# Crisis-Related Experience
# and Collaborative Learning
# for Korean Missionaries

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This article is written on the basis of a research conducted with an intention to examine the potentiality of communal learning from the crisis-related experience. Specifically, it is built on the hypothesis that enabling Korean missionaries to expose their crisis-related experiences in small peer groups and to process them in a communal manner will have a positive effect on their emotional well-being[1] and development.[2]

1. Ray S. Anderson, *Self Care: A Theology of Personal Empowerment and Spiritual Healing* (Pasadena: Fuller Seminary Press, 1989), 224-226. People have primary needs which can be satisfied by impersonal resources that they possess. Besides these, however, people have quality of life needs, the satisfaction of which can be determined by their actions and capabilities to think from others' positions. Hence, when talking about well-being, it has to be understood in a more holistic context which embraces not only physical but also social, psychological, interpersonal, emotional, cultural, spiritual, and environmental dimensions. I use the term "emotional well-being" in this study to refer to a state in which one is able to have his or her emotional needs satisfied and further emerge into the "larger space of self-expression and relation with others," moving "from overcoming to becoming" in the process of which "the ragged broken edge of life" can indeed become "the growing edge."

2. *Human Resource Development* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2001), 208; Shelly G. Trebesch, *Developing Persons in Christian Organizations A Case Study of OMF International* (Ph.D. diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 2001), 17. First and foremost, the word "development" in this study refers to the development of people. Here are several definitions given by those engaged in human resource development. For instance, Gilley, Eggland, and Gilley define it as "advancement of knowledge, skills, and competencies for the purpose of improving performance within an organization." According to Swanson and Holton, it is "the planned growth and expansion of the knowledge and expertise of people beyond the present job requirements" which is accomplished through "systematic training, learning experiences, work assignments, and assessment efforts." Trebesch, by contrast, gives a more faith-based definition of the word: "the process of transformation and growth that occurs in the lives of people as

This article is organized into three major parts. Part one consists of sections that provide the rationale for the research as well as the framework for the data collection. Part Two, the heart of the article, refers to two primary outcomes of Korean missionaries' learning from the crisis-related experience: meaning transformation and self-perceived emotional well-being. Part Three serves as a conclusion of the article based on the reflective interpretation of the data collected and analyzed.

## Part One: Data Collection

### *Rationale for the Research*

Much of the Korean church's efforts made thus far in terms of missions have been focused primarily on mobilizing its people to "go," rather than recognizing the implications of the phrase "as you go" (Matt 28:19). Consequently, though many seminars and training programs have been offered, especially for pre-service missionaries, space or opportunities have not been made available where "in-service," "interrupted in-service,"[3]and/or "post-service" missionaries can come together and candidly share their positive and negative experiences. If the Korean church considers its missionaries to be "too valuable to lose" and "worth keeping,"[4] it should make intentional efforts not only to keep its status as the second-largest missionary sending church in the world but also to be the faithful steward of its missionaries. Specifically, in light of the fact that missionaries today work in contexts of increasing complexity with greater accountability and that their life expectancy is

they are in relationship with God and with their community that allows them to embrace and fulfill their calling – their destiny." In this study, I use the term development to imply "the process of growth and transformation which takes place as people gain more in-depth understandings of their experiences as a result of which they become empowered to continue in their journey of faith to fulfill God's purposes."

3. J. Robert Clinton, *The Leadership Training Models Reader* (Pasadena: Fuller Theological Seminary, 2006), 6. In Clinton's time/ministry continuum, there is a group of Christian leaders who belong to a category called "interrupted in-service." According to Clinton, they are the ones who need "training in the area of spiritual formation and dynamic reflection," where they can evaluate past experiences and grow toward renewed sense of call and purpose before he or she returns to ministry.

4. William David Taylor and World Evangelical Fellowship, *Too Valuable to Lose* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1997) and Rob Hay et al, *Worth Keeping*: *Global Perspectives on Best Practice in Missionary Retention* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2007). These books are written on the basis of research conducted to identify both causes of missionary attrition and best practices to enhance missionary retention.

higher in general, the Korean church must make additional efforts for the missionaries who return home so that they can continue to make valuable contributions. This goal can be accomplished, for example, by offering the returning missionaries carefully designed learning and training opportunities. The results of the current research are anticipated to provide a concrete way to foster further learning for the already experienced Korean missionaries.

