

Interview of Joe and Sun Willett, successful Heavenly Tribal Messiahs

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True Mother recognizing the Willetts

Question: Joe Willett, you have painted many portraits, simple people as well as celebrities. What is your main concern when you portray people?

The likeness is my first concern, since I am a realistic artist. The portrait should reflect the model, but not just externally. If the artist feels the personality, that will come out. A painter may reveal something about people that they were unaware of. In a special moment, you may catch and enhance the character and destiny of the person. Painting a person is painting the most beautiful of God's creations.

You catch this essence by quieting your brain and what you think you know and paying attention to shapes and colors. More than intuition, I would call it a "visual mind." We should not remain analytical; we should liberate ourselves from the dominant learning centers of the brain. I sometimes feel that this visual mind prompted Mother Teresa just to serve people.

The Principle tells us that we have to love and see others from God's point of view. An artist with this visual mind may bring out more beauty from a wrinkled old lady than from a fresh model in her twenties. Artists should seek the original beauty; you may call that the ethics of the artist.



Question: Christ is a person often represented in art. You had the unique opportunity to portray the living Christ, True Father. How did Father react?

Joe Willett: After hearing the Principle, I had given up on art for years in order to serve the True Parents directly. I was on the security team at East Garden. Mrs. Won Pok Choi asked me, "Joe, why don't you do Father's portrait?" I was hesitant. I knew Father did not like most of the portraits done of him because no one had really understood the essence of Father's features.

One time someone placed a sculpture of him in the East Garden dining room. After a few days, I learned that Father had taken it out to the back porch and destroyed it. Father may be very sensitive about what happened to Jesus -- people made engravings and images of Jesus and worshiped his image rather than following what he taught.

Mrs. Choi encouraged me. She brought a photograph of Father and asked me to make a drawing in her office on the second floor. She guided me to understand some of Father's physical features and spiritual dimensions from a Korean viewpoint.

I had denied art for many years and here I was, denying my style and following her wise guidance. Then Father entered the room accidentally. Mrs. Choi, who was smiling, showed my portrait. I wanted to hide. Father looked at it and grumbled, "hmmm... Yeah!" The portrait was accepted.

Sun Willett: After the portrait was completed, I asked God to show me whether Father really liked it. That night, I had a dream that clearly showed that Father loved it. When I woke up, the feeling was not dreamlike but real.



Question: Father was a living icon. In most members' home is a photograph that represents True Parents. However, they urged all of us to become their living representatives as tribal messiahs. How did you allow God to transform the Willetts into tribal messiahs?

Sun Willett: I communicate with God daily and I receive many inspirations and dreams. I strongly felt that if we are united with Father, we shall achieve a higher position than Jesus Christ by becoming tribal messiahs. To represent our True Parents means to be victorious, successful, because True Parents are the victorious Messiahs.

When God sees us, he wants to penetrate us and he wants to transform the unworthy person into a successful Messiah. True Father wants us to represent him not in name but in substance. True Father wants us to be his disciples and his elite students. He wants to be proud of us in front of Satan. To accept that God can transform your life, you have to make many conditions, repeatedly. We did those conditions for years.

Question: From having blessed many people, you are significant in the lives of some of your friends. Among their words of appreciation, what was most meaningful for you?

Sun Willett: I shall limit myself to a testimony of a certain Reverend Wayne, who wrote:

I had been at my job for about thirteen years, when I met Sun. She knows the name of everybody in the building. I don't know how she does that. The love of the Lord is in this woman. She and

Joe are a match made in heaven and you can feel that when you are around them. She has witnessed to me several times and we witnessed to each other, back and forth.

I'm a minister, but she is helping me on my way. What an appropriate name! She not only has the sun above us but she has the son within her. We did the marriage re-dedication with her, at work. Karen was there by picture; she is with me in spirit because I am half her and she is half me. What a wonderful blessing to rededicate our marriage! This lady puts everything into everything that she believes. Even if you've been around her a couple of minutes you know she has God in her heart.

What a witness it is that just one lady and her husband can touch all these people here. Very few ministries can do that. Sun and Joe have a ministry. Look around you and see all the peoples here that she's touched in the name of Jesus. That is why we are gathered today to celebrate what God has put together.



