

## FFWPU USA: Marriage Is a Family Effort

Elijah Maddox  
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*Photo courtesy of Elijah Maddox*

I always liked the idea of getting married. When I was a small child, I looked up to my parents' marriage. No matter how many ups and downs we went through as a family, there was always love in the home. For that, I consider myself lucky. I still view my parents as a hopeful example of what married life can be. They are my first teachers, my role models for where I would like to be in a few decades. Somehow, it was never strange to me to start this thought process at a young age. It seemed like common sense to me at the time. Now that I'm not quite as young, I've had to put more thought into the what and the why. What really is marriage, and why do I want it so badly in my life?

"A wife loves her husband not for his own sake, dear one, but because the Divine Beloved lives in him. A Husband loves his wife not for her own sake, dear one, but because the Divine Beloved lives in her."

- The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad

### **Marriage is Sacred**

A good marriage is something almost anyone can look up to. Historically, marriage has long been acknowledged as a necessary and worthwhile part of life. In the book of Genesis, it says, "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." (Genesis 2:24) Later, scripture tells us, "He who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the Lord." (Proverbs 18:22) These verses tell us that God has intended for humanity to form marriage bonds and that they are a good thing. This one sacred relationship in our lives is part of our ultimate purpose, and we don't just have to take the Judeo-Christian word for it.

In the Hindu tradition, it is said that "A wife loves her husband not for his own sake, dear one, but because the Divine Beloved lives in him. A Husband loves his wife not for her own sake, dear one, but because the Divine Beloved lives in her." (The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad) These different faith traditions teach us that marriage is sacred and that its value in each of our lives cannot be measured.

### **Young People Are Divided on Marriage**

However, [marriage has also often been romanticized](#). The fairytale versions of love and marriage that many of us fixate on in our youth can seem unattainable in the real world of complicated relationships and tedious responsibilities. People can compare the fairytale with reality and become jaded. It's no wonder. Feeling that real love and lasting marriage are ultimately unattainable is enough to drive anybody away from the whole concept. In fact, the younger generation in America today is experiencing exactly that. According to a [Pew Research Center](#) survey in 2024, "Among all adults ages 18 to 34, 20% say being

married is extremely or very important for people to live a fulfilling life." That means that a large majority of our young people view it as unimportant. They have lost faith in the idea of marriage. We as a society are in danger of [losing marriage altogether](#).

"Among all adults ages 18 to 34, 20% say being married is extremely or very important for people to live a fulfilling life."  
- Pew Research Center

### **Compatibility Is About Partnership**

In my case, thankfully, the idea of marriage still has some hold on me. I was fortunate to be able to start on my marriage journey a year ago with my lovely wife, Afi. As wonderful a journey as it's been so far, it has been far from smooth sailing. If anything, it's been the most tumultuous experience of our lives. We come from different worlds, we have different characters and goals, and we watch different movies. We seem incompatible with many modern standards of relationship ideals. But we haven't seen it that way. The inherent challenges and unpredictable nature of the journey are all things we've come to embrace and have grown together all the more for it. But it does still raise the question of how to best create an environment for a successful marriage at all?

### **We Need Marriage**

Being raised in the Unificationist faith, prioritizing marriage has always been one of our community's core values. We hold marriage in the highest esteem, striving to cultivate joyful and fulfilling relationships. "We need marriage," [Mother Moon](#) commented at a prayer breakfast, "because it is the true way to develop our love. In marriage, we ripen as a seed of God. Our entire life should be centered on true love. We should be born in true love; we should grow in true love; we should live centered on true love, and we should return to true love when we die." Based on this vision, we understand the significance of centering our lives around the love we nurture in our marriages. By doing so, regardless of the challenges we face, we can mature as the seeds of God.

Marriage serves as the key to unlocking our true value as human beings that God created us to embody. But it takes that partnership, that [unity of a man and woman](#), to fully embody it. As impossible as that can seem at times, the transformative power and beauty of the end result are more than enough reasons to make it a life priority.

