

September 2026 Golden Age Newsletter

Richard Buessing and Carol Pobanz
September 2, 2026



Golden Age Newsletter

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Hello Goldies, this month's newsletter contains An inspirational Nudge from Heaven, Unification Thought for the Future, a memoir by former UC President Tyler Hendricks, two creative short stories, a celebration of RYS's 40th Anniversary, a thoughtful reflection on happiness, and—just for fun—a thought about ruffly pasta! Finally a repeat of Bob and Carol's memoir announcements and request for articles. Enjoy!

This Month's Message

An Undeniable Nudge from Heaven



by Donna Avey

Do you ever receive an undeniable nudge from Heaven?

I meet with a group of Business and Professional Women whom I have loved as sisters since I came to Alaska in 1989. One of them sent the chat group a devotional, “Let’s Play Ball,” written and published by Judy Ann Young through her #Judyannspeaks and “HeartSpace.” VIEW BELOW

HeartSpace #120, titled “Let’s Play Ball,” emphasizes remaining coachable and asserts that believing there is nothing left to learn causes one to sit out the game of life. Judy Ann Young notes that God continuously provides new levels of mastery and purpose, urging individuals to get off the sidelines rather than observing from the bleachers.

As I face each new physical challenge of aging, I pray to understand how to keep doing God’s work—my calling—at the same time. The push I felt in this devotional is to keep showing up and stepping out, despite how uncomfortable it may be.

Each of us has a community we have connected with over the course of our lifetimes. Yes, it may be 50 years since I used to street witness in New York or Washington, D.C., with a member of the New Hope Singers for a God Bless America Rally, but I am still connected in heart.

The message Heaven gave me is: “Do it. Renew and reinvigorate your determination. Each day, joyfully share the greatest gift humanity has ever been given—that the blessing of True Parents, making the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth, is a reality.”

Loudly and kindly, I heard: “Open your mouth. Testify! Keep doing it! And be joyful.”

Maybe this will speak to your heart, too.

Let’s do our utmost to bring in many “good plays” for Heaven.

#120 Let’s Play Ball

The moment you believe you have nothing left to learn is the moment you begin sitting out the game of life.

I love learning—especially when the subject is something I already think I’m pretty good at, like cooking, motorcycle riding or storytelling. Because no matter how skilled we become, there is always another level of mastery waiting for us.

Recently, I coached a young couple. As I asked questions they had never considered, I watched their faces light up with one “aha” moment after another. After they left, I realized what made the session so refreshing: they were coachable.

When I study the greats, I notice they all share that quality. Michael Jordan and Muhammad Ali were among the very best, yet neither believed talent made coaching unnecessary. They understood that even greatness needs guidance.

A good coach tracks your progress, holds you accountable and helps you see the blind spots you cannot see for yourself. And many of us don’t recognize a blind spot until after the collision—when all we can say is, “I never saw that coming.”

Being coachable means remaining open at the top—humble enough to recognize that God can still teach us something through a person, a challenge, a new skill or an unexpected experience.

We don’t grow old simply because the years pass. We grow old when we stop being curious, stop asking questions and become more committed to being comfortable than to becoming.

Life is not stagnant or etched in stone. Spirit is forever creating, expanding and inviting us forward. When we resist learning, the world doesn’t stop evolving—we simply get left behind defending the way things used to be.

No matter your age, there is tremendous value in learning something new, developing a hobby, taking a class or working with a coach. Growth in one area often awakens possibilities in every other area. It stimulates the mind, strengthens confidence and reminds us that we are still becoming.

But once we choose the sidelines, it becomes easy to criticize the people courageous enough to remain on the field. Before long, we’re sitting in the nosebleed section of our own lives—too far away to experience the joy, movement and purpose of the game.

As long as there is breath in your body, God is not finished with you. There is still something to learn, something to offer and another level of yourself waiting to be called forward. So lace up your shoes. Find a coach. Reenter the arena—and let’s play ball.

Because God did not breathe life into you so you could spend it judging the game from the bleachers. You were given breath, gifts and purpose because you were born to get on the field—and leave your mark on the game.

The clock is still running. Your purpose is still calling. And the game isn't over until God says it is.

Now get off the bench—and play like Heaven drafted you. And so it is. Amen.

**** #Judyannspeaks

Unification Thoughts

Offering Into The Settlement Era

Unification Thoughts - September 2026

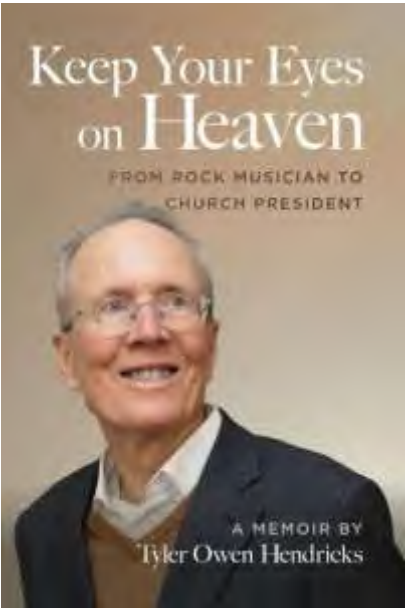
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This time, there's another very closely related idea which is worth serious consideration. It's from the Principle and it's directly relevant . . .

[To read more, please click here!](#)

Arts and Culture

A Memoir



by Dr. Tyler Hendricks

I hope you are doing well. I have written my memoir, *Keep Your Eyes On Heaven: From Rock Musician to Church President*. Earlier this year I published a pre-edition in Europe, through KANDO. Comments from readers in Europe introduce the book far better than I can

[To read more, please click here!](#)

Advice from God's Friend in Manila



By Larry Moffitt

SanViejo@gmail.com

Anyone who is one in heart with God is one in heart with everyone else who is one in heart with God.

