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Hyun Kwon



I was born as a second child among three siblings in South Korea. My father was a police officer and my mother was a full-time mom—we were just an ordinary family.

South Korea promotes elite education through special purpose high schools. In my case I attended a “science” high school where only a small percentage of students are accepted. Ever since then I knew I was going to work in science or engineering. After high school, I went on to attend the Korean Advanced Institute of Technology (KAIST) with a full governmental scholarship. I chose engineering to study because in that area math and science are applied to bring positive change to society.

It was while I was pursuing my PhD at KAIST that I visited the U.S. and it so impressed me I decided I wanted to come and live here someday. It happened sooner than I expected, as I found I could transfer and complete my PhD at the University of Louisville.

Up to that time in my life I had been focused on academic and professional success. I never had many Christian friends in my circle in Korea. I think that if I had stayed there my ego would have become so big I would not have needed God. I firmly believe it was God who led me to cross the ocean and face the difficulties that come with that type of transition, so that I could open my mind and search myself for the truth. It was my version of the Exodus.

It was meeting my husband-to-be that introduced me to Adventism, and it was right after my PhD, during my post-doc, that I chose to be an Adventist for myself. My life perspective after that changed totally as I started understanding my profession and my future through the role of a Christian. I went out to a solitary place near my home and prayed every morning for months so I could listen to God telling me where my next journey should be. That is when I heard about a position at Andrews; it was the first time I had even heard of Andrews University. I was sure that it was a response from God.

Years later it is even more clear that God led me here. The Department of Engineering & Computer Science was in its infancy when I came to Andrews and I sometimes had to teach a class with just one student. And now look how the department has grown! I am so glad that I could be a part of this amazing journey with the department and now I have the opportunity to lead the department as chair.

Coming to Andrews was one of the best things that happened to me. I have grown in so many aspects personally and have contributed to the department growth with other faculty and staff. And I have had four beautiful children. I often say to my students, “Your decision to come to Andrews will be one of the best things that happens in your life. You will realize this for sure when you look back later!”

I am now a wife, mother of four children, department chair and am still researching and teaching. I am asked sometimes how I get it all done! It is tough, but I have learned to live one day at a time. Whenever I think about all the tasks I need to accomplish, I get overwhelmed and stressed. But each day I give my best at work and reset myself at night. My family are my biggest supporters and give me strength. I never think of my children as slowing me down. Every night, when I have them in my arms, I feel like I have the world.

I wouldn't want to give up anything. Being a chair was my latest new challenge. However, it gives me the opportunity to meet more people and think about our departmental direction and vision all the time. The students are the best part of being faculty at Andrews. I never get tired of providing my best service for them. I enjoy being a role model to the women studying in engineering also. Women in engineering are an underrepresented group. We have a limited number on our campus but the number of female engineers is growing worldwide. I want young women to know that if you are good at what you do, the career path in engineering will be bright.

I admit that over my life I have asked God to give me achievements I think are important. What I have learned, however, is that he answers me with what he thinks is important. This includes the message that “life” is the most important. I sometimes commit myself to the point of exhaustion and he teaches me how to bring balance and live healthfully. He knows me better than I know myself, and he knows what is most important. Sometimes at the time it is hard to notice this, even to think my prayers are not answered, but when I look back I understand. He was, and is, always right!