### *Narrative Description of the Model*

The hypothesis of this research is that enabling Korean missionaries to share openly about their crisis-related experiences in small peer groups and helping them to process their experiences in a communal manner will have a positive effect on their emotional well-being and development. In order to test this hypothesis, I created a communal reflective/narrative learning model (see Figure 1 below). Here is the narrative description of its key components:
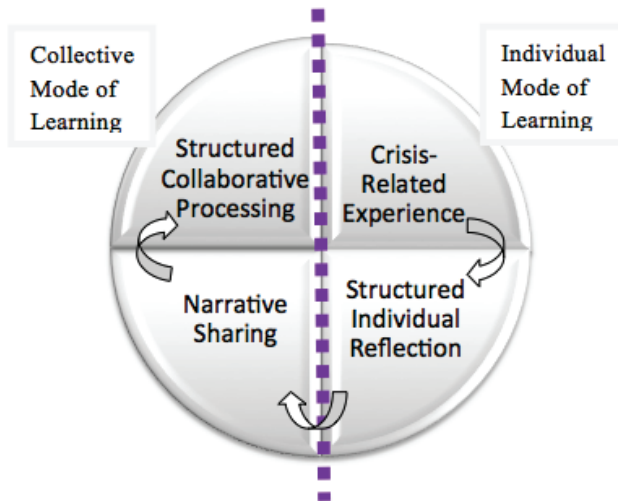


*Figure 1: Key Components of the Communal Reflective/Narrative Learning Model*

The model begins with a crisis-related experience. The participants are asked to choose one from four different types of crises observed

and identified in J. Robert Clinton's study.[5] They are isolation,[6] conflict, ministry conflict, and life-crisis.[7] The participants may also note other experiences that they perceived as crises.

The model continues with structured individual reflection. However, before asking the participants to describe their own crisis-related experience in writing, they are exposed to others' crises, namely, those of the facilitator as well as William Carey's as represented in the film, *Candle in the Dark: The Story of William Carey.* The experiences of others are intended to help the participants revisit and recollect their own crisis-related experiences with more ease. Each of the participants is then given about an hour to write down what had happened, who were involved, and how the involved persons had reacted to what had happened.

Once the participants finish their reflective writing, they are invited to share their experience with the group. Each of the participants is given enough time to give a full account of his or her crisis-related experience. This particular component of the model, narrative sharing, is the point where the participants are expected to cross the boundary between individual and communal modes of learning. The selected experience that was reflected upon at an individual level prior to this point is now being exposed to the rest of the group, leading to the last component of the model: structured collaborative processing.

Each of the crises selected, recalled, and reflected in writing and shared in telling is finally processed collaboratively with the help of peers in the group. Peers in the group are invited to make comments and/or ask questions, and they are advised to do so without making premature judgments or offering advice.

### Overview of the Participants

The model described above was tested with twenty-five Korean missionaries between November, 2010 and January, 2012. They were placed in four different groups (see Table 1 below) where I functioned as both the facilitator and the researcher.

5. J. Robert Clinton, *Leadership Emergence Theory: A Self-Study Manual for Analyzing the Development of a Christian Leader* (Altadena: Barnabas, 1989).

6. The term "isolation" in this study means the setting aside of a leader for an extended time from normal ministry involvement in its natural context.

7. The term "life-crisis" in the current study implies a life-and-death situation that causes one to reflect on the meaning of life.

*Table 1: Groups of Participants*

| Group | Mission Fields | Gender & Number of Participants | Age Range | Mission Experience |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| #1 | China, Ecuador, Korea, Malaysia, Philippines, Papua New Guinea | Female/ 6 | 40-55 | 6-15 years |
| #2 | China, India (3), Kenya, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea | Male/ 7 | 40-58 | 4-25 years |
| #3 | Brazil, China, Egypt, Thailand, Turkey, USA | Both/ 6 | 37-48 | 6-20 years |
| #4 | Kyrgyzstan (2), China (2), Philippines (2) | Couples/ 6 | 40-60 | 6-10 years |

The first group had six female Korean missionaries in total. They were recruited by the director of a well-known Korean mission organization who is highly respected among Korean mission leaders. Five of the participants and their husbands were selected and trained in and through the mission organization. The second group consisted of seven Korean male missionaries, most of whom had served overseas for more than twenty years. They were the most experienced group of the four. Also, five participants of the group returned to Korea and were now serving either as the head of a mission organization or as Korean representatives, making this group a Korean missional leaders' group. The third group had six participants who had served in Brazil, China, Egypt, Thailand, Turkey, and the US.[8] They differed from the rest of the groups in the following ways. First, they were a mixed-gender group consisting of three female and three male missionaries. Second, no one had to recruit them; their participation was completely voluntary. Third, they were either graduates or current students of Fuller Theological Seminary. Finally, during the second and third sessions, the group included a visitor—a friend of one of the female participants who was prepar-

8. One of the participants was a Chinese-Korean with rich mission experiences. She not only helped many missionaries from overseas to serve in China, but also served as a local missionary reaching out to different minorities living in China. However, her life and study in the US challenged her to become an overseas missionary for the first time. It was during this study that she came to realize that she had been a missionary in the US, learning to adjust to a new culture, new language, different worldviews, and different value systems and mindsets.

ing to become a long-term missionary to Thailand. The last group had six missionaries who served in Kyrgyzstan, China and the Philippines, respectively. One thing that distinguished this group from the rest was that it was a missionary couple group in which both husbands and wives participated.

