

Discovering Myself

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I went to Waterbury, Connecticut during the 40 day pioneering condition. Most of the last five years of my life were spent in an office: first assisting the foreign missionaries, and, most recently, working with Reverend Chung Hwan Kwak. Therefore, the opportunity to leave the office in order to pioneer was a terrific liberation for me, enabling me to grow in many ways that one may not think possible after spending most of my time inside a building.

I don't want to explain all of the external things that happened to me because I think that you can hear from other people the miracles God does work. I want to testify about something internal I learned.

There is a quote from the book *The Bridge of San Luis Rey* by Thornton Wilder with which I would like to preface my testimony:

There is a land of the living and a land of the dead. The bridge is love; the only truth, the only survival.

As I mentioned, I have been almost exclusively in the city of New York for the past five years. Even though it may be difficult to admit, I think that the last few years I haven't really been "living" in the "land of the living." I think in one sense I had died. But I thank God for the privilege to go out

to find the land of the living once again. I don't know how many people went out pioneering or how many actually found one or more of the 69 spiritual children who moved in during this period. What I do know is that the spiritual child I found was Nancy Neiland. I imagine that some of the rest of you had a similar experience. Yet, based on how it happened, I am beginning to think that it isn't absolutely necessary to go to 40 days in a "wilderness" of sorts to find yourself; God can work that miracle no matter where you are.

God showed me the "me" I was especially through two people whom I met in Waterbury. I think that before I went out I didn't really remember who I was anymore. I was certainly not in touch with myself. I know now that I had become too engrossed in the world I made and hid in. Under the shadows of my "sacrifice", I told everybody who would listen, and sometimes even those who didn't listen, that I had to slave away in the office. But I stayed inside and away from people and society for so long that I didn't know who people were any more. Yet, I think through my pioneer experience God showed me things about Himself, myself and others. And I learned how important and invaluable each person is.

I think one of these two people revealed my past self to me. She was an older lady who lived in the building where I was staying. I went to her church, and then she expected me to adopt it as my summer church. She felt I was her "convert" and that was all that mattered to her. She expected me to go to the prayer meetings, Bible study, Thursday night services, etc. Every time I saw her on the porch in the evening and tried to speak to her about her potential as a person, she greeted me quite nastily, attacking me because I wasn't living up to her expectations of me. Because of that, she became upset and angry. She didn't want me to be her friend; she just wanted me as something to "show". I began to notice the big chip on her shoulder. I think that she really hated the world because she kept telling me that the world did her injustice after injustice. I suppose I didn't help matters any by being there because she probably thought I was doing her another injustice. I began to realize that, before going pioneering, I felt the same way about the world. I didn't know how to be a friend anymore. I lived only in negative concepts of myself and my situation. I began trying to avoid her, and then thought that perhaps brothers and sisters wanted to avoid me, too, for the same reasons. I looked at myself again, and thought and reflected through prayer and study. By honestly seeing myself, I was shocked.

During the experience with this woman, God led me to a wonderful lady whose name also happens to be Nancy. She was older than I, and when she asked me what I was doing in Waterbury, I told her I had come to pray and to re-create myself and re-establish a stronger relationship with God. Through knowing and loving her and discovering a genuine friend, I also discovered who I was. She also had a self-discovery. I didn't immediately tell her I was a Unification Church missionary. Although I had told almost everyone else right away, for some reason, I didn't tell her. I spiritually felt it was important not to, but to become a true friend to her instead. We became very close, meeting three times a week and talking for

hours. In our friendship we talked a lot about life, about goals, about God and His love. It was amazing to me: I experienced loving someone and had the same experience from her. I discovered that Mr. Wilder is right: the bridge between the land of the living and the land of the dead is truly love.

In Waterbury, I began to remember that as I smugly sat in New York year after year hiding, I know that I had absolutely zero confidence to go door to door and meet people because, I recalled, I was just looking for converts to fulfill some result. It didn't have enough to do with being a true friend or building a relationship of love. Somehow, I never really believed I could go to a door and sell our church or our religion. Consequently, I found it very hard to witness. I didn't realize that witnessing isn't a matter of selling something but of offering the God within myself to people. Therefore, I didn't know how to love people and become their true friend, although Father has encouraged us to do this time and again. I couldn't do this until God gave me the opportunity of meeting Nancy and I saw the contrast between Nancy and Marie, until I saw what I was and the kind of person I wanted to be for God and our Parents.

In Waterbury, I remembered something Rev. Kwak said in a speech he gave early this summer. He said that one of the qualities which impressed him most of all about Father is that he is the most normal of normal people. He has been around Father and Mother so much and yet he considers them to be so natural and normal. I reflected on how unnatural I was because I had divorced myself from myself, and, letting myself be riddled by fear and guilt, I had ceased to see God in myself. Some of you may have had the same experience. If you have, or find yourself in that situation in the future, I urge you to put aside your fear and guilt. It belongs to the past. Repentance is one thing, but simply opening the wounds again and again does more damage than good. One thing to remember is that God feels that pain again and again when we do. I believe that He wants to forget it. We should, too.

I received a revelation in prayer one Sunday morning while in Waterbury. I took it down in shorthand because I felt it was important. I have had spiritual experiences before, but this time God clearly said to me:

You have My forgiveness. Learn to be a true person. Learn to be true, above all, to Me and then you will automatically be true to yourself and to others. Learn through Me, freedom. Learn to go toward life with open arms and embrace it instead of shutting it out with folded arms. Serve people. Love people and you will have served and loved Me in the process. Once again, you do have My forgiveness. Now go forward and forget the past. Look inward, look around, and let's build our kingdom.

