

# **BUDDHISM DOCTRINE**



# **4**



## Question 1

Upon being saved by Amida Buddha, one's body and mind both become one with the *Myōgō*. Write out a quote that states this, and give the source too.

## Answer(s) 1

A person who attains true faith (is saved by Amida Buddha) becomes one with Namu Amida Butsu, both in body and mind.

— *Notes on the Attainment of True Faith*

## Explanation

Upon being saved by Amida, one attains 'oneness with Buddha' (the mind of Amida Buddha and the mind of the believer form a single entity). In other words, the human mind cannot be separated from Amida Buddha's mind, and vice versa.

On this, one Pure Land Shin follower said,  
“Strike my head—Namu Amida Butsu,  
Strike my hand—Namu Amida Butsu,  
Strike my leg—Namu Amida Butsu,  
Strike my behind—Namu Amida Butsu,  
When sitting—Namu Amida Butsu,  
When standing—Namu Amida Butsu,  
When walking—Namu Amida Butsu:  
The Vow is the follower; the follower, the Vow.”

One's raging blind passions become Namu Amida Butsu just as they are; when saved, one is made aware of this.



## Question 2

“Having been saved by Amida Buddha, I, Shinran, the most exceedingly evil being of all, have gained the most exceedingly wonderful happiness of all.” Write the hymn in which Master Shinran said this. Give the source too.

## Answer(s) 2

Impenitent toward others,  
unashamed in my heart,  
I lack a mind of truth;  
but because I have received Amida's Name,  
virtue fills the ten directions.

## Explanation

To paraphrase: “I erupt in anger if anyone criticizes me for being steeped in selfish desire, nor do I think myself a bad fellow in the least. I am completely lacking in shame and penitence. There is no trace of truth in me. But having received from Amida the crystallized virtue of the cosmos (Namu Amida Butsu), I am filled with truth and overcome with joy.”

[Please refer to *You Were Born for a Reason* pg. 136]

Impenitent toward others, unashamed in my heart: Having no shame within oneself or shame directed towards others.

[Please refer to *Buddhist Doctrine 2* Question 31]

I have received Amida's Name: To have been granted Namu Amida Butsu by Amida Buddha.

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### Question 3

In Buddhism, it is taught that there are three kinds of rich people. What kind of people are they?

### Answer(s) 3

1. People who are rich in house
2. People who are rich in body
3. People who are rich in mind: Śākyamuni Buddha said that this is the best one.

### Explanation

“Rich people” refers to those who are blessed or happy. In general, “rich people” means those who have money, such as millionaires or billionaires. However, Śākyamuni Buddha taught that there are three kinds of “rich people”.

1. People who are rich in house: Those who are blessed with money and possessions.

2. People who are rich in body: Those who are blessed with health.
3. People who are rich in mind: Those who have been granted the great virtue of the Name from Amida Buddha (attained true faith) and made to live on in absolute happiness.

Money, possessions, and body are impermanent. No matter how much of them we are blessed with, we are always unable to feel at ease and, in the end, they all will collapse. Therefore, Śākyamuni Buddha urges us to be saved from this world into everlasting happiness by Amida Buddha as soon as possible.



#### **Question 4**

Write the words of Master Rennyo in which he described the difference in objects of reverence of Pure Land Shin Buddhism and Pure Land Buddhism and clarified the correct object of reverence of Pure Land Shin Buddhism. Give the source too.

#### **Answer(s) 4**

In other schools, they say “Rather than the Name, a painting; rather than a painting, a wooden statue.” In our school we say “Rather than a wooden statue, a painting; rather

than a painting, the Name.”

— *The Words of Rennyo Heard and  
Recorded During His Lifetime*

## **Explanation**

“In schools other than Pure Land Shin Buddhism, people say, ‘Better than the Name as an object of reverence is a painting, and better than a painting is a wooden statue; a wooden statue is best.’

In the Pure Land Shin school, Master Shinran taught, ‘The correct object of reverence is the Name.’”

Other schools: Pure Land schools other than Pure Land Shin Buddhism. These schools teach of going to somewhere other than the Land of Bliss.

Pure Land Shin Buddhism: True Pure Land Buddhism. The teachings of Master Shinran.

The Name: The six Chinese characters of ‘Namu Amida Butsu’.

Painting: The image of Amida Buddha depicted in picture form.

Wooden statue: The image of Amida Buddha depicted as a metal or wooden statue.

The object of reverence is something that is fundamentally valuable. In Buddhism in particular, the object of reverence is of utmost importance. This is why you will find no household where people have placed their Buddhist altar, which holds the object of reverence, next to the front door or the toilet. The Buddhist altar is placed in the best room in the house, and the object of reverence is enshrined in the middle of the altar. Both Master Shinran and Master Rennyo gave clear teachings on the topic of the object of reverence: “The correct object of reverence of Pure Land Shin Buddhism is the Name, *Namu Amida Butsu*.” This is the meaning of the quote from *The Words of Rennyo Heard and Recorded During His Lifetime*.

Neither Master Shinran nor Master Rennyo ever once enshrined anything other than the Name as an object of reverence. Both Masters pressed their palms before and worshiped only the Name; this is a widely-documented historical fact. It goes without saying, then, that they also granted the Name to their disciples and followers and directed them to worship it.

The grounds for this are in Śākyamuni Buddha’s *Passage on Fulfilment of the Primal Vow: Mon go myōgō shinjin kangi*.



This means, “All people, in the instant when they receive the Name, Namu Amida Butsu, from Amida Buddha, will be saved and embraced into absolute happiness.”

As it is entirely through the working of the Name, Namu Amida Butsu, that we are saved and embraced into absolute happiness, both Master Shinran and Master Rennyo taught throughout their lives that “the correct object of reverence of Pure Land Shin Buddhism is the Name, Namu Amida Butsu.”



### Question 5

The “*ichinen* of faith” is the vital lynchpin and fountain-head. Give five quotes that teach this from the *sūtras* and scriptures.

### Answer(s) 7

In Sakyamuni Buddha’s *Explanation of the Vow*, it says, “When they hear that Name in an *ichinen*, [they] will gain faith, great joy.” (*Larger Sūtra of Infinite Life*)

*Ichinen* indicates the utmost speed of the onset of faith.

— *Teaching, Practice, Faith, Enlightenment*)

Concerning the obtaining of true faith, let the words in the

*Explanation of the Vow* be the sole standard: “[In an *ichinen*, they will] gain faith, great joy...” I never heard him say anything else.

