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The Seeker's Quest

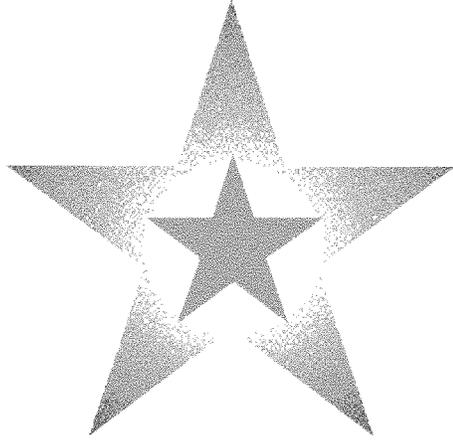
COURSE THREE

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

C  **RE** Core Curriculum
for Spiritual
Education

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

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Bahá'ís of the United States



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

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

The Seeker's Quest

COURSE THREE

Some
Fundamental
Verities of the
Bahá'í Faith

Introduction

OVERVIEW OF THE FUNDAMENTAL VERITIES COURSES: The Organization of the Courses

This course, developed under the supervision of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States, has the purpose of evoking the spirit of the Bahá'í Faith and providing a basic knowledge of some of the fundamental verities of this Faith. This is in no wise an in-depth study of the Faith, but rather as an introduction to ongoing study of the writings of Bahá'u'lláh that inspire the love of God and service to all the human race.

Course Design and Presentation

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

Introductory Course: To Be a Bahá'í

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

The Art of Facilitation

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

Contents of Course Three: The Seeker's Quest

Introduction

- Session 1 A Vision of Growth
Session 2 The Divine Fragrance
Session 3 Nobility of the Human Spirit
Session 4 Our Perfect Exemplar
Session 5 The Seeker's Quest
Session 6 The Power of Love
Session 7 Spiritual Transformation
Session 8 Finding Receptive Souls
Session 9 The Word of God

A Spiritual Framework for Self-Directed Learning

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

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

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

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

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

Knowledge

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

Wisdom

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

Spiritual Perception

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

Eloquent Speech

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

Activity
Verities of the Faith

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



VERITIES OF THE FAITH

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

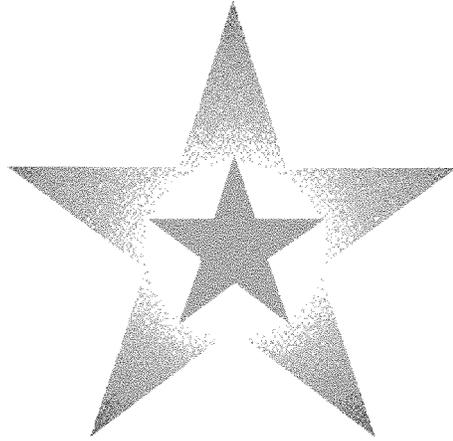
WRITTEN ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, *Compilation of Compilations, Volume 1*, pp. 228-9

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

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

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

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



*T*he time fore-ordained unto the
peoples and kindreds of the earth
is now come.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

The Seeker's Quest

COURSE THREE

Some
Fundamental
Verities of the
Bahá'í Faith

Session 1

A Vision of Growth

Devotions

Welcome to this third course in the Fundamental Verities Sequence of Courses! This course explores some of the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh about the great changes taking place in the world today, the power of Bahá'u'lláh to attract the human heart, and ways that we can be part of the movement for positive change.

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

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

The time fore-ordained unto the peoples and kindreds of the earth is now come.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Proclamation of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 111

Welcome!

This third course of the Fundamental Verities Sequence of Courses, a sequence developed under the supervision of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States, focuses on the attraction of the human heart to the call of God. Through our study together we hope to become an increasingly powerful source of attraction in our communities.

Please introduce yourself and mention a spiritual quality that you hope to be able to cultivate in this study circle. Please also share a few words about the hopes you have for your service as a result of our study together.

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

Contents of Course Three: The Seeker's Quest

Here is an overview of the topics we'll consider in this course:

Introduction

Session 1	A Vision of Growth
Session 2	The Divine Fragrance
Session 3	Nobility of the Human Spirit
Session 4	Our Perfect Exemplar
Session 5	The Seeker's Quest
Session 6	The Power of Love
Session 7	Spiritual Transformation
Session 8	Finding Receptive Souls
Session 9	The Word of God

Objectives of the Session

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

Knowledge

To become familiar with some of the writings about the nature of the growth of the Faith.

To know who is summoned to the Cause of God.

Wisdom

To understand the significance of this time in history.

To understand the organic nature of the growth process.

Spiritual Perception

To perceive where the Bahá'í community is now and project where it will be in six months.

To discern how the growth of the Bahá'í Faith reflects organic processes.

Eloquent Speech

To create a personal teaching plan.

Activity

A Time to Grow

1. If available, observe two potted plants of the same fragrant variety, one in full bloom, the other with no blossoms; otherwise, picture these plants in your mind. Consider that the peoples of the world are like this plant: one day full of potential, the next in full bloom! This is the season for humanity—like the plant—to respond to the divine summons and reveal its beauty as never before.

2. Discuss the question:

If we had never seen a plant blossom, what might we anticipate in the future growth of a green plant?

3. After you have had the opportunity to consult, consider the following:

As the best predictor of future behavior is past behavior, one might assume that the plant would continue to produce green leaves, growing in size but not changing in form. However, a knowledgeable gardener knows that this plant will bloom. In the same way, the Universal House of Justice knows that this is the time for a significant advance in the process of entry by troops.

The Fundamental Verities Sequence of Courses responds to the call of the Universal House of Justice for training programs “to endow ever-growing contingents of believers with the spiritual insights, the knowledge, and the skills needed to carry out the many tasks of accelerated expansion and consolidation, including the teaching and deepening of a large number of people—adults, youth and children.” Courses 3 and 4 in this sequence focus directly on the teaching work.

1. Consider the following passages written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice:

...Since the beginning of the Four Year Plan, the entire Bahá'í world has been undergoing a profound change in culture required by the single focus of the global Plans in this latter part of the first century of the Faith's Formative Age—advancing the process of entry by troops.

Letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice, 12 August 2002

The culture now emerging is one in which groups of Bahá'u'lláh's followers explore together the truths in His Teachings, freely open their study circles, devotional gatherings and children's classes to their friends and neighbours, and invest their efforts confidently in plans of action designed at the level of the cluster, that makes growth a manageable goal. The enthusiasm with which Bahá'í communities in most parts of the world are responding to this challenge, and the results their efforts are beginning to garner have been a source of great joy to the House of Justice.

Letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice, 22 August 2002

Briefly discuss: How does our participation in this study circle reflect these profound changes in ourselves, the Bahá'í community, and the community at large?

2. In the whole group, read aloud the quotations on the following pages entitled "A Vision of Growth."
3. Then, while listening to quiet meditative music, individually choose from the selection of pictures provided:
 - one picture that represents your Bahá'í community now
 - another picture that represents your community in six months, after a significant acceleration in the process of entry by troops.
4. Share your two pictures in the study circle and briefly explain the reasons for your choice.
5. Briefly discuss: What evidence have we noticed among our friends, relatives, and acquaintances of increased interest in spiritual questions over the past few years?
6. Then, in groups of 2-3, create a shared vision of increased growth in the form of a poster that incorporates the pictures chosen by each member of your group. Incorporate one of the selected quotations in your poster. Share your poster in the whole group. Applaud all!



A VISION OF GROWTH

Focus Questions:

Who is summoned to the Cause of God?

What is the significance of this time in history?

1 How vast is the tabernacle of the Cause of God! It hath overshadowed all the peoples and kindreds of the earth, and will, ere long, gather together the whole of mankind beneath its shelter.

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

2 This Revelation is endowed with such a power that it will act as the lodestone for all nations and kindreds of the earth. Should one pause to meditate attentively he would recognize that no place is there, nor can there be, for anyone to flee to.

