

Jersey Boys

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When I was a child I used to make up songs about airplanes. I didn't carry a tune very well, but that was the beginning of my love affair with music. In grade school my best friend made me come over to his house one afternoon to listen to every one of the top 40 songs on the radio. Then in high school I drove to the department store to buy my first album, "Meet the Beatles." However, the first concert I attended was to see a group known as "the Four Seasons." From the time I first heard, "Dawn- Go away you're no good for me" all the way to Franki Valli's single, "Can't take my eyes off of you," I was hooked. Yet, I don't remember anyone else in high school as in love with the music of the Four Seasons as I was.

When Jersey Boys first came out on Broadway, I ran out and bought the CD. Of course I knew all of the music, but I did not know what Paul Harvey would call, "the rest of the story." Last night my wife and I went out to see the Jersey Boys movie and I learned probably a lot more than I wanted to. The movie was awesome in that the soundtrack covered most all of their hits. But what I also learned was the simple fact that success does not equate into happiness. I remember a similar movie about "the Beach Boys," another group that I grew up with. It told the story of an over-dominating Father and how he shaped the group's lives in a much less than perfect manner. As great a song writer as Brian Wilson was, his success, like Franki Valli's, did not necessarily translate into personal happiness.

Several years ago a Congressman's son was arrested for selling drugs. I remember how shocked people were; but let's look at the reality: the Congressman was away from home so much of the time that his son grew up without an everyday Father. I know fully how difficult my teenage years were with a Mother and Father that were almost always physically present. How much more difficult it must be for the child of a traveling celebrity, albeit, musician, athlete or traveling minister. We all know the term "preacher's kid," and we know that "PKs" are known for raising hell wherever they may go.

Likewise for the children of our True Parents. Many of us have read Ye Jin Nim's letters and poems dating from the time when she was still in Korea while her parents were in America. I was present when she returned to New York after being blessed in Korea. I witnessed her tear filled testimony, as she talked about how she had promised her parents that she was never going to cry again.

In the case of the Four Seasons, their true lives as depicted in the movie made me feel quite uncomfortable. As good as the movie was i.e., the music and the acting, it was not such an "enjoyable" movie to watch. The music was great, their lives were not. As good a person as Franki Valli was depicted to be, he was still an absent husband and an absent Father. As a result his marriage fell apart and his daughter overdosed on drugs.

We all grow up idolizing our heroes—but little do we know about their real lives. Whether it's a drug overdose that ends the lives of such musical icons as Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin, or Whitney Houston, or the suicide that ended the life of Vincent Van Gogh, success and happiness do not necessarily equate. On a very personal level, my baseball idol was a small second baseman named Nellie Fox, whose prowess led the Chicago White Sox to their first pennant in 40 years in 1959, when I was but a child of twelve. Too few years later, the chewing tobacco that he was famous for always carrying in his cheek caused him to die from skin cancer. Much worse was my college music idol, the folk singer Phil Ochs. I was always so proud when we sang his patriotic song, "Power and Glory" at one of our weekend workshops. In fact we just sang it during an all-night prayer with Dr. & Mrs. Durst in San Francisco during the Holy Ground, "God's Hope for America Tour" Kickoff Weekend. But Ochs ended his own life and left an abandoned family behind.

The theology of happiness does not necessarily intersect with the highway called success. Sociologists have suggested that any amount of money in excess of what a family needs to have a roof over their heads, feed their children, have the necessary medical care and comfortably pay its bills proportionally causes excess stress. I was recently introduced to "social-emotional learning." It's an educational system understanding that what young adults really need to learn in school is how to harness their emotions into creative and successful behavior. Likewise, in order for Unification Theology and Unification Thought to have true value they must teach people how to combine success and happiness.