

What Goes On At a Weekend Divine Principle Workshop

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"We're holding a special workshop this weekend. Would you care to join us?" Every day, thousands of people all around the country, of all ages, religions, and walks of life, respond positively to this question.

And every day more and more people are finding that the Divine Principle Workshop provides the answers to the basic questions of life: Does God exist? Why did He create the universe? Where did we come from, where are we going, and why?

And far more than merely receiving philosophical answers to these age-old questions, people are discovering that the Divine Principle also offers workable and practical solutions to the present day problems of suffering, immorality, injustice, war, and evil.

Just what is the Divine Principle? And what is it about the workshops that has inspired and literally transformed the lives of more than 2 million people the world over to become happy, loving, and God-centered?

The Divine Principle is a series of revelations given by God to Reverend Sun Myung Moon, who founded the Unification Church in 1954. Since 1936, however, Rev. Moon had been studying the Bible and praying deeply for answers to the perplexing problems of life. He subsequently realized that God has been using a consistent strategy to save mankind through both the Old and New Testaments. This strategy, furthermore, provides the foundation for Moses' and Jesus' lives and teachings.

Through understanding the principles of how God created the universe (and man) and how He is working His restoration, all people can find new insights into the puzzling problems of faith in a troubled world, and Bible interpretation in an age of controversy. But even more than this, people are finding deeper meaning and closer relationship with God in their own day-to-day lives.

There is perhaps no better way to understand the Divine Principle than to attend a weekend workshop or seminar for yourself. This is truly an exciting time -- an experience filled with wonderful life, love, sharing, joy, and insight -- and finding that we can live with all people as brothers and sisters. Let's sit in on a typical workshop and see just what takes place.

The Weekend Workshop

It's 7 o'clock Saturday morning. I awake to the melodious sounds of a guitar and happy voices singing "Morning Has Broken." Still lying in my sleeping bag, I smile to myself and gaze at the ceiling for a few moments, just listening to the words of the song describing God's creation: "... Praise for them springing, fresh from the Word."

By now, everyone is awake. We get up and greet each other as a bright stream of yellow sunlight floods through the window. The four other fellows -- mostly between 21 and 28 years old -- are to be my companions -- (workshop guests) during the next two days. Michael, the guitar player, who is a Church member, greets us all good morning, calling us "brothers." (The "sisters" sleep in a separate room. They are being awakened in a similar manner.)

I look around. One brother, whose name is Denny -- a workshop guest like myself -- appears to be a

"hippie," with long hair, beard, faded blue jeans, and all the rest. Another guest, Bill, looks like he might be an accountant (he's actually sales manager for a dry cleaning franchise). He dresses neatly in a shirt, tie, and sport coat. It seems as if there's a cross-section of today's youthful society in the room.

As I put on my shirt, I hear sounds of busy activity coming from other parts of the two-story house. We're in the outskirts of town, and outside it looks like a beautiful, clear day is in the offing. A feeling of excitement pervades the air as we speculate upon what the day might bring.



Why I Came

But rolling up my sleeping bag, I can't help thinking back to the week before, when it all started. I had met this pleasantly smiling girl downtown, and she asked me if I was concerned about the state of our society and this nation. I told her I was and she then asked if I had any notion of how it might be changed permanently and for the better. I thought for a while, but had to admit I was stumped, for although I had definite feelings of what was wrong, I really didn't know how to bring a lasting, real solution, nor did I know of anyone who did.

It seemed to me that while the government is trying to legislate equality and peace and social organizations try to provide health care and other needed services, there is too little emphasis on eliminating the source of the problems. Radical groups vehemently proclaim that we must destroy the capitalistic society. But their proclaimed "ideals" are unattractive: immorality, drugs, "do-your-own-thing," and eventual Communism.

None of these appeared to offer a permanent solution something that would get at the cause of today's many problems and deal with them at their roots. "Basically, the cause of the problem is man himself," Darlene (the girl downtown) said. "If we can become loving, concerned, open-hearted, and conscientious people, we couldn't steal from our neighbors, trample on the rights of others, or neglect those in need.

