

Questions and Answers on Faith: What Is Good Fortune?

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Q: What is good fortune?

A: Good fortune is something invisible. Therefore, it can be difficult to know whether we have it or not.

One Japanese Buddhist dictionary defines good fortune as “fortunate and virtuous causes and their effects that, present in one’s life from the past to this point in time, contribute greatly to one’s happiness.” For instance, if you are born in good financial circumstances, Buddhism says that’s not a coincidence. It’s a result of your virtuous conduct in the past.

But Buddhism also says that material wealth is not long-lasting fortune. It’s a relative thing and does not guarantee one’s true happiness. Nichiren Daishonin calls material wealth *treasures of the storehouse*. He further regards good health, physical ability and social status as *treasures of the body*. Then, he defines as *treasures of the heart* the strong life force, high life-condition and great character that we develop in Buddhist practice.

The Daishonin stresses the importance of nurturing the treasures of the heart by stating, “More valuable than treasures in a storehouse are the treasures of the body, and the treasures of the heart are the most valuable of all” (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 2 [2nd ed.], p. 238)

No matter how blessed we may be in this lifetime in terms of treasures of the storehouse and body, we can’t say we are absolutely happy because of them since they’re impermanent by nature. And only when backed up by the treasures of the heart can the greatest fortune within our lives shine brilliantly and manifest itself in the form of the treasures of the storehouse and body.

President Ikeda once stated: “All the good causes you have accumulated will definitely manifest themselves in this lifetime. With your sincere faith in and practice to the Gohonzon, you can freely enjoy a great life-condition in exact accord with your *ichinen* or prayers and thoughts”. In other words, once we have accumulated good fortune within, based on the treasures of the heart, a free, grand life-condition will be ours.

So what can we do to accumulate these treasures of the heart? Buddhism teaches that what’s important is not only to feel satisfied with our own happiness but to pray and take action for others’ happiness. Taking action to help others get rid of their sufferings — encouraging them in faith — is guaranteed to increase our fortune.

It is also important to note that while we can continue to accumulate good fortune through Buddhist practice, we can also *erase* the good fortune we have accumulated — by making negative causes through our actions, words, and thoughts. Our fortune increases or decreases based on our behavior.

From another standpoint, no matter how severe our circumstances may be, to know of the Law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo and to have sincere faith in it is the ultimate good fortune. In this sense, the Daishonin boldly asserts, “There is no greater happiness for human beings than chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo” (MW-1, 161).

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