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

3 The summons and the message which We gave were never intended to reach or to benefit one land or one people only. Mankind in its entirety must firmly adhere to whatsoever hath been revealed and vouchsafed unto it. Then and only then will it attain unto true liberty. The whole earth is illuminated with the resplendent glory of God's Revelation.

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

4 When the victory arriveth, every man shall profess himself as believer and shall hasten to the shelter of God's Faith. Happy are they who in the days of world-encompassing trials have stood fast in the Cause and refused to swerve from its truth.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Gleanings from the Writings of Babá'u'lláh*, p. 319, CL

5 The time fore-ordained unto the peoples and kindreds of the earth is now come.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Proclamation of Babá'u'lláh*, p. 111

6 Bestir yourselves, O people, in anticipation of the days of Divine justice, for the promised hour is now come. Beware lest ye fail to apprehend its import and be accounted among the erring.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Gleanings from the Writings of Babá'u'lláh*, p. 17, XII

7 This is the century of motion, divine stimulus and accomplishment, the century of human solidarity and altruistic service, the century of universal peace and the reality of the divine Kingdom.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 143

8 Now is the beginning of the manifestation of the spiritual power, and inevitably the potency of its life forces will assume greater and greater proportions. Therefore, this twentieth century is the dawn, or beginning, of spiritual illumination, and it is evident that day by day it will advance. It will reach such a degree that spiritual effulgences will overcome the physical, so that divine susceptibilities will overpower material intelligence and the heavenly light dispel and banish earthly darkness.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 131

9 Ancient laws and archaic ethical systems will not meet the requirements of modern conditions, for this is clearly the century of a new life, the century of the revelation of reality and, therefore, the greatest of all centuries.

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

10 The powers of earth cannot withstand the privileges and bestowals which God has ordained for this great and glorious century. It is a need and exigency of the time. Man can withstand anything except that which is divinely intended and indicated for the age and its requirements.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 125

11 In the estimation of historians this radiant century is equivalent to one hundred centuries of the past. If comparison be made with the sum total of all former human achievements, it will be found that the discoveries, scientific advancement and material civilization of this present century have equaled, yea far exceeded the progress and outcome of one hundred former centuries.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 143

12 How many blessed souls have longed for this radiant century, their utmost hopes and desires centered upon the happiness and joy of one such day as this. Many the nights they passed sleepless and lamenting until the very morn in longing anticipation of this age, yearning to realize even an hour of this time. God has favored you in this century and has specialized you for the realization of its blessings. Therefore, you must praise and thank God with heart and soul in appreciation of this great opportunity and the attainment of this infinite bestowal—that such doors have been opened before your faces, that such abundance is pouring down from the cloud of mercy and that these refreshing breezes from the paradise of Abhá are resuscitating you. You must become of one heart, one spirit and one susceptibility.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 214

13 In this radiant century minds have developed, perceptions have become keener, eyes are illumined and ears attentive.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 288

14 Action is essential. Inasmuch as this century is a century of light, capacity for action is assured to mankind.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 121

Activity
The Nature of Growth

1. Divide into small study groups. While in these groups, read aloud the quotations on the following pages that describe some characteristics of growth. As a group, select one of the following questions to answer, incorporating quotations or parts of quotations in your answer.
 - How does the growth of the Bahá'í Faith reflect organic processes?
 - How does Bahá'í history illustrate the cycle of crisis and victory?
 - What is the impact of social decline on the growth of the Bahá'í Faith?
 - How does the Faith's emergence from obscurity influence the teaching work?
2. Then still in your small group, think of an example from the world of nature to illustrate your answer, perhaps also using an image from the picture collection used in the previous activity.
3. Share your answer with the group, including your quotations and your example from nature.



CHARACTERISTICS OF GROWTH

Select one question as your group's focus for consultation:

- How does the growth of the Bahá'í Faith reflect organic processes?
 - How does Bahá'í history illustrate the cycle of crisis and victory?
 - What is the impact of social decline on the growth of the Bahá'í Faith?
 - How does the Faith's emergence from obscurity influence the teaching work?
-

1 The work that the members of your small family are doing in spreading the Cause and infusing its divine spirit among the people you meet, is a fact that no one familiar with your life can deny. In time you will see how abundant the fruit of your services will be. It is not sufficient to number the souls that embrace the Cause to know the progress that it is making. The more important consequences of your activities are the spirit that is diffused into the life of the community, and the extent to which the teachings we proclaim become part of the consciousness and belief of the people that hear them. For it is only when the spirit has thoroughly permeated the world that the people will begin to enter the Faith in large numbers. 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.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *Teaching the Bahá'í Faith*, p. 23

2 This [steady flow of reinforcements], moreover, will presage and hasten the advent of the day which, as prophesied by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, will witness the entry by troops of peoples of divers nations and races into the Bahá'í world—a day which, viewed in its proper perspective, will be the prelude to that long-awaited hour when a mass conversion on the part of these same nations and races, and as a direct result of a chain of events, momentous and possibly catastrophic in nature, and which cannot as yet be even dimly visualized, will suddenly revolutionize the fortunes of the Faith, derange the equilibrium of the world, and reinforce a thousandfold the numerical strength as well as the material power and the spiritual authority of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *Citadel of Faith*, p. 117

3 The Faith of God does not advance at one uniform pace. Sometimes it is like the advance of the sea when the tide is rising. Meeting a sandbank the water seems to be held back, but, with a new wave, it surges forward, flooding past the barrier which checked it for a little while. If the friends will but persist in their efforts, the cumulative effect of years of work will suddenly appear.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *Teaching the Bahá'í Faith*, p. 36

4 The Faith advances, not at a uniform rate of growth, but in vast surges, precipitated by the alternation of crisis and victory.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *Teaching the Bahá'í Faith*, p. 38

5 From the record of its tumultuous history, almost every page of which portrays a fresh crisis, is laden with the description of a new calamity, recounts the tale of a base betrayal, and is stained with the account of unspeakable atrocities, there emerges, clear and incontrovertible, the supreme truth that with every fresh outbreak of hostility to the Faith, whether from within or from without, a corresponding measure of outpouring grace, sustaining its defenders and confounding its adversaries, has been providentially released, communicating a fresh impulse to the onward march of the Faith, while this impetus, in its turn, would through its manifestations, provoke fresh hostility in quarters heretofore unaware of its challenging implications—this increased hostility being accompanied by a still more arresting revelation of Divine Power and a more abundant effusion of celestial grace, which, by enabling the upholders of that Faith to register still more brilliant victories, would thereby generate issues of still more vital import and raise up still more formidable enemies against a Cause that cannot but, in the end, resolve those issues and crush the resistance of those enemies, through a still more glorious unfoldment of its inherent power.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *Messages to America*, p. 51

6 There are two things which will contribute greatly to bringing more people into the Cause more swiftly: one is the maturity of the Bahá'ís within their Communities, functioning according to Bahá'í laws and in the proper spirit of unity, and the other is the disintegration of society and the suffering it will bring in its wake. When the old forms are seen to be hopelessly useless, the people will stir from their materialism and spiritual lethargy, and embrace the Faith.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *Teaching the Bahá'í Faith*, p. 27

7 This is the ebb of the tide. The Bahá'ís know that the tide will turn and come in, after mankind has suffered, with mighty waves of faith and devotion. The people will enter the Cause of God in troops, and the whole condition will change. The Bahá'ís see this new condition which will take place, as one on the mountain-top sees the first glimpse of the dawn, before others are aware of it; and it is toward that that the Bahá'ís must work.

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

8 The media are giving increasing attention to the Bahá'í world community; authors are acknowledging its existence in a growing number of articles, books and reference works, one of the most highly respected of which recently listed the Faith as the most widely spread religion after Christianity. A remarkable display of interest in this community by governments, civil authorities, prominent personalities and humanitarian organizations is increasingly apparent. Not only are the community's laws and principles, organization and way of life being investigated, but its advice and active help are also being sought for the alleviation of social problems and the carrying out of humanitarian activities.

