

## Serving Together With God - I Learned So Much From My Grandmother

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Hyun Jin Moon's Family Peace Association



Families or individuals who serve as a way of life usually do so due to the example that their parents, family members or mentors demonstrated early on. Education through example is the most powerful way to continue this way of life, the goal being to normalize service in all areas of our day-to-day experience and in every relationship we build. We have all experienced the joy and happiness that comes from living this way.



I learned so much from my Grandmother at an early age as she consistently lived a life of service, especially within our family. She did not make a big deal out of it or try to bring attention to herself. She lived this way naturally and was always emphasizing the importance of family and God. She never once pushed her religion on anyone, but encouraged all of us to love and serve each other. This became the foundation for my own spiritual life.

At age 24, I joined a spiritual movement whose Founders' teaching on "living for others" also had a huge impact on my life. It was a continuation of what I had previously

learned. This perspective helped me to connect to God on deeper levels. I learned the importance of deepening relationships of love in the family and expanding that into our community and the world.

I also learned and grew by being a part of a Small Group for the past 17 years with a focus on spiritual growth and community building. The Small Group environment is a great place to learn how to build authentic relationships, where love and caring for each other is the center piece. You not only learn to find your own voice, but also to listen to others and build authentic relationships. This experience has given me the foundation to reach out, and to make many new friends in the larger community. As I began reaching out, I found God guiding and connecting me with wonderful people each step of the way. This has been profound and has enriched my life in ways I never thought possible. Everywhere I went, whether it was at my favorite Starbucks, my health club, or wherever, new relationships were being built. One critical point to consider is that these relationships were built over time, through effort and consistency. To quote Stephen Covey, "With people, fast is slow and slow is fast."



About seven years ago, I got involved with the Cookstove Project. This organization builds clean cookstoves for families in Uganda and Nepal. In the beginning, I was not sure how I could contribute to this important work. While swimming at my health club, I became friends with a Japanese gentleman named Ken, who lived locally. We were talking one day and he asked me if I was involved in community work. I told him about my connection with the Cookstove Project and what we do. Right away, he asked if we wanted to come to his Rotary Club and give a presentation, and of course I said, yes! I was not aware of Rotary or what it did. I just knew that it was

a community organization that liked to help others, locally and internationally.

I reached out to the President of the Cookstove Project and we arranged to speak at the club. As it turned out, the Rotary Club really liked our work and offered us a generous donation. After that meeting, I was invited back twice and later decided that this is a great bunch of "like-minded" people. So I joined the club.

Being part of Rotary has been a huge game changer for me. Through this organization, I have become friends with so many wonderful people and have been connected with the larger community. One of the many benefits from being part of this organization, and through the relationships built there, was being able to give numerous Cookstove presentations to many other clubs in my district and beyond, and raise more than \$40,000 through this effort. This has allowed us to help 4,000 families in a substantial way with a new clean cookstove. This happened very naturally and organically over time. You build trust through serving others, then God comes in and opens doors in ways you never thought possible. It is magical! Miracles come when we apply these simple principles of love and service.



After two years of being involved in Rotary, I was asked to join the Board of Directors, and a year later they asked me to be their president - something that I never sought out. I served two years as the president, and I cannot tell you how much I learned and gained from this experience. It is very humbling, knowing clearly that God is leading you on this path. You can be a part of any organization, not necessarily a Rotarian, for this to happen. Living these Universal Principles of love and service in your community and beyond is the key.

It is also important to remember that these types of experiences and our growth happen on the foundation of getting out of our comfort zones, taking risks and putting ourselves "out there" on a consistent basis. The fruit of our effort is not gained overnight, it takes time.

In conclusion, what I learned from my family, my spiritual elders and dear friends is that living this religious life is actually quite simple. It is all about service- - "living for others, giving and forgetting, and giving again". It is where we can meet and live with God every day. By our own example of living this way, we can naturally inspire our family and others to live this way themselves. And remember what St. Francis of Assisi once said, "Speak the gospel at all times, and when necessary use words." I truly believe that our actions and service do speak louder than our words.