
Life of Faith

It is not easy to live a life of faith. It is an overwhelming proposition, but one that Unificationists answered in the affirmative. Each of us knew that it would entail hardships and sacrifice. We knew that tears would be inevitable, that suffering would enter in. Yet we perhaps did not realize what tremendous opposition God and the True Parents receive from Satan, and that we would share in that burden of persecution.

Since making our commitment, we may have come to God in moments of hopelessness and cried out that it was just too difficult to go on. But something within us was strong enough to draw our sword of righteousness, and with boldness and conviction, conquer that emotion. We may have repented in tears that we simply do not possess strong faith, commitment, motivation, sensitivity, wisdom, integrity, fidelity, and self-confidence. We realize that our ultimate goal is perfection of heart. Yet sometimes it seems too far out of reach for us to muster the strength and tackle that summit. And sometimes we become comfortable in our own routine and begin to rely on ourselves instead of trusting in God.

There are times when we feel anxious. There are days which seem to be inundated with difficulties. But some voice within us still cheers us on. That voice is God's, and the choir we hear is the resounding support from spiritual beings who desire to help us.

Satan's society sometimes looks tempting; life out there seems "normal" in comparison to our own. But a life of faith entails clearing the fallen trees and branches from the path that leads to God. And it involves setting foot on that road and then walking the necessary distance until we arrive home.

In living a life of faith we have to relearn everything. We must start to live all over again. Sometimes the process becomes very strenuous because we are not used to it. We are accustomed to a different lifestyle, and sometimes we want to go back to that time when we lived life almost exclusively on our own.

But when our whole being is soaked with the desire to serve and love God, then devoting ourselves to living a spiritual life becomes less and less of a problem. It no longer feels so demanding, but rather uplifting and rejuvenating. It is the old self—that fallen nature—still existing within us that is so strong, dragging us down and pulling us back.

We must realize that our life of faith will involve combat against Satan. Unless we learn that now, we will become hurt and bruised much more

often than necessary. But with proper preparation and a realistic vision of the goal, we will be able to win the war!

Living an active life of faith is a rather strange phenomenon to us. Because we are not accustomed to it, it feels awkward and takes great effort. Yet eventually it will be like breathing and eating, and then leading a religious life will seem the norm.

It is essential to develop trust in both God and True Parents. But we should also learn to trust in ourselves. And we should use all the weapons that are available to us: the truth, our heart, and our love for God. In order to survive and become successful in living a life of faith, we must rectify our attitude and motivation. Yet if we focus upon living primarily for ourselves and our own family, we will most likely plummet spiritually and find it hard to ascend again.

I think we have to consider our life of faith with God and True Parents as a steady learning process in which we must work to close the gap between ourselves and God. There are many things to learn. Just as exams and essays are a part of normal school curriculum, we have to pass spiritual tests. In school we build up credits in order to receive a diploma or degree. The same is true in terms of a life of faith; and the degree we are out to earn is perfection. All that we go through helps us to perfect our heart.

It takes such tremendous effort to reach God. Father once said that it takes seven times more strength to come to God than to go to Satan. Any person who wants to break away from the so-called "normalcy" of this world needs to develop incredible inner fortitude. That is why it is so hard to live a life of faith. It is far easier to live with Satan in his world; that life is the norm and what everybody considers acceptable. But to do the will of God and take the leap of faith to step into His world, takes exertion and effort; we have to fight upstream all the way.

We are in the process of learning the Principle. And through prayer life and activities, we must investigate each of those principles—how they

function and how to apply them in everyday life. That takes widening our horizon in any way possible. Although the majority of Unificationists spends a good many years living in a church center, this will not necessarily always be the case in the future. We must live within society and do our best to guide and lead people in living lives of substance and purpose. To do that we must develop an understanding of societal concerns and problems, and balance that with the vision God holds for humanity. But with the background of a life of faith, we will be much better equipped to deal with such difficulties and challenges.

Some people in history listened to God's voice and followed His direction. Some began to live a life of faith. They understood that their ultimate home is not six feet under the earth, but in the Heaven of spirit world. They perceived that this physical world is really hell, a place where two super-powers stand against one another, ready to blow each other to "kingdom come." But this world is not the Kingdom of God. Nor is it the eternal home of mankind. However to come back to God, to perceive things about Him, and discover how to make our way home, we must live a life of faith even while we live on earth. It is only through living a life of faith that we will be able to comprehend the greatness of God. A life of faith can help us understand people and come to love them rather than despise them. And it is within the context of a life of faith that we can meet God regularly.

