



**CORE CURRICULUM  
FOR  
SPIRITUAL EDUCATION**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 1 The Joys and Challenges of Parenting
- 2 Nurturing Spirituality in Children
- 3 The Purpose of Spiritual Education
- 4 Guiding Children Spiritually
- 5 Consultation and Reflection
- 6 Research and Action
- 7 Spiritual Education in the Home
- 8 Love in the Human Family
- 9 The Child-Development Centered Community
- 10 Bahá'í Classes Open to All
- 11 Children in the Cause of God
- 12 Love Is Light

# Spiritual Parenting

## COURSE TWO

**National Bahá'í  
Education Task Force**

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CORE CURRICULUM FOR  
SPIRITUAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING



# **Spiritual Parenting**

## **COURSE TWO**

### **Purpose of the Course**

The purpose of the Spiritual Parenting Course is to foster loving, unified, spiritually vibrant families.

Trainings are offered under the sponsorship of Local Spiritual Assemblies or Regional Training Institutes on behalf of and in concert with the National Bahá'í Education Task Force.

### **The Indispensable Foundation of All Human Excellence**

The education and training of children is among the most meritorious acts of humankind and draweth down the grace and favor of the All-Merciful, for education is the indispensable foundation of all human excellence and alloweth man to work his way to the heights of abiding glory.

*'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, NO. 103, P. 129*

## Preface

Among the greatest of all services that can possibly be rendered by man to Almighty God is the education and training of children. . . .

*'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, NO. 106, P. 133*

This second course in the Core Curriculum Spiritual Parenting Program provides a process for parents to cultivate their children's innate talents and capacities and guide them to contribute to the betterment of the human world. It assists parents to consider deeply the means to raise their children to love God and shape their actions by the heavenly teachings that form the core of the world's great religions. In addition, the course fosters understanding of the importance of community life for raising children to become contributing members of society.

The Core Curriculum Spiritual Parenting Program provides an integral component of the Core Curriculum for Spiritual Education and Training, a comprehensive spiritual education curriculum for children, youth, and adults. In addition to this Spiritual Parenting Program, the Core Curriculum includes a nine-year spiritual education curriculum for children and junior youth, materials for the spiritual education of young children, and materials for the spiritual empowerment of youth. It includes courses on marriage and family life, race unity, equality of women and men, and training for teachers of children and junior youth. It also offers a course sequence on some of the basic teachings of the Bahá'í Faith, the Fundamental Verities Sequence of Courses.

The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States has supervised the on-going development of the Core Curriculum since 1988. The curriculum is based on the scriptures of the Bahá'í Faith and draws upon the grassroots participation of individuals from all walks of life. All components of the curriculum serve the purpose of assisting ever-growing numbers of individuals to contribute their God-given talents to the service of humanity, and to the growth and development of communities striving to reflect the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, the Founder of the Bahá'í Faith. These communities, in turn, provide a glimpse of a future society based on the love of God, the fundamental spiritual principle of the oneness of humanity, and a deep commitment of service to others. All of these courses are open to all.

In addition to an overall spiritual education curriculum, the Core Curriculum includes training for individuals who wish to serve their communities by facilitating these courses. In many areas, a system of Regional Training Institutes provides the primary venue for this training. Please contact your Regional Training Institute for more information or to arrange this training. You may also learn more about the Core Curriculum by visiting the website [www.core-curriculum.org](http://www.core-curriculum.org) or by contacting the National Children's Education and Research Center at [ncerc@usbnc.org](mailto:ncerc@usbnc.org) or by telephoning 810.653.5033.

Individuals engaged in these courses, whether as participants or facilitators, all contribute to an on-going process of learning about the application of Bahá'í teachings to the every-day realities of life. By sharing the results of their study, consultation, reflection, and action with others, they contribute to the development of a learning community, a truly Bahá'í community, in which children "shine as the emblems of a better future."<sup>1</sup>

The National Bahá'í Education Task Force, June 2005

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<sup>1</sup> The Universal House of Justice, Ridván 2000



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**The Greatest of All Services  
Growth Through Challenge  
Parents Helping Parents**

# Spiritual Parenting

## **COURSE TWO**

### **Session One**

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The Joys and Challenges of Parenting

## *Opening Devotions*

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Thou seest, O Lord, our suppliant hands lifted up towards the heaven of Thy favor and bounty. Grant that they may be filled with the treasures of Thy munificence and bountiful favor. Forgive us, and our fathers, and our mothers, and fulfill whatsoever we have desired from the ocean of Thy grace and Divine generosity. Accept, O Beloved of our hearts, all our works in Thy path. Thou art, verily, the Most Powerful, the Most Exalted, the Incomparable, the One, the Forgiving, the Gracious.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *GLEANINGS FROM THE WRITINGS OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH*, CXXXVIII, PP. 301-2

O Thou kind Lord! These lovely children are the handiwork of the fingers of Thy might and the wondrous signs of Thy greatness. O God! Protect these children, graciously assist them to be educated and enable them to render service to the world of humanity. O God! These children are pearls, cause them to be nurtured within the shell of Thy loving-kindness.

Thou art the Bountiful, the All-Loving.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *BAHÁ'Í PRAYERS*, P. 35

When a man turns his face to God he finds sunshine everywhere.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *PARIS TALKS*, P. 15

When a man has found the joy of life in one place, he returns to that same spot to find more joy. When a man has found gold in a mine, he returns again to that mine to dig for more gold.

This shows the internal force and natural instinct which God has given to man, and the power of vital energy which is born in him.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *PARIS TALKS*, P. 33

Ye have written as to the meetings of the friends, and how filled they are with peace and joy. Of course this is so; for wherever the spiritually minded are gathered together, there in His beauty reigneth Bahá'u'lláh. Thus it is certain that such reunions will yield boundless happiness and peace.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ*, NO. 54, P. 93

. . . Man can receive no greater gift than this, that he rejoice another's heart. 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*, NO. 174, PP. 203-4

Yea, certain persons shall in this divine dispensation produce heavenly children and such children shall promulgate the teachings of the Beauty of Abhá and serve His great Cause. Through a heavenly power and spiritual confirmation they shall be enabled to promote the Word of God and to diffuse the fragrances of God. These children are neither Oriental nor Occidental, neither Asiatic nor American, neither European nor African, but they are of the Kingdom; their native home is heaven and their resort is the Kingdom of Abhá. This is but truth and there is naught after truth save superstitions (or fancy).

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *TABLETS OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ*, V. 3, PP. 647-48

O Thou compassionate Lord, Thou Who art generous and able! We are servants of Thine sheltered beneath Thy providence. Cast Thy glance of favor upon us. Give light to our eyes, hearing to our ears, and understanding and love to our hearts. Render our souls joyous and happy through Thy glad tidings. O Lord! Point out to us the pathway of Thy kingdom and resuscitate all of us through the breaths of the Holy Spirit. Bestow upon us life everlasting and confer upon us never-ending honor. Unify mankind and illumine the world of humanity. May we all follow Thy pathway, long for Thy good pleasure and seek the mysteries of Thy kingdom. O God! Unite us and connect our hearts with Thy indissoluble bond. Verily, Thou art the Giver, Thou art the Kind One and Thou art the Almighty.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *BAHÁ'Í PRAYERS*, P. 99

## ***Welcome!***

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Welcome to Course Two in the Core Curriculum Spiritual Parenting Program.

Please begin your session with opening prayers, music, and readings such as those suggested on the previous pages.

## ***The Greatest of All Services***

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### **Introductions to each other**

1. In your whole group, reflect upon your experiences as a parent. Please consider a time when you faced an important challenge as a parent, and you noticed that the challenge had a good outcome. What happened? What did you do? Were other people involved? What seemed to make a difference? And what was the positive outcome?
2. After a few minutes of reflection, pair with another person in your group. Share your reflections with each other. Then, introduce one another to the group as a whole. In your introductions, please include the name of your sharing partner, the members of his or her household, and a brief highlight from the story you heard.

**Introductions to Course Two in the Core Curriculum Spiritual Parenting Program**

1. In the whole group, carefully read aloud the following quotation:

Among the greatest of all services that can possibly be rendered by man to Almighty God is the education and training of children, young plants of the Abhá Paradise, so that these children, fostered by grace in the way of salvation, growing like pearls of divine bounty in the shell of education, will one day bejewel the crown of abiding glory.

It is, however, very difficult to undertake this service, even harder to succeed in it. I hope that thou wilt acquit thyself well in this most important of tasks, and successfully carry the day, and become an ensign of God's abounding grace; that these children, reared one and all in the holy Teachings, will develop natures like unto the sweet airs that blow across the gardens of the All-Glorious, and will waft their fragrance around the world.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ*, NO. 106, PP. 133–34

Then, discuss the questions:

- What is the outcome of the education and training of children?
- Why do we think that the education and training of children is “among the greatest of all possible services that can be rendered by man to Almighty God”?
- What insights about this “greatest” service can we gain from the stories we shared of our successful responses to parenting challenges?

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*Course Overview*

This course builds upon the first course by providing additional opportunities to study and practice the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh that relate to parenting. The first course focused on some of the fundamental spiritual processes that help parents rear their children to contribute their talents to the betterment of the human world. This course continues the study and practice of spiritual parenting. It explores ways to work with teachers and with the community as a whole so that children can “shine as emblems of a better future.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Universal House of Justice, Ridván 2000

The course provides participatory learning experiences for the following topics:

Session 1: The Joys and Challenges of Parenting

Session 2: Nurturing Spirituality in Children

Session 3: The Purpose of Spiritual Education

Session 4: Guiding Children Spiritually

Session 5: Consultation and Reflection

Session 6: Research and Action

Session 7: Spiritual Education in the Home

Session 8: Love in the Human Family

Session 9: The Child-Development Centered Community

Session 10: Bahá'í Classes Open to All

Session 11: Children in the Cause of God

Session 12: Love Is Light

Quotations from the Bahá'í writings provide the themes for each session. Learning experiences draw on the Core Curriculum learning model to build knowledge, understanding, spiritual insights, and positive action.

Each session includes Parents Helping Parents—a structured process for exploring important questions and concerns that may not be addressed by the theme of that session.

## *Course Logistics*

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Please review the practical arrangements for your course by briefly discussing the following questions:

- How would we like to organize our sessions? Would we like to make some agreements about the ways we'd like to consult together?
- What other logistical arrangements will assist us to function as a group? How will we arrange our time together—do we need to agree to begin and end our sessions punctually? How much flexibility do we have with time? If not already determined, how will we provide care for our children while we study?
- What else do we need to discuss as a group?

Record any agreements that you make so that you can refer to them in future sessions if you like.



Then please read aloud the themes and learning objectives for this session.

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## *Session One Themes*

### **The Greatest of All Services**

Among the greatest of all services that can possibly be rendered by man to Almighty God is the education and training of children. . . .

*'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, NO. 106, P. 133*

### **Growth Through Challenge**

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, NO. 40, P. 82*

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## *Learning Objectives*

### **KNOWLEDGE**

- Become familiar with some of the Bahá'í writings on the purpose of tests and challenges.

### **WISDOM**

- Understand the source of spiritual happiness.
- Recognize that spiritual growth comes through tests and challenges.

### **SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION**

- Discern ways to grow through tests and challenges.
- Discern the importance of a parent support network.

### **ELOQUENT SPEECH**

- Identify a parenting goal to achieve through this course.

## *Growth Through Challenge*

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**Purpose:**

Become familiar with some of the Bahá'í writings on tests and challenges.

Recognize that spiritual growth comes through challenge.

1. In your whole group, read aloud the quotations, GROWTH THROUGH CHALLENGE, pp. 19–20.
2. Enjoy together the “Remover of Difficulties” prayer in music, either sung by a participant or from a recording, as you reflect on the words of this prayer.
3. Take a few minutes to look back over the quotations. Then work together to create a list of some of the actions that we can take to benefit spiritually from life’s challenges.
4. Individually select three images from the pictures provided: one to represent your experiences as a parent at the beginning of Course One; one to represent your experience as a parent today; and one to represent a personal spiritual goal that you hope to achieve as a parent during this course.
5. Share your pictures and your reasons for selecting them in the whole group.
6. Glue the third picture on your VISION OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH, p. 21, as a reminder of your goal.
7. Review the Core Curriculum learning model if desired. Then, listen to quiet music while you outline some action steps that you can take to achieve your goal. Record your action steps on your SPIRITUAL GROWTH PLAN, p. 22, or record your plan on a blank journal page.
8. After taking the time you need to complete your plan, consider sharing your goals in the whole group. Briefly discuss: How could we encourage and support each other in this process?

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**Process the Activity**

What is the value of setting our own spiritual development goals? How could we teach this process to our children?

1 Sorrow not if, in these days and on this earthly plane, things contrary to your wishes have been ordained and manifested by God, for days of blissful joy, of heavenly delight, are assuredly in store for you.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *GLEANINGS FROM THE WRITINGS OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH*, CLIII, p. 329

2 Nothing save that which profiteth them can befall My loved ones.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, QUOTED IN *THE ADVENT OF DIVINE JUSTICE*, p. 81

3 In this world we are influenced by two sentiments, Joy and Pain.

Joy gives us wings! In times of joy our strength is more vital, our intellect keener, and our understanding less clouded. We seem better able to cope with the world and to find our sphere of usefulness. But when sadness visits us we become weak, our strength leaves us, our comprehension is dim and our intelligence veiled. The actualities of life seem to elude our grasp, the eyes of our spirits fail to discover the sacred mysteries, and we become even as dead beings.

There is no human being untouched by these two influences; but all the sorrow and the grief that exist come from the world of matter—the spiritual world bestows only the joy!

If we suffer it is the outcome of material things, and all the trials and troubles come from this world of illusion.

For instance, a merchant may lose his trade and depression ensues. A workman is dismissed and starvation stares him in the face. A farmer has a bad harvest, anxiety fills his mind. A man builds a house which is burnt to the ground and he is straightway homeless, ruined, and in despair.

All these examples are to show you that the trials which beset our every step, all our sorrow, pain, shame and grief, are born in the world of matter; whereas the spiritual Kingdom never causes sadness. A man living with his thoughts in this Kingdom knows perpetual joy. The ills all flesh is heir to do not pass him by, but they only touch the surface of his life, the depths are calm and serene.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *PARIS TALKS*, pp. 109–10

4 Holy souls are like soil which has been plowed and tilled with much earnest labor, the thorns and thistles cast aside and all weeds uprooted. Such soil is most fruitful, and the harvest from it will prove full and plenteous.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *THE PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE*, p. 293

5 The more difficulties one sees in the world the more perfect one becomes. The more you plough and dig the ground the more fertile it becomes. The more you put the gold in the fire the purer it becomes. The more you sharpen the steel by grinding the better it cuts. Therefore, the more sorrows one sees the more perfect one becomes. That is why, in all times, the Prophets of God have had tribulations and difficulties to withstand. . . . Therefore I am happy that you have had great tribulations and difficulties. For this I am very happy.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, QUOTED IN *STAR OF THE WEST*, VOL. 14, NO. 2, P. 41

6 Naturally there will be periods of distress and difficulty, and even severe tests; but if that person turns firmly towards the Divine Manifestation, studies carefully His spiritual teachings and receives the blessings of the Holy Spirit, he will find that in reality these tests and difficulties have been the gifts of God to enable him to grow and develop.

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, *LIVING THE LIFE*, PP. 35–36

7 Life is a process of trials and testings, and these are—contrary to what we are prone to thinking—good for us, and give us stamina, and teach us to rely on God. Knowing He will help us, we can help ourselves more.

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, *UNFOLDING DESTINY*, P. 453

8 . . . An essential characteristic of this physical world is that we are constantly faced with trials, tribulations, hardships and sufferings and that by overcoming them we achieve moral and spiritual development. . . .

ON BEHALF OF THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE,  
*LIGHTS OF GUIDANCE*, NO. 1226, P. 366

## MY VISION OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH

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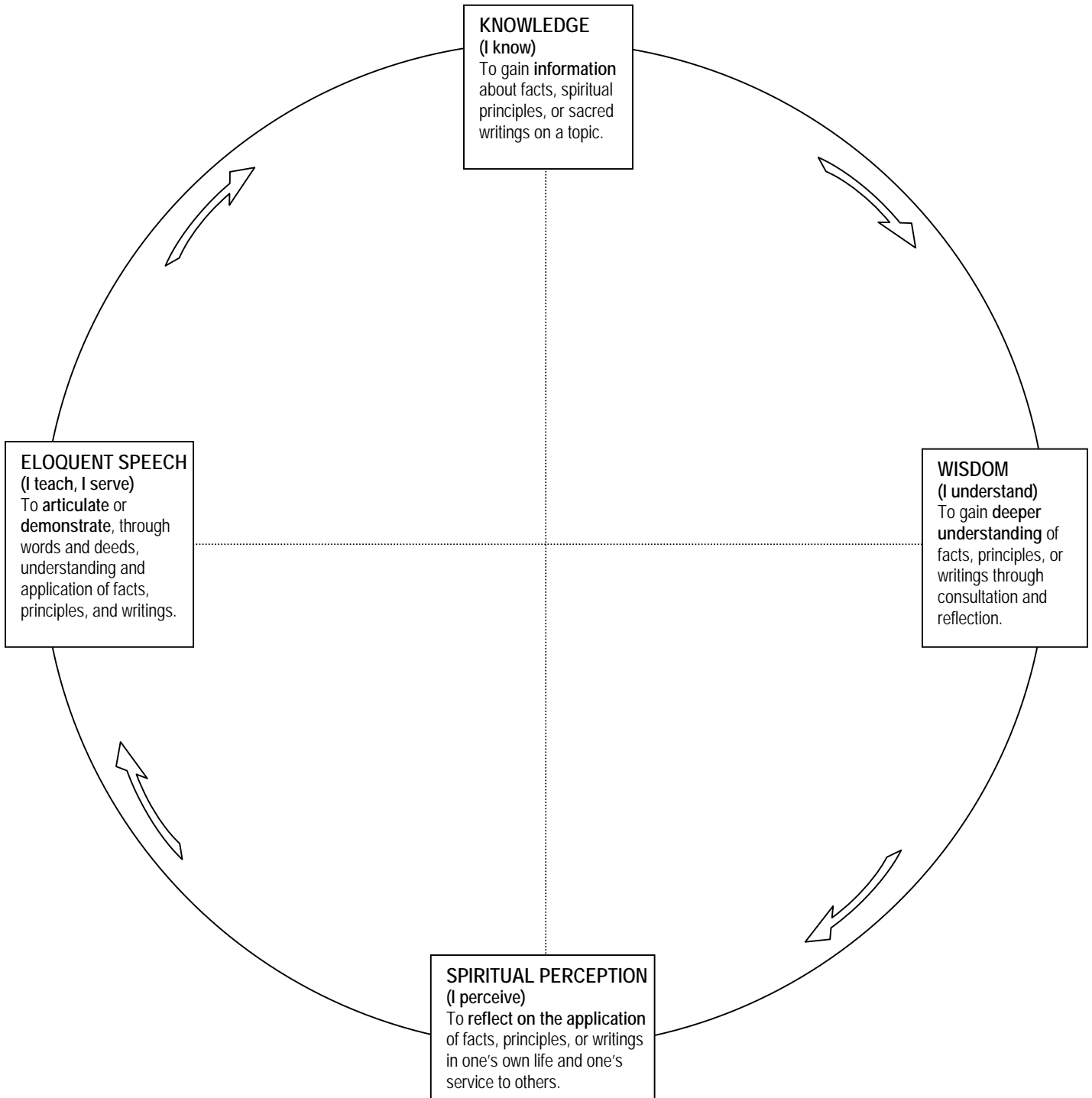
**“ . . . Choose for yourselves a noble goal.”** —‘Abdu’l-Bahá

## MY SPIRITUAL GROWTH PLAN

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Then, so much as capacity and capability allow, ye needs must deck the tree of being with fruits such as knowledge, wisdom, spiritual perception, and eloquent speech.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *BAHÁ'Í EDUCATION*, REV. ED. 1999, NO. 9, P. 3



- How will I track my progress and modify my plan if needed?
- How will I invite my family's encouragement or support as I strive toward my goal?
- How will I celebrate my progress?

The prime requisites for them that take counsel together are purity of motive, radiance of spirit, detachment from all else save God, attraction to His Divine Fragrances, humility and lowliness amongst His loved ones, patience and long-suffering in difficulties and servitude to His exalted Threshold. Should they be graciously aided to acquire these attributes, victory from the unseen Kingdom of Baha shall be vouchsafed to them.

*'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, NO. 43, P. 86*

**Purpose:**

Discern the importance of a parent support network in problem-solving.

During each session of this spiritual parenting course:

We will have an opportunity to give a short description of a situation we would like to change at home.

We will be able to share our experiences with parents who have successfully handled similar challenges.

A volunteer will be invited to role-play a new approach he or she would like to practice at home, perhaps based on one or a combination of possible strategies offered by others.

1. Reflect: who would like to share a short description of a situation that you would like to change at home?
2. Let's consult about ways to resolve this dilemma.
3. Then, could an individual or small group role-play how this situation may be handled?
4. After consulting together and role-playing some possible solutions, encourage the process by sharing your appreciation to all who offer challenges and successes. Appreciation might sound like:
  - I learned . . .
  - I felt . . .
  - I have the same problem, so now I can try . . .
  - I know how hard it is to share . . .
  - Thank you for . . .

## ***Concluding Session One***

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If possible, please bring a photograph of your children or your family to the next session.

If desired, you may also prepare for the next session by reading pages 84–93 of the book *Foundations for a Spiritual Education*, sections: The Nature, Purpose, and Outcomes of Spiritual Education.

Conclude the session with the following story, prayers, and music.

## **THE SWEETNESS OF LOVE**

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A master had a servant who was completely devoted to him. One day he gave the servant a melon which when cut open looked most ripe and delicious. The servant ate one piece, then another and another with great relish (the day being warm) until nearly the whole melon had disappeared. The master, picking up the last slice, tasted it, and found it exceedingly bitter and unpalatable. "Why it is very bitter! Did you not find it so?" he asked the servant. "Yes, my master," the servant replied, "it was bitter and unpleasant, but I have tasted so much sweetness from thy hand that one bitter melon was not worth mentioning."

ADAPTED FROM *TEN DAYS IN THE LIGHT OF AKKÁ*, BY JULIA M. GRUNDY, P. 103





# Spiritual Parenting

## COURSE TWO

**Nurturing Spirituality in Children**  
**Nurturing the Soul**  
**The Value of This Day**  
**Parents Helping Parents**

## **Session Two**

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Nurturing Spirituality in Children

## *Opening Devotions*

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Begin your session by sharing your photographs of your children or your families. Consider placing these photographs where all will be able to see them during this session. Mention the children by name, share a hope you have for them, and remember them during our opening prayers and music.

Then, read aloud the themes and learning objectives for this session

## *Session Two Themes*

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### **Nurturing Spirituality in Children**

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*, NO. 40, P. 82

### **The Value of this Day**

Know thou the value of these days; let not this chance escape thee. Beg thou God to make thee a lighted candle, so that thou mayest guide a great multitude through this darksome world.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ*, NO. 64, P. 100

## *Learning Objectives*

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### **KNOWLEDGE**

- Become familiar with some of the Bahá'í writings on nurturing spirituality in children.
- Identify how one's time is spent.

### **WISDOM**

- Understand the importance of nurturing spirituality in children.

### **SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION**

- Perceive how time can be used to achieve goals.
- Discern the importance of a parent support network in problem-solving.

### **ELOQUENT SPEECH**

- Develop a personal plan to further establish prayer and daily readings in the home.

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## *Reflections on Session One*

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Please briefly discuss the questions:

What have we noticed as we've been striving to progress toward our parenting goals—any particular victories or challenges?

What has brought joy to your heart this week?

If you've been able to read selections from *Foundations for a Spiritual Education*, please share your reflections on your reading with the group.

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## *Nurturing Spirituality in Children*

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1. Enjoy a demonstration prepared by your facilitators.
2. Then listen to quiet background music as you silently read the quotations on the following page. Mark your favorite words and phrases as you read.
3. Share some of your favorite words and phrases with the person beside you.
4. Working with that person, use some of these favorite words and phrases in a sentence that answers the question: What are some of the ways that we as parents can nurture spirituality in our children?
5. Share your team's sentence with the whole group. Applaud all!

