

Confronting an Unknown World in an Unknown Nation

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Our "eventful" daily life together soon made us realize why our True Parents had intentionally sent us out as representatives of three such completely different nations and cultures. Our first task, to create unity, turned out to be a very special challenge. Personal character, history, cultures and customs, separated us.

It was not simply the three of us who met. Our ancestors met one another, too. There were many conflicts in the beginning. Many desperate hours. Each of us sometimes thought we were approaching the limit of what the human heart can bear. American self-confidence encountered Japanese pride. Openness against taciturnity. And another seasoning, added to the already well-spiced dish, was German stubbornness. The whole encounter was framed by completely strange, and in every respect, unusual surroundings.

Even a person without a terribly active imagination should be able to envision the peculiarity of this situation: One is used to blowing his nose in a noisy way; for the other, this shows terrible manners. Another one has to switch from

chopsticks to a knife and fork. One eats his soup noisily, while in the West people try to eat as noiselessly as possible. The Western heart rebels when the Eastern person walks ten meters ahead on the sidewalk.

In the West, people express joy and suffering; in the East, it is a mark of good breeding to withhold public displays of emotions. Something that sounds agreeable in the German language means something disrespectful and insulting in English. In the Oriental view of what a woman should look like, one of us may have definitely been too tall and the other not thin enough.



Ulrike Baecker and Maureen Gottesman with two local men and the men's camel

To sum up, simply everything was confusing. And because of the language difficulties, which did not allow our hearts to express themselves as they desired, our personal characters—which were not rounded to begin with—had many sharp corners that seemed to jut out, all too often. One difficulty was also that we realized our own shortcomings through each other, and that we had to change ourselves before we could embrace each other. And that it was together we needed to love our mission country.

When I look back today, I am so grateful to have learned more the value of the Cain/Abel relationship through living in the mission field. One comes to know the human character especially through resolving this relationship. In its highs and its lows. In its depravity and its divinity. A true purification can take place especially when pain is experienced. You begin to wonder about things. How does one mature? Isn't it by overcoming pride? By having the courage to humble oneself? Yes, but also through the slow, but solid development of a love in which we refuse to succumb to the tendency to criticize others around us, and learn to spontaneously center our hearts on God. Only together can we learn to serve our True Parents.

We must restore ourselves first, and then work with other people. Often we have to overcome things not only for our own sake. Perhaps in God's eyes it is necessary as a condition, as a way to achieve a higher purpose which we do not yet know. Sometimes tears rolled down our cheeks, and only after a long time could we realize the actual "why." We each were tested to a degree I had never imagined possible.



My pride for me and pride in my "old continent" were things I clung to. Such typical arrogance. Such German obstinacy and lack of modesty. If I was aware of them before, they had been simply pins, pricking my heart and conscience, trying to chide me into giving them up. Yet in the mission field, they became stakes, the pain forcing me to break free from the old.

Through my American sister, God tried to bring seemingly trivial things to light. And to my great amazement, if my heart refused to accept my mistakes or errors that God and our True Parents showed, often in prayer, through a dream, or in daily life, I was clearly shown the attitude which had to be revised.

Today [after 5 years], looking back on the confrontations and difficulties, I know all three of us realize how many locked horizons have opened up through these experiences. And within ourselves, we realize the unique value and infinite richness of mutual exchange on so many different levels. Sharp corners have become rounder. Through unity, with its spiritual abundance and ability to attract the presence of God, we recognized the emptiness we felt during our moments of misunderstanding. I think the great heavenly secret for any unity, for any success, is the ability to forgive, and by solidifying this foundation, love can emerge. This is true not only for our situation, but also for overcoming all sorts of barriers between different systems, cultures, and habits still existing in this world. Only in this way can the good and the divine in the people we confront be realized and developed.

All this becomes possible only through living the Principle, and through the example of our True Parents who have shown us the direction through their sacrificial way of life. Even the simple thought of them often united the three of us to become, at least in spirit, one in heart. In front of such an historic, unique example as True Parents who have moved the heart of God and all mankind, our own shortcomings seemed even more worthy of repentance. In our hearts remained a deep gratitude to be allowed to know them, and to help them in the mission of world restoration to the best of our ability. At the same time, the experiences of these last five years helped in such a wonderful way to bring us to understand True Parents and empathize with their path through life -- their happiness, and their suffering -- and brought us to much

deeper personal maturity.

Through this testimony, I want by no means to give the impression that we are the central focus. All accomplishments are based on the merits of our True Parents, who accompanied us day by day, protected us with their prayers, and who had to pioneer and confront far greater problems than any we faced.

