

FFWPU USA: What Does It Mean to Live with God?

Lena Iwasaki
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Mother Moon offers a prayer for the victims of slavery at Gorée Island (2018)

What does it mean to live with God? Mother Cabrini, Jesus Christ, Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, and Reverend Sun Myung Moon are four examples of lives lived in service and sacrifice for God. From nations, countries, and communities, these individuals are recognized for their authentic relationship with God and how they lived it. They teach us that living with God also means living while connecting to [the vision God has for us](#) and the world. Living with God means giving.

We Learn From Our Past

What does it look like to live with God? How can I substantially live with God and feel it in my mind and soul every day? If you have had questions like these on your mind, you have to ask someone who has done it before. Understanding the life of saints and sages in our history is like following the recipe of a foreign dish you are trying to make. Would you ask your neighbor who has never eaten, made, or seen Japanese gyoza dumplings how to make them? No.

In the same way, our respected saints, sages, and religious figures can help us find the recipe for [how to connect with God](#) and [share that connection with others](#).

"I can do all things in Christ who strengthens me."
- Philippians 4:13

God's Vision Is Greater Than Your Own

Mother MoonFeatured in a recent movie, the life of [Mother Cabrini](#) was far from easy. Born premature and frail, she lived most of her life being doubted by those around her. The only words that kept her from believing those doubts were, "I can do all things in Christ who strengthens me." (Philippians 4:13). On her mission to the Americas, she encountered famine, disease, orphans, and children lacking proper education. Telling herself that she would serve her purpose, and not her weakness, within two years, Mother Cabrini was able to create a hospital for the poor in New York as well as schools for immigrants in Chicago.

Although inspired, realistically, this may not be the level of devotion and sacrifice we can all live. This may never have even crossed your mind, and that's okay. What we can learn from Mother Cabrini as well as countless other figures who have lived their life with God is that [through service](#), we are substantially practicing God's word that in turn nourishes our relationship with Him.

Becoming the Word of God

We can say the same thing about Jesus Christ, Rev. Sun Myung Moon, and Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon. Dr. Moon, the Mother of

In the Book of Matthew, Jesus disregards the teachers and Pharisees who speak God's word without living by them. He says, "

Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices - mint, dill, and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law - justice, mercy, and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former." (Mathew 23:23)

"Without sacrifice and service, one cannot even begin to think one is living for the sake of others rather than for oneself. As I strictly cultivated my faith from a young age, I cherished a dream deep within my heart. That dream was to liberate my Heavenly Father who, throughout history, gave Himself for the salvation of humanity."
- (Mother of Peace, pg. 82)

Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, also known as the [Mother of Peace](#), emphasizes in [her memoir](#) the value of contributing our talents and passions to God's vision of a peaceful world. Living her life knowing that Heavenly Father was truly her parent, she says,

"Without sacrifice and service, one cannot even begin to think one is living for the sake of others rather than for oneself. As I strictly cultivated my faith from a young age, I cherished a dream deep within my heart. That dream was to liberate my Heavenly Father who, throughout history, gave Himself for the salvation of humanity" (Mother of Peace, pg. 82)

Mother Moon has lived her life in service to God, her Heavenly Parent, with intense devotion throughout her 81 years. In her memoir, Mother Moon shares her heart over the pain that has been inflicted in this world and her desire to lift humanity out of suffering. During her visit to Gorée Island, the largest slave-trading center on the African coast, Mother Moon prayed, "I wanted to visit Gorée Island and liberate the historical agony and heartbreak of all the Africans who suffered due to the scourge of slavery...Humankind's long, painful history of exploitation and deprivation of freedom must come to an end."

We all have [our own life of faith journeys](#) and it may not look like Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon's or Mother Cabrini's. Regardless, I can say through personal experience that the moments I have felt closest to Heavenly Parent were when I was completely out of my comfort zone. For instance, when I decided to become a youth pastor for our small community. It wasn't necessarily a calling or because I had the skills to teach my younger brothers and sisters about God. I just knew that youth ministry was what kept me close to God growing up.

