

# WINNING IN LIFE: THE BASICS OF THE PRACTICE OF NICHIREN'S BUDDHISM

## Learning How To Live

By JEFF FARR  
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

*This new series will cover the basics of Buddhist practice. Included will be some background on Buddhism and its basic concepts, the spirit we need to continue practicing, the significance of participating in SGI activities and the problems that can come up in the course of practice. The experiences of various seniors will be sought; questions and suggestions from readers are always welcome.*

Because Nichiren's Buddhism is such a profound philosophy, the more we deepen our understanding of it, the more we can gain from practicing it. In this process, we also prepare ourselves to share our practice with others.

All of us struggle at some point, aware of Buddhism's profundity, to explain it so that friends or family members can understand. It can be a great struggle to get the words to come out right. And sometimes we even struggle to explain Buddhism to ourselves! This struggle is a positive thing, though — it is actually the way we deepen our understanding.

The term *Buddhism* originally meant the "Buddha Way" or the "way of the human being," in other words the way we should live as human beings. Pursuing the lifetime process of learning what Buddhism is all about, then, simply means to keep learning how to live as a human being.

Ted Morino, the SGI-USA Study Department chief, says one way he deepened his understanding was by making friends in the organization. "I was so fortunate to be surrounded by very strong Gakkai friends who were of the same generation when I started," he remembers. "They were way ahead of me in terms of faith. Through such relationships, I grew unconsciously in faith."

The Buddhist writings we study, like Nichiren Daishonin's Goshō, are very important, but without also learning from people around us, from seeing how their lives progress, we cannot completely understand how Buddhist teachings translate into a better life. Mary Suggs, a 77-year-old Kansas member, explains: "It's important to listen to what other people say in meetings. Their experiences or ideas will help you understand some fraction of your life.... By having an open mind, you can get real insight into your life."

Mr. Morino also emphasizes having experiences in faith. "In my case, the biggest one was the university entrance examination which I had to challenge," he says. "After two years of study and devoted daimoku, I passed the exam and became a student of the Osaka University of Foreign Studies. It was a great experience through which I really felt the power of this practice."

In deepening our understanding, it really helps to keep these kinds of Buddhist basics in mind, which is what this series will be all about. Having friends in the organization and creating our own experiences are two of the basics, but the most basic of all is understanding Buddhism's starting and ending point — human life, our lives. Every teaching in this religion relates back to how human beings can live the best of lives. This is the Buddha way.

**WT**