"We need marriage because it is the true way to develop our love. In marriage, we ripen as a seed of God. Our entire life should be centered on true love. We should be born in true love, we should grow in true love, we should live centered on true love, and we should return to true love when we die."  
- Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon

### **It's a Family Affair**

Any daunting and difficult task, such as building an ideal marriage, can be made more manageable through teamwork. Our belief is that couples should not have to face this journey alone. What are family and community for if not for supporting us through this? In the Unificationist faith, [the role of family support is key in nurturing healthy and enduring marriages](#). Parents bear the responsibility to first cultivate their own long and fruitful relationships. Then, in due time, it becomes natural that they would share the fruits of their long and successful marriages with their adult children who are starting their own marriage journeys. The same can be said for extended families and communities. The collective wisdom of our elders can lift much of the burden on young couples, sparing them from having to figure everything out on their own. Relationships are hard. Why not rely on someone whose experience you can trust?

### **Personal Responsibility is Key**

This idea might sound strange to modern ears, but the truth is that these practices have existed for centuries. Family involvement in marriage is a longstanding tradition observed worldwide, with Christianity, Judaism, and Hinduism highlighting parental involvement in courtship. Unificationism follows a similar approach.

Courtships or arranged marriages might seem strange and old-fashioned today, but marriage based solely on physical attraction and short-term desire could be said to be equally, if not more, strange. The importance of personal commitment and choice in marriage cannot be overstated. The role of parental involvement is not to dictate decisions for the couple. Spouses in the Unificationist faith are not assigned but rather introduced. If a couple meets and wants to move towards marriage, parental involvement is not about allowing or forbidding, but rather about encouraging or cautioning.

Ultimately, the couple must make the choice to pursue the relationship and commit to a lasting marriage.

All of this underscores the significance of personal agency in marital relationships.

### **Community Is a Resource**

I learned many lessons on love and marriage from my faith community. Initially, it was observing my parents - watching their conversations, their conflict resolution, and their teamwork in creating a life for our family - that laid the foundations of my understanding of relationships. Truly, [family is the school of love](#). But as I entered my teens and twenties, I expanded this influence to include other couples within my community. Mentors from church, coworkers with a few years on me, and even a few peers who had married before I did, all played a role. I surrounded myself with couples who had something to teach me, and I was eager to learn. Often, I would glean just one simple lesson or make one small observation from another couple, but over time, these lessons accumulated into my personal roadmap for relationships.

Combined with a plethora of written materials aimed at helping young couples engage in deep and meaningful conversations, this allowed me to approach my own relationship with clarity and focus. I understood the importance of having a vision for my marriage, one that aligned with the original purpose of becoming an embodiment of God's ideal together with my spouse. I'd learned many tips, tricks, and techniques to help me get there, but that goal was fundamental above all else. It's what separated marriage from a casual relationship in my heart.

### **Don't Do It Alone**

Any sane person is still going to need support navigating all the complexities of marriage. That's why not trying to do it alone is so important. We need support - family and community - despite acknowledging that our families may not be perfect and our communities may have flaws. But without some kind of guidance and example, it is far too easy to become lost, aimless, and hopeless in a marriage lacking purpose. [Our young generation today is lonely and disconnected](#). But we don't have to be. What we need is an environment that fosters connection, support, and guidance. It begins with a simple choice: to [seek out community](#), support, and guidance from those with wisdom to offer, and ultimately, to commit to nurturing strong marital relationships.

Don't search endlessly on your own. Find your community. Make the choice to build your vision for a God-centered relationship. With love, support, and dedication, fulfilling relationships are achievable. To every young person looking for real love, I say that it is within your grasp - with a little help.

## How to Create Your Soulmate



### **How do I become the person my future spouse can love?**

Hollywood might have us believe that a soulmate has to be found, but when you have decided to embark on a spiritual journey and live a life centered on God, there is a lot more involved than luck. The path of owning your faith is all preparation for what Unificationists consider the ultimate spiritual journey—marriage. In marriage, we apply our core values of living for the sake of others, building a global family, and creating unity across religious and cultural boundaries.

Just as they say that happiness can't be found but must be created, a "soulmate" is not someone we were necessarily destined to meet, but someone with whom we work to create a relationship that can stand the test of time.

How do we begin this journey to create our soulmate?