A thrilling consequence of these favourably conjoined developments is the emergence of a new paradigm of opportunity for further growth and consolidation of our world-wide community. New prospects for teaching the Cause at all levels of society have unfolded. The immediate possibilities presented by this providential situation compel us to expect that an expansion of the Community of the Most Great Name, such as has not yet been experienced, is, indeed, at hand.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *Teaching the Bahá'í Faith*, p. 39

9 The stage is set for universal, rapid and massive growth of the Cause of God. The all-important teaching work must be imaginatively, persistently and sacrificially continued, ensuring the enrollment of ever larger numbers who will provide the energy, the resources and spiritual force to enable the beloved Cause to worthily play its part in the redemption of mankind.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *Teaching the Bahá'í Faith*, p. 38

10 In North America, there are opportunities for the advancement of the process of entry by troops, the like of which presently exist in no other place on earth. Three unique characteristics combine to give rise to this condition: the unparalleled strength of your local communities, particularly evident in the activity of your Local Spiritual Assemblies and in the consecration of the Bahá'í youth; the positive impression of the Faith which has been conveyed, not only to the generality of the population, but also to leaders of thought and people of influence; and the composition of your nations, which have welcomed to their shores immigrants, students and refugees from all parts of the planet, drawn from all the major racial, ethnic and religious backgrounds of humanity. You, who live in a continent described by 'Abdu'l-Bahá as 'the land wherein the splendors of His light shall be revealed, where the mysteries of His Faith shall be unveiled, the home of the righteous, and the gathering-place of the free,' are called upon to take full advantage of these favorable circumstances.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *The Four Year Plan*, pp. 72-3



Individual Acts of Study, Teaching, and Service

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

Individual teaching, study, and service to humanity are essential components of the Fundamental Verities Sequence of Courses. Bahá'u'lláh writes:

Make thou every effort to render service unto God, that from thee may appear that which will immortalize thy memory in His glorious and exalted heaven.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 234

Here are some individual acts of study and service that directly relate to this session.

1. Memorize one of the passages from this session's readings. Be prepared to recite it for the group at the next session.
2. Show the love of God by visiting a friend or acquaintance. Consider how you might show love to that person while you are there. While visiting, initiate a conversation, so that you can listen to your friend, and then share a favorite passage from the writings, perhaps one that you have hand-copied on nice paper. Report on your visit at the next class session.
3. Plan and host a devotional gathering for your family, friends, or community.
4. Support your community's children's classes open to all.

A Personal Action Plan for Service and Teaching

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

Discuss: In what ways do the actions mentioned in the second paragraph increase our ability to carry out the actions described in the first paragraph?

Please take a few minutes to individually complete your own Personal Action Plan, perhaps while listening to quiet music. Incorporate your choice of the suggested acts of service listed above into your plan.

Closing Devotions

Close the session with singing and prayers for divine assistance.



A PERSONAL ACTION PLAN FOR SERVICE AND TEACHING

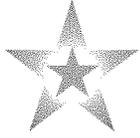
Focus Question:

In what ways do the actions mentioned in the second paragraph increase our ability to carry out the actions described in the first paragraph?

The role of the individual is of unique importance in the work of the Cause. It is the individual who manifests the vitality of faith upon which the success of the teaching work and the development of the community depend. Bahá'u'lláh's command to each believer to teach His Faith confers an inescapable responsibility which cannot be transferred to, or assumed by, any institution of the Cause. The individual alone can exercise those capacities which include the ability to take initiative, to seize opportunities, to form friendships, to interact personally with others, to build relationships, to win the cooperation of others in common service to the Faith and society, and to convert into action the decisions made by consultative bodies. It is the individual's duty to 'consider every avenue of approach which he might utilize in his personal attempts to capture the attention, maintain the interest, and deepen the faith, of those whom he seeks to bring into the fold of his Faith.'

To optimize the use of these capacities, the individual draws upon his love for Bahá'u'lláh, the power of the Covenant, the dynamics of prayer, the inspiration and education derived from regular reading and study of the Holy Texts, and the transformative forces that operate upon his soul as he strives to behave in accordance with the divine laws and principles. In addition to these, the individual, having been given the duty to teach the Cause, is endowed with the capacity to attract particular blessings promised by Bahá'u'lláh. "Whoso openeth his lips in this Day," the blessed Beauty asserts, "and maketh mention of the name of his Lord, the hosts of Divine inspiration shall descend upon him from the heaven of My name, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. On him shall also descend the Concourse on high, each bearing aloft a chalice of pure light."

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, Ridván 153, The Four Year Plan, pp. 31-2



A PERSONAL TEACHING PLAN

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

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

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



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

How can I draw upon...?



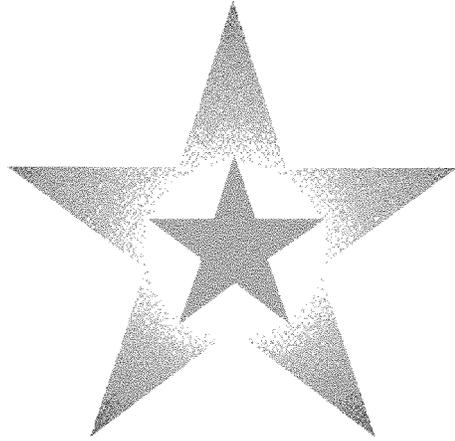
My love for Bahá'u'lláh; the power of the Covenant; the dynamics of prayer; the inspiration and education derived from regular reading and study of the Holy Texts?



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



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



O people!

Consort with the followers of all religions
in a spirit of friendliness and fellowship.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

The Seeker's Quest

COURSE THREE

Some
Fundamental
Verities of the
Bahá'í Faith

Session 2

Diffusing the
Divine Fragrance

Opening Devotions

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

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

If the learned and worldly-wise men of this age were to allow mankind to inhale the fragrance of fellowship and love, every understanding heart would apprehend the meaning of true liberty, and discover the secret of undisturbed peace and absolute composure.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 162

Objectives of the Session

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

Knowledge

To know who is summoned to the Cause of God.

To know that to increase the number of believers we must infuse “the divine spirit among the people we meet.”

Wisdom

To understand how Bahá'í history illustrates the cycle of crisis and victory.

Spiritual Perception

To perceive the importance of making many friendly contacts for the teaching work.

Eloquent Speech

To be able to create a personal teaching plan.

To develop specific steps to increase one's contact with a variety of people.

Consultation About Individual Acts of Teaching, Study, and Service

Recall your Personal Teaching Plan:

- If you were able to visit a friend or acquaintance, how did your friend respond? Were you able to share a prayer or passage from the writings?
- If you hosted a devotional gathering or supported a class for children, what was a highlight?
- What else would you like to share about your acts of teaching, study, and service since our last session?

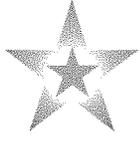
Diffusing the Divine Fragrance

1. Based on our study in the previous session, we recall that one step in the teaching process is “infusing the divine spirit among the people you meet” for “it is only when the spirit has thoroughly permeated the world that the people will begin to enter the Faith in large numbers.”
2. Briefly discuss the question: What are some of the ways that we can “infuse the divine spirit” so that this spirit thoroughly permeates the world?
Record your answers on chart paper.
3. Then share the following story about the life of Bahá’u’lláh during the Baghdád period:

There was in Baghdád a Siyyid Habíb the Arab, who was the [borough-head] of Old Baghdád. This man had a coffee house which Bahá’u’lláh would frequent, and as a general thing this is where the people would come to be with Him. Here Bahá’u’lláh would partake of coffee every day and would converse with the people. His purpose in going to this coffeehouse was to spread the Faith. It was an excellent establishment. Siyyid Habíb was not a believer, but he was a fine man—and very unassuming. After an hour or an hour and a half, Bahá’u’lláh would leave here and return to His living quarters until afternoon. Then He would again set out for another visit to the coffeehouse and stay until sundown. All the great of Baghdád, and the ulama, and the magistrates, would present themselves here at this coffeehouse with extreme deference. Many a time they would refer difficult questions to Him and request Him to solve them.

