

## Self-denial is a virtue, but when taken too far turns into unhealthy denial

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Our movement has accomplished many great things and made a beautiful offering to God. And I am deeply grateful for all that I gained from True Parents and the training they gave me. Their deeply visionary and altruistic worldview has shaped me and allowed me to raise children who have a deep goodness and beautiful hearts. I am concerned, however, that we need some new ideas and strategies which may help us achieve breakthroughs and become more successful.

I have made a long-term commitment to studying other religions, and a lifelong commitment to learning itself. I was fortunate in that I had dropped out of college close to graduation, so I was able to finish through the pre-seminary program. And with my degree in Physics, I was able to contribute to the work of the World Research Institute for Science and Technology (WRIST) and to become successful in my career.

But just imagine if everyone in our movement were taught directly by Father some of the principles of Electrical Engineering which he had studied in Japan, or if he had published sermons saying that "studying physics, mathematics, and chemistry is

worshipping God." This is something I'm sure True Father would agree with judging from his support of the Science Conference, and of WRIST. What if, instead of sacrificing everything to witness, fundraise, and work on campaigns, or in addition to a period of being trained in those ways, we were treated more like we now treat the second generation. We teach our children Divine Principle at home, bring them to church on Sundays, and encourage them to attend workshops and programs like GPA or NGA, but we don't push them to drop out of college to become full time missionaries. It may be that our church would have grown a little slower at the beginning, but I think the growth would have continued instead of flattening out for decades.

Why do I think this? Because I studied other new religious movements, and from what I can understand, they have grown more steadily using this type of approach. In this way I've learned:

- Invest in education. If you are young, able, and willing, choose teaching as your profession.
- If you are a businessperson, support a school financially.
- If you are a parent, encourage sound education and for that, help build a school in your locality.
- On that foundation, engage in other projects, such as media, hospitals, disaster relief, and poverty assistance.

A path like this could build the credibility that our movement needs. Not only that, we could also truly inherit the status of the Chosen People, and like the Jews, begin to produce Nobel Prize winners for contributions to science as well as for peace work.

True Father gave us an incredible vision, but in our desperation to serve God at all costs, and high expectations for winning Christian vision, our movement failed to see and invest in the potential of the

members to grow not only in faith and dedication, but to gain marketable skills and become successful and influential members of society.

If we had become scientists, engineers, politicians, etc., we wouldn't have to pay such people to attend our conferences. By virtue of our standing in those fields we could attract such people and have them pay their own way, or be sponsored by their employer, as they do for most conferences. [I understand and appreciate that True Mother is investing in young people through scholarships and the Crane's Club. I hope this will be a sustained and sustainable effort over time.]

I was able to finish college because of the Pre-Seminary program at UTS. But it wasn't really a program at all. It was just a bunch of guys who explained ways they figured out to get college credits. If we really had a substantial program backed by visionary leaders who were willing to invest in each member, who knows how many members would have attended college or a trade school and been able to have a successful career.

Another thing that is desperately needed is training in cross-cultural understanding, and in understanding the very real differences between men and women. Although we have some programs now for marriage enrichment and a few very good counselors in our movement, if we aren't willing to open up and be vulnerable or don't understand or accept the needs and perspective of our partner, we can attend as many programs as we like, and the content goes in one ear and out the other. And many members, couples, and families, dedicated as they are to their marriages, need help from a trained therapist, hopefully one who appreciates and understands our values.

Many American members are impacted by the divorce of their parents, and most of all long to have a loving and affectionate relationship with their spouse to ensure that their children actually feel loved. No matter how much my parents expressed their love for me, I couldn't trust or fully believe it because they obviously had great anger and sometimes hatred for each other and divorced when I was seven.

Another prevalent issue in the U.S. is alcoholism, and I'm sure many of the first generation were affected by a parent or relative who was an alcoholic. Everyone knows about Alcoholics Anonymous, but not so many know about Al-Anon, an organization that helps people to recover from the effects of coping with an alcoholic in their family.

More particular to our movement is that we were trained as "Heavenly Soldiers" but soldiers, nonetheless. Bringing the mentality of a righteous warrior into a marriage or into parenting is a recipe for disaster. I had the grace of a 15-year long mission in which no one could tell me what to think, because I had to use my own intellect and creativity to do engineering work. That mission involved praying at Twin Peaks in San Francisco at 5 AM and working till 7 PM six days a week. Fortunately, my mother was nearby and brought our family together at every possible occasion, which was immensely valuable in keeping our family as close as it is.

