



SEICHO-NO-IE

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SEICHO-NO-IE

TRUTH OF LIFE

September 2007

Volume 56, No. 9

Seicho-No-Ie is nondenominational, an **INTERNATIONAL PEACE BY FAITH MOVEMENT** based on the Truth that all religions emanate from One Universal God.

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Cover Photo

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COVER DESCRIPTION:

Family harmony begins with you.

When you are grateful to your grandparents, parents, siblings, children, and all relatives, you will bring happiness and love into your home. This will then make yours a Seicho-No-Ie home.

TRUTH OF LIFE is published monthly by Seicho-No-Ie United States Missionary Headquarters, 14527 South Vermont Avenue, Gardena, CA 90247, a non-profit California religious and educational corporation. Copyright © 2007 by Seicho-No-Ie, Inc. Subscription: \$15.00 yearly, \$1.50 per copy. Third class postage paid at Gardena, CA. Printed in the U.S.A.



Printed on recycled paper



IS YOUR LOVE BEING CORRECTLY EXPRESSED?

All parents think they love their children. But how would they respond if asked whether or not they love all their children in the same way? More than likely, most parents would say that they *do* love their children in the same way. If they did not, it would be hard to say they are good parents.

Still, since nothing or no one is completely perfect and flawless in this physical world, there may be instances in which one child is given special, more favorable treatment. We must be very careful when this happens, as favoritism may leave an emotional scar on the other children.

All children love their mother and father and in turn want to feel loved by them. Consequently, they naturally begin to want “proof” of their parents’ love. If they notice that one sibling is receiving more attention, they could become very unhappy, feel competitive, and even become jealous. Siblings who had previously been getting along perfectly then begin to fight, become ill, or may even run into trouble with the police. These are problems that have to do with a parent’s love, as well as to how that love is being expressed. No matter how often parents may say they love their children in the same way, the important thing is whether or not they are *expressing* that love in the same way.

Love is most effective when it is expressed. This applies to the love between a parent and child, as well as to the love between a husband and wife. No matter how much one may love the other

in one's mind, if the correct expression is not there, it is the same as having no love at all. Love is like a rough sketch. It does not make sense to focus only on the coloring in just one part of the drawing. If we do, the entire balance would be thrown off and the result would be a ridiculous picture. When sketching, we must always be aware of the overall balance of the drawing.

Similarly, parents need to be careful not to focus exclusively on one child while ignoring the others, thereby leaving them feeling alone and abandoned.

“I WANT A LITTLE BROTHER”

Hiroko Kawamura lived in Yamaguchi Prefecture, Japan, and had been active in the Youth and Young Adults Association in Seicho-No-Ie since she was in high school.

She was a very loving person, and she also married someone very wonderful. Unfortunately, Hiroko eventually drifted away from Seicho-No-Ie and even stopped going to Readers' Meetings.

Five years after getting married, Hiroko finally had her first child—a little boy. They named him Hideaki and he grew to be very strong and healthy. However, being an only child can be very lonely. Hiroko and her husband wanted to have another child very much, and in their ninth year of marriage Hiroko became pregnant again. Although she was over 40 years old at the time, Hiroko was not at all concerned and went ahead in having the baby.

Hiroko was very happy to have another boy whom she and her husband named Tomohiro. Since Hideaki had been wanting a little brother, he was very excited for the baby to be born. However, when the baby was actually born, things were not as he had expected. The baby had been born slightly premature, so that he was slightly smaller than other babies and required his mother's undivided attention. She began to focus completely on the care of the little baby, thereby leaving her older child to fend for himself. This situation would soon prove to be problematic.

Of course, Hiroko loved both her sons. Nevertheless, she and her husband now had to concentrate on caring more for their

younger son and did not pay as much attention to Hideaki as they had before. So Hideaki began to feel very sad and lonely, and these feelings began to manifest as jealousy towards his younger brother. Before his parents could realize what was happening, Hideaki began to bully and tease his brother to the point where they ended up having to scold him every day.

In no way was Hideaki to blame for this situation nor were his parents deliberately playing favorites between the two. It was simply that Tomohiro had been born prematurely, and in their desire to raise him to become a normal, healthy child, the parents overdid caring for him. As a result, they had inadvertently thrown off the balance between baby Tomohiro and Hideaki. This was the reason why Hiroko had to reprimand Hideaki every day.