The Willetts and some of their Blessed spiritual children

Question: What an impressive tribute! Many members are still apprehensive about the duties of the tribal messiah. What do you think is the main factor to overcome apprehension?

Sun Willett: You don't need to focus on the number of couples, 430. Tribal messiahship is not about reaching numbers but about affecting people with God's love. This starts with a change in your life. We all would like to live for the sake of others. Joe and I tried to do just that. We sometimes went to dark places and tried to love people unconditionally. That is how the fear vanishes. People were attracted to me, because I was genuine. If you do things with all your sincerity, the spirit world will help you.

Question: Let us go more deeply into your portrait, into your social background. What are both your occupations and what are your social lives like?

Joe Willett: For many years, I was lonely. I felt that I did not really belong to the world, and socializing was not easy for me. But I have been teaching art and have enjoyed coaching people. I should also pay tribute to my parents, who were devout Catholics. My father, especially, was a man who could exhaust himself supporting the local community. More than a special social background, I have some model of what a man should do for his fellow men.

Sun Willett: I come from Korea. I considered working at the Toyota factory in Georgetown, Kentucky, like many of my friends, but I failed the test, so I could never work in the automobile sector. I heard that other members had opened flower shops, and I did just that. This flower business has been much more than a source of income.

It was a gateway to tribal messiahship. But since this interview is to draw our "portrait," we represent more than our social background. We live in the secular world and we are not of it. We represent our True Parents in Satan's dungeons. We socialize with people in this dungeon in order to save them and bring them to Cheon Il Guk with us. True Mother sends us to save our brothers and sisters and bring them God's love and blessing.

Question: On a more personal level, we would like to know your character better. In some families, one spouse does tribal messiahship work, but you worked as a couple. How was God able to work through you?

Sun Willett: "True Parents" means "one heart." Working together gives us more energy. We prayed together and did much Hoon Dok Hae as a couple. We drove together many miles to reach out to my contacts.

Joe Willett: Back in the 1990s, we already had our rehearsal, when we had to bless 180 couples by going door-to-door. Our teamwork started then. If you want to know if we are similar or different, I would say we are complementary. After I was matched with Sun, Dr. Bo Hi Pak commented that I would be living with a Korean Army sergeant. He was wrong. Sun is now my general. [Laughter]

Sun Willett: I am a motherly general. Don't worry. Sometimes, I sleep only two hours at night, but I put the list of my guests' names over my heart, very tenderly. A general sometimes has to kill, but I am here to give life to people, together with my husband.

Joe Willett: we have been each other's anchor. This is a mission only the two of us can do.

Question: Receiving this award, and looking back on your whole life, what feelings came to your heart?

Joe Willett: After receiving the award from True Mother, we had no time to look back where we came from. We can only think of moving forward and of the next steps. The award was not our grand finale but our debut.

Question: Your original motivation with the flower business was to make money for the total living offering. Can you tell us more about this?

Sun Willett: It is something unique about our couple. We needed to make money to pay the Total Living Offering. Since I could not work at Toyota, I started to sell flowers. In one year, the money needed for the Total Living Offering was there. Moreover, this business allowed me to give advice to my customers. I became a channel of God's love and guidance for them and the relationships went on and on, so that now my husband and I have been able to bless hundreds of my customers.

Question: True Mother told the tribal messiahs to keep educating the couples. What will be the next steps for your tribal messiahship?

Sun Willett: We push them to make conditions, such as reading Father's words and Father's autobiography and studying the Divine Principle. People should follow several steps, including taking the holy wine, receiving the holy water, going through the indemnity stick ceremony, completing the forty-day separation and the three-day ceremony. Without providing education, you cannot ask people to do these things.

Question: Joe, throughout your church life, you have often sacrificed art for spirituality and witnessing. Yet, you have become an accomplished artist and a successful tribal messiah. How can art and culture help us in tribal messiahship?

Tribal Messiahship will bring about the world of Cheon Il Guk, the world of the original culture, where all forms of art will blossom. Our True Parents, while taking the course of indemnity, developed the arts and culture. We are not just a church. We must influence the world. You do this through culture. If we want to expand our heavenly tribe, we have to create attractive cultural forms that will bring people to our side. Not only our ideas and beliefs but our lifestyle, our traditions, our celebrations, our joys, should appear as the best.