

Introduction	p. 3	
Session 1	p. 11	Love's Flame
Session 2	p. 19	The Power of Utterance
Session 3	p. 29	Blazoning the Name of Bahá'u'lláh
Session 4	p. 39	A Contemporary Faith
Session 5	p. 47	Human Happiness
Session 6	p. 59	The Power of Divine Assistance
Session 7	p. 69	The Fireside
Session 8	p. 81	Contributing to Growth
Session 9	p. 95	Inviting Receptive Souls
Session 10	p. 107	Nurturing New Believers
Session 11	p. 117	Promoting Entry by Troops
Session 12	p. 129	A Door to Entry by Troops
Appendix	p. 145	

Every Believer Is a Teacher

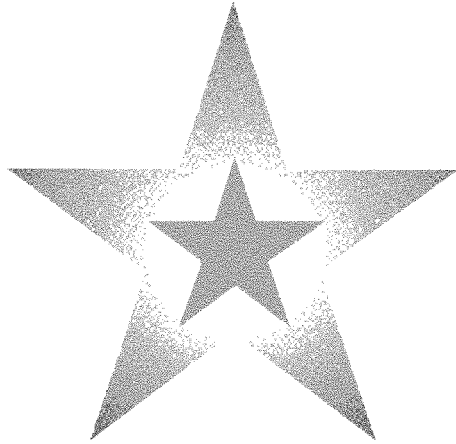
COURSE FOUR

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

C  **RE** **Core Curriculum
for Spiritual
Education**

National Spiritual Assembly
of the
Bahá'ís of the United States

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Bahá'ís of the United States



*I*f he be kindled with the fire of His love,
if he forgoeth all created things, the words
he uttereth shall set on fire them that hear
him.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

Every Believer Is a Teacher

COURSE FOUR

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. This is in no wise an in-depth study of the Faith, but rather as an introduction to ongoing study of the writings of Bahá'u'lláh that inspire the love of God and service to all the human race.

Course Design and Presentation

This course is the fourth 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 series

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 Four: Every Believer Is a Teacher

- Session 1 Love's Flame
Session 2 The Power of Utterance
Session 3 Blazoning the Name of Bahá'u'lláh
Session 4 A Contemporary Faith
Session 5 Human Happiness
Session 6 The Power of Divine Assistance
Session 7 The Fireside
Session 8 Contributing to Growth
Session 9 Inviting Receptive Souls
Session 10 Nurturing New Believers
Session 11 Promoting Entry by Troops
Session 12 A Door to Entry by Troops

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 or 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. . . .

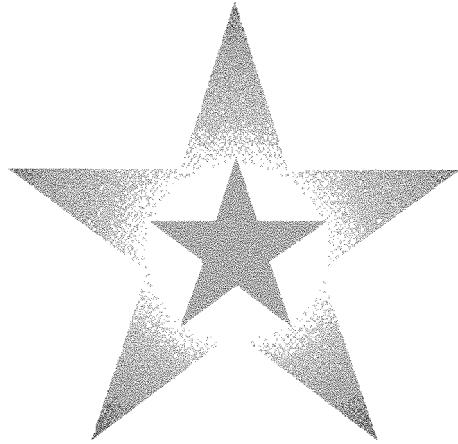
WRITTEN ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, *Compilation of Compilations, Volume 1*, pp. 228-9

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*each thou the Cause of God with an utterance
which will cause the bushes to be enkindled,
and the call “Verily, there is no God but me,
the Almighty, the Unconstrained”
to be raised therefrom.

BAHÁ’U’LLÁH

Every Believer Is a Teacher

COURSE FOUR

Some
Fundamental
Verities of the
Bahá’í Faith

Session 1

Love’s Flame

Opening Devotions

Welcome to this fourth course in the Fundamental Verities Sequence of Courses about the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. Please begin your session with reverent, uplifting devotions, including singing or recorded music.

If desired, the following passages may also be included:

If he be kindled with the fire of His love, if he forgoeth all created things, the words he uttereth shall set on fire them that hear him.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, Quoted in *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 51

The Great Being saith: The Word is the master key for the whole world, inasmuch as through its potency the doors of the hearts of men, which in reality are the doors of heaven, are unlocked.

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

Introduction to the Course

This course has the purpose of assisting us to blazon the Name of Bahá'u'lláh in our communities, sharing the Word of God with others, hosting firesides, and inviting others to enlist themselves under the banner of Bahá'u'lláh. This course, as the other courses in the Fundamental Verities sequence, assists us to “translate that which hath been written into reality and action.”

Please introduce yourselves and share one goal that you hope to realize through your participation in this course.

Then, review logistical information such as schedule, cost, child care, location of washrooms, refreshments available, or other matters related to the course.

Objectives of the Session

Read aloud the learning objectives for this session.

Knowledge

To become familiar with Bahá'í writings on the power of love in spreading the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh.

Wisdom

To understand the importance of the love of God when teaching the Faith.

Spiritual Perception

To perceive teaching opportunities in every day life.

Eloquent Speech

To consult about teaching and create a teaching plan.

As we know, ‘Abdu’l-Baha is the perfect Exemplar of every Bahá’í teaching. His love kindled the fire of the love of God in the hearts of the thousands of people He met. Let’s begin our study circle by exploring this fire of love.

1. Light a candle near a portrait of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Then take one small unlit candle, so that each study circle participant has one. Hold your unlit candle next to the unlit candle of your neighbor. Observe that merely associating with others is not sufficient for spreading the fire of the love of God.
2. Now hold your unlit candle beside the lit candle so that the bodies of the candles touch but the wicks of these candles do not touch each other. Consider that even a person who is enkindled with the love of God does not *necessarily* have an effect on others.
3. Then hold the wick of your unlit candle to the flame so that your candle becomes lit. Notice that fire spreads when we are not only kindled with the fire of the love of God, but when we share the Word of God with others, when the Holy Spirit confirms our efforts, and when we sustain our contact until the other flame is able to burn on its own and, in turn, can light others. We are like the candles; the flame is the love of God. Communicating this flame is the work of the Holy Spirit. It is our privilege to serve as a vehicle for the Holy Spirit.
4. After all members of the study circle have lit their candles, read aloud the passages on the following pages, “Love’s Flame” slowly and eloquently.
5. After reading, allow time for a quiet period of reflection, possibly while playing some meditative music. Then, in the whole group, discuss the following questions:
 - How do we kindle the fire of the love of God in our own hearts?
 - How might we convey the spark of faith to others?
 - How can we support each other in this process?



1 O Friends! You must all be so ablaze in this day with the fire of the love of God that the heat thereof may be manifest in all your veins, your limbs and members of your body, and the peoples of the world may be ignited by this heat and turn to the horizon of the Beloved.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. 2, p. 293

2 If he be kindled with the fire of His love, if he forgoeth all created things, the words he uttereth shall set on fire them that hear him.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, Quoted in *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 51

3 Day by day become ye more illumined. Draw ye nearer and nearer unto the threshold of oneness. Become ye the manifestors of spiritual favors and the dawning-places of infinite lights! . . .

As regards the teachers, they must completely divest themselves from the old garments and be invested with a new garment. According to the statement of Christ, they must attain to the station of rebirth—that is, whereas in the first instance they were born from the womb of the mother, this time they must be born from the womb of the world of nature. Just as they are now totally unaware of the experiences of the fetal world, they must also forget entirely the defects of the world of nature. They must be baptized with the water of life, the fire of the love of God and the breaths of the Holy Spirit; be satisfied with little food, but take a large portion from the heavenly table. They must disengage themselves from temptation and covetousness, and be filled with the spirit. Through the effect of their pure breath, they must change the stone into the brilliant ruby and the shell into pearl. Like unto the cloud of vernal shower, they must transform the black soil into the rose garden and orchard. They must make the blind seeing, the deaf hearing, the extinguished one enkindled and set aglow, and the dead quickened.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, p. 96

4 The teacher, when teaching, must be himself fully enkindled, so that his utterance, like unto a flame of fire, may exert influence and consume the veil of self and passion. He must also be utterly humble and lowly so that others may be edified, and be totally self-effaced and evanescent so that he may teach with the melody of the Concourse on high—otherwise his teaching will have no effect.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 270, #217

5 . . . the believers of God must become self-sacrificing and like unto the candles of guidance become ignited . . . Should they show forth such a magnanimity, it is assured that they will obtain universal divine confirmations, the heavenly cohorts will reinforce them uninterruptedly, and a most great victory will be obtained.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, pp. 27-8

6 Soon will our handful of days, our vanishing life, be gone, and we shall pass, empty-handed, into the hollow that is dug for those who speak no more; wherefore must we bind our hearts to the manifest Beauty, and cling to the lifeline that faileth never. We must gird ourselves for service, kindle love's flame, and burn away in its heat. We must loose our tongues till we set the wide world's heart afire, and with bright rays of guidance blot out the armies of the night, and then, for His sake, on the field of sacrifice, fling down our lives.

Thus let us scatter over every people the treasured gems of the recognition of God, and with the decisive blade of the tongue, and the sure arrows of knowledge, let us defeat the hosts of self and passion, and hasten onward to the site of martyrdom, to the place where we die for the Lord. And then, with flying flags, and to the beat of drums, let us pass into the realm of the All-Glorious, and join the Company on high. Well is it with the doers of great deeds.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 267, #210

7 When a speaker's brow shineth with the radiance of the love of God, at the time of his exposition of a subject, and he is exhilarated with the wine of true understanding, he becometh the centre of a potent force which like unto a magnet will attract the hearts. This is why the expounder must be in the utmost enkindlement.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. 2, p. 299

8 Entire and selfless devotion is what is most needful. The brighter our torch burns, the more light will it give and the more readily will it impart its blaze to others....

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. 2, pp. 305-6

9 The key to the conversion of people to the Faith is the action of the individual Bahá'í conveying the spark of faith to individual seekers, answering their questions and deepening their understanding of the teachings.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *Teaching the Bahá'í Faith*, p. 42

Consultation About Individual Acts of Teaching, Study, and Service

1. Read aloud the following selection from the 17 January 2003 letter to the Bahá'ís of the world from the Universal House of Justice. In this letter the Universal House of Justice observes that participation in a sequence of courses evokes “the spirit of enterprise” to carry out the actions that promote growth.

Particularly heartwarming to observe is a growing sense of initiative and resourcefulness throughout the Bahá'í world, along with courage and audacity. Consecration, zeal, confidence and tenacity—these are among the qualities that are distinguishing the believers in every continent. . . .

In most clusters, movement from one stage of growth to the next is being defined in terms of the multiplication of study circles, devotional meetings and children's classes, and the expansion they engender. Devotional meetings begin to flourish as consciousness of the spiritual dimension of human existence is raised among the believers in an area through institute courses. Children's classes, too, are a natural outgrowth of the training received early in the study of the main sequence. As both activities are made open to the wider community through a variety of well-conceived and imaginative means, they attract a growing number of seekers, who, more often than not, are eager to attend firesides and join study circles. Many go on subsequently to declare their faith in Bahá'u'lláh and, from the outset, view their role in the community as that of active participants in a dynamic process of growth. Individual and collective exertions in the teaching field intensify correspondingly, further fuelling the process. Established communities are revitalized, and newly formed ones soon gain the privilege of electing their Local Spiritual Assemblies.

The coherence thus achieved through the establishment of study circles, devotional meetings and children's classes provides the initial impulse for growth in a cluster, an impulse that gathers strength as these core activities multiply in number.

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, To the Bahá'ís of the World, 17 January 2003

2. Discuss: In what ways has our participation in this sequence of courses assisted us to:
 - multiply devotional gatherings?
 - promote children's classes and foster community events that welcome children and families?
 - open our devotional meetings, children's classes, and study circles to all?
 - attract seekers to attend firesides, devotional meetings, and study circles?

As this course is designed to assist us to carry out these important acts of service to our communities, we spend some time in each session planning our service in the coming week.

Please consider the following questions as you plan your service for the coming week:

- How can I increase my own love for the Beloved of every heart?
- How, when, and where can I share the love of God with others, remembering that I show my love for God through love and service to others?
- Will I plan to show loving interest in a friend or acquaintance by offering hospitality in my home, or inviting them to meet me for coffee or a soft drink in a public place?
- How can I find opportunities to ask interested questions, listen with love, and perhaps share an encouraging passage from the Bahá'í writings?
- Could I plan and host a devotional gathering or fireside, perhaps using the Fireside packets posted online at http://www.education.usbnc.org/a_themes/fireside_manuals.htm?
- How could I encourage the young people in our community?

Personal Teaching Plan

Listen to meditative music as you complete your “Personal Teaching Plan” on the following page.

Closing Devotions

Conclude the session with prayers for teaching and group singing.



A PERSONAL TEACHING PLAN

Whoso openeth his lips in this Day and maketh mention of the name of his Lord, the hosts of Divine inspiration shall descend upon him from the heaven of My name, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. On him shall also descend the Concourse on high, each bearing aloft a chalice of pure light.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Gleanings*, p. 280, section CXXIX

What specific steps can I take this week...?



To take initiative; to seize opportunities; to form friendships; to interact personally with others; to build relationships?

How can I draw upon...?



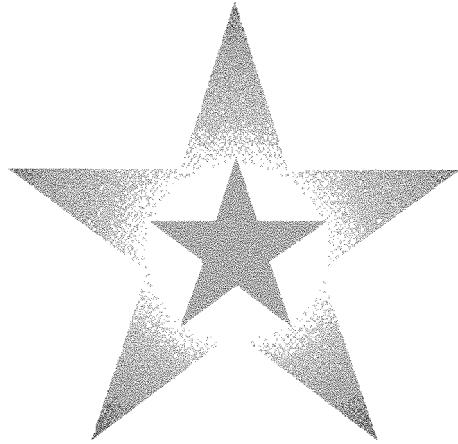
My love for Bahá'u'lláh; the power of the Covenant; the dynamics of prayer; the inspiration and education derived from regular reading and study of the Holy Texts?



The transformative forces that operate upon my soul as I strive to behave in accordance with the divine laws and principles?



In addition, how can I attract the particular blessings promised by Bahá'u'lláh to the one who mentions His name?



*A*rise for the triumph of My Cause, and,
through the power of thine utterance,
subdue the hearts of men.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

Every Believer Is a Teacher

COURSE FOUR

Some
Fundamental
Verities of the
Bahá'í Faith

Session 2

The Power of
Utterance

Opening Devotions

Begin the session with uplifting devotions, including music or singing.

You may consider including the following quotation along with your opening prayers:

The sanctified souls should ponder and meditate in their hearts regarding the methods of teaching. From the texts of the wondrous, heavenly Scriptures they should memorize phrases and passages bearing on various instances, so that in the course of their speech they may recite divine verses whenever the occasion demandeth it, inasmuch as these holy verses are the most potent elixir, the greatest and mightiest talisman. So potent is their influence that the hearer will have no cause for vacillation. I swear by My life! This Revelation is endowed with such a power that it will act as the lodestone for all nations and kindreds of the earth. Should one pause to meditate attentively he would recognize that no place is there, nor can there be, for anyone to flee to.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Tablets of Babá'u'lláh*, p. 200

Objectives of the Session

Read aloud the learning objectives for this session.

Knowledge

To become familiar with the writings on the power of utterance.

Wisdom

To understand the importance of using the power of utterance to share the Word of God with others.

Spiritual Perception

To perceive teaching opportunities in every day life.

Eloquent Speech

To answer our friends' questions with the Word of God.

To create and persevere in a Personal Teaching Plan.

Consultation on Individual Acts of Service and Teaching

- Who was able to make a new friend or strengthen a friendship this week? What happened?
- Who was able to make contact with a particularly chosen individual or group this week? What happened?
- What happened when you initiated friendly conversations with others?
- Were you able to share quotations, stories, principles? What was the result?
- Were you able to support your local children's classes or host a devotional meeting or a fireside? What are we learning about encouraging others through these core activities?

Activity The Power of Utterance

One of the gifts of Bahá'u'lláh is the gift of sharing His beautiful message with others. Although not everyone makes public talks, we all can share the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh with others. We can learn from the strategies used by a gifted teacher, Hand of the Cause of God Dorothy Baker, whether we are preparing a fireside, a formal talk, or for the many informal conversations we have about our beloved Faith.

1. Read the story from Dorothy Baker's biography, "Becoming a Teacher." Briefly discuss: How can we apply some of Dorothy Baker's approaches to teaching in our everyday lives?
2. Then, work in small study groups to read aloud the quotations, "The Power of Utterance," carefully study the advice offered in these writings, and discuss the focus questions.
3. While still in your study group, individually reflect on a time when you were guided by the speech of another. Briefly share your story with the members of your small groups and then as a group identify some common elements in your stories. Using the materials provided, create a visual representation to illustrate these common elements.
4. Share your visual representation of these elements in the whole group. Applaud all contributions!



BECOMING A TEACHER

Excerpt from Dorothy Freeman, *From Copper to Gold*, pp. 128-130

During her lifetime Dorothy became a magnificent speaker. Many say Shoghi Effendi called her the greatest Bahá'í speaker of her time. . . . At Louhelen [Bahá'í School] Dorothy discussed how to become a better speaker. Annamarie Kunz Honnold . . . had the vision to write down her casual remarks on how to prepare and give a talk.

In order to speak on the spur of the moment, prepare a reservoir beforehand and have a supply of information. In preparing a speech have about five times (or so) more material than you will actually need. Divide talk into main and sub points. Every good talk should have a definite thought throughout. Have stories to explain theory and make central theme stand out. Don't repeat except for emphasis—not to collect thoughts. Don't worry about rhetoric while speaking. Trust God to get you out. Climax is important. When you have clinched your talk, sit down and be through. Don't forget the human element. Don't make it 'a cold proposition.' Make the talk a living breathing reality.

At home in Lima while doing housework, Dorothy would think of questions she might be asked after a talk and consider possible replies. For each one she would construct various answers so that whether the individual was calling attention to himself, seriously interested, aggressive or mildly curious, she would have an appropriate reply. Then she would pretend someone challenged her illustration, and improve on it until her answer was as close to fool-proof as possible.

Early in her speaking career, after researching a subject, Dorothy would write out her entire talk, then make an outline from that. After studying both she would summarize the first outline into a shorter one that named only the more important major points She felt that too many notes to follow ruin a talk, so she kept them to a minimum. When her outline was familiar enough for her to follow easily, Dorothy often practiced giving her talk in front of a mirror. . . .

Dorothy's beloved friend Doris McKay once asked her how to get over the nervousness she felt when she had to speak. Dorothy said, "Speak to one responsive person first. Then think of them as separate people, not a crowd. You couldn't be nervous speaking to one." Almost regardless of the location or the audience, Dorothy opened her talks by reading a prayer aloud. She kept this habit her whole life. Even in the middle of a formal speech Dorothy would occasionally close her eyes for a long moment to pray.



THE POWER OF UTTERANCE

Focus questions:

What spiritual qualities endow our speech with the power to attract the hearts of others? How can we decide what to say to any particular person? What is the value of attributing these teachings to the Blessed Beauty, Bahá'u'lláh?

1 Arise for the triumph of My Cause, and, through the power of thine utterance, subdue the hearts of men.

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

2 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. This is the station of supreme victory and celestial dominion. Whoso attaineth thereto is invested with the power to teach the Cause of God and to prevail over the hearts and minds of men.

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

3 The sanctified souls should ponder and meditate in their hearts regarding the methods of teaching. From the texts of the wondrous, heavenly Scriptures they should memorize phrases and passages bearing on various instances, so that in the course of their speech they may recite divine verses whenever the occasion demandeth it, inasmuch as these holy verses are the most potent elixir, the greatest and mightiest talisman. So potent is their influence that the hearer will have no cause for vacillation. I swear by My life! This Revelation is endowed with such a power that it will act as the lodestone for all nations and kindreds of the earth. Should one pause to meditate attentively he would recognize that no place is there, nor can there be, for anyone to flee to.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Tablets of Babá'u'lláh*, p. 200

4 Consort with all men, O people of Bahá, in a spirit of friendliness and fellowship. If ye be aware of a certain truth, if ye possess a jewel, of which others are deprived, share it with them in a language of utmost kindness and good-will. If it be accepted, if it fulfill its purpose, your object is attained. If any one should refuse it, leave him unto himself, and beseech God to guide him. Beware lest ye deal unkindly with him. A kindly tongue is the lodestone of the hearts of men. It is the bread of the spirit, it clotheth the words with meaning, it is the fountain of the light of wisdom and understanding....

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Gleanings from the Writings of Babá'u'lláh*, p. 289, CXXXII

5 In accordance with the divine teachings in this glorious dispensation we should not belittle anyone and call him ignorant, saying: “You know not, but I know.” Rather, we should look upon others with respect, and when attempting to explain and demonstrate, we should speak as if we are investigating the truth, saying: ‘Here these things are before us. Let us investigate to determine where and in what form the truth can be found.’ The teacher should not consider himself as learned and others ignorant. Such a thought breedeth pride, and pride is not conducive to influence. The teacher should not see in himself any superiority; he should speak with the utmost kindness, lowliness and humility, for such speech exerteth influence and educateth the souls.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Babá*, p. 30, #15

6 Follow thou the way of thy Lord, and say not that which the ears cannot bear to hear, for such speech is like luscious food given to small children. However palatable, rare and rich the food may be, it cannot be assimilated by the digestive organs of a suckling child. Therefore unto every one who hath a right, let his settled measure be given. “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.” Such is the consummate wisdom to be observed in thy pursuits. Be not oblivious thereof, if thou wishest to be a man of action under all conditions. First diagnose the disease and identify the malady, then prescribe the remedy, for such is the perfect method of the skilful physician.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Babá*, p. 269, #214

7 Do not argue with anyone, and be wary of disputation. Speak out the truth. If your hearer accepteth, the aim is achieved. If he is obdurate, you should leave him to himself, and place your trust in God. Such is the quality of those who are firm in the Covenant.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. 2, p. 301

8 Rest assured that the breathings of the Holy Spirit will loosen thy tongue. Speak, therefore; speak out with great courage at every meeting. When thou art about to begin thine address, turn first to Bahá’u’lláh, and ask for the confirmations of the Holy Spirit, then open thy lips and say whatever is suggested to thy heart; this, however, with the utmost courage, dignity and conviction.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Babá*, p. 269, #216

9 As to his question about the permissibility of promulgating the divine teachings without relating them to the Most Great Name, you should answer: “This blessed Name hath an effect on the reality of things. If these teachings are spread without identifying them with this holy Name, they will fail to exert an abiding influence in the world. The teachings are like the body, and this holy Name is like the spirit. It imparteth life to the body. It causeth the people of the world to be aroused from their slumber.”

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. 2, pp. 299-300

1. Recall the power of the Word of God to open the human heart:

The Great Being saith: The Word is the master key for the whole world, inasmuch as through its potency the doors of the hearts of men, which in reality are the doors of heaven, are unlocked.

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

The things He hath reserved for Himself are the cities of men's hearts, that He may cleanse them from all earthly defilements, and enable them to draw nigh unto the hallowed Spot which the hands of the infidel can never profane. Open, O people, the city of the human heart with the key of your utterance.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 304, CXXXIX

2. Working with one or two others in your study circle, list 2-3 questions that your friends or acquaintances might have about the Bahá'í Faith.
3. Refer to a collection of Bahá'í books and resource materials such as *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh Revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, *Some Answered Questions*, as well as *The Promise of World Peace*, the statement *Bahá'u'lláh*, *The Bahá'ís* magazine, and other materials as desired.
4. Share your questions and answers in the whole group. Then practice asking and answering questions.
5. Working in pairs, practice introducing Bahá'í concepts into your own everyday conversations. Remember to include your prepared answers in your conversations.

Briefly discuss the question: In the course of everyday conversation, how can we introduce the topic of the Bahá'í Faith and inspire our friends' questions?

