

## FFWPU USA: What to Do When You're Feeling Blue

Elijah Maddox

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Everyone has had the experience of getting knocked down by the challenges that life hurls at us. When we are confronted with feelings of sadness or uncertainty, what can we do about it? Thankfully, there is more than just one solution. With a little intentionality and especially with God's guidance and love, each one of us can fight these battles against the blues and come out on top.

The traditional religious approach to dealing with the turmoil of life is as valuable today as it has ever been. [First among these is prayer](#). In our darkest hour, we should turn first to our Heavenly Parent. Who else knows us inside and out better than God does? The best support in our lives can often come from that voice within ourselves, our [Original Mind created by God](#).

Prayer may include requests for answers or guidance, but it can also be as simple as a conversation with God. I've turned to prayer many times when I felt uneasy or disquieted. When I was stressed out of my mind over my job and couldn't seem to figure out how to face another day, I turned to prayer to ask for confidence and persistence. After spending months seething with resentment towards a close friend, I prayed in repentance until my own heart softened. Time and again I have turned to prayer to reset my spiritual compass and start moving me forward again after I had felt spiritually and emotionally stuck.

Sometimes, it's not so much an answer that we look for, just a chance to realign our hearts closer to our Heavenly Parent. Father Moon advises us in our prayer life that, "The way of righteousness requires that we declare our intentions and then report what we do. First, declare in your prayer, 'Father, I will do such and such today,' and later on report, 'I have accomplished those things today.'" In these cases, it's not that God needs to know what our plan is. Rather, we share with Him for our own sake. Developing this closeness with God through prayer can have a profound effect on our peace of mind.

[Taking care of our mental health is another form of spiritual care](#). Therapy or counseling aimed at helping us heal old wounds and discover deeper aspects of our hearts and souls can be options worth pursuing. It

can be helpful to talk things through with a friend or mentor whom we can confide in. Everybody needs community in their lives. [Those who have lived long and fruitful lives are in the perfect position to advise the younger](#) among us when we hit stumbling blocks in our paths.

I have been blessed to have amazing mentors who advise me, support me, and challenge me to do a little better at my current responsibilities. Having a family and community to fall back on in times of need has helped me to feel that the world is not so big and scary a place after all.

Aside from the focus on our mind and soul, sometimes all we need to do to make a big impact on our mental state is get our physical bodies moving. The easiest thing for me to do each night after I get off work is to collapse on my bed and scroll through YouTube until I pass out. This, I have found, does not make me happy. Conversely, the hardest thing for me after a long work day is to change into gym clothes and hit the weight room for an hour. It isn't easy, and yet I have never once regretted it. Eating a good diet, drinking water, getting sunlight, and moving our bodies are simple steps, but they can go a long way toward improving our well-being.

Service is something not everyone associates as a mood booster. One of the important rules I learned to follow during my missionary years was to [love and serve others first](#) as a way to reinvigorate myself. Seeing the positive effect I had on people would immediately raise my spirits. The Unificationist teaching is that when we love and serve others, we forget ourselves. That may sound uncomfortable, but it can be a profound experience. Many people today can only think of their own needs, fears, desires, and pain. Letting all of that go in the process of serving others can free us (at least temporarily) from that baggage.

We need purpose in our lives. Purpose gives us something to work towards. We find joy in accomplishing our goals. A life with purpose is a joyful life. Each one of us needs small purposes in our day-to-day lives, but we should also take the time to set our sights on what we ultimately want to accomplish with our lives on a bigger scale. Our Heavenly Parent has a providence here in this world that He would like all of us to be connected to.

Speaking to an American audience about our role in the world, Mother Moon said in a recent speech that, "You all have a responsibility. America cannot become a country where only America prospers, it should become an America that can embrace its siblings from all over the world. Through all of you, you have to make it clear to the American political, economic, and all... Although they may not know it, there is a purpose prepared by heaven, but you must enlighten those who are not aligned in that direction and educate them so that they can become the Heavenly United States that can fulfill its responsibility." Her message is that we each need to be aware of the bigger purpose Hor intends for our lives. Being tuned in to that can give us something greater than ourselves to live for.