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### **Process the Activity**

How can we explain the process of spiritual growth to our children? What is the benefit of helping children understand their spiritual nature?

## NURTURING SPIRITUALITY IN CHILDREN

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1 I am, O my God, but a tiny seed which Thou hast sown in the soil of Thy love, and caused to spring forth by the hand of Thy bounty. This seed craveth, therefore, in its inmost being, for the waters of Thy mercy and the living fountain of Thy grace.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *BAHÁ'Í PRAYERS*, p. 148

2 Unless and until the believers really come to realize 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.

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, *THE COMPILATION OF COMPILATIONS*, VOL. 2, p. 312

3 I pray for each and all that you may be as flames of love in the world, and that the brightness of your light and the warmth of your affection may reach the heart of every sad and sorrowing child of God.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *PARIS TALKS*, pp. 95–96

4 . . . The Teachings of God, the utterances of God, are like the water.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *THE COMPILATION OF COMPILATIONS*, VOL. 2, p. 77

5 As the sun ripens the fruits of the earth, and gives life and warmth to all living beings, so shines the Sun of Truth on all souls, filling them with the fire of Divine love and understanding.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *PARIS TALKS*, p. 25

6 Thus will these young plants in the garden of God's love grow and flourish under the warmth of the Sun of Truth, the gentle spring winds of Heaven, and their mother's guiding hand. Thus, in the Abhá Paradise, will each become a tree, bearing his clustered fruit, and each one, in this new and wondrous season, out of the bounties of the spring, will become possessed of all beauty and grace.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ*, NO. 113, pp. 138–39

7 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*, NO. 40, p. 82

8 Children are even as a branch that is fresh and green; they will grow up in whatever way ye train them.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ*, NO. 110, p. 136

1. Read aloud the following quotations:

Teach ye your children so that they may peruse the divine verses every morn and eve.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *THE COMPILATION OF COMPILATIONS*, VOL. 1, P. 1

These children are even as young plants, and teaching them the prayers is as letting the rain pour down upon them, that they may wax tender and fresh, and the soft breezes of the love of God may blow over them, making them to tremble with joy.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ*, NO. 115, P. 139

**Purpose:**

Develop a personal plan to establish prayer and daily readings in the home.

2. In the whole group, discuss the questions:

- What is the importance of prayers and readings in the home?
- How can it help us?
- How can it help our children?
- What are some of the different ways that families arrange for family devotions?
- What are some of the barriers that prevent families from establishing daily prayers and readings in the home?
- How can these barriers be overcome?
- What are some small steps that families can take to make prayers and readings a regular part of their daily routine?

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**Process the Activity**

Record in your journals your individual reflections, hopes, and plans for family prayer and reading time in the coming week.

## *The Value of This Day*

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### **Purpose:**

Identify how one's time is spent.

Perceive how time can be used to achieve goals.

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

Know thou the value of these days; let not this chance escape thee. Beg thou God to make thee a lighted candle, so that thou mayest guide a great multitude through this darksome world.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ*, NO. 64, P. 100

2. In the next two minutes, individually make a list of your activities on a typical day. It need not be in chronological order, but please be as specific as possible.
3. 'Abdu'l-Bahá provides some guidance about categorizing the activities in our lives:

Education is of three kinds: material, human and spiritual. Material education is concerned with the progress and development of the body, through gaining its sustenance, its material comfort and ease. This education is common to animals and man. Human education signifies civilization and progress—that is to say, government, administration, charitable works, trades, arts and handicrafts, sciences, great inventions and discoveries, and elaborate institutions, which are the activities essential to man as distinguished from the animal. Divine education is that of the Kingdom of God; it consists in acquiring divine perfections, and this is true education. . . . This is the goal of the world of humanity.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *BAHÁ'Í EDUCATION*, P. 11

4. Now go through your list and mark each task with **M** if it is **material** in nature, **H** if it is a **human** activity, or **S** if it is a **spiritual** or “divine” activity.
5. When finished, turn to the person next to you and share the results. Briefly discuss: How are you spending most of your time? Does time spent reflect your spiritual goals?

6. Combine your teams so that you're working in groups of three or four. In these groups explore possibilities for adjusting your daily schedule. Could time be reallocated to "fit" in more than one category? For example, could one genuinely "spiritualize" time spent in human and material pursuits by singing Bahá'í songs and prayers in the car on the way to school, telling Bahá'í stories while cooking, or discuss spiritual principles while driving with friends to soccer practice?
7. After allowing time for discussion, work in your same team to create a two-minute role-play or brief dramatic sketch to demonstrate a realistic opportunity for "spiritualizing" an everyday family activity.
8. Present your role-plays in the whole group. Applaud all!

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**Process the Activity**

Turn again to your journal and record your specific plans for nurturing your children spiritually this week. As you make your plans, remember that consistent small steps can create lasting change.

**Purpose:**

Discern the importance of a parent support network in problem-solving.

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

*'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, CONSULTATION: A COMPILATION, NO. 15, P. 8*

During each session of this spiritual parenting course:

We will have an opportunity to give a short description of a situation we would like to change at home.

We will be able to share our experiences with parents who have successfully handled similar challenges.

A volunteer will be invited to role-play a new approach he or she would like to practice at home, perhaps based on one or a combination of possible strategies offered by others.

1. Invite one member of the group to share a short description of a situation he or she would like to change at home.
2. Let's consult about ways to resolve this dilemma.
3. Then, could an individual or small group role-play how this situation may be handled?
4. After consulting together and role-playing some possible solutions, encourage the process by sharing your appreciation to all who offer challenges and successes. Appreciation might sound like:
  - I learned . . .
  - I felt . . .
  - I have the same problem, so now I can try . . .
  - I know how hard it is to share . . .
  - Thank you for . . .



Refer again to the photographs of your children and families. Call them to mind and heart as you conclude your session with prayers and music.

If desired you may also prepare for the next session by reading pages 93–99 in *Foundations for a Spiritual Education: The Spiritual Reality of the Child*.





# Spiritual Parenting

## COURSE TWO

**The Purpose of Spiritual Education**  
**Spiritual Foundations for Family Life**  
**Mining the Gems**  
**Parents Helping Parents**

### **Session Three**

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The Purpose of Spiritual Education

## *Welcome and Devotions*

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Begin your session with prayers and music. Then read aloud the theme quotations and learning objectives for this session.

## *Session Three Themes*

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### **The Purpose of Spiritual Education**

Man is the supreme Talisman. Lack of a proper education, hath, however, deprived him of that which he doth inherently possess. . . . 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*, PP. 161–62

### **Spiritual Foundations for Family Life**

Parents must exert every effort to rear their offspring to be religious, for should the children not attain this greatest of adornments, they will not obey their parents, which in a certain sense means that they will not obey God. Indeed, such children will show no consideration to anyone, and will do exactly as they please.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *THE COMPILATION OF COMPILATIONS*, VOL. 1, P. 248

## *Learning Objectives*

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### **KNOWLEDGE**

- Become familiar with the Bahá'í writings on the purpose of spiritual education.

### **WISDOM**

- Ponder the meaning and purpose of spiritual education.

### **SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION**

- Perceive ways to teach children to love and obey God.
- Discern the importance of a parent support network in problem-solving.

### **ELOQUENT SPEECH**

- Create a plan to share a quotation with your children.
- Practice a new way to assist children to memorize the Bahá'í writings.

## *Session Two Reflections*

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Please briefly share success and challenges in nurturing spirituality in your children since our last session.

If you have been able to read *The Spiritual Reality of the Child in Foundations for a Spiritual Education*, please also share your reflections on that study.

## *The Purpose of Spiritual Education*

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1. Working in small teams, think of some simple household objects. Choose a household object with moving parts that you could use your own bodies to demonstrate. Then, demonstrate your object for the whole group and invite them to guess the purpose of that object.  
For example, if your small group chooses to demonstrate a spoon stirring a pot of soup, the others may guess that the purpose of the spoon is to stir ingredients together and prevent them from sticking to the bottom of the pot and burning.
2. Enjoy all demonstrations, then in the whole group briefly discuss the question: Why is it important for us to know and understand the purpose of things?
3. Then, work in your same teams to read aloud the quotations, *THE PURPOSE OF SPIRITUAL EDUCATION*, pp. 38–39. Discuss the focus questions.
4. Share your answers in the whole group. Applaud all!

**Purpose:**

Ponder the meaning and purpose of spiritual education.

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**Process the Activity:**

Briefly discuss: How could we share some of these ideas with our children?

## THE PURPOSE OF SPIRITUAL EDUCATION

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**Focus Questions:** What is the purpose of spiritual education? How does spiritual education help the child? How does spiritual education help humanity as a whole?

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1 The Prophets and Messengers of God have been sent down for the sole purpose of guiding mankind to the straight Path of Truth. The purpose underlying Their revelation hath been to educate all men, that they may, at the hour of death, ascend, in the utmost purity and sanctity and with absolute detachment, to the throne of the Most High.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *GLEANINGS FROM THE WRITINGS OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH*, LXXXI, PP. 156–57

2 We have decreed, O people, that the highest and last end of all learning be the recognition of Him Who is the Object of all knowledge. . . .

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *EPISTLE TO THE SON OF THE WOLF*, P. 129

3 The fundamental purpose animating the Faith of God and His Religion is to safeguard the interests and promote the unity of the human race, and to foster the spirit of love and fellowship amongst men.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *TABLETS OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH*, P. 168

4 Man is the supreme Talisman. Lack of a proper education hath, however, deprived him of that which he doth inherently possess. Through a word proceeding out of the mouth of God he was called into being; by one word more he was guided to recognize the Source of his education; by yet another word his station and destiny were safeguarded. The Great Being saith: 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*, PP. 161–62

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

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *GLEANINGS FROM THE WRITINGS OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH*, CXXXII, P. 287

6 The purpose of the one true God in manifesting Himself is to summon all mankind to truthfulness and sincerity, to piety and trustworthiness, to resignation and submissiveness to the Will of God, to forbearance and kindness, to uprightness and wisdom. His object is to array every man with the mantle of a saintly character, and to adorn him with the ornament of holy and goodly deeds.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *GLEANINGS FROM THE WRITINGS OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH*, CXXXVII, P. 298

7 Then, so much as capacity and capability allow, ye needs must deck the tree of being with fruits such as knowledge, wisdom, spiritual perception and eloquent speech.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *BAHÁ'Í EDUCATION*, NO. 9, P. 3

8 As to the children: We have directed that in the beginning they should be trained in the observances and laws of religion; and thereafter, in such branches of knowledge as are of benefit, and in commercial pursuits that are distinguished for integrity, and in deeds that will further the victory of God's Cause or will attract some outcome which will draw the believer closer to his Lord.

We beg of God to assist the children of His loved ones and adorn them with wisdom, good conduct, integrity and righteousness.

He, verily, is the Forgiving, the Clement.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *BAHÁ'Í EDUCATION*, NO. 25, P. 5

9 Among the safeguards of the Holy Faith is the training of children, and this is among the weightiest of principles in all the Divine Teachings. Thus from the very beginning mothers must rear their infants in the cradle of good morals—for it is the mothers who are the first educators—so that, when the child cometh to maturity, he will prove to be endowed with all the virtues and qualities that are worthy of praise.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *BAHÁ'Í EDUCATION*, NO. 39, P. 15

10 Ye should consider the question of goodly character as of the first importance. It is incumbent upon every father and mother to counsel their children over a long period, and guide them unto those things which lead to everlasting honour.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ*, NO. 108, P. 134

11 In a time to come, morals will degenerate to an extreme degree. It is essential that children be reared in the Bahá'í way, that they may find happiness both in this world and the next. If not, they shall be beset by sorrows and troubles, for human happiness is founded upon spiritual behaviour.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ*, NO. 100, P. 127

12 You live to do good and to bring happiness to others.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *PARIS TALKS*, P. 112–13

## *Spiritual Foundations for Family Life*

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**Purpose:**

Perceive ways to teach children to love and obey God.

Create a plan to share a quotation with your children.

1. In the whole group, briefly discuss the question: How do we introduce our children to God—that Divine Unknowable Essence, closer to us than we are to our own selves, Who is known through His Messengers, the Founders of all the world's great religions?
2. Listen to some ideas shared in the whole group, then work in small teams to read aloud the quotations, LOVE AND OBEDIENCE, pp. 41–42. Discuss the focus questions.
3. Share your answers in the whole group.
4. Then turn to your journals. While listening to quiet background music, consider your own family's spiritual foundations: What small or simple line of action could you take to assist your children to love God and want to obey Him?
5. Next select one of the quotations in today's session about the purpose of spiritual education or the importance of loving and obeying God to share with your children. Copy it onto nice paper and decorate it in a way that will attract your children's heart. Then plan how, when, and where to share this quotation with your children.

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**Process the Activity:**

Consider sharing your action plans with each other: How could we support each other in this process? How can sharing quotations with our children help strengthen the spiritual foundation of family life?



**Focus Questions:** What is the relationship between the love of God and the fear of God? How can the love and fear of God help children learn to love and obey their parents? How can teaching children to love God and to fear Him protect them from harm? What are some ways that we can teach our children to love and fear God?

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1 Observe My commandments, for the love of My beauty.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *THE KITÁB-I-AQDAS*, PARAGRAPH 4

2 That which is of paramount importance for the children, that which must precede all else, is to teach them the oneness of God and the laws of God. For lacking this, the fear of God cannot be inculcated, and lacking the fear of God an infinity of odious and abominable actions will spring up, and sentiments will be uttered that transgress all bounds. . . . Parents must exert every effort to rear their offspring to be religious, for should the children not attain this greatest of adornments, they will not obey their parents, which in a certain sense means that they will not obey God. Indeed, such children will show no consideration to anyone, and will do exactly as they please.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *THE COMPILATION OF COMPILATIONS*, VOL. 1, P. 248

3 The fear of God hath ever been a sure defence and a safe stronghold for all the peoples of the world. It is the chief cause of the protection of mankind, and the supreme instrument for its preservation.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *TABLETS OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH*, P. 63

4 In formulating the principles and laws a part hath been devoted to penalties which form an effective instrument for the security and protection of men. However, dread of the penalties maketh people desist only outwardly from committing vile and contemptible deeds, while that which guardeth and restraineth man both outwardly and inwardly hath been and still is the fear of God. It is man's true protector and his spiritual guardian.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *TABLETS OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH*, P. 93

5 . . . The mother must continually call God to mind and make mention of Him, and tell of His greatness, and instill the fear of Him in the child, and rear the child gently, in the way of tenderness, and in extreme cleanliness. Thus from the very beginning of life every child will be refreshed by the gentle wafting of the love of God and will tremble with joy at the sweet scent of heavenly guidance. In this lieth the beginning of the process; it is the essential basis of all the rest.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *THE COMPILATION OF COMPILATIONS*, VOL. 1, P. 280

6 . . . From the very beginning, the children must receive divine education and must continually be reminded to remember their God. Let the love of God pervade their inmost being, commingled with their mother's milk.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ*, NO. 99, P. 127

7 As to thy question regarding the education of children: it behoveth thee to nurture them at the breast of the love of God, and urge them onward to the things of the spirit, that they may turn their faces unto God; that their ways may conform to the rules of good conduct and their character be second to none; that they make their own all the graces and praiseworthy qualities of humankind; acquire a sound knowledge of the various branches of learning, so that from the very beginning of life they may become spiritual beings, dwellers in the Kingdom, enamoured of the sweet breaths of holiness, and may receive an education religious, spiritual, and of the Heavenly Realm.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ*, NO. 122, P. 142

8 Train these children with divine exhortations. From their childhood instill in their hearts the love of God so they may manifest in their lives the fear of God and have confidence in the bestowals of God. Teach them to free themselves from human imperfections and to acquire the divine perfections latent in the heart of man. The life of man is useful if he attains the perfections of man. If he becomes the center of the imperfections of the world of humanity, death is better than life, and nonexistence better than existence. Therefore, make ye an effort in order that these children may be rightly trained and educated and that each one of them may attain perfection in the world of humanity.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *THE PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE*, PP. 53–54

9 You ask him about the fear of God: perhaps the friends do not realize that the majority of human beings need the element of fear in order to discipline their conduct? Only a relatively very highly evolved soul would always be disciplined by love alone. Fear of punishment, fear of the anger of God if we do evil, are needed to keep people's feet on the right path. Of course we should love God—but we must fear Him in the sense of a child fearing the righteous anger and chastisement of a parent; not cringe before Him as before a tyrant, but know His mercy exceeds His justice!

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, *THE COMPILATION OF COMPILATIONS*, VOL. 1, P. 306

10 In explaining the fear of God to children, there is no objection to teaching it as 'Abdu'l-Bahá so often taught everything, in the form of parables. Also the child should be made to understand that we don't fear God because He is cruel, but we fear Him because He is just, and, if we do wrong and deserve to be punished, then in His justice He may see fit to punish us. We must both love God and fear Him.

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, *THE COMPILATION OF COMPILATIONS*, VOL. 1, P. 309

**Mining the Gems**

1. Write the following quotation on chart paper or chalkboard, leaving some space between the lines of text.

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*, PP. 161–62

2. Then as a group, think of simple line drawings that could represent some of the words in this short quotation. Create these simple sketches on index cards, using one card for each simple image. See if you can create drawings to indicate a third or more of the words in the quotation.
3. Tape these drawings above the corresponding words in the quotation.
4. Then, begin reading the quotation over and over in the whole group. As you begin to learn the quotation, move the index cards one by one so that they cover the words. Gradually, you will see more and more words covered by cards as you continue reciting the quotation.
5. As you learn more of the quotation, gradually cover additional words with blank index cards as you continue reciting.  
Eventually all of the words will be covered and you will have memorized the quotation.
6. Applaud your success!

**Purpose:**

Practice a new way to assist children to memorize the Bahá'í writings.

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**Process the Activity:**

What is the benefit of memorizing short passages from the Bahá'í sacred writings? How could we help our children memorize short prayers and passages?

## *Parents Helping Parents*

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### **Purpose:**

Discern the importance of a parent support network in problem-solving.

The members thereof must take counsel together in such wise that no occasion for ill-feeling or discord may arise. This can be attained when every member expresseth with absolute freedom his own opinion and setteth forth his argument. Should any one oppose, he must on no account feel hurt for not until matters are fully discussed can the right way be revealed.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, QUOTED IN *BAHÁ'Í ADMINISTRATION*, P. 21

1. Ask a volunteer to share a short description of a situation he or she would like to change at home.
2. Parents who have had successes handling similar challenges may briefly share their experiences. *Those sharing successes might role play how the volunteer's challenge could be handled.*
3. Invite the volunteer to role play a new approach he or she would like to practice at home, perhaps based on one or a combination of possibilities offered by others.
4. Encourage expressions of appreciation to all who offer challenges and successes. Appreciation might sound like:
  - I learned . . .
  - I felt . . .
  - I have the same problem, so now I can try . . .
  - I know how hard it is to share . . .
  - Thank you for . . .

## *Closing Activity*

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If you have not already done so, take a few moments to record your action plan for the coming week in your journals.

If desired, you may prepare for the next session by reading pages 143–50 in the book *Foundations for a Spiritual Education: Stages of Maturity*.

Conclude your session with prayers and music.



# Spiritual Parenting

## COURSE TWO

**Guiding Children Spiritually**  
**Learning From Nature**  
**Parents Helping Parents**

## **Session Four**

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Guiding Children Spiritually

## *Opening Devotions*

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Open with prayers and inspirational readings, perhaps including those below. Include music and singing in your devotions.

Then read aloud the learning objectives for this session.

## *Session Four Themes*

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### **Guiding Children Spiritually**

The first remedy of all is to guide the people aright, so that they will turn themselves unto God, and listen to His counsellings, and go forth with hearing ears and seeing eyes.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ*, NO. 200, P. 244

### **Learning From Nature**

O Son of Bounty!

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

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *THE HIDDEN WORDS*, PERSIAN NO. 29

## *Learning Objectives*

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### **KNOWLEDGE**

- Become familiar with Bahá'í writings on the importance of parental guidance in child-rearing.

### **WISDOM**

- Gain a deeper understanding of the role of parents in providing guidance for their children.
- Discover the associations between natural phenomena and spiritual reality.

### **SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION**

- Perceive ways to match parental guidance to children's levels of maturity.
- Discern the importance of a parent support network.
- Perceive in the material world a means for greater spiritual understanding.

### **ELOQUENT SPEECH**

- Experience offering different forms of guidance.
- Plan ways to guide our children to recognize their spiritual reality.

## *Reflections on Session Three*

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Please share one brief experience from the past week regarding your efforts to nurture spirituality in your children.

What insights have you gleaned about children's stages of maturity from the selections in *Foundations for a Spiritual Education*?

## *Guiding Children Spiritually*

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1. Enjoy participating in an experience organized by your facilitator.
2. In the whole group, carefully read aloud twice the quotations on the following page, GUIDING CHILDREN SPIRITUALLY.
3. Then briefly discuss the questions:
  - What is the value of parental guidance as a “first remedy” in child-rearing?
  - What are some practical ways that parents can guide children so that they will turn themselves to God?
  - Under what circumstances have you noticed your own children turning themselves to God or choosing a path of virtue?
  - How could two-year-olds, ten-year-olds, and fifteen-year-olds demonstrate high aims and firm purpose?

### **Purpose:**

Gain a deeper understanding of the role of the parent in providing guidance for their children.

Experience offering different forms of guidance.

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### **Process the Activity**

In your journal, reflect on your own children one by one: What new ideas do you have for guiding them towards spiritual excellence and human accomplishment?

## GUIDING CHILDREN SPIRITUALLY

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1 The first remedy of all is to guide the people aright, so that they will turn themselves unto God, and listen to His counsellings, and go forth with hearing ears and seeing eyes.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ*, NO. 199, P. 244

2 It is incumbent upon every father and mother to counsel their children over a long period, and guide them unto those things which lead to everlasting honour.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ*, NO. 108, P. 134

3 Work ye for the guidance of the women in that land, teach the young girls and the children, so that the mothers may educate their little ones from their earliest days, thoroughly train them, rear them to have a goodly character and good morals, guide them to all the virtues of humankind, prevent the development of any behavior that would be worthy of blame, and foster them in the embrace of Bahá'í education.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ*, NO. 95, PP. 124–25

4 They must be constantly encouraged and made eager to gain all the summits of human accomplishment, so that from their earliest years they will be taught to have high aims, to conduct themselves well, to be chaste, pure, and undefiled, and will learn to be of powerful resolve and firm of purpose in all things. . . .

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ*, NO. 110, P. 135

5 Let the mothers consider that whatever concerneth the education of children is of the first importance. Let them put forth every effort in this regard, for when the bough is green and tender it will grow in whatever way ye train it. Therefore is it incumbent upon the mothers to rear their little ones even as a gardener tendeth his young plants. Let them strive by day and by night to establish within their children faith and certitude, the fear of God, the love of the Beloved of the worlds, and all good qualities and traits. Whensoever a mother seeth that her child hath done well, let her praise and applaud him and cheer his heart; and if the slightest undesirable trait should manifest itself, let her counsel the child and punish him, and use means based on reason, even a slight verbal chastisement should this be necessary. It is not, however, permissible to strike a child, or vilify him, for the child's character will be totally perverted if he be subjected to blows or verbal abuse.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *BAHÁ'Í EDUCATION*, PP. 49–50



1. To begin this activity, individually spend 10–15 minutes in a reflective nature walk. Try not to talk among yourselves, but simply observe and experience the natural world, noting the associations that come to your mind and heart, and any “signs and traces of God’s spirit” that appear to you.
2. After this time for reflection and observation, share your thoughts and reflections on the power of nature to illustrate spiritual reality in ourselves and in our children.
3. The Bahá’í writings are filled with metaphors, many of them from the natural world. Read aloud the following words of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:  

Our spiritual perception, our inward sight must be opened, so that we can see the signs and traces of God’s spirit in everything. Everything can reflect to us the light of the spirit.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, FROM A TALK REPORTED BY MISS ETHEL J. ROSENBERG, QUOTED IN *BAHÁ’U’LLÁH AND THE NEW ERA*, J. E. ESSELMONT, 1980 ED., P. 89
4. Listen to gentle background music or sounds from nature while you collectively read the quotations on the following pages, *NATURE METAPHORS IN THE BAHÁ’Í WRITINGS*. As you read through these metaphors, individually identify a nature image that would encourage your children to do one of the following activities:
  - explore the Creative Word
  - confidently share with others the teachings of Bahá’u’lláh even when results are not immediately apparent
  - attain spiritual distinction among their peers
  - value human diversity
  - manifest a particular spiritual attribute, such as generosity, unity, contentment with the will of God, etc.
5. Record your insights in your journals.

