

**May the Fire of Revival  
Ignite in Our Families!**

**James Kim**

# Introduction

Near where I currently live in La Crescenta, California (USA), the Eaton Fire in the Eaton area has caused numerous people to lose their homes, with even 16 people confirmed dead, 6 firefighters injured, and 5,718 buildings destroyed by fire (January 16, 2015). I only found out about the fire in the Eaton area last Wednesday morning, and after a warning was issued for our area as well, my wife, mother-in-law, brother-in-law, our dog, and I evacuated due to the bad smoke from the fire. My wife, mother-in-law, brother-in-law, and dog went to my sister-in-law's house, and I went to the church, where I stayed in the pastor's office for about three days. During that time, I was monitoring not only the Eaton fire but also the largest fire, the Palisades Fire, on the internet. Suddenly, I remembered two lines from a gospel song we had sung during the New Year services (January 1 and 5), which were offered by the praise team and by me with the Victory praise team: 'May the fire of revival ignite,' 'Holy Spirit, blow upon us.' The reason those lines came to mind was probably because at that time, the Santa Ana winds, which are sometimes called the "devil's wind," were blowing so strongly that two power lines in front of my house had snapped and were lying in the street. Because of this, the fire suppression rate was at 0%, and the fire was spreading uncontrollably. At that time, I wrote a short devotional on the morning of Thursday, January 9th, in the pastor's office at the church, focusing on Mark 4:35-41 from the Korean Modern Bible. The title was "Even though I may face a great wildfire, my soul is always at peace—my soul, my soul, is at peace." I'll share just a part of it: 'When the boat that the disciples were in with Jesus was about to sink' (Mark 4:37, Korean Modern Bible), I reflected on this verse, and it reminded me of something from about 22 years ago. I faintly recall when Pastor Han-Heum Oak, who has since passed away, spoke at the Church Pastors' Renewal Conference retreat at the Ansan Retreat Center in Korea. He compared the Korean church to a boat, saying that the boat (the church) was sinking. I remember him saying that if church leaders lower their standards, the Korean church would perish just as a sinking ship would. Perhaps that's why, as I was taking photos and videos of this wildfire and sharing them through the internet and KakaoTalk with people, I suddenly thought of the lyrics from the praise gospel song "Revival" that we had sung at last week's Wednesday service and Sunday service. The lyrics are: 'May the fire of revival ignite,' 'Holy Spirit, blow upon us ....' Seeing the crisis of this great disaster, I have been praying, and continue to pray, that the wind of the Holy Spirit will blow upon our church leaders and that the fire of revival may ignite. My conviction is that true revival, which the Holy Spirit brings, begins with repentance. Leaders like myself in our church must tear our hearts and return to God (Ref: Joel 2:13) [Repentance, Reconciliation, Restoration, Reformation, Revival. Without repentance, reconciliation, restoration, reformation, and revival are meaningless!].

I shared this short devotional with the church members via KakaoTalk on that day (January 9, Thursday), and one of the congregation members sent me the following message on my personal KakaoTalk: 'As we began the new year, the song 'Revival' we sang together and the post you shared in the Victory Room have also given me grace and

deeply touched my heart. It might be difficult to say this to those who are currently affected by the fire and facing hardships, but if we base it on the word of the Lord, we cannot overlook the fact that the Holy Spirit, in His holiness, teaches us with sharp discernment, revealing all that we face as something to be understood only in the Lord. The unexpected great fire at the beginning of the new year, just as the lyrics of the song we sang, is truly the fire of the Holy Spirit! I boldly confess that it is a gift of mercy through which the Spirit has come powerfully to burn away our idols (both outwardly and inwardly), and I find myself grateful for it (perhaps a story that will get me in trouble? 😊). The Santa Ana winds are often called the ‘devil’s winds’ in the world, and because the direction of the wind cannot be predicted, it is extremely difficult to control the fire. Truly, as the Bible says, the Holy Spirit is like the wind—no one knows where it comes from or where it goes [(John 3:8) 'The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going...']. It is an unstoppable force that man cannot control, and the wind of the Holy Spirit cannot be blocked by anyone! This is the truth. I sincerely hope that even in the midst of this pain, God's people will have ears to hear and eyes to see the words that the Holy Spirit is speaking to the churches. And that, whenever the Lord gives us the opportunity, we will embrace the fire of the Holy Spirit—which burns away our idols—with gratitude, accepting it as a paradoxical love. I hope that we will be filled with the overwhelming joy of proclaiming and boasting about the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit and be raised up as living witnesses of Christ Jesus. This, I believe, is the greatest blessing we can receive. Because everything has already been completed according to the Creator Jehovah God's intention and design before the foundation of the world, though we may have been shocked for a moment, fearful for a moment, or sad for a moment. I pray with all my heart that the miraculous peace that comes from above will completely overwhelm us, and that the traces of this divine joy will continue to increase and deepen in our lives. I pray earnestly. Hallelujah~.’ I replied to this message with “Amen.”

Then, about six days later, yesterday (January 15), during the online Wednesday service, our Pastor Emeritus asked everyone to pray together for those who are suffering. I was kneeling and praying on my bed in my bedroom, and I remembered the sermon by Pastor Gi-sung Yoo that I had listened to a few days earlier in my car on YouTube. His message was about the serious struggles the citizens of Korea are facing, particularly regarding family issues. Even before hearing that, I had been reflecting on how many people are suffering from marital and parenting issues, as I have been conversing with many people through my internet ministry via secret comments on my Naver blog (<https://blog.naver.com/kdicaprio74>) and KakaoTalk (ID: jamesthemonk). Additionally, every year, when I visit mission fields and stop by Korea for about two weeks to meet various people, I cannot help but think about how many are suffering due to problems in their marriages and with their children. Out of the seven couples I have been praying for, three of them have already divorced. And then, once again, the lyrics from the gospel song 'Revival' came to mind: 'May the fire of revival ignite,' 'Holy Spirit, blow upon us ...' And then I remembered the title of this book, “May the Fire of Revival Ignite in Our Families!” So, after meditating on God's Word this morning (Thursday, January 16), I began writing the manuscript for this book. My earnest desire is that the Lord will have mercy on our families, forgive our sins, and heal our families, firmly establishing them as Lord-centered families.

Within the Lord, the Master of our families,

James Kim

(January 16, 2025, remembering and commemorating the 58th birthday of my dear friend, Brother Albert Kim)

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# **Part 1: Repentance**

# Repentance

'Repentance is needed by hypocrites.  
Hypocrisy is the disguise of holiness,  
and a hypocrite or stage actor goes further than a moralist  
by dressing his body in the attire of religion.  
He assumes the form of godliness but denies its power  
(2 Timothy 3:5).  
A hypocrite may look like a beautiful house,  
but every room is dark.  
He is a beautifully gilded rotten pillar,  
hiding the wounds of his own plague  
under the mask of a confession of faith.  
A hypocrite opposes the idea of makeup on the face,  
but applies makeup to his holiness.  
Because he appears good on the outside, he can be truly evil.  
The hypocrite seems to have his eyes fixed on heaven,  
but his heart is full of impure fleshly desires.  
He lives in secret sin, going against his conscience.  
He hears the word but has only ears for it.  
He is zealous in church devotion,  
and others look at him and praise him for it,  
but he neglects his home and private prayers.  
The hypocrite pretends humility,  
but it is only for the sake of success in the world.  
He claims to have faith,  
but rather than using faith as a shield, he uses it as a mask.  
He carries a Bible under his arm, but he does not carry it in his heart.  
Take the lamp of the Word and examine your heart,  
to see if there is anything there worthy of repentance.'

[Thomas Watson's "Repentance"]

## **Repentance should be prioritized, but ...**

**“The Lord, the LORD Almighty, called you on that day to weep and to wail, to tear out your hair and put on sackcloth. But see, there is joy and revelry, slaughtering of cattle and killing of sheep, eating of meat and drinking of wine! ‘Let us eat and drink,’ you say, ‘for tomorrow we die!’” (Isaiah 22:12-13)**

Right now, God is telling us to repent, but we are crying out to God for restoration. The tears we should be shedding right now are tears of repentance, yet we are shedding tears asking for restoration. There is no restoration without repentance, but right now, we are so focused on the need for restoration that we don't even recognize the need for repentance. This shows how much we fail to recognize the sins we are committing against God. We no longer view sin as sin and continue to repeat the same sins before the holy God. Not only against God, but we are also sinning against our family members and church members, yet we do not consider these sins as sins and boldly continue to repeat them. Even then, we are not thinking that we need to repent. To that extent, we have become numb to sin. Meanwhile, we have become very sensitive to God's blessings of restoration and material blessings.

To us, God is commanding today, “Wail, lament, and tear your hair out, put on sackcloth.” In other words, God is commanding us to weep tears of repentance. I long for that moment. I remember the tears of repentance I shed through the powerful work of the Holy Spirit when I heard the message from John 6:1-15 during a college retreat in May 1987. I am praying that the Holy Spirit will allow me to shed those tears of repentance again. The reason is that tears of gratitude or joy without tears of repentance are meaningless. When I think of myself, my family, and the body of Christ, the church, I want to weep tears of repentance before God. However, those tears have dried up. Without those tears, I am barely managing family ministry and pastoral work. At the same time, I dream of a home and church where I am joyful and happy, without considering repentance for my sins. What would God think of this? In today's text, Isaiah 22:13, God commanded the people of Judah to wail, lament, and tear their hair out, and put on sackcloth (v. 12), but they said, 'Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die' (v. 13). How can they say 'Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die' without shedding tears of repentance? Isn't this the attitude of unbelievers who do not believe in the resurrection of Jesus? (1 Corinthians 15:32) Before the flood in Noah's time, “People were eating,

drinking, marrying, and being given in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark. Then the flood came and destroyed them all” (Luke 17:27). How could the people of Judah be reveling and rejoicing instead of shedding tears of repentance? (Isaiah 22:2, Korean Modern Bible) Aren't we doing the same thing now? Isn't the church doing the same thing now? While the Lord clearly tells us, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near” (Matthew 4:17), is the church today focusing on creating a festive atmosphere with worship and events rather than striving for repentance? And so, through the prophet Isaiah, God said to the people of Judah, “Truly, this sin will not be forgiven until you die” (Isaiah 22:14).

It seems that now is not the time to rejoice and be glad. Now is not the time to revel and celebrate. Instead, now is the time for repentance. We must confess and repent for our own sins, the sins of our families, and the sins of our church. We need to repent for not longing for our holy and righteous God and for not honoring the Lord who governs all things in our lives (v. 11). We must also repent for living in the same way as the people of this world, saying, “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die,” and indulging in the pleasures and comforts of this world (v. 13). Now is not the time for laughter; it is the time to shed tears of repentance.

I want to shed tears of repentance again,

James Kim

(July 26, 2017, praying for the repentance of not only my own sins but also the sins of my family and the church I serve)

# **Disasters in the family are never coincidental**

For us Christians who believe in God's sovereignty, there is no such thing as coincidence (Ecclesiastes 9:11). Everything happens within God's sovereignty and providence, and there is nothing that happens by mere chance. I believe that everything takes place according to God's sovereign will. Therefore, personally, I do not accept the phrase "Good luck," meaning "I wish you good fortune." I also believe that 'timing' is such that not only for each of us, but for our families, our churches, and even our nation, a sudden disaster could strike at any time (v. 12). Just like a domino effect, when you touch the first domino with one finger, all the dominoes behind it will fall one by one. Even though it seems that the disasters we face occur in succession and often leave us in shock, not knowing what to do, surely the sovereign God will lead us to repentance and rebuild us, one step at a time, from the foundation. Therefore, the unexpected disastrous events that happen in God's sovereignty are, as God promised, an opportunity to build us up (Ecclesiastes 9:11; Matthew 16:18).

## **Can one claim to live a good faith life while neglecting his family life?**

When we look at Elkanah, a man who went up to Shiloh every year to worship and offer sacrifices to the Almighty God, it seems that he was a good believer. However, when we consider that he especially loved Hannah, who had no children among his two wives, and that whenever he offered sacrifices, he gave the meat of the offerings to Peninnah and her children, but gave Hannah a double portion, it seems that he did not handle his family life well (1 Samuel 1:2-5). Can one truly live a good faith life while neglecting his family life?

**Because of the church tradition  
that taught me that as long as I serve the Lord  
and His church devotedly, I don't need to care for  
(or sacrifice for) my family ...**

Isn't it true that like the Pharisees and scribes who taught that if someone claims to have given to God what should have been given to their parents, they don't need to honor their parents (Matthew 15:5-7), we have made God's word of no effect due to the church tradition that taught that as long as we serve the Lord and His church devotedly, we don't have to care for (or sacrifice for) our family?

# **I pray that God's great grace may allow for quick repentance of the sin of adultery.**

King David, upon hearing that Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, was pregnant with his child, tried to cover up the matter by calling Uriah, who was fighting in the battlefield with his commander Joab and the Israelite army, back to his house, hoping he would go home and sleep with his wife Bathsheba, whom he had been away from for a long time. However, contrary to David's plan, Uriah did not go home. Instead, he spent the night with the palace guards at the palace gates. The reason was that Uriah said, "The army is at war, and the ark of the Lord is with them, and my commander Joab and his men are camping in the open fields. How can I go to my house to eat, drink, and sleep with my wife?" Uriah swore before King David that he would not do such a thing. Despite this, King David invited Uriah to dinner, got him drunk, and tried to make him go home, but Uriah still did not go home. He spent the night with the palace guards at the gate (2 Samuel 11:5-13). The loyal soldier Uriah, although he had been away from his wife Bathsheba for a long time, did not sleep with her, while David, abusing his kingship, committed the sin of adultery with Bathsheba, his neighbor's wife. How many Christians today are committing the same sin of adultery as David did? I pray for God's great grace to allow for quick repentance of the sin of adultery.



# **“You are the man!”**

## **“Then Nathan said to David, “You are the man! ....” (2 Samuel 12:7)**

When I look at myself, there are often things that I realize, even if belatedly. One of them, of course, is God's grace. Only after the fact do I realize God's guidance, help, provision, and so on. Another thing I realize, though belatedly, is that I spoke out of line. Especially after having conversations with someone, when I think about the content later, I realize that the conversation applies to me as well, but I spoke as if I were talking about someone else. For example, after a recent meeting with the presbytery, during dinner, I had a conversation with several pastors. I firmly shared my personal thought that when members of our church transfer from another church, they should at least get permission from their previous pastor, just as when pastors join a new presbytery, they bring a transfer letter. After reflecting on it, I realized that I had only done that once, yet I spoke as if it was something I always did. Furthermore, I regret saying, “You all should do this, it's the right thing,” loud enough for the pastors to hear. I regretted saying it after realizing I hadn't properly reflected on my own actions before speaking. And yet, I feel like I have said things like this countless times. When I realize, even if just a little bit late, I try to reflect on myself and remind myself to speak carefully next time, but I often end up repeating the same mistake.

Today's passage from 2 Samuel 12:7 is a verse we are quite familiar with. It recounts how David, after lying with Bathsheba, the wife of his loyal soldier Uriah (11:4), seemed to show no regard for his sin of adultery. When he heard that Bathsheba had conceived (v. 5), he devised a cunning plan to cover up his sin by making it appear that the child was Uriah's. According to Yoon-sun Park's commentary, David called Uriah back from the battlefield to the palace, urging him to go down to his house and rest, even sending food to him (v. 8, Park). However, the loyal soldier Uriah did not go to his house but slept at the entrance of the palace with his master's servants (v. 9). David then devised a second cunning plan. He brought Uriah into his presence, made him eat and drink, and got him drunk, hoping that in his drunken state, Uriah would go down to his house (v. 13). Why did David go to such lengths, trying twice to send Uriah home? The reason was to make it seem as though the child conceived by Bathsheba was the result of her union with her husband Uriah, not with David. After all, in those days, there were no DNA tests to determine whether the child was David's or Uriah's. How could anyone have discerned whose child it was? However, as we know, Uriah once again did not go down to his house but lay on his bed among the servants of his lord (v. 13). In the end, David deliberately arranged for Uriah to be killed in battle (vv. 14-25). When David received news from the messenger sent by Joab that Uriah had died in the war, he told the messenger to relay this message to Joab: "Do not

let this upset you; the sword devours one as well as another..." (v. 25). How could David intentionally and purposefully have one of his loyal soldiers killed and then say, "The sword devours one as well as another"? How could he speak so casually about a life he had taken? David's actions were evil in the eyes of the Lord (v. 27), so God sent the prophet Nathan to confront David with a parable about a rich man and a poor man in a city, exposing David's sin of taking Uriah's wife (12:1-4). At that time, David, filled with anger, declared to Nathan, "As surely as the Lord lives, the man who did this deserves to die!" (v. 5). In his efforts to conceal his sin upon sin, it seems David had even suppressed his own conscience to the point that he failed to recognize that he himself was the guilty man who deserved judgment. At that moment, the prophet Nathan rebuked David directly, saying, "You are the man ..." (v. 7). What a shocking rebuke this must have been! David surely did not think of himself as the one deserving death, yet Nathan's words, "You are the man," must have stunned him. When we fail to recognize our actions as sinful, and the holy God reveals them for what they are, doesn't our conscience experience a similar shock? The one who truly deserves to die is me, yet I convince myself that it must be someone else. How blind is such ignorance of oneself! Without knowing his own sin or even his own standing, David, in his anger, declared, "The man who did this deserves to die." What do you think of such a statement, made out of the indignation of a man oblivious to his own guilt?

In May, I typically preach about family. On one occasion, during a sermon for Family Month, a church member came up to me afterward and said, "That was a message my wife really needed to hear." At that time, the focus of my message was likely on the passage, "Wives, submit to your husbands." I often find myself doing something similar. While listening to God's Word, instead of receiving it as His voice speaking directly to me, I think, "This is a message so-and-so needs to hear." Clearly, God was addressing me through His Word, but I perceived it as a message intended for someone else. This is especially true when I preach messages that confront sin. The Word of God, described as the sword of the Spirit, should pierce my own heart like a dagger. However, instead of letting its blade strike deeply into my heart, I subconsciously direct its cutting edge toward others, thinking, "This is a message for them, not me." What is the problem here? It is the result of failing to diligently examine myself in the holy mirror of God's Word. When I neglect self-reflection and self-examination, I gradually stop recognizing sin as sin. Instead of confessing, "It is my sin," I take the posture of, "It is that person's sin," as I listen to God's voice. Even though I am the one who committed the sin, I perceive it as someone else's wrongdoing. How prideful and sinful is such an attitude! When we sin and then try to cover it up, it seems that even the abundant grace God has given us becomes obscured in our hearts. In that prideful state, we fail to hear God's rebuke meant for us. Covering up sin not only silences our conscience but also conceals grace and stops up our ears. How tragic it is to live in such a way! This is not how we are meant to live...

Relying on the sword of the Spirit,

James Kim

(With a heart that longs for the grace to honestly confess exposed sins and to truly repent)

## **How important is the role of the father as the head of the household?**

Tamar, who had been raped by her half-brother Amnon, was living desolately in her brother Absalom's house. During that time, Absalom harbored hatred toward Amnon for disgracing his sister Tamar and refused to speak to him at all (2 Samuel 13:20, 22). Two years later (v. 23), Absalom killed Amnon (v. 29). During those two years, how deeply must Absalom have nurtured his hatred and sharpened his sword of vengeance against Amnon for violating his sister? Meanwhile, their father, David, upon hearing all that Amnon had done to Tamar, was furious (v. 21). Yet the Scripture does not record that David, as a father, ever rebuked or disciplined his foolish son Amnon in love. Nor does it mention David visiting or comforting his desolate daughter Tamar, who was living in Absalom's house. Perhaps David, as the king of Israel, was so consumed with the affairs of the nation that he had no time to tend to the needs of his family.

## **Even when we encounter misfortunes in the family ...**

Even when we encounter misfortunes in the family, we must recognize our pride, repent, and humble ourselves like little children to enter the kingdom of heaven (Ref: Matthew 18:7-9). Furthermore, with a humble heart, we must heed Jesus' teaching to avoid looking down on "even one of these little ones." The reason is that "their angels in heaven always see the face of My [Jesus'] Father in heaven" (Ref: v. 10, Korean Modern Bible).

# **When I apply this message to my family and to Victory Presbyterian Church, which I serve ...**

The amazing work of God is seen in how He led the disobedient prophet Jonah to pray from within the belly of a great fish. When the word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time, God enabled him to obey. Jonah proclaimed, "Forty more days and Nineveh will be overthrown"(Jonah 3:4) and the people of Nineveh believed God. They fasted, even forbidding their livestock from drinking water. Ultimately, from the king of Nineveh down to every person, they turned from their wicked ways and sincerely repented (vv. 5-9). When I apply this passage to my family and to Victory Presbyterian Church, which I serve, I deeply desire to experience God's incredible work of repentance in my life first as the head of my household and as the pastor of the Lord's church, Victory Presbyterian Church. I pray that I may continually receive and hear God's Word, which is the sword of the Spirit (Ephesians 6:17) and like a hammer and fire (Jeremiah 23:29). Through the powerful work of the indwelling Holy Spirit, I long to be continually convicted in my conscience (Ref: 1 Samuel 24:5; 2 Samuel 24:10; Acts 2:37), to have my hardened heart broken, and my cold heart melted. As a result, I hope to sincerely repent of my sins and lead my family and church to continually turn away from all sin.

# **If we have truly encountered Jesus, we are not destroyers of families or churches, but builders of families and churches.**

Saul, who once violently went from house to house, dragging both men and women and imprisoning all who believed (Acts 5:42), met the resurrected and ascended Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus, saw Him sitting at the right hand of God, and was converted and received a mission (9:3-7). From that moment on, he went from house to house, proclaiming that all must repent, return to God, and believe in our Lord Jesus Christ, thus building the Lord's church through his ministry (20:20-21). If we have truly encountered God's Son, Jesus Christ, we are not destroyers of families or churches but builders of families and churches. We must not only proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ with our lips but also live in a manner worthy of the gospel (Philippians 1:27), thereby building both our families and the church.

## **Marital relationship**

In a marriage, even the smallest things can lead to big arguments. As a result, the relationship can become distanced. While living together physically, the hearts of the couple may have already drifted so far apart that it's almost beyond measure. Therefore, couples must learn how to fight well, to ensure that a small spark doesn't turn into a raging fire. Especially, we must be cautious not to argue because of third parties such as children or parents. What matters most is what happens after the fight. We must continue to learn through failure in reconciliation. We need to calm our anger and approach the Lord in prayer. When we pray, the finger we point at our spouse must turn back toward ourselves. After repenting, confessing, and seeking forgiveness, we should go to our spouse to admit our wrongs and ask for forgiveness. I believe the responsibility of husbands is especially weighty.

# Conflict and crisis in marital relationships

Through the encounters I had as part of the "2024 Internet Ministry to Korea," and reflecting on the meetings with brothers and sisters in Christ who are facing crises in their marital relationships, I want to take this opportunity to organize and express my thoughts in writing, considering how God has led those moments:

1. It seems that conflict and disputes are unavoidable in marital relationships. Therefore, rather than trying to avoid them or striving to show others that we, as a couple, have no conflict or disputes, I believe it is far better to focus on how to fight and argue with wisdom that God provides. We should aim to handle marital conflict with effort and intention, trusting in God's guidance.
  - a. My spouse and I had our first fight on our honeymoon. Until then, we had been in a long-distance relationship for about six months, introduced through matchmaking, and had never had any conflicts or arguments. After getting married, however, we faced countless conflicts and disputes over the course of about 20 years. I tried to hide our marital conflicts and disputes, not wanting to show them in front of our children or others, but it was in vain. Eventually, through a pastor, I learned about the positive aspects of marital conflict. From that point, I became committed to learning not how to avoid or hide conflicts, but how to fight well in marriage.
  - b. When I think of the brothers and sisters in Christ I met through the "Internet Ministry to Korea" who shared a little about their marital relationships, at least they acknowledged their marital conflicts. Furthermore, those who opened their hearts and shared with me were experiencing a marital crisis and were desperately in need of help. These brothers and sisters who were going through such a marital crisis seemed to be in a state of cold war, where they no longer argued with each other. Such deep marital conflicts have reached a point where, beyond trying to figure out how to fight well, it is necessary to humbly and seriously reflect before God on how the conflict escalated to this extent and to look back at oneself (and even more so than at the spouse).
2. I believe that marital conflict and disputes can be a good opportunity for a husband and wife to get to know each other more deeply.
  - a. In our case, about 22 years ago when we were living in Korea, we had a major fight over our beloved first son, Dillon. Through that fight, God allowed me to get to know my wife more deeply. My wife didn't want Dillon to live in the same way she had—always giving in—and I, on the other hand,

wanted Dillon to live that way because that's how I had been taught by my parents. We had a big argument because of this. However, during that time, I began to understand, even if just a little, that my wife, as the eldest daughter, didn't want Dillon to live the way she did, always yielding to others.

- b. Among the brothers and sisters I met through the "Internet Ministry to Korea," most of those who were going through marital conflict and crisis seemed to focus on their spouse's faults or the unreasonable demands they felt were being placed on them, rather than reflecting on the reasons for their own fighting. Perhaps the reason for this is that the wounds they have received from their spouse are so deep. A marital relationship that focuses on one's own wounds and the faults of the other spouse does not seem capable of using the crisis as an opportunity to get to know each other better with God's help.
3. I believe that the husband's resignation as the head of the household can maximize marital conflict and bring a crisis to the marriage.
    - a. Among the brothers and sisters I met through the "Internet Ministry to Korea," there were some whose husbands' unexpected resignations caused significant emotional distress and heaviness for them. In addition to these personal struggles, I realized that financial difficulties and problems could trigger marital conflict and bring about a crisis in marriage.
    - b. Especially when marital conflict arises due to financial issues, I believe there is a great risk of past unresolved issues and wounds in the marriage being expressed and brought to the surface. Therefore, even if the couple's relationship appeared to be fine and without major issues when the financial pressures were not severe, I realized that when the husband faces financial difficulties due to his resignation, the relationship could drastically deteriorate. In particular, I thought that during such times, the temptations of Satan could lead not only to sin against God but also to sin against the wife. As a result, I felt that the marital relationship could worsen significantly under these circumstances.
4. I believe that as the head of the household, the husband should take responsibility for the marital crisis and repent before God.
    - a. In a book I read long ago titled "Reformed Marriage," the author Douglas Wilson mentions that his presupposition during countless marital counseling sessions is that it is the husband's responsibility. I have never forgotten this point, and I fully agree with it. I believe that in my own marriage, all the conflicts, arguments, and fights fall under my responsibility as the husband. Even though there may have been many instances when I thought my wife was wrong, I believe it was my responsibility as a husband, failing to properly "nurture" my wife according to God's word (Ephesians 5:29).

Therefore, I take responsibility for all the issues in our marriage. However, despite knowing this, I often tried to avoid responsibility, blaming my wife and sinning against both God and her. Even though I may not fully realize all the sins I have committed in my marriage, I know in my head that I must repent before God, though in my heart, I struggle to do so. I have come to understand that without God's grace, I cannot repent on my own. Therefore, I pray that God may grant me the grace of repentance.

- b. During the "Internet Ministry to Korea" this time, I think for the first time in my life, I said directly to a brother in Christ, "If you do not break and repent before God, there is no hope for this family." I was surprised at myself for saying that. I never thought I would be the type of person who could say such things to anyone, and I believed that I didn't have the qualifications to say such things. However, when I reflect on why I said that to the brother, I believe it was God's love for that brother and his family that prompted me to speak in that way. Especially, my heart felt desperate when I thought about that brother's family. I had no idea that their marital situation was that serious, but when I learned a little about it through that brother, my heart broke, and I wept. Then, when I met with the brother's wife three times (the last meeting was supposed to be with their eldest daughter one-on-one, but she wasn't comfortable meeting me alone, so her mother came along), I listened intently to what she said, and my heart ached even more. That is why I felt even more desperate. So, I spoke to that brother and went to his house at 10:40 p.m. Then, in front of his wife, I spoke to him in that way. Even now, as I write this, thinking about that brother and sister, I am only looking to the Lord, longing for His great mercy, compassion, and the grace of salvation.
5. When marital conflicts escalate and a crisis arises in the marriage, I believe the couple should seek help from a third party.
    - a. Based on the marriage books I read a long time ago, when I wrote a pre-marital counseling script, one of the last methods for resolving marital conflicts was to seek help from a third party. The third party here refers mainly to professional marriage counselors.
    - b. However, one of the individuals who contacted me through KakaoTalk during the "Internet Ministry to Korea" mentioned that even though the couple had met with a marriage counselor, there was no significant effect. When I heard that, I thought about how desperate the couple must have been to seek help from a marriage counselor, and yet still found no results, leading them to reach out to someone like me—who is not an expert, but a pastor—for courage. My heart broke as I thought about their desperation. I made an effort to meet with the couple, but due to unavoidable circumstances, I wasn't able to meet them and eventually returned to the U.S. Even now, as I think about them, I am praying to God and writing this with that same heart. And through this, I want to



express my thoughts: "Don't give up. The Lord will not give up. The Lord is our hope. Just as now, continue not to give up and do your best."

6. No matter how hopeless a couple may seem or how they appear to be in the darkest, most intense darkness, even in such extreme marital crises, I believe that the Lord will surely pour out and reveal His amazing and great saving love.
  - a. The biggest crisis in our marriage, in my opinion, was when I suggested to my wife, early in our marriage, that we get a divorce. Of course, I deeply regret saying that to my beloved wife now, but at that time, I was so angry with her that I seriously wanted a divorce. I can't clearly remember why I was that angry, but I think I had been deeply hurt by her. At that time, I didn't know how to communicate with my wife the way I do now. As a young person, I was someone who, with a lack of maturity, expressed extreme thoughts directly to my wife. Even after that, I revealed many flaws and shortcomings in my character in our marriage. Therefore, I believe there is no relationship where I can so openly expose my weaknesses, deficiencies, foolishness, and faults as in my marriage. As I continued to grow in our relationship, a book I read on our 10th wedding anniversary became, in some ways, a turning point for our marriage. The title of that book is "Love & Respect: The Love She Most Desires, The Respect He Desperately Needs" by Emerson Eggerichs. I still vividly remember it. One day, on our 10th wedding anniversary, after having dinner with my wife, we spent time asking each other the questions at the end of each chapter (Chapter 6 is for the husband to read, and the remaining 6 chapters are for the wife). We took turns discussing each question, and that time became, at least for me, a great help and a beneficial experience as a husband. Another unforgettable event in our 27 years of marriage is the death of our first child, Charis. During that time, I experienced the amazing and overwhelming love of the Lord, as described in Psalms 63:3, and I will never forget it. Although that was the greatest crisis we faced, the death of our first child led us to experience the Lord's saving love, which became a major steppingstone for the growth of our marriage.
  - b. As I think about the beloved brothers and sisters in Christ who are currently going through marital crises, I believe that only the Lord can rescue them from their crisis and, even in the midst of such a great crisis, He is the God who clearly shows His saving love. The Lord, who raised Lazarus from the dead, is the same God who has given life to us, who were spiritually dead, by bringing us to life again (being born again). Therefore, I believe that even a marriage relationship that seems dead can be revived by our Lord, who is the Lord of the resurrection. I earnestly pray that our Lord will extend His great grace of salvation to the brothers and sisters whom He loves most in their marital crises, transforming their hearts first, and through that, bringing a great change in their marital relationship.

# Concerning extramarital affairs

This morning, after having a conversation with a sister and praying together, I would like to write down my thoughts about extramarital affairs, though I am lacking in wisdom. Perhaps it may be of some help.

First, when I think of "extramarital affair," two people come to mind, particularly two men. These two men are currently in prison. One man, despite having a wife and children, is in prison for raping young women. The other man, believing his wife was unfaithful, killed the man she was allegedly involved with by shooting him, and has been in prison for many years. The reason I think of these two men is because I have some connection with their wives. Both women have divorced their husbands and are now raising their children on their own. In addition to these two, I also think of two other individuals. One is a woman with four children, whose husband committed extramarital marital, and although she considered divorce, she ultimately stayed with him, as far as I know. The other woman is, in my opinion, an example among the many women I've encountered who had unfaithful husbands. The reason I think of her this way is that when her husband was unfaithful, she did not agree to his request for a divorce, but instead turned to God, praying and pleading for her husband to repent. Eventually, he did, and they are now living a healthy marital life together. I have prayed and talked with her from the beginning of her husband's extramarital affair, and her story is the first one I have seen where God truly brought repentance and restoration to the marriage. It is truly remarkable. With a heart longing for the grace of marital restoration, I would like to share my personal thoughts on extramarital affairs.

1. Satan wants to turn our homes into hell. Therefore, Satan is causing us to hate each other, following the commandments of hell (Genesis 37:5; Deuteronomy 22:13; Matthew 24:10; 1 John 2:9). In the growing hatred toward our spouse, Satan targets the cracks in our marital relationship (Ref: Nehemiah 4:3, "parats" in Hebrew meaning "to break" due to a "breach" in a wall; 6:1) and causes us to be attracted to another person, leading us to lust after them through the lust of the eyes and the lust of the flesh (1 John 2:16). Eventually, this leads to extramarital affairs. Satan's goal is to destroy and ruin our family, preventing it from becoming a heavenly home, and instead turning it into a hellish one.
2. A foolish husband who commits adultery does not love his wife alone (Proverbs 5:15). To be more specific, he commits adultery because he cannot make his wife happy and does not enjoy being with her (v. 18). If he truly cherished his wife as lovely and beautiful, was always satisfied with her embrace, and constantly longed for her love (v. 19), he would never give his affection to another woman, embrace someone else's wife, or father children outside of his marriage (vv. 16, 20).

3. A foolish husband who commits adultery, driven by greed, not only fails to find satisfaction in his wife's embrace (v. 19) but also begins to covet other women beyond what is appropriate. As a result, he is led by the lust of his eyes and starts to look at women other than his wife. His ears begin to listen to them. However, no matter how many women he sees and listens to, his eyes remain unsatisfied (Ecclesiastes 1:8). Therefore, Satan entices him with lewdness and the lust of the flesh, leading him to sin (2 Peter 2:18). Satan causes him to covet another woman. This greed knows no bounds (Isaiah 56:11). Thus, greed prevents him from finding satisfaction in his wife (Proverbs 5:19) and instead makes him desire his neighbor's wife (Exodus 20:17).
4. The foolish husband who commits adultery refuses to forgive his wife in his heart (Ref: Colossians 3:13).
5. When a couple fails to fulfill their sexual duties and refuses each other's body, thus not having a normal sexual relationship, the husband is at great risk of getting close to another woman, and the wife to another man. If they then fail to resist the sexual temptations toward the opposite sex, Satan will tempt them, leading them to eventually commit adultery (1 Corinthians 7:1-5).
6. Marriage counselor M. Gary Newman conducted a research study on 200 men (both those who cheat and those who do not) to understand why men cheat, and here are the findings (Internet): 48% of men reported that they cheat because they do not feel emotional or mental love from their partner (wife/lover). We often think that the biggest reason men cheat is the lack of physical intimacy with their wives, but only about 8% of men agreed with this. Men also desire emotional and mental closeness from their wives, such as hearing "Honey, thank you" or "Honey, I love you," rather than physical affection. However, the difference between men and women is that men often struggle to express these emotions. 77% of men report knowing someone in their circle of friends or acquaintances who has cheated. 40% of men say they meet their affair partners at work. Most men cheat with women they meet at work, and the reason is that they receive compliments and respect from female colleagues or younger women at the workplace. In other words, men are drawn to women who acknowledge and recognize them.
7. When we men abandon our wives and become interested in other women, eventually leading to extramarital affairs, we can only experience the consequences of our sinful choices. The discipline that follows includes loss of honor (Proverbs 5:9), loss of time (v. 9), loss of wealth (v. 10), loss of health (v. 11), and suffering from the pain of conscience (vv. 12-14).
8. To avoid entering into an affair, we must not get close to or seek the company of anyone other than our spouse (Proverbs 5:8), especially those who might try to come between us in our relationship. We must be very cautious of covetousness (Exodus 20:17). If we have greed in our hearts, we will not be satisfied with our spouse's embrace (Proverbs 5:19), but will look toward another person (Ecclesiastes 1:8), think

about them, and listen to their words. We must live with mutual forgiveness (Colossians 3:13). Just as the Lord forgives us, we must forgive and tolerate our spouses. If we refuse to forgive and allow grievances to accumulate without resolution, our relationship will deteriorate, and eventually, we will likely turn our attention to someone else. We must not choose the easier path of ignoring or allowing unresolved problems and conflicts to fester, but instead make a determined effort to resolve them in the Lord.

# **As I am watching a Korean drama called 'The Qualification of a Wife' ...**

I've been watching a drama called 'The Qualifications of a Wife' recently. The title is '아내의 자격' (The Qualifications of a Wife), but I keep reading it as '아내의 저격' (The Sniping of a Wife) which sounds similar in Korean. Haha. Rather than sharing my thoughts about the drama itself, I'd like to reflect on why, as a husband, I feel the need for my wife's 'sniping' (?) — a bit of a personal thought.

I've mentioned in my seminary alumni pastors' group chat (with 18 members) that my wife is a 'sniper,' and there's a reason for this:

## **The first reason is that I believe her 'sniping' is incredibly accurate in my opinion.**

For example, a few years ago, I asked my wife for her evaluation of my sermon, and I still remember her response. She told me that she thought it would be better if I preached my Sunday sermon at the Wednesday prayer meeting and preached my Wednesday prayer meeting sermon on Sunday. Haha. I was quite surprised by that answer. The reason is that I felt she had made an accurate diagnosis. The reason I thought so is that at the time, I was preaching from the book of Proverbs at the Wednesday prayer meeting, and my wife felt it would be better if I preached that sermon on Sunday instead. I couldn't disagree with her, and I also couldn't disagree with her suggestion of preaching the Sunday sermon at the Wednesday prayer meeting because, as she said, the people who attend the Wednesday prayer meeting are generally more committed and dedicated, so I thought it would be easier for them to digest the Sunday sermon. But I was doing the opposite. I thought I needed to preach more simply and for a wider audience on Sunday, while preaching at the Wednesday prayer meeting in a way that suited the level of the committed attendees. I couldn't disagree with my wife's point of view on this. After hearing her answer, I couldn't help but agree, and that's why I was often surprised by the accuracy of my wife's 'sniping.' Haha. (Since then, I don't remember asking my wife how my sermon went on any given day. Haha. I think the reason is that, rather than being afraid of her accurate diagnosis, I wanted to avoid facing my own shortcomings that I couldn't fix, even though I knew about them).

**The second reason is that my wife's 'sniping,' with its high accuracy, pricks my conscience.**

And although it's not easy at the moment, it is ultimately beneficial for me because it challenges me. For example, I remember when we were newly married, and as my wife got to know me, there were times when she 'sniped' at aspects of my faith that resembled the Pharisee-like attitude. Of course, in the moment of being 'sniped' at, I didn't want to admit it, I wanted to deny it, and I resisted accepting it. But as I reflect on it now, I realize that, instead of genuinely repenting and striving to become a true follower of Jesus, becoming more like Him in my faith and life, I didn't do that at the time. I didn't truly repent. It was only through my wife's 'sniping' that the hypocrisy within me was brought to light, but I didn't take it seriously enough to repent.

**The third reason is that the Lord is shaping me through the high accuracy of my beloved wife's loving 'sniping.'**

Just as the Lord is the potter, shaping me—a vessel full of flaws and imperfections, needing to be refined—one of the purposes for which He gave me such a beloved wife is to use her 'sniping' to shape me, to refine me, and to help me become more like Jesus. I believe this is a great grace, a work, and a love that He is bestowing upon me.

That's why, as I watch this drama called 'The Qualifications of a Wife,' I keep reading the title as 'The Sniping of a Wife.' Haha.



## **From my experience of taking the subway in the opposite direction and making a U-Turn ...**

I received a lesson through this experience. The lessons are: (1) When I am walking down the wrong path (in the opposite direction from my destination), I should be cautious of believing it is the right path, or of being certain, as it is very dangerous; (2) I may not recognize that the path is wrong; (3) The Lord can use my spouse or others as instruments to make me realize that I am on the wrong path; (4) What matters is turning around (repenting) when I realize it; (5) However, I don't have the ability to repent on my own; (6) Only the Lord can make me repent; (7) I must bear the fruit of repentance. The Lord has applied these lessons to our marriage as well. For example, even though it's me, the husband, who is doing something wrong, I might think (and even be certain) that my wife is the one at fault. Yet, I may not recognize that I am the problem and that I am wrong. This is something the Lord helps me realize through my wife, but I often do not listen to her words. Therefore, I believe the realization that the Lord gives is a great grace. And in that realization, to acknowledge and confess my wrongs to God and to my wife is a great grace from God. Thus, I long for this grace from God. And with God's grace, I want to repent and bear the fruit of repentance. Therefore, I want our marriage to be centered more and more on the Lord, so that we can bring glory to God.

# The existence of a father

God's work is fascinating. This coming Sunday (June 16th) is Father's Day here in the United States. So, this Saturday afternoon, I plan to have dinner with my wife, Dillon, probably his fiancée Jessica, and our youngest, Karis, at our home. However, today (Thursday), I met with two brothers and a sister in Christ for lunch and coffee, and the three of us ended up talking about our fathers. It was undoubtedly a meeting that God had allowed, in His sovereignty, at the right time. And after knowing each other for about 37 years, it seems this is the first time we've shared such honest thoughts about our fathers. So, as I reflect, I'd like to think about the lesson or message that the Lord might be giving me through today's meeting:

1. It was a conversation that made me reflect once again on how important a father's role is for his children. So, as the father of my beloved Dillon, Yeri, and Karis, I want to take this opportunity, through the grace of today's meeting, to reflect once again on how I should love each of them with God's love and to learn the lessons or messages He is teaching me.
2. One of the small insights the Lord has already given me through my internet ministry is that, from the perspective of daughters, if they have been deeply wounded by their fathers, it can be very difficult for them to meet a man and get married, carrying that hurt with them. However, today, the sister in Christ I met, although I don't know what kind of wound she received from her father, shared with me for the first time that the reason she hasn't married is for preventive reasons. What I understood from that was that when I met her last year, she told me she had no affection for her father, but today, she specifically explained how much her father's actions had hurt her, her siblings, and especially her mother. She said that because of the wounds she received from her father, she was afraid that if she met a man, married, and had children, her children would end up like her, and that was why, in a preventive way, she had decided not to marry. 😞
3. Nevertheless, I asked her, "Have you forgiven your father?" She replied that she had forgiven him and now makes side dishes for him and serves him, but in her heart, there is bitterness and resentment. I believe that her forgiveness of her father, who is over 90 years old, is a great grace. And I am proud of her. She said that she forgave her father because he is family. So, I also told her and the brother that "I too had bitterness towards my father, but I have forgiven him," even though my father never asked for my forgiveness.



4. However, the other brother who was listening to these words did not say that he had forgiven his father (perhaps he couldn't?). Instead, he said that it was fortunate that he is now living apart from his father (and his mother is also living apart from his father). As I reflect on this, I am reminded of some of the honest words that this brother had shared with his father:
  - a. Have I, perhaps, taught my three children a strict (?) religious life like a Pharisee, showing my own self-righteousness, and am I still showing that now? And have I perhaps taught them a legalistic religious life?
  - b. I must have made my children angry at some point—have I asked for their forgiveness?
  - c. Even if a child is over 50 years old, I don't think it is right for a father to not trust his child and, under the guise of love, try to control everything, even telling them what to wear. Therefore, I have learned the lesson that, because I trust God more, I should trust my three children more as well.
  
5. As I briefly reflect again on the existence of a "father," I ask myself, "What kind of father am I to my three children?" My earnest wish is that I would become more and more filled with the fruit of the Holy Spirit, which is love, so that I can be used as a channel or instrument of the Lord's love to love my three children with God's love. And even though I am full of flaws, sins, and weaknesses, I pray that the Lord will work through me, sanctifying me through the Holy Spirit, making me more like Jesus. I pray that when Dillon, Yeri, and Karis remember me after I pass away, they will think of the image of Jesus in me, and that they will feel, "Dad loved me with the love of Jesus."

# My great mistake

**July 21, 2024, Sunday morning.**

Today, I have to give my sixth sermon under the title "Husbands, Love Your Wives" ["Husbands, Love Your Wives and Do Not Be Harsh with Them" (Colossians 3:19)]. But I feel a pang of conscience. The reason is that, last Monday, while driving to the funeral service for my beloved cousin, Christie, I remembered a conversation I had with my beloved daughter Yeri in the car. At that time, I asked Yeri, "If you have any bitterness or resentment toward me, please let me know." I didn't plan to ask her this question, but my beloved son Dillon had already told me and my wife, "I don't have bitterness toward you guys" (though as parents, we don't deserve such grace, Dillon showed us grace). And my beloved youngest daughter, Karis, also responded during Mother's Day dinner with my wife, when I asked her the same thing, "If you have any bitterness or resentment toward me, please let me know." She didn't seem to have anything in particular to say, so I thought I would only need to ask Yeri. But Yeri honestly told me that she had some bitterness, not just toward me but probably toward my wife as well. I was thankful to Yeri for her honesty. So, I apologized to Yeri, saying, "I'm sorry." But what shocked me wasn't that she had bitterness toward us (her parents), but the reason she explained why she had that bitterness. According to her, she didn't like it when mom and dad fought and then each of us separately spoke negatively about the other to her. 😞 Hearing this, I seriously realized that I had made a big mistake. Why did I, after arguing with my wife in the past, later speak negatively about her to Yeri...? I felt like I had acted foolishly. 😞 I foolishly involved my children in our marital disputes. This is where I went terribly wrong. What I had always believed and emphasized was that we should never involve third parties, such as our children or our parents or in-laws, in marital conflicts, but after a fight with my wife, I ended up involving Dillon, Yeri, and Karis in our relationship. 😞😞 I hadn't realized this until last Monday when, in the car, Yeri openly shared why she had bitterness toward me and my wife in the past. That's when I became aware of it. 😞 Am I really this foolish...? I feel so frustrated. So, after hearing Yeri's words, I was somewhat shocked, but I'm thankful that Yeri was honest with me, as it helped me recognize my great mistake, even if just a little. I apologized to her once again. In response, Yeri said that she no longer feels that way, even though she did in the past. She mentioned that after talking with her friends, she had heard a lot about conflicts and arguments in their parents' marriages. Whether it was because Yeri had matured or because of both factors, she told me that she no longer has bitterness toward me and my wife. Is this not grace that I, as a father, receive through my children? I am grateful.

# Forgiveness

**“The cost of forgiveness is great, but the harvest of forgiveness is a beautiful thing ....” [Paul David Tripp, “What did you Expect?”]**

Forgiveness is hard. I know in my head that I should forgive my spouse for the wrongs she has done to me, but in my heart, I just can't forgive her. And honestly, there are times when I don't even want to forgive her. Especially when I think about how she has treated me, I get so angry, and sometimes I even feel like I want to do the same thing to her. Yet, I hold myself back. The Bible says, “Love is patient” (1 Corinthians 13:4), so I endure and keep enduring. But still, she continues to hurt my heart, again and again. And yet, she doesn't ask for my forgiveness. No, it seems like she doesn't even feel the need to ask for forgiveness. Maybe she doesn't even realize that she has hurt me and caused me pain. Perhaps that's why she acts as if nothing has happened. I find her attitude so unbearable. And because of that, I refuse to forgive her.

Husbands and wives, as they live together, wrong each other countless times. In fact, couples inevitably wrong each other countless times. Of course, the two people have different personalities, come from different backgrounds, and have been influenced by their parents in different ways, etc., which leads to impulses and conflicts, causing them to wrong each other. However, the root cause is that two sinners met, got married, and established a family. Think about it. Two sinners met, got married, and formed a family—how could they avoid wronging each other? We not only wrong each other but also sin against each other countless times. The problem is that even after committing all these wrongs and sins, we are not forgiving each other well. Even when we forgive, we do not forgive as much as we wronged and sinned against each other. This shows that we are slow to forgive. We also refuse to forgive to that extent. Because we are not living lives where we forgive each other, there are wounds and bitterness in our hearts. These wounds and bitterness prevent us from fully loving our spouses. For example, the wounds and bitterness in our hearts make us focus more on the wrongs we are doing to each other rather than the good we could be doing for each other. And the more we focus on these wrongs, the more we judge each other, and we even end up criticizing and condemning each other. What we fail to recognize here is that when we judge, criticize, and condemn each other, we are revealing our “self-righteousness” to one another. For example, a husband who refuses to forgive his wife for wronging him and instead acts out of the wounds and bitterness in his heart will judge and criticize her

(even if only in his heart) whenever she makes a mistake, condemning her. By doing so, he is essentially saying to his wife, "You are wrong, and I am right." Meanwhile, he may even be seeking to be recognized by God as being in the right. As a result, he becomes prideful, unable to see the sin he's committing before God, and feels no need to seek forgiveness from God. What is the sin he is committing before God? It is the sin of not forgiving his wife. And yet, he continues to see her mistakes and sins, judging, pointing them out, criticizing, and even condemning her (even in his heart). What does this look like in the eyes of God? And how does this affect the wife who is being judged, criticized, and condemned by her husband? She will never feel loved by him. She will certainly be wounded by him. And she will not only fail to forgive him but may also feel that she cannot. What happens when a couple fails to forgive each other and continues to live this way? Their hearts will inevitably be filled with wounds and bitterness. Eventually, they will explode at each other, and their marriage will inevitably fall apart. The Bible says: "But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins" (Matthew 6:15). When spouses wrong each other, they must forgive one another. The person who has wronged their spouse should not just say, "I'm sorry," but also be able to say, "I was wrong." They should specifically acknowledge what they did wrong and how they hurt their spouse. Furthermore, they must show a commitment to not making the same mistake again in the future. However, forgiving is not easy. The reason is that the nature of our old self is selfish, and we believe that our spouse's wrongs are greater and more numerous than our own. Moreover, our instinct is to expect and hope that our spouse will forgive us, rather than the other way around. Fighting and overcoming these sinful, selfish instincts within ourselves in order to forgive our spouse is no small task. Forgiving my spouse requires a great personal cost. I must deny myself and sacrifice myself (Mark 8:34). But when I forgive my spouse at such a great cost, the harvest of that forgiveness is beautiful. When my spouse, at their own cost, asks for forgiveness, I must forgive her. And when I forgive, I must do so "just as in Christ God forgave you" (Ephesians 4:32). Just as a sinner like me, who has committed countless sins against the holy God, was forgiven by God in Jesus Christ, and continues to be forgiven, I too must forgive my spouse. Moreover, I must accept them as they are and love them with God's love. When I do this, I can pray to the Lord in this way: "Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us ..." (Luke 11:4).

As I ask for forgiveness from God, I ask for forgiveness from you, my beloved.

James Kim

(July 29, 2014, Just as God forgave a sinner like me, I forgive you.)

# Forgiving your spouse (1)

**“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you” (Ephesians 4:32).**

“Forgiveness is hard. I know in my mind that I should forgive my spouse for the wrongs they’ve done to me, but in my heart, I cannot forgive. And honestly, there are times when I don’t even want to forgive her. Especially when I think about how she has treated me, I get so angry, and at times, I even feel like I want to do the same to her. Yet, I endure. The Bible says, 'Love is patient' (1 Corinthians 13:4), so I endure, again and again. But that person continues to hurt my heart. And yet, they don’t ask for forgiveness. No, it seems like they don’t even feel the need to ask for forgiveness. Perhaps she doesn’t even realize that she has hurt my heart. That might be why she speaks and acts as if nothing ever happened. I find her behavior so repulsive and unbearable. And so, I don’t want to forgive.”

When a couple lives together, they make countless mistakes toward each other. No, couples cannot help but make countless mistakes toward each other. The reason is that their personalities are different, their backgrounds are different, and the influences they received from their parents are different, which can lead to impulses and conflicts, causing them to wrong each other. However, the fundamental reason is that two sinners have come together, married, and formed a family. Think about it: How can two sinners who come together and form a family not wrong each other? We not only wrong each other, but there are countless times when we sin against one another. The problem is that even after committing countless wrongs and sins against each other, we do not forgive each other well. Even when we forgive, we do not do so as much as we should, considering how much we have wronged and sinned against one another. We are slow to forgive and even refuse to forgive. Because we are not living a life of forgiveness toward each other, there are wounds and bitterness in our hearts. These wounds and bitterness prevent us from loving our spouses fully.

## Forgiving your spouse (2)

**“For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins” (Matthew 6:14-15).**

The wounds and bitterness in our hearts prevent us from seeing the good we are doing for each other and cause us to focus only on the wrongs we are committing toward each other. The more we focus on these wrongs, the more we judge each other, and even criticize and condemn one another. There is something we fail to realize here: when we judge, criticize, and condemn each other, we are presenting our "self-righteousness" to one another. For example, when a spouse who has been wronged and hurt by their partner refuses to forgive them but instead treats them with bitterness and wounds in their heart, they end up judging, criticizing, and even condemning them (even in their heart) whenever their spouse makes a mistake, essentially saying, "You are wrong, and I am right." At the same time, they seek validation before God, hoping to be seen as right. As a result, they become arrogant and fail to realize the sin they are committing before God? It is the sin of not forgiving their spouse. Yet, they continue to judge, point out, criticize, and even condemn their spouse (even in their hearts), so how does this look before God? And how does the spouse receiving this judgment, criticism, and condemnation feel? They will feel unloved and hurt by their partner. And because of that hurt, they will not only refuse to forgive but may feel unable to forgive. What happens when couples do not forgive each other? Their hearts will continue to fill with wounds and bitterness, and eventually, they will explode toward one another, leading to the destruction of their marriage.

## Forgiving your spouse (3)

**“Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: ‘If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me’” (Mark 8:34); “Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation” (Luke 11:4).**

The Bible says, "If you do not forgive others their wrongdoings, your Father will not forgive your wrongdoings" (Matthew 6:15). Husbands and wives must forgive each other when they have wronged one another. The person who has wronged their spouse should not just say, "I'm sorry," but also say, "I am wrong." They should be able to specifically express how and what they did wrong to their spouse. Additionally, they must show commitment to not repeating those mistakes in the future. However, forgiving is never easy. The reason is that the instinct of our old nature is selfish, leading us to believe that the wrongs of others are bigger and more numerous than our own. Moreover, our instinct is not to forgive the other person, but to expect and hope for forgiveness from him or her instead. Fighting against this sinful, selfish instinct within us in order to forgive our spouse is a difficult and challenging task. Forgiving our spouse requires paying a great price. We must deny ourselves and sacrifice ourselves (Mark 8:34). However, when we pay this price to forgive our spouse, the harvest of that forgiveness is beautiful. When our spouse, having paid a great price, asks for our forgiveness, we must forgive our spouse. And when we forgive, we must do so "as God forgave you (me) in Christ" (Ephesians 4:32). The holy God has forgiven me, a sinner who has sinned countless times, in Jesus Christ, and He continues to forgive me and will continue to forgive me. Therefore, I must forgive my spouse's wrongs. Then, I must accept my spouse as she is and love her with God's love. When we do this, we will be able to pray to the Lord, saying: "Forgive us our sins, as we forgive everyone who is indebted to us" (Luke 11:4).

## Forgiving your spouse (4)

**“Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven--for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little” (Luke 7:47).**

In the past, I occasionally said something like this honestly to my wife: "You are the greatest encourager to me, but at the same time, you are also the greatest discourager." The reason I said this to my wife was because I had been hurt by her words. Once, I said to her honestly, "Jane, my heart hurts so much. Your words pierce my heart like a dagger, and it really hurts." In response, my wife said, "Thank you for letting me know." I was a bit shocked when I heard that. In my mind, I thought, "How can she say thank you for my words? Didn't she realize how much her words hurt me? Then, if my heart hurts again, I should honestly tell her how I feel. After that conversation, although there continued to be marital conflicts between us, something changed. It was that we began to think a little more carefully about what not to say and what not to do in order to avoid hurting each other. We started to develop a habit of being more open and cautious in our communication, speaking honestly about things that had hurt us and trying to avoid repeating the same mistakes.

When we are hurt, we want comfort and healing because the pain is so difficult to bear. It's our instinct. However, often we ignore even that instinct and carry the wounds we have received from our spouses deep inside without seeking comfort or healing. As a result, those hidden wounds pile up over time, and eventually, new wounds cause those accumulated wounds to be expressed outwardly. Eventually, they explode like a bomb and bring a crisis to the marriage. Before this happens, we need to discover and carefully remove the hidden "bombs" in our relationship, just like we would remove hidden landmines from a field. To do this, we need to commit ourselves, along with our spouse, to removing those bombs together in the Lord. We must use the "bomb disposal tool" wisely. The bomb disposal tool is "forgiveness." To clear the bombs in our hearts, we must commit to forgiving each other with the heart of Christ Jesus. And in doing so, we must forgive our spouses first, without waiting for them to come to us and ask for forgiveness. How is this possible? How can we forgive our spouse first?



## **First, we need to recognize the sins we have committed against God and our spouse.**

Look at Luke 7:39: "When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, 'If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is—that she is a sinner.'" This was what the Pharisee, who had invited Jesus to his house for a meal, thought to himself (v. 36). He said this because he saw a "sinful woman" from the town come to Jesus while he was sitting at the Pharisee's house, bringing an alabaster jar of perfume. She stood behind him at his feet, weeping, and began to wet his feet with her tears. She wiped them with her hair, kissed them, and poured perfume on them (vv. 37-39). However, Jesus did not reject this "sinful woman"; instead, he allowed her to wash his feet with her tears, dry them with her hair, kiss them, and even pour perfume on them. From the Pharisee's perspective, this did not make sense. If Jesus were indeed the prophet that the Jews were expecting (Deuteronomy 18:18), he would surely know who the woman touching him was and that she was a sinner, so why would he allow a sinner to touch him? The Pharisee likely found this perplexing. One thing we can infer from this situation is that while the Pharisee knew that the "sinful woman" was a sinner, he did not recognize that he himself was a sinner. More precisely, it seems that the Pharisee considered himself righteous. That is why he called the woman a "sinner" in his mind. He probably viewed her as unclean and distanced himself from her. But Jesus, on the other hand, did not prevent her from drawing near to him, and he allowed her to perform all the actions she was doing at his feet. From the Pharisee's point of view, this must have been very shocking.

When two people live together in marriage, there are many surprising things that happen between them. These are things that were not known during the dating phase. However, after getting married and building a family, these things are revealed, and when we witness them with our own eyes, we can't help but be shocked. These are things we didn't know when we were dating, but as we live together in marriage, we start to realize them more and more, which is why it's natural to be surprised. The problem is that when we discover things that we didn't know about each other, it's not just about being surprised or shocked — we end up feeling disappointed in our spouse, and these newfound issues become points of conflict in our relationship. At first, we may not address these issues, and we may try to endure and overlook them. But as time goes on, these problems become more evident, and eventually, our relationship can face more and more friction. Ultimately, we may end up arguing and fighting. And during these fights, we may speak harshly to our spouse in our anger, causing emotional wounds (even though we may not be aware of it). Of course, the wounds we inflict on each other aren't always due to what the other person said. Spouses can also hurt each other through non-verbal actions. The problem is that when we are hurt, we don't express our pain to each other or refuse to forgive, which causes our perspective of each other to become increasingly distorted due to the wounds we hold in our hearts. As a result, we begin to criticize each other (Matthew 7:1). We even despise each other in our hearts (Romans 14:3). Moreover, we start to slander each other (James 4:11) and even condemn one another (Luke 6:37). At this point, we no longer tolerate each other's weaknesses and even criticize each other's words (Roman 14:1). When this happens, we cease to be "doers of the law" and become "judges" (James 4:11). Once we reach this point, we no longer recognize the sin we have committed against both our spouse and God. The reason for this is that we are focusing on ourselves in front of our spouse, rather than looking at ourselves before God, who is the judge.

Because of this, we lose the ability to recognize our sins as sins. So, how can we acknowledge, confess, and seek forgiveness for our sins before God? If we cannot confess our sins and seek forgiveness from God, it is natural that we will also be unable to admit, confess, and ask for forgiveness from our spouse for the wrongs we have committed.

We need to realize and recognize the sins we have committed against God and our spouse. When we have sinned against our spouse, instead of focusing on the multitude and the magnitude of their sins, we must first look at the multitude and the magnitude of our own sins before God. To do this, we must meditate on the suffering and death of Jesus on the cross. When we think of Jesus, who suffered and was crucified because of our sins, we can begin to understand the extent and gravity of our own sins. The more we recognize the magnitude of our sins, the less we will focus on the sins of our spouse and the more we will find time to examine our own sins before God.

### **Second and last, just as God has forgiven our sins, we must forgive our spouse's sins.**

Look at Luke 7:42: "Since they had no way to repay, he forgave them both. Now which of them will love him more?" This is a statement Jesus made to a Pharisee named Simon (v. 36) when he told him the parable of a moneylender who forgave two debtors (one owing 500 denarii, the other 50 denarii) because they could not repay their debts. Jesus then asked Simon, "Which of them will love him more?" (vv. 41-42). Simon's response was, "The one who had the bigger debt forgiven" (v. 43). What was Jesus' purpose in telling this parable to Simon, who had treated the woman pouring perfume on Jesus' feet as a "sinner" (v. 39)? I found the answer in verse 47: "... her many sins have been forgiven—as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little" (Korean Modern Bible). Jesus wanted to make it clear to Simon that the woman's many sins had been forgiven because she loved Jesus greatly (vv. 47-48).

A truly serious issue in a marital relationship is that we fail to realize the sins we have committed against both God and our spouse. However, an even more serious problem is that, even when we are aware of the sins we've committed against God and our spouse, we do not seek forgiveness from either of them. Often, we may ask for forgiveness from God but not from our spouse. We say we love our spouse, yet we hesitate to ask for forgiveness, and in doing so, we miss the opportunity to reconcile. Why is that? Perhaps the reason is that we want to appear right in front of our spouse (Luke 10:29). In other words, we may justify ourselves in front of our spouse, causing us to miss the right moment to ask for forgiveness. It's also possible that we see the faults and sins of our spouse more clearly than our own, and because of that, we refuse to ask for forgiveness from our spouse. If we truly understood the magnitude of the sins we've committed against our spouse before God, we would humbly and sincerely approach her and ask for forgiveness, not just from God. If our spouse knows, in her heart, that God has forgiven her sins through Jesus Christ, she will forgive us in the same way God has forgiven her in Christ. Not only that, but she will also find the courage to accept us with love, and her love for us will grow even deeper than before.

I would like to conclude with a reflection on the word. A husband must recognize not only the wrongs he has done before God and his spouse, but also the sins he has committed. He must acknowledge and confess the sins he has committed against his wife before God, repent, and also confess those sins to his wife. Moreover, he must show through his life that he has truly repented, with the certainty of God's forgiveness. In doing so, his wife should be able to recognize that he has genuinely repented and changed. When this happens, the wife must forgive her husband. However, she must forgive him with gratitude and grace, remembering that God has forgiven a sinner like her through Jesus Christ. In particular, she should forgive her husband with love, knowing that she, too, has been forgiven for many great sins before God, and that the love she has received from God is great and overflowing. Similarly, the husband must forgive his wife with love, knowing that he, a great sinner, has been forgiven by God's great love and abundant grace. He must have the courage to forgive and embrace his wife with the heart of Christ Jesus. My hope is that, in our relationship with God, we not only come to recognize the magnitude and depth of our sins, but that we also, through the overflowing grace of God and the heart of Jesus Christ, forgive our beloved spouses first. This is my prayer for all of us.

Devoted to loving, forgiving, and accepting my spouse just as she is,

James Kim

(October 25, 2014, while praying and missing my beloved wife who is far away)

# The link in an unhealthy family?

1. As we grow up, we undoubtedly receive both good and bad influences from our parents.
2. However, it seems that we are often unaware of the negative influences we've received from our parents, or even if we do recognize them, we don't fully understand them. As a result, we sometimes unconsciously speak and act like our parents.
3. Then, through conflicts with our spouse, we may come to recognize, albeit partially and amidst pain and struggle, the negative influences we received from our parents by the grace of God.
4. Particularly in the case of a husband or wife who is a people-pleaser, conflicts within the marriage can lead them to deeply reflect and engage in self-examination. Through this process, they may come to recognize the negative influences they received from their parents. This is especially true when their spouse is an avoider—someone who is excessively independent. Such a spouse may, without much thought or consideration, make blunt and self-centered remarks. These direct words can cause the people-pleasing husband or wife to ponder deeply. As a result, they begin to reflect on themselves and come to acknowledge, even if only partially, the negative influences they received from their parents.
5. A somewhat serious concern is that a people-pleasing husband or wife, due to the negative influences they recognize and acknowledge as coming from their parents, often feels excessively apologetic toward their spouse. In their desire to make their spouse exceedingly happy (perhaps because their own happiness depends on it?), there seems to be a risk of placing their spouse on the throne of their heart—or on the chair where the king sits. Before marriage, it was their mother and/or father, who had a profoundly negative influence on them, sitting on that throne. However, after marriage, they have replaced them with their spouse.
6. This is considered a serious issue in my view because the throne of one's heart is where the Lord, the King of kings, should be seated. If someone else — whether it be one's mother, father, or spouse—is seated there instead of the Lord, it becomes an act of idolatry.

7. Parents or spouses can easily become idols in our hearts to that extent. However, this idolatrous tendency does not end with replacing the idolatry of parents with the idolatry of a spouse. There is also a significant risk of idolizing one's children and loving them excessively or overly indulgently.
8. Then, by God's great love and grace, even through a major family crisis, we are led to reflect on ourselves. In the process of self-examination, we come to recognize and repent of the sin of idolizing a family member we love excessively. We cast away all idols from our hearts and invite the Lord to sit on the throne of our hearts as the rightful King.
9. After doing so, we humbly surrender to the Lord, allowing Him to reign over us. In faith, we entrust our marriage relationship to Him, letting Him take full control.
10. What we begin to glimpse with the eyes of faith is how the Lord is wonderfully at work in our marriage — bringing together two very different individuals (a people-pleasing husband/wife and an avoidant wife/husband) to complement each other's weaknesses and shortcomings. Moreover, as we experience how deeply the Lord loves us as a couple, we gradually find freedom from the negative influences of our parents. Step by step, we are built into a Christ-centered marriage.

# **A mother's "attachment"(애착) to her daughter, a daughter's "love-hate(애증) relationship" with her mother.**

A mother's "attachment" to her daughter can cause the daughter to develop a "love-hate relationship" with her mother.

It is Sunday morning here. This past Friday and Saturday, I traveled to Ensenada, Mexico, with several fellow believers. The round trip likely took about 14 hours. Though my body feels tired, the Lord blessed me with restful sleep, allowing me to wake up early this morning and arrive at the church's pastor's office ahead of time. After completing most of the preparations for today's Sunday service, I now have a moment to reflect on the lessons the Lord has taught me about family through the encounters He provided during this trip.

1. Through an entirely unexpected encounter, I found myself wondering, What immense pain, suffering, and difficulty within her family could have led a woman to shave her head completely? It seems that her deep pain stems from her relationship with her mother.
2. How can the relationship between a daughter and her mother become healthy? This is a profoundly important question for me as well, one that brings me to the verge of tears. Of course, from a daughter's perspective, she would naturally love her mother. But why is it that a daughter's heart, when thinking about her mother, holds not only love but also hatred? Is that why the relationship between a daughter and her mother is often described as one of "love and hatred"?
3. Why would a mother, who loves her daughter so much, cause her daughter such deep pain, suffering, wounds, and tears that the daughter ends up hating her mother? Why is it that a mother, due to her "attachment" [(definition: "to love or be drawn to something so much that one cannot part from it, or the feeling itself" (Naver Dictionary)], is unaware of the immense suffering her daughter is experiencing? 😞 If a mother's love for her daughter is an "attachment," I believe that attachment can cause the daughter to have a "love-hate" relationship with her mother.
4. If a mother says she loves her daughter so much, says she can't live without her daughter, and loves her daughter to the extent that their lives are intertwined as one, and if this mother, through her faith in God,

refuses to let go of her daughter, then I believe that daughter could live her entire life (even after the mother's death) as an emotional and psychological cripple, burdened by her mother's love.

5. However, this unhealthy mother-daughter relationship is not limited to just one generation. If that daughter gets married and has a daughter of her own, I believe that the mother-daughter relationship could become distorted again. Even though this daughter, now a mother herself, may not consciously form an attachment to her own daughter in the same way her mother did, she may inadvertently make her daughter feel the weight of her own mother's attachment.
6. How can we break the intense pain experienced in the mother-daughter relationship in such families? Through the worship and praise at the Ensenada, Mexico, Youth Alliance conference, what I am reflecting on now is the precious lesson that "Jesus Christ is enough!" I believe that if a mother finds sufficiency in Jesus Christ, she will no longer cause her daughter unwanted wounds, pain, or suffering. Similarly, if a daughter finds sufficiency in Jesus Christ, she will no longer experience great suffering due to her mother but will instead be able to love her mother with the love of Christ.

# **The love of a worldly mother who does not resemble Jesus is never the love of the Lord for her children!**

Among Jesus' disciples were two brothers, James and John. Their father was Zebedee, and their mother came to Jesus with her two sons, bowed down, and asked Him for something. She requested, "Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at Your right and the other at Your left in Your kingdom" (Matthew 20:20-21, Korean Modern Bible). Why did the mother of James and John make such a request? Of course, she didn't fully understand what she was asking (v. 22), but I believe her ultimate intent was that her two sons would be great and prominent. In response, Jesus, hearing her request, spoke to the ten disciples, who were angry (because they were excluded from the request), saying, "Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave" (vv. 26-27). Jesus came not to be served, but to serve (v. 28), yet it seems that the mother of James and John wanted her sons to be served. The worldly love of a mother who does not resemble Jesus is never the same as loving her children with the Lord's love!

Until just a moment ago, I was reflecting on the words from Matthew 20 and wrote a brief meditation, which I shared here and there. Afterward, I wanted to think more specifically about the meditation I had written. Perhaps the reason for this is that, as the title of the meditation suggests, "The worldly love of a mother who does not resemble Jesus is never the love of the Lord for her children!" — this truth seems to me to be quite serious.

Personally, I believe that after God's love, a mother's love is the greatest love. This is because I have received so much love from my mother—great, deep, and wide—and I continue to receive it to this day. Especially since she turned eighty, my mother often shares with me the hardships she endured when I was born. She tells me how, when I was born with a large head, she needed the help of a midwife to deliver me at home, and how, as I was often sick while growing up, she carried me on her back and transferred buses twice to take me to a distant hospital for treatment. Therefore, every year in May, during Mother's Sunday (here in the U.S., Mother's Day and Father's Day are separate), when I worship God and sing the hymn "A Mother's Wide Love" from the new hymnal, I often feel deeply moved. Here are the lyrics to the first and second verses: (Verse 1) A mother's wide love is precious and rare. That love wraps me up whenever I need it. When I cry, my mother prays to the Lord, And when I laugh with joy, she sings praises. (Verse 2) The Bible my mother read morning and evening, With fingerprints on every passage, I can still see her. "Whoever believes will have eternal life," The precious words she taught me now give me strength. The image of my mother that I can never forget is when I visited her home and found her sitting at the dining table, copying from the



Bible, and then she lowered her head and fell asleep at the table. Another memory I hold dear is when my mother was taken away in an ambulance and was lying in the emergency room. While we were there, just the two of us, worshipping God, I asked my mother to memorize her favorite Bible verse, Isaiah 41:10. She then recited: "Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." Apart from countless other memories, the one image of my mother that stays with me is when she would cry in front of me. Those tears are quietly stored in the depths of my heart [Ref: "Put my tears in your bottle" (Psalms 56:8)]. At the same time, what I can never forget is how much I hurt my mother's heart, causing her to shed tears.

What I know about making my mother cry is probably only 1%. The remaining 99% is something I still don't fully understand, and I can only guess. One of those guesses is that, during my teenage years, I tried to break free from my mother's excessive love, and with my words and actions, I must have caused her a great deal of pain, making her cry many times in private when I wasn't looking. At that time, I felt overwhelmed by how much my mother loved me, and it burdened me. I hated it when she constantly worried about me, showed concern, and lectured me. In short, I wanted to become independent from her excessive love and protection. So, in my own way, I struggled and ended up speaking harshly to her. From my mother's perspective, she had endured so much to give birth to me and raised me as a child in Korea, where I was often sick, and among her three children, she gave me extra care, even giving me eggs when I wasn't well. When we immigrated to the U.S. and I didn't even know the English alphabet, I had to memorize 20 words for a test the next day. She watched me struggle and cry as I memorized them, and I wonder, how must my mother have felt, remembering all that she went through for me? However, from my perspective, my mother's endless, unconditional love became so overwhelming that I longed for independence from her excessive love. I wanted to decide for myself what I wanted to do and act freely according to my own will. I did not want my mother to worry so much about me or be overly concerned. The reason for this was because I was worried about my mother's health. I still remember when I was in elementary school, my mother was in her early 40s and suffered a stroke. I remember seeing her receive acupuncture all over her body from a traditional Korean medicine doctor or a church elder. Since then, she has been on blood pressure medication for her whole life. Thinking about my mother now, I wish she would take care of her health more than she worries about mine (even now).

The reason I am sharing honestly about my relationship with my mother is because, although I believe that God's love and my mother's love are the closest human love to me, if my mother's great and precious love does not reflect God's love, I believe that such love does more harm than good to the child. I deeply feel how serious a mother's love can be when it harms the child, and I feel a great deal of sorrow about it. That's why today, after writing a short reflection under the title "The love of a worldly mother, who does not resemble Jesus, is never the love of the Lord for her children," I would like to organize my more serious thoughts in writing.

1. First, as the title of my short reflection suggests, I believe that a "worldly mother who does not resemble Jesus" is a very serious issue. Of course, a child who does not resemble Jesus is also a big problem, but in my opinion, a worldly mother, who does not resemble Jesus, is a greater problem than the child.
2. Even though a mother may believe in Jesus, if, from the child's perspective, the child feels that "my mother believes in Jesus and is a servant of God, but I am not sure if she truly believes and trusts Jesus," then that mother, no matter how excellent her faith may appear in front of church members, will be seen as someone who, in her home, worries, is anxious, and feels troubled by her child on a daily basis and in every moment. In this case, the child might understandably say, "I don't know if my mother truly believes in the Lord."
3. Especially if such a mother loves her child excessively, like the mother of James and John, desiring "for my child to be great and first," and passionately wishes for her child to climb the ladder of worldly success and reach the highest position (status), going so far as to come to God's temple and, like Hannah, the mother of Samuel, pray to God, "God, make my child the head and never the tail" (Deuteronomy 28:13, Korean Modern Bible), I believe her child will never be able to satisfy her desires. Furthermore, the child will likely suffer from guilt for not being able to fulfill their mother's expectations, and may struggle with low self-esteem and inferiority, thinking, "No matter how hard I try, I can never satisfy my mother."
4. I believe that children who view their own worth as low and think of themselves as insignificant are at great risk of being manipulated emotionally and mentally by their mother. These children will likely try everything to gain their mother's approval, but the more they try, the more dissatisfied the mother will become, saying, "You can do better than that," and desiring for her child to climb higher on the ladder of worldly success. I believe that such a mother's excessive love and expectations can deeply harm her child's soul, mind, and emotions.
5. When I reflect on children who are in such a serious situation, I see the relationship between the child and their mother as a toxic one. The more the mother loves her children, the more these children are at risk of being poisoned by that love. The children, due to their mother's worldly love, are being poisoned and slowly dying, while the mother believes, in her own way, that she is loving her child sacrificially to the best of her ability, and she expresses that to her child. I think this is a very sad reality.
6. Is there an antidote to this poisoned relationship between mothers and children? If there is, what would that antidote be? Personally, I believe that the antidote is for mothers who love their children in a worldly way to learn to love their children in a healthier manner. They need to stop sacrificing themselves by pouring all their energy into loving their children to the point of exhaustion. It's like an engine that's too powerful for the car, where the mother's love for her child, driven by good intentions, keeps revving up

the engine to a point where the car can't stop, much like not being able to apply the brakes. So, even though mothers may think they should sacrifice everything for their children's sake, some may have lost the ability to stop themselves. That's why I believe these mothers need to consciously try to love their children in a balanced way. If they don't, their children may either become so disillusioned that they want to give up on life, or they may grow to resent their mothers and hate them.

7. I believe that mothers who cannot let go of their children, even when seeing them suffocate, must first distance themselves physically, temporally, and emotionally. Even if it's painful, they must intentionally create this distance. Although it may tear their hearts apart, mothers must establish healthy boundaries for the sake of their children. Especially for mothers who are pouring everything into their children due to a strained relationship with their husbands, they must stand on their own before God and release their children with faith. Mothers who are anxious about their children because they lack trust in God need to repent. This is because not raising their children in faith is a sin (Ref: Romans 14:23).
8. Mothers who recognize that the issue in their relationship with their children is not the child but themselves should come before God and long for the grace of repentance to resolve the problem. They must look to Jesus Christ, who was crucified and died, with faith. As they repent with assurance of forgiveness, they should strive to gradually understand how great, amazing, and wonderful God's love for them is, all while loving their children with this love. Only then can mothers love their children with God's love.
9. Mothers who are committed to loving their children with God's love do so by relying on the power of the Holy Spirit, not their own strength. They trust in the Holy Spirit's teachings and the confidence He gives, believing that God loves their children the most. Therefore, they entrust their children to God in faith. They respect their children's personalities, and with wisdom, help them become independent by allowing them to make their own decisions at the appropriate age, supporting them as they leave their parents' care to live on their own.
10. A wise and Spirit-filled mother, as she grows in her understanding of Jesus' love and loves Jesus in return, loves her children with that same love. And because she is firmly rooted in her faith in Jesus, she continuously prays for her children, never ceasing, with faith. She receives answers to her prayers from God and, with a heart of gratitude and faith, shares her testimony with her children. My mother is such a mother.



# **Committing a sin is an opportunity.**

**“Therefore, let everyone who is godly pray to you while you may be found ...”  
(Psalms 32:6).**

Crisis is an opportunity. A crisis is a great opportunity to hear God's voice. A good example of this is found in Hosea 2:14: "Therefore I am now going to allure her; I will lead her into the desert and speak tenderly to her." The crisis that the Israelites faced was the consequence of their own sins, receiving God's discipline. And that discipline was leading them into the wilderness, into the desert. However, this crisis became an opportunity for them. It became a good opportunity to hear God's voice. While we believe that a crisis is a good opportunity to hear God's voice, is committing a sin also a good opportunity for us? If it is a good opportunity, what kind of opportunity is it? It is a great opportunity to meet the Lord (Psalms 32:6).

Today's passage, Psalms 32, is a psalm written by David after he sinned against God. It was written after he committed adultery with Bathsheba, had her husband, the faithful soldier Uriah, killed, and was rebuked by the prophet Nathan and repented. As I meditated on this psalm, especially verse 6, the phrase "an opportunity to meet the Lord" stood out to me. And the thought that came to mind was that committing a sin is an opportunity. Since I had never thought of it like this before, I was somewhat perplexed. I even wondered, "How can sinning be an opportunity?" As I continued meditating on Psalms 32, especially focusing on verse 6, I began to realize that even through our sins, God gives us the opportunity to meet Him. But what kind of Lord can we meet?

## **First, committing sin is an opportunity to meet the Lord who presses upon us.**

Look at Psalms 32:4: "For Your hand was heavy upon me day and night; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer." David experienced the Lord's hand pressing upon him when he did not confess the sin he had committed. I imagine how heavy David's heart must have been under that pressure. Wasn't his heart weighed down? We should consider this heaviness of heart a blessing. The reason is that often, even after we sin, we do not feel the weight of it in our hearts. When we do not feel heavy-hearted after sinning, it means we are treating our sin lightly. This shows that, in the end, we are not seeing our sin from the perspective of the holy God. As a result, not only do we not confess our sin to God, but we will also try to hide it (v. 5). Furthermore, we will likely commit the same or

similar sins again. Therefore, when we sin, and the Lord's hand presses upon us, making our hearts heavy, we should see it as a great blessing. Even through committing sins, we need to experience the Lord's hand pressing upon us day and night.

**Second, sin provides an opportunity to meet the Lord who listens to and answers our prayers.**

Let's look again at Psalms 32:6: "Therefore let everyone who is godly pray to you while you may be found." After David sinned, he was rebuked by the prophet Nathan, and in the heaviness of his heart, he confessed his sins to God and repented. He then received God's answer to his prayers. He was forgiven of his sins. You see, sin is a good opportunity to pray for repentance before God. Furthermore, it is a great opportunity to meet the Lord who listens to and answers our prayers. Therefore, we should take the opportunity to meet the Lord and pray to Him.

**Third, sin provides an opportunity to meet the Lord who protects and saves us from trouble.**

Look at Psalms 32:7: "You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance." David, as a consequence of his sin, was forced to flee to the wilderness of Judah, pursued by his son Absalom. In the midst of this, David encountered the Lord who was his hiding place, his protector, and his Savior. Not only did the Lord deliver him from the hands of his enemy, Absalom, but He also saved him from the consequences of his own sin. Just as David encountered the Lord of salvation, we too can meet the same Lord of salvation. When we sin against God, the Lord, who presses upon us and makes our hearts heavy, will lead us to confess and repent through prayer. He will hear our prayers, answer us, and save us. We must meet this Savior.

**Fourth, sin provides an opportunity to meet the Lord who observes us and gives us instruction.**

Look at Psalms 32:8: "I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my loving eye on you." After David sinned against God, he encountered the Lord who observed him and gave him instruction. Isn't that amazing? How can the holy Lord pay attention to a sinner like him? The Lord is holy, and we are sinners—why would He focus on us and instruct us? The truly incomprehensible thing is that the Holy Spirit, the holy presence of God, dwells within us, even as we sin. Just as the holy God observed and counseled David, the same Lord observes and counsels us. Even after we sin, we are blessed to encounter this Lord who teaches and instructs us.

**Fifth, sin provides an opportunity to meet the compassionate Lord.**

Look at Psalms 32:10: "Many are the woes of the wicked, but the Lord's unfailing love surrounds the one who trusts in Him." David experienced the Lord's unfailing love. He experienced the constant, unchanging love of the Lord. Even though David was not always faithful in loving the Lord and sinned against Him, the Lord still loved him steadfastly. David met that loving Lord, and because of that, he grew to trust the Lord even more. Shouldn't we also trust that same Lord even more?

I would like to conclude this meditation on the Word. David, who sinned, eventually cried out: "Rejoice in the Lord and be glad, you righteous; sing, all you who are upright in heart" (v. 11). Why did David shout this? The reason was that David had joy and gladness in his heart. The reason for this was that David had encountered the Lord, who pressed him, listened to his prayers, responded to him, protected and saved him from trouble, and corrected him, and who loved him unchangingly. I sincerely hope that we too, after sinning, may meet the same Lord and, because of Him, rejoice and be glad in the Lord.

With a heart of gratitude for the unwavering love of the Lord who is with a sinner like me,

James Kim

(Reflecting on the cross of Jesus Christ on the morning of Thursday, June 21, 2012)

# The pain of the heart, the joy of the heart

## [Proverbs 14:10-35]

Is your heart joyful right now, or is it in pain? If your heart is in pain, why is it painful? If your heart is joyful, why is it joyful? The saying, "When sorrow is shared, it is halved, and when joy is shared, it is doubled," comes to mind. But in reality, are you and I sharing the sorrows and joys we experience in our lives with the people we love around us? Perhaps we are somewhat better at sharing our joys with others, but I think we struggle to share our sorrows. One reason for this is that we may feel others won't fully understand our sadness. I personally believe this reason is valid. No one can fully understand the sorrows we experience. This is true not only for sorrow but also for joy. I believe that no one can fully understand the sorrow or joy in each of our hearts, not even our spouse, who is one with us. Similarly, the members of the church, who are one body in Christ, cannot fully understand the sorrow or joy in each other's hearts. However, Romans 12:15 says, "Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn." Why is this? When I think about this, Hebrews 4:15 comes to mind: "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin." I believe the reason is that God wants the members of the church to sympathize with each other, just as Jesus, our High Priest, sympathizes with us. Therefore, the church must be a community that rejoices together and mourns together.

In today's passage, Proverbs 14:10 says: "The heart knows its own bitterness, and no one else can share its joy." With this verse in mind, under the title "The pain of the heart, the joy of the heart," I want to reflect on one or two things and receive the lessons that God is giving to both you and me.

First of all, let us consider "the pain of the heart." When do we experience pain in our hearts? I want to reflect on this by thinking of eight different situations:

**First, when our home is falling apart, there is pain in our hearts.**



In today's passage, Proverbs 14:11a says: "The house of the wicked will be destroyed ...." Here, "house" can mean family members, according to one commentary, but it can also refer to possessions (Walvoord). If this interpretation is correct, this first part of verse 11 is saying that the house of the wicked, meaning either their family members or possessions, will be destroyed, according to Scripture. Even though, as Christians, we may observe that the wicked seem to prosper in this world, the Bible tells us that their success is temporary (Ref: Psalms 73). Therefore, we must not forget that the house of the wicked, though it may seem to flourish temporarily, will ultimately face destruction. What is the reason for this? It is because of the wickedness of the wicked. The holy and just God will bring ruin to their house because of their sin.

I reflected on this verse and sought to apply it to us as Christians (the righteous). When doing so, I realized that if we, as believers, harbor unrepented sins and have not sought God's forgiveness, even our households could face ruin. The issue lies in our sins. If we fail to repent of our sins, our households will inevitably suffer because of them. One of the consequences of this suffering is that our lives become difficult and burdensome. Look at the second part of Proverbs 14:34: "... sin is a disgrace to any people." What does this mean? The term "disgrace" here refers to "lack or hardship." In other words, when people are sinful, their lives become burdensome and full of hardship (as explained by Yoon-sun Park). While this verse specifically speaks about how a nation's people experience hardship due to sin, I believe the same principle can be applied to families. If a household is full of sin, it will inevitably face hardship. Another form of suffering that sin can bring to a family is disgrace or shame. Look at the latter part of Proverbs 14:35: "... a disgraceful servant incurs his wrath." While this verse specifically refers to a disgraceful servant within a kingdom, when applied to a household, it suggests that a family plagued by sin will not only experience hardship but also shame and dishonor. For instance, when children go astray and commit numerous sins, they can bring dishonor to their parents and disgrace to the family. Similarly, when parents commit many sins, they can bring shame upon their children and cause great dishonor to the household. Such a family is often referred to as a "broken household." If our family is becoming a broken household due to an abundance of sin, it will undoubtedly bring pain and distress to our hearts. What should we do in such situations? We must rely on the blood shed by Jesus on the cross, confessing and repenting of our sins and those of our household before God. When we do so, God will forgive our sins and the sins of our family, covering them completely. As a result, God will turn the pain in our hearts into joy and gladness.

**Second, when we walk down a path that seems right to us but is not right in the eyes of God, it brings pain to our hearts.**

Let us look at today's passage, Proverbs 14:12: "There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end, it leads to death." This exact phrase is repeated in Proverbs 16:25. When we reflect on these words in the context of King Solomon, the wise king, we may see this "way that appears right" as referring to his love for "many foreign women besides Pharaoh's daughter" (1 Kings 11:1) and his romantic involvement with them (v. 2). Despite God's clear warning to the Israelites that intermarriage with foreign nations would turn their hearts away to follow other gods (v. 2), Solomon pursued what seemed right in his own eyes and loved many foreign women. What was the

outcome of this decision? 1 Kings 11:4 tells us: "As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the Lord his God, as the heart of David his father had been." He went on to follow Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Sidonians, and Molek, the detestable god of the Ammonites (v. 5). As a result, even the immensely wise King Solomon ended up worshiping idols and sinning against God in his old age. Although God had appeared to him twice and commanded him not to follow other gods (vv. 9-10), Solomon failed to obey God's commands (v. 10). It seems that Solomon eventually realized, perhaps too late, that the path he believed to be right was, in fact, a path that led to death.

In the first part of Proverbs 15:25, Scripture says, "The Lord will tear down the house of the proud." God, in His justice, brought judgment upon the proud Solomon, who ignored God's warnings and sinned by disobeying His commands. As a result, during the reign of Solomon's son Rehoboam, God tore the kingdom of Israel into two. Reflecting on the division of one nation into two, I am reminded of Jesus' words in Mark 3:24-26: "If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. And if Satan opposes himself and is divided, he cannot stand; his end has come." If our household is divided and in conflict, it cannot remain strong or stable. When there is division within a family, all members inevitably suffer emotional pain and distress. Even Solomon, considered the wisest man on earth, disregarded God's Word and chose a path that seemed right in his own eyes, only to find that it led to death. Acknowledging this, he warns us in Proverbs 14:12, "There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end it leads to death." How, then, should we respond to this truth? At the very least, even if a path seems right to us, we must continually examine it in the light of God's Word. We must ask ourselves whether what appears right to us is also right in God's eyes. This requires persistent reflection and testing against the Scripture. As we engage in this process, the Holy Spirit will use God's Word to reveal to our hearts whether the way we deem right is, in fact, contrary to God's will. When we come to this realization, we must turn back from that path. If we do, God will transform the sorrow in our hearts into joy.

### **Third, when we pursue pleasures of this world, our hearts experience pain.**

Look at Proverbs 14:13: "Even in laughter the heart may ache, and rejoicing may end in grief." This verse highlights that the pleasures of this world are neither pure nor enduring. Worldly joys, particularly pleasures of the flesh, often lead to sorrow afterward (Park). Consider King Solomon. He believed it was right in his own eyes to take many foreign women as wives and concubines, only to end up in his later years committing the sin of worshiping their idols. Imagine how much laughter and joy Solomon must have experienced at first, surrounding himself with so many women. But eventually, they caused him great grief and sorrow. Reflecting on Solomon's life, it's hard not to agree that worldly pleasures inevitably lead to pain. Even in my own past, I cannot help but agree with the truth of verse 13. I once sought meaning, happiness, and joy in the things of this world, but ultimately, all it gave me was sorrow and tears. I remember especially the pain of losing two friends who were fatally shot, attending their funerals, and realizing more deeply that the world's offerings ultimately bring grief and heartache.

