

Makoto Maeda, Tokyo, 1967



I joined the church in Tokyo, Japan in 1967 when I became a member of the Collegiate Association for the Research of Principles (CARP) at Waseda University. I was blessed as an 1800 couple and went to Africa as a missionary. I am now living with my wife and three daughters in Orlando, Florida.

I was born in Toba, a port near the middle of Japan on the east coast. Around the autumn of 1966, I began to experience spiritual phenomena. I was far away from home and often felt lonely. One day in my room I felt a strong presence of God. I called God and said, "If You exist, show me a sign." Suddenly the room filled with brilliant light. That night I could not sleep. Early in the morning around 4:30 or 5:00 a.m., I went out for a walk. It was still dark but I felt God's presence outside also. Again, I asked God to show me a sign. Immediately half of the sky filled with bright light.

Several days later I went to an Autumn Festival at Waseda and saw several CARP members displaying Divine Principle posters in a room. I asked, "Why, if God exists, is there nuclear war?" Afterwards, I attended a one-week workshop, and then a two-week workshop. It was just before the entrance examination, and I found it very difficult to take the time to attend the workshops, but I went. At the workshop I was very touched to hear that this brilliant and great God has suffered throughout human history.

After the workshop I took entrance exams for two Tokyo universities. Again I failed the Waseda exam, but I was accepted by the other school. I decided to go there, where there was also a CARP organization, and my father paid the tuition. I returned to Toba for a visit,

and every day I wondered why I had failed after the vision of an old man who had told me to go to Waseda. After two months, I received a postcard from Waseda telling me that another student had dropped out and that I was now accepted.

I entered Waseda University and became an active CARP member. At that time no one spoke about the Second Coming, and True Father was always called "Great Teacher." In 1967, Tokyo headquarters announced that Great Teacher was coming to visit. From early morning, many members gathered to wait. I was also standing among the members lined up in front of the gate. Great Teacher arrived and began to enter the gate. Suddenly he turned his head and looked at me. I returned his gaze for what seemed like a long time. Suddenly his face disappeared in a brilliant light, and I realized that he was very special. Later I realized that he was a divine spirit person.

Later I was a missionary for a long time. Whenever I was in a difficult situation I remembered that moment in front of Tokyo headquarters. I felt that in that moment True Father already knew my entire future and what kind of life lay ahead for me.

At that time, Communists occupied the campuses of many Japanese universities, and at Waseda they demonstrated almost every day wearing white helmets and carrying sticks. It was difficult to study. Every day police came to the campus and fought them with water hoses as they threw stones. As CARP members we had many heated discussions with Communist students, so I began to study the work of Georg Hegel, especially his theory of dialectics. I wrote many articles for our CARP newspaper. I witnessed to many philosophy students, and we held camps and discussion groups. One of my spiritual grandsons died after he was lynched by Communists.

The greatest blessing for me during my CARP years was serving True Father's son, Sung-Jin-Nim who was studying in Japan as a graduate student. We played ping-pong and ate fish together. One day he asked several of us to take him to a police museum in Tokyo. On the

subway, as I was standing next to him holding onto a strap, I saw a vision of True Father being tortured by police. I realized that Sung-Jin-Nim wanted to know everything about True Father's life in Japan.

In 1971, True Father called Japanese CARP leaders to Korea for leadership training. Most of us were around 20 years old. I became a CARP leader in Tottori Prefecture, but in 1975 True Father suddenly came to Tokyo and selected 120 members from among Japanese leaders to become overseas missionaries. The CARP leaders were late in arriving, and by the time we got there, only the African countries remained. I was assigned to a West African country. True Father said that he wanted to see each of our faces and asked us to stand up one by one.

I went to Waseda to research my mission country, and no one knew much about it. Africa had been colonized by Europeans, and this country was a former French colony occupied mainly by Islamic people. I decided I should go to France first and get information there. After arriving in Europe, I felt a very different atmosphere from Japan, an atmosphere of freedom and broad-mindedness.

I realized that Japan had no tradition of respect for missionaries, but Europeans respected missionaries very much. The French members welcomed me warmly. Though I had no idea how difficult missionary life would be, they seemed to know, and before I left France, they took me to a fine restaurant for a farewell meal. They told me to go to a North-African country and to visit two members there who had joined in Paris, before continuing south over the Sahara. When I arrived in my mission country, I was overwhelmed by the spiritual atmosphere. I could feel the miserable spirit world of the slave trade that had taken place there. For years I went through many trials and adventures as a foreign missionary in Africa.

I went to Ivory Coast, where I was able to stay for almost two years. There I witnessed to a spiritual son who was later blessed.

In 1982, after the Blessing, I went to Japan to get medical treatment

for malaria. The doctor x-rayed me and told me that I had liver damage and that I had also recovered from tuberculosis. After I came out of the hospital I was fundraising near Tokyo to go back to Africa.

One night around 9 p.m., I was so exhausted. As I walked past a noodle restaurant I suddenly felt surrounded by the love of God, and God said, "If I know your situation, that's enough." This was repeated several times. From the bottom of my heart I began to weep. I did not care what the people passing me on the sidewalk were thinking. Afterwards I felt elevated by love.



Makoto Maeda and wife in Zaire in the mid-1980s.

The happiest time for me was when I was blessed, and my wife came to my mission country. We were responsible for a project in eastern Zaire. Many members in the capital city of Kinshasa told us that the eastern region was paradise because it was in the mountains, and the climate was very pleasant. It was beautiful, but, in fact, the region was very poor and unstable. Many people ate only once in two or three days. At night we could see orange sparks erupting from the volcano above the town.

Our first child was born in a hospital that had no running water and no electricity. We had to camp there for a week before the baby

was born, because the hospital was 50 kilometers by taxi from our house.

Through being blessed with a Western wife, and living overseas, I have learned so much. As a missionary from Japan, I felt I had a limitation because I did not really understand Christianity deeply. I could work hard, and be very active, but I did not understand the true significance of the Blessing and of True Parents. True Father has often said that our movement is based on Judeo-Christianity, and today I believe I can understand True Parents' value from a Christian point of view.