

**IN MY LIFE: SEEING THROUGH MY EXCUSES
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Life is limited, and we must not begrudge it. What we should aspire to, after all, is the Buddha land. (“Aspiration for the Buddha Land,” *The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 5, p. 132)

I recently decided on the law school that I want to attend and, with the help of my instructor, began to prepare my application. She gave me some pointers about my résumé and told me that in order to meet my deadline, I had to put aside my need for immediate gratification and prioritize. I retorted that my free time was spent doing volunteer activities — for world peace, even — and that I would do my best.

Her statement, though, bothered me for days. Was I using my time wisely? Was my faith being reflected in my daily life? I realized that I had to be honest with myself. I needed to go to bed earlier and be rested rather than frantically scrambling in the morning.

Once I started doing gongyo in my car, I knew that my life was not going in the proper direction. So the other night, I just sat down after work and chanted an hour. I did the same the next night. On the third night, I picked up the Daishonin’s writings and was reading the above passage, when suddenly it dawned on me. My professor had been right!

My actions had become focused only on my immediate gratification; things that were necessary to my life in the moment — finding an article, cleaning my apartment, or returning a phone call or an e-mail. I hadn’t realized, though, that they were not truly important to fulfill my prayers to the Gohonzon. They were often excuses that kept me from chanting, both quality and quantity daimoku.

It is my constant battle to “aspire to the Buddha land” at every moment, but I have the choice, at any time, to re-prioritize my life by sitting straight up in front of my Gohonzon and chanting to win. For that moment, I have won.

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