

FFWPU USA: My Journey With Jesus

Celine Stoco
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This blog post is the first in a series exploring the essence of Jesus and how our understanding is evolving.

In a world filled with uncertainty and chaos, people find comfort in the timeless teachings and profound example set by Jesus Christ. As we recently celebrated [Pentecost](#), which celebrates the descent of the Holy Spirit following the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, it should be seen as an opportunity to reflect on the enduring impact of his life and inspire ourselves to be and do better.

When I was younger, I found it difficult to connect with Jesus. For me, he was way above me. He seemed like a distant figure, almost unreal, and I struggled to understand how I could form a meaningful relationship with someone who I was only able to see in pictures. But as time passed by, I had the opportunity to listen to one of the best lectures of my life. I heard this person talking with so much passion, tears in his eyes as he explained Jesus's life course and how much God suffered as he saw his son being tortured and sacrificed. After this moving lecture, I decided I wanted to build such a relationship where I have tears in my eyes when talking about Jesus.

Firstly, I needed to understand the reason why God sent Jesus to earth. As a Unificationist, I concluded that he came not only as a teacher and a healer but as the embodiment of God's love and grace and that he was responsible for spreading God's word. . Jesus came to restore what had been lost at the fall, which was God's ideal for a family, with God as our Heavenly Parent and Adam and Eve as his children. . After thousands of years of preparation, God sent his son in hopes to reconnect us with [our original nature](#), thus bringing us back into God's parental embrace.

"Jesus came for the sake of God's love."
- Cheon Seong Gyeong 3.2

After understanding why Jesus came, I went and asked how he was supposed to accomplish such an enormous task. After reading Unificationist scripture, I discovered that he was supposed to grow and express the true nature of God, which is as a loving parent.

"O righteous Father! The world has not known You, but I have known You; and these have known that You sent me. And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them."
- John 17:25-26

When the right time came, he as God's Only Begotten Son was meant to find the Only Begotten Daughter, have the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, and build a family under God's true love, which was

how it should have been since the beginning. This might all sound like a foreign concept, as there is no other religion that has thought to talk about God's daughter in substance. We'll explore the concept of the Only Begotten Daughter in a later post.

"It would be a serious matter for the only begotten son to live alone. There must be an only begotten woman. Therefore, he must search for the only begotten woman, and they must get married in a place they mutually prefer centering on God. They must get married, becoming the bridegroom and the bride who can rejoice as horizontal parents with God rejoicing as the vertical parent, and multiply children on earth."

- The Completed Testament Age and The Ideal Kingdom by Rev. Sun Myung Moon

In his time for marriage preparation, Jesus taught humanity so much, and as I read some of his teachings I started to see how touching his [relationship with God](#) was. He is the reason a lot of people don't see God as a ruler or a tyrant but as a Father, a loving, [caring Father who is suffering unimaginable pain](#) but is unable to intervene directly.

"You should know that Jesus' view of God as the Father was that revolutionary. Jesus went a step higher and introduced God's love. In the Old Testament Age, Moses introduced only the God of authority, God of power, and God of judgment, without being able to introduce the God of love. But, Jesus introduced love."

- Cheon Seong Gyeong 3.1

Jesus also taught us how we should always treat others as we would like to be treated in Matthew 7:12. He showed us that if we want to build a better world, we need to unite and not fight, as said in Matthew 5:39.

"Through Jesus, God revealed His true loving form in which He loves His enemies and forgives a brother's faults, not just seven times but even seventy times seven. How could a father not forgive his child's faults? God is not someone you can see; in Jesus, the invisible God appeared as the visible God."

- Cheon Seong Gyeong 3.2

After seeing how much Jesus changed the way people saw God, and how people acted, my heart was touched.

The next step was to understand how his death came to happen. The person who made me feel a small piece of the deep sadness God felt when Jesus was crucified was Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon. He explained that Jesus died not because he failed, but because people failed him. From the very start, due to the failure of others, Jesus had to work much harder. He was obligated to pull his disciples out of the ashes, and he did all of that with a thankful heart because the only thing he truly desired was to allow his father, God, to have his children back.

Unfortunately, Jesus was crucified at such a young age, and again not due to lack of effort, but because his disciples abandoned him. Even after being tortured and on the verge of death, he taught us the power of forgiveness.