REVERSING THE SITUATION

The neighbors and people at school, however, would say, “Hideaki is a very good child.” Hiroko couldn't believe what they were saying, and thought they were just being polite. But Hideaki *was* actually a good child outside his home. All he wanted was for his parents to pay attention to him, therefore he would do all the things that he was told not to—although when he did his parents would see him as a “problem child.”

Hiroko knew that things couldn't go on in this way. Not knowing what to do, she turned to reading the Seicho-No-Ie books that she had read many years before. Yet nothing really changed because Hiroko herself had not changed.

It was at about this time that a neighbor gave her a copy of a Seicho-No-Ie magazine and encouraged her to read it. Soon thereafter, the same person invited her to attend a Mother's Study Class.

Hiroko went to the classes, and after listening to various lectures and testimonies she finally realized the mistake she had made in raising her children was having reversed the roles of her two sons. She saw the huge differences in the way she had been expressing her love. She had put her younger son ahead in any and all circumstances because he was small, and she felt that

small children needed more attention. For example, during snack-time, she would give the younger child his snack first. To her older son, she would always say, “You’re bigger, so you have to be patient.” Perhaps she thought that she was protecting the small, but this intention didn’t hold any meaning for Hideaki; he merely thought that Hiroko was discriminating against him.

Just think about it. Why should having been born first or being strong and healthy mean that you get your snack later? When using public transportation, some mothers may let their younger children sit because they are small. They make the older ones stand, and perspiring they themselves grab on to the passenger strap while carrying heavy packages. To do this is a mistake. If you allow this to happen, the younger child will never cease to behave in a spoiled manner, and before you know it, he will have begun making fun of adults and older children. He will also get the impression that it’s only natural for them to give up their seat for him.

SCHOOL IMPROVES, TOO

Hiroko was a very intelligent person, however, and realized at once what it was that she had done wrong. She immediately decided to correct things. Nevertheless, it took a long time to get rid of her old habits, such as what she was used to doing at snack time. Previously, she had been giving more to her younger son, but now she stopped doing that. She began by telling Hideaki, “You are bigger than your brother, so you’ll get your snack first and I’ll also give you more,” and she *did* give him a little more. The younger child got a little less and waited until after his older brother received his snack. As she corrected the order in which she had been doing things and began to show respect for Hideaki, Tomohiro began to adore and respect his older brother.

Still, despite this change, Hideaki continued to have problems. He became obsessed with volleyball and focused on playing throughout the 7th and 8th grades. He came home from school exhausted with no energy to commit to his studies. When

Hideaki entered the 9th grade and could no longer be on the team, his mother hoped that he would begin studying but Hideaki began watching TV all the time instead. Hiroko wanted to bring out the good points of her son as she had learned at the Mother’s Study Classes, but she was filled with apprehension.

“Hideaki is a good child! Everything is going to be fine!” She prayed in this way, visualizing his God-nature. There were also many troubling things happening internally at the school then, and the teachers were in a quandary as to what to do. So Hiroko left everything regarding Hideaki up to God and began to concentrate on helping to resolve the issues at school. She did this because she felt that it was selfish to focus exclusively on her own child.

In this way, Hiroko prayed, visualizing the True Image of the teachers and students at school and even began distributing the Seicho-No-Ie magazines there. The teachers had lost any and all confidence they once had. It happened, however, that in one of the magazines, there was an article that said, “Let’s be grateful to our teachers,” and this was what Hiroko began to do. She obtained a copy of a roster of all the teachers’ names from the school office, and she encouraged others to join her in showing their gratitude to the teachers. The reaction wasn’t very positive, but at the graduation ceremony, although they had initially thought they might need to call in the police for protection, nothing happened and it turned out to be a wonderful ceremony.

Meanwhile, two weeks before he was scheduled to take his high school entrance exams, Hideaki began to buckle down and study. Hiroko felt that it might be too late, but she decided to leave everything up to God. Right before his exams, Hideaki put his hands together and prayed. He also stuffed his pockets with all the amulets that people had given him, went to take the exam, and passed the test for the high school of his choice with flying colors.

The two brothers have since grown and matured to become fine adults who get along very well with each other.