## Part Two: Data Analysis

### *Meaning Transformation*

One of the most prominent outcomes of Korean missionaries' learning from crisis-related experiences is meaning transformation. In the following pages, I will look at how meaning transformation took place in each of the main components of the model.

### *Structured Individual Reflection and Meaning Transformation*

If the original meanings derived from the crisis-related experience changed during the period for individual reflective writing, how did this occur? This could only be presumed on the basis of what the participants actually verbalized during and after the study. Here are some of the things that participants shared:[9]

> As I wrote about the experience, I came to see that I still had many good moments. Also, I came to realize that it was not so big or serious an issue.

> Before the reflective writing, I did not think that the crisis of mine originated from the poor leadership transition. Rather, I used to question why the missionaries that came after us could not take better care of the team members.

> As I was writing about my crisis-related experience, I realized that I remembered much more than I thought I did... and what I went through was not a matter of team ministry, but of leadership. To be more specific, it had to do with leadership styles.

> It was a bit awkward for me to write about the crisis; I'd never done it before. As I became engaged in writing, I felt emotionally heavy in my heart because the memory of being mistreated, insulted, and betrayed came back to me. However, it (the structured individual reflection) offered me a chance to *re-view* what happened *with a more objective eye*,

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9. All the data presented in this article was first collected and transcribed in Korean and then translated into English.

possibly because I was mindful that I will have to share it with others in the group (emphases added).

The time given for me to write about the crisis-related experience offered me an opportunity to look back on what happened and as I did so, I came to shed lots of tears. It made me feel pent up. Yet at the same time, as I continued writing, I could find myself at peace, and I tried to depict what happened not based on my emotions but on the facts, *from a more objective point of view*. I guess, as I was writing about the crisis, I had a mixture of feelings; feeling guilty for failing to act mature enough as a senior missionary and feeling tempted to diminish what I did wrong (emphases added).

Reflective writing helped me see the reasons (for the crisis) that have been hidden from my own sight (emphases added).

The data collected thus suggests that the crisis-related experiences recalled during the structured individual reflection consisted not only of what took place, but also of one's conceptual and emotional responses as to what transpired and their subsequent interpretations of these as well. Furthermore, the data implies that the time and space intentionally provided for the structured individual reflection offered the participants a chance to take another look at what happened with a fresher and less subjective view. In other words, the original meanings were re-examined. Though it may be wrong to conclude that their initial meanings became completely transformed at this early stage of the study, it may be reasonable to argue that the original meanings derived from their experiences began to be challenged during the structured individual reflection. While the meanings changed more noticeably in and through the next two stages of the model (as will be discussed later), it was during the structured individual reflection that some of the Korean missionaries began to embrace different perspectives about the meanings of these experiences.

### Narrative Sharing and Meaning Transformation

Prior to discussing how the crisis-related experience came to be reinterpreted in and through the narrative sharing, let me first discuss the data collected in light of the body of literature on narrative learning. First, advocates of narrative learning argue that we learn through the narratives that are heard, told, and recognized.[10] All the participants heard and responded to different stories coming directly from actual life and ministry experiences. Moreover, all the participants were able

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10. Marsha Rossiter and M. Carolyn Clark, *Narrative and the Practice of Adult Education* (Malabar: Krieger, 2007), 19-29.

to organize their thoughts and feelings and present their own stories in such a way as to be understood and evaluated. Many, if not all, participants recognized that despite the particularities found in their own experiences, their stories still resonated with others. Second, the narrative approach to learning is believed to build community, and the data suggests this to be true for Korean missionaries as well. The shared crisis-related experiences not only aroused sympathy, but also created an authentic sense of connection among the participants and between all four groups. Despite the fact that they had come together for a limited time, the participants felt safe and interrelated with one another. Third, as suggested by Bruner, the narrative way of learning proved to be more adequate than the scientific; studying reality was imbued with meaning.[11] Although narratives were the primary means for learning with no other cognitive input given, many of the participants confessed, particularly toward the end, that they benefited a great deal from the study.[12] Finally, as argued by the advocates of narrative learning, the participants were able to recognize their own cultural narratives through listening to different narratives. The narrative approach to crisis-related experiences helped the participants see the values embedded in their lives and ministries. These cultural values were further examined in the structured collaborative processing as will be discussed later in this paper. In short, the data collected infers that there was a narrative impulse among the participants and that this particular impulse was satisfied during the narrative sharing.[13]

As they presented their experiences, which were first recalled in written form and then verbally, the participants were able to recall some forgotten, yet crucial, details that helped them to do the following:[14]

1. look deeper into the cultural values that may have been the underlying causes for the crises;
2. assess organizational and/or structural deficits that may have contributed to the crises;
3. look at the crises from others' points of view, especially from the eyes of those who were directly involved in the crises;
4. look into oneself and further open up to pin down what they may have done wrong;

11. Jerome S. Bruner, *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986).

12. It is true, however, that actual learning outcomes must be tested further down the road.

13. Rossiter and Clark, *Narrative and the Practice of Adult Education*, 13.

14. As it will be discussed later, many of these continued to be further developed in and through structured collaborative processing.