"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."

- Luke 23:34

Jesus was suffering and dying, but what worried him the most was that God's efforts were not recognized by the people. Because of his persistence and goodness, and even though he was not able to complete his mission due to a lack of belief from the people, he was still able to open the doors of spiritual rebirth.

"Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."

- Luke 23:43

After my journey of years of listening to lectures, speeches, and reading books, I can say that I now have a profound relationship with Jesus of love and gratitude, and my heart aches to think of how much suffering he had to endure for other people. Alongside the unimaginable pain God felt when witnessing his son being killed.

My journey to build my relationship with Jesus was profound and full of tears. It resulted in an even greater bond with God. During Easter time, I remember how I can always do something good, from selfless action, strong faith, or forgiving someone who has wronged me. I believe we can all feel closer to Jesus by following his example a little more each day.

Why Do We Do Bad Things?



By Lena Iwasaki

What is fallen nature? To put it simply, fallen nature is a term used in the Divine Principle, the core teachings of the Unificationist faith, to describe the habits and tendencies to commit wrongdoings. Sometimes we feel it is our inborn nature to hurt people, to lie, to cheat, to steal, to spread gossip. The Divine Principle states that God did not create human beings with fallen nature. It comes from the actions of our first ancestors when they turned away from God and His guidance. He created us with an [Original Mind that is good](#). Awareness of even small habits that contribute to our fallen nature is the first step in stopping ourselves from committing them.

“Whenever [evil] desires are sated, we feel unrest in our conscience and agony in our heart.”

— Divine Principle (p. 1)

Jealousy, the Thief of Joy

“Do not overrate what you have received, nor envy others. He who envies others does not obtain peace of mind” is what Siddhartha Gautama, most commonly referred to as the Buddha, says about jealousy. Let’s face it. Deep inside, we already know comparing ourselves and being envious only brings us misery, yet we all struggle not to compare our lives to others. Envy does nothing but imprison us in our thoughts and doubts. When we begin to obsess over what others have and compare it with what we don’t have, it begins the cycle of acting against our original mind. The core teachings of the Divine Principle call these the four characteristics of fallen nature.

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— Siddhartha Gautama

Failure to See From God's Perspective

This envy is the first characteristic of fallen nature described in the Divine Principle as the “failure to see from God's perspective.” The Divine Principle says, “The Archangel's [Lucifer] fall was his failure to love Adam with the same heart and perspective as God; instead he felt jealous of Adam. This [led him to tempt Eve.](#)” (Moon 73) The Archangel, being in the position to guide Adam and Eve, was jealous of their position to inherit everything God created as God's beloved children. We may not be able to fully comprehend something that happened so long ago at the beginning of human history. However, it is undeniable that we may have all experienced resentment towards someone who undeservingly received things we desire in life.

There is an old Korean folk story about jealousy between two brothers. The older brother, Nolbu, was the king of his family and will one day inherit the family fortune. The younger brother, Hungbu, by contrast, was humble, quiet, and shy. He did everything in the shadow of his elder brother. One day, Hungbu finds an injured sparrow and secretly nurses it back to health. The sparrow returns his kindness by giving him seeds. The seeds then grew gourds filled with gold coins which grew the family fortune making Hungbu the wealthiest man in town. Seeing that Hungbu was getting so much recognition and heavenly fortune, the jealous elder brother tries to do the same thing by breaking the legs of a healthy sparrow and nursing it back to health. Punishing Nolbu for this heinous crime, the sparrow returns the act by giving Nolbu seeds filled with goblins.

In this story, The elder brother blinded with jealousy could not see that his younger brother had only pure intentions to nurse the sparrow and thus was rewarded. He only grew the family fortune and their parents. Perhaps you can relate to Nolbu when you try so hard to be someone you are not by desperately clinging to looks, position, and materialism. Acting on jealousy blinds us to the blessings we may already have.

Leaving Your Proper Position

The second characteristic of fallen nature is “leaving your proper position.” It's not about stealing someone's place in line at the grocery store. More than leaving any physical position, the Divine Principle describes it as leaving your place of responsibility. Not thinking of who or what it may hurt to “step beyond the bounds of what is right and overreach themselves” is fallen nature (Moon 73).

