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Building a New Civilization

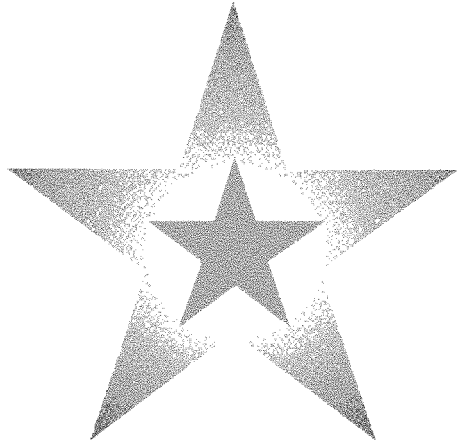
COURSE SIX

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

CORE 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

Building a New Civilization

COURSE SIX

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 sixth 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 (telephone 847-733-3492 or email: schools@usbnc.org) or to the National Teacher Training Center at Louhelen Bahá’í School (telephone 810-653-5033 or 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 as 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 Six: Building a New Civilization

Introduction

Session 1	Breezes of the Most Merciful
Session 2	The Covenant and the New World Order
Session 3	One Family, One Country, One World
Session 4	Adversity: A Morning Dew upon His Green Pasture
Session 5	The Individual in a New Model of Community Life
Session 6	A Unique System: Twin Arms of the Administrative Order
Session 7	A Vibrant Model of Unity in Diversity
Session 8	A World Embracing Vision
Session 9	Our Glorious Mission

A Spiritual Framework for Self-Directed Learning

This sequence of courses has the purpose of “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.”¹ The sequence is designed to foster participatory and self-directed learning and application of the creative Word of God.

To this end, a learning model derived from the writings of Bahá’u’lláh provides the organizational framework for all Core Curriculum courses including this Fundamental Verities Sequence.

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.²

The Core Curriculum assists learners to learn, internalize, and 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

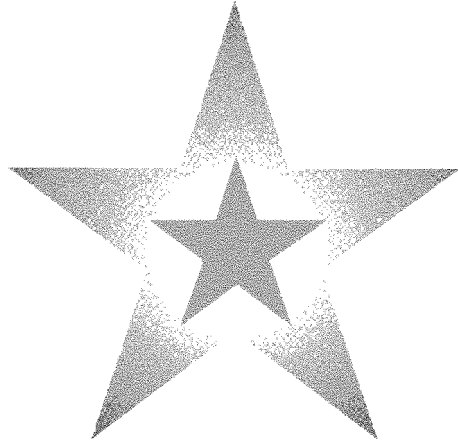
A penetrating inner vision and the internalization of what is being learned.

Eloquent Speech

The ability to speak or act in a way that manifests one’s learning.

¹ UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, to the Bahá’ís of the World, Ridván 153 B.E.

² BAHÁ’U’LLÁH, *Bahá’í Education*, #9, p. 3



*T*he breezes of the Most Merciful have passed
over all created things; happy the man
that hath discovered their fragrance,
and set himself towards them with a sound heart.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

Building a New Civilization

COURSE SIX

Some
Fundamental
Verities of the
Bahá'í Faith

Session 1

Breezes of the
Most Merciful

Opening Devotions

Welcome to the sixth course in the Fundamental Verities sequence. As you begin this new course, consider how you might create a new element of beauty in the room. One possibility would be to prepare a display table that includes elements from nature such as beautiful or interesting rocks, twigs, moss, potted plants, or other items to reflect the nature theme of this session.

Consider playing music, birdsong, or other sounds from nature during your opening prayers or begin this first session outdoors.

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

The breezes of the Most Merciful have passed over all created things; happy the man that hath discovered their fragrance, and set himself towards them with a sound heart. Attire thy temple with the ornament of My Name, and thy tongue with remembrance of Me, and thine heart with love for Me, the Almighty, the Most High.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, p. 68

Introduction to the Course

This course explores the relationships among our individual acts of service and teaching, the growth of the Cause of God, and the establishment of the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh. As we know, “the Bahá'í Administration is only the first shaping of what in future will come to be the social life and laws of community living.”³ This course provides an overview of the principles and institutions that establish the nucleus and pattern for the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, the Kingdom of God on earth.

Please introduce yourselves by describing a time when you felt yourself to be learning something perhaps difficult but very wonderful about how to live together as a community, according to the glorious teachings of Bahá'u'lláh.

If desired, review logistical information about the course such as schedule, cost of materials, child care, refreshments, or other matters that will help your study circle to function effectively as a group.

³ on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, *The Compilation of Compilations* Vol. II, p. 59

Objectives of the Session

Read aloud the learning objectives for this session.

Knowledge

To become more familiar with some of the writings about the growth of the Cause of God.

Wisdom

To gain a deeper understanding of the forces in the socio-spiritual environment surrounding the growth of Bahá'u'lláh's World Order.

Spiritual Perception

To perceive the organic nature of the growth of the Cause of God.

Eloquent Speech

To demonstrate understanding of some of the relationships linking the Cause of God, the Covenant, and the Administrative Order.

To plan individual acts of study, service and teaching.

Consultation on Individual Teaching, Service, and Study

As a group, reflect on your individual acts of teaching, service, and study during this sequence of courses and since the last course by considering the following quotations:

Drink thou the life-giving water of blissful joy from the chalice of utterance proffered by the Fountainhead of divine Revelation—He Who hath made mention of thee in this mighty stronghold. Endeavour to the utmost of thy powers to establish the word of truth with eloquence and wisdom and to dispel falsehood from the face of the earth.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 139

I beg of God that ye will be bringers of joy, even as are the angels in Heaven.

ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 203, no. 174

Discuss the questions:

- What are we learning about the power of this Cause to transform us into powerful agents for the happiness and well-being of the community around us?
- What are we learning about the power of the Word of God to attract the hearts of the people we know and the people we meet?
- What are we learning about the effectiveness of our devotional meetings, children's classes, and firesides for engaging the interest and attracting the hearts of our friends, neighbors, and co-workers? How have we refined our teaching efforts in light of our study and our experiences?

- What are we learning from our study, consultation, and experiences about introducing the Faith to seekers, inviting them to devotional meetings, children’s classes, and firesides, and inviting them also to contribute to these core activities?
- How can we best use these short discussions each session to enhance our capabilities for service and teaching?

Activity

Breezes of the Most Merciful

1. This session focuses on the organic process of growth in the World Order of Bahá’u’lláh by comparing the organic growth of the World Order of Bahá’u’lláh to the growth of a plant in nature.
2. Using images, pictures, or the powers of imagination and memory, consider the process of organic growth in nature. What are some of the various aspects of this process? How do these different elements of the organic growth process relate to one another?
3. As your study circle identifies these various processes, create a simple line drawing on chart paper to indicate a large tree, a sun with streaming rays, dark clouds, gusting wind, and other elements.
4. Keeping these images in mind, carefully read aloud the quotations “Breezes of the Most Merciful” and answer the focus questions.
5. Reflecting again on these quotations: What are some key words, images, or phrases in the quotations that illustrate forces in the social environmental? Note these key words, images or phrases near the environmental forces indicated in your drawing.
6. Then, reflect on the nurturing foundations or “solid ground” for the New World Order suggested by the passages. Note these key words, images or phrases near the “ground” of your drawing. If chart paper is not available, record your notes on the illustration, p. 15.



BREEZES OF THE MOST MERCIFUL

Focus Questions:

What are some evidences of the breezes of the Most Merciful in the world as it is? What are the winter storms? We see positive things happening in the world but at the same time, the problems seem to get more dangerous and difficult. How can we make sense of it all? How does Bahá'u'lláh's New World Order fit in the picture?

1 The breezes of the Most Merciful have passed over all created things; happy the man that hath discovered their fragrance, and set himself towards them with a sound heart. Attire thy temple with the ornament of My Name, and thy tongue with remembrance of Me, and thine heart with love for Me, the Almighty, the Most High.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, p. 68

2 In this day, the fertilizing winds of the grace of God have passed over all things. Every creature hath been endowed with all the potentialities it can carry. And yet the peoples of the world have denied this grace! Every tree hath been endowed with the choicest fruits, every ocean enriched with the most luminous gems. Man, himself, hath been invested with the gifts of understanding and knowledge. The whole creation hath been made the recipient of the revelation of the All-Merciful, and the earth the repository of things inscrutable to all except God, the Truth, the Knower of things unseen.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, p. 24

3 The fierce gales and whirlwinds of the world and its peoples can never shake the foundation upon which the rock-like stability of My chosen ones is based.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 341, CLXIII

4 In winter come the storms, and the great winds blow, but then will follow spring in all its beauty, adorning hill and plain with perfumed plants and red anemones, fair to see. Then will the birds trill out upon the branches their songs of joy, and sermonize in lilting tones from the pulpits of the trees. Erelong shall ye bear witness that the lights are streaming forth, the banners of the realm above are waving, the sweet scents of the All-Merciful are wafted abroad, the hosts of the Kingdom are marching down, the angels of heaven are rushing forward, and the Holy Spirit is breathing upon all those regions.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 163-4, no. 141

5 The whole earth is now in a state of pregnancy. The day is approaching when it will have yielded its noblest fruits, when from it will have sprung forth the loftiest trees, the most enchanting blossoms, the most heavenly blessings. Immeasurably exalted is the breeze that wafteth from the garment of thy Lord, the Glorified! For lo, it hath breathed its fragrance and made all things new!

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *The Promised Day is Come*, p. 46

6 Compare these splendid manifestations of the spirit animating this vibrant body of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh with the cries and agony, the follies and vanities, the bitterness and prejudices, the wickedness and divisions of an ailing and chaotic world. Witness the fear that torments its leaders and paralyzes the action of its blind and bewildered statesmen. How fierce the hatreds, how false the ambitions, how petty the pursuits, how deep-rooted the suspicions of its peoples! How disquieting the lawlessness, the corruption, the unbelief that are eating into the vitals of a tottering civilization!

Might not this process of steady deterioration which is insidiously invading so many departments of human activity and thought be regarded as a necessary accompaniment to the rise of this almighty Arm of Bahá'u'lláh? Might we not look upon the momentous happenings which . . . have so deeply agitated every continent of the earth, as ominous signs simultaneously proclaiming the agonies of a disintegrating civilization and the birthpangs of that World Order—that Ark of human salvation—that must needs arise upon its ruins?

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 154-55

7 Such simultaneous processes of rise and of fall, of integration and of disintegration, of order and chaos, with their continuous and reciprocal reactions on each other, are but aspects of a greater Plan, one and indivisible, whose Source is God, whose author is Bahá'u'lláh, the theater of whose operations is the entire planet, and whose ultimate objectives are the unity of the human race and the peace of all mankind.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, pp. 72-73

8 The Administrative Order . . . will, as its component parts, its organic institutions, begin to function with efficiency and vigor, assert its claim and demonstrate its capacity to be regarded not only as the nucleus but the very pattern of the New World Order destined to embrace in the fullness of time the whole of mankind.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 144

9 The condition of the world today is such that it is obvious no political solution to its problems is going to be found. We Bahá'ís must therefore concentrate on Bahá'u'lláh's World Order—the true solution.

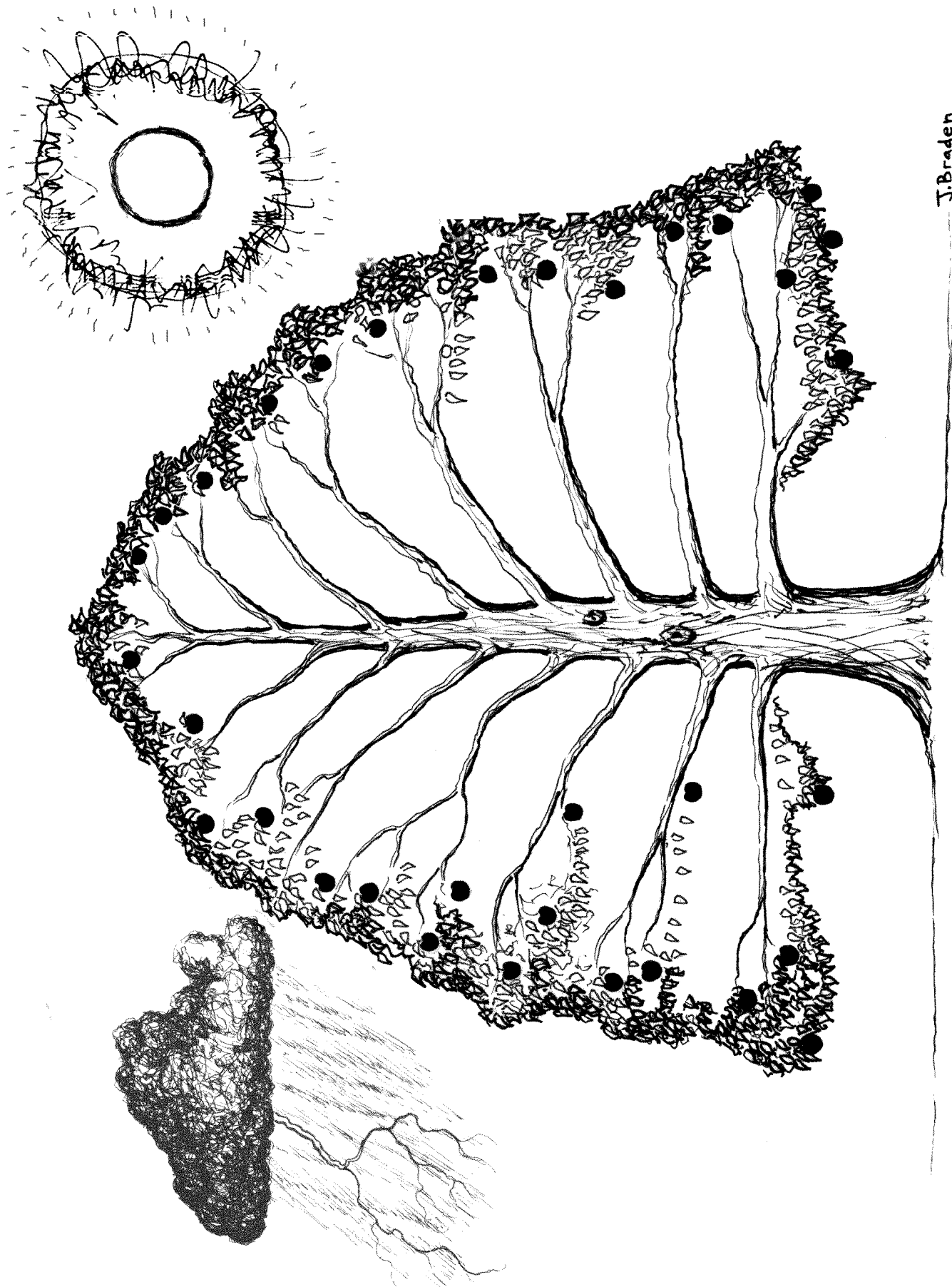
SHOGHI EFFENDI, *Arohanni: Letters from Shoghi Effendi to New Zealand*, p. 51

10 The believers should, therefore, seize this opportunity to make a supreme effort to present, in convincing and eloquent language, those social and humanitarian teachings of the Faith which we believe to constitute the sole panacea for the innumerable ills afflicting our present-day world.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *Directives of the Guardian*, p. 74

11 Prayer, no doubt, will help the world, but what it needs is to accept Bahá'u'lláh's system so as to build up the World Order on a new foundation, a divine foundation!

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *Directives of the Guardian*, p. 54



J. Braden

Activity

A Unique Order

1. Continue your study by reading aloud the passages entitled, “A Unique Order” and answer the focus questions. Then:
 - reflect on the strong “trunk-like” structures of the New World Order mentioned in the quotations,
 - identify key words, images or phrases in the quotations that illustrate these structures. Note these key words, images or phrases around the branches and trunk on your drawing.
2. Briefly review the unfolding picture of the organic growth of the Cause of God. Discuss: In what way does this metaphor for organic growth assist us to explain the majestic World Order of Bahá’u’lláh to seekers?

Please save the chart paper with your drawing of the tree for the next session, as we’ll return to our exploration of the organic growth of the Cause of God at that time.



Focus questions:

What is the relationship of the Cause to the Administration?

What are some of the unique features of the Administrative Order?

1 The supreme cause for creating the world and all that is therein is for man to know God. In this Day whosoever is guided by the fragrance of the raiment of His mercy to gain admittance into the pristine Abode, which is the station of recognizing the Source of divine commandments and the Dayspring of His Revelation, hath everlastingly attained unto all good. Having reached this lofty station a twofold obligation resteth upon every soul. One is to be steadfast in the Cause with such steadfastness that were all the peoples of the world to attempt to prevent him from turning to the Source of Revelation, they would be powerless to do so. The other is observance of the divine ordinances which have streamed forth from the wellspring of His heavenly-propelled Pen. For man's knowledge of God cannot develop fully and adequately save by observing whatsoever hath been ordained by Him and is set forth in His heavenly Book.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 268

2 When the ocean of My presence hath ebbed and the Book of My Revelation is ended, turn your faces toward Him Whom God hath purposed, Who hath branched from this Ancient Root.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, paragraph 121

3 The Lord hath ordained that in every city a House of Justice be established wherein shall gather counsellors to the number of Bahá, and should it exceed this number it doth not matter. They should consider themselves as entering the Court of the presence of God, the Exalted, the Most High, and as beholding Him Who is the Unseen. It behoveth them to be the trusted ones of the Merciful among men and to regard themselves as the guardians appointed of God for all that dwell on earth. It is incumbent upon them to take counsel together and to have regard for the interests of the servants of God, for His sake, even as they regard their own interests, and to choose that which is meet and seemly.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, paragraph 30

4 To direct and canalize these forces let loose by this Heaven-sent process, and to insure their harmonious and continuous operation after His ascension, an instrument divinely ordained, invested with indisputable authority, organically linked with the Author of the Revelation Himself, was clearly indispensable. That instrument Bahá'u'lláh had expressly provided through the institution of the Covenant, an institution which He had firmly established prior to His ascension.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *God Passes By*, p. 237

5 Regarding the relationship of the Cause to the Administration; the Bahá'í Faith, as the Guardian himself has repeatedly and emphatically stated cannot be confined to a mere system of organization, however elaborate in its features and universal in its scope it may be. Organization is only a means to the realization of its aims and ideals, and not an end in itself. To divorce the two, however, would be to mutilate the Cause itself, as they stand inseparably bound to each other, in very much the same relationship existing between the soul and body in the world of human existence.

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, *Lights of Guidance*, p. 2

6 The Administrative Order [is] unique in the annals of the world's religious systems. . . . Neither in theory nor in practice can the Administrative Order of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh be said to conform to any type of democratic government, to any system of autocracy, to any purely aristocratic order, or to any of the various theocracies, whether Jewish, Christian or Islamic which mankind has witnessed in the past. It incorporates within its structure certain elements which are to be found in each of the three recognized forms of secular government, is devoid of the defects which each of them inherently possesses, and blends the salutary truths which each undoubtedly contains without vitiating in any way the integrity of the Divine verities on which it is essentially founded.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *God Passes By*, p. 326

7 . . . To accept the Cause without the administration is like to accept the teachings without acknowledging the divine Station of Bahá'u'lláh. To be a Bahá'í is to accept the Cause in its entirety. To take exception to one basic principle is to deny the authority and sovereignty of Bahá'u'lláh, and therefore is to deny the Cause. The administration is the social order of Bahá'u'lláh. Without it all the principles of the Cause will remain abortive. To take exception to this, therefore, is to take exception to the fabric that Bahá'u'lláh has prescribed, it is to disobey His law.

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, *Bahá'í News*, No. 43, August 1930, p. 3

8 Bahá'u'lláh ordains both the Universal House of Justice and the Local Houses of Justice in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, in His Will and Testament, provides for the Secondary (National or Regional) Houses of Justice and outlines the method to be pursued for the election of the Universal House of Justice.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, Notes, n. 49

9 Upon the Universal House of Justice, in the words of the Guardian, 'has been conferred the exclusive right of legislating on matters not expressly revealed in the Bahá'í Writings.' Its pronouncements, which are susceptible of amendment or abrogation by the House of Justice itself, serve to supplement and apply the Law of God. Although not invested with the function of interpretation, the House of Justice is in a position to do everything necessary to establish the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh on this earth.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. 1, p. 125

Individual Acts of Teaching, Study, and Service

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

- Memorize a passage from this session's readings. Share it with another soul before the next session.
- Consult with your family about the devotional meetings, children's classes, and firesides in your cluster. As a family, choose an act of service to complete before the next session. Share the results with the group at the next session.
- Invite a seeker (or a family of seekers) to your home to show loving hospitality. Consider how you might listen to your friends and then introduce the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh in a way that will attract their hearts. Share the results of this gathering at the next session.
- Think of the people in your neighborhood: Who would enjoy a friendly visit? Think of a way to bring joy to the heart of elders, families with young children, or others in your neighborhood. Share the results of your visit or other service at the next session.
- Read the Tablet revealed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá on April 8, 1916 to the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada, published in that great charter for teaching the Faith, *Tablets of the Divine Plan*. Plan to share one key point at the next session.
- Read pp. 1-50 of the book, *Bahá'í Administration* by Shoghi Effendi. Prepare a 2-minute report for the next session.

Personal Teaching Plan

Consider listening to music, recorded birdsong, or other sounds from nature as you complete your Personal Teaching Plan for the coming week.

Closing Devotions

Close the session with music and prayers for the triumph of the Cause.



A PERSONAL TEACHING PLAN

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 in *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 78

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...?



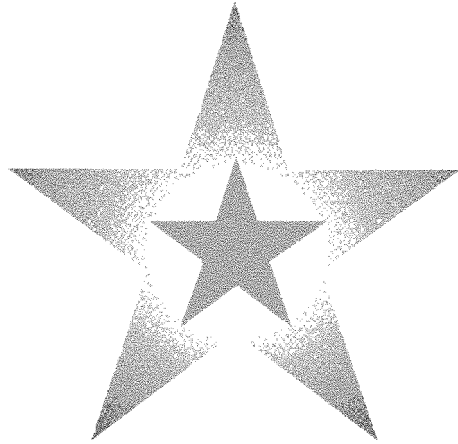
My love for Bahá'u'lláh; the power of the Covenant; the dynamics of prayer; the inspiration and education derived from regular reading and study of the Holy Texts?



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*trive, O people of God, that haply the hearts
of the divers kindreds of the earth may,
through the waters of your forbearance and
loving-kindness, be cleansed and sanctified from
animosity and hatred, and be made worthy and befitting
recipients of the splendors of the Sun of Truth.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

Building a New Civilization

COURSE SIX

Some
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Session 2

The Covenant and
the New World
Order

Opening Devotions

Begin your study circle with singing and prayers. Consider also including the following quotation as part of your opening devotions:

Look ye not upon the present, fix your gaze upon the times to come. In the beginning, how small is the seed, yet in the end it is a mighty tree. Look ye not upon the seed, look ye upon the tree, and its blossoms, and its leaves and its fruits.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 82, no. 40

Objectives of the Session:

Read aloud the learning objectives for this session.

Knowledge

To become more familiar with some of the writings on the Covenant and the Administrative Order.

Wisdom

To gain a deeper understanding of the forces in the socio-spiritual environment that surround the growth of Bahá’u’lláh’s World Order.

Spiritual Perception

To perceive the inseparable relationship of the Cause to the Administrative Order.

Eloquent Speech

To demonstrate understanding of the unified whole of the Cause of God, the Covenant, and the Administrative Order through actions and presentations.

To plan individual acts of study, service and teaching.

Consultation on Individual Teaching, Service, and Study

Reflecting on our individual acts of study, service and teaching since the last session:

- Who has memorized a passage from the writings that you would like to share with the group? Were you also able to share it with another soul?
- If you chose to involve your family in a specific act of service to the Cause of God, what happened as a result of your family's actions? Were you also able to involve friends of the family?
- Who was able to show loving hospitality to a seeker or family of seekers? Did you find a way to introduce the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh? What attracted their hearts?
- Who chose to visit or offer another service to people in your neighborhood? What did you do? What did you learn?
- Who was able to study letters from the book, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*? What did you learn?
- Who chose to read the Tablet revealed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá on April 8, 1916 published in *Tablets of the Divine Plan*? What key point would you like to share?
- What else would you like to share about your teaching, service, and study over the past week?

Activity

The Covenant and the New World Order

1. Display the sketch of a tree that you created during your last session. Briefly review the environmental forces and elements represented by solid ground, trunk, and branches.
2. Then, working in small teams of two or three, read the quotations entitled, “Leaves.”

Discuss: What are some of the distinguishing administrative principles of Bahá’u’lláh’s World-Embracing Order? In what way are these principles like leaves on the tree of organic unity that we created in the last session?

While still in your groups, identify key words, images or phrases in the quotations that indicate these “leaves”.

3. Share your insights in the whole group. Then, using the materials provided, create paper, tissue, or fabric “leaves” and note these key words, images, or phrases on the leaves. Add them to the tree you created.
4. Continue working in your small teams with the selected passages describing the “Fruits” of this tree.

Discuss: What are some of the fruits of the world-embracing Cause of God?

Identify key words, images or phrases in the quotations that illustrate these “fruits”. Create fruits, again using the art supplies available, briefly note these key words, images or phrases on the fruit, and add it to your tree.

Discuss briefly: What is the relationship between a healthy tree and its environment? What are the relationships among the trunk, branches, leaves, and fruit of a healthy tree? What is the relationship between our actions as individuals or as communities and the unfolding World Order of Bahá’u’lláh? How can we explain these ideas to seekers?

