

Suit Your Self

Bruce Sutchar
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SUIT YOUR SELF

Last week I had the chance to preach in the Toronto Church. My Bible verse was John 15:13, “no love hath man greater than he who is willing to lay down his life for his friend.” Jesus then implores the disciples to follow his commandment which is to love one another. As I have thought about this all week I came to the conclusion that our movement is great at many things, but one that is sorely missing is our inability to take care of each other.

Recently I have been corresponding with an elder brother whom I deeply love and respect. However, when he failed to honor a request to help a younger brother I was deeply hurt, not only by his behavior but by his excuses. I do not believe for a minute that he is bad or evil or even irresponsible. Please allow me to use this example because sadly, it has been way too much the norm in our movement.

Most recently, I have been through a few situations where our church members seem to have no understanding of what it means to take care of their brothers and sisters. In our communities we are great at bringing results. We are an incredibly vertical community, but we have never really had a pastor, but rather a series of state leaders and regional directors. We have couples in our community who are suffering; families who are seriously dysfunctional, and yet I see no hint of anyone making any effort to change anything. Our second generation has never even had a youth pastor and the results speak volumes.

We have almost no second generation Blessed Couples in Chicago, and I can honestly say that our second generation has rarely if ever, until very recently at best, been consulted about anything that they really care about.

Our focus continues to be on results and results alone.

My own children, although they may love God and True Parents have absolutely no desire to attend Sunday Service, even last Sunday when our Continental Director was here to deliver the message.

In fact, my children do attend churches, but not ours. My daughter even attended our church in Charlotte when she was in college, and she has attended church with her mother and I when we were going to one of the American Clergy Leadership Conference (ACLC) churches. She has read and enjoyed Father’s autobiography, yet, we cannot get her to attend our own Sunday Service. My sons on their own have attended churches, one of which, unbeknownst to him, happened to be one of the ACLC churches.

The young brother that I mentioned earlier was, based on his charitable work, invited to an International Leadership Conference in South America. He has read Father’s autobiography and has followed the articles about the programs that we are doing internationally. Yet everyone seemed too busy to follow-up on his experience at the conference.

Another example is that of a wonderful Service for Peace co-program director who once said to me, “You know I think that if I had the opportunity to sit down and have breakfast with Rev. Moon, I believe that I would probably agree with most everything he would say. I believe that the Unification Movement is probably the most enlightened movement in the world today. But you know what, I cannot figure out how in the world to work with your movement.” Sadly, I understand her fully.

We spend millions and millions of dollars doing these huge international conferences and then there is no follow-up because we seem to be so immersed in bringing big names to the conferences so that our leaders can report this to True Parents. Sadly, because of certain decisions to utilize the funds this way, no members are invited who would be able to take care of the guests when they return home. Nearly every one of our original American Freedom Coalition contacts came from our American Leadership Conferences from 1987-1991. But our members were at the conferences so that they could take care of and get to know the guests at the conferences and especially when the guests returned to their home states. This month 3 former congressmen were invited to Korea. They will attend the conference with their wives, but no members outside of one UPF, USA leader will be in attendance. To me that is an incredible waste of money. Earlier this year a former State Senator and Gubernatorial candidate attended the International Leadership Conference in Korea, even paying for much of the airfare on his

own. Basically, he had an excellent experience at the conference but he had several serious questions that were left unanswered. I was able to meet him after he returned, but how much better it would have been if I had attended the conference with him.



I am not trying to share my list of everything that is wrong with our church institution, but I have experienced too many situations similar to those I have mentioned. Recently in response to my criticism I received the following letter from an elder member.

“Please be a little more sensitive to our situation and our extremely busy schedule. We have been very involved in relief distribution in our region; [of course I know this] we have a political party and are deeply concerned about drafting a new constitution; I am a journalist and need to write and publish news articles regularly; (but too busy to send even one email?) we are extremely busy fulfilling our 430-couple Heavenly Tribal Messiah mission (these activities consume a lot of our time and include: holding many, many Blessings programs, educating tens of thousands of families individually about the 3-day ceremony, making large photo albums of our new Blessed

Central Families to take to Korea to show True Parents at the time of True Father’s 3rd Seonghwa anniversary, educating and visiting VVIPs to attend as Chief Guests in our programs, and meeting and inviting religious leaders who come to offer their prayers at our Blessing ceremony). We are also writing a family-values based character education curricula for the government leaders; we are planning seminars and workshop for students (my guest personally set up a scholarship program for these Students] which will be next month; we are planning and inviting religious leaders to a DP seminar next month, and we are laying out the schedule for a 40-day DP education program for 120 young leaders who will stay in Korea for 40 days after True Father’s Seonghwa.”

Of course, these are all wonderful providential projects, but are they all more important than sending out one email to a new guest, especially when True Mother is emphasizing witnessing so strongly?

Sadly, these wonderful activities sound too much like excuses (isn’t self-justification one of the 4 fallen natures?); like the excuses I have been hearing for nearly 40 years, “we are too busy with providential activities to take care of our own members.” How many times were our leaders too busy trying to get new guests to stay for the workshop while an older member was struggling and in need of some internal guidance? In the seminary I did a research paper on how many people joined our movement. How many people who were witnessed to came to the introductory program; how many of those went to a 2 day workshop; how many of those stayed for the 7, 21 and 40 day workshops; and then, how many of these stayed long enough to get matched and blessed. Sadly it is not a very high percentage of members who fulfilled all of the above categories. If it was, then we would have brought the 30,000 members that Father asked us to bring.

Maybe the fact that my doctoral work was in counseling psychology makes me a bit biased, but I make no apologies for that. Pastoral counseling just doesn’t seem to be one of the strong points of our movement.

Finally, let me re-iterate that I love and deeply respect so many of my elder brothers and sisters, especially those who are fulfilling Father’s direction all over the world and those who took the time with me that resulted in my joining, growing in and then getting matched and blessed in our movement. I respect the lifestyle that they have chosen serving True Parents in America and all over the world for so many years.

However, my guest recently told me, “they spent all this money to send me to the conference in South America and yet there has been almost zero follow-up since and especially in the area of my expertise.”

I am the currently the unpaid mid-west director of Universal Peace Federation (UPF), USA in Chicago following my passion to save America by influencing her leaders to come to understand who True Parents really are. Father has said very clearly that he sees UPF as the primary way for our movement to connect to the leaders of America. But we are laughingly told that there is almost no budget to do this and that next year there will be significantly less. The country that Father came to save is going down the tubes and Father’s movement, being penniless in America in spite of all of our incredible sacrifice and efforts, is doing far too little to save it.