

## A Unification Church Parent Speaks On Personal Growth

Nora Spurgin

May 30, 1976

National Unification Church Parents' Conference in New York



Once in a while, I think about the fact that I'm a member, and my husband is a member of the Unification Church, and we're teaching our children a certain set of values. And we have no guarantee that those children, when they grow up, will not rebel against those values, too.

However, my husband and I are hoping that we can help to make this a better world, so that when our children grow up, they will have a better place in which to live. We feel that our values are good ones, so we understand very much, as parents, what you feel.

I also think of my own experience: I grew up in a very strict Mennonite home in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. My parents' greatest desire was that I would marry a Mennonite boy who lived next door! I have always felt that I have a very close relationship with God. All throughout my life I always prayed, "God, where do you want me to go next? What do you want me to do next?" Those prayers led me to the Unification Church.

I felt like everything that happened in my life prepared me for where I'm at now. I feel like my own Mennonite background and my strong faith really led me to this point. And yet my parents, of course, wouldn't think that. So I share with you also the pain that I feel in my heart because we don't share the same goals. But I still have to do what I feel is right, and they understand that, and they, too, want to do what's right. They're the kind of people who are pretty tolerant, and they're willing to let me do what I feel is right for my life.

I'd like to talk today about personal growth which I know is something that all of us are very much concerned about. In my studying, I once came across a quote by Freud. Freud said that, "To be able to love and to work is a healthy personality." I thought about that: It's so true! If you are motivated and happy, then you're able to work and able to be a productive person. But to be a productive person takes one more thing: To be able to love. When we have a capacity to love and to be loved and we're able to be a productive member of our society, then we should be a pretty normal, healthy person.

I was thinking about that in terms of some of the accusations that are made against the Unification Church members. They say all kinds of different things, but they always mention that we're happy and we're always talking about love. And we work so hard. Well, according to Freud's definition, that would be a pretty healthy person. I really think that our members are quite healthy people. Every once in a while I find some difficulties, but basically, I think we have a really healthy bunch of people. And they're your kids. One of the accusations is that we always take the cream of the crop, and I think we do. We have the cream of the crop.

Dr. Young Oon Kim, who was one of the first missionaries to America, once said, "To become a master of human relationships is one of the greatest goals in life." In thinking about that, it's so true! To become a master of human relationships means what? It means that you have developed the capacity to love. And if you can develop the capacity to love everyone, then we can have good marriages; we can have good relationships with other people; we can have good relationships with our children -- just good relationships in general. This affects, ultimately, our relationship with God. If we're able to develop the capacity to love, this is God's name. God is love. If we can master human relationships, and learn how to live with each other and love each other, this is one of the greatest things we can do.

I'd like to ask four questions.

Where is the place in a normal, healthy, happy, well-adjusted person, where is the place for faith, commitment, sacrifice, and living for a higher purpose: I feel personally that there is a place in life for each one of these aspects. They all, of course, have to do with religion, and this is what I'd like to talk about. People are talking about religious commitment and conversion experiences as being the next thing to brainwashing. So I'd like to talk about that a little bit.

First of all is there a place for faith in life? Certainly in the past, faith has been a very important part of our having vision for the future. We're not just talking about a faith in God -- but in man, faith in each other, faith in life in general. If we lose that faith, then there's no motivation to do anything. Part of the reason there's so much apathy today is that people have lost faith. I think basically we have lost faith in God; therefore we've lost faith in everything else. If we don't have faith, then there's no vision, there's no hope for the future, and there's no need to live. There's no purpose in life. We must have motivation in order to be happy. There's no reason to get up in the morning if there's nothing to get up for. We drift along, just sit back and keep away from life.

Haven't you ever gone to bed at night with the feeling that you can't wait to get up and get started the next

morning, when there's something you really want to get done? I get my satisfaction when I'm sewing... I love to sew! Whenever I'm making something, I hate to stop at night, and I can't wait to get up in the morning to finish it. I'm like that when I do something really creative, that I just love to do. I can't conceive of any better way than to live a life like that -- with a great deal of exuberance, faith, happiness, creativity, and desire to keep growing and learning. When we lose that motivation we have no reason to get up in the morning. We have no reason to do anything, even no reason to extend ourselves. If we stop extending ourselves, then we quickly become depressed. My cure for depression is expression. The more you give out, the more comes back to you.

