

**PERSPECTIVE
BEWARE THE FIVE-MINUTE PRAYER
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Chanting abundantly has developed tremendous fortune in Mike Lisagor's life.

In "The New Human Revolution," Daisaku Ikeda writes: "I also hope you will chant abundant daimoku, regarding the Gohonzon as your greatest treasure, thus experiencing the wonderful benefit of the Mystic Law with your own life. I want you to gain unshakable conviction that the Daishonin's Buddhism is absolute" (Sept. 1, 2000, *World Tribune*, p. 10).

I believe the importance of a strong daily practice can't be overemphasized. Perhaps it's easy for members who've been practicing for awhile to take for granted that everyone realizes the real battle against our demons is fought each day in front of the Gohonzon.

One of the factors that distinguishes Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism is that the Daishonin revealed a daily practice that allows each of us to replenish our spirituality, like a lost child who finally finds his parents. We don't just study Buddhism so that we can exclaim: "That's it! I was the Buddha all along." More important is that our realization of the existence of our Buddha nature motivates us to chant more and to take action to help others become happy.

One of my favorite quotes by the CEO of Coca Cola, Bryan Dyson, is: "Imagine life as a game in which you are juggling five balls—work, family, health, friends and spirit. Work is a rubber ball. If you drop it, it will bounce back. But the other four balls are made of glass. If you drop one of these, they will never be the same."

As a management consultant, I find that almost all my clients spend an inordinate amount of time juggling the work ball at the expense of the other four. They are chasing the elusive "empty" in-basket. I think how fortunate I am to have encountered Buddhism and how sad it would be if I were seduced by the hollow promise of material success or fame. I personally think it takes more than five minutes of chanting a day to keep the spirit ball in the air.

My wife, Trude, and I have always tried to chant abundantly. It doesn't usually take too long for us to notice when we need to reconfirm our commitment to this basic principle. Basically, I don't think the specific amount someone chants is worthy of sharing, but suffice it to say our daily average has remained well above five minutes a day—and for a very good reason.

Through 31 years of chanting abundantly and doing consistent prayers morning and evening, we have accumulated tremendous fortune in our lives. We have created a wonderfully close relationship and a warm and caring family in spite of our tumultuous beginnings. We have both continued to grow in our personal and professional lives and have found a balance in our lives that I believe would have continued to elude us if we had succumbed to the temptation to lessen our daily practice on a regular basis.

Surely, these are decisions each of us must make for ourselves. We learn, through gain and loss, what works and doesn't. I suppose if someone finds a way to establish an enriching Buddhist practice by chanting five minutes a day, then I'm glad for him or her. It's not that I am afraid to buck the system or miss an occasional late night gongyo to get

some much-needed sleep, but on a regular basis, I think I'll err on the side of abundant practice.

Sometimes I catch myself rationalizing that I'm too tired to get up or there are other things I want to do rather than chant more this morning, or that, after all, Nichiren Daishonin himself said you could attain your enlightenment by chanting Nam-myohorenge-kyo even once. It's during these moments that I ask myself where this decision is coming from—my mind or my heart? It's also at these times, when no one is around and no one is listening, that I make the really important decisions in my life. Olympic hopefuls face the same dilemma with their exercise regimen.

Like many of you, I made a decision years ago to follow a Buddhist path. I came to the conclusion that the Daishonin's teaching and SGI President Daisaku Ikeda's guidance was the most effective and powerful way for me to accomplish my goals in this lifetime and to be able to polish the Buddha nature within my own life. So, as long as I'm on this path, I'm going to beware of the five-minute prayer.