— *Notes Rectifying Heresy*

Even if one reads the various scriptures and knows many things, one who has not attained faith in an *ichinen* will not be saved.

— *The Letters*

The split-second (*ichinen*) of having relied thoroughly on Amida Buddha is the vital lynchpin and fountainhead.

— The Words of Rennyo Heard and Recorded  
During His Lifetime)

## Explanation

The “vital lynchpin and fountainhead” (肝要 kan’yo) is the “most essential of all that is essential.” Though there may be several things that are essential, only one thing can be the “most essential of all that is essential.” That is what is called the “vital lynchpin and fountainhead” (肝要 kan’yo) in Buddhism.

In the quotes above, Sakyamuni Buddha, Master Shinran, Master Kakunyo, and Master Rennyo all taught that the vital lynchpin and fountainhead of Pure Land Shin Buddhism is the “*ichinen* of faith.”

Quote from Sakyamuni Buddha's *Explanation of the Vow*:

“When they hear that Name in an *ichinen*, [they] will gain faith, great joy.”

Here Sakyamuni Buddha clarified, “In the split-second of *ichinen* of being granted the Name by Amida, one is saved into absolute happiness.”

Quote from Master Shinran's *Teaching, Practice, Faith, Enlightenment*:

“An ‘*ichinen*’ is the speed at which one is saved by Amida: in less than a nanosecond.”

The onset of faith:

The settlement of faith. Salvation by Amida.

The utmost speed:

The very fastest speed; nothing is quicker than this.

Quote from Master Kakunyo's Notes Rectifying Heresy:

“Master Shinran taught that Sakyamuni's teachings in the *Explanation of the Vow* are the ultimate teachings on the acquisition of true faith. I, Kakunyo, never heard any teachings other than this Explanation from Master Shinran.”

The obtaining of true faith:

Being granted the Name by Amida Buddha; the acquisition of faith.

The words in the *Explanation of the Vow*: “[In an *ichinen*, they will] gain faith, great joy...”:

These words express the “*ichinen* of faith” that is the vital lynchpin; this part represents the whole of the passage.

The sole standard:

Whether or not one’s faith is true is determined by whether or not it is in accordance with what is taught in the *Explanation of the Vow*. No matter what sort of amazing experiences one might have had, faith that is not in accordance with the Explanation is false, delusional, and wrong, and is absolutely not true faith.

I never heard him say anything else:

“I never heard any teachings other than what is taught in the *Explanation of the Vow* from Master Shinran.” In *Teaching, Practice, Faith, Enlightenment*, Master Shinran taught, “The *Explanation of the Vow*... is the one true teaching that is sublime and all-complete, true Buddhism.” Here he was stating that he never taught anything other than what is taught in Sakyamuni’s Explanation. From this we can see that both Master Shinran’s and Master Kakunyo’s words on this matter are consistent with each other.

Quote from Master Rennyo’s *The Letters*:

“No matter how large a number of scriptures you read, or

how many things you know, if you do not attain ‘*ichinen* faith,’ you will not be saved.”

Quote from The Words of Rennyo Heard and Recorded During His Lifetime:

“The *ichinen* of faith is what is absolutely vital.”

The split-second (*ichinen*) of having relied thoroughly on Amida Buddha:

The *ichinen* of believing in Amida. The *ichinen* of attaining faith.

In this way, all true Buddhist masters emphasise that it is the “*ichinen* of faith” that is the dividing line between self-power and other-power, the partition between the world of suffering and the Pure Land, the ultimate intent of Amida’s Vow, the purpose of Sakyamuni’s appearance in this world, the key to human beings attaining birth (salvation), and the vital lynchpin and fountainhead of Pure Land Shin Buddhism.



## Question 6

The term “*ichinen* of faith” has two meanings. Write these two meanings and give the sources too.

## Answer(s) 7

One is the “*ichinen* of time,” and the other is the “*ichinen* of the state of faith.”

On the *ichinen* of time: “The true faith of *shingyō* has the moment of *ichinen*. *Ichinen* indicates the utmost speed of the onset of faith (*shingyō*) and it also expresses the inconceivably vast joyful mind.”

— *Teaching, Practice, Faith, Enlightenment*,  
Chapter on Faith

On the *ichinen* of the state of faith: “*Ichinen* is so called because it does not have a double heart.”

[*You Were Born for a Reason*, pg. 99]

## Explanation

In the Passage Explaining the Primal Vow, Sakyamuni Buddha taught, “in that split second (*ichinen*) you will gain faith and joy.” Master Shinran clarified that “*ichinen*” here is the *ichinen* of faith. He divided this “*ichinen* of faith” into the “*ichinen* of time” and the “*ichinen* of the state of faith”.

### *Ichinen* of time:

This indicates the immeasurable swiftness of Amida’s salvation, which takes place in less than a nanosecond.

Ichinen of the state of faith:

The mind from which the “double heart” has been eliminated through salvation by Amida

Quote on the “*ichinen* of time”

To paraphrase: “True faith of *shingyō* has *ichinen*. *Ichinen* indicates the utmost swiftness of salvation by Amida (unfolding of faith of *shingyō*). “Unfolding of faith of *shingyō*” expresses that our doubt in Amida’s Vow has been dispelled. At the same time, we attain settled conviction that birth in the Pure Land is certain and attain vast security and satisfaction.

True faith of *shingyō*: Other-power faith.

True faith (of *shingyō*) has *ichinen* without fail. In other words, faith without *ichinen* is not true faith; instead, that is untrue, deluded, wrong, and false faith.

In Pure Land Shin Buddhism, many people believe that we will be saved gradually. However, it is clear that their belief is false and wrong. Such a belief goes against the teachings of the Passage Explaining the Primal Vow (the criterion).

Quote on the “*ichinen* of the state of faith”

To paraphrase: “*Ichinen* refers to the mind where no more ‘double heart’ dwells.”

### Double heart:

The mind that doubts Amida Buddha's Vow; the doubting mind. This is the mind that deliberates about Amida's Vow, wondering whether one will be saved or not be saved. It is also called the "mind that doubts the Vow" and the "the mind of darkness."

"*Ichinen* of the state of faith" is the state in which all trace of doubt in Amida's Vow has vanished.

