

Testimony - the Parable of the Prodigal Son

Angel Ricardo Evans
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Angel (center), together with his daughter Michelle and his wife Carmen, to whom he was Blessed at the Manhattan Center on March 23, 2012.

The following is a testimony written by Angel Ricardo Evans, who was reintroduced to the Unification Church 30 years after taking a different course from it. He is currently living in New York and attending Lovin' Life with his wife and daughter.

I am a living testimony to the parable of the prodigal son. I consider myself the young son who set off on a long journey and wasted his time wandering through different paths of life. But that young man finally came to his senses and remembered his father. In humility, he recognized his foolishness and decided to return to his father to ask for forgiveness and mercy. The father, who had been waiting, welcomed his son back with open arms of compassion. He was overjoyed by the return of his lost son.

I first became a member of the Unification Church in 1981, more than 30 years ago. I heard the Divine Principle lecture from Kevin McCarthy at the New Yorker World Mission Center, in a little coffee shop called the Down Home Inn. I was transformed by what I heard, particularly the chapter titled The Purpose of the Messiah. I learned that Jesus did not initially come to be nailed to a cross, but instead came to marry, raise children and establish the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. It was a life-changing experience. I sighed, then I wept, then the floodgates opened, and I cried uncontrollably for days.

As a member, I lived in the Queens Center, on 154th Street with other brothers and sisters. Carl Hagan was the central figure at first, and later that year, Rev. Richard Buessing led the group. We all lived devout lives as missionaries. I learned how to witness, fundraise, and worship. On November 8, 1981, I was featured in the Sunday service at 43rd Street [the church headquarters building at 4 W. 43rd St.]. I sang a solo of "The Impossible Dream" in the style of Roberta Flack. It was a moving rendition that would have made Reverend [Joshua] Cotter, Ben Lorentzen and all of Sonic Cult proud! The following year in March, I was featured on the pages of Today's World Magazine.

Throughout the years, I experienced so much love from the brothers and sisters, and I felt Father and Mother Moon's love through them as well. But I still left the church.

After knowing the Divine Principle, it is difficult to conceive how someone could possibly leave. But I struggled, and we all encounter difficulties in uniting our mind and body.

I sought after things of the world: an education, a career and a family of my own. But I always knew that these things lacked the fundamental purpose of creation. Jesus once said, "What will it profit a man that he gain the whole world yet lose his own soul?"

Although I was living in my own world, God tried reaching out to me. He sent me visions and dreams. He showed me my future wife in my dreams. She was short, brown-skinned (like rich coffee) and had black hair; a Taino woman. After a year of having this recurring dream, I could see this Taino woman very clearly. I saw her face, and I knew what she looked like. She was beautiful.

Having completed a Bachelor's Degree in education, I landed a teaching job in a public school in Brooklyn. On the first day, the principal of the school took me on a tour and introduced me to the staff. Then he introduced me to a Taino woman, just like the one in my recurring dream. Immediately I knew who she was.

Her name was Carmen. At first, I wanted to run in the opposite direction. I fought against my own destiny. I finally gave in after about three years. I tried to woo her with songs, but she would not respond.

So, one day I walked up to her and told her that she was to be my wife. I told her it was predestined, that it was written in the stars, and there was very little either of us could do about it.

Of course, she dismissed me as being completely out of my mind, but I patiently waited for her until she changed her mind. We got married in 1988. We have one daughter, Michelle Marie, who was born in 1994. She just recently turned 18.

The Prodigal Son Returns

One quiet night while I was at home watching television in my room, I flipped through the channels and came across a program on World Religions. Father and Mother Moon appeared on the TV screen presiding over a Holy Blessing Ceremony in Korea. I was moved by the spectacle and cried alone in my room knowing that I would never be blessed by Father and Mother in marriage.

I felt like a failure as a son, a husband and a father, because I had not even attempted to fulfill the three great blessings intended at the time of creation. However, Heavenly Father is not vengeful. He is merciful and loves His children so much that He sent us True Parents on earth. Eventually, all of mankind will come to know Him and be with Him in the Kingdom of Heaven.

I decided to find True Parents. My plan was simple: Find True Parents and ask for forgiveness. Jesus once said, "Ask, and it shall be given."

Years had passed, and it was now 2011. The New Yorker Hotel was no longer the World Mission Center. The Down Home Inn had become The Tick Tock Diner.

Jesus once said, "Seek, and ye shall find." So, I found my spiritual mother, Alejita Feliciano Jacob on Facebook. She brought me to Lovin' Life Ministries that very Sunday. Since then, I have attended every Sunday service. My daughter became interested in where I was going on Sundays, so she attended the service with me one day. Then, my wife started coming as well.

My daughter attended the Lovin' Life Summer Camp in the summer of 2011, and she encouraged her boyfriend, James, to come to service on Sundays. Carmen, Michelle, James and I joined together. We attended Starting Point and W.I.R.E.D, which are the small-group classes for new members.

In a total gesture of forgiveness, Carmen and I were invited to take part in the Holy Blessing Wedding Ceremony on March 23, 2012 that was presided over by True Parents.

I am so grateful to the brothers and sisters at Lovin' Life Ministries. I would like to thank Senior Pastor In Jin Moon and all of the True Children, all the Blessed Central Families, Rev. Bruce Grodner, Rev. Chen Fong, Andrew Love, John and Joy Theriot, Olga Mazhitova, and so many of you who brought this sacred blessing to us. Praise True Parents!