5. Working again either as a whole study circle or in your small groups, select one of the quotations on the following pages to memorize. Consider writing the quotation on chart paper and gradually covering every 4th word with self-stick notes as you recite the quotation in unison, setting the quotation to music or rhythm, using visual images, or respectful motions as memory aids while your work.
6. Recite your memorized passage in the whole group collectively or individually. Celebrate all efforts!
7. Conclude this activity with group singing in celebration of the golden fruit of this tree of Revelation. Invite one of the friends to lead the singing of familiar songs or use well-loved and familiar Bahá’í recordings to accompany your singing.



1 Ye are the saplings which the hand of Loving-kindness hath planted in the soil of mercy, and which the showers of bounty have made to flourish. He hath protected you from the mighty winds of misbelief, and the tempestuous gales of impiety, and nurtured you with the hands of His loving providence. Now is the time for you to put forth your leaves, and yield your fruit. The fruits of the tree of man have ever been and are goodly deeds and a praiseworthy character. Withhold not these fruits from the heedless. If they be accepted, your end is attained, and the purpose of life achieved. If not, leave them in their pastime of vain disputes. Strive, O people of God, that haply the hearts of the divers kindreds of the earth may, through the waters of your forbearance and loving-kindness, be cleansed and sanctified from animosity and hatred, and be made worthy and befitting recipients of the splendors of the Sun of Truth.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, pp. 25-6

2 The Blessed Beauty saith: 'Ye are all the fruits of one tree, the leaves of one branch.' Thus hath He likened this world of being to a single tree, and all its peoples to the leaves thereof, and the blossoms and fruits. It is needful for the bough to blossom, and leaf and fruit to flourish, and upon the interconnection of all parts of the world-tree, dependeth the flourishing of leaf and blossom, and the sweetness of the fruit.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 1, no. 1

3 Look ye not upon the present, fix your gaze upon the times to come. In the beginning, how small is the seed, yet in the end it is a mighty tree. Look ye not upon the seed, look ye upon the tree, and its blossoms, and its leaves and its fruits.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 82, no. 40

4 Today the one overriding need is unity and harmony among the beloved of the Lord, for they should have among them but one heart and soul and should, so far as in them lieth, unitedly withstand the hostility of all the peoples of the world; they must bring to an end the benighted prejudices of all nations and religions and must make known to every member of the human race that all are the leaves of one branch, the fruits of one bough. Until such time, however, as the friends establish perfect unity among themselves, how can they summon others to harmony and peace?

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 277, no. 221

5 If we Bahá'ís cannot attain to cordial unity among ourselves, then we fail to realize the main purpose for which the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh and the Beloved Master lived and suffered.

In order to achieve this cordial unity one of the first essentials insisted on by Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá is that we resist the natural tendency to let our attention dwell on the faults and failings of others rather than on our own. Each of us is responsible for one life only, and that is our own.

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. 2, pp. 3-4

6 The duties of those whom the friends have freely and conscientiously elected as their representatives are no less vital and binding than the obligations of those who have chosen them. Their function is not to dictate, but to consult, and consult not only among themselves, but as much as possible with the friends whom they represent. They must regard themselves in no other light but that of chosen instruments for a more efficient and dignified presentation of the Cause of God. They should never be led to suppose that they are the central ornaments of the body of the Cause, intrinsically superior to others in capacity or merit, and sole promoters of its teachings and principles. They should approach their task with extreme humility, and endeavor, by their open-mindedness, their high sense of justice and duty, their candor, their modesty, their entire devotion to the welfare and interests of the friends, the Cause, and humanity, to win, not only the confidence and the genuine support and respect of those whom they serve, but also their esteem and real affection. They must, at all times, avoid the spirit of exclusiveness, the atmosphere of secrecy, free themselves from a domineering attitude, and banish all forms of prejudice and passion from their deliberations.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *Bahá'í Administration*, p. 64

7 This challenge, so severe and insistent, and yet so glorious, faces no doubt primarily the individual believer on whom, in the last resort, depends the fate of the entire community. He it is who constitutes the warp and woof on which the quality and pattern of the whole fabric must depend. He it is who acts as one of the countless links in the mighty chain that now girdles the globe. He it is who serves as one of the multitude of bricks which support the structure and insure the stability of the administrative edifice now being raised in every part of the world.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *Citadel of Faith*, p. 130

8 There are two main principles which the Guardian wishes the friends to always bear in mind and to conscientiously and faithfully follow. First is the principle of unqualified and wholehearted loyalty to the revealed Word. The believers should be careful not to deviate, even a hair-breadth, from the Teachings. Their supreme consideration should be to safeguard the purity of the principles, tenets and laws of the Faith. It is only by this means that they can hope to maintain the organic unity of the Cause. There can and should be no liberals or conservatives, no moderates or extremes in the Cause. For they are all subject to the one and the same law which is the Law of God. This law transcends all differences, all personal or local tendencies, moods and aspirations.

Next is the principle of complete, and immediate obedience to the Assemblies, both local and national. It is the responsibility of these Bahá'í administrative bodies to enable the community to acquire, and increasingly deepen in the knowledge and understanding of the Cause. Doctrinal unity and administrative unity, these are the two chief pillars that sustain the edifice of the Cause, and protect it from the storms of opposition which so severely rage against it.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *Dawn of a New Day*, p. 61



1 The blessed Lote-Tree standeth, in this day, before thy face, laden with heavenly, with new and wondrous fruits.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 152

2 The people of God should make the utmost endeavour that perchance the fire of hatred and malice which smouldereth in the breasts of kindreds and peoples may, through the living waters of utterance and the exhortations of Him Who is the Desire of the world, be quenched and the trees of human existence may be adorned with wondrous and excellent fruit. He is, in truth, the Admonisher, the Compassionate, the All-Bountiful.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 132

3 These mighty blasts, this wintry desolation, shall however pass away. The dormant seed will burst into fresh activity. It shall put forth its buds, shall reveal, in mighty institutions, its leaves and blossoms. The vernal showers which the tender mercies of my heavenly Father will cause to descend upon you will enable this tender plant to spread out its branches to regions far beyond the confines of your native land. And finally the steadily mounting sun of His Revelation, shining in its meridian splendor, will enable this mighty Tree of His Faith to yield, in the fullness of time and on your soil, its golden fruit.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 86

4 As the fabric of present-day society heaves and cracks under the strain and stress of portentous events and calamities, as the fissures, accentuating the cleavage separating nation from nation, class from class, race from race, and creed from creed, multiply, the prosecutors of the Plan must evince a still greater cohesion in their spiritual lives and administrative activities, and demonstrate a higher standard of concerted effort, of mutual assistance, and of harmonious development in their collective enterprises.

Then, and only then, will the reaction to the stupendous forces, released through the operation of a divinely conceived, divinely impelled Plan, be made apparent, and the fairest fruit of the weightiest spiritual enterprise launched in recorded history under the aegis of the Center of the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh be garnered.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *Citadel of Faith*, p. 43

5 A world community in which all economic barriers will have been permanently demolished and the interdependence of Capital and Labor definitely recognized; in which the clamor of religious fanaticism and strife will have been forever stilled; in which the flame of racial animosity will have been finally extinguished; in which a single code of international law—the product of the considered judgment of the world’s federated representatives—shall have as its sanction the instant and coercive intervention of the combined forces of the federated units; and finally a world community in which the fury of a capricious and militant nationalism will have been transmuted into an abiding consciousness of world citizenship—such indeed, appears, in its broadest outline, the Order anticipated by Bahá’u’lláh, an Order that shall come to be regarded as the fairest fruit of a slowly maturing age.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 41

6 It was ‘Abdu’l-Bahá Who, through the provisions of His weighty Will and Testament, has forged the vital link which must for ever connect the age that has just expired with the one we now live in—the Transitional and Formative period of the Faith—a stage that must in the fullness of time reach its blossom and yield its fruit in the exploits and triumphs that are to herald the Golden Age of the Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 98

7 This final and crowning stage in the evolution of the plan wrought by God Himself for humanity will, in turn, prove to be the signal for the birth of a world civilization, incomparable in its range, its character and potency, in the history of mankind—a civilization which posterity will, with one voice, acclaim as the fairest fruit of the Golden Age of the Dispensation of Bahá’u’lláh, and whose rich harvest will be garnered during future dispensations destined to succeed one another in the course of the five thousand century Bahá’í Cycle.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *Messages to the Bahá’í World*, pp. 155-56

8 The Formative Period, the Iron Age, of that Dispensation was now beginning, the Age in which the institutions, local, national and international, of the Faith of Bahá’u’lláh were to take shape, develop and become fully consolidated, in anticipation of the third, the last, the Golden Age destined to witness the emergence of a world-embracing Order enshrining the ultimate fruit of God’s latest Revelation to mankind, a fruit whose maturity must signalize the establishment of a world civilization and the formal inauguration of the Kingdom of the Father upon earth as promised by Jesus Christ Himself.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *God Passes By*, p. 324

Individual Acts of Study, Service and Teaching

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

- Make a list of the places where you meet people: at school or work, in your neighborhood, through your family, places of recreation, community service, or other places. In which places have the souls seemed particularly receptive to the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh? Do you see a way to increase your contacts with others? Are there ways that we could support each other in this process? Who could we invite to a devotional meeting, children's class, or fireside?
- Consider the devotional meetings, firesides, and children's classes in our cluster: What service would we like to offer these core activities either individually or as a study circle? Could we involve our families in this service? Could we invite seekers to collaborate with us in this service?
- Which seekers do we know that would be interested in the spiritual and administrative principles studied in these first two sessions of Course Six? Could we create a devotional meeting or fireside that presents these ideas in a way that will respond to our friends' interests? How could we incorporate the Word of God, storytelling, and music in this gathering?
- Read the Tablet written by 'Abdu'l-Bahá on April 11, 1916 to the believers in the United States and Canada, published in *Tablets of the Divine Plan*. Prepare a 2-minute report that explains the bounties of teaching.
- Read pp. 50-90 of the book, *Bahá'í Administration* by Shoghi Effendi. Prepare a 2-minute report for the next session that focuses on 1-2 spiritual principles that underlie Bahá'í administration.

Personal Teaching Plan

Consider listening to quiet music as you complete your Personal Teaching Plan.

Closing Devotions

Close the session with music and prayers for teaching.



A PERSONAL TEACHING PLAN

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 in *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 78

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...?



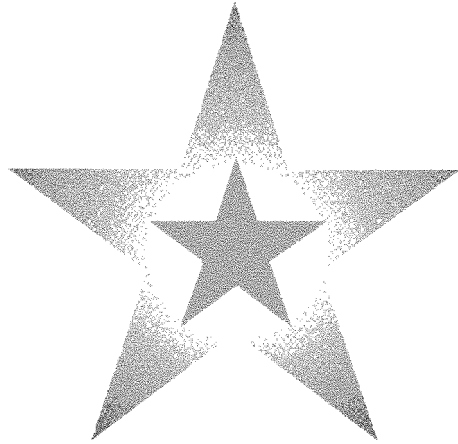
My love for Bahá'u'lláh; the power of the Covenant; the dynamics of prayer; the inspiration and education derived from regular reading and study of the Holy Texts?



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*he earth is but one country,
and mankind its citizens.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

Building a New Civilization

COURSE SIX

Some
Fundamental
Verities of the
Bahá'í Faith

Session 3

One Family, One
Country, One
World

Opening Devotions

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

The people of the future . . . will be citizens of a universal nationality—the one family, the one country, the one world of humanity. . . .
‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 19

They cannot find a pattern to work by comparable to that which Bahá’u’lláh has given to the world in this age; the sanity, the justice, the perfect balance of His system can alone accomplish the next step in Man’s evolution—the unification of the human race as one family inhabiting this planet.
SHOGHI EFFENDI, The Compilation of Compilations, Vol. 2, pg. 433

Objectives of the Session

Read aloud the learning objectives for this session.

Knowledge

To become more familiar with the spiritual foundation for world citizenship.

Wisdom

To understand the inseparability of form and spirit in the World Order of Bahá’u’lláh.

Spiritual Perception

To perceive practical strategies for fostering a warm and loving community spirit.

Eloquent Speech

To plan a devotional meeting open to all.

To plan individual acts of study, service and teaching.

Consultation on Individual Teaching, Service, and Study

Reflecting on our individual or collaborative acts of study, service and teaching since the last session:

- Who has memorized a passage from the writings that you'd like to share with the group?
- What have we learned this week from our interactions with seekers? What are we learning from their responses to our genuine efforts to show love and care? What are we also learning from our friends about how to explain the beautiful teachings of Bahá'u'lláh in a way that strikes a responsive chord in their hearts?
- What have been the results of our service hosting, participating in, and supporting devotional meetings and children's classes? What are some ways that we've involved our friends, families, and seekers in this service?
- Who was able to share some of the spiritual and administrative principles of the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh with seekers? How did they respond?
- Who chose to read the April 11 Tablet by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in reading *Tablets of the Divine Plan*? What did you learn?
- Who was able to study letters from the book, *Bahá'í Administration* by Shoghi Effendi? What did you learn?
- Who else would like to share the results of your study, service and teaching over the past week?

Activity

One Family, One Country, One World

1. While in the whole group, eloquently read aloud the quotations, "One Family, One Country, One World," while playing quiet background music. Pause between each quotation and also allow a period of quiet reflection after the readings are complete.
2. Then briefly discuss the focus questions in the whole group.



ONE FAMILY, ONE COUNTRY, ONE WORLD

Focus Questions:

What does it mean to be a “citizen” in the World Order of Bahá’u’lláh? How does this new idea of citizenship change the way we think about, and act toward, each other? How can each of us participate in this new form of universal self-governance? What concrete specific actions build that “warm community atmosphere which alone can attract the hearts of humanity?”

1 The earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens.

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

2 The people of the future . . . will be citizens of a universal nationality—the one family, the one country, the one world of humanity.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 19

3 Every imperfect soul is self-centred and thinketh only of his own good. But as his thoughts expand a little he will begin to think of the welfare and comfort of his family. If his ideas still more widen, his concern will be the felicity of his fellow citizens; and if still they widen, he will be thinking of the glory of his land and of his race. But when ideas and views reach the utmost degree of expansion and attain the stage of perfection, then will he be interested in the exaltation of humankind. He will then be the well-wisher of all men and the seeker of the weal and prosperity of all lands. This is indicative of perfection.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 69, no. 34

4 The supreme need of humanity is cooperation and reciprocity. The stronger the ties of fellowship and solidarity amongst men, the greater will be the power of constructiveness and accomplishment in all the planes of human activity. Without cooperation and reciprocal attitude the individual member of human society remains self-centered, uninspired by altruistic purposes, limited and solitary in development like the animal and plant organisms of the lower kingdoms. The lower creatures are not in need of cooperation and reciprocity. A tree can live solitary and alone, but this is impossible for man without retrogression. Therefore, every cooperative attitude and activity of human life is praiseworthy and forintended by the will of God.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 338

5 There are imperfections in every human being, and you will always become unhappy if you look toward the people themselves. But if you look toward God, you will love them and be kind to them, for the world of God is the world of perfection and complete mercy. Therefore, do not look at the shortcomings of anybody; see with the sight of forgiveness. The imperfect eye beholds imperfections. The eye that covers faults looks toward the Creator of souls.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 93

6 Verily, the century of radiance has dawned, minds are advancing, perceptions are broadening, realizations of human possibilities are becoming universal, susceptibilities are developing, the discovery of realities is

progressing. Therefore, it is necessary that we should cast aside all the prejudices of ignorance, discard superannuated beliefs in traditions of past ages and raise aloft the banner of international agreement. Let us cooperate in love and through spiritual reciprocity enjoy eternal happiness and peace.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 379-80

7 The source of perfect unity and love in the world of existence is the bond and oneness of reality. When the divine and fundamental reality enters human hearts and lives, it conserves and protects all states and conditions of mankind, establishing that intrinsic oneness of the world of humanity which can only come into being through the efficacy of the Holy Spirit. For the Holy Spirit is like unto the life in the human body, which blends all differences of parts and members in unity and agreement. Consider how numerous are these parts and members, but the oneness of the animating spirit of life unites them all in perfect combination.

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

8 How good it is if the friends be as close as sheaves of light, if they stand together side by side in a firm unbroken line. . . . Let all be set free from the multiple identities that were born of passion and desire, and in the oneness of their love for God find a new way of life.

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

9 This universal, this transcending love which the followers of the Bahá’í Faith feel for their fellow-men, of whatever race, creed, class or nation, is neither mysterious nor can it be said to have been artificially stimulated. It is both spontaneous and genuine. They whose hearts are warmed by the energizing influence of God’s creative love cherish His creatures for His sake, and recognize in every human face a sign of His reflected glory. Of such men and women it may be truly said that to them ‘every foreign land is a fatherland, and every fatherland a foreign land.’ For their citizenship, it must be remembered, is in the Kingdom of Bahá’u’lláh.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh*, pp. 197-98

10 Unless and until the believers really come to realise they are one spiritual family, knit together by a bond more lasting than mere physical ties can ever be, they will not be able to create that warm community atmosphere which alone can attract the hearts of humanity, frozen for lack of real love and feeling.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *Unfolding Destiny*, p. 439

11 Conveying the message is merely the first step. We must then ensure that it is understood and applied, for, as we read in one of the letters written on behalf of the Guardian: “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.” When people embrace the Cause, they should then, through the Teachings, develop their relationships with each other and with their fellow-citizens to gradually produce a truly Bahá’í community, a light and haven for the bewildered.

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *Ridván 151*, 1994

Activity

A New Balance of Form and Spirit

1. Organize your study circle into study groups so that each group studies either Group A or Group B of the quotations entitled “A New Balance of Form and Spirit.”
2. In your study group, read aloud your selected quotations and answer the focus question.
3. Then, work with your group to create a dynamic model representing the Administrative Order’s new balance of form and spirit, using the materials provided.

Consider using such materials as:

- A diverse supply of containers that could be used to represent the FORM of the Administrative Order, such as glass or plastic bottles, drinking glasses or goblets, soft plastic containers, sturdy plastic bags, etc.
- A varied collection of fluids (or solids that can act as fluids) that could be used to represent the SPIRIT of the Administrative Order such as: water, mineral oil, food coloring, rice, candy, sand, glitter, etc.

Alternately, your group may choose to create a human sculpture (a pose or tableau) to represent the Administrative Order’s new balance of form and spirit.

4. Share your model or sculpture in the whole group, pointing out how it represents the balance of form and spirit as expressed in the quotations studied.
5. Discuss the questions:
 - What are some examples that we’ve seen in our own lives of firmness in principle and flexibility in application? Why is it important to maintain a firm grounding in the fundamental principles of our Faith? Why is important to show flexibility in the application of these principles?
 - How does this flexible model of administration support the organic growth of the World Order of Bahá’u’lláh? What are some ways that we can share these important ideas with others in our homes and neighborhoods, in our places of work and recreation, and in our schools?



A NEW BALANCE OF FORM AND SPIRIT

Group A

Focus Question:

How does the Administrative Order create a new balance of form and spirit in human organization?

1 They cannot find a pattern to work by comparable to that which Bahá'u'lláh has given to the world in this age; the sanity, the justice, the perfect balance of His system can alone accomplish the next step in Man's evolution—the unification of the human race as one family inhabiting this planet.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. 2, p. 433

2 He was particularly pleased to hear that a profound spirit of love and unity pervaded the school and its attendants. The world not only desperately needs the organization for world order brought by Bahá'u'lláh, but above all the living example of community love and inner oneness without which the other is merely a perfect shell, devoid of spirit.

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, *Letter to Loubelen Bahá'í School*, 8 August 1944

3 Administrative efficiency and order should always be accompanied by an equal degree of love, of devotion and of spiritual development. Both of them are essential and to attempt to dissociate one from the other is to deaden the body of the Cause. In these days, when the Faith is still in its infancy, great care must be taken lest mere administrative routine stifles the spirit which must feed the body of the Administration itself. That spirit is its propelling force and the motivating power of its very life.

But as already emphasized, both the spirit and the form are essential to the safe and speedy development of the Administration. To maintain full balance between them is the main and unique responsibility of the administrators of the Cause.

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. 2, p. 133

4 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, so alive, so devoted, so strikingly and rapidly developing, may maintain a proper balance between these two essential aspects of its development, and march forward with rapid strides and along sound lines toward the goal of the Plan it has adopted, is the ardent hope of my heart and my constant prayer.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *Letters from the Guardian to Australia and New Zealand*, pp. 75-76

5 They should, within the limits imposed upon them by present-day circumstances, endeavor to maintain the balance in such a manner that the evils of over-centralization which clog, confuse and in the long run depreciate the value of the Bahá'í services rendered shall on one hand be entirely avoided, and on the other the perils of utter decentralization with the consequent lapse of governing authority from the hands of the national representatives of the believers definitely averted. The absorption of the petty details of Bahá'í administration by the personnel of the National Spiritual Assembly is manifestly injurious to efficiency and an expert discharge of Bahá'í duties, whilst the granting of undue discretion to bodies that should be regarded in no other light than that of expert advisers and executive assistants would jeopardize the very vital and pervading powers that are the sacred prerogatives of bodies that in time will evolve into Bahá'í National Houses of Justice.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *Bahá'í Administration*, p. 142



A NEW BALANCE OF FORM AND SPIRIT

Group B

Focus Question:

How does the Administrative Order create a new balance of form and spirit in human organization?

1 . . . The Guardian is advising that rules and regulations should not be multiplied and new statements on “procedure” issued; we should be elastic in details and rigid in principles; consequently he does not want your Assembly to issue statements of a binding nature unless absolutely necessary.

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, *Dawn of a New Day*, p. 123

2 First, let me say that one of the reasons God has given us the institution of Guardianship is to prevent men from crystallizing the Cause of God into a rigid system. Your questions are mostly along the line of trying to lay down a fixed pattern for future society, long before the time for such a pattern is ripe. Remember that Bahá'u'lláh says what is not already revealed, the International House of Justice must in the future legislate, and it can make, and abrogate if necessary, its own laws. This means not fixity in guiding society, but fluidity!

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *The Light of Divine Guidance*, Vol. 2, p. 82

3 He wishes the friends to keep as elastic as possible in administering the affairs of the Faith, while at the same time adhering to fundamentals. He knows that at times this inconveniences the National Bodies and makes their work more detailed, but believes it to be the lesser, so to speak, of two evils.

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, *Unfolding Destiny*, p. 333

4 . . . Assembly members have always to be mindful that the authority they wield must in general be expressed with love, humility and a genuine respect for others. Thus exercised, authority strikes a natural note and accords with that which is acceptable to spiritually attuned and fairminded souls.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *Letter of 19 May 1994 to a National Spiritual Assembly*

5 Over-administration can be even worse for the Faith at this time than under-administration. The believers are, for the most part, young in the Cause, and if they make mistakes it is not half as important as if their spirit is crushed by being told all the time—do this and don't do that!

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *High Endeavors*, p. 35

6 Every other word of Bahá'u'lláh's and 'Abdu'l-Bahá's writings is a preachment on moral and ethical conduct; all else is the form, the chalice, into which the pure spirit must be poured; without the spirit and the action which must demonstrate it, it is a lifeless form.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *Living the Life*, p. 20

7 He considers that what he has laid down in Bahá'í Administration is essential, but that practically everything else is secondary and he wishes the Assemblies, your own included, to deal with things with elasticity, as they come up, case by case, and not by continually passing new rulings to cover all similar cases.

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, *Letters from the Guardian to Australia and New Zealand*, p. 74

A Devotional Meeting Open to All

As a group, briefly consider the plans for a devotional meeting provided as the next session of your study circle.

1. Read aloud the quotations entitled “Devotional Meetings,” discuss the focus questions, then consult as a group:
 - What would make it both possible and desirable to invite guests to the next session of our study circle?
 - How would we like to invite our guests? Which individuals or families might enjoy participating in their first devotional meeting?
 - Where would we like to host the gathering—in our usual location or another place?
 - How can we greet our guests as they arrive and make them feel welcome?
 - How can we be sure to respond to their interests and questions?
 - How will we include music, especially singing?
 - Who will eloquently re-tell the stories? Do we see other ways to draw on the power of the arts?
 - Would we like to serve refreshments and plan a social period to follow the music, stories, and quotations?
 - How could we organize ourselves so that each member of our study circle actively seeks to engage the guests in happy fellowship, listen to their interests and hopes, and respond to their questions?
2. If you decide to open your study circle to guests, consider also reserving next session’s discussion about individual acts of teaching, study, and service to the following week.

Alternately, if circumstances prevent you from opening your next session to guests, please enjoy the alternate form of your next session. Decide if you’d also like to use these plans for another occasion.



DEVOTIONAL MEETINGS

Focus Questions:

What is the purpose of a devotional meeting?

What factors will insure the success of a devotional meeting?

1 It behooveth the friends in whatever land they be, to gather together in meetings, and therein to speak wisely and with eloquence, and to read the verses of God; for it is God's words that kindle love's fire and set it ablaze.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Bahá'í Meetings/The Nineteen Day Feast*, p. 3

2 We, verily, have made music as a ladder for your souls, a means whereby they may be lifted up unto the realm on high. . . .

