

*Christel Werner,
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I was born on a Sunday, November 10, 1929, the firstborn of five children, in Duisburg, located in the Rhine/Ruhr Valley of West Germany. I married Paul Werner in 1951, and we emigrated to Canada in 1953 and later to the United States in 1957.

In 1961 Paul and his partner decided to move their business to Sacramento, California. After a disappointing experience with the partner, Paul decided to study at a business and engineering college and a real-estate school in Sacramento. He received diplomas and licenses in both. He then started his own business as a contractor, investor and real-estate broker. He had duplexes and apartment houses under construction, and our financial situation was secure. We all loved sunny California and already had made plans for an early retirement. I worked full time for IBM and really liked my job and the working climate there, thinking: "This is where I would like to stay for years to come." I didn't know then that this was just wishful thinking on my part.

We were a close-knit family and always attended parties together, never one of us alone. This one time though, during the summer of 1963, one of our secretaries at IBM was leaving and I, along with all the other girls, was invited to her farewell party. I accepted the invitation and intended to be home by 10 p.m. To my surprise, one of my former co-workers, Sandy Pinkerton, showed up too. I hadn't seen her for some time and we had a lot to talk about. When it was nearly time for me to leave the party to be home on time, Sandy offered to take me back to the IBM garage to pick up my car. She usually was very talkative, but now she was quiet and started crying. I was at a loss of what

to do and asked her how I could help. Sobbing she told me: "Christ has returned. He is now on earth."

I was so shocked and started to explain to her that, according to Bible prophecies, certain events had to take place before his return and to our knowledge these prophecies were still unfulfilled. We discussed different aspects of the Bible, and I realized this would take many more hours to explain, and I was already late, knowing that Paul would get very nervous. Unfortunately, we had no cell phones at that time, and I had to head home. We agreed to meet again soon.

Needless to say, Paul was very upset about my arriving so late. He had already called the police and the local hospital to find out about car accidents in the area and was in no mood to listen to my explanation. After he calmed down the next day I told him about my experience with Sandy and his reply was: "Why didn't you tell me?"

"Well," I asked him, "how could I?"

As it turned out, these two simple sentences changed our lives forever. Sandy knew we were good Christians and were actually waiting for Christ's return. We, on the other hand, knew she was involved with the Edgar Cayce group and interested in other New Age groups springing up in California. Paul's first reaction was, "Let's talk to her and set things straight. Apparently she has fallen for one of those many sects and needs help." When we invited her for Sunday afternoon coffee, three people showed up at our house. Sandy had brought along her husband, John Pinkerton, who also was a co-worker of mine at IBM, and Pauline Philips Verheyen. As we were very familiar with Bible quotes concerning the return of Christ, fireworks really erupted as soon as they started explaining highlights of the Principle. Certain parts, like everlasting life after our physical death, spirit world, and prophecies of the Bible, were in accord with our Christian beliefs.

But most disturbing were their statements about Jesus, our Savior. How could they dare tell us that Jesus didn't come primarily to die for our sins but to take a bride and form a True Family, thereby fulfilling

God's Ideal of Creation and that he wasn't able to fulfill God's primary purpose because of the disbelief of his people? They told us that by going the way of the cross, Jesus brought spiritual salvation, but in order to bring physical salvation as well, he would return in the flesh as a man to completely fulfill his mission. But, as stated in the Bible, he will have a new name. They told us that God's promise has now been fulfilled by sending his son, Sun Myung Moon, to this earth, and he and Jesus are one in mission, comparable with John the Baptist, who, according to the Bible, came in the spirit and power of Elijah.

The confrontation got so intense that I felt quite uncomfortable. I had a good relationship with John and Sandy and didn't want to hurt their feelings, but the sparks kept flying. We believed in the Bible as the word of God and expected Jesus to return in the clouds. Logically this was not possible by human reasoning, we felt, but with God nothing is impossible.

Our struggles during the following weeks and months are hard to describe. Just thinking about it now, I'm reliving this difficult time period, overcome by emotions. We studied the Principle, prayed, fasted, and cried to God and Jesus for help. We wanted to be true to our faith and serve the Messiah at his second coming. But how could we be sure? We waited for the return of Christ and didn't want to make the same mistake of 2000 years ago. According to the Bible, he would have a new name. Could it be Sun Myung Moon?