### **First and foremost, involve God.**

God's original design of love was that a man and woman who had grown to maturity would unite in marriage, raise children in a loving family, and contribute to the larger society. A marriage that puts God at the center goes beyond "How can I feel love from my partner" and asks "How can my partner and I help to make a better world?" When a couple like this marries, they understand that their union is not just for themselves, but it is a bridge between their two families, between cultures, and the foundation for raising their children, the future leaders in the world.

Instead of a love that seeks to take, we should be thinking, "What can I give?" We don't have to wait to have a partner to start living these principles. When we are still single, we can focus on becoming the best version of ourselves so

that we are the soulmate our future spouse can love. We can create “big picture” goals for our marriage and look for someone who shares those goals. We can reflect on questions like: How do I want my marriage to be an inspiration for others? What role does my marriage play in creating a better world?

### **Make it a family affair.**

Though charting out our spiritual path is an individual task, we can't experience growth alone. We are constantly learning from and being supported by those around us. When it comes to choosing a life partner, it can help to have more than just ourselves as a compass.

In Unificationist families, parents often play a role in finding a match for their children by networking with other parents and communicating closely with their children. Who better than our own families—those who raised us and know us best—to help us in setting up a union with the right person?

If we take a moment to sit down with our parents and siblings, or someone we consider as close as family, we can gain clarity by asking ourselves and each other: What kind of person would I best flourish within a marriage? What is important for me to look for in a husband or wife? What unique qualities can I offer to my future spouse and what do I still need to work on to be ready for this stage in life? When we marry, this family dynamic continues as we can enjoy the ongoing benefits of the joint involvement of both families working together to support the couple.

### **Love is not a feeling. It's a decision.**

Romance, love, and passion are an important part of the equation and a beautiful part of life, but they may not come in the order you expected.

Focusing first on your commitment and on building a shared spiritual vision with someone can add all the more depth to your love life. True and blooming intimacy begins not physically but spiritually, mentally, and emotionally.

Instead of “falling in love,” we want to “grow in love.” “Falling in” implies that we can “fall out” of love, but if we are growing, then love is always expanding. Growing in love is a choice we make no matter how long we've been together. It's the kind of love that will go the distance.

Our soulmate may not be some Hollywood hero or heroine, but chances are we're not either! Take some time to meditate on how you can foster growth in your relationship—present or future. How can I be the person my spouse or future spouse can love? How can I see my relationship from God's viewpoint—

as a bridge between families, a builder of peace, and an example for generations to come?

Think about the qualities you want in a soulmate, then try to foster those within yourself.

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## Does Marriage Even Matter Still? We say, “Yes!”



We all desire love. Marriage, to most of us, is the ultimate symbol of love. It is a declaration and a promise. But could a marriage mean more than just a couple’s happiness? In a world where many marriages end in divorce and many are choosing to forgo marriage altogether, is there something missing? Does marriage as an institution even still matter?

We say, “Yes.” Not only is marriage the center of their ministry, from a Unificationist perspective it is the building block of a world of peace and the birthplace of God’s love.

And not just marriage, but the Marriage Blessing.

The Blessing movement takes marriage to a whole new level, beyond just the happiness of the married individuals or their families. By receiving the Marriage Blessing, couples commit to something greater—they commit to changing the world together.

### **Reality Check: Why can’t we just keep living as we do?**

We live in a world where war, division and violence are commonplace. The United Nations estimates that about 7 in 10 women around the world will experience physical and/or sexual violence at some point in their lifetime. Around 460,000 intentional homicides occur worldwide *per year*—most of which are in the Americas. Everywhere cultures are clashing.

Global problems often seem insurmountable, and non-relatable on an individual level, but once you zero in on the national level, more pieces of the puzzle emerge. In the United States, domestic violence is the third leading cause of homelessness among families, and more than 3 million children witness domestic violence in their homes every year.

Fewer than half of kids live in a home with two, married parents, compared to

73% in 1960. In communities across the country, 85 percent of imprisoned youth and 71 percent of all high school dropouts come from fatherless homes. Researchers found the rate of divorce and relationship issues increased when fathers were emotionally or physically unavailable to youth.