I get it. It's hard to say "Yes" because maybe we've said that all our lives, and now we're tired. Every single time I feel I'm being called to do something for Heavenly Parent, it is more daunting than the first time I learned to drive on the freeway. However, when you can say "Yes" in those overwhelming moments, you will feel the grace, power, and serenity that gives you the courage to move. There is a quote I like to chant to myself in these moments.

"God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference." (Reinhold Niebuhr)

Starting Small

Living with God means living His word, and living His word means service to others. The religious figures mentioned above show us that when we give, we are bound to become closer to God because that is what God is doing as well. Needless to say, maybe we are not ready to give our whole life to service just yet. I know I am not. However, there are ways to do that whether it is tithing regularly, or plugging into something in your local community. Say yes to becoming a youth pastor or a volunteer for a service event. When we do something that is completely out of our vision and comfort zone, [God will surely be there](#).

Trust in God's Timing



By Celine Stoco

In life, we often wonder about when things will happen and how they'll unfold. The idea of God's timing has fascinated people for a long time. It's about when God chooses to make things happen in our lives. But here's some important information: God's timing operates on a plane far beyond our human comprehension.

"But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord, a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day."

— 2 Peter 3:8

God's Timing is Different

If we understand that God's timing is different from our own, things such as how the Israelites walked for 40 years in the desert until they found the Promised Land or how God created the world in only six days, make more sense.

"All phenomena occurring in the universe bear fruit only after the lapse of a certain interval of time. All things are designed to reach completion only after passing through a set growing period."

— Divine Principle 5.2

With this understanding, the only thing we need to do is live as we want, and things will happen right?

things will happen, right.

The answer is no.

Portion of Responsibility

It is essential to understand that while God has a different perception of time, we also have our portion of responsibility to fulfill. I can use the example of how preparing to find a spouse has made me think more deeply about the subject. I remember being 14 and thinking about the [Marriage Blessing](#). The only thing I thought I needed was to meet my partner, which shows how I did not consider the importance of commitment. As I grew older, I realized I was ahead of God's timing for me. If I wanted to be ready when time arrived, I had to first work on myself.

“Human beings, however, are created in such a way that their growth requires the fulfillment of their own portion of responsibility, in addition to the guidance provided by the Principle.”

— Divine Principle 5.2.2

I started asking profound questions. “What is the meaning of the Blessing to me? What are my values?” In the end, I had to figure out who I am, so that when the right time and the right person comes along, I will be ready to receive them.

Preparation is Everything

The parable in Matthew 25:1-13 can be applied in this context. Jesus tells about the ten virgins who were awaiting the arrival of a bridegroom for a wedding feast. The virgins are divided into two groups: five are wise and five are foolish. While the wise brought extra oil the foolish did not. When the virgins heard the cry that the bridegroom was coming, the wise virgins had the extra oil to keep their flames alight, the foolish ones on the other hand did not. As the foolish ones left to buy oil, the bridegroom came and welcomed all of the wise one's who had been prepared. He closed the door to the ones who were late for his arrival.

To me, this parable shows the importance of being prepared for the right timing.

God Needs an Invite

Now that we understand that God's timing is different than our own, and that it is also dependent on how much we are prepared to recognize it, another key aspect that should be taken into account is that we need to ask.

“Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.”

– Matthew 7:7-8

God is always with us, and He sees what you are going through. However, it is difficult for Him to act if you don't tell Him that you're ready and open to His involvement.

How will He know what you need if you don't ask?

It is the same as when I was a kid. I had a soar throat and was feeling under the weather. I cried to my mom and she came running to examine me. She asked what was wrong and the only thing I did was continue to cry. How was she supposed to know that I had a soar throat if I did not tell her? It is the same for God. Sometimes He sees people suffering and He wants to help but we need to take the first step to ask for His support and guidance.

