

Overcoming Suffering by Faith - The Story of the Van Der Stok Family - Part 1

Moes van der Stok

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After their eldest son Johan witnessed to them, the van der Stok family - including their grown-up children - joined our church in 1967. From the Netherlands, they were one the earliest Western previously married couples to receive the Blessing. This is the testimony of the mother of the family, Moes van der Stok.



The ship, Willem Ruys, that carried Moes and her children back to the Netherlands from Indonesia

I was born into a large family of seven children in Holland. Because I was the fifth child things were easier for me than for the other older children. My mother was Orthodox Christian Protestant. My father initially wasn't all that religious but later became more interested in religion and eventually served as an elder at our church. My parents were strict: no sport on Sunday, we could not go to church even by bicycle. We had to walk to church. As children, we didn't like it so much.

In my adolescent years I became interested in other churches and occasionally went to the Roman Catholic Church. Even though my parents were strictly Orthodox it wasn't a problem for them. Eventually when I reached the age of 17, I met my future husband. Although his grandfather was actually a Minister of Religion, he and his family were not so religious and didn't go to church regularly; but through me and my mother he went to church and followed certain classes in religious schooling.

I met my husband while he was studying Tropical Agriculture at a school in my town - because he wanted to go to Indonesia. This was before the Second World War. We met because his school was in the city where I lived. As it was a very bad time economically speaking (it was after the Great Depression in the 1930s), even though he had studied to work in tropical agricultural plantations there was really no job for him, so he eventually joined a shipping company. Because of the bad economic situation in the Netherlands, actually all over the world, my husband had to go on his own to Indonesia. My fiancé had to go ahead of me for three years, so we were separated while we were engaged.

After these three years we married in the Netherlands in 1936, but during the time while he was on his own in Indonesia, he had met a religious group called the Oxford Group. The present name is the Moral Re-Armament,[\[1\]](#) which is a worldwide religious organization.

After he returned to Holland and before we married we both studied the Oxford Group teachings. The Oxford Group has got four absolute standards. They teach that participants should try to reach those standards. The four standards are absolute unselfishness, absolute love, absolute honesty and absolute purity. Another important point of that group is that every morning before they start the day the members have a brief religious gathering together. They read the Bible, and are also supposed to open themselves up and, almost like a confession to a certain extent, discuss matters with each other. The aim is that if you have something against someone, to honestly open up and discuss the problem. On that foundation, we

began our married life.

We went to Indonesia together and eventually had five children. Our eldest son Johan was born in 1937 and the second son Wouter was born in 1940, on May 5, five days before World War II came to the Netherlands.

In Indonesia the war came later because Japan entered the war later. In 1942 my husband was interned as a prisoner of war by the Japanese. The women and children also went to concentration camps, children under 10 years of age could stay with their mothers in the women's camp, but those over 10 years old had to join the men in the men's camp. We never heard anything about where our husbands or men were all those years.



Moes with son Wouter, who became our first missionary in Africa in 1970

We didn't prepare for a long stay, so we never accumulated tins of food as many people did. When people heard that they were going to concentration camps, they bought as much food as they could, enough tins to last them a long time. Later on, when the food ran out, with that, to a certain extent, their faith also ran out because they put their faith in tins of food. We, however, had no food and therefore you might say that our faith was replacing the food and, even though it was a terrible time, still we never complained to Heavenly Father.

Before we went to the concentration camp, I had met some friends and one of those friends was really a very good spiritual medium who could pass on messages from spirit world. There I learned about spirit world because she taught us many things about the reality of spirit world and messages being passed on by guides, and so on. During that time and also afterwards it was always a very important point for me that when Christ would come again, how would I, as someone who is not so clever, be able to recognize Christ when he would come again?

In the camp there was not enough food and the food we got there was of very poor quality - such as soup with maybe one potato for ten people. There were not enough nutrients. People became ill, and I also became very ill

and often almost died. But somehow we survived. During the war, while we were in the camp, I tried to teach my two sons not to hate other people, such as the Japanese, or the Germans in Holland - in other words, not to hate the oppressors.

In about August 1945, the Japanese were defeated by the Americans and only then I heard that my husband was still alive. He was actually shipped from Indonesia to Kobe in Japan, where he had to work, almost like slave labor, in a factory. My husband's elder brother, Erik, was there too. It was very unusual that they could stay together in the camp throughout the war because it was the policy of the Japanese to immediately separate family members. They were very fortunate in that the whole period they could stay together.

Just towards the end of the war (the last few months), Erik became ill. He was not so ill, but he still had to go to hospital because of course people did not get enough food and he was very weak. When freed by the Americans, my husband was shipped to Manila in the Philippines and there one day he heard from someone that his elder brother had died in hospital. He also came to learn that his father had died some years previously, in 1942, about which he had no news until then.

That same day he also found out that his wife and two children were seriously ill in hospital. Because of the bad food, or actually almost no food, that we received over some years, our bodies were not strong, so we caught many serious diseases. For a few months we stayed in hospital in Indonesia and then, because we were so ill, we boarded the first available military hospital ship (the Willem Ruys) back to Holland where we also stayed a couple of months in hospital because we could not keep any food down. We had dysentery, typhoid and eventually also pneumonia and all kinds of illnesses because our bodies were so weak.

Because we, his wife and children, were so unwell, my husband received permission to leave the Dutch Army while he was still in Manila awaiting for orders. In January 1946, he was discharged and quickly came to Holland where in February we were reunited as a family.

Later that year, we again took up our ties with the Oxford Group which by then was called the Moral Re-Armament. My husband went back and forth to Indonesia and we were sometimes separated again on those occasions. Because of the economic situation, very often my husband had to go in advance. Often we did not see each other for some years.

Our son Wouter finished his studies in Holland in 1961 and emigrated to South Africa. Two years later in 1963, my eldest son Johan emigrated to the USA, where he met the Unification Church in 1964. He accepted True Parents in December 1965. Though letters Johan started to write about this movement he had joined, and his letters only gave certain details. We did not understand very much and we thought it was a very strange sect and therefore almost decided that my husband should fly to America and see what was going on. We decided against that because Johan was already 27 years old, old enough to make up his own mind.

[\[1\]](#) The Moral Re-Armament encouraged people to develop their spirituality and to live moral and good lives, and was very influential in the middle of the last century. The movement is now based in Switzerland under the name Initiatives of Change.