

Why did Reverend Moon building an education center in the middle of Sin City?

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Las Vegas is the last place on earth you would expect to meet the returning Christ. It is a city without historical roots in the American spiritual narrative. Pilgrim fathers did not come to Nevada in order to build the Kingdom of God on Earth. Pilgrim mothers did not flock to Las Vegas to live a life of faith in Christ on Earth. Las Vegas was founded by evil people. Mafia. Gangsters. Bad actors. Sex workers (pimps, whores and prostitutes of all genders).

If the devil himself imagined a city representing the Kingdom of Hell on Earth, it would be Las Vegas.

Las Vegasans are proud of it. "What happens in Las Vegas stays in Las Vegas." That slogan can be translated loosely as follows. You can do anything you want in Las Vegas and no one will ever find out about it. So go ahead and sin and forget about it.

By the way, did I mention that the Devil is a liar?

Everything you and I do, dear seeker after goodness, beauty and truth, is recorded in a sort of video archive of Eternity. No exceptions. The truth is, if you sin in Vatican City, it will be on the record. Nevada is no different except for geography.

Why was Reverend Moon building an education center in the middle of a city that has the reputation as "Sin City"?

This is the question that was rattling around in my head as I stepped out of a 15-passenger van onto a hot asphalt parking lot in the middle of Las Vegas in July of 2011. The heat was overwhelming. I carried in my bag several autobiographies of the Reverend Sun Myung Moon titled *A Peace Loving Global Citizen*. There was an acrid smell coming from the rubber soles of my sneakers frying on the pavement beneath my feet. So I did the only thing a spiritual person could do - I prayed for guidance. "God, what do you need me to do?"

"Go find an oasis!" There it was, clear as a bell, the voice of God. Go find an oasis? Is that it, God? You want me to find an oasis in a parking lot? I must be hallucinating, hearing voices maybe. Answer to prayer, indeed!

I looked around for signs of water. A palm tree maybe? Or some sand? Suddenly, there it was on the far side of the lot. I spotted a big white motorhome with a big sign on the side. I squinted to read the lettering.

LOOKING FOR AN OASIS in the DESERT? FREE WATER.

"OK, God, I will get right on it." I headed for the motorhome. Knocking on the door, I was surprised when a grizzled head of white hair poked out of the opening side door of the motorhome. "Come in sonny, it's hotter than blazes out there, get yourself a bottle of water." As I stepped into the air-conditioned living room of his "desert schooner," he handed me a cold bottle of mineral water.

"Whatcha selling on a hot day like this?" I held up the autobiography of Reverend Moon, wondering what his reaction might be.

"Well, I'll be danged if it aint old Moonie. Been seeing posters all over town about him. Tell me more, sonny."

What else could I do? I told him about the autobiography, I told him part of my personal testimony of how finding peace and comfort through Jesus and the Holy Spirit had led me to meet Reverend Moon and how I came to understand the meaning of the Second Coming of Christ.

He got real quiet for a while. A long while went by before he spoke. Then he said, "Any friend of Jesus is a friend of mine. How much do you want for the book?"

And that's how it went that week in Las Vegas. People of faith showed up in the most unexpected places. But that's not really what I wanted to tell you about in this story. I want to tell you about one of the last times I took the Messiah by the hand, only to discover that he was taking me by the hand.

At the end of the week, Reverend Randy Francis and our team of pastors, most of us old timers, were about to head out of town to the airport. But we wanted to stop by the newly purchased warehouse one more time. The place was a huge framed building, mostly storage space. A makeshift office and distribution center for the autobiography books had been set up by the front entrance. Reverend Francis dropped me and Freeman Daugherty at the front door. Freeman needed to pick up a box of books. We found the books and headed for the door. Suddenly, a wide-eyed younger brother raced into the book distribution center. "Heads up, everybody. Clean up everything; clear the tables, boxes in closets or under tables. We have to clear a path! Hurry it up! Father will be here any moment; I just got a call, Father is in the car and on the way."

I sent a quick text to Randy Francis, alerting him to what was about to happen. He was a few blocks away doing another errand with the van. It all happened so fast that we barely had time to clean up the room before a parade of Korean elders surrounding True Father poured through the door. They walked around the building, looking at this and that and speaking in rapid Korean. Less than a half an hour later, we saw them coming from the end of the building toward the door. Most of us just ran outside and got in a line along the sidewalk so we could at least wave goodbye as Father left.

The entourage came through the door with Father in the middle of a half-dozen Korean men. Suddenly I noticed that he walked very carefully, relying on a cane, which he held in his right hand, for support. I was standing a little to the left of our beloved True Father and my heart reached out with love and respect. Suddenly he seemed so vulnerable! He swayed a tiny bit in my direction and instinctively I extended my hand to support him in case he needed a little support. Father grasped my hand and held on to it firmly, stopping for a moment to look at me. Father pressed my hand with a firm grip that held me for a moment. That touch spoke to my soul. In my mind, I "heard" him saying, "I am fine, you just hang on and let's keep on doing for God. Thank you, Matthew."

Father did not speak a word to me on that occasion. He did not have to. His touch said it all. "Keep on doing for God."

Recently as I continue to read both True Father's and True Mother's memoirs, I realize how fortunate we are to be on earth at this time in history. Just hang on to the True Parents and keep doing for God and everything will work out well.

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