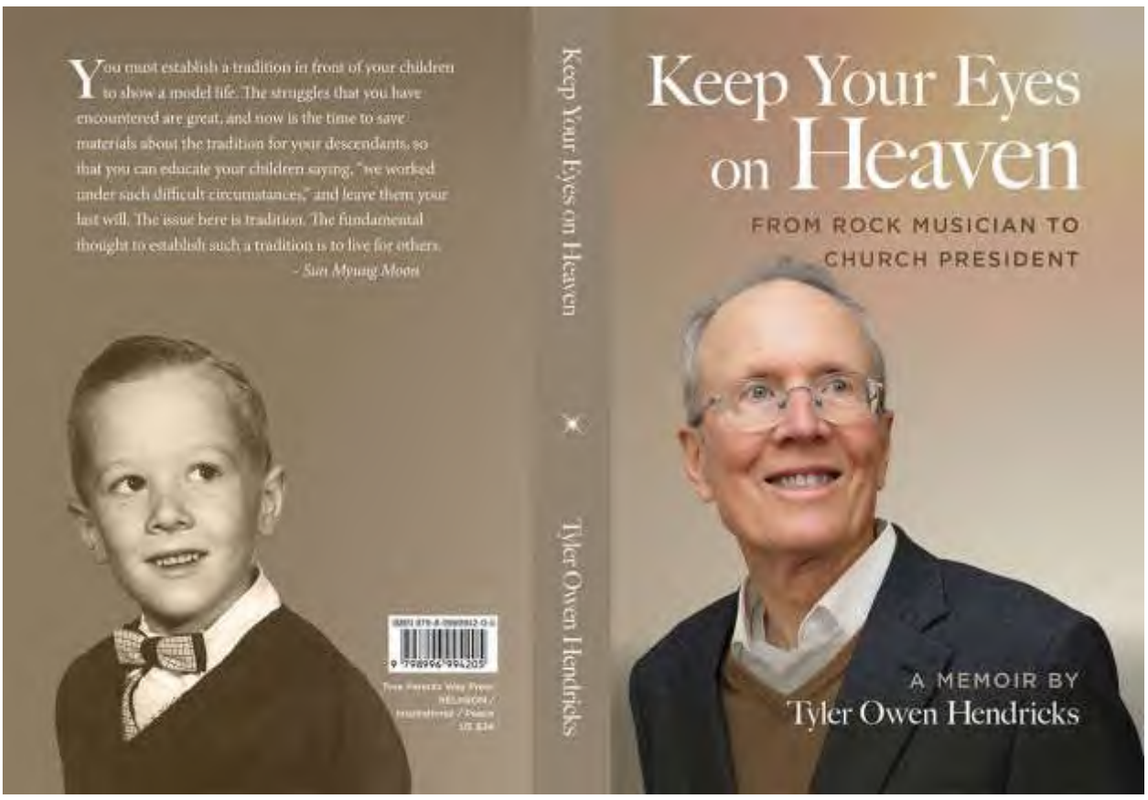
FFWPU International: Keep Your Eyes on Heaven

Tyler Hendricks
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Dr. Tyler Owen Hendricks has released his new memoir, titled Keep Your Eyes on Heaven, now available on Amazon! Read below for a preview of the key experiences and insights featured in this article."

Born in northern California and raised in Oakland, Tyler Hendricks got a degree in math and then became a semi-pro rock musician. He met True Parents, for whom he was searching, in the Oakland Center in 1972. He served as a center member in Oakland, New Hampshire and New York, and as an MFT fundraiser before graduating from Unification Theological Seminary and Vanderbilt University Divinity School. His subsequent missions included Ocean Church, CARP, Common Suffering Fellowship, Assembly of the World's Religions, Religious Youth Service, HSA-UWC in New England, IOWC, and finally the presidency of the national church and then of the Unification Theological Seminary. He has authored Family, Church, Community, Kingdom and True Family Values: Creating a Faithful Christian Marriage. He helped produce "The Path to Happiness" Divine Principle video series, co-authored Four Family Loves,smoothed outthe English expression of True Parents' words, and created the "True Parents Way" website, which has over 3 million views. He is now completing Heavenly Parent, Only Begotten Daughter: A Theological Exploration of True Parents' Words and a revised Exposition of the Divine Principle. Tyler was blessed in marriage with Hyeyong Lee in 1982, and they are parents of five children and grandparents of twelve grandchildren.