In Proverbs 14:16, Scripture says: "The wise fear the Lord and shun evil, but a fool is hotheaded and yet feels secure." The Bible teaches that fools lack the wisdom that comes from fearing God. Instead, they trust only in themselves, living recklessly and committing sins as they pursue worldly pleasures. As a result, they lead indulgent lives, often acting hastily in anger and committing many foolish deeds, as stated in verse 17. Furthermore, Proverbs 14:29 highlights that fools, in their impatience, reveal their folly: "A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones." Ultimately, as verse 18 says, fools embrace folly as their inheritance. Such a fool may appear outwardly to laugh and rejoice, but what remains in the end is nothing but worry and sorrow in their heart. Look at Proverbs 15:13: "A happy heart makes the face cheerful, but heartache crushes the spirit." This underscores that true joy is reflected in a radiant countenance, while inner grief deeply wounds the soul.

When I reflect on this passage, I can't help but think that many Christians may display a smiling face that hides inner sorrow, much like what is described in Proverbs 14:13: "Even in laughter, the heart may ache, and rejoicing may end in grief." Personally, I find myself pausing when I encounter people who are always smiling. This is because, behind their constant smiles, there may be a shadow of worry or sadness. When I see brothers and sisters whose smiling faces lack a radiant glow, I sometimes wonder if they are trying to mask their sorrow or anxiety. What truly matters is that when the joy and delight God gives us fill our hearts, our faces will naturally shine with light. However, if we pursue the joy and pleasure this world offers, it will inevitably lead to sorrow and worry, leaving our hearts to endure pain.

#### **Fourth, when our hearts become perverse, we experience pain in our hearts.**

Look at the first part of Proverbs 14:14: "The backslider in heart will be filled with his own ways ...." The phrase "backslider in heart" literally means "to revert to old evil habits, to turn back, or to fall away" (Walvoord). While it would be ideal for us to continually grow in faith and experience transformation as we follow Jesus, there are moments when our spiritual growth seems to stagnate or even regress. When this happens, it is often a sign that we are drifting away from God. One of the troubling symptoms that can appear during such times is turning away from truth, pursuing falsehood, and living a deceitful life. If our hearts become perverse, we distance ourselves from God, believe in lies, seek falsehood, and live deceitfully. As Proverbs 14:25 says in its latter part, "A false witness breathes out lies." This reminds us of the harmful tendencies of a heart that has strayed. If our hearts become perverse, we devise wicked schemes in our hearts (6:18). In other words, we plot harmful plans against others (Park). Furthermore, we pursue evil (14:22). If we are engaged in plotting wicked schemes and pursuing evil, there can be no joy in our perverse hearts. Instead, a perverse heart experiences pain. Why is this so? The reason is that God will judge us according to our actions. In other words, He will repay us according to what we have done (v. 14a). This divine principle of justice ensures that the pain of a perverse heart is a consequence of turning away from God's ways.

Dr. Yoon-sun Park said, 'A person can conceal their sin for a time without repenting. However, the day will come when it will cry out and catch up with the person (James 5:4; Genesis 4:10). In other words, the sinner must

take the lead in confessing their sin and repenting to resolve it. If they don't do this and push it aside, the sin will eventually catch up with them and take revenge on them' (Park). I believe this is an undeniable statement. If we do not repent of our sins, they will inevitably catch up with us and take revenge, which, on one hand, resonates with truth, but on the other hand, brings fear. The reason for this is that unrepented sin certainly has consequences. For example, listen to what Jacob, who was deceived and who deceived others in the Old Testament, said when he came to Egypt and spoke to Pharaoh: "...The years of my pilgrimage are one hundred and thirty. My years have been few and difficult, and they do not equal the years of the pilgrimage of my ancestors" (Genesis 47:9). When I think of Jacob's confession, I am reminded of Genesis 37:34-35. When Jacob saw Joseph's coat stained with the blood of a goat, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth, and mourned for his son for many days. He did not accept any comfort from his children. He said, "I will go down to the grave to my son in mourning." This teaches us a lesson: when we backslide, turn away from God, and lie, deceive, or harm others, our false actions will certainly have consequences. These consequences include not only being deceived ourselves but also being engulfed in pain and sorrow. Therefore, in order to avoid being overwhelmed by sorrow and pain, we must continue to faithfully draw near to God, so that our hearts do not become corrupt. In doing so, we can prevent our spiritual decline and receive the grace to recognize and repent of our sins. As a result, God will turn our pain into joy and bring peace to our hearts.

#### **Fifth, when we believe every word, there is distress in our hearts.**

Look at the first half of Proverbs 14:15: "The simple believes every word ...." The "simple" here refers to someone who is "naive" due to lack of experience or knowledge, or someone who is gullible and easily deceived by others. Such a person is easily influenced by others (Walvoord). If we look at the latter half of Proverbs 14:8, it says, "The folly of the foolish is deceit." What does this mean? It means that the foolish not only deceive others, but they are also deceived themselves. Therefore, the simple person is someone who believes others easily and falls for their tricks. An example of this is the foolish young man from Proverbs 7:7, who was enticed by the crafty woman (v. 5) and lacked wisdom (v. 7). That young man was enticed by the loud voice of the crafty woman (v. 11), seduced by her smooth words, and fell for the deceptive words of her lips (v. 21), following her as an ox goes to the slaughter, as a fool is bound to the correction of a fool (v. 22). What was the result? The result was that he was wounded, fell down, and even unto death, as the Bible says (vv. 26-27). If we are too naïve and easily believe others' words, we will inevitably experience distress in our hearts. We need wisdom. We must ask God for wisdom. Therefore, we should listen carefully to others' words with the wisdom that God gives us. We need to listen with discernment. By doing so, we can prevent our hearts from suffering distress.

#### **Sixth, when we are hated by our neighbors, there is distress in our hearts.**

Look at Proverbs 14:20: "The poor is hated even by his neighbor, but the rich has many friends." Jesus commanded us, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:39). However, although we know we must obey this commandment of Jesus, we still show favoritism when it comes to loving our neighbors. How exactly do

we show favoritism? We tend to judge people based on their appearance (James 2:1; see also John 7:24). So, when someone enters the church wearing a gold ring and fine clothes (v. 2), we say, "Sit here in a good place" (v. 3), but when a poor person in shabby clothes enters (v. 2), we tell them, "You stand there, or sit at my footstool" (v. 3). Such actions are discriminatory, judging others with evil thoughts (v. 4), and showing contempt for the poor (v. 6). The Bible says this is sin. In other words, when we judge people by their appearance, we are sinning against God (v. 9).

In today's passage, Proverbs 14:21a states, "He who despises his neighbor sins." Here, "his neighbor" refers specifically to "the poor" mentioned in the first half of verse 20 or the "needy" mentioned in the latter half of verse 21. In this sinful world, the poor and needy are not only despised by society (v. 20) but are also looked down upon (v. 21). Moreover, they are sometimes oppressed (v. 31). Consequently, the poor and needy often harbor feelings of envy toward the rich, and this phenomenon can be seen in society as a whole. Indeed, in the second half of verse 30, the Bible says, "Envy is the rottenness of the bones." It seems that in our current society, the poor and needy are envious of the wealthy. Ultimately, in a society where envy, hatred, contempt, and oppression prevail, there can be no peace, only pain and sorrow. Even though the society we live in may be like this, the community of the church should be different. In church, we should not show favoritism or discrimination between the rich and the poor. If there is discrimination and favoritism in the church, the poor and needy brothers will be hated, and their hearts will be filled with distress. To prevent this from happening, we must not judge people based on their appearance, either inside or outside the church. We must not show favoritism. Instead, we should obey Jesus' command to love our neighbors as ourselves. When we do so, the distress in our hearts will disappear, and we will experience joy and gladness in our hearts.

### **Seventh, when we only speak and do not act, our hearts are filled with pain.**

In Proverbs 14:23b states, "... the talk of the lips leads only to poverty." Here, "the talk of the lips" refers to speaking without action (Job 11:2; Isaiah 36:5) (Park). The Bible says that those who speak with their lips but do not act will only bring about poverty (Proverbs 14:23). What kind of poverty does a person who only speaks without acting experience? Dr. Park gives a couple of reasons:

(1) They become impoverished in their physical life.

This is because they are lazy, speaking without doing anything. The lazy person disregards God's command to work diligently (Genesis 3:19), and as a result, they become impoverished as a punishment from God.

(2) Those who speak but do not act, the lazy ones, become impoverished in their spiritual life as well.

Consider this: How can our spiritual life become abundant if we only speak about spiritual matters but do not live according to God's Word? The issue is that, even though we know this, we often walk the path of poverty rather than pursuing abundance in our physical or spiritual lives. In other words, although we know that we should not only speak but also take action, we often only speak about it. This shows how weak human beings are—quick to speak but slow to act. Therefore, the Bible says in Proverbs 14:24b: "The wealth of the fool is only folly." What does this mean? It means that the foolish person, even when they know their wrongs, does not correct them but continues to act foolishly. As a result, the foolish person will inevitably suffer in their heart. We must not become people who speak without acting. Instead, we should cultivate the habit of speaking and immediately translating our words into action. When we live a life of integrity between our words and actions, our hearts will experience joy.

### **Lastly, eighth, when we do not repent until the end, there is suffering in our hearts.**

Look at the first half of Proverbs 14:32: "The wicked is driven away in his wickedness ...." Here, the term "wicked" refers to those who do not repent until the end. The term "driven away" means to be led away forcibly, implying a compulsion (Park). In other words, the wicked who do not repent are driven into trouble. It means that the holy and righteous God judges the unrepentant wicked, allowing them to be swallowed by their suffering, thereby revealing God's glory. When we sin and do not repent of our sin, we will inevitably face trouble. The issue is that, even though we are enduring trouble because of our unrepentant sins, we may still cry out to God for salvation, yet fail to feel the need to repent of our sins. And even when we plead with God for salvation and receive no answers, and thus continue in our troubles, we may end up blaming God. Ultimately, through our troubles, because we do not realize our sin and repent, we end up sinning even more against God. As a result, the suffering in our hearts grows even more intense. When we face trouble because of our sins, we must examine ourselves before the holy God to see if there are any unrepented sins that we have committed against Him. When we do this, the Holy Spirit will reveal our sins to us, and when we realize them, we should rely on the power of the precious blood of Jesus shed on the cross to confess our sins to God and repent. Surely, our God will forgive our sins and accept us. When we do so, our hearts will be filled with peace and joy.

Finally, what we want to reflect on is the "joy of our heart." Let us think about the seven times when our hearts experience joy:

### **First, there is joy in our hearts when our dwelling prospers.**

Look at the latter half of Proverbs 14:11: "The tent of the upright will flourish." The house of the wicked is bound to perish. Not only will their household face hardship, but they will also be shamed, as the Bible says in the first part of verse 11. However, the tent of the upright will flourish, as stated in the latter half of verse 11. What does this mean? The upright, those who confess their sins and believe in the Lord, receiving His righteousness (Park), live

with hope in the heavenly kingdom. This is why they "dwell in a tent." Of course, this does not mean that we should sell all our houses and live in tents. King Solomon, the wise one, uses the word "tent" rather than "house" because the upright person does not live with their hopes set on the things of this earth. Instead, they focus on heavenly things, placing their hope in the kingdom of heaven and pursuing the eternal. Therefore, the Bible says that their tent will flourish.

We are people of faith moving towards a better homeland (Ref: Hebrews 11). This world is not our home. The house where we will dwell forever is the house in heaven. Therefore, while living on this earth, we must set our hopes on heaven and pursue the things of the afterlife. When we do so, God will make our lives prosper. He will prosper our homes and churches, and He will also stabilize them (Walvoord). I believe the same applies to a nation. When the president and leaders of a country are honest and govern the nation with justice, that country will be established as a nation of righteousness (v. 34). When that happens, the people of that righteous nation will increase (v. 28a), and God will exalt that nation ("glorifying" it), as the Bible says. Those who live in a nation, church, or home with prosperity and stability will experience true joy and happiness given by God and will live day by day with peace in their hearts.

### **Second, there is joy in our hearts when we live truthfully.**

Look at the second half of Proverbs 14:14: "... even a good person will be satisfied by his ways." If our hearts are foolish (v. 14), we will stray from God, believe in lies, pursue falsehood, and live a deceitful life. We will speak lies and deceive others. If our hearts are foolish, we will devise evil plans in our hearts. We will plot to harm others in our minds. We will scheme to do evil (v. 22). A foolish heart will inevitably lead to pain. The reason for this is that God will judge us according to our deeds. However, if we are "good people" (v. 14), that is, if we have received God's grace of salvation and live truthfully as Christians, our hearts will be filled with joy. Specifically, as it says in the first half of verse 33, if we, like the "wise" person, treasure the truth of God in our hearts and live according to that truth (Park), our hearts will surely be filled with joy and gladness. Living according to God's truth, a true believer will be a faithful witness, saving lives and experiencing the joy of salvation and the joy of God by rescuing others (v. 25).

### **Third, there is joy in our hearts when we trust only in the Lord and act according to His will.**

Look at the second half of Proverbs 14:15: "... the prudent person gives thought to his steps." The "prudent person" here refers to one who truly trusts only in the Lord and acts according to His will (Park). And the "prudent person crowns himself with knowledge" (v. 18). Therefore, he, in the knowledge of God, carefully considers his actions and does not, like the foolish person, naively believe everything others say and be influenced by them. Instead, he judges and discerns others' words in the knowledge of God and seeks only the will of the Lord, pursuing it above

all. As we've already reflected on Proverbs 14:8, "The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way, but the folly of fools is deceit," the Bible teaches. What does this mean? The foolish person, not fearing or disregarding God, does not seek God's will and does not walk in the path He desires. Instead, the foolish person walks according to his own will, choosing his own path (v. 8). But the prudent person knows his way. In other words, the wise Christian knows the will God has for him and lives according to that will. He knows what he is to do according to God's will and does it (1 Corinthians 7:17).

In the first half of Proverbs 14:35, the Bible says, "The king's favor is toward a wise servant." Likewise, when we act wisely (with wisdom), we will receive the favor of the King of kings, the Lord. So, how can we act in a way that is considered wise in the eyes of the Lord? It is by doing what pleases God. So, what is it that pleases God? It is living according to God's will. When we live in obedience to God's Word, He will be pleased, and when God is pleased, our hearts will be filled with joy.

**Fourth, there is joy in our hearts when we fear the Lord and live by turning away from evil.**

In the first half of Proverbs 14:16, the Bible says, "A wise man fears and departs from evil ...." The foolish person lacks the wisdom to fear God, so they trust only in themselves and live arrogantly in sin in this world (14:16a). They do not fear God and pursue the pleasures of this world, living a life of debauchery. As a result, they experience sorrow and pain in this life. However, the wise person fears God and departs from evil. Because they turn away from evil, their life is filled with a sense of security (v. 26a). In Proverbs 14:27, the Bible tells us that the fear of the Lord is the fountain of life. And when we fear God, we will be delivered from the snares of death (14:27). The Bible also tells us that when we live in the fear of the Lord, we have hope even in death (v. 32). In other words, we can find refuge even in death (v. 32b). Therefore, we must become wise children of God, fearing Him and living according to His wisdom. As God's wise children, we must live apart from evil and make God our refuge, even in times of persecution and tribulation (v. 26b). God will surely protect and keep us. When we do this, we will experience the joy and delight that God gives us.

**Fifth, when we overcome evil with good, there is joy in our hearts.**

Look at Proverbs 14:19: "The evil will bow before the good, and the wicked at the gates of the righteous." The Bible clearly says that the wicked and the unrighteous will bow before the good and the righteous. In other words, the good and the righteous will overcome the wicked and the unrighteous. However, when we look at this evil world, it often seems as if the wicked and the unrighteous are prevailing over the good and the righteous. In other words, from our human perspective, it seems that the evil ones have more power than the good, and they oppress and torment the righteous. In fact, there are even instances where the wicked kill the righteous in this era. Because of this, many Christians may struggle to believe in the truth that the good and the righteous will eventually overcome the wicked



and the unrighteous. However, looking at the Scripture, we see many instances where the righteous prevail over the wicked. For example, Joseph's brothers bowing before him (Genesis 42:6), Pharaoh and his people bowing before Moses (Exodus 8:28, 9:27, 12:31-33), the evil men who sought to kill Daniel being thrown into the lion's den (Daniel 7:27), and Haman, who built a gallows to execute Mordecai, being hanged on that very gallows (Esther 7:9-10) can all be cited as examples (Park).

When I meditated on this passage, I thought of Romans 12:21: "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." As we live our faith, if we are overcome by evil, our hearts will inevitably experience pain. However, if God is with us and we overcome evil with good, our hearts will be filled with the joy of victory. Shouldn't we live our faith in a way that allows us to experience this joy? In today's passage, Proverbs 14:22b says, "Those who plan good find love and faithfulness." What does this mean? It means that we must diligently carry out good deeds with preparation and without stopping (Park). When we do so, God will not only show us love (kindness), but He will also faithfully fulfill the promises He has given us. Therefore, we must plan good. We must diligently do good works. We must live lives that overcome evil with good. When we do so, God will give us joy and delight in our hearts.

### **Sixth, when we love our neighbors, our hearts are filled with joy.**

Look at Proverbs 14:21: "Whoever despises their neighbor sins, but blessed is the one who is kind to the poor." If we disobey Jesus' command and fail to love our neighbor, but instead despise them, our hearts will inevitably be filled with pain. The reason is that we are sinning against God. However, if we obey Jesus' command and love our neighbor as ourselves, the more we do so, the more joy and happiness we will feel in our hearts. Look at the first verse of hymn "Jesus Comes With Pow'r to Gladden": "Jesus comes with pow'r to gladden, When love shines in, Every life that woe can sadden, When love shines in. Love will teach us how to pray, Love will drive the gloom away, Turn our darkness into day, When love shines in." So, how should we love our neighbors? In the second half of Proverbs 14:21, the Bible commands us to have compassion on the poor. The Bible says that such a person is blessed. Why is that? The reason is that having compassion on the poor is a way of honoring the Lord (v. 31b). This means that if we claim to honor the Lord with our lips but do not have compassion on the poor, we are not truly honoring Him. We must not only speak with our lips but also show compassion for the poor through actions, helping them with love. To do this, one thing we need, as mentioned in the first half of verse 29, is great wisdom. When we are wise, we will be slow to anger toward our neighbors (v. 29a). Also, we should not be hasty in our hearts. In doing so, we will love our neighbors with patience and humility, especially having compassion for the poor. Therefore, we will experience peace in our hearts in our relationships with our neighbors (v. 30a).

### **Finally, seventh, when we work diligently, there is joy in our hearts.**

Look at the first half of Proverbs 14:23: "All hard work brings a profit ...." While meditating on Proverbs, we have seen that the wise King Solomon speaks repeatedly about laziness and diligence. The key point of his words

is that we should not be lazy, but diligent. In the first half of today's passage, Solomon says that all labor brings profit. In other words, a person who only speaks without putting in any effort will come to poverty (v. 23b), whereas a diligent person who works hard and sweats will gain profit. What kind of profit might he gain? We can think of three possibilities:

(1) The Bible says that the diligent person will become rich.

Look at Proverbs 10:4: "Lazy hands make for poverty, but diligent hands bring wealth." The Bible teaches that a diligent person works hard, especially during the harvest time, not resting but diligently working to reap the rewards (v. 5).

(2) The Bible says that the diligent person will have plenty of food.

Look at Proverbs 12:11: "Those who work their land will have abundant food, but those who chase fantasies have no sense." By working diligently and cultivating their land, the person will naturally have plenty of food to eat.

(3) The Bible says that the diligent person will rule over others.

Look at Proverbs 12:24: "The hand of the diligent will rule, but the lazy will be put to forced labor." The lazy will be forced to serve, but the diligent will rule over others, which is another benefit of diligence. When we think about these benefits, if we are diligent and work hard, our hearts will be filled with joy.

I would like to conclude this reflection on the Word. Often, we go up to the house of God and sing the hymn "Out of My Bondage, Sorrow and Night," which goes, "Out of my bondage, sorrow and night, Jesus, I come, Jesus, I come. Into Thy freedom, gladness and light, Jesus, I come to Thee" (Verse 1). When I sing this song of repentant forgiveness, it reminds me that indeed, this world is full of suffering, and there are many times when we face defeat and disappointment. There are many causes for this, but reflecting on today's scripture, I realize that it is when I walk the path I believe to be right with a proud heart, even though it is not the path that pleases God; when I pursue worldly pleasures, speak without action, and fail to repent despite knowing I should, I sometimes find myself in pain and disappointment. Therefore, when I sing this hymn, I often lay down my proud heart before the cross and desire to follow the blessed Word of God. When I do so, I experience God comforting my sorrowful heart and giving me strength when I feel discouraged. With the strength God provides, I want to trust in the Lord alone and live according to His will. I want to live truthfully, fearing God, and walking a life that turns away from evil. I want to live overcoming evil with good. I want to love my neighbor according to the commandments of Jesus and work diligently in the Lord's service. I believe that when I live this way, the Lord will prosper His Church and His family.

Looking to God, who turns the pain in our hearts into joy,

James Kim

(March 7, 2012)

## **Part 2: Reconciliation**

# **The peace of the family is truly important.**

The peace of the family is truly important.

Of course, conflicts in marital relationships are unavoidable,  
but we must seek harmony even amidst those conflicts.

We are called to be peacemakers.

We must strive to preserve peace within our families.

Husbands and wives must be committed to blocking  
any third-party relationships that harm their marital bond.

Whether the third party is beloved children or parents,  
if there is a risk of disrupting the harmony of the marital relationship,  
it must be firmly rejected.

If the stress from family relationships outweighs the happiness they bring,  
effort should be made to identify and eliminate the root causes of such stress.

# A peaceful family

**“Better a dry crust with peace and quiet than a house full of feasting, with strife.”  
(Proverbs 17:1)**

What do you think is the final goal of employees' lives? As a result of a survey of 239 employees, 88.7% of respondents answered that they have the final goal of their lives. Nine out of ten workers say they have the final goal in life, and the number one is a peaceful family. 28.3% said that they want to achieve the peaceful family as their final goal of their lives. 27.4% of the respondents said that they want to be the best in their field, 16.0% said that they want to be entrepreneurs, 9.4% said that they want to trouble around the world, 8.5% said they want to prepare their own house, 4.2% said that they want to change jobs and etc.. In order to achieve the goal, 60.4% said that they are working hard, 45.8% said that they are collecting a lot of money, 34.4% said that they are doing activities to expand their network, 31.1 % said that they are studying hard every day, 26.4 % said that they are doing financial technology. The reason for setting the final goal of life is that 72.2% said that they want 'to live a happy life, 8.5% said that they want to earn wealth and honor, 7.1% said that they want to not be ashamed by others, 6.6% said that they want to contribute to society, and 2.4% said that they want to do their filial duties to their parents (Internet).

In Proverbs 17:1, the Bible says, “Better a dry crust with peace and quiet than a house full of feasting, with strife.” What does it mean? It means that it’s better to be peaceful in the family even if we live poorly than to live abundantly with strife in the family. It is said that the old family of Israel shared the leftover food from what they offered sacrifice to God (Lev. 7:16; 19:6; 1 Sam. 9:24). And after offering sacrifice to God, the family members supposed to enjoy meal together. But if there was strife among them, then it is the family with serious dissatisfaction (Park). Can you imagine that after we gave tithe and thanksgiving offering to God during Sunday worship the family members are disputing with the leftover money? The word Proverbs 17:1 teaches us that peace of the family doesn’t depend on abundance or poverty. And my personal thought is that the cause of strife is not only depended on abundance. Based on Proverbs 17:1, I would like to think about what kind of family is the peaceful family and how we can avoid strife in our family.

**First, a peaceful family covers each other's offense. We must not repeat each other's offense in order to avoid strife in our family.**

Look at Proverbs 17:9 – “He who covers over an offense promotes love, but whoever repeats the matter separates close friends.” Once, I posted this question on my personal Facebook: ‘Why is it hard to share our prayer topics with one another in the church community?’ One of the brothers in Christ commented as follow: ‘We can share the prayer topic of our heart when there is trust among us. If not, then we can get hurt greatly. That’s why it is possible only with those who have the spirit of keeping the secret completely.’ What do you think of these words? As someone said, the church became the place where we cannot share our prayer requests. The reason is because there are people who "repeat the matters" in the church (v. 9). In other words, there are those who repeat the prayer requests of another person. If we repeat another person’s prayer request, then our relationship with that person will be distanced. Look at Proverbs 16:28 – “A perverse man stirs up dissension, and a gossip separates close friends.” What does it mean? A liar stirs up dissension and separates close friends. When we look at marital relations at home, why do we have strife? Isn’t it because Satan, a liar, separates our marital relationship? How does Satan separate our marital relationship? Satan does so especially by making us to look at each other's offenses more that each other’s strengths and to repeat them not only to each other but to others as well. Although love keeps no record of wrongs (1 Cor. 13:5), Satan keeps on making us to keep record of each other’s wrongs in our thoughts, and make us to tell each other about the wrongs. Thus, Satan brings strife and discord in our marital relationship. I cannot help but agree with what King Solomon said in Proverbs 18:8 – “The words of a gossip are like choice morsels; they go down to a man's inmost parts.”

What should we do? We must meditate on the love of God that has covered our transgressions. In Ephesians 2:1, the Bible says, “And you were dead in your trespasses and sins.” God made us alive together with Christ even when we were dead in our transgression, and saved us (v. 5). Therefore, the Psalmist said in Psalms 32:1 – “How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered!” We who have received God’s great blessing and love in Christ Jesus must love our neighbors. How should we love our neighbors? We can love our neighbors by covering over their wrongs (Prov. 10:12). We must put effort to cover over our closest neighbor that is our family members’ wrongs. Therefore, we must keep the unity of the Holy Spirit in our family (Eph. 4:3).

**Second, a peaceful family receives rebuke from each other. We must humbly receive each other's rebuke in order to avoid strife in our family.**

Look at Proverbs 17:10 – “A rebuke goes deeper into one who has understanding Than a hundred blows into a fool.” What would you do if your children were offended and fighting each other because they broke the commandments of God and continued to talk about each other's faults? Would you just keep on watching them arguing and fighting? I am sure you won’t. I am sure no parents like to see their children fighting. We want our children to love each other and to be at peace. But if they fight, then we have to rebuke them in love. But what if our children

are fools so they don't listen to our rebuke? What should we do then? I think we have no choice but to discipline them. But if any of our children hear our rebuke and repent of their own wrongs and have peace with their brother or sister, then how wise are they? The Bible says it is better to rebuke our wise children because our rebuke will go deeper into them more than the hundred blows into the foolish children (v. 10). Isn't this word interesting? Of course we must not interpret this word literally. Can you imagine hitting our foolish children hundred times? What would happen to our children then? Nevertheless, a fool is mocker (9:7) that he won't repent and turn away from his/her wrongdoings. But if we rebuke our wise children, our rebuke will be deeply engraved in their hearts even though there will be no mark of discipline on their body. There is a good example in the Bible about the wise man. The good example is David. How did David respond when Prophet Nathan rebuked him for his sins of adultery and intentionally killing Bathsheba's husband Uriah? Look at 2 Samuel 12:13a – "I have sinned against the LORD ...." As soon as David heard the Prophet Nathan's rebuke, he immediately confessed and repented of his sins. In the case of Apostle Peter, when a rooster crowed and when the Lord turned and looked at Peter, he remembered the word of the Lord, "Before a rooster crows today, you will deny Me three times" (Lk. 22:60-61). And he went out and wept bitterly (v. 62). What a wise man who wept bitterly and repent as he remembered what the Lord said? Like David and Peter, those who are wise don't need a hundred lashes. They just need a word of rebuke from the Lord. Then they will confess and repent of their sins. Don't you think our family members need this kind of wisdom?

Those who are wise, that is, the ones who have understanding, will repent of their sins and walk on the right path. We cannot but help ourselves sinning against God and against each other in our family. But if we have God's given wisdom, we will be able to not only know our sins but also the Spirit will help us to confess and repent our sins to God and to each other. Especially, we will be able to receive each other's rebuke humbly and repent and return to God and to each other. When we do so, our family will be in peace.

**Third, a peaceful family doesn't pay back evil for good. We must pay back good for good in order to avoid strife in our family.**

Look at Proverbs 17:13 – "If a man pays back evil for good, evil will never leave his house." The family, in which evil never leaves, rebels against God's will, disobeys God's words and does unrighteous things. And because they do unrighteous things, they meet disaster in their family. That biblical example is David. King David paid back evil for good. In other words, he purposely killed Uriah, the husband of Bathsheba, who was loyal to him and his kingdom, so that he repaid evil for good. As a result, his son Amnon raped Tamar like his father David had committed adultery with Bathsheba. And as David killed Uriah, Absalom, the brother of Tamar, killed Amnon. These family calamities came because David disobeyed God's will and His commands. It was the result of his unrighteous acts.

So many families now are facing family disasters. It seems like there is never ending discord in the families. What are the problems in the contemporary family that are filled with wounds, pains and suffering? One of the problems is the sin of our family. Many families are suffering now because they are sinning against God's will,



disobeying God's Word, and doing evil rather than good. The family that cannot taste the goodness of God, that doesn't feel the grace and love of God, and is not humble before God, but rather is arrogant eventually rebels against God's will, disobeys His commands and does unrighteous. What must we do? We should listen to the words of 1 Peter 3:9 – “Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.” What do you think of the word of God, that you should repay evil with blessing? We should bless our family members even when we hurt each with our lips in the midst of strife in the family.

When I was working out before with mp3 on my years, I heard 1 Peter 2:23 Jesus didn't retaliate when people hurled their insults at Him but he suffered. As I heard this word and meditated on it, I thought to myself that I shouldn't say the same thing to other people when they say the things that displeased me. We should not overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good (Romans 12:21). We must suffer from doing good rather than doing evil. This is the will of God for us (1 Peter 3:17). Although our souls forlorn when people repay us evil for good (Psalms 35:12), we must not grow weary of doing good (2 Thessalonians 3:13). We must turn from evil and do good. We must seek peace and pursue our family peace (Psalms 34:14).

**Fourth, a peace family drops the matter before a dispute breaks out. We must drop the matter before the dispute breaks out in order to avoid strife in our family.**

Look at Proverbs 17:14 – “Starting a quarrel is like breaching a dam; so drop the matter before a dispute breaks out.” Why do we usually start a quarrel in the family? Is it because of big things or just a little thing? There are few Chinese words that I found in the Internet. Let me translate into English: (1) “百年偕老” (Growing old together): As a couple, a husband and a wife grow old together in harmony. (2) “偕老同穴” (Growing old together and are buried in the same grave): Since the couple lives in peace, they grow old together when they are alive and they bury in the same grave when they die. (3) “蝸角之爭” (Fighting over small things): Literal meaning is that fighting on the horns of a snail. It means that small countries are fight each other. The couple is fight over very small thing. The reason why couples and children fight each other is starting from a very minor matter. That's why Proverbs 17:14a says “Starting a quarrel is like breaching a dam ....” What does this mean?

Have you ever been to Hoover Dam, near Las Vegas? If you have heard that there is water leaking in the dam, will you still walk on the dam and look around? Think about it. If there is a very small hole in such a large dam, and water is coming out in small quantities, will you still stand over the Hoover Dam and continue to look the dam and its surround? Even if it is very small hole with small amount of water leading, I am sure that if people working at the dam find out, then they will certainly tell the tourists to flee and not come near at all. Why is that? Isn't it because it is very dangerous? When I think about this, I think there is a perfect Chinese word for it. It is “水滴穿石”. It means that if water drops continually, then it will eventually punch a hole in a stone (Internet). Even if it is a very small hole in a big dam, if you leave it alone, the dam will collapse, and it will have a great damage. That's

why King Solomon said in Proverbs 17:14b “so drop the matter before a dispute breaks out.” But it seems like we aren’t obeying this word of God. We aren’t dropping the matter before the dispute breaks out. As a result, small argument gets bigger fight. What’s the problem? Look at James 4:1 – “What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don’t they come from your desires that battle within you?” The problem is our desires that battle within us. And if we don’t control these desires but just keep on fighting and quarreling, then we will be those who love a quarrel (Proverbs 17:19). And if we love the quarrel, then we will love sin (v. 19). After all, the reason we fight and quarrel in our home is because of our desires that battle within us. And there is covetousness in us that desires to fight and quarrel (James 4:2). For example, when the couple is fighting, they start fighting when their desire is not satisfied by their spouse, that is, when they don’t get what they want. When we put down what we want (covetousness), we can prevent the fight. But how difficult is it to actually put it down?

There is book titled ‘Put down’ by formal missionary to Mongolia Pastor Yong-gyu Lee. I think after he published that book he wrote another book titled ‘Put down more’. Although he could have pursued worldly success with his Ph.D. degree at Harvard University, he went to remote area as a missionary and served the Lord. But that wasn’t why he wrote his book ‘Put down’. What he emphasized in his book was death of self in Christ as Galatians 2:20 teaches (Internet). And this is what he said in his book ‘Put down’: There is a very small child in us. That child is a crying child who wants to be recognized. When this child’s desire is not satisfied, he makes our inner self very difficult. We live in our emotions without knowing that there is a child in us. However, this child can only be restored and rested through the love and recognition of God. Satan constantly makes us obsessed with what we don’t have. As long as we are obsessed with what we don’t have, we cannot enjoy what we have received with joy. As we seek the recognition of the world, we are held in this world. That is how much we miss our freedom from heaven. God said, ‘I see the perfumed jar in you.’ The very next word drove me into surprise and pierced my heart deeply. ‘But the jar wants not to be broken yet even though it was given in front of Jesus’ feet.’ Because of that word, I saw my unbroken self. Although I went all the way in front of the Jesus’ feet, I realized my pride that didn’t want to be broken. I saw in me that I wanted to be respected. I thought because of that I was hurt by someone else’s words. A deep sob came out of me. I made a pledge to God in sadness. ‘God, I see parts in me that are still unbroken. I want to break my perfumed jar’. Although I was offered in front of Jesus’ feet, I cannot sent forth a sweet fragrance if it’s not broken. When the perfumed jar is broken and all the perfume in it flows out, we can commemorate the cross of Jesus’ (Internet).

There is a story among old traditions fairy tales of Korea. ‘It was not long before she was married. But one day she was crying in the kitchen without making rice. Her husband who saw her crying asked her why she was crying. She said because she had burnt the rice. The husband, who heard this, said to her, ‘It is my fault that I brought little water today because I was busy and that’s why you burned the rice because of little water.’ And he comforted her. When she heard this, she was more tearful because her heart was touched by what he said. His father-in-law, who was passing by in front of the kitchen, saw this scene and asked her why she was crying. When he heard what she said, he said that it was because he was too old and weak that he couldn’t cut the firewood small enough. So the

fire was too strong and that's why the rice got burned. And he comforted his son and daughter-in-law. When her mother-in-law who heard all these came and told her daughter-in-law that it was her fault because she is too old that she couldn't smell the rice cooking and forgot to tell her daughter-in-law the time to put down the rice. So, she tried to comfort her daughter-in-law as well. The old people told this story and said it was "家和萬事成" (Chinese word). It means 'when one's home is happy, all goes well.' If we look at this story, we can see that no one blamed her who burned the rice, but everybody tried to comfort her as they reflect on their mistakes and blame on themselves. In this way, peace comes. And all is well in peace. Moreover, the Holy Spirit is dwelling in us. This Holy Spirit unifies our hearts. Therefore, when all our family members are obedient to the guidance and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, we will be able to live in understanding, forgiveness, comfort and encouragement and live heavenly life in our family (Internet).

## **To be at peace with one another ...**

Jesus said, "Have salt among yourselves,  
and be at peace with each other" (Mark 9:50).

For us to be at peace with one another,  
the following are necessary:

Self-Sacrifice (v. 50)

Just as salt dissolves, we must give of ourselves.

Self-Denial (8:34)

Instead of focusing on human concerns, we should focus on the things of God.

Humility (9:34–37)

A proud person cannot live in harmony with others.

Service (v. 41)

Serve others with the strength God provides, being faithful even in small things.

## **Even if a couple appears to be at peace on the outside ...**

Even if a couple (or family) appears to be at peace on the outside,  
they may actually be a couple (or family) with a serious relationship.

# A family is ...

A family is...

A place where a couple meets each other's needs rather than demanding their own needs be met.

A place where a couple listens to each other's stories rather than insisting on their own opinions.

A place where gratitude is expressed to one another rather than complaints and dissatisfaction.

A place where a couple sacrifices and yields for each other rather than selfishly pursuing their own desires.

A place where wounds are healed rather than deeper wounds being inflicted.

A place where mistakes are forgotten rather than remembered and repeatedly brought up.

A place where forgiveness is extended rather than hatred taking root.

A place where financial support is shared rather than disputes arising over money.

A place where children are raised together with care rather than treated as a burden or shifted onto the other.

A place where words of encouragement and support are spoken rather than harsh words that wound deeply.

A place where patience is practiced  
rather than anger unleashed.

A place where humility and service thrive  
rather than pride and arrogance taking center stage.

A place where a couple shares one heart, walking the same path together,  
rather than harboring divided hearts and walking separate ways.

A family is ...

# **A family is not a place where a husband and wife demand what they want from each other.**

A family is not a place where a husband and wife demand what they want from each other. However, we often find ourselves expecting our spouse to fulfill our own desires. What is the problem? It stems from misunderstanding the purpose of the family—not as a place to meet each other's needs, but as a place to demand personal wants.

If a wife constantly demands from her husband, and the husband likewise keeps demanding from his wife, such a family will be plagued with dissatisfaction, conflict, and arguments. However, if a couple views their family as a wilderness — a place of mutual dedication—they will focus not on demanding their desires but on meeting each other's needs with commitment and care.

When a husband strives to understand his wife's needs more deeply and seeks to meet those needs with Christ-like love, the wife will feel God's love through him. Similarly, when a wife grows in understanding her husband's needs and acknowledges his authority, submitting to him as the Church submits to Christ, listening to and following his guidance, the husband will be strengthened by the grace that God provides through her. In this way, the couple will experience their needs being met through one another, leading to a sense of satisfaction and contentment. Together, they will offer thanks and praise to God.

For a couple to maintain a healthy relationship, it is important for each spouse to have their own healthy relationships and interactions with friends. Additionally, to build a strong marital relationship, each spouse must properly “leave” their parents (Genesis 2:24). This leaving may require clearly and decisively cutting emotional and psychological ties with parents if those ties are harmful to the marriage.

# **If we wrong a brother and then go to worship God in His house without first reconciling with that brother ...**

If we wrong a brother and then go to worship God in His house  
without first reconciling with that brother (Ref: Matthew 5:23-24),  
God might respond to our worship with these words:

“What is the point of your numerous acts of worship to me?”

“I am weary of the worship you offer.”

“I do not take pleasure in your worship.”

“Who asked you to bring such worship to me?”

“You are merely treading on the floor of my temple.”

“Stop bringing meaningless offerings of worship.”

“Even your worship has become detestable to me.”

“I cannot endure your assemblies,  
for though you gather on Sundays or for religious meetings,  
I see the evil you continue to commit.”

“The worship you bring, which I despise,  
has become a burden to me, and I am weary of bearing it”

(Ref: Isaiah 1:11-14, Korean Modern Bible).



# About marital conflicts ... (1)

My wife and I fought a lot over the course of about 20 years. Reflecting on that time, I'd like to share a few lessons I've learned about marital conflicts:

1. We fought over trivial matters. Many of our arguments were over insignificant issues. Over time, fighting became a habit, and we began to treat it lightly, even though it wasn't healthy.
2. These small fights built up over time. Each conflict added another layer to the burdens in our hearts, and we developed distorted thoughts and perspectives about each other. In essence, unhealthy prejudices about one another gradually took root in our hearts.
3. We started to label each other. During arguments, we would internally say things like, "That's just how they are," imposing our own assumptions onto each other.
4. We lost the ability to understand one another. This labeling caused us to lose the capacity to empathize with each other, which only deepened the misunderstandings between us.
5. These misunderstandings led to emotional separation. The accumulation of these unresolved issues caused us to drift apart emotionally. It felt as though we were like a train derailing from its tracks, no longer walking the shared path of life together but instead heading down separate roads.
6. As a result, our relationship grew more distant. We began to lose interest in each other, and both of us became increasingly self-centered.
7. This led to more frequent marital conflicts, and over time, our arguments and fights left larger and deeper emotional scars in our hearts.
8. In particular, during our fights, we crossed lines we should never have crossed, saying and doing things we should have avoided.
9. Especially when we crossed those lines, we were unaware of just how devastating the wounds inflicted on our relationship were. By the time we began to realize it, it was like a ship sailing far from the shore—we were living under the same roof, but our hearts had already grown distant from each other.

10. From this experience, I came to realize that it is far better for a couple to be physically apart but emotionally close than to be physically close but emotionally distant.
11. However, a heart that is deeply and severely wounded cannot truly forgive or seek forgiveness without God's intervention. While the mind may understand, genuine words and actions that come from the heart seem impossible without His help.
12. When a couple refuses to forgive and fails to recognize the need for forgiveness, it may seem humanly impossible to maintain their relationship.
13. Despite this, God's great love and abundant grace, under His sovereignty, have touched each of our hearts with His nail-pierced hands.
14. Even when a marital relationship seems hopeless and it appears impossible to forgive each other, God has slowly, little by little, healed our broken hearts.
15. It was as though the Lord, like a surgeon cutting where necessary, carefully removed the tumors of bitterness and the elements that were gradually destroying our relationship.
16. Usually, during surgery, the patient feels no pain because of general anesthesia, but in some urgent situations, surgery is performed without anesthesia, leading to extreme pain. In the same way, when a marriage is in a critical state, it seems to undergo intense suffering. This suffering, in God's eyes, is necessary, and it appears to be an unavoidable "surgical" pain for us.
17. There seems to be an essential pain in the restoration of a marital relationship. The greater the pain, the more deeply our hearts are broken and shattered, allowing us to hear God's voice more clearly through His Word in the midst of great suffering.
18. And the Holy Spirit, who dwells within us, works a miraculous wonder in making us obey the words of God He has made us hear.
19. Experiencing this miracle, we were amazed to deeply realize, through intense pain, that God is truly alive and that He loves our marriage more than we could ever comprehend.
20. Therefore, marital conflicts become a valuable opportunity for each of us to recognize what needs to be thoroughly broken and rebuilt, a precious chance to approach the Lord with a humble heart, and a valuable moment to surrender our relationship to God and hold onto hope.

## About marital conflicts ... (2)

- A. One of the things we learn through marital conflict is how to complement each other's differences and create a win-win situation.
  
- B. The beneficial aspects of marital conflict are:
  - 1. It reveals each other's differences.
  - 2. It helps us see each other's weaknesses.
  - 3. It uncovers each other's sinful tendencies.
  - 4. It allows us to learn about each other's background and upbringing.
  - 5. It helps us understand each other's habits, personalities, and values.
  - 6. It shows us what each of us wants from the other.
  - 7. It teaches us what words and actions should be avoided in our relationship.
  
- C. To make marital conflict beneficial:
  - 1. We must acknowledge and gradually accept each other's differences.
  - 2. While observing each other's weaknesses, we should intentionally focus on and appreciate each other's strengths, complimenting and encouraging one another, and making efforts to complement each other's weaknesses.
  - 3. As we recognize each other's sinful tendencies, we must rely on the power of Jesus Christ's death on the cross and His precious blood, forgiving one another as the Lord has forgiven us.
  - 4. By understanding each other's backgrounds and learning about each other's parents, we should play the role of a bridge between our respective families and parents.
  - 5. As we learn about each other's habits, personalities, and values, we should not criticize or try to change each other. Instead, we should make judgments based on Scripture, pray for each other in faith, and patiently wait with hope.
  - 6. By letting go of what we want from each other and learning what each other truly needs, we must dedicate ourselves to fulfilling each other's needs.
  - 7. To avoid words or actions that may hurt one another, we should desire the fruit of the Spirit, self-control. Rather than focusing on what to say or do, we should diligently and humbly learn and practice what words and actions should be avoided in our relationship.

# **Even if one is poor, a peaceful home is better than a wealthy household filled with conflict.**

Even if one is poor,  
a peaceful home is better than one filled with disputes  
(Ref: Proverbs 17:1, Korean Modern Bible).

When a single person with a twisted heart speaks recklessly,  
that household will inevitably face difficult situations  
(Ref: Proverbs 20, Korean Modern Bible).

Conflicts start from small things.  
Therefore, before a fight breaks out,  
we must resolve disputes early  
(Ref: Proverbs 14, Korean Modern Bible).

However, those who love to quarrel  
are those who love sin,  
and such a household will never know peace  
(Ref: Proverbs 19, Korean Modern Bible).

# **"Let us not quarrel."**

**"Abram said to Lot, 'We are relatives. Let us not have any conflict between you and me, or between your herders and mine'." (Genesis 13:8, Korean Modern Bible)**

About two weeks ago, during our Tuesday online family prayer meeting, I shared seven thoughts under the title "Lord, build our entire family and relatives into a family of love," based on Ephesians 5:31-33 and two articles I wrote. The seven thoughts were:

1. Family is truly important.
2. The spiritual health of the husband, as the head of the family, is crucial.
3. The spiritual maturity and leadership of the husband, as the head of the family, are vital.
4. A spiritually healthy and mature husband prioritizes loving his wife.
5. A spiritually healthy and mature husband sets clear and healthy boundaries.
6. There may be crises or challenges in the marital relationship.
7. The marriage relationship must align with the relationship between Christ and the Church.

While reflecting on the fifth thought, "A spiritually healthy and mature husband sets clear and healthy boundaries," I quoted Ephesians 5:31: "For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh" (Korean Modern Bible). When sharing this thought, I used the example of mother-in-law and daughter-in-law conflicts. I mentioned a situation where the husband failed to "leave" his parents, especially his mother, as stated in Ephesians 5:31. I believe that if a husband does not "leave" his parents (particularly his mother), the conflict between his mother and wife will be constant and unresolvable. In other words, a spiritually unhealthy and immature husband cannot "leave" his mother (either emotionally or mentally), which prevents him from establishing clear and healthy boundaries between his wife and his mother. As a result, he is unable to protect his wife in the conflict between her and his mother, causing his wife to continue experiencing hurt and tears from his mother.

However, a spiritually healthy and mature husband, having left his parents and united with his wife as one flesh, views even his mother as a third party. He also regards his children, siblings, and relatives as third parties, ensuring that they do not interfere with the marital relationship. He wisely and carefully prevents them from having a negative impact on the relationship.

In today's passage, Genesis 13:8, we see the spiritually healthy and mature Abram. He sought to resolve the conflict that existed between him and his nephew Lot by saying to him: "We are relatives. Let not our herdsmen quarrel, neither my herdsmen nor your herdsmen" (Korean Modern Bible). From this verse, it seems to me that Abram is saying two things based on the conflict between him and Lot: "We are relatives" and "Let us not quarrel". I believe these two statements can apply not only to our relationships with relatives but also to family relationships, particularly marital relationships. For example, when considering a marital relationship, in times of conflict, a husband should say to his wife, "We are one body" (Ephesians 5:31, Korean Modern Bible), and "Let us not quarrel" (Genesis 13:8, Korean Modern Bible). Therefore, the husband should strive to resolve conflicts with his wife in the Lord. Blessed are the peacemakers (Matthew 5:9). In today's passage, Abram was a peacemaker. He did not want to quarrel with his beloved nephew Lot. So, he said to Lot, "We are relatives. Let us not quarrel, neither my herdsmen nor your herdsmen" (Genesis 13:8, Korean Modern Bible). The first question I would ask is: Why did Abram and Lot, and their herdsmen, quarrel? When thinking about this, I believe the quarrel was not directly between Abram and Lot, but rather between their herdsmen. Second, the reason for the quarrel was that "Abram and Lot had so many livestock that the land could not support both of them living together" (v. 6). Here, what does "the land" refer to? "The land" refers to the place where "Abram took his wife and his nephew Lot, along with all their possessions, and left Egypt to go toward the Negev region in the south of Canaan" (12:1, Korean Modern Bible). "There, he continued traveling northward to Bethel and Ai, to the place where he had previously pitched his tent and built an altar" (v. 3). The term "previously" refers to what is described in Genesis 12:5-8, where "Abram took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, and all the wealth and servants he had acquired in Haran, and entered the land of Canaan" (v. 5, Korean Modern Bible). "He passed through the land to the Oak of Moreh at Shechem" (v. 6), where Abram received God's promise. "He built an altar there" (v. 7), and then "left that place and traveled southward to pitch his tent between Bethel to the west and Ai to the east. There, he also built an altar and worshiped the Lord" (v. 8, Korean Modern Bible). There are two interesting points here:

- (1) The first interesting point is that Abram, with his wife Sarai and nephew Lot, left Haran in faith as God had instructed him (v. 4) and entered the land of Canaan (v. 5).

He pitched his tent between Bethel and Ai (v. 8). Later, he moved further south in Canaan (v. 9), but when a severe famine struck the land of Canaan, he went down to Egypt to live (v. 10). Due to the incident with his beautiful wife Sarai and the Pharaoh of Egypt, he had to leave Egypt (vv. 11-20). Ultimately, Abram, along with his wife and nephew Lot and all his possessions, left Egypt and went up to the Negev region in the

southern part of Canaan (13:1), then returned to the place where he had previously pitched his tent and built an altar, between Bethel and Ai (v. 3).

(2) Something I considered is that while Abram was camping between Bethel and Ai, building an altar and worshiping God (v. 3; see also 12:8), Abram and Lot had so many animals that the land could not support both of them, causing conflict between Abram's herdsmen and Lot's herdsmen (13:6-7).

When reflecting on this, we realize that even after worshiping God, couples can still argue, and conflicts can arise not only within a family but also among relatives. Even with abundant wealth, as seen with Abram and Lot, family members or relatives can quarrel. Proverbs 17:1 comes to mind: "Better a dry piece of bread and peace in the house than a house full of food and strife" (Korean Modern Bible). It is better for a family to live in peace, even with a little material scarcity, than to be rich and argue. What matters is not how much material wealth there is in the house, but the peace within it. However, among family members, those with greed will stir up strife (28:25).

As I was meditating on Genesis 13:8-10, I considered the reason Abram's herdsmen and Lot's herdsmen quarreled: they had too many livestock, and the land between Bethel and Ai could not support both of their herds (Genesis 13:2, 6-7). This raised the question, "How did their livestock become so many?" I wondered if they had always had many animals or if their herds grew later on. To find an answer, I read Genesis 12 and noticed in Genesis 12:5 that "Abram took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, and all the possessions and servants he had acquired in Haran and went into the land of Canaan." From this, it seemed that Abram already had "all his possessions" from the beginning. However, I wondered whether his all his possessions (12:5) were already "too much" (13:6) at that time. In my opinion, I don't think so. The reason I think this is because in Genesis 12:10, when a severe famine struck the land of Canaan where Abram, his wife Sarai, and his nephew Lot were staying, Abram decided to go down to Egypt to live. For example, where I currently live, in Southern California, the cost of living has risen significantly, with high apartment rents and overall financial difficulty, leading many people to relocate to Texas or other states. I've also heard that some people, even though they want to move to Los Angeles, cannot afford the high cost of living here. However, no matter how high the cost of living is, people living in wealthy areas like Beverly Hills, who have substantial wealth, probably wouldn't consider moving to another state. Just like this, if Abram had already had all his possessions (v. 5) in sufficient amounts while living in the land of Canaan, he would not have gone to Egypt when a severe famine struck. If my thoughts are correct, another question arises: "How then did Abram's 'all his possessions' become 'too many' (13:6)?" In my opinion, it was because God blessed Abram as He had promised in the covenant (12:2, 3). How did the covenant God faithfully bless Abram? By causing a severe famine in the land of Canaan where Abram was living, God led Abram to go down to Egypt (v. 10), and there, through the beauty of Abram's wife Sarai, God caused Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, to treat Abram generously, giving him sheep, cattle, donkeys, male and female servants, and camels (v. 16). However, in this process, Abram was not faithful. It seems that he did not fully trust the

covenant God. Because of the beauty of his wife Sarai, he feared he might be killed by the Egyptians and told Sarai, "Say that you are my sister" (vv. 12-13). Because he feared for his life due to his wife, Abram made his wife lie, but despite this, the covenant God faithfully blessed him and gave him many livestock through Pharaoh (v. 16). When considering how much Abram had, Genesis 13:2 in the Korean Modern Bible says, "He had many livestock, silver, and gold." As I reflected on this, Exodus 12:36 and 38 came to mind. Here is the translation from the Korean Modern Bible: "The Lord made the Egyptians favor the Israelites, so they gave them what they asked for, and the Israelites plundered the Egyptians. ... Also, many other people from various nations went with them, along with sheep, cattle, and many livestock." When God delivered the Israelites from Egypt through Moses, He caused the Egyptians to favor the Israelites and gave them what they asked for, so the Israelites left Egypt with the Egyptians' possessions, including sheep, cattle, and many livestock. God blessed both Abram and his descendants, the Israelites, with many livestock. This leads to the question: How did Abram's nephew Lot accumulate so many livestock? Of course, Genesis 13:5 says, "Lot also had flocks and herds and tents," but in verse 6, it says, "Abram and Lot had so many livestock." This raised the question of how Lot ended up with so many livestock. The Bible doesn't provide a clear answer, but in my view, Abram may have shared the material blessings he received from God with his nephew Lot. In other words, because God blessed Abram with "many livestock, silver, and gold" (13:2, Korean Modern Bible), Abram likely gave a portion of his wealth to his beloved nephew Lot, which is why "Lot also had flocks and herds and tents" (v. 6, Korean Modern Bible).

I would like to conclude my reflection on the passage. When Abram and his nephew Lot, or rather their shepherds, were fighting due to their abundant possessions, Abram said to Lot, "We are relatives. Let there be no quarrel between me and you, and between your herders and mine" (v. 8, Korean Modern Bible). Although it may seem that Abram and Lot were not quarreling, their herders were in conflict because there was not enough pasture for their livestock in the land between Bethel and Ai. In this situation, Abram told Lot not to let the herders "quarrel" (v. 8). As Christians who believe in Jesus, we are not to be those who quarrel with each other or cause others to quarrel. Rather, we are peacemakers, those who strive to keep the peace. But why do so many quarrels arise among us? Why is there so much conflict within the church? Is it because we have abundant possessions? Or is it because something is lacking? We must not allow the material blessings God gives us to become the cause of disputes. Instead, we should use those blessings wisely to bring glory to God.

I pray that we may not quarrel but live in peace with one another,

James Kim

[July 23, 2022, "What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You desire but do not have, so you kill; you covet but cannot get, so you quarrel and fight" (James 4:1-2, Korean Modern Bible)]



# **Couples must protect their relationship!**

Just as a couple can fight due to their children,  
they can also quarrel because of their parents (on both sides).  
What is important, however, is that  
even in the midst of such conflicts,  
the husband and wife must protect their relationship.

# Emotional intimacy

The article titled "Ways You Can Rebuild Emotional Intimacy In Your Marriage" talks about the importance of emotional intimacy in marriage. In the past, I didn't fully understand the significance of emotional intimacy between spouses. However, now I realize the importance of emotional closeness in a marriage. This realization came from seeing close sisters around me struggle in their relationships with their husbands due to a lack of emotional intimacy, with some even going through divorce. As a result, I would like to reflect on and apply the three methods mentioned in the article to rebuild emotional intimacy in marriage: (1) "Communicate through touch," (2) "Express empathy," and (3) "Don't be afraid to show vulnerability."

1. I prioritize 'faith intimacy' over 'emotional intimacy' in my relationship with my wife. Therefore, I share the 'facts' of the truth of God's Word with her. For example, when I meditate on God's Word and receive grace from a particular passage, I share it with my wife. At those moments, when I catch a glimpse of how the Lord is working in our lives through His Word, I share it with her. Specifically, when I see how the Lord is working in the lives of our three children, I share that with her in gratitude and joy. As she acknowledges in faith how the Lord is working in our children's lives, we, as a couple, empathize, recognize, and give thanks to God together.
2. I am seeking 'heart intimacy' with my wife. This means I open up my heart and share my feelings honestly with her. I also share my vulnerabilities with her. For example, when I remember and pray for our beloved children, I often share the feelings that the Lord gives me with her. When I talk about my heart concerning our children, my wife and I open our hearts to each other because we love them, and we discuss our children together. Tonight, I will also open my heart to my wife and share the insights and feelings that the Lord gave me about our children during Sunday morning. This kind of sharing allows us to look at our three children with one heart in the Lord and helps us understand each other's hearts even more."
3. I am pursuing 'sexual intimacy' with my wife while also seeking 'emotional intimacy.' The reason for pursuing both simultaneously is because of the differences between men and women. A man wants to seek sexual intimacy with his wife, while a woman wants to seek emotional intimacy with her husband. Of course, this doesn't mean that a woman doesn't desire sexual intimacy with her husband. Likewise, it doesn't mean that a man doesn't want emotional intimacy with his wife. Even though there are clear

differences between men and women, a man, too, sometimes wants to open his heart and share his feelings with his beloved wife (even though it may not happen often). When this happens, if the wife doesn't empathize with her husband's feelings and responds logically, the husband can feel lonely (Perhaps, women may experience this loneliness even more and more frequently than men). In my case, recently, I shared with my wife my genuine feelings about the sudden death of my friend, thinking about his wife and mother. My heart was aching, and I almost cried. However, the timing wasn't ideal, as my wife was on the phone handling work matters. Perhaps my wife also thought that when she shared her feelings with me, I couldn't empathize with her emotions, and she felt that I didn't understand her. In this way, my wife and I often fail to pursue emotional intimacy and make mistakes. But even so, as we pursue intimacy in faith and in heart, we are still striving for emotional intimacy, albeit imperfectly. I don't think our marriage is difficult because we are not emotionally connected (this is my perspective). However, I am beginning to realize that I need to learn more and make a greater effort to pursue emotional connection and intimacy with my wife in our marriage.

# Emotional cheating?

Until now, I mainly thought that the wrong type of marriage relationship was simply called 'affair' or 'extramarital relationship.' But the first term I heard was 'emotional cheating.' In Korean, it's translated as '감정 속임수' (emotional cheating). It was a somewhat unfamiliar term to me, but I remembered a few years ago when a sister in Christ told me that the reason she divorced her husband was because they couldn't form an 'emotional connection.' And I realized how incredibly important 'emotion' is in a marriage. I heard the terms 'emotional connection' and 'emotional cheating' from different sisters in Christ, and from the wives' perspective, I realized again how crucial 'emotion' is (since I had never heard such terms from brothers in Christ). So, as a man, I would like to reflect on the terms 'emotional connection' and 'emotional cheating' from a woman's point of view. If any of the sisters in Christ reading this think I am misunderstanding or saying something wrong, please let me know in the comments. Thank you.

1. From the wives' perspective, I believe emotions are very important. However, since husbands may not prioritize emotions as much as wives do, I think it is difficult for wives to find 'emotional satisfaction' from their husbands in the marriage relationship.
2. As a result, wives are bound to experience 'emotional dissatisfaction' with their husbands, and I believe that this emotional dissatisfaction can accumulate over time.
3. Consequently, I think that wives may reach a breaking point where their emotional dissatisfaction erupts at some point, triggered by a particular event. Alternatively, from the wives' perspective, there is a high likelihood of experiencing a marriage where the emotional connection with their husbands is broken, leading to a state of indifference or apathy toward the relationship.
4. I believe that when in this emotional state, Satan takes advantage of the opening and sneaks in with a dramatic temptation. This dramatic temptation leads husbands or wives to feel emotionally attracted to someone of the opposite sex, other than their spouse, and enjoy emotional satisfaction, ultimately resulting in emotional cheating.
5. For example, let's say there is a wife who has accumulated a lot of emotional dissatisfaction with her husband. In this case, I think the wife might experience constant conflict with her husband. At that point, Satan could bring the wife, who is emotionally dissatisfied, and her husband, who is weary from

- the ongoing conflicts and might not even understand why his wife is emotionally dissatisfied, into contact with another woman at church or work, where the wife is unable to provide the comfort he needs. This could make the husband seek emotional satisfaction and comfort from the other woman, potentially leading to a sustained relationship. From the wife's perspective, she might think her husband is emotionally deceiving her (emotional cheating). Ultimately, I believe this could escalate into an emotional affair.
6. As a result, the wife will no longer be able to trust her husband and will be forced to continue doubting and being distrustful. She might even feel betrayed by her husband.
  7. As a result, the wife might even consider divorce.
  8. So, how can we prevent this from reaching such an extent?
  9. First, I believe that the husband (and the wife as well) must stand firm on the truth of God's Word (the fact), rather than on their feelings (emotions), holding onto His Word and earnestly seeking God in faith.
  10. Especially in times of crisis in the marriage, I believe that God will give His (promised) Word to both the husband and wife. That is, a marital crisis is an opportunity to hear God's voice. We must hold onto the word we have received and, with a desperate heart, earnestly seek God.
  11. In this context, I believe that especially we husbands must respect our wives' emotions, be sensitive to them, and develop the ability to feel what our wives are feeling (emotional connection and emotional satisfaction). Of course, this is not easy. It requires a lot of practice and training.
  12. Therefore, I believe we husbands must engage in conversations with our wives at the emotional level, feeling what they feel, and ultimately upgrade the conversation to the fact level. In other words, our goal as husbands is to love our wives, trying to feel together, and ultimately to nurture our wives with God's Word. So, emotions (Feeling) should not come first, but we should lead our wives with the truth of God's Word, which is the fact (Fact).
  13. Therefore, I believe that when a couple is led by the truth of God's Word, with emotions being rich within the boundaries of that truth, their relationship in the Lord should be firm and abundant.
  14. In my opinion, emotions that are not based on the truth of God's Word or emotions that go beyond the boundaries of truth are not beneficial to the marital relationship and can rather pose a great risk of harm. I believe they risk causing a crack in the marital bond.

15. Therefore, we must elevate our emotions in a healthy way, based on God's truth, so that as a couple, we are connected through His Word (The Word-connection) and establish a healthy emotional connection, continually raising our emotional satisfaction in faith.

## **What is more important than pleasing your wife and family harmony ...**

Pleasing your wife is important. Pursuing harmony in the family is very important.

However, doing so at the expense of disobeying God's Word is not desirable.

The most important thing is to obey God's Word.

# When mom and dad argue, how difficult must it be for the child's heart?

Yesterday, Thursday, I had dinner with my beloved wife and youngest daughter, Karis. During the meal, Karis, feeling upset about the "tattoo incident," opened up and expressed her honest feelings to me. My wife, listening beside us, became my spokesperson and defended me. As the restaurant was about to close, I suggested continuing the conversation at home. Back at home, Karis kept sharing what was on her mind. This time, instead of defending me, my wife also shared some of her thoughts and feelings with me. 😊 So there I was, sitting on a chair with my hands folded (almost as if in prayer 🙏), listening intently to the words of my beloved wife and daughter, Karis. It felt like I was on the verge of a double nosebleed! 😅 I'd like to share some reflections on the conversations from yesterday as they come to mind:

1. Karis mentioned that her standards for me, as her dad, had been high but that she felt she should lower them. I responded by saying, "Thank you," in a way that acknowledged her words. I also told her, "As your dad, I am lacking in many ways, but my hope is that you can see the little Christ within me." From my perspective, Karis seems to have thought of me quite highly, perhaps even exceptionally so. I think this is a reflection of how much she loves and respects me. However, it seems the tattoo incident left her deeply disappointed. Moving forward, I wouldn't mind if Karis's expectations of me as her dad continue to be adjusted lower. Haha.
2. I responded to Karis' words honestly (from a spiritual perspective), but as my wife listened, she shared some thoughts she had been holding back, speaking to me in front of Karis. While spiritual conversations are important, it seemed my wife was expressing her thoughts on how I, as a father, should build a relationship and communicate with our daughter. Then, my wife also shared some feelings of hurt she had regarding our relationship. Listening to all of this, Karis started crying and spoke emotionally to both of us. Usually, when her mom and I argue or fight, Karis avoids the situation. However, this might have been the first time she faced such a moment directly, and it seemed very difficult for her. She couldn't take sides—neither with her dad nor her mom—and instead, she tried to remain neutral while expressing what she wanted to say. I told Karis, "I am sorry," because I genuinely felt apologetic toward her. I handed her a napkin, and when they weren't looking, I wiped the tears from my own eyes with my hand.

3. Karis seemed to feel like her mom was blaming her dad. And in reality, my wife did express some dissatisfaction toward me. But that's because I haven't been a good husband, and even now, I fall short in many ways. So, I told my wife and Karis, "As a husband to your mom and a father to Dillon, Yeri, and Karis, I've been lacking and have done many things wrong." I also admitted that I'm not confident I'll do better in the future. Without God's help, I cannot fulfill my responsibilities in this family ministry. Hearing this, my wife also shared her own shortcomings and weaknesses. Then Karis, in her own way, lovingly rebuked us both, saying, "Why do Mom and Dad keep putting yourselves down like this?" Her words were a kind of loving correction. When she said that, I had nothing to say in response. I simply asked her, "Please pray for Mom and Dad." However, at that moment, Karis was so heartbroken, crying and crying — it wasn't a situation where she could easily pray for us. She just went back to her room.

I couldn't remember all of yesterday's long conversation, nor do I know how to properly summarize it, so I've decided to organize my thoughts into three key points. However, I am grateful because I believe last night's conversation was precious and beneficial. In particular, as a father, I'm thankful that Karis was able to speak honestly with me and her mom, sharing what was on her heart. I trust that the Lord will help her process and work through her thoughts as she reflects in her room, organizes her feelings, and writes in her journal. I also sense God granting wisdom not only to me and my family but also to Karis, and I am grateful and joyful to witness this. Last night, I also shared my heart openly with Karis. As I observe how God is working in the hearts and lives of Dillon, Yeri, and Karis, I am continually amazed. What's particularly striking is that among my three children, Karis seems to resemble my spirituality the most. I've translated and shared with our extended family the ministry letters, testimonies, and mission updates that Dillon, Yeri, and Karis have written. Through their writings, I catch glimpses of God actively working in each of their lives. And with Karis, I've noticed that it's not just our taste in food that's similar—our spirituality bears a resemblance too. I shared this observation honestly with her last night.

Our marriage will require continuous effort and prayer for God's grace until the very end of our lives. One of the phrases my wife has likely said the most during our 26 years of marriage is "different." That reflects just how different we are from each other. Yesterday, one of the things my wife said to me in front of Karis was that the walls around my heart are too high. From her perspective, I believe this means she loves me deeply and wants to draw closer to me, but the strength and height of those walls make it difficult for her. With a heart longing for God's grace, I will continue prioritizing our relationship and striving to improve it. Interestingly, after Karis left our room last night, my wife and I joyfully worked on preparations for our October trip. 😊 Of course, Karis wouldn't know about these little moments and nuances that are part of just our relationship.

[One thought came to mind. Yesterday, Karis pointed out that as a father, I may have placed too much emphasis on the independence of my children. While all three of them have indeed become quite independent in their own ways, she felt that this focus has resulted in a lack of emotional connection between me and them. I had nothing to say in response because she was right. In prioritizing and perhaps overemphasizing their independence, I may have



unintentionally created a situation where my children don't feel an adequate emotional connection with me as their father. When Karis honestly shared this with me yesterday, it made me realize the truth in her words, and I've been reflecting on it ever since.]

# A family meal where hearts are shared

To celebrate my wife's birthday today, in the morning, my wife and I had a meal just the two of us, and in the afternoon, after my wife finished work, the family gathered at a restaurant she chose for a hearty meal. I'm grateful. Especially, it was nice to watch my wife have various conversations with our son Dillon and his wife Jessica, including about his proposal to Jessica. It was heartwarming to see Dillon chatting with her, smiling brightly. Jessica, as expected, ate her favorite Korean food Bossam with great enthusiasm. Haha. Our youngest daughter Karis seemed to have only eaten ramen all day, but it was heartwarming to see her happily eating her favorite seasoned egg. After the meal, my wife wanted to have tea or something for dessert, so we went to the café we often visit as a family. There, though it wasn't planned, I just opened my heart and shared my sincere feelings. And that sincerity was ...

1. Your dad never had the chance to date and only experienced unrequited love until I met your mom and got married. I knew so little about women, and because of that, I had many regrets for the times I treated your mom poorly.
2. Also, after our first child, Charis, passed away, my wife and I longed for a baby so much. When God gave us Dillon, we were so thankful, but I had no idea how to raise children and became a father without knowing much about parenting.
3. So, as I raised the three of you children, there were so many things I did wrong. I'm really sorry for that.
4. Mom and dad don't focus on what we have or haven't done for you. When we talk about you three, our focus is on how God is working in each of your lives.
5. Mom and dad can't help but be thankful to God. The reason is that, even though we are imperfect parents, God loves you more than anyone and is personally raising you, and He has allowed us to catch a glimpse of that through faith.

I shared my sincere feelings like, and during the process, I asked my children if I was too strict when they were young, but they said I wasn't. Haha. Also, there were several times when I disciplined all three of them at once with a stick, and Dillon and Karis remember those moments. What's amazing, though, is that both of them said I disciplined them with love, not in anger. But in reality, I feel like most of the time I disciplined them out of anger. I'm not sure. I

apologized to my kids, thinking I had made many mistakes in raising them. But I realized they perceive things differently. It must be God's grace.

## **Even if a great storm of life rages and the ship called family begins to sink ...**

Even if a great storm of life rages and the ship called family begins to sink (Ref: Matthew 8:24, Korean Modern Bible), I want to rest in the Lord, believing in Emmanuel God (1:23) with faith. I want to sing the hymn, "When peace, like a river, attendeth my way, When sorrows like sea billows roll; Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say, 'It is well, it is well with my soul.' It is well with my soul; It is well, it is well with my soul" (Hymn "When Peace, Like a River, Attended My Way," verse 1 and refrain) and find rest in the Lord (Ref: 2 Thessalonians 1:7; Hebrews 4:11, Korean Common Translation).

## **We must reconcile before we die.**

At the funeral, I saw the family members not getting along. I mostly saw children arguing with each other at the funeral of one of their parents. I'm not sure how to express it, but it wasn't something that brought any good. It was a sad sight. On the other hand, I heard about someone who, before passing away, reached out to each person they had a bad relationship with, asked for forgiveness, and reconciled with them before they left. It was a beautiful sight. But what was unfortunate was that, at that person's funeral, one of their siblings told the funeral attendees to remove the flower arrangements from the ceremony. The person who passed had reconciled with everyone, but it seemed like one of their siblings had not done the same. To die well, to offer a worship service that glorifies God, and to hold a funeral that leaves a lasting, gracious memory in the hearts of all the mourners, we must reflect again on the teaching from Romans 12:18, which says, "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone."

# **Part 3: Restoration**

# Restoration is ...

Restoration is returning.

It is returning to God with a heart of repentance for one's sins.

That is true restoration.

God promises that He will lead us to return to Him

(Ezekiel 39:25, 27, 28).

God promises that He will restore us.

**I pray that He will restore everything  
to its original state.**

I pray that the Lord will raise up our broken family and our church,  
and rebuild them, restoring everything to its original state

(Ref: Amos 9:11, 14, Korean Modern Bible).

# ‘Restore us now!’

## [Psalms 60]

When I think of "restoration," I remember a visit to a couple's home about 1-2 years ago with a church deacon. At that time, the wife of that family was going through a difficult period, and we prayed to God for restoration. After the prayer, I remember her being curious about why pastors always pray for restoration. After visiting the couple, I returned to the church and reflected on the visit, and I thought, "Why didn't I urge them to repent?" I believe that without addressing the issue of sin and resolving it in the Lord, we cannot experience the true grace of restoration. I still remember it clearly. About two years ago, during the New Year's Eve service, I declared the message of the 5 R's: Repentance → Reconciliation → Restoration → Reformation → Revival. In order to experience true restoration, we must first repent and be reconciled with God.

In today's passage, Psalms 60:1b, we see that David is pleading with God, saying, "... now restore us!" Based on this verse, under the title "Restore us now!" we will reflect on why David prayed for restoration, how he prayed for restoration, and finally, what his attitude was after praying for restoration, as we seek to learn the lessons he offers.

### **First, why did David pray for restoration?**

The reason is that he had suffered a temporary defeat in battle due to God's discipline (Psalms 60:1-3) (Park). The psalmist, David, explains the cause of the temporary defeat in the war as follows: "O God, you have rejected us and scattered us; you have been angry; restore us!" (v. 1), "You have shaken the earth and torn it open; heal its fractures, for it is quaking" (v. 2), "You have shown your people desperate times; you have given us wine that makes us stagger" (v. 3). The "wine" mentioned in verse 3 is a metaphor for God's wrath (Park). In other words, David experienced a temporary defeat due to the invasion by Edom, and he knew the cause was God's anger. As a result, David (and the people of Judah) endured hardships because of God's wrath (v. 3). Therefore, David pleaded with God, saying, "Restore us now!" (v. 1), and "Heal its fractures, for the earth is quaking" (v. 2). Since the Lord had shaken the earth and torn it open, a gap had naturally appeared. David asked God to heal that gap. This prayer was a prayer for restoration.

If God is angry and abandons us, we cannot help but lose in the spiritual battle. If God does not hold us, we will stumble and fall, and we will inevitably fail in life. No matter how strong our faith may seem, or how firm our family, business, or church may appear, the Lord shakes the earth and causes it to split (v. 2). If God's anger causes the foundations of our family, business, and the church we serve to be shaken, how can we not be shaken? When we see gaps in our lives due to God's wrath, and when we are shaken and unsettled, we must remember that there are sins within us that have provoked God's anger. We must repent of our sins before God and seek His mercy. The reason for this is that true restoration cannot happen without genuine repentance.

## **Second, how did David pray for restoration?**

David prayed for restoration with two convictions:

### **(1) David prayed for restoration with the assurance of salvation.**

Look at Psalms 60:5: "Answer us and save us with your right hand, that those you love may be delivered." Here, we see David pleading with God, relying on God's love (mercy). David was confident that God, who loves His people more than anyone else, would not turn a deaf ear to their cries. He believed that God would answer their prayers and save them with His powerful right hand. This reminds me of the gospel song "Vision": 'We have gathered before His throne, praising the Lord together, God gave His Son out of love, and by His blood we are saved, The love He poured out on the cross, flowing like a river across the land, From every nation, tribe, and people, they are saved and worship Him. Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and to the Lamb. Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and to the Lamb.'

### **(2) David prayed for restoration with the assurance of victory.**

Look at Psalms 60:4: "You have given a banner to those who fear you, to be raised because of the truth (Selah)." The Bible tells us that God gives a "banner" to those who fear Him. Why did God give David a "banner"? It was to show that God would be with David and give him victory. In short, the "banner" mentioned here is a flag of victory. What is the cause of this victory? It is not because the army is strong, the soldiers are many, or the weapons are powerful, but because God is with them. Since God was with David, he was confident that he would prevail against Moab, Edom, and the Philistines, as mentioned in verse 8. That is why, in verse 6, David declares, "I will rejoice." David rejoiced because he foresaw victory in battle. How could he have such assurance of victory? "God has spoken from His holiness" (v. 6). Because the holy God promised to be with David, David rejoiced with the assurance of victory. The lyrics of hymn "There's a Royal Banner," verse 4 and the refrain, reflect this: "When the glory dawns 'tis drawing very near It is hast-'ning day by day; Then before our King the foe shall disappear, And the cross the world shall sway!



Marching on, marching on, For Christ count everything but loss! And to crown Him King, Toil and sing 'Neath the banner of the cross!"

### **Finally, third, what was David's attitude after he prayed for restoration?**

In short, David relied on God and acted courageously. Look at Psalms 60:12: "With God we will gain the victory, and he will trample down our enemies." What does it mean to rely on God here?

(1) To rely on God means to believe that only God can lead and guide us.

Look at Psalms 60:9: "Who will bring me to the fortified city? Who will lead me to Edom?" The "fortified city" here refers to the impregnable city of Petra, the capital of Edom (Par). The city of Edom, as strong as a rock ... David believed that only God could bring down that city and lead him and the Israelite army into it.

(2) To rely on God is to have Immanuel faith. It is the belief that God is with us.

Look at Psalms 60:10: "Have you not rejected us, O God? And will you not go forth with our armies?" David, relying on God, was pleading while remembering how, in the past, God's anger had caused him and his army to suffer a temporary defeat. This time, he earnestly prayed for God to be with them. The reason for this was that David knew that no matter how large the army, it would be useless unless God went into battle with them. In other words, he understood that victory in battle depended on whether or not God was with them, and that is why he prayed for God's presence.

(3) To rely on God is to acknowledge that human salvation is worthless.

Look at Psalms 60:11: "Give us aid against the enemy, for the help of man is worthless." To rely on God means not to rely on people. David's faith was one that depended solely on God, not on people. Like David, we must fully rely on God and act courageously. We do not need to fear our enemies. We must boldly raise the banner of the cross and go forward to fight against sin, the world, and Satan, and achieve victory.

David, having experienced a temporary defeat in the war with Edom due to God's anger, prayed for restoration with the assurance of salvation and victory. He then made the decision to rely on God and act courageously. Like David, we must also plead with God, saying, "Restore us now!" We must pray for recovery with the assurance of salvation and victory in faith. And we must act courageously, relying on God.

"Restore us now!"

Pastor James' Sharing

(June 7, 2007, with a heart longing for the grace of restoration)

# For restoration ...

For the restoration of our relationship with God,  
as well as the restoration of our relationships with others...

(1) We must receive.

What should we receive? We must receive God's teachings (His Word) (Job 22:22). And we must keep those teachings/words in our hearts.

(2) We must return.

To whom should we return? We must return to Almighty God (Job 22:23a). Just as the prodigal son returned to his father, we must return to God the Father.

(3) We must remove.

What should we remove? We must remove all unrighteousness (Job 22:23b). If we truly wish to return to the righteous God, we must distance ourselves from all unrighteousness.

For restoration, we must receive God's Word, return to Him, and remove all unrighteousness. When we do this, the Bible says, "You will be restored" (Job 22:23).

Restore, Receive, Return, Remove

With a heart seeking relationship restoration,

James Kim

(May 12, 2007, During Saturday Morning Prayer service)

# **The Lord will surely fulfill His words of restoration.**

The Lord will not only give us His words of restoration,  
but He will also surely fulfill them out in His time and in His way  
(Ref: Ezekiel 37:14, Korean Modern Bible).

## **Aren't we making it impossible for ourselves to be restored?**

Right now, we may be shouting "restoration" with our lips, but aren't we perhaps making it impossible for ourselves to be restored with our hearts and actions? (2 Chronicles 36:16) If, at this moment, our hearts are not humble before God, if we harden our necks and our hearts, not returning to God, and are greatly sinning against Him? Or if we are following all the abominable practices of the world and defiling God's temple, even when God sends His servant diligently to speak His word, and we mock and scorn His servant, despising God's word? If so, then we are making it impossible for ourselves to be restored (vv. 12-16).

# When I think of our families ...

1. I long for God's great grace and mercy.
2. I earnestly pray that God would bestow the grace of salvation upon us.
3. I pray that God would humble all of our family members, even through our pain, wounds, and suffering, and help us to look to and depend on the Lord alone.
4. I pray that God would thoroughly break and shatter each of us, softening our hearts.
5. I pray that God would expose our sins, helping us to recognize, acknowledge, and confess them, and that we would seek forgiveness through the precious blood of Jesus on the cross.
6. May God grant us the assurance of forgiveness, and through the great grace and love that comes from knowing we have been forgiven by God, may we also be able to forgive one another as God has forgiven us.
7. I pray that God would protect and watch over our children. Especially, I earnestly ask that God would gently heal the hearts of our wounded children.
8. I pray that God would turn around the crisis in our family and bestow grace upon us, so that we may deeply and widely experience His great love and salvation.
9. I pray that God, who is the Lord, would govern and rule over our family, protecting us from all evil forces and Satan, and keeping us safe.
10. I pray that the Holy Spirit would bear more of the fruit of God's divine love in us and use us as instruments of His love, so that every member of our family may love one another with the Lord's love.

# Lessons on family (1)

As I reflect on the ministry I've been carrying out on the internet until yesterday, I would like to revisit some thoughts and feelings about family and see if there are any lessons the Lord wants to teach us through them:

1. When thinking about family, there are tears.
2. The love between husband and wife shines even more brightly in times of crisis.
3. The pain caused by physical illness makes the husband and wife weep together, and together they praise and worship God with joyful hearts.
4. Christ's love enables us to overcome illness abundantly.
5. The boundless love of the Lord is far stronger than death.
6. Husband and wife, who love each other with the Lord's love, are truly beautiful.
7. The beautiful couple in the Lord's eyes, by partially reenacting the marriage of the Lamb in the heavenly kingdom, where Christ is the Bridegroom and the Church is His bride, are used by the Lord as witnesses to Jesus Christ in this world.

(Thinking of Pastor Jun-Hak Kim and Mrs. Soo-Eun Shim, whom the Lord loves.)

# My thoughts on family issues and crisis

As I reflect on yesterday's meeting and write down my thoughts today, I would like to organize a few points that come to mind:

1. Family issues are very personal, and I believe they can bring deep wounds and immense stress that we cannot avoid.
2. Family issues make us feel the limits of our human capacity in a profound way.
3. Without God's help, family issues can truly feel hopeless.
4. I believe we should see the crisis in the family as an opportunity given by God, enduring with faith, relying solely on God, and pleading with Him.
5. This opportunity is that God uses the crisis in the family to transform husbands and wives, parents, and children.
6. One of the key aspects of that transformation is that through the breaking and shattering of the self, we are made to completely trust and rely on God, ultimately tasting God's goodness, who works all things together for good (Psalms 34:8; Romans 8:28).
7. By trusting God more and more, we receive the great grace and blessing of knowing "Be still, and know that I am God" (Psalms 46:10).

# The crisis in the family

It is 7:13 PM on Tuesday here. Since there is a family prayer meeting at 8, I am preparing the sermon after meditating on the words I reflected on this morning. In the meantime, I wanted to take a moment to briefly write about the conversation I had with two couples that God led me to meet last week (one with a husband, and the next day with another husband and his wife, where we had an extended conversation). I hope this will be of some benefit to you:

1. Every family (those two families) is facing a crisis. Both couples faced crises, and this time, they were experiencing continuous difficulties. The other husband seems to be going through a major crisis at the moment.
2. When a great crisis comes to a family, what should we do and how should we respond? Personally, I believe that crisis is an opportunity. However, when actually going through a crisis, the reality seen with our physical eyes and the way we think about it in our minds can make it feel almost impossible to endure or handle the situation from a human perspective.
3. Among the various types of crises in a family, the one I am most concerned about and tend to focus on is the crisis between the couple. When husband and wife are experiencing deep conflicts for various reasons and reach a point where they no longer want to live together, I believe it is a truly serious crisis. Particularly, if the couple is living under the same roof but their hearts and emotions have already drifted apart, such a relationship lacking interest and affection is, in my view, a great crisis.
4. Another family crisis is one caused by the mother-in-law. After the crisis between the couple, the next family crisis that concerns me the most is the significant difficulty that arises from the husband's mother or the wife's mother-in-law. In the midst of this great difficulty, what concerns me the most is not the daughter-in-law (sister) but the son (the sister's husband). Why do I worry about the husband more than his wife? It is because I believe that if the husband is thinking rightly in faith, seeing his beloved wife in deep pain, hurt, and tears due to his mother would be unbearable for him. However, even though he would be greatly troubled, he cannot sever the relationship with his mother. He will be deeply conflicted on how to wisely honor his mother while loving his wife, whom he is one with, just as Jesus loved the church.



5. Particularly, if before marriage, the wife's parents, especially the father and mother, were deeply hurt because of the mother-in-law, I believe that the husband's heart would be greatly pained and distressed seeing his wife's deep wounds and tears. After such deep wounds and pain, they eventually married, but even now, seeing them suffer because of the mother-in-law, I can't help but believe that the difficulty caused by the mother-in-law is indeed a serious family issue.
6. What I am grateful for is that when the couple could not have such a sensitive conversation directly with each other (the husband told me that he couldn't talk to his wife about those things directly), the Lord used me to help them open up their hearts and have a sincere conversation. I was thankful and joyful about that (I believe that when I do counseling, my role is to help the couple communicate with each other through me).
7. If the wife considers her mother-in-law to be at the level of a 'patient,' how can she, as a daughter-in-law, love, honor, and serve such a mother-in-law? When I heard the wife's words, and even the husband agreed with her, it seemed that the mother-in-law was not a normal person. What should I have advised this couple? When I listened to them, I thought that not only was the mother-in-law emotionally and mentally unstable, but she seemed spiritually unwell too, as a Korean church "권사"(kwon-sa). God sees the heart, and if someone is not cultivating an inner faith but rather is focused on outward appearances like the Pharisees, how can a daughter-in-law love such a mother-in-law, and how can the husband (her son) honor and love such a mother? I truly think it is a very difficult challenge.
8. So, I challenged the husband to not only stand firm in faith as the head of his household, but also to seek wisdom from God on how to wisely honor his mother in the Lord. And I encouraged his wife (the sister) that even though her heart is deeply troubled and difficult because of her mother-in-law, she should think about the future generations (the children and grandchildren that will be born to the couple) rather than just herself. I advised her that, as her husband said, the family environment is very important, and in order to create a home that is beautiful in the Lord's eyes, she should wisely support her husband.

## **Even through the crisis in the family ...**

If, through the crisis in the family, we can meet the Lord personally,  
then I believe that the pain of the family has value.

## **When a family crisis comes ...**

When a crisis comes to the family,  
all the family members should be able to wisely and faithfully  
face the crisis with one heart and one mind in the Lord,  
using it as a precious opportunity to give glory to God and witness His glory.

## **Love and wounds received in the family**

In the family, we receive both love and wounds.  
However, we must gradually receive more love, deeper love,  
so that with that greater and deeper love,  
we can heal the wounds we have received from our loved ones.

# **Is the crisis in the family an opportunity to experience the Lord's saving love more deeply?**

Yesterday, while I was chatting on KakaoTalk with a fellow believer who was going through some family difficulties, I received some insights. I just took a moment to reflect on them and write them down. I pray that these insights, which are not only for that individual but for all of us, may be wisely applied in our family ministry, so that through the crisis in our families, we can experience God's saving love more deeply, more abundantly, and more greatly.

I believe we can pray to the Lord, "Lord, can You love us like this?" especially when we are going through very difficult times. When we pray and ask the Lord to answer our prayers in the way we expect, it may seem like the hardship or difficulty we're facing will be resolved more easily (or at least not get worse).

About 22 years ago, when my first child fell ill and was at the brink of life and death, my fervent hope and prayer were that the Lord would miraculously heal my baby and save their life. However, things did not unfold as I had prayed and hoped; instead, my baby was gradually heading toward death. I might have thought, "Lord, can you show us your love by saving our baby?" But in the end, my baby died in my arms. So, how could I feel God's love in that moment? After we cremated our child and I was holding the small box of ashes, my wife and I went out on a boat, sprinkled the ashes in the water, and as we returned, the Holy Spirit moved in my heart so powerfully that I was led to praise and glorify the amazing and wondrous love of God's salvation (Psalms 63:3).

In May 1987, during our church's college department retreat, I received the Lord's calling (John 6:1-15), and after that experience, I began to deeply experience God's saving love more abundantly (Ephesians 3:18-19). Therefore, I would like to pray this prayer to the Lord: "Lord, do not love me according to my will, but love me according to Your will" (Matthew 26:39). The reason I want to pray this is that I believe it is best to be loved according to the will of the Lord, who loves me most (John 3:16; Romans 8:32), knows me best (Psalms 139), and desires to give me what is always best for me.

# **I want to become genuine even through a crisis.**

Through the crisis...

I pray that it will be an opportunity for us to become authentic Christians,  
for our family to become an authentic Christian family,  
and for our church to become an authentic Lord-centered church.

# The negative influence received from our parents.

A few weeks ago, I met a brother in Christ at a restaurant in Koreatown and had a heartfelt conversation while we were eating. After the meal, we moved to a Korean coffee shop and continued our conversation. During that time, I thought it would be a good idea to meet with his wife as well, and have a conversation with both of them. The reason I said this was that I suspected his wife might have experienced some past wounds from her parents. So yesterday, on Sunday afternoon, I met with the brother and his wife, and we had an open and honest conversation. Afterward, this morning, my wife and I discussed the conversations we had during our meeting yesterday, and we had a meaningful dialogue about our own family, including our beloved son Dillon and his wife Jessica. Reflecting on all of these conversations, I want to take the time to write down each one and share my thoughts.

1. As we grow up, there are certainly good influences we receive from our parents, but at the same time, there are also clearly negative influences.
2. However, it seems that we are often unaware of the negative influences we received from our parents, and even if we are aware, we do not fully recognize them. As a result, we sometimes unconsciously speak and act like our parents.
3. Eventually, through conflicts with our spouse, we may begin to recognize, even if just a little, the negative influences we received from our parents, often in the midst of pain and struggle, through God's grace.
4. Especially for a husband or wife who tends to be a people-pleaser, through marital conflicts, they may find time to reflect on themselves and, in the midst of deep thought and struggles, become aware of the negative influences they received from their parents. Particularly when their spouse is an avoider—someone excessively independent—the people-pleasing husband or wife, who may not have deeply thought about their actions, could find themselves hurt by the direct, blunt words their spouse says without much thought. As a result, the people-pleaser may start to reflect deeply on themselves and, through this self-reflection, recognize and acknowledge (even if just a little) the negative influences they received from their parents.

