

True Parents Who Love Me As My Parents

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CARP members deepen their relationships through a "Girls' Club." Ikumi Shinohara is at the far left

My parents were blessed among the 6,500-couple blessing group. I was born and raised in Hyogo as the second oldest of four children. I have always loved my family and have cherished the time spent with them more than the time spent in school or with my friends. Since I deeply respected my parents, who lived devotedly for the providence and our family, I have a firm conviction that whatever they say is 100 percent correct. Therefore, I never harbored doubts about the church, and I participated actively in it. However, I did not quite understand about God or the Divine Principle, which my parents believed in.

When I went on to college, I failed the entrance examination for the national college I had hoped to enter and ended up going to a private college. This made me feel apologetic toward my parents for having put great financial pressure on them. Even after I entered college, I felt sorry each time I thought about it and lost all my confidence.

In my first year, I started attending Kobe CARP because one of my older friends in the community invited me. While hoping for a chance to regain my confidence, I heard about a forty-day intermediate summer workshop and decided to take part in it.

Arriving at a decision

After about ten days of the workshop had passed, I received a letter from my parents. Instead of reading it right away, I decided to read it when I felt as if I had reached my limit during the workshop. This happened on the morning of the last day of door-to-door faith training, when half of the workshop was over. I wanted to give up on everything because I was not able to produce good enough results no matter how hard I tried.

In the letter, my parents said that they loved me no matter what and that they were always praying for my

happiness. I felt my parents' tremendous love as I read it. Ever since I failed the entrance exam, I felt sorry toward my parents for my being unfilial. However, they have always simply loved me no matter what.

Moreover, extreme joy filled my heart when I realized that God, who is our Heavenly Parent, has also wanted to make me happy. With that, the desire to return beauty for the love I received from God welled up within me. That day, thanks to spiritual guidance, I was able to reach a record.

When I was able to realize God's love for me, I started to think, "I want to know more about God throughout my life. I want to become a filial daughter to God and my parents by showing them my growth." That is why I decided to join Kobe CARP after the workshop.

Great love came to me through my relationship with True Parents

Gradually, I came to know God's love through my life of faith and CARP activities but I was not able to connect "me" with True Parents. Although I understood that True Parents were great figures, I could not find any connection between True Parents and me.

During the spring workshop, I had a counseling session with the group leader. I spoke openly and said, "I cannot feel True Parents' love for me." I used to think it was wrong or embarrassing for someone in the second-generation to think like that, but my group leader embraced my concern. She simply said, "True Parents' love for you is the same as your parents' love for you."

In that moment, the wall between True Parents and me broke down. I had never before thought of True Parents as my parents, but the group leader's statement instantly reduced the distance between True Parents and me. Realizing that True Parents' great love was actually very close and familiar moved me to tears. It gave me a firm conviction that True Parents were not just great figures, but were "my" parents. After that, I was able to experience numerous encounters with True Parents through the faith training. Every encounter inspired me, and my parent-child relationship with God and True Parents grew stronger and deeper each time I experienced their presence.

The autumn workshop I attended in my junior year of college changed my life. I participated with the mind of staking my life on it, because I wanted to face my life seriously and determine my course centering on the Divine Principle. When I was listening to the lecture on True Father's life course, I felt my heart shouting out, "I want to sacrifice myself for something precious like True Father did!"

Seeing the way forward

I realized what God's wish was for me through the forty-minute prayer I offered every day during the workshop. True Father's dream was to realize God's ideal world and he sacrificed his entire life in order to fulfill it. However, in reality, this dream has not yet come true on earth. I felt that because True Father no longer has a physical body, he would want to work on earth to carry on the providence through someone else's body and that he might be trusting in me. At that moment, I thought, from the bottom of my heart, "True Parents gave me my life. I want to live for them. I want to offer my life to realize their dream." That is when I decided to live devotedly for the providence.

Although there are many difficulties in carrying on a life of faith, I can also gain great joy through it. I would like to keep pursuing the way of the providence cheerfully in order to convey this inspiration to the people around me.