

**The Reconsidering and Creating Story for Building a Family  
in the Age of Destruction of Home  
Research Interest Group – APRRE-REA 2006**

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**Introduction – Opening**

We can say that human life is a kind of web of stories. Human beings are familiar with stories. Stories have played an important role in human living. Herbert Anderson and Edward Foley say, “Telling stories is the way to be human.”<sup>1</sup> Koreans, traditionally, have grown up hearing many stories from grandmother and mother. Children ask their grandparent and parent for telling a story. Most children have listened to stories laying their head on grandparent or parent’s lap. They often have fallen asleep while hearing stories. It might be thought as one of the happiest moments for them. Westerners also have done bedtime story telling for their kids’ good night sleep. Listening to stories might be the one of best memories of childhood in the western as well as in the eastern. Sharing stories is also the one of best ways of knowing themselves. We can say that such stories have formed our perspectives and ways of life. Unconsciously or consciously, stories have been imbedded in our way of thinking and then embodied in our lives. It is very powerful: Even though anybody forced people to believe a certain perspective, people become fixed in it. This is very the power of story. Though it might be heard manipulatively, therefore, stories can be a wonderful medium for educating people and changing the way of thinking. Story has the possibility of the both negative and positive effect on our way of life. Person A, for instance, reads the story of brave military officer’s biography and dreams to be an officer. Person B, on the other hand, commits a crime, getting an idea from his/her reading. A murderer of his parent, for instance, confessed to imitate the way of kill from a novel. These are extreme examples, but the story has the significant effect on human life.

This study will invite you to think of some Korean folk tales, which say the false image of family and seriously ill communication among family members. Many folk tales treat the conflict between the stepmother and the stepdaughter. They are what are called the stepmother-type novels. They depict the stepmother as a cruel person. The stepmother does all things as she can to harm her stepdaughter. The father in such stories is very powerless and silent. All characters do not share their stories with each other and hide the fact. The daughter in stories does not talk to her father about her suffer. Father and his daughter rarely communicate with each other about their thinking and situation throughout stories. Such stories show the distorted communication among family members. Such a distortion leads to tragedy. We need to create many stories for helping people communicate mutually and soundly. Through reconsidering and rethinking the existing stories and wrestling with creating new ways of story and storytelling, I want to help people rebuild our families as an institution God creates directly. Family, in the Genesis, is the institution God creates. Jesus was also born and grew up at a home. Our contemporary society, however, suffers from broken relationship among family members. Many

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<sup>1</sup> Herbert Anderson and Edward Foley, *Mighty Stories, Dangerous Rituals: Weaving Together the Human and the Divine* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998), 19.

teenagers have some kind of hatred toward their family, especially father, mother, or the both. Parent, on the other hand, suffers from their children's or spouse's not talking. The whole family suffers from its mal-communication. There only exist victims and also at the same time victimizers. Their estrangement is deepened so far they do not share their suffering and stories. I think that the healthy family life connects to the pattern of communication among family members. More basically, there is the broken relationship among family members in families with difficulties.

Here, I propose typical Korean folk tales that emphasize the traditional way of thinking but do not represent our contemporary contexts. Though many folk tales, for example, treat the conflict between the stepmother and the stepdaughter, contemporary society differs from before in many respects. The way of life has changed according to development in industry and science. People think differently. People behave differently. The form of family also has changed accordingly. Traditionally, mother, father and their biological children are thought as the basic members of the family, or including grandparent. Contemporary society, however, has various types of families such as same sex married families, divorced families, remarried families, single parent families, and alternative families such as family made up of biologically 'unrelated' people. Divorced and remarried families have extremely increased in number. Many Korean stories, on the other side, still show the negative perspective on the image of stepparent, especially stepmother. Father stands behind. These negative images of parents have soaked inwardly and are acted out outwardly in our daily lives. In addition, folk tales show distorted communication among characters. Our contemporary society still suffers from the same problem. Many families cannot share their stories and keep distance from each other. There is difference between two times. In folk tales, characters could not express their suffer outwardly, but in contemporary society people act out their suffer in several ways such as violence and lingual harassment. The negative image of family members and the ill communication among family members result in more serious problem in our society. The illness of family is usually succeeded in the next generation. It causes a vicious circle. The stories, therefore, need to be changed in some aspects such as communication type and the image of character to transform the way of life of ordinary people.

