

## God's Hope for America Bus Tour - The Teacher Who Wouldn't Stop Speaking

Michael Balcomb

July 25, 2014



As I travel through all 50 states on the #godshopeforamerica holy ground pilgrimage, I'm constantly intrigued in meeting all the very different kinds of people who became attracted to True Father and True Parents. What is it that they most remember about him now, two years after his passing?

Last night we were being hosted by the Columbus, Ohio Family Church. To welcome our pilgrims, they'd invited a number of prominent members of the community, representing several different faith traditions. One who caught my attention was Sister Ismene from the Nation of Islam, who came to the program despite being in the final hours of the Ramadan Fast.

Tall, charismatic, attractive and articulate, Sister Ismene shared about her first meeting with Father and Mother Moon. It was a small group and an intimate gathering, and she confessed that Rev. Moon ended up speaking a long, long time.

"Even though he spoke so long, and the translator made everything even longer, I was almost mesmerized by that first encounter," she said. "I hardly noticed time going by; I was so engrossed with what he was saying. The part that stuck with me the most was his recurring theme, to live for the sake of others, and in that way to create one family under God."

As she shared her testimony of that inspiring but lengthy evening many years ago, others in the audience were smiling and nodding in agreement. One common theme that most people experienced when they met Rev. Moon for the first time is that he liked to speak for a long, long time. Ask almost anyone who ever met him and they'll probably tell you about a speech that they attended here or there, and just how very long it lasted. You can tell by the way they tell the story that they actually treasure that experience, partly because it was so unusual, so beyond the bounds of conventional behavior.

One particular incident that sticks in my mind took place about eight years ago in Korea. At the time I was working with the Universal Peace Federation, and we had just concluded a high-powered international conference that included among the delegates quite a number of VIPs from Asia and beyond. At a time when tensions on the Korean peninsula were running high (nothing new) due to some missile

test or another, our group had covered some important ground in several days of serious deliberation. It was therefore a pleasant, but not entirely unexpected surprise, to be invited as a group to take lunch together with True Parents at their residence on the final day of the conference.

We arrived on time, a couple of hundred of us, for the 12 noon luncheon, and everything was proceeding smoothly. The VIPs were seated, a Grace had been said over the meal, and the sweet aroma of delicious food ready in the wings was wafting through the room. A small group of musicians played quietly in the background. The stage was set for a delightful encounter.

But then came the words that caused those of us who knew Father Moon well to take a sharp breath. "Ladies and Gentlemen," said the emcee, "our host today, Dr. Sun Myung Moon, would just like to say a few words before we eat."

The unsuspecting crowd settled back in their chairs, expecting perhaps a conventional five to ten minute address. Perhaps he would have something nice to say about the hard work of the conference just concluded? Or perhaps he would share his vision of the next steps for peace in Korea?

Then again, perhaps not.

What actually happened was a seven-hour sermon, covering all of God's providential history from what seemed like the beginning of time right up to the present. He was absolutely unstoppable. At about the three-hour mark, the catering staff attempted to bring in cold drinks to revive the flagging audience, but were turned back by a curt word. Perhaps it was just me, but was that a little tension I detected creeping into the room?

At around 5 hours, Mother Moon sent in a couple of Rev. Moon's grandchildren to try to gently lead him to his waiting table, but they too were turned away, kindly but firmly. Finally, miraculously, a few minutes after 7pm, he abruptly concluded. Lunch had become dinner, but the tension broke, and the group happily shared in the meal almost as though nothing had happened.

As one of the staff and organizers, I often worried that this incident and countless others like it would eventually make important people angry and upset. Somehow, it never did.

The next day I unexpectedly had a chance to ask Rev. Moon why he had behaved in such an extraordinary fashion. "It's actually very simple," he said. "I want to do something that they will never forget, ever. All of these VIPs have probably been to a hundred, or a thousand formal lunches. All those events are the same. The speeches are the same. The food is the same!"

"I want to be different," he said with a big grin. "I will probably only meet them once in my life, and I want to make it count!"