



Not going to Mars – Report – Reflection – Reality

Dear brothers and sisters!

Many of us attending the Easter workshop could experience a special connectedness beyond a mere zoom link. There was an unexpected magic in certain moments which could bring us beneath the surface of day-to-day life. The sharing platter of lecturers and topics provided good food for thought on the theme of why “We are not going to Mars!” (how to remain grounded in the Principle and spirituality). We explored words of truth and poetry, wisdom and philosophy, interwoven with personal reflections and stories. Honest thoughts, opinions and reflections were offered. We could take our pick, but we could also take something from it all. Here are a few reflections to share a flavour of the themes and questions that were explored ...

Whether we choose to remain grounded in our faith is a choice; and spiritual life is in part the pursuit of freedom and responsibility, as the path to expand one’s heart towards an all-embracing love. One cannot expect to find simple answers to complex questions. How can we be rooted in God and grounded in goodness in a world of radically changing values?

“And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen.” Matthew (6:5-6)

We may want to seek recognition from others for being what we believe is “good”; but “looking good” and “doing good” might be completely different things. One needs to explore, to listen carefully to what a teacher has to say, to speak and express one’s thoughts and to be open and bold to grow and possibly let go. We mature in many stages in life, and we are grateful to have reminders to keep growing and not to get stuck and stagnate. Despite needing more time, and having our own pace, what is important is that we stay committed to exploring and progressing one step at a time.

Being “in the church” may be defined as a binary choice by some, but it does not need to be. Life is not just geometry and religion not just a ruler. Following scripture without a conscience makes you dogmatic; following a master without a conscience enrolls you in a cult of personality. We need to consider what part of space we are gravitating towards.

The ‘DP’ stands for Divine Principle. Are we using it as a compass for our life? We need to know it first, apply it second, and then evaluate. A compass helps to find a direction, but we need to figure out the challenges on the path. A deep person stands for the ‘DP’.

“Store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” Matthew (6:20-21)

What should be in my treasure box? What is truly important to me? Generosity and compassion are like pearls and diamonds, and spirituality can ground us in something of eternal value.

We appreciate all the teachers, participants and staff for their sincerity and contribution to the workshop. We are grateful to God and True Parents for all the treasures we have been offered.

The ESGD team

Some participant reflections:

“I honestly gained way more than I thought I would in just three evenings. Every talk was so thought-provoking, though not overly dense.

Although it wasn't a major theme, I felt more connected to Jesus than ever this Easter. This was really interesting to think about in conjunction with the discussions on polarisation and wokeism. I'm so glad that ESGD is opening up this conversation, one of the most important ones of our generation I believe.” (Earthling 7)

“Personally, it was a refreshing reminder to revisit the convictions for why I'm choosing to support things in my life and the importance of cultivating and energising those reasons by fighting shallowness and seeking more depth in my life. I thought the content was helpful, with great variety. This was also reflected in my group sharing at the end, in which I felt we could connect well as it was focused and genuine, and I think that reflects the workshop's atmosphere.” (Earthling 13)

“Kudos for bringing up really relevant topics and for allowing young adults a place within our community with real spiritual stimulation and connection.

... I really loved just the genuine hope and good inspiration that simply emanated from some of the talks. This reignition of appreciation of the deeply personal connection one can only have with God has been just wonderful” (Earthling 19)

“What stayed in my mind was the question if I want to be a well-protected individual or if I want to become a strong person” (Earthling 26)

“Our life is full of obstacles and we have to face them in order to grow. If we only run from them we will never be able to overcome those fears and struggles” (Earthling 31)

“I always appreciate the openness and humility presented through the content. I feel these spaces are created to come, listen and contemplate together the questions which seek to build internal strength and peace to better buttress the uncertainties we see in society, in ourselves and within our own movement.

I believe good content should leave you with good questions. This was my experience after Mars, for the lecturers/talks I could attend, I could hear beautiful reflections from people I trust, leaving with questions I want to grapple with personally and own deeper in my life.” (Earthling 48)

“I'm really grateful for the well-thought-out programme with a great variety of speakers. Carlos' talk had a deep impact on me, which I'm still feeling to this day. It made me fall in love with religion again. I was speechless at the end of his talk; he had created a sacred space through his words and I felt that to speak would be to desecrate it. My thinking has been very scientific for several years now - his talk showed me the value of religious thought, bringing me back into balance.” (Earthling 63)

“The theme was provocative but I think a good challenge. It confronted me to revisit my concepts regarding how I was living my life, to what extent I am not facing the difficulties in my day-to-day life, in my relationships, and in my community. I also appreciated how each speaker was able to bring their own perspective to the issue of "staying grounded".

... there was a strong point in confronting the neo-Marxist fad that is becoming popular in society these days. It brings me back to the stories I would hear of our parents going up against communism back in the day, on the streets and in their universities. I'm also worried that there aren't enough people bravely confronting these issues, that they would rather just not to make a stir. It's good to hear the DP being declared as a true alternative to the contemporary narrative.” (Earthling 78)

Some quotes from the workshop:

"While Mars is tempting, there is virtue in facing the reality"

"Our parents are a walking lecture in the art of living for the sake of others"

"If your goal doesn't bring you closer to God then it is not a worthy goal"

"Respect and renovate the tradition. If you just repeat it, then you're just a craftsman and not an artist"

“Everybody in this world can be your teacher and being humble towards your teacher is a blessing"

"Conversation is liberation"

"It's not about looking good, it's about doing good"

"You can't hashtag goodness"

"Voluntarily confront what stands in your way"

"What happens in me, happens in the world"

"Don't love with a calculator"

"Every time you criticize, leave enough space for vision"

“My life is a masterpiece and I am its creator”