

Rev. Taewon Seo Memorial Scholarship



(1905 – 1950)

Rev. Taewon Seo came to faith in Jesus Christ during the Japanese colonial period while studying at Paichai School. After graduating, he pursued further education at Aoyama Gakuin University in Japan, dedicating six years to study before entering pastoral ministry.

Upon returning to Korea, Rev. Seo went back to his hometown in Chungcheongnam-do. There, he made a remarkable and deeply principled decision: he distributed the extensive land he had inherited from his great-grandfather to thirty-four servants, enabling them to build lives of dignity and independence. This act was not merely charitable—it was a faithful and embodied witness to his conviction that the gospel calls for justice, restoration, and the flourishing of all.

Rev. Seo went on to plant four churches throughout the Chungcheongnam-do region. As each congregation became established and began to grow, he entrusted its leadership to others and moved on, repeating a pattern of ministry marked by humility, trust, and vision.

Among the churches he founded, Daejeon First Methodist Church and Yesan First Methodist Church continue to bear fruit today. In particular, Yesan First Methodist Church stood as a living expression of faith during a time of national crisis, actively participating in the Korean independence movement. During the Japanese occupation, Rev. Seo refused to comply with enforced Shinto shrine worship and was imprisoned for his convictions—a testimony to his courage and steadfast faith.

At the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950, Rev. Seo was serving as a professor at Seoul Methodist Theological University. Shortly before the war began, after preaching at Jeongdong First Methodist Church, he was urged to evacuate. He declined, saying that if everyone left, there would be no one to protect the school. Soon afterward, he was taken by communist forces in front of his family and abducted to the North.

As an educator, Rev. Seo formed leaders whose influence extended far beyond the church. Among his students were Kim Hyung-min, a graduate of the University of Michigan and the first mayor of Seoul; Choi Ji-yeol, a brigadier general in the navy; Kim Young-geun, a professor at Columbia University; and Koo Doo-hoe, a graduate of Tokyo Imperial University and later a respected professor.

In a particularly meaningful continuation of his legacy, Prof. Koo Doo-hoe established a scholarship fund at Seoul Methodist Theological University in honor of his teacher. He faithfully stewarded this fund for a decade before entrusting it to Rev. Seo's family. Since its founding in the 1960s, the scholarship has continued to grow through the devoted commitment of his family, including attorney Seo Dong-sung, elder Seo Dong-young, and elder Seo Dong-myeong. Attorney Seo Dong-sung, in particular, pledged to dedicate family assets to expand the scholarship's impact for future generations.

Rev. Taewon Seo's life reflects a profound integration of faith and action—marked by sacrificial leadership, a commitment to education, and a deep generosity of spirit. In the face of immense historical upheaval, he remained steadfast: planting churches, nurturing leaders, and offering himself for the good of others. His legacy endures not only in the institutions he helped build, but in the lives that continue to be shaped by his faith, courage, and vision.

