

Families

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At a Hoon Dok Hae meeting in Chicago on March 1st 2000 during Father's 50 city tour, Father said that he felt sorry for those members who had just recently joined the Unification Church -- because they would never know the suffering that the members had gone through when they were rejected and cut off by their physical families. Of course we all know that in the late 70s and into the 80s many members were kidnapped by their parents. Shortly after I joined in 1976, five members of the Oakland Family (a branch of the Unification Church) willingly challenged the conservatorship law that the kidnappers were hiding behind in California. This was a law that allowed adult children to take over legal custody of their octogenarian parents so they wouldn't give away the family jewels to the next door-to-door salesman. The deprogrammers were using this law to say that members of cults were being brainwashed and were not capable of making sound decisions. Basically the courts did not really want to get involved in "family squabbles" so they did not want to exert any legal action. This meant that the law "allowed" parents to hire faith breakers like Ted Patrick to literally kidnap their adult children and attempt to break their faith. The faith-breakers were often successful and the practice ran rampant well into the 1980s.

Tragically, for the members who were able to escape from the kidnappers or whose faith was not broken (current church members like Dr. Thomas Ward and Rev. Catherine Ono are two examples) was a long-term separation of the parents from their children.

In my own case, I was 29 years old when I met the members of the Unification Movement in San Francisco. I already had a master's degree – although I had withdrawn from my doctoral program seeking to find the real meaning of life. When my Jewish parents found out that I was involved with Rev. Moon's group, they asked me to come home and explain to them what I was doing. I knew that this would never work and asked them to come out to California to "see for themselves." In fact they had turned down an offer from Ted Patrick to kidnap me for \$10,000 (one Kansas family had paid him \$30,000 for 3 attempts to get their daughter out of the Unification Movement). I never knew if my parents couldn't afford the \$10,000 or just didn't think I was worth it, but I think that the fact that I was nearly 30 years old (most new members were in their early twenties) had a lot to do with their decision.

Almost one year to the day that I had joined the movement (I joined on Christmas Eve, 1976) my parents arrived in San Francisco to "see for themselves." We actually spent Christmas Day with Dr. Durst; four Jews eating Christmas dinner at the St. Francis Hotel in downtown San Francisco. Dr. Durst was telling every Jewish anecdote that he knew to my parents, who were really "not that Jewish." Then we all went back to the center on Bush Street and Dr. Durst gave the evening lecture. It was the most serious lecture that I had ever heard him give – and I suspected it was directed primarily at my parents. He treated them

to every funny story that I had ever heard him tell, and I think that my parents were OK with what they experienced.

One funny story is that one night we went to eat dinner on Fisherman's Wharf. The restaurant that we chose, I had just recently helped the Oakland Family company clean their carpets. I was so proud when I explained this to my mother.

Later, my parents were entertained at the camp in Aetna Springs, about one hour north of San Francisco in the Napa Valley. I couldn't go with them, so Dr Durst sent his 7 year old son Chaim to be their "chaperone." My mom, basically a shy person, was so impressed. She found it remarkable that a little 7 year old would feel so comfortable with two people that he had never met before – something she felt that she would never have been able to do.

Not so funny was the reality that 1977 was right in the midst of the hottest time in the deprogramming activity. Therefore, my "spiritual father" accompanied us everywhere. This confirmed much of what my parents had read about our "brainwashing" techniques, but I explained it as his just being a good friend.

When my parents got ready to return to Chicago, they gave me a beautiful Seiko watch (which I still possess) and wished me well. They were not so pleased that I had chosen this path in life. They would have been much happier if I had finished my Ph.D. and worked as a psychologist, but they had the wherewithal to realize that I was happy and therefore they could accept my lifestyle choice. Personally I think that if I had, in fact, finished my doctorate, I would probably be a practicing psychologist today, driving my BMW and sending my ex her alimony check every month.

