



Why Try?

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In the January 1, 2009 issue of Friends for Peace, we learned about a letter Nichiren Daishonin wrote to Nanjo Tokimitsu to encourage him. The letter is called “The Dragon Gate”. In this letter Nichiren tells a story about a waterfall that fish struggle to climb but if they are able to reach the top they become dragons.

In his lecture on this letter, SGI President Daisaku Ikeda refers to a poem about a carp that tries to climb the waterfall. While trying to get to the top, the carp falls and hurts his head. He then decides not to try anymore. He tells himself that if he did become a dragon, he would have to do even harder work and face even bigger challenges. So, he decides to just stay a carp. Isn't it sad, that the little fish gave up and never became a dragon?

Have you ever felt like that carp? Have you ever asked yourself, “Why should I try? Even if I make it, so what? Why should I work so hard?” That is a very good question; why should we work so hard? Why would a carp even bother to want to become a dragon? Wouldn't life be easier if we didn't push ourselves to do difficult things? Well yes, life would be easier; but easier isn't always better.

When I was a kid, I wanted to play the piano. I didn't want to take lessons, practice scales or learn to read music. I just wanted to sit down and play. At the same time, I had a friend who also wanted to play the piano. And she was willing to do the work that it took. So while I was out riding my bike, she took piano lessons. And while I was swimming, she practiced scales. Now, one of us is able to play the piano – and, guess what, it isn't me.

Whatever we want to do in life, there is an element of work we have to do and challenges we have to go through to accomplish it. We could choose not to try or to deal with the challenges. But, if we do that we give up the chance to accomplish something great. Not only do we give up the chance to do what we said we wanted to do., but also we give up the chance to make ourselves better people.

So let's tackle that waterfall (or whatever it is that you want to achieve) and give it all we've got. Look to your right and left to see that you are not alone. Let's cheer each other on. And whoever gets up that waterfall and becomes a dragon, extend a claw and help the others up.

