

Generation Peace Academy goes fundraising

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Yuji T. from Bridgeport, Connecticut, is entering his first year in the Generation Peace Academy program. The following is a moving experience he had while fundraising for the program tuition.

Fundraising isn't always the easiest thing to do. Rejection becomes normal, person after person.

One day, halfway into my foil-print fundraising run, I collapsed in the parking lot and felt nauseous and sick. I ran to the bathroom at a nearby gas station and started breathing quickly, feeling a numbness in my hands and feet, and almost broke into a complete panic. I ended up having an anxiety attack.

As I calmed myself through guided meditation, I repeated my internal goal with each breath: "Trust God. ... Trust God. ... Trust God." After I brought my breathing to a controlled pace, I prayed and felt the support of so many people: God, True Parents, my family, my friends and my community. I realized that if I gave up right now, all that support would go to waste. I was investing so much in my relationship with God, and likewise He was investing in me as well.

Once I composed myself to continue fundraising, I met Melody, an extremely devout Christian who loves Jesus and God with her whole heart. Her life motto is "Even when I may struggle or Satan may attack me, I can still laugh in the face of Satan and tell him to 'Go to hell' because I know that God and Jesus are always with me. He is my Lord, my Father, my husband, my big brother. He is always with me and will always be there for me."

I introduced myself to her and explained my purpose for fundraising. She told me, "I really believe in what you're doing. I just had a yard sale to help support a new Christian day care I've been wanting to start up. I really want to help raise children right and help them feel God's love. I made over \$1,000 from this yard sale, and I want to give some of that to you."

To my surprise, Melody handed me \$300 and began thumbing through the foil prints. Each print she looked at reminded her of someone. She picked out twelve prints -- one for her son in the Green Berets deployed in Africa, and one for her other son who has suicidal tendencies and has been struggling with being transgender. For him, Melody quit her job to really take care of him. With each story she shared with me, I felt emotional and overwhelmed. I could tell she had been through so much, yet still kept her strong faith and trust in God. She purchased her 12 prints, but then decided to pray once more. After she prayed she said, "I really want to help you out even more. In my prayer, I felt a strong calling to donate and to help you out. I felt Jesus telling me to do so." Melody then handed me another \$700, and my heart just burst with gratitude.

As I thanked her for her faith, strength and donation, she said: "Honestly, it's been really tough. While cleaning out my house for this yard sale, I found a breach in my marriage. But I know everything will work out in the end. Even though Satan is attacking me, I know God and Jesus are always with me. I really hope that you always remind yourself of that, too. Thank you for everything today. I'm really inspired by young men like you who really live for God and Jesus. You could be doing anything else, but you're really doing the right thing for the Lord."

As I offered the experience up to God through a prayer, I burst into tears. I thanked God for the experience of being able to love Melody and for her kind heart and spirit. I was so deeply moved by her. Despite all the struggles that she has faced, she still has absolute faith and trust in God and Jesus. She shared her personal hardships with a complete stranger and donated most of her earnings from her yard sale, all because she trusted God.

My biggest victory through this experience was that I felt my motivations and interactions with Melody were of a pure heart. I received her donation with a hand of God, and in that moment I felt that God had taught me so much through her. No investment goes to waste. As we invest in God, God invests in us and He prepares blessings for us. Had I not overcome my struggles from that day, I would have never interacted with Melody. When I prayed for her, I asked God to send her the biggest of blessings. Even if I couldn't repay her kindness directly, I made the determination to give my all in GPA this year -- to learn and grow as much as I could, so I could give as she did to me and give back to my brothers and sisters, to my community, to my parents, and to my family as a filial son, brother, youth pastor, and leader.