As we continued to attend Sunday Services in our Lutheran Church, and I prayed desperately during the service for guidance concerning the Principle and Father, Jesus embraced me and told me: "I love you." This was comforting and confusing at the same time. I needed a clear answer.

I had to go to work daily, but Paul checked his construction sites just briefly and returned home trying to come to a decision. He studied the Divine Principle in reference to the Bible and prayed and prayed. When I came home in the evening, trying to maintain at least

part of our family life for the sake of Klaus, our 11-year-old son, it was extremely difficult. Even at dinner time the discussions continued and the atmosphere was so heavy.

Very soon, Pauline, John, and Sandy moved into our home and really took over. They practically decided what should be done and when.

I knew then that this was the end of our family life. We slept in different rooms right away, and practically everything changed overnight. Sandy especially was unpredictable. One morning she couldn't be found anywhere. Finally we discovered her in our back yard in her sleeping bag. Needless to say, our neighbors found this behavior rather strange. Then Pauline decided to send her to San Francisco to stay with Miss Young Oon Kim. Miss Kim was very strict concerning center life and could handle her.

Life at our home was upside down. How could I protect our child who wasn't sure of what to make of these drastic changes in our family life? At his young age he needed a stable environment and enough rest to manage his school life. He was so patient and supportive, and all I could do was pray for his protection and try to help him cope as best I could.

True to his character, Paul's struggles in prayer were very intense, and his conditions of indemnity were dramatic, as you know from his testimony. It was heart-breaking for me to watch his suffering and not be able to help. After his decision to join the movement, he decided to subjugate his physical body in order to reach perfection very fast, or so he thought. Along with other extreme conditions he took his daily bath in ice cold water, literally containing ice cubes, and I feared for his health. But he wouldn't listen to reason. Half a year later, on our way to Germany, the effects of these conditions became obvious, and he had to seek medical treatment in New York before boarding our ship to Germany.

My nature is just the opposite, and my indemnity conditions were

not so extreme. I studied, fasted, and my deep prayer life carried me through these difficult times. Deep in my heart I knew that my intimate relationship to God and Jesus would guide me. The different prophecies in the Bible were so confusing:

- “They will see the Son of man coming in the clouds of Heaven...and every eye will see him.” Mt. 24.30
- “The Kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed” Luke 17.20
- “The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night...”
1 Th. 5.2
- “When the son of man comes, will he find faith on earth?”
Luke 18.8
- “But first he must suffer and be rejected by this generation...”
Luke 17.25
- “...and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone which no one knows except him who receives it.”
Rev. 2.17

Then Miss Kim came to Sacramento for a two-day workshop. We attended all sessions and were very impressed by her lectures and her personal testimony. Up to that point we had no idea that she had been a professor of theology in Seoul. The atmosphere was very high, and we felt God’s presence. During the following question-and answer-session, Paul really bombarded her with questions, quoting Bible prophecies concerning Jesus and the second coming. Finally her patience reached its limits, and she said: “Do you think I’m that stupid to accept something that isn’t true?” There was an uneasy silence and Paul kept quiet. She then concluded the workshop. \

The meeting with Miss Kim actually marked the turning point in our struggles. Her lectures were down to earth and yet spiritual at the same time. While studying her English translation of the Divine Principle, we were amazed about the new horizons opening up. This could only be the work of God explaining His plan of salvation. We also

understood that we were prepared through generations of ancestors to be among the first in the Western world to follow God's call.

Having endured much pain and sorrow throughout our lives, here in California we finally had made a good life as a family, and I knew that accepting Christ at his Second Advent meant total sacrifice of everything dear to our hearts, meaning all our dreams and plans and above all, our life as a family. Even to this day I can never sing the Holy Song "Light of Grace" without shedding tears: "Though clouds may come, hiding His face, hiding the smile of my God; though clouds may come, still He is there, shining brightly, God is love. I'll give my life and my love unto the one God of love." It's one thing to sing this song, but to actually do it is a different story. As Paul often told new members, once you give your life to God, it belongs to Him and you can never take it back. It's a very serious decision.