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“우리 가정을 믿음 안에서 사랑 한다면?”

Christ has always been a part of our family one way or another. I do not remember the days I did not go to church because my family was a Christian family even before I was born. The earliest memories of our family worshiping are when we lived in Missouri. I remember going to a big mansion and singing worship songs every week. When I hear songs like, Oh How He Loves Us and What a Beautiful Name, I remember the times when we sang them at the mansion. Even in the midst of foreigners and some Koreans, our family was able to worship Christ nonetheless. Since my parents could speak minimal English and my brothers and I were too young, there was a language barrier between our parents and others. Despite that, we were able to converse with the people who introduced us and other Koreans. We were able to find a church to attend wherever we went. Wherever we lived, Christ was always there with us one way or another. This was to the point where I don't even know if I “believe” in Christ anymore because it is more like a fact to me. This was due to the fact that I have been surrounded by the people of Christ since the time, I could remember.

When we came to California, I remember summers where we made goals to read the whole bible during that summer. We would read as a family either before or after dinner when everyone was gathered. We start with a prayer and take turns reading chapters until the goal of that day was finished. After we read the goal chapters, we end with a prayer and the Lord's prayer. From the time when I was in second grade to when I was in 6th grade, we went to a church where my dad took on the position of a youth pastor. We were responsible for planning events, service messages, and everything involving the kids. On top of that, everyone in my family did volunteer work for the church. My dad would be in charge of the slides for worship, my mom would sing with the praise team, my oldest brother would play the cello, my second and third brother would play the violin, and I would play the flute during worship. We had other kids playing instruments too, we had a trumpet, clarinet, and another flute player. Every Friday and Sunday, our family would go earlier than others to get ready for service. On Sundays, my

family and I had to stay for both the first and second service. We would wake up at around 7 A.M. with six people moving around chaotically throughout the house to get ready for church. We usually stayed until after 4 P.M. on most days since we had to lock up the church afterward.

When my brothers and I were young, I remember writing Proverbs too, just like the one we did this time. Even though it wasn't the exact same, we had a book that had a faint grey writing that we would write over in Korean. Since I was too young, I just did it without understanding the meaning but now I kind of understand why my mom pushed for me and my brothers to do it. When I did the bible writing contest, I realized that writing instead of just reading is much better for me since I read the words more clearly since I need to write them. When I just read it, the words start to just come in as sentences that I am just reading instead of fully understanding the words. We also did bible memorizing every night and Awana when we were younger. Awana is an organization for young kids to learn about God with fun and games. I remember playing games, wearing vests, earning batches, memorizing verses from our booklets, and interacting with others. As I think about it, I used to collect the batches and be jealous of the different batches my brothers would get for older groups. We did this at our past church in Missouri which hosted as a place for Awana.

Maybe unlike some people, the time for church is embedded into my daily schedule. Friday nights and Sundays from the morning to after lunchtime is reserved in my mind for church out of habit. I usually refuse to go to my soccer games and hangouts with my friends if they overlap with my church time. My friends all know that I go to church and understand when I say I can't go hang out on the days I have church services to attend. Some people might have a hard time saying that to people close to them but I don't feel uncomfortable at all because it is something that comes pretty naturally to me because of the amount of exposure I have had to Christians.

In our current church, doing quiet time is highly encouraged to the point that many are asked on the spot to share their quiet time for the day. There are also group chats so people can share their quiet times to inspire others to do it when they aren't motivated. This is the same for high schoolers and middle schoolers alike. Although high school and middle school services aren't as

long as the adult services, we end the service early to share a point we got from the message, a doable application to connect and reflect on the message today, and any prayer requests. In my family group chat, we send daily quiet times to keep ourselves accountable. We also volunteer to help with VBS preparations and on the actual days of VBS too.

During this Corona-19 pandemic, there were many churches that were shut down and were made so we could not meet physically. I'm sure many families were faltering at the sudden shutdown of all places including the church but since our church was already shooting our services and messages live on YouTube even before the pandemic, we were able to smoothly transition to online worship. On Friday nights, we would each log in to zoom in for each individual worship that is divided by age group, and on Sunday mornings, we would dress up even though we are still in our house. We knew that we would get complacent if we get used to online worshipping and comfortable wearing the clothes that we usually wear around the house while worshipping. We thought that we should take online worshipping seriously even though no one is watching us because God is the one who knows all. We had the mindset of online worship being like any other worship when we go to church so we take it as seriously as possible. I won't say that it wasn't tough sometimes to wake up and dress up to sit in front of the tv to listen to an hour and a half of the pastor giving the message, but our family pushed through until the day the restrictions were lifted to meet physically for worship.

Even after the church was open, as everyone probably knows, there were very strict rules to follow such as opening up windows so air circulates in the room and spacing out chairs to keep some distance between everyone. At first, I found this very uncomfortable and it was something I was not used to. When the church opened back up, it was a very cold time and on Sundays, I would not be able to concentrate on the message and shiver in the cold. I would open one-time-use hand warmers to keep me warm but this however became a distraction for me during worship and message. However, after time, I got used to it. After meeting up at church physically, it came to me about how long it has been since I've been at church. I was really surprised when I forgot about the order of how things went since it has been so long. I came to my current church at the beginning of seventh grade and after a few months, the

pandemic hit. So, it has only been around half a year since I went there so it wasn't that weird that I forgot how things worked. Our family was able to connect well with our church members in our short time with them physically before we went into online worshipping.

I'm proud of my family that even in hard times, God was in the shadows always looking out for us just like in the watercolor painting I drew for this contest. My painting has many meanings such as how it symbolizes the shadow and fragrance of God my family tries to spread as we meet new people daily. In my painting, I drew the shadow of Jesus on the cross with a shining yellow and orange light shining through from behind. The rest of the painting is faded into a black color to symbolize that anywhere that is not next to God is somewhere leading to hell. This painting will remind our family to always follow the light of Jesus in dark times. It also symbolizes how Jesus is the pillar of our life and it will stand firm eternally.

I reflect and feel grateful for being blessed to be in a family like mine because I was guided to the right path by God. As I grew up in a Christian environment, it helped me discern the right from the wrong and make the right decisions in times of trouble. I'm glad to be born into a Christian family who sticks with the Lord because I would have never come to believe in God on my own with my own motivation. Praying has enlightened me in making decisions I would have made with a lot of thinking in a clear cut without regret. Presently, my family continues to stand firm in following God and will continue to do so in the future.