

*The following is a summary of a lecture given by SGI-USA Vice General Director Greg Martin at the Seattle Culture Centre on June 9, 1995. Mr. Martin has reviewed this summary and has approved its distribution.*

Tonight I'd like to talk about two passages from the Gosho, "On Prayer." (May '95 Seikyo Times, p8). Specifically, the passages, "It could never come about that the prayers of the practitioner of the Lotus Sutra would go unanswered," and "How can your prayers fail to be answered?"

Many of us have experienced prayers going unanswered. I'd like to talk tonight about the nature of prayer in Buddhism and how we can maximise the power and the benefit that we receive from our prayer.

Our Buddhist practice should not be an endless ordeal that takes aeons in order to make even small changes in our karma. The Daishonin's Buddhism is intended to make a dramatic effect upon our daily life and our karma. If that is not happening, one has to wonder why. Doesn't the Daishonin promise that our prayers will be answered?

All our prayers are definitely answered, but sometimes the answer is "No!" (laughter). Sometimes, if we are praying for something that is bad for us, the answer will come back "No." This is why I want to talk about the nature of prayer in Buddhism.

Prayer in Buddhism is significantly different from the prayer that many of us were familiar with in our upbringing. If we don't understand the difference, there will be a tendency in us to continue to pray as though we are trying to communicate with some external power. This would be taking on only the superficial aspects of a Buddha, while inside remaining attached to previous ways of thinking.

Prayers in the Western tradition try to communicate with a transcendent power that is above and beyond us. It doesn't exist in the life of human beings; it has to be found somewhere else. Prayer becomes other-directed. This type of religious view is based upon the premise that human beings are flawed in the depths of their being; that we are inherently "no good." Prayers then become filled with feelings of guilt and inadequacy.

In Buddhism, the "source" or the "power" is within us. A Buddhist prayer is inner-directed. We are seeking assistance from our own Buddha nature within. In Buddhism, human beings are inherently worthy and good. We possess the Buddha nature. Buddhist prayers are then filled with a sense of responsibility and appreciation.

Traditional Western prayer tends to be pessimistic and superficial. Buddhism has an essentially optimistic view of human life. It is profound. The Gosho that we read from earlier says, “One does not throw away gold because the bag is dirty, one does not ignore the sandalwood trees because of the foul odour of the eranda trees around them, and one does not refuse to gather lotuses because the pond in the valley where they grow is filthy.” (MW7, pp.46-47)

In this we can see the fundamentally positive, optimistic view of human life that the Buddhism of Nichiren Daishonin possesses. Our prayer should be that we are going to try to gather lotuses in the muddy swamp of our own life. Chanting daimoku to the Gohonzon is intended to open our eyes to see that lotus blossom. It is extremely difficult for us to perceive what is at the depths of our lives. The Daishonin created a prayer for us to open our eyes and see revealed the treasure that we possess.

If you are chanting in front of the Gohonzon and searching for some power out there to come to you and bring you a miracle, you are looking in the wrong place. Our Buddha nature is in the deep dark storehouse of our lives. It is not easy to find. We tend to look for our Buddha nature in the areas of our lives where we can see easily. Within our lives lie not only the cause of our suffering, but also the solution to all of our problems.

If you pray with an outwardly-directed prayer, your prayers will not be answered. Nothing will happen.

Buddhism does not teach “earthly desires lead to benefit.” Nor does Buddhism teach that benefit is the same as enlightenment. Buddhism teaches that earthly desires lead to enlightenment.

We all know that “stuff” happens in our lives. In the Gosho called “Happiness in this World,” Nichiren Daishonin states: “Suffer what there is to suffer, enjoy what there is to enjoy. Regard both suffering and joy as facts of life ... No one can avoid problems, not even saints or sages.”

“Stuff” happens even to saints and sages. Buddhism accepts the fact that stuff happens and we suffer. Our suffering brings forth the desire to eradicate it. Everyone has the desire to remove suffering. This desire inspires us to take action that is intended to remove our suffering.