A Typical East Garden Birthday

I went back to Nashville and successfully defended my dissertation. Returning to New York City, I duly had two copies of it printed and bound. Rev. Kwak was out of the country, so I reported that I had the printed copies to Dr. David Kim. He took me to East Garden to present the bound copies with my diploma to True Parents. It was on Jeungjin-nim's first birthday, early June of 1983. There were perhaps a hundred people at East Garden for the birthday celebration. Notified by Dr. Kim of why I was there, True Parents invited me to join them at their breakfast table, one among perhaps fifteen at the table. Dr. Kim announced that I was the first UTS graduate to finish the Ph.D. Which is amazing enough, but more amazing because I was in the second class. True Parents were so happy. Father signed the diploma and dissertation, and True Mother shook my hand. I peacefully sat down to enjoy the meal. Then Father announced to everyone that I should pioneer the course for all Ph.D. graduates to follow. I'm sure everyone thought Father would talk about teaching and writing books. And I was off to a good start, writing Level Five. But Father did not declare that I would be a theologian and professor. He stated that my mission would begin with the most important providence for spiritual and physical training and for the salvation of America and feeding of the entire world. Okay, I can agree with that. And that mission is …Ocean Church! And it begins today! At this moment! And Tyler Hendricks is hereby the National

Leader of Ocean Church!

The room and entire mansion exploded with applause, as my mind exploded with "what did I just hear?" It was faith meets reality, face to face, son meets father, face to face, Tyler meets God, face to face. Then I heard Father say, okay, Dr. Hendricks, stand up and give your acceptance speech!

I thought to myself, "Just agree. It's a condition. Just play the part, representing all your Ph.D. colleagues." So I smiled and nodded. Father waxed on about the value of being out on the ocean, fighting the elements from before dawn until past midnight, the thrill of catching the big one, communing with God, saving America's youth and turning around America's economy. I smiled and nodded. "This is just a game Father's playing," I said to myself, "When Rev. Kwak gets back, he'll explain to Father that I already have a mission. Father doesn't need to worry about assigning me one; I already have one! Please rest, Father! It will all get sorted out within a couple of days."

Then Father expounded about the course upon which I was embarking, through Ocean Church, CARP, church leader, IOWC leader, and finally back to teach at UTS. I played along, smiling, telling myself that it's for the sake of all this audience, it's a teaching moment for Father. Then, he turned to me and said, "Okay, Tyler Hendricks, now stand up and give your acceptance speech."

I thought, "Woaah, Father, this is too much. You're really putting me in a hammerlock in front of everyone." But as I was thinking that, my body was, as if on its own, standing up and moving behind my chair. I opened my mouth and started talking. I don't remember my exact words, but I remember my feeling. The words flowed out and it was all in harmony with what Father had been saying. What a great idea to make me National Director of Ocean Church! Who else could have come up with such a great plan? It was what I always wanted to do! It will be so great to get out on the ocean! You might say I became a consummate actor, but it was a real spirit world that possessed me, and I accepted it whole-heartedly, raising and lowering myself on my tiptoes.

I sat down to more cheers, and Father moved on to other things.

It's Simple: Follow Father

Nonetheless, my humanistic brain was wedded to the Level Five assignment, and I expected that Rev. Kwak would straighten Father out about that. Plus, I hoped that Father would realize that I have no qualification to be the National Director of Ocean Church. So I returned to my Level Five office, in a state of denial. Two or three days later was a Friday. My Level Five office was on the New Yorker's fifth floor and the Ocean Church office was on the ninth floor. I was in my office that evening when an Ocean Church member walked in and told me that a national Ocean Church leaders meeting had started and, since I'm the National Director, I should come and speak to them. Oh yeah? Really? Well, okay. I went up and walked into a room full of perhaps 40 Ocean Church brothers sitting on the floor, waiting for me. Back then, most Ocean Church brothers sported a beard. They were burly, bearded and sun-burned. In the front row was Gerhard Peemoeller, the main Ocean Church leader. He had been Father's security guard, and was called "big Gerhard" because he was 6' 8" and weighed 300 pounds. They all looked like big Gerhard to me, and they didn't look as if they were ready to welcome this Ph.D. pinhead as their leader. I was honest with them. "Look," I said, "You're with Ocean Church because Father put you here, and now I'm the director for the same reason. So, you follow Father, I follow Father, and we deal with it; God will work through it. Thanks, nice to meet you. By the way, I know absolutely nothing about Ocean Church, except that you have boats and go fishing. I guess I will get some education. Have a great meeting." They seemed to handle that. A short, honest speech.

