

Forgiveness Renews Our Lives

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Through the Divine Principle, we can understand God's ideal for all men. Having witnessed our True Parents' victorious completion of the first twenty-one year course, we are starting to believe in God's hope for our own perfection of heart. Yet, in listening to many brothers and sisters, we find an inability to act confidently on that foundation of love and sacrifice. We can teach the ideal, witness to its accomplishment, and comfort all men with the hope of its worldwide realization. But why can't we see with the eyes of that love and that ideal? Why do we often feel inadequate to the point of feeling like failures? Why do we feel that true love is of the future and not a part of our daily living? What happened to the joy, excitement and anticipation we had as young members? How can we rekindle the fervor of youth and its passionate love for God?

Forgiveness is a key that will unlock the many chains that bind our hearts, Forgiveness that is from the depths of our hearts -- not from our

intellect or moral law. Heartistic forgiveness comes from true love, whereas intellectual forgiveness is given strictly from the head -- forgiven but not forgotten. This type of forgiveness is self-centered because it happens from the perspective of what was done to me. True forgiveness has an entirely different motivation.

From God's Perspective

Reverend [Chung Hwan] Kwak clarified this point by drawing an example from the life of Jesus. When Jesus was dying on the cross, he uttered the astounding words, Father, forgive them for they know not what they do. How could Jesus forgive such criminal failures executed with such cruelty? Jesus first and foremost united with the Will of God. By obeying God's Will, he could receive God's heart for man -- the heart of the parent longing and lamenting after his lost children. Therefore Jesus could see his tormentors and his disciples as children still in need of God's love.

Because of Jesus' ability to honor and obey God's Will and to love men as God loved them, he turned his crucifixion into a spiritual victory. In other words, we cannot truly forgive someone unless we unite with God's Will and inherit His parental heart. Forgiveness comes from the unconditional love of a parent.

Focused on Original Nature

Perhaps another example would help. Two years ago my husband and I brought our little family to visit my parents. My mother was shocked by the antics of our two-year-old, who (I had always felt) behaved like a normal two-year-old. My mother insisted, you never acted like that when you were that age! When I recalled specific instances I remember being disciplined for, my mother said, "I don't remember that!" Although I would like to believe I was an absolute angel, I seriously doubt that I miraculously skipped the "terrible twos". My mother's loving heart quite literally forgot all my wrongdoings and remembered only the joys and successes.

Failure to Receive Love

So it is with Heavenly Father. He loves us with such a deep heart to forgive us our wrongdoings and help us to realize our original nature. We want to accept God's love, but don't always. Why are we so flip-flop in our relationship with God? The answer, of course, is sin. But what is sin?

If we were to define sin from God's maternal point of view, then sin could be our refusal to accept His love, turning our backs on Him, and refusing to live UJ• to the potential He has created in each of us. If we can accept this definition for a while, recognizing that it isn't a total definition, then we can look at our life of faith a little differently.

The most important tool in examining any life or situation is honesty. We must admit the wrongs we have done, the correct things we haven't done, and all the unpleasant motivations that indicate we are not as well as we would like to believe. With that in mind, let's take a look at ourselves as members of the Unification Church: the family of God.

The Sin of Indifference

In counseling, the comments I hear so often are: "I feel so alone", "I don't have any close friends", and "there's no one to talk to -- everyone is always so *busy*." George Bernard Shaw once said, "The worst sin toward our fellow creatures is not to hate them, but to be indifferent to them: that's the essence of inhumanity." Colleen Townsend in her book on forgiveness aid, "... when Christ lives within us, we cannot remain neutral or indifferent because he is not. If he were, he wouldn't have walked this earth in the first place, because that required his complete involvement in our lives."

So what sin are we defining here? That sin of indifference or insensitivity of heart. Oh, we justify our uninvolvedness with each other in many ways: no time, no experience, didn't realize, etc. If True Father were standing right beside us, I wonder if we wouldn't choke on those excuses. Our refusal to make ourselves vulnerable to each other and to Heavenly Father from fear of failure and lack of involvement are examples of lapses in our faith.

Communication and Humility

Pride and secrecy are the breeding grounds of Satan. By making us too proud to ask for help or too proud to help someone break their tense-filled silence -- we are allowing Satan to isolate us from each other, from the principle of give and take. It is the principle of give and take which helps us to clarify our point of view and the principle by which we learn to love.