SALMÁNÍ, *My Memories of Bahá’u’lláh*, pp. 16-7

4. Form small study groups, ideally with friends who live near you, so that you could collaborate between sessions of your study circle. Carefully read the quotations, “Diffusing the Divine Fragrance.”
5. Write your answers to the focus question in the space provided so that you can refer to them later. Please be as specific as possible, taking into account your real circumstances.



DIFFUSING THE DIVINE FRAGRANCE

Focus Questions:

How can we increase the number of people we interact with?

What are some of the characteristics of the people we are most likely to meet?

Where, when, and how can we meet them?

What are their ideas, tastes, and habits, their manners, traditions, thoughts and customs?

What are some ways that we can practice the science of sociability?

What specific actions can we take to cultivate friendliness and fellowship?

How can we support each other in making many friends?

1 O people! Consort with the followers of all religions in a spirit of friendliness and fellowship.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Tablets of Babá'u'lláh*, p. 22

2 If the learned and worldly-wise men of this age were to allow mankind to inhale the fragrance of fellowship and love, every understanding heart would apprehend the meaning of true liberty, and discover the secret of undisturbed peace and absolute composure.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Tablets of Babá'u'lláh*, p. 162

3 The friends of God should weave bonds of fellowship with others and show absolute love and affection towards them. These links have a deep influence on people and they will listen. When the friends sense receptivity to the Word of God, they should deliver the Message with wisdom. They must first try and remove any apprehensions in the people they teach. In fact, every one of the believers should choose one person every year and try to establish ties of friendship with him, so that all his fear would disappear. Only then, and gradually, must he teach that person. This is the best method.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Volume II, p. 300

4 The three conditions of teaching the Cause of God are the science of sociability, purity of deeds and sweetness of speech. I hope each one of you may become confirmed with these three attributes.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *Star of the West*, Vol. XII, No. 11, p. 177

5 Every laborer in those fields, whether as traveling teacher or settler, should, I feel, make it his chief and constant concern to mix, in a friendly manner, with all sections of the population, irrespective of class, creed, nationality, or color, to familiarize himself with their ideas, tastes, and habits, to study the approach best suited to them, to concentrate, patiently and tactfully, on a few who have shown marked capacity and receptivity, and to endeavor, with extreme kindness, to implant such love, zeal, and devotion in their hearts as to enable them to become in turn self-sufficient and independent promoters of the Faith in their respective localities. . . .

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 65

6 Having on his own initiative, and undaunted by any hindrances with which either friend or foe may, unwittingly or deliberately, obstruct his path, resolved to arise and respond to the call of teaching, let him carefully consider every avenue of approach which he might utilize in his personal attempts to capture the attention, maintain the interest, and deepen the faith, of those whom he seeks to bring into the fold of his Faith. Let him survey the possibilities which the particular circumstances in which he lives offer him, evaluate their advantages, and proceed intelligently and systematically to utilize them for the achievement of the object he has in mind. Let him also attempt to devise such methods as association with clubs, exhibitions, and societies, lectures on subjects akin to the teachings and ideals of his Cause such as temperance, morality, social welfare, religious and racial tolerance, economic cooperation, Islám, and

Comparative Religion, or participation in social, cultural, humanitarian, charitable, and educational organizations and enterprises which, while safeguarding the integrity of his Faith, will open up to him a multitude of ways and means whereby he can enlist successively the sympathy, the support, and ultimately the allegiance of those with whom he comes in contact. Let him, while such contacts are being made, bear in mind the claims which his Faith is constantly making upon him to preserve its dignity, and station, to safeguard the integrity of its laws and principles, to demonstrate its comprehensiveness and universality, and to defend fearlessly its manifold and vital interests.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 51

7 The individual alone must assess its character, consult his conscience, prayerfully consider all its aspects, manfully struggle against the natural inertia that weighs him down in his effort to arise, shed, heroically and irrevocably, the trivial and superfluous attachments which hold him back, empty himself of every thought that may tend to obstruct his path, mix, in obedience to the counsels of the Author of His Faith, and in imitation of the One Who is its true Exemplar, with men and women, in all walks of life, seek to touch their hearts, through the distinction which characterizes his thoughts, his words and his acts, and win them over tactfully, lovingly, prayerfully and persistently, to the Faith he himself has espoused.

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

8 By all means persevere and associate in a friendly spirit with other groups of young people, particularly of a different race or minority nationality, for such association will demonstrate your complete conviction of the oneness of mankind and attract others to the Faith, both young and old alike. A spirit of prejudice-free, loving comradeship with others is what will open the eyes of people more than any amount of words. Combined with such deeds you can teach the Faith easily.

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, *The Compilations of Compilations*, Volume II, p. 312

9 The Cause of God has room for all. It would, indeed, not be the Cause of God if it did not take in and welcome everyone—poor and rich, educated and ignorant, the unknown, and the prominent—God surely wants them all, as He created them all.

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, *The Compilations of Compilations*, Volume II, p. 261

1. Set aside your books as your facilitator or another participant uncaps a small vial of rose water.
2. Discuss the question: What is the most effective way to diffuse this fragrance so that it thoroughly permeates the room?
3. Record all ideas. Then select one method and implement your plan.
4. Discuss the questions:

How long did it take to diffuse the fragrance?

What were the steps?

How many people were involved?

What can we learn about the teaching process from this activity?

Thinking back on the posters created in the introductory activity from the previous session, “A Vision of Growth,” how will these actions help make this vision a reality?

Activity
The Science of Sociability

1. Read again the words of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

The three conditions of teaching the Cause of God are the science of sociability, purity of deeds and sweetness of speech. I hope each one of you may become confirmed with these three attributes.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *Star of the West*, Vol. XII, No. 11, p. 177

Briefly discuss: How could we find ways during the coming week, as we go about our routine activities, to increase the number of conversations (however brief) that we might not have otherwise chosen?

How can we be guided by the words of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to offer a friendly greeting and a short conversation with friends, co-workers, classmates or even people standing in line or behind the counter at the post office or grocery store?

If you meet those of different race and color from yourself, do not mistrust them and withdraw yourself into your shell of conventionality, but rather be glad and show them kindness.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *Paris Talks*, p. 53

Individual Acts of Teaching, Study, and Service

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

1. Reflect on the people you know and the people you meet:
What specific steps can you take to increase your contact with a variety of people?
What specific steps can you take to strengthen the friendships you have?
Bring examples of your increased fellowship with others to the next class session.
2. Choose a quotation from this session, copy it into your teaching plan and memorize it by the next class session.
3. Invite some of the friends you wish to teach to share stories about some of their family's customs, interests, habits and traditions. Offer a brief report at the next session.
4. Support or host a devotional gathering for family and friends.
5. Support your community's children's classes open to all.

A Personal Teaching Plan

1. Reflect on the people you know and the people you meet.
What specific steps can you take to increase your contact with a variety of people?
What specific steps can you take to strengthen the friendships you have?
2. After several minutes of quiet reflection, complete your Personal Teaching Plan. You may share some elements of your plan with the study circle, if desired.



A PERSONAL TEACHING PLAN

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

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

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



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

How can I draw upon...?



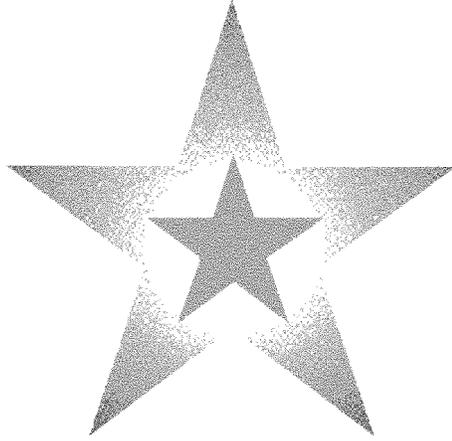
My love for Bahá'u'lláh; the power of the Covenant; the dynamics of prayer; the inspiration and education derived from regular reading and study of the Holy Texts?



