

Innovative Workshop for Students from Former Soviet Countries

Jin Hwa Chong
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With students: seated; Jin Hwa Chung, president of our Northeast Region: second from right; with Pres. Kyung Seuk Lu of Korea and others related to his region or to Korea

Our Northeast Region conducted a workshop from August 20–26 based on the concept that to give people a real shot at studying new principles, it helps to bring them out of their usual environment into one that facilitates uncluttered contemplation. With True Mother's direct encouragement and financial support, the regional staff was able to arrange a Divine Principle workshop at Yong Pyong Resort in the Korean countryside for students from nations of the former Soviet Union that wish to learn more about our movement. Yong Pyong is a four-season resort owned by our church business foundation. (Its ski runs are some of the best in Korea, and it will be one of the venues for the 2018 Winter Olympics.) Yet the twenty-three carefully selected students, from Russia, Lithuania, Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine, Kazakhstan and even Mongolia, were not exactly on vacation.

According to regional president Jin Hwa Chung, "The program was a mixture of the Divine Principle and experiential programs. Participants listened to Divine Principle presentations and then discussed the purpose of life."

The workshop program was indeed intense and diverse. During its five-day course, students not only heard Divine Principle but took part in interactive sessions and outdoor activities. Opportunities abounded for participants to express their thoughts and to ask questions.



Mathew Huish giving a lecture on the purpose of the returning Messiah

An Awakening of Idealism

Perhaps because most participants came from the former Soviet Union, where governments had

suppressed the expressions of religious ideas for two generations, Divine Principle concepts were especially stimulating, and participants in the question and answer sessions following each presentation were animated.

The first day's focus on the Principle of Creation, for example, included a showing of the movie "What Dreams May Come," depicting life and love in the spirit world. A number of participants were struck by the issues raised -- that the spirit world might really exist and that it might influence our lives on earth.

The next day, Korean FFWPU President Lu spoke on True Parents' work to sow many seeds for the establishment of world peace. His visit was all the more memorable because he brought pizza and gifts for each participant. In discussing Rev. Lu's speech, participants concluded:

We are young people and we are the future, which is why we need to take responsibility for the future.

Even though we are all different we can make a world of peace through unity.

No matter which religion you come to God through, when you come to God you can make unity.

There followed a debate on the topic of pure love. Although not all the students agreed with the presentations on this topic, the debate caused them to consider more intensely worldly concepts that they naturally absorbed by dint of growing up in societies without a strong religious foundation.



The students played yute



A result of a sisterhood ceremony

The Challenge Accepted

Second-generation church leader and lecturer Matthew Huish from the United Kingdom gave lectures on the purpose of the coming of the Messiah on the third day. Rather than quoting the Bible or other scriptures, Rev. Huish used examples from science and psychology, an approach the participants appreciated. The session concluded with a role-playing exercise: students were asked to imagine they were the Messiah and give a speech to the people of the world. Many struggled with the task, perhaps realizing how weighty and challenging the mission and responsibility of the Messiah is.

The afternoon was devoted to a hike through the hills. The connection between the vigorous hike and the morning lectures on the course of the Messiah was not lost on the students. The hike represented (or perhaps foreshadowed) the toughness of the indemnity course and revealed how easily our fallen nature comes to the fore. The lesson for the day was in perseverance. The students' victory was that they did not give up and the principle learned that they should never complain. Reaching the summit of the hill naturally symbolized each person's internal victory.

Testimony to Personal Change

The internet campaign specially organized to invite students to this workshop was what attracted a young participant from Vladivostok in eastern Russia. Even before traveling to Korea, our members told her that after the workshop she would see the world completely differently and that she herself would change. She doubted this. However, on the third day, after the lectures on the Last Days and the Purpose of the Messiah, she testified that her mind and heart had exploded. She broke into tears, something she said was not usual for her.

On the final day, after lectures about True Father's life and after a question and answer session on the blessing, she said that her mind turned upside down, without the possibility of reverting to its previous state. She was afraid of the change because she was not ready for it, she said, but she expressed confidence to be able to digest everything in time.

Another participant, from Kazakhstan, asked why Almighty God could not find the Messiah right away,

and why he did not change people quickly. After the mountain hike she realized that it is difficult to avoid complaining even for just two hours; yet God needs people to be grateful and keep an unchanging heart for a much longer time period. That is why for God it is so difficult to find his champion.

Creating Family Ties

For the majority of participants, the most valuable experience was making relationships with people of different nationalities and cultures. In the beginning, they thought relating with people who spoke different languages would be hard, but the experience showed them it could be done.

The brother–sisterhood ceremony that matched the visiting students with counterparts from among Korean CARP members, students from Sun Moon University, brought this home.

The first thing they did with their newfound siblings was to learn one or two phrases of the other's language. The visiting students thus broadened their minds to an international level. Some mentioned they through the workshop they had found a new family.

Regional President Chung noted in conclusion, "There are parallels in history. In 1991, three thousand university students came from the Soviet Union to attend Divine Principle workshops in the United States. That providence is now taking place again with this successful Divine Principle workshop in Korea, where, again, young people from the former Soviet Union have come. I believe that drawing upon heavenly fortune, the workshop should become a successful starting point for the establishment of Cheon Il Guk by 2020. I sincerely convey my gratitude to True Parents."