

**WORDS TO WIN BY  
CREATING VALUE FROM ATTACHMENTS  
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*From "Earthly Desires Are Enlightenment," The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, pp. 317–20.*

**These are also what is called "earthly desires are enlightenment," and "the sufferings of birth and death are nirvana." ... The Universal Worthy Sutra states, "Without either cutting off earthly desires or separating themselves from the five desires, they can purify all their senses and wipe away all their offenses." (WND, 318)**

This is the passage from which this letter takes its name. Earthly desires is a generic term for all the negative workings of life, including the desires and illusions that cause one physical and spiritual suffering and impede the quest for enlightenment. Perhaps another way to view earthly desires is as the tendency to be swept along by various wants and cravings.

Among the earlier provisional teachings of Shakyamuni, it was taught that the "flame" of enlightenment could be kindled only when the flame of earthly desires was extinguished. Or that one could enter the "ocean" of Buddhahood only after departing from the sea of suffering.

Contrary to this view, as Nichiren Daishonin indicates in the above passage, Buddhism teaches that "without either cutting off earthly desires or separating themselves from the five desires, [people] can purify all their senses and wipe away all their offenses." The Lotus Sutra teaches the truth that Buddhahood possesses all nine worlds.

Thus, even after achieving enlightenment, a Buddha still retains the nine worlds of the common mortal and their accompanying worries and attachments. There is neither extinguishing nor departing from the desires in our lives.

When based on the world of Buddhahood, the nine worlds and the fundamental illusions and sufferings inherent within them work to create joy for us rather than suffering. Our Buddhist practice allows us to discern the true nature of our desires and attachments—to see them for what they are—and utilize them as a springboard for our happiness.

The Daishonin states in the "Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings" that "we burn the firewood of earthly desires and behold the fire of enlightened wisdom before our eyes" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 710). Because earthly desires are innate in life—and for that reason can never be fully eradicated—it is important that we make full use of our attachments in a positive way rather than letting them control us.

SGI President Ikeda explains that it is by cultivating strong attachments that our lives are made interesting and significant (see Lectures on the "Expedient Means" and "Life Span" Chapter of the *Lotus Sutra*, vol. 1, p. 93). Because we are attached to our work or our activities for kosen-rufu, for instance, we can fill our lives with great passion and produce tremendous value.

Of course, we must maintain our various attachments in such a way that they do not cause us suffering. To gain the perspective that our various sufferings and attachments are the fuel for growth and the source of deep joy requires us to fully establish our fundamental objective in life.

By chanting sincere daimoku to the Gohonzon and taking action for kosen-rufu, we are putting the principle that earthly desires are enlightenment into practice. We can continue developing our lives, able to take on progressively greater challenges, including leading many other people to the path of true happiness.