

## FFWPU USA: Your Testimony is an Act of Faith - Sharing is Caring

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As someone who grew up in a religious household, I make it a habit to regularly examine my life of faith. I've experienced many changes and stages in my own growth. Since childhood, my siblings and I learned about faith from our parents: habits, practices, traditions. Recently, I was Blessed in marriage to a wonderful young woman, prompting me to think more about how to pass on those traditions to my own children when they come along. I've had to consider what were the best, most important aspects of my childhood faith that I would want to recreate in my kids' lives.

### **The Tradition of Testimony**

The answer that I came to was simple: my own faith testimony. There are many important aspects to a life of faith, but few are as personal and unique as our own story. While we may all worship the same God and study the same scripture, our individual and personal relationships with Him are far from ordinary.

Some of my early cherished memories are of my parents telling me stories. Both of them devoted their twenties to service and missionary work for the Unification movement founded by Father and Mother Moon. The stories they shared with me and my siblings of that time in their lives uplifted and inspired me. Even as a young child, I felt excited at the idea of developing my relationship with God through experiences like the ones my parents had. It was much more engaging to my young mind than sitting down and studying scripture.

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### **Make It Exciting**

The stories that stick out to me are the exciting ones, like my dad bonding with Russian church members while bribing guards to get access to better food for their church center. Or my mom fundraising for church expenses by going door to door and office to office, running away from angry security while sympathetic employees helped her cover her tracks.

Many of the things they had to do were hard, and they didn't always enjoy them at the time. But my question was always, "Why did they still do it? What possessed them to live such a wild and uncertain life?" Then they would share that it was a strong desire to grow closer to God and live a life guided by that relationship with Him that pushed them to keep going beyond their limitations, sometimes to the point of exhaustion. In the end, they were certain that their lives were much better for it. After hearing my parents' testimonies, I felt my own desire to develop my faith. These early memories played a crucial role in shaping my perspective on faith. I've always felt grateful to my parents for that.

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one day, I hope they'll inspire and benefit my kids, too."

### **Your Story Matters**

After spending my early twenties devoted to my own missionary experience, I've realized that my testimony is just as special as my parents' stories were. I've been able to travel all over the world, serving different communities and growing as an individual. I can think of dozens of experiences that moved me, challenged me, changed me, and taught me something profound about God. There's a big difference between reading about how to have faith and actually fighting to keep that faith alive in difficult and desperate times. With some thought and reflection, I think that my own stories can be something worth sharing. They can be stories that inspire and benefit others, and one day, I hope they'll inspire and benefit my kids, too.

### **Roots in Religion**

The tradition of testimony is deeply rooted in religious culture. One Unification Church elder, Paul Werner, explained in his book *In Harmony with the Eternal: Words of Spiritual Guidance* that when someone relates their own personal testimony of God, other people may have a chance to understand that aspect of God, even if they had never had a similar experience. This practice is found in the Bible as well. Werner explained that the Apostle John, "claims that he met Jesus, and he goes on to testify that many things were revealed to him. He wrote about that personal experience and it is 'documented' in the Bible. Millions of people since that time have clung to those words. On the other hand, many people doubt them. Yet the majority of Christians today expect Jesus to return to the world according to the vision which John shared."

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- Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon

### **Don't Let Doubt Stop You**

The problem many people run into is the creeping doubt that their life isn't all that interesting or valuable. Mother Moon often encourages Unificationists to focus on the intrinsic value of each of their own lives. In her memoir, *Mother of Peace*, she emphasizes that "Every one of us needs to feel deeply grateful for being born. There is not one person whose birth is meaningless." Because we are all children of God, created in His image, our lives hold intrinsic value to God. Our stories are testaments to our personal relationships with God are as unique as each of us and hold equal value. Therefore, as Mother Moon concluded, "No one should belittle his or her life. We should deeply realize that everyone is a precious being, born through the sacred workings of the universe."

### **Sharing is Caring**

When the people we respect and admire share their stories, it can stay with us forever. Within a faith community, the stories of elders have the potential to do real good for the community's youth. These shared testimonies don't just instruct. They bring us together. That's why it can be a worthwhile practice to take the time to create our own faith testimonies. In sharing our stories, orally or in writing, we help build a strong bond of faith that connects us. Passing on our experiences becomes a special way for us to weave a beautiful tapestry of faith that links generations together. That is our legacy, and ultimately, that is God's legacy as well.