

1976 to 1978

Korea Seoul Mission

Elder Jeffry P Belnap

Letters to Home - Summary Essays

(Compiled and Written by Automation)
(From Jeff's Aerogrammes & Letters)

General Summary

(October to December 1976)

Across roughly two months at the Language Training Mission (LTM), Jeff's letters consistently emphasize **intense language learning, spiritual growth, personal discipline, and preparation for service in Korea**. He describes rapid progress in learning Hangul and Korean grammar, often expressing joy and fascination with the language's logic and structure, while also acknowledging its difficulty and the humility that comes with realizing how much remains to learn.

Daily life at the LTM is portrayed through recurring themes of **rigorous study schedules, physical training, temple attendance, and laundry-room reflections**, which serve as informal moments of introspection. Jeff frequently discusses memorization of missionary discussions, goal-setting, and the pressure of pass-offs and spot checks, balanced by gratitude for prayer, family support, and spiritual experiences.

Interpersonally, he reflects thoughtfully on **companionship challenges**, striving for patience, leadership, and charity. He shows growing self-awareness about working with others, learning forgiveness, and improving his own attitudes. His letters also convey affection and concern for family members, interest in their lives, and logistical coordination for travel, finances, and personal items.

Spiritually, the letters show a deepening testimony. Jeff repeatedly affirms his belief that his mission call is divine, that prayer—especially in another language—shapes intent and faith, and that love is essential for communicating across cultures. As departure approaches, excitement, anxiety, gratitude, and determination converge, marking a clear transition from training to active missionary service.

General Summary (January to February 1977)

During January and February 1977, Jeff describes his first full months serving as a missionary in Seoul, Korea. This period is marked by cultural adjustment, intensive language learning, financial awareness, and gradual spiritual and missionary growth.

Jeff begins the year settling into missionary life, adjusting to small living quarters, Korean customs, and a rigorous daily schedule. Much of his time is devoted to studying Korean, learning gospel discussions, teaching English classes, visiting members, and contacting investigators. He frequently expresses frustration with the slowness of his language acquisition, especially during lessons and promises, but also notes steady improvement and increasing comprehension week by week.

Culturally, Jeff records many observations about Korean society, including housing styles, family life, food, transportation, social manners, and religious influences such as Buddhism. He experiences both admiration for Korean kindness and moments of culture shock. Daily life involves extensive walking, crowded buses, cold weather, traditional meals, and frequent hospitality from members and investigators.

Financially, Jeff is very conscious of his limited mission budget. He tracks expenses carefully, discusses housing and transportation costs, and relies on family support as well as selling Books of Mormon. He makes ongoing efforts to remain within his allowance while managing unexpected expenses such as film, transportation, and customs charges.

Missionary work during this time is slow but meaningful. January passes without baptisms, which weighs on him emotionally, especially as his area is one of the lowest-producing zones in the mission. Despite this, he works diligently with investigators, members, and fellow missionaries, participates in splits, conferences, English classes, and stake events, and focuses on improving spirituality and companionship unity.

February brings significant developments. Jeff experiences companionship changes and increased responsibility within his area. By the end of the two-month period, he performs his first baptism—Ko Sung Heon—marking an important milestone and boost in confidence. He also reports growing confidence in teaching discussions and a clearer sense of purpose as a missionary.

Throughout the letters, Jeff consistently expresses gratitude to his family for their emotional, financial, and spiritual support. He reflects often on personal growth, patience, discipline, and long-term goals, showing a transition from early uncertainty toward greater commitment and maturity in his mission service.

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General Summary (March to April 1977)

During March and April 1977, Jeff experiences a period of significant emotional strain, personal reflection, and gradual leadership development in his mission service in Seoul, Korea. These months are characterized by companionship difficulty, slowed missionary productivity, and deep self-evaluation, followed by renewed optimism and increased responsibility.