I was in Manila fighting sin. My own, of course, as always. But that's not why I went. My purpose in going to the Philippines was to look after some details related to an upcoming international conference—logistics stuff, hotels, catering, ground transportation.

[To read more, please click here!](#)

God Whispers to Me



by Robert Beebe

God whispers to me. It started one morning not long ago as I lay in bed. It never happened before, but that morning I clearly heard a voice whispering to me as I was waking up, or maybe it was the voice itself that woke me up. It said, “Don’t be afraid, Tanya. I’m always with you.”

[To read more, please click here!](#)

History Bytes

Congratulations RYS for 40 Years of Service



Congratulatory Remarks by Carol Pobanz

As John Gehring, the International Director of RYS, for many years, has often pointed out, RYS has been built upon two essential components.

- The first is the vertical dimension—developing God's Heart (or by whatever name you may refer to the Divine): the heart of unselfish love that inspires, motivates, and gives purpose to our actions

[To read more, please click here!](#)

Testimonies, Tributes and Thoughts

Little Things

by Christine Libon

In this life, while big things may be unattainable, the little things can often bring us much contentment. Small things that cater to one's personal needs are not frivolous. For me, it is putting a fresh coat of white paint on the window sills, planning a window box full of brightly colored portulaca/purslanes for next season, cleaning a dirty spot from the carpeted stairs, tidying up the bed with a crisp, clean topsheet, improving my appearance by having a front tooth repaired, splurging on a pair of pink-toned dangle earrings, wearing a loose-fitting 100% cotton summer dress, or reading an enjoyable novel.

I hope you, too, indulge in some little things which can make a big difference by uplifting your mood. Take loving care.



Health and Recipe

Mafaldine



Submitted by Christine Libon

While grocery shopping at a store that specializes in Italian foods, I came across a pasta I had never seen or heard of, named Mafaldine. Sure, pasta is pasta; it’s

always made of the same ingredients, right? But, curious as I have been since birth, I wanted to try it.

Little did I know what fun eating lay ahead. I actually laughed as I ate the first mouthful ... because of the “mouth-feel!” I wouldn’t say the ruffled edges tickled, but they definitely stimulated my tongue, giving me a *never-before* experience. One might imagine it similar to eating a new critter and, for this reason I think children will either love it or hate it.

So now I had to know the origin of its name and by whom it was created. Thank you, Google. In 1902, Neapolitan pasta makers named this pasta to honor the birth of Princess Mafalda of Savoy, second daughter of King Victor Emmanuel III of Italy. The shape was adapted from an older local pasta “curled fettucelle.” The ruffled edges of this ribbon-like pasta resembled the intricate laces and frills on dresses worn by royalty. Mafaldine is also known as “reginette” or little queen, further emphasizing its royal inspiration.

What sauce? This type of pasta holds various types of sauces well, such as those with bits of meat, cherry tomatoes, or shrimp and seafood, even creamy sauces. I simply coated mine with a bit of butter, salt and basil.

Buon Appetito ♡



Bulletin Board



A Memoir by Robert Beebe

Preface

“This is the way you must live: feeling God’s presence with you in every action, feeling that God is going before you.”

Rev. Sun Myung Moon

When one decides to write a memoir or autobiography of one’s life, that person is confronted with the question: Why? Why am I writing this? For whom am I writing it? And why would anyone, among the billions of people living in the world, be interested in reading my life story and reflections? As I set to writing, I wonder: who’s going to

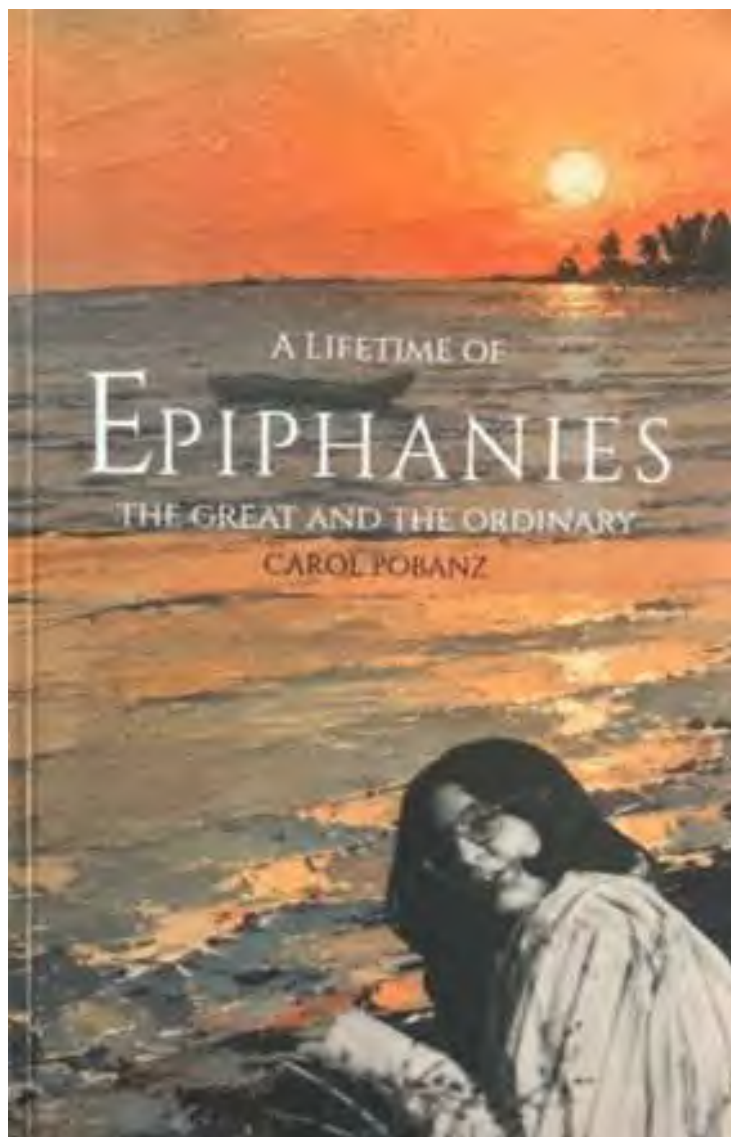
read this stuff? What should I talk about—mundane things about my daily life or high ideals? Is there a connection between the two?

