

## Winning in Life: Sharing Buddhism

By JEFF FARR

Associate Editor

When the Soka Gakkai in Japan recently received many requests from new members to explain the word *shakubuku*, SGI President Ikeda said that it “essentially means speaking the truth.” More specifically, he said it means to speak the truth about this Buddhism, i.e., to share the teachings of the Daishonin’s Buddhism.

As new members, we may feel unqualified to “speak the truth” about this Buddhism. That sounds a little daunting, Buddhism being such a profound philosophy. But to share this Buddhism, we don’t need to know everything about it. We need only speak about what we have experienced ourselves and learned from the practice — the truth as we know it.

“New members already know the most important thing that non-members need to know, that the Gohonzon works, that they have actual proof,” says SGI-USA Vice General Director Greg Martin. “That’s ultimately the most important thing you can tell them. So even if all you can do is share a brief experience, it’s enough. Then all the other questions can be answered by a senior in faith, at a meeting or such. But new members know the most important thing.”

President Ikeda often encourages us to be ourselves in all things, “natural and unaffected,” as he puts it. This applies to sharing Buddhism, too. For instance, if someone we’re introducing asks a question we cannot answer, there’s no need to pretend we know more than we do. “When somebody asks me a question that I can’t answer — which happens often — first I honestly tell them I don’t know the answer,” Mr. Martin says. “Then I say, ‘Let’s you and I go get the answer’ — that way we learn together and I can help that person connect to a senior in faith. If he or she can’t go with me, I go get the answer and bring it back. But I always promise the person, because I believe there is an answer, that I will get the answer.”

When we make this kind of effort to help others understand Buddhism, we greatly increase our understanding. “Basically I’m a shy person,” says SGI Vice General Director Al Albergate. “So in going out and trying to meet people for the purpose of sharing this great life philosophy — and in the course of that talking about my personal experiences, opening my life to other people and talking to them about their lives, their dreams and their problems — certainly I experienced a real revolution in my life. I truly value those experiences because they helped me understand what true compassion is all about.”

The ultimate purpose of sharing Buddhism is, of course, a compassionate one — to help our friends become happy. Who can help our friends and families become happy besides us? “Just as all the different kinds of plants and trees come forth from the earth,” Nichiren Daishonin writes, “all the various teachings of the Buddha are spread by persons” (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 5, p. 31). Sharing this Buddhism is thus an awesome responsibility — but the first step is just speaking the truth as we know it.

**WT**

Title: Sharing Buddhism

Subject: World Tribune 05/23/97 n.3140 p.11 WT970523p11

Author: Jeff Farr

Keywords: Basics Life Practice Propagation Sharing Study Tribune Winning World