

## Winning in Life: Understanding 'Faith'

By JEFF FARR

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Some friends were recently discussing what the most popular word in SGI-USA is. What word is used more than any other?

They came up with *faith*. Over and over again, we read and hear this word. SGI President Ikeda always mentions it, all the leaders say it and anyone who starts to practice will eventually find themselves using it, too.

"But what is faith?" we sometimes ask ourselves. "And how do I know if I have it or not?" Having faith, in a general sense, means to believe in something. In Buddhism, having faith means we believe that we possess the wisdom, courage and compassion that are all part of the Buddha nature. We believe that by chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo to the Gohonzon and helping others, we can strengthen this Buddha nature in ourselves and thus live the most meaningful, fulfilling lives possible. This is faith for us.

Rather than emphasize faith as something abstract, Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism focuses on the many ways faith is expressed in the real world, giving us a wealth of concrete examples. As President Ikeda suggests in his poem "To My Beloved Young American Friends": "Faith is — / to fear nothing / to stand unswayed / the power to surmount any obstacle." These are just three ways faith is concretely expressed; there are many more.

President Ikeda's guidance and Nichiren Daishonin's letters are full of such examples. Reiko Groshell, the SGI-USA young women's division chief, says that for her a clear expression of faith is found in President Ikeda's novel *The New Human Revolution*. President Ikeda's real experiences, how he used faith to overcome a wide variety of problems, inspire her.

"It's exactly what President Ikeda has gone through," she says. "And it's exactly like something I might have gone through or will go through." After studying *The New Human Revolution* she likes to chant about what she's read. She finds it deepens her faith. "When I put into action what I have learned," she adds, "I really understand what faith is all about. From *The New Human Revolution*, you see that faith is something you can *do*."

Arnold Kawasaki, the chairman of the American University Group, experienced the deepening of his faith upon the passing of his father many years ago. Arnold's father was adamantly opposed to the Soka Gakkai. Toward the end of his life, his father experienced a prolonged, devastating hospitalization which exhausted him physically and emotionally. Arnold and his sister convinced their father to chant two days prior to his death. He said: "OK, but don't tell your mom. Give me the beads and book." Arnold recalls that his father's voice emanated from the depths of his life those last two days.

After his father's death, Arnold peered into the coffin. To his surprise, he saw the face of a happy, smiling man expressing great joy! Arnold was then convinced of Nichiren Daishonin's words in the Gosho: "Be resolved to summon forth the great power of your faith and chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo with the prayer that your faith will be steadfast and correct at the moment of your death... Only then will you realize that earthly desires are enlightenment and the sufferings of life and death are nirvana" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 25). And also: "Were he to go right now to Eagle Peak, he would feel as delighted as if the sun had come out and illuminated the ten directions; and he would find himself rejoicing, wondering how an early death could be so happy a thing" (MW-5, 281).

As we continue to practice, we collect many such examples of faith from our own

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experiences, from experiences we hear, from our study of the teachings and so on. All of these add up to fortify our faith and make us stronger. They remind us that we possess all the wisdom, courage and compassion we need to win in life.

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