So, what do you do when you're feeling blue? Talk to God, move your body, and love others more than you love yourself. It's up to you to determine which of these approaches is right for you in the moment. Problems come up in life, and we have to be prepared to face them. But just remember that God will always have your back.

## The Power of Prayer



By Lena Iwasaki

“The Cheon Shim Won is a sacred place [that] would be nice to have people surrounding it with prayer and devotion.”

— Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon

Hearing other people pray is not my definition of a meaningful prayer. I used to find it hard to open up my heart and speak to Heavenly Parent when I could hear other people’s conversations with their wails and pleas. That was what I used to think when I heard about the Cheon Shim Won, a special prayer room established by the Unification faith leader, Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, whom we affectionately call Mother Moon. The Cheon Shim Won can be compared to a temple or shrine where you can find peace to be one with God.

The first location that Mother Moon founded in the U.S. was Las Vegas. She called it “a sacred place [that] would be nice to have people surrounding it with prayer and devotion.” (2022) Filled with everyone’s flowing tears, fervent prayers, and desperate hopes, it is a place where you can find answers through “spirit and truth”.

One practice encouraged by Father and Mother Moon is unison prayer. As the word implies, unison prayer is when every person in the room begins praying together out loud, and I mean *very* loud. You may have experienced a unison prayer in a Pentecostal church where the Holy Spirit surges through the room. I have always thought prayer was a silent and peaceful communication between you and God. Unison prayer in the Cheon Shim Won is on a whole other level.

“A strong prayer life is not formed in an instant. It takes both



time and practice. Therefore, be patient with yourself; you are able to learn more about prayer as you continue to pray. It is only natural that you would rather withdraw and be on your own. It is sometimes hard for new members to acclimatize themselves with the practice of unison prayer. However, developing the ability to break through to God even in unison prayer is definitely one of the best ways to become spiritually free, as well as to build up spiritual power. By developing a strong prayer life, you will experience breakthroughs.”

— Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon

Being part of a [new religious movement](#) is interesting. We have a living founder who offers new revelations and shifts our teachings, which can sometimes be a challenge. Mother Moon established the Cheon Shim Won, unlike any other prayer room. It is a place where we can connect to Heavenly Parent’s heart and spirit directly as parent and child. There are Cheon Shim Won prayer rooms in over 50 Unification Churches across the United States. Specially designed to create an atmosphere of healing, renewal, and clarity, the Cheon Shim Won is a holy place.

[Since my younger brother passed away](#), my family has prayed every single night in front of our altar at home. During the first few months after his death, I remember how hard it was for me to pray; to look to God for comfort or understanding. I knew better than to be angry at God because there was no point in going down the rabbit hole of wondering if this was in “God’s plan”.

However, deep inside, I couldn’t help but feel like it was unfair. That someone who had the smile of an angel and the heart of a hero could go so soon. Maybe that was because I never went inside the Cheon Shim Won in the small community church of Philadelphia. I helped paint it and decorate the room, but a part of me was a little afraid to go inside. It felt like I would be forced to unpack all the burdens, fears, and responsibilities I had left unresolved. As though the moment I sat down, closed my eyes, and said a word, I would burst into helpless wails myself.

I decided to call an older sister and mentor I talk to when I feel like I have used up every logical reason to resolve a situation. The words she gave to me still come to mind. [“What you need the most right now is the exact thing you are avoiding.”](#)

I still resisted going into the Cheon Shim Won until after I moved a month later. When I finally stepped inside, there was something about the holy prayer room at the Chicago Family Church that felt serene. I felt calm, peaceful, and warm. I

didn't bother turning on the lights and sat in front of the altar. At first, I just took deep breaths so I wouldn't cry. When I finally gave in, I cried and cried, and maybe wailed a little, too.