    5. raise questions that were asked only in private; and

    6. identify potential reasons of why they think the crises in question have happened.[15]

Furthermore, the narrative sharing helped the participants become more keenly aware of the complexity of emotions involved in the crises. Emotions that had been suppressed for various reasons--even during the individual reflective writing--became more evident not only to the participants who narrated the experience but also to those who listened.

In summary, as the participants' life and ministry experiences became central to the study, and as each of the participants was invited to incorporate his or her own life and ministry experience into the learning process, they were able to reconstruct the initial meanings given. This was not necessarily because they were given new information or knowledge, but because they were impacted by the stories that were heard in both the cognitive and affective dimensions. They were able to embrace a new understanding of self that led to further acceptance of others. In other words, narratives told, heard, and recognized served as "a powerful medium for transformational learning and growth."[16]

What then is transformational learning? In brief, it is about change. Unlike informational learning, which results in already established cognitive capacities being extended, transformational learning occurs when there is a transformation in one's "frame of reference" that includes both a habit of mind and a point of view.[17] In other words, it is the process by which our taken-for-granted frames of reference are transformed "to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective so that they may generate beliefs and opinions that will prove truer or justified to guide action."[18] The data collected infers that the narrative sharing established a foothold for transformational learning that continued through the collaborative processing as will be discussed in the following pages.[19]

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    15. Some of these reasons, however, turned out to be incorrect by the end of the collaborative processing.

    16. Rossiter and Clark, *Narrative and the Practice of Adult Education*, 73.

    17. Jack Mezirow and Associates, *Learning as Transformation* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000), 16.

    18. Mezirow, *Learning as Transformation*, 8.

    19. I need to point out here that it may be premature to assert that all participants benefited from the narrative sharing or experienced meaning transformation to the same extent. For some, it simply gave them an opportunity to describe what happened and to do so in a more elaborative way; for others, it enabled them to expose more of their emotions. Nonetheless, the data collected does indicate that every participant's need to rehearse their entire experience,

### *Structured Collaborative Processing and Meaning Transformation*

The collaborative processing began in a very natural manner as the peers in the group began asking questions about the experience that they heard. As indicated in previous pages, the original meanings derived from the crisis-related experience that began to be challenged and reinterpreted during the individual reflection, and narrative sharing continued to be transformed through collaborative processing. The collaborative processing, through which the crisis-related experience came to be further exposed, questioned, and then reexamined in a communal manner, helped the participants in the following ways:[20]

1. It challenged the participants to grow more aware of others involved in the crises and enter into their feelings;
2. It helped to reveal more fundamental, yet still hidden, causes for the crises to be accepted;
3. It helped the participants see a completely different cause for the crises;
4. It gave practical advice as to what to do in the future should similar crises arise;
5. it challenged the participants to see what they themselves did wrong and/or failed to do and/or see;
6. It assisted some of the participants in coming up with alternative ways of dealing with and/or responding to similar experiences in case they emerge in the future;
7. It helped almost all participants to identify causes such as personal convictions that had been taken for granted;
8. It offered most of the participants vicarious learning opportunities where they could ask and answer questions that were not raised before;
9. It helped the participants embrace more of God's perspectives on what happened ;
10. It provided some of the participants with a sense of healing[21]; and
11. It helped the participants see that the crises-related experience that individual missionaries went through involved issues that Korean missionaries have to face and deal with together as a whole.

including crises, most of which had never been shared prior to this study, was met through narrative sharing, leading to reinterpretations of the crises.

20. As indicated earlier, though some of these points took place during the narrative sharing, it was during the collaborative processing that they came to be revealed to a greater extent.

21. It may be difficult to conclude the exact number of participants who actually experienced emotional well-being; some simply may not have articulated it as explicitly.

When the Korean missionaries were provided with a structured opportunity to process their crisis-related experiences together with those who may have faced similar challenges, they were able to gain multiple perspectives and new insights. With the help of their group peers, the Korean missionaries were able to move beyond the limits of their own ways of thinking and evaluating. Even though most of the crisis-related experiences were adaptive challenges that involved complex, tangled, and multiple layers of causes,[22] the participants were able to help one another face and accept the need to transform the "long-standing habits and deeply held assumptions and values."[23] The study provided them with a good holding environment, where a good balance of support and challenge was created and kept.[24]

When the participants were given a safe time period and enough support to process the crisis-related experience together with their peers in this study, they were able to reveal what would have usually remained concealed in the normal course of life, such as habits, priorities, and "value biases"[25] shared among Koreans in general.

Prior to moving further to address another major outcome of learning from crisis-related experiences—self-perceived emotional well-being—it seems reasonable to discuss how the meaning transformation, which began and was further developed through the structured individual reflection, narrative writing, and structured collaborative processing, is closely intertwined with the discovery of cultural value biases. Here are some of the cultural value biases that were distinguished and discussed as more fundamental causes for the crisis-related experiences that the Korean missionaries underwent.