**Purpose:**

Become familiar with nature metaphors in the Bahá’í writings.

Discover the associations between natural phenomena and spiritual reality.

Perceive the material world as a means for greater spiritual understanding.

Plan ways to use nature for the spiritual education of children.

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**Process the Activity**

How have the experiences of this session enhanced your own spiritual perception?

Identify one way you will use nature and nature metaphors at home to help deepen your child’s spiritual perception.

## NATURE METAPHORS IN THE BAHÁ'Í WRITINGS

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1 Whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth is a direct evidence of the revelation within it of the attributes and names of God, inasmuch as within every atom are enshrined the signs that bear eloquent testimony to the revelation of that Most Great Light . . . all things, in their inmost reality, testify to the revelation of the names and attributes of God within them. Each according to its capacity, indicateth, and is expressive of, the knowledge of God. So potent and universal is this revelation, that it hath encompassed all things visible and invisible.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *GLEANINGS FROM THE WRITINGS OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH*, XC, PP. 177-78

2 O Son of Bounty!

Out of the wastes of nothingness, with the clay of My command I made thee to appear, and have ordained for thy training every atom in existence and the essence of all created things. Thus, ere thou didst issue from thy mother's womb, I destined for thee two founts of gleaming milk, eyes to watch over thee, and hearts to love thee. Out of My loving-kindness, 'neath the shade of My mercy I nurtured thee, and guarded thee by the essence of My grace and favor. And My purpose in all this was that thou mightest attain My everlasting dominion and become worthy of My invisible bestowals. And yet heedless thou didst remain, and when fully grown, thou didst neglect all My bounties and occupied thyself with thine idle imaginings, in such wise that thou didst become wholly forgetful, and, turning away from the portals of the Friend didst abide within the courts of My enemy.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *THE HIDDEN WORDS*, PERSIAN NO. 29

3 From the exalted source, and out of the essence of His favor and bounty He hath entrusted every created thing with a sign of His knowledge, so that none of His creatures may be deprived of its share in expressing, each according to its capacity and rank, this knowledge. This sign is the mirror of His beauty in the world of creation. The greater the effort exerted for the refinement of this sublime and noble mirror, the more faithfully will it be made to reflect the glory of the names and attributes of God, and reveal the wonders of His signs and knowledge. . . .

There can be no doubt whatever that, in consequence of the efforts which every man may consciously exert and as a result of the exertion of his own spiritual faculties, this mirror can be so cleansed from the dross of earthly defilements and purged from satanic fancies as to be able to draw nigh unto the meads of eternal holiness and attain the courts of everlasting fellowship.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *GLEANINGS FROM THE WRITINGS OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH*, CXXIV, P. 262

4 Whatever I behold, I readily discover that it maketh Thee known unto me, and it remindeth me of Thy signs, and of Thy tokens, and of thy testimonies. By Thy glory! Every time I lift up mine eyes unto Thy heaven, I call to mind Thy highness and Thy loftiness, and Thine incomparable glory and greatness; and every time I turn my gaze to Thine earth, I am made to recognize the evidences of Thy power and the tokens of Thy bounty. And when I behold the sea, I find that it speaketh to me of Thy majesty, and of the potency of Thy might, and of Thy sovereignty and Thy grandeur. And at whatever time I contemplate the mountains, I am led to discover the ensigns of Thy victory and the standards of Thine omnipotence.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *PRAYERS AND MEDITATIONS*, P. 272

5 Immerse yourselves in the ocean of My words, that ye may unravel its secrets, and discover all the pearls of wisdom that lie hid in its depths.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *THE KITÁB-I-AQDAS*, PARAGRAPH 182, P. 85

6 Ye are the stars of the heaven of understanding, the breeze that stirreth at the break of day, the soft-flowing waters upon which must depend the very life of all men, the letters inscribed upon His sacred scroll.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, QUOTED BY SHOGHI EFFENDI, *THE ADVENT OF DIVINE JUSTICE*, P. 75

7 . . . The black, white, yellow, blue and other colored pigeons are in utmost harmony with one another. They never give importance to color. Likewise sheep and the beasts, despite difference in color, are in utmost love and unity.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *THE POWER OF UNITY*, NO. 4, P. 48

8 When a person becomes a Bahá'í . . . the seed of the spirit starts to grow in the human soul. This seed must be watered by the outpourings of the Holy Spirit. These gifts of the spirit are received through prayer, meditation, study of the Holy utterances and service to the Cause of God.

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, *THE IMPORTANCE OF DEEPENING*, P. 51

9 At the beginning of spring only the few, exceptionally favoured seeds will sprout, but when the season gets in its full sway, and the atmosphere gets permeated with the warmth of true springtime, then masses of flowers will begin to appear, and a whole hillside suddenly blooms. We are still in the state when only isolated souls are awakened, but soon we shall have the full swing of the season and the quickening of whole groups and nations into the spiritual life breathed by Bahá'u'lláh.

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, *THE COMPILATION OF COMPILATIONS*, VOL. 3, PP. 173-74

## *Parents Helping Parents*

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**Purpose:**

Discern the importance of a parent support network in problem-solving.

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

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ*, NO. 39, P. 81

1. Ask a volunteer to share a short description of a situation he or she would like to change at home.
2. Parents who have had successes handling similar challenges may briefly share their experiences. *Those sharing successes might role play how the volunteer's challenge could be handled.*
3. Invite the volunteer to role play a new approach he or she would like to practice at home, perhaps based on one or a combination of possibilities offered by others.
4. Encourage expressions of appreciation to all who offer challenges and successes. Appreciation might sound like:
  - I learned . . .
  - I felt . . .
  - I have the same problem, so now I can try . . .
  - I know how hard it is to share . . .
  - Thank you for . . .

## *Closing Activity*

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If you have not already done so, listen to quiet music as you use your journals to identify a clear line of action for the coming week.

Considering your children's ages and stages of maturity, plan your next steps in assisting them to turn their hearts to the Creator of us all, recognize their own spiritual reality, and learn to guide themselves by the teachings of God. How specifically could you draw on the world of nature to illustrate spiritual reality for your children?

If desired, read pages 152–73, Instructional Methods and Learning Tools, in *Foundations for a Spiritual Education* before the next session.

Conclude your session with music and prayers.





# Spiritual Parenting

## COURSE TWO

**Practicing Consultation  
The Power of Reflection  
Parents Helping Parents**

### **Session Five**

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Consultation and Reflection

## *Welcome and Devotions*

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Begin your session with prayers and music. Then read aloud the theme quotations and the learning objectives for this session.

## *Session Five Themes*

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### **Practicing Consultation**

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

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *FAMILY LIFE* (INDIA) P. 60, (CANADA) P. 32

### **The Power of Reflection**

Set before thine eyes God's unerring Balance and, as one standing in His Presence, weigh in that Balance thine actions every day, every moment of thy life.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *THE SUMMONS OF THE LORD OF HOSTS*, P. 213

## *Learning Objectives*

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### **KNOWLEDGE**

- Study further the Bahá'í writings on consultation.

### **WISDOM**

- Discover additional benefits in practicing consultation.

### **SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION**

- Discern the importance of a parent support network.
- Perceive the value of self-reflection both for parents and for children.

### **ELOQUENT SPEECH**

- Demonstrate increasing skill in drawing on the power of consultation in family life.



## *Session Four Reflections*

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Please reflect on your efforts to guide your children spiritually. What are we learning from our own experiences and from listening to each other?

Please also share your reflections on reading the selection on instructional methods and learning tools in the book *Foundations for a Spiritual Education*.

Allow about five minutes of reflection and sharing.

## *Consultation*

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1. In pairs, read aloud the quotations CONSULTATION on the following page and discuss the focus questions.
2. Then, reflect on your own experiences using the power of consultation in your family, either in consultation with the family as a whole or in consultation with an individual child. Think of a specific experience in which you perceived the positive power of consultation. What did you learn through consultation that you did not know before consulting? What did your child or children learn? How did your consultation assist you to discover truth, promote unity, and create a plan for positive action?
3. After recalling an example of the positive power of consultation, please share your example with the person sitting beside you.

### **Purpose:**

Study further the Bahá'í writings on consultation.

Discover additional benefits in practicing consultation.

## CONSULTATION

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**Focus Questions:** What are some of the benefits of consultation to family life? How can parents use consultation with children to discover ways to guide them spiritually?

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1 Consultation bestoweth greater awareness and transmuteth conjecture into certitude. It is a shining light which, in a dark world, leadeth the way and guideth. For everything there is and will continue to be a station of perfection and maturity. The maturity of the gift of understanding is made manifest through consultation.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *CONSULTATION: A COMPILATION*, NO. 3, P. 3

2 The light of truth shineth from the faces of those who engage in consultation. Such consultation causeth the living waters to flow in the meadows of man's reality, the rays of ancient glory to shine upon him, and the tree of his being to be adorned with wondrous fruit. The members who are consulting, however, should behave in the utmost love, harmony and sincerity towards each other. The principle of consultation is one of the most fundamental elements of the divine edifice. Even in their ordinary affairs the individual members of society should consult.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *CONSULTATION: A COMPILATION*, NO. 15, P. 8

3 The purpose of consultation is to show that the view of several individuals are assuredly preferable to one man, even as the power of a number of men is of courage greater than the power of one man. Thus consultation is acceptable in the presence of the Almighty, and hath been enjoined upon the believers, so that they may confer upon ordinary and personal matters, as well as on affairs which are general in nature and universal.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *CONSULTATION: A COMPILATION*, NO. 17, P. 8

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

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *COMPILATION ON WOMEN*, NO. 69, P. 25

1. In the whole group, brainstorm a list of possible topics that could become the subject of consultation in the family. Display your list where all can see it.
2. Then, work in groups of 3–5 participants to read aloud the quotations PRACTICING CONSULTATION on the following page and identify some of the key elements for successful consultation.
3. In your small group, select one of the topics that the whole group listed as a possible topic for family consultation. Create a brief role-play that demonstrates the positive power of family consultation to address the topic you've selected.
4. Share your role-plays in the whole group. Applaud all contributions!
5. Briefly discuss: How can we teach the skill of consultation in our families?

**Purpose:**

Demonstrate increasing skill in drawing on the power of consultation in family life.

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**Process the Activity**

In your journals, record your reflections on your own family's consultation. What are your family's strengths? What does the family need to learn? What is one practical action that you could take to strengthen your family's ability to consult?

## PRACTICING CONSULTATION

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1 . . . True consultation is spiritual conference in the attitude and atmosphere of love. Members must love each other in the spirit of fellowship in order that good results may be forthcoming.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *THE PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE*, PP. 72–73

2 They must when coming together turn their faces to the Kingdom on High and ask aid from the Realm of Glory.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ*, NO. 45, P. 88

3 They must then proceed with the utmost devotion, dignity, care and moderation to express their views.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ*, NO. 45, P. 88

4 . . . Every member expresseth with absolute freedom his own opinion and setteth forth his argument. Should anyone oppose, he must on no account feel hurt for not until matters are fully discussed can the right way be revealed.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ*, NO. 44, P. 87

5 Man should weigh his opinions with the utmost serenity, calmness and composure. Before expressing his own views he should carefully consider the views already advanced by others.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *THE PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE*, P. 72

6 They must in every matter search out the truth and not insist upon their own opinion, for stubbornness and persistence in one's views will lead ultimately to discord and wrangling and the truth will remain hidden.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ*, NO. 45, P. 88

7 . . . It is in no wise permissible for one to belittle the thought of another.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *CONSULTATION: A COMPILATION*, NO. 10, P. 6

8 . . . Whatsoever thing is arranged in harmony and with love and purity of motive, its result is light. . . .

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ*, NO. 45, P. 88

1. In your whole group, read aloud the following story:

We had learned that to be with 'Abdu'l-Bahá was all life, joy and blessedness. We were to learn also that His Presence is a purifying fire. The pilgrimage to the Holy City is naught but a crucible in which the souls are tried; where the gold is purified and the dross is consumed. It did not seem possible that anything but love could ever again animate our words and actions. Yet that very afternoon, in my room with two of the believers, I spoke against a brother in the truth, finding fault with him, and giving vent to the evil in my own heart by my words. While we were still sitting together our Master who had been visiting the poor and sick, returned, and immediately sent for my spiritual mother, Lua, who was with us. He told her that during His absence one of His servants had spoken unkindly of another, and that it grieved His heart that the believers should not love one another or that they should speak against any soul. Then He charged her not to speak of it but to pray. A little later we all went to supper, and my hard heart was unconscious of its error, until as my eyes sought the beloved face of my Master, I met His gaze, so full of gentleness and compassion that I was smitten to the heart. For in some marvellous way His eyes spoke to me; in that pure and perfect mirror I saw my wretched self and burst into tears. He took no notice of me for a while and everyone kindly continued with the supper while I sat in His dear Presence washing away some of my sins in tears. After a few moments He turned and smiled on me and spoke my name several times as though He were calling me to Him. In an instant such sweet happiness pervaded my soul, my heart was comforted with such infinite hope, that I knew He would cleanse me of all my sins.

MAY MAXWELL, *AN EARLY PILGRIMAGE*, PP. 25-26

**Purpose:**

Perceive the value of self-reflection both for parents and for children.

2. Then, briefly discuss the following questions: What are some examples of the power of reflection in our own lives? What are some examples of times that we've gained insight into the positive or negative effects of our own actions simply through the power of our own self-reflection? What are some occasions as a parent in which reflection might be more helpful than consultation? How can careful listening help a child learn the skill of self-reflection?
3. In pairs, come up with two or more examples of questions that you feel could assist your children to develop the skill of self-reflection. Here are some examples to get you started:
  - What did you learn today that you'd like to teach your own children someday?
  - Can you help me understand what happened? And what happened after that? What do you think are the spiritual principles that could apply?

Then share your examples in the whole group.

4. Work in small teams to carefully read aloud the quotations, *THE POWER OF REFLECTION*, p. 63. Using the materials provided, create a visual representation of your answers to the focus questions.
5. After allowing time to work, display your visual representations as in an art gallery.
6. In your whole group, consider listening to quiet music as you silently view these representations.

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**Process the activity**

In your journals, reflect on the question: How can I create a climate of consultation *and* reflection in my home?

## THE POWER OF REFLECTION

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**Focus Questions:** What is the value of parents reflecting on their own behavior each day? As parents, how can we teach our children to reflect on their own actions as part of their daily routine? What are some occasions in which we might choose to pose thoughtful questions to assist our children to reflect and correct their own actions? What would be the value of reflecting on our own actions before we attempt to guide our children?

---

1 Set before thine eyes God's unerring Balance and, as one standing in His Presence, weigh in that Balance thine actions every day, every moment of thy life.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *THE SUMMONS OF THE LORD OF HOSTS*, p. 213

2 O Son of Being! Bring thyself to account each day ere thou art summoned to a reckoning; for death, unheralded, shall come upon thee and thou shalt be called to give account for thy deeds.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *THE HIDDEN WORDS*, ARABIC NO. 31

3 It behoveth every ruler to weigh his own being every day in the balance of equity and justice and then to judge between men and counsel them to do that which would direct their steps unto the path of wisdom and understanding.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *TABLETS OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH*, pp. 166–67

4 Every day, in the morning when arising you should compare today with yesterday and see in what condition you are. If you see your belief is stronger and your heart more occupied with God and your love increased and your freedom from the world greater then thank God and ask for the increase of these qualities. You must begin to pray and repent for all that you have done which is wrong and you must implore and ask for help and assistance that you may become better than yesterday so that you may continue to make progress.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *THE COMPILATION OF COMPILATION*, VOL. 1, p. 376

## *Parents Helping Parents*

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### **Purpose:**

Discern the importance of a parent support network in problem-solving.

1. Read again one or more of your favorite quotations on consultation.
2. Invite one member of the group to share a short description of a situation he or she would like to change at home.
3. Let's consult about ways to resolve this dilemma.
4. Then, could an individual or small group role-play how this situation may be handled?
5. After consulting together and role-playing some possible solutions, encourage the process by sharing your appreciation to all who offer challenges and successes. Appreciation might sound like:
  - I learned . . .
  - I felt . . .
  - I have the same problem, so now I can try . . .
  - I know how hard it is to share . . .
  - Thank you for . . .

## *Closing Activity*

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If you have not already done so, please identify a specific line of action to implement in your home before the next session:

- How might you incorporate or refine the use of consultation and reflection in your own life and in your interactions with your children?
- Reflect also on the questions and challenges that you face personally as a parent. During the next session we will have the opportunity to research the Bahá'í writings for guidance that may apply to these challenges and questions about parenting.
- Consider also re-reading pages 152–73, Instructional Methods and Learning Tools in *Foundations for a Spiritual Education* before the next session. Consider experimenting with the use of one of these methods or tools before the next session.

Conclude your session with prayers and music.





**Researching the Bahá'í Writings**  
**The Power of Action**  
**Parents Helping Parents**

# Spiritual Parenting

**COURSE TWO**

**Session Six**

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Research and Action

## *Welcome and Devotions*

---

Begin your session with prayers and music.

Then read aloud the theme quotations and learning objectives for this session.

## *Session Six Themes*

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### **Researching the Bahá'í Writings**

The friends need only read the Writings; the answers are all in them; we have no priests in this Faith to interpret or answer for us.

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, *THE COMPILATION OF COMPILATIONS*, VOL. 1, P. 233

### **The Power of Action**

Let deeds, not words, be your adorning.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *THE HIDDEN WORDS*, PERSIAN NO. 5

## *Learning Objectives*

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### **KNOWLEDGE**

- Know that the Bahá'í writings contain guidance and direction to answer questions about parenting.

### **WISDOM**

- Understand the power of action in parenting.

### **SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION**

- Apply research of the Bahá'í writings, consultation, and parent support in a process to seek solutions to parenting challenges and questions.
- Discern the importance of a parent support network.

### **ELOQUENT SPEECH**

- Demonstrate ability to research and apply the Bahá'í writings to find answers to questions and challenges encountered in parenting.

## Session Five Reflections

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Please share one brief illustration of the power of consultation or of reflection in your family since the last session.

If you've experimented with one of the instructional methods or learning tools described in *Foundations for a Spiritual Education*, pp. 152–73, what did you do? And what was the result?

Allow about five minutes of reflection and sharing.

## Researching the Writings for Answers

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1. Read the following excerpts aloud:

Immerse yourselves in the ocean of My words, that ye may unravel its secrets, and discover all the pearls of wisdom that lie hid in its depths.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *THE KITÁB-I-AQDAS*, PARAGRAPH 182, P. 85

The friends need only read the Writings; the answers are all in them; we have no priests in this Faith to interpret or answer for us.

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, *THE COMPILATION OF COMPILATIONS*, VOL. 1, P. 233

It is neither possible nor desirable for the Universal House of Justice to set forth a set of rules covering every situation. Rather is it the task of the individual believer to determine, according to his own prayerful understanding of the Writings, precisely what his course of conduct should be in relation to situations which he encounters in his daily life. If he is to fulfill his true mission in life as a follower of the Blessed perfection, he will pattern his life according to the Teachings.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *THE COMPILATION OF COMPILATIONS*, VOL. 1, P. 47

2. Discuss the question: What are some of the challenges and questions that we face as parents?
3. Create a list of questions on chart paper using questions that have arisen during previous sessions of this course, questions and challenges you may have identified as part of your reflections over the past week, and new questions identified at this time. If desired, you may also add some of the following questions to your list:
  - Should Bahá'í mothers stay at home with their children?
  - What are our duties, as parents, in providing financially for our children?
  - Should there be differences between how we raise our sons and daughters?

### Purpose:

Know that the Bahá'í writings contain guidance and direction to answer questions about parenting.

Apply research of the Bahá'í writings, consultation, and parent support in a process to seek Bahá'í solutions to parenting challenges and questions.

- Is it ever appropriate to use physical punishment as a means of disciplining children?
  - How can we guide our children to make the best choice of a marriage partner or a career?
4. Generate a list of books, compilations, computer programs, and other resources that will assist us to answer these questions. Your list might include *Foundations for a Spiritual Education*, *The Compilation of Compilations*, *Lights of Guidance*, etc.
  5. Next, form teams of two to four that can work together to research these questions. Each group will choose one or more of the important questions that we have listed.
  6. Using the reference materials provided by your facilitator, begin the research process as a team, remembering the value of consultation to the learning process.
  7. After allowing sufficient time to find one or more quotations that either directly address your question or highlight spiritual principles that you can apply to your question, please share the outcome of your research.
  8. If you like, consider choosing another question to research before the next session.
  9. If you choose an additional research question, please bring to the next session copies of the quotations that shed light on the question you selected.

1. Read aloud the following quotations:

Let deeds, not words, be your adorning.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *THE HIDDEN WORDS*, PERSIAN NO. 5

The wise are they that speak not unless they obtain a hearing.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *THE HIDDEN WORDS*, PERSIAN NO. 36

Even as it hath been said: "Not everything that a man knoweth can be disclosed, nor can everything that he can disclose be regarded as timely, nor can every timely utterance be considered as suited to the capacity of those who hear it."

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *GLEANINGS FROM THE WRITINGS OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH*, LXXXIX, P. 176

2. Then, discuss the questions: What are some examples of times that a parent might choose to take action rather than use words to guide our children? What are some appropriate actions that parents might take in these circumstances? What spiritual principles might apply in these situations?
3. Next, work in small groups to demonstrate the power of action through a 1–2 minute role-play.
4. Present your demonstrations in the whole group. Applaud all!

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### **Process the Activity**

How could emphasizing "deeds not words" assist you as a parent? What could you do this week to experiment with the power of action?

**Purpose:**

Discern the importance of a parent support network in problem-solving.

Read aloud the following quotation:

When a believer has a problem concerning which he must make a decision, he has several courses open to him. If it is a matter that affects the interests of the Faith he should consult with the appropriate Assembly or committee, but individuals have many problems which are purely personal and there is no obligation upon them to take such problems to the institutions of the Faith; indeed, when the needs of the teaching work are of such urgency it is better if the friends will not burden their Assemblies with personal problems that they can solve by themselves.<sup>2</sup>

A Bahá'í who has a problem may wish to make his own decision upon it after prayer and after weighing all the aspects of it in his own mind; he may prefer to seek the counsel of individual friends or of professional counselors such as his doctor or lawyer so that he can consider such advice when making his decision; or in a case where several people are involved, such as a family situation, he may want to gather together those who are affected so that they may arrive at a collective decision. There is also no objection whatever to a Bahá'í asking a group of people to consult on a problem facing him.

It should be borne in mind that all consultation is aimed at arriving at a solution to a problem and is quite different from the sort of group baring of the soul that is popular in some circles these days and which borders on the kind of confession that is forbidden in the faith. On the subject of confession the Guardian's secretary wrote on his behalf to an individual believer: "We are forbidden to confess to any person, as do the Catholics to their priests, our sins and shortcomings, or to do so in public, as some religious sects do. However, if we spontaneously desire to acknowledge we have been wrong in something, or that we have some fault of character, and ask another person's forgiveness or pardon, we are quite free to do so. The Guardian wants to point out, however, that we are not obliged to do so. It rests entirely with the individual.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *CONSULTATION: A COMPILATION*, NO. 47, P. 22

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<sup>2</sup> Local Spiritual Assemblies are elected by Bahá'ís in a locality to administer the affairs of the Bahá'í Faith in that locality.

1. Ask a volunteer to share a short description of a situation he or she would like to change at home.
2. Parents who have had successes handling similar challenges may briefly share their experiences. *Those sharing successes might role play how the volunteer's challenge could be handled.*
3. Invite the volunteer to role play a new approach he or she would like to practice at home, perhaps based on one or a combination of possibilities offered by others.
4. Encourage expressions of appreciation to all who offer challenges and successes. Appreciation might sound like:
  - I learned . . .
  - I felt . . .
  - I have the same problem, so now I can try . . .
  - I know how hard it is to share . . .
  - Thank you for . . .

