

Blessed Teens Academy Renews Effort to Study Divine Principle

BTA staff and D. Michael Hentrich

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Blessed Teens Academy (BTA), an international leadership academy for young Unificationists located in Blanco, Texas, participated in a three-day "Kick-off Divine Principle Workshop" presented by Rev. D. Michael Hentrich from Colorado from January 7-10, 2013. According to the BTA students, they were inspired by Rev. Hentrich to begin their second semester on a good note and to unite with True Mother's direction of focusing on studying the Divine Principle.

The schedule of the workshop was organized by BTA students Gloria Morales, 20 and Justson Daugherty, 18, who was also the emcee. The daily schedule, beginning at 7 a.m. and concluding at 9:30 p.m., included three lectures, group discussions, sports, group activities and meals.

On the first day, January 10th, Rev. Hentrich dove deeply into the Divine Principle to talk about the "Three Great Blessings," that is, to "be fruitful, multiply, and have dominion."

According to BTA student Yoshiha Tsuchida, "Rev. Hentrich had the opportunity to learn and to hear the Principle from True Father's own mouth, so it was very exciting to hear his experiences of listening to and talking with Father. Father's way of understanding the Principle is so precise and fixed. I've heard the Principle from many different teachers, but none of their teaching methods compare to that of Father's. I realized that something as simple as the Three Great Blessings, when explained by Father, contain numerous details that changed my perspective on life and the Bible. It made me realize how precious it was to have the True Parents on the earth. I don't like reading in general, but listening to Rev Hentrich's lectures inspired me to start reading the Divine Principle again – this time, with a new mindset that makes me feel as if I'm reading the Principle for the first time. I've never enjoyed reading Father's words this much before."

“During the first lecture,” Tshuchida continued, “we explored how people have placed a huge gap between man and God. Nobody, except Jesus, knew the truth that man should resemble God, that we need to be able to think and act like Him. The First Blessing clearly states: ‘Be fruitful, reach perfection.’ I was surprised when Rev. Hentrich told us that Father said, ‘Don’t live for God.’ I was confused. Wasn’t that the purpose of our lives? But then Rev. Hentrich said, ‘Live with God.’ This interpretation amazed me. He explained that by living for God, you create a boundary between you and Him, you keep God at a distance. But if you live with God, you put God in your life and it shows Him that you always want to be with Him. That little phrase truly shows Father’s wisdom.”

On the second day, Rev. Hentrich addressed three topics: “Spirit World,” “The Fall” and “Restoration.”

“With each topic, he went into depth about things that are not always discussed or brought to our attention,” said BTA student Sarah Rischl. She continued: “When talking about the consequences of the Fall, he asked his audience for a list that included things that are a product of the Fall. The list included war, suicide, AIDS, abortion, etc. Then I started thinking about the ideal world. The ideal world that God intended for us is completely opposite from what fallen human beings have created. The world we are living in is not generated by true love, happiness and peace. As much as people want that, what we have been raised in is a false way of thinking and being.

According to Rischl, “the next lecture on Restoration explained how we can come back to God. This lecture provoked a lot of questions, but I was also able to see more clearly how much pain God has suffered throughout history. We had group discussions after each lecture, and it was good to talk, debate and hear different points of view.”

On the third day, Rev. Hentrich addressed an additional three topics: “Parallels,” “Jesus” and “Who Is True Father?”

“Through these talks, I was able to understand the foundation we stand on as children of our True Parents,” said BTA staff member Nolan Ichinohe. “I understood that in the providence of restoration, Heavenly Parent has worked and still is working hard to bring humanity back to our original roots. We learned about important figures in history and studied the conditions they made for God's providence of restoration.

“Rev. Hentrich took us into the discovery of Jesus' life and reminded us that there is a war going on – a war that Jesus was at the forefront of throughout his 33 years of life. We heard about difficulties in Jesus' life that are not commonly known, and we felt blessed to receive these special insights. I felt immense gratitude and sympathy toward Jesus, who had a burning passion to fulfill his mission but was restricted by the loss of his life.

“In the next lecture, which touched upon the Blessings of True Parents, Rev. Hentrich helped us realize how much True Father and True Mother have accomplished. These accomplishments included gaining the true understanding of who God is, the discovery of all the secrets of the Bible and the ground-breaking ceremony of the Blessing, which brings people from all different kinds of backgrounds together in marriage. This lecture brought me closer to True Parents than ever before.”

On the fourth morning, after the three-day Divine Principle workshop had concluded, Rev. Hentrich introduced the topic “Roots and Fruits” for morning service.

“Rev. Hentrich said that if you are not seeing the fruits in life, go back to your roots. This point reminded me of the tradition True Parents have established for us and the value it has in our everyday life. An example of living connected to the tradition would be the sharing of Father’s words as a family. Rev.

Hentrich emphasized that if we wish to reach full maturity and build ideal families, we must follow the guidelines provided within God and True Parents' words," said Ichinohe.

According to all the BTA participants, the workshop left them inspired and more knowledgeable about how the Divine Principle and the Bible relates to their lives and how important it is to have True Father's teaching in order to see through God's viewpoint and to create a world of true love.

BTA students publicly expressed gratitude to Rev. Hentrich for coming from Colorado to Blanco, TX for four days to provide his in-depth teaching of the Divine Principle!

D. Michael Hentrich's Testimony about the Evolving Blessed Teens Academy

"I have always been amazed when visiting with students of Blessed Teens Academy (BTA), now located in south central Texas. My consistent experience, especially with the second- and third-year students, has been nothing short of unforgettable as they conveyed to me directly, and indirectly, the spiritual maturity they have gained. Certainly, I would be lying to myself if I thought the program was a good fit for every teenager in our movement, because no program can claim to be that. But those who resonate with the BTA experience and training have continually surprised and impressed me over the years.

"Now, BTA is opening up new horizons, and, as always, striving to be synchronized with the core direction of the Providence of True Parents. While True Mother is busy calling for and organizing a leadership academy in Korea, BTA is also making plans to expand its program into the critical area of leadership training of our youth. This is more than exciting to me, and long-overdue, in my book. What does this sort of expansion mean and what does that look like?

"Well, the staff, composed of mostly second-generation Unificationists, is just getting started on crafting the new layers of experiential training and development of personal- and team-skills. So, clarity is yet to come. But already there is talk of more formal, goal-oriented community-action programs, relationship-skill building, and Abel-type character development on higher levels than before. Already, BTA has been expanding the minds and hearts of its students through pilgrimages throughout Korea, during which they visit all the Holy Sites there, and mission activities outside of the United States, as well as a practice they have consistently done over the years, which is to offer a regular stream of Divine Principle workshops for youth across the nation and even overseas, taught by BTA students, themselves. I have always seen that as a basic, core, foundational experience, this is indispensable in helping anyone become an owner of God's truth and providence.

"The founder and director of the program, Mrs. Jeri Tamayo, is herself experiencing dramatic transformation in her own life and persona. She is seeing entirely new visions of who she is and what she can do, and a whole new world has been opening up to her, within her devoted efforts to serve and attend True Parents and True Family. Her own evolving transformation is spearheading BTA's evolving transformation and promising an even greater resource for our youth. And, she is empowering the second-generation staff as the creative force and engine behind the development of the program as it evolves.

"There is just no way to describe in words the blossoming that I and many others have witnessed in young people immersed in the BTA environment. I have known skeptical leaders who found themselves speechless after spending time with the students and seeing for themselves what is going on in BTA. I don't know exactly what the program will look like a year or two down the road, but it appears that a great program for teenagers is about to become a greater program in terms of producing the future leaders of this movement and of America.