March begins with Jeff feeling discouraged by an unproductive companionship. He frequently expresses frustration over lost teaching opportunities, diminishing numbers of investigators, and a lack of shared motivation with his companion. This period weighs heavily on him, leading to introspection, repentance, and a conscious recommitment to use time more effectively. Despite these challenges, Jeff continues language study, teaches English classes, participates in zone conferences, and reflects deeply on missionary purpose, obedience, and endurance.

Cultural observations continue throughout the period, including reflections on Korean family dynamics, public expressions of emotion, food customs, seasonal changes, and social expectations. Jeff is particularly affected by witnessing family separations at the airport and becomes more sensitive to the emotional cost of missionary life on families and converts alike. Financial discipline improves during this time as he sells personal items to remain within budget and reduces transportation expenses.

By mid-to-late March, Jeff demonstrates growing maturity. He formalizes personal goals, expands efforts to repair ward records, works more closely with members, and shows increasing confidence in teaching gospel discussions independently. Although conflicts with his companion persist, he emphasizes patience, humility, and personal accountability, choosing endurance over confrontation.

April marks an important turning point. Transfers bring Jeff a new companion and a leadership calling as assistant zone leader. His responsibilities expand to include overseeing language study and helping other missionaries pass off discussions—ironically even as he feels his own language mastery is still developing. This transition restores much of his enthusiasm and sense of purpose.

Jeff reports improved morale, renewed motivation, and optimism about missionary work going forward. He becomes more engaged in leadership discussions, missionary strategy, choir organization, family-focused work, and long-term vision for the mission. Though he remains occasionally discouraged and “trunky,” he closes the period expressing gratitude, emotional resilience, and confidence that sustained effort will bring future success.

General Summary (May to June 1977)

During May and June 1977, Jeff enters a season of increased confidence, spiritual depth, and productive missionary momentum while serving in Seoul, Korea. These months reflect a noticeable shift from earlier discouragement toward clarity of purpose, leadership growth, and meaningful teaching experiences.

Missionary work intensifies as Jeff participates in a revised, family-focused proselyting schedule emphasizing early-morning door knocking. He reports improved success finding investigators through direct contact rather than English classes, which he increasingly views as ineffective for lasting conversion. Several investigators accept baptismal challenges, marking Jeff's first experiences teaching individuals from initial contact through advanced discussions.

A major highlight of this period is the mission conference at Songni-san, where Jeff is deeply inspired by testimony meetings, workshops on motivation and goal-setting, and teachings from senior church leaders. These experiences strengthen his testimony, increase his sense of urgency, and reinforce principles of planning, preparation, and disciplined use of time. He repeatedly emphasizes personal revelation, study, and organization as keys to missionary effectiveness.

Leadership development continues as Jeff assists in zone-level meetings, workshops, and interviews. Though still serving as a junior companion, he becomes more reflective about leadership, obedience, and supporting seniors despite personal differences. He views companionship challenges as a valuable, though difficult, learning experience that is shaping his character and future leadership style.

Spiritually, Jeff describes sustained periods of inspiration, deepened testimony, and a growing desire to honor both his heavenly and earthly parents through faithful service. He feels increasingly connected to the gospel's message and its relevance in the lives of Korean families. He also demonstrates greater cultural appreciation, noting Korean politeness, discipline, hospitality, family structures, and perseverance—often contrasting them with American norms.

Personally, Jeff remains closely tied to his family, frequently expressing gratitude for their letters, encouragement, and sacrifices. He offers heartfelt counsel to his siblings about journaling, work ethic, perseverance, and recognizing blessings. While occasionally fatigued or overwhelmed, he consistently reports happiness, motivation, and confidence that he is progressing and fulfilling his purpose.

By the end of June, Jeff presents himself as more grounded, spiritually aligned, and optimistic than earlier in his mission, with clear signs of growth in discipline, teaching ability, leadership awareness, and commitment to missionary work.

