

WOW! Why More?
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In “Letter to the Brothers,” Nichiren Daishonin puts all his energy into encouraging the Ikegami brothers to remain steadfast in their faith. He gives the three reasons why believers meet hardships in spite of their Buddhist practice: First, strong faith enables us to rid our lives of the negative karma caused by our past slander of the Law. Second, hardships arise to test our faith. Third, hardships arise as a function of the fundamental darkness innate in our lives, which acts to keep us ignorant of our Buddha nature.

Also, according to the Daishonin, hardships such as sudden death, torture, slander, or humiliation are relatively *minor* sufferings. The greatest suffering is to have our faith destroyed. Losing faith in the Mystic Law is losing faith in our unlimited potential. And this is the single greatest cause of future hellish sufferings.

Personally, I feel that this letter should be titled “A Letter to Mitchell.” I can relate to it because I have been practicing for more than 20 years, and the circumstances in my life are not the way I envisioned them. I thought that I would be “Superman! Faster than a speeding bullet, stronger than a locomotive, able to leap tall buildings in a single bound.”

I keep asking myself: “Why do certain problems keep occurring in my life? I chant to overcome them, but they keep reappearing. Why?”

Eventually, doubt sets in; my faith starts to weaken; I can see the face of fundamental darkness smiling, saying, “I got you now!” Then, I find that my best friends are the worlds of Hell, Hunger, Animality and Anger, that my life is dominated, by these four.

Fortunately, my fellow members and leaders tell me that this is all a test. “Don’t look at your problems as obstacles but opportunities to change your negative karma,” they say. I feel encouraged, and then I become determined again to win — to not lose. There is no in between.