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



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



*N*ow is the time to cheer and refresh
the down-cast through the invigorating breeze
of love and fellowship, and the living waters
of friendliness and charity.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

The Seeker's Quest

COURSE THREE

Some
Fundamental
Verities of the
Bahá'í Faith

Session 3

Nobility of the
Human Spirit

Opening Devotions

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

This is the Day whereon the Ocean of God's mercy hath been manifested unto men, the Day in which the Day Star of His loving-kindness hath shed its radiance upon them, the Day in which the clouds of His bountiful favor have overshadowed the whole of mankind. Now is the time to cheer and refresh the down-cast through the invigorating breeze of love and fellowship, and the living waters of friendliness and charity.

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

Objectives of the Session

Read aloud the learning objectives for this session.

Knowledge

To become familiar with some of the writings about the nobility of the human spirit and the barriers that the human spirit encounters.

Wisdom

To understand the limitations created by a negative view of human nature.

Spiritual Perception

To appreciate the nobility of the human spirit.

Eloquent Speech

To articulate the writings about the nobility of the human spirit.

To identify and carry out the next steps in one's personal teaching plan.

Consultation About Personal Teaching, Study, and Service

Recall your acts of service since our last session:

- What have been the results of our efforts to increase our contacts with others? Who can share specific examples of increased fellowship and friendliness?
- Who would like to recite a memorized quotation?
- Who has been able to have a friendly conversation about other families' customs, interests, and habits? What can we learn from these conversations?
- Who has been able to support children's classes or host a devotional gathering?

1. As we know, all humanity has received the gift of the bounties of this Day of God. Each one of us and all of us together are moving toward God, according to our own circumstances. As the bearers of the Name of God in this Day, we need to understand what people are telling us if we are to be able to serve them.

“Abdu’l-Bahá encourages us to:

First diagnose the disease and identify the malady, then prescribe the remedy, for such is the perfect method of the skilled physician.

Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, p. 269

2. In the whole group, consider the people you know, and with the utmost respect and humility, quickly brainstorm a list of five reasons these friends may not have already expressed interest in the teachings of Bahá’u’lláh. Some examples might include:

“I just have time for my work and my family.”

“I don’t like organized religion.”

“Religion is just for do-gooders.”

“How can there be a God when there is such evil in the world?”

“I’m happy with my own religion.”

3. After a few minutes, record the results on chart paper under the heading, **Veils to Receptivity**. Then, briefly discuss: What basic beliefs about reality underlie these barriers? What feelings do our friends attach to these ideas?”

Record your ideas on chart paper under the heading, **Underlying Beliefs and Feelings**.

4. Recall the Master’s words:

First diagnose the disease and identify the malady, then prescribe the remedy, for such is the perfect method of the skilled physician.

Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, p. 269

Note that our understanding of the thoughts and feelings of our friends is an important step in our path of loving service to them.

5. Working now in small groups, carefully study the quotations, “Removing Barriers and Veils.” Prepare answers to the focus questions. Then briefly share your answers with the whole group.



REMOVING BARRIERS AND VEILS

Focus Questions:

What do these passages tell us about the barriers that intervene between the human spirit and its Creator? How can we assist our friends to remove these barriers?

1 The peoples of the world are fast asleep. Were they to wake from their slumber, they would hasten with eagerness unto God, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. They would cast away everything they possess, be it all the treasures of the earth, that their Lord may remember them to the extent of addressing to them but one word.

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

2 This humble servant is filled with wonder, inasmuch as all men are endowed with the capacity to see and hear, yet we find them deprived of the privilege of using these faculties.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Tablets of Babá'u'lláh*, p. 171

3 Methinks people's sense of taste hath, alas, been sorely affected by the fever of negligence and folly, for they are found to be wholly unconscious and deprived of the sweetness of His utterance.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Tablets of Babá'u'lláh*, pp. 173-174

4 His proof hath been manifested, and yet they are unaware of it. And when they behold the face of the All-Merciful, their own faces are saddened, while they are disporting themselves. They hasten forward to Hell Fire, and mistake it for light.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Gleanings from the Writings of Babá'u'lláh*, p. 42, XVII

5 In these days the people have debarred themselves from the effusions of divine grace by following in the footsteps of every ignorant one that hath gone astray. They have cast the Ocean of divine knowledge behind their backs and fixed their eyes upon such foolish men as claim to be well versed in learning without being supported by any evidence from God, the Lord of mankind.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Tablets of Babá'u'lláh*, p. 252

6 What 'oppression' is greater than that which hath been recounted? What 'oppression' is more grievous than that a soul seeking the truth, and wishing to attain unto the knowledge of God, should know not where to go for it and from whom to seek it? . . . This 'oppression' is the essential feature of every Revelation. Unless it cometh to pass, the Sun of Truth will not be made manifest. For the break of the morn of divine guidance must needs follow the darkness of the night of error.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 31

7 Tear asunder, in My Name, the veils that have grievously blinded your vision, and, through the power born of your belief in the unity of God, scatter the idols of vain imitation. Enter, then, the holy paradise of the good-pleasure of the All-Merciful. Sanctify your souls from whatsoever is not of God, and taste ye the sweetness of rest within the pale of His vast and mighty Revelation, and beneath the shadow of His supreme and infallible authority. Suffer not yourselves to be wrapt in the dense veils of your selfish desires, inasmuch as I have perfected in every one of you My creation, so that the excellence of My handiwork may be fully revealed unto men. It follows, therefore, that every man hath been, and will continue to be, able of himself to appreciate the Beauty of God, the Glorified.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 143, LXXV

8 Purge your sight, that ye may perceive its glory with your own eyes, and depend not on the sight of any one except your self, for God hath never burdened any soul beyond its power.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 106-7, LII

9 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. . . . Unasked, I have showered upon thee My grace. Unpetitioned, I have fulfilled thy wish. In spite of thy undeserving, I have singled thee out for My richest, My incalculable favors. . . .

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 322, CLII

10 . . . a paralyzing contradiction has developed in human affairs. On the one hand, people of all nations proclaim not only their readiness but their longing for peace and harmony, for an end to the harrowing apprehensions tormenting their daily lives. On the other, uncritical assent is given to the proposition that human beings are incorrigibly selfish and aggressive and thus incapable of erecting a social system at once progressive and peaceful, dynamic and harmonious, a system giving free play to individual creativity and initiative but based on cooperation and reciprocity.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *Peace: More Than an End to War*, pp. 4-5

11 As the need for peace becomes more urgent, this fundamental contradiction, which hinders its realization, demands a reassessment of the assumptions upon which the commonly held view of mankind's historical predicament is based. Dispassionately examined, the evidence reveals that such conduct, far from expressing man's true self, represents a distortion of the human spirit.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *Peace: More Than an End to War*, p. 5

Activity
The Nobility of the Human Spirit

1. In this Day of God, we know that the human spirit is created to respond to the word of God. In pairs, read aloud the quotations, “The Nobility of the Human Spirit,” and discuss the focus questions.
2. Then in the same pairs, create a brief dramatic sketch of a realistic situation in which one person asserts that people are naturally selfish or corrupt or sinful and that this is just the way it is. The other person responds with love, listening, and a brief mention of the Bahá’í teachings on the human spirit, including a brief quotation or part of a quotation.

Be sure to allow sufficient time for this key activity.

3. In your teams, take turns practicing both roles, then demonstrate one of your conversations in the whole group.



THE NOBILITY OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT

Focus Questions:

What do the writings tell us about the human spirit? How is this different from contemporary religious practice, from popular notions of psychology? How could knowledge of our true selves influence the way we see ourselves and interact with others?

