

## Finding Inner Strength When Witnessing (Or Anything) Is Difficult

Robert Kittel

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*Robert Kittel circa 2019*

Eleven years ago, I left the United States as a foreign missionary for a country in South Asia. I remember that the first time we went out to rent a house, we looked for a place large enough for the IOWC [International One-World Crusade] to live in, since they were expected to visit our country within months. Oh, the expectations when we left Barrytown in 1975!

Now, when I am asked to give a report about the progress in the South Asia Region (the nations of Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, India, and Sri Lanka), it's difficult to speak. Our results are so small compared to other mission countries. We have no sausage factories and no restaurants to support our work; nor do we have the thousands of members that some other mission countries have. And just last month, I was officially denied residency in my mission country.

It's easy to give a report if there is something to report about, but when the results are not there and a report has to be made, it's like being asked to talk about everything you've failed to accomplish. The one topic, however, which I do feel qualified to speak about is: "How to continue a life of faith without achieving substantial results."

### **Being tested in faith**

After years of struggle and suffering with still no substantial results to offer, my faith was put on the line. It was very difficult at times to keep an internal heart of excitement, joy, and gratitude -- and so easy to accuse or blame others for the lack of success.

When giving a report to our mission director, I would talk about the few things we were doing and our plans for the future. But internally, I was justifying the lack of results and blaming it on the external circumstances -- the poverty, the government, the religion, the people's lack of education. I even found myself taking the next step: I began to be silently resentful.

Although this was all going on only in the solitude of my own mind, it was nonetheless very real. Yet I found that there was an alternative, a solution to these Cain-type thoughts. In a one-on-one talk with God in prayer, He asked me not to blame others, but to take responsibility myself. Through this test of my faith, I understood the internal aspect of my own fallen nature and I learned how to change an apparent external failure into a substantial internal victory.

God, however, waited until I really changed my attitude of trying to justify my shortcomings to that of being internally responsible. Then, in prayer, God was able to use this experience to teach me an internal aspect of the fall of man which I had never known. The account of man's actions and God's response immediately after the fall, as recorded in Gen.3:8-9, was the story God used as an example for me:

And they [Adam and Eve] heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. And the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?"

The situation reflects an important dynamic between the heart of God and the heart of man. It was not man who went to God, but God who came after man. When God asked, "Where are you?" He was not looking for the physical location of Adam but seeking man's internal state of mind and heart. God was asking man to reflect internally and find himself. In one sense, God was asking Adam to make a report of the situation.

In my times of failure, I realized my heart could go in one of two ways. I could either look for excuses, or assume responsibility. When God asked Adam, "Where are you?" He was really asking, "Will you look for excuses or be responsible?" The Bible is clear Adam accused Eve. And when God put the same question to Eve, she, too, passed the blame and accused the archangel. I think what God really wanted to say was, "Okay, the Fall has happened. Yes, it is a great tragedy. But let's get on with the work of restoration. Who is going to take responsibility?"



### **Feeling what Adam felt**

Through this, I could understand a very real dimension of the providence of restoration, which Father says has actually taken over one and a half million years. My external situation was different from Adam's, yet I found myself in the exact same internal and emotional circumstances as Adam after the Fall.

After 11 years of very little external result God was asking me, "Where are you, Robert?" At first I sought to justify my lack of result, but it was not until I took responsibility and related my experience to God that I was able to use this situation of failure and change it into a source of spiritual growth and internal victory.

I feel that the heart of God's entire providential history can be summed up in the first three words which our Heavenly Father spoke after the Fall: "Where are you?" We surely did not cause the Fall, but God is asking us, "Will you look for excuses, multiplying the problem, or will you take responsibility?" God is asking each of us where we are -- spiritually, emotionally, and in our heart.

The experience of having my resident visa denied reinforced and augmented this internal situation. It seemed that God was making sure that I really learned the lesson. Being expelled from a country is a missionary's worst nightmare. Without being able to reside in my country, how could I witness, teach, or do anything for God? It is like being rejected by someone you have been trying to love for so many years. My first feelings again came from the Cain side: anger, resentment, and accusation. I was looking for someone or something to blame -- and I could find many of both.