For making a healthy home, we need stories that speak of the positive image of mother, father, and children and various forms of family and suggest healthy communication between them. We do not talk the "perfect one" but "good enough." Family is the base structure of our society. People become resilient through the healthy family life. Home should be a place for vitality and reproduction. For the healthy family, we need to improve the way of our communication. The healthy stories can give an example for better communication and better life of family. We, educators, help people understand the broad meaning of family and communicate mutually among family members. I want to help many families recover the meaning of family and build healthy family through sharing and telling stories. This study is written from the perspective of a Korean woman who has grown up under the Confucian way of life and has studied the western way of thinking and has wrestled with the human dignity. This exploration limits its range to Korean context. It, however, can be a good example for over the world. As far as I know, many western folk tales such as *Cinderella* are similar to Korean stories.

This study has intended audience such as congregational director of religious education, local pastor, religious educators, adult educators, and people who are wrestling with making a good family regardless of their religion. People in general can be an intended audience.

The following step is to examine the characteristics and functions of stories and story telling. Then, Korean folk tales and the reality of our contemporary Korean family are presented for you to rethink of the seriousness of family communication and the false image of family members. For the healthy family life, I will present stories, films, and the Bible that challenge and change our existing perspectives. During the conference meeting, I suggest, it is good to share our folk tales related to family with cultural background. Then, think of how we as religious educators help people communicate mutually among family members and what kinds of stories are helpful for sound family communication.

### **Why is story or storytelling needed for building healthy family? – Unfolding**

Why do we need stories to build the healthy family? It becomes clear when we think of the characteristics and functions of stories or story telling. Stories have the power of helping people know who we are. As I remember, hearing stories was very joyful moment and made me feel the happiness. Sometimes I asked happy-ending stories. Sometimes I asked scary stories. I had often imagined those stories. The most favorite stories that I asked for are my family stories and my stories that I did not know or could not remember. Those stories are always interesting even though I heard them over and over again. The more often I heard, the more strongly I want. It was awesome. It was a kind of process of getting used to the society around me. Through stories, I had learned our tradition of my family and perspectives on the world. They taught me that who I am and what I do in daily life. They gave me a sense of identity. Through hearing and telling stories, people can form their identity. In addition, stories reflect our perspectives. In stories, our way of life is soaked. The perspective on the stepmother, for instance, is melt in stories. Reversely, the image of the stepmother in stories permeates people's perspective. Stories and reality are very deeply related to each other. In *Womanist*<sup>2</sup> and *Mujerista*<sup>3</sup> theology, on the other hand, theologians use story as a tool for African American women and Latin American women in US to develop their identity and offer a respectable self-interpretation of them. When people speak their stories to others, they can step outside of their experience and reflect on it. Each person is the primary author of his/her own life story. Anderson and Foley point out, "When we tell stories about ourselves, we are often amazed to discover unknown

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<sup>2</sup> The term Womanist was developed by author Alice Walker and referred primarily to African-American women, but it is for all women. Womanist theology is a movement in Christianity to reconsider the traditions, practices, scriptures, and theologies with a special lens to empower and liberate African women in America. The goals of womanist theology include interrogating the social construction of black womanhood in relation to the Black community and to assume a liberatory perspective so that African American women can live emboldened lives within the African American community and within the larger society. Womanist theologians use a variety of methods to approach the scripture. Some attempted to find black women within biblical narrative so as to reclaim the role and identity of black people in general, and black women in specific within the Bible. (from wikipedia, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Womanist>).

<sup>3</sup> *Mujerista* theology, which includes both ethics and theology, is a liberative praxis: reflective action that has as its goal liberation. As a liberative praxis *mujerista* theology is a process of enablement for Latina women insisting on the development of a strong sense of moral agency, and clarifying the importance and value of who they are, what they think, and what they do. Second, as a liberative praxis, *mujerista* theology seeks to impact mainline theologies, the theologies which support what is normative in church and, to a large degree, in society. (from <http://www.users.drew.edu/aisasidi/Definition1.htm>).

commonalities that bond us quickly with strangers or deepen the affections of friends or family.”<sup>4</sup> Storytelling, therefore, becomes a good way of such theologies.