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, paragraph 51

3 Every meeting which is organized for the purpose of unity and concord will be conducive to changing strangers into friends, enemies into associates, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá will be present in his heart and soul with that meeting.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, Vol. 3, p. 553

4 At these meetings, there should be no extraneous conversation whatever. Rather, the assemblage should confine itself to reading and reciting the Holy Words, and to the discussion of matters relating to the Cause of God, expounding, for example, conclusive proofs and arguments, and the Writings of the Best Beloved of mankind. Those who present themselves at these gatherings must first array themselves in spotless clothing, turn their faces toward the Kingdom of Abhá, and then with lowliness and submissiveness enter in. During the readings they must maintain complete silence. Should anyone wish to speak, he should say his say in all humility, with exactitude and eloquence. Salutations be unto you, and praise.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *Bahá'í Meetings/The Nineteen Day Feast*, p. 9

5 . . . This meeting is blessed. But if it is firmly established and become constant, it will bring forth great results and most weighty developments will be attained. Consequently, persevere ye in renewing your meetings and display utmost magnanimity in firmness and steadfastness.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, Vol. 3, p. 690

6 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.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *The Arts*, p. 7

7 As we have said in an earlier message, the flourishing of the community, especially at the local level, demands a significant enhancement in patterns of behaviour: those patterns by which the collective expression of the virtues of the individual members and the functioning of the Spiritual Assembly are manifest in the unity and fellowship of the community and the dynamism of its activity and growth. This calls for the integration of the component elements—adults, youth and children—in spiritual, social, educational and administrative activities; and their engagement in local plans of teaching and development. It implies a collective will and sense of purpose to perpetuate the Spiritual Assembly through annual elections. It involves the practice of collective worship of God. Hence, it is essential to the spiritual life of the community that the friends hold regular devotional meetings in local Bahá'í centres, where available, or elsewhere, including the homes of believers.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, Ridván 1996, *Message to the World*

Individual Acts of Teaching, Study, and Service

If your group chooses to open your next session to guests, select two or more of the following actions to complete prior to Session Five:

- Plan a specific act of service that you could offer your community or neighborhood, inspired by your consciousness of world citizenship. Would you like to offer this service individually or as a group? Would you also like to select a short quotation to share with the group, either through individual conversation or in the form of a gift card?
- Consult again with your family about a specific path of service to offer the Cause of God. As a family, choose an action to complete during the course of this week. Consider how you might support the core activities of your cluster through this service. Share the results with the group at the next session.
- Invite a seeker (or a family of seekers) to your home to show loving hospitality and fellowship. How would you like to share the Word of God during this visit? Could you find a way to say prayers or enjoy music and storytelling together? How could you show hospitality to your youngest guests? Share the results of this gathering at the next session.
- Host a devotional meeting or fireside in your home or community.
- Read the Tablet written April 19, 20, and 22 to the Bahá'ís in North America by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, published in *Tablets of the Divine Plan*. Prepare a 2-minute report for the next session that describes the conditions for attaining the station of Apostles of Bahá'u'lláh.
- Read pages 90-140 of the book, *Bahá'í Administration* by Shoghi Effendi. Prepare a 2-minute report for the next session that shares a key concept of Bahá'í administration.

A Personal Teaching Plan

Complete your Personal Teaching Plan, perhaps while listening to quiet background music.

Closing Devotions

Conclude the session with prayers and music. Consider incorporating some of the prayers published in *Tablets of the Divine Plan* as part of your closing devotions.



A PERSONAL TEACHING PLAN

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 in *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 78

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...?



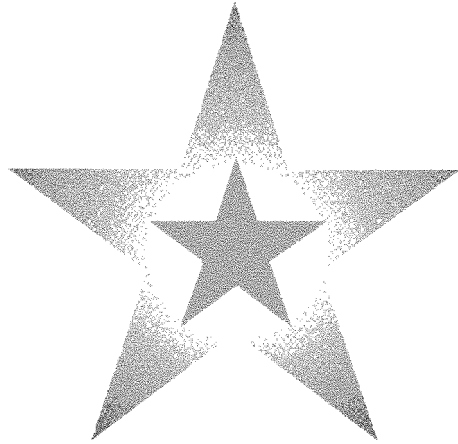
My love for Bahá'u'lláh; the power of the Covenant; the dynamics of prayer; the inspiration and education derived from regular reading and study of the Holy Texts?



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 God hath made adversity
as a morning dew upon His green pasture,
and a wick for His lamp
which lighteth earth and heaven.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

Building a New Civilization

COURSE SIX

Some
Fundamental
Verities of the
Bahá'í Faith

Session 4

Adversity: A
Morning Dew upon
His Green Pasture

Opening Devotions

Welcome! Greet your guests at the door and make them welcome.

Then, begin your devotional meeting with carefully selected prayers and music, including group singing if possible.

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

Verily God hath made adversity as a morning dew upon His green pasture, and a wick for His lamp which lighteth earth and heaven.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, p. 128

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

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 312

Objectives of the Session:

If desired, you may choose to share the learning objectives for this session or you may omit this step to foster a sense of inclusion with your guests.

Knowledge

To know some of the stories about the Holy Family.

Wisdom

To understand the relationship between adversity and the growth of the Cause of God.

Spiritual Perception

To perceive the importance of fostering joy even in difficult circumstances.

To perceive ways to create a warm and welcoming environment for guests.

Eloquent Speech

To demonstrate capability to host a devotional meeting open to all.

To demonstrate understanding of the relationship between adversity and the growth of the Cause of God.

A member of your study circle may create a spirit of welcome by sharing the following comments and instructions with your guests, in your own words:

- This devotional gathering provides an opportunity to reflect on some possibilities for us all to live together as individuals, families, and as a community. The Creator of us all has offered these glorious possibilities in the form of a gift to all humanity through the Words and Deeds of Bahá'u'lláh, the Founder of the Bahá'í Faith.
- As Bahá'u'lláh explained that His purpose is to promote “the good of the world and the happiness of the nations,” let’s each think of a time when we felt ourselves to be happy because we were part of something important and something good. We might have been with our families or another group, it might have been long ago or recently, but let’s each think of a happy time in our own lives when we knew we were working together with others for the good of humanity.

After a short period of reflection, invite the friends—young and old, study circle participants and all guests—to introduce themselves and share their happy memories with the group.

Then, explain to your guests that during this gathering we will enjoy stories about some of Bahá'u'lláh's actions that promote human happiness, a few musical selections, and then have the opportunity to study some of Bahá'u'lláh's Words that explain how we can find happiness in even the most difficult circumstances.

A Devotional Program Open to All

Bahá'u'lláh's Words and Deeds: Images of a New World Order

Reader #1:

The foundation of Bahá'u'lláh's teachings is the concept that all people are important and worthy of love. This all-embracing love was expressed in the deeds of Bahá'u'lláh's everyday life. In the following memory recorded by Bahíyyih Khánum, the daughter of Bahá'u'lláh, we glimpse the love between her Father, the Manifestation of God, and His wife, her mother. The Family had lost their wealth and position, Bahá'u'lláh Himself had endured a period of torture and imprisonment, and the Family had entered a life of exile from their home in Persia to Iraq. Bahíyyih Khánum recalls:

Asíyih Khánum, my dear mother, was in delicate health, her strength was diminished by the hardships she had undergone, but she always worked beyond her force.

Sometimes my father himself helped in the cooking, as that hard work was too much for the dainty, refined, gentle lady. The hardships she had endured saddened the heart of her divine husband, who was also her beloved Lord.

THE SPOKEN CHRONICLE OF BAHÍYYIH KHÁNUM, Daughter of Bahá'u'lláh, in *The Chosen Highway* by Lady Blomfield, p. 47

Reader #2:

In another glimpse of Bahá'u'lláh's family life, Túbá Khánum, His granddaughter, remembers how He responded to the culture of His time that valued boy children more highly than girls. She said:

When my little sister, Ruh-Angiz Asíyih, arrived, there was some disappointment that she was not a boy.

Bahá'u'lláh said, "I will love her more than all the rest; you must not wish that she had been a boy."

THE SPOKEN CHRONICLE OF TÚBÁ KHÁNUM, Daughter of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, grand-daughter of Bahá'u'lláh, in *The Chosen Highway* by Lady Blomfield, p. 103

Reader #3:

To Bahá'u'lláh, children were a precious gift to be brought within the loving embrace of the community. Túbá Khánum, His granddaughter, also remembers:

We children looked upon Bahá'u'lláh as another loving Father; to Him we carried all our little difficulties and troubles. He took an interest in everything which concerned us.

He used to send a servant to Beirut every year to buy stuff for our clothes. Bahá'u'lláh would then call for us to choose which we liked best for our frocks. My mother, my aunt, and the children would make this cotton material into garments. . . .

All our holidays, all our treats and our happiness came from Him in those days; when boxes of sweets were brought to Him He would set some aside for us.

“Put that box of sweets over there, or [‘Abdu’l-Bahá] will give it away to the people,” He would say in fun.

“Let the dear children come in, and have some dessert,” He often said, when we were being sent off to bed—my Father and my mother not wishing that we should disturb Him—but He always welcomed us with loving words.

How we adored Him!

“Now children, to-morrow you shall come with Me for a picnic to the Ridván,” He would say, and our night was so full of joy we could scarcely sleep.

THE SPOKEN CHRONICLE OF TÚBÁ KHÁNUM, daughter of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, in *The Chosen Highway* by Lady Blomfield, p. 98

Reader #4:

All of these simple glimpses of into the life of Bahá'u'lláh convey, in deeds, the fundamental spirit of the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. At their core, the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh break the back of the prejudicial favor of one group over another. Even in the face of pressure from corrupt officials, Bahá'u'lláh stood for the principle of justice:

In the days before Bahá'u'lláh lost all his wealth and was completely impoverished, He owned some property in the countryside. One day, a high government official demanded to be able to buy the property that belonged to Bahá'u'lláh. By corrupt means the official tried to force Bahá'u'lláh to sell to him. Bahá'u'lláh refused to bend to the pressure from this corrupt official, replying to the official demand by saying: “Had this property been exclusively mine own, I would willingly have complied with your desire. This transitory life, with all its sordid possessions, is worthy of no attachment in my eyes, how much less this small and insignificant estate. As a number of other people, both rich and poor, some of full age and some still minors, share with me the ownership of this property, I would request you to refer this matter to them, and to seek their consent.”

ADAPTED FROM SHOGHI EFFENDI, *The Dawn-Breakers*, p. 120

Reader #5:

These wonderful glimpses of a new form of family and community life did not end with Bahá'u'lláh Himself, but also extended to the people who enlisted themselves under His Cause, the Cause of peace and unity and happiness for all humankind. In the words of one of Bahá'u'lláh's followers:

“So intoxicated were those who had quaffed from the cup of Bahá'u'lláh's presence . . . that in their eyes the palaces of kings appeared more ephemeral than a spider's web. . . . The celebrations and festivities that were theirs were such as the kings of the earth had never dreamt of. I, myself with two others . . . lived in a room which was devoid of furniture. Bahá'u'lláh entered it one day, and, looking about Him, remarked: ‘Its emptiness pleases Me. In My estimation it is preferable to many a spacious palace, inasmuch as the beloved of God are occupied in it with the remembrance of the Incomparable Friend, with hearts that are wholly emptied of the dross of this world.’” His own life was characterized by that same austerity, and evinced that same simplicity which marked the lives of His beloved companions. “There was a time in Iraq,” He Himself affirms, in one of His Tablets, “when the Ancient Beauty . . . had no change of linen. The one shirt He possessed would be washed, dried and worn again.

“Many a night . . . no less than ten persons subsisted on no more than a pennyworth of dates. No one knew to whom actually belonged the shoes, the cloaks, or the robes that were to be found in their houses. Whoever went to the bazaar could claim that the shoes upon his feet were his own, and each one who entered the presence of Bahá'u'lláh could affirm that the cloak and robe he then wore belonged to him. Their own names they had forgotten, their hearts were emptied of aught else except adoration for their Beloved. . . . O, for the joy of those days, and the gladness and wonder of those hours!”

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *God Passes By*, p. 136

Additional Optional Reading, if available:

Our final story is especially for the children. If all the children would come forward and take a seat around me, I will read a story to them that shows how these beautiful Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh can really make a difference for us in our daily lives:

Read “Not in My Class,” *The Central Figures: Bahá'u'lláh*, Vol. 2, pp. 149-53.

Reader #6:

Bahá'u'lláh suffered torture, imprisonment, and banishment to show people how to build a New World Order. He assures us that this powerful Message from God cannot be stopped by tribulations and adversity. He wrote:

I was asleep upon My couch, when lo, the breezes of My Lord, the All-Merciful, passed over Me, awoke Me from My slumber, and bade Me lift up My voice betwixt earth and heaven. This thing is not from Me, but from God. Unto this testify the dwellers of His Dominion and of His Kingdom, and the inhabitants of the cities of His unfading glory. By Him Who is the Truth! I fear no tribulation in His path, nor any affliction in My love for Him and in the way of His good pleasure. Verily God hath made adversity as a morning dew upon His green pasture, and a wick for His lamp which lighteth earth and heaven.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, p. 128

Suggested music to play as transition:

“Paradise of the Placeless,” “Bahá'u'lláh,” or “This is Faith” from the *Fruits of the Spirit* CD. Alternate recorded music would be equally effective and singing is ideal.

Activity Open to All

A Morning Dew Upon His Green Pasture

1. Explain to participants that we will now be exploring the meaning of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation and His Sufferings on behalf of humanity.
2. Invite participants to work in small teams to study the quotations entitled "A Morning Dew Upon His Green Pasture." Consider providing your guests with photocopies of these quotations. Alternatively, you may copy the quotations on chart paper to display in your gathering or you may copy the quotations by hand and give each participant one of the hand-copied quotations.
3. Invite the friends (guests and study circle participants alike) either to read the quotations aloud in their teams or to listen as members of your study circle read the quotations aloud in the whole group.
4. Consider providing young children with a quiet activity such as drawing pictures of the words in the quotations while they listen. Alternately, a member of your study circle may engage them in quiet activities in a nearby area.
5. After carefully reading the quotations, encourage each team to discuss the questions provided. Explain that there are no 'right' answers, but that they are asked to apply their own insights to explore the meaning of the passages. After allowing some time for small group discussion, encourage the teams to briefly share their ideas in the whole group.
6. Explain in your own words that Bahá'u'lláh did not passively submit to oppression and suffering, but that His sufferings had a purpose:
 - Bahá'u'lláh accepted banishment and imprisonment so the world could be made new;
 - Bahá'u'lláh also says that when we experience troubles, we can call to mind His own troubles and know that God Himself will roll up the old world and spread out a new order in its place;
 - We too can be part of God's great Plan.
7. Ask each group to write or draw their ideas or images of what a "New World Order" might look like. If the participants were designing a new world order that would bring peace, justice and unity to every person on earth, what would it look like? Encourage children to contribute to these drawings.
8. Invite each group to share their ideas and images of the New World Order. Celebrate all contributions!

Suggested music to play as transition:

"Kam Kam Ruz Beh Ruz" from *Fruits of the Spirit* CD, or other suitable music.



ADVERSITY: A MORNING DEW UPON HIS GREEN PASTURE

Discussion Questions:

How is it possible that adversity or hardship can be like a morning dew upon His green pasture? What evidence do we see of this principle in the lives of the Founders of the world's great religions? What evidence do we see of this principle in our own lives or in the lives of people we know?

1 We have accepted to be abased, O believers in the Unity of God, that ye may be exalted, and have suffered manifold afflictions, that ye might prosper and flourish. He Who hath come to build anew the whole world, behold, how they that have joined partners with God have forced Him to dwell within the most desolate of cities!

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

2 All this befell Me, though I had come unto them at their own behest and did not oppose their authority, which deriveth from thine [the Sultan's] own. Thus did We accept and observe their bidding. They, however, appear to have forgotten that which God hath commanded. . . . They seem to imagine that they have been created from pure light, while others have been fashioned out of dust. How wretched are their imaginings! We have all been created from a sorry germ.

I swear by God, O King! It is not My wish to make My plaint to thee against them that persecute Me. I only plead My grief and My sorrow to God, Who hath created Me and them, Who well knoweth our state and Who watcheth over all things. My wish is to warn them of the consequences of their actions, if perchance they might desist from treating others as they have treated Me, and be of them that heed My warning.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, p. 217

3 Walk thou steadfastly in the love of God, and keep straight on in His Faith, and aid Him through the power of thine utterance. Thus biddeth thee the All-Merciful Who is suffering imprisonment at the hands of His oppressors.

If tribulation touch thee for My sake, call thou to mind My ills and troubles, and remember My banishment and imprisonment. Thus do We devolve on thee what hath descended upon Us from Him Who is the All-Glorious, the All-Wise.

By My Self! The day is approaching when We will have rolled up the world and all that is therein, and spread out a new order in its stead. He, verily, is powerful over all things.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 312, CXLIII

4 Briefly, this Wronged One hath, in the face of all that hath befallen Him at their hands, and all that hath been said of Him, endured patiently, and held His peace, inasmuch as it is Our purpose, through the loving providence of God—exalted be His glory—and His surpassing mercy, to abolish, through the force of Our utterance, all disputes, war, and bloodshed, from the face of the earth.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 33

Reproducible Page

Closing Devotions

Consider concluding the group study with a closing prayer and singing before you begin your fellowship activities. Be sure to allow time for fellowship with your guests.

Fellowship! Fellowship!

Enjoy time for fellowship with your guests. Some fellowship opportunities can include:

- Games that involve all ages
- Refreshments
- Active engagement of your guests in happy conversations
- Listen with love to your guests' hopes and cares, respond with genuine interest, and share the Word of God as a gift from God
- Group singing
- Other enjoyable activities that promote group unity

How will you invite your guests to participate in future devotional gatherings?

Could you invite them also to participate in firesides or children's classes?

Are some of your guests ready to begin the first course in a sequence of institute courses?

A Personal Teaching Plan

Individually complete your personal teaching plan after your devotional gathering has concluded. Reflect upon ways that you can continue to nurture the souls that you invited to your devotional meeting.



A PERSONAL TEACHING PLAN

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 in *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 78

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...?



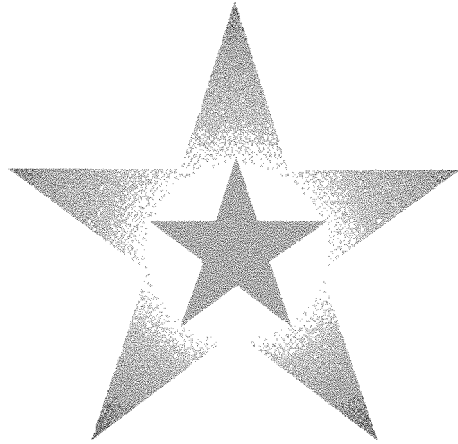
My love for Bahá'u'lláh; the power of the Covenant; the dynamics of prayer; the inspiration and education derived from regular reading and study of the Holy Texts?



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?



*R*egard man as a mine rich in gems of inestimable value.
Education can, alone, cause it to reveal its treasures, and
enable mankind to benefit therefrom.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

Building a New Civilization

COURSE SIX

Some
Fundamental
Verities of the
Bahá'í Faith

Session 5

The Individual in a
New Model of
Community Life

Opening Devotions

Singing is ideal for uniting the hearts. Consider beginning your session with group singing, prayers, and recorded music as desired.

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

Regard man as a mine rich in gems of inestimable value. Education can, alone, cause it to reveal its treasures, and enable mankind to benefit therefrom.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 161

Objectives of the Session

Read aloud the learning objectives for this session.

Knowledge

To become more familiar with the writings on the relationship between individuals, institutions, and the community.

Wisdom

To understand the contributions of individual and institutions to a vibrant, growing community.

Spiritual Perception

To perceive the role of the institutions to empower individual service to the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh.

Eloquent Speech

To demonstrate an understanding of the relationships of the institutions, the individual and the community by creating a visual representation.

To plan individual acts of study, service and teaching.

Consultation on Individual Teaching, Service, and Study

Reflecting on our study, service and teaching since the past two sessions:

- What was especially heart-warming about our devotional meeting open to all? What are some highlights that we can build on for future gatherings? How can we follow up with the people whose hearts were obviously touched? What were some of the ways that we supported each other as we served together? What can we learn about reaching out to the community at large through our service?
- Who chose to offer another service to the community or neighborhood? Do you see possibilities for ongoing connection?
- Who also chose to offer service as a family? What happened as a result of your service?
- Who was able to host another devotional meeting or fireside in your home or community? What was a highlight?
- Who also invited a seeker or family of seekers to your home? How did they respond?
- Who chose to study the Tablet from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá published in *Tablets of the Divine Plan*? What did you learn?
- Who chose to study letters from the book, *Bahá’í Administration* by Shoghi Effendi? What did you learn?
- Who else would like to share the results of study, service and teaching over the past week?

Activity *The Individual in a New Model of Community Life*

1. In your study circle, read aloud the quotations entitled “The Individual in a New Model of Community Life,” paying careful attention to the description of mutually collaborative relationships.
2. Discuss answers to the focus questions.



THE INDIVIDUAL IN A NEW MODEL OF COMMUNITY LIFE

Focus Questions:

What are the capacities of the individual believer? What additional capacities are enabled by participation in Bahá'í community life? What additional capacities stem from working within the guidance of consultative bodies?

1 Regard man as a mine rich in gems of inestimable value. Education can, alone, cause it to reveal its treasures, and enable mankind to benefit therefrom.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 161

2 These are the days of seed sowing. These are the days of tree planting. The bountiful bestowals of God are successive. He who sows a seed in this day will behold his reward in the fruits and harvest of the heavenly Kingdom. This timely seed, when planted in the hearts of the beloved of God, will be watered by showers of divine mercy and warmed by the sunshine of divine love. Its fruitage and flower shall be the solidarity of mankind, the perfection of justice and the praiseworthy attributes of heaven manifest in humanity. All who sow such a seed and plant such a tree according to the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh shall surely witness this divine outcome in the degrees of its perfection and will attain unto the good pleasure of the Merciful One. . . .

Therefore, you must without delay employ your powers in spreading the effulgent glow of the love of God and so order your lives that you may be known and seen as examples of its radiance. You must deal with all in loving-kindness in order that this precious seed entrusted to your planting may continue to grow and bring forth its perfect fruit. The love and mercy of God will accomplish this through you if you have love in your own heart.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 8

3 . . . The importance of the Bahá'í administration is its value in serving as a facilitator of the emergence and maintenance of community life in a wholly new mode, and in catering to the requirements of the spiritual relationships which flow from love and unity among the friends. This touches upon a distinguishing characteristic of Bahá'í life which such spiritual relationships foster, namely, the spirit of servitude to God, expressed in service to the Cause, to the friends and to humanity as a whole. The attitude of the individual as a servant, an attitude pre-eminently exemplified in the life and person of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, is a dynamic that permeates the activities of the Faith; it acquires collective, transformative force in the normal functioning of a community. In this regard, the institutions of the Faith stand as channels for the promotion of this salient characteristic. It is in this framework that the concepts of rulership and leadership, authority and power are properly understood and actualized.

The appearance of a united, firmly based and self-sustaining community must be a major goal of a Spiritual Assembly. Composed of a membership reflecting a diversity of personalities, talents, abilities and interests, such a community requires a level of internal interaction between the Assembly and the body of the believers based on a commonly recognized commitment to service, and in which a sense of partnership based on appreciation of each other's distinctive sphere of action is fully recognized and unfailingly upheld, and no semblance of a dichotomy between the two appears. In such a community leadership is that expression of service by which the Spiritual Assembly invites and encourages the use of the manifold talents and abilities with which the community is endowed, and stimulates and guides the diverse elements of the community towards goals and strategies by which the effects of a coherent force for progress can be realized.

The maintenance of a climate of love and unity depends upon the feeling among the individuals composing the community that the Assembly is part of themselves, that their cooperative interactions with that divinely ordained body allow them a fair latitude for initiative and that the quality of their relationships with both the institution and their fellow believers encourages a spirit of enterprise invigorated by an awareness of the revolutionizing purpose of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation, by a consciousness of the high privilege of their being associated with efforts to realize that purpose, and by a consequent, ever-present sense of joy. In such a climate, the community is transformed from being the mere sum of its parts to assuming a wholly new personality as an entity in which its members blend without losing their individual uniqueness. . . .

The authority to direct the affairs of the Faith locally, nationally and internationally, is divinely conferred on elected representatives. However, the power to accomplish the tasks of the community resides primarily in the mass of the believers. The authority of the institutions is an irrevocable necessity for the progress of humanity; its exercise is an art to be mastered. The power of action in the believers is unlocked at the level of individual initiative and surges at the level of collective volition. In its potential, this mass power, this mix of individual potentialities, exists in a malleable form susceptible to the multiple reactions of individuals to the sundry influences at work in the world. To realize its highest purpose, this power needs to express itself through orderly avenues of activity. Even though individuals may strive to be guided in their actions by their personal understanding of the Divine Texts, and much can be accomplished thereby, such actions, untempered by the overall direction provided by authorized institutions, are incapable of attaining the thrust necessary for the unencumbered advancement of civilization.

Individual initiative is a pre-eminent aspect of this power; it is therefore a major responsibility of the institutions to safeguard and stimulate it. Similarly, it is important for individuals to recognize and accept that the institutions must act as a guiding and moderating influence on the march of civilization. . . .

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *Letter dated 19 May 1994 to a National Spiritual Assembly*

Activity

Building Communities

As we have seen, the well-being both of the individual and of the community stems from the contributions of individuals of all ages and of all walks of life to the community as a whole.

1. Working in teams of two, imagine a specific individual—man, woman, youth, or child—that you might meet within the coming few weeks or months. Imagine that this individual finds joy and happiness in discovering the Message of God for this day and begins to contribute his or her talents to the community.
2. In your team of two, create a simple, stylized outline drawing of one or more men, women, youth, or children who could begin to contribute their talents to a vibrant, growing, spirit-filled community. Using chart paper and markers or other materials available:
 - Create a simple sketch of one or more individuals drawn by the Word of God and the love of Bahá'u'lláh to contribute their talents to building the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh.
 - On the back of your sketched images, note the names, talents and interests, and potential contributions of these imagined individuals to the growth of your dynamic, outward-focused community.
 - Also briefly note how you imagine that these individuals discovered the Message of Bahá'u'lláh and decided to contribute their share to building this New World Order.
3. Then, introduce your individuals to the study circle. Display all the sketches as a reminder to keep these new members of your growing community in your minds and hearts for the next activity.