After discussing the question, consider the following ideas. How would you adjust them to fit your circumstances?

- *Introduce the Bahá'í Faith by sharing your own activities:*
“I need to get the children ready for their Bahá'í children's class. Isn't it wonderful to know that all children are the most precious treasure a community can possess?” or “I'm so excited about the Bahá'í youth service project this weekend. Would you like to join us?”
- *Responding with love and a brief quotation to an event in the lives of our friends:*
“I'm so happy to hear that your son is getting married! Did you know that Bahá'u'lláh teaches that the life of a married couple should resemble the life of the angels in heaven?”
- *Responding with thoughtful comments about current events:* “Did you see the story in the news today? It seems clear that the need for race unity is the most vital and challenging issue facing this country.”

Individual Acts of Teaching, Study, and Service

Choose one or more of these activities to complete before the next session.

1. Initiate friendly conversations with at least 3 people prior to the next session. Pray to find receptive souls.
2. Find and memorize one or more brief quotations on a subject of personal interest to particular individuals that you know. Share this passage with at least one other person before the next session.
3. Study one or more chapters in the *Tablets of the Divine Plan*. Prepare a brief report to share with the friends at the next session that indicates one of the spiritual qualities for a Bahá'í teacher.
4. Plan and host a devotional meeting. Invite your friends!
5. Find ways to support your local children's classes, open to all.

Personal Teaching Plan

Prayerfully complete your "Personal Teaching Plan" on the following page, perhaps while listening to quiet music.

As you complete your plan, consider the question: How can I increase my reliance on divine assistance?

Closing Devotions

Close the session with prayers for teaching and with group singing.



A PERSONAL TEACHING PLAN

Whoso openeth his lips in this Day and maketh mention of the name of his Lord, the hosts of Divine inspiration shall descend upon him from the heaven of My name, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. On him shall also descend the Concourse on high, each bearing aloft a chalice of pure light.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Gleanings*, p. 280, section CXXIX

What specific steps can I take this week...?



To take initiative; to seize opportunities; to form friendships; to interact personally with others; to build relationships?

How can I draw upon...?



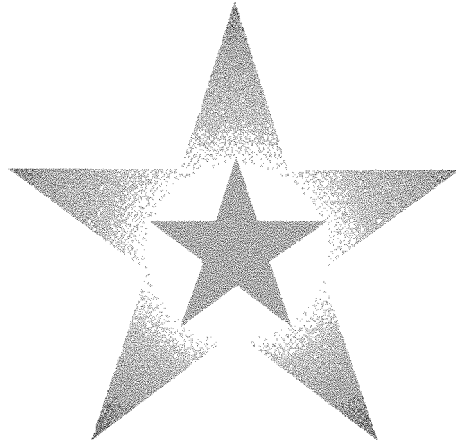
My love for Bahá'u'lláh; the power of the Covenant; the dynamics of prayer; the inspiration and education derived from regular reading and study of the Holy Texts?



The transformative forces that operate upon my soul as I strive to behave in accordance with the divine laws and principles?



In addition, how can I attract the particular blessings promised by Bahá'u'lláh to the one who mentions His name?



*B*y the righteousness of God!
Whoso openeth his lips in this day,
and maketh mention of the name of his Lord,
the hosts of Divine inspiration shall descend upon him
from the heaven of my name,
the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

Every Believer Is a Teacher

COURSE FOUR

Some
Fundamental
Verities of the
Bahá'í Faith

Session 3

Blazoning the Name
of Bahá'u'lláh

Opening Devotions

Begin the session with reverent, uplifting devotions.

You may consider including the following quotation along with your opening prayers:

By the righteousness of God! Whoso openeth his lips in this day, and maketh mention of the name of his Lord, the hosts of Divine inspiration shall descend upon him from the heaven of my name, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. On him shall also descend the Concourse on high, each bearing aloft a chalice of pure light.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, Quoted in *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 61

Objectives of the Session:

Read aloud the learning objectives for this session.

Knowledge

To become familiar with some of the writings about Bahá'u'lláh and His Station.

Wisdom

To understand the effect of Bahá'u'lláh's presence on those who met Him.

Spiritual Perception

To discern what one needs to do in order to blazon the Name of Bahá'u'lláh.

Eloquent Speech

To develop a verbal response to the question "Who is Bahá'u'lláh?"

To create and persevere in a Personal Teaching Plan.

Consultation about Individual Acts of Teaching, Study, and Service

- Who was able to read one or more chapters in *Tablets of the Divine Plan*? What did you learn about the spiritual qualities of a Bahá'í teacher?
- What happened as you continued your efforts to initiate friendly conversations with others, build friendships with selected individuals or groups, and pray for these seekers? What can we learn from these experiences?

- What happened as you listened for and created opportunities to share the teachings with others?
- Who memorized an additional short quotation on a topic of interest to your friends? Were you able to share it with your friend? What can we learn from your friend's response?
- What was a highlight in your devotional meeting or in your interactions with young people in the community?

Activity
Blazoning the Name of Bahá'u'lláh

1. Invite one member of your study circle to read aloud the following account of E. G. Browne's visit to Bahá'u'lláh in the Holy Land in 1890.

My conductor paused for a moment while I removed my shoes. Then, with a quick movement of the hand, he withdrew, and, as I passed, replaced the curtain; and I found myself in a large apartment, along the upper end of which ran a low divan, while on the side opposite to the door were placed two or three chairs. Though I dimly suspected whither I was going and whom I was to behold (for no distinct intimation had been given to me), a second or two elapsed ere, with a throb of wonder and awe, I became definitely conscious that the room was not untenanted. In the corner where the divan met the wall sat a wondrous and venerable figure, crowned with a felt head-dress of the kind called *táj* by dervishes (but of unusual height and make), round the base of which was wound a small white turban. The face of him on whom I gazed I can never forget, though I cannot describe it. Those piercing eyes seemed to read one's very soul; power and authority sat on that ample brow; while the deep lines on the forehead and face implied an age which the jet-black hair and beard flowing down in indistinguishable luxuriance almost to the waist seemed to belie. No need to ask in whose presence I stood, as I bowed myself before one who is the object of a devotion and love which kings might envy and emperors sigh for in vain!

A mild dignified voice bade me be seated, and then continued: "Praise be to God that thou hast attained! . . . Thou hast come to see a prisoner and an exile. . . . We desire but the good of the world and the happiness of the nations; yet they deem us a stirrer up of strife and sedition worthy of bondage and banishment. . . . That all nations should become one in faith and all men as brothers; that the bonds of affection and unity between the sons of men should be strengthened; that diversity of religion should cease and differences of race be annulled—what harm is there in this? . . . Yet so it shall be; these fruitless strifes, these ruinous wars shall pass away, and the 'Most Great Peace' shall come. . . . Do not you in Europe need this also? Is not this that which Christ foretold? . . . Yet do we see your kings and rulers lavishing their treasures more freely on means for the destruction of the human race than on

that which would conduce to the happiness of mankind. . . . These strifes and this bloodshed and discord must cease, and all men be as one kindred and one family. . . . Let not a man glory in this, that he loves his country; let him rather glory in this, that he loves his kind. . . .”

H. M. Balyuzi, *Bahá'u'lláh King of Glory*, pp. 371-3

2. Briefly discuss: How was Bahá'u'lláh perceived by the visitor, E.G. Browne?
3. Now, working in small teams, read the quotations provided on the following pages and briefly discuss the focus questions.
4. Then, using the quotations just studied and additional reference materials if desired, create a 3-4 minute response to the question, “Who is Bahá'u'lláh?” Additional reference materials might include the statement *Bahá'u'lláh* prepared by the Bahá'í International Community at the request of the Universal House of Justice, books such as *God Passes By* by Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá'u'lláh: The King of Glory* by Balyuzi, *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era* by Esslemont, the magazine *The Bahá'ís*, or the materials used in previous courses of Fundamental Verities Sequence of Courses.

Remember to include at least one brief quotation from the Bahá'í writings in your answer. Consider emphasizing such points as His majesty, loving-kindness, and generosity to others, His willing acceptance of suffering to bring God's message to humanity, the love He inspires in others, and His great victories over all efforts to prevent Him from sharing His message with humanity.

Remember also that the purpose of your response is to kindle the fire of love in the heart of the seeker. The many wonderful episodes of Bahá'u'lláh's life may be learned later if this first response touches the heart of the seeker.

5. After about 30 minutes of work time, share your answers with the whole group.
6. Discuss: How can we create opportunities in our everyday lives to mention this priceless Name and share His Word with our family, friends, and co-workers? How can we kindle interest without forcing ourselves on others? How can the spiritual qualities demonstrated by 'Abdu'l-Bahá help us to find the balance?



BLAZONING THE NAME OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

Focus Questions:

Who does Bahá'u'lláh say He is? What is His Mission?

1 We were consigned for four months to a place foul beyond comparison. As to the dungeon in which this Wronged One and others similarly wronged were confined, a dark and narrow pit were preferable. Upon Our arrival We were first conducted along a pitch-black corridor, from whence We descended three steep flights of stairs to the place of confinement assigned to Us. The dungeon was wrapped in thick darkness, and Our fellow-prisoners numbered nearly a hundred and fifty souls: thieves, assassins and highwaymen. Though crowded, it had no other outlet than the passage by which We entered. No pen can depict that place, nor any tongue describe its loathsome smell. Most of these men had neither clothes nor bedding to lie on. God alone knoweth what befell Us in that most foul-smelling and gloomy place!

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, pp. 20-1

2 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.

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

3 One night, in a dream, these exalted words were heard on every side: 'Verily, We shall render Thee victorious by Thyself and by Thy Pen. Grieve Thou not for that which hath befallen Thee, neither be Thou afraid, for Thou art in safety. Erelong will God raise up the treasures of the earth—men who will aid Thee through Thyself and through Thy Name, wherewith God hath revived the hearts of such as have recognized Him.'

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 21

4 During the days I lay in the prison of Tihrán, though the galling weight of the chains and the stench-filled air allowed Me but little sleep, still in those infrequent moments of slumber I felt as if something flowed from the crown of My head over My breast, even as a mighty torrent that precipitateth itself upon the earth from the summit of a lofty mountain. Every limb of My body would, as a result, be set afire. At such moments My tongue recited what no man could bear to hear.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 22

5 God is My witness, O people! I was asleep on My couch, when lo, the Breeze of God wafting over Me roused Me from My slumber. His quickening Spirit revived Me, and My tongue was unloosed to voice His Call.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 90, XLI

6 The learning current amongst men I studied not; their schools I entered not. Ask of the city wherein I dwelt, that thou mayest be well assured that I am not of them who speak falsely. This is but a leaf which the winds of the will of thy Lord, the Almighty, the All-Praised, have stirred. Can it be still when the tempestuous winds are blowing? Nay, by Him Who is the Lord of all Names and Attributes! They move it as they list. The evanescent is as nothing before Him Who is the Ever-Abiding. His all-compelling summons hath reached Me, and caused Me to speak His praise amidst all people. I was indeed as one dead when His behest was uttered. The hand of the will of thy Lord, the Compassionate, the Merciful, transformed Me.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, pp. 11-2

7 “I testify before God . . . to the greatness, the inconceivable greatness of this Revelation. Again and again have We in most of Our tablets borne witness to this truth, that mankind may be roused from its heedlessness.” “In this most mighty Revelation . . . all the Dispensations of the past have attained their highest, their final consummation.” “That which hath been made manifest in this preeminent, this most exalted Revelation, stands unparalleled in the annals of the past, nor will further ages witness its like.”

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, Quoted in *The World Order of Babá'u'lláh*, pp. 103-4

8 I am the royal Falcon on the arm of the Almighty. I unfold the drooping wings of every broken bird and start it on its flight.

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

9 Of all the tributes I have paid to Him Who is to come after Me, the greatest is this, My written confession, that no words of Mine can adequately describe Him, nor can any reference to Him in My Book, the Bayán, do justice to His Cause.

THE BÁB, Quoted in *The Covenant of Babá'u'lláh*, p. 41

10 “The mere contemplation of the Dispensation inaugurated by the Blessed Beauty would have sufficed to overwhelm the saints of bygone ages—saints who longed to partake for one moment of its great glory.” “The holy ones of past ages and centuries have, each and all, yearned with tearful eyes to live, though for one moment, in the Day of God. Their longing unsatisfied, they repaired to the Great Beyond. How great, therefore, is the bounty of the Abhá Beauty Who, notwithstanding our utter unworthiness, hath through His grace and mercy breathed into us in this divinely-illuminated century the spirit of life, hath gathered us beneath the standard of the Beloved of the world, and chose to confer upon us a bounty for which the mighty ones of bygone ages had craved in vain.”

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, Quoted in *The World Order of Babá'u'lláh*, pp. 110-1

As a group, memorize the following proclamation of Bahá'u'lláh:

I am the royal Falcon on the arm of the Almighty. I unfold the drooping wings of every broken bird and start it on its flight.

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

Consider using one of the following memorization strategies:

- In the whole group, recite aloud until all have memorized the passage.
- Set the passage to music.
- Write the passage on a chalkboard. While reciting aloud, erase a few words each time the passage is recited, until all words are erased.
- Use movement to mime phrases.

Silently reflect: What evidence do we have of Bahá'u'lláh's power in our own lives? How does He unfold our "drooping wings" and start us on our flight? Record your reflections on the blank page (38) at the end of this session.

Individual Acts of Teaching, Service, and Study
Choose one or more of these acts of service to complete before the next session.

1. Share a brief quotation from the writings of Bahá'u'lláh with at least one other person this week.
2. Initiate friendly conversations with at least three people this week. Continue to pray for receptive souls.
3. Develop a 5-10 minute description of the Life of Bahá'u'lláh. Create a plan to share this presentation with others at a devotional meeting, through informal conversation, or other means. Share both an outline of the talk and your plan with the group at the next session.
4. Study one of the talks given by 'Abdu'l-Bahá published in *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*. Prepare an outline from a talk given by 'Abdu'l-Bahá that would interest someone you know. Create a plan to share these points with that seeker through informal conversation, a devotional meeting, or other means. Share your results at the next session.
5. Invite a friend to a devotional meeting or children's class.

Personal Teaching Plan

Complete the “Personal Teaching Plan” on the following page.

As you complete your plan, consider the question: How can I recognize and seize opportunities to share my description of Bahá’u’lláh?

Closing Devotions

Close the session with prayers for teaching and with group singing.



A PERSONAL TEACHING PLAN

Whoso openeth his lips in this Day and maketh mention of the name of his Lord, the hosts of Divine inspiration shall descend upon him from the heaven of My name, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. On him shall also descend the Concourse on high, each bearing aloft a chalice of pure light.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Gleanings*, p. 280, section CXXIX

What specific steps can I take this week...?



To take initiative; to seize opportunities; to form friendships; to interact personally with others; to build relationships?

How can I draw upon...?



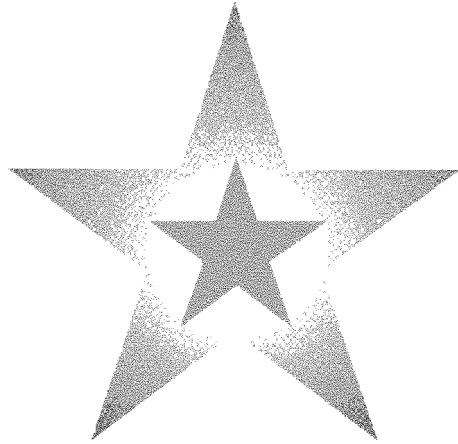
My love for Bahá'u'lláh; the power of the Covenant; the dynamics of prayer; the inspiration and education derived from regular reading and study of the Holy Texts?



The transformative forces that operate upon my soul as I strive to behave in accordance with the divine laws and principles?



In addition, how can I attract the particular blessings promised by Bahá'u'lláh to the one who mentions His name?



*E*re long will God raise up the treasures of the earth—
men who will aid Thee through Thyself and through
Thy Name, wherewith God hath revived the hearts
of such as have recognized Him.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

Every Believer Is a Teacher

COURSE FOUR

Some
Fundamental
Verities of the
Bahá'í Faith

Session 4

A Contemporary
Faith

Opening Devotions

Begin the session with reverent and joyous prayers and music. You may also consider including the following quotations along with your opening prayers:

One night, in a dream, these exalted words were heard on every side: ‘Verily, We shall render Thee victorious by Thyself and by Thy Pen. Grieve Thou not for that which hath befallen Thee, neither be Thou afraid, for Thou art in safety. Erelong will God raise up the treasures of the earth—men who will aid Thee through Thyself and through Thy Name, wherewith God hath revived the hearts of such as have recognized Him.’

BAHÁ’U’LLÁH, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 21

Acceptance of the oneness of mankind is the first fundamental prerequisite for reorganization and administration of the world as one country, the home of humankind.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *The Promise of World Peace*, p. 13

Objectives of the Session:

Read aloud the learning objectives for this session.

Knowledge

To become familiar with some of the writings relating to contemporary social issues.

Wisdom

To understand that the principle of oneness is the pivotal principle of Bahá’u’lláh.

Spiritual Perception

To perceive ways to apply the principle of oneness to social and humanitarian issues.

Eloquent Speech

To be able to share applications of the principle of oneness with others.

To create and implement a personal teaching plan.

Consultation on Individual Study, Service and Teaching

- What happened as we listened for and created opportunities to share Bahá'u'lláh's message with others?
- Who was able to mention the name of Bahá'u'lláh in a friendly conversation with others?
- What are we learning from our efforts to initiate friendly conversations with others, build friendships with selected individuals or groups, and pray for those we wish to teach? Which of our efforts seem to be bearing fruit? Do we need to consider adjusting our plans?
- Who would like to share a memorized passage from the writings studied in the last session?
- Who was able to support a children's class or host a devotional meeting?
- Who chose to prepare a short presentation about Bahá'u'lláh? Please share your outline and your plan for using it with the study circle.
- Who chose to study a talk given by 'Abdu'l-Bahá published in *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*? Please share your outline and your plan with the friends.

Activity

Relating the Faith to Contemporary Social and Humanitarian Issues

In the Ridván 1988 message to the Bahá'ís of the world, the Universal House of Justice wrote that “a constant endeavour to relate these Teachings to current issues” increases our success in teaching. Bahá'u'lláh's pivotal principle, the principle of oneness, provides the solution to many contemporary social and humanitarian issues.

1. Read aloud the quotations, “The Light of Oneness,” on the following pages. Briefly discuss: What exactly is 'Abdu'l-Bahá telling us? Why is acceptance of the oneness of mankind a prerequisite for peace and world order?
2. As a whole group, generate a list of ways that people thoughtlessly describe opposing groups, each seeing the other as the cause of problems, e.g., lazy welfare mothers vs. arrogant privileged suburbanites; pointy-headed liberals vs. red-neck conservatives; crunchy granola greens vs. fat-cat industrial polluters.
3. Working in small teams, select one of the social issues facing your community. In your small group, very briefly articulate the problem (as perceived by each of the opposing sides) according to the formula, “I am a _____, and the problem is _____, and it is caused

by the _____, who _____.” (Each group will have two different explanations of the problem, one from each side of the dichotomy.)

4. Then, still in your small working group, rewrite the explanation of the problem in light of the principle of interdependence and according to the formula, “We are _____, and the problem is _____, and what I _____ (one part of the old dichotomy) can do about it is _____, and what I _____ (the other part of the old dichotomy) can do about it is _____, and the result of all our actions, together, is _____.”
5. After you’ve conceived and rewritten your problem, gather again with the whole study circle. Share first your opposing explanation of the problem and then your interdependent explanation of the problem that includes steps to a solution.
6. After all small groups have shared, briefly discuss the questions:
 - How do the ways we think and act change when we recognize ourselves as connected to the social and humanitarian issues in the world?
 - How is our sense of ourselves and our responsibilities affected by the recognition of interdependence and the power of our actions?
7. Finally, break into pairs. Practice the conversation of a seeker with a Bahá’í who can offer the possibility of seeing a highly polarized social issue in a new way. Remember to listen with respect to the seeker, show true friendship and courtesy in your response, and incorporate a brief passage from the Bahá’í writings in your answer. The goal is to touch the seeker’s heart. Please practice both roles.



Focus questions:

What exactly is 'Abdu'l-Bahá telling us? Why is acceptance of the oneness of mankind a prerequisite for peace and world order?

1 So powerful is the light of unity that it can illuminate the whole earth.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Gleanings from the Writings of Babá'u'lláh*, p. 288, CXXXII

2 As preordained by the Fountainhead of Creation, the temple of the world hath been fashioned after the image and likeness of the human body. In fact each mirroreth forth the image of the other, wert thou but to observe with discerning eyes. By this is meant that even as the human body in this world which is outwardly composed of different limbs and organs, is in reality a closely integrated, coherent entity, similarly the structure of the physical world is like unto a single being whose limbs and members are inseparably linked together. 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. Consider for instance how one group of created things constituteth the vegetable kingdom, and another the animal kingdom. Each of these two maketh use of certain elements in the air on which its own life dependeth, while each increaseth the quantity of such elements as are essential for the life of the other. In other words, the growth and development of the vegetable world is impossible without the existence of the animal kingdom, and the maintenance of animal life is inconceivable without the co-operation of the vegetable kingdom. Of like kind are the relationships that exist among all created things. Hence it was stated that co-operation and reciprocity are essential properties which are inherent in the unified system of the world of existence, and without which the entire creation would be reduced to nothingness. In surveying the vast range of creation thou shalt perceive that the higher a kingdom of created things is on the arc of ascent, the more conspicuous are the signs and evidences of the truth that co-operation and reciprocity at the level of a higher order are greater than those that exist at the level of a lower order. For example the evident signs of this fundamental reality are more discernible in the vegetable kingdom than in the mineral, and still more manifest in the animal world than in the vegetable. And thus when contemplating the human world thou beholdest this wondrous phenomenon shining resplendent from all sides with the utmost perfection, inasmuch as in this station acts of co-operation, mutual assistance and reciprocity are not confined to the body and to things that pertain to the material world, but for all conditions, whether physical or spiritual, such as those related to minds, thoughts, opinions, manners, customs, attitudes, understandings, feelings or other human susceptibilities.

In all these thou shouldst find these binding relationships securely established. 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 Compilation of Compilations, Vol. 1, pgs 508-10

3 Acceptance of the oneness of mankind is the first fundamental prerequisite for reorganization and administration of the world as one country, the home of humankind.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *The Promise of World Peace*, p. 13

Individual Acts of Teaching, Study, and Service
Choose one or more of these activities to complete before the next session

1. Initiate friendly conversations with at least five people this week.
Continue to pray for receptive souls.
2. Make a special effort to find natural ways to share the principle of oneness with individuals that you meet. Is it also possible to mention Bahá'u'lláh's name?
3. Study one of the talks given by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*. Prepare an outline from a talk given by 'Abdu'l-Bahá that would interest someone you know. Could this talk become part of a devotional meeting or fireside? Is there another way you could share these ideas with others?
4. Plan and host a devotional gathering. Invite your friends!
5. Find practical ways to support your local children's class or encourage the children and junior youth in your community.

Personal Teaching Plan

Complete the "Personal Teaching Plan" on the following page. As you complete your plan, consider the questions:

- How can I recognize and seize opportunities to relate the Faith to social and humanitarian issues?
- Who do I specifically plan to teach this week? In what setting? Using which quotations or teachings?
- How can I continue to deepen my friendships and increase my friendly contacts with others?

Closing Devotions

Close the session with prayers for teaching and with group singing.



A PERSONAL TEACHING PLAN

Whoso openeth his lips in this Day and maketh mention of the name of his Lord, the hosts of Divine inspiration shall descend upon him from the heaven of My name, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. On him shall also descend the Concourse on high, each bearing aloft a chalice of pure light.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Gleanings*, p. 280, section CXXIX

What specific steps can I take this week...?