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### *Closing Activity*

Play beautiful soft music and take at least five minutes to record your reflections on this session. Please select a specific line of action that will assist you to further your goals as a parent.

If you have selected an additional research question, remember to plan how you will work with your research group to carry out this action assignment.

Consider reading the sections Attending to Individual Capacity, Capability, and Interest (pp. 150–52) and Organization, Evaluation, and Methods of Discipline (pp. 168–73) in *Foundations for a Spiritual Education* before the next session.

Conclude your session with prayers and music.







# Spiritual Parenting

## COURSE TWO

**Spiritual Education**  
**“Seize Thy Chance”**  
**Parents Helping Parents**  
**Closing Activity: Music—A Ladder for the Soul**

## **Session Seven**

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Spiritual Education in the Home

## *Welcome and Devotions*

---

Begin your session with prayers and music. Then read aloud the theme quotations and learning objectives for this session.

## *Session Seven Themes*

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### **Spiritual Education and Training**

Divine education is that of the Kingdom of God: it consists in acquiring divine perfections, and this is true education; for in this state man becomes the focus of divine blessings, the manifestation of the words, "Let Us make man in Our image, and after Our likeness." This is the goal of the world of humanity.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *SOME ANSWERED QUESTIONS*, P. 8

Among these children many blessed souls will arise, if they be trained according to the Bahá'í Teachings. If a plant is carefully nurtured by a gardener, it will become good, and produce better fruit. These children must be given a good training from their earliest childhood. They must be given a systematic training which will further their development from day to day, in order that they may receive greater insight, so that their spiritual receptivity be broadened. Beginning in childhood they must receive instruction. They cannot be taught through books. Many elementary sciences must be made clear to them in the nursery; they must learn them in play, in amusement. Most ideas must be taught them through speech, not by book learning.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *BAHÁ'Í EDUCATION*, P. 73

## *Learning Objectives*

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### **KNOWLEDGE**

- Become familiar with some of the Bahá'í writings on spiritual education and training.

### **WISDOM**

- Understand the importance of seizing everyday opportunities for spiritual education.
- Appreciate the value of music in spiritual education.

### **SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION**

- Discern the value of example in spiritual education.
- Discern the importance of a parent support network in problem-solving.

### **ELOQUENT SPEECH**

- Demonstrate the benefits of spiritual education through the arts.

## Session Six Reflections

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In your group, please share the results of your efforts to use the power of action to guide your children. Also briefly share the results of additional research of the Bahá'í writings that may guide our actions as parents.

If you were able to read selections from *Foundations for a Spiritual Education*, what are your reflections on considering the individual capacity, capability, and interest of each child, as well as considering the specific circumstances in selecting methods of discipline?

## Spiritual Education and Training

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1. Share the story “Room for Everyone” from *Stories from Star of the West* reprinted on the next page.
2. Discuss: How did the man with the terrible face educate the society he wanted to join?
3. Working in small teams, read the quotations on SPIRITUAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING, pp. 77–78, and discuss the focus questions:
  - What is the focus of spiritual education and training?
  - What are the benefits of spiritual education and training?
4. In your small group, create a simple poem, rap, song, or work of art to illustrate the benefits of spiritual education and training, based on your study of these quotations. Each team may choose to select one of the quotations for this work.
5. Share your small group’s creation with the whole group. Applaud all!

### **Purpose:**

Become familiar with some of the Bahá'í writings on spiritual education and training.

Create a work of art illustrating the benefits of spiritual education.

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### **Process the Activity**

What is the benefit of using the arts to express our spiritual understanding of these important quotations? What are some ways that we can use the power of the arts with our children?

## ROOM FOR EVERYONE

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Once upon a time in Persia there was a society, the members of which never spoke to each other. Instead, when they had something to say they would make signs and gestures. They became so good at this that they could understand the most difficult subjects in this way and could understand what other people were thinking from the look of their faces and eyes.

Anyone who wanted to join the society had to stand at the door of the house where the members met. Then the members would consult each other by signs and decide whether that person could join.

One day a man with a really ugly face, a body that was all bent, and old and tattered clothes, came to the door.

The members of the society inspected him and saw how awful he looked. They consulted briefly and then the president of the society took a cup and filled it right to the brim with water. This was the sign that there was no room for a new member. It meant that the society was full up.

However, the man with the terrible face was clever. He picked up from the ground a small flower petal and, with the greatest respect went into the house. Very, very carefully he put the petal on the surface of the water so that the water did not move or spill, showing that he did not need a lot of room and that, however full the society was there was still a place for him.

All the members were delighted and clapped their hands at his cleverness.

They quickly changed their minds and accepted him as a member, and as time went by he became greatly honored and loved by everyone.

ANDREW GASH, *STORIES FROM STAR OF THE WEST*, P. 23

## SPIRITUAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

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**Focus Topics:** What is the focus of spiritual education and training? What are the benefits of spiritual education and training?

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1 Divine education is that of the Kingdom of God: it consists in acquiring divine perfections, and this is true education; for in this state man becomes the focus of divine blessings, the manifestation of the words, "Let Us make man in Our image, and after Our likeness." This is the goal of the world of humanity.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *SOME ANSWERED QUESTIONS*, P. 8

2 But the indispensable basis of all is that he [the child] should develop spiritual characteristics and the praiseworthy virtues of humankind. This is the primary consideration. If a person be unlettered, and yet clothed with divine excellence, and alive in the breaths of the Spirit, that individual will contribute to the welfare of society, and his inability to read and write will do him no harm. And if a person be versed in the arts and every branch of knowledge, and not live a religious life, and not take on the characteristics of God, and not be directed by a pure intent, and be engrossed in the life of the flesh—then he is harm personified, and nothing will come of all his learning and intellectual accomplishments but scandal and torment.

If, however, an individual hath spiritual characteristics, and virtues that shine out, and his purpose in life be spiritual and his inclinations be directed toward God, and he also study other branches of knowledge—then we have light upon light: his outer being luminous, his private character radiant, his heart sound, his thought elevated, his understanding swift, his rank noble.

Blessed is he who attaineth this exalted station.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *THE COMPILATION OF COMPILATIONS*, VOL. 1, P. 282

3 Wherefore, O loved ones of God! Make ye a mighty effort till you yourselves betoken this advancement in all these confirmations, and become focal centers of God’s blessings, daysprings of the light of His unity, promoters of the gifts and graces of civilized life. Be ye in that land vanguards of the perfections of humankind, carry forward the various branches of knowledge, be active and progressive in the field of inventions and the arts. Endeavour to rectify the conduct of men, and seek to excel the whole world in moral character. While the children are yet in their infancy feed them from the breast of heavenly grace, foster them in the cradle of all excellence, rear them in the embrace of bounty. Give them the advantage of every useful kind of knowledge. Let them share in every new and rare and wondrous craft and art. Bring them up to work and strive, and accustom them to hardship. Teach them to dedicate their lives to matters of great import, and inspire them to undertake studies that will benefit mankind.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ*, NO. 102, P. 129

4 It is incumbent upon Bahá'í children to surpass other children in the acquisition of sciences and arts, for they have been cradled in the grace of God.

Whatever other children learn in a year, let Bahá'í children learn in a month. The heart of 'Abdu'l-Bahá longeth, in its love, to find that Bahá'í young people, each and all, are known throughout the world for their intellectual attainments. There is no question but that they will exert all their efforts, their energies, their sense of pride, to acquire the sciences and arts.

*'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, NO. 119, P. 141*

## *“Seize Thy Chance”*

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1. Enjoy reading the story about ‘Abdu’l-Bahá on the following page.
2. Discuss the question: How did ‘Abdu’l-Bahá attract Florence Khánum’s heart through His example?
3. Read aloud the quotations, “SEIZE THY CHANCE,” on p. 81.
4. Briefly discuss: How do these writings enhance our understanding of the importance of seizing everyday opportunities for spiritual education? What are some examples of everyday moments in which we can seize the opportunity for spiritual education?
5. Turn to pp. 82–83, SEIZING OPPORTUNITIES FOR SPIRITUAL EDUCATION, and individually mark your choice for responding to each situation.
6. When finished, share your answers with the person next to you and briefly discuss the similarities and differences in your responses.
7. Then organize yourselves into teams of 3–4. In your team identify at least two examples of seizing everyday opportunities in your own personal experience.
8. Choose one example to role-play before the whole group.
9. Present your role-plays. Applaud all!

### **Purpose:**

Understand the importance of seizing everyday opportunities for spiritual education.

Discern the value of example in spiritual education.

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### **Process the Activity**

In your journals, record your reflections on ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s example of selflessness and service. How can we “seize our chance” to assist our children to reflect these qualities in their own lives?

## THE EXAMPLE OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ

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Florence Khánum, the wife of Ali Kuli Khán, wrote about her experiences in the home of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá on the anniversary night of the Declaration of the Báb, the same night of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s birth.

. . . I awoke late. . . . For once I had not been called as usual, to the early morning prayers. . . . Soon after, Khán appeared and said, “Since early dawn the Master has been busy. . . . Over two hundred guests are expected for the Feast, and the Master has been at work, since dawn.”

I exclaimed, “The Master working on His birthday?”

“Oh! You should have seen Him! . . . They tell me He has been kneading, with His own hands, dough for the ovens. He has been in gay spirits, inspiring, uplifting, cheering all His helpers.”

The picture I had envisioned, of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá reclining . . . all the morning, while we paid Him homage, vanished in my astonishment! Later, Khán returned radiant and enthusiastic to our room. . . . He said that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá assisted in passing the platters . . . the rice . . . the lamb . . . the fruits of the region (of such large size, such colour, and such fragrance as only the sunshine of the East produces and paints). Moving among His two hundred guests, He spoke to them as He served them, such Divine words of love and spiritual import. Khán particularly recalled His words to this effect:

“If one of you has been wounded in heart by the words or deeds of another, during the past year, forgive him now; that in purity of heart and loving pardon, you may feast in happiness, and arise, renewed in spirit.”

For ‘Abdu’l-Bahá teaches us that in whatever mood we sit down to eat, that mood is actually strengthened within us by the physical food of which we partake. He has said that this is one reason why the Bahá’í Feasts make us all so happy. United in love and loving kindness, love is strengthened within us when Bahá’ís eat together. . . .

He said not a word about His own birthday! He spoke only of the Báb, His mission and message.

MARZIEH GAIL, *THE SHELTERING BRANCH*, PP. 69–71,  
REPRINTED IN *THE DECLARATION OF THE BÁB, A COMPILATION*, PP. 35–37



1 O Son of Spirit!

Noble have I created thee, yet thou hast abased thyself. Rise then unto that for which thou wast created.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *THE HIDDEN WORDS*, ARABIC NO. 22

2 O my Servant!

Free thyself from the fetters of this world, and loose thy soul from the prison of self. Seize thy chance, for it will come to thee no more.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *THE HIDDEN WORDS*, PERSIAN NO. 40

3 Among these children many blessed souls will arise, if they be trained according to the Bahá'í Teachings. If a plant is carefully nurtured by a gardener, it will become good, and produce better fruit. These children must be given a good training from their earliest childhood. They must be given a systematic training which will further their development from day to day, in order that they may receive greater insight, so that their spiritual receptivity be broadened. Beginning in childhood they must receive instruction. They cannot be taught through books. Many elementary sciences must be made clear to them in the nursery; they must learn them in play, in amusement. Most ideas must be taught them through speech, not by book learning.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *BAHÁ'Í EDUCATION*, P. 73

4 Ye should consider the question of goodly character as of the first importance. It is incumbent upon every father and mother to counsel their children over a long period, and guide them unto those things which lead to everlasting honor.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF ABDO'L-BAHÁ*, NO. 108, P. 134

5 Let the mothers consider that whatever concerneth the education of children is of the first importance. Let them put forth every effort in this regard, for when the bough is green and tender it will grow in whatever way ye train it. Therefore is it incumbent upon the mothers to rear their little ones even as a gardener tendeth his young plants. Let them strive by day and by night to establish within their children faith and certitude, the fear of God, the love of the Beloved of the worlds, and all good qualities and traits. Whenssoever a mother seeth that her child hath done well, let her praise and applaud him and cheer his heart; and if the slightest undesirable trait should manifest itself, let her counsel the child and punish him, and use means based on reason, even a slight verbal chastisement should this be necessary. It is not, however, permissible to strike a child, or vilify him, for the child's character will be totally perverted if he be subjected to blows or verbal abuse.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ*, NO. 95, PP. 124–25

## **SEIZING OPPORTUNITIES FOR SPIRITUAL EDUCATION**

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Every day we encounter countless opportunities to foster the spiritual education of our children. We can:

- A. acknowledge the unique gifts and spiritual qualities of a child, thus encouraging responsibility and spiritual behavior.
- B. call a child to virtue with loving firmness, avoiding preaching or moralizing.
- C. help a child to face tests, perhaps through prayer and consultation.
- D. provide systematic skill training.
- E. engage the child's heart through storytelling, examples, music, or other means.
- F. offer limited choices or organize a structured environment.

These can best be accomplished when we expect responsible behavior, understand the child's capacity, and listen to and observe the child with full attention.

Read through the following examples of everyday family life. Select one of the parenting approaches described above and indicate your choice by writing A, B, C, D, E, or F in the blank provided OR write your own response.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Your 8-year-old's friend insists that they play with all of the toys that she has just put away. Your daughter asks if you will help clean up her room when the friend leaves.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. A 10-year-old consistently feeds his dog without being reminded.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. While the family is watching TV, an underwear commercial is aired. Your son identifies his discomfort with the lack of modesty.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. A 13-year-old shares that he witnessed two students shoving and verbally abusing a classmate.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. A 4-year-old grabs a toy from another child during a park outing.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. You plan a family reunion camping trip, knowing that your daughter "despises" two cousins who will attend.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. A 16-year-old habitually arrives home at least five minutes before curfew.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. A 2-year-old frequently says "please" and "thank you."
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. You ask your artistic child to prepare decorated quotations for a neighborhood devotional meeting.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. You overhear your 12-year-old telling his "best friend" that they should give a classmate the "silent treatment" because "she acts weird."
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. A 3-year-old wants to play instead of eating lunch.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. A 14-year-old regularly cleans the bathrooms (one of her family services) meticulously.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. Your 9-year-old comes home from a friend's house and tells you he must have the video game he was just playing—and you do not approve of the content in this particular game.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. A 17-year-old informs you that she is going to use her first-month's earnings from her summer job to purchase items her younger siblings have desired, but you have been unable to buy.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. Your 13-year-old is troubled because a friend was found to have cigarettes at school today.

## PARENTS HELPING PARENTS

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### **Purpose:**

Discern the importance of a parent support network in problem-solving.

Indeed the believers have not yet fully learned to draw on each other's love for strength and consolation in time of need. The Cause of God is endowed with tremendous powers, and the reason the believers do not gain more from it is because they have not learned to fully draw on these mighty forces of love and strength and harmony generated by the Faith.

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, *THE COMPILATION OF COMPILATIONS*, VOL. 2, NO. 1288

1. Ask a volunteer to share a short description of a situation he or she would like to change at home.
2. Parents who have had successes handling similar challenges may briefly share their experiences. *Those sharing successes might role play how the volunteer's challenge could be handled.*
3. Invite the volunteer to role play a new approach he or she would like to practice at home, perhaps based on one or a combination of possibilities offered by others.
4. Encourage expressions of appreciation to all who offer challenges and successes. Appreciation might sound like:
  - I learned . . .
  - I felt . . .
  - I have the same problem, so now I can try . . .
  - I know how hard it is to share . . .
  - Thank you for . . .

## *Closing Activity: Music—Ladder for the Soul*

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1. Please take a few moments to identify a specific line of action to complete before the next session. What progress are you seeing toward your goal for this course? What are you learning from your experience? What new ideas would you like to try?
2. Consider reading all or part of The Content of Spiritual Education, pp. 99–142, in *Foundations for a Spiritual Education* before the next session.
3. Read aloud following quotation:

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

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *THE KITÁB-I-AQDAS*, PARAGRAPH 51

Note that beautiful music opens our hearts to love and unity and can be a useful tool for teaching the Bahá'í writings and spiritual principles.

4. Conclude your session by singing songs together such as:

“Fellowship, Fellowship”

“God is One”

“Did You Ever Wonder” by Susan Engle, from the album *Come and Sing*

“Isn't It Wonderful?” by Susan Engle, from the album *Loving Hands*

“We Are One Family” by Red Grammar, from the album *Free Falling*

“Shine Your Light on Me” by the Bahá'í Gospel Choir, from the album *We Have Come to Sing Praises*

“World Citizens” by Phil Lucas

“One Heart, Ruby Red”

“O, Bahá'u'lláh”

**Purpose:**

Appreciate the value of music in spiritual education.





# Spiritual Parenting

## COURSE TWO

### **Session Eight**

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Love in the Human Family

**Appreciating Diversity**  
**The Principle of Oneness**  
**Teaching Children About Oneness**  
**The Power of Unity: Example of Louis Gregory**  
**Parents Helping Parents**

## *Welcome and Devotions*

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Begin your session with prayers, music, and readings about the oneness of mankind. Then read aloud the theme quotations and learning objectives for this session.

## *Session Eight Themes*

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### **Appreciating Diversity**

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.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *PARIS TALKS*, P. 53

### **The Principle of Oneness**

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

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *GLEANINGS FROM THE WRITINGS OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH*, CVII, P. 213

## *Learning Objectives*

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### **KNOWLEDGE**

- Know the power of love to create unity in the human family.
- Learn about the principle of unity from Louis Gregory's example.

### **WISDOM**

- Understand the importance of diversity for creating unity.

### **SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION**

- Appreciate the importance of raising children to appreciate diversity.
- Discern the importance of a parent support network for problem-solving.

### **ELOQUENT SPEECH**

- Demonstrate ways to teach children about oneness.
- Articulate plans for cultivating a love of diversity in our children.



## Session Seven Reflections

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Please briefly share one sweet moment from the past week when you felt the power of love in the family.

If you were able to read all or part of The Content of Spiritual Education in *Foundations for a Spiritual Education*, what is one aspect of spiritual education that especially caught your interest?

Allow about five minutes of reflection and sharing.

## Appreciating Diversity

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1. Led by your facilitator or by someone else in your group, sing a round. Some simple rounds include:

- “God Sufficeth”
- “Row, Row, Row Your Boat”
- “Make New Friends But Keep the Old”

2. How does this song illustrate the meaning and importance of diversity in music? In nature? In the human family?

3. Read aloud the following quotation:

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.

‘ABDU’L-ABHÁ, *PARIS TALKS*, P. 53

4. Then briefly discuss the question:

Why is it so important for us to teach our children to appreciate diversity?

**Purpose:**

Appreciate the importance of raising children to appreciate diversity.

## *Teaching Children about Oneness*

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**Purpose:**

Know the power of love to create unity in the human family.

Demonstrate ways to teach children about oneness.

1. Create small working groups to read the quotations THE PRINCIPLE OF ONENESS, and discuss the questions on p. 92, TEACHING CHILDREN ABOUT ONENESS. Use the space on the questionnaire to record the highlights of your discussion.
2. Share your discoveries in the whole group.
3. Return to your small working group to create a brief role-play to demonstrate teaching children about oneness.
4. Share your role-plays in the whole group. Applaud all!

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**Process the Activity**

What new ideas did you hear for teaching children about the oneness of humanity?

## THE PRINCIPLE OF ONENESS

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

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *GLEANINGS FROM THE WRITINGS OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH*, CVII, P. 213

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

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *THE HIDDEN WORDS*, ARABIC NO. 68

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

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ*, NO. 8, P. 24

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

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ*, NO. 144, P. 169

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

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ*, NO. 8, P. 24

6 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. Think of them as different coloured roses growing in the beautiful garden of humanity, and rejoice to be among them.

Likewise, when you meet those whose opinions differ from your own, do not turn away your face from them. All are seeking truth, and there are many roads leading thereto. Truth has many aspects, but it remains always and forever one.

Do not allow difference of opinion, or diversity of thought to separate you from your fellow-men, or to be the cause of dispute, hatred and strife in your hearts.

Rather, search diligently for the truth and make all men your friends.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *PARIS TALKS*, P. 53

## **TEACHING CHILDREN ABOUT ONENESS**

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### **Knowledge:**

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

How can parents assist children to acquire this divine knowledge?

### **Wisdom:**

How can children come to understand that they have a “destiny before God” to assist the human race to become united?

### **Spiritual Perception:**

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

### **Eloquent Speech:**

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

## *The Power of Unity: Example of Louis Gregory*

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1. Read aloud the true story, “The Power of Unity,” from the Hand of the Cause of God, Louis G. Gregory.
2. After enjoying this story, briefly discuss: How does this story illustrate the power of unity to “move the world?”
3. In your journals, record your responses to the following questions:
  - What is one action I shall take with my children this week to promote the prime and pivotal principle of oneness?
  - How could I build on that action over time?

**Purpose:**

Learn about the principle of unity from Louis Gregory's example.

Articulate plans for creating a love of diversity in our children.

## THE POWER OF UNITY

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from *To Move the World* by Gayle Morrison, pp. 320–21

“Just a few months ago I was in far away Florida,” he told an audience gathered to hear him give a public address on “The Oneness of Mankind” during the 1926 National Bahá’í Convention in San Francisco.

“I was invited to join a group of workers going out to visit a country school. We had to pass along an unfrequented road, a distance of about eighteen miles. We had a Ford car which carried the party of four or five people. After we were well started on our journey it began to rain, which made the already difficult road, extremely difficult, but we continued on our way and finally reached our goal. It continued to rain all the time. We served the children as best we could and started on our way back. After we had gone two-thirds of the distance we got stuck and a small boy, and the entire party went to work and for an hour and a half, in the rain, we toiled and struggled to dislodge that machine. Our efforts were entirely fruitless. By-and-by we heard a noise in the distance, which grew greater and greater, and finally there came into sight an automobile truck driven by two white working men. Not knowing what would happen, we called upon them for assistance. I may say, parenthetically, that the working men of the world, whether black or white, have a community interest, and although not having seen that interest borne out in human experience, we called on them for assistance, not knowing what would happen, but gallantly they responded. They came to our aid and the four men, two white and two black, made a tremendous effort, but we were still unsuccessful. . . . They were prevailed upon to make another effort and this time the ladies and the small boy joined us, so the entire party, composed of youth and age, black and white, men and women, all made an effort and this time we were victorious. The automobile was dislodged and we went back a distance to a haven of safety much relieved by the removal of this embarrassing situation. We shook hands, across the color line, and our friends bade us good-bye. . . . [After some minutes spent fixing the car] we started once more on our way. The most interesting part of the story is this, it seems to me: We had not gone a distance of more than what would be covered by two or three of your city blocks before we came upon our two white friends and this time they were stuck in the mire. (Laughter) We were very happy, not because they were in difficulties, of course, but because we had the opportunity to return their kindness.

“So, among all the different races and groups and classes of people in the world, the ideal of today is co-operation, mutuality, service. If one wants to distinguish himself let him become distinguished as a servant of humanity. (Applause) Let him stand upon this exalted principle of the oneness of God and the oneness of the entire human race. Who-ever stands upon this exalted principle will never be shaken by the shifting sands of time; who-ever stands upon this exalted principle, like the lever of Archimedes, will move the world.”

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

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *BAHÁ'Í ADMINISTRATION*, p. 79

**Purpose:**

Discern the importance of a parent support network in problem-solving.

1. Ask a volunteer to share a short description of a situation he or she would like to change at home.
2. Parents who have had successes handling similar challenges may briefly share their experiences.
3. *Those sharing successes might role play how the volunteer's challenge could be handled.*
4. Invite the volunteer to role play a new approach he or she would like to practice at home, perhaps based on one or a combination of possibilities offered by others.
5. Encourage expressions of appreciation to all who offer challenges and successes. Appreciation might sound like:
  - I learned . . .
  - I felt . . .
  - I have the same problem, so now I can try . . .
  - I know how hard it is to share . . .
  - Thank you for . . .

*Closing Devotions*

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If you have not already done so, please record your action plan as a parent for the coming week.

Consider reading pp. 173–87, Roles and Responsibilities, in *Foundations for a Spiritual Education* as preparation for the next session.

Conclude your session with prayers and music.