At that point in time, I happened to be the co-director, with Dr. Frank Flinn, of "The Sun Myung Moon Institute," a project of the International Religious Foundation. We had scheduled a meeting that weekend, to discuss our project to research the life courses of the 36 blessed couples. Who are they? What are they doing? That project never got off the ground, nor did the Institute. In the middle of our Saturday morning meeting, which I felt was more important for me than the Ocean Church national gathering, an Ocean Church member appeared in my office to tell me that Father was speaking to the group at Belvedere, and he's wondering where I am. Dr. Flinn, a good Catholic, understood completely that Reverend Moon came first. I didn't see Frank again that weekend; he probably went back home.

As the staff brother drove me to Belvedere, I was laying on the floor of the van. I was hit with hay fever and a stomach ache. But as soon as we arrived at Belvedere, the sickness went away. I stood at the back of the training center and conversed with True Father, with Colonel Han translating. I told Father that I hadn't come because I was meeting a professor. Father was very kind and warm to me. He wasn't angry or anything. So I inched forward. "You know, Father, it's not smart to make me the director of Ocean Church. I don't know anything about fishing." Father volleyed back, and I felt as if we were playing ping pong. I forget what he said, but it was a reasonable and positive response as to why I should be at the Ocean Church meeting. I returned the volley. "Father, I have an important mission, writing Level Five." Father hit it back, firmly but kindly. "Father," I went on, "there are so many great Ocean Church

members. They know much more about Ocean Church than I do. I'm sure that any of them would do a much better job than I can." Father hit it back, another soft, deft response.

At that point, I realized several things. One, I could not outsmart Father. Two, I'm being uncooperative and Father is being very gentle. There was a play on Broadway around that time, called "Your Arms Are Too Short to Box with God." That came to mind. Three, no matter what, Father wants me to take this position. It was not for an immediate or practical reason, based upon personal capability and putting people in positions best suited to their skill sets. There was a longer-term, broader-based agenda playing out, for America, for all those burly bearded boys, for me personally, and who knows what else. True Father's life is a game of 10-dimensional chess. He is willing to sacrifice practical results for the sake of spiritual training. We are a spiritual movement; the spiritual comes first; our spiritual growth comes first. Four, I realized that I'd better quit while Father is indulging my obstinance. I said yes, thank you Father. I sat down, got to know the Ocean Church members and enjoyed the meeting.

My office moved to the ninth floor.

Earning My Docktorate

My immediate task was to prepare for the Ocean Challenge in Gloucester, MA, the year's main Ocean Church event. True Father had discovered that giant bluefin tuna abounded off Cape Anne, and had developed a novel method to catch them. Here's where 10-dimensional chess comes in. Fishing is spiritual training for young people. America's fishing industry is declining. Fishing communities are suffering. Investment in fishing will revive communities and youth. Japan is a huge market for raw tuna. Father knew that once Japanese sushi was introduced in America, it would become very popular and, between that and the Japanese market, the price for a pound of tuna would sky-rocket. Each bluefin tuna that Father figured out how to catch weighed from 500 to a thousand pounds.

Do the math, put it all together, and we have the spiritual and physical nexus of Ocean Church, spiritual training, boat building, fish processing, coastal city prosperity, seafood distribution and Japanese restaurants. Some forty years later, journalist David Fromson published a New York Times article on the economic dimension of True Father's accomplishment, "The Untold Story of Sushi," (Nov. 22, 2021). Because fishing involves hard work and team unity in a challenging physical environment - we considered our activity as a spiritual training for young men and women. There also is the commercial value of the tuna that we caught and, in effect, donated to a seafood corporation that Father directed to be established. It was called, "Happy Group." In the future, True Father expanded his thinking in two directions - the provision of food for nations in need, and the protection of the earth's environment.