When we look at these statistics, suddenly the global epidemic of violence hits closer to home. Our world is made up of flawed nations, which are made up of struggling communities, which are made up of broken families that create individuals starved for love.

### **How do we reverse the domino effect?**

Vincent J. Bove reflects in his book *Listen to Their Cries: Calling the Nation to Renewal*, "The family is first and foremost the primary source of education for all of society and is critical to a community's health. Each and every human being enters the world through a family and every human being is communal by nature."

Imagine if every child were guaranteed the chance to grow up in a home filled with love, acceptance and peace. Imagine a family in which parents loved each other, invested in their children, and gave back to the community. It seems like a fairytale, but that is exactly what God envisioned for each and every one of us.

Father Moon tells us that God's desire from the very beginning was for Adam and Eve to marry centered on His love, then build a family that would multiply that love to the entire world. Sadly, we all know the story of how Adam and Eve's family really turned out. Since that time, God has longed to bring us back to that original ideal, a place where we can build loving relationships and happy families as the foundation for a peaceful world.

The Marriage Blessing is an opportunity to change the statistics. The Marriage Blessing is more than just a marriage ceremony. It includes God as the center of the relationship and honors the marriage relationship as something beyond just the couple. Couples who enter into the Marriage Blessing understand that their marriage is not just for their own sake; rather, it serves as a foundation for a loving family, a vibrant community and a peaceful world.

### **Want to make your marriage deeper?**

For those already married, the Marriage Blessing can be a rededication. It can be the beginning of a more fulfilling marriage and more joyful parenting.

Through the Marriage Blessing, couples help build a community in which marriage and family truly are honored and supported.



The Marriage Blessing is an affirmation of our origin as human beings created by God—knowing that He wants His children not only to change our habits but also to be truly happy and have the chance to create a family and culture completely based on godly values through personal commitment and self-change.

That means changing the way things have been done for centuries—not only by connecting marriage to God from the start but also by making a commitment as a couple to include God in every aspect of daily life—making God our go-to when things are both joyful and difficult.

### Attend the Next Blessing

Whether you want to improve your marriage or change the world, the Marriage Blessing is the best place to start, because it focuses on the core relationship between you and God, and extends outward to the world and your descendants.

The Marriage Blessing is our call to action to create a culture that genuinely cares for each human being, values commitment between husband and wife and upholds family values.

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WHO IS THE  
MOTHER OF  
PEACE?

## DR. HAK JA HAN MOON

Over her 50 years of public ministry, the Mother of Peace, affectionately known as Mother Moon, has dedicated her life to the realization of peace. Acting in the role of humanity's parents, she and her husband created [non-profit organizations](#).

businesses, conferences and awards spanning every facet of society and culture to support resolving historical wounds and finding solutions to the world's many problems. At the root of all their initiatives is a path to strengthen families and prevent the breakdown of society through the Marriage Blessing movement. As the only female religious leader operating on such a global level, her powerful message has inspired millions to transcend national, racial and ideological boundaries.