To purchase the book, please click here!

<https://www.amazon.com/World-Peace-Through-Ideal-Families/dp>

Epiphanies

(a memoir by Carol Pobanz)



Epiphanies is a collection of reflective stories of pivotal moments that shaped my life and deepened my understanding of God. The narrative carries me from the post-World War II religious years in America, to the spiritual searching of the 1960s and 1970s, and into my life as an adherent of one of the many spiritual organizations that emerged in the United States during the second half of the twentieth century—the Unification Movement.

To buy the book click here:

https://www.lulu.com/search?sortBy=RELEVANCE&page=1&q=a+lifetime+of+epiphanies&pageSize=10&adult_audience_rating=00

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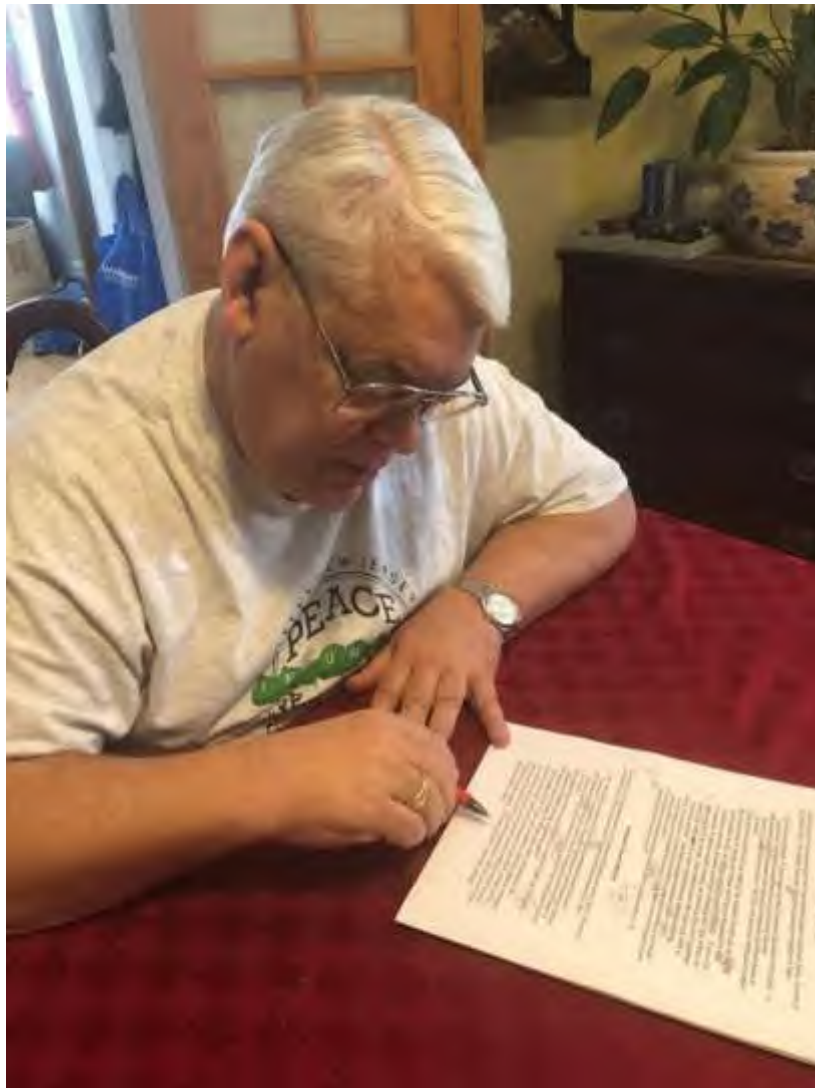


Photo credit: Carol Pobanz

The Golden Age Newsletter began as a small Clifton Senior newsletter about 3 years ago.

ARTICLE GUIDELINES

Purpose: The Golden Age newsletter has been created as a means to keep our elder community connected to one another. Articles are not in any way meant to proselytize or push a point of view.

It is a place to share God's Love – what is positive in our life as a result of finding our Heavenly Parent and True Parents.

Motto: "This is the Dawning of our New Age" – We are always in the process of redefining ourselves as we grow older and as we add experiences to our lives. Therefore, we must consider how God can use us even when we may be decreasing in our physical capabilities.

The e-newsletter is broken down into eight sections:

1. A Featured Message of Inspiration – Helping others to feel hope and inspiration for the establishment of CIG.
2. "Unification Thoughts" – any educational article on the "Fifth Realm of Heart" – Grandparents' heart
3. History Byte – A short article on a positive memory, a funny or affectionate story about experiences in the church with True Parents or with brothers and sisters or an article about the development/experience of helping to develop one of True Parents' providential projects or events.
4. Arts and Culture – A sharing about one's talents, hobbies or interests and how this relates to sharing God's love (to family, community, nation or world).
5. Tributes and Testimonies- a personal testimony of one or more life learning experiences or a Tribute to a spouse, friend, or leader
6. Health – An article that relates to health (physical or mental), possibly providing a link to an article you think might be interesting or important to other seniors.
7. I Love being a Grandparent – stories about grandparenting or about things to do with grandchildren
8. Recipe – Preferably a healthy recipe along with 2-3 paragraphs about what makes it a good or memorable recipe.
9. Book Review – report on a book that inspires thoughts toward a world of peace
10. Bulletin board – reports on personal activities, or request help on a project

*Did someone forward this to you? Subscribe to the Golden Age
Newsletter [here!](#)*

Offering Into The Settlement Era

Unification Thoughts - September 2026

Back in June, there was a [post](#) that opened with lyrics from a song called *Barrytown* which was followed by an explanation of how the song was shaped by an idea in Godism's Theory of Art.