However, because we lack wisdom and because delusion exists in our lives, we take the wrong action in spite of our sincerity. We make a bad cause instead of a good cause. Even though we are doing our best, we are filled with illusion and delusion.

Imagine if the Seattle Mariners, a team of dedicated, superbly-skilled athletes, were sent to Guatemala to compete in the World Cup of Soccer. The Mariners are told that if they win, they will be given a million dollars a year for the rest of their lives. They are motivated ! However, we don't tell them the rules of soccer.

The Mariners go out onto the soccer field with their bats and gloves ready to win the World Cup. They play their hardest, but they can only play according to the rules of baseball, because they don't know the rules of soccer. So they try to bat the soccer ball or try to slide into the goal, and they get called for it. In spite of their sincerity, they have the wrong rules. They can't play the game because they don't know the rules. Life is the same way.

You will be unhappy if your life is filled with delusion, no matter how sincere or dedicated or hard working you are. You will continue to make uninformed, bad causes, perpetuating your karma, which will lead to further suffering. Your desire to eradicate your suffering will rise even higher. That is why, sometimes, it seems like the more you try to fix something the worse it gets.

Shakyamuni Buddha stated that we should eliminate desire to break out of the paths of suffering. For us, not only is this not practical, it leads to a dead-end. Nichiren Daishonin said that we can transform earthly desires using wisdom. When we are suffering, we can chant daimoku in front of the Gohonzon and pray for the wisdom to see the root cause of our suffering correctly and to make the right cause. Wisdom allows us to break this karmic chain. We acquire wisdom, which inspires us to take action, which frees us from suffering, which deepens our faith. We are now on a completely different path of life.

The intent of prayer in Buddhism is to transform illusion into wisdom. Wisdom is the greatest benefit of our Buddhist practice. Our society tends to promote the view that the purpose of life is to collect as much material possession as possible. Buddhism says that this is not the purpose of life.

A man came to see me recently and told me that he needed help with his "financial karma." He went on to explain how deep and profound his "financial karma" was. He hadn't been able to fix it in his ten years of practice. My first question to him was, "What kind of work do you do?" He said he was out of work. I asked him why. He said he quit his job six months before. I asked him why. He said he got into a disagreement with his boss and felt that he had to quit.

I asked about the job he had before that. He said that he got fired because he got angry with his boss. He told me he quit the job before that one. This person, in his ten years of practice, had eight jobs and lost them. I asked him how he expected to have financial fortune if he didn't have a job. There is no

magic in Buddhism; it is unreasonable to think that one can acquire financial fortune without having a job.

He then said that his real question to me was, “Why do I have the karma to have authoritarian bosses?”

Most of us think that the bad things that happen to us are our karma. We think that our karma exists outside of us, but this is not correct. We are not the only ones that bad things are happening to. Bad things happen to everyone. Then what is karma?

Karma is our inability to deal with the “stuff.” We don’t know how to handle the stuff when it hits us, and we end up doing the wrong thing. We end up creating more “stuff” for ourselves.

In any case, I pointed out to this person his tendency to get angry with his bosses. There was a clear pattern. It was very difficult for this person to realise that his problem was anger. Buddhism says that if you have anger, you have the poison of arrogance. I told this person that until he was able to control his arrogant mind and his anger, he wouldn’t be able to keep a job. He was actually a very talented person at his job, but this led to him thinking he could do as he wished at his workplace and treat others badly.

I told him that since he needed a way to stop losing jobs, he needed to deal with his karma. I told him to not let his anger defeat him and to sincerely pray for the wisdom to respond to situations in a way other than with anger. To date, he has been employed for three years and has just bought a house.

What is the greater benefit: another job (which he would probably lose), or wisdom to see the root cause of his problem and never have to repeat it? People would pay millions of dollars for wisdom about the true nature of their suffering.

