



Dealing with Couples' Problems in Pursuit of Ideal Families

An interview of Yu Cheong-sun, director of the Multicultural Welfare Center

April 2014

True Peace magazine: Could you describe the work you do?

Counselor: This is a counseling center within the multicultural welfare center. I have been working as a counselor for ten years, since 2005. I have been mainly counseling people in multicultural¹ families, both our members and nonmembers. I do counsel nonmembers but most of my clients are members.

You have an academic background in counseling.

Yes. I am now pursuing my doctorate degree in the field.

A theme that emerged with WNLA 2014² was that happy families are needed to build Cheon Il Guk.

In ten years' of counseling, most of my clients have been church members. Usually when we receive the blessing, we do so with the hope or expectation that we can create ideal families. How to realize an ideal family is probably one of the main concerns for our members. The reality, however, is that many blessed families are not happy. I think that especially for international couples, several causes can be seen for this. The first is language. When foreign wives or husbands come to Korea, they first cannot catch what is being said, cannot speak the language and cannot understand it. This causes many difficulties for the couple.

¹ Our church in Korea and others use this term for families whose parents do not share the same national origin. "Welfare" here refers to the wellbeing and happiness of the families and is not to be confused with programs that funds the poor.

² Run by the FFWPU International Headquarters, February 13-17, at the Youth Center in Cheongpyeong

Usually, we see women getting married to Korean men. They always face difficulties living in Korea, but the Korean husbands have rarely had experience living abroad, so they cannot relate to the difficulties the wife is going through. They keep hoping or wishing that the wife will assimilate to Korean culture. Yet, the wife needs time to digest it. First, she has to accept the culture, and this is a big difficulty.

Families from international couples, fall into two types: You have families that are happy living together and families that have many difficulties. Some families fall in the middle; they are not very happy but they are not so bad. These, though, are the main two types. What we need to do is look at why they are different—why some are happy and others are not.

We, unlike other people in society, unlike secular people, usually marry based on this faith. If the couple share the same faith and live a life of faith together, even if they have conflicts, they can easily overcome these when they share the same faith.

The second aspect of happy families is that they respect one another. Usually, among happy couples, because they respect each other, don't want to forcefully change the other person. They respect the individuality, the personality of that other person, the food the person likes, the culture the other person is accustomed to. That's another aspect of why a couple is happy.

The third aspect is good communication between the happy couple. Because they respect each other, communication naturally comes easily in the family. Another aspect is that happy couples usually practice skin ship³ they love hugging and touching each other. Usually in families where the parents hug each other, they hug their children and hold the children's hands wherever they go, or massage each other. Of course, there are different aspects of why families are happy but I can point to these four common characteristics.

³ Formed like an English word and pronounced approximately as it would be if said in English, this term, which apparently originated in Japanese, means to form a bond through frequent physical contact.

Do unhappy families result simply from the absence of these features?

Unhappy families also have very clear characteristics. The first is that the couple do not live a life of faith or they do not share a life of faith. First, because we marry within our faith, if my partner does not share the same sense of this faith's importance, I end up not respecting the partner for that. Many of these couples did not marry because they liked each other but because of the faith, they come together and work to build an ideal. When they first come together and one realizes that the other person doesn't share the faith, respect for that other person declines.

From a horizontal point of view, one may try hard to work alongside and get along with the other partner, but it's usually very difficult to overcome this barrier. Regular people marry based on love. In love, you have three main elements: One is passion toward each other, missing the partner. The second is closeness. Being together as a couple, each feels warm, each feels safe—closeness exists between them. The third element is feeling responsibility for one's partner.

We do not meet because of love; we meet because of religion. We do not know each other. We don't necessarily like each other. We are not yet close to each other. We do not feel any passion toward each other. The first element, the first base that develops between the couple is responsibility over the blessing. The point is how we can live happily when we start on a base that's not formed by love but by responsibility. Blessed couples start on a base of responsibility and education.

After forming that base on responsibility, it is necessary to move on to develop closeness toward each other and then passion can emerge. It should go through this three step process. In the beginning, you start your married life, blessed family life, with the belief that this person and I think the same way. Yet, when this breaks down, the couple finds it difficult to develop closeness from a sense of responsibility. This couple cannot even think of becoming passionate about each other.

