

**YOUTH STUDY FEBRUARY**  
**“STANDING ALONE LIVING FOR A MISSION”**  
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**This is the era of youth. Youth do not depend on anyone. Nor do they hang on someone else’s coattails. “I will open the way forward myself. I will advance kosen-rufu. I will see to it that the SGI is victorious.” This is the spirit of youth and the attitude of true successors who love and cherish the SGI.”** (*Faith into Action*, pp. 69–70)

**The lion goes alone on his thousand-mile journey. He seeks no companion. I too will go toward kosen-rufu. I’ll weather the storm, I’ll fight obstacles and demons, I’ll ride out the raging waves and I’ll forge on, no matter what. I’ll go, I’ll fight.”** (*Faith into Action*, p. 120)

At a recent conference I attended at the Florida Nature and Culture Center, a young woman said that she didn’t like the idea of standing alone. She wanted to be with people. But after attending the conference, she realized that standing alone didn’t mean being alone; it didn’t mean doing everything by oneself. It meant chanting to come up with a dream, a vision, and then committing oneself fully to accomplishing that vision. Standing alone meant, for her, to take full responsibility and not to depend on anyone else to achieve your dream. The stand-alone spirit means being so determined that you are willing to go through anything for your dream.

When I first started practicing, I also didn’t like the idea of standing alone. I didn’t like the way it sounded. Standing alone sounded so lonely. But as I developed in my practice, I realized that you never stand alone for long. Or, put another way, when you stand up for something meaningful, when you are absolutely determined to accomplish something of value and every nerve and fiber in your body is focused on your goal, the environment responds to your determination and rallies behind you. People come from seemingly nowhere to assist you.

The history of the SGI bears this out time and again. The first Soka Gakkai president Makiguchi died in prison alone, abandoned by most of the other Gakkai leaders and even by the priests of the religion he was devoted to protecting. But his integrity, his determination to dedicate his life to protect Nichiren Daishonin’s teachings inspired one other man, Josei Toda, to stand alone after World War II. By 1957, 750,000 people joined to support this cause. And today, more than 17 million of us have emerged in response to this stand alone spirit. In other words, when we stand alone, we attract others to us.

A person who stands alone is strong in themselves. They manifest their Buddha nature, their true potential. They begin polishing the gold inside that is unique to them and can never be taken away. Even if everyone is against them, they possess an integrity, an inner core, created by their own efforts, sometimes invisible and unappreciated, that makes them strong. They fear nothing because they are willing

to go through anything for their beliefs and vision.

By contrast, those who are always following others, never taking the initiative for their lives or dreams, end up very lonely. They are so focused on pleasing others or on trying to win friends that they completely lose sight of who they are. Often, they so desperately look outside themselves for validation or direction that they have no sense of mission for themselves. Lonely people can be lonely even in a crowd. Buddhism teaches us to never look outside ourselves for the Gohonzon or our Buddha nature.

In a sense, the stand-alone spirit is the essence of the mentor–disciple relationship. A mentor stands alone, and through their example and high life-condition developed from standing alone, others are inspired to do so as well. For example, Nichiren Daishonin would often describe his difficult conditions on Mount Minobu or Sado Island or his various persecutions, but he never complained. He always looked at the positive aspects of his situation, saying in essence that “This proves that I am a votary of the Lotus Sutra.” He even said in the midst of his direst persecutions that he was “the happiest man in Japan” because he viewed his difficulties as proof of his mission in life. Seeing how he persevered despite his difficulties inspired his followers to do the same.

People who stand alone can be trusted. But how do we start standing alone, especially if we feel that we are a wimp? We need to have to have a strong mentor. When we are inspired to stand up for a great dream, standing alone means making that dream our personal responsibility. When we take the same dream as the mentor, share the same heart and the same vision, then the relationship between mentor and disciple is stronger than any other bond because both mentor and disciple are willing to go through absolutely anything for their shared vision.

But this also means that we must know ourselves very well. We have to know and find out what our vision is. What is your dream? What is your “mission”? To learn this, we need a strong seeking spirit, and the strong desire to lead a correct and happy life. If we chant, eventually we will develop our instincts and inner strength to stand alone.

As President Ikeda wrote in *The Human Revolution*, “Do not be afraid of people’s scornful laughter or society’s criticism. When you stand up, have the self-confidence that you can conquer the world. Stand up with ability and conviction. Seek those who will appreciate you 100 generations hence. Do not count on being acknowledged in the present age. Seek the responsibility that is to be entrusted to you and carry it out.”

## **QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

Look at the quotes. How do you feel about this? Why is it especially important for youth to stand alone?

Does it make sense to you that by standing alone you actually attract people, and by

living to pursue popularity, you end up feeling lonely and alone? Have you ever seen examples of this?

In your life, how do you view standing alone versus “following the crowd”? Why do you think so many people seek popularity? In the long run, what do you think will help you to become happy, or to establish real fortune and joy in your life?

What does mission mean to you? Do you feel like you have a sense of mission? Do you think having a purpose is necessary? Why or why not?