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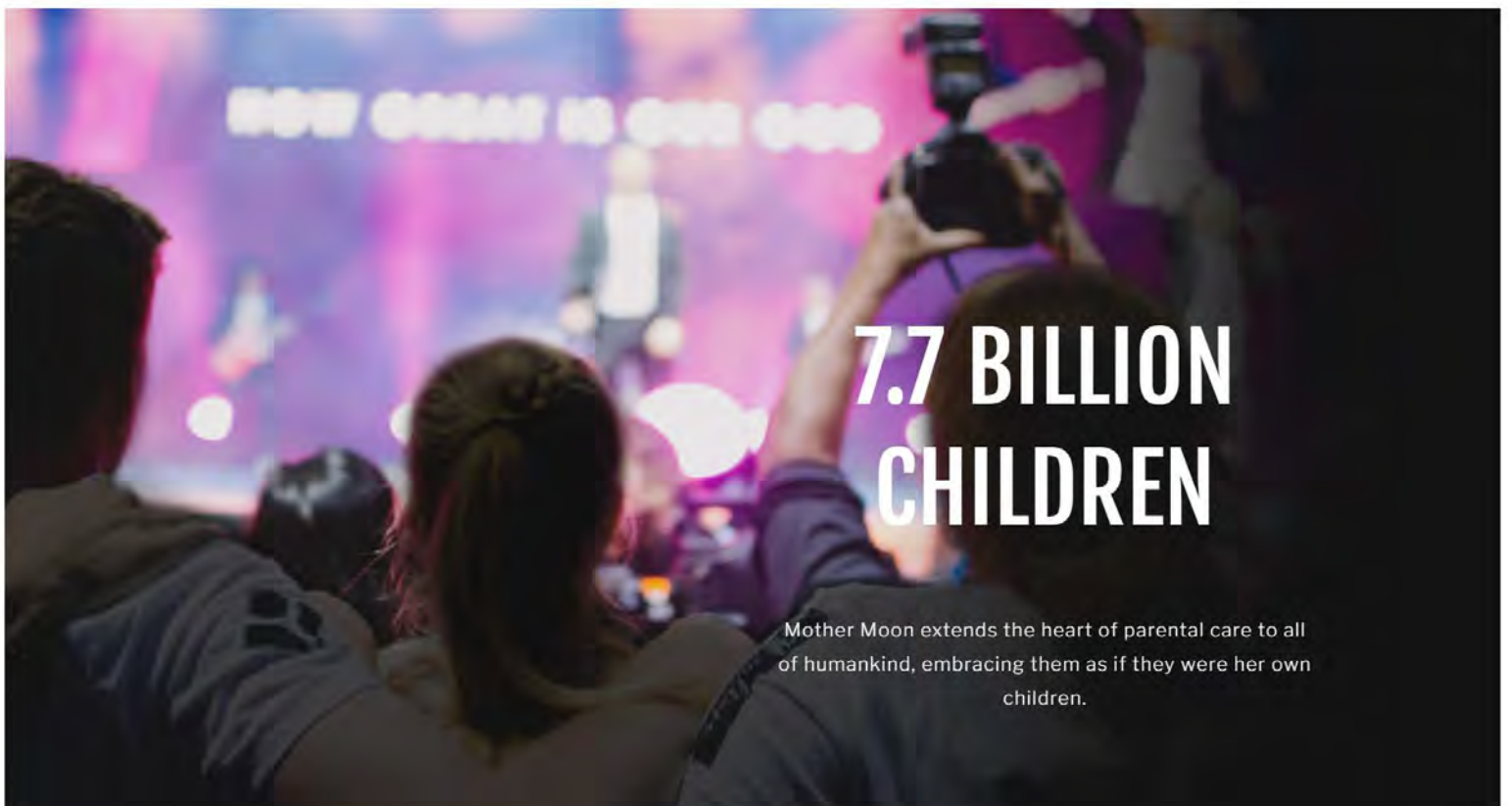


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THE MOTHER OF PEACE IS

# HEALING THE HUMAN CONDITION



A close-up photograph of two hands clasped together. The hand on the left is darker-skinned and has a gold ring with a circular emblem on the ring finger. The hand on the right is lighter-skinned. The background is blurred, showing what appears to be a wedding or formal event.

# FAMILY AS THE FOUNDATION

The world's great faiths unanimously affirm the sanctity of marriage. The breakdown of love in the family is the root of all human problems. The Marriage Blessing is an inter-religious affirmation of the universal importance of marriage and family, creating God-centered families united as one family under God.

A photograph of a diverse crowd of people at an event. Many are wearing black suits with white scarves. In the foreground, a woman with short dark hair and sunglasses has her mouth open as if speaking or singing. Another woman next to her is also speaking. A circular logo with the text 'PEACE STARTS WITH ME' is visible on a white scarf.

# PEACE STARTS WITH ME

Thousands across the globe have come together through the Peace Starts With Me experience. Mother Moon is challenging us to become peacemakers, starting with ourselves. Politicians come and go, but we are the people who must take responsibility to bring about change rather than relying on others to do it for us.

**“Today we stand at the gateway of a new historic millennium for the sake of world peace and a hope-filled future, which we must bring to fruition without delay.”**

— Mother Moon, February 2019



DR. HAK JA HAN MOON, THE MOTHER OF PEACE.  
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# What is God's Nature?



