

A Spiritual Experience I Had While Fundraising

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Photo date and location unknown

After about two years of fundraising on MFT, I was running into a brick wall: my own resentment. I had brothers that I liked and got along with well, but when they were my team captains I inevitably ended up hating them. They would tell me to go here or there, and a sullen anger would rise up in me and I wouldn't want to do anything for them, including getting a good result that they could report. One time Chris, my team captain, was driving me somewhere and he asked me if I could give him a shoulder massage. I did, and as I was working on his shoulders my hands closed around his neck. He joked about it, but there was something making my hands tighten around his neck.

I could see what resentment was doing to my life. I wanted to serve, I wanted to do well, I liked these brothers. But something inside me wanted to kill them, or me. This was ruining my life, and this was nothing new. I had struggled with this for years. It had blocked me from doing things I knew I wanted to do.

I decided I had to do something about it. I prayed a messy prayer. Usually, I liked my prayers to be things I controlled in some way, like "Here am I, and this is what I am going to do." This was no such prayer. I had to get rid of this resentment somehow and I had no idea how to do it. And so I prayed a kind of gut-bursting, snot-dripping prayer "Heavenly Father, this resentment is killing me and I have to get rid of it. I have no idea how to do this, but I have to do it. Please help me."

I prayed this and lay down on my sleeping bag, on the carpeted floor of the Birmingham, Alabama church center. Birmingham is an old steel town in the Bible Belt, a rough, gritty industrial town with a huge statue of Vulcan, the Roman God of the forge sitting on a hill atop the city. Fundraising there was not a

smooth, harmonious experience. I remember trudging along, going into place after place on a smoky morning, trying as best I could and getting very little back for my efforts.

That night, after I prayed, as I lay down (here I should mention that with 5 hours of sleep a night, not much usually happened after you laid down at night) there appeared True Mother and Father as if they were tucking me in for the night. Mother making a face as if to say “Isn't he cute?.” and Father saying “Yes he is”. There they were, smiling and loving me as their son, regardless of how much money I had made that day, or how ugly my struggles were.

That night I had a dream. I was in court, being accused of being a useless time-waster who knew the truth and didn't do enough about it. An angry rebel who destroyed his life to get back at his parents. Every one of my faults was being magnified and dragged out for all to see. Then True Father stood up and defended me. “He is my son. He is fundraising all day and night, he is repenting of his evil actions. Look at him, crying in prayer before he sleeps on the floor. He is good.”

In the morning when I woke up, Parents were still smiling at me as I pulled my stiff body up to my feet, washed and prayed. My body still hurt, Birmingham was still a gritty and unhappy place. People still scowled and found reason after reason not to give anything when I approached them. I still had to push my legs to keep stepping down the street to the next place. But the whole time I was doing that, Parents' faces were before me, smiling at me like I was their beloved child. I hadn't felt that kind of pure love since I was a little boy, but this was hitting me in a deeper place, as I had just admitted to God that something ugly and evil was living in me and wrecking my life. I had asked for help, and there it was.

Later, in Memphis, I had found a spot on the pedestrian mall downtown where I set up with my box of wood roses. I was there for a couple of days, and one man came up and talked to me. He worked in an office nearby, and asked me about the wood roses and how I was doing. It was only when he came back the next day that I realized how much like my father he was. In talking to him, I could feel a closeness, some of the layers of resentment falling away. On MFT, you did not generally get the chance to make relationships with people. We were always on the move. So to see someone even two days in a row was something. It was as if God was helping me resolve my issues with my father, thousands of miles away, by giving me someone like my father to resolve those feelings with.

In many ways, MFT was a way to go through many emotional barriers, with the constant flow of people and situations that you experienced in a day. If there was something inside you that needed to come out, it was going to come out on MFT. There was no hiding from that. Often, even in the best area on payday with the perfect product, money would not come as long as you were doing things the way you always had, or until you had addressed the particular emotional or spiritual lump that God was working on.

There was no one way to fundraise that worked every day. That approach would get you so far, and hit a dead end. Every day was a puzzle, and you tried everything you knew to break through. Sometimes the answer was something you didn't know. One of the first things I hit was my pride. I come from a Harvard-educated family, and we knew things. When I was fundraising in country towns in Tennessee, people did not respond well to a young, educated missionary who knew things. I was a young idealist on fire for God, armed with the truth. The more I talked that way, the less I connected with people. Finally, I threw my pride in and acted like I didn't know how to do this thing called fundraising, but I was going to try it anyway. (Which was more like the truth, actually. I wanted to appear like I knew, but that is not the same thing. I really didn't know how to do this thing called fundraising.) People responded warmly. I was putting myself under them, not above them.