22. Ronald A. Heifetz, *Leadership without Easy Answers* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1994), 254-255; Ronald A. Heifetz and Martin Linsky, *Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive through Dangers of Leading* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2002), 14. Heifetz differentiates technical problems from adaptive challenges. Whereas technical problems are situations whose problems and solutions are clearly defined, adaptive challenges represent those situations for which neither problem nor adequate solution is known or developed even by those who are known to have authoritative expertise. In other words, an adaptive challenge is one that implies that there is a gap between values and reality that cannot be amended by routine behavior or technical know-how. His intention in making this distinction is to help those in leadership avoid the tendency to treat adaptive challenges as technical problems.

23. Sharon Daloz Parks, *Leadership Can Be Taught: A Bold Approach for a Complex World* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2005), 10.

24. Drago-Severson, *Leading Adult Learning: Supporting Adult Development in Our Schools* (Thousand Oaks: Corwin, 2009), 7.

25. Sherwood G. Lingenfelter and Marvin K. Mayers, *Ministering Cross-Culturally.* 2d ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 11-12.

The first cultural habit has to do with Korea being a racially homogenous and community-oriented nation in which Koreans often consider them to be part of one big family. The concept such as "we are one family" becomes intensified, especially when living overseas. When Koreans meet with other Koreans while living overseas, they often feel a sense of familial responsibility and act accordingly. Unfortunately, however, well-intentioned actions that arise out of this "big family" conviction that can sometimes be interpreted as rude, impolite, and even invasive of one's privacy. Some of the crisis-related experiences shared in the study demonstrate how hospitable acts done out of a sense of familial obligation were seen as violating boundaries between "self" and "other" without mutual consent.

The second value bias generally shared by Koreans was respect for seniority in terms age. Koreans, especially the older generations, esteem polite and appropriate treatment of those who are older. It is not a great surprise that most Korean missionaries underwent relationship issues, many of which involved the issue of seniority (see Table 2 below). Indeed, seniority seemed to be what made it hard for Koreans to work in team ministry. Though many support and desire to become part of a team ministry, it was difficult for them to work in partnership in a Korean with different age groups. Accommodating all voices equally and properly regardless of age proved to be a real challenge.

Finally, a cultural habit that came to be identified as a probable cause for crises was Koreans' tendency to become competitive. South Korea is part of a small peninsula with its population reaching close to 50 million. In order to survive and succeed amidst this high population density, many Koreans are taught to become competitive from their early years. Many parents either directly or indirectly communicate to their children that unless they become better than their peers, they cannot ever become successful. Consequently, a sense of satisfaction often arises not when goals are achieved, but when assurance has been given that they have done better than others. With such a tendency deeply entrenched within Korean values, Koreans do not easily open themselves up or talk about what lies deep within their hearts. Missionaries are no exceptions. This may be one of the reasons why conversations among peer missionaries often remain superficial, depriving them of quality time to discuss the "real" issues, as some of the participants confessed during the study.

*Table 2: Types of Crises*

| Types of Crises | Total Number of Crises | Percentage | Corresponding Case #s[1] |
|---|---|---|---|
| Conflict with Peer Missionaries | 7 | 28% | 1, 2, 6, 7, 9, 22, 23 |
| Conflict with Senior Missionaries | 5 | 20% | 4, 5, 12, 15, 21 |
| Conflict with the Sending Body | 3 | 12% | 8, 14, 25 |
| Conflict with Local Believers | 3 | 12% | 10, 11, 20 |
| Conflict with Junior Missionaries | 2 | 8% | 16, 18 |
| Conflict with Family Members | 2 | 8% | 13, 17 |
| Leadership Backlash | 1 | 4% | 3 |
| Life Crisis | 1 | 4% | 19 |
| Financial Crisis | 1 | 4% | 24 |

Let me now review the Korean communal value biases identified above in light of several different dimensions of national culture as suggested by the scholar Geert Hofstede. According to Hofstede, different national value systems emerge in the process of solving problems, and on the basis of these differences, he has categorized five dimensions of culture; namely, power distance, individualism and collectivism, masculinity-femininity, avoidance of uncertainty, and long- and short- term orientation.[26] Korea, according to Hofstede, is a large power-distance, collectivist, feminine, strong uncertainty avoidance, and

26. Geert Hofstede and Gert Jan Hofstede, *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2005), 39-237.

high long-term oriented country. Let me now illustrate how the Korean communal values biases identified above can be correlated with three of Hofstede's national culture dimensions.