As I mentioned, I joined the Unification Movement in 1976 and lived in San Francisco, New York, New Mexico and Wyoming over the next 10 years. In 1987 I had the opportunity to move back to Chicago with my wife and infant son, and we have been there ever since. My wife and I both loved the Rocky Mountains (we were living in Cheyenne, Wyoming) but we both felt that my parents deserved the chance to watch their grandchildren grow up, especially as pay back after what they had to put up with all those years raising my brother and myself. My parents had the opportunity to be with their five grandchildren for the next twenty five years. We have had a very deep and heartfelt relationship over this time. My father said that he would never allow religion or politics to interfere in his relationship with his children or grandchildren. My parents were never religious, but there is a long line of rabbis in my Cohen lineage – the priestly group within the Levite tribe – the ones that carried the Torah marching seven times around the walls of Jericho.

In the twenty five years that we lived in Chicago, we were able to give the marriage blessing to my parents and my brother and his wife (once at home and once in an official international ceremony). My mom came once to hear True Mother when she spoke in Chicago, and my dad was always secretly interested in what True Parents had to say; he allowed me to read him the entire speech that True Mother had given when my mother attended.

Far more difficult and painful is the situation with my only brother. He is five years younger and we shared the same room until I went off to college. I'm sure that being five years younger was not easy for him. In spite of my many shortcomings, I truly loved him. In non-religious Judaism, the family is like the messiah. Our small extended family (my mother had two sisters and my father had one) did everything together. We rarely went out to a restaurant (no one is going to feed her family half as well as their Jewish mother) and celebrated every holiday and birthday in our house or in the home of our cousins or our grandparents.

When I returned from college after my junior year my "little" brother dragged me out into the alley to show me how he could beat me in basketball. He was now 6' 5" inches tall about 5" taller than me, and much more athletic. In fact he was voted the most athletic in his high school graduating class, being the center on the basketball team, the catcher on the baseball team and the quarterback on the football team. After being dominated by me for all those years, he was now in heaven; bigger than most of the other kids his age.

Sadly, the next several years saw us drifting apart. He dropped out of college and then traveled and lived all over the world. Upon his return, sporting a crazy Israeli girlfriend, he proposed that we take a road trip together. I took a leave of absence from graduate school and we went down to New Orleans for Mardi Gras and then I drove him to Miami where he hopped a freighter for South America.

At one point, while living in the mountains of Bolivia, he had a deep spiritual experience. He realized that the locals who had never been far from their homes knew more about their culture than he knew about his own. So, he decided to return to America. However, by the time he returned to Chicago, I was involved with the Unification Movement on the west coast. I was working in the Oakland Family's Jewish deli in Oakland, and one day he just showed up. He was ready for another road trip, but I was committed to what I was doing. He attended the nightly evening program but one of the sisters told me that, compared to my

parents, he was 200% more negative. I think that my brother is very innocent, and since it was right in the middle of the “brainwashing” accusations, he was literally scared to death. He left shortly afterward and I did not see him again for a couple of years.

In the meantime he became severely depressed. His girl friend from Israel left to go to Alaska and I think that there were many other negative changes in his life. I actually called a family friend who was a professional psychologist and asked her to keep an eye out over him. When I finally came to Chicago to visit he said to me, “I think that if I was drowning and one of your Unification brothers was drowning, that you would save him first.” As I mentioned earlier, for non-religious Jews (of which he was certainly one) the family is the be all and end all. Thus, for me to have joined the Unification movement meant that I had discarded my physical family and replaced it with the Unification family.

By the time I moved back to Chicago about nine years later, he had settled into a serious negative groove about the Unification movement. He didn’t want to have anything to do with me or my family and we would only see each other at family dinners at my parents’ house. Finally, one Passover, I just couldn’t take it anymore. I refused to shake hands with him at dinner. For me to just shake hands and say a formal hello to the person that I had lived in the same room with shared the first 18 years of my life with was too painful. When he accused me of being “un-Christian” I just let every 4 letter word I knew spew out of my mouth. To be honest, after that, things kind of got a little bit better.