1 O Son of Utterance! Thou art My stronghold; enter therein that thou mayest abide in safety. My love is in thee, know it, that thou mayest find Me near unto thee.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *The Hidden Words*, Arabic #10

2 O Son of Being! Thou art My lamp and My light is in thee. Get thou from it thy radiance and seek none other than Me. For I have created thee rich and have bountifully shed My favor upon thee.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *The Hidden Words*, Arabic #11

3 O Son of Being! With the hands of power I made thee and with the fingers of strength I created thee; and within thee have I placed the essence of My light. Be thou content with it and seek naught else, for My work is perfect and My command is binding. Question it not, nor have a doubt thereof.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *The Hidden Words*, Arabic #12

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

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *The Hidden Words*, Arabic #13

5 O Son of Man! Thou art My dominion and My dominion perisheth not, wherefore fearest thou thy perishing? Thou art My light and My light shall never be extinguished, why dost thou dread extinction? Thou art My glory and My glory fadeth not; thou art My robe and My robe shall never be outworn. Abide then in thy love for Me, that thou mayest find Me in the realm of glory.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *The Hidden Words*, Arabic #14

6 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*, p. 287, CXXXII

7 This is the Day whereon the Ocean of God's mercy hath been manifested unto men, the Day in which the Day Star of His loving-kindness hath shed its radiance upon them, the Day in which the clouds of His bountiful favor have overshadowed the whole of mankind. Now is the time to cheer and refresh the down-cast through the invigorating breeze of love and fellowship, and the living waters of friendliness and charity.

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

8 The potentialities inherent in the station of man, the full measure of his destiny on earth, the innate excellence of his reality, must all be manifested in this promised Day of God.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 340, CLXII

9 Were man to appreciate the greatness of his station and the loftiness of his destiny he would manifest naught save goodly character, pure deeds, and a seemly and praiseworthy conduct.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 172

10 These energies with which the Day Star of Divine bounty and Source of heavenly guidance hath endowed the reality of man lie, however, latent within him, even as the flame is hidden within the candle and the rays of light are potentially present in the lamp. The radiance of these energies may be obscured by worldly desires even as the light of the sun can be concealed beneath the dust and dross which cover the mirror. Neither the candle nor the lamp can be lighted through their own unaided efforts, nor can it ever be possible for the mirror to free itself from its dross. It is clear and evident that until a fire is kindled the lamp will never be ignited, and unless the dross is blotted out from the face of the mirror it can never represent the image of the sun nor reflect its light and glory.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 65-6, XXVII

11 . . . it is impossible for a human being to turn aside from his own selfish advantages and sacrifice his own good for the good of the community except through true religious faith. For self-love is kneaded into the very clay of man, and it is not possible that, without any hope of a substantial reward, he should neglect his own present material good. That individual, however, who puts his faith in God and believes in the words of God—because he is promised and certain of a plentiful reward in the next life, and because worldly benefits as compared to the abiding joy and glory of future planes of existence are nothing to him—will for the sake of God abandon his own peace and profit and will freely consecrate his heart and soul to the common good.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, pp. 96-7

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

1. Memorize one of the quotations about the nobility of the human spirit.
2. Share the results of your continued efforts to increase the number of friendly contacts you have with others.
3. Research the qualities of the human spirit in the books *Paris Talks* and *Some Answered Questions*. Prepare a 2-minute report, including at least one quotation from the Master's words, to share in the next session of this course.
4. Plan and host a devotional gathering for friends or family.
5. Support your local children's classes open to all.

Personal Teaching Plan

Complete your Personal Teaching Plan for the coming week, perhaps while listening to quiet music. Incorporate one or more of the acts of service, study, and teaching suggested above.

Closing Devotions

Conclude the session with singing and prayers.



A PERSONAL TEACHING PLAN

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

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

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



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

How can I draw upon...?



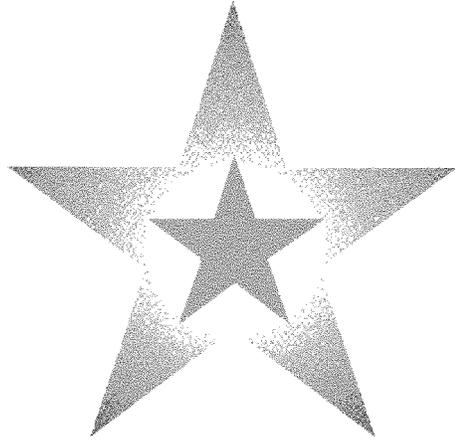
My love for Bahá'u'lláh; the power of the Covenant; the dynamics of prayer; the inspiration and education derived from regular reading and study of the Holy Texts?



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



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



*T*he potentialities inherent in the station of man,
the full measure of his destiny on earth,
the innate excellence of his reality,
must all be manifested in this promised Day of God.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

The Seeker's Quest

COURSE THREE

Some
Fundamental
Verities of the
Bahá'í Faith

Session 4

Our Perfect
Exemplar

Opening Devotions

Begin the session with prayers and singing or recorded music

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

O ye rich ones of the earth! Flee not from the face of the poor that lieth in the dust, nay rather befriend him and suffer him to recount the tale of the woes with which God's inscrutable Decree hath caused him to be afflicted. By the righteousness of God! Whilst ye consort with him, the Concourse on high will be looking upon you, will be interceding for you, will be extolling your names and glorifying your action.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 314-315, CXLV

Objectives of the Session

Read aloud the learning objectives for this session.

Knowledge

To become familiar with the example of 'Abdu'l-Bahá as a listener.

Wisdom

To understand the qualities exemplified by 'Abdu'l-Bahá as he interacted with others.

Spiritual Perception

To appreciate the power of listening in the teaching work.

Eloquent Speech

To memorize a quotation about the nobility of the human spirit.

To identify and carry out the next steps in one's personal teaching plan.

Consultation About Individual Acts of Teaching, Study, and Service

Reflecting on our Personal Teaching Plans:

- Who would like to share a memorized quotation about the nobility of the human spirit?
- What are some examples of our efforts to increase our friendly contacts with others?
- Who would like to share more information from 'Abdu'l-Bahá about the nobility of the human spirit?
- Who was able to participate in a devotional gathering or support a children's class?

Activity:
Our Perfect Exemplar

1. Sing or listen to one of the beautiful recorded songs about our perfect Exemplar, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Consider lighting a candle and placing it near a portrait of the Master while you enjoy the song.
2. Read aloud twice the following passage from the writings of Bahá’u’lláh, that the actions of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá illustrate perfectly:

If ye meet the abased or the down-trodden, turn not away disdainfully from them, for the King of Glory ever watcheth over them and surroundeth them with such tenderness as none can fathom except them that have suffered their wishes and desires to be merged in the Will of your Lord, the Gracious, the All-Wise. O ye rich ones of the earth! Flee not from the face of the poor that lieth in the dust, nay rather befriend him and suffer him to recount the tale of the woes with which God’s inscrutable Decree hath caused him to be afflicted. By the righteousness of God! Whilst ye consort with him, the Concourse on high will be looking upon you, will be interceding for you, will be extolling your names and glorifying your action. Blessed are the learned that pride not themselves on their attainments; and well is it with the righteous that mock not the sinful, but rather conceal their misdeeds, so that their own shortcomings may remain veiled to men’s eyes.

BAHÁ’U’LLÁH, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, pp. 314-315, CXLV

Discuss: what are the bounties of listening to others? Who is rich? Who is poor? How can we tell?

3. Then, working in pairs, read aloud the following stories and discuss the focus questions.
4. Still working in pairs, share with each other a question or a barrier you encountered during your own spiritual search. Although some of us have had the bounty of growing up as Bahá’ís, we all may have faced questions at one time or another.
5. While listening, strive to listen with the Master’s love. Take turns listening with love and complete attention to the other.
6. Then, in the whole group, briefly discuss:
 - What is the impact of listening with love?
 - How do we show our love when we listen to others?
 - How can listening assist others in their spiritual search?
 - After listening, how can I identify occasions for sharing the beautiful teachings about the nobility of the human spirit?



OUR PERFECT EXEMPLAR

Focus questions:

What qualities did the Master reflect in these stories?

How can we show these qualities when we teach?

Story #1

[During the pilgrimage of Corinne True, the Master]. . . spoke to her inmost being when, holding her hand, He spoke to her of love, universal love, and the importance of loving everyone, even the seemingly unlovable “Mrs. True,” He said, “when you go back I want you to look at every human being and say to yourself, “You are a letter from my Beloved, and I must love you because of the Beloved Who wrote you. The letter may be torn, it may be blurred—but because the Beloved wrote the letter, you must love it.”