5. However, a more serious issue seems to be that the husband or wife who tries to please others, due to the negative influences they received from their own parents, may carry an excessive sense of guilt toward their spouse. In trying to make their spouse happy (perhaps because making their spouse happy makes them feel happy too?), they risk allowing their spouse to sit on the throne of their heart. Before marriage, the throne of their heart was occupied by the mother and/or father, who had a significant negative influence on them. But after marriage, they replace that position with their spouse. The reason this seems like a serious problem to me is that the throne of our hearts should be occupied by the King of Kings, the Lord. If anyone other than the Lord — whether it's their mother, father, or spouse — is sitting in that place, it becomes a form of idol worship.
6. Parents or spouses can indeed become idols in our hearts to that extent. However, this idolatrous mindset does not end with replacing the idolatry of our parents with the idolatry of our spouse. There is a real risk of excessively or overly idolizing our children, placing them in an idolized position.
7. Through the great love and grace of God, even through the great crisis in our family, we are able to reflect on ourselves. In the process of self-reflection, we recognize and repent of the sin of idolizing the family members we excessively love, thereby removing all idols from our hearts. We then allow the Lord to sit on the throne of our hearts.
8. After doing this, we humbly yield to the Lord's authority, allowing Him to govern our relationship as a couple, and we trust and place our marriage in His hands by faith.
9. When we do this, through the eyes of faith, we begin to see how the Lord is working remarkably in our marriage, bringing together the strengths and weaknesses of both spouses (the husband/wife who seeks to please others and the spouse who tends to avoid) to complement each other in His amazing work.
10. Furthermore, as we experience how much the Lord loves our marriage, we gradually gain freedom from the negative influences of our parents and are slowly built up into a Lord-centered marriage.

# **The love for children of a worldly mother who does not resemble Jesus is never the love for children with the Lord's love!**

Among Jesus' disciples, there were two brothers named James and John. Their father was Zebedee, and their mother came to Jesus with James and John, bowing down and asking for something. She requested, "Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom" (Matthew 20:20-21, Korean Modern Bible). Why did the mother of James and John ask Jesus for such a request? Of course, she didn't fully understand what she was asking (v. 22), but I believe her ultimate intention was for her two sons to be great and to be first in the kingdom. In response, Jesus, hearing her words, said to the ten other disciples who were upset, "Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave" (vv. 26-27, Korean Modern Bible). Jesus came not to be served, but to serve (v. 28), while the mother of James and John seemed to want her two sons to be served. A worldly mother's love for her children, who does not resemble Jesus, is certainly not loving them with the Lord's love!

Until just a moment ago, I was meditating on the passage from Matthew 20, and I wrote a short reflection based on that passage, which I shared in a few places. Afterward, I felt the need to reflect more deeply on the points in my previous meditation. Perhaps the reason for this is that the truth stated in the title of my reflection — "The love for children of a worldly mother who does not resemble Jesus is never the love for children with the Lord's love!" — seems to be very serious to me.

Personally, I believe that after God's love, the greatest love is a mother's love. This is because I, too, have received so much of my mother's love—great, deep, and wide—and I still do. Especially now, after she turned over eighty, my mother often shares with me how much she suffered when I was born. She tells me that when I was born with a large head, she had to rely on the help of a midwife, and how she often had to carry me on her back when I was sick, taking two buses to travel far to the hospital for treatment. She shares these stories with me. So, every year in May, on Mother's Day, when I worship God and sing hymn "Precious Love, the Love of Mother," I often feel a lump in my throat. Here are the lyrics of the first and second verses: (Verse 1) Precious love, the love of mother, Broad and deep beyond all praise! Precious love, it stirs my spirit Gives me gladness all my days. Mother pray'd when I was weeping, Made my sorrows all her own; And when I was glad and smiling Sang her praises at the Throne. (Verse 2)

Precious Book, my mother's Bible, Which she read me morn and night. Still I see her read, and, pausing, Call some treasure to my sight: "Whosoever but believeth Shall receive eternal life." Precious words of her reciting, Still my strength in mortal strife! The memory I still can't forget is of my mother, sitting at the table at her house, transcribing the Bible, and then, her head bowing, falling asleep at the table. Another memory that I hold dear is when my mother was taken by ambulance to the emergency room. While she lay there, just the two of us worshipped God, and I asked her to recite her favorite Bible verse, Isaiah 41:10. She responded with the words: "Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." There are countless other memories in my heart, but if I were to share just one more, it would be the image of my mother crying in front of me. Those tears of my mother are quiet in the depths of my heart [Reference: "You have collected all my tears in your bottle" (Psalms 56:8)]. At the same time, I cannot forget how much I must have hurt my mother, making her cry. What I know about causing my mother to cry is probably only 1%. The other 99% of the times I hurt my mother's heart and made her cry, I still don't know, and I can only guess. One of those guesses is that during my teenage years, when I wanted to break free from my mother's overwhelming love, I hurt her a lot with my words and actions, and she probably cried a lot and deeply, in places I couldn't see. At that time, I felt burdened by my mother's excessive love. I didn't like how she constantly worried about me, fussed over me, and lectured me. In short, I wanted to be independent from her excessive love and protection. So, in my attempt to break free, I ended up saying many hurtful things to her directly. From my mother's perspective, hearing those things must have been painful, especially considering all the hardships she endured since giving birth to me. Not only did she suffer while raising me in Korea, where I was often sick, but she also made sure I received the eggs, which she didn't give to my other siblings, and when we immigrated to the U.S., she didn't even know the English alphabet. I had to memorize 20 words for a test the next day in elementary school, and seeing me struggle, crying as I memorized all those words, she must have been deeply pained. How do you think my mother felt about all of this? However, from my perspective at the time, my mother's unconditional love felt like a burden, and I wanted to break free from her overwhelming love and make my own decisions to do what I wanted. I didn't want her to worry so much or to be overly concerned about me. The reason was that I was more worried about my mother's health. I still remember when my mother was in her early 40s and suffered a stroke while I was in elementary school. She had to get acupuncture all over her body, either from a traditional medicine doctor or a church elder. Since then, my mother has had to take blood pressure medicine for the rest of her life. When I think of her, I wish she would take better care of her health, even more than she takes care of me (and I still feel this way now).

The reason I am sharing honestly about my relationship with my mother is that although I believe that my mother's love is the closest human love to God's love, if that great and precious love of my mother does not reflect God's love, then I believe that such love from a mother can do more harm than good to her child. I feel deeply that the love of a mother that harms her child is a serious issue, and I am truly saddened by this. So, after writing a short reflection on the topic "The love for children of a worldly mother who does not resemble Jesus is never the love for children with the Lord's love!," I want to take a moment to reflect on my deeper thoughts and express them in writing to better organize them.



1. First of all, as the title of my short reflection suggests, I believe that a worldly mother who does not resemble Jesus is a very serious issue. Of course, a child who does not resemble Jesus is also a big problem, but in my view, a worldly mother who does not resemble Jesus is an even bigger problem than such a child.
2. Even though a mother may be a believer in Jesus, if her child perceives her as someone who, despite being a member of the church and professing faith, doesn't truly seem to trust or believe in Jesus, then that mother, no matter how impressive her faith might appear in front of other church members, will still cause her child to doubt whether she truly believes in Jesus. If a mother constantly worries, is anxious, and is burdened by her child's struggles day by day, moment by moment, it is understandable that the child might say, "I'm not sure my mother truly believes in the Lord."
3. Especially if such a mother loves her children excessively, to the point where she desires, like the mother of James and John, that her children become great and rise to the top, and so desperately wants them to climb the ladder of worldly success and reach the highest position, if she goes to the temple of God and prays to God the Father like Hannah, Samuel's mother, saying, "God, make my children the head and not the tail" (Ref: Deuteronomy 28:13, Korean Modern Bible), then in my opinion, her children will never be able to satisfy their mother's desires. Moreover, her children will likely struggle with guilt, thinking, "No matter how hard I try, I can never satisfy my mother," and in that negative mindset, they may suffer from low self-esteem and inferiority complexes.
4. I believe that children who view their own worth as low and consider themselves insignificant, while emotionally and mentally bound to their mothers, are at great risk of being manipulated. These children will strive to gain their mother's approval, and the more they try, the more the unsatisfied mother will say, "You can do better than that," pushing the child to climb higher on the ladder of worldly success. I believe that the excessive love, expectations, and desires of such a mother can ultimately destroy the child's soul, mind, and emotions.
5. When I observe children in such a serious situation, I see their relationship with their mother as a toxic one. The more the mother loves her children, the greater the risk that the children are being poisoned. These children, due to their mother's worldly love, are being poisoned and are dying, while the mother believes that she is loving her children sacrificially and to the best of her ability, and she communicates this belief to her children. I think this is a very sad reality.
6. Is there an antidote to this poisoned relationship between mothers and children? If there is, what might it be? Personally, I believe that the antidote is for mothers who love their children in worldly ways to start loving their children with a more balanced approach. I think they need to stop loving so sacrificially to the point of exhausting themselves, as though they are giving their lives for their children. "Parental

love" can sometimes be like a car with an engine that's too powerful, where the mother, believing she is doing what's best for her child, keeps the engine running, pushing herself too hard in the race of love. Eventually, this can lead to a point where she can no longer apply the brakes. So, even though many mothers might say they must love their children sacrificially, some may have lost the ability to stop themselves. For this reason, I believe that these mothers need to intentionally love their children in a more measured and controlled way. If they don't, the children may either become consumed by the poison, leading to a sense of hopelessness and a desire to give up, or they may carry bitterness and hatred toward their mothers.

7. Mothers who cannot let go of their children, even when they see their children suffocating, need to establish physical and emotional boundaries, both in terms of distance and time. They must do this intentionally. Even though it may feel unbearably painful, mothers must set healthy boundaries for the sake of their children. Especially for mothers who, due to difficult relationships with their husbands, pour all their energy into their children, they need to stand firm in their faith before God and trust God to let their children go in faith. Mothers who are anxious about their children due to a lack of trust in God need to repent. The reason is that failing to raise children in faith is a sin (Ref: Romans 14:23).
8. Mothers who recognize that the problem in their relationship with their children lies not with their children, but with themselves, should come before God to seek the grace of repentance. They must look to Jesus Christ, who was crucified, with faith. In the assurance of forgiveness, as they repent, mothers must learn more and more about God's great and amazing love for them, gradually realizing how immense and incredible that love is. Only then will mothers be able to love their children with God's love.
9. Mothers who are dedicated to loving their children with God's love love their children through the power of the Holy Spirit, not by their own strength. Therefore, they believe with the assurance given by the Holy Spirit that God loves their children the most, and in faith, they entrust their children to God. They wisely help their children, who are of the age to make their own choices and decisions, by respecting their children's personalities and encouraging them to leave and become independent from their parents.
10. A wise and Spirit-filled mother, as she grows in the love of Jesus, loves her children with that same love of Jesus. She stands firm in her faith in Jesus, and so she continually prays for her children, never ceasing, with faith. As she receives answers to her prayers from God, she shares her testimony with her children with a heart of gratitude and faith. My mother is such a mother.

# **After watching a video titled 'Can the wounds and pain received from our parents be restored?'**

Last week, a sister in Christ who is in the group chat of people I met through an online ministry shared the link to this YouTube video, and I just finished listening to it a little while ago this Sunday afternoon. While listening to the words of the author, Eun-young Oh (a professor of psychiatry) who wrote the book “Reconciliation,” I wasn’t able to fully understand everything, but there were several points that made me think deeply.

1. First of all, the wounds we received from our parents when we were young can have a negative impact on our lives even as adults. Not only can these negative effects affect us in various ways, but we might also unintentionally pass them on to our own children. Therefore, I believe it’s important to pray to God about this issue, seek the wisdom He provides, and learn from resources like expert books or seminars, so we can put those lessons into practice.
2. In putting this into practice, when we hope that our parents (father and/or mother) will acknowledge the wounds they inflicted on us when we were young, and even further expect them to recognize and admit that they hurt us, I think what’s important is that, even if our parents do not respond as we hope or expect, we still need to speak about our wounds for our own sake. Most parents, when we open our hearts, muster up the courage, and try to reconcile with them in the Lord, may not acknowledge our childhood wounds or admit their mistakes when we bring up those wounds. However, I believe that the very act of confronting our wounds, speaking courageously to our parents, and acknowledging those wounds inside us will itself be a great help in healing.
3. During this process, I think it’s much better for us to continue praying to God and, rather than trying to forgive our parents based on their reactions, move toward forgiving them through the great love that God has shown us in forgiving us through Jesus Christ. This, I believe, is a very important and significant step in healing the wounds within us.
4. In addition, throughout this entire process, I believe we need to gradually and clearly draw healthy boundaries with our parents in our hearts, guided by the wisdom that God gives us. These healthy boundaries include emotional boundaries with our parents as well. If, by sharing the wounds we’ve received from our parents, we wonder how they will respond or ask questions like how we will face

them in the future, these thoughts and feelings often indicate that we have not yet established healthy boundaries with our parents. After praying and following the Holy Spirit's guidance, I believe we do not need to be overly sensitive to their reactions when we speak to them. I think it's necessary to establish appropriate or suitable boundaries—whether emotional, mental, or geographical—and create distance. However, children who are deeply wounded often feel emotionally and mentally chained to their parents. I believe that these unhealthy emotional and mental chains should be broken by the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Therefore, we should experience freedom in the Lord.

5. In that context, I believe we should love our parents with the love of the Lord.

[https://youtu.be/S6Th8t\\_ENTA](https://youtu.be/S6Th8t_ENTA)



# Painful feelings

These days, I am reading a book called “How We Love: Discover Your Love Style, Enhance Your Marriage” (by Milan & Kay Yerkovich) before going to bed at night. Since I received this book as a gift, I have been reading it every night before going to bed. There are sentences that make me think and reflect on myself. I would like to share one paragraph and think about it a little:

“Throughout this book we will see why the ability to appropriately express a full spectrum of emotions is so important. The fact is that, when Susie marries, she will have a huge advantage over those people who didn’t learn to feel and deal when they were growing up. Susie will know how to manage rather than avoid painful emotions. Children raised in homes like Susie’s learn through their experiences to have good listening skills and to draw out the opinions and feelings of others. As adults, they are open, vulnerable, and comfortable with disclosure. They have interpersonal skills and are able to negotiate mutually satisfying solutions to problems.”

As I read this passage last night, I wanted to meditate and reflect more deeply, so I took a picture with my phone camera and sent it to myself via KakaoTalk. Then, I sat down at my desk in the pastor's office at church this morning and am writing this. I just write down the thoughts that God gives me, one by one:

1. I think I suppressed my personal painful feelings rather than expressing them as I grew up. When I look back on the painful feelings I had while living in Korea at that young age, I can think of three main emotions: one is when my parents had a big fight (I was probably in the 4th grade at the time, and I still vividly remember one scene where my father and mother had a big fight), another is when a student who was taller and bigger than me in elementary school (I still remember his nickname, ‘Big eyes’) hit and bullied me, and the other is when I saw my father being grabbed by the collar by another adult man and not reacting at all. If I were to think about the three feelings I felt at that time and talk about them now, I would say in one word that they were painful feelings (of course, I don't have those feelings right now).
2. Then, when I was 12, I immigrated to the United States with my parents and siblings, and I had a hard time adjusting to American culture because I didn't even know the English alphabet and had come to a country other than Korea as an adolescent. What I still vividly remember is that when I came to the United States and entered the 6th grade of elementary school again (I had already graduated from 6th grade in Korea), my American teacher introduced me to a Korean student who was good at English, and

- I remember that student served as interpreter) and I said that I would memorize 20 English words and take a test the next day. That night, I came home (I remember my fourth uncle living alone in an apartment where my family temporarily stayed) and cried while memorizing all 20 words (my mother still remembers me crying that day). So, the next day, I went to school and tried to take the test, but the American teacher told me, ‘You came yesterday, so you don’t have to take the test.’ I can’t erase this memory from my head. I think it’s because I was so shocked that I cried. If I look back now, I can say that my emotions at that time were ‘shocked emotions.’
3. That’s how I started my life in the US. When I was in the 11th and 12th grade of high school, I started hanging out with my friends, drinking, smoking, going to parties and dancing. Then, out of curiosity, I even tried drugs. Meanwhile, I went to church every Sunday and worshiped. What I felt during that time was a ‘guilty feeling’. Growing up as the son of a Korean Presbyterian (Hapdong) pastor, and hearing some of the church members at the Korean Sang Hyun Church call me a ‘little pastor’ when I was in elementary school, I came to the US and lived my life doing so many bad things while only attending worship on Sundays, so naturally my conscience tormented me. But the guilt I had felt so strongly seemed to have faded away as time passed. Later, two friends were shot to death, and I remember going to their funeral and crying because I was so upset. Then, I became a ‘little philosopher’ and asked myself two questions countless times: (1) ‘What is the purpose of life?’ (2) ‘Where is the joy of life?’ The books I read at that time were those of philosopher Hyung-seok Kim and Dong-gil Kim. My feelings at that time could be described as ‘confused emotions.’
  4. In the midst of all this, I felt bitter toward my father because I wanted to have a father-son relationship with him at home, and I was not satisfied at all. At that time, my feelings were ‘wounded emotions.’ I remember David A. Seamands, a former missionary to India, saying in his book ‘Healing from Wounded Emotions’ that ‘wounded emotions’ are one of the most common emotions, the inability to recognize one’s own worth. So, I became, as Seamans puts it, a person who is constantly anxious, who feels inadequate, who has an inferiority complex, who always tells herself, ‘I’m no good.’ And I had what he called a “perfectionist complex,” which made me always searching, always striving, always feeling guilty, always feeling like I have to do something. On top of that, I had another damaged emotion, which he called “super sensitivity.” But then I realized that I was, as Seamans puts it, always deeply hurt. At that time, my feelings were ‘wounded emotions’. In particular, when my parents fought with each other, I really hated how my mother kept bringing up past events to my father. At that time, I felt anger and feelings of hate toward my father.
  5. Then, when I was in college, by the grace of God, I changed my major to “psychology” to believe in Jesus and to become a pastor as I was called by the Lord. Then, I learned three words that described the emotions I experienced well: (1) Rejection, (2) Repression, (3) Suppression. “The main difference

between repression and suppression is that repression is generally considered to be an unconscious process, while suppression is a conscious process” (Internet). When I was in college, I had a crush on two girls (sisters in the Lord) and was ‘rejected’. And then I had a crush on another girl (sister) for about a year and ended it by myself. Haha. What I mean is, unlike the other two girls, I couldn’t even confess my feelings for them. I just had feelings for her by myself and I don’t remember what happened, but I ended it by myself. Haha. At that time, my feelings were ‘suppression’. I had consciously suppressed my feelings. Because of that, I unconsciously suppressed my feelings and spent my college life as if I had become accustomed to reacting to my feelings since I was young. In particular, I was very lonely during my first and second years of college. I still vividly remember sitting alone on a bench under a big tree in a park in the middle of the campus, often singing the gospel song ‘Someone is Praying for You’ and crying a lot. I missed people so much at that time. My feelings at that time were “lonely feelings” and “sad feelings.” However, by God’s grace, I started serving as a staff in a Christian club in my third year of college. At that time, I was happy to meet many people I had missed, but I felt like I had hurt them, so I would go to the dorm (an apartment within the school) and repent and pray to God for forgiveness. My feelings at that time were “guilty feelings.”

6. I entered theological seminary right after graduating from college. Studying was too hard for me. But the senior pastors elected me as the president of the Korean club. I didn’t want to, but I had no choice but to serve as the president. So I reluctantly participated in the morning prayer meeting because I thought I had to set an example as the president. At that time, I felt ‘guilt’.
7. After graduating from a theological seminary, I met my current wife Jane by God’s grace and got married. Then God gave us our first child, “Joo-young” (meaning: Glory of the Lord) (English name is “Charis” meaning “grace”), but the baby was born with a disease and eventually died in my arms after 55 days. After that, I suffered from a severe sense of guilt for over a year. The reason was that I thought Joo-young (Charis) died because of my sins.
8. I met my wife Jane with these feelings, got married, and have been married ever since. Next April, we will have been married for 28 years. But when I look back on our married life, we had a lot of conflicts for about 20 years since we got married. The reason is, as my wife has said many times, ‘We are very (so) different.’ Where in the world would there be a couple where a man and a woman are not different? They are all different. However, I think that we had marital conflicts because we couldn’t accept each other’s differences, and we couldn’t love and accept each other as we are, even though we had differences.
9. What I want to focus on here is that in the book I’m reading right now, “How We Love: Discover Your Love Style, Enhance your Marriage,” the author says that I (and I think my wife) never learned to manage rather than avoid painful feelings. In fact, I never learned how to deal with the feelings I felt growing up.

The only way I knew how was to suppress and repress my painful feelings. That's how I lived, so that's what I was most comfortable with.

10. In particular, I suppressed and repressed my anger towards my wife, so I thought that I was holding back and not getting angry at her (of course, there were many times when I was so angry that I expressed my anger), but when my wife said to me, 'You are angry inside,' I realized that I had "inner anger" (I am grateful to my beloved wife). And another thing I learned from my wife is that I have a "passive-aggressive tendency." That is why the aftereffects [definition: "the feelings that still remain after there have been bad feelings" (Naver Dictionary)] after our fights were no joke (severe). And I mostly avoided marital conflicts. I was so confused about how to solve them. And I had been suppressing and repressing my own emotions, so when I felt those emotions in my married life, I didn't know what to do, so I continued to suppress and repress them as I had always done. In short, I had never properly and correctly learned how to manage my painful emotions, so I continued to avoid them. However, when I looked back, I found it strange that my wife would express her anger when we had a fight and then never let it go. Haha. I don't want to mention my wife's 'painful feelings' that I see as her husband. Although if I share her painful feelings (it's better for her to share them than for me to share them), I will be able to understand our conflicts more fully because of the emotions we felt as a couple growing up before we got married. But I was hurt at that time (wounded emotions). So, once I honestly told my wife, 'What you said to me made my heart feel like it was stabbed with a knife.' Do you know what my wife said to me? 'Thank you for telling me.' Hahaha. [At that time, when I heard those words, I thought to myself: (1) 'How can I respond by saying thank you for saying that?' (I thought my wife would say 'I'm sorry'), (2) 'Why didn't I tell my wife when I was hurt (by her words) like I did today?' I felt very(?) regretful. Hahaha.
11. Since the writing is quite long, I will stop here talking about my personal painful feelings, and then I would like to talk about how the Lord brought out all of these painful feelings, comforted me, touched me, and healed me. Therefore, I would like to focus on how the Lord helped our relationship grow.
12. First, the Lord changed me, the husband and the head of the family (of course, the Lord is still changing me and I believe that He will change me until I die) (Transformation). The Lord brought out my painful feelings that I had suppressed deep in my heart little by little. For example, the Lord made me share my wounded emotions honestly with my loving wife. That means that the Lord made my wife listen to me when I told her about my wounded feelings and also made my wife understand my feelings. I think that the Lord's work gave me the courage to share my painful feelings with my wife little by little.
13. But more importantly, the Lord's work of change is that the Lord has gradually freed me from one of my most painful emotions, 'guilt feeling,' by making me believe and rely more on the Light, Jesus Christ,



and the power of His blood on the cross. Not only that, the Lord has gradually made my heart and emotions, which were easily hurt by my wife's anger and words, strong, firm, and courageous through the powerful word of God (Ref: 1 Peter 5:10). Furthermore, the Holy Spirit who lives in me has made me bear more and more fruit of love, allowing me to gradually see into my wife's heart better than her anger and words, and giving me the desire to love her more with the love of the Lord. In particular, the Holy Spirit gradually allowed me to see my wife's painful emotions more clearly, and gave me a heart of compassion toward her. Ultimately, the Lord shaped and broadened our hearts through our conflicts, so that we could acknowledge and embrace each other's differences, and even gradually embrace the wounds we inflicted on each other unintentionally (unwillingly). An important realization in the process was that through our conflicts, we were able to see each other's painful feelings, and those painful feelings helped us understand more about the backgrounds in which each of us grew up.

14. For example, when my wife and I lived in Korea about 23 years ago, one day my wife and I had an argument because of our beloved son Dillon, who was attending a church kindergarten. The reason we had an argument was that I wanted Dillon to yield to other children in kindergarten, and my wife wanted Dillon to do what he wanted to do rather than yield. The realization that the Lord gave me at that time was that I had grown up seeing my parents yield and learned to do so, so I wanted my son to be a yielding person, and my wife, as the eldest daughter, had not been able to do what she wanted to do and had to yield to her parents and live in obedience to their words, so she did not want her beloved Dillon to become like her (I came to know a little bit about the deep and painful feelings my wife had, albeit late). Ultimately, our conflict at that time became an opportunity for my wife and I to get to know and understand each other better.
  
15. I want to finish this article. While I was writing this article for a long time, I checked my phone from time to time and saw that my niece Lois (my brother's eldest daughter) posted a video on her Instagram story about starting an ultramarathon 100 miles (163 km) at around 5 a.m. today. My wife is now with Lois, her friend, and two of her marathon friends to run her second ultramarathon 100 miles in about two years. I have a purpose for fully supporting my beloved wife who loves running. That purpose is because I earnestly pray that the Lord will free my wife from all the painful feelings, stress, and things that she thinks are harmful to her through the marathon. That is why I have been holding on to this word in faith and praying for my beloved wife for about 28 years of marriage: "And you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." I believe that the Lord will continue to establish my wife and I as a more Lord-centered couple!

# Selfish heart

**“Our fundamental problem is not ignorance of what is right. Our problem is selfishness of heart that causes us to care more about what we want than about what is right.” [Paul David Tripp, “What did you Expect?”]**

In this sinful world, when a sinner man marries a sinner woman, how can they not sin in their relationship as a couple? The root of the sins that the couple commits is pride. That is, the sin that these two proud sinners commit against God is the disobedience to God's commandments. They are proud and do not keep Jesus' twofold commandment: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind” and “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:37, 39). They do not love God and their neighbor. Because they do not love God, they not only fail to love their neighbor with God's love, but they are also unable to do so. Their love for their neighbor is the love of a sinful human, and the bitter root of that love is selfishness.

The issue is that even though we Christians have been forgiven and saved by God's total grace in Jesus Christ, the bitter root of selfishness, which is the love of sinful humans, still exists in our hearts. Although "the love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us" (Romans 5:5), and we have become new people in Christ Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:17), we do love God and also love our neighbors (Luke 10:27), our old self refuses to live according to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and continues to devise works of the flesh, still loving our neighbors with selfish hearts. This selfish heart makes us focus on what we want rather than what is right, so instead of doing what is right in God's sight, we build relationships with others based on our own desires. Among all these relationships, I believe the one where our selfish hearts are most apparent is in the marriage relationship. The reason I believe this is that the purpose of God, the Potter, who, in His sovereignty, pairs a man and a woman together to live, is to have two different individuals become one flesh in the Lord. Therefore, the Holy Spirit is bearing the fruit of love in those two people (Galatians 5:22). Thus, the Holy Spirit gradually sanctifies the couple, enabling them to love each other more and more with God's love. In this process of sanctification, the Holy Spirit is gradually helping us to cast off our old, selfish nature that seeks to act according to our own desires, rather than what the Lord desires and even what our spouse desires. The Holy Spirit first brings to the surface our selfish hearts in our marital relationship.

Husband and wife each pursue what they want, rather than what the Lord wants or what the other spouse wants. As a result, the two selfish "kingdoms" — the husband's and the wife's — collide with each other, producing the bitter fruit of conflict, disputes, wounds, and pain. But the amazing thing is that God, our Potter, uses even the sinful, bitter fruits of our actions to mold us like clay. Through this, He causes us to confess and repent of our selfish hearts, enabling us to love God with one heart and to love one another with an unselfish heart. What else could this be but God's grace?

God is making His grace overflow even more where sin abounds (Romans 5:20). God has paired two selfish sinners together, sanctifying us, and using our conflicts, wounds, and pains to lead us, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to love one another with God's love. Specifically, God teaches us the sacrificial love of Jesus Christ on the cross, enabling us to cast off our selfish hearts and love each other with Christ's selfless heart. The purpose of this is that God desires to establish His Kingdom in our home. In establishing His Kingdom among us, God has given us the commandment of His Kingdom: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and love your neighbor as yourself" (Luke 10:27). We must obey this commandment. All Christian couples must obey this commandment and build Christ-centered homes. Therefore, through the Christ-centered homes that the Lord establishes, we pray that His Church and His Kingdom will be firmly built on the rock.

Praying to continually cast off selfishness and love the wife that God has paired me with, with a selfless heart,

James Kim

(July 29, 2014, Living with my beloved wife Jane by God's grace)

# Conflict and crisis in marital relationships

Through the meetings I had, guided by God, during the "2024 Internet Ministry to Korea," I want to reflect on the thoughts I had through my encounters with brothers and sisters who are facing a crisis in their marriages. I am attempting to organize these thoughts in writing once again:

1. It seems that conflicts and disputes are inevitable in marital relationships. Therefore, rather than trying to avoid them (and trying to appear to others as if our marriage has no conflicts or disputes), I believe it is much better to make efforts and strive to fight and dispute in a way that aligns with the wisdom that God provides.
  - a. My spouse and I had our first argument on our honeymoon. Before that, we had been in a long-distance relationship for about six months after being introduced through an arranged marriage, and during that time, we never had any conflicts or disputes. After getting married, we had countless conflicts and disputes over the next 20 years. I didn't want to show our marital conflicts or disputes in front of our children or others, so I tried to hide them, but it was useless. Then, through a pastor, I learned about the positive aspects of marital conflict. It was then that I became committed to learning not how to avoid or hide marital conflicts, but how to handle and fight them well.
  - b. When I think about the brothers and sisters in Christ whom I met through the "Internet Ministry to Korea" who shared even a little bit about their marital relationships with me, at least they acknowledged their marital conflicts. Furthermore, the ones who opened their hearts to me and shared were those who were going through a marital crisis, and they were desperate for help. Those who were going through such a crisis seemed to be in a state of cold war, where there was no longer any fighting between the spouses. Marital conflicts at this level have gone beyond the stage where couples can try to fight well, and I believe it is necessary to humbly and seriously reflect on where and how the conflict escalated to this point before God, looking inwardly at oneself (rather than blaming the spouse).
2. I believe that marital conflicts and disagreements provide a good opportunity for the husband and wife to get to know each other more deeply.

- a. In our case, about 22 years ago, when we were living in Korea, we had a big fight because of our beloved first son, Dillon. Through that marital conflict, God allowed me to get to know my wife more deeply. In other words, my wife did not want Dillon to live his life by always yielding, as she had done to her parents as the eldest daughter. Meanwhile, I wanted Dillon to live his life by yielding, as I had learned from my parents. That's when we had a big argument, but during that time, I came to understand that my wife, as the eldest daughter, did not want Dillon to live the way she had by always yielding to her parents.
  - b. Among the brothers and sisters in Christ whom I met through the "Internet Ministry to Korea," most of those in marital conflict and crisis seemed to focus more on what their spouses were doing wrong or on unreasonable demands they were making, rather than considering the reasons for their own arguments. Perhaps this is because the wounds they had received from their spouses were so deep. A marital relationship that focuses on one's own wounds and the faults of the spouse, rather than on the deeper issues, seems incapable of seeing the crisis as an opportunity for both partners to truly get to know each other.
3. I believe that the husband's resignation as the head of the household can significantly exacerbate marital conflicts and lead to a marital crisis.
- a. Among the brothers and sisters in Christ whom I met through the "Internet Ministry to Korea," there were some whose husbands' unwanted resignations undoubtedly caused them great emotional strain and heaviness. Furthermore, the financial difficulties and issues arising from this situation seemed to trigger not only marital conflicts but also a deeper marital crisis.
  - b. I particularly thought that when a couple argues due to financial issues, unresolved problems and wounds from their relationship can easily be expressed and manifested. Therefore, even if the marital relationship appeared to be going well and without issues when financial pressure was not as severe, the situation could drastically worsen due to the husband's resignation and subsequent financial struggles. I also thought that during such times, with many temptations from Satan, there is a high risk of not only sinning against God but also sinning against the wife. Consequently, I believe the marital relationship can deteriorate to a point where it is extremely difficult to recover.
4. I believe that as the head of the household, the husband is responsible for the marital crisis and should repent before God.

- a. I still remember from a book I read a long time ago called "Reformed Marriage" by Douglas Wilson, where the author states that his presupposition in counseling many couples is always 'it is the husband's responsibility'(Wilson). I fully agree with this statement. In our marriage, I believe that all the conflicts, arguments, and fights are ultimately my responsibility as the husband. Even though I may think my wife has made mistakes at times, I believe it is my responsibility as the husband for not properly nurturing her according to God's word (Ephesians 5:29). Therefore, I believe that all the issues in our marriage fall on my shoulders. Despite this, there have been many times when I did not want to take responsibility, and I blamed my wife, sinning against both her and God. Even though I know intellectually that I must repent for all the sins I've committed in our marriage, my heart struggles to repent. I have come to realize that without God's grace, I cannot even repent on my own. Therefore, I pray that God would grant me the grace of repentance.
  - b. During my recent encounters with fellow believers through the "Internet Ministry to Korea," I believe for the first time in my life, I directly told a brother in Christ, 'If you don't break and repent before God, there is no hope for this family.' Even I was surprised at myself for saying that. I never thought I would be able to say something like that, nor did I believe I had the right to say such words. But upon reflecting on why I said that to him, I think it was because of God's love for that brother and his family in my heart that made me speak in that way. Especially, my heart felt extremely desperate when thinking about that his family. I had no idea that the situation in their marriage was that serious until I learned a little bit through him, and my heart was deeply pained, to the point of tears. Additionally, when I met with his wife three times (the third time, I had planned to meet their eldest daughter one-on-one, but she was uncomfortable meeting me alone, so she came with her mother), and listened carefully to the wife's words, my heart was even more deeply hurt. That's why my heart became even more desperate. So, I spoke to that brother and visited their home at 10:40 PM. That's when I spoke those words in front of his wife. As I write this now and think of that brother and sister in Christ, I realize that all I can do is look to the Lord, longing for His great mercy, compassion, and grace of salvation.
5. I believe that when marital conflicts intensify and a crisis arises in the marriage, the couple should seek help from a third party.
- a. Based on the marriage books I read a long time ago, I remember writing a pre-marital counseling manuscript where the last method of resolving marital conflicts was to seek help from a third party. Here, the third party primarily refers to a professional marriage counselor or therapist.
  - b. However, one of the brothers and sisters in Christ who contacted me through KakaoTalk during the 'Internet Ministry to Korea' shared that they had seen a marriage counselor, but it had not been very

effective. When I heard this, I thought about how desperate the couple must have been to reach out to a marriage counselor, yet still, there was no effect, which led them to contact me—someone who is not an expert, but a pastor. My heart broke for them, and I felt deeply for their situation. I tried my best to meet with them, but due to unavoidable circumstances, we could not meet, and I returned to the United States. As I write this now, I am praying for that couple, and I want to express my heart in this writing: ‘Don’t give up. The Lord will not give up. The Lord is our hope. Keep going, as you are now, and continue to give your best. Don’t give up.’

6. No matter how hopeless a couple may seem, or how they appear to be in the midst of a deep darkness, like a severe crisis, I believe that even in such a dire marital crisis, the Lord is the God who will undoubtedly pour out and reveal His amazing and great saving love.
  - a. The biggest crisis in our marriage, in my view, was when, early in our marriage, I told my wife that we should get a divorce. Of course, now I deeply regret saying that to my beloved wife, but at the time, I was so angry with her that I genuinely wanted a divorce. I can't quite remember why I was that angry, but I believe I had been deeply hurt by her at that time. Of course, back then, I didn't know how to communicate with my wife the way I do now. And at a young age, I was the kind of person who would openly express extreme thoughts, and I just said those things to her without thinking. Even after that, I revealed a lot of my flaws and shortcomings in my relationship with my wife. For that reason, I believe there is no better relationship than marriage (and the spousal relationship) to reveal one's weaknesses, insufficiencies, foolishness, and flaws. As I was working through our relationship, a book I read on our 10th wedding anniversary became, in some ways, a turning point in our marriage. The title of that book is "Love and Respect: The Love She Most Desires, The Respect He Desperately Needs" (Author: Emerson Eggerichs). I still vividly remember it. On one of our 10th wedding anniversary days, after having dinner with my wife, we took some time to go through the questions at the end of each chapter (Chapter 6 was for the husband to read, and the remaining six chapters were for the wife). We asked each other those questions and had a deep conversation. That time was, at least for me, a very helpful and beneficial moment as a husband. Another unforgettable moment in our 27 years of marriage was the death of our first child, Joo-young. I cannot forget the amazing and incredible love of the Lord that I experienced through the fulfillment of Psalms 63:3 during that time. While it was the greatest crisis we faced as a couple, the death of our first baby led us to experience the Lord's salvific love, and that experience became a significant stepping stone in the growth of our marital relationship.
  - b. When I think of the beloved brothers and sisters in Christ who are going through marital crises, I believe that only the Lord can rescue those couples from their crises, and that even in the midst of great turmoil, God will clearly reveal His saving love. The Lord, who raised Lazarus from the dead,

is the God who has brought us—who were spiritually dead—back to life (through regeneration). Therefore, I believe that even a marriage that seems dead can be revived by our Lord, who is the Lord of resurrection. I earnestly pray that our Lord will pour out great grace upon the brothers and sisters He loves, especially those in marital crisis, and that He will first transform their hearts, bringing about a great change in their relationships.



# Principles/methods (?) for overcoming crises in marital relationships

Since my wife enjoys talking while running, I shared with her some things I've learned through my running as we talked. What I learned is that I typically run around the neighborhood, counting numbers in my head, about three times a week (around 3 miles, or 2600 steps). My wife says she can't run like I do, counting numbers in her head (Haha, our running styles are very different!). When I leave the house for a run, there's a hilly path. Just earlier, I ran that hill, which is about 300 steps long. The first 150 steps are okay, but from about 150 to 300 steps, it gets tough. I shared this with my wife and told her that once you get past that "tough part," completing the whole loop around the neighborhood becomes much easier. I then applied this lesson to our marriage. I said that in marriage, there are always "tough spots" too, but if we endure, persevere, and overcome them, we will make it through. Of course, when I said this to my wife, I was especially thinking about newlyweds. I believe that in the first few years of marriage, there will be times when you feel like you want to get divorced, but if you hold on, rely on the Lord, and persevere, you can overcome those tough times. But I don't think this principle applies only to newlyweds. In a society with things like gray divorce, I don't think tough times in marriage are limited to just new couples. I'm learning how to endure, persevere, and overcome those tough times through running, and I shared that with my wife.

## (1) Returning to the foundation that the Lord has sovereignly matched us together as a couple.

In our case, the Lord gave us this assurance. However, when looking back on our marriage, there have been difficult moments in my own thinking. One of the gracious blessings the Lord gave me during those times was to reflect on how, despite everything, the Lord had matched my wife and me together and made us one body, something that could not have happened naturally.

## (2) Holding onto the promise that the Lord will build His family.

I apply Matthew 16:18 to our family in this way. In order to hold onto this and pray, my wife and I need to fully realize through the challenges in our marriage that we are powerless and incapable of building our relationship and family on our own. Our self-centeredness must be broken down. It is only then that we kneel and cry out to the Lord. When we cry out, we hold onto Matthew 16:18, saying, "Lord, I cannot build our marriage or our family, but You have promised to build it. Please build it in Your time and in Your way."

- (3) Humbly acknowledging and confessing one's wrongs or shortcomings before the Lord and spouse, and recommitting to love and respect them with the Lord's love, as revealed with a gentle heart.

I believe this third principle/method is impossible without the second one.

# Imprinted Love Style (ILS)

Among the books I've recently received as gifts, there is one about love in marriage. Last Saturday evening, before falling asleep, I was reading this book and became intrigued by the author's concepts of "love style" and "imprinted deficit" (where "deficit" refers to an area that is missing or imperfect). So, this Sunday morning, after having a quick meal of instant noodles, rice, and kimchi in the church office, I'm writing down my thoughts under the title "Imprinted Love Style" in an attempt to organize my personal reflections:

1. My wife and I inevitably have different love styles as a married couple. The reason is that both of us, from the moment we were born, have learned different love styles from our parents (without even realizing it).
2. For example, as I grew up, the way my parents loved me was different from each other. My mother loved me unconditionally, but her love was sacrificial, as she went through a lot of hardship because of me when I was young (though I don't remember this, I learned about it from her). During my teenage years, the love I received from my mother felt like overbearing love. On the other hand, my father's love for me was one that lacked words and expressions, a love that was more reserved.
3. As I grew up, I witnessed the different love styles of my parents, and as a result, there are certain "imprinted deficits" (areas that were either missing or flawed, making them incomplete) of love in my memory. Among these deficits, the one that stands out the most is that when my parents argued (during their marital conflicts), my mother would constantly complain about the love she felt she hadn't received from my father in the past. I will never forget hearing those complaints because I disliked hearing them so much. At the time, I didn't understand why my mother repeatedly voiced her dissatisfaction with my father. It was only later that I realized that my mother had many unresolved issues in her relationship with her husband. So, I believe that whenever my mother had marital conflicts, she would repeatedly bring up past issues from her memory and pour them out onto her husband. Before getting married, while reading books by Pastor H. Norman Wright, I was challenged by the phrase 'Commitment to be free from the past,' and it led me to make this decision in my heart: 'If I get married, I will live with my beloved wife and resolve our marital conflicts day by day, ensuring that my wife has no unresolved issues in her heart so that she won't complain when conflicts arise.' By God's grace, when I met and married my wife, I made a determined effort to ensure that she would not complain out of dissatisfaction, as my

mother had, due to a lack of love from her husband. I was determined to help my wife be free from the past in our married life together.

4. However, right after we got married, my wife and I had a big argument on our honeymoon. I wouldn't exactly say we fought, but rather, I was in the wrong and got scolded by my wife. The reason was that, in my view, my wife wanted to explore and visit different places since we had rented a car, but I just wanted to stay at the hotel. I ended up going to the hotel lobby, renting a movie from the video store, and watching it in our hotel room. Of course, my wife wasn't happy about that! So, I, not wanting to hear her complaints, went out to the hotel balcony and closed the door. My wife followed me there, and in her anger, she started venting her frustration. I then used the book I was holding to cover my face, avoiding looking at her, and preventing her from seeing my face too. This, I would say, was the first "imprinted deficit" in our relationship. Even though about 28 years have passed, I still clearly and vividly remember that moment. That shows how different my love style was from my wife's love style. In other words, the way my wife wanted to be loved and the way I could show love were vastly different. I believe the reason for this disparity in our love styles is because we, as a man and a woman, are inherently very different, and on top of that, we grew up in very different environments with different influences from our parents.
5. In my view (though my wife may see things differently), I believe that besides the fundamental differences between men and women, the individual differences between "James" and "Jane," as well as the imprinted deficits in our respective parents' love styles, have had a significant impact on our marriage. One unforgettable memory I have is when our family lived in Korea for a while. One day, my wife and I had a conflict about our beloved son. The reason for the conflict was that I wanted my son to learn to share with others at kindergarten, while my wife wanted him to freely do what he wanted without being influenced by other kids. It was only after this conflict that I realized the root of the issue. From that point on, I came to believe that there can be benefits to marital conflict (before this, I had heard a sermon on the radio by a pastor who spoke about the benefits of conflict in marriage). The benefit, in this case, was that through this conflict, I came to understand that my wife and I had been influenced by our parents in different ways due to the backgrounds in which we grew up. In other words, while I had been influenced by my father to share with others, my wife, as the eldest daughter, had to always make sacrifices for her parents (which meant she couldn't always do what she wanted). Therefore, she didn't want her beloved son to have to live the same way, constantly sacrificing for others instead of being able to do what he wanted.
6. Through our marital conflicts, my wife and I not only began to realize our differences, but also started to become aware of the imprinted deficits in each other's upbringing. As a result, we came to understand and accept that our expectations of each other's love styles were very different, and this difference inevitably led to marital conflicts. In my opinion, it took about 20 years for us to reach this realization.

Haha. That's how strongly, in my view, our hearts had become hardened (stubborn) due to our respective imprinted love styles and the deficits we each carried.

7. Only after that did the Lord enable us as a couple to accept, embrace, and love each other with our imprinted love styles and deficits as they were. It was then that we discovered and began to cultivate our own unique common love style, and we also started to respect that shared love style. Although this common love style is not 100% what either of us individually prefers, through numerous conflicts, we came to understand each other's imprinted love styles and, to some extent, respected them. As a result, we were able to create our own love style. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit continues to imprint this common love style on our hearts.

# The Avoider Love Style

I am currently reading a book that I received as a gift. The title of the book is “HOW WE LOVE” (authors: Milan & Kay Yerkovich). The main point of the book is “Discover Your Love Style, Enhance Your Marriage”. As I was reading the book, I kept thinking, “This is about me” as I read the article written by the author under the title “The Avoider Love Style” in Chapter 5. So I am going to read the article about “The Avoider Love Style” again and reflect on myself.

1. I am an avoider. I hate conflicts and hurt feelings in relationships, so I avoid them as much as possible. That is why I have mostly avoided conflicts between couples and still do. In the process, I have suppressed and repressed my emotions while living my married life. It was only through my wife that I realized that I was feeling inner anger. Until then, I thought I was holding back my anger, not being angry. So, after our fight, I was mistaken in thinking that I was holding back my anger, so I somehow expressed my anger to my wife. So for the first time in my life, I realized through my wife that I am a “passive-aggressive” person. Haha. In a word, I realized that I am the type who indirectly attacks my wife. Haha. The reason I can’t do it directly is because I am not a confrontational style. When a conflict arises between us, I keep my mouth shut, get angry inside, and indirectly attack my wife. I am not the type to openly and directly attack her. I am the type who finds it burdensome to directly express my angry feelings to my wife. So, one of the Bible verses that I struggle with is Proverbs 27:5: “Better is open rebuke than hidden love.”
2. For me, the article titled “The Avoider Love Style” in the book “HOW WE LOVE” made me want to look back at the book again, reflect on myself, and write honestly. The book says that the “avoidant love style” is “hyper-independent,” and I agree with that. So, an avoidant like me is used to solving things on my own and making decisions on my own. I tend to evaluate situations, draw conclusions, and solve problems without feeling the need to consult anyone. So, I want my wife and my children to be independent, not just myself. But in my case, I am “very” or “too” independent, so my wife may feel isolated and lonely. “Spouses of avoiders say they sometimes feel like they’re purposefully being ignored.”
3. My ‘avoidant love style’ avoids “vulnerability, emotions, neediness, honest reflection that brings self-awareness.” I think of myself as someone who honestly and honestly reflects on myself and shares my vulnerabilities with others. But at some point, my wife started saying that I am someone who does not

share all my vulnerabilities honestly. To be honest, I still cannot agree with my wife's words in my heart. I think I believe that I live my life sharing my vulnerabilities honestly. However, as I read and reread the article that says that the 'avoidant love style' avoids its own vulnerabilities, and as I reflect on myself more honestly, I cannot help but admit that I do not share my true vulnerabilities with anyone and only pray to God.

4. My 'avoidant love style' may be because I received limited physical affection from my father as a child and my emotional connection with my parents was not proper, so my "emotional life is underdeveloped." That's why I still seem to be restricting my feelings and limiting my need for others in my relationship with my wife. So, I think my answer to my life is "self-sufficiency."
5. People with an "avoidant love style" like me isolate themselves when they get angry. And since I have mastered the art of not feeling, it usually takes a great deal of stress before I experience much discomfort. An avoider like me has learned to comfort myself in nonrelational ways, through exercise, work, sports so when my wife is emotional upset, I may expect my wife to take care of the problem on her own because this is what I do.
6. A hyper-independent person like me wants to be in charge in order to keep others at a safe distance and to maintain control over my emotion. So, I think I need to set a "healthy boundary" not only with others but also with my children and even with my wife. This "healthy boundary" is probably a "safe distance" for me. Maybe it's because my underdeveloped emotions don't want to get hurt anymore. If pushed to be vulnerable, I am likely to respond with frustration and effectively push others away.
7. In this way, I reread the author's writing under the title "The Avoider Love Style" in the book "HOW WE LOVE" and reflected on myself. So how should I love my wife in the future?
8. I am trying to have the habit of speaking my thoughts, feelings, and emotions to my wife more directly and honestly. For example, when I am offended by what my wife says, I usually don't say anything and just express it with nonverbal behavior, saying, "I'm not feeling well right now." I am trying to recognize that and reduce it, and I will continue to try to wisely share my thoughts and emotions with my wife honestly and wisely at each time.
9. I am not good at confronting my wife. One of the reasons I avoid confronting my wife when we have a conflict is because I think, "No matter how much I try to express my opinion, my wife will insist on her strong opinion rather than trying to understand me." In particular, I almost always avoid confronting my wife in front of my children. The reason is that I really hate showing my children that we are fighting. So, I think my children might think that my father always avoids me when I fight with my mother.

Maybe I need to change my thinking and stop avoiding my wife's problems and start showing my children how to confront her and have a good conversation. I need God's grace and help.

10. I want my wife and children to be independent, not just myself. However, I don't think I'm a hyper-independent person. However, when I see my wife feeling a little lonely, I think I should try to be a more independent person and talk to her, make decisions, and solve problems together.



# The Pleaser Love Style

Last night before going to bed, I had a conversation with my beloved wife about an essay I wrote titled The Avoider Love Style. My wife agreed with me when I mentioned that I am “hyper-independent” and tend to draw boundaries too clearly. During our honest conversation, I confessed to her, ‘I don’t even know why I am this way.’ In response, she embraced me and said, ‘It’s okay. God knows.’ Her words deeply comforted my heart. Even though I’ve been trying to understand myself better by reading Chapter 5 of HOW WE LOVE, where the authors discuss The Avoider Love Style, reflecting on myself through their insights, and writing about it, I still feel like I don’t fully know myself. However, I found comfort and strength in my wife’s words that our all-knowing Creator, who made me, knows me best. During our conversation yesterday, I shared with her that Chapter 5 of the book HOW WE LOVE, which I’ve been reading, is about The Avoider Love Style and that it seemed to describe me. After writing about it and discussing it with her, I mentioned that the next chapter, Chapter 6, is titled The Pleaser Love Style. Her response was, ‘That’s me.’ Haha. I had already thought of her while reading Chapter 6, and hearing her say that made me want to read it again, this time reflecting on it from my perspective as her husband. The reason is that I hope to better understand her and strive, even just a little, to love her from her perspective with the love of the Lord (I also hope that my beloved wife will read this and join me in a conversation about it) (In fact, I wasn’t able to finish writing this yesterday, but during dinner with my beloved wife, we had an in-depth conversation about The Pleaser Love Style. I’m grateful because, through her honest sharing, I learned things about her that I hadn’t known in our nearly 28 years of marriage).

1. Some children experience a lot of anxiety as they grow up because their overprotective parents worry excessively about them. Alternatively, parents who are often angry or overly critical can also, often unintentionally, instill this anxiety in their children. As a result, these children learn to avoid criticism or anger. “A youngster adopts the role of the good boy or good girl in an attempt to gain approval or recognition and to reduce tension in the parent or the family by pleasing rather than causing problems.” While reading this part, I couldn’t help but think that perhaps my wife experienced a lot of anxiety growing up because her overprotective mother worried excessively about her. According to my wife, she often heard critical remarks from her mother rather than praise. I believe this was because my mother-in-law loved her so deeply that she had high expectations for her, which led to such comments. As a result, my wife didn’t feel properly acknowledged or approved by her mother. At the same time, it seems to me that my wife took on the role of the ‘obedient daughter,’ sacrificing her own desires to avoid causing problems and to gain her mother’s approval or recognition. Perhaps she absorbed a great deal of tension and sought to alleviate her anxiety by making her parents happy. She likely didn’t have the

- opportunity to contemplate or process anxiety driving her own relational style because she had to be aware of and take responsibility for her parents' emotions ("These children absorb a lot of tension and try to find relief for their own anxiety by making others happy. Being aware of and responsible for the feelings of others, the pleaser has no opportunity to contemplate or process the anxiety driving his or her own relational style").
2. "In adult relationships, the underlying motivation for being in the helping role and focusing on the needs of others is to reduce one's own anxiety by keeping people close, content, and satisfied. When those around pleasers are happy, they are happy too. If others are upset, pleasers are distressed as well. When others distance themselves, detach, or are angry, the result is space in the relationship. This space causes agitation and drives the pleaser into pursuit mode in an effort to close the gap. ... After pleasers spend a number of years of chronic worry and over giving, resentment often emerges." As I read this passage, I find myself reflecting on my relationship with my wife from her perspective. From her point of view, if I am happy, she is happy as well, so she focuses on meeting my needs in pursuit of a fulfilling relationship with me. However, in our current relationship, I realize that my "hyper-independent" nature may be causing a gap between us. When I stubbornly refuse things she wants to do together, this space in our relationship could very likely trigger anxiety for her.
  3. Parents with unhealthy fears and worries often struggle with letting a child go and relinquishing control. "Fearful parents need control in order to minimize risk. In many respects, this dynamic becomes more about the parents' attempts to reduce their own anxiety by being in charge, rather than about their teaching the child to conquer his or her fears"). As I read this passage, I believe that parents with a lot of fear and worry, not wanting their children to get hurt, try to control their children in order to reduce their own anxiety, and may even manipulate their children. These parents, in turn, do everything they can to keep their children close or make them live near them. As a result, these parents become excessively devoted to helping their children. They give their children all the help they can, sending a harmful message: "You can't do it by yourself; you need my help." Parents who are filled with worry and fear and cannot let go of their children in faith cannot tolerate the idea of their children choosing for themselves and experiencing failure. As a result, their children grow up unable to overcome their own fears. Over time, this leads to a codependent relationship between the parents and children [A codependent relationship is one in which one or both individuals are experiencing difficulties due to poor mental health, immaturity, irresponsibility, or lack of achievement, and the dynamics of the relationship only worsen the situation. One or both parties may begin to neglect other areas of their lives in order to please the other person. Their extreme devotion to the other can harm other important relationships, such as friendships, education or career opportunities, or daily responsibilities. Those who feel codependent or rely on someone with these traits may struggle to maintain a balanced, reciprocal relationship. They often end up depending on the other's sacrifice or deprivation rather than encouraging

the other person to thrive. ... This can hinder the growth of individuals or couples and leave little room for independent thought or action' (Internet)].

4. I believe that children who cannot leave the 'safe nest' created by their parents are mentally and emotionally bound by their parents' worries and fears, and as a result, they are unable to fully experience freedom due to the unhealthy relationship with their parents. I think the negative impact of parents who are filled with so much fear and worry on their children is extremely serious. Parents who constantly worry about their children, and who try to relieve their own fears and anxieties by nagging and meddling in everything, create an environment that suffocates their children with fear and worry. Such parents, in many ways, turn their children into disabled individuals. For example, I believe such children are bound to become mentally disabled. Even if these children physically leave their parents' "nest" by struggling to break free (for example, moving to a distant college dorm), I think there are cases where they cannot mentally detach from their parents. The reason for this is that the child has already been conditioned by the many negative influences from their parents, who are filled with worry and fear. As a result, even if the child is physically far away from their parents, they may still feel mentally connected to them. This mental connection, being unhealthy, can cause the child significant emotional turmoil, confusion, and distress. Moreover, if the emotional bond between the child and the parents is a dysfunctional one, the child may love their parents but also harbor hatred towards them (a mix of love and hate). I believe that this very serious and toxic relationship between parents and children can prevent the child from experiencing mental or emotional freedom for their entire life. Even if the parents die, the child may still remain bound by the negative influence of the parents, unable to fully experience freedom, which poses a great risk to their well-being.
5. When children who are bound by fear and worry from their parents grow up and get married, they may become anxious when their husbands want to spend time alone or with friends. In our case, because I am hyper-independent, I think my wife may feel anxious when I establish clear boundaries with her and am comfortable being alone. "While the avoider may prefer to be alone, pleasers actually feel lost and anxious when they're isolated." Of course, my wife has improved a lot and doesn't feel anxious like she did at the beginning of our marriage. However, I still think that since my wife has not yet fully embraced independence like I have, she might try to please me in order to alleviate her anxiety when I want to be alone. In doing so, she might try even harder to spend more time together, because that might help her reduce her anxiety to some extent.
6. "Making decisions requires a level of self-reliance and self-confidence. Decision making becomes difficult when we are overly concerned about rejection or making others mad." The reason this phrase makes me think for a moment is that, in my opinion, my wife finds it very difficult to make decisions. While she has improved a lot since the early days of our marriage, I still think she struggles with decision-

making. To that extent, it seems that my wife worries excessively about being rejected or making others angry. As a pleaser, she is naturally sensitive to other people's reactions, because if others are happy, she will be happy too. So, if my wife wants to make decisions about things she wants to do with me, hoping to make me happy by pleasing me, she must be very mindful when we discuss it. Haha. It's not a laughing matter, but the reason I laugh is that just yesterday, while we were having dinner, my wife was talking about her Korean marathon group, which has a year-end meeting in mid-December. She asked me via text whether I would go with her, and after asking, she thought a lot about whether I would be uncomfortable if I said "yes" and went. Haha. If I (being an avoider) go there and don't know anyone (except her), and feel uncomfortable, it would mean that I'm not making her happy, so from her perspective, it's understandable that she would be worried and anxious. So, after sending me the invitation for the year-end gathering via KakaoTalk yesterday, my wife wrote, 'Should I go or not???' and sent it to me. Haha. In the end, while we were having dinner yesterday, my wife talked to her running friend to find out what would be happening at the year-end gathering (since I wanted to know), and we agreed to discuss it further and make a decision later. Haha.

7. "Fearful pleasers usually control in passive ways with one purpose in mind: to keep others close to them. When people around them detach emotionally or physically, the pleasers' apprehensions intensify"). When I think about this phrase, I realize that my wife, as a pleaser, wants to keep me close, while I, as an avoider, tend to be overly independent and prefer to have some distance from her, enjoying my own time alone. Our marriage is like that. Haha. However, as I reflect on how different we are, I believe I can see God's providence in it through the lens of faith. Yesterday, I shared my thoughts with my wife: 'I think God paired you and me together to make us husband and wife because, as an avoider who is overly independent, He wants me to believe in Him and fully support you, the pleaser. This way, you can feel more confident and do things like run without me and even go rock climbing with other men. You've gained a lot of confidence in doing things on your own.' So, I see that my wife is becoming more and more capable of doing things by herself, even without me. She no longer feels anxious or afraid when we are apart. To me, this feels like God's providence in bringing together an avoider like me and a pleaser like her to be married. Haha.
8. "As a result, time management can be a problem as their schedule becomes overcrowded and unmanageable in their attempts to make everyone happy." As I read this passage, I thought of my wife because, as a pleaser, she often struggled with time management in her efforts to satisfy everyone in our family. For example, when we used to talk about doing something together as a family, she wanted to please not just me as her husband but also our children. Planning everything on time and putting it into action became a burden and a source of stress for her. So, I believe that managing time according to a schedule has always been very difficult for her, and it still doesn't seem easy. As a pleaser, she naturally tends to think a lot while trying to make everyone happy, and she is not the type to quickly organize

those thoughts and take immediate action. On the other hand, I, as an avoider, am overly independent and make little effort to please or satisfy others, so deciding something and putting it into action isn't very difficult for me. From my wife's perspective, it might seem like I manage my time easily, and at the same time, she may feel guilty for not being able to manage time like I do. She might also feel that she fails to please me, someone who values punctuality. In the differences between us as a couple, I see God's providence. Over time, my wife has started to consult with me before making decisions. She listens to my opinions and then decides on her own, which helps her save time and reduce stress. I increasingly see God's providence in how He uses our strengths to complement each other's weaknesses, and I am learning to perceive this with eyes of faith.

9. "Pleasers are good givers, but lousy receivers. When asked what they want or feel, pleasers often don't know." People like me, who are avoiders, enjoy receiving, but my wife, who is a pleaser, is good at giving but struggles with receiving. In fact, even when I give her something, she doesn't always accept it completely. Haha. In my opinion, love isn't just about giving; it's also about humbly receiving, but my wife, being considerate and thoughtful, enjoys giving gifts that she believes the other person will like. However, even when I, as her husband, try to give her something out of love and thoughtfulness, she doesn't always fully receive my gesture (She may not agree with me on this point, though). To put it more bluntly, I think my wife is not very good at receiving. Doesn't it sound a bit ironic? A person like my wife, who tries so hard to please others and considers their needs, ends up being somewhat awkward at receiving gifts from her husband, which means she might not fully understand or appreciate my intentions. Haha.
  
10. "Pleasers tend to be hyperalert about possible fearful responses from others, so they may overemphasize the need for protection." People like me, who are avoiders, enjoy receiving, but my wife, who is a pleaser, is good at giving but struggles with receiving. In fact, even when I give her something, she doesn't always accept it completely. Haha. In my opinion, love isn't just about giving; it's also about humbly receiving, but my wife, being considerate and thoughtful, enjoys giving gifts that she believes the other person will like. However, even when I, as her husband, try to give her something out of love and thoughtfulness, she doesn't always fully receive my gesture (She may not agree with me on this point, though). To put it more bluntly, I think my wife is not very good at receiving. Doesn't it sound a bit ironic? A person like my wife, who tries so hard to please others and considers their needs, ends up being somewhat awkward at receiving gifts from her husband, which means she might not fully understand or appreciate my intentions. 😊

# **To restore trust in a broken marital relationship**

Trust in a broken marital relationship,  
The key to restoring trust is not in each spouse.  
When looking at each other, anxiety, fear, and hurt,  
It seems like trust in a marital relationship will be restored a little,  
But again ...  
Rather than looking at each other,  
You should only look at the Lord.  
As you draw closer to the Lord,  
you should seek to grow and strengthen your faith toward the Lord.  
In the midst of that, you should look at your spouse.  
Restoring trust in a broken marital relationship is possible in the Lord.

# Lessons learned through counseling

Looking back on the counseling sessions, I thought I might share a few things that could be helpful:

1. Ongoing conflicts in a marriage are, to me, a sign that the couple doesn't truly know each other. Because they don't understand each other well, each spouse tends to judge the other's words and actions from their own perspective (often jumping to conclusions), and they form preconceived notions. As a result, they tolerate things for a while, but eventually, dissatisfaction is expressed, leading to emotional conflicts (anger).

Suggestion: Husbands and wives should learn to use conflict as an opportunity to get to know each other.

2. I believe that we should be devoted to building trust strongly in our marital relationship. However, the devil tries to break that trust by planting doubts, leading to suspicion, and ultimately causing distrust between the couple. The devil's tool is simply lies. Deception. The reason a couple may not trust each other is because they believe their spouse is lying (or they doubt their spouse). But it seems people rarely realize that they might be deceiving themselves.

Suggestion: "I trust the Lord, and because of that, I have devoted myself to trusting you (even if, in the future, you were to betray me)."

3. We should focus on the underlying internal causes of the issue, rather than just the surface-level symptoms. Why is my spouse unable to trust me? Why does my spouse think I'm lying? Could it be that the reason lies in past wounds, where someone they once trusted betrayed them with lies, leaving a deep emotional scar?

Suggestion: We should pray to be used as God's healing tool, entering our spouse's inner world.

4. A conversation between spouses that is not based on trust cannot lead to genuine dialogue where hearts connect. Men and women are already so different, and their ways of communicating are also different (not just in how they speak, but also in how they listen to each other). If there is no trust between them (if one believes the other frequently lies), how can truthful communication between spouses be possible?

Suggestion: We must listen with hearts of love and draw out the deep thoughts and feelings from our spouse's heart.

5. Without genuine communication where hearts connect, a couple cannot build the love and respect relationship that the Lord desires. A husband will not be able to love his wife with the love of the Lord, and a wife will not be able to respect her husband as she does the Lord. As a result, a wife who does not receive love will not respect her husband (or submit to him), and a husband who does not receive respect will refuse to love his wife. Therefore, useless marital conflicts will persist and only deepen over time.

Suggestion: Before looking at my spouse, I must first look to the Lord, and through constant prayer, I must ask God to help me direct my unconditional love and respect toward my spouse.



**‘[Dr. Jin-se Kim’s Counseling Room] I found out my husband is homosexual ... Should I get a divorce? Should I just pretend to be a married couple and live together?’**

[http://news.khan.co.kr/kh\\_news/khan\\_art\\_view.html?artid=202006261633005&code=940100&nv=stand&utm\\_source=naver&utm\\_medium=newsstand&utm\\_campaign=row2\\_thumb&C](http://news.khan.co.kr/kh_news/khan_art_view.html?artid=202006261633005&code=940100&nv=stand&utm_source=naver&utm_medium=newsstand&utm_campaign=row2_thumb&C)



The title seems a bit shocking, so as I read through the article, I noticed that there are several thought-provoking points (things to learn) in the content by ‘Dr. Jin-se Kim’ and ‘Eun-joo Kim.’ I would like to take some time to reflect on these points one by one as I continue reading:

- (1) ‘... I never expected to collapse like this.’ (Eun-joo Kim)

The statement from 'Eun-joo Kim' in the article, 'I've overcome all sorts of difficult situations by myself, but I never expected to collapse like this,' is something I find important. What's significant about it is that we need to recognize and acknowledge how fragile and easily breakable our own existence as humans can be through our own collapses. Only then do we truly seem to rely entirely on the Lord. However, the strange thing is that we don't usually break down easily. We try hard, doing our best not to collapse, but the parts where we mainly break and fall apart are in our relationships with our loved ones. In other words, since our greatest vulnerability lies within our loved ones, just like in the case of Eun-joo Kim in this article, we can be truly broken by our spouse or children.

(2) 'You must have felt betrayed that the husband, who should have been the one to trust the most, did that.' (Dr. Kim)

The feeling of betrayal that arises when trust is broken in a marriage, or when trust is broken in the relationship between parents and children, is something that can definitely happen. And in the breaking of trust, there is often lying and deception involved. Why do we deceive the people we love, such as our spouse, parents, or children? Why do we lie?

(3) 'I must be useless... Right now, I just feel like I made a huge mistake.' (Eun-joo Kim)

While my Korean is limited and I'm not sure if I can express my thoughts clearly. If I were to try, the words "self-abuse" come to mind when I think about Eun-joo Kim's statement, 'I must be useless.' The mistake was that her husband hid the fact that he was gay, and when he married Eun-joo Kim, she felt betrayed. Yet, despite this, she said, 'I must be useless' during the counseling. I believe that during times of great difficulty and crisis in the family, we should be very cautious about abusing ourselves. In my case, when my first baby, Charis, passed away, I abused myself for over a year. That self-abuse was rooted in the overwhelming guilt I felt, believing that my child's death was because of my sin.

(4) 'If he you're going to marry someone, you should have told her/him beforehand.' (Dr. Kim)

Recently, I advised someone to confess their past sexual sins to their future spouse before marriage and ask for forgiveness. The reason I gave this advice is that we often confess our sins to God, whom we cannot see, but then hide them from our future spouse, with whom we are supposed to share our lives. Especially in a world like today, where premarital sex, pregnancy, and abortion are common, Christians have lost the ability to view sin as sin and tend to take it lightly. We often end up marrying while keeping things hidden, even though "if you're going to marry someone, you should have told her/him beforehand.' So, when someone like Eun-joo Kim finds out later, how would you react? (I believe we don't know our spouse, or even our

children, as well as we think we do. That's why many people struggle to cope with the shock when they find out the truth later.)

(5) 'It must have been like a prison for the person involved. So, being separated from their family, I guess the only way out was marriage.' (Eun-joo Kim)

It seems that here in the U.S., many young people deliberately go far away to college. In my opinion, one of the reasons for this is escape. In other words, they intentionally want to distance themselves from their parents, so they go to colleges far from home. Not only that, but some also live far away from their parents after marriage. Looking at these phenomena, I believe the underlying cause is often problems or wounds in the relationship with their parents. And sometimes, this is even true in marriages. In this article, when Eun-joo Kim talks about her husband, she mentions that his relationship with his mother is one of "master-servant" or "codependency." If the wife perceives her husband's relationship with his mother this way, I think it's likely that this is not a healthy relationship. No matter how "ideal" it may seem to others, once you know the underlying issues, it may reveal serious psychological and emotional problems. Among the serious psychological and emotional issues, I take very seriously what Eun-joo Kim describes in the article as 'it must have been like a prison,' and I consider it a very serious matter when parents psychologically or emotionally imprison their children. So, I am constantly reflecting on myself before God, examining whether I might be committing the sin of imprisoning my children psychologically or emotionally, and I am fighting with myself in this area. I hope that my wife and children can be free in the Lord. To do that, I want to live as a free person in the Lord first. The reason I take this seriously is that, generally speaking, parents can unknowingly imprison their children psychologically or emotionally, chaining them with psychological or emotional bonds. I don't believe that this ends when parents die. What that means is that even after our parents are gone, our children can still live in psychological or emotional "prison" because of us. That's why the verse I love and hold onto is, "Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:32). I believe that many people today are living in "prison" in various ways. On the surface, they may appear very free, but it seems that many are living in psychological or emotional "prison." And if they are spiritually living in prison ...

In this article, Eun-joo Kim mentions that she believes her husband sought an escape through marriage, and she admits, I too had many concerns and conflicts about my family. I won't deny that I rushed into marriage because I wanted to leave home.' The statement 'Both of us wanted to leave our families, and at the time, we believed we loved each other' is, I think, a precious confession. It is important because we need to be honest with ourselves. In other words, before marriage, we need to clearly examine why we want to marry this person and face the motivations in our hearts. If, like Eun-joo Kim, the reason for getting married is to escape from many concerns and conflicts at home, then it is risky. At the time, one might be filled with the expectation of leaving home ... thinking that living just with this person will make you happy, and so on. But if you marry (or rush into marriage) for these reasons, you could face significant difficulties later, like Eun-

joo Kim did. It's not necessarily because of your spouse or your children, but you might suffer from immense guilt, self-blame, and distress because of the negative effects you have on them due to your own actions. Marriage is not an escape. 'If the purpose of marriage is not marriage itself, but something else, it is easy to become unhappy. Of course, everyone may have different reasons for marriage, but the value of those additional purposes should not be exaggerated. If you married to escape a difficult reality, at first, you might be satisfied because you achieved that goal. But every choice comes with a cost. For example, the emotional pain that often arises from conflicts with your husband or your in-laws' (Dr. Kim).

(6) 'Personally, I think that nowadays, a relationship where we can respect and trust each other, and maintain the closest bond, is perhaps the most important condition for happiness.' (Dr. Kim)

I agree with this statement. I also believe that 'a relationship where we can respect and trust each other,' whether in a marriage, parent-child relationship, or any other human relationship, is an important condition for happiness. Especially, I ask the question, "Where does the ability to maintain the most intimate relationship come from?" The reason I ask this is because I believe such ability does not come from within us. However, if we believe that this ability lies within us, and try to maintain an intimate relationship in a marriage or any other relationship based on self-centered abilities, I believe that relationship will eventually break down. This is why I consider it extremely important, especially in my relationship with my wife and with each of my three children, to prioritize the relationship I have with the Lord. I am making an effort and praying for the relationship with the Lord—my relationship with Him, my wife's relationship with Him, and each of my children's relationship with Him. I believe that only when my relationship with the Lord is maintained can I truly have an intimate and lasting relationship with my loved ones. For example, I believe that in order to have (horizontal) intimate fellowship within not only the family community but also the church community, it is impossible to have genuine fellowship without first having (vertical) intimate fellowship with the Lord. Specifically, if a husband/father like myself, who is the head of the household, neglects intimate fellowship with the Lord, the consequences will not only affect my relationship and fellowship with my wife but also have a significant impact on my relationship and fellowship with my three children and with the church members, and indeed, all human relationships. Therefore, one of the important lessons I am learning is that just as the Lord loves me, I must love myself with His love, and just as the Lord sees me as precious and honorable, I must treat myself that way (love myself in that way) and, in turn, love and treat my wife, children, and others in the same manner. I am striving, albeit imperfectly, to practice this lesson in my life.

(7) 'Sex is not just a product of simple instinct. While there is the biological purpose of having children, it is also an important means of communication for sharing emotions and maintaining intimacy.' (Dr. Kim)

I agree with this. Of these two purposes of sex, I prioritize having children. The basis for my thinking is Malachi 2:15. And I think it's important to say that sex is "an important means of communication to maintain intimacy" in a marital relationship. The reason is that I think one of the purposes of marriage is to "avoid sexual immorality" (1 Corinthians 7:2-3). I think sex is important in a marital relationship. In particular, I think it's a warning sign that the number of "sexless couples" (sex less than 10 times a year, sex less than once a month) is increasing these days. I think couples should enjoy sex and give each other sexual satisfaction. Going a little further, I think couples should enjoy sex with each other. I think it's a precious gift from God. And I think couples should enjoy talking about sex, and even more so, I think parents should talk to their (older) children about sex.

(8) 'Then, are you suggesting that I should get a divorce?' (Eun-joo Kim) 'The choice is yours, Eun-joo.' (Dr. Kim)

The reason I majored in psychology during college was because I heard that it would help me counsel the congregation when I became a pastor. After graduating from college, I entered seminary to study biblical counseling, and during this time, I realized how humanistic and person-centered the psychology I had studied in college was. As I studied biblical counseling, I became interested in it and began buying books to read outside of the seminary curriculum. Even now, I am still learning about it. Relating this to the point made in this article (point 8), I learned that when someone requests counseling (whether a church member or someone I know, a client, etc.) and asks the counselor (in this case, "Dr. Kim"), "Are you suggesting that I should get a divorce?" we should not respond with, "Yes, get a divorce." Instead, as Dr. Kim said, we should answer, "The choice is yours, Eun-joo." The reason I am mentioning this briefly is that, when counseling someone who is struggling in their marriage and confiding in you, because you love them, you might get emotionally involved in their feelings and complain together about their spouse. But we should question whether this is what the Lord would want. Especially when someone asks, "I'm thinking of getting a divorce, should I or shouldn't I?" — we should refrain from saying, "Yes, if it were me, I'd get a divorce..." We must be careful not to influence others to make choices based on our personal opinions.

(9) 'I'm the eldest daughter, but I was just born first by chance. It's not something I wanted. Even so, do I have to give in, take responsibility, and sacrifice? Is that what makes me a good daughter?' (Eun-joo Kim)

As the eldest daughter, Eun-joo Kim asked Dr. Kim, "Do I have to give in, take responsibility, and sacrifice?" This statement resonates with me. The reason is that I think my wife, as the eldest daughter, has been "giving in, taking responsibility, and sacrificing." Especially the word "give in"... sigh... As I shared before, when we lived in Korea, I came to understand through a major conflict with my wife that, while she had lived by sacrificing and giving in, she did not want her eldest son to live that way, sacrificing (giving in) as well. This

cannot be emphasized enough. In spiritual maturity, we must learn to give in and taste the joy of sacrifice, like Jesus. They say they dislike the "good man," but I think living as a "good daughter" can significantly affect relationships, both with a spouse and children.

(10) 'I understand your decision, Eun-joo. The problem is that the unfortunate outcome of such a marriage is something you will have to bear entirely.' (Dr. Kim)

Why did Eun-joo marry that man, and why did Dr. Kim say he "understands" her words but, more importantly, emphasized that Eun-joo would have to bear the "unfortunate consequences of such a marriage"? This brings to mind that beyond the choice to marry, we continue making countless choices throughout life, and we need to recognize the "consequences" of those choices, even if it takes time. I believe that if we still have the opportunity, we should seize it and, through repentance and restoration, seek God's guidance and rely on Him completely. Ideally, we would have the wisdom to make those choices before experiencing the consequences, rather than realizing them too late. It makes me wonder how many young couples truly have that wisdom when they marry, but those who humbly prepare and trust in God will likely make wise choices. I pray that my children will make such wise decisions. Furthermore, I have repeatedly advised my children to focus on the character and sincerity of their future spouse. The reason is that while someone might claim to be a Christian, their character may not reflect the image of Jesus, and they might not be truthful, engaging in lies and deceit. I worry about them encountering such a partner. Also, having personally experienced the painful consequences of one wrong choice before marriage and seeing loved ones suffer from it, I have occasionally discussed the outcomes of such choices with my children.

(11) 'Shouldn't the parents and siblings, with whom we've shared the most time, be the ones with whom we have the most comfortable relationship?' (Eun-joo Kim)

But in reality, "harmonious (or peaceful) families" are not as common as we might think. Of course, on the outside, many families may appear to be harmonious. However, I believe that "families that are not harmonious" are not few, but rather quite a lot. How could there be no conflicts within families? Disagreements, arguments, wounds, pain, and tears... two sinners come together to form a marriage, so how much more will they sin against each other, right? Haha. Nevertheless, we believe in the death of Jesus on the cross, in the forgiveness of sins, and in the fact that Jesus broke down the wall of separation between Jews and Gentiles, bringing reconciliation through His death. We are committed to living lives worthy of the gospel, continually fighting ourselves, seeking to obey the Lord's word, and building a harmonious family. Therefore, "the parents and siblings with whom we have spent the most time should be the ones with whom we have the most comfortable relationship." If the relationship is so uncomfortable that we want to avoid or distance ourselves from it, well ... I suppose we should seriously reflect, pray, and think about whether we are truly a community that reflects Jesus' light and serves as salt, as a harmonious family believing in Jesus.

- (12) 'The world has changed a lot, but one thing that hasn't changed is that family remains the most important value for everyone. ... We need to know each other more, and by doing so, we can understand each other more in order to become a happy family. 'The more you know, the happier the family becomes.' So, if you truly want family happiness, you need to understand, communicate, and love more. Family happiness is not a gift that comes by chance. If you want to be happy, you have to put in the effort.' (Dr. Kim)

There's one last thing I want to reflect on. "Family remains the most important value for everyone, and that hasn't changed." I fully agree with the statement that we need to "know each other more, and therefore understand each other more" in such an important family. Of course, how can we ever fully know someone? However, I believe that until the day I die, I need to continue learning about my wife and also my children. In this process of understanding, I place great importance on 'heart-to-heart communication.' As I try to put this into practice, I follow three principles [These principles are things I apply to all my personal relationships]. The three principles are: (a) honesty, (b) transparency, and (c) vulnerability. So, I strive to open my heart first, sharing my thoughts honestly and transparently. This sharing of my heart is not only for conversations with my spouse but also for conversations with my three children, where I aim to apply these three principles. When I do this, I experience the Lord's work a lot. By getting to know each other in the Lord, we understand each other, love each other as we are, but also with hope—understanding, accepting, and enduring each other. I experience how He helps us love each other. And I want to love more with the Lord's love, so I want to understand and communicate more.

## **Through our children's crisis ...**

주님께서 우리 자녀의 위기를 통해서  
우리 부모를 가정의 견고한 울타리로 세워주시길 간구합니다.

# **In memory of my beloved first daughter, Joo-young (Charis)**

Today, April 27th, 2023, marks the 25th anniversary of the day our beloved daughter Joo-young (Charis - meaning 'grace' in Greek) fell asleep (passed away) in my arms, a precious gift of grace from the Lord to my wife and me. I want to share a letter from my heart that I wrote to Joo-young on March 30, 1998:

## **To my beloved Joo-young (Charis), who loves Jesus,**

Every time I look at you, Joo-young, and see that you are still alive by God's grace, I give thanks to the Lord. As I come to see you every day, I see how God extends your life, and I realize that God is training our faith as parents. When you get a little better, I rejoice with thankfulness, and when you get worse, I can't help but worry. In these moments, I see that our faith is weak, and instead of trusting in the faithful Lord, we are looking for some visible evidence. When I think about whether this is the kind of faith God desires for us, I feel ashamed. I confess our sins before God, and I make a firm resolve to look only to the Lord as I care for you, Joo-young.

Someday, when I go to find Joo-young and open my mouth to express my heart to her, I will call out to her, saying, "To my beloved Joo-young, who loves Jesus," but I will forget the words I want to say. When I think about the pain Joo-young is enduring, I feel ashamed as a father to approach her. When I compare Joo-young's short three weeks of life to my 30 years, I realize how much suffering she must have gone through, and that thought makes me unable to speak. In that moment, seeing Joo-young peacefully lying there, I felt a deep emotional pain in my heart, and my heart shed tears. I, as a father, who has never even heard the sound of Joo-young's crying, am still praying today, hoping that, by God's grace, Joo-young will be made complete, and that she will be able to express her pain through crying while being held in her mother's arms in a healthy body. I am waiting for that moment.

Dear Joo-young, my beloved, every time I see that you recognize your father's voice, my heart is filled with joy. Furthermore, when I see you, despite the difficulty, trying to open your eyes to see your father, my heart overflows with tears of gratitude. There are moments when I see you looking directly at my face with your eyes wide open, and in those moments, I, too, look into your eyes, hoping to read your heart. I wonder, as I think about the tubes in your mouth, unable to cry or make a sound, what you might be trying to say to me. My dear Joo-young, don't you want to be healthy so that you can cry out freely? You must be in a lot of pain, but don't you want to open your mouth and cry out? One day, I believe without a doubt, I will see the day when you are in your mother's arms, crying freely, and



then peacefully falling asleep. Until that day comes, my dear Joo-young, you must be strong. Mommy and daddy, too, will remain strong in our faith in the Lord, and we will patiently wait for that day, trusting in Him.

In the Lord,

Your loving father

(March 30, 1998)



# **They say there is no family without problems. What should we do?**

It is often said that there is no family without problems.

In other words, every family has its own struggles, worries, and painful situations.

To put it another way, each of our families has heartfelt prayer requests before God.

If there aren't any right now, there will be in the future.

So, what should we do, and how should we approach it?

Here are my personal thoughts:

1. I believe that God loves our family.
2. I am confident that our family is within God's sovereign will. And I believe that this sovereign will of God is good, pleasing, and perfect (Romans 12:2).
3. I believe that even the problems, difficulties, painful situations, and crises in our family will work together for good, as God promises (Romans 8:28). With faith, I will pray, expect, and wait, remembering that this crisis is a good opportunity to experience God's saving love and presence (Psalm 63:3).
4. As I remember the grace and love that God has bestowed upon our family from the past to the present, I will feel (and experience) His grace and love, and with gratitude, I commit to obeying God's commandments and instructions (Deuteronomy 11:1-7).
5. Our family will engage in spiritual warfare through the Word and prayer, believing that our Lord Jesus Christ has already won the victory, and with the assurance of victory, we will aim to live a victorious and combative faith life together (1 Corinthians 10:13).

# **It's not a right and wrong issue.**

## **It's a saving issue!**

This morning, I had a conversation with my beloved wife, and she told me, "It is not a right and wrong issue but a saving issue." The reason she said this to me is because both my wife's loved ones and my loved ones are facing great difficulties or crises in their families right now. So, I would like to take what my wife said as a topic and write down my personal thoughts. I pray that the Holy Spirit will help me:

1. Right now, both my wife's family and the family of someone I love are facing great difficulties or crises, and these difficulties or crises involve what is commonly referred to as the process of "divorce".
2. Even though divorce may be common in this day and age, each individual in a family going through the process of divorce is likely experiencing great hardship, suffering, and pain. Especially in my opinion, while the person being divorced is, of course, going through a lot of pain and suffering, it may be even more difficult, painful, and sorrowful for the one who initiates the divorce.
3. The reason I thought about this while talking with my wife today is that my wife's friend, whom she loves, has been battling cancer for five years. Afterward, she told her husband that she wanted a divorce (and her children don't know that their parents are thinking about divorce). It seems that the husband probably doesn't understand why his wife wants a divorce or the reasons behind it, and so on. While hearing not only those words but also the story from the wife's perspective through my wife, I started to think that, rather than the husband who is being divorced, the wife who wants to get a divorce may be the one who is suffering more, enduring more pain, and struggling more.
4. For example, from the perspective of the husband who is being divorced, it would be a great shock. The reason is that he likely doesn't clearly understand why his wife is asking for a divorce. Especially if he thinks, "I don't feel like I've done anything wrong enough to deserve being divorced by my wife, so I just can't understand why she's asking for a divorce," his heart would undoubtedly be very confused and distressed. But what would the wife's feelings be when she looks at her husband in this situation? When she told her husband that she wanted a divorce, she had probably been suffering, struggling, and enduring for a long time, but finally, she felt that she couldn't continue anymore (perhaps feeling the limits of what a person can endure?). After much worry and contemplation, she decided to tell her husband she

wanted a divorce. But he doesn't understand why she's saying this, and he probably doesn't even know what he has been doing wrong in their relationship. When she realizes that he can't even comprehend her feelings, she will most likely feel a sense of despair. In that case, she would become even more resolute in her decision to divorce him and proceed with it.

5. One family issue that caught my attention while listening to my wife's words today is the family system. In short, I came to think that when a family system loses its balance, it will inevitably face great difficulties or crises at some point. The reason I started thinking this way is that my wife mentioned that her friend's family system, in her opinion, had lost a lot of balance. And I believe that the loss of balance in their family system was something that happened gradually and continuously over the 20 years she had been married to her husband (and even after their children were born). When I say that their family system lost balance, I think it means that her family had become devoted not only to meeting the needs of her needy husband, but also to meeting the needs of the children. As a result, the husband and children had grown accustomed to her help, which caused their family system to lose its balance. So, I told my wife that, while the husband who is being divorced is certainly facing a problem, I think the wife also has issues to deal with.
  
6. My personal opinion is that, of course, the crisis in a marriage is the responsibility of the husband, as the head of the household, but when I see couples going through divorce, it becomes clear that the issue is not solely the husband's, but there are also issues with the wife. Looking at my wife's friend's situation, I believe that, from her perspective, she probably did her best to meet the needs of her husband, who was dependent on her, and also tried to meet her children's needs. However, what she received in return was that, despite battling cancer for about five years, she did not seem to receive comfort or help that could meet her own needs from her husband or children. So, I told my wife that I wondered how difficult, painful, and lonely it must have been for her. However, in some ways, I also thought that perhaps her husband and children turned out this way because she had, in a sense, trained them to be this way. In other words, while she must have tried hard to have a positive influence on her husband (and children), her husband (and children) may have become people who didn't even recognize her needs, to the point of losing balance and over-relying on her. I also wondered how things might have been if she had wisely and slowly trained her husband (and children) to meet their own needs. In other words, within the family system, I believe that a wife can have a positive influence on her husband, but for the family system to be balanced, the husband should also be able to positively influence his wife. The wife should not only meet her husband's needs but the husband should also meet his wife's needs. And when a couple cannot meet each other's needs, I believe that only the Lord fully knows each of their needs and can completely fulfill them. Therefore, the couple should pray to the Lord for each other.

7. Of course, I don't think it is desirable to clearly define and speak about family issues in just one or two ways. But as I listened to my wife share what her friend said (since my wife heard her friend's words from her subjective perspective and then shared them with me), I've been reflecting on what lesson might be conveyed through this conversation. Through this, I am sharing my personal thoughts in writing. One of those thoughts is that, when a couple faces a crisis, it is not about determining who is right or wrong, but rather asking the question, "Why did this couple end up in this situation?" By considering and reflecting on the causes, in my case, I also wish to receive lessons through conversations with my wife. The purpose is for both my wife and I to take the lessons we have received and, with them, help those around us who are facing marital crises—not by judging who is right or wrong, but rather, if it is the Lord's will, to help save those couples. I hope that, although we are imperfect, my wife and I can still be used in some small way for this purpose.

# Regarding the relationship between my wife and me, and our children ...

The photo below was taken by my beloved daughter, Yeri. She posted it on her Instagram story, and I copied it from there. Haha. This photo was taken when our family, including my wife and two daughters, Yeri and Karis, went on a trip to Pismo Beach. Karis was walking in front of us, while Yeri was walking behind us, and this is a picture of us walking hand in hand from behind, taken by Yeri. Hehe. Along with this photo, I would like to share a few personal thoughts based on the Korean drama my wife and I are currently watching, “One Spring Night” (“봄밤”).

1. First, as I look at the photo that Yeri took, my personal thought is that, in the eyes of our children, our back view as a couple should be something they find beautiful. In other words, I believe that my wife and I must be role models for our children. This means that the relationship between my wife and me is the most important in our family. It’s not that the relationship between mother and child is the most important. I believe that the most important relationship — the marriage — must continue to grow in the love of the Lord. Therefore, I think our children should grow up seeing the love between us as a couple. If, however, our children grow up seeing us not loving each other, but instead hating and fighting due to sinful, old instincts, I believe that would be very harmful and leave them with deep wounds.
2. Recently, when my wife and I watch the Korean drama “One Spring Night” before going to bed, we see that the female protagonist, "Jeong-in Lee," has parents (especially her father) who intervene in her marriage, almost forcefully, by telling her what to do. Watching this, I said two important things to my wife, who was sitting beside me watching the drama: (1) When we, as a couple, were united by the Lord, and when we look at our beloved son Dillon and his wife, we can see that when the Lord brings two people together in marriage, everything goes smoothly. (2) In the future, for our beloved two daughters, Yeri and Karis, who will get married, let’s not overly intervene as parents. Instead, let’s commit their marriages to the Lord in prayer and trust Him with their future.
3. In the drama “One Spring Night,” I believe that the father of the female protagonist, Jeong-in Lee, ruined the marriage of his eldest daughter, Seo-in Lee. The father arranged for his eldest daughter to marry a man who was a successful dentist, but this husband habitually abused Seo-in. Even after finding out that she was pregnant, he wanted her to divorce him. However, even after learning that his daughter was

being abused, her father advised her not to divorce him, using various arguments. My wife and I are not familiar with Korean culture and sentiments, so we don't understand why parents would want to marry their children off to someone with a good job and a good family background (where "good" in this context, I believe, refers to what the parents see as "good," which I think is worldly and secular). We believe that, rather than focusing on background or profession, parents should first consider the character and qualities of the person their child has chosen as a spouse. Furthermore, before all of this, my wife and I trust in God, and because of that, we believe we should also trust our children. Therefore, we think that we should trust the future spouse our children choose as well. If we, as parents, cannot trust our child and instead worry or have doubts about the future spouse they've chosen, it will certainly lead to conflict. I believe that, in this situation, our child will sense our disapproval of their choice, and the conflict between parent and child could become much deeper.

4. My wife and I believe that, as parents, we must trust in God while raising our children, and because of this, we also believe we should give our children trust. In addition, we think that there must be healthy boundaries in our relationships with our children. There should be an appropriate distance and space between us and them. Therefore, we believe that we, as parents, must make an effort to maintain those boundaries. If we don't, parents will struggle because of their children, and children will suffer because of their parents.
5. My wife and I maintain our relationship by setting boundaries and keeping an appropriate distance from each other. For example, when it comes to exercising for our health, we respect each other's preferences and do not tell each other what to do. Moreover, we do not interfere with each other's work as much as possible. The reason is that the person who knows best about what each of us does is ourselves, not our spouse. However, when we do talk about each other's work, we each make an effort to listen to and understand each other's thoughts and feelings. What we are grateful for in this process is that the Holy Spirit helps us to have the same heart, the same thoughts, and the same intentions when we discuss our children. As a result, my wife and I do not argue or fight over our differences of opinion regarding our children. Instead, we empathize with each other's hearts, understand each other's thoughts, and complement one another, so that, according to God's will (not our own), we are able to love and serve each of our children.





