

Building Principled Families: The Nuts and Bolts

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Frans and Elizabeth are among the 6,000-couple blessing group

The main structure of heavenly ethics exists, however, there are many "open ends," so to speak, which sometimes leads to much hurt and even misunderstandings. These feelings were growing over the years, especially during our years in Korea, a land of many unique traditions and special cultural aspects. Thus, I felt the desire growing in my heart to contribute to good developments in that field. In Yeosu, I took interest in writing and reading in my spare time, and I came to write about international ethics. Even though many words have been spoken about all aspects of life, there may be a need to compile a guidebook or "handbook" on international heavenly ethics for all aspects of day-to-day life, which can contribute to fewer misunderstandings, less friction and more harmony, happiness, cooperation and unity.

It became clear that the traditions of Christianity and Confucianism, with their many rules and commandments, and Buddhism and Islam with their emphases, respectively, on obedience and compassion, are not so very different from each other in their traditional forms; all brought together centered on unification and international exchange.

There is talk about unity between East and West, North and South, but how does that materialize practically? How can much greater unity come about in our various communities, in our day-to-day lives -- this is the question. I think that we want to increase our federation of families and make everything more beautiful.

Over the last several years that we have been in Korea, my wife and I have witnessed to and contacted people quite a lot. We have had many experiences and have gathered many contacts -- young and old, male and female, rich and poor, clerics and laymen. We hope these efforts made an impression on many people's lives, however, I am wondering if we shouldn't do more on unity building on the community level, by constituting some worldwide unified ground rules (of course centered on heart) in day-to-day affairs.

I know that our Holy Scriptures and many other books have touched the main principled areas of lives. Nevertheless, there are still areas to cover. I am under the impression that families must work this out individually, nationally, continentally. The cultural and character differences between nations and individuals are still quite large, which leads to age-old undesired disharmony and conflicts.

Family background

I grew up where working -- even doing homework as a youngster -- on Sundays was considered a sin, but in South Korean communities (and in the East generally) it is a widely accepted practice in families for children to focus on studying at the cost of celebrating Sunday. People give priority to work in Korea in contrast to keeping at least one day for the family, and for that matter, for some rest. I was born into a rather big family; I was the eighth of ten children. Our father and mother were good parents and good Christians. My Father worked hard. I remember that he was an "evening person," which meant he got up after the children left for school, but often worked until late at night. He loved to rest a bit after lunch.

On Sundays, we went to church both in the morning and in the late afternoon. Sometimes our mother organized singing on Sunday or family games on Saturday evenings. In our puberty years, our father sometimes brought breakfast in bed on Sunday mornings to my younger brother and me in order to encourage us to go to church. When I was about eighteen, my Mother put a book on my bookshelf, *Your body, God's Temple*. It was a good book, teaching about purity and obedience. The fact that I never opened the book until many years later when I started my present spiritual life is clear evidence of fallen nature present in human beings, blocking them from following the good path. As a result of that, we see the need for to be born into a new, pure lineage.

Yet, how do we deal with the way we address one another or with the stress put on the educational areas our children pursue? How do we resolve the sometimes strong conflicts that arise? Unity between one's mind and body is the only solution, but after reaching that state, will wisdom and consideration for others come automatically? Surely, but then, who has achieved it? What does it actually mean to do what is right and good at any given moment?

Focus on the family

Actually, it is best that we teach good ethics and sound values within a family. Parents can educate their children in an atmosphere of true love, trust harmony and cooperation. Religious families always had the challenge of not only being grateful for the grace they felt had come to their families but also to bring actual holiness into their families, through spiritual activities, songs, service and cooperation. Even when the growing children do not see their parents as "stylish" or wealthy, if the children, at least, are convinced about their parents' and siblings' sincerity with regard to a true spiritual and good life, they will be fine, and will follow the good way in their own life courses. One area where children can be experienced this is around the dinner table. When a family shares daily regular meals, with both parents and everyone else present, good, healthy home cooked food, and pleasant conversation in a "royal" and friendly atmosphere, heaven is near. Going to faraway places to find happiness is unnecessary. We realize that it is not where you "go" but what you "sow" that creates a sense of happiness and fulfillment.

For instance, when I was young I remember we did certain games to "overcome Satan" by wild shaking movements, and in the family of a friend they were taught to add the words "by God's grace" every time they spoke about doing something in the future. In Africa, there is the system of the extended family, everyone living together -- grandparents, parents, uncles, aunts, nephews and nieces. Once a child can walk, all the other family members raise the child in a natural way.

Because of the natural love that parents feel for their children and the pure openness of the child's mind, as well as its trust toward the parents, things naturally flow in harmony. It goes without saying therefore that young people and the adults surrounding them desire and prepare for the young people to have such a family themselves.