Leave Space for God to Work

[How we ask things from God is important.](#) For example, my parents have always told me that having preferences for a spouse is not a problem, but that I must keep in mind that if I have too many criteria, I close the space where God can work. We must seek God out but trust that God's vision for our life is much bigger than our own.

In essence, a partnership with God is necessary if we seek to achieve our and God's goals. We must prepare and strive to become the best version of ourselves and be aware of the opportunities that come in our path. By cultivating patience, faith, and resilience, we open ourselves to the blessings of His timing.

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Who Is God to You?



By Celine Stoco

The concept of God varies across different religious, philosophical, and cultural traditions. There isn't a universally agreed-upon definition. However, when most people describe this entity, they use words like powerful, ruler, creator, divine, transcendent, or eternal. These words have gravitas, but also create a feeling that God is far away, distant.

While there is a general concept of God, every person has a personal understanding of who He is, too. For some, it is love, for others God is the only way, the beginning and the end, or even the alpha and omega. Unificationists believe that He is [a personal God](#).

So how can you find your personal God?

“God is without form. If we should conceive of Him as large, He is infinitely large, and if we should conceive of Him as small, He is infinitely small.”

— Cheon Seong Gyeong 1.1[a].1

As we can see from this quote, creating a personal relationship with God can be difficult since [God can take any shape but no shape at all](#). So if we truly aim to achieve a relationship with God, we need to use more than just logical thinking since who/what God is cannot be placed in a box.

“we should not perceive the existence of God only vaguely and conceptually. It is impossible to understand the existence of God through logic alone.”

— Cheon Seong Gyeong 1.1[b].4

Even though it can be hard to connect with God, it is not impossible. The best way to start is to find a way that you can feel God or talk to God, through prayer, songs, reading, or [nature](#).

“You should know how to love nature and love people. Because all things of creation are symbols for God and because people are substantial beings, those who know how to love all things of creation and people will come to love God.”

— Cheon Seong Gyong 2.5.5

Unificationists, for example, believe that “God, the Creator of all things, is the absolute reality, eternal, self-existent, and transcendent of time and space. The fundamental energy of God’s being is also eternal, self-existent, and absolute. It is the origin of all energies and forces that allow created beings to exist.”
(Divine Principle 2.1)

Thus, God is not a bearded guy on a throne in the sky. We believe that God wants to be with us, His children, all the time, and even though He is not able to directly communicate with us due to [the fall](#), He is still closer than we imagine.

“God’s home is in the middle of our heart.”

— Cheon Seong Gyong 1.1.2

If you are feeling lost about where God is, don’t feel bad. It’s like that for a lot of people. For me, it has always been hard to build a personal relationship with God, since He has always seemed so far away. But as I thought about it more, I saw that God is with me all the time. He is with my family when we are having lunch together, within my niece when we are playing, in nature. He is in every little thing we do. If we start to pay attention, we will see that He’s there.

God is with us in the happy and sad times. He is in the small and big things. That is what God is all about. Meeting God is something personal, and as we work on it, and acquire experiences, this is going to be the most precious thing in our life of faith.

There is no right or wrong answer. You need to build your unique relationship with God. This relationship will change over time. It’s about putting in the effort. So who is God to you?

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A World Where We See God in Each Other



Imagine a world where we recognize God in each other.

Many of us have had an experience where we notice God working through someone in our lives, often unexpectedly. We may choose to call it something else, like synchronicity; but either way, most of us have experienced it in some form. The funny thing is, that many of us are so busy chasing our ideas of what we want, that we carelessly miss many of the opportunities to recognize what already exists. Is it possible to fine-tune our ability to recognize the way God is working in our lives? Wouldn't it make life a lot more simple?

Reverend Sun Myung Moon inspires us to seek a direct relationship with God, "Once our spiritual body can receive the vibration of God's love, our whole self will resound with it. Our entire physical body will respond to God's stimuli. That would be the total satisfaction of love. Nothing could be more desired by anyone."

