

The Blessing is a Gift from True Parents

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I was born in the city of Tsushima in Aichi Prefecture in 1953 as the second of two sons. I joined the church soon after I entered Doshisha University in Kyoto in 1971 and learned the Divine Principle in a three-day workshop.

I wanted to learn about Christology and parallel providential periods in depth. With my spiritual parent's recommendation, I decided to participate in a Special Workshop held at the Takarazuka Training Center (then located in Hyogo Prefecture). Among the many lectures I heard during the workshop, the one on Jesus' life course made a deep impression on me. I was surprised and amazed to learn that we were living in the same era as the Messiah whom Heaven had sent to the world in the Last Days and the start of a new age. I firmly made up my mind that I would never denounce the Messiah. Besides my college studies, I devoted myself to activities in the Kyoto Family Church Student Department.

Witnessing on IOWC with Western members

After graduating from college in 1976, I served on the IOWC. Back then, many members from Europe and the United States came to Japan, and Japanese members went out witnessing with them. They visited homes or went to meet high school principals or college professors and invite them to a Day of Hope Rally.

In June 1978, the Japanese IOWC members, including me, were sent to the United Kingdom. In September, True Parents matched these members. Most of the matchings occurred within two days. However, although True Father called on me two times, I ended up not getting matched.

For the next two and a half years, I served in England, doing home church activities in Derby and Manchester. During this period, every evening as I came back to the church from daily activities I would ask God (Heavenly Parent) why I had not gotten matched.

At first, I thought it was because of my arrogant view that certainly I would get matched as a reward for seven years of devotion in church activities. I gradually realized that subconsciously I had an ideal of the perfect woman. To realize that each woman has God's divine nature, which God loves, required some time.

At the end of December 1980, True Parents called the Japanese members who had not yet received a match to New York City. Several hundred US brothers and sisters were sitting in front of True Father. Behind True Father, Japanese brothers, I among them, stood in line.

True Father said, "Sisters who want to be blessed to a Japanese brother, raise your hands," and then

matched a few couples. A short while later, True Father brought a petite sister in front of me. She was Nancy Moriarty from Boston. This was how our matching took place.

She was born as the oldest of five siblings. In 1977, when she was a sophomore in college, she joined the church. Back when we first met, she was serving in the church in State of Michigan. Because of the differences in national and ethnic backgrounds, bi-national couples tend to have trouble finding common themes to talk about. As for us, however, we felt happy about our relationship from the start.



Entering UTS after the Blessing Ceremony

After the matching, Nancy went back to Michigan, and I stayed in New York City to carry out my mission. On July 1, 1982, we took part in the 2,075- Couple Holy Wedding Ceremony. Nancy and I enjoyed the magnificent entertainment performed at the indoor arena as we shared our joy over taking part in the holy Blessing Ceremony.

In the autumn of that year, I entered UTS with the hope of gaining a deeper understanding of Christianity. However, through a special meeting for Japanese members in the US held in January 1983, I came to understand the providential significance of missionary work in the US and decided to take time off from school and engage in activities as a member of the church in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

In December of that year, Nancy and I started our family in one of the rooms in the church international headquarters in New York. While Nancy stayed and served in New York, I did front line witnessing in Philadelphia. I returned to New York once a month. After True Father began his imprisonment in the Danbury Federal Correctional Institution in July 1984, I engaged in outreach and volunteer work and visited Christian leaders.

In January 1985, our daughter Yoko was born. To be honest, Nancy and I were not living in an environment suitable to welcoming a baby. Nevertheless, since it is normal for a husband to stay with his wife during delivery in the US, I, too, headed for the hospital with Nancy before her due date.

Fourteen years had passed since I came across True Parents teachings in Kyoto. I was grateful to God and True Parents for being able to offer our daughter before Heaven as the fruit of the past fourteen years. Feeling my responsibility as a father, I wanted to work even harder for God's providence for the sake of my daughter.

However, back then, few blessed couples in the US had children. Since I lived away from my family, I believe Nancy must have had a tough time caring for the baby alone.

Soon after we celebrated Yoko's 100th day at the Philadelphia church, I received an assignment in Erie, Pennsylvania, doing pioneer witnessing as part of the providence to establish five hundred churches in the United States. In Erie, I engaged in activities such as outreach toward Christian ministers.

Meanwhile, Nancy moved into a church in Boston close to her parents' house for financial reasons. That her parents lavished love and care on Yoko as their first grandchild was a blessed relief.

My pioneer witnessing mission ended in January 1986 and I re-entered UTS after three years, while most of my fellow students had graduated.

Through my studies, I gained a firm conviction that Unification Church theology is systematic and has the potential to contribute to religious reconciliation around the world. Furthermore, through communication with other Japanese-American blessed families in UTS, I became aware of obstacles due to language barriers that can damage the husband–wife relationship. The concept of gender equality is widespread in US society. It can harm a relationship if a husband uses forceful language to his wife such as You must do this and that. Since then, I have been careful not to hurt my wife's feelings with careless words. On her part, my wife has always tried to understand me.

