

In Thailand, I Came to Understand God and True Parents on a Deeper Level

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1975 Unification Church Missionary to Thailand



Family Background

First, I would like to introduce myself. I was born in Bremen, Germany, in 1951.

During my childhood, I often had to visit physicians and undergo frequent surgeries; this experience helped me develop compassion for people who suffer.

As a child, I enjoyed attending Sunday school at different Protestant Churches, and I had some spiritual experiences. Then, as a teenager, I started searching for answers to many questions regarding the purpose of life, but neither the people in my life nor the books I read were able to help me.

Meeting Our Movement

In 1973 I finally met my spiritual mother, who introduced me to the Unification Movement. At that time, I was a kindergarten teacher. It took me almost a year to become a fulltime member since I knew from the beginning that this would require a lot of discipline and sacrifice. I always stayed in contact with my parents, even though they never understood my motivation for joining the Unification Movement. In 1974, I joined a witnessing team in Munich and worked in Karlsruhe for a while before all German members were called to a meeting at our training center near Camberg. There I volunteered to become a missionary to Thailand.

The Beginning in Bangkok, Capital of Thailand -- My Country

On 28th April 1975, I arrived in Bangkok, unprepared for my mission country's language, climate, and culture.

Somehow, in my broken English, I managed to tell a taxi driver that I was looking for an apartment to rent. At first, I could not imagine how I could survive in Thailand, after sweeping and scrubbing my apartment, I only wanted to sleep.

The temperature outside was about 99 degrees Fahrenheit (37°C), and I only had a fan in my room. During my first three days in Bangkok, I mostly consumed just fruit and water. On the third day, my landlord introduced me to a Vietnamese student who could speak German. She took me on a tour to interesting places.

On 2nd May, I encountered the American brother, Jack, in the lobby of my apartment building. I was happy to meet him and learned that he had already joined our movement in 1970 and participated in the Marriage Blessing of 1800 couples in February 1975.

Political Situation

Jack and I were extremely concerned about the political situation in Thailand because Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos, and Burma (now Myanmar) already had communist governments. At that time, leftist students began to organise demonstrations in Bangkok.

We taught English and German at language institutes to increase our income. In this way, we were also able to take classes in the Thai language regularly because the majority of the population in this country was not fluent in English. In June, another missionary, arrived at our home and told us that he could not stay in his mission country, Myanmar, because of the political situation. So, for the time being, he moved into our apartment and later stayed in Thailand for sixteen years. Every few months, he was able to travel to Myanmar as a journalist.

Visits by Other Missionaries and Joint Actions

Until the end of 1975, all missionaries, who were either unable to remain in their mission countries or stayed in Thailand just for a short time to apply for a new visa to reenter their mission countries, came to Bangkok. That was a very chaotic period because everyone had their own agenda.

The missionaries who had visa problems and could not stay in their country travelled to Thailand's Cambodian, Vietnamese, and Laotian refugee camps. Yet, they did not know how to help the refugees who had just escaped death and were not ready to join our movement.

Jack and I started to offer prayer and other conditions. For the most part, it was just the two of us. Yet, at times, other missionaries attended our meetings and activities. Even though, during one of our gatherings, all missionaries decided that Jack should be our central figure, nobody really adhered to this decision. Therefore, in November 1975, he concluded that we should separate for a while.

I rented a small room in a house, which was in a poor neighbourhood in Bangkok. This home belonged to a couple that rented out every room except the one they occupied. Kitchen and the bathroom were shared by about ten people, which meant that everyone was only given up to five minutes to wash. Fortunately, the toilet was in a separate location. We had to brush our teeth and attend to all other personal hygiene in our bedroom or at an outside sink.



Jack Hart and Eva Studemann Mackin

How I Came to Understand God and True Parents on a Deeper Level

I remained in this house for a few months, which became one of the most challenging times during my mission in Thailand. Some people in the same building hearing me pray in my room made fun of me and asked: "Where is your God?" Furthermore, they did not believe that I sincerely practised an ascetic and celibate lifestyle. Therefore, they introduced me to different potential boyfriends. I always made an effort to witness, even when I felt that most people were not in the least bit interested in what I had to say. The positive aspect of living with people who did not speak English was that I continuously had the opportunity to practice my Thai.

