

## Finding True Love in Virtues

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### Creating Love between Partners



I found a list of “horizontal” virtues 40 years ago, when I was just out of college and had despaired of ever finding true romantic love. I couldn’t imagine finding a girl who’d be faithful to me for life. And in truth, I couldn’t imagine that I had it in me to do it either. But then I found the Divine Principle and soon after I was introduced to Unification Thought. My hope was revived in spite of myself, and I gradually allowed myself to start dreaming again.

Many films, songs, books, TV shows, paper and digital periodicals and blogs focus widely on one

special dimension of horizontal love: the romantic one. And a common tendency is to emphasize the sensual aspect of that love. But as miraculous as that can be, by itself it will become terribly incomplete — a permanent relationship needs more than that alone.

Loyalty, trust, compassion, empathy, unselfishness, cooperation, companionship, helpfulness...

There’s a lot that actually needs to be learned before someone can build a long-lasting romantic relationship, one that’s safe enough to make legal and commit to “until death do us part”. Maybe there was a time when it was common knowledge that it takes a good number of years for the heart to mature enough to make a life-long commitment, but with the frequency of breakups it might be that a little review is in order.

### Growing Up in Love



Unification Thought reminds us that learning to love someone of a similar age starts in the relationship between siblings. If you’re lucky enough to have some, you spend all of your formative years learning to relate to and accommodate the sibling(s) you live with.

Unification Thought lists a number of virtues that being a sibling provides an extended opportunity to work on: fidelity, reconciliation, tolerance, obligation, courtesy, modesty, compassion, cooperation, service,

sympathy, justice, sincerity, helpfulness, understanding, etc. You get to do this day in and day out, for about two decades, so you’re bound to learn something.

The basic form of love between siblings is fidelity. The Latin root of the word is fidelis, which means faithful (or fides, which means faith). The Chinese ideogram for fidelity 忠誠 is made up of the two characters for loyalty and sincerity. The Chinese character for loyalty 忠 is made up of the ideograms for center and heart, the inference being that the loyal person’s heart has a center beyond and even above itself. And the character for sincerity 誠 is made up of the ideograms for words and to become. When you put them all together, the inference is that the faithful brother or sister is one whose heart and words are true to you; that person will stand by you, no matter what. Ultimately, fidelity is an expression of a heart that’s strong, staunch and true.

This faithful heart is then expressed through the other virtues. For example, by always striving for reconciliation, siblings make sure that no disagreement causes a permanent break in their relationship. Tolerance cultivates patience with the imperfections of others. Obligation acknowledges that a debt of heart must not be taken for granted or overlooked, but dutifully reciprocated. Courtesy extends graciousness to another; it expresses respect and regard for them. Modesty in behavior and dress demonstrates a respect for and protectiveness towards the heart of a loved one. Compassion, sympathy

and understanding demonstrate sensitivity for the thoughts and feelings of the other. Cooperation and service show the desire and flexibility to accommodate and assist another.

### **The Soul of Romantic Love**



After a couple decades of practicing these virtues, a person's character grows to maturity, alongside of their physical development. During this time, they've grown and made acquaintances, friends, classmates, team mates and office-mates in communities beyond their family. Through all these relationships, they've polished these "horizontal" virtues and in so doing, they've matured their character and personality, growing their heart's capacity to understand and practice loving others. In an ideal scenario that's what's supposed to happen.

And that's the solid background of virtue that two people bring into the most challenging and intimate of peer relationships: marriage. Fidelity and all its accompanying virtues come into full bloom in this relationship, and rather than simple infatuation, these virtues are the real soul of romantic love.

So 32 years ago, God gave me a girl who'd also given up on love, but who (like me) was willing to try because of the inspiring ideals of Unificationism. Through these three decades and some, we two have maneuvered the adventure of marriage, from being young strangers, through the heat of new love, through parenthood, and through becoming empty-nesters. (And with any luck, we'll get to see what being grandparents is like. Friends tell me it's unlike anything they've ever known...)

And through these 32 years, I've been guided by this small list of virtues from Unification Thought. They inform my thoughts and perceptions, and so they shape the nature of all my spiritual and physical interactions with my wife. In martial arts terms, perhaps by now I'd be a red belt (middle-grade) at it all.

The Divine Principle says that the outcome of each of the Three Great Blessings is Joy; and when I experience that in my marriage, I attribute it to what I've learned: Rev. Moon modeled it for me and Unification Thought helped me understand what I was seeing. So I've been working at it all these years and yes, it does fill my heart.

So then, the realms of sibling love and then conjugal love, along with the parents' and children's' realms of heart, contribute greatly to a more complete experience of the fullness of love. It's a richer, multi-dimensional experience, much more complete than the one-dimensional picture of love that we're so often presented.