# Spiritual Parenting

## COURSE TWO

### **Session Nine**

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The Child-Development Centered  
Community

**Community Roles and Responsibilities**  
**Major Features of the Child-Development  
Centered Community**  
**Community Web**  
*Brilliant Star Magazine*  
**Parents Helping Parents**

## *Welcome and Devotions*

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Begin your session with prayers and music. Then read aloud the theme quotations and learning objectives for this session.

## *Session Nine Theme*

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### **Community Roles and Responsibilities**

Everyone, whether man or woman, should hand over to a trusted person a portion of what he or she earneth through trade, agriculture or other occupation, for the training and education of children, to be spent for this purpose with the knowledge of the Trustees of the House of Justice.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *TABLETS OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH*, P. 90

Blessed is that teacher who remaineth faithful to the Covenant of God, and occupieth himself with the education of children. For him hath the Supreme Pen inscribed the reward which is revealed in the Most Holy Book. Blessed, blessed is he!

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *BAHÁ'Í EDUCATION*, NO. 28, P. 7

These Bahá'í children are of such great importance to the future. . . . The Cause alone can equip them to properly serve the needs of the future. . . . So their task will be a great one, and too much care cannot be devoted to their upbringing and preparation.

WRITTEN ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, *BAHÁ'Í EDUCATION*, NO. 128, P. 58

## *Learning Objectives*

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### **KNOWLEDGE**

- Become familiar with the roles and responsibilities for educating children within the Bahá'í community.
- Know that *Brilliant Star* magazine is a resource for families.

### **WISDOM**

- Understand the role of the Bahá'í community in assisting children and youth to fulfill their destiny before God.

### **SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION**

- Discern the features of a child-development centered community.
- Perceive the strong ties that unite a community.

### **ELOQUENT SPEECH**

- Demonstrate the understanding of parental and community roles through role-play.
- Articulate ways that the community functions as a whole for the spiritual empowerment of children, junior youth, and youth.
- Select a *Brilliant Star* activity to use with the family.

*Session Eight Reflections*

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Please share the results of your efforts to teach children about the oneness of humanity in your family this week. What did you learn from these experiences?

If you have been able to read selections from *Foundations for a Spiritual Education*, please share your insights into community roles and responsibilities.

*Community Roles and Responsibilities*

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**Defining the Child-Development Centered Community**

1. In the whole group read aloud the quotations, COMMUNITY ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES, beginning on the following page.
2. Then, in small groups, read MAJOR FEATURES OF THE CHILD-DEVELOPMENT CENTERED COMMUNITY, p. 102.
3. In your small groups, discuss: What is a Child-Development Centered Community? What is it NOT? Record your answers on the chart below.
4. Next, in your whole group list on chart paper the results of your consultation.

*Creating the Definition of a Child-Development Centered Community*

<b>What it IS:</b>	<b>What it is NOT:</b>

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**Process the Activity**

How does a child-development centered community assist children and youth to fulfill their destiny before God? How does a focus on child development advance the growth and development of the community as a whole? How does a focus on child development help a Bahá'í community become increasingly open to all?

## COMMUNITY ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

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1 Blessed is that teacher who remaineth faithful to the Covenant of God, and occupieth himself with the education of children. For him hath the Supreme Pen inscribed the reward which is revealed in the Most Holy Book. Blessed, blessed is he!

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *BAHÁ'Í EDUCATION*, NO. 28, P. 7

2 Everyone, whether man or woman, should hand over to a trusted person a portion of what he or she earneth through trade, agriculture or other occupation, for the training and education of children, to be spent for this purpose with the knowledge of the Trustees of the House of Justice.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *TABLETS OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH*, P. 90

3 For mothers are the first educators, the first mentors; and truly it is the mothers who determine the happiness, the future greatness, the courteous ways and learning and judgment, the understanding and the faith of their little ones.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ*, NO. 96, P. 126

4 The father must always endeavor to educate his son and to acquaint him with the heavenly teachings. . . . In brief, let him instill into his mind the virtues and perfection of the world of humanity. Above all, he should continually call to mind the remembrance of God so that his throbbing veins and arteries may pulsate with the love of God.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *BAHÁ'Í MARRIAGE AND FAMILY LIFE*, NO. 154, P. 47

5 My highest wish and desire is that ye who are my children may be educated according to the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh and may receive a Bahá'í training; that ye may each become a lighted candle in the world of humanity, may be devoted to the service of all mankind, may give up your rest and comfort, so that ye may become the cause of the tranquillity of the world of creation.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ*, NO. 120, P. 141

6 Wherefore, O ye illumined youth, strive by night and by day to unravel the mysteries of the mind and spirit, and to grasp the secrets of the Day of God. Inform yourselves of the evidences that the Most Great Name hath dawned. Open your lips in praise. Adduce convincing arguments and proofs. Lead those who thirst to the fountain of life; grant ye true health to the ailing. Be ye apprentices of God, be ye physicians directed by God, and heal ye the sick among humankind. Bring those who have been excluded into the circle of intimate friends. Make the despairing to be filled with hope. Waken them that slumber; make the heedless mindful. Such are the fruits of this earthly life. Such is the station of resplendent glory.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *BAHÁ'Í EDUCATION*, NO. 97, P. 141

7 [Local Spiritual Assemblies] must promote by every means in their power the material as well as spiritual enlightenment of youth, the means for the education of children, institute, wherever possible, Bahá'í educational institutions, organize and supervise their work, and provide the best means for their progress and development.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *BAHÁ'Í ADMINISTRATION: SELECTED MESSAGES*, p. 38

8 These Bahá'í children are of such great importance to the future. . . . The Cause alone can equip them to properly serve the needs of the future. . . . So their task will be a great one, and too much care cannot be devoted to their upbringing and preparation.

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, *BAHÁ'Í EDUCATION*, NO. 128, p. 58

9 . . . 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 the spiritual, social, educational and administrative activities. . . .

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, RIDVÁN 1996

10 Spiritual education of children and junior youth are of paramount importance to the further progress of the community. . . . But although providing spiritual and academic education for children is essential, this represents only a part of what must go into developing their characters and shaping their personalities. The necessity exists, too, for individuals and the institutions at all levels, which is to say the community as a whole, to show a proper attitude towards children and to take a general interest in their welfare. Such an attitude should be far removed from that of a rapidly declining order.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, RIDVÁN 2000

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

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, RIDVÁN 2000

## **MAJOR FEATURES OF THE CHILD-DEVELOPMENT CENTERED COMMUNITY**

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Summarized from hundreds of consultations about the Bahá'í sacred writings and letters of the Universal House of Justice

- The main goal of the spiritual education curriculum is the development of spiritually transformed children who, in turn, help to transform the community. Spiritual education in the child-development centered community results in children developing as loving servants of Bahá'u'lláh, who fulfill their destiny as teachers of the Cause, servants of humanity, and responsible contributors in marriage and parenthood.
- Vital elements of community growth and development include enhancing the spiritual life of the community and placing the development of children and youth at the center of community activities.
- The roles and relationships within each community are examined through consultation and renewed in this new age. This is particularly true for parents, teachers, and Assemblies in relationship to children and youth.
- The spiritual development of children and youth becomes a central focus of community life, and is routinely considered in plans, consultation, resource allocation, and organized activities.
- Parents are encouraged, supported, and trained as important members of the community, so that they are empowered to carry on the important task of rearing children. Parent training is an important component of this process.
- The teaching of children and youth is elevated to a station that is commensurate with the vital and sensitive role that it will become. Teachers are appointed by the Assembly or group to carry out the responsibility of Bahá'í classes. They play a critical role in the spiritual education of children and junior youth. This role necessitates a new look at the Bahá'í sacred writings to identify the competencies and criteria for training teachers.
- The relationship between parents and teachers is carefully considered and developed through consultation. It is a collaborative relationship that carries on an integrated and harmonious approach to the education and nurturing of the children and youth. The teachers become mentors, catalysts, and facilitators for the dynamic relationships among parents, children, youth, and community. They also become consultants to Spiritual Assemblies, parents, and the community regarding the education of children and youth and the achievement of spiritual education goals.
- The child-development centered community draws upon examples and models within the entire Bahá'í community where members operate as extended family. These relationships contribute positively to the establishment of community life and fellowship. Many of these relationships become catalysts for development of deepened Bahá'ís engaged in significant service to the community as a whole.

1. Begin this activity by reading the following quotation:

Liken the world of existence to the temple of man. All the limbs and organs of the human body assist one another; therefore life continues. When, in this wonderful organism, there is disconnection, life is changed to death and the parts of the body disintegrate. Likewise, among the parts of existence there is a wonderful connection and interchange of forces, which is the cause of the life of the world and the continuation of these countless phenomena. When one considers the living beings and the growing plants, he realizes that the animals and man sustain life by inhaling the emanations from the vegetable world, and this . . . element is called oxygen. The vegetable kingdom also draws life from the living creatures in the substance called carbon.

. . . From this illustration one can see the base of life is this material aid and helpfulness, and the cause of destruction and non-existence would be the interruption of this material assistance. The more the world aspires to civilization the more this most important matter of cooperation becomes manifest. Therefore in the world of humanity one sees this matter of helpfulness attain to a high degree of efficiency; so much so that the continuance of humanity entirely depends upon this interrelation.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *THE DIVINE ART OF LIVING*, CHAPTER 14, PP. 107-8

2. Enjoy playing **Community Web**, guided by your facilitator.
3. Note what happens as the game continues.
4. At the end of the game, discuss the implications of our roles and responsibilities and the effect of our behavior on the growth and development of the children, youth, and the community.
  - How do these roles interconnect to assist the children and youth in fulfilling their destinies?
  - How do these interconnections foster the community's overall growth and development?
  - How is the community strengthened by the participation of all its members in the spiritual education of children and youth?

**Purpose:**

Understand the connection between the strength, welfare, and growth of the community and the education of children.

Distinguish the unique role and responsibilities of Spiritual Assemblies, parents, teachers, and others in the Bahá'í community in the spiritual development of children and youth.

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**Process the Activity**

How is the community strengthened by the participation of all its members in the education and development of children and youth? How would this vision of a Child-Development Centered Community assist you as a parent?

## *Brilliant Star Magazine*

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**Purpose:**

Know that *Brilliant Star* magazine is a resource for families.

Select a *Brilliant Star* activity to use within the family.

1. Take a few moments to acquaint yourselves with copies of *Brilliant Star* magazine, a highly effective tool for parents to use in the home for the spiritual education of their children.
2. Working in family teams, browse through the magazines provided and select an activity that you can enjoy with your families at home, or use as part of an upcoming community gathering, such as a 19-Day Feast, Holy Day observance, or devotional meeting.
3. After choosing your activity, briefly share the selected activity with the whole group. Please also share when and where you plan to use it.
4. If you would like to subscribe to *Brilliant Star* magazine you may do so by contacting Bahá'í Distribution Service (BDS)  
Attention: Subscriber Service  
4703 Fulton Industrial Blvd  
Atlanta, GA 30336-2017 USA  
Fax: 404.472.0119  
Phone: 404.472.9019 or 800.999.9019  
E-mail: [subscription@usbnc.org](mailto:subscription@usbnc.org)

In 2005, the United States National Spiritual Assembly decided to provide free subscriptions to *Brilliant Star* magazine for children between the ages of 7 and 12 who are registered as Bahá'ís in the United States.

If you would like to register your children as Bahá'ís you may do so by informing your Local Spiritual Assembly or by contacting the Office of Membership and Records at the Bahá'í National Center. You can reach them by phone at 847-733-3437 and select option 3, or by email at [is-membership@usbnc.org](mailto:is-membership@usbnc.org).



. . . No man can attain his true station except through his justice. No power can exist except through unity. No welfare and no well-being can be attained except through consultation.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *CONSULTATION: A COMPILATION*, NO. 2, P. 3

**Purpose:**

Discern the importance of a parent support network in problem-solving.

1. Ask a volunteer to share a short description of a situation he or she would like to change at home.
2. Parents who have had successes handling similar challenges may briefly share their experiences. *Those sharing successes might role play how the volunteer's challenge could be handled.*
3. Invite the volunteer to role play a new approach he or she would like to practice at home, perhaps based on one or a combination of possibilities offered by others.
4. Encourage expressions of appreciation to all who offer challenges and successes. Appreciation might sound like:
  - I learned . . .
  - I felt . . .
  - I have the same problem, so now I can try . . .
  - I know how hard it is to share . . .
  - Thank you for . . .

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*Closing Devotions*

Please turn to your journals and record your reflections on your family's role in the child-development centered community: What can you do to encourage the inter-connections of community life? And how specifically can you strengthen your children's connections with other members of the community? Select a clear line of action to complete before the next session.

Consider reading all or part of The Content of Spiritual Education, pp. 99–142, in the book *Foundations for a Spiritual Education* as preparation for the next session. If you have access to that book, please bring it with you to the next session.

Conclude your session with prayers and music.





**Using Stories to Teach Children**  
**Teachable Moments**  
**Parents Helping Parents**

# Spiritual Parenting

**COURSE TWO**

**Session Ten**

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Bahá'í Classes Open to All

## *Welcome and Devotions*

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Begin your session with prayers and music. Then read aloud the theme quotations and learning objectives for this session.

## *Session Ten Themes*

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### **Bahá'í Classes Open to All**

My wish is that these children should receive a Bahá'í education, so that they may progress both here and in the Kingdom, and rejoice thy heart.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ*, NO. 100, P. 127

### **Sharing Stories for Spiritual Education**

Divine things are too deep to be expressed by common words. The heavenly teachings are expressed in parable in order to be understood and preserved for ages to come.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *'ABDU'L-BAHÁ IN LONDON*, P. 79

## *Learning Objectives*

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### **KNOWLEDGE**

- Become familiar with some of the content and processes of Bahá'í education.
- Know that storytelling can be a powerful tool for teaching children.

### **WISDOM**

- Understand the importance of stories in spiritual education.
- Appreciate the wealth of guidance in the Bahá'í writings on ways for parents to educate their children.

### **SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION**

- Discern the value of example in spiritual education.
- Discern the importance of a parent support network in problem-solving.

### **ELOQUENT SPEECH**

- Practice using a story for the spiritual education of children.

## *Session Nine Reflections*

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If you were able to use an activity from *Brilliant Star* magazine in your home or community, please share highlights from your experience.

Allow about 5 minutes of reflection and sharing.

**The Content of Bahá'í Education**

1. In the whole group read aloud the quotation:

My wish is that these children should receive a Bahá'í education, so that they may progress both here and in the Kingdom, and rejoice thy heart.

*'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, NO. 100, P. 127*

2. Briefly discuss: What elements of Bahá'í education have we already discovered through this course and our efforts at home to educate our children spiritually?
3. Keeping in mind that “children are the most precious treasure that a community can possess,” Bahá'í communities everywhere are striving to support parents in the spiritual education of their children by offering Bahá'í classes for children and junior youth, open to all the people in their communities. The book *Foundations for a Spiritual Education* compiles many of the Bahá'í writings that guide this endeavor. Organize your group into small teams to explore the *content* of Bahá'í classes for children and junior youth. Four small teams would be ideal for this study, if the size of your group permits.
4. If you have copies of the *Foundations* book available, organize your study groups so that each team studies one or more of the following sections in that book:
  - Knowledge (pp. 100–18)
  - Wisdom (pp. 119–26)
  - Spiritual Perception (pp. 126–35)
  - Eloquent Speech (pp. 135–42)Alternately you may refer to the selections from that book in the Appendix of this course book: Knowledge (pp. 145–49); Wisdom (pp. 150–51); Spiritual Perception (pp. 152–54); Eloquent Speech (pp. 155–56).
5. In your study group, read aloud the bold headings along with all or part of one of the quotations under that heading. Then, prepare a chart or other visual representation of the content you have reviewed.
6. Next, refer to the list of Instructional Methods and Learning Tools provided on the following pages. Identify several methods or tools that could be used to teach the content in your section. Indicate these methods or tools on your chart.
7. Share your charts in the whole group. Applaud all!

**Purpose:**

Become familiar with some of the content of Bahá'í education.

Appreciate the wealth of guidance in the Bahá'í writings on ways for parents to educate their children

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**Process the Activity**

What insights did you gain into the scope of Bahá'í education through this activity?

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## Core Curriculum Instructional Methods and Learning Tools

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### Establish a Loving Environment

Be thou a teacher of love in a school of unity.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Bahá'í Education*, no. 61, p. 24

### Direct Use of the Bahá'í Sacred Writings

Train these children with divine exhortations.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 53

### Education Directed Toward the Recognition of God

We have decreed, O people, that the highest and last end of all learning be the recognition of Him Who is the Object of all knowledge. . . .

Bahá'u'lláh, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 129

### Involve Service to Humanity

The honor and distinction of the individual consist in this, that he among all the world's multitudes should become a source of social good. . . .

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, pp. 2-3

To assist Me is to teach My Cause.

Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 196

### Engage the Mind and Heart

The principles of the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh should be carefully studied, one by one, until they are realized and understood by mind and heart – so will you become strong followers of the light. . . .

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, p. 22

### Private Study of the Writings

. . . Stimulate the students to proceed in their studies privately once they return home. . . .

on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, *Centers of Bahá'í Learning* no. 20, p. 8

### Establish Bonds of Unity and Friendship

Let them seek but love and faithfulness. . . .

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, no. 206, p. 257

### Use of Consultation

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

Bahá'u'lláh, in *Consultation: A Compilation*, no. 1, p. 3

### Use of Questioning and Peer Teaching

Oral questions must be asked and answers must be given orally. They must discuss with each other in this manner.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Bahá'í World*, vol. 9, p. 543

### Independent Investigation and Using the Power of Reasoning

Therefore, depend upon your own reason and judgment and adhere to the outcome of your own investigation. . . .

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 293

### Use of Memorization and Recitation

It is . . . highly praiseworthy to memorize the Tablets, divine verses and sacred traditions.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, in *Bahá'í Education*, no. 77, p. 30

Teach . . . the words that have been sent down from God, that they may recite. . . .

Bahá'u'lláh, in *Bahá'í Education*, no. 23, p. 6

## **Use of Meditation and Reflection**

Meditation is the key for opening the doors of mysteries.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, pp. 174–75

The source of crafts, sciences and arts is the power of reflection.

Bahá’u’lláh, *Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 72

## **Use of Parables and Stories**

Divine things are too deep to be expressed by common words. The heavenly teachings are expressed in parables in order to be understood and preserved for ages to come.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, quoted in *‘Abdu’l-Bahá in London*, p. 80

. . . stories regarding the life of different Prophets together with Their sayings will also be useful to better understand the literature of the Cause. . . .

on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá’í Education*, no. 130, p. 53

## **Use of Music**

Music is an important means to the education and development of humanity. . . .

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Bahá’í Writings on Music*, p. 8

## **Use of Drama**

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

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, quoted in *‘Abdu’l-Bahá in London*, p. 93

## **Employ Creativity and the Arts**

Art can better awaken such noble sentiments than cold rationalizing, especially among the masses of people.

Shoghi Effendi, quoted in “In Its Full Splendor,” *Bahá’í News*, no. 73 (May 1973), p. 7

## **Engage in Science and in the Investigation of the World of Nature**

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

Bahá’u’lláh, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 26

And whatever time I contemplate the mountains, I am led to discover the ensigns of Thy victory and the standards of Thine omnipotence.

Bahá’u’lláh, *Prayers and Meditations*, p. 272

## **Play and Use of Manipulatives**

They should be taught, in play, some letter and words . . . as is done in certain countries where they fashion letters and words out of sweets. . . .

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Bahá’í Education*, no. 78, p. 30

## **Use of Travel**

If a man should live his entire life in one city, he cannot gain a knowledge of the whole world. To become perfectly informed he must visit other cities, see the mountains and valleys, cross the rivers and traverse the plains. . . .

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 295

## **Use of Recreation**

A wise schoolmaster should send his scholars out to play . . . so that their minds and bodies may be refreshed, and during the hour of the lesson they may learn it better.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, in “Bahá’í Methods of Education,” *Star of the West*, vol. 9, no. 8, p. 91

## *Bahá'í Classes Open to All*

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### **The Core Curriculum for the Spiritual Education of Children and Junior Youth**

**Purpose:**

Appreciate the scope of the *Core Curriculum for the Spiritual Education of Children and Junior Youth*.

Since 1988, the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States has supervised the development of the Core Curriculum for children and junior youth. The first step in that development was to compile *Foundations for a Spiritual Education*. Development of the curriculum continues as materials and processes are refined.

Please read through the following curriculum overview, then discuss the questions on p. 116.

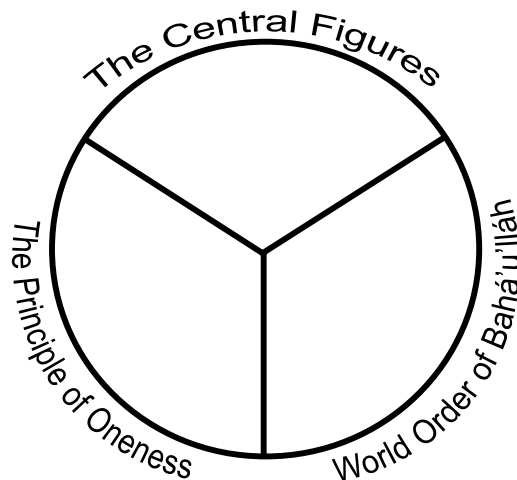
### **Strands of the Curriculum**

That which is of paramount importance for the children, that which must precede all else, is to teach them the oneness of God and the Laws of God.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *BAHÁ'Í EDUCATION*, NO. 14, P. 3

Following this exhortation of Bahá'u'lláh, the content of the Core Curriculum is organized into three “strands,” or major categories of study:

- The **Central Figures** of the Faith
- The **Principle of Oneness**
- The **World Order of Bahá'u'lláh**





## Themes of Study

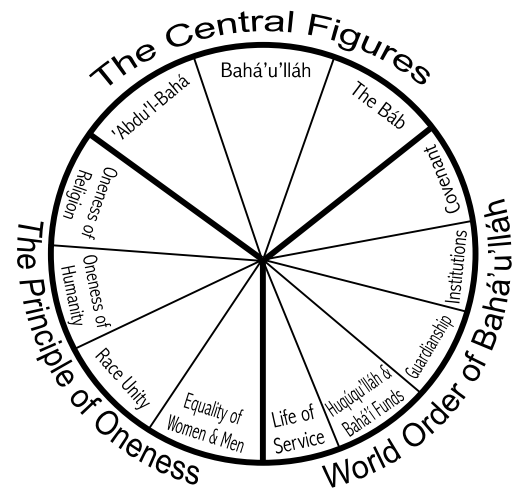
Each strand has several themes:

**The Central Figures** includes The Báb, Bahá'u'lláh, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

**The Principle of Oneness** includes The Oneness of Religion, The Oneness of Humanity, Race Unity, and The Equality of Women and Men.

**The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh** includes The Covenant, The Institutions of the Faith, The Guardianship, Huqúqu'lláh and the Bahá'í Funds, and A Life of Service.

Within each theme, specific learning goals and topics systematically guide the learner to increasingly deeper levels of knowledge, understanding, spiritual insight, and action.



## Three Levels of Study

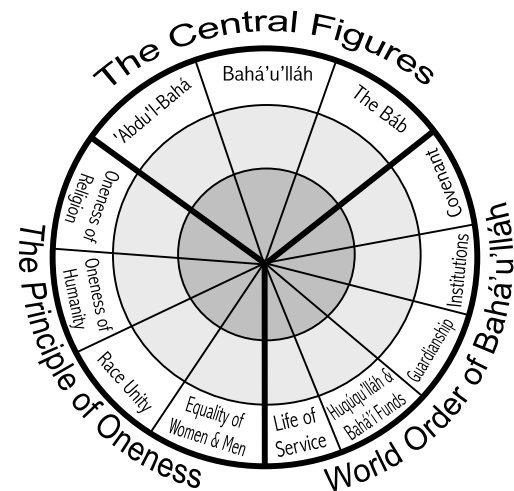
The Core Curriculum provides three levels of study. All of the themes of study are organized into a nine-year sequential curriculum for children and junior youth through age 14:

- Level One, for children aged 6–8,
- Level Two, for children 9–11,
- Level Three, for junior youth 12–14.