# First, everything needs to be restored (set right)!

On Wednesday morning this week, while meditating on Matthew 17, I wrote a short reflection under the title "The Lord's servant, like John the Baptist, who prepares for the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, sets everything right": "The Lord's servant, like John the Baptist, who prepares for the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, sets everything right. However, hypocrites, like the Pharisees, who have a stubborn heart and refuse to be corrected, will persecute that servant of the Lord. Therefore, the servant of the Lord who prepares for Jesus' second coming will suffer (Ref: Matthew 17:11-13, Korean Modern Bible)." Reflecting on this short meditation, I thought to myself, "As the servant of the Lord, in preparing for the second coming of Jesus, I must 'first set everything right!'" The thought that followed was, "What is it that the Lord wants to restore (set right) in me, since He called me and anointed me to be His servant (pastor)?" I hope to organize my thoughts as I write down a few things that come to mind:

1. First and foremost, I believe that the Lord wants to restore (or set right) me first. And in restoring me, the most urgent matter is repentance. This is because there is no restoration without repentance. Among the things I need to repent of, the most urgent are my stubborn heart, which disobeys God's Word, and my hypocrisy. "Hover o'er me, Holy Spirit, Bathe my trembling heart and brow; Fill me with Thy hallowed presence, Come, O come and fill me now. Fill me now, fill me now, Jesus, come and fill me now; Fill me with Thy hallowed presence; Come, O come and fill me now" (Hymn "Hover O'er me, Holy Spirit," verse 1 and chorus).
2. In this process, I believe that what the Lord desires to restore (or set right) through me is my family. As the head of the household, I must repent and be restored by God's grace, and through that transformation, I must raise my beloved wife and children, whom God has given me as a gift of grace (Ephesians 5:29; 6:4). I believe that I should raise them with God's Word, not only teaching them the right way with my lips (Matthew 21:32) but also showing them the right example through my life [living in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ (Philippians 1:27)], and by doing so, I should exert a good influence on them. Therefore, I pray that my entire family and I will walk the right path that the Lord walked, and become people who are willing to give up our lives for Jesus and the gospel (Mark 8:35).
3. The ultimate purpose of the restoration of myself and my family is the restoration of the Lord's church. Since the Lord, who is the head of the church (Ephesians 1:22; 5:23; Colossians 1:18), has promised to

build His church (Matthew 16:18), I believe that my family, along with all the members of the church, must pray for the restoration of the church they serve, in faith, according to the Lord's promise. We should eagerly long for the work of the Holy Spirit in repentance. I pray that the Holy Spirit will break and melt our stubborn hearts as His Word, like a hammer and fire, touches us (Jeremiah 23:29), and with the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God (Ephesians 6:17), He will pierce our consciences (1 Samuel 24:5; 2 Samuel 24:10), exposing our sins (Ephesians 5:11) and leading us to confess them (1 John 1:9). I also pray that the Holy Spirit will not allow us to conform to the world but will renew our minds and transform us (Romans 12:2), so that we may fulfill our role as the light and salt of the earth (Matthew 5:13-16).

**We are restored by the Lord's unchanging love.**

Christians who love the Lord's commandments,  
as those who faithfully keep His Word,  
are restored by the Lord's unchanging love  
(Psalms 119:158-159, Korean Modern Bible).

# **‘Lord, may You recapture our hearts!’**

**“I will do this to recapture the hearts of the people of Israel, who have all deserted me for their idols.” (Ezekiel 14:5)**

My heart is wavering. My relationship with my husband is already not good, and now another man is approaching me and treating me warmly. Because of this, my heart is now more occupied by him than by my husband. I actually prefer being outside the house with that man rather than being at home with my husband. My heart has already moved more toward that man than my husband.

One of the causes of committing the sin of adultery is that we do not love only our wives (Proverbs 5:15). To be more specific, the reason we commit the sin of adultery is that we fail to make our wives happy and we do not enjoy being with them (v. 18). If we cherish and admire our wives, and if we are always satisfied with their embrace and continually long for their love (v. 19), we would never give our affection to another woman or embrace someone else's wife (vv. 16, 20). Another cause of committing the sin of adultery is greed (Ecclesiastes 7:7). When greed is within us, we fail to be satisfied with our wife's embrace (Proverbs 5:19). Furthermore, we are led by the lust of the eyes and, beyond what is appropriate, we look at other women, think about them constantly, and listen to their words (Ecclesiastes 1:8). And we are led by the lust of the flesh to sleep with our wives in the house, but sleep with other women outside the house as well (Ref:2 Peter 2:18). This insatiable greed (Isaiah 56:11) not only prevents us from being satisfied with our wives (Proverbs 5:19) but also causes us to covet our neighbor's wife (Exodus 20:17), leading us to commit the sin of adultery. When we commit the sin of adultery, what is the heart of our wives? Wouldn't they feel betrayed? From her perspective, how could she not feel betrayed when her husband, whom she trusted, is being captivated by another woman and committing infidelity?

In today's passage, Ezekiel 14:5, God says to the people of Israel, "The people of Israel have all rebelled against Me because of their idols." Why did God say this? The reason is that God felt betrayed by the people of Israel. God had chosen and loved Israel, making them His own people, but they disobeyed His commands, pleasing

themselves with other gods (v. 3), and were serving idols (Exodus 20:3). Seeing this, God felt betrayed. From God's perspective, He had every right to feel betrayed (Ezekiel 14:5). Particularly, from God's point of view, the people of Israel were coming to the temple, saying with their mouths that they were drawing near to God and honoring Him with their lips, but their hearts were far from God (Isaiah 29:13). In God's eyes, they were committing abominations by oppressing foreigners and orphans, shedding innocent blood, serving other gods (Jeremiah 7:6), stealing, murdering, committing adultery, bearing false witness, burning incense to Baal, and following gods they did not know (v. 9). They entered God's temple and proclaimed that they had salvation, yet continued to do evil in God's eyes (v. 10). This was something they brought upon themselves (v. 6). Nevertheless, the people of Judah, in their ignorance, entered God's temple, worshipped Him, and claimed that they were safe because they had salvation (v. 4). Then, when they left the temple, they continued to commit all kinds of abominable acts in God's sight. Among the abominations, the most glaring was that while they came to the temple and performed all religious rituals, claiming with their lips to honor God, when they left the temple, they burned incense to Baal and worshipped idols. In God's eyes, this was a betrayal of God because of their idols (Ezekiel 14:5).

As I meditated on this passage, I thought about the relationship between the bridegroom, Jesus Christ, and His bride, the church (Ephesians 5:32). The church, which is the bride, does not love the bridegroom, Jesus, with all her heart, soul, and mind (Matthew 22:37). Instead, she has idolized wealth and serves both Jesus and money (6:24). Jesus clearly said that no one can serve two masters, but the church is currently serving two masters. The love of money is the root of all evil (1 Timothy 6:10), and we should hate money, disregard it, love the Lord, and be loyal to Him (Matthew 6:24). Yet, the church, with her heart, loves money and is loyal to it, while with her lips, she says that she loves the Lord and will be loyal to Him. When the bride, the church, loves money, idolizes it, and is loyal to it, how do you think the heart of the bridegroom, the Lord, feels? Surely, the Lord will feel betrayed. When He sees the unfaithful bride, the church, He will undoubtedly feel a deep sense of betrayal. However, the amazing love and grace of the Lord is that even though we constantly betray Him, He still calls us. And the Lord continues to show us true love. I found this true love of the Lord in the relationship between the prophet Hosea and his wife, the unfaithful woman Gomer, as recorded in the Old Testament. First, God commanded the prophet Hosea, "Go, take yourself a wife of harlotry and have children of harlotry" (Hosea 1:2). This is truly an incomprehensible command of God, I believe. The reason is that in Leviticus 21:14, it is clearly stated that a consecrated high priest must marry a virgin. So, how is it that the Lord instructed the anointed prophet Hosea to marry a woman who was not a virgin, but an unfaithful woman? I do not fully understand this. Nevertheless, Hosea obeyed God's command and married Gomer (Hosea 3:3). However, even after marrying Hosea, Gomer continued to act as a prostitute (2:5). Even when she was pregnant with an illegitimate child, she shamefully said that she would go after those she loved (v. 5). But then God told Hosea, "Go, love again a woman who is loved by another man and is an adulteress" (3:1, Korean Modern Bible). The prophet Hosea obeyed this command without any complaints or grievances. So, Hosea said, "I bought her for 15 shekels of silver and about 9 bushels of barley, and I said to her, 'You are to live with me for many days. You must not be a prostitute or be with any other man, and I will behave the same way toward you'" (vv. 2-3, Korean Modern Bible). This is the love of the bridegroom, the Lord, toward His bride, the church. The true Hosea (meaning "God is

salvation") is the bridegroom, Jesus (also meaning "God is salvation"), who obeyed the will of God the Father and came to this earth. Although Jesus originally had the nature of God, He did not consider equality with God something to be grasped. Instead, He gave up all His privileges and took the form of a servant, becoming like one of us in human likeness. He humbled Himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross (Philippians 2:6-8). The reason is that Jesus loves our church, like the adulterous woman Gomer, and He loves us to the point of giving His life on the cross. That is why the Lord continues to call us, even though we constantly betray Him, leading us to confess our sins, repent, and turn back to Him. Right now, the Lord is recapturing our hearts, turning us from the path of betrayal to the path of obedience. The bridegroom, the Lord, is reclaiming the hearts of His bride, the church, so that we no longer live lives that idolize and chase after money, but instead live lives that love and follow the Lord. It truly is the great grace of God.

I would like to conclude this reflection on the Word. In a marital relationship, infidelity or adultery can cause great feelings of betrayal in the spouse. Especially when we find out that the wife, whom we trusted and believed in, has let another man into her heart and formed an adulterous relationship with him, it is easy to feel deeply betrayed. Despite this, can we continue to love a spouse who has betrayed us? Can we love that spouse with the Lord's love and try to win her heart back? Or will we simply separate (divorce)? The Israelites, like an adulterous woman, brought idols into their hearts and worshiped them, thus betraying God. God told them, "You have all betrayed Me through idols." I believe that right now, the bridegroom, Jesus, who is the head of the church, is telling us, His bride, the Christians, "You have all betrayed Me through idols." One of the reasons for this is that we are currently violating Jesus' teachings by idolizing money, harboring a love for it in our hearts, and serving both money and the Lord at the same time. Right now, we are serving two masters. On Sundays, we serve the Lord, but during the week, we go out into the world and serve money. Living this double life, straddling two worlds, is detestable in God's eyes and is a betrayal of the Lord. Nevertheless, the Bridegroom, Jesus, continues to call us, His bride, who chase after money like the adulterous Gomer, and He desires for us to confess our sins and repent. Especially, knowing our weaknesses, the Lord is holding our hearts again, causing us to turn away from idols and all abominations. This is the full grace of God. As the bride, the church, comes to realize this grace, we must earnestly ask the Bridegroom, Jesus, "Lord, please hold our hearts again." Therefore, until the day the Lord returns to this world, we pray that He would hold our hearts once more, causing us to turn away from all idols and abominations, and helping us to become more like the holy Jesus, preparing His bride to be a glorious church.

Purifying our dirty and ugly idolatrous hearts with the precious blood of Jesus' cross, we are able to love the Lord even a little.

James Kim (August 31, 2018, Even though I betray the Lord every day, I am still called, and I thank the Lord for His true love and grace. I pray that I may fully follow the Lord with a grateful heart for His grace and love.)

## **When the Lord restores us ...**

When the Lord restores us, we will hear the sounds of rejoicing, the sounds of joy, the voice of the Bridegroom, the voice of the Bride, and the voice saying, 'Give thanks to the Lord of hosts, for the Lord is good; His lovingkindness endures forever,' as well as the sounds of people offering thanksgiving worship in God's temple" (Ref: Jeremiah 33:10).

## **The grace of God's restoration**

When God restores us to our former state,  
He will heal and mend the wounds we have received,  
grant us peace and prosperity,  
rebuild us as before,  
cleanse us from all the sins we have committed against Him,  
and forgive our sins and acts of rebellion.  
We will become a source of joy, praise, and glory to God,  
and the whole world will hear of all the good things God has done for us,  
and the abundant blessings and prosperity He has bestowed,  
and they will be filled with awe and trembling.  
At that time, we will rejoice and be glad,  
offering thanksgiving sacrifices in the Lord's temple,  
and the sound of singing, saying,  
"Give thanks to the Almighty Lord. The Lord is good,  
and His love endures forever" will be heard again.  
(Jeremiah 33:6-11, Korean Modern Bible).

# **Part 4: Reformation**

# **A family centered on the Lord ...**

A family centered on the Lord ...

Acknowledges the sovereignty of God the Father,  
and believes that God controls and rules our family.

Because we are under the authority of the Son Jesus,  
we obey Jesus' twofold commandment,  
and love God and our neighbors.

By producing the fruit of the Holy Spirit, love,  
we experience the presence of God.

A family centered on the Lord,  
achieves the heavenly kingdom of the family.



# The Lord-centered family

## [Matthew 22:34-40]

Here is an article titled "10 Things That Must Be in a Happy Home," and I would like to share it with you (Internet). Please think about whether these 10 things are present in your home:

1. **Forgiveness is necessary.** If forgiveness isn't given in the home, there is no place for forgiveness in the world.
2. **Understanding is necessary.** If understanding isn't given in the home, that person will end up living like an animal.
3. **There must be someone to talk to.** If you can't find someone to talk to at home, you'll end up looking for conversation elsewhere.
4. **There must be a private space.** The more personal space (like a closet, study room, bathroom) there is, the more peaceful the person will become.
5. **Rest is necessary.** If there is no environment at home to rest and recharge when you're exhausted, you'll seek rest outside.
6. **Acknowledgment is necessary.** If a person isn't acknowledged at home, they won't be acknowledged outside either.
7. **Humor is necessary.** Humor acts as a lubricant to increase affection within the family.
8. **There must be adults.** Not just older people, but adults who set an example with their words and actions must be present.

9. **Love is necessary.** Love must have the dual nature of both correcting mistakes and praising good deeds.

10. **Hope is necessary.** If there is hope for a better future, the value of the home increases.

How about it? Do these 10 things exist in your home? Are you happy with your family life right now?

We often say that there is no family without problems. In other words, we believe that every family has its own concerns, struggles, and painful situations. In other words, each of our families has (earnest) prayer requests to bring before God. If there aren't any right now, there will be in the future. I would like to share my thoughts on family issues and crises:

1. Family problems are very personal, and because of this, they can deeply wound us and cause extreme stress.
2. Family problems make us keenly aware of our human limitations.
3. Family problems can be utterly hopeless without God's help.
4. I believe that family crises should be seen as opportunities that God gives us.
5. We must endure with faith, rely only on God, and ask God for help. The opportunity is that God uses family crises to transform husbands and wives, parents, and children.
6. One of the key aspects of this transformation is that as our ego is broken and shattered, we are led to completely trust and rely on God, ultimately experiencing His goodness, which works all things together for good (Romans 8:28), through it all (Psalms 34:8).
7. By trusting God even more, we receive the great grace and blessing of knowing "Be still, and know that I am God" (Psalms 46:10).

Another thing I would like to share is my personal thoughts on what we should do and how we should approach our family issues:

1. We must believe that God loves our family. We need to be assured that our family is within God's sovereign will. And we must believe that His sovereign will is good, pleasing, and perfect (Romans 12:2).

2. Even in the face of difficulties, struggles, painful situations, or crises in our family, we should believe that God will work all things together for good (Romans 8:28). With faith, we must pray, expect, and wait, trusting that this crisis is a good opportunity to experience God's saving love and His presence (Psalms 63:3).
3. By remembering the grace and love that God has shown our family from the past until now, and by experiencing His grace and love, we should commit to obeying God's commandments and commands (His Word) in gratitude (Deuteronomy 11:1-7).
4. Our family should engage in spiritual warfare through the Word and prayer, with the belief that our Lord Jesus Christ has already won the victory. We should pursue victorious faith together with the confidence of that victory (1 Corinthians 10:13).

As I prepared for today's message, I reflected on the teachings I have meditated on regarding "family" up until now. Some of the reflections I would like to share are: (1) I meditated on "a peaceful family" based on Proverbs 17:1, (2) I reflected on "a godly family" based on Acts 10:2, (3) I meditated on "a successful family in the eyes of God" based on 2 Kings 18:3, 7, and (4) I also reflected on "a family engaged in spiritual warfare" based on 1 Chronicles 14:10. Today, I would like to meditate on "The Lord-centered family" based on Matthew 22:34-40, reflecting on what the Lord-centered family truly is, and I would like to receive lessons by meditating on three aspects. I pray that we all humbly receive God's Word, obey it wisely, and dedicate ourselves to building our families as the Lord-centered families.

### **First, the Lord-centered family acknowledges the sovereignty of God the Father and believes that God controls and governs our family.**

In an article titled "The Family Built According to God's Rule" written by Pastor Paul Tripp, he said the following: 'I am increasingly convinced that there are only two ways of living. One is to trust in God and live in obedience to His will and rule, and the other is to live as though we are trying to be God. I believe there is no other way of living besides these two. There are many times when I wonder if we are more familiar with trying to be God rather than living a life of obedience to God's rule. And I think we need to carefully examine how this spiritual dynamic profoundly impacts parenting and marital life' (Tripp). What do you think of these words? I recognize these two ways of life, and I believe that each of us is choosing to live according to one of these paths. Especially when I think of our families, I believe it is extremely important for the heads of our households, our husbands/fathers, to trust in God and live in obedience to His will and rule. If, however, we choose the opposite path and live as if we are trying to be God, then that family cannot be the Lord-centered family but will inevitably become a self-centered family. In particular, Pastor Tripp says, 'Successful parenting is about doing things God's way, correctly, and relinquishing control,' and he explains that the goal of parenting is to raise children who once completely depended on us to become

independent, mature adults who rely on God, are properly connected to the Christian community, and can stand on their own. I wholeheartedly agree with this statement. Just last week, while sitting at the table with my beloved wife and son Dillon, having an honest conversation, I encouraged Dillon by saying, 'After talking with you one-on-one this morning, I believe you've grown enough to pray to God, make your own decisions, and lead your girlfriend down the right path.' Additionally, Pastor Tripp emphasizes three important truths to remember when it comes to parenting: (1) Christ rules over all things for the sake of the church, so there are no situations outside of His control (Ephesians 1:22). (2) God not only governs every situation but is also accomplishing the good work He has promised (Romans 8:28). Therefore, we do not need to control every desire, thought, or action of our growing children. Even in situations where it seems like we have nothing we can do, our children are still under the sovereign rule of Christ. (3) The goal of parenting is not to make our children follow our image, but to help them become people who obey the image of Christ. It is not about replicating our preferences, perspectives, or habits in our children, or seeking our image within them. What we truly desire is for the image of Christ to manifest in them. As I reflect on these three truths, I especially believe that even in situations where it seems like there is nothing we can do as parents, our children are still under the sovereign rule of the Lord. If we are living the Lord-centered life, we must acknowledge the sovereignty of God the Father and believe that He is in control of our family. Specifically, as fathers and husbands, we must firmly believe that God the Father is controlling and ruling over our family. Those of us who believe this will place the control and authority fully in God's hands and, by faith, carry out the ministry of the family quietly and faithfully. If, however, we still believe that we have control and authority and try to control or manipulate our wives and children, then our family ministry will inevitably face many conflicts, struggles, fights, wounds, pain, and suffering. Only when we encounter situations where it seems like there is nothing we can do in our marriage or in raising and guiding our children's marriage, will we finally surrender control to God and ask Him to rule over our family.

God the Father must control and govern our families for them to be firmly established. In 2 Chronicles 17:5, the Bible says, "The Lord established the kingdom under his control ...." When we apply this verse to our families, it means that only God the Father can firmly establish our families through His hands. Additionally, in Luke 1:33, the Bible says, "He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end." When we apply this to our families, it means that God the Father reigns over our homes as King, and our families will continue forever (Luke 1:33). There is a gospel song titled "The Lord Reigns in My Life," and the lyrics to the first verse and the chorus are as follows: "The Lord reigns in my life, / The Lord reigns in my life, / The Lord is working, even in this moment / The Lord is working in my life. / In You alone I trust, In You alone I trust, / In You alone I trust, Yes, my Lord. / You alone, I worship. You alone I love." The Lord reigns over all of our lives. The Lord reigns over all of our families. We believe that the Lord controls and governs both our lives and our families. Let us all give control to the Lord, trust and rely solely on Him, worship Him alone, and love Him, as we continue to live with faith in His sovereign reign.

**Second, the Lord-centered family is under the authority of the Son, Jesus Christ, and, in obedience to His two commandments, we love God and love our neighbors.**

On January 25, 2021, I shared a message titled “A Family Bearing the Fruit of Love,” where I wrote: “By planting the seed of love, the roots of love grow deeply and widely beneath the ground, and as the sprouts of love gradually emerge, the tree of love grows strong and healthy, bearing the fruit of love. I pray that our Lord-centered families will become such families that bear the fruit of love.” Like farmers, we are those who plant the seeds of love in our families. This seed of love, when planted under the soil, will take time to grow deep and wide. Therefore, we must learn the patience of a farmer. The Bible in James 5:7 (Korean Modern Bible) says, “Brothers and sisters, be patient and wait for the Lord’s return. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient for it, until it receives the early and latter rains.” In our families, we need to treat our loved ones with the patience of a farmer. Just as a farmer plants the seeds and patiently waits for the fruit to grow, we must also wait patiently for the fruit of love to grow. However, during the process of bearing the fruit of love, there may be conflicts due to our differences. In those moments of conflict, we must not be angry with our family members, who are made in the image of God. We must endure and restrain our anger. Let’s look at Proverbs 19:11: “A person’s wisdom yields patience; it is to one’s glory to overlook an offense.” Particularly, we need to learn from God’s patience towards us. What does Paul say about God’s patience toward him in 1 Timothy 1:16? “But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his immense patience as an example for those who would believe in him and receive eternal life.” Just as God displayed immense patience toward the Apostle Paul, He is now showing infinite patience toward you and me. By imitating God’s unending patience, we too must be patient with our family members. By doing so, our Lord-centered families will be built up in harmony and strength.

The Lord-centered family is under the authority of Jesus Christ. This means that the Lord-centered family must obey the authoritative words of the Lord Jesus Christ. These authoritative words of the Lord Jesus Christ are found in the twofold commandment Jesus spoke in Matthew 22:37, 39: “Jesus replied: ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. ... The second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself.’” Obeying Jesus’ twofold commandment means that every member of the family must love God with all their heart, soul, and mind, and love their neighbor as themselves. This is our responsibility to establish the Lord-centered family under the authority of Jesus. The Lord desires to establish our family as a heaven on earth. Therefore, He has given us the commandment of heaven, which is Jesus’ twofold commandment (Matt. 22:37, 39). The Lord, along with the Holy Spirit, pours God’s love into us (Romans 5:5) so that we can obey the twofold commandment, and He fills us progressively with the fruit of the Spirit—love (Galatians 5:22). Our responsibility is to obey this commandment, and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, all members of the family must love God with all their heart, soul, and mind, and love one another as themselves, being of one mind and purpose (Philippians 1:27; 2:2). When we do this, our family will be transformed into a heavenly one, filled with the joy (John 15:11; 1 John 1:4), love (Psalms 33:5), and peace (Romans 15:13) of heaven.

I have reinterpreted Jesus’ twofold commandment from the perspective of the Apostle John’s First Epistle. Jesus said, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind” (Matthew 22:37). When viewed through the lens of 1 John, this commandment aligns with the teaching in 1 John 2:15-17: “Do not love

the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.” Here, doing the will of God means not living according to the passing things of this world — “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.” Additionally, when Jesus says, “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:39), interpreting this through the lens of 1 John would mean obeying the teachings found in 1 John 2:3-11. In summary, the message of 1 John 2:3-11 is to love your brothers and sisters and not hate them. But Satan wants to turn our homes into hell. Therefore, Satan leads us to disobey the twofold commandment of Jesus, which is the commandment of heaven (Eph. 2:2; 5:6), and instead, he makes us hate one another, which is the commandment of hell (Genesis 37:5; Deuteronomy 22:13; Matthew 24:10; 1 John 2:9). Together with the spirit of falsehood, Satan plants hatred in us (Deuteronomy 21:17; 2 Samuel 13:15; Proverbs 10:12), causing us to engage in works of darkness (Isaiah 29:15; Ezekiel 8:12; Ephesians 5:11), and bringing forth bitter fruits in our homes (Romans 7:5). As a result, Satan tries to make us not want to go to a home that is like hell; instead, he makes us wander outside the home or, even worse, makes us want to leave the home completely. Satan also tries to make us not want to see our family members. Furthermore, Satan makes us hate our spouses even more. Within the growing hatred toward our spouse, Satan seeks to create breach in the relationship (Ref: Nehemiah 4:3); and through the lust of the eyes and the lust of the flesh (1 John 2:16), Satan leads us to be attracted to another man or woman, eventually causing us to commit adultery. The purpose is that Satan wants to destroy and tear down our homes, preventing us from creating a home of heaven, and instead making our homes like hell. This is spiritual warfare! The home is a spiritual battlefield! What should we do? We must engage in spiritual warfare.

We belong to God. We, as children of God who have been born again (regenerated) through faith in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, belong to God. We must be certain of the fact that we belong to God. Even though we live in this world ruled by Satan (the devil), as those who belong to God, we must live in obedience to Jesus' twofold commandment, as citizens of the heavenly world that is to come. Even though Satan may try to deceive us and lead us to hate our brothers and sisters, we, as those who have already received eternal life, must live lives loving God and loving one another. This spiritual battle should be fought as we grow in the knowledge of the Lord who dwells within us and stand firm in the powerful Word of God that dwells within us, living by faith and resisting the temptations of Satan. Therefore, while living in this evil world ruled by the devil, we must live as those who belong to God, loving our neighbors, brothers, and sisters with God's love, and preparing ourselves for the second coming of Jesus and the life in the Kingdom of Heaven.

We must be devoted to establishing the Lord-centered family. To do this, secondly, we must submit to the authority of the Son, Jesus Christ. We must obey Jesus' twofold commandment. The eschatological Holy Spirit dwells within us, producing the fruit of the Spirit, "love" (Galatians 5:22), and enabling us to obey Jesus' twofold commandment. Therefore, we must walk according to the Holy Spirit (v. 16). In other words, we must be led by the

Holy Spirit (v. 18), live by the Holy Spirit, and act by the Holy Spirit (v. 25). When we do this, our hearts will become heavenly, our families will become heavenly, and our church will become a community that is heavenly.

### **Third and last, the Lord-centered family experiences the presence of the Holy Spirit.**

I would like to ask you two questions:

(1) Do you believe that God is with you?

For example, in Isaiah 41:10, which my mother loves, the Bible says, "Do not fear, for I am with you ..." Do you still believe in this word of God? To believe in this word means that you trust when God says, "I am with you," and you are not afraid because God is with you. Another example is in Matthew 28:20, where Jesus says, "And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." Do you believe these words of Jesus? Those who believe understand that the Lord, who loves us and loves us to the end (John 13:1), is with us always, even until the end of the world (Matthew 28:20).

(2) Have you experienced God's presence with you?

For example, a few weeks ago, when I heard the news about sister in Christ Jong-mi Lee, who has been praying with us, undergoing her fifth heart surgery and recovering, I truly experienced that God is alive and that He is with us. When I shared this experience of God's presence with you, perhaps some of you may ask, "If sister Jong-mi Lee experienced God's presence in her recovery after surgery, can we still experience God's presence if she had died during the surgery?" I would confidently answer "Yes," because when my first child, Joo-young (Charis), passed away, I experienced the presence of the living God. This experience happened when my wife and I were on a boat, scattering our baby's ashes into the water, and on our way back to land, I found myself praising God for His amazing and wonderful love of salvation, filled with the power of the Holy Spirit. This is irrefutable evidence of the work of the Holy Spirit. How could I, as a father, praise God for His salvation love after the death of my beloved child? It was the Holy Spirit who did it. This is experiencing the presence of God. It is being aware of and experiencing that God is with me.

We have already learned two of the three aspects of the Lord-centered family: (1) The Lord-centered family acknowledges the sovereignty of God the Father and believes that God controls and governs our family. (2) The Lord-centered family is under the authority of the Son, Jesus Christ, and obeys His twofold commandment to love God and love our neighbors. (3) The Lord-centered family experiences the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Do you experience the presence of the Holy Spirit in your family? Are you aware of and experiencing the presence of the Holy Spirit in your marriage or in your relationships with your children? What does it mean to "experience and be aware of the Holy Spirit's presence with us"? Let me explain it in two ways:

- (1) The Holy Spirit helps us to acknowledge the sovereignty of God the Father and believe that God controls and governs our family.

Not only does the Holy Spirit help us believe this, but He also enables us to recognize and experience God's sovereign work in our daily lives, where God is actively controlling and governing our family members. In my case, when my wife and I met about 26 years ago and had our wedding ceremony about 25 years ago, I firmly believed, was assured, and confessed that our meeting and marriage were part of God's sovereign plan. The Holy Spirit gave me such faith and conviction that I could not doubt it. The reason I am so convinced is that, from a human perspective, my wife and I could never have met, but by God's grace, we came together as one in the Lord. Furthermore, as we raise our three children, we see that God the Father loves them even more than we love them and is sovereignly working in each of their lives. Truly, God is controlling and governing our children. Therefore, my wife and I continue to pray in faith, asking God the Father to continue to control and govern their lives.

- (2) To "be aware of and experience the presence of the Holy Spirit with us" means that the Holy Spirit enables us to obey the authoritative words of Jesus' twofold command, leading us to create a heavenly family.

This awareness and experience occur as the Holy Spirit, who dwells within us, fills our hearts with the fruit of the Spirit, which is love. As we follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we love God with all our heart, soul, and mind, and we love our family members as ourselves. This process transforms our family into a heavenly one. The transformation of the family into heaven is the work of the Holy Spirit, and only the Holy Spirit can bring this about. Therefore, whether husband, wife, or children, the entire family must be filled with the Holy Spirit and love. Together, with one heart and mind, we should love God with all our heart, soul, and mind, and love each other with God's love as we love ourselves. When we do this, we will become aware of and experience the presence of the Holy Spirit with us.

I would like to conclude with a reflection on the Word. Each of our families is very important in God's sight. Therefore, the Lord desires to establish each of our families. Thus, we must humbly participate in the work of the Lord in establishing our families. However, before we participate, we must first live a life centered on the Lord. To live a life centered on the Lord means to live under the sovereign rule, control, and governance of God the Father, who is a God of love (1 John 4:8, 16), and to obey the authoritative words of Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Truth (John 14:6), specifically the twofold commandment of loving God and loving our neighbors (Matthew 22:37, 39). It



means experiencing the presence of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, our families must also be established as Lord-centered families. We must recognize the sovereignty of God the Father, believe that He controls and governs our families, and live under the authority of Jesus Christ, the Son, obeying His twofold commandment to love God and love our neighbors. Through this, we must consciously experience the presence of the Holy Spirit in our families. Such Lord-centered families bring about the transformation of our homes into heavenly ones. May this blessing be upon the families of all of us.

Humbly desiring to participate in the Lord's work of establishing Lord-centered families,

James Kim

[June 5, 2022, Praying that our families may be those that are controlled by God the Father, that submit to the authority of Jesus Christ, the Son, and experience the presence of the Holy Spirit.]

# A transformed family

**“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.” (Romans 12:2)**

Pastor Dallas Willard, in his book “Renovation of the Heart,” says, “The only way to truly conquer the external evil is through deep internal change” (Willard). Do you and I believe that the only way to truly conquer external evil is through deep internal change?

Personally, I am pursuing internal change not only for myself but also for my physical family members and spiritual family members. In other words, I want to focus on the internal changes that God sees, rather than the external changes that are visible to others, as I carry out my personal faith journey, family ministry, and pastoral ministry. The reason is that without internal change, true external change cannot happen. I personally believe that the problem among Christians is that we tend to neglect internal transformation while focusing too much on external change. Without a fundamental change in our hearts, we end up pursuing surface-level changes. As a result, instead of Christians being a good influence on the world, we are influenced by the world, imitating its ways and living in a way that causes us to sin and become corrupted before God and others. Outwardly, we may seem like we have great faith, pray well, have good knowledge of the Bible, and serve the church diligently. But without a fundamental change in our hearts, even after attending church for many years, there may be no noticeable change in our character or actions.

Personally, I consider my family to be a wilderness and, seeking God's help, I am carrying out my family ministry. The reason I came to this realization is because of reading John Beveré's book, “Growing Strong in Dry Times”. As I read this book, I came to the conclusion that not only the church but especially the family should also be treated as a wilderness. There are two reasons for this:

- (1) The reason we must treat the family as a wilderness, or rather the unavoidable reason, is because all the sins of our family members will inevitably be exposed.

Especially when I think about the marital relationship, I believe there is no better place than the family for all of our sins to be exposed. Of course, when all our sins are exposed within the family, it is truly painful and distressing. There is naturally suffering and sorrow. It can certainly cause deep wounds to one another. However, couples who treat their family as a wilderness can, through such processes, see how sinners live by God's grace. Therefore, the sins exposed in the marital relationship are viewed with God's grace. Couples who come to understand this grace, when their sins are exposed in front of the holy God, will accept and recognize each other, seeing each other as they are, with all their flaws. In this process, we come to acknowledge and confess that not only I, but my spouse, have been made by God's grace. In this way, we relate to one another with the grace of God, who loves sinners like us. We forgive each other's faults and sins, and with the heart of God the Father, we embrace and love one another. However, we also realize that this is not something we can do by our own strength, so we must remain before God in the wilderness-like family, earnestly seeking Him. As we seek Him, God works in each of our hearts and grants us grace, enabling us to relate to one another with the grace and love that God gives us. Therefore, we must treat our family as a wilderness because there is no better place than the family for all of our sins to be exposed."

(2) The reason we must consider our family as a wilderness is because, rather than demanding what we want from each other, we must fill each other's needs.

A family is not a place where spouses demand what they want from each other. However, we often want our spouse to satisfy our personal desires. The problem arises when these desires are not met by the other person, leading to complaints, resentment, and arguments between the couple. When the Israelites spent 40 years in the wilderness, they thought their desires were not being satisfied and continually complained to Moses and God. We see this phenomenon in our families, especially in our relationships with our spouses. What is the problem? It's that we confuse the family with a place where we demand what we want from each other, rather than seeing it as a place where we fulfill each other's needs. If the wife constantly demands from the husband and the husband also continues to demand from the wife, then that family will be filled with dissatisfaction, disputes, and fights. However, if the couple treats their family as a wilderness and lives their married life, they will be committed to filling each other's needs rather than demanding their own desires. If the husband makes an effort to meet the wife's needs with the love of Christ, the wife will feel God's love through him. Similarly, if the wife understands the husband's needs more deeply and recognizes his authority, just as the church submits to Jesus, she will listen to and obey him, and in turn, the husband will receive strength from God through her. By doing so, the couple will experience their needs being fulfilled through each other, and they will enjoy satisfaction and contentment. Together, they will give thanks and praise to God. Therefore, we must treat our family as a wilderness, because there is no better place where a husband and wife can fulfill each other's needs with the love of the Lord.

Today, under the title "A transformed family," I would like to reflect on what our responsibility is in building transformed families, focusing on Romans 12:2, while praying for the Lord to transform each of our families.

### **We should not conform to this world but be transformed by the renewing of our minds.**

In Matthew 12:39, Jesus referred to this generation as an “evil and adulterous generation.” The Apostle Paul also referred to this generation as "this evil generation" in Galatians 1:4. Additionally, Paul mentioned in Ephesians 2:2 and Galatians 5:16 that before we became new people through faith in Jesus, we "followed the ways of this world" (Ephesians 2:2) or "followed the desires of the flesh" (Galatians 5:16). So, what were the "ways of this world" or "desires of the flesh" that we followed before we became new through faith in Jesus? Galatians 5:19-21 gives us a list: "The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions, and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like." A similar list appears in Romans 1:29-31: "They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, they are gossips, they are malicious, they are God-haters, they are insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless."

We must be dedicated to meditating on God’s word more and more. The reason is that the more we meditate on God’s word day and night, the more our hearts will be transformed by it. How is this possible? First, the more we meditate on God’s word, the Holy Spirit will make God’s voice heard to us. To put it another way, based on the perspective of Romans 12:2, the more we meditate on God’s word, the more we will be able to discern His will. As a result, second, by obeying God’s will that we discern, true change will take place in our hearts. Therefore, the Apostle Peter says in 1 Peter 1:22, "Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for each other ...." Additionally, the Apostle Paul says in Ephesians 5:26, "to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word." I sincerely pray that all of our families will draw closer to God's word—listening to it, reading it, meditating on it, studying it, and also obeying it—so that fundamental changes in our hearts will take place. I pray that our hearts will be made whole (perfect hearts). Therefore, I pray that none of us will conform to this world but will be increasingly transformed to imitate Jesus, and that we, along with our families, will be agents of change in this world.

I would like to conclude with a reflection on meditating on God’s word. Pastor Jun-min Kang said the following: “We all desire change. But change is never easy. Tolstoy said, ‘Everyone thinks that humanity needs to change, but no one thinks that they themselves need to change.’ We often think others around us need to change. We also struggle to change those we live with. However, we rarely think that we ourselves need to change. The reason is that we do not honestly face ourselves. If we want to change others, we must first experience change ourselves” (Kang). If we are earnestly praying for our families to be transformed by God, we must first experience change ourselves. I

pray that, as we do not conform to this world but are transformed by the renewing of our minds, our families may also be transformed by the Lord.

I pray that the Lord will continue to transform me first, and then my family, church family, and their families as well.

James Kim

(May 21, 2023, reflecting on being built as a family of believers in Jesus through God's great love and abundant grace.)

# A devout family

**“He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly.” (Acts 10:2)**

Here are ten secrets to a happy family, as introduced by Dr. H. L. Mencken:

1. **Set goals for married life:** Whether preparing for marriage or after getting married, set goals for the kind of family you want to have and steadily move toward that goal. Without a goal, there is no direction.
2. **Keep your eyes wide open before marriage and half-closed after:** After marriage, pretend not to notice your family's faults. Who is without flaws? "Do not judge, or you too will be judged" (Matthew 7:1).
3. **Comparing to others leads to misery, and secrets lead to tragedy:** Unknowingly, we compare our loved ones to others. This can lead to pride or despair. Secrets always build walls.
4. **Do not go to bed angry:** This is the same meaning as Paul's teaching, "Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry."
5. **Don't just face each other but look in the same direction:** You should seek and try to live according to God's will together. If you only follow one side's opinion, the one being pulled will harbor resentment.
6. **Be united in your use of money:** It's wise to agree on how to spend money, excluding small change.
7. **30 seconds of words can lead to 30 years in the heart:** Unkind words can cause deep wounds. Words should always be positive.

8. **Maintain joy in the bedroom:** "Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame" (Genesis 2:25). This was the first couple in the Garden of Eden.
9. **Encourage each other and bring joy:** This is the magic of love. There is hardly any ministry more important than encouragement.
10. **Open and close the day with prayer:** This is advice from someone who knows life. If you understand and keep this secret well, while there may be no perfect happiness on earth, you can live nearly happily.

Among these ten ways to build a happy family, three particular ones stand out to me: setting goals in marriage, starting and ending the day with prayer, and remembering that "30 seconds of words can lead to 30 years in the heart."

Today, I would like to reflect on Acts 10:2 and focus on how, in order to have a happy family, our family must first become a devout family. Through the example of Cornelius and his family, I want to share three lessons on how we can build a devout family. I hope that by applying these three lessons, our families will become devoted in God's eyes and happy in the eyes of our neighbors.

### **First, a devout family fears God.**

Look at the first part of Acts 10:2: "He was a devout man who feared God with all his household ...." The fact that Cornelius, as the head of his household, was devout and "feared God with all his household" teaches us an important lesson. This lesson is that, as husbands and fathers in our homes, we men must take the lead in fearing God. So, what does it mean to fear God? It means to hate evil. Proverbs 8:13 says, "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil; I hate pride and arrogance, evil behavior and perverse speech." The Bible tells us that God hates pride, arrogance, evil deeds, and perverse speech. Therefore, those who fear God should also hate these things that God despises. Additionally, if fearing God means hating evil, then conversely, we can say that fearing God means loving what is good. In other words, fearing God is loving what is good. We are to hate evil and love what is good (Romans 12:9). We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works (Ephesians 2:10). The reason God has made us new is "to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." Therefore, we should not grow weary in doing good (Galatians 6:9), for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

A devout family is a Christ-centered family that fears God. A family that fears God is one that hates evil, loves good, and practices goodness. We must diligently pursue doing good without becoming discouraged.

### **Second, a devout family is one that gives generously.**

Look at the middle part of Acts 10:2: "... he gave generously to those in need ...." Cornelius and his family showed us the true nature of godliness, which involves fearing God above and loving people around us. True devotion is like the two sides of a coin: the front side is loving God, and the back side is serving others. What does true devotion look like? James 1:27 says, "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world." True, pure religion before God is looking after orphans and widows in their distress, and guarding oneself from being corrupted by the world. Cornelius was a man of true devotion. He feared God and generously gave to those in need, which became known throughout "the entire Jewish nation," and he was praised for it (Acts 10:22).

We, too, must strive to give. Not only should we care for our own families, but as the family of God, the church, we must also serve others and especially care for the marginalized in society. This is true devotion in God's eyes.

### **Third and last, a devout family is one that prays to God always.**

Look at the latter part of Acts 10:2: "... he prayed to God regularly." Cornelius followed the Jewish custom of praying regularly. The Jewish prayer customs included praying twice a day (at 9 a.m. and 3 p.m.) or three times a day (at 9 a.m., 12 p.m., and 3 p.m.). In other words, Cornelius maintained a regular prayer life. What is remarkable is that Cornelius' prayers and acts of charity were remembered before God and reached His presence. In verse 4, it says: "... Your prayers and gifts to the poor have come up as a memorial offering before God." Here, we can see the connection between prayer and charity. This shows that when prayer is based on good deeds, it becomes the right kind of prayer.

Those who fear God are those who pray. We must strive to maintain a regular prayer life. Furthermore, we should offer living prayers to God. In our prayers, we must fear God above, and, in our actions, we must love our neighbors by dedicating ourselves to acts of charity. Our prayer life must be accompanied by good deeds.

As we approach the month of May, the month dedicated to families, I have reflected on the devout family of Cornelius as described in the Bible. I pray that the Lord will establish our families to be devout families, just like the family of Cornelius. May our homes be ones that fear God, love our neighbors, and practice charity, and may they be homes of prayer. I pray that the Lord will build our families to be centered on Him, bringing the fragrance of Jesus to this world.



Dreaming of the devout family that the Lord establishes,

James Kim

(May 6, 2011, reflecting on the physical family while thinking about the church, God's family)

## **We must be very cautious of the pride that comes from thinking our family and church are strong.**

The Jebusites living in Jerusalem believed their city was so strong that David and his army could never conquer it. When David led his army to attack, they boldly shouted, "You will never get in here! Even the blind and the lame could keep you out!" (2 Samuel 5:6, Korean Modern Bible). However, David and his army attacked the Jebusites and captured the fortress of Zion (v. 7). The lesson this passage teaches us is that we should be very cautious of any arrogance that assumes our homes and churches are so strong that Satan and his army cannot invade. We must always remain vigilant and sober-minded (1 Peter 5:8) and sharpen the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God (Ephesians 6:17), so that we can successfully resist the devil and his schemes (Ephesians 6:11; James 4:7).

## **When we turn from our evil way, then He will relent.**

**“Perhaps they will listen and each will turn from his evil way. Then I will relent and not bring on them the disaster I was planning because of the evil they have done. ... Now reform your ways and your actions and obey the LORD your God. Then the LORD will relent and not bring the disaster he has pronounced against you.” (Jeremiah 26:3, 13)**

The heart of a parent is to wait for their child who has left home to return. So, parents pray to God every day, eagerly awaiting their child's return. A perfect biblical example of this is the parable of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15 (vv. 11-32). In this parable, the father waited for his second son, the prodigal son, to return after he had taken his inheritance and went to a distant country (vv. 12-13). The father waited for the son's return (v. 20). When the son, in poverty (vv. 13-17), came to his senses and decided to return home, the father saw him from a distance, ran to him, embraced him, and kissed him (v. 20). The father then ordered his servants to bring the best robe and put it on him, put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet, and even bring the fattened calf to celebrate and feast (vv. 22-23). The reason was that the father had lost his son and found him again, had thought him dead but now had him alive again (v. 24). When I think of the parable of the prodigal son, I used to think that the son who needed to return was only the second son who had left the house. However, as I reflected on God's word in today's passage from Jeremiah 26:3, 13, I began to think that perhaps the one who truly needed to return in the parable of the Prodigal Son was the older son. The reason I thought this way is because, while the younger son recognized his sin, repented, and returned to his home and father, the older son sinned by becoming angry at his father's joy upon the return of his younger brother, instead of joining in the celebration (Luke 15:28-30). In particular, the younger son returned with a humble attitude, acknowledging, "I have only sinned" (vv. 18-21), and with a heart of repentance. On the other hand, the older son, full of "self-righteousness," stood by with pride, saying, "I have done only what is right" (v. 29), and remained distant from his father. Therefore, I believe that the one who truly needed to return to the father was the older son.

In today's passage, Jeremiah 26:3, God tells the prophet Jeremiah, "Stand in the court of the Lord's house and speak to all the cities of Judah, who come to worship in the house of the Lord, all the words that I command you to speak to them; do not omit a word" (v.2). Then God explains His purpose: "Perhaps they will listen and every one turn from his evil way, that I may relent of the disaster that I intend to do to them because of the evil of their deeds" (v. 3). I have thought of two purposes in this. The first purpose is that through the prophet Jeremiah, God desires to speak to those who come to worship in His temple, so that they may hear His word and turn from their wicked ways. The second purpose is that God wishes to relent from the disaster He had planned to bring upon them (v. 3). In summary, God's purpose is for the people of Judah to turn from their evil ways so that He might change His mind about the disaster He intended to bring upon them.

As I reflected on this passage, I began to think that perhaps God is calling those of us inside the church to turn back, rather than focusing on those outside the church. In other words, God may be telling us, the ones who come to worship in His temple on the Lord's Day, to turn back (Jeremiah 7:2; 26:2). What is God calling us to turn from? From "the evil way" (v. 2). When I apply this "evil way" to us Christians who are inside the church, I believe it refers to at least two things: idolatry and our double lives. First, when thinking about our idolatry, three things come to mind that we might love more than God: money, men/women, and honor. Like the Pharisees, we love money (Luke 16:14). We also love others of the opposite sex more than we love the Lord, and even those of us who are married may love someone else more than our spouse. Additionally, we value our reputation more than the holy name of God. Even though God's holy name is being defiled (Ezekiel 20:39; 34:16; 36:21-23; 43:7-8), we are more concerned with preserving our own name. Furthermore, our double life, which is another evil way, is serving two masters. Right now, we are serving both God and wealth (Matthew 6:24; Luke 16:13). If we truly loved God, we would hate money. However, with our lips, we say "I honor God" (Isaiah 29:13; Matthew 15:8; Mark 7:6) and "I love the Lord," but in our hearts, we love money (1 Timothy 6:10). Additionally, we go up to the Lord's house on Sundays to worship, and with our lips, we sing, "I'd rather have Jesus than men's applause I'd rather be faithful to His - dear cause; I'd rather have Jesus than Worldwide fame. I'd rather be true to His holy name" (Hymn, "I'd Rather Have Jesus," verse 2). Yet, in our hearts, we cherish our own name more than Jesus' name. We sing praises and pray, declaring our love for the Lord on Sundays, but in our hearts, we have already departed from the Lord, loving the adulteress (Psalms 73:27; Proverbs 5:20; 7:8). Every Sunday, we go to the house of God, worship with our lips, but our hearts are far from Him. We go out of the temple and love idols more than God, longing for them and spending time with them. To us, God is speaking through the Scriptures. His message is: "Therefore, amend your ways and your deeds, and obey the voice of the Lord your God. Then the Lord will relent concerning the disaster He has pronounced against you" (Jeremiah 26:13). God is telling us to change our ways and actions. In other words, God is calling us to reform our wicked ways and actions (Jeremiah 26:13). God has already told us to make our ways and actions right, to reform them, in Jeremiah 7:3. And here, in today's passage from Jeremiah 26:13, He is calling us once again to reform our ways and actions. What is "reform"? Reform must always be preceded by "repentance." In other words, reform without repentance is impossible. In order to truly reform our wicked ways of idolatry and our double-minded lives according to God's word, we must repent. We need to realize, confess, and repent of our sins of idolatry and our double lives. We must

turn back. We must abandon idolatry and our double lives and return to God. Like the prodigal son, we must return to our Heavenly Father. When true repentance is among us, there will be genuine "restoration." We will experience true "reconciliation" in our relationship with God and with our neighbors. When there is repentance, restoration, and reconciliation, true "reformation" will take place, and when true reformation is among us, the church will experience the "revival" that God truly brings.

I would like to conclude today's reflection on the word. As I meditated on the passages from Jeremiah 26:3 and 13, I was reminded of the book of Jonah. In Jonah 3:10, we see that when God saw that the king of Nineveh and the people had turned from their evil ways, He relented and did not bring upon them the disaster He had declared. In other words, when the people of Nineveh heard through the prophet Jonah that "within forty days Nineveh will be overthrown" (Jonah 4:4), they believed in God, proclaimed a fast, and wore sackcloth, both great and small (3:5). The king of Nineveh also did this and issued a decree that all the people should call urgently on God, give up their evil ways, and stop their violent actions (v. 8). The reason the king did this was that he hoped God might relent and turn from His anger so that the people of Nineveh would not be destroyed (v. 9). As a result, God saw that they had turned from their evil ways and relented from the disaster He had declared against them (v. 10). In short, because the people of Nineveh turned from their evil ways, God changed His mind about the disaster He had planned to bring upon them. However, Jonah, God's servant and prophet, was very displeased and angry (4:1). So, he prayed to the Lord, saying, "O Lord, take my life; for it is better for me to die than to live" (v. 3, Korean Modern Bible). And the prophet Jonah went out of the city of Nineveh and sat down on the east side of the city, where he built a shelter for himself to see what would become of the city (v. 5). In other words, Jonah waited to see if God would bring disaster upon Nineveh. Certainly, Jonah knew that God, as he understood, is gracious, compassionate, slow to anger, abounding in love, and relents from sending disaster (v. 2). God saw that the people of Nineveh turned from their evil ways and, in His mercy, He changed His mind and did not bring disaster upon the city (3:10). However, Jonah, following his own will and stubbornness, wanted to see Nineveh destroyed. Just like the elder son in the parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15, Jonah greatly disliked that the people of Nineveh repented and returned to God. That's why he was so angry that he asked God to take his life (Jonah 4:3-4). The people of Nineveh, the capital of the foreign Assyrian empire, heard God's word through the prophet Jonah and, in obedience to God's word, turned from their evil ways and returned to God. Meanwhile, God's servant, the Jewish prophet Jonah, had once disobeyed God's command (1:2-3) and again refused to submit his own will to God's will. Just like Jonah, God is speaking to our pastors, calling us to repent and return to Him. Moreover, God is speaking to us Christians, like the elder son in the parable of the prodigal son, telling us to repent and return to Him. When we turn away from our evil ways and deeds and return to God the Father, He will relent from the disaster He intended to bring upon us. When all of our churches reform their evil ways and deeds and return to God, He will turn away the disaster He had planned for us. The reason is that God has already poured out all the wrath and disaster that we rightly deserved upon His only Son, Jesus Christ, who was nailed to the cross.

(v. 1) Come home! come home! You are weary at heart,  
For the way has been dark, And so lonely and wild;

(v. 2) Come home! come home! For we watch and we wait,  
And we stand at the gate, While the shadows are piled;  
(v. 3) Come home! come home! From the sorrow and blame,  
From the sin and the shame, And the tempter that smiled.  
(v. 4) Come home! come home! There is bread and to spare,  
And a warm welcome there, Then, to friend reconciled.  
[Chorus] O prodigal child! Come home! oh come home!  
Come home! Come, oh come home!

[Hymn "Come Home! Come Home"]

"Father, I stretch my hands to Thee, No other help I know; If Thou withdraw Thyself from me, Ah! whither shall I go?  
I do believe, I now believe, That Jesus died for me, And that He shed His precious blood From sin to set me free"  
(Hymn "Father, I Stretch My Hands to Thee," Verse 1),

James Kim

(August 15, 2018, Reflecting on God, who turns away the disaster intended for us when we return to God the Father,  
trusting in the merit of Jesus Christ's cross)

## Lessons on family (2)

1. The family is a spiritual battlefield.
2. Satan is constantly attacking our families.
3. When there is discord in the marital relationship, Satan can magnify even the smallest conflicts between husband and wife, driving them to the brink of a marital crisis.
4. Husband and wife are bound to be different, and the Lord intends for these differences to complement each other. However, Satan tries to make them compare themselves with each other or with other "perfect" couples, leading to dissatisfaction and complaints.
5. Satan encourages couples to magnify each other's weaknesses while minimizing each other's strengths, making them overlook what truly matters.
6. One of the husband's duties is to protect his wife (and children) from the influence of both sides of the family. In particular, he must shield his family from the idols, unbelief, unbiblical, and worldly views of his in-laws.
7. One of the wife's duties is to wisely honor her husband in front of her parents, but she must not allow herself to be manipulated, particularly by her mother.
8. One of the great duties of parents is to let go of their married children. Parents who are emotionally or psychologically unhealthy and still strongly connected to their children must deliberately cut this bond for the sake of their children's marital relationship.
9. In many ways, sick parents can unknowingly harm their children's hearts, minds, and emotions, and this unhealthy influence can deeply affect the marital relationship, extending even to their grandchildren.
10. We must faithfully carry out family ministry, guided by the Holy Spirit, with the confidence of victory, fighting against Satan who attacks our families, as we believe in the Lord who has overcome Satan. We must engage in a combative family life, continually resisting Satan and fighting the spiritual battles.

(Thinking of the people I have already met who are fighting a spiritual war through the Internet Ministry in Korea in 2022)

## **Family ministry is undeniably spiritual warfare!**

The Lord desires to build our families for heaven,

but Satan wants to turn our families into hell.

The Lord has given us the commandment of loving God and loving our neighbors, a commandment of heaven,

but Satan has given us the commandment of hatred, a commandment of hell.

Our responsibility is to obey the Lord's commandments,

so that all of us, as one heart and one mind, love God and love one another with the love of God.

However, Satan continues to relentlessly attack us,

tempting us to disobey the Lord's commandments and sow hatred among us.

It is truly spiritual warfare!

# A family in spiritual warfare

**“so David inquired of God: ‘Shall I go and attack the Philistines? Will you hand them over to me?’ The LORD answered him, ‘Go, I will hand them over to you.’” (1 Chronicles 14:10)**

When we think of "family," we tend to dream of a happy family. The husband loves his wife, the wife respects and submits to her husband, the children honor and obey their parents in the Lord, and the parents raise their children with the Lord's teaching and discipline, not provoking them to anger. A truly happy family is one that obeys God's word. But what does our family look like right now? Our families are not obeying God's word. Husbands do not love their wives, wives disrespect their husbands, children are ungrateful and disobedient to their parents, and parents provoke their children to anger. Currently, the husbands and fathers of our families are disobeying God's word and are not raising their wives and children according to His teachings. As a result, we are not experiencing the happiness that God desires to give us within our families. We are refusing the blessing of forgiveness, which God gives us as a gift of grace through Jesus Christ, because we do not forgive each other. Our families are losing in this spiritual warfare. As a result, the people of the world view our Christian families with contempt. What should we do? We must engage in spiritual warfare. Therefore, today, I want to reflect on how our Christian families should approach spiritual warfare, based on the passage from 1 Chronicles 14:8-17. I hope and pray that our families will be victorious in spiritual warfare and be built as the Lord-centered families that cause the world to fear the Lord.

**First, our families must "oppose" our enemies.**

Look at 1 Chronicles 14:8: "When the Philistines heard that David had been anointed king over all Israel, they went up to search for him, but David heard about it and went out to meet them." The news that David had been anointed king of Israel was a joyful one for all the people of Judah who followed him, but it was certainly not good news for the Philistines. So, the Philistines went up to search for David (v. 8) and had already gathered in the Valley of Rephaim (v. 9). Upon hearing this news, David went out to oppose them (v. 8).



We too must go out to oppose Satan and his servants. They do not like the blessings that God is bestowing upon our families. Therefore, every time God blesses our families with His grace, they attack us. We must be prepared for their attacks. And when they come, we must resist them. Especially, Satan is attacking the members of our families, making them spiritually weak and leading them to disobey God's word. He causes husbands to hate their wives, wives to disrespect their husbands, children to rebel against their parents, and parents to provoke their children to anger. As a result, Satan is causing Christian families to sin against God. Yet, right now, we are continuing to lose to these attacks from Satan, in an unprotected state. We must be prepared and resist his attacks. To do so, we must develop the ability to resist Satan's attacks. We need to feed on and practice God's word, which is the sword of the Spirit, in order to build up our spiritual immunity. And we must sharpen the sword of the Spirit. Only then, when Satan attacks, can we resist him with God's word, just as Jesus did.

### **Second, our families must ask our God.**

Look at 1 Chronicles 14:10a, 14a: "David inquired of God, saying, 'Shall I go up against the Philistines? Will you deliver them into my hand?' ... David again inquired of God ...." David asked God twice, each time when the Philistines invaded, whether he should go up against them and if God would deliver them into his hands. Isn't that interesting? Saul did not inquire of the Lord, and because of that, the Lord had him killed (10:14). However, David, unlike Saul, inquired of God and kept asking. God responded to David's inquiries: "Go up, for I will deliver them into your hand" (v. 10), and "Do not go up directly, but circle around them and come upon them opposite the mulberry trees. And when you hear a sound of marching in the tops of the mulberry trees, then go out to battle, for God has gone out before you to strike the army of the Philistines" (vv. 14-15). The common point in these two answers is that God promised David victory. The difference lies in the strategies God gave David for the battles. In the first battle, God simply told David, "Go up" (v. 10), but in the second battle, God instructed David to "not go up directly but to circle around them" (v. 14). Isn't it fascinating that God gave David a different strategy for each battle? Especially in the second battle, God told David, "When you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the mulberry trees, then go out to fight" (v. 15). Could it be the sound of angels' footsteps? The important point is that "God will go out before you to strike the Philistine army" (v. 15). This was not just David's battle against the Philistines, but God's battle. And because God was fighting the battle, victory was certain. Ultimately, the Philistines burned their idols that they had abandoned at Baal-perazim (v. 11), meaning that the God of David, the God of Israel, as the true God, triumphed over the false gods of the Philistines.

We, like David, must inquire of God. Especially in spiritual warfare with Satan, we need to develop the habit of asking God not only in times of great crisis but also in the small matters of life. When we do so, the Holy Spirit who dwells within us will give us assurance of victory through the truth of His Word. In fact, the Holy Spirit has already given us the assurance of victory. Look at 1 Corinthians 10:13: "No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with

the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it." We must approach spiritual warfare with this assurance of victory that God has given us.

### **Third and last, our families must obey God's commands.**

Look at 1 Chronicles 14:11, 16: "So they went up to Baal-perazim, and David struck them there. And David said, 'God has broken through my enemies by my hand, like a breakthrough of water.' Therefore, they called the name of that place Baal-perazim ... So David did as God commanded him, and they struck down the Philistine army from Gibeon as far as Gezer." After David inquired of God, he received God's answer and obeyed. He took his men to Baal-perazim (v. 11), and he "acted according to God's command" and struck the Philistine army (v. 16). When David obeyed God's command, "God scattered my enemies by my hand, like the breaking of water" (v. 11), and also "God went before you to strike the Philistine army" (v. 15). God struck the Philistine army "from Gibeon to Gezer" (v. 16). Just as God had promised, He gave David victory.

The spiritual battle in our families can only be won by God. When God intervenes and shows Himself as the true God by opposing our enemies, He can remove all idols and sins from our families. What we can do is prepare diligently for spiritual warfare, seek God in prayer, inquire of Him, and obey His commands with faith. When we do so, God will grant victory to our families in the spiritual battle. Victory!

As we prepare to be a family that fights the battle, I pray that our families will become victorious,

James Kim

(May 12, 2011, Victory Church, Victory Families!)

## **The cunning Satan who attacks our families.**

**“In the course of time, Amnon son of David fell in love with Tamar, the beautiful sister of Absalom son of David. Amnon became frustrated to the point of illness on account of his sister Tamar, for she was a virgin, and it seemed impossible for him to do anything to her. Now Amnon had a friend named Jonadab son of Shimeah, David's brother. Jonadab was a very shrewd man.” (2 Samuel 13:1-3)**

The Family is a Spiritual Battleground! Satan is constantly attacking our families. Pastor Warren Wiersbe said in his book "Strategy for Spiritual Warfare" the following: "Satan attacked the family by separating Adam and Eve when Eve needed Adam's spiritual authority. Eve acted independently of her husband, leading him into sin." "When Christians marry outside of God's will, Satan can freely operate in that family. If one or both spouses are immature for marriage, Satan will easily find openings for attack. If the married couple does not obey the Bible's teachings or cannot leave their parents, and thus gives space for parents to interfere, Satan can easily attack their marriage" (Wiersbe). How do you feel about this statement? I truly believe it is something we cannot deny. As Pastor Wiersbe said, Satan attacked the first couple in Genesis, and this is something we all must acknowledge (Genesis 3). I fully agree with his point that when Eve, the wife, needed her husband Adam's spiritual authority, Satan separated them. As a result, Eve acted independently of Adam (eating from the tree of knowledge) and led her husband into sin. However, I also believe that Adam, the husband, was attacked by Satan and failed to exercise his spiritual authority, being led astray by the temptation of his wife Eve. Also, just as Pastor Wiersbe said, how many husbands and wives today are under attack from Satan because they cannot leave their parents and allow their parents to interfere in their marital relationships? Especially, how many couples are under attack because the husband allows his mother to interfere in his marriage? When there is discord in a marriage, Satan can easily magnify even the smallest issues and turn them into a crisis for the couple. Couples are bound to be different, and the Lord intends for these differences to complement one another. However, Satan encourages them to compare each other, or compare themselves to other "perfect" couples, causing dissatisfaction and complaints. Satan causes couples to maximize each other's weaknesses while minimizing their strengths, making even the smallest things seem like insurmountable problems.

The Lord desires to establish our families as a reflection of heaven. That is why He has given us the twofold commandment of Jesus, the commandments of heaven (Matthew 22:37, 39). And the Lord pours His love into us through the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5) so that we may obey these commandments, and gradually fills us with the fruit of the Spirit—love—more and more (Galatians 5:22). Therefore, our responsibility is to obey these commandments, following the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and for the entire family to love God with all our hearts and souls (Philippians 1:27; 2:2), and to love one another as ourselves. As we do so, our families will be transformed into heaven, and they will be filled with the joy of heaven (John 15:11; 1 John 1:4), love (Psalms 33:5), and peace (Romans 15:13). However, Satan desires to turn our families into hell. He tempts us to disobey the twofold commandment of Jesus (Ephesians 2:2; 5:6) and instead, makes us hate one another (Genesis 37:5; Deuteronomy 22:13; Matthew 24:10; 1 John 2:9). With the spirit of lies, Satan sows hatred in our hearts (Deuteronomy 21:17; 2 Samuel 13:15; Proverbs 10:12) and leads us to do dark deeds (Isaiah 29:15; Ezekiel 8:12; Ephesians 5:11), causing our families to bear bitter fruit (Romans 7:5). Thus, Satan makes us unwilling to go home to a hellish household, causing us to linger outside or, even further, to want to leave the home entirely. Satan also causes us to not want to see our family members, and makes us grow in hatred toward our spouse. In the midst of that growing hatred, Satan exploits the breach in the marriage relationship (Nehemiah 4:3, the Hebrew word for "breach"; 6:1), enticing one of the spouses to become interested in another person. With lustful eyes and sinful desires (1 John 2:16), Satan leads them to seek out another partner, eventually leading them to commit adultery. The goal is for Satan to destroy and ruin our families, preventing them from becoming a family of heaven, and instead, turning them into a family like hell. This is a spiritual battle! The family is a battlefield! What should we do? We must engage in spiritual warfare.

In today's passage, 2 Samuel 13:1-3, we see the story of David's family, which fell victim to a cunning attack by Satan. I would like to reflect on the lessons from this passage, focusing on 2 Samuel chapters 13 and 14, and apply these teachings to our own families. My hope is that as we apply these lessons to our homes, we will become more aware of how the deceitful Satan is attacking our families, and that we can reflect seriously on how we can fight this spiritual battle and become victorious families. I pray that this reflection will help us think deeply and pray about how to overcome the challenges and strengthen our families in the Lord.

**First, we must resist Satan's attacks in relationships, whether they be in romantic relationships or marriage.**

Here is the passage from 2 Samuel 13:1-3: "Sometime later, Absalom, the son of David, had a beautiful sister named Tamar, and Amnon, the son of David, fell in love with her. Amnon became so obsessed with his sister Tamar that he made himself ill. She was a virgin, and it seemed impossible for him to do anything to her. Now Amnon had an adviser, a man named Jonadab, the son of David's brother Shimeah; and Jonadab was a very shrewd man." In the final Sunday service of September 2018, during the English worship, I asked the high school and young adult brothers and sisters in Christ attending the service: "What do you think is important in romantic relationships or marriage?" I received the following responses: (1) "Trust," (2) "Communication," (3) "Supportive," (4) "Sacrifice," (5) "Respect,"

(6) "Loyalty." However, as God has allowed me to become aware of those in difficulty in relationships, especially in romantic relationships or marriages, and having conversations with them, I have seen that although trust is so important, it is often broken, leading to questioning, doubt, and even distrust between each other. Also, while communication is recognized as essential in both romantic and marital relationships, men and women often do not understand each other's communication styles and continue to use their own style of communication, which inevitably leads to conflict. In addition to these, things like mutual support, sacrifice, respect, loyalty, and faithfulness are all important in relationships, but the problem is that the cunning Satan attacks these aspects and twists them. Satan twists not only the trust in relationships but also attacks the emotions of men and women in romantic or marital relationships, causing them to become disloyal to each other. Until early last year, I thought that a wrong relationship in marriage was only referred to as an "affair" or "infidelity." However, the first time I heard the term "emotional cheating" was from a sister who was going through marital difficulties. It was a term that was somewhat unfamiliar to me. But then, I recalled a conversation I had a few years ago when a sister told me that the reason she divorced her husband was that they didn't have an "emotional connection." This made me realize how important "emotion" is in a marital relationship. I heard both the terms "emotional connection" and "emotional cheating" from different sisters, and from the perspective of these wives, I was reminded once again of how significant emotions are in a relationship (since I have never heard such terms from brothers).

In today's passage, 2 Samuel 13:1 begins with "After this," referring to the events following King David's sin with Bathsheba. David had seen Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, bathing and, in his lust, brought her to himself and slept with her (11:2-4). After she became pregnant (v. 5), David, attempting to cover up his adultery, intentionally had Uriah killed on the battlefield (vv. 6-26). This was evil in the sight of God (12:9), and God punished David by causing the child born from Bathsheba to fall ill and die after a period of suffering (12:15-18). "After this" (13:1), David's son Amnon fell deeply in love with his half-sister Tamar, the beautiful sister of his brother Absalom. His infatuation with her became so intense that he eventually fell ill over it. Since Tamar was a "virgin and of good character," Amnon found it difficult to approach her and was helpless in his desire for her (vv. 1-2). At that point, Amnon's "very crafty friend," Jonadab, the son of David's brother Shimeah, came to him (v. 3). As I meditated on this passage, I was reminded of Genesis 3, where the "serpent" approached Eve. The reason this connection came to mind is because the Bible tells us that "the serpent was more cunning than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made" (Genesis 3:1). I believe that the most cunning Satan is the one who tempts us when we fall deeply in love with someone we should not love, and even become ill from our obsession. But when we find ourselves helpless and unable to act, he easily approaches us with a "good trick," saying, "Do as I tell you" and tempts us. How can we know this? Because in today's text, the very cunning Jonadab easily approached Amnon, who was sick and depressed every day because of his love for his half-sister Tamar, and said, "Go to bed and pretend to be sick. When your father (father David) comes to see you, send your sister Tamar so that she can prepare some food for you while you watch. Then tell him, 'I will make you feel better if Tamar eats the food I have prepared with her own hands'" (2 Samuel 13:5, Korean Modern Bible). This very cunning trick by Jonadab made Tamar and Amnon's father David get involved (just like making parents or children get involved in a marital relationship to cause marital conflict), and eventually made Tamar, whom

Amnon could not easily approach, come to Amnon's house. And she made Amnon, who was lying in bed pretending to be sick, take some flour, knead it, make cakes in front of her half-brother Amnon, and go into the bedroom where Amnon was lying and feed him the bread herself. Eventually, when Tamar approached Amnon to feed him, Amnon grabbed her and forced her to "come and lie with me, my sister." Tamar refused, but Amnon did not listen to her and, being stronger than Tamar, he attacked her and raped her (vv. 5-14). The most cunning Satan, although Amnon loved Tamar very much and was greatly in love with her, could not easily approach her and was so obsessed with her that he became sick, approached Amnon through the very cunning Jonadab and made him do "this foolish thing" (v. 12) by "attacking her and raping her" (v. 14). In addition, Satan made Amnon's love for Tamar turn into hatred, and he hated her with a hatred greater than the love he had for her (v. 15). Yet foolish Amnon did not know that it was a greater sin to hate Tamar and send her away than to love her so much and rape her (vv. 15-16). The ignorance of such a fool reveals his foolishness to everyone (Ecclesiastes 10:3). And yet a fool does not know his own shame (Ref: Zephaniah 3:5). In this way, the most cunning Satan makes people commit sins such as adultery and rape "with craftiness and deceit" (2 Corinthians 12:16, Korean Modern Bible) in their relationships with the opposite sex, and turns love into hatred.

However, Jesus knew the craftiness of Satan (Ref: Luke 20:23), and when the crafty Satan tempted Jesus, Jesus resisted the devil with the word of God recorded in the Old Testament and won (Matthew 4:1-11; James 4:7). Like Jesus, we too must "put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Ephesians 6:11). And like Jesus, we must resist the crafty temptations of Satan with the word of God and win. In particular, we must be very careful about the temptations of the crafty Satan in our relationships with the opposite sex. If a man and a woman who should not love each other love each other very much and one of them is in love with the other, the very fact that they are in the same room together is a situation in which they cannot help but fall for the crafty temptations of Satan. To avoid such a situation, the man and woman need to set healthy boundaries and distance themselves from each other. However, they need to clearly set a distance in their hearts and especially in their emotions, rather than a physical distance. The reason is that if you love and yearn for someone too much to the point of becoming sick, you run the risk of doing something foolish. Amnon's foolishness was that he told his father David as Tamar, whom he loved and yearned for very much, told him, and so he rejected Tamar's good plan to marry Amnon, and because he was stronger than her, he raped her. As a result, Amnon became "the most foolish man in Israel" (2 Samuel 13:1-2, 12-14, Korean Modern Bible).

A fool thinks only of the pleasures he can see (Ecclesiastes 7:4), his heart is inclined to do evil (10:2), and he acts rashly (Proverbs 14:16). As a result, the fool will pay for his foolishness (14:18) and die in his stubbornness (1:31).

**Second, when the cunning Satan attacks our families, the role of the father as the head of the household is very important.**

A person named Jae-hyuk Jin said the following in an article titled "A Parent's Leadership Determines a Child's Future": "Although it may be possible to achieve desired results from people through authoritarian charisma, if one cannot truly move people's hearts and gain the trust of those who follow them, that cannot be called true leadership" (Internet). What, then, is the true leadership of a father towards his children? God has given fathers (husbands) the authority to lead their families. And fathers are responsible for leading their families well with the divine authority God has given them. However, the problem is that many fathers are sometimes referred to as authoritarian fathers by their children. Why is that? Perhaps the reason is that we lack patience. In other words, it may be because we want quick results from our children. While authoritarian charisma may bring quick results or behavior, it does not truly move the hearts of our children. So, what should we fathers do? How can we lead our families well as heads of the household? I have thought of three ways:

(1) Fathers, as the heads of the household, should not abuse the authority God has given us.

The reason for this is that when we abuse the authority God has given us, we will never be able to win the hearts of our children. Instead, we should wisely use the authority given to us by God to maintain peace and order in the home. Nowadays, many families seem to have seen the authority of the father diminished. Since the wife ignores the husband's authority, the children, following their mother's example, seem to be disregarding the father as well. This is a serious issue. While the abuse of authority is a serious problem, the disregard of authority is also a serious problem.

(2) Fathers, as the heads of the household, should trust their children.

Of course, this will not be easy. Especially when parents believe that their children have lied to them, trusting them becomes very difficult. However, if we trust God completely and entrust our children to Him, we will be able to trust our children. And because we trust God, we must be dedicated to trusting our children. In doing so, we will win their hearts. Even if the quick results we want and expect are not immediately visible, as we dedicate ourselves to trusting our children, gradually their hearts will come to trust and follow their fathers.

(3) Fathers, as the heads of the household, should have heart-to-heart conversations with their children.

Especially, fathers should open their hearts and have one-on-one conversations with their sons. Of course, this won't be easy. For fathers who are not used to talking, engaging in conversation with their children may feel unfamiliar. However, it is necessary. We must intentionally try to converse with our children. Instead of formal conversations, we need to have honest discussions that open our hearts to one another. When heart-to-heart conversations take place, fathers will be able to guide their children well.

In my opinion, based on the context of 2 Samuel 13:1-3, I think King David may have ruled the nation well, but he failed to lead his own family properly. The reason I think this is that David was completely unaware of his son Amnon's actions. For example, it seems that David did not know that his son Amnon was deeply in love with his half-sister Tamar. Additionally, David did not know that Amnon was "lying in bed pretending to be sick." If David had known about this, when Amnon asked him to "send Tamar to make food for me in front of me," David should not have ordered Tamar to go to Amnon's house and prepare food for him (vv. 6-7, Korean Modern Bible). The reason is that it would have been like giving a fish to a cat. How could David have directed Tamar to go to Amnon's house and prepare food for him, knowing that Amnon loved, desired, and was even sick because of his obsession with Tamar? As a result, Amnon raped Tamar (v. 14). Can we say that his father David was not at all responsible?

I think Tamar's going to Amnon's house was like "an ox going to the slaughter, or a deer running into a snare" (Proverbs 7:22, Korean Modern Bible). Of course, the execution of all these cunning plans came from the very cunning mind of Jonadab, but I wonder if we can say that Amnon and Tamar's father David was not at all responsible. After this incident, Tamar, who was raped by her half-brother Amnon, lived miserably in her brother Absalom's house. At that time, Absalom hated Amnon for raping his sister Tamar and would not speak to him at all (2 Samuel 13:20, 22). Two years later, Absalom held a feast and invited not only all the princes but also his father, King David (vv. 23-24). At that time, his father David did not go to the feast because he thought it would be "too much of a burden" for Absalom, but instead blessed Absalom (v. 25, Korean Modern Bible). Then Absalom said to his father David, "If so, let my brother Amnon go with us." King David asked, "Why should Amnon go with you?" (v. 26, Korean Modern Bible). However, because Absalom persisted in urging him, King David sent Amnon and all the other king's sons with Absalom, even though he did not know why Amnon should go with him (v. 27). Father David, who did not want to burden his son too much, eventually gave in to Absalom's pleas, even though he did not know why his son was pleading with him. As a result, Absalom killed Amnon (v. 29). How much must Absalom have sharpened his sword of revenge to kill Amnon, who had raped his sister, during those two years? In the meantime, father David was "very angry" when he heard all that Amnon had done to Tamar (v. 21). The Bible does not say that father David rebuked his foolish son Amnon, let alone lovingly disciplined him. Also, the Bible does not say that father David visited his daughter Tamar, who was living miserably in Absalom's house, to comfort her. Perhaps David was so busy with the affairs of the nation as the king of Israel that he had no time to do household chores.

**Third and last, the cunning Satan attacks our families and makes it so that we cannot forgive each other. However, as believers in Jesus Christ, we must forgive one another just as God the Father has forgiven us in Christ Jesus.**

In his book "Resolving Conflict", Lou Priolo discusses why we are unable to forgive our parents or our spouses. He says: "Perhaps the reason is that you are focusing on the hurts you received from them and on the people who caused those hurts. When they deeply hurt you, they planted seeds of bitterness in the soil of your heart. But instead of forgiving them when the seeds of bitterness began to sprout, you allowed those seeds to grow by continually



thinking about the hurts they caused you, instead of uprooting them. As a result, you have focused on the wounds for so long, and bitterness has taken root in your heart. Bitterness is the result of not forgiving them. Forgiveness is not focusing on the person who hurt you, but focusing on the God who works through those wounds to bring glory to Himself" (a good example is Joseph) (Priolo). Joseph in the book of Genesis not only sincerely forgave his brothers who hated him and even tried to kill him, but he also comforted them with kind words, took care of them and their children, and lived to be 110 years old (Genesis 50:21, 26). How was this possible? Joseph was able to do good to his brothers, who had tried to harm him, because he had tasted God's goodness (Psalms 34:8). In other words, although his brothers had intended to harm him, Joseph realized that God turned it into good, fulfilling His good purpose by saving many lives (Genesis 50:20; see also Romans 12:2). This understanding allowed him to truly forgive his brothers, comfort them with kind words, and take care of them and their children until his death. What makes it possible for us to not only forgive those who have wronged us, but also to do good to the evil people who sought to harm us, even comforting and caring for them? It is only when God enables us, through faith, to understand that He turns the evil intended for us into good, fulfilling His good purpose. This great grace of God is what we long for.

In the context of today's passage from 2 Samuel 13:1-3, it appears that Absalom hated Amnon for defiling his sister Tamar, and for about two years, he likely did not speak to him at all (2 Samuel 13:22-23). After those two years, Absalom killed Amnon and fled to Geshur, where he stayed for three years (v. 38). As a result, it seems that Absalom had no communication with his father, David, for five years. However, despite longing for his son Absalom (v. 39), David did not search for Absalom during those three years of exile. Reflecting on this, it does not seem that the relationship between Father David and son Absalom was healthy. Eventually, General Joab, knowing that King David longed for Absalom, sent a woman from Tekoa and instructed her to speak wisely to the king (14:2). After she was given the message, she went to King David (v. 19). The wise woman said to King David, "You have spoken like someone guilty of sin" (v. 13, Korean Modern Bible). The reason for this was that David had said he would take responsibility for the woman's family matter, commanding that no one harm her remaining son—who had killed his brother (v. 6). Furthermore, David swore by the name of the living Lord that "not a hair of your son will fall to the ground" (v. 11, Korean Modern Bible). However, by not bringing his exiled son Absalom back to the palace, King David had become, in the eyes of the wise woman, "like someone guilty of sin" (v. 13, Korean Modern Bible).

As I meditate on this passage, I believe that King David was not only "like a guilty person," but in fact, he had sinned. That sin was not forgiving his son Absalom. I think David did not truly forgive Absalom, who had killed his other son Amnon. Eventually, David brought Absalom back from Geshur to Jerusalem (v. 21), but he made him stay at his own house without appearing before him for two years. The reason was that David did not want to see Absalom (vv. 24, 28). Could it be that, just as Absalom hated Amnon for two years (until he killed him), David also hated Absalom for two years? During those two years in Jerusalem, Absalom wanted to meet his father, King David, whom he had not yet seen, and asked General Joab to intercede on his behalf. But Joab refused to meet with him (v. 29). In desperation, Absalom ordered his servants to set fire to Joab's barley field, which finally caused Joab to meet with him (vv. 30-31). At that time, Absalom said to Joab: "I called you here because I wanted you to ask the king why

he brought me from Geshur if he had no intention of seeing me. I would rather have stayed there. Now, let the king meet with me. If I have done anything wrong, let him kill me" (v. 32, Korean Modern Bible). When I think about Absalom's actions and words, I believe he truly missed his father, David. He wanted to see him. He just wanted to meet his father. But King David, after bringing him from Geshur to Jerusalem, did not meet with him even once for two years. That is why Absalom said to Joab that he would have preferred to stay in Geshur instead of coming to Jerusalem.

As I meditate on this passage, I believe that even though a father and son may live under the same roof, a heart that does not forgive creates distance between them. A heart of hatred makes people distance themselves from each other, but a heart of forgiveness brings them closer together. No matter how much one longs for another, if there is no heart of forgiveness, they will inevitably create distance between themselves. If David had truly forgiven his son Absalom, he would not have brought him to Jerusalem after he had been in Geshur for three years and then made him stay away from him for another two years. What father could go for five years without seeing a child he has forgiven? In my view, David was a sinner. He was a father who did not forgive his child. Pastor Eugene Peterson, in his book "Leap Over a Wall", says that one of the greatest sins David committed in his life, for which he paid the heaviest price, was his inability to truly forgive his son Absalom. The more David distanced himself from his son Absalom without forgiving him, the further he also drifted from God (Peterson).

A heart that does not forgive not only distances itself from those who have hurt us, but also becomes distant from God. In other words, a heart that does not forgive cannot enjoy intimate fellowship with the Lord. Therefore, just as the Lord has forgiven us, we too must forgive our family members. As God forgave us in Christ, we must also forgive one another (Ephesians 4:32). People of this world, who belong to this age, might say, "I will never forgive, even if it kills me!" But the people of God, who belong to the coming age (the heavenly kingdom), forgive even unto death, just as Jesus forgave us to the point of dying on the cross (Luke 23:34; 1 Corinthians 15:40, 48, 49; Philippians 3:20; 1 John 5:19). When someone we love wrongs us, instead of focusing on how much and how great their wrongs are, we must first see the greatness and the magnitude of our own sins before God. When we do this, just as God has forgiven us in Jesus Christ, we will not only forgive that person from the heart, but we will also find the courage to accept them and love them even more than before.

I would like to conclude with a reflection on the word. The deceitful Satan, as he did with Jonadab, is still behind the scenes orchestrating evil, attacking the families of believers in Jesus Christ, the descendants of David, and bringing them to ruin. Therefore, we must resist the attacks of Satan in relationships, both in romantic and marital contexts. While the Lord desires to build our families as a reflection of heaven, Satan aims to turn them into hell. The Lord has given us the commandments of loving God and loving our neighbors, which are the commands of heaven, but Satan has given us the commandments of hatred, which are from hell. Our responsibility is to obey the Lord's commandments and, with one heart and one mind, love God and love one another with His love. However, Satan continues to attack us, tempting us repeatedly to disobey the Lord's commandments and make us hate each other. This

is indeed a spiritual battle! We must keep this in mind. When Satan attacks our families, the role of the father as the head of the household is extremely important. The spiritual health of the husband and father is crucial within the family. While a husband should, of course, lovingly care for, guide, and support his wife's spiritual health, a wise wife should be willing to sacrifice for the sake of helping the spiritual growth of her husband, the head of the family. All of us fathers must be fathers who are assured of our salvation. We fathers must be filled with the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ. To do this, we fathers must hear the gospel of Jesus Christ and truly understand God's grace, living a life that bears fruit. In our families, just as God the Father forgives us, we too must forgive one another. As those who have been forgiven by God the Father in Jesus Christ, we must forgive our family members from the heart, just as God has forgiven us.

I earnestly pray that the Lord will establish our family as the Lord-centered family,

James Kim

(March 18, 2023, with a heart praying for a family that, through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, fights and overcomes the cunning and deceptive attacks of Satan on the family, giving glory to God)

# We must dedicate ourselves to be free from the past!

These days, my wife and I have been watching the Korean drama “Forecasting Love and Weather” (기상청 사람들). However, while watching it with my beloved wife yesterday, I was reminded of a book I read before getting married: *Making Peace with Your Past* by H. Norman Wright (Before getting married, I personally came to really appreciate H. Norman Wright’s books on marriage). Perhaps the reason for this is that, while watching the drama, I felt that the female lead—who had been in a 10-year relationship and was once engaged but eventually broke it off—was unable to move on from her past. The lingering effects of her previous romantic relationship seemed to be negatively impacting her current relationship with the male lead. At the same time, the man she previously dated also failed to properly bring closure to their past relationship and continued to remain entangled with her, which in turn had a profoundly negative impact on his marriage. With this in mind, I have decided to reflect more deeply on how we can truly experience freedom from our past. I hope to organize my thoughts by writing them down and exploring this topic further.

1. The word of God that I hold onto in prayer is John 8:32: "Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."
2. Jesus, who is the Truth (John 14:6), commands us to "forgive your brother from your heart" (Matthew 18:35).
3. However, even though we know Jesus' words, the reason we do not (or cannot?) obey them is that the wounds we have received from our loved ones in the past are too deep and painful (For example, wounds from a beloved father or mother, wounds from a beloved spouse, wounds from a beloved boyfriend or girlfriend, and so on).
4. Wounds from parents, wounds from a spouse, wounds from children, wounds from siblings, wounds from relatives — what should we do about them? How should we respond to the suffering, pain, and wounds that come into our lives? Henry Nouwen, in his book “Turn My Mourning into Dancing,” suggests four ways to respond. He refers to these four responses as the four steps of dancing with God:

- a. The first step in dancing with God is to grieve the pain and suffering we experience. We must weep when it is time to weep. However, we must weep before the cross. When we are in pain and suffering, we must come before God the Father and tell Him of our pain and sorrow. Yet, for some reason, instead of acknowledging our pain, suffering, and sorrow, we often try to deny it, ignore it, or suppress it deep within our hearts. If we do this, the suffering we experience cannot bring us any benefit. On the contrary, like the Israelites in the Old Testament, we are more likely to fall into sin—grumbling and complaining against God whenever we face hardship.
  - b. The second step in dancing with God is to face the cause of our pain and suffering. We must look directly at the hidden losses that paralyze us and imprison us in denial, shame, and guilt. What, then, is the root cause of our pain and suffering? In order to either confront or avoid it, we must first understand what that cause is. Yet, many times, we seem unaware of the true source of our pain and suffering. As a result, not only do we fail to face it, but even when we do recognize it, our natural human instinct is to avoid it rather than confront it. Why? Because avoidance is what we are accustomed to. However, unless we face the cause of our pain and suffering, we will not be able to experience the grace that God desires to pour out upon us through our hardships.
  - c. The third step in the dance is to enter into and go through our pain, suffering, loss, and wounds. We must never pour excessive energy into denial. Instead, we must acknowledge what needs to be acknowledged and step into the pain, suffering, loss, and wounds we are experiencing. We can no longer avoid them. We must enter the tunnel of pain and suffering. Though it may be dark and frightening, we must still go through it. Unless we enter that tunnel, the suffering we experience will bring us no benefit.
  - d. The fourth and final step in the dance is to meet God the Father in the midst of our pain, suffering, loss, and wounds. We must enter the tunnel of pain and suffering and experience the pain, suffering, loss, and wounds of Jesus. It is in doing so that we find healing for our own pain and wounds. Furthermore, through this process, we can be raised up as wounded healers, becoming instruments of the Lord to bring healing to others.
5. In the book “Healing for Damaged Emotions,” the author, David A. Seamands, a former missionary to India, states that one of the most common emotional wounds is the inability to recognize one's own worth. He describes this as a person who constantly carries worry, sees themselves as inadequate, and struggles with feelings of inferiority, repeatedly telling themselves, "I'm not good enough." He also mentions another type of person who suffers from a "perfectionist complex." These individuals are always searching, always striving, yet always feeling guilty and trapped in a mindset that they must constantly do something to prove their worth. Additionally, he identifies another damaged emotion

called "excessive sensitivity" (super sensitivity). A person who is overly sensitive is easily and deeply wounded. There are also those who are filled with fear, and perhaps the greatest of these fears is the fear of failure. Seamands concludes by stating that most Christians deny that they have serious emotional problems. He goes on to say that many Christians believe that being filled with the Holy Spirit will automatically resolve all their problems, so they continue to suppress or hide their deep emotional wounds. If they do not, they often suffer from guilt due to their lack of inner freedom and even engage in self-destructive behavior. However, unresolved issues remain buried beneath the surface of life and later manifest in various ways, such as physical illnesses, depression, strange behaviors, or unhappy family situations. If there are deep wounds from the past that still bind our hearts, we must remember that God desires to break the chains of oppression that have kept us bound to our past and set us free to live a life of true freedom. Moreover, God is willing to help us break those chains and experience that freedom. David A. Seamands, a former missionary to India, emphasizes that God heals our emotional wounds, but he also outlines six steps we must take: (a) Face the problem head-on, (b) Acknowledge your own responsibility for the issue, whatever it may be, (c) Ask yourself if you truly desire healing, (d) Forgive everyone involved in the issue, (e) Forgive yourself, (f) Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal the root of the problem and guide you in how to pray for it (Seamands).

6. Wounds from romantic relationships can be truly devastating. They can even lead us to the point of giving up on our own souls. Because the wounds from romantic relationships can have such serious consequences, I want to reflect deeply on them in the light of Scripture. There is much I do not know, but I would like to write down the thoughts that come to my heart.
  - a. The first thought that comes to mind is, of course, the wounds of Jesus. When we are wounded in a romantic relationship, it is natural that Jesus' wounds may not even cross our minds. However, if God grants us the grace to intentionally reflect on the wounds of Jesus, we must ask ourselves: Why did Jesus suffer those wounds? The reason is that Jesus was wounded on our behalf. His wounds are different from the wounds we experience in romantic relationships. In romantic relationships, we are wounded "because of" the other person, but we are not wounded "for" or "on behalf of" the other person. If we could experience wounds in a romantic relationship in a way that reflects Jesus' love—suffering not just because of someone, but for their sake—then perhaps we would be pursuing a higher, Christ-centered dimension of love in our relationships.
  - b. The second thought that comes to mind is "wound tolerance." Jesus was wounded on our behalf. So, shouldn't we as Christians also be able to bear wounds on behalf of the ones we love? If we can, this would truly be a remarkable or mature expression of pursuing the love of the Lord. However, it seems that many romantic relationships lack the capacity to bear wounds for the other person, or to suffer on their behalf. Of course, some may claim that they bear wounds for the one they love,

but I wonder how truly capable they are of accepting such wounds. Moreover, there may be a confusion between what is truly acceptable to the Lord in terms of wound tolerance and what we consider acceptable in our own eyes. We might be mistaken in thinking we understand it correctly, while in reality, we might be operating under a false illusion of what is truly a godly tolerance for suffering.