—From *Chichi to Haha no Tameni*, “For Father and Mother,” pp. 174-181

Cherishing Our Parents

*The Relationship Between
A Wife and Her Father-in-Law*

Masaharu Taniguchi

T*his article from Dr. Taniguchi's writings is based on a testimony given by Mrs. Shizuyo Suzue of Hamamatsu City at one of Dr. Taniguchi's Grand Lecture Seminars.*

Some time ago, Shizuyo remarried, bringing her children from a previous marriage. Her new life began well, but it quickly changed when Shizuyo's father-in-law decided to move in with them.

Her father-in-law had a very obstinate and eccentric personality. Initially living with his eldest son, he was unable to get along with the family and so moved in with his second son. However, he could not get along with his second son's family either and was soon told by both his sons, "We don't consider you our father, nor do we consider ourselves your children. Don't ever bother us again." Having nowhere else to go, he had no choice but to go live with his third son, Shizuyo's husband.

When her father-in-law first came to stay with them, Shizuyo said very politely, "I am your daughter-in-law. Please let me know if there is anything I can do for you." The father-in-law merely sniffed, "Humph," in response and looked coldly at her without saying a word. His grandchildren would call him "Grandpa," and try to get to know him, but he would only look away, as though saying, "Just leave me alone."

At first, Shizuyo wanted to do whatever she could to take care of her father-in-law, but she could not help but resent him for acting this way.

His attitude definitely stemmed from his obstinate nature, but a person's thoughts reflect those of others, too. Although Shizuyo considered her father-in-law coming to live with them a great burden, she also felt sorry for him and wanted to do what she could to take care of him—especially since he had been abandoned by his two other sons. However, her air of superiority and condescending attitude that implied, "I'm doing you a favor by looking after you," led to his feelings of resentment and animosity. He could not accept what she was saying when he knew that in her heart she was actually looking down on him. Therefore, no matter how politely she spoke to him, he refused to respond. And when he looked at the grandchildren who were *her* children, all he could do was look away, even when they called his name.

The father-in-law's cold, harsh attitude affected Shizuyo even more. No one could really blame her for her growing feeling of dislike towards her father-in-law and for treating him increasingly like a nuisance. Every time she saw his arrogant, sullen expression, Shizuyo could feel the hatred building in her and couldn't help but think of him in a very negative way.

Around this time, her father-in-law began having intestinal problems. He was no longer able to control his bowel movements and he began soiling his clothes. Perhaps it was because of these intestinal problems but he found everything tasteless, and all he did was complain no matter what Shizuyo cooked. Even then, however, he could still manage to drink an entire bottle of sake.

All Shizuyo could think was, "This vulgar, hateful, dirty old man! I wish he'd just die!" These harsh feelings became even *more* apparent as time went by, and in turn her father-in-law became even more spiteful. For some reason, his appetite grew more voracious and he would eat huge amounts—although he complained with every mouthful. He ate a tremendous amount

only to get a bad case of diarrhea and soil himself. Since it was Shizuyo's responsibility to clean up after him, everything became very overwhelming for her.

It was during this time that Shizuyo was introduced to the Seicho-No-Ie teachings. She learned that God is love and that this love is not merely a sentimental emotion of liking someone. She learned that we have to try and love people we hate even more than we do others because we cannot elevate our soul by loving only those we like which is something that anyone can do—in the way, for example, a mother loves the child she gave birth to or sweethearts love each other. No one can expect to build muscle mass by lifting something so light that anyone can pick up; one develops muscles through the effort exerted when trying to lift something very heavy. Shizuyo listened to lectures that taught her that loving someone who is difficult to love—someone like her nasty, dirty, old, hateful, spiteful, complaining, drunken father-in-law, for instance—would help her to grow spiritually. Keeping what she learned in mind, Shizuyo tried to love her “unlovable” father-in-law, but she simply was not able to love him from the bottom of her heart.

Finally, Shizuyo decided to go to Nagoya and receive individual counseling from Rev. Kinzo Shoji of the Missionary Center there.

“I have to take care of my elderly father-in-law. Please tell me how I can learn to really love him,” she asked Rev. Shoji. Much to her surprise, he replied, “You are so fortunate to have such a wonderful person living with you. You must be very happy.” Shizuyo was so stunned to hear these unexpected words that she could only stare at Rev. Shoji blankly. She could not understand what he meant by “wonderful.” And how could her father-in-law coming into her home possibly make her happy? The minister had to be kidding!

