

YOUNG DISCIPLES
THE BEAUTIFUL EXCHANGE OF DEDICATION AND TRUST
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Seize the Day will be running a monthly column titled “Young Disciples.” Each installment will be written with two ideas in mind: to explore the mentor–disciple relationship; and to discuss some of the many actions SGI President Ikeda has taken in the name of peace.

This column will be coordinated by SGI-USA High School leaders Jomo Thorne and Nobuko Kobayashi and SGI-USA Jr. High School leaders Shan Serafin and Bobbie Stemple. They will write their own perspectives, and from time to time, will support someone else, perhaps one of you, in creating material to be printed under the “Young Disciples” heading.

Sometimes in my weaker moods, I feel that following a mentor means giving up my control. Luckily these moods occur less and less as I see more and more actual proof of how rewarding the mentor–disciple relationship is.

What’s ironic is that my struggles with being a disciple stem from my misunderstandings of the role of the mentor. In short, I used to believe that the disciple is the one who is most humble and generous. Now, I feel it is the mentor who in fact demonstrates the greatest selflessness and devotion.

I feel one of the best ways to study the mentor–disciple relationship is to look at various exchanges between SGI President Ikeda and second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda. Repeatedly I am amazed at the selflessness on both sides and the action taken on both sides. I offer you an excerpt from the “Autumn Frost” chapter of *The Human Revolution* (volume 4), which I believe nicely illustrates this point.

Background: Although Toda is exhausted from the ordeal of negotiating with his creditors, he assures his disciple Daisaku that their relationship will continue unbroken. Young Ikeda, having just heard this, offers a poem expressing his own rock solid dedication.

As I serve my master
in the old mystic bond,
Unchanged will I myself remain
Though others may change.

[Toda responded,] “All right, I will compose a poem in response to yours. Have you any paper? Well, let me see...”

Toda picked up the pen, thought for a while and then began to write in bold strokes:

Oft I arose on fields of war
I’ll keep you as my sword
At my side always.

My own convictions intensify when I think of the extreme trust Toda placed in young Ikeda. Toda often used metaphors of battle to discuss the struggle of

promoting peace. In this sense, the sword symbolizes a peace leader's most effective tool. And there in the above poem, Toda is identifying Daisaku Ikeda, a youth, as this most effective tool. Wow! Think of the enormous trust Toda is placing in young Ikeda, completely entrusting responsibility for the most crucial mission of all time to his young disciple.

The exchange continues...

“This is my small gift for you.”

With gratitude, [Daisaku Ikeda] was about to receive the piece of paper, but Toda would not hand it to him.

“Wait, I have another poem to write for you.”

With pen in hand, Toda remained still for a moment, and then he moved suddenly and wrote another poem in fluid motions:

My glory as king is fading
And my power gone;
I will leave behind, howe'er
You, my crown
Even if I may die.

Here, Toda is regarding his disciple as his “crown.” He opens his own life and distinguishes Daisaku Ikeda as its most glorious aspect. To call someone your crown, to pinpoint his (or her) existence as the greatness of your own life, is astoundingly humble and selfless. And in being the one so compassionate and generous Toda, is acting as the mentor. This noble action provides much needed inspiration for me as I advance along the challenging path of being a true disciple.