“People must be awakened from their ignorance and must preserve the environment well. We must save the dying land and oceans...We should feel true ownership just as God does and become one in all respects, cooperating with one another to fulfill this work.”

— Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, 2024

A modern example is today's environmental crisis. For decades, human beings have been contributing irresponsibly to deforestation, fossil fuel production, weak policies, and pollution. We have left the position to take care of Mother Nature long ago, and we wait around until an extraordinary and miraculous invention can save it.

Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, also known as the [Mother of Peace](#), in her recent messages urges, “People must be awakened from their ignorance and must preserve the environment well. We must save the dying land and oceans...We should feel true ownership just as God does and become one in all respects, cooperating with one another to fulfill this work.” (Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, 2024). Taking responsibility sometimes feels like a big burden on our shoulders and we desperately seek someone else to blame. However, it is noticing small moments like these where we can choose to think otherwise that God blessed humanity with the biggest gift of taking care of this beautiful world.

Reversal of Dominion

Dominion sounds like a rather harsh word synonymous with “dictate” or “command.” However, in the Divine Principle the word “dominion” is referred to as the responsibility of human beings to take care of God's creation. Think of it more as stewardship. [God created everything in nature for human beings](#) and to one day entrust us with its care.

The *reversal of dominion*, the third characteristic of fallen nature, can be seen in the bible when the Archangel tricks Adam and Eve into obeying his directions instead of God. This can be compared to a usurper forcibly taking over a country, land, or people. We can even see this in the microcosms of our society. You may have experienced viewing a particular leader as incapable; maybe a teacher, guide, or boss. Regardless of someone's capabilities, does that give us the right to act as an usurper as well?

Wrongdoing Loves Company

The last characteristic of fallen nature is “multiplying evil.” Imagine little evil minions, but not the cute kind. We have all at one point taken it upon ourselves to share the burden of a mistake with the people around us. When you do

to share the burden of a mistake with the people around us. When you do something wrong, it feels better to have someone do it with you. Why? Because fallen nature taught us that we don't like to shoulder the blame alone. The bully at school has people around him because he feels more powerful in a group. Even gossiping is a form of fallen nature. We spread seemingly light jokes, dirt, lies, and private information about others in the hopes that we feel more connected to the people around us or better about ourselves by comparison. However, we are unknowingly sharing little evil minions with our friends.

“Everything that irritates us about others can lead us to an understanding of ourselves.”

– Carl Jung

See From God's Perspective

Fallen nature is not always obvious. It can be in the smallest, everyday interactions that seem innocent. This is not to say we should give up. On the contrary, we should be even more aware of the things we say, do, and think. As philosopher Carl Jung said, “Everything that irritates us about others can lead us to an understanding of ourselves.” One of the greatest steps we can take is to be aware of our seemingly innocuous acts that could be reinforcing our fallen nature, and to try to act from God's perspective rather than our own.

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Does God Suffer?



By Jennifer Pierce

God does suffer, and it matters.

It was the end of summer 2019. My elderly cat had to be put down. I cried for about a week, even though it was painless for her. My mom, who watched and supported me through that ordeal kept saying that she never wanted me to suffer that much again. (She almost denied me getting a new kitten based on that experience, but I digress.)

In my experience, for the religious community, the concept of suffering has largely been reserved for sinners. Suffering is treated like the consequence of sin. Since God has no sin, then how could God suffer?

Unificationists think of it a little differently. **God suffers because God loves us.**

“To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything and your heart will be wrung and possibly broken.”

– C.S. Lewis

It's not a huge leap, if you think about it. Like my mother, parents feel the pain their children feel, whether it be self-inflicted or caused by someone else.

Parents don't have to be the target of suffering to feel their children's pain. This is not to say the loss of my beloved feline friend is the same as the enormous

pain and suffering that some people endure, but the way my mother experienced what I was going through is comparable.

Seeing people you care about go through difficult times causes us pain as well, whether they're friends or family. It's impossible to separate love from grief or pain. As C.S. Lewis once wrote, "To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything and your heart will be wrung and possibly broken."

If your heart goes out to another person, naturally a sympathetic or empathetic bond is created. As researcher Brené Brown puts it, "Staying vulnerable is a risk we have to take if we want to experience connection." The connection made with another person opens us up to the possibility of pain.