Activity

Institutions Fostering Bahá'í Community Life

1. Working now in the same teams of two, select one of the following sets of quotations, read aloud the passages, and answer the focus question.
 - The Nineteen Day Feast in a New Model of Community Life
 - The Bahá'í Fund in a New Model of Community Life
 - The House of Worship in a New Model of Community Life
 - Bahá'í Elections in a New Model of Community Life
2. Keeping the group of imaginary new members of your growing community in mind, create a simple sketched visual symbol to illustrate your answers to the questions:
 - How do these individuals contribute to the growth of this institution?
 - How does the institution channel and enhance the capabilities of these individuals?
 - How does this institution strengthen patterns of community life?
 - How does this institution contribute to the well-being of the community at large?
3. Share your simple sketch with the whole group.
4. Arrange these symbols along with your sketched individuals to create a visual representation of individuals, the community, and these institutions that function at the grassroots of human society. Read aloud the following quotation:

When the masses of mankind are awakened and enter the Faith of God, a new process is set in motion and the growth of a new civilization begins. Witness the emergence of Christianity and of Islam. These masses are the rank and file, steeped in traditions of their own, but receptive to the new Word of God, by which, when they truly respond to it, they become so influenced as to transform those who come in contact with them.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *Wellspring of Guidance*, p. 31
5. Briefly discuss: What are some of the ways that our community is already beginning to grow and develop distinctive patterns of Bahá'í life? In what ways is our study circle contributing to this process? What is the value of focusing our contributions on the core activities of the Plan?
6. Save your sketched men, women, youth, children, and symbols of these institutions. Please bring them to the next session of your study circle.



THE NINETEEN-DAY FEAST IN A NEW MODEL OF COMMUNITY LIFE

Focus Question:

How does the Nineteen-Day Feast empower and sustain a new pattern of community life?

1 Verily, it is enjoined upon you to offer a feast, once in every month, though only water be served; for God hath purposed to bind hearts together, albeit through both earthly and heavenly means.

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

2 This Feast is a bringer of joy. It is the groundwork of agreement and unity. It is the key to affection and fellowship. It diffuseth the oneness of mankind.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. 1, p. 426

3 In brief, this is my hope: that the Nineteen Day Feast become the cause of great spiritual solidarity between the friends, that it may bring believers into the bond of unity, and we will then be so united together that love and wisdom will spread from this centre to all parts. This Feast is a divine Feast. It is a Lord's supper. It attracts confirmation of God like a magnet. It is the cause of the enlightenment of hearts.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. 1, p. 430

4 As to your question concerning Bahá'í feasts, Shoghi Effendi strongly feels that on such occasions the friends should emphasize both the spiritual and the administrative elements. For these are equally essential to the success of every Bahá'í festival. To maintain the right balance between them is, therefore, the duty and responsibility of every individual Bahá'í or group. Until the believers learn to combine the two, there can be no hope of their gaining any real and permanent benefit from such religious celebrations.

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. 1, p. 433

5 There is a time set aside at the 19 Day Feasts for the community to express its views and make suggestions to its assembly; the assembly and the believers should look forward to this happy period of discussion, and neither fear it nor suppress it.

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. 1, p. 452

6 It is clear, then, that the Feast is rooted in hospitality, with all its implications of friendliness, courtesy, service, generosity and conviviality. The very idea of hospitality as the sustaining spirit of so significant an institution introduces a revolutionary new attitude to the conduct of human affairs at all levels, an attitude which is critical to that world unity which the Central Figures of our Faith laboured so long and suffered so much cruelty to bring into being. It is in this divine festival that the foundation is laid for the realization of so unprecedented a reality.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. 1, p. 422



THE BAHÁ'Í FUND IN A NEW MODEL OF COMMUNITY LIFE

Focus Question:

How does the Bahá'í Fund empower and sustain a new pattern of community life?

1 . . . It is important for the National Spiritual Assemblies to work out ways and means of creating a sense of belonging in the hearts of the believers. One of the ways this can be done is to bring to their attention the needs of the Fund. The National Assembly should neither feel embarrassed nor ashamed in turning to the friends, continuously appealing to them to exemplify their faith and devotion to the Cause by sacrificing for it, and pointing out to them that they will grow spiritually through their acts of self-abnegation, that the fear of poverty should not deter them from sacrificing for the Fund, and that the assistance and bounty of the Source of all good and of all wealth are unailing and assured.

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. 2, p. 67

2 With regard to your question concerning contributions to the Temple fund: the friends should certainly be encouraged and even urged to support financially this, as well as other national institutions of the Cause. But they should, under no circumstances, be required to do so. As to the idea of 'giving what one can afford': this does by no means put a limit or even exclude the possibility of self-sacrifice. There can be no limit to one's contributions to the national fund. The more one can give the better it is, especially when such offerings necessitate the sacrifice of other wants and desires on the part of the donor. The harder the sacrifice the more meritorious will it be, of course, in the sight of God. For after all it is not so much the quantity of one's offerings that matters, but rather the measure of deprivation that such offerings entail. It is the spirit, not the mere fact of contributing, that we should always take into account when we stress the necessity for a universal and whole-hearted support of the various funds of the Cause.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. 1, p. 539

3 And as the progress and execution of spiritual activities is dependent and conditioned upon material means, it is of absolute necessity that immediately after the establishment of local as well as national Spiritual Assemblies, a Bahá'í Fund be established, to be placed under the exclusive control of the Spiritual Assembly. . . . It is the sacred obligation of every conscientious and faithful servant of Bahá'u'lláh who desires to see His Cause advance, to contribute freely and generously for the increase of that Fund.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *Bahá'í Administration*, pp. 41-42

4 The House of Justice believes that the financial needs of the Cause should be met by universal participation in giving and urges National and Local Spiritual Assemblies to pursue this goal with vigour and imagination, recalling to the friends the plea of the beloved Guardian to every believer 'unhesitatingly, to place, each according to his circumstances, his share on the altar of Bahá'í sacrifice.' The fact that only we, the Bahá'ís, can contribute financially to the Cause is both our honour and our challenge.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *Ridván Message*, 1967



THE HOUSE OF WORSHIP IN A NEW MODEL OF COMMUNITY LIFE

Focus Question:

How does the House of Worship empower and sustain a new pattern of community life? How is this embryonic institution expressed in our country today?

It should be borne in mind that the central Edifice of the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár*, round which in the fullness of time shall cluster such institutions of social service as shall afford relief to the suffering, sustenance to the poor, shelter to the wayfarer, solace to the bereaved, and education to the ignorant, should be regarded apart from these Dependencies, as a House solely designed and entirely dedicated to the worship of God. . . .

But however inspiring the conception of Bahá'í worship, as witnessed in the central Edifice of this exalted Temple, it cannot be regarded as the sole, nor even the essential, factor in the part which the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár*, as designed by Bahá'u'lláh, is destined to play in the organic life of the Bahá'í community. Divorced from the social, humanitarian, educational and scientific pursuits centering around the Dependencies of the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár*, Bahá'í worship, however exalted in its conception, however passionate in fervor, can never hope to achieve beyond the meagre and often transitory results produced by the contemplations of the ascetic or the communion of the passive worshiper. It cannot afford lasting satisfaction and benefit to the worshiper himself, much less to humanity in general, unless and until translated and transfused into that dynamic and disinterested service to the cause of humanity which it is the supreme privilege of the Dependencies of the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár* to facilitate and promote. Nor will the exertions, no matter how disinterested and strenuous, of those who within the precincts of the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár* will be engaged in administering the affairs of the future Bahá'í Commonwealth, fructify and prosper unless they are brought into close and daily communion with those spiritual agencies centering in and radiating from the central Shrine of the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár*. Nothing short of direct and constant interaction between the spiritual forces emanating from this House of Worship centering in the heart of the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár*, and the energies consciously displayed by those who administer its affairs in their service to humanity can possibly provide the necessary agency capable of removing the ills that have so long and so grievously afflicted humanity. For it is assuredly upon the consciousness of the efficacy of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, reinforced on one hand by spiritual communion with His Spirit, and on the other by the intelligent application and the faithful execution of the principles and laws He revealed, that the salvation of a world in travail must ultimately depend. And of all the institutions that stand associated with His Holy Name, surely none save the institution of the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár* can most adequately provide the essentials of Bahá'í worship and service, both so vital to the regeneration of the world. Therein lies the secret of the loftiness, of the potency, of the unique position of the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár* as one of the outstanding institutions conceived by Bahá'u'lláh.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *Bahá'í Administration*, p. 184-86



BAHÁ'Í ELECTIONS IN A NEW MODEL OF COMMUNITY LIFE

Focus Question:

How do Bahá'í elections empower and sustain a new pattern of community life?

1 On the election day, the friends must wholeheartedly participate in the elections, in unity and amity, turning their hearts to God, detached from all things but Him, seeking His guidance and supplicating His aid and bounty.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. 1, p. 315

2 Due regard must be paid to their actual capacity and present attainments, and only those who are best qualified for membership, be they men or women....

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *Dawn of a New Day*, p. 4

3 It is incumbent upon the chosen delegates to consider without the least trace of passion and prejudice, and irrespective of any material consideration, the names of only those who can best combine the necessary qualities of unquestioned loyalty, of selfless devotion, of a well-trained mind, of recognized ability and mature experience.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *Bahá'í Administration*, pp. 87-88

4 One's vote should be kept confidential. It is not permissible to make any reference whatsoever to individual names.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. 1, p. 317

5 If any discrimination is at all to be tolerated, it should be a discrimination not against, but rather in favor of the minority, be it racial or otherwise. Unlike the nations and peoples of the earth, be they of the East or of the West, democratic or authoritarian, communist or capitalist, whether belonging to the Old World or the New, who either ignore, trample upon, or extirpate, the racial, religious, or political minorities within the sphere of their jurisdiction, every organized community enlisted under the banner of Bahá'u'lláh should feel it to be its first and inescapable obligation to nurture, encourage, and safeguard every minority belonging to any faith, race, class, or nation within it. So great and vital is this principle that in such circumstances, as when an equal number of ballots have been cast in an election, or where the qualifications for any office are balanced as between the various races, faiths or nationalities within the community, priority should unhesitatingly be accorded the party representing the minority, and this for no other reason except to stimulate and encourage it, and afford it an opportunity to further the interests of the community. In the light of this principle, and bearing in mind the extreme desirability of having the minority elements participate and share responsibility in the conduct of Bahá'í activity, it should be the duty of every Bahá'í community so to arrange its affairs that in cases where individuals belonging to the divers minority elements within it are already qualified and fulfill the necessary requirements, Bahá'í representative institutions, be they Assemblies, conventions, conferences, or committees, may have represented on them as many of these divers elements, racial or otherwise, as possible. . . .

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, pp. 35-36

Individual Acts of Teaching, Study, and Service

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

- Choose a specific service to offer your local children's classes.
- Plan a specific act of service that you could offer your community or neighborhood, inspired by your consciousness of world citizenship. Would you like to offer this service individually or as a group? Could you carefully select a short quotation to share with the group, either through individual conversation or perhaps in the form of a gift card?
- Invite a seeker (or a family of seekers) to your home to show loving hospitality and fellowship. How would you like to share the Word of God during this visit? Could you find a way to say prayers or enjoy music and storytelling together? How could you show hospitality to your youngest guests? Share the results of this gathering at the next session.
- Host a devotional meeting or fireside in your home or community. Could you involve your family or a family of seekers in this service? Could you draw on the leadership capabilities of a youth in your community to collaborate with you in this service?
- Read the Tablet written March 8, 1917 to the Bahá'ís in North America by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, published in *Tablets of the Divine Plan*. Prepare a 2-minute report for the next session that describes how the oneness of humanity will be established in the world.
- Finish reading the book, *Bahá'í Administration* by Shoghi Effendi. Prepare a 2-minute report for the next session that shares a key concept of Bahá'í administration, unique to this new World Order.

A Personal Teaching Plan

Consider listening to quiet music as you complete your personal teaching plan.

Closing Devotions

Close the session with music and prayers for teaching and firmness in the Covenant.



A PERSONAL TEACHING PLAN

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 in *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 78

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...?



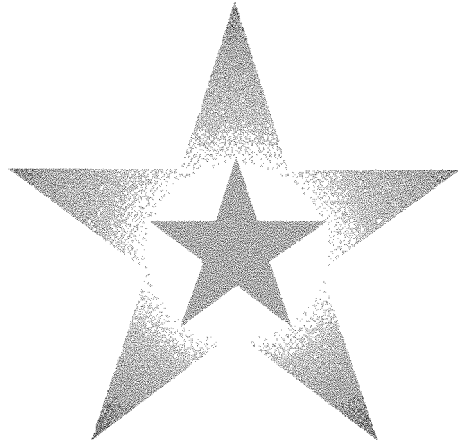
? My love for Bahá'u'lláh; the power of the Covenant; the dynamics of prayer; the inspiration and education derived from regular reading and study of the Holy Texts?



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?



*W*e love to see you at all times consorting in amity and concord within the paradise of My good-pleasure, and to inhale from your acts the fragrance of friendliness and unity, of loving-kindness and fellowship.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

Building a New Civilization

COURSE SIX

Some
Fundamental
Verities of the
Bahá'í Faith

Session 6

A Unique System:
Twin Arms of the
Administrative
Order

Opening Devotions

Begin with music or singing, prayers and the following quotation, if you wish:

We love to see you at all times consorting in amity and concord within the paradise of My good-pleasure, and to inhale from your acts the fragrance of friendliness and unity, of loving-kindness and fellowship.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 315, sec. CXLVI

Objectives of the Session

Read aloud the learning objectives for this session.

Knowledge

To become more familiar with some of the writings that outline the responsibilities of the twin arms of the Administrative Order.

Wisdom

To understand the importance of collaboration and harmony between the twin arms of the Administrative Order.

Spiritual Perception

To perceive the role of both institutions to empower individual service to the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh.

Eloquent Speech

To demonstrate understanding of the relationships among the institutions, individuals, and the community by creating a visual representation of a vibrant community of growth.

To plan individual acts of study, service and teaching.

Consultation on Individual Teaching, Service, and Study

Reflecting on our study, service and teaching since the last session:

- Who chose an act of service to your local children's class? What was a highlight?
- Who chose to offer service to your neighborhood or your community? What happened? Do you see a way to extend the service?
- Who was able to host a devotional meeting or fireside or invite seekers to your home? What attracted the hearts of your friends?
- Who chose to read the March 8, 1917 Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in *Tablets of the Divine Plan*? What did you learn?
- Who was able to study letters from the book, *Bahá'í Administration* by Shoghi Effendi? What did you learn?
- As a study circle, what are we learning about the process of service and how to sustain it over an extended period of time? In what ways

are we becoming more and more effective in sharing the message of Bahá'u'lláh with others? What are we learning about the importance of the full integration of young people in the core activities of our community?

Jigsaw Activity

Twin Arms of the Administrative Order in New Model of Community Life

1. Once again, admire the display of sketched individuals and institutional symbols that you created in the last session. Recall the spiritual qualities and contributions of these individuals and institutions to a new model of community life. Consider these individuals as members of your growing community as you explore the complementary functions of the twin arms of the Administrative Order brought by Bahá'u'lláh.
2. Organize your study circle into two groups. In your groups, read aloud the quotations and answer the focus question for one of the following sets of quotations:
 - The Institution of the Rulers in a New Model of Community Life: Local and National Spiritual Assemblies and Regional Bahá'í Councils
 - The Institution of the Learned in a New Model of Community Life: Continental Boards of Counselors, Auxiliary Board Members and their Assistants
3. Then, recombine your study groups into two new groups, so that some members of each of the previous groups are now in both new groups.
4. In your new group, share your answers and listen to the other set of answers to the focus questions studied in your previous groups.
5. Then, carefully read aloud the following quotation from the Universal House of Justice:

As the Bahá'í world experiences the manifold interactions of these two vital and complementary arms of the Administrative Order of Bahá'u'lláh, the unique benefits of this divinely ordained System become ever more apparent.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *Messages 1963 to 1986*, p. 465
6. Discuss: What might be some of the unique benefits of having two vital and complementary arms in the Administrative Order of Bahá'u'lláh? What are some functions that they share? What are their distinct responsibilities? Together, how do they support the growth and development of the community? Using the materials provided, create a visual symbol of the benefits of this System to add to your display of a new model of community life.
7. Share your group's symbol in the whole group. Add both symbols to your display. Congratulations on exploring a dynamic new model for vibrant, growing, unified community life!



THE INSTITUTION OF THE RULERS IN A NEW MODEL OF COMMUNITY LIFE: LOCAL AND NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLIES AND REGIONAL BAHÁ'Í COUNCILS

Focus Question:

How does the Institution of the Rulers cultivate a new pattern of community life?

1 The Lord hath ordained that in every city a House of Justice be established wherein shall gather counsellors to the number of Bahá. . . . It behoveth them to be the trusted ones of the Merciful among men and to regard themselves as the guardians appointed of God for all that dwell on earth. It incumbent upon them to take counsel together and to have regard for the interests of the servants of God, for His sake, even as they regard their own interests, and to choose that which is meet and seemly.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, paragraph 30

2 These Spiritual Assemblies are shining lamps and heavenly gardens, from which the fragrances of holiness are diffused over all regions, and the lights of knowledge are shed abroad over all created things. From them the spirit of life streameth in every direction. They, indeed, are the potent sources of the progress of man, at all times and under all conditions.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, sec. 38, p. 80

3 The divinely ordained institution of the Local Spiritual Assembly operates at the first levels of human society and is the basic administrative unit of Bahá'u'lláh's World Order. It is concerned with individuals and families whom it must constantly encourage to unite in a distinctive Bahá'í society, vitalized and guarded by the laws, ordinances and principles of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation. It protects the Cause of God; it acts as the loving shepherd of the Bahá'í flock.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. 2, p. 29

4 The friends are called upon to give their whole-hearted support and cooperation to the Local Spiritual Assembly, first by voting for the membership and then by energetically pursuing its plans and programmes, by turning to it in time of trouble or difficulty, by praying for its success and taking delight in its rise to influence and honour. This great prize, this gift of God within each community must be cherished, nurtured, loved, assisted, obeyed and prayed for. 'Such a firmly founded, busy and happy community life as is envisioned when Local Spiritual Assemblies are truly effective, will provide a firm home foundation from which the friends may derive courage and strength and loving support in bearing the Divine Message to their fellow-men and conforming their lives to its benevolent rule.'

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. 2, pp. 29-30

5 Regarding the establishment of "National Assemblies" . . . its immediate purpose is to stimulate, unify and coordinate by frequent personal consultations, the manifold activities of the friends as well as the local Assemblies; and by keeping in close and constant touch with the

Holy Land, initiate measures, and direct in general the affairs of the Cause in that country.

It serves also another purpose, no less essential than the first, as in the course of time it shall evolve into the National House of Justice (referred to in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Will as the "secondary House of Justice"), which according to the explicit text of the Testament will have, in conjunction with the other National Assemblies throughout the Bahá'í world, to elect directly the members of the International House of Justice, that Supreme Council that will guide, organize and unify the affairs of the Movement throughout the world.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *Bahá'í Administration*, p. 39

6 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 centers of activity, upholding and promoting their interests with complete unanimity and contentment, with perfect understanding, genuine enthusiasm, and sustained vigor. This indeed is the one joy and yearning of my life, for it is the fountainhead 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

7 It is the duty and privilege of the National and Local Assemblies . . . to initiate and conduct, with their knowledge and consent, any undertaking that would serve to enhance the work which they have set themselves to achieve. . . . They should, by every means in their power, stimulate the spirit of enterprise among the believers in order to further the teaching as well as the administrative work of the Cause. They should endeavour by personal contact and written appeals to imbue the body of the faithful with a deep sense of personal responsibility, and urge every believer, whether high or low, poor or wealthy, to conceive, formulate, and execute such measures and projects as would redound, in the eyes of their representatives, to the power and the fair name of this sacred Cause.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *Bahá'í Administration*, p. 128

8 The expansion of the Bahá'í community and the growing complexity of the issues which are facing National Spiritual Assemblies in certain countries have brought the Cause to a new stage in its development. . . . We have reached the conclusion that the time has arrived for us to formalize a new element of Bahá'í administration, between the local and national levels, comprising institutions of a special kind, to be designated as 'Regional Bahá'í Councils'. . . .

Regional Bahá'í Councils partake of some, but not all, characteristics of Spiritual Assemblies, and thus provide a means of carrying forward the teaching work and administering related affairs of a rapidly growing Bahá'í community in a number of situations.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, Letter dated 30 May 1997 to National Spiritual Assemblies



THE INSTITUTION OF THE LEARNED IN A NEW MODEL OF COMMUNITY LIFE: CONTINENTAL BOARDS OF COUNSELORS, AUXILIARY BOARDS AND THEIR ASSISTANTS

Focus Question:

How does the Institution of the Learned cultivate a new pattern of community life?

1 Abase not the station of the learned in Bahá and belittle not the rank of such rulers as administer justice amidst you.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 138-9

2 The Hands of the Cause of God, the Counselors and the members of the Auxiliary Boards fall within the definition of the “learned” given by the beloved Guardian.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *Messages 1963 to 1986*, p. 214

3 The Administrative Order conceived by Bahá'u'lláh accomplishes its divinely ordained purpose through a system of institutions, each with its defined sphere of action. The central governing body of the Order is the Universal House of Justice, whose terms of reference are the revealed Word of Bahá'u'lláh together with the interpretations and expositions of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and the Guardian. Under its guidance, legislative, executive and judicial authority over the affairs of the Bahá'í community is exercised by Local and National Spiritual Assemblies. This authority is also exercised by Regional Councils, committees and other agencies established by these institutions, to the extent that it is so delegated.

Together with the authority vested in elected corporate bodies to make decisions binding on the community is the spiritual, moral and intellectual influence that the Administrative Order exerts on both the lives of believers and the work of the Faith's institutions. This influence acquires a special character through the services performed by those individuals who are appointed to the high rank of Counselors and by their deputies. More specifically, the Continental Counselors and the members of the Auxiliary Boards and their assistants are charged with functions relating to the protection and propagation of the Faith. In carrying out their duties, the Continental Counselors receive their guidance from the International Teaching Centre, an institution whose mandate is global and which functions in close proximity to the Universal House of Justice.

Acting in their respective roles, the two institutions of the Counselors and the Spiritual Assemblies share responsibility for the protection and propagation of the Faith. The harmonious interaction between them ensures the constant flow of guidance, love and encouragement to the believers and invigorates their individual and collective endeavors to advance the Cause. . . .

Freed from those administrative functions assigned to elected bodies, the Counselors and Auxiliary Board members are able to concentrate their energies on the task of promoting adherence to principle on the part of individual Bahá'ís, Bahá'í institutions and Bahá'í communities. Their understanding of the Teachings, together with the wisdom that comes

from the experience gained through intimate involvement in the many aspects of Bahá'í activity, especially qualifies them to offer advice that assists the work of elected bodies. Further, the fact that they occupy a rank higher than that of the Spiritual Assemblies ensures that they are kept properly informed and that Spiritual Assemblies give due consideration to their advice and recommendations. The administrative processes of the Faith are not only concerned with judicial matters, laws and regulations, and programs that direct action, but also embrace those measures that elicit from the friends wholehearted response and channel their energies. Counselors and their auxiliaries bring to bear on all such administrative processes their ability as individuals of proven devotion and consecrated spirit. Similarly, they play a vital part in encouraging the friends and in fostering individual initiative, diversity and freedom of action. In their endeavors they strive to follow in the footsteps of the Hands of the Cause, whom 'Abdu'l-Bahá called on "to diffuse the Divine Fragrances, to edify the souls of men, to promote learning, to improve the character of all men and to be, at all times and under all conditions, sanctified and detached from earthly things." . . .

The existence of the institution of the Hands of the Cause, and subsequently of the Counselors, comprising individuals who play such a vital role in advancing the interests of the Faith, but who have no legislative, executive or judicial authority, and are entirely devoid of priestly functions or the right to make authoritative interpretations, is a feature of Bahá'í administration unparalleled in the religions of the past.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *The Institution of the Counselors*, pp. 1-3

4 Stimulating individual initiative is one of the paramount duties of the Auxiliary Board members, a duty they can perform with the help of assistants they must carefully select, train and nurture. It involves constant encouragement of the friends. . . .

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *The Institution of the Counselors*, p. 12

5 The flexibility and speed with which the Counselors and their Auxiliary Board members can respond to a perceived need in the community—such as a need for encouragement, explanation of plans, deepening in the Teachings, protection of the Covenant—are elements of their functioning which distinguish them from Spiritual Assemblies; this flexibility enables them to operate as occasions demand, whether it is in giving counsel at a meeting, or advising an individual in private, or helping the friends to understand and obey a ruling of the Spiritual Assembly, or dealing with issues of the Covenant. In such different modes these officers of the Faith are able to draw attention to relevant Texts, to impart information, explore situations, and acquaint themselves with conditions in ways not possible to a Spiritual Assembly but important to the success of its plans. They are able then to share with Spiritual Assemblies, as deemed necessary, ideas, analyses, perceptions and advice which inevitably enhance the ability of these Assemblies to serve their communities. They thus assist Assemblies to mature. Where Local Assemblies are new or weak, Auxiliary Board members help them to understand their functions, encourage them to organize their work, and rally the local believers in support of their Assemblies' initiatives.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, Letter dated 19 May 1944 to a National Spiritual Assembly

Activity

Perfect Reciprocity and Utmost Harmony

1. In the whole group, read aloud the following quotations:

In the body of a man, which is the true divine example or parallel, the spirit, when in ideal control of all the lesser parts of the organism, finds the utmost harmony throughout the whole body—each part is in perfect reciprocity with the other parts. The commands and impulses of the spirit are obeyed by the body and the body in turn in its actions and functions identifies and determines the expression the spiritual impulses shall take. This is divine unity—and this law, being universal and found in every created object in the universe, has full application to the universal Bahá'í organism made up of believers everywhere, which has been established by the Manifestation of God.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *Principles of Bahá'í Administration*, p. 1

. . . The friends should love each other, constantly encourage each other, work together, be as one soul in one body, and in so doing become a true, organic, healthy body animated and illumined by the spirit.