First, the "we are one family" concept that is prevalent among Koreans in general can be understood in the context of Korea as a collectivist nation where "people from birth onward are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, which throughout people's lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty."[27] Some of the key characteristics of a collectivist nation include: avoiding use of the word "I"; relationships prevailing over tasks; and groups intruding upon private lives.[28] Second, the Korean communal value bias that respects those who are older applies to Korea as a large power distance nation where "the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally."[29] Some of the characteristics of a large power distance nation that correspond to Korean culture include: respect for parents and older relatives is a basic and lifelong virtue; expectations by subordinates of being told what to do; and the value preference for white-collar jobs over blue-collar jobs.[30] Finally, Koreans' competitiveness can be explained by Hofstede's uncertainty avoidance, which is defined as follows: "the extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations."[31] In countries that avoid uncertainty strongly, such as Korea, anxiety and stress levels are relatively high and people show an "emotional need to be busy and an inner urge to work hard." People living in such countries tend to be worse at invention but better at implementation. They also tend to believe in experts and technical solutions. All of these ring true for Koreans in general.

The participants' growing awareness of how cultural value biases impact their life and ministry will have to be tested in the future. However, it seems fitting to argue that the crisis-related experience, when addressed in a safe environment, triggers retrospective evaluations that create a rare learning opportunity for Korean missionaries to question deeply held personal and cultural assumptions. As a result, they come to reinterpret the initial meanings derived from the crisis-related experiences. Let me now move to discuss the other major outcome of Korean missionaries' learning from crisis-related experiences.

27. Hofstede, *Cultures and Organizations*, 399.
28. Hofstede, *Cultures and Organizations*, 97-104.
29. Hofstede, *Cultures and Organizations*, 46.
30. Hofstede, *Cultures and Organizations*, 59.
31. Hofstede, *Cultures and Organizations*, 167.

### Self-Perceived Emotional Well-being

One of the questions that I came to the study with was: Can a sense of self-perceived emotional well-being emerge from communal learning regarding the crisis-related experience? Along with this question, I proposed the following hypothesis: Individuals who successfully share their crisis-related experiences and receive positive affirmations from their peers and, in turn, assist others in processing their crisis-related experiences, will articulate specific self-perceptions of emotional well-being.

### Affective Dimension in Learning
### from Crisis-Related Experience

The data collected indicates that learning is not only a rational process, but also an affective one. Before the participants could review their experience and challenge their initial interpretations, they had to first feel safe and supported. Listen to the following:

> I shared what I shared because it felt safe to do so. When you expressed empathy, I felt comforted. I realized how important it was for me to be sympathized with . . . It felt so good; it felt like I won a whole team over to my side . . . I experienced how good it is to win the empathy of someone, to have someone listen to me without making judgment, besides my own husband, besides one's kith and kin;

> Well . . . as I shared my experience in telling, I ended up sharing more than what was described in writing . . . In narrative sharing, hidden emotions became exposed and I just let them come out of me;

> The narrative sharing of the crisis . . . eased the pain associated on one hand and increased the joy that has been missing on the other. Through the narrative sharing, I felt the seriousness of the crisis diminish and the level of acceptance increase;

> When somebody else reads one's feeling, it gives him or her strength to come out of the trap of being too subjective . . . Though I was not able to communicate what happened with as much clarity as I desired, just the thought that there was a group of people who sympathizes with me helped me not to be carried away with negative emotions;

> As I shared my experience, I did not feel excessively burdened or angry as before. Also, I did not feel ashamed of myself as I listened to others discuss my case. When they told me that they would have acted the same if they were ever put in the same situation, I felt so comforted;

> I came to realize how important it is not only for me but also for others to win empathy; one may learn from crises once he or she feels fully sympathized with . . . . For me, I think, failure to win the empathy of others may hinder us from learning from crises.

Many of the participants referred to one word in particular: empathy.[32] Rather than losing energy in defending themselves, Korean missionaries were able to face suppressed or unaddressed emotions and alleviate some of their negative feelings due to the empathy expressed during the study. One participant in the first female missionary group, however, confessed on the last day that she could not learn much in the study because she was offended by a single comment that I made as a facilitator. At that moment, she had felt offended and misunderstood, and was literally blocked from learning any further. It seems worth noting that, as Table 3 below indicates, most of participants did not look forward to the study with anticipation. Rather, most of them harbored somewhat negative emotions: hurt, inadequacy, fear, defensiveness, insecurity, unpreparedness, hesitancy, doubt, or agitation. They had to be provided with an environment where they could feel sufficiently secure before they could be asked to engage in critical reflection, much less anything else.

In short, the participants' reflection and dialogue, which continued throughout the entire study, were not only cognitive but also affective exercises; their conversations and interactions required both their rational and their emotional capacities. The participants' learning from crisis-related experiences was not built on their scholarship, but on relationships of trust. They were sufficiently encouraged and supported to the point where they were able to put words to the feelings evoked both during and after the crisis-related experience. They could further reevaluate their behavior in light of the underlying values and assumptions that had previously been unquestioned.

32. The word "empathy" repeatedly came up in conversations among the participants. I am unsure as to whether the English word "empathy" has the same connotations as the Korean word, 공감(共感) (*gongam*). The literal translation of the word *gonggam* may be "common feeling," which implies mutual understanding, approval, and support.