- c. The third thought that comes to mind is the word "healing." The wounds we have received need to be bound up and healed, but how is this truly possible? Of course, the Bible tells us that God heals. In particular, Psalms 147:2 shows that in healing our wounds, God first heals our inner broken hearts and then heals our external wounds. When we consider how the Lord heals the broken-hearted, He does so with a love that is greater, wider, and deeper than any romantic love from a relationship. It is the love of God the Father that heals. It is only with this love that we can be healed of the wounds we have received in our romantic relationships. Just as the great ocean covers the streams, when God's vast love covers the wounds of humanity, healing takes place. In the process of dating, deep wounds are caused by breakups, leading to feelings of disgust with everything, even with people, and ultimately, a rejection of God. Even if we feel like giving up on ourselves, God will not abandon us in our wounded state. He will never let us go. In fact, God the Father, with His loving and precious care, actively seeks us, His beautiful sons and daughters, who are wounded by love, to embrace us in His love. When we throw ourselves into His embrace, like Jonah, when we are held by Jesus' arms spread on the cross, and when we touch His nail-pierced hands and the wound in His side in faith, our wounds will disappear, and we will be healed.
7. Finally, I want to reflect on Joseph, the "wounded healer" who experienced freedom from his past, and conclude with his story. In the Bible, Joseph, as seen in the book of Genesis, was loved by his father Jacob but was hated by his 10 brothers. They even plotted to kill him, though he narrowly escaped death. Yet, God saved Joseph from this death threat, and at the age of 17, he was sold as a slave to Egypt, where he served in the house of Potiphar, an Egyptian officer. Later, he was unjustly accused and imprisoned. If Joseph had remained trapped in his past, he could never have forgiven his brothers and might have sought revenge, holding onto bitterness and resentment (Genesis 50:15). However, instead of seeking revenge, he reassured his brothers, who feared him, and cared for them and their children for the rest of his life (until he was 110 years old) (Genesis 50:20-22). How was Joseph able to do this? How could he forgive his brothers and actively love them, all while enjoying freedom from the past? I find the answer in Genesis 50:19: "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives" (Korean Modern Bible).
  - a. I believe Joseph's ability to genuinely forgive his brothers is rooted in two key truths. The first truth is that Joseph's brothers definitely wronged him. They hated him and initially plotted to kill him, but ultimately sold him as a slave to Egypt. They clearly sinned against both God and Joseph. This

is an undeniable fact. Joseph, too, must have known this and could not deny it. However, the remarkable thing is that Joseph believed in a second truth more than the first. It was because of this second truth that Joseph was able to truly forgive his brothers. The second truth is that "you intended to harm me, but God intended it for good" (c. 20). While Joseph's brothers had indeed intended to harm him, Joseph did not focus on that fact or allow it to define his life. Instead, he chose to focus on what God had done. Although his brothers' actions were meant to hurt him, Joseph believed in God's plan, which transformed those actions for good. Joseph accepted by faith that God sent him ahead to Egypt, where he was made a ruler to save many lives. Furthermore, because Joseph understood the purpose of God's work in his life, he was able to genuinely forgive his brothers. The purpose, God's will, was to "save many lives, as it is being done today" (c. 20). Once Joseph realized this divine purpose, he could wholeheartedly forgive the brothers who had once tried to harm him.

- b. This is the key to forgiveness. Instead of focusing on the evil things others have done to us, we must accept by faith that even in those situations, God has worked all things together for good. When we embrace this truth, we are able to forgive those who have sinned against us. If we only dwell on the wrongs and sins others have committed against us, we will never be able to forgive them. However, when we recognize God's providence, realizing how He has worked all things together for good even in the midst of others' wrongdoings, we are empowered to forgive. If we have this ability to forgive within us, it does not stop at merely forgiving the other person's faults and sins. It cannot stop there. In other words, Joseph did not simply forgive his brothers; he also cared for them and their children. He comforted them with a devoted heart, not just offering forgiveness but also taking active steps to care for them. Instead of focusing on the hurt, Joseph spoke to them with words of compassion, from a heart filled with God's goodness. Joseph did not forgive his brothers passively. His forgiveness did not end with forgiving their wrongs and sins. His forgiveness was active. He loved them even more from their perspective. He comforted the brothers who were fearful and promised to provide for their needs. He promised to take care of them all. To live this life of forgiveness, we must focus on the second truth—the work of God. We need to realize the providence of God, how He works all things together for good. Even if we suffer because of others, in those moments of suffering, we must look to God in faith, trusting that He is working for good. Through patience, we should experience and recognize God's goodness (Psalms 34:8). When we taste that goodness, we will truly be able to forgive others from our hearts.
- c. When our hearts are troubled and weary, when we are discouraged and depressed, and when we are struggling in worry and anxiety, we must look to the Lord of hope with faith. Surely, the Lord will help us. He will heal us. In His time, with His method, the Lord will comfort our broken hearts and heal our wounded spirits. The Lord will set our hearts free (James Kim, "For the Brokenhearted").



# **The relationship of the wise: Application to marital relationships**

## **[Proverbs 3:27-35]**

I believe that the relationship which brings the most joy, happiness, and fulfillment among all human relationships is the marital relationship. At the same time, I also think that the relationship which brings the most sadness, pain, and unhappiness is the marital relationship. In this way, spouses are both the greatest encouragers, bringing comfort to one another, and the greatest discouragers, causing disheartenment. So, how should we conduct our marriage? How can we have a marriage that brings glory to God? As I meditate on the passage of Proverbs 3:27-31 under the title "The relationship of the wise: Application to marital relationships," I want to draw three principles and lessons to apply to our marital relationships. I pray that all of us, as couples, will establish marriages centered on the Lord, obedient to His Word, and bring glory to God.

### **First, we should not withhold giving to those who truly deserve it.**

Look at Proverbs 3:27-28: "Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in the power of your hand to do so. Do not say to your neighbor, 'Go, and come back, and tomorrow I will give it,' when you have it with you." I have already applied this lesson to the relationship between employer and employee. Today, I want to apply this lesson to the marital relationship. Husbands, we must not withhold love from our wives, who are the ones most deserving of our love. In particular, husbands must abandon the thought that we should show more love to others than to our own wives, simply because she is the one closest to us. How can we say we love others if we fail to love our wives properly? Another excuse we often give is that our wives must respect us and show love in order for us to love them. However, the Bible in Ephesians 5:25 clearly says that husbands should love their wives as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her. We do not love our wives because they have shown us something worthy of love; rather, we must love our wives as Christ loves the church. Our wives are truly deserving of our love. Therefore, husbands must recognize that our wives are deserving of love and should not withhold our love from them. So, what should wives do for their husbands? They should respect them. Wives should give their husbands the respect they

rightfully deserve. Of course, wives may ask, "How can I respect my husband when he does not act in ways that deserve respect?" But the Bible in Ephesians 5:24 tells wives to submit to and respect their husbands in everything, just as the church submits to Christ. Therefore, Christian wives should respect and obey their husbands as they would the Lord.

### **Second, we should not harm others without cause.**

Look at Proverbs 3:29-30: "Do not plot evil against your neighbor who dwells trustfully beside you. Do not strive with a man without cause, if he has done you no harm." The closest neighbor who gives us trust and peace is our husband or wife in a marital relationship. The problem, however, is that in marriages, the enemy (Satan) works to break that trust rather than build it, sowing seeds of doubt and mistrust in our hearts. As a result, couples often fight and argue over small matters. The root cause of this is misunderstanding each other over even the smallest things. And while we may misunderstand each other, we often don't know how to communicate or resolve those misunderstandings. As a result, trust is broken, and we stop opening our hearts and sharing with one another. This leads to the inability to form a deeper relationship. But the problem doesn't end there. As misunderstandings accumulate, they grow into dissatisfaction, complaints, and distrust. Consequently, even the smallest triggers can lead to explosive arguments. Eventually, the relationship between husband and wife can deteriorate into animosity, instead of remaining a loving, trusting partnership. What should we do? Husbands, what should we do for our wives? And wives, what should you do for your husbands? We should not argue or criticize each other without cause (v. 30). We should not become a couple who causes harm or slanders one another without reason. Instead, we should be the closest neighbors who give each other trust and confidence. To achieve this, we must live according to the Lord's will in our marriage, being honest and obedient. When we do this, the wife can trust her husband, and the husband can trust his wife. Even when circumstances are difficult, we must trust the Lord and commit to trusting one another.

### **Third, we should not envy the violent.**

Look at Proverbs 3:31: "Do not envy the violent, and do not choose any of their ways." In this evil world, there are times when we may envy the prosperity of the violent, the sinner, or the wicked (Proverbs 23:17; 24:1, 19). As a result, we may stumble by envying the prosperity of the wicked (Psalms 73:1). We might question why, as believers in Jesus, we endure suffering, while the violent, sinners, and wicked prosper. This can lead us to stumble and follow the ways of the wicked, sinning against God. However, in today's passage, King Solomon, the wise man, advises us not to envy the violent or follow any of their ways. Why should we not envy the violent or follow their ways? What is the reason?

In Proverbs 3:32-35, the Bible gives us four reasons (Walvoord). We will consider these four reasons and apply them to our marital relationships.

(1) The first reason is that God hates the rebellious.

Look at Proverbs 3:32: "For the LORD detests the perverse but takes the upright into his confidence." The first reason why we should not envy the prosperity of the violent or the wicked or follow their ways is that God hates them. Is there any excuse we can make for this clear reason? It's simple, straightforward, and obvious. Because God hates them, we should not envy the violent or the wicked or follow their ways. Instead, you and I should strive to be upright. Why? Because God loves the upright, and only the upright can have a deep fellowship with Him.

We are facing a crisis of honesty. Not to mention other relationships, we have faced a crisis of honesty within our marriage, where we have become one body in the Lord. The cause is that, instead of approaching each other with upright hearts, we have approached each other with rebellious hearts, envying the ways of the rebellious. Because of this, we not only lack a deep fellowship with the Lord, but we are also unable to share a deep fellowship within our marriage. This is not the relationship the Lord desires for us as a couple. The relationship the Lord desires for us is one where we share deep fellowship in the Lord. To achieve this, we must reject rebellion and choose honesty. In other words, husbands should be honest with their wives as they are with the Lord. The same goes for wives. Just as they are honest with the Lord, wives should be honest with their husbands. In doing so, we can share deep fellowship with each other in the Lord.

(2) The second reason is that God curses the wicked.

Look at Proverbs 3:33: "The curse of the Lord is on the house of the wicked, but He blesses the dwelling of the righteous." In the book of Proverbs, King Solomon repeatedly advises us not to envy the prosperity of the wicked (Proverbs 23:17; 24:1, 19). Why is this? The reason is that God curses the house of the wicked (Proverbs 3:33). Although it may seem that the wicked live well, prosper, and are successful on earth from our human perspective, the Bible says their ultimate end is destruction and ruin (Psalms 73:18-19). However, God blesses the righteous, as the Bible tells us today (Proverbs 3:33). Therefore, as those who are justified by faith in Jesus Christ, we should not envy the prosperity of the wicked but instead rejoice in the suffering of the righteous. Why? Because our Lord Jesus also suffered, and to share in His suffering is a grace from God (Philippians 1:29).

We dislike suffering. Which couple would enjoy going through hardship? Therefore, there are times when we envy the prosperity of the wicked. However, the Bible clearly tells us today that God not only hates the wicked but also curses them. On the other hand, God loves the honest and blesses the righteous. Therefore, as couples, rather than envying the prosperity of a thousand wicked people, we should join in the suffering of one righteous person. Why? The reason is that, as a couple, when we become one body and share in the

Lord's suffering, it is a grace (Philippians 1:29). If we, as one body, live the life of the righteous and endure suffering for the Lord, God will bless us.

(3) The third reason is that God mocks the arrogant.

Look at Proverbs 3:34: "Surely He scoffs at the scoffers, but He gives grace to the humble." As we reflected on in Proverbs 1:26, when we refuse to listen to God's rebuke (v. 24) and instead despise His counsel (v. 25), we will encounter disaster (v. 26), and when fear comes upon us, God will mock us (v. 26). We have already learned that when we are arrogant, refusing to listen to God's correction and instead despising it, God mocks us. In today's passage, King Solomon says something similar. God mocks the arrogant. The arrogant, who do not accept God's rebuke, who despise it and seek their own glory rather than God's, are mocked by God, as the Bible says. Therefore, we must never be arrogant. Instead, we should be humble. Why? Because God gives grace to the humble.

We, as a couple, must be cautious of arrogance. The enemy places pride in our hearts, transforming us into selfish individuals who demand love or respect from one another by seeking positions higher than the other, rather than serving each other with humility. We must fight against this temptation from the enemy. To overcome this spiritual battle, we must look to Jesus, who humbled Himself to the point of death on the cross and obeyed the will of God the Father (Philippians 2:5-8). Therefore, we should consider one another as better than ourselves (v. 3). And not only should we look out for our own interests, but we should also look out for the interests of our spouse (v. 4). In doing so, our joy will be fulfilled by the Lord, who is our joy (v. 4).

(4) The final reason is that God will shame the foolish.

Look at Proverbs 3:35: "The wise will inherit honor, but fools get only shame." The violent and wicked people, while committing sins, often do not feel shame. This is because their consciences have become numb, and they have become shameless. The problem is that even we Christians, who repeatedly commit the same sins, are increasingly unaware of our own shame. I recently read an article in a Christian news outlet about a pastor who, while working with a larger Christian organization, exposed the financial misconduct of a senior pastor in their denomination by presenting a recorded tape as evidence. When I read that, I found myself speechless. What left me even more speechless was the image of the pastor exposing the wrongdoing, sitting in a chair holding the tape recorder — a picture that showed no humility or shame. A foolish and ignorant person, while sinning against God, does not recognize sin as sin and, even after committing disgraceful acts, feels no shame. We must not be like that. As Christians, we must know how to feel shame. We should never be foolish Christians who, even after sinning, feel no remorse. Instead, we must be wise Christians. When God rebukes us, we must humbly accept His correction. And when God exposes our sins,

we should feel some level of shame. Therefore, we must repent of our sins, turn back to God, and inherit honor.

As husbands and wives, we must be people who can feel some level of shame before God and our children. To fail to love and honor each other, and to be disobedient without feeling any shame before God and our children, is truly a disgrace. We must feel ashamed. Especially when we argue and fight in front of our children and feel no shame, it shows that our consciences have become numb and our faces are shameless. We need to realize this and humbly come before God the Father, confessing and repenting of our sins. The wise person, when the Holy Spirit convicts our consciences with God's Word and rebukes our hearts, listens to the rebuke and obeys the Holy Spirit's prompting, going before God the Father to repent of their sins. When we do so, we will inherit glory from God.

I would like to conclude with a reflection on the Word. Under the title "Human Relationships of the Wise" (1)~(3), we have learned three key principles for relationships from Proverbs 3:27-35. First, we should not withhold from giving to those who deserve it; second, we should not harm others without cause; and third, we should not envy the violent. The reason we should not envy the violent is that God hates the wicked, curses them, mocks the proud, and will shame the foolish. Instead, we should become honest people whom God loves and righteous people whom God blesses. We should also become humble individuals whom God shows grace to, and wise people who inherit glory from God. Today, I applied these three principles to our marital relationships. The reason for this is that many couples around us are suffering from marital conflicts. Couples often argue, fight, and say hurtful words that wound each other's hearts without hesitation in anger. They may also fail to be honest with one another, envy the prosperity of the wicked, and, instead of humbly serving each other, try to control one another with pride. Additionally, some couples are foolish in refusing to listen to the Lord's rebuke, as well as the loving rebukes from each other. What should we, as a couple, do? We must unreservedly show each other the love and respect that we rightfully deserve. A husband should receive respect from his wife, and a wife should receive love from her husband. Furthermore, we must become trustworthy individuals to each other. We must also be honest with each other. Instead of envying the prosperity of the wicked, we should share in the suffering of the righteous. We must humble ourselves and serve each other, considering the other better than ourselves. And we must strive to be wise couples. Therefore, I pray that all of us will be dedicated to building the Lord-centered marriages, so that in this age where divorce rates are soaring, couples who believe in Jesus can show how they are different, radiating the fragrance of Christ's love.

With a deep desire to love my wife with God's love and show her a small reflection of Jesus before I die,

James Kim

(March 30, 2011, Pursuing the Lord-centered marital and interpersonal relationships)

## **We must honor our wives.**

**“and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. ...”  
(1 Corinthians 12:23a).**

Last month, before I left to attend the India Mission Conference in September, our pastor emeritus was in Korea, so I had to preach at the Wednesday service. In that sermon, based on 1 Corinthians 12:25, I proclaimed the message titled "Is Our Church a Mirror?" and shared three points on how our church, Victory Presbyterian Church, can maintain unity amidst diversity: (1) We need to recognize that we are all needed by one another, (2) We must honor one another, and (3) We must see the beauty in each other. After delivering this message and finishing the service, when I went home, my wife shared a couple of things with me. When I heard her words, I was convicted in my conscience. The reason for this was that, as she said, I had not been treating her with the honor she deserved. The reason she felt that way was because, although she had asked me multiple times to go camping with her, I had always said "no," and later suggested, "Next April, when a pastor couple we know come to Texas, we can go camping then. After that, just the two of us will go." If I had truly honored her, I should have wanted to go camping with her alone first. I realized this from her loving correction that day. So, after returning from the India Mission Conference, I apologized and told her we would go camping alone, just the two of us. Then, last Sunday afternoon, I went camping with only my wife, and we returned home on Tuesday. Originally, my wife had suggested that we bring our three children along, but I said, "No." The reason was that I wanted to go camping with her alone. Though we've been married for over 25 years, this was the first time we went camping just the two of us. It was wonderful. Especially on the last evening, Monday night, when we lit a campfire, grilled some marinated meat, and wrapped it in lettuce with ssamjang (Korean dipping sauce), eating and having a meal together at the table was truly enjoyable. Seeing my wife eat so well made me feel thankful and happy.

In today's passage, 1 Corinthians 12:23a, the Apostle Paul tells the Corinthians, "We give greater honor to the parts that lacked it ...." I had already received the lesson last month during the Wednesday service, emphasizing that in order for our Victory Presbyterian Church to maintain unity in diversity, we must honor one another. I then applied this lesson to the family context, meaning that husbands and wives must honor each other. Specifically, as a

husband, I was reminded of the lesson that "husbands must honor their wives." To practice this lesson in my relationship with my wife, I considered what I should do and how I should approach it in two ways:

**First, in order for me, as a husband, to honor my wife, I need to understand how much the Triune God values me.**

When my children were younger, I would often write letters to them on their birthdays and send them via email. I would address them, saying, "To my precious, beloved son Dillon" or "To my precious, beloved daughter Yeri" (or Karis). I did this because, in the eyes of God the Father, they were precious children, and as their earthly father, I wanted to honor and cherish them in the same way. However, I realized that I was not humbly honoring myself as precious in the faith. Despite the fact that God the Father valued me so much that He sent His only Son, Jesus, to this earth and allowed Him to bear my sins on the cross and die, I had not been valuing myself through His love. When I think about how much God the Father values me, to the point of not sparing His Son but delivering Him up for me on the cross (Romans 8:32), I am overwhelmed by how great, deep, wide, and vast His love is. I also want to realize more deeply how precious I am to Jesus, the Son of God. Jesus, who has the authority to lay down His life (John 10:18), gave Himself up on the cross for someone like me, a sinner who was an enemy of God (Romans 5:8, 10), and I want to understand more deeply how much He loves me and values me. Furthermore, I want to understand how precious I am to the Holy Spirit, who lives within me as a righteous sinner, bearing fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) and working to transform me to become more like Jesus (2 Peter 1:4). In short, I want to realize more and more how precious I am to the Triune God. Therefore, I want to love myself with the love of the Triune God, and following Jesus' command, I want to love my neighbor as myself (Matthew 22:39). In particular, I want to love my wife, who is one with me in the Lord, with the love of the Triune God, valuing her even more.

**Second and last, as a husband, I want to value my wife as the more fragile vessel, the partner with whom I will share eternal life, which is given by grace.**

This is from 1 Peter 3:7: "Husbands, in the same way, be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers" [(Korean Modern Bible) "Husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way. Treat them as the weaker vessel, and as co-heirs of the grace of life, value them. This is so that your prayers may not be hindered"]. From this verse, the Bible is telling husbands like me to "honor" our wives. The Contemporary Bible says, "value them." I ponder how I can obey this command and value my wife. I have thought of three ways:

(1) As a husband, I must live with my wife in understanding.

This is the first half of 1 Peter 3:7 from the Korean Modern Bible: "Husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way ...." Having lived with my wife for over 25 years, I have tried and tried to understand

her. There were times when I simply couldn't understand her, and my conclusion was, "It seems that my wife is an object of love, not an object to be understood." Haha. But as I read this verse from 1 Peter 3:7, I am reminded that as a husband, I am supposed to "understand" my wife. However, when it comes to putting this teaching into practice, the spiritual battle is real. Satan keeps trying to make me "misunderstand" her. While the Holy Spirit is helping me understand my wife, Satan is trying to lead me into misunderstanding her, thus upsetting my emotions. In the past, Satan would make me say things in anger, which resulted in conflicts between us. But now, the Holy Spirit is guiding me to understand my wife more deeply. Not only that, the Holy Spirit is also helping my wife understand me better. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit is teaching us to accept and love each other, even when we struggle to understand one another, without letting misunderstandings take root.

(2) As a husband, I must recognize that my wife is the "weaker vessel" and love her as she is.

I would like to share an interesting interpretation of the term "weaker vessel" from 1 Peter 3:7: "The word 'skeuos' (σκεῦος) for vessel does not refer to a specific shaped container but rather a general term for any vessel used for carrying something. This term 'vessel' is often used in the Bible as a metaphor for someone with a mission (Internet). When I accept this interpretation, I believe the Lord has also given my wife a mission. Additionally, I believe that as her husband, I must fully support the development of the gifts and talents that God has given her. I try to practice this by supporting what my wife enjoys, loves, and excels at. I also look with eyes of faith to see how the Lord is working in my wife's heart and life, and I am thankful and joyful. I trust that the Lord will continue to work through my wife and be glorified. My prayer is that both my wife and I will live according to the respective missions the Lord has given us, bringing glory to God. Of course, I believe that living according to these missions means serving together as one body, fulfilling the Lord's calling for our family, His church, and His kingdom.

In this way, as a husband, I want to recognize my wife as a partner with whom I will share the eternal life that God graciously gives, and I want to cherish her more deeply. I want to cherish her, especially as a couple who, by God's grace, already possess eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ, and as such, I hope we can be a couple who, according to Jesus' commandments, love one another more with the Lord's love (1 John 3:14).

I pray that I will be established as a husband who cherishes my beloved wife, whom God has given as a gift of grace.

James Kim

(October 12, 2022, How can I, as someone who is loved by the Triune God, continue to sin by not cherishing the wife whom He has graciously given to me?)



# **It makes me think of some lessons about family.**

King Ahasuerus became so angry and could not bear it when Queen Vashti refused to come at his command. So, he asked his advisers, who were experts in the law, "What should we do in this case? What does the law say?" One of the advisers, Memucan, responded, "Queen Vashti has not wronged the king only, but also every noble and citizen in all the provinces of the king's realm. What she has done will become known to all the women, and they will look down on their husbands and say, 'King Xerxes (Ahasuerus) commanded Queen Vashti to come, but she refused.' Today the Persian and Median women of the royal provinces will hear about the queen's conduct, and they will despise their husbands and say such things, and the husbands will be filled with anger. Therefore, if it pleases the king, let him issue a royal decree and let it be written into the laws of Persia and Media, which cannot be repealed, that Vashti is never again to come before the king, and let the king give her royal position to someone else who is better than she. When the king's decree is proclaimed throughout his vast realm, all women will respect their husbands, from the least to the greatest."

The king and his advisers liked this idea, so he followed Memucan's advice and issued a decree in the languages of all the peoples, commanding that every husband should rule over his household with authority (Esther 1:12-21, Korean Modern Bible). As I reflect on this passage, I think about several lessons regarding the family:

1. Wives should submit to their husbands in the Lord.
2. Wives should not disrespect or despise their husbands.
3. Rather, wives should honor their husbands.
4. Every husband should govern his household with authority as the head of the family.

## **We should follow Job's example and value family ministry.**

Job, who was truthful, honest, and served God with a fearful heart, distancing himself from evil, had his children hold feasts in their homes on their birthdays, inviting their three sisters to join them in eating and drinking. After each feast, Job would call his children to purify them and offer burnt offerings for each of them early in the morning. He did this because he thought, "Perhaps my children have sinned and cursed God in their hearts." This was Job's regular practice (Job 1:1-5). As I reflect on this passage, I believe that Job, as a father, set an example for his children by being truthful, honest, and serving God with a reverent heart, distancing himself from evil. I also believe Job valued family ministry. The reason I think this is that in Job 1:1-5, after introducing who Job is (v.1), how many children he has (v.2), and his possessions (v.3), verses 4-5 speak specifically about his children. Job offered burnt offerings for his children because he feared that they might have sinned and cursed God in their hearts. I believe he deeply desired that neither he nor his children would "curse God in their hearts." Job focused not only on actions but on the heart in his spiritual life. We, too, should follow Job's example, serving God with truth, honesty, and a fearful heart, and distancing ourselves from evil. Additionally, we should also value family ministry, as Job did. In our own spiritual lives, we need to regularly examine our hearts to ensure that we are not dishonoring God in our hearts, even when our actions appear correct.

# Building the Family

Because the Lord wants to establish our families,  
we must be devoted to building the family.  
To join in the Lord's work of establishing the family,  
we must humbly obey His Word.  
Especially, as the heads of the family,  
husbands and fathers must obey the Lord's Word.  
They must nurture their beloved wives and children with the Word of the Lord.  
Not only with words, but in the life we live together,  
husbands and fathers should teach their wives and children the Word of God.  
However, today, our husbands and fathers are disobedient to the Lord's Word.  
This is not only a serious problem but also a grave sin.  
Because of our sins, the wives and children whom the Lord loves  
are spiritually, mentally, and emotionally starving for love.

# **“Lord, establish our families!”**

"Lord, establish our families!" (1 Chronicles 17:16-27):

- (1) "Lord, may our families be one that is governed by Your grace!" (v. 16)
- (2) "Lord, may Your Word be the authority in our families!" (v. 23)
- (3) "Lord, may our families experience Your presence through prayer!" (v. 25)

## **Mission statement of my family:**

To love one another with the Lord's love,  
To become more like Jesus Christ,  
To be established as the Lord-centered family and community,  
And to be used as instruments for spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ.

# How should we build our families?

**“so she said to Abram, ‘The LORD has kept me from having children. Go, sleep with my maidservant; perhaps I can build a family through her.’ Abram agreed to what Sarai said.” (Genesis 16:2)**

We must build our family firmly on the foundation of Jesus Christ. To establish the body of Christ, the Church, firmly on the foundation of Jesus, we must first build our family on that same foundation. To do this, we need to find the principles for building a family in the Bible and follow them. Of course, the Bible contains many principles for building a family. Prominent examples include Ephesians chapters 5-6, Colossians 3:13-4:1, and 1 Peter 3:1-7. However, today I would like to reflect on biblical principles for building our family, focusing on Genesis 16:2, and share these reflections in the hope that they will be helpful not only for my own family but also for yours.

The passage from today’s text, Genesis 16:2, describes the scene where Sarai, who was unable to conceive and had no children (11:30), speaks to her husband Abram, asking him to sleep with her servant Hagar (16:1) in order to build a family. Sarai’s intention was for her husband Abram to sleep with her servant Hagar so that they could have children and establish a family. Abram listens to Sarai’s request and ultimately sleeps with Hagar, and Hagar becomes pregnant (v. 4). When Hagar realized she was pregnant, she despised her mistress Sarai (v. 4). At this point, Sarai spoke to Abram, saying, "My wrong be upon you. I gave my maid into your embrace, and when she saw that she had conceived, I became despised in her eyes. The Lord judge between you and me" (v. 5). This situation seems to reflect the concept of "the pot calling the kettle black." Sarai, who initiated the situation, now blames her husband Abram (it seems Sarai was complaining to her husband). In response, Abram said to Sarai, "Your maid is in your hand; do to her as you please" (v. 6). As a result, Hagar fled from her mistress Sarai (v. 8).

As I think more about this story, I increasingly believe that Abram and Sarai did not follow the biblical principles for marriage and were disobedient. In other words, Sarai did not respect (honor) her husband Abram as a wife, and Abram did not truly love his wife Sarai.

**First, Sarai disobeyed the biblical principle of respecting (honoring) her husband Abram (Ephesians 5:33).**

How can we know this? If Sarai had truly respected her husband Abram, she should have trusted and followed him. In other words, if she truly respected (honored) her husband, she would have obeyed his words (Ephesians 5:22-24). In other words, Sarai should have believed and patiently waited, just as Abram believed the promise of God's blessings (Genesis 12:1-3, 7; 15:4-5) and waited in faith. Instead, she sinned by disobedience rooted in unbelief. In other words, Sarai did not believe God's promise to Abram, "To your offspring, I will give this land" (12:7), "A son coming from your own body will be your heir" (15:4), "Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth" (v. 5), and she took matters into her own hands. Rather than trusting God's plan, she decided to have her servant Hagar bear a child with Abram to establish a family. Clearly, God had said, "A son coming from your own body will be your heir" (v. 4), but Sarai did not believe this promise. Instead of following God's plan, she acted according to her own will and plan. God's plan was for Abram to receive the promise when he was 75 (12:4), and for him to have a son, Isaac, when he was 100. However, Sarai, unable to wait in faith for 10 years (16:3), resorted to her own solution by having Abram sleep with Hagar to have a child, ultimately leading to the birth of Ishmael. Sarai chose to pursue her own plan, having Hagar sleep with Abram to establish a family, rather than trusting in God's way, which was for Isaac to be born from Abram and Sarai. In short, Sarai did not build her family by faith.

**Second, Abram disobeyed the biblical principle of loving his wife Sarai (Ephesians 5:25-28).**

How can we know this? If Abram had truly loved his wife Sarai, he would have led her properly. In other words, if Abram had loved his wife Sarai, he would have led her in truth. However, when Sarai told Abram to sleep with her servant Hagar, Abram listened to Sarai's words (Genesis 16:2). A wife should listen to and obey her husband, but here we see the opposite: Abram, the husband, listening to and obeying his wife's words. Why is this wrong? Clearly, Abram had received God's promise, "A son coming from your own body will be your heir" (15:4). If he truly believed this promise, when his wife Sarai suggested having Hagar bear a child to build a family, Abram should have rejected Sarai's words in faith, instead of obeying them. Shouldn't Abram have rebuked his wife with love, saying, "Why don't you believe that God will give us descendants through our bodies?" Instead, Abram obeyed his wife's unbelieving suggestion. This made me think of Adam. After eating the forbidden fruit, Adam should have rejected Eve's words and rebuked her with love, but instead, he ate the fruit she gave him. Adam refused to lead his wife. He did not exercise leadership as a husband. I believe the same applies to Abram. As the husband, Abram should have led Sarai, but instead, he refused to lead and obeyed his wife's wrong words, as we see in today's text, Genesis 16:2. If Abram had truly loved his wife, he would have rejected her unbelieving words and, with love, led her in truth. But Abram failed to do this. He loved his wife without truth. This kind of love is meaningless. If he was simply trying to maintain peace in the family by listening to and obeying his wife's words in her unbelief, that thinking was a great

mistake. Love that is not based on truth cannot maintain peace in the family. In short, Abram did not build his family with true love.

In order to build our family, we must remain faithful to the biblical principles that God has given us, no matter what situation we find ourselves in. A wife must respect her husband. A wife who respects her husband obeys his words as she would the Lord. A wise wife who builds her family in faith submits to her husband's authority (not authoritarianism, but the divine authority God has given to her husband) and follows his lead. Therefore, she honors her husband. What about the husband? A Spirit-filled husband who builds his family in faith loves his wife as Christ loves the Church. He leads his wife in truth. He never listens to or agrees with words from his wife's unbelief, nor does he obey them. Instead, he knows how to rebuke her in love. Therefore, because he loves her, he builds her up in truth. When both the husband and wife are faithful to God's principles for building a family—when the husband builds up his wife, and the wife builds up her husband—our family will be firmly established on the rock.

Dedicated to building families,

James Kim

(January 5, 2010, re-committing to lead my beloved wife in truth)

# **Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.**

**“bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.” (1 Corinthians 13:7)**

Yesterday, Friday, while I was driving my beloved youngest daughter, Karis, home from her university dorm, we had various conversations in the car. For almost 40 minutes, Karis shared the things she wanted to tell me, and among them, she shared something her church's college pastor had said. The essence of the pastor's message, as I understood it, was that the relationship of love with the Lord is what truly matters. The background to this message was about how, when struggling with not being able to read the entire Bible, rather than focusing on that, it is more important to focus on our relationship with the Lord, which is a relationship of love. I told my beloved daughter that I agreed with the pastor's teaching. There can certainly be struggles and concerns about things like whether we read the Bible or not, whether we evangelize or not, and so on, regarding what we should and should not do. However, the important thing is that the more intimate and solid our relationship of love with the Lord becomes, the more we will live in obedience to His Word, empowered by His love.

Personally, when I think of the Lord's love and pray with a longing heart for His love, there is a verse from the Bible that I hold onto. That verse is Ephesians 3:17-18. In the Korean Modern Bible, it says: “... and I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.” I often pray to God the Father, like the Apostle Paul, according to this verse. The reason is that I want to more deeply understand the width, length, height, and depth of Christ's love. Moreover, I long to be submerged in the ocean of His love. I earnestly desire to be used as a tool (a channel) of His love to love others. I experienced the answer to this prayer especially through the death of my first child, Charis (Joo-young). When we sprinkled Charis' ashes into the water and were returning, my wife, who had been sitting at the front of the small boat while I was steering at the back, looked at me and said “Titanic.” After seeing the tears flowing down her face, I unknowingly began to praise the hymn “My Savior's Love” while looking at the sky. The Holy Spirit within



me led me to praise the greatness and wonder of my Savior's love. Later, I realized that it was the fulfillment of Psalms 63:3, which led me to make the decision to let Charis pass away quickly. Through this great crisis in our newlywed life, the Lord allowed me to understand a little more of the width, length, height, and depth of His love. And the Lord caused the root of His love to be planted in our hearts as a couple.

Today's passage, 1 Corinthians 13:7, is a verse from the letter that the Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians, and it is one of the well-known verses from the "love chapter." It says, "Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things." Based on this verse, I would like to reflect on four lessons about love.

### **First, love bears all things.**

Today's passage from 1 Corinthians 13:7 says, "Love bears all things ...." I still vividly remember the time when my wife and I went to visit my parents shortly after we got married. I will never forget the one thing my mother-in-law said to my wife: "Bear with it and bear with it again." Of course, as a mother-in-law, she meant that in the context of a married couple, advising my wife to endure and be patient. However, as I heard my mother-in-law's words, I understood them as advice from a senior pastor's wife (my mother) to a junior pastor's wife (my wife).

Love bears all things (v. 7). Love bears and endures again and again. Love is patient (James 5:8). Love is long-suffering (1 Corinthians 13:4). Just as Jesus Christ demonstrated great patience and endurance toward us (1 Timothy 1:16), we, too, show patience and endurance toward one another with the love of Christ. Love bears trials and persecutions (1 Corinthians 4:12). Love waits (1 Peter 3:20). Love waits patiently before God (Psalms 37:7). Love serves patiently (Acts 20:19). Love bears all things for the glory of God (Isaiah 48:9).

### **Second, love believes all things.**

Today's passage is 1 Corinthians 13:7: "Love... believes all things ...." Trust is very important in human relationships, yet today, trust in many human relationships is breaking down. For example, in marriage, husbands and wives should trust each other, but we often hear of relationships where that trust begins to crack and eventually shatters. If a couple cannot trust each other, how can they trust others? This is the work of Satan. Satan is breaking down trust in all human relationships. But a more frightening work of Satan is that he causes us to rely on our own understanding (wisdom), which leads us to not trust the Lord (Ref: Proverbs 3:5). Satan makes us question the Lord (and His word), which leads to doubt, and eventually to unbelief. Therefore, Satan tries to turn the love relationship between the Lord and us into one of complaints, resentment, and even hatred. However, the Holy Spirit strengthens and solidifies our love relationship with the Lord, making us trust in the Lord (and His word) fully. The Holy Spirit makes our faith more steadfast (Colossians 2:7).

Love believes all things (1 Corinthians 13:7). Love believes in God (Acts 27:25). Love believes in the Lord (18:8). Love believes that the Lord is the Christ who will come into the world and is the Son of God (John 11:27). Love believes that Jesus died and rose again (1 Thessalonians 4:14). Love believes that those who have died in faith in Jesus will be brought with Him (v. 14). Love believes that salvation comes through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 15:11). Love believes in every word of God recorded in the Bible (24:14). Love believes that what God has spoken to me will certainly come to pass (27:25). Love believes that God has rescued us from the great danger of death, and He will continue to rescue us, and will rescue us again (2 Corinthians 1:10).

### **Third, love hopes all things.**

Look at 1 Corinthians 13:7: “Love ... hopes all things ....” There are times when we feel there is nothing more to hope for. There are times when the situation is so hopeless that we cannot hold on to hope anymore. For example, when my first baby was in the intensive care unit, one day as I was washing my hands and putting on the gown, the attending physician came to me and said that they had done everything they could. He told me that I needed to decide whether to let the baby die slowly or let the baby die quickly. At that moment, I asked the doctor to let the baby die slowly. The reason was that, up until that point, I had seen how the Lord had spared my baby and extended her life even through major surgeries. Therefore, although the situation was hopeless from a medical perspective, I placed my hope in the Lord. With the hope the Holy Spirit had placed in my heart, I asked the doctor to let the baby die slowly. In our lives on earth, there are times when we are faced with situations where, from a human perspective, we cannot have any more hope. That is why, personally, I have come to love the lyrics of the third verse of the hymn “My Hope is Built on Nothing Less”: “His oath, His covenant, His blood, Support me in the whelming flood; When all around my soul gives way He then is all my hope and stay.” Although we may not fully understand why the Lord allows everything we trust in this world to be cut off, piece by piece, or all at once, I believe that the Lord’s purpose is to lead us to trust only in Him, place all our hope in Him, and rely solely on Him. I believe that the more despairing the situation is from a human perspective, the more the Lord desires to draw us to Himself, to hope in Him, and to long for Him, fulfilling His good, perfect, and pleasing will.

Love bears all things (1 Corinthians 13:7). Love hopes for all things. Love hopes even when, from a human perspective, there seems to be no hope. A great biblical example of this is Abraham. In Romans 4:18, the Bible says that Abraham “hoped against hope” — that is, he hoped even when it seemed impossible. Abraham was in a situation where there was no reason to hope. He was almost a hundred years old, and his body was as good as dead, and his wife Sarah was also old and beyond childbearing age (v. 19). He was in an impossible situation where having a son was not feasible (v. 18). Yet, despite these circumstances, Abraham did not doubt God with unbelief. He did not weaken in faith but stood firm in faith, convinced that God could fulfill His promise (vv. 19-21). Just like Abraham, we too must hope and believe even when it seems impossible (v. 18). Love hopes for all things (1 Corinthians 13:7). Love puts its hope in God (Psalms 42:5, 11; 43:5). Love hopes for the salvation of the Lord (119:166). Love does not depart from the hope of the gospel (Colossians 1:23). Love eagerly awaits the blessed hope, the glorious appearing

of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ (Titus 2:13). When our Savior, Jesus Christ, returns to this world, we will see the Lord face to face (1 Corinthians 13:12).

### **Four and last, love endures all things.**

Today's scripture, 1 Corinthians 13:7, says, "Love ... bears all things." We often face situations that are unexpectedly difficult to endure, and in these moments, we ask ourselves the question "Why?" This can lead us into complaints, dissatisfaction, and a sense of victimization, causing our emotions to be filled with discouragement, despair, frustration, and hopelessness. We also ask "How?" and, unable to understand certain things in our own reasoning, we struggle to find solutions to our problems and may end up wasting God's time. We may ask "What?" countless times, trying to discern God's will, but our thoughts and God's thoughts are as far apart as the heavens and the earth (Isaiah 55:9), and there are far more times when we do not know His will than when we do. Therefore, we must ask the question, "Who is God?" Just as Job, knowing and believing in who God is, accepted his painful reality, acknowledging God's sovereignty in faith, and did not sin with his lips but instead worshiped God, we too must accept our reality by acknowledging God's Lordship. When we do so, our emotions will no longer be filled with discouragement, frustration, and despair. Instead, we will experience true and steadfast peace, and with love for God and our neighbors, we will be able to endure all things.

Love bears all things (v. 7). Love endures trials (James 1:12). Love endures God's discipline (Hebrews 12:7). Love endures suffering (2 Corinthians 1:6; 2 Timothy 4:5). Love endures even severe suffering, beyond our strength (2 Corinthians 1:8). Love endures when we are enslaved, exploited, used, treated with arrogance, or slapped on the cheek (2 Corinthians 11:20). Love endures when we deeply treasure God's Word in our hearts, and when pain or persecution comes because of that Word (Ref: Matthew 13:21). Love, through God's glorious power, strengthens us to endure all things with joy (Colossians 1:11). Love endures all hardships to help those chosen by God gain salvation in Christ Jesus, along with eternal glory (2 Timothy 2:10).

I would like to conclude with a reflection on the Word. Love bears all things. Love believes all things. Love hopes all things. Love endures all things (1 Corinthians 13:7). Love never fails (v. 8). Love is eternal. God's love is eternal (Psalms 136). The eternal God loves us with an eternal love (Jeremiah 31:3).

"The love of God is greater far Than tongue or pen can ever tell; It goes beyond the highest star, And reaches to the lowest hell; The guilty pair, bowed down with care, God gave His Son to win; His erring child He reconciled, And

pardoned from His sin. Oh love of God, how rich and pure! How measure-less and strong! It shall forever more endure, The saints' and angels' song" (Hymn "The Love of God is Greater Far," verse 1 and chorus),

James Kim

[March 5, 2022, wishing that you may be rooted and grounded in love, together with all the saints, grasping the breadth, length, height, and depth of Christ's love, and that God's abundant grace may overflow to you (Ephesians 3:17-18, Korean Modern Bible)]

## **Tough Love**

A long time ago, on the radio program Focus on the Family, I remember Pastor James Dobson mentioning the term tough love. That memory came to mind today while I was having a conversation with three sisters whom I met for the first time. Perhaps the reason it resurfaced was that we were discussing family matters — particularly how we, as parents, should love our children—and sharing our concerns and thoughts on the subject. When I mentioned to them that as parents, we sometimes need to show tough love to our children, one of the sisters responded by saying that she had considered loving her children unconditionally (just as God loves us unconditionally) but had never really thought about the need for tough love before. In response, I explained that while God does indeed love us unconditionally, His love is also a tough love. For example, just as God led the Israelites into the wilderness during the Exodus, He sometimes leads us into the wilderness to humble us and to teach us that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God (Deuteronomy 8:2). Therefore, I believe that when we love our children, we must maintain balance. God's love includes both unconditional love and tough love. In the same way, we must love our children with that balance.

# The Lord-centered couple

Yesterday, on Sunday, my wife came into the pastor's office and, using her new phone (since her old one wasn't in good condition, she ended up using an old phone that our nephew had been using), she held it up close to my face and took three pictures of us together. Haha. As I upload these pictures here, I want to take a moment to briefly reflect and write down some thoughts about us as a couple.

1. A couple is established under the sovereignty of God the Father, who joins one man and one woman together. Therefore, as a married couple, we must live together for a lifetime, firmly believing and trusting that God has sovereignly united us. When we hold onto this truth, I believe we can overcome any marital challenges that come our way.
2. A couple must submit to the authority of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. In particular, a husband and wife must love God with all their heart, soul, and mind, and with that love of God, they must love one another as they love themselves—just as Jesus' twofold commanded (Matthew 22:37, 39).
3. Therefore, a married couple must experience the presence of the Holy Spirit. Since the Holy Spirit bears the fruit of love, when a husband and wife love each other with God's love, they can taste the joy and peace of heaven and, in part, experience heavenly living within their home here on earth.
4. The husband's responsibility and role in marriage are of great importance. First and foremost, as husbands, we must draw closer to the Lord, enjoy an intimate relationship with Him, and love our wives with the grace and love He provides. Biblically speaking, husbands must come to understand the depth, width, greatness, and abundance of Christ's love for us (the Church) (Ephesians 3:18-19). Therefore, just as Christ loves the Church, we too must love our wives in the same way (5:25).
5. A wife who experiences the love of Christ through her husband should submit to her husband in everything, just as the Church submits to Christ (v. 24). Furthermore, wives are called not merely to love their husbands but to respect them (v. 33). It is crucial to avoid words or non-verbal actions that belittle or disregard one's husband.
6. Another key principle in marriage is that a husband must give his wife trust by faith, just as he trusts in the Lord, and the wife must trust her husband because she trusts in the Lord. The foundation of trust in

marriage must be centered on the Lord. This means that unless a husband and wife trust in the Lord first, they cannot truly trust each other. Trust in a spouse does not come first — trust in the Lord must come first. In other words, as a husband and wife grow in their faith and trust in the Lord, their trust in each other will naturally grow as well.

7. Intimacy with the Lord and growth in faith are directly connected to intimacy and growth in marriage. This means that as a husband deepens his intimate relationship with the Lord and grows in faith, he will nurture his wife in such a way that she, too, draws closer to the Lord and grows in faith. As a result, their marital relationship will inevitably grow stronger and more intimate in the Lord.
8. If a married couple does not prioritize the Lord in their relationship but instead places their marriage as the highest priority while pursuing intimacy in love, they will inevitably become increasingly dissatisfied with each other. This dissatisfaction will lead to endless conflicts and disputes. In short, if a couple does not put the Lord first but instead prioritizes their love relationship above Him, the result will be dissatisfaction, conflict, arguments, and emotional wounds.
9. When marital conflicts and disputes worsen, deep wounds can accumulate, gradually leading the relationship to a point where divorce may seem like the only option. However, if a couple recognizes their sin of not prioritizing the Lord and repents under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, their marital crisis can become a turning point for restoration. By reestablishing the foundation and core of their marriage in the Lord, they can develop the Lord-centered marriage. It is essential to seek and commit to this grace, trusting that, by God's grace, true restoration is fully possible.
10. Our purpose as a married couple is to love each other with the love of Jesus Christ and to reflect Christ in our lives, becoming witnesses of Him as husband and wife. We desire to be a couple that demonstrates faith in Jesus, loves one another with His love, and grows to resemble Him. Even in the midst of conflicts and struggles, we want to grow as the Lord-centered couple by God's grace, ultimately bringing glory to Him.

# Our marriage that the Lord is establishing

**Saturday Morning, February 10, 2024.**

Yesterday, Friday afternoon, while driving to have dinner with my beloved wife, we were having a conversation when she mentioned that she would be going rock climbing with some people on Saturday, a bit far from home. So, I asked her, "Who are you going with?" and followed up with, "Are there men going as well?" [The reason I asked her this was because, on a previous occasion, she had gone on a long hiking trip with two brothers in Christ (men) for an extended period of time]. Her response wasn't entirely clear(?), but I didn't dwell on it and simply moved on to another topic. However, before going to sleep last night, my beloved wife brought up the question, seemingly feeling a bit uncomfortable about it. She asked me why I had asked her, "Are you going with men?" She then told me that the two men were going rock climbing and that she had asked them if she could join (The previous hiking trip was also because my wife had asked those two men if she could go along with them). I believe that when my wife does activities like hiking or rock climbing, there are limits when she's with other women, and it seems more fitting for her adventurous spirit and passion to be with men. Therefore, I understand that she's going rock climbing with the two men this time as well. However, I still asked her yesterday if she was going only with men. I think the reason I asked this is because, as much as I trust my wife, I'm not completely unconcerned about the situation. As her husband, I believe it's perfectly normal for me to feel a little concerned (I can imagine how much my wife must have been worried when I met with the sisters one-on-one during my time in Korea doing internet ministry). Even so, she trusted me. We talked about this before going to sleep last night.

This morning, I woke up around 3 AM, and by nearly 5 AM (since I thought my wife was waking up at 5 AM to go rock climbing), I sent her a text message: "Good morning, Jane. Have a safe and enjoyable trip. I trust our God and I trust you." Later, after finishing the early morning prayer meeting and coming into the pastor's office, she checked her messages and saw that I had written, "Loved" followed by "Thank you," with a love emoji. Haha. Then, just a little while ago, I saw her Instagram story and noticed that she had posted the text in the photo below:

**"Balance of freedom & home.**

Find a partner who can give you the space you need to be your own person. It is healthy to have different interests, likes and dislikes. You do not need to become the same person to prove your love to each other. You know you are both supporting each other's happiness when you each feel like you can be your truest self. Remember, trust blossoms in the absence of control and vibrant relationships should feel like a balance of freedom and home. ~ YP"

As I read the post my wife shared on Instagram, I was able to catch a glimpse of how the Lord is building our marriage. I realized that my wife is now thinking more like I do, more than before. I believe that in a marriage, there must be healthy boundaries. I also believe that within the marriage, we should provide space for each other to live our individual lives. While my wife and I share many of the same interests, there are also differences, and I believe we should respect and support each other in those areas. I think this is what makes a healthy marriage, and I was able to confirm, through the post below, that my wife is now thinking more like I do than before. As a husband, I strive to actively support my beloved wife by respecting her gifts, talents, interests, passions, and more. I see this as a joyful responsibility as her husband. I pray that she will continue to grow and that the Lord will build her up. Just as the post below says, "Trust develops in the absence of control," I also believe this. I trust that the Lord is the one who is ultimately in control of both my wife and me, as well as our marriage. That is why, just as I said in the text to my wife this morning, "I trust our God and I trust you" (my precious and beloved wife, Jane).



# A couple imitating Christ

**“But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her.” (Ephesians 5:24-25)**

What is the purpose of your marriage relationship? I see that too many Christian men and women, both while preparing for marriage and even after they are married, do not have a clear purpose for their marriage relationship. As a result, they become focused on things like circumstances and emotions and fail to bring glory to God through their marriage. So, if we say that the purpose of marriage is to bring glory to God, we must think about how we can establish a marriage that glorifies God. We should not fall into the trap of hypocrisy by having blindly idealistic goals, which lead to a disconnect between words and actions. At the same time, we should not abandon the divine calling and dreams that God has given us by holding too strictly to overly realistic goals. The important thing is balance. For my wife and me, our purpose as a couple is twofold: (1) to reflect the image of Jesus in each other's lives and (2) to love each other with the love of Jesus.

In the article titled "Fragile Marriages and Distorted Parent-Child Relationships," the following is written: "Many parents say, 'We endure because of the children.' However, children's hearts become wounded by parents who live only for themselves. When the marital relationship is not smooth and lacks intimacy, one parent unconsciously forms a bond with the child, which should have been formed with the spouse. The parent unconsciously seeks the love and recognition from the child that they do not receive from their spouse. In this case, the parent may attempt to fulfill emotional, social, or even sexual needs that are unmet in the marriage through the child. Additionally, they try to compensate for feelings of resentment and anger toward their spouse by siding with the child and pushing the spouse away." What do you think of this article? I believe this is a very accurate reflection of many couples who have weak marriages. Perhaps many couples say, "We endure because of the children," and when the children grow up, they think about divorce. In fact, an article I read in 2019 stated that there were a total of 108,684 divorce cases in Korea that year. Among them, 33.3% (36,327 cases) were "twilight" divorces after more than 20 years of marriage, followed

by 21.4% from newlywed couples (0-4 years). I believe that when a marriage is not harmonious and lacks intimacy, the wife, in particular, may unconsciously pour excessive love onto the children, seeking from them the love she is not receiving from her husband. This happens because, unconsciously, the wife may seek love from her children. We need to reflect on the current state of our marriage. The reason for this is that children may be suffering emotionally because they are living with parents who are solely focused on themselves.

Today, I would like to reflect on two principles of marriage relationships taught in the Bible, focusing on Ephesians 5:24-25 under the title "A couple imitating Christ." I hope that through the understanding and wisdom given by the Holy Spirit, we can apply these principles well in our marital relationships and be built up as couples who imitate Christ.

### **First, wives must submit to their husbands in everything, just as the church submits to Christ.**

Look at Ephesians 5:24: "Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything." The family is a spiritual battleground! The Lord wants to establish our homes as heavenly places. That's why He has given us the commandment of heaven, Jesus' twofold commandment (Matthew 22:37, 39). And the Lord has poured out His love upon us with the Holy Spirit, enabling us to obey Jesus' twofold commandment (Romans 5:5). The Holy Spirit is filling us progressively with the fruit of the Spirit, which is love (Galatians 5:22). Therefore, our responsibility is to obey this commandment and, guided by the Holy Spirit, love God with all our heart and soul and love one another as ourselves, with one mind and one purpose (Philippians 1:27; 2:2). When we do so, our family will be transformed into heaven, filled with the joy (John 15:11; 1 John 1:4), love (Psalms 33:5), and peace (Romans 15:13) of heaven. However, Satan wants to turn our family into hell. He leads us to disobey the twofold commandment of Jesus, which is a heavenly commandment (Ephesians 2:2; 5:6), and instead encourages hatred, which is the commandment of hell (Genesis 37:5; Deuteronomy 22:13; Matthew 24:10; 1 John 2:9). Along with the spirit of falsehood, Satan plants hatred in us (Deuteronomy 21:17; 2 Samuel 13:15; Proverbs 10:12), leading us to do the works of darkness (Isaiah 29:15; Ezekiel 8:12; Ephesians 5:11), thus producing bitter fruit in our families (Romans 7:5). Therefore, Satan is making us not want to go to a home that feels like hell, and instead, he makes us linger outside the home or even want to leave it completely. Additionally, Satan is causing us to not want to see our family members. He is making us hate our spouse even more. In this growing hatred towards our spouse, Satan targets the cracks in the marital relationship (Ref: Nehemiah 4:3, Hebrew for "breach"; 6:1) and causes us to be interested in another woman or man. Through the lust of the eyes and the lust of the flesh (1 John 2:16), he entices us to desire another person, leading to infidelity. Satan's purpose is to destroy our family, preventing it from becoming a heavenly home and instead turning it into a hellish home. This is a spiritual battle! The family is a spiritual battleground! What should we do? We must engage in spiritual warfare.

In today's passage, Ephesians 5:24, the Bible says, "Wives should submit in everything to their husbands." The Greek word for "submit" used here is a compound term that means to be under, or in a lower position (hypotasso). The Bible also teaches that the husband is the head of the wife. Look at Ephesians 5:23: "For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior." This verse does not imply that the husband is superior to the wife. If someone misunderstands this verse and thinks it means they are of a higher rank than their wife, and treats her as a servant, that would be wrong. This would be an abuse of the divine authority God has given to the man as the head of the household. A husband like this would clearly be an authoritarian. God did not give men divine authority to become authoritarian figures in their homes. God appointed husbands as the heads of their households and granted them divine authority because with that authority comes great responsibility. How serious is the responsibility God has entrusted to us husbands! That responsibility means that a husband must love his wife and family members (v. 25), protecting and providing for them. However, this protection and provision should be done with sacrifice, where the husband is willing to give of himself for the well-being of his wife and family. A wife should submit to and be under the protection of a husband who faithfully fulfills this responsibility. She should respect her husband, who is diligently fulfilling his duties (v. 33b) "... the wife must respect her husband." One way she shows this respect is by expressing gratitude to her husband for his sacrificial care and provision for her and the family. She should not complain or criticize him for having a low income. Instead, she should express appreciation for his efforts to support and care for her and their family. In this way, she will trust her husband. When this happens, the husband, as the head of the family, will be even more devoted to protecting and providing for his wife and children.

I came across an article titled "Wives Who Cannot Understand Their Husbands, Husbands Who Hurt With Words," and I read it. The article says that when husbands feel unrecognized by their wives, they become frustrated. It continues by stating that when a husband fails to receive the strength to go out into the world and fight, he becomes disheartened and loses all his energy. It also mentions: "Wives often do not realize how much influence they have on their husbands and overlook it" (Internet). Wives need to understand how much influence they have on their husbands. The best way to exert a positive influence on their husband is by obeying God's Word. That Word is found in Ephesians 5:33, which instructs a wise wife to "respect her husband." Therefore, a wise wife helps her husband become someone who is respected by others.

The bride, the Church, must honor the Bridegroom, Jesus Christ. Therefore, we must lead others to honor Jesus. To do this, we must obey the Lord's Word. As we obey, we should live in this world as the bride of Christ, the Church. When we do so, the Bridegroom, our Lord, will be honored by the people of this world as well.

**Second and last, husbands must love their wives just as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for her.**

Look at Ephesians 5:25: "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her." It is difficult for a husband who is not respected or is being ignored by his wife, but it is equally painful for

a wife who is not loved by her husband. Especially for God's precious and valuable daughters, who were created to be loved by God, how painful is it when they not only do not receive love from their husbands but are even hated and spend their lives in hurt, pain, and tears? On January 11, 2018, I reflected on the story of Leah, a woman who did not receive love from her husband Jacob, under the title "A Woman Who Was Not Loved by Her Husband," based on Genesis 29:31. The reason Leah was not loved by her husband Jacob was because Jacob loved Leah's beautiful and attractive younger sister, Rachel, more than Leah, who had weak eyesight (vv. 17, 18). In reflecting on this, I concluded that Leah, who did not receive love from her husband Jacob during her lifetime, was buried beside her husband Jacob in the Cave of Machpelah in front of Mamre in Canaan, which was the burial place of Abraham and his wife Sarah (49:30-31). Rachel, who had been loved by Jacob during her lifetime, died giving birth to Benjamin near Ephrath, on their journey to Canaan, and was buried there (35:16-20). What is even more important is that God, seeing that Leah was not loved by her husband, opened her womb (29:31) and gave her six sons (Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun) and a daughter, Dinah. Through these six sons, six of the twelve tribes of Israel were formed, and especially through Leah's descendant, the tribe of Judah, the Messiah, Jesus Christ, was born. What an amazing and generous gift from God! The same God who worked in the past is now able to give His precious daughters who are not loved by their husbands abundant gifts and fulfill their desires. I pray that God will bless them with His abundant gifts and answer their prayers.

Today's passage, Ephesians 5:25, says, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her." So, how should we husbands love our wives? How can we love them just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her?

- (1) Based on Proverbs 18:22, we husbands should regard our wives as a blessing that God has given to us.

Look at Proverbs 18:22: "He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favor from the Lord." The Bible is not speaking of just any wife here. The "wife" mentioned in this verse refers to "an excellent wife" (12:4), "a prudent wife" (19:14), or "a wife of noble character" (31:10). Proverbs 18:22 tells us that the person who finds such a wife—one who is virtuous, wise, and noble—is blessed and has received favor from God. A husband with such a wife is truly blessed, for such a wife becomes a great treasure to him. But why do many husbands not regard their wives as the blessing that God has given them? What is the reason for this? One reason is that the woman may not be a wise, virtuous, or noble wife, but instead a "contentious wife" (12:4). Who is a "contentious wife"? It refers to a wife who is prone to argue and quarrel (Park). The Bible describes such a wife in this way: "It is better to live in a corner of the roof than in a house shared with a quarrelsome wife" (21:9), and "Better to live in a desert land than with a quarrelsome and fretful woman" (25:24). Perhaps some men may want to make excuses like this: "God didn't give me a wise wife, but rather a contentious and hot-tempered one. How can I consider such a wife a blessing?" It might sound like a reasonable excuse, doesn't it? If I hear such words, I would want to tell that brother, "God did not give you

a quarrelsome and angry wife; you chose that kind of woman. Therefore, you must take responsibility and raise her to be a wise and virtuous wife." In too many cases, we men reject the virtuous, wise, and noble woman that God provides, and instead choose the one we find attractive, who later becomes quarrelsome and angry, and marry her. If we have made such a choice, we must take responsibility and commit to nurturing our wives into the wise women they should be. Unfortunately, many of us husbands are acting irresponsibly toward the wives we chose. We do not hesitate to speak words of curse to our wives, and through our actions, we make them feel as though they are a burden. In short, many wives are living their lives without receiving love from their husbands. How miserable is the life of such a woman? We must regard our wives as the blessings that God has given us. Our wives are a gift from God. We should delight in them and always feel content in their embrace.

(2) We husbands must honor our wives.

Look at 1 Peter 3:7, the first part: "Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers ...." Research in modern social sciences has revealed that there are three basic things a wife needs most in marriage. The first is to be treated with honor (the other two are being understood and being respected). We husbands must honor our wives. The Lord honors our wives—who are we, that we would dishonor the daughters of God whom the Lord Himself holds in esteem? This brings to mind 1 John 4:20: "Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen." If we husbands claim to honor the Lord but do not honor our wives, whom we can see, this is hypocrisy.

(3) We husbands must delight in our wives.

Look at Proverbs 5:18: "May your fountain be blessed, and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth." How should we husbands delight in our wives? We husbands must always find contentment in our wives' embrace. Look at Proverbs 5:19: "She is a loving doe, a graceful deer; may her breasts satisfy you always, may you ever be intoxicated with her love." To always find contentment in our wives' embrace means that we should be captivated by her love. Specifically, we husbands should be captivated by her virtues, rather than just her beauty. This is the meaning of the metaphor "loving doe" and "graceful deer" (Park). When we do this, we will enjoy only the love of our "well" and "fountain" (v. 15), our wives, and we will never leave her to go to the house of a prostitute. In other words, when we find satisfying refreshment both sexually and affectionately from our wives, we will never long for the embrace or love of another woman (v. 20). Proverbs 5:16-17 says: "Why should your springs overflow in the streets, your streams of water in the public squares? Let them be yours alone, never to be shared with strangers." However, how many husbands are allowing their springs to overflow outside their homes and sharing them with others? How many men are abandoning

their wives and going after other women? Many husbands are not finding contentment in their wives' embrace and are not delighting in her, which causes them not to cherish her love (v. 19), and instead, they long for the embrace of a prostitute and are drawn to other women (v. 20). When we men abandon our wives and seek affection elsewhere, we will inevitably taste the consequences of our sinful choices (vv. 7-14). These consequences include "loss of honor" (v. 9), "loss of time" (v. 9), "loss of wealth" (v. 10), "loss of health" (v. 11), and "pain of conscience" (vv. 12-14). Therefore, we must understand the consequences of adultery and not long for another woman. Instead, we should always find contentment in our wives' embrace and delight in them.

(4) We husbands must love and cherish our wives as our own bodies.

Look at Ephesians 5:28 and the first half of verse 33: "In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself." Just as we husbands take care of the needs of our own bodies, our love for our wives should meet their needs and promote their growth and development. We husbands must love our wives with two purposes in mind. The first purpose is to make her holy (v. 26a), and the second is to present her to the Lord as a radiant wife (v. 27). The way to achieve these purposes is mentioned in Ephesians 5:26, "to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word," and in 1 Peter 1:22, "Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth." We husbands must teach our wives with the truth of God's word, leading them to obey it so that they can live lives set apart from the world—lives that reflect God's holiness. Therefore, we husbands must nurture our wives to be "radiant wives" before the Lord, wives in whom the glory of the Lord shines.

(5) We husbands must be able to sacrifice for our wives.

Look at Ephesians 5:25: "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her." We husbands must practice sacrificial love, with the goal being solely for our wives, and not with the expectation of receiving any reward from them. Our motivation should be to care for our wives. We husbands should know how to sacrifice even in small things. For example, listening carefully to our wives, spending time with them, occasionally taking out the trash, or pretending to do the dishes in the kitchen — these small acts of attention demonstrate our love and bring us closer.

(6) We husbands must take an active responsibility in parenting.

Look at Ephesians 6:4: "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord." As the heads of our households, we husbands are not only responsible for raising our wives with God's Word, but also for raising our children in the Lord's discipline and instruction.

Parenting should not be something we passively leave to our wives. We must take an active and engaged role in the responsibility of raising our children.

So why must we husbands love our wives in this way? The reason is that we, as a couple, are one flesh. Look at Ephesians 5:31: "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." Since we have become one flesh with our wives by leaving our parents, we must love our wives as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her.

I would like to conclude with a reflection on the Word. Our couple's purpose is twofold. First, to show the image of Jesus in each other's lives, and second, to love each other with the love of Jesus. We have made this our prayer topic and have come this far, and we will continue this way until the day the Lord calls us. To fulfill the second purpose of loving each other with the love of Jesus, the first thing we have learned is to recognize and acknowledge that we, as sinners, cannot love each other with our own love. Many times, after a fight, what I feel is that I cannot love my wife by my own strength or love, and I must admit this. I have confessed this to my wife as well. I remember the painful and tearful moments when I could not help but confess to God and my wife the human corruption and incapacity that make it impossible for me to love her as I would like. Even now, it is the same. I never want to forget that I cannot love my wife by my own strength. That is why I must pursue the fruit of the Spirit, the divine love that is nobler, more powerful, and more complete than human love. I believe in the words of Romans 5:5, that when we believed in Jesus, God's love was already poured into our hearts. In this faith, I recognize the weakness, insufficiency, and imperfection of my human love, and I pray and seek that it will gradually be filled and completed by the love of the Lord, which will forever replace it. I believe in the words of 1 Peter 1:22: "Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for each other, love one another deeply, from the heart." I want to love my wife deeply from my heart by first obeying the Lord's truth, which purifies my soul. This truth makes me realize the weakness, incapacity, and inadequacy of my human love and humbles me, allowing me to admit this before God and my wife. Moreover, it becomes the driving force that leads me to pursue God's divine love. Through listening to God's Word and living in obedience, and through the inner transformation of the Holy Spirit, I now experience the compelling work of the Lord in me, who, instead of me loving my wife, loves her through me. As I live in this way, our relationship will increasingly be centered on the love of the Lord. Our first purpose as a couple is to show each other the image of Jesus in our lives, which sometimes brings me to tears as I pray with earnest desire. One day, I confessed to my wife: "The greatest gift I want to give you is my image, resembling Jesus, before my death." In reality, I have nothing to give my wife. Even if I had something to give, I believe there is no greater gift than my image, resembling Jesus. For my wife, who knows the preciousness of this gift, there is no gift more valuable than that.

I pray that the Lord would establish us as a couple who follows Christ,

James Kim

(May 22, 2022, praying that all Christian couples may become husbands who love their wives with the Lord's love, as Christ loves the Church, and wives who submit to and respect their husbands, as the Church does to Christ).

## **Building trust in marriage**

In a marriage,  
if we rely on our own understanding (Proverbs 3:5),  
it ultimately leads to suspicion toward each other.  
And as that suspicion grows,  
it eventually leads to distrust.

However, a couple who refuses to rely on their own understanding  
and instead trusts God with all their heart (Proverbs 3:5)  
will trust in God and, as a result, give trust to one another.



# How to build strong trust with a loved one?

**“Trust not only needs to be build, but it needs to be protected.”**

**[Paul David Tripp, “What did you Expect?”]**

It seems like we live in a world where there's no one to trust. Many people are disappointed and hurt after trusting others. As a result, many are hesitant to trust anyone. Even in marriage, couples often fail to fully trust each other. In fact, many couples seem to be filled with doubt. Some may suspect that their husband or wife is having an affair with someone else. Particularly when trust has already been broken, like in cases of infidelity, trusting that spouse again can feel like a huge risk. In this world, we are living in a time where we can't even trust those we love. So, what should we, as Christians, do in this world of distrust? We must build deep trust with the people we love, especially with our spouses, whom God has brought into our lives. But how do we do this? Here are four things to consider:

**First, in order to build deep trust with someone we love, we must first trust God.**

The ultimate reason why people who love each other fail to trust one another is because they do not trust God. For example, couples who do not trust God cannot trust each other. This is because only when there is trust in the vertical relationship with God can there be trust in the horizontal relationship with a loving spouse. Therefore, the first thing we must do to build deep trust with the ones we love is to trust God. Proverbs 3:5 tells us: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding." Just as this verse says, we must trust God with all our hearts. However, there are elements that hinder us from trusting God with all our hearts. One of those elements is relying on our own understanding. This is our instinct. Our instinct is not to trust God with all our hearts but to rely on our own understanding (knowledge). If we try to trust the person we love while relying on our own understanding, it will be unstable. This is because the source of trust is not God, but ourselves. If we trust ourselves more than God, we cannot fully trust anyone else, let alone the person we love. Because we trust ourselves more than anyone else, we may think that we are trusting the person we love, but that trust will be insecure. It can break at any time. This is

why Jesus did not entrust Himself to people (John 2:24). The reason is that Jesus "knew what was in a man" (v. 25). Therefore, in order to build deep trust with the ones we love, we must first trust God rather than people. Only by trusting God can we trust those we love.

**Second, in order to build deep trust with the person we love, we must give trust to them by trusting in God.**

Those who love each other must trust each other because they trust God. The more they trust God, the more they will be able to trust each other. When trusting one another, those who love each other should first give trust to their partner before expecting it. They should give trust not only when there seems to be something trustworthy in the other person but even when it seems there is nothing trustworthy. They should give trust because they trust God, regardless of what they see in the other person. Just as God's love is unconditional, we must love the person we love unconditionally. And if we love unconditionally, we must also give trust unconditionally to the one we love. Even if the person we love breaks our trust and betrays us, we must give trust to them because we trust God. Now, if the person we love breaks our trust and betrays us, what should we do? This is a question we may very well ask. And the reason we ask such a question is likely because we do not fully trust God and instead trust our own understanding more. When we trust ourselves more than God, we may end up questioning, "What if I give my trust to the person I love and get betrayed?" This is an inevitable question that arises from doubt and insecurity. When we rely on our own understanding, we cannot fully trust anyone (even our beloved spouse). Therefore, we must trust in God and give trust to the spouse we love. However, many times, because we trust ourselves more than God, instead of giving trust to our spouse, we expect to receive trust from them. When we do not receive that trust, we become upset or even angry. This is a relationship centered on people. If we have a relationship centered on people, we will expect to receive rather than give (and it becomes selfish). However, if our marriage is God-centered, we will prefer to give rather than expect to receive from our spouse (and it becomes selfless). Couples with a God-centered marriage give unconditional love to each other first and also give unconditional trust to each other first. Even if they are betrayed by their beloved spouse, couples with a God-centered marriage look to and rely on Jesus, who was betrayed by His people, and through this, they overcome the battle within themselves. In the process, they forgive the spouse who betrayed them with God's love. From a human perspective, this may seem impossible, but if we trust God, it is absolutely possible. God can make it possible. And by trusting in Him, we must give trust to the ones we love.

**Third, in order to trust the people we love, we must be truthful before them, just as we are truthful before God.**

Those who love each other must be sincere Christians. And those who love each other must be honest. They must not lie to each other. They should not deceive each other. They must be truthful not only before God but also before one another. To the extent that they can say to each other, "God is my witness" (Philippians 1:8), they must be truthful. God sees everything about us. God knows all our thoughts. Therefore, just as we are truthful before God,

we must also be truthful before the people we love. To do this, we must have honest, clear, and transparent conversations with the people we love. In our conversations, we should engage in "other-centered" communication rather than "self-centered" communication. This means that when we speak, we should not speak with the intent of getting something from the other person, but we should speak with the intention of doing something for them. That is what builds up the person we love. On the other hand, words that tear down the person we love are those used to manipulate or extract something from them. We should avoid such words. We must also not deceive the people we love. Just as we do not deceive God, we should not deceive the people we love. Just as we are honest, clear, and transparent in our prayers to God, we should also be honest, clear, and transparent in our conversations with those we love. We must speak the truth in our hearts (Ps. 15:2). Truthful lips will endure forever (Proverbs 12:19). Just as all of God's works are true (Psalms 33:4), we too must act in truth. We must be committed to keeping the promises we make to the people we love, whether big or small. By doing so, we can build trust in our relationship with them. Thus, we must love one another in truth (1 John 3:18). We must become truthful people and trust each other (Proverbs 25:19).

**Fourth and last, in order to trust the people we love, we must acknowledge our mistakes and ask for forgiveness when we wrong them. And we must be committed to change.**

Those who love each other can certainly make mistakes. When they do not fully trust God and rely on their own understanding, they may struggle to trust each other completely and may even doubt each other. This doubt can develop into distrust. This distrust creates dissatisfaction in their hearts, which leads to complaining with their lips and disobedience toward each other. The dissatisfaction in their hearts can even lead them to be dishonest and speak lies to one another. And when they lie, they may try to justify their actions, rationalizing the lie as a "good lie" or as something done for the sake of their loved one. However, a lie is still a lie, and it is unprofitable (Jeremiah 7:8). We are told not to deceive one another or lie to each other (Leviticus 19:11, Colossians 3:9). Furthermore, we should not commit acts of deceit against one another. We should not deceive the people we love. However, if we have deceived the person we love and lied to them, we must ask for their forgiveness. We need to confess our wrongs to them openly and honestly. Moreover, we must commit to never repeating the same mistakes again and show that commitment through our actions. Not only that, when the person we love asks for forgiveness for their own wrongs, we must forgive them. However, when we forgive, we must not keep a record of their wrongs in our hearts for a long time (1 Corinthians 13:5). Just as God, in His great mercy, has blotted out our transgressions (Psalms 51:1), we must erase the wrongs they have committed against us from our hearts. We should also commit to loving them with God's unchanging love. Furthermore, we must recommit to trusting them. We should view our relationship with the person we love as an opportunity for transformation in Christ. Therefore, we should grow together with our loved one in the Lord. We must be built up as mature individuals.

Trusting my beloved wife because I trust in God,

James Kim Sharing

(August 5, 2014, As I live with my beloved wife in the Lord, my trust in her grows more and more)

# A growing marital relationship

Here in Mongolia, it is Friday at 4:31 AM. I woke up from sleep and took some medicine again because I still have a bit of a cough. Since I couldn't fall back asleep easily, I decided—perhaps a bit recklessly—to reflect on this recent mission trip and the many people I met, focusing only on the topic of 'family' as I organize my thoughts into writing. I pray that God grants me wisdom and helps me in this:

## (1) Spouses can feel lonely.

My wife once told me that she felt lonely, and through the encounters on this mission trip, I came to realize that the reason might be that I have not been standing in her shoes or doing the things she wants to do with me. This realization convicted me and challenged me, so I made a promise to take her on a camping trip, just the two of us, and to go indoor rock climbing together. Before it's too late. Because I don't want to live with regret. And because I've come to a deeper realization that loving my wife is not something I should take for granted.

## (2) Spouses may struggle to fully share their emotional pain.

The first reason for this is that even when spouses do share their emotional pain, they tend to listen and process it primarily from their own perspective. Second, even when they do share, they often lack a sufficient level of empathy to satisfy each other's emotional needs. As a result, thirdly, spouses may become reluctant to fully share their emotional burdens with one another. When couples are unable to adequately share their emotional pain, they may begin to feel lonely. If that loneliness becomes too overwhelming, they may seek the help of a third party and end up sharing their emotional struggles with that person more than with their own spouse.

## (3) Seeking help from a third party can be beneficial for a marriage.

When it comes to third-party help, we typically think of professional Christian counselors. However, since many husbands may be reluctant to seek counseling, someone like a pastor—such as myself—could also serve in this role. In many cases, a wife or husband may reach out to a pastor to share their struggles, even if they do not meet in person, as communication platforms like KakaoTalk are available. When a third party

listens, they must do so with an open heart—without preconceived notions or a critical mindset. Instead, they should listen with the heart of the Lord, to the point of deeply empathizing with the person's pain. This level of listening is ultimately the work of the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit moves, the third party's role allows the struggling individual to pour out their heart and, in doing so, receive comfort.

(4) It is important to pour out our painful family history not only to God but also to a trusted, loving person.

If someone has only ever shared their painful family history with God, they should also be able to share it with their loving spouse. However, the challenge is that even when they do, they may not receive the comfort they truly need. Moreover, if they do not experience healing for the pain caused by their family history, they may require the help of a third party. This third party does not necessarily have to be a pastor or a professional counselor. Sometimes, a closest friend—other than one's spouse—can serve in this role. Why is this important? Because opening up to a trusted third party about one's painful family history can aid in emotional healing. In this healing process, the first step is to accept rather than deny the painful family history. This acceptance is crucial in beginning the journey toward healing. The second step is confrontation—facing and addressing the painful family history. Instead of avoiding it to the point where one refuses to think or talk about it, they must bring it out from the depths of their heart with the courage that God provides. They must confront it and ask God to rescue them from its grip so that their past no longer holds them back. Through God's truth, they must find freedom. Even if this healing process takes a long time, they must take the first step, relying on the strength of God's grace.

(5) Clearly establish healthy boundaries in family relationships.

During this mission trip, one thought repeatedly came to mind: if each person I met had set clearer and healthier boundaries, their situations might have been much better. Many individuals are experiencing conflicts with their parents, and these conflicts are not only causing great distress but also negatively impacting their marriage. In fact, tensions with parents can directly create conflicts within the marriage itself. Therefore, couples must prioritize their marital relationship before God and prevent parental conflicts from negatively affecting their union. In particular, a husband must set clear and healthy boundaries with his mother to ensure that her influence does not harm his relationship with his wife. This will require wisdom and courage from God. Additionally, a husband must always remember that when it comes to honoring and caring for both sets of parents, his wife must remain his priority. Parents are third parties, and even children are third parties in the marriage. It is essential to establish firm boundaries so that these third parties do not introduce conflict into the marital relationship.

(6) Husbands must love their wives as Christ loves the Church.

This is a truth we already know from Scripture, yet in reality, many of us fail to truly obey it in our marriages. I realized through an honest conversation with a brother that I, too, have not been loving my wife as I should. After parting ways with that brother, I contacted my wife and promised to go camping and indoor rock climbing with her—things she had wanted to do together. Though these may seem like small steps, I want to begin here. Another realization I had during a different conversation with a brother was that as husbands, we must not only view things from our own perspective but also consider our wives' perspectives. The stronger our own standpoint, the more difficult it becomes to recognize and prioritize our wives' feelings. As a result, we often fail to be sensitive to our wives' silent struggles, and even if we do notice them, we may not offer the level of empathy and understanding they need. When this happens, our wives may feel deeply disappointed that they cannot receive the emotional connection and understanding they desire from their husbands. Over time, they may eventually resign themselves to living without that hope.

(7) A wise wife builds up her husband by respecting and submitting to Him.

In marriage, the Crazy Cycle occurs when a husband disobeys God's Word by failing to love his wife as Christ loves the church. As a result, the wife does not submit to or respect her husband as the church does to Christ. When a husband does not receive respect and submission from his wife, he, in turn, does not show love to her. This cycle, if left unbroken, can lead to a marriage that feels like a living hell. However, a heavenly marriage is one where the husband loves his wife as Christ loves the church, and the wife submits to and respects her husband as the church does to Christ. Establishing such a healthy marriage requires both partners to play their roles faithfully. While the husband's role is crucial, the wife's role is equally important. A key role of the wife is to wisely build up her husband. For example, a wise wife respects and submits to her husband, thereby honoring him in front of their children. She upholds him as the head of the household. This is an essential aspect of fostering a godly and thriving marriage.

# Choosing a church for newlyweds?

What should be the criteria for newlyweds in seeking God's will and choosing a church? Many young newlywed couples, especially those with young children, often decide on a church based on what is best for their children. For instance, most young couples choose a church with well-established children's programs. However, I believe that church selection should be made primarily for the couple rather than for the children. Just as in an airplane emergency, where one must first put on their oxygen mask before assisting their child, I believe that choosing a church should prioritize the couple's spiritual well-being rather than focusing solely on the children. Of course, a husband may choose a church with his wife in mind, and if she suggests attending a church for the benefit of their children, the husband may readily agree and go along with her choice. However, in addition to prioritizing the couple's spiritual growth over the children's, I also believe that the wife should consider choosing a church for the sake of her husband, who is the head of the household (Of course, the husband, out of love for his wife, will also consider her in this decision). The reason for this is that the husband must stand firm in his faith as the spiritual leader of the family. Only then will he be able to nurture his wife and children according to the Word of God. However, if a husband follows his wife's choice of church for the sake of their children, the wife may feel satisfied because she has a community of mothers in a similar life stage, and the children may enjoy the Sunday school programs. But what if the husband feels disconnected from the pastor's sermons and finds himself reluctantly socializing with other husbands simply because of his wife's involvement? In the long run, I believe this could lead to a loss of spiritual balance in the home, ultimately harming the family's overall faith and spiritual life. I believe a wise wife will build up her husband as the head of the household in a way that is spiritually beneficial. While this requires much prayer, patience, and service, the most urgent priority should be to establish the husband as the spiritual leader of the family. Since before marriage, I have held the conviction that my relationship with my wife in the Lord is the most important, and that children and extended family are secondary. As the head of my household, I believe that my role is to draw closer to the Lord so that I can help my wife do the same. Though I fall short, by God's grace, I have tried to live this out. Dillon, Yeri, and Karis did not always have the most ideal church environment, but as my wife and I prioritized our faith as a couple, God Himself has been faithfully nurturing them in various ways. This is not an easy or simple topic, but I pray that God grants us all wisdom to choose the right church, so that as men (brothers in faith), we may grow spiritually and in turn lead our wives and children in God's Word and love.



# **“Holy Bravery: How Christian Men Act Like Men”**

**" Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong." (1 Corinthians 16:13)**

In the experience shared, the user describes how their wife displayed courage and practicality during a fire evacuation by handling a fallen power line. The user reflects on how, despite their own more cautious nature, their wife possesses boldness and adventurous traits, like hiking and rock climbing. He humorously contrasts their differences and acknowledges how God's plan led him to be born with different qualities. He remains uncertain about God's will but trusts in divine providence.

But yesterday Saturday afternoon, after we evacuated due to a forest fire, I came back home with my wife for the first time in a long time(?) and while talking, I realized (thought) that my wife is a "woman". Haha, hmm... I think it might be a bit dangerous for me to say this (I might get verbally attacked by my sisters? Haha). It's just my thought. The reason why I started thinking of my wife as a "woman" yesterday was because she didn't know what to do and was at a loss. So, as a husband, I suggested a solution, and as a result, my wife accepted my advice and things were resolved well. The ultimate reason why I called my wife a "woman" here is because my wife needs my leadership as her husband. That leadership requires sound judgment. And that leadership requires the responsibility to lead a loving wife properly. And that leadership absolutely requires God's love above all else. Yesterday, I was talking to my wife while looking at her, and I was so touched that I started to cry. Then my wife started to cry too. So, I got up from where I was sitting, went to my wife, hugged her, and put my right hand on her back. My wife, who was sitting on the bed, grabbed my legs with both arms and cried. When I think of my wife crying like that, I realize that I have not been loving my wife delicately from her perspective. I still feel that I am not very good at loving my wife delicately, and that I need to continue to learn. I just keep asking for God's help.

[Note: “Holy Bravery: How Christian Men Act Like Men” article: <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/holy-bravery>]

## **I want to be a 'stepping stone' husband.**

Even before I got married, I had this mindset from the Lord that 'If I get married, I must be a stepping stone for my wife to come closer to Christ as a husband.' So, before I got married, I started praying to God, (1) 'Lord, let me love my (future) wife with Your love (let her love me with Your love) and (2) let my wife see a little Jesus in me (before I die) (let me also see a little Jesus in her).' However, during today's Saturday morning prayer meeting, while proclaiming the word of God, I realized that I was becoming a stumbling block to my wife rather than a stepping stone, and that the reason was that I had a spiritual disability. In other words, I confess that I am a spiritually disabled person and am an obstacle between Christ and my wife. My heart wants to be a stepping stone between Christ and my wife, but my weak flesh is now an obstacle between Christ and my wife. I am learning from the words proclaimed at the Saturday morning prayer meeting today about how to overcome this great obstacle.

# **I have put countless obstacles in front of my wife.**

I have put obstacles in front of my wife countless times during the 27 years I have been married to her. Before I got married, I had committed myself to love my wife with the love of Jesus and become a stepping stone between the Lord and my wife as I grew closer to Jesus and became like Him. However, in reality, I have put obstacles in front of my wife countless times and caused her to stumble. Furthermore, as a father of three children, I have put obstacles in front of my three children countless times and caused them to be discouraged. In particular, I did not love my wife, but rather hated her, and I fought with her, putting obstacles in front of my three children. Nevertheless, the amazing grace of God said that my beloved children did not feel bitter toward me. If I were their parent, I would have felt bitter enough. Parents should be stepping stones for their children to come closer to the Lord, but even though I am an obstacle, the Lord is allowing my three children to grow in Him. I cannot understand this at all with my reason. All I believe is that the Lord loves my three children more than my wife and I. So the Lord uses parents like my husband and I, who are very lacking, foolish, and sinful, to personally raise Dillon, Yeri, and Karis, whom the Lord loves, and to help them grow in Him. I am not only not confident that I will be able to serve as a stepping stone for my beloved wife and three children in the future, but I will certainly commit the sin of putting obstacles in their path again and again. Nevertheless, the Lord, who is rich in mercy, grace, and love, will continue to build our family as a family centered on Him. Jesus Christ, who is the true stepping stone, will lead and guide me, my wife, and my three children to come closer to the Lord. With this faith, I pray that the gift of grace that the Lord has entrusted to me will allow me to serve my beloved wife and three children with love, humility, and wisdom, as guided by the Holy Spirit.

## Slowly, in step with my wife ...

This morning, as I was meditating on Genesis 33, I was brought to focus on verse 14: "You go on ahead, my brother; I will go slowly, keeping pace with the livestock and the children, until I meet you at Seir." While meditating on this verse, I wrote this short meditation: "Parents should keep pace with their children, so that they may go slowly before them (Ref: Genesis 33:14, NIV). Then, another thought came to me when I ran a marathon with my wife. The reason is that I could have run faster than her, but I ran slowly, 'keeping pace' with her. My wife also knows this fact. So, when we used to run together, she would sometimes say to me, "You could have run faster than me and gotten ahead, but you had a hard time running with me." This memory came to mind as I was meditating on Genesis 33:14 in Korean Modern Bible.

One of my most memorable memories was when I ran my first half-marathon with my wife. We were running about 9 miles side by side, and for the first time in my life, almost all the muscles in my legs were cramping (I had cramps when I came to the US and started playing basketball), so I couldn't run with her. So, I said to my wife, 'I'll walk a bit, so you run first. I said something like, 'I'll follow you soon' and my wife later told me that she believed me and ran hard (fast) because she thought I would follow her. Haha. My wife didn't know that I had that much cramp in both my legs. Haha. So, I walked like a turtle for the remaining 3 miles and barely made it to the goal line, where my wife was waiting for me at the goal line (it must have taken over an hour) and was cheering me on (not knowing how much pain I was in. Haha). Eventually, two white men from the paramedics helped me across the goal line from both sides and I collapsed on the grass. Haha. The reason I can't forget this experience is because it remains a trauma to me. Haha. While meditating on the Bible verse for modern people in Genesis 33:14, this memory came to mind and I realized that of course parents should walk slowly, keeping pace with their children, but I also ran slowly, keeping pace with my wife. I didn't realize it at the time, but looking back, I realized that it could have been more difficult. I think the reason is that although my running ability (?) is faster than my wife's, I have to self-control not to fully demonstrate my ability because I have to run slowly, keeping pace with her. Even so, looking at our life together for over 25 years, not only is it about running, but my personality is impatient and my wife is a bit easygoing. For someone with an impatient personality like me to adjust to my wife's easygoing personality, I am certain that we would never have been able to get to where we are today without a certain amount of God's grace and self-control, which is the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Haha. Well, it's not just our personalities. There were so many times when my wife and I didn't get along. Hahaha. My wife and I are that different. Of course, my wife must have tried hard to keep up with me. For example, I've been bothered by the fact that my wife doesn't turn off the lights and doesn't close the door often, so I can't tell you how many times I've told her this for the past 25 years. LOL. Now, my wife is much

more likely to close the door before she leaves the room. LOL. She even asks me, "Should I close the door?" when she leaves. LOL. Of course, there are still times when she forgets and leaves the door open, so if I tell her, she goes back up the stairs and closes the door. LOL. She's been trained to this extent(?) that she helps me close the door. LOL.

In Genesis 33:14, where Jacob says he will "slowly go, matching the pace with the children," the principle of matching pace applies not just in the context of marriage or parent-child relationships but also in the relationship between a pastor and congregation, among others. As a husband and pastor, it's important to reflect on how we can lead others slowly and gently, adjusting to their pace, which aligns with God's guidance in leading and caring for others.



# Space in a marital relationship

I think that in a marital relationship, we need to give each other a certain amount of 'space'. I think that space is the space where the Lord works in the lives of each husband and wife, the space where the couple trusts each other because they trust the Lord, the space where each husband and wife change, and the space where each can develop their gifts, talents, and potential.

## Is space essential?

In a marriage relationship, couples need to give each other space so that the Lord can work in their hearts and lives (something I thought was important in my conversation with my wife tonight).

"We should respect all people. We may not respect them for who they are now, but we should respect them for their potential to change through the blood of the Lamb and the renewing power of the Holy Spirit" (A. W. Tozer).

People cannot see the "potential to change" unless they themselves are changing. The reason we want the other person to change and think, "Why doesn't that person change?" is because we ourselves are not changing.

A couple must be able to see the "potential for change" in each other with faith. In order to do so, I must first continue to change in my relationship with the Lord. In the midst of this, I must see my beloved spouse from the perspective of faith that trusts in the Lord, and quietly and patiently watch with the eyes of faith how the Lord changes my spouse in that "space."

So when I talk to my wife, I tell her that we need to avoid saying things like, "You always do that," or, "You never do that," because the words "always" and "never" lock the other person into our preconceptions and blind them to the "potential for change."

If a couple lives a life centered on the Lord, they will trust in the Lord and look to each other, pray, expect, and wait with faith that the Lord is changing their spouse just as He is changing them, and that He will continue to change them in the future.

