

Down Is the Only Way Out: An Interview with Ben Lorentzen

Yolande Brener
November 25, 2013



Ben Lorentzen and In Jin Moon singing "Make You Feel My Love" at the True Love Ball

“You’ve got to have big balls to attend the True Love Ball,” read the invitation to Ben Lorentzen and In Jin Moon’s post wedding party. Around 100 people attended the October 12 event in a mid-Manhattan loft, and I was fortunate enough to be one of them.

In November, I asked Ben about his take on recent events.

Your parents joined the Unification Church after you were born. How do they feel about you being married to a member of the True Family?

It is funny to see the line "member of the true family," because it doesn't feel like that at all. It is In Jin, my wife, who happens to be the daughter of Rev Sun Myung Moon. But I think the question is asked because since my parents are very dedicated members of the Unification Church, they might potentially feel a bit strange about that fact. But they seem to be and also express to be very happy. Happy because they really like her as a person and I think they can see that I am happy.

How do you feel about being married to a member of True Family? Do you feel in awe of your wife, or only in the way that any man in love with a woman feels that way?

The only way it is possible for me to relate to In Jin as my wife is to first and foremost see her for who she is as a person. I don't think it's healthy to be in awe of people, at least not for a long period of time. But I do admire her. I think I admire her for being so "normal" and balanced having grown up in the turmoil of a very public family, inside a movement where you experience being seen as a saint, and at the same time inside a world that at times thinks of your father and your family as the devil incarnated. I admire her strength. And I see it again after the fact of us being together became public the coin got somewhat flipped: people outside the movement/ church seems to embrace us, whereas people in the church seem to think of us as—lets say it politely—"less than ideal."

She doesn't let that affect her too much, even though it does hurt, and she refuses to go out and defend herself by lashing out at people. I admire her kindness, I like her humor; she is always giving. So I love her for those reasons and more.

Would you like to share anything about your recent marriage for those who could not attend but are interested?

We felt so lucky and so happy to be in the company of family and friends from both our sides, also to have Dr. [Joseph] Lowery officiate. He is a long time friend of In Jin and even though his own wife had died just a couple of months earlier and he himself didn't feel his strongest, he pulled through because he told us he felt that this was important to him. So we were naturally very honored. The forecast was rain but it turned out to be a beautiful sunny day. We just felt very blessed. We had an Imam read from the Quran, friends and family read from the Bible and from Sun Myung Moon's words, so we had an interfaith based wedding for our interracial couple. Just the way we wanted it, because we believe in that.



Ben's band, Sonic Cult, at the True Love Ball

At the True Love Ball, why was it important for you to showcase new talent?

We decided that since we know a bit about the music industry and we have tons of contacts it would be cool to create an annual showcase opportunity for talent that we meet. Helping kids is something we both are passionate about. In Jin has done so for years in Japan, with her scholarship programs. I have worked with kids back in Norway, so one thing we want to do is to continue to create opportunities for kids. And what better day to launch the True Love ball than on our wedding day?

How has your life changed since your recent marriage and since the new addition to your family?

That's too big to answer here, but: I feel that it only took me 44 years to become happy. I am happy. The world can crush around me but I have my family and that is the most valuable. I am happy because of the family. That is the upside. But, because of the reaction around us, from people outside the family, I have never felt so hated before, not even after working 12 years with juvenile delinquents. But like Johnny Cash once said, "It's good to know who hates you and it's good to be hated by the right people."

So I have seen the highest and the lowest. It has put my ability to forgive to the maximum test. That is a good thing. All in all I think that any experience can be turned to a good one, at least over time.

What is most special about your son?

I cannot categorize it. It is impossible. To be a father again so late in life is an almost unthinkable blessing!

Why are so many members of the Unification Church angry about your family situation?

Great question!

I think it is because they have completely misunderstood the message of the founder, and that is also why

they do not experience any growth, they haven't for years.

But that is not true for all members! This is truer for people in leadership positions who feel threatened by us turning their value system upside down. We feel however that a publicly silent, yet growing group is supportive of us, or at least very sympathetic. I feel confident that more and more people as the years go by, and as they get to know us, will be more and more supportive.

What is your opinion about the future of the Unification Church?

In its present form it will die out. I parted from this movement when I was about 25 and up until In Jin started Loving Life. With her ministry I felt that this was something that made sense to me. I parted with it because I saw a very militaristic system where you were made to obey your leader. We still see that at work, like in our own situation: because we are seen as "out of line" we were forced out of our jobs. We have people on close to a weekly basis calling us fallen, evil, satanic etc. With that small-minded attitude as part of their culture, who in their right mind would want to join something like that? I think over the next seven years we will see some dramatic changes. It will not be possible to continue like now. Let me add that I have met some of the biggest hearts in this movement, people who really want to make life better for others in accordance to Moon's big "golden rule": Live For The Sake of Others!

Do you have any opinion about the recent story in the New Republic, which suggests that the Unification Church is on a downward trend?

