

Fall In Love with God - Part 1

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Excerpts from Testimony



Walking with True Parents

I accepted True Parents in January 1962, in Dr. Young Oon Kim's group in San Francisco. At that time, I was an engineering student in Berkeley. Through some friend I got acquainted with a member who I invited over and we had a whole group of people who heard this; yet I was the only one to take it seriously. Everybody just laughed. And then I went to the center to inquire more. I immediately was impressed by the great truth, especially regarding the mission of the Messiah, which answered many, many questions I had, and at the same time I received a great deal of spiritual help.

Looking back, I can say that God had prepared me for at least about fifteen years to meet the Principle with experiences during and after the war [Second World War], which didn't make any sense to me at that time, but later looked to me as steps in this process of preparing me for the Principle. Right from the beginning, after meeting the Principle, I had a lot of spiritual experiences, by which I mean dreams, and, for example, I saw Father in spirit even before I had seen a picture of him.

I joined in about two weeks, firmly established as a new member. At that time our church family was small. At that time we received our membership number after we passed the test, and I was very happy to know I became member number ten in America. I was, at that time, a foreign student at Berkeley [University of California], and therefore I felt responsible to witness to foreign students there. I sent out two thousand letters to foreign students at Berkeley and visited them after that; we won one new member. At that time, of course, the church family was very small, and it was certainly not over-organized - quite a healthy stage. On the other hand, we didn't have a lot of the spiritual material we have now.

I decided to drop my engineering career, though I think I would have been a very good engineer, because

I said to myself, "There are many engineers in the world, but there is no one in all of Europe who can teach the people the Principle." So I prepared myself to go back to Germany, my native country. Together with Ursula Schuhmann, I translated the first Principle book into German.



Celebrating Children's Day at Frankfurt Bleichstrasse (April 1964)

Beginning the Mission in Europe

Then I started the mission in Europe. I went by ship because I didn't have enough money for a plane ticket. I started the mission in Europe on June 11, 1963. I first went to the city of Muenster where I used to live before my immigration to America. I bought a mimeograph machine and personally printed the first eighty copies of the German translation of the Divine Principle. At that time, I also witnessed in Muenster, especially to ministers. After a few visits they usually became very, very friendly, but then they never wanted to see me again. I decided not to start the mission in my hometown, but to go away from my hometown into some other city.

Someone among our members had received a revelation that I should start in the city of Heidelberg. Today I don't see any special reason why I started in Heidelberg. Heidelberg was just a city like any other city, so I said, "Why not Heidelberg?"

Then in order to make a condition, I wanted to walk to Heidelberg. So I got myself a raincoat and a

knapsack and put the Principle inside and told my mother I would go to another city, but I would not tell her which city, and I would write when I arrived. Since it was quite a long march (it later turned out to be exactly three times 120 kilometers), I took some good American Army boots. However, there was something wrong with those boots. Usually there is a little piece of leather glued into the boot under the heel. On both boots, this little piece of leather got loose, floated up and caused a terrific blister. When I reached the city limits, I already had considerable blisters on both heels.

My first goal was a city exactly forty kilometers away. When I reached that city, I was absolutely exhausted and suffering terrible pain from my heels. When I entered the city, it was just six o'clock and all the church bells were ringing. I said to myself, "How significant." But I was so exhausted that I decided I would just get a place to sleep and the next morning call a taxi to bring me to the train station and take the next train home. During the night Father appeared to me in a dream and he said, "That is nothing. That is not suffering. You should know what I have gone through. Go on! Go on!"

Of course, the next morning I went on, but the situation with the blisters really got terrible. On the third day, I walked only thirteen kilometers in eight hours. The blisters were very, very big, and the water in the blisters and the pressure on the water tore away the skin. After three or four days, my feet were in terrible shape. Nevertheless, I walked on.

I had planned to make this trip in twelve days, but one night a voice came to me and told me, "If you make it in 21 days, that is okay." I would never have made it in twelve days. This march to Heidelberg, over 21 days, was the worst experience I have ever gone through in my life. Once on that highway I wished I could die, but it was impossible because I had not fulfilled my mission yet.

After a few weeks in Heidelberg, I decided to work together with Ursula Schuhmann^[1] who had arrived by then and started a center in Frankfurt. As we were looking for a center, we found house with a garden right in the center of Frankfurt. However, the house had just been rented out to somebody else. I was not willing to accept that fact, so we continuously marched around the block, praying to God that we needed this house for His mission. We asked Him to please give us this house for our center. Ten minutes after we finished marching around the block the owner sent us a telegram that we could have it.

This was how we started in Frankfurt. We witnessed mainly to established groups, like church groups, prayer groups - all kinds of groups - because we could look for prepared people and people who would be interested in religion. If we just talked to anyone on the street, we were going to come in contact with a lot of people who would not be interested at all. Yet in the church groups, we did not find anyone who stayed with us. It was, rather, at my workplace, that I met somebody to whom I witnessed and right away accepted. He became the first new member to join in Europe. This was Reiner Vincenz.^[2]

When I started the mission in Europe, I was a member for about one and a half years and I thought I knew everything about the Principle. Only gradually did I come to realize how little I actually knew and that I still had to learn a great deal.

^[1] Ursula also joined in the United States

^[2] Reiner later pioneered France and witnessed to that country's first member, Henri Blanchard.

Rev. Peter Koch was one of the earliest members in the West, and the first person to bring the Principle teaching to Europe - even before True Father's first world tour in 1965. Rev. Koch notably did pioneer missionary work in Germany and Austria. He is known for masterminding the Butterfly Mission, for which members studied Eastern European languages and witnessed behind the Iron Curtain.