Stories have the power for formation and transformation of human life. Herbert Anderson and Andrew Foley articulate the power of story: “Stories are mighty not only because we shape our lives through them but also because they have the power to unsettle the lives we have comfortably shaped by them.”<sup>5</sup> When people, for example, read an impressing story, they are affected by it. For children and young aged people such as adolescents, especially, reading is powerful for forming their identity and way of thinking. Stories can have people get a transformational moment in their lives. Through stories, people change their perspectives and behave accordingly. Some stories tell us what we do in our daily life. Others teach us what we do not do. Authors sometimes use stories strategically for their own special goal. Some Korean authors, for example, had created stories metaphorically for illustrating king’s fault. Another example is the case of India. Many poor Indians kill or abandon their new born baby-girls because of marriage portion.<sup>6</sup> The government of India makes a story of the public promotion to change their perspective on women and it works. The rate of abortion of girl in India has decreased gradually; at least it warns the importance of human dignity. It is clear that stories can help people change their existing perspectives and form a new way of thinking. Through stories, people get the fixed ideas and also change their existing ways of thinking and doing. Therefore, it is very meaningful to reflect on some Korean folktales and to open the possibility of changing our fixed ideas.

In addition, stories also have the power of healing. Many persons, for instance, are healed through telling their painful experiences. Further, they often can find the solutions through reflecting on their experience subjectively. People can clarify their thinking throughout telling their stories. Therefore, telling story can be the first step for therapy. A psychologist, for example, visited one refugee camp of Rwanda in Tanzania. The women of that camp cannot be sleeping after witnessing the murder of family and friends because of the massacres occurred in Rwanda in the early 1990’s. The psychologist decided to set up a story tree: a safe place for the women to speak of their experiences. Though the first day no one came, within a few days the women came to gather and share their tales of loss, fear, and death. After sharing stories, they can be sleeping.<sup>7</sup> In this way, when people share their stories about their common trauma, they come to deepen the affections among them.

Walter Brueggemann, a famous theologian of the Old Testament, understands the Bible as a book of stories.<sup>8</sup> Stories can connect human beings with God. The stories of God are weaved into our stories in daily life. Dwight and Linda Vogel says, “The story invites us in, and we are able to participate in the relationship with God it evokes.”<sup>9</sup> Story itself can be a medium for communication. God communicates with us through stories in our daily lives. Stories in the Bible have been a wonderful material for education. Stories help people form and transform their faith. People in story can be a role model for readers or listeners. Through hearing stories, people can live out those stories in their daily live. God in stories can be embodied in our lives.

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<sup>4</sup> Herbert Anderson and Edward Foley, 10.

<sup>5</sup> Herbert Anderson and Edward Foley, 7.

<sup>6</sup> YonHap News, July 2, 2006.

<sup>7</sup> Herbert Anderson and Edward Foley, 3.

<sup>8</sup> Karen Marie Yust, *Real Kids Real Faith: Practices for Nurturing Children’s Spiritual Lives* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004), 41.

<sup>9</sup> Dwight W. Vogel and Linda J. Vogel, *Sacramental Living: Falling Stars and Coloring Outside the Lines* (Nashville: Upper Room Books, 1999), 51.

Many theologians such as Anne Wimberly point out the significance of story telling for educating people in faith. Karen Marie Yust emphasizes the importance of story and story telling for formation and growth in faith. Gretchen Wolff Pritchard also points out that the story is at the core for children's education.

As we can see, the stories have the potential for challenging and changing our way of thinking and doing in our lives. I say the purpose of this study is to help people live their lives without any negative false image of their family relations and without distorted communication among them. Let's move on the next step. Stories reflect human life and human life is affected by stories. So then, what Korean fairy tales say about the image of family members and the communication within home?