These three levels of study may be adapted to meet the needs of learners of all ages and varied backgrounds. In a growing community, this flexibility enables beginning learners to start with the concepts of Level One, using age-appropriate activities. The Core Curriculum also includes materials for the spiritual education of young children, youth, and adults.

The spiritual education of each learner is carefully documented in a comprehensive Spiritual Education Record.

Notice that the content of the curriculum is outlined on the Core Curriculum Scope and Sequence chart provided on the following pages.



# Core Curriculum for Spiritual Education of Children and Junior Youth

		Strand: Principle of Oneness				Strand: The Central	
		ONENESS OF RELIGION	ONENESS OF HUMANITY	RACE UNITY	EQUALITY OF WOMEN AND	THE BÁB	BAHÁ'U'LLÁH
L E V E L	1	<b>Understanding of the Oneness of God:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The Meaning of Divine Unity</li> </ul> <b>Understanding of the Major Religions of the Past:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The Nature and Purpose of Religion</li> </ul>	<b>The Prime and Pivotal Teaching:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The Prime and Pivotal Principle</li> </ul> <b>To Know that Human Reality Is Spiritual:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ No Distinction or Separation</li> <li>○ All Are Born with Potential</li> </ul>	<b>Understanding the Principle of Unity in Diversity:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Beauty and Purpose of Diversity in the Realm of Creation</li> </ul> <b>Eliminating Racial Prejudice:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Following the Example of 'Abdu'l-Bahá</li> </ul>	<b>Equality and How It Differs from Being the Same:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Equal in Value, not Appearance</li> </ul> <b>Equality In Family and Community:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Roles of Fathers, Mothers, Wives and Husbands</li> </ul> <b>Examples of Heroes and Heroines:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The Holy Family</li> </ul>	<b>Historical Context:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Religious Awakening in Anticipation</li> <li>○ Mullá Husayn's Search</li> </ul> <b>The Station of the Báb:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The Titles of the Báb</li> </ul> <b>The Life of the Báb:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Early Life of the Báb</li> <li>○ Declaration of the Báb</li> </ul> <b>The Writings of the Báb:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Prayers of the Báb</li> </ul>	<b>Love for Bahá'u'lláh:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Prayers and Meditations</li> <li>○ Loving Acts</li> <li>○ Children of His Household</li> </ul> <b>The Station of Bahá'u'lláh:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ ... as Stated By 'Abdu'l-Bahá</li> </ul> <b>His Life &amp; Ministry:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The Childhood of Bahá'u'lláh</li> <li>○ Youth and Early Manhood</li> </ul> <b>The Principles of Bahá'u'lláh:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Oneness of God and of Humanity</li> </ul>
	2	<b>Understanding of Oneness of God:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ To Be a True Seeker</li> </ul> <b>Understanding of Major Religions of the Past:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The Mission of the Prophets</li> <li>○ The History, Laws, and Teachings of Major Religions</li> </ul> <b>The Greatest Means for Unity:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The Essential Foundation of All Religions</li> </ul>	<b>The Prime and Pivotal Teaching:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ For the Peoples of the World</li> </ul> <b>The Diversity of Humanity:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Appreciating Diversity</li> </ul> <b>The Importance of the Principle of the Elimination of All Prejudices:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ A Barrier to Oneness and World Peace</li> </ul>	<b>The Unity and Equality of the Races:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Created from the Same Dust</li> <li>○ A Composite Harmony and Beauty</li> </ul>	<b>Equality and How It Differs from Being the Same:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Equality in Nature</li> </ul> <b>The Principle of Equality as it is Reflected in Bahá'í Teachings</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The History of Equality and Inequality</li> </ul> <b>Equality In Family and Community:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Collaborative Family Life</li> </ul> <b>Examples of Heroes and Heroines:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Expressing Equality</li> </ul>	<b>Historical Context:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The World of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century</li> <li>○ Iran in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century</li> </ul> <b>The Station of the Báb:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The Herald of Bahá'u'lláh</li> </ul> <b>The Life of the Báb:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The Letters of the Living</li> <li>○ The Ministry of the Báb After His Declaration</li> <li>○ Conference at Badashht</li> </ul> <b>The Writings of the Báb:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The Development of the Bahá'í Calendar</li> </ul>	<b>Love for Bahá'u'lláh:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The Suffering and Sacrifices</li> <li>○ Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá</li> <li>○ The Holy Family</li> </ul> <b>The Station of Bahá'u'lláh:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ ... as Stated by the Báb</li> <li>○ ... as Stated by His Own Pen</li> </ul> <b>His Life &amp; Ministry:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Bahá'u'lláh in the Siyah-Chál</li> <li>○ Banishment to Iraq</li> <li>○ Declaration in the Garden of Ridván</li> </ul> <b>Proofs &amp; Evidences of His Station</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Progressive Revelation</li> </ul> <b>The Principles of Bahá'u'lláh:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The Social Principles</li> </ul> <b>Writings of Bahá'u'lláh:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The Significance of the Writings</li> </ul>
L E V E L	JUNIOR YOUTH: COMING OF AGE						
	3	<b>Understanding of the Oneness of God:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Progressive Revelation – The Prophetic Cycle</li> </ul> <b>The Greatest Means for Unity:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Religious Prejudice as Cause of War and Hatred</li> <li>○ Religion Must Be Cause of Love and Unity</li> </ul>	<b>The Diversity of Humanity:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The Principle of Unity in Diversity</li> </ul> <b>The Importance of the Principle of the Elimination of All Prejudices:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ All Must Strive to Overcome Prejudice</li> <li>○ True Unity as the Outcome of the Elimination of All Prejudice</li> </ul>	<b>Eliminating Racial Prejudice:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The Most Vital and Challenging Issue</li> <li>○ Spiritual Qualities and Responsibilities Needed</li> <li>○ Promised Outcomes</li> </ul>	<b>The Principle of Equality as it is Reflected in Bahá'í Teachings</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The Role of the Institutions</li> </ul> <b>Equality in Family and Community:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Development of Human Economy</li> <li>○ Equality and World Peace</li> </ul>	<b>The Station of the Báb:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The Islamic Prophecies</li> </ul> <b>The Life of the Báb:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The Martyrdom of the Báb</li> <li>○ Upheavals Associated with the Ministry of the Báb</li> <li>○ The Shrine of the Báb</li> </ul> <b>The Writings of the Báb:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The Major Writings</li> </ul>	<b>The Station of Bahá'u'lláh:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ ... as Stated in the Holy Books of Previous Religions</li> <li>○ ... as Stated by Shoghi Effendi</li> </ul> <b>His Life &amp; Ministry:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Exiles - Constantinople, Adrianople</li> <li>○ Exile to the Holy Land</li> </ul> <b>Proofs and Evidences of His Station</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Proofs and Evidences Found in Divine Religions of the Past</li> </ul> <b>The Principles of Bahá'u'lláh:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The Personal Principles</li> </ul> <b>Laws of Bahá'u'lláh:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The Need for Laws</li> <li>○ The Kitáb-i-Aqdas</li> </ul> <b>Writings of Bahá'u'lláh:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Mysteries and Hidden Meanings</li> <li>○ Major Texts</li> </ul>

<b>Strand: World Order of Bahá'u'lláh</b>					
'ABDU'L-BAHÁ	THE COVENANT	THE GUARDIANSHIP	HUQÚQU'LLÁH / BAHÁ'Í FUNDS	INSTITUTIONS OF THE BAHÁ'Í FAITH	A LIFE OF SERVICE
<p><b>The Life of 'Abdu'l-Bahá:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The Childhood of 'Abdu'l-Bahá</li> <li>○ 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Life of Service</li> <li>○ The Mother Temple of the West</li> </ul> <p><b>The Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Tablets and Talks Addressed to Children</li> </ul>	<p><b>A Divine Covenant:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The Definition of a Divine Covenant</li> </ul> <p><b>The Greater Covenant:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ How the Manifestations have been Received by Humanity</li> </ul>	<p><b>The Life of the Guardian, Shoghi Effendi:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Lineage and Early Life, Childhood, Early Youth, Schooling</li> </ul> <p><b>Guardian's Contributions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Development of the World Center</li> </ul>	<p><b>The Bahá'í Fund:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The Bahá'í Fund</li> </ul>	<p><b>The Structure and Function of the Administrative Order:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The Nineteen Day Feast</li> </ul>	<p><b>The Purpose of Living a Life of Service:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The Purpose of Life</li> </ul> <p><b>Caring for One's Body:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The Relationship between physical cleanliness and spirituality</li> </ul> <p><b>Developing Intellectual Faculties:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Excellence and Education</li> </ul> <p><b>Developing Spiritual Capacity:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Spiritual Foundations</li> </ul> <p><b>Developing Social Life:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Daily Deeds of Service</li> </ul>
<p><b>Station of 'Abdu'l-Bahá:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 'Abdu'l-Bahá as Exemplar</li> <li>○ 'Abdu'l-Bahá as Interpreter</li> </ul> <p><b>Life of 'Abdu'l-Bahá:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Youth of 'Abdu'l-Bahá</li> <li>○ The Sacrifices of . . .</li> </ul> <p><b>The Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Major Topics / Titles</li> <li>○ <i>Memorials of the Faithful</i></li> </ul> <p><b>Journeys and Talks in the West:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Significance to the Western Believers</li> <li>○ Important Principles</li> </ul>	<p><b>The Greater Covenant:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The Covenant of the Báb</li> <li>○ The Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh</li> </ul> <p><b>The Lesser Covenant:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ First of Its Kind in Religious History</li> </ul>	<p><b>The Life of the Guardian, Shoghi Effendi:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Character of the Guardian and His Excellence in All Things</li> </ul> <p><b>Guardian's Contributions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Translation and Interpretation of the Writings, Correspondence with the Bahá'ís of the World, and His Writings</li> <li>○ The Appointment of Shoghi Effendi as Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith</li> </ul>	<p><b>The History of Huqúqu'lláh:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Unique Nature of Huqúqu'lláh</li> </ul> <p><b>Purpose of the Law of Huqúqu'lláh for Institutions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Reciprocity, Mutual Assistance and Cooperation</li> <li>○ Building the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh</li> </ul> <p><b>Purpose of the Law of Huqúqu'lláh for the Individual:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Personal Aspects of the Law</li> <li>○ Outcomes for the Individual</li> </ul>	<p><b>Significance and Distinction of the Institutions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The Administrative Order</li> <li>○ Systems of the Past</li> <li>○ The Covenant</li> </ul> <p><b>Development of the Administrative Order:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Heroic and Formative Ages</li> <li>○ Institution of the Learned</li> <li>○ The Bahá'í World Centre</li> </ul> <p><b>Structure and Function of the Administrative Order:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Structure and Form</li> <li>○ The Learned and the Rulers</li> <li>○ Local and National Institutions</li> </ul> <p><b>Citizenship:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Individual's Relationship to Institutions</li> <li>○ Service to the Institutions</li> </ul>	<p><b>The Purpose of Living a Life of Service</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The Power of Action</li> </ul> <p><b>Caring for One's Body</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Chastity and Purity</li> </ul> <p><b>Developing Intellectual Faculties:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The Needs of our Time</li> </ul> <p><b>Developing Spiritual Capacity:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Spiritual Habits</li> </ul> <p><b>Developing Social Life:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Serving the World and Humanity</li> <li>○ Teaching through Words and Deeds</li> </ul>
<b>JUNIOR YOUTH: COMING OF AGE</b>					
<p><b>The Station of 'Abdu'l-Bahá:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The Kitáb-i-Ahd</li> <li>○ The Center of the Covenant</li> <li>○ The Reactions of Others</li> </ul> <p><b>Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Themes in . . .</li> <li>○ Bahá'í Administrative Order</li> </ul> <p><b>The Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Some Answered Questions</i></li> </ul> <p><b>Public Addresses:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Style and Presentation</li> </ul>	<p><b>The Lesser Covenant:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Its Purpose to Preserve Unity</li> </ul> <p><b>The Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The Will and Testament</li> <li>○ Guardianship and Universal House Of Justice</li> </ul> <p><b>The Individual &amp; the Covenant:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Complete Loyalty to Bahá'u'lláh</li> <li>○ Participation &amp; Obedience</li> <li>○ Covenant-Breakers</li> </ul>	<p><b>The Life of the Guardian, Shoghi Effendi:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Family Relationships: Marriage, Greatest Holy Leaf, Covenant Breakers</li> <li>○ Passing of the Guardian</li> </ul> <p><b>Guardian's Contributions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Expansion and Implementation of the Bahá'í Administrative Order, Design, Implementation</li> <li>○ The Institution of the Guardianship</li> </ul>	<p><b>The History of Huqúqu'lláh:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Development of the Institution of Huqúqu'lláh</li> <li>○ The Trusteeship of Huqúqu'lláh</li> </ul> <p><b>Purpose of the Law of Huqúqu'lláh for Institutions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The Disbursement of Huqúqu'lláh</li> </ul> <p><b>Application of the Law of Huqúqu'lláh:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The Features of Huqúqu'lláh</li> <li>○ Calculating Huqúqu'lláh</li> </ul> <p><b>The Bahá'í Fund:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Distinction Between Fund and Huqúq</li> </ul>	<p><b>Development of the Administrative Order:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Role as Architect</li> </ul> <p><b>Structure and Function of the Administrative Order:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The Universal House of Justice</li> <li>○ Bahá'í Elections</li> </ul> <p><b>Consultation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The Role of Consultation</li> <li>○ Spiritual Prerequisites</li> <li>○ Decision Making</li> <li>○ The Steps Used in Consultation</li> </ul> <p><b>Citizenship:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ America's Spiritual Destiny</li> </ul> <p><b>The Mission and Future of the Faith:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Purpose and Mission of Bahá'u'lláh</li> <li>○ Unfolding Destiny</li> </ul>	<p><b>Developing Intellectual Faculties:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The Kitáb-i-Aqdas</li> <li>○ Heroes and Heroines</li> </ul> <p><b>Developing Spiritual Capacity:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Spiritual Practices</li> </ul> <p><b>Developing Social Life:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Community Service</li> <li>○ Preparation for Marriage</li> <li>○ Teaching our Peers</li> </ul>

LEVEL 1

LEVEL 2

LEVEL 3



### **Lesson Planning Guides and Storybooks**

Richly detailed Lesson Planning Guides provide teachers with learning objectives and fully-developed sample activities utilizing the arts, sciences, crafts, and other learning methods suggested in the Bahá'í writings. A growing collection of illustrated storybooks enhances the lessons being taught. A system of careful training and hands-on practice supports teachers to become fully adept at using these materials to teach children and junior youth.

While all of these materials are excellent for Bahá'í classes, the storybooks carefully link spiritual education in the home with spiritual education in Bahá'í class.

**Briefly discuss** the questions:

- What will be the effect on our children, our families, our community, and the future well-being of humanity when systematic spiritual education is available to all?
- What do we need to do to increase the number of teachers who can offer these spiritual education classes to our children and to others?
- What are some ways that we can invite the people we know to participate in Bahá'í classes that are truly open to every member of the community?

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#### **Process the Activity:**

In your journals, please outline a simple line of action that you can take to make Bahá'í education increasingly available to your children and to all others.

## *Sharing Stories for Spiritual Education*

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1. In your large group, read aloud the response of Hand of the Cause of God Abu'l-Qasim Faizi when asked about the best methods for teaching spiritual and moral principles:

I think the best means would be stories for children. Because when you tell stories to the children, they always think that they must emulate this personality, go into the skin of this man or woman and become one of them. And the simpler the story, the better for children, so they can understand it. . . .

Stories of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the martyrs, and the great teachers of the Cause and the illiterate people who became the greatest teachers of the Cause. And tell the children that the greatest thing is the purity of heart, always, not to know very much. Because no matter how much we learn, still we lack something. But, the purity of our heart gives us an endless treasure house of God's Mercy. For example, ask the children, "Do you know 'Abu'l-Fadl?" If they don't know, tell them that he is the greatest scholar who ever accepted the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh. The Guardian said he was a specialist in history and in literature. He could write in Persian and Arabic just the same. If you would start to talk in Persian or Arabic, it would be the same for him. Arabic is a very hard language, but he wrote it so beautifully that even the Arabs were astounded. And then when you say these things, but who brought him to the Faith? Who taught him? A blacksmith, illiterate altogether, awakened him to the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh.

Such things will really awaken the children also to the fact that there is a power, mysterious power. We must tackle it. We must use it. And when we use it properly, it will come to our aid.

TRANSCRIPTION OF AUDIO RECORDING MADE IN GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN

2. Then, read aloud the following quotation:

Divine things are too deep to be expressed by common words. The heavenly teachings are expressed in parable in order to be understood and preserved for ages to come.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ IN LONDON, P. 79

3. Briefly discuss: In what ways have we seen children's understanding of spiritual principles enhanced through the use of stories?
4. Working in small teams, select one story from the Core Curriculum storybooks provided by your facilitator for reference. Identify the value of this story for the spiritual education of children.
5. As time permits, share one or more of these stories in the whole group.

### **Purpose:**

Understand the importance of stories in spiritual education.

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### **Process the Activity**

While playing quiet music, use your journals to record your plans for using stories for character education in your family.

## *Parents Helping Parents*

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### **Purpose:**

Discern the importance of a parent support network in problem-solving.

Consultation bestoweth greater awareness and transmuteth conjecture into certitude. It is a shining light which, in a dark world, leadeth the way and guideth. For everything there is and will continue to be a station of perfection and maturity. The maturity of the gift of understanding is made manifest through consultation.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *CONSULTATION: A COMPILATION*, NO. 3, P. 3

1. Ask a volunteer to share a short description of a situation he or she would like to change at home.
2. Parents who have had successes handling similar challenges may briefly share their experiences.
3. *Those sharing successes might role play how the volunteer's challenge could be handled.*
4. Invite the volunteer to role play a new approach he or she would like to practice at home, perhaps based on one or a combination of possibilities offered by others.
5. Encourage expressions of appreciation to all who offer challenges and successes. Appreciation might sound like:
  - I learned . . .
  - I felt . . .
  - I have the same problem, so now I can try . . .
  - I know how hard it is to share . . .
  - Thank you for . . .

### *Closing Activity*

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If you have not already done so, please identify a clear line of action for yourself as a parent. Plan to complete your action over the coming week. How could you make use of the wealth of materials available for the spiritual education of your children? How could you assist, stimulate, or encourage your community to increasingly make classes available to all the children in your community?

Consider reading or re-reading pp. 183–87, *The Role of Children*, in *Foundations for a Spiritual Education* as preparation for the next session.

Conclude your session with prayers and music.



**Full Participants in Community Life**  
**Teachers of the Cause of God**  
**Parents Helping Parents**

# Spiritual Parenting

## **COURSE TWO**

### **Session Eleven**

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Children in the Cause of God

## *Welcome and Devotions*

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Begin with prayers for children, including sung or recorded music.  
Then read aloud the theme quotations and learning objectives for this session.

## *Session Eleven Themes*

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### **Children: Full Participants in Community Life**

Teach your children the verses revealed from the heaven of majesty and power, so that, in most melodious tones, they may recite the Tablets of the All-Merciful in the alcoves within the Mashriqu'l-Adhkárs.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *THE KITÁB-I-AQDAS*, PARAGRAPH 150, P. 74

### **Children: Teachers of the Cause of God**

Among these children many blessed souls will arise if they be trained according to the Bahá'í teaching.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, "BAHÁ'Í METHODS OF EDUCATION," IN *STAR OF THE WEST*, VOL. 9, NO. 8 (AUG. 1, 1918), P. 90

## *Learning Objectives*

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### **KNOWLEDGE**

- Learn the power of children to teach, serve and contribute to the Cause of God.

### **WISDOM**

- Understand the importance of children's participation in devotional meetings, Holy Day celebrations, and the Nineteen-Day Feast.
- Identify ways that children can contribute to the Funds.
- Appreciate the power of children to teach the Cause of God.

### **SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION**

- Discern ways to foster the full participation of children in community life.

### **ELOQUENT SPEECH**

- Plan ways to assist children as teachers of the Cause of God.
- Plan a devotional program that includes children.



## Session Ten Reflections

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In teams of two, please share with each other one brief experience from the past week that shows your efforts to promote love within your own families and within the entire human family. Please also share the results of your efforts to foster spiritual education with the community as a whole and the insights you've gained from your reading in *Foundations for a Spiritual Education*.

Allow about five minutes of reflection and sharing with your partner.

## Children: Full Participants in Community Life

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1. In the whole group, carefully read aloud the quotations on the following page, CHILDREN: FULL PARTICIPANTS IN COMMUNITY LIFE.
2. Then discuss the questions:
  - How can we as parents assist our children to prepare for devotional meetings, Holy Day celebrations, and the Nineteen-Day Feast, appreciate their importance, and show proper courtesy and reverence during them?
  - How can we assist our children to participate in giving to the Bahá'í Funds and other charitable activities?
3. Then, form small working groups. In your working group, carefully create plans to host a devotional meeting that includes participation of children (a public gathering, a Holy Day commemoration, or a Nineteen-Day Feast) and takes into account:
  - the needs of the occasion or event
  - the needs of the local community, including new-comers
  - the needs of children and elders
4. After about 15 minutes of planning time, share your group's ideas in the whole group.
5. Together, make a commitment to carry out your plans.

### **Purpose:**

Understand the importance of children's participation in devotional meetings, Holy Day celebrations, and the Nineteen-Day Feast.

Identify ways that children can contribute to the Funds.

Discern ways to foster the full participation of children in community life.

Plan a devotional program that includes children.

## CHILDREN: FULL PARTICIPANTS IN COMMUNITY LIFE

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1 Teach your children the verses revealed from the heaven of majesty and power, so that, in most melodious tones, they may recite the Tablets of the All-Merciful in the alcoves within the Mashriqu'l-Adhkárs. Whoever hath been transported by the rapture born of adoration for My Name, the Most Compassionate, will recite the verses of God in such wise as to captivate the hearts of those yet wrapped in slumber.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *THE KITÁB-I-AQDAS*, PARAGRAPH 150, P. 74

2 As to the Nineteen Day Feast, ye must give this your most careful attention, and firmly establish it. For this Feast bringeth bliss and unity and love to the lovers of God.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *STIRRING OF THE SPIRIT: NINETEEN-DAY FEAST*, NO. 3, PP. 7-8

3 You must continue to keep the Nineteen Day Feast. It is very important; it is very good. But when you present yourselves in the meetings, before entering them, free yourselves from all that you have in your heart, free your thoughts and your minds from all else save God, and speak to your heart. That all may make this a gathering of love, make it the cause of illumination, make it a gathering of attraction of the hearts, surround this gathering with the Lights of the Supreme concourse, so that you may be gathered together with the utmost love.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *STIRRING OF THE SPIRIT: NINETEEN-DAY FEAST*, NO. 17, P. 11

4 Any Bahá'í can give to the Cause's Funds, adult or child. No statement is required on this subject; Bahá'í children have always given to the Cause, everywhere. Whatever situation may arise in a class which non-Bahá'í children attend is for the teacher of the class to solve. No ruling should be made to cover such things.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *FUNDS COMPILATION (CANADA)*, P. 16

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

6 . . . 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 honor 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 behavior.

In any case, the House of Justice points out that parents are responsible for their children and should make them behave when they attend Bahá'í meetings. If children persist in creating a disturbance they should be taken out of the meeting. This is not merely necessary to ensure the properly dignified conduct of Bahá'í meetings but is an aspect of the training of children in courtesy, consideration for others, reverence, and obedience to their parents.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *STIRRING OF THE SPIRIT: NINETEEN-DAY FEAST*,  
NO. 63, PP. 29–30

7 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

8 It is essential to the spiritual life of the community that the friends hold regular devotional meetings in local Bahá'í centers, where available, or elsewhere, including the homes of believers.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, RIDVÁN, 1996

9 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 UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, LETTER OF 9 JANUARY 2001

## *Children as Teachers of the Cause of God*

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### **Purpose:**

Appreciate the power of children to teach the Cause of God.

Plan ways to assist children as teachers of the Cause of God.

