

Question: What is the meaning of practice?

In Buddhism, “practice” means to do exactly what the Buddha taught. It is said that the sutras Shakyamuni expounded comprise five or seven thousand volumes. Among these, there are none that stated, “we are able to become happy without practice.” Twenty-sixth High Priest Nichikan Shonin states:

The fundamental point of Shakyamuni’s many teachings is to lead all the people to practice.

(Summary, *Six Volume Writings*, p. 161)

It is important to learn the Buddha’s teachings, but it is more important to put those teachings into practice. Our High Priest Nichinyo Shonin stated the following to encourage our faith and practice: “Faith and practice are not just intellectual exercises. It is important to take action.” There are two kinds of practice—practice for oneself and practice for the sake of others.

When we do Gongyo, chant Daimoku, and make a pilgrimage to the Head Temple, this is the practice for oneself. We do Gongyo every morning and evening. Gongyo signifies training or practice. It is a continuous accumulation of practice, day by day. Some of you might say that you are not good at doing Gongyo consistently everyday. However, the reason why we are able to lead our lives safely each day is because of the Buddha’s protection. Please do Gongyo assiduously, in order to show your appreciation to the Gohonzon. Gongyo is the most basic and important practice in Nichiren Shoshu. When one does Gongyo every day, various kinds of wishes will be materialized without fail. No matter how far away one’s destination may be, one must advance, one step at a time. Otherwise, the destination never will be reached. Let us strive to maintain this important practice of doing Gongyo, firmly believing in the Gohonzon, so that we will be able to become happy.

We also need to communicate with people who are practicing provisional religions. We courageously must tell them that the teachings they are following are incorrect. Let’s encourage them to build happy lives by practicing the Daishonin’s Buddhism together with us. This is the practice for others.

When you hear the word, “shakubuku,” please do not hesitate. Don’t tell yourself, “I cannot do it,” or “It’s just too hard.” There are many ways to do shakubuku. There are no set rules on how you must do it. The most important point is to chant sincerely to the Gohonzon for the happiness of the person whom you want to shakubuku. Remember, there is no shakubuku if there is no Shodai. Before talking to someone whom you want to shakubuku, first offer your prayers to the Gohonzon, such as, “Please help me to encourage this person to practice.” The Daishonin states the following about chanting Daimoku:

Now, in the Latter Day of the Law, the Daimoku that Nichiren chants is different from that of previous ages. It is the Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo of both practice for oneself and practice for the sake of others.

(*Gosho*, p. 1594)

This means that the Daimoku propagated by Nichiren Daishonin contains the significance of saving others (practice for the sake of others) in addition to gaining happiness for oneself (practice for oneself). Thus, if you are doing Gongyo and chanting Daimoku at home alone, and are not doing shakubuku, you are not carrying out the practice of the Daishonin's Buddhism in the true sense. Please think about this point. The Daishonin states, "Nichiren's disciples should never be cowardly." (*Gosho*, p. 1109)

Based on the foundation of doing Gongyo and chanting Daimoku everyday, let us try to do shakubuku with courage. This is the correct way to carry out the practice for oneself and practice for the sake of others.