

Living a Life of Faith and Gratitude

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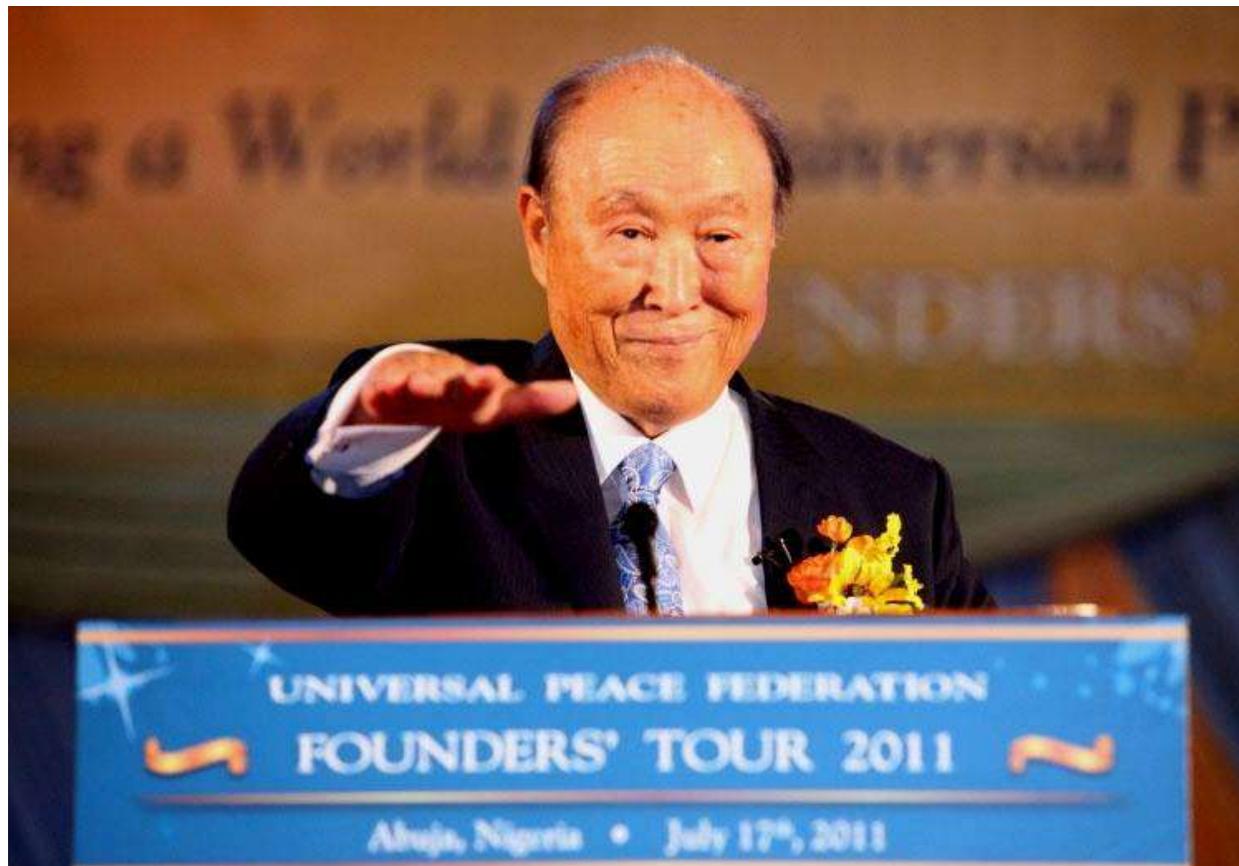


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Google defines faith as complete trust or confidence in someone or something. Another dictionary Merriam Webster states that faith is strong belief or trust in someone or something.

Faith actually finds its origin in the beginning of creation. When God created Adam and Eve, God had this expectation that they would have complete trust and confidence in Him. Through that trust and confidence, they would always feel hopeful even in difficult circumstances because they knew that God would always be with them. They would feel happy because though trials and tribulations they would succeed. They would always be grateful; they would always thank God, for life and for all the blessings that He bestowed upon them.

Faith and gratitude are in an inseparable relationship

Faith and gratitude are in an inseparable relationship. A smiling face gives us a good illustration of this inseparable relationship between faith and gratitude. A facial expression is a reflection of an internal or invisible feeling, emotion, thought or sentiment, a state of mind. Feelings, emotions, thoughts and sentiments need to be expressed. Not expressing them often lead to, rebellion, depression, destruction and in ultimately cases to death. Similarly, faith needs expression, that expression is a life of gratitude. Faith without gratitude leads to problems. This is evident in many places in our surroundings.