When the doubt in Amida's Vow (double heart) has vanished, we are made clearly aware of two things:

1. what "the true nature of the object of salvation" is (revelation of the self), and
2. "the Vow of Amida Buddha, in which Amida pledged to save such people without fail" (revelation of the Vow). These two things become clear simultaneously.

It is also called the "unified twofold revelation of the self and the Vow of Amida," or the "twofold revelation" for short.

"*Ichinen* of the state of faith" is the "twofold revelation".





## Question 7

Why did Amida Buddha make a Vow to save us in an *ichinen* ? Quote the scriptures, and give the source.

## Answer(s) 7

Amida's great compassion is aimed at saving one who is but a single moment from death. Were the Primal Vow to require several moments to take effect, how could one with but a moment of life remaining, the end nigh, ride on the Primal Vow? That is why *ichinen* salvation is the vital linchpin and fountainhead of the true sect.

## Explanation

To paraphrase: Amida's compassion is so thorough going that its chief object is an individual in the worst-case situation of having only one moment left before dying. If salvation took longer than a moment, such a person could not be saved. Therefore *ichinen* salvation is indeed the main point of, and in it lies the distinctive character of, Amida's salvation.

[*You Were Born for a Reason*, pg. 186]

The end nigh: Approaching death.

How could one... ride on the Primal Vow?: How could one be saved through Amida's Vow?

The vital linchpin and fountainhead of the true sect: The most essential characteristic of Amida's Vow.

Ichinen: The utmost speed of the onset of faith.

## Question 8

What is “*Gokusoku ennyu no shinsen*”?

## Answer(s) 8

- *Gokusoku* means the swiftness of an *ichinen*.
- *Ennyu* means wholly receiving the wisdom of Buddha and gaining perfect, flawless satisfaction.
- *Shinsen* means the true teachings.

## Explanation

These words describe Amida's “*ichinen* salvation.” Master Shinran wrote that salvation is “*Gokusoku ennyu*.” “*Gokusoku*” means “exceedingly swift” and “*ennyu*” means “perfect, without flaw.” Salvation that required time to take effect could hardly be “exceedingly swift,” and salvation that was unfinished could hardly be “perfect, without flaw.”

Shinran wrote that salvation is *Gokusoku ennyu*, where *Gokusoku* means “exceedingly swift” and *ennyu*, “perfect, without flaw.” Salvation that required time to take effect

could hardly be “exceedingly swift,” and salvation that was unfinished could hardly be “perfect, without flaw.”

[*You Were Born for a Reason*, pg. 185]

(Please refer to *You Were Born for a Reason* Part 2 Chapter 27.)

There is a false teaching that we are saved gradually. The teaching of “*Gokusoku ennyu*” destroys this error.



### Question 9

We can have the source of our suffering severed and be saved in an *ichinen*. Write out the words of Master Kakunyo in which he clarified this, and give the source too.

### Answer(s) 9

Even though this body (human existence), made of five aggregates, which has been transmigrating in the *saha* world of birth-and-death, remains alive, the delusion of self-power (root cause of suffering) that has bound us to the endless wheel of birth-and-death is destroyed in the moment (*ichinen*) when Amida grants us diamond faith, and we believe and follow the words of Buddha taught faithfully by the masters. This alone is called ‘casting aside self-power and entering other-power’ and ‘gaining immediate salvation.’

— *Notes Rectifying Heresy*

## Explanation

“While the body is still alive, the ‘delusion of self-power’, which has made us suffer since the distant past, dies in the *ichinen* of having received other-power faith. At that point, we are made firmly aware that Amida’s Vow is true; this is to have ‘heard Buddhism’. It is also called ‘casting aside self-power and entering other-power’ and ‘attaining salvation’.”

**This body (human existence), made of five aggregates, which has been transmigrating in the *saha* world of birth-and-death:** The physical body. The five aggregates are the five factors that comprise us.

**Has bound us to the endless wheel of birth-and-death:** Is the source of our suffering since the distant past.

**The delusion of self-power (root cause of suffering):** The self-power mind; the doubting mind; darkness of no light.

**The moment (*ichinen*) when Amida grants us diamond faith:** The *ichinen* when one is bestowed other-power faith.

**The words of Buddha taught faithfully by the masters:** The teachings of true Buddhist masters.



## Question 10

In the instant of receiving “Namu Amida Butsu,” our eternal delusion is destroyed. Write the words of Master Rennyo in which he taught this. Give the source too.

## Answer(s) 10

The great virtue of “Namu Amida Butsu” is transferred in an *ichinen* to us sentient beings when we rely on Amida. Therefore the “karmic hindrance of the three worlds of the past, present and future” is instantly extinguished, and we are settled at the level of *shōjō* (true settlement), the stage of near-perfect enlightenment.

— *The Letters*

## Explanation

“The root cause of delusion, which has made us suffer throughout the three worlds of the past, present, and future, is severed in the instant when we receive the great virtue of Namu Amida Butsu from Amida. At the same time, we are made to leap to the 51<sup>st</sup> level of enlightenment and thus are saved into the level of true settlement—absolute happiness.”

**To us sentient beings when we rely on Amida:** To us human beings when we believe in Amida.

**The karmic hindrance of the three worlds:** The source of suffering throughout the three worlds.

**In an *ichinen*:** In an instant.

**The level of true settlement, the stage of near-perfect enlightenment:** The 51<sup>st</sup> level of enlightenment out of 52—one level away from a buddha’s enlightenment. The great satisfaction of having one’s birth in the Pure Land settled.

Salvation by Amida Buddha does not happen “gradually,” but in the fastest possible space of time: an *ichinen*. This is expressed in the words, “The karmic hindrance of the three worlds... is instantly extinguished.”



## Question 11

Master Tan-luan used a metaphor to describe the swiftness of the *ichinen* of salvation by Amida Buddha. Write out the words in which he did so, and give the source too.

## Answer(s) 11

If light were to enter a room that had been dark for millennia, it would be lit up instantly — it is just like this. By no means did the light take millennia to dispel the darkness.

— Commentary on ‘*Discourse on the Pure Land*’

## Explanation

“The swiftness of salvation by Amida can be expressed as follows: If light enters a room that has been dark for thousands of years, in an instant it becomes bright. This of course does not mean that removing the darkness from the room took thousands of years; although the ‘darkness of no light’ had caused one to be lost in transmigration since the beginningless past, it didn’t take any time at all for it to be cleared up. In the *ichinen* of salvation by Amida, this darkness is completely dispelled.”

