

## EDITORIAL: You Can Give a Good Lecture

Heard any good Gosho lectures lately? Given any good ones?

For our movement to progress in the United States, and for Buddhism to take root in people's lives, study must become a regular and meaningful part of our activities. Josei Toda, the second Soka Gakkai president, understood this point perhaps better than anyone.

When government authorities persecuted the Soka Gakkai in Japan during World War II, many of the organization's top leaders quit. Josei Toda, then general director, concluded that it was a lack of study that allowed those leaders to act cowardly in the face of government authority. They could not see the profound religious significance in the persecution that befell the Soka Gakkai.

After the war, Toda set out to rectify the situation by giving lecture after lecture on the Lotus Sutra and the Gosho. As depicted in *The Human Revolution*, Toda's profound understanding, clear logic, humor and deep understanding of human nature made his lectures the foundation of the Soka Gakkai's growth. The conviction in faith he passed on to his listeners remains a model for us today.

Recently, in line with his challenge that study be taken more seriously this year, General Director Zaitu urged joint territory leaders to take the lead in giving refreshing and inspirational lectures. Actually, this spirit to challenge giving quality lectures is something every person can benefit from, whether we've been practicing one year or 40. In the process we study harder than we usually do and pray more deeply that somehow what we say can reach even one person.

What's the key to a quality lecture? SGI President Ikeda often says that in public speaking, sincerity is everything. When we truly care about our listeners and have a pure-hearted spirit to help them understand, we can touch their hearts.

Ted Morino, the SGI-USA Study Department chief, has shared several practical pointers. When it comes to Gosho lectures, he says the speaker should make sure to understand the literal meaning of each line, the principle explained and the intent contained there. He also emphasizes the speaker's life-condition and the use of humor, real-life experiences and clear logic.

Bookstores, too, contain many public speaking aids. Books like *Speaking With Confidence*, *I Can See You Naked*, *ASAP: The Fastest Way to Make a Memorable Speech* and *The Toastmasters International Guide to Successful Speaking* all contain valuable tips that can be applied to our study movement.

Anyone can learn to be a powerful speaker. "The ability to get your message across clearly, confidently and persuasively is a skill which anyone can learn, practice and perfect," writes David Lewis in *Get Your Message Across*. And Terrence McCann, executive director of Toastmasters International, writes: "I honestly believe that every person who truly wants to become a confident and eloquent speaker can. Success or failure in this area depends solely on attitude."

Our movement cries out for people who can speak passionately about our profound movement. As President Ikeda has said: "We must speak out and say what needs to be said. Let's boldly proclaim the greatness of Buddhism and the righteousness of the SGI. That courage will slay the negative tendencies in our lives, as well as those in the lives of those with whom we speak."

With prayer and preparation, the next great lecture you attend could be the one you give.

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