*Table 3: Emotions Experienced by the Participants*[33]

| Emotions Experienced Either in the Midst of or Shortly after the Crises | | | Emotions Accompanied to the Study | Emotions Experienced During and at the End of the Study |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sense of Failure | Deserted | Dumb-founded | Hurt | Comforted |
| Suicidal Drive | Estranged | Shocked | Inadequate | Empathized |
| Depressed | Troubled | Burdened | Fearful | Safe |
| Uncomfort-able | Fearful | Sorry | Defensive | Eased |
| Painful | Threatened | Ashamed | Insecure | Blessed |
| Looked down | Miserable | Vulnerable | Unprepared | Calmed |
| Despaired | Bitter | Suppressed | Hesitant | Relieved |
| Anxious | Hurt | Lost | Doubtful | Supported |
| Pitiful | Pangs of Conscience | Regretful | Agitated | Restored |
| Resentful | Wrongly Accused | Mistreated | | Lightened |
| Bitter | Lonely | Ashamed | | Accepted |
| Distrusted | Neglected | Perplexed | | Welcomed |
| Guilty | Forgotten | Sad | | Understood |
| Victimized | Manipulated | Despondent | | Healed |
| Defensive | Monitored | Confused | | Less burdened |
| Underesti-mated | Deprived | Disappointed | | Grateful |
| Offended | Tired | Isolated | | |
| Desperate | Misunder-stood | Gloomy | | |
| Angry | Sorrowful | Abused | | |
| Ousted | Broken down | Humiliated | | |
| Frustrated | Inadequate | Tensed | | |
| Despondent | | | | |

33.  The table includes emotions that were either articulated or implied in the data collected.

### *Self-Perceived Emotional Well-being*

Toward the end of the study, more than half of the participants explicitly referred to self-perceived emotional well-being as a result of the study. Everyone in the first female group, in particular, referred to how the study brought forth a sense of healing for them. Here are some samples of what they said:

> I found myself most engaged when the participants shared their crisis-related experiences because that was the time when we could share the pain together with others and I could be reminded of my own painful experiences from which I became healed.

> When they (the peers in the group) said it must have been so hard for me, I realized that it was the very first time that I heard anything similar. I felt relieved and became determined not to talk about them (the junior missionaries involved in the crisis) to others anymore . . . . There is a conviction in my heart that what I went through will help me understand and help others. I thank all of you for listening to my story.

> The feeling of being mistreated must have been there at the very bottom of my heart as I went through something that I had never anticipated . . . . Your questions and comments helped me see the reality. Well . . . I can't say that I am completely free from the pain that I received, and yet, it certainly has diminished.

> I never had an opportunity like this before, where I could share my crisis-related experience and feel so accepted and safe. As I received empathy from my colleagues I felt that the pains of my heart were healed. Of course, not everything will be over all at once. However, I will be able to look at what happened with a more objective eye and I am more than willing to understand and help other missionaries . . . . I believe that every participant has gone through both healing and growth, big and small. I believe that the tears we shed for one another for the pains experienced certainly functioned as curative medicine.

> This experience was a meaningful time for me . . . . As I told you earlier, though I was hesitant to recall something that I did not want to revisit, recalling something unpleasant for me in the end had a healing effect . . . . As I pulled the experience out and thought it over, I think I went through a healing process. I always thought of the experience as an experience of failure rather than as something helpful, though there were people telling us that what we experienced would be helpful in the end . . . . Now, more time has passed and through the time we have had together, I have finally come to see that people are different and I learned a great deal.

> I believe my self-esteem as a missionary has been restored through this opportunity . . . I am sure that God talked to each of our groups with

His gentle comfort. Most of all, I realized that all of the participants are part of God's gift of healing, with whom I could sympathize and through whom I could also be sympathized for.

A sense of healing was confirmed in the other three groups of participants as well. Here are the things shared in the second male group:

In and through the process of not only talking about what happened, but by also answering the questions given by the peers, I felt the burden on my shoulders lift.

Though I cannot say that I was completely healed through this experience, I was at least given an opportunity to reconsider many different aspects of what had happened on the whole.

I came to see that what I had done to others; their impact may have been more negative than I had ever thought. The feeling of hatred and resentment against others diminished.

Here is what was shared in the third and fourth group:

Scars are still left. However, they are interpreted at a different and new level than they were before.

I was freed from my hidden self, and I feel healed.

Healing is not the same thing as being emotionally comforted. It includes cognitive aspects as well. I gained a God-centered view and came to see what happened from afar.

I felt safe here and exposed my symptoms to be diagnosed communally. As a result, I received a 'prescription.' I feel healed and will continue to be healed.

I was reminded of the expression, *Donghyeongsangryeon* (동병상련 /同病相憐)[34] as I listened to the crises shared in our group. I realized, while listening to others, that many have gone through similar experiences . . . and I came to thank God for the crises that I went through.