The months it took me to attempt to solve, reflect, and, explain what I was going through didn't vanish with a revelation or a profound experience.

However, praying in the Cheon Shim Won gave me a serenity I had never felt before, which I could only find [in the embrace of my Heavenly Parent](#).

I don't mind the wailing, and the shouts from other people in the Cheon Shim Won anymore because I understand that is another person who desperately desires to be in tune with their Heavenly Parent, just like me.

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## An Original Mind at Work



By Elijah Maddox

Everyone has had a bad day at work. First, you fumble your way through your tedious morning routine. You wish you hadn't stayed up so late watching that disappointing movie, but here you are, tired and irritable. The early morning commute traffic does nothing to improve your mood. Then you find yourself facing yet another grueling day at your job. Amid your burning frustration and foul mood, do you ever wonder, "Is there any point in trying to be kind or decent today at all? Why don't I just embrace the negativity?"

### **Our Original Mind is Good**

In times like these, each one of us has to remember that we, like all people, are more than our meanest instincts. We are created to be full of the potential to do good as well as the desire to follow through with it. This potential and desire is what Unificationism refers to as our Original Mind. When we study the book of Genesis in the Bible, we can see clearly how humanity fell into temptation and sin, and history has shown us a prolonged continuation of that sad state of affairs. And yet, as far as we may have fallen from God's ideal for us, we cannot totally lose our connection to the true, good nature that our Creator has endowed us with. As the [Principle of Creation](#) explains it, "the original mind always inclines toward goodness, even in an evil person. However, unless a [person] leads a good life, the [Original Mind] cannot provide anything for the betterment of the physical [person]."

"The original mind always inclines toward goodness, even in an evil person. However, unless a [person] leads a good life, the [Original Mind] cannot provide anything for the betterment of the physical [person]."

As difficult as it often can be, we have to become people that always strive in our lives to follow our Original Mind. But how can we do that? Making an effort to practice it in the mundane and ever present aspects of our day to day routines. What better place to start than at work? With all the stresses and temptations to give in to negativity, choosing to follow your Original Mind, while challenging, can be extremely rewarding.

### **Practice at Work**

Take that blue Monday morning we started off with. When you enter the breakroom for your first cup of coffee, gathered around the counter are your equally tired and cranky co-workers, many of them eager to engage you in a group whining and complaining session. It's what everybody does, and it's what you often catch yourself doing. But if we turn to the Bible, we are told, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." (Romans 12:2)

The Bible says we should avoid following the ways of the world because they are governed by selfish desire and negativity. In order to orient our minds towards God and goodness, we need to try our best to act out of positivity, love, and kindness. That means when others complain, we should not. When others give up and put in minimal work, we should continue to give our best efforts. Our tendency is to shy away from hardship and pain, but if we listen to our Original Mind, it will tell us that [hardship is just an opportunity for growth](#).

"A newborn baby cannot carry out the work of God's providence. Heaven waits until the baby grows up, is able to judge things for him- or herself, understands God's will, makes his or her determination, and advances toward perfecting his or her character."

— Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon

### **God Knows It Takes Time**

In a recent speech, [Mother Moon](#), co-founder of Unificationism, explained that God intended for people to grow naturally in their ability to follow their Original Mind. "A newborn baby cannot carry out the work of God's providence. Heaven waits until the baby grows up, is able to judge things for him- or herself, understands God's will, makes his or her determination, and advances toward perfecting his or her character." That means that instead of expecting



ourselves to be perfect at dealing with hardship and automatically following our Original Mind, we should have the courage and grit to train ourselves to tap into it a little more every day.

### **Coworkers are a Training Ground**

The most challenging part of any workplace will often be those pesky interpersonal relationships. When diverse people come together to work, conflict, misunderstanding, and personal differences can make things much harder than the job itself would indicate. Once again, a common temptation for many of us is to resort to complaint and negativity, or else treat the relationship with indifference or contempt. In our goal of always following our Original Mind the challenge then is to [face these difficult relationships with an attitude of kindness and love](#).

