

Jeong Seong

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Some years ago I was having lunch with a Korean friend. During lunch she peeled some Korean pears for us to eat. We fell to discussing the difference between Korean and western pears. Of course she was of the opinion that Korean pears tasted much better than western pears. I could accept that. There is no accounting for taste. Furthermore she insisted that all fruit grown in Korea tastes better than fruit from the west. This wasn't an unfamiliar theme for me. I had often heard Korean people imply that all things Korean are best.

When I pressed her on the issue she enthusiastically explained her position to me. In America, she said, fruit is usually grown on huge farms and harvested with machines. In Korea fruit is typically grown by farmers who have only a handful of trees. The farmer cultivates each tree by hand. To this farmer each individual piece of fruit is precious. The farmer watches the development of each piece day by day during the growing season

investing a great deal of thought and care into each piece. According to her, this process imbedded all the farmer's sincere mind into the fruit and could be felt when eaten. She said this is called Jeong Seong.

The concept fascinated me and I've never forgotten her example. Later when I moved to Korea I tried to understand this concept and asked many people what is Jeong Seong. Apparently it is not a commonly used word and most people while knowing the word had trouble explaining it and told me it meant sincerity. The common word for sincere in Korean is not the same so I was not fully satisfied. One thing that I learned about Korean culture is that sincerity in word and action is considered one of the highest virtues in the same way as Americans value liberty. As an American I can understand that the importance of liberty can be traced directly to Protestant Christianity. In further discussions I learned that the Korean concept of sincerity or Jeong Seong is rooted in the one thousand plus years of Buddhism. In particular it can be traced to the Son (Zen) Buddhist concept of mindfulness. Mindfulness means to do everything fully aware and investing sincere thought in everything one does. It seemed that I was getting somewhere.

When Moon Hyung Jin began his ministry in Korea he started as the Senior Pastor of the Mapo area church. His sermons were light and full of hope and members were delighted. Here was a son of True Parents, loving and serving the members and for the first time in a long time people felt hope for the future. He was so well received that True Father moved him to the Headquarters Church in Chung Pa Dong. He was given a national level position and together with Moon Kook Jin began to reorganize and redirect the Korean Church. Together their focus was to revive the church and resurrect the name of Rev. Moon in society. They changed the name of the organization to Tong Il Gyo and made plans to build a world level temple.

Hyung Jin's sermons became more serious calling for repentance as an attitude needed to experience God. New, previously unknown in the Unification Church, rituals and ceremonies began to appear. For the first time in over 30 years in the church I heard the words Jeong Seong used as a part of Unification Church practice. The English translation was always "offer Jeong Seong". It usually meant doing what used to be called 'doing a condition' with an activity like bowing and a time period. I tried to match this with my own idea of Jeong Seong.

My understanding of Jeong Seong is that it is an attitude of living. For me it means doing the things that I do fully engaged, mindfully and sincerely. I do the same things every day. I exercise, pray, read, write and teach every day. Mindfully and sincerely investing myself in these activities is my Jeong Seong.