

Think or Stink

Conferences have been a major part of my life for the past 12 years, more so since the founding of the IIFWP in February of 1999. With each new conference or event come new challenges and obstacles. One of the biggest of these is the shrinking time period provided for preparations. Reflecting back on my course of running meetings and international events I can remember the time when we had one year to prepare for events such as the Assembly of World Religions in 1992 or the World Culture and Sports Festival in 1995. We had time and could review and check our preparations thoroughly. However, since then, the lead-time has become shorter and shorter. In particular I remember an event we did in Uruguay in 1996 when we had only 10 days to prepare for 800 guests! A few years later when we ran the first public Hoon Dok Hae conference for outside guests we had 21 days to prepare both the content and also 200 high level guests. In the last few years with the rapid advance of God's Providence in the Era after the Coming of Heaven, we are doing an average of one major international event per month!

Inviting guests, processing information, securing an appropriate venue and lining up the services and support needed to handle such these events takes time and careful planning. As time is simply not available, our IIFWP leaders and staff have learned to work effectively within these abbreviated circumstances.

To create systems and procedures that work well under such conditions, we had to develop the ability to get a quick turn around with hotel quotes, communications to and from the field, vendor services and staff support. Over time this has become more efficient as our hotel contacts understand our way of working, our vendors provide quotes quickly and generally our office functions on high alert most of the time. Some of us actually enjoy the challenge of working under adversity and making things work well under duress.

I have often reflected on a passage from True Father where he said in the spiritual world if we want to have a meeting we would just think about it and it would take place in an instant. I thought hard about that quote, as many of my waking hours are devoted to preparing for or running events. The thought of a time when I would just be able to "think" about something to make it happen is very appealing to me. But, after tossing this over and over in my mind, I have come up with some insights that I would like to share.

I believe that any kind of "event" has structural elements that cannot be avoided. That is, large or small, each event needs to be planned, have a purpose or program, guests to attend, staff to run it, and a beginning and end. If the event was held in the spiritual world, I actually think it would still require the same sort of preparations, albeit in a different dimension.

What I mean is, judging from my experience, is that we basically work in space and time. I have watched time shrink in front of my very eyes. I know first hand that some tasks that the industry thinks should take three months, such as contract negotiation for example, can happen rather quickly if all sides are well prepared for a quick turn-around; even within a day if needed. In terms of space, well, that too is relative. We work in some specific environment with desks, chairs, office equipment, etc. However these days one can work from a laptop with an Internet connection any place on the planet and get the same results.

So, in our experience of stripping away the traditional concepts of space and time and seeing that we can actually achieve the same results that used to take us a year, it's not really that much of a stretch to imagine how it might be in the spiritual world where we do not have the same constraints of space and time. Thus, if we think it, it can happen.

The issue then becomes what does it mean to “think” it.

What is it that we do in preparing for an event? We plan. What is planning? Basically it is *thinking*. We think about or imagine the work or event in our minds, then consider all the details related to realizing it in substance. In the end it's really our *thinking* that drives everything. For example, many times when we forget an important detail or make a mistake, we often say something like, “Oh, sorry, I did not *think* of that.”



So much of the hard work of doing conferences is really done in the planning or thinking. We have to know how to think in order to be successful in planning. The industry helps us with this through the questions they ask when we tell them we are planning an event. They usually have a whole series of questions about the number of guests, dates, nature of the function, etc. Thus through their questions, and our experience and repetition, we can train ourselves to think properly about doing events. At some point, as with those who get doctorate degrees or advance specialization in various areas, we will become the master of planning events as the “thinking” will come naturally and we will naturally ask all the right questions. Finally, with such correct thinking, we can plan an event in a very short time and make all the connections with staff, venues, and other support services needed to make the event a success. But clearly, that success relies heavily on our ability to detail, anticipate for and plan all the details in advance. If the time shrinks, so be it. If the space disappears, so be it. It is all a question of thinking. If our thinking is right, the event will unfold effortlessly, if our thinking stinks, so will our event.