

## DISCUSSIONS ON YOUTH IT TAKES COURAGE

**In this discussion, President Ikeda explains that ‘no matter how wonderful our dreams, how noble our ideals or how high our hopes, ultimately we need courage to make them a reality.’**

**YASUYUKI ITAKURA:** Thank you so much for talking with us again today. We’re all looking forward to hearing your thoughts on courage.

**SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA:** Thank *you* for the opportunity and for your participation. Courage is very important. Whether or not we have courage has a crucial bearing on the direction our lives take. People who have courage are happy.

**MICHIKO KANAZAWA:** I think that everyone wants to have courage. The high school division members offer many examples of situations in which you wish to bravely take the initiative. For instance, when you know that a friend is making a terrible mistake but don’t say anything because you’re afraid it will destroy your relationship. Or being too faint-hearted to lend a helping hand when you see a disabled person in distress on the street. Or even something as simple as being afraid to ask questions in class or after school.

**ITAKURA:** Or being too timid to offer an older person your seat on a bus or train.

One student noticed that a classmate wasn’t at school any more. He wanted to phone him to find out if he were all right, but since they hung out in different groups, he just decided to let it go. When he later learned that the classmate had transferred to another school, he regretted not calling him when he had the chance.

These may seem like small things, but they cause the members a lot of heartache.

**IKEDA:** Others might think they’re trifling concerns, but to those actually facing such issues they’re very serious. Small things matter. What may look like a small act of courage is courage nevertheless. The important thing is to be willing to take a step forward.

As long as we’re alive, we’ll face all kinds of problems. But no matter what happens, we simply have to live with courage and press on, aiming always toward the future.

No one can escape the realities of daily life. We have to deal with life and its problems. Young people have their problems, just as adults have theirs.

Life and the world we live in is like a storm-tossed sea. We have to make our way through it, buffeted by all different kinds of experiences. There is no other way. This is part of our inescapable destiny as human beings.

**ITAKURA:** Being born in this world, we have a mission to live out our lives.

**IKEDA:** Everyone has their own hopes and dreams, their own way of life, their own ideals, their own joys, their own sufferings, their own pain and their own grief. No matter what happens, however, we have to get on with life. We have to keep moving, working toward realizing our ideals and dreams.

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**KANAZAWA:** That's so true.

## **The loss of courage is the loss of everything.**

**IKEDA:** But no matter how wonderful our dreams, how noble our ideals or how high our hopes, ultimately we need courage to make them a reality. We can come up with the greatest ideas or plans in the world or be filled with boundless compassion for others, but it will all come to nothing unless we have the courage to put it into action. Without action, it's as if it never existed.

**ITAKURA:** I see what you're saying. We may possess magnificent treasures inside us, but if we don't have the courage to reveal them, it's just like keeping them locked up in a safe, hidden and unknown to others.

**IKEDA:** That's why courage is the driving force or engine of our lives. Even activities such as studying and going to school require courage.

**KANAZAWA:** If courage is the engine of our lives, it follows that those with powerful engines will be at an advantage.

**IKEDA:** The courageous have the strength to forge ahead, calmly traversing life's ups and downs and advancing steadily toward the summit of their chosen goals and dreams. Courage is a powerful asset.

Those who lack courage stray from the correct path and succumb to apathy, negativity and destructive ways. They run away from hardship, seeking only a life of ease and comfort.

Consequently, those who lack courage cannot devote themselves to the happiness of others nor can they improve themselves or achieve anything important or lasting. It's as if their engine has suffered a malfunction.

**ITAKURA:** There's really nothing more important in life than courage, is there?

**IKEDA:** The German poet Goethe declared that the loss of possessions and reputation is an insignificant thing. You can always set out to restore them, whereas the loss of courage is the loss of everything.

*In a poem titled "Zahme Xenien [VIII]," Goethe writes:*

*Possessions lost — little lost!  
Just reflect on yourself  
And acquire new ones.  
Honor lost — much lost!  
Just gain a good reputation  
And people will change their minds.  
Courage lost — all lost!  
It would have been better never to have been born.*

If you summon your courage to challenge something, you'll never be left with regret.

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How sad it is to spend your life wishing, “If only I’d had a little more courage.” Whatever the outcome may be, the important thing is to take a step forward on the path that you believe is right.

There’s no need to worry about what others may think. Be true to yourself. It’s your life, after all.

*Part one of a discussion on courage among SGI President Ikeda and Soka Gakkai high school division leaders Yasuyuki Itakura (Kansai young men’s leader) and Michiko Kanazawa (young women’s secretariat).*

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