To take initiative; to seize opportunities; to form friendships; to interact personally with others; to build relationships?

How can I draw upon...?



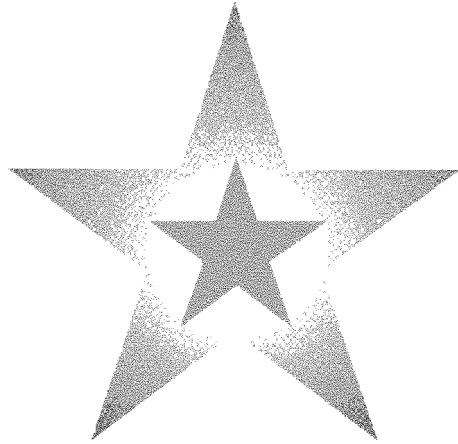
My love for Bahá'u'lláh; the power of the Covenant; the dynamics of prayer; the inspiration and education derived from regular reading and study of the Holy Texts?



The transformative forces that operate upon my soul as I strive to behave in accordance with the divine laws and principles?



In addition, how can I attract the particular blessings promised by Bahá'u'lláh to the one who mentions His name?



*S*enses and faculties have been bestowed upon us,
to be devoted to the service of the general good.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ

Every Believer Is a Teacher

COURSE FOUR

Some
Fundamental
Verities of the
Bahá'í Faith

Session 5

Human Happiness

Opening Devotions

Begin the session with prayers and music. You may also consider including the following quotation along with your opening devotions:

And the honor and distinction of the individual consist in this, that he among all the world's multitudes should become a source of social good. Is any larger bounty conceivable than this, that an individual, looking within himself, should find that by the confirming grace of God he has become the cause of peace and well-being, of happiness and advantage to his fellow men? No, by the one true God, there is no greater bliss, no more complete delight.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, pp. 2-3

Objectives of the Session:

Read aloud the learning objectives for this session.

Knowledge

To become familiar with some of the writings that describe different methods of teaching.

To know the factors that should be included in every presentation of the message of Bahá'u'lláh.

Wisdom

To understand the true source of happiness.

To understand the relationship between happiness and spiritual discipline.

Spiritual Perception

To reflect on the learning tools and instructional methods that enhance teaching.

To select teaching methods appropriate for particular seekers.

Eloquent Speech

To make preparations for a fireside.

To develop strategies for adapting the message of Bahá'u'lláh to the needs of the seekers.

Consultation on Individual Service and Teaching

- Who was able to share their answer to the question, “Who is Bahá’u’lláh?” with a seeker. What happened?
- Who was able to relate the principle of oneness to a social or humanitarian issue? How did your friend respond?
- What are we learning about building friendship with others, showing them our love and care, and sharing the Word of God in a natural way? What have we noticed truly touches the hearts of our friends?
- Who participated in a devotional meeting, fireside, or children’s class? What were the highlights?

Consultation on Individual Study

- Who would like to recite a passage memorized from a previous session?
- Who chose to study one of “Abdu’l-Bahá’s talks from *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*? How can you share these ideas with others?

Activity

Human Happiness and Spiritual Discipline

Bahá'u'lláh tells us that He desires the “good of the world and the happiness of the nations.” As we share this message with others, what ideas might our friends have heard from contemporary society about the sources of happiness?

Let's compare these ideas with the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh.

1. In small working groups, read aloud the quotations on the following pages entitled “Human Happiness and Spiritual Discipline” and discuss the focus questions.

2. Reconvene in the whole group.

As our friends consider becoming Bahá'ís, they are often interested in learning about Bahá'í laws of personal behavior. Quickly brainstorm a list of 10 answers to the question, “What can't you do?” Then, while still in the whole group, translate each “can't do” statement into a positive statement that affirms the dignity and honor of the human spirit.

For example: “Chastity in no way implies withdrawal from human relationships.” It frees us to have real friendship with all people. (from a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice)

Another example: Bahá'u'lláh teaches that marriage is an eternal bond, that sexuality within marriage is “the natural right of every individual,” and that “its chief and sacred purpose” is the “perpetuation of the human race.” (selected phrases from letters written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi)

3. Now divide into teams of two. In your teams, take turns responding respectfully and with genuine friendship to ideas that might be expressed by a seeker. Decide if you can include a phrase from the writings in a natural way. Then consider the seekers you know. What might be their questions about Bahá'í laws of personal behavior? How could you respond?

Some examples of seekers' questions:

“I've achieved all my goals—nice family, nice house, nice car—I just don't know what's wrong with me. I should be really happy. What's your secret?”

“Why are you always taking care of other people? Don't you worry about being co-dependent?”

“Why don't you come partying with me? We'll have a great time. I've discovered this fantastic new bar. . .”



HUMAN HAPPINESS AND SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE

Focus Questions:

What is the true source of human happiness? How can we keep our good qualities in equilibrium? How can human society advance through the cultivation of individual spiritual discipline? How and when could we share these teachings with seekers?

1 We desire by the good of the world and the happiness of the nations. . . .

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, quoted in J.E. Esslemont, *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era*, 5th rev. ed., pp. 39-40

2 Think not that We have revealed unto you a mere code of laws. Nay, rather, we have unsealed the choice Wine with the fingers of might and power.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 21, paragraph 5

3 Human happiness is founded upon spiritual behaviour.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 127, #100

4 And the honor and distinction of the individual consist in this, that he among all the world's multitudes should become a source of social good. Is any larger bounty conceivable than this, that an individual, looking within himself, should find that by the confirming grace of God he has become the cause of peace and well-being, of happiness and advantage to his fellow men? No, by the one true God, there is no greater bliss, no more complete delight.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, pp. 2-3

5 God has given us eyes, that we may look about us at the world, and lay hold of whatsoever will further civilization and the arts of living. He has given us ears, that we may hear and profit by the wisdom of scholars and philosophers and arise to promote and practice it. Senses and faculties have been bestowed upon us, to be devoted to the service of the general good; so that we, distinguished above all other forms of life for perceptiveness and reason, should labor at all times and along all lines, whether the occasion be great or small, ordinary or extraordinary, until all mankind are safely gathered into the impregnable stronghold of knowledge. We should continually be establishing new bases for human happiness and creating and promoting new instrumentalities toward this end. How excellent, how honorable is man if he arises to fulfill his responsibilities; how wretched and contemptible, if he shuts his eyes to the welfare of society and wastes his precious life in pursuing his own selfish interests and personal advantages. Supreme happiness is man's, and he beholds the signs of God in the world and in the human soul, if he urges on the steed of high endeavor in the arena of civilization and justice.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, pp. 3-4

6 The primary, the most urgent requirement is the promotion of education. It is inconceivable that any nation should achieve prosperity and success unless this paramount, this fundamental concern is carried forward. The principal reason for the decline and fall of peoples is ignorance. Today the mass of the people are uninformed even as to ordinary affairs, how much less do they grasp the core of the important problems and complex needs of the time.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, p. 109

7 The first attribute of perfection is learning and the cultural attainments of the mind. . . .

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, p. 35

8 The second attribute of perfection is justice and impartiality. This means to have no regard for one’s own personal benefits and selfish advantages, and to carry out the laws of God without the slightest concern for anything else. It means to see one’s self as only one of the servants of God, the All-Possessing, and except for aspiring to spiritual distinction, never attempting to be singled out from the others. It means to consider the welfare of the community as one’s own. It means, in brief, to regard humanity as a single individual, and one’s own self as a member of that corporeal form, and to know of a certainty that if pain or injury afflicts any member of that body, it must inevitably result in suffering for all the rest.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, p. 39

9 The third element of the utterance under discussion is, ‘opposes his passions.’ How wonderful are the implications of this deceptively easy, all-inclusive phrase. This is the very foundation of every laudable human quality; indeed, these few words embody the light of the world, the impregnable basis of all the spiritual attributes of human beings. This is the balance wheel of all behavior, the means of keeping all man’s good qualities in equilibrium.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, p. 59

10 In teaching people, when they begin to seriously study the Faith there is no objection to impressing upon them that this message involves great spiritual responsibility, and should not be either accepted or cast aside lightly. But we must be very gentle, tactful and patient, and not administer shocks to people.

We must always teach constructively, and be very sure that none of us, through disagreement among ourselves or indiscretion, cool off the souls of the seekers.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. 2, p. 313

Activity
Establishing a Loving Environment

To begin this activity, you may choose to play a portion of any *Bahá'í Newsreel* (available from the Bahá'í Distribution Service) which depicts the beautiful atmosphere created by the Universal House of Justice when commemorating the 100th anniversary of the Ascension of the Blessed Beauty in 1992. This atmosphere was a perfect example of evoking the sacred and giving the friends an opportunity to feel and share their love for this Cause. Alternatively, view a brief segment of the Dedication Program for the Arc and Terraces on Mt. Carmel in 2001, or consider beginning this activity with singing or beautiful recorded music.

1. Read aloud the quotations entitled “Establishing a Loving Environment.”
2. While listening to soft music, reflect quietly on your own experiences as a learner.
3. Recall times when your learning was enhanced through the use of the learning tools and instructional methods suggested by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Then, consider how these tools could attract the hearts of our family members, friends, and others to the Blessed Beauty. Using the blank space on this page, please take a few minutes to record your reflections on this important topic.



ESTABLISH A LOVING ENVIRONMENT

Genuine Love and Kindness

1 Through example, loving fellowship, prayer, and kindness the friends can attract the hearts of such people and enable them to realize that this is the Cause of God in deed, not merely words!

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. 2, p. 312

The Word of God

2 What the Guardian feels is of vital importance for the friends to do is to teach the Cause directly and by means of imparting the Holy Words....

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. 2, p. 308

Consultation

3 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 Babá'u'lláh*, p. 168

4 The purpose of consultation is to show that the views of several individuals are assuredly preferable to one man, even as the power of a number of men is of course greater than the power of one man.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. 1, p. 97

Individual Investigation

5 God has given man the eye of investigation by which he may see and recognize truth. He has endowed man with ears that he may hear the message of reality and conferred upon him the gift of reason by which he may discover things for himself. This is his endowment and equipment for the investigation of reality. Man is not intended to see through the eyes of another, hear through another's ears nor comprehend with another's brain. Each human creature has individual endowment, power and responsibility in the creative plan of God.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 293

Memorization

6 It is also highly praiseworthy to memorize the Tablets, divine verses and sacred traditions. Ye will surely exert every effort in teaching, and in furthering understanding.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. 1, p. 195

Meditation

7 Meditation is the key for opening the doors of mysteries.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *Paris Talks*, p. 175

Stories and Parables

8 Divine things are too deep to be expressed by common words. The heavenly teachings are expressed in parable in order to be understood and preserved for ages to come. When the spiritually minded dive deeply into the ocean of their meaning they bring to the surface the pearls of their inner significance. There is no greater pleasure than to study God’s Word with a spiritual mind.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *‘Abdu’l-Bahá in London*, p. 80

Music

9 The art of music is divine and effective. It is the food of the soul and spirit. Through the power and charm of music the spirit of man is uplifted.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 52

Drama

10 The drama is of the utmost importance. It has been a great educational power in the past; it will be so again.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *‘Abdu’l-Bahá in London*, p. 93

11 The day will come when the Cause will spread like wildfire when its spirit and teachings will be presented on the stage or in art and literature as a whole. Art can better awaken such noble sentiments than cold rationalizing, especially among the mass of the people.

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. 1, p. 7

The Study of Nature

12 O Son of Bounty! Out of the wastes of nothingness, with the clay of My command I made thee to appear, and have ordained for thy training every atom in existence and the essence of all created things.

BAHÁ’U’LLÁH, *The Hidden Words*, Persian no. 29, p. 32

Arts, Crafts, and Sciences

13 Arts, crafts and sciences uplift the world of being, and are conducive to its exaltation.

BAHÁ’U’LLÁH, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 26

Personal Teaching Plan

Take a few minutes to complete the “Personal Teaching Plan,” on the next page. Consider playing quiet music while you complete your plan for this week.

In addition to those on the plan, please also consider the following questions:

- How can I continue to make many friendly contacts; concentrate on the more receptive souls to teach; build intimate friendships; listen with love and close attention to the needs and interests of their friends; adapt the presentation of the Message to the friends; use the Word of God; and use methods that touch both mind and heart?
- How can I initiate and continue the teaching process with more and more friends, while gradually confirming receptive souls in their faith?

Individual Acts of Teaching, Study, and Service

Choose one or more of these activities to complete before the next session.

1. Memorize one or more quotations that pertain to the value of personal discipline or the sources of human happiness and share that quotation or quotations with a friend.
2. Review Course One of the Fundamental Verities Sequence of Courses, *This Day of God*. Identify the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh about your friends' religion. Prepare a 2-minute report that outlines those teachings. Include at least one brief quotation in your report. Be prepared to share your outline and quotation at the next session. How can you use this knowledge to reach in true friendship to these souls?
3. Memorize a teaching prayer from *The Tablets of the Divine Plan*. Recite it daily.
4. Plan and host a devotional meeting. Invite a friend!
5. Invite a child to your community's children's classes or to your devotional gathering.

Closing Devotions

Close the session with prayers and singing. Consider including a teaching prayer from *The Tablets of the Divine Plan* in these closing devotions.



A PERSONAL TEACHING PLAN

Whoso openeth his lips in this Day and maketh mention of the name of his Lord, the hosts of Divine inspiration shall descend upon him from the heaven of My name, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. On him shall also descend the Concourse on high, each bearing aloft a chalice of pure light.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Gleanings*, p. 280, section CXXIX

What specific steps can I take this week...?



To take initiative; to seize opportunities; to form friendships; to interact personally with others; to build relationships?

How can I draw upon...?



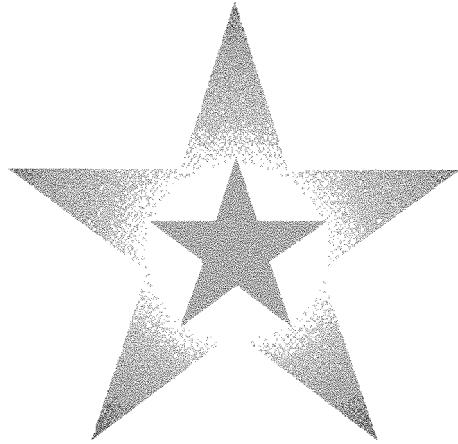
My love for Bahá'u'lláh; the power of the Covenant; the dynamics of prayer; the inspiration and education derived from regular reading and study of the Holy Texts?



The transformative forces that operate upon my soul as I strive to behave in accordance with the divine laws and principles?



In addition, how can I attract the particular blessings promised by Bahá'u'lláh to the one who mentions His name?



*V*erily, We behold you from Our realm of glory,
and shall aid whosoever will arise for the triumph
of Our Cause with the hosts of the Concourse
on high and a company of Our favored angels.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

Every Believer Is a Teacher

COURSE FOUR

Some
Fundamental
Verities of the
Bahá'í Faith

Session 6

The Power of Divine
Assistance

Opening Devotions

Begin the session with uplifting devotions. Singing and music is ideal for uniting the hearts.

Consider including the following passages along with your opening prayers:

We are with you at all times, and shall strengthen you through the power of truth.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 137, LXXI

Let not your hearts be perturbed, O people, when the glory of My Presence is withdrawn, and the ocean of My utterance is stilled. In My presence amongst you there is a wisdom, and in My absence there is yet another, inscrutable to all but God, the Incomparable, the All-Knowing. Verily, We behold you from Our realm of glory, and shall aid whosoever will arise for the triumph of Our Cause with the hosts of the Concourse on high and a company of Our favored angels.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 139, LXXII

Objectives of the Session:

Read aloud the learning objectives for this session.

Knowledge

To become familiar with some of the writings that describe the necessity for flexible methods of teaching to reach the diversity of human hearts.

Wisdom

To understand that the power of the Holy Spirit is the real teacher.

Spiritual Perception

To perceive action steps for touching the hearts of particular seekers with the message of Bahá'u'lláh.

Eloquent Speech

To develop strategies for adapting the message of Bahá'u'lláh to the needs of the seekers.

To share our appreciation of the power of divine assistance with others.

Consultation on Individual Service and Teaching

- Who was able to share insights about the sources of happiness with another person? How did your friend respond?
- Who was able to relate the teachings to a social or humanitarian issue, or mention Bahá'u'lláh's Name? What happened? What were their interests? How could you continue the conversation?
- What happened as you continued your efforts to initiate friendly conversations with others?
- Who was able to host a devotional meeting? Any highlights?
- Who chose to invite a child to children's classes or a devotional gathering? What happened?

Consultation on Individual Study

- Who would like to recite a passage memorized as an extended activity?
- Who chose to research a friend's religious belief? What did you learn? How can you strengthen your friendship with your friend?
- Who chose to memorize a teaching prayer from Tablets of the Divine Plan? Would you like to recite it now?

Activity Teaching Methods

1. Divide into teams of three. In these teams, read the quotations on the following pages aloud twice. Then, discuss the focus questions.
2. After you discuss the focus questions, think of particular individuals or families that you know. Using quotations 3 and 5 as your guide, carefully consider your friends' interests and hopes. Then, consider the advice of Shoghi Effendi as you identify the next steps you could take to attract their hearts to the beauty of Bahá'u'lláh's teachings.

Please allow sufficient time for this key activity. Consider recording your action steps on this page, and then incorporating them in your Personal Teaching Plan.

3. Share your plans with the whole group. Briefly discuss how this flexible approach can assist us to show love to our friends as we become increasingly effective teachers of the Cause.



TEACHING METHODS

Focus Topics:

How is it possible to adapt the message of Bahá'u'lláh to the needs of the seeker? What factors should be included in every presentation of the message of Bahá'u'lláh?

1 In teaching the Cause, much depends on the personality of the teacher and on the method he chooses for presenting the message. Different personalities and different classes and types of individuals need different methods of approach. And it is the sign of an able teacher to know how to best adapt his methods to various types of people whom he happens to meet. There is no one method one can follow all through. But there should be as many ways of approach as there are types of individual seekers. Flexibility and variety of method is, therefore, an essential prerequisite for the success of every teaching activity.

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. 2, p. 308

2 There are innumerable ways of teaching the Cause. You can choose the one that suits best your nature and capacity.

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. 2, p. 308

3 Our teaching methods should allow a certain degree of elasticity in establishing contacts with various types of individual seekers. Every inquirer has to be approached from his own angle. Those who are essentially of the mystic type should first be given those teachings of the Cause which emphasize the nature and value of spiritual realities; while those who are practically minded and of a positive type are naturally more ready and inclined to accept the social aspect of the Teachings. But of course, gradually the entire Message, in all its aspects and with the full implications it entails, should be explained to the newcomer. For to be a believer means to accept the Cause in its wholeness, and not to adhere to some of its teachings. However, as already stated, this ought to be done gradually and tactfully. For conversion is after all a slow process.

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. 2, p. 270

4 A true and adequate knowledge of the Cause is, indeed, indispensable to every one who wishes to successfully teach the Message. The book of Gleanings gives the friends a splendid opportunity to acquire this necessary knowledge and understanding. It gives them, in addition, that inspiration and spiritual fervour which the reading of the Holy Words can alone impart.

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. 2, p. 308

5 Nor should any of the pioneers, at this early stage in the upbuilding of Bahá'í national communities, overlook the fundamental prerequisite for any successful teaching enterprise, which is to adapt the presentation of the fundamental principles of their Faith to the cultural and religious backgrounds, the ideologies, and the temperament of the divers races and nations whom they are called upon to enlighten and attract. . . .

These pioneers, in their contact with the members of divers creeds, races and nations, covering a range which offers no parallel in either the north or south continents, must neither antagonize them nor compromise with their own essential principles. They must be neither provocative nor supine, neither fanatical nor excessively liberal, in their exposition of the fundamental and distinguishing features of their Faith. They must be either wary or bold, they must act swiftly or mark time, they must use the direct or indirect method, they must be challenging or conciliatory, in strict accordance with the spiritual receptivity of the soul with whom they come in contact, whether he be a nobleman or a commoner, a northerner or a southerner, a layman or a priest, a capitalist or a socialist, a statesman or a prince, an artisan or a beggar. In their presentation of the Message of Bahá'u'lláh they must neither hesitate nor falter. They must be neither contemptuous of the poor nor timid before the great. In their exposition of its verities they must neither overstress nor whittle down the truth which they champion, whether their hearer belong to royalty, or be a prince of the church, or a politician, or a tradesman, or a man of the street. To all alike, high or low, rich or poor, they must proffer, with open hands, with a radiant heart, with an eloquent tongue, with infinite patience, with uncompromising loyalty, with great wisdom, with unshakable courage, the Cup of Salvation at so critical an hour, to the confused, the hungry, the distraught and fear-stricken multitudes, in the north, in the west, in the south and in the heart, of that sorely tried continent.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *Citadel of Faith*, pp. 25-6

Activity
The Power of Divine Assistance

1. In your whole group read aloud the quotations “Power of Divine Assistance” and discuss the focus questions.
2. Then, individually choose one of the passages read to copy on parchment paper or card stock and illuminate with drawings, pictures cut from magazines, or other simple art. Reflect upon the meaning of your chosen passage as you prepare this quotation as a gift for one of your friends.
3. Consider ways to encourage your friend’s spiritual search or teaching efforts as you give the illuminated passage as a gift card or scroll.



THE POWER OF DIVINE ASSISTANCE

Focus Questions:

What is the role of the Holy Spirit in the teaching process? What can we do to receive this promised assistance? What are the divine bestowals promised to the teacher who arises to spread the Word of God? What are some of the times that we're conscious of receiving divine assistance?

1 We are with you at all times, and shall strengthen you through the power of truth. We are truly almighty. Whoso hath recognized Me, will arise and serve Me with such determination that the powers of earth and heaven shall be unable to defeat his purpose.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Gleanings from the Writings of Babá'u'lláh*, p. 136, LXXI

2 Let not your hearts be perturbed, O people, when the glory of My Presence is withdrawn, and the ocean of My utterance is stilled. In My presence amongst you there is a wisdom, and in My absence there is yet another, inscrutable to all but God, the Incomparable, the All-Knowing. Verily, We behold you from Our realm of glory, and shall aid whosoever will arise for the triumph of Our Cause with the hosts of the Concourse on high and a company of Our favored angels.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Gleanings from the Writings of Babá'u'lláh*, p. 139, LXXII

3 By the righteousness of God! Whoso openeth his lips in this day, and maketh mention of the name of his Lord, the hosts of Divine inspiration shall descend upon him from the heaven of my name, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. On him shall also descend the Concourse on high, each bearing aloft a chalice of pure light.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, quoted in *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 61

4 O thou maid-servant of God! Whenever thou art intending to deliver a speech, turn thy face toward the Kingdom of Abhá and, with a heart detached, begin to talk. The breaths of the Holy Spirit will assist thee.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá Abbas*. Vol. 2, p. 246

5 By the Lord of the Kingdom! If one arise to promote the Word of God with a pure heart, overflowing with the love of God and severed from the world, the Lord of Hosts will assist him with such a power as will penetrate the core of the existent beings.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. 2, p. 211

6 When the friends do not endeavour to spread the message, they fail to remember God befittingly, and will not witness the tokens of assistance and confirmation from the Abhá Kingdom nor comprehend the divine mysteries. However, when the tongue of the teacher is engaged in teaching, he will naturally himself be stimulated, will become a magnet attracting the divine aid and bounty of the Kingdom,

and will be like unto the bird at the hour of dawn, which itself becometh exhilarated by its own singing, its warbling and its melody.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pgs 267-268, #211

7 Today, as never before, the magnet which attracts the blessings from on high is teaching the Faith of God. The Hosts of Heaven are poised between heaven and earth, just waiting, and patiently, for the Bahá’í to step forth, with pure devotion and consecration, to teach the Cause of God, so they may rush to his aid and assistance. It is the Guardian’s prayer that the Friends may treble their efforts, as the time is short—alas, the workers too few. Let those who wish to achieve immortality step forth and raise the Divine Call. They will be astonished at the spiritual victories they will gain.