Nathaniel Rutstein, *Corinne True*, p. 69

Story #2

He [Bahá'u'lláh] spoke about teaching. He said: ‘A kindly approach and loving behavior toward the people are the first requirements for teaching the Cause. The teacher must carefully listen to whatever a person has to say—even though his talk may consist only of vain imaginings and blind repetitions of the opinions of others. One should not resist or engage in argument. The teacher must avoid disputes which will end in stubborn refusal or hostility, because the other person will feel overpowered and defeated. Therefore, he will be more inclined to reject the Cause. One should rather say, ‘Maybe you are right, but kindly consider the question from this other point of view.’ Consideration, respect, and love encourage people to listen and do not force them to respond with hostility. They are convinced because they see that your purpose is not to defeat them, but to convey truth, to manifest courtesy and to show forth heavenly attributes. This will encourage the people to be fair. Their spiritual natures will respond, and, by the bounty of God, they will find themselves recreated. Consider the way in which the Master teaches the people. He listens very carefully to the most hollow and senseless talk. He listens so intently that the speaker says to himself, ‘He is trying to learn from me.’ Then the Master gradually and very carefully, by means that the other person does not perceive, puts him on the right path and endows him with a fresh power of understanding.

Reported words of Bahá'u'lláh, *Stories from the Delight of Hearts*, pp. 109-10

Story #3

That was just it! ‘Abdu'l-Bahá seemed to listen with my ears. . . . And when, under His encouraging sympathy, the interviewer became emptied of his words, there followed a brief interval of silence. There was no instant and complete outpouring of explanation and advice. He sometimes closed His eyes a moment as if He sought guidance from above Himself; sometimes He sat and searched the questioner’s soul with a loving, comprehending smile that melted the heart.

Howard Colby Ives, *Portals to Freedom*, pp. 194-5

Story #4

. . . And He never argued, of course. Nor did He press a point. He left one free. There was never an assumption of authority, rather He was ever the personification of humility. He taught “as if offering a gift to a king.” He never told me what I should do, beyond suggesting that what I was doing was right. Nor did He ever tell me what I should believe. He made Truth and Love so beautiful and royal that the heart perforce did reverence. He showed me by His voice, manner, bearing, smile, how I should be, knowing that out of the pure soil of being the good fruit of deeds and words would surely spring.

Howard Colby Ives, *Portals to Freedom*, pp. 39-40

Story #5

Three extraordinary qualities which characterized all of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s utterances were to be found in these two brief conversations: His supreme logic; His delightful sense of humor; and the inspiring buoyancy with which He gave forth solemn pronouncements. For instance, when He said, “But Bahá’ís must endure people even when they are unendurable,” He did not look at us solemnly as if appointing us to an arduous and difficult task. Rather, He beamed upon us delightfully as if to suggest what a joy to us it would be to act in this way! . . . This philosophy of joy was the keynote of all of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s teaching. “Are you happy?” was His frequent greeting to his visitors. “Be happy.” Those who were unhappy (and who of us are not at times!) would weep at this. And ‘Abdu’l-Bahá would smile as if to say, “Yes, weep on. Beyond the tears is sunshine.” And sometimes He would wipe away with His own hands the tears from their wet cheeks, and they would leave His presence transfigured.

Stanwood Cobb, *Memories of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 6

Story #6

No matter what subject was brought up He was perfectly at home in its discussion, yet always with an undercurrent of modesty and loving consideration for the opinions of others. I have before spoken of His unfailing courtesy. It was really more than what that term usually connotes to the Western mind. The same Persian word is used for both reverence and courtesy. He “saw the Face of His Heavenly Father in every face” and revered the soul behind it. How could one be discourteous if such an attitude was held towards everyone!

Howard Colby Ives, *Portals to Freedom*, p. 116

Story #7

. . . Father took this opportunity to express to the loving, listening ear of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá the spiritual philosophy which had guided him in life. I sat there quite shocked. But I didn’t need to be. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá plainly was not shocked . . . He sat there smiling, saying little, enveloping us with His love. And at the end Father came away feeling that he had had a wonderful interview. What a lesson in humility this was, that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá thus exemplified! There are so many times when we can help others best just by being good listeners.

Stanwood Cobb, *Memories of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 15

Memorization

1. Working with one or more partners, select a quotation or a portion of a quotation to memorize that you feel will assist you to share Bahá'u'lláh's message with others. Consider selecting either the quotation from Bahá'u'lláh on p. 47 or one of the quotations about the nobility of the human spirit on pp. 41-2.
2. Some possible memorization techniques include team recitation, setting the words to a simple tune, drawing pictures as a memory aid, or writing the passage while reciting it. Choose a technique that seems best for your team.
3. After you have memorized all or part of your selected quotation, recite it for the whole group.
4. Applaud all effort!

Individual Acts of Teaching, Study, and Service

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

1. Bring examples of the power of listening in your interactions with others.
2. Memorize an additional quotation about the power of the human spirit.
3. Consider the following questions as you complete your personal plan for the coming week:
 - What specific steps can I take to sustain my increased, friendly contact with a variety of individual souls?
 - What specific steps can I take to build friendships through listening with love to the friends I meet?
 - Who can I meet for coffee (or lunch, or a soft drink) this week with the goal of listening with love and, if possible, sharing with them a quotation I have memorized about the nobility of the human spirit?
 - How can I follow the Master's example in my contacts with others?.
4. Read more about 'Abdu'l-Bahá's interactions with others in *Vignettes from the Life of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, compiled by Annamarie Honnold, or another book of your choice.
5. Share one or more of the stories from today's session about the Master with a friend or family member before the next session. Be prepared to share what happened in the next session.
6. Plan and host a devotional gathering for family and friends.
7. Support your local children's classes open to all.

A Personal Teaching Plan

Play quiet music, possibly one of the beautiful songs written in tribute to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, while you complete your plan.

Closing Devotions

Close the session with singing and prayers for teaching.



A PERSONAL TEACHING PLAN

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

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

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



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

How can I draw upon...?



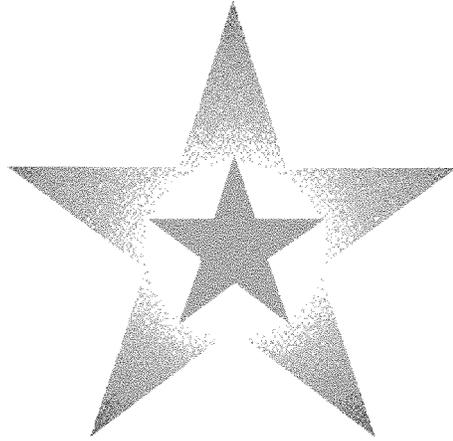
My love for Bahá'u'lláh; the power of the Covenant; the dynamics of prayer; the inspiration and education derived from regular reading and study of the Holy Texts?



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



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



*T*he true seeker hunteth naught
but the object of his quest,
and the lover hath no desire
save union with his beloved

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

The Seeker's Quest

COURSE THREE

Some
Fundamental
Verities of the
Bahá'í Faith

Session 5

The Seeker's Quest

Opening Devotions

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

The true seeker hunteth naught but the object of his quest, and the lover hath no desire save union with his beloved. Nor shall the seeker reach his goal unless he sacrifice all things.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *The Seven Valleys and the Four Valleys*, p. 6

Objectives of the Session

Read aloud the learning objectives for this session.

Knowledge

To become familiar with some of the writings on independent investigation.

Wisdom

To understand the process of a special search for spiritual truth.

Spiritual Perception

To recognize strategies to assist seekers in their quest.

Eloquent Speech

To create and share a map of one's spiritual journey.

To develop specific steps to continue meeting people and building friendship with others.

