

Blessing & Family Ministry: What Arranged Marriage Taught Me about True Love

Yun-A Johnson
January 28, 2021



The first conversation I had with my future husband, after my parents told me his name, was over instant messenger. It went something like this:

Me: so, I heard some news

Him: oh yeah?

Me: yeah, about us

Him: Oh, I think I know what you're talking about

Me: so what do you think?

Him: I don't know, what do you think?

Me: I'm cool with it

Him: me too

This is not an exact transcript, and what you don't see is me freaking out in front of my computer while I figured out what to type in order to sound cool. Growing up as a Unificationist, I knew my parents would be closely involved in my engagement process. I wasn't always so confident in this tradition, but I knew I

wanted what my parents had: a loving, committed relationship.

We had been friends before our parents began talking to each other and decided we would make a good match. After that conversation, we went on dates and spent two years traveling back and forth between Philadelphia and New Jersey to visit each other on weekends while we finished college. In 2005, we participated in the [Holy Marriage Blessing](#) in Seoul, South Korea. This year will be our 10th anniversary.

Though our beginnings may be a bit unusual compared to most couples in the United States, we're very much like any other married couple. We fight and make up, we talk about the future, we struggle to find time for each other amidst the demands of work and kids. I don't have any magic formula for how to make a marriage work; we're figuring it out just like everyone else. Looking back though, I do think that growing up in a culture that encouraged arranged marriages gave me a different perspective on love than some of my peers.

Love Starts with You

Before my engagement, I spent a long time in the realm of singlehood. While there were times, most notably in high school, that I wanted to fit in and go on dates like the rest of my friends, staying single taught me a lot about love. Singlehood is a unique and valuable time in and of itself. It's a time of exploration, growth, and of learning what love really means. Being single allowed me to focus my energies on lasting friendships, on my hopes and passions, and maturing into the kind of person I wanted to be when I met the man I would marry. I first learned how to love myself, and to show up as someone ready to give.

Love is Not About You

What is love? Growing up, my faith taught me that true love was the ability to put someone else's needs above your own, to love someone more than yourself. A lot of people make lists about the qualities they want in a partner. Not that I didn't have a list of my own, but I was also taught to focus on what I had to give to my future spouse. Think of the difference it would make, if two people came into a relationship thinking about what they can give instead of get from the other person. It's not easy, and I still struggle with this on a daily basis, but it's a worthy goal.

Love is Created

I'll be honest, I was not in love at first. It's completely backwards to the way that most couples approach relationships, and it's not the kind of love that you see in the movies. The commitment comes first, then the friendship, then love. Romance is great, but it is also fleeting. That magical transcendent feeling is wonderful, and I've been lucky to have those moments as well, but when the rosy fog dissipates, it can feel like the love is gone too. Unless, we understand that love is more than just some swell of emotion. [Love is an action](#); it's something you practice and nurture every day. I know that our relationship is made of tougher stuff, that when life hits us hard and it feels like the love is gone, there is still hope. We can create love again, because we did it once before.

The issue of choice is what often comes up most when we hear the word "arranged". How can you give up your choice? How could you let someone else decide something so important? I may not have chosen this person if it had been left only up to me, but I thank God that it wasn't, because I would have missed out on an amazing person and the beautiful family I have now. I did choose. I chose to love. Love is a gift, whether it happens at first sight or is built over years. The choice is to continue to love through all of the ups and downs.