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. 2, p. 223

8 The Hosts of the Supreme Concourse are in martial array, poised between Earth and Heaven ready to rush to the assistance of those who arise to Teach the Faith. If one seeks the confirmation of the Holy Spirit, one can find it in rich abundance in the Teaching Field. The world is seeking as never before, and if the Friends will arise with new determination, fully consecrated to the noble task ahead of them, victory after victory will be won for the Glorious Faith of God.

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, *Compilation of Compilations*, vol. 2, p. 321

9 The Master assured us that when we forget ourselves, and strive with all our powers to serve and teach the Faith, we receive divine assistance. It is not we who do the work, but we are the instruments used at that time for the purpose of teaching His Cause.

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. 2, p. 324

10 Teaching is the source of Divine Confirmation. It is not sufficient to pray diligently for guidance, but this prayer must be followed by meditation as to the best methods of action and then action itself. Even if the action should not immediately produce results, or perhaps not be entirely correct, that does not make so much difference, because prayers can only be answered through action and if someone’s action is wrong, God can use that method of showing the pathway which is right. . . .

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. 2, p. 325

11 The Bahá’í teacher must be all confidence. Therein lies his strength and the secret of his success. Though single-handed, and no matter how great the apathy of the people around you may be, you should have faith that the hosts of the Kingdom are on your side, and that through their help you are bound to overcome the forces of darkness that are facing the Cause of God. Persevere, be happy and confident, therefore.

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. 2, p. 221

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

1. Memorize one of the quotations about the power of divine assistance. Share it with another person before the next session.
2. Invite your friends to tell you more about their own beliefs or background. Listen with love. Respond in a way that affirms a specific element in their background or beliefs. You may also choose to research those beliefs through the library or the internet.
3. Carry out the specific steps you identified for sharing the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh with friends.
4. Plan and host a devotional meeting, perhaps in collaboration with another person in your study circle. Invite your friends!
5. Invite a child or a family to go with you to your community's children's classes. Offer a ride.

Personal Teaching Plan

Take a few minutes to complete the "Personal Teaching Plan," on the next page. Consider playing quiet music while you complete your plan for this week.

Closing Devotions

Conclude the session with prayers for divine assistance and singing.



A PERSONAL TEACHING PLAN

Whoso openeth his lips in this Day and maketh mention of the name of his Lord, the hosts of Divine inspiration shall descend upon him from the heaven of My name, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. On him shall also descend the Concourse on high, each bearing aloft a chalice of pure light.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Gleanings*, p. 280, section CXXIX

What specific steps can I take this week...?



To take initiative; to seize opportunities; to form friendships; to interact personally with others; to build relationships?

How can I draw upon...?



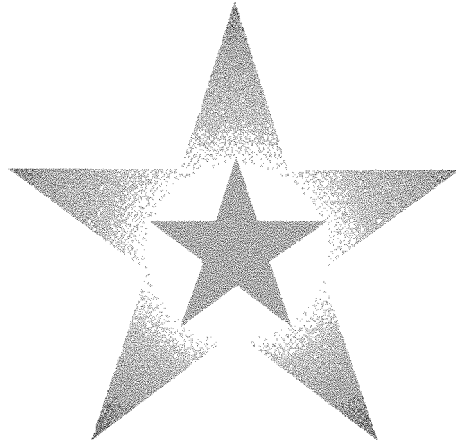
My love for Bahá'u'lláh; the power of the Covenant; the dynamics of prayer; the inspiration and education derived from regular reading and study of the Holy Texts?



The transformative forces that operate upon my soul as I strive to behave in accordance with the divine laws and principles?



In addition, how can I attract the particular blessings promised by Bahá'u'lláh to the one who mentions His name?



*I*f a small number of people gather lovingly together,
with absolute purity and sanctity,
with their hearts free of the world,
experiencing the emotions of the Kingdom and the
powerful magnetic forces of the Divine,
and being at one in their happy fellowship,
that gathering will exert its influence over all the earth.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ

Every Believer Is a Teacher

COURSE FOUR

Some
Fundamental
Verities of the
Bahá'í Faith

Session 7

The Fireside

Opening Devotions

Begin the session with uplifting devotions and music, including singing if possible because it unites the hearts.

Consider including the following passage along with your opening prayers:

If a small number of people gather lovingly together, with absolute purity and sanctity, with their hearts free of the world, experiencing the emotions of the Kingdom and the powerful magnetic forces of the Divine, and being at one in their happy fellowship, that gathering will exert its influence over all the earth. The nature of that band of people, the words they speak, the deeds they do, will unleash the bestowals of Heaven, and provide a foretaste of eternal bliss. The hosts of the Company on high will defend them, and the angels of the Abhá Paradise, in continuous succession, will come down to their aid.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 81, #39

Objectives of the Session:

Read aloud the learning objectives for this session.

Knowledge

To become familiar with some of the writings that describe the fireside.

Wisdom

To understand the sacred nature of the fireside.

Spiritual Perception

To reflect on the learning tools and instructional methods that can enhance teaching in a fireside setting.

Eloquent Speech

To prepare to host a fireside.

Consultation on Individual Service and Teaching

- Who was able to implement action steps for adapting your presentation of Bahá'u'lláh's message to the interests of a seeker?
- Who was able to invite a friend to a devotional meeting or children's class? What did your friends seem to appreciate most about the gathering?
- Who was able to notice the power of divine assistance this week?
- What happened as you continued to listen for and create opportunities to build friendships and share the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh with others?

Consultation on Individual Study

- Who would like to recite a passage memorized since the last session?
- Who learned more about the beliefs or background of a friend or friends? How does that knowledge strengthen your friendship? How can it assist you to share the Message of Bahá'u'lláh according to their own tastes and interests?

Activity

The Fireside Story

The fireside, which Shoghi Effendi calls the most effective method of teaching, can be illustrated by the following story of Mullá Husayn's first visit with the Primal Point, the Báb.

1. Enjoy listening to the following story, perhaps with some quiet background music.
-

On this hot afternoon of May 22nd, Mullá Husayn was fatigued after the trying journey from the coast up the precipitous tracks of the rising plateau. But his mind was alert and his soul yearned for that peace which the attainment of his goal would bring him. As he walked and pondered he came face to face with a Youth of striking appearance. That young Man, who was gentle and gracious and whose turban proclaimed His descent from the Prophet Muhammad, greeted him with great kindness. Mullá Husayn was amazed and overwhelmed by the warmth of this unexpected welcome. It was the courtesy coupled with the dignified mien of this young Siyyid which particularly impressed him. Then the young Man invited him to be His guest and to partake of the evening meal at His house. Mullá Husayn mentioned that his companions had gone ahead and would be awaiting him, to which the young Siyyid replied: 'Commit them to the care of God; He will surely protect and watch over them.'

'We soon found ourselves standing at the gate of a house of modest appearance,' Mullá Husayn has recounted. 'He knocked at the door, which was soon opened by an Ethiopian servant. "Enter therein in peace, secure," were His words as He crossed the threshold and motioned me to follow Him. His invitation, uttered with power and majesty, penetrated my soul. I thought it a good augury to be addressed in such words, standing as I did on the threshold of the first house I was entering in Shíráz, a city the very atmosphere of which had produced already an indescribable impression upon me. 'Shíráz had cast its spell upon Mullá Husayn. But little did he think that his youthful Host, whose utterance rang with authority, was that 'Lord of the Age', that 'Qá'im of the House of Muhammad' whom he was seeking. Yet he could not escape the feeling that the unexpected encounter might in some way bring him near the end of his quest.

At the same time he was uneasy at having left his brother and nephew with no news of himself. He further recounts: 'Overwhelmed with His acts of extreme kindness, I arose to depart. "The time for evening prayer is approaching," I ventured to observe. "I have promised my friends to join them at that hour in the Masjid-i-Ílkhání." With extreme courtesy and calm He replied: "You must surely have made the hour of your return conditional upon the will and pleasure of God. It seems that His will has decreed otherwise. You need have no fear of having broken your pledge." Such undoubted assurance should have made Mullá Husayn aware that he was about to experience the supreme test of his life.

They prayed together. They sat down to converse. And suddenly his Host asked Mullá Husayn: ‘Whom, after Siyyid Kázim, do you regard as his successor and your leader?’ Furthermore, He asked: ‘Has your teacher given you any detailed indications as to the distinguishing features of the promised One?’ Mullá Husayn replied that Siyyid Kázim had laid the injunction upon his disciples to disperse after his death and seek ‘the Lord of the Age,’ and indeed he had given them indications by which they could come to recognize Him. ‘He is of a pure lineage, is of illustrious descent,’ said Mullá Husayn, ‘and of the seed of Fátimih. As to His age, He is more than twenty and less than thirty. He is endowed with innate knowledge, . . . abstains from smoking, and is free from bodily deficiency.’ There was silence—the pause that precedes the breaking of the dawn. Mullá Husayn has told us that the silence was broken with ‘vibrant voice’ by his Host who declared to him: Behold, all these signs are manifest in Me. Mullá Husayn was for the moment shocked and bewildered. He tried to resist a claim so breath-taking. But truth looked him in the face. He marshalled arguments. But Truth is its own argument. Mullá Husayn said: ‘He whose advent we await is a Man of unsurpassed holiness, and the Cause He is to reveal [is] a Cause of tremendous power. Many and diverse are the requirements which He who claims to be its visible embodiment must needs fulfill. How often has Siyyid Kázim referred to the vastness of the knowledge of the promised One! How often did he say: “My own knowledge is but a drop compared with that with which He has been endowed. All my attainments are but a speck of dust in the face of the immensity of His knowledge. Nay, immeasurable is the difference!”’

In days gone by Mullá Husayn had written a dissertation on some of the abstruse doctrines and teachings which Shaykh Ahmad and Siyyid Kázim had enunciated. He carried a copy of this treatise with him.

He now presented it to his Host and asked Him to peruse it, and elucidate the mysteries which it contained. Not only did his Host after a rapid look through that treatise shed light upon it, He went far beyond it. Then Mullá Husayn was given the proof of which he had ample knowledge. There is a Súrih (Arabic ‘Súrah’: chapter) in the Qur’án entitled the Súrih of Joseph. It tells the story of Joseph, the son of Jacob, he whom his brothers betrayed and sold into slavery, who suffered imprisonment in Egypt, but rose to rule that land. It is highly allegorical. Siyyid Kázim had told Mullá Husayn, when requested by him to write a commentary on that chapter of the Qur’án: ‘This is, verily, beyond me. He, that great One, who comes after me will, unasked, reveal it for you. That commentary will constitute one of the weightiest testimonies of His truth, and one of the clearest evidences of the loftiness of His position.’

Mullá Husayn’s Host told him: ‘Now is the time to reveal the commentary on the Súrih of Joseph.’

‘He took up His pen,’ Mullá Husayn related, ‘and with incredible rapidity revealed the entire Súrih of Mulk, the first chapter of His commentary on the Súrih of Joseph. The overpowering effect of the manner in which He wrote was heightened by the gentle intonation of His voice which accompanied His writing. Not for one moment did He interrupt the flow of the verses which streamed from His pen. Not once did He pause till the Súrih of Mulk was finished. I sat enraptured by the magic of His voice and the sweeping force of His revelation.’

But Mullá Husayn was anxious to rejoin his companions. Since that afternoon—and long ago it seemed—when he had sent them into the city and had himself lingered outside the city-gates, he had had no news of them nor they of him. So he rose and asked to be permitted to depart. His Host smilingly told him: ‘If you leave in such a state, whoever sees you will assuredly say: “This poor youth has lost his mind.”’ ‘At that moment,’ Mullá Husayn has said, ‘the clock registered two hours and eleven minutes after sunset.’ In that moment a new Dispensation was born.

‘This night,’ said He who ushered in the new Dispensation, He who was to herald a new cycle, ‘this very hour will, in the days to come, be celebrated as one of the greatest and most significant of all festivals.’

The evening meal was now served. Mullá Husayn afterwards recalled: ‘That holy repast refreshed alike my body and soul. In the presence of my Host, at that hour, I felt as though I were feeding upon the fruits of Paradise . . . Had my youthful Host no other claim to greatness, this were sufficient—that He received me with that quality of hospitality and loving-kindness which I was convinced no other human being could possibly reveal.

‘I sat spellbound by His utterance, oblivious of time and of those who awaited me . . . Sleep had departed from me that night. I was enthralled by the music of that voice which rose and fell as He chanted; now swelling forth as He revealed verses of the Qayyúmu’l-Asmá’, again acquiring ethereal, subtle harmonies as He uttered the prayers He was revealing. At the end of each invocation, He would repeat this verse: ‘Far from the glory of thy Lord, the All-Glorious, be that which His creatures affirm of Him! And peace be upon His Messengers! And praise be to God, the Lord of all beings!’ Such was Mullá Husayn’s recollection of that momentous night.

H. M. Balyuzi, *The Báb*, pp. 17-21

2. Allow a few moments of silent reflection on this beautiful story, then discuss:

- While this experience was clearly unique, what are some of the elements that we could use in showing hospitality to our friends? What also could we learn from the Báb’s presentation of His Message?
- Thinking about our own experiences as guests and as hosts, what can we do to create a beautiful spiritual environment in which to share with others the message from God for today? In our experiences, what is the role of genuine love, listening, hospitality, sharing the Word of God, and other factors?

1. Reflect individually on the following quotations, perhaps while listening to quiet music.

... God hath purposed to bind hearts together, albeit through both earthly and heavenly means.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 40, paragraph 57

If a small number of people gather lovingly together, with absolute purity and sanctity, with their hearts free of the world, experiencing the emotions of the Kingdom and the powerful magnetic forces of the Divine, and being at one in their happy fellowship, that gathering will exert its influence over all the earth. The nature of that band of people, the words they speak, the deeds they do, will unleash the bestowals of Heaven, and provide a foretaste of eternal bliss. The hosts of the Company on high will defend them, and the angels of the Abhá Paradise, in continuous succession, will come down to their aid.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 81, #39

2. Then, choose one person with whom you might collaborate to plan a fireside. This is a planning partner, not necessarily a co-host, as the spiritual environment of the fireside reflects the hospitality of an individual or a family.
3. In pairs, read aloud the quotations entitled “The Power of Firesides” on the following page and discuss the focus questions.
4. Then use the next page, “Planning a Fireside,” to plan a fireside that you can carry out within the next 19 days.
5. After all have had the opportunity to plan their firesides, share the highlights of your plans with the whole group.



THE POWER OF FIRESIDES

Focus Questions:

How does Shoghi Effendi describe the fireside method of teaching? How is a fireside different from a public meeting? What can we do to more closely follow the Guardian's advice in planning firesides?

1 Not all of us are capable of serving in the same way, but the one way every Bahá'í can spread the Faith is by example. This moves the hearts of people far more deeply than words ever can. The love we show others, the hospitality and understanding, the willingness to help them, these are the very best advertisements of the Faith. . . .

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. 2, p. 10

2 As we have such wonderful prayers and meditations in our writings, the reading of these with friends who are interested in and crave for this type of small meeting is often a step towards attracting them to the Faith. Perhaps you could start such an activity in your city.

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. 2, p. 315

3 The believers are entirely free to hold as many little teaching groups or Firesides as they please in their own homes. . . . In fact this personal, informal, home teaching is perhaps the most productive of results.

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. 2, p. 316

4 It should not be overlooked, however, that the most powerful and effective teaching medium that has been found so far is the fireside meeting, because in the fireside meeting, intimate personal questions can be answered, and the student find the spirit of the Faith more abundant there.

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. 2, pp. 317-8

5 The most effective method of teaching is the Fireside group, where new people can be shown Bahá'í hospitality, and ask all questions which bother them. They can feel there the true Bahá'í spirit—and it is the spirit that quickeneth.

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. 2, p. 323

6 The fireside method of teaching seems to produce the greatest results, when each one invites friends into their homes once in nineteen days, and introduces them to the Faith. Close association and loving service affects the hearts; and when the heart is affected, then the spirit can enter. It is the Holy Spirit that quickens, and the Friends must become channels for its diffusion.

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. 2, p. 324



PLANNING A FIRESIDE

- Begin your consultation with a prayer.
- Reflect on the seekers you know. Who would you like to invite to your home? Do you wish to invite an individual or would it be better to invite the family? Do you wish to invite one individual or family or would you prefer to invite several?
- When you invite your friend or friends, how do you plan to word the invitation? Do you want to make the invitation to a fireside, to a devotional program, for a visit, for dinner, or other? When do you plan to offer this invitation?
- If it is not possible for you to have a guest in your home, where else could you show personal loving hospitality?
- What can you do to prepare the environment to reflect warm hospitality?
- What can you do to show loving interest in the friend? Do you know the interests and questions of the seeker? If not, how can you discover them?
- How can you share a prayer with the seeker? Do you want to open the meeting with prayers? Do you want to give a copy of a prayer as a gift? Do you want to pray together?
- What passage or passages from the writings do you want to share? How will you share them? Do you plan to recite the Word of God from memory, do you prefer to read together, do you want to copy the passage or prayer as a gift for your friend?
- What questions do you anticipate your seekers might ask? Can you incorporate answers prepared in this course? Do you need to research answers for other questions you anticipate from your seeker? How will you respond if the seeker asks a question you haven't anticipated?
- What learning tools or instructional methods (e.g., music, art, nature, stories, etc.) do you wish to incorporate? What would touch the hearts of the particular seekers you have in mind?
- Do you want to serve simple refreshments? How else can you show hospitality?
- What prayers do you want to say for this seeker, beginning today?

Individual Acts of Teaching, Service, and Study

Choose one or more of these activities to complete before the next session.

1. Carry out your fireside plan so that the invitation to the fireside is made before the next session and the fireside has been held within 19 days. Could you even host the fireside this week?
2. Give careful thought to the children that may come to your fireside. How can you let them know that you're genuinely happy to see them?
3. Could you participate in a devotional meeting or support a children's class open to all?
4. Memorize the teaching prayer from *The Tablets of the Divine Plan* for your region. Recite it daily.

Personal Teaching Plan

Please complete your Personal Teaching Plan, taking into account the plans you have just made for your fireside. Please also remember your flexible steps to teaching the Faith according to the seekers' own needs, hopes, and interests, as discussed in Session 6 of this course.

Closing Devotions

Close the session with prayers and singing. Include the teaching prayer from *The Tablets of the Divine Plan* for your region in these closing devotions.



A PERSONAL TEACHING PLAN

Whoso openeth his lips in this Day and maketh mention of the name of his Lord, the hosts of Divine inspiration shall descend upon him from the heaven of My name, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. On him shall also descend the Concourse on high, each bearing aloft a chalice of pure light.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Gleanings*, p. 280, section CXXIX

What specific steps can I take this week...?



To take initiative; to seize opportunities; to form friendships; to interact personally with others; to build relationships?

How can I draw upon...?



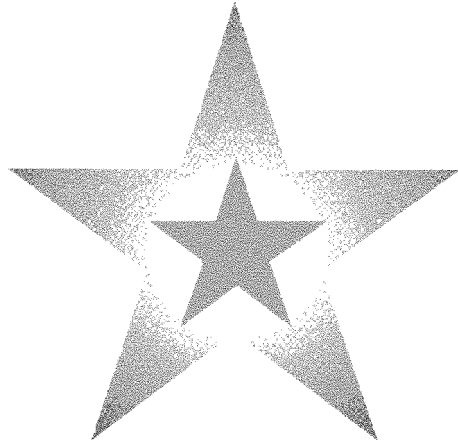
My love for Bahá'u'lláh; the power of the Covenant; the dynamics of prayer; the inspiration and education derived from regular reading and study of the Holy Texts?



The transformative forces that operate upon my soul as I strive to behave in accordance with the divine laws and principles?



In addition, how can I attract the particular blessings promised by Bahá'u'lláh to the one who mentions His name?



O ye friends! Fellowship, fellowship!
Love, love! Unity, unity!

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ

Every Believer Is a Teacher

COURSE FOUR

Some
Fundamental
Verities of the
Bahá'í Faith

Session 8

Contributing to
Growth

Opening Devotions

Begin your session with uplifting music, prayers, and memorized quotations from the Bahá'í writings. Consider including the following quotation along with your opening prayers:

The divine friends must be attracted to and enamored of each other and ever be ready and willing to sacrifice their own lives for each other. Should one soul from amongst the believers meet another, it must be as though a thirsty one with parched lips has reached to the fountain of the water of life, or a lover has met his true beloved. For one of the greatest divine wisdoms regarding the appearance of the holy Manifestations is this: The souls may come to know each other and become intimate with each other; the power of the love of God may make all of them the waves of one sea, the flowers of one rose garden, and the stars of one heaven. . . .

O ye friends! Fellowship, fellowship! Love, love! Unity, unity!—so that the power of the Bahá'í Cause may appear and become manifest in the world of existence. My thoughts are turned towards you, and my heart leaps within me at your mention. Could ye know how my soul glows with your love, so great a happiness would flood your hearts as to cause you to become enamored with each other.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, pp. 52-53

Objectives of the Session

Read aloud the learning objectives for this session.

Knowledge

To become familiar with some of the writings about love and unity in the Bahá'í Community.

To become familiar with some of the writings about universal participation.

Wisdom

To understand some factors contributing to growth.

To understand the relationship between expansion and consolidation.

Spiritual Perception

To perceive the Bahá'í Community as a model.

Eloquent Speech

To consult on ways our communities might develop systematic projects to advance the process of entry by troops.

To plan steps for teaching that include ongoing lines of action.

Consultation on Individual Service and Teaching

- Who was able to carry out their fireside this week?
- Who was able to make invitations to their friends to come to an upcoming fireside?
- What would you like to share about your participation in devotional meetings or children's classes?
- How are we creating a spirit of open inclusion of all people in our gatherings and contributing to the development of young people in our community?
- What are the results of continued efforts to “capture the attention, maintain the interest, and deepen the faith of those whom he seeks to bring into the fold of his Faith?” (Shoghi Effendi, *Teaching the Bahá'í Faith*, p. 64)

Consultation on Individual Study

- Who would like to recite from memory the prayer for their region revealed by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in the *Tablets of the Divine Plan*?
- Who would like to recite the passages memorized that pertain to the value of personal discipline or that describe the sources of human happiness.
- Who was able to share these passages with others or to mention the Name of Bahá'u'lláh in a new setting?

Story
Louis G. Gregory's Fireside

Enjoy reading the following story from the biography of Hand of the Cause of God Louis G. Gregory, then briefly discuss the question:

How did Mr. Gregory capture the attention, maintain the interest, and deepen the faith of these friends?

Shoghi Effendi, too, continued to stress Louis Gregory's important role in the South. In October 1933 the Guardian requested that he focus on a "few important centers in the South" and also that he "emphasize" among the Southern Bahá'ís the importance of "intensive teaching."

Shoghi Effendi described "intensive teaching" in terms that suggested an extension of the kind of effort that Louis Gregory had been making for years in the South:

"Your immediate objective, as you rightly state, should be to establish a small group of well-confirmed, devoted and active believers who will be able to carry on the work after your departure. The method of intensive teachings seems to be very effective and promising at present. The masses as a whole do not show much interest in religion. But there are always to be found some competent, sincere and eager souls to whom the Message has a profound appeal. It is for the Bahá'í teacher to look for them, and to try to deepen and sustain their interest and thus enable them eventually to embrace the Cause."

