

## A Proposal to Allocate More Resources for Counseling

Incheol Son  
September 4, 2022



A two-year-old child sat on the floor in a relative's house, wearing only one piece of knit in the cold winter. He was staring aimlessly and couldn't recognize who had come before him.

This boy had forgotten the faces of his mother and father. He was left there all alone in "separation" from his parents who went out for witnessing. Immediately after his father saw the baby, his father escaped to the kitchen and cried quite a while.

This is the story my mother shared with me. It was about me. In fact, I have no recollection of it.

But, I surely recall the day when I tried to describe that scene in a testimony at a workshop. All those listening suddenly cried along. They were all second generation and had similar experiences as mine. I came to realize it was not just an individual but a collective one.



*Incheol Son*

From a psychological point of view, however, the vulnerable little boy was exposed to an "overwhelming" event to lose his parents in his earliest years by being abandoned in what for him was a strange place. I had to face a series of similar events that continued to take place afterward, such as my mother's sudden disappearance to go witnessing and my father's quitting his job to become a pastor.

These experiences were very damaging to a child, though it's been theologically justified as "indemnity" to build a condition that UC members tried to love the world more than their own children. I was educated in training programs to accept the logic as such. I tried and it worked -- for a while.

I've even been encouraged to sublimate such primal wounds. But, they have never gone away. Rather they've accumulated; the emotional lump of trauma is still active inside me. And, now I realize it has kept influencing my life.

For example, I have a kind of "fear" of facing strangers, new people. Some say it's just my character. And so I've also been encouraged not only to overcome it personally but to apply the ideal model of engaging in a new relationship. But, it's like the fear of heights I have. I just react naturally to it. Fear is a psychological "symptom" of trauma.

When I served briefly as a pastor, one Japanese woman who had married a Korean man approached me for counseling. Her husband had no faith at the time and so was more like a secular man. He just joined the church because his older sister, from a senior blessed couple, had urged him to get married. The application forms were submitted and the man was able to participate in the blessing ceremony though he was not fully qualified.

On the other hand, the Japanese wife, who graduated from a renown university in Japan, entered the blessing by hope and faith. But the reality she had to face afterward in South Korea was far from what she had dreamed. Her specific difficulty she shared with me was her husband's habit of inviting his friends over in the evenings. She had to welcome and serve those unexpected guests every time, but she, who already had two children and was pregnant with her third, couldn't feel happiness from his habits.

After listening to her story, I felt terribly helpless. There was little I could say to her but to advise her to accept the reality and be nice to her visitors. Actually, I wanted to be frank with her but I couldn't because of my position as pastor. Though I was taught pastoral counseling at seminary, I was totally inexperienced in it. So, I couldn't come up with any real consolation for her. But, I didn't like pushing her back to the battlefield. It became a regrettable scene in my memory, which keeps bothering me in flashbacks.

It's been almost 70 years since the Unification Church first openly engaged in providential work. I think the providential work of the church has been a great trial, and so can be called a "Great Experiment." This term comes from Alexander the Great, who experimented exactly the same way as we have under the name of "Blessing": *International Marriage*. He had a dream that all people from different backgrounds

can get along together and create a harmonious and peaceful community throughout his territory. He tried hard, but he lived a short life and so the dream was cut short. As a result, it remained just a historical trial and experiment.

Any experiment is fundamentally based on countless attempts of trial and error. This church has aggressively and harshly experimented upon us, in particular the second generation, in the name of providence to raise us up as ideal people who practice Divine Principle every day and live for the ideal world. It's been an intensive movement, like war against the secular world. It was not only my parents who had been drafted to the front line time after time. I was also drafted into the battlefield without conscious awareness.

A battlefield is usually strewn with wounded soldiers. It's the nature of war. It's the flip side of the reality of war and a logical consequence. So is the providence of our Unification Church. Here there is no small amount of "collateral damage" or side effects of a great trial. A war purposes eventually winning in ensuing battles. A war by nature cannot be pursued without steady influx of healthy and strong soldiers. So, field hospitals are placed at the rear of the battlefield. Many of the wounded are only briefly treated and brought back to the front line.



We have a training center that is officially designated a center of healing, but it's rather a place that is emotionally too intense, like a heavy industrial factory with a blast furnace rather than a field hospital. As result, those who have been deeply psychologically wounded are technically untouched and many times ignored from the site of providence.

That's why the providence has concentrated on constantly recruiting more soldiers from outside, and at the same time keeps producing so many wounded. They all need psychological "therapy"

like Vietnam War or Iraq War veterans who have significantly suffered from trauma like PTSD. Those vets have to go through extensive therapy provided by the very same government that chose to engage in a war.