But there are people—let's say Buddhist-Christian couples—that develop a relationship. Isn't it possible—after the initial shock— that a blessed couple learns to live together and develop that passion?

It is possible, but we are unique. Buddhists and Christians among regular people might live well together, but when you look at their relationship in depth, you can find many struggles too. It would be relatively easier to live well together if only one of the couple has a religion than when both have separate religions. What is certain is that couples with different religions face many difficulties too.

Well, a number of our second generation members go into the blessing to please their parents rather than because of their deep faith. Are you saying that the prospect of happiness among second generation couples in those cases is low?

The prospect is very low. We can classify second generation members that receive the blessing into two groups: those that understand God's will and the values following that and the group that cannot reject their parents' wishes and receive the blessing out of obedience. Those who received the blessing after accepting our faith and acknowledging its values are usually very subjective and active.

The problem is that second generation members also face the same problem— one partner who is very active and has accepted our faith with conviction may meet a partner who doesn't share the same view. When this happens, a huge conflict may occur. Another case is when a partner receives the blessing out of obedience because the parents pushed but he or she cannot handle the aftermath of the blessing. These many cases include couples who get blessed but do not start

family life, couples that do start family life but break up or cases where after having a child one partner leaves the other or disappears.

Based on my counseling experiences, if parents force a child to receive the blessing without enough communication beforehand, the child certainly ends up being insecure after the Blessing Ceremony. What matters most, whether it be the blessing or regular life, is being a healthy family where healthy children grow under healthy parents that can communicate; hence, the ability to communicate is essential.

The True Family gave blessed families very precious ideals; however, not many blessed families are actually achieving them. They may all look fine on the outside, but when you look deep inside, not many truly feel happy. What is the cause? Why aren't we happy even though Father taught us and gave us everything? This needs to be deeply researched. If we do not get an answer to this, our future will not be bright.

The most first-generation couples were blessed between 1992 and 1997, so the largest number of children becomes eligible for blessing between now and 2020. Much of our church's future hinges on the success of this second generation group. We could match couples that both just want to please their parents or only allow members that are faithful participate in the blessing. Is either of these courses feasible?

Their faith must be raised. It is like building a house on top of a sand hill if they just receive the blessing. It will be a marriage but they won't become Unification Church members.

This is what I think: Many second generation children have received the blessing but do not come to church. We need to think of the reason. We should listen to what those second generation members have to say. Why don't they want to come to church? What do they think our church's problems are? What should be done to develop the church? What should be

changed about our church? How should the parents change? We need to listen to these issues from those in the second generation. Parents should seriously consider these points because the second-generation members are different from their parents.

We directly listened to Father's teachings and were moved by this. In other words, we chose to follow this path by ourselves. However, second-generation members do not have that experience. Children should be able to be inspired by lives of their parents, see them as their role models and want to become like them. This is how it should naturally be. The reason that second-generation members do not want to receive the blessing is because they ask, "Mother, are you happy? Father, are you happy with your blessing?" The parents, however, cannot answer those questions and are usually not honest about it. They basically do not talk about what problems they each individually have, in what areas they failed, and where the children should be careful not to follow the same path as the parents.

First, parents do not listen to their children well. Next, they are not honest and they are not courageous. They lack the courage to talk about their problems because they fear their children might judge them. In order to resolve these problems, we must be honest with ourselves about where we've failed, what we did wrong, how we failed to practice the Divine Principle even though we know it, how we have not listened to the children with our hearts and how we have not been able to be honest with them. Without being sincerely open about these problems, our second-generation members cannot trust us. Unfortunately, we do not have the courage to do that and do not even know how to talk about it. This is our problem realistically.

Parents only keep emphasizing that the children must receive the blessing. When the children ask why they should receive the blessing, they cannot answer. They just emphasize that they are second generation members. Yet, the children do not desire the title "second generation member." They question what a second-generation member is, how it benefits them. They think it is of no help and is just a burden. This is what they say. The problem is that the parents have nothing with which they can persuade their children regarding why second-generation members

are important. Not many parents can guide their children to accept this in their hearts. That is why the children do not respect their parents. That is why they do not think of this way as important. They feel they would be much happier living with someone they like. The children question why our ideology is important and say, “Mom, Dad, you married because of this ideology and live together, but aren’t you unhappy? So, why are you forcing this on me? I want to go my own way.” This is what many second generation members today go through.