### A room that had been dark for millennia:

A metaphor for the ‘darkness of no light’, which is the source of suffering that has kept us transmigrating since the beginningless past.

### Instantly: In an *ichinen*.

The consummate swiftness of *ichinen* salvation is expressed figuratively in this old Buddhist saying:

“Light comes and darkness goes. Darkness goes and light comes.” Which happens first? Does the light first come and the darkness then leave, or does the darkness first vanish and the light shine afterward? Neither statement is right, or rather both are-but human tongue and pen cannot comprehend the two simultaneously.

— *You Were Born for a Reason*, Chapter 27



## Question 14

The “acquisition of faith” (*shinjin ketsujō*) means dying once. Write the words of Master Shinran and Master Kakunyo in which they taught this, and give the sources too.

## Answer(s) 14

Revelation of the Primal Vow means the end of life in the former-moment. (in the former-moment).

— *Gutoku's Notes*

The onset of the salvation of *ichinen* in this life through the words of a true Buddhist master is the end, the final passing, of illusion.

— *Notes on Steadfast Holding*

Having believed and followed the words of a true Buddhist master, one encounters Amida's *ichinen* salvation while alive. This moment means the end, the final passing, of illusion.

## Explanation

Quote from *Gutoku's Notes*

“The moment when the veracity of Amida's Vow is clearly revealed is the moment when one's life of delusion dies.”



## Revelation of the Primal Vow

To have one's doubts in Amida's Vow completely cleared up; to have encountered the Vow of Amida and had its truth revealed. The settlement of faith.

The end of life in the former-moment: "Life in the former-moment" is the life of delusion that has been transmigrating for countless kalpas. This refers to the deluded self-power mind, or the mind of darkness. The "end of life" refers to the death of this life of delusion.

## Quote from *Notes on Steadfast Holding*

"When, in this life, one attains Amida's *ichinen* salvation, having followed the teachings of the true masters, that means the end of this life; the funeral of the mind."

## Through the words of a true Buddhist master:

Having believed and followed the teachings of a true Buddhist master.

## The final passing: The death of the mind

"Encountering Amida's *ichinen* salvation" refers to the moment when the mind of brightness towards the afterlife is born. Simultaneously, the mind of darkness towards the afterlife dies; this is expressed as "the end, the final passing, of illusion." At the very moment when *ichinen* salva-

tion occurs, the mind of illusion dies completely.

— *You Were Born for a Reason*, Part 2 Chapter 27



### Question 17

Master Shinran professed that he had attained true salvation, which is difficult to attain even in many lifetimes or myriad aeons. Write the words in which he said so, and give the source.

### Answer(s) 17

Ah, how hard it is, even in many lifetimes, to encounter the strong power of Amida's Vow! How hard it is, even in myriad aeons, to obtain faith that is true and real! Anyone blessed with this faith cannot help but rejoice at the benevolent workings [of Amida] since the distant past that have brought it into being. Had I remained covered by the net of doubt in this life as well, I should have had to keep wandering, lost, through vast aeons. How genuine, the true words that embrace us and never forsake us, the absolute truth that is peerless and transcendent! Listen and believe without hesitation or delay.

— *Teaching, Practice, Faith, Enlightenment*, Preface

## Explanation

“Ah... how wonderful! The life of joy that I, Shinran, sought for so long, through many lives and aeons, is now mine! This is absolutely due to Amida’s great saving power that embraces all. I am overwhelmed with deepest gratitude. If this life too had ended without my dark mind clearing, for endless ages to come I should have gone on suffering. I must hurry to tell everyone this truth, let them know that this vast, shoreless world of the mind exists!”

Ah: A wordless expression of surprise and joy at having been saved and embraced by Amida Buddha.

Many lifetimes: Innumerable repetitions of the cycle of birth and death in the realms of delusion since the distant past.

Faith that is true and real: True faith; other-power faith. Absolute happiness.

Myriad aeons: A mind-bendingly long time.

Rejoice at the benevolent workings [of Amida] since the distant past: Amida Buddha has been toiling since the distant past to save and embrace all people into absolute happiness. When we encounter Amida’s salvation, we “cannot help but rejoice” at all he has done to make it happen.

The net of doubt: The mind that doubts in Amida Buddha's Vow. Also known as the doubting mind, or the darkness of no light.

Had I remained covered: If Master Shinran's doubting mind had not been cleared up.

I should have had to keep wandering, lost, through vast aeons: Master Shinran was certain to have had to keep suffering into the eternal future.

How genuine!: It is true! It is not a lie!

The true words [of Amida] that embrace us and never forsake us: Amida Buddha's Vow, in which he promised to grant us the benefit of being held fast, never to be forsaken.

The absolute truth that is peerless and transcendent: Amida Buddha's Primal Vow; the extraordinary truth that is beyond our understanding.

Listen and believe without hesitation or delay: "Listen and believe" means listening to Amida's Vow. "Without hesitation or delay" means not getting distracted. Master Shinran was urging us to listen to Buddhism with all seriousness, right away and without dawdling.

Both the purpose of our having been born human beings and the purpose of listening to Buddhism is to encounter Amida's salvation, which we have been unable to encounter even in many lifetimes, and to attain true faith, which is difficult to encounter even in myriad aeons.

\*Please refer to *You Were Born for a Reason*,  
Part 2 Chapter 8 page 85.



### **Question 20**

The Light of Amida Buddha can be divided into three, and it can also be divided into two. List these workings in both ways.

### **Answer(s) 20**

1. The Nurturing Light—Before salvation—The All-Pervading Light
  2. The Darkness-Breaking Light—At the moment of salvation
  3. The Protecting Light—After salvation
- 2 and 3 — The Grasping and Embracing Light

### **Explanation**

1. The Nurturing Light  
In order to save all sentient beings into absolute happiness, Amida Buddha is constantly working on our

minds. Amida Buddha's Light is nurturing and cultivating all people at all times. Since all people are being illuminated by this light without exception, it is also called the 'All-Pervading Light'.

The Nurturing Light = The All-Pervading Light

2. The Darkness-Breaking Light

The power that eliminates one's darkness of mind in a split-second.

3. The Protecting Light

This Light embraces and protects those whose darkness of no light is eliminated until the moment of death.

Together, the 'Darkness-Breaking Light' and the 'Protecting Light' are called the 'Grasping and Embracing Light'.

