

True Love Comes to the Samurai - Part 3

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In June 1968 Father in Seoul, Korea with Hideo Oyamada

I was a seeker, a wanderer. I carried on like that until my senior year, when I became very sick.

At the same time, I was seeking truth I was seeking a spouse. Because of the great confusion all around, I was looking for a good girlfriend. I found someone, but she just wanted to bring me to church. I had all kinds of problems, but no solution.

The leftist movement said the social system was wrong, especially the Japanese capitalistic system. However, among the communist leaders there were more contradictions. Almost half of them committed suicide. The daughter of the dean of my faculty died in that way.

I wondered why they were teaching us the communist ideal if it is garbage and they were all committing suicide. On the outside they seemed heroic, but the inside was so dark - always some fighting or a love affair. I realized that their idea was not true, and I continued to seek for the solution or answer to my questions.

I was reflecting on those things when about four o'clock one morning I heard in the darkness some young girls singing in my dormitory. Then my body was lifted up, and I found myself bowing in front of God Almighty. "Oh, what's happening?" I wondered. "I still don't know the existence of God!"

At that time, I also experienced platonic love. The elder sister of one of my private students was very beautiful and clever. She gave me such good advice about many things. My love for her was just private; I never said I loved her or anything. It was all in my mind.

I finally encountered the dilemma of whether to love God or to love a woman. These two loves were fighting within me. Until then I was just seeking pure truth, completely beyond issues of security, love, economics, everything. However, when I met this beautiful girl, my "heartistic" self was so moved.

Overcoming illness

Finally, I became very sick with a special kind of diarrhea. I was put in the hospital for three weeks. On the floor above me, there was an urgent-care unit. Every night there were people dying in the middle of the night. They were always screaming for doctors and nurses, and emergency cars came in and out all night.

Sitting in a big room all alone I saw a big message on the wall with the words: "Do not worry. Physical life is very impermanent. Afterwards you will go to the eternal world." Day by day, my body was becoming weaker and weaker from diarrhea. I wondered what was happening.

I was twenty-one years old at that time. I reflected, "If I live, I must change my thinking." My health condition was terrible, and I was losing so much blood. Then I began to analyze things and realized I had been concentrating just on myself. I thought, "Okay, a spiritual world exists, I will change my attitude from selfishness to unselfishness. I want to try to do more for the sake of others."

I stopped giving private classes to girls and cut off my platonic love. Still I was full of questions, about everything. Even in the daytime, I felt it was so dark. Half a million people lived in Sendai at that time, but no one cared about me. During the day it was like I was asleep. In the evening I would wake up. At midnight my brain would be working full speed; it was almost crazy. Many days I couldn't sleep until 4:00 am.

In those days, I was living isolated from the horizontal world; my life was completely vertical. Then, all the spirits would come to me. Almost half crazy, I saw spirits. Moses came; some prince or princess from ancient Egypt came. I felt, "Oh, this is not good."

Baptism as a Christian

Finally, when I came out of the hospital, I really began to seek God. I asked my minister, "Can I become a Christian? Can I be baptized?"

"Sure, why not?" he said. When I had recovered from my illness, in 1963, I was baptized as a Christian.

During the baptism ceremony, I received the holy water in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. I felt a cold wind blow across my back when I thought, "What is my future? My future is only the cross. How can I endure?"

I wondered how I could meet God, so I decided to study how the prophets and saints met God. One by one, I checked out St. Paul, Augustine, Martin Luther, Kierkegaard, and Toyohiko Kagawa.

After becoming a Christian, I went on to become a Sunday School teacher, and my social status became greater. Inside I felt empty, with constant fighting between spirit and body. I couldn't resolve the problem of the love for God (agape) versus love for people, especially for women (eros). I longed to solve this problem and understand the original sin.

I began concentrating on some works of Martin Luther and Soren Kierkegaard, especially on their struggle between love for God and Christ and love for women. I couldn't find any solution. I couldn't tell others about such agony because they would say, "Oh, you are just wasting time. This world is not as simple as you want it to be." They would always criticize me.

Finally, I asked my minister if I could go to the seminary, and he agreed. In my church there were many scholars, famous professors, and famous theologians - a very academic, intellectual church. I had reflected, "Without understanding God, we cannot find the truth." My conclusion was that I needed to study the nature of Christ and the meaning of the end of time. Christology and eschatology were my basic questions. My aim was to find the best way to solve those problems.

As a student of philosophy. I learned about Karl Jaspers, a famous German philosopher who was persecuted under the Nazi regime. He taught that philosophy is not knowledge but a way of life. It involves seeking God, or the ultimate being. To meet God vertically is to meet your real self. To meet your real self you need another real person. The key to that is Jesus Christ. Where can I best encounter Jesus Christ? I gave up everything in order to go to the seminary to seek Jesus, because through Jesus Christ I could meet the real, existing God.

I meet my spiritual father, Sung Ho Kwak

However, one week after my decision to go to the seminary, I met Mr. Sung Ho Kwak, my spiritual father. A Korean resident in Japan, he had just come back from Atlanta to Hiroshima, which is his hometown. He was wonderful, but no words - just smiles. His heart and love would always come out. Later, words began to come out also.

I met Mr. Kwak at a Bible class. He asked for my address and visited me at my dormitory, along with Mrs. Chizuko Runyon, the first missionary sent from headquarters to Sendai. He brought a small blackboard with him.

In my dormitory Mr. Kwak prayed, and after that he asked, "What kind of questions do you have?"

I told him, "My problem is how to understand Christ, original sin and the end of the world."

"Congratulations!" he shouted, and seeing that I didn't understand what he meant, he explained, "I have eternal truth."

"Eternal truth?" I asked. As a student of philosophy, I had been trained to doubt everything. My profession is to doubt rather than give answers - that is the philosophical way of thinking. However, at that time my original mind said, "When you listen to other people, if you criticize first, you lose the chance to hear the truth. This time you will be quiet, meek and humble."

Mr. Kwak and Mrs. Runyon explained the mission of the Messiah and the necessity for the Lord of the Second Advent. As I listened, my critical mind said, "Wait, wait." I was shocked. I was never taught about the Lord of the Second Advent in the Presbyterian church. "Oh, this is a serious thing," I thought. "If the Lord of the Second Advent has come, it is serious. If it is true, it is very serious. If it is not true, it is serious also. Either way I must listen."

This was in 1963. I was busy writing a term paper and was planning to go to graduate school. They asked me to come to the center. Like our centers worldwide, it was a little house with a big banner on it. I visited there and heard the Principle of Creation.

I couldn't endure what I had heard. I said, "What are you talking about?" I asked. "This is not truth of the twentieth century!" However, since it was not a truth of the nineteenth century either, it must be the truth of the twenty-first century. I had become so foolish, being spiritually influenced by a wrong philosophy.

I recognized the dual characteristics and the action of give and take as truth. However, I voiced objections: "What kind of truth is this? It won't work!" Mr. Kwak said, "Please be patient. Please hear the next lecture."

He lectured on the Fall of Man. I was thunderstruck. While I was sitting there, the sound I heard was not a human voice, but like a voice resounding in the whole universe. I completely surrendered. I had been seeking the solution to precisely that problem - original sin. I found out it was illicit love, fornication. A loud yell came out of my mouth, "Yaaaack!" They were surprised; Satan was kicked out. Then I told them, "I have nothing to say. Whatever you advise me to do, I will do it absolutely." I had sought unsuccessfully for the solution to this problem. Illicit love had been a problem for everyone - St. Augustine, St. Paul...and me.