

The Crossroads: Finding One's Path as a Second Generation Member

J. Cox

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I think many members of the second generation are standing at a spiritual crossroads. One course leads the way we've been going our entire lives: the way of our parents, the way of the Blessing, the way of inheriting the faith tradition we were born into. The other course lies outside, through what we fondly call the fallen world.

Kind of a scary ultimatum, isn't it?

In a time of many transitions and new starts — life goals, career ambitions, even marriage prospects knocking at one's door — it's almost too much for a young person to handle at one time.

All of the most critical decisions of one's life seem to be clustered in this tender three-to-four year gap between teenagehood and college graduation. On top of that, add the fact that most young people, in their late teens and early twenties, are still desperately trying to find themselves.

Young people are especially vulnerable to the whims of the world, as they are also expected, and sometimes herded, to go to college during this pivotal, impressionable stage of their lives. I regret to say that, while colleges do provide a wealth of knowledge and opportunity, college campuses are also rife with harmful influences. In such an environment, confusion on many levels is likely to trouble a young person's mind; some would even say this is calculated.



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At college, students are presented with a smorgasbord of various ideas and intellectual concepts. While a few of these may be true, it is difficult for a young person to discern between truth and mere conjecture, between fact and theory. When a theory is well-supported and popularly acknowledged as gospel, it is easy to be compelled to go along with the common opinion that it is fact. Uneducated young people are in this position to judge a vast array of conflicting ideologies without a point of reference. If they are already uncertain about their own identity and beliefs, by what standards will they be able to judge the rest of the world, especially when that world is speaking from a position of authority and experience?

Simply put: If you don't have your feet firmly grounded, you are going to be swept away by the tide.

The minds and hearts of young people are often amorphous, yet to be formed and shaped by experience and belief. When such people are called to inherit the responsibility of a faith tradition as new and different as ours, it presents itself a daunting task, to say the least. This is why having one's feet firmly grounded in conviction is key. Without conviction, it is a bitter struggle, if not an impossible task, to stave off the tidal waves of confusion and relativity that the world is rife with. If you believe in nothing, you can be influenced to do anything. And when uncertainty is all you have where your faith is concerned, it is tempting to want to jump ship.

How then will second generation members find their conviction and take ownership of their faith?

At this time in particular, it is easy to be swept away by doubts, and many second generation are. College is merely the catalyst for these doubts. *Will the movement succeed? Is my participation in the movement really needed? Is the purpose of this movement really in line with God's vision?* Such crippling questions are especially common now, in the wake of Father's transition to the spirit world. But if the upcoming years without True Father's guidance are the long dark tunnel for Unificationists, faith is the torch, for both old and young members.

It is not always easy to find this torch of faith, especially when we are left groping in the darkness, as we are now. In the handful of testimonies I have heard about why second generation are leaving, there's far more to it than a lack of faith. These young men and women have found few to no convincing reasons to stay, and plenty of viable reasons to leave instead. Their faith has been shaken, perhaps even destroyed,

and cannot easily be reclaimed. Perhaps disturbing truths were revealed to them that the track record of the church is not, in fact, impeccable. Perhaps there were bitter relationships with other members which soured the whole movement for them. Perhaps nothing about Unificationism made sense to them anymore, and they couldn't bring themselves to confront that. Perhaps they found that life as a Unificationist was too challenging for them, too lonely, too ridden with rejection and disappointment to be anything resembling an appealing life course.



In some ways they are correct. It can be difficult to thrive within the church, while it remains so small in comparison with the great world religions. It is difficult for a Unificationist to thrive outside of it as well, to try, with one's limited experience, to associate with other people and not be written off as some out-of-touch, narrow-minded cult follower. I know it — sometimes the faith community seems as small and insignificant as an island. But we have to remember in all this that our reputation is not what we are; and, in truth, our small company of believers

is as vibrant and valiant as God could have hoped for — in this, our numbers matter little. Our small community means a great deal to God, as perhaps the only faith movement that is actively fighting the suffocating darkness of the fallen world with such ambitious ideals.

A faith community with such a vision should not be taken lightly, or written off as “just another church,” and thus should not be left with a light reason. Our movement possesses something of unique and undeniable beauty. In our decision of which road to take at the Crossroads, the second generation must consider carefully. Above all, the second generation need to explore their faith to take ownership of it, and find their own conviction as members of a growing movement; and if we should end up leaving the faith, let it be done with great care and not frivolously.

For myself, before I choose my path, I want to have clear motivation and conviction in my faith. But despite the unsettling truths I may discover along the way, despite the discouraging experiences I might have, I sincerely want to stay with this movement, to stick it out despite whatever rough patches come my way.

Why do I want to choose such a path? Because my heart is most inclined to stay united with the culture of heart that I was born into, in the community that I love and learned so much from. Thus far, my experiences with the faith community have given me every emotional reason to stay. I have friends, I have family, I have more supportive and wholesome relationships here than I've experienced anywhere else. To build on that, as a second generation member, I want to work to take true ownership of my faith.

The journey has begun.

Jenny Cox is a student at Barrytown College of UTS and participates in its singing club, CARP chapter, and ballroom dancing club. She aspires to become a published author and possibly illustrator, and currently lives in New Hampshire.