

A United Direction for the Media in the New Millennium

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Given on True Father's behalf

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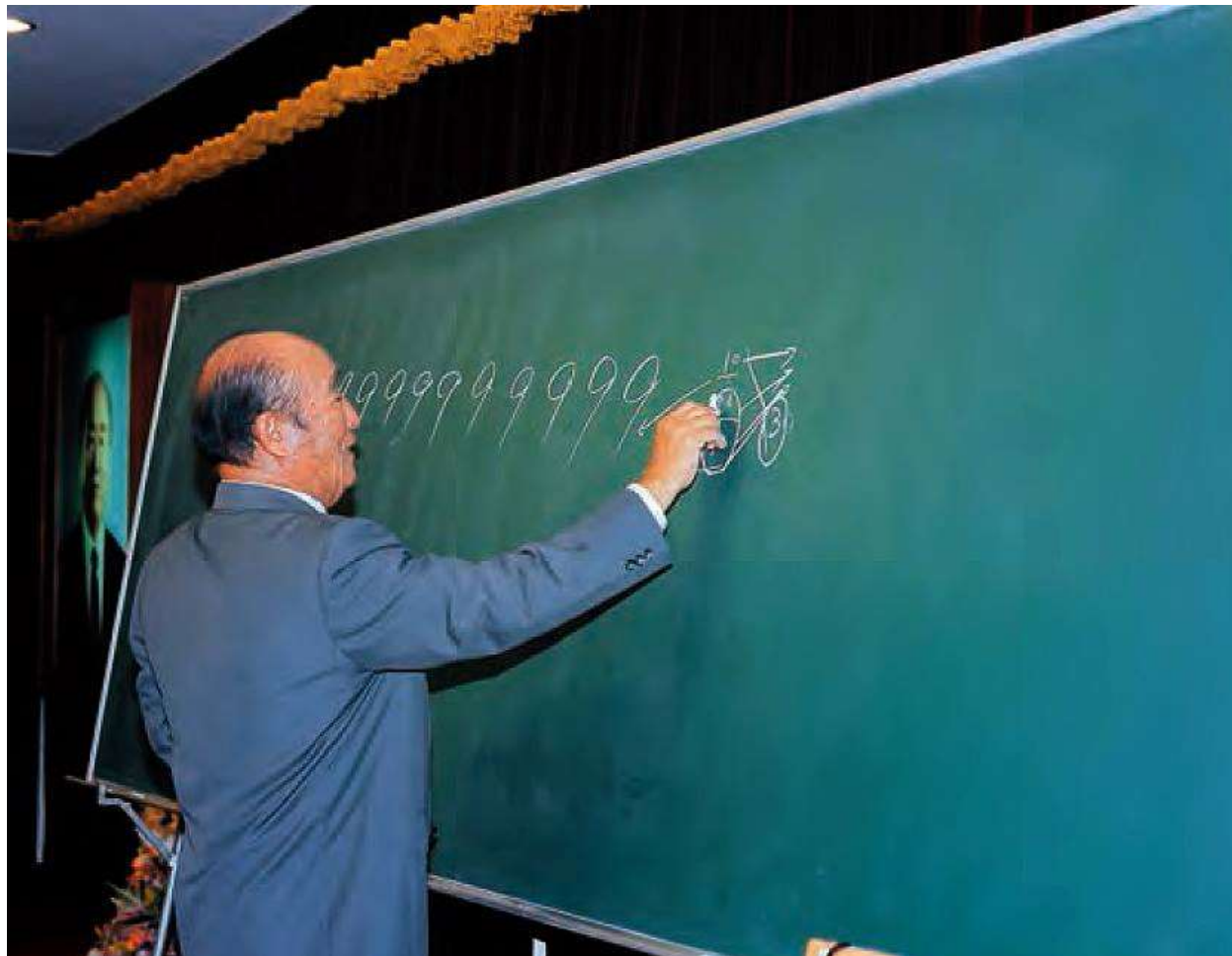


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Most respected present and former heads of state, leaders in the field of media, ladies and gentlemen:

We have all taken our first steps into a new age at the beginning of this new millennium. Only a decade ago, humanity was living in fear in the midst of the Cold War era. At the time, the entire world faced the threat of the annihilating power of nuclear weapons.

