

Foreign Missions 1975-1985 – The First Ten Years (Part 3)

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Tatsuo Sasaki in Senegal in 1977

Obviously language was a problem for many missionaries, and many of the Japanese brothers had an especially hard time with this. Many of the German missionaries already knew a little English or in some cases they knew Spanish or French. Among themselves, however, the missionaries had to be able to communicate, and many times they sat together with two or three dictionaries, trying in English or the local language.

At the beginning, it sometimes took them hours to share just a few ideas, and even then, the missionaries were not sure whether they had been understood or not.

Yet even if a missionary knew or had studied English, French, Spanish, Arabic, Chinese, Swahili, or any major language of the country, he or she then had to train his or her ear to also deal with the variety of dialects and native languages of the country. Being misunderstood was a constant frustration.

Since language is a most effective means of expressing our will or heart, if we can't use it proficiently we have no way to make others understand. There are also times when, even though we feel we have communicated, people misunderstand us. Language is the means by which we can convey our character to others. If we use it poorly, we may sometimes show ourselves to be men or women who have nothing that is attractive to others. Sometimes people entertained such a feeling about me.

And when I sensed people had such feelings about me, I was overwhelmed with sorrow. Sometimes I tried to break an oppressive atmosphere by using gestures or smiles. However, in most cases, this only made things worse. I could sense people thinking, 'You fool!' I felt so sad. I came to see that Heavenly Father has never been able to express Himself, no matter how much He desired to do so and I came to empathize with His suffering so much."

Studying the National Character

How did the foreign missionaries learn to unite with the heart of the people and learn how to love them? The missionaries had to study the national character of their nation's people hard and long. They had to dig beneath the surface to discover the true nature of their spiritual children. Yet this often brought great resistance on the part of those they were studying. One brother who worked in Southeast Asia explains:

"When I first began witnessing, I saw that almost everyone was happy to talk to me. They were even willing to speak about whatever subject I wanted to talk about. It seemed almost too good to be true. Wherever I went, people sat and spoke to me. If I gave them my address, many times they would actually come to visit. Yet as the months passed, the picture became darker and darker,

because it became clearer and clearer to me that the positivity and smiles were an elaborate, complex cover, masking fear and deep insecurity.

I finally could see that the smiles were not an expression of their joy, but were instead an expression of their fear and their inability to face reality and themselves.

The standard these people are trying to reach is so incredibly high. Of course, no one knows how to reach the ideal. They always want to be happy.

They never want to hurt anyone. They always fail, as have all people in history. Yet in this nation, the people accuse themselves again and again for their inability to reach the standard of their hearts.

As a result, the people criticize themselves and everyone else, too. When I first arrived, I thought there was no criticism, but now I can recognize that it is within every level. I also realize that it stems from a critical attitude toward themselves.

All the customs -- much of the culture, to a great extent the language, and particularly their expressions -- are used as protection. There are many expressions and customs which mean, "Stay away. leave me alone. Don't pry. I want to be alone. look at my outside, not my inside."

The land of smiles and relaxed living? It is far from that. Internally, people experience almost excruciating turmoil because of their inability to meet the standards of their hearts. As they seek the ideal, they must protect themselves from the truth they learn about themselves. They think it is too terrible to face.

When I could understand these few facts, I could begin to love this nation, for I could see its heart of suffering. When people smile, I know what they really mean. When they laugh, I know often it is simply to keep the tears away."

Visa Problems

For all the foreign missionaries who *could* stay in their nations, there were many missionaries who could not remain in their mission countries, and they began the life of a gypsy. Going from nation to nation, finding no home, and wondering how to pray and invest their hearts in a place that wasn't really " theirs," these missionaries could not help but think of the people in their assigned countries. They prayed for a chance to meet at least one person, witness to him or her, and raise that person up in order to send him or her back to restore the country in their place.

Yet many of these foreign missionaries felt that by not staying in their countries they had failed. One point True Father had impressed upon them before they left for their nations was to anchor themselves there for three years, no matter what. But visas to many nations were not easy to obtain and sometimes after only one or two weeks, the government officials felt that a tourist had seen all he could or should see, or that a business man doing market research could certainly exhaust the territory within three months. Not only were visa extensions denied, but in some cases officials escorted our missionaries to the borders to make sure that they actually left the country.

