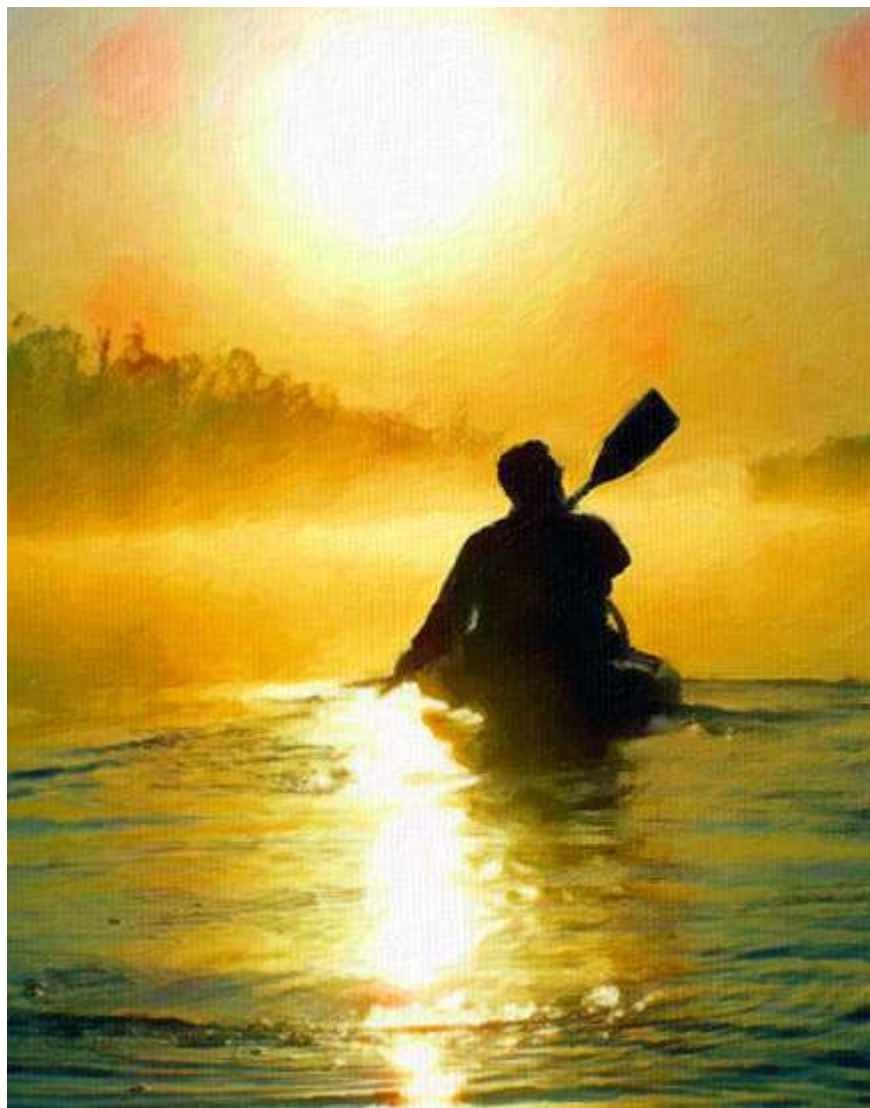


## The Growth Period: An Opportunity for the Unification Movement

John Redmond  
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My niece recently had a baby. My family and I went to see him after they recovered from the first wave of family visits. The great thing about a baby is that although he is tiny, all the pieces are there. He is in the formation stage.

In contrast, I have a teenager. Since he's been gone for a few weeks, we've saved \$15 or \$20 a week on milk bills. He is not tiny at all; in fact, he's pretty big.

When my kids were little and I said that clouds were made of dandelion fuzz that floated up and clumped together, they believed me because I was their dad. However, when they become teenagers in the growth stage, you can tell them the absolute truth and they won't believe it. "Yes, that T-shirt looks really ugly, don't wear it." They wear it anyway. Your position shifts and your relationship changes. In the growth period, all relationships shift and there is

a different approach to how good things happen.

All things reach perfection (completion), after passing through a growth period, by the authority and power of God's principle. So this experience, passing from the formation stage to growth stage and at some point on to the completion stage, is not unusual or weird; it's how things are supposed to work.



