

## **FPA USA: Each person is made in the image of the Creator**

Howard Self  
November 7, 2021  
Hyun Jin Moon's Family Peace Association



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As God's sons and daughters, we all have the capacity to reflect a unique

aspect of His character. Those reflections are often found in the small things that unexpectedly make a deep impression on those around us. Below are stories written by family members who recognized these God-given qualities in their loved ones.

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## **A Memorial Tribute to My Wife Giusi Johnson**

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# A Memorial Tribute to My Wife Giusi Johnson

Oct 5, 2021



By Mark Johnson

When I think about my late wife Giusi, I am in an endless state of awe and amazement. I had the privilege to witness the life of a very special person up close for 17 years. It's hard to believe that 23 years have gone by since her time of passing.



Mark and Giusi

I first met Giusi in December of 1980, in New York City. I was immediately struck by her unusually deep beauty and spirit. I began talking with her in English, but quickly realized she did not understand a word I was saying, as she smiled, shaking her head. Giusi was born and raised in Northern Italy and had only been in the States for a very short while. Hand language helped a lot at that point! I remember wondering, even though I was deeply moved by this first encounter, how could this ever work, moving forward.

I know you have all heard the saying "Love at First Sight," and for me it was like this with Giusi. I had never met anyone with whom I felt so comfortable and peaceful from the very beginning. I know that this may be unusual for some, but for me (and I believe for her also), this was how it was. I have to say I was in a blissful state of mind and, for the most part, it just got better over time. This is because of the kind of person Giusi was, and how she lived her life on a daily basis in relationship to others, and with God.

One of the greatest tests of character is how a person lives their life no matter what the situation. We can all make ourselves look good in public, at work or at church, but when we are out of the spotlight, how do we behave and live our lives? Giusi was always constant. She gave everything of herself in all that she did. She always went out of her way to make people feel comfortable, and never stopped giving of herself, night and day. In the beginning of our relationship I remember feeling a little jealous of how much she loved and sacrificed herself for others, but I later came to love her more for this unique quality. Friends were always calling Giusi on the phone or coming by the house to talk with her. She was the one others felt free to share their heart with. She was a very great listener and, when asked, gave good advice. If anyone came to our home, she would feed them good food (we wore out the Waffle maker) and everyone would leave feeling full and content. It certainly showed in my well-rounded body!

When at the office, Giusi always took on more than was asked of her, often helping others do their job. During the busy season of her work, when she was not able to get everything done before leaving for home, she would often go back to the office after our boys were in bed, staying there till after midnight. This is not easy to do, especially with three energetic young boys to take care of, but she never complained. Because of this, Giusi won the respect of employees both at the home office and in the other locations she interacted with. She was known as the one person you could go to get things done, the one to call if you needed to solve a problem, and this was always done with a joyful attitude. In 1997 she was selected as employee of the year out of over 400 employees nationwide.



Giusi with our son

Our home was most often filled with joy. Giusi was always singing (Italian songs) and laughing around the house. She had a great sense of humor and would even laugh at my worn-out jokes.

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I would often kid around about how clean and neat she was, and I would get her to laugh so hard she would cry. During the weekends when I would go away for work, she would wait up or sleep on the couch until I arrived home, sometimes early in the morning. Her love and support were constant, no matter what.



The one thing I remember most is how much Giusi loved our three boys. She was most happy when she was with them. She would light up when she was with them and cry tears when they were struggling or sick. She was always proud of their accomplishments and a cheering Mom at sports events and breakthroughs at school. Even when she was upset at them for what young children do, she would yell at them in Italian so they would not understand the words being used. They would laugh at her

Italian words and gestures and most of the time she would just laugh with them. I also remember how clean and organized our house was all the time. Coming from Italy, Giusi was trained to keep things very clean and orderly, and people who visited our home were amazed to see this, especially with 3 active children in the house. Giusi had a way of organizing things very quickly and efficiently on a very tight budget. I remember when we moved into our house in New York, in one day she had completely put away and organized our whole home. I just could not believe it when I came home from work that night.