One of the things that has come up in the news in recent months is the Patty Hearst case. I feel that a lot of the reason why we heard so much accusation about brainwashing is because of the Patty Hearst case. It made brainwashing a very popular term. In fact it made brainwashing a household term; everyone was talking about it. It was decided, however, that we can't blame anyone else for what we do. After that decision was made in Patty Hearst's case, I felt that the accusation of brainwashing became a naive one. I've talked to many professional people who said so, too.

I'd like to talk a little about the difference between brainwashing and conversion. First of all, brainwashing implies that you have to wash the brain or something. You have to take something away; you have to strip someone. So the whole concept of brainwashing involves stripping away and providing a substitute. Conversion is not stripping; it's adding to their lives. You give them something new. If that something new is so good, their life may change as a result.

That sort of thing happens in the Unification Church. People join the Church and they suddenly find motivation and vision, where they had lost faith. Now there's something to live for. Instead of staying in bed, suddenly there is something exciting in life. There's something to do, there's a whole world to live for. Therefore people's life-styles change rather drastically. But I don't think that it is because anybody sat down and deliberately, point by point, stripped someone of their old beliefs and tried to give them something new. It just simply is not the case.

I am a strong believer in each person taking personal responsibility for his life. I believe that whatever decision anybody makes, ultimately we are responsible and ultimately we don't make a decision we don't want to. For a while you may be convinced, but ultimately, you really don't do anything you don't want to do. Therefore, we have individual responsibility for every act, for everything we do. The difference is if you can really come to a point of closeness to God.

Let me put it this way: St. Paul once said you have to have a law written on your heart. I used to think about that; and it struck me one time as I was doing a paper on the concept of freedom, "Gee, to have a law written on your heart means you've incorporated the desires of God." Then those desires become your guide, your desires. If you no longer are working against anything, you feel one with yourself, one with God, and one with the universe. People who have a deep religious experience have an inner peace inside something that makes them feel one with the universe, one with God, one with something. There is no longer a struggle, a conflict. I interpret this to mean that you've got the law written upon your forehead. You've got to become one with the lawmaker, and who is the lawmaker? God, the creator of man. If we are made in the image of God, then we constantly long to become close to that person, that creator in whose image we are made. Therefore, I feel that the closer we can come to that, the more inner peace we have.

The second point is: Is there a place for commitment? I can tell you a little story about my own personal experience while I was working as a social worker. I had many friends who were young, married women who were working. They had husbands who also usually had good-paying jobs, and one of the things I noticed is that many of them really didn't want to make a full commitment to their marriage. Each one had their own paycheck, their own car, their own checking account, and each paid for half of the rent and half of the food. This is the trend among young married people, even to the extent where they really don't want to have children because they aren't sure of their marriage. When you have children, of course, you need commitment.

I really think the whole concept of commitment is passé today. People don't want to be committed to anything. They want to be free to say no to everything. I walked by a bookstand and there were four paperbacks having to deal with how to say no, how to refuse, how not to be persuaded, etc. People really don't want to be committed to anything. It's not the mode today to be committed. However, if you think of what makes your life good, what makes your life great, isn't it the way in which you commit yourself to something? As long as you reserve yourself a little bit, nothing happens. But when you commit yourself, something happens because you become invested, and you receive something from it.

I remember when I first got married. Actually I wasn't so young when I got married, so I had been independent for a long time, and all of a sudden I had to share everything. And I remember it takes a lot of trust to put your life into somebody else's hands. But I realized when I did how wonderful it was, because I was no longer just me. Somebody really loved me enough to take care of me. That person loves me and he will never exploit me.

The same thing is true of God. We are afraid to commit ourselves to God because we are afraid God might exploit us. But if God loves us, He won't exploit us. One of the things that people are a little bit scared of in the Unification Church, is that people actually make a strong commitment -- a commitment

which changes their lives. Because of their commitment, they also feel a certain joy, and they receive something from that commitment. I personally think it takes a healthy person, a mature person to make a commitment. I think if you are very insecure you're going to have more trouble making a commitment. That your sons and daughters have made the commitment speaks well of them. That doesn't mean that people don't join the Unification Church for other, lesser reasons. However, in general I believe the young people who join really are making a commitment to a higher purpose.

