

**21. Shakyamuni and Amida's Teachings**

The group discussed the relationship between Shakyamuni Buddha and Amida Buddha, and how Shakyamuni's teachings point towards Amida's Pure Land as a path to salvation. They examined how Shakyamuni's enlightenment and teachings represent different aspects of Buddhist wisdom. The discussion concluded with insights on Shinran's perspective on becoming a Buddha, and the group reflecting on the unshakable faith in Amida's Pure Land despite differing interpretations.

22. Shinran's Teachings on Simple Faith

The group discussed Shinran's Kyogoshinsho, a six-volume work that selects essential teachings from various sutras and Pure Land masters to enable ordinary people to attain enlightenment through simple faith in Amida Buddha. They explored Shinran's original contribution of emphasizing the single Nembutsu recitation with genuine faith, rather than requiring multiple repetitions. The discussion concluded with Gary expressing concern about the focus on numerical growth in Shin Buddhism, emphasizing instead the importance of helping others find liberation through understanding that they have already been saved by Amida Buddha.

23. Shinran's Humble Nature

The group discussed the life and legacy of Shinran Shonin, focusing on his humble nature and resistance to forming a following despite the later development of Jodo Shinshu. They explored how Shinran's teachings, particularly his emphasis on the sufficiency of one sincere Nembutsu, distinguished him from his mentor Honen. Gary provided background on Shinran's birth in 1173 to a prominent family in Kyoto, his early loss of parents, and his upbringing by his uncle before being brought to Mount Hie for Buddhist training.

24. Shinran's Ascetic Path

Gary discussed Shinran's early life and ordination as a monk at Mount Hiei, a renowned center for Buddhist teachings in Japan. He shared stories about the mountain monks' extreme ascetic practices, including the "eternal walking" ritual, which involves walking around temples for 9 days and 9 nights without food or water. Gary also mentioned his own experiences with lucid dreams after quitting smoking. Luke shared his understanding of how ultra-endurance activities can strip away worldly concerns and lead to spiritual clarity, though he noted that Jodo Shinshu doesn't see asceticism as a realistic path to enlightenment.