Unfortunately, many members' lives continue to be dominated by a devotion to a mission which surpasses their love for their spouse or family and keeps them from seeing the dysfunction in their lives. Self-denial in the service of God is a virtue, but when taken too far turns into unhealthy denial in which we lose sight of the goal of "World Peace through Ideal Families."

American members need healing. After 45 years in the church, I joined a men's group facilitated by a member who is a trained therapist, and it has been truly impactful in my life. I suggest we find a way to replicate and scale that up. It has been wisely suggested that UTS and Bridgeport invest in training Marriage and Family Therapists. Had UTS produced even 10 such graduates a year we would now have the capacity to serve our members and even reach out to help other churches.

Although this is a sensitive issue, I believe we should find resources to help with cross-cultural marriages. At least a third of Western men in the U.S are married with a Japanese sister, as am I. Having tried for

many years to learn about Japanese culture - to my dismay - I discovered that I was the worst possible match for practically any of the Japanese sisters, including my wife. What she most longed for was for me to be a decisive leader, but I was the most indecisive person you could ever imagine and had been that way growing up and had not changed since. When I realized how disappointed she must be, I struggled intensely, thinking that I could not change my essential nature, and wishing she could appreciate me just as I am. I had suppressed my feelings as a survival mechanism as a child, and the only emotion that I recognized was that I felt confusion most of the time.

Amazingly, at the age of 45, I encountered my first Interfaith group. I was so happy that there were people eager to listen to me explain my beliefs. I found a sense of joy and a renewal of purpose, and I began to feel again, and began to be able to make decisions. But it was a bit late to repair many of the wounds we couldn't help but inflict on each other. I learned and grew so much from so many difficult experiences, as we all have. But just think if we had support from trained professional counselors and had a system for sharing best practices and holding up examples of couples who had great relationships!

Men need acceptance and appreciation, and readily sacrifice to provide for their families. Men thrive when they feel respected and at times even admired. With these elements in their relationship, they easily fall in love and want to do everything in their power to make their wives happy. Sometimes Japanese wives have serious difficulties in externally showing affection. I am sure there must be sisters who have overcome this issue and could share their experience with others.

America is a land of rugged individuals who embrace the right of everyone to have freedom and pursue self-actualization. When coupled with discipline and high ideals, this is a great asset. But in our movement, this great asset was often overlooked or even crushed. Only those members who could somehow digest the directions of their leaders in a way that allowed them to keep their dignity and worth have been able to survive until this day. Many others left the church or found that the church left them. Especially our second generation just didn't understand why they had to grow up so poor in such a prosperous country. Even more painful to experience was their parents who professed to love God so much, didn't know how to love each other, or how to embrace imperfection in their children.

I suggest that our leadership reach out sincerely to the members to uncover and feel their pain, to ask them what it is they need, and to provide financial support to help make possible the kind of support needed. Depending on the locale and the community it might be help in financial literacy, marriage counseling, childcare, cleaning / disinfecting the church facilities, hiring a music director, or giving a second generation couple the chance to revive a congregation and make it welcoming to young people as well as old. Whatever it is, it is time that the church hold members in as high an esteem as the members hold their leaders, and as they say, "to put their money where their mouth is."

Had we been given more resources to strengthen our marriages and families, and more educational opportunities, we would be already shining examples naturally attracting our friends and neighbors. Even at this stage, there is still a chance we can turn things around, but we'll need to focus substantial resources on taking care of members. Even at 68 years old, I can spend enormous amounts of energy in my job because I find it tremendously challenging and rewarding. And even with that, I am so happy and proud to be able to share Father's words and heart in every Interfaith event I attend. I only hope that even the humblest member can feel validated by each and every member and leader of our community and feel that they are the infinitely valuable son or daughter of God that they indeed are.

I hope through this message to start a conversation that can help us heal our wounds and those of our children, and to reinvigorate the idealism, altruism and love of God that brought us into the movement in the first place. I hope our leaders can receive it, and would very much appreciate any suggestions or comments.