



Sponsor Information

Korea



Compassion sponsorship in Korea

An introductory word

This booklet has been prepared with the purpose of providing you with some information about your child, his culture, and the details of sponsorship . . . we hope this booklet will answer some of your questions.

Letters from sponsors are always welcome. It's a great joy when you share your own experiences with us. If you have any questions which are not answered in this book, please feel free to write to us. We are at your service for the benefit of needy children everywhere!

Background

Compassion sponsorship in Korea began in 1952, following the Korean War. While visiting South Korea, a Chicago evangelist, the Reverend Everett Swanson, was moved by the plight of helpless orphan children scavenging garbage cans for food. Literally thousands of children were orphaned or abandoned . . . many died from starvation, cold, and neglect. Because of these desperate, immediate needs, Compassion, Inc. came into existence.

Sponsorship today

Today in Korea, sponsorship serves a somewhat different need. Most of the children being cared for in Compassion-supported homes are "abandoned" children rather than true orphans. Many of these needy children have been abandoned by desperately poor widows who simply cannot provide for their children. Although the



situation in Korea is steadily improving, there still are tragic human needs that must be met.

Compassion-supported homes are staffed by dedicated Christian workers, most of whom are Korean nationals. Each staff includes a superintendent, several pomos (mothering ladies), cooks, seamstresses, and a Bible teacher. A home will average about 110 children.

A public health program includes Korean nurses visiting the homes to check the health of the children and to train in nutrition, health habits, and first aid. Medical care is provided through arrangements with five regional mission hospitals.

Compassion is not only interested in feeding and clothing these precious children, but is greatly concerned about training the children in Christian living. A Bible teacher is responsible for daily Christian instruction.

In addition to caring for children in children's homes, Compassion is helping many needy children living at home with their parents. Through our Family Helper Program, hundreds of destitute children are able to attend school and receive basic care that their parents simply cannot afford to provide.

Sponsorship through the Family Helper Plan actually prevents abandonment in some cases.

Letter-writing and Gifts

How often to write

A sponsor, first of all, is not required to write to his child, although we encourage it. You may write whenever you wish . . . perhaps every 2 or 3 months, once a year, or as often as you like.

What to write about

Your child will be interested in your family, your age, pets, simple descriptions of your activities and work; however, descriptions of your home and possessions are not suggested as they only accentuate the poverty of those in other lands. Your letters should be brief and simple. Photographs of your self and your family will be especially appreciated, as well as birthday and Christmas cards.

All correspondence must be channeled through our Chicago Office. You may use the buff-colored envelope provided, or any envelope, so long as you print your child's name and number on the front.

To make the task of translation of your letter easier, please write plainly, or, if possible, use a typewriter.



Letters from your child

Compassion requests that children write regularly to their sponsors. However, we face several problems which we would like to share with you. First, there is a cultural barrier. Letter-writing is a custom unfamiliar to your child; therefore, he or she will not be able to communicate as a Western child would. Asian children are taught to highly respect adults and to show honor to them. Thus their letters may be filled with words of praise and exaltation for their sponsors. The child's humility is revealed through the lack of personal references to his own daily activities. This formality often makes the letter seem impersonal to us.

Another problem we face is the language barrier. Your letters will be translated into English by Korean translators. These people are proud of their education and want their work to reflect their ability, which results in choosing more advanced vocabulary words or phrases than a child would use. Also, whenever a language is translated, there is something lost and something gained because equivalent words cannot always be found. We ask you to be patient with our foreign staff. They have a difficult task.

The third barrier is a physical one. Letters may take up to two months for delivery, due to translation, foreign postal systems, and processing through the Chicago Office.

Sending gifts to your child

Many sponsors write us concerning the giving of gifts to their children in Korea. First of all, we must ask you not to send packages of any kind, either to our office or to your child overseas. The customs duty on gifts purchased in the United States generally amounts to more than the gift is worth, and your gift may well be lost or stolen.



If you wish to send a gift to your child, please send a check for the amount you wish to give (limit of \$10.00) to our Chicago Office. We dispense such gifts once a week, and a staff worker will purchase a gift for your child. We suggest that you let the staff worker choose the gift that your child should have. Under no circumstances should a gift for one child be more than \$10.00.