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *Wellspring of Guidance*, p. 39

. . . [The Bahá'í community] is a single social organism, representative of the diversity of the human family, conducting its affairs through a system of commonly accepted consultative principles, and cherishing equally all the great outpourings of divine guidance in human history. Its existence is yet another convincing proof of the practicality of its Founder's vision of a united world, another evidence that humanity can live as one global society, equal to whatever challenges its coming of age may entail. If the Bahá'í experience can contribute in whatever measure to reinforcing hope in the unity of the human race, we are happy to offer it as model for study.

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *The Promise of World Peace*, October 1985

As we can see from these quotations, the potential of the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh unfolds as all the elements of Bahá'í community life function in the utmost harmony and perfect reciprocity with all other parts.

2. In your study circle experience this harmony and reciprocity by organizing yourselves so that each person faces another person at arm's length. Alternately, three people may face one another, in triangle fashion, at arm's length.
3. Touch your palms together in the pairs or triangles. Close your eyes and try to feel the spirit of loving fellowship and mutual respect that unites the community as a single social organism.
4. Keeping your eyes closed, drop your hands, and turn around three times. Without opening your eyes, relocate the open palms that you were connected to before. It may take awhile, but persevere!

5. Once you are again connected with the palms of your partner(s), focus again on the feeling of loving fellowship and mutual respect that unites the community as a single organism.
6. Now, open your eyes and drop one hand, while staying connected to the other person(s) in your pair or triangle.
7. While maintaining the palm to palm connection with your original partners, move around the room, connecting in similar fashion with others, until the whole group is connected palm-to-palm.
8. Again reflect on the feeling of organic oneness in your community. Briefly discuss: How does the power of sight or vision help us come together more easily? How do the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh provide the necessary vision for working together to build dynamic, unified communities of growth?

Memorization

1. Working in small teams, memorize one of the following quotations, using recitation, music, art, or movement as memory aids.

We love to see you at all times consorting in amity and concord within the paradise of My good-pleasure, and to inhale from your acts the fragrance of friendliness and unity, of loving-kindness and fellowship.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, sec. CXLVI, p. 315

With the utmost unity, and in a spirit of perfect fellowship, exert yourselves, that ye may be enabled to achieve that which beseemeth this Day of God. Verily I say, strife and dissension, and whatsoever the mind of man abhorreth are entirely unworthy of his station. Centre your energies in the propagation of the Faith of God.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, sec. XCVI, p. 196

They that are endued with sincerity and faithfulness should associate with all the peoples and kindreds of the earth with joy and radiance, inasmuch as consorting with people hath promoted and will continue to promote unity and concord, which in turn are conducive to the maintenance of order in the world and to the regeneration of nations.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 36

2. Recite your memorized passage in the whole group. Applaud all efforts!

Individual Acts of Teaching, Study, and Service

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

- Continue to practice your memorized quotation. Share it with another person before the next session.
- Reflect on your cluster. What is an act of service that you could offer one of the Bahá'í institutions in your cluster?
- Identify a service organization, a presentation or workshop at a local school or college, or public event at which you could meet new people. Engage the people you meet in friendly conversation. How will you be able to tell when someone you meet is receptive to the message of Bahá'u'lláh?
- Host a fireside or devotional meeting. Invite a young person or member of your family to co-host with you.
- Choose a specific service to offer your local children's classes.
- Select one of the Tablets by 'Abdu'l-Bahá addressed to a specific region in North America, published in *Tablets of the Divine Plan*. Prepare a 2-minute report for the next session to share 'Abdu'l-Bahá's advice about teaching in that Tablet.
- Read pages 1-20 of *The Advent of Divine Justice* by Shoghi Effendi. Prepare a 2-minute report for the next session that outlines some key responsibilities of the Bahá'ís of North America.

A Personal Teaching Plan

Consider listening to quiet music as you complete your Personal Teaching Plan.

Closing Devotions

Conclude the session with prayers for teaching and for divine assistance.



A PERSONAL TEACHING PLAN

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 in *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 78

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...?



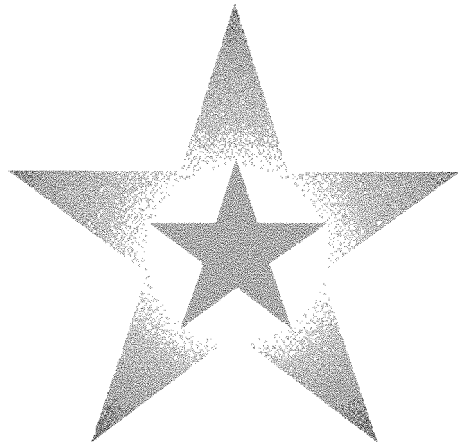
My love for Bahá'u'lláh; the power of the Covenant; the dynamics of prayer; the inspiration and education derived from regular reading and study of the Holy Texts?



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*he diversity in the human family should be the cause of love and harmony, as it is in music where many different notes blend together in the making of a perfect chord.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ

Building a New Civilization

COURSE SIX

Some
Fundamental
Verities of the
Bahá’í Faith

Session 7

A Vibrant Model of
Unity in Diversity

Opening Devotions

Begin your study circle session with prayers and uplifting music.

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

Conveying the message is merely the first step. We must then ensure that it is understood and applied, for, as we read in one of the letters written on behalf of the Guardian: ‘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.’ When people embrace the Cause, they should then, through the Teachings, develop their relationships with each other and with their fellow-citizens to gradually produce a truly Bahá’í community, a light and haven for the bewildered.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, Ridván 1994

You should strive to create a Bahá’í community which will offer to the entire world a vibrant model of unity in diversity.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, RIDVÁN 153, 1996, TO NORTH AMERICA

Objectives of the Session

Read aloud the learning objectives for this session.

Knowledge

To become familiar with some of the writings on Bahá’í community life.

Wisdom

To understand the relationship between personal transformation and community life.

Spiritual Perception

To perceive the importance of devotional meetings in Bahá’í community life.

Eloquent Speech

To demonstrate the importance of devotional meetings by learning to plan one.

To plan individual acts of study, service and teaching.

Consultation on Individual Teaching, Service, and Study

- Reflecting on our service and teaching over the past week, what experiences would we like to share with each other? Which approaches have felt successful? When have we perceived that our efforts are confirmed by the power of the Holy Spirit?
- How are we doing with our own teaching and spiritual development plans? Do we see additional ways to support each other?
- Who would like to share a highlight from a devotional meeting, fireside, or children's class?
- Who studied of the Tablets by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in *Tablets of the Divine Plan*? What can we learn about teaching from that Tablet?
- Who was able to read pp. 1-20 *The Advent of Divine Justice*? What did you learn about our responsibilities as Bahá'ís?
- What else would you like to share about your study, service and teaching over the past week?

Activity *New World Thinking: A Personal Reflection*

1. Play beautiful background music as you take turns reading the following descriptive images. Pause after reading each image.
2. During the pause, individually reflect and record your responses. As the descriptive images on the following pages are intended to stimulate personal reflection, individual responses will not be shared with the group.



IMAGE #1:

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

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

Old World Thinking:

We are bowls of “biological soup” which as separate, material beings, have only those obligations to each other that we choose for ourselves.

New World Thinking:

We are divinely created beings, commanded to be as one soul, which gives us inescapable moral and spiritual obligations to each other.

More
matches
my view

• OLD 3 • 2 • 1 • 0 • 1 • 2 • 3 NEW •

More
matches
my view



IMAGE #2:

There was once a lover who had sighed for long years in separation from his beloved, and wasted in the fire of remoteness. From the rule of love, his heart was empty of patience, and his body weary of his spirit; he reckoned life without her as a mockery, and time consumed him away. How many a day he found no rest in longing for her; how many a night the pain of her kept him from sleep; his body was worn to a sigh, his heart's wound had turned him to a cry of sorrow. He had given a thousand lives for one taste of the cup of her presence, but it availed him not. The doctors knew no cure for him, and companions avoided his company; yea, physicians have no medicine for one sick of love, unless the favor of the beloved one deliver him.

At last, the tree of his longing yielded the fruit of despair, and the fire of his hope fell to ashes. Then one night he could live no more, and he went out of his house and made for the marketplace. On a sudden, a watchman followed after him. He broke into a run, with the watchman following; then other watchmen came together, and barred every passage to the weary one. And the wretched one cried from his heart, and ran here and there, and moaned to himself: 'Surely this watchman is 'Izrá'íl, my angel of death, following so fast upon me; or he is a tyrant of men, seeking to harm me.' His feet carried him on, the one bleeding with the arrow of love, and his heart lamented. Then he came to a garden wall, and with untold pain he scaled it, for it proved very high; and forgetting his life, he threw himself down to the garden.

And there he beheld his beloved with a lamp in her hand, searching for a ring she had lost. When the heart-surrendered lover looked on his ravishing love, he drew a great breath and raised up his hands in prayer, crying: 'O God! Give Thou glory to the watchman, and riches and long life. For the watchman was Gabriel, guiding this poor one; or he was Israfil, bringing life to this wretched one!'

Indeed, his words were true, for he had found many a secret justice in this seeming tyranny of the watchman, and seen how many a mercy lay hid behind the veil. Out of wrath, the guard had led him who was athirst in love's desert to the sea of his loved one, and lit up the dark night of absence with the light of reunion. He had driven one who was afar, into the garden of nearness, had guided an ailing soul to the heart's physician.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *The Seven Valleys and The Four Valleys*, pp. 13-15

Old World Thinking:

Fear of others must dominate and guide our perceptions of, and assumptions about, each other: our safety and happiness depend on it. We cannot afford to leave our comfort zone.

New World Thinking:

Love for others must dominate and guide our perceptions of, and assumptions about, each other: our safety and happiness depend on it. We cannot reach our goals except by leaving our comfort zone.

More
matches
my view

• OLD 3 • 2 • 1 • 0 • 1 • 2 • 3 NEW •

More
matches
my view



IMAGE #3:

When a man turns his face to God he finds sunshine everywhere. All men are his brothers. Let not conventionality cause you to seem cold and unsympathetic when you meet strange people from other countries. Do not look at them as though you suspected them of being evil-doers, thieves and boors. You think it necessary to be very careful, not to expose yourselves to the risk of making acquaintance with such, possibly, undesirable people.

I ask you not to think only of yourselves. Be kind to the strangers, whether come they from Turkey, Japan, Persia, Russia, China or any other country in the world.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *Paris Talks*, p. 15

The diversity in the human family should be the cause of love and harmony, as it is in music where many different notes blend together in the making of a perfect chord. If you meet those of different race and colour from yourself, do not mistrust them and withdraw yourself into your shell of conventionality, but rather be glad and show them kindness.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *Paris Talks*, p. 53

And let it be known once more that until woman and man recognize and realize equality, social and political progress here or anywhere will not be possible. For the world of humanity consists of two parts or members: one is woman; the other is man. Until these two members are equal in strength, the oneness of humanity cannot be established, and the happiness and felicity of mankind will not be a reality.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 77

Old World Thinking:

Our happiness depends upon ourselves. Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness are possible if we think mostly of ourselves. The world is a competitive place and we must look out for ourselves.

New World Thinking:

We cannot find happiness by ourselves. Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness are impossible if we think mostly of ourselves. We must forget ourselves.

More
matches
my view

• OLD 3 • 2 • 1 • 0 • 1 • 2 • 3 NEW •

More
matches
my view



IMAGE #4:

My Darling:

. . . The unity feast will be held tonight. A hall has been engaged for tomorrow night and we expect a good attendance of both races. There is great harmony between the white and colored people here. I believe it would make 'Abdu'l-Bahá very happy to see the white and colored children attending the same public schools and playing peacefully together in the yards at time of recess. It looks like the varigated [sic] flowers in a garden, of which He so beautifully speaks. The Bahá'ís are everywhere wonderfully kind to me. Their love and kindness are a reflection of the Divine Love.

HAND OF THE CAUSE OF GOD, LOUIS GREGORY, Excerpt from a letter written to his wife Louisa

Old World Thinking:

The races should be separated from one another. They should live apart from one another, have their own separate society, and keep to themselves.

New World Thinking:

The races should come together in love and fellowship. They should completely commingle and share community life and family life together.

More
matches
my view

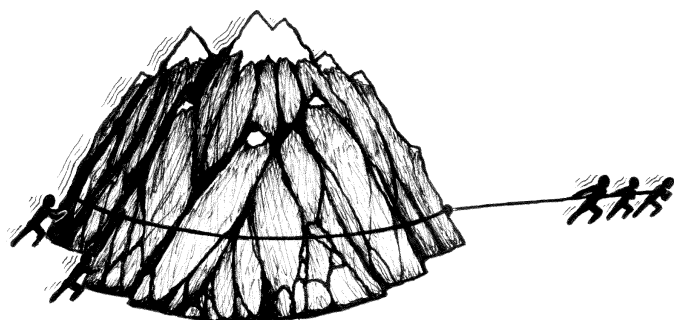
• OLD 3 • 2 • 1 • 0 • 1 • 2 • 3 NEW •

More
matches
my view

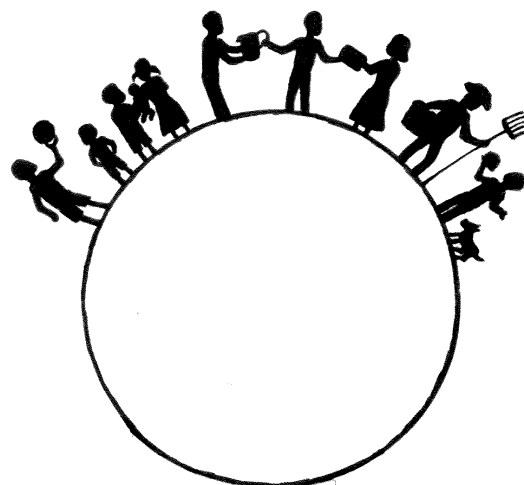


IMAGE #5:

Below are several pictures that illustrate some aspects of unity. What ideas and feelings about unity do they stimulate for you? Jot down key words, phrases, and ideas around each picture as you wish.



- Now, think back over the thoughts and feelings you have had during this activity, and write a one-sentence definition of “New World Thinking.”



- Share your sentence with the group, if you like.

Activity

Unlocking the Power of Unified Action

1. In the whole group, read aloud the following passage from the Universal House of Justice which reminds us of the fundamental challenge of personal transformation:

Now as never before should you strive mightily to free yourselves from the obstacles of apathy, attachment to worldly pursuits, and lethargy, which stand in the way of so glorious a realization. As the people around you yearn increasingly for a society in which rectitude of conduct prevails, which is animated by a nobility of moral behaviour, and in which the diverse races are firmly united, your challenge is to demonstrate the efficacy of the Message of Bahá'u'lláh in ministering to their needs and in recreating the very foundation of individual and social life. The whole of North America stands in desperate need of the inspiring vision, the dynamic sense of purpose and the idealism, which can be provided only by those who are imbued with the spirit and truths of the Bahá'í Writings.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, Ridván 1996, Letter to North America

Hand of the Cause of God Mrs. Corinne True provides an interesting example, in living action, of these principles. She was praised highly by 'Abdu'l-Bahá when he said, "I love Mrs. True very much."

2. Working in small teams, study one of the following stories adapted from Nathan Rutstein's biography of Corrine True. After reading your story, prepare to:
 - eloquently retell your story of Mrs. True and, based on your study and reflection, "offer her advice" to us today,
 - share your list of the "*daily deeds of constructive spiritual living*" that can be found in Mrs. True's life,
 - share your reflections on what we can learn from the life and experience of Corinne True about the relationship between spiritual transformation and the growth of the Faith.
3. Briefly share your story and your reflections in the whole group. Applaud all contributions!



UNLOCKING THE POWER OF UNIFIED ACTION

First Story

Focus Questions:

How did Mrs. True strive to advance the Cause of God?

What might be her advice to us today?

Corinne True experienced personal challenges and tragedy often throughout her life:

Six out of seven of her sisters and brothers died before age 25. This experience with death in her family worried Corinne as she began to have her own children. Would her mother's experience be repeated? Sadly, Corinne also would face the loss of many of her children.

Harriet (Corinne's 10-year-old, eldest daughter) died shortly after falling down the stone basement stairs. . . . Diphtheria killed her son Nathanael. . . . The seven-year-old twins, Katherine and Kenneth, were stricken with another outbreak of diphtheria. . . . Kenneth died. The third child to die in eight years . . . Corinne's son, Laurence, drowned in a sailing accident. . . . Moses True, her well-loved husband of twenty-nine years, passed away suddenly. . . . In the midst of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's visit to Chicago—on the very day before the site for Corinne's beloved Temple was to be dedicated by 'Abdu'l-Bahá Himself—Corinne's son, Davis, passed away—the fourth of her children to die . . . her daughter Arna's husband died suddenly, and Arna's son, Davis, was killed in World War II.

When her children seemed to be dying one after another, Corinne held the family together. Despite the losses, Corinne gradually developed a sense of well-being. She knew that without her knowledge of the Bahá'í Faith she would have been consumed by grief. Instead, the guidance she received, some of it in Tablets from 'Abdu'l-Bahá Himself, created a feeling that encompassed and fortified her spirit. She grew calmer, more patient. . . . Friends and family marvelled at the way she endured such grievous hardship. It wasn't what she said to her family and friends that helped them recover from tragedy, but her calm attitude of faith. Corinne knew that what impressed them was not herself, but the power of the Faith. How could she tell them that? . . . Plagued with feelings of inadequacy, Corinne began to teach. . . .

Throughout the tragedies, Corinne never wavered in her vigorous pace of service. She was not about to go through life in mourning. She came to understand death as a natural step in the process of living, a part of the work God planned for each of us, but God also had other work He wanted each person to do. Corinne forged ahead with optimism.

Despite the drain of concern, Corinne's excitement increased as it became more and more certain that 'Abdu'l-Bahá would visit America during 1912. She wished the Master would find a united Bahá'í community. Yet at times, when she spoke of the need for more love and unity among the Bahá'ís, some of the friends would misinterpret her intent and bristle, causing the opposite effect. At times she felt helpless. What could she do?

‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s visit to America was profoundly important to Corinne for many reasons, but perhaps most of all because of his sensitivity to her personal needs. Being strongly aware of what she felt were weaknesses, Corinne knew she was sometimes too outspoken and was not a good public speaker, but the Master lovingly challenged these very doubts: “Mrs. True, I want you to speak in public. I want you to tell the people about the Faith.” Corinne was stunned: “But Master, I can’t do it. . . .” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was kind in his guidance to Corinne: “Forget what you can’t do . . . stand up and turn your heart wholly toward me. Look over the heads of the audience and I’ll never fail you.” Although she was terrified and unsettled by the prospect of public speaking, Corinne was absolutely obedient and decided to make a beginning at what ‘Abdu’l-Bahá asked her to do. From then on she was able to speak easily and fluently to all audiences. She had always been a teacher by example . . . and a teacher through ceaseless hospitality and action. But now Corinne wanted to increase her teaching efforts, even though to those who were close to her she had always seemed to be teaching all the time already. From the moment she awoke, she was ready to share the Message of Bahá’u’lláh with someone. That was her state of consciousness throughout the day. Dealing with salesmen at the door, shopping, on vacation . . . she was conditioned to seize the smallest opportunity. For her, teaching was a state of mind. Her home was a center of teaching, even as she became older, and was well-known as a stickler for using direct quotations from the Central Figures of the Faith in explaining any topic, to Bahá’ís or non-Bahá’ís.

Corinne’s devotion to the Faith was an example to many. Her daughter Arna remembered her this way: “I think of certain outstanding qualities that never wavered, like obedience, justice, studying always the Writings themselves, and her unfailing joy of service.”

Towards the end of her last conversation with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in America, Corinne unburdened her heart to the Master about all the tests, suffering and grief she had endured. “I have had a great many sorrows, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá,” she said. “I have had a sad life—sad things to bear.” The Master’s response was surprising: “I know, I know, Mrs. True, because I have sent them to you.” But Corinne did not flinch. In fact, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s response brought peace to her heart. What questions she had had about the meaning of her suffering over the years had been answered forever. She could withstand anything now. Where she had always been a comforter to those who suffered, or had lost a dear one, now she became even stronger.

Throughout her life, Corinne’s personality and attitudes were continuously enriched and transformed by daily study of the Creative Word. Some of her natural and culturally-engrained inclinations were moderated, or fell away. While shedding some personality characteristics, others developed and her already rock-solid steadfastness was reinforced. The Guardian acknowledged this growth in a note to her, “Your staunch, unswerving faith, your boundless devotions, and assiduous care to preserve the integrity and extend the bounds of the Cause, are among the most richly valued assets that the Faith of Bahá’u’lláh in that land [America].”

Adapted from *Corinne True, Faithful Handmaid of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, by Nathan Rutstein



UNLOCKING THE POWER OF UNIFIED ACTION

Second Story

Focus Questions:

How did Mrs. True strive to advance the Cause of God?

What might be her advice to us today?

Though eager to impart the new Revelation to friends and family, Corinne was careful not to overwhelm them with it. At the appropriate time she would share a Tablet from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá or a newly-translated excerpt from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh with friends and family—especially with her children—who were impressed with her dedication to her Faith. In the long run, that had a profound effect on them.

The True family was happy and very close. There was deep love between children and parents, and they were not afraid to express it. Edna went around the house as a child, leaving little notes to her parents—writing on almost anything available, ‘O, how I love my mother and father.’ But that did not mean the children did not, at times, have a hard time following family rules. Although they were not defiant, the children did at times need extra disciplining: If a meaningful look from Corinne did not gain the desired behavior, she would tap the child on the arm or cheek with her forefinger. The loving, joyful family atmosphere nurtured happy, well-behaved children. Although Corinne’s husband, Moses, never became a Bahá’í, he strongly supported Corinne’s Bahá’í work and, in many ways, led a Bahá’í life.

Corinne realized that caring for and training one’s children was more than a parental duty. It was an essential Bahá’í act. Corinne found time to become involved in her children’s interests, even if she understood little about them. She knew, for example, that it meant a lot to her son, Davis, that she attend his sporting events; so she went to them, even though she called his best sport “Poller vaulting” and it terrified her to see him throwing his body high in the air over the wooden bar! Similarly, Corinne encouraged Edna in her basketball interest in days when basketball was viewed as a sport only for men—and she went on to become a star women’s basketball player at Smith College!

Corinne’s home was a Bahá’í home, where Bahá’í standards were kept. When the children behaved contrary to a Bahá’í principle, she would lovingly remind them of the principle. When emphasis was needed, she would tap her forefinger on the palm of her other hand. To the children, that was enough because of Corinne’s dynamic example of Bahá’í living. The True home was like a Bahá’í hotel. People from different parts of the world would spend time with them. At times the children gave up their beds to travellers—but despite the inconvenience, the children found such a home exciting. Growing up in such an environment, the children absorbed the Faith little by little, and like their mother, they learned to turn to the Faith as the center of their lives. Those that survived into adulthood, all became devoted believers and servants of the Cause, including a member of the Continental Board of Counselors.

Corinne knew that raising spiritual children was an important foundation for the growth of the Faith, and she involved them and their interests in her philosophy of teaching. She encouraged the children to stage “vaudeville” performances in the True family backyard including dancing, singing, silly skits. These performances drew the interest and participation of many children and adult neighbors. Corinne saw this wholesome, happy fun as a way to develop the loving friendship and hospitality that was an important way to make new friends for the Faith. The life-changing spirit of love and happiness could be expressed in many ways. She also encouraged the children to turn to toward the Center of the Covenant. Edna and Katherine wrote their first personal letters to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá at ages 9 and 15, and she took her children with her on pilgrimages.

Corinne made a total of nine pilgrimages, the last at age 91. On her first pilgrimage, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá gave Corinne a piece of life-changing advice as she left His presence. Because the Master sensed the fear and distaste Corinne had felt during her journey regarding the different peoples and cultures she encountered, He spoke to her of love, universal love, and the importance of loving everyone, even the seemingly unlovable. And above all, He gave her the key to doing so: “Mrs. True, when you go back I want you to look at every human being and say to yourself, ‘You are a letter from my Beloved, and I must love you because of the Beloved Who wrote you. The letter may be torn, it may be blurred—but because the Beloved wrote the letter, you must love it.’”

Corinne learned what teaching was by observing the Master’s household. Over forty people living together in unity, black, white, Arabic, Persian, Burmese, Italian, Russian, English, and American. Corinne saw that “the life lived and not preached is what creates the wonderful atmosphere of that Home. It is natural and normal and easy. No one ever criticizes or finds fault with anyone—they only see the good in everyone.”