I reflected and thought: "He's right. I have been dwelling too much on my own problems and my own guilt and my own fears to be able to be used as His instrument instead of going out of myself and loving someone or something." But, through meeting various people and having them react to me as Moonie, whether I was persecuted or not (and many times I was), I learned that it didn't make any difference. God gave me and showed me how to have the confidence that I not only have a very personal, very real and very unique relationship with Him that nobody else has, but how essential it is to constantly build and develop that relationship. And I think I had forgotten that. Maybe some of you have forgotten those things too. But I urge you not to forget it and, if necessary, to start over again. I am sure that in the realm of God's heart, it is never too late. God hasn't forgotten you or forsaken you.

I decided to fast the 39th day of the condition because my friend, Nancy, another lady and I were going to have dinner the night of the 40th day. I prayed all day that God would give her an open mind and heart. I knew I would have to reveal my true purpose in coming to Waterbury. I had gone through the whole summer without telling her, but I knew that she loved me and I loved her, and that that love was also God's. We had talked about so many "vertical" things but I really couldn't have known how she would react to my identity. I had done whatever possible, praying for her from the first day we met. I had faith that God must be doing something with her. I simply had faith.

And all the while I wondered how to tell her, she was wondering how to ask me. She told me later that she couldn't figure it out but she knew there was something I wasn't telling her. During the middle of dinner she said, "You know so much about Jo and me, but who are you?" At that point I could tell her. At that point I think I was beginning to know, and I felt that was God's lead in. I said, "Well, what I say to both of you may shock you, but I wanted to tell you tonight, too." I then explained that the reason I went around the world, and lived in Manhattan even though they thought I was crazy was because I worked in my church's international headquarters office. Then I told them I belong to the Unification Church, Reverend Moon's church. God had been working. At that moment she took my hand and with tears in her eyes said, "God is judging me so much right now because had I known this four weeks ago I would have been prejudiced. But I love you because I know you and I am so pleased that you are from such a wonderful place I never knew existed before. I really had a prejudice against your church because of all I had read, but I don't have a prejudice against you. Now I know why a person like you belongs to your church. Please teach *me*." Later in the evening she chuckled and said, "Your witnessing technique worked perfectly with me."

Even after her husband came to New York and met our members, he said, "They are real people. You can trust what they say about anything." I felt that God showed me the bridge of love between the land of the living and the land of the dead by working with me to develop a close, deep relationship with someone. And I felt He was really claiming me to come back to the land of the living once again.

During this 40 day period I began to feel good about myself once again. I began to think that God must feel each one of us is really a precious person, not because we may know how to do some external thing but because we are His children. God's desire is to save each one of us. I felt God wanted very much to save me because I was drowning before I went out.

Thoreau, in a very simple sentence, summed up a truth: "Birds never sing in caves." I built my life in a cave here in New York. And maybe some of you live in a cave, too. Before I went out, I thought that the 40 days were a beginning and an end. I thought that I would go out for 40 days and then come back to normal. No. It wasn't the beginning and it definitely is not the end. It is one step and it is part of the process of growing. I have come out of my cave and now I believe it is possible for anyone. I refuse to go back to death. I want to face Satan and not give him any advantage. I find it much better to begin and end my days with God.

Even though it may not seem like a traditional practice among pioneers, I read a lot of books about positive thinking this summer. I felt that I really needed those words to build self-confidence. I felt that God could speak to me through those words, too. And I think He did because, through study of this sort, I began to have confidence in myself, a confidence I didn't have before I left. Therefore, I also want to share with you some "spiritual vitamins" from a book called *Love* by Leo Buscaglia.

Dedicate yourself to love. Why? The main goal is to help unfold your true self.

(I thought that this is really what Father is saying, too. He encourages us to find out who we are. He encourages us to be natural and normal people, and then people will naturally be attracted to us.)

And help others to become strong and perfect themselves as unique individuals. Give them the opportunities to show their feelings and express their aspirations and share their dreams. Combat the forces of evil through an active love which is a concerned one, interested in each person's free quest for self-discovery. Be a model; being a good human being is the greatest thing you can be. Forgive yourself for being less than perfect. Understand that change is inevitable; when it is directed in love and self-realization it is always good. Be convinced that behavior, to be teamed, must be tried out.

Learn that you cannot be loved by all men. You may be the plum, but some men do not like plums. You can become a second rate banana, but you'll always be the very best plum. And you can find as a second rate banana that your loved ones only want the best banana and discard you, and then you can spend life trying to be the very best banana but it's not possible if you're a plum. Or, you can seek again to be the best plum. It's up to you.

Endeavor to love all men and even if you're not loved by all, don't love to be loved, love to love. And if the love you offer is rejected by one, don't pull away in fear or pain or disappointment. It is not the other person's fault; it is just that he wasn't ready to accept what you offered. If you are rejected by one, hundreds of others await love.

I think, perhaps, that is what I found. There are hundreds of others who are awaiting love. But until just recently, I could never seem to know how to get out of my shell or my cave and start to sing that love with people. I was not a bird because I didn't know how to be, or even that God wanted me to be. But I want to encourage you to be who you are-be the best plum you can be for God. I am also grateful to have gone out. I was able to search and find just who I am and who God is through me and in me.

Like a vast majority of pioneers, I can see much more clearly now that each one of us can make an indispensable team with God. We just have to have that kind of confidence. God does give us His forgiveness. He wants us to go forward and forget the past, to look inward, look around and to build our kingdom.