

George Fernsler, Washington, D.C., 1965



At age five or six in 1945-46, I had an extraordinarily strange and vivid dream that stuck in my memory. Oddly, I was standing at night in the middle of our town's main street, lit only by a glow from our colonial-era church and its graveyard. Cartoon figures of the Sun and the Moon appeared before me, each with arms and legs. The "Moon" demanded that I go and wake the sleeping people of my town to tell them that "Sun and Moon are on earth!"

I first had a sense of a particular spirit guide a few years later, when I found out that I could relax myself into a trance state and then, if deep enough, have an out-of-body experience. A certain guide was there in an apparent alternate reality. He showed me that the everyday world was bathed in darkness from this view. He took me within sight of another world of bright light, marked off by a boundary line – but I was to go myself to the world of light, while resisting tentacles of darkness. If I made it, I couldn't stand in the direct sun there, but I could go down to various heavens with a seemingly symbolic or indirect sun.

As I read the Bible in my high-school years, I would see myself as a Jewish boy of the time listening to Jesus. I received revelations: that I lived in the "same times as those of Jesus" and that the Christ could return as a man; that this time on the worldwide scale there would be "many John the Baptists" and that I should somehow be one.

The idea that I could be any kind of "John the Baptist" was total nonsense on its face. I had not walked, talked, or even crawled properly until I was three. Even through much of high school, I could not pronounce many common sounds, and I was extremely awkward; I stuttered regularly, and my head would twitch. So, I was afraid to

open my mouth unless really necessary. A speech therapist helped me learn to pronounce common sounds that were difficult, and an unconventional doctor used chiropractic-like cranial adjustments to alleviate pressure on nerves to extremities with cerebral palsy symptoms. Though the outward problems were much lessened, I was still hesitant to speak.

I was living in Philadelphia in April 1965. My friend, Diane Giffin, urged me to visit a religious group in Washington, D.C. At the time of her invitation, I felt the strong presence and excitement of a spirit guide whom I had, at times in my life since childhood, been aware of and had listened to. When Diane told me that she was going to a “religious group” in Washington on Friday, the spirit demanded that I must go also. That became the most amazing day and weekend in my life. Although Diane had just come to the group herself a few weeks before, she taught me the outline of the Divine Principle from Col. Bo Hi Pak’s biblically-oriented translation/interpretation all the way to the conclusion! At that point the spirit guide seemed to grab my shoulders while I was driving, in order to demand that I would not laugh! Then, Diane bought me not only to the group in Bo Hi Pak’s house (in Virginia) but to the “Leader” (as we called Father then). There, in the center of it all, around True Father I saw and felt a strange, powerful and fiery aura.

In addition, I found out that it was “Parents’ Day” and that the “Leader” had just completed – in 40 days! – blessing more than 50 Holy Grounds in the 48 continental states and the District of Columbia. On Sunday, a man and a horrible, fearful spirit suddenly burst into the beautiful atmosphere in the house, and shouted that we were all “fanatics.” I thought that he might have a gun and start shooting the Leader and anyone else in the room. But the Leader commanded something powerfully in Korean, and strangely the man just slithered away and was shown out, accompanied by Col. Pak.

That very Sunday, I intended, with a push from the spirit, to

strikingly commit myself to this new vision, hope, “family” group, and the Leader. I meant to say directly to the Leader (that is, to Father), “I am a new baby,” but in my long, very weakened turn of speech, I said, “I guess I am a new baby.” Pauline Phillips (known for over 40 years by members as Pauline Verheyen) hugged me then. On the East Coast, we did not have a formal organization or use the word “church,” but called ourselves “The Unified Family.”

I also quickly realized that there was some suspicion by some who had participated longer in the Unified Family than me of my being brought in by a new “baby” member like Diane. I had the sense that this gathering was only supposed to be for members who had heard all the Principles. Especially Col. Pak’s nephew and right-hand man, Jhoon Rhee, seemed to have no sense of my powerful spiritual experiences and doubted that a “baby” sister might have taught me much of significance. I was too overwhelmed by my spiritual experiences and what I had heard to speak up about them. All this initially led to some separation on my part and a little trouble with an otherwise powerful and exciting teacher of the Divine Principle like Jhoon Rhee. He had also started a Tae Kwon Do school to raise money and indirectly introduce Divine Principle ideas. Col. Pak was unavailable, as he directly attended the Leader after I had committed myself to the vision.

Alone back in Philadelphia, when I read Col. Pak’s booklets on the Principle, I experienced unusual difficulty as lamps and pictures fell for no reason, and a car crashed outside on the rather quiet street.

When I touched the booklet on the Fall of Man to open it, I suddenly became paralyzed for a time – until I screamed out to God.

Most members of Col. Pak’s group adored Jhoon Rhee, but he later left the Unified Family to be married outside the church. Most of these early members also left entirely or pulled away from involvement for some time. At that time, Diane and her spiritual “mother” were in Japan on an exchange with young Japanese members in the

United States. I hung on in faith, and Young Oon Kim sent some of her people to help.

I was blessed with Diane Giffin on February 28, 1969 in the first stage of the first international Blessing, the “43 couple Blessing,” by Rev. and Mrs. Moon at the newly-acquired Upshur House in Washington, D.C. So, my spiritual mother became also my wife through Father’s matching and Blessing. However, there also seemed to be a connection pre-planned by spirit influences on both of us. My spirit guide seemed to be a Puritan and often told me that I should be totally pure and not date any girl. When I did date anyway, I generally gave in to the spiritual influence and stopped dating soon after.

However, when I was nailing hooks for a sign on a church door in light rain in Philadelphia, and then saw Diane – I dropped the sign. But this time the spirit did not say that I must not date or relate to her, but rather said “She knows about something that can help you to be closer to God, and you must find out what it is.” Rather than going over the refrain of needing to be pure, the spirit even told me “someday you could be married.” Mentally I avoided the specific inference but took it as a new possibility of being not like a monk but being both a very spiritual person and married with someone.

Diane had had a similar spiritual/mental experience at an earlier encounter. But, despite all this spiritual influence, we have struggled with our marriage a lot.

Since my spiritually-guided encounter with the Unification Church in 1965, I have long felt that there had been a connection since my early childhood, with revelations and a childhood spirit guide pulling me in the direction of the Divine Principle. Despite many reversals and disappointments, it has defined my whole life so that I still feel like I can never leave or be pushed away from the truth.