

A kernel of wheat for many – David Hong

“I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.” (Jn12:24)

(In 1980), I was born as the first son among two brothers. My father had an infantile paralysis in his right leg, which made him feel inferior. His disability made me feel ashamed of him. My mother was a Christian and prayer warrior.

In my high school years, I felt bad for my father when I saw his tears because of his pain and frustration due to his disability. As the first son, I felt I should study hard for him. However, from time to time, I felt empty knowing that study might not be the real solution. What was worse, one of my friends misunderstood me and began to pick on me together with other friends. I hated that boy. I was miserable both at home and at school. So I indulged myself in lustful thinking and despair and stole things from stores.

I hoped that college might give me a new life. I entered KOOKMIN University. As a freshman, I joined in many clubs, where I met many people and drank with them. Even though I began to study the Bible at UBF, I was not serious about it.

One day, a bus ran over my foot and I was hospitalized. Unfortunately, the hospital was very near to the UBF center. Many people, especially two shepherdesses around my mother's age served me as if I were their son. They invited me to the Summer Bible conference. Through learning about Jesus prayer at Gethsemane, I realized Jesus' human nature, and how much pain and struggle Jesus went through as a human being to die on the cross for my sins. I repented of my sins of lust and thievish habits. I began a common life with several UBF shepherds. At the beginning of my sophomore year, while I was preparing a GBS, several friends outside of UBF told me that my face became very bright. They didn't know why, but I knew why. God healed me from my meaninglessness and inferiority complex when I simply accepted Genesis 1:31, and I knew I was good in the sight of God.

However, several friends from my common life left UBF one by one. I was confused. While I was struggling, God gave me John 21:22. “Jesus answered, “If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me.” Jesus wanted me to have independent faith. By writing a 50-page life testimony, I could clearly see God's

leading in my life and made a decision to follow him. When I simply followed him, I got the highest GPA in my class and received two full-scholarships. Remembering God's grace, I wanted to serve sheep. Several sheep came. But while I was serving them, I served them half-heartedly because I was afraid of losing my personal time and money on them. I knew that there was something wrong within me. While I was praying about my problem, God convicted me that I should give simply without any human thinking. I volunteered to serve several freshmen by having common life with them. Once I made a noodle soup. I also called my mom who ran a restaurant to make the most delicious soup for them. While eating, they did not say a word. Their satisfied faces made me joyful. I learned the joy of serving and giving to others. As a senior, I devoted myself to building up campus ministry as a student leader of our UBF club in the school.

Right after graduation, I applied for a position known as a KATUSA in US army base hoping to learn English and go out as a missionary someday. After basic training, I was stationed to the Infantry Division. A pastor there said, "If you want to meet God personally, go to a desert like Moses did." The Army sent me to the 2nd Battalion of 9th Infantry which had field training schedules twice more than U.S. Fort. I had training during the day and studied English and military knowledge at night. God was with me. I became a team leader. I led many missions and trained numerous U.S. soldiers. I met Henry Nguyen who is a North Eastern student now and invited him to worship service.

While completing the last mission in the Army, I heard some unbelievable news that one of the shepherdesses who loved me like their own son, died of cancer. 2 months later, I was discharged from the Army, but not from the agony of death. Death seemed to devour her, and I wondered if her Christian life and work was meaningless. In my prayer, God reminded me of what she once taught. In John 12:24, Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds." I thought about Jesus' life and death. Then I could see my shepherdess's life from Jesus' point of view. My shepherdess died of cancer, but God had done many great things through her life. Death is not the end of everything. Instead of fearing death, I began to learn to die to myself giving my life to Jesus and to his people.

I had received intern shepherd training for three years at Jongno UBF. When I desired to learn the secret of a kernel of wheat, God raised several disciples through me. One of them is preparing to go to Japan as a missionary.

After intern training, my chapter director encouraged me to get a job. I thought I couldn't go out as a missionary if I would get a job in Korea. So I went to a graduate school. Early in 2007, I joined a research project funded by the Korean Educational department. I had a chance to visit several universities in Singapore and Malaysia. This trip rekindled my hope to be a missionary.

I held on to John 12:24 continually. Then God opened a door for me in his perfect way. Shepherdess Lani from Wright College UBF came to Korea and attended the 2006 world mission report. Somehow, I served her and another shepherd named Michael from Wright UBF. I translated her life testimony. During the world mission journey, shepherdess Lani visited the DMZ that has divided the North and South Korea. When I happened to meet her, I told her that I would like to go to North Korea to serve poor students there. In fact, later after marriage, she told me that she was surprised that I was talking about the same thing as she had prayed at the DMZ. Then she went back to the US. One year passed. One day, Dr. John Jun introduced to me one American Shepherdess. I was shocked to find out that she was shepherdess Lani. I was sure that God had led both of us in this way for his work and he established my house church with her this June.

Here, in America, I again want to remember Jesus' words in John 12:24. I want to practice the secret of a kernel of wheat here in America. I believe God will bless my house church for Loyola ministry first and then send us to North Korea someday. May God bless America as a kernel of wheat for the whole world.

One word is a kernel of wheat.