Buddhism is about the inner life. It is about awakening wisdom about the true nature of yourself. That wisdom is a thousand times more valuable than all the little benefits you can accumulate. Getting caught up in the pursuit of material possessions, some of us may think that “this will make wonderful actual proof.” I don’t think so. How many times have you seen a millionaire and said, “Gee, I wonder what religion this person practices? Maybe I’ll convert.” (Laughter)

There is nothing wrong with the pursuit of material possessions, but this is not the purpose of life. People are seeking means to change themselves. This is the nature of the Buddhist prayer. Nichiren Daishonin does not talk about desires becoming benefit, but desires leading to self-knowledge.

Of course, as we change, our environment reflects this change, and we experience benefit. However, if we try to seek out only the benefit without going through the inner process, eventually nothing will happen. The Gohonzon has almost no power to transform your environment. The Gohonzon does have power to transform you. When you use the Gohonzon to transform you, then you transform your environment. There's a big difference. We should determine in front of the Gohonzon that we will solve our problem or that we will overcome our suffering.

When you pray to the Gohonzon with that prayer, you will be amazed to find out what you see about yourself and what you need to fix in your life. Buddhism is about the inner reformation, not about the external reformation. Of course, benefits in the outside environment do come, but really that's not the point at all. It's really about inner change.

We've heard about the four powers of Buddhism. The powers of faith and practice bring forth the powers of the Buddha and the Law. Where do the powers of the Buddha and the Law reside? In the Gohonzon? No. The power of the Buddha and the power of the Law reside in the Buddha nature within your own life. The powers of faith and practice awaken them and bring them forth.

The strength of our faith determines the degree to which we can manifest the power of the Buddha and the power of the Law in our life.

What is the power of the Buddha? The power of the Buddha is wisdom. It means the mind of the Buddha, which is the mind that perceives the true nature of events. What is the power of the Law? It is the body, or action, of the Buddha. When we pray to the Gohonzon, we get wisdom to perceive the true nature of what's really going on and strike at the root of our problem.

The path of our life is well worn. It's like a highway. We've been walking the path of our life, making the same decisions, doing the same things, for lifetimes. Never once did we wake up to the fact that we are walking in circles, always coming back to the same place.

The power of the Buddha and the power of the Law arise because we use our voice, the voice of the Buddha, to pray to the Gohonzon. We pray to the Gohonzon that with wisdom and strength we are going to overcome our problem. We should have that kind of determined prayer. We may not have a clue what to do, but that's OK. That's why we practice. If we already knew what to do, we wouldn't be suffering. We would have fixed it already.

We can muster determination, and then we need wisdom. Chant daimoku to the Gohonzon, study the Goshō, read President Ikeda's guidance, and get guidance

from your seniors. All of this functions to point you at the root cause of your suffering.

An example of this is when you read President Ikeda's guidance, not out of formality, but with the attitude, "President Ikeda, I have a problem. I need wisdom." You start reading. Suddenly some passage will pop out and you'll say, "He's talking about me!" Stop right there and do it. That's wisdom. The wisdom came from your mentor; your teacher. Then you will find you have a personal relationship with President Ikeda. You will find out that he is giving you instruction on how to win. He is teaching you the rules. If you are not seeking wisdom, you will not find it. If you are just seeking benefit, you will not find wisdom. Wisdom is the more valuable treasure.

We practice Buddhism for who we want to become. What kind of person are you becoming? We are trying to become enlightened Buddhas. Sometimes that may appear to abstract to us. Actually, though, to become enlightened, to shine a light on your life, is something you can do everyday. Every time you chant daimoku in front of the Gohonzon for the wisdom to understand the root cause of your suffering and what fundamental action you can take to achieve happiness, you are seeking enlightenment. Buddhahood is not something far and distant and something that maybe you can achieve someday. Every morning and every evening, you attain Buddhahood.