This time, there's another very closely related idea which is worth serious consideration. It's from the Principle and it's directly relevant in this post-Foundation Day, CIG, Settlement Era, when Heaven passes responsibility to us to pioneer the model for all to see. There's a lot that's already been said on this topic of recalibrating to life in this new era (for example [here](#)) but for good measure, here are three meaningful quotes to represent the injunction:

"... do not act like wild olive trees. **Take the seed of the true olive tree and bear its fruit wherever you take root in the world. ... manifesting God's ideal of creation...**" (1990.05.24)

- Cheon Seong Gyeong, Book 12, Chap. 2

"*Cheon Il Guk* is the **original world having nothing to do with the Fall**, the world that God **envisioned according to His ideal of creation...** . The **final destination** toward which we are advancing..." (2003.12.10)

- Cheon Seong Gyeong, Book 12, Chap. 2

"... This is the age of the realm of the Fourth Adam^[i]. It is ... the **age of restoration in a natural way.**" (1999.10.10)

- Chambumo Gyeong, Book 12, Chap. 3

When we read these passages—and many others like them in the Holy Books—we can realize that the Settlement Era is the time for us to *manifest God's original hopes* for our lives, as it was to be *before the human fall*, and as it is to be *after Foundation Day*, when the beginning of the new era was begun. In sum,

we are to restore that original world “in a **natural way**”, that is, according to the **original way of life**.

With those quotes in mind, let’s get to the core of this article. We’ll look more closely at the principle that guided a major part of our lives.

In the *Exposition of the Divine Principle*, we first encountered it in Part II, Section 1 as *The Principle of Restoration Through Indemnity*. There (*Exposition of the Divine Principle*, p. 177), it is explained that indemnity requires “Acts of restitution or compensation” (as expressed in Exod. 21:23–24: “life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth”). So indemnity is not simple or easy; it is strict, usually difficult and even painful (ibid., p. 178).

The mechanics of it involve rebuilding two broken but deeply fundamental foundations: one of “Faith” and one of “Substance”. Part 2 of the Principle details at length that rebuilding is an arduous process that individuals—especially chosen ones—go through, not once, but repeatedly. And in our case, we lived it all throughout the 40-year *Wilderness Era*, which coincided with the middle decades of our lives. Most of our children were born into that era and so they experienced it as well.

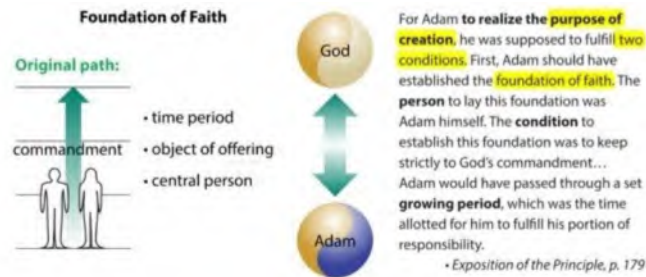
But now, in this *post-Foundation Day*, *CIG Settlement Era*, we’re to readjust our focus back onto the **original** nature of these two foundations. Let’s begin by *carefully* rereading this passage on page 179 of the Principle:

“...we must first understand how Adam was to have realized the purpose of creation and how he failed to do it, because the condition of indemnity is made by reversing the course of the deviation from the original path.”

Taking note of that phrase “reversing the course of deviation from the original path”, the important question then becomes: *What exactly is this “original path”?*

The answer is further down that page, which states that the **original** purpose of the two conditions was “For Adam to realize the purpose of **Creation**”:

“For Adam to realize the purpose of creation, he was supposed to fulfill two conditions. First, Adam should have established the foundation of faith. The person to lay this foundation was Adam himself. The condition to establish this foundation was to keep strictly to God’s commandment not to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. In fulfilling this condition, Adam would have passed through a **set growing period**, which was the time allotted for him to fulfill his portion of responsibility.”



– Exposition of the Divine Principle, p. 179

In other words, as he was growing up in the Garden **before** the human fall, Adam was to firmly establish his **Foundation of Faith**, proving his trustworthiness before his Heavenly Parent. He was the central person; he would offer his obedience to the warning to “not eat”; and he would do it consistently and repeatedly throughout his **growing period**. It was a gradual spiritual path “upward”, that he could ideally complete within the first 21 years of his life.

And based on Abonim’s many words about *original* life (just one example is [here](#)), this applies not only to a single commandment forbidding *one evil thing*, but to a heartfelt parental desire embracing every **good thing** Adam did in his youth—most especially those things that Adam *was gifted in* and that he *really enjoyed doing well!* He could thus demonstrate—despite his immersion in the powerful excitement of such things—that he had faithfully practiced and finally mastered keeping God with him at all times; it would simply be second nature to him. He could prove not only that *he had faith* in his Heavenly Parent, but—even more critically—that his *Heavenly Parent could have faith* in him!

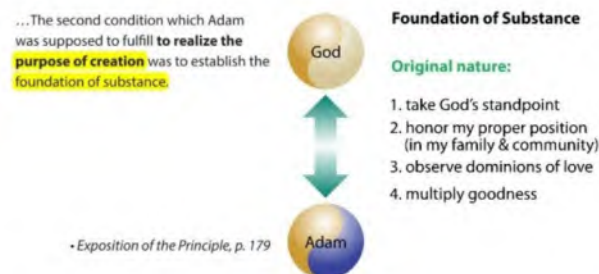
So today, in the Settlement Era, a youth repeatedly practicing that throughout his or her “growth stage” (i.e., ages 7–14), and then continuing with intention throughout his or her “completion stage”, would create an increasingly stronger trust bond between Heavenly Parent and himself or herself. Going back to the opening quotes of this article, it’s what Abonim means when He talks about “*manifesting God’s ideal of creation*” and restoring this world “*in a natural way*”.