### **What Korean folk tales say? – Conflict**

About the middle of the time of the Yi dynasty, one retired man had lived along with his beautiful nice wife. They had a pretty baby girl after twenty years from their marriage. His wife, however, died after three months. This man came to live with his younger baby girl. That man remarried to a bad woman. She was very wicked: She maltreated his daughter when the father went out. His daughter was Konggy. Her stepmother had her own daughter, Pattgy, and loved only her own. Stepmother was cruel to Konggy. Stepmother made her only work hard even without any food. Konggy could not have any good things. Her stepmother gave good things only to her own daughter. Pattgy also was cruel to Konggy. Konggy was tolerant all things that they did. Even she did not talk to her father anything. Moreover, her father did not know about what's going on in his family, especially the dynamic of three women's relationship in the story. Konggy was killed by her stepmother and her daughter's entrapment, but her ghost revenged them and she revived from the death. Konggy lived happy together with her husband and her father.<sup>10</sup>

This is the one of the famous Korean folk tales that treats a story of stepmother and stepdaughter: *The Story of Konggy and Pattgy*. There are, traditionally, many folk tales that treat morality drama. Many Korean folk tales show the negative image of stepmother. These stepmother-type stories depict the stepmother as cruel. She has her stepdaughter do hard work and entrapped her, even tries to kill her. Father in stories has kept silent. He generally does not know about his new wife's maltreatment. He rarely appears throughout stories. *The Story of JangWha and HongRyun* is also one of the stepmother-type stories, however, the character of father is more active than any other stories: when he knew the stepmother's maltreatment, he asked her to take care of his daughters. He spoke to his daughters and had sympathy on them. He, however, followed his wife after knowing his daughter's abortion. He did not realize it was his wife's entrapment. The father and his wife decided to kill his daughter. The officer, finally, resolved their grudge. The stepmother paid the price for her cruelty. This story also follows the plot of *The Story of Konggy and Pattgy*. This kind of stepmother-type stories does not limit to Korean tradition. Many western folk tales such as *Cinderella* and *the Snow White* also describe stepmother as a heartless person. There is no father's image or intervention into the dynamic of the stepmother and the stepdaughter. The reader cannot find father's voice in this dynamic throughout the whole story. The father usually is depicted as silent and powerless. Most of stories are colored like this way.

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<sup>10</sup> Anonymous, *The Story of Konggy and Pattgy* (Seoul: Korean Classical Literature Institute, 2004).

At the very moment, there is a serious problem. The story has taught people that stepmother is a wicked person. While the biological mother is always portrayed in a positive way such as charming, merciful and so on, the stepmother is depicted as a vicious character. In addition, father does not appear in the serious situation. Father is described as a shadow character. Even he does know stepmother's maltreatment; he just talks his new wife to improve treatment to his daughter. It does not work. Many of "once upon a time" stories have showed the negative image of stepmother and the silent image of father. These perspectives soaked in our under-conscious area. This is why it is important to create and retell the stories for the transformation of our false perspective.

Where does this way of thinking come from? Such perspective comes from the importance of the origin of the bloodline. Korean society has thought that bloodline is very significant for the family. Koreans have given the superior position to the oldest son and his children than any other children. And Koreans ought to think that people love and take care of only their own children. Even though Koreans love to help people in the ditch, it differs from the family bond. Therefore, it is natural for people to think as following: If the biological mother blames her own child, people are generous to her maltreatment; When the stepmother, on the other hand, blames stepchildren, she becomes a bad person because she is not their biological mother. In addition, the stepmother loves only her own child and her daughter and she seem to take the vested rights from the stepdaughter. She might want for her own daughter to enjoy the privilege without other's intervention. On the other hand, she might be jealous of her husband's love for his daughter.

In addition, the image of the father in stories leads people to the false idea of the role of father at home: Father does not have the responsibility for taking care of children and family stuff. Even if the father concerns himself with family stuff in detail, people think such man as a petty little fellow. Such perspectives have been carved in the ordinary life. Moreover, at those times, Korean men had a tendency to follow the predominant attitude regardless of his intention because they were sensitive to others' eyes. Even some enjoy their vested rights: no housework and no childrearing. Thus, consciously or unconsciously people behave like the characters of stories in their daily lives. This is not an old story. Even today's drama implies such perspective on the stepmother's attitude. Even it is worse that the image of many fathers in stories is still remained silent. Some fathers are portrayed as a person who cares for family stuff, but it is restricted to the very simple family work such as playing with children for a while. Many fathers do not know children's life. They do not share stories with their children. The gap between father and his children ought to become deeper and deeper.

How about the daughters in stories? They do not get along each other. The stepmother's daughter is very harsh to her stepsister. She follows her mother's way. On the contrary, the stepdaughter does not complain of her maltreatment and there is no one to listen to her. In the beginning, she tries to talk to her father about her suffer, but it does not work. Later, she finally keeps silent. The way of communication of two daughters is also unhealthy. That the daughters succeed to parent's fault is the reason why such communication and relationship are serious.