## A Divine Dance of Masculine and Feminine

In the vast landscape of spiritual traditions, a prevailing theme emerges—the divine dance of masculine and feminine energies. Here are a couple of examples from Christianity and Hinduism to offer a few.

“So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.”

— Genesis 1:27

Picture God not as a singular force, but as the exquisite fusion of both, a sacred union weaving through the very fabric of existence. Let's unravel this concept and delve into how it can elevate your spiritual journey.

To grasp the essence of God as the harmony of masculine and feminine, one must first acknowledge and celebrate the inherent duality within ourselves and the world at large. Each of us resonates with both masculine and feminine energies.

Embracing these dual facets brings a profound sense of completeness and equilibrium, fostering a deeper connection with the divine.

## The Divine Feminine

Enter [the divine feminine](#)—a force embodying nurture, compassion, and intuition. It beckons us to tap into the interconnected web of existence, radiating love, acceptance, and empathy. This energy encourages us to honor life's cyclical nature, heed our intuition's whispers, and forge profound connections with others and ourselves.

### **The Divine Masculine**

On the flip side, we encounter the divine masculine—a powerhouse of strength, logic, and action. It stands as the guardian urging us to shoulder responsibility for our lives and the world we inhabit. This side of God imparts lessons in courage, discipline, and deploying intellect in service of a loftier purpose. It's a call to instill order, structure, and stability in our lives.

### **A Marriage of Opposites**

In the tapestry of God, the harmonious interplay of masculine and feminine energies signifies a divine marriage of opposites. This fusion births a symphony of balance and completeness that we see reflected in the world around us.

“In the beginning, the divine power, born of the Yoga, was one:  
this diversified into male and female.”

– Rig Veda 10.90.1 (Hindiusm)

### **Complimentary Forces**

Father and Mother Moon took up the mantle of symbolically representing this unity of all masculine and feminine energies as one of their core missions together. They both represented God, or who our faith tradition now refer to as Heavenly Parent, in extremely different ways. Some feel inclined to want to choose sides with one flavor of the divine over the other, but that misses the point. Our roots as a human race originate from these [complimentary forces harmonizing](#) to create life since the beginning of time.

In Chapter 1 of the [Divine Principle](#), the core teachings of the Unificationist faith, it says, “The myriad qualities of God, in their duality, are apportioned into diverse human beings.”

“The myriad qualities of God, in their duality, are apportioned  
into diverse human beings”

– The Divine Principle, Chapter 1

### **How to Reflect God's Nature**

To infuse your spiritual journey with the harmony of masculine and feminine, weave practices that nurture both energies. Immerse yourself in activities kindling intuition and emotions—meditation, journaling, or [communina with](#)

[nature.](#)

Simultaneously, embrace assertive and disciplined actions like setting intentions, pursuing personal growth, or chasing meaningful goals.

### **Embrace the Harmony**

Understanding God as the harmony of masculine and feminine beckons us to rise above gender stereotypes, embracing the completeness within ourselves and the divine. By honoring the dance of masculine and feminine energies, we not only deepen our spiritual tether but also craft a life with balance. In this sacred union, we discover the divine within, forging an unshakeable bond with all creation.

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## Why Family Is the School of Love



There are many kinds of institutions in this world. Schools are man-made institutions to obtain knowledge. Hospitals are institutions for physical healing, while churches are institutions for spiritual exploration. However, there is one that often gets overlooked because it is an institution we're all born into—a family.

What is there to gain from the God-made institution of a family? According to the teachings of Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon and Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, the family is where we learn the valuable skills needed to build meaningful and healthy relationships.

**To put it in simple terms, family is the school of love.**

“You need to build bonds within your family that will empower you to broaden your love for one another inside and outside the family. Your love within your family is the encapsulation of your love for your nation and the world.”

— Cheon Seong Gyeong p.484 (5.3)

Just as we benefit from learning the difference between addition and subtraction, society at large can benefit from someone learning the importance of healthy communication, the virtue of listening, and even the art of a simple apology. The *I Ching* an ancient Chinese book of wisdom, reminds us that the person we are within our family is reflected in other interpersonal relationships. In this way, the family provides deep insight.