General Summary (July to August 1977)

During July and August 1977, Jeff experiences one of the most demanding yet formative stretches of his mission in Seoul, Korea. These months are marked by increased responsibility, leadership pressure, physical fatigue, spiritual testing, cultural engagement through music, and a significant transfer that signals a new phase in his service.

July begins with Jeff carrying an unusually heavy workload when his zone leader companion is hospitalized. During this period, Jeff manages zone responsibilities, ongoing proselyting, baptisms, statistics, and administrative duties with limited support. The strain exposes gaps in his preparation and time management but also provides critical insight into leadership realities and accountability. Financial pressure is also heightened due to living in the most expensive housing area in the mission, prompting concern but acceptance and patience.

As summer progresses, Jeff becomes increasingly involved in zone-level leadership efforts, conferences, and workshops centered on testimony, missionary focus, and proper use of time. He develops greater confidence in handling responsibility, speaks frequently in meetings, and reflects deeply on the challenges of companionship dynamics, obedience, and learning to support leadership despite personal preferences.

A major highlight of this period is Jeff's expanded involvement with music. He works closely with the New Horizons musical group, participates in rehearsals and recording sessions, and contributes percussion work. These musical experiences serve both as a spiritual outlet and as a tool for missionary outreach. However, under new mission leadership, the New Horizons program is formally ended, a moment that disappoints Jeff but also reinforces lessons about obedience, humility, and adapting to inspired change.

Spiritually, Jeff reports increasing language comprehension, deeper testimony, and frequent moments of self-evaluation. He acknowledges ongoing shortcomings—fatigue, missed study, imperfect prayer—but consistently recommits to growth through effort and faith. He describes the Korean people as exceptionally kind and receptive and expresses gratitude for being called to serve among them.

August brings significant transition. Jeff is transferred out of Third Ward after eight months to Ninth Ward, marking one-third of his mission completed. Though emotionally conflicted at leaving familiar members and responsibilities, he embraces the change with renewed motivation. In the new area, he experiences focused door-knocking success,

new investigators, family teaching opportunities, and even moments of persecution, which further strengthen his resolve and testimony.

By the end of August, Jeff presents himself as seasoned yet striving—happier, more self-aware, more capable, and still intensely driven to live up to the mission he had envisioned. The period reflects a turning point where idealism is tempered by experience, producing deeper humility, resilience, and commitment.

General Summary

(September to October 1977)

During September and October 1977, Jeff's mission enters a highly demanding and transformative phase marked by intense cultural engagement, major personal growth, public exposure, spiritual testing, and a significant leadership transition.

A dominant theme of this period is Jeff's deep involvement in Korean traditional music and dance, particularly his preparation for and participation in the Foreigners Music Festival. What begins as a cultural side project develops into an exhausting and expensive commitment involving daily rehearsals, paid instruction, costume preparation, and the eventual purchase and borrowing of multiple Korean drums. Although Jeff later recognizes that the project temporarily distracts from direct missionary work, it becomes a powerful vehicle for cultural immersion, language growth, discipline, and public representation of missionaries in Korea. His performance is nationally televised, earns second prize, and becomes a defining personal experience that blends faith, culture, perseverance, and humility.

Missionary work during these months continues steadily but with complex challenges. Jeff baptizes individuals and an entire young family, experiences both receptive investigators and difficult encounters with competing religious beliefs, and confronts moments of persecution during door-to-door proselyting. He frequently reflects on the frustrations of language limitation—not basic comprehension, but the inability to fully express personality and nuance—describing this stage as a critical threshold many missionaries fail to push beyond.

Emotionally, Jeff oscillates between confidence and discouragement. Illness, fatigue, financial stress, delayed correspondence, and feelings of being held back from leadership roles weigh on him. At the same time, he shows noticeable maturity through honest

self-assessment, recommitment to obedience, and conscious efforts to support senior companions despite personal readiness for greater responsibility.