That article is right about that, but that is something anyone can see. The article itself is weak because there are very few of the allegations that have been challenged by the people in question. Also facts are off, numbers are wrong, and it feels very one sided. "Let's get In Jin Moon" type of feeling. Not exactly an objective piece of work.

How do you maintain your faith on a daily basis? Do you have any rituals?

I don't feel like I have to maintain faith. It's not aerobics to me. I believe in what I believe, so no rituals. God is my parent. I don't relate ritualistically to my family.

How will you educate your son in matters of faith?

The only way possible: by example.



Do you believe in upholding the religious traditions of the Unification Church—or any religion—or do you believe in reforming them?

Traditions are important to me and to us humans, I believe. I am a bit conservative in that regard. But we have to constantly rid ourselves of traditions that hurt us or hold us back. This is painful. Not easy. But I like some of the Judeo/Christian/Unification traditions. I sense a belonging with good traditions and that feeling is paramount to our wellbeing.

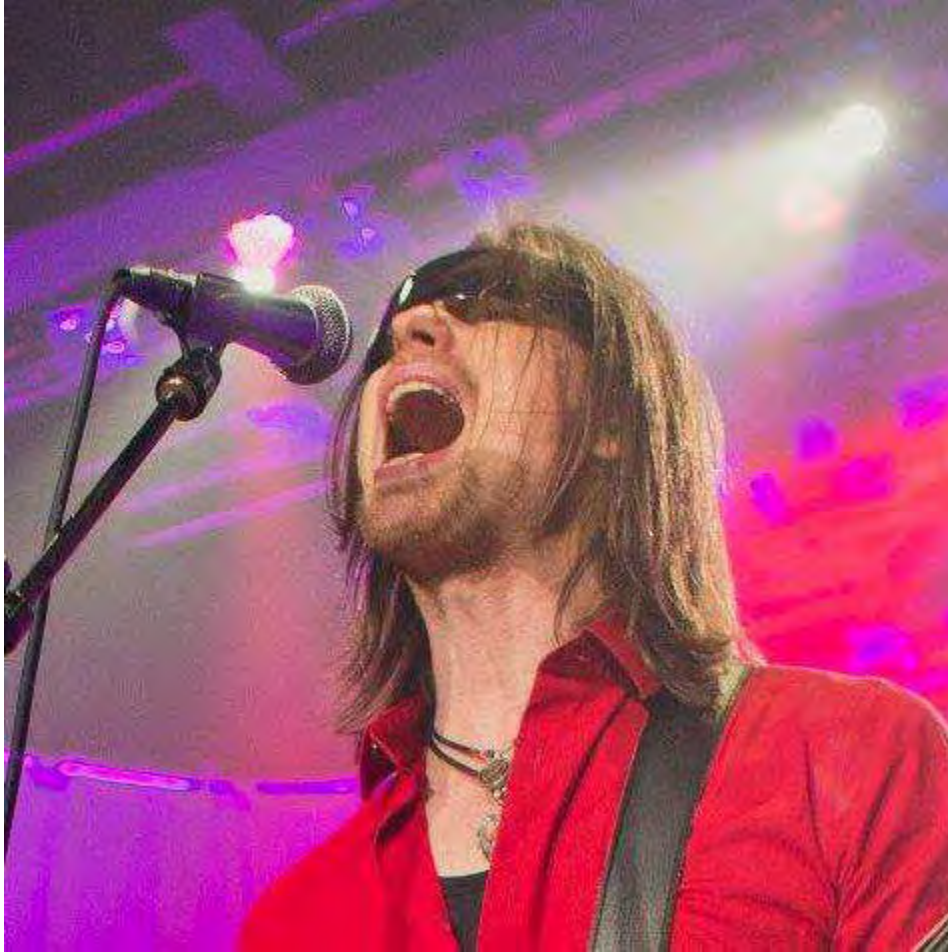
I asked this before, but I'm asking it again: Do you feel that rock and roll and religion are doomed to be in conflict, or do you think rock music can be holy? And if you think the idea of holiness is ridiculous, what is your standard of goodness?

Rock comes from religious music: gospel for instance had a HUGE impact on the fathers of rock. No way around it.

I think people are holy. We are first and foremost our parents' creation, and therefore holy. Religion has created a business out of categorizing people's lives, and I think that is very wrong. Holiness takes its purest form in maturity. Immaturity holds us back from the

purest sense of holiness. But even if you make a lot of mistakes your value doesn't change, in my opinion. I have seen over and over again people grow out of their immaturity towards maturity. The

potential for pure holiness is always there. That is why there is hope for humanity.



What is your favorite thing you have done with your band this past year? Do you have any upcoming events?

We are just about to launch our first cd. Super excited!

Musically, what is your ultimate goal?

Ultimate goal: change culture. Meaning be a piece that impacts culture in a direction I would like it to go.

Have your goals changed over the past year?

No, it was always my goal. No matter what I did!