

## Preparing for Our Seonghwa: Life as an Exclusively Spiritual Being

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We live in a death-denying culture, the result of a human-centered worldview instead of a life centered on God. Because of the Fall, we lost not only the true understanding of life, but of death as well.

Reverend Moon said:

“I talk about death in order to teach the meaning of life. Who really knows the value of life? It is not the person who is going all out to preserve his life. The only person who really knows about life is the one who goes into the valley of death. He confirms the meaning of life as he desperately cries out to Heaven at the crossroads of life and death.”  
 (“Understanding Life and Death,” Dec. 18, 1998)

Most people don’t think about death until we are forced by circumstances beyond our control, primarily, from illness or accident. Those fortunate enough to recover know how precious life then seems. When we assume that our life here on earth will go on as normal, we tend to take it all for granted, but when we are reminded that it has an end, then every moment and every day takes on a new and revitalized meaning.

### We Are Not Alone



William Selig

For the past six years, I have been working in a hospice or hospital environment. It is a precious and profoundly spiritual experience. Based on my observation, one of the biggest challenges facing a patient, particularly those in an end-of-life situation, is the sense of loneliness. Spirituality and religion offer patients a chance to reconnect to themselves, family, community, traditions, and ultimately to God.

According to the *Principle*, the cause for this sense of loneliness can be traced back to the Fall. By disobeying God and succumbing to temptation, our ancestors inherited the element of fear, which comes from a guilty conscience. This unnatural element has been transmitted from generation to generation. It is fear that drives people apart from one another, but most significantly, from our Creator.

My role as a chaplain is to find a way into the heart of the patient, locate that divine spark that lies within us all, and gently remind them that even in those times when we find ourselves in the “darkest valley,” our Heavenly Parent is always there. He/She forgives and loves us unconditionally.

“Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.” (Psalm 23)

Although Unification Church members understand their original sin has been conditionally removed through the Blessing, we are infected by the effects of secularism — individualism and materialism — and don't fully comprehend the profound meaning of the "Seonghwa" and life as an exclusively spiritual being. Father Moon described it "like an insect coming out of its cocoon, getting rid of a shackle, and becoming a new body and a new existence, a new entity."

### **Prepare Ye the Way of the Lord**

*Case 1:* There is a touching testimony in *Blessing Quarterly* (Spring 1991) by an elder member of the 43 couples' Blessing, who lived 55 years in the physical world before her transition to the spirit world. She served in the Church's education department and authored a series of Father's life stories for children.

When the diagnosis of cancer came, she testified to the importance of attitude, determination, and especially of love. She said it was a time for soul-searching. She thought about all the things she hadn't done. Like everyone, she had lived under the operational principle that there was always a "tomorrow." When that paradigm fell apart, she began to put more emphasis on each day.

She prayed to our Heavenly Parent for guidance. She was led to read Agnes Sanford, the mother of the Inner Healing Movement, who says prayer is really the act of getting oneself in line with God's field of vibration. Prayer, music, and living for the sake of others raises our vibrations so we can get nearer our Heavenly Parent. Sanford says don't pray with desperation, "Oh, please give me this! Please give me that!" Power doesn't come by volume. Shouting is not the way to God's heart, but rather tune into His/Her heart quietly, become one with it.

She surely hoped her body would heal and that she would have more time with her family, yet she knew sooner or later she would have to give it up and make the transition to the spirit world. Once it became clear that her body was too diseased to heal, then she focused her energies on "getting in line with God's field of vibration," in heart and love through prayer, music, and living for the sake of others.



*The National Seonghwa for Dr. David S. C. Kim, first President of Unification Theological Seminary, November 2011, Barrytown, NY*

*Case 2:* One of our tradition's leading elders recently transitioned to the spirit world. A few days earlier, his daughter shared a heartfelt testimony, but one point that struck me in particular dealt with "preparation." She wrote:

My dad's been suffering with severe Parkinson's for quite some time now. It quickly progressed over the last four years, especially the past year. In many ways, we've been prepared for a while — mentally, emotionally, physically. My mom's been by his side and has been worried about him passing every day for over a year. So cemetery plots and funeral arrangements have already been made. Going to pick out which casket my mom wanted to use; that was probably one of the hardest things. There is a closet in our hallway filled mostly with funeral preparations that my mom has gotten ready. So, so many things have already been prepared for months. Yet at the same time when "the time" really comes, you're not fully

ready.