My wife works at a church-subsidized counseling center. The center was started as a project of the international affairs division of the Family Department inside church headquarters. In the beginning, it mainly responded to Japanese wives who formed the majority of marriage migration wives who came to South Korea and experienced all kinds of difficulties, from language and cultural barriers to conjugal relationships. And the center has continued the task after being an independent unit because the in-flow demanding counseling has never ceased. It's rather grown day-by-day. It extended to cover international wives other than Japanese.

She shares with me her impressions from the reality uncovered in her work at the counseling center. Though I cannot get further detail from her, it was enough for me to sense and guess how the hardships of those counseled has been. One thing is clear: there are so many of such members in the church. In particular, she's amazed by coming to realize that those international couples are too ignorant of basic relationships as a couple. They haven't been educated or trained and couldn't overcome cultural barriers in what the Korean husbands demanded from their wives mentally and physically.

It was because of me that my wife, who graduated from theological seminary, then decided to get a master's degree in counseling. I urged her to do so. It's because of my personal need. When I went through hardship, the one that has been left behind as a result of numerous failures from putting Divine Principle into practice, I was desperate to seek consolation from any second-gen seniors who could catch what I had been uneasy with. I didn't want to seek outside counseling. I didn't want to reveal my story because I thought it would bring shame to the church.

But, I couldn't find any independent counselors other than church pastors, who were already busy in their assignments. So, I had to take care of myself most of the time all by myself. I first tried with my mother, but she said only Divine Principle things. That wasn't helpful but made me just feel suffocated. Then, I tried with my wife. My "attachment" to her was strong. But, she was the same. She tried hard to talk with me but every time encountered a strange man, who was hardly consoled from her trial.

Interestingly, these days my wife counsels her mother, who is so proud of having served as a pastor. My mother-in-law experiences difficulty in dealing with her kinsfolk, including me. She's been puzzled by the poor quality of her attitude toward them after retirement, though she's been so good at dealing with outsiders. It's an ironic scene. But, it clearly shows that even a long-time pastor has not been professionally counseled and thus, healed.

Therefore, I propose that more resources be spent on independent professional counseling or pastoral counseling. What if the headquarters set it up as a strategic goal of the providence, and allocated more funds toward a counseling center; or ran a separate program of counseling at the training center? And to run such a healing center needs professionally-educated counselors, with M.Div. degrees from UTS or SunMoon University as a requirement.

It's time to strategically look after those wounded people in the backyard of our church. This means we need to put more funds into creating places for long-term healing. I believe second-gen adults of blessed families are surely full of such trauma deep in their hearts by which they are experiencing hardship in managing normal life.

I believe in God as the Healer not only the Savior. God has tried to restore this fallen world into an ideal kingdom by healing, literally "redeeming" the people. If such psychologically "overwhelming" events were unavoidable on the path of providential development, the obligation to cure those with trauma from those events should be providential as well. That means they shouldn't be avoided or alienated.

I'm kind of a "survivor," not a "victim," because I can reflect on my memory and try to heal myself. Theories of psychology say that trauma is a mental injury that a survivor holds. It is the survivor who can recognize such psychological wounds as trauma from those experiences. As soon as it's identified as such, "therapeutic" treatment should follow. Of course, psychological theories say that not all "overwhelming" events develop into trauma. It depends on the individual who faces and copes with those events.

But, there are still so many wounded out there who were once committed and brave soldiers on the battlefield. I think it's time to look around us and locate the many wounded and begin to help them recover, or at least to maintain a normal life. Let us support and help them to sublimate those traumatic wounds in order for them not to end up as merely the results of an experimental trial, and so as to advance and achieve the goal: a happy family life on earth.

Moreover, my real concern is that the untreated and remaining trauma seems to get passed on to subsequent generations in a different form, such as a different kind of harsh treatment of them. That should've been severed in my generation. There's no guarantee that if I simply sacrifice enough, then everything will go well. Sacrifice costs something precious; otherwise it can't be called sacrifice.

Our church started from a few young people, who were once welcomed so delightfully as precious beings. What if we were to treat these wounded just like those young people, but who are recovered and recommitted, so as to be gladly welcomed as precious beings once again? It's time for the church to provide spiritual care for its "internal clients," its own members, so that many of them can revive. This can commence from earnest efforts to heal them.

---

*Dr. Incheol Son is the International Director of PWWA International and he also works at SunHak Universal Peace Graduate University as a translator. He earned his Ph.D. in public administration from Kookmin University, an MBA from the University of Bridgeport, and his bachelor's in theology from SunMoon University.*