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Circles of Unity

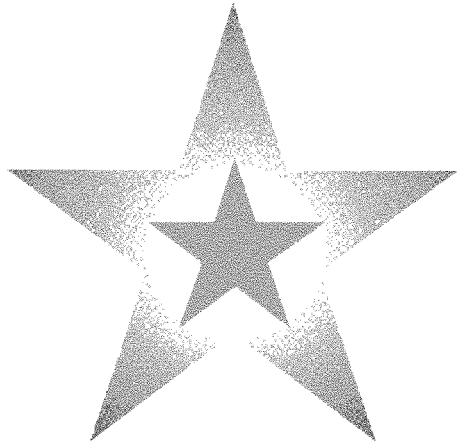
COURSE TWO

A Sequence of
Courses on the
Fundamental
Verities of the
Bahá'í Faith



NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY
OF THE
BAHÁ'ÍS OF THE UNITED STATES

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Bahá'ís of the United States



*T*he day is approaching when We will
have rolled up the world and all that is
therein, and spread out a new order in its
stead. He, verily, is powerful
over all things.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

Circles ^{of} Unity

COURSE TWO

Some
Fundamental
Verities of the
Bahá'í Faith

Introduction

OVERVIEW OF THE FUNDAMENTAL VERITIES COURSES:

The Organization of the Courses

This course, developed under the supervision of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States, has the purpose of evoking the spirit of the Bahá'í Faith and providing a basic knowledge of some of the fundamental verities of this Faith. Rather than an in-depth study of the Faith, this sequence of courses provides an introduction to ongoing study of the writings of Bahá'u'lláh to inspire the love of God and service to all the human race.

Course Design and Presentation

This course is the second in a basic sequence of courses about the Bahá'í Faith. This six-part sequence consists of:

Course One:	This Day of God
Course Two:	Circles of Unity
Course Three:	The Seeker's Quest
Course Four:	Every Believer Is a Teacher
Course Five:	To Serve the Covenant
Course Six:	Building a New Civilization

In addition to this basic sequence of courses, other courses in the Fundamental Verities series include:

To Be a Bahá'í—An Introduction to the Bahá'í Faith
Progressive Revelation: The Bible and Bahá'u'lláh
The Art of Facilitation—a course for facilitators of the Fundamental Verities sequence of courses

In its statement of March 24, 2003 entitled “Vision and Evolution of the Institute Process in the United States Bahá’í Community,” the National Spiritual Assembly stated:

Anticipating the diversity of cultural backgrounds, ages, literacy and learning styles, the Universal House of Justice called for training institutes to “develop a wide variety of approaches fitted to the needs of the diverse components of your population.”

The training institute process in the United States Bahá’í community is founded on two pillars: the *Fundamental Verities* and the *Rubi* materials. In the Five Year Plan, the National Assembly has called for the use of these two approaches and for the development of new curricula.

The Fundamental Verities Sequence of Courses, as all courses of the Core Curriculum for Spiritual Education, attempts to engage the mind and heart in a variety of activities such as reading, discussing, listening, reflecting, and expressing through the arts. These varied methods of teaching and learning are suggested in the writings of the Bahá’í Faith and compiled in the book *Foundations for a Spiritual Education* available through the Bahá’í Distribution Service.

Please refer to the Appendix for practical suggestions about facilitating this course in a study circle format. These suggestions are intended to be used with flexibility according to the needs and circumstances of the particular study circle.

Music and materials can be obtained by calling the Bahá’í Distribution Service, 1-800-999-9019. Additional questions about the course may be directed to the Education and Schools Office at the Bahá’í National Center—847-733-3492 (email: schools@usbnc.org) or to the National Teacher Training Center at Louhelen Bahá’í School—810-653-5033 (email: nttc@usbnc.org).

*Course Series on the
Fundamental Verities
of the Bahá'í Faith*



... All the forces of the universe, in the last analysis
serve the Covenant.
— ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ

Introductory Course: To Be a Bahá'í

- Course One: This Day of God**
Course Two: Circles of Unity
Course Three: The Seeker's Quest
Course Four: Every Believer Is a Teacher
Course Five: To Serve the Covenant
Course Six: Building a New Civilization

The Art of Facilitation

Each of these courses may be convened as a weekly study circle, except for *The Art of Facilitation*, which is intended to be an intensive weekend program. Each session includes an opportunity to study, to consult, and to prepare to “translate that which hath been written into reality and action.”

Contents of Course Two: Circles of Unity

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| Session 7 | Principles and Process of Consultation |
| Session 8 | A New Foundation for Peace and World Order |
| Session 9 | The Seeds of World Peace |

A Spiritual Framework for Self-Directed Learning

The purpose of this program is to inspire self-directed learning of the creative Word of God. To accomplish this, the program is structured using a learning model derived from the writings of Bahá'u'lláh:

Strain every nerve to acquire both inner and outer perfections, for the fruit of the human tree hath ever been and will ever be perfections both within and without. It is not desirable that a man be left without knowledge or skills, for he is then but a barren tree. Then, so much as capacity and capability allow, ye needs must deck the tree of being with fruits such as knowledge, wisdom, spiritual perception and eloquent speech.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Bahá'í Education*, #9, p. 3

This learning model assists learners to apply the Word of God to everyday experiences and actions.

Learning activities in this program are organized to achieve the following four aspects of learning:

Knowledge

A keen awareness of information and facts; the remembering and recalling of previously learned materials.

Wisdom

True comprehension and insight into the meaning of information and facts.

Spiritual Perception

A penetrating inner vision and the internalization of what is being learned.

Eloquent Speech

The ability to speak and act in a way that manifests one's learning.

Activity

Verities of the Faith

In the whole group, read and discuss the quotations on “Verities of the Faith.” Allow discussion as time permits.



VERITIES OF THE FAITH

1 Volumes will not suffice to hold the mystery of the Beloved One, nor can it be exhausted in these pages, although it be no more than a word, no more than a sign. “Knowledge is a single point, but the ignorant have multiplied it.”

BAHÁ’U’LLÁH, *Seven Valleys and Four Valleys*, pp. 24-5

2 How great the multitude of truths which the garment of words can never contain! How vast the number of such verities as no expression can adequately describe, whose significance can never be unfolded, and to which not even the remotest allusions can be made! How manifold are the truths which must remain unuttered until the appointed time is come! Even as it hath been said: “Not everything that a man knoweth can be disclosed, nor can everything that he can disclose be regarded as timely, nor can every timely utterance be considered as suited to the capacity of those who hear it.”

BAHÁ’U’LLÁH, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 176, LXXXIX

3 The All-Knowing Physician hath His finger on the pulse of mankind. He perceiveth the disease, and prescribeth, in His unerring wisdom, the remedy. Every age hath its own problem, and every soul its particular aspiration. The remedy the world needeth in its present-day afflictions can never be the same as that which a subsequent age may require. Be anxiously concerned with the needs of the age ye live in, and center your deliberations on its exigencies and requirements.

BAHÁ’U’LLÁH, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 213, CVI

4 What he wants the Bahá’ís to do is to study more, not to study less. The more general knowledge, scientific and otherwise, they possess, the better. Likewise he is constantly urging them to really study the Bahá’í teachings more deeply. One might liken Bahá’u’lláh’s teachings to a sphere; there are points poles apart, and in between the thoughts and doctrines that unite them. . . .

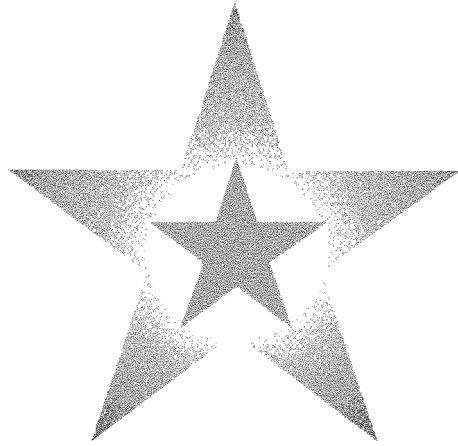
WRITTEN ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, *Compilation of Compilations, Volume 1*, pp. 228-9

5 As the processes impelling a rapidly evolving Order on the highroad of its destiny multiply and gather momentum, attention should be increasingly directed to the vital need of ensuring, by every means possible, the deepening of the Faith, the understanding and the spiritual life of the individuals who, as the privileged members of this community, are called upon to participate in this glorious unfoldment, and are lending their assistance to this historic evolution. A profound study of the Faith which they have espoused, its history, its spiritual as well as administrative principles; a thorough understanding of the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh and of the Will of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, a deeper realization of the implications of the claims advanced by the Founders of the Faith; strict adherence to the laws and principles which they have established; a greater dedication to the fundamentals and verities enshrined in their teachings—these constitute, I feel convinced, the urgent need of the members of this rapidly expanding community. For upon this spiritual foundation must depend the solidity of the institutions which they are now so painstakingly erecting. Every outward thrust into new fields, every multiplication of Bahá'í institutions, must be paralleled by a deeper thrust of the roots which sustain the spiritual life of the community and ensure its sound development. From this vital, this ever-present need, attention must at no time be diverted; nor must it be, under any circumstances, neglected, or subordinated to the no less vital and urgent task of ensuring the outer expansion of Bahá'í administrative institutions.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *Letters to Australia and New Zealand*, pp. 75-6

6 It is therefore of paramount importance that systematic attention be given to devising methods for educating large numbers of believers in the fundamental verities of the Faith and for training and assisting them to serve the Cause as their God-given talents allow.

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, to the Bahá'ís of the World, Ridván 153 B.E.



*T*hrough the movement of Our Pen of glory
We have, at the bidding of the omnipotent Ordainer,
breathed a new life into every human frame,
and instilled into every word a fresh potency.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

Circles ^{of} Unity

COURSE TWO

Some
Fundamental
Verities of the
Bahá'í Faith

Session 1

God's New Creation

Devotions

Welcome to this second course in the Fundamental Verities Sequence of Courses! This course explores some of the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh about the great changes taking place in the world today and how we can be part of the movement for positive change.

Please begin the session with reverent, uplifting devotions, including music.

You may also include the following passage that indicates the theme for this session:

Through the movement of Our Pen of glory We have, at the bidding of the omnipotent Ordainer, breathed a new life into every human frame, and instilled into every word a fresh potency. All created things proclaim the evidences of this world-wide regeneration.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 84

Objectives of the Session

As a group, read through the learning objectives for this session.

Knowledge

To know how the writings describe the common origin of the human family.

Wisdom

To understand the oneness of the human family, considering both physical and spiritual origins.

Spiritual Perception

To reflect on the significance of this time in history.

Eloquent Speech

To plan individual acts of study, teaching and service.

Welcome to the Course

This second course of the Fundamental Verities Sequence of Courses, a sequence developed under the supervision of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States, focuses on the Principle of Oneness in our daily lives. Through our study together we hope to become an increasingly powerful source of unity in our families and in our communities.

Please introduce yourself and mention a spiritual quality that you hope to be able to foster in the study circle. You may also wish to share (in just a few words) a hope you have for the course.

After you introduce yourselves, please review any necessary logistical information such as cost, time frame, location of washrooms, refreshments available, child care, etc. for the study circle.

Overview of the Verities Courses

As a group, review the Fundamental Verities Sequence of Courses.

- Course One: This Day of God**
- Course Two: Circles of Unity**
- Course Three: The Seeker's Quest**
- Course Four: Every Believer Is a Teacher**
- Course Five: To Serve the Covenant**
- Course Six: Building a New Civilization**

Each session in these courses provides the opportunity to study, consult, and prepare to “translate that which hath been written into reality and action.”

Contents of Course Two: Circles of Unity

Please also note the topics studied in this course as we seek to express the principle of oneness in our daily lives, in our families, and in our communities. We will also consider how to create the sort of community life that embraces the young people in our community, the most precious treasure a community can possess.

Session 1	God's New Creation
Session 2	The Spirit of Servitude to God
Session 3	Family Unity and World Peace
Session 4	The Source of Unity
Session 5	Expanding Circles of Unity
Session 6	Fostering Unified Action
Session 7	Principles and Process of Consultation
Session 8	A New Foundation for Governance
Session 9	The Seeds of World Peace

Activity *God's New Creation*

Please pair with one other person, perhaps with someone you may know less well than others in your study circle.

In these teams of two, carefully read aloud the quotations on the next page entitled "God's New Creation" and come up with some initial answers to the focus questions.



Focus Questions:

Just what is happening in the world today? Things look so awful sometimes—violence, war, poverty, environmental destruction, prejudice: is there a future worth living for? What difference will it make if I strive to live in accordance with the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh?

1 I testify that no sooner had the First Word proceeded, through the potency of Thy will and purpose, out of His mouth, and the First Call gone forth from His lips than the whole creation was revolutionized, and all that are in the heavens and all that are on earth were stirred to the depths. Through that Word the realities of all created things were shaken, were divided, separated, scattered, combined and reunited, disclosing, in both the contingent world and the heavenly kingdom, entities of a new creation, and revealing, in the unseen realms, the signs and tokens of Thy unity and oneness.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Prayers and Meditations*, p. 295, CLXXVIII

2 Through the movement of Our Pen of glory We have, at the bidding of the omnipotent Ordainer, breathed a new life into every human frame, and instilled into every word a fresh potency. All created things proclaim the evidences of this world-wide regeneration.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 84

3 Beseech ye the one true God to grant that all men may be graciously assisted to fulfill that which is acceptable in Our sight. Soon will the present-day order be rolled up, and a new one spread out in its stead. Verily, thy Lord speaketh the truth, and is the Knower of things unseen.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 7, IV

4 The Ancient Beauty hath consented to be bound with chains that mankind may be released from its bondage, and hath accepted to be made a prisoner within this most mighty Stronghold that the whole world may attain unto true liberty. He hath drained to its dregs the cup of sorrow, that all the peoples of the earth may attain unto abiding joy, and be filled with gladness. This is of the mercy of your Lord, the Compassionate, the Most Merciful. We have accepted to be abased, O believers in the Unity of God, that ye may be exalted, and have suffered manifold afflictions, that ye might prosper and flourish. He Who hath come to build anew the whole world, behold, how they that have joined partners with God have forced Him to dwell within the most desolate of cities!

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 99-100, XLV

5 The world of being shineth, in this Day, with the resplendency of this Divine Revelation. All created things extol its saving grace, and sing its praises. The universe is wrapt in an ecstasy of joy and gladness. The Scriptures of past Dispensations celebrate the great Jubilee that must needs greet this most great Day of God. Well is it with him that hath lived to see this Day, and hath recognized its station.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, quoted in *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 78

Activity

The Individual and God's New Creation

Combine your team of two with one other team.

Now in these groups of four, carefully read aloud the following passages entitled "The Individual and God's New Creation."

As a group, answer the focus questions.



THE INDIVIDUAL AND GOD'S NEW CREATION

Focus Questions:

I'm just one person—how can I change anything? How is it possible that I can have an effect on the billions of human beings on the planet?

1 The companions of God are, in this day, the lump that must leaven the peoples of the world. They must show forth such trustworthiness, such truthfulness and perseverance, such deeds and character that all mankind may profit by their example.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, quoted in *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 23

2 I swear by Him Who is the Most Great Ocean! Within the very breath of such souls as are pure and sanctified far-reaching potentialities are hidden. So great are these potentialities that they exercise their influence upon all created things.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, quoted in *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 23

3 If ye will follow earnestly the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, ye shall indeed become the light of the world, the soul for the body of the world, the comfort and help for humanity, and the source of salvation for the whole universe.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *Paris Talks*, pp. 113-4

4 Likewise, reflect upon the perfection of man's creation, and that all these planes and states are folded up and hidden away within him.

Dost thou reckon thyself only a puny form
When within thee the universe is folded?

Then we must labor to destroy the animal condition, till the meaning of humanity shall come to light.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *The Seven Valleys and The Four Valleys*, p. 34

5 Reflect upon the inner realities of the universe, the secret wisdoms involved, the enigmas, the inter-relationships, the rules that govern all. For every part of the universe is connected with every other part by ties that are very powerful and admit of no imbalance, nor any slackening whatever.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 157, no. 137

6 For all beings are connected together like a chain; and reciprocal help, assistance and interaction belonging to the properties of things are the causes of the existence, development and growth of created beings. It is confirmed through evidences and proofs that every being universally acts upon other beings, either absolutely or through association.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *Some Answered Questions*, pp. 178-9

7 To conclude: the beings, whether great or small, are connected with one another by the perfect wisdom of God, and affect and influence one another.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *Some Answered Questions*, pp. 246-7

Activity

God's New Creation and the Oneness of Humanity

1. Reconvene as a whole study circle. Please share within the group:
 - One statement from the writings that confirmed one of your previous understandings of the world, and
 - One statement from the writings that offered an entirely new idea that you had not previously considered.
2. While still in the whole group, read aloud the focus questions and passages on the next page entitled “God’s New Creation and the Oneness of Humanity.”
3. Then, individually and silently reflect on the question: “Where do we come from?”
4. Using clay, play dough or other modeling material, work individually to create an image that illustrates how our common origin makes us all members of one family.
5. Share these images in the study circle and highlight the particular quotation that inspired your model.
6. Consider giving your model as a gift to someone in your family or a friend. Consider also sharing with your friend a brief passage from the writings that inspired your model.



GOD'S NEW CREATION AND THE ONENESS OF HUMANITY

Focus Questions:

How did this all begin? Where did we come from? Do we all come from a common origin, or were some people created differently than others?

1 O Son of Spirit! I created thee rich, why dost thou bring thyself down to poverty? Noble I made thee, wherewith dost thou abase thyself? Out of the essence of knowledge I gave thee being, why seekest thou enlightenment from anyone beside Me? Out of the clay of love I molded thee, how dost thou busy thyself with another? Turn thy sight unto thyself, that thou mayest find Me standing within thee, mighty, powerful and self-subsisting.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *The Hidden Words*, Arabic no. 13

2 O Children of Men! Know ye not why We created you all from the same dust? That no one should exalt himself over the other. Ponder at all times in your hearts how ye were created. Since We have created you all from one same substance it is incumbent on you to be even as one soul, to walk with the same feet, eat with the same mouth and dwell in the same land, that from your inmost being, by your deeds and actions, the signs of oneness and the essence of detachment may be made manifest. Such is My counsel to you, O concourse of light! Heed ye this counsel that ye may obtain the fruit of holiness from the tree of wondrous glory.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *The Hidden Words*, Arabic no. 68

3 Ye are all created out of water, and unto dust shall ye return.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, ¶148

4 Verily, the origin of all material life is one and its termination likewise one.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 350

5 Consider the world of created beings, how varied and diverse they are in species, yet with one sole origin.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *Paris Talks*, pp. 39-40

6 The Creator of all is One God. From this same God all creation sprang into existence, and He is the one goal, towards which everything in nature yearns.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *Paris Talks*, p. 39

Memorization

A New Creation

Return to your original two person teams. As a final reflection on the writings that have been studied in this session, choose one of the following passages from the writings of Bahá'u'lláh to commit to memory as a team. Please select a passage that will cheer your own heart and that you might enjoy sharing with others.

Through that Word the realities of all created things were shaken, were divided, separated, scattered, combined and reunited, disclosing, in both the contingent world and the heavenly kingdom, entities of a new creation. . . .

Soon will the present-day order be rolled up, and a new one spread out in its stead.

Through the movement of Our Pen of glory We have, at the bidding of the omnipotent Ordainer, breathed a new life into every human frame, and instilled into every word a fresh potency.

All things proclaim the evidences of this world-wide regeneration.

The world of being shineth, in this Day, with the resplendency of this Divine Revelation.

The universe is wrapt in an ecstasy of joy and gladness.

The Scriptures of past Dispensations celebrate the great Jubilee that must needs greet this most great Day of God.

The Ancient Beauty hath consented to be bound with chains that mankind may be released from its bondage, and hath accepted to be made a prisoner within this most mighty Stronghold that the whole world may attain unto true liberty.

We have accepted to be abased, O believers in the Unity of God, that ye may be exalted, and have suffered manifold afflictions, that ye might prosper and flourish.

Well is it with him that hath lived to see this Day, and hath recognized its station.

Individual Acts of Study, Service, and Teaching

Choose one or more of the following acts of service to complete before the next session.

Individual study and service to humanity are essential components of the Fundamental Verities Sequence of Courses. Bahá'u'lláh writes: “Blessed and happy is he that ariseth to promote the best interests of the peoples and kindreds of the earth.” Here are some individual acts of study and service that directly relate to this session.

1. Memorize another of the passages from this session’s readings. Be prepared to recite it for the group at the next session.
2. Show the love of God by paying a visit to a friend or acquaintance. Consider how you might show love to that person while you are there. While visiting, initiate a conversation, listen to your friend with loving attention, and then share one of the ideas studied in this session, or your memorized passage from the writings. Report on your visit at the next class session.
3. Consider giving your model of our common origin as a gift to a family member or friend.
4. Read selections from *The Hidden Words*, a short book by Bahá'u'lláh. Select one or two Hidden Words to share as part of the opening devotions for the next session of your study circle.
5. Host or participate in a devotional meeting in your community.

A Personal Action Plan for Service and Teaching

Read aloud the quotation at the top of the next page.

Discuss: In what ways do these actions increase our ability to serve humanity and to teach spiritual principles to others?

Please take a few minutes to individually complete your own Personal Plan, perhaps while listening to quiet music.

Closing Devotions

Conclude your session by reciting your memorized passages, singing, and prayers of praise and thanksgiving.



A PERSONAL ACTION PLAN

“... it is on the initiative, the resolute will of the individual to teach and to serve, that the success of the entire community depends. Well-grounded in the mighty Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh, sustained by daily prayer and reading of the Holy Word, strengthened by a continual striving to obtain a deeper understanding of the divine Teachings, illumined by a constant endeavour to relate these Teachings to current issues, nourished by observance of the laws and principles of His wondrous World Order, every individual can attain increasing measures of success in teaching. In sum, the ultimate triumph of the Cause is assured by that ‘one thing and only one thing’ so poignantly emphasized by Shoghi Effendi Effendi, namely, ‘the extent to which our own inner life and private character mirror forth in their manifold aspects the splendour of those eternal principles proclaimed by Bahá'u'lláh.’”

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, Rídván Message 1988

What specific steps can I take this week to increase my service to humanity by:



Drawing on my love for God, the power of the Covenant, and the dynamics of daily prayer?



Regular reading and study of the sacred texts?



Striving to obtain a deeper understanding of the divine teachings and relate these teachings to current issues?



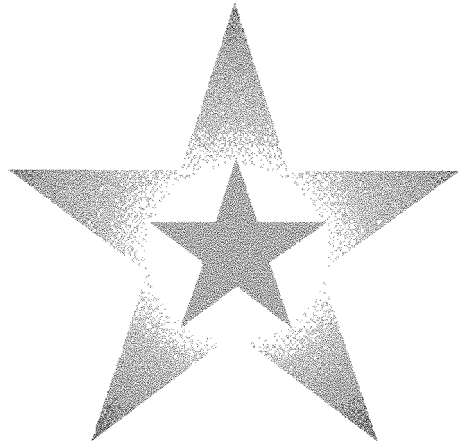
Mirroring Bahá'u'lláh's eternal principles in my inner life and private character?