What kind of answers do we have regarding this problem? This is our present concern. What is more serious is that the second-generation members that were born after the 360,000 couples are entering adolescence. However, these adolescent children have many problems. The biggest concern of foreign mothers here in Korea is that they have given up on their husbands, but because they received the blessing, they know the importance of second generation members. Their last hope is to bless their second generation children. However, their children do not attend church and reject it. This is the biggest sorrow of our foreign mothers. Where can they be comforted? Who can comfort them? Who can tell them, you did the right thing, you did well and your choice to follow Father’s teachings was the right one? They considered Father’s teachings precious. I think helping them recover from their wounds is very important. They should be comforted and be able to accept themselves, accept that they did the right thing by choosing to be blessed and have families through their religious beliefs, changing everything in the process by leaving behind their hometowns, their parents, their siblings, their jobs and their entire life history. They should be able to accept themselves and that they did the right thing about their lives.

Faith to Unification Church members is not just about attending Sunday services; it is of a completely different dimension. Faith, for at least those members who are internationally blessed, is a belief that they changed their lives. Hence, when it comes to such a precious belief, internationally blessed members need to have conviction that they did the right thing. But in reality, many have a lot of wounds, are confused and wandering around. They received the

blessing not because of their partner but because of the church. Then, what is the church doing for them? When they worry, when they shed tears and are in agony, what kind of help can we give them from the church level?

Unfortunately—and this may be my personal opinion—no one is taking responsibility for this. Maybe no one knows how to take care of this problem. So, we must now join hands, honestly acknowledge this real problem, and find ways to resolve their pain, heal their wounds and thereby change this crisis into an opportunity to raise the Unification Church again. This is a time when we should join hands and consider this problem together. This is what I think.

I appreciate what you have said. Also on another level, for parents or the couples themselves to trust international matching and blessing, they need assurance of an international standard that the education your child is receiving is the same education of the prospective spouse from another country.

The Family Department takes care of the blessing and hence, the educational curriculum for the blessing. Since the Family Department operates these programs, you will be able to get a better answer from them.

What we do here is take care of the problems, difficulties and struggles that happen after the Blessing Ceremony. Hence, I think asking the Family Department about the educational process would be more helpful to you. However, I completely agree with what you said and that it is very important.

Last year, the Family Department sometimes invited me to give lectures on education of the second generation, education about starting a family or education for newly married couples. While educating the participants, I said that the counseling office was always open if they had any problems afterward. I told them that they should not suffer through trying to resolve a

problem when fights occur, but to call the counseling office or pay a visit when they have difficulties. A few of the couples did actually come to our office. They had difficulties after starting family life but could easily resolve it through counseling. According to their feedback, they mentioned that their problem might have become a serious one if they had not known about this counseling center because they might have ended up fighting over many problems, or have given up in the end and gotten a divorce. However, thanks to the advice and help of the counseling center, they could easily recognize their own problems and resolve them. They were truly grateful. We received a good deal of feedback of this type.

Thank you. We appreciate taking up much of your time and I believe your advice will be very useful to our readers.

What's most important is the education of parents. Even if the blessing is conducted successfully, cases arise where couples break up because of the parents. The parents' perspective must therefore be very clear. In addition, the recovery of the individual is certainly important, as is the education of couples. We do not know how to communicate because we did not learn about it anywhere. Many couples do not really know ways to resolve their conflicts and usually just hold their struggles inside, suppress themselves or fight.

One thing I ardently felt while working here for ten years is that it is very important that couples are educated together. Wives, if necessary, usually find the education they need. On the other hand, the husbands do not have much time because they work; they do not know where they can learn what they need to learn; they do not recognize its necessity and do not know how to resolve problems. Hence, they cannot be happy.

Our church does many things, but I believe that it should teach couples how to happily live together in the future. They should be taught communication skills and that they need some time together to resolve conflicts between each other. However, couples usually do not have much

time together except for Sundays. We always attend church on Sundays, but I believe that at times it would be good if the worship service is concluded a bit earlier than usual and education of couples, seminars for couples or many other such programs are conducted afterward on these days. By developing a curriculum and conducting many programs, we should expand their education. A couple should get to know about each other and by observing other couples, they can learn a lot. They also learn how to raise their children. Going to Sunday service is important, but I believe education to be more important.