The 'Darkness-Breaking Light' + The 'Protecting Light' = The 'Grasping and Embracing Light'



## Question 22

Write the difference between the “*ichinen* of faith” and the “*ichinen* of the nembutsu”.

## Answer(s) 22

The “*ichinen* of faith” comes before the “*ichinen* of the nembutsu”. If we compared them to hitting your head against a pillar, we can explain them as follows.

When you hit your head against a pillar, you feel pain: This is the “*ichinen* of faith”.

Then you shout “Ouch!”: This is the “*ichinen* of the nembutsu”.

The *ichinen* of faith is when you become one with Amida Buddha’s wisdom and your mind of darkness has been dispelled.

The *ichinen* of the nembutsu is the nembutsu you recite for the first time after you have become one with Amida Buddha’s wisdom.

## Explanation

Amida’s salvation is completed when his wisdom becomes one with us. It happens before the “*ichinen* of the nembutsu” — the first nembutsu, which we recite after salvation.

The “*ichinen* of faith” is first and the “*ichinen* of the nembutsu” follows.

Therefore, Master Shinran kept teaching that the “*ichinen* of faith” is the most important point of Amida’s salvation.

When does Amida’s salvation take place? In chapter one of

*Lamenting the Deviations*, it is written, “When you believe this, a mind intent on saying the nembutsu arises within you, and in that instant you receive the benefit of being held fast, never to be forsaken.” The passage tells us plainly that salvation happens in a split second of *ichinen* in this life (*ichinen* of faith).

Thus it is clear that we are granted absolute happiness (we are held fast by Amida, never to be forsaken) before we recite the nembutsu.



### **Question 23**

Write out Section I of *Lamenting the Deviations*.

### **Answer(s) 23**

Saved through the wonder of Amida’s Vow, I am certain to achieve birth in the Pure Land”: When you believe this, a mind intent on saying the nembutsu arises within you, and in that instant you receive the benefit of being held fast, never to be forsaken. You should know that Amida’s Primal Vow does not discriminate between young and old or good and evil; the sole requirement is faith. For the Vow of Amida exists to save sentient beings who are deeply stained with evil and inflamed with passions. Accordingly, once one believes in the Primal Vow, no other good is needed,



since there can be no greater good than the nembutsu. Nor is there any need to fear evil, since no evil can block the working of Amida's Primal Vow. These were his words.

## **Explanation**

“When, being saved by the inconceivable power of Amida Buddha's Vow, your birth in Amida's Pure Land is assured beyond any doubt and the desire to say the nembutsu erupts within you, in that instant you are clasped fast by Amida, never to be abandoned, thus entering into absolute happiness. Amida's salvation makes no distinction whatever between young and old or good and evil. Know that faith alone is essential—faith in the truth of the Vow with no possibility of doubt. How is it possible that even an evil person can be saved merely through faith in the Vow? This is the true value of Amida's Primal Vow: it was established precisely to save the monstrous sinner whose blind passions rage and whose sins weigh heavy. It follows that anyone saved by Amida's Vow has no need to do good deeds for the sake of their salvation, because no greater good exists than the nembutsu bestowed on us by Amida. Also, whatever evil such a person may commit, he is free from concern or fear, because no evil can hinder salvation by Amida's Vow. This is what the master said.”

All eighteen sections of *Lamenting the Deviations* are summarized in Section I.

## Reference

*Unlocking Tannisho* (Part 1 Chapter 1, Part 2 Chapters 1-4)

*You Were Born for a Reason* (Part 2 Chapter 24)

## Question 25

Write the reason why Buddhism uses the image of lotus flowers, as well as the five virtues of lotus flowers.

## Answer(s) 25

The five virtues represent true faith.

1. The virtue of being untainted despite being in mud
2. The virtue of having one flower on one stalk
3. The virtue of simultaneous flowering and bearing of fruit
4. The virtue of one flower bearing many fruits
5. The virtue of being hollow on the inside and upright on the outside

## Explanation

The five special characteristics of lotus flowers represent the special characteristics of other-power faith.

1. The virtue of being untainted despite being in mud:  
Lotus flowers bloom in muddy swamp water, yet they are not dirtied at all by this mud; they are pure.

This describes how other-power faith blooms in the minds of evil people who are full of worldly passions like greed, anger, and envy, and that despite the fact that these passions do not change at all even after salvation, they are not a hindrance to birth in the Pure Land.

2. The virtue of having one flower on one stalk:

Like tulips and other such flowers, lotus flowers bloom with one flower to one stem.

This describes how true faith is something that each individual should seek and attain; no-one can seek or attain true faith in another person's stead. Just as no-one can eat instead of us, and no-one can go to the toilet instead of us, the matter of the afterlife is something that each of us has to have resolved on an individual basis.

3. The virtue of simultaneous flowering and bearing of fruit:

Lotus flowers do not open gradually, but in an instant. Furthermore, the flower bears fruit at the same time as it opens.

This describes how true faith blooms in a split-second of *ichinen*, and at the same time, we enter the stage of the truly settled (gain absolute happiness).

4. The virtue of one flower bearing many fruits:

Just one lotus flower bears a lot of fruit.

This describes how when one attains true faith, one receives countless kinds of happiness (benefits) in this present life.

5. The virtue of being hollow on the inside and upright on the outside:

This is a special characteristic of the lotus flower's stem. What is inside the stem is air, which on first glance may make it appear weak, yet it is actually strong. The stem also stands up completely straight. When people in general hear about other-power faith, they think it sounds weak, but it is actually the opposite. One who has attained other-power faith is able to walk the path of truth steadfastly and resolutely.

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## Question 26

Before Master Shinran, it was commonly believed that “*shishin eko*” in Sakyamuni’s *Explanation of the Vow* meant that we transfer the mind of truth to Amida, but Master Shinran clarified that it is Amida Buddha who grants a mind of truth to us with a genuine mind. Why did Master Shinran come to this conclusion? Write two quotes from the *sūtras* that support what he taught.

## Answer(s) 26

In the *Hymn Affirming the Vows* in the first part of the *Larger Sūtra of Infinite Life*, it says,

“Over countless kalpas I have vowed to become one who bestows vast merit and thereby saves all those who are poor and afflicted. If I cannot fulfill my vow I will not attain true buddhahood.”

It also says,

“I have opened the storehouse of truth for all beings, to distribute widely the treasure of merit.”

