



함께 합소서  
Need Them Every Hour

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# “I Need Thee

EVERY HOUR” *Pak Mi-Jung’s two children quickly accepted the gospel, but she didn’t think she could make the commitment to be baptized.*

By Jonathan H. Westover

One pleasant Sunday afternoon on my mission in the Korea Seoul West Mission, my companion, Elder Ricks, and I were saying good-bye to members after church and were about to set out proselyting when the ward mission leader introduced us to a small, solemn 12-year-old boy, Kong Sung-Gyun, who had attended church that day and wanted to learn more about the gospel.

Of course we were excited about the prospect of teaching him, though we did not typically teach children so young. We immediately called his home to seek his parents’ permission, and I talked briefly with his mother, Pak Mi-Jung. I was pleasantly surprised when she said she was pleased her son was looking into attending church and that she would be happy to have us come and teach him.

## Unexpected Investigators

The next evening we arrived at Sung-Gyun’s home, and we were surprised to discover that Mi-Jung also wanted us to teach her daughter, Kong Su-Jin. Since we were strangers in her home, Mi-Jung wanted to sit in on the lessons too. Of course we were happy to teach as many as wanted to listen!

After they had served us some simple refreshments, we sat

down together and began to get to know each other. Elder Ricks and I shared a little about our families and why we were serving a mission, and then Mi-Jung told us about the recent trials and hardships her family had been through, including her son’s battle with cancer. He had successfully gone through radiation treatments, and the cancer was in remission, but the doctors warned them that the cancer could still return. Of course this took a big toll on their family. They were a working-class family, and their father worked extremely hard to provide the simple necessities for his family.

My heart was heavy as I learned of the many trials and hardships in their lives. However, while life was not easy for them, their family was extremely close and relied heavily on each other. We left their home that evening having gotten to know this very special family much better and having had the opportunity to share a simple gospel message of love and hope with them.

Elder Ricks and I went back to teach several more times in the following weeks, each time experiencing the same warmth and generosity we had experienced on our first visit. When the topic of baptism came up, the children were both eager to join the Church. Additionally, their mother, Mi-Jung, was supportive of her children’s desires. However,



though our teachings resonated with her, she personally did not feel that she could make and keep the kind of commitments that joining the Church required. She also did not feel that it would be appropriate for her to get baptized without her husband, whom we had yet to meet. But, she was more than willing to continue to meet with us and also wanted to join her children each week in attending church.

As we continued to teach in their home, we met Mi-Jung's husband, Kong Kuk-Won—a humble, gracious, and generous man. He joined us for the final few discussions and instantly believed everything we taught, including principles and teachings others often find difficult, like tithing and the Word of Wisdom. The father's only obstacle was that he had to work at the airport every Sunday and was unable to attend church with the rest of his family. Despite his busy work schedule, he and his wife arranged to attend their children's baptisms the following Sunday afternoon, and it was a wonderful occasion!

Following the children's baptisms, we continued to meet frequently in the family's home. We held family home evenings, shared scriptures and uplifting experiences, and introduced them to many ward members and helped them to get integrated into the ward. However, despite the continued gospel experiences and the regular Sunday attendance of the children and their mother, Kuk-Won and Mi-Jung were no closer to setting their own baptismal date. We just continued to love and support them the best we knew how.

As the months went by, Elder Ricks was transferred, and my new companion, Elder Minor, was an elder straight from the missionary training center. He was full of faith, energy, and excitement, and I honestly had a difficult time keeping up with him! After meeting with Kuk-Won and Mi-Jung on a few occasions, Elder Minor approached me and asked whether or not my previous companion and I had fasted with them. We had not. In fact, I was a bit embarrassed to admit that the thought had not even occurred to me! So we met with this loving family and suggested a fast. I was amazed to discover that after learning of fasting from us, they had already been periodically fasting on their own, both for the health of their son and for a change in work schedule



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that would allow Kuk-Won to attend church with his family. We asked if we might join them in their family fast, and soon their faithful prayers were answered: Kuk-Won's work schedule was changed. While we thought this was the only thing keeping them from getting baptized, Mi-Jung still did not feel ready to get baptized.

### **An Inspired Idea**

On one visit to their home, Elder Minor had another inspired idea. After we shared a scripture message, he pulled out his pocket-sized hymnbook and asked if we could sing with them. Though we had sung together with their family

on previous occasions, I had never seen Mi-Jung join in the singing and just assumed that she did not like singing or was uncomfortable because the music was new to her. Elder Minor asked her if she had a favorite hymn, and to my astonishment, she got choked up and replied that she loved singing hymns and that ever since she was a little girl, her favorite hymn had been “I Need Thee Every Hour” (*Hymns*, no. 98). We asked if she would sing that hymn with us, and she tearfully agreed. Soon we were singing a four-part harmony, with Kuk-Won and his children singing the melody, Mi-Jung singing alto, Elder Minor singing tenor, and me singing bass.

The Spirit was as strong in the room as we had ever felt. As we sang the third verse, emotion overcame her, and her voice dropped out as we continued:

*I need thee every hour,  
In joy or pain.  
Come quickly and abide,  
Or life is vain.  
I need thee, oh, I need thee;  
Ev'ry hour I need thee!  
Oh, bless me now, my Savior;  
I come to thee!*

As we completed the fourth and final verse, she was sobbing. As her husband tried to comfort her, she was eventually able to compose herself. She looked me right in the eyes and said, “I need to get baptized.”

The baptismal service for Kong Kuk-Won and Pak Mi-Jung that following Sunday afternoon was a truly joyous occasion! Their children, Sung-Gyun and Su-Jin, participated in the program, and numerous local members attended to show their support for the newest convert family in their ward. And

Elder Minor and I provided a special musical number: “I Need Thee Every Hour.”

Eventually I finished my mission and returned home. After a year at Brigham Young University, I returned to South Korea for a summer internship, and each weekend I made a point of visiting the many special friends and families I had met while serving on my mission. After a few weeks, I made my way back to meet with this special family. Upon arriving at their home, I noticed that someone was missing—their son, Sung-Gyun. With tears in her eyes, Mi-Jung broke the news to me: their son’s cancer had come out of remission, and at age 14 he had lost the battle.

As I tried to express my heartfelt condolences to their family and also process the deep sorrow and pain I was feeling, Kuk-Won assured me that they knew everything would be OK. They loved the gospel, attended church faithfully, and looked forward to the day when their family might be sealed together for eternity in the Seoul Korea Temple. Despite the heartache and loss they felt, they knew they would again see Sung-Gyun and be reunited. Mi-Jung also told me that singing hymns daily helped her and her family find the strength to cope with the loss of her beloved son and feel the accompanying peace the Spirit brings.

As I left their home that evening, I reflected again on the words of Mi-Jung’s favorite hymn. I am grateful that Heavenly Father blessed this amazing family with peace after Sung-Gyun’s passing, and I am especially grateful for the Spirit’s role in Mi-Jung’s personal conversion and for the faith and hope their family held for the eternal blessings of the temple. ■

*The author lives in Utah, USA.*

## HYMNS CONSOLE THE MOURNING

“Some of the greatest sermons are preached by the singing of hymns. Hymns move us to repentance and good works, build testimony and faith, comfort the weary, console the mourning, and inspire us to endure to the end.”

*“First Presidency Preface,”  
Hymns, ix.*