Gloucester was the focal point for all of this at the time. There, we owned a marina, a fish processing and shipping facility, a sushi restaurant, and a center with sleeping rooms, cafeteria and a lecture room, all on one two-acre property. I was in charge of the spiritual-training, as well as explaining all of this to the media and local townspeople. But I knew really why Father brought me there; it was to get me out of the library and onto a boat, fishing for tuna in the deep blue sea.

Father's Vision for Me

We called the summer's fishing activity, "Ocean Challenge." For a few weeks I dealt with the logistical preparations in the New Yorker Hotel Ocean Church office. I have notes of words Father spoke to me in a meeting on June 27, 1983: "You'll become a national-level leader, prophet, conveyor of Father's heart. You got the Ph.D. and went to Ocean Church not by your will but by Father's will. That is a great thing. Ocean Church is not your ultimate mission. Not long - three years at most. It depends upon how well you do. Father will decide. This summer you won't be on the New Hope [Father's boat]. You will captain a small boat."

He talked about other things for a while, and then returned to me, "Do you follow?" I answered, "Yes, Father." He said again, "Do you follow?" I said, "Yes."What can one say? I could not digest much of it, except that, "I'm with you, Father. If you say I'm a prophet, that's what I am. If you say I'm blessed, so be it. If you put me on MFT, there I will go." As I write this memoir, I am happy that all of that happened, and I will be happy eternally. I am appreciating it more and more, the older I get. I believe that this appreciation will increase for eternity.

Then on July 3, in Gloucester, True Father gave an amazing speech, which is in a book curated by two sister Ocean Church captains, Karen Smith and Susan Bouachri: God's Will and the Ocean. During that speech, Father said, "Look at Tyler Hendricks. He was the first Ph.D. graduate. As soon as he graduated, he was asked to come to Ocean Church. He couldn't believe it. I had been working for seven or eight years before I could become the top fisherman, but Tyler came along and had to inherit it in one season. No matter how tough it was, he had to do that. It's really impossible, but anyway, he had to find out what it is like."

The Birth of Helena, the Ocean Princess

On June 29, our one and only first beautiful baby Helena arrived. Hyeyong's mother had come from Korea, and Helena was born at St. Luke's Roosevelt Hospital on Manhattan's 10th Avenue. Thank you God that Helena's grandmother was there. I was there as much as I could be, but she was the one to give the tender loving care that Hyeyong and Helena needed and deserved. One thing I did accomplish - I informed True Parents of Helena's birth, and they named her Helena, "He" from Hendricks, and "Lee," Hyeyong's maiden name.

Tuna Fishing on Good-Go 44

Within a few days of Helena's birth, I was on-site in Gloucester, with fifty or sixty members and twenty or so boats to oversee, plus media and community relations, plus True Parents often being at Morning Garden, an estate two miles from the marina, fishing with us and coming sometimes to speak. We had one meeting to which we invited the Gloucester community; there were one hundred or more people there, and midway through the program we were alerted that someone was in the parking lot writing down the license plate numbers of the cars parked there. It caused a bit of a bustle, but I did not hear of anything coming from it. I had no special encounters with True Parents, beyond one breakfast with them and two of their sons, and crossing paths with True Father on the dock or at sea.

A few weeks later, Hyeyong moved to Gloucester, with newborn Helena, living with East Garden staff sisters. I did not have time to visit that house. That was our life; it is what Father expected, I understood it and believed in it and still do. My heart was pure making the offering. And yet I can also acknowledge a failure of responsibility, similar to my failure to write a letter to Hyeyong during the first two months of our engagement. I was shirking responsibility and causing others to sacrifice, namely, my wife and daughter, while thinking that I'm the one making the faithful sacrifice. I did not have it in me to enjoy time with my wife and new baby, while my brothers were without a wife, working 24-hours a day, and hadn't even started family life.

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