

Sang Ik Choi, the First Unification Church Missionary - Part 16

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How we received a large donation from a pioneering church

At that time, two young women, aged 17 and 19, were doing mission work for our church in Nagoya. The two of them finished their street missionary work early and ended up visiting an affluent house. When they rang the bell, the doorkeeper came out and asked what their business was. When they said they were there to witness, he asked them to leave. But the woman who owned the house, who had been tending flowers in the yard, asked them to come inside and had a conversation with them. After listening carefully to the words of the two evangelists, the woman said she didn't have any more time today and offered to go see them in person the next day. The reason she insisted on visiting them herself was as follows: "Even though the two of you are young, you are teachers who are communicating the word of God, so I will visit you."

The next day, the woman came to their humble church, carrying the address with her. After listening to presentations all day, she exclaimed, "So the truth can be born in such a place, just as a lotus flower emerges from a muddy pond!" She also asked them to tell her how she could help them. Though reluctant to talk about money, they told the woman how they were struggling to build a church in Tokyo because of a lack of funding. When the rich woman came back the next day to take a follow-up class, she brought along a few other people. These people donated 1 million yen on two occasions, which was used to help build the church in Tokyo. When they came to Tokyo to meet me, they also made a large offering.

That's how we managed to pay the cost of building a church. After that, when a member of the Japanese imperial family took a special interest in our church and began to attend, people connected to him visited frequently. We ended up buying a luxury car so that we could host them. That was when our church began to prosper and attract important people. Some of them were linked to an organization called Rissho Kosei Kai, and a large number of their higher leaders ended up joining the church.

Witnessing to the members of a religious order

One day, a young man who had been moved by our teaching during our mission work on the streets of Tokyo visited our church to hear our teaching in more detail. He was the youth director for Rissho Kosei Kai, a Buddhist organization with two million members. The young man told his organization's chairman that he had met a remarkable teacher and heard a worthy message and urged the chairman to meet this teacher. They sent a vehicle to pick me up and took me to meet the chairman. Of all the religious figures I had met in Japan, this chairman was the one who treated me with the most respect. He listened to me quietly while I talked for one hour, and then continued to do so for two and then three hours. When I visited again the next day, the chairman told me he had been very impressed and asked me to train his chief of staff, his sons, and the youth director.

So we began teaching key figures in that organization. Even though prime ministers and lawmakers were members of that organization, the chairman was troubled because his two sons refused to believe it, so he had asked us to teach his sons to ease his mind. So we gave the same training and the same teaching to the chairman's sons as we gave to others. After 10 days, we took them with us out for street witnessing just like everyone else, and after 40 days they had changed completely - they were new people. The chairman was beside himself with joy. The chairman's chief of staff and his sons eventually reported to him that the Divine Principle was the only doctrine by which the world could be saved.

After hearing that report, the chairman asked us to impart our teaching to the two million members of his organization. So we had him choose 100 young men from among his members who were university graduates, healthy individuals, and good-looking, and we taught them. With the goal of influencing young people around the world, we set up a World Youth Council, which we had first proposed to the chairman.

The training of these young men lasted 40 days, split into four periods. After each 10-day period, the young men were given more discretion over their lifestyle. During a certain 10-day period, we held a retreat outside to give the young men complete freedom. During the last 10-day period, we had the young men fast in return for giving them their freedom. All of them were equipped with the Divine Principle and even swore that they were ready to live or die on command. During the graduation ceremony, I begged them through my tears to center their lives on the Divine Principle and to bring about the restoration of the universe. Everyone was so moved during the first retreat that we ended up having five retreats in a row.



In the United States in the 1970s with True Father, Young-hwi Kim and Bo-hi Pak

At that point, however, the traditionalists and the conservatives in that Buddhist order began to rebel. But most of the leaders of the Japanese Unification Church entered the church through such connections.

From that point forward, our church was completely transformed. Our congregation, which had been around 40 or 50 people, increased to 300 or 400, and the Japanese government began to take notice of us, though somewhat doubtfully. At a time when Japan was facing the challenges of Soka Gakkai [an influential Buddhist order] and communism, which had gained influence because of the wave of liberalization, we were told that some leaders were taking a great interest in the Unification Church because of its outstanding leadership ideology and because of the globalist ideology it advocated.

One day, a detective visited and asked me where I was from. I did my best to play innocent and told him I was from a certain small town in Shiga Prefecture. It turned out that they had already been keeping tabs on my actions for four years. With the support of forces that opposed us, the police at last took me into custody on June 2, 1964. On June 4, I was handed over to the immigration authorities and had to spend 44 awful days in detention. During that time, many of our members were thoughtful enough to come visit me, and those who were watching were unable to hide their surprise and wonder.

Ryoichi Sasakawa, a major figure in the Japanese business establishment, ended up joining. As the chairman of the association of Japanese shipping companies, Sasakawa was quite powerful. This man visited the chairman of the Legal Affairs Committee to negotiate on my behalf. "I'm already too old to do anything for Japan, but this young man has been working with the youth and has been doing great things for Japan since coming here. Please set him free," Sasakawa told the chairman. The chairman agreed, on one condition: "Since this young man is currently a problem in society, I can't really do this on my own. If this young man goes to South Korea after his release and then returns, I'll give him permanent residency."

So I returned to South Korea on September 1, 1964, after being away for seven years, and returned to Japan on December 17.

Back on the road to restoration of the world

On January 28, 1965, the Master visited Japan in person and brought down great blessings from Heaven that had never been seen before, such as training the members and selecting Holy Grounds.

In obedience to Master's command, the long chapter of my mission work in Japan came to a close on March 16, and I set off on the new journey to do missionary work in the United States.

While accompanying Master on his world tour, I received amazing blessings.