# The wise woman who builds a house

## [Proverbs 14:1-9]

How should you and I build our own families? Personally, when I think about Matthew 16:18, the promise that the Lord gave to our Victory Presbyterian Church, I pray while holding on to the words that the Lord will build the Lord's church. I have three prayer topics. I pray that the Lord will raise up the Christ-centered leaders with dreams among us. In the midst of that, I also pray that the Lord will build each of our families. And I pray that the Lord will build Victory Presbyterian Church, the body of the Lord, and establish the kingdom of God. That is why, whenever I pray with you, I often pray for individuals, families, and churches together. Among these three prayer topics today, I cannot help but think about the second prayer topic, how we should pray for the Lord to establish our families. As a review, let's look back at the sermon on May 18, 2008 titled "Lord, establish our families!" and read 1 Chronicles 17:16-27. At that time, we received three prayer topics: (1) "Lord, let my family be governed by the grace of God!" (v. 16), (2) "Lord, let the Word of God be the authority in my family!" (v. 23), and (3) "Lord, let my family be the one that experiences the presence of God through prayer!" (v. 25). Let's look back again today as we receive the word and pray to see if our families are governed by the grace of God, if the Word of God is the authority in our families, and if we are families that experience the presence of God through prayer.

Today, I would like to meditate on the fact that the Lord uses a wise woman to build my family and yours, focusing on Proverbs 14:1-9. Look at today's text, Proverbs 14:1: "A wise woman builds her house, but a foolish woman tears it down with her own hands." I would like to divide this passage into two parts under the title, "A wise woman who builds a house." I hope that as you meditate on these two parts, you and I will receive the lessons that God gives you and I, and obey them, so that you and I can humbly participate in the Lord's work of building our families and the churches we serve.

The first thing I want to think about is the foolish woman who destroys her house with her own hands. Look at the second half of Proverbs 14:1: "... The foolish woman tears it down with her own hands."  
Who is the foolish woman who destroys her house with her own hands?

### **First, the foolish woman who destroys her house with her own hands despises God.**

Look at the second half Proverbs 14:2: "... The one who acts perversely despises the Lord." A foolish woman is "one who acts perversely." A person who acts perversely is someone who acts only according to her own good (Park). And a foolish woman who acts only according to her own good despises God. In other words, she despises God. How does she despise God? Dr. Park said in seven ways (Park): (1) A foolish woman who despises God loves pleasure more than she loves God (2 Tim. 3:4), (2) A foolish woman who despises God acts according to her corrupted human nature and does not repent or believe in God (Jude 1:10), (3) A foolish woman who despises God despises God and says there is no God because God is long-suffering with human sin and does not punish quickly or every time (Romans 2:4). (4) A foolish woman who despises God does not fear the words of God written in the Bible (Proverbs 13:13). (5) A foolish woman who despises God does not glorify God but herself. In other words, she rashly tries to steal God's glory. (6) A foolish woman who despises God does not pray to God. This is despising God's promise to give to those who ask (Matthew 7:7-11). and (7) A foolish woman who despises God does not worship God sincerely. A foolish woman who despises God in this way does not fear God, but rather, because she despises God, she cannot walk the straight path but walks a crooked path. In other words, a foolish woman who despises God walks the path of double-dealings (KJV Bible Commentary). She is unfaithful, and because she does not fear God, she does not (cannot) walk uprightly, but rather does evil. Therefore, a foolish woman who despises God builds her own house with her own hands.

### **Second, a foolish woman who destroys her house with her own hands is proud.**

Look at the first half of Proverbs 14:3: "A fool is proud; his mouth is a whip ...." The Bible says that a foolish woman who does not fear God is proud (v. 3). She is proud and considers others as inferior to her. Therefore, she looks down on others and looks down on them in her heart. For example, in a family, if a wife is foolish and proud, she looks down on her husband as inferior to her and looks down on him. Therefore, she speaks disparagingly to her husband, hurting his feelings. And the serious problem is that she does not realize that she has spoken hurtfully to her husband. How would the husband feel if he lived with such a proud and foolish wife? And what would happen to their house? Would it be built properly or would it fall apart? In the first half of Proverbs 11:2, the Bible says: "When pride comes, then comes shame ...." What does this mean? It means that a foolish and proud woman will be shamed by her own mouth. What kind of shame will she be? If we look at the second half of Proverbs 10:13, the Bible says, "... a rod is for the back of him who lacks wisdom." In other words, the Bible says that a foolish and proud woman will receive disgrace through her own mouth, and she will be disciplined with a rod or a rod (26:3). Therefore, God humbles a proud woman (29:23). God will never build a family with a proud woman. Such a foolish and proud woman ruins her own home.

### **Third, a foolish woman who destroys her house with her own hands is arrogant.**



Look at the first half of Proverbs 14:6: "... A scorner seeks wisdom and finds it not ...." A foolish woman is arrogant and refuses to listen to others. Therefore, she loses the ability to hear (MacDonald). What happens to a person when he loses the ability to hear? Even if he has two ears to hear, if he continues to refuse to listen to the advice, counsel, or rebuke of other loved ones, he will not only become obsessed with his own righteousness, but will also become a very selfish person who only cares about himself. If that happens, he will lose all his friends around him. Who would want to be friends with a selfish person who only thinks about himself? Furthermore, who would stay around him when he thinks he is the best and the words coming out of his mouth sound so arrogant? If there is a foolish and arrogant wife in the house, she will refuse to listen to her husband. As she loses the ability to listen, she will become arrogant, arrogant, and selfish. Can you imagine the negative influence such a woman would have on her husband and especially on her children? Verse 6 of our text for today says that such a proud person seeks wisdom but does not find it. Isn't that a bit strange? Isn't it a bit strange that a proud person who refuses to listen to others and thinks he is right seeks wisdom? The problem is not the seeking of wisdom itself, but the fact that the one seeking wisdom is proud and does not have the fear of God, which is the foundation of wisdom (1:7; 9:10) (Walvoord). How can a proud and arrogant person who does not fear God seek wisdom? The Bible says in Proverbs 16:18: "... A haughty spirit goes before a fall." An arrogant and foolish woman who lacks wisdom causes her husband and children to fall. She is a bad influence on her husband and children, and she will eventually destroy her family with her own hands.

**Fourth, a foolish woman who destroys her house with her own hands has no knowledge.**

Look at Proverbs 14:7: "Go away from a fool, for you have not found knowledge in his lips." A foolish woman who destroys her house with her own hands despises God and is proud and arrogant, so she does not listen to the word of God. In other words, she uses words and actions that ignore God (Psalms 14:1) (Park). And because she is proud and does not know anything, she likes to argue and quarrel, which causes jealousy, strife, sabotage, and evil thoughts (1 Timothy 6:4). If a wife is proud and does not know anything in the house, she will definitely like to argue and quarrel. The result will be jealousy, strife, sabotage, and evil thoughts, and such a family will not have a day of peace. However, the problem is that a foolish woman is proud and thinks she has knowledge even though she has no knowledge. And if she is arrogant and does not listen to anyone's advice and words, what will happen to that family? The same goes for the church, a spiritual family. If there is someone who is arrogant and proud, who does not have much knowledge of God, and who likes to argue and argue, that church will inevitably be noisy. It will not be easy to teach such a person. The reason is that they are arrogant and do not have the heart to receive instruction. Therefore, the Bible advises us to turn away from such a fool (Proverbs 14:7). If we do not turn away from such a fool, we too may become fools who ignore God and destroy our own house.

**Fifth, a foolish woman who destroys her house with her own hands deceives herself.**

Look at the second half of Proverbs 14:8: "... The folly of a fool is deceit." The foolishness of a foolish woman is to ignore God. In other words, the foolishness of a foolish woman is to think that there is no God (Psalms 53:1). Therefore, a foolish woman not only does not fear God, but also cannot do it, so she becomes corrupt and commits abominable evil (v. 1). She not only does not do good, but also cannot do it (vv. 1, 3). Nevertheless, the foolish woman thinks that her actions are right (Proverbs 12:15). James 1:22 comes to mind: "But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves." The Bible says that if you only listen to the word of God and do not obey (practice), you are deceiving yourself. However, a foolish and arrogant woman thinks that there is no God, so she does not even listen to the word of God. How can a foolish woman who ignores God obey the word of God? This is deceiving herself. How can a foolish woman who deceives herself like this build her house (home)?

### **Sixth, a foolish woman who destroys her house with her own hands takes sin lightly.**

Look at the first half of Proverbs 14:9: "A fool regards sin lightly, but ...." A foolish woman does not listen to God's words because she thinks there is no God, and because she does not listen to God's words, she does not know the truth. What happens when she does not know the truth? A foolish woman does evil because she does not know the truth. However, she does not consider her sins as sins. She has lost the ability to do so. Rather, a foolish woman who does not know the truth and has lost the ability to consider sins as sins "takes pleasure in doing evil" (Proverbs 10:23). Therefore, a foolish woman's heart is hardened by sin and she is not afraid to sin against God. In other words, a foolish woman regards sin lightly. Clearly, God takes sin seriously, but a foolish woman takes sin lightly. Dr. Park said, "Those who are ignorant of the Bible do not recognize sin as sin, but rather enjoy it" (Park). Therefore, she not only does not repent of her sins, but she cannot repent. The reason is that she does not consider sin as sin, so she does not feel the need to repent. Therefore, she will continue to live sinning against God. She will take sin lightly, so she will live a sinful life that has turned away from God's grace. And she will live with such a strong heart that she will not be pricked by her conscience even though she commits numerous sins. What will happen to the house if such a woman is in it?

The last thing I want to think about is the wise woman who builds her house. Look at the first half of Proverbs 14:1: "A wise woman builds her house ...". Who is the wise woman who builds her house?

### **First, the wise woman who builds her house fears God and acts uprightly.**

Look at the first half of Proverbs 14:2: "He who walks uprightly fears the Lord ...." A wise woman who builds a house fears God. The reason is that the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom (1:7). And a wise woman who fears God acts uprightly. So how does a wise woman who fears God and acts uprightly live a life of faith? Dr. Park mentioned five things (Park): (1) She fears God so as not to commit sins while doing ordinary things. (2) She lives a devout life in secret and prays vigilantly. (3) She does not commit sins in her heart. (4) She is afraid and cautious so as not to leave the Lord in times of peace. (5) She does not try to avoid it in difficult times, but keeps her

righteousness. A wise woman who fears God and acts honestly never takes sin lightly (v. 9). Rather, she takes sin seriously because she fears God (v. 9). Therefore, when she sins against God, she realizes her sin and confesses and repents her sin to God. Therefore, God gives grace to the woman who fears God and acts honestly (v. 9). In other words, God willingly accepts (acceptance) a woman who fears God and acts honestly when she repents of her sin and returns to God (Walvoord). What else is this but God's grace? (8:35) If we look at Proverbs 31:30, which we are all familiar with, the Bible says this about a woman who fears God: "Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain; but a woman who fears the Lord, she will be praised." A wise woman who fears God acts uprightly, and she is praised by God and people. Through such a woman who fears God, God establishes our families and churches.

### **Second, the wise woman who builds her house has knowledge in her lips.**

Look at Proverbs 14:7: "Go away from the presence of a fool, for you do not see knowledge in his lips." A wise woman fears God, so she is humble before God and people. And because she is humble, she not only listens well to the voice of God, but also easily gains knowledge by humbly listening to the advice and instruction of the wise (v. 6). She even humbly listens to the rebuke of the righteous. Rather, she considers the rebuke of the wise as grace (Psalms 141:5). Therefore, she welcomes the rebuke of the wise. The reason is that she knows how to use the rebuke of the wise to her own benefit. How does she use the rebuke of the wise to her own benefit? That is why a wise woman benefits from the rebuke of the wise man, because it adds to her own learning (Proverbs 1:5, 9:9). Look at Proverbs 9:9: "Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be wiser still; teach a righteous man, and he will increase in learning." A wise woman who is humble and adds to her learning does not ask for a beating with her mouth like a proud woman (14:3). Rather, she preserves herself with her lips (v. 3). In other words, a wise woman speaks when she should speak and is silent when she should be silent, guarding her lips so that they benefit others. Therefore, she also benefits herself (Park). Dr. Park said, "A wise man loves others, so he does not slander them, but rather protects them (1 Peter 4:8). Therefore, others protect him with their words" (Park). Furthermore, as a faithful witness (Proverbs 14:5), she testifies to the word of God with her lips of knowledge. God builds up the family and the church, the body of the Lord, through these wise women who have knowledge in their lips.

### **Third, a wise woman who builds a house is diligent.**

Look at Proverbs 14:4: "Where there are no oxen, the manger is clean, but much comes from the strength of the ox." Of course, without oxen, the manger is clean. However, without oxen, there is no strength to cultivate the fields. Therefore, without oxen, there is no great harvest in agriculture. Therefore, a wise woman buys oxen (money), invests time (time), feeds and washes them, and takes care of them, so that they work diligently together (work) and obtain a rich harvest. When we read the Bible, we can see that God especially mentions oxen among animals to teach people what they should work hard for. For example, in Deuteronomy 25:4, the Bible says: "Do not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain." So, Dr. Park said, "The 'ox' is a symbol of loyalty and effort" (Park). In other words, a wise woman is loyal and works hard. She works hard and diligently, so "she does not lack for her produce" (Proverbs

31:11). Looking at Proverbs 31:13, the Bible says that a virtuous woman “seeks wool and flax, and works diligently with her hands” (v. 13). She gets up before dawn to share food with her household and assigns tasks to her maids (v. 15). She girds her loins with strength and strengthens her arms (v. 17). She knows that her trade is profitable, and she does not put out her lamp at night (v. 18). And the Bible says that she “keeps watch over the affairs of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness (v. 27). Therefore, her children rise up and give thanks to her, and her husband praises her (v. 28). Through such wise and diligent women, God establishes families and churches.

#### **Fourth and last, the wise woman who builds her house knows her own way.**

Look at Proverbs 14:8: “The wisdom of the prudent is to know her own way, but the folly of fools is deceit.” A foolish woman does not fear God and ignores Him, so she does not seek His will and walk the way He wants her to walk. Instead, she walks the way she wants to walk, according to her own will and desires. This ultimately only reveals her own foolishness. The reason is that she lives thinking that there is no God (Psalms 53:1). And this ultimately only leads to deceiving herself. The reason is that a life apart from God is living a false life apart from the truth. A foolish woman who deceives herself and reveals her foolishness in this way cannot help but destroy her own family. However, a wise woman builds her own house. She first knows her own path. She knows God’s will for her and lives according to God’s will. In other words, a wise woman knows exactly what she must do according to God’s will and does it (1 Corinthians 7:17) (Park). One of God’s wills is to build her own house and also to build the church, which is God’s house. A wise woman knows this will of the Lord and lives humbly according to God’s will in order to fulfill this will of the Lord, being loyal to the Lord and working diligently. She fears God and lives according to the Lord’s will. Through such a wise woman, the Lord builds His house.

I would like to conclude my meditation on the Word. When you think of a wise woman who built a house, who comes to mind in the Bible? I think of Ruth, a Moabite woman from the Book of Ruth. The Bible calls her a “woman of excellence” (Ruth 3:11). In a way, Ruth’s family had lost her father-in-law Elimelech, her husband Mahlon, her brother-in-law Chilion, and her sister-in-law Orpah, leaving her widowed mother-in-law Naomi and herself. Despite being a foreign woman, Ruth followed her mother-in-law Naomi to Bethlehem in Judah, worked hard in Boaz’s field, and eventually married Boaz. They married and gave birth to Obed, the grandfather of David. So, Ruth’s name was eventually recorded in Jesus’ genealogy along with Boaz. What an amazing and great grace! When I think about this grace, I think that Ruth was truly a virtuous and wise woman. And she was a woman who longed for grace (2:10), an obedient woman (3:5-6), and a woman who showed kindness (3:10). Through Ruth, the Lord established the family of Boaz, and through that family, Jesus, the Messiah, was born on this earth, and through Jesus, the church was established. And the Lord wants to establish the Victory Presbyterian Church, the body of the Lord, through me and you. Therefore, we must become wise people. Wise Christians fear God and act honestly. Wise Christians also have knowledge in their lips. Wise Christians are diligent. And wise Christians know their own way and faithfully do what they must do according to the Lord’s will. I hope that you and I will become wise people who build the Lord’s house in this way.

Thinking of my beloved wife, a wise woman who builds a home by the grace of God,

James Kim

(February 15, 2012, Serving the family the Lord builds with a joyful heart)

# A wife of noble character

## [Proverbs 31:10-31]

I still vaguely remember seeing a Bible verse embroidered with Proverbs 31:10-31 in English about a “A wife of noble character” on a frame in the living room when I went to a dormitory to meet someone at a college in Southern California a long time ago. It occurred to me that the single brother was longing to marry a sister like the noble woman of Proverbs 31. I am sure it isn’t just him. If not all single brothers who believe in Jesus, millions of brothers would dream of the noble woman of Proverbs 31:10-31 as their future spouse. Here, the word “A wife of noble character” literally means ‘A woman of power’, which refers to ‘A woman capable of execution in morality and courtesy’ (Park).

I personally thought that “A wife of noble character” only appears in Proverbs 31. Then in 2009, while reading the book of Ruth, I found out that Ruth 3:11 also speaks of a “a woman of noble character”: “And now, my daughter, don't be afraid. I will do for you all you ask. All my fellow townsmen know that you are a woman of noble character.” This word was spoken by a Jew named Boaz to a Moabite woman named Ruth. And Boaz said that all the people of the city knew that Ruth was “a woman of noble character.” So I meditated on three things about what kind of woman Ruth was, so that Boaz and the people of her town knew that she was “a woman of noble character”:

**First, Ruth was a woman who longed for grace. In other words, “a woman with noble character” longs for God's grace.**

Boaz was gracious to Ruth, and Ruth, who received his grace, confessed that she could not understand why he was being gracious to her and notice her, even though she was a foreigner (2:10). In the midst of this, Ruth, who was comforted by Boaz and heard the words of joy in her heart, confessed: “May I continue to find favor in your eyes, my lord” (2:13). He said that she was not like one of Boaz's servant girls (v. 13). Ruth, such a woman with noble character, humbly longed for the Boaz’s grace.

As I meditated on these words, I came to realize that I must first become a Christian with noble character. And I am taught that in order to become the Christian with noble character, I must long for God's grace more and more. The word that comes to mind at that time is Romans 5:20 – "... But where sin increased, grace increased all the more." I want to realize the grace of God more and more in the midst of my sins that are continuously exposed because of the presence of a holy God. Then I will be compelled to confess like the psalmist: "O LORD, what is man that you care for him, the son of man that you think of him?" (Psalms 144:3) Also, as I gradually realized God's abundant grace, I cannot but pray to God, 'Lord, how could you pour out such great grace to such sinner like me?' like Ruth who confessed "Why have I found such favor in your eyes that you notice me--a foreigner?" (Ruth 2:10) and Paul who confessed "of whom I am the worst" (1 Timothy 1:15). The reason is because the grace of God that is bestowed upon the greatest among sinners like me is beyond comprehension and will never be understood. Then I will be forced to humble myself before the Lord. So like Ruth who said to Boaz, "my lord ... though I do not have the standing of one of your servant girls" (Ruth 2:13), and the prodigal son who said to his father, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son" (Luke 15:21), I confess to the Lord, "My Lord, I am not like one of your servants" (Ruth 2:13). Because I am the chief of sinners, 'I am not worthy to be considered as precious and honorable to God' (Isaiah 43:4).

**Second, Ruth was an obedient woman. In other words, "a woman with noble character" obeys the word of God.**

Ruth was a daughter-in-law who obeyed her mother-in-law Naomi. She was an obedient daughter-in-law who did everything her mother-in-law Naomi had told her (Ruth 3:5-6). Ruth was a woman who knew grace, and she longed for it even more. And I think she had an obedient heart out of humility. So, Ruth simply obeyed her mother-in-law's orders with a simple heart. Naomi told Ruth, "Wash yourself therefore, and anoint yourself and put on your best clothes, and go down to the threshing floor; but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. It shall be when he lies down, that you shall notice the place where he lies, and you shall go and uncover his feet and lie down; then he will tell you what you shall do" (vv. 3-4). Ruth said to Naomi, "All that you say I will do" (v. 5) and "she went down to the threshing floor and did according to all that her mother-in-law had commanded her" (v. 6). This woman of noble character Ruth obeyed her mother-in-law Naomi.

When I meditate on these words, I receive a lesson that in order to become a Christian with noble character, I must understand God's abundant grace and obey His word with the power of that grace. The word that comes to mind at that time is 1 Corinthians 15:10 – "But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them--yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me." This verse came to mind because the apostle Paul "worked harder than all" other apostles by the grace of God. That is, those who gradually come to know God's grace more and more are bound to become more humble ["For I am the least of the apostles ..." (v. 9), "Although I am less than the least of all God's people ..." (Ephesians 3:8), "... sinners--of whom I am the worst" (1 Timothy 1:15)] and have no choice but to obey His word more and more. That's why he

didn't consider his life worth nothing in finishing the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus gave him – the task of testifying of the gospel of God's grace (Acts 20:24). Therefore, I also want to be humbled more and more in my life of faith where I realize God's grace more and more, so that I may obey the Lord's word, even to the point of death like Jesus (Philippians 2:8).

**Third and last, Ruth was a kind woman. In other words, “a woman with noble character” shows kindness.**

In obedience to mother-in-law Naomi's order, Ruth, who uncovered Boaz's feet and lied down (Ruth 3:4, 7). In the middle of the night, Boaz who startled and found Ruth, said: “May you be blessed of the LORD, my daughter. You have shown your last kindness to be better than the first by not going after young men, whether poor or rich” (v. 10). In this way, Ruth was a woman who knew how to show kindness.

As I meditate on these words, in order for me to become a Christian with noble character, I need to obey His word with the power of that grace as I taste and yearn for God's grace more and more so that my love for the Lord is progressively more and more filled than when I first believed in Jesus. As I do so, the hymn that came to mind is “More Love to Thee, O Christ”: “... This is my ear-nest plea: More love, O Christ, to Thee, More love to Thee, More love to Thee! ... This all my prayer shall be: More love, O Christ, to Thee, More love to Thee, More love to Thee!” Like this lyric, I want to love the Lord more and more. So when the Lord sees me, I want to become a person who loves the Lord more than when I first believed in Jesus by the grace of God.

The woman of noble character desires God's grace more and more, obeys His word more and more, and loves God more and more. Such a noble woman is more precious than pearls (Proverbs 31:10). Have you ever heard the saying, ‘Pearls are the jewel of pain’? I learned a bit about why pearls are jewels of pain through an internet article. During various activities for survival such as feeding and respiration, foreign substances such as grains of sand or small worms penetrate into the body of the clam and dig into the flesh. At this time, the clam continues to secrete secretions to overcome the pain. The fight to protect life begins when this substance enters and the unbearable pain begins, and the crystal of pain grows as the secretions are thinly wrapped. Pearls are called jewels of pain because the more they are injured, the more secretions are secreted, which grow bigger and brighter. The thicker the nacre layer, the more beautiful the luster, and the luster and thickness are important factors that determine the quality of pearls. Those with thick nacles and no flaws are said to be 'the finest pearls' (Internet). So, when Jesus told the parable about the kingdom of heaven, he said in Matthew 13:46, “Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it” (KJV). In this way, pearls are extremely valuable so that they sell all they have to buy them. The Bible says in Proverbs 8:11, “For wisdom is better than jewels; And all desirable things cannot compare with her.” That is how valuable, important, and precious wisdom is.



However, in Proverbs 31:10, King Lemuel's mother said to her son King Lemuel, “A wife of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies” [“An excellent wife, who can find? For her worth is far above jewels” (NASB)]. What a wise mother she was. I think Lemuel's mother was a wise mother who taught her beloved son Lemuel about the woman with noble character who is more precious than jewels. I think the reason Lemuel's mother taught her son Lemuel about the woman with noble character who was more precious than pearls was because she wanted her son to find such a noble woman and marry her. Then, what is the value of the woman with noble character who is more precious than the pearls that King Lemuel's mother saw? Look at Proverbs 31:29 – “Many women do noble things, but you surpass them all.” The woman with noble character, who is more precious than pearls (v. 10), surpasses all women (v. 29) in the eyes of her husband (v. 28). That is why the husband said to his wife with noble character, “Many women do noble things, but you surpass them all” (v. 29). And her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her (v. 28). So how do we find this woman? When we see King Lemuel's mother said “A wife of noble character who can find?” (v. 10a), who and how can we find her? This is what Dr. Yoon-sun Park said: ‘It is difficult for those who seek only the physical beauty to find such a capable noble woman. Only those who pray and seek God will find such a capable noble woman. Such a wife is a gift from God’ (Park). Then he said two Bible verses: “He who finds a wife finds a good thing And obtains favor from the LORD” (18:22) and “House and wealth are an inheritance from fathers, But a prudent wife is from the LORD” (19:14).

In Proverbs 31:10, King Lemuel's mother said to her son King Lemuel (v. 1), “A wife of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies” (v. 10). I would like to receive lessons by meditating on six things under the title of “A wife of noble character”, focusing on Proverbs 31:10–31.

### **First, the wife of noble character gives her husband trust.**

Look at Proverbs 31:11-12: “Her husband has full confidence in her and lacks nothing of value. She brings him good, not harm, all the days of her life.” It's like a world where we cannot trust anybody. There are a lot of people who trust people and then get disappointed and get hurt. As a result, many people don't want to trust anyone. Even married couples don't fully trust each other. Rather, it seems that many couples are suspicious of each other. And it seems that there are many couples who doubt that my husband/wife is having an affair with another woman/man. In particular, trusting a spouse who broke the relationship of trust after having an affair once again can be a great adventure. In this way, we are living in a world where even the ones we love cannot trust. What should we Christians do in this world of unbelief? We need to build strong trust with those we love. In particular, we need to build strong trust with our God-given spouse. How do we do that? There are 4 things to think about:

#### **(1) In order to build trust with the person we love, we must first trust God.**

The ultimate reason why we don't trust each other is because we don't trust God. For example, the couples who don't trust in God cannot trust each other. The reason is because only when there is trust in a vertical

relationship with God can trust in a horizontal relationship with a loving spouse be possible. Therefore, the first thing we must do to build trust with the person we love is to trust God.

(2) In order to build trust with the person we love, we need to give trust to him by trusting God.

We who love trust each other as we trust God. The more we trust God, the more we can trust each other. We must first trust the other before we can expect him to trust us. Rather than giving trust only when he has something to trust, we trust him even if there is nothing to trust him by trusting God. Just as God's love is unconditional, we must love our loved one unconditionally. And if we love unconditionally, then we have to give trust to him we love unconditionally. Then, even if we are betrayed by our loved one, the God-centered couple sees and relies on Jesus, who had been betrayed by His own people, and thus overcome our own struggles. And in the meantime, we forgive our spouses who betrayed us with God's love. It is impossible for our understanding. But it is possible if we trust God. God can make it possible. By trusting in that God, we must give trust to the one we love.

(3) In order to build trust with the person we love, we must be true to him as we are to God.

We who love should be truthful Christians. And we should be honest. We must not lie to each other. We must not do anything to deceive each other. We must be truthful not only before God but also with each other. To what extent we must be truthful to one another, and to the extent that we can tell each other, 'God is my witness' (Philippians 1:8). God sees us all. Also, God knows all our thoughts. Therefore, just as we are true to God, we must also be true to our loved one.

(4) In order to build trust with the person we love, we must admit our fault and ask for forgiveness when we do something wrong to him. And we must commit ourselves to change.

If we deceived the person we love and lied to him, we should ask him for forgiveness. We must confess our sins to him frankly and honestly. And we must not only commit to him that we will never commit the same wrong sin again, but we must demonstrate that devotion to him in action. Not only that, but when someone we love asks us to forgive him for his sins, we must forgive him. We must not keep no record of wrongs that he has done to us (1 Corinthians 13:5). Just as God blots out our transgressions according to His great compassion (Psalms 51:1), we must erase all his wrongdoings from our hearts. And we must commit ourselves to love him with the unchanging love of God. We must also recommit ourselves to trust him whom we love. We should rather use our relationship with him that can be perverted as an opportunity for change in the Lord. Therefore, we should rather grow together with him whom we love in the Lord. We must be built up as mature Christians.

In Proverbs 31:11-12, King Lemuel's mother said to her son Lemuel, "A wife of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies" (v. 10) and specifically talked about her: "Her husband has full confidence in her and lacks nothing of value. She brings him good, not harm, all the days of her life." King Lemuel's mother told her beloved son, King Lemuel, that the husband of the woman with noble character who is more precious than pearls, that is, more precious than all the treasures in the world (Park), believes in her. That is, the noble woman's husband trusts her. Why does he trust his noble wife? I think the closest reason is written in verse 12: "She brings him good, not harm, all the days of her life." In other words, the reason why the husband of the wife with noble character trusts her is because she does good to him "all they days of her life" and not harm. What do you think about doing good and not harm to her husband throughout her life? When I think of this word, I think that the woman with noble character is a good woman who does good, and that she is a faithful woman who does good to her husband all the days of her life. That is why her husband trusts in his noble wife. I looked in verse 30 for some more ultimate reasons why the husband of the noble woman trusts her in addition to the reasons given in this close verse 12: "Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised." In other words, the reason the husband of the noble woman trusts her is because she is a God-fearing wise woman. This God-fearing wise and noble woman hates evil (8:13). And such a woman not only hates evil, but loves good (Amos 5:15). Also, the God-fearing woman who belongs to God doesn't imitate what is evil, but imitates what is good and does good (3 John 1:11). Personally, I often admonish my beloved children that the character of their spouse is very important in their future marriage. And the character I emphasize to them is "truthfulness." I urged my children to be wary of liars. The reason I emphasize the truthfulness of character to my children is because I hope and pray that they may meet their future spouses who are trustworthy.

We must become the church of the bride whom Jesus, the Bridegroom, can trust. In other words, the church, the bride of the Lord, must be the church that believes in the eyes of Jesus. To that end, the Lord's church must do good and not evil to Jesus, the Bridegroom, until the last moment of existence on this earth. Here, the church does good to Jesus means those who were created in Christ Jesus for good works (Ephesians 2:10) must fulfill God's good will (Romans 12:2) on this earth by doing good works. Therefore, I hope and pray that we the church will become a church that can give trust to Jesus.

### **Second, the wife of noble character works diligently.**

Even if we are married, we must work diligently to make sure that our loved one is attracted to us. In the effort, there must be not only physical attraction, but also personal attraction. And in that personal attraction, I think it's important to have truthfulness to give trust to our spouses, like the lesson we learned based on verses 11-12, 'The wife of noble character gives her husband trust'. In other words, one of the personal attractions that a couple should strive for is truthfulness that can give them trust. In the midst of this, I think that another thing that the couple should strive for is "diligence".

If we look back on the Book of Proverbs that we have meditated on at every Wednesday prayer meeting for a long time, the writer of Proverbs often mentioned laziness and diligence. For example, the writer of Proverbs said about laziness in Proverbs 6:10 and 24:33: “A little sleep, a little slumber, A little folding of the hands to rest ... A little sleep, a little slumber, A little folding of the hands to rest.” This lazy man not only say “A little sleep, a little slumber, A little folding of the hands to rest,” but actually sleep more, lie down more. In other words, the lazy man doesn’t wake up at the time he should wake up, but postpone it until later. Also, the lazy man doesn't work when he is supposed to, and put it off until later. In doing so, he doesn’t blame his own laziness, but others (situations, people, etc.). In other words, the lazy man doesn’t know how to take responsibility. What is the result? Look at Proverbs 6:11 and 24:34 – “Your poverty will come in like a vagabond And your need like an armed man. ... Then your poverty will come as a robber And your want like an armed man.” What does it mean? It means that poverty is inevitable for the lazy man. Poverty comes just as a victim is struck by a robber and is overwhelmed (24:33) (MacArthur). One interesting thing is that Proverbs 24:30 tells us that the writer of Proverbs saw him as he passed through the fields of “the sluggard” and the vineyards of “the man who lacks judgment.” Here, the write of Proverbs uses “the sluggard” and “the man who lacks judgment” as synonyms. In other words, the lazy man is the man who lacks judgment. What is the judgment that the lazy man lacks? I think it’s a priority. In other words, the lazy man lacks judgment about what to do first and what to do later. For example, Jesus said, “Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you” (Matthew 6:33). However, at the time of the prophet Haggai, the Israelites were busy building their own houses before God's house (Haggai 1:4, 9). They left the temple, the house of God, to be in ruins, and were busy building their own houses in splendor. Their priorities were wrong. As a result, God punished the Israelites. What was that punishment? Look at Haggai 1:6, 9a: “You have planted much, but have harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it. ... You expected much, but see, it turned out to be little. What you brought home, I blew away. ....” What does it mean? God caused the crops of the people of Judah to suffer from famine (1:11), and the harvest was little (vv. 6, 9) (Park). In the end, God makes us needy by causing a drought in our finances when we don’t first seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness. In other words, if we don't put our priorities right in God's eyes, we're bound to be in need. This lazy man is poor because he lacks wisdom and doesn’t do what he should do first. So the writer of Proverbs said in Proverbs 6:6 – “Go to the ant, O sluggard, Observe her ways and be wise.” Why? Why should the lazy man go to the ant and see what it does and gain wisdom? Doesn't that mean that the lazy man is already more foolish than the ant? What wisdom should the lazy man learn from the ant? There are two things (Park): (1) The ant works voluntarily, diligently and cooperatively, even without a supervisor. Look at Proverbs 6:7 – “Which, having no chief, Officer or ruler.” The lazy man should go to the diligent ant, which voluntarily cooperating with each other in a spirit of mutual aid, even without overseeing ant, to take a closer look and gain wisdom. (2) The ant prepares in advance for the future. Look at Proverbs 6:8 – “Prepares her food in the summer And gathers her provision in the harvest.” The Bible exhorts the lazy man to go to the ant and learn the wisdom of preparing for the future. In Proverbs 30:25, the Bible also introduces the ants which prepare their food in the summer. Why do the ants prepare winter food in advance in summer? According to

Dr. Yoon-sun Park, summer is the harvest time in Palestine. So, it is said that at this time the ants gather food for winter (Park). In this way, the ants prepare their winter food in advance at harvest time.

Look at Proverbs 31:13-19: “She selects wool and flax and works with eager hands. She is like the merchant ships, bringing her food from afar. She gets up while it is still dark; she provides food for her family and portions for her servant girls. She considers a field and buys it; out of her earnings she plants a vineyard. She sets about her work vigorously; her arms are strong for her tasks. She sees that her trading is profitable, and her lamp does not go out at night. In her hand she holds the distaff and grasps the spindle with her fingers.” The words of this section are about the labor of the wife with noble character. In a word, the wife with noble character possessed the beauty of labor to run a business diligently (Park). Dr. Park talked about how the wife with noble character diligently ran her business in three ways:

(1) The wife with noble character is engaged in the production of fabric/cloth.

Look at Proverbs 31:13, 18, 19: “She selects wool and flax and works with eager hands. ... She sees that her trading is profitable, and her lamp does not go out at night. In her hand she holds the distaff and grasps the spindle with her fingers.” The wife with noble character runs a small-scale industry within the house, producing on a small scale using her hands and simple tools. For example, in verse 13, the wife with noble character “selects wool and flax and works with eager hands.” She holds the distaff in her hands and grasps the spindle with her fingers (v. 19). And she does business with it. And when she realizes that the business is going well, she works until late at night so as not to turn off the lights (v. 18). When I thought of these words, I thought that it would be good for the wives at home, like this noble woman, to cherish home craftsmanship and engage in productive small-scale industry. Especially in today's world, I think that it is an era when wives can sufficiently run various small-scale, productive businesses such as computer Internet in addition to home-made handicrafts at home. That means there are small businesses that wives can do while doing household chores if they take care of their children at home. I think it would be good for each wife to find the things she wants to do at home and to do business diligently according to the talents of each wife.

(2) The wife with noble character manages her family life well.

Look at Proverbs 31:14-15a: “She is like merchant ships; She brings her food from afar. She rises also while it is still night And gives food to her household ...” Personally, I think a woman who works hard at church but neglects her family life is living a life of faith that is out of balance. In particular, if her husband is an unbeliever who doesn't believe in Jesus, I think that it is against 1 Peter 3:1 of the Bible for her to neglect her family life: “Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives.” Now, many Jesus-believing wives who have unbelieving husbands are working hard in church life but neglecting their family life. They

may be setting an example in the church, but they are not setting an example in the home. I think their Christian life is out of balance. What should they do? A wise wife sets an example not only in the church, but especially in the home. She sets an example in her home as she submits to her unbeliever her husband as to the Lord. Dr. Yoon-sun Park said: ‘When an unbelieving husband sees his wife's devotion, he realizes the truth of the gospel and can be converted. It is preaching the gospel of God through action. Our gospel witness is powerless unless it goes hand in hand with our good life’ (Park). The wise wife does not just speak the gospel witness. She never just tells her unbeliever her husband, ‘Let's go to church’. Rather, she shows the truth of the gospel by submitting to her husband as she would to the Lord. She shows Jesus Christ with her life. Therefore, the Lord uses her to save her unbeliever husband as well.

In Proverbs 31:14-15, King Lemuel's mother said to her son, King Lemuel, about the woman with noble character, saying, “She is like merchant ships; She brings her food from afar. She rises also while it is still night And gives food to her household ....” What we do know about the woman with noble character here is that she buys food for her family from afar and brings them home. But the food she brings from afar is not just regular food, it's the best food (MacArthur). Dr. Yoon-sun Park said: ‘The purpose of her purchase of food from a distance is to purchase quality products at a low price. So she discharges her household's food policy with agility’ (Park). Shouldn't our wives have this kind of agility? The wise wives should manage their finances wisely and well in terms of household food policy as well as household chores in general, so that they don't waste their money, but rather buy good products at low prices. If not, what would happen to that family if they wasted money and their finances? In fact, the mother of Proverbs writer King Lemuel said in Proverbs 31:27 that the woman with noble character takes care of her household chores, and doesn't eat the bread of idleness. The woman with noble character diligently takes care of her household chores, and works hard to eat food. She not only buys her goodies cheaply, even from afar, for her own family, but she gets up early before dawn and prepares breakfast for her family (v. 15). Perhaps in the beginning of the newlyweds, there are cases where the wife prepares breakfast and then goes to work. Of course, I don't think that all newlyweds are like that. It seems that some newlyweds either make their own breakfast from the start, or they almost skip breakfast. Especially in today's world where there are a lot of dual-income couples, I don't think it will be easy for a wife to prepare breakfast for her husband. In particular, I think it is a great challenge for a wife of a family with young children to prepare breakfast for not only her husband but also her children. Nevertheless, in Proverbs 31:15, the Bible says that the woman with noble character “rises also while it is still night And gives food to her household And portions to her maidens.” Regarding this statement, Dr. Yoon-sun Park said: ‘She personally prepares and provides food for her family. The family table is prepared with such care, and there is the warmth and joy of the home’ (Park). The woman with noble character gets up early in the morning with joy and prepares breakfast for her loved ones. This means that she is diligent in household chores.

(3) The woman with noble character develops an industry.

Look at Proverbs 31:15b-19: "... And gives food to her household And portions to her maidens. She considers a field and buys it; From her earnings she plants a vineyard. She girds herself with strength And makes her arms strong. She senses that her gain is good; Her lamp does not go out at night. She stretches out her hands to the distaff, And her hands grasp the spindle." If we look at these verses, we can see that the woman with noble character didn't do the housework alone and did a small-scale industry, but worked with a female servant who told her what to do. Then, seeing that this woman with noble character showed her maid what to do, I think she must have had some leadership of her own. And when we see that she considers a field and buys it; From her earnings she plants a vineyard (v. 16), she 'considered deeply' (Park) vineyards by collecting the money she earned from a small business at home I think he bought a field and cultivated that vineyard. That is, the wise and noble woman diligently runs the family and does her own work to expand her industry. Dr. Yoon-sun Park said: 'She develops the industry, working to operate her products far away to increase her income (vv. 17-19)' (Park). Such a woman with noble character is financially strong because of her diligence (Park) (v. 17). So she knows that what she is doing is useful, and she works late into the night (v. 18). I think that one of those useful things is said in verse 24: "She makes linen garments and sells them, And supplies belts to the tradesmen." Seeing that young women are also selling clothes online these days, I think that the wise and noble woman can do a good job at home while diligently selling clothes and other things online.

The wise and noble woman knows whether what she is doing is beneficial or unprofitable. Therefore, she doesn't do unprofitable things, but diligently does useful things. And the woman with noble character who is industrious has financial power. Therefore, she collects her earned money, uses it prudently and works diligently, thus developing and expanding her own industry. This is what our church, the bride and groom of Jesus, should be like. Knowing what is beneficial in God's sight, we must diligently do the Lord's work to expand the kingdom of God.

### **Third, the wife with noble character helps the poor and needy.**

One day (May 8, 2018), there was an article in the Korean JoongAng Ilbo Internet newspaper titled, "7 out of 10 Christians, 'Help the poor neighbor'" and I read it. According to the article, "Barna Research, a public opinion polling company, recently published a report on the topic of '3 reasons to have hope for the global poverty problem'." According to Barna Research, 7 out of 10 practicing Christians (75 %) said 'I have provided food to poor people or low-income families.' Here, 'practicing Christian' refers to a member of the church who regularly participates in religious activities and says that he or she lives a practice of the doctrine. Christians have donated clothes or furniture, including money (72%, general adults 64%), Pray for the poor at a specific time (62%, general adults 33%), local Have volunteered for the low-income class in society (47%, general adult 29%), have volunteered at a volunteer organization in the United States (39%, general adult 24%), go abroad to help the poor. The response rate was higher than that of general adults in all areas such as have ever gone out (10%, 6% of general adults). Barna Research believes that there is hope for solving the poverty problem ► Practicing Christians are involved in a variety

of philanthropic activities in the United States and around the world ► People who feel the need for active participation in poverty alleviation are also interested in other social issues ► People who have hopes for alleviating poverty are more likely to be more actively involved in solutions (Internet).

In Proverbs 31:20, King Lemuel's mother said to her son, King Lemuel, about the wife with noble character: "She extends her hand to the poor, And she stretches out her hands to the needy." The meaning of the word 'extending a hand' here refers to kindly sending relief materials even to the poor who are far away (Park). This means that the wife with noble character not only kindly gives alms to the poor near, but also kindly sends the alms to the poor far away. Why is she kindly giving relief not only to the poor near, but also to the poor far away? I think the reason is because she has compassion for the poor. In other words, the wife with noble character is that she kindly gives relief to those in need because she has compassion for the needy.

Personally, when I think of 'a heart of compassion,' I can't forget what Henri Nouwen wrote about "compassion". He said that the original Hebrew word for "compassion" is "rachamim," which refers to the womb of YHWH (God). So, while searching for articles on "the womb" on the Internet, I came across three characteristics of the uterus, and I compared them with God's compassion like this: (1) Just as the womb doesn't reject foreign matter but accepts it, so God the Father doesn't reject us sinners, but accepts us. (2) Just as the womb receives the penetration of placental blood vessels and thus nourishes the placenta to grow, so Jesus the Son also tolerates the 'sin penetration' of us sinners by dying on the cross for our sins and provided the bread of life. Therefore, everyone who believes in this Bread, Jesus, is now blocking the 'infiltration of sin' and preventing the 'communication of sin' so as not to defile the whole body and soul. (3) Furthermore, just as the endometrium prevents the natural death of cells while the baby is growing in the womb, and in the latter part of pregnancy, the uterus becomes thin and soft to facilitate the movement of the fetus in the mother's belly wall, the Holy Spirit is making us to live a life of faith so that we can move freely in the Lord.

Those who have this kind of compassion help the poor and needy obey Jesus' words in Matthew 6:2-4: "So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you." Interestingly, those who are compassionate don't only do charitable works to help the poor, but also pray to God. In other words, they not only give alms in love for their neighbors, but also faithfully lead a prayer life in their relationship with God. So, after Jesus talked about almsgiving in Matthew 6:2-4, he talked about prayer in verses 5-15. A good example of this is devout and God-fearing Cornelius Acts 10. Look at Acts 10:2 – "He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly." And God said to Cornelius through an angel, "Cornelius, God has heard your prayer and remembered your gifts to the poor" (v. 31). In other words, godliness that God remembers is prayer and almsgiving.



In Proverbs 31:20, the wife with noble character works diligently (v. 13) and works hard (v. 17) to expand her own business (vv. 15b-19) and feed not only her own household (v.14) but also helps the poor and needy in her neighbor. When I think of this wife with noble character, I think of her as “the wise rich.” The reason is because the wise rich woman fears God (22:4, 31:30), works diligently, and since she knows the needs of the poor in humility (29:7) and has compassion on them (Psalms 72:13), she gives alms (Proverbs 28:27) and helps them (31:20). Such a wise rich woman doesn’t exalt her heart, and doesn’t set her hopes on unpredictable riches, but set her sights on God, who gives abundantly. And the wise rich woman is a generous woman who does good, does many good works, and loves to share (1 Timothy 6:17-19). The Bible says in Proverbs 28:27 that he who gives to the poor is not in need: “He who gives to the poor will lack nothing, but he who closes his eyes to them receives many curses.” Rather, the Bible says in Proverbs 11:24, “One man gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty.”

I hope that our church will become a church that gives alms like the church in Antioch. In order to help the Jewish brothers who were suffering from the great famine, the church in Antioch voluntarily collected a relief offering according to their own financial ability and sent it to the elders of the Jerusalem church through Barnabas and Paul (Acts 11:29-30). Like the church in Antioch, if our church helps not only close neighbors but also difficult churches in distant mission fields to build the Lord's church and to raise the Christ-centered visionary leaders, isn't this the beautiful bride church of Jesus, the Bridegroom?

#### **Fourth, the wife with noble character doesn't worry.**

We live in a world where there are so many things to worry about right now. In a world full of things to worry about day by day, even though we know that we should cast all our anxieties on the Lord according to the words of 1 Peter 5:7, it seems like we cannot cast all our anxiety on the Lord. But, as Jesus said in Luke 12:22, 29, we must not worry about our lives, what we will eat or drink, or what we will wear for our bodies. Why? (1) The first reason is because no one can add a single house to his life by worrying (v. 25). What good is it for us to worry? We shouldn't worry about anything that doesn't help us. (2) The second reason is because we “cannot do this very little thing” (v. 26). Why do we worry about the rest if we cannot do this very little thing? (v. 26) (3) The third reason is because “the pagans run after all these things” (Mt. 6:32). (4) The fourth reason is because our Father knows that we need them (Luke 12:30). Although we shouldn't be anxious because Heavenly Father knows everything we need, we worry and are anxious. It is because we are “of little faith” (v. 28). Because we are of little faith, we worry about what we will eat for our lives and what we will wear for our bodies today and tomorrow (v. 22).

What should we do? We must think of the crow (v. 24). We must see the birds of the air (Matthew 6:26). I still remember. Last time I went to the English Ministry retreat to the mountain, and in the morning I sat on a chair on the back porch outside the hostel and looked at the birds flying and perched on a tree. And I remembered the word of Matthew 6:26 – “Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly

Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?” So when I looked at the birds and meditated on this word for a little while, I thought: ‘My heavenly Father who feeds the birds, will He not feed me who is much more precious and honored than the birds (Isaiah 43:4)? In fact, throughout my life, my Heavenly Father raised me and gave me my daily bread plenty, so I never went hungry. Also, Heavenly Father provided me with clothes to wear, so I never went naked without clothes. Rather, God allowed me to live in abundance, enjoying food and clothes. Nevertheless, I worry about other things. I worry about what to say to the other person in a relationship (Matthew 10:19). Also, as I am concerned about the affairs of this world, I am concerned about how to please my wife (1 Corinthians 7:33). I am concerned about church affairs (2 Corinthians 11:28, Ref: Luke 10:41). I am afraid that some of the members will leave the church and leave Jesus (Deuteronomy 29:18). In particular, I fear that I might fall into Satan's temptations (1 Timothy 3:7). In this way, my heart is weighed down with the anxieties of life (Luke 21:34). And because of this anxieties of life, the word of God is choked and never bears fruit (Mark 4:19). Although I know I shouldn't be like this (v. 19), I am still worried about various things. Not only I'm worried about today's events, I'm also worried about tomorrow (the future) that hasn't happened yet. This is what the Lord is saying to me: “Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own” (Matthew 6:34).

Look at Proverbs 31:21-22: “She is not afraid of the snow for her household, For all her household are clothed with scarlet. She makes coverings for herself; Her clothing is fine linen and purple.” According to this verse, the Bible says that the wife with noble character was clothed in scarlet, so as not to be anxious for the people of her household, and she wore linen and purple for herself. Here, both linen and purple clothes were expensive (Bible Knowledge commentary). Looking at it, we can see that the wife with noble character didn't make her family to be in need, but rather made her family affluent. It is that such a noble woman worked diligently (v. 13) and developed her own industry (vv. 15b-19) so that her family didn't have to worry about life (vv. 21-22). To a certain extent, her husband has no lack of gain because of the wife of noble character he trusted (v. 11). After all, the reason the wife with noble character wasn't concerned for the people of her household was that she took good care of the household chores so that her family didn't have to worry about life. That is why she has strength and dignity and doesn't worry about the future (v. 25).

Let us not worry. Especially we the parents should not be anxious in front of our children. The reason is because when we worry in front of our children, they will be anxious. Rather, we should show our children that we cast all our anxieties on the Lord in prayer. Even if we don't hide our concerns from our children because our faith is weak and we don't deny them, we must show that we surrender all our worries to the Lord according to the Scripture. The grace I experienced a few years ago was that God already knew all my concerns about the weakness of my faith and provided me with what I needed in a way I never expected. At that time, I realized at least little bit that my Heavenly Father loved me so much, and I thanked Him. At that time, I keep trying to live according to what my eyes see even though I have to live by faith moment by moment. So, I was anxious as I tried to anticipate the results. I was relying on my understanding, rather than trusting God and waiting and praying silently for God to

work. I don't want to do that anymore. Now I don't want to live day to day with anxiety and worry anymore. Rather, I want to cast all my anxieties on the Lord and live by faith. I hope and pray that all members of our church will put all their worries on Jesus by faith. Let's not rely on our understanding. Let's trust and rely entirely on the Lord and let's not worry any more.

### **Fifth, the wife with noble character makes her husband to be respected by other men.**

What kind of woman do you think a wise wife is? 'Seven Things Her Husband Wants from His Wife' are among the highlights that Sungshin Women's University psychology professor Chae has compiled during her 20 years of marital counseling. One of them is that the husband wants his wife to respect and boost his self-esteem. The hardest thing for her husband to bear is the feeling of being ignored by his wife. Especially he hates his wife comparing himself to other husbands. The regular menu items that women compare to their husbands are salary envelopes, gifts, vacations, things that are good for their in-laws, and helping with housework and so on. Professor Chae is saying that women should not try to modify their husband's behavior by comparing their husbands with other men, but rather focus on their husband's current behavior, point out what they are good at, and ask for the behavior they want.

I would like to share with you what I wrote on May 22, 2005 under the heading 'The Wise Wife': 'A wise wife is a wife who is submissive to her husband, and a wife who respects her husband. However, in this day and age, the words "submission" and "respect" are hard to find in marital relationships. Even though the unchanging Word should be applied in the changing times, I am concerned that many Christian couples, bachelors, and virgins are ignoring the principles of the unchanging eternal Word in the uncontrollable flow of the changing times. Although it is the duty of a wife to submit to her husband out of reverence for the Lord as she would to the Lord (Colossians 3:18) and her great divine calling to witness to her unbelieving husband, I think there are many wives who aren't able to fulfill this divine calling well. Also, I think many wives are ignoring their husbands even though respecting their husbands as a wife is a precious thing to build their husbands. This shouldn't be like this anymore. Wise wives, be submissive to your husband and beautify your home by respecting him!'

Look at Proverbs 31:23 – "Her husband is known in the gates, When he sits among the elders of the land." What this verse suggests is that the wife with noble character is a wise woman who made a significant contribution to the establishment of her husband, to sit at the gates with the elders of the land (MacArthur). You may think this is such a big deal. But it is said that at that time, the city gate was where the leaders of the city or other provinces were located (Job 31:21) (Park). But the fact that there the husband of the wife with noble character sat there with the elders of the land meant that he was known as a leader and not a commoner (Proverbs 31:23). Without the assistance of such a wife with noble character, would her husband have become a leader? This husband's success would have been impossible without the assistance of his noble wife. Such noble woman sets her husband up to be recognized and respected by men (v. 23). Those who are married women, how would you feel if you found out that your husband is not only successful in his own way, but also recognized and respected by others? Won't you be happy?

I was browsing Christian Internet websites today and came across an interesting article. The article was about the wife of the famous Pastor Spurgeon. The article was titled '3 Things You Didn't Know About Spurgeon's Wife'. First of all, Pastor Spurgeon's wife, Susannah, had no choice but to learn a difficult lesson about marriage. Living with a husband who has great responsibility for the kingdom of God, the work of the Lord, and the ministry of the gospel, she had to learn the hard way that as a wife she could never put herself first in her husband's heart. Therefore, she should have committed herself not to be an obstacle to her husband's Kingdom ministry and the Lord's work. Second, through her sickness and suffering, God shaped her personality to draw her closer to God. Not only did she have to help her husband struggling with depression and illness, but she also suffered from severe medical warfare. But she believed that God was shaping her character through her breakage. And she believed that her own physical suffering brought her closer to the Lord. Third, Mrs. Susanna has established a worldwide ministry. She had organized a charity called "The Book Fund," which distributed 3,058 theological books and 71,000 copies to poor pastors (Internet). Because she had such a wise wife with great faith, I think her husband, Pastor Spurgeon, was an influential pastor who did many great things for the Lord's church and the kingdom of God. According to Proverbs 31:23, a wife with noble character Susanna has established her husband as a pastor who is respected by many people

The noble and wise woman not only respects her husband (Ephesians 6:33), but also causes him to be respected by others (Proverbs 31:23). How, then, can the noble woman make a great contribution to getting her husband to sit at the gates of the city with the elders of the land and to build him up to be recognized and respected by the people? I found the answer in Proverbs 31:11-12: "The heart of her husband trusts in her, And he will have no lack of gain. She does him good and not evil All the days of her life." The wife with noble character does good to her husband all her life and never harms him, so that her husband trusts in her. Therefore, since her husband, who trusts in her has no lack of gain (v. 11), sits at the gates with the elders of the land with her help (v. 23).

I read an article called "A wife who does not understand her husband, a husband who hurts her with his words.' The article says that when a husband feels unappreciated by his wife, he becomes frustrated. Then the husband said that he would not get the strength from his wife to go out into the world and win the fight. So, he would become frustrated and lose all his energy. And this is what he said: 'Wives are often overlooked without realizing how much influence they have over their husbands' (Internet). Women, you need to know how much influence you have over your husband. I think the best way for you to influence your husbands for good is to obey God's word. The word of God is Ephesians 5:33, which says that the woman with noble character obeys the command to "respect her husband." Therefore, the wife with noble character makes her husband respected by others. Our church as a bride should respect Jesus, the Bridegroom. Therefore, we must make others respect Jesus. In order to do that, we must obey the word of the Lord. We must live in this world like the church, the bride of Jesus, just like the church in Antioch in the book of Acts. Then, the Lord, the Bridegroom, will be respected by the people of this world.

**Sixth and last, the wife with noble character has a wise mouth.**

Have you ever heard the phrase ‘You have to use your three inches tongue well’? It means that the tongue is that the words that come out of a short tongue are so important that life goes back and forth. The tongue is as short as that, but the result of the words coming from that tongue is enormous. Look at James 3:5 – “So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and yet it boasts of great things See how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire!” The words that come out of our tongues become great scars, frustrations, disappointments, and curses for some, hope, courage, and life for some. And in other cases, inadvertent words can kill others. If so, how important is a word from us Christians who believe in Jesus? So, Proverbs 18:21 of the Bible tells us this: “Death and life are in the power of the tongue, And those who love it will eat its fruit.”

In Proverbs 15:2, the Bible says: “The tongue of the wise makes knowledge acceptable, But the mouth of fools spouts folly.” Focusing on this word, we already meditated on the tongue of the wise in four ways:

(1) The tongue of the wise turns away wrath.

Look at Proverbs 15:1a – “A gentle answer turns away wrath ...” The wise man will not be angry with the other when the other is angry. Rather, the wise man is slow to get angry even when the other person is angry (v. 18). Meanwhile, he knows what to do with his angry opponent. It's about taking the other person's anger off with a gentle answer. In other words, the wise man uses gentle words to relieve his opponent's anger. Not only that, the wise man is patient with those who are angry (25:15). He persuades others with a soft tongue, and puts the wrath of the angry

(2) The tongue of the wise makes knowledge acceptable.

Look at Proverbs 15:2a – “The tongue of the wise makes knowledge acceptable ...” What does it mean? The tongue of the wise means speaking the word of God well (Park). In other words, the tongue of the wise speaks the word of God well and spread knowledge (v. 7). The reason is because the eyes of the wise read the word of God, his ears seek knowledge (18:15), and his life meditates on the word of God day and night (Psalms 1:2). In other words, since the wise man meditates on the word of God day and night, he has knowledge of God's word so that he can convey that knowledge to others well.

(3) The tongue of the wise heals wounds.

Look at Proverbs 15:4a – “The tongue that brings healing is a tree of life ...” The lips of the fool speak harsh words and hurt the other person's heart. But the tongue of the wise heals the wound. Don't you want to have this healing tongue? How does the tongue of the wise heal wounds? It heals the wounds by speaking the word of God well (v. 2). The tongue of the wise speaks well with gentle words (v. 1) to heal the other's broken heart. Dr. Yoon-sun Park speaks of this healing tongue, saying that it is truthful and peaceful word

that comforts, saves, and gives hope to the listeners. Such words are referred to as “full of grace, seasoned with salt” (Colossians 4:6) (Park). The Bible says that the tongue of the wise is the “tree of life” because it comforts, gives life and hope to those who hear it (Proverbs 15:4). In other words, the tongue of the wise is the tree of life to heal dying souls by preaching Jesus Christ, who is life.

#### (4) The tongue of the wise speaks a timely word.

Look at Proverbs 15:23 – “A man finds joy in giving an apt reply-- and how good is a timely word!” As I personally meditate on this word, I think of how beautiful the right word is at the right time. And in fact, I often experience the work of the indwelling Holy Spirit, letting me speak the right word at the right time. For example, when I talk to others through internet chat, there are times when I get a glimpse of what is working in the other person's heart because God the Holy Spirit makes me to share the Bible verses by reminding me those verses. When that happens, sometimes I am surprised by myself. The reason is because the words that the Holy Spirit reminded me were appropriate words for others at that time. So personally, when I think of Proverbs 15:23, I believe that God will bring us joy by letting us speak the word of God through us in His time. This is what Proverbs 25:11-12 says: “Like apples of gold in settings of silver Is a word spoken in right circumstances. Like an earring of gold and an ornament of fine gold Is a wise reprove to a listening ear.” What does it mean? In case of proper advice, it means that it produces good fruit (Park). Here, the original Hebrew word for “right circumstances” means “wheel”. In other words, it refers to the turn by adjusting the circumstances at that time. This teaches that the adviser should take a number of things into account and control it when speaking to the other person (Park): ‘Those who give advice should speak when they have love and peace. They should not speak in a humiliating manner. They should not speak hasty. Don't speak without courtesy. The Bible says that when the other person accepts such advice, it becomes a great treat (meaning of “apples of gold” and “setting of silver”) to the person giving them (Park).

Look at Proverbs 31:26 – “She opens her mouth in wisdom, And the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.” The wife with noble character is not only a good housewife who works diligently to develop her own industry, but she also guides her family in the words of wisdom (The Pulpit commentary). What are the words of wisdom that come out of her mouth here? I believe that the words of wisdom that come out of her mouth are knowledge (15:7), and that knowledge is truth (8:7). The reason I think this way is because her heart is full of the truth of life (18:4, Park). From the mouth of the wise and noble woman should flow the gospel of Jesus Christ who gives eternal life. Not only must the knowledge of Jesus Christ be preached out of her mouth, but the good news of Jesus Christ, who was crucified and resurrected three days later, in order to give us eternal life. And the word of truth of God must flow out of her mouth. The knowledge to know God must come out, and the words of wisdom must flow out. Furthermore, the Bible says that the wife with noble character speaks “the teaching of kindness” with her mouth (v. 26). I think that in the heart of the wife with noble character, not only the words of the truth of life are abundant, but also the love of God. That is why she speaks the teaching of kindness with her tongue. Her tongue is a tongue regulated by the love

of God, speaking the teaching of kindness (The Pulpit commentary). I think that the teaching of kindness is Jesus' double commandment if it applies to us who are living in the new covenant age. The double commandment is "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind" and "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:37, 39). The wife with noble character not only show this twofold command in her home to her her husband and her children with her life, but also opens her mouth to teach her children.

This should be the image of the church, the bride of Jesus. The church must not only show the law of God's love by living in obedience to Jesus' twofold command, but also we must open our mouths to spread the word of truth. We the church must open our mouths to preach Jesus Christ, who is the true wisdom. In other words, we must preach the gospel. This is the appearance of the church, the wise and the noble bride of Jesus, the Bridegroom.

There are some words I will never forget among the words my grandmother said to me when she was alive. That word was Proverbs 31:30 – "Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, But a woman who fears the LORD, she shall be praised." I still vividly remember it. I don't remember what conversation we had when I visited the nursing home to see my grandmother. But I do remember that my grandmother memorized Proverbs 31:30 even though she was old and had many wrinkles on her face. At that time, as I listened to that word through my grandmother, I could not help but feel the words, "Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain." The reason is because I could not help thinking about the meaning of a woman's beauty in the face of the passing years. However, it struck me how important it was to say: "But a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised." And the only God-fearing woman who is praised is the wise and noble woman. The wife with noble character means she gives her husband trust, works diligently, helps the poor and needy, and doesn't worry. Not only that, but the wife with noble character has a wise mouth and her husband is also respected. Her children thank (and are grateful for) her own mother and her husband tells her, "'Many women do noble things, but you surpass them all' (there are many great women in the world, but you are the greatest of them all)". I hope and pray that all of us may become a church that trusts the Lord, the Bridegroom. I hope and pray that we will become diligent in doing the Lord's work, helping the poor and needy, worrying about nothing, and preaching and teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ and the truth of God with our wise mouths. Therefore, when we stand before the Lord, I hope and pray that we will all be praised by the Lord as "Well done, good and faithful servant!" (Matthew 25:21)

A wife with noble character, serving the Church as a wise Bride,

James Kim

(October 9, 2019, Dreaming of a Victorious Community that only fears God)

# Happy birthday Jane!

Here it is 4:20 AM. Today is my beloved wife's birthday. My wife is sleeping right now, but I sent her a birthday message and shared the picture below in the family chatroom of 5 people. My wife is planning to have a birthday dinner this afternoon after she gets off work. I thought my wife, my youngest daughter, and I would have dinner together, but I just saw a message from Dillon and Jessica saying they are free. That's great. Dillon proposed to Jessica anyway, so my wife will be happy and excited to have dinner together on her mom's birthday.

As I celebrate my wife's birthday, I would like to write down some things I am thankful for God and my wife when I think of her:

1. My wife is a gift of God's grace.
2. God changes me through my wife.
3. I am learning about myself through my wife.
4. I am receiving so much love from my wife.
5. I am simply thankful for my wife's very existence.





# As I celebrate my beloved wife's birthday ...

Today, as I celebrate my beloved wife's birthday, I meditate on Proverbs 15 and apply and reflect on it to my wife and I:

1. In a relationship between a couple, a gentle answer dispels anger, but harsh words stir up anger (Ref: Proverbs 15:1).
2. A wise husband seeks the knowledge of God and the knowledge of His will, and his lips speak of that knowledge kindly to his beloved wife, but a foolish husband does not do so; he enjoys foolishness and pours out foolishness (Ref: vv. 2, 7, 14).
3. In a marital relationship, gentle words are like a tree of life, but cruel words break a person's heart (Ref: v. 4).
4. God delights in the prayers of an honest couple and loves a couple who pursues righteousness (Ref: vv. 8, 9).
5. A wise couple knows that they may be able to hide their thoughts from each other, but they cannot hide them from God (Ref: v. 11).
6. A proud husband hates to be rebuked by his wife and does not seek out a wise wife (Ref: v. 12).
7. A wife's cheerful heart brightens her face, but a husband's anxious heart hurts his spirit (Ref: v. 13).
8. A couple who suffers is miserable, but a couple who has joy in their hearts is always happy (Ref: v. 15).
9. A couple who is poor but fears God and serves Him together is better than a couple who is rich but always lives in worry (Ref: v. 17).
10. A quick-tempered husband will cause quarrels, but a wife who is slow to get angry will calm them down (Ref: v. 18).

11. The path of a lazy couple is like a field of thorns, while the path of an honest couple is like a highway (Ref: v. 19).
12. . A wise wife makes her husband happy, but a foolish husband despises her (Ref: v. 20).
13. An ignorant couple enjoys foolishness, but a wise couple walks the right path together (Ref: v. 21).
14. A husband who gives wise advice makes a wife successful in her plans (Ref: v. 22).
15. A wise couple gives each other timely words and answers, giving each other joy (Ref: v. 23).
16. The thoughts of a pure-hearted couple please God (Ref: v. 26).
17. A wise and honest couple who fear God do not seek ill-gotten gain and harm their family (Ref: v. 27).
18. A righteous couple thinks carefully about what to say to each other, but a wicked couple spews out evil words to each other (Ref: v. 28).
19. . A wise couple not only knows how to listen to each other's good rebuke, but they also receive the rebuke with joy, and so they gain enlightenment (Ref: vv. 31, 32).
20. A couple who fears God gains wisdom, and so they are humble (Ref: v. 33).

# Parental duties

Today, Saturday (September 28, 2024), at the dawn prayer meeting, we proclaimed the word of God based on Romans 12:16 under the title, “Conflict is an opportunity,” and applied it in various ways to the duties of parents in raising children. I am writing this article while thinking about the duties of parents again:

1. It is entirely by God’s grace that my wife and I have become parents of three children. This means that although my wife and I are not qualified to be parents of three children, God has given us precious lives (children) as a gift.
2. God is allowing our children to receive grace from us. That means that in my case, as a father of three children, I have done many wrong and sinned against them, but my three children do not feel bitterness or resentment toward me. I think this is an amazing grace and miracle of God. I am a father who receives grace, forgiveness, and love from my children.
3. After I married my wife by the grace of God and received our first child, Charis, as a gift of grace from God, I encouraged my beloved wife to draw a (clear) boundary between us so that no third party, our child, would interfere in our marital relationship. However, baby Charis was born with an illness, and we could not draw a clear boundary with her and we could not help but fall deeply in love with her. After Charis passed away in my arms, God gave us three children as gifts: Dillon (who experienced God’s restorative love), Yeri (who experienced God’s abundant love), and Karis [whose name means the same as our first baby Charis’ English name (“grace”), who made us confess, “God is love”]. However, my husband and I seem to have fought a lot while raising our three children. That means we allowed our three children to interfere with our marital relationship. Therefore, we argued and fought because of our children. To that extent, my husband and I were immature and failed to draw clear and healthy boundaries while raising our children.
4. Nevertheless, the Lord was not only personally raising each of our three children, but also raising me and my wife. As parents of three children, my wife and I had different ways of raising them, and when we each thought we were right or tried to emphasize and push our own ideas, we had no choice but to argue and fight with each other. In that process, our pride and foolishness were bound to be exposed. However, God’s amazing grace and love is that through that process, the Lord allowed us to see our differences more clearly. And furthermore, the Lord helped us understand the reason why my wife and I

had different ideas about raising our children. The reason is that my husband and I grew up in different backgrounds. They had to be different. How can a couple have the same backgrounds? Our parents are different, too. And how many differences can there be between our parents in their marital relationships? So, my husband and I each received love from different parents and were influenced by them differently, so our methods of raising our three children were bound to be different. However, through our marital conflicts, the Lord gradually helped us realize these differences, and instead of comparing them, He began to help us complement each other in raising our children. So, as I began to see my wife's strengths as a mother of three children, I began to respect her parenting style. And my beloved wife began to respect my parenting style. However, the Lord Bodhi made us a team as a father and mother of three children, and gradually led us to do team family ministry. While respecting each other's parenting style's strengths, He helped us complement each other's weaknesses, allowing us to raise each child in a variety of ways.

5. As I went through this process, I was truly thankful that the Lord, the master of our family, loves us so much and has shown us mercy and compassion. He has taught us and made us realize many mistakes regarding raising our children, and He still does. Of all those teachings and realizations, the one that has had the greatest impact on my heart, is the one that has been and will continue to have the greatest impact on me. More than anyone else (even more than my husband and I), God the Father loves our children the most. So, when I was struggling as a father, not knowing what to do and how to love my three children properly, the Holy Spirit reminded me of the Lord's precious teachings and realizations, helped me hold on to them with faith, and made me rely on God, which has brought me to where I am today.
6. I cried a lot in front of God because my heart was so hurt and tormented. The reason was that they were God's most beloved children, but as a father, I could not love them, and the things I tried to do in my own way, saying that I loved them, sometimes did not help them at all and actually harmed them. So, as a father, I reproached myself countless times because of the guilt I felt. Then, while praying for the salvation of the soul of my beloved youngest daughter, Karis, I prayed, "Lord, even if you take my physical life, please save my beloved Karis." Even though it was insufficient, the Holy Spirit made me risk my own physical life (support it) to pray for the salvation of my beloved daughter's soul, and in the end, when I came to know that God gave Karis, whom He loved more than anyone else, a precious faith as a gift of grace and made her believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, I received the precious grace to believe in and rely on the God of salvation even more. Not only that, but the Lord faithfully built my family, called my beloved son Dillon and gave him a calling, so he is currently attending seminary and serving as a college evangelist (pastoral intern) at a church as a college evangelist. He has also continued to serve the Christian club at the university he graduated from since graduation. Then, not long ago, He allowed me to marry Jessica, whom I had met and dated for about 4-5 years on the mission field, and start a family. My beloved daughter Yeri, who was called by the Lord to Japan for a year of missionary work, returned to Japan this Wednesday for her second year of missionary work. The amazing things

the Lord is doing in her life are allowing my wife and I to see with eyes of faith that the true God is fulfilling the promise in 1 Peter 5:10 for Yeri.

7. Today, during the Saturday dawn prayer meeting, I preached God's word with the title, "Conflict is an Opportunity," centered on Romans 12:16. Then, I applied the word I received to my family. In the midst of that, the teaching the Lord gave me was that, as the head of a household, I was arrogant and foolish and committed countless sins against God and my family, but God bestowed upon me amazing and abundant grace, love, and mercy. Truly, God works amazingly in the lives of each and every one of our family members, whom He loves more than anyone else. I pray that the Lord will further break and shatter me as the head of the household, so that I may follow the humble heart of Jesus (Ref: Philippians 2:5-8). Also, I earnestly pray that the Lord will pour out even more of His amazing wisdom on me, so that I can raise my children with love, one heart, and one mind together with my wife, who has been given to me as a great gift of grace, according to His will, His heart, and His love, so that He may establish all of them, as well as their descendants to be born in the future, as God's workers with Christ-centered dreams, and that they may be preciously used for Jesus, the gospel, and the kingdom of God.

[(Romans 12:16) "Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly Do not be wise in your own estimation"].

# A short meditation on God's Word about children

I pray that God will protect our children from all adversaries, granting them peace and stability so that they may become people of peace (Ref: 1 Chronicles 22:9, Korean Modern Bible).

I pray that, as God has promised, He will be with our children so that they may successfully carry out His work for the kingdom of God (Ref: v. 11, Korean Modern Bible).

I pray that God will grant our children wisdom and understanding so that they may live faithfully according to all His commandments (Ref: v. 12, Korean Modern Bible).

If our children carefully keep all of God's commandments, they will prosper in all they do (Ref: v. 13, Korean Modern Bible).

I want to tell my children, "Be strong and courageous, and do not be afraid of anything" (Ref: v. 13, Korean Modern Bible)

I want to tell my children, "Seek God with all your heart and devotion, and live for His kingdom and His church" (Ref: v. 19, Korean Modern Bible)

As I meditate on this short passage from God's Word about children this morning, I am reminded of a conversation I had yesterday afternoon with a couple. The reason is that our discussion was primarily about our children. So, this morning, as I reflect on that conversation once again, I want to write down some of my personal thoughts on parenting, one by one:

1. As a father of three children, there have been many times when I did not know how to raise them. That is why I deeply resonate with Manoah's prayer in the Bible, asking God to teach him how to raise his child (Ref: Judges 13:8, 12, Korean Modern Bible).
2. I cannot help but acknowledge before God and others that I lack wisdom in parenting. That is why I hold on to James 1:5: "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given to him."

3. I am learning about parenting little by little, one lesson at a time, through countless mistakes. So, I tell my beloved children, "It's okay for you to make mistakes or even to fail, as long as you learn from them."
4. When I think of my children, I pray to God: "Lord, may You raise beloved Dillon, Yeri, and Karis as Christ-centered visionary leaders to expand the Kingdom of God."
5. When I pray for my children, I specifically pray like this:  
(Dillon): "God, reveal Your truthfulness and faithfulness to Dillon so that he may be truthful and faithful to You."  
(Yeri): "God, accomplish the work of Ephraim in Yeri so that she may be twice as fruitful."  
(Karis): "God, help Karis to truly understand Your grace so that she may live a life of sharing and extending grace to others."
6. I am witnessing God at work in the lives of my three children. It is purely by His grace. As a father, I have done little for them, and even now, I fall short. Yet, I firmly believe that because God loves them more than anyone else, He Himself is faithfully nurturing them.
7. I want to be a father who reminds my beloved children of Jesus. So, when I pass away and they remember me, I pray they will say, "My father loved Jesus and showed Him to me" (Ref: Hebrews 11:4).

# To Dillon, Yeri, and Karis who love Jesus

**Thursday, May 7, 2015.**

**Dear Dillon, Yeri, and Karis,**

This dad said that about 17 years ago, when your older sister Joo-young (Charis) was very sick and hospitalized in the intensive care unit of L.A. Children's Hospital, he heard on Radio Korea that they were holding a contest for letters to be written to their beloved children, and he wrote a letter titled "To Joo-young who loves Jesus." At that time, this dad wrote a letter thinking of his beloved baby Joo-young who was on an oxygen mask and couldn't say anything or even cry in pain. This dad just wanted to express his love to Joo-young. And 17 years have already passed.

The other day, while driving, I happened to tune into a Korean radio station and heard about a contest for letters written to children. After thinking about it for a while, I was inspired this morning during the early morning prayer service. As I prayed for you—Dillon, Yeri, and Karis—before our Heavenly Father, I gained the courage to express my love for you in writing, just as I did for Joo-young about 17 years ago. So now, I am writing a letter to you, titled "To Dillon, Yeri, and Karis, who love Jesus."

**My beloved son, Dillon,**

You are a precious son to me. After your older sister, Joo-young, fell asleep in my arms, your mom and I were overwhelmed with deep sorrow. When we scattered her ashes, I was in such unbearable pain that I asked your mom to remove all of Joo-young's photos from our home. Your mom and I longed and prayed earnestly for another child, but for a time, we struggled as no baby was conceived. Then, in God's perfect timing, He blessed us with you. I still remember the exact moment we found out that your mom was pregnant with you. My heart overflowed with gratitude—thankfulness beyond words. After months of anguish following Jooyoung's passing, your birth became a testimony of God's restoring love in my life. Through Joo-young, I experienced God's holy love, and through you, God had mercy on me and gifted us with your precious life. I named you Dillon because the meaning of that name resonated deeply with my heart. Your name means "faithful and truthful", and I hope you will never forget that. Every



day, I pray this prayer: "Heavenly Father, please make our Dillon a faithful and truthful person." And as I pray this for you, I will also strive to be a faithful and truthful father myself.

### **My beloved daughter, Yeri,**

Through you, I have experienced God's abundant love. I was already deeply grateful when God gave us your older brother, Dillon, as a precious gift. But when He also gifted us with you, I came to understand even more that God's love is not only holy and restorative, but also abundant. As I prayed and read the Bible after receiving you as a gift, I came across the name "Ephraim", the second son of Joseph. His name means "twice fruitful." Inspired by this meaning, I chose your Korean name, Yeri. If I remember correctly, an elder at church once mentioned that the name Yeri also carries the meaning of abundance in Chinese characters. But I'm sorry—I never confirmed that! Haha. But Yeri, you understand my heart, right? I pray that you will live a twice-fruitful life, experiencing God's abundant blessings and generously sharing them with others. And as I pray this for you, I will strive to set an example in my own life.

### **My beloved youngest, Karis,**

You bring so much laughter to my life. To my dear Karis, who makes me laugh so often — "Thank you!" When you were born, I couldn't help but declare, "God is love." Through your oldest sister, Joo-young (Charis), I experienced God's holy love; through your brother, Dillon, God's restoring love; and through your sister, Yeri, God's abundant love. And when God gifted you to your mom and me, my heart overflowed with the confession: "God is love." Do you remember how I've told you many times why I gave you your English name, Karis? Your name comes from the Greek word for "grace", just like your oldest sister Joo-young's English name, Charis—only spelled differently. I wonder if you still remember the day I took you to L.A. Children's Hospital, where your sister Joo-young was once hospitalized. I showed you the building and told you about her. The reason I named you Karis is because, through your sister's short life and passing, I experienced God's overwhelming grace and love, even in the midst of deep sorrow and pain. What else could that be but God's grace? That's why I wanted to give you the same name. Karis, do you remember what I taught you? "Sharing is caring." Inspired by this, I even titled my Naver blog "Sharing is Caring," where I share my reflections on Scripture with many people. And just as I strive to share with joy, I pray that you, too, will live a life of sharing. I pray every day that as you grow, you will recognize the abundant grace God pours into your life, be deeply moved by it, and live a life of sharing His grace and love with others. And as I pray for you, I will also strive to live joyfully, sharing all that God gives me.

### **My Dear Dillon, Yeri, and Karis, who love Jesus,**

This is the prayer your dad lifts up to our Heavenly Father:

“Abba Father, God, thank You. Thank You for blessing us with the precious gift of four children. Above all, we are deeply grateful that through them, You have revealed Your love to us.

We dedicate these children to You, Lord. While they are with us for a short time on this earth, we recognize that they have been entrusted to us for a season. As we prepare to release them into the world, may we faithfully fulfill the responsibility of raising them. And as we prepare for the day when we, too, will leave this world, may we nurture them with that eternal perspective in mind.

Use us as Your instruments, Lord, so that these children—whom You have graciously given to us—may grow into Christ-centered visionaries leaders, dedicated to expanding Your Kingdom.

In Jesus’ name, I pray.

Amen.”

# **After reading my beloved daughter Karis’ reflection on “Looking Back on a Year with Henri Nouwen’s ‘Beloved’” ...**

Last Saturday, around 3:20 AM, as I was reading the reflection written by Karis titled "A Year in Review with Henri Nouwen’s Beloved," I was so deeply moved that it brought tears to my eyes. The reason for this overwhelming emotion is because I saw with eyes of faith that God the Father has answered even my imperfect prayers, working in Karis' heart and life. What especially surprised me was that Karis, after reading Henri Nouwen's "Beloved", took such an honest and transparent look at herself, reflecting deeply and even sharing her vulnerabilities in her writing. This was something I had not expected. Moreover, I reflected on the time when, about 20 years ago, from 2001 to 2003, I was physically and emotionally exhausted, fleeing to Korea to find rest. During that time, Henri Nouwen's books provided me with much-needed comfort and healing for my soul, challenging me and strengthening me. Now, seeing how God has led Karis, one of our children, to start reading Nouwen’s works, and even writing reflective pieces like this, fills me with deep gratitude for God’s love and grace, which have profoundly impacted her heart and life.

Earlier this year, after my beloved wife had a Bible study, she came home and shared with me, in tears, how she was blessed by the truth that she is a beloved daughter of God. Now, seeing how God has also blessed Karis by leading her to read Henri Nouwen’s “Beloved” and experience His grace and love, I am deeply thankful. This morning, shortly after midnight, I woke up from my sleep and slowly read through Karis’ writing again, reflecting on what message God might be trying to communicate to me through her words. As I meditated on her reflection, I broke it down into three parts for deeper thought:

## **First, I reflected on the word “Beloved”.**

I looked up the word “beloved” in the Bible using an online Bible tool. It appears in various places throughout the 66 books of the Bible, and I selected five verses: (Matthew 3:17) “And behold, a voice from heaven said, ‘This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.’” (Matthew 12:18) “Behold, My servant whom I have chosen, My beloved, with whom My soul is well pleased. I will put My Spirit upon him, and he will proclaim justice to the Gentiles.” (2 Peter 1:17) “For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to Him by the Majestic Glory, ‘This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased,’” (Song of Solomon 7:10) “I am my beloved’s, and his desire is for me.” (Romans 9:25, Korean Modern Bible) “As he says in Hosea, ‘Those who

were not my people I will call “my people,” and her who was not beloved I will call “beloved.””” As I meditated on Romans 9:25 from the Korean Modern Bible, I reflected on how before we believed in Jesus, we were like those whom God called “not My people.” Yet, by His love and grace, we have been transformed into “My beloved.” How immense and beautiful is God’s love and grace! I pray that I may grow even more in my understanding of this incredible love. And when I meditated on Matthew 3:17, Matthew 12:18, and 2 Peter 1:17 together, I was reminded that when God the Father spoke to His only Son, Jesus Christ, saying, “This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased,” Jesus received honor and glory from God the Father. He also received the Spirit of God, through which He proclaimed justice to the Gentiles. As I looked up “beloved” in the Bible, I found that it appears most frequently in the Song of Solomon. Among the many verses, I chose Song of Solomon 7:10 because it highlights that Jesus belongs to the Father who loves Him, and likewise, we belong to Jesus, who loves us. As I reflected on this, I found comfort in realizing the depth, breadth, abundance, and height of God’s love for us.

**Second, I thought about what Karis learned from the book “Beloved”, particularly the idea that “loneliness is not a bad thing.”**

When I think about solitude, the first thing that comes to mind is Henri Nouwen’s words, “Make the lonely wilderness a garden of solitude.” I came across these words in Nouwen’s book about 20 years ago, and they have had such a great influence on me that I still can’t forget them. When I thought about what they meant, I thought of Jesus, who made the lonely wilderness a garden of solitude. When I read the Synoptic Gospels, we see that Jesus went to a “solitary place” to pray during his public ministry (Mark 1:35; Luke 5:16). Although it only appears twice that Jesus went to a “solitary place” to pray, it was actually Jesus’ habit to go to a solitary place and pray to God the Father. Luke 22:39 says, “Jesus went out, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives; and his disciples followed him.” There he said to them, “Pray that you will not fall into temptation” (v. 40). Then he withdrew from them about a stone’s throw, knelt down, and prayed (v. 41): “Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done” (v. 42). This is what makes a lonely wilderness a garden of solitude. Although we may feel lonely in the crowd as we follow Jesus in this world and do the Lord’s work, that loneliness, as Karis says in her writing, is a tool by which the Lord invites us to spend time with God (“where we discover the truth about who you are”).

In order to respond to this invitation from the Lord, we need to “let go of our busyness” and see our “emptiness as more opportunities,” as Karis said. Karis saw her emptiness as an opportunity to fill her heart with “better and better things, such as opening her heart and receiving God’s love.” In a word, only when we let go of our busyness and feel our emptiness can we fill our hearts with the best things, God’s love and God’s will. That is why Jesus prayed to God the Father in the Garden of Gethsemane, “Nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will” (Matthew 26:39, Korean Modern Bible).

**Third and last, I thought about the fourth and final thing that Karis realized while reading and reflecting on the book “Beloved”: “I want to serve God more joyfully for His sake, not for my own merits.”**

I found it interesting that Karis said that she wanted to serve God more joyfully for God’s sake rather than for her own merits. The reason, I think, is that if we think about, rely on, or boast about our own merits, we cannot serve God joyfully. In other words, if we have even a little sense of merit, we cannot serve God joyfully. A sense of merit may allow us to fully enjoy the joy that people give us, but it prevents us from experiencing the divine joy that God gives us. Therefore, we must be very wary of a sense of merit and be filled with a sense of grace. Then, when we serve God with God’s grace, we can serve God more with a grateful and joyful heart that God gives us.

Another thing I want to think about is the Bible story of Martha and Mary, which Henri Nouwen mentioned in his article (Luke 10:38-42): “In short, he (Henri Nouwen) says that the reason Jesus rebuked Martha was not because she was too busy serving Him, but because her own insecure behavior fueled her busyness. He says that if our activities come from insecurity about who we are, we may not serve the kingdom. It becomes an act of faithlessness, wanting to prove something and show something” (Karis). When I reread this article, I thought that Martha’s insecure behavior came from insecurity about who she was. If I think about it the other way around, if Martha had a conviction that she was God’s beloved daughter, she would never have acted in an insecure way. She would not have been “crowded about much preparation” (v. 40). She would not have said to Jesus, “Lord, do you not see that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Help me” (v. 40, Korean Modern Bible). In short, if Martha had a clear sense of her identity as God’s beloved daughter, she would not have been “worried and troubled about many things” (v. 41) but would have been “necessary for only a few things, or even for one” (v. 42). She, like her sister Mary, would have been “sitting before the Lord and listening to his word” (v. 39, Korean Modern Bible). This makes me think about how important it is for us to have a clear sense of our identity as God’s beloved sons/daughters. If I were to sum it up in one word, it would be the title of the book by Henri Nouwen that Karis read, “Beloved”. If we have the conviction that “I am a beloved being (son/daughter) of God!”, our actions (service) that naturally come from the conviction of being a loving being will never be unstable (without worrying, being anxious, or comparing ourselves to those around us), but rather, we will choose what is good in the eyes of the Lord, sit before the Lord, listen to His words, and live a life of obedience.

In conclusion, Karis writes, “Looking Back on a Year with Henri Nouwen’s ‘Beloved’,” and says, “Ultimately, this book is simply a tool to help me become more intentional about the ways God works and moves through my daily life. I hope these reflections will remind me and others in my life that God is very real and very active. He continues to amaze me in such a way that He blesses me. With grace, Karis.” As Karis says, our God is truly alive! Our living God blessed our beloved daughter, Karis, through Henri Nouwen’s book, “Beloved.” I can only give thanks. When I pray to God in memory of my three children, I pray to God for the meaning of each of their names. The English name “Karis” means “grace” in Greek (I gave the same name to my firstborn, “Charis,” who died in my arms). And her

Korean name is “Ye-eun,” which means “the grace of Jesus.” So, whenever I pray to God for her, I pray, “God, please help my beloved Karis realize and understand the grace of God so that she can become a person who bestows grace on others. However, I am enjoying the grace and blessing of seeing God answering my insufficient prayers through Karis’ life. As Karis said, I hope that Karis’ reflection, “Looking back on the year with Henle Nouwen’s ‘Beloved’,” and the writing I wrote after reading her article will remind you that God is truly real (alive) and working.

Believing that I am who I am is entirely by the grace of God,

James Kim, father of Karis

(May 3, 2023, in gratitude for the blessings the Lord, the master of our family, has bestowed upon our family of five that we are sons and daughters whom God loves)



# **We must send our children away!**

**“Is not the whole land before you? Please separate from me; if to the left, then I will go to the right; or if to the right, then I will go to the left.” (Genesis 13:9)**

Among the couples I know, a few are experiencing conflict between the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law. From the perspective of the daughters-in-law, many are struggling. There are various difficulties, but the most challenging, in my view, is the husband who is caught in between, wavering between his wife and his mother. For the wives, it's naturally painful to see their husbands, who are supposed to be on their side, siding with their mothers instead. Especially when they feel their husbands are what people call "mama's boys," it must be even more painful. If their husband has a stronger attachment to his mother than to his wife, and after having a conversation with the wife, then getting closer to his mother and obeying her words, it must be extremely frustrating for the wives. They might feel suffocated. The excessive attachment, obsession, and closeness between the husband and his mother cause a rift, which leads to conflict between the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law. How should we resolve this conflict? Aside from this, there can also be conflicts between the in-laws and the daughter-in-law or between the father-in-law and son-in-law. Conflicts can also arise between spouses, between parents and children, and even among siblings. When we face these kinds of conflicts, what should we do? I found the principle in Genesis 13:9, where Uncle Abram says to his nephew Lot, "Please separate from me." The principle is simple: "We must send our children away!"

Look at Genesis 13:9: "Is not the whole land before you? Please separate from me. If you take the left, then I will go to the right; or if you take the right, then I will go to the left." This was what Uncle Abram said to his nephew Lot. Why did Abram say this to Lot? The reason was to avoid conflict between them. Look at Genesis 13:8: "So Abram said to Lot, 'Please let there be no strife between you and me, and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen, for we are brothers.'" Even though Abram and Lot were relatives, they were in conflict. I think Abram and Lot themselves did not directly quarrel, but rather, it was a conflict between Abram's herdsmen and Lot's herdsmen. I believe this because the Korean Modern Bible says, "Let there be no strife between us," meaning that the conflict was between their herdsmen. Why were the herdsmen quarreling? The reason is given in Genesis 13:6: "Now the land was not able to support them so that they might dwell together, for their possessions were so great that they could not

dwell together." The reason for the dispute between the herdsmen was that Abram and Lot had so many livestock that the land they were living on couldn't sustain them all. To put it simply in modern terms, they quarreled because of wealth ("possessions").

