

QUESTION of the MONTH: 'What has been the biggest change in your beliefs since you started practicing?'

Before starting this practice, I believed happiness was found in the pursuit and attainment of personal goals: a good education, a satisfying job, interesting friends and the like. Through studying and practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, I've come to understand the concepts of relative happiness (what I used to believe happiness was) and absolute happiness (true happiness based on a life dedicated to helping others become absolutely happy). The things I used to believe to be happiness were actually just components of absolute happiness.

— ELIZABETH PAGE, Seattle

The biggest change in my beliefs since I started practicing is that my life is not separate from the universe but in fact is part of the great universe. That my life is Nam-myoho-renge-kyo and that the Gohonzon is my life itself, not outside my life. Most of all I still remain a kind, fun-loving and compassionate person with a passion for dancing, singing and working out at my local gym. What a beautiful state of life.

— DEBORAH NICHOLSON-BENITEZ, Chicago

Changing my beliefs from believing in God to believing in myself has been the biggest change in my life since I began practicing about a year ago. Strengthening my faith in this Buddhism will help me to continue my lifelong journey of self-growth and happiness.

— JENNIFER TAVERAS, Bronx, N.Y.

Before I practiced, I felt that I had no control over the things that happened to me. I was a victim of my circumstances and felt that I did not have the power to make changes. Through many experiences with the Gohonzon, I know now that I have complete control over my life as well as what goes on around me.

— KIM BUTLER, Columbia, Md.

Since I started practicing, the biggest change in my belief has been the realization of the absolute truth of cause and effect. When I am not nice to other people or gossip about them and, in turn, get treated badly or am gossiped about, I see cause and effect at work. When I am nice to people, they are nice to me. Because of this realization, I am getting such positive results in my life.

— SANDY WINKLER, Baltimore

The biggest change is now I know the only thing that holds me back in accomplishing something I set out to do is lack of confidence. Before I began this practice, I had no confidence to do anything. Coming from a very poor family, it was difficult to envision accomplishing my dreams for the future. I had no drive or motivation. Practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism made me feel good and gave me hope to at least try something. The more I succeeded in the little challenges, the more confidence I developed. Today, as I set out to accomplish something, the first thing I have is confidence, then I apply the principles of Buddhism to achieve whatever goal I set.

— ANTHONY WHITE, Tacoma, Wash.

My beliefs changed 180 degrees. In my native Ghana, we offered libations to our ancestors every 48 days, asking them to intervene on our behalf. I believed every event in my life was destined, whether good or bad. There was nothing I could do but complain about the negative and rejoice about the positive. When I started chanting, I began to understand the law of cause and effect. I began to see for the first time that I could generate a positive

Title: Question of the Month: What has been the biggest change in your beliefs since you started ...

Subject: World Tribune 10/03/97 n.3159 p.2 WT971003p02

Author:

Keywords: been beliefs biggest change Experiences Month Opinion Practice practicing Question since started Tribune World your

charge in my life that gives me energy and insight to fight to resolve the difficult situations in my life. I also chant every day for my ancestors to be born into families with the Gohonzon, so that they, too, can make positive causes and experience positive effects.

— KOFI APPIAH-KUBI, New York

I now see reason, consistency and oneness in life. I can change my destiny if I really determine so...though it seems to take forever! That not only is matter and energy conserved, but also the psychological. That there is only one rule in life: Have no regrets! I now view my problems as necessary challenges with important lessons I must learn at each step. If I do not overcome my difficulties, I will be caught in a Catch-22 until I do so. Complaining saps one's life force; sincere chanting and actions build it up. My happiness is the gradient of my determination, therefore I must be constantly making sincere efforts in favor of kosen-rufu in order to be happy. I learn within this life's bitter experiences the truth that in the end all that matters is heart — compassion. All depends upon my spirit, my determination.

— JAMES D. TRAILL, Melbourne, Australia

All my life, I questioned everything — especially the meaning of my existence. Since I started practicing, I developed within me the belief in my sense of mission. I've come to believe that world peace begins within me, and I can make a significant contribution to world peace by fully developing my potential. This belief in my mission guides me and gives my life great meaning.

— VICKI MOKURIA, Dallas

Before I started practicing, I felt that I had limited control over my life. My mode of dealing with life was to react to and cope with whatever came my way. Since I started chanting, I began to feel that I was in control of my life, and now, I know that I am the one who makes things happen in my life. I now fully believe that my life is my responsibility. To know this and believe this is both liberating and empowering.

— WENDY DeORE, Dallas

Before I started practicing Buddhism, I often felt I was at the mercy of whatever was happening to me. I would hope that some day I would be the person I wanted to be and live the life of my dreams. After I started practicing and studying Buddhism, I began to believe that I had the ability to change anything, and that I could create the life I wanted. Based on my experiences with the practice, I still believe my belief in the power of my Buddha nature has made all the difference in my approach to problems. I now see them as opportunities to grow and create something positive.

— J. LAVORA PERRY, East Cleveland, Ohio

Four years ago, in Brazil, I realized we are not victims of the destiny — everything is cause and effect, so we better take personal responsibility for our lives. For me, that was the first step in the right direction.

— LOREN DAE, Florida

The greatest change for me is knowing that I am totally responsible for my actions, instead of having a Supreme Being guide the course of my life.

— BILL McCALL, Philadelphia

Thanks to all who responded!

Title: Question of the Month: What has been the biggest change in your beliefs since you started ...
Subject: World Tribune 10/03/97 n.3159 p.2 WT971003p02
Author:
Keywords: been beliefs biggest change Experiences Month Opinion Practice practicing Question since started Tribune World your