

## The Way Is Hard that Leads to Life, and Those Who Find It Are Few

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*Photo date and location unknown*

*Jesus said:*

*Whoever seeks to gain his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will preserve it. (Lk. 17:33)*

*Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few. (Mt. 7:11-14)*

If I were asked to select the one word that best describes the teachings of Reverend Sun Myung Moon and the Unification Church, I personally would choose the word "sacrifice." Love, service, unity, persistence - all of these concepts typify our movement. However, the distinguishing characteristic seems to me to be our emphasis on selfless sacrifice. For the sake of others, God, and ourselves, we deny our own desires.

The individual sacrifices for the family, the family for the community, the community for the nation, the nation for the world, and the world for God. Straight and narrow is the path to the Kingdom of God. Only a few hearty pioneers are willing or able to make the necessary sacrifices.

Historically the path of men of God has never been easy. Rejected and persecuted, theirs has been a narrow channel. In his book *New Hope*, Rev. Moon recounts this path in the following manner: "In every area -- relationships with people, knowledge, material things -- they plunged themselves into a relationship with God, because there was no one else to rely on except God."

In the past the way of great men of God has been neither the way of common sense nor of majority opinion. They abandoned relationships with others; they were unconcerned with pleasure, wealth, and material comfort; they sacrificed such worldly desires as positions, careers, and prestige; they ignored normal pursuits of life (entertainment, sports, and relaxation); they defied common sense -- because they were so absorbed in their divine missions. So totally enveloped by what they were doing, they forgot themselves and these normal pursuits of life. They were on fire with the Word of God.

I recollect a dream that a girl once had a few days after hearing the Divine Principle of Rev. Moon. She felt herself walking up a dimly -- lit, steep, and rickety old staircase. Looking to the side, she saw an open field and a long, wide highway. Many people were on the highway -- laughing, singing, and chattering: they all seemed so happy. But as she looked further she saw a big dark, black cloud engulfing the people at the end of the road. Turning, she glanced at the staircase confronting her and was frightened. The way seemed so steep and narrow, and she was all alone.

But intuitively she felt she must walk that arrow path, realizing that the highway only led to eventual destruction. Though frightened, she immediately chose the way of the staircase. Upon reaching the top,

the heavens opened up to her and she saw an inconceivably beautiful place -- Shangri-La, the Kingdom of God. And the people there said to her, "What took you so long? We've been waiting for you." Then she knew she had taken the right path, God was just, and her sufferings had meaning.

The way to God's Kingdom might be understood in light of an hourglass analogy. The Divine Principle teaches that this is Satan's world, not God's. Because of man's fall, Satan claimed man and the creation. Man has never fully experienced God. God has never fully dwelt within man, because man remains a blend of good and evil. God in His perfection cannot relate directly to imperfect man.

Externally there is little difference between God's world and Satan's world. In God's world we will possess and engage in the same types of things and activities that we do in Satan's world: this world. We will eat and sleep, sit in chairs and drive autos, sing and laugh, engage in business and politics. Externally there will be minimal differences, but internally God's world of absolute goodness will be the antithesis of this existing world.

An automobile can be used either for a good or an evil purpose. If used to take ghetto youth to a ballgame, that is good. If used to murder someone, that is evil. Its use depends upon man, not upon the automobile. The auto has no motivations, feelings, or direction; it is neutral. Its value is determined by man and man's intentions.

The opening between the two ends of an hourglass is small. Only a few grains of sand can pass through at any moment. It is impossible for all of the sand to pass immediately from one end to the other without passing through the narrow channel. Similarly, for man to pass from this world to God's world he must traverse a straight and narrow path. Practically this means he must sacrifice many possessions and desires of this world temporarily! His ambitions, talents, career, happiness, etc. must be surrendered that he might come to know and depend upon God. Only having set that condition of faith, can he be trusted as selfless and qualified to be an instrument of Heaven.

Later on he must of necessity broaden, on the foundation of his faith, to relate to every aspect of the world (but not too quickly). He'll then be allowed to use his talents and follow his desires, having been born anew. With God as a part of each aspect of himself, his motivation will be pure and refined.

Several years ago I took a Dale Carnegie course in public speaking in which myself and others were told to do an exercise in "coming out of ourselves" (i.e. freeing ourselves of fears and inhibitions regarding speaking publicly), even though we might not want to do so. The instructor told us that in the process of doing the exercise we would overcome our fears, and that action affects feelings. He quoted William James as having said that feelings are not under our conscious control, but actions are and that by controlling them we can affect our feelings.

At first I thought he was wrong. The Divine Principle teaches that feelings are internal and subject and actions are external and object. Later on I recognized considerable truth in what the Dale Carnegie people teach. As my experiences with affecting feelings through actions increased and as I began to reflect on the deeper aspects of the Divine Principle I began to understand that actions can change, although feelings are subject and actions are object. The two are interrelated, and influence one another.

Rev. Moon has asserted that when we are depressed we should deny our feelings in order to overcome them. Many people in our Unification movement believe we cannot trust our feelings because the fall of man affected not only our external aspects but also our internal character. Our deepest emotions, desires, and thoughts were corrupted. Often Satan works through emotions. Adam and Eve violated God's commandment -- when passion overcame reason. Emotion lacks direction; truth provides the guidance.