We'd automatically, intuitively, know what to do. Just as when your little child needs something, you don't hesitate or question whether you should give him what he needs. So if the whole world would have this type of concern, wouldn't it quickly become an ideal world?"

Well, there was no question in my mind that such a world would certainly be wonderful, but, naturally, I was skeptical that such a thing could ever come about. "How can you expect everyone to become good, open-hearted, idealistic, and caring," I asked her, "when there's so much greed, corruption, and evil in the world?"

Darlene invited me to attend an introductory lecture at the Unification Church that she said would explain how God created the world and His original plan for mankind. She also promised that further lectures at the workshop would show a way whereby mankind can come back to that ideal. "This is the time of the Second Coming, the new Messiah," she explained. "And if we can prepare for his coming and follow him, then God's ideal can be reestablished -- the actual Kingdom of Heaven on earth."

So here I am, at the weekend workshop, anxious to hear more about God's plan for man and how it can be accomplished. But, as I learn quickly, while the mind and spirit are most important, the body can't be ignored. So, exercises first! From 7:30 to 8 o'clock I find myself, along with everyone else, enthusiastically doing jumping jacks, windmills, jogging-in-place, and other kinds of stretching exercises. Both brothers and sisters participate in these exercises, which we do in a circle in the backyard. I had to admit that this was the first time I ever felt joyful while doing exercises! Probably because everyone was really "into" the activity.

Rarin' To Go

What a great feeling to be completely awake, energized and "rarin' to go!" Now back inside the house, the delicious smell of cooking food greets me and I hurry along to breakfast. But breakfast isn't just breakfast. Like all meals in the Unification Church, it's an opportunity to share your thoughts and feelings and to get to know each other more. We start by singing a few songs. Jan, the sister leading the songs, is brightly dressed in a white blouse and orange skirt. Her smile and poise are so wholesome and pure that it's difficult but to smile and feel good -- just by looking at her!

Michael has been accompanying us on the guitar. After again welcoming everyone to the workshop, he offers a prayer and asks God to bless the meal and our activities for the day. We all say, "Amen." Next,

Michael reads off the names of the Church members who are to be discussion group leaders and the guests (such as myself) who will be in each group. All five of us "brother workshop guests" are in one group, or team, with the group leader, an assistant, and one other Church member.

The four "sister guests" are assigned to a different group, with three other Church members. (I later asked Bill, my team leader, why men and women are separated in the discussions. He answered that it's easier for women and men to talk about personal issues more openly if they're in the company of their own sex. Although I kind of objected at first, I later realized how right Bill was.) Everyone clapped enthusiastically after the team announcements.

I really felt excited and anxious to get started, and this feeling seemed to be shared by almost everyone in the room. When I smiled at another guest, he or she would smile back! So basic, yet what a difference compared to the indifference and negativity in the city.

Sitting with my group at the breakfast table, I found the meal (oatmeal, brown sugar, butter, milk, hardboiled eggs, toast and jelly) to be delicious and satisfying. If the workshop is as good as the cooking, I thought, this is really going to be something.

During breakfast, we introduce ourselves and get acquainted. Bill, the group leader, talks about his experiences before joining the Church, why he joined, and how much he's grown spiritually since being a member. "I just had an ordinary job," Bill says, "and I was kind of drifting, you might say. I didn't have any particular notion of a goal in life, so I got into drugs, like so many in our generation. Then, I met the Unification Church. After hearing the lectures and experiencing the hope they offered, I decided to get myself together and dedicate myself to serving God and mankind. So here I am.

It's been the greatest thing in my life!" His sincerity, openness, and positive attitude, plus his obvious capability as a leader, leave little doubt in anyone's mind that he's truly found something wonderful.



Lectures

By 9 o'clock, we've finished eating and help clean the tables. But an orientation meeting is to begin shortly in the lecture room, so we hurry over there. The lecture room is a place I find I'll be spending lots of my time during the next two days.