The results Louis Gregory achieved in this new phase of intensive teaching were striking. Thelma Allison, one of the "competent, sincere and eager souls" he found in Nashville, has recalled that she met him through her husband, a good friend of Mr. Gregory. A fireside meeting for inquirers was soon arranged. All of those who attended were black women, and they formed the nucleus of a study group. As Mrs. Allison put it, all fell in love with his presentation of the Faith; rather than giving his own views, he quoted extensively from the Bahá'í writings, and his listeners "knew that those words were different." [In another conversation, Mrs. Allison added that as the study group sewed, Mr. Gregory often read to them from the book, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*.] The effect was heightened by his "beautiful, most lovely, most persuasive voice." By April six to eight black women had become Bahá'ís, augmenting the small community that had existed before Mr. Gregory's arrival—"a tiny group of believers," as he described it, "six southern whites and one colored." Together they formed Nashville's first Local Spiritual Assembly.

GAYLE MORRISON, *To Move the World*, pp. 242-243

As you may know, the Research Department of the Universal House of Justice has identified several factors that contribute to the large-scale growth of the Faith.

These factors interact with and reinforce each other and, when they operate in concert, they provide the basis for the creation of a growth-producing milieu—a Bahá'í community whose members are dedicated to refining their understanding of the nature of teaching and to learning how to work together in ways that will both accelerate and sustain the processes of expansion and consolidation.

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *Teaching the Bahá'í Faith*, p. 6

1. Working in three small study groups, carefully read the quotations on the following pages that describe factors contributing to growth, and prepare answers to the focus questions.
 - Group One: Commitment to Spiritual Transformation and Love and Unity
 - Group Two: Universal Participation and Balance Between Expansion and Consolidation
 - Group Three: Bahá'í Community as a Model
2. After each study group has had time to study the passages and prepare answers to the focus questions, reconvene in the study circle.
3. Then divide into new groups so that each new group has at least one member from each of the three previous study groups.
4. In your new groups, share with the others the insights your first study group gathered through discussion.
5. Then, still in this new group, create a poster or other visual aid that illustrates how these factors reinforce each other to accelerate and sustain the processes of expansion and consolidation.
6. Share your poster or other visual aid with the entire study circle.
7. Consider displaying these posters at the next Nineteen Day Feast or an upcoming cluster meeting to share with other friends in the community and thus contribute to the consultation about teaching. Consider also briefly sharing with the friends at Feast of your cluster meeting the results of your study about factors contributing to growth, and your systematic striving as a study circle to become increasingly effective Bahá'í teachers. Consider sharing an example of your efforts in the teaching work and the power of your group consultation about teaching. If desired, encourage whole-group consultation about teaching in your community at this meeting.



COMMITMENT TO SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION

Focus Questions:

What steps can we take to foster the crucial links between individual transformation, the gradual maturation of the Bahá'í community and the growth of the Faith?

1 The blessed Person of the Promised One is interpreted in the Holy Book as the Lord of Hosts—the heavenly armies. By heavenly armies those souls are intended who are entirely freed from the human world, transformed into celestial spirits and have become divine angels. . . . Any soul from among the believers of Bahá'u'lláh who attains to this station, will become known as the Apostle of Bahá'u'lláh. . . . To attain to this supreme station is however, dependent on the realization of certain conditions: The first condition is firmness in the Covenant of God. For the power of the Covenant will protect the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh from the doubts of the people of error. . . .

The second condition: Fellowship and love amongst the believers. The divine friends must be attracted to and enamored of each other and ever be ready and willing to sacrifice their own lives for each other

The third condition: Teachers must continually travel to all parts of the continent, nay, rather, to all parts of the world, but they must travel like 'Abdu'l-Bahá , who journeyed throughout the cities of America. He was sanctified and free from every attachment and in the he utmost severance. . . .

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, pp. 49-53

2 When the true spirit of teaching, which calls for complete dedication, consecration to the noble mission, and living the life, is fulfilled, not only by the individual, but by the Assemblies also, then the Faith will grow by leaps and bounds.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *Teaching the Bahá'í Faith*, p. 29

3 Bahá'u'lláh has stated quite clearly in His Writings the essential requisites for our spiritual growth, and these are stressed again and again by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in His talks and Tablets. One can summarize them briefly in this way:

1. The recital each day on one of the Obligatory Prayers with pure-hearted devotion.
2. The regular reading of the Sacred Scriptures, specifically at least each morning and evening, with reverence, attention and thought.
3. Prayerful meditation on the Teachings, so that we may understand them more deeply, fulfill them more faithfully, and convey them more accurately to others.
4. Striving every day to bring our behavior more into accordance with the high standards that are set forth in the Teachings.
5. Teaching the Cause of God.
6. Selfless service in the work of the Cause and in the carrying on of our trade or profession.

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *Messages from the Universal House of Justice*, p. 589



Focus Questions:

What steps can we take to foster such love and unity among the believers that more and more people find themselves attracted to this great circle of intimate friends?

1 The divine friends must be attracted to and enamored of each other and ever be ready and willing to sacrifice their own lives for each other. Should one soul from amongst the believers meet another, it must be as though a thirsty one with parched lips has reached to the fountain of the water of life, or a lover has met his true beloved. For one of the greatest divine wisdoms regarding the appearance of the holy Manifestations is this: The souls may come to know each other and become intimate with each other; the power of the love of God may make all of them the waves of one sea, the flowers of one rose garden, and the stars of one heaven. This is the wisdom for the appearance of the holy Manifestations! When the most great bestowal reveals itself in the hearts of the believers, the world of nature will be transformed, the darkness of the contingent being will vanish, and heavenly illumination will be obtained. Then the whole world will become the Paradise of Abhá, every one of the believers of God will become a blessed tree, producing wonderful fruits.

O ye friends! Fellowship, fellowship! Love, love! Unity, unity!—so that the power of the Bahá'í Cause may appear and become manifest in the world of existence. My thoughts are turned towards you, and my heart leaps within me at your mention. Could ye know how my soul glows with your love, so great a happiness would flood your hearts as to cause you to become enamored with each other.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, pp. 52-3

2 Too great emphasis cannot be laid on the importance of the unity of the friends, for only by manifesting the greatness of their love for and patient with each other can they hope to attract large numbers to their ranks.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *Teaching the Bahá'í Faith*, p. 25

3 He longs to see a greater degree of unity and love among the believers, for these are the spirit which must animate their Community life. Until the people of the world see a shining example set by us they will not embrace the Cause in masses, because they require to see the teachings demonstrated in a pattern of action.

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, *Teaching the Bahá'í Faith*, p. 26

4 Without the spirit of real love for Bahá'u'lláh, for His Faith and its Institutions, and the believers for each other, the Cause can never really bring in large numbers of people. For it is not preaching and rules the world wants, but love and action.

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, *Teaching the Bahá'í Faith*, p. 28



UNIVERSAL PARTICIPATION

Focus Questions:

What steps can we take to foster universal participation in efforts to teach the Cause and to apply its principles?

1 Everyone is a potential teacher. He has only to use what God has given him and thus prove that he is faithful to his trust.

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. 2, p. 308

2 Universal participation and constant action will win this goal. Every believer has a part to play, and is capable of playing it, for every soul meets others, and, as promised by Bahá'u'lláh, 'Whosoever ariseth to aid Our Cause God will render him victorious. . . .'

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *Teaching the Bahá'í Faith*, p. 31

3 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, *Teaching the Bahá'í Faith*, p. 40

4 . . . the community must become more adept at accommodating a wide range of actions without losing concentration on the primary objectives of teaching, namely, expansion and consolidation. A unity in diversity of actions is called for, a condition in which different individuals will concentrate on different activities, appreciating the salutary effect of the aggregate on the growth and development of the Faith, because each person cannot do everything and all persons cannot do the same thing.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *Teaching the Bahá'í Faith*, pp. 43-44

5 In the words of our beloved Guardian, "One thing and only one thing will unfailingly and alone secure the undoubted triumph of this sacred Cause, namely the extent to which our own inner life and private character mirror forth in their manifold aspects the splendor of those eternal principles proclaimed by Bahá'u'lláh."

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *Messages of the Universal House of Justice*, p. 42

6 In addition to teaching every believer can pray. Every believer can strive to make his 'own inner life and private character mirror forth in their manifold aspects the splendor of those eternal principles proclaimed by Bahá'u'lláh.' Every believer can contribute to the Fund. Not all believers can give public talks, not all are called upon to serve on administrative institutions. But all can pray, fight their own spiritual battles, and contribute to the Fund. If every believer will carry out these sacred duties, we shall be astonished at the accession of power which will result to the whole body, and which in its turn will give rise to further growth and the showering of greater blessings on all of us.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *Messages of the Universal House of Justice*, p. 43



BALANCE BETWEEN EXPANSION AND CONSOLIDATION

Focus Questions:

What specific, practical steps can we take to deepen the faith of the new believers that we bring into the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh? How can we assist them to arise to teach and serve this blessed Cause?

1 Expansion and consolidation are twin processes that must go hand in hand. The friends must not stop expansion in the name of consolidation. Deepening the newly enrolled believers generates tremendous stimulus which results in further expansion. The enrollment of new believers, on the other hand, creates a new spirit in the community and provides additional potential manpower that will reinforce the consolidation work.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *Wellspring of Guidance*, p. 33

2 Consolidation is as vital a part of the teaching work as expansion. It is that aspect of teaching which assists the believers to deepen their knowledge and understanding of the Teachings, and fans the flame of their devotion to Bahá'u'lláh and His Cause, so that they will, of their own volition, continue the process of their spiritual development, promote the teaching work, and strengthen the functioning of their administrative institutions. Proper consolidation is essential to the preservation of the spiritual health of the community, to the protection of its interests, to the upholding of its good name, and ultimately to the continuation of the work of expansion itself.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *Teaching the Bahá'í Faith*, p. 37

3 The aim, therefore, of all Bahá'í institutions and Bahá'í teachers is to advance continually to new areas and strata of society, with such thoroughness that, as the spark of faith kindles the hearts of the hearers, the teaching of the believers continues until, and even after, they shoulder their responsibilities and Bahá'ís and participate in both the teaching and administrative work of the Faith.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *Teaching the Bahá'í Faith*, p. 35

4 In many lands, however, there is an eager receptivity for the teachings of the Faith. The challenge for the Bahá'ís is to provide these thousands of seeking souls, as swiftly as possible, with the spiritual food that they crave, to enlist them under the banner of Bahá'u'lláh, to nurture them in the way of life He has revealed, and to guide them to elect Local Spiritual Assemblies which, as they begin to function, strongly, will unite the friends in firmly consolidated Bahá'í communities and become beacons of guidance and havens of refuge to mankind.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *Teaching the Bahá'í Faith*, p. 35



THE BAHÁ'Í COMMUNITY AS A MODEL

Focus Questions:

What specific steps can we take to foster Bahá'í community life and the evolution of the Administrative Order? What aspects of the Bahá'í Administrative Order demonstrate its efficacy as a pattern for future society? How can we teach about “the potentialities inherent in the administrative system” as “a signal of hope to those who despair?”

1 The second century is destined to witness a tremendous deployment and a notable consolidation of the forces working towards the world-wide development of that Order, as well as the first stirrings of that World Order, of which the present Administrative System is at once the precursor, the nucleus and pattern—an Order which, as it slowly crystallizes and radiates its benign influence over the entire planet, will proclaim at once the coming of age of the whole human race, as well as the maturity of the Faith itself, the progenitor of that Order.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *Messages to America*, pp. 96-97

2 Until the public sees in the Bahá'í community a true pattern, in action, of something better than it already has, it will not respond to the Faith in large numbers.

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, *Teaching the Bahá'í Faith*, p. 26

3 Wherever a Bahá'í community exists, whether large or small, let it be distinguished for its abiding sense of security and faith, its high standard of rectitude, its complete freedom from all forms of prejudice, the spirit of love among its members and for the closely knit fabric of its social life. The acute distinction between this and present-day society will inevitably arouse the interest of the more enlightened, and as the world's gloom deepens the light of Bahá'í life will shine even brighter and brighter until its brilliance must eventually attract the disillusioned masses and cause them to enter the haven of the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh, Who alone can bring them peace and justice and an ordered life.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *Teaching the Bahá'í Faith*, pp. 33-34

4 In many lands, however, there is an eager receptivity for the teachings of the Faith. The challenge for the Bahá'ís is to provide these thousands of seeking souls, as swiftly as possible, with the spiritual food that they crave, to enlist them under the banner of Bahá'u'lláh, to nurture them in the way of life He has revealed, and to guide them to elect Local Spiritual Assemblies which, as they begin to function, strongly, will unite the friends in firmly consolidated Bahá'í communities and become beacons of guidance and havens of refuge to mankind.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *Teaching the Bahá'í Faith*, p. 35

5 The Order brought by Bahá'u'lláh is intended to guide the progress and resolve the problems of society. Our numbers are as yet too small to effect an adequate demonstration of the potentialities inherent in the administrative system we are building, and the efficacy of this system will not be fully appreciated without a vast expansion of our membership. With the prevailing situation in the world the necessity to effect such a demonstration becomes more compelling. It is all too obvious that even those who real against the defects of the old order, and would even tear it down, are themselves bereft of any viable alternative to put in its place. Since the Administrative Order is designed to be a pattern for future society, the visibility of such a pattern will be a signal of hope to those who despair.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *Teaching the Bahá'í Faith*, p. 44

6 The proper functioning of these institutions depends largely on the efforts of their members to familiarize themselves with their duties and to adhere scrupulously to principle in their personal behaviour and in the conduct of their official responsibilities. Of relevant importance, too, are their resolve to remove all traces of estrangement and sectarian tendencies from their midst, their ability to win the affection and support of the friends under their care and to involve as many individuals as possible in the work of the Cause. By their constantly aiming at improving their performance, the communities they guide will reflect a pattern of life that will be a credit to the Faith and will, as a welcome consequence, rekindle hope among the increasingly disillusioned members of society.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *Teaching the Bahá'í Faith*, p. 48

Personal Teaching Plan

Take a few minutes to complete the “Personal Teaching Plan,” on the next page. Consider playing quiet music while you complete your plan for this week.

As you complete your plan, “consider every avenue of approach which he might utilize in his personal attempts to capture the attention, maintain the interest, and deepen the faith, of those whom he seeks to bring into the fold of his Faith.” (Shoghi Effendi, Quoted in the Ridvan 153 Letter to the Bahá’ís of the World)

Also continue to plan for your firesides and invite waiting souls into this blessed Faith.

Individual Acts of Teaching, Service, and Study

Choose one or more of these activities to complete before the next session.

1. Carry out your previously planned fireside. Plan your next fireside.
2. Memorize one or more quotations that you feel would touch the heart of a seeker. Share that quotation with your friend.
3. Research the talks given by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá published in *The Promulgation of World Peace*. Choose one talk that addresses the interests of your friends. Create a short talk based on the talk given by the Master. Share your outline and at least one short quotation from that talk at the next session of this course, as well as your plan for sharing these ideas with your friends.
4. Surprise a friend or family member with a good deed. Use that loving service to strengthen your friendship with that person.
5. Continue to support your community’s devotional meetings and children’s classes open to all.

Closing Devotions

Close the session with prayers for teaching, prayers for specific seekers, and singing.



A PERSONAL TEACHING PLAN

Whoso openeth his lips in this Day and maketh mention of the name of his Lord, the hosts of Divine inspiration shall descend upon him from the heaven of My name, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. On him shall also descend the Concourse on high, each bearing aloft a chalice of pure light.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Gleanings*, p. 280, section CXXIX

What specific steps can I take this week...?



To take initiative; to seize opportunities; to form friendships; to interact personally with others; to build relationships?

How can I draw upon...?



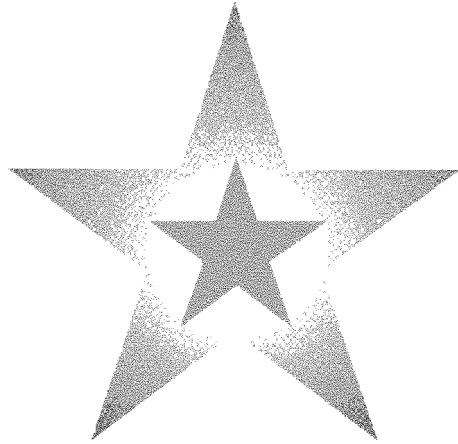
My love for Bahá'u'lláh; the power of the Covenant; the dynamics of prayer; the inspiration and education derived from regular reading and study of the Holy Texts?



The transformative forces that operate upon my soul as I strive to behave in accordance with the divine laws and principles?



In addition, how can I attract the particular blessings promised by Bahá'u'lláh to the one who mentions His name?



*T*o give and to be generous are attributes of Mine;
well is it with him that adorneth himself
with My virtues.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

Every Believer Is a Teacher

COURSE FOUR

Some
Fundamental
Verities of the
Bahá'í Faith

Session 9

Inviting Receptive
Souls

Opening Devotions

Begin your study circle with prayers and music. Consider also including the following quotations along with your opening prayers:

To give and to be generous are attributes of Mine; well is it with him that adorneth himself with My virtues.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Persian Hidden Words*, no. 49

Summon ye, then, the people of God, and invite humanity to follow the example of the Company on high.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 3, #1

Objectives of the Session

Read aloud the learning objectives for this session.

Knowledge

To become familiar with the process and conditions of enrollment in the Bahá'í Faith.

Wisdom

To understand that the human heart is created to recognize its Creator.

Spiritual Perception

To reflect upon different ways of inviting seekers to join the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh.

Eloquent Speech

To plan steps for teaching through ongoing lines of action.

Consultation on Individual Service and Teaching

- Were you able to carry out your fireside this week? What happened? How did you create the spirit of loving fellowship? How did you show the Word of God? How did your friends respond? Ideas for follow-up?
- Who was able to invite friends to come to an upcoming fireside?
- What are the results of continued efforts to “capture the attention, maintain the interest, and deepen the faith of those whom he seeks to bring into the fold of his Faith?” (Shoghi Effendi, *Teaching the Bahá'í Faith*, p. 64) What are we learning from our experiences? Do we need to sustain or modify our action steps?
- How are we doing with our systematic efforts to support devotional meetings and children's classes open to all?

Activity
The Banquet of Divine Bounty

1. Consider for a moment: What is your most priceless treasure? What, above all else, brings you joy?
2. After this brief period of reflection turn to one other person in your study circle. If you wish, take turns sharing briefly the process by which your soul was drawn to the Beloved of every heart. Allow 2-3 minutes for each person to speak while the other person listens with focused attention.

Please be mindful of the special beauty of these stories of love and attraction, whether a soul is born into a Bahá'í family and has had the bounty of Bahá'u'lláh's teaching from the earliest years, the person engaged in a lengthy search, or is even now fully engaged in the process of search.

3. In the whole group, briefly discuss: What do our own experiences teach us about the Creator of souls, and the capability of the human soul to respond to its Creator?
4. Read aloud the quotations entitled "The Banquet of Divine Bounty." Briefly discuss the focus question.



THE BANQUET OF DIVINE BOUNTY

Focus Question:

In what way does the spiritual quality of generosity help us invite the people we know to the banquet of divine bounty?

1 To give and to be generous are attributes of Mine; well is it with him that adorneth himself with My virtues.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Persian Hidden Words*, no. 49

2 Behold how the manifold grace of God, which is being showered from the clouds of Divine glory, hath, in this day, encompassed the world. For whereas in days past every lover besought and searched after his Beloved, it is the Beloved Himself Who now is calling His lovers and is inviting them to attain His presence. Take heed lest ye forfeit so precious a favor; beware lest ye belittle so remarkable a token of His grace. Abandon not the incorruptible benefits, and be not content with that which perisheth. Lift up the veil that obscureth your vision, and dispel the darkness with which it is enveloped, that ye may gaze on the naked beauty of the Beloved's face, may behold that which no eye hath beheld, and hear that which no ear hath heard.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Gleanings from the Writings of Babá'u'lláh*, p. 320, CLI

3 Through the potency of the Name of the Best-Beloved, invite thou the receptive souls unto God's holy court, that perchance they may not remain deprived of the heavenly Fountain of living water. He is in truth the Gracious, the Forgiving.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Tablets of Babá'u'lláh*, p. 236-7

4 Summon ye, then, the people of God, and invite humanity to follow the example of the Company on high.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Babá*, p. 3, #1

5 Bahá'u'lláh hath been made manifest to all mankind and He hath invited all to the table of God, the banquet of Divine bounty.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Babá*, p. 195, #163

6 O thou kind Lord! Praise be unto Thee that Thou hast shown us the highway of guidance, opened the doors of the kingdom and manifested Thyself through the Sun of Reality. To the blind Thou hast given sight; to the deaf Thou hast granted hearing; Thou hast resuscitated the dead; Thou hast enriched the poor; Thou hast shown the way to those who have gone astray; Thou hast led those with parched lips to the fountain of guidance; Thou hast suffered the thirsty fish to reach the ocean of reality; and Thou hast invited the wandering birds to the rose garden of grace.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, p. 64

1. Privately recall your declaration or the declaration of someone you know.
2. Divide into teams of two, and share with your partner answers to the following questions:
 - In what manner were you (or your friend) invited to join the Bahá'í Faith?
 - How did you (or your friend) indicate that you (or your friend) accepted this invitation?
 - What was the enrollment process?
3. After you each share your recollections, briefly discuss the questions:
 - Would you (or your friend) have joined the Faith if no one had invited you?
 - How often do we offer this invitation to our families, friends and seekers?
 - What might happen if we regularly invited receptive souls to enlist themselves into the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh?
4. In the same groups of two, study the pages of quotations entitled “Declaration and Enrollment,” and prepare answers to the focus questions.
5. Then, complete the worksheet titled “An Invitation to Join the Bahá'í Faith.”
6. When finished, please share with the entire study circle your answers and your plans to invite the souls you know to the banquet table of the Lord of Hosts.



DECLARATION AND ENROLLMENT

Focus Questions:

How does Shoghi Effendi describe the process of becoming a Bahá'í? What does the Universal House of Justice say are the requirements for becoming a Bahá'í? How long does it take to become a Bahá'í? What are the bounties of teaching the Faith to others?

1 Let him consider the degree of his hearer's receptivity, and decide for himself the suitability of either the direct or indirect method of teaching, whereby he can impress upon the seeker the vital importance of the Divine Message, and persuade him to throw in his lot with those who have already embraced it. Let him remember the example set by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and His constant admonition to shower such kindness upon the seeker, and exemplify to such a degree the spirit of the teachings he hopes to instill into him, that the recipient will be spontaneously impelled to identify himself with the Cause embodying such teachings. Let him refrain, at the outset, from insisting on such laws and observances as might impose too severe a strain on the seeker's newly awakened faith, and endeavor to nurse him, patiently, tactfully, and yet determinedly, into full maturity, and aid him to proclaim his unqualified acceptance of whatever has been ordained by Bahá'u'lláh. Let him, as soon as that stage has been attained, introduce him to the body of his fellow-believers, and seek, through constant fellowship and active participation in the local activities of his community, to enable him to contribute his share to the enrichment of its life, the furtherance of its tasks, the consolidations of its interests, and the coordination of its activities with those of its sister communities. Let him not be content until he has infused into his spiritual child so deep a longing as to impel him to arise independently, in his turn, and devote his energies to the quickening of other souls, and the upholding of the laws and principles laid down by his newly adopted Faith.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, pp. 51-52

2 In teaching people, when they begin to seriously study the Faith there is no objection to impressing upon them that this message involves great spiritual responsibility, and should not be either accepted or cast aside lightly. But we must be very gentle, tactful and patient, and not administer shocks to people.

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. 2, p. 313

3 The people of the world are submerged in an atmosphere which is the very antithesis, morally, of the Bahá'í atmosphere; we must teach them. If we are too strict in the beginning most—not all—types will be rebuffed and veer away from what they might otherwise be led to accept. On the other hand, we don't want Bahá'ís who do not seriously try to live up to the teachings—we must therefore use great tact and challenge strong souls and lead weak souls.