God created love to be the essence of life. We know that even though we cannot touch them, emotions such as sincerity and love still exist. Despite its invisibility, love is a tremendously important tool, able to uplift people or if abused, even destroy. Once we embark on the journey through a life of faith, we are forced to learn how to love, for love is the substance we will breathe once we live in the spirit world. We begin to love God because this new experience He has given us is beautiful and wonderful. We feel something inside our heart that we never felt before. And our whole life becomes different because of it. Our insight deepens, and our spiritual vibration changes. We truly begin to live in an entirely new world. It is what can bring us out of the spiritual doldrums; and forget about feeling neglected or sorry for ourselves.

Once our heart is touched by the love of God, we feel deeply loved and secure. It is at those moments that the love dwelling deep within our heart is activated toward other people. That is when we pray for people no matter where they live. That is when we can even sacrifice our lives for them. That is the direct result of being moved by the love of God. And it is energized by a life of faith.

We receive salvation through a life of faith. We can be "saved" from fear, and rescued from the domination and abomination of Satan. Salvation involves being taken away from the side of Satan and placed into the realm of God where peace, harmony, and love exist. And when people lead a life of faith, that is the place they live.

There are many ways of living a life of faith. Monks and nuns live in monasteries and convents. But the faithful of any religion are called by God to give their lives in service to Him. Whether they are Buddhist, Moslem, Christian, Mormon, or any other religion, the followers desire to help God and humanity. Nevertheless, numerous religious orders are falling apart today. In unprecedented numbers people leave that lifestyle. Many have said they no longer necessarily feel an inner satisfaction, or may disagree with certain points of the doctrine. They are searching for answers to their very real questions of faith and may feel that God wants something more for them than living isolated from society. Many of them no doubt feel called to reach outward to help mankind, not just pray in a cloistered community, but to respond to that innate desire to bring salvation to all mankind.

It is a question of coming to know the living God and what He can do for us, as well as perceiving what we can do for Him—knowing what a life of faith really does for us, not just seeing the limitations it brings, not only noticing that it forces us to constrain ourselves to a certain way of life in order to come closer to God. We must be able to see much more the glory and freedom that accompanies any suffering—the fulfillment, purity and blessing that eventually comes to those who live a life of faith.

We need to live a life of faith in order to be governed by our heart, not just the rules and regulations of society. Religionists seek direction from God. We feel a responsibility to live a life of faith not just for ourselves, but to bring fulfillment to humanity. We intuitively feel that we were not created for ourselves; rather, we are made to assist society—our neighbors, our brothers and sisters. Therefore, we should not just center upon our own problems. Rather, we should think first about God and mankind. A life of faith teaches us exactly that: God first, then our brother.

A life of faith is adventurous. It brings us so many new challenges through which we gather more and greater experiences with God. And liv-

ing a life of dependence upon God, we come to feel more mature, fulfilled, and secure.

We have been called to erect a new society and begin a new tradition. If we attempt to merely survive in this degraded society and try to do it without God as the center, we will drown spiritually. Our life of faith is a beautiful opportunity to develop character and a relationship to God and True Parents. It also affords us the experience of cultivating and nurturing mutually satisfying human relationships. It is such excellent training; it motivates us to seek confrontation rather than take the easy road. For that is the way we polish the diamond of our heart. If we keep busy and do not withdraw or give in to weakness, our spiritual growth will soar.

Any experience in your life of faith is worth learning from. Once you are confronted with a situation and face similar circumstances sometime later, you can just recall how you overcame it the first time, and then apply the same method.

Although you can guide another person through your words, personal experience is the best teacher. That is a definite part of a life of faith: daily confrontation with yourself, and learning how to act based upon both good and bad past experiences.

Live a spiritual life, not a superficial one. One thing nobody can take away from us is the suffering that we endured to create the foundation for the erection of the Kingdom of Heaven. That will be the source of our pride once we live in spirit world. In the future, many people who are much smarter and more capable than we, will become Unificationists. Yet they will not be able to claim that they helped in the True Parents' personal, family, national, or worldwide victory conditions. But this is something we *can* claim.