A great example of this is the old film *Chariots of Fire*. In case you’ve forgotten, it’s the true story of a missionary son whom God gifted with such extraordinary speed that he earned a place on England’s team for the 1924 Olympics in Paris. He and his sister were planning to return to their mission country when his Olympic opportunity suddenly intervened. His sister was distraught, so he assured her that he believed in God’s missionary purpose for his life. But he added “...God also made me fast! And when I run, I feel His pleasure—to win is to honor Him.” So his sister accepted the temporary detour for

competition. The closing scene (use your speakers or earphones) is a precise example of “central figure + offering + time period”. It exemplifies some *exhilarating* Foundation-building: as Liddle hits his stride, he slips into the *Zone, the Flow of the moment*, all the while *intensely engaged with his beloved Lord*.

So now, on to the second condition: **The Foundation of Substance**. The Principle explains it as the second step that Adam needed “to realize the purpose of creation”. Again returning to the definition of “indemnity”, we see that it’s based on “reversing the course of deviation from the original path”.

As to be expected, the “original path” is explained by the Principle as four behaviors that reverse the four *deviant* natures. And in many pages and sections afterwards, it connects these four behaviors to our “*original nature*”:



In the *Exposition of the Divine Principle*, “original nature” is mentioned 40 times^[i]. But since the entire Part II of the Principle is devoted to explaining and illustrating “restoration through *indemnity*”, its emphasis is necessarily on *restitution*, *reversal* and *removal* of fallen nature, so that the Messiah could be well-received and supported *substantially* in His mission to restore God’s ideal on earth. The simplified list of what would make that possible is on page 193 of *Exposition of the Divine Principle*. There, it’s stated simply that Cain should have:

1. taken God’s standpoint by **loving** Abel
2. **received God’s love** through Abel... **respecting him...** (and) **maintained his proper position**
3. obediently **submitted** to Abel... (and) **rectified** the order of dominion
4. been **receptive...** **learned...** (and) made a foundation to multiply goodness

And that’s largely what we learned and tried to be during our decades in the 40-year Wilderness Era.

But a more complete understanding of humanity’s **original nature** is what’s needed to actually build the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth in the *Settlement Era*. It’s worth noting that in the Introduction to the “Exposition” textbook, the second to last paragraph

states:

"The words proclaimed on these pages are **only a portion** of this truth. This volume is merely a compilation of what his disciples have hitherto heard and seen. We believe and hope that **when the time is ripe, more profound portions of the truth will be published.**"

– *Exposition of the Divine Principle*, p. 12

To this very end, *Cheon Seong Gyeong* was published twice in the 2000s and Chapter 4 of Book 4 is one example: Much of its content is from the roughly 30–40 years that followed the publication of the first English version of the Divine Principle. (Abonim also initiated the publication of *Unification Thought* in the 1960s, wherein 10 of its 11 chapters treated the ideals of the Principle of Creation^[ii]).

Getting back to where we were, please try to imagine what kind of character a young person would develop if he or she earnestly practiced their *original* nature *intentionally* throughout their *growth* and *completion* stages^[iii]: At the end of the first 21 years of their life, he or she would be a *remarkable* young adult—and likely a fine *matching* candidate.



In Principled terms, the young adult would become “one with God”, incarnate “the Word”, have “perfect character” and thereby fulfill “**God’s first blessing**”. Or, put simply, the young person would fulfill his or her very purpose of existence—he or she would be a joy to Heavenly Parent, a joy to family, friends and community, and experience the joy of his or her own completion!

Our 1st Blessing rests on two foundations:



And this would open the door wide for them to accomplish God’s *second* and *third* blessings to them—blessed *marriage and family* and service to others

through achieving *mastery in their profession*.

Conclusion

At this point, it's hopefully very obvious what these two foundations were *originally* meant to be: They're meant not only to restore *mistakes* we make in life, but more importantly—*especially in this post-Foundation Day, CIG Settlement Era*—they're meant to be an integral part of a **remarkable, beautiful and even exciting** way of living.

Then let's seriously reconsider the quotes we began this article with—Father Moon's advice about the best way to approach life in this new era:

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- Chambumo Gyeong, *Book 12, Chap. 3*

Going forward, may we as families and as a community live well and enjoy—for the sake of God and others as well as for ourselves!

Endnotes

[1] Adam was the 1st generation; Jesus was the 2nd, True Parents are the 3rd, and the folks they've blessed and engrafted are the 4th.

[2] In *Exposition of the DP*, "original nature" is mentioned on pp. 18–21, 23, 31, 33, 35–36, 41, 68, 73, 75–76, 100, 113, 178, 181, 228, 233, 277, 342, 348–349, 351–354, 356, 371, 376–377. But it's explained only briefly on page 193.

[3] In the latest edition of *Unification Thought*, see the chapters on *Oriainal Human Nature* and the closely related

chapters on [Axiology](#) and [Ethics](#)

[4] If studies about a child's stages of learning happen to interest you, you might also take a look at the landmark works of [Vygotsky](#), [Piaget](#) and [Erikson](#).