Sharing these teachings with others?



What one action can I promise myself to do this week? When, where, and how can I do it? How will I be able to tell that I've done it? What result do I hope to see from my action?



*B*eseech ye the one true God
to grant that all men
may be graciously assisted to fulfill
that which is acceptable in Our sight.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

Circles ^{of} Unity

COURSE TWO

Some
Fundamental
Verities of the
Bahá'í Faith

Session 2

The Spirit of
Servitude to God

Devotions

Begin the session with reverent, uplifting devotions, and sung or recorded music.

If desired, the following passage may be included:

If ye will follow earnestly the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, ye shall indeed become the light of the world, the soul for the body of the world, the comfort and help for humanity, and the source of salvation for the whole universe.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *Paris Talks*, pp. 113-14

Objectives of the Session

As a group, read through the learning objectives for this session.

Knowledge

To become familiar with the writings describing the source of unity.

Wisdom

To understand the importance of engaging both mind and heart to reflect the oneness of the human family.

Spiritual Perception

To reflect on the significance of this time in history as described in sciences and spiritual teachings.

Eloquent Speech

To demonstrate understanding of this stage in history and be able to share your understanding with others.

To plan individual acts of study, teaching and service.

Consultation About Individual Acts of Service

Recall the after-class activity to visit a friend or acquaintance, or to share with others your model of humanity's oneness.

- What happened when you offered this gift of yourself?
- Did anything surprising or unusual happen? How did your friends respond?
- Did you discover another opportunity to share the teachings about the power of God this week?
- How can we build on these acts of service?

Consultation About Individual Acts of Study

If you memorized another quotation from the last session, please share it with the group at this time.

If you brought favorite Hidden Words, please also share them at this time. What especially attracted you to the Hidden Words you selected?

Activity Reflecting Oneness

1. Organize your study circle into two working groups, maximizing diversity in both groups. Consider factors such as personality, family background, place of birth, age, gender, heritage, professional background, etc.
2. While in your working group, briefly share a memory of a time when you truly felt yourself to be a part of one single human family. What were you doing? What was happening that gave the experience such a powerful feeling of unity and oneness?
3. In your same working groups, study either Part A or Part B of the "Reflecting Oneness" quotations on the following pages and discuss the focus questions.
4. Then briefly share your group's answers in the whole group.



REFLECTING ONENESS (PART A)

Focus Questions:

Life seems so ordinary. Is it really the same awesome power that created the universe that stirs in my soul? How can I tap into that stupendous power?

1 Praise and thanksgiving be unto Providence that out of all the realities in existence He has chosen the reality of man and has honored it with intellect and wisdom, the two most luminous lights in either world. Through the agency of this great endowment, He has in every epoch cast on the mirror of creation new and wonderful configurations. If we look objectively upon the world of being, it will become apparent that from age to age, the temple of existence has continually been embellished with a fresh grace, and distinguished with an ever-varying splendor, deriving from wisdom and the power of thought.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, p. 1

2 Reality or truth is one, yet there are many religious beliefs, denominations, creeds and differing opinions in the world today. Why should these differences exist? Because they do not investigate and examine the fundamental unity, which is one and unchangeable. If they seek reality itself, they will agree and be united; for reality is indivisible and not multiple. It is evident, therefore, that there is nothing of greater importance to mankind than the investigation of truth.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 62-3

3 The real temple is the very Word of God; for to it all humanity must turn, and it is the center of unity for all mankind. It is the collective center, the cause of accord and communion of hearts, the sign of the solidarity of the human race, the source of eternal life.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 65

4 The source of perfect unity and love in the world of existence is the bond and oneness of reality. When the divine and fundamental reality enters human hearts and lives, it conserves and protects all states and conditions of mankind, establishing that intrinsic oneness of the world of humanity which can only come into being through the efficacy of the Holy Spirit. For the Holy Spirit is like unto the life in the human body, which blends all differences of parts and members in unity and agreement. Consider how numerous are these parts and members, but the oneness of the animating spirit of life unites them all in perfect combination. . . . Just as the human spirit of life is the cause of coordination among the various parts of the human organism, the Holy Spirit is the controlling cause of the unity and coordination of mankind. That is to say, the bond or oneness of humanity cannot be effectively established save through the power of the Holy Spirit, for the world of humanity is a composite body, and the Holy Spirit is the animating principle of its life.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 321-2



REFLECTING ONENESS (PART B)

Focus Questions:

Who will discover the secret of making unity in the family, the community, and in the world? Did God build into the creation an answer to these questions?

1 O ye friends of God! Exert ye with heart and soul, so that association, love, unity and agreement be obtained between the hearts, all the aims may be merged into one aim, all the songs become one song and the power of the Holy Spirit may become so overwhelmingly victorious as to overcome all the forces of the world of nature. Exert yourselves; your mission is unspeakably glorious. Should success crown your enterprise, America will assuredly evolve into a center from which waves of spiritual power will emanate, and the throne of the Kingdom of God will, in the plenitude of its majesty and glory, be firmly established.

This phenomenal world will not remain in an unchanging condition even for a short while. Second after second it undergoes change and transformation. Every foundation will finally become collapsed; every glory and splendor will at last vanish and disappear, but the Kingdom of God is eternal and the heavenly sovereignty and majesty will stand firm, everlasting. Hence in the estimation of a wise man the mat in the Kingdom of God is preferable to the throne of the government of the world.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, p. 72

2 Know thou of a certainty that Love is the secret of God’s holy Dispensation, the manifestation of the All-Merciful, the fountain of spiritual outpourings. Love is heaven’s kindly light, the Holy Spirit’s eternal breath that vivifieth the human soul. Love is the cause of God’s revelation unto man, the vital bond inherent, in accordance with the divine creation, in the realities of things. Love is the one means that ensureth true felicity both in this world and the next. Love is the light that guideth in darkness, the living link that uniteth God with man, that assureth the progress of every illumined soul. Love is the most great law that ruleth this mighty and heavenly cycle, the unique power that bindeth together the divers elements of this material world, the supreme magnetic force that directeth the movements of the spheres in the celestial realms. Love revealeth with unfailing and limitless power the mysteries latent in the universe. Love is the spirit of life unto the adorned body of mankind, the establisher of true civilization in this mortal world, and the shedder of imperishable glory upon every high-aiming race and nation.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 27, no. 12

3 For service in love for mankind is unity with God. He who serves has already entered the Kingdom and is seated at the right hand of his Lord.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 186

4 The essence of Bahá’u’lláh’s Teaching is all-embracing love, for love includeth every excellence of humankind. It causeth every soul to go forward.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 66, no. 31

Activity

The Greatest Drama of the World's Spiritual History

The stage has been set for what Shoghi Effendi has called the “greatest drama of the world’s spiritual history.”

1. Working again in your same small study groups, read aloud the statements from contemporary scientists as well as the passages from the Bahá’í writings found on the following pages entitled “The Greatest Drama.”
2. After reading all the passages, select one quotation from the scientists, and one from the Bahá’í writings. Discuss the focus question in light of the quotation you selected.
3. Create a 1-2 minute dramatic sketch (or human sculpture) that illustrates or expresses your group’s view of this great spiritual drama. Allow 5-10 minutes for your preparation.
4. Share your group’s portrayal in the whole group.
5. Discuss: How do these demonstrations help us understand what is happening in the world around us and in our own lives? What are some natural ways that we could share these ideas with others?



Focus Question:

How would you describe “the greatest drama of the world’s spiritual history?”

Some contemporary scientists describe the drama:

1 In our time, everything has changed except our way of thinking. . . . We shall require a substantially different manner of thinking if mankind is to survive . . . a cosmic religious consciousness.

ALBERT EINSTEIN

2 There is a prerequisite to humankind’s survival: letting go of selfishness. This is the final exam which will determine whether the human species qualifies to continue on earth.

R. BUCKMINSTER FULLER

3 Humanity is a community, there is no way we can be anything but a community, the inhabitants of a single planet. We have entered a new period in history, and in this period, we are either going to become a community, or we are going to die.

BARBARA WARD

The Bahá’í writings describe the drama:

4 Bahá’u’lláh, referring to the transformation effected by every Revelation in the ways, thoughts and manners of the people, reveals these words: ‘Is not the object of every Revelation to effect a transformation in the whole character of mankind, a transformation that shall manifest itself, both outwardly and inwardly, that shall affect both its inner life and external conditions? For if the character of mankind be not changed, the futility of God’s universal Manifestation would be apparent.’

Did not Christ Himself, addressing His disciples, utter these words: ‘I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth’?

From the text of this recognized tradition, as well as from the words of Christ, as attested by the Gospel, every unprejudiced observer will readily apprehend the magnitude of the Faith which Bahá’u’lláh has revealed, and recognize the staggering weight of the claim He has advanced. No wonder if ‘Abdu’l-Bahá has portrayed in such lurid colors the fierceness of the agitation that shall center in the days to come round the nascent institutions of the Faith. We can now but faintly discern the beginnings of that turmoil which the rise and ascendancy of the Cause of God is destined to cast in the world. . . .

Ours is the duty to ponder these things in our heart, to strive to widen our vision, and to deepen our comprehension of this Cause, and to arise, resolutely and unreservedly, to play our part, however small, in this greatest drama of the world's spiritual history.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 25-6

5 Once Varqa asked Bahá'u'lláh, 'How will the Cause of God be universally adopted by mankind?' Bahá'u'lláh said that first, the nations of the world would arm themselves with infernal engines of war, and when fully armed would attack each other like bloodthirsty beasts. As a result, there would be enormous bloodshed throughout the world. Then the wise from all nations would gather together to investigate the cause of such bloodshed. They would come to the conclusion that prejudices were the cause, a major form being religious prejudice. They would therefore try to eliminate religion so as to eliminate prejudice. Later they would realize that man cannot live without religion. Then they would study the teachings of all religions to see which of the religions conformed to the prevailing conditions of the time. It is then that the Cause of God would become universal.

(These are not the exact words of Bahá'u'lláh, but convey the gist of what He said to Varqa.)

ADIB TAHERZADEH, *The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh*, vol. 4, p. 56

Activity
The Spirit of Servitude to God

1. Choose a partner. In pairs read the passages from the Bahá'í writings on the following pages entitled "The Spirit of Servitude to God" and discuss the focus questions.
2. After your study and discussion, briefly share your answers with the whole group. Enjoy listening for the beauty in the diversity of your responses.



THE SPIRIT OF SERVITUDE TO GOD

Focus Questions:

What is the role of the individual believer in spreading the Light of Oneness to all humanity? How does understanding the spiritual drama of our time assist us to arise to play our part in this drama? Given the circumstances of my daily life, what specific actions can I undertake to teach this priceless Cause in my home, my work or school, or with my friends? What is the relationship between service to others and sharing spiritual teachings with others?

1 Arise ye, under all conditions, to render service to the Cause, for God will assuredly assist you through the power of His sovereignty which overshadoweth the worlds.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 46, ¶ 74

2 Gird up the loins of thine endeavor, that haply thou mayest guide thy neighbor to the law of God, the Most Merciful. Such an act, verily, excelleth all other acts in the sight of God, the All-Possessing, the Most High. Such must be thy steadfastness in the Cause of God, that no earthly thing whatsoever will have the power to deter thee from thy duty. Though the powers of earth be leagued against thee, though all men dispute with thee, thou must remain unshaken.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 339, CLXI

3 Wherefore, O ye friends of God, redouble your efforts, strain every nerve, till ye triumph in your servitude to the Ancient Beauty, the Manifest Light, and become the cause of spreading far and wide the rays of the Day-Star of Truth. Breathe ye into the world's worn and wasted body the fresh breath of life, and in the furrows of every region sow ye holy seed. Rise up to champion this Cause; open your lips and teach. In the meeting place of life be ye a guiding candle; in the skies of this world be dazzling stars; in the gardens of unity be birds of the spirit, singing of inner truths and mysteries.

Expend your every breath of life in this great Cause and dedicate all your days to the service of Bahá, so that in the end, safe from loss and deprivation, ye will inherit the heaped-up treasures of the realms above. . .

Wherefore, rest ye neither day nor night and seek no ease. Tell ye the secrets of servitude, follow the pathway of service, till ye attain the promised succour that cometh from the realms of God.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 271, no. 218

4 This challenge, so severe and insistent, and yet so glorious, faces no doubt primarily the individual believer on whom, in the last resort, depends the fate of the entire community. He it is who constitutes the warp and woof on which the quality and pattern of the whole fabric must depend. He it is who acts as one of the countless links in the mighty chain that now girdles the globe. He it is who serves as one of the multitude of bricks which support the structure and insure the stability of the administrative edifice now being raised in every part of the world. Without his support, at once whole-hearted, continuous and generous, every measure adopted, and every plan formulated, by the body which acts as the national representative of the community to which he belongs, is foredoomed to failure.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *Citadel of Faith*, pp. 130-131

5 Every Bahá'í, however humble or inarticulate, must become intent on fulfilling his role as a bearer of the Divine Message. Indeed, how can a true believer remain silent while around us men cry out in anguish for truth, love and unity to descend upon this world?

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *Messages from the Universal House of Justice*, p. 34

Individual Acts of Study, Service, and Teaching

Choose one or more of the following acts of service to complete before the next session.

1. Work individually or with a partner to plan a devotional gathering that includes prayers and some of the quotations in this course. Consider whether this gathering should be an informal gathering or part of a scheduled series, in your home or another location. Could you invite someone new to join you?
2. Invite a friend to your home to show loving hospitality. Consider giving the gift of a favorite passage from the writings copied onto a beautiful card. Share the response of your friend to this gift at the next session.
3. Read one or more of the following letters from the book, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh* by Shoghi Effendi, entitled: "The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh;" "The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh: Further Considerations;" "The Goal of a New World Order;" "The Golden Age of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh." Prepare a 2-minute report for the next session.

A Personal Action Plan

Complete your Personal Action Plan, perhaps while listening to quiet music. Consider also including one or more acts of study, service and teaching described above.

Closing Devotions

Close with prayers for divine assistance.



A PERSONAL ACTION PLAN

“... it is on the initiative, the resolute will of the individual to teach and to serve, that the success of the entire community depends. Well-grounded in the mighty Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh, sustained by daily prayer and reading of the Holy Word, strengthened by a continual striving to obtain a deeper understanding of the divine Teachings, illumined by a constant endeavour to relate these Teachings to current issues, nourished by observance of the laws and principles of His wondrous World Order, every individual can attain increasing measures of success in teaching. In sum, the ultimate triumph of the Cause is assured by that ‘one thing and only one thing’ so poignantly emphasized by Shoghi Effendi Effendi, namely, ‘the extent to which our own inner life and private character mirror forth in their manifold aspects the splendour of those eternal principles proclaimed by Bahá'u'lláh.’”

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, Rídván Message 1988

What specific steps can I take this week to increase my service to humanity by:



Drawing on my love for God, the power of the Covenant, and the dynamics of daily prayer?



Regular reading and study of the sacred texts?



Striving to obtain a deeper understanding of the divine teachings and relate these teachings to current issues?



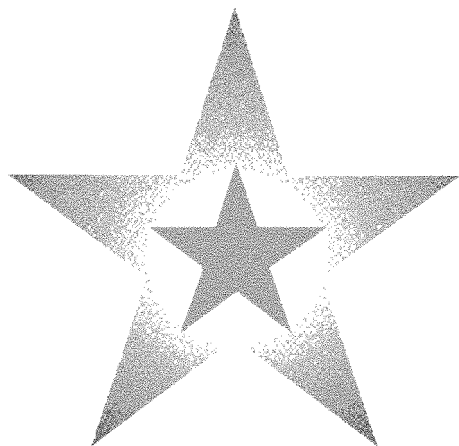
Mirroring Bahá'u'lláh's eternal principles in my inner life and private character?



Sharing these teachings with others?



What one action can I promise myself to do this week? When, where, and how can I do it? How will I be able to tell that I've done it? What result do I hope to see from my action?



*T*his is a new cycle of human power.
All the horizons of the world are luminous,
and the world will become indeed
as a garden and a paradise.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ

Circles of Unity

COURSE TWO

Some
Fundamental
Verities of the
Bahá’í Faith

Session 3

Family Unity and
World Peace

Devotions

Begin with prayer and devotions. You may want to include prayers for families as part of the opening devotions.

If desired, the following passage could be included:

According to the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh the family, being a human unit, must be educated according to the rules of sanctity. All the virtues must be taught the family. The integrity of the family bond must be constantly considered, and the rights of the individual members must not be transgressed. . . .The injury of one shall be considered the injury of all; the comfort of each, the comfort of all; the honor of one, the honor of all.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 168

Objectives of the Session

As a group, read through the learning objectives for this session.

Knowledge

To become familiar with some of the Bahá'í writings on marriage and family life.

Wisdom

To understand the relationship between family unity and world peace.

Spiritual Perception

To perceive that this is a new cycle of human power.

Eloquent Speech

To develop plans for serving one's own family.

To plan individual acts of study, service and teaching.

Consultation About Individual Acts of Service

Consider your Personal Action Plan for spiritual development, service, and teaching.

- Who has noticed an intensification of personal prayer since the last session?
- Who was able to invite someone to their home or share the gift of a passage from the writings with a friend?
- Who was able to plan and host a devotional gathering, however simple? What was the result?
- What are we learning about sharing the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh with others?

Consultation About Individual Acts of Study

Who would like to share a memorized passage or prayer?

- If you were able to study selections from the book *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, please share your new insights with the study circle.

Activity The Nature of Creative Power

1. Read the passages on the following page entitled “The Nature of Creative Power” aloud in the whole group. Briefly discuss the focus questions.
2. Then, take a drinking straw. Pinching your nose shut, breathe through the straw only—WITHOUT CHEATING!—Don’t let air leak through your lips around the straw. The only air passage should be the straw itself.
3. How might this experience serve as a metaphor for trying to live by only our own powers, without seeking divine assistance? Or how it might it illustrate trying to live only in the material world, while ignoring the divine realm?



THE NATURE OF CREATIVE POWER

Focus Questions:

What is “power”? Where does power come from? Is human power the source of happiness?

1 Everything that is hath come to be through His irresistible decree.

BAHÁ’U’LLÁH, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, ¶ 7

2 The world of existence came into being through the heat generated from the interaction between the active force and that which is its recipient. These two are the same, yet they are different. Thus doth the Great Announcement inform thee about this glorious structure. Such as communicate the generating influence and such as receive its impact are indeed created through the irresistible Word of God which is the Cause of the entire creation, while all else besides His Word are but the creatures and the effects thereof.

BAHÁ’U’LLÁH, *Tablets of Babá’u’lláh*, p. 141

3 Creation is the expression of motion. Motion is life. A moving object is a living object, whereas that which is motionless and inert is as dead. All created forms are progressive in their planes, or kingdoms of existence, under the stimulus of the power or spirit of life. The universal energy is dynamic. Nothing is stationary in the material world of outer phenomena or in the inner world of intellect and consciousness.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 140

4 This is a new cycle of human power. All the horizons of the world are luminous, and the world will become indeed as a garden and a paradise. It is the hour of unity of the sons of men and of the drawing together of all races and all classes. You are loosed from ancient superstitions which have kept men ignorant, destroying the foundation of true humanity.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *‘Abdu’l-Bahá in London*, p. 19

5 Today the world of humanity is in need of international unity and conciliation. To establish these great fundamental principles a propelling power is needed. It is self-evident that the unity of the human world and the Most Great Peace cannot be accomplished through material means. They cannot be established through political power, for the political interests of nations are various and the policies of peoples are divergent and conflicting. They cannot be founded through racial or patriotic power, for these are human powers, selfish and weak. The very nature of racial differences and patriotic prejudices prevents the realization of this unity and agreement. Therefore, it is evidenced that the promotion of the oneness of the kingdom of humanity, which is the essence of the teachings of all the Manifestations of God, is impossible except through the divine power and breaths of the Holy Spirit. Other powers are too weak and are incapable of accomplishing this.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 11-2

Activity
Family Unity and World Peace

1. Select a study partner, maximizing diversity in your partnership. Take into account such factors as age, gender, patterns of thought, ethnicity, family pattern, personality, etc. to create your diverse study teams.
2. With your study partner, read aloud the quotations on the following pages entitled “Family Unity and World Peace” and discuss the focus questions.
3. After your study and discussion, individually select a picture from the collection provided to visually represent the relationship of family unity to world peace. Share the picture with your study partner and explain your reason for choosing it.
4. Consider gluing the picture in the space below, as a reminder of your reflections. Can you also think of ways to express these ideas through your everyday actions?



FAMILY UNITY AND WORLD PEACE

Focus Questions:

The Most Great Peace, international unity, spiritual civilization—what do they mean in daily life? How specifically does a unified family promote the Most Great Peace?

1 Today the human world is in need of a great power by which these glorious principles and purposes may be executed. The cause of peace is a very great cause; it is the Cause of God, and all the forces of the world are opposed to it. Governments, for instance, consider militarism as the step to human progress, that division among men and nations is the cause of patriotism and honor, that if one nation attack and conquer another, gaining wealth, territory and glory thereby, this warfare and conquest, this bloodshed and cruelty are the cause of that victorious nation's advancement and prosperity. This is an utter mistake. Compare the nations of the world to the members of a family. A family is a nation in miniature. Simply enlarge the circle of the household, and you have the nation. Enlarge the circle of nations, and you have all humanity. The conditions surrounding the family surround the nation. The happenings in the family are the happenings in the life of the nation. Would it add to the progress and advancement of a family if dissensions should arise among its members, all fighting, pillaging each other, jealous and revengeful of injury, seeking selfish advantage? Nay, this would be the cause of the effacement of progress and advancement. So it is in the great family of nations, for nations are but an aggregate of families. Therefore, as strife and dissension destroy a family and prevent its progress, so nations are destroyed and advancement hindered.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 156-7

2 “By what process,” continued the questioner, “will this peace on earth be established? Will it come at once after a universal declaration of the Truth?”

“No, it will come about gradually,” said ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. “A plant that grows too quickly lasts but a short time. You are my family,” and he looked about with a smile, “my new children! If a family lives in unison, great results are obtained. Widen the circle; when a city lives in intimate accord greater results will follow, and a continent that is fully united will likewise unite all other continents. Then will be the time of the greatest results, for all the inhabitants of the earth belong to one native land.”

