

Observations on the Unification Church from a Mother Who Is a Member

Genie Ennis
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It is quite common for people who hear the Divine Principle to desire to commit themselves to full-time work in the Unification Church.

However, when Genie Ennis was introduced to the Church two and a half years ago, she already had responsibilities as a wife and mother of three children to consider.

"But the great thing about the Unification Church is that you can love God as much as you want and still have a family. I just had to learn the delicate balance between serving God and serving my family," Genie says. "Once I started applying the Principle to my marriage, I knew I could make it.

Every day I learn more. And the Principle is showing me the way I can help bring my husband and my children closer to God."

Her husband of 14 years Genie describes as an idealist who has found his own way of serving as a Marine Corps career officer who served twice in Vietnam. "But he does not have the same awareness of God that I have," so Genie admits he sometimes finds it hard to understand her desire for a life of commitment to the Church.

At first, she says, it just seemed totally radical to him, "but that was partly because I got so enthusiastic that I wasn't completely fulfilling my responsibilities at home. But as I came to understand the Divine Principle more deeply, I realized that my words and deeds were not always connected. Now, Andy recognizes that I'm really pushing myself to be a good wife and mother as well as an active member of the Church. The Principle has kept my marriage alive. I know now that the totality of my commitment centers around my husband and my family as well as the Church."

Genie had been a conscientious Catholic, "as involved as you can get." The hardest part was explaining to her children why all of a sudden one week they went to a Catholic Church and the next week to the Unification Church. But after the first shock of unaccustomed strangeness, "they accepted everything I told them. Eventually I want them to make their own conscious choice about the Church, but for now they attend Sunday School and I can see the changes that have taken place in them.

"The first time my youngest son went to Sunday School (he was four at the time) he was taught the story of Adam and Eve. That night, instead of having his father tell him a story, he said, 'Dad, I want to tell you a story.' And he told him the story from Genesis concluding, 'Isn't that the saddest story you ever heard?' It is this kind of understanding of God's heart that he has gained through the Unification Church.

"My oldest son has experienced a similar understanding of God through his prayers and close association with the members of the Church. He writes poetry and several of his poems reveal the inner spiritual growth which has taken place through his study of the Divine Principle. Both he and my middle son have attended not only children's workshops, but adult workshops -- where they have actively participated in the study and presentation of the Divine Principle. Somehow a child's faith can become the inspiration that we callous adults lack. And more and more I can say that their faith is more real and living than it had ever been before."

What seemed like an abrupt change in Genie's religion to her husband and children was only because they were unaware of the year of intense spiritual searching that had preceded her discovery of the Unification Church.

"In 1972, during my husband's second tour in Vietnam, I was living alone with my three children in a Virginia suburb. I began to look at the values I had been brought up with more clearly, and many of them did not hold up. I started questioning many aspects of my faith, even the existence of God and of organized religions. I continued to attend Mass every Sunday, but didn't feel anything.

"I also had a sense of anticipation that something was going to happen. I felt that my marriage was a preparation for something else, that perhaps God was calling me for a mission. But then I thought that if this were true He would show me the way.

"I was involved in a lot of activities -- PTA, scouting, teaching catechism, even feminism but nothing seemed to absorb my entire life. I began asking myself, If I were living at the time of Jesus and God asked me to make a total commitment, what would I do? Could I leave everything -- and by this I felt more of a

philosophical abandonment -- and follow? I prayed and analyzed myself honestly and decided that I would be willing to take a chance if God called me.

"I did a lot of reading during this time, too -- about spiritual phenomena and life after death. I stayed up all night to read *The Exorcist* and concluded that Satan was a reality which we all had to confront and overcome, but I knew that the spiritual armor I had would not be enough to do it. "That year pulled me away from the way I had thought all my life (I had an all-Catholic educational background, including college) and prepared me to accept something new. I had a great sense of returning to the essence of religion -- and a simplicity of faith.



"In April 1973 I made a casual telephone call to my sister-in-law who is like a real sister to me. My brother answered instead. He was very anxious to talk about a new religious group which he and Nancy had discovered called the Unification Church. As he talked I could sense that I was receiving more than a message about a new church -- my heart literally stopped dead -- I knew that the importance of this information could change my life.

"My brother described the members enthusiastically stating that they had the joy of the early Christians. I knew that this was the group that God had been preparing me for. Later, when I learned the Principle in depth, all of my questions were resolved. I could see that God had carefully prepared me through my period of doubt and study -- He finally fulfilled my life's desire to serve Him in the Unification Church.

"The Catholic Church had become sterile for me. My yearning to know God on a deeper level was not fulfilled. By placing myself in the position of wanting to know Him, God led me directly to the place I am now.

"The Unification Church has given me God. Every day I think, 'I can't believe it! I am so grateful for what God has given me.' My fears are gone. Once you've made that leap of faith, you feel you are in God's hands and that He is working through you. It is an ongoing process of eternal value and consequence. What you fear you are losing seems like trivia compared to what you are gaining on a daily basis... the ability to know God and to live with Him forever."

At first it was frustrating for Genie to want to be able to give so much but not be able to go out fundraising and witnessing like full-time members. All she could do was come to services on Sunday. The handful of married members at that time wanted to do so much more but were restricted in the time they could give because of their families and jobs.

"During this time I kept thinking, 'when God's ready, He'll show me the way.' I never got disillusioned. "I was patient and, sure enough, God fulfilled my desires. I had been working for two years in my brother-in-law's real estate firm as the office and property manager. I was ready for a change and was in the process of job-hunting when I learned that the Church was looking for a manager for the Ginseng Tea House (a Unification Church health food restaurant serving lunch to the embassy staff officials and others who work in the busy DuPont Circle area of Washington, D.C.). I had always loved the Tea House and envied the members who worked there.

"Besides I love a challenge. I love taking on an almost impossible situation. When I was approached about the job of manager, I knew that it would be this kind of challenge because I had no prior restaurant experience. But working fulltime with other Church members and married members eventually balanced out my inexperience. We set conditions to create unity among our staff of volunteers. Every day we begin our work with a prayer meeting.

As we go about our daily work, we try to create an atmosphere of loving and serving. When I am short-handed, which is a chronic problem, God always sends someone. When you get in a position of total dependency on God, He is there. I have the constant feeling that God is helping me. I've never grown so much as through this job.

"There is a job for everyone who seeks to do God's Will. Reverend Moon says that happiness comes from finding our own unique way of giving. To me the opportunity to be a mother and a wife and to serve with a fulltime commitment has been fulfilled. This is it for me."