

**WORDS TO WIN BY  
A REPUTATION FOR DEVOTION TO THE LOTUS SUTRA  
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*From “Earthly Desires Are Enlightenment,” The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, pp. 317–20.*

**Carry through with your faith in the Lotus Sutra. You cannot strike fire from flint if you stop halfway. Bring forth the great power of faith, and be spoken of by all the people of Kamakura, both high and low, or by all the people of Japan, as “Shijo Kingo, Shijo Kingo of the Lotus school!” Even a bad reputation will spread far and wide. A good reputation will spread even farther, particularly if it is a reputation for devotion to the Lotus Sutra.**

**Explain all this to your wife too, and work together like the sun and moon, a pair of eyes, or the two wings of a bird. With the sun and moon, could there be a path of darkness? With a pair of eyes, no doubt you will see the faces of Shakyamuni, Many Treasures, and the Buddhas of the ten directions. With a pair of wings, you will surely fly in an instant to the treasure land of Tranquil Light. (WND, 319)**

Having explained to Shijo Kingo a number of profound Buddhist principles in this letter, Nichiren Daishonin concludes with guidance about the spirit of practice. He illustrates in practical terms the principle that earthly desires are enlightenment.

First, he impresses upon Shijo Kingo the necessity of sustaining faith, even though his disciple had practiced for some 16 years at this point.

The life-tendency of Buddhahood is sustained through our continuous faith and practice. We never reach a state of perfection, in which we no longer need to exert ourselves. Rather, carrying through to the end with our faith in the Gohonzon, no matter what the difficulties, is in itself the path of Buddhahood.

Were we to abandon our practice halfway, we would be unable to experience the great benefit of faith. As the Daishonin says, “To accept is easy; to continue is difficult. But Buddhahood lies in continuing faith” (WND, 471).

Second, the Daishonin urges Shijo Kingo to display the power of faith in society, encouraging him to develop “a reputation for devotion to the Lotus Sutra” (WND, 319).

The greatness of Buddhism is demonstrated through the lives we lead. We can manifest actual proof of faith in every aspect of our lives — from becoming healthy and deepening our relationships to creating new opportunities and experiencing an ever more rewarding life.

Third, the Daishonin says that to “bring forth the great power of faith” we must practice with the determination to prove the greatness of Buddhism. In other words, we can best manifest the great power of our Buddhist practice when we recognize that the actual proof we receive is not only for ourselves but for others — we are demonstrating the power of faith in the Gohonzon to everyone.

Fourth, the Daishonin says that Shijo Kingo and his wife Nichigen-nyo should “work together” (WND, 319). Through such unity of purpose, a couple can continue to deepen their faith and enjoy its full benefit. This encouragement applies to all our other relationships, as well: The path to happiness is not walked alone. We get there together with others.

Thus, the Daishonin urges us to make earthly desires—all the frustrations, problems, challenges, sufferings, hopes and aspirations of daily living—our motivation to chant to the Gohonzon. We do so not simply to change our circumstances (ultimately relative happiness) but to awaken our innate Buddha nature—to transform our inner state of life where the foundations of lasting, absolute happiness are constructed.

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