Giusi was diagnosed with rapid growth breast cancer late in 1995. When we got the news of course it was quite upsetting, but she was determined not to let this get her down and we immediately made a plan to fight it. After limited results from a natural approach and surgeries to deal with the disease, she tried chemo as well as supplemental herbal treatments. During this process, she hardly ever complained and even decided to continue working and investing in taking care of others. She did not want to overburden her friends with all that she was going through. Throughout this whole ordeal I was always amazed at Giusi's unselfishness and her service to others, even during her last days before passing. Even during her last days, when she could no longer get out of bed and was in pain, when friends would come over to visit, her first question was are you hungry, would you like to eat? Or, how are your children and family? I witnessed this firsthand over and over. Giusi's greatest struggle came from knowing that she would not be there each day for her young boys, (they were 9, 10 and 12 at that time) and to give them the love and guidance they needed while growing up, and she shed many tears over this. She even told me that I was the best thing that ever happened to her; I know she was for me. Many tears were shed over this. She was also very upset knowing she would leave her only brother Franko and his family behind, whom she loved very much.

During the last few days of her life, a most serene and pure spirit filled our bedroom. Even though she was so frail, and her body was slipping away, I have to say I never saw her more beautiful and peaceful. The room was thick with the presence of God and love. Giusi passed away at home very peacefully on Oct. 5th, 1998, at 3am.

Thank you Giusi for showing all of us what Love really is by the way you lived your life each and every day. I apologize that these words do not begin to say what a great person you were/are, what a wonderful wife you were to me, and mother you were to our children, and a great friend and sister to so many. Even though it's been 23 years since your passing, true love never dies, it only grows deeper, and our memories of you will always be forever fresh and alive.



# Teaching Character: Think About the Future to Adjust in the Present

Oct 20, 2021



My son is almost nine. He loves to make things. Cardboard boxes, scraps of cloth or wood, and pieces of anything and everything are sources of imagination and delight for him. I've had to covertly throw out many, many things, or else our house would have likely become unlivable, overflowing with sticks, boxes, plastic bins and bags, rocks, old acorns, leaves, etc.



When he entered elementary school, we set up a little desk that quickly became his workshop/dumping grounds. Bits of paper, craft projects from school or ones that he made from scrap wood, chopsticks, seeds, pebbles, shells, bottle caps, bottles, paperclips, rubber bands... As his mom, the piles were, at times, unbearable. For the most part, I'd managed my feelings about this with some chagrin; I loved his creative drive and interest in creating, building, making. I wanted to encourage his God-given heart to make things, to be a "co-creator."

I'd cope with the mess by establishing rules and periodic clean sweeps. He would be required to clean his desk, but it would often and easily fall into disarray. Yet recently, I'd begun to feel that I had to balance his love of making things with a sense of responsibility and ownership over "all the things of Creation." I was concerned that his constant mess-making established a pattern of behavior that would remain with him throughout his life. In Korea, there is a saying that "a habit one has at two will remain with you until you're 80."

At first, I tried yelling (lose-lose for both of us) and lecturing on being responsible for his messes (primarily ineffective) and threats of throwing out everything (somewhat effective, but not a great long-term strategy). Then the other day, instead of yelling at my son about his messes, I quietly but pointedly took pictures of his piles. Intrigued, he asked me, "What are you doing?"

Only half-joking, I explained, "When you grow up and get married, I'm going to show your wife these photos of your messes." I also noted that I would delete the photos if he were to clean it up right away. This motivated him to clean his messes. The room was miraculously transformed - spic and span. It may have been even cleaner than before he made his mess.



I was delighted, of course. And the next time he made a mess, all I had to do was whip out my phone and take a few pictures in front of him. He cleaned it up and sweetly requested I delete the photos from my phone. And I love that he already values his theoretical family so much.

