

*Dee Anne Yokpore,
Kansas City, Missouri, 1965*



When I met the church in 1965 in Kansas City, Missouri, I was Dee Anne Sneed. At that time, I was married and the mother of two beautiful children.

From the time I was a teenager, I felt like the whole world had a secret which no one was telling me. How could they all be so happy? I wasn't happy, so I spent a lot of my teenage years doing things that might "accidentally" lead to my own death – things like racing cars, jumping into deep and dangerous places, etc. The scarier it was, the better I felt when it was over. It was like a competition between me and death.

I also used to go into the swamp near my home and pray, asking God to find out the secret to feeling calm, the secret everyone else seemed to know. But I didn't recognize His answer.

At that time, having marriage and children seemed the only possibility of finding happiness. I was 18 years old when I married. My husband and I continued doing dangerous things, pretending that we didn't know they were dangerous, but still I felt empty inside.

Then we found out we were going to have a baby. During this pregnancy my husband was sent overseas in the military. He was gone for three years. I missed my husband, but I truly loved my baby, my little boy. I felt a very personal relationship with him, even when he was in the womb, and I was never sorry I had such a beautiful baby boy. I have many stories of how happy he made me. But even so, I soon started feeling the emptiness again.

After my husband returned from his tour of duty, we moved to Kansas City. Shortly after that, while my husband was at work, a

person knocked on my door; he was a Bible salesman. I bought the beautiful, gold-engraved Bible he was selling and began to read it. I read and meditated on various parts of the Bible. When I read and meditated on the Cain-Able story, I couldn't understand why God couldn't accept Cain's offering. This was deeply disturbing to me. Many other questions came to me as I read.

Around this time, our second child, a girl, was born. When she was born, I had a spiritual experience, one of many I had in my life.

After meeting the church, my heart began to be healed. My husband's brother met Pauline Verheyen and introduced us to her. My husband and I studied the Principle and joined the church together. But, before long, as I felt myself being drawn closer and closer to the church, my husband retreated and finally left the church.

After he left, the matter of our children and their care became a serious concern. My husband told me he'd rather the children be with me, so I took the children and went to live with my aunt. Meanwhile, he went to discover himself and be "free." My whole life, from the time I was very young, I wanted to be a mother and have children. I didn't feel his absence so much, because I still had them, my beautiful babies.

About three months later however, my mother decided I was an unfit mother (because I was a Unificationist) and demanded that my husband take the children from me. At that time I was working two jobs and living with my aunt. I paid her to take care of my children while I was working to afford their care.

My mother and father and my ex-husband came while I was at work and took my children from me. When I lost my children, I didn't want to live, I wanted to die. How could my own parents take my children from me? It tore me up. I was devastated and wept bitterly for a very long time.

Only my spiritual mother was able finally to comfort me. When she heard what had happened, she came to take me away from my

aunt's home. She breathed life back into me, and I devoted myself to working for the church. Still, I was in a deep hole for many difficult years until the day my daughter, Ilhwa, was born. I will not talk about those difficulties now.

My blessed husband is African; his name is Timothee Yokpore. We were blessed in 1982 in Korea, as part of the 6000-Couple Blessing. I lived 14 years in Africa as his wife. We lived together in Cote d'Ivoire, which was his home, in Mauritania, and Senegal, where we were sent by Heung Jin Nim (in an embodiment).

We have one daughter together. Her name is Ilhwa. Her birth was, in itself, a miracle, because I was already 43 years old and gave birth to Ilhwa in a nation without modern medical care that we could afford. Still, I was able to have a child! Our daughter, Ilhwa, is now blessed to Alexander Compton and is working with Lovin' Life Ministries in Manhattan.

My husband wasn't as lucky. Ilhwa and I came to the United States for her safety and education and to lay the foundation for bringing Timothee to the United State for medical care. He had advanced diabetes. Ilhwa and I were in the process of raising funds for his flight to America when he passed away in his sleep. This was in 2006.

I have given only a simple version of my life. Still, I hope that it testifies to the amazing love that True Parents have for each of us and to the value of perseverance. I have lived in the miracle of True Parents' love long enough finally to be happy and to feel the joy of living. I am 68 years old today.