## Explanation

Up until Master Shinran began conveying true Buddhism, “*shishin eko*” in Sakyamuni’s *Explanation of the Vow* was commonly interpreted to mean that one polishes one’s mind so that it becomes a mind of truth and one offers this sincere mind to Amida Buddha. However, Master Shinran gave a different interpretation: that it is Amida Buddha who grants the mind of truth to us with a genuine mind. This was completely the opposite of what had been taught until then.

This is certainly a uniquely perceptive interpretation, yet it is not something that Master Shinran simply thought up himself. His assertion is well-grounded in the words of Amida’s Hymn Affirming the Vows.

- Hymn Affirming the Vows

Amida Buddha promised that he would save all sentient beings by all means, but he knew that they would doubt in this Vow. In order to dispel their doubts, he repeated his promise again in this hymn

“Over countless kalpas I have vowed to become one who bestows vast merit and thereby saves all those who are poor and afflicted. If I cannot fulfill my vow I will not attain true buddhahood.”

“I (Amida) will be the donor of the great virtue that was created through practices carried out over a mind-bendingly long time. By granting the great virtue of Namu Amida Butsu, I will save all beings afflicted with suffering into absolute happiness. If I cannot save them, I will do away with my life.”

Paraphrase from Why Do We Live 2:

From the distant past, I have vowed to bestow the great merit of Namu Amida Butsu and save those who are suffering into absolute happiness.

Countless kalpas: A mind-bendingly long time

One who bestows vast merit: One who gives great virtue.

Those who are poor and afflicted:

People in suffering and distress. The poverty of such beings is not to do with money or things, but rather a ‘poverty of the heart’. All human beings completely lack a mind of truth and are constantly afflicted by fear and suffering.

“I have opened the storehouse of truth for all beings...”

“For the sake of all people, I will grant them the great virtue of ‘Namu Amida Butsu’ with all sincerity.”

All beings: The sentient beings of the ten directions; the poor and the afflicted.

The storehouse of truth: The true teachings.

Treasure of merit: The supreme virtue that is Namu Amida Butsu.

- In the Hymn Affirming the Vows, Amida Buddha was saying, “Without fail, I will grant the treasures of merit (Namu Amida Butsu) to all human beings afflicted with suffering.”

As is clear from this hymn, the granting is done by Amida; he promised to give the great virtue of the Name. Therefore, Master Shinran taught that one should read “*shishin eko*” in Sakyamuni’s Explanation as meaning that Amida

Buddha grants the mind of truth to us with his genuine mind, and used the highest honorific language to make this clear.

Master Shinran clarified Amida's absolutely other-power salvation, saying, "Amida Buddha, with his genuine mind, gives us the great virtue of Namu Amida Butsu."



### Question 27

What is the meaning of 'other-power' in Buddhism?  
Give the source too.

### Answer 27

It refers only to the Vow-power of Amida Buddha.

'Other-power' means Amida Buddha's Vow-power.

— *Teaching, Practice, Faith, Enlightenment,*  
Chapter on Practice

### Explanation

The term 'other-power' may sound as if it is referring to 'the power of other people', but in Buddhism, it is only used to refer to Amida Buddha's Vow-power. It is never used to mean 'the power of other people.'





## Question 28

What is the meaning of *jinen* in Pure Land Shin Buddhism?  
Also, give a quote from a scripture along with its source.

## Answer(s) 28

*Jinen* means other-power, buddha-power, the Vow-power of Amida Buddha.

*jinen Sokuji nyu hitsujō*

By the power of Amida Buddha, one immediately (in an *ichinen* ) enters the “definitely settled” (true settlement = absolute happiness)

— *Hymn of True Faith*

## Explanation

*Jinen* is often translated as “spontaneously” or “naturally” and interpreted to mean “before one knows it,” but this is mistaken.

What *jinen* refers to is the Vow-power of Amida Buddha, which destroys the mind of darkness—the source of all humanity’s suffering—and saves us into absolute happiness.

*Sokuji* (immediately) refers to an *ichinen*, and *hitsujō* (definitely settled) means absolute happiness, so this quote means, “Through the power of Amida Buddha, one is saved into absolute happiness in an *ichinen*.” If *jinen* meant “be-

fore one knows it,” *jinen sokuji* would mean, “Before one knows it, in a split-second of *ichinen*,” which is complete nonsense.

*Ichinen*: The shortest possible unit of time, even shorter than a nanosecond



## Question 29

Amida Buddha made his Vow with those who are suffering as his true target. Write out the hymn in which Master Shinran taught this, and give the source too.

## Answer(s) 29

When I reflect on the establishment of the Vow,  
I find that Amida, unable to abandon sentient beings to  
their pain,  
completed the Name of great compassion  
with the sole purpose of bestowing it on them.

— *Hymns on the Three Ages*

## Explanation

“Why did Amida make his Vow and the Name (*myōgō*; Namu Amida Butsu)? That was because in his great compassion, Amida could not bear to abandon us beings to our suffering and torment, and he saw with all clarity that the

only way to save all sentient beings of the ten directions is to grant them great virtue. Thus he made the Name, Namu Amida Butsu.”

Daihishin = The mind of great compassion = Amida Buddha’s great compassion = The Name (Namu Amida Butsu)



### Question 30

When one is saved by Amida Buddha, one becomes a bodhisattva of true settlement. Give two or more quotes that teach this. Write the sources too.

### Answer(s) 30

Revelation of the Primal Vow means the end of life in the former-moment. Simultaneously, one enters the number of the truly settled. Gaining immediate salvation means immediate birth in the latter-moment. In that instant, one is truly settled in becoming a buddha. Such a person is also called “a bodhisattva truly settled in attaining buddhahood.”

— *Gutoku’s Notes*

This is also known as attaining the level of true settlement in a split second of *ichinen*.

— *The Letters*

## Explanation

Quote from *Gutoku's Notes*

To paraphrase: “When the truth of Amida’s Vow is revealed, one’s life of illusion ends and one enters the stage of true settlement. ‘Gaining immediate salvation’ means that when one’s life of illusion ends, simultaneously, one is born into the world of absolute happiness; one becomes a bodhisattva of true settlement in a split second of *ichinen*.”

Revelation of the Primal Vow:

The truth of Amida’s Vow is revealed and all doubt toward the Vow is cleared up.

The end of life in the former-moment (zennen *myōjū*):

“Zennen” has two meanings: one, the former-moment; two, the former-life. The former-life is the life of illusion that has been transmigrating for untold aeons. “*Myōjū*” means death. Therefore, “zennen *myōjū*” also means “the former-life dies.”