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We, however, often get locked into a snapshot. We forget that things are going through a growth period and get stuck in a concept that things will always be like this. So, your kid is six or seven years old and he behaves a certain way. As he grows up a little and starts behaving in a different way, it surprises you.

"What do you mean it's your opinion, when did you start having opinions? I'm the dad, I have the opinions around here." Nope, they start having their own opinions. They start to think for themselves, to experience things for themselves, to not tell you things. You start to realize that there is a lot going on here.

However, humans have this other thing called a "portion of responsibility" which complicates everything.

In the growth stage, there is a balance, a harmony, between God's 95% and our 5%. Many times, when you are moved by compassion for people, you try to help them and you give them everything and they get worse. It doesn't help. They have a portion of responsibility and if we encroach upon that portion of responsibility, we undercut their moral authority and responsibility. Wisdom requires that we approach each other carefully, that our relationship be carefully crafted. To support people without undercutting them, to uplift people without dragging them up — it's a delicate dance.

Think about Adam and Eve. I heard that the Fall took place over three years; it wasn't just a sudden event, but a series of choices that took them further and further away from God. Your decision culminates in a

single moment, but it starts when you veer away from your original mind and heart, separating from goodness. A set of choices, a set of decisions made under your free will, under your control, takes you away from integrity.

We can make mistakes. If you don't try stuff, you'll never make a mistake, but if you don't try, you'll never grow.

The growth period is a scary, chaotic thing, and there are a lot of ways to do it wrong. But there is a lot of grace for those who keep reaching out.

Not only individuals go through a growth period. Think about a young couple who just got married. After they cut the cake and get the presents and send the thank you notes, their marriage enters the growth period. They are learning to love each other, to have two people in the same house, spending money out of the same checkbook, preferring different things and balancing those things. They are not dealing with one free will, but two. Every decision is complicated by two stubborn, opinionated people with divine free will. The good news is that a marriage can thrive and blossom and be naturally beautiful in the growth stage.

If families go through growth periods, how about more complex organizations like religious movements? For our Movement, the life of the founder, Reverend Moon, was the formation stage. Now we are entering the growth stage. Christianity took 400 years after the death of Jesus for the growth stage and then it leveled off. But the first 400 years after the death of its founder was when that church became something meaningful for the world.

There is an opportunity for our church to go through this growth stage we are facing with brilliance, passion, verve, and style. There is also an opportunity for us to become video game players, shut the door, turn the music up, slouch at the dinner table, and mumble to the relatives. We have the chance to be badly behaved adolescents as a movement or we can actually surprise and delight our parents.

If you put the current phase of our movement in that perspective, then we have not just a responsibility, but an opportunity. In the growth period, you can experience greatness and plant the seeds for future greatness. A lot of people are discouraged by the state of our church and they miss Father because he kind of had it all mapped out. But it is not God's plan for you to be forever in the formation stage.

Since we have free will, we need to step out and try stuff; we need to make new relationships, we have to try new things, we have to win people's hearts, not because "mom said so," but because it's the right thing to do.



*Reverend Sun Myung Moon speaking at holy rock at Belvedere, Tarrytown, NY, in 1973*

If we put ourselves in perspective, we have an opportunity before us to create a great history-making movement. It's not over because Father died; it's just beginning. All the rules that you learned as a child do not get you to greatness; they get you to survival. At the top of the growth stage, you blossom, thrive,

and dig in, and see what you are really made of.

We are just at the beginning of the growth stage in our movement and Father is not going to come from spirit world to talk to you about it. He already talked to you — he talked for countless hours, [<http://www.tparents.org/Lib-Moon-Talk.htm>] and you're already not doing what he said.

So here we are. We don't have much competition because if you read the news, very few people are striving to be great in our culture. They are trying to be popular or rich. That's different than being great. The field is wide open for people who want to be great.

The growth period: In our religion it is often scary. It is where people go to die. But in my opinion, the growth period is where people should go to blossom, thrive and become.

I don't know what that looks like for you and I don't care. As long as you're thriving, it's contagious and that's what's really needed. Start to make things happen. That's our mission.

I think we mourned Father long enough. Now it is time to honor him by actually making his dreams come true and protecting God from the evils of man.

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