Serving as a minister in a pioneer church

After graduating from UTS in the summer of 1987, my family and I moved to Massachusetts in the New England region, because I was assigned to serve as a minister in a pioneer church there. Although we had to share our home with the church members, I was happy with the fact that we were together, since it was the first time for me to live with my family. Sometime later, Nancy's parents and sisters came to visit our church. I think they hid their shock when seeing our old, narrow house.

In 1988, our second daughter, Margaret, was born. I think our family became stabler after welcoming a second child. As a father of two, I felt a heavy responsibility on my shoulders. At the same time, I was excited to see my family expand from my wife to my children and my wife's parents and sisters.

That year, at a conference True Parents hosted at East Garden on the Day of All True Things, I received instructions to travel around the US as an itinerant worker with a few other members. I had to travel to each and every church in one region and then go on to another region after two months. My responsibilities included giving lectures and Sunday service on weekends and speaking to church members at meetings on weekdays.

In those days, in the US, we conducted Christian clergy pilgrimage tours to Korea, and I sometimes gave lectures to US ministers at gatherings. After this providence, I returned to Massachusetts.



In August 1989, the day after the fourth anniversary of True Father's release from Danbury prison, he instructed about twenty US leaders to meet in Kodiak, Alaska. A special seven-day workshop took place at North Garden, True Parents' home in Kodiak. It was a valuable experience, but I felt tense sleeping and eating with True Parents for a week. We went out to sea fishing for Halibut in the daytime. In the evening, we listened to True Father speak. Nightly, we got to bed after midnight. In the end, True Father's message started Saturday evening and ended at five o'clock that next morning, just in time for Pledge Service. It was truly a workshop to offer devotion to Heaven.

In 1990, our son Kozen was born. Now that we had three children, for Nancy to take care of them alone became increasingly difficult. Living as a minister, I am not sure if I was of enough help to her, but I did what I could. I changed the diapers and fed the baby his bottle, etc. In 1992, our third daughter Kenshuku was born and we became a family of six.

Being a parish leader in my hometown in Japan

On True Parents' birthday in January 1993, True Parents gathered UTS graduates in the US and told all Japanese graduates to return to their hometowns. In March of that year, I returned to Japan after fifteen years. I served as the leader of the Aichi Parish. I worked energetically every day from morning to night in order for Japan to fulfill its role as the Mother Nation. By the time I retired in 2019, I had served as a minister in Aichi, Tokyo and the Tohoku region.

Several months later, my family came to Japan and we moved into a dormitory for young members and blessed families in Nagoya. Since Nancy and our children did not understand Japanese at all, they did not leave the house for the first month.

The kitchen was for shared use, so it was not easy for Nancy to cook. She and the children were unused to bathing in a huge bathtub with other people. I believe it was a period of endurance, especially for Nancy. Back in the US, the children had been accustomed to eating cereal in the morning. When I saw them eat rice with milk or ketchup, I recognized the difference in food culture. In September, the children started to go to elementary school and nursery school. Since Nancy could not read what the teacher had written in the parent-teacher correspondence notebook, she asked one of the members in the dorm house to help her.

While serving as a missionary, I also worked hard to witness to my mother (my father had died nine years earlier). My mother started to come to Sunday service once a month. "I wanted to see my grandchildren attending Sunday school," she said. In 1994, she attended the special workshop for Japanese woman leaders in the Central Training Center in Sutaekdong, Guri, South Korea.

When I revealed my hope for her to receive the blessing, she accepted it. In 1995, she received the single-person blessing in the Kanayama Family Church. I could not dream of my mother getting blessed when I was back in the US. I offered a prayer of gratitude to heaven by the Kiso River for granting my long-cherished wish. A few years later when my children entered middle school and high school, I told them

occasionally about how their grandmother came to receive the blessing. I believe this had a good influence on our family for conducting the second-generation matching and blessing.

In 1999, I went to Korea with my mother to participate in the Ancestor Liberation Ceremony in the HJ CheonBo Training Center. My mother told me that she felt that "the truth is here" when she met members from various countries around the world at the training center. In 2000, she received the Physical World–Spiritual World Blessing.

Reflecting on our marriage in Jardim, Brazil

In November 1996, Nancy applied to do volunteer work in South America. While she was away for a month, I had to take care of the children on my own. The kids were still in elementary school and nursery school, so naturally they came to rely on me. I think my bond with our children grew stronger during this period. My mother came over for two weeks and helped me with the housework. The family trust relationship that formed during this period has lasted to this day.

Nancy returned from South America in December 1997. The next year, the Forty-Day Workshop for World Peace and Ideal Families started in Jardim. Nancy and I left our children behind in Japan and headed there. We had time to reflect on our relationship during the workshop. Up until then, as a minister, I was too busy to spend time with my family. The only time I had with them was Sunday evenings. Needless to say, I had no time to spend with my wife.

