

## FROM OUR READERS

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### **Thoughts on Dialogue on the Lotus Sutra**

I WANT to express my appreciation to *Living Buddhism* for publishing President Ikeda's series, "Dialogue on the Lotus Sutra." Studying it has had a very positive impact on my understanding of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, my prayer to the Gohonzon and my life.

Studying and discussing the series, which was first featured in the April 1995 issue, has become a consistent source of encouragement, and, more importantly, a profound resource for deepening my faith.

I have studied "Dialogue on the Lotus Sutra" with four different groups. In May of 1995, as a member of our joint territory study committee, I noticed that we were starting our meetings late because everyone spontaneously started talking about the latest installment. In June, I was appointed study coordinator and my first suggestion was to set aside the first half-hour of our monthly meeting for studying these installments. This didn't work out as we planned. Instead of studying the installments prior to the meeting and discussing them for a half-hour, we usually discussed them for fifty or fifty-five minutes of our one-hour meeting! I noticed a very interesting result. We made a transformation into people with greater confidence and enthusiasm. As new people joined our committee and began to study the series, they also had this same type of experience.

In January and February of 1996, we were in the final stages of preparing for the Advanced-level exam to be held in April. After meeting monthly for a little over two years, the group I was studying in was starting to meet every week to study and review our curriculum material. At around the same time, the series was covering the "Expedient Means" chapter and in particular, the section concerning the true entity of life. I found that studying it helped me understand the Daishonin's writing, "The True Entity of Life" that was going to be on the exam. I began to use quotes and excerpts at our meetings. Everyone started reading the series. Despite the fact that we were all trying to study and prepare for weekly meetings! After the exam, we all realized that we did not want to disband our study group. We had met together each month for two years and seven months. In that time, we had deepened our faith, our understanding of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism and developed friendship and trust among ourselves. We had created an activity where we could discuss anything together as close friends. We had found a way to relate our experience in life with our study and apply our new understanding in our daily lives. We did not want to lose such a source of encouragement and support. We decided to continue our monthly meetings and use the "Dialogue on the Lotus Sutra" in the current issue as our study material.

Later in 1996, my wife noticed how much fun we were having studying the series. We always seemed to forget the time and no one seemed to mind whenever we kept talking to

8:45 or so. She had started a women's study group, but hadn't gotten quite as much enthusiasm. Switching to studying "Dialogue on the Lotus Sutra changed that. After that, her group kept growing (they often go overtime, too). New people would find it challenging and difficult in their first month or two, but they would then make that transformation and become confident and enthusiastic. The women's group does one thing differently—a few women meet prior to the study meeting, go through the installment and list the points they feel are important. Then they make up a handout of these points so they can use it to facilitate their discussion. My wife then types the points into the computer and often asks me to proofread it before she prints it out. So, I am able to study each installment even more! What a benefit. The main points of each installment have really stayed in my mind!

The fourth group I started studying with last year, decided to start at the beginning of the series. It's great, you discover all kinds of things you missed the first time around!

I often feel like I'm in the room listening to President Ikeda, Mr. Saito, Mr. Suda & Mr. Endo. Studying an installment changes my life-condition. Continued study deepens my faith and understanding and intensifies my passion and enthusiasm for learning and life.

I deeply appreciate that President Ikeda and the other participants have put a tremendous effort into creating this dialogue series for us. I feel it is my responsibility to share my enthusiasm with others and, most importantly, enable others to have the kinds of positive study experiences that I have been fortunate to experience.

I have copied and compiled all of the installments in a binder, and encourage others to do the same. I have made a list of all the installments, their sub-sections and what issue and page they are on—so I can go back and find important points (already 468 pages thru #37). I use points from DLS in other study presentations whenever I can.

Consistent, serious study with others has enabled me to experience the power of study on a new level. I find that, just as I can transform my life-condition with gongyo and daimoku, just as I can transform my life-condition with participating in activities, I can transform my life-condition by studying. Places you don't like—post office lines, the DMV, doctor's offices, etc.—are now places where I can read President Ikeda's guidance or the writings of Nichiren Daishonin and they become enjoyable! Talk about a transformation! Also, I have had a lot of conversations about Buddhism when someone starts reading over my shoulder.

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