So why has it been so hard for many of us to find and maintain this type of spiritual vibration? Well, the [Divine Principle](#) does go into the root causes of human conflict; but even when we understand these topics, we still need each other's support. Imagine then, being part of a community where we are able to support each other's spiritual development by seeing God in each other!

[Read the Divine Principle online](#)

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Is Filial Piety a Spiritual Practice?



By Lena Iwasaki

Respect for your parents is not a particularly Western concept. But anyone who comes from a Japanese or Korean family was taught from birth to cultivate an attitude of respect for their parents. Unificationist teachings are a blend of Christian and Confucian philosophies. Filial piety is a core belief that Unificationists have adopted and taken even further. We extend filial piety to God, our Heavenly Parent.

Filial piety is such an important concept that God made sure to include it in the Ten Commandments, which said "Honor your father and your mother" (Exodus 20:12). What does it mean to honor your parents?

The essence of filial piety is to inherit our parents' hopes and dreams, centered on God, and pass them down to our own children. To continue our parents' lineage, and ultimately God's lineage is the ideal expression of filial piety a child can offer.

"When children see their parents' unchanging hearts and minds, they should think, "We must emulate our parents' love and unite with each other." When they can say that, the ideal family is right there."

— Cheon Seong Gyeong p. 544 (2.20)

Filial piety can seem like an impossible goal so let's break it down into more bite-sized steps starting with our own family. Do we truly know our parents? Do we know their dreams, hopes, and values? For many of us, our parents seem like they have everything figured out, but in the end, we need to remember that

they are not just our parents, but unique expressions of God.

Parents spend countless hours nursing us to sleep as babies, listening to our questions as inquisitive toddlers, and taking our punches when we're teenagers. It is our responsibility as children to respect what our parents have given us with gratitude by being there when they need help even when they don't ask, trying to understand their hearts, and endeavoring to bring them joy. One way of doing this is by asking them questions to show a genuine interest in their thoughts, hopes, and desires.

"The reason a child of filial piety is precious is that he respects and serves his parents with unchanging love, whether in childhood, as an adult, or in old age."

— Cheon Seong Gyong p. 371 (4.2)

In the Roman story of Aeneas, the Trojan hero, he carried his elderly father Anchises on his back while fleeing the burning city of Troy. He thought about the well-being of his father first, even if that meant sacrificing himself.

As we reach the mind of a filial child to our parents, we can extend this mindset to God, our Heavenly Parent. Living a life that would bring honor and joy to God is a life lived for the sake of others.

Remember all of the sacrifices your parents have made so you can be where you are today. Take those small steps to learn more about your parents and express gratitude towards them.

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Why I Chose My Faith



By **Elijah Maddox**

I've never liked the feeling of having no control. It doesn't matter if it's as significant of an issue as the direction my life is moving in or as minor as the time I arrive at work. Knowing that things are within my sphere of influence helps me feel like I am living life intentionally. For small matters, it's never that complicated. All it takes is discipline and forethought. If it's important to me never to arrive late for work, then all I have to do is leave the house every day with time to spare. The power rests with me.

But what about the bigger things in life, the ones that are harder to plan, predict, or fully feel control over? What about the fundamental aspects of our life of faith? Do we ever truly get to choose our beliefs? I've often wondered about this. Many people, like my parents, or many of my mentors in my faith community, can clearly answer this question with a resounding "yes". They can often pinpoint the exact moment or experience that sparked their belief in God. In times of struggle or doubt, they have that singular memory of the birth of their faith to look back upon. People like me, however, who are born into a faith community, have a vastly different experience. You can't easily mark the start of your relationship with God when it's been a gradual process throughout your life. Moreover, the feeling of a lack of choice or agency tends to creep in at some point or another.

"The most important thing for a believer is a clear goal.

