

## FFWPU USA: Does God suffer? God does suffer, and it matters

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It was the end of summer 2019. My elderly cat had to be put down. I cried for about a week, even though it was painless for her. My mom, who watched and supported me through that ordeal kept saying that she never wanted me to suffer that much again. (She almost denied me getting a new kitten based on that experience, but I digress.)

In my experience, for the religious community, the concept of suffering has largely been reserved for sinners. Suffering is treated like the consequence of sin. Since God has no sin, then how could God suffer?

Unificationists think of it a little differently. God suffers because God loves us.

"To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything and your heart will be wrung and possibly broken."  
- C.S. Lewis

It's not a huge leap, if you think about it. Like my mother, parents feel the pain their children feel, whether it be self-inflicted or caused by someone else. Parents don't have to be the target of suffering to feel their children's pain. This is not to say the loss of my beloved feline friend is the same as the enormous pain and suffering that some people endure, but the way my mother experienced what I was going through is comparable.

Seeing people you care about go through difficult times causes us pain as well, whether they're friends or family. It's impossible to separate love from grief or pain. As C.S. Lewis once wrote, "To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything and your heart will be wrung and possibly broken."

If your heart goes out to another person, naturally a sympathetic or empathetic bond is created. As researcher Brené Brown puts it, "Staying vulnerable is a risk we have to take if we want to experience connection." The connection made with another person opens us up to the possibility of pain.

In Unificationist teaching, God is all of humankind's Heavenly Parent. Our suffering is God's suffering. The fact that we are not happy and are hurting, God feels those emotions with us as our Parent. For God, closeness is the goal, not distance. If we are in the trenches, God is right there with us.

"Staying vulnerable is a risk we have to take if we want to experience connection."  
- Brené Brown

I think the fear for religious people is that if we claim God suffers, it devalues the Divine. That God can be as base as the common man. But that is not what Unificationists are saying. We are claiming the opposite - God's love is so perfect and big that it cannot help but feel our hurt.

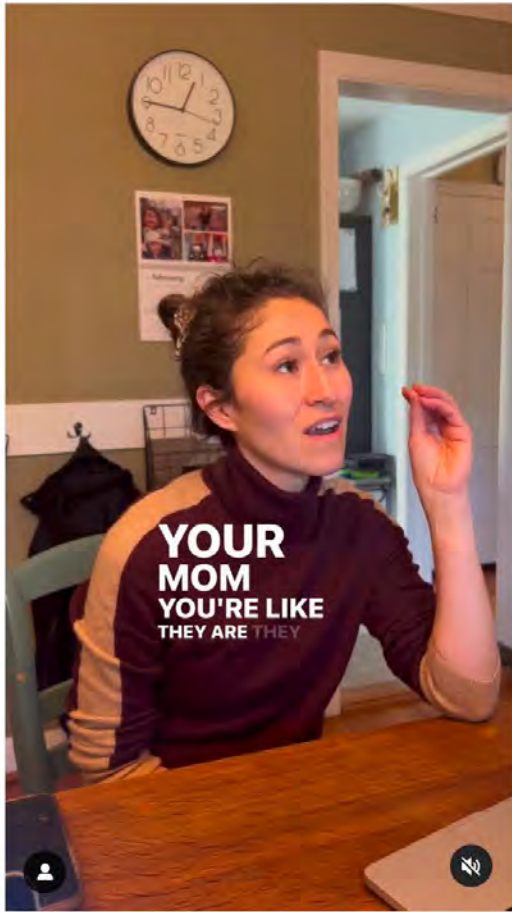
Our Heavenly Parent has personal suffering, too. Since sin has separated God and humans, God has never had the chance to really enjoy the sharing of love with us, to live with us in harmony, as Unificationists believe is God's true desire. History's journey to bring us back to our Heavenly Parent has been long and messy, and, so far, incomplete. As long as even one child of God is not connected to their Heavenly Parent, God will mourn their absence.

Rev. Moon, in his 1977 speech "The Pinnacle of Suffering," explains it this way:

"One thousand years is just one moment to God, who has no concept of time, and the pain of man...has never gone from God's mind and heart. Could God ever decide, 'I don't want to suffer anymore,' and just cast His suffering out of His heart? Even though He is almighty, could He ever change His situation? God's love is absolute, unique, and unchanging, and it is impossible that He could alter His heart and decide not to suffer."

If you lost your loved ones, you could never erase from your mind the memory of them or the pain of their departure. It is there to stay. It is the same with God."

[God's suffering matters](#) because it's proof of Heavenly Parent's love for us.



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Very nice message... and back in the 70's I was the NJ church director.

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