We should strive to keep the pioneer spirit at all times rather than become too established and comfortable in our surroundings. We must always keep in mind that the reason we are here is because of our love for God and True Parents.

God asks that our life of faith be built on sacrifice, total dedication, and active participation. To do that, we should be more serious about our goal; we are not here simply to feel good. Of course it is good to laugh; it is a healthy release of any tension or emotions. But we cannot neglect the fact

that we have committed our lives for a momentous task. And we must realize that we need to depend totally on the help of God and spirit world to accomplish it. We can do many things ourselves, but the greatest amount is done by them. That is why daily connection to both God and spirit world is essential to living a rich and deep life of faith.

A life of faith should serve to separate us from Satan and return us to God. Although we still live in Satan's society, we should focus on being *in* society, but not *of* it. Yet that does not mean we should not live a rich and full life; it simply means that our standards of value must be in accordance with God's will. And to do that effectively, we must make God the center of our lives.

Some Unificationists think they have lived according to the Principle, but they still have not been so successful in bringing great results. If that is your situation, why not check whether you really live your life of faith according to the Principle. There may be a deficiency someplace; you may have overlooked certain points.

Many of the first Christians died upside down on the cross. Some were eaten by lions, and others were burned. Even in that day and age they held a certain position, and even today Christian martyrs are respected. What is our position? Father has referred to us as the first disciples of the third Israel. Therefore, even though this life of faith we are living may be arduous, we don't have any basis for complaint. This is not yet the time to feel total ecstasy. Yes, we may feel certain moments of joy, but it will be some time yet before we live in Heaven. I believe that "Heaven" will be experienced when families live together and make God their focus. That is when they will share true happiness and joy with each other, and with their God. But that time is yet to come. We are still faced with the separation of families because frontline work is so crucial now.

This is still the time to sacrifice for the greater good. Many millions of people will profit from our sacrifice. You have to make up your mind that you want to give your life for the sake of God and humanity. Realize the benefit is great for you and will also be of great magnitude for billions of people.

Although they were persecuted, Christians were proud to be different—to live in a realm spiritually quite apart from many people in their contem-

porary society. Too often Unificationists of today would rather be considered a part of this fallen world. They are afraid to be "different" and would rather just blend in. Of course, we must become a part of society and live within it, but we should still view our lives as different from the lives of other people. Our purpose is different, and that is one point which measures our personal integrity and pride. As a whole, Unificationists used to be proud to be "different," grateful for the gifts of the Principle and the Blessing. Yet if we opt to be just like everybody else and forgo living a life of faith in favor of just living "life," will we ever fully join the True Parents' crusade to restore this dead and decaying world?

It is such a great task to live a life of faith. Unless we develop a great love for God and True Parents and live by Principle in order to evoke a response from heaven, it will be difficult to succeed. As we come closer to God, our sense of responsibility will increase, and our desire to live with Him will grow ever greater. As the world becomes increasingly humanistic and corrupted, I feel that living a life of faith will become even more strenuous in the future, but we have to grow spiritually in proportion to what is demanded of us. Once we exemplify our faith in God, He will breathe new life into us.

Include elements of the Principle in whatever you speak. If you experience the Principle, you will be able to speak about it with authority. Reading sections of the Principle from the book is one thing and certainly an important beginning, but investing yourself into *living* it through your life of faith, will make a difference to your self-confidence and integrity. And you will also make a great impact upon those you speak to. How can you talk about the heart of God if you have never experienced it? Not only will it be hard to bring forth words, but those words may strike others as sounding quite hollow.

We must progress into perfection. We need to work on overcoming our problems in order to become stabilized, strong, and wise enough to resist temptation and not create bases for Satan to invade. A life of faith is a full-time job. Any person who believes certain religious dogma, yet considers that a life of faith is something he can "do" for an hour a week or even through five small prayers a day, will never experience total salvation.

To live a life of faith well is serious business, and something which calls

for sincerity. It involves living by the rules of the heart, conscience, the Principle, and the new tradition which is being established by the True Parents.