### 1. Read aloud following quotations:

Among these children many blessed souls will arise if they be trained according to the Bahá'í teaching.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, IN "BAHÁ'Í METHODS OF EDUCATION," IN *STAR OF THE WEST*, VOL. 9, NO. 8 (AUG. 1, 1918), P. 90

Yea, certain persons shall in this divine dispensation produce heavenly children and such children shall promulgate the teachings of the Beauty of Abhá and serve His great Cause. Through a heavenly power and spiritual confirmation they shall be enabled to promote the word of God and to diffuse the fragrances of God.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *TABLETS OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ ABBAS*, VOL. 3, PP. 647–48

Just because you are children does not mean you cannot serve the Faith, and teach it, by your example. . . .

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *BAHÁ'Í EDUCATION*, P. 71

Our Faith is just as much for children as for older people, and it rejoices his heart when he sees both working together to bring this great Message of good to all mankind.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *FAMILY LIFE*, (INDIA) P. 42, (CANADA) P. 23

### 2. Enjoy listening while members of your group read the stories on pp. 125–27 about children as teachers:

- BAHÁ'U'LLÁH'S DAUGHTER: TEACHING THROUGH SERVICE
- A LITTLE CHILD SHALL LEAD THEM
- RÚHU'LLÁH

### 3. After hearing the stories, discuss the following questions:

- What qualities did these children demonstrate in teaching the principles of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh? Record your responses on chart paper.

### 4. Looking at your list of responses, discuss the questions:

- How can we foster these spiritual qualities in our children?
- How can we assist them to use these qualities to teach other people—both their own age and older—the Cause of God?

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### **Process the Activity**

Using your journals, take a few minutes to plan specific actions to assist and empower your children as teachers of the Cause of God.

## BAHÁ'U'LLÁH'S DAUGHTER: TEACHING THROUGH SERVICE

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When Arab ladies came to see us, this was the only reception room. These ladies came because they had been taught by Táhirih, Qurratu'l-'Ayn, during her visit to Baghdad.

One day when an old lady was there, I was told to prepare the samovar—it was very heavy to carry upstairs, for my arms were not extremely strong. The old lady said: “One proof that the Bábí teaching is wonderful is that a very little girl served the samovár!”

My father was amused, he used to say, “Here is the lady converted by seeing your service at the samovár!”

SPOKEN CHRONICLE OF BAHÍYYIH KHÁNUM, LADY BLOMFIELD, *THE CHOSEN HIGHWAY*, P. 47

## A LITTLE CHILD SHALL LEAD THEM

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A visitor, to her great relief, reached the doors of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's house only two days before He left Paris. She had traveled post-haste from the United States, and had a remarkable story to relate. At home her little daughter had asked her what she would do should the Lord Jesus return to the world. She would rush to seek Him, she had said, only to be told that the Lord Jesus was here. How did she know, the mother had inquired. The child replied that the Lord Jesus had told her Himself. Some days later the mother was reproached for not doing what she had said she would do. Twice the Lord Jesus had told her that He was here, the little girl insisted. But she did not know where to look, the mother told her child. And the child was certain that they would discover where to go, where to look. That afternoon, on a walk, the little girl suddenly stopped and, excited and ecstatic, pointed to a shop where magazines were displayed. Prominent there was the photograph of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. “There, there!” the child shouted, was the Lord Jesus. The magazine, which contained the photograph of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, led the way to Paris, and the American lady, taking the first available boat to cross the Atlantic, sailed that very night.

HASAN BALYUZI, 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, P. 168

Varqá's two children 'Azizu'llah and Rúhu'lláh who accompanied him to Akká also had the honor of attaining the presence of Bahá'u'lláh several times. Contact with the Supreme Manifestation of God left an abiding impression on their souls. Though young in age they both became charged with the spirit of faith. Rúhu'lláh in particular flourished spiritually in those holy surroundings. He may be regarded as one of the spiritual prodigies which the hand of God has raised up in this Dispensation. Although he was only about eight years old when he came into the presence of Bahá'u'lláh, his understanding of the Faith was very profound.

To cite one example: One day Bahá'u'lláh asked Rúhu'lláh, 'What did you do today?'

He replied: 'I was having lessons from \_\_\_\_ [a certain teacher].'

Bahá'u'lláh asked, 'What subject were you learning?'

'Concerning the return [of the prophets]', said Rúhu'lláh.

'Will you explain what this means?' Bahá'u'lláh demanded.

He replied: 'By return is meant the return of realities and qualities.'

Bahá'u'lláh, questioning him further, said: 'These are exactly the words of your teacher and you are repeating them like a parrot. Tell me in your own words your own understanding of the subject.'

'It is like cutting a flower from a plant this year,' answered Rúhu'lláh. 'Next year's flower will look exactly like this one, but it is not the same.'

The Blessed Beauty praised the child for his intelligent answer and often called him His honor, the Bahá'í teacher.

On another occasion Bahá'u'lláh asked Rúhu'lláh how he spent his time at home. He answered, 'We teach the Faith and tell the people that the "Promised One" has come.' Bahá'u'lláh, obviously enjoying this conversation, then asked him what he would do if it were found that the Message of the Báb was not authentic and the true Promised One appeared. 'I would try to teach him the Faith,' was his prompt reply.

. . . After the ascension of Bahá'u'lláh, Varqá, together with the same two children, went on pilgrimage to the presence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. As in the past, 'Abdu'l-Bahá and His sister the Greatest Holy Leaf showed admiration and love for Rúhu'lláh, and both enjoyed talking to them.

One day the Greatest Holy Leaf noticed that Rúhu'lláh and his older brother 'Azizu'lláh were playing in the garden. She called them in and they sat in her presence. Also present were . . . the two sons of Bahá'u'lláh who later joined hands with . . . the Arch-breaker of the

covenant of Bahá'u'lláh. The Greatest Holy Leaf, often referred to as 'Khánum,' asked them what they said to people when teaching the Faith.

'We tell them,' Rúhu'lláh answered, 'that God has manifested Himself.'

Surprised at this remark, Khánum told them that surely they could not say such a thing straight away to people!

'We don't tell this to everybody,' responded Rúhu'lláh, 'we only say it to those who have the capacity to hear such a statement.'

'How would you know such people?' asked Khánum.

'We look into their eyes and then know whether we can give them the Message,' replied Rúhu'lláh.

Khánum laughed heartily and then beckoned Rúhu'lláh to come close and look into her eyes to find out whether she had the capacity for hearing such words. In obedience to her request Rúhu'lláh sat down opposite the Greatest Holy Leaf, looked intently into her eyes and then said, 'You already believe in these words.'

Then it was the turn of the two sons of Bahá'u'lláh. Rúhu'lláh went close to them, looked searchingly into their eyes and sadly said to Bahíyyih Khánum, 'They are not worth looking into!'

Truly, Rúhu'lláh was no ordinary child. He was an inspired being and acted as a spiritual giant. At a young age he wrote beautiful poetry which clearly demonstrates how deep was his love for Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, how vast his knowledge of the Faith and how profound his understanding of the real purpose of life.

ADIB TAHERZADEH, *THE REVELATION OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH*, VOL. 3, PP. 58-60

## *Parents Helping Parents*

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### **Purpose:**

Discern the importance of a parent support network in problem-solving.

In all things it is necessary to consult. This matter should be forcibly stressed by thee, so that consultation may be observed by all. The intent of what hath been revealed from the Pen of the Most High is that consultation may be fully carried out among the friends, inasmuch as it is and will always be a cause of awareness and of awakening and a source of good and well-being.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *CONSULTATION: A COMPILATION*, NO. 5, P. 3

1. Ask a volunteer to share a short description of a situation he or she would like to change at home.
2. Parents who have had successes handling similar challenges may briefly share their experiences.
3. *Those sharing successes might role play how the volunteer's challenge could be handled.*
4. Invite the volunteer to role play a new approach he or she would like to practice at home, perhaps based on one or a combination of possibilities offered by others.
5. Encourage expressions of appreciation to all who offer challenges and successes. Appreciation might sound like:
  - I learned . . .
  - I felt . . .
  - I have the same problem, so now I can try . . .
  - I know how hard it is to share . . .
  - Thank you for . . .

## *Closing Activity*

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If you have not already done so, please identify a clear line of action to complete before the next session.

Consider also preparing for the next session by re-reading favorite sections in *Foundations for a Spiritual Education*.

Conclude your session with prayers and music.





# Spiritual Parenting

## COURSE TWO

### Session Twelve

**Love Is Light**  
**Stories from the Childhood of Shoghi Effendi**  
**Methods of Showing Love**  
**A Treasure Trove of Methods and Tools**  
**Parents Helping Parents**  
**Needs Assessment: What's Next?**

Love Is Light

## ***Welcome and Devotions***

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Begin your session with reverent devotions, using the LOVE IS LIGHT quotations on pp. 132–33. Consider listening to beautiful background music during these opening devotions. Then read aloud the theme quotation and learning objectives for this session.

## ***Session Twelve Themes***

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### **Love in the Family**

O friend! Be set aglow with the fire of the love of God, so that the hearts of the people will become enlightened by the light of thy love.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *BAHÁ'Í WORLD FAITH*, P. 359

## ***Session Eight Learning Objectives***

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### **KNOWLEDGE**

- Recognize the power of love in the family.

### **WISDOM**

- Appreciate the power of love as demonstrated by the family of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.
- Understand practical methods for sharing love within the family.

### **SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION**

- Appreciate the importance of raising children who appreciate diversity.

### **ELOQUENT SPEECH**

- Participate in consultative problem solving.
- Articulate plans for cultivating a love of diversity in our children.

## ***Session Eleven Reflections***

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Please share one brief experience from the past week that illustrates the power of your children to actively participate in community life and to teach the Cause of God. Please also share your reflections on your reading in *Foundations for a Spiritual Education*.

Allow about five minutes of reflection and sharing.

1. In the whole group, read the following story about ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in the Maxwell house:

May Maxwell recorded in her notes a particularly moving reference to the arrival of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in the Maxwell home on the night of August 30<sup>th</sup>, 1912, and His words on that occasion:

“. . . Home”, He said, “all that is in it is mine”—turning with an ineffable look He continued—“You are mine—your husband and child. This is my home.” He was cold and we lighted a fire. He looked about and He asked where the child was. When we said that she was sleeping He told us not to disturb her and added, “dark indeed is the home where there is no child.”

There is an especially touching story about this visit, told by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá Himself to His companions and recorded in the memoirs of A. A. Nakhjavani. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá told them:

“Today I was resting on the *chaise longue* in my bedroom and the door opened. The little girl came in to me and pushed my eyelids up with her small finger and said, ‘Wake up, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá!’ I took her in my arms and placed her head on my chest and we both had a good sleep.”

VIOLETTE NAKHJAVANI, *A TRIBUTE TO AMATU’L-BAHÁ RÚHÍYYIH KHÁNUM*, PP. 10–11

2. Then, silently and individually read through the quotations we just heard in our opening devotions, LOVE IS LIGHT, and underline or highlight any word or phrase that denotes parental responsibility to bring the light of love into the home.
3. Create on a small piece of paper a word or symbol of that responsibility that attracts your heart.
4. Using the materials provided by your facilitator, create a “treasure chest” of your responsibilities as a parent.
5. Place in the “treasure chest” the word or symbol of the responsibility that you chose earlier.

Your “treasure chest” may be continually enhanced throughout this session.

**Purpose:**

Recognize the power of love in the family.

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**Process the Activity**

How has the power of love already influenced your family and others around you?

## LOVE IS LIGHT

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1 The light of a good character surpasseth the light of the sun and the radiance thereof.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *TABLETS OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH*, p. 36

2 Hearken ye to the Call of this wronged One, and magnify ye the name of the one true God, and adorn yourselves with the ornament of His remembrance, and illumine your hearts with the light of His love. This is the key that unlocketh the hearts of men, the burnish that shall cleanse the souls of all beings.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *GLEANINGS FROM THE WRITINGS OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH*, C, p. 205

3 Be ablaze as the fire, that ye may burn away the veils of heedlessness and set aglow, through the quickening energies of the love of God, the chilled and wayward heart.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *GLEANING FROM THE WRITINGS OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH*, pp. 322–23

4 It is the warmth that these Luminaries of God generate, and the undying fires they kindle, which cause the light of the love of God to burn fiercely in the heart of humanity.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *THE KITÁB-I-ÍQÁN*, p. 34

5 I implore Thee, O Thou Who causeth the dawn to appear, by Thy Lamp which Thou didst light with the fire of Thy love before all that are in heaven and on earth, and whose flame Thou feedest with the fuel of Thy wisdom in the kingdom of Thy creation, to make me to be of those who have soared in Thine atmosphere, and surrendered their will to Thy decree.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *PRAYERS AND MEDITATIONS*, pp. 32–33

6 Look, then, O Thou my God Who settest my soul on fire, upon the tears I shed, and the sighs I utter, and the anguish that afflicteth my heart and the fire that consumeth my being. Thy glory beareth me witness, O Thou, the Light of the world! The fire of Thy love that burneth continually within me hath so inflamed me that whoever among Thy creatures approacheth me, and inclineth his inner ear towards me, cannot fail to hear its raging within each of my veins.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *PRAYERS AND MEDITATIONS*, pp. 269–70

7 My hope is that through the zeal and ardour of the pure of heart, the darkness of hatred and difference will be entirely abolished, and the light of love and unity shall shine; this world shall become a new world; things material shall become the mirror of the divine; human hearts shall meet and embrace each other; the whole world become as a man's native country and the different races be counted as one race.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *'ABDU'L-BAHÁ IN LONDON*, p. 38

8 O Thou the Compassionate God. Bestow upon me a heart which, like unto a glass, may be illumined with the light of Thy love, and confer upon me thoughts which may change this world into a rose garden through the outpourings of heavenly grace.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *BAHÁ'Í PRAYERS* (US EDITION), P. 72

9 O friend! Be set aglow with the fire of the love of God, so that the hearts of the people will become enlightened by the light of thy love.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *TABLETS OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ*, VOL. 2, P. 259

10 Take the utmost care to give them [children] high ideals, so that once they come of age, they will cast their beams like brilliant candles on the world.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ*, NO. 110, P. 136

11 Do not despair! Work steadily. Sincerity and love will conquer hate. How many seemingly impossible events are coming to pass in these days! Set your faces steadily towards the Light of the World. Show love to all; 'Love is the breath of the Holy Spirit in the heart of Man'. Take courage! God never forsakes His children who strive and work and pray! Let your hearts be filled with the strenuous desire that tranquility and harmony may encircle all this warring world. So will success crown your efforts, and with the universal brotherhood will come the Kingdom of God in peace and goodwill.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *PARIS TALKS*, P. 30

12 Soon will your swiftly-passing days be over, and the fame and riches, the comforts, the joys provided by this rubbish-heap, the world, will be gone without a trace. Summon ye, then, the people to God, and invite humanity to follow the example of the Company on high. Be ye loving fathers to the orphan, and a refuge to the helpless, and a treasury for the poor, and a cure for the ailing. Be ye the helpers of every victim of oppression, the patrons of the disadvantaged. Think ye at all times of rendering some service to every member of the human race. Pay ye no heed to aversion and rejection, to disdain, hostility, injustice: act ye in the opposite way. Be ye sincerely kind, not in appearance only. Let each one of God's loved ones centre his attention on this: to be the Lord's mercy to man; to be the Lord's grace. Let him do some good to every person whose path he crosseth, and be of some benefit to him. Let him improve the character of each and all, and reorient the minds of men. In this way, the light of divine guidance will shine forth, and the blessings of God will cradle all mankind: for love is light, no matter in what abode it dwelleth; and hate is darkness, no matter where it may make its nest. O friends of God! That the hidden Mystery may stand revealed, and the secret essence of all things may be disclosed, strive ye to banish that darkness for ever and ever.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ*, NO. 1, P. 3

## *Love in the Family—Stories from the Childhood of Shoghi Effendi*

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**Purpose:**

Appreciate the power of love as demonstrated by the family of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

1. Read together STORIES FROM THE CHILDHOOD OF SHOGHI EFFENDI on the following pages.
2. Discuss the question: How does the example of the family of Shoghi Effendi enrich our understanding of the power of love in the family?
3. After your discussion, take a few moments to record your thoughts in your journals.

## STORIES FROM THE CHILDHOOD OF SHOGHI EFFENDI

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by Elyce Nasseri, reprinted from *Brilliant Star* (May-June 1991)

As the neighborhood was preparing for the Muslim Fast of Ramadán, one household near the prison of ‘Akká was already celebrating a happy event. Diyá’iyyih Khánum, the eldest daughter of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, and Mírzá Hádí Shírází had a new son. The date was March 1, 1897.

The proud grandfather, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, gave the name of Shoghi Effendi to the little boy. He said that everyone should use the title “Effendi,” which means “mister” or “sir,” as a term of respect for the new child, even his parents. The name Shoghi means “the one who longs.” In one tablet written for Shoghi Effendi, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá asks that he may yearn for the Kingdom of God and soar into the realms of the unseen!

One morning, Shoghi Effendi woke up to the crowing of roosters. The sun was just dawning over the tops of the sun-baked roofs of the town. He and the other children of the household rushed to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s room for prayers. The children sat on the floor, their legs folded under them and their arms folded across their breasts in great respect. When asked, they would chant for ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, “O my God! O my God! Unite the hearts of Thy servants, and reveal to them Thy great purpose. . . .” they sang. There was no shouting or unseemly conduct.

Then the breakfast. The ladies served the hot, sweet tea in little glasses. On the low table was pure white bread and gleaming white goat’s milk cheese. “May I please have some more tea?” asked one of the little cousins of Shoghi Effendi. “Thank you,” she replied when served.

After breakfast, the children roamed around the big house and yard. Whenever Shoghi Effendi visited his great aunt’s room, he always felt that he should be quiet and respectful. The other members of the household felt this way, too. Later it was learned that under one of the divans in that very room of Bahíyyih Khánum were hidden the remains of His Holiness the Báb. Later they were transferred to the Shrine of the Báb on Mount Carmel by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Many years later, the beautiful outside structure of the Shrine would be completed under the guidance of Shoghi Effendi, when he was Guardian of our Faith.

One day, when Shoghi Effendi was only five years old, he was pestering the Master to write something for him. So, in His own hand, 'Abdu'l-Bahá penned these words:

*He is God!*

*My Shoghi, I have no time to talk, leave me alone! You said 'write' – I have written. What else should be done? Now is not the time for you to read and write, it is the time for jumping about and chanting "O my God!", therefore, memorize the prayers of the Blessed Beauty and chant them that I may hear them, because there is no time for anything else.*

Shoghi Effendi did just as he was told. When his chanting became so loud as to bother the rest of the family, they complained to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, who told them to leave Shoghi Effendi alone.

Once a Western friend asked 'Abdu'l-Bahá to reveal a prayer for children. He did so and the first to memorize it and chant it was Shoghi Effendi, who would also chant it in the meetings of the friends.

Soon enough it was time for Shoghi Effendi to go to school. During his first years in school, he asked his Grandfather to give him another name so that he could be distinguished from his cousins who all had the name of Afnan (being descendants of the family of the Báb). The Master gave him the name "Rabbani" as a last name. This name, which means "divine," was also used by the brothers and sisters of Shoghi Effendi. At school, Shoghi Effendi starting learning English and French so that he would be able to help 'Abdu'l-Bahá in His letters to the Bahá'ís all over the world.

The tender relationship between that Grandfather and His grandson, Shoghi Effendi, helped prepare Shoghi Effendi for the big job he was later to have as Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith.



## *Methods of Showing Love*

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1. Reflect on times you have felt the power of love in your family. What were the circumstances? How was this power evident?
2. Briefly share one of these moments with the person next to you.
3. In your whole group, create a list of some practical strategies that we can use to show love in our families.
4. Briefly discuss: How can showing love as a family become a tool for reaching out to share this love with others?
5. Identify one strategy for sharing love that you can commit to doing this week. Write a promise to yourself and add it to your treasure box.

**Purpose:**

Identify practical methods of showing love within and beyond the family.

## *A Treasure Trove of Parenting Methods and Tools*

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1. In the whole group, work together to briefly summarize some of the parental roles that have been introduced in the Core Curriculum Spiritual Parenting Program. As we know, parents decide many times each day how to fulfill their responsibilities to their children.
2. In your whole group, page through Spiritual Parenting Course Two. As you page through the book, identify each method or tool as it is introduced. Write some of your favorite methods and tools on small pieces of paper and add them to your treasure box. Then recall some of the additional parenting strategies that you learned in Course One, referring to a copy of that course book, if available. Add these methods and tools to your treasure chest.
3. After completing this summary overview of courses one and two in the Core Curriculum Spiritual Parenting Program, briefly discuss:
  - Which new methods and tools have we most successfully used in our families?
  - Which new methods and tools would we like to experiment with in the near future?

**Purpose:**

Identify which parental roles might best suit a given situation.  
Demonstrate understanding of parental roles.

## *Parents Helping Parents*

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**Purpose:**

Demonstrate understanding of parental roles.

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

*'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, THE PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE, PP. 68-70*

1. In the whole group, please describe a time that you successfully faced a parenting challenge or share another sweet moment of recent weeks in your family.
2. After sharing your story, work with other group members as desired to determine which parental roles may have contributed to this success.
3. Briefly discuss: What new challenges are we currently facing as parents—could one of the methods or tools explored in this Spiritual Parenting Program be used in a new way to address those challenges?
4. Please role-play a successful resolution to this challenge, using one or more parental roles, methods, or tools. Applaud all!

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**What's Next? Parenting Program, Course Three**

1. Please take a few moments to complete both the *Needs Assessment Core Curriculum Parenting Survey* and the *Evaluation Form* for this course.

Although this is the final session of this second course of the Core Curriculum Parenting Program, Course Three will provide an opportunity to further study and practice the skills of spiritual parenting.

Your facilitator will share future workshop materials as they become available, and at that time you will have the opportunity to participate in these additional sessions for parents.

2. While listening to quiet background music, reflect again on your sacred responsibilities as a parent and the contributions that your children will make toward building a better world, a world that is more united, peaceful, and prosperous for all. In your journal, respond to the following questions:
  - What light do you see in your children's faces? What contribution do you anticipate they will make toward building a better world?
  - Considering your many roles as a parent, how can you enhance your ability to spiritually nurture your own self and strengthen your ability to spiritually educate and guide your children? How can you build on your current successes and challenges?
  - Recall the goal you set for yourself in Session One of this course. What progress have you seen toward your goal?
  - What specific action steps can you take to continue your progress as a parent?
  - What support do you need from others to be successful? What support can you offer other participants in your parenting group?
3. After allowing time to record your reflections, consider sharing your reflections in the whole group.
4. Celebrate the conclusion of this course with uplifting devotions, including prayers and music.

**Purpose:**

Contribute to the development of future parenting courses.







**Core Curriculum for Spiritual Education**

dates

location

**Spiritual Parenting, Course Two**

facilitated by

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**Evaluation**

This opportunity to work with you has truly been a pleasure. Please candidly share your feelings and reactions. This information will be invaluable to us in planning future workshops.

The presenters were organized and clear in their presentation?

The purpose of the training and the individual sessions was clear?

The materials were supportive of the presentations?

Adequate time was provided for reflection upon and recording of your observations?

The training demonstrated the use of different teaching methods and learning tools?

The Sacred Writings were sufficiently utilized to elevate the spirit of the participants and lay the foundation for the work before them?

The expectations and directions for your role as a parent were made sufficiently clear?

	Excellent	Very good	Fair	Poor
The presenters were organized and clear in their presentation?				
The purpose of the training and the individual sessions was clear?				
The materials were supportive of the presentations?				
Adequate time was provided for reflection upon and recording of your observations?				
The training demonstrated the use of different teaching methods and learning tools?				
The Sacred Writings were sufficiently utilized to elevate the spirit of the participants and lay the foundation for the work before them?				
The expectations and directions for your role as a parent were made sufficiently clear?				

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.

What was most helpful to you?

What was least helpful to you?

What would you recommend for future workshops?





## APPENDIX: The Content of Spiritual Education

From *Foundations for a Spiritual Education*

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### C. The Content of Spiritual Education

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.<sup>3</sup>

#### Knowledge

In truth, knowledge is a veritable treasure for man, and a source of glory, of bounty, of joy, of exaltation, of cheer and gladness unto him. Happy the man that cleaveth unto it, and woe betide the heedless.

— BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *EPISTLE TO THE SON OF THE WOLF*, p. 27

#### C-K1 Knowledge of the Power of the Love of God and of the Establishment of Unity and Justice as the Essential Foundation of Religion.