The third thing I would like to talk about is sacrifice. Again, this is certainly out of vogue today. Who wants to make any sacrifices? Yet, those things that bring us goodness in life are the times when we have to give up something if we are to receive it. To me, sacrifice is not being a martyr, but sacrifice is making an investment for future fulfillment. We have to learn to delay our gratification. If I were to gratify myself immediately, and just go out and get whatever I wanted, then I would certainly receive a much lesser kind of fulfillment. Certainly the people who have made great contributions to our society are those who have had to make a certain kind of sacrifice, who have had to give up certain things in order to get to a point where they have a greater contribution. I have a very good friend who is an Aramaic Bible scholar. He is about 80 years old. I remember he said to me, "I never got married because I committed my life to translating the Bible from Aramaic into English." He had spent 50 years doing this. "Now I'm lonely, and I wish I had married," But, he said, "I could never have accomplished what I did, so I can't regret it." It's true. He could never have done the work he did with a wife and children. That's one of the greatest sacrifices anyone could ever make. Yet he made it, for the sake of bringing the whole world something which he had to offer. We feel that the sacrifices we make are small, compared to what it will enable us to bring to the whole world, the kind of contribution which we'll make.

There's one more thing I'd like to talk about: Can we live for a higher purpose in life, a purpose beyond ourselves? This is what makes life worthwhile -- to be able to live for a purpose that's higher than ourselves. Just living for ourselves doesn't make it worthwhile to extend yourself.

Before I joined the Unification Church I worked as a volunteer taking care of children in a nursery. We really worked hard; we took good care of those children from early in the morning 'til late at night. I used to get so tired sometimes and I'd say, "If I got paid for this job, I would never do it." I never could have been compensated for it with money. But because I was doing this as a volunteer, I was receiving something beyond a paycheck. I said, "I need to sacrifice for these children because, if I don't then who will? If I have only made their lives a little bit brighter, it's worth it." That's just an illustration of submitting to a higher goal.

At our science conference last fall, one of the professors said something that truly struck me. I'd like to share that with you.

He said, "We as scientists cannot continue to develop technology unless we have a world that's capable of receiving this technology we develop." That's so true. We can't continue to develop a more advanced way of life technologically because we need morals to give direction to the development. If we don't have those morals, then everything we develop can be used destructively as well as constructively. At this point, we are at the mercy of man's reason. We're at the mercy of the morals of people in other countries. We can't go on like this or we'll blow ourselves up.

In order to continue to advance, we must have a set of morals. This is what we want to bring to men -- a set of morals that can make one cooperative world, which can then receive the technology and the advancement that can come. We feel that God could give us so much more development, so much more advancement, so much more comfort and joy and happiness. Man just has to change his heart. If man can change his heart, there's no end to what man can do. There's no end to man's creativity.

We are really trying to make this an international world by starting as one international family. One of the very healthy aspects about our movement, I feel, is the international aspect. We live very closely with people from many different countries and discover little nuances of differences in cultures -- the little things that you'd never notice except by daily living with each other. We feel the Church already is making a foundation for the future world.

I really want all the members of the Unification Church to have this ultimate opportunity for personal growth. I feel that we have so many rich experiences. We're in a situation where we can have the greatest wealth of human relationships. And to me, that's where it's at. Sometimes people say, "Well, we hear that you never watch TV, you never go to the movies, and you never do this and that." But most of the time -- who wants to sit in a room alone and watch TV, when there's so much excitement going on? There's so much life! Right there. People are like novels, you know? So you don't really need to go to a movie.

Anyway, we do go to the movies. But, I say this because rich life experiences are going on constantly around us. That's what makes the Unification Church members look happy and excited and exuberant -- because we have a purpose in life, because we have faith, because we have made a commitment, because we have a higher purpose to live for, because we are making some sacrifices for that higher purpose.