Big problems occurred as a result of the fall. Spiritual darkness shrouded everything. Spiritual ignorance resulted. And that is still the greatest weapon of Satan today. It is due to ignorance that millions and even billions of people have suffered and died. Therefore, we have to become knowledgeable about God—His nature, His physical and spiritual laws. It is when we do, that we will be able to act upon what we know and become the incarnation of love.

It is so hard for fallen man to realign himself with God. Investing energy to sustain a life of faith on a daily basis is very demanding. If an athlete only trains directly before he enters some competition but stops exercising afterward, he will have trouble sustaining his previous level of energy and strength. Those athletes who train every day—before and after a meet—will always be in good shape.

I feel this is also what a life of faith entails. The best thing for us is to stay in training for the rest of our lives. But that takes pacing ourselves—not going full steam for a certain number of weeks, months, or years and then burning out and giving up. We will stay in top spiritual condition if we "work out" every day and establish our priorities according to the goals of our present mission as well as our future goals, and the paramount goal of perfecting our heart. Then we will not be deterred in cultivating our relationship to God.

Spiritual growth entails re-creating yourself. Father gives us the main direction and points us down the road we should take. He explains the Principle and gives us the go-ahead to restore the temple within.

We need to make this structure so inviting for God that He will be drawn to us. You can begin to fantasize what it will be like. Envision a beautiful building of gold and diamonds. Then draw up the blueprint. Keeping that vision in front of you every day can help you work with enthusiasm on the rebuilding and remodeling of your heart and soul. But invest some time and effort into beautifying the outside, too. Once you make the inside brand new, the outside might look shabby in comparison if you do not work to adorn it.

If you really want God to live within you, you will do everything to keep your heart clean and sparkling every day. The re-creation of self is probably the most creative venture any of us will ever work on during our

lives. And we do this without timber or steel, but by actualizing the elements of tangible faith through living a life of faith.

A new way of life was offered to each of us. We Unificationists individually made the decision that it is the right way to go. But this involves turning ourselves around and heading in the right direction. To do that, we have to replace all our former values with new ones. We must discover the way to manage ourselves and our lives. We were previously educated by a certain system of thoughts and examples, but upon stepping into this new world, we notice that we are now facing a different direction. If we want to be reborn, we must start from the humble position. We will mature spiritually by using many of the same tools and principles that we learned previously. But there is one major difference: God must be at the center.

If you practice living a spiritual life, the intensity of your problems will diminish. Practice. Practice love. Practice caring. Practice serving. Not just once a week, but every day.

Look upon everything as training. By training yourself, you ultimately become a better person. Become self-sustaining and self-sufficient to have the strength to persevere through whatever spiritual trials you encounter. "Boot camp" in the army encourages the participants to become proficient in fighting their way through war, and even life.

A life of faith is real life. And life is not a "bowl of cherries." It takes hard work to survive in this world. We have to equip ourselves, put ourselves into gear, and get ourselves into good shape physically, emotionally, and spiritually. The kind of training Unificationists undergo only serves to help us achieve any of our goals. But if we set our mind to accomplishing a certain task and then enact the Principle, we can accomplish miracles. If you want to become a pianist, you have to practice faithfully every day. It was discovered that Franz Liszt practiced seven hours a day—and he became a musical genius!

How does a spiritual renewal take place? In the Christian church, baptism and the sacraments are conditions which can bring people closer to God. Denominations vary in viewpoint of what constitutes a rebirth. Some claim that baptism is only effective if a person is totally immersed in water. Others feel that the sprinkling of a few drops of water will suffice. Still others believe that only when you speak in tongues are you spiritually reborn. Who is right? Who is wrong?

It takes certain elements to live a rich spiritual life. To sustain life—to multiply thoughts, ideas, and energy requires give and take. The first chapter of the Principle gives us many insights into how. Neither Moses nor Jesus were able to convey to their followers all elements necessary to lead a successful spiritual life. Not enough of God's truth was revealed at those times. Yet through an intimate connection to God, True Parents have received a great deal of insight and they show us how to conduct a life of faith on both the individual and family levels.

It is not enough to live a religious life as in the past—attending church once a week, yet at the same time living a self-centered way of life. Religion is not just the practice of external rites and rituals. It is also something internal. True Parents teach us that living our faith must become a way of life, not something abstract. They tell us that it is the essence which stirs us to come alive spiritually. Whether we work in a factory, bakery shop, or on a train, we should give witness to the glory of God and the building of the new world. That is one of the main points in living a life of faith during this age of attendance to the Messiah.