But Rev. Shoji continued, “Your father-in-law has brought blessings into your home. Being kind to your father-in-law gives you the opportunity to make deposits of virtues into the ‘Universal Bank.’ You are very lucky. Think of things in this way and be kind to your father-in-law.”

“Hmmm. That's a good way of putting it,” Shizuyo thought. When she thought about how her father-in-law had brought these blessings into her home, she felt very guilty about having had such negative thoughts and hating him so much. She decided to go home, ask for his forgiveness, and immediately start to be kind to him.

“Father, I'm back,” Shizuyo said politely as soon as she got home. She looked at her father-in-law and, as usual, he wore the same dour expression that no one could possibly love. She wanted to apologize for not having been more loving, but looking at that hateful expression, she simply could not bring herself to do so. Once again, she could only think of him as being a “dirty, hateful old man.” Not being able to say anything more, she left the room.

Still, Shizuyo could not forget Rev. Shoji's words about her father-in-law having come to give her an opportunity to make deposits in the “Universal Bank.” Throughout the day and night, Shizuyo could hear Rev. Shoji's voice, like the voice of God from deep within her, telling her how her father-in-law had come to her home to give her and her family blessings and virtues and how she should be grateful to him. Since she could not bring herself to express her gratitude to her father-in-law directly, Shizuyo began repeating to herself, “Father, thank you very much. You came to our home to give us blessings. Thanks to you, I am accumulating these blessings and virtues in this way. Thank you very much,” as she washed his soiled clothing every day. Whenever she served him his meals, she tried to think, “Thank you very much. Thank you very much.”

Through these efforts, Shizuyo was really able to accumulate virtues. Since she made it a point to think only of words of gratitude such as, “Thank you very much,” quietly in her mind, she was able to say, “Thank you very much,” to others as well. Even when people said simple things such as, “Good morning,” or commented on how cold it was, words of gratitude welled up from within her, and she was able to sincerely say, “Thank you very much.”

As she did this, something inside Shizuyo changed. In the past, whenever she washed her father-in-law's soiled clothing, she would hold her nose—as the smell was so foul—and lament the fact that she had to wash them. She would wash the clothes while complaining and feeling sorry for herself. But she was now grateful to be able to wash them. Furthermore, whenever she looked at her father-in-law, she felt a surge of love and really, truly wanted to embrace and comfort him.

Thrown out by his other two sons and disowned as a parent, he had come from far away to live with Shizuyo and her husband. He was alone and very old and weak now, and Shizuyo realized that no one would help him if she herself did not. He had nowhere to turn, and the only person he could rely on and look to for help was Shizuyo. She looked closely at him and the only thing she could see now was how very sad and lonely he looked. There was not a trace of the hateful expressions that she had seen before. Her heart went out to him and she could not stop crying.

Shizuyo was suddenly able to apologize from the bottom of her heart and say, "Father, please forgive me. I really wasn't thinking about your welfare until now. I'm so sorry for having been so cold and unloving."

For the first time since he had come to live with them, Shizuyo's father-in-law looked truly happy and smiled. As he smiled, however, tears were streaming down his face. Perhaps it was because he didn't want people seeing him in this way, he went upstairs—as if running away—to his room.

The next morning, as Shizuyo was about to greet her father-in-law, it was *he* who said, "Good morning," to *her*. Seicho-No-Ie teaches us that our environment is a reflection of our mind and that others will change when we do. Shizuyo's father-in-law, who had until that time always ignored her whenever she had said, "Good morning," was now very kind when she spoke to him. And although he had once behaved very coldly whenever his grandchildren tried to talk to him, he now began to care and look after them. Furthermore, once Shizuyo stopped

thinking of her father-in-law as "that nasty, dirty old man," his diarrhea stopped.

Shizuyo and her family now live very happily and contentedly—a life of heaven on earth. The Seicho-No-Ie teaching of one's environment being a reflection of one's mind is, indeed without a doubt, one of Truth.

—From *Onna no Ikigai*, "A Woman's Purpose in Life," pp. 151-158

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