

The Awkward Relationship Between Me, God's Will and Joy

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I come from Presbyterian ancestry, whose attitude is summed up in a joke my father used to tell:

A Scottish minister had two churches to preach in, on either side of a loch (lake). Every Sunday he'd preach in one, then walk the road around the lake to the other one. One winter's day the snow was so deep the road was impassable. "How am I to do the Laird's will today?" he thought, gazing across the frozen lake. "There's to be nay playin on the Laird's day," he thought, "but skating is the only way across."

He strapped on a pair of skates and glided across the ice. On the other shore, the church elders were gathered, frowning with their arms crossed.

"Ye know there's to be nay playin of a Sunday."

"Aye, but it's the only way I could come here today to preach the Lords' word."

The elders murmured among each other. Finally, "We have but one question: Did ye enjoy yerself?"

There is a belief in Presbyterianism that doing God's will is the best thing, and the highest is to do God's will when you are getting nothing out of it yourself. God's will, no joy. So my ancestors were approving of me miserably forcing myself to fundraise.

While they were valiantly pushing to see how joyless I could be while doing God's will, serious face to the world while serving the messiah, etc, this became difficult to sustain, to say the least.

When I was on MFT, I was always trying different fundraising approaches. For someone like me, it's impossible to say the same thing all the time. One day, I tried saying "We're fundraising for our church. Can you help? It's very important!"

I reported my new line when I got in the van, as it seemed to get people reaching for their wallets. "My god!!!" our Mexican team mother exclaimed, "Lighten up! People are going to fall over when you talk to them like that." She had a point. I really couldn't keep that up.

All throughout my spiritual life I got glimpses to remind me of family life.

I couldn't have joined anywhere but Oakland, I think. There were church centers, with stiff people showing narrowly defined joy doing God's will, in several cities I passed through on the way to Oakland, and I felt no spiritual pull whatsoever. I only felt called to Oakland.

The family spirit in Oakland called me, jolted me, sustained me. I could participate to a degree, but my ancestors were so severe they were yelling at me all the time about not being serious enough, and at times it was paralyzing.

Mr. Izukawa's MFT region in Georgia was another such place. Mr. Izukawa liked to joke around. When I

was on my 7 day fast, he'd offer me a plate of spaghetti at dinnertime. "No, it's ok, you can eat." Smile.

Also when I lost a front tooth, and had been fundraising without it for several months, he recommended I get it replaced.

"Empty space in teeth, means fortune coming out. Also, food coming out."

As an honorably miserable disciple, at one point in my MFT career, I was running out of gas. Well, I should really say 'at one of the points' because it happened way more than once. Anyway, I decided to do a 21 day prayer, as taught by Rev Sudo: 7 days of 'What's the problem?', followed by 7 days of 'What's the solution?', finishing off with 7 days of 'How to get the energy to do this.'

I was doing a mall booth, in our time honored tradition of being the one and only employee. I called in regularly, and soon after finishing the 21 days I phoned in my day's results to Mrs. Izukawa, the commander's wife.

"You know Sam," she said out of nowhere, "I think you need to be lighter with people. You are very serious person, but you need to joking around and make fun so people like talking with you."

She was right on. I started practicing joking around. I was so immersed in the depths of God's New Truth that a lot of my conversational contributions landed like lead. I have a well-established talent for finishing conversations with a profound observation that ends all speculation. Or at least I like to think that's why everyone stops talking.

Many years later, I suddenly found myself in Bridgeport supporting Mother's speech at the university there. I don't remember many details, but one thing is stuck in my mind to this day.

Mother had begun her speech and I was watching from behind the curtains on stage left. Mother's microphone began drooping slowly. Next to me were Peter Kim and a Korean sister (It could have been WonJu McDevitt, I don't know.)

Peter Kim said "Need to fix Mother's microphone. You go."

She said, "No, you go!"

He said "No, you go!" with a little shove to her shoulder. They were both shoving each other and giggling like little kids, while arguing in whispers. Finally, the sister went out and fixed Mother's microphone.

I was watching all of this, amazed. If I had an opportunity to serve True Mother, I would have died of seriousness, thinking of all the providential meaning and not daring to make a wrong step and make all my ancestors ashamed and doomed for all eternity. No way in hell would I have cracked a smile. That would be a million times worse than farting in church.

Yet here were two people close to Mother giggling with glee and fussing with each other as to who was going to walk out on the stage and fix her microphone. At the time I couldn't fathom that you could be joyful and be around the True Parents, the messiah. I'd heard that the purpose of life was joy, but it was not easy for that to penetrate my upbringing and my ancestors.

Yet I also remember the twinkle in Father's eye, the joy beaming from him at times. I know there's more to Father and Mother's hearts, depths greater than that. But that gleam was real.

While at the seminary, I had a dream. I had been praying about how I could serve, what I should do next. In my dream, Father was speaking to a crowd. I was behind him, and thought, "He must be tired. I'll support him." I put my hand on his back to hold him up, a gesture of support. Father looked sideways at me, got a twinkle in his eye, and leaned his full weight against my hand, as if to say 'You really want to support me? How about this?' I was about to collapse. In my dream. What a joker.

I also heard (I usually try to avoid 'I hears' as they're so hard to verify, but I really hope this one's true...) that during an ICUS conference, a Nobel prize winner was introduced, and as he's passing behind Father on the way to the podium, Father reaches out and pinches his ass, hard. I'd love to hear from an eyewitness that that's true. Put that in your Completed Testament. I dare you.