

**BACK TO THE BASICS
EARTHLY DESIRES
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We all have many kinds of desires. They are intrinsic to our being human.

The culture we live in often encourages us to pursue our most unenlightened desires. More and more of what we *do not really* need—this is what we must have to become happy, advertisements tell us.

Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism asks us to turn all our desires—even our lower ones—into enlightenment. The Daishonin shares his conviction that we can “burn the firewood of earthly desires and behold the fire of enlightened wisdom before our eyes” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 710). In other words, through struggling to satisfy all our desires through Buddhist practice, we bring forth Buddha wisdom.

Of course, we do not want to let our desires control us; we want to use them in the best way. We can see them for what they are: tools to help us deepen our faith.

This is a different outlook from many religions, including many forms of Buddhism. We may have been taught to try to get rid of our desires, to be ashamed of them. This is tantamount to being embarrassed by our humanity.

It is important for us to discover pride in the connection between our current wants, worries and wishes and our eternal happiness. When we take everything to the Gohonzon, when we do not hold anything back, our inner life grows in a beautiful way—our minds open to ever greater desires, including the happiness of all people.

“It is human nature to think of oneself,” SGI President Ikeda says. “The important thing is that we go to the Gohonzon just as we are. If we go out of our way to put on an air of nobility, as if all our concerns are lofty ones, then we are presenting a ‘false self.’ The Gohonzon does not respond to lies” (June *Living Buddhism*, p. 37).

Part of having this honest relationship with the Gohonzon can be challenging ourselves to pray for higher desires. This Buddhism does not teach that we should offer selfish prayers until everything we ever wanted is achieved and *then* start praying for the rest of humanity. We can do both at the same time. Again, our desires for our lives and our desires for kosen-rufu are inextricably linked.

Earthly desires help us practice to the point where all our desires become expressions of our Buddhahood. The Daishonin teaches that “life is limited; we must not begrudge it. What we should ultimately aspire to is the Buddha land” (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 214). This Buddha land, which is found in our hearts, is built on the bedrock of every aspiration that we pray to the Gohonzon about. Earthly desires, in short, are our friends!