

## EDITORIAL: Prayer, Not Just Chanting, Key to Great Change

Have you ever felt unfocused when you chant? That your heart just wasn't in it? Have you ever gone a long time without seeing benefit?

All of us can go through this at one time or another: We diligently do gongyo and chant daimoku but lack a real prayer. Though chanting many hours can be great, the true benefit of chanting comes from having a specific prayer. In fact, even a 10-hour stretch of chanting can amount to very little benefit if our hearts aren't in it!

After all, in anything we do, if our hearts aren't in it we'll never see much success. The Tom Cruise character in the movie *Jerry Maguire* learns this lesson. Until he really focuses on putting his heart into his daily life — his job as a sports agent and his new family — nothing clicks.

To chant with focus, with specific determinations like “I will do this” or “I will definitely accomplish that” is an important aspect of heartfelt prayer. In this week's issue, SGI President Ikeda says that “there is no real joy or excitement in a life without concrete goals or direction. In the realm of faith, too, we grow when we have clear goals...” (p. 11).

Nichiren Daishonin taught his disciples that making sure our faith is strong is also crucial to getting our prayers answered. In one letter to Shijo Kingo, Nichiren Daishonin expresses concern that the prayers of Kingo's wife are going unanswered; perhaps her faith has become weak. He writes, “The fact that Nichigen-nyo's [Kingo's wife] prayers have gone unanswered is like a strong bow with a weak bowstring or a fine sword in the hands of a coward” (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 5, p. 73). And in another letter, the Daishonin tells Kingo that “faith alone is what really matters” (MW-1, 246).

Using the common sense formula to first make a clear determination, then chant daimoku with strong faith and finally take the needed action toward our determinations, the world opens up for us.

At the same time, always using common sense about when, where, how long — and of course how loud — we chant is helpful. President Ikeda once expressed concern over members sometimes chanting several hours in a single sitting while neglecting their responsibilities, even causing family members and neighbors suffering. And when organizational units sponsor long chanting sessions, he said, unreasonable demands are often unfortunately placed on members.

“If a leader wishes to launch a major daimoku campaign and get a rhythm of more chanting going,” he said, “the important thing is that that person lead by offering deep and strong prayers” (*Selected Speeches on the Basics of Buddhism*, pp. 44–45).

When we offer deep and strong prayers while keeping common sense as our guideline in all things related to faith, Nichiren Daishonin teaches that all our prayers will definitely be answered.

**WT**