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *‘Abdu’l-Bahá in London*, p. 106

3 According to the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh the family, being a human unit, must be educated according to the rules of sanctity. All the virtues must be taught the family. The integrity of the family bond must be constantly considered, and the rights of the individual members must not be transgressed. The rights of the son, the father, the mother—none of them must be transgressed, none of them must be arbitrary. Just as the son has certain obligations to his father, the father, likewise, has certain obligations to his son. The mother, the sister and other members of the household have their certain prerogatives. All these rights and prerogatives must be conserved, yet the unity of the family must be sustained. The injury of one shall be considered the injury of all; the comfort of each, the comfort of all; the honor of one, the honor of all.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 168

4 From separation doth every kind of hurt and harm proceed, but the union of created things doth ever yield most laudable results. From the pairing of even the smallest particles in the world of being are the grace and bounty of God made manifest; and the higher the degree, the more momentous is the union. ‘Glory be to Him Who hath created all the pairs, of such things as earth produceth, and out of men themselves, and of things beyond their ken.’ And above all other unions is that between human beings, especially when it cometh to pass in the love of God. Thus is the primal oneness made to appear; thus is laid the foundation of love in the spirit.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 119, no. 87

5 O ye my two beloved children! The news of your union, as soon as it reached me, imparted infinite joy and gratitude. Praise be to God, those two faithful birds have sought shelter in one nest. I beseech God that He may enable them to raise an honoured family, for the importance of marriage lieth in the bringing up of a richly blessed family, so that with entire gladness they may, even as candles, illuminate the world. For the enlightenment of the world dependeth upon the existence of man. If man did not exist in this world, it would have been like a tree without fruit.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 120, no. 88

6 This is in truth a Bahá’í house. Every time such a house or meeting place is founded it becomes one of the greatest aids to the general development of the town and country to which it belongs. It encourages the growth of learning and science and is known for its intense spirituality and for the love it spreads among the peoples.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *Paris Talks*, pp. 72-3

Individual Acts of Study, Service, and Teaching

Choose one or more of the following acts of service to complete before the next session.

1. Memorize one of the passages from this session's reading assignments. Be prepared to recite it for the group at the next session.
2. Gather with your family for morning or evening prayers. Or copy and send the gift of a prayer to a family member at a distance.
3. Choose a specific service you can offer a family member. Give this gift of service without mentioning it to the family member. Notice what changes as a result of this secret service. Share the results at the next session.
4. Read one or both of the following letters from the book, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh* by Shoghi Effendi, entitled: "The Golden Age of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh," "America and the Most Great Peace." Prepare to offer a 2-minute report for the next session.

A Personal Action Plan

Individually prepare your Personal Plan for the coming week on the following page. Consider including one or more of the acts of study, service and teaching described above.

Closing Devotions

Close with prayers for divine assistance.



A PERSONAL ACTION PLAN

“... it is on the initiative, the resolute will of the individual to teach and to serve, that the success of the entire community depends. Well-grounded in the mighty Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh, sustained by daily prayer and reading of the Holy Word, strengthened by a continual striving to obtain a deeper understanding of the divine Teachings, illumined by a constant endeavour to relate these Teachings to current issues, nourished by observance of the laws and principles of His wondrous World Order, every individual can attain increasing measures of success in teaching. In sum, the ultimate triumph of the Cause is assured by that ‘one thing and only one thing’ so poignantly emphasized by Shoghi Effendi Effendi, namely, ‘the extent to which our own inner life and private character mirror forth in their manifold aspects the splendour of those eternal principles proclaimed by Bahá'u'lláh.’”

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, Rídván Message 1988

What specific steps can I take this week to increase my service to humanity by:



Drawing on my love for God, the power of the Covenant, and the dynamics of daily prayer?



Regular reading and study of the sacred texts?



Striving to obtain a deeper understanding of the divine teachings and relate these teachings to current issues?



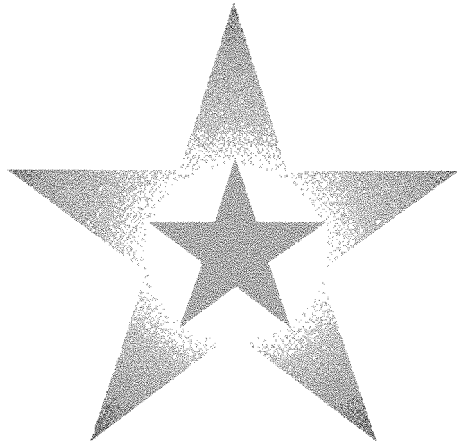
Mirroring Bahá'u'lláh's eternal principles in my inner life and private character?



Sharing these teachings with others?



What one action can I promise myself to do this week? When, where, and how can I do it? How will I be able to tell that I've done it? What result do I hope to see from my action?



*H*e doeth what He pleaseth.

He chooseth, and none may question His choice.

Whatsoever He, the Well-Beloved, ordaineth,
the same is, verily, beloved.

To this He Who is the Lord of all creation
beareth Me witness.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

Circles ^{of} Unity

COURSE TWO

Some
Fundamental
Verities of the
Bahá'í Faith

Session 4

The Source of Unity

Devotions

Begin the session with spirit-filled devotions. Consider including prayers for unity and sung or recorded music.

If desired, the following passage could be included:

This is a new cycle of human power. All the horizons of the world are luminous, and the world will become indeed as a garden and a paradise. It is the hour of unity of the sons of men and of the drawing together of all races and all classes. You are loosed from ancient superstitions which have kept men ignorant, destroying the foundation of true humanity.
‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *‘Abdu’l-Bahá in London*, p. 19

Objectives of the Session

As a group, read through the learning objectives for this session.

Knowledge

To become familiar with some of the Bahá’í writings on unity within the family.

Wisdom

To understand the importance of mutual collaboration within the family.

Spiritual Perception

To perceive some ways to promote strong, spiritually vibrant families within our own homes.

Eloquent Speech

To develop plans for strengthening one’s own family life.

To plan individual acts of study, service and teaching.

Consultation About Individual Acts of Service

- Who was able to offer a secret service to a family member? What did you observe in response to your service?
- Who was able to share prayers within the family?
- Who was able to support or host a devotional meeting?

Consultation About Individual Acts of Study

- Who would like to share a memorized prayer or passage from the writings?
- Who was able to study letters from the book, *The World Order of Babá'u'lláh*? What did you learn?
- What else would you like to share about your individual study, service, or teaching?

Activity The Source of Unity

1. Working in small study groups, read aloud the quotations on the following page entitled “The Source of Unity” and answer the focus questions.
2. While still sitting with your small group, respond to the following questions for a brief whole group discussion. The purpose of this very brief discussion is to extend the small group discussions, not to find definitive answers in the whole group.
 - Physical laws and spiritual laws are different expressions of the same fundamental principles. For instance, love may be considered the spiritual manifestation of the fundamental principle of attraction which, when considered in the physical realm, we call gravity. What are some other examples of fundamental principles expressed in spiritual and physical terms?
 - Consider the different “types of obedience” that are possible, and the varying results. HINT: How do a thrown ball, a falling tree, the sun and planets, an airplane designer, and an spacecraft flying to Jupiter all “obey” the law of gravity? Is “obedience” the same in each case? Why? How does knowledge of and conscious obedience to the law of gravity change our relationship to the law? How does this change empower us?
 - Apply this kind of thinking to the law of love. How does knowledge of and obedience to the law of love empower us?
3. Working once again with your small group, find an example from the world of nature of the power of the Covenant. Consider using pictures of nature or finding a small item outdoors to illustrate your example.
4. Share these examples in the whole group.



THE SOURCE OF UNITY

Focus Questions:

If civilization depends on marriage and family life, we are in trouble! Men and women are so different from one another—aren't they just naturally driven to disagree and be in conflict? Is there any real hope that we can really build lasting marriages and strong families? How can family life express the power of the Covenant? What do we mean when we use the word "Covenant?"

1 By nature is meant those inherent properties and necessary relations derived from the realities of things. And these realities of things, though in the utmost diversity, are yet intimately connected one with another. For these diverse realities an all-unifying agency is needed that shall link them all one with another.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *Tablet to August Forel*, p. 13

2 It hath therefore been made evident and proved that interaction, cooperation and interrelation amongst beings are under the direction and will of a motive Power which is the origin, the motive force and the pivot of all interactions in the universe.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *Tablet to August Forel*, p. 23

3 It is clear that the reality of mankind is diverse, that opinions are various and sentiments different; and this difference of opinions, of thoughts, of intelligence, of sentiments among the human species arises from essential necessity; for the differences in the degrees of existence of creatures is one of the necessities of existence, which unfolds itself in infinite forms. Therefore, we have need of a general power which may dominate the sentiments, the opinions and the thoughts of all, thanks to which these divisions may no longer have effect, and all individuals may be brought under the influence of the unity of the world of humanity. It is clear and evident that this greatest power in the human world is the love of God. It brings the different peoples under the shadow of the tent of affection; it gives to the antagonistic and hostile nations and families the greatest love and union.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 300

4 And though these infinite realities are diverse in their character yet they are in the utmost harmony and closely connected together. As one's vision is broadened and the matter observed carefully, it will be made certain that every reality is but an essential requisite of other realities.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *Tablet to August Forel*, pp. 20-1

5 Today the dynamic power of the world of existence is the power of the Covenant which like unto an artery pulsateth in the body of the contingent world and protecteth Bahá'í unity.

The Bahá'ís are commanded to establish the oneness of mankind; if they cannot unite around one point how will they be able to bring about the unity of mankind?

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 208-9, no. 183

6 If it is considered with insight, it will be seen that all the forces of the universe, in the last analysis serve the Covenant.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 228, no. 192

Activity
A Fortress on Which the Cause Relies

1. Divide into new small groups, so that young and old, males and females, and diversity of family background are as evenly balanced as possible.
2. In your group, read aloud the selected quotations, “A Fortress on Which the Cause Relies,” and underline key words and phrases. Discuss the focus questions, using the underlined words and phrases to answer the questions.
3. After time for study and discussion, share several of your group’s key words and phrases with the entire group. Record all the groups’ suggested words and phrases on chart paper so that everyone can see the entire list.
4. Once again in your small groups, create a one-sentence answer to either of the focus questions, incorporating as many of the key words and phrases as possible into that sentence.
5. Share your sentences with the whole group. Enjoy all the groups’ contributions!



A FORTRESS ON WHICH THE CAUSE RELIES

Focus Questions:

If the foundation of a new civilization is the family, and if the power to build the family is the Covenant, how can I serve the Covenant in my family? How can I make my home a fortress on which the Cause relies? And if I'm a single person living alone, how can I serve the Covenant by supporting families?

1 All should know, and in this regard attain the splendours of the sun of certitude, and be illumined thereby: Women and men have been and will always be equal in the sight of God.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. 2, p. 379

2 . . . In this new cycle, education and training are recorded in the Book of God as obligatory and not voluntary. That is, it is enjoined upon the father and mother, as a duty, to strive with all effort to train the daughter and the son, to nurse them from the breast of knowledge and to rear them in the bosom of sciences and arts. Should they neglect this matter, they shall be held responsible and worthy for reproach in the presence of the stern Lord.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 126-7, no. 98

3 A truly Bahá'í home is a true fortress upon which the Cause can rely while planning its campaigns.

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. 1, p. 399

4 Every individual believer—man, woman, youth and child—is summoned to this field of action; for it is on the initiative, the resolute will of the individual to teach and to serve, that the success of the entire community depends.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *Ridván Message*, 1988

5 The emancipation of women, the achievement of full equality between the sexes is one of the most important, though less acknowledged prerequisites of peace. The denial of such equality perpetrates an injustice against one half of the world's population and promotes in men harmful attitudes and habits that are carried from the family to the workplace, to political life, and ultimately to international relations. There are no grounds, moral, practical, or biological, upon which such denial can be justified. Only as women are welcomed into full partnership in all fields of human endeavour will the moral and psychological climate be created in which international peace can emerge.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *The Promise of World Peace*, pp. 11-2

6 The members of a family all have duties and responsibilities towards one another and to the family as a whole, and these duties and responsibilities vary from member to member because of their natural relationships. The parents have the inescapable duty to educate their children—but not vice versa; the children have the duty to obey their parents—the parents do not obey the children; the mother—not the father—bears the children, nurses them in babyhood, and is thus their first educator; hence daughters have a prior right to education over sons and, as the Guardian’s secretary has written on his behalf, ‘The task of bringing up a Bahá’í child, as emphasized time and again in Bahá’í Writings, is the chief responsibility of the mother, whose unique privilege is indeed to create in her home such conditions as would be most conducive to both his material and spiritual welfare and advancement. The training which a child first receives through his mother constitutes the strongest foundation for his future development . . .’ A corollary of this responsibility of the mother is her right to be supported by her husband—a husband has no explicit right to be supported by his wife.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. 1, p. 414

7 As soon as a Bahá’í family unit emerges, the members should feel responsible for making the collective life of the family a spiritual reality, animated by divine love and inspired by the ennobling principles of the Faith. To achieve this purpose, the reading of the Sacred Writings and prayers should ideally become a daily family activity. As far as the teaching work is concerned, just as individuals are called upon to adopt teaching goals, the family itself could adopt its own goals. In this way the friends could make of their families strong healthy units, bright candles for the diffusion of the light of the Kingdom, and powerful centres to attract the heavenly confirmations.

ON BEHALF OF THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *Bahá’í Marriage and Family Life*, p. 76

Individual Acts of Study, Service, and Teaching
Choose one or more of the following actions to complete before the next session.

1. Memorize one of the passages from this session's reading assignment. Be prepared to recite it for the group at the next session.
2. Take a nature walk with your family or with children from another family. While walking look for evidences of the powers of attraction, unity, and obedience in the world of nature. Bring to the next session an example from nature of one of these powers.
3. Consult with your family about how your home can become a fortress on which the Cause relies. Choose one specific line of action to initiate prior to the next session. Share the results with the group at the next session.
4. Study one or more of the following passages about marriage (sections 84-92, pp. 117-22) or child-rearing (sections 95-125, pp. 124-44) in *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*. Share a 2-minute overview of your study at the next session.

A Personal Action Plan

Individually prepare your Personal Plan for the coming week on the following page. Consider including one or more of the acts of study, service and teaching described above.

Closing Devotions

Close with prayers for divine assistance.



A PERSONAL ACTION PLAN

“... it is on the initiative, the resolute will of the individual to teach and to serve, that the success of the entire community depends. Well-grounded in the mighty Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh, sustained by daily prayer and reading of the Holy Word, strengthened by a continual striving to obtain a deeper understanding of the divine Teachings, illumined by a constant endeavour to relate these Teachings to current issues, nourished by observance of the laws and principles of His wondrous World Order, every individual can attain increasing measures of success in teaching. In sum, the ultimate triumph of the Cause is assured by that ‘one thing and only one thing’ so poignantly emphasized by Shoghi Effendi Effendi, namely, ‘the extent to which our own inner life and private character mirror forth in their manifold aspects the splendour of those eternal principles proclaimed by Bahá'u'lláh.’”

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, Rídván Message 1988

What specific steps can I take this week to increase my service to humanity by:



Drawing on my love for God, the power of the Covenant, and the dynamics of daily prayer?



Regular reading and study of the sacred texts?



Striving to obtain a deeper understanding of the divine teachings and relate these teachings to current issues?



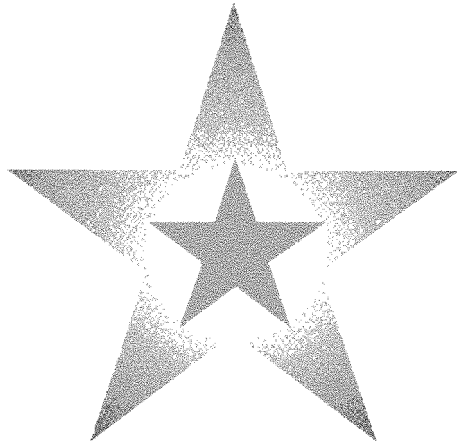
Mirroring Bahá'u'lláh's eternal principles in my inner life and private character?



Sharing these teachings with others?



What one action can I promise myself to do this week? When, where, and how can I do it? How will I be able to tell that I've done it? What result do I hope to see from my action?



*T*he Purpose of the one true God,
exalted be His glory,
in revealing Himself unto men
is to lay bare those gems that lie hidden
within the mine of their true and inmost selves.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

Circles of Unity

COURSE TWO

Some
Fundamental
Verities of the
Bahá'í Faith

Session 5

Expanding Circles of
Unity

Devotions

Begin the session with spirit-filled prayers and music. You may also include the following quotation:

The form of the seed was sacrificed for the tree, but its perfections, because of this sacrifice, became evident and apparent—the tree, the branches, the leaves and the blossoms being concealed in the seed. When the form of the seed was sacrificed, its perfections appeared in the perfect form of leaves, blossoms and fruits.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 120

Objectives of the Session

As a group, read through the learning objectives for this session.

Knowledge

To become familiar with some of the Bahá’í writings on unity, sacrifice, and freedom.

Wisdom

To understand the power of love.

Spiritual Perception

To perceive some of the varied gifts of family life.

Eloquent Speech

To create a gift card for a member of one’s family.

To memorize a short passage from the Bahá’í writings.

To plan individual acts of study, service and teaching.

Consultation About Individual Acts of Service

- Were you able to go on a nature walk with children? What evidence did you see of the powers of attraction, unity, or obedience in the world of nature?
- Who was able to plan a family consultation? Would you like to share the results?

Consultation About Individual Acts of Study

- If you were able to memorize a passage from the last session, please share it with the group at this time.
- Were you able to study passages from the book, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*? What did you learn?

1. In your study circle, read aloud the quotations on the following pages entitled “Expanding Circles of Unity.” Briefly discuss the focus questions.
2. Then, privately consider these questions:
 - Whether in the role of parent, child, spouse, or single individual, how can I promote the oneness of the world of humanity by encouraging a strong and vibrant family life?
 - What specific steps can I take today to carry my idea into action?Record your ideas by taking notes or drawing in the box on page 61.
3. After several minutes of quiet reflection time, create a gift card for a family member or for a member of your spiritual family, using blank note cards and the assorted art materials provided for this purpose. Consider including a favorite passage studied in this session. Make your card as beautiful and as heartfelt as possible. Please allow yourself sufficient time to complete this key activity. You may also complete your card after the session is over, if there is not time to complete it during this session. Plan to give or mail your card prior to the next session.
4. After most of the friends in the study circle have completed the gift card, pause a moment to consider the qualities of a gift. Consider a wrapped gift. As a group, list as many different names as you can for this object—in as many languages as possible
5. Briefly discuss: Do different names, or different wrappings, change the essential nature of the gift?
6. Imagine that different people—different in their appearance, different in the way they speak, different in their names, different in their preferences—give you different gifts, at different times, for different reasons. Briefly discuss the following questions:
 - Are some gifts more pleasing to us than others? Why or why not?
 - Is an urgently needed item always the best gift to give? Why or why not? To receive?
 - Are we always aware of the gifts we receive, or who gives them to us? Why or why not?
 - Are there times it’s better to know, or not?
 - How might gift giving be a metaphor for relations within the family?

Note: As you complete your gift card, you may choose to move on to the memorization activity while other members of the study circle continue working on their cards.



EXPANDING CIRCLES OF UNITY

Focus Questions:

The family is the “laboratory” within which new human potentialities are created. How can the fullness of potential be released in the family, without creating simply destructive individualism? Where is the balance between being true to oneself and sacrificing oneself for others?

1 The Purpose of the one true God, exalted be His glory, in revealing Himself unto men is to lay bare those gems that lie hidden within the mine of their true and inmost selves. That the divers communions of the earth, and the manifold systems of religious belief, should never be allowed to foster the feelings of animosity among men, is, in this Day, of the essence of the Faith of God and His Religion. . . .

The utterance of God is a lamp, whose light is these words: Ye are the fruits of one tree, and the leaves of one branch. Deal ye one with another with the utmost love and harmony, with friendliness and fellowship.

BAHÁ’U’LLÁH, *Gleanings from the Writings of Babá’u’lláh*, pp. 287-8, CXXXII

2 Nothing can be effected in the world, not even conceivably, without unity and agreement, and the perfect means for engendering fellowship and union is true religion.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, p. 74

3 How good it is if the friends be as close as sheaves of light, if they stand together side by side in a firm unbroken line. For now have the rays of reality from the Sun of the world of existence, united in adoration all the worshippers of this light; and these rays have, through infinite grace, gathered all peoples together within this wide-spreading shelter; therefore must all souls become as one soul, and all hearts as one heart. Let all be set free from the multiple identities that were born of passion and desire, and in the oneness of their love for God find a new way of life.

. . . Release yourselves from this world’s life, and at every stage long ye for non-existence; for when the ray returneth to the sun, it is wiped out, and when the drop cometh to the sea, it vanisheth, and when the true lover findeth his Beloved, he yieldeth up his soul.

. . . Do all ye can to become wholly weary of self, and bind yourselves to that Countenance of Splendours; and once ye have reached such heights of servitude, ye will find, gathered within your shadow, all created things. This is boundless grace; this is the highest sovereignty; this is the life that dieth not. All else save this is at the last but manifest perdition and great loss.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 76-7, no. 36

4 The form of the seed was sacrificed for the tree, but its perfections, because of this sacrifice, became evident and apparent—the tree, the branches, the leaves and the blossoms being concealed in the seed. When the form of the seed was sacrificed, its perfections appeared in the perfect form of leaves, blossoms and fruits.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 120

5 . . . with regard to the peoples who clamor for freedom: the moderate freedom which guarantees the welfare of the world of mankind and maintains and preserves the universal relationships, is found in its fullest power and extension in the teachings of Bahá’u’lláh.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 305, no. 227

My Ideas:

Activity

Memorization

Team with another person to memorize this short quotation from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Select a strategy for memorization such as gestures and movement, music, repeated writing, or oral repetition as you work together.

When you love a member of your family or a compatriot, let it be with a ray of the Infinite Love! Let it be in God, and for God! Wherever you find the attributes of God love that person, whether he be of your family or of another. Shed the light of a boundless love on every human being whom you meet. . . .

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *Paris Talks*, p. 38

Alternatively, select another favorite passage to memorize from this course.

Individual Acts of Study, Service, and Teaching

Choose one or more of the following actions to complete before the next session.

1. Memorize one of the passages from today’s study. Share it with a family member. Be prepared to recite it for the group at the next session.
2. Find a time to gather your family for morning or evening prayers and readings on a regular basis.
3. Invite a seeker (or a family of seekers) to your home to show loving hospitality. Consider sharing the ideas discussed in this session with those friends. Share the response of your friends at the next session.
4. Read one or both of the following letters from the book, *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh* by Shoghi Effendi, entitled: “The Golden Age of the Cause of Bahá’u’lláh,” “America and the Most Great Peace.” Prepare a 2-minute report for the next session.
5. Host or participate in a devotional meeting.

A Personal Action Plan

Complete your Personal Plan for the coming week. Consider including one or more of the acts of study, service and teaching listed above.

