

EDITORIAL: LEARNING FROM EXAMPLES
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In fulfilling his role as a teacher of Buddhism and a mentor of life in contemporary times, SGI President Ikeda often highlights outstanding qualities of historical figures or those world leaders with whom he has personally met. This is to give us inspiring examples of how to challenge ourselves to live victoriously.

But some people have expressed confusion and concern over some of the examples President Ikeda has chosen. Some, for instance, are military leaders, like Napoleon.

Obviously, President Ikeda does not write about such figures to justify the negative things they have done. Since Buddhism upholds the absolute dignity of life, naturally, he does not defend those actions or policies that have caused human misery. His point isn't to encourage us to disregard the crimes that they may have committed.

After all, there are no perfect people to write about. Even a Buddha possesses the nine worlds. If we wait to write about perfect people who have no bad qualities, we will wait forever. So President Ikeda finds the good qualities in all sorts of people. Nichiren Daishonin states, "Even a heartless villain loves his wife and children" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 53).

Buddhism teaches that there is something to learn from everyone who has challenged themselves — from people who have been victorious in a wide variety of fields. And, they don't have to be perfect for us to learn something from them about winning in life.

Take the case of Napoleon: In a recent speech, President Ikeda asks, "What precisely can we learn from Napoleon's life?" One of the points he makes in answering this question is that "when Napoleon achieved one victory, he immediately looked to the next" (June 11 *World Tribune*, p. 6).

Although Napoleon's victories may have caused suffering to others, the point remains that he had the amazing quality of turning one victory into another — of never being defeated. This, President Ikeda suggests in his speech, is a quality we all inherently have.

Also in Napoleon, President Ikeda sees the unlimited potential of a man, which may help people today expand the scope of their dreams for the future — dreams that tend to shrink or disappear before the onslaught negativity in today's news.

Therefore, being aware of the existence of shortcomings that are particular to, in this case, Napoleon, President Ikeda intentionally focuses on traits that help others recognize their own potential — to help people tap their inherent hope, courage, wisdom, compassion, perseverance and conviction — aspects of Buddhahood. In other words, understanding that people may have differing opinions of Napoleon,

President Ikeda boldly brings to our attention what we can learn from elements of Napoleon's character.

President Ikeda continues to seek great examples of all kinds of people, renowned or unknown — figures who can teach us lessons about how we can win in life. And what's most important in reading about these people is to get the point that President Ikeda is making.

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