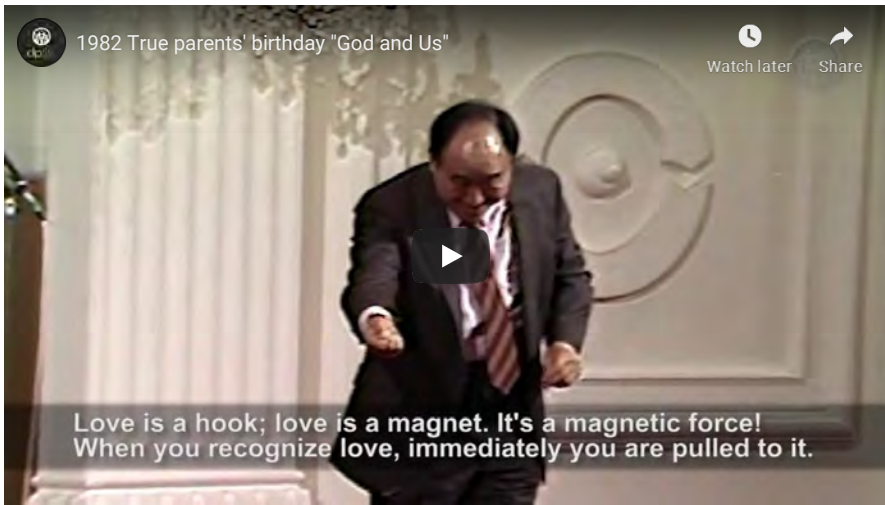

[NEWS](#)

A Return To Love

Posted January 15, 2016



The DP Life Team



Reverend Moon speaks about the ultimate expression of love. Feb 1, 1982, NYC

On February 20, 2016 thousands of brides and grooms will participate in the Marriage Blessing, a marriage ceremony happening in South Korea and across the United States. Like most weddings, there will be white dresses and tuxedos, flowers, music, and of course, cake. But the Blessing is not your average wedding...

For the Love of God

Weddings are beautiful, two people commit to love each other, "till death do us part", to unite and share their whole lives with one another. It embodies all of our hopes for happiness and peace. Every culture, every religion, has some form of this sacred institution.

Marriage is a cornerstone of society, but it is also a gift, or "Blessing" from God. It is God's gift to all His and Her children to be able to experience love and create a family. For Unificationists, the Blessing signifies the union of man and woman, which is the truest reflection of God, whose essence is both [male and female](#). The divine union of a man and woman through a Blessed marriage reflects our Heavenly Parent's image more fully, and invites God's presence more powerfully than any individual alone. As Father Moon put it: "Neither man nor woman can touch God's highest love by themselves."

For many, even before the marriage itself, the process of finding a husband or wife is unique. Instead of dating multiple partners in order to find, "[the one](#)", Unificationists participate in a family-guided engagement process, often referred to as the "matching". With the matching, two individuals are introduced and build their relationship with the support of their families or mentors. While most couples in a dating relationship may not even be looking for a long term commitment, Unificationists begin their relationship with the [goal of marriage](#) in mind. They commit not just to each other, but also to God, putting the Heavenly Parent in the center of their family.

"We are gathered here today..."

In a traditional wedding, a bride and groom stand alone in front of family and friends to proclaim their vows. In the Blessing ceremony, couples are married along side of hundreds, sometimes thousands of other couples, in one big ceremony.

Why would anyone want to share their wedding day? Because marriage is not just about the joining together of "man and wife." It is a joining together of [two families](#), and often, two cultures. There is a higher purpose that goes beyond the couple.

Unificationists think of their marriages as a piece of the larger puzzle to [creating a better world](#), and believe that the family is the channel of God's love. In order to build a peaceful world, we must first build peaceful families, and that begins with the [harmonious union](#) of husband and wife.

A History of Love

Beginning from Rev. and Mrs. Moon's own Marriage Blessing in 1960, this Blessing tradition has spread to millions of families and homes throughout the world, transcending the Unification faith itself.

If you were to look out on the crowd at a Blessing Ceremony, you would see couples of all different nationalities, races, and religions. Since 1992, clergy and members from many faiths have participated in the International and Interreligious Marriage Blessing Ceremony. Already-married couples join as well to rededicate their love to God and each other.

Top Posts this Week



The Unsung Hero In Every Great Marriage



3 Habits You'll Want to Keep for Life



How To See God In The Little Things



How to Keep the Odds in Your Favor

Father Moon's special insight is that the corruption that exists in the world today is a direct result of the breakdown of the family, starting of course, with the first family. When Adam and Eve fell away from God, they were unable to receive God's blessing. Genesis tells the history of the first dysfunctional family; hiding from God, blaming and mis-trusting each other, and creating a family in which a jealous and angry elder brother killed his own younger sibling. This family is the root of the entire human family today. The Holy Marriage Blessing is a way to return to God's original idea of love, building loving families, harmonious nations, and a peaceful world.