October brings a pivotal institutional shift. Jeff reaches the mid-mission “hump,” experiences curtailment of mission music programs under new leadership, and is called to serve in Mission Home Public Relations. This transfer marks a turning point from field-focused missionary service to administrative and representational responsibilities, placing him close to mission leadership and visiting church authorities. Jeff meets prominent leaders, observes high-level church operations, and reflects with pride on missionary professionalism and unity.

Throughout these months, Jeff consistently expresses gratitude to his family for financial, emotional, and spiritual support. He remains deeply reflective, people-focused, culturally sensitive, and driven to reconcile his ideal vision of missionary work with the realities of obedience, timing, and personal refinement.

By the end of October, Jeff emerges more disciplined, humbled, and self-aware—still ambitious and unsatisfied, but clearly strengthened by success, disappointment, visibility, and sustained effort. This period represents a crucial developmental midpoint where experience reshapes expectation into resilience and long-term commitment.

General Summary

(November to December 1977)

During November and December 1977, Jeff’s mission enters a reflective and transitional phase marked by temporary field reassignment, increasing administrative responsibility, cultural observation, and a deepened focus on remembrance, record-keeping, and long-term purpose.

November begins with Jeff being reassigned from the Mission Home to Seventh Ward to substitute for a hospitalized missionary. This return to full-time proselyting energizes him, providing renewed contact with investigators and door-knocking activities. He works closely with a capable companion, Elder Kevin Coleman, teaching a variety of people including a bilingual Chinese family with Buddhist background. Jeff reflects thoughtfully on Korean cultural norms at the door—politeness, indirect refusals, and quiet forms of rejection—while noting the absence of overt hostility.

Throughout November, Jeff also processes physical concerns such as acne treatments, diet changes, minor illness, and fatigue, alongside ongoing uncertainty about purchasing a camera and arranging shipment of drums and festival items home. His letters show

increasing awareness that material concerns distract from long-term meaning, prompting restraint and discernment.

By late November, Jeff returns to the Mission Home, where a significant shift occurs. He steps fully into his Public Communications role, learning typing, organizing historical materials, initiating a mission scrapbook, supporting filmstrip production, coordinating media outreach, and helping prepare articles for Church publications. This work exposes him to senior leadership thinking, historical continuity, and the broader narrative of missionary work in Korea.

December is quieter outwardly but spiritually focused. Jeff observes that Christmas in Korea lacks commercial emphasis, allowing deeper reflection on the Savior's life. He emphasizes the importance of journals, scrapbooks, genealogy, and "books of remembrance," encouraging his family to preserve spiritual and family history over acquiring possessions. These themes recur persistently, signaling a maturation in perspective from immediate activity to legacy and continuity.

Jeff participates in mission-wide Christmas preparations, including planning a large dinner for 150 missionaries, producing skits, filming televised programs, and coordinating public relations efforts. He encounters issues surrounding the orphan girls' singing group, Tender Apples, reflecting thoughtfully on cultural identity, well-being, and long-term consequences of Western influence.

Throughout these months, Jeff's tone becomes more measured and introspective. While still motivated and engaged, he acknowledges the need for endurance now that novelty has faded. His gratitude toward family support intensifies, and he repeatedly emphasizes gratitude, humility, and refinement over ambition.

By the end of December, Jeff stands firmly transitioned into his second mission year—no longer new, no longer idealistic in early ways, but grounded, reflective, and purpose-driven. He closes the year expressing resolve for personal improvement in the coming year and a deep sense of privilege serving in Korea.

General Summary (January to February 1978)

Overview

During January and February 1978, Jeff was deeply engaged in missionary service in Korea, balancing heavy administrative responsibilities at the mission home with proselyting, communications work, and significant personal and spiritual reflection. The period shows steady maturation: increased responsibility, creative initiative, and a growing awareness of the limits and opportunities of his assignment.

January 1978 — New Year, Expanding Responsibility

January opens with optimism and resolve. Jeff begins the year reflecting on goals, discipline, and personal improvement, formally recording detailed **New Year's resolutions** that include journaling, scripture study, prayer, exercise, budgeting, and deeper enjoyment of missionary life. He expresses genuine happiness and motivation early in the month.