In Unificationist teaching, God is all of humankind's Heavenly Parent. Our suffering is God's suffering. The fact that we are not happy and are hurting, God feels those emotions with us as our Parent. For God, closeness is the goal, not distance. If we are in the trenches, God is right there with us.

"Staying vulnerable is a risk we have to take if we want to experience connection."

— Brené Brown

I think the fear for religious people is that if we claim God suffers, it devalues the Divine. That God can be as base as the common man. But that is not what Unificationists are saying. We are claiming the opposite – God's love is so perfect and big that it cannot help but feel our hurt.

Our Heavenly Parent has personal suffering, too. Since sin has separated God and humans, God has never had the chance to really enjoy the sharing of love with us, to live with us in harmony, as Unificationists believe is God's true desire. History's journey to bring us back to our Heavenly Parent has been long and messy, and, so far, incomplete. As long as even one child of God is not connected to their Heavenly Parent, God will mourn their absence.

Rev. Moon, in his 1977 speech "The Pinnacle of Suffering," explains it this way:

"One thousand years is just one moment to God, who has no concept of time, and the pain of man...has never gone from God's mind and heart. Could God ever decide, 'I don't want to suffer anymore,' and just cast His suffering out of His heart? Even though He is almighty, could He ever change His situation? God's love is absolute, unique, and unchanging, and it is impossible that He could alter His heart and decide not to suffer.

If you lost your loved ones, you could never erase from your mind the memory of them or the pain of their departure. It is there to stay. It is the same with God."

[God's suffering matters](#) because it's proof of Heavenly Parent's love for us.

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Who Is God to You?



By Celine Stoco

The concept of God varies across different religious, philosophical, and cultural traditions. There isn't a universally agreed-upon definition. However, when most people describe this entity, they use words like powerful, ruler, creator, divine, transcendent, or eternal. These words have gravitas, but also create a feeling that God is far away, distant.

While there is a general concept of God, every person has a personal understanding of who He is, too. For some, it is love, for others God is the only way, the beginning and the end, or even the alpha and omega. Unificationists believe that He is [a personal God](#).

So how can you find your personal God?

“God is without form. If we should conceive of Him as large, He is infinitely large, and if we should conceive of Him as small, He is infinitely small.”

— Cheon Seong Gyeong 1.1[a].1

As we can see from this quote, creating a personal relationship with God can be difficult since [God can take any shape but no shape at all](#). So if we truly aim to achieve a relationship with God, we need to use more than just logical thinking since who/what God is cannot be placed in a box.

“We should not perceive the existence of God only vaguely and conceptually. It is impossible to understand the existence of God through logic alone.”

— Cheon Seong Gyeong 1.1[b].4

Even though it can be hard to connect with God, it is not impossible. The best way to start is to find a way that you can feel God or talk to God, through prayer, songs, reading, or [nature](#).

“You should know how to love nature and love people. Because all things of creation are symbols for God and because people are substantial beings, those who know how to love all things of creation and people will come to love God.”

– Cheon Seong Gyong 2.5.5

Unificationists, for example, believe that “God, the Creator of all things, is the absolute reality, eternal, self-existent, and transcendent of time and space. The fundamental energy of God’s being is also eternal, self-existent, and absolute. It is the origin of all energies and forces that allow created beings to exist.”
(Divine Principle 2.1)

Thus, God is not a bearded guy on a throne in the sky. We believe that God wants to be with us, His children, all the time, and even though He is not able to directly communicate with us due to [the fall](#), He is still closer than we imagine.

“God’s home is in the middle of our heart.”

– Cheon Seong Gyong 1.1.2

If you are feeling lost about where God is, don’t feel bad. It’s like that for a lot of people. For me, it has always been hard to build a personal relationship with God, since He has always seemed so far away. But as I thought about it more, I saw that God is with me all the time. He is with my family when we are having lunch together, within my niece when we are playing, in nature. He is in every little thing we do. If we start to pay attention, we will see that He’s there.

God is with us in the happy and sad times. He is in the small and big things. That is what God is all about. Meeting God is something personal, and as we work on it, and acquire experiences, this is going to be the most precious thing in our life of faith.

There is no right or wrong answer. You need to build your unique relationship with God. This relationship will change over time. It’s about putting in the effort. So who is God to you?

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