Isn't it the case that many family conflicts today arise because of property? Why do siblings fight with each other? Isn't it often because of their parents' inheritance or possessions? While reflecting on this verse, I wondered how Abram and Lot came to have so many possessions (v. 6). In conclusion, I believe that God fulfilled His promise to Abram (12:1-3) by blessing him, even allowing a severe famine to occur in the land of Canaan where Abram was living, leading Abram to go down to Egypt (v. 10). There, because of Abram's beautiful wife Sarai, Pharaoh treated Abram well and gave him sheep, cattle, donkeys, servants, and camels (v. 16). As a result, Abram became wealthy in livestock and silver (13:2). So how did Abram's nephew Lot come to have so many livestock? Of course, in Genesis 13:5, the Bible says, "Lot also had flocks and herds and tents," but in verse 6, it says, "Now the land was not able to support them so that they might dwell together, for their possessions were so great that they could not dwell together" (Korean Modern Bible). This raises the question: How did Lot have so many livestock? While the Bible doesn't provide a clear explanation, I believe that Lot had inherited livestock from his late father Haran, and in addition, he received even more livestock from his uncle Abram as a result of God's blessings. Since Abram and Lot had so many livestock, their herdsmen quarreled. The reason for this was that the land they were living on could not support them all. The land where they resided was the region where Abram had led his wife, his nephew Lot, and all of his possessions when they left Egypt and went up to the southern Negev of Canaan (v. 1). There, he continued traveling north to the area between Bethel and Ai, where he had previously pitched his tent and built an altar (vv. 3-4). The "previously" mentioned here refers to the time when Abram had entered the land of Canaan, bringing his wife Sarai, nephew Lot, and all his possessions from Haran (12:5). He traveled through the land, stopping at the oak of Moreh in Shechem (v. 6), where God gave him His promise. Abram built an altar to the Lord in that place (v. 7), and later, he moved south to pitch his tent between Bethel and Ai, where he also built an altar to worship the Lord (v. 8). In these places where Abram had worshiped God, the herdsmen quarreled because of the wealth ("possessions" in Genesis 13:6) that Abram and Lot had received through God's blessings. How did Abram resolve this conflict?

Look again at Genesis 13:9: "Is not the whole land before you? Separate yourself from me. If you take the left, then I will go to the right; or if you go to the right, then I will go to the left." How did Abram resolve the conflict with his nephew Lot? He told Lot, "Separate from me." Was it easy for Abram to say this to his nephew Lot? I don't think it was at all. The reason I think so is that, in Genesis 12:4-5, when God commanded Abram, "Leave your country, your family, and your father's house, and go to the land that I will show you," Abram obeyed and left his home and family in Haran with Lot. In other words, Abram, by leaving with his nephew Lot, shows that he loved Lot deeply as an uncle. Especially when Abram's brother Haran (Lot's father) had died in Ur of the Chaldeans while Abram's father Terah was still alive (11:28), and since Sarai was unable to have children (v. 30), it seems that Abram loved Lot as his own son. Now, however, Abram tells Lot, "Separate from me. If you go left, I will go right, and if you go right, I will go left" (13:9). The "east" refers to the area around Ai (v. 3), and the "west" refers to the area near Bethel (v. 3). To



clarify further, the eastern area near Ai was where Zoar, Sodom, and Gomorrah were located. Abram and Lot had pitched their tents between Bethel and Ai (v. 3), and their herdsmen were tending to their many livestock. Because of the growing conflict between the herdsmen, Abram did not want them to quarrel anymore (v. 8), so he told Lot to separate from him, offering him the choice of direction: if Lot went east, Abram would go west, and if Lot went west, Abram would go east (v. 9). Was this truly the best choice for Abram, to speak like this to his nephew Lot?

When there is conflict between parents and children in a family, it is not easy for parents to say to their children, "Go away." Especially after living together for 20-30 years, it would be difficult to resolve the conflict and send the child away for the sake of restoring peace and harmony between parent and child. If parents have not been able to foster the child's independence, and the relationship between them is co-dependent, it becomes even harder. Here, "co-dependency" refers to a relational condition where one person enables the addiction, mental health decline, immaturity, irresponsibility, or underachievement of another person. The greatest feature of co-dependency is excessive dependence on others to gain recognition or a sense of identity. Co-dependency is often defined as a behavioral condition with symptoms that may be latent, situational, or episodic, resembling dependent personality disorder. From a parent's perspective, letting go of a child becomes almost impossible in such circumstances. Of course, one could try to create physical distance, but the problem is that no matter how much parents try to distance themselves physically, if they have not been able to create emotional or psychological distance, then they haven't truly let go of their child. In fact, by placing physical distance, parents may end up becoming even more emotionally or mentally attached to the child. This is why I believe it is very unhealthy for parents, especially mothers, to live solely for their children. In Korean dramas, you often see scenes where a mother says things like, "Look at how much I sacrificed for you ...." While this may seem like the mother's best effort to love selflessly, in reality, it can become a source of painful guilt for the child who has not been let go. Especially if the child is already married and has a wife, but the mother cannot let go and continues to offer her "best love," the pain the child experiences between his wife and mother can become a source of guilt. The son caught between his loving wife and mother will likely be torn, and there will likely be no peace in the marriage. How painful it must be for the wife who already struggles with her relationship with her mother-in-law and now faces a husband who sides with his mother instead of comforting her. How can she trust and depend on a husband who cannot even protect her from his own mother? A mother who cannot let go of her child doesn't just harm the child but also risks damaging the child's marriage.

When Abram said to his nephew Lot, "Go away from me; if you go to the left, I will go to the right, and if you go to the right, I will go to the left" (v. 9), Lot "looked up and saw that the whole plain of the Jordan was well watered, like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, toward Zoar" (v. 10). Therefore, Lot chose the east. The reason for his choice was that he saw the east as a place that was "well watered" (v. 10). Since he had a large number of livestock, a place with abundant water appeared to be the right choice to him in a practical sense. In particular, to Lot, the east seemed "like the garden of the Lord and like the land of Egypt" (v. 10). This was a practical decision based on his view of material prosperity. His criterion for making the choice, it seems, was to protect and preserve his wealth and possessions. However, what he failed to consider was that the east was where "the people of Sodom

were wicked and were sinning greatly against the Lord" (v. 13, Korean Modern Bible), and that this was before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah (v. 10). As a result, when the kings of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboim, and the king of Bela (Zoar), fought in the valley of Siddim against the kings of Elam, Shinar, and others, they were defeated. The four kings who were enemies of Sodom and Gomorrah captured all the goods and provisions of Sodom, and Lot, who was living in Sodom, was taken captive along with all his possessions (14:8-12). Moreover, Lot suffered because of the lawless and immoral behavior of the people in Sodom and Gomorrah (2 Peter 2:7). In other words, he was greatly distressed by seeing and hearing the wickedness of evil people every day (v. 8). This was the result of Lot's choice to go east. This was the outcome of his practical decision. By choosing the east to protect his possessions, Lot not only became a prisoner of war, losing all his wealth, but his righteous soul was also tormented (verse 8).

Did Abram know about all these facts when he said to his nephew Lot, "Go away from me" (Genesis 13:9)? Of course, he did not. If Abram had known, he would not have let Lot choose the east. However, at least what we can be sure of is that Abram gave Lot the right to choose first (v. 9). And I believe that Abram respected Lot's choice. This means that when Lot chose the east, Abram did not ask, "Why did you choose the east?" "I understand that the land was well watered, but should you choose the east only for the sake of your livestock?" "You should not only think about your wealth, but think and pray about God's will before making a decision." Without saying such things, Abram respected Lot's choice. I often tell my three children this: "It's okay to make mistakes and experience failures as long as you can learn from them. However, you must take responsibility for the results of your choices." The reason I say this to my children is that, as their father, I want to respect their choices. I also believe that, while they might make mistakes and wrong choices, they can learn valuable lessons from those bitter experiences through the Lord's teaching. Furthermore, I want not only myself but also my children to become individuals who can take responsibility. When we make wrong choices and face the bitter consequences in life, I pray that we, as Christians, do not avoid it but take responsibility. If we consider this from the perspective of Abram, the little uncle, he saw that Lot chose the east, which led to the results of Lot becoming a war captive and losing all his possessions (Genesis 14). Additionally, in his conversation with God, Abram asked, "Will You destroy the righteous with the wicked? If there are fifty righteous people in that city (Sodom and Gomorrah, where Lot was living), will You not spare the place for the fifty righteous?" (18:23-24). He continued asking, reducing the number from fifty to forty, thirty, twenty, and even down to ten, saying, "What will You do if You find only ten?" (vv. 25-32). At that point, God responded, "For the sake of ten, I will not destroy it" (v. 32). However, when God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, which had no righteous people left, He spared Lot because "He remembered Abraham and made sure Lot escaped the disaster" (19:29, Korean Modern Bible). In this process, Abram "got up early in the morning and went to the place where he had stood before the Lord the day before, and looked down at Sodom and Gomorrah and all the land, and saw that smoke was rising from the land like the smoke of a furnace" (vv. 27-28, Korean Modern Bible). How do you think Abram felt at that moment? By giving Lot the choice first (13:9), Abram witnessed the bitter consequences of Lot's choice. If Abram had known that Lot would experience such bitterness in life as a result of choosing the east, would he have chosen the east himself and allowed Lot to choose the west? Perhaps this is the heart of a parent: "I would rather suffer the pain myself than watch my child suffer." But is this truly the kind of love that reflects God's love for His children? Of

course, God's love is sacrificial, as He gave His only Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross for us. But does God not respect the choices of His children, even though He knows the consequences of our wrong choices? Even though Abram may not have known the consequences of Lot's choice, doesn't our Heavenly Father love us so much that He respects our choices, even knowing the results?

After finishing the Saturday morning prayer meeting today, I was praying alone and reflecting on the message I received while thinking about myself, my beloved wife, and our three children. I prayed to God, asking Him to allow me to let go of my beloved wife and three children in faith. Of course, my beloved wife and I will live together on this earth until the day we die, but I prayed to God to help me let go of her in faith when she goes hiking, running, or even rock climbing on the mountains she enjoys. As I've mentioned before, Hebrews 11:6 says, "Without faith, it is impossible to please God ...," and I think to myself, "Without faith, I cannot support my wife." Haha. No, when my wife comes home after hiking and says she saw a mountain lion or a bear, how do you think I, as her husband, feel? Haha. When I hear news online about women dying while hiking alone or groups of people dying while rock climbing, how do you think I feel? Haha. Yet, despite this, I continue to support my beloved wife by entrusting her to God in faith. Our beloved son Dillon is currently serving full-time in the Christian student club at his university, where he served during his college years, because the Lord has given him a heart for ministry. His one-year term of service will end at the end of July, but he plans to extend it for another year. During this time, Dillon has been in a relationship with his girlfriend, and I understand they've been together for almost three years now. It seems like he wants to marry her. Therefore, since there are no single women in our church's English ministry, considering his girlfriend, Dillon shared with us that this coming Sunday will be his last Sunday at our church. Last week, he told me, my wife, and the pastor in charge of the English ministry that this coming Sunday would be his last. My two daughters are already attending different churches, and now Dillon will also leave our church. I respect my beloved son's decision and support him in leaving the church where I serve (though my mother may not agree. I'm sure she still doesn't approve. Haha). Our beloved daughter Yeri has been very busy lately. Haha. Her boyfriend has come down from out of state and is staying at his relatives' house here in Southern California for about two weeks. Yeri goes there every day in the morning, and they spend the whole day together, probably returning home only in the early morning (since my wife and I are already asleep, Haha). For reference, her boyfriend is an only child. Haha. From what we see, he's someone who hasn't yet achieved independence from his parents.

He seems like a very good son. Last Sunday, I think he even asked his parents before meeting with us. When my wife found this out, she must have been quite worried. Of course, I can understand her concern, especially when I think about the struggles in the marriages of only sons who experience conflict with their mothers-in-law. However, this morning, while praying to God, I entrusted Yeri to Him as well. Since God loves Yeri more than anyone else, I have decided again to respect her choices and continue to support her in faith. I also entrust the future of their relationship to God. Even if our concerns come to pass and the situation unfolds as we fear, I trust in God, so I will give Yeri my trust, respect her choices, and pray, leaving the outcomes to God. When I pray for our beloved youngest, Karis, I can't help but offer a prayer of thanksgiving to God. The reason is that a few months ago, when I asked God

the Father to save Karis, He granted my request. After she entered university and began attending the Christian student group at the church Yeri goes to, she started feeling God's love and personally met Jesus Christ. When she shared her testimony with me in the car, I couldn't help but thank God. If it's God's will, Karis will also have a boyfriend and eventually get married, and I am entrusting this important matter to God as well. In my heart, I have already let go of my three children. Though I am still fighting with myself because of various things, every time I face these challenges, I choose to trust in God. I give my children my trust, respect their decisions, and pray, leaving the results in God's hands, doing my best in the process.

I would like to conclude my reflection on the Word here. Last Saturday, after the early morning prayer meeting, I wrote and shared a reflection based on Genesis 13:8, titled "Let's Not Let There Be Strife Between Us" (1). However, after today's morning prayer meeting, I revised the title to "Let's Not Let There Be Strife Between Us" (2). The reason for this change is that I didn't settle on the title "Let's Not Let There Be Strife Between Us" (2), but instead chose the title "We must send our children away!" I chose this title because, in my heart, I have observed and continue to observe the pain and suffering of children whose parents (especially mothers?) have not been able to send them away in faith. I have seen the effects of this, particularly in the cases of married children suffering because their parents didn't trust them to God. Especially when I think of a sister who shed tears in front of me due to the pain caused by conflicts with her mother-in-law (even her husband's brothers, whom I had never met before, cried in front of me... 😞), my heart aches. Another couple, in my opinion, has had their marriage deeply affected by the ongoing conflict between the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law over many years. I also think that this couple's pain stems from the fact that the widowed mother-in-law was unable to send her only son off in faith, which caused great distress in her son's family. Another couple comes to mind, where the wife shared with me that she could not understand the relationship between her husband and his mother. I know that this couple is still going through great difficulty because of a significant fight they had, and during that crisis, the husband even reached out to me, saying he wanted to commit suicide. I shared these stories in a roundabout way because, in my view, parents (especially mothers) who cannot send their only son off in faith are causing pain and suffering in their children's lives. It was because of this that I felt a strong need to title this reflection, "We must send our children away!" with a desperate heart. Of course, the reason I applied this reflection first to myself is that, like Abraham, the father of faith, who sent his beloved nephew Lot away in faith, I, too, have sent off my three children in faith and am still sending them away. I hope to continue doing so. And, when the Lord calls me, I will leave them, but for now, I entrust them to God with faith. Haha. Until then, as the head of my household, I have been devoted to raising the wife and three children whom the Lord has graciously given me, and I have committed myself to sending them off in faith. Just as Abraham sent Lot away, knowing that the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, which Lot chose in the east, were evil and filled with great sin in the eyes of God, so too did God the Father send His beloved and well-pleasing only Son, Jesus Christ, into this world, where only the wicked and the great sinners live, even though it is a world filled with sin. Although Lot did not know that Sodom and Gomorrah were evil and full of great sin, he chose the east, but Jesus Christ, the Son of God, knew that the world was full of sin and that the thoughts of mankind are always evil (Genesis 6:5), yet He came into this sinful and wicked world and gave His life for us on the cross (1 John 3:16). At that moment, Jesus cried out from the cross, "My God,

My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Matthew 27:46), but God the Father turned away from the cry of His beloved Son. Even to the point of turning away, God the Father loves us. And for that reason, I, in faith, send away my children—Dillon, Yeri, and Karis— with the love of God.

Learning the heart of God the Father, who sent His only Son, Jesus Christ, away,

James Kim

(July 30, 2022, as I again commit to send away my three children, Dillon, Yeri, and Karis, in faith, as a gift of grace from God the Father)

# “Become a Sending Parents”

Here in the mission field, it is 3:10 AM on Saturday. I woke up at 2:30 AM yesterday and woke up around 1:30 AM today. After video chatting with my wife, I meditated on God’s word and shared short meditations here and there. Then, I searched Christian internet websites to see if there were any good Christian articles and immediately found an article called “Become a Sending Parent.” I would like to share my thoughts here. (<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/become-sending-parent/>):

1. I believe that parents should be sending parents, as the author of this article claims.
2. If we apply this to my wife and I now, we should send our beloved daughter Yeri to Japan at the end of June. The reason is that God called her and sent her to Japan as a missionary.
3. In short, my wife and I are sending Yeri because God sent our beloved daughter Yeri.
4. Send, but my wife and I must send our beloved daughter Yeri with faith. If we, as her parents, were to send her far away to Japan for a year, we should not worry and be anxious in advance. As parents who trust in God, we must entrust her to God and send her with faith.
5. Then, one day, in God's time, not only Yeri, but also Dillon and Karis will be married in the Lord, and we must send them away.
6. For example, my beloved son Dillon is probably going to get married next year, and my wife and I need to let him go with faith. When he marries his girlfriend next year, we need to let him go not only physically (he has been living in his own house for several years now) but also emotionally and mentally. The way to do that is for my wife and I to trust in God and give Dillon faith.
7. The youngest, Karis, also started to live physically apart from us as she went to college, just like her older brother Dillon and older sister Yeri. Although we sent our three children to college, we sent them off in faith as their parents. And Karis will also go on a one-week mission trip in July. Therefore, my wife and I plan to send Karis on a mission trip in faith as well.
8. As far as I can remember, Dillon, Yeri, and Karis were the first to leave us when they were teenagers. The reason was that they were going through growing pains and leaving us. I think that was natural and

completely normal. If my wife and I had not let them go slowly and naturally as their parents back then, and had still treated them as our babies or little elementary children, we would have kept them in our arms. I don't think that is good parenting.

9. As the author of this article said, since God the Father sent His only begotten Son Jesus to this sinful world, I think that our parents should also become parents who send their children with faith.
  
10. Now, in September, my beloved son Dillon will probably go to seminary, so my wife and I plan to send him to seminary with faith. Now, at the end of June, my wife and I plan to send our beloved daughter Yeri far away to Japan. Now, in July, my wife and I plan to send our youngest daughter Karis on a one-week mission trip with faith. Then, when the three children each get married in God's time, my wife and I will send them away with faith. Then, if it is God's will, the three children will send me and my wife (parents) away to heaven with faith! Haha.

# About our beloved children's relationships and marriages ...

Yesterday, early Sunday morning, I had a conversation with my beloved daughter, Yeri, who is in Japan, through KakaoTalk. The main topic of our discussion was relationships. Later that Sunday morning, before my dear friend, a pastor, delivered God's Word at our church service, we had a meaningful conversation in the church's pastoral office, where we also talked about our children's marriages. At that moment, I felt that my early morning conversation with Yeri about relationships was not a coincidence. It also led me to reflect on my beloved son, Dillon, and Jessica's marriage. This morning, Monday, I had an open and honest discussion with my beloved wife about these thoughts. The central theme of all these conversations was "About our beloved children's relationships and marriages." So, as I write this, I want to organize my thoughts one by one:

1. God's way of working is truly fascinating. I believe that my conversation with Yeri, followed by my discussion with my pastor friend, was not coincidental but rather orchestrated under God's sovereignty. It was also encouraging that my wife and I could discuss and agree on these matters together.
2. I believe that through these conversations, there are lessons God is teaching me and important reflections He is placing on my heart.
3. One of the reflections that came to mind is that, as parents of our three children, my wife and I naturally have concerns and worries regarding their relationships and marriages. Furthermore, I acknowledge that these concerns could become even more of a reality in the future.
4. Another thought is that, as parents, we may not always fully approve of the person our child is dating. However, what is even more interesting is that even if we do approve of their partner, we may not be comfortable with that person's parents, circumstances, or environment (My pastor friend mentioned that the relationship between my son's future spouse and her father is crucial. In other words, the father-daughter relationship is very important. If my son were to marry a woman who has a broken relationship with her father and carries deep wounds from that relationship, their marriage could be significantly affected. This made me reflect on my own relationship with my daughters, Yeri and Karis. Applying this principle to them, I believe that the relationship a man has with his mother is also critical. If a man has an unhealthy or overly dependent relationship with his mother—if he is a "mama's boy"—then not



only could his marriage with my daughter be difficult, but the relationship between my daughter and her mother-in-law could also be very challenging). Considering such situations and environments, if we imagine our beloved daughters marrying into them, it is natural for us to feel concern and worry.

5. From a parental perspective, some children seem mature enough to navigate relationships and future marriage wisely on their own. However, for other children, we might feel they are still somewhat immature, leading us to have greater concerns.
6. If, as parents, we recognize that our child is still immature and is so infatuated with their romantic partner that they lose rational judgment and act impulsively, we must wisely advise and counsel them to prevent them from making reckless decisions. This is an important lesson we have learned (Preventing such behavior could include, for example, encouraging our child to create some physical distance from their partner. However, it is likely that they would resist our advice and refuse to separate from the person they love). I believe this is not an easy lesson at all. Implementing it in real life would be impossible without God's help (For instance, unless God Himself intervenes and creates circumstances that naturally distance our child from their romantic partner, this separation may not happen). This reminds us how deeply we, as parents, need God's help and guidance.
7. Ultimately, after reflecting on my conversations with my beloved daughter, my pastor friend, and my wife, I have come to a personal conclusion: As the father of my three children, I must have faith that the Lord loves our children far more than we, as parents, ever could. Because of this, He will sovereignly guide their relationships and future marriages, fulfilling His good, perfect, and pleasing will (Of course, my wife must also have this faith). Standing firmly upon this foundation of faith, my wife and I must seek God's help so that, with His wisdom, spiritual discernment, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we may humbly support and assist our children in their relationships and future marriages as needed, moment by moment. In this process, I believe the most urgent priority is that my wife and I humbly entrust all our worries, concerns, and anxieties to the Lord in faith. Moreover, as we grow in trusting and depending entirely on God, I pray that we will wisely fulfill our great responsibility as parents—whether it be regarding our son Dillon and Jessica's marriage, Yeri and Chris's relationship, or, in the future, if Karis also enters a relationship—by following the Holy Spirit's leading to provide timely and gracious support as needed.

# My views on children's marriage

Now, it seems that my wife and I have reached the stage where our children are approaching the age of marriage. Among the couples around us who are slightly older, some already have married their first child, and some even have grandchildren. Today, I had a phone conversation with my beloved eldest son, Dillon, and we talked about his future marriage. Beyond just that conversation, I also want to reflect on the concerns of parents in our generation who already have married children. I hope that organizing these thoughts from my perspective may be of some benefit to all of our children's future marriages.

1. As a father, I have repeatedly told Dillon, Yeri, and Karis—ever since they were in high school—that when praying for and seeking a future spouse, their primary criterion should be the person's character. In particular, I emphasized that truthfulness is one of the most important aspects of character. I told them: “If you find out that the person you’re dating has lied to you—even more so if it happens repeatedly—you must seriously consider whether you should continue that relationship.”
2. The reason I have been reflecting on this again is that if our children later realize that they made the wrong choice in selecting their spouse, the consequences of that decision could be extremely serious. One of the major issues is that it wouldn't just affect their marriage but could also deeply wound and distress both sides of the family. Moreover, the siblings of the married couple could also suffer as a result. Therefore, while it is important for our children to pray about their future spouse as they walk in faith, I believe that as parents, we must also raise them to have the discernment to recognize the spouse God has prepared for them and to make the right choice based on the right criteria.
3. However, no matter how much we pray for our children's marriage and strive to raise them well, there is no guarantee that they will make the right choice in selecting their spouse. As a result, if we, as believing parents, come to think that our child has not made the right choice in their marriage, then not only will our child suffer in their married life, but we as parents will inevitably suffer alongside them. If we come to know that our child is experiencing ongoing difficulties and suffering in their marriage, the pain we endure as parents will be incredibly difficult to bear. Yet, even through such immense suffering, I believe that God is refining and shaping us in many ways.

4. Today, while talking with Dillon, I told him that when a sinful groom and a sinful bride get married, they become one body and build a family together. And because of this, the holy God will all the more expose their sins. That is why God's grace is absolutely necessary in a marriage (Romans 5:20). I also told him that while preparing for the wedding ceremony is important, what truly matters is what comes after the wedding. Therefore, I emphasized that preparing for marriage itself is far more important than just preparing for the wedding. During this preparation process, I shared with Dillon that while advice from various married people can be valuable, in my case, books on marriage have been very helpful in my relationship with my wife and continue to be so. I also reminded him of the conversation we had last year during his birthday dinner when I gave Jessica the book "Love & Respect" and shared my thoughts on it.
  
5. It seems that Dillon and Jessica have already decided on their wedding venue and date, but there appears to be a limit on the number of guests they can invite due to the venue's capacity. So, I told Dillon, "Don't worry about Mom and me; you and Jessica should decide on the guest list as you see fit." The reason I said this is that last December, during my wife's birthday dinner with Dillon, Jessica, my wife, and Karis, I mentioned that it would be good to find a larger venue to invite more people if possible. However, that was just my opinion, and what truly matters is what Dillon and Jessica think. That's why today I encouraged Dillon to take responsibility for inviting people as he and Jessica see fit. The reason I'm sharing this is that, as Dillon's father, I've realized the importance of setting a healthy boundary wisely and appropriately. I wasn't able to do this before, but today, I finally drew that boundary with Dillon. I trust that he and Jessica will handle things well. By trusting God, I want to trust Dillon even more.

# **Our house is built more firmly through wisdom**

**“By wisdom a house is built, And by understanding it is established; And by knowledge the rooms are filled With all precious and pleasant riches.”  
(Proverbs 24:3-4)**

On January 1, 2024, I meditated on Proverbs 24. As I reflected, I wrote a short devotional piece, centering on Proverbs 24:3-4 (Korean Modern Bible), in which I wrote: "As we welcome the new year of 2024, I earnestly pray that as I serve my beloved wife and three children—whom the Lord has given me as a gracious gift—our home will be strengthened even more through wisdom, and filled with all kinds of precious and beautiful treasures, by serving my family with the wisdom, understanding, and knowledge that come from God." Today, as I meditate on this short devotional piece, I seek to receive grace and lessons by dividing it into three key reflections.

**First, I reaffirm my commitment to never forget that my beloved wife and three children are gracious gifts from God, and I will continue to serve my family with this truth in mind.**

I am unworthy to be my wife’s husband and my children’s father, yet I believe that God, in His love, has given them to me as gifts of grace. Holding on to this truth, I desire to serve my family this year by the grace that God provides. In particular, I cling to 2 Corinthians 3:5 (New Korean Revised Version): "We do not think that we are qualified to do anything on our own. Our qualification comes from God."

**Second, I pray that I will serve my beloved family with the wisdom that God provides.**

The slogan of Victory Presbyterian Church for the new year, 2024, is “Lord, expand the boundary of service.” The slogan comes from John 13:15: “I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.” In this context, what Jesus did for His disciples was washing their feet (v. 14). After showing them this example, Jesus said

to His disciples, “Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet” (v. 14). Following Jesus’ example, I pray that I will serve my wife first. This is what is right in the Lord’s eyes. In order to do this right thing, what is urgently needed for me is, of course, God’s love, but also the humility of Jesus. In last Sunday’s sermon, I learned that the third item on the list of five qualities of the “new self” that we should wear (Colossians 3:12) is “humility.” Here, “humility” means putting myself last and considering myself as least (KJV commentary). I want to realize more clearly and urgently, like the Apostle Paul, that ‘I am a very insignificant person.’ Only then will I be able to serve my family, following the example of Jesus. In addition to “humility,” what is urgently needed for me to serve my family is the “wisdom” that God provides. Looking back just one day, on January 1, I was ashamed of how foolishly I spoke and acted. I especially felt convicted by my lips, knowing they often resemble the lips of a fool. Afterward, as I meditated on Proverbs 25:15 on January 2, I wrote this short devotional piece based on the Korean Modern Version: “I need a gentle tongue that can break bones and persuasive endurance that can turn even the most stubborn heart.” When I reflect on this meditation, I cannot deny that my lips have often lacked gentleness, and my words have been lacking in persuasion due to insufficient patience. Additionally, when I reflected on Proverbs 24:25 (Korean Modern Bible) yesterday, I realized my own foolishness, even as I said that I wanted to be rebuked more boldly by God’s word in the new year, 2024. I pray that, through God’s word, my hardened heart will be boldly rebuked like a rod and that I will feel convicted in my conscience, leading me to break down the areas that need to be broken down in me. Only then will I be properly and firmly built up in the Lord. I believe that this will help strengthen my wife and children as well.

**Third and last, I pray that the Lord will firmly establish our family and fill our home with various precious and beautiful treasures.**

As I meditated on Proverbs 25:4 from the Korean Modern Bible this morning, I prayed that the Lord would continue to remove all impurities within me, even through life’s crises and pains, like a great earthquake. I believe that only then will the Lord fill our home with various precious and beautiful treasures. I pray that, by obeying God’s word, our home will be firmly established on the rock, and that every member of our family will become wise servants of God, laying up treasures in heaven.

# My faithful mother

**Tuesday morning, March 14, 2023.**

On Monday morning, I received news from my beloved younger sister that our mother's health had worsened, and that she had called 911 for an ambulance. I quickly prepared, informed my older brother, his wife, and my wife, then drove to the hospital. My father also messaged me via KakaoTalk to inform me that the ambulance had arrived, and that my sister Grace had gone along with our mother.

When I arrived at the hospital, my sister came out, and I went into the emergency room where our mother was lying (only one visitor is allowed in the emergency room). As I entered and saw our mother's face, she seemed to be in a lot of pain (I noticed a reflection of my older brother's features on her face). Our mother shared her prayers with me, calling out to "Father" God. This prayer revealed just how much she had been striving to live an upright life before God. She also mentioned that if God the Father called her home (to heaven), she wished to go peacefully without any more suffering.

So, I shared with her her favorite Bible verse, Isaiah 41:10 - "Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." I held onto this verse and prayed in faith to God the Father. Our mother repeatedly said, "Amen!" "Amen!" as I prayed. She also told me that her favorite hymn was "For Away in the Depths of My Spirit." I shared with her that I, too, really liked the fourth verse: "Ah! soul, are you here without comfort or rest, Marching down the rough pathway of time? Make Jesus your Friend ere the shadows grow dark; Oh, accept this sweet peace so sublime! Peace! Peace! wonderful peace, Coming down from the Father above! Sweep over my spirit forever, I pray, In fathomless billows of love." I believe that God's incredible peace will reign in my mother's heart.

**In order to enjoy the blessing of having servants  
of the Lord continue to come from  
among our descendants for generations  
until Jesus comes again ...**

In order to enjoy the blessing of having servants of the Lord continue to come from among our descendants for generations until Jesus comes again, we, our children, and our descendants must be careful in all things, do our best before God, live truthfully, and obey God's word (Ref:1 Kings 2:4, Korean Modern Bible).

# **Part 5: Revival**



# For True Revival

**“When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, ‘Brothers, what shall we do?’” (Acts 2:37)**

Last Tuesday, I listened to an interview with Pastor Kyung-won Kim, who will be coming to our church for the revival meeting, on the Korean Gospel Broadcasting radio. During the interview, when the host asked Pastor Kim how we should prepare for the revival meeting, his response was, "We must prepare with a heart of repentance." Upon hearing this, I couldn't help but agree, and I thanked God. The reason is that God has been preparing my heart and the hearts of our church brothers and sisters in the same way before the revival meeting.

Today, during this Wednesday prayer meeting, I want to further prepare for the upcoming revival meeting. I want to prepare our hearts by hearing the message of repentance. I also want to join in prayer with a heart of repentance to God. I want to base this prayer on Acts 2:37, which says, "When they heard this, they were pierced to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, 'Brothers, what shall we do?'"

**We should pray to God together, asking that, when we hear the Lord's Word, our hearts will be pierced.**

We are living in a spiritually numb age. We are witnessing our hearts becoming increasingly hardened. We have lost the reverence for God's Word. We have entered an era where even the effort to obey His Word is being avoided. We must listen carefully to Hebrews 4:7, which says: "... Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts ...." We must follow the example of David. In 2 Samuel 24:10, the Bible says that after David had counted the number of soldiers under his command, "his heart was troubled" – in other words, he was convicted in his conscience. Afterward, he repented of his sin and said, "... I have sinned greatly in what I have done. Now, Lord, I beg you, take away the guilt of your servant. I have done a very foolish thing." Therefore, we desire to bear the

appropriate fruits of repentance. Consider Acts 26:20 and Matthew 3:8: "... Repent and turn to God, and do works worthy of repentance..." (Acts 26:20), "Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance" (Matt. 3:8).

True repentance will bring about reconciliation, restoration, reformation, and revival among us. I earnestly pray that God will bring about such a marvelous revival within our Victory Community.

# Revival of the Word

**“Ezra praised the LORD, the great God; and all the people lifted their hands and responded, ‘Amen! Amen!’ Then they bowed down and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground. The Levites--Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan and Pelaiah--instructed the people in the Law while the people were standing there. They read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people could understand what was being read. Then Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who were instructing the people said to them all, ‘This day is sacred to the LORD your God. Do not mourn or weep.’ For all the people had been weeping as they listened to the words of the Law.” (Nehemiah 8:6-9)**

The world has become morally lax. These days, we hear the term "moral hazard" frequently. Originally, this term meant that when people are insured, they tend not to be careful. For example, when someone has car insurance, they may not fear traffic accidents as much, and when someone has life insurance, they may not pay much attention to their health. It's like how the sense function on a remote control can eventually stop working—our conscience becomes dulled. It means we lose the ability to discern right from wrong. This phenomenon of moral hazard is not new, but it shows that there seems to be a lack of standards (Internet). So, what is our standard? It is the Bible. The Bible is referred to as the "canon." The original meaning of "canon" is a "measuring stick" or "rod." If we borrow the words from Amos 7:7-8, it is called a "plumb line." A plumb line is a tool used in construction to ensure something is perfectly vertical by attaching a weight to a string. This is the function and role of God's Word. If we live without the Word of God, we will inevitably live according to our own whims (Internet). That's why Judges 21:25 says: "In

those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.” Based on today’s passage, I would like to think of three signs of the revival of the Word, under the title “Revival of the Word.”

### **The first is praise and worship.**

Look at Nehemiah 8:6: "Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God, and all the people answered, 'Amen, Amen,' lifting up their hands; then they bowed down and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground." In Pastor Seong-geon Hong's book "The People God Seeks," he describes two stages of worship. Regarding the first stage of worship, "praise," the author says: "It is the stage where we come to God relying on what He has accomplished for us through Jesus Christ. ... When we worship God, the starting point is remembering and giving thanks for the work that God has already accomplished in Jesus Christ. Then, we sing about it, proclaim it, and praise it." Regarding the second stage of worship, "worship," the author says: "When we approach God, we come remembering and thanking Him for what He has done in us. But when we reach the throne of God, we see His glory. At that point, we no longer focus on what God has done but on who God is—God Himself. We praise Him for His grace, love, holiness, mercy, and majesty. ... At this point, we no longer praise God for what He has done, but we worship Him for who He is" (Hong).

In today's passage, verse 6, we see Ezra praising and the Israelites worshipping: "Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God..." Ezra knew that the great God, with His great power, had accomplished this great work—the rebuilding of Jerusalem—through His mighty ability (1:10, 6:16). So, Ezra praised the great God in front of all the people of Israel gathered at the Water Gate, eager to hear the law of Moses. Look at Ezra 3:11: "And they sang, praising and giving thanks to the Lord, saying, 'For He is good, for His steadfast love endures forever toward Israel.' And all the people shouted with a great shout when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid." At that time, the response of all the people of Israel was to "worship the Lord." Now look at the second part of Nehemiah 8:6: "And all the people answered, 'Amen, Amen,' lifting up their hands; then they bowed down and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground." This is truly a remarkable and genuine revival of the Word. The Bible tells us that all the people of Israel who had gathered at the Water Gate, responding to the praise of the "great God" by Ezra the scribe with "Amen, Amen," humbled themselves and "worshiped" the Lord. In other words, the people of Israel acknowledged that the great God, with His mighty power, had accomplished a great work—rebuilding the city of Jerusalem—and that is why they responded with "Amen, Amen." Furthermore, the people did not stop at participating in the praise of Ezra because of the historical work God had done, but they went further to worship with humility and reverence, honoring God for His greatness as "the great God."

Like Ezra, we should praise God for His actions, seeing His good hand fulfilling His promises to our Victory Presbyterian Church, particularly the promise in Matthew 16:18. We should praise God for His work and His fulfillment of this promise. Furthermore, like the people of Israel, we should humbly acknowledge God’s faithfulness, grace, goodness, and His being God, and approach His throne of grace to worship Him.

## **The second is understanding.**

Look at Nehemiah 8:7-8: "Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kalita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, the Levites, helped the people to understand the law, while the people remained in their places. They read from the book of the law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people understood what was being read." When the scribe Ezra praised God ("blessed" God), the people of Israel responded with "Amen, Amen," worshiping God. Then, in verse 7, the Levites, standing in the Water Gate, taught the people the law. Here, we can find several principles for teaching the Bible.

### **(1) Reading the Bible.**

The Levites "read from the book of the law of God."

### **(2) Clarifying and interpreting what the Bible teaches.**

The Levites "gave the meaning of the book of the law of God" to the people of Israel. More specifically, the Levites interpreted the Mosaic law in a language that the people of Israel could understand. This was necessary because the Hebrew language used by Moses in writing the first five books of the Bible (Genesis to Deuteronomy) had changed over time by the period of Nehemiah and Ezra. Therefore, the Levites made the Mosaic law understandable to the people of Israel. J. I. Packer notes that the Levites helped the people of Israel apply the law to their lives by interpreting the meaning of the law of God.

### **(3) The purpose of Bible study is to help learners understand God's Word.**

The Levites helped the people of Israel understand God's law.

In John Milton Gregory's *The 7 Laws of Teaching*, the first law, "The Law of Teaching," defines teaching as follows: "Teaching, in its simplest sense, is the communication of experience. ... It is painting in the mind of another the picture in one's own – the shaping of the thought and understanding to the comprehension of some truth which the teacher knows and wishes to communicate" (Gregory). Here, "communication" does not mean simply transferring intellectual knowledge, but helping the learner produce the teacher's experience in their own understanding. Gregory further explains that the teacher must thoroughly know the lesson they wish to teach. This means teaching with a full heart and clear understanding. Teachers should use language that is clear and understandable both to themselves and to the students.

## **The third and last is weeping.**

Look at the first part of Nehemiah 8:9: "When the people heard the words of the law, they wept ...." As the people of Israel listened to the law of Moses, they all wept. The reason for their tears was that through the law, they became aware of their sins. Look at Romans 3:20: "...through the law we become conscious of our sin." J. I. Packer explained that the reason the people of Israel wept was because the realization of God's Word struck their hearts. People weep when they are overwhelmed by their emotions, and the tears resulting from those emotions are due to a clear awareness of some particular reality. The root of personal and communal spiritual revival is always a clear awareness of God's holiness, goodness, mercy, and the reality of our personal sins—wickedness, shame, rudeness, and suicidal foolishness.

When have we ever wept after hearing God's Word? When have we shed tears of repentance because the Word pierced our hearts and exposed our sins? Why are our tears of repentance dry? I find the reason in Amos 8:11: "A famine for hearing the words of the Lord." Because of this famine, we fail to recognize our sins.

This is Thomas Watson's view on "Repentance": "Repentance is needed for hypocrites. Hypocrisy is the disguising of holiness, and the hypocrite, or actor, goes a step further than the moralist by dressing up in the garments of religion. He pretends to have the form of godliness but denies its power (2 Timothy 3:5). The hypocrite is like a house with a beautiful appearance, but every room is dark. He is a beautifully gilded, rotten pillar, hiding the festering sores of his plague under the mask of a confession of faith. The hypocrite opposes the painting of his face but puts on the makeup of holiness. Outwardly he appears good, but inwardly he can be truly wicked. The hypocrite seems to have his eyes fixed on heaven, but his heart is filled with impure desires. He goes against his conscience and lives in secret sin. He hears the Word, but only with his ears. He is zealous for church dedication, and others see and praise him for it, yet he neglects private prayer in his home and closet. The hypocrite pretends humility, but it is for worldly success. He claims faith but uses it as a mask rather than a shield. He carries a Bible under his arm, but does not carry it in his heart. Take the candlestick of the Word and examine your heart, and see if you can find any area of repentance within it" (Internet).

We have entered a time of famine for hearing the Word of God (Amos 8:11). The prophet Habakkuk said in Habakkuk 1:4, "... the law is paralyzed, and justice never goes forth. For the wicked surround the righteous; so justice goes forth perverted." In such a time, when the law is paralyzed, what should we, the saints, do? Seeing this, the prophet of God, Habakkuk, prayed: "O Lord, I have heard the report of You, and I fear. O Lord, revive Your work in the midst of the years; in the midst of the years make it known; in wrath remember mercy" (3:2). The Hebrew word used for "revive" here is "hayah," meaning to desire God to pour life into us. In the Hebrew perspective, revival always leads to repentance and "returning to God." In the New Testament, returning to God is also referred to as revival. Revival is to abandon what we were pursuing for our own glory and return to the Lord. It is about kindling a fire in our weakened hearts and "becoming hot again." Revival is a time when the faith of the saints grows, and unbelievers return to God in concentrated focus. We must quickly turn back to God, repenting of our sins and living lives of obedience to Him.

# **“O LORD, revive Your work in the midst of the years”**

**“LORD, I have heard the report about You and I fear O LORD, revive Your work in the midst of the years, In the midst of the years make it known; In wrath remember mercy.” (Habakkuk 3:2)**

What is "revival"? Our church will celebrate its 32nd anniversary of establishment on July 1st, and to mark this, we will be holding a revival service with Pastor Daniel Song as the speaker on June 29th (Friday) and 30th (Saturday). Many churches typically refer to such events as “revival meetings” or “revival services,” but in our church, we call it a “Word meeting.” The reason for this is that we believe the concept of "revival" that is commonly sought, prayed for, and shouted about in churches today has taken on a distorted meaning. That mistaken understanding is that "revival" is often seen as a church growing large, building bigger church buildings, increasing the number of members, and collecting more offerings. It seems that, these days, Christians' perception of revival is closely linked to “growth first,” “results-oriented thinking,” and “economic priorities.” This represents a church that has been influenced by worldly logic and has become secularized (Internet). That is why, in our church, we do not call our event a “revival meeting” or “revival service,” but rather a “Word meeting.” I believe that if we Christians truly desire the true revival that the Bible speaks of, we must return to God's Word. And I believe that we must listen to God's Word and genuinely repent. The reason is that there is no revival without repentance.

In today's passage, Habakkuk 3:2, the prophet Habakkuk prays to God: “O Lord, I have heard the report of You, and I fear. O Lord, revive Your work in the midst of the years; in the midst of the years make it known; in wrath remember mercy.” In Habakkuk 3:1, it says, “A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet, according to the Shigionoth,” and in the last part of the final verse, 19, the Bible states, “This song is to be played on my stringed instrument.” What does this mean? In verse 1, it refers to a “prayer,” but in verse 19, it says “song.” So, is the prayer of the prophet Habakkuk a prayer or a song? Another question is, what does the term “Shigionoth” in verse 1 mean? First, the word

“Shigionoth” is only mentioned twice in the Bible, once in Habakkuk 3:1 and once in the heading of Psalms 7. Its meaning is unclear, but according to Dr. Yoon-sun Park, the word likely refers to a type of music with an exuberant or passionate character (Park). According to Pastor John MacArthur, this word has a musical-liturgical significance, and Habakkuk 3 was sung (MacArthur). In summary, the prayer of the prophet Habakkuk in today’s passage can be seen as a prayer expressed through his passionate song. Therefore, I want us to meditate on the message of this “song of Habakkuk,” focusing on the second verse and the prayer requests Habakkuk made to God through his song. May we receive the lessons God is teaching us and also offer our own “revival” as a song of prayer, passionately praising God with our prayers.

If we look again at the first half of Habakkuk 3:2, the Bible says, “O Lord, I have heard the report of You, and I fear. O Lord, revive Your work in the midst of the years; in the midst of the years make it known.” What is the report that the prophet Habakkuk heard about the Lord? Why was he astonished when he heard this report? The report was that God was going to judge Judah (1:5-11) and Babylon (2:2-20). Why did God say He was going to judge His people, the people of Judah? The reason was that they were acting with "wickedness," "rebellion," and were committing "injustice and violence," and there were "strife and contention" among them (1:3). In other words, the people of Judah were practicing evil and injustice, so they had no choice but to face God's judgment. To what extent had the people of Judah been acting wickedly? In Habakkuk 1:4, it says, “Therefore the law is paralyzed, and justice never goes forth,” showing how corrupt and unjust they had become. Could this be a reflection of our current situation as Christians? Are we not, like the people of Judah in Habakkuk's time, also committing evil and injustice, and have we not lost our zeal for keeping God's law (His commandments)? And what has been the result? The result is that we, as Christians, are failing to fulfill our role as the salt and light of the world. To be more specific, today we Christians are not practicing justice in society, and instead, we are contributing to an unjust society. Just as, in Habakkuk's time, the wicked surrounded the righteous, today, in this society, there are more Christians living in disobedience to God's commandments than those living by faith. Therefore, the holy and just God spoke to the people of Judah in Habakkuk 1:5, saying: "Look among the nations and see; wonder and be astounded. For I am doing a work in your days that you would not believe if told." What is the great work that God will perform, a work that will astonish the people of Judah? It is that God will raise up the Chaldeans, or the Babylonians (v. 6), a fierce and hasty people, who roam through the earth and seize dwellings that do not belong to them, to judge the people of Judah. However, when the prophet Habakkuk heard this judgment, he understood that it was a punishment from God to warn the people of Judah of their sin (v. 12). He also knew that the holy God of Israel would not completely destroy Israel by the hands of the Babylonians, who were even more wicked than the Israelites (v. 12). In fact, he knew that the eternal God, who existed before the ages, would remember and care for His chosen people, Israel, forever (Park). Therefore, the prophet Habakkuk could not help but stand in awe of God. The reason he was astonished when he heard the report about the Lord was not because God would use the Babylonians to punish the Israelites, but because he expressed "a sense of awe experienced in the presence of God, or worship and praise of God and His mysterious ways" (Martyn Lloyd-Jones). The mysterious way of God, as described in Habakkuk 2, is that after punishing the Jewish people, God would then judge Babylon to save them. In other words, God, who is proud in heart (2:3, 4) and



sins against his own soul (v. 10), would punish Babylon, a nation that acted as if drunk (vv. 5, 15), who was unaware of restraint, and who, driven by ambition for territorial expansion, violently invaded nations, shedding blood and committing oppression (v. 8). Habakkuk, hearing of God's judgment on Babylon, could not help but be in awe of God. In this awe, the prophet Habakkuk prayed through song, saying, "O Lord, revive Your work in the midst of the years" (3:2). What is the "work of the Lord" here? It refers to God saving His people, Israel, by judging Babylon. Habakkuk prayed through song, asking God to bring about this work of the Lord, to revive it in the coming years (3:2).

Why do we come into the presence of God and offer Him thanks, praise, and worship? Why do we approach God's presence with awe and offer praise and worship? Is it not because of God's mysterious ways in saving you and me? How is it that God sent His only Son, Jesus, to be crucified on the cursed tree of the cross, in order to save us—who were bound to perish eternally? When we consider this marvelous work of salvation, how can we, without reverence for God, approach His presence with arrogance and offer praise and worship with pride? What the prophet Habakkuk could do was cry out in praise to God, saying, "O Lord, revive Your work in the midst of the years; in the midst of the years make it known..." (3:2). What does this mean? Pastor Martyn Lloyd-Jones said: "He did not ask for salvation or comfort, he did not ask for the people of Israel to be spared, nor did he ask for a war with the Chaldeans to be avoided. He did not ask to be spared from suffering, nor did he ask for Jerusalem to be saved from being plundered, or for the temple to be spared from complete destruction. He realized that these things must happen, and that they were things that Israel deserved. He did not pray for God to change His plans. The prophet's one concern was that God's work and purpose would be accomplished in His kingdom and over the whole world. He simply desired that all things be done rightly. In fact, he came to the point where he could say, 'No matter what suffering my people and I face, as long as the work of the Lord is revived and carried out in purity, I will not worry about that suffering.' His one request was that God would revive His work in the coming years" (Lloyd-Jones). What was the "revival" that the prophet Habakkuk longed for? Was it not that the people of Israel, God's people, would repent of all their sins in the midst of the suffering and pain brought on by the judgment of Babylon's invasion, and return to God, living as His holy people? The Hebrew word for "revival" means "to preserve" or "to make alive," but it also means "to purify, to correct, and to remove all evil" (Lloyd-Jones). God's desire was to purify the people of Israel, removing all their sin by raising up the Babylonians to punish them, so that they would become His pure people. Hearing of this, the prophet Habakkuk, filled with awe, cried out to God in song: "O Lord, revive Your work in the midst of the years; in the midst of the years make it known ..." (3:2).

In today's passage, the prophet Habakkuk also prays to God in song in the second half of Habakkuk 3:2: "In wrath, remember mercy." The prophet understood that if God were to judge the people of Israel according to their sins, they would be completely destroyed. In other words, he knew that the holy and just God, if He poured out all His wrath on the sinful people of Israel, would leave no one alive and they would be utterly annihilated by the invasion of Babylon. Therefore, the prophet Habakkuk humbly pleaded with God, saying, "In wrath, remember mercy" (3:2). The meaning of this plea is that "if God repays according to their sins, the Jewish nation would be destroyed and there would be no survivors, but he is asking God to have mercy and save them even in the midst of judgment" (Park). This

prayer is similar to the plea in Psalms 85:2, asking God to “forgive the iniquity of Your people and cover all their sins.” It is also a request like the one in Psalms 85:3, asking God to “take away all Your wrath and turn from Your fierce anger.” The prophet Habakkuk prayed like this: “Lord, turn Your wrath into mercy. We can only ask You to act according to Your nature and to have mercy on us in the midst of Your wrath” (Lloyd-Jones). Shouldn't we, too, be making such a plea to God in our church?

I would like to conclude this meditation on the Word. Personally, I often feel the message of "revival" when singing gospel songs, especially when the lyrics of the songs touch my heart. Particularly when I sing, "Look upon the desolation of this land, O God of heaven, have mercy, O Lord," I sometimes find myself singing with a heart that seeks the mercy of God while observing the desolation of the church. In such moments, I sing with a heart asking God to forgive the sins of our church, and with the desire to devote myself, together with all others, to rebuilding the broken foundation of our church. The truth of God's Word will renew our church. The river of God's grace will flow through the church, and the wind of the Holy Spirit will begin to blow. The Lord will give us a new day, full of His glory. I earnestly pray for God's kingdom to come to this earth.

As I pray that the Lord will revive His work in the coming years,

James Kim

(After praying with the saints on June 24, 2012, for the Korean churches in the U.S. and Korea)

# When I think of our families ...

1. I long for God's great grace and mercy.
2. I earnestly pray that God will grant us the grace of salvation.
3. May God humble all of our family members through our pain, wounds, and suffering, and let us look only to the Lord and rely on Him.
4. I pray that God will thoroughly break and shatter each of us, and soften our hearts.
5. I pray that God will expose our sins, make us realize and acknowledge our sins, confess them, and seek forgiveness through the blood of Jesus' cross.
6. May God grant us the assurance of forgiveness and, through His great grace and love that we have been forgiven, may we be able to forgive one another as He has forgiven us.
7. May God protect and guard our children. In particular, may God comfort and heal the hearts of our wounded children.
8. I earnestly pray that God will turn our family crises around and grant us the grace to experience God's great love of salvation deeply, widely, and greatly.
9. May the Lord God rule and govern our family, protect and guard us from all evil forces and Satan.
10. May the Holy Spirit help us bear more fruits of God's divine love and use us as a channel of God's love so that all family members can love one another with the Lord's love.

# True revival?

The true revival that God brings about begins with repentance.

However, the 'revival' that we people are trying to bring about seems to begin with 'restoration.'

Repentance

Reconciliation

Restoration

Reformation

Revival

## **A heart that experiences God's revival**

A heart that experiences God's revival has praise and peace (Isaiah 57:19).

However, a heart without praise and peace is a proud heart and a heart that is committing sin.

# **I have tasted the goodness of God.**

## **“Taste and see that the Lord is good ....” (Psalms 34:8a)**

Last Sunday (8/18), during the worship service at Victory Presbyterian Church, I was blessed as I listened to the Victory Choir praising God with the song "Good Good Father." In particular, I was deeply moved by the lyrics that proclaim that our good God is the One who leads our lives. I couldn't help but say, "Amen!" So, as I began my sermon, I declared, "Everyone, our God is truly a good God!"

This morning (August 20, 2024), as I was preparing the sermon for our Tuesday family worship, the first half of Psalms 34:8 came to mind: "Taste and see that the Lord is good ...." This very verse was brought to my remembrance by the indwelling Holy Spirit about 28 years ago, during the wedding service my wife and I offered to God. At that time, I had met my beloved wife just about six months earlier, and as we stood there on our wedding day, memories of how we had come to that moment flashed through my mind like a video. Amidst those thoughts, the Holy Spirit enabled me to experience (taste) the goodness of God in a profound way. And so, in that moment, I couldn't help but shed tears of gratitude.

At my beloved son Dillon's wedding reception last Saturday, I became emotional during the mealtime prayer and shed tears. The next morning, on Sunday, as I sat in my church office, I reflected on those tears. What were they? They were none other than tears of gratitude. So, under the title "I Shed Tears of Gratitude," I wrote ten short reflections and shared them with dear ones here and there. I would like to share the second of those reflections with you: "I don't know why I shed so many tears. Haha. Perhaps the reason I became emotional when thinking about Dillon is that, after our first baby, Charis, passed away in my arms, my beloved wife and I longed deeply for another child, but she was unable to conceive. Then, when we finally found out that she was pregnant with Dillon, we were overwhelmed with joy and gratitude. Through Dillon, we experienced God's restoring love. And now, seeing that very child grow up and get married, my heart overflowed with gratitude, and I couldn't help but shed tears." As I reminisced on this moment of tears of gratitude, the Holy Spirit allowed me to taste God's goodness in a special way over the past three days—Saturday through Monday. I would like to share with you three specific ways in which I experienced His goodness.

**First, I tasted God’s goodness last Saturday (8/17) through a text message from my beloved eldest son, Dillon.**

In particular, I experienced God’s goodness through Dillon’s words: "Dad, there may be things you think you did wrong in the past, but in my eyes, you have done truly good and faithful things for our family, and you continue to do so." What touched me the most was the phrase: "Dad, there may be things you think you did wrong in the past, but in my eyes ...." Through these words, I felt my son’s gracious love. Why did I see this as Dillon’s gracious love? Because I realized that not only had Dillon already forgiven me, but he also no longer remembered my mistakes. And yet, I had not forgiven myself. I was still holding onto the memories of the wrongs I had done to him.

**Second, I tasted God’s goodness last Sunday (8/18) through a text message from my beloved niece, Sophie—the youngest daughter of my late cousin Christie, who is now with the Lord.**

That afternoon, I sent a wedding photo of Dillon and Jessica to Christie’s five daughters. Kate, the third daughter, responded, "Aw, looks wonderful." Sophie, the youngest, replied, "Loved an image" and then added, "So pretty." Ella and Kara also responded with, "Loved an image." So, I sent them this message: "Thanks, girls. Yesterday, a lady saw my wife and told her that Dillon looks so much like his mom. I was standing right next to my wife. Haha." Kara, the eldest, replied, "Laughed" and then added, "Sorry, Uncle James, I have to agree with the lady too," along with two laughing emojis. Haha. Then I asked them, "How are you all?" Sophie responded, "We are doing good!" I replied, "Thanks, Sophie! Good." Kara also responded, "We are doing good. Elise is getting over a sinus infection, and the girls start school tomorrow." So, I texted Kara: "Oh no. I hope and pray that Elise gets well soon. If school starts tomorrow, then I can’t buy you lunch and dessert. It’s okay. Next time—before our Lord comes!" Haha. Kara responded with "Loved." As I reflected on this conversation with my nieces, I noticed something that caught my attention. Of course, Kara had also responded with "We are doing good." But for some reason, my heart and mind lingered a little longer on Sophie’s words: "We are doing good!" It seemed like both sisters had given the same response, but there was one difference. Sophie had added an exclamation mark ("!"). That exclamation mark was meant to emphasize something. When I saw it, I felt as though Sophie was sincerely reassuring her uncle that she was truly doing well. Then, I thought about how Sophie believes that her mother is now in heaven having a "wonderful time." At that moment, I realized that Sophie’s faith was pure and unshaken—an untainted, childlike faith. And it reminded me of Hebrews 11:6: "And without faith, it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him."

**Third and last, I tasted God’s goodness was yesterday, on Monday, through an honest conversation and prayer with my beloved wife.**

I am grateful that my wife approached me and openly shared her heart and feelings with me. Though I fell short in fully understanding, empathizing, and sharing in her emotions, the Holy Spirit—who dwells within us—was at work in both of our hearts. Because of this, we were able to have a heartfelt and genuine conversation, sharing our hearts with one another before the Lord. Afterward, we held each other tightly and cried out to God in prayer, weeping together. The Holy Spirit led me to sincerely seek my wife's forgiveness for the deep guilt I had carried for so long over the ways I had wronged her. And that same Spirit worked in my wife's heart, enabling her to forgive me. At last, after more than ten years, I have been set free from the burden of guilt. And I believe that the Holy Spirit has also brought healing to the wounds in my wife's heart.

I would like to conclude this reflection. "Dear friends, our God is truly a good God!" We must taste and see the goodness of God. Especially in our lives with our beloved family, we must remember and cherish the moments when we have already experienced His goodness. When we do, we will be able to sincerely sing: "Good God, good God, my truly good God!" Therefore, may we all be those who give glory to God.

## **Every member of the Lord-centered family filled with wisdom and knowledge**

Every member of the Lord-centered family, filled with wisdom and knowledge, follows God's commandments with one heart and one mind. Just as the Lord has commanded, they live by the eternal commandments of heaven—the place where we will one day dwell forever: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind" (Our vertical relationship with God). "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Our horizontal relationship with others) (Ref: Deuteronomy 4:5-6; Matthew 22:37, 39, Korean Modern Bible).

# God's beloved son/daughter

**Monday Afternoon, March 6, 2023**

I cannot help but be grateful for the conversation I had with my beloved wife last night and this morning. In particular, I thank our Father God again and again when I recall how my wife shared her heart with me so honestly and, in the end, confessed in faith that she is God's beloved child. As she made this confession, she was overwhelmed with gratitude for the great love of our Heavenly Father and shed tears before me. Now, as I reflect once more on our conversations from last night and this morning, I can clearly see that our living and loving God is answering my earnest prayers. For about 26 years—since the day I met my wife through God's grace and guidance and we were married—I have had a deep and fervent prayer request for her in my heart. That prayer has been based on John 8:32: "Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." The Holy Spirit placed this verse in my heart, making me long for it and cling to it. He stirred within me a deep desire to intercede for my wife with this prayer. And now, through our conversations last night and this morning, I am certain that God is answering that prayer—revealing the truth to my wife and setting her free through it. The core of my wife's confession in faith was this: "God loves me so much because I am His beloved child." This confession is undeniable proof that God is opening her heart to His truth. And it is clear evidence that He is setting her free. Through His love and grace, my wife is coming to know God's love for her—more deeply, more broadly, and more profoundly than ever before. Moved by the overwhelming love of the Father, she shed tears of gratitude last night before me. And again, this morning, she wept. So, I opened my arms wide and embraced her. Then, I shared with her John 8:32, saying: "God is indeed setting you free, just as He promised in His Word."

Another thing I am truly grateful for is that this morning, as my wife sat beside me working online before heading to her job, she came across this article (<https://www.getinflow.io/post/overwhelm-shutdown-adhd>). After reading it, she said it was incredibly relevant to her, and we had a long conversation about it. The article discusses ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder), and as we talked about its content, we shared a few key takeaways or lessons together:

1. Since God has created each of us uniquely, rather than saying that having a certain condition or disorder is wrong, we should love and accept others just as God loves and accepts them as they are.



2. Getting to know God is a great grace and blessing because, in doing so, we also come to know ourselves.
3. As we learn more about ourselves, it is important not only to be aware but also to acknowledge what we discover, even as we read articles like this.
4. When we do this, we can love ourselves with God's love, embracing and accepting who we are as He created us.
5. Only then can we truly love and accept one another as we are in our marriage—and in all of our relationships.

# A family experiencing the miracle of prayer and praise

## [2 Chronicles 20:15-22]

This past Monday afternoon, I had a one-on-one prayer meeting with a beloved younger brother in Christ from college. During our conversation, he shared with me a touching story from last Sunday, Mother's Day. He told me how he visited his mother at a nursing home. Despite his mother suffering from dementia and not recognizing him or his family, she smiled at him. Hearing this, I told him that, even though his mother couldn't recognize him, it was still something to be thankful for that she smiled. I said this because one of the beloved church deacons I know, who also had dementia and was in a nursing home before passing into the Lord's arms, had stopped smiling in the later stages of her illness (she had a blank expression). As we talked, the brother and I both agreed that, even in situations where it may be difficult to be thankful from a physical perspective, we should choose to look at those situations through the eyes of faith and decide to give thanks.

In the context of today's passage, 2 Chronicles 20:15-22, King Jehoshaphat of Judah found himself in an incredibly difficult and seemingly hopeless situation, one that, from a human perspective, was impossible to be thankful for. The crisis he faced was that the Moabites, Ammonites, and some of the Meunites had gathered a vast army to invade Judah (vv. 1-2). In response, King Jehoshaphat, afraid, decided to inquire of the Lord, and he proclaimed a fast for all Judah (v. 3). As a result, all the people of Judah gathered from all the cities to seek help from the Lord in Jerusalem (v. 4). When reflecting on this part of the Scripture, the first lesson I learned was that when we suddenly face overwhelming difficulties, like Daniel, we should decide to humble ourselves before God (Daniel 10:12), and like King Jehoshaphat, we should resolve to inquire of the Lord (2 Chronicles 20:3) and pray to Him. Especially as the head of my household, I have learned to first decide to pray to God, and I encourage my beloved wife and three children to seek God's help together. This lesson teaches me that, when our family faces overwhelming difficulties, every family member must turn to God in prayer.

When all the people of Judah had gathered in front of the new court of the temple in Jerusalem, King Jehoshaphat stood among the crowd and prayed to God. The passage from 2 Chronicles 20:6 in the Korean Modern Bible says: “O Lord, the God of our ancestors, are You not the God who is in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. Power and might are in Your hand, and no one can withstand You.” As I reflected on this verse, I gained a second lesson. The lesson is that when we face overwhelming challenges, we must first recognize and admit that we do not have the power or ability to solve these challenges on our own. The verse from 2 Chronicles 20:12 in the Korean Modern Bible says: “O our God, will You not judge them? For we have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are upon You.” In this prayer, King Jehoshaphat acknowledges that not only does he, but also the people of Judah, lack the power to overcome the great army threatening them. In the midst of this, King Jehoshaphat pleads, saying, “We do not know what to do, but our eyes are upon You.” Likewise, when we face enormous challenges, we may, like King Jehoshaphat, realize and admit our own helplessness and inability, and in that state, we sometimes find ourselves knowing not what to do, but looking to the Lord for guidance. Through these overwhelming challenges, we must recognize and admit our own weakness and limitations, but at the same time, we must also acknowledge that only the God in heaven has the power and ability to resolve these difficult situations. Therefore, we learn that we should trust and rely on this God and seek His help.

Another lesson I gained (the third lesson) is that when we face overwhelming difficulties, we must remain silent before God and reflect on the grace He has shown us in the past. This lesson is based on the prayer of King Jehoshaphat in 2 Chronicles 20:7 in the Korean Modern Bible: “O our God, did You not drive out the inhabitants of this land before Your people Israel and give it forever to the descendants of Your friend Abraham?” In this prayer, King Jehoshaphat recalls how, during the time of Joshua, God drove out the Canaanite inhabitants before the Israelites and gave the land to the descendants of Abraham, God's friend. The interesting point is that Jehoshaphat refers to the Israelites as “the descendants of Your friend Abraham.” This made me think of John 15:13: “Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.” As I reflected on this, I thought of the great love of Jesus, who, even though I am a sinner, called me His friend, forgave all my sins, and gave me eternal life (salvation) by laying down His life on the cross. As I considered this, I could not help but thank God in faith for His great grace and love. The same God who helped and delivered us from past overwhelming difficulties is the God who will help and deliver us from the current overwhelming difficulties we face. The reason for this is that, as Hebrews 13:8 says, our God of salvation is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Therefore, like the psalmist, we lift our eyes to the mountains. Where does our help come from? Our help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth (Psalms 121:1-2, Korean Modern Bible).

When King Jehoshaphat prayed to God (vv. 7-12), the Spirit of God came upon a Levite named Jahaziel, who was standing in the midst of the assembly, and He moved him to proclaim God’s message to King Jehoshaphat, Judah, and the people of Jerusalem: “Hear the word of the Lord, all you people of Judah and Jerusalem, and King Jehoshaphat. This is what the Lord says to you: ‘Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God’s. Tomorrow, march down against them. They will be climbing up by the pass of Ziz, and

you will find them at the end of the gorge in the desert of Jeruel. You will not have to fight this battle. Take up your positions; stand firm and see the deliverance the Lord will give you, Judah and Jerusalem. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Go out to face them tomorrow, and the Lord will be with you” (2 Chronicles 20:15-17, Korean Modern Bible). From this word of God, we see that God told King Jehoshaphat and the people of Judah and Jerusalem twice not to be afraid or discouraged because of the vast army invading their land. Why did God say this? The reasons are twofold: (1) God would be with His people [“The Lord will be with you” (v. 17)], and (2) the battle with this great army was God’s battle, not theirs [“This battle is not yours, but the Lord’s” (v. 15)].

Having heard this word of God through Jahaziel, King Jehoshaphat and the people of Judah and Jerusalem fell down and worshiped God (v. 18). Then, the Levites from the descendants of Kohath and Korah stood up and praised the Lord, the God of Israel, with a very loud voice (v. 19). “Early the next morning, as the army of Judah was about to set out for the Desert of Tekoa, King Jehoshaphat stood and said to the people, 'Listen to me, Judah and the people of Jerusalem! Have faith in the Lord your God, and you will be upheld; have faith in His prophets, and you will be successful’” (v. 20, Korean Modern Bible). King Jehoshaphat urged the people twice to "trust." He called them to trust in God and in God's prophets (the seers). Interestingly, while God had told them twice, "Do not be afraid or discouraged" (vv. 15, 17, Korean Modern Bible), King Jehoshaphat said twice, "Trust in God" and "Trust in His prophets."

As I meditate on this word, the fourth lesson I learn is that no matter how much Satan and his forces attack our family, we should not be afraid or discouraged. The reason is that this spiritual battle is not our battle, but God's battle. In God's battle, He Himself will fight for us, save us, and lead us to victory. Therefore, we should believe God's word that He will be with us and uphold us, and move forward in faith against Satan and his forces. Additionally, we must worship and praise God in faith. Even when we face enormous difficulties, by trusting in the word given through God and His servants, we can have assurance of salvation and victory, and we should thank God and praise Him for His love, which is eternal. "After consulting with the people, Jehoshaphat appointed men to sing to the Lord and to praise Him for the splendor of His holiness as they went out at the head of the army, saying: 'Give thanks to the Lord, for His love endures forever!'" (v. 21, Korean Modern Bible). When we do so, God will transform our "valley of Achor" (the valley of trouble) (Joshua 7:24-26) into a "valley of blessing" (the valley of praise) (2 Chronicles 20:26)!

I would like to conclude this reflection on the Word. As I meditated on the Word of 2 Chronicles 20 under the title "A Family Experiencing the Miracle of Prayer and Praise," I was reminded of a passage from Acts 16:25 that I reflected on during the New Year's service this year, under the title "Experience the Miracle of Praise!" It says: "About midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them."

As I reflected again on the three miracles the Lord performed when the Apostle Paul and Silas prayed and praised God in prison, I was led to meditate on the passage in 2 Chronicles 20. I reflected on how King Jehoshaphat,

along with the people of Judah and Jerusalem, prayed to God and organized a choir to sing praises, and how God gave Judah the miraculous victory over the great army. Through this, I received four lessons:

1. The first lesson is that when we suddenly face enormous challenges, we should, like Daniel, decide to humble ourselves before God (Daniel 10:12), and like King Jehoshaphat, decide to seek God's guidance (2 Chronicles 20:3) and pray to God. Specifically, when our family faces tremendous difficulties, we must all pray to God.
2. The second lesson is that when we encounter enormous difficulties, we must first recognize and admit that we do not have the strength or ability to solve the problem. At the same time, we must recognize and admit that only God in heaven has the power and ability to solve such overwhelming challenges. Therefore, we must trust in and rely on God, seeking His help.
3. The third lesson is that when we face great difficulties, we must remain silent before God and recall the grace He has shown us in the past.
4. The fourth lesson is that no matter how much Satan and his forces may attack our family, we must not be afraid or discouraged. The reason for this is that this spiritual battle is not our battle, but God's battle. Even when we face overwhelming challenges, we must trust in the words God gives through God and His servants, and with the assurance of salvation and victory, we should thank God and praise Him for His eternal love. When we do this, God will transform the "Valley of Trouble (Achor)" into the "Valley of Blessing (Praise)."

Wishing for a family that experiences the miracle of prayer and praise,

James Kim

(May 20, 2023, thinking of the Victory Presbyterian Church established by the Lord and each family)

# **A faithful God who uses even favored parents**

**“When the boys grew up, Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the field, but Jacob was a peaceful man, living in tents. Now Isaac loved Esau, because he had a taste for game, but Rebekah loved Jacob.” (Genesis 25:27-28)**

Why do parents favor one child? Researchers at the University of California, Davis (UCD) conducted interviews with 768 individuals (384 sibling pairs) and their parents, and found that 70% of fathers and 65% of mothers admitted to having a preference for one of their children, with most of them favoring the eldest (Internet). Additionally, children who suffer emotional damage due to parental favoritism may have significant difficulties in recognizing themselves as independent individuals, and this can also negatively affect their relationships and marriage. They may excessively cling to relationships in an attempt to fill the emotional void caused by a lack of parental love, and they may live with anxiety and fear of being abandoned by others. Children who are hurt by favoritism may experience significant emotional challenges as well (Internet).

In today's passage, Genesis 25:28, the Korean Modern Bible states, "Isaac loved Esau because he enjoyed the game that Esau brought home, and Rebekah loved Jacob." Why did Isaac, the father, and Rebekah, the mother, show favoritism to their children? Isaac loved his firstborn son Esau, a skilled hunter (v. 28), because Isaac enjoyed the game Esau hunted (v. 28). So, why did Rebekah love her younger son, Jacob? I believe the reason is that Jacob was a quiet man who stayed among the tents (v. 27). This could explain why, in Genesis 25:29, it says, "One day Jacob was cooking a stew," implying that he was quietly preparing food at home. It seems that Jacob spent a lot of time with his mother, Rebekah, who managed the household, and perhaps he learned how to cook from her, which led him to prepare the stew. Then, starting from the second half of verse 29, Esau, after hunting, returns home starving and asks Jacob for some of the stew he was making, saying, "Let me eat some of that red stew, for I am exhausted" (v. 30, Korean Modern Bible). At that point, Jacob responds, "First sell me your birthright" (v. 31), and Esau answers, "I am about to die; of what use is a birthright to me?" (v.32). Jacob then insists, "Swear to me first," and Esau swears to him and sells his birthright to Jacob (v. 33). This happened because Esau despised his birthright (v. 34). By despising

his birthright and selling it to his younger brother Jacob for a bowl of stew, Esau later, in Genesis 27, loses the blessing that his father Isaac had intended for him. Esau says, "... He has deceived me these two times. He took my birthright, and now he has taken my blessing ..." (v. 36, Korean Modern Bible). Today, I would like to reflect on how Jacob, the younger son, took the blessing that Esau should have received from their father Isaac, as described in Genesis 27. Through this reflection, I hope to gain lessons, especially focusing on Isaac, the father, who showed favoritism toward his firstborn son Esau. Next Saturday, I plan to focus on Rebekah, the mother, who showed favoritism toward the younger son, Jacob.

**When I think of Isaac, the father who favored his firstborn son Esau, I believe that Isaac lacked discernment and ended up blessing his younger son Jacob.**

Look at Genesis 27:23: "His hands were hairy like his brother Esau's hands, so he did not recognize him and blessed him." Isaac lacked discernment. In other words, he was deceived by his younger son Jacob, thinking he was blessing his beloved firstborn son Esau. He could not tell the difference between his beloved firstborn Esau and his younger son Jacob. Perhaps the reason was that Isaac was old and his eyes had become dim, making it hard for him to see well (v. 1). Additionally, since Esau and Jacob were "twins" (25:24), it may have been even more difficult for Isaac to distinguish between them. Moreover, I think that Isaac's inability to distinguish between Esau and Jacob was also due to the fact that Jacob had received considerable help from his mother Rebekah in deceiving Isaac. Isaac, who favored Esau, wanted to bless him before he died, as he was old and uncertain about when he would pass away (27:2). He had hoped that Esau would prepare his favorite dish one last time so that he could eat it and give Esau his blessing before he passed (vv. 2-3). However, in the end, he unknowingly blessed the one who deceived him, Jacob, instead of Esau (v. 23). Even so, when Jacob deceived Isaac, I believe that Isaac tried at least seven times to confirm whether Jacob was truly his beloved firstborn son, Esau.

(1) "My son, who are you?" (v. 18)

When Jacob brought the special food and bread to Isaac and called out, "Father," Isaac responded by asking, "My son, who are you?" (v. 18). Isaac was asking Jacob to identify himself. Clearly, Isaac had been expecting and waiting for Esau to come with the special food he loved. If Jacob's voice had sounded like Esau's, Isaac would not have asked, "My son, who are you?"

(2) "My son, how did you find it so quickly?" (v. 20)

When Isaac asked, "My son, who are you?" (v. 18), Jacob answered, "I am Esau, your firstborn. I have done as you told me. Please sit up and eat some of my game so that you may bless me" (v. 19). At this, Isaac questioned him again, saying, "My son, how did you find it so quickly?" (v. 20). The reason for Isaac's question was that he had told Esau, "Take your bow and go out into the field to hunt some wild game for me.

Prepare the tasty food I love and bring it to me so that I may give you my blessing before I die" (vv. 3-4, Korean Modern Bible). But while Esau was still out hunting (v. 5), Rebekah overheard Isaac's words to Esau (v. 5) and, because she loved Jacob, she quickly prepared Isaac's favorite dish (v. 9). She then gave it to Jacob, along with some bread, so that he could take it to Isaac and receive the blessing in Esau's place (v. 17). From Isaac's perspective, it was unexpected that Esau would have caught game, prepared the food, and brought it to him so quickly. In response to Isaac's question, Jacob answered, "The Lord your God helped me find it quickly" (v. 20, Korean Modern Bible). How could Jacob go so far as to invoke the name of "the Lord your God" to deceive his father Isaac?

(3) "Come near, my son, so I can touch you to know whether you are really my son Esau or not" (v. 21).

Isaac told Jacob, who had claimed, "I am Esau, your firstborn" (v. 19), to "come near" (v. 21) because he wanted to touch him and confirm whether he was truly Esau or not. This shows that Isaac did not fully trust that Jacob was Esau, so he attempted to verify it by touch. The reason for this was that Esau had a hairy body, whereas Jacob had smooth skin (v. 11).

(4) "The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau" (v. 22).

When Jacob approached his father Isaac as instructed, Isaac touched him and said, "The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau" (v. 22). This means that Isaac recognized that Jacob's voice did not sound like Esau's. However, since Isaac was old and his eyesight was poor (v. 1), he could not see well enough to identify him by sight, so he relied on touch. Because Esau had hairy hands (v. 11), Isaac reached out to feel Jacob's hands. When he touched them, he concluded, "The hands are the hands of Esau" (v. 22). But how could Isaac say this when Jacob's hands were naturally smooth (v. 11)? The reason was that Rebekah had taken the best clothes of her eldest son Esau, which she had kept in the house, and dressed Jacob in them (v. 15).

(5) "Are you really my son Esau?" (v. 24).

After first asking Jacob, "My son, who are you?" (v. 18), and then touching him, Isaac was still unsure. Though Jacob's hands felt like Esau's, Isaac remained uncertain. Before blessing him, Isaac questioned him once more, asking, "Are you really my son Esau?" (v. 24). This shows that Isaac still did not have complete confidence that Jacob was Esau. At that moment, Jacob replied, "Yes, I am" (v. 24, Korean Modern Bible).

(6) "Come here, my son, and kiss me" (v. 26).



Isaac said to Jacob, "Bring me some of your game to eat, so that I may give you my blessing" (v. 25). Jacob then brought the food to Isaac, who ate it and drank some wine. After that, Isaac said, "Come here, my son, and kiss me" (v. 26). The reason Isaac asked Jacob to come close and kiss him was likely because he wanted to confirm once more whether he was truly Esau.

(7) "So he went to him and kissed him. When Isaac caught the smell of his clothes ..." (v. 27, Korean Modern Bible).

Jacob obeyed his father's request, came close, and kissed him. At that moment, Isaac smelled Jacob's clothes, making one last attempt to verify whether he was really his beloved firstborn son, Esau. However, because Rebekah had dressed Jacob in Esau's best clothes, which she had kept in the house, Isaac naturally smelled Esau's scent on them.

As a result, Isaac failed to discern the truth and, believing Jacob to be Esau, went on to bless him (vv. 23, 28-29).

As I meditate on this passage, I realize that no matter how much we try to verify things, without a mature level of spiritual discernment, we are bound to fall for Satan's deceptions. The reason is that when we are spiritually immature, our spiritual eyes are dim, and we lack discernment, making us vulnerable to Satan's cunning schemes (Ref: Ephesians 4:14). Who are spiritually immature Christians? They are those who do not love the truth (2 Thessalonians 2:10). Christians who do not love God's truth are spiritually immature and lack discernment, making them unable to recognize Satan, who "masquerades as an angel of light" (2 Corinthians 11:14), nor his servants, who disguise themselves as "servants of righteousness" (v.15, Korean Modern Bible). As a result, they are at great risk of falling for the cunning lies and deceptions of Satan and his followers. A prime example of this is the woman in Genesis 3. When the serpent, the most cunning of all the wild animals that God had made, came and deceived her (Genesis 3:1-5), she fell for his lies and deceit, disobeyed God's command (2:17), and ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. She then gave some to her husband, Adam, who was with her, and he ate it as well (3:6). If Adam had been spiritually mature and possessed discernment, he would not have eaten the forbidden fruit that his wife had given him. Furthermore, had he been spiritually discerning, he would have taken action to prevent his wife from falling for the serpent's deception and temptation in the first place. However, Adam, who was with his wife (v.6), did nothing to stop her from eating the fruit, and worse, he ate it himself when she gave it to him. Reflecting on Adam's lack of spiritual discernment, we must strive to love God's truth and develop our ability to discern. We need to carefully examine everything and cultivate the ability to distinguish between good and evil. With this discernment, we should hold on to what is good and reject every form of evil (Ref: 1 Thessalonians 5:21-22). We must sharpen our minds with the Word of God, which is the sword of the Spirit, and with spiritual discernment, recognize Satan's strategies. Through God's Word and constant prayer, we must fight against Satan moment by moment and walk in daily victory.

Last Monday, while I was having fellowship in the Lord with my university juniors—especially while listening to the testimony of a friend who nearly died from a heart attack last December—I received a KakaoTalk message from another junior. The message contained the news that his mother had peacefully departed from this world and was now resting in the loving arms of God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I would like to share a part of that message: "May the Lord bless you to honor your mother by loving the Lord and others, just as she did during her earthly life. Through her daily life, she demonstrated an authentic love and faith in God the Father in heaven and the Lord Jesus Christ." In his heartfelt words, I saw the precious love of a child longing to honor his mother by loving God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ with genuine love, just as she had done. This reminded me of hymn, "Precious Love, the Lore of Mother": (Verse 1) Precious love, the love of mother, Broad and deep beyond all praise! Precious love, it stirs my spirit Gives me gladness all my days. Mother pray'd when I was weeping, Made my sorrows all her own; And when I was glad and smiling Sang her praises at the Throne. (Verse 2) Precious Book, my mother's Bible, Which she read me morn and night. Still I see her read, and, pausing, Call some treasure to my sight: "Whosoever but believeth Shall receive eternal life." Precious words of her reciting, Still my strength in mortal strife! (Verse 3) When I lie alone and troubled, Restless with exhausting fears, Mother's voice, in hymns she sang me, Echoes living in my ears: "From the rock flow springs of water; In the desert flowers grow." "Those who walk the way with Jesus Need fear nothing here below." (Verse 4) Mother's life was sweet and humble, Strong and firm in doing right. I can make my life worth living With her ever in my sight. Mother, in a world of tempests, Fought the good fight all her days; Soon, by streams of living water, I shall live with her always.

**Lastly, when I think of Rebekah, the mother who favored her younger son, Jacob, I see her as the mastermind behind all the events that led Jacob to receive Isaac's blessing.**

In the latter part of Genesis 25:28, the Bible states, "Rebekah loved Jacob." Why did Rebekah love her younger son Jacob rather than her firstborn son Esau? I believe the reason is that Jacob was "a quiet man who preferred to stay at home" (Genesis 25:27, Korean Modern Bible). While Esau, being a skilled hunter, likely enjoyed going out into the fields, Jacob was a quiet man who preferred to stay at home. Naturally, this meant that he spent more time with his mother, Rebekah. Given that Jacob was seen cooking stew (v. 29), I also think he might have learned cooking from his mother. Another reason is that Rebekah was troubled by Esau's marriage to two Hittite women. The Bible says that these two daughters-in-law were a source of grief to Rebekah (v. 35). In fact, she was so distressed by them that she told her husband, Isaac, "I am disgusted with living because of these Hittite women. If Jacob takes a wife from among the women of this land, from Hittite women like these, my life will not be worth living" (27:46, Korean Modern Bible). It seems clear that there was a significant conflict between Rebekah and her two Hittite daughters-in-law. This strained relationship likely contributed to her stronger affection for Jacob over Esau.

I believe that mothers-in-law who have conflicts with their daughters-in-law today might relate to Rebekah's feelings. If a mother-in-law has ongoing tension with her eldest son's wife, she may naturally develop a stronger affection for her younger son, especially if he is still unmarried. If her relationship with her eldest daughter-in-law is

so difficult that she feels, like Rebekah, that life is unbearable because of her, it is understandable that she might feel closer to her younger son (v. 46). Furthermore, if the younger son has a quiet personality like Jacob and prefers to stay at home, wouldn't a mother be more inclined to favor him over the elder son, who is always out and about? And if her husband—whom she may not have the best relationship with—openly favors the eldest son, wouldn't she be even more likely to pour her love into the younger son?

Mother Rebekah loved her second son, Jacob, so she orchestrated a plan for him to receive the blessing that Isaac had intended to give to his beloved firstborn, Esau, before his death (v. 4). She essentially stole [or took away, as Esau later laments in verse 36] Esau's blessing and ensured that Jacob would receive it instead. I believe Rebekah was the mastermind behind this deception because Jacob initially feared being exposed as a deceiver and worried that, rather than receiving a blessing, he might bring a curse upon himself (v. 12). However, when his mother told him, "My son, let the curse fall on me" (v. 13, Korean Modern Bible) and commanded him, "Just do what I say; go and get them for me" (v. 8, Korean Modern Bible), Jacob simply trusted and obeyed her. To put it in modern terms, Jacob seems to have been something of a mama's boy. He did not act independently but rather relied on his mother's guidance. Because of this, Rebekah likely found it easy to manipulate him into deceiving Isaac and taking Esau's blessing. Before setting her plan in motion, the first thing Rebekah did was eavesdrop on her husband Isaac's conversation with Esau. Genesis 27:5-6 (Korean Modern Bible) states: "Now Rebekah was listening as Isaac spoke to his son Esau. When Esau left for the open country to hunt game and bring it back, Rebekah said to her son Jacob, 'Look, I overheard your father say to your brother Esau.'" The phrase "at that time" refers to the moment when Isaac, now old and nearly blind, acknowledged that he did not know when he would die (vv. 1-2). Because of this, he summoned his beloved firstborn son, Esau, and said, "Take your hunting gear, your quiver and bow, and go out to the open country to hunt some wild game for me. Prepare me the kind of tasty food I like and bring it to me to eat, so that I may give you my blessing before I die" (vv. 3-4, Korean Modern Bible). It was precisely at that moment that Rebekah overheard Isaac speaking to Esau and devised her plan.

One time, my wife told me, "I can hear everything you're saying with the elder in your office from the next room. It would be good if you spoke a little more quietly." At that time, she was probably in the room next to my office, possibly using the copier or doing some other work. If she had been in the fellowship hall, eating lunch with other church members after Sunday service, she wouldn't have been able to hear my conversation with the elder. Moreover, she didn't intentionally listen in on our conversation; rather, she happened to be in the adjacent room, where she couldn't help but hear what was being said. The point I want to make here is this: When the Bible says Rebekah eavesdropped on Isaac's conversation with Esau, it indicates that she was in close proximity to them. Otherwise, she wouldn't have been able to overhear their conversation. This raises an important question: Did Rebekah just happen to be near the location where Isaac was speaking with Esau, overhearing their conversation by coincidence? Or did she intentionally approach their location with the deliberate purpose of listening in on what Isaac was saying to Esau? The word "was listening" (v. 5, Korean Modern Bible) implies that Rebekah deliberately positioned herself close enough to overhear Isaac's words. She did not just happen to be nearby; rather, she purposefully drew closer to

eavesdrop on their conversation. For example, if my wife had wanted to listen in on my conversation with the elder, she could have intentionally moved from the fellowship hall to the room next to my office. By doing so, she would have been able to hear everything discussed between the pastor and the elder. Likewise, Rebekah must have deliberately moved closer to listen to Isaac's words to Esau. After hearing everything her husband said to their firstborn son, she immediately called Jacob and told him, "Look, I overheard your father say to your brother Esau, 'Bring me some game and prepare me some tasty food to eat, so that I may give you my blessing in the presence of the Lord before I die'" (vv. 6-7, Korean Modern Bible).

After overhearing what her husband had said to their firstborn son, Rebekah waited until Jacob received his father Isaac's blessing and left. Shortly after, Esau returned from his hunt (v. 30) and discovered that his younger brother had deceived their father and stolen the blessing meant for him (vv. 35-36). Upon realizing this, Esau hated Jacob (v. 41) and was filled with rage (v. 44). In his anger, he muttered to himself, "The days of mourning for my father are near; then I will kill my brother Jacob" (v. 41, Korean Modern Bible). However, despite Esau muttering these words to himself, Rebekah somehow heard about it. The Modern Korean Bible translates Genesis 27:42 as "she heard about it"—implying that someone relayed this information to her. Upon learning of Esau's murderous intent, she immediately called Jacob and warned him: "Your brother Esau is planning to kill you to get his revenge. Now then, my son, do what I say: Flee at once to my brother Laban in Haran. Stay with him for a while until your brother's fury subsides. When your brother is no longer angry with you and forgets what you did to him, I will send for you and bring you back. Why should I lose both of you in one day?" (vv. 42-45, Korean Modern Bible) How did Rebekah come to know about Esau's private mutterings? Initially, I thought she must have been close enough to overhear him directly. However, it is more likely that someone else (perhaps a servant loyal to her) relayed Esau's words to her. The key point here is that Rebekah was keenly attentive to everything concerning Jacob. She had already eavesdropped on Isaac's conversation with Esau, and now she even heard about Esau's private mutterings. This reveals her deep concern for her beloved younger son—so much so that she paid close attention not only to her husband's words to Esau but also to Esau's own secret thoughts.

When I think of the mother Rebecca, who favored her younger son Jacob, I believe Rebecca was the mastermind behind everything that led Jacob to receive Isaac's blessing. The first step in this process was that Rebecca heard, and heard again. She overheard her husband Isaac speaking to his beloved firstborn son Esau, and even the words that Esau muttered to himself. Her ears were attentive to the words of her husband Isaac and her firstborn son Esau. All this listening was for the sake of her beloved younger son, Jacob. She wanted Jacob, rather than Esau, to receive Isaac's blessing. Therefore, she overheard what Isaac said when he called Esau. Then, she called her beloved second son Jacob and told him everything Isaac had said to Esau, making Jacob deceive his father and take the blessing meant for Esau. The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob must have known all of this, but why did God allow Rebecca to manipulate things so that Jacob, her favored younger son, would take the blessing meant for Esau? What was God's sovereign purpose in allowing Rebecca to secretly arrange for Jacob to receive Isaac's blessing? I believe the answer is in Genesis 25:23, which says: "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from

within you will be separated; one people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger” (Korean Modern Bible). Since God’s sovereign will was for the older Esau to serve the younger Jacob, I believe God knew what Rebecca was doing and allowed it to happen. The purpose was that through Jacob’s descendants, God would send the Messiah, Christ Jesus, into the world to be crucified for us. Why did God the Father allow His only Son, Jesus Christ, to cry out, “My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me?” (Matthew 27:46), even though He heard it, while still loving Him and being pleased with Him? The reason is to forgive our sins and to save us.

This past Tuesday, I attended the funeral of a university friend’s mother and participated in the funeral service, offering a burial prayer to God. The friend, who had received God’s authentic love through her mother during her lifetime, shared that even though her mother had passed, she wanted to honor her by loving others with the genuine love her mother had shown her. I thought this was truly a precious love from her mother. Starting from that afternoon, and continuing until Friday, I made some adjustments to the Scripture passage the pastor had preached during the burial service, focusing on 2 Corinthians 4:18–5:2, and wrote a reflection titled "Looking Forward to the Day We Will Put on God’s Body."

In today’s Scripture, Genesis 25:27-28, we see that Isaac, the father, loved his firstborn son Esau because he enjoyed the game Esau hunted, while his mother, Rebecca, loved her younger son Jacob. Isaac, who loved Esau, became troubled when Esau, at the age of 40, married two women from the Hittite people (I believe Esau married these foreign women without his parents’ approval). Even though these wives caused distress to his heart (26:35), Isaac, now old and nearly blind, still wanted to bless Esau one last time before he died (27:1-4). However, Rebecca, the mother, overheard the conversation Isaac had with his beloved Esau and, while Esau was out hunting (v. 5), secretly arranged for her beloved younger son Jacob (25:28) to receive Isaac’s blessing instead.

(1) The first step in this process was that Rebecca listened, and listened again.

Not only did she overhear the words Isaac spoke to his beloved Esau (27:5), but later, she also overheard Esau muttering to himself that he hated Jacob because Isaac had blessed him instead, saying, "Since my father’s time is near, after he dies, I will kill Jacob" (vv. 41-42). In this way, Rebecca’s ears were attentive to the words of her husband Isaac and her firstborn son Esau. All of this listening was for the sake of her beloved younger son Jacob. She wanted Jacob, whom she loved, to receive Isaac’s blessing rather than Esau.