It was impossible to obtain missionary visas in most countries; however, finding a reason to stay in a country was essential. Many missionaries were able to secure work permits and jobs; some became embassy workers, airline employees, or journalists. Their work or school environment then provided a natural place to meet people, and with a certain amount of caution in some cases, they became friends with their fellow workers or students, slowly introducing them to the Principle. Since Father had also suggested that missionaries teach their native tongue to people interested in learning German, Japanese, or English, many missionaries did this. In fact, quite a number of members joined through this connection.

In some cases, with the help of God's guidance and the spirit world, missionaries were able to renew their tourist, business, or student visas far longer than was normal.

On the other hand, some missionaries who were legally in their countries were accused of being spies for the CIA or for their government, and out of fear, immigration officials in their mission countries deported them. Some brothers and sisters were discovered to be missionaries from the Unification Church, which caused them to be imprisoned and/or deported. In several cases, amazing victories were won and those who were deported were able to later re-enter their nations. But this was unfortunately the exception, not the rule.

In 1978 True Father called most of the foreign missionaries who could not stay in their original countries to London and asked them to help assume the home church responsibilities of the seminarians who, after some time mobilized to the UK, were returning to the United States. Each of them felt accepted again by

True Parents, uplifted, carried, and very loved. They had the chance to invest their hearts in a small nation – the "nation" of their home church area in England. For many it was a turning point in their life of faith and a boost for their self-confidence.

After that, however, True Father brought them to America to participate in 40-day training, after which he reassigned them to new countries. Grateful to have this new chance, these foreign missionaries started their missionary life over again.



Our three missionaries in Tunisia in traditional Tunisian clothing

Overcoming Different Moral Codes

During the early years, it was impossible in some cases for the foreign missionaries to live together in a center because of finances, moral codes (men and women not married to each other living in the same apartment or house was often strictly forbidden), or danger. Witnessing, too, presented many risks, often being extremely dangerous.

"My first African spiritual child was born through countless tears cried by both of us. His rebirth took place in a humble hut of mud in the midst of the slums.

The political situation of my nation allowed us no freedom No freedom to witness. No freedom even for the missionaries to meet. Yet God did not stop. He ignored this fact and He brought about the spiritual rebirth of five native people.

Because of this, the three of us missionaries decided that one night in October of 1975, we would hold a meeting with our members. Each missionary and each native member knew the danger we all faced. We decided that we would make a Holy Ground and that would be the common base for our meeting. Yet even that was dangerous and Satan was always watching, always near. In our country we had to establish our holy ground three different times because it was destroyed twice-by bulldozers! Each time it was established, it was done at the risk of our lives."

God pulled invisible strings in the hearts of many people. And He gently pushed our missionaries to sometimes quite unusual places and circumstances to meet these people and witness to them.

The missionaries, being of three different nationalities, had such different cultural backgrounds and different spiritual upbringings. It was hard enough to tackle trying to merge the three heritages into one; and in addition, they had to find out how to teach the people from their mission country as they embraced its own unique culture and environment.

For instance, how does one teach the Principle to someone who questions why only Judea-Christianity is discussed? Missionaries in the Middle East faced this challenge, and began to read and study the Koran in

order to share with Muslims the many similarities their teaching has to the Principle.

One missionary wrote that when a girl in Central America becomes 14 or 15 years old, her friends and her parents start to urge her to have a child. The emphasis is on having a child, not necessarily on getting married. It was a frustration for missionaries to teach people who have a moral code that conflicts with such a key point of the Principle.

Yet back on the other side of the world, their fellow missionaries in the Middle East had quite a different set of circumstances to break through. How does a man witness to a woman when the Islamic society strictly forbids any type of male-female relationship outside of marriage, and virtually every foreigner is suspect?

And how should a missionary explain God's dual nature to someone who looks blankly when his or her teacher talks about molecules and atoms? Some people in third world countries are not so well educated; therefore, the concepts and words used had to be adapted to the individual situation. The missionaries had to express their hearts in a different way in a different society so that it was not misperceived was a challenge. The methods of witnessing were so different from what the missionaries were used to; the culture of the country had not only to be taken into account, but adopted.