In that instant, one is truly settled in becoming a buddha:

We attain absolute happiness in a split second of *ichinen*.

Gaining immediate salvation:

This refers to the following words of Sakyamuni Buddha in his *Explanation of the Vow*: “simultaneously they will attain salvation.”

Immediate birth in the latter-moment (*gonen sokushō*):

“Gonen” has two meanings: one, the latter-moment; two, the latter-life. The latter-life is absolute happiness. “*Sokushō*” means to be born in a split second of *ichinen*. Therefore, “*gonen sokushō*” also means to be born into absolute happiness in a split second of *ichinen*.

In that instant: In the split second of *ichinen*.

Truly settled in becoming a buddha (*hitsujo*):

The state of being certain to be able to become a buddha. Also expressed as the “stage of true settlement” or the “number of the truly settled” (*shōjōju*)

Here, Master Shinran clarified that the meaning of “simultaneously they will attain salvation” (*sokutoku ōjō*) in Sakyamuni Buddha’s *Explanation of the Vow* is salvation without loss of the body in a split second of *ichinen* in this life. “Simultaneously they will attain salvation” is the explanation of “If I cannot enable all to be born” in Amida’s Vow. Therefore, what Master Shinran taught through these words from *Gutoku’s Notes* was this: “Amida Buddha pledged in his Vow to make us be born without fail, staking his very life on this promise. He pledged to make us to be born into a world of *shingyō* (absolute peace and joy; true settlement) in this life, which is salvation without loss of the body.”

Quote from *The Letters* (The Essence of Master Shinran's Lifetime Teaching)

To paraphrase: “Amida’s salvation is also known as attaining the level of true settlement in a split second of *ichinen*.”

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### Question 31

Give two alternate expressions for “the stage of true settlement” (*shōjō*).

### Answer(s) 31

near-perfect enlightenment  
the rank of succession

### Explanation

True settlement (*shōjō*): The 51<sup>st</sup> among the 52 levels of enlightenment. One who will be a buddha without fail.

Near-perfect enlightenment: The 51<sup>st</sup> among the 52 levels of enlightenment.

The rank of succession: The 51<sup>st</sup> among the 52 levels of enlightenment.

## Question 32

What is the meaning of *genshō futai*? Give a quote and source.

## Answer(s) 32

*Genshō futai* means to attain the level of non-regressive true settlement in this life. It means to be granted perfect salvation in this life.

I know in truth. The great bodhisattva Maitreya has attained the diamond faith of enlightenment, the highest spiritual stage possible for a bodhisattva, and will indeed enter into supreme enlightenment beneath the dragon-flower tree at the dawn of the three assemblies. As all those saved by Amida have attained the diamond faith bestowed by him, at the moment of death each one will be reborn in the Pure Land of Amida and become a buddha.

— *Teaching, Practice, Faith, Enlightenment*

## Explanation

To paraphrase: “It is true! I, Shinran, am now on a par with the great bodhisattva Maitreya, Buddha of the future. This is due solely to the wondrous power of Amida’s Vow. Not only that, while Maitreya will be unable to attain buddhahood for 5.67 billion years to come, I, Shinran, will attain it even as this life ends. Could any happiness be greater than this?”

[For reference: *You Were Born for a Reason* page 147]

I know in truth: I have been made clearly aware.

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### Question 33

It is said that even Maitreya Bodhisattva will be unable to attain buddhahood for 5.67 billion years to come. However, one who has gained true faith will attain the enlightenment of a buddha immediately upon death. Write out the hymn of Master Shinran in which he taught this, and give the source too

### Answer(s) 33

Miroku Bodhisattva will take  
5.67 billion years to become a buddha.  
The one who gains true faith now  
will attain enlightenment upon death.

— *Hymns of the Three Ages*

### Explanation

5.67 billion years will pass  
Before Maitreya Bodhisattva attains buddhahood.  
But the one who gains true faith now  
will attain a buddha's enlightenment at the time of death.



“It will take Maitreya Bodhisattva 5.67 billion years to attain a buddha’s enlightenment, yet one who has been saved by Amida in the now will attain it upon dying, the moment this life ends.”

True faith: Other-power faith. Salvation by Amida.



### Question 35

The Japanese word translated as “attaining” in “attaining true faith” is *Gyakutoku* (獲得). *Gyaku* (獲) and *toku* (得) have two different meanings. What are those meanings?

### Answer(s) 35

*Gyaku* (獲) means to have received the benefit of the present life.

*Toku* (得) means to receive the benefit of the afterlife.

### Explanation

The benefit of the present life: True settlement.

The benefit of the afterlife: Birth in the Pure Land.

We are granted two things by Amida Buddha: one in this life, and one after we die. This is expressed through the two Chinese characters of *Gyakutoku* (獲得).

### Question 36

What is the meaning of *ōjō* (往生) taught in Buddhism?  
Give two meanings of the word.

### Answer(s) 36

To be made to live (in absolute happiness)  
To go and be born (in Amida's Pure Land)

### Explanation

**To be made to live (in absolute happiness):** A life of ceaseless suffering transforms into a life of absolute happiness. In Buddhism, this is called 'salvation without loss of the body'. It is the *ōjō* (salvation) of the present.

**To go and be born (in Amida's Pure Land):** One goes to Amida Buddha's Pure Land of Utmost Bliss at the moment of death and attains the same buddha's enlightenment as Amida. In Buddhism, this is called 'salvation with loss of the body'. It is the '*ōjō*' (salvation) of the afterlife.

In this way, there are two types of *ōjō* (salvation): 1. salvation in the present; 2. salvation after death. Only those who have attained *ōjō* in the present will be granted *ōjō* after death. For this reason, Master Shinran urged us to hurry

to achieve *ōjō* of the present (salvation without loss of the body).



### Question 37

Amida's salvation occurs twice, once in this world and once at the moment of death. This is called "two benefits in the present and future". Write the words of Master Shinran and Master Rennyo in which they taught that Amida's salvation occurs twice — in this life and after death.

### Answer(s) 37

Those who have become the truly settled will achieve great Nirvana.

— The *Hymn of True Faith*

Those who are saved by Amida in a split second [*ichinen* ] enter *shōjōju*. This is salvation in this life. *Metsudo* means going to the Pure Land and attaining the same level of enlightenment as Amida Buddha. This is salvation after death. Accordingly, Amida's salvation must be understood to confer two benefits.

