

Ansan Church Pastor's Testimony: Bringing People Back to Feel Joy - Part 1

Cho Chan-hee
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Ansan Church once had over 100 young adult members. However, after a series of complex incidents, during the hardest times only 3 young adult members remained. Now new Youth Pastor, Cho Chan-hee, brought many young adults back, centering on Cheonshim Won's vigil prayer and their devotional life. Currently, 30 young adults have come together, and they are on the path to achieving their goal of 60 members.

Pastor Cho Chan-hee: In the past, when our family welcomed a new baby, we all stayed at a postpartum care center. I witnessed a Christian pastor in the lobby visiting one of his followers to pray for her health and well-being. I had never received such a prayer in my life before. For a moment, a thought crossed my mind that If I ever did receive such prayer, I would feel too sorry not to come to church after that.

Second-generation members share their pain:

Member 1: I became an inactive member after being hurt not just by society, but also in the same way by the church. I started to think, 'Since people treat me the same in both society and the church, should I just give up on life?' This led me to lose all motivation to carry on in life.



Second generation members guided by the works of Cheonshim Won prayer

Member 2: I was one inactive in the church after being hurt by the conflict among unprincipled groups in

the church and my second-generation peers. While my peers would loudly proclaim, "Let's practice true love," I saw unprincipled behavior behind closed doors, just as we see in society. I was left to wonder, "Is there really true love among these people?" This left me feeling disappointed. At the time, I sought help from church officials, but all I received in return were comments like, "Aren't you partly to blame? You need to try harder." This made things all the more painful.

At that time, I also struggled with people in high school, leaving me with nowhere to turn. Even after entering university, the wounds from that period didn't heal easily. Managing relationships and social interactions while dealing with depression became an overwhelming challenge for me.

Pastor Cho: Hello. I am the Youth Pastor of Ansan Church. After entering Universal Peace Academy (UPA), as I continued to offer my devotions, I heard the voices of Hyo-jin-nim and Heung-jin-nim saying, "You at least have a body. However, we don't. Please help Mother in our place." Their earnest voices captured my heart.

In 2022, I became the Youth Pastor of Ansan. Knowing almost nothing, there was little I could do. I reached out to over 100 parents and contacted more than 200 members, but I received an indifferent response. It took me a whole month just to connect with one person. I felt overwhelmed and powerless. I began offering daily hoondok prayers at Cheonshim Won, with a list of around 400 members from the second generation.



Completing the Spirituality Workshop and becoming a full-time member

Member 2: I began visiting Cheonshim Won with my parents to overcome my difficulties. Before I knew it, I found myself saying, "Please save me. Help me escape this pain" At that moment, my mother suggested, "Ji-yeon, let's meet the new Youth Pastor together." She was clinging to that one hope, as if grasping at straws. This marked my first encounter with Youth Pastor Cho Chan-hee.

Member 1: I had the thought it would be better to end my life than to continue spending my days meaninglessly. I thought, "I'm also having a hard time. Why do I have to help others? They won't understand me anyway." As I spent my days like that, Pastor Cho Chan-hee contacted me. I assumed he just wanted to chat, so I decided to go along with it. As I began to share my story and feelings, I found myself crying and finally pouring my heart out.

As I opened up about my feelings, Pastor Cho Chan-hee said, 'Sang-min, let's do this together' From that moment on, I began participating in various activities with him. Gradually, my mindset shifted from feeling obligated to attend church to thinking about how to make the most of each day. I realized I wanted to take action for others, and that marked the turning point in my renewed journey back to the church.

Member 3: Youth Pastor Cho Chan-hee is the public worker who ended my seven years of darkness and restored my faith in the church. He is the most righteous and caring person I have ever met. Without his care, there wouldn't have been any adults showing interest in us. He can be annoyingly intrusive at times, but that all comes from love. Because of his seemingly overwhelming love, I felt as though I was receiving the unending, boundless love of Heavenly Parent and True Parents through this person named Cho Chan-hee.

A pastor's Cheonshim Won devotions

Pastor Cho: Every day, I offered hoondok prayers at Cheonshim Won. Gradually, one by one, people began to reach out, and on busy days, I found myself visiting up to seven individuals in a single day. I would start visits as early as 9 AM and sometimes continue until 1:30 or 2 AM.

As I connected with each person, I was faced with countless heart wrenching stories. I met young individuals who had lost all hope, those with severe disabilities struggling to get by without proper care, leaving them without disability registration or support, those unable to find employment or continue their studies. I encountered a young person whose mother was facing Leukemia and preparing to say her goodbyes, and another whose father suffered from severe dementia. Many had been knocked down by family pain or societal wounds, struggling to get back on their feet.

Seeing the mothers who poured their hearts into their prayers brought me to tears. Every day, I prayed earnestly before Heaven at Cheonshim Won, taking into account the circumstances of our members. I also dedicated Hyojeong wish papers to ensure that Heaven would be with us.

Member 3: The youth pastor at Ansan Church first suggested I become a full-time volunteer, saying, 'There's so much you can help with where I fall short. Many brothers and sisters are going through the same challenges and pain you've experienced.' Hearing those words, I started to notice things in the young adults that I hadn't seen before - things I had looked pass.

The seemingly cheerful young adult members were actually grappling with serious issues and wounds. These included their parents' divorce, domestic violence, and the wounds left by experiences within the church.

I was simply grateful that they were alive and coming to church like this. I had so much to say to them. Of course, I vowed to do whatever it takes for True Mother in the beginning, but in reality, I found that there was little I could accomplish on my own. One day, as I was heading home, I felt overwhelmed and lost. I was completely drained, and before I knew it, tears were streaming down my face uncontrollably.

There were a lot of activities to be done in Ansan, and with the many struggles faced by the young adults, every day felt like a challenge, leaving us physically exhausted. I learned that during his two and a half years in Ansan, Youth Pastor Cho Chan-hee also endured severe physical and mental challenges, including panic disorder and a herniated disc. Despite this, he pushed forward with unwavering determination, driven solely by the desire to attend True Mother.

Seeing Youth Pastor Cho and other young adult members wholeheartedly investing themselves has inspired me to dream of a transformed future for myself.