

Growing Our Venezuelan Church

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In 2007, an Anglican priest introduced me to the dean of the engineering faculty in Alejandro de Humboldt University, who offered me a job as a teacher. I began teaching college subjects such as critical thinking, how to study and think effectively, ethics and report writing. The students were young, having just graduated from high school. They were pure and just beginning a new life, so I introduced many points of the Divine Principle through my lectures and classes.

The students were interested. Many of them asked questions and invited me out to coffee during breaks. We became friends. After they passed my subjects, we continued the relationship. I began inviting them to Divine Principle lectures in my home, and I started a new ministry with these young students. The students brought more young members. I had been teaching Divine Principle in my home and in my backyard, but we could not continue there because there was not enough space.

I began to hold Divine Principle workshops, two- or three-day workshops at a house owned by an ambassador for peace in the countryside. In the beginning, she lent it to us free of charge as long as we took care of it. We held sixty workshops there, forty- eight three-day and twelve seven- day Divine Principle workshops. We had an educational structure, but our church did not have the infrastructure to educate people as fulltime members. For that reason, I began to send them to workshops in other countries, such as Argentina, which had a set of twenty-one-day workshops within a formula course that ran for either one year or two.

That was where our full-time-member training began. From the more than twenty young members I had sent to Argentina for this spiritual education, enough of them came back with a particularly good, solid education that we could then have full-time-member programs in Venezuela. We had young leaders who could take care of the youngest, and we began to grow.

Recognizing our latent potential

My approach was somewhat radical. I remember once listening to someone talk about proclaiming True Parents as the Messiah and thinking, How can I do that? And I had the idea, Well, let's proclaim that everyone is the messiah, because we are all potential messiahs. The only way we can develop that potential is through the Messiah, our True Parents. So I began to proclaim, "You are the messiah," which became our workshop's approach to the participants. In that way we were demonstrating God's existence. We were demonstrating that the Fall was a sexual issue, but we were also demonstrating that a person has the potential to be a messiah.

People felt so high -- Wow, I want to be a messiah! After this experience, we introduced them, in a seven-day workshop, to True Parents as the Messiah. "Now you can be the messiah, because the Messiah has arrived, and they are teaching all of us to be messiahs." This was our approach to young people; specifically, teenagers. Teenagers hearing these ideals become excited; they want to become messiahs, and they work hard to become messiahs.

In five years (2007–2012) we had seventeen people, who were exhilarated, join as full-time members in

Venezuela. Four of them [at the time of writing] were in Argentina. We had twenty blessed central families. We had twenty-three second-generation children. We had twelve young home members, and we had seven elders. We were growing. This may not have seemed like much to members in other countries, but to us it was a huge result after many years of stagnation in the Venezuelan church.

The power of pure love

I feel that two events were significant for the Venezuelan providence. In February 2010, we went to Korea to perform at a cultural festival for True Parents. We presented a play aimed at helping prevent spread of the HIV virus (which if left untreated leads to AIDS), drug abuse and teenage pregnancy. Only true, pure, responsible love can overcome all these situations. We presented this in English to True Parents, who seemed happy. That was the first time Venezuelans had reached the point of being close to True Parents and making them happy.

In 2012, after performing a dance of the saints in front of True Parents -- involving Buddha, Confucius, Jesus and Mohammed dancing in celebration of True Parents' victory -- fourteen members remained in Korea for six months. Because for the past few years we'd had to pay a fee to use the ambassador's house, they raised funds to purchase a countryside workshop site. It was such arduous work and the result they were expecting was slow to materialize. Father heard about our team and he was so excited about it that he decided to give a large grant to the Venezuelan members. They reached their goal thanks to True Parents.



Joining heaven and earth

Our members came back to Venezuela, and we re-inaugurated our CARP activities. Many of them were university students. We had nine CARP student members working at four universities in Caracas, the nation's capital. We called our version of CARP "An Incorruptible Venezuela is Possible." We wanted to reach out to young people at universities and in high schools and tell them that if everybody becomes incorruptible, we are going to change our country; we're going to change society, and we're going to change the world.

People were so interested in the word "incorruptible," which we feel somehow unites heaven and earth. It is a very earthy word. It corresponds to the first blessing. No more personal sin, plus maturity of character -- it signifies a responsible person who lives for the sake of others, freely and happily. Incorruptible people will form happy families and societies.

Both corruption and incorruptibility are results of our decisions. Through appropriate values education, we learned and taught decision-making based on goodness, upon which we can build an incorruptible life. Training for incorruptibility requires introspection and practice. Character development involves disciplining one's desires and emotions so as to incorporate universal values into everyday life.

Our campus activities

We decided to work with young people, and we were having impressive results. At that time, the most important activity we were developing was debates in universities. We held these debates between college students. We called this program "Incorruptible Values, Image and Power." The idea was to focus on three types of power that we need to overcome and master in order to avoid being corrupted -- the power of sex, the power to dominate or hurt others and the power of money. The program proved attractive to young people. It served as an approach to the discussion of the incorruptible individual, family and society, as well as incorruptible leadership.

Every week, also, in two or three universities, we had what we called "a conversation." We picked an important figure in history -- it might be Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr. or Helen Keller -- and we talked about their values, why they were so great. Afterward, we held an open discussion. We guided the conversation toward the topic of becoming incorruptible. We gave participants some ideas to reflect on, and the following week they returned with that reflection, and we continued those conversations.

For instance, we might say to them, "Listen, evil doesn't exist. Evil is just a human creation. We decided to create evil. If we decide not to create evil, evil won't exist." Statements of this type make people think. We continued, "To avoid evil, all that is needed is a decision, but it also involves arduous effort because we have to first define what goodness is. Then, we have to incorporate, that is, incarnate, that goodness. That means we have to deal with our desires and our emotions. So please come to our workshops, and we will continue working."

We were then dealing with these kinds of topics at universities. We combined them with social service projects that we held every Saturday. Many volunteers came. Our goal was to enable young people to discover the joy of giving love without expecting compensation in return. The focus was on benefiting others, especially the needy and disadvantaged. We indirectly enriched ourselves spiritually, emotionally and ethically. We also developed a healthy sense of belonging (of ownership) and a feeling for our own country and our people, whom we wanted to protect. We learned to educate by example. This helped create a dynamic energy among young people. We encouraged those members to become our young leaders. They were great. With our CARP programs, I believed we would soon see incorruptible people in Venezuela that would provide the best leadership in any political, economic or legal system.