

My Unificationist Memoirs Chapter 12

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These have been the most difficult words to write. And now, they have become the most difficult words to publish. As I do so, I ask the forgiveness of my brothers and sisters.

After Thuy, and despite my internal torment, temptation became more difficult to resist. Steadily, over a period of a year, the momentum of my spiritual life decreased, then shifted direction. I had opened the floodgates. I no longer had the power to control my longings, instead, I looked for opportunities to find affection and intimacy. I did not physically fall, but my spirit and my heart were another story. I called the Blessing Department and reported my situation. I don't recall anything substantive coming from my efforts. I asked my wife to come to San Francisco, hoping that we could witness as a couple and build a relationship. Her central figure, a Japanese brother I respected, strongly opposed any change of mission. Finally, by the summer of 1986, I had completely lost confidence that I could be faithful to my wife once we began our married life together. My hope evaporated. I hit bottom. I concluded a separation now would be better than a failed marriage later.

I called the Blessing Department and informed them.

Before doing so, I prayed. I had not lost my faith in True Parents or Divine Principle. I still believed that the path of salvation went through the very Blessing I was abandoning. I asked for God's forgiveness and felt a calm that had eluded me. This may be hard for more faithful brothers and sisters to imagine, but I never felt disconnected from God or True Parents after making this decision. Instead, I prayed and told Heavenly Father that I was willing to start over, from the beginning, and I understood that I was responsible for my choices and the consequences of my actions. I blamed no one but myself. Even now, I can recall very clearly the moment of my decision and prayer. Within my deepest heart, hope emerged, simply because I repented and addressed the circumstances in my life that had pulled me into despair.

Even though I could not see a way forward at that moment, one soon began to unfold. As I write, I feel the tangible reality of God's love. In the midst of the Chinese Cultural Revolution, there was a saying, "Alive in the Bitter Sea." In fact, embraced by the love of True Parents, we are alive in the Ocean of God's Mercy.

Two years earlier, in September 1984, well before my troubles, I met a medical student, Cindy O., in the UCSF Reading Room, as I sat and worked at what was an otherwise empty table. I recall very clearly annotating Aristotle's "Politics," for a Classical Political Theory class. Cindy came, sat across from me, and observed. She knew I was an "imposter," as no medical student had the time to read Aristotle. We spoke and introduced ourselves. One of the other books in my stack was a Kanji Dictionary and we discussed my Japanese coursework. Cindy expressed an interest in studying Japanese the following summer at the Bukkyo Dendo Kyokai, a Buddhist Church and Cultural Center in Japan Town. She would not give me her phone number, but took mine. From a witnessing perspective, I thought the encounter entirely providential and that the same spiritual world that led her to sit across from me, would spur her to pursue our friendship.

Sure enough, like clockwork, every quarter, Cindy would call me and we would confirm our plan to study Japanese over the summer. Finally, the time arrived and we registered for our classes: she enrolled in the advanced course and I in the intermediate. Cindy was a Nisei and her parents spoke Japanese in the home. However, her mother used to laugh at her pronunciation and consequently, she had been a very shy speaker.

I invited her to the Judah Street Center, but she always demurred, having heard the usual negativity about our church. However, she enjoyed the company of our members and found Bruce B., Joachim B., Mike C., and Chris M. to be entertaining, if somewhat eccentric, companions. Once, Bruce, Joachim, and I took Cindy to see the movie "MacArthur's Children." At some point, she did meet Mama-San Choi, and of course, loved her. Cindy's boyfriend, Sean, was her fellow Pomona College graduate and they had been dating since that time. He was an MD-PhD student at UCSF but left to pursue pure research at Cal Tech in Pasadena (Sean's team would later go on to patent their work on the BRCA1, Breast Cancer Gene). At the end of the summer, Cindy's parents came up for a visit. After our final classes, we dined together in Japan Town and as we drove home in Cindy's little Honda Civic, she turned to me and said, "I have plans for you." Mystified, I said my goodbyes to her parents, as once again, Cindy promised to call me.

And of course, she did call. Cindy proposed that we become "study partners." We would meet after classes every day during the week at 5:00 p.m. and study until the library closed at 11:00 p.m. Saturday night we could take off (only because the library closed) but Sunday morning, by 11:00 a.m., we were to be in the library to study until evening. While I necessarily made exceptions for other demands - work, fishing, Judah Street, my Vietnamese and Chinese connections - the schedule set by Cindy became the framework for my life. In the midst of my spiritual crisis, as my emotional tumult grew and my life's discipline eroded, my commitment to Cindy became a stabilizing influence, a steady keel in the stormy sea.