

Faith Is the Compass for Victory in Life—Courageously and Cheerfully Sailing the Course to Happiness

Lecture presented by Mai Ogushi
SGI Canada Study Department

Hi everyone! Welcome to the March study podcast. My name is Mai Ogushi. In March 1954, Toda Sensei established a youth office for the organization and appointed Ikeda Sensei as the Youth Chief of Staff. This year marks the 70th anniversary of this appointment, and to commemorate this milestone, the youth will be holding a youth general meeting across Canada this month. How exciting! Wanted to give a plug for the youth division before we get into the study 😊

This month, we will study how we can cross the “sea of the sufferings of birth and death” and sail our course to happiness. As the title suggests, faith is the compass for victory in life.

At the beginning of the lecture, Ikeda Sensei shares the following:

Nichiren Buddhism is the supreme philosophy of life, the light of wisdom illuminating turbulent and troubled times. The more you study it, the more you open the door to a life of happiness and victory. Buddhist study expands and enriches your inner state of life.

The writings of Nichiren Daishonin are a source of inspiration and courage. They awaken us to the absolute dignity of our lives and enable us to overcome all adversity. Buddhist study is the driving force for building a solid core of wisdom and freely creating value. Studying the supreme principles of life brings joy and will not fail to impact our lives profoundly. Those who study and those who teach become experts in human philosophy, whose lives shine with pride and triumph. Mr. Toda frequently encouraged members by describing those who embrace Nichiren Buddhism as champions of faith and life.

The first Gosho passage we will study is from “A Ship to Cross the Sea of Suffering.”

One who listens to even a sentence or phrase of the [Lotus Sutra] and cherishes it deep in one's heart may be likened to a ship that crosses the sea of the sufferings of birth and death. The Great Teacher Miao-lo stated, "Even a single phrase cherished deep in one's heart will without fail help one reach the opposite shore [that is, enlightenment]. To ponder one phrase and practice it is to exercise navigation." Only the ship of Myoho-enge-kyo enables one to cross the sea of the sufferings of birth and death. (WND-1, 33 "A Ship to Cross the Sea of Suffering")

We all go through a series of hardships in life, which at times, can discourage you and make you lose hope. In the passage we just read, these hardships and sufferings in life are likened to the sea, and enlightenment is likened to the opposite shore. And Nichiren Daishonin clearly states that, "Only the ship of Myoho-enge-kyo enables one to cross the sea of the sufferings of birth and death." (WND-1, 33)

Chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo is the only way for us to keep the light of hope in our hearts, strengthen our life state and continue advancing toward victory. The Women's Division know this very well as "Everything begins with prayer" is the first guideline of their eternal guidelines.

Here, the "sea of the sufferings of birth and death" (WND-1, 33) refers to the endless suffering of life in this world. And "cherishes it deep in one's heart" (WND-1, 33) means to continue chanting everyday and teach others to do the same. It's about our fundamental teaching of practice for oneself and others to keep the ship on the right course to Buddhahood.

I would like to read from the section "Freeing All People from Suffering":

Mr. Toda offered four criteria for identifying a religious philosophy that genuinely benefits humanity. Namely, it must help all people (1) free themselves from suffering, (2) enjoy true happiness, (3) truly purify their lives, and (4) awaken to the true eternal nature of their lives. The "ship of Myoho-enge-kyo" is the great ship for freeing all people from suffering. Who can board this ship? The Daishonin declares

with absolute conviction that it is “the disciples and lay supporters of Nichiren” (WND-1, 34). He clearly promises that we who embrace the Gohonzon [Nam-myoho-rence-kyo] are certain to reach the other shore of happiness and fulfillment. How wonderful this is!

The next Gosho passage we will study is from “Letter to Hoki and the Others”

I have already reported this to Brahma, Shakra, the gods of the sun and moon, and other protective deities. They would never fail to pay heed. Please regard your situations as the design of the heavens.

**With my deep respect,
Nichiren**

(GZ, new ed., 1936; “Letter to Hoki and the Others”)

In the Gosho passage we just read, it is believed that the Daishonin is encouraging his disciples who were being persecuted by other religious and political authorities who felt alarmed by the growing numbers of the Daishonin’s followers. His disciples were being subject to a series of threats and acts of violence against them.

Although short, this passage demonstrates the Daishonin’s care, compassion and prayer to protect his disciples. It also conveys his strong conviction when he says, “They would never fail to pay heed.”

When we have steadfast faith and practice for the happiness of oneself and others, the protective functions of the universe help us move things in the best possible direction.

The sentence, “Please regard your situation as the design of the heavens” (GZ, new ed., 1936) teaches us that even when things don’t go as hoped, we should regard it as “the design of the heavens” and harbour no doubt. As a young women’s leader, I often refer to these words of the Daishonin when encouraging young women whose prayers are not being answered. It’s easy to get discouraged and have doubt when things don’t go your way even though you chanted for it, but that is precisely the time we must engrave this

Gosho passage and start anew with stronger determination!

Ikeda Sensei says, “Therefore, even if the results at the time were not what we hoped for, we will win in the end and be able to look back with gratitude, realizing we were indeed protected and everything that happened had a profound meaning.” Having such conviction and confidence is the key in navigating the “sea of suffering” and sail our course to happiness!

To end, I would like to share Ikeda Sensei’s words from the section, “Faith for Absolute Victory”:

No matter how adverse the circumstances, by chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo and bringing forth abundant life force, we can create the right time or opportunity, expand our circle of support and friendship, and forge ahead triumphantly. Human beings are not prisoners of destiny. We possess the inherent life state of Buddhahood. Endowed with power and potential as vast as the universe, it can change the four sufferings of birth, aging, sickness, and death into the four noble virtues of eternity, happiness, true self, and purity. We all possess the unfathomable latent power of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth.

I hope this month’s study will truly empower you and enable you to confidently advance toward your victories this year!!

Thank you so much for listening, and have a wonderful study meeting this month! If you have any questions, please send them to us at: study@sgicanada.org