

EXPERIENCE — SARA CAPRILLE, HOUSTON OBSTACLES ARE SOURCES OF BENEFITS

A new attitude based on strong prayer empowers Sara Caprille to change her 'life tendencies' and rebuild a united family.

I was born in Peru and first heard about Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism when I was 22 years old, but it was not until later that I took faith. After one year of marriage, my husband, Aldo, was introduced to the practice by one of my cousins. In 1984 we started a serious practice of Buddhism together, and on Nov. 24, 1985, we received the Gohonzon. As we received many benefits, our faith naturally increased.

One of our greatest benefits was coming to America on Oct. 12, 1989. At first it was very difficult for me, but as time passed, I learned to adjust to the new environment and culture.

Although my husband and I continued our faith diligently, we still had many problems. We seemed to always make the wrong decisions. I had an impulsive character and over the simplest things I would become angry. I was also very jealous of my husband. This eventually led to family discord, confrontations, mistrust and misunderstanding.

As a result of my behavior our marriage and my two sons, Piero and Johnathan, suffered. After 14 years of turmoil, my husband decided to move out. During this period of separation, my husband started a relationship with another woman. He would even bring her to our home when visiting our sons.

Prior to our separation, we owned a small cleaning business. Under these strained conditions, we continued to work together side by side. I tried to talk to my husband in hopes of solving our problems, but all I received were signs of his disgust. He didn't want anything to do with me or the Gohonzon. After that incident I felt that my whole life had ended. I was crazed and held beliefs that nothing else in life was important. I felt worthless. In those days I cried a lot in front of the Gohonzon and chanted many hours. I prayed to become a stronger person so that I could overcome my difficulties.

Unable to see any changes, I went to talk to a senior in faith. She encouraged me to continue chanting and to do lots of activities for kosen-rufu. Still things did not improve. After several months had passed, I began to feel stronger, more confident, and most importantly, I started to gain control over my life. I decided that, come what may, I would go it alone and shortly after that I began to run the business alone.

A deeper sense of appreciation for my Buddhist practice started to develop. I sincerely prayed for wisdom and strength to care for my children independently. I chanted two to four hours daily so that I could continue my faith. Finally I realized that this was my karma and that by changing my attitude, my environment would change, too.

In time I started thinking more positively. My children no longer witnessed my desperation or tears. I became more relaxed as they observed my practice and activities. I also received lots of support from my Buddhist friends. Thanks to this obstacle I was able to change my life tendencies. I was able to handle difficult situations more confidently, and I even developed a deeper sense of appreciation for myself. Practicing correctly helped me change my karma to the point that I was able to open my heart to forgiveness. I began praying for my husband's happiness. This was something that I had never been able to do in the past.

There came a time in my life when I thought I no longer needed him as I continued to pray for his protection and that he would return to the correct way of faith, practice and study. After eight months had passed, my husband returned home asking for forgiveness. He asked, "May I please pray to the Gohonzon?" Without asking any questions, I decided that everything that had happened was in the past and that was where it should remain. Together we were starting our practice anew. My prayers have surely been answered.

When he left home we had lost most of our clients and our home had gone into foreclosure. But because of my strong faith and hard work, our clients have returned and our finances have strengthened. We have paid back our debts and did not lose any equity in our house. The only thing I can say with total confidence is that the power of the Gohonzon is absolute and no prayer goes unanswered. Besides which, my husband can hardly believe the positive changes that have taken place within me. We now respect one another and have vowed to rededicate our lives for the sake of world peace.

This obstacle has resulted in my oldest son starting his practice and learning more about cause and effect. The greatest benefit of all occurred within me and I have opened up my life in ways I never dreamed possible. My home is now being rebuilt with daimoku, love and respect. I am so happy.

As SGI President Ikeda has said, "Fundamentally, for people who have faith in the Gohonzon, everything that happens is a benefit."

—As told to Yolonda White and Maude O'Donnell