Sunday service is something that we must attend for our entire life; however, going to church for your entire life does not guarantee improvement in a couple's relationship. Of course it is important to learn how to express respect to God, but we also need a lot of time to communicate about how a couple is supposed to live, how to guide a family, what the wife truly wants, what the husband truly wants or what a couple desires together. After the couple attains a certain degree of unity, they need to communicate with their children. Through this, the couple can naturally teach their children about the blessing and implant its values. Parents must become models. Otherwise, they will fail. This is what I wanted to say.

Many other nations don't have counseling centers in our church. What do you suggest the church leaders or parents there do? In some cases, they go to outside counselors that don't understand our beliefs.

I know that education on counseling is part of the curriculum of the national leaders' workshop this time. In Korea, this situation has improved a bit through the counseling center. However since other nations do not have counseling centers, the leaders must first be educated about this. They should receive basic education and be able to practice it. Only by doing so, can they try it out in their nations and take care of their members through such experiences. Hence, leaders must learn first.

Leaders should learn about counseling and communication between people. When counseling, I discover that many people have been greatly hurt by their pastors. Pastors, however, seem unaware of this fact. They think they are doing well. Of course, they are working hard; however, they should be able to read people's hearts.

We are trying to achieve Vision 2020 to complete the experience of love and perfect ourselves before we go to the spiritual world; hence, I believe our lives are about returning to our original position as children of God.

Father clearly taught us that the air in the spiritual world is love, but that love does not grow in the spiritual world, which is why we need numerous experiences of love on earth—the four great realms of heart-to-heart love: parental love, love for siblings, love between the couple and children's love.

Unfortunately, we live as though we were meant to hate each other. What matters now is how members can train themselves to restore love and complete the four kinds of love in accordance with Father's teachings.

In order to do this, the individual has to be healthy. Healthy individuals must meet each other and build healthy families. It is natural for healthy children to emerge from a healthy couple. However, Unification Church members, in particular, have many wounds from the beginning. Many of our members did not receive love from their parents at a young age, came from broken families or insecure families. Many people are insecure.

Hence, many members hold the ideal of a great family, but they are not aware of their own wounds and get married. That is why they receive the blessing just with the ideal they hold. However, their partner has the same wounds. Their partner also comes to the blessing with that ideal alone.

They do not know how to become an ideal couple because they are each in pain. When we are healthy, we are usually glad when we shake hands like this. However, let us say Kayoung4 has

hurt her finger, but I am not aware of it. I am so glad to meet Kayoung⁴ after a very long time and shake her hand. What do you think will happen? She will probably cry out in pain. Is Kayoung then welcoming that handshake or is it painful to her?

Likewise, if there are wounds within me, my partner may not mean to hurt me, but I end up getting hurt. Unfortunately, two hurt individuals usually end up meeting each other. Even if a partner does not mean to hurt me, I may cry out in pain when touched as shown in the example. It is important for us to recognize our own internal wounds and understand that my partner may also have wounds.

At the point where a couple should set off together, each should be able to recognize that one can get hurt not because the partner means to inflict pain, but because of one's own wounds. All relationships should start from understanding oneself first. This is the starting point. Couples should start from there.

I should be healthy and be able to love and accept myself just the way I am. Just as God is whole, he created us whole too. God created us to closely resemble his internal nature and external form. So, we may have fallen and have cut off our relationship to God as a result, but each individual is still whole deep inside, just as God created us. We have fallen nature, but deep inside our fallen nature, we can find our true self.

Our fallen nature is more or less like garbage. My true self is hidden within this garbage. Hence, life is about getting rid of this garbage. Once one gets rid of the garbage, one will discover inside a jewel that we did not know existed. The task of getting rid of this trash throughout our lives is the way to restore love within our hearts. I cannot say everything here, but these are some of the basics.

⁴ Kim Kayoung was the interpreter in this interview.

Hence, we should be able to trust our wholesome selves and that we have God's nature in its intact form within us, despite our fallen nature. Simply put, the purpose of our lives is to let God's nature bloom within us. Experiences of love cover the four great realms of love, but the core of these is connubial love because a family starts from a couple.

In order to be parents that raise healthy children, we should first become healthy parents. For this reason, within the couple, the individuals must check themselves first and become healthy. The problem does not lie with my husband or my wife. Everything is my problem. Everything starts from this point. This is what I think./