I've always encouraged my kids to think about their future spouses and future kids. We would also talk about what they want and what kind of people they would have to be to have those happy future families. I want those families to loom large in their lives, because I feel it is our responsibility as parents, with a larger sense of what the future holds, to prepare our children for the future. Teaching our kids concepts like "responsibility," "cleanliness," and "stewardship" is not always easy. Using the framework of their futures, their families, to teach the importance of good habits today is an excellent way to prepare them for that abstract future.



I was discussing with my kids about character, defined by the Oxford Languages as the "mental and moral qualities distinctive to an individual." Now, how do you explain this to a child? I put it simply, "the kind of person that you are or become." But it's when you put this idea into a specific role or context that it becomes much more relevant. If

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you're going to be a husband or father, what kind of father or husband do you want to be?

My son's messes aren't necessarily indicative of a moral failure, but it was interesting to me that he instinctively did not want his future wife or children to see his messes. Doesn't this mean that he wants to be seen as clean and responsible? If so, let's work on being those things now so that in the future, he will be!

And – I get a clean living room to boot. Win-win.



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# A God Who Never Gives Up – Lessons from Losing

Oct 29, 2021 | 0 comments



"I told the team, 'We're going to win.' And I meant it," my son told me the day after their 40-6 loss.

Varsity had lost badly to this team last weekend. Every bone in my body said, "They're going to lose." But I was surprised that he had started staring the odds in the face and smiling back.

They lost. Part of me wanted to say, "I called it." But I couldn't laugh at his optimism.

So I listened. "We lost, but we learned. That means eventually we are going to win. I'm going to make every practice count, every game count. We're going to win the next game."

And I stared, slightly in disbelief, but partly because his optimism and faith was calling out my pessimism and lack of faith. And yet, I find myself often working in the field that requires faith. Talk about irony.

I asked slowly, "Where does your optimism come from?"

He smiled. "I met a very wise man at the top of the mountains. He told me, 'What you think and how you perceive things determines your reality.'"

I nodded, "Good. Don't lose that. If you keep believing, it will come to pass."



My son continued, "It's like God. He never gave up on us. No matter how many times we make mistakes as a humanity, no matter how bad things get, He doesn't give up. So, in the end, His dream will come true."

A small smile of a mix of wonder, pride and joy played at the side of my mouth. I was moved at how close and real my boy was feeling God in his life.

There is a Bible quote, Matthew 19:26, "...with God all things are possible." I think my son just showed me a little bit of how that quote works.

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### HEALING FRACTURES: A LESSON IN PARENTING

Jun 18, 2021

By K.M. When you have a boy, there are certain things that you know will probably be inevitable: knee scrapes, fights, mud, and broken bones. Even if you expect it - each one weighs heavy on your heart. So when our extremely active three-year-old boy fractured his...



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Jun 13, 2021

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Jun 10, 2021

Susan's son is now grown. In fact, they are really close. They even work together. But Susan knows, a child's happiness is not something that comes easily. It is something that a mother has to keep fighting for. Susan's son has special learning needs. He was often...



### EXTENDING OUR FAMILY MEANS EXTENDING OUR HEARTS

Jun 4, 2021

By Ken Bates There is often a significant event that becomes the "defining moment" for an individual or group. As a defining moment, it's some special occurrence or decision that makes a statement on who you are and what matters most to you. It may be overcoming...



### A PRECIOUS GIFT FROM MY AUNT

May 29, 2021

By M.I. My life has been quite a journey so far, and yet there is still so much ahead of me. It's been hard sometimes, so it's been important that God was always with me, and I shouldn't give up. One of the main people who helped me realize that is my aunt. She taught...



### TALES ABOUT GRANDPA AND THE GIFTS HE GAVE TO MOM

May 25, 2021

Originally published: Jun 19, 2020  
This is a shortened version of a biographical essay I wrote when I was in elementary school. We were asked to interview our parents and I had interviewed my mother. This became, in a way, more of an ode to my mother's father (my...

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