

IN MY LIFE: Five and Three
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I have written out the prose section of the *Hoben* chapter for you. You should recite it together with the Jigage, which I sent you earlier. (“Reply to Soya Nyudo,” *The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 5, p. 163)

In this passage written in 1275 (after the Sado Exile), the Daishonin prescribes that a Buddhist practitioner recite portions of the Lotus Sutra — which we in the SGI do each day when we perform gongyo.

While it’s clear that the Daishonin recommended that we recite the sutra as well as chant Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, he never said that we should recite these portions five times in the morning and three times in the evening. Rather, five-and-three was originally prescribed during the time of 26th High Priest Nichikan and was adopted by the SGI as the basic practice of Buddhism.

I’ve dabbled, I admit, with other formats — one and three, one and one, five and none — usually because of time constraints. But I’ve learned that nothing revs my enthusiasm and boosts my self-confidence more than a consistent five and three. It’s worth making time for.

To me, the SGI is like a track coach who says, “Look, if you want to be a strong distance runner, this is your training regimen, this is how you should practice.” I’m always free to find my own regimen. And it’s up to me to ask myself: Am I getting the results I want? Am I becoming a wiser, more compassionate human being?

This is a subjective question that we each have to answer for ourselves. From a more objective view, though, I look at people who have practiced in accord with the SGI’s “coaching,” and I see people who have developed the kind of faith that heals, creates and illuminates — the kind of faith for which I strive.

There are days when (for whatever reason) I can’t do a full five and three — but that only helps me appreciate the value (for me) of five and three even more.

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