

Faith Equals Daily Life

The purpose of religion should be to enable people to lead happy, fulfilling lives. Buddhism exists for this very reason. While many tend to view Buddhism as a reclusive practice of contemplation aimed at freeing the mind from the concerns of this world, this is by no means its original intent. Seeking to deny or escape the realities of life or society does not accord with the genuine spirit of Buddhism. Enlightenment, which Buddhism aims for, is not a transcendent or passive state, confined to the mind alone. It is an all-encompassing condition that includes an enduring sense of fulfillment and joy, and permeates every aspect of our lives, enabling us to live in the most valuable and contributive way. This idea is expressed in the SGI through the principle that “faith equals daily life.”

Nichiren Daishonin stressed this idea from many angles in his writings, often quoting the Great Teacher T’ien-t’ai’s statement that “no worldly affairs of life or work are ever contrary to the true reality” (“Reply to a Believer,” *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 905). When, through our Buddhist practice, our inner condition becomes strong and healthy—when we bring forth the “true reality” of our innate Buddha nature—we can act with energy and wisdom to excel at school or work and contribute to the well-being of our families and communities.

Regarding the principle that faith equals daily life, “daily life” points to the outward expressions of our inner life. And “faith,” our Buddhist practice, strengthens the power within us to transform our inner lives at the deepest level. When we apply our practice to the issues and problems we encounter in daily life, those challenges become stimuli—causes or conditions—that enable us to bring forth and manifest Buddhahood. Our daily lives become the stage upon which we carry out a drama of deep internal life reformation.

Nichiren writes: “When the skies are clear, the ground is illuminated. Similarly, when one knows the Lotus Sutra, one understands the meaning of all worldly affairs” (“The Object of Devotion for Observing the Mind,” WND-1, 376). For us, “knowing the Lotus Sutra” means chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo courageously to the Gohonzon and participating in SGI activities for our own and others’ happiness. This causes our Buddha nature to surge forth, infusing us with rich life force and wisdom. We in effect come to “understand the meaning of all worldly affairs.” The teaching and practice of Buddhism enable us in this way to win in daily life.

A scholar recently noted that one reason the SGI has attracted such a diverse group of people over the years is that it emphasizes and encourages people to apply Buddhist practice to winning in their lives. This accords with Nichiren’s emphasis on actual results as the most reliable gauge of the validity of a Buddhist teaching. As he says, “Nothing is more certain than actual proof” (“The Teaching, Practice, and Proof,” WND-1, 478).

At monthly SGI discussion meetings, members share experiences that result from faith and practice, and joyfully refresh their determination to advance and grow. The Soka Gakkai’s founding president, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, established the discussion-meeting format before World War II. He described them as venues to “prove experimentally the life of major good” (*The Wisdom of the Lotus Sutra*, vol. 2, p. 118). Hearing and sharing experiences in faith give us insight into how Buddhist practice enriches people’s lives and inspire us to strengthen our resolve. Discussion meetings are forums for confirming the purpose of Buddhism, which is to enable every person to win in life and become happy.

We should also understand that chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo produces the most meaningful rewards when accompanied by action or effort.

Any religion promising results without effort would be akin to magic. But even if we could get what we wanted through magic, we would not grow in character, develop strength or become happy in the process. Buddhist practice complements and strengthens the effects of any effort. A student may chant to ace a test, but the surest path to passing is to match such prayers with serious effort in study. The same applies to all matters of daily living.

The power of chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo to the Gohonzon is unlimited. It infuses us with the energy we need to keep striving and with the wisdom to take the best, most effective action. When we act wielding this energy and wisdom, we will undoubtedly see our prayers realized.

President Ikeda says: “The Gohonzon is the ultimate crystallization of human wisdom and the Buddha wisdom. That’s why the power of the Buddha and the Law emerge in exact accord with the power of your faith and practice. If the power of your faith and practice equal a force of one hundred, then they will bring forth the power of the Buddha and the Law to the degree of one hundred. And if it is a force of ten thousand, then it will elicit that degree of corresponding power” (*Discussions on Youth*, second edition, p. 299).

Nichiren Daishonin instructed one of his disciples—a samurai named Shijo Kingo who lived in the military capital, Kamakura—as follows: “Live so that all the people of Kamakura will say in your praise that Nakatsukasa Saburo Saemon-no-jo [Shijo Kingo] is diligent in the service of his lord, in the service of Buddhism, and in his concern for other people” (“The Three Kinds of Treasure,” WND-1, 851). At the time, Kingo had been subject to jealousy among his warrior colleagues, some of whom had spread rumors and made false reports about him to his feudal lord. But taking Nichiren’s encouragement to heart, Kingo strove to act with sincerity and integrity, and thereby strengthened his ability to assist his lord—to do his job, in today’s terms.

Nichiren also encouraged him that the entire significance or purpose of Buddhism lies in the Buddha's "behavior as a human being" (WND-1, 852) to fundamentally respect all people. This suggests that as Buddhists our sincere and thoughtful behavior toward others is of paramount importance.

Eventually Kingo regained his lord's trust and received additional lands, showing proof of the power of applying Nichiren's teaching to life's realities.

When President Ikeda visited the United States in 1990, he said to SGI-USA members: "I also sincerely hope that, treasuring your lives and doing your best at your jobs, each of you without exception will lead a victorious life. It is for this reason that we carry out our practice of faith" (*My Dear Friends in America*, third edition, p. 22).

We can view our immediate environment and responsibilities—at work, in our families and in our communities—as training grounds in faith and in life. In this way, we can use every difficulty as an opportunity to further activate our inherent Buddha nature through chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, and win in the affairs of society. Then we can grasp the real joy of applying the principle that faith equals daily life.

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Changing Karma Into Mission

No one can avoid difficulties or problems. Buddhism encourages us to build happiness in the midst of reality, to grow, improve and become stronger while facing life's challenges. Nichiren Buddhism enables us to change every aspect of our lives for the better, permanently. The process called "changing karma" entails securing unwavering happiness by revolutionizing our lives at the very core. And seen from the Buddhist perspective of life and death, this happiness persists eternally, countless lifetimes into the future. Here we examine the principle of changing karma and the Buddhist practice for changing karma into mission.

What Is Karma?

Some of our problems and sufferings are caused by actions and decisions we have made in this life. But for some we can find no apparent cause. These may make us think, *I've done nothing wrong, so why is this happening to me?*

Buddhism teaches the principle of karma—that many events and conditions we experience in this lifetime result from actions we have made in previous lives. *Karma* is a Sanskrit word that means "action." It explains the workings of cause and effect that span the boundaries of life and death. Our actions of thought, speech and behavior are like seeds that become implanted in our lives. These causes can remain dormant as "latent effects" in the current and future lifetimes. At certain times under certain conditions, however, these reveal themselves as "manifest effects"—results, or karmic rewards, we experience in a tangible way. Karma, then, is the accumulation of actions from previous existences that remain dormant within us until they appear as effects in this lifetime. This karma can