### **Family Is a Microcosm of Society**

How a child treats her mother, father, and siblings is reflected in the ways she will treat her future spouse, friends, and community members. The *I Ching*

describes the family as being the “microcosm of society.” You may argue that your roommate of two years is not as annoying as your brother of twenty years. While that may be true, probably the longer that relationship continues, eventually even that dynamic with your roommate will be tested.

### **The Four Great Realms of Heart**

The Four Great Realms of Heart, according to Unificationist teachings, encompasses four major categories of relationships encountered in life that teach you to love all types of people unconditionally as God would, [especially when it's hard](#).

#### **Children's Love**

The first is children's love, and not the kind of love children have for anyone who gives them candy. This is the kind of pure love a child has for their parents and the filial piety they practice towards them. You might remember being a kid fighting about what is right and wrong because “my mom said so.” It is in the relationship with their parents that children begin to experience and understand the heart of God.

#### **Sibling's Love**

Siblings' love is the next level of expanding our hearts. It is the love that siblings experience growing up with and challenging one another. Love becomes more reciprocal, as children learn to give as well as receive with their brothers and sisters. If there is anyone that can win a competition for listing all of your weaknesses, it's your siblings. They are the ones that remember the time you were too scared to go to the basement even as a senior in high school. They know exactly what to say to get a reaction out of you with surgical precision. However, it is in these fights with your siblings that you can also learn to love someone outside your family with all the complexity they may bring.

#### **Conjugal Love**

The third realm of heart is conjugal love. This is the love you share with your spouse and the only kind of love that can not be shared with anyone else. Hopefully, by now, your siblings have taught you the necessary patience to endure any challenges with your spouse. This realm of love teaches us what it means to love someone new wholeheartedly. Not as a friend, a sibling, a parent, or a co-worker, but as a life partner. It is the commitment of both individuals to something more significant than their own happiness that is the most important lesson this realm of heart teaches us.

#### **Parental Love**

The fourth realm of heart, parental love, is the love that is most similar to

God's love for humanity; the love parents have for their children. It is hard to explain what makes a mother trust and embrace her foolish son again and again regardless of past betrayals. It is just as hard to comprehend a parent's heart when they lose a child. Without a care for anyone in the room, they may scream and cry for what seems like hours because that is the intensity they feel in their hearts. This is the kind of love you can never come close to understanding without being a parent themselves.

### Love All People as Family

All these types of relationships seem daunting and tedious at first, like a never-ending checklist. However, they are what allow us to grow our hearts in order to [see all people as family](#). Every person is worthy of being treated with the same respect and curiosity to work out our differences and challenges, just as we would with our nuclear family.

### The Platinum Rule

Jesus Christ teaches humanity to love and give unconditionally, which is the whole point of true love. He urges us to love others as we would like to be loved; the golden rule. But there is actually a platinum rule. Love others as they would like to be loved. Wars, political corruption, famines, diseases, racism, and countless other problems our world faces have taught humanity otherwise. That is why without first practicing unconditional love within the nuclear unit of society, the family, this ideal is far from attainable. How do we love our neighbors as family if we do not know how to love our own brothers and sisters?