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. 2, p. 316

4 But of course, gradually the entire Message, in all its aspects and with the full implications it entails, should be explained to the newcomer. For to be a believer means to accept the Cause in its wholeness, and not to adhere to some of its teachings. However, as already stated, this ought to be done gradually and tactfully. For conversion is after all a slow process.

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. 2, p. 309

5 It is better to have one Bahá'í who understands the Teachings and is wholeheartedly convinced of their truth, than a number of Bahá'ís, who are not well aware of the Cause, and deep-rooted in the Covenant.

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. 2, p. 319

6 Those who declare themselves as Bahá'ís should become enchanted with the beauty of the teachings, and touched by the love of Bahá'u'lláh. The declarants need not know all the proofs, history, laws, and principles of the Faith, but in the process of declaring themselves they must, in addition to catching the spark of faith, become basically informed about the Central Figures of the Faith, as well as the existence of laws they must follow and an administration they must obey.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *Wellspring of Guidance*, p. 32

7 In the western world in recent decades, Bahá'ís have grown used to thinking that the process by which a person accepts the Faith takes a long time, and that it is unthinkable for someone to intelligently accept Bahá'u'lláh within minutes of hearing of Him. This may be the pattern to which they have become accustomed, but it is far from being a universal one. When people accepted the Faith quickly in Africa and other parts of the Third World, western Bahá'ís sometimes explained it away by saying that such people were less educated and had fewer ideas to work their way through. Now the same process is happening in the countries of the former Eastern Bloc, and highly educated people are accepting the Faith as soon as they hear of it, embracing it enthusiastically and rapidly deepening their understanding of its Teachings by reading every Bahá'í book they can lay their hands on. So it is clear that receptivity to spiritual truth is, as Bahá'u'lláh indicated, a matter of purity of heart, not of education or lack of it.

In the west of Europe, too, there are signs of great receptivity towards the Faith among the people, and some are ready to join the community of the Most Great Name if approached in the proper manner. In such cases when an individual hears the Message of Bahá'u'lláh and is moved to declare this faith there should be no obstacle placed in his way. Great care must be taken that when the heart of the individual is touched by the power of Bahá'u'lláh's Message and the declarant has expressed his desire to embrace the Faith, the knowledge of the new believer in the verities of the Faith is the most vital part of teaching; but deepening is not merely the imparting of knowledge—it requires also to imbue the soul of the person with the love of Bahá'u'lláh so that his faith may grow day by day and he becomes a steadfast believer.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *Teaching the Bahá'í Faith*, p. 50

AN INVITATION TO JOIN THE FAITH OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

Invitations to join the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh can be made in many different ways, as many ways as there are seekers. Some possible options include:

A. While engaged in a warm and loving conversation about the needs and hopes of the seeker and how the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh address those needs and hopes, say, “I can see that your heart, like mine, is touched by these beautiful teachings. If you choose to enroll in the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, you will become part of the world-wide family of Bahá'ís, striving to implement these teachings in our own lives and in the world around us. You are most welcome!”

B. Say, “Sometimes people wonder how to become a Bahá'í. It is a very simple process. Once a person believes that Bahá'u'lláh is the Manifestation of God for this age, it is simply a matter of recording that belief on this card.” Give the friend an enrollment card, read through it together, answer any questions, and let them take it with them if they are not ready to sign it at that time.

C. After your friends have participated in several firesides, plan a fireside on the topic “Becoming a Bahá'í.” Review the booklet *So Great an Honor*. Give each person, Bahá'í and seeker alike, an enrollment card, read through it, answer any questions, and then offer pens for those who wish to enroll at that time.

D. Have enrollment cards along with pamphlets and books of writings on the coffee table during firesides. Invite your friends to take a card at the same time you offer pamphlets or to read the writings together.

E. Simply say, “As you know, each individual soul is created in the image of God with wonderful talents and capacities. When we begin to study the Word of God and strive to implement these beautiful teachings, our abilities to serve others and to contribute to the betterment of the world grow rapidly. And when we enlist ourselves under the banner of Bahá'u'lláh, we become part of a world-wide system designed to carry these teachings to every member of the human race and to build the Institutions that will create peace and justice all over the earth. With all my heart, I invite you to join us.”

Sometimes the key to enrollment is a simple invitation to join the Faith. Working with your partner, think of the seekers you know, your friends and family members. Then identify methods that you could use to invite them to enroll in the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh. Use one of the methods described above or create your own.

Use the space below to record your plans. Remember to include prayers for your seeker as part of your plan; to offer these beautiful teachings as one would offer a gift to a king; and that a person who does not accept the first invitation may well accept a later invitation.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for recording plans and prayers. It occupies the majority of the page's vertical space below the introductory text.

Individual Acts of Teaching, Service, and Study

Choose one or more of these activities to complete before the next session.

1. Carry out your previously planned fireside. Plan your next fireside. Consider reviewing the text-based Fireside Packets prepared for the Media Campaign that are included in Courses 1-3 in the Fundamental Verities Sequence of Courses and posted online at

http://www.education.usbnc.org/a_themes/fireside_manuals.htm.

Remember that you may use these firesides exactly as they are written or adapt them as best meets your friends' needs, interests, and hopes. They may be adapted either for your own firesides or to use in the format of a devotional meeting.

2. Memorize one or more quotations that you feel would touch the heart of a seeker. Share that quotation with your friend.
3. Research the talks given by 'Abdu'l-Bahá published in *The Promulgation of World Peace*. Choose one talk that addresses the interests of your friends. Create a short presentation based on the talk given by the Master. Share your outline and at least one short quotation from that talk at the next session of this course.
4. Continue to support your community's devotional meetings and children's classes open to all.

Personal Teaching Plan

Complete the Personal Teaching Plan on the next page. Consider including in your plan a personal invitation to enlist under the banner of Bahá'u'lláh.

Closing Devotions

Close the session with prayers for teaching, prayers for specific seekers, and singing.



A PERSONAL TEACHING PLAN

Whoso openeth his lips in this Day and maketh mention of the name of his Lord, the hosts of Divine inspiration shall descend upon him from the heaven of My name, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. On him shall also descend the Concourse on high, each bearing aloft a chalice of pure light.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Gleanings*, p. 280, section CXXIX

What specific steps can I take this week...?



To take initiative; to seize opportunities; to form friendships; to interact personally with others; to build relationships?

How can I draw upon...?



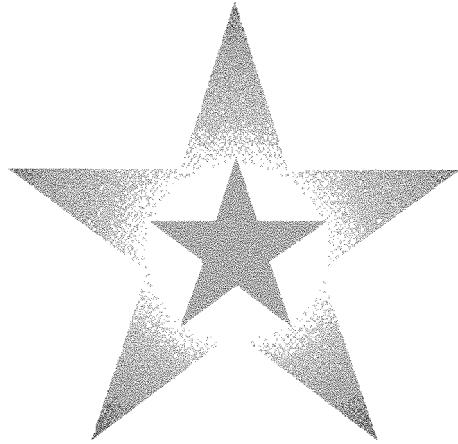
My love for Bahá'u'lláh; the power of the Covenant; the dynamics of prayer; the inspiration and education derived from regular reading and study of the Holy Texts?



The transformative forces that operate upon my soul as I strive to behave in accordance with the divine laws and principles?



In addition, how can I attract the particular blessings promised by Bahá'u'lláh to the one who mentions His name?



*P*iety and detachment are even as
two most great luminaries of the heaven of teaching.
Blessed the one who hath attained
to this supreme station. . . .

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

Every Believer Is a Teacher

COURSE FOUR

Some
Fundamental
Verities of the
Bahá'í Faith

Session 10

Nurturing New
Believers

Opening Devotions

Begin your study circle with prayers and music. Consider also including the following passage along with your opening prayers:

The whole duty of man in this Day is to attain that share of the flood of grace which God poureth forth for him. Let none, therefore, consider the largeness or smallness of the receptacle. The portion of some might lie in the palm of a man's hand, the portion of others might fill a cup, and of others even a gallon-measure.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Gleanings from the Writings of Babá'u'lláh*, p. 8, V

Objectives of the Session

In the group, read aloud the learning objectives for this session.

Knowledge

To become familiar with some of the writings about nurturing new believers and overcoming barriers to enrollment.

Wisdom

To understand that deepening the knowledge of the new believer in the verities of the Faith is vital part of the teaching process.

Spiritual Perception

To perceive the importance of the teacher's patience, perseverance, and detachment in the teaching process.

Eloquent Speech

To plan steps for teaching that include ongoing lines of action.
To create a plan for nurturing new believers.

Consultation on Individual Service and Teaching

- Who would like to share the results of your fireside with the group?
- Who surprised a friend or family member with a good deed and would like to share what you did and its result with the group?
- What is the most encouraging or inspiring thing that has happened recently at your devotional meetings or children's classes open to all?

Consultation on Individual Service and Teaching

- Who memorized passages to share with a seeker? Would you like to share one of those passages with the study circle? Please describe the context in which you shared that passage with your friend.
- Who researched one of the talks in *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*? Would you like to share your outline of a selected quotation with the group? How do you anticipate being able to share these ideas with others?

Activity Nurturing New Believers

1. Divide into working groups of three or four.
2. Read aloud the quotations on the following pages, answer the focus questions, and then share your answers with the entire group. In your consultation, consider the information about education and training programs listed at the back of this book, p. 160.
3. Please also consider the importance of the core activities of devotional meetings, children's classes, and study circles as well as such ongoing practices of family visits, phone calls, joint service to the community at large, and genuine friendship.
4. Share your responses in the whole group. Briefly discuss: In what ways do the twin processes of expansion and consolidation work together for the growth of the Bahá'í Faith and the renewal of human civilization?



NURTURING NEW BELIEVERS

Focus Questions:

What are some of the essential components of deepening and consolidation in the Bahá'í Faith? What specific, practical steps can I take to nurture the new believers that I have taught? What specific, practical steps can we take in our community to assist newly enrolled and veteran believers to serve the Cause of God?

1 Let him remember the example set by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and His constant admonition to shower such kindness upon the seeker, and exemplify to such a degree the spirit of the teachings he hopes to instill into him, that the recipient will be spontaneously impelled to identify himself with the Cause embodying such teachings. Let him refrain, at the outset, from insisting on such laws and observances as might impose too severe a strain on the seeker's newly awakened faith, and endeavor to nurse him, patiently, tactfully, and yet determinedly, into full maturity, and aid him to proclaim his unqualified acceptance of whatever has been ordained by Bahá'u'lláh. Let him, as soon as that stage has been attained, introduce him to the body of his fellow-believers, and seek, through constant fellowship and active participation in the local activities of his community, to enable him to contribute his share to the enrichment of its life, the furtherance of its tasks, the consolidations of its interests, and the coordination of its activities with those of its sister communities. Let him not be content until he has infused into his spiritual child so deep a longing as to impel him to arise independently, in his turn, and devote his energies to the quickening of other souls, and the upholding of the laws and principles laid down by his newly adopted Faith.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 52

2 Shoghi Effendi has often in his letters mentioned the importance of follow-up work. Seeds sown but not watered and reared will not mature into fruition.

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, *Teaching the Bahá'í Faith*, p. 68

3 Deepening the knowledge of the new believer in the verities of the Faith is the most vital part of teaching; but deepening is not merely the imparting of knowledge—it requires also to imbue the soul of the person with the love of Bahá'u'lláh so that his faith may grow day by day and he becomes a steadfast believer.

ON BEHALF OF THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *Teaching the Bahá'í Faith*, p. 50

4 . . . True consolidation is to ensure that the love of Bahá'u'lláh and devotion to His Faith are firmly rooted in the hearts of the believers; this is the essential foundation for the subsequent addition of increased knowledge of the Teachings and the development of the Bahá'í way of life.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *Lights of Guidance*, p. 593

5 After declaration, the new believers must not be left to their own devices. Through correspondence and dispatch of visitors, through conferences and training courses, these friends must be patiently strengthened and lovingly helped to develop into full Bahá'í maturity.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *Wellspring of Guidance*, p. 32

6 Consolidation must comprise not only the establishment of Bahá'í administrative institutions, but a true deepening in the fundamental verities of the Cause and in its spiritual principles, understanding of its prime purpose in the establishment of the unity of mankind, instruction in its standards of behavior in all aspects of private and public life, in the particular practice of Bahá'í life in such things as daily prayer, education of children, observance of the laws of Bahá'í marriage, abstention from politics, the obligation to contribute to the Fund, the importance of the Nineteen Day Feast, and opportunity to acquire a sound knowledge of the present-day practice of Bahá'í Administration.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *Wellspring of Guidance*, p. 78

7 To effect the possibilities of expansion and consolidation implied by entry by troops, a determined, worldwide effort to develop human resources must be made. The endeavor of individuals to conduct study classes in their homes, the sponsorship by the institutions of occasional courses of instruction, and the informal activities of the community, though important, are not adequate for the education and training of a rapidly expanding community. 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. There should be no delay in establishing permanent institutes designed to provide well-organized, formally conducted programs of training on a regular schedule. . . .

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *The Four Year Plan*, pp. 35-6

8 It is especially gratifying to note the high degree of participation of believers in the various aspects of the growth process. In cluster after cluster, the number of those shouldering the responsibilities of expansion and consolidation is steadily increasing. Meetings of consultation held at the cluster level serve to raise awareness of possibilities and generate enthusiasm. Here, free from the demands of formal decision-making, participants reflect on experience gained, share insights, explore approaches and acquire a better understanding of how each can contribute to achieving the aim of the Plan. In many cases, such interaction leads to consensus on a set of short-term goals, both individual and collective. Learning in action is becoming the outstanding feature of the emerging mode of operation.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, To the Bahá'í of the World, 17 January 2003

Activity

Overcoming Barriers to Enrollment

1. Have you ever had a negative response from a seeker to an invitation to join the Bahá'í Faith? If you desire, briefly share your experiences.
2. Consider the following example of a seeker who feels reluctant to join an “organized religion.” Carefully read both the barriers and the quotations that might offer a possible response.
3. How could you respond to this friend, incorporating a few words or phrases from one of these quotations in your response?

Barrier:

“Well, I like everything you’re telling me but organized religion just isn’t for me. Too many wars have been fought in the name of religion. I don’t need to join a religion, I have my own light within. I pray and try to live a very good life, helping those in need and trying to do the right thing.”

Possible response:

It is true that there are foolish individuals who have never properly examined the fundamentals of the Divine religions, who have taken as their criterion the behavior of a few religious hypocrites and measured all religious persons by that yardstick, and have on this account concluded that religions are an obstacle to progress, a divisive factor and a cause of malevolence and enmity among peoples. They have not even observed this much, that the principles of the Divine religions can hardly be evaluated by the acts of those who only claim to follow them. For every excellent thing, peerless though it may be, can still be diverted to the wrong ends. A lighted lamp in the hands of an ignorant child or of the blind will not dispel the surrounding darkness nor light up the house—it will set both the bearer and the house on fire. Can we, in such an instance, blame the lamp? No, by the Lord God! To the seeing, a lamp is a guide and will show him his path; but it is a disaster to the blind.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, p. 72

Our purpose is to show how true religion promotes the civilization and honor, the prosperity and prestige, the learning and advancement of a people once abject, enslaved and ignorant, and how, when it falls into the hands of religious leaders who are foolish and fanatical, it is diverted to the wrong ends, until this greatest of splendors turns into blackest night.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, p. 80

4. Then, working in small groups of three or four, identify one barrier to joining the Faith that you either have heard from a seeker or that you might realistically anticipate from a seeker. Using the space below, create a loving response to that barrier that includes a phrase or brief quotation from the writings, or that is based on spiritual principles.
5. After allowing some time for this work, share your team's barrier and its response with the entire study circle.

Activity
Patience, Perseverance, and Detachment

1. In the whole group, read aloud the quotations entitled "Patience, Perseverance, and Detachment" and discuss the focus questions.
2. Then, working individually, in pairs, or in small groups, select all or part of one of these passages to memorize.
3. Share your memorized passages in the whole group. Applaud all efforts!



PATIENCE, PERSEVERANCE, AND DETACHMENT

Focus Questions:

Why are the spiritual qualities of patience, perseverance, and detachment of such critical importance to our efforts to share the healing message of Bahá'u'lláh with all the human race? What other spiritual qualities are also required? What are some practical ways that we can develop these qualities?

1 Piety and detachment are even as two most great luminaries of the heaven of teaching. Blessed the one who hath attained unto this supreme station, this habitation of transcendent holiness and sublimity.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 253

2 Show forbearance and benevolence and love to one another. Should any one among you be incapable of grasping a certain truth, or be striving to comprehend it, show forth, when conversing with him, a spirit of extreme kindness and good-will. Help him to see and recognize the truth, without esteeming yourself to be, in the least, superior to him, or to be possessed of greater endowments.

The whole duty of man in this Day is to attain that share of the flood of grace which God poureth forth for him. Let none, therefore, consider the largeness or smallness of the receptacle. The portion of some might lie in the palm of a man's hand, the portion of others might fill a cup, and of others even a gallon-measure.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 8, V

3 Perhaps the reason why you have not accomplished so much in the field of teaching is the extent you looked upon your own weaknesses and inabilities to spread the message. Bahá'u'lláh and the Master have both urged us repeatedly to disregard our own handicaps and lay our whole reliance upon God. He will come to our help if we only arise and become an active channel for God's grace. Do you think it is the teachers who make converts and change human hearts? No, surely not. They are only pure souls who take the first step, and then let the spirit of Bahá'u'lláh move them and make use of them. If any one of them should even for a second consider his achievements as due to his own capacities, his work is ended and his fall starts. This is in fact the reason why so many competent souls have after wonderful services suddenly found themselves absolutely impotent and perhaps thrown aside by the Spirit of the Cause as useless souls. The criterion is the extent to which we are ready to have the will of God operate through us.

Stop being conscious of your frailties, therefore; have a perfect reliance upon God; let your heart burn with the desire to serve His mission and proclaim His call; and you will observe how eloquence and the power to change human hearts will come as a matter of course.

Shoghi Effendi will surely pray for your success if you should arise and start to teach. In fact the mere act of arising will win for you God's help and blessings.

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, *The Compilation of Compilations*, vol II, p. 219-20

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

1. Carry out your previously planned fireside. Plan your next fireside.
2. Memorize one or more quotations that you feel would touch the heart of a seeker. Share that quotation with your friend.
3. Research the talks given by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá published in *The Promulgation of World Peace*. Choose one talk that addresses the interests of your friends. Create a short presentation based on the talk given by the Master. Share your outline and at least one short quotation from that talk at the next session of this course. Strive to share these ideas in an natural way with your friend before the next session.
4. Invite a friend to a devotional meeting or children’s class.

Personal Teaching Plan

Complete the Personal Teaching Plan on the next page. Consider including in your plan renewed concentration on developing the spiritual qualities of patience, perseverance, and detachment in the teaching process.

Closing Devotions

Those who desire, please offer your choice of prayers and music to close this session.



A PERSONAL TEACHING PLAN

Whoso openeth his lips in this Day and maketh mention of the name of his Lord, the hosts of Divine inspiration shall descend upon him from the heaven of My name, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. On him shall also descend the Concourse on high, each bearing aloft a chalice of pure light.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Gleanings*, p. 280, section CXXIX

What specific steps can I take this week...?



To take initiative; to seize opportunities; to form friendships; to interact personally with others; to build relationships?

How can I draw upon...?



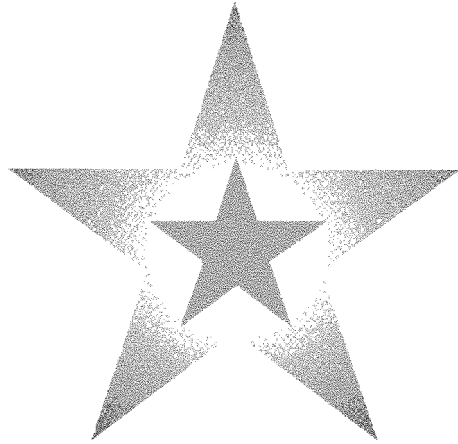
My love for Bahá'u'lláh; the power of the Covenant; the dynamics of prayer; the inspiration and education derived from regular reading and study of the Holy Texts?



The transformative forces that operate upon my soul as I strive to behave in accordance with the divine laws and principles?



In addition, how can I attract the particular blessings promised by Bahá'u'lláh to the one who mentions His name?



*T*hose who are the beloved of God, in whatever place they gather and whomsoever they may meet, must evince, in their attitude towards God, and in the manner of their celebration of His praise and glory, such humility and submissiveness that every atom of the dust beneath their feet may attest the depth of their devotion.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

Every Believer Is a Teacher

COURSE FOUR

Some
Fundamental
Verities of the
Bahá'í Faith

Session 11

Promoting Entry by
Troops

Opening Devotions

Begin your session with heartfelt prayers and music, as well as the following passage:

They who are the beloved of God, in whatever place they gather and whomsoever they may meet, must evince, in their attitude towards God, and in the manner of their celebration of His praise and glory, such humility and submissiveness that every atom of the dust beneath their feet may attest the depth of their devotion.

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

Objectives of the Session

In the group, read aloud the learning objectives for this session.

Knowledge

To become familiar with some of the writings about promoting entry by troops.

Wisdom

To understand the activities that promote entry by troops.

Spiritual Perception

To perceive the importance of the spiritual quality of humility in the teaching process.

Eloquent Speech

To plan the next steps in our teaching work.

To describe the unity of diversity of actions that promote entry by troops.

Consultation on Individual Service and Teaching

- Who hosted a fireside and would like to share the results of that fireside with the group?
- Who surprised a friend or family member with a good deed and would like to share what you did and its result with the group?
- Were you able to participate in a devotional meeting or take a friend to a children's class?

Consultation on Individual Service and Teaching

- Who memorized passages to share with a seeker and would like to share one of those passages with the study circle? How did your friend respond?
- Who researched one ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s talks in *The Promulgation of Universal Peace* and would like to share an outline of a that talk? Were you able to share these ideas with others? How could you share these ideas in the future?
- What are we learning about natural ways to share the divine teachings in our everyday lives? What seem to be effective ways to attract the hears of receptive souls?

Jigsaw Activity *Activities that Promote Entry by Troops*

1. If possible, organize your study circle into four study groups. If the your study circle has fewer than 10 participants and doesn’t allow five teams of two, please distribute the topics so that each small group has different study topics.
2. In your group, please one set of study the quotations on the following pages and answer the focus questions.
3. After allowing time for study, recombine into new groups so that each new group has at least one member from each of the previous study groups.
4. In these new groups, your answers to your previous study group’s focus questions.
5. Then, still in your new group, review the list of all five factors that contribute to growth (Session 8) and the five activities that promote entry by troops (see page 124) and using building materials such as tinker toys, lego blocks, chenille sticks, pipe cleaners, or toothpicks and modeling clay, create a dynamic model of an organic growing system.
6. When all groups have finished building, share your model with the whole group. Enjoy all contributions!



PROMOTING ENTRY BY TROOPS: GROUP ONE

Focus Questions:

How does the strengthening of Spiritual Assemblies promote entry by troops?