Closing Devotions

Close with prayers for divine assistance.



A PERSONAL ACTION PLAN

“... it is on the initiative, the resolute will of the individual to teach and to serve, that the success of the entire community depends. Well-grounded in the mighty Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh, sustained by daily prayer and reading of the Holy Word, strengthened by a continual striving to obtain a deeper understanding of the divine Teachings, illumined by a constant endeavour to relate these Teachings to current issues, nourished by observance of the laws and principles of His wondrous World Order, every individual can attain increasing measures of success in teaching. In sum, the ultimate triumph of the Cause is assured by that ‘one thing and only one thing’ so poignantly emphasized by Shoghi Effendi Effendi, namely, ‘the extent to which our own inner life and private character mirror forth in their manifold aspects the splendour of those eternal principles proclaimed by Bahá'u'lláh.’”

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, Rídván Message 1988

What specific steps can I take this week to increase my service to humanity by:



Drawing on my love for God, the power of the Covenant, and the dynamics of daily prayer?



Regular reading and study of the sacred texts?



Striving to obtain a deeper understanding of the divine teachings and relate these teachings to current issues?



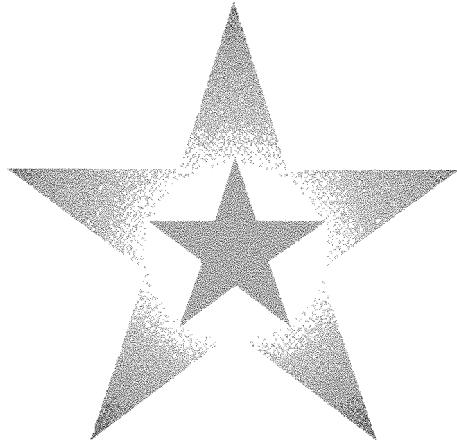
Mirroring Bahá'u'lláh's eternal principles in my inner life and private character?



Sharing these teachings with others?



What one action can I promise myself to do this week? When, where, and how can I do it? How will I be able to tell that I've done it? What result do I hope to see from my action?



*T*he sword of a virtuous character
and upright conduct
is sharper than blades of steel.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

Circles ^{of} Unity

COURSE TWO

Some
Fundamental
Verities of the
Bahá'í Faith

Session 6

Fostering Unified
Action

Devotions

Begin the session with spirit-filled devotions. Consider including prayers for unity and sung or recorded music, and the following passage, if desired:

If ye will follow earnestly the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, ye shall indeed become the light of the world, the soul for the body of the world, the comfort and help for humanity, and the source of salvation for the whole universe.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *Paris Talks*, pp. 113-4

Objectives of the Session

As a group, read through the learning objectives for this session.

Knowledge

To become familiar with some of the Bahá'í writings on consultation and on fostering unified action.

Wisdom

To understand ways to influence others while building unity.

Spiritual Perception

To perceive the power of individual action.

To perceive the relationship between sacrifice and fostering world civilization.

Eloquent Speech

To be able to share with others some strategies for fostering unified action.

To plan individual acts of study, teaching and service.

Consultation About Individual Acts of Service

- Who invited a seeker (or family of seekers) to their home? Were you able to share the spiritual significance of the family with the seeker? What happened?
- Who was able to find a time for regular prayers and readings with the family? What was the result?
- Who was able to host or participate in a devotional meeting? What was a highlight of the gathering?

Consultation About Individual Acts of Study

- Who would like to share a memorized passage from the writings?
- Who was able to study letters from the book, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*? What did you learn?
- Who else would like to share the results of their study, service and teaching over the past week?

Activity Faith and Action

1. Read aloud the quotations on the following page entitled “Faith and Action” and discuss the focus question.
2. After taking time to read the quotations and answer the question, identify one or two real-life examples from everyday life that illustrate the relationship between faith and action.
3. Then, consider a simple demonstration of the power of faith as it is translated into action.

Note to Facilitator: see instructions for this demonstration in the Appendix, p. 125.



FAITH AND ACTION

Focus Question:

What is the relationship between faith and action?

1 Briefly, if to the knowledge of God is joined the love of God, and attraction, ecstasy and goodwill, a righteous action is then perfect and complete. Otherwise, though a good action is praiseworthy, yet if it is not sustained by the knowledge of God, the love of God, and a sincere intention, it is imperfect. . . .

Now, today, we meet with people in the world who, in truth, desire the universal good, and who according to their power occupy themselves in protecting the oppressed and in aiding the poor: they are enthusiastic for peace and the universal well-being. Although from this point of view they may be perfect, if they are deprived of the knowledge and love of God, they are imperfect.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 302

2 Although a person of good deeds is acceptable at the Threshold of the Almighty, yet it is first ‘to know,’ and then ‘to do.’ Although a blind man produceth a most wonderful and exquisite art, yet he is deprived of seeing it. Consider how most animals labor for man, draw loads and facilitate travel; yet, as they are ignorant, they receive no reward for this toil and labor . . . Herein lies the difference: By faith is meant, first, conscious knowledge, and second, the practice of good deeds.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *Bahá’í World Faith*, pp. 382-383

3 The attainment of any object is conditioned upon knowledge, volition and action.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 157

4 The wrong in the world continues to exist just because people talk only of their ideals, and do not strive to put them into practice. If actions took the place of words, the world’s misery would very soon be changed into comfort.

A man who does great good, and talks not of it, is on the way to perfection. The man who has accomplished a small good and magnifies it in his speech is worth very little.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *Paris Talks*, p. 4

5 The great and fundamental teachings of Bahá’u’lláh are the oneness of God and unity of mankind. This is the bond of union among Bahá’ís all over the world. They become united among themselves, then unite others. It is impossible to unite unless united. . . .

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 156

Activity
The Role of Sacrifice

1. Working in small teams, select one of the stories entitled “The Role of Sacrifice” to read aloud and to use as the basis for answering the focus question.
2. After taking time to read and consult, work with your team to create a simple visual image showing the relationship between sacrifice, action, and results. Your visual image may be a drawing, design, construction, or arrangement of people. In your visual image, represent both what is lost and what is gained.
3. Share your image with the whole group. Briefly discuss: How do these images help us understand the relationship between these concepts?



THE ROLE OF SACRIFICE

Focus Question:

What is the relationship between faith, action, and sacrifice?

¹ Qurratu'l-'Ayn [Táhirih] was a Persian woman without fame and importance—unknown, like all other Persian women. When she saw Bahá'u'lláh, she changed completely, visibly, and looked within another world. The reins of volition were taken out of her hands by heavenly attraction. She was so overcome that physical susceptibilities ceased. Her husband, her sons and her family arose in the greatest hostility against Bahá'u'lláh. She became so attracted to the divine threshold that she forsook everything and went forth to the plain of Badasht, no fear in her heart, dauntless, intrepid, openly proclaiming the message of light which had come to her. The Persian government stood against her. They made every effort to quiet her, they imprisoned her in the governor's house, but she continued to speak. Then she was taken and killed. To her very last breath she spoke with fervid eloquence and so became famous for her complete attraction in the path of God. If she had not seen Bahá'u'lláh, no such effect would have been produced. She had read and heard the teachings of scriptures all her life, but the action and enkindlement were missing. All women in Persia are enveloped in veils in public. So completely covered are they that even the hand is not visible. This rigid veiling is unspeakable. Qurratu'l-'Ayn tore off her veils and went forth fearlessly. She was like a lioness. Her action caused a great turmoil throughout the land of Persia. So excessive and compulsory is the requirement for veiling in the East that the people in the West have no idea of the excitement and indignation produced by the appearance of an unveiled woman. Qurratu'l-'Ayn lost all thought of herself and was unconscious of fear in her attraction to God. . . . This is the beginning of woman's emancipation from the thralldom of centuries. Qurratu'l-'Ayn was really the liberator of all Persian women.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 251-2

2 When . . . the unmistakable signs of Israel's disintegration, abasement, subjection and annihilation had become apparent, then the sweet and holy breathings of the Spirit of God (Jesus) were shed across Jordan and the land of Galilee; the cloud of Divine pity overspread those skies, and rained down the copious waters of the spirit, and after those swelling showers that came from the most great Sea, the Holy Land put forth its perfume and blossomed with the knowledge of God. Then the solemn Gospel song rose up till it rang in the ears of those who dwell in the chambers of heaven, and at the touch of Jesus' breath the unmindful dead that lay in the graves of their ignorance lifted up their heads to receive eternal life. For the space of three years, that Luminary of perfections walked about the fields of Palestine and in the neighborhood of Jerusalem, leading all men into the dawn of redemption, teaching them how to acquire spiritual qualities and attributes well-pleasing to God. Had the people of Israel believed in that beauteous Countenance, they would have girded themselves to serve and obey Him heart and soul, and through the quickening fragrance of His Spirit they would have regained their lost vitality and gone on to new victories.

Alas, of what avail was it; they turned away and opposed Him. They rose up and tormented that Source of Divine knowledge, that point where the Revelation had come down—all except for a handful who, turning their faces toward God, were cleansed of the stain of this world and found their way to the heights of the placeless Realm. They inflicted every agony on that Well-spring of grace until it became impossible for Him to live in the towns, and still He lifted up the flag of salvation and solidly established the fundamentals of human righteousness, that essential basis of true civilization.

In the fifth chapter of Matthew beginning with the thirty-seventh verse He [Jesus] counsels: "Resist not evil and injury with its like; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." And further, from the forty-third verse: "Ye have heard that it hath been said, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and thou shalt not vex thine enemy with enmity.' But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth down the rain of His mercy on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same?"

Many were the counsels of this kind that were uttered by that Dayspring of Divine wisdom, and souls who have become characterized with such attributes of holiness are the distilled essence of creation and the sources of true civilization.

Jesus, then, founded the sacred Law on a basis of moral character and complete spirituality, and for those who believed in Him He delineated a special way of life which constitutes the highest type of action on earth.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, pp. 82-3

Activity
Fostering Unified Action

1. Continue working with your same small team to read aloud the quotations on the next page entitled “Fostering United Action” and answer the focus question.
2. After taking time to read and consult, enhance your visual image created for the previous activity by adding a representation of strategies for influencing others while building unity.
3. Share these enhanced images in the whole group. Admire all contributions!



Focus Question:

We know from the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh that the most effective action is unified action. How can we influence others while building unity?

1 The sword of a virtuous character and upright conduct is sharper than blades of steel.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 30

2 O people of Bahá! Subdue the citadels of men's hearts with the swords of wisdom and of utterance. They that dispute, as prompted by their desires, are indeed wrapped in a palpable veil.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 56

3 Utterance must needs possess penetrating power. For if bereft of this quality it would fail to exert influence. And this penetrating influence dependeth on the spirit being pure and the heart stainless. Likewise it needeth moderation, without which the hearer would be unable to bear it, rather he would manifest opposition from the very outset. And moderation will be obtained by blending utterance with the tokens of divine wisdom which are recorded in the sacred Books and Tablets. Thus when the essence of one's utterance is endowed with these two requisites it will prove highly effective and will be the prime factor in transforming the souls of men.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 198-9

4 One word may be likened unto fire, another unto light, and the influence which both exert is manifest in the world. Therefore an enlightened man of wisdom should primarily speak with words as mild as milk, that the children of men may be nurtured and edified thereby and may attain the ultimate goal of human existence which is the station of true understanding and nobility.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 173

5 Sow not, O people, the seeds of dissension amongst men, and contend not with your neighbor. Be patient under all conditions, and place your whole trust and confidence in God. Aid ye your Lord with the sword of wisdom and of utterance. This indeed well cometh the station of man.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 296, CXXXVI

6 The heaven of divine wisdom is illumined with the two luminaries of consultation and compassion. Take ye counsel together in all matters, inasmuch as consultation is the lamp of guidance which leadeth the way, and is the bestower of understanding.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 169

Individual Acts of Study, Service and Teaching

Choose one or more of the following actions to complete before the next session.

1. Memorize an additional passage from this session's readings. Be prepared to recite it for the next session.
2. Consult with your family about the specific line of action that you have chosen in your service to the Cause of God. Invite your family to collaborate with you in this service.
3. Many of the stories in the Core Curriculum storybooks describe great deeds of faith in action. Select one or more stories from *The Central Figures: Bahá'u'lláh, Vol. 1, 2, or 3* and read it aloud with children in your family or with other children. Discuss the relationship between faith and action.
4. Teach a child a prayer or a short quotation from the Bahá'í writings.
5. Read more about the life of Táhirih in the books: *Memorials of the Faithful*, *The Dawnbreakers*, *God Passes By*, *Táhirih the Pure*, or *Táhirih*. Prepare a brief report for the next session.
6. Host or participate in a devotional meeting. Invite a friend!

A Personal Action Plan

Complete your Personal Plan for the coming week. Consider including one or more of the acts of study, service and teaching listed above.

Closing Devotions

Conclude the session with prayers and singing or music.



A PERSONAL ACTION PLAN

“... it is on the initiative, the resolute will of the individual to teach and to serve, that the success of the entire community depends. Well-grounded in the mighty Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh, sustained by daily prayer and reading of the Holy Word, strengthened by a continual striving to obtain a deeper understanding of the divine Teachings, illumined by a constant endeavour to relate these Teachings to current issues, nourished by observance of the laws and principles of His wondrous World Order, every individual can attain increasing measures of success in teaching. In sum, the ultimate triumph of the Cause is assured by that ‘one thing and only one thing’ so poignantly emphasized by Shoghi Effendi Effendi, namely, ‘the extent to which our own inner life and private character mirror forth in their manifold aspects the splendour of those eternal principles proclaimed by Bahá'u'lláh.’”

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, Rídván Message 1988

What specific steps can I take this week to increase my service to humanity by:



Drawing on my love for God, the power of the Covenant, and the dynamics of daily prayer?



Regular reading and study of the sacred texts?



Striving to obtain a deeper understanding of the divine teachings and relate these teachings to current issues?



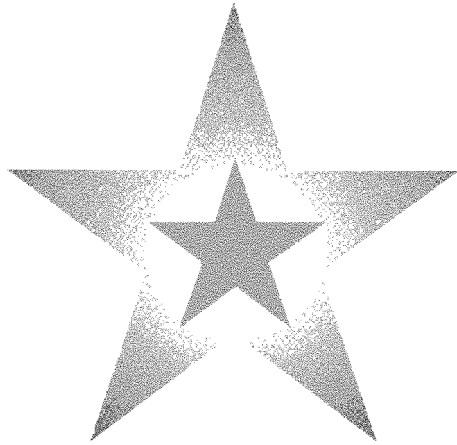
Mirroring Bahá'u'lláh's eternal principles in my inner life and private character?



Sharing these teachings with others?



What one action can I promise myself to do this week? When, where, and how can I do it? How will I be able to tell that I've done it? What result do I hope to see from my action?



*T*ake ye counsel together in all matters,
inasmuch as consultation is the lamp of guidance
which leadeth the way,
and is the bestower of understanding.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

Circles ^{of} Unity

COURSE TWO

Some
Fundamental
Verities of the
Bahá'í Faith

Session 7

Principles and
Process of
Consultation

Devotions

Begin the session with prayers and music. You may also include the following passage:

O ye that dwell on earth! The distinguishing feature that marketh the pre-eminent character of this Supreme Revelation consisteth in that We have, on the one hand, blotted out from the pages of God's holy Book whatsoever hath been the cause of strife, of malice and mischief amongst the children of men, and have, on the other, laid down the essential prerequisites of concord, of understanding, of complete and enduring unity. Well is it with them that keep My statutes.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 84

Objectives of the Session

As a group, read through the learning objectives for this session.

Knowledge

To become familiar with some of the writings on consultation.

Wisdom

To understand ways to influence others while building unity.

Spiritual Perception

To gain insight into the issues of contemporary society.

Eloquent Speech

To demonstrate processes of consultation.

To plan individual acts of study, teaching and service.

Consultation About Individual Acts of Service

- Who chose to consult as a family and select a path of service as a family? What happened?
- Who chose to share stories from *The Central Figures: Bahá'u'lláh* storybook series with children? How did they respond?
- Who chose to teach a child a prayer or a short passage from the writings? Who did you teach?
- If you participated in a devotional meeting, what was a highlight from that gathering?

Consultation About Individual Acts of Study

- Who would like to share a memorized passage from the writings?
- Were you able to learn more about the life of Táhírih? Please share one thing that you especially admire about her life of service.
- What else would you like to share about your study, service and teaching over the past week?

Activity *Principles and Process of Consultation*

1. Work in teams of two to read the quotations on the following pages entitled “Principles and Process of Consultation” and answer the focus questions.
2. Recall a time you have seen these qualities and principles in action. Share your experiences with each other.
3. Read the quotations again, this time highlighting key words and phrases from these quotations that indicate the attitudes and actions that foster true consultation.
4. In your team, create a 2-minute dramatic sketch that illustrates the principles or process of consultation. Incorporate the recitation of a brief passage that you studied into the dramatic sketch.
5. Share your presentation with the whole group.

Briefly discuss: How can these simple dramatic sketches help us learn to consult more effectively in our families, our communities, and our work?



PRINCIPLES AND PROCESS OF CONSULTATION

Focus Questions:

What are some of the principles that are essential to consultation? How does consultation differ from other common means of seeking to move toward collective action?

1 In this Cause consultation is of vital importance, but spiritual conference and not the mere voicing of personal views is intended. In France I was present at a session of the senate, but the experience was not impressive. Parliamentary procedure should have for its object the attainment of the light of truth upon questions presented and not furnish a battleground for opposition and self-opinion. Antagonism and contradiction are unfortunate and always destructive to truth. In the parliamentary meeting mentioned, altercation and useless quibbling were frequent; the result, mostly confusion and turmoil; even in one instance a physical encounter took place between two members. It was not consultation but comedy.

The purpose is to emphasize the statement that consultation must have for its object the investigation of truth. He who expresses an opinion should not voice it as correct and right but set it forth as a contribution to the consensus of opinion, for the light of reality becomes apparent when two opinions coincide. A spark is produced when flint and steel come together. Man should weigh his opinions with the utmost serenity, calmness and composure. Before expressing his own views he should carefully consider the views already advanced by others. If he finds that a previously expressed opinion is more true and worthy, he should accept it immediately and not willfully hold to an opinion of his own. By this excellent method he endeavors to arrive at unity and truth. Opposition and division are deplorable. It is better then to have the opinion of a wise, sagacious man; otherwise, contradiction and altercation, in which varied and divergent views are presented, will make it necessary for a judicial body to render decision upon the question. Even a majority opinion or consensus may be incorrect. A thousand people may hold to one view and be mistaken, whereas one sagacious person may be right. Therefore, true consultation is spiritual conference in the attitude and atmosphere of love. Members must love each other in the spirit of fellowship in order that good results may be forthcoming. Love and fellowship are the foundation.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 72-3

2 They must, when coming together, turn their faces to the Kingdom on High and ask aid from the Realm of Glory. They must then proceed with the utmost devotion, courtesy, dignity, care and moderation to express their views. They must in every matter search out the truth and not insist upon their own opinion, for stubbornness and persistence in one’s views will lead ultimately to discord and wrangling and the truth will remain hidden.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 88, no. 45

3 For it has been directly witnessed in certain foreign countries that following on the establishment of parliaments those bodies actually distressed and confused the people and their well-meant reforms produced maleficent results. While the setting up of parliaments, the organizing of assemblies of consultation, constitutes the very foundation and bedrock of government, there are several essential requirements which these institutions must fulfill. First, the elected members must be righteous, God-fearing, high-minded, incorruptible. Second, they must be fully cognizant, in every particular, of the laws of God, informed as to the highest principles of law, versed in the rules which govern the management of internal affairs and the conduct of foreign relations, skilled in the useful arts of civilization, and content with their lawful emoluments.

Let it not be imagined that members of this type would be impossible to find. Through the grace of God and His chosen ones, and the high endeavors of the devoted and the consecrated, every difficulty can be easily resolved, every problem however complex will prove simpler than blinking an eye.

If, however, the members of these consultative assemblies are inferior, ignorant, uninformed of the laws of government and administration, unwise, of low aim, indifferent, idle, self-seeking, no benefit will accrue from the organizing of such bodies.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, pp. 18-9

4 Man must consult on all matters, whether major or minor, so that he may become cognizant of what is good. Consultation giveth him insight into things and enableth him to delve into questions which are unknown. The light of truth shineth from the faces of those who engage in consultation. Such consultation causeth the living waters to flow in the meadows of man’s reality, the rays of ancient glory to shine upon him, and the tree of his being to be adorned with wondrous fruit. The members who are consulting, however, should behave in the utmost love, harmony and sincerity towards each other. The principle of consultation is one of the most fundamental elements of the divine edifice. Even in their ordinary affairs the individual members of society should consult.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. 1, p. 97

5 Not infrequently, nay oftentimes, the most lowly, untutored and inexperienced among the friends will, by the sheer inspiring force of selfless and ardent devotion, contribute a distinct and memorable share to a highly involved discussion in any given Assembly.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *Bahá’í Administration*, p. 79

6 Bahá’u’lláh also stressed the importance of consultation. We should not think this worthwhile method of seeking solutions is confined to the administrative institutions of the Cause. Family consultation employing full and frank discussion, and animated by awareness of the need for moderation and balance, can be the panacea for domestic conflict.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. I, pp. 412-3

Activity

Clarifying Vision: Many Issues Coming to a Head

1. Work in different teams of two. Read the quotations on the following page entitled “Clarifying Vision: Many Issues Coming to a Head” and answer the focus questions.
2. Create a second brief dramatic sketch to illustrate a realistic situation in everyday life in which a person of any age raises a question about what is happening in the world today. Demonstrate a response to the question that is expressed in the spirit of consultation.
3. Share your brief dramatic sketch in the whole group. Discuss: How does the spirit of consultation assist us to share a world-embracing vision with others?



CLARIFYING VISION: MANY ISSUES COMING TO A HEAD

Focus Questions:

How do these passages help us further clarify and focus our understanding of the underlying causes of the trouble and crises in our times? How does clarity of vision help us to be more effective in addressing the troubles and crises around us? In what ways is a world-embracing vision helpful to individuals, families, and communities?

1 . . . the condition that the world is in is bringing many issues to a head. It would be perhaps impossible to find a nation or people not in a state of crisis today. The materialism, the lack of true religion and the consequent baser forces in human nature which are being released, have brought the whole world to the brink of probably the greatest crisis it has ever faced or will have to face.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *Lights of Guidance*, p. 131

2 Indeed the chief reason for the evils now rampant in society is the lack of spirituality. The materialistic civilization of our age has so much absorbed the energy and interest of mankind that people in general do no longer feel the necessity of raising themselves above the forces and conditions of their daily material existence. There is not sufficient demand for things that we call spiritual to differentiate them from the needs and requirements of our physical existence.