### **Again, hardship can be our friend.**

When we work to overcome our difficulties with even the most challenging coworkers, the resulting transformation within the relationship can be incredibly rewarding. Maybe you'll resolve your conflict in a way you never thought feasible. Maybe you'll [turn a rivalry into a close friendship](#). Or maybe you'll simply strengthen your patience. Any outcome will surely be better than choosing the path of negativity, resentment, and unhappiness.

Whether it's a stressful project, an uncooperative coworker, or just a bad day at work, we will always be faced with hardship within our workplaces, and ultimately throughout our lives. The key is to remember that each one of those challenges can be taken as a miserable burden or as a wonderful opportunity to put our Original Mind in the driver's seat and grow in our capacity for goodness.

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## Your Mental Health is Spiritual and Physical



By Celine Stoco

May is Mental Health Awareness Month, a time dedicated to promoting the importance of mental well-being. But unlike many people who think their anxiety and depression can only be solved with medicine and therapy, there may also be a spiritual reason at the heart of these issues that needs to be addressed.

“Today, we are living in anxiety, unable to spend even a single day in happiness, due to all the difficult and tragic problems striking the world.”

— Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon (04.22.2024)

To answer some of the questions about the topic, I took the initiative to have a conversation with someone close to me to ask her how she copes with these problems. She has had bipolar disorder for 23 years while struggling with depression and anxiety.

She told me that while she has been a Unificationist since she was 10 years old, and learned early on how science and faith are complementary, when she experienced symptoms of mental health problems, she hesitated to go to a doctor. For some time, she relied only on prayer, asking for motivation to have the energy to get out of bed, to help control her emotions, to end her eternal anxiety. Some days were good, while other days she felt like she was in a hole, trapped with no way out.

After years of struggle, she decided to seek professional help, for her own sake but also for her loved ones. While in the beginning she felt conflicted

about needing professional help, she realized that only being faithful would not cure her. She is better now and has taught me and my sibling that there is no shame in asking for help.

My parents told me a story when I was younger that explains how God works in these kinds of situations.

In the story, there is a man drowning in the sea. He prayed, asking God to save him. A few minutes passed and a woman appeared with a life vest and offered it to the man, but he refused. He said that God would save him and sent the woman away. The man kept on praying. After a few more minutes, a boat full of people came saying they could help him, but the man again refused saying that God would save him. In the end, the man drowned, having refused the very help he was praying for.

While having faith is important, sometimes we must take action. God gives us the path, but we also have our [portion of responsibility to fulfill](#).

My friend's testimony shows us that while seeking professional help from a doctor was important, her trust in God was what kept her going after all those years of suffering. Without Him, she would not be with us today. God sends us the help we need, but it is up to us to see it.

For many people, mental health issues like depression or anxiety are wrongly perceived as something that can be suppressed through willpower alone. Such behavior can be even more present if the person is religious, because of the misconception that to believe in God, you cannot believe in science, and vice versa. The root of the problem is the need to choose between faith and science, but what if they are complementary?

"The new truth should be able to unify knowledge by reconciling the internal truth pursued by religion and the external truth pursued by science."

– Exposition of the Divine Principle, p. 24

Father Moon emphasized the importance of embracing both faith and science. [God created science](#), which has allowed humanity to evolve, answer questions, and solve many problems that faith alone could not. While science may seem to have more direct solutions, faith should not be ignored either.

The power of faith motivates many people to keep fighting when they are in their lowest moments in life. That internal motivation is what drives them to keep living.

Jesus taught us that we should refer to God as our beloved parent. As a father and mother, God will be on our side no matter how broken, sad, angry, or



frustrated we are. Heavenly Parent desires you to find comfort in sharing your deep secrets and struggles, even when you are not ready to share with your loved ones. He wants you to feel loved no matter what you're going through.

