

Reflection on today's Cheon Shim Won service, New Jersey Family Church

Sam Harley
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Cheon Shim Won Prayer Hall

Two things I learned while kayaking with Outward Bound when I was 17: one; never lean on your upstream paddle. (side the water is flowing from) If you do, the force of the water flow will push your paddle down, rolling you and your kayak underwater. You can lean on your downstream paddle (side the water is flowing to) without any problem. The water will push you forward. Meaning, lean on where you're going, not where you're coming from.

Two; never underestimate the power of flowing water. A river moving at a placid couple miles an hour can wrap an aluminum canoe around a rock like it was tinfoil. So you don't want to be going sideways down a river. It's better to be pointing forwards so you can steer your way around things.

This is going to apply to what I'm about to say, trust me.

Our church was founded in 1955 in a poverty stricken country, devastated after years of war. Amid that struggle for food and shelter, the Holy Spirit Association for Unification of World Christianity was founded in a rented building whose eaves were so low that local children could knock the sign down.

I live near a small town where a little building proclaims itself the University of Melchizedek. It looks like a one room library. It seems ridiculous when you're driving by. Right, there's a university. Big name, tiny building. Ha-ha.

But that's what our church looked like to people in the area. Even before that, in Beomnetgol, in a cardboard hut held together with mud, Father was loudly proclaiming a new era for all humankind. .

Now, we have a huge foundation, South Korea is a prosperous and modern country, and we have large and impressive buildings in Chung Pyeong.

All this external prosperity and foundation came from the waves of spiritual depth and a new, deeper relationship with God pouring from our True Father and Mother. That is what is moving the external changes we see. It's a little like when a flood of water pushes trees, rocks and even houses in its path. You can see the water pushing these things along. In the case of our church and the world, the spirit is not directly visible.

It's a little like America's prosperity after WWII. It was pushed along by the spirit of God's Providence, preparing the US to be the big brother nation to the world. Americans, not seeing the flow of spirit pushing their prosperity along, thought it was because they were special.

Today, that flood of spirit is still pushing world events. There are some countries and events that are moving in the main channel of the flood, and others not in the main flow that are being pushed into eddies and backwater channels where they clash into each other, going round and round, repeating past patterns.

The spiritual force moving the world is still flowing. In this time, it is easy to be swept up by the things being pushed along by the flood. Changes of leadership, changes of status, buildings being lost, communities changing. Easy to be caught up in and confused by the external things. If we focus externally, it is a very confusing and chaotic time.

I'm the same way. If I focus just externally, on what I need to do, and how I'm going to do them, I quickly become overwhelmed, confused and exhausted using my own thinking. If I focus on prayer and being connecting with Heavenly Parents first, dealing with things becomes easier and it's much clearer what to do.

Putting our relationship with God first is exactly what we mean when we say God-centered. It's a way of being.

If we focus on maintaining our flow in the spirit that is stronger than ever, praying in the Cheon Shim Won and participating in the flow of heart with True Parents and Heavenly Parents, we need not be agitated.

Spirit will create and change form. Our movement has been changing form ever since it was founded. While we may have gotten used to the phase we were in, the flood of heart and spirit keeps moving and taking new forms.

This is to be expected. New songs will be written, old ones rewritten.

Focusing on our relationship to Heavenly Parents and True Parents keeps us in the flow. If we lose the flow, we end up clinging to something that is being pushed along by the flow. We become more concerned with what's happening to our particular piece of debris, and get pushed under when it spins or bumps into an obstacle.

Are we more aligned with the flood or the debris? Are we connected to the cause, or attached to the result? These are good questions to ask ourselves.

Here's the thing: if you're in the main channel, pointing forwards, you're swooshing along to new places, able to navigate around obstacles that come up. You're moving alongside big things.

If you're going sideways or backwards, getting carried along, you're either being pushed into a backwater eddy, or you're bumping hard into obstacles. If you end up in a position where you're stuck against a rock and the flow is pushing on you, it's an uncomfortable position, one that could break you apart.

If you're not steering your way in the flow, you can end up stuck in a repeating cycle until you can steer free.

And, if you focus more on where you're going than where you've been, you will be propelled along. If you try to lean on where you've been, you can get rolled under.

One last thing: it helps to know what's coming around the next bend. Listen to people who've been there already, our elders, our parents.

We're all in the river. Might as well paddle in the right direction.