— The *Letters*

## Explanation

**Two benefits in the present and future:** Two benefits in this life and after death. “Benefit” refers to Amida’s salvation, or happiness. Amida’s salvation occurs both in the present and after death. This is called “two benefits in the present and future”.

### **Quote from *The Hymn of True Faith***

“Those who have become the truly settled will achieve great Nirvana.”

**To paraphrase:** Those who are saved into absolute happiness in this life will achieve the same level of enlightenment as Amida Buddha after death.

**Those who have become the truly settled:** Benefit in this life.

**Achieve great Nirvana:** To attain the same enlightenment as Amida. Benefit after death.

### **Quote from *The Letters*:**

In this world we are saved to the same level as Maitreya Bodhisattva (*shōjōju*; the stage of the truly settled), and at the moment of death we attain supreme enlightenment in Amida’s Pure Land. Therefore, Amida’s salvation occurs twice.

[Please refer to *You Were Born for a Reason* pg. 148]

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### **Question 39**

Master Shinran's teaching of 'salvation by faith alone' causes shockwaves in the sphere of Buddhism. What exactly does 'salvation by faith alone' mean?

### **Answer(s) 39**

Through believing alone, one is able to leap straight up to the 51<sup>st</sup> level of enlightenment.

### **Explanation**

Salvation by faith alone: To jump to the 51<sup>st</sup> stage of enlightenment through faith alone.

'Faith' in 'salvation by faith alone' means other-power faith; it does not refer to any other kind of faith. (Other-power faith is faith granted by Amida Buddha.)

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### **Question 40**

Give three or more quotes in which Master Shinran declared that salvation by Amida Buddha happens solely through other-power faith. Write the sources, too.

## Answer(s) 40

Swift entrance into the Land of Utmost Bliss (Pure Land) is made possible through faith alone.

—*Hymn of True Faith*

The true cause of Nirvana is faith alone.

— “on Faith,” in *Teaching, Practice, Faith, Enlightenment*

The cause of anu-bodhi (supreme perfect enlightenment) is true faith bestowed by Amida.

— *Notes on the Inscriptions on Sacred Scrolls*

## Explanation

Quote from *Hymn of True Faith*

In order to go to the Pure Land of Amida, faith is essential.

Swift: At the moment of death.

The Land of Utmost Bliss: Amida Buddha's Pure Land.

Quote from *Teaching Practice Faith Enlightenment*

“Faith, and nothing else, is the true cause of Nirvana.”: The cause of birth in the Pure Land of Amida is faith alone.

Quote from *Notes on the Inscriptions on Sacred Scrolls*

The true cause of attaining a buddha's enlightenment is the true faith that is granted by Amida Buddha.

The same level of enlightenment as Amida Buddha.

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### Question 42

It is made clear whether or not one can go to the Land of Utmost Bliss (the Pure Land) in an *ichinen* in this present life. Write out the words of Master Kakunyo in which he taught this, and give the source too.

### Answer(s) 42

Whether one can go to the Pure Land or not is determined in the *ichinen* of the present life. If one does not gain settlement of birth in this present life, one will be unable to go to the Pure Land.

— *Notes on Steadfast Holding*

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### Question 43

What is the meaning of *heizei gōjō*?

### Answer(s) 43

*Heizei* means ‘the present life’, *gō* means ‘the great undertaking of life’, and *jō* means ‘achievement’, so *heizei gōjō* means achieving life’s purpose (salvation) now, in this life.

## Explanation

Amida Buddha's Primal Vow is a promise to save us into the absolute happiness of having our births settled in this present life, and Master Shinran spent his whole life clarifying this. His teaching clarifying that Amida saves us in this life is called *heizei gōjō*.

The great undertaking of life: To become one whose birth in the Pure Land after death is settled.



## Question 44

Master Shinran clarified that Amida Buddha's 18<sup>th</sup> Vow is a promise to save people while alive. Write the hymn in which he said so, and give the source.

## Answer(s) 44

Because of the Vow that Amida Buddha pledged his life for, The moment of faith of *shingyō* (absolute happiness) will surely come.

Those who attain Great Joy in a split second of *ichinen*  
Will unfailingly have their birth [in the Pure Land] settled.



## Explanation

“Amida Buddha staked his life on his promise to ‘make them be born without fail,’ so the time will definitely come when one will be born into faith of *shingyō* (absolute happiness). Those who have been saved into absolute happiness in a split-second of *ichinen* gain certainty of being born into the Pure Land upon death.”

The Vow that Amida Buddha pledged his life for: In the 18<sup>th</sup> Vow, in which Amida Buddha pledged his true intention, he promised, “If they are not born, may I not attain supreme Enlightenment.” Staking his life on the single word “if” Amida Buddha promised to “make them be born without fail.”

Surely: Without fail.

Attain Great Joy in a split second of *ichinen*: To experience Great Joy at having attained the settlement of birth in a split second of *ichinen*.



## Question 49

Write the words of Master Rennyo in which he stated clearly that the “crucial matter of the afterlife” means suffering in hell for an eternity after death. Give the source too.

## Answer(s) 49

The [crucial matter of the] afterlife means falling for long ages into hell, so you must quickly take the crucial matter of the afterlife to heart, rely on Amida's Vow and be saved, settled in other-power faith.

— *Out of the Book Letter*

## Explanation

“The crucial matter of the afterlife means falling into hell in the future and suffering there for ages. You must hurry, keeping the resolution of this crucial matter in mind, and encounter Amida's salvation.”

The “crucial matter of the afterlife” is the great issue of what will happen to us after death. The meaning of the “crucial matter” is completely different before and after being saved by Amida Buddha. In the above words, Master Rennyo was speaking of the crucial matter of the afterlife of one who has not yet been saved by Amida.



## Question 50

Write out the words in which Master Rennyo taught the purpose of holding Buddhist lectures. Give the source too.

### **Answer(s) 50**

For what purpose are congregations held twice a month? It is so that followers may acquire faith that enables them to be born in the land of utmost bliss, and for no other purpose.

— *The Letters*

### **Explanation**

“Why are Buddhist lectures held twice a month? It is so that everyone can attain true faith and achieve their ultimate purpose, which is being born into Amida’s Pure Land. This is the one and only purpose of Buddhist lectures.”

Congregations: Buddhist lectures.