A Memoir >

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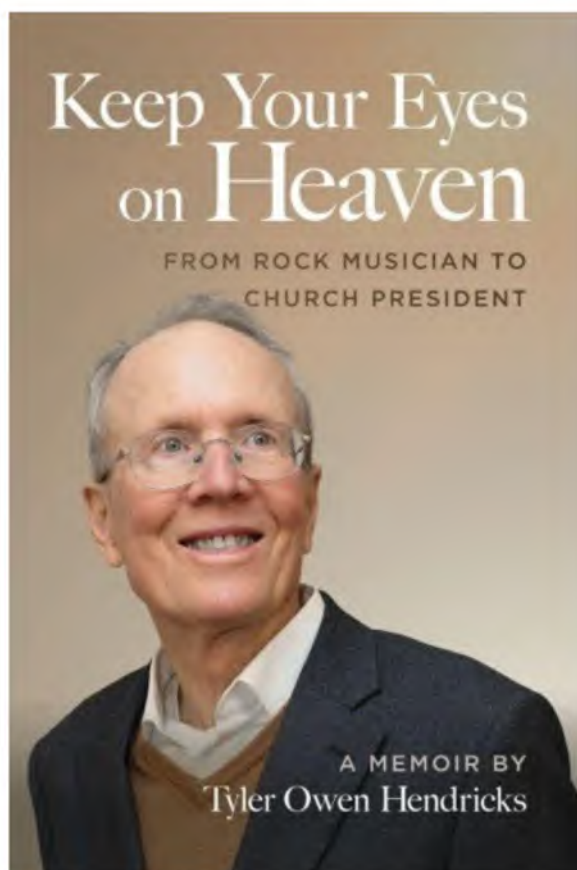
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A Memoir



A Memoir by Dr. Tyler Hendricks

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Tyler Hendricks offers a fascinating insight into the early days of the Unification Movement in the USA and its evolution over the past decades—a journey he witnessed firsthand and helped shape in many ways. From the very first pages of the prologue, I was captivated. **Gregor Sattler**

“You are honest, sincere, exact, and bring so much information about the history of our movement. True

information about the history of our movement, True Parents and True Family. You write very well, it's never boring, I'll read your book again. It will follow us in our moving around." **Monique Schneider**

"Your content is very interesting and honestly shared, which makes me really desire to read more. I was reading some of it to two pastors. One, who attended a recent pilgrimage in Korea, wants to have your book." **Keijo Mikkonen, Vice-Chair, Universal Peace Federation, Finland**

"The way you explain the challenges you faced and how you overcame them is a valuable spiritual guide for my own struggles. I believe that all second and third generation should read your book for their own education!!!" **Claus Dubisz, Community Leader and WCLC Representative, Frankfurt, Germany**

"His dedication resulted in a mind-boggling range of experiences and opportunities, described with humor and flair. We are given insights into his Blessing and family life, academic career, a wide variety of church missions, experiences with 'channelling' ...and so much more." **Catriona Valenta**

Just for background, I grew up in Oakland, California and moved into the Creative Community Project on Dana Street, January 20, 1973. Within ten months I found myself living at Belvedere, sitting at Father's feet every Sunday. God sent me, courtesy of True Parents, from New York area center member and lecturer, to MFT, UTS, home church in England, Vanderbilt University for a Ph.D., Ocean Church, CARP, Common Suffering Fellowship, clergy conferences, Assembly of the World's Religions, New England Regional Coordinator, IOWC, HSA-UWC America Vice-President then President, True Family Values Ministry, UTS President, True Parents Way website, teacher of only begotten Daughter theology (invited directly by True Mother), and now full-time grandfather overflowing with experiences that I'm so happy to share.

You can find *Keep Your Eyes On Heaven* hard copy or ebook, on Amazon, Barnes and Noble, and Walmart websites.

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Advice from God's Friend in Manila >

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Build your Blessed Family. ♥

Advice from God's Friend in Manila



By Larry Moffitt

SanViejo@gmail.com

Anyone who is one in heart with God is one in heart with everyone else who is one in heart with God.

I was in Manila fighting sin. My own, of course, as always. But that's not why I went. My purpose in going to the Philippines was to look after some details related to an upcoming international conference—logistics stuff, hotels, catering, ground transportation.

The thing is, God is pretty much everywhere, and most people are quite happy with that thought. That's why God is easy to think and converse about. Or can be. Many of the people who would be at this conference were themselves spiritually oriented, coming from a wide variety of faiths. Lots of Catholics, this being the Philippines, but everything else too. So I ended up speaking with people about God all day long, and over dinner at night. Every faith has a home in heaven, and I was having the time of my life.

Like you, I'm a seeker. Or at least I hope you are, and that you remain so all your life, even after you've found "Life's Great Big Happy Answer." There is still a lot

found the Great Big Happy Answer. There is still a lot of seeking and improving most of us can do within our great big answer, so don't get too comfy.

My back was bothering me one morning, so an associate suggested we go to a spa and get ourselves worked over by someone reputed to be a highly skilled massage therapist. I was lying on the table, covered by a towel, my head on my arms as I was about to fall asleep. A woman roughly my age walked in and introduced herself as Lucille. Her fingers were knotted and twisted like gnarled branches brought to life by a Disney animator.

She laid her palm in the middle of my back and said, "Ah, okay. Yes." It was as if I was hearing her end of a phone call with my spine. She moved her hand. "Yes. Un-huh. Okay, yes." And then she hung up. She asked me, "Are you a writer?"

"Yeah, I do some of that," I said, "but today I'm helping organize a conference."

"A meeting for religious people," she said. It wasn't a question.

"Have we met before?"

She ignored me, saying only, "Those who do not live in trust with God are foolish people. I have no time for them." She said other things on the same theme, but I'm not sure what, because my ability to form coherent thought suffered a power outage as every corpuscle of my soul rushed over to my back to see what was going on with Lucille's mahogany thumbs. My stress points were being hunted down like dogs and mangled by her bare hands.

After a certain amount of moaning in dire agony, I gasped, "Lucille, can I ask you a question?"

Apparently not, because she ignored that one too, while quickly heating the air inside glass cups and placing each one upside down on my back. About a dozen in all. I couldn't see how she did it, but I smelled the fire and felt minor heat. As the air cooled in the cups a strong partial vacuum was created inside each glass.