From my observation, living one's faith seems a decisive factor in the struggle to become a true human being. I feel that it is when people try to live *without* religion and especially without God, that they unwittingly erect even more obstacles which block their goal to become a genuine person.

At the risk of sounding too simplistic, if each of us could emulate the religious leaders of the past and learn to be parental to one another—sacrifice, serve, and love God and each other—our own personalities would become more well-rounded, and the effect we would have on the lives of others would be much more constructive than destructive.

When people sink into deep depression and negativity, they can easily lose their perspective. If we were to abandon our faith, we may find ourselves wedged in a corner from which we cannot escape without substantial remuneration. That payment is sacrifice and service, and involves taking responsibility to break free of the cocoon of self-doubt. When we compare our lives with those of the suffering peoples throughout the world, we will see how many blessings we take for granted and how small our problems really are.

Every person can train himself. Every person has brains. Every person has a heart. In fact every person is composed of forty-six chromosomes, and billions of cells. You are a walking miracle! You just have to train yourself. You were not born with the ability to read; you had to learn how. But if you practiced, you graduated from picture books to novels and eventually could even read encyclopaedias.

Everything is training. You had to be taught how to walk and how to eat. You can train yourself to do anything. It takes activating yourself in a certain direction. You begin to function once you get motivated. A jumbo jet stands on a runway quite a long time before it takes off; the turbines are started quite a while beforehand because the whole machine needs time to warm up.

As soon as you awake, warm up your turbines. Then once you want to propel yourself into high gear, you can do it easily. Even when you are tired, if you push yourself a little bit, you will be able to thrust yourself to new heights. Experience in life is like that. Once you push yourself over the limits you previously set for yourself, you will discover new realms and new lands. And that can make any of us an even greater person.

A life of faith is a part of life. You may only see it as a job or mission but that is because of the fall. If the fall had not happened, all of humanity would have been connected to God in a very normal way. They would have lived a divine life, a life with God. But that is not our situation. We must go back to God, and that takes tremendous energy. If the fall would not have happened, we would have lived with God at all times. We would have lived a life of faith without even knowing it. We would have responded to God in everything we did. That would have been the perfect world.

Yet that is not our situation today. We live at the time of the Messiah's return. He is determined to build a new world, leading humanity from Satan's world into God's territory. Once the perfect world is established, we will live with God naturally—day in and day out, not just an hour a week. Even though it is hard to live a spiritual life, there is no escape. We only find it arduous because two opposing forces are at work. Because Satan still dominates this world, it is so hard for us to live a life of faith. But once millions of people take up the commitment to live with God, life will be most beautiful, and no longer an insurmountable challenge.

But presently so few people consciously live with God. Therefore, we should not think of rationalizing why we could abandon this way of life in three, five, or even ten years. We need to continue to live a religious way of life. Although we may not be able to recognize it now, living a life of faith

has nothing but benefits. If we would not live with God and True Parents, our lives would have little meaning. We would still be searching like so many people—trying desperately to find the purpose of life.

The problem is that we are living during the period of transition from the old world into the new. It is hard to straddle both worlds. We have to make up our minds that a life with God and True Parents is beautiful. And that such a life is our future, not something temporary. Some Unificationists may feel reluctant about living a life of faith because they think that means they will have to fundraise and witness for eternity. Surely, all of us will do far different things in the future. The point is to look at living a life of faith as living our life with God, no matter what it is we do. This is the time of pioneering, the time of war, and the time of emergency; we may still have to do things that we don't particularly like. But great benefits will definitely be part of our future.

I have made up my mind and pledged to God that for the rest of my life, I will stay on the frontline. It is an extremely liberating feeling. If you want to be free, make up your mind that your life belongs to God. Then be willing to do whatever it takes to restore this world. The real blessings will come to us in the spirit world. And that is when we will arrive at our eternal home.

Through working on the frontline, you get stronger and much more assistance from the spirit world. Those who remain in the background may become reluctant because they just live from day to day without much spiritual confrontation. Even the spirit world has a harder time cooperating with them. A spirit who wants to grow, absolutely wants to do something for God and will desire to work with those who are on the move. Being on the frontline means growth, which is definitely an element in living a life of faith.