The universal crisis affecting mankind is, therefore, essentially spiritual in its causes.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *Directives of the Guardian*, p. 86

3 . . . the ever-increasing confusion of the world, threatened as never before with disruptive forces, fierce rivalries, fresh commotions and grave disorder, has well-nigh overwhelmed the heart and damped the zeal of even the most enthusiastic believer in the destiny of mankind.

And yet, how often we seem to forget the clear and repeated warnings of our beloved Master, who, in particular during the concluding years of His mission on earth, laid stress on the “severe mental tests” that would inevitably sweep over His loved ones of the West—tests that would purge, purify and prepare them for their noble mission in life.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *Bahá’í Administration*, p. 50

4 The passionate and violent happenings that have, in recent years, strained to almost the point of complete breakdown the political and economic structure of society are too numerous and complex to attempt, within the limitations of this general survey, to arrive at an adequate estimate of their character. Nor have these tribulations, grievous as they have been, seemed to have reached their climax, and exerted the full force of their destructive power. The whole world, wherever and however we survey it, offers us the sad and pitiful spectacle of a vast, an enfeebled, and moribund organism, which is being torn politically and strangulated economically by forces it has ceased to either control or comprehend.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 188

5 The gross materialism that engulfs the entire nation at the present hour; the attachment to worldly things that enshrouds the souls of men; the fears and anxieties that distract their minds; the pleasure and dissipations that fill their time, the prejudices and animosities that darken their outlook, the apathy and lethargy that paralyze their spiritual faculties—these are among the formidable obstacles that stand in the path of every would-be warrior in the service of Bahá'u'lláh, obstacles which he must battle against and surmount in his crusade for the redemption of his own countrymen.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *Citadel of Faith*, p. 148

6 Surely the world, contracted and transformed into a single highly complex organism by the marvellous progress achieved in the realm of physical science, by the world-wide expansion of commerce and industry, and struggling, under the pressure of world economic forces, amidst the pitfalls of a materialistic civilization, stands in dire need of a restatement of the Truth underlying all the Revelations of the past in a language suited to its essential requirements.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *The World Order of Baha'u'llah*, p. 47

Individual Acts of Study, Service, and Teaching
To be completed before the next session

Conclude the session by reading aloud the following story from Joseph Sheppherd's experience as a pioneer among the Ntumu people of Cameroon:

"When the all of the honey had been squeezed out of the hive the old man folded up the leaves into a cone-shaped package and sealed the top closed with a spine he had cut from a nearby vine. . . .

"He pointed to the package of honey and said . . . 'Man is a leaf of honey.'

" . . . Papa Atanga started off down the path that led to the village . . . As we walked along he explained, 'I will take this leaf of honey back to my first-wife to store. She will drain the honey from the leaf into a special bottle she keeps. When she is finished she will give the leaf to the children. Each will lick the leaf and find some honey to sweeten the tongue. When the last child has finished, he will throw the leaf out behind the hut where the goats sleep. They will have their turn. The other animals, the chickens, the flies, ants and so on will come and find their share of honey left on the leaf. . . .'

"The old man paused and stared into my soul with his black eyes, and for the first time smiled at me. 'Man is a leaf of honey. This is what you need to know about us.' He repeated this several times to make sure I understood, and then continued: 'Man is good and man is precious and, like the leaf of honey, his goodness is inexhaustible. When you think that there is none left, there is still some there to find. This you should not forget.'"

JOSEPH SHEPPHERD, *A Leaf of Honey*, pp. 3-5

After a brief period of silence, choose one or more of the following actions to complete prior to the next session:

1. Memorize an additional passage from this session's reading assignment. Be prepared to recite it for the next session.
2. Share your insights about the principles and practices of consultation with your family or members of your household. Convene a family or household consultation about an important topic such as daily prayers and readings, the family's service to humanity, family service within the household, or family unity.
3. Invite a friend or acquaintance or a family to your home to show loving hospitality. Consider how you can share the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh to influence the visitor's heart while building unity. Share the results of this gathering at the next session.
4. Read passages from *Consultation: A Compilation*, prepared by the Research Department of the Universal House of Justice. Share your insights at the next session.
5. Support your local children's classes or devotional meetings. Invite a friend to go with you.

A Personal Action Plan

Complete your Personal Plan for the coming week. Consider including one or more of the acts of study, service and teaching listed above.

Closing Devotions

Close with prayers and singing or music.



A PERSONAL ACTION PLAN

“... it is on the initiative, the resolute will of the individual to teach and to serve, that the success of the entire community depends. Well-grounded in the mighty Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh, sustained by daily prayer and reading of the Holy Word, strengthened by a continual striving to obtain a deeper understanding of the divine Teachings, illumined by a constant endeavour to relate these Teachings to current issues, nourished by observance of the laws and principles of His wondrous World Order, every individual can attain increasing measures of success in teaching. In sum, the ultimate triumph of the Cause is assured by that ‘one thing and only one thing’ so poignantly emphasized by Shoghi Effendi Effendi, namely, ‘the extent to which our own inner life and private character mirror forth in their manifold aspects the splendour of those eternal principles proclaimed by Bahá'u'lláh.’”

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, Rídván Message 1988

What specific steps can I take this week to increase my service to humanity by:



Drawing on my love for God, the power of the Covenant, and the dynamics of daily prayer?



Regular reading and study of the sacred texts?



Striving to obtain a deeper understanding of the divine teachings and relate these teachings to current issues?



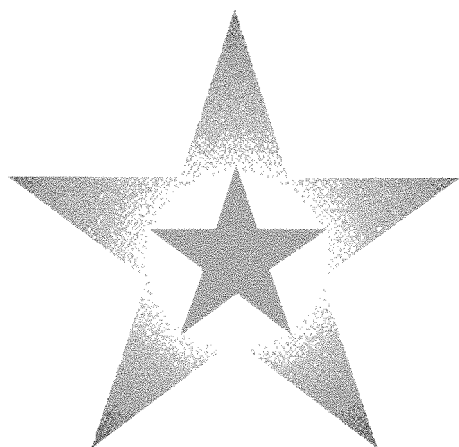
Mirroring Bahá'u'lláh's eternal principles in my inner life and private character?



Sharing these teachings with others?



What one action can I promise myself to do this week? When, where, and how can I do it? How will I be able to tell that I've done it? What result do I hope to see from my action?



*R*eligion is, verily, the chief instrument for the
establishment of order in the world, and of tranquillity
amongst its peoples.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

Circles of Unity

COURSE TWO

Some
Fundamental
Verities of the
Bahá'í Faith

Session 8

A New Foundation
for Peace and World
Order

Devotions

Begin the session with spirit-filled devotions. You may want to include prayers for unity and sung or recorded music as part of the opening devotions.

If desired, the following passage could be included:

The Pen of the Divine Expounder exhorteth, at this moment, the manifestations of authority and the sources of power, namely the kings and rulers of the earth, may God assist them, and enjoineth them to uphold the cause of religion, and to cleave unto it. Religion is, verily, the chief instrument for the establishment of order in the world, and of tranquillity amongst its peoples.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 29

Objectives of the Session

As a group, read through the learning objectives for this session.

Knowledge

To become familiar with some of the Bahá'í writings on the principles of right governance.

Wisdom

To understand some ways to promote right governance in the world today.

Spiritual Perception

To perceive the importance of the principle of oneness to peace and world order.

Eloquent Speech

To demonstrate understanding of the power of Bahá'u'lláh's teachings to transform human relationships as the foundation of world unity.

To plan individual acts of study, teaching and service.

Consultation About Individual Acts of Service

- Were you able to invite someone to your home? How was your hospitality received? Were you able to share the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh? How were they received?
- Who chose to convene a family or household consultation? What were the results?
- Who was able to support a devotional meeting or children's class? What was a highlight?

Consultation About Individual Acts of Study

- Who would like to share a memorized passage from the writings?
- Were you able to read more of the letters of Shoghi Effendi? Share your insights from your reading.
- Who chose to read additional passages from *Consultation: A Compilation*? What did you learn?
- What else would you like to share about your study, service, or teaching over the past week?

Activity *A New Foundation for Peace and World Order*

1. In the whole group, volunteers please read aloud the passages entitled “A New Foundation for Peace and World Order.”
2. Then read aloud the focus question and rather than discussing these passages, reflect individually on your own answer to this question.
3. Attach two large sheets of paper to the wall and label them “Power of the Holy Spirit” and “Power of the Word of God.” Using markers, paints, crayons or other writing materials, write “graffiti” on each large sheet of paper—taking care to protect the wall from paint or marker bleeding through the paper. Allow about 5-10 minutes for this activity.
4. Then, post another large sheet of paper labeled “Investigation and Consultation: Foundations of a New World Order.”
5. Consult as a group to select 3 or 4 “graffiti” from the first sheet that you consider the most essential to good investigation and consultation. Transfer these “graffiti” to the second sheet. Then add additional graffiti appropriate to the second sheet.



A NEW FOUNDATION FOR PEACE AND WORLD ORDER

Focus Question:

What critical element binds investigation and consultation into a sure foundation for governance in a New World Order?

1 So long as the powers of the mind are various, it is certain that men's judgements and opinions will differ one from another. If, however, one single, universal perceptive power be introduced—a power encompassing all the rest—those differing opinions will merge, and a spiritual harmony and oneness will become apparent.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 63, no. 31

2 The essentials of the divine religion are one reality, indivisible and not multiple. It is one. And when through investigation we find it to be single, we have a basis for the oneness of the world of humanity.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 42

3 . . . there is nothing of greater importance to mankind than the investigation of truth.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 63

4 Praise be to God, today the splendour of the Word of God hath illumined every horizon, and from all sects, races, tribes, nations, and communities souls have come together in the light of the Word, assembled, united and agreed in perfect harmony. Oh! What a great number of meetings are held adorned with souls from various races and diverse sects! Anyone attending these will be struck with amazement, and might suppose that these souls are all of one land, one nationality, one community, one thought, one belief and one opinion; whereas, in fact, one is an American, the other an African, one cometh from Asia and another from Europe, one is a native of India, another is from Turkestan, one is an Arab, another a Tajik, another a Persian and yet another a Greek. Notwithstanding such diversity they associate in perfect harmony and unity, love and freedom they have one voice, one thought and one purpose. Verily this is from the penetrative power of the Word of God! If all the forces of the universe were to combine they would not be able thus to gather a single assemblage so imbued with the sentiments of love, affection, attraction and enkindlement as to unite the members of different races and to raise up from the heart of the world a voice that shall dispel war and strife, uproot dissension and disputation, usher in the era of universal peace and establish unity and concord amongst men.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 292, no. 225

5 Today the greatest need of the world is the animating, unifying presence of the Holy Spirit. Until it becomes effective, penetrating and interpenetrating hearts and spirits, and until perfect, reasoning faith shall be implanted in the minds of men, it will be impossible for the social body to be inspired with security and confidence.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 321

Activity *Promoting World Order, Part 1*

Divide into four groups, so that each group has approximately the same number of participants.

Group One: Read the quotations and answer the focus questions in the section titled “Right Governance.”

Group Two: Read the quotations and answer the focus questions in the section titled “Promoting Right Governance.”

Group Three: Read the quotations and answer the focus questions in the section titled “The Principle of Oneness.”

Group Four: Read the quotations and answer the focus questions in the section titled “Peace and World Order.”

Alternatively, if numbers do not permit four effective groups to be created, divide into two groups of equal size.

Group One: Read the quotations and answer the focus questions in the section titled “Right Governance” and “The Principle of Oneness.”

or

Group Two: Read the quotations and answer the focus questions in the section titled “Promoting Right Governance” and “Peace and World Order.”

Instructions for continuing this activity follow the quotation pages.



RIGHT GOVERNANCE

Focus Questions:

What are some of the spiritual purposes of governance? What are the consequences of obeying or not obeying the divine command? Why do some political and social orders fall short in the quest for right governance?

1 The Pen of the Divine Expounder exhorteth, at this moment, the manifestations of authority and the sources of power, namely the kings and rulers of the earth, may God assist them, and enjoineth them to uphold the cause of religion, and to cleave unto it. Religion is, verily, the chief instrument for the establishment of order in the world, and of tranquillity amongst its peoples.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 29

2 It is incumbent upon them who are in authority to exercise moderation in all things. Whatsoever passeth beyond the limits of moderation will cease to exert a beneficial influence. Consider for instance such things as liberty, civilization and the like. However much men of understanding may favorably regard them, they will, if carried to excess, exercise a pernicious influence upon men.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Gleanings from the Writings of Babá'u'lláh*, p. 216, CX

3 The obstacle to human happiness is racial or religious prejudice, the competitive struggle for existence and inhumanity toward each other.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 468

4 The root cause of wrongdoing is ignorance.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 136, no. 111

5 Ye observe how the world is divided against itself, how many a land is red with blood and its very dust is caked with human gore. . . .Fathers have lost their sons, and sons their fathers. Mothers have wept away their hearts over dead children. Children have been orphaned, women left to wander, vagrants without a home. From every aspect, humankind hath sunken low. Loud are the piercing cries of fatherless children; loud the mothers' anguished voices, reaching to the skies.

And the breeding-ground of all these tragedies is prejudice: prejudice of race and nation, of religion, of political opinion; and the root cause of prejudice is blind imitation of the past—imitation in religion, in racial attitudes, in national bias, in politics. So long as this aping of the past persisteth, just so long will the foundations of the social order be blown to the four winds, just so long will humanity be continually exposed to direst peril.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 247, no. 202



PROMOTING RIGHT GOVERNANCE

Focus Questions:

What is right governance from the Bahá'í perspective? How can we be effective in promoting right governance in society?

1 O ye that dwell on earth! The distinguishing feature that marketh the pre-eminent character of this Supreme Revelation consisteth in that We have, on the one hand, blotted out from the pages of God's holy Book whatsoever hath been the cause of strife, of malice and mischief amongst the children of men, and have, on the other, laid down the essential prerequisites of concord, of understanding, of complete and enduring unity. Well is it with them that keep My statutes.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 84

2 The Bahá'í Cause covers all economic and social questions under the heading and ruling of its laws. The essence of the Bahá'í spirit is that, in order to establish a better social order and economic condition, there must be allegiance to the laws and principles of government. Under the laws which are to govern the world, the socialists may justly demand human rights but without resort to force and violence. The governments will enact these laws, establishing just legislation and economics in order that all humanity may enjoy a full measure of welfare and privilege; but this will always be according to legal protection and procedure. Without legislative administration, rights and demands fail, and the welfare of the commonwealth cannot be realized. Today the method of demand is the strike and resort to force, which is manifestly wrong and destructive of human foundations. Rightful privilege and demand must be set forth in laws and regulations.

While thousands are considering these questions, we have more essential purposes. The fundamentals of the whole economic condition are divine in nature and are associated with the world of the heart and spirit. This is fully explained in the Bahá'í teaching, and without knowledge of its principles no improvement in the economic state can be realized. The Bahá'ís will bring about this improvement and betterment but not through sedition and appeal to physical force not through warfare, but welfare. Hearts must be so cemented together, love must become so dominant that the rich shall most willingly extend assistance to the poor and take steps to establish these economic adjustments permanently. If it is accomplished in this way, it will be most praiseworthy because then it will be for the sake of God and in the pathway of His service. For example, it will be as if the rich inhabitants of a city should say, "It is neither just nor lawful that we should possess great wealth while there is abject poverty in this community," and then willingly give their wealth to the poor, retaining only as much as will enable them to live comfortably.

Strive, therefore, to create love in the hearts in order that they may become glowing and radiant. When that love is shining, it will permeate other hearts even as this electric light illumines its surroundings. When the love of God is established, everything else will be realized. This is the true foundation of all economics. Reflect upon it. Endeavor to become the cause of the attraction of souls rather than to enforce minds. Manifest true economics to the people. Show what love is, what kindness is, what true severance is and generosity. This is the important thing for you to do. Act in accordance with the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 238-9

3 The Bahá'ís must not engage in political movements which lead to sedition. They must interest themselves in movements which conduce to law and order.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 238

4 Fully aware of the repeated statements of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá that universality is of God, Bahá'ís in every land are ready, nay anxious, to associate themselves by word and deed with any association of men which, after careful scrutiny, they feel satisfied is free from every tinge of partisanship and politics and is wholly devoted to the interests of all mankind. In their collaboration with such associations they would extend any moral and material assistance they can afford, after having fulfilled their share of support to those institutions that affect directly the interests of the Cause. They should always bear in mind, however, the dominating purpose of such a collaboration which is to secure in time the recognition by those with whom they are associated of the paramount necessity and the true significance of the Bahá'í Revelation in this day.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *Bahá'í Administration*, pp. 125-6



THE PRINCIPLE OF ONENESS

Focus Question:

What leading principle in Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation is the pivot round which all those seeking right governance must ultimately gather?

1 Of the principles enshrined in these Tablets the most vital of them all is the principle of the oneness and wholeness of the human race, which may well be regarded as the hall-mark of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation and the pivot of His teachings. Of such cardinal importance is this principle of unity that it is expressly referred to in the Book of His Covenant, and He unreservedly proclaims it as the central purpose of His Faith.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *God Passes By*, pp. 225-6

2 "It is indubitably clear," He, [‘Abdu’l-Bahá] furthermore, has stated, "that the pivot of the oneness of mankind is nothing else but the power of the Covenant."

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *God Passes By*, p. 238

3 Are not these intermittent crises that convulse present-day society due primarily to the lamentable inability of the world's recognized leaders to read aright the signs of the times, to rid themselves once for all of their preconceived ideas and fettering creeds, and to reshape the machinery of their respective governments according to those standards that are implicit in Bahá'u'lláh's supreme declaration of the Oneness of Mankind the chief and distinguishing feature of the Faith He proclaimed? For the principle of the Oneness of Mankind, the cornerstone of Bahá'u'lláh's world-embracing dominion, implies nothing more nor less than the enforcement of His scheme for the unification of the world the scheme to which we have already referred. "In every Dispensation," writes ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, "the light of Divine Guidance has been focussed upon one central theme. . . . In this wondrous Revelation, this glorious century, the foundation of the Faith of God and the distinguishing feature of His Law is the consciousness of the Oneness of Mankind."

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 36

4 Let there be no mistake. The principle of the Oneness of Mankind, the pivot round which all the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh revolve, is no mere outburst of ignorant emotionalism or an expression of vague and pious hope. Its appeal is not to be merely identified with a reawakening of the spirit of brotherhood and good-will among men, nor does it aim solely at the fostering of harmonious cooperation among individual peoples and nations. Its implications are deeper, its claims greater than any which the Prophets of old were allowed to advance. Its message is applicable not only to the individual, but concerns itself primarily with the nature of those essential relationships that must bind all the states and

nations as members of one human family. It does not constitute merely the enunciation of an ideal, but stands inseparably associated with an institution adequate to embody its truth, demonstrate its validity, and perpetuate its influence. It implies an organic change in the structure of present-day society, a change such as the world has not yet experienced. It constitutes a challenge, at once bold and universal, to outworn shibboleths of national creeds that have had their day and which must, in the ordinary course of events as shaped and controlled by Providence, give way to a new gospel, fundamentally different from, and infinitely superior to, what the world has already conceived. It calls for no less than the reconstruction and the demilitarization of the whole civilized world world organically unified in all the essential aspects of its life, its political machinery, its spiritual aspiration, its trade and finance, its script and language, and yet infinite in the diversity of the national characteristics of its federated units.

It represents the consummation of human evolution that has had its earliest beginnings in the birth of family life, its subsequent development in the achievement of tribal solidarity, leading in turn to the constitution of the city-state, and expanding later into the institution of independent and sovereign nations.

The principle of the Oneness of Mankind, as proclaimed by Bahá'u'lláh, carries with it no more and no less than a solemn assertion that attainment to this final stage in this stupendous evolution is not only necessary but inevitable, that its realization is fast approaching, and that nothing short of a power that is born of God can succeed in establishing it.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 42-3

5 World order can be founded only on an unshakable consciousness of the oneness of mankind, a spiritual truth which all the human sciences confirm.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *The Promise of World Peace*, p. 17



Focus Question:

Through the power of God's grace, right governance will surely come to pass. But the Bahá'ís are so few, how will it come about?

1 It is incumbent upon all the peoples of the world to reconcile their differences, and, with perfect unity and peace, abide beneath the shadow of the Tree of His care and loving-kindness. It behoveth them to cleave to whatsoever will, in this Day, be conducive to the exaltation of their stations, and to the promotion of their best interests. Soon will the present-day order be rolled up, and a new one spread out in its stead.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p.6, IV

2 The Great Being, wishing to reveal the prerequisites of the peace and tranquillity of the world and the advancement of its peoples, hath written: The time must come when the imperative necessity for the holding of a vast, an all-embracing assemblage of men will be universally realized. The rulers and kings of the earth must needs attend it, and, participating in its deliberations, must consider such ways and means as will lay the foundations of the world's Great Peace amongst men.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 249, CXVII

3 There must be no difference in the education of male and female in order that womankind may develop equal capacity and importance with man in the social and economic equation. Then the world will attain unity and harmony. In past ages humanity has been defective and inefficient because it has been incomplete. War and its ravages have blighted the world; the education of woman will be a mighty step toward its abolition and ending, for she will use her whole influence against war. Woman rears the child and educates the youth to maturity. She will refuse to give her sons for sacrifice upon the field of battle. In truth, she will be the greatest factor in establishing universal peace and international arbitration.

Assuredly, woman will abolish warfare among mankind. Inasmuch as human society consists of two parts, the male and female, each the complement of the other, the happiness and stability of humanity cannot be assured unless both are perfected. Therefore, the standard and status of man and woman must become equalized.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 108

4 O handmaid of God, peace must first be established among individuals, until it leadeth in the end to peace among nations. Wherefore, O ye Bahá'ís, strive ye with all your might to create, through the power of the Word of God, genuine love, spiritual communion and durable bonds among individuals. This is your task.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 246, no. 201

5 Some movements appear, manifest a brief period of activity, then discontinue. Others show forth a greater measure of growth and strength, but before attaining mature development, weaken, disintegrate and are lost in oblivion. Neither of these mentioned are progressive and permanent.

There is still another kind of movement or cause which from a very small, inconspicuous beginning goes forward with sure and steady progress, gradually broadening and widening until it has assumed universal dimensions. The Bahá'í Movement is of this nature. . . .

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 43-4

Jigsaw Activity
Promoting World Order, Part 2

1. After allowing time for study, recombine into new groups, so that each new group includes at least one member from the previous study groups.
2. In your new group, share a favorite brief quotation from the writings studied in your previous group, and share the answers to the focus questions from that previous group.
3. While in your new group, create a brief dramatic sketch to portray the need for right governance, the goal of a New World Order, and strategies for transforming the current situation into a new system reflecting the principles of Bahá'u'lláh. Be sure to allow sufficient time for this key activity.
4. Share your brief dramatic sketch with the whole group. Congratulations on your exploration of some important principles upon which peace and world order can be built!