Over the years life settled down. He had been living with his girlfriend for quite some time and she, a twin with eight siblings, is an angel. We continued to be together at my parents’ house on every holiday, and our interaction improved somewhat. He started bringing my parents to my boys’ high school football games and he began to develop a relationship with them, texting and emailing. One day I invited him out for breakfast at his favorite place. I mentioned that our two couples had never gone out together except at my parents’ home. My brother’s response was, “I’m not sure that I want to let you into my life that much.”

In the last 4 years both of my parents have passed away—each was well into their nineties. Since he had retired from work on the mercantile exchange and has no kids, he had taken care of all of their legal affairs over several years. As a result, he took an enormous amount of time and energy, putting all of their assets into a trust for my children. After their passing, he has been 100% awesome in taking care of all of their legal wishes.

I have shared an enormous amount of personal things in this article, but the most difficult thing to share is the pain that I have gone through in my heart. Father talks about the indemnity of the heart and as he said in his March 1, 2000 remarks, it is the pain of separation from our families that has been most difficult of all of our indemnities. I love my brother very much and it is sad that we can’t share our mutual love together. In the past when my young children were growing up, I felt so sad that the relationship between their uncle and his nephews and nieces was so limited—especially since all were so immersed in athletics. Through the years when he and his wife would come to our house for the holidays he would bring the children’s favorite side dish—green beans with mushrooms and French fried onions.

One day I was reading an internet joke that showed the traditional meals from the different cultures around the world. When it got to Indiana, it was frozen green beans, French fried onions and mushroom soup—the dish my brother always brought to our holiday dinners. I forwarded him the joke and he replied by saying, “Don’t ever send me another email unless it has something to do with mom and dad.”

In my own prayer, God told me long ago, “Never close the door” on him, no matter what. Following this, a couple of strange un-explainable things have happened. When I turned fifty, he took me and my parents to a Cubs baseball game. I am a White Sox fan, but still, this kind act sort of blew my mind. Plus, his wife who worked for Marriott took us all out to dinner and treated us to a suite at the Downtown Marriott Hotel. On another occasion, he invited me out for a round of golf before we took my parents out for their anniversary; also he even asked me to pick him up after his High School reunion because he knew that he would be in no shape to drive home.

These last events don’t make sense to me – he still won’t include me in his life, but yet he invites me out to play golf, or to a baseball game. Before she died my mother expressed a lot of worry about him. She worried that he was so unhappy and that he was beginning to drink more and more. His wife mentioned to him that after my mother passed away that I would be his only living relative, but this has never had any effect on him. Except for some family business details I have really not heard from him since my mother passed away in 2012.

Shortly before my mom passed, she, who did not believe in life after death, had an out-of-body experience. She was on a breathing machine and the doctors did not expect her to recover. But on Sunday morning as my brother and I were each standing at the end of her bed, she opened her eyes. She then waved her arms toward each of us, she seemed to be signalling that the reason she came back was that she had one unfulfilled desire left in her life. It was that her two sons would make up and be brothers again.

She told us that she had traveled to a place with many beautiful splotches of paint of the walls. All of her arthritis was gone and her teeth didn't hurt anymore. I have read that sometimes people have a choice of whether to proceed on to the spiritual world or return to the earth. The bottom line seems to be whether they have any unfinished business on the earth. Obviously, at ninety three years old, my mother felt basically fulfilled in nearly every area except for the fractured relationship between her two sons.

My mom passed away on Christmas morning, 2012 (it's OK she was Jewish). So we are coming up to her third anniversary. This morning I got a beautiful email from my brother's wife telling me that she could feel my heart after reading this article and couldn't even imagine not interacting with any of her eight brothers and sisters. I know not what the future will bring in our relationship, but I will do as God has instructed me and always leave my door open, no matter what. And I am so grateful for those precious words that I heard directly from our True Father over fifteen years ago, explaining how this personal family "heartistic" indemnity is so precious to God.