What is expected from contemporary people as hearers of such stories? Men as fathers who grew up hearing these stories may think that they should be passive or violent. Women as stepmothers also may feel a kind of burden of being stepmother. Worst result is that children who hear these stories may think that stepmothers are very bad persons and also think that the child who has the stepmother is very unhappy. Many other extra problems occur in public life. A child who has a stepmother, on the one hand, may have negative feeling on her. Other

children, on the other hand, may discriminate this child. The number of stepmothers has increased around all over the world. Even though there is diversity of family type, the way of thinking does not change accordingly. Therefore, we need to keep retelling the stories toward new directions for building healthy families and better society.

Such folk tales illustrate the very limited communication. The healthy communication does not appear throughout stories. What does it mean? There is no chance to learn to communicate each other in healthy way. People become used to such way of communication. In Confucian way, children should only obey their parent, especially father. Tolerance is the virtue, especially for girls and women. The conversation among family members is very restricted. Even women cannot participate in the conversation. Koreans are apt to look down those who are talkative. Regardless of sex, a man or a woman of few words is thought be respectable. People, therefore, often guess other's thinking in their way and behave accordingly. This distorted communication often makes human relationship worse. Ultimately, people come to close their heart to each other. Then, how about the contemporary Korean family?

### **What does the contemporary Korean family say? – Conflict**

Family can be said the basic institution for human life. Needless to say, family is very important for all people. Family can be said to be at the center of all networks around us. For believers, family has a significant role for their faith and spiritual life. Bradley Wigger challenges us to consider meaning of family, quoting the book *The Meaning of Things*: “The home is not only a material shelter but also a shelter for those things that make life meaningful.”<sup>11</sup> He adds the following: “Home could include the doorposts of a house as well as the promised homeland. Home could include households of worship or even creation.”<sup>12</sup>

Many families in our contemporary society, however, do not play that role for family members. Most families do not have healthy and active communication. Many families have lost the gift of communication among their family members. They do not talk to each other. They do not share their life stories. They just speak of things they need. Even some families never talk to each other. They treat their family members like strangers. How terrible it is! We need to build the healthy family community. Therefore, we need new stories that challenge and transform our way of life. Story has the power of building our relationship among family members and recovering our society from the age of broken family. Following stories illustrate the serious condition of the communication of Korean families.

Seoul Broadcast System (*sbs*), one of major channels in Korea reported the seriousness of communication at home on April 8<sup>th</sup>, 2006. This program is well known as the program which comments on the current hot issues in our society. According to their interviews, lack of communication results in suspicion and tragedy follows it. *sbs* interviewed 3,230 people aged from teenagers to sixties for a month, March 2006. The seventy percent of them talk to family members within an hour a day and over fifty percent of it are just speaking of ordinary stuff. They also say to feel the necessity of family talking, but they have no time and do not know how to do.

Let me introduce one family that the *sbs* interviewed. This family has not spoken to each other for the last five years. A daughter has not talked to her family for almost three years.

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<sup>11</sup> J. Bradley Wigger, *The Power of God at Home: Nurturing Our Children in Love and Grace* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 125

<sup>12</sup> J. Bradley Wigger, 125.

When her parent talked to her, she usually does not respond to it. When her parent keeps talking to her, she becomes violent. She did not want to be interviewed and even did not come out from her room. The producer, finally, interviewed her with difficulty. She said that she could not understand her father. Her father had bit and abused her since she was young. Even after she became an adult, he has been still the same as before. She said that her father has not listened to her speaking. She could not tolerate his abusive words and violence any more. Only what she can do is no response and violence. She follows the way of her father as the resolution for keeping from her father's way of communication. Even when her mother talked to her cautiously, after few second she responded with violence and offensive speaking. The more her mother talks to her, the more she becomes violent. Her parent cannot have the normal relationship with her. The daughter does not talk to her family and only watch the television.

On 5<sup>th</sup> August 2006, *sbs* reported again the serious reality of communication within family. It showed three families in trouble with communication and each case showed the broken relationship among family members. Stories of three families in this program prove that our society is seriously ill. Moreover, the pattern of communication deepens the estrangement among them.

