

Finding the Unification Church: Reemerging into Fresh Air and Sunshine

Gregory Davis
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Gregory and Sumiko Davis

I was never searching for religion, unlike one of my best friends, my college roommate in the early 1970s. He was always excitedly telling me about his latest “in search of religion” exploits. They were entertaining and interesting, but... not for me. So, it was surprising when in July 1974 I found myself at a Unification Church weekend workshop studying a teaching called the Divine Principle.

A few days before that, I had met some young people who expressed new ideas for Christianity, using big meaningful expressions, like “purpose of life,” “the fall of man” and “the return of Christ.” They said I could possibly be living at the time of Jesus’ return.

As a disillusioned teenager growing up in the 1960s, I wasn’t knowledgeable about or interested in religion or the second coming of Christ. However, they were interesting, friendly people and I was intrigued. I wondered, Could I be living in a unique time in

history?

Surprisingly, I found myself agreeing to attend their three-day seminar to discuss these ideas further. The workshop, at first, seemed like summer camp, with lots of singing, clapping and lighthearted fun. I was thinking, What is this? It soon took on a more intense, serious tone and I was drawn in to the fascinating lectures.

The conclusion, which was to totally upend my comfortable world, was, yes, I was living at special time in history, the Lord was here, he needed my help (and that of tens of thousands of others) to quite literally save the world. Count me in, I thought. I was ready (or so I imagined) for the adventure of a lifetime. Thus, in July 1974, I became a member of the Unification Church.

Missions

I joined the International One World Crusade in Rochester, New York. We eventually ended up in Philadelphia. From there, I became a member of MFT (mobile fund raising teams) with brief occasional involvement in Father’s speaking engagements—Madison Square Garden (MSG), Yankee Stadium and Washington Monument. I was mostly on MFT for seven years, after which I was an early pioneer in Happy Group, doing many kinds of business activities.

My matching and blessing happened in MSG in the historic 2,075-Couple Blessing in July 1982. After a few years in church businesses, I attended the Unification Theological Seminary, graduating with the class of 1989. After which, I continued in business missions and working, as well with the fledgling International Leadership Seminars, first in the US and later in the former Soviet Union.

My wife Sumiko and I raised two lovely daughters on Long Island (a pastoral area adjacent to New York

City) and participated in various activities with our local Long Island community church as well as missions in Korea, Israel and her native Japan.

Illness and sudden loss

When, in 2009, I was diagnosed with a serious debilitating illness, Multiple Sclerosis (MS), my life retreated. I became very sick, unable to work. I began an intense regimen of months and years of physical therapy and various alternative treatment options. I got better. In the meantime, I lost my house, went through a bankruptcy and lost my mobility—not necessarily in that order. Walking even a few feet was difficult; I constantly stumbled and lost my balance. Fortunately, I did not fall much. These are common symptoms of MS. The good news is my condition has improved, my mind is sharp, and I am in relatively little pain.



How I got my life back

From the day I learned I had MS, my life has drastically changed. I had been able to work. I enjoyed swimming, running, bike riding, hiking and various other outdoor activities. My illness brought such activities to a screeching halt. To walk down the hall to the bathroom or to walk to the street corner to get our mail was a struggle. Just to get through the day was a challenge.

Nevertheless, I felt determined not to let my illness define me. I fought back. The gist of it is that after many years of physical therapy, acupuncture, meditation, and various nutrition programs I was

able to restore some semblance of functionality. I still have a long way to go. I am very grateful to be doing as well as I am.

Yikes, trikes!

Last summer I started thinking about how to get mobile. I missed getting out into my neighborhood, meeting my neighbors, and experiencing fresh air and beautiful scenery. Being from Long Island, I missed the strolls along the boardwalks of our beautiful beaches. Then I discovered the world of recumbent trikes.

I had seen guys riding around in some sort of weird tricycle, but I didn't know what they were. They looked like exotic pedal cars. They looked hard to ride, and for someone with limited mobility and reduced leg strength, impossible. But they looked so cool! I wondered to myself, Could I actually pedal one of those things?

I researched online and learned more about the world of recumbent trikes. I watched videos and researched companies. I wanted to try one to see if I could actually ride it. Finding a shop that had any type of recumbent trike in their shop was difficult, but I was undaunted.

Eventually I found a shop in my area with just one in stock. It was “love at first sight.” It was low and sleek, dare I say—cool. Could sit in it? Could I pedal it? After my initial test ride, I knew this it was coming home with me. Since then, once again, I have been enjoying beautiful, precious mobility. A recumbent trike is amazing and easy to ride for someone with my disability. I have been riding my trike for a couple of years. Each day is special because I have my freedom again. No price can be put on that.

Your Trike Spirit

My “liberation” so profoundly affected me that I want to help others have that experience. I am now in year two of my effort to sell recumbent trikes on Long Island. In April 2015, with the help of family, friends and numerous brothers and sisters in the Long Island Unificationist community, I set up a shop, Your Trike Spirit, so named because riding a trike is close to having a spiritual experience. We sell recumbent trikes with a focus on the disabled and mobility-challenged community.

People with disabilities deserve to have options and to be able to enjoy the best that life has to offer—to get out and get mobile on their own power.



Helping others

Jesse was born with a serious nerve condition. As a child, she was told she would never walk, but she did not listen. She is a fighter. She refused to accept that fate. A friend of hers made an appointment for her to come into the shop. He was not sure she would be interested or able to use a trike. When she came in her eyes opened wide; she was so excited. On that beautiful warm day, we went for a test ride. She seemed thrilled at how easy it was for her to pedal even though she normally needs two crutches to walk.

Her church community took up a collection (that was their plan from the beginning) and bought the trike for her as a Christmas present. When they presented it to her, she was in tears. Truly, her life changed instantly. She now rides the trike at every opportunity. She rides it to work on warm days. She has a new sense of hope now that she has mobility.

Mary, who had never seen a trike before, came to the shop with her mother. How comfortable and easy to pedal a trike is surprised her.

She told me that she had been having knee and back problems and was unable to ride a regular bike due to stress on her joints and back pain, but she wanted be active. She had recently lost a lot of weight and wanted to continue to do so. She was convinced that with the trike she could do that. She was like a happy child when she made her purpose, and was riding all summer enjoying the ability to get exercise and enhanced mobility. We rode together with other customers to a local park several times last summer. She is now part of trike family.

Support for Your Trike Spirit

I am currently engaged in a fund raising effort to develop and expand the scope of my business and to help more people get their mobility back. If you are interested in helping and are able to do so, I would deeply appreciated it. Here is the link by which you can do that <http://www.gofundme.com/mnbitw>.