

MIDDLEWAY: GETTING THE WORD OUT
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Did you ever wish you had a book that gave a clear, concise, easy-to-read explanation of this practice, something that you could recommend to anyone? Well, it is here.

Did you ever wish you could just walk into a bookstore and pull it off a shelf? Well, you can.

As an example, here is a delicious quote from Middleway Press's *The Buddha in Your Mirror*: "Buddhism, like physics, teaches that everything is in constant flux. But...rather than actively striving to clarify the nature of the physical world..., Buddhism seeks to illuminate the human condition. To Nichiren, freedom meant not an escape from the realm of changing phenomena but the discovery of an absolute point of reliance within ourselves. This liberates us from the bonds of karma as a result of manifesting Buddha wisdom to perceive the true nature of all phenomena, including our relationship with them" (p. 77).

The name *Middleway* is worth a closer look. The Buddhist concept of the Middle Way is not to be confused with middle of the road or a little of this, a little of that. The quote above refers to the "discovery of an absolute point of reliance within ourselves," which wonderfully describes the Middle Way — the direct path that transcends extremes and that veers neither left nor right from the ultimate goal. It's like the balance you need to ride a bike. The faster you pedal, the more you must adjust to the increasing pull from side to side as you strive for balance. As the Daishonin writes in "On Attaining Buddhahood in This Lifetime": "[Life] is neither existence nor non-existence, yet exhibits the qualities of both. It is the mystic entity of the Middle Way that is the ultimate reality" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 4).

Middleway Press is pedaling with great energy toward its goal to make the Daishonin's Buddhism accessible to a larger audience. It's been barely a year since its first release — SGI President Ikeda's *The Way of Youth*. Since then, two more books have come out: *For the Sake of Peace*, also by President Ikeda; and *The Buddha in Your Mirror*, by Woody Hochswender, Greg Martin and Ted Morino. A fourth release — *Soka Education* by President Ikeda — is on its way.

And one of the best parts is that they are all available at your local bookstore. Even if they're not on the shelf, your bookseller will be delighted to take an order. If they get enough orders, the bookstore is likely to keep it in stock.

Middleway Press has an innovative vision for future publications. As Dave McNeill, managing director, recently said: "The names Ikeda, Nichiren and SGI are virtually unheard of in the U.S. book trade and book-buying public. Middleway Press is out to change all that."

It is a whole new take on propagation. I thought, at first, why not sell Middleway books in our community center bookstores? One answer is that the purpose of the Middleway books is to deliver the Daishonin's Buddhism to the widest possible circle of people. It will take our extra effort to ensure that these books find a place in mainstream bookstores. Every time we walk into a bookstore (or go on-line) and ask for a Middleway book, it's a chance to introduce these books and their message to another person. If these books only stayed in our own bookstores, their audience would be far too limited.

The point is: Get President Ikeda's message out where people can find it. We have all

seen books by the Dalai Lama and other religious leaders at eye-level on bookstore shelves. Middleway Press books should be right up there. It's up to us to prime the pump, to create the momentum that will get our books into many hands. This isn't just a matter of selling books—it is sharing the richness and effectiveness of the Daishonin's Buddhism. I am looking forward to the day when books by Daisaku Ikeda will be on the list of best sellers.

Because of Middleway Press, anyone can have access to the wisdom of Buddhism anytime, anywhere, including on the Web (check out www.middlewaypress.com). I am struck by what a great propagation tool it can be! Maybe you will be on the phone with your cousin several states away. "Gee, my teenager is asking so many questions these days," she says. "I could really use some help." So you tell her to check out this wonderful book, *The Way of Youth*. Reviewers, you tell your cousin, have said that readers will "find Ikeda's caring commitment both inspiring and attractive." The book is also a finalist for an industry Book of the Year award. And here is the easy part: Your cousin can go down to the local bookstore that same day and ask for the book.

Here is another scenario: Someone you have never met is browsing the bookstore for some practical insight to world peace, and he happens upon *For the Sake of Peace*. The book, subtitled *Seven Paths to Global Harmony*, reiterates the author's conviction that peace starts with the individual. "If all practiced the principles of empathy, dialogue and awareness that Ikeda outlines," one reviewer wrote, "the world would experience true peace." Now there is a thought.

Talking with people about Middleway Press books is one important way to get the message out. Here is another idea: Talk with your fellow chapter members or your area leaders and approach a bookstore near your community center or other meeting place. Tell them you are promoting these books to X-number of members every month, and that you will direct them to that store if they will carry those books on the shelves. Everyone will benefit that way, including those non-members who just happen to find one of the books! You can do this even in individual districts, especially if the district is far from its home chapter.

Did you know that many of the large bookstore chains are willing to come to, say, a summer SGI-USA festival and set up a booth to sell Middleway Press titles? If your festival organizers are interested, contact the Middleway Press staff (310-260-8934) for help in making arrangements.

One final point: When you walk up to the order desk at your local bookstore, don't take "not available" for an answer. As I write this, *The Buddha in Your Mirror* is in its second printing, but some booksellers may not be aware of it. If they tell you a book is not available, let them know it is, and ask them to place the order anyway. This extra effort will have a significant impact, as it raises awareness in the bookstore of the interest in and popularity of Middleway books.