

## GAINING UNDERSTANDING FROM STUDY

**Christine Allen, Burlingame, Calif.:** “I just graduated from college, and I usually study Buddhism before I go to bed. But I almost didn’t want to study for this test. I’m sick of having to do specific assignments. I like to read what I want to read. But I think the material was very important and I enjoyed it.

“I liked reading the “Life Span” chapter, especially about *kuon ganjo*, the original moment of life, and *hon ’nin-myō*, and how we can always use this to move forward. When we do gongyo, we’re in the original moment of life, with no beginning or end.

“Studying about the temple issue helped me by discussing how to talk with temple members, since I tend to get very emotional. I especially liked the part that says it’s OK to speak with conviction and to have the courage to refute mistaken ideas, but also to have compassion, and to respect the other person’s life.”

**Aaron Franklin, Everett, Wash.:** “Studying for this exam, I gained an understanding of true action and what it means to be a true leader, not just someone who says whatever they want to say. In other words, the true aspect of a leader. Leading people means you have to care about them. I’m now viewing people and leadership differently. True leadership is caring for people’s well-being and finding the best way to help them become happy. That also applies to my career as an elementary school teacher. I have more compassion and my actions come from a deeper level of compassion.”

**S’Omell Richards, Brooklyn, N.Y.:** “Preparing for the Intermediate study exam gave me a new perspective on the temple issue. Instead of asking myself, ‘What can I do?’, I began asking myself ‘What must I do?’ With a newly awakened sense of mission, I became motivated to deepen my understanding of Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism, not only by studying for the exam, but by taking a step further and joining the study department. As I build ‘muscles’ from an increased understanding of the practice, I feel well ‘armed’ for meaningful and compassionate dialogue. In general, I am taking action to ensure that the temple issue is freely and openly discussed from the perspective of its deeper meaning for kosen-rufu. Thanks to study, I’m not afraid of it anymore.”

**Sandra Meinke, Honolulu:** “By studying together with others, I was able to hear many experiences and it made me more passionate in my pursuit of true happiness. Since studying I have gained more confidence in my practice and have been able to speak to others about our faith and the temple issue.”

**Joseph Errante, Brooklyn:** “What have I gained from recent study of the temple issue? Clarity. The unmasking of decadence and depravity, as cloaked in the robes of Nichiren Shoshu. As an individual, I can confront and muster the determination to overcome and change my own personal forms of weakness and to not cultivate these weaknesses into behaviors. On a societal level, I see more clearly the underlying foundation of evil as it pervades the workings of current social interactions. I, alone, am able to (by studying this issue) contribute to the overall progress and success of society. How? By using the example of Nichiren Shoshu as a model for what essentially must be overcome in our lives

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before progress can be attained.”

**Brynda Hintton, Philadelphia:** “In studying for the intermediate test, I was given a great benefit to increase my study and I enjoyed sharing dialogue regarding the now more informed views of the ‘Twenty-six Admonitions’ and their importance to my practice.”

**Glyde King, Seattle:** “When I first heard that we were studying the temple issue for this exam, I rolled my eyes at having to study it yet again. But after going through the text, it resonated with my life in new ways — with a new light. I now appreciate the opportunity to deepen my understanding and look at it yet again. Studying has helped me be more sensitive.”

**Ahmed Shaheed, Napa Valley, Calif.:** “We studied in different people’s homes, and that interaction with other members was very enriching to me. It took discipline for me to study, and to be committed. We had study group meetings every Monday. Studying for the Intermediate Exam was much more intense than studying for the entrance exam.

“I have a car now because of the persistence I learned as a result of studying. It was a breakthrough. Before this I would make a plan, then in a couple of hours forget all about it. Being from Guam, I usually put things off as long as possible. Because of the persistence in my study, I was also persistent enough to save money toward a car.

“I also learned about communicating Buddhism to other people, and about the kind of shakubuku I want to do. Introducing Buddhism means not trying to force it on them. My friend does see the actual proof in my life, especially after being able to buy a car.”

**Rita Marcelli, Miami Beach, Fla.:** “I probably would not have studied about the priesthood issue if it was not a requirement for the Intermediate Exam. I usually avoid dealing with the issue since it is unpleasant. However, to prepare I had to not only deal with it, but study it in-depth.

“What I gained from my study was an understanding about how to deal with authority. It also taught me about the SGI’s courage to defy the appearance of power and authority in the form of the high priest. We now know that the priesthood is not the intermediary between us and our higher power. We have now been shown this equality even within the organization of the SGI. It has empowered us in our dealings with leaders and other members.

“It also teaches us to promote justice and not just accept what others tell us because they might be in positions of authority. So we must have the courage and the wisdom to break this authoritarian culture in daily life.”

**Michael Pehmoeller, Denver:** “Study of the temple issue for the Intermediate Exam allowed me to realize that the focus is really the happiness of all people. Especially the point that our attitude toward temple members is one of compassion struck me. According to the Gosho, this is one of the most important issues both in terms of understanding correct practice and developing as a human being.”

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