A man lives with his three daughters without any conversation. They have never had a conversation. They have lived like strangers. Even his wife lives apart. She has lived and worked at the restaurant near from home. The reason why they live apart does not appears in that program. She says that she cannot feel happy at home. The father says that he is a silent person. According to him, his household does not talk to him. Daughters, on the other hand, complain that their father does not try to listen to their speaking. One of three daughters says that she cannot recognize they are family. She doubts that living together under the one roof can be said as a family. They live in the house, but it is not home. They dwell apart emotionally. Her comment illustrates that there is no meaning of family in her family. In addition, it shows that family without affection cannot be a true home. They, fortunately, participate in family therapy with the help of *sbs*. Even though they are not good at communicating each other, they say that they realize what is their problem. That can be the first step for healthy family life.

Next family is the case that a man appeals that his wife does not talk to him. Husband drives a cab. He has been tired of her not talking. This couple has an adult son. This son also does not speak to his father. This program gives one episode that the family have breakfast together. At that moment, the father says that today is special because he has a breakfast with his son. They do not have had a meal for a long time. Wife and son speak to each other, but they do not talk to father at the table. Mother and son are united together and father stands in other side. He has thought that his wife always blames him and he tries to protect himself from her attack. Family therapist says that they do not know how to communicate each other. They judge each other's behavior and try to rationalize theirs. Thus, their communication comes to finish to close the door of the heart.

The last one is about struggle for twenty-five years between couple. This case shows the immature communication. Husband is violent. Their daughter teen aged left her family. She thinks that his father does not understand her and that it is useless to talk to his father. She closed the door of her heart and made the wall between her father and herself. Their estrangement is deepened. They became not talking to each other. Mother sometimes meets her daughter outside, but they do not share the bottom of their heart. Throughout interview, whenever this couple talks to each other, they come to quarrel within few minutes. According to family therapist, the pattern of communication of this couple is to blame each other and to do

self-assertion. Professionals advise people to focus on speaking of their own emotion, not blaming the spouse.

These families that have problem and pains also have communication problem. Most of all interviewed persons appeal their suffer from no conversation among family members. Fathers fail to get children's heart and seem to live in the pre-modern way of thinking. According to children, they complain that fathers do not listen to them. A father taxi driver says to try to talk to his family, but he still speaks to their family unilaterally. The father at each family seems to be outside of home. When the communication at home is unhealthy, the family troubles go on and on.

The shortage and distortion of communication causes more terrible results. On May 2006, a son who graduated from the first class university murdered his parent cut into pieces. According to his statement, since the relationship between his parents had been worse and his mother forced him to study hard. This couple had abused him emotionally. The son planned to kill his parent for a long time. Who is responsible for this tragedy! In contemporary society, many families cannot speak to each other because they are all busy. Even preschoolers go many private institutions for extracurricular activities. Most mothers work outside. Almost fathers works late. Family cannot see each other. Even though they gather together, they cannot share their stories.

Though healthy and effective communication is desirable for all families, as we can see, many families suffer from communication problem and their distorted family relationship. They do not have a chance to reflect on their own attitude and their family dynamic. They do not have the mutual communication. They shout only their needs and pains or keep silent from a distance. According to Jason DelVitto, "It becomes increasingly important for us to gather together, to communicate with each other and to celebrate each other's presence face to face."<sup>13</sup> What are helpful for these suffering families in our contemporary society? It is very significant to share their stories for binding together as a family. Through sharing stories, the sympathy is occurred among family members. When they open their heart and open their mouth, they stand again as a loving family community. Then, how can the story be told and created for healthy family life?

### **How to retell or create story? – Climax**

One of my hopes in presenting this study is that we try to reflect on the existing stories and to create new stories. In addition, in regard of religious education, the church encourages people to live their lives at home more actively and more meaningfully as God's children because family is the institution of God and the basic unit of our world. Home should be a reproductive place for all family members and for sharing their life stories.