When we joined the unification movement we came into this church as full time missionaries doing at least a year of volunteer work or more. Then we settled in by becoming blessed and raising a blessed family; this is how far our faith has brought us.

In our faith when we look at people some always live a life of gratitude, but others are constantly facing arduous obstacles in their life of faith. Living a life of gratitude is a life where we express gratitude towards our faith. However, when people cannot express gratitude while living their life of faith, they encounter a dilemma where they do not how to thank others.

In Europe, the Puritans ventured out into a new world to practice their faith on a new land called America. Obviously when they first came here they didn't know what to do. They had no foundation to start life in America. They lacked food and basic necessities for life. That is why many people died from diseases and starvation. In that point of time, Native Americans came to the puritans' rescue, teaching them how to survive and help them live in this unknown land. That is why the Puritans thanked God and the natives by having a day of gratitude, which we now call Thanksgiving.

The Puritans set this holiday so that they would not forget the difficult times of starting anew and receiving help from God and Native Americans. This holiday was the expression of their heart of gratitude. In faith, there is another expression of gratitude.

Let us look back at the Puritans again. The Puritans were in an environment where they were on the verge of death, but still maintained their gratitude towards God. They also returned their thanks to the natives whom they received help from. Let's now look at the gratitude given to God by the faith of the Puritans. First, giving thanks to God is something a man of no faith cannot do. Second, even if you have religion on your side when you cannot see God's blessings you cannot be grateful. During that time, many people died from diseases and starvation. However in that environment the Puritans maintained their faith and still returned gratitude to God.

The Puritans' faith and gratitude was their life. While walking the arduous path of faith the puritans' faith never wavered. The most important factor in their faith was their gratitude.

Anyone can practice faith. However, the quality of your faith depends on whether you live a life of gratitude or not. Faith grounded in gratitude is the utmost expression of faith. It is a healthy faith, it is a productive faith, and it is a rewarding faith. A life of gratitude can promote many things like reduce in stress, growing one's faith through struggles, and through thanking God or others you can leave an impact to them. It is a lifestyle that continues to grow.

A life of faith isn't chosen.

Many people say that they are free to believe in what they want to believe in. However, a life of faith cannot be free. The basis of our faith is from God. From the beginning God created man and gave permission to one path of faith. He gave the command to not eat of the fruit and allowed a direct relationship with God. However, our ancestors chose another path. They chose the path they shouldn't have went. Do you know who chose that path? That is the path that we chose to go to when God told us not to go there.

There are many people who say they are free to believe in anything and are walking their own paths. Every religion has one goal, which is to direct everyone to the path that leads to God. However, nowadays people succumbed to their own greed thus deviating from the path of God. Many people chose to live a relaxing life, only thinking about their own benefit. In doing so, they are following in the footsteps of their ancestors, following the path of the fall.

What path of faith are we choosing to follow? Is it for our own benefit? There are people who have a life of faith just for their own success in their business. Is it for your own mental comfort? There are people who according to the situation and how they feel will change their faith. Is it to feel superiority? Many people use God and Jesus to feel superior to others and or special from others. There are many people who use faith as a refuge while perpetuating a life of sin. So, we can see the many paths of faith people have chosen to go.

As I have been here with the unification church I have heard many stories of how people accepted True Parents into their lives. Of the many stories, I heard there weren't many stories of how people chose to join the movement. However, there were many people who received revelations from their ancestors who guided them to True Parents and decided their life of faith.

What kind of religion is a true religion?

If it is a true religion that religion must explain the significant details about their creator, God.

If it is a true religion that religion must explain what kind of being God is

If it is a true religion that religion must explain what kind of situation God is in

If it is a true religion that religion must explain the purpose of human creation

If it is a true religion that religion must explain about human values.

If it is a true religion that religion must explain about value of all things

If it is a true religion that religion must explain the principle of true love.

So, than how can we find which one is true? True Farther said "In the course of seeking out the Principle, I took great interest in everything. I would have a question, and then pay attention to a myriad of things, and from among them, the answer would emerge. When that answer aligns with the east, west, south and north, I know it is correct. This is the Principle." (069-171,19731031) BOOK 6 TRUE CREATION

What kind of faith do we need to practice in the true religion?

