

Jeff Tallakson, Berkeley, California 1967



In 1967, during my last year in high school, I helped Campus Crusade for Christ on a weeklong witnessing campaign at the University of California at Berkeley. The culmination was an address by Billy Graham at the Greek Theatre. I was a recently “reborn” Christian, but I was also a young adolescent feeling tempted by the youth culture of the “Hippie” 1960s. I felt most free of temptation when I was doing God’s work, so I did it every chance I had.

I read a small want ad in the *Berkeley Barb*, the hippie newspaper, which read: “New Truth for a New Age.” I phoned and spoke with Edwin Ang. He told me about “principles” and urged me to drive 50 miles to hear a lecture in Berkeley. I decided not to because he did not mention Jesus once, but some “thing” drove me to visit. Thus began my connection with four people sent by “Miss Kim” (Young Oon Kim) to restart the center in Berkeley (Edwin Ang, Farley Jones, Betsy O’Neil Jones, and Helen Ireland Subrenat).

It was not easy for me to shed my Christian dogma to understand the Heart of God. Yet, I was not fully satisfied with evangelical Christianity. I loved the certainty of the “literal” interpretation of the Bible. But I felt confined by the fundamentalist prejudices against others – Mormons, Christian Scientists, Catholics, Buddhists, and exasperatingly, even against other Evangelicals. It did not fit into my upbringing in the more liberal yet more tolerant Congregational Church (United Church of Christ). In my teen searching I talked with people of any background about their experience with God. As an Evangelical I had a small nagging feeling that God might be bigger than just my Baptist

Church. Prejudice and intolerance seemed to me incongruent with the way Jesus lived and taught.

So, although overcoming my own religious prejudice and intolerance was very difficult, each time I visited the Unified Family Center, Heavenly Father had another revelation to knock away chinks from the conceptual armor I wore so tightly. One was the shock that "these people" prayed with tears. And they prayed not for themselves, but to comfort God! For me it was, on the face of it, arrogant blasphemy for sinners to assume they could do something for the Almighty God, but yet, I felt Heavenly Father loved their caring prayers and tears, the likes of which I had never heard. During another of my many visits, Ernie Stewart happened to be visiting. He "blew my mind" by showing me that the Divine Principle was also in the scriptures, and that much of what I thought was in the scriptures was not really there.

It took me six months finally to commit. While driving down the road on my way to attend Biola (Christian) University, I decided to make a U-turn and head back to the Berkeley Center, where I moved in. Many people joined in Berkeley in the ensuing months and years, and it appeared to me that each one was handpicked by God for much-needed "missions." God had so many things he needed each of us to do to restore the world of His original ideal.

We believed that Heavenly Father needed us. But more than merely needing us, we experienced Heavenly Father loving us, and caring for each of us, as we loved and cared for each other. I still remember each person who joined in our youth, when our lives were touched by fire. Even though, in reality, we followed various missions and paths that kept us apart, I still love each brother and sister who joined with me and still feel close to them.