There are some trials in our society. As we know, contemporary Korean society has the diversity in types of family. The rich diversity of families extends across the households and includes not only biological and legal kin but also others who function as kinfolk for one another. One of television dramas tries to shake our perspective on the meaning and the form of family. The title is *The Inferior Family*. This implies many layered meanings: not rich, abnormal, unrelated in blood, no marriage, each member has its own trauma and so on. This drama emphasizes that love, share, and sympathy can be the key aspect for building up family, not biological bond. An imitated family is made up for the recovery of a little girl's memory whose

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<sup>13</sup> Jason DelVitto, "Family Communication: A Tool for Healthy Family Life," (Publication of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America, Dec. 1998), <http://www.orthodoxresearchinstitute.org>

family is killed. In the beginning, they are merely actors and actresses for money for living, but they come to realize meaning of family. They present us another type of true family. The more they live together, the more they realize the love among them. They challenge us with a question of what is family.

Some authors recreate the existing stories into a new version of story. There are parodies of the existing folk tales, which can help people rethink and reflect on our perspectives on the existing characters in stories. The story “*Ssalgy and Borigy*,” for example, parodies “*The Story of Konggy and Pattgy*.” This story changes the personality of the characters and gives a new lens to the reader. The stepmother in this story is very nice person and loves her stepdaughter and her daughter. Two sisters also have a good relationship and cooperate for the common goal. They have an active communication among them. This kind of trial is very useful to change or transform our fixed ideas. Step by step, whenever people read these stories, they can rethink their old thinking and further more they change their perspectives. So then, our society may move toward better understanding each other. The author tries to make a voice for the stepmothers in our society. This story illustrates the healthy remarried family.

Some teachers have classes for children to rewrite the existing folk tales for rethinking those stories with their point of view. This trial will be very useful for children to rethink the existing stories and through this process they can express their perspectives on stories. After recreating stories, they have a chance to explain about their revision of the story. It will be a good start for change and challenge our way of life. Children are at the beginning the process of forming their perspective and worldview. Moreover, they will become leaders of our society.

The following film and the stories also present different versions of our prevailing expectation on stories. Film *Prince and Princess* directed by Michael Oslo challenges the existing way of thinking. Six omnibus stories are presented as a way of rethinking and changing our perspective on the image of women and men. These stories describe the princess as an ordinary person, not beautiful, not weak, and not passive, the prince is not handsome, not strong, and not active. The prince is rather less active than the princess. In addition, Robert N. Munsch wrote a story titled as *The Paper Bag Princess*. This story also challenges the existing expectation of Prince and Princess. Princess is not beautiful, but very ordinary. Prince is neither handsome nor strong. Unlike any other fairy tales, they do not marry. They went on their own way.

The story of *The Best Conversation Princess PyungKang, The Worst Conversation JangWha and HongRyun* explores two folk tales with regard to the aspect of conversation throughout story. It is a cartoon book for children. The author points out Princess PyungKang shows the best way of communication. The original story of *The story of the Princess PyungKang and The Fool OnDaal* treats a story for true love. The princess is apt to cry whenever she meets embarrassing moment. Whenever she cries, her father, the King, says that if she does not stop, he will marry her off to the fool OnDaal. When she become the age of marriage, she really wanted to marry him and did. The fool OnDaal is a fool, but very nice and faithful person. After marriage, she and he lived together very happily. They shared almost all stories each other. She encouraged her husband to study hard and to do his best. They had confidence in each other. They communicated each other with respect. They used encouraging words. This illustrates a healthy communication among family members.

Let’s move on to the story of God and us. God wants to communicate with creature human beings. Through nature, God wants for us to recognize God and gives us a book of stories for implying God-self and for our life in the earth. The Bible is God’s written

communication. God understands human beings fully, but human beings do not. Therefore, God gives Jesus as human being to us for the communication with God. At this point, for the healthy communication, we can see that God set the eye with human beings'. It illustrates that it needs to understand conversation partner for healthy communication. For the understanding of human beings, God embodies God's words in Jesus' life. God also communicates with us through many stories in our daily lives. Through stories, human beings can understand God. Stories are powerful means of communication. Communication is at the core of all kinds of relationship.

Like God's way of communication with us, good communication skills and attitude are essential to the wellbeing of the family and the relationship among members. Through healthy communication patterns, family members express the gift of their personhood and share their life stories. Healthy and active communication forms their uniqueness before God and others. DelVitto points out that it is the healthy family who fosters a spirit of freedom of expression among its members.