When an American couple invited me to their home, I slipped and fractured my right hip. The physician who performed the surgery inserted several screws so that my bones would heal faster. He instructed me not to put any weight on my right leg for at least three months and use crutches.

Worried that I might have to return to Germany, I determined to continue praying and witnessing. Unfortunately, I had to quit my job as a language teacher, so I could not continue with my Thai lessons due to a lack of funds because, for a while, the financial support from Germany did not reach me on time. In addition, it was impossible to use public transportation with my crutches and too expensive to travel by taxi every day.

For the first time in my life, I did not even have enough money for food. I decided to purchase one

inexpensive meal per day and trust that God would provide more nourishment through other people. My landlady knew of my financial problems and invited me almost daily for dinner. She also said that I should not worry about my rent for the time being.

My witnessing contacts often invited me to a meal. Even the physician who performed my hip surgery told me that I could pay him whenever possible. I experienced severe physical pain because, according to local custom, I slept on the floor. Moreover, I felt very lonely since I was not able to meet my brothers every day.

During this period, I had my first dream of True Father. He told me that I could entrust all my problems to him. I felt overwhelming love as he listened to me.

Looking back, I am infinitely grateful for the suffering I had experienced as it deepened my belief in God and True Parents immensely.

Unity in the Trinity and a New Beginning

In January 1976, Jack Hart and some brothers, who were expelled from their countries due to visa problems, relocated to a house that became our second center. In the end, we always cleared up our differences because both of us were wholly convinced that Thailand's future depended on our unity. I never sacrificed as much as during these pioneering years! We started organising weekend workshops regularly, and Jack encouraged me to give lectures in the Thai language, admitting that I was more fluent than him. I wrote the words of the diagrams in English and taught them in Thai because the Thai written language is much more complicated than the spoken one. Whenever I introduced the Divine Principle, I felt so much energy from God, and words I did not know before came out of my mouth.

Strangely enough, it became more difficult to have simple conversations afterwards.

First Members, Political Tensions and Changes

Our first member joined us in December 1976. Four more members moved into our center during the same year, but only Dr Lek has remained in our movement until today. He spoke fluent English and translated the Divine Principle into Thai.

One of my spiritual children, Rungporn, was a woman who took three years to become a member; I met her in 1975 she listened to lectures, joined our movement, and later received the Marriage Blessing. Even today, we are in close contact.

On 6th October 1976, amid rising fears of a communist takeover similar to the one that had taken place in Vietnam, anti-communist police and paramilitaries attacked a leftist student demonstration during an incident that became known as the Thammasat University Massacre.

According to official estimates, 46 students were killed and 167 wounded.

In 1977 we relocated to a different mission center and kept this building for seven years. A German sister, Amala, came to Thailand to live with us. She met our movement in Sri Lanka but was unable to remain there due to visa problems. In 1978 we began to sell Ilhwa Ginseng and other products to finance our living expenses and projects without relying on financial support from the United States and Germany. The number of our members grew steadily.

Temptations, Protection and Reflections

During my first years in Thailand, I often felt lonely and occasionally made careless decisions. One night I was walking alone in Bangkok, not thinking about my safety; a young man appeared and said he would stay with me until I was ready to go home. I do not recall how long we were walking, but when we arrived at our center, he told me that he would wait in front of the house until I turned off the lights and went to sleep. I never saw him again and concluded that he was an angel. Sometimes I wonder how often God protected me in mysterious ways.

I experienced diverse temptations because, generally, the male population here felt more attracted to me than German men. Soon I faced the greatest trial of my faith; one day, while I was street witnessing, a handsome young man followed me and inquired about our movement. He declined my invitation to visit our center and asked me to give him a lecture at a nearby coffee shop.

I agreed, but during my presentation, I realised that he was not interested in the Divine Principle. He said he would like to meet me again, and we made an appointment a few days later. I was somehow attracted to him, yet I hoped that the second lecture would turn him around.

However, that second meeting changed nothing. He said that he would call me later. At the center, I entered our prayer room. While crying profusely, I admitted to God that I was seriously thinking of leaving our movement because I had not felt such an infatuation for a long time. Then I found myself knocking at the brothers' bedroom door, and Jack appeared. I told him about my experience, and he did not judge me at all.