Professionally, his workload accelerates. He spends extensive time **typing reports**, organizing mission files, and preparing materials for **Church News** and public communications. He works closely with **President Hawkins**, navigating scrutiny over spelling, formatting, and precision—an experience that frustrates him emotionally but ultimately builds skill, humility, and perseverance.

Jeff's calling increasingly centers on **media and public outreach**. He begins drafting articles, exploring Korean-language filmstrips, radio spots, and television exposure, and conducting historical and archival research for the mission (including mission scrapbooks and older publications like *The White Field*). He recognizes much of this work is **self-initiated**, requiring vision and personal discipline to sustain.

Interpersonally, January reflects growth and tension. He struggles at times with confidence, creative expectations (such as writing scripts and pageant concepts), and the balance between office work and direct teaching. Still, he remains spiritually grounded, valuing moments of effective teaching, discussions with leaders, and firesides that provide doctrinal perspective—especially teachings that emphasize **the family as the core eternal organization**.

January also includes personal milestones: his **21st birthday**, gratitude for letters and support from home, thoughts about future education and scholarships, and logistics related to shipping handcrafted Korean drum stands back to the U.S.—a recurring practical challenge that occupies significant time and energy.

February 1978 — Consolidation, Reflection, and Cultural Immersion

February marks a shift from initiation to consolidation. Jeff succeeds in resolving the long-running issue of shipping the drum stands, finding a workable postal solution after earlier cost barriers. This resolution brings visible relief and closure.

His communications role advances:

- His **first official news release is printed**.
- A mission newsletter is launched.
- Filmstrip projects and media scripts receive organizational approval.

- He participates more formally in **Korea Area Public Communications Council (KAPCC)** meetings, confirming feasibility for broader outreach projects.

Spiritually and emotionally, February is more introspective. Jeff writes candidly about challenges with companions, remorse, repentance, and the importance of humility. He describes profound spiritual moments when teaching flows naturally in Korean, contrasting them with times of discouragement. Firesides and dinners at the mission president's home remain important spiritual anchors.

Cultural exploration becomes more pronounced. Jeff visits **Buddhist temples**, witnesses ancestral rites and weddings, photographs artifacts, and researches translated Buddhist texts. He gathers materials for the **Salt Lake Visitor Center** and seeks to understand Korean religious traditions in order to better explain why the gospel resonates with the people. These experiences deepen his respect for Korean culture and history.

He also reflects critically on his earlier **drum dance performances**, questioning whether they meaningfully advanced missionary work or distracted from its purpose. This marks an important maturation point: a shift from visibility and novelty toward lasting spiritual impact.

By late February, Jeff expresses a growing urgency to return to more direct teaching and “the meat of the work,” even as he continues to value the unique perspective and influence his mission-home responsibilities provide. He remains optimistic, grateful, and committed, emphasizing how deeply he loves both Korea and his role there.

General Description (March to April 1978)

The March and April 1978 letters present a sustained, detailed portrait of a young missionary deeply immersed in an unusual and demanding phase of his service in Korea. Writing to his family from Seoul, he documents a period marked by intense responsibility, rapid personal growth, cultural discovery, and evolving spiritual perspective.

Across these letters, a dominant theme is his unexpected central role in public relations and large-scale health exhibitions sponsored by the Church. Rather than traditional door-to-door missionary work, much of his time is consumed by planning, designing, building, and managing exhibitions held in subway stations, public halls, and provincial towns. He describes long nights with little sleep, coordination with city officials, creation of posters and displays, media outreach, and interaction with newspapers and television. The strain of this work is evident, yet so is his pride in its success, measured in public attendance, media coverage, and inquiries about the Church.