A small gift of money for Christmas or for a child's birthday is encouraged, but of course this is optional. Gift money should be received by our Chicago Office 6 weeks prior to the date for which

the gift is intended.

There is one exception to the \$10.00 gift limit. For children living in one of Compassion's children's homes, a "birthday party" can be arranged. A gift of \$20.00, designated to provide such a party for your child, will enable the superintendent to purchase a treat for 100 children in the home, and have a wonderful party for your child.

Anything extra you may do endears you to the child. However, we want to assure our sponsors that, while gifts are much appreciated, no one is obligated to send them at any time.



Other ways you can help...

Many sponsors ask how they can help Compassion's needy children in addition to regular support for their child. You can add to your love and help by giving to the following important projects:

Medical Project—Provides for surgery and for medical treatment for sponsored children with special needs.

WARM Project—Provides an extra set of winter clothing for sponsored children (sweater, pants, mittens, socks, underwear).

Education Project—Helps keep promising children in school. Because of limited facilities and tuition expenses, many sponsored children are unable to continue in school beyond the elementary level unless extra schooling funds are available.

These projects represent needs in the lives of orphaned, abandoned, and destitute children. Al-

though you may give to these special projects at any time, once each year you will receive information from our Chicago Office concerning a special effort to meet these growing needs. We would be glad for any extra gift you may want to make.

Future Giving

Compassion has several plans for deferred giving and special contributions. Write for more information about the following:

- Gift Annuities—up to 10% return.
- Giving through your will.
- Giving through life insurance.
- Living Sponsorships—a once-for-all sponsorship payment that provides unending care for children.
- Revocable Agreements—"change your mind giving."
- Tax Saving Income Trust.

Questions asked by sponsors

Q. Can I adopt my child and bring him to America?

A. Although many children from Korea have been adopted through various agencies, we think it is in the best interest of the child to remain in Korea in his own culture. Many of these adopted children have a hard time adapting themselves to a new country, a new language, and a different school system.

Q. Can my child come to the U.S. to visit me?

A. No. The cost would be prohibitive; there would be much red tape involved in obtaining passports; young children would be required to travel with a chaperone, and round-trip fares for both would have to be provided. There is also the problem of language and culture, both very real and great.

Q. May I visit my child?

A. Yes, we have had many sponsors who have been able to do this. Some have been able to go on a Compassion Orient Tour, and some have gone on their own. We will help in any way we are able to bring about the meeting of sponsor and child should the sponsor find that he is able to travel to Korea.

Q. At what age does a child become self-supporting?

A. The Government of Korea encourages young people to be self-supporting at 18 years of age. However, if a young person is still in school at this age, it is obvious that the care and shelter provided by the home is still needed. Thus, some young people are still in the home at 21 or 22. Many Korean children get a late start in school.

Q. As a former sponsor, can we write to our child after he or she leaves the home?

A. Generally, the answer is "No." It is too diffi-

cult for the superintendent to trace the whereabouts of the child. In the case of a boy, he may have been drafted into the armed forces and no record is available concerning his present location. A superintendent also has his hands full with other routine jobs around the home. To keep up with all the "graduates" of the home would be an impossible task.

Q. How can we know that the money we provide gets to the children?

A. Through the years, Compassion has set up rather stringent standards regarding our homes and their supervision in Korea. We expect these standards to be lived up to by the officials of each of the homes. We expect that each child who is supported by Compassion funds receives a certain amount of food, adequate clothes, and a warm place in which to live. Our field director for South Korea keeps close tab on each of the homes and sees to it that Compassion's rules and regulations are carried out. Furthermore, our "books" are open for the inspection of any sponsor, at any time. We count it our sacred trust to use sponsor money in a way that will benefit the children.







South Korea... Land of the Morning Calm

Korea boasts of a history over 4000 years old. This peninsula, jutting out into the Sea of Japan, is a beautiful country. Majestic mountains grace the countryside covering most of the land. Rice paddies spread out across the valleys and step up hillsides in well-laid terraces.

The peninsula has been desired by covetous countries for centuries and has known the destruction of many devastating wars. "A shrimp is crushed in the battle of the whales," a Korean proverb, describes her plight among surrounding powers.