Anyone in a physical or business mission has to exhibit solid faith and be spiritually strong. Some leaders feel that if a person is not able to do a spiritual mission, it is best to put him in a business mission. I feel that this point is grossly misunderstood. Personally, I practice the opposite principle. In many senses, business and fundraising are much more demanding tasks. I find that someone who is spiritually strong will maintain a life of faith and high spiritual standard no matter what he does. Therefore, I try to encourage such a person to undertake fundraising or work in business. I feel more confident that he will be successful because of his spiritual standard.

Presently, our lifestyle is not "normal" as viewed by society. Yet we do not have to expect to do the same activities for the rest of our lives. It will not be necessary to go fundraising or get up very early in the morning forever. Later we may be just as effective in working for God living a different life-style. Yet during this emergency time, we still have to remain active and live our lives of faith as we do.

No matter how much someone may protest, all mankind is in need of healing. If you have physical pain, the wisest thing is to go to the doctor. You know that you can probably get help from him, and it need not be a negative experience. This is also true in our life of faith. Once we surrender before our physicians, God and the Messiah, we will be uplifted and fulfilled. Their love and compassion are so full of grace and promise. They offer relief and comfort to a bruised heart.

We are only halfway healed once we accept the Messiah. And he tenders the other portion of the cure by extending his love and giving us direction which can assist us in fulfilling our course of restoration. Each of us decides whether we will grab his hand and follow him. Living a life of faith is an individual choice; that is the medicine no one can take for us.

Sometimes you can see spirituality within a person's face. When you look at Father in person or even in a picture, you see a "second" face, a transcendency—a spiritual aura. There is an incredible depth in his face and his whole appearance. And if we are perceptive, we can notice that. A person's spiritual depth is somewhat reflected in his physical countenance.

If you don't like what you see in the mirror, do something about it! Change until you are satisfied that you reflect something of God's nature that is truly beautiful and special. Gain weight; lose weight. Change your hairstyle. Begin to feel a harmony internally and externally. Change your habits and behavior if you know that they offend you or others. A life of faith is not limited to prayer and service. It incorporates becoming and offering to God the best possible "you."

It is inevitable that sometimes you are going to be hurt by something someone does or says. Yet if you can cope well with this spiritual "hot iron," it can make you change for the better. You become somehow different, somehow new. There is nothing gained without the shedding of something—be it blood, sweat, or tears. But people could pass you by unless

you open up and are willing to totally involve yourself with others — discarding those fears of possibly becoming hurt. This challenge is of the "all or nothing" variety.

Tomorrow you will confront the goals you do not make today. But if you still don't make them tomorrow, be assured that you will encounter them sometime in the future. Whether or not you climb one more rung on the ladder to Heaven today, does not matter so much. But if you don't do it today, you will have to do it in one of your tomorrows. In your fight to earn release from Satan, there is no way to avoid confrontations with him and his world.

God has been preaching through His mediators. Sometimes they used a stick or a sword to convey something about the nature of God. But people of the time did not always listen or obey.

Many people believed His messengers. They believed that if they did not repent, they would go up in flames. Fear, not love, was the motivator. "true Parents teach us that living with God is something so precious, that to become spiritual is a beautiful thing and a key to meeting God. Yet they also tell us that spirituality is not something that comes over you for an hour a week, but something which you develop to live a richer life. Inhaling the love of God is like taking a breath of life. They tell us that if we want to breathe, if we want to live, then we *have* to have God."

Walking the long way home to God is the essence of our life of faith. We first need to believe that God exists. We also must recognize that He has been behind the scenes of human history—preparing for the time when the world could be restored. We have to recognize that His was the voice which spoke through the prophets and the central figures of history. We must realize that in the midst of Satan's world, God raised people up to lead mankind away from evil, but unfortunately so many were stoned to death or killed in some other way.

Even though He has not been able to show His face to many people, we need to believe that God is alive. We must have faith in his inherent goodness and know He has a vision in mind for all of us. Our own life of faith must reflect that we believe Him to be the ultimate—the omnipotent, omnipresent, and almighty. He is our Eternal, and we must do whatever we can to find harmony with Him.