Go Back to the Principles of Peace and the Breath of Love

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I have dedicated my life to building bridges of peace between countries that hate each other as enemies because of ideology and religion. I created forums where Islam, Christianity, and Judaism could come together. I worked to reconcile the views of the United States and the Soviet Union when they were at odds with each other over Iraq. I have helped in the process of bringing reconciliation between North and South Korea. I did not do these things for money or fame. From the time I was old enough to know what was going on in the world, there has been only one objective for my life: that is for the world to live in peace, as one. I never wanted anything else. It has not been easy to live day and night for the purpose of peace, but that is the work that makes me most happy.

During the Cold War, we experienced the pain of having our world divided in two because of ideology. It seemed then that if only communism would disappear, peace would come. Yet, now that the Cold War is past, we find even more conflicts. We are now fractured by race and religion. Many countries facing each other across their borders are at odds. As if that were not enough, we have situations within countries where people are divided by race, religion, or the regions where they were born. People think of each other as enemies across these lines of division and refuse to open their hearts to one another.

When we look at human history, we see that the most brutal and cruel wars were not those fought between nations but those between races. Among these, the worst were wars between races where religion was used as a pretext. In the Bosnian civil war, said to be one of the worst ethnic conflicts of the twentieth century, thousands, including many children, were brutally massacred. I am sure you remember the terrorist incident of September 11, 2001, when thousands of innocent lives were lost as the World Trade Center buildings in New York were completely destroyed after passenger planes were crashed into them. Recently, too, in the Gaza Strip in Palestine as well as in southern Israel, hundreds have lost their lives as a result of that intense conflict. Homes have been destroyed, and people are living on the brink of death. All this is the grim result of conflicts between ethnic groups and between religions.

Religious wars continue to occur because many politicians use the enmity between religions to satisfy their selfish designs. In the face of political power, religions often waver and lose their way. They lose sight of their original purpose, which is to exist for the sake of peace. All religions have a responsibility to advance the cause of world peace. Yet, lamentably, we see that religions instead become the cause of conflict. Behind this evil we find the machinations of politics, with its power and money. The responsibility of a leader, above all else, is to keep the peace. Yet leaders often seem to do the opposite and lead the world into confrontation and violence.

The truth of the universe is that we must acknowledge each other and help each other. Even the smallest animals know this. Cats and dogs do not get along, but if you raise them in the same household, they embrace each other's offspring and are friendly toward each other. We see the same thing in plants. The vine that winds its way up a tree depends on the trunk to support it. The tree, however, does not say, "Hey, what do you think you're doing, winding your way up my trunk?" The principle of the universe is for everyone to live together, for the sake of one another. Anyone who deviates from this principle faces certain ruin. If nationalities and religions continue maliciously to attack each other, humanity has no future. There will be an endless cycle of terror and warfare until one day we become extinct. But we are not without hope. Clearly there is hope.

I have lived my life without ever letting go of that hope and always kept alive the dream of peace. What I want is to wipe away completely the walls and fences that divide the world in myriad ways and to create a world of unity. I want to tear down the walls between religions and between races and fill in the gap between the rich and the poor. Once that is done, we can reestablish the world of peace that God created in the beginning. I am talking about a world where no one goes hungry and no one sheds tears. To heal a world where there is no hope, and which is lacking in love, we need to go back to the pure hearts that we had as children. To shed our desire to possess ever-increasing amounts of material wealth and restore our beautiful essence as human beings, we need to go back to the principles of peace and the breath of love that we learned as we were being carried on our fathers' backs.

I would often fall asleep in the hills after playing there. My father would be forced to come find me. When I heard my father shouting in the distance, "Yong Myung! Yong Myung!" I couldn't help but smile, even as I slept. My name as a child was Yong Myung. The sound of his voice would awaken me, but I would pretend to still be asleep. He would hoist me onto his back and carry me home. That feeling I had as he carried me down the hill -- feeling completely secure and able to let my heart be completely at ease -- that was peace. That is how I learned about peace, while being carried on my father's back.