"I'm taking out the bad blood," she said, adding inexplicably, "Never fight with God."

"Okay, I won't."

"I know you don't."

The glass hickey-makers sat on my back for 30 minutes, rearranging my blood. I had lots of bad blood still in me from my car accident the year before, and plenty of new bad blood from the stress of organizing this conference instead of being at home writing, like I should have been.

But soon my bad blood was good blood and I had 12 large red circles on my back that, in the event of a strip search going through customs, would identify me as a guy who had been in a fight with a giant squid.

After she made another brief phone call to my right shoulder, Lucille announced, "This is where you were injured."

She meant in the car accident. She was batting a thousand. The thinking of normal people is that injuries are left alone, or touched only tenderly at most. Lucille leaned on my injury with the pointy part of her elbow.

My shoulder was screaming silent, shoulderly obscenities.

"Ahhhhhhhh, you're killing me!" I told her. Loudly.

"I'm not killing you. I'm loving you," she said, applying even more pressure to the ligament muscle thingies, my *triceratops ob-la-di ob-lada*. If she had been a professional wrestler, we could call her The Manila Folder.

Hahahaha. Really, I crack me up, sometimes.

Most of us have experienced situations when life looks like certain death. When what seems counter-intuitive is actually the correct course. Like when you're disarming a bomb and your brain is shouting, "Whoa, don't cut the red wire!" But you cut it anyway, and everybody is saved. It has always worked for me.

This was like that. As soon as she stopped leaning on my shoulder, the being-on-fire feeling stopped and went away—*utterly and completely*, leaving behind only the deafening silence of *no pain*. And anyway, isn't it one of life's ongoing literary archetypal scenarios that you do something difficult, and it's painful, but it's for your own good? Or that you look down the road toward a fork where the signpost holding the direction arrows pointing toward "Good" and "Evil" has fallen over and you can't tell which road goes to which destination?

Did I tell you I love the Philippines? I do. The people, the culture, the mangoes, the geckos on the ceilings and walls of every room—it all works for me. I don't know where Lucille came from, but God bless her. She was chosen by the merit of her ancestors and would have been a magical saint in any time or culture.

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God Whispers To Me



By Robert Beebe

God whispers to me. It started one morning not long ago as I lay in bed. It never happened before, but that morning I clearly heard a voice whispering to me as I was waking up, or maybe it was the voice itself that woke me up. It said, "Don't be afraid, Tanya. I'm always with you."

I opened my eyes and looked around the bedroom. Nobody was there. I looked at my brown Teddy lying next to me. "Did you say something?" I asked in my mind. He stared back at me blankly. Interesting.

I got up and dressed myself. Downstairs I could hear my mom moving about the kitchen preparing breakfast. The smell of bacon and eggs was already wafting through the house and up to my room.

"Tanya, dear! Is that you? Better get a move on. It's a quarter to eight already."

It was Monday morning and the week was off to a running start. I knew that already my father and two older brothers were out the door. Being still just a sixth-grader, I got to sleep in a little longer and was the last to leave the house.

I was about to come down the stairs when I heard the voice again. "Be careful today," it whispered. My right foot hung over the top step. My eyes darted from left

to right. Then, slowly, I turned my head around. An empty hallway. Weird.

I walked quietly down the stairs and came into the kitchen. Everything looked normal. My mom, at the stove with her back to me, was in her usual place. Bowzer, our family dog, a grey cocker spaniel, was in his corner spot, head on his front paws. Upon seeing me, he lifted himself up and came over for his morning pet.

"Hiya doin', Bowz," I said absent-mindedly. Everything *looked* normal, but I sure didn't *feel* normal.

"Mom?"

"Yes, dear," came the reply through the back of her head.

I was about to tell her about the voice but then thought better of it. No sense getting her all worked up over something that probably didn't mean anything. You see, at that point, I still didn't know it was God.

The rest of the morning was pretty normal: wolfing down the eggs and bacon, grabbing my backpack and lunch, kissing my mom on the cheek, picking up my bike and pedaling furiously to school, and finding myself in first period math class straining to keep my eyes open.

I was sitting in my very normal fifth period geography class, the one right after lunch, doing what I normally do: daydreaming about my favorite after-school activity—riding bikes with my best friend, Norma, when suddenly I heard my name: "Tanya!"

Well, by now, I bet you know it wasn't Mr. Winkler, my geography teacher, who was calling me, although I did immediately sit up straight and was about to say "Mississippi River" in response to a question I thought he was asking before I caught myself when I saw him speaking to Miranda Peters in the front row.

No, it was that voice again. It was whispering something. I listened closely: "Don't worry. Everything will be all right. I'm with you."

Now I was worrying. What was going on? Why was I hearing this voice?

Well, for the rest of the day I couldn't pay attention to my teachers nor daydream either. I just wanted to be ready to hear what the voice would say next, but it had again fallen silent.

Three o'clock came. Norma and I met at our usual spot near the bike racks. The whole fall since school started, we had been biking buddies. We had a set route: first to her place to drop off her backpack and books, then to my house to do the same and pick up a snack, finally over to Winsbury Park to hang out till

dark.

By now, I had forgotten about the voice. We chatted a bit before we got our bikes, then set off.

Usually Norma led the way, I right behind. Today, for some reason, I was out in front. Norma was a good leader. She had a good sense about how fast to go and to watch out for traffic. I could trust her completely. Now I was the one who had to set the pace and watch out.

We were just turning onto Elm Street, Norma's street, when it happened. It was a sharp right-hand turn into oncoming one-way traffic. I allowed myself to veer too far into the middle of the road. The last thing I saw was a white garbage truck. I didn't feel a thing. Everything went blank.

"Tanya, I'm right here with you. You had an accident, but everything will be fine. I'm seeing to it." I don't really know how long I was unconscious. I never asked and it doesn't really matter. I just know the whole time I felt I was being cradled in someone's giant arms. I felt warm and safe and not at all worried about anything.