“You should be able to cry out ‘Father!’ even in your sleep and even when you are by yourself. When in your daily life you forget to eat or sleep and exclaim ‘Father!’ with a deep longing, you will be able to hold His hand. Magical things will happen. When you call out ‘Father!’ He will embrace you.”

— Cheon Seong Gyeong 1.2

When we acquire the understanding that faith and science are supposed to be seen as complementary and not opposites, the solutions to our problems become more clear. There is no need to fear going to the doctor as a religious person nor to demonstrate faith when working in the field of science.

“When the sailor, who has completed his voyage in search of external truth under the sail of science adds another sail, the sail of religion, and embarks on a new voyage in search of internal truth, he finally will be headed toward the destination for which his original mind yearns.”

— Exposition of the Divine Principle, p.21

[God makes everything for a reason.](#) Remember that if you are struggling with mental health issues, God is there to comfort and guide you towards the practical and spiritual help you need. Your Heavenly Parent created you as both spiritual and physical. Taking care of both your spiritual and physical well-being are equally important to a healthy state of mind.

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## Marriage Is a Family Effort



*Photo courtesy of Elijah Maddox*

**By Elijah Maddox**

I always liked the idea of getting married. When I was a small child, I looked up to my parents' marriage. No matter how many ups and downs we went through as a family, there was always love in the home. For that, I consider myself lucky. I still view my parents as a hopeful example of what married life can be. They are my first teachers, my role models for where I would like to be in a few decades. Somehow, it was never strange to me to start this thought process at a young age. It seemed like common sense to me at the time. Now that I'm not quite as young, I've had to put more thought into the what and the why. What really is marriage, and why do I want it so badly in my life?

"A wife loves her husband not for his own sake, dear one, but because the Divine Beloved lives in him. A Husband loves his wife not for her own sake, dear one, but because the Divine Beloved lives in her."

— The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad

### **Marriage is Sacred**

A good marriage is something almost anyone can look up to. Historically, marriage has long been acknowledged as a necessary and worthwhile part of life. In the book of Genesis, it says, "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." (Genesis 2:24) Later, scripture tells us, "He who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the Lord." (Proverbs 18:22) These verses tell us that God has intended for humanity to form marriage bonds and that they are a



good thing. This one sacred relationship in our lives is part of our ultimate purpose, and we don't just have to take the Judeo-Christian word for it.

In the Hindu tradition, it is said that "A wife loves her husband not for his own sake, dear one, but because the Divine Beloved lives in him. A Husband loves his wife not for her own sake, dear one, but because the Divine Beloved lives in her." (The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad) These different faith traditions teach us that marriage is sacred and that its value in each of our lives cannot be measured.

### **Young People Are Divided on Marriage**

However, [marriage has also often been romanticized](#). The fairytale versions of love and marriage that many of us fixate on in our youth can seem unattainable in the real world of complicated relationships and tedious responsibilities.

People can compare the fairytale with reality and become jaded. It's no wonder. Feeling that real love and lasting marriage are ultimately unattainable is enough to drive anybody away from the whole concept. In fact, the younger generation in America today is experiencing exactly that. According to a [Pew Research Center](#) survey in 2024, "Among all adults ages 18 to 34, 20% say being married is extremely or very important for people to live a fulfilling life." That means that a large majority of our young people view it as unimportant. They have lost faith in the idea of marriage. We as a society are in danger of [losing marriage altogether](#).

"Among all adults ages 18 to 34, 20% say being married is extremely or very important for people to live a fulfilling life."