Interwoven with these accounts of work are reflections on cultural life in Korea. He writes vividly about museums, Buddhist gold plates, traditional music and dance, modern cultural institutions, and rapid urban development in Seoul. An accidental attendance at a full dress rehearsal in the new Sejong Cultural Center stands out as a moment of awe, inspiring deep admiration for Korean artistic achievement and national resilience. These experiences reinforce his growing affection for the country and its people.

Spiritually, the letters trace a clear progression. Early entries balance enthusiasm with fatigue and self-doubt, particularly as administrative and promotional duties distance him from regular study and proselyting. Over time, however, his testimony strengthens. He reflects frequently on the eternal importance of missionary work, the symbolism of guidance and commitment, and lessons learned through discouragement and perseverance. By late April, he expresses a mature sense of purpose, gratitude, and conviction that his mission time has become one of the most meaningful periods of his life.

Personal elements anchor the correspondence. He comments on family news, missed birthdays, upcoming weddings, and financial sacrifices. He apologizes repeatedly for delayed letters and typing errors, revealing both exhaustion and concern for maintaining connection with home. Moments of humor—about food, age, or sleep-deprived dreams—soften the intensity of his workload and humanize the narrative.

These letters form a coherent record of two demanding months in which professional skills, cultural immersion, and spiritual insight converge. The letters mark a transition from uncertainty to confidence and task overload to reflective clarity.

General Description

(May to June 1978)

The letters written in May 1978 reflect a period of transition and re-centering. Jeff writes as someone closing a significant chapter—his extended assignment at the mission home—while mentally and spiritually preparing to re-enter full-time field work. The tone blends gratitude, restlessness, and anticipation. He is reflective but forward-looking, aware that time on his mission is no longer abundant.

Much of May's correspondence balances external change with internal readiness. Jeff expresses appreciation for the mission home experience but makes it clear that his heart is oriented toward traditional missionary service: teaching, proselyting, and daily sacrifice. His writing conveys eagerness to return to what he considers the "real" work of a

missionary, alongside concern that everything he helped build at the mission home be left in good order.

The letters also show heightened cultural awareness and affection for Korea. Jeff comments thoughtfully on Korean modesty, morality, and sincerity, often contrasting them with Western influences. These observations are not casual; they serve to reaffirm his respect for the people he serves and his conviction that his mission has meaning beyond statistics or assignments.

As the month progresses and he arrives in Hwa Gok Dong, the tone shifts toward adjustment and grounding. He describes everyday missionary realities—shared housing, cooking, companionship dynamics—not as complaints, but as signs that he has returned fully to missionary life. Early optimism appears frequently: optimism about his new companion, the branch's potential, and the sense that the Lord is again placing him exactly where he should be.

Overall, the May letters are marked by recommitment. Jeff writes as someone consciously shedding a specialized role and re-embracing the fundamentals of discipleship, confident that renewed obedience and hard work will invite spiritual power.

The June 1978 letters are heavier, more inward, and more mature in tone. Having settled into his new assignment, Jeff no longer writes from anticipation but from the daily grind of difficult missionary work. The letters emphasize endurance, patience, and the emotional cost of sustained effort in the face of limited visible success.

June correspondence conveys frequent tension between effort and outcome. Jeff describes long hours, repeated rejection, missed appointments, and investigators constrained by tradition, apathy, or agency. These letters are frank and unpolished, revealing discouragement without surrender. His faith is not naïve optimism; it is faith forged by persistence when results are uncertain.

A recurring theme is companionship strain. Jeff writes candidly about his companion's struggles with language, stamina, and adjustment. Rather than criticizing, he frames these challenges as part of leadership, sacrifice, and his own personal refinement. The letters reveal a growing sense of responsibility—not merely to work hard, but to *carry* the work when others struggle.

Spiritually, June is marked by deepening conviction rather than fresh excitement. Jeff reflects extensively on testimony, agency, and the cost of discipleship. The announcement of the June 1978 priesthood revelation stands out as a defining moment, described with reverence, spiritual confirmation, and gratitude for prophetic leadership. It reinforces his belief that the Church is divinely guided, even when the day-to-day missionary experience is difficult.

