

Awakening to Heavenly Heart in Our Later Years - The Embodiment of Hyo Jeong

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December 3, 2025



In the fall of 1974, while a student in my senior year at the University of Kansas, I encountered the Divine Principle. I remember how naturally its teachings made sense to me and how impactful it was to realize that we are living in the Age of the Second Coming. The idea of True Parents was new to me, yet it seemed the logical culmination of everything the Principle explained.

The Divine Principle opened my eyes to a God who creates with purpose. We are not accidents of biology, but divine beings shaped in the image of our Heavenly Parent, with the capacity to uncover truth, appreciate beauty, and aspire to goodness. I learned that at our core, like God, we are beings of heart. Over the years, I continue to deepen my understanding of the meaning and practice of heart. We grow our hearts by giving and receiving love and by offering care and service to others, with God's Word as our guide.

In a 1973 address at Belvedere, True Father explained that the word "heart" in English does not fully convey the depth of the Korean term *shimjung*. He taught that *shimjung* encompasses heart, sentiment, and deep love. A person of *shimjung* feels deeply, loves actively, and looks at God, people, and creation with affection, interest, and concern. Father said that this is the original standard of heart that Heavenly Parent has longed to share with us, and that we are called to return to the place of original heart where such love can flow freely.

In recent years True Mother is teaching Hyo Jeong as central to Heavenly Culture. Like *shimjung*, its meaning cannot be captured in a single English word. I invite you to read Dr. Thomas Selover's article "Heavenly Society (신사회) and the Development of Hyo Jeong (孝情) Culture," published in the Journal of Unification Studies in 2018, which I found insightful.

Dr. Selover explains that Hyo Jeong unites two ideas: *hyo*, filial piety, which stresses respect, loyalty, and loving attendance toward parents and elders; and *jeong*, a warm emotional bond of affection, closeness, and shared life. Hyo brings vertical alignment with God; *jeong* refers to horizontal companionship. Together they form the heavenly energy that binds families and communities in God.

If you are like me, you struggle to capture Hyo Jeong's meaning. Like other teachings in the Principle, Hyo Jeong is not understood merely in the abstract. It is an instruction on how to live. It is an experience we participate in and which we carry inside.

Prayer and meditation have always helped me move from intellectual understanding to living experience, and openhearted service to others helps make space within me to welcome God's presence. My attempts at active study, prayer, and service affirm for me True Parents' guidance that such daily practice generates real change and allows for deeper communion with Heavenly Parent and an understanding of Heaven's Culture.

I believe the culture of Hyo Jeong is something we are gradually awakening to. It grows out of our devotion to Heavenly Parent and is based on the inner work we do to align our thoughts, emotions, and choices with Heaven. When we taste even a small portion of Heavenly Parent's direct love, we are revived, uplifted, and filled with calm and joy. This vertical connection in love overtakes us and becomes the driving force around which our thoughts and activities revolve. I believe that this was the primary force behind the work of Jesus during his ministry and is the central force that drives True Parents in all

that they do.

For me, True Parents are the embodiment of Hyo Jeong. Whether we are fortunate enough to be with them physically or invite their presence as we read their words in the early morning, True Parents inspire in us the desire to love God, honor parents and ancestors, cultivate gratitude and humility before Heaven, and to practice kindness, patience, and affection in daily life. This growing presence in our lives is what strengthens our determination and gives us power to persevere. Growing in my understanding God's perspective shapes how I relate to my spouse, how I listen to my children, how I treat others. Hyo Jeong is practiced in our active public mission, but is also present when in the kitchen, the garden, the workplace, and in quiet moments of prayer and study.

Building heavenly culture means deciding to cultivate community rather than waiting for it to appear. Although we work hard to make our church a welcoming home, if we are honest, we still feel challenged to sit next to someone new or introduce ourselves to someone we do not know. Yet Hyo Jeong encourages us to do exactly that. It invites us to take interest in families, youth, children, and elders, to appreciate pastors, volunteers, and musicians, and to give time to listen to a brother or sister in need. Hyo Jeong motivates us to notice those who may feel overlooked and helps create a culture that feels like family. When we practice Hyo Jeong together, polite attendance becomes heartfelt fellowship, and the church grows into a community of genuine love. As True Mother writes in her memoirs, Hyo Jeong culture gives birth to a community that is a welcoming home for all who enter.

The vertical aspect of filial piety roots us in God's heart. The horizontal aspect, a warm emotional bond between humans, attaches us to God's heart and allows His love to flow through us to others. Together these two features engender a life of faith and service that is energizing, generous, and enduring. Heaven's love increasingly fills every aspect of our daily lives, and we more closely resemble the sons and daughters God intended.

For those of us in our grandparent years, Hyo Jeong can find joyful expression in everyday activities - telling a corny "grandpa joke," discovering a new tenderness for your spouse after decades of Blessed marriage, tending a vegetable garden, or feeling deeper appreciation and gratitude for a nearby mountain lake. My own attempts to practice Hyo Jeong have rekindled my love for God, True Father and True Mother, for Jesus, family, friends, and Heaven's creation.

This love, concern, and appreciation arise from placing God at the center of our thoughts and actions throughout the week, not only during formal gatherings. Every day becomes a holy day - not through ritual, but through doing our best to see life more faithfully through the eyes of our Heavenly Parent.

Recently, a dear brother and I were speaking about past experiences with True Parents. As we recalled these special memories, I was taken aback when I unexpectedly felt again the atmosphere of heart I encountered in Father and Mother's presence. It reminded me of who True Parents are, why we feel so deeply attached to them, why we miss them, and why we long for them. Through them, God is teaching us about Heavenly Heart.

Hyo Jeong invites us to discover, perhaps more deeply than before, who we truly are: children of Heavenly Parent, created to love without limit and called to bring warmth, goodness, and blessing to our families, our church communities, and the wider society. Hyo Jeong is also the source of our uncompromising determination to face with dignity and confidence the challenges put in our path as we seek to build Heavenly Culture.

For those of us in the latter years of life, perhaps Heavenly Parent is now granting us one of His greatest gifts - a new awakening to heart, a new fullness of love, and a new closeness to Heaven. In this latter season of our lives on Earth, our hearts can still grow stronger, broader, softer, more deeply anchored, committed, and attuned to Heaven.