

What Being Tall Means to Me, by Sunjae Kim

I could always reach the cookie jar. I was that one person that everyone came to when they couldn't reach something. "Maybe Sunjae can get that ball," they said, as I jumped to clear a basketball stuck on the rim. Especially today, modern society has portrayed being tall essentially as a requirement, something that was closer to an asset than a characteristic. Because of this, I have always felt proud of my height. When someone asks "How tall are you?", it's one of those questions I am glad to hear.

But to be honest, while society portrays height as something that only has benefits, there are plenty of drawbacks that only a tall person could fully understand. Some minor examples may be having to duck when I see a tree in the way, or having a greater target in dodgeball. Some major examples may be a higher susceptibility to chronic knee and back pain, or being at higher risk for circulatory issues like varicose veins and heart conditions.

But regardless, I see my height as a core part of who I am. One question I get asked in conjunction with inquiries about my height is: "Do you play basketball?" To tell the truth, I do play basketball, but my love for the sport started far before I was as tall as I am today. I began the sport when I was only about 11 or 12 years old, nowhere near the height I am today.

Growing up, I thought 6'3" was towering. It felt like an automatic advantage. But when I learned that the average NBA player stands around six-foot-seven or taller, I realized something important: in the grand scheme of things, my height is not extraordinary. There will always be someone taller, stronger, or more physically gifted. Height alone does not guarantee distinction. If inches could not define excellence, then character would now have to.

But it is true that being tall helps with basketball. I am able to often shoot over my smaller opponents, or grab rebounds over them. But over time, I realized height is more than a physical advantage. It makes you visible. In a crowded room, you stand out whether you want to or not. Teachers notice you. Coaches expect more from you. Younger church youth look up to you, sometimes literally, but also figuratively.

In youth group, younger students gravitated toward me during small groups, asking questions or copying my reactions during discussions. In Finance Club, underclassmen would ask me for investment advice. For tennis camp, many of the campers saw me as the head coach automatically. When I was later asked to help lead, I realized height had prepared me for

something more important than visibility; it had prepared me for responsibility. When you are physically noticeable, your behavior becomes noticeable too. The way you listen, the way you speak, the way you respond to conflict all receive significantly more attention.

Height has also given me perspective, literally and figuratively. I can see over crowds, but more importantly, I have learned to see beyond immediate frustrations. When conflicts arise in group settings, I try to look at the broader picture: what motivates people, what unites them, what outcome serves everyone best. Standing above others physically reminds me not to place myself above them personally.

Today, I am still satisfied with my height. But now I know being tall no longer means simply reaching higher shelves or answering the inevitable “How tall are you?” It means standing firm when others are uncertain. It means lifting others rather than overshadowing them. It means recognizing that any advantage, whether physical or personal, comes with the responsibility to use it well. Perhaps society measures height in inches and accolades. Perhaps being tall isn’t all that great, and has its duties as well. Perhaps true height is not measured in inches, but with integrity and responsibility.