Family and eternal perspective surface more frequently in June. References to Father's Day, dreams of returning home, and thoughts about the end of his mission reflect a

growing awareness of time. Jeff writes not with homesickness, but with urgency—recognizing that his remaining months must count and that he does not want to return home unable to account for how he spent them.

Overall, the June letters are characterized by sobriety and resolve. They portray a missionary refined by hardship, emotionally invested, spiritually steady, and increasingly focused on finishing his mission with integrity, power, and purpose rather than comfort or recognition.

General Description (July to August 1978)

The letters written during July and August of 1978 form a continuous, reflective record of a young missionary's life in Korea during the final, intensifying phase of his mission. Across these two months, the correspondence blends daily experience, spiritual reflection, cultural observation, and emotional transition, revealing Jeff who is simultaneously grounded in routine missionary work and increasingly aware of approaching change.

At a practical level, the letters document a full and demanding schedule. Teaching hours are long and frequent, contacts come and go unpredictably, and progress is measured not only in baptisms but in persistence despite disappointment. Investigators may express interest yet fail to follow through; others engage deeply and arrive unexpectedly through chance encounters. Jeff repeatedly emphasizes a lesson learned through experience rather than theory: missionaries cannot supply desire for others. This recognition, expressed in nearly identical language across multiple letters, marks a shift from optimism rooted in effort to a more mature understanding of agency, patience, and limitation.

Daily life in Korea is described with attentiveness and understated affection. The monsoon rains, heat, and improvised bathing routines appear not as complaints but as accepted features of life. Housing quality, meals prepared at home, and shared domestic moments convey a sense of stability and adaptation. Cultural excursions—traditional dance performances, visits to the Korea House and Korean Folk Village—are moments of deliberate enjoyment, suggesting an awareness that this experience is finite and worth savoring. These descriptions are observational rather than exoticizing, written with familiarity rather than distance, indicating how thoroughly Jeff has settled into his surroundings.

Interwoven with routine are encounters with other religious traditions that sharpen the Jeff's own theological identity. Conversations with Jehovah's Witnesses, a Catholic priest, and members of various Protestant denominations are recounted in detail. These interactions are not treated as abstract debates but as emotionally charged experiences—frustrating, enlightening, or gently humanizing. The letters show a developing confidence

in explaining belief while also revealing fatigue at repeated misunderstandings and entrenched prejudice. Jeff becomes increasingly reflective about how faith is practiced publicly in Korea, particularly regarding church visibility, noise, and social pressure, and how these factors shape receptiveness.

Family remains a persistent reference point. The letters repeatedly encourage scripture study, journaling, and family home evening, not as generic counsel but as continuity between home and mission life. News of weddings, pregnancies, and everyday events back home carries emotional weight. As August approaches, thoughts of returning home surface more frequently—not with excitement alone, but with unease. Jeff expresses clear ambivalence: he misses home deeply, yet feels unready to leave Korea. This tension becomes one of the defining themes of the later letters.

The approaching end of the mission introduces practical concerns alongside emotional ones. Budgeting, purchases, books, clothing, and future education plans appear—often tentatively, with requests for parental guidance rather than declarations of intent. These passages reflect a transitional mindset: life after the mission is unavoidable, yet still abstract and delayed mentally, even as calendars advance.

One of the most emotionally serious moments occurs in late August with the account of administering a blessing to a woman in a prolonged coma following a suicide attempt. The tone here is restrained, careful, and reverent. The writer does not dramatize the event but reflects quietly on divine will, human suffering, and the limits of understanding. This experience seems to crystallize themes present throughout the letters: service without control, faith without certainty, and action undertaken with humility rather than expectation.

Overall, these two months of letters present a portrait of steady maturation. Jeff remains committed, hopeful, and sincere, yet increasingly nuanced in how he understands faith, people, and himself. Optimism is no longer naïve; it is tempered by realism and sustained by discipline rather than novelty. Korea is no longer merely a mission field—it has become a lived landscape of memory, effort, affection, and personal transformation. By late August, the letters read less like reports from abroad and more like a reflective bridge between who Jeff was when he arrived and who he is becoming as he prepares, reluctantly, to leave.

