



By Elder Yoon
Hwan Choi
Of the Seventy

STRENGTHENED by the Word of God

*When I learned how to apply the words of the prophets, I changed my life
from what I wanted to be to what the Lord wanted me to be.*

While I was growing up in Korea, my father allowed his children to attend the church of our choice, but often during dinner we disagreed about our different religious beliefs. Because of this contention, my father wanted to unify our family's religious beliefs. Since my younger brother was going to meetings of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints with my uncle, my dad began attending meetings with them to learn more about the Church. I also attended and was impressed by fun Mutual activities and how the seminary program strengthened young people spiritually.

When I was 16, my parents and I were baptized, and the rest of our 23

family members and relatives joined the Church within seven months.

When we joined the Church, we committed to being fully active and to continuing to learn about gospel doctrines. We did this by studying the scriptures faithfully every day, along with reading many other Church books and manuals. During the next few years, I learned two important principles about staying strong in the Church:

1. Study the scriptures at seminary, church, and home.
2. Listen to and follow the counsel of the prophet.

STRENGTH IN THE SCRIPTURES

In addition to studying the scriptures at home, my brother and I also faithfully attended seminary and Mutual. In those days, we had Sunday School in the morning, with sacrament meeting in the late afternoon. Because of the distance to our meetinghouse, we stayed at the Church building, attended seminary class, and enjoyed visiting and being with other members of the Church until after sacrament meeting. A lot of young people were joining the Church in Korea at that time, and as we learned together and had fun at activities, we became close.

I was called to serve in my Aaronic Priesthood quorum and worked closely with the young women who served in their classes. We learned how to care for and pray for those we

led as well as how to plan activities together and use our time wisely.

During the week, I studied the scriptures for seminary before I did my schoolwork. When I was too tired to do my homework or was having challenges at school, I opened my seminary manual, studied, and prayed. I found that when I did that, I could refresh my mind and focus better on my homework. I still apply this in my life. Today, whenever I have a hard time, I still read my scriptures or general conference talks to refresh my mind.

Many high school students in Korea spend most of their time going to school and studying late. We learned that when we took time out for seminary and Mutual activities, we felt refreshed and were blessed to do better with our schoolwork. The lessons I learned there also helped me in other situations while I was still in school.

One day at school, one of my teachers taught a lesson about Utah, USA, in our geography class and said some things about the Church that were wrong. I thought, “Should I correct him in front of everyone, or should I go up to him privately after class?” In that moment, the words of my seminary teacher came to my mind. She had said, “Do not argue with or offend anyone when someone says wrong things about the Church.”

I felt that I should remain quiet and respectful during class. When I



visited with him afterward, I told him that I was a member of the Church, and I corrected him on the incorrect things that he had taught in the class. He said, “I didn’t know you were a Mormon. Thank you for telling me.” Afterward he corrected his lecture to give accurate information, and he still treated me with respect. I was grateful for the counsel I’d been taught through my seminary teacher.

MILITARY OR MISSION?

When I was young, I wanted to be a general in the army. I planned to apply to the military academy in order to further my goal. That decision meant that I wasn’t expecting to serve a mission because I knew that the program in the academy for military officers would not excuse anyone for any religious activity.

Then I had the opportunity to go to a regional conference in Seoul, Korea—an experience that changed the direction of my life. During the conference, I heard President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) counsel youth to:

- a) attend seminary,
- b) serve an honorable mission,
- c) marry in the temple, and
- d) work toward exaltation.

I knew his counsel was right, and I remembered the verse that says, “My word shall not pass away, but shall all be fulfilled, whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my

servants, it is the same” (D&C 1:38).

When I heard the prophet speak about the importance of serving a mission as a priority in life, I knew I should put my trust in the Lord, serve a mission, and forego my dream to become a general, remembering to “seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matthew 6:33).

Even though I no longer planned to attend the military academy, serving three years as a soldier was still required for all young men. I had already served one year in the Korea Busan Mission when I received orders from the Korean government to report for military duty. I served three years in the army, and after I was discharged, I wanted to finish my mission. I was then called to the Korea Seoul Mission and served another year there.

“ARE YOU CRAZY?”

When I returned from my mission, I was again blessed by following the counsel from prophets. For example, when I finished my mission, I decided to marry, even though I hadn’t finished my schooling. In Korea, the tradition is to be financially stable and complete your schooling before marrying and starting a family. But I knew I needed to follow the counsel of the prophet and work toward marriage right away. My wife and I had met when we were in the

MY ADVICE TO YOU

As you follow the counsel of the prophets and apostles, you will be blessed.

1. Study the scriptures, go to seminary, participate in the *Come, Follow Me* lessons, and use *Preach My Gospel* to be a great missionary both now and, for those who serve, as a full-time missionary.
2. Listen to and follow the counsel of the prophet.
3. Do all things in wisdom and order.

youth program and were good friends before my mission, so we knew each other well. We were married shortly after I came home, even though her friends said, “Are you crazy? You don’t have any money.”

We went against the cultural tradition because we knew we needed to follow the Lord’s counsel. Our lives have been blessed by following the counsel of the prophet, and we have had experiences we might not otherwise have had.

The Lord’s counsel to do all things in wisdom and order (see Mosiah 4:27) is sometimes different from what society teaches, but when we are obedient to the Lord’s timetable, we will find our lives changed for the better. I am grateful for the living prophet, who leads us in the Lord’s way today. I know that “when we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated” (D&C 130:21). **NE**