



Transition

by Doh Ah Kim

(Article from Growing up Global, Cindy Loong, Shepherd International Church Limited, Hong Kong. Used with permission.)

It's the people that matter-social, cultural and environmental changes can be dealt with-but without friends, transitions could become unbearable. At each transition in my life, there were a few friends who stuck with me, and were patient even though I did not respond quickly.

My first transition occurred when our family moved to Taiwan. It was perhaps the smoothest one, because I had no idea what was going on. The most difficult transition happened later on during my teenage years. My series of transitions started at the age of four, when our family moved from Korea to Taiwan. Perhaps because I moved at such a young age, I was not aware of the major changes in life I would experience.

I started out at a Chinese kindergarten knowing no Chinese. One day I returned from kindergarten frustrated, locked the door to my room, and started sobbing. Although I cannot remember clearly, even at age four, I knew I did not belong to the group, and most of all, there was nothing more distressing than being forced to take a nap at a place which felt foreign to me. From then on, numerous transitions occurred while moving from one country to another, mostly due to furloughs and changing of schools.

One of the most difficult, yet rewarding transitions was in 1992 during our family's first furlough. During the 18 months in Seoul, we settled in a nice neighborhood apartment complex close to the school I was to attend. I entered 3rd grade elementary school uninformed and naive as to what to expect. I couldn't understand what the teacher was saying when he told us to bring a sketchbook and watercolors to school. I didn't understand why the whole class had to be on detention when the other classmates did not know an answer to a math problem. But during those months, I came to know a classmate named So-young, who lived on the same apartment floor as I. What a comfort it was to see her at my door every morning!

It's the people that matter-social, cultural and environmental changes can be dealt with-but without friends, transitions could become unbearable. At each transition in my life, there were a few friends who stuck with me, and were patient even though I did not respond quickly. During my high school years in Korea (1997-2000), I felt detached from Korean society because I attended an American school (Seoul Foreign School) while living in my home country. This created a gap between myself and other Koreans, especially at church. Yet, there was a girl who would always say "Hi Doh Ah" and smile. I could barely return a smile, because I was miserable. Her persistence for three years saying "Hi Doh Ah" has made us best friends. Now she is in Mongolia, even though we seem to be apart all the time, we keep in touch because of the firm foundation we have established.

My latest transition has been from Calvin College (USA) back to Korea. Now a law school student at Handong International Law School, I can say that my previous transitions back to Korea have been immensely helpful. And God has also faithfully given me great friends, maybe the greatest, since I have met my husband here!

Doh Ah was born in Korea and grew up in Taiwan with her missionary parents. She was educated first in a Chinese school, then at Morrison Christian Academy of Taiwan (American system), Korean high school, Ferndown Upper School (England), Calvin College (MI, USA), and Handong International Law School. Doh Ah married Soo Seok Yang in July 2007.