[Sign Up for the Next Blessing](#)

[marriage](#)

[relationships](#)

[arranged](#)

[love](#)

[family](#)

[tradition](#)

[blessing](#)



Previous

[Beyond Love: The Marriage Blessing](#)

Next

[The World's Biggest Birthday Party](#)



[COMMENT](#)

Updates

- [News](#)
- [Culture](#)
- [All Posts](#)

Learn More

- [DP Insights](#)
- [DP Dojo](#)
- [About Us](#)

Connect

- [Our Communities](#)
- [Contact Us](#)



The Unsung Hero In Every Great Marriage

Posted October 10, 2014



The DP Life Team

Unconditional Respect

Have you ever watched the show [Everybody Loves Raymond](#)? It's a great comedy about a three-generation household where everybody deals with their family relationships. The show would be perfect if Deborah, the wife, didn't call her husband an idiot every two seconds. (Okay, that may be an exaggeration, but her words are a clear sign of a lack of respect!) It's hard to say we practice loving unconditionally when we don't also practice respect.

Like a mother's love for her child, unconditional love is a love that doesn't have to be earned. It is a love that serves without expecting anything in return. And we think *that* part is hard! As we love, we also need to show respect to our partner even if we feel that they haven't "deserved" it. That can be tough, but unconditional respect allows us to be empowered to win over others' hearts, and is the place from which love can blossom.

Respecting our spouse no matter what happens doesn't make us a doormat. It simply means that we show consideration and confront issues in a mature way, honoring each other's potential to change.

Here are some ideas and habits that can keep the wheels of respect turning in our relationships:

Talk about it. It's often the small things that tear us apart in relationships, isn't it? In [this blog post](#), Cody lists the top 10 arguments he has with his wife, and most of them are small matters such as cleaning or his exercise habits. He praises the practice of not "venting [their] pent up frustrations." After a while we might just sigh on the inside (we may or may not blow up later on), but if we don't bring these up, then simply tolerating our partner's bad habits or clashing characteristics can actually be a sign of disrespect. The lack of communication prevents the relationship from moving forward. It's important to deal with the feelings, using words like "I feel," not "you make me feel". Create a quiet setting and then try to talk about even the small things. Bring it up, as it comes up.

God's viewpoint is the bigger picture. It's just so easy to look at life through our own eyes and then point at the other person's faults, isn't it? Showing respect is a lot harder than we want to admit, but it's easier when we can see the bigger picture. There's a perspective far greater than our own one-sided view: God's. Say your partner comes home from a long day at work and doesn't want to do anything but gaze blankly at a TV screen. You might underestimate how hard they worked that day and assume that he or she is being lazy, but once we step out of our own minds and take God's and our partner's point of view, we can empathize much better with whatever they are going through.

Serve your partner. Wouldn't you agree that the best way to love and respect someone is to *show* them? Nothing shows love and respect—or generates it—better than service. [Father Moon](#) tells us that love is put in motion when we serve others willingly. He says, "Which comes first, love or living for the sake of others? Living for the sake of others comes first."

Let go of pride. We often think we are right—or simply don't want to be wrong. This tendency in us is a class-A barrier to happier, more respectful relationships because it's a self-centered feeling that makes us close off to our partner. It's not about being right, it's about making it right. It's about asking ourselves, "What would happen if we were both on the same side?" Next time you and your partner are in a clash over something, try applying this thought to the situation, and see how that changes your actions and motives. If you come out of the situation feeling that you both understand each other better, then you have succeeded.

Give them a chance. Isn't it usually true that we might offer or admit more to our partner if we simply had an open window to do so? When we feel welcome and are treated with patience, we tend to be more open ourselves, and we want to be our best selves. Just the same, by giving our loved one space and trust, we honor his or her potential to change. Give your spouse time to think, reflect and take responsibility for their actions, and they will feel your respect for them.

When it comes down to it, all of these practices are about fostering a habit of respect. Father Moon encourages us to create new habits—ones where we love and respect people for their true identity, whether we see it or not.

If we want to grow our relationships, love and respect are key. In a way, it's about being to our spouse who God is to us. Every person is a unique expression of God; we're each a piece in the grand puzzle of humanity, and our spouse is that one person with whom we'll discover this is infinitely true. Father Moon teaches that by giving unconditional love and unconditional respect to our partner, we honor the God in them and allow them to change and grow.

Do you know a couple for whom expressing respect is rather difficult? What would *you* tell them?

family

love

service

relationships