In the present day, however, barriers have been broken down in almost all fields, including politics, economics and culture, and the world now is transforming into a single global community. Through the development of mass media, which has collapsed time and space, we are experiencing a wider range of changes than ever before in human history. The relationship of the individual with the world, and the world with the individual, is closer than at any time in the past.

For example, the Internet, as you well know, is changing the way in which we obtain news and information. It allows anyone to convey the most trivial opinion to the entire world. In the same way, important ideas and global issues appear on everyone's computer screen.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the power of electricity was the decisive factor in the development of science and technology. Nowadays it is the speed and capacity of the computer, and our access to a vast highway of information, that drives such development. The amount of information you can obtain in one day through the different forms of media -- radio, television, newspapers and the Internet -- is immeasurable. The problem is whether humanity has sufficient will and ability to digest all this information, and to use the power to convey it for a good purpose.

The world is overflowing with news and information, and at the same time we are witnessing a trend toward the expansion of commercialization. Information and images are being sold on the market as commercial goods. Rather than evaluating the ethical, social and moral influence of these "goods," their*producers emphasize marketability, that is, what consumers will pay for their information or images. We need a critical eye in order to rightly assess the influence of the information highway. We

need to look beyond the external aspects of this era's amazing development of science and technology and focus on the internal aspects, on what is being, or can be, conveyed through the media.

We need to examine, from a more essential and candid standpoint, how the information age is affecting the human mind and spirit, and evaluate whether it is a positive or negative influence. Now that we have ushered in the era of the global village, the time has come for us to ask ourselves what kind of media we desire. In the present age, we need to clearly perceive the responsibility of the media from a historical vantage point.

Let us reflect on the influence of the media on the essential aspects of human life: on our institutions, our families, our nations and our world. The core problem is who dominates the transmission of information. At present, the forces that utilize the ultramodern information technology most actively are those of commercial advertising, political propaganda and pop culture.

The fact that information technology has developed by leaps and bounds does not mean that we have become better people, or that our societies have become more sound. Though there are positive aspects in what has emerged, there also are highly negative aspects.

Parents often witness their children neglecting their studies and chatting all night online or accessing the Internet, which can be a very immoral and sexually corrupt environment. Violent and sensual recreational videos are found in abundance in the popular culture. They promote a world far removed from reality and make viewers insensitive to the pain and suffering of real people. They even make it impossible for viewers to engage in the original act of love in healthy relationships, as God intended.

In the twenty-first century humanity will face problems that are more fundamental and, in some ways, even more dangerous than those of the Cold War era. These problems will no longer involve confrontation between East and West; instead they will be a worldwide conflict of values. In short, there will be a global war between morality and immorality.

Excessive commercialization is already having a negative impact on our basic human dignity. It makes it difficult for God to be with us in our lives. The media is attempting to uphold its own standard of morality by emphasizing justice and fairness. However, those in the media are exposed to the temptation of succumbing to those with authority and power, who control the competitive media market and pursue their own business interests, with no regard for moral values.

Unfortunately, the contemporary social and cultural environment is already morally corrupt. The dignity of the family is being destroyed; in some countries whole families are being devastated due to the AIDS epidemic; in every nation on earth people are being driven into the swamp of suffering and despair.

If the mass media does not recognize its social responsibility to help avert these problems by upholding moral norms, how can it prevent our societies, especially our youth, from self-destruction? How will such blind mass media impact issues such as drug abuse, the increasing divorce rate, family breakdown, the AIDS problems, illicit sex and so forth? You already know the answer to my question without my saying it.