"The Person and the Law" Gosho states: "Since the Law is supreme, the person is worthy of respect." Because the teaching that we embrace is true, anybody who embraces that teaching becomes a person of respect; becomes a Buddha. The Gosho goes on to say, "Because the person is worthy, the land becomes sacred."

Because we embrace the Gohonzon, we attain Buddhahood. Wherever you go becomes the Buddha's land. The kitchen becomes the Buddha's kitchen. School becomes the Buddha's school. How many of you find the Buddha's land when you go to work? Who was supposed to bring the Buddha to work? You are the one with the Gohonzon. You are the one who is supposed to bring forth the life of the Buddha and bring it to work with you. But you left it at home in front of your altar! (Laughter)

If you chant daimoku to the Gohonzon in the morning with the determination that, "I'm going to bring the life of Buddha with me and I will transform my work place. I need wisdom. I need strength, but I'm going to make the difference." you will be amazed at the power you already possess to transform your environment.

In *The Human Revolution*, President Ikeda writes: "If a man believes in something that's mistaken, no matter what it is, it'll drag him into the depths of

misery. The same holds true for a group of men, society, even a whole nation. To mistake a fallacy for the truth and believe it, is the most horrible thing in the world.” If the things that you believe are wrong, they will put you in hell in a minute. Your fundamental beliefs are the most important thing in the world. If your life is based on delusion and illusion you will be in hell and suffering and you won’t be able to get out. We practice to learn the rules of life and change our basic view of life. Once you know the rules you can freely play the game for the rest of your life.

President Ikeda goes on to say, “No amount of good intentions or hard work will help a man then. If he believes in something false or unscientific, he can’t help but invite misfortune. It’s inevitable.”

“A man may place his trust in a specific doctrine, or in science, religion, his country, his business, his relatives, his friends, in his convictions, or in medicine or technology. Human beings can’t act unless they believe in something. Unconsciously, even a man who flaunts his atheism acts on the basis of some belief. All human affairs are no more than the sum total of actions rooted in faith.”

Belief is not something apart from life. Nor is it confined to a select group of people. The most important thing is the extent to which one is aware of what he believes in. Most people never even question if the substance of their belief is absolutely correct. Right or wrong, just or evil - they ignore it and go merrily on their way. Here, right here, is the root of unhappiness.”

How many times have we asked ourselves if our fundamental beliefs are correct? Many, many times I have seen people with 15 or 20 years of practice who are stuck, unable to make advancement. Their practice has become a difficulty. When we examine the root cause, we find that in their head, they know all the right Buddhist things, but in their heart, they still think it’s someone else’s responsibility. They are in *dotai ishin*, or “one in body, many in mind.”

They are talking like a Buddhist but inside they don’t have Buddhist beliefs. They haven’t examined their fundamental beliefs. Because of that, their Buddhist practice eventually will stop producing benefit. They are not trying to transform what they believe from something false into something true.

The *Rissho Ankoku Ron* states: “Therefore you must quickly reform the tenets that you hold in your heart and embrace the one true vehicle, the single good doctrine of the Lotus Sutra.”

In other words, we chant daimoku in front of the Gohonzon. The Gohonzon is *kanjin no honzon*, or the true object of worship for observing the truth about

your own life. When you chant daimoku seeking the truth, you will become shockingly aware of your self, which takes courage, and you will also be able to discover that you possess the Buddha nature.

Unless you have the courage to look at the true nature of your life, you cannot find the Buddha nature. You have to have the courage to look.

The question is, will any old prayer do? In *The Human Revolution*, volume 10, President Ikeda asks if daimoku is enough. His conclusion is no. Daimoku is the basis of everything, but by itself it's not enough. Daimoku must be plugged into the other parts of the practice.