General Summary

(September to October 1978)

The September–October 1978 letters present a sustained, reflective closing chapter of a missionary experience in Korea, marked by emotional intensity, spiritual urgency, and a growing awareness of time. Across these weeks, the letters move steadily from ordinary reporting toward summation, farewell, and testimony. Together they form a portrait of a

young missionary, Jeff, at the end of his service, balancing exhaustion, confidence, frustration, hope, and gratitude.

Throughout September, the letters consistently emphasize work—daily missionary labor, conferences, investigators, and teaching experiences. Jeff frequently notes how busy the work has become and how little time seems available for writing. This pressure of activity is accompanied by an increasing sense of competency: by mid-September, he reflects that he has “just learned how to do missionary work,” even as he acknowledges that time is running out to see many people progress to baptism. The tone mixes satisfaction with regret, suggesting growth that has come only at the end.

A recurring theme is translation and communication, both literal and spiritual. Early in the period, he describes translating from Korean to English at stake conference, highlighting the difficulty of transferring meaning across languages and structures. This linguistic tension parallels his broader concern with conveying truth—how investigators can struggle to understand doctrine, how competing churches influence belief, and how language itself can limit persuasion. By October, this theme expands into reflections on testimony: the role of the Holy Ghost as a witness, the difference between ridicule and discernment, and the responsibility to recognize truth without contempt for others.

The letters also reflect frequent contact with other Christian groups, particularly Jehovah’s Witnesses, Assemblies of God, Presbyterians, and the Unification Church. These encounters are described not abstractly but through lived experience—family discussions, healing requests, public sermons, and confrontational conversations. The strongest emotional response occurs after a Presbyterian service that denounces “heretic” churches. Jeff’s reaction reveals an inner struggle between anger and restraint, ending with a reaffirmation that truth should be defended through love rather than ridicule. This episode becomes a turning point that solidifies his personal testimony rather than weakening it.

Another dominant thread is music and public performance, which appears as an unexpected but meaningful part of the missionary experience. Singing Korean popular music in competitions, rehearsals, and broadcasts provides both personal enjoyment and public visibility. These performances are described with excitement and pride, but also with awareness of limits imposed on explicitly religious expression. Music functions as a bridge between cultures and as a source of confidence, offering moments of joy amid demanding work.

As October progresses, the letters increasingly reflect time compression and anticipation of return. Weeks no longer feel long; days blur together. Jeff repeatedly comments on how quickly three weeks pass and how insufficient time feels for conversion, closure, or completion. He compares the number of people taught, homes entered, and doors knocked to the scale of wards and stakes, underscoring both effort and disappointment. Success is measured less in baptisms than in sincerity of labor and faithfulness.

Family becomes more prominent toward the end. References to home, weddings, parents, and especially grandmother's illness and recovery provide emotional grounding. His grandmother's progress becomes a source of encouragement for investigators suffering from strokes, allowing personal experience to reinforce missionary teaching. By the final letter, gratitude toward parents and family support is explicit and central, framed as foundational to his testimony and endurance.

The closing letters shift unmistakably into testimony and final accounting. He speaks of patriarchal blessing, eternal experiences, and knowledge gained that will endure beyond Korea. Though he expresses disappointment at not baptizing more people himself, he finds comfort in knowing that others will continue the work. The final tone is not triumphant but settled—marked by humility, acceptance, and deep appreciation.

Taken together, the September–October 1978 letters document the transformation that occurs at the end of long service: confidence earned late, clarity sharpened by opposition, and faith distilled by time pressure. They are neither naïve nor triumphant. Instead, they record a thoughtful closing—an honest reckoning with unfinished work, enduring relationships, and a testimony made personal through effort, sacrifice, and love.