Faith is not something limited to just religion. Faith is something we need to integrate into our lives. This is the message our ancestors have wanted to give to us from God. If our human ancestors had not fallen we wouldn't have the need for religion. The word, faith is probably used as a belief in our lives. Therefore, we mustn't practice faith to become a man of religion. True Parents told us they didn't come to create the unification church, but to get rid of all religions. If faith becomes our lives we wouldn't need to have religion. The reason why we have religion is to have a temporary system so that faith can have a foundation in our lives. Once faith has become our culture then faith and religion will fully complete its purpose.

One of my friends is going to have walking a mountain as part of their life. This person despite the weather would consistently go up the mountain every weekend. This friend here tells me that if you don't become addicted to going up the mountain you would not be able to go there every weekend. In this world if we are not truly addicted to an action it's hard to accomplish it.

To us the word addiction doesn't have a nice meaning(connotation). We do not call eating and sleeping everyday an addiction. This is because those actions are actions that must be fulfilled for our survival and are things our body needs. They are actions our bodies do by themselves in order to survive. Faith is not an addiction, but something like this.

Human beings definitely consist of the dual characteristics of mind and body, a physical element and a spiritual element. Many people usually focus on the physical aspect. That is because they do not know of God and human value that is why they focus their life on external elements only such as money and material.

Here our faith is to help us build ourselves spiritually. As we eat everyday while taking care of our physical body we must have a healthy spiritual life through a life of faith. When we do so, we balance with our physical and spiritual body, we become God's perfected creation. To make it easier for the average person to understand we must become addicted to faith. In other words we must practice faith as if we were eating.

Like how we do Hoon Dok Hae every morning, going to church every Sunday to listen to a sermon, giving 10% of what you made as an offering to God, and living life as a missionary, these are ways to train ourselves to integrate faith into our lives

If everyone here were to not eat it is evident that everyone would die. If we do not practice a life of faith it is evident our spiritual self would die. Just as how we supply our bodies with food we must practice our faith for our spirit to live.

In conclusion, we must practice a life of faith as if we were eating. In order for us to eat we put a lot of effort into things. We invest 8 hours or more into work just so we can get food into our lives. Similarly, faith too needs to be invested into so our spirit can maintain a healthy life. In order for us to eat we go to a company and do work. In order for us to practice a life of faith we must do prayer, hoon dok hae, attend Sunday service, tithe, volunteer in our church, community, as missionary etc.

While we work in society there are people who receive a lot of stress, but there are some who have fun while working. The person who receives stress while working even though he is able to fill his stomach cannot maintain a healthy body. It is the same with faith. Many people who practice their life of faith receive a lot of stress and eventually they cannot also maintain a healthy spiritual life. The only way to have a healthy spirit is to enjoy practicing our life of faith.

How can we practice our life of faith while also enjoying it? In the world every happiness, sadness, and suffering was created by God and you. Because of that there must be a solution to all human issues. There are times when we face a point where we cannot handle a situation. In these instances, we cannot solve it through any method. We have to rely on God with full communication. When we face a point where we cannot handle the situation we become hopeless and it makes it difficult to be grateful for a life of faith. And then we begin to doubt God and ourselves. In this situation, what we need is a relationship with God, a conversation with God, a way to report to God. In a situation where we cannot handle an issue, the moment we leave our trust in God, we are able to maintain a life of faith with gratitude.

So, you may say to me "Okay, if we have any problem than we can communicate with God, can be solve any problem?" It cannot solve the problem but you can get answer or get energy to solve problem.

Jesus said Mark 11:22-24 "Have faith in God," Jesus answered. I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him. Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you

have received it, and it will be yours.”

If Jesus talk to you like this can you believe it? When True Parents talk to you like this Can you still believe?

Have faith means trust, hope, gratitude, absolute. When you communicate with God, He will guide you right direction.

Please remember there are two faces; one is a happy face and the other is a sad and sorrowful face. The happy face is just like faith with gratitude; the sad and sorrowful face is faith with ingratitude. If you want to be a happy person, your faith and gratitude cannot be separated. They are one.

November is the month of gratitude. Also in a year it is one of the months that is part of the last season.

In a year out of 12 months it is time to say goodbye to October and year 2016. Even though there were many times where you felt you haven't done enough this is a time where we must have a heart of gratitude towards God and maintain a healthy life of faith. The new year 2017 is coming let us prepare ourselves by finishing 2016 with our utmost effort. Let us finish 2016 with a grateful heart and let's face 2017 with renewed hope.