The Goshō "On Prayer" states: "It could never come about that the prayers of the practitioner of the Lotus Sutra would go unanswered." Nichikan Shōnin, the 26th High Priest, said, "No prayer (of the votary of the Lotus Sutra) will go answered ..." However, the "Strategy of the Lotus Sutra" Goshō states: "A coward cannot have any of his prayers answered." In other words, it is possible not to have your prayers answered.

Vice President Tsuji once said, "We all have the same Gohonzon and practice in the same way; however, we find that while some people find tremendous benefits, nothing much happens for others, and still others tremendous loss. What is the correct relationship with the Gohonzon? How can we practice to it to receive benefit?"

"The Gohonzon that is outside ourselves brings joy from within ourselves. And, when we establish a relationship with the Gohonzon in front of us by chanting Nam-Myōhō-Renge-Kyō, that Nam-Myōhō-Renge-Kyō within ourselves will well up. If we look at the Gohonzon and think to ourselves that by doing this, 'I'm going to get something,' it is like a beggar asking for something. Even under these circumstances, we will probably receive a benefit; however, the type of benefit we receive in this way will be as tiny as the tip a waiter gets compared to full payment for a meal."

"We should chant daimoku with the attitude that through our prayers to the Gohonzon, whether it be for a new home, our business or our health, we will be able to contribute to the cause of kosen-rufu. Ask the Gohonzon, 'For kosen-rufu, please let me overcome these difficulties.' Buddhist gods will render protection based on our prayer for kosen-rufu. Without thinking about kosen-rufu and simply chanting Nam-Myōhō-Renge-Kyō, we will find little benefit. Benefit derived from our prayers based on kosen-rufu is as dynamic as flying in an airplane, while chanting just for our own sake is as slow as walking in terms of gaining benefit."

The Gosho “On Attaining Buddhahood” states: “However, even though you chant and believe in Myoho-Renge-Kyo, if you think the Law is outside yourself...” What does that mean? If you think the cause of your problems is outside yourself, or if you think the solution to your problems is outside yourself, you are not embracing the Mystic Law, but some inferior teaching, even while you are chanting daimoku to the Gohonzon. This is an important point. Even as we chant daimoku before the Gohonzon, if we think, “my answer lies outside myself,” you are actually not even practising Buddhism, even though you are chanting daimoku.

The Gosho goes on to state: “‘Inferior teachings’ means those other than this sutra, which are all provisional and transient. No provisional teaching leads directly to enlightenment, and without the direct path to enlightenment you cannot attain Buddhahood, even if you practice lifetime after lifetime for countless aeons.”

Imagine doing gongyo, chanting daimoku, doing *shakubuku*, attending discussion meetings, promoting the *World Tribune*, participating in *zaimu*, for lifetime after lifetime for countless aeons, and never changing your karma; never attaining enlightenment. That’s a depressing thought.

The Daishonin is pointing out here how important it is not to look outside yourself. Don’t try to get power from outside yourself. Seek the solution to the problem within yourself. You are the problem. You are also the solution.

If you chant daimoku in front of the Gohonzon with the prayer, “Give me the wisdom to know what I need to do. Give me the wisdom to know what action I need to take,” you will be amazed at the progress you make. Outwardly-directed prayers will not help you in the least, even if you do it for the rest of your life.

The Daishonin’s strict point here is that if you are going to chant daimoku, don’t waste your time trying to fix things outside yourself. The Gohonzon has almost no power in the outer realm, but the Gohonzon has a universe of unlimited power to change you and reform your life. Open your life and see your true nature. Deal with your true nature. It is characterised by one of the three poisons: greed, anger or stupidity. To find out which it is, just ask yourself, “Am I greedy, am I angry, or am I stupid?” It’s one of those three! (Laughter)

The Daishonin goes on to state: “... you cannot attain Buddhahood, even if you practice lifetime after lifetime for countless aeons. Attaining Buddhahood in this lifetime is then impossible ... For example, a poor man cannot earn a penny just by counting his neighbour’s wealth, even if he does so night and day.”