Activity

Group Memorization

In the whole group (or in smaller groups, if desired) memorize the following quotation from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

In every Dispensation, the light of Divine Guidance has been focused upon one central theme. In this wondrous Revelation, this glorious century, the foundation of the Faith of God and the distinguishing feature of His Law is the consciousness of the Oneness of Mankind.

Consider writing the quotation on a chalkboard or whiteboard and reciting it in unison, then gradually erase every 4th word while continuing to recite the passage as a group. Continue to recite until all the words have been erased. After memorization is complete, recite the entire passage individually or as a group, as you prefer.

Alternatively, you may print the quotation on chart paper and cover every 4th word with self-stick notes or other paper and tape. Continue as described above.

You will be happy to learn that you have memorized this short passage in a very short time.

Individual Acts of Study, Service and Teaching
Choose one or more of the following actions to complete before the next session.

- Consult as a group: Would you like to choose the same letter or letters to read before the next session? These letters are published in *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh* by Shoghi Effendi, and are entitled: “America and the Most Great Peace,” “The Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh,” and “The Unfoldment of World Civilization.” If you select this study please prepare a 2-minute report of your study to share at the next session.

Individually choose one or more of the following actions to complete prior to the next session:

1. Choose a specific service you can offer a family member or a friend. Give this gift of service without mentioning it to the family member or friend. Notice what changes as a result of this secret service. Share the results at the next session.
2. Consult again with your family about the specific line of action you have chosen to offer service to the Cause of God. As a family, choose an action to complete during the course of this week. Consider how you might involve the friends of your family in this action. Share the results with the group at the next session.
3. Invite a friend or a family to your home to show loving hospitality. Share the results of this gathering at the next session.
4. Read the book *The Prince of Peace* by William Sears. Prepare a brief report for the next session. Consider how you could share these ideas with others.
5. Offer to prepare, along with your facilitator, the devotional program located in the Appendix for the next session of this course.
6. Support your local children’s classes or devotional meetings.

A Personal Action Plan

Complete your Personal Plan for the coming week. Consider including one or more of the acts of study, service and teaching listed above.

Closing Devotions

Close the session with prayers for divine assistance.



A PERSONAL ACTION PLAN

“... it is on the initiative, the resolute will of the individual to teach and to serve, that the success of the entire community depends. Well-grounded in the mighty Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh, sustained by daily prayer and reading of the Holy Word, strengthened by a continual striving to obtain a deeper understanding of the divine Teachings, illumined by a constant endeavour to relate these Teachings to current issues, nourished by observance of the laws and principles of His wondrous World Order, every individual can attain increasing measures of success in teaching. In sum, the ultimate triumph of the Cause is assured by that ‘one thing and only one thing’ so poignantly emphasized by Shoghi Effendi Effendi, namely, ‘the extent to which our own inner life and private character mirror forth in their manifold aspects the splendour of those eternal principles proclaimed by Bahá'u'lláh.’”

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, Rídván Message 1988

What specific steps can I take this week to increase my service to humanity by:



Drawing on my love for God, the power of the Covenant, and the dynamics of daily prayer?



Regular reading and study of the sacred texts?



Striving to obtain a deeper understanding of the divine teachings and relate these teachings to current issues?



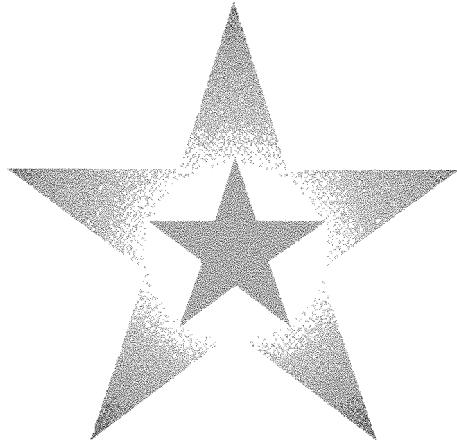
Mirroring Bahá'u'lláh's eternal principles in my inner life and private character?



Sharing these teachings with others?



What one action can I promise myself to do this week? When, where, and how can I do it? How will I be able to tell that I've done it? What result do I hope to see from my action?



*B*lessed is the house that hath attained
unto My tender mercy,
wherein My remembrance is celebrated,
and which is ennobled by the presence
of My loved ones. . . .

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

Circles ^{of} Unity

COURSE TWO

Some
Fundamental
Verities of the
Bahá'í Faith

Session 9

Seeds of World Peace

Devotions

Plan ahead to begin the session with the devotional program found in the Appendix, page 128.

Consultation About Individual Acts of Study and Service

After the devotional program is finished, allow a short period of quiet reflection. Reflect on your individual acts of study, service and teaching since Session One and answer some of these questions:

- Who has memorized a passage from the writings that they would like to share with the group?
- Who was able to study letters from the book, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*? What did you learn?
- Who chose an act of secret service to a friend or family member? What happened?
- Who consulted with family members about a specific line of action in service to the Cause of God? What did you choose? What results have you seen?
- Who invited a friend or family to their home? How were you able to share the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh while promoting unity? What happened?
- Who chose to read the book *The Prince of Peace* by William Sears? How could you share these ideas with others?
- Who else would like to share the results of their study, service and teaching over the past week?

Objectives of the Session

As a group, read through the learning objectives for this session.

Knowledge

To become familiar with the fireside workshops prepared to accompany the media campaign video “Family: The Seeds of World Peace.”

Wisdom

To understand ways to welcome children and families into a warm and vibrant community life.

Spiritual Perception

To perceive the importance of children to the unfoldment of peace and world order.

Eloquent Speech

To prepare a community gathering that welcomes children and families.

Activity

Children: The Most Precious Treasure a Community Can Possess

1. Read aloud the selected paragraphs from the Radván 2000 message of the Universal House of Justice on the following pages.
2. Discuss the questions:
Why is it important for all members of the community to take an interest in children and junior youth? What are some ways to create a welcoming environment for children and junior youth? What are some ways to ‘lovingly but insistently’ guide children and junior youth?
3. Individually and silently reflect on your own childhood. Remember a time in which you felt yourself to be truly engaged an important community gathering that was of benefit to humanity. What were the circumstances? Who else was involved? What were you doing? What were others doing? What were the results?
4. After this brief period of reflection, turn to the person beside you and take turns sharing and listening to each other share these happy memories.
5. In the whole group, briefly discuss: What are some common elements in these memories that we shared with each other? List these elements on chart paper.
6. Then discuss: What can we learn from these happy memories about hosting community gatherings that attract the hearts of all ages? Record your answers on chart paper.



THE MOST PRECIOUS TREASURE A COMMUNITY CAN POSSESS

Children are the most precious treasure a community can possess, for in them are the promise and guarantee of the future. They bear the seeds of the character of future society which is largely shaped by what the adults constituting the community do or fail to do with respect to children. They are a trust no community can neglect with impunity. An all-embracing love of children, the manner of treating them, the quality of the attention shown them, the spirit of adult behaviour toward them—these are all among the vital aspects of the requisite attitude. Love demands discipline, the courage to accustom children to hardship, not to indulge their whims or leave them entirely to their own devices. An atmosphere needs to be maintained in which children feel that they belong to the community and share in its purpose. They must lovingly but insistently be guided to live up to Bahá'í standards, to study and teach the Cause in ways that are suited to their circumstances.

Among the young ones in the community are those known as junior youth, who fall between the ages of, say, 12 and 15. They represent a special group with special needs as they are somewhat in between childhood and youth when many changes are occurring within them. Creative attention must be devoted to involving them in programmes of activity that will engage their interests, mold their capacities for teaching and service, and involve them in social interaction with older youth. The employment of the arts in various forms can be of great value in such activity.

And now we wish to address a few words to parents who bear the primary responsibility for the upbringing of their children. We appeal to them to give constant attention to the spiritual education of their children. Some parents appear to think that this is the exclusive responsibility of the community; others believe that in order to preserve the independence of children to investigate truth, the Faith should not be taught to them. Still others feel inadequate to take on such a task. None of this is correct. The beloved Master has said that “it is enjoined upon the father and mother, as a duty, to strive with all effort to train the daughter and the son,” adding that, “should they neglect this matter, they shall be held responsible and worthy of reproach in the presence of the stern Lord.” Independent of the level of their education, parents are in a critical position to shape the spiritual development of their children. They should not ever underestimate their capacity to mold their children’s moral character. For they exercise indispensable influence through the home environment they consciously create by their love of God, their striving to adhere to His laws, their spirit of service to His Cause, their lack of fanaticism, and their freedom from the corrosive effects of

backbiting. Every parent who is a believer in the Blessed Beauty has the responsibility to conduct herself or himself in such a way as to elicit the spontaneous obedience to parents to which the Teachings attach so high a value. Of course, in addition to the efforts made at home, the parents should support Bahá'í children's classes provided by the community. It must be borne in mind, too, that children live in a world that informs them of harsh realities through direct experience with the horrors already described or through the unavoidable outpourings of the mass media. Many of them are thereby forced to mature prematurely, and among these are those who look for standards and discipline by which to guide their lives. Against this gloomy backdrop of a decadent society, Bahá'í children should shine as the emblems of a better future. . . .

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, to the Bahá'ís of the World, Ridván 2000

Activity

Family: The Seeds of World Peace

1. Organize your study circle into two or more small working groups that could carry out a community service together within the next few weeks.
2. In your group, select one of the text-based Firesides in the Appendix, “Family: The Seeds of World Peace,” perhaps especially considering Firesides 1 and 5.
3. Working in your small group, read through the plans for your selected fireside. Also refer to the facilitator notes and materials checklist on pp. 118-19 of that Appendix.
4. Develop the specific plans necessary to carry out that fireside either as a fireside or as a devotional gathering. Consider specifically:
Where will you host your gathering?
Who will you invite? How will you invite them?
How will you engage the hearts and minds of the younger participants in your gathering?
How will you support the participation of parents of very young children?
What refreshments might you serve?
How will you create a welcoming and joyous atmosphere?
How will you include music or beautify the environment?
Will you use the Fireside plans exactly as they are written or do you prefer to adjust them to better respond to the needs and interests of the people you plan to invite?
How could you build on your success with follow-up gatherings?
5. After completing your specific plans, please share your plans in the whole group. Encourage each other in these plans and offer to support each other to bring these plans to fruition.

Note: Electronic files of all media campaign fireside workshops are available for download in PDF and Microsoft Word format from the World Wide Web at http://www.education.usbnc.org/a_themes/fireside_manuals.htm.

Individual Acts of Service, Study, and Teaching
Choose one or more of these extended activities to complete in the coming weeks.

1. Carry out your plans for your firesides or devotional gatherings that welcome participation of children and families.
2. Do you know a child or junior youth that you could invite to join you for outdoor or indoor games, ice cream, a movie, schoolwork, or other activity?
3. Get together with the participants in your study circle for fellowship and service. Do you know each other's families? Do you know other families you could meet?
4. Reflect on the needs and hopes of the young people in your community. Could you initiate a conversation with other friends, possibly at the Nineteen-Day Feast, to explore such questions as:
 - How could we support our spiritual education classes for children and junior youth? Do we need to train teachers? Do we need additional educational materials?
 - How could we increasingly open our Bahá'í classes to the entire population?
 - What other resources could foster the well-being of children, junior youth, youth, parents, and teachers in our community?

Please refer to www.education.usbnc.org or contact the National Teacher Training Center by phone at (810) 653-5033 or email at nttc@usbnc.org for additional information.

5. Tell a friend what this course has meant to you. Invite your friend to join a study circle. Offer to give your friend a ride if needed.
6. Choose when to begin Course Three in the Fundamental Verities Sequence of Courses.

A Personal Action Plan

Complete your Personal Action Plan, including your choices of the acts of study, service, and teaching listed above.

Course Evaluation

Complete the attached evaluation form and share this important information with your Regional Training Institute and the National Teacher Training Center.

Closing devotions are suggested on p. 115.



A PERSONAL ACTION PLAN

“... it is on the initiative, the resolute will of the individual to teach and to serve, that the success of the entire community depends. Well-grounded in the mighty Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh, sustained by daily prayer and reading of the Holy Word, strengthened by a continual striving to obtain a deeper understanding of the divine Teachings, illumined by a constant endeavour to relate these Teachings to current issues, nourished by observance of the laws and principles of His wondrous World Order, every individual can attain increasing measures of success in teaching. In sum, the ultimate triumph of the Cause is assured by that ‘one thing and only one thing’ so poignantly emphasized by Shoghi Effendi Effendi, namely, ‘the extent to which our own inner life and private character mirror forth in their manifold aspects the splendour of those eternal principles proclaimed by Bahá'u'lláh.’”

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, Rídván Message 1988

What specific steps can I take this week to increase my service to humanity by:



Drawing on my love for God, the power of the Covenant, and the dynamics of daily prayer?



Regular reading and study of the sacred texts?



Striving to obtain a deeper understanding of the divine teachings and relate these teachings to current issues?



Mirroring Bahá'u'lláh's eternal principles in my inner life and private character?



Sharing these teachings with others?



What one action can I promise myself to do this week? When, where, and how can I do it? How will I be able to tell that I've done it? What result do I hope to see from my action?

When shall we begin Course Three in the Fundamental Verities Sequence of Courses?

Fundamental Verities Course—Course Two

Circles of Unity

Location: _____ Facilitator(s): _____ Ending Date: _____

Session(s) Attended:

- | | | | |
|------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> All | <input type="checkbox"/> Session 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> Session 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> Session 7 |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Session 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> Session 5 | <input type="checkbox"/> Session 8 |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Session 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> Session 6 | <input type="checkbox"/> Session 9 |

Please candidly share your feelings and reactions. This information will assist in improving this course.

What sessions were most informative and why?

What type of activity did you most enjoy and why?

What session was the least informative and why?

What activity did you least enjoy and why?

What type of extended after-class activity did you most enjoy and why?

(Check one of the boxes for each question.)

	Exceptional	Very Good	Fair	Poor
The presenters were organized and clear in their presentation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The purpose of each session was made clear.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Materials supported the sessions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How would you rate the after-class extended activities?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

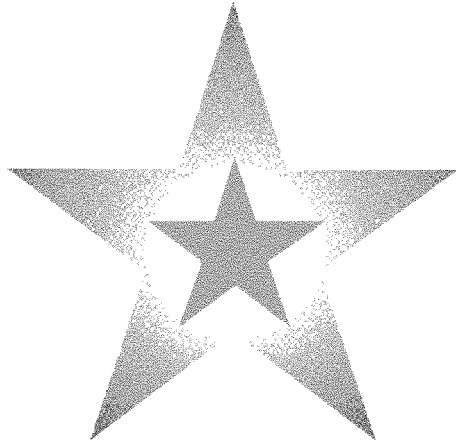
Please take time to expand on any of the items listed above, particularly if any are rated fair or poor so that we might improve the course. Also, please let us know what you would change or add to this course.

Please return this form to:

National Teacher Training Center, Louhelen Bahá'í School, 3208 S. State Rd., Davison, MI 48423.

Closing Devotions
Channels of God's Grace

1. Recall the Biblical passage that promises: “But let justice flow down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream.” (Amos 5:24).
2. Reflect on the beauty, justice and righteousness of individual, family, and community life that will evolve into the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, embracing all ages, embracing all humankind.
3. Then, consider the beauty of the terraces on Mount Carmel, which portray in symbolic terms the fulfillment of this prophecy. Justice flows down from the Mountain of God, just as the pure water that flows down these terraces. How wonderful that our actions can help bring this ancient hope into reality!
4. If available, view 5-minute segment of a video, slides, or photographs of these beautiful terraces with fountains and water flowing in channels down the mountain.
5. Conclude your session with prayers and uplifting music, perhaps from the Official Opening of the Arc and Terraces on Mount Carmel.



Facilitation Guidelines	p. 118
Suggestions for Facilitators, Lists of Materials	p. 120
The Power of Prayer fireside materials	p. 131

Circles of Unity

COURSE TWO

Fundamental
Verities of the
Bahá'í Faith

APPENDIX

Facilitation Guidelines

Please contact the National Teacher Training Center if you would like to schedule a course, *The Art of Facilitation*, to train friends to effectively serve as facilitators in the Fundamental Verities Sequence of Courses. You may call 810-653-5033, or email: NTTC@usbnc.org, to participate in this course at the NTTC or at other locations.

Some specific guidelines which may be helpful in facilitating these workshops:

- Use the Master as our example. Constantly bring to mind the life and words of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá as an example of how to respond in a loving manner to the friends. Personally study and reflect upon some of the writings and prayers of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá before you begin so that you will have His image clearly in mind when offering the workshops.
- Use the Sacred Texts as the basis for all consultation. When answering questions, refer to the answers that can be found in the Writings. Inspire confidence in the answers and advice in the Bahá’í writings that we can then translate into action in our daily lives.
- Be sensitive to the varying levels of literacy. If the amount of reading or number of quotations suggested in the workshops becomes a burden to the friends, select 2 or 3 quotations to study rather than an entire page. If the friends are not comfortable reading in English, either memorize (as a group) one quotation for each activity that can become the basis for that activity, or team readers with non-readers for group activities.
- Keep your own comments brief. Creating an atmosphere where all participants feel free to share their views and concerns necessitates that the facilitators keep their presentations and answers brief.
- Practice patience and sensitivity. The workshop topics can engender deep emotions. All participants come with something unique to offer and assisting them to realize that their contributions are important is part of making people feel welcome.
- Be happy! An uplifting environment makes learning easier. You may find your own Faith renewed as you joyfully assist the friends to understand the magnificence of this New Day and the privilege of recognizing Bahá’u’lláh as that Manifestation of God awaited by all the peoples of the earth.

Devotions and Spiritual Atmosphere

The environment sets the tone for study:

- Carefully prepare the learning environment so that it reflects the principles of hospitality, beauty, cleanliness, dignity and refinement.
- Arrive early and say prayers in the room.
- Lovingly greet each of the friends as they arrive.
- Consider displaying a portrait of the Master, photographs of Holy Places, and framed quotations.
- Consider playing music as the friends enter.
- Plan the opening devotions for a reverent, uplifting beginning to each session of this course sequence on fundamental verities of the Bahá'í Faith.
- Include prayers for teaching, and sung or recorded music relevant to the week's topic as part of the opening devotions.
- Consider playing quiet background music during individual and group work.



SUGGESTIONS FOR FACILITATORS

Session 1

GOD'S NEW CREATION

Suggested Schedule of Activities

Devotions	10 minutes
Objectives, Welcome, Overview, and Contents	15 minutes
God's New Creation	15 minutes
The Individual and God's New Creation	15 minutes
God's New Creation and the Oneness of Humanity	20 minutes
Memorization: A New Creation	10 minutes
Individual Acts of Study, Service, and Teaching	10 minutes
A Personal Action Plan	5 minutes
Closing Devotions	5 minutes

Materials Needed

- Prayer books
- Music, recorded or sung
- Modeling clay, beeswax or play-dough
- Recordings of quiet background music and tape or CD player

Preparation Needed

Materials to create a welcoming atmosphere for spiritual learning, such as a photograph of the Master, pictures of the Holy Places, or framed quotations.

Suggested Music

- "Bahá'u'lláh's Getting Us Ready for that Great Day," "We May Never Pass this Way Again," *Lift Up Your Voices and Sing*, vol. 2, various artists
- "When Will It Be," "New World Comin'," *Encore*, various artists
- "The Spirit of the Lord is Everywhere," *We Have Come to Sing Praises*, Bahá'í Gospel Choir
- "Vanguard of the Dawning," "Lift Up Your Heads," *To the Glory of God*, Eric Dozier
- "New Century," *Search*, Seaforth & Jenkins
- "Daybreak," *Prayers*, Sandy Simmons

Session 2

THE SPIRIT OF SERVITUDE TO GOD

Suggested Schedule of Activities

Devotions	10 minutes
Objectives of the Session	5 minutes
Consultation on Individual Acts of Service	5 minutes
Consultation on Individual Acts of Study	5 minutes
Reflecting Oneness	20 minutes
The Greatest Drama	30 minutes
The Spirit of Servitude to God	15 minutes
Individual Acts of Study, Service, and Teaching	5 minutes
A Personal Action Plan	5 minutes
Closing Devotions	5 minutes=

Materials Needed

- Prayer books
- Music, recorded or sung
- Recording of quiet background music and tape or CD player

Suggested Music

- “Soldiers in God’s Army,” “God Is One,” *Lift Up Your Voices and Sing*, vol. 1
- “We Will Have One World,” “World Citizens,” *Lift Up Your Voices and Sing*, vol. 2
- “We Are One,” *Lift Up Your Voices and Sing*, vol. 3
- “Love is the Secret,” *Fruits of the Spirit*, various artists
- “Unity House,” “New World Comin’,” *Encore*, various artists
- “I Love All My Brothers,” “Unity House,” *We Are Bahá’ís, Too!*, Jack Lenz
- “We Have Come to Sing Praises,” “In This Day, Bahá’u’lláh,” *We Have Come to Sing Praises*, Bahá’í Gospel Choir
- “Garden of Ridván (narrative introduction),” *Lote Tree*, William Sears

Session 3

FAMILY UNITY AND WORLD PEACE

Suggested Schedule of Activities

Devotions	10 minutes
Objectives of the Session	5 minutes
Consultation on Individual Acts of Service	10 minutes
Consultation on Individual Acts of Study	5 minutes
The Nature of Creative Power	20 minutes
Family Unity and World Peace	20 minutes
Individual Acts of Study, Service, and Teaching	5 minutes
A Personal Action Plan	5 minutes
Closing Devotions	5 minutes

Materials Needed

- Prayer books
- Music, recorded or sung
- Drinking straws, one per participant
- Pictures cut from magazines
- Recording of quiet background music and tape or CD player

Preparation Needed

Have available a supply of pictures cut from magazines such as “National Geographic” that represent a variety of images from nature, including water, the sky, space, various sorts of countryside, animals, and human families or other groups of people interacting together. If possible also include artistic portrayals of these same subjects.

Suggested Music

- “The Call,” “Verily, Thou Hast Come by the Command of God,” “Unity House,” *We Are Bahá’ís, Too!* Jack Lenz
- “We’re All in This Together,” “Time Together,” Hello World, Red Grammer
- “We Are One,” “Windflowers,” “One Planet, One People, Please,” *Lift Up Your Voices and Sing*, vol. 3, various artists
- “We Will Have One World,” *Lift Up Your Voices and Sing*, vol. 2, various artists

Session 4

THE SOURCE OF UNITY

Suggested Schedule of Activities

Devotions	10 minutes
Objectives of the Session	5 minutes
Consultation on Individual Acts of Service	5 minutes
Consultation on Individual Acts of Study	10 minutes
The Source of Unity	30 minutes
A Fortress on which the Cause Relies	30 minutes
Individual Acts of Study, Service, and Teaching	5 minutes
A Personal Action Plan	5 minutes
Closing Devotions	5 minutes

Materials Needed

- Prayer books
- Music, recorded or sung
- Flipchart paper or poster paper or chalkboard
- Writing paper
- Recording of quiet background music and tape or CD player

Preparation Needed

Have on hand a supply of nature pictures from magazines or other sources, if desired, to illustrate concepts in “The Source of Unity.” Alternatively, consider if it is possible to refer participants to an outdoor area to find examples of the power of the Covenant in nature.