(2) In the process of secretly arranging for her beloved younger son Jacob to receive Isaac’s blessing, the second step was that Rebecca made sure Jacob listened to her and obeyed her instructions.

This is Genesis 27:8 from the Korean Modern Bible: "My son, listen carefully to what I say and do exactly as I tell you." Rebecca overheard the words Isaac spoke to Esau and, while Esau was out hunting, called

Jacob and said: "I heard your father say to your brother Esau, 'Bring me some game and prepare a dish for me to eat, that I may bless you before I die'" (vv. 5-7, Korean Modern Bible). Then she told Jacob to listen carefully and do exactly as she instructed (v. 8). As I meditate on this passage, I wonder, "Should children always do everything their mothers tell them?" The reason I question this is because, just as Rebecca instructed Jacob to deceive his father and take Esau's blessing, if our mother were to tell us to deceive others, I don't think we should follow her instruction. The Bible says, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord" (Ephesians 6:1), but it does not say we should obey our parents when it involves deceiving others. For example, if our parents were focused on fleeting, material wealth (which the Bible compares to mist that disappears—2 Corinthians 4:18) rather than on the eternal and unseen, and they continued to encourage us to succeed in the world by pursuing visible riches, I believe we should not obey such instructions. If we obey such words, we would be serving two masters. As Jesus said, "No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money" (Matthew 6:24, Korean Modern Bible). I am reminded of Micah's mother in Judges 17. Micah's mother, after realizing her son had stolen 1,100 silver shekels from her, called down a curse upon him, but when Micah returned the money, she still wanted him to be blessed (17:2). How could a mother bless her son who had stolen from her without holding him accountable? This is an incomprehensible act of motherhood. What is even more baffling is that Micah's mother, after receiving the 1,100 silver back from her son, declared she would dedicate it to the Lord, yet gave 200 silver to a silversmith to make an idol, which she then gave to her son (vv. 3-4). What an absurd action from a mother! As a result, Micah placed the idol his mother gave him in his house (v. 4). The surprising thing is that after receiving this blessing from his mother—"My son, I pray that the Lord bless you"—Micah even had a shrine (v. 5). Micah, living according to his mother's worldly love and instructions, represents a son who followed his mother's worldly advice.

(3) In the process of secretly arranging for her beloved younger son Jacob to receive Isaac's blessing, the third step was that Rebecca made Jacob become a "deceiver" in the eyes of Isaac.

Here is Genesis 27:12 from the Korean Modern Bible: "What if my father touches me? I would appear to be deceiving him, and instead of receiving a blessing, I might be cursed." Jacob, after hearing his mother Rebecca say, "Listen carefully to what I say and do exactly as I tell you. Go out and bring me two young goats, and I will prepare a dish that your father loves. You will take it to your father so that he may eat before he dies and bless you" (vv. 8-10, Korean Modern Bible), responded, "My brother Esau is hairy, but I am smooth-skinned. What if my father touches me? I would seem to be deceiving him and would receive a curse instead of a blessing" (vv. 11-12, Korean Modern Bible). Looking at Jacob's words, it's clear that if Jacob followed his mother Rebecca's instructions, he knew that he would become a "deceiver" in the eyes of his father Isaac. As I meditate on this, I truly believe that "the deceiver" is Satan. Satan is the deceiver of the world and the accuser (Revelation 12:9-10). In John 8:44, Jesus says: "You belong to your father, the devil,

and you want to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies." Satan speaks lies according to his nature because he is the father of lies. Satan disguises himself as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14), and his servants are like wolves in sheep's clothing (Matthew 7:15). They appear as evil ones, showing false signs and wonders by Satan's power, using every form of deception to lead people to destruction (2 Thessalonians 2:9-10). We must not be deceived by Satan and his servants' cunning lies (2 Corinthians 11:3). Their words are distorted, twisting the truth to speak lies and deception. They twist God's Word to confuse us. One of their dangerous tactics is to get us to believe in a mixed truth. In other words, Satan and his servants work diligently to add lies to God's truth, leading us to believe in this mixed truth. We must remember that everything they say is a lie and a deceitful word (Proverbs 6:12, Walvoord). The reason for this is that their hearts are twisted, and from twisted hearts come twisted words. If we fall for their lies, our hearts will become corrupt, causing us to forsake the truth and purity of Christ (v. 3). We must have spiritual discernment and not be deceived by the cunning lies and tricks of Satan and his servants.

(4) In the process of secretly arranging for her beloved younger son Jacob to receive Isaac's blessing, the fourth step was that Rebecca was willing to receive a curse on behalf of her beloved younger son, Jacob.

Here is Genesis 27:12-13 from the Korean Modern Bible: "What if my father touches me? I would appear to be deceiving him, and instead of receiving a blessing, I might be cursed," Jacob said. His mother replied, "My son, let the curse fall on me. Just do what I say and go get the goats for me." Jacob was afraid of being caught while deceiving his father Isaac, so he said to his mother, "What if I appear to be deceiving my father and receive a curse instead of a blessing?" (v. 12, Korean Modern Bible). At that moment, his mother Rebecca said, "My son, let the curse fall on me ..." (v. 13, Korean Modern Bible). Rebecca was willing to take the curse herself as long as Jacob could receive the blessing from Isaac. She loved Jacob that much. Is this kind of mother's love a healthy one? I believe it is a sick love, one that can make the child sick as well. This kind of sick, manipulative love from a mother, like when Rebecca told Jacob, "Listen carefully to what I say and do exactly as I tell you" (v. 8, Korean Modern Bible) and later, "Now, do exactly as I say" (v. 43, Korean Modern Bible), tries to control and manipulate the child under the guise of love. A child who is being manipulated in this way cannot emotionally or psychologically detach from their mother, causing their heart, emotions, and thoughts to become sick and in pain. Furthermore, if the child is already married, this kind of unhealthy influence can affect the marital relationship as well, leading to a sickening of that relationship too. The ripple effects of a mother's sick love for her child are vast. Nevertheless, a mother who is willing to take on a curse for her child may not fully realize the massive impact her sick love is having. Such a mother needs to confess her sins and repent, relying on the blood of Jesus, who bore our sins on the cross (Deuteronomy 21:23; Galatians 3:13), and receive forgiveness (Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14; 1 John 1:9). She must then

love her children with God's true love and release them in faith. She must establish healthy boundaries in her relationship with her children, clearly defining where she ends and where they begin. She needs to guide her children in truth and be a model of truth herself. To do this, she must live a truthful life before God and act in accordance with His truth. She must hate lies and deception. She needs to understand that obedience to God's commands is a great blessing for her (Psalms 119:56). And then, she must bless her children with prayer: "The Lord bless you and keep you" (Numbers 6:24, Korean Modern Bible).

(5) In the process of secretly arranging for her beloved younger son Jacob to receive Isaac's blessing, the fifth step was that Rebecca took the best clothes of the firstborn Esau and put them on her younger son Jacob.

Here is Genesis 27:15 from the Korean Modern Bible: "Then Rebecca took the best clothes of her firstborn son Esau, which she had kept in the house, and put them on her younger son Jacob." Jacob was worried that his father Isaac might touch him and realize that he was smooth-skinned, unlike his hairy brother Esau (vv. 11-12). At that moment, Rebecca took the best clothes of Esau, which she had kept in the house, and put them on her younger son Jacob (v. 15). Why did Rebecca keep Esau's best clothes in the house? Wouldn't Esau, who prized and often wore those clothes, have kept them safe himself? Could it be that Rebecca kept these clothes in her home because she had them for her beloved younger son Jacob? And when the time came, she used them for Jacob, to disguise him as Esau? Eventually, Rebecca also covered Jacob's hands and the smooth part of his neck with the skins of the goats he had brought (v. 16). As a result, when Jacob, wearing Esau's best clothes, went into Isaac, Isaac said, "My son, come near and kiss me" (v. 26, Korean Modern Bible). When Jacob kissed him, Isaac smelled the clothes and blessed Jacob, saying, "The smell of my son is like the smell of a field that the Lord has blessed!" (vv. 26-27, Korean Modern Bible). This passage suggests that Isaac, who had grown old and had dim eyes (v. 1), may have intentionally asked Jacob to come close and kiss him (v. 26). The reason seems to be that Isaac was trying to identify whether the person before him was his beloved firstborn son Esau, by the smell of his clothes. Rebecca anticipated this and made sure to dress Jacob in Esau's best clothes. In this way, Rebecca thoroughly disguised Jacob as Esau, enabling him to receive the blessing from Isaac. When I reflect on this passage, I question whether giving a child only "the best" (v. 15, Korean Modern Bible) out of love truly serves their best interest. Although a mother may want to give her child the best out of love and hope for their success, the outcome may not turn out as expected. In fact, the "best" a mother gives might end up being the worst for the child. However, our Heavenly Father, who loves us most (John 3:16; Romans 8:32) and knows us best (Psalms 139:1-4), gives us the best according to His timing and method, as a grace that helps us in our time of need (Hebrews 4:16). Here is Romans 8:32 from the Korean Modern Bible: "He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all, how will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things?"



(6) In the final sixth step of secretly arranging for her beloved younger son Jacob to receive Isaac's blessing, Rebecca made the favorite dish of her husband Isaac and gave it to Jacob to take to his father.

Here is Genesis 27:14 and 17 from the Korean Modern Bible: "So Jacob went and got the goats and brought them to his mother, and his mother made the tasty dishes that his husband liked. ... She put the prepared dishes and bread in Jacob's hand." Isaac loved the food that Esau hunted (25:27), so he said to his beloved Esau, "Take your bow and go out to the field to hunt, and make the tasty dish that I love. Then I will eat it and bless you before I die" (27:3-4, Korean Modern Bible). Hearing this, Rebecca, while Esau was out hunting in the field (v. 5), secretly arranged for Jacob to follow her instructions (v. 8). She also personally made the dish and handed it to Jacob, telling him to bring it to his father Isaac to eat (vv. 10, 17). As I reflect on this passage, I wonder whether Esau made Isaac's favorite dish better than Rebecca did, or if Rebecca made it better. In my opinion, Rebecca probably made Isaac's favorite dish better than Esau did. I think this because Rebecca, being Isaac's wife, would have known his tastes better than Esau, and she would have prepared Isaac's favorite dish for a longer period of time, serving it to him regularly, whereas Esau might not have had the same experience. When Jacob took the food his mother Rebecca made and went to his father, Isaac asked, "Who are you?" Why did Isaac ask this question? I believe the reason can be found in the first half of verse 20: "How did you find it so quickly, my son?" From Isaac's perspective, Esau had not been gone hunting for long (v. 5, Korean Modern Bible), so when Jacob came in pretending to be Esau, Isaac became suspicious. Isaac had clearly eaten Esau's dish made from the game he hunted multiple times, so he likely had a rough idea of how long it would take for Esau to return with the food. When Jacob came back much sooner than expected, Isaac asked, "How did you find it so quickly?" (v. 20, Korean Modern Bible). Then, look at Jacob's response: "The Lord your God helped me find it quickly" (v. 20, Korean Modern Bible). How could he invoke the name of "the Lord your God" and lie? In reality, it was not "the Lord your God" who helped him; it was his mother Rebecca who helped him. How could Jacob lie to his father in such a way? Ultimately, Isaac was deceived by Jacob and blessed him (vv. 27-30, Korean Modern Bible).

As I reflect on this passage, I believe that Rebecca used every means possible to deceive Isaac and made Jacob into a deceiver in order to receive the blessing from Isaac, as she desired. I think she ultimately achieved what she wanted, with Jacob receiving Isaac's blessing. However, I believe Rebecca's method was wrong. It is certainly not a method that pleases God. Nevertheless, I believe that God fulfilled His sovereign will by allowing the promise that "the older will serve the younger" (25:23, Korean Modern Bible) to come to pass. How God used even Rebecca's deceitful methods to fulfill His sovereign will is something I don't fully understand. However, what I know and believe is found in 2 Timothy 2:13: "If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself." This is a trustworthy saying." God used both Isaac, the father who was blind to his favoritism for his older son Esau, and Rebecca, the mother who was untruthful in her favoritism for her younger son Jacob, to fulfill His sovereign will. God worked to ensure that Esau would serve Jacob, as He had planned. When I think of the truth and faithfulness of

God, who accomplishes His sovereign will even through partial and flawed parents, I am reminded of the first verse of the hymn "Great Is Thy Faithfulness": "Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father, there is no shadow of turning with Thee; Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not, as Thou hast been, Thou forever wilt be." "The one who promised is faithful" (Hebrews 10:23a, Korean Modern Bible).

“Like the sun that rises everyday O You are so faithful, dear Lord You are so faithful  
Like the rain that You bring and every breath that I breathe  
You are so faithful Lord. Like a rose that comes alive every spring  
O You are so faithful, dear Lord You are so faithful  
Like the life that You give to every beat of, my heart  
You are so faithful, Lord. I see a cross and the price You had to pay  
I see the brood that washed my sins away  
In the midst of the storm through the wind and the waves  
You'll still be faithful O You'll still be faithful  
When the stars refuse to shine and time is no more  
You'll still be faithful O You'll still be faithful. O Lord  
Great is thy faithfulness. Lord unto me

[“You are so faithful”]

Praising the faithful Lord,

James Kim

[August 20, 2022, Although I am very unfaithful, I believe that the Lord, who is true and faithful, is faithfully fulfilling the promise of the five loaves and two fish (John 6:1-15) and the promise of “... I will build my church...” (Matthew 1:18)]

# **In order for children to prosper more and more ...**

## **"He must increase, but I must decrease." (John 3:30)**

The valuable lesson that the Holy Spirit is teaching my wife and me these days is that "children should prosper more and more, and parents should decrease more and more." The Holy Spirit has been teaching this lesson to both my wife and me, and the foundation for this is found in John 3:30. John the Baptist said that Jesus must increase, and he himself must decrease. The Holy Spirit has reminded me of this word of God and led me to reflect on it, prompting a conversation with my wife. The key point of our conversation was that, as parents of our beloved children—Dillon, Yeri, and Karis—we must decrease our role in their lives as we nurture them. To apply this more concretely, we must intervene less in the lives of our beloved children. This means we must allow Dillon, Yeri, and Karis to think, pray, and make decisions before God on their own. It means that until they come to us with questions or seek help, our role is to pray for them behind the scenes, viewing them with eyes of faith, not to contact them and tell them how to live their lives. Our role is to quietly watch them think, struggle, and make decisions, trusting in their process. However, if we do not trust God and instead keep worrying about our children because of our own weaknesses and lack of faith, we will struggle to resist the impulse to intervene in their lives. If this happens, we will keep contacting them and nagging them, transferring our own worries and anxieties to them, which will cause them to be concerned about us and worried about our feelings. This kind of parent-child relationship is not healthy. It only harms the children and does not help their growth at all. Therefore, my wife and I have committed to applying the lesson from John 3:30 that the Holy Spirit reminded us of to our parenting: we must decrease. In doing so, we believe that the Lord, who loves our children much more than we do, will take care of them and help them prosper and grow.

[The photo below is from yesterday, Saturday, when I went to my beloved daughter Yeri's apartment to help move her belongings. Yeri packed her things in her room and kitchen, and after she was done, her boyfriend Chris helped her with the packing. Then, Chris carried the things to the front of the apartment, where I was waiting. I took the items from Chris and moved them to the car parked outside the apartment. My role was to carry the things from the

apartment to the car. Haha. That was about it! Hehe. However, when I sent a picture of myself moving the items to my beloved wife, she sent me a picture of herself running or hiking on a mountain, something she loves. Hahahaha. I felt like I was Mr. Mom, and my wife, who used to be the loving mother to our daughter, had become a neglecting mom, leaving me to handle things my way. Hahahahah.]



# "God, please bless our family with abundance."

## [Ruth 1:1-22]

One of the prayer topics that we should pray for throughout our lives is for the family that God has graciously given us. Each of us likely has prayer requests for our own families. Of course, we pray for our spouses, but we probably cannot avoid praying for our children every day. There are many reasons for this, but if I were to sum it up in one phrase, it is because our parents' hearts are filled with love for their children. That is why we think of our beloved children and pray to our Heavenly Father every moment of every day, even if it is just in our hearts. Among these prayer topics, today I have a new prayer request based on the message from Ruth 1. That prayer request is: "God, please bless our family with abundance."

After meditating on the passage from Ruth 1:1-22 on Thursday morning, I wrote a brief reflection and shared it here and there. Then, while reflecting again on Friday afternoon, I became particularly interested in the words "famine" in verse 1 and "abundance" in verse 6 of the Korean Modern Bible. As I meditated on the whole chapter of Ruth 1, I realized that even though it starts with "famine" in the land of Judah (v. 1), after about 10 years (v. 4), God blesses His people, bringing "abundance" to the land of Judah (v. 6, Korean Modern Bible). I began to apply this to our own families. I thought about how, just like the seasons of famine and abundance in the story, our families might also experience times of "famine" and "abundance." For example, the word "famine" is defined in Naver Dictionary as "a year in which crops do not do well compared to previous years, leading to hunger." Reflecting on our own families, I thought that a "famine" in the family might refer to times when the growth of children, or the nurturing of the family, is not progressing as it should, especially compared to when the children were younger. Moreover, even when material needs such as food are abundant, there can still be "famine" in the family if the children do not receive enough of God's love from the parents, leading to an emotional hunger. This could be what we refer to as "affection deprivation," which is defined as "not receiving sufficient affection from parents in childhood and failing to form close relationships with others, resulting in emotional instability" (Naver Dictionary). However, what we should long for is the "abundance" of the family. For instance, the word "abundance" is defined as "a year in which crops grow well and yield more than usual" (Naver Dictionary). The "abundance" we should long for and pray for in our families is

that our children grow well in both physical and spiritual ways, flourishing in the Lord, and bearing precious fruit for the glory of God. Furthermore, "abundance" in the family could mean a family that bears more and more fruit of God's love each year. Do you not long for such a family? Therefore, I want to make "God, please bless our family with abundance" a prayer topic for us today. As I meditated on the passage from Ruth 1, I reflected on the "famine" and "abundance" in the life of Naomi. I wish to receive the grace and lessons God has for each of us through this passage. In particular, as I reflect on how God reversed the "famine" in Naomi's family into "abundance," I pray that we, too, will receive the grace and lessons He has for us, and that we will be people who humbly ask God to bless our families.

**First, I would like to reflect on the famine in the family of Naomi, the woman mentioned in today's passage.**

The passage from Ruth 1:1 reads: "In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land, and a man from Bethlehem in Judah, together with his wife and two sons, went to live for a while in the country of Moab." This verse mentions that there was a "famine in the land" (v. 1, Korean Modern Bible), and this "land" refers to "the land of Judah" as mentioned in verse 7. The famine occurred during the period when "the judges ruled" (v. 1). For reference, during the time when "the judges ruled" (v. 1), "there was no king in Israel, and everyone did as they saw fit" (Judges 17:6; 21:25). At that time, "a man from Bethlehem in Judah" (Ruth 1:1), named Elimelech, took his wife Naomi and their two sons, Mahlon and Kilion, and left their hometown to live in Moab. The Korean Modern Bible reads, "Elimelech, along with his wife Naomi and their two sons Mahlon and Kilion, left their hometown and went to live in the land of Moab" (v. 2). As I reflect on this passage, I was reminded of the stories in the Bible where famine led people to migrate. A prime example of this is found in Genesis, where Jacob and his descendants migrated to Egypt due to a severe famine in the land of Canaan (Genesis 41:56-57; 43:1), and eventually settled there (Genesis 46). In today's passage from Ruth, the famine in the land of Judah caused Elimelech to leave his hometown with his wife Naomi and their two sons Mahlon and Kilion, and they migrated to the land of Moab, where they lived. One of the possible reasons for their migration from their hometown of Judah to the foreign land of Moab was to protect their wealth and property. How can we know this? We can see it in Ruth 1:21: "I went away full, but the Lord has brought me back empty ...." So, what happened to the family of Elimelech, who left their homeland of Judah and moved to Moab due to the famine?

Here is Ruth 1:3-5: "Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died, and she was left with her two sons. They married Moabite women, one named Orpah and the other Ruth. After they had lived there about ten years, both Mahlon and Kilion also died, and Naomi was left without her two sons and her husband." In the end, after about ten years of living in Moab, it wasn't just Elimelech who died, but her two sons, Mahlon and Kilion, also died, and Naomi was left alone, having lost her husband and both of her children. I see this as Naomi's "family famine." In other words, her family's famine wasn't just the loss of money (wealth) but the loss of three beloved family members. I believe that in every family, there can be such a "family famine." I would describe it in one word: "loss." Of course, in Naomi's case, she

lost her husband, both sons, and her wealth. When I reflect on this, the character of Job from the Bible comes to mind. Job didn't just lose his possessions (Job 1:12-17), but he also lost all ten of his children (v. 18). Furthermore, Job lost his health, and "from the soles of his feet to the top of his head, he was covered with painful sores" (2:7, Korean Modern Bible), and "he took a piece of broken pottery and scraped himself with it as he sat among the ashes" (v. 8). What about our families today? Are we perhaps losing things like Naomi or Job did? If so, I pray that God will turn the famine in our families into a season of abundance. So, what is "family abundance"? I would like to reflect on three ways in which God turned Naomi's "family famine" into "family abundance" in today's passage, Ruth 1, and apply it to our own families as we pray.

### **First, "family abundance" means that God blesses our families.**

In today's passage, Ruth 1:6a from the Korean Modern Bible: "After some time, Naomi heard that the Lord had come to the aid of His people by providing food for them, for He had blessed the land with a bountiful harvest ...." This verse speaks of "after some time," which, as mentioned in verse 5, refers to the period after Naomi's two sons, Mahlon and Kilion, had died, and Naomi was left alone, having lost her husband and children. It marks the time about ten years after Naomi and her family had moved to Moab (v. 4). After this time, Naomi heard the joyful news that God had blessed His people, the people of Judah, by bringing a bountiful harvest to the land (v. 6). How joyous this news must have been for Naomi! After living in Moab for ten years because of the famine in her homeland of Judah, she now heard that God had blessed the land of Judah with a bountiful harvest. I pray that God blesses all our families. May our families experience abundance and joy. I pray that God will send good news to all our homes. Of course, God can bless our families in many ways, bringing us various joyful news, but the greatest joy comes when every member of our family hears the gospel of Jesus Christ and believes in Him. I pray that the amazing blessing of salvation and eternal life through Jesus Christ will be with each of our families.

### **Second, family abundance means leaving this sinful world and returning to the Lord.**

Ruth 1:6b to 7 in the Korean Modern Bible says "... Naomi decided to leave Moab with her two daughters-in-law. As they were on their way back to Judah." After hearing the news that the Lord had blessed His people and brought a bountiful harvest to Judah, Naomi decided to leave Moab with her two daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth, and return to Judah. As I reflect on this passage, I believe that for Naomi, "abundance" meant returning to her homeland, Judah. This is similar to the Israelites, the descendants of Abraham, who after about 400 years in Egypt, were led by Moses, whom God sent to deliver them from Egypt and guide them through the wilderness. Eventually, Joshua was used by God to bring the second generation of Israelites, along with Caleb, into the Promised Land, Canaan. This parallels the promise in Genesis 15:13-21 (Korean Modern Bible): "At that time, the Lord said to Abram, 'Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated for 400 years. But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions.

As for you, you will go to your ancestors in peace and be buried at a good old age. In the fourth generation, your descendants will return here ....”

I pray that God grants us this amazing blessing of returning to Him and bringing abundance to our families. Just as the prodigal son in Luke 15 returned to his father’s embrace, I pray that any wandering spouses, children, or descendants in our families may return to the loving arms of God the Father. Furthermore, if we are already believers, but facing a "spiritual famine," where our souls feel dry and hungry like withered grass in the wilderness, I pray that we would return to the Lord, who revives our spirits. Isaiah 55:1-3 says: “Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and you will delight in the richest of fare. Give ear and come to me; listen, that you may live ....” The hymn "Come, Ye Disconsolate” is also a beautiful reminder of this:

(Verse 1) Come, ye disconsolate, where'er ye languish; Come to the mercy seat, fervently kneel,  
Here bring your wounded hearts, here tell you're anguish.  
Earth has no sorrow that heaven cannot heal.

(Verse 2) Joy of the desolate, light of the straying Hope of the penitent, fadeless and pure,  
Here speaks the comforter, tenderly saying, "Earth has no sorrow that heaven cannot cure.

(Verse 3) Here see the bread of life; see waters flowing Forth from the throne of God, pure from above.  
Come to the feast of love; come, ever knowing Earth has no sorrow but heaven can remove.

(Verse 4) All who draw nigh and take, here, of Cod's bounty Shall know a spring of Life, still to increase,  
Water of life shall flow up from within them, Ending all thirsting, and never to cease.

**Lastly, thirdly, family abundance means being loved with a love stronger than death and receiving from the Lord a "restorer of life" and a "nourisher in old age."**

Ruth 4:13-15 says: “So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. When he made love to her, the Lord enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son. The women said to Naomi, 'Praise be to the Lord, who this day has not left you without a guardian-redeemer. May he become famous throughout Israel! He will renew your life and sustain you in your old age. For your daughter-in-law, who loves you and who is better to you than seven sons, has given him birth.'” When we look at Ruth 1:7, as Naomi and her two daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth, were on their way back to Judah, Naomi urged them to return to their own families. The reason was that the two daughters-in-law had served their husbands and Naomi with great devotion, and now Naomi wanted them to return to their families and remarry, so they could have a happy life (vv. 7-9). Though Naomi was too old to remarry, she wished for Orpah and Ruth to have new husbands and start happy families, even if she herself would live without a husband (vv. 9, 12). Naomi told Orpah and Ruth that it grieved her heart to be the cause of their suffering and that she felt the pain even more because of the hurt they had to endure (v. 13). From this, we see that Naomi was a mother-in-law who loved her daughters-



in-law deeply and wanted only the best for them. Ultimately, Orpah tearfully said goodbye to her mother-in-law, returned to her people (Moab), and to her gods. However, Ruth clung to Naomi and refused to leave her side. Ruth expressed her desire to go to Judah with Naomi and live there, saying that Naomi's people would become her people and Naomi's God would become her God. Furthermore, Ruth made a solemn vow to Naomi, saying, "Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me." When Naomi saw Ruth's determination to stay with her, she could not persuade her otherwise (vv. 14-18, Korean Modern Bible).

As I reflect on this passage, I am reminded that Ruth's love for her mother-in-law is as strong as death (Song of Songs 8:6). In short, Ruth was a daughter-in-law who loved her mother-in-law Naomi with an unyielding love. I believe that a mother-in-law who has such a daughter-in-law is truly blessed by God. Naomi (meaning "my joy") returned to her hometown, Bethlehem, with her daughter-in-law Ruth (1:19), and she said to the women there, "Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara" (meaning "bitter") (v. 20). The reason was, "The Almighty has made my life very bitter. I went away full, but the Lord has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi, since the Lord has afflicted me, and the Almighty has brought misfortune upon me?" (vv. 19-21, Korean Modern Bible). The decision Naomi made to leave her home in Judah and go to Moab during the famine (vv. 1-2) led to the loss of all she had and her return home empty-handed. As a result, Naomi felt that God had forsaken her and given her much bitterness. However, although Naomi had lost so much (even her husband and two sons), she gained one daughter-in-law, Ruth, a foreign woman. And through Ruth, she would later receive even greater blessings. Ruth married Boaz (remarriage), and God blessed her with a son named Obed (4:13). Obed would later become the father of Jesse, the father of King David (v. 17). The women in the town then said to Naomi, "Your daughter-in-law Ruth is better to you than seven sons. She will restore your life and take care of you in your old age" (v. 15). From a human perspective, Naomi might have thought she had lost more than she gained, considering she lost her husband, Elimelech, and her two sons, Mahlon and Chilion. But from the perspective of faith, Ruth, a single woman, married Boaz and gave birth to Obed, the father of Jesse, who was the father of King David (v. 17). And through King David, the Messiah, Jesus, came into the world (Matthew 1:1-16, especially verses 5-6). What an incredible blessing this family received from God! God turned Naomi's situation around and brought a rich harvest to her family!

I would like to close with this reflection. Our God is the God who reverses "Mara" (bitterness) into "Naomi" (my joy)! God gave Naomi, who had tasted the bitterness of life (Mara), joy in accordance with the meaning of her name. No longer would Naomi experience famine in her family, but God brought a rich harvest to her household. I pray that God will turn around the famine in our families and bring abundance to them. I pray that God will bless each of our families. I pray that God will lead all of us, and our family members, to turn away from this sinful world and return to the Lord. I pray that God will love us with a love stronger than death and grant us a "Restorer of Life" and a "Nourisher in Old Age."

Believing in God, who turns around the bitterness of Mara, the famine in our homes, and brings a rich harvest, allowing us to taste the joy of our families,

James Kim

(After praying for my beloved wife and three children on January 14, 2023)

## **“Lord, please establish our entire family and relatives as a loving family.”**

**“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. This is a profound mystery--but I am talking about Christ and the church. However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.”  
(Ephesians 5:31-33)**

Last Sunday, we held a thanksgiving service to celebrate the 42nd anniversary of the founding of Victory Presbyterian Church, where I serve as the senior pastor. Based on the promise from Matthew 16:18, the theme of the sermon was "The Church Built by the Lord," and I received five prayer requests. I applied those five prayer points to my entire family and relatives and proclaimed God's word during our online family prayer meeting on Tuesday: "Lord, please establish our entire family and relatives as (1) a thankful family, (2) a steadfast family, (3) a victorious family, (4) a family that raises workers, and (5) a family that expands God's kingdom." I pray that our entire family and relatives will realize that where sin abounds, God's abundant grace (2 Corinthians 12:9) will overflow even more (Romans 5:20), and through this understanding (Colossians 1:6), we will become a family that thanks God. May the Lord establish our entire family and relatives on the solid rock of Jesus Christ (Matthew 16:18; 1 Corinthians 10:4), and may we deeply root ourselves in Christ, building our lives on Him, standing firm in the faith as we have been taught (Colossians 2:7), and practicing (obeying) His Word (Matthew 7:24-25), so that no matter what temptations, deceptions, trials, or difficulties come our way, we will not be shaken but will always be fervent in the Lord's work (1 Corinthians 15:58). I pray that our entire family and relatives will have a victorious assurance rooted in the love of the Triune God (Romans 8:35-39) and in the victory of Christ (v. 37), believing that God, who is faithful, will not allow us to be tested beyond what we can bear, but will provide a way out during times of trial (1 Corinthians 10:13).

May we, in our spiritual warfare, live a victorious life in faith. The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few ("harvest")—at a time when there are fewer laborers preaching the gospel ("workers for the harvest"). I pray that the Lord will raise up workers with Christ-centered dreams among my entire family and relatives (Matthew 9:37-38). May the Lord send these workers to various places to expand His kingdom, and may our entire family and relatives be used for this purpose. Additionally, I added one more prayer request, applying it to my entire family and relatives: "Lord, please establish our entire family and relatives as a loving family."

Today, I have summarized the sixth prayer request, "Lord, please establish our entire family and relatives as a loving family," based on the two articles I wrote on family last Sunday afternoon and Monday morning, and the passage from Ephesians 5:31-33, in seven key points.

### **First, family is very important.**

Each family within our entire family and extended family is truly important. The Lord loves each of our families and considers them very important. The Lord, who is the head of each of our families, places great importance on the spiritual health of each of our families (3 John 1:2). Therefore, each of our family members should also place great importance on the families that the Lord values, as well as on the spiritual health of each of our families.

### **Second, the spiritual health of the husband, as the head of the household, is very important.**

The spiritual health of the husband, who is the head of each of our families, is truly important. Of course, the spiritual health of the wife is also very important. However, if the husband is not spiritually healthy, how can he raise his wife in the Word of God? (Ephesians 5:29) A wise and mature wife prays for her husband's spiritual health and sacrificially helps him. Therefore, the husband, as the head of the household, must be spiritually healthy and raise not only his beloved wife but also his beloved children with the Lord's teachings and discipline (Ephesians 6:4). When this happens, the entire family and relatives can be spiritually healthy.

### **Third, the spiritual maturity and leadership of the husband, as the head of the household, is very important.**

A spiritually healthy husband faithfully nurtures his beloved wife with the Word of God for her spiritual health. In this process, he himself lives a life of obedience to God's Word first. No matter how much he may live a life of obedience outside the home and gain recognition and praise from others, if he does not live that way within the home, it is not a faithful life of obedience to the Word. A spiritually mature husband shows the example of obedience

to God's Word to his beloved wife and children, and by doing so, he nurtures them. This mature, obedient leadership of the husband is very important.

#### **Fourth, a spiritually healthy and mature husband loves his wife first.**

A spiritually healthy and mature husband loves his wife according to the Word of God, just as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it (Ephesians 5:23). He loves his wife as he loves himself (vv. 28, 33), because to love his wife is to love himself (v. 28). A spiritually healthy and mature husband, in loving his wife as himself, ensures that no third party — whether children, parents, siblings, or even friends—interferes in their relationship. In this context, a third party refers to anyone outside the marriage. However, a spiritually unhealthy and immature husband does not prioritize the marriage relationship and allows third parties to interfere, leading to conflict, quarrels, and strife. This is not the type of marriage or love that God desires.

#### **Fifth, a spiritually healthy and mature husband establishes clear and healthy boundaries.**

In Ephesians 5:31 (Korean Modern Bible), it is written: "For this reason, the Bible says, 'A man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.'" A spiritually healthy and mature husband, having left his parents and joined with his wife, does not allow anyone—whether his children, parents, siblings, or friends—to interfere in their marital relationship. He wisely establishes clear and healthy boundaries to protect the marriage relationship. He prioritizes his marriage and ensures no one can penetrate and cause conflict between him and his wife. However, a spiritually unhealthy and immature husband fails to establish these boundaries, and as a result, he allows others to influence the marriage and cause conflict. Specifically, a husband who is overly influenced by his mother may often be the cause of conflicts between his wife and mother. In these cases, the husband, instead of fostering peace in the relationship between his wife and mother, may inadvertently make it worse. This often stems from an unhealthy, codependent relationship with his mother, in which he fails to establish healthy boundaries. As a result, he struggles to prioritize his wife and is uncertain of how to navigate between his wife and mother. The wife, seeing her husband side with his mother over her, may lose trust in him and be unable to receive the love she needs from him (Ephesians 5:25-28, 33). She may begin to pour excessive love onto her children instead, which often leads to an unhealthy, codependent relationship with them. As a result, the couple's marriage becomes secondary, and the husband becomes indecisive and ineffective in his role. If the couple has married children, the excessive love from the mother may cause conflicts in their children's marriage as well. Therefore, a spiritually healthy and mature husband must clearly establish healthy boundaries, ensuring that neither his parents nor children can negatively affect his primary relationship with his wife. In this way, the husband, loving his wife as Christ loved the Church and giving himself for her (Ephesians 5:25, 28, 33), will be loved by his wife, who will respect him (v. 33) and, as the Church submits to Christ, she will submit to her husband in all things (v. 24). As a result, the couple will continue to be built up as spiritually healthy and mature partners.

## **Sixth, a marriage relationship may face crises or challenges.**

I believe that crises or challenges in a marriage relationship can arise not only for spiritually unhealthy and immature couples but also for spiritually healthy and mature couples. In other words, crises or challenges can come to any couple. Of course, the nature of the crises or challenges may be the same for both types of couples, but they could also be different. What is important is that it is not desirable for spiritually healthy and mature couples to think that they will never face a crisis or challenge in their relationship, just as it is not desirable for spiritually unhealthy and immature couples to live with the constant belief that there will always be a crisis or challenge. In other words, the key is that any couple, at any time, can face unexpected crises or challenges in their relationship. Therefore, when such a crisis or challenge comes, the couple should be prepared to know what they need to do. I would like to share three personal ways to prepare for such situations: A marital crisis can be a good opportunity given by the Lord. In other words, a crisis in a marriage relationship can be a valuable opportunity provided by the Lord for the growth and maturity of that relationship. This valuable opportunity is a chance for the couple to desperately seek the Lord together. When a marriage is struggling and suffering, it is easy for both partners to become discouraged and even fall into despair. In such moments of marital despair, the great grace given by the Lord works in our hearts, making us yearn for Him. He causes us to find hope in Him, making Him the hope for both ourselves and our marriage. In short, a marital crisis is an opportunity for earnest prayer, seeking God desperately. Another precious opportunity is when the Lord cultivates the hearts of the couple, softening them, and planting His Word in their hearts. In other words, a marital crisis is a great opportunity for God's Word to be planted in the heart of the couple. For example, when a couple is going through a crisis or challenge, in their desperate search for God, He may plant the seed of victory from 1 Corinthians 10:13 into their hearts: "No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it" (Korean Modern Bible). As we receive this Word and meditate quietly before God, the Holy Spirit may give us the insight to pray like this with our hearts: "The marital trial I am facing is something that everyone goes through. I believe in the truth that God is faithful and will not allow me to face a temptation I cannot bear, and He will surely provide a way out when I am tempted, allowing me to endure this trial in my marriage." As we receive God's Word with faith, may it work powerfully within us, guiding us to victory in the spiritual battle with the enemy (1 Thessalonians 2:13) so that all couples may experience victory and overcome challenges (1 John 2:14).

## **Seventh, the marital relationship should align with the relationship between Christ and the Church.**

Ephesians 5:32 in the Korean Modern Bible reads: "This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church." In this letter to the Ephesians, Apostle Paul speaks about the relationship between husband and wife, and as he reaches the conclusion, he quotes Genesis 2:24: "For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh" (Ephesians 5:31, Korean Modern Bible). He

then explains, “This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church” (v. 32, Korean Modern Bible). The meaning of this is that when a man leaves his parents and is united to his wife, becoming one flesh, the husband is to love his wife “just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her” (vv. 25, 28, 33, Korean Modern Bible), and the wife is to “submit to her husband in everything, just as the church submits to Christ” (v. 24, Korean Modern Bible), respecting her husband (v. 33). The key point here is “Christ” (vv. 24, 25). In other words, the Lord-centered marriage seeks to follow the biblical relationship between Christ and the church. To be more precise, the Lord-centered marriage aligns with the biblical relationship between Christ and the church.

I would like to conclude with a meditation on this Word. I pray that the Lord will make my entire family, including relatives, a family of gratitude, a solid family, a victorious family, and the Lord-centered family that raises workers with dreams centered on the Lord, sending them out to expand God's kingdom. I especially pray that the Lord will make my entire family a family of love, bringing glory to God.

May the Lord establish our entire family and relatives as a family worthy of the Lord,

James Kim

(July 14, 2022, after declaring the word of God with a sincere and heavy heart, focusing on Ephesians 5:31-33 during the online family prayer meeting last Tuesday afternoon)

# **A family that praises God the Father with a grateful heart**

## **[Colossians 3:18-21]**

Under the title "When Thinking of Our Families," I wrote the following:

1. I long for God's great grace and mercy.
2. I earnestly pray that God will grant the grace of salvation.
3. I pray that through our pain, suffering, and wounds, God will humble all of our family members, and that we will look to and rely solely on the Lord.
4. I pray that God will thoroughly break and shatter each of us, softening our hearts.
5. I pray that God will remove our sins, helping us to realize, acknowledge, and confess them, and seek forgiveness by relying on the precious blood of Jesus on the cross.
6. I pray that God will grant us assurance of forgiveness, and that, by the grace and love of being forgiven, we may forgive one another just as God has forgiven us.
7. I pray that God will protect and guard our children. Especially, I earnestly hope that God will comfort the hearts of our wounded children and heal them.
8. I earnestly pray that God will turn around the crises in our families and pour out grace so that we may experience His great salvation love deeply, broadly, and abundantly.



9. I pray that the Lord, who is God, will govern and rule over our family, protecting us from all evil forces and Satan.
10. I pray that the Holy Spirit will bear more of the fruits of God's divine love, and that He will use us as instruments of His love so that all members of our family may love one another with the love of the Lord.

In May 2023, we meditated on the passage from 2 Chronicles 20 under the title "A Family Experiencing the Miracle of Prayer and Praise." In 2 Chronicles 20, King Jehoshaphat of Judah was facing a tremendous crisis that, from a human perspective, seemed impossible to be thankful for. This immense challenge was when a vast army, consisting of the Moabites, Ammonites, and some Meunites, invaded Judah (vv. 1-2). At that time, King Jehoshaphat decided to inquire of the Lord in fear, and he proclaimed a fast for all Judah (v. 3). Consequently, the people of Judah gathered from all parts of the land in Jerusalem to seek help from the Lord (v. 4). Eventually, as King Jehoshaphat, the people of Judah, and the citizens of Jerusalem prayed and organized a choir to praise God, the Lord gave them victory over the massive invading army. Reflecting on this miraculous victory, I received four lessons:

1. The first lesson is that when we suddenly face overwhelming challenges, we must decide, like Daniel, to humble ourselves before God (Daniel 10:12, Modern Translation), and like King Jehoshaphat, to inquire of the Lord (2 Chronicles 20:3, Modern Translation), and pray to God. Specifically, we learn that when we encounter great difficulties in our families, all family members must pray to God.
2. The second lesson is that when we face great difficulties, we must first realize and admit that we do not have the strength or ability to solve these problems on our own. At the same time, we must acknowledge that only God in heaven has the strength and ability to resolve these overwhelming difficulties. Therefore, we learn that we must trust and rely on God, seeking His help.
3. The third lesson is that when facing tremendous challenges, we should remain still before God and reflect on the grace He has previously shown us.
4. The fourth lesson is that no matter how much Satan and his forces attack our family, we should not be afraid or discouraged. The reason for this is that this spiritual battle is not ours, but God's. Even when we face overwhelming difficulties, we must trust in the words given by God and His servants, and with the assurance of salvation and victory, we should give thanks to God and praise that His love is everlasting. When we do this, God will transform the "valley of trouble (Achor)" into a "valley of blessing (praise)."

As I was meditating on today's passage, Colossians 3:18-21, I wondered what kind of family would obey these words. While reflecting, I became particularly interested in the second half of Colossians 3:16 and 3:17, which

we had already meditated on: "... singing to God with gratitude in your hearts" (v. 16b), and "giving thanks to God the Father through him" (v. 17b). When I linked these verses to Colossians 3:18-21, I thought that a family that obeys God's word is a "family that praises God the Father with gratitude in their hearts." Therefore, under the title "A Family that Praises God the Father with Gratitude," I want to meditate on four lessons that God gives to our family through the passage Colossians 3:18-21: (1) God's message to wives, (2) God's message to husbands, (3) God's message to children, (4) God's message to parents.

"My thoughts on family problems and crises" are as follows: (1) Family problems are very personal, so I believe they inevitably cause deep wounds and extreme stress. (2) Family problems make us keenly aware of our human limitations. (3) Family problems can be utterly hopeless without God's help. (4) I believe we should see the crisis in the family as an opportunity given by God, and with faith, patiently endure and rely on God, seeking His help. (5) That opportunity is that through the crisis, God changes the couple, parents, and children. (6) One key element of this change is that through the breaking and shattering of the self, we are made to trust and rely completely on God, and ultimately, He works all things together for good (Romans 8:28), allowing us to taste His goodness (Psalms 34:8). (7) By trusting in God more, we receive the great grace and blessing of knowing that "Be still and know that I am God" (46:10).

### **First, what is God's message to wives?**

Colossians 3:18 says "Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord." In Ephesians 5:22, the Bible says, "Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord." The Korean Modern Bible renders it as, "Wives, submit to your husbands as you do to the Lord." Pastor Lloyd-Jones, in his book *Spiritual Life*, says: "... What does the command to 'submit as to the Lord' mean? It means, 'Wives, submit to your husbands because it is part of your duty to the Lord, and doing so is a reflection of your submission to the Lord.'" If our female believers are not submitting to their husbands, it means they are not fulfilling their duty to the Lord. Moreover, it shows that they are not submitting to the Lord. It might seem to others that these women have great faith, but in God's eyes, they are not women of great faith. A woman who does not submit to her husband, who can be seen with physical eyes, is not submitting to the unseen Lord. Some women believers might ask, "If my husband does not believe in Jesus, should I still submit to him as I do to the Lord?" 1 Peter 3:1-5 (Korean Modern Bible) says: "Wives, in the same way, submit yourselves to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewelry or fine clothes. Rather, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to adorn themselves. They submitted themselves to their own husbands." As I meditated on this passage, I wrote this short reflection: "Wives, do not focus on outward adornment that is merely flashy. Instead, beautify your inner self with a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God. And wives, you should adorn yourselves by submitting to your husbands. When you submit to your husband,

even if he does not believe the Lord, your behavior will speak louder than words, and he will be led to believe in God. Your husbands are watching how you live a clean and godly life, serving the Lord."

What kind of woman do you consider to have great faith? Typically, when we think of a woman with great faith, we might think of someone who prays fervently in the church. This is because we believe that a woman who prays fervently to God is someone who trusts in God and relies on Him. Therefore, we might think of women like Hannah, the mother of Samuel, as examples of women with great faith. Some women might even pray earnestly to God for children, saying, "If God remembers me and grants me a child, I will dedicate that child to God for his whole life" (see 1 Samuel 1:11, Korean Modern Bible). When we see women who earnestly and devotedly seek God in prayer, we tend to think of them as women of great faith.

In Matthew 15:21-28, there is a woman who is specifically called "a woman with great faith" by Jesus (v. 28). This woman is described in Mark 7:25-26 as a "Greek" and a "Syrophenician" woman. The term "Greek" indicates that she was a Gentile, not a Jew, and the term "Syrophenician" means she was from the Phoenician region of Syria. This people group was descended from the Canaanite nations who were driven north during the conquest of Canaan by the Jews (Park). Therefore, Matthew refers to her simply as "a Canaanite woman" (Matthew 15:22). This Canaanite woman had a young daughter who was possessed by an evil spirit. As soon as she heard about Jesus, she sought Him out and approached Him (v. 22). So, my question is, why did Jesus say to this woman, "Woman, you have great faith" (v. 28)? I believe there are at least two reasons for this.

(1) A woman with great faith is one who believes that Jesus is the Lord and the Christ.

According to the Jewish historian Josephus, the region of Tyre, where Jesus met the Canaanite woman, was part of the Syrophenician land, located to the north of Galilee. This area was inhabited by Gentiles who harbored animosity toward the Jews. However, this Gentile Canaanite woman, upon hearing about Jesus, immediately came to Him and knelt at His feet. The reason she did so is that she did not view Jesus merely as a Jew like the other Gentiles; instead, she believed Jesus was the "Son of David" (Matthew 15:22). It was with this faith that she approached Jesus.

(2) A woman with great faith is one who earnestly petitions the Lord.

She cried out to the Lord, "Have mercy on me," for her daughter was grievously possessed by a demon and suffering terribly. She continued to cry out to Jesus (v. 23). Even when Jesus did not answer her and remained silent in response to her earnest cries (v. 23), she persisted, following Him and continuing to call out. What she desperately sought from Jesus was for Him to cast the demon out of her daughter (Mark 7:26). Ultimately, Jesus heard the earnest prayer of this woman with great faith and granted her the blessing of the kingdom of heaven. As a result, her demon-possessed daughter was healed and made whole.

Women with great faith, when they truly believe and hold Jesus as their Lord in their hearts, my question is: "Do they believe in Jesus as Lord and keep Him in their hearts not only in the church but also in their homes?" The reason I ask this question is that, perhaps, some of the women we consider to have great faith may live as if Jesus is their Lord and obey His word both inside and outside the church, making tremendous efforts to live in devotion to His teachings. However, in their homes, they might not be living in the same way. The statement that these women with great faith are not living in obedience to the Lord's word in their homes means that, as mentioned in today's passage (Colossians 3:18), they are not submitting to their husbands. This results in "God's word being maligned" (Titus 2:5, Korean Modern Bible). The Bible clearly says that wives should submit to their husbands as it is "fitting for those who belong to the Lord" (Colossians 3:18, Korean Modern Bible), but it appears that even women with great faith in the church and outside the church may not be living according to this command within their homes. If this is true, we must ask, "Is it right, in God's sight, for women who submit only to the Lord but not to their husbands, believing that obeying only the Lord is enough?" What do you think? Is it right to think that submitting to the Lord alone is sufficient while not obeying the husband, as the Bible commands?

The word of God is clear for women of faith. God's word commands you to submit to your husbands (Colossians 3:18; Ephesians 5:22; 1 Peter 3:1, 5). Why should you submit to your husbands? The Bible gives three reasons:

(1) Because the husband is the head of the wife.

This is what Ephesians 5:23 says: "For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church ...." This scripture teaches the position or role of the husband in the family. It says that the husband is the head of the wife. Additionally, this scripture suggests that there should be order in the family, as it clearly defines the position of the husband. When the wife recognizes and acknowledges her husband's role as "my head," and accepts that he is the leader of the family, this helps preserve the husband's self-esteem. This is one of the wife's important responsibilities. In a book by Pastor Dong-won Lee, "The New Family Acts," there is a survey that reveals the five things men need most from their wives. The first is self-esteem. A wise wife recognizes her husband's position as the head and leader of the family, and she submits to him, thus building up his need for self-esteem.

(2) Because it is fitting for the wife to submit to her husband in the Lord.

Colossians 3:18 says: "Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord." Our God is not a God of disorder but of peace (1 Corinthians 14:33). Therefore, in a family established by the Lord, there is not disorder but peace. That is, a peaceful family has order. To maintain that order, each person must faithfully and humbly fulfill their biblical responsibility within the family. For wives, that responsibility is to submit to their husbands. The Bible says that this is what is fitting in the Lord. This is the wife's duty. According

to the family structure that the Lord has established, it is appropriate (fitting) and right (natural) for the wife to submit to her husband as she would to the Lord.

(3) To lead an unbelieving husband to salvation.

1 Peter 3:1 says: "Wives, in the same way submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives." Many believing wives with unbelieving husbands are actively involved in church life but neglecting their home life. While they may be good examples in the church, they are not setting the right example at home. This is an imbalanced Christian life. What should they do? A wise wife is an example not only in church but especially in the home. She submits to her unbelieving husband as she would to the Lord, setting an example at home as well. Dr. Yoon-sun Park said: "An unbelieving husband can be moved by seeing his wife's godliness and come to realize the truth of the gospel, leading him to repentance. This is a practical way to share God's gospel. If our gospel proclamation does not align with our good life, it becomes powerless" (Park). A wise wife does not only speak the gospel but shows the truth of the gospel through her actions. She does not merely say to her unbelieving husband, "Let's go to church." Rather, by submitting to him as she does to the Lord, she demonstrates the truth of the gospel. She shows Jesus Christ through her life. Therefore, the Lord uses her to bring salvation to her unbelieving husband.

So, how does a wise wife submit to her husband? The Bible teaches two things:

(1) A wise wife submits to her husband as she does to the Lord.

Ephesians 5:22b, 24a say: "As to the Lord" (v. 22b), "just as the church submits to Christ ..." (v. 24a). Why should a wife submit to her husband as she does to the Lord? The reason is that "the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the church" (v. 23). The word "husband" in Hebrew means "Baal" or "master," and in Greek, it means "lord" or "man above." Therefore, the husband is meant to be the caretaker and a gentle authority in the home. The apostle Peter says, "Wives, in the same way submit yourselves to your own husbands ..." (1 Peter 3:1). The phrase "in the same way" refers to the idea found in 1 Peter 2:18, where servants are told to submit to their masters. Therefore, Sarah also called her husband Abraham "lord" and submitted to him (1 Peter 3:6, Genesis 18:12). A wise wife knows that the Lord has established her husband as the head of the household and acknowledges his authority by submitting to him. She listens attentively to him and respects his position. The word "submission" is a combination of two concepts: "under" (preposition) and "to listen well." Thus, when a wife submits to her husband, it primarily means that she listens well to him and acknowledges his authority (Lee).

(2) A wise wife submits to her husband with reverence for Christ.

Ephesians 5:21a says: "Out of reverence for Christ ...." In the same way that Christ "humbled Himself" (Philippians 2:3), "emptied Himself" (v. 7), and "became obedient to death" (v. 8), a wise wife, following the example of Jesus, submits to her husband out of reverence for Christ.

So, what should a wife submit to her husband in? In all things. Ephesians 5:24b says: "... Wives should submit to their husbands in everything."

What is the difference between a good wife and a bad wife? A good wife satisfies a good husband, while a bad wife silences her husband. A perfect wife never expects a perfect husband. A wise wife governs her husband through obedience (Internet). I hope you become a wise wife who submits to her husband out of reverence for the Lord, just as you would to the Lord.

The great evangelist of the century, Pastor Billy Graham, had a wife, Ruth Graham, who supported him excellently through prayer. A Christian journalist once asked her: "Mrs. Ruth, you have lived as the wife of the pastor who is considered the greatest evangelist after the Apostle Paul for many decades. Over all these years, have you ever considered divorce?" Mrs. Ruth Graham replied, "No! Never! But I have thought about it almost every day!" Curious, the journalist asked, "What do you mean?" Mrs. Ruth Graham smiled and said, "Murder... yes, murder!" Have any of you wives ever felt so angry with your husbands that you wanted to kill them? 1 John 3:15 in the Korean Modern Bible says: "Anyone who hates a brother or sister is a murderer ...."

## **Second, what does God say to husbands?**

Colossians 3:19, says: "Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them." God has appointed husbands as the head of the household and given them divine authority. With that authority comes great responsibility. What a weighty responsibility our husbands bear! That responsibility is for husbands to love their wives and family members (Ephesians 5:25), to protect and provide for them. They must protect and provide with sacrifice for the well-being of their wives and family members. In Colossians 3:19, the Bible gives two instructions to husbands:

### **(1) The Bible says husbands must love their wives.**

How should our husbands love their wives? Ephesians 5:25 says: "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her." Here are five ways to think about it:

#### **(a) Our husbands should consider their wives as a blessing that God has given them.**

Proverbs 18:22 says: "He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favor from the Lord." This does not refer to just any wife, but specifically to a "good wife" (an excellent wife) (12:4), a "wise wife"

(prudent wife) (19:14), or a "wife of noble character" (31:10). Such a woman is competent (v. 10), upright, and virtuous. She is wise and discerning, and she helps her husband well. The Bible says that anyone who finds such a wise, virtuous, and noble wife is blessed and has received favor from God. A husband who has such a wife is truly blessed because a wife like this becomes a precious blessing to him.

But why do so many husbands not consider their wives as the blessing that God has given them? What is the reason for this? One of the reasons is that the woman is not a virtuous, wise, or good woman, but rather "a woman who brings shame" (Proverbs 12:4). A "woman who brings shame" refers to a woman who is quarrelsome and argumentative (Park). She is also a woman who makes her husband feel ashamed through her disgraceful words or actions (Internet). The Bible speaks about quarrelsome women in this way: "It is better to live in a corner of the roof than share a house with a quarrelsome wife" (21:9), "Better to live in a desert land than with a quarrelsome and fretful woman" (25:24). Perhaps some men would want to make excuses like this: "God did not give me a virtuous wife, but rather a quarrelsome and angry one. How can I consider such a wife a blessing?" Doesn't that sound like a reasonable excuse? If I were to hear such words, I would want to tell that brother, "God did not give you a quarrelsome and angry wife. You chose her, so take responsibility and nurture her to become a virtuous woman." In many cases, it seems that we men reject the wise, virtuous, and good women that God gives us, and instead choose women who are attractive and charming but later become quarrelsome and angry, and then we marry them. If we made that choice, we must take responsibility and dedicate ourselves to nurturing our wives into virtuous women. Too many of us men are acting irresponsibly toward the wives we chose to marry. They are not afraid to speak curses to their wives and, through their actions, make their wives feel like they are cursed. In other words, many wives today live without feeling loved by their husbands. How miserable is the life of such a woman? We husbands must see our wives as the blessings God has given us. A wife is a blessing that God has given to us. We must rejoice in our wives and always be content with the embrace of that wife.

**(b) We husbands must honor our wives.**

1 Peter 3:7 says: "Husbands, in the same way, be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers." Research in modern social science has revealed that there are three basic needs that a wife has in marriage. The first is to be honored (the other two are to be understood and respected). We husbands must honor our wives. The Lord honors our wives, so who are we to dishonor the daughters of God whom the Lord cherishes? 1 John 4:20 says: "Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen." If we, as husbands, claim to honor the Lord and praise God, who is invisible, but fail to honor our wives, who are visible, this is hypocrisy.

Today, June 16th, in the United States, we celebrate "Father's Day." I received a "Happy Father's Day" photo from an Indian missionary, and I thought the acronym "F.A.T.H.E.R.S." applied well:

F: Faithful (Fathers are faithful).

A: Always there (Fathers are always there).

T: Trustworthy (Fathers can be trusted).

H: Honoring (We honor our fathers).

E: Ever-loving (Fathers love unconditionally).

R: Righteous (Fathers are righteous).

S: Supportive (Fathers provide unwavering support).

As I thought of an Indian missionary and her father, a man of God, I reflected on these words and applied them to myself as well.

- Our father, the head of a family who believes in and loves Jesus, is a 'man of God.'
- The loving God has greatly influenced us, His children, through our father, a man of God, and He continues to do so, and will continue to do so until we die.
- Although we will temporarily be separated from such a loving father in this world, we are confident that we will meet again in the world to come. Nevertheless, the longing for our beloved father seems beyond words.
- We also believe that it is a great grace and blessing from God that we live by believing in and loving Jesus, and living for Jesus and the Gospel, just as we have learned from our father.
- Just as we received a great positive influence from our father, we hope that our children will receive the same from us.

**(c) Our husbands should take pleasure in their wives.**

Proverbs 5:18 says: "Rejoice in the wife of your youth." How should our husbands rejoice in their wives? Our husbands should always be content with the embrace of their wives. Proverbs 5:19 says: "She is like a loving doe, a graceful deer; may her breasts satisfy you always, may you ever be intoxicated with her love." The idea of always being content with her embrace means that our husbands should be captivated by her love. Particularly, our husbands should be captivated by her virtues more than by her physical beauty. This is the meaning behind the comparison of "loving doe" and "graceful deer" (Park). When this happens, we will find our "well" and our "spring" (v. 15) in our wives' love, and we will never forsake them to go after the house of a prostitute. In other words, when we are satisfied in both affection and sexuality through our wives, we will never long for the embrace or love of another woman (v. 20).



Proverbs 5:16-17 says: "Why should your springs overflow outside, your streams of water in the public squares? Let them be yours alone, never to be shared with strangers."

However, how many husbands are allowing their springs to overflow outside, sharing them with others? How many men are abandoning their wives and going to other women? Today, many husbands do not rejoice in their wives, are not satisfied with their embrace, and do not cherish their love (v. 19). Instead, they long for the love of others and embrace other women (v. 20). When husbands abandon their wives and start affairs with other women, they will inevitably face the consequences of their sinful choices (vv. 7-14). The consequences include "loss of honor" (v. 9), "loss of time" (v. 9), "loss of wealth" (v. 10), "loss of health" (v. 11), and "guilt and regret" (vv. 12-14). Therefore, we must understand the consequences of adultery and not long for the love of another woman. Instead, we should always cherish our wives and take pleasure in them.

In today's passage from Colossians 3:19, the Bible gives two instructions for husbands. The first instruction is that husbands should love their wives. How should our husbands love us? We have already reflected on three out of five biblical principles: (1) Husbands should regard their wives as a blessing from God (Proverbs 18:22). (2) Husbands should honor their wives (1 Peter 3:7). (3) Husbands should take pleasure in their wives (Proverbs 5:18). How should husbands take pleasure in their wives? Our husbands should always be content with and fully appreciate the embrace of their wives. Proverbs 5:19 says, "She is like a loving doe, a graceful deer; may her breasts satisfy you always, may you ever be intoxicated with her love." The phrase "always be content with her embrace" means that husbands should be captivated by their wives' love.

Last Sunday, we learned the third biblical principle, and on Friday, I read a short devotional message based on Song of Solomon 4:9, shared by a brother I know through my online ministry. Song of Solomon 4:9 says, "You have stolen my heart, my sister, my bride; you have stolen my heart with one glance of your eyes, with one jewel of your necklace." The brother shared that "you have stolen my heart" refers to the idea of losing control of your heart and being captivated by the other person, so that at any moment, your heart is entirely directed toward them. This is how the bridegroom, Jesus, is captivated by the smallest glance of the bride, the church, or even by the small decorations around her neck. As I reflected on this devotional, three Bible verses came to mind: (1) Isaiah 43:4, "Since you are precious and honored in my sight, and because I love you, I will give people in exchange for you, nations in exchange for your life." (2) Zephaniah 3:17, "The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing." (3) Psalms 139:17-18, "How precious to me are your thoughts, God! How vast is the sum of them! Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand—when I awake, I am still with you."

When I reflected on the fact that the Bridegroom, our Lord, loves His Bride, the Church, in this way, I began to ask myself, “Am I loving my wife this much?” As Proverbs 5:19 says, “Am I always and fully content with my wife’s embrace?” and “Has my heart been captivated by my wife’s love?” According to Dr. Park, husbands should be captivated by their wives’ virtues rather than their beauty. So, yesterday, Saturday, I asked myself, “What are the virtues of my wife that have captivated my heart?” However, since I didn’t fully understand the meaning of the word “virtue,” I looked it up online. According to the Korean dictionary, it means “morally good and beautiful actions or qualities” (Internet). But I was more drawn to the meaning shared by Pastor Jonathan Edwards in his book “The Nature of True Virtue.” Pastor Edwards states that true virtue is “an unconditional love for God and an unconditional love for the saints. However, the true owner of true virtue is God. God is the embodiment of true virtue. When we are born again by the Holy Spirit that God gives us, we possess this true virtue. Therefore, we love God unconditionally and, also, we love the saints who are born again by the Holy Spirit unconditionally, because the Holy Spirit, God Himself, dwells in them” (Internet). In thinking about my wife’s virtues more specifically, I reflected again on the six qualities of the “virtuous woman” found in Proverbs 31:10-31, which I had previously meditated on. I thought about which of these qualities my wife possesses. Out of the six, I believe my wife exhibits three of them: (1) “A virtuous woman gives her husband trust” (Proverbs 31:11-12). My wife gives me her trust, and because of that, I trust her. (2) “A virtuous woman makes her husband respected by others” (v. 23). My wife helps me gain respect and recognition from others. (3) “A virtuous woman has wise speech” (v. 26). My wife has wise speech, and I believe that she speaks “the right word at the right time” (v. 23). She is thoughtful and careful with her words, considering many factors before speaking (Park).

**(d) Husbands should love and cherish their wives as their own bodies.**

Ephesians 5:28, 33a say: “In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself ... However, each one of you must also love his wife as he loves himself.” Just as husbands take care of the needs of their own bodies, our love for our wives should meet their needs and promote their growth and development. Husbands should love their wives with two purposes in mind: to make them holy (v. 26a) and to present them to the Lord as radiant wives (v. 27). The way to achieve these purposes is mentioned in Ephesians 5:26, where it says, “to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word,” and in 1 Peter 1:22, “Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth ....” Husbands should teach their wives with the truth of God’s Word and guide them to obey it, so they will live lives that are separated from the world—lives of holiness, imitating God’s ways. Therefore, husbands should raise their wives to be “radiant wives” before the Lord, where His glory shines through them.

**(e) Husbands must be willing to sacrifice for their wives.**

Ephesians 5:25 says: "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her." Husbands should practice sacrificial love, and the goal of this love must be solely for the benefit of the wife. It should not be with the expectation of receiving reward but simply out of a desire to care for her. Husbands should learn to sacrifice in small ways. For example, listening attentively to their wives, spending time with them, occasionally taking out the trash, or even pretending to wash the dishes—small acts of attention and care are ways to show great love.

**(f) Husbands should take an active role in raising their children.**

Ephesians 6:4 says: "Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord." As the head of the household, husbands should not only ensure that their wives are nurtured by God's Word, but they must also raise their children with the training and instruction of the Lord. We should not leave all responsibility for child-rearing to our wives and remain passive. We must take an active, proactive role and fulfill our responsibility in raising our children.

In his book "Life in the Spirit," Pastor Lloyd-Jones said: "A husband must love his wife as his own body, as part of himself. He does not insult her. He does not disregard her. He does not view her as something perfect. He protects her from her weaknesses. He strengthens her." I hope that we husbands will be dedicated to loving our wives in this way.

Yesterday, after the Saturday early morning prayer meeting, I shared a sermon video titled "Sadness is an Opportunity (1)" in various places. While preparing for today's Sunday service, I visited a Christian website called "GRACE TO KOREA." As I was skimming through the article titles, one caught my eye: "What the Bible Says About Marriage: 10. Resolving Marital Conflicts (1)." I became interested and read it. In the article, it mentions, "A spouse is the object of love, but in conflict, they become the object of a fight," and explains the meaning of the word "conflict" according to the Standard Korean Dictionary: "Just as wild yams and vines intertwine, conflict occurs when individuals or groups have different goals or interests, causing them to be hostile or collide, or being in such a state." It suggests that even in marriage, when goals or interests diverge, there can be hostility. So, why do marital conflicts arise? I'd like to think about two reasons:

- "Differences"

"If you've ever said, 'I just don't understand,' to your spouse, then you already know that conflicts arise because of differences. Differences, in and of themselves, are not sin, but because marriage is the union of two different people, these differences require continuous understanding and acceptance from both sides in order to become one."

- "Sin"

"While differences between a husband and wife are not inherently sinful, both pride and fleshly desires in each spouse are the main sources of conflict, with sin being the root cause (Galatians 5:19-21; James 4:1-3). Sin begins as a minor desire but ends up as a strong demand. A need becomes a want, and a want quickly turns into a demand."

What caught my attention in the article was the section titled "Characteristics of couples who wrongly avoid or incorrectly resolve conflicts."

- "Silent Withdrawal"

"Instead of actively resolving the issue, one hopes to just let things go without doing anything. However, this is not loving your wife but making her suffer (Colossians 3:19)."

- "Becoming Isolated from Each Other"

"When couples are physically distant from each other, there's an expectation that they can find a certain peace by themselves. However, this is far from loving each other fervently and covering a multitude of sins (1 Peter 4:8). This is a situation where a couple gives up intimacy and seeks to avoid major conflict. Sometimes, couples avoid discussions on issues, fearing the problem might escalate, or hide past hurts or deeply rooted wounds in their hearts. They might think they've avoided conflict, but in reality, they've just swept it under the rug. Because they didn't address it in time, the issue festers and creates even bigger conflicts."

## **Second, husbands must not cause their wives distress.**

Colossians 3:19 says, "Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them." When do we husbands distress our wives? I think sometimes we don't even realize when we are doing so. Or, if we are aware and still distress them, then it is not loving them as Christ loved the church. We husbands need to be sensitive to when and why our wives are distressed because of us. Therefore, we should not cause them distress. Distressing our wives is like distressing ourselves, because we are one body. In the family, a foolish husband, rather than loving his wife, is harsh with her (v. 19). He answers her words with a harsh response rather than a gentle one, causing her to be angry (Proverbs 15:1). Furthermore, a foolish husband causes distress by nagging his wife. "Among all the nagging, what hurts the wife's heart the most is when the husband says, 'You've been at home all day, and what exactly are you doing? Can't you even do this right?'—this kind of unconditional criticism. A husband who nags, especially one who holds the financial power in the household, thinks of his wife as inferior to him, whether intentionally or

unintentionally, and repeatedly causes hurt with daily criticism. Most husbands who nag, rather than communicating with their wives, tend to yell, and husbands who reject communication with their wives may be struggling with psychological issues, making it difficult for them to communicate properly, leading to continuous nagging (Internet).

In today's passage, Colossians 3:19, the Bible says, "Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them." As I reflect on this verse again, I thought, "The thing that hurts a wife the most is when her husband does not love her." On January 11, 2018, I wrote a meditation under the title "A Woman Who Is Not Loved by Her Husband," based on Genesis 29:31, reflecting on Leah, who was not loved by her husband, Jacob. A wife who is not loved by her husband must inevitably suffer deeply. Especially for daughters of God, who were created to receive God's love, it is heartbreaking to think that not only do they not receive love from their husbands, but they may also be hated, and live through years filled with pain, wounds, and tears. How sorrowful and painful is that life? The reason Leah was not loved by Jacob was because Jacob loved her younger, beautiful sister Rachel more than her (vv. 17-18). Wives who are not loved by their husbands often, unconsciously, pour excessive love onto their children to compensate for the love they lack from their husbands. As a result, these children may become overly protected or overly dependent on their mothers, at risk of becoming overly attached or clingy.

In the end, a poor marital relationship leads to a distorted parent-child relationship. "In this case, parents unconsciously attempt to fulfill their unmet emotional, social, and sexual needs through their children. Additionally, they try to compensate for their resentment and anger toward their spouse by aligning with their children against their spouse" (Internet). Many couples may say, "I'm enduring this for the sake of the kids," and then consider divorce once the children are older. In fact, a 2019 article I read reported that in Korea, the total number of divorce cases in one year was 108,684, with 33.3% (36,327 cases) being "gray divorce" (couples who have been married for over 20 years), followed by newlywed couples (0-4 years) at 21.4%. When marital relationships are not harmonious or intimate, wives, in particular, may unconsciously pour excessive love onto their children because they may subconsciously seek the love they lack from their husbands. We need to think about what our relationship as a couple is like right now. The reason for this is that children, who are raised by mothers and fathers who focus only on them, may be developing emotional distress. Ultimately, according to today's passage in Colossians 3:19, I believe that when husbands love their wives, they are not making them suffer. In other words, husbands should love their wives "as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her" (Ephesians 5:25). Ephesians 5:28 in the Korean Modern Bible says, "In the same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself."

### **Third, what does God say to children?**

Colossians 3:20 says, "Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord." On May 11, 2021, I read an article titled "'If You Follow Your Parents Well, You Will End Up Like Me' — A Regret by So-young Noh," which caught my attention. The article included this content: "... Director Noh told her acquaintances that her

mother, Kim, said, 'I'm sorry for not allowing you to follow your own wishes and for keeping you confined at home, for telling you to wait for a husband who didn't return, and for insisting that a woman's happiness is in the family. You are a different person than I am, and it seems like I was acting out of my own selfishness.' Director Noh continued, 'If you follow your parents' advice well, you will end up like me. I want to tell all young people this' (Internet). As I read this article, I thought it was something we should seriously reflect on, and I wrote my thoughts. The phrase that stood out to me from the article was, "If you follow your parents' advice well, you will end up like me." This phrase made me think deeply because the Bible clearly says, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right" (Ephesians 6:1). But So-young Noh said, "If you follow your parents' advice well, you will end up like me." When asked, "Whose words should we follow?" most of us would naturally say we should follow the words of the Bible. However, I believe that even the words of So-young Noh should be taken seriously when it comes to following advice. In other words, while we should obey our parents according to God's Word, I think we need to carefully reflect on both the command to obey "in the Lord" (Ephesians 6:1) and So-young Noh's words, praying and seeking God's wisdom to discern what we should and should not obey from our parents' words. This means that children should not simply obey their parents' words without question. For example, I never want my beloved children, Dillon, Yeri, and Karis, to be children who blindly obey everything I say as their father. The reason is that my words can certainly be wrong when I speak to them. How can I know God's will completely? How can I speak to my children in faith, fully aligned with God's Word? I am a father who can never do that. Yet, when God works in the lives of my three children, fulfilling His purpose, if I, in my ignorance, give them instructions on what they should or shouldn't do, it will be contradictory to what they are receiving from God in their relationship with Him. They each have their own guidance from God. What will happen if, as their father, I speak differently? I want my children to obey God's Word. The reason I wrote this with some passion after reading this article is that our parents, rather than raising children according to God's heart and will, often do so based on their own desires or incomplete faith and views on faith. If we fail to recognize this and, thinking we love our children, we overprotect and overly intervene, trying to control their choices and actions, what will happen to our children? Hmmm ... I don't believe this is right.

In today's passage, Colossians 3:20, the Bible says, "Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord." As I reflect on this passage, I also consider it in connection with Ephesians 6:1. Instead of focusing on the idea that children should "obey parents in everything," I focused on the part that says to obey "in the Lord" (Ephesians 6:1). The reason is that this is the right thing for those who believe in the Lord to do (v. 1). If we reflect on Ephesians 6:1 from the opposite perspective, we can see that children obeying their parents outside of the Lord is not the right thing for believers to do—it is wrong (incorrect). In other words, even though Colossians 3:20 says, "Children, obey your parents in everything ...." Ephesians 6:1 says, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord ...." So, if we look at both passages together, the Bible's teaching to children is: "Children, obey your parents in everything in the Lord." However, it seems that children often misunderstand this and think they must obey their parents in everything without understanding this holistic biblical message. That is, they may think they should obey their parents even when they speak outside of God's will. If parents speak out of their own will or selfish desires, children need to discern, using God's wisdom, that this is not the same as obeying their parents "in the Lord." This is the

misunderstanding I see, where children think they must blindly obey their parents even when those instructions are not aligned with God's will. As stated in Colossians 3:20, this is not the kind of action that pleases the Lord.

When children obey their parents, they should seek to please the Lord, rather than simply pleasing their parents. I still remember, about 34 years ago when I was in college, a junior in school seemed troubled by her poor grades. I encouraged her to do her best and leave the results to God. Her response was that she was worried her parents wouldn't be happy with her. In other words, she was concerned that her parents would not be pleased if she didn't do well in school. I think even now, many children, in their own way, love their parents and try to make them happy in any way they can. However, there may be times when children wonder whether making their parents happy truly means pleasing the Lord. The reason is that there are times when pleasing parents and pleasing the Lord conflict with each other. When such a conflict arises in their hearts, what should children do? Perhaps they need to be trained to pray as Jesus did in the Garden of Gethsemane: "Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will" (Matthew 26:39, Korean Modern Bible), and pray, "Do not let me follow my parents' will, but let me follow your will, Lord." The important thing is that, from the perspective of children, it is admirable to obey their parents to make them happy, but if this obedience conflicts with their desire to please the Lord, they should obey the Lord in order to please Him.

So, how can children obey their parents while also seeking to please the Lord? First, they need to verify whether their parents' instructions align with God's Word. This is why Apostle Paul says in Ephesians 6:1, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right." In other words, if a parent's instructions are not in accordance with the Lord's Word, it is not obedience to the Lord to follow those instructions; instead, children should disobey. Acts 4:19 comes to mind: "Peter and John replied, 'Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God'" (Korean Modern Bible). Children must decide if obeying their parents, when it goes against God's Word, is truly right in God's eyes. If they confirm that their parents' instructions align with God's Word, they should naturally obey those instructions. "This is what pleases the Lord" (Colossians 3:20). "This is what is right for those who believe in the Lord" (Ephesians 6:1, Korean Modern Bible). If children believe in the Lord, they will seek to please Him and obey His command to "obey your parents in everything" (Colossians 3:20), as it is the right thing to do in the Lord's eyes.

Proverbs 23:15-16 says: "My son, if your heart is wise, then my heart will be glad; if your lips speak what is right, my soul will rejoice." Children who make their parents happy and joyful are those who have wise hearts and speak with honesty (right words). These wise children listen to their parents' words (vv. 19, 22). Even if those words are a rebuke, they listen humbly (25:12). They seek more wisdom and guide their hearts in the right direction (23:19). They will never allow themselves to go down the path of recklessness (20:1). A wise child does not despise their aging parents (22:22). However, a child who despises their aging parents is a foolish one (11:12). In other words, such a child is foolish. The reason a foolish child despises their parents is that they are despising God's Word (13:13). Think about it. Ephesians 6:1 clearly says, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right," yet a foolish

child ignores and despises this command, and therefore does not obey their parents. A child who lacks wisdom not only despises God's Word but also despises their parents' words, refusing to listen to them (23:9). This is not right in the eyes of God. It is a sin against God (14:21).

### **Fourth and last, what is God's message to parents?**

Colossians 3:21 says: "Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged." An article titled "Church-going Parents: What Happens When They Do This, Children Leave the Church" states, "One of the biggest tasks the Korean church must address is how to keep young people from leaving the church despite the aging congregation. As the church ages, it is crucial for parents in families with children to play a key role in continuing the legacy of faith and ensuring that future generations settle into the church" (Internet). It continues, "In this regard, parents with children are required to set an example of faith to prevent their children from leaving the church. On the other hand, there are six faith attitudes that parents should absolutely avoid: (1) occasionally attending church, (2) complaining about the church, (3) limiting children to youth culture, (4) ignoring important questions, (5) frequently changing churches, and (6) treating the gospel as insignificant. The church is a community created by the gospel of Christ. However, when parents treat the gospel as insignificant or push it to the periphery of their lives, their children become disconnected from the church, which is the body of Christ. If the church is seen by the children as simply a place to attend rather than the gospel-centered priority in life, they will push the gospel to the margins of their own lives as well, just as their parents did (Internet).

In today's passage from Colossians 3:21, the Bible says: "Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged." Apostle Paul is instructing parents not to provoke their children to anger. In the Korean Modern Bible, it says, "Parents, do not provoke your children to anger." As I meditated on this verse, I was led to ask, "Do we, as parents, truly understand and empathize with our children's emotions?" I think the reason this question arose is because, personally, I feel I have often failed to fully understand or share in my children's emotions. As a father to three children, I still don't know exactly how to avoid provoking Dillon, Yeri, and Karis' emotions to the point where they become angry. One thing I do know is that when my wife and I, in our relationship, fail to love each other with God's love, it seems to make our children sad. And if I fail to live a life consistent with my words or act impulsively, I seem to provoke their emotions, causing them to feel anger. Of course, there must be countless other times when I have unintentionally provoked my children's emotions, but the real problem is that I don't always understand their emotions.

In Ephesians 6:4a, Apostle Paul also says, "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger." In other words, parents are instructed not to provoke, stimulate, or enrage their children. How can we, as parents, provoke our children to anger? There are several possible answers. For example, (1) by yelling at them or becoming angry with them, (2) by making provocative remarks, (3) by disciplining them incorrectly, (4) by living poorly as parents while criticizing their mistakes, (5) by treating children as though they are possessions and imposing authoritarian control, or even



mistreating them or disregarding their dignity (Jong-jin Pi). The Bible Exposition commentary lists six reasons why fathers might provoke their children to anger and discourage them: (1) saying one thing but acting differently, (2) always blaming the children and never offering praise, (3) being inconsistent and unfair in discipline, (4) showing favoritism within the home, (5) failing to keep promises, and (6) belittling things that are very important to their children. In my opinion, one of the reasons parents might provoke their children is when they do not love one another, especially when the father is not showing love to the mother. When children see their father not loving their mother, they feel anger. In fact, as children grow, if they see their father not loving their mother, causing her pain or suffering (perhaps even leading to illness), they may understandably harbor resentment toward their father. Moreover, our children can easily become discouraged.

I read an article under the title "Don't Provoke Your Children to Anger?" The article's advice was that "parents should help their children grow with confidence and not be discouraged." When do children feel hurt and angry with their parents? Understanding this is essential if we are to follow the command not to provoke our children to anger, right? According to the author of the article, after hearing answers from many people, the summarized reasons are as follows: "When children are discriminated against in comparison to their siblings, or when they face other forms of discrimination due to being a daughter or for various other reasons; when parents fail to keep their promises; when they witness their parents' double standards; when excessive pressure is placed on their studies; when they are forced to follow their parents' demands and cannot pursue the studies or path they want; and when they are burdened with too much responsibility because they are the eldest son or daughter, they get angry." "Among these reasons, the most common response was 'when parents fight.'" "The main reason children feel the most hurt, angry, and discouraged is when parents argue. Children are hurt when their parents fight" (internet).

The second part of Ephesians 6:4 says: "But bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord." Apostle Paul instructs parents to educate, strengthen, and raise their children until they mature. The word "bring them up" here is the same word used in Ephesians 5:29, where it says husbands should "nourish" their wives. In other words, fathers have the responsibility not only to nourish their wives but also to nourish their children as spiritual leaders in the home. So, how should parents raise their children?

(1) We parents should raise our children "in the training of the Lord."

In other words, after we, as parents, have been disciplined and corrected by the Lord, we should raise our children in the same way, following the path that the Lord walked. Proverbs 22:6 says: "Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it." We must teach our children the proper way to live, the wise path, and the way of a godly life. In teaching, I especially strive, although imperfectly, to teach my children and the children at church three things: (1) Right values, (2) Clear purpose, and (3) Eternal perspective on life.

(2) We parents should raise our children in the Lord's "instruction."

We, as parents, must counsel, warn, and also encourage our children with love. How exactly should we "instruct" our children? Tedd Tripp, in his book "Shepherding a Child's Heart," explains it in two ways: Rich, full communication and The rod. Raising children in the Lord's "instruction" refers to communication rather than the rod. So, how should we communicate with our children? There are three principles: (a) We should not talk to our children but rather talk with them. (b) We should not just express our own thoughts (Proverbs 18:13), but we should allow our children to express their thoughts. (c) We should focus on understanding our children. It is important to understand the nature of the struggles they are going through. We should put effort into understanding why they express their emotions the way they do.

I will conclude with a meditation on the Word. I pray that the Lord will establish each of our families (Ref: Matthew 16:18) and build them as homes that praise God the Father with a thankful heart. Based on today's text from Colossians 3:18-21, I meditated on the lessons God gives to our families under the title "Homes that Praise God the Father with a Thankful Heart," reflecting on four lessons: (1) God's word to wives is, "Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord" (Colossians 3:18), (2) God's word to husbands is, "Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them" (Colossians 3:19), (3) God's word to children is, "Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord" (Colossians 3:20), God's word to parents is, "Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged" (Colossians 3:21).

# When I look back on my family in 2023 ...

1. By God's great love and grace, my wife, our three children, and I have come this far.
2. Although I, as the head of the family, have not loved my wife and children properly (correctly), the Lord, the owner of our family, has loved them.
3. Even though this year has been one where I have fallen short as a husband to my wife and a father to my children, God has been with me in abundant grace, allowing me to carry out my family ministry, though imperfectly, until today.
4. Although I am not qualified to be my wife's husband or my children's father, I believe that my qualifications come from God (2 Corinthians 3:5).
5. What I am truly grateful for is that the Lord called my beloved son, Dillon, and made him His servant, anointing him and leading him to seminary. Furthermore, the Lord has appointed Dillon to serve as a pastor in the college ministry at the church he is currently attending.
6. I am also deeply thankful that the Lord has paired Dillon with Jessica as his life partner. This February, we had a meeting with Jessica's mother for the first time, and in December, Dillon proposed to Jessica. They plan to marry in the second half of next year.
7. I am truly grateful that the Lord sent my beloved daughter, Yeri, to Japan for a year of mission work. I am thankful that the Lord allowed me to glimpse through the eyes of faith how He is fulfilling His promise to me from 1 Peter 5:10. I am also deeply thankful that my wife and I were able to visit Japan in October to spend time with Yeri. I thank God for allowing us to create precious memories with our beloved daughter in the Lord.
8. I am truly grateful that the Lord has given my beloved daughter, Karis, a heart for missions. During the Thanksgiving holiday, while driving with my beloved wife and Karis to visit my mother-in-law and brother-in-law, Karis told me that she would rather do missions than get married. The Lord has truly given Karis a strong conviction about missions, and I am thankful for that. I also thank God for His

amazing work in Karis' life this year, as I have seen her spirituality and faith grow. I am excited to see what the Lord will do through her, especially as she currently serves as the president of the Christian club at her university.

9. I am truly thankful that my beloved wife, throughout this year, was able to engage in activities like running marathons, hiking, camping, and even rock climbing, all without any accidents. Although she is currently sick with the COVID-19 virus and unable to go to work or attend church today, and will also miss tomorrow's family New Year gathering, I am still thankful because this illness is allowing her to rest. It must have been challenging to balance full-time work, family ministry, church service, and all the activities, but I thank God that the Lord has given my wife good health—not just physically, but also strengthening her heart and spirit. As her husband, I am filled with gratitude toward God.
  
10. This year, the Lord has shown me great mercy, compassion, grace, and love. He has not only blessed me with personal time for sharing Bible meditation and internet ministry, but He has also fulfilled His promise of the multiplication of the loaves and fish (John 6:1-15). Moreover, the Lord has allowed me to serve at Victory Presbyterian Church, as He promised to build His church (Matthew 16:18), and He has entrusted me with family ministry, bringing me to this point. I am truly grateful. I thank God for enabling me to carry out all of this ministry this year, by His grace and love.

# Conclusion

I earnestly pray that the powerful wind of the Holy Spirit will blow through each of our homes, causing a flame of revival to ignite. I pray that the Holy Spirit, with the mighty Word of God, like a rod, will break the stubborn hearts of our family members, and with the fire of that Word, will melt our cold hearts. May the Word of God, like the sword of the Spirit, continue to pierce our consciences, leading us to recognize, acknowledge, confess, and repent of all the sins in our homes by relying on the power of Jesus' blood on the cross. I earnestly pray that even through the crises in our homes, the Holy Spirit will lead the husbands and fathers, as the heads of the family, to first confess and repent of the sins of the household before God. I pray that the Holy Spirit will bring repentance not only for the sins committed by our husbands in marital conflicts but also for the sins of the fathers in raising their children. I pray that the Holy Spirit will help the husbands repent of the sins of not submitting to their wives in the Lord, and that the wives, who may overly love their children with human love instead of God's love, will also repent. I pray that the Holy Spirit will bring repentance for the sins of children who do not honor their parents in the Lord, and for all sins of not loving their siblings according to the Lord's commandments. May the Holy Spirit bring to light these sins and help us realize them, so that by relying on the power of the blood of Jesus' cross, we may confess and repent. Furthermore, I pray that those of us who have been forgiven by God will be led by the Holy Spirit to forgive one another within our families. I pray that we will no longer hate one another due to the wounds, pain, and bitterness in our hearts. Through the powerful work of the Holy Spirit, may we, just as the Lord forgave us, also be able to forgive one another.

I earnestly pray that the powerful wind of the Holy Spirit will blow into our families, binding us together with the belt of peace, and help us diligently protect the unity of our families. I pray that the Holy Spirit will cause each member of our family to refuse to be those who break peace, but rather to be those who make peace and uphold the peace of our families. The Holy Spirit, who reconciles us with God and with one another, will lead us to obey the Word that brings reconciliation, and will help us faithfully carry out the role of peacemakers within our families. I even pray that through marital conflicts and disputes, the Holy Spirit will allow us as couples to understand each other more deeply, to acknowledge our differences, and to overcome them. May our differences serve to complement our shortcomings, so that as husband and wife, we may keep the unity created by the Holy Spirit, striving to live in one heart, one mind, and one love in the Lord. I pray that even if life's great storms overwhelm us and our family seems to be sinking like a ship, we will, like the prophet Jonah, cry out to God for salvation, knowing that "salvation belongs to the Lord," and trust that God will rescue our family.

I earnestly pray that the powerful wind of the Holy Spirit will blow into our families and restore them to their original state. Even if we feel we can no longer restore things on our own, I pray that the Holy Spirit will bring about a miraculous restoration in our families, even using family crises as a means to heal and restore every family member. Whether the crisis is in the marriage or with the children, I pray that the Lord, with His unchanging love, will restore our families and allow us to deeply experience God's love for restoration. May the Lord restore all of our painful emotions, wounds, and hurts, healing us from any negative influences or wounds we have received from our parents, and granting us true freedom in Christ. I believe that according to the Word of restoration given to each of our families, God will faithfully fulfill His promise. Although our families may be going through temporary trials, I trust that in His perfect time and according to His way, God will surely restore our families, making them strong, firm, and secure!

I earnestly pray that the powerful wind of the Holy Spirit will blow into our families, causing all of our family members to return solely to the Word of God. I pray that each of our families will be equipped with God's Word to fight against the deceitful attacks of Satan, who relentlessly strives to destroy our families, and that we may overcome through faith and win the victory. Although Satan is making every effort to destroy our families, I pray that the Lord will protect and safeguard all of our families, firmly establishing them upon the solid foundation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Rock, so that our families may remain steadfast and unshaken, no matter the winds of temptation. I also pray that the Lord will establish each of our families as godly, transformed households centered on Him, so that our families may shine as a fragrant aroma of Christ in this age when families are breaking apart. I pray that the Lord will first guide the heads of our households—the husbands and fathers—to dedicate themselves to family ministry, nurturing their beloved wives and children faithfully with God's Word, loving them first with God's love, and raising them with His Word. I pray that husbands and wives will grow into couples who are centered on Christ and resemble Him, trusting in God and, as a result, learning to trust one another. Furthermore, I pray that through their trust in God, they will become parents who can instill trust in their children. As parents, I pray that they will love their children with faith, love, and hope, nurturing them with God's Word, and that in God's perfect time, following the guidance of the Holy Spirit, they will be able to send their children out. I pray that the children, upon leaving, will rely more on God, obey His call, and follow their parents' example in faith. They will be raised up as workers for the Lord, with the Lord-centered dreams, serving in God's kingdom and for His church. Therefore, I pray that as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord alone!

I earnestly pray that the powerful wind of the Holy Spirit will blow into our homes and ignite the flames of revival. Just as the prophet Habakkuk cried out, "O Lord, revive Your work in the midst of the years" (Habakkuk 3:2), we too pray, "Lord, please send the strong wind of the Holy Spirit into our families and revive us." I pray that our Heavenly Father, who sees the desolation of our families, will have compassion on us, forgive our sins, and heal our families. Now, as we, all of us, unite in the Lord and begin to rebuild the broken foundation of our families, I pray that the powerful fire of the Holy Spirit will come upon us to burn away all our idols. Lord, let the fire of revival burn brightly in our families. Let the truth of Your Word renew our families. Let the river of God's grace overflow in each of our homes. Let the strong wind of the Holy Spirit blow and bring a new day filled with Your glory. O Lord, may

Your Kingdom come upon our families. May the powerful wind of the Holy Spirit blow into each of our families and bring a true revival of Your Word. May every member of our families submit to the authority of Your Word and love You with all our heart, soul, and mind, and love our neighbors as ourselves. Establish our families in obedience to the twofold command of the Kingdom of Heaven, and may we become families that give praise and worship to God the Father with grateful hearts. I earnestly pray all this in the precious name of Jesus Christ. Amen!