This Gosho goes on to say that if you do not understand that this is happening within you and not out there someplace, you will be unable to change your karma. Your practice will become an endless, painful austerity.

Let's turn that around. Look at your life. Is there any area in your life in which, when you chant daimoku about it, it seems an endless, painful austerity? It may be your job, your relationships, your children, or anything else. You might be fine in all other areas, but when it comes to relationships, for example, you can be completely non-Buddhist and getting no benefit. This can go on for years. You may even give up because it's so painful.

The problem is not Buddhism. The problem is not that your karma is so heavy. The problem is that you are looking the wrong place. You are the problem. You are not looking inside. It's easier to look outside.

Let's say you have a large problem that you want to overcome. You begin a campaign of chanting one million daimoku. Somewhere around 999,950 daimoku, it suddenly dawns on you, "hey, maybe the problem is me!" Knowing this, we can shorten the process a little bit!

Start out knowing that "the problem is me." That way we can make progress chanting maybe only 50,00 daimoku instead of 1 million.

The quality of our prayer is just as important as the quantity. The ideal thing is to chant quality, quantity daimoku. However, the quality of our prayer is extremely important.

When we look at our practice, we only see it from one direction, and it always looks right to us. Most of the time, we think we're fine. But someone else can clearly see if we are way out of line. This is especially true when you have an experienced senior in faith. This is why we receive guidance.

When you go to receive guidance, what do you think the guidance will be? Chant daimoku right? Has it ever happened to you that the guidance you received was, "I think you are chanting too much daimoku"? Of course not (although I heard that Nikken once said that chanting too much daimoku was not healthy!).

You know what the conclusion will be when you receive guidance. The person giving the guidance knows what the conclusion will be. So why go to receive guidance? The reason is because the daimoku you're currently chanting is not reaching the Gohonzon. Something's gone amiss and you're frustrated. You need someone to point to you and say, "Ah, your view has become non-Buddhist. You've lost the correct spirit and you're chanting for the wrong

reason.” The power of guidance is to redirect our prayer to the Gohonzon so we can get the benefit to start flowing again.

When we lose the Buddhist perspective and we start looking outside ourselves, blaming others or thinking the problem is outside of us, there is no voice that says, “Watch out! You’re about to look outside of yourself”! It creeps up on you from behind. Before you know it, your daimoku is losing its power. The joy is not there anymore.

You may begin to think, “Maybe I never did get benefit before. Maybe this practice never did work for me.” Doubts begin to appear. This is how our faith gets bent. This is why we need guidance. Our organisation is an organisation for guiding people in correct faith so they can straighten out their prayer, get rid of all the non-Buddhist stuff and focus their prayer on daimoku for their human revolution. Immediately after that kind of guidance, people get benefit. It is not the guidance that did it, but the person’s prayer. The guidance helped the person see how to get their prayer correct.

How we pray in Buddhism makes all the difference in the world. What does it mean to pray as a votary of the Lotus Sutra? One aspect is that the votary, or the practitioner of the Lotus Sutra practices three things strongly. You cannot have your prayers answered as a votary of the Lotus Sutra if you are not practising for others, if you are not studying, and if you are not chanting daimoku to the Gohonzon.

You know whether or not you are doing your best in those three areas. If your practice has lost its power to produce benefit, I would immediately look at those three legs of your practice and ask yourself, “Am I exerting myself to the best of my ability in study, practice for myself and practice for others?” If you want to move your life faster, strengthen those three aspects of your practice.

Some people have thought that President Ikeda told us in February of 1990 that showing actual proof in your daily life was the same as practice for others. They are not. One is as important as the other, that’s for sure. We must show actual proof in our daily life, but they are not the same thing.

They are two different realms in which we practice. President Ikeda was telling us not to practice for others at the expense of our daily life. He was also telling us not to practice for benefit at the expense of others. Strive to fulfil both. Study is the backbone of being able to do this.