During the workshop, I had the chance to reflect on the hardship Nancy must have gone through. I felt so grateful for her, and our bond grew stronger. Nancy had experienced many difficulties ever since she married me. I think she was able to overcome those difficulties because of her absolute trust in True Parents' matching. "Cherish the relationship with your spouse. Do not fight from here on out." This message, which True Parents gave us during the workshop, left a strong impression on me.

When our children went on to middle school and high school, every day a series of tensions arose. Nancy was especially sensitive about our daughters' relationships with their friends. Since she was not fluent in Japanese, I was the one to go to school for our children's progress assessments. But as a minister, I was more concerned about the children of the church members. Looking back, I feel sorry for not having been more concerned about my own children.

When I was serving in Tokyo, away from my family, I received a phone call from Nancy saying that Kenshuku, our third daughter, who was then a high school student, was violating her family curfew. It turned out that she was with her friends doing a school club activity, but Nancy always kept a lookout on our children's friendships at school and repeatedly reminded them about the importance of purity. Furthermore, she emphasized the importance of communication with other second-generation members and told the children to participate in Sunday services and workshops. I deeply appreciate that she raised our children well.

Nancy and I wanted our children to learn Korean. All four of our children went to the Sun Moon University Korean Language Institute after graduating from high school and learned Korean language, culture and good manners. Our oldest daughter and son went on to Sun Moon University after finishing their course at the language institute.

On deciding his career, my son asked me which course he should take. Usually, I tend to judge things based on my stereotypes. However, I answered, "You should choose the course you are interested in." I think this was a useful answer for building a trusting relationship with him. My second and third daughters found their life's path in the US after finishing the language institution course.

Our four children received the blessing

In June 2007, I received a sudden phone call from our second daughter, Margaret, who was participating in a forty-day workshop at the HJ CheonBo Training Center in Korea. She said she wanted to take part in True Parents' matching. I was surprised because she was still a minor. But Nancy and I discussed it and decided to respect her wish.

As a result, True Parents matched her to Jun-hyeong Kim, the oldest son of Yong-ju Kim and Setsuko Kawano (Chungnam church, 6,000-couple blessing group). In July of that year, they took part in the 2007 International and Intercultural Marriage Blessing to Bring the Era of Peace and Prosperity. Jun-hyeong entered Sun Moon University Graduate School, and in 2009 they started their family. Today, they have two children.

After that, we prepared for our oldest daughter Yoko's parents' matching. One day, a blessed couple from the US, Hiroshi and Hatsune Inose (in the 1,800-couple group), came to visit me at the Nagoya Family Church, North Aichi Parish, where I served as a parish leader. They wanted to introduce their oldest son,

Eisuke, to Yoko.

After sufficient communication, Eisuke and Yoko participated in the Marriage Blessing Ceremony for the Reign of Peace in a Heavenly Civilization in July 2008. They started their family that year and now have two children. Today, they serve in the Kien Family Church.

In 2016, Nancy and I started preparing for the blessing of our third daughter Kenshuku. From her experience in missionary activity in the US, Kenshuku wanted a second-generation member from the US. Nancy searched for a candidate through the US Family Department. As a result, we decided to contact Robert and Akemi Bartholome in Florida (2,075- couple blessing group) to ask if their oldest son David was willing to meet our daughter.

In January 2017, David came to Japan to meet us. Nancy supported Kenshuku and David whenever they suffered from misunderstandings. In September of that year, they took part in the 2017 HJ Cosmic Marriage Blessing in Korea. They started their family life together in Florida in 2018.

Our son Kozen registered on a blessing website in 2017 and met Chiyo Shibuya, the second daughter of Tomoyoshi Shibuya and Gyeonghi Lee (Niigata Parish, 6,500-couple group) in May of that year. After sufficient communication, they held an engagement ceremony at the Kien Family Church in July. They participated in the 2017 HJ Cosmic Marriage Blessing and started their family in 2018. They had their first child in September 2019.

We receive the blessing by True Parents' grace. Nancy and I are making effort to correct our course by constantly returning to this original point. Two among our four children married spouses from foreign countries. For transnational couples to understand each other may take time. I have learned through the process of my children's matching and blessing that second-generation members can move forward toward the blessing as long as they themselves are determined to do so. As our children live with their families in Korea, Japan and the US, I would like to watch over them with joy and constant sincerity.

Shinobu Sugiura was a member of the International One World Crusade (IOWC) when True Parents matched him with Miss Nancy Moriarty (an American) in 1980. After the matching, he worked for the providence in the United States. In July 1982, he and Nancy received the blessing in the 2,075-couple Holy Wedding Ceremony. After graduating from the Unification Theological Seminary (UTS), he worked as a minister in the US. When True Parents announced the Hometown Providence in 1993, he returned to Japan, where he served as a minister. This blessed family confirmed the value of True Parents' blessing through their experiences living in countries with vastly different environments.