1 The second century is destined to witness a tremendous deployment and a notable consolidation of the forces working towards the world-wide development of that Order, as well as the first stirrings of that World Order, of which the present Administrative System is at once the precursor, the nucleus and pattern of an Order which, as it slowly crystallizes and radiated its benign influence over the entire planet, will proclaim at once the coming of age of the whole human race, as well as the maturity of the Faith itself, the progenitor of that Order.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *Messages to America*, p. 96

2 With increasing public attention being focused on the Cause of God, it becomes imperative for Bahá'í institutions to improve their performance . . . so that the communities they guide will reflect a pattern of life that will offer hope to the disillusioned members of society.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *Teaching the Bahá'í Faith*, p. 45

3 Expansion and consolidation are inseparable processes that must go hand in hand. The inter-dependence of these processes is best elucidated in the following passage from the writings of the beloved Guardian: "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. That this community . . . may maintain a proper balance between these two essential aspects of its development . . . is the ardent hope of my heart. . . ." To ensure that the spiritual life of the individual believer is continuously enriched, that local communities are becoming increasingly conscious of their collective duties, and that the institutions of an evolving administration are operating efficiently, is, therefore, as important as expanding into new fields and bringing in the multitudes under the shadow of the Cause.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. 2, p. 65

4 We know the prime needs of the Cause at the moment: a vast expansion of its numbers and financial resources; a greater consolidation of its community life and the authority of its institutions; an observable increase in those characteristics of loving unity, stability of family life, freedom from prejudice and rectitude of conduct which must distinguish the Bahá'ís from the spiritually lost and wayward multitudes around them.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *Teaching the Bahá'í Faith*, p. 37



PROMOTING ENTRY BY TROOPS: GROUP TWO

Focus Questions:

How do strategic, flexible teaching plans promote entry by troops?

1 The paramount goal of the teaching work at the present time is to carry the message of Bahá'u'lláh to every stratum of human society and every walk of life. An eager response to the teachings will often be found in the most unexpected quarters, and any such response should be quickly followed up, for success in a fertile area awakens a response in those who were at first uninterested.

The same presentation of the teachings will not appeal to everybody; the method of expression and the approach must be varied in accordance with the outlook and interests of the hearer. An approach which is designed to appeal to everybody will usually result in attracting the middle section, leaving both extremes untouched. No effort must be spared to ensure that the healing Word of God reaches the rich and the poor, the learned and the illiterate, the old and the young, the devout and the atheist, the dweller in the remote hills and islands, the inhabitants of the teeming cities, the suburban businessman, the labourer in the slums, the nomadic tribesman, the farmer, the university student; all must be brought consciously within the teaching plans of the Bahá'í Community.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *Teaching the Bahá'í Faith*, pp. 32-3

2 We note that the new teaching methods you have developed, in reaching the waiting masses, have substantially influenced the winning of your goals, and we urge the American Bahá'ís, one and all, newly enrolled and believers of long standing, to arise, put their reliance in Bahá'u'lláh and armed with that supreme power, continue unabated their efforts to reach the waiting souls, while simultaneously consolidating the hard-won victories. New methods inevitably bring with them criticism and challenges no matter how successful they may ultimately prove to be. The influx of so many new believers is, in itself, a call to the veteran believers to join the ranks of those in this field of service and to give wholeheartedly of their knowledge and experience. Far from standing aloof, the American believers are called upon now, as never before, to grasp this golden opportunity which has been presented to them, to consult together prayerfully and widen the scope of their endeavours.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *Teaching the Bahá'í Faith*, p. 34

3 Teaching the Faith embraces many diverse activities, all of which are vital to success, and each of which reinforces the other.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *Teaching the Bahá'í Faith*, p. 35

4 A unity in diversity of actions is called for, a condition in which different individuals will concentrate on different activities, appreciating the salutary effect of the aggregate on the growth and development of the Faith, because each person cannot do everything and all persons cannot do the same thing.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *Teaching the Bahá'í Faith*, p. 44



PROMOTING ENTRY BY TROOPS: GROUP THREE

Focus Questions:

How does reaching people of capacity promote entry by troops?

1 Ye should strive to widen the circle of those with whom ye enjoy friendly relations, and to establish the closest contact with those benevolent souls whose only thought is to do good, who are labouring in the cause of universal peace, and who cherish no desire but to witness the unification of the world of humanity. Ye should seek out the company of such people as these, that ye may imbue them with an awareness of the heavenly Kingdom, for albeit their motives are of the finest, yet they do not realize that all the powers of the earth are impotent either to establish universal peace or to promote the oneness of the human world. Nothing short of the power of the Word of God and the breaths of the Holy Spirit can ever succeed.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, The Compilation of Compilations, vol. 2, p. 265

2 He feels that the great point is to confirm people of true capacity and ability—from whatever social stratum they may be -- because the Cause needs now, and will ever-increasingly need, souls of great ability who can bring it before the public at large, administer its ever-growing affairs, and contribute to its advancement in every field.

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, The Compilation of Compilations, vol. 2, p. 71

3 It is really strange how much modern thinkers are, of their own accord, drawing nearer to the teachings of the Faith and voicing views very much like ours. It shows clearly the truth of the saying of the Master that the spirit of the Movement has permeated the hearts of all the people of the world. It is God's hands operating and guiding the nations and intellectual men and leaders of society to a gradual acceptance of His Message revealed through Bahá'u'lláh.

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, The Compilation of Compilations, vol. 2, p. 269

4 Thus far, we have achieved a marvelous diversity in the large numbers of ethnic groups represented in the Faith, and everything should be done to fortify it through larger enrollments from among groups already represented and the attraction of members from groups not yet reached. However, there is another category of diversity which must be built up and without which the Cause will not be able adequately to meet the challenges being thrust upon it. Its membership, regardless of ethnic variety, needs now to embrace increasing numbers of people of capacity, including persons of accomplishment and prominence in the various fields of human endeavour. Enrolling significant numbers of such persons is an indispensable aspect of teaching the masses, an aspect which cannot any longer be neglected and which must be consciously and deliberately incorporated into our teaching work, so as to broaden its base and accelerate the process of entry by troops.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, Teaching the Bahá'í Faith, p. 44



PROMOTING ENTRY BY TROOPS: GROUP FOUR

Focus Questions:

How does relating the Faith the contemporary social and humanitarian issues promote entry by troops?

1 It seems what we need now is a more profound and co-ordinated Bahá'í scholarship in order to attract such men as you are contacting. The world has—at least the thinking world—caught up by now with all the great and universal principles enunciated by Bahá'u'lláh over 70 years ago, and so of course it does not sound 'new' to them. But we know that the deeper teachings, the capacity of His projected World Order to re-create society, are new and dynamic. It is these we must learn to present intelligently and enticingly to such men!

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, *Teaching the Bahá'í Faith*, p. 75

2 And now as I look into the future, I hope to see the friends at all times, in every land, and of every shade of thought and character, voluntarily and joyously rallying round their local and in particular their national centres of activity, upholding and promoting their interests with complete unanimity and contentment, with perfect understanding, genuine enthusiasm, and sustained vigour. This indeed is the one joy and yearning of my life, for it is the fountain-head from which all future blessings will flow, the broad foundation upon which the security of the Divine Edifice must ultimately rest. May we not hope that now at last the dawn of a brighter day is breaking upon our beloved Cause?

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *Bahá'í Administration*, p. 67

3 We are told by Shoghi Effendi that two great processes are at work in the world: the great Plan of God, tumultuous in its process, working through mankind as a whole, tearing down barriers to world unity and forging humankind into a unified body in the fires of suffering and experience. This process will produce, in God's due time, the Lesser Peace, the political unification of the world. Mankind at that time can be likened to a body that is unified but without life. The second process, the task of breathing like into this unified body—of creating true unity and spiritually culminating in the Most Great Peace—is that of the Bahá'ís, who are labouring consciously, with detailed instructions and continuing divine guidance, to erect the fabric of the kingdom of God on earth, into which they call their fellow-men, thus conferring upon them eternal life.

The working out of God's Major Plan proceeds mysteriously in ways directed by Him alone, but the Minor Plan that He has given us to execute, as our part in His grand design for the redemption of mankind, is clearly delineated. It is to this work that we must devote all our energies, for there is no one else to do it.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *Teaching the Bahá'í Faith*, p. 33



PROMOTING ENTRY BY TROOPS

Factors Contributing to Growth

- Commitment to Spiritual Transformation
- Love and Unity
- Universal Participation
- Balance between Expansion and Consolidation
- Bahá'í Community as a Model

Activities that Promote Entry by Troops

- Strengthening of Spiritual Assemblies
- Efficient Administration and Prompt Consolidation
- Strategic, Flexible Teaching Plans
- Reaching People of Capacity
- Relating the Faith to Contemporary Social Issues
- Goal-Directed Behavior

1. In your study circle, play beautiful background music while one of the participants reads aloud the following quotation at least twice. Reflect on the meaning of the words.

They who are the beloved of God, in whatever place they gather and whomsoever they may meet, must evince, in their attitude towards God, and in the manner of their celebration of His praise and glory, such humility and submissiveness that every atom of the dust beneath their feet may attest the depth of their devotion. The conversation carried by these holy souls should be informed with such power that these same atoms of dust will be thrilled by its influence. They should conduct themselves in such manner that the earth upon which they tread may never be allowed to address to them such words as these: “I am to be preferred above you. For witness, how patient I am in bearing the burden which the husbandman layeth upon me. I am the instrument that continually imparteth unto all beings the blessings with which He Who is the Source of all grace hath entrusted me. Notwithstanding the honor conferred upon me, and the unnumbered evidences of my wealth—a wealth that supplieth the needs of all creation—behold the measure of my humility, witness with what absolute submissiveness I allow myself to be trodden beneath the feet of men. . . .”

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, Gleanings from the Writings of Babá'u'lláh, pp. 7-8, V

2. Then, individually read the quotation again, this time underlining key words and phrases.
3. Using the key words or phrases, arrange them in the form of a poem. You may add additional short words if necessary to complete your short verse. As time permits, copy your poem onto clean paper. If desired, you may add simple geometric designs to beautify your work or create a border to frame your poem, using the art materials provided.
4. Share your work with the study circle if you like.
5. Place this poem where you will see it regularly as a reminder of the importance of humility in spreading the Word of God.

Individual Acts of Teaching, Service, and Study

Choose one or more of these activities to complete before the next session.

1. Plan and host a fireside or devotional gathering. Invite some new friends. Continue to follow-up with friends you are currently teaching.
2. Memorize one or more quotations that you feel would touch the heart of a seeker. Share that quotation with your friend.
3. Research one or more of the spiritual qualities of patience, perseverance, detachment, humility, or love in the Bahá'í writings. Prepare a 2-minute presentation to share with the study circle at our next session.
4. Invite a friend to a Bahá'í children's class. Can you provide a service to the children's class? Can you find another way to reach out and encourage the children and junior youth in your community?

Personal Teaching Plan

Complete the Personal Teaching Plan on the next page, perhaps while listening to beautiful background music.

Closing Devotions

Those who desire, please offer your choice of prayers and music to close this session.



A PERSONAL TEACHING PLAN

Whoso openeth his lips in this Day and maketh mention of the name of his Lord, the hosts of Divine inspiration shall descend upon him from the heaven of My name, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. On him shall also descend the Concourse on high, each bearing aloft a chalice of pure light.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Gleanings*, p. 280, section CXXIX

What specific steps can I take this week...?



To take initiative; to seize opportunities; to form friendships; to interact personally with others; to build relationships?

How can I draw upon...?



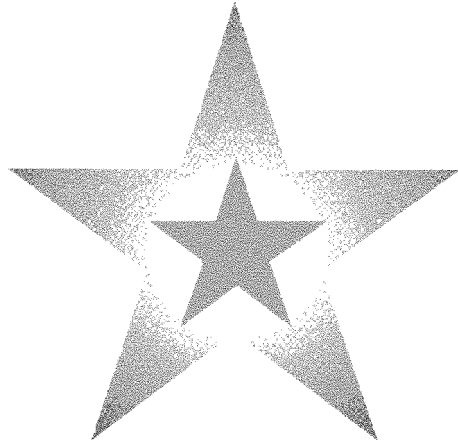
My love for Bahá'u'lláh; the power of the Covenant; the dynamics of prayer; the inspiration and education derived from regular reading and study of the Holy Texts?



The transformative forces that operate upon my soul as I strive to behave in accordance with the divine laws and principles?



In addition, how can I attract the particular blessings promised by Bahá'u'lláh to the one who mentions His name?



*T*his day a door is open wider than heaven and earth.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

Every Believer Is a Teacher

COURSE FOUR

Some
Fundamental
Verities of the
Bahá'í Faith

Session 12

A Door to Entry by
Troops

Opening Devotions

Consider including the following quotation along with your opening prayers:

This Day a door is open wider than both heaven and earth. The eye of the mercy of Him Who is the Desire of the worlds is turned towards all men. An act, however infinitesimal, is, when viewed in the mirror of the knowledge of God, mightier than a mountain. Every drop proffered in His path is as the sea in that mirror. For this is the Day which the one true God, glorified be He, hath announced in all His Books, unto His Prophets and His Messengers.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, quoted by Shoghi Effendi, *Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 78

O ye beloved of the Lord! This day is the day of union, the day of the ingathering of all mankind. 'Verily God loveth those who, as though they were a solid wall, do battle for His Cause in serried lines!' Note that He saith 'in serried lines'—meaning crowded and pressed together, one locked to the next, each supporting his fellows.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 260, # 207

Objectives of the Session

In the group, read aloud the learning objectives for this session.

Knowledge

To know the actions that promote systematic patterns of growth.

Wisdom

To understand the importance of collaboration and mutual support in the teaching work.

Spiritual Perception

To visualize our role in the growth of the Bahá'í Community.

Eloquent Speech

To consult on ways to sustain and initiate systematic patterns of growth.

To plan steps for sustained and systematic lines of individual and group action.

Consultation on Individual Service and Teaching

- Who was able to host a fireside or devotional meeting? How did your friends respond? What do you see as your next steps?
- Who memorized quotations that would touch the heart of a seeker? What was the result of sharing that quotation with your friends?
- Who was able to show encouragement to a child or junior youth in a children's class or another setting?

Consultation on Individual Study

- Who researched one of the spiritual qualities of a Bahá'í teacher? What did you learn?

Activity

A Door to Entry by Troops

1. Read aloud the following quotations. Then discuss:

What steps can we take to continuously meet new people, build friendships with receptive souls, and demonstrate through our words and deeds our solidarity with our fellow human beings?

This Day a door is open wider than both heaven and earth. The eye of the mercy of Him Who is the Desire of the worlds is turned towards all men.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, quoted by Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 78

Beyond opening the doors of the Bahá'í community to the outside world, the believers are also exerting themselves to reach out. Bahá'ís are striving to expand their social circles and ultimately their friendships, as friendship is the surest foundation for touching the hearts. To pursue these aims, individuals have begun to examine their priorities, including the services they are rendering the Faith, and to reorder their lives so as to allow themselves more time for interaction with their relatives, friends, and coworkers. Ultimately, what is the point of striving to become more effective teachers if we are not meeting people to teach?

Having an “outward-looking orientation” also suggests that it is important for Bahá'ís to understand more deeply the forces operating on the world stage and the solutions offered by the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh. Our task is to convey to seekers that we are all living in the same world, facing common trials, and striving to fulfill similar, long-held aspirations for the human race. Our expressions of solidarity with our fellow human beings must be sincerely voiced and genuinely felt.

INTERNATIONAL TEACHING CENTRE, *Building Momentum*, pp. 41-2

2. Consider listing all the avenues that you currently have for meeting new people. What could you add? Could you offer service to a like minded-organization? Enroll in or audit a class at your local community college or university? Simply walk next door to meet your neighbors?
3. Please share your ideas with your study circle. Would you like to add one of these ideas to your Personal Teaching Plan?
4. Create another list of your friends, relatives, neighbors, and coworkers. What steps have you already taken to strengthen your friendships with these souls? What ideas do you have for your next steps? Would you like to add one of these ideas to your Personal Teaching Plan?

Activity
A Systematic Pattern of Growth

Prepare in advance a large chart like the attached “A Framework for Projects” on page 136. Several sheets of chart paper may be necessary to create a chart large enough that all participants will be able to see it during the whole group consultation period of this activity. (The chart on page 136 may also be enlarged at a photocopy store.)

1. Read aloud the following quotations entitled, “A Systematic Pattern of Growth.” Discuss the focus questions.
2. Turn to the chart, “A Framework for Projects.” Take notes on your individual form while the whole group:
 - lists the actions already taking place in your cluster,
 - adds lines of action that individuals or the study circle can initiate or sustain,
 - indicates ideas that could be taken to a cluster meeting or offered to an Institution.
3. Following this whole-group consultation, record any new commitments on your Personal Teaching Plan. Please remember that small actions really achieved are a greater contribution to the world of humanity than large ideas that simply remain as hopes.
4. Decide who will share these lines of action at an upcoming cluster meeting and refer any ideas that require institutional involvement to the appropriate institution.



A SYSTEMATIC PATTERN OF GROWTH

Focus Questions:

What is the role of devotional meetings, children's classes, firesides, youth activities, and study circles in the process of growth? What evidence do we see in our community of an outward-looking orientation? How have we seen our services increase as we have progressed through our sequence of courses? What are some examples of increased momentum in the growth process in our own community?

1 The lines of action you have so clearly delineated for advancing the process of entry by troops make for a welcome integration of effort at all levels of the community. The teaching work, largely stimulated by the increasingly effective media campaign, driven by individual and collective activity, and fortified by the consolidation work involving the institute process and its study circles, as well as the devotional meetings, children's classes and youth programs that are multiplying—all these constitute key elements which operating within the framework of clusters, can and will guarantee a systematic pattern of growth.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE to the United States Bahá'í community, 26 April, 2002

2 In most clusters, movement from one stage of growth to the next is being defined in terms of multiplication of study circles, devotional meetings and children's classes, and the expansion they engender. Devotional meetings begin to flourish as consciousness of the spiritual dimension of human existence is raised among the believers in an area through institute courses. Children's classes, too, are a natural outgrowth of the training received early in the study of the main sequence. As both activities are made open to the wider community through a variety of well-conceived and imaginative means, they attract a growing number of seekers, who, more often than not, are eager to attend firesides and join study circles. Many go on subsequently to declare their faith in Bahá'u'lláh and, from the outset, view their role in the community as that of active participants in a dynamic process of growth. Individual and collective exertions in the teaching field intensify correspondingly, further fuelling the process. Established communities are revitalized, and newly formed ones soon gain the privilege of electing their Local Spiritual Assemblies.

The coherence thus achieved through the establishment of study circles, devotional meetings and children's classes provides the initial impulse for growth in a cluster, an impulse that gathers strength as these core activities multiply in number. Campaigns that help a sizeable group of believers advance far enough in the main sequence of courses to perform the necessary acts of service lend impetus to this multiplication of activity.

It is evident, then, that a systematic approach to training has created a way for Bahá'ís to reach out to the surrounding society, share Bahá'u'lláh's message with friends, family, neighbors and co-workers, and expose them to the richness of His teachings. This outward-looking orientation is one of the finest fruits of the grassroots learning taking place. The pattern of activity that is being established in clusters around the globe constitutes a

proven means of accelerating expansion and consolidation. Yet this is only a beginning.

In many parts of the world, bringing large numbers into the ranks of Bahá'u'lláh's followers has traditionally not been a formidable task. It is therefore encouraging to see that, in some of the more developed clusters, carefully designed projects are being added to the existing pattern of growth to reach receptive populations and lift the rate of expansion to a higher level. Such projects accelerate the tempo of teaching, already on the rise through the efforts of individuals. And, where large-scale enrolment is beginning to result, provision is being made to ensure that a certain percentage of the new believers immediately enter the institute program, for, as we have emphasized in several messages, these friends will be called upon to serve the needs of an ever-growing Bahá'í population. They help deepen the generality of the Bahá'ís by visiting them regularly; they teach children, arrange devotional meetings and form study circles, making it possible to sustain expansion.

All of this opens thrilling opportunities for Local Spiritual Assemblies. Theirs is the challenge, in collaboration with the Auxiliary Board members who counsel and assist them, to utilize the energies and talents of the swelling human resources available in their respective areas of jurisdiction both to create a vibrant community life and to begin influencing the society around them. In localities where Spiritual Assemblies do not exist or are not yet functioning at the necessary level, a step-by-step approach to the development of communities and Local Spiritual Assemblies is showing excellent promise.

It is especially gratifying to note the high degree of participation of believers in the various aspects of the growth process. In cluster after cluster, the number of those shouldering the responsibilities of expansion and consolidation is steadily increasing. Meetings of consultation held at the cluster level serve to raise awareness of possibilities and generate enthusiasm. Here, free from the demands of formal decision-making, participants reflect on experience gained, share insights, explore approaches and acquire a better understanding of how each can contribute to achieving the aim of the Plan. In many cases, such interaction leads by consensus on a set of short-term goals, both individual and collective. Learning in action is becoming the outstanding feature of the emerging mode of operation.

Let there be no doubt that what we are witnessing is the gathering momentum of that process of the entry of humanity into the Cause by troops, foreshadowed by Bahá'u'lláh's Tablet to the King of Persia, eagerly anticipated by the Master, and described by the Guardian as the necessary prelude to mass conversion. In the vanguard of the process are those clusters which, although still relatively few in number, are now ready to launch intensive programs of growth. The scale of expansion that is to mark the next stage of growth in these clusters calls for an intensity of effort yet to be achieved. May the prodigious output of energy devoted to this mighty undertaking be reinforced by the power of Divine assistance.

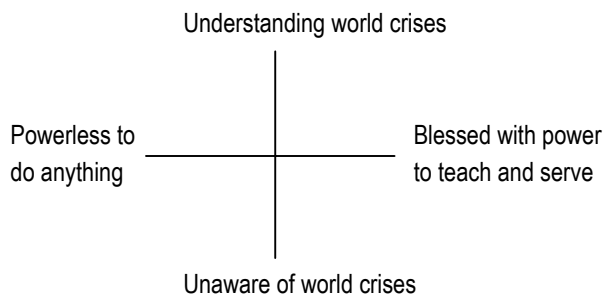
THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, January 17, 2003

A Framework for Projects

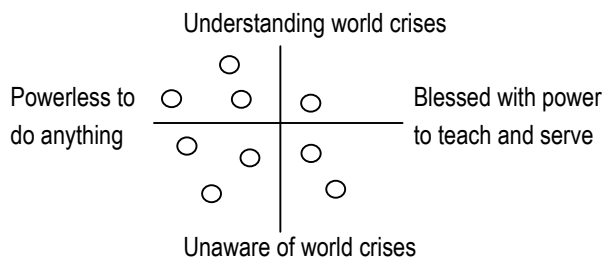
“This Day a door is open wider than both heaven and earth.” BAHÁ’U’LLÁH

	Lines of Action Currently in Place	Individual Initiative or Study Circle	Take Ideas to Cluster Meeting	Offer Ideas to Local Spiritual Assemblies, Regional Training Institutes, or Auxiliary Board Member
Study Circles Open to All				
Children’s Classes Open to All				
Devotional Meetings Open to All				
Firesides				
Youth Activities to Teach and Serve				
Media Campaign and other Proclamation				
Specialized Training Programs to Build Patterns of Bahá’í Community Life				
Focused Outreach to Friends, Relatives, Neighbors, Co-workers				

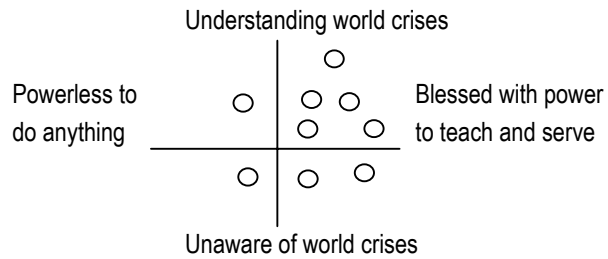
1. Prepare four signs on poster paper labeled:
 1. *God's Major Plan: Understanding World Crises*
 2. *God's Major Plan: Unaware of (or frightened by) World Crises*
 3. *My Part in God's Minor Plan: Blessed with Divine Power to Teach and Serve*
 4. *My Part in God's Minor Plan: Powerless to Do Anything*
2. Place signs 1 and 2 on walls on opposite sides of the room, for example, the north and south walls. Place signs 3 and 4 on walls on the other set of opposite sides of the room, for example, the east and west walls. If you are meeting outdoors, place the signs as desired to indicate four directions.
3. Consider the space where we are meeting as a very large grid that can indicate our growth and transformation over time, both in the way we see the world and in the way we see ourselves as powerful agents of change in the world.
4. Looking from the air, the meeting space could be seen as divided into four quadrants as illustrated below:



5. Think of yourself 10 years ago. Now stand on the north/south axis of the room marking your level of understanding of God's Major Plan; then move to the place in the room that would indicate how able you felt to serve the Cause of God. In this way, participants will stand in varying quadrants of the room, perhaps something like this:



6. Next, think of yourself today. Move to the place in the room that shows your level of understanding and your level of confidence in your power to serve today.