— Pew Research Center

### **Compatibility Is About Partnership**

In my case, thankfully, the idea of marriage still has some hold on me. I was fortunate to be able to start on my marriage journey a year ago with my lovely wife, Afi. As wonderful a journey as it's been so far, it has been far from smooth sailing. If anything, it's been the most tumultuous experience of our lives. We come from different worlds, we have different characters and goals, and we watch different movies. We seem incompatible with many modern standards of relationship ideals. But we haven't seen it that way. The inherent challenges and unpredictable nature of the journey are all things we've come to embrace and have grown together all the more for it. But it does still raise the question of how to best create an environment for a successful marriage at all?

### **We Need Marriage**

Being raised in the Unificationist faith, prioritizing marriage has always been one of our community's core values. We hold marriage in the highest esteem, striving to cultivate joyful and fulfilling relationships. "We need marriage," [Mother Moon](#) commented at a prayer breakfast, "because it is the true way to develop our love. In marriage, we ripen as a seed of God. Our entire life should be centered on true love. We should be born in true love; we should grow in true love; we should live centered on true love, and we should return to true love when we die." Based on this vision, we understand the significance of centering our lives around the love we nurture in our marriages. By doing so, regardless of the challenges we face, we can mature as the seeds of God.

Marriage serves as the key to unlocking our true value as human beings that God created us to embody. But it takes that partnership, that [unity of a man and woman](#), to fully embody it. As impossible as that can seem at times, the transformative power and beauty of the end result are more than enough reasons to make it a life priority.

"We need marriage because it is the true way to develop our love. In marriage, we ripen as a seed of God. Our entire life should be centered on true love. We should be born in true love, we should grow in true love, we should live centered on true love, and we should return to true love when we die."

— Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon

### **It's a Family Affair**

Any daunting and difficult task, such as building an ideal marriage, can be made more manageable through teamwork. Our belief is that couples should not have to face this journey alone. What are family and community for if not for supporting us through this? In the Unificationist faith, [the role of family support is key in nurturing healthy and enduring marriages](#). Parents bear the responsibility to first cultivate their own long and fruitful relationships. Then, in due time, it becomes natural that they would share the fruits of their long and successful marriages with their adult children who are starting their own marriage journeys. The same can be said for extended families and communities. The collective wisdom of our elders can lift much of the burden on young couples, sparing them from having to figure everything out on their own. Relationships are hard. Why not rely on someone whose experience you can trust?

### **Personal Responsibility is Key**

This idea might sound strange to modern ears, but the truth is that these



practices have existed for centuries. Family involvement in marriage is a longstanding tradition observed worldwide, with Christianity, Judaism, and Hinduism highlighting parental involvement in courtship. Unificationism follows a similar approach.

Courtships or arranged marriages might seem strange and old-fashioned today, but marriage based solely on physical attraction and short-term desire could be said to be equally, if not more, strange. The importance of personal commitment and choice in marriage cannot be overstated. The role of parental involvement is not to dictate decisions for the couple. Spouses in the Unificationist faith are not assigned but rather introduced. If a couple meets and wants to move towards marriage, parental involvement is not about allowing or forbidding, but rather about encouraging or cautioning.

Ultimately, the couple must make the choice to pursue the relationship and commit to a lasting marriage. All of this underscores the significance of personal agency in marital relationships.

### **Community Is a Resource**

I learned many lessons on love and marriage from my faith community. Initially, it was observing my parents—watching their conversations, their conflict resolution, and their teamwork in creating a life for our family—that laid the foundations of my understanding of relationships. Truly, [family is the school of love](#). But as I entered my teens and twenties, I expanded this influence to include other couples within my community. Mentors from church, coworkers with a few years on me, and even a few peers who had married before I did, all played a role. I surrounded myself with couples who had something to teach me, and I was eager to learn. Often, I would glean just one simple lesson or make one small observation from another couple, but over time, these lessons accumulated into my personal roadmap for relationships.

Combined with a plethora of written materials aimed at helping young couples engage in deep and meaningful conversations, this allowed me to approach my own relationship with clarity and focus. I understood the importance of having a vision for my marriage, one that aligned with the original purpose of becoming an embodiment of God's ideal together with my spouse. I'd learned many tips, tricks, and techniques to help me get there, but that goal was fundamental above all else. It's what separated marriage from a casual relationship in my heart.

