

An Antagonistic Guest Changed through Family Gatherings

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In response to the emphasis on family gatherings of the then chairman of the Japanese Blessed Family Associations, Rev. Song Yong-cheon, the leader of the seventh district, Rev. Yoshifumi Gotoda, and the Inuyama Family Church Pastor Akihiro Nakamura are pouring their energy into family gatherings. Although there is still a long way for us to go, I would like to introduce a testimony that arose during our attempts.

Ms. Hashimoto (in her fifties) is a guest who has been taking part in the Inuyama Historical Sites Tour Club, which the Inuyama Family Church has hosted for almost three years. Because she has participated in almost every site tour, held every two months, she is more like a staff member than a guest, and the friends she has invited to the club have already become regular members. Her spiritual mother, Mrs. Mizuki (in her fifties) has invited her to various events such as shosha activities and Divine Principle lectures, but the tour club was the only activity Ms. Hashimoto participated in.

It seemed as if she did not feel resistance against coming to the church for the tour club. She would often say, "I'm not a church member, but I like this place." However, Mrs. Mizuki was in dilemma because Ms. Hashimoto strongly rejected her suggestions to study True Parents' teachings.

One day, Mrs. Mizuki suddenly fell victim to a serious disease. Mrs. Mizuki was a very devoted member and a leader of the Cheon Il Guk Witnessing Revival Team. Therefore, all staff members including the representative of the Women's Association decided firmly to connect Ms. Hashimoto to the church and made an appointment with her. We visited her house and appealed in tears, "Let's do shosha together. It is also Mrs. Mizuki's wish." Then, Ms. Hashimoto said, "Mrs. Mizuki has done a lot for me. Let me at least do shosha for her." This was how she started to take part in "Review Shosha Club" held in our church.

One day, on our way home from a historical site tour, Ms. Hashimoto said, "Mrs. Mizuki used to take me to family gatherings before, but I cannot go anymore because she's not here." She also said, "I feel resistance against joining a religion surrounded by bad rumors." However, she told me that she was interested in the good stories she heard at family gatherings. She said, "I tend to be cautious; I don't want to be rushed."

In response to this, the members of the area planned to hold a family gathering right away. Ms. Hashimoto was pleased to participate, and even promised to take part in future gatherings. I think a large part of this was due to devotion offered by Ms. Hashimoto's spiritual mother, Mrs. Mizuki, but I was also reminded of the benefits of the family gathering. At a family gathering, we can testify about True Parents through light informal conversation and the guests can listen to such conversations in a very natural way. It seems as if Ms. Hashimoto is getting less influenced by rumors and less hesitant toward the Family Federation every time she takes part in a family gathering. She is also taking part in shosha activities now and is moving forward at her own pace. I feel that the scope of witnessing has expanded through the family gathering.

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