

John Brady - May 1981 - South Africa

[The Providence challenged all church members (brothers and sisters alike) at that time to make an extreme condition – by going out alone for 40 days without money or prearranging a place to stay, witnessing and living among the local people. In South Africa according to the governing Apartheid laws at that time, people of different races were only allowed to live in residential areas allocated to their own race. Thus all our church members did this 40-day condition in such residential areas – black members in black areas, white members in white areas, etc. - difficult enough, but relatively safe. However I – as the church leader at the time – felt I had to challenge myself more than the others and do the condition in a black residential area – which wasn't very safe. I 'cheated' in as far as prearranging my place to stay with the family of a church contact (in their tiny 'township house').]

I spent 40 days pioneering in a very hot city (Ga-Rankuwa, north-west of Pretoria).

Just as my visiting an all-Black area was new to me, my presence was a new experience for the people, too. Wherever I walked in the street, the little children shouted: "Lekgoa! Lekgoa!" That means white man. It was not exactly the most complimentary greeting, but what can you do when a group of five-year-olds shout in chorus and smile with such innocent faces? The shrillness of their voices forewarned everyone in the neighborhood that I was coming -- and people peered out of their windows and cascaded out of the doorways to see this oddity. It was a while before both they and I got used to it.

Before I arrived, I was not so aware of the main problems the people were facing. It was as much an education for me as it was anything I was able to teach them. Several times young people simply "attacked" me. It became typical that as I walked along the street a group of young guys -- maybe 17 or 18 years old -- walked alongside me and said, "Hey, what are you doing in our place? What are you doing here?" I said, "Well, I'm a missionary." Hatred filled their eyes. They taunted: "What's your business here?" Sometimes they also approached me speaking in another language, but always in the same accusatory tone. So I said I was a missionary. They jeered at me, "Well, missionaries have caused enough trouble here; why don't you get out?"

At first I could not understand why they approached me like that. After a while I discovered that they were quite disappointed with the way Christian people behaved in the past -- especially whites. One 19-year old boy I was teaching crystallized the feeling in his probing question, "How can there be a God? When He blesses the white people the way He does, how can He just forget about the black people?"

Whether or not his question was rhetorical, I wanted to find a satisfactory answer. Those who asked these questions were quality people. They were the deep thinkers. They were alert. I felt that God wanted to give them answers. I knew they had been long searching for convincing and assuring answers. But when answers didn't appear, the people moved in the direction of politics and violence as the only viable solutions.

I found myself really struggling to give them answers. I did not struggle in a literal sense. In fact, I was never afraid of anyone. Only on two rare occasions did I have some close-calls with hateful thugs. But finally, through conversations, answers developed. That is how I found myself saying the things that I want to tell you about.

On the morning of the last day, I was invited to give a sermon in front of an entire high school assembly of 700 young people. It is customary to invite a guest minister to address their assembly; therefore, I was introduced as Rev. John Brady. I gave no indication that they should use such a title, but the principal thought that title was proper. I stood before the 700 young people. I faced them with the thought that God wanted to tell them something; I felt that He didn't want to repeat the same old things that every other minister tells them. I wanted to deliver a message, one that they would remember.

I had been refining this method of witnessing. In the end I proposed that one must not completely reject God and Christ based on the bad example set by certain Christians. I conceded that some whites were especially bad examples of what Christians should be like. We must not become negative, however. Were we to do this, I explained, we would only multiply their mistakes by overreacting to them. We have become hateful because they made mistakes. Rather than being filled with hate, however, we should understand the "method" of forgiveness: forgiveness is actually not for the sake of the person who is making the mistake so much as it is for the one who is doing the forgiving. Forgiveness is to free yourself from the burden of the other person's mistake. In other words, I found more and more the secret is to have a positive attitude. Reflecting on this, I find this is extremely important for our mission and movement here. We have to be good people! We have to show the example ourselves. And we have to be positive.

So many people looked at me with eyes filled with hate and mistrust. I couldn't even begin to imitate their expressions for you - anyway the feelings of their glances or the dregs of resentment they expressed do not deserve to be multiplied. I could see that they had been so hurt by white people, so persecuted by white people, that on seeing me they thought, "Another white man. What will he do – shoot me? Put me in jail?"

I felt I had to be the one to start to change that attitude. So I tried. I greeted them warmly. Even though they hated me, I tried to smile and be cheerful and say, "Dumela! legkai?" (Hello, how are you?) Generally when they passed I heard an apologetic, "Oh, Dumelar." They were shocked to find someone quite different from their past experience. Children then also began to reflect the feelings of their parents.

Someone is needed. Someone must go out, work among the people, and wherever there is hate and resentment and hopelessness, inject hope and positivity into society. We do not want to get overly involved with the mistakes of the past: we want to be filled, rather, with the vision of what we are going to do: build the Kingdom of Heaven here on earth. We want to

be most concerned with how we are going to do it. Here we have the best evidence of how we are already building it: together as brothers and sisters, one family of man.

In searching for an answer to the problems, I found only one message: we need a new alternative, our True Parents! To be hopeful. To be positive, we have to have a new source of hope. We need True Parents.

Who is going to solve the problem? God knows how, but He cannot speak to us because we are too distant from Him, too full of sin. But He can speak through True Parents to us. And we can follow their instructions doing such activities as home church, which are not just exercises to make us suffer. They are actually building the Kingdom of Heaven. It is our belief or disbelief which is the key.

I regret that I just developed the clarity of this message at the end of my time there. When I spoke to the high school assembly, I gave such powerful clear guidance to them that they almost fell off their chairs!

At the beginning, I was full of excuses and humanistic sensitivities. I had to learn a lot of things. I am very thankful to God, True Parents and the people I met for giving me the opportunity to learn so much with them.