

Q&A ON FAITH
QUESTIONS FROM THE SECOND GENERATION
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I am a so-called “fortune baby,” a second-generation SGI-USA member who was born into this practice. I am struggling to develop a sense of determination to practice Buddhism for myself. Any advice?

Since I myself am not a “fortune baby,” I don’t think I can understand exactly how SGI-USA members of the second or third generation feel. With that said, I want to first mention that we are living in a new era in which there are many second and even third generation youth who were born into the practice of Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism in our basically Judeo-Christian society. It’s amazing to see how much they are positively influenced by the life-affirming philosophy of Buddhism from the beginning of their existence in this world.

I have interviewed several members whose parents were already Buddhist when they were born. Some of these youth are fully determined to use this practice to become victors in life with a deep sense of gratitude to their parents for their faith, while others are still unclear about the necessity of practicing to the Gohonzon.

In this article, I would like to address the latter group of members who may be questioning the need for Buddhist faith and practice. Some common responses from them were: “I do gongyo, because if I do it, my parents are happy”; “I think I know the greatness of faith, but I don’t feel like sitting in front of the Gohonzon”; “When I am seriously worried about something, I know I have to go to the Gohonzon”; “When I chant, I have more questions than answers”; “Everybody says I had better practice hard, but I can’t blindly accept this faith”; “I can’t make a determination, even though I have been told in the SGI that determination is what counts”; “I still don’t understand why I have to chant”; and, “When I see how my parents are, I don’t feel like following suit.”

When my own brother introduced me to this practice, I didn’t have any clue as to what I was getting into. But fortunately I was soon surrounded by strong SGI members my own age. I also began to harbor a strong desire to attend a particular university near my hometown in Japan. This powerful desire motivated me to seriously chant and test the power of faith in the Gohonzon. Most importantly at some point after I joined the SGI, I *chose* to practice this Buddhism myself. So, my true journey of faith started with this desire of mine to attend a certain university, not on the day I joined the SGI.

When I view the issues you, the second- or third-generation members, have expressed, I can say that I believe the true beginning of your faith will start when you truly *want* to give Buddhist practice a sincere and serious try. This challenge from the Daishonin echoed in my heart when I decided for myself to practice his Buddhism: “I say to you, my disciples, try practicing as the Lotus Sutra teaches, exerting yourselves without begrudging your lives! Test the truth of Buddhism now.” (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, pp. 583–84).

Developing solid faith in the Mystic Law — and thereby in our innate Buddha nature — is everybody’s challenge regardless of our background and the circumstances of how we were raised. Speaking about the treasure of faith, President Ikeda states: “When your determination changes, everything will begin to move in the direction you desire. The

moment you resolve to be victorious, every nerve and fiber in your being will immediately orient itself toward your success. On the other hand, if you think, ‘This is never going to work out,’ then at that instant every cell in your being will be deflated and give up the fight. Then everything really will move in the direction of failure”(*Faith Into Action*, pp. 108–09).

In the final analysis, faith, self-confidence and happiness are not things we can inherit from somebody, but something we tenaciously build within our lives through our own efforts.