Corinne had always had a progressive attitude toward race relations, but the Master had shown her that the real source of love for all people was deep in the heart. The real depth of Corinne True’s love for humanity—expressed in action—is illustrated by her relationship with the black women who served as her cook. Vivian Wesson realized that Corinne was not a social-political activist on race relations, but rather “a real Bahá’í” who simply broke down racial barriers by taking Vivian many places blacks had never been before. What Corinne did was not political protest. To Corinne bringing her well-loved Bahá’í sister along was just the natural thing to do. The love between Corinne and Vivian continued throughout their lives, and when Vivian decided to go pioneering in the Ten Year Crusade, she visited Corinne for advice. Corinne told her: “Rely on Bahá’u’lláh. Study the teachings hard. Know your subject when you speak. But don’t lecture to people and tell them what they should be. Give them love. And be simple.”

It was this spirit that endeared her to the Master and the Guardian.

Adapted from *Corinne True, Faithful Handmaid of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, by Nathan Rutstein



UNLOCKING THE POWER OF UNIFIED ACTION

Third Story

Focus Questions:

How did Mrs. True strive to advance the Cause of God?

What might be her advice to us today?

On her [Corinne True's] first pilgrimage 'Abdu'l-Bahá fed her spiritual yearning and gave her new perspective by giving her the personal instruction to "Go back...go back and work for the Temple; it is a great work, and the best thing you could do, Mrs. True....Devote yourself to this project—make a beginning and all will come right." But He warned her that doing the work would not be easy; that she would suffer and be misunderstood. "Pray for the strength you will need to achieve your goal." Corinne would view that advice as a life-long order. Corinne's short stay in 'Akká was an experience of rebirth. From that point on, Corinne would promote and work for the Temple project with unflagging energy and devotion.

While Corinne was on her way home from her pilgrimage, three members of the Chicago House of Spirituality were, themselves, arriving in 'Akká to visit 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Among them was Thornton Chase, the first American Bahá'í and a leading member of the House of Spirituality who was opposed to women being on the House of Spirituality. In response to Mr. Chase's questions about the proposed Temple project in Chicago, 'Abdu'l-Bahá instructed: "When you return consult with Mrs. True—I have given her complete instructions." Mr. Chase was startled. He simply wasn't prepared for this instruction from 'Abdu'l-Bahá!

How does one develop a Bahá'í Fund? Corinne had little guidance beyond general principles. She knew that a universal House of Worship must have the support of all the Bahá'ís in North America in building it. Universal participation was important. She waged a campaign to gain the interest and contributions of every believer. She did not engage in direct personal requests for money. Rather she tried to inspire and educate the Bahá'ís about the meaning and significance of the Temple project. She wrote a hand-written letter—not a simple thank you—to acknowledge every contribution. Corinne's efforts helped to develop support for the Fund in such a way that contributions continued throughout the Depression years when times were hard.

In 1920, 'Abdu'l-Bahá directed that all matters concerning the Temple project should be referred to the annual convention, and whatever the convention decided with a majority of opinions, must be accepted. The Master believed that the American Bahá'ís were mature enough to administer their affairs. But the change was not easy for Corinne. Although she accepted 'Abdu'l-Bahá's wish as a wise command, it was painful for her. She would remain involved in the Temple project in important ways, but her central personal administrative role had now been passed to consultative bodies.

Even though Corinne knew that it was now time for her to share with other people what had been her unique responsibilities for the Temple project, she stayed busy with the project and many other activities as well. Even in later years, when past 70 and no longer directly involved, Corinne continued to promote it in talks, for as the Guardian had instructed her, it was to be her “first and most sacred obligation.” Attending the dedication of the completed Temple at age 91, Corinne must have felt that the Master’s instructions had, at last, been realized.

Corinne took her last pilgrimage in 1952, at age 91. At one of the meetings with the pilgrims, the Guardian seated Corinne at the place of honor and, with a twinkle in his eyes, said to her, “I understand Mrs. True, you had something to do with the Temple in the United States.”

“Yes, Shoghi Effendi,” she said, rather puzzled, since she had worked closely with the Guardian on the project for many years.

“Didn’t you have something to do with the money?”

“Yes, I received the money and was the financial secretary.”

At that point the Guardian handed Corinne the purse carried by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá when he visited America. Shoghi Effendi, obviously moved, urged her to open the purse. Inside was a five-dollar gold piece inscribed with the date 1907—the year of her first pilgrimage.

The same evening, the Guardian talked enthusiastically about teaching, and asked Corinne, “Mrs. True, do you think I am too ambitious?”

Corinne replied: “No, Shoghi Effendi. But I think we should hurry home and get to work; there is so much work to be done.”

The Guardian’s eyes twinkled and he described Corinne as a ‘spiritual politician,’ and explained what he meant. “You have learned to be spiritual and at the same time get things done.”

He went on to tell the assembled pilgrims: “It should be stated that Mrs. True is to be regarded as the most venerable figure among the pioneers of the Faith of Bahá’u’lláh in the West.” That was a strange pronouncement since Corinne had never been a “Bahá’í pioneer” in the sense of living in a new area to spread the Cause. The Guardian meant she was a pioneer in a different sense. Through her efforts the American Bahá’í community had matured, expanded in numbers, completed the Temple, and achieved great institutional development. Tests and challenges had seemed overwhelming at times, nevertheless, she had persevered. Whatever she had been asked to do, and whatever she had initiated, she had done with a spirit of devotion and determined follow-through.

Adapted from *Corinne True, Faithful Handmaid of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, by Nathan Rutstein

Individual Acts of Teaching, Study, and Service

Read aloud the following quotation. Consider the power of our individual and collective actions to bring this vision into reality.

Dear Friends, now must you commit yourselves to the work of the Cause afresh, liberated from any doubts, uncertainties or hesitations which may have impeded you in the past. Every stratum of society must be brought within your embrace, as you vigorously advance toward the goal of entry by troops at this time when powerful spiritual forces are at work in the hearts of the people. Neither the affluent nor the indigent should be excluded from your purview. Receptive souls should be sought in the sophisticated circles of urban society, on the campuses of colleges and universities, in centres of industry and commerce, on the farms and villages of the mountains, plains and prairies—wherever are to found human beings in search of the divine Truth. You should strive to create a Bahá'í community which will offer to the entire world a vibrant model of unity in diversity.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, Ridván 153, 1996, to North America

Then, choose one or more of the actions suggested below or other acts of service that you choose to complete before the next session:

- Host a devotional meeting or fireside. Invite your seekers!
- Invite a seeker or family of seekers to participate with you in service to the community at large. Share your reflections with the seeker about the importance of individual contributions to the community. Consider writing a quotation about service or fellowship on a card to give to your friend.
- Select one of the Tablets by 'Abdu'l-Bahá addressed to a specific region in North America, published in *Tablets of the Divine Plan*. Prepare a 2-minute report for the next session to share 'Abdu'l-Bahá's advice about teaching in that Tablet.
- Read pages 20-43 of *The Advent of Divine Justice*. Prepare a 2-minute report for the next session that explains the double crusade to bring about the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh.

A Personal Teaching Plan

Consider listening to quiet music as you complete your Personal Teaching Plan.

Closing Devotions

Conclude the session with prayers and singing.



A PERSONAL TEACHING PLAN

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 in *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 78

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...?



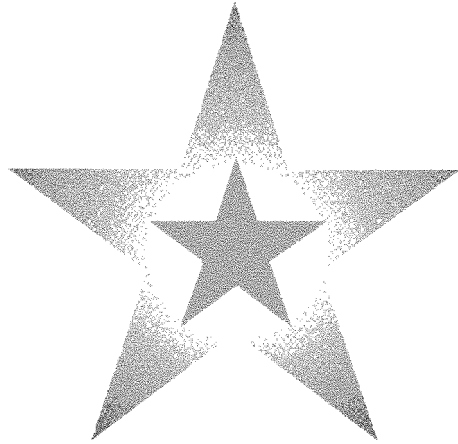
My love for Bahá'u'lláh; the power of the Covenant; the dynamics of prayer; the inspiration and education derived from regular reading and study of the Holy Texts?



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*he whole earth is illuminated with the resplendent glory of God's Revelation. . . . Behold how the generality of mankind hath been endued with the capacity to hearken unto God's most exalted Word—the Word upon which must depend the gathering together and spiritual resurrection of all men.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

Building a New Civilization

COURSE SIX

Some
Fundamental
Verities of the
Bahá'í Faith

Session 8

A World
Embracing Vision

Opening Devotions

Begin your study circle with prayers and singing or recorded music.

You may also consider including the following quotations with your opening prayers:

Let your vision be world-embracing, rather than confined to your own self.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 86

The summons and the message which We gave were never intended to reach or to benefit one land or one people only. Mankind in its entirety must firmly adhere to whatsoever hath been revealed and vouchsafed unto it. Then and only then will it attain unto true liberty. The whole earth is illuminated with the resplendent glory of God's Revelation. . . . Behold how the generality of mankind hath been endued with the capacity to hearken unto God's most exalted Word—the Word upon which must depend the gathering together and spiritual resurrection of all men.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 89

Objectives of the Session

Read aloud the learning objectives for this session.

Knowledge

To become familiar with some of the writings on the institutions at the World Center.

Wisdom

To understand the importance of world-embracing institutions for the development of a world civilization.

Spiritual Perception

To perceive how Bahá'u'lláh's teachings resolve contemporary social issues.

Eloquent Speech

To demonstrate an understanding of some important steps to world order.
To plan individual acts of study, service and teaching.

Consultation on Individual Teaching, Service, and Study

- Reflecting on our service and our teaching over the past week, what experiences would we like to share with each other? Do we have practical challenges that we could address together? Do we have promising approaches that we could continue? How can we continue to support each other and our families in our service to our community?
- If you studied one of the Tablets of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, what can you share from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s advice about teaching?
- If you studied pp. 20-43 in *The Advent of Divine Justice*, what did you learn about the double crusade?
- What else would we like to share about our study, service and teaching over the past week?

Activity

A World Civilization and World Spiritual Center

1. Display a globe where all members of your study circle can easily see it, refer to a world map, or sketch a world map on chart paper as outlined in the Appendix.
2. Locate the Bahá’í World Center on the globe or map and highlight it with a marker, sticker, or stick-pin.
3. Working together, think of Bahá’ís and others that you know around the world. Mark the countries where they reside.
4. Briefly discuss: Is the Bahá’í World Center prominently marked on commercial maps? Why or why not? How do you think maps of the Holy Land will be 100 years from now?
5. Consider the following story told by E.F. Schumacher:

On a visit to Leningrad [prior to the end of the Soviet regime] some years ago I consulted a map to find out where I was, but could not make it out. From where I stood, I could see several enormous churches, yet there was no trace of them on my map. When finally an interpreter came to help me, he said: We don’t show churches on our maps. Contradicting him, I pointed to one that was very clearly marked. That is a museum, he said, not what we call a living church. It is only the living churches we don’t show.

It then occurred to me that this was not the first time I had been given a map which failed to show many things I could see right in front of my eyes. I had been given maps of life and knowledge on which there was hardly a trace of many of the things that I most cared about and that seemed to me to be of the greatest possible importance to the conduct of my life.

Perhaps someone says: For happiness you need wisdom—but what is wisdom? Or: For happiness you need the truth that makes you free—but what is the truth that makes us free? Who will tell me where I can find it? Who can guide me to it or at least point out the direction in which I have to proceed? What am I supposed to do with my life?

E.F. SCHUMACHER, *A Guide for the Perplexed*, pp.1-6

As we know, Bahá'u'lláh has provided the map to true happiness and peace for all the human race. He declares that “The whole earth is illuminated with the resplendent glory of God’s Revelation”⁴ and reminds us, “Let your vision be world-embracing, rather than confined to your own self.”⁵

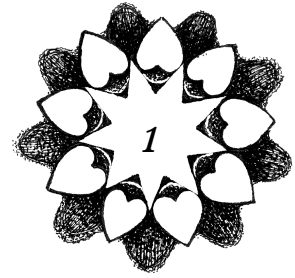
6. Each day this world-embracing vision attracts more and more people who are working together to transform themselves and create a truly human, worldwide, spiritual civilization. Working together, encourage members of your study circle to stand, and with a spirit of dignity and majesty, announce the landmarks on the following pages in a way that imparts the spiritual grandeur, awe-inspiring power, and world-awakening significance of these landmarks.
7. Continue working together to highlight these landmarks on your map or globe. Use the designs provided in the appendix or create your own designs to surround the Bahá'í World Center with sunbursts. Consider also attaching strands of colored ribbon from the Bahá'í World Center to the countries around the world to clearly indicate the new spiritual center of world civilization.
8. Briefly discuss: In what ways does the beauty of the Arc and Terraces indicate the beauty of that future world civilization toward which all our efforts are striving?

⁴ Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 88

⁵ Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 86

1 The unity of the human race, as envisaged by Bahá'u'lláh, implies the establishment of a world commonwealth in which all nations, races, creeds and classes are closely and permanently united, and in which the autonomy of its state members and the personal freedom and initiative of the individuals that compose them are definitely and completely safeguarded. This commonwealth must, as far as we can visualize it, consist of a world legislature, whose members will, as the trustees of the whole of mankind, ultimately control the entire resources of all the component nations, and will enact such laws as shall be required to regulate the life, satisfy the needs and adjust the relationships of all races and peoples. A world executive, backed by an international Force, will carry out the decisions arrived at, and apply the laws enacted by, this world legislature, and will safeguard the organic unity of the whole commonwealth. A world tribunal will adjudicate and deliver its compulsory and final verdict in all and any disputes that may arise between the various elements constituting this universal system. A mechanism of world inter-communication will be devised, embracing the whole planet, freed from national hindrances and restrictions, and functioning with marvellous swiftness and perfect regularity

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 203-04

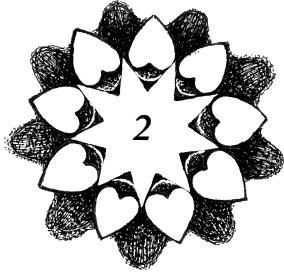


2 The Universal House of Justice, which the Guardian said would be regarded by posterity as “the last refuge of a tottering civilization,” is now, in the absence of the Guardian, the sole infallibly guided institution in the world to which all must turn, and on it rests the responsibility for ensuring the unity and progress of the Cause of God in accordance with the revealed Word. There are statements from the Master and the Guardian indicating that the Universal House of Justice, in addition to being the highest legislative body of the Faith, is also the body to which all must turn, and is the “apex” of the Bahá'í Administrative Order, as well as the “supreme organ of the Bahá'í Commonwealth.”

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *Wellspring of Guidance, Messages 1963-1968*, p. 89

NEW LANDMARK #2

A WORLD METROPOLIS: HAIFA-‘AKKÁ



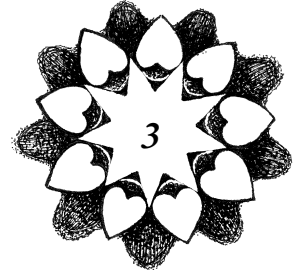
1 A world metropolis will act as the nerve center of a world civilization, the focus towards which the unifying forces of life will converge and from which its energizing influences will radiate. A world federal system, ruling the whole earth and exercising unchallengeable authority over its unimaginably vast resources, blending and embodying the ideals of both the East and the West, liberated from the curse of war and its miseries, and bent on the exploitation of all the available sources of energy on the surface of the planet, a system in which Force is made the servant of Justice, whose life is sustained by its universal recognition of one God and by its allegiance to one common Revelation such is the goal towards which humanity, impelled by the unifying forces of life, is moving.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 203-4

2 [‘Abdu’l-Bahá] spoke of the vision He had of the future of Mount Carmel and the bay, of the two towns stretched out there before His gaze. Behind Him stood Mírzá Mahmúd-i-Zarqaní, His secretary during His tour of the Western world and the diarist of that tour. Did Mírzá Mahmúd see the splendorous scene, He asked. Poor Mírzá Mahmúd could see nothing but a puny town below, which was Haifa, an almost deserted port that had no harbour facilities, a bare waste of desert and sand round the arc of the bay, in the distance a walled, circumscribed ‘Akká, dimly discernible. But ‘Abdu’l-Bahá could see the two towns joined round the bay, a fine harbour teeming with the ships of all nations, Carmel bathed in light at nightfall, shining like a jewel, great institutions serving the needs and the aspirations of the human race. He saw the world metropolis of the future, sited in a land holy since the days of Abraham.

H. M. Balyuzi, *‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp. 132-33

1 For, just as in the realm of the spirit, the reality of the Báb has been hailed by the Author of the Bahá'í Revelation as 'The Point round Whom the realities of the Prophets and Messengers revolve,' so, on this visible plane, His sacred remains constitute the heart and center of what may be regarded as nine concentric circles, paralleling thereby, and adding further emphasis to the central position accorded by the Founder of our Faith to One 'from Whom God hath caused to proceed the knowledge of all that was and shall be,' 'the Primal Point from which have been generated all created things.



The outermost circle in this vast system, the visible counterpart of the pivotal position conferred on the Herald of our Faith, is none other than the entire planet. Within the heart of this planet lies the 'Most Holy Land,' acclaimed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá as 'the Nest of the Prophets' and which must be regarded as the center of the world and the Qiblih of the nations. Within this Most Holy Land rises the Mountain of God of immemorial sanctity, the Vineyard of the Lord, the Retreat of Elijah, Whose return the Báb Himself symbolizes. Reposing on the breast of this holy mountain are the extensive properties permanently dedicated to, and constituting the sacred precincts of, the Báb's holy Sepulcher. In the midst of these properties, recognized as the international endowments of the Faith, is situated the most holy court, an enclosure comprising gardens and terraces which at once embellish, and lend a peculiar charm to, these sacred precincts. Embosomed in these lovely and verdant surroundings stands in all its exquisite beauty the mausoleum of the Báb, the shell designed to preserve and adorn the original structure raised by 'Abdu'l-Bahá as the tomb of the Martyr-Herald of our Faith. Within this shell is enshrined that Pearl of Great Price, the holy of holies, those chambers which constitute the tomb itself, and which were constructed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Within the heart of this holy of holies is the tabernacle, the vault wherein reposes the most holy casket. Within this vault rests the alabaster sarcophagus in which is deposited that inestimable jewel, the Báb's holy dust. So precious is this dust that the very earth surrounding the edifice enshrining this dust has been extolled by the Center of Bahá'u'lláh's Covenant, in one of His Tablets in which He named the five doors belonging to the six chambers which He originally erected after five of the believers associated with the construction of the Shrine, as being endowed with such potency as to have inspired Him in bestowing these names, whilst the tomb itself housing this dust He acclaimed as the spot round which the Concourse on high circle in adoration.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *Citadel of Faith*, pp. 95-96

2 For it must be clearly understood, nor can it be sufficiently emphasized, that the conjunction of the resting-place of the Greatest Holy Leaf with those of her brother and mother incalculably reinforces the spiritual potencies of that consecrated Spot which, under the wings of the Báb's overshadowing Sepulchre, and in the vicinity of the future Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, which will be reared on its flank, is destined to evolve into the focal center of those world-shaking, world-embracing, world-

directing administrative institutions, ordained by Bahá'u'lláh and anticipated by 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

Suffice it to say that at this troubled stage in world history the association of these three incomparably precious souls who, next to the three Central Figures of our Faith, tower in rank above the vast multitude of the heroes, Letters, martyrs, hands, teachers and administrators of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh, in such a potentially powerful spiritual and administrative Center, is in itself an event which will release forces that are bound to hasten the emergence in a land which, geographically, spiritually and administratively, constitutes the heart of the entire planet, of some of the brightest gems of that World Order now shaping in the womb of this travailing age.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *Messages to America*, pp. 32-33

1 Nigh on one hundred years ago, Bahá'u'lláh walked on God's Holy Mountain and revealed the Tablet of Carmel, the Charter of the World Centre of His Faith, calling into being the metropolis of the Kingdom of God on Earth . . .

On this same Mount Carmel 'Abdu'l-Bahá, with infinite pains, raised the Mausoleum of the Báb on the spot chosen by His Father, and laid to rest within its heart the sacred remains of the Prophet Herald of the Faith, establishing a Spiritual Center of immeasurable significance. In accordance with the same divine command, Shoghi Effendi embellished the Shrine with an exquisite shell and then, under its protecting wing, began the construction of the Administrative Center of the Faith, to comprise five buildings in a harmonious style of architecture, standing on a far-flung Arc centering on the Monuments of the Greatest Holy Leaf, her Mother and Brother. The first of these five buildings, the International Archives, was completed in the beloved Guardian's lifetime. The second, the Seat of the Universal House of Justice, now stands at the apex of the Arc. . . .

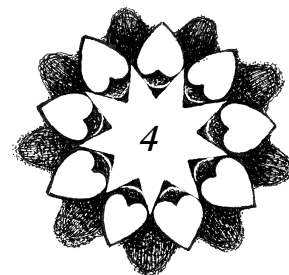
The International Teaching Centre will be the seat of that institution which is specifically invested with the twin functions of the protection and propagation of the Cause of God. The institution itself, referred to by the beloved Guardian in his writings, was established in June 1973, bringing to fruition the work of the Hands of the Cause of God residing in the Holy Land and providing for the extension into the future of functions with which that body had been endowed.

The Centre for the Study of the Texts. This building will be the seat of an institution of Bahá'í scholars, the efflorescence of the present Research Department of the World Centre, which will assist the Universal House of Justice in consulting the Sacred Writings, and will prepare translations of and commentaries on the authoritative texts of the Faith.

The International Archives Building. We have decided to construct, westwards, an extension to the basement of the present Archives Building to provide accommodation for the central office of the ever-growing Archives at the World Centre. This institution is charged with responsibility for the preservation of the Sacred Texts and Relics and the historic documents of the Cause of God.

The International Bahá'í Library. This Library is the central depository of all literature published on the Faith, and is an essential source of information for the institutions of the World Centre on all subjects relating to the Cause of God and the conditions of mankind. In future decades its functions must grow, it will serve as an active center for knowledge in all fields, and it will become the kernel of great institutions of scientific investigation and discovery.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *A Wider Horizon*, pp. 57-59



Activity

Promoting Divine Justice

1. In your study circle, read aloud the selection “Promoting Divine Justice” from the letter written by the Universal House of Justice 24 May 2001 to the believers gathered for the events marking the completion of the projects on Mount Carmel. If available, you may also enjoy seeing photographs of this unfolding beauty on Mount Carmel.
2. Individually reflect on the following questions, perhaps while listening to quiet music.
 - How does the completion of these projects in the midst of heartbreaking human suffering mirror the world-wide paradox of crisis and victory, social upheaval and the growth of world order?
 - What is our responsibility in light of these circumstances?
 - In what ways can our involvement in a world-wide system of study circles, devotional meetings, children’s classes, and firesides assist us to fulfill our responsibilities?
 - What are some of the other ways that we can offer a message of hope to all humankind?
3. Then, using one of the inside cover pages of this book, create your own map outlining our journey to the World Order of Bahá’u’lláh, including:
 - Important roadways and prominent landmarks.
 - Directional markers indicating the straight path and road hazards.
 - Other outstanding features of the landscape, roadways, and destination.
4. When you’re ready, share your map with another person in your study circle.



PROMOTING DIVINE JUSTICE

1 The majestic buildings that now stand along the Arc traced for them by Shoghi Effendi on the slope of the Mountain of God, together with the magnificent flight of garden terraces that embrace the Shrine of the Báb, are an outward expression of the immense power animating the Cause we serve. They offer timeless witness to the fact that the followers of Bahá'u'lláh have successfully laid the foundations of a worldwide community transcending all differences that divide the human race, and have brought into existence the principal institutions of a unique and unassailable Administrative Order that shapes this community's life. In the transformation that has taken place on Mount Carmel, the Bahá'í Cause emerges as a visible and compelling reality on the global stage, as the focal center of forces that will, in God's good time, bring about the reconstruction of society, and as a mystic source of spiritual renewal for all who turn to it.

Reflection on what the Bahá'í community has accomplished throws into heartbreaking perspective the suffering and deprivation engulfing the great majority of our fellow human beings. It is necessary that it should do so, because the effect is to open our minds and souls to vital implications of the mission Bahá'u'lláh has laid on us. "Know thou of a truth," He declares, "these great oppressions that have befallen the world are preparing it for the advent of the Most Great Justice." "God be praised!" 'Abdu'l-Bahá adds, "The sun of justice hath risen above the horizon of Bahá'u'lláh. For in His Tablets the foundations of such a justice have been laid as no mind hath, from the beginning of creation, conceived." In the final analysis, it is this Divine purpose that all our activities are intended to serve, and we will advance this purpose to the degree that we understand what is at stake in the efforts we are making to teach the Faith, to establish and consolidate its institutions, and to intensify the influence it is exerting in life of society.

Humanity's crying need will not be met by a struggle among competing ambitions or by protest against one or another of the countless wrongs afflicting a desperate age. It calls, rather, for a fundamental change of consciousness, for a wholehearted embrace of Bahá'u'lláh's teaching that the time has come when each human being on earth must learn to accept responsibility for the welfare of the entire human family. Commitment to this revolutionizing principle will increasingly empower individual believers and Bahá'í institutions alike in awakening others to the Day of God and to the latent spiritual and moral capacities that can change this world into another world. We demonstrate this commitment, Shoghi Effendi tells us, by our rectitude of conduct towards others, by the discipline of our own natures, and by our complete freedom from the prejudices that cripple collective action in the society around us and frustrate positive impulses towards change.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, letter, 24 May 2001

Individual Acts of Teaching, Study, and Service

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

1. Memorize one of the teaching prayers from *Tablets of the Divine Plan*. Be prepared to recite it for the next session.
2. Focus your service on devotional meetings, firesides, children's classes and youth activities. Find ways to involve seekers and families in your service.
3. Prepare to eloquently re-tell one of the stories included in Session 9 of this course.
4. Select one of the Tablets by 'Abdu'l-Bahá addressed to a specific region in North America, published in *Tablets of the Divine Plan*. Prepare a 2-minute report for the next session to share 'Abdu'l-Bahá's advice about teaching in that Tablet.
5. Read pages 43-72 of *The Advent of Divine Justice*. Prepare a 2-minute report for the next session that explains an important strategy for ushering in the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh.
6. Begin to reflect on your service following the completion of this course.
 - Consider preparing to facilitate this sequence of courses to increase the number of study circles in your cluster,
 - Consider preparing to offer one of the courses designed to build patterns of community life such as teaching children's classes, facilitating parenting study circles or workshops for married couples and those preparing for marriage, facilitating youth empowerment, or promoting race unity or gender equality.
 - Consider consulting with your family about these paths of service and bringing your questions to the next study circle.
7. **As a group**, consider the possibility of presenting (during or following the next session) the gift of a plant, seedling, or small tree to your local Bahá'í center, a public park, your host family, or a local institution as a symbol of your commitment to the growth of the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh.