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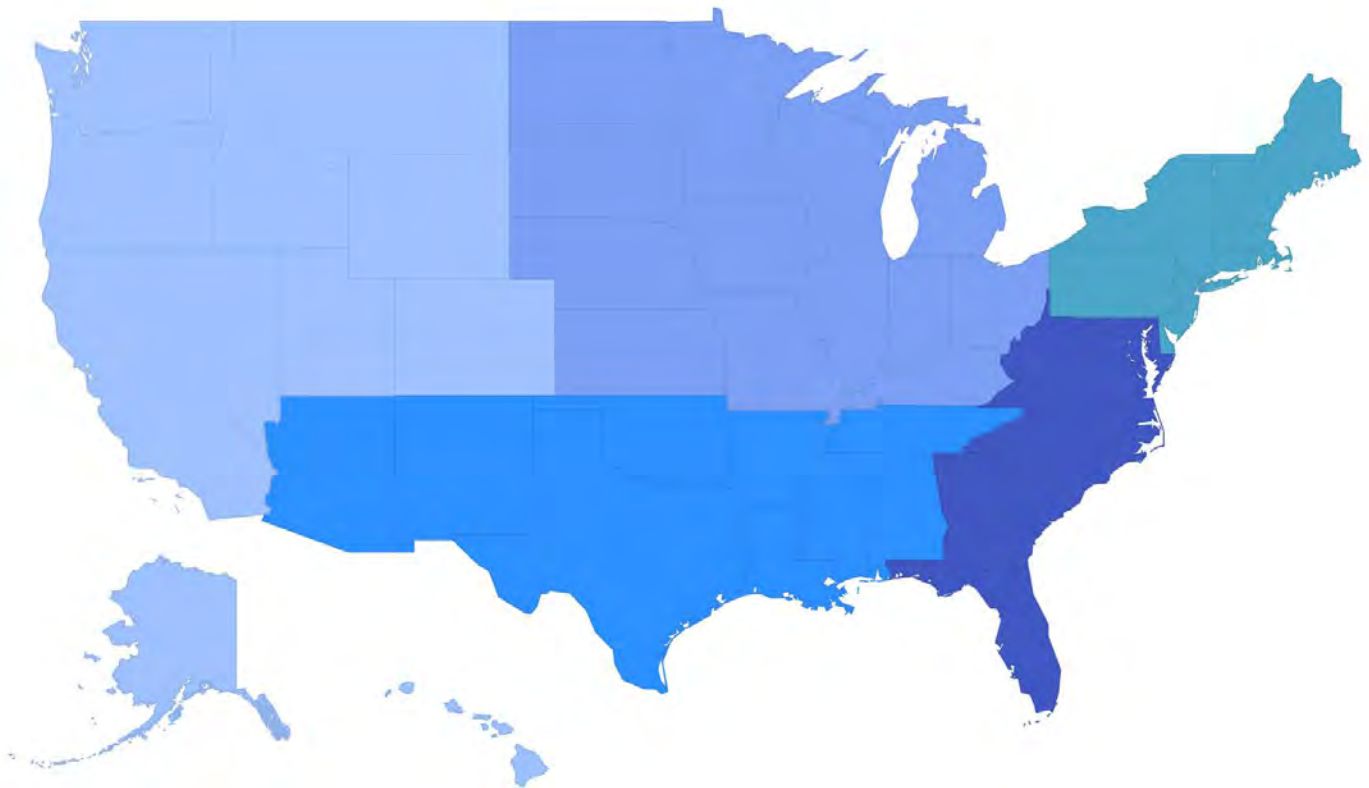
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*Dentew Learey Next Generation Director*

*Sungmi Holdhus Communications Manager*

### NORTHEAST COMMUNITY

[NORTH@FAMILYFED.ORG](mailto:NORTH@FAMILYFED.ORG)

*Naokimi Ushiroda Northeast Senior Pastor*

*Eunmi Rangala Secretary General, Northeast*

### SOUTHEAST COMMUNITY

[SOUTHEAST@FAMILYFED.ORG](mailto:SOUTHEAST@FAMILYFED.ORG)

*Dr. Achille Acolatse Southeast Senior Pastor*

*Tomomi Fukuda Secretary General, Southeast*

### MIDWEST COMMUNITY

[MIDWEST@FAMILYFED.ORG](mailto:MIDWEST@FAMILYFED.ORG)

*Kazuo Takami Midwest Senior Pastor*

*Shizuka Pehling Secretary General, Midwest*

## SOUTH COMMUNITY

[SOUTHWEST@FAMILYFED.ORG](mailto:SOUTHWEST@FAMILYFED.ORG)

**John Jackson** *South Senior Pastor*

**Izak Hernandez** *Secretary General, South*

## WEST COMMUNITY

[WEST@FAMILYFED.ORG](mailto:WEST@FAMILYFED.ORG)

**Kevin Thompson** *West Senior Pastor*

**Gabriela Von Euw** *Secretary General, West*

## LAS VEGAS COMMUNITY

[VEGAS@FAMILYFED.ORG](mailto:VEGAS@FAMILYFED.ORG)

**Ki Hoon Kim** *Senior Pastor of the Las Vegas Family Church*

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