Sad to say, I've dealt with a number of families who were not so diligent on this point of preparation. I understand there are times of accidents and unforeseen events, but by and large, we all know that death will come naturally or abruptly, so why not take some simple steps now?

At minimum, I suggest preparing a will and an advance health care directive, and purchasing a cemetery plot. Prices can only go up, and most importantly, have the "talk" about end-of-life issues with your loved ones. The Conversation is an excellent resource. Designate an executor who will be a decision maker, not necessarily a spouse. Between dealing with a hospital or hospice, funeral home, lawyers, etc., it's just too much emotional weight for one person to handle when they should be focusing their energies on sending off their loved one and taking care of the family. It's important to spell out your thoughts and desires. For example, to what lengths would you want to be kept alive in a catastrophic situation? In my capacity as chaplain, and working with the seonghwa ministry, I can absolutely testify you cannot assume your loved ones will know what to do or that there won't be differences of opinion in knowing "what's best." It's very important to have the "talk" so your wishes can be honored at the end of your physical life.

### **Father Moon on Death and Dying**

Father Moon spoke about the meaning of death at the seonghwa ceremony for his second son in 1984: "In the secular world, death signifies the end of life. However, in our world, death is like a rebirth or a new birth into another world, particularly for those who give their life for the purpose of the Kingdom of Heaven and for the sake of the movement are special heroes.... This is a birth from the second universal mother's womb into another world, just like when a baby emerges from its first mother's womb.... That's exactly the same kind of process."

### **Faiths on Death and Dying**

Here is my general sense of how Unificationism compares to other major faiths on the subject of death and dying:

*Christianity:* When a Christian dies their soul is transported into heaven to be with Christ. It is a time of joy but also sadness, as the person will be missed by friends and loved ones.

*Judaism:* When a person dies they will go to Heaven to be with God. The next world is called the "world of truth." Death is seen as a part of life and a part of God's plan.

*Islam:* The soul continues to exist after death. Muslims believe there will be a day of judgment by Allah. Until then, the deceased remain in their graves but on judgment day they will either go to Heaven or Hell.

*Unificationism:* The *Seonghwa* ceremony commemorates the victory of God's love over the power of death which has reigned since the Fall, and the commencement of life as an exclusively spiritual being.

Although religious faiths recognize the universal principle that all living things in the physical world inevitably die, it was True Father who brought the *full* truth: that the physical world and spirit world are not meant to be separated. In God's ideal, they are linked together as the cosmos. As Father said, "I talk about death in order to teach the meaning of life." By attending and practicing the teachings of the True Parents, we are truly blessed to be the beneficiaries of an astounding legacy of restoration.

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*Dr. William Selig (UTS Class of 1981 and 2012) has been involved with the Seonghwa ministry since 2001, and has published six books on Unification tradition: Preparing for the Afterlife: Based on the Teachings of Sun Myung Moon; True Family and the Seonghwa Tradition; Guide to the Seonghwa Ceremony: The Third Stage of Life; God's Holy War to Rescue the Messiah; Interviews with Sun Myung Moon and Hak Ja Han; and Death and Dying: The Teachings of Sun Myung Moon (each available at [lulu.com](http://lulu.com)). Dr. Selig is currently a hospital chaplain in the Washington, D.C. area.*

#### *Resources:*

The Seonghwa Ministry page of the FFWPU [[bfm.familyfed.org/in-memoriam/](http://bfm.familyfed.org/in-memoriam/)]

Guide to the Seonghwa and Won Jeon Ceremonies (PDF) [[bfm.familyfed.org/wp-content/uploads/SeungHwaCeremony-Guide.pdf](http://bfm.familyfed.org/wp-content/uploads/SeungHwaCeremony-Guide.pdf)]

The National Wonjeon site: [[ww.nationalwonjeon.com/](http://ww.nationalwonjeon.com/)]