1. REFRAIN from eating meals, as an SGI Zoom meeting constitutes a faith activity.

2. TURN CAMERA ON during activities which involve discussion and engagement.

3. MUTE WHEN NOT SPEAKING.

4. OTHER DISTRACTIVE BEHAVIORS: COOKING/CLEANING
Faith for Absolute Victory

SGI-USA December 2021 Discussion Meeting
What does achieving *Absolute Victory* mean to you?
Key Point

1. Absolute victory means developing an invincible, conviction-filled life state by taking action to spread Buddhism and applying our Buddhist practice to overcome all obstacles.
Nichiren Daishonin’s Invincible State of Life

I myself, since the day I first took faith [in the Lotus Sutra], have recited [passages from this sutra] every day, making a vow and praying ... and although I have encountered great difficulties of various kinds, because of the profound influence of the benefits bestowed by the Lotus Sutra and the golden words of Shakyamuni Buddha, I have managed to survive until today.

- Nichiren Daishonin, “Letter Sent With the Prayer Sutra,” The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, vol. 2, p. 460
By Chanting, We Can Overcome All Difficulties

When we chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo with faith in the Gohonzon, we come into contact with the Daishonin’s spirit and manifest the same great life state as the Daishonin, the life state of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, in our own beings. That’s how we bring forth limitless wisdom, compassion and courage, powerfully overcome every difficulty, and change poison into medicine. How fortunate we are!

- Ikeda Sensei, November 2021 Living Buddhism, pp. 65–66
Achieving Absolute Victory With the Same Heart as the Mentors of Kosen-rufu

Aligning our hearts with the mentors of kosen-rufu and fighting with the “strategy of the Lotus Sutra” always lead to victory. By persevering with courageous faith, we can uphold and promote what’s right. By building an organization dedicated to good, in which many different individuals are united in purpose, we can vanquish any evil. This is the ultimate meaning of “faith for absolute victory.”

Bobby Eppsteiner’s Absolute Victory

• Dreamed of becoming a surgeon at 16
• Due to low grades in science, teachers, advisors and counselors all tried to sway Bobby away from his dream
• Turning to Sensei’s encouragement, Bobby dove headfirst in his studies and Buddhist practice
• Was denied by 19 out 20 medical schools
• Currently a ear, nose & throat surgeon – his top choice

“Looking back, I see clearly that Sensei’s guidance was what gave me the courage, time and again, to buck conventional wisdom and follow my gut.”

Discussion Question

1. What does finishing this year victoriously look like for you?
Slide 1: (Not in 11/18 insert)

**This slide is NOT part of the discussion meeting presentation. This slide is to outline basic Zoom etiquette. This slide can be shown at the beginning of a discussion meeting as members/guests join the meeting. The presentation starts from slide 2.

Slide 2: (11/18 insert: Faith for Absolute Victory)

- Hello everyone! Thank you for this opportunity to study with you all!
- Today we will be studying about “Faith for Absolute Victory.”
- Let’s get started!

Slide 3: (11/18 insert: What does achieving Absolute Victory mean to you?)

- The topic “faith for absolute victory” comes from the five eternal guidelines of the Soka Gakkai, which are:
  1. Faith for a Harmonious Family
  2. Faith for Achieving Happiness
  3. Faith for Overcoming Obstacles
  4. Faith for Health and Long Life
  5. Faith for Absolute Victory
- So today, we will be going over the fifth and final guideline.
- Before we dive a little deeper, I would like to ask everyone a question.
- In a few words: **What does achieving Absolute Victory mean to you?**
- Please unmute and say what you think or write it in the chat.
  (give a few moments for people to share their answers)
- Alright, thank you for your answers! Now, let’s see how Nichiren Buddhism views this topic by looking at our key points for today.

