

## **Our Prayer Is Supposed to Start with “Thank You”**

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September 2016

Chairman Okano recently visited Hawaii and stayed here for two days. He told me about the Fall Grand Festival in Sacramento. They held the special tribute celebrations for Bishop Kishida and Mother Kiyota, so lots of people came and enjoyed the events.

Before the chairman came, it had been very windy. My wife noticed terrible squeaking noises in the backyard at night, and she couldn't sleep. The next day, I found out that the squeaking noises came from some tree branches in the backyard that were touching the roof. I decided to trim the tree before the chairman came. At first, I tried to trim just a little, but once I started it, I couldn't stop, and I ended up trimming a lot. I felt very exhausted after that.

Exhaustion can make us physically and mentally weak. We can easily get moody, irritated or grumpy. However, I heard that we should be grateful when we become exhausted. We should think like this: “I feel exhausted now because I was able to work hard today, which is a great thing.” If we are sick, we cannot work hard. We have to rest in bed.

The “Gedatsu Thought for the Month” is “It is good for you to feel grateful to everything and enjoy working.”

Rev. Aoyama in Japan writes an explanation about the thought for the month for Gedatsu HQ staff members every month. He summarized our founder's writing, including before and after the Gedatsu thought for the month. I am going to read an excerpt.

“As long as we live as humans, we must experience pain, sadness, hardship and sickness. Sometimes we have an accident, and we become unlucky. Sometimes it's sunny and sometimes it's rainy. We also have a windy day, snowy day or stormy day.

“Technically, we cannot avoid these things. So, when it's raining, don't think about sunny days. We can work or travel with rain gear. We should feel grateful to rain. Thanks to rain, irrigation works and we can use water well. Thanks to rain, crops grow. It is said that if we have flooding, we can expect a good harvest next year. We don't need to worry about anything. Snow is okay and windy is also okay. If we can accept everything as it is, we don't need to suffer or feel sad. Rain, wind and snow are the blessings from Mother Nature.

“Everyone, work hard. It is good for you to feel grateful to everything and enjoy working. You don't need to be afraid of death, either. If we were born, we are supposed to die.

“No one can avoid death. The only difference is life span. It is useless to dislike death but like living.

“If we can accept both living and death without thinking anything, we can overcome the fear of death. We cannot avoid death. Trying to avoid what we cannot avoid is the most painful thing. Our fate is in God's hands. It is better not to resist, but to accept our fate. Even though you or your loved ones are sick or poor, don't be bothered, but just do what you can do now. Your suffering and trouble will disappear. Your life will be full of joy and that is the main goal of Gedatsu teachings.”

That was from Rev. Aoyama's summary.

Our founder said, "Our prayer is supposed to start with 'thank you.'" When we go to church or temple, the first thing we are supposed to say is "thank you."

Even when we become sick or have an accident or our business goes bankrupt, the first thing we should do is say "thank you" to God and ancestors for guiding and protecting us until today.

If we study Gedatsu teachings, we should keep calm and accept everything with gratitude. "This is an important assignment that God and my ancestors gave me to cultivate my mind." That is not easy to practice but still we can try to do so in our daily life.

I would like to introduce one quote that our founder left: "Why does God allow hardships in our lives? That is because God knows that we can handle it, and we can grow through hardships."