O thou son of the Kingdom! All things are beneficial if joined with the love of God; and without His love all things are harmful, and act as a veil between man and the Lord of the Kingdom. When His love is there, every bitterness turneth sweet, and every bounty rendereth a wholesome pleasure. For example, a melody, sweet to the ear, bringeth the very spirit of life to a heart in love with God, yet staineth with lust a soul engrossed in sensual desires. And every branch of learning, conjoined with the love of God, is approved and worthy of praise; but bereft of His love, learning is barren — indeed, it bringeth on madness. Every kind of knowledge, every science, is as a tree: if the fruit of it be the love of God, then is it a blessed tree, but if not, that tree is but dried-up wood, and shall only feed the fire.

— 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ*, NO. 154, p. 181

#### C-K2 Knowledge of the Sacred Writings and Bahá'í Literature.

Read ye The Hidden Words, ponder the inner meanings thereof, act in accord therewith. Read with close attention, the Tablets of Tarázát (Ornaments), Kalímát (Words of Paradise), Tajalliyát (Effulgences), Ishráqát (Splendors), and Bishárát (Glad Tidings), and rise up as ye are bidden in the heavenly teachings.

— 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ*, NO. 17, p. 35

. . . He feels that the young Bahá'ís should gain a mastery of such books as Gleanings, the Dawnbreakers, God Passes By, the Íqán, Some Answered Questions and the more important Tablets. All aspects of the Faith should be deeply studied. . . .

— ON BEHALF OF SHOQHI EFFENDI IN *THE IMPORTANCE OF DEEPENING OUR KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE FAITH*, NO. 143, p. 46

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<sup>3</sup> Bahá'ú'lláh, in *Bahá'í Education*, no. 9, p 3

### C-K3 Knowledge of the Life and Teachings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

He is, and should for all time be regarded, first and foremost, as the Center and Pivot of Bahá’u’lláh’s peerless and all-enfolding Covenant, His most exalted handiwork, the stainless Mirror of His light, the perfect Exemplar of His teachings, the unerring Interpreter of His Word, the embodiment of every Bahá’í ideal, the incarnation of every Bahá’í virtue, the Most Mighty Branch sprung from the Ancient Root, the Limb of the Law of God, the Being "round Whom all names revolve," the Mainspring of the Oneness of Humanity, the Ensign of the Most Great Peace, the Moon of the Central Orb of this most holy Dispensation — styles and titles that are implicit and find their truest, their highest and fairest expression in the magic name ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. He is, above and beyond these appellations, the "Mystery of God" — an expression by which Bahá’u’lláh Himself has chosen to designate Him, and which, while it does not by any means justify us to assign to Him the station of Prophethood, indicates how in the person of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá the incompatible characteristics of a human nature and superhuman knowledge and perfection have been blended and are completely harmonized.

— SHOGHI EFFENDI, *WORLD ORDER OF BAHÁ’U’LLÁH*, p. 134

### C-K4 Knowledge of the Covenant and the Bahá’í Administrative Order.

The deepening and enrichment of the spiritual life of the individual believer, his increasing comprehension of the essential verities underlying his Faith, his training in its administrative processes, his understanding of the fundamentals of the Covenants established by its Author and the authorized Interpreter of its teachings should be made the supreme objective of the national representatives responsible for the edification, the progress and consolidation of these communities.

— SHOGHI EFFENDI, IN *THE IMPORTANCE OF DEEPENING OUR KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE FAITH*, no. 86, p. 25

### C-K5 Knowledge of Progressive Revelation.

Beware, O believers in the Unity of God, lest ye be tempted to make any distinction between any of the Manifestations of His Cause, or to discriminate against the signs that have accompanied and proclaimed their Revelation. This indeed is the true meaning of Divine Unity, if ye be of them that apprehend and believe this truth.

— BAHÁ’U’LLÁH, *GLEANINGS FROM THE WRITINGS OF BAHÁ’U’LLÁH*, XXIV, p. 59

### C-K6 Knowledge of Divine Proofs.

You must come into the knowledge of the divine Manifestations and Their teachings through proofs and evidences. You must unseal the mysteries of the supreme Kingdom and become capable of unsealing the inner realities of things. Then you shall be the manifestations of the mercy of God and true believers, firm and steadfast in the Cause of God.

— ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *THE PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE*, pp. 227–28

### C-K7 Knowledge of the Laws and Principles of Religion.

Schools must first train the children in the principles of religion, so that the Promise and the Threat recorded in the Books of God, may prevent them from the things forbidden and adorn them with the mantle of the commandments; but this in such a measure that it may not injure the children by resulting in ignorant fanaticism and bigotry.

— BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *TABLETS OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH*, P. 68

### C-K8 Knowledge of the Major Principles of the Bahá'í Faith.

The principles of the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh should be carefully studied, one by one, until they are realized and understood by mind and heart. . . .

— 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *PARIS TALKS*, P. 22

### C-K9 Knowledge of the Oneness of God.

That which is of paramount importance for the children, that which must precede all else, is to teach them the oneness of God and the Laws of God.

— BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, IN *BAHÁ'Í EDUCATION*, NO. 14, PP. 3–4

### C-K10 Knowledge of the Oneness of Humanity and the Importance of the Abolition of All Prejudices.

When delivering the glad tidings, speak out and say: the Promised One of all the world's peoples hath now been made manifest. For each and every people, and every religion, await a Promised One, and Bahá'u'lláh is that One Who is awaited by all; and therefore the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh will bring about the oneness of mankind. . . .

— 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ*, NO. 65, P. 101

The principle of the Oneness of Mankind [is] the pivot round which all the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh revolve. . . .

— SHOGHI EFFENDI, *THE WORLD ORDER OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH*, P. 42–43

### C-K11 Knowledge of the Principle of the Equality of Women and Men.

When all mankind shall receive the same opportunity of education and the equality of men and women be realized, the foundations of war will be utterly destroyed. Without equality this will be impossible because all differences and distinction are conducive to discord and strife. . . . There is no doubt that when women obtain equality of rights, war will entirely cease among mankind.

— 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *THE PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE*, P. 175

### C-K12 Knowledge of the Need for a Universal Language.

It beseemeth . . . the . . . officials of the Government to convene a gathering and choose one of the divers languages, and likewise one of the existing scripts, or else to create a new language and a new script to be taught children in schools throughout the world. They would, in this way, be acquiring only two languages, one their own native tongue, the other the language in which all the peoples of the world would converse.

— BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *EPISTLE TO THE SON OF THE WOLF*, P. 138

### C-K13 Knowledge of the Important Problems and Needs of Our Time.

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

— 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *THE SECRET OF DIVINE CIVILIZATION*, P. 109

### C-K14 Knowledge of the Importance of Education.

Arts, crafts, and sciences uplift the world of being, and are conducive to its exaltation. Knowledge is as wings to man's life, and a ladder for his ascent. Its acquisition is incumbent upon everyone.

— BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *EPISTLE TO THE SON OF THE WOLF*, P. 26

### C-K15 Knowledge of the Importance of Balance.

Being a Bahá'í you are certainly aware of the fact that Bahá'u'lláh considered education as one of the most fundamental factors of a true civilization — this education, however in order to be adequate and fruitful should be comprehensive in nature and should take into consideration not only the physical and the intellectual side of man but also his spiritual and ethical aspects.

— ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, IN *BAHÁ'Í EDUCATION*, NO. 128, P. 52

### C-K16 Knowledge of the Principle of Work as Devotion to God.

Ye are the trees of My garden; ye must give forth goodly and wondrous fruits, that ye yourselves and others may profit therefrom. Thus it is incumbent on every one to engage in crafts and professions, for therein lies the secret of wealth, O men of understanding!

— BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *THE HIDDEN WORDS, PERSIAN*, NO. 80

## Summary

Both ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi refer to specific areas of knowledge that should be included in the child’s spiritual education curriculum. Of primary importance is the knowledge of the oneness of God and the laws of God. The sacred texts are primary sources for knowledge of the Cause of God. Memorization of such texts is highly praiseworthy, especially when their meaning is translated into action.

For the purposes of the Core Curriculum we have adopted a narrow definition of the term “knowledge.” However, from a Bahá’í perspective, knowledge is more than the result of acquiring facts and information about various subjects, whether Bahá’í or secular. The acquisition of knowledge, in its fullest sense, involves the study and comprehension of “the secrets of all things even as they are,”<sup>4</sup> as ‘Abdu’l-Bahá explains. Knowledge is incomplete until it is transformed into actions that benefit humanity. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá states that “Knowledge is love.”<sup>5</sup> Teachers, parents, and children are urged to acquire this deeper understanding that manifests itself in deeds and words.

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<sup>4</sup> ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, in *Bahá’í Education*, p. 29, no. 74.

<sup>5</sup> ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, quoted in Bertha Hyde Patrick, “Teach Us to Pray,” in *Star of the West*, vol. 20, no. 10 (Jan. 1930), p. 314.

## Wisdom

The Great Being saith: The man of consummate learning and the sage endowed with penetrating wisdom are the two eyes to the body of mankind. God willing, the earth shall never be deprived of these two great gifts.

— BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *TABLETS OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH*, P. 171

### C-W1 Understanding the Station of Bahá'u'lláh and the Significance of His Revelation.

Those children who, sheltered by the Blessed Tree, have set foot upon the world, those who are cradled in the Faith and are nurtured at the breast of grace — such must from the beginning receive spiritual training directly from their mothers.

— 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, IN *BAHÁ'Í EDUCATION*, NO. 79, P. 31

### C-W2 What it Means to be a Bahá'í.

. . . The little children must needs be made aware in their very heart and soul that “Bahá'í” is not just a name but a truth. Every child must be trained in the things of the spirit, so that he may embody all the virtues and become a source of glory to the Cause of God. Otherwise, the mere word “Bahá'í”, if it yield no fruit, will come to nothing.

— 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ*, NO. 123, P. 143

### C-W3 Understanding the Importance of Prayer and the Power of Divine Assistance.

Gather ye together with the utmost joy and fellowship and recite the verses revealed by the merciful Lord. By so doing the doors of true knowledge will be opened to your inner beings, and ye will then feel your souls endowed with steadfastness and your hearts filled with radiant joy.

— BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, IN *THE IMPORTANCE OF DEEPENING OUR KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE FAITH*, NO. 6, P. 2

### C-W4 Understanding the Spiritual Significance of Bahá'í Gatherings.

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.

— ON BEHALF OF THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, IN *STIRRING OF THE SPIRIT*, NO. 63, P. 29

### C-W5 Understanding the Meaning and Purpose of True Education.

The Prophets and Messengers of God have been sent down for the sole purpose of guiding mankind to the straight Path of Truth. The purpose underlying Their revelation hath been to educate all men, that they may, at the hour of death, ascend, in the utmost purity and sanctity and with absolute detachment, to the throne of the Most High.

— BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *GLEANINGS FROM THE WRITINGS OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH*, LXXXI, PP. 156–57

### C-W6 Understanding the Purpose of Education and the Station of the Teacher.

Blessed is the teacher who shall arise to instruct the children, and to guide the people into the pathways of God, the Bestower, the Well Beloved.

— BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, IN *BAHÁ'Í EDUCATION*, NO. 28, P. 7

### C-W7 Understanding the Self.

. . . Man should know his own self and recognize that which leadeth unto loftiness or lowliness, glory or abasement, wealth or poverty.

— BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *TABLETS OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH*, P. 34-35

### C-W8 Understanding the True Meaning and Purpose of Distinction.

I desire distinction for you. The Bahá'ís must be distinguished from others of humanity. But this distinction must not depend upon wealth — that they should become more affluent than other people. I do not desire for you financial distinction. It is not an ordinary distinction I desire; not scientific, commercial, industrial distinction. For you I desire spiritual distinction — that is, you must become eminent and distinguished in morals. In the love of God you must become distinguished from all else. You must become distinguished for loving humanity, for unity and accord, for love and justice. In brief you must become distinguished for all the virtues of the human world. . . .

— 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *THE PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE*, P. 190

### C-W9 Understanding Future Responsibilities.

Instill in . . . every Bahá'í child, the sense of his unique opportunities and future responsibilities in the great task that awaits him in future. . . .

Impress upon their hearts the vital necessity of establishing, now, whilst in their tender age, a firm foundation for their mission in life.

— SHOGHI EFFENDI, IN *BAHÁ'Í EDUCATION*, NO. 120, P. 49

### C-W10 Understanding the Importance of Moderation.

Whatsoever passeth beyond the limits of moderation will cease to exert a beneficial influence.

— BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *GLEANINGS FROM THE WRITINGS OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH*, CX, P. 216

## Summary

True education involves the cultivation of the child's inherent spiritual character, the release of human potential, confirmation of faith, and the achievement of certitude. Without gradually acquiring wisdom, children will be unsuccessful in applying their knowledge of both spiritual and secular subjects, for wisdom allows one to develop goals and pursue them within the context of the spiritual meaning of life. Self-understanding equips young people with tools for spiritual growth. It enables them to strive to contribute to “an ever-advancing civilization.”<sup>6</sup> Wisdom also involves reliance upon God and an understanding of spiritual truth based on consultation and reflection. This allows “the hyacinths of divine wisdom” to “spring from the heart.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 125.

<sup>7</sup> Bahá'u'lláh, *The Hidden Words*, Persian, no. 36.

## Spiritual Perception

Let them make the greatest progress in the shortest span of time, let them open wide their eyes and uncover the inner realities of all things, become proficient in every art and skill, and learn to comprehend the secrets of all things even as they are — this faculty being one of the clearly evident effects of servitude to the Holy Threshold.

— ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, IN *BAHÁ’I EDUCATION*, NO. 74, PP. 28–29

### C-SP1 Perceiving One’s Purpose in Life.

We cherish the hope that through the loving-kindness of the All-Wise, the All-Knowing, obscuring dust may be dispelled and the power of perception enhanced, that the people may discover the purpose for which they have been called into being. In this way whatsoever serveth to reduce blindness and to increase vision is worthy of consideration.

— BAHÁ’U’LLÁH, *TABLETS OF BAHÁ’U’LLÁH*, P. 35

### C-SP2 Perceiving the Importance of Vision and High Aims in the Process of Goal Setting.

They must be constantly encouraged and made eager to gain all the summits of human accomplishment, so that from their earliest years they will be taught to have high aims, to conduct themselves well, to be chaste, pure, and undefiled, and will learn to be of powerful resolve and firm of purpose in all things. Let them not jest and trifle, but earnestly advance unto their goals, so that in every situation they will be found resolute and firm.

— ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ*, NO. 110, P. 135

### C-SP3 Discerning the Difference between Divine and Satanic Knowledge.

Know verily that knowledge is of two kinds: Divine and Satanic. The one welleteth out from the fountain of divine inspiration; the other is but a reflection of vain and obscure thoughts. The source of the former is God Himself; the motive-force of the latter the whisperings of selfish desire. The one is guided by the principle: “Fear ye God; God will teach you”; the other is but a confirmation of the truth: “Knowledge is the most grievous veil between man and his Creator.” The former bringeth forth the fruit of patience, of longing desire, of true understanding, and love; whilst the latter can yield naught but arrogance, vainglory and conceit.

— BAHÁ’U’LLÁH, *THE KITÁB-I-ÍQÁN*, PP. 69–70

### C-SP4 Instilling the Love and Fear of God.

Let them [the mothers] strive by day and by night to establish within their children faith and certitude, the fear of God, the love of the Beloved of the worlds, and all good qualities and traits.

— ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ*, NO. 95, P. 125



### C-SP5 Perceiving the Meaning of True Liberty.

Say: True liberty consisteth in man's submission unto My commandments, little as ye know it. . . . Say: The liberty that profiteth you is to be found nowhere except in complete servitude unto God, the Eternal Truth. Whoso hath tasted of its sweetness will refuse to barter it for all the dominion of earth and heaven.

— BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *GLEANINGS FROM THE WRITINGS OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH*, CLIX, p. 336

### C-SP6 Perceiving the Importance of Developing Spiritual Characteristics.

He [the child] should develop spiritual characteristics and the praiseworthy virtues of humankind. This is the primary consideration. If a person be unlettered, and yet clothed with Divine excellence, and alive in the breaths of Spirit, that individual will contribute to the welfare of society, and his inability to read and write will do him no harm. And if a person be versed in the arts and every branch of knowledge, and not live a religious life, and not take on the characteristics of God, and not be directed by a pure intent, and be engrossed in the life of the flesh — then he is harm personified, and nothing will come of all his learning and intellectual accomplishments but scandal and torment.

— 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, IN *BAHÁ'Í EDUCATION*, NO. 79, p. 32

### C-SP7 Perceiving the Mysteries in the Sacred Writings.

The friends must direct their attention toward the education and training of all the children . . . so that all of them, having, in the school of true learning, achieved the power of understanding and come to know the inner realities of the universe, will go on to uncover the signs and mysteries of God, and will find themselves illumined by the lights of the knowledge of the Lord, and by His love. This truly is the very best way to educate all peoples.

— 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, IN *BAHÁ'Í EDUCATION*, NO. 73, p. 28

### C-SP8 Perceiving the Importance of Chastity and Purity.

Such a chaste and holy life, with its implications of modesty, purity, temperance, decency, and clean-mindedness, involves no less than the exercise of moderation in all that pertains to dress, language, amusements, and all artistic and literary avocations. It demands daily vigilance in the control of one's carnal desires and corrupt inclinations. It calls for the abandonment of a frivolous conduct, with its excessive attachment to trivial and often misdirected pleasures. It requires total abstinence from all alcoholic drinks, from opium, and from similar habit-forming drugs. It condemns the prostitution of art and of literature, the practices of nudism and of companionate marriage, infidelity in marital relationships, and all manner of promiscuity, of easy familiarity, and of sexual vices.

— SHOHI EFFENDI, *THE ADVENT OF DIVINE JUSTICE*, p. 30

### C-SP9 Perceiving the Relationship Between Physical Cleanliness and Spirituality.

Although bodily cleanliness is a physical thing, it hath, nevertheless, a powerful influence on the life of the spirit.

— 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ*, NO. 129, p. 147

### C-SP10 Perceiving the Divine Nature of the Fund.

Any Bahá'í can give to the Cause's Funds, adult or child. No statement is required on this subject; Bahá'í children have always given to the Cause everywhere.

— ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, IN *BAHÁ'Í EDUCATION*, NO. 155, P. 60

### C-SP11 Perceiving the Bounty of Huqúqu'lláh.

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 one's riches and earthly possessions according to that which is prescribed by God.

— BAHÁ'U'LLAH, IN *HUQÚQU'LLAH*, NO. 31, P. 11

### C-SP12 Perceiving One's Relationship to the Environment.

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

— 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ*, NO. 137, P. 157

### C-SP13 Perceiving the Importance of Kindness to Animals.

Educate the children in their infancy in such a way that they may become exceedingly kind and merciful to the animals.

— 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, IN *THE PATTERN OF BAHÁ'Í LIFE*, P. 24

## Summary

To develop spiritual perception, children must be trained by parents and teachers to use insight and vision to perceive the beauty of God, to hear His melodies, to inhale His fragrances, to taste the sweetness of servitude in His path, and to develop spiritual susceptibilities and purity of heart and mind. Thus their relationships with their material, social, and spiritual environments become integrated, guided, and inspired by an ever-growing spiritual perception, as described by Bahá'u'lláh.

Thine eye is My trust, suffer not the dust of vain desires to becloud its luster. Thine ear is a sign of My bounty, let not the tumult of unseemly motives turn it away from My Word that encompasseth all creation. Thine heart is My treasury, allow not the treacherous hand of self to rob thee of the pearls which I have treasured therein. Thine hand is a symbol of My loving kindness, hinder it not from holding fast unto My guarded and hidden Tablets. . . .<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Bahá'u'lláh, *The Hidden Words*, Persian, no. 36.

## Eloquent Speech

No man of wisdom can demonstrate his knowledge save by means of words. . . .  
Moreover words and utterances should be both impressive and penetrating. However,  
no word will be infused with these two qualities unless it be uttered wholly for the sake  
of God and with due regard for the exigencies of the occasion and the people.

— BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *TABLETS OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH*, p. 172

It is incumbent upon every man of insight and understanding to strive to translate that  
which hath been written into reality and action.

— BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *TABLETS OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH*, p. 166

### C-ES1 The Importance of Recitation of the Holy Writings.

Teach unto your children the words that have been sent down from God, that they may  
recite them in the sweetest of tones. This standeth revealed in a mighty Book.

— BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, IN *BAHÁ'Í EDUCATION*, NO. 23, p. 6

### C-ES2 Using the Power of Speech Effectively.

No man of wisdom can demonstrate his knowledge save by means of words. . . .  
Moreover words and utterances should be both impressive and penetrating. However,  
no word will be infused with these two qualities unless it be uttered wholly for the sake  
of God and with due regard unto the exigencies of the occasion and the people.

— BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *TABLETS OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH*, p. 172

### C-ES3 The Importance of Eloquence.

Encourage ye the school children, from their earliest years, to deliver speeches of high  
quality, so that in their leisure time they will engage in giving cogent and effective talks,  
expressing themselves with clarity and eloquence.

— 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ*, NO. 108, p. 134

### C-ES4 Awareness of the Affective Power of Speech.

A kindly tongue is the lodestone of the hearts of men. It is the bread of the spirit, it  
clotheth the words with meaning, it is the fountain of the light of wisdom and  
understanding. . . .

— BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *GLEANINGS FROM THE WRITINGS OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH*, CXXXII, p. 289

### C-ES5 Using the Power of Action.

Some men and women glory in their exalted thoughts, but if these thoughts never reach  
the plane of action they remain useless: the power of thought is dependent upon its  
manifestation in deeds.

— 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *PARIS TALKS*, p. 18

### C-ES6 Demonstrating Spiritual Qualities.

As to thy question concerning training children: It is incumbent upon thee to nurture them from the breast of the love of God, to urge them towards spiritual matters, to turn unto God and to acquire good manners, best characteristics and praiseworthy virtues and qualities in the world of humanity, and to study sciences with the utmost diligence; so that they may become spiritual, heavenly and attracted to the fragrances of sanctity from their childhood and be reared in a religious, spiritual and heavenly training.

— ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *TABLETS OF ABDUL-BAHÁ ABBAS*, VOL. I, P. 87

We, verily, have chosen courtesy, and made it the true mark of such as are nigh unto Him. Courtesy is, in truth, a raiment which fitteth all men, whether young or old. Well is it with him that adorneth his temple therewith, and woe unto him who is deprived of this great bounty.

— BAHÁ’U’LLÁH, *EPISTLE TO THE SON OF THE WOLF*, P. 50

### C-ES7 Service to the World of Humanity Is an Essential Element of Bahá’í Education.

Service to the world of humanity should be obligatory. Every student should know, with perfect certainty, that he is the brother of the people of all religions and nations and that he should be without religious, racial, national, patriotic or political bias, so that he may find the thoughts of universal peace and the love of humankind firmly established in his heart. He should know himself as a servant of human society of all the countries in the world.

— ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, IN *STAR OF THE WEST*, VOL. 17, NO. 5 (AUG. 1926), P. 161

### C-ES8 Empowering Young Teachers of the Faith.

Among these children many blessed souls will arise if they be trained according to the Bahá’í teaching.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, IN “BAHÁ’Í METHODS OF EDUCATION,” *STAR OF THE WEST*, VOL. 9, NO. 8 (AUG. 1, 1918), P. 90

## Summary

Clearly possessing knowledge, wisdom, and spiritual perception will benefit the self and others more when a person is able to speak eloquently and is able to communicate effectively in both words and deeds. This is especially important in Bahá’í spiritual education since one of its chief aims is to raise up those with a high standard of conduct who are consecrated servants of humanity. Such children are teachers of the Faith who have the capability to teach both by word and by example.

Bahá’í children have the potential to become an “instrument of healing amongst humankind,” a “door to entry by troops,” a “living creation of God necessary at this very moment for the purposes of God,” and a “fruitful source of teachers both for their own generation and even for the deepening of others.”<sup>9</sup> It is evident that the development of spiritual perception and the ability to speak and act in ways that manifest the spiritual character of one’s being, are indispensable qualities for accomplishing these tasks.

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<sup>9</sup> The International Teaching Center, letter dated 5 December 1988 to all Continental Counselors.