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I had an opportunity to speak with a gentleman named Jin Kang over Zoom on February 18, 2023. I was introduced to Mr. Kang through a friend at Alliance Theological Seminary and met with him a few times before he moved to Ohio for his career development. Mr. Kang is a Korean American born and raised in New Jersey. He is 28 years old and completed his masters in Computer Science at Rutgers University in 2020. At an early age, Mr. Kang lost his mother due to an illness and lived with his father most of his life. His father is a Korean immigrant and lacked language skills. Therefore, Mr. Kang had to learn to “become an adult” at a young age. Furthermore, Mr. Kang had a tough childhood as his father was physically and emotionally abusive in a mild way that he describes as being normal in his ethnic background and especially in the motherland of South Korea.

When asked the question, “If I were to speak to you or your family about God, how would you like me to represent Him?” Mr. Jin Kang took a few moments to think. He said, “as far as I can remember, I think Christianity was always something that was present in my life.” As a child of an immigrant, his father often went to Korean-diaspora churches to build relationships. According to Mr. Kang, this was strictly for making relationships and business connections and both him and his father never declared to be a Christian. However, Mr. Kang expressed that he would always hear about “the love of God” and never understood what that really meant. In his experience, Christians or church-goers were practically the same as anyone he met outside the church. As far as what he experienced, neither were better nor worse than the other. He felt that Christians “tended to be nicer in their demeanor” but, in the end, felt that they were exactly the

same as anyone else. With this in mind, he wondered out loud, “I wonder if you were to display that love they talk about in church in a tangible way, I would be more inclined to trust that Christians or God is actually better or good.”

Mr. Jin Kang went on to explain to me that he never had a parental figure that he looked up to. He knew close to nothing about his mother and his father was never really present. Mr. Kang described his father as an alcoholic workaholic and never came to any school events. He felt that he was always alone and had to grow up alone. Here, I asked him, “Do you think that God or a higher power that you seek might be someone who knows and cares about you?” To this he said, “it blows my mind that Christians believe that they can have a relationship with this ‘father’ that they can’t even see. I never even had a relationship with a father that’s back home.” After the conversation about representing God concluded, Mr. Jin Kang and I spoke for about 10 more minutes before ending our call.

In his experience, Mr. Kang heard a lot of ‘good things’ said about God but never tangibly experienced them. The two major factors that stood out to me was that he sought to find the love of God in Christians and his biological father and never came across it. Maybe he thought Christians ought to be better. Or maybe Christ-followers were not found to be honest in their brokenness and attempted to cover it up. I cannot speak for his relationship with other Christians, but Mr. Kang, feeling that there was nothing different about them, assumed that the love of God cannot be found in his relationship with other Christians. His relationship, or the lack thereof, with his father also left him wondering about God. Reading inbetween the lines, it seemed clear that, if I were to represent God to him, he would desire to have a genuine and deep relationship with me that would allow him to gradually experience a relationship with God through my testimony. Mr. Kang seemed to value and seek genuineness in people.