The Bible encourages communication among people. There are abundant words about the influence of good and bad communications. Proverbs 3:3 says, for example, "Those who guard their mouths preserve their lives; those who open wide their lips come to ruin." DelVitto presents some guidelines for healthy communication. First of all, family members should have a sense of mutual respect. Mutual respect allows each member of the family to recognize each other as a unique and loved member of the family community. "Parents especially have the responsibility of maintaining and fostering an atmosphere of respect within the family."<sup>14</sup> As we can see families interviewed above, most parents do not have healthy relationship. Colossians illustrates the importance of respect: Col.3: 17 "Whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him"; Col. 4:6 "Let your speech always be gracious seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer everyone."

Secondly, DelVitto says, "Family members should be encouraged to express themselves freely and responsibly and what they wish to communicate should be respected and valued by the other family members even if there is disagreement."<sup>15</sup> For the free and active communication, I propose the activation and development of the regional division band in the church. Most Korean churches have the regional division bands in proportion to the number of church members. Most bands at present are generally divided with sex, age, and region. Children and youths do not belong to any bands. If the family becomes the basic unit of the band, family members naturally have a chance to share their stories. Even though it is very difficult to gather together at a certain time, it can be a way of gathering to have meeting monthly or bimonthly. The families in one band, for instance, have a special program such as 'movie night' and share their own reflection on it. Or through band bible study, they wrestle together with the meaning of the Bible verses of that day. These can be wonderful trials for the healthy family life.

Thirdly, "the family ought to be a place which provides loving support for open dialogue among its members through frequent and close personal contact."<sup>16</sup> Each family tries to find its own way to healthy communication. There is no only one answer for healthy communication. The family may go local bookstores for books on family communication or may watch television programs which present healthy and effective communication among family members. Koreans

<sup>14</sup> Jason DelVitto, <http://www.orthodoxresearchinstitute.org>

<sup>15</sup> Jason DelVitto, <http://www.orthodoxresearchinstitute.org>

<sup>16</sup> Jason DelVitto, <http://www.orthodoxresearchinstitute.org>

are still unfamiliar with sharing stories with family members. Therefore, it is a natural way for opening conversation among its members to watch television programs together.

Lastly, family members should not blame other members without any reflection on his/her attitude. Most families with difficulties are apt to blame their distorted relationship on other members. If each person feels uncomfortable, therapists advise, speak about his/her own emotion at that time to conversation partners, not blame on them. Speaking focusing on their own emotion and thinking can be a clue for resolution. The author of Proverbs emphasizes the importance of tender speaking: 15:1 A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger; 15:4 A gentle tongue is a tree of life, but perverseness in it breaks the spirit; 16:24 Pleasant words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the body.

A variety of stories including films, fairy tales, TV dramas, and the Bible articulate the healthy family communication and family life and challenge our existing perspectives on family. Contemporary families may follow the healthy model or may be quite different. Regardless of how we divide the roles and responsibilities in families, we must be sure that the family fulfills its essential function as a loving community for all family members. Through stories, we expect, all families can stand up as a living and loving community. Even though it is not easy to encourage the families to build their families as a loving environment, we cannot stop our step for this goal.

## Conclusion – Ending

According to Berger, the way of seeing is affected by what we know or believe. People come to form a fixed idea on certain things or events and this fixed idea comes to be generalized in the whole society. Then, they manifest in TV drama and novels.<sup>17</sup> Reverse process also happens. Scott explains this phenomenon with a term ‘literary custom.’<sup>18</sup> That is, literature reflects roles and symbols of people in general. This literary custom intensifies the people’s fixed ideas. People often follow the literary custom without reflecting whether it is right or wrong. Stories have such power. As we see above, it is powerful and effective to rethink the existing stories and create new stories to change our way of family life. Let the stories speak to us and let’s speak to stories mutually.

*Be ready to listen to every narrative, and do not let wise proverbs escape you.  
Sirach 6:35(Revised Standard Version)*

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<sup>17</sup> John Berger, *Ways of Seeing: Based on the BBC Television Series* (London: Penguin, 1997).

<sup>18</sup> Jon C. Scott, “Conversation and Parody in Children’s Stories,” *Children’s Literature in Education* (1990), quoted from Hyang Rim Kwak, *Using Parodies as Children’s Literature in Education*, (Seoul: Association of Chung Ang Education, 1997).

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