Discuss the questions:

- Have you moved?
- What has changed for you?
- What sacrifices have you made to change your position?
- How does the power of divine assistance help us move?
- How does teaching the Cause of God change where we stand?

Activity *Serried Lines*

1. While still standing, form yourselves into serried lines. In serried lines, not only are the friends crowded and pressed together, but the lines form so that in the second line, the heads of the friends look over the shoulders of the friends in the first line, and so on. In your group, experience how strong you are together:

Can you learn to step forward together?

While in serried lines, what happens if one of the friends starts to stumble or fall? Can you support each other?

2. Read aloud the quotation on the following page.

Then discuss: What are some practical ways that we can support each other in our teaching work?



O ye beloved of the Lord! This day is the day of union, the day of the ingathering of all mankind. 'Verily God loveth those who, as though they were a solid wall, do battle for His Cause in serried lines!' Note that He saith 'in serried lines'—meaning crowded and pressed together, one locked to the next, each supporting his fellows. To do battle, as stated in the sacred verse, doth not, in this greatest of all dispensations, mean to go forth with sword and spear, with lance and piercing arrow—but rather weaponed with pure intent, with righteous motives, with counsels helpful and effective, with godly attributes, with deeds pleasing to the Almighty, with the qualities of heaven. It signifieth education for all mankind, guidance for all men, the spreading far and wide of the sweet savours of the spirit, the promulgation of God's proofs, the setting forth of arguments conclusive and divine, the doing of charitable deeds.

Whensoever holy souls, drawing on the powers of heaven, shall arise with such qualities of the spirit, and march in unison, rank on rank, every one of those souls will be even as one thousand, and the surging waves of that mighty ocean will be even as the battalions of the Concourse on high. What a blessing that will be—when all shall come together, even as once separate torrents, rivers and streams, running brooks and single drops, when collected together in one place will form a mighty sea. And to such a degree will the inherent unity of all prevail, that the traditions, rules, customs and distinctions in the fanciful life of these populations will be effaced and vanish away like isolated drops, once the great sea of oneness doth leap and surge and roll.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, pp. 260-1, #207

Personal Teaching Plan

1. Play quiet music while completing your Personal Teaching Plan on the next page.
2. As you complete your plan please consider the following questions:
What lines of action will you continue?
What lines of action will you initiate?
What can you do to support the actions of others?
3. Consider continuing with Course 5 of the Fundamental Verities Sequence of Courses, to sustain the momentum of study, reflection and action within the context of a supportive teaching group.

Evaluation and Conclusion

Remember to complete your evaluation form and conclude your study circle with the devotional program suggested on the subsequent page.



A PERSONAL TEACHING PLAN

Whoso openeth his lips in this Day and maketh mention of the name of his Lord, the hosts of Divine inspiration shall descend upon him from the heaven of My name, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. On him shall also descend the Concourse on high, each bearing aloft a chalice of pure light.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Gleanings*, p. 280, section CXXIX

What specific steps can I take this week...?



To take initiative; to seize opportunities; to form friendships; to interact personally with others; to build relationships?

How can I draw upon...?



My love for Bahá'u'lláh; the power of the Covenant; the dynamics of prayer; the inspiration and education derived from regular reading and study of the Holy Texts?



The transformative forces that operate upon my soul as I strive to behave in accordance with the divine laws and principles?



In addition, how can I attract the particular blessings promised by Bahá'u'lláh to the one who mentions His name?

Closing Devotions

In addition to prayers for teaching, prayers for seekers, and much group singing, include the following passages as you conclude this course.

Nor shall the seeker reach his goal unless he sacrifice all things.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

Until a being setteth his foot in the plane of sacrifice, he is bereft of every favour and grace; and this plane of sacrifice is the realm of dying to the self, that the radiance of the living God may then shine forth. . . .

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ

Through . . . sacrifice nearness to God is made possible.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ

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

O Lord! Should the breath of the Holy Spirit confirm the weakest of creatures, he would attain all to which he aspireth and would possess anything he desireth. Indeed, Thou hast assisted Thy servants in the past and, though they were the weakest of Thy creatures, the lowliest of Thy servants and the most insignificant of those who lived upon the earth, through Thy sanction and potency they took precedence over the most glorious of Thy people and the most noble of mankind. Whereas formerly they were as moths, they became as royal falcons, and whereas before they were as brooks, they became as seas, through Thy bestowal and Thy mercy. They became, through Thy most great favor, stars shining on the horizon of guidance, birds singing in the rose gardens of immortality, lions roaring in the forests of knowledge and wisdom, and whales swimming in the oceans of life.

Verily, Thou art the Clement, the Powerful, the Mighty, and the Most Merciful of the merciful.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, p. 106

O Thou Incomparable God! O Thou Lord of the Kingdom! These souls are Thy heavenly army. Assist them and, with the cohorts of the Supreme Concourse, make them victorious, so that each one of them may become like unto a regiment and conquer these countries through the love of God and the illumination of divine teachings.

O God! Be Thou their supporter and their helper, and in the wilderness, the mountain, the valley, the forests, the prairies and the seas, be Thou their confidant—so that they may cry out through the power of the Kingdom and the breath of the Holy Spirit.

Verily, Thou art the Powerful, the Mighty and the Omnipotent, and Thou art the Wise, the Hearing and the Seeing.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, p. 35

Fundamental Verities Course—Course Four Every Believer Is a Teacher

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 10 |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Session 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> Session 5 | <input type="checkbox"/> Session 8 | <input type="checkbox"/> Session 11 |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Session 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> Session 6 | <input type="checkbox"/> Session 9 | <input type="checkbox"/> Session 12 |

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?

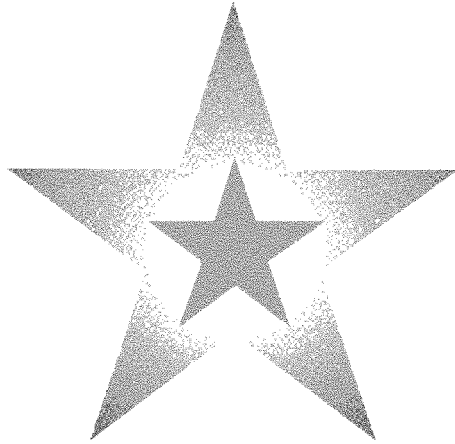
(Check one of the boxes for each question.)

	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.



Facilitation Guidelines
Suggestions for Facilitators
Lists of Materials

Every Believer Is a Teacher

COURSE FOUR

Some
Fundamental
Verities of the
Bahá'í Faith

Appendix

Facilitation Guidelines

If you would like to arrange a course, *The Art of Facilitation*, to train friends to effectively serve as facilitators in the Fundamental Verities Sequence of Courses, please contact the National Teacher Training Center by phone at 810-653-5033, or email: NTTC@usbnc.org. Courses may be offered 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.

Consultation About Individual Acts of Teaching, Study, and Service

Allow time for this important consultation period. It is very important for the friends to receive the support of the group for their efforts, however small, to build friendships and to teach the Faith. This time must be kept short enough that the material for each session can be studied in the group and long enough to reinforce the teaching and service engendered by the course.



SUGGESTIONS FOR FACILITATORS

Session 1

LOVE'S FLAME

Suggested Schedule of Activities

Devotions	10 minutes
Objectives of the Session	5 minutes
Love's Flame	50 minutes
Individual Acts of Study, Service, and Teaching	5 minutes
Personal Teaching Plan	10 minutes
Closing Devotions	5 minutes

Materials Needed

- Prayer books
- Music, recorded or sung
- Candles: one small for each participant and two for facilitator
- Picture of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Preparation Needed

Prepare the environment in advance to create an appropriately spiritual atmosphere for this session.

Suggestions for Music

- "Shine Your Light on Me," *We Have Come to Sing Praises*, Bahá'í Gospel Choir
- "Ye Are the Stars," *Bird*, Susan Lewis Wright
- "We Can Move the World," "The Generation of Light," *Fruits of the Spirit*, various artists
- "Proclaim the Greatest Name," *Lift Up Your Voices and Sing, vol. 2*, Tom Price with various artists

Session 2

THE POWER OF UTTERANCE

Suggested Schedule of Activities

Devotions	10 minutes
Objectives	5 minutes
Consultation on Individual Service and Teaching	5 minutes
The Power of Utterance	30 minutes
Sharing the Word of God	30 minutes
Individual Acts of Teaching, Service, and Study	5 minutes
Personal Teaching Plan	5 minutes
Closing Devotions	5 minutes

Materials Needed

- Prayer books
- Music, recorded or sung
- Bahá'í books and resource materials such as *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh Revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, *Selections from the Writings of "Abdu'l-Bahá, Some Answered Questions*, as well as *The Promise of World Peace*, the statement *Bahá'u'lláh*, *The Bahá'ís* magazine, and other materials as desired.
- Drawing paper
- Markers and other art supplies
- Poster paper (or newsprint)

Suggestions for Music

- "Proclaim the Greatest Name," *Lift Up Your Voices and Sing*, vol. 2, Tom Price with various artists
- "Armed with the Power of Thy Name," "God is Sufficient," *Prayers*, Sandy Simmons
- "Guide Ye the People," "Ocean of My Words," *Love All the World*, Tim Urbonya
- "Glad Tidings," *Desire of the Heart*, Narges

Session 3

BLAZONING THE NAME OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

Suggested Schedule of Activities

Devotions	10 minutes
Objectives	5 minutes
Consultation on Individual Teaching, Service, Study	15 minutes
Blazoning the Name of Bahá'u'lláh	40 minutes
Memorization	10 minutes
Individual Acts of Study, Service, and Teaching	5 minutes
Closing Devotions	5 minutes

Materials Needed

- Prayer books
- Music, recorded or sung
- Additional reference materials such as the statement *Bahá'u'lláh* prepared by the Bahá'í International Community at the request of the Universal House of Justice, books such as *God Passes By* by Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá'u'lláh: The King of Glory* by Balyuzi, *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era* by Esslemont, the magazine *The Bahá'ís*

Preparation Needed

Become familiar with the account of J.E. Esslemont meeting Bahá'u'lláh, pp. 22-3, prior to the session. Consider applying your storytelling skills or those of another participant when relating this story.

Suggestions for Music

- “We Have Come to Sing Praises,” “In this Day Bahá'u'lláh,” “Shine Your Light on Me,” *We Have Come to Sing Praises*, Bahá'í Gospel Choir
- “Armed with the Power of Thy Name,” *Prayers*, Sandy Simmons
- “O Bahá'u'lláh,” “In this Day Bahá'u'lláh,” *Music of the Bahá'í World Congress*
- “Minaret of Love,” *City of Love*, Minarets of the West
- “The Royal Falcon,” *The Royal Falcon*, Paul Parrish
- “Garden of Ridvan,” *Lote Tree*, Sears, William with various artists
- “This is Faith,” *This is Faith*, Lucy Shropshire

Session 4

A CONTEMPORARY FAITH

Suggested Schedule of Activities

Devotions	10 minutes
Objectives	5 minutes
Consultation on Individual Study, Service, Teaching	10 minutes
Relating the Faith to Contemporary Social and Humanitarian Issues	60 minutes
Personal Teaching Plan	5 minutes
Individual Acts of Study, Service, and Teaching	5 minutes
Closing Devotions	5 minutes

Materials Needed

- Prayer books
- Music, recorded or sung
- Chart paper (or any large paper) and markers

Suggestions for Music

- “In this Day Bahá’u’lláh,” *We Have Come to Sing Praises*, Bahá’í Gospel Choir
- “Unity,” “Turn this World Around,” *Bird*, Susan Lewis Wright
- “Teaching Peace,” “Listen,” *Teaching Peace*, Red Grammer
- “Call of the Peace Warrior,” *Fruits of the Spirit*, various artists
- “The Prince of Peace,” “God Is One,” *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
- “In This Day Bahá’u’lláh,” *Music of the Bahá’í World Congress*
- “One Planet, One People, Please,” *Lote Tree*, William Sears and various artists
- “Let It Be this Generation,” “Unity House,” “New World Comin’,” *Encore*, Jack Lenz with various artists
- “Waves of One Sea,” “Love all the World,” *Love All the World*, Tim Urbonya

Session 5

HUMAN HAPPINESS

Suggested Schedule of Activities

Devotions	10 minutes
Objectives	5 minutes
Consultation on Individual Service and Teaching	5 minutes
Consultation on Individual Study	5 minutes
Human Happiness and Spiritual Discipline	40 minutes
Establishing a Loving Environment	20 minutes
Personal Teaching Plan	5 minutes
Individual Acts of Study, Service, and Teaching	5 minutes
Closing Devotions	5 minutes

Materials Needed

- Prayer books
- Music, recorded or sung
- Chart paper and markers (or any large paper)
- Video, if available, for use as an introduction: Bahá'í Newsreel, Aug. 1992, or video of the program of the Official Opening of the Terraces on Mt. Carmel in 2001, or any Newsreel or other excerpt showing some aspect of the Commemoration of the 100th Anniversary of the Ascension of Bahá'u'lláh in 1992 in the Holy Land.

Suggestions for Music

- “Make Thy Beauty,” “Refresh and Gladden,” *Fruits of the Spirit*, various artists
- “Create in Me a Pure Heart,” *Bird*, Susan Lewis Wright
- “Digging for Diamonds,” “Shining Eyes,” *Hello World*, Red Grammer
- “I Think You’re Wonderful,” “See Me Beautiful,” *Teaching Peace*, Red Grammer
- “Refresh and Gladden My Spirit,” *Prayers*, Sandy Simmons

Session 6

THE POWER OF DIVINE ASSISTANCE

Suggested Schedule of Activities

Devotions	10 minutes
Objectives	5 minutes
Consultation on Individual Service and Teaching	5 minutes
Consultation on Individual Study	5 minutes
Teaching Methods	30 minutes
The Power of Divine Assistance	30 minutes
Individual Acts of Study, Service, and Teaching	5 minutes
Closing Devotions	5 minutes

Materials Needed

- Prayer books
- Music, recorded or sung
- Parchment-type paper or cardstock
- Pictures cut from magazines
- Various art supplies (markers, glue, etc.)

Suggestions for Music

- “The Báb,” *Lote Tree*, William Sears with various artists
- “O Bahá’u’lláh,” “Ya Bahá’u’l-Abhá, Ya All’u’l-Alá,” *Music of the Bahá’í World Congress*
- “Ay Yad-I-Toh,” “Benediction,” *Lift Up Your Voices and Sing, vol. 1*, various artists
- “O Bahá’u’lláh,” “Blessed is the Spot,” *Lift Up Your Voices and Sing, vol. 2*, various artists
- “Allah’u’Abha,” *Narges*, Narges
- “Meditation,” “Bird,” *Bird*, Susan Lewis Wright

Session 7

THE FIRESIDE

Suggested Schedule of Activities

Devotions	10 minutes
Objectives	5 minutes
Consultation on Individual Service and Teaching	5 minutes
Consultation on Individual Study	5 minutes
The Fireside Story	10 minutes
Planning the Fireside	45 minutes
Personal Teaching Plan	5 minutes
Individual Acts of Study, Service, and Teaching	5 minutes
Closing Devotions	

Materials Needed

- Prayer books
- Music, recorded or sung
- Poster paper and markers

Preparation Needed

Become familiar with the story about the Báb's meeting with Mulla Husayn, pp. 72-4, prior to the session. Consider applying your storytelling skills or those of another participant when relating this story.

Suggestions for Music

- "I'm So Glad," "If We Ever Needed Love," "Shine Your Light on Me," *We Have Come to Sing Praises*, Bahá'í Gospel Choir
- "Refresh and Gladden," "Love is the Secret," "Kam Kam Ruz Beh Ruz," *Fruits of the Spirit*, various artists
- "Look at Me, Follow Me," "God Is One," *Lift Up Your Voices and Sing, vol. 1*, various artists
- "Bahá'u'lláh's Getting Us Ready for that Great Day," "Proclaim the Greatest Name," "Would You Give Your Life," "We Will Have One World," "World Citizens," *Lift Up Your Voices and Sing, vol. 2*, various artists

Session 8

CONTRIBUTING TO GROWTH

Suggested Schedule of Activities

Devotions	10 minutes
Objectives	5 minutes
Consultation on Individual Service and Teaching	5 minutes
Consultation on Individual Study	5 minutes
Factors Contributing to Growth	50 minutes
Personal Teaching Plan	5 minutes
Individual Acts of Study, Service, and Teaching	5 minutes
Closing Devotions	5 minutes

Materials Needed

- Prayer books
- Music, recorded or sung
- Poster paper
- Pictures of people and nature cut from magazines
- Other art supplies (markers, glue, etc.)

Preparation Needed

Become familiar with the story about Louis Gregory's fireside, p. 84, prior to the session. Consider applying your storytelling skills or those of another participant when relating this story.

Suggestions for Music

- "Love is the Secret," "Kam Kam Ruz Beh Ruz," *Fruits of the Spirit*, various artists
- "Create in Me a Pure Heart," "Unity," "Turn this World Around," *Bird*, Susan Lewis Wright
- "Look at Me, Follow Me," "God Is One," *Lift Up Your Voices and Sing, vol. 1*, various artists
- "Bahá'u'lláh's Getting Us Ready for that Great Day," "Proclaim the Greatest Name," "Would You Give Your Life," "We Will Have One World," "World Citizens," *Lift Up Your Voices and Sing, vol. 2*, various artists
- "We Are One," "Advance Guards," *Lift Up Your Voices and Sing, vol. 3*, various artists
- "Minaret of Love," "City of Love," "Workin' on a Building," "House of Heaven," *City of Love, Minarets of the West*

Session 9

INVITING RECEPTIVE SOULS

Suggested Schedule of Activities

Devotions	10 minutes
Objectives	5 minutes
Consultation on Individual Service and Teaching	5 minutes
Consultation on Individual Study	5 minutes
The Banquet of Divine Bounty	20 minutes
Joining the Bahá'í Faith	40 minutes
Assign Extended After-Class Activities	5 minutes
Closing Devotions	5 minutes

Materials Needed

- Prayer books
- Music, recorded or sung

Suggestions for Music

- “Have You Heard of Bahá'u'lláh,” “God Is One,” “The Prince of Peace,” *Lift Up Your Voices and Sing, vol. 1*, various artists
- “Proclaim the Greatest Name,” “We Will Have One World,” *Lift Up Your Voices and Sing, vol. 2*, various artists
- “We Are One,” “Bahá'u'lláh,” “Oh Bahá'u'lláh,” *Lift Up Your Voices and Sing, vol. 3*, various artists
- “Remover of Difficulties,” “Tests and Difficulties,” “Search,” *Search, Seaforth & Jenkins*

Session 10

NURTURING NEW BELIEVERS

Suggested Schedule of Activities

Devotions	10 minutes
Objectives	5 minutes
Consultation on Individual Service and Teaching	5 minutes
Consultation on Individual Study	5 minutes
Nurturing New Believers	25 minutes
Overcoming Barriers to Enrollment	25 minutes
Patience, Perseverance, and Detachment	15 minutes
Closing Devotions	5 minutes

Materials Needed

- Prayer books
- Music, recorded or sung

Suggestions for Music

- “Unity in Diversity,” *The Gift*, Gordi Munro
- “Queen of Carmel,” “Prayer for the Hands of the Cause,” *Music of the Babá’i World Congress*
- “New Century,” “Search,” *Search*, Seaforth & Jenkins
- “To the Planters of Trees,” “Let It Be this Generation,” “New World Comin’,” *Encore*, Jack Lenz with various artists
- “Shoghi Effendi,” *Lote Tree*, William Sears with various artists
- “Workin’ on a Building,” “House of Heaven,” *City of Love*, Minarets of the West
- “We Are Building the Kingdom of God,” *To the Glory of God*, Eric Dozier

Session 11

PROMOTING ENTRY BY TROOPS

Suggested Schedule of Activities

Devotions	10 minutes
Objectives	5 minutes
Consultation on Individual Service and Teaching	5 minutes
Consultation on Individual Study	5 minutes
Activities that Promote Entry by Troops	50 minutes
The Dust Beneath Our Feet	20 minutes
Personal Teaching Plan	5 minutes
Closing Devotions	5 minutes

Materials Needed

- Prayer books
- Music, recorded or sung
- Drawing paper
- Markers and other art supplies
- Any materials that can be used to make models. Some might include:
 - tinker toys
 - lego blocks
 - toothpicks and modeling clay or playdough

Suggestions for Music

- “Let Us be About Our Father’s Business,” *Special Times*, Susan Engle and Jean White
- “A Sacrifice to Thee,” *A Sacrifice to Thee*, Matthew Levine
- “This is Faith,” “Kam Kam Ruz Beh Ruz,” “Paradise of the Placeless,” “Make Thy Beauty,” “Keep Holding On,” “Baha’u’llah Wam,” *Fruits of the Spirit*, various artists
- “Ghol-Allah-o-Yakfi...God Is Sufficient unto Me,” *Music of the Bahá’í World Congress*
- “Whither Can a Lover Go,” *Bird*, Susan Lewis Wright
- “Would You Give Your Life to Bahá’u’lláh,” *Lift Up Your Voices and Sing, vol. 2*, various artists
- “Windflowers,” “Oh, Bahá’u’lláh,” *Lift Up Your Voices and Sing, vol. 3*, various artists
- “In Halgheh Baha (The Lover’s Noose),” “Zolf-I-Yar (Hair of the Beloved), *Narges*, Narges

Session 12

A DOOR TO ENTRY BY TROOPS

Suggested Schedule of Activities

Devotions	10 minutes
Objectives	5 minutes
Consultation on Individual Service and Teaching	5 minutes
Consultation on Individual Study	5 minutes
A Systematic Pattern of Growth	50 minutes
Where Do We Stand?	15 minutes
Serried Lines	10 minutes
Personal Teaching Plan	5 minutes
Evaluations	5 minutes
Closing Devotions	10 minutes

Materials Needed

- Prayer books
- Music, recorded or sung
- Large chart paper
- Poster paper and markers

Preparation Needed

Prepare in advance a large chart like the attached “A Framework for Projects” on page 136. Several sheets of chart paper may be necessary to create a chart large enough that all participants will be able to see it during the whole group consultation period of this activity. (The chart on page 136 may also be enlarged at a photocopy store.)

Consider giving a small gift (such as an inspiring quotation, beautifully written on nice paper, rolled as a scroll, and tied with a ribbon) to acknowledge the service and sacrifice that the friends have offered the Lord of the Age during this course of the Fundamental Verities sequence of courses, “Every Believer Is a Teacher.”

Consider also using the song “Let Us Be about Our Father’s Business” on the audiotape *Special Times* by Susan Engle and Jean White as part of the closing devotions.

Suggestions for Music

- “Let Us be About Our Father’s Business,” *Special Times*, Susan Engle and Jean White
- “A Sacrifice to Thee,” *A Sacrifice to Thee*, Matthew Levine
- “Proclaim the Greatest Name,” “We Will Have One World,” *Lift Up Your Voices and Sing, vol. 2*, various artists
- “Whither Can a Lover Go,” *Bird*, Susan Lewis Wright
- “Would You Give Your Life to Bahá’u’lláh,” *Lift Up Your Voices and Sing, vol. 2*, various artists
- “We Can Move the World,” “The Generation of Light,” *Fruits of the Spirit*, various artists

*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