

The Righteous Are as Bold as a Lion - Part I

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Mrs. Kang Sun-ae was born in Seoul in 1915. She graduated from Ehwa College in 1937. She lived during a time when the role and value of women were changing in Korea. She had married and had children before she joined our church in 1958, without her husband. Thus, she represents one type among our early church pioneers. This is a testimony that evokes the Korea of a past time, and as such is a study of some of the values and sacrifices that characterized the early period of our movement.

I started worrying about problems in life and my future around the time of my graduation from the girl's high school I attended. From a young age, I lived under the shadow of my father's double life and of my mother's behavior. She dedicated everything including her time and love to caring for her parents-in-law and brothers-in-law. Seeing my mother persevering through so much without saying a single word made me deeply realize how pathetic

her life was. Living in an era filled with questions about life, I worried because of my being a girl.

On the days that I walked back home in the same direction as my three closest friends, who lived in the same family environment as I did, we would say to each other, "Let us all go to Mt. Kungang and become Buddhist nuns. Why marry if we are not going to receive love from our husbands?" as we sighed, pitying ourselves. As graduation day came closer, I made up my mind to study hard and live a celibate life, dedicating myself to learning.

After graduating from the girl's high school, I hoped to study in Japan but could not do so because my father became ill. I ended up going to Ehwa College instead. I first applied to the English Department, but my former teachers advised me against it saying that I would do better in the Department of Education because I was a girl. Some said there was no need to study English because war is coming between Japan and the United States.^[1] Influenced by that, I decided to change my major to the Department of Kindergarten Teachers' Training two days before school started.

I started feeling closer to God as I prayed every morning during chapel. As a result, I preferred sitting on the grass, looking at the sky and whispering to God instead of hanging around with friends. As time passed, I completely immersed myself in this mystique and developed a close relationship with the missionaries.^[2] I regarded the efforts of the missionaries as noble as they transcended national barriers and sacrificed themselves to serve others. I felt myself being unconsciously attracted to them. Though I did not know a single verse of the Bible, teacher Pak Maria (the wife of Mr. Lee Ki-bong^[3]) separately taught me and two other students the Bible. Among the things I learned, I remember the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5 and hoped to live according to it.

This happened one night after graduation as I worried about finding a job: The skies were pitch dark and the North Star alone was shining. I saw a truly beautiful angel, wearing a white crown and fluttering white clothes, flying toward me. She said in my ear, "Do not worry," and then disappeared after leaving her verbal message. In those days, there were not many kindergartens, so finding a vacant position was difficult. However, God already knew about my concerns and sent his angel to let me know everything was going to be okay. This experience enabled me to realize that God exists, that he is omnipresent, loves

mankind and is concerned about us. I also realized that angels are beautiful and are God's secret envoys.

I set celibate life and charity as my life mottoes and after being appointed to a kindergarten in North Hamgyong Province, I set out for Seoho. I thought that now was the start of my actual life, a time when I could practice what I had learned, and a time to practice my education as desired by Heaven. With this in mind, I washed the children's faces, clipped their nails and cut their hair. I taught them songs, dances and fairy tales, and how to fold colored paper. I played and danced with them as though I were a child myself and could realize what the verse, "unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven" meant. This realization added much joy to my life.



Soon after, I was instructed to take a new post at Ehwa Kindergarten. When I arrived at Ehwa Garden, I felt as though I were going back into my mother's embrace; it was heart-warming indeed. However, I had to take extra care of the children since they all had come from the wealthiest and best-known families in Seoul.

Every single day was the continuation of a happy life. At the young age of twenty-two, I had gained so much weight that my students' mothers would even say that I looked like a magnolia that had just bloomed. Heaven, however, gave me an ordeal and I had to be hospitalized with dermatitis at the age of twenty-three. While being treated, an injection I received caused infiltration of bacteria and I had to undergo two operations. I groaned on my hospital bed for six months.

While in the hospital, I underwent a positive change of mind toward marriage. After my discharge from the hospital, I married a man suggested by a couple I was close to. However, marriage life was not as smooth as I had idealistically expected. Marrying into a family running a first-class business, money became the enemy. The discord between my brothers-in-law and my husband's promiscuous life tortured me. After the birth of my first son, I tried hard to persevere and bring harmony within the family; however, my mind could not relax and I ended up feeling an even stronger attachment to my life of faith.

When my son turned one, we could get our own place away from my parents-in-law, where we tried to have an ideal family life. It was during this time that the Great East Asia War^[4] arose. Thankfully, we did not face any troubles eating or clothing ourselves because we were materially prepared, but all kinds of other ordeals came to us after that.

Recovery after entering the church

At the age of forty-three, I suffered from a serious illness and was bedridden as a result. This just aggravated my pain and sorrow. While I was lying sick in bed, Kang Jeong-won's mother and aunt came to visit our foster daughter-in-law^[5] and saw me. They seemed concerned after seeing me but on the other hand seemed happy. Jeong-won's aunt, Hwi-bong, used to be physically very weak too, but she now looked healthy and her face glowed. When they were about to leave, thoughts surged into my mind: I wish they could pray for me, and I should go to the Unification Church tomorrow. Hence, I sent someone to them asking them to take me with them to the Unification Church the next day. The next day, I woke up with a lighter heart in the morning and washed my face. After this, Hwi-bong arrived and together with the foster daughter-in-law, we got ready, took a taxi and headed for Cheongpa-dong. Once we went through the gate, I saw some of my Ehwa College alumni. The beaming appearance of Lee So-dam and [Prof.] Choi Won-bok were quite beautiful.

I went up to the second floor, sat near a heater and started listening attentively to Rev. Eu Hyo-won's lecture. As I listened, I completely forgot that I was sick and started experiencing miracles. It was as though pure water were scrubbing, washing, my head. My entire body felt as though it were being cleaned in the process. My body was so light; it felt as though I were riding a cloud. As my body cried in joy, I reached a certain dimension where I experienced a saying by Confucius "If one achieves body - mind unity in the morning, one would have no regrets at all about dying, even the same evening."

After the lecture, I met Father. As soon as he saw me, he asked, "You have talents in liberal arts. What department did you major in?" I replied, "I graduated from the childcare department." Though it was the first time I had met Father, he looked familiar to me and seemed to be a man of integrity.

I went back home with a completely recovered body. My entire family was surprised. The next day, I went back to listen to the second half of the lecture. That was on January 29, 1957, the day of my resurrection. The lecture was about the start of history, its process and development. I realized that it is God who started history and God who has led history. I understood that history ran in accordance with a certain formula. This understanding resolved the questions I had about life and about history. My insecurities, fears and concerns disappeared, and joy completely filled me; I felt as though I were flying on a cloud.

^[1] This was during a time when Korea had been annexed as a part of Japan.

^[2] Mary Scranton, a missionary, founded the school as Ehwa Haktang in 1886.

^[3] Later, he was South Korean President Rhee Syngman's personal secretary

^[4] This is World War II from the Japanese perspective (1931 - 1945) beginning with their invasion of Manchuria and attempt to conquer China. Faced with ABCD (America, Britain, China, Dutch) encirclement and near complete denial of supplies, Japan broadened its war to include the United States in 1941.

^[5] Perhaps married to someone that Mrs. Kang treated as though he were a foster son