As Table 3 above demonstrates, crisis-related experiences involve many emotions, most of which are quite negative. However, toward the end of the study, we see a dramatic change in these emotions; all of the emotions expressed either implicitly or explicitly during the study are nothing like the ones experienced during or after the crisis-related experience. Thus, it seems reasonable to argue that one of the primary

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34. The loose translation of this expression would be "to take mutual pity on the other who suffers from the same affliction."

outcomes of Korean missionaries' learning from the crisis-related experience is self-perceived emotional well-being.

## Part Three: Data Intpretation and Conclusion

### *Learning as Communal Caring*

Korean missionaries' initial interpretations of the crisis-related experience proved to be somewhat limited, though not necessarily inaccurate. When exposed to someone else's viewpoint and perspective, what they experienced and how they responded to it came to be newly interpreted. With the help of their peers in the group, Korean missionaries came to face and accept new and/or revised interpretations of what happened, which in turn led to new understandings and insights. This community of Korean missionaries, when introduced to a well-structured and safe environment, opened up a space within which unique learning opportunities became available. Also, Korean missionaries' learning from crisis-related experiences took place as they made not only cognitive but also social and emotional connections with one another. Their learning was associated with cognitive meaning making, construction of new knowledge, and/or behavior change, Moreover, there was also a sense of authentic connection. My point is that Korean missionaries' learning from crisis-related experiences took place not only as *they themselves* deepened and enriched their cognitive understanding, but also as they *helped one another* feel safe, accepted, and connected. Korean missionaries' learning occurred as they collaboratively helped one another derive deeper and more constructive meanings from their life and ministry experiences. It is here that we may posit a new potential definition of learning: learning as communal caring.

Almost all of the participants confessed that they learned much more than they had expected, especially on the last day of the study. Such a sense of satisfaction and appreciation seems to be associated with the realization that their unique stories, despite their specificity and particularity, resonated with the stories of others. This enabled them to feel encouraged and connected to one another. It also seems to have resulted because they came to recognize their own as well as their peers' crisis-related experiences were valid source of learning and wisdom. Listen to the following words shared on the last day of the study in the first female group:

> I think I experienced a greater impact this time because our experience
> was done in a community, in a communal setting based on a relationship
> of trust.

In today's world where so much information can be accessed with a simple click of a finger, not many may be willing to recall, revisit, and review serious issues, let alone in a communal manner where full attention must be paid to what others say and to how they feel. However, the data affirms that it is through the process of making oneself available, vulnerable and committed to others that Korean missionaries gain rich learning experiences. That is, Korean missionaries learn as they become vulnerable, available, and responsive to those who share similar experiences. Learning for Korean missionaries is an interactive journey undertaken together' it is both a process and a result where hidden insights are revealed, affirmed, and shared for the benefit of the community.

### *Effective Reflection, Reflective Collaboration, and Collaborative Restoration*

The communal reflective/narrative learning model created in this study was designed to promote reflection, both individual and communal. Reflection has proven to play a critical role in fostering learning from crisis-related experiences for Korean missionaries. It has been shown to be both an intellectual and effective effort through which the Korean missionaries are able to explore their experiences and as a result, come to a new level of understanding and appreciation of their experiences. When provided with time and space to intentionally pause and process these experiences, they are able to adopt a reflective approach toward what transpired. Their initial interpretations of these experiences may be transformed. The data collected affirms that effective learning did not come so much from positive experiences, but from effective reflection.

Effective reflection was then followed by reflective collaboration. The crisis-related experiences were listened to with care, responded to with empathy, and questioned with a critical mindset. These nurturing interactions led to helpful insights and expanded perspectives. It helped the Korean missionaries examine alternative ways of looking at what happened from a variety of perspectives.

Finally, toward the end of the study, the participants came to experience what I would call *collaborative restoration*. The concept of restoration, which varies in meaning according to different disciplines, carries the basic connotation of "returning to its former state." Having gone through effective reflection and collaboration, most of the participants came to feel renewed and even healed. As the meanings of the crises came to be reinterpreted in light of expanded perspectives as well as newly exposed cultural value biases, the participants experienced something new: tears that had been shed in secret and pains born in

isolation were now exposed and shared. Consequently, they were restored and restored together.

As a community of people entrusted with the task of bringing *shalom* back to where it has been lost among different peoples created in the image of God, having a structured opportunity to make peace with oneself and others seems to have been a fruitful and powerful experience for the Korean missionaries. Through the study, the Korean missionaries brought the healing shadow of the vulnerable power of the cross. Restored, they are now ready to take the next step in their ongoing participation in God's mission for His kingdom and glory.

to determine the "true" heroes and villains in Korean mission history does not belong to us, but to the omniscient God. Even so, we need to examine critically and honestly the positive and negative depictions of missionary activities that took place in Korea in efforts to discern God's sovereign role in the history of missions.

In Korea, many second generation descendants of the first generation missionaries remained or returned to Korea to serve as missionaries. Many missionary wives (as well as husbands) became widows, but they chose to remain in Korea to fulfill their remaining tasks. Many wished to be buried in Korean soil as the literal "seeds" of the gospel. Fortunately, in the memory of the Korean people, there are more heroes than villains.