Michael introduces the lecturer, whose name is David. He's a pleasant-looking man, about 34 or 35, with curly hair and a ready smile. David's been a member of the Unification Church for eight years. He tells us, "We're about to undertake a wonderful journey -- a journey to uncover the origin of man and his history. We'll find out why and how man fell and how God has been working all throughout history, at times with saints and prophets, and at other times with kings and governments and societies, to restore man back to the ideal of love and happiness the Kingdom of Heaven on earth.

"We hope you'll have an exciting, stimulating experience," David continues. "You'll have ample opportunity to share and discuss any questions and ideas, as well as time for sports, entertainment, and special programs. We're all looking forward to a great time together."

Before the lecture begins, however, Michael gives some guidelines for our expected conduct.

These include no drugs or alcohol, keeping a high moral standard, and refraining from smoking as far as possible.

The first lecture is called the Principle of Creation. But before it starts, Jan and Michael lead some songs: "This Land is Your Land," "To Be Alive," and "We Are One In the Spirit." I begin to see how amazing it is that singing a few songs together can raise the mood and "atmosphere" so quickly. Although I don't know all the words to the songs or know all the people so well, I'm beginning to feel a special closeness -- a deep feeling of trust and love.



Knowing God

I know that this is how God would want us to feel for each other. But we've been holding back because all too often our trust for others has been exploited and our love not returned or appreciated. Yet here, my intuition tells me, there is love already being given -- God's love and concern for His children.

The lecture starts. David explains how we can know that God exists and what He is like; why God created man and the universe; what are love, beauty, and goodness; the existence and nature of the world after death; and the ideal world God originally intended.

"Why did God create this world?" David asks. "According to the Bible, each time God created He said, 'It is good.' Therefore, God made creations to be objects of goodness, and goodness can bring joy. To have an object of goodness is also to have an object of joy. Therefore, God must have made creation to receive joy."

After a few breaks for cookies and hot chocolate, David begins to talk of humanity as one family. The reality and truth of this hits home strongly, based upon understanding the ideal that God always wanted. Beginning to get inspired, he says, "Actually,

we're all brothers and sisters for we now understand that we all have a common parent -- God. That makes us all part of one, big family.

We may have black, yellow, red, or white skin, but inside, is our blood different colors? No. All blood is red. And regardless of our race, nationality, or background, we all feel the same human emotions: love, happiness, depression. This shows our common source, our common lineage."

By this time, everyone -- guests and staff members alike -- is genuinely inspired and excited. A warm feeling of unity and joy, like a glow pervades the room, unlike anything I've ever experienced. During lunch, I again sit with my group and enjoy a "family atmosphere." Like breakfast, lunch is more than just a meal -- it's a time to share and feel good. So, during the meal, we sing songs and various staff people stand and tell something about the Unification Church and their experiences in it. Even some of the guests get up spontaneously and tell how much they're enjoying the workshop and experiencing love in a concrete way. It's easy to tell something wonderful is going on!

Everyone Wins

If I thought the warm, wonderful atmosphere was at its limit, I was wrong. Sports come after Lunch -- healthy for the body and mind together. It's more important to be a good sport (winner or loser), than to actually win. Everyone naturally plays with the desire to win, but also with consideration for the other players -- on both teams. No matter who wins, everyone feels good! In a sense, everyone wins!

After dodgeball, there's time for refreshments, resting, and cleaning up. By 4:30, we're ready for the next lecture, The Fall of Man.

David explains the nature and origin of evil and how it continues to exist today. He also clarifies the true nature of freedom. "Man now has two selves within himself: good and evil. Which of the two is the genuine self or true self? It must be the good self. Nevertheless, there's another self, contradictory to the true self, so we must understand the source of this evil. Man lost his relationship with God when Adam and Eve fell in the Garden of Eden. This fall, initiated by Satan, brought separation from God -- spiritual death. Sin is being distant from God."