The prayer of the votary of the Lotus Sutra is answered because they carry out these three practices strongly. The votary of the Lotus Sutra is not seeking personal benefit, but enlightenment and wisdom to become a Buddha. Of course, when you become a Buddha, you get benefit.

President Ikeda gave the following guidance: “Prayers in Buddhism, however, never end with the mere act of prayer; they include the actions one takes to realise them. It is just like an arrow, drawn back, charged with energy and shot from a bow. Prayer without action is idealism, and action without prayer is futile ... A great prayer comes from a great sense of responsibility.”

Another aspect of karma which is often misunderstood is this: we often think our karma is something outside of us. However, someone else’s behaviour is not your karma. Your karma is that you don’t know how to deal with their behaviour. You can’t handle their behaviour. You respond in the wrong way to their behaviour. That’s your problem. Your behaviour is your karma. Sometimes we may think that we are a terrible person if we have someone in our environment who is a terrible person. That’s not true. They are a terrible person in their own right!

The question is, why are you suffering? You have the karma to be with that person, but they were going to be that way anyway. You didn’t make them that way. Ask yourself why you are unable to deal with that person. Why does that person make you angry? Why do you let that person make you unhappy? In such a case, you have the karma to be unable to handle these things in your environment. That is your problem.

When you chant daimoku to be able to handle that person; to be able to grow and be stronger than that person so that you are no longer affected, then it no longer affects you. You’ve transformed your environment.

President Ikeda continues in this same guidance: “True prayer will never grow out of an irresponsible or nonchalant attitude towards your job, daily life or your existence itself. The ones who take responsibility for everything they are involved in and seriously work to improve will develop strong prayers.”

“Daily life and life itself are battles. Do you win or lose? The outcome is not always determined by how much experience or ability you have.”

“What is most important is your decision to win. Then pray sincerely with all your might, bringing forth great wisdom while making every effort to accomplish your goal.”

Start with a determination. For example, “I will overcome my suffering. I will do it.” You have no idea how, so you need wisdom and strength. That kind of self-empowering prayer produces results.

President Ikeda states in *The New Human Revolution*: “Buddhism is a teaching of unsurpassed reason. Therefore, the strength of one’s faith must manifest

itself in the form of studying, exercising one's ingenuity and making twice as much effort as anyone else. Earnest daimoku is the wellspring for the energy to challenge these things. Your daimoku must also be a pledge..."

"Of course, there are all kinds of ways of praying. Some people may pray that everything just falls into their laps without having to make any effort. But a religion that encourages such prayer is one that will lead people to ruin."

"Prayer in Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism means to chant daimoku based on a pledge or vow. At its very core, this vow is to attain kosen-rufu. It means chanting resolutely with the determination: 'I will realise kosen-rufu in Brazil. Therefore, I will show magnificent actual proof in my work. Please enable me to somehow bring forth my greatest potential.' This is what our prayer should be like."

"It is also important that we establish clear and concrete goals for what we hope to achieve each day and then pray and challenge ourselves to achieve each one. This earnest determination will give rise to wisdom and resourcefulness, thereby leading to success. In short, to win in life we need determination and prayer, effort and ingenuity. It is misguided to dream of getting rich quick, expecting to encounter a rare stroke of luck or some shrewd money-making scheme. This is not faith. It is mere fantasy." (6/6/94 *World Tribune*)

Prayer in Buddhism absolutely works, but it has to be correct prayer. How we pray makes all the difference in the world. What we are doing and thinking while we are chanting daimoku in front of the Gohonzon makes all the difference between a trickle of benefit or absolutely incredible benefit.

Please reflect on whether you have the Buddhist attitude or are you trying to get someone else to help you. What is your attitude in front of the Gohonzon? Are you playing the victim or are you filled with the determination that you will overcome your suffering?

"I need wisdom and strength, but I am going to do it!" With that kind of prayer, I believe there is nothing that you cannot achieve. Thank you very much for this evening!

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