'Whatever the circumstances I will walk this way' is such a clear goal. When this goal becomes vague, our life as a believer crumbles, and no matter how firmly we are determined, we will

have no connection whatsoever with the purpose. What does it help to determine oneself hundreds of times without a purpose?"

— Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon

Growing up, I remember countless conversations I had with other young people like me who struggled with the feeling of not having control over their own faith journey. It was often seen as just a tradition inherited from the previous generation. It wasn't necessarily viewed as inherently wrong or unwanted; rather, it felt like a journey with no clear beginning and perhaps no real end for us. The truth is that many of us who were born into this sort of position weren't quite sure if we really wanted to be here. I remember this distinctly when I thought of the future. I and many of my friends really didn't know if we wanted to remain in the church as we grew into adulthood.

During a summer workshop, one late night conversation strayed to this topic of future families. We struggled to envision creating a family life within the culture we had grown up in. Would it be our choice because we wanted it? Or would we choose it only because it was what we knew, what we were used to and comfortable with? Or would we not choose it at all? I remember most of us having mixed answers on this point. In the end, we often felt like we had one foot in the doorway of faith and one foot out.

I was never comfortable being in that lukewarm position about my own belief system. The Bible warns us against this behavior, and in it John admonishes us that, "I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth." (Revelations 3:15-16) What it means is that we are called to make choices in our lives, to pick a side and make a stand. I had the sense that I needed to find a resolution to this conflict I had, but I struggled to figure out exactly what that resolution would be.

During a conversation with my dad over coffee one morning shortly after I graduated from high school, I confided in him that I envied his life experiences, particularly how he could trace his faith journey back to clear sets of experiences. I realized that I lacked that clarity in my life, and I was afraid that I would never find it. But as I shared my feelings with him, I felt inspired to do something about it. I decided then that if I was going to continue in my journey with God, I needed to make the choice for myself. It didn't matter that I'd been born into a faith community. It didn't matter that I'd been praying to God before I even knew what prayer was. It didn't even matter that I felt like I could never match the powerful, transformative faith experiences of my elders. I had clearly decided that making this choice for myself was something that was important to me, and I figured that there was no time as good as the present to

do so.

It wasn't a flashy or showy moment in any way, but it was *my* moment. That day in the coffee shop, that conversation with my dad, became a new beginning for me. From then on, I felt a newfound sense of freedom and solidity in my faith journey. I no longer saw myself as someone who had a belief system thrust upon them, as I sometimes had felt in the past. Instead, I saw myself as a seeker, someone who was moving in a meaningful direction of their own free will. I felt happier, more confident and hopeful for the future. All my life, I had wished that I could feel the power to choose my direction. Now I felt that I had claimed that right by making the choice, whether I felt capable of it or not. It was the difference between wanting to find the faith to choose and making the choice to have faith. As seemingly small of a shift as it might seem, it made all the difference to me.

"God is a perfect Being, but He gave all the responsibility to humankind."

— Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon

I believe each one of us can and should have such a moment of personal choice about our faith. Really, in every aspect of our lives, we need to be actively choosing which direction to move in. Father Moon spoke very strongly on this subject. "The most important thing for a believer", he argued, "is a clear goal. 'Whatever the circumstances I will walk this way' is such a clear goal. When this goal becomes vague, our life as a believer crumbles, and no matter how firmly we are determined, we will have no connection whatsoever with the purpose. What does it help to determine oneself hundreds of times without a purpose?"

Without something we have chosen for ourselves to strive for, it is easy for our faith to wither. Speaking from experience, it's much easier to just go with the flow and let the river of life carry us along. That works well for a time, until one day we wake up and realize we're not sure where we are, but wherever it is, we don't like it very much. In terms of our relationship with God, Mother Moon puts it very simply. "God is a perfect Being, but He gave all the responsibility to humankind." We have to be the ones to take ownership and choose Him. Ultimately, it doesn't matter where we started. It matters where we're headed.

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