After the lecture, we meet in groups, pray, and discuss what we've learned. Many questions are asked and Bill and the other Church staff members answer. I myself find the Divine Principle to be logical and meaningful so far. Other guests tell me this is the first time the Bible has made real sense to them.

The final lecture of the day is called Mission of the Messiah. After we hear of God's wonderful plan for

mankind and how this was thwarted by the fall, David reviews the path of Jesus: his life, the mission of John the Baptist, the crucifixion and resurrection, what salvation actually is and the purpose of the promised Second Coming of the Messiah. We realize that when the Messiah comes again, he'll bring real solutions to the problems of the world. This is the hope of salvation for mankind. This is God's ultimate plan for restoring man.

Another group meeting lets us share our expectations and insights, to ask questions, and talk more deeply about the purpose of the Messiah.

Opening Up

Dinner comes next, but the lectures have been so thought provoking that the discussions naturally continue during the meal. Time is going by so quickly that it's already 8:30. A special entertainment night has been planned; but we're not to be just an audience, we're also to participate. My group puts on a skit -- an impromptu and humorous enactment of the story of Noah. Others sing, some play instruments; and one girl reads a poem she had written that day. In no time at all, many people who seemed shy or bashful now "open up" and really enjoy the chance to entertain others. After entertainment, there's a final group meeting and a time for discussion and reflection. At 11:45 it's time to call it a day -- and it's been a truly full and busy day at that! A day filled with joy, learning, sharing, and understanding. A day I can look back on as being one of the most memorable of my life.

On Sunday, we rise, have exercises, and breakfast in a similar manner as the day before. The first lecture today is the History of Restoration. I find this to be a fascinating account of how God has been following a definite basic pattern. All throughout human history, He has been trying to establish the conditions necessary for the Messiah to come to mankind.

But man also has his portion of responsibility -- and beginning with Cain and Abel, Noah and his sons, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob -- great men of the past were called upon by God to fulfill certain conditions so God could send the Messiah.

Unfortunately, these men only succeeded to various degrees, prolonging the Messiah's coming for 4,000 years -- until Jesus. "Fallen man's essential desire," David states, "is to go back to God. But sin, once committed, can't just be cleansed away. Some condition must be established to indemnify the sin man committed. For instance, through faith man establishes a condition for God to claim him back to His side."

A Family Feeling

A group meeting, lunch, and sports follow. As the day before, the unity and depth of feeling experienced in all our activities grows more and more. We really feel as if we're in a big, loving family, and I understand why the Unification Church members call their Church organization the "Family." Later in the afternoon we gather to hear the Parallels of History lecture. Here, an incredible experience takes place! Events throughout the past 4,000 years of history are shown to be exactly parallel in scope and significance to each other. For instance, the 400 years of the Israelites' slavery in Egypt matches with the 400 years of the early Christians' persecution in the Roman Empire. Or the 70 years of Jewish captivity in Babylon matches exactly the Papal Captivity in Avignon 2,000 years later.

Why? God's plan to save mankind follows a definite and exact pattern. To discover that pattern and understand how we fit into it at this time in history is a fantastic experience. I discover that I fit into the stream of history and God's plan! We all do.

Perhaps the most wonderful thing of all happens when we see that 400 years before God could send Jesus, the Messiah, God sent the reformer Malachi to the Jewish people. Two thousand years later, another religious reformer, Martin Luther, came to the Christians.

This was in 1517. Add 400 years, and 1917 is when the Messiah could have appeared on earth again. How to recognize the Messiah, what he should be doing, and his mission when he comes is the topic of much active discussion that evening.

After dinner, David invites us to study further to discover more about the coming of the Messiah, and to help prepare others for his arrival. This, to me, is the most precious and valuable thing in the world. I can only think, "If I were alive at the time of Jesus, how great it would have been to understand him, to serve him, to help him. The Messiah's second coming is in this century. The salvation of mankind is at hand. How wonderful it is!"

I and almost all of the other guests (we no longer feel as "guests" -- but part of the Family) decide to study more, to learn more about this most precious and important moment in human history!