Love, ambition, or pride can be either good or bad. The emotions themselves are neutral. There is nothing wrong with ambition if my desire is to be good and to know God, but if that desire becomes self-centered and tyrannical, then that is evil. Likewise as children of God we should be confident, secure, and proud, but not arrogant. God centered, selfless love is to be given and received, but sensual, egotistical love is to be avoided.

In the beginning God created man through the Word, but man fell. Through the Word God has sought to re-create man.

Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and others have brought God's commandments (i.e. truth) to provide direction to our emotions. Love and truth are two, complementary aspects to man's nature. Truth is external; love is internal. Love (not knowledge, power, or material wealth) is the purpose of life.

However, because of the fall of man, the way of restoration consists in reversing our actions through a process of indemnifying our failures step by step. As a result (with regard to the particular point I am now making, but not of course absolutely), the external must be restored first, then the internal. Rev. Moon has indicated that the foundation for a movement like our own must essentially not be based upon emotion, but upon truth. Truth controls and guides emotion. Through the Word men will be re-created.

Adam and Eve violated God's commandments, God's words; passions overcame reason. Eve knew what was right, but she lost control over her desire. Having felt love, she responded and fell. In the process of re-creation our course must be the reverse: control of passions and obedience to God's commands. By

learning to discipline desire, we can exhibit the self-control intended for man in the beginning of history. Ideally we should resemble a rock, unaffected internally by premature, unrestrained lusts. Our faith in God's commands should be absolute.

A paradox exists with regard to despair, fear, and depression. When we become depressed the worst remedy is to surrender to that depression: rather it is better to deny our feelings. The paradox is that in the process of forgetting ourselves we obtain happiness. As Jesus said, "Whoever seeks to gain his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will preserve it." If, for example, I have an opportunity to meet someone but I am afraid, anxious, or depressed, the best course of action is to act happy - even though I don't feel happy and go ahead and talk with the person. Though contrary to common sense, in the process of talking, smiling, acting I will forget myself and overcome unhappiness.

Frankness is neither necessarily nor invariably the most appropriate attribute to express during any particular human interaction. Such cardinal virtues as respect, loyalty, faith, obedience, tact, patience, sensitivity, privacy, and most importantly love may in any given encounter take precedence. That is to say, it may be more appropriate to reserve than express a response.

Rev. Moon would say love is the purpose of life and of highest value. If truth were the highest virtue then centuries ago God would have without reservation thrust upon mankind the ultimate, absolute standard of value. He originally intended and demanded obedience. Of course there is some question whether even almighty God could force such absoluteness on immature man -- even though we might be willing. Most likely even He could not out of His own will immediately, unconditionally restore us to His ideal. We must first set the proper conditions for our own perfection before being qualified to bask in the absoluteness of heaven.

Perfect God created a perfect system of principles by which to govern the universe. Embodied within that system is the absolute truth that men seek, because Heavenly Father is a God of truth. More significantly; however, Father is a God of benevolence and love, flexibility and restraint, patience and endurance. Out of love He limits Himself. That man might assume responsibility and possess dignity, He gave us free will. He will not violate that gift. Not interested in robots, Father desires that we freely love and obey Him. Yet we as men are so remote from God's original ideal that we can neither fully perceive nor receive His love. If He were to demand immediate, absolute conformity to certain fixed, immutable principles few could do so. Probably no one of us is prepared to accept the absolute truth of our own sinfulness and conform to Father's expectations. Patiently and lovingly, God has gradually step by step sought to recreate us. From the hells of suffering to the joys of heaven He is lifting us up.

For instance, as an analogy, if I were to erect a house, I would not begin by first constructing the roof and frame, then laying the foundation. Rather I would start with the foundation and ascend upward, finally putting on the roof. Thus is the manner of the Father; patiently, He has toiled with man. Though in one sense omnipresent, that is not to say that He works directly and intensely with everyone simultaneously. Not everyone is qualified or prepared to accept the responsibility of God's laws and obey His commands. Rather Father starts with one man, and on the foundation of faith of that man, He builds a God-centered family, community, nation, and world.

Since the beginning God's desire has been universal salvation. Desiring that we be qualified to enter the Kingdom of God, He gives each of us abundant opportunities to perfect ourselves. Centuries ago He could have judged and condemned us by demanding that we live in accord with His ideal, ultimate standard of truth. But we as fallen men are so distant from that ideal as to be incapable of measuring up to such expectations.

Cognizant of all this, God has gently and patiently nurtured us that someday we might live in accord with His absolute truth. A baby cannot eat meat; if he tries he may choke and die. Likewise for those who are spiritually immature, honest words of truth (unless blunted with diplomacy) can spiritually damage a fragile soul. Human interaction requires wisdom and sensitivity. Jesus said, "Judge not, that you be not judged." (Mt. 7:1) Often love necessitates restraint. Experience has taught me that there are times when tact, diplomacy, love, sensitivity, privacy and consideration for the beliefs and feelings of others have greater relative value than frankness and honesty. Love, not truth, is the highest virtue. To reveal our feelings may not be the wisest action at any given moment.

I wanted to make four major points: (1) Sacrifice in the Unification Church means to deny one's desires and do the will of God. (2) Paradoxically, by denying feelings we can overcome depression. (3) In the process of doing (i.e. becoming active and involved) we can change negative feelings and (4) Love implies restraint in expression of our opinions to others. For these and many other reasons I submit that feelings are not necessarily the best criterion for determining action; they sometimes cannot be trusted (insofar as negative feelings may not originate with God); and the should not be indiscriminately expressed.