

Searching for Peace - Agape love and true love - Family as the school of love

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Students protesting the Vietnam War. Image from UCLA Alumni Newsletter, October 2019.

The United States is again embroiled in a social upheaval over race relations. Peace and civil discourse are difficult to find, as insults, stereotyping, and name-calling prevail. I am listening carefully, but I can't hear a voice for a better, less unfair, more peaceful future.

Today's turbulence reminds me of the 1960s anti-war movement, which I experienced during my first year at University of California, Santa Barbara. It was a time of widespread protest, fomented by the political and social challenges of that time.

I became disenchanted with the angry solutions offered by the [protest movement](#) and began my "search for peace." I wanted to find a "higher truth," a pathway that was universal and more unifying than the confrontational rhetoric of the day.

Absolute values key to peace

Rev. Sun Myung Moon explained that God has always been center stage at times of turmoil, when history has moved forward.

In a speech at a "Conference on the Unity of the Sciences," he explained, "It can be said assuredly that the absolute value perspective is established only through religions that revere God. In other words, it can be validly claimed that no solution to today's confusion is possible through those thoughts and philosophies which are not founded on God. It follows logically that only through God-centered religion is it possible that mankind can be saved from confusion."

"In history," he added, "we have such examples as Confucianism, Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam. Each one, in its own time and place, dissolved social insecurity and confusion and, on the foundation of peace and security, brought forth a flourishing of culture. This was true of the role of Confucian culture in the Han Dynasty of China, of the role of Christian culture in Medieval Europe, and that of Islamic culture in the Saracen civilization of the Middle East."¹

In contrast to Rev. Moon's observation that God-centered views are essential to laying the foundation for peace, we now hear people using [relativistic terms](#), such as "my truth" and "stand in your truth" as their viewpoint. The latter perspective would appear to be the antithesis or an intentional rejection of the former.

My question is: If there is no Creator and no "higher purpose" for existence -- and every person's worldview is equally valid -- is there any hope for unifying, harmonious, peaceful solutions?

I would submit that there are unifying or universal values. They are entirely natural, fully obvious, self-evident, and apply to and are equally deserved by all people.

Agape love and "true love"

These values relate to the proper order of, or the ethics of, love. Art, music, and literature tell us endlessly of the universal acceptance and appeal of "true love." On this topic, there is little controversy across the

diversity of contemporary cultures. The highest expression of "true love" is unconditional, parental, or [agape love](#), that gives sacrificially without thought of return.

Then what is true love? Its essence is to give, to live for the sake of others and for the sake of the whole... True love gives joyfully. We find it in the joyful and loving heart of a mother who cradles her baby in her arms and nurses it at her breast... Nothing can compare to the value of true love. It has the power to dissolve the barriers fallen people have created, including national boundaries and the barriers of race and even religion.²



*Photo by August de Richelieu
from Pexels*

Moreover, the source for understanding and learning these values can also be identified. It is the family -- a formation of intimate biological and emotional bonds, designed by God to provide for our fundamental emotional and physical needs. In fact, Rev. Moon's core theology was a profound step beyond individual freedom and individual salvation. His relentless emphasis was on the family, rather the individual, as the center of value. This is because the family is the "school of love."

Family as the 'school of love'

The nuclear and extended family is the natural team for the provision of both physical and spiritual prosperity. Ideally, we grow up through a sequence of love experiences in a family: first, as infants and little children, then as siblings, then as husband and wife, and finally as parents and grandparents. Learning, practicing parental or agape love is the final or highest stage of that sacred process.

Of course, families take many different forms. And, without exception, every family faces struggle and turmoil. No family is without disappointment, crisis, and heartbreak; some are seriously disadvantaged, and even abusive.

Yet the ideal of the genuinely responsible and loving family can be easily and universally understood. Therefore, the "ideal" of the family can be upheld as the universal value. No matter how imperfectly expressed, the family ideal is where the universal value of love can be found, learned, and expressed. It is the physical, emotional, and spiritual crucible for nurturing responsible love, the key ingredient for social peace and human prosperity.

Finding my way home

In the turmoil of my college years I would have never guessed that the solution to my lofty search for "higher truth" would lead me right back to the earthly roots from whence I came -- my family.

I therefore chose the path of marriage and family. Together, over four decades, my wife and I brought four beautiful children into the world and raised them through adulthood. Together, we passed through the unfolding of family life, with its high emotional drama, mountain of responsibilities, and shared lessons in communication, acceptance, forgiveness, and care. Though in a microcosm, these are all key ingredients for world peace!

I applied these same requirements of love, responsibility, communication as I served and contributed in my worldly career -- as CEO in business and chairman of a non-profit and a church council. My three generations of family life have made me a better contributor to the world and even to world peace -- as a leader, partner, disciple, tutor, and friend. I am grateful to my parents, wife, siblings, and children for the "school of love" I attended -- and to my Heavenly Father for the "curriculum" He provided.

Footnotes:

1 Rev. Sun Myung Moon, "Absolute Value Perspective," at the Unity of the Sciences Conference, November 26, 1982.

2 Rev. Sun Myung Moon, "Tenth Message of Peace," November 26, 2006.