Personal Teaching Plan

Complete your Personal Teaching Plan for the coming week.

Please bring a photograph or other small reminder of dearly loved children or youth to the next session.

Closing Devotions

Conclude the session with prayers for divine assistance.



A PERSONAL TEACHING PLAN

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 in *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 78

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...?



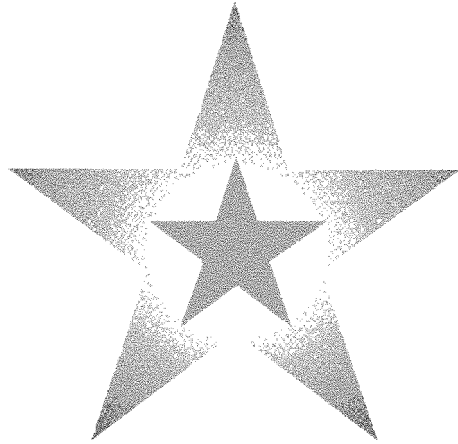
My love for Bahá'u'lláh; the power of the Covenant; the dynamics of prayer; the inspiration and education derived from regular reading and study of the Holy Texts?



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 of God! Exert ye with heart and soul, so that association, love, unity and agreement be obtained between the hearts, all the aims may be merged into one aim, all the songs become one song and the power of the Holy Spirit may become so overwhelmingly victorious as to overcome all the forces of the world of nature. Exert yourselves; your mission is unspeakably glorious.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ

Building a New Civilization

COURSE SIX

Some
Fundamental
Verities of the
Bahá’í Faith

Session 9

Our Glorious
Mission

Opening Devotions

As you begin your devotions, call to mind one or more dearly loved children or youth. If you brought a photograph or other reminder of these dear ones, place the photograph or other object where all can see it.

As you begin your prayers, remember the beauty of this Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh and the wonderful difference these precious teachings will make in these lives and the lives of all humankind.

Offer your favorite prayers, music, chanted prayers, or group singing as a beautiful, uplifting beginning to this last session in Course Six.

Objectives of the Session

Read aloud the learning objectives for this session.

Knowledge

To become familiar with some of the writings on institutions and patterns of community life that will uplift all humanity.

Wisdom

To understand the importance systematic individual action to the development of a world civilization.

Spiritual Perception

To perceive the link between one's own involvement in Bahá'í community life, outreach to the community at large, and the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth.

Eloquent Speech

To demonstrate an understanding of our contributions to world order.
To plan ongoing individual acts of study, service and teaching.

Consultation on Individual Teaching, Service, and Study

- Reflecting on our service and our teaching over the past week, what experiences would we like to share with each other?
- Do we have practical challenges that we could address together?
- If you studied one of the Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, what would you like to share with the group?
- If you studied pp. 43-72 in *The Advent of Divine Justice*, what did you learn?
- What else would we like to share about our study, service and teaching over the past week?

1. Enjoy reading aloud the following story of the commemoration of Bahá'í festivals during the time of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, which is a summary translation of an account by Dr. Yunis Khan:

On the day of the Bahá'í festivals, a large quantity of pots filled with flowers intended for the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh were brought to the outer apartment of the house of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. All the pilgrims and resident believers dressed in their best clothes would assemble outside the house at a certain time (usually about two hours before sunset, or at other times when the heat of the sun was not unbearable). The procession to the Shrine would then start. The believers walked two by two, each person carrying a flower-pot on his shoulder. In later years, because of the opposition of the Covenant-breakers, the procession would start outside the gate of the city of 'Akká where the flower-pots were also placed.

While carrying a flower-pot on His shoulders, the Blessed Person of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, like the commander of an army, walked sometimes in the front and sometimes beside the procession and issued various instructions on the way. Usually two or three people who had melodious voices were directed by Him to chant, one after the other, some poems of Bahá'u'lláh or other suitable verses related to a particular Bahá'í festival which famous Bahá'í poets had written. In this way, solemnly and with great dignity, they would walk slowly towards the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh.

As soon as that Holy Place became visible to the eye, all would halt at the behest of the Master . . . while someone would chant a prayer. To what spiritual worlds one would be carried at this time is impossible for me to describe. . . . As the believers approached the Shrine, the flower-pots were handed in, and another prayer chanted. Then all would retire to a room where refreshments would be served. When all had rested and refreshed themselves, they would be summoned by 'Abdu'l-Bahá to enter the Shrine. The Tablet of Visitation would be chanted as usual by 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Then the believers were allowed to sit down to chant prayers and Tablets. . . .

ADIB TAHERZADEH, *The Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 190

2. After a brief period of reflection on the solemn beauty of the commemoration, briefly discuss the following questions, either in pairs or in the whole group:
 - How does this story illustrate vibrant patterns of Bahá'í community life?
 - What are some times that we've experienced a taste of this same sweetness? What happened: What was the positive benefit of that experience to the community as a whole?

Activity continues on next page ►

3. Then, organize your study circle into study groups so that each team studies one of the sets of quotations “The Nineteen Day Feast,” “Universal Participation in Uplifting Community Life,” “Huqúqu’lláh,” and “Bahá’í Holy Days.”
4. In your group, keep in mind your community, including specific seekers, as you:
 - read the quotations and answer the focus questions,
 - prepare a brief presentation of important points to share with the whole group,
 - choose a brief passage from the selected quotations to incorporate in your presentation.
5. Share your presentation in the whole group. Applaud all contributions!
6. Briefly discuss: In what ways does our participation in these patterns of community life promote the development of a world-embracing civilization? In what ways do these patterns of community life redress society’s ills? Then, decide as a group:
 - Do we see additional ways to enhance the spirit of our regular devotional gatherings?
 - Would we like to work together in small teams to plan an upcoming Feast or Holy Day commemoration?
 - Would we like to invite a representative of Huqúqu’lláh to make a presentation in our community?
 - Do we see small steps that we could take together to increase our service to the community at large?
7. If you choose to carry these ideas into action, schedule time to develop them into your Personal Teaching Plan. If institutional support would be required, also decide when to contact the appropriate Institution.



THE NINETEEN DAY FEAST

Focus Questions:

What is the importance of the Nineteen Day Feast?

What strategies are suggested in the following passages to enhance its quality?

1 As to the Nineteen Day Feast, it rejoiceth mind and heart. If this feast be held in the proper fashion, the friends will, once in nineteen days, find themselves spiritually restored, and endued with a power that is not of this world.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, no. 51.1

2 The Feast is known to have three distinct but related parts: the devotional, the administrative, and the social. The first entails the recitation of prayers and reading from the Holy Texts. The second is a general meeting where the Local Spiritual Assembly reports its activities, plans and problems to the community, shares news and messages from the World Centre and the National Assembly, and receives the thoughts and recommendations of the friends through a process of consultation. The third involves the partaking of refreshments and engaging in other activities meant to foster fellowship in a culturally determined diversity of forms which do not violate principles of the Faith or the essential character of the Feast.

Even though the Feast requires strict adherence to the threefold aspects in the sequence in which they have been defined, there is much room for variety in the total experience. . . . The effects of different cultures in all these respects are welcome factors which can lend the Feast a salutary diversity, representative of the unique characteristics of the various societies in which it is held and therefore conducive to the upliftment and enjoyment of its participants. . . .

Important aspects of the preparation of the Feast include the proper selection of readings, the assignment, in advance, of good readers, and a sense of decorum both in the presentation and the reception of the devotional programme. Attention to the environment in which the Feast is to be held, whether indoors or outdoors, greatly influences the experience. Cleanliness, arrangement of the space in practical and decorative ways—play a significant part. Punctuality is also a measure of good preparation.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. 1, pp. 419-420

3 . . . If a non-Bahá’í should inadvertently attend a Nineteen Day Feast he would be treated courteously. However, it is equally important for the friends to understand that they should refrain from inviting non-Bahá’ís to these special gatherings. . . .

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. 1, p. 444

4 . . . The House of Justice has instructed us to say that children should be trained to understand the spiritual significance of the gatherings of the followers of the Blessed Beauty, and to appreciate the honour and bounty of being able to take part in them, whatever their outward form may be. It is realized that some Bahá'í observances are lengthy and it is difficult for very small children to remain quiet for so long. In such cases one or other of the parents may have to miss part of the meeting in order to care for the child. The Spiritual Assembly can also perhaps help the parents by providing for a children's observance, suited to their capacities, in a separate room during part of the community's observance. Attendance at the whole of the adult celebration thus becomes a sign of growing maturity and a distinction to be earned by good behaviour.

ON BEHALF OF THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. 1, p. 447

5 It is the hope of the House of Justice that every Feast will be a feast of love when the children will give and receive the tangible affection of the community and its individual members.

ON BEHALF OF THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. 1, p. 448



BAHÁ'Í HOLY DAYS

Focus Questions:

- What is the importance of commemorating Bahá'í Holy Days?
- What will be the results of these celebrations and solemn commemorations?
- What factors will insure the success of these Holy Day celebrations?

1 All Feasts have attained their consummation in the two Most Great Festivals, and in the two other Festivals that fall on the twin days—the first of the Most Great Festivals being those days whereon the All-Merciful shed upon the whole of creation the effulgent glory of His most excellent Names and His most exalted Attributes, and the second being that day on which We raised up the One Who announced unto mankind the glad tidings of this Name, through which the dead have been resurrected and all who are in the heavens and on earth have been gathered together. Thus hath it been decreed by Him Who is the Ordainer, the Omniscient. Happy the one who entereth upon the first day of the month of Bahá, the day which God hath consecrated to this Great Name. And blessed be he who evidenceth on this day the bounties that God hath bestowed upon him; he, verily, is of those who show forth thanks to God through actions betokening the Lord's munificence which hath encompassed all the worlds. Say: This day, verily, is the crown of all the months and the source thereof, the day on which the breath of life is wafted over all created things. Great is the blessedness of him who greeteth it with radiance and joy. We testify that he is, in truth, among those who are blissful.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, paragraphs 110-11

2 He wishes also to stress the fact that, according to the Bahá'í laws, work is forbidden on our nine Holy Days. Believers who have independent businesses or shops should refrain from working on these days. Those who are in government employ should, on religious grounds, make an effort to be excused from work; all believers, whoever their employers, should do likewise. If the government or other employers refuse to grant them these days off, they are not required to forfeit their employment, but they should make every effort to have the independent status of the Faith recognized and their right to hold their own religious Holy Days acknowledged.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *Directives of the Guardian*, pp. 37-38

3 Dignity and reverence befitting the occasion should obviously characterize observances of Bahá'í Holy Days by the friends, but this does not mean that cultural traditions which do not contravene Bahá'í principles may not, and cannot, find expression in the local observances and meetings of the friends.

ON BEHALF OF THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. 1, p. 457

Bahá'í Holy Days

Naw-Rúz (New Year), March 21 (work suspended)	Declaration of the Báb, May 23 (work suspended)
Birth of Bahá'u'lláh, November 12 (work suspended)	Birth of the Báb, October 20 (work suspended)
Ascension of Bahá'u'lláh, May 29 (work suspended)	Martyrdom of the Báb, July 9 (work suspended)
Day of the Covenant, November 26	Ascension of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, November 28
Festival of Ridván (Declaration of Bahá'u'lláh), April 21-May 2 (work suspended on the 1st, 9th, and 12th days of Ridván)	



UNIVERSAL PARTICIPATION IN UPLIFTING CIVILIZATION

1 The primary, the most urgent requirement is the promotion of education. 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. 110

2 It is the duty of those who are in charge of the organization of society to give every individual the opportunity of acquiring the necessary talent in some kind of profession, and also the means of utilizing such a talent, both for its own sake and for the sake of earning a livelihood. Every individual, no matter how handicapped and limited he may be, is under the obligation of engaging in some work or profession, for work, specially when performed in the spirit of service, is a form of worship.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *Principles of Bahá’í Administration*, p. 12

3 Universal participation must be pressed toward attainment in every continent, country and island of the globe. Every Bahá’í, however humble or inarticulate, must become intent on fulfilling his role as a bearer of the Divine Message. Indeed, how can a true believer remain silent while around us men cry out in anguish for truth, love and unity to descend upon this world?

We all know how often the Master and the beloved Guardian called upon the friends to consciously strive to be more loving, more united, more dedicated and prayerful than ever before in order to overcome the atmosphere of present-day society which is unloving, disunited, careless of right and wrong and heedless of God. “When we see the increasing darkness in the world today,” the Guardian’s secretary wrote on his behalf, “we can fully realize that unless the Message of Bahá’u’lláh reaches into the hearts of men and transforms them, there can be no peace and no spiritual progress in the future.”

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *Messages of the Universal House of Justice*, pp. 39-40

4 Among the initial goals for every community should be the establishment of study circles, children’s classes, and devotional meetings, open to all the inhabitants of the locality. The observance of the Nineteen Day Feast has to be given due weight, and consistent effort should be made to strengthen the Local Spiritual Assemblies. Once communities are able to sustain the basic activities of Bahá’í life, a natural way to further their consolidation is to introduce small projects of social and economic development — for example, a literacy project, a project for the advancement of women or environmental preservation, or even a village school. As strength builds, the responsibility for increasing numbers of lines of action is to be devolved onto the Local Spiritual Assemblies.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, to the Conference of the Continental Boards of Counsellors, 9 January 2001



HUQÚQU'LLÁH:

ESTABLISHING A BINDING RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PROGRESS AND PROSPERITY

1 Say: O people, the first duty is to recognize the One True God—magnified be His glory—the second is to show forth constancy in His Cause and, after these, one's duty is to purify ones riches and earthly possessions according to that which is prescribed by God.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Huqúqu'lláh*, p. 31

2 Cooperation 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.

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 cooperation, 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 interrelationship is strengthened and expanded, the more will human society advance in progress and prosperity.

This is the basic principle on which the institution of Huqúqu'lláh is established, inasmuch as its proceeds are dedicated to the furtherance of these ends.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *Huqúqu'lláh*, p. 61

3 Huqúqu'lláh (The Right of God) is a great law and a sacred institution. Laid down in the Most Holy Book (*Kitáb-i-Aqdas*), it is one of the key instruments for constructing the foundation and supporting the structure of the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh. It has far-reaching ramifications that extend from promoting the welfare of the individual, to buttressing the authority and extending the activity of the Head of the Faith. In providing a regular and systematic source of revenue for the Central Institution of the Cause, Bahá'u'lláh has assured the means for the independence and decisive functioning of the World Centre of His Faith.

By identifying this law as 'The Right of God' Bahá'u'lláh has re-emphasized the nature of the relationship between human beings and their Creator as a Covenant based on mutual assurances and obligations; and, by designating the Central Authority in the Cause, to which all must turn, as the recipient of this Right, He has created a direct and vital link between every individual believer and the Head of his Faith that is unique in the structure of His World Order. This law enables the friends to recognize the elevation of their economic activity to the level of divine acceptability, it is a means for the purification of their wealth and a magnet attracting divine blessings. The computation and the payment of Huqúqu'lláh, within the general guidelines set forth, are exclusively a matter of conscience between the individual and God; demanding or soliciting the

Huqúqu'lláh is prohibited, only appeals, reminders and exhortations of a general nature, under the auspices of the institutions of the Faith, are permissible. That the observance and enforcement of this law, so crucial to the material well-being of the emerging Bahá'í commonwealth, should thus have been left entirely to the faith and conscience of the individual, gives substance to and sheds light on what the beloved Master calls the spiritual solution to economic problems. Indeed, the implications of the law of Huqúqu'lláh for the realization of a number of the principles of the Faith, such as the elimination of extremes of wealth and poverty, and a more equitable distribution of resources, will increasingly become manifest as the friends assume in ever greater measure the responsibility for observing it.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *A Wider Horizon*, pp. 178-79

Activity

An Astonishing Legacy: Tablets of the Divine Plan

1. Recalling the design of the tree you created in the first session of this course to represent the organic growth of the Cause of God, consider the Tablets of the Divine Plan and the noble response of the believers to the articulation of this Plan by the Guardian, Shoghi Effendi.
2. Refer to the plant or tree you brought as a symbol of your commitment to the Divine Plan. Read aloud the selections from “Tablets of the Divine Plan” and enjoy hearing the stories of Hands of the Cause of God, Miss Martha Root and Mr. Louis Gregory as retold by members of your study circle.
3. In your study circle, go around the circle with each person completing the statement:
“Miss Martha Root (or) Mr. Louis Gregory is a true hero because . . .”
4. Then, go around the circle again with each person completing the statement:
“A quality that I see in Martha Root (or) Louis Gregory that I will strive to develop is . . .”
5. After a few minutes of silence, individually select phrases from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Tablets to write on the ribbons or paper provided.
If a plant or tree is not available, sketch your own tree and adorn it with the phrases you select.
6. Then, read the phrases you selected and tie your paper or ribbons onto your plant, adorning it with the promised destiny of the Plan of God.
7. Consider passing a bowl of fruits or nuts to celebrate this promise.



TABLETS OF THE DIVINE PLAN: A SPIRITUAL DESTINY

1 O ye real Bahá'ís of America:

Praise be to His Highness the Desired One that ye have become confirmed in the promotion of divine teachings in that vast Continent, raised the call of the Kingdom of God in that region and announced the Glad Tidings of the manifestation of the Lord of Hosts and His Highness the Promised One. Thanks be unto the Lord that ye have become assisted and confirmed in this aim. This is purely through the confirmations of the Lord of Hosts and the breaths of the Holy Spirit. The full measure of your success is as yet unrevealed, its significance still unapprehended. Erelong ye will, with your own eyes, witness how brilliantly every one of you, even as a shining star, will radiate in the firmament of your country the light of Divine Guidance, and will bestow upon its people the glory of an everlasting life. . . .

The range of your future achievements still remains undisclosed. I fervently hope that in the near future the whole earth may be stirred and shaken by the results of your achievements. The hope which 'Abdu'l-Bahá cherishes for you is that the same success which has attended your efforts in America may crown your endeavors in other parts of the world, that through you the fame of the Cause of God may be diffused throughout the East and the West and the advent of the Kingdom of the Lord of Hosts be proclaimed in all the five continents of the globe.

The moment this Divine Message is carried forward by the American believers from the shores of America and is propagated through the continents of Europe, of Asia, of Africa and of Australasia, and as far as the islands of the Pacific, this community will find itself securely established upon the throne of an everlasting dominion. Then will all the peoples of the world witness that this community is spiritually illumined and divinely guided. Then will the whole earth resound with the praises of its majesty and greatness.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, pp. 36-37

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

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



. . . [Martha Root] has covered herself with a glory that has not only eclipsed the achievements of the teachers of the Faith among her contemporaries the globe around, but has outshone the feats accomplished by any of its propagators in the course of an entire century. To Martha Root, that archetype of Bahá'í itinerant teachers and the foremost Hand raised by Bahá'u'lláh since 'Abdu'l-Bahá's passing, must be awarded, if her manifold services and the supreme act of her life are to be correctly appraised, the title of Leading Ambassadors of His Faith and Pride of Bahá'í teachers, whether men or women, in both the East and the West.

The first to arise, in the very year the Tablets of the Divine Plan were unveiled in the United States of America, in response to the epoch-making summons voiced in them by 'Abdu'l-Bahá; embarking, with unswerving resolve and a spirit of sublime detachment, on her world journeys, covering an almost uninterrupted period of twenty years and carrying her four times round the globe, in the course of which she traveled four times to China and Japan and three times to India, visited every important city in South America, transmitted the message of the New Day to kings, queens, princes and princesses, presidents of republics, ministers and statesmen, publicists, professors, clergymen and poets, as well as a vast number of people in various walks of life, and contacted, both officially and informally, religious congresses, peace societies, Esperanto associations, socialist congresses, Theosophical societies, women's clubs and other kindred organizations, this indomitable soul has, by virtue of the character of her exertions and the quality of the victories she has won, established a record that constitutes the nearest approach to the example set by 'Abdu'l-Bahá Himself to His disciples in the course of His journeys throughout the West.

Her eight successive audiences with Queen Marie of Rumania . . . ; the three invitations which that indefatigable champion of the Faith received to call on Prince Paul and Princess Olga of Yugoslavia at the Royal Palace in Belgrade; the lectures which she delivered in over four hundred universities and colleges in both the East and the West; her twice repeated visits to all German universities with the exception of two, as well as to nearly a hundred universities, colleges and schools in China; the innumerable articles which she published in newspapers and magazines in practically every country she visited; the numerous broadcasts which she delivered and the unnumbered books she placed in private and state libraries; her personal meetings with the statesmen of more than fifty countries . . . ; the painstaking efforts she exerted, while on her arduous journeys, in supervising the translation and production of a large number of versions of Dr. Esslemont's Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era; the correspondence exchanged with, and the presentation of Bahá'í books to, men to eminence and learning . . . these may be regarded as the highlights of a service which, in many of its aspects, is without parallel in the entire history of the first Bahá'í century. . . .

Neither age nor ill-health, neither the paucity of literature which hampered her early efforts, nor the meager resources which imposed an added burden on her labors, neither the extremities of the climates to which she was exposed, nor the political disturbances which she encountered in the course of her journeys, could damp the zeal or deflect the purpose of this spiritually dynamic and saintly woman. Single-handed and, on more than one occasion, in extremely perilous circumstances, she continued to call, in clarion tones, men of diverse creeds, color and classes to the Message of Bahá'u'lláh, until, while in spite of a deadly and painful disease, the onslaught of which she endured with heroic fortitude, she hastened homeward to help in the recently launched Seven Year Plan, she was stricken down on her way, in far off Honolulu. There in that symbolic spot between the Eastern and Western Hemispheres, in both of which she had labored so mightily, she died, on September 28, 1939, and brought to its close a life which may well be regarded as the fairest fruit as yet yielded by the Formative Age of the Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *God Passes By*, pp. 386-89



. . . The first five segments of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Divine Plan reached America [1916] . . . Louis Gregory responded immediately. . . .

Mr. Gregory left even earlier than planned. By 31 October, when he wrote to Joseph Hannen . . . he had spoken to “nearly 5000 souls, representing many communities.” . . . At Florida A&M College he reported that “the professors & three hundred students there received three of the principles, the Message, & the reading of the Word, with hearty appreciation last night, and two addresses are scheduled for today. The president has read some of the literature.” He added that in Jacksonville he had given six addresses. . . . For the next six weeks or so he traveled extensively in the South, ultimately reaching “probably more than fifteen thousand people. . . .”

“Abdu’l-Bahá has made it all possible,” Louis Gregory claimed, and he vowed that the Master’s assurance of assistance and confirmation had animated him from the beginning. . . .

His way of arranging his affairs to devote more time to Bahá’í work in the South was—with Louise’s wholehearted concurrence—simply to relinquish them. . . . The decision [entailed] closing his law practice and a real estate firm he had just established and later turning down an offered position on the law faculty at Howard University. The sale of their home provided the funds necessary for his travels. . . .

Both Louis and Louise Gregory unerringly sensed the urgency of the Master’s summons. . . . “We must not sit inactive for one moment; we must sever ourselves from composure, rest, tranquillity, goods, property, life and attachment to material things.”

. . . The “extended teaching tour” lasted without interruption for fifteen years. It became a series of tours, punctuated by periods of administrative and organizational activity, throughout which Mr. Gregory devoted his time wholly to the Faith.

In his travels he followed the example set by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, rising early for prayers at dawn, filling his daily schedule, often giving several major talks in addition to informal meetings and interviews. From Louisville, Kentucky, in 1919, he reported that he had given two lectures at the New Thought Center, six in one Methodist church, one each in a Congregational, a Baptist, and two other Methodist churches, one at the State University, one at each of two women’s clubs, one before a Socialist group, two in a socialist church, and “almost numberless meetings with individuals and small groups and the end is not yet.”

Like ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, he found in the experience of teaching the strength to continue the pace for months at a time. “It is really most heartening and inspiring to see the happiness of people when they hear the Glad Tidings of the Kingdom. . . .”

His active concern for the advancement of black people, dating back to the time before he encountered the Bahá'í Faith, and his special interest in unity between blacks and whites, the mission given him by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, never narrowed his vision or limited his audiences. Rather, oneness served as a key to his understanding all the various elements of a new world order and to his genuine concern for all oppressed people.

A 1917 talk he gave in Boston on "The Equality of Men and Women" illustrates the scope of his views:

"The Day of God is the day of freedom for all the varied elements of humanity. It accords with divine justice that each and all may develop their powers without hindrance from their fellows. Hand in hand with the oneness of humanity is the other principle, the equality of men and women. Humanity 'cannot exist half-slave and half-free.' Women must be free in order that men may be free. Considering the physical, mental and spiritual effects: thralldom rests as heavily upon the oppressor as upon the oppressed."