### **Don't Do It Alone**

Any sane person is still going to need support navigating all the complexities of marriage. That's why not trying to do it alone is so important. We need support—family and community—despite acknowledging that our families may not be perfect and our communities may have flaws. But without some kind of

not be perfect and our communities may have flaws. But without some kind of guidance and example, it is far too easy to become lost, aimless, and hopeless in a marriage lacking purpose. [Our young generation today is lonely and disconnected.](#) But we don't have to be. What we need is an environment that fosters connection, support, and guidance. It begins with a simple choice: to [seek out community](#), support, and guidance from those with wisdom to offer, and ultimately, to commit to nurturing strong marital relationships.

Don't search endlessly on your own. Find your community. Make the choice to build your vision for a God-centered relationship. With love, support, and dedication, fulfilling relationships are achievable. To every young person looking for real love, I say that it is within your grasp—with a little help.

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## Winning the Heart of Cain



By **Elijah Maddox**

One of my favorite stories in the Bible is that of Cain and Abel, brothers at odds. I believe it clearly lays out for us just how wrong our interactions and relationships can go with ourselves, with each other, and with God. It's a seemingly bleak lesson, but by learning it we can come to understand how to do things right.

### **Do you *really* know the story of Cain and Abel?**

Most of us know the story from Sunday school. God asked Cain and Abel each to make a burnt offering, and while Abel's was accepted by God, Cain's was not. In psychologist [Jordan Peterson's interpretation of the story](#), he notes that, "If someone fails and is rejected because he refused to make any sacrifices at all—well, that's at least understandable. He may still feel resentful and vengeful, but he knows in his heart that he is personally to blame...It's much worse, however, if he had actually forgone the pleasures of the moment—if he had strived and toiled and things still didn't work out—if he was rejected despite his efforts. Then his work—his sacrifice—has been pointless. Under such conditions, the world darkens, and the soul rebels."

### **Their Portion of Responsibility**

I think this part of the story is key. It's not that Cain was evil and simply refused to work toward God's will. He made his dedicated effort, but at that moment, it could not be accepted by God. His bitterness, in a way, is understandable.

This is a central story in our faith community because we look at Abel's responsibility as well as Cain's. Cain had many shortcomings: impatience, jealousy, and an unwillingness to listen to the voice of God, who spoke reason and warning to him when he most needed to listen to it. But what was Abel's

shortcoming? He left Cain in the dust. He made his acceptable offering to God and simply went about business as usual. When Cain was at his darkest place, Abel did nothing to help him.

### **Abel Needed to Help Cain**

In the Divine Principle (p.197), it says, "God could not instruct Cain and Abel on how to properly make their sacrifices because it was [their portion of responsibility](#) that Cain make his sacrifice with Abel's help."

"God could not instruct Cain and Abel on how to properly make their sacrifices because it was their portion of responsibility that Cain make his sacrifice with Abel's help."

— Exposition of the Divine Principle, p. 197

One does not decide to kill one's brother on a whim; something truly must have been [lacking in the relationship](#), a crucial piece that led to the doom of them both. At times in our lives, we all may find ourselves in the position of Cain in relation to others, and we also may find ourselves in the position of Abel. It's therefore worth knowing how to learn from their mistakes.

### **A Lesson in Abel-ing**

Teaching middle school has introduced me to a lot of little Cains. Children are sweet, generally, but they also can be arrogant, disrespectful, complaining, and entirely unaware of themselves and others. Day after day, I deal with kids who have problems and complaints. They feel school is too hard, they think homework is too long, a teacher made a mistake in their punishment, somebody called them a mean name and got away with it, the room is too cold, the lights are too bright, class is moving too fast, the content is too boring. The list never ends.

