

SPIRITUAL BIOGRAPHY

Daniel J. Kim

Daniel Johnguk Kim was born on September 19, 1957 (Seoul, Korea) to Ho Keun and Chungyul Lee Kim. In 1967, he emigrated to the United States to join his parents who had arrived earlier. Daniel and his three siblings (a brother and two sisters) grew up in Wilson, North Carolina, where Daniel's father was professor of physics at a Christian college and his mother was a homemaker and businesswoman. In his youth, Daniel was a faithful church attendee, an honor student, an Eagle Scout, the recipient of the Citizenship Award, and a member of the National Youth Science Camp.

In his youth, Daniel was constantly in search of deeper meaning and purpose in life. During his teen years, he was interested in martial arts and eastern mysticism. In his college years, he joined the varsity fencing team, while studying classical ballet on the side. Daniel attended North Carolina State University where he received his B.S. degree in Mechanical Engineering in 1980. After his engineering studies, Daniel moved to New York City to further pursue his artistic vision as a dancer and choreographer. During his two years of training at School of American Ballet, Daniel began meditating more seriously on the meaning of life. During a deep soul search, in March 1982, Daniel experienced a radical spiritual conversion. Although Daniel was raised in a Christian family and had faithfully attended church all throughout his life, it was not until then that he accepted Jesus as his personal Lord and Savior, and committed his life fully to Him.

A few months later, Daniel sensed a divine call to enter into full-time Christian ministry. In response to and in preparation for his call, Daniel began his theological studies at Fuller Theological Seminary (Pasadena, CA) in January 1983. He also began to serve as a youth minister at L. A. Korean Christian Reformed Church, and to minister at various retreats, revival meetings, and conferences. It was during these seminary years that Daniel began to experience a variety of divine encounters and spiritual gifts.

After graduating from Fuller Seminary (M.Div.) in 1986, Daniel set out to his homeland, Korea, for a personal spiritual renewal. There, Daniel visited many significant churches and prayer mountains. It was during this time he cultivated a strong discipline of Bible study and prayer (experiencing his first season of 40 days of fast). He was also nurtured by some significant mentors who imparted to him a deeper understanding of consecrated and commissioned life before the Lord. Daniel also had an opportunity to study at Korean Presbyterian Seminary. Basically, he learned to appreciate both his Christian and Korean cultural heritage. Moreover, while in Korea, in November 1990, he married Esther Park, a gifted Christian musician and daughter of a renowned pastor, Chong Soon Park (Choongshin Presbyterian Church). Presently, they have three daughters, Sarah, Michelle, and Anna.

When Daniel and Esther returned to the United States in January 1991, Daniel joined the pastoral staff at Young Nak Presbyterian Church (Los Angeles), and was soon ordained through its denomination, Korean Presbyterian Churches in America. At Young Nak, he first served as pastor of Young Adults Ministry (1991-1992). Then, he served as senior pastor of the English-speaking congregation (1993-1994).

In the latter part of 1994, while cultivating a personal call to develop the area of biblical prophetic spirituality, Daniel began to disciple a dozen Korean-American Fuller seminarians. Then, after resigning from Young Nak, Daniel and Esther (along with their seminarian-disciples) planted a new church called River of Life Christian Fellowship in Pasadena, California. Here, Daniel began to seriously research in the area of prophetic spirituality, as he pastored and mentored many future servant-leaders. The church gradually evolved into a multi-ethnic community which served the larger Christian community in the Greater Los Angeles area, particularly through training seminars and conferences.

It was also during this season that Daniel continued his study at Fuller Seminary—this time, in the area of missiology. He began to investigate in particular the field of prophetic spirituality and its relation to the church and the kingdom. As a result, he completed his Th.M. thesis entitled “A Review of Literature in the Contemporary Prophetic Movement” (1995). This study led to Daniel’s realization of the need to research in greater depth the biblical-theological basis for prophetic authority and spirituality. In the process, Daniel produced a Ph.D. dissertation entitled “The Quest for Authentic Prophetic Authority: A Biblical Theology of Divine Commission” (2002), under the mentorship of Charles E. Van Engen. (Daniel’s dissertation earned him the theology award from the School of Intercultural Studies, Fuller Seminary.)

While developing his academic disciplines, Daniel has consistently focused on his personal relationship with God. He has persistently sought for intimacy with God and contemplation of the presence of God. He has also encountered the Lord in a number of significant ways—through visions, dreams, and theophanies. Moreover, through a series of personal trials and sufferings, Daniel has cultivated a deeper sense of reverence for the sovereign mystery of God. In 1998, subsequent to death of his infant son, Daniel experienced a special encounter with God, and received a profound understanding of the Father’s heart and the essence of the cross. In 2002, through a dream encounter with Jesus, Daniel came to a deeper understanding of the intimate, covenant relationship with the Lord. These spiritual experiences, along with his theological processing, helped Daniel to arrive at a point of conviction regarding the essence of union with Christ (*unio cum Christo*).

Presently, Daniel is on a personal quest to understand, in an integrative sense, the depth of the incarnate nature of Christ (incarnational Christology), the triune nature of God (trinitarian theology), the *imago dei* nature of humanity (theological anthropology), and the created nature of the universe (theological cosmology). Essentially, Daniel is developing a spiritual theology (particularly, contemplative theology and presence theology) and methodology for proper understanding of the reality of God, humanity, nature, and the cosmos. Moreover, in the recent years, Daniel has devoted himself to an intensive historical research on patristic and reformation theology and spirituality. Particularly focusing on the practical and pietistic theology of John Calvin, Daniel is seeking to develop a truly evangelical model of spiritual theology. Most recently, he has also rekindled his passion for the arts by choreographing and producing a theodrama called “Imago” (2014), a preaching drama called “Prophetica” (2015), a worship drama called “Communio” (2016), and a theo-drama called “Resurrectio” (2017). Basically, Daniel is in the process of developing a spiritual theology of arts.

Reflecting on his past experiences, both natural and spiritual, theological and prophetic, Daniel has concluded that his life purpose is to explore the depth of intimacy with God in Christ and to realize all of life, ministry, and vision from this essence of intimate relationship with Christ. Daniel has concluded that his *modus operandi* will be research and training. It is not by accident that Daniel’s own life has been a series of personal training and quest for truth: (1) academic (science, theology, missiology); (2) artistic (martial arts, fencing, ballet); and (3) spiritual (through biblical, historical, and contemporary role models). It seems the Lord has meant through all these means to prepare and equip Daniel for the vision of establishing a training/research institute, which focuses on spiritual theology and practical spirituality—for better training and mobilizing future servants of God for strategic ministries and missions to the nations.

Presently, Daniel is a professor at Asia United Theological University (Asian Center for Theological Studies and Mission - ACTS), teaching spiritual theology and mission theology, and serving as director of Spiritual Theology program at Korean Graduate School. Daniel’s primary passion, however, is to cultivate his vision of Imago Christi Studio for research and training in the integrative disciplines of theology, spirituality, mission, and arts.