears and she began to weep uncontrollably during the song and continued to cry for many minutes afterward.

As the service continued and the minister gave a sermon, Dr. Kim regained her composure and began to ponder the voice. "Who was this voice?" she wondered. "Was this God?" The next morning, she prayed for the first time, ending with "In the Name of Jesus Christ," as she had been taught the night before. Dr. Kim's prayer life grew strong from this humble beginning and she was taught many things through prayer. Often she prayed for hours in church; other times she chose a nearby mountain.

Dr. Kim had two powerful experiences with Jesus after becoming a Christian. The first came at Christmastime. After she had retired to bed, she was suddenly awakened and had a vision of herself kneeling at the foot of Jesus' cross. She looked up into his pain stricken face and cried deeply, telling the Savior, "I did not know you loved me so much to die for me."

Months later, at Easter, she spent many hours praying inside the church late at night. During her prayer, she had a vision of being with Jesus at the Easter scene. Mary Magdalene was present and said to Jesus, "Rabbi," and went to touch him, but he said, "Don't touch me. Go to the brethren and tell them that I have risen." Dr. Kim was deeply moved and prayed longer; crying out to God and Jesus. But that vision was not the only phenomenon to happen that Easter night! When she started for home, around 4:00, she noticed that instead of being swathed in darkness, everything she passed on the way was completely lit up. Her feet seemed weightless and she floated in air. Trees, rooftops and houses seemed to wave and call out to her and a voice kept ringing in her ears, "I created this for you." It felt as if the entire creation was welcoming her.

Although she did not speak of this experience to many people, Dr. Kim's reputation as an exemplary Christian increased steadily. People began to say of Dr. Kim, "If you want to be a Christian, be like her," and "She is like an angel -- she is a theologian."

The powerful voice continued to guide Dr. Kim on many occasions. Once when she had a bookkeeping job, the voice said, "Do not work with dead numerals. Work with lives." So, she decided to become schoolteacher. She went through a special nine-month training course and became a teacher with 80 pupils in a country school. She enjoyed the work there, but after a while, the voice came again and said, "Work on something for eternity."

After pondering this, Dr. Kim concluded that anyone could teach mathematics or the alphabet. As she had been coincidentally reading works by Swedenborg, she began to think about "eternal" qualities and decided that what the Bible contained was eternal. As a result, she understood that she must teach people the eternal word of God. She learned of an exclusive, men-only seminary in Japan and through her determination, was accepted there as a "special student." Because she believed that God had placed her there, Dr. Kim worked hard at her studies for five years and got the highest marks. At times, when she was studying she would wonder if God really intended for her to spend so much time behind her books. She prayed, "Do I need to study? This may not save souls." But the voice came back firmly, "I want you to know your enemies' weapons." And she thought to herself, "Will I be fighting against Christianity someday?" This time, no answer came. Upon her graduation, the head of Ehwa Women's University invited Dr. Kim to teach there, but Dr. Kim first took a two-year scholarship to Canada in 1948. While in Canada, she had a dream that North Korean tanks were crashing down on the South. She stood up in her bedroom and was paralyzed with fear -- she knew that the communists would kill all the leaders and the country would become dark. She then heard the powerful voice say, "You must study hard so that you can do the work of three people."

Dr. Kim stayed an extra year at the Canadian school and then attended international ecumenical conferences in Europe. It was there, for the first time, she witnessed the weaknesses of Christianity, and she was deeply worried. She could see the decline of the great churches and felt a desolation of spirit. She returned to Pusan, Korea, and began to teach at Ehwa Women's University.

But her health, never excellent in past years, declined. She suffered from digestive problems and thought that she would die from them because no medicine seemed to help. But she worried that she would die before she had fulfilled her life's mission. Once, when she was thinking this, the voice came and said, "This is the crisis of the entire spirit world." She asked what it meant, but it did not answer her. A few days later, an acquaintance who was a member of Father's group visited her and during the conversation used the word "revelation." Dr. Kim was intrigued and accepted an invitation to hear a lecture.

After her friend left, Dr. Kim came down with a severe case of cramps and went into the hospital for three weeks. When she came home, the friend returned and again Dr. Kim accepted an invitation to come to the lecture. But again the sickness welled up within her, and Dr. Kim had to cancel. The friend came back a third time and told Dr. Kim, "You may be healed if you come." So Dr. Kim packed her things and came to the center. The first night of lectures did not overly impress her. Some things she accepted, other things she disagreed with. When she met Father later that day and he asked her what she thought about the lectures, she told him that she felt that he may have received a revelation, but that it was probably from the lower realms of spirit world. Father became angry and told her to pray, especially about Jesus' mission and the temptation of the archangel. The second day, Dr. Kim was taught about the spirit world, which made her feel very positive toward the Principle.

Throughout her experience at the center, Dr. Kim had suffered with her disease. But the second night she was there, she heard the now-familiar voice speak to her again, saying, "It was I who led you to the Christian church. I led you to Swedenborg. And I have led you here."

Dr. Kim wept at the sound of the beloved voice and prayed, later falling into a deep, peaceful sleep. When she awoke the next morning, she found that her physical trouble had disappeared and she was whole again. "My stomach was light and pleasant like it had never been before, and Father was so happy," she recalled.

After she heard more lectures and news of her miraculous healing spread, Father gathered a small group of members and they sang welcome songs to Dr. Kim. She felt in the midst of heaven, and for the first time, felt that she had finally come home.

Editor's Note

Dr. Young Oon Kim arrived in America on January 4, 1959. She came on a student visa to attend the University of Oregon in Eugene, Oregon, bringing with her the message of the Divine Principle for the western world. There, in Eugene, with a rented typewriter, she translated and typed the manuscript of the first edition of the Divine Principle in book form. There, she also found the first five members, who moved with her to San Francisco in November, 1960.

Dr. Kim is a person with long-term vision. Here in America she quietly worked to lay a solid and lasting foundation for a future Unification Church, closely supervising each step of the way. One of those steps was the filing of the Articles of Incorporation of HSA-UWC with the State of California. Dr. Kim drafted them after thorough study of a legal book on incorporating.

Dr. Kim was always concerned about having an adequate and correct English version of the Divine Principle. After the first edition she spent endless hours going through nearly 500 copies, pasting correction slips over large errors and correcting small ones by hand. As the years went on, she continued to write new editions. Many older members remember well the many hours she poured over the writing, of ten asking us about the correct usage of our language.

When the National Headquarters moved to Washington D.C. and for many years afterwards, she played an active role in the everyday life of the center, personally raising many of America's foundation members.

Having already published the three-volume World Religions, Unification Theology and Christian Thought, and Unification Theology, she continues to write. She is currently a professor of theology at the Unification Theological Seminary at Barrytown.

Members who lived with her in centers have deep memories of the meticulous care with which she taught us about God, True Parents, and life. A woman whose greatness is invested in the lives of her students and the written word, Dr. Kim has touched the lives and captured the hearts of many members of the Unification Church in the western world.