Suggested Music

- “Equal but not the Same,” *Fruits of the Spirit*, various artists
- “The Unity Prayer,” “Home of Peace,” *Love Setteth the World Aflame*, Roya Bauman
- “With Two Wings,” *Teaching Peace*, Red Grammer
- “Marry, O People,” *Selections from the Bahá’í Writings*, Paul Parrish
- “Woman and Man,” *Search*, Seaforth & Jenkins
- “My Home,” *Laughter of Angels*, Red Grammer with various artists
- “Expectation,” “See the Light,” “In this Day, Bahá’u’lláh,” *Music of the Bahá’í World Congress*, various artists

Session 5

EXPANDING CIRCLES OF UNITY

Suggested Schedule of Activities

Devotions	10 minutes
Objectives of the Session	5 minutes
Consultation on Individual Acts of Service	5 minutes
Consultation on Individual Acts of Study	5 minutes
Expanding Circles of Unity	40 minutes
Memorization	15 minutes
Individual Acts of Study, Service, and Teaching	5 minutes
A Personal Action Plan	5 minutes
Closing Devotions	5 minutes

Materials Needed

- Prayer books
- Music, recorded or sung
- A wrapped gift (could be an empty box wrapped to look like a gift)
- Materials for the friends to make cards
(Could include folded card stock and pictures or other things to decorate with, markers, colored papers, stickers, glue sticks, etc.)
- Recording of quiet background music and tape or CD player

Suggested Music

- “Strangely Wrapped Gift,” *Soul Man in a Techno World*, Red Grammer
- “A Sacrifice to Thee,” *A Sacrifice to Thee*, Matthew Levine
- “Make Me an Instrument,” “Hollow Reed,” *Search*, Seaforth & Jenkins
- “Submission to the Will of God,” “O Servant of God,” *Desire of the Heart*, Narges
- “To the Planters of Trees,” *Encore*, Jack Lenz with various artists

Session 6

FOSTERING UNIFIED ACTION

Suggested Schedule of Activities

Devotions	5 minutes
Objectives of the Session	5 minutes
Consultation on Individual Acts of Service	5 minutes
Consultation on Individual Acts of Study	5 minutes
Faith and Action	20 minutes
The Role of Sacrifice	20 minutes
Fostering Unified Action	20 minutes
Individual Acts of Study, Service, and Teaching	5 minutes
A Personal Action Plan	5 minutes
Closing Devotions	5 minutes

Materials Needed

- Prayer books
- Music, recorded or sung
- Items for Faith and Action demonstration: 2 glass or clear plastic bowls, one large, one small; long spoon or stir stick; pitcher of water; red food coloring
- Craft table items, such as markers, paper of different sizes and colors, pictures cut out of magazines, glue sticks, glitter, etc.

Preparation Needed

Session 6: Faith and Action demonstration

- Place the small glass bowl inside the large glass bowl and fill both bowls with clear water, so that the small bowl is completely immersed in the large bowl.
- Add one droplet of food coloring to the water in the small bowl that is inside the large bowl.
- Consider: If this drop of color represents the spirit of faith in an individual, the small bowl represents the individual, and the large bowl represents the world around us, what will happen when the individual's faith is stirred into action?
- Stir the drop of color in the small bowl. What happens in the large bowl?

Suggested Music

- "This is Faith," *Fruits of the Spirit*, various artists
- "This is Faith," *This is Faith*, Lucy Shropshire
- "The Lord's Prayer," *Songs of the Ancient Beauty*, Voices of Baha Chorale
- "Táhirih," *Songs for the Martyrs*, Grant Hindin Miller
- "The Prisoner," *Lift Up Your Voices and Sing, vol. 1*, various artists
- "Táhirih's Dream," *Suite: Mothers and Angels*, Mackay, Caroline
- "A Sacrifice to Thee," *A Sacrifice to Thee*, Matthew Levine
- "Mona with the Children," "I Want to Be with Him Today," *Encore*, Jack Lenz with various artists

Session 7

PRINCIPLES AND PROCESS OF CONSULTATION

Suggested Schedule of Activities

Devotions	10 minutes
Objectives of the Session	5 minutes
Consultation on Individual Acts of Service	5 minutes
Consultation on Individual Acts of Study	5 minutes
Principles and Process of Consultation	40 minutes
Clarifying Vision: Many Issues Coming to a Head	20 minutes
Individual Acts of Study, Service, and Teaching	10 minutes
A Personal Action Plan	5 minutes
Closing Devotions	5 minutes

Materials Needed

- Prayer books
- Music, recorded or sung
- Recording of quiet background music and tape or CD player

Suggested Music

- “Let It Be this Generation,” “Unity House,” *Encore*, Jack Lenz with various artists
- “If We Ever Needed Love,” “Shine Your Light on Me,” “Remover of Difficulties,” *We Have Come to Sing Praises*, Bahá’í Gospel Choir
- “Remover of Difficulties,” “Tests and Difficulties,” *Search*, Seaforth & Jenkins

Session 8

A NEW FOUNDATION FOR PEACE AND WORLD ORDER

Suggested Schedule of Activities

Devotions	10 minutes
Objectives of the Session	5 minutes
Consultation on Individual Acts of Service	5 minutes
Consultation on Individual Acts of Study	5 minutes
A New Foundation for Peace and World Order	15 minutes
Promoting World Order, I	20 minutes
Promoting World Order, II	20 minutes
Group Memorization	15 minutes
Individual Acts of Study, Service, and Teaching	5 minutes
A Personal Action Plan	5 minutes
Closing Devotions	5 minutes

Materials Needed

- Prayer books
- Large banner/poster paper or flip chart paper
- Paints, markers, crayons
- Chalkboard or erasable marker board
- Recording of quiet background music and tape or CD player

Advance Preparation Needed

Label three large sheets of poster paper or flip chart paper “Power of the Holy Spirit,” “Power of the Word of God,” and “Investigation, Consultation and Clear Vision: Foundations of a New World Order,” respectively.

Suggested Music

- “Esengo Na Mboka Haifa,” Congo Youth Choir, *Official Opening of the Arc and Terraces on Mount Carmel*
- “God Is One,” “The Prince of Peace,” *Lift Up Your Voices and Sing*, vol. 1, various artists
- “We Will Have One World,” “World Citizens,” *Lift Up Your Voices and Sing*, vol. 2, various artists
- “We Are One,” “One Planet, One People, Please,” *Lift Up Your Voices and Sing*, vol. 3, various artists
- “Love All the World,” “Waves of One Sea,” *Love All the World*, Tim Urbonya
- “We’re Building the Kingdom of God,” *To the Glory of God*, Eric Dozier
- “In this Day Bahá’u’lláh,” *We Have Come to Sing Praises*, Bahá’í Gospel Choir
- “Let It Be this Generation,” “Unity House,” “New World Comin’,” *Encore*, Jack Lenz

Session 9

SEEDS OF WORLD PEACE

Suggested Schedule of Activities

Devotional Program	30 minutes
Consultation on Individual Acts of Service	10 minutes
Objectives of the Session	5 minutes
Children: The Most Precious Treasure	20 minutes
Family: Seeds of World Peace	20 minutes
Extended After-Class Activities	10 minutes
Course Evaluation	5 minutes
A Personal Action Plan	5 minutes
Closing Devotions	15 minutes

Materials Needed

- Music—particular music recommended for the opening devotions of this session: Handel’s “Messiah,” and *Music from the Bahá’í World Congress*, but other music may be selected.
- Prayer books
- Video: *Vineyard of the Lord*, Part II, or other footage of the Arc/Terraces. Slides from someone in the community who has recently returned from pilgrimage may also be used.
- Copy of the Bible for closing devotions.

Advance Preparation Needed

Devotional Program

- Carefully prepare the learning environment so that it reflects the principles of loving hospitality, beauty, cleanliness, dignity and refinement.
- If possible, display framed photographs or paintings of the Shrines of Bahá’u’lláh and the Báb, of the Terraces, buildings, monuments and gardens on Mount Carmel. If you have not previously used candles, flowers, a slightly different room arrangement, or a nearby outdoor area to set a devotional mood, this would be an excellent opportunity to experiment with one or more of those options.
- Arrive early to say prayers for the success of this program in the room where you will meet.
- Lovingly greet each of the friends as they arrive.
- Plan a beautiful devotional opening for this session, linking prophecy about the establishment of world order in the last days to the mission of Bahá’u’lláh. Consider copying the suggested passages on the next page on beautiful paper and selecting eloquent readers in advance.
- Consider incorporating music from one of the many recordings, including gospel style, of Handel’s Messiah, which has set Biblical prophecy to music and is

readily available from libraries. Also consider including selections from the Bahá'í World Congress Oratorio. If the suggested recorded music is not available, plan alternate music to acknowledge the magnificence of Bahá'u'lláh's revelation. Another option is to plan live music instead of the suggested recordings.

Opening Music:

“Expectation, Oratorio to His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh,” *Music of the Bahá'í World Congress* (6 minutes)

Reading:

“And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.

And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

“And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.”

THE BIBLE, Isaiah 2:2-4

Music:

“And the Glory of the Lord,” Handel’s *Messiah* (3 minutes)

Reading:

“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.”

THE BIBLE, Isaiah 9:6-7

Music:

“For Unto Us a Child is Born,” Handel’s *Messiah* (4 minutes)

Readings:

“Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.”

THE BIBLE, Luke 11:2

“But let justice flow down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream.”

THE BIBLE, Amos 5:24

Music:

“See the Light, Oratorio to His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh,” *Music of the Bahá'í World Congress* (4 minutes)

Readings:

“The light of men is Justice. Quench it not with the contrary winds of oppression and tyranny. The purpose of justice is the appearance of unity among men. Were mankind to be adorned with this raiment, they would behold the day-star of the utterance, ‘On that day God will satisfy everyone out of His abundance,’ shining resplendent above the horizon of the world. Appreciate ye the value of this utterance; it is a noble fruit that the Tree of the Pen of Glory hath yielded. Happy is the man that giveth ear unto it and observeth its precepts. Verily I say, whatever is sent down from the heaven of the Will of God is the means for the establishment of order in the world and the instrument for promoting unity and fellowship among its peoples.”

BAHÁ’U’LLÁH, *Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh*, pp. 66-67

“Adorn ye the temple of dominion with the ornament of justice and of the fear of God, and its head with the crown of the remembrance of your Lord, the Creator of the heavens. Thus counselleth you He Who is the Dayspring of Names, as bidden by Him Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. The Promised One hath appeared in this glorified Station, whereat all beings, both seen and unseen, have rejoiced. Take ye advantage of the Day of God. Verily, to meet Him is better for you than all that whereon the sun shineth, could ye but know it. O concourse of rulers! Give ear unto that which hath been raised from the Dayspring of Grandeur: ‘Verily, there is none other God but Me, the Lord of Utterance, the All-Knowing.’ Bind ye the broken with the hands of justice, and crush the oppressor who flourisheth with the rod of the commandments of your Lord, the Ordainer, the All-Wise.”

BAHÁ’U’LLÁH, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, K88

Music:

“In This Day, Bahá’u’lláh,” *Music of the Bahá’í World Congress* (6 minutes)

Closing Devotions:

1. Consider having a Bible on hand and ask someone to read the passage (Amos 5:24).

2. Suggestions for visuals of the terraces on Mount Carmel:

Video:

Vineyard of the Lord, Part 2

Official Opening of the Terraces of the Shrine of the Báb

Books:

Visions of a New World Order: Paradise Created, by Brenton Edwards. published by George Ronald.

Bahá’í Shrine and Gardens, Mount Carmel, Haifa: A Visual Journey. Published by the Haifa Tourist Board.

Family: The Seeds of World Peace



*Firesides to accompany
the video
“Family: The Seeds of World Peace”*

A collaborative project by the National Education Task Force,
the National Education and Schools Office,
and the National Teaching Committee

Introduction

Firesides to Accompany “Family: The Seeds of World Peace” Videotape



In order to make the greatest possible use of the nation-wide broadcasts of “Family: The Seeds of World Peace” video, the National Spiritual Assembly has developed and distributed five firesides to be used in conjunction with the video. Each fireside workshop is approximately 90 minutes in length, including time to view the “Family” videotape. If the friends gathered have recently seen the video, it is not required to show it again.

These firesides are intended to help create an awareness of the ways parents model behavior in positive and negative ways, the importance of establishing a spiritual home environment, and understanding the relationship between world peace and harmonious family life.

We encourage the fireside host and/or workshop facilitator to read about the different methods of teaching and learning suggested by the Writings in our Faith in the book, *Foundations for a Spiritual Education*, available through the Bahá’í Distribution Service. We also suggest that you contact any Core Curriculum Trainers to assist with the facilitation of these workshops. Please contact the National Teacher Training Center at Louhelen Bahá’í School if you need help identifying Core Curriculum trainers in your area.

We suggest that the fireside host or workshop facilitator carefully consider how to create an atmosphere to facilitate spiritual learning. While there is much flexibility in how this might be achieved, we have found that advance preparation of the devotional readings and the environment creates a more reverent and relaxed atmosphere for Bahá’ís and seekers alike to receive the Word of God.

The host or facilitator may wish to have some related resources available to the fireside guests on the topic of family. Consider sharing these titles:

- *Bahá’í Marriage and Family Life*, compilation of Bahá’í Writings (available from the Bahá’í Distribution Service 1-800-999-9019)
- *Violence Free Society—A Gift to Our Children* by Dr. Hossain Danesh (booklet, available from Special Ideas 1-800-326-1197)
- *The Family in a World Community*--for the 1994 International Year of the Family (pamphlet available from the Distribution Service)

Many of the fireside ideas and activities come from the Core Curriculum Parenting Program or the Core Curriculum Marriage and Family Life Program. For more information on either of these programs, or to identify trainers in your area who can offer a complete training program, please contact the National Teacher Training Center at Louhelen Bahá’í School, telephone: (810) 653-5033, or send an e-mail message to: <louhelen@usbnc.org>

Some specific guidelines for facilitating these workshops:

Use the Master as our example. Constantly bringing to mind the life and words of our beloved ‘Abdu’l-Bahá will assist you to respond in a loving manner to these precious friends. Please feel free to personally study and reflect upon some of the writings and prayers of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá before you begin so that you will have His image clearly in mind when delivering the workshops.

Use the Sacred Texts as a basis for your answers. When answering questions, try to refer to the answers that can be found in the Writings.

Be sensitive to varying levels of literacy. If the amount of reading or number of quotations suggested in the workshops becomes a burden to the friends, select 2-3 quotations to study rather than an entire page. If the friends are not comfortable reading in English, either memorize (as a group) one quotation for each activity that can become the basis for that activity, or team readers with non-readers for group activities.

Keep your comments brief. Creating an atmosphere where the participants themselves feel free to share their views and concerns necessitates that the facilitators keep their presentations and answers brief. Allow the participants to have the opportunity to connect their hearts to Bahá’u’lláh through use of the Sacred Texts.

Practice patience and sensitivity. All participants come with something unique to offer and assisting them to realize that their contributions are important is part of making people feel welcome.

Be happy! An uplifting environment will always make learning easier and a cheerful presenter can really make all the difference. You will find your own Faith renewed as you joyfully assist the friends to come to a deeper understanding of the mystery of prayer and meditation.

Allow time for fellowship. Following the structured parts of the fireside gathering, encourage informal conversation to occur so that friends of the Faith can raise additional questions in a less formal setting.

Make liberal use of music. Selections from a diverse array of musical styles may enhance spiritual learning and appeal to people of many different backgrounds. Some sources include: music of the Bahá’í Gospel Choir; music from the Bahá’í World Congress; *Songs of the Ancient Beauty*, parts I and II; and music from these artists: Narges, Red Grammer, El Viento Canta, Kevin Locke, Matthew Levine, Mary Davis, Seaforth and Jenkins, Kiu Haghighi, Paul Parrish (*Hidden Words* put to music), Remembrance Ensemble (a cappella *Hidden Words* renderings), and instrumental jazz pieces, as well as classical music, are possibilities.

Materials Checklist for Workshop Facilitators

Advance Preparation and Materials Needed for All Workshops:

- ☐ photocopy the set of pages for the workshop you are facilitating for each participant or guest
- ☐ TV/VCR and videotape: *Family: The Seeds of World Peace* (optional if seen recently)
- ☐ prayer book(s)
- ☐ copies of small prayer books and/or copies of small booklet: *The Light of Unity—The Family* to offer to each participant; resource materials on family (optional)—see introduction
- ☐ flip chart and markers
- ☐ blank paper for recording personal notes and reflections
- ☐ pens/pencils

Creating a Spiritual Environment:

- ☐ special touches—flowers, candles, a picture of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá—may set the tone and signal that this is going to be special
- ☐ extensive use of diverse music to set the tone before the fireside or workshop gets started and at any appropriate time during the program
- ☐ refreshments—something very simple such as coffee, tea, cookies—to offer either during a break or following the workshop

Specific Workshop Materials:

Fireside #1

- ☐ copies of quotes “The Power of Example” for each participant
- ☐ copy of family scenarios, “Demonstrate the Power of Example,” cut apart

Fireside #2

- ☐ carefully cut out magazine pictures: pictures from *National Geographic Magazine*, or any magazine or calendar with pictures from nature, e.g. birds, animals, insects, waterfalls, mountains, etc.
- ☐ copies of quotes “A Spiritual Environment in the Home” for each participant

Fireside #3

- ☐ copies of quotes “The Principle of Oneness” and questionnaire “Teaching Children about Oneness” for each participant

Fireside #4

- ☐ copies of quotations “Family Life in an Ever Advancing Civilization” for each participant
- ☐ sets of Tinker Toys, Legos, or other simple construction materials for each group of 3-5 participants

Fireside #5

- ☐ one copy of story for each small group of 4-7 participants
- ☐ simple arts and crafts supplies, e.g. markers, glue, different kinds of paper, feathers, etc. available for groups to use
- ☐ selection of instrumental music—jazz, classical, etc. available for use

Family Life in an Ever Advancing Civilization

Purpose:

To understand the relationship between family life and the peace of nations.

Fireside/Workshop/Meeting
90 minutes

Carefully prepare the learning environment to reflect hospitality, beauty, friendliness and love. Lovingly greet the guests as they arrive. You may also wish to have soft, instrumental music playing as the guests come in.

Opening prayer(s). When possible, include the use of music.

Introduction

Begin by explaining to the guests that the purpose of the gathering is to begin to understand how a healthy family life relates to peace in the world.

Family: The Seeds of World Peace Video

Have the guests watch the video (or telecast) of "Family: The seeds of World Peace (approximately 30 minutes).

Learning Experience

» In small groups, study the selected quotations and answer the focus questions:

- What practical expressions of cooperation, mutual aid and reciprocity strengthen family life?
- How can families assist children to learn the attitudes and habits that foster equality, harmony and unity in the family, and then transfer those attitudes and habits to the workplace, political life, and international relations?

Please be as specific as possible in your answers.

» In small groups, create a dynamic model (a model with moving parts) using tinker toys or other construction materials to show the relationship of family life to the peace, prosperity and well-being of nations. How can a simple model show this relationship?

» Invite each group to display and explain their model to the whole group.

Closing

- » Discuss these questions: What steps will I take to foster equality, harmony and unity in my own family? What steps will I take today?
- » Conclude by mentioning again the Bahá'í perspective that harmony and unity on a national and international level has its roots in the family. Invite participants to investigate the Bahá'í Faith.
- » Close the session with prayer, either spoken, chanted or sung.

Family Life in an Ever Advancing Civilization

Focus Questions:

- What practical expressions of co-operation, mutual aid and reciprocity strengthen family life?
- How can families assist children to learn the attitudes and habits that foster equality, harmony and unity in the family, and then transfer those attitudes and habits to the workplace, political life, and international relations?

Please be as specific as possible in your answers.



“Compare the nations of the world to the members of a family. A family is a nation in miniature. Simply enlarge the circle of the household, and you have the nation. Enlarge the circle of nations, and you have all humanity. The conditions surrounding the family surround the nation. The happenings in the family are the happenings in the life of the nation. Would it add to the progress and advancement of a family if dissensions should arise among its members, all fighting, pillaging each other, jealous and revengeful of injury, seeking selfish advantage? Nay, this would be the cause of the effacement of progress and advancement. So it is in the great family of nations, for nations are but an aggregate of families.”

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p.157)

“Consider the harmful effect of discord and dissension in a family; then reflect upon the favors and blessings which descend upon that family when unity exists among its various members. What incalculable benefits and blessings would descend upon the great human family if unity and brotherhood were established!”

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 230)

“According to the teachings of Baha’u’llah, the family, being a human unit, must be educated according to the rules of sanctity. All the virtues must be taught the family. The integrity of the family bond must be constantly considered, and the rights of the individual members must not be transgressed. The rights of the son, the father, the mother—none of them must be transgressed, none of them must be arbitrary. Just as the son has certain obligations to his father, the father, likewise, has certain obligations to his son. The mother, the sister and other members of the household have their certain prerogatives. All these rights and prerogatives must be conserved, yet the unity of the family must be sustained. The injury of one shall be considered the injury of all; the comfort of each, the comfort of all; the honor of one, the honor of all.”

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 168)

“Were one to observe with an eye that discovereth the realities of all things, it would become clear that the greatest relationship that bindeth the world of being together lieth in the range of created things themselves, and that co-operation, mutual aid and reciprocity are essential characteristics in the unified body of the world of being, inasmuch as all created things are closely related together and each is influenced by the other or deriveth benefit therefrom, either directly or indirectly. . . . The more this inter-relationship is strengthened and expanded, the more will human society advance in progress and prosperity. Indeed without these vital ties it would be wholly impossible for the world of humanity to attain true felicity and success.”

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Compilations: Volume 1*, pp. 509-10)

“The denial of . . . equality perpetrates an injustice against one half of the world’s population and promotes in men harmful attitudes and habits that are carried from the family to the workplace, to political life, and ultimately to international relations.”

(The Universal House of Justice, *The Compilations: Volume 2*, p. 392)

Standards of Parents

Purpose:

To develop awareness of ways we positively and negatively model behavior.
To illustrate the power of parental example.

Fireside/Workshop/Meeting
90 minutes

Carefully prepare the learning environment to reflect hospitality, beauty, friendliness and love. Lovingly greet the guests as they arrive. You may also wish to have soft, instrumental music playing as the guests come in.

Opening prayer(s). When possible, include the use of music.

Introduction

Begin by explaining to the guests that the purpose of the gathering is to explore the ways we model both positive and negative behavior and the role of parental example.