When I awoke, I was in a bright white hospital room. At first, I thought I was in heaven. Then, I saw my mom's big blue moist eyes staring down at me. Her hand was stroking my cheek. "Oh, Tanya!" she cried. She bent over and hugged me tight.

Norma was standing on the other side of the bed. I was still a bit dazed. She was saying something to me excitedly.

"It's a miracle, Tanya! A real miracle!"

"Miracle?" I murmured. "What do you mean? What happened?" I tried to recall what I was doing that landed me in this hospital bed. Oh, yes...the truck; the white truck.

"You were heading straight into that garbage truck. I thought you were a goner when..." Norma's voice trailed off. Tears began to well up in her eyes. She started to choke.

I waited unemotionally until she could continue.

"Well, suddenly you fell, like somebody just pushed you down and, that truck, it just rolled right over you without hitting you. Instead, you fell between the front wheels and went unconscious when your head hit the road. Somebody up there is watching out for you, Tan."

I know for a fact it's true. He told me He would take care of me and was true to His word. Since that day, God and I have become something like good buddies. He's always whispering stuff into my ear now. His is the

first voice I hear every morning. All day He's telling me things—teaching me, comforting me, challenging me. It's no mystery to me anymore.

Yes, God whispers to me—all the time.

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Congratulations RYS on 40yrs of Service

Congratulatory Remarks by Carol Pobanz



As John Gehring, the International Director of RYS, for many years, has often pointed out, RYS has been built upon two essential components.

- The first is the vertical dimension—developing God's Heart (or by whatever name you may refer to the Divine): the heart of unselfish love that inspires, motivates, and gives purpose to our actions.
- The second is the horizontal dimension—expressing that love through acts of service to others.

In its simplest form, RYS is about Heart and Service.

That has been the foundation of Religious Youth Service for the past 40 years.

When I first became involved with RYS, much of our service centered on physical projects. We built schools and medical clinics, created parks, cleaned neighborhoods, painted buildings, restored areas after storms, planted trees, and worked side by side with local communities. These projects changed lives, but over time I came to an important realization.

Service is far broader than construction, restoration, or cleanup.

Service is anything we do for the genuine benefit of others.

As I reflected on this, I realized that each of us has unique gifts, talents, and passions. Those very passions can become our way of serving the world. Since my own passion has always been art, I naturally gravitated toward communal or participatory art projects. Rather than simply creating art to hang on a wall, I became interested in art that brings people together—creating murals, mosaics, sculptures, and creative projects that beautify neighborhoods, foster community pride, spark conversations, and communicate hope. In that way, art became my form of service—and we did many projects in Europe and central America as well as here in the United States.

This broadened my understanding of what RYS truly represents.

A doctor serves by healing. A teacher by educating. A carpenter by building. A musician serves by lifting hearts through music. A cook or baker serves by nourishing others. An athlete or coach serves by encouraging teamwork, discipline, and friendship. A scientist serves by discovering new knowledge. A businessperson serves by creating opportunities. A parent by nurturing a family.

When the motivation is love and the goal is to benefit others, every honest vocation and every genuine talent can become an act of service.

Perhaps that is one of the greatest lessons RYS has taught me over these past four decades: our passions, interests, and abilities are not merely for our own fulfillment and benefit. They become the vehicles through which we express God's love to the world.

So, whatever our gifts may be, when they are offered with a loving heart for the sake of others, they become true service.

During my years with RYS, I had the privilege of watching many young participants discover a deeper purpose for their lives. Some went on to careers in youth ministry. Others dedicated themselves to non-governmental organizations, the Peace Corps, education, social work, community development, and countless other fields devoted to serving humanity. Seeing the seeds planted through RYS blossom into lifelong commitments to service has been one of the greatest joys of my life. I am deeply proud of every one of those individuals.

Yet, the point I want to make today goes even further.

My hope is not simply that RYS participants will choose careers in service organizations. Rather, my hope is that every person who has experienced RYS will come to see that their entire life can become an extension of RYS.

RYS is not merely a program. It is not simply a service project, a summer experience, or a memorable event from our youth. RYS is a way of looking at the world. It is a way of seeing every person as a brother or sister and every circumstance as an opportunity to express love through service.

Whether we become doctors, teachers, artists, engineers, business owners, parents, politicians, scientists, carpenters, or retirees, we can carry the spirit of RYS into whatever we do. Every workplace can become a place of service. Every neighborhood can become a community to care for. Every relationship can become an opportunity to practice compassion, understanding, and generosity.

The physical projects we completed during RYS eventually came to an end. The buildings were finished. The parks were restored. The schools were painted. But the spirit that inspired those projects was never meant to end. It was meant to become part of who we are.

That's why I believe RYS is fundamentally an attitude of heart. It is the habit of asking, *"How can I make life better for someone else?"* It's the willingness to use our unique gifts, talents, and passions to uplift others. It's choosing to live for the sake of others not only during a service project but through every day of our lives.

If every participant leaves RYS carrying that attitude into their family, their profession, their community, and their nation, then the impact of RYS continues to grow long after the project itself has ended.

So, today, as this project is a celebration of 40 years of service, my hope is that the spirit of RYS will accompany each of you throughout your lives—from this day forward and, ultimately, into eternity. For a heart that has learned to love and to serve never retires, never grows old, and never comes to an end.

Congratulations RYS on 40 years of Service!

Thank you and God bless you all!

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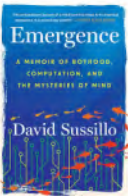
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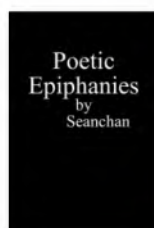
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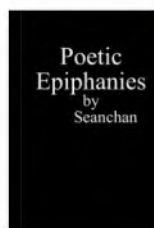
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