

A Family Experience of Christ's Return - Part 1

Christel Werner

January 2010

Republished by FFWPU International Headquarters July 12, 2022



Christel and Paul on their wedding day, April 14, 1951

Mrs. Werner shares how she and her husband, Paul, who ascended in 2008, met the church in the early 1960s after twelve years of marriage and how they devoted the rest of their fifty-seven years together in response to God's call.

We were a close-knit family and always attended parties together, never one of us alone. This one time though, during the summer of 1963, one of our secretaries at IBM was leaving and I, along with all the other girls, was invited to her farewell party. I accepted the invitation and intended to be home by 10:00 pm. To my surprise, one of my former co-workers, Sandy Pinkerton, showed up too. I hadn't seen her for some time and we had a lot to talk about. When it was nearly time for me to leave the party to be home on time, Sandy offered to take me back to the IBM garage to pick up my car. She was usually very talkative but now she was quiet and started crying. I was at a loss as to what to do and asked her how I could help. Sobbing, she told me, "Christ has returned. He is now on earth." I was so shocked and started to explain to her that, according to Bible prophecies, certain events had to take place before his return and to our knowledge these prophecies were still

unfulfilled. We discussed different aspects of the Bible, and I realized this would take many more hours to explain and I was already late, knowing that Paul would get very nervous. I had to head home. We agreed to meet again soon. Needless to say, Paul was very upset about my arriving so late. He had already called the police and the local hospital to find out about car accidents in the area and was in no mood to listen to my explanation. After he calmed down the next day, I told him about my experience with Sandy and his reply was, "Why didn't you tell me?"

"Well," I asked him, "How could I?"

As it turned out, these two simple sentences changed our lives forever. Sandy knew we were good Christians and were actually waiting for Christ's return. When we invited her for Sunday afternoon coffee, three people showed up at our house. Sandy had brought along her husband, John, who also was a co-worker of mine at IBM, and Pauline Philips Verheyen. As we were very familiar with Bible quotes concerning the return of Christ, fireworks erupted as soon as they started explaining highlights of the Principle. Certain parts, like everlasting life after our physical death, the spirit world and prophecies of the Bible were in accord with our Christian beliefs. But most disturbing were statements about Jesus, our Savior. How could they dare tell us that Jesus didn't come primarily to die for our sins but to take a bride and form a true family, thereby fulfilling the ideal God held at the time of the Creation, and that Jesus wasn't able to fulfill God's primary purpose because of the disbelief of his people? They told us that he would return in the flesh as a man to completely fulfill his mission, and as stated in the Bible, he would have a new name. God's promise had now been fulfilled by sending his son, Sun Myung Moon, to earth.

The confrontation got so intense that I felt quite uncomfortable. I had a good relationship with John and Sandy and didn't want to hurt their feelings, but the sparks kept flying. We believed in the Bible as the word of God and expected Jesus to return in the clouds. Logically, we felt this was not possible by human reasoning, but with God, nothing is impossible.

Our struggle during the following weeks and months is hard to describe. Just thinking about it now, I'm reliving this difficult period, overcome by emotion. We studied the Principle, prayed, fasted and cried to God and Jesus for help. We wanted to be true to our faith and serve the Messiah at his Second Coming. But how could we be sure? We waited for the return of Christ and didn't want to make the same mistake

as occurred two thousand years ago. According to the Bible he would have a new name. Could it be Sun Myung Moon?

We continued to attend Sunday services in our Lutheran Church, and I prayed desperately during the service for guidance concerning the Principle and Father. Jesus embraced me and told me, "I love you." This was comforting and confusing at the same time. I needed a clear answer.

I had to go to work daily, but Paul checked his construction sites just briefly and returned home, trying to come to a decision. He studied the Principle in reference to the Bible and prayed and prayed. When I came home in the evening, trying to maintain at least part of our family life for the sake of Klaus, our eleven-year-old son, it was extremely difficult. Our discussions continued even at dinnertime, and the atmosphere was heavy.



Left to right: John and Sandy Pinkerton, Pauline Verheyen, Christel and Paul Werner on their way to the San Francisco center in 1963

Very soon, Pauline, John and Sandy moved into our home and really took over. They practically decided what should be done and when. I knew then that this was the end of our family life. We slept in different rooms right away, and practically everything changed overnight. Life at our home was upside down. How could I protect our child, who wasn't sure of what to make of these drastic changes in our family life? At that age, he needed a stable environment and enough rest to manage his school life. He was so patient and supportive, and all I could do was pray for his protection and try to help him cope as best I could.

True to Paul's character, his struggles in prayer were very intense and his conditions of indemnity dramatic as you may know from his testimony. It was heartbreaking for me to watch his suffering and not be able to help. After his decision to join the movement, he decided to subjugate his physical body and reach perfection very fast, or so he thought. Along with other extreme conditions, he took his daily bath in ice-cold water, literally containing ice cubes. I feared for his health. But he wouldn't listen to reason. Half a year later, the effects of these conditions became obvious, and he had to seek medical treatment in New York before boarding our ship to Germany.

My nature is just the opposite, and my indemnity conditions were not as extreme. I studied, fasted and my deep prayer life carried me through these difficult times. Deep in my heart I knew that my intimate relationship with God and Jesus would guide me.

Then Miss Young-oon Kim^[1] came to Sacramento for a two-day workshop. We attended all the sessions and were very impressed by her lectures and her personal testimony. Up to that point, we had no idea that she had been a professor of Theology in Seoul. The atmosphere was very high, and we felt God's presence. During the question-and-answer session Paul bombarded her with questions, quoting Bible prophecies concerning Jesus and the Second Coming. Finally, her patience reached its limits and she said, "Do you think I'm that stupid to accept something that isn't true?" The meeting with Miss Kim marked the turning point in our struggles. Her lectures were down to earth and yet spiritual at the same time. While

studying her English translation of the Divine Principle, we were amazed at the new horizons opening up. This could only be the work of God explaining His plan of salvation. We also understood that we were prepared through generations of ancestors to be among the first in the Western world to follow God's call.

We had gone through much pain and sorrow throughout our lives, but here in California we finally had a good life as a family and I knew that accepting Christ at his Second Coming meant the total sacrifice of everything dear to our hearts, meaning all our dreams and plans and above all our life as a family. Even to this day, I can never sing the Holy Song "Light of Grace" without shedding tears: "I'll give my life and my love unto the one God of love." It's one thing to sing this song, but to actually do it is a different story. As Paul often told new members, once you give your life to God, it belongs to Him and you can never take it back. It's a very serious decision.

Up to this point, we had done everything together as a family, but I knew that Paul's decision, once he made it, would be final, even if it meant sacrificing our family. His motto was "God first" and then his family. At that time, he was increasingly convinced that the Second Coming had taken place and that we were called to serve the Messiah. I saw only two choices - either we would follow the Messiah together, or we would go our separate ways.

In my agony I turned to God for guidance. I fasted and prayed in tears and by studying the Principle many hidden things in the Bible became clear. My trust in God was so deep that I knew He would never forsake me and I felt surrounded by His love. The atmosphere was so high and I knew this was from God.



[\[1\]](#) Young-oon Kim was one of the first three missionaries Father sent to the United States.