

What Does Faith Equals Daily Life Mean?

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What does the Buddhist principle “faith equals daily life” mean? Does it mean people have strong faith if they have successful careers? Or that the happiest families are those with strong faith? Or the healthiest people have the strongest faith? If people lose their jobs or contract serious illnesses, do we question their faith? Is the strength of our faith reflected in the conditions of our immediate environment? Or is our faith reflected in how we face our daily lives? Nichiren Daishonin says that neither saints nor sages can avoid problems, so strong faith is not the absence of problems and obstacles.

The point is not the conditions in our environment, but the condition of our lives, the power of our life force. It is the attitude with which we approach each day.

Through our daily practice in front of the Gohonzon, we stimulate and solidify our inherent Buddha nature, putting ourselves into the highest of the ten worlds (of Hell, Hunger, Animality, Anger, Tranquillity, Rapture, Learning, Realization, Bodhisattva and Buddhahood). When we leave the Gohonzon and go about our daily lives, we are buffeted by the lower nine worlds in society. What we carry into these nine worlds—in other words, into our jobs, schools, families or other pursuits—is a high life-condition based on our Buddha nature. This is the spirit to do our best, to be victorious, to use our potential to the maximum. We can also control our basic life tendency and reveal our innate capability when our Buddha nature is strong.

Regardless of what role we assume each day, our daily lives are the arena in which we can display the benefits of our faith. We may or may not be successful or healthy at the moment, but we do have responsibility for our inner realm. Many of us may dislike our jobs, or our very lives, but through consistent practice we discover the key to finding happiness even under dire circumstances. Sony Niethammer of Long Beach, Calif., described it like this:

Gradually, something in me was awakening to the chanting. It was as if my heart had been buried under layers of darkness. At times it was painful to keep going—I begrudged my life and hated how I grew up. I was filled with self-doubt. However, as I continued to chant, my life began to expand and shine, and I felt a deep, strong identity (August 15, 1997, *World Tribune*, p. 6).

Her happiness was generated from within, not from a change in the environment. But what we find is that when we change our inner life, the outer environment will improve as well. This is what happens when we bring our Buddha nature into the nine worlds of daily life. When we are in an elevated state, we can display our true potential. If we are facing financial difficulties, relationship difficulties, health problems or whatever, the key to victory is to generate the fighting spirit of the Buddha through our faith. We can describe the Buddhist faith as a discipline for putting oneself in agreement—establishing life resonance—with the universal Buddha nature.

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Our expanded life will enable us to embrace other people—to be compassionate for the sufferings of others. Soudy explains that “I spent every moment I could sharing and teaching others what I knew about this Buddhism that had changed my life” (Ibid.).

NICHIREN Daishonin teaches us to pour all our determination into every aspect of our lives. In 1278, he wrote a letter of encouragement to Shijo Kingo, who was being persecuted by his lord for practicing the Daishonin’s Buddhism. The Daishonin obliterated any differences between the religious and secular worlds by saying: “Regard your service to your lord as the practice of the Lotus Sutra. No affairs of life or work are in any way different from the ultimate reality” (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 3, p. 270).

By applying our faith to our activities each day, by doing our best, we are also contributing to the goal of kosen-rufu. SGI President Ikeda explains:

Human life and work for peace represent struggles between positive and negative energy. Throughout human history, the triumph of the positive has required each individual to conquer his or her own negative aspects and convert them to positive aspects. Though it might seem circuitous, this is actually the shortest, most direct way to the goal, the attainment of which is the reason for the existence of Buddhism and the human revolution.

A person with powerful life energy exerts a great influence for orienting companions in a common direction. People of strong faith initiate flows of energy as surely as pressure differential causes air currents to flow from areas of high to areas of low atmospheric pressure. To facilitate encounters making these things possible, we must abbreviate social boundary lines and lower social barriers. (*Choose Peace*, pp. 74–75) □

1. *The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, pp. 268–69.