Many students are able to manage things relatively well, [overcoming little disagreements](#) and scuffles here and there, and ultimately getting back on track for a good day of learning. For some students, however, that's just not the case. They don't have just a chip on their shoulder – it's a brick. We can safely consider them to be a super-Cain.

### **How to Win the Heart of Cain**

These kids often have the hardest time in school, and we can't ignore the fact that much of it is self-inflicted, but my heart does go out to them. I've had to ask myself every day, for each one of these students, "How can I win their hearts today?" I start by reminding myself that their complaints and their resentments are often not wrong. They really did get treated unfairly that one time in class, and maybe the homework was more confusing than it needed to



be. Loving them means acknowledging their perspective and letting them know that I see them.

Cain needs to be seen and understood. But Cain also needs to do the right thing, and it's Abel's job to insist on that. Loving isn't just validating with no guidance. Tough love is required, especially for tough children with big attitudes. Tough love, however, only works based on care and respect.

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### **Golden Rules of Abel**

In my missionary days, I learned a simple set of Golden Rules of Abel. It was a tried-and-true set of attitudes for whenever you found yourself in the position of Abel. The first two are: **1) receive punishment without having committed any kind of sin**, and **2) refrain from complaint or resentment while receiving punishment**. Because Abel was the one accepted by God, Abel is in the position of goodness and authority. As a teacher, I have the authority of the school vested in me. I have a right to stand before the kids and tell them to listen to what I teach and do as I say. My super-Cain students, however, often have other ideas. The disrespect I receive from them is painful to take, and it does feel like a daily punishment. It seems unfair. But when I put myself in the mindset of taking that punishment willingly, I find that I can keep a brighter spirit and a warmer heart for much longer than I otherwise could. It allows me to practice the final two rules: **3) love Cain** and **4) give all things to Cain**. No matter what they throw at me, I still have to wake up in the morning ready to teach them something, ready to make a difference in their lives, whether they recognize me for it or not.

### **It's a Daily Choice**

When I greet the 35 kids at the classroom door as they arrive in the morning, only a handful will mumble a response or make eye contact. Every morning, I have to remember my role and my responsibility toward the kids. Whether I like it or not, this is the situation I find myself in. Other teachers I talk to express the same kinds of experiences, just in different terms. [It can be so easy to complain about it](#), to become bitter and jaded, as some of my colleagues have. But when I start to feel that temptation, I remind myself of what potential I have here.

“It is a love that gives and then forgets that it has given – that is, a love that gives unconditionally. It is sacrificial love. In the same way that parents attach no conditions to the love by which they give birth to, raise, and provide for a child, so also true love is a love that gives unconditionally. This was the kind of love that God bestowed on human beings at the time He created us. That is why the origin of true love lies in God.”

— Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon

Mother Moon reveals a beautiful perspective on true love by explaining: “It is a love that gives and then forgets that it has given – that is, a love that gives unconditionally. It is sacrificial love. In the same way that parents attach no conditions to the love by which they give birth to, raise, and provide for a child, so also true love is a love that gives unconditionally. This was the kind of love that God bestowed on human beings at the time He created us. That is why the origin of true love lies in God.” This, to me, is a beautiful explanation of how the Cain-Abel dynamic can function ideally. By embodying this kind of sacrificial love toward Cain, Abel opens the floodgates for God’s love to reach Cain.

#### **Loving Cain Takes Time**

All of this conceptualization of Cain-Abel dynamics can seem a little esoteric, but when I see it play out in the classroom, it really feels like a worthwhile way to view things. I’ve made a difference with kids whom I refused to stop loving, even when other teachers had written them off as psychos. Over months, I’ve been able to form relationships with a few of these Cain-type children, and the difference in class is remarkable. With other kids, even if I can’t see immediate results, I remind myself that there is no telling how I will be remembered by a child whose other teachers have given up on them.

Striving to give all of myself in loving these kids every day makes all the difference in my own mind and heart. And just maybe, it can make a difference in theirs as well.

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