

## **VOICES: How do you respond to people of different religions who misunderstand our philosophy?**

*Members from Houston Territory respond:*

After more than 20 years of practice, I can truly appreciate my family's religious guidance as well as my own crusade to find happiness and peace of mind. My personal investigations have afforded me the experience needed to relate to others in a deeper and more respectful manner, rather than in an argumentative or closed-minded way. The wisdom that I receive through chanting is the key factor in establishing meaningful dialogue and humanistic trust. I find that once mutual respect has been developed, a deeper understanding can result.

— DORIS BRYANT, Pasadena, Texas

I mainly respond by listening carefully before speaking. Through many experiences with dialoguing with people of differing views, and after years of daimoku, I have learned to calmly express my understanding without making it into a debate. I explain that the idea of a supreme deity, who helps you out and tells us what you need to become happy, is not prevalent amongst all religions. In an attempt to encourage the person, I further explain that the concept of a God can truly be found within the self and the positive life force that we all possess.

—YOLANDA WHITE, Missouri City, Texas

I think it is important to have the correct life-condition to respect another person's beliefs. To approach one another with a deeper understanding so that it goes beyond just winning an argument, I point out similarities in our beliefs and then explain certain aspects of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. For example, the law of cause and effect or recognizing the dignity of human life. Daimoku helps me refrain from acting defensively, superior, or argumentatively. This keeps me calm, confident and considerate. This allows room for understanding and friendship.

— MARCIE DASHER, Houston

Although I've been practicing more than 10 years, it has only been recently that I have begun to approach this situation. What I painfully realized was that it was my arrogance, feelings of superiority, and intolerance toward any other religion that kept me indifferent to discussing this topic. After chanting daimoku I began to break down the borders that were keeping me from opening my self up to talking about other religions. Then I could begin to calmly dialogue with others.

— BABBS BURKE, Houston

I try to ascertain the basis for the misunderstanding, and then I proceed to introduce them to this philosophy. I tell them why I practice. I explain about the freedom of spirit experienced through chanting daimoku, the bonding of one's life's rhythm with that of the universe and the joy of seeing the reaction or effect manifested in one's environment when these two components are combined with sincere action.

— CHERYL SANDIFORD, Houston

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