Family: The Seeds of World Peace Video

Have the guests watch the video (or telecast) of “Family: The Seeds of World Peace” (approximately 30 minutes).

Learning Experience

- » Divide into groups of three or four people.
Read the quotes, “The Power of Example,” aloud within each group.
Discuss the focus topics:
 - Based on the Holy Writings, how do we teach our children through example?
 - What are the implications of poor modeling?
- » Provide each group with a family scenario. Have each group role play for the large group their scenario, demonstrating how the positive example of parents can transform difficult situations. (Allow 10-15 minutes to prepare.)
Instruct the groups to be as subtle or as overt as they wish, but note that subtle complexities may inspire deeper discussions.

Closing

- » In the large group discuss this question: Why is understanding the power of example important?
- » Conclude by mentioning again the Bahá’í perspective on the power of parental example. Invite the participants to investigate the Bahá’í Faith.
- » Close the session with prayer, either spoken, chanted or sung.

The Power of Example

Focus Questions:

- Based on the Holy Writings, how do we teach our children through example?
- What are the implications of poor modeling?



“O SON OF MY HANDMAID! Guidance hath ever been given by words, and now it is given by deeds. Every one must show forth deeds that are pure and holy, for words are the property of all alike, whereas such deeds as these belong only to Our loved ones. Strive then with heart and soul to distinguish yourselves by your deeds. In this wise We counsel you in this holy and resplendent tablet.”

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Hidden Words of Bahá'u'lláh*, Persian, p. 76)

“Say: O people of God! That which can ensure the victory of Him Who is the Eternal Truth, His hosts and helpers on earth, have been set down in the sacred Books and Scriptures, and are as clear and manifest as the sun. These hosts are such righteous deeds, such conduct and character, as are acceptable in His sight. Whoso ariseth, in this Day, to aid Our Cause, and summoneth to his assistance the hosts of a praiseworthy character and upright conduct, the influence flowing from such an action will, most certainly, be diffused throughout the whole world.”

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 287, CXXXI)

“Whoso ariseth among you to teach the Cause of his Lord, let him, before all else, teach his own self, that his speech may attract the hearts of them that hear him. Unless he teacheth his own self, the words of his mouth will not influence the heart of the seeker. Take heed, O people, lest ye be of them that give good counsel to others but forget to follow it themselves. The words of such as these, and beyond the words the realities of all things, and beyond these realities the angels that are nigh unto God, bring against them the accusation of falsehood.”

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 277, CXXVIII)

“Let your acts be a guide unto all mankind, for the professions of most men, be they high or low, differ from their conduct. It is through your deeds that ye can distinguish yourselves from others. Through them the brightness of your light can be shed upon the whole earth.”

(Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 25)

“It is primarily through the potency of noble deeds and character, rather than by the power of exposition and proofs, that the friends of God should demonstrate to the world that what has been promised by God is bound to happen, that it is already taking place and that the divine glad-tidings are clear, evident and complete. For unless some illustrious souls step forth into the arena of service and shine out resplendent in the assemblage of men, the task of vindicating the truth of this Cause before the eyes of enlightened people would be formidable indeed. However, if the friends become embodiments of virtue and good character, words and arguments will be superfluous. Their very deeds will well serve as eloquent testimony, and their noble conduct will ensure the preservation, integrity and glory of the Cause of God.”

(Shoghi Effendi, from a letter dated 19 December 1923)

Demonstrate the Power of Example

1. The family is attending an athletic event. During the game the coach continually paces, smokes, and yells, "Get your act together!" shaking his head disgustedly. Other parents are picking up the coach's habits and mumbling about the need for better playing and/or coaching.
 - ☛ How can this situation be transformed?

2. Father comes home from work and immediately mentions that he is really tired and hungry (implying that dinner should be ready and served). As time goes by it is apparent that women are serving men continuously in this family. Men choose family TV viewing. Men initiate dinner conversation and talk about men they work with and meet on the golf course. Females are given "cute" nicknames and males have "reliable" names.
 - ☛ How can this situation be transformed?

3. The family is sitting down for dinner, discussing an issue with one of the children. A research paper is due Monday, but in order to complete this assignment the teenager must decline social and teaching opportunities over the weekend. The teenager's solution is to miss school Monday and/or lie to the teacher to obtain an extension. The parents uphold the virtue of honesty. The phone rings. The teenager answers, and relays the message, "It's for _____" (one of the parents). The parent asks the teen to respond that they're "not home" and "to make up an excuse for not returning the call."
 - ☛ How can this situation be transformed?

4. The daughter asks dad for permission to go out for pizza and fun despite the fact that it is a school night. The answer is no. The daughter then goes to mother (in the other room) and makes the same request. The answer is yes. As the daughter prepares to leave, she is confronted by her father who then demands an explanation from the mother. Mother sticks to her easy-going position.
 - ☛ How can this situation be transformed?

Nurturing a Spiritual Environment in the Home

Purpose:

To comprehend the importance of a spiritual home environment.

To identify one strategy to establish a spiritual environment in the home.

Fireside/Workshop/Meeting
90 minutes

Carefully prepare the learning environment to reflect hospitality, beauty, friendliness and love. Lovingly greet the guests as they arrive. You may also wish to have soft, instrumental music playing as the guests come in.

Opening prayer(s). When possible, include the use of music.

Introduction

Begin by explaining to the guests that the purpose of the gathering is to investigate the importance of establishing a spiritual home environment for both children and adults.

Family: The Seeds of World Peace Video

Have the guests watch the video (or telecast) of "Family: The Seeds of World Peace" (approximately 30 minutes).

Learning Experience

» Prepare in advance a set of images cut from magazines, calendars, etc., that include families of birds, animals, insects, waterfalls, mountains, sunsets; i.e., a variety of images from nature. Place the pictures in a suitable location.

» Have the whole group read aloud the handout "A Spiritual Environment in the Home."

» Discuss this question: Why is it important to establish a spiritual environment in the home?

» From the magazine pictures, invite the friends to choose an image that represents an attribute such as unity, beauty, respect, service, etc. that they would like to nurture or develop in their homes.

» Allow participants to share their pictures with the group, then to share one strategy they have used to nurture this attribute within their family.

» Invite the friends to record one new strategy they plan to take to strengthen or enhance the spiritual environment in their home.

Closing

- » Conclude by mentioning again the Bahá'í perspective on the importance of nurturing a spiritual environment in the home.
- » Invite the participants to investigate the Bahá'í Faith.
- » Close the session with prayer, either spoken, chanted or sung.

A Spiritual Environment in the Home



“Blessed is the house that hath attained unto My tender mercy, wherein My remembrance is celebrated, and which is ennobled by the presence of My loved ones, who have proclaimed My praise, cleaved fast to the cord of My grace and been honored by chanting My verses. Verily they are the exalted servants whom God hath extolled in the Qayyumu'l-Asma' and other scriptures. Verily He is the All-Hearing, the Answerer, He Who perceiveth all things.”

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Family Life*, p. 3)

“Note ye how easily, where unity existeth in a given family, the affairs of that family are conducted; what progress the members of that family make, how they prosper in the world. Their concerns are in order, they enjoy comfort and tranquillity, they are secure, their position is assured, they come to be envied by all. Such a family but addeth to its stature and its lasting honor, as day succeedeth day.”

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 279)

“I beseech God to graciously make of thy home a centre for the diffusion of the light of divine guidance, for the dissemination of the Words of God and for enkindling at all times the fire of love in the hearts of His faithful servants and maidservants. Know thou of a certainty that every house wherein the anthem of praise is raised to the Realm of Glory in celebration of the Name of God is indeed a heavenly home, and one of the gardens of delight in the Paradise of God.”

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Family Life*, (Canada) p. 10, (India) p. 17)

“My home is the home of peace. My home is the home of joy and delight. My home is the home of laughter and exultation. Whosoever enters through the portals of this home, must go out with gladsome heart. This is the home of light; whosoever enters here must become illumined.”

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Star of the West*, Vol. 9, No. 3, p. 40)

“In this glorious Cause the life of a married couple should resemble the life of the angels in heaven—a life full of joy and spiritual delight, a life of unity and concord, a friendship both mental and physical. The home should be orderly and well-organized. Their ideas and thoughts should be like the rays of the sun of truth and the radiance of the brilliant stars in the heavens. Even as two birds they should warble melodies upon the branches of the tree of fellowship and harmony. They should always be elated with joy and gladness and be a source of happiness to the hearts of others. They should set an example to their fellow-men, manifest a true and sincere love towards each other and educate their children in such a manner as to blazon the fame and glory of their family.”

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Family Life*, (Canada) pp. 15-16, (India) p. 28)

Love in the Human Family Teaching Children about Oneness

Purpose:

To appreciate the importance of raising children who appreciate diversity.
To articulate plans for creating a love of diversity in our children.

Fireside/Workshop/Meeting
90 minutes

Carefully prepare the learning environment to reflect hospitality, beauty, friendliness and love. Lovingly greet the guests as they arrive. You may also wish to have soft, instrumental music playing as the guests come in.

Opening prayer(s). When possible, include the use of music.

Introduction

Begin by explaining to the guests that the purpose of the gathering is to look at the importance of teaching children to appreciate and love diversity.

Family: The Seeds of World Peace Video

Have the guests watch the video (or telecast) of “Family: The Seeds of World Peace (approximately 30 minutes).

Learning Experience

- » Divide into small groups to read the quotations “The Principle of Oneness” and the questionnaire “Teaching Children about Oneness.”
- » Read the quotations and generate answers to the questionnaire.
- » Have each group create a short skit or mime to demonstrate a specific action they can share with their children to promote the principle of oneness and cultivate the love of diversity.

Closing

- » Bring the group back together and discuss this question: What is one action I will take with my children to promote the principle of oneness and a love of diversity?
- » Share with the participants the Bahá’í concept of oneness and invite everyone to investigate the Bahá’í Faith.
- » Close the session with prayer, either spoken, chanted or sung.

The Principle of Oneness



“O Children of Men! Know ye not why We have created you all from the same dust? That no one should exalt himself over the other. Ponder at all times in your hearts how ye were created. Since We have created you all from one same substance it is incumbent upon you to be even as one soul, to walk with the same feet, eat with the same mouth and dwell in the same land, that from your inmost being, by your deeds and actions, the signs of oneness and the essence of detachment may be made manifest. Such is My counsel to you, O concourse of light! Heed ye this counsel that ye may obtain the fruits of holiness from the tree of wondrous glory.”

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Hidden Words of Bahá'u'lláh*, Arabic, p. 20)

“He Who is your Lord, the All-Merciful, cherisheth in His heart the desire of beholding the entire human race as one soul and one body.”

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 213, CVI)

“Wherefore must the loved ones of God associate in affectionate fellowship with stranger and friends alike, showing forth to all the utmost loving-kindness, disregarding the degree of their capacity, never asking whether they deserve to be loved.”

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 12)

“Be thou a summoner to love, and be thou kind to all the human race. Love thou the children of men and share in their sorrows. Be thou of those who foster peace. Offer thy friendship, be worthy of trust. Be thou a balm to every sore, be thou a medicine for every ill. Bind thou the souls together.”

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 26)

“One must see in every human being only that which is worthy of praise. When this is done, one can be a friend to the whole human race.”

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 169)

“Cleanse ye your eyes, so that ye behold no man as different than yourselves. See ye no strangers; rather see all men as friends, for love and unity come hard when ye fix your gaze on otherness.”

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 24)

Teaching Children about Oneness

- ◆ What do children need to know in order to embrace the teaching of the oneness of humanity?

- ◆ How can parents assist children to acquire this divine knowledge?

- ◆ How can children come to understand that they have a capacity and are capable of assisting the human race to become united?

- ◆ How can parents help children to perceive what unity and diversity “look like” and to discern their role in advancing the process of unity and diversity?

- ◆ What family programs, activities, habits, routines and environments could be conducive to children becoming prejudice-free and united with their fellow human beings?

Glimpses of the Holy Family

Purpose:

To discover how members of
`Abdu'l-Bahá's family cared for each other.
To apply this understanding to our own
families.

Fireside/Workshop/Meeting
90 minutes

Carefully prepare the learning environment to reflect hospitality, beauty, friendliness and love. Lovingly greet the guests as they arrive. You may also wish to have soft, instrumental music playing as the guests come in.

Opening prayer(s). When possible, include the use of music.

Introduction

Open by explaining to the guests that the purpose of the gathering is to look at the ways that `Abdu'l-Bahá's family (the Holy Family) related to each other and to catch a glimpse of how they cared for one another.

Family: The Seeds of World Peace Video

Have the guests watch the video (or telecast) of "Family: The Seeds of World Peace (approximately 30 minutes).

Learning Experience

» Introduce the activity by reading aloud the following passage from `Abdu'l-Bahá:

My home is the home of peace. My home is the home of joy and delight. My home is the home of laughter and exultation. Whosoever enters through the portals of this home, must go out with gladsome heart. This is the home of light; whosoever enters here must become illumined. . . .

(From a Tablet, published in "Star of the West", vol. 9, no. 3, `Abdu'l-Bahá: *Family Life*, p. 397)

» Give a brief explanation of who the members of `Abdu'l-Bahá's family are so that the stories make sense for those unfamiliar with the Bahá'í Faith.

» Then invite the friends to divide themselves into small working groups according to their interest in one of the arts: dance, music, drama, mime, poetry or visual art. Assign each of the groups one or more of the following stories:

1. `Abdu'l-Bahá and His Sister, the Greatest Holy Leaf
2. The Marriage of `Abdu'l-Bahá and Munírih Khánúm
3. Gifts of the Greatest Holy Leaf
4. The Children's Education
5. Shoghi Effendi's Tenderness

» Invite the friends to read their story aloud and to reflect on the qualities the members of the Holy Family illustrate, a quality that enabled that individual to serve selflessly in the household of `Abdu'l-Bahá.

» Request the participants to choose one of the qualities they saw in their story and then prepare a creative representation of how that quality, so beautifully demonstrated in the Holy Family, can assist us to establish “homes of joy and delight” in the world today.

» After allowing work time in the small group, invite each working group to share with the whole group:

- the quality they identified
- their creative expression of how that quality can assist us to achieve equality in the world today, either through dance, music, drama, mime, poetry or visual art.

Closing

Bring the group back together and discuss these questions:

- How can the qualities illustrated by the Holy Family be expressed in my family?
- What practical steps, however small, shall I take this week to more fully express the principle of equality in my family?

Invite the participants to investigate the Bahá'í Faith.

Close the session with prayer, either spoken, chanted or sung.

Group One: 'Abdu'l-Bahá and His Sister, the Greatest Holy Leaf

Bahíyyih Khánum recalls:

The journey to Adrianople, although occupying but nine days, was the most terrible experience of travel we had thus far had. It was the beginning of winter, and very cold; heavy snow fell most of the time; and destitute as we were of proper clothing or food, it was a miracle that we survived it. We arrived at Adrianople all sick--even the young and strong. . . .

Our family, numbering eleven persons, was lodged in a house of three rooms just outside the city of Adrianople. It was like a prison; without comforts and surrounded by a guard of soldiers. Our only food was the prison fare allowed us, which was unsuitable for the children and the sick.

That winter was a period of intense suffering, due to cold, hunger, and, above all, to the torments of vermin, with which the house was swarming. These made even the days horrible, and the nights still more so. When they were so intolerable that it was impossible to sleep, my brother would light a lamp (which somewhat intimidated the vermin) and by singing and laughing seek to restore the spirits of the family."

(Pheaps, Myron H., *The Master in 'Akka*, pp. 47-48)



'Abdu'l-Bahá provides for His sister's comfort during a later journey by writing to His daughter: O Diya! It is incumbent upon thee, throughout the journey, to be a close, a constant and cheerful companion to my honoured and distinguished sister. Unceasingly, with the utmost vigour and devotion, exert thyself, by day and night, to gladden her blessed heart; for all her days she was denied a moment of tranquillity. She was astir and restless every hour of her life. Moth-like she circled in adoration round the undying flame of the Divine Candle, her spirit ablaze and her heart consumed by the fire of His love.

('Abdu'l-Bahá, *Bahíyyih Khánum*, p. 10)

Group Two: *The Marriage of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and Munírih Khánum*

Munírih Khánum recalls:

It is impossible to put into words the delight of being with the Master; I seemed to be in a glorious realm of sacred happiness whilst in His company. You have known Him in His later years, but then, in the youth of His beauty and manly vigour, with His unfailing love, His kindness, His cheerfulness, His sense of humour, His untiring consideration for everybody, He was marvelous, without equal, surely in all the earth!

For fifty years my Beloved and I were together. Never were we separated, save during His visits to Egypt, Europe, and America. O my Beloved husband and my Lord! How shall I speak of Him? You, who have known Him, can imagine what my fifty years have been--how they fled by in an atmosphere of love and joy and the perfection of that Peace which passeth all understanding, in the radiant light of which I await the day when I shall be called to join Him, in the celestial garden of transfiguration.

(spoken chronicle of Munírih Khánum, *The Chosen Highway*, pp. 89-90)

Group Three: *Gifts of the Greatest Holy Leaf*

Early pilgrims share remembrances of the Greatest Holy Leaf:

It is a charming Persian habit to wrap a gift in an embroidered silk or linen cloth, as fine in its way as the thing enclosed. So, always, she (Bahíyyih Khánúm) gave a gift within the gift. You took the happy warmth of contentment you felt when you were with her and only later came to realize that this was the fine wrapping of a deeper joy, a richer core. . . .

She was seldom alone. . . . Her room was the heart of the house. Around the glow of her brazier in winter or when she sat on her window divan in full sunlight, old and young would gather near her, filtering in one by one, slipping out again to work or play, or pausing for a moment in a busy day at the doorway for a glimpse. You left your shoes at the threshold of that room and you left, too, any outer covering of pose or manner you might have made for yourself for protection in a bleak world. Here was no need for pretense and brave showing: here in the light of her shining simplicity you became simple.

(Morten, Marjory, *The Passing of Bahíyyih Khánúm in Crystallizations*, pp. 168 and 170)



Among the visitors was a widow from the Middle East, who had arrived on what seemed to be a permanent pilgrimage. I do not recall the source of this lady's permanent melancholy. True, she would help some of the people there on occasion, sitting on the floor according to the lingering custom and working on the vegetables and other ingredients of the patriarchal dinner dishes that would feed so many mouths. But she would take little part in the conversations, being mostly wrapped in unadulterated grief. One day, there she came, and sat, heaving her usual sighs, her face clouded with sorrow. Gently the Greatest Holy Leaf leaned over and addressed her. "There are not frontiers to the world of gloom," she said. "You will never get to the end of it, no matter how far and how fast you gallop your steed."

(Gail, Marzieh, *Khánúm, The Greatest Holy Leaf*, p. 25)

Group Four: *The Children's Education*

From the earliest days of the small Bahá'í community centered around Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the Holy Land, the education of children--both boys and girls-- was emphasized, within the limits imposed by the confinement of the family and companions as prisoners of the Ottoman Turks, and by the meager facilities available to them.

The emphasis on education was constant. Lady Blomfield, an early Bahá'í, describes how, when the family of 'Abdu'l-Bahá was evacuated temporarily from Haifa to the village of Abu-Sinan during the period of World War I when Haifa was in danger of bombardment, 'Abdu'l-Bahá arranged for schools to be set up in that village to ensure that the children's education was not neglected.

(Khan, Janet A. and Peter J. Khan, *The Advancement of Women*, p. 183)



'Abdu'l-Bahá took particular care in Shoghi Effendi's education:

"At this time, the British world empire is the greatest of all and is still advancing. Its language is a world language. My Vizier shall receive his education in England itself, after acquiring the Oriental languages and the wisdom of the East in this place."

The doctor ventured to object: Would not Western education "check his active spirit," rigidly bind it, "stifle his Oriental non-rationalities and intuition into dogmas and conventionalities," so that he would turn from being a servant of the Most High and become "a slave of Western opportunism and the trite and commonplace?" A long pause. Then 'Abdu'l-Bahá stood up and said in a firm voice, "I am not giving my Elisha to the British for education: I am consecrating him to Almighty God. May His eyes watch over my child even at Oxford."

(Gail, Marzieh, *Khánum, The Greatest Holy Leaf*, pp. 33-34)

Group Five: Shoghi Effendi's Tenderness

Rúhiyyih Khánum shares this personal story about the Guardian:

In 1940 my mother, animated by a passionate desire to render the Cause some service . . . decided to go to South America and help in teaching the Faith in Argentina. . . . The Guardian, my father and I had consented to this long journey, but at such an age, and with a heart very far from sound, it was a risk, to say the least.

The reason I record all these personal things is because behind them, in them, pervading them was the spirit of the Guardian and his tender heart, . . . which were all reflected in the events that followed. My mother reached Buenos Aires and died almost immediately of a heart attack. The three cables that came, one from her asking for his prayers, one from my father saying she was very ill and to prepare me, and one from my cousin Jeanne Bolles, who had accompanied her, saying she had died, were all handed by me to Shoghi Effendi. As he read them I saw his face change and he looked at me with an expression of intense anxiety and concern. Then of course, gradually, he had to tell me she was dead. I cannot conceive that any human being ever received such pure kindness as I did from the Guardian during that period of shock and grief. His praises of her sacrifice, his descriptions of her state of joy in the next world, . . . his vivid depiction of her as she wandered about the Abhá Kingdom making a thorough nuisance of herself because all she wanted to talk about was her beloved daughter on earth!--all combined to lift me into a state of such happiness that many times I would find myself laughing with him over the things he seemed to be actually divining.

(Rabbani, Rúhiyyih, *The Priceless Pearl*, pp. 154-155)

Overview of education and training programs of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States

Core Curriculum for Spiritual Education

Fundamental Verities Course Series

- Introductory Course: To Be a Bahá'í
- Course One: This Day of God
- Course Two: Circles of Unity
- Course Three: The Seeker's Quest
- Course Four: Every Believer Is a Teacher
- Course Five: To Serve the Covenant
- Course Six: Building a New Civilization
- The Art of Facilitation

Programs for Developing Patterns of Bahá'í Life

Trainer/Facilitator Training for each of the following programs is offered at the National Teacher Training Center, Louhelen Bahá'í School • (810) 653-5033 • NTTC@usbnc.org

- Training for Teachers of Children and Youth
- Parenting
- Training for Race Unity Workers
- Marriage and Family Life for Couples
- Preparation for Marriage and Family Life
- Youth Empowerment
- Equality of Women and Men

Local Assembly Development Program

Training for Pioneers

Training for Media Representatives

Training for Local Treasurers

Permanent Schools and Institutes

Bosch Bahá'í School
Green Acre Bahá'í School
Louhelen Bahá'í School
Louis Gregory Bahá'í Institute
Native American Bahá'í Institute
National Teacher Training Center at Louhelen Bahá'í School
The Wilmette Institute