Modern communication technology expands our freedom of speech. The Internet turns everyone into a publisher. This may sound strange, but nowadays we have so much freedom of expression that we are drowning in it. Therefore, how we exercise our freedom of expression is a vital issue.

The main theme of this conference is, "A United Direction for the Media in the New Millennium." I believe that among you there will be different opinions with regard to this subject, since you may think that freedom of speech means there is no need for a central principle to guide the media. However, what I mean by a united direction is that we need to consider the quality of the information we are disseminating, rather than striving for quantity for commercial purposes. That is, we must consider our responsibility to promote correct social norms based on human dignity, true families and faith-based values, rather than striving to expand our business in the name of free speech.

The value and dignity of an individual rise and shine all the more on the stable foundation of a true family. The family is the best place for a man and a woman to learn to respect each other and to live together in harmony. It is there that people learn about true love -- which, with respect to family, is the most important factor in life.

Our parents and our brothers and sisters are the primary influences on our perception of values with regard to the world. The family is the first and best school for learning about love. The family is indeed the cornerstone of an ideal society and a peaceful world. That is why the media need to respect and protect the value of the true family.

A society may be affluent and free, and it may create an environment wherein every family can have

computers with fiber-optic Internet access. However, if this society cannot prevent the breakdown of its families, it is not a sound society that can bring happiness to its citizens.

Where is the basis of human dignity? Humankind was created by God, originally as His children. This is the reason we commonly call Him our Heavenly Father. And our goal is to grow up as children that resemble Him, inheriting His divinity. When God-centered individuals come together as husband and wife, they form families that are also God-centered. When such families come together, they form the true human family in which everyone comes to inherit the life, love and lineage of God, our True Parent.

In human society the role of religion is important in that it advances the relationship between people and God. In this regard, having a solid faith is vital. Whatever religion you believe in, at its core is the relationship between you and God. When, through religion, humankind becomes one with the absolute, unique, eternal and unchanging God, our internal value also becomes absolute, unique, eternal and unchanging. That is why religion is indispensable in protecting the dignity of humankind.

In this regard, the freedom to believe, the life of faith, and activities based on faith are the pillars upon which the ideal society is built. Such religious values will guide humanity to the world of God's true love through the practice of living for the sake of others. When all religions practice true love with faith as their basis, the world's peoples will come together as brothers and sisters under God.

The World Media Association, which I founded in 1978, has made efforts to promote freedom of the press in regions where it is suppressed, and has contributed toward the responsible use of that freedom where it is guaranteed. I hope that during this conference you will all participate in coming up with guidelines for the responsible conduct of the media in today's new environment.

Outstanding members of the press have sometimes displayed great courage in conveying truth, enlightening people about what is important in human affairs, and endorsing sincere efforts to realize world peace. Through your efforts as members of the media, you can ensure that the future will be a time in which the absolute, unique, eternal and unchanging dignity of humanity will be upheld; in which true families will thrive; and in which world peace will ultimately be realized.

From this viewpoint, today is a very significant day. I hope that you leaders in the field of media, from nations across the world, will engrave what I have said tonight deep in your hearts. The mission of constructing sound families, ideal societies and a peaceful world was not given to me alone. God desires that you also take part in this great enterprise.

In the information age, no matter where you are, it is possible for you to communicate instantly with anyone, anywhere in the world. However, in order to fulfill God's Will for you, your nation and the world, you need to have a sense of responsibility about the values your communications convey, and the influence they have in the world. Moreover, you need to be bold in asserting true values in your own life, as an example to others. If you do so, you will return glory to God and bring hope and happiness to humanity.

I expect that your serious efforts at this conference will bear wonderful results. We already have secured the technology necessary for effectively conveying all kinds of news and information to the world. It is my hope that you now will take an interest in the values of the heart and the original nature of true human beings, and connect with God as you make use of this technology.

May God's blessing be with you and with your families. Thank you.