South Korea is about the size of Indiana, but supports five times as many people. Over thirty-two million people are crowded into 39,000 square miles. Very little privacy exists in Korea. How can it, with 875 persons per square mile?

Korea is a land of contrasts; of the old versus the new, of ancient custom versus modernization. Mercury lighted, paved streets are lined with twenty-story buildings; yet, crowded, cold huts and ragged tents dot the barren hillsides and river banks. A Greyhound bus whisks passengers from Seoul to Pusan on a divided, three-hundred mile freeway, while an ox cart bogs down in the rutty

roads of the city. The first leg of an extensive subway system in Seoul is now being planned, meanwhile, a bicycle, carrying ten crates of chickens, sways and topples over, causing taxis and buses to pile up behind. Korea is clutching ancient customs in one hand while reaching and stretching to envelop western culture with the other.

Domestic Life

The family is the basic and most important unit in Korea. The father is the respected head of the house and makes all the decisions. When the first son marries, the bride is brought into the groom's house and is expected to help her mother-in-law, who supervises the household duties. Sons are important because they support parents in their old age, enlarge the family, and carry on the family name. Daughters are of least importance for they soon leave the home to join another clan. As many as three or four generations may live under one roof, all obedient to the head of the house, the absolute power.

The village people live in small, one-storied huts of wood frames with stone and clay walls and



thatched roofs of rice straw. The U-shaped house has a work-yard surrounded by a stone wall or high brush fence. The furnishings are limited; usually a few small tables, a chest for clothing and bedding which is spread on the floor at night. Heat circulates under the floor by a system of flues leading from a fire pit in the kitchen.

The city homes are built of block or brick with tile roofs, are larger and may be two stories, but the house plan is much the same. Even modern apartment buildings use ondul floors for heating. With the rapid economic growth, more furnishings are being brought into the homes, but even the wealthy eat and sleep on the floor. (Per capita income averages about \$300 a year).

For centuries Korea has produced an abundance of rice which has served as the main food. The average family eats three meals a day consisting of steaming rice, hot vegetable soup, bean paste and kimchi. On occasion boiled meat or

fried fish with vegetables may be served. The foods are eaten from stainless steel bowls or china-ware. Squatting on the floor at low tables, eating with chopsticks and flat spoons, the Koreans consume vast amounts of rice. (Forks and knives are used only in the kitchen). They drink a rice or barley tea "brewed from the remnants in the pot."

A Korean meal always includes "kimchi," a mixture of hot, fermented vegetables served the year round. Cabbage, salt, garlic, red pepper, green onion, turnip, ginger and salted fish are combined and preserved in huge earthenware vases. A westerner experiences great difficulty in eating "kimchi," as it is incredibly hot.

In addition to rice, the Koreans also raise barley, potatoes, fruits and vegetables. In spite of the fact that fish are caught in eighty different varieties along the rugged coastline, fish is expensive; therefore, it is usually served in soup or fried in bite-size pieces. Since beef is also costly, it is



used mainly to flavor soup or served only on special occasions. Koreans living near the seashore can be seen gathering seaweed and transporting it to market. Seaweed soup is considered a delicate dish. It is also dried and wrapped around hot rice.

Education—goal of all Koreans

The educational system of Korea has four levels: elementary, first grade through sixth grade; middle school, grades seven, eight, nine; and high school, grades ten, eleven, twelve; and college. The first semester begins March 1 and closes July 31. The children enjoy a summer vacation during August. The second semester lasts from September 1 until February 28. Because of the cold winter and lack of heated buildings January is also a vacation month.

Roughly 95% of the school age children enroll in first grade. Many children are forced to drop

out of school because their parents cannot afford to pay for books, supplies and uniforms.

The three years of high school are not required, but are highly sought after by most students in spite of difficulties. Children attend in shifts because of limited facilities. Because of unheated classrooms, children often wear mittens or blow warm breath on their numb fingers so they can write.

Religion

Religion plays an important part in the life of the Oriental. Many families in Korea still practice both Buddhism and Confucianism. This is possible because there is "no conflict between these two faiths, for Buddhism pays scant attention to this life and Confucianism ignores the next." Christianity has made great inroads since 1945, and today many denominations are winning converts.

Compassion

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