Instead, he replied that it was okay because now I could sympathise with my brothers on a deeper level since they had faced temptations many more times than I did. Afterwards, I had the strength to tell this young man that he could only see me at our center, but I remained very sad for a few months.

One afternoon, when I was street witnessing for a short time, I met my third spiritual child, Woravut. I just wanted to distribute one more invitation to our lectures and immediately return to our center, because we expected many guests.

Most people who received our invitations just took them and disappeared, but Woravut was very intrigued and followed me on the spot. When I introduced the Divine Principle to him, he seemed fascinated; however, more with my presence than the actual lecture.

Woravut visited us every day to see me, whereupon I said to him that God had already chosen a partner for each of us and waits for us to become mature enough to receive the Marriage Blessing. Woravut continued to listen to lectures every day without much understanding until I talked about Moses' providence. Suddenly a light dawned on him; he understood the contents of my words and asked if he could become a member. I shed many tears for him. Later he was blessed in marriage and now has two children as well as four grandchildren.

I cannot express how much joy I felt to teach the Divine Principle. Some guests wanted to hear the whole content in one sitting. Some of them stayed all night, and we consumed a lot of coffee to stay awake. I used the diagrams in my book for a while, but later, some Thai members created beautiful charts, making lecturing easier.

In May 1978, Jack was officially appointed national leader of the mission in Thailand; my responsibility was to be a foreign correspondent for our German and American newspapers. I was also responsible for building an economic foundation for our movement in Thailand.

Those directions came as a big shock for me since I had no experience in politics or economics. Nevertheless, I decided to follow the new directives to the best of my abilities.

I told Jack that I would write newspaper articles two days a week and work on a business plan for another two days. During the remaining three days and every evening, I would continue giving Divine Principle lectures because Jack wanted me to, and I could not imagine giving it up.

Sometimes I visited refugee camps together with other missionaries and wrote about my experiences. Once I interviewed prostitutes to understand their motivation and to publish their stories. Soon the political situation changed once more, which provided important material for my journalistic activities.

Vietnam launched an invasion of Cambodia in late December 1978 to disempower the dictator, Pol Pot. Two million Cambodians had died at the hands of the Khmer Rouge regime, and Pol Pot's troops conducted bloody cross-border raids into Vietnam, Cambodia's historical enemy, massacring civilians and torching villages.

Pol Pot fled ahead of the onslaught, and Phnom Penh was placed under Vietnamese control in a little over a week. During the rule of the Khmer Rouge regime, we learned about reports from Cambodian refugees through newspapers and personally interviewing them at a camp in Thailand. Jack and I shed many tears for the Cambodian people, and we were relieved when Pol Pot lost his power.

We started to build our Home Church in that area by visiting families and offering classes to the children.

In the fall of 1980, Tanet joined us. He had met our movement in London and just knew the address of our P.O. Box; every day, he visited the post office to meet one of us. He became a dedicated member who received the Marriage Blessing two years later.

In December 1980, Oliver, a young British man visited us. He had met our movement in his homeland but decided to travel the world before listening to the Divine Principle. Whilst still in Thailand, he changed his plan and tried to find our phone number. Through the Ministry of Education, he received the number of a journalist who specialised in religious movements. This reporter knew our number, even though we had not yet registered our organisation.

Oliver became a full time member; later, his brother Russell from England paid us a visit to convince the

former to come home, but instead joined us as well. 1989 Russell received the Marriage Blessing and was appointed national leader of our movement in Greece in 2010.

Birthday of True Parents, Trinity, Matching and Blessing

When we missionaries were invited to the birthday celebration of the True Parents in February 1980 in New York, I felt that True Parents looked exactly as in my dreams and the photos I had seen. When True Father spoke, I was surprised by how much he understood our struggles and suffering. Many missionaries were shedding tears during his speech.

Amala, the German sister from Sri Lanka, and I took part in a Matching by photo on 30th December 1980.

In 1981, all missionaries and their spouses received visas as representatives of the International Relief Friendship Foundation (IRFF). We were elated because, for the past six years.