GAYLE MORRISON, *To Move the World*, pp. 84-87

Activity
The Legacy Is in Our Hands

1. Read aloud the selections from the January 17, 2003 message of the Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'ís of the World highlighting progress during the Five Year Plan.
2. Reflect individually:
 - on the growth of the Cause of God, which like the tree must be continuously nourished to bear fruit,
 - on the heroes and heroines of the past, those we have known personally and those we have studied, whose deeds have adorned the tree of the Cause of God, and whose fruits we have enjoyed,
 - on the sweet faces of these much loved children and youth, and on the generations yet to come, whose lives and happiness depend upon the growth and flourishing of the Cause of God,
 - and on the tasks of the present hour, the countless tasks of expansion and consolidation, of building institutions and fostering family and community life, that accelerate the gathering momentum of that process of the entry of humanity into the Cause by troops.
3. Review the core activities for the growth of the Cause of God in your cluster:
 - Could you increase the number of study circles open to all by taking *The Art of Facilitation* and beginning to facilitate the Fundamental Verities sequence of courses?
 - Could you increase the number of children's classes open to all by taking Core Curriculum Teacher Training?
 - Could you commit to planning and hosting a regular devotional meeting or fireside?
 - Could you prepare to facilitate one of the Core Curriculum training programs designed to build patterns of community life and reach out to several specific segments of the population—Youth Empowerment, Parenting, Marriage and Family Life, Race Unity, Equality of Women and Men, and Teachers of Children?
 - Are there other outreach activities in your cluster that you could initiate or serve?
4. Choose for yourself a noble goal, to foster the growth of this precious tree, that you can carry out in the coming months. What are the steps necessary to bring your goal to fruition? Please identify a simple step toward achieving that goal that you can take this week, as well as a systematic line of action that will lead to its completion.

Activity continues on next page ►

5. Using the notecards provided, record your pledge of noble deeds:
 - Keep one of these cards for yourself, so that you can monitor your progress toward this goal.
 - Give one to the child or youth whose picture you brought to this session, and invite that young person to collaborate with you to achieve your goal.
 - In addition, share your plan with your Local Spiritual Assembly or Auxiliary Board member, along with a message of love and support, and possibly requesting their prayers for your success in achieving your goal.
6. Then, either in the study circle or at another appropriate time and place, present the gift of your tree or other plant with your plan for its long-term care. Will it be given as a gift? Or placed in a permanent site where it can be enjoyed by friends and seekers alike? Who will care for it? How often? How long will the ribbons adorn the tree? At what point should they be removed or refreshed?



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 programme, 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. . . .

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 programmes 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.

Be assured of our heartfelt prayers in the Holy Shrines that Bahá'u'lláh may bless and confirm your endeavours to realize, to the fullest, the extraordinary opportunities of these precious days.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, Letter to the Bahá'ís of the World, Jan. 17, 2003

Individual Acts of Teaching, Study, and Service

Choose one or more of the following actions to complete during the coming weeks.

1. Carry out the first step in your plan for ongoing service to the Cause of God.
2. Increase your systematic outreach to the community at large.
3. Involve your family, young people in your community, and/or seekers in your service.
4. Finish reading the book, *The Advent of Divine Justice* by Shoghi Effendi. Share the results of your study with another person, perhaps a member of your study circle or a family member.
5. Select a new book to systematically study.

Personal Teaching Plan

Complete your Personal Teaching Plan, perhaps while listening to quiet music.

Evaluation

Please complete the Evaluation Form on p. 139 and return copies of this form to your Regional Training Institute and to the National Teacher Training Center.

Closing Devotions

Conclude your study circle with prayers that the Holy Spirit will confirm you in your service to this glorious Cause.



A PERSONAL TEACHING PLAN

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 in *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 78

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?

Fundamental Verities Course—Course Six

Building a New Civilization

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

Session(s) Attended:

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

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

What sessions were most informative and why?

What type of activity did you most enjoy and why?

What session was the least informative and why?

What activity did you least enjoy and why?

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

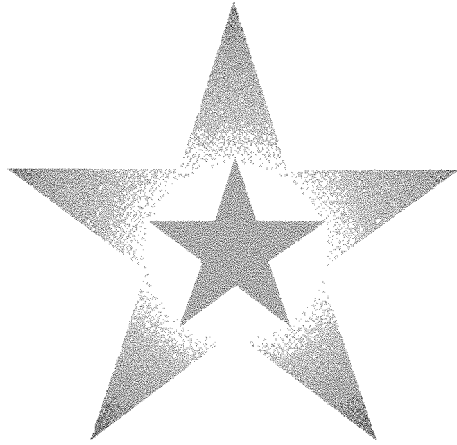
(Check one of the boxes for each question.)

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

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

Please return this form to:

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



Facilitation Guidelines

p. 142

Suggestions for Facilitators, Lists of Materials

p. 145

Building a New Civilization

COURSE SIX

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 your Regional Training Institute or the National Teacher Training Center by phone at 810-653-5033, or email: NTTC@usbnc.org. Courses may be offered at the NTTC and 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 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.

Please also make every effort to create a warm and encouraging atmosphere in which the group as a whole generates enthusiasm for sharing the Message of God, constantly and consciously learns from its experiences, and cultivates an attitude of humble fellowship with the souls it is striving to teach.

A Note about the Timing of Activities

The times offered as suggestions on the following pages are simply that: suggestions! An important responsibility of the study circle facilitator, in consultation with the other participants, is to organize your time together so that:

- Participants engage thoroughly with the Word of God with both mind and heart.
- There is a feeling of dynamic energetic movement in the study circle without rushing or feeling stressed.

Please adjust the schedule as necessary, refining your choices in light of experience, consultation, and prayer.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FACILITATORS

Session 1

BREEZES OF THE MOST MERCIFUL

Suggested Schedule of Activities

Devotions	10 minutes
Introduction, Objectives	10 minutes
Consultation on Teaching, Service, and Study	10 minutes
Breezes of the Most Merciful	30 minutes
A Unique Order	25 minutes
Individual Acts of Teaching, Service, and Study	5 minutes
A Personal Teaching Plan	5 minutes
Closing Devotions	5 minutes

Materials Needed

- Prayer books
- Music, recorded or sung
- Other materials to create a welcoming atmosphere for spiritual learning, such as a picture of the Master, pictures of the Holy Places, framed quotations, or beautiful natural elements
- Pens, pencils, markers
- Images relating to “organic growth in nature”
- Chart paper and markers—remember to save your sketch of a tree for Session 2

Advance Preparation

Prior to this session, collect a variety of images and pictures from magazines, newspapers, clip art, books, etc. which illustrate the organic processes of growth of plants in nature. Be sure to include illustrations of as many aspects of the organic process of growth as possible, including the role of storms and gusting winds as well as sunshine and rain.

If possible, enrich the learning environment with living plants.

Suggestions for Music

- “Bahá’u’lláh’s Getting Us Ready for that Great Day,” “We Will Have One World,” *Lift Up Your Voices and Sing*, vol. 2, various artists
- “One Planet, One People, Please,” “Bahá’u’lláh,” *Lift Up Your Voices and Sing*, vol. 3, various artists
- “Armed with the Power of Thy Name,” “God Is Sufficient,” “Unite the Hearts of Thy Servants,” *Prayers*, Sandy Simmons
- “We Are Building the Kingdom of God,” “Vanguard of the Dawning,” *To the Glory of God*, Eric Dozier
- “Unity,” “Turn this World Around,” “Ye are the Stars,” *Bird*, Susan Lewis Wright
- “We Can Move the World,” “Keep Holding On,” “Protect Us,” *Fruits of the Spirit*, various artists

Session 2

THE COVENANT AND THE NEW WORLD ORDER

Suggested Schedule of Activities

Devotions	10 minutes
Objectives	5 minutes
Consultation on Teaching, Service, and Study	10 minutes
The Covenant and the New World Order	50 minutes
Individual Acts of Teaching, Service, and Study	10 minutes
A Personal Teaching Plan	5 minutes
Closing Devotions	5 minutes

Materials Needed

- Prayer books
- Music, recorded or sung
- Other materials to create a welcoming atmosphere for spiritual learning, such as a picture of the Master, pictures of the Holy Places or framed quotations
- Markers, marking pens or paints
- Glue or tape
- Paper, fabric, tissue paper, poster board, or construction paper
- Sketch of a tree created on chart paper during Session 1

Suggestions for Music

- “The Báb,” “Garden of Ridván,” “Abdu'l-Bahá,” “Shoghi Effendi,” “One Planet, One People, Please,” *Lote Tree*, William Sears with various artists
- “We Are Building the Kingdom of God,” “Vanguard of the Dawning,” *To the Glory of God*, Eric Dozier
- “Tribute to 'Abdu'l-Bahá,” “Queen of Carmel,” “Prayer for the Hands of the Cause,” “In this Day, Bahá'u'lláh,” *Music of the Bahá'í World Congress*
- “The Queen of Carmel,” *Fruits of the Spirit*, various artists
- “Queen of Carmel,” “In this Day Bahá'u'lláh,” *We Have Come to Sing Praises*, Bahá'í Gospel Choir
- “Prayer for the Hands of the Cause,” *Songs of the Ancient Beauty*, Voices of Bahá Chorale

Session 3

ONE FAMILY, ONE COUNTRY, ONE WORLD

Suggested Schedule of Activities

Devotions	10 minutes
Objectives	5 minutes
Consultation on Teaching, Service, and Study	10 minutes
One Family, One Country, One World	15 minutes
A New Balance of Form and Spirit	30 minutes
Devotional Meeting Open to All	20 minutes
Individual Acts of Teaching, Service, and Study	5 minutes
A Personal Teaching Plan	5 minutes
Closing Devotions	5 minutes

Materials Needed

- Prayer books
- Music, recorded or sung
- a variety of containers (glass or plastic bottles or containers—see page 36 for details)
- a variety of fluids (water, mineral oil, sand, etc.— see page 36 for details)

Suggestions for Music

- “Unite the Hearts of Thy Servants,” *Prayers*, Sandy Simmons
- “Waves of One Sea,” “Love All the World,” *Love all the World*, Tim Urbonya
- “World Citizens,” “We Will Have One World,” *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
- “Unity House,” “New World Comin’,” “Let It Be this Generation,” *Encore*, Jack Lenz with various artists
- “We Are Building the Kingdom of God,” *To the Glory of God*, Eric Dozier

Session 4

ADVERSITY: A MORNING DEW UPON HIS GREEN PASTURE

Suggested Schedule of Activities

Opening Devotions	10 minutes
Welcome to All!	15 minutes
Devotional Program: Images of a New World Order	30 minutes
A Morning Dew Upon His Green Pasture	30 minutes
Closing Devotions	5 minutes
Fellowship	variable

Materials Needed

- Prayer books
- Music, recorded or sung
- Copies of the reproducible quotation page entitled “A Morning Dew Upon His Green Pasture,” p. 55, for your guests.
- Chart paper for writing and drawing and markers.
- CD player
- *Fruits of the Spirit* CD, or other suitable music. Please note that group singing is ideal and that many different selections of recorded music are equally effective. This particular CD is offered as an option simply because it includes a wide diversity of musical styles.
- Copy of the Core Curriculum storybook, *The Central Figures: Bahá'u'lláh, v. II*, if available.
- Refreshments as desired

Suggestions for Music

- *Fruits of the Spirit*, various artists, Louhelen Bahá'í School
- *Selections from the Hidden Words of Bahá'u'lláh*, Remembrance Ensemble
- *Selections from the Bahá'í Writings*, Paul Parrish
- *Love Setteth the World Aflame*, Roya Bauman
- *Immerse Yourself...Prayers and Writings for the Young at Heart*, Joe Crone
- *Music of the Bahá'í World Congress*
- *Songs of the Ancient Beauty*, Voices of Bahá Chorale
- *Melodies from the Sacred Writings of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, Nancy Ward

Session 5

THE INDIVIDUAL IN A NEW MODEL OF COMMUNITY LIFE

Suggested Schedule of Activities

Devotions	10 minutes
Objectives	5 minutes
Consultation on Teaching, Service, and Study	10 minutes
The Individual in a New Model of Community Life	20 minutes
Building Communities	15 minutes
Institutions Fostering Bahá'í Community Life	25 minutes
Individual Acts of Teaching, Service, and Study	5 minutes
A Personal Teaching Plan	5 minutes
Closing Devotions	5 minutes

Materials Needed

- Prayer books
- Music, recorded or sung
- Chart paper
- Markers or other drawing materials
- Tape or glue
- Paper or fabric display background
- Remember to save the sketches created in this session for use in Session 6

Suggestions for Music

- “Ay Yad-I-Toh (Thy Remembrance),” “Nightingale of Paradise,” *Lift Up Your Voices and Sing, vol. 1*, Tom Price with various artists
- “Would You Give Your Life to Bahá'u'lláh,” *Lift Up Your Voices and Sing, vol. 2*, Tom Price with various artists
- “Armed with the Power of Thy Name,” “He Who Puts His Trust in God,” *Prayers*, Sandy Simmons
- “Desire of the Heart,” “Lover and the Beloved,” *Desire of the Heart*, Narges

Session 6

A UNIQUE SYSTEM: TWIN ARMS OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER

Suggested Schedule of Activities

Devotions	10 minutes
Objectives	5 minutes
Consultation on Teaching, Service, and Study	10 minutes
Twin Arms of the Administrative Order	40 minutes
Perfect Reciprocity and Utmost Harmony	15 minutes
Memorization	10 minutes
Individual Acts of Teaching, Service, and Study	5 minutes
A Personal Teaching Plan	5 minutes
Closing Devotions	5 minutes

Materials Needed

- Prayer books
- Music, recorded or sung
- Drawing paper
- Markers, pens, or other drawing materials
- Tape or glue
- Sketched individual and symbols of institutions created in Session 5

Suggestions for Music

- “We Are Building the Kingdom of God,” *To the Glory of God*, Eric Dozier
- “Prayer for the Hands of the Cause,” “Queen of Carmel,” *Music of the Bahá’í World Congress*
- “Blessed is the Spot,” “Allah’u’Abha,” “Ya Bahá’u’l-Abhá, Ya Aliyyu’l-‘Ala,” “Prayer for the Hands of the Cause,” *Songs of the Ancient Beauty*, Voices of Bahá Chorale
- “To the Planters of Trees,” “New World Comin’,” *Encore*, Jack Lenz with various artists

Session 7

A VIBRANT MODEL OF UNITY IN DIVERSITY

Suggested Schedule of Activities

Opening Devotions	10 minutes
Objectives	5 minutes
Consultation on Teaching, Service, and Study	10 minutes
New World Thinking: A Personal Reflection	20 minutes
Unlocking the Power of Unified Action	30 minutes
Individual Acts of Teaching, Study, and Service	5 minutes
A Personal Teaching Plan	5 minutes
Closing Devotions	5 minutes

Materials Needed

- Prayer books
- Music, recorded or sung

Suggestions for Music

- “World Citizens,” “Queen of Carmel,” “East of Ginger Trees,” *Lift Up Your Voices and Sing*, vol. 2, Tom Price with various artists
- “We Are Building the Kingdom of God,” *To the Glory of God*, Eric Dozier
- “O Bahá'u'lláh,” “Queen of Carmel,” *Music of the Bahá'í World Congress*
- “Sing, O Carmel,” *Songs for the Martyrs*, Grant Hindin Miller
- “Inheritance of the Kingdom,” *Desire of the Heart*, Narges

Session 8

A WORLD EMBRACING VISION

Suggested Schedule of Activities

Opening Devotions	10 minutes
Objectives	5 minutes
Consultation on Teaching, Service, and Study	10 minutes
A World Civilization and World Spiritual Center	30 minutes
Promoting Divine Justice	25 minutes
Individual Acts of Teaching, Study, and Service	10 minutes
A Personal Teaching Plan	5 minutes
Closing Devotions	5 minutes

Materials Needed

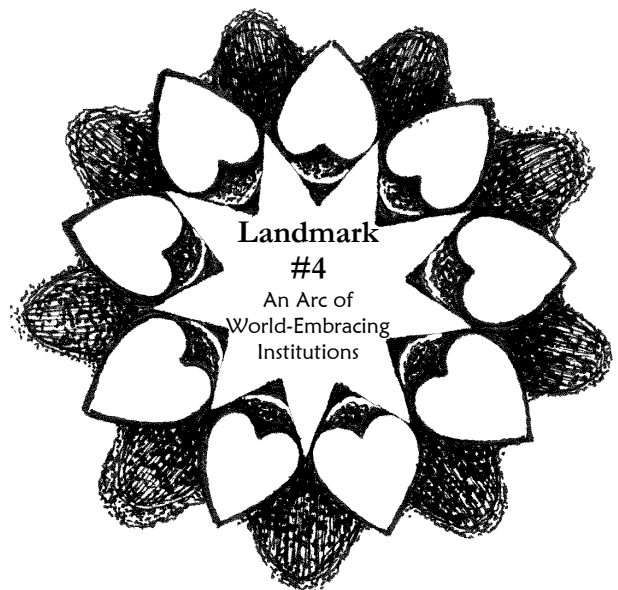
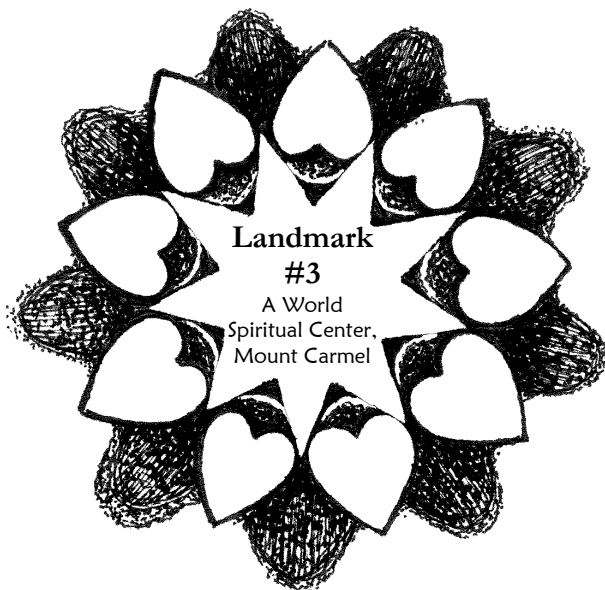
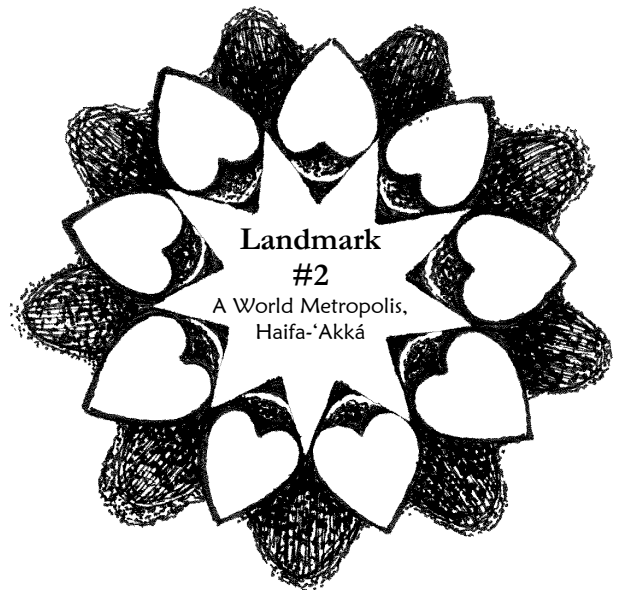
- Prayer books
- Music, recorded or sung
- A world map—Maps can be inexpensively purchased in bookstores or borrowed from friends. You may also sketch a world map onto chart paper from the example provided on p. 154
- Stickers, stick pins, or markers to highlight locations on the map
- Copies of the starburst designs provided on p. 153, if desired
- Ribbon, if desired

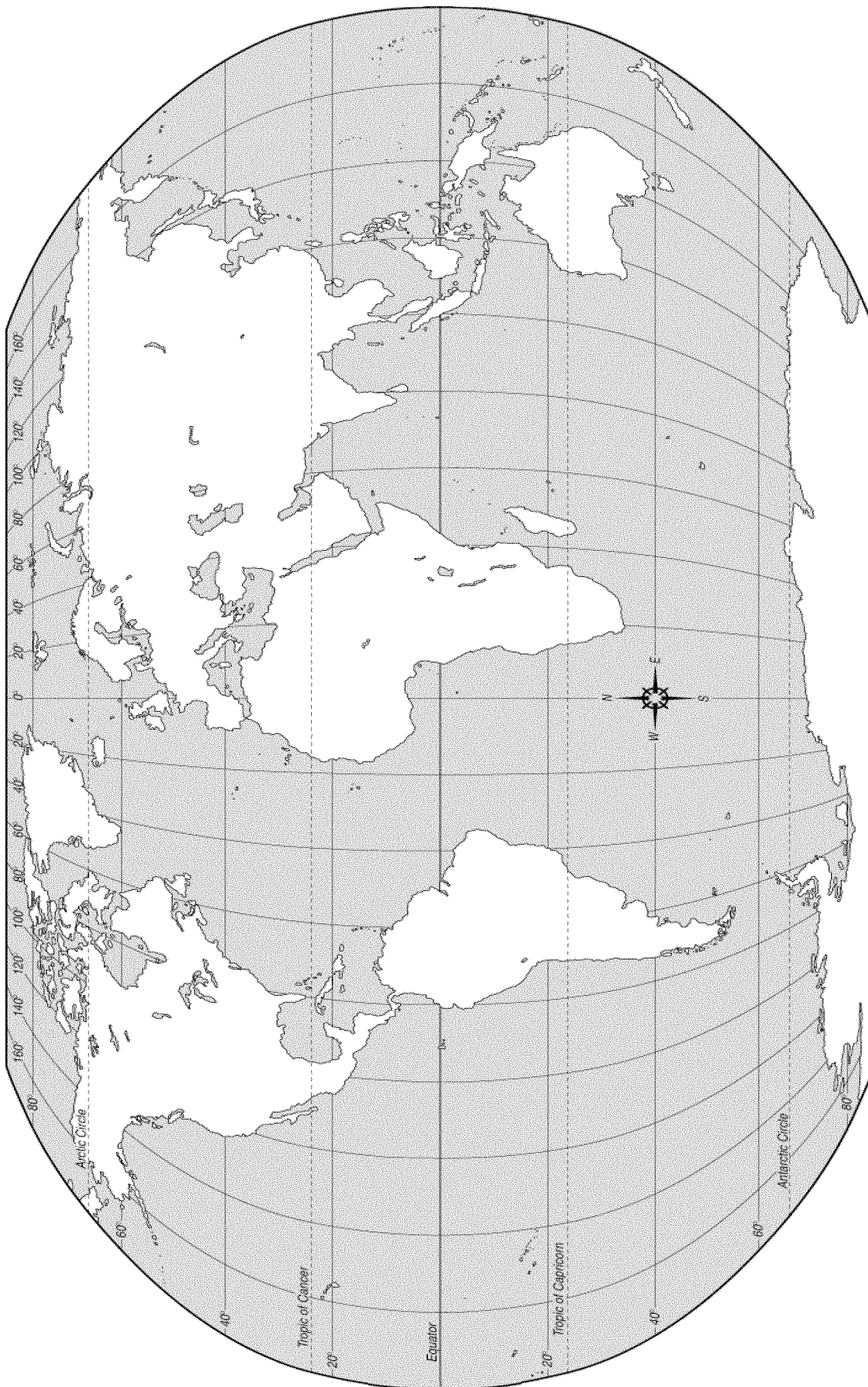
Advance Preparation

- If desired, sketch a world map onto chart paper from the example provided on p. 154.
- Photocopy the sunburst cutouts, p. 153, or copy them onto colored card stock, cut them out, and embellish them with ribbons or other decorations. Alternately, you may create (or invite a participant to create) your own designs for this activity.

Suggestions for Music

- “Soldiers in God’s Army,” *Lift Up Your Voices and Sing, vol. 1*, Tom Price with various artists
- “Would You Give Your Life to Bahá'u'lláh,” *Lift Up Your Voices and Sing, vol. 2*, Tom Price with various artists
- “We Are Building the Kingdom of God,” *To the Glory of God*, Eric Dozier
- “O Bahá'u'lláh,” “Queen of Carmel,” *Music of the Bahá'í World Congress*
- “Sing, O Carmel,” *Songs for the Martyrs*, Grant Hindin Miller
- “Inheritance of the Kingdom,” *Desire of the Heart*, Narges





Session 9

OUR GLORIOUS MISSION

Suggested Schedule of Activities

Devotions	10 minutes
Objectives	5 minutes
Consultation on Teaching, Service, and Study	10 minutes
Developing Patterns of Community Life	25 minutes
An Astonishing Legacy: Tablets of the Divine Plan	25 minutes
The Legacy Is in Our Hands	20 minutes
Individual Acts of Teaching, Study, and Service	5 minutes
Personal Teaching Plan	5 minutes
Evaluation	5 minutes
Devotions	5 minutes

Materials Needed

- Prayer books
- Music, recorded or sung
- A plant or tree, potted or suitable for planting
- Potting soil, suitable pot or outdoor space for planting, as desired
- Satin ribbon, two or more 18-inch lengths or paper cutouts and yarn for each participant
- Marking pens—test the pens to be sure they will write on the ribbon
- Note cards, pens and pencils
- Fruits and/or nuts to serve (optional)
- Chart paper and markers

Suggestions for Music

- “Ye Are the Stars,” “Turn this World Around,” *Bird*, Susan Lewis Wright
- “We Are Building the Kingdom of God,” “Vanguard of the Dawning,” *To the Glory of God*, Eric Dozier
- “Soldiers in God’s Army,” *Lift Up Your Voices and Sing, vol. 1*, Tom Price with various artists
- “To the Planters of Trees,” “Let It Be this Generation,” “New World Comin’” *Encore*, Jack Lenz with 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