### **Anger, resentment, and then...**

After some time, however, and in prayer with God, my second-born emotions surfaced. Instead of anger and resentment, I found a heart of sympathy and forgiveness. Instead of accusing others, I came to see my own failures; then an overflowing of repentance followed. It was not they who failed me, but I who failed them. I didn't teach enough, pray enough, love enough. I also was not able to represent the heart and love of God and our True Parents in a deep enough way.

By relating my emotions to our Father's heart of restoration, I was able to understand the internal victory

that Jesus gained on the cross. Jesus was able to take responsibility and overcome the feelings of resentment which he surely must have had. With his dying words Jesus was able to bring out the Abel side of his heart and lay the foundation for resurrection. If he had carried resentment or accusation, even his sacrifice on the cross would have been lost. Therefore, I could understand what a great victory there was behind Jesus' last words, "Father, forgive them ..."

I felt this was also an aspect of True Father's course in Danbury. The external situation seemed like a failure, but because Father had a heart of forgiveness and could relate his experience to God both individually and providentially, he could change defeat into a victorious foundation for resurrection.

With these examples before me, I tried to live this standard. Even though the government was expelling me, if I could overcome my anger and resentment, changing those feelings to repentance and forgiveness, then the foundation for the nation's resurrection could be laid, even if I were not to be physically present in the country.

After I changed my internal attitude, God showed me how to relate my deportation experience and the whole problem of visas to my own personal relationship with God. In order to reside in my mission country, I needed government permission in the form of a visa. In a very real sense, we are each a government unto ourselves. We decide who comes to reside in our hearts. Even God cannot live in our hearts without our permission.

We must issue God a resident visa. If we are the temples and God's spirit is to dwell in us, we must make the foundation for this relationship. By establishing the foundation of faith and substance, we are in fact granting God a resident visa to live in our hearts. Even though I had almost no external results and was later rejected by the national government, these experiences helped deepen my understanding of God's heart. This was a way to change an external defeat into an internal victory.



*Robert Kittel, right, with another missionary, Masashi Ishikawa, in Afghanistan*

### **Beyond my Cain emotions**

By taking responsibility and deepening my relationship with God through repentance, I found myself more determined to work for God's providence of restoration and to end the suffering of both God and humankind. Ironically, the times of greatest trial can also be the times of deepest spiritual growth. I understood why the Bible says, "Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you" (1 Thess. 5:18).

If I had kept only my first-born emotions, I would have failed both externally and internally. I may not be able to control all the external factors in a mission, but I am always totally responsible for my internal reactions, which will directly affect my personal relationship with God. If I had allowed the feelings of

anger and resentment to dominate my heart, then it would not only have been an external failure, but an internal one too. I would have cut myself off from God spiritually, instead of using the experience to deepen my understanding of God.

Through these experiences, I could realize that both the Cain and Abel emotions are a part of my internal makeup. The anger and frustration I felt when I was unable to accomplish my mission and the resentment I felt when being deported from my country are a real part of me. If I didn't feel these things, would I even be alive? It is when the desire to accomplish is unfulfilled that these so-called Cain emotions emerge. But that's natural and good. Our Cain emotions become a problem only when they are the end of our emotional journey and become the final basis upon which we act. Then they are wrong.

I realized that I need not try to ignore or kill my Cain emotions altogether, but search beyond them and find the Abel side of my heart. I would not be a real person if I tried to be someone who had only Abel-type feelings all the time, just pretending that the anger and resentment, that we surely all feel at times, did not exist. This would not be my true self. It is the correct relationship between the Cain and Abel emotions inside of us that is needed.

Last November, True Father talked to some of the missionaries during breakfast one morning at the Assembly of the World's Religions. His words have been a great comfort to me and other missionaries in our region and throughout the world. Father said, essentially, that he does not judge victory in the mission field by the number of members we find. The real victory is the legacy of the sacrificial lifestyle that we leave behind.

Membership, Father said, could come by the tens of thousands when we telecast the Principle over national television stations. But he stressed that our history of sacrifice, suffering, and forgiveness would be the most powerful source of inspiration for the people of our country in the future. He said that our life of faith could bring life to others and be their bridge to the resurrection and salvation that our True Parents want to give to each and every one of them.