Slide 4: (11/18 insert: Key Point)

- **Absolute victory means developing an invincible, conviction-filled life state by taking action to spread Buddhism and applying our Buddhist practice to overcome all obstacles.**
- In other words, faith for absolute victory is not about worldly gains or external accomplishments. Instead, it’s more about the kind of people we become through our Buddhist faith and practice.
Slide 5: (11/18 insert: Nichiren Daishonin's Invincible State of Life)

- A perfect example of someone who exemplified this victorious spirit is our philosophy's founder: Nichiren Daishonin.
- Nichiren endured unbelievable hardships due to his practice of and belief in the Lotus Sutra.
- Other religious leaders and government officials, afraid of losing their following to Nichiren and his teaching of respect and equality for all people, felt highly threatened by the Daishonin and did whatever they could to stop the spread of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.
- Nichiren was publicly ridiculed numerous times, exiled twice and almost beheaded. Many also attacked and criticized his followers.
- Still, not once did he waver in faith or blame his Buddhist practice for his sufferings.
- In one letter to his followers, Nichiren wrote:
  
  I myself, since the day I first took faith [in the Lotus Sutra], have recited [passages from this sutra] every day, making a vow and praying ... and although I have encountered great difficulties of various kinds, because of the profound influence of the benefits bestowed by the Lotus Sutra and the golden words of Shakyamuni Buddha, I have managed to survive until today.

- It’s important to note that merely “surviving” life may not equate to a “victorious” one. Still, the critical point here is that Nichiren had total conviction in the Lotus Sutra and his Buddhist practice.
- He was never swayed or discouraged no matter what happened to him; thus, he was absolutely victorious.

Slide 6: (11/18 insert: By Chanting, We Can Overcome All Difficulties)

- The Daishonin is an excellent example of one person winning against all odds by using their Buddhist practice.
- We might think that because we haven’t faced challenges similar to his we cannot bring out that same diamond-like state of life.
- But this is not true.
- Sensei says:
  
  **When we chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo with faith in the Gohonzon, we come into contact with the Daishonin’s spirit and manifest the same great life state as the Daishonin, the life state of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, in our own beings. That’s how we bring forth limitless wisdom, compassion and courage, powerfully overcome every difficulty, and change poison into medicine. How fortunate we are!**

- Even if we aren’t going through life-or-death situations like Nichiren, that doesn’t mean our problems or emotions we are dealing with are any less critical.
- For some of us here, maybe 2021 wasn’t the year we thought we would have.
- Perhaps we aren’t even close to finishing the resolutions we made. But that doesn’t define whether we are victorious or not.
- First of all, the year’s not over! We still have a couple of weeks to break through and end with a win. But more importantly, we can chant and re-determine that, no matter what happened this year, we won’t give up and will keep progressing.
• This resilience is what the Daishonin developed through his practice. Because we experience setbacks and obstacles, we can choose not to be discouraged by them and use them as opportunities to show the power of our lives to ourselves and those around us.
• That is how we live with absolute victory.

Slide 7: (11/18 insert: Achieving Absolute Victory With the Same Heart as the Mentors of Kosen-rufu)

• Buddhism also emphasizes the importance of having a mentor in our lives.
• Inheriting the same ideals and spirit as the Daishonin, the three founding presidents of the Soka Gakkai have been the mentors for SGI members worldwide.
• But, related to our study topic today, why is this type of relationship so important?
• Sensei says: Aligning our hearts with the mentors of kosen-rufu and fighting with the “strategy of the Lotus Sutra” always lead to victory. By persevering with courageous faith, we can uphold and promote what's right. By building an organization dedicated to good, in which many different individuals are united in purpose, we can vanquish any evil. This is the ultimate meaning of “faith for absolute victory.”

Slide 8: (Not in 11/18 insert)

• Before we head into our discussion groups, let’s look at Bobby Eppsteiner's experience of refusing to be defeated and living with a victorious spirit.
• When Bobby was 16, he discovered his mission of becoming a surgeon.
• But almost no one, not his teachers, advisors or counselors, encouraged him to pursue it. In fact, they all tried to convince him to go for another career since science was historically his worst class.
• But Bobby’s parents encouraged him to read Sensei’s guidance, and he could feel Sensei’s belief in him.
• Regardless of what his advisors said, he put his all into his studies and Buddhist practice.
• Even after college, he was denied by 19 out of the 20 medical schools he applied to, getting into the last remaining school on the final day of admissions.
• Amazingly, today, he is an ear, nose and throat surgeon.
• Recalling his experience, Bobby says: Looking back, I see clearly that Sensei’s guidance was what gave me the courage, time and again, to buck conventional wisdom and follow my gut.
• Bobby is great example of never being defeated, even when everything or everyone seem to be against us.

Slide 9: (11/18 insert: Discussion Question)

• Now let’s discuss!
• We have one question that we can use to start the discussion:
  1. What does finishing this year victoriously look like for you?