We can realize a golden age of the victorious, restored brotherhood of Esau and Jacob if we can but forgive our brother's wrongdoings and humble ourselves to the Will and heart of God. I have always been inspired when I've thought of how much it must have taken for Esau to put aside his murderous rage toward Jacob, humbling himself to God's desire for the nation of Israel, and embracing his brother for the sake of comforting God's heart and breaking the cycle of Cain / Abel failure. Esau didn't have perfect understanding of God's heart for Jacob, but he did have faith in God.

The Pain of Caring

In Father's sermon, *The Day of the Love of God*, given on May 20th of this year, Father tells of God's heart after the fall of man:

"All the precious items... have been perverted and abused by Satan, and this pierces God's heart over and over again. Worst of all, Satan has abused and perverted God's own children... Certainly God is always on the verge of anger, feeling that He would like to smash everything He created in order to be free of the Pain."

Never have I read words that more deeply describe the anguish of God. His love of mankind forces Him to open Himself up; to trust, to hope, to reach out to man -- knowing that He will probably be tremendously disappointed and deeply wounded once again.

After reading these words, how can we leave God alone to care for the hearts of fallen mankind? How can we ask for guarantees not to be hurt or rejected before we reach out to each other? How can we use our past experiences of being hurt as an excuse not to keep trying to explain ourselves or to be there for someone else?

Comforting God and Each Other

We need to keep our hearts warmly wrapped in the deep lessons of the Principle and the incredible insights given in True Father's words. We need to share our experiences with True Parents with each other -- especially in times of loneliness and pain. Then our pain, our rejection becomes an offering to comfort the hearts of our True Parents and Heavenly Father. The more we practice this kind of offering, the less self-conscious we become, and the more our giving is done to consciously bring comfort to Heavenly Father. Father goes on to explain in that sermon that God cannot smash His creation or turn off His heart:

"But God's very own purpose of existence is at stake, and therefore God must endure. No matter how terribly difficult it is, He must slowly but surely restore this shattered world into one healthy whole."

We must realize that our purpose of life and love is so closely tied, not only to God and True Parents, but

it is especially bonded to the life and heart of each other. This sincere concern for the well-being of each and every member must be our guiding grace to eliminate loneliness and misunderstanding within our family.

God must endure no matter how painful or difficult it is and so must we. We must push ourselves to honestly face our shortcomings, admitting them to our brothers and sisters and asking their help and God's to overcome them. When we have wronged someone, we must quickly repent to God and that person. If we are wronged, we must quickly pray for the person who has hurt us. This will stop any resentment from developing and enable the forgiveness process to begin more quickly.

We Must Forgive

When we cannot forgive, we become filled with guilt or resentment. We become separated, cut off -- from ourselves, from others and from God. We can't love anymore and we can't feel loved, so we take it out on ourselves. We punish ourselves in some way. We allow guilt to rob us of life.

These feelings we must honestly bring to Heavenly Father and ask His help. I recently read of an example of Corrie Ten Boom when she toured Europe after World War II. She was in a church in Germany. After her testimony, the guard of the concentration camp that had killed her whole family came up to her to ask her forgiveness. She was taken aback and her heart sank inside. She felt anger and resentment welling up inside herself. So she asked God to help her: "I can raise my hand... but You, dear Lord, must supply the feeling."

As she raised her arm to take his hand, she felt a warmth start at her shoulder and fly through her hand into the guard. The energy filled him and then began flowing back through her arm into her whole body. Soon she could feel God's heart of forgiveness and she embraced a very tearful and grateful guard.

If we just make a condition of acting on the need to forgive and ask God's help, then truly our faith will save not only ourselves but also our family.

God's Motherly Heart

The last point I would like to make is the necessity of forgiving ourselves. When we know the highest standard of love and truth, and know ourselves and all our sin, we are terribly aware of the gap that lies between what we are and what we should be and need to be. We feel guilty for every weakness and shortcoming; we despair at every mistake. But here's where we need to remember the motherly heart of God.

God wants us to use guilt as a warning device that we need to evaluate our actions and change some aspect of ourselves. He never intended guilt to cripple us. He wants us to learn from our mistakes -- to allow the lessons of life and love to melt our fallen nature and mold us into true children of His heart.

So let us go forward with the heart of forgiveness to strengthen our True Parents' foundation in America and deepen our unity with each other and with Heavenly Father.