

Spiritual Formation of TCKs

Cindy Loong



TCKs have a unique calling to serve God, because of the heritage they get from their parents. At the same time, TCKs are more dependent on their parents for support through times of isolation, transition and feelings of alienation (the feeling of 'not belonging' to society or parents' home and home church). Often TCKs who are being relocated reluctantly leave their friends, parents, and siblings, and become their only stability. Parents of TCKs need to be more aware of the spiritual situation of their TCKs because very often they are in extremely isolated situations. Parents also play the role of mentor and pastor to their children. This is more so in Restricted Access Nations or the BAM families as there might not be visible churches, and coworkers restrain themselves in fellowship. Some parents choose to send their children off to Boarding school in big cities. That is a different kind of being isolated due to separation.

It is important for parents of TCKs to listen to the spiritual struggles of their TCKs, even if they sound quite unusual or serious. Through listening to the spiritual struggles of TCKs, they need to depend on God to help their TCKs process these struggles. It is important for parents to ponder the following:

1. When is it time for them to refer their TCKs to

2. When it is time for parents to pray for TCKs to press through,
3. When parents should just pray and wait with TCKs.

Often parents need to encourage TCKs to share with some spiritual older brothers or sisters about their spiritual struggles. Since TCKs have often moved around a lot and so have a harder time trusting people in their surroundings. Parents can guide them to suitable older brothers or sisters in the Christian community. As an outsider, TCKs may not distinguish who are the 'trusted' ones. Parents and their mission should be actively seeking such resources for the TCKs.

Often the spiritual struggles of TCKs are related to emotional and cultural issues. Parents need to discern when to seek professional help for emotional issues and who is the most suitable person to help. Other times a simple but powerful reconciliation with parents is just exactly what the TCK needs for breakthrough in their lives.

For many years I was going through a hard time spiritually and a friend suggested that I needed to reconcile with my parents in order to feel their love more. Over the years, I had let many offenses get between me and my relationship with my parents. However, over the course of a few weeks' time, I

was able to tearfully communicate with my parents regarding past hurts and how my own relational patterns had gotten in the way of my receiving love from them. We had many discussions and became much closer together than before, even though we had been quite close.

There is an important interconnection between seeking for outside help and parents being the source of the TCK's encouragement. Professional help from others or spiritual help from older brothers and sisters or uncles and aunties is valuable because it provides an objective source of feedback for the TCK. The TCK has a chance to hear advice about spiritual and emotional issues from someone other than their parents. They could be more receptive in these situations. It often helps to shed light on their spiritual lives and also their relationship with parents. As a professional counselor myself, I have helped a number of teenage TCKs through these issues, yet often their parents are either shy or ignorant or too busy to encourage their children to look for outside help. I encourage parents to take this bold step if necessary. For adult TCKs I encourage you to own your situation and find professional and or spiritual help when you need it.

When I was going through a profound spiritual and emotional crisis, a friend confronted me that seemingly I had not learned to receive love from God or others. I was shocked because I grew up in Christian home, have been in Christian ministry for a while. This friend told me the story of how he was reconciled with his parents a few years ago and how it might be a good idea for me to do the same. Since then I have taken heed to what he said and reconciled with my parents. Now as I look around, I realize many in full time Christian ministry (and doing very well) also have yet to reconcile with parents; blocking God from doing greater things in their family. Satan's work is subtle and God's families are very susceptible to its disturbance.

There has been so much talk about parental love. However, there comes a point in a TCK's life when

the TCK needs to reconcile his/her own heart with his/her parents' hearts, and realize issues in his/her life that are preventing him/her from receiving parents' love. Often a third party, counselor, or spiritual uncle/aunt or older brother and sister can be instrumental in pointing these out so that they can take ownership of these issues and deal with them.

Ownership of TCK's spiritual life

The biggest spiritual struggle for the TCK is to take ownership of his/her own spiritual life. No one can do this for him/her, and ultimately the parents need to let go and let the TCK find his/her own way in God for this to happen. I have observed many TCKs seem spiritually lost during a season of time. The TCK will eventually find God in the midst of chaos if there is a genuine relationship with God. During this time other friends and spiritual influences will often be more important to the TCK than his/her own parents since the TCK needs to find his/her unique way towards God.

Belonging to a spiritual community

Finally, TCKs need to have a sense of belonging in a spiritual community and have spiritual role models and peers. There are spiritual role models across many denominations. Parents, teachers, mission leaders can guide TCKs to suitable role models. (Note: I know this is not always easy as TCKs are very independent and even a little rebellious). Most parents and mission leaders are more traditional in worship style etc., they must release their TCKs to find spiritual community that are more contemporary and more international (for example, international churches in Hong Kong). Another advantage is the TCKs can be themselves and not 'tag along' parents. As long as the TCK feels a sense of belonging in that Christian community, that is the most important thing for the TCK to grow.

(作者曾隨父母在美國、台灣、新加坡、香港等地居住，現從事專業輔導)