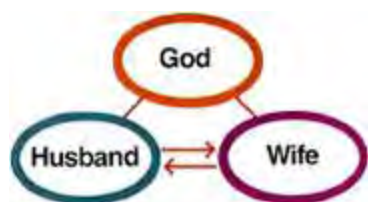


Unification Thought Journey

Gerry Servito
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For the past couple of years, I've been on a journey with students of GPA (Generation Peace Academy) introducing Unification Thought. During this past school year, I have also been their Divine Principle coach. Now, as summer has arrived and the students have graduated, I've had a chance to reflect back on the year and assimilate some experiences and insights that flashed by me when I was immersed in the flow of the teaching experience.

The Role of Grandparents



For just short of 40 years, I've been a student of the Divine Principle. During most of those years, I'd learned to visualize God at the center of my marriage. That is, if my wife and I represent the equal side-by-side positions in our marriage, God represents a higher center — the “first position” if you will — in our marriage. So that our relationship is not simply a yang/yin relationship between two, but rather a 3-part relationship where God is the axis point my wife and I both share. And as the outcome of our unity, a “fourth position” is established, resulting in our family and children.

However, in the last decade or so — I can't recall an exact year anymore — one notion in Unification Thought took new clarity and prominence in my mind: the first position in an actual family is that of the grandparent(s). That's not to say that a grandparent supplants the position of God, but rather that a grandparent is to be a family's most concrete expression of godliness.



I'm sure that this had to do with the confluence of two major experiences in my life:

1. My Mom's position in our household and
2. My efforts to understand and apply the ideas of Unification Thought in my life.

There were also lesser, related experiences:

1. Unsolicited offers at stores to take advantage of the “Senior Discount” and
2. Automatic enrollment, two years ago, in the “Golden Age” club of my local church.

Grandma's Love

Regarding the first of the two experiences, my Mom occupied the master bedroom in our home. She came in 1991 (when my parents were in their 80s), left a couple years after my Dad passed away in 1994, and returned again in 2006 at the age of 93.

My mother was the eldest of 5 children, and the matriarch of our clan. Being deeply religious and prayerful, she had become its spiritual center as well. Because she prayed daily for her siblings, their children and grandchildren, she had been led to give educational & medical assistance on many occasions. Relatives asked counsel of her for many challenging situations that arose in their lives.

Mom could devote herself fully to the family because she was in the advanced stages of glaucoma: her sight was irreversibly failing. So she listened to the Bible, and prayed and sang hymns three times daily, often with my wife. Her deeply spiritual and religious presence in our home added a dimension of faith, love and experience that was developed more than 30 years beyond my own; that had been nurtured through the World Wars, the Great Depression and racial prejudice. Personally I could experience — even in my 5th decade of life — coming home and having a source of life-wisdom and faith to confide in and seek counsel for the challenges of fatherhood.

As she grew feebler, Mom was increasingly pained about the burden she felt that she placed on us, because my wife had stopped working in order to take full care of her. This care became a 24/7 responsibility in the years approaching her transition. I'd try to assure Mom that her influence on our household far outweighed matters of “inconvenience”. These were not simply words to express kindness or give comfort, they were true: My children experienced first-hand the depth of love and faith that only a sincerely religious grandparent can provide. Mom's extra 35+ years of a sincerely religious life and family experience added something to our home that was unique and irreplaceable.

This experience was happening in my own life at the same time that some of my peers were becoming grandparents themselves. This — especially after Mom's passing — has resulted in an epiphany of sorts: that I am at the age of becoming a grandparent myself.

A new level of understanding Unification Thought

My understanding of the ethical perspective in Unification Thought regarding the elderly has therefore become quite personal. Unification Thought states that the grandparents' position in a family is the one that is most representative of God: through the strength of faith of the grandparents, the love and the wisdom of God can become manifest in a family, thereby enriching it practically and profoundly! Unification Thought brought my attention to this and my mother's example in our home punctuated it.

I'm then at the beginning of a most challenging stage of my life, a stage when new opportunities to learn and grow appear, opportunities that could not come at an earlier time. This realization has affected my sense of responsibility towards my community, my responsibilities as a coach and teacher (in GPA and going forward), and my responsibilities as a father and uncle, and someday a grandfather and a father-in-law.

There's a new realm of life and love here which is not only personally intriguing, but which my family and my community would benefit from if I were to step up to the possibilities, as my Mom did. It would be deeply gratifying to become a grand-dad who is as vital as my Unification Thought teacher, Rev. Moon, was in his 9th decade!