In 1982, a Professors for World Peace (PWPA) conference took place in the Philippines, and we were able to send a group of professors from Bangkok. Amala, as well as I, received the Marriage Blessing in July as part of the 2075 couples in New York, and six of our members joined a Blessing ceremony in October among a group of 6000 couples in Korea.

In 1983, my husband Tom and the wives of some Thai brothers arrived in Bangkok to start our families, and together we continued our mission. We were happy to sponsor a conference of the International Cultural Foundation in Thailand, and at the end of the year, some Thai professors attended a PWPA conference in Korea.



Eva Studemann Mackin teaching Divine Principle

Progress in Our Mission

In 1984, the first conference of the World Media Association took place in Bangkok. Reverend Lee became the national leader of the movement in Thailand and later the regional director of twenty Asian countries. By that time, we had more than forty fulltime members.

Jack and I had worked together for nine years on the national level; Amala other missionaries also supported us immensely for a long time. When Reverend Lee arrived, we only had a few pioneer centres in Bangkok and some other provinces. The Unification Movement was not yet officially registered because Jack and I were concerned about the political situation in Thailand. Furthermore, we knew that Christian missionaries had been largely unsuccessful in converting the Thais, as 95 percent of the population is Buddhist, and we wanted to avoid any misunderstanding.

Since Reverend Lee was responsible for the mission in Thailand, Jack, others and I were working in pioneer centres. My husband and I managed three different centres successively, located close to the largest university in Bangkok. During that time, our daughter and son were born.

In 1986, when our youngest child was one-year-old, our family and a group of members were sent to Phuket in the south of Thailand to start a mission there. At first, we felt lonely because we were used to the many members and projects in Bangkok, but then we came to love this beautiful town close to the ocean. Our fundraising and witnessing efforts brought outstanding results. The worst experience in Phuket occurred when my husband Tom almost drowned, whereas the best one was the conception of our third child.

After one year in Phuket, we were assigned to Songkhla, another town in the south, and a year later to Chiang Mai in the north of Thailand.

In August 1988, a World Collegiate Association for the Research of Principles (CARP) Conference was held in Bangkok. For a few months, Tom assisted with the preparations. Most Thai members and representatives from many countries around the world participated in it.

In 1989, Tom and I returned to Bangkok because Reverend Lee wanted me to conduct 21-day Divine Principle workshops and become the principal of a small school for the children of our movement.

In 1990, Reverend Lee encouraged my family to move to the United States, planning to assign leadership positions to native members. The missionaries were to stay in the background as advisors. I wanted to remain in Thailand at all costs, but my husband did not. I cannot express how my heart was torn apart at that time.

This country had become my home, and I wanted to be buried here. At first, I could not imagine how I could ever be happy at any other place. With time I got used to America, but Thailand will always have a special place in my heart.



Eva Studemann Mackin, her husband Tom and their children

Reflections

When I first arrived in Thailand, I did not have the faintest idea of what was waiting for me. Jack became my closest ally, and I believe that our unity was the foundation for all the success in Thailand. We shed countless tears and offered many conditions, including prayers, fasting and witnessing. Jack ascended to the spirit world in 2007; I know that he also loved Thailand more than any other country. Some Thai members told me that they often feel the presence of his spirit.

At the time of this writing, it has been 31 years since I left Thailand. However, I have always stayed in touch with some of the members. Especially since the creation of social media, I have shared a lot with my Thai brothers and sisters. In 2018, I stayed in Kalasin in the Northeast of Thailand for three weeks to participate in witnessing and preparing candidates for the Marriage Blessing. In 2019 I revisited Kalasin.

One year after our family moved to the United

States, the Unification Movement in Thailand experienced severe persecution because one government official became very hostile towards our organisation due to misinformation. Our members were accused of attempting to abolish the Royal Family and Buddhism in Thailand. Eight of our leaders were arrested and imprisoned for 21 months, where they had to wear handcuffs and shackles. This group included Dr Lek and his wife Bai Hang from Taiwan. Some leaders of our movement in the USA were able to assist by hiring a good lawyer, but it took 21 years until we were completely vindicated.

Finally, in 2012, Dr Lek and his wife became the first Blessed family worldwide who fulfilled their mission as tribal messiahs.

Until this day, my family continues to support Thailand and our mission there.