Consultation About Individual Acts of Teaching, Study, and Service

Reflecting on our Personal Teaching Plans:

- Who could share an example of the power of listening, the experience of sharing stories of the Master, or the results of our continued efforts to increase our friendly contacts with others?
- Who would like to recite a memorized quotation about the nobility of the human spirit?
- Who would like to share an additional story that you found about 'Abdu'l-Bahá's interactions with others?
- Who was able to host a devotional gathering or support a children's class?

1. Organize your study circle into teams of two or more. To the extent possible make the teams equal in size.
2. In your team, carefully read aloud the quotation pages for one of the following topics. Each member of your group should be able to share your group's answers to the focus questions with others.

Group One: The Search as Scientific Investigation

Group Two: The Search as a Journey

Group Three: The Search for the Beloved

Group Four: The Search as the Cultivation of a Garden

3. After you have carefully read aloud the selected passages and prepared answers to the focus questions, reconvene the whole group.
4. Then recombine into new groups, so that each new group includes one member from each of the previous groups. In your new group, please briefly share with your group the answers that your first group created for the focus questions.
5. After each person in your new group has had the opportunity to share the work of their previous study group, once again reconvene as a whole group. Then briefly discuss the questions:

What have we learned about the search process?

What have we learned about the role of the teacher in service to the seeker?

6. Then, reflect individually on your own spiritual journey. Using the paper, markers, and other art supplies provided, create a map of your own spiritual journey, indicating milestones along the path, and suggesting ongoing spiritual development. Consider playing quiet instrumental music during this work period.
7. After a work period, consider sharing the "map" of your spiritual journey with the group.
8. Briefly discuss the questions:
How do the forces released in the Plan of God influence our own spiritual journeys?
How do they impact humanity at large?
How have we seen our friends and acquaintances responding to the forces of our age?



THE SEARCH AS SCIENTIFIC INVESTIGATION

Focus Questions:

As a scientist, what can the seeker do to effectively investigate reality?

How can we assist a seeker to investigate reality?

1 O Son of Spirit! The best beloved of all things in My sight is Justice; turn not away therefrom if thou desirest Me, and neglect it not that I may confide in thee. By its aid thou shalt see with thine own eyes and not through the eyes of others, and shalt know of thine own knowledge and not through the knowledge of thy neighbor. Ponder this in thy heart; how it behooveth thee to be. Verily justice is My gift to thee and the sign of My loving-kindness. Set it then before thine eyes.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *The Hidden Words, Arabic #2*, pp. 3-4

2 Furthermore, know ye that God has created in man the power of reason, whereby man is enabled to investigate reality. God has not intended man to imitate blindly his fathers and ancestors. He has endowed him with mind, or the faculty of reasoning, by the exercise of which he is to investigate and discover the truth, and that which he finds real and true he must accept. He must not be an imitator or blind follower of any soul. He must not rely implicitly upon the opinion of any man without investigation; nay, each soul must seek intelligently and independently, arriving at a real conclusion and bound only by that reality. The greatest cause of bereavement and disheartening in the world of humanity is ignorance based upon blind imitation. It is due to this that wars and battles prevail; from this cause hatred and animosity arise continually among mankind.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 291

3 We should, therefore, detach ourselves from the external forms and practices of religion. We must realize that these forms and practices, however beautiful, are but garments clothing the warm heart and the living limbs of Divine truth. We must abandon the prejudices of tradition if we would succeed in finding the truth at the core of all religions. . . . In order to find truth we must give up our prejudices, our own small trivial notions; an open receptive mind is essential. If our chalice is full of self, there is no room in it for the water of life. The fact that we imagine ourselves to be right and everybody else wrong is the greatest of all obstacles in the path towards unity, and unity is necessary if we would reach truth, for truth is one.

Therefore it is imperative that we should renounce our own particular prejudices and superstitions if we earnestly desire to seek the truth. Unless we make a distinction in our minds between dogma, superstition and prejudice on the one hand, and truth on the other, we cannot succeed. When we are in earnest in our search for anything we look for it everywhere. This principle we must carry out in our search for truth.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *Paris Talks*, pp. 136-7

4 Science must be accepted. No one truth can contradict another truth. Light is good in whatsoever lamp it is burning! A rose is beautiful in whatsoever garden it may bloom! A star has the same radiance if it shines from the East or from the West. Be free from prejudice, so will you love the Sun of Truth from whatsoever point in the horizon it may arise! You will realize that if the Divine light of truth shone in Jesus Christ it also shone in Moses and in Buddha. The earnest seeker will arrive at this truth. This is what is meant by the ‘Search after Truth.’

It means, also, that we must be willing to clear away all that we have previously learned, all that would clog our steps on the way to truth; we must not shrink if necessary from beginning our education all over again. We must not allow our love for any one religion or any one personality to so blind our eyes that we become fettered by superstition! When we are freed from all these bonds, seeking with liberated minds, then shall we be able to arrive at our goal.

‘Seek the truth, the truth shall make you free.’ So shall we see the truth in all religions, for truth is in all and truth is one!

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *Paris Talks*, p. 137

5 Day and night you must strive that you may attain to the significances of the heavenly Kingdom, perceive the signs of Divinity, acquire certainty of knowledge and realize that this world has a Creator, a Vivifier, a Provider, an Architect—knowing this through proofs and evidences and not through susceptibilities, nay, rather, through decisive arguments and real vision—that is to say, visualizing it as clearly as the outer eye beholds the sun. In this way may you behold the presence of God and attain to the knowledge of the holy, divine Manifestations.

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 discovering the inner realities of things. Then shall you 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. 227-8



THE SEARCH AS A JOURNEY

Focus Questions:

As a traveler, what can the seeker do to discover and reach the City of God?

How can we assist a seeker to reach the City of God?

But, O my brother, when a true seeker determineth to take the step of search in the path leading to the knowledge of the Ancient of Days, he must, before all else, cleanse and purify his heart, which is the seat of the revelation of the inner mysteries of God, from the obscuring dust of all acquired knowledge, and the allusions of the embodiments of satanic fancy. He must purge his breast, which is the sanctuary of the abiding love of the Beloved, of every defilement, and sanctify his soul from all that pertaineth to water and clay, from all shadowy and ephemeral attachments. He must so cleanse his heart that no remnant of either love or hate may linger therein, lest that love blindly incline him to error, or that hate repel him away from the truth. Even as thou dost witness in this day how most of the people, because of such love and hate, are bereft of the immortal Face, have strayed far from the Embodiments of the divine mysteries, and, shepherdless, are roaming through the wilderness of oblivion and error. That seeker must at all times put his trust in God, must renounce the peoples of the earth, detach himself from the world of dust, and cleave unto Him Who is the Lord of Lords. He must never seek to exalt himself above any one, must wash away from the tablet of his heart every trace of pride and vainglory, must cling unto patience and resignation, observe silence, and refrain from idle talk. For the tongue is a smouldering fire, and excess of speech a deadly poison. Material fire consumeth the body, whereas the fire of the tongue devoureth both heart and soul. The force of the former lasteth but for a time, whilst the effects of the latter endureth a century.

That seeker should also regard backbiting as grievous error, and keep himself aloof from its dominion, inasmuch as backbiting quencheth the light of the heart, and extinguisheth the life of the soul. He should be content with little, and be freed from all inordinate desire. He should treasure the companionship of those that have renounced the world, and regard avoidance of boastful and worldly people a precious benefit. At the dawn of every day he should commune with God, and with all his soul persevere in the quest of his Beloved. He should consume every wayward thought with the flame of His loving mention, and, with the swiftness of lightning, pass by all else save Him. He should succour the dispossessed, and never withhold his favour from the destitute. He should show kindness to animals, how much more unto his fellow-man, to him who is endowed with the power of utterance. He should not hesitate to offer up his life for his Beloved, nor allow the censure of the people to turn him away from the Truth. He should not wish for others that which he doth not wish for himself, nor promise that which he doth not fulfill. With all his heart should the seeker avoid fellowship with evil doers, and pray for the remission of their sins. He should forgive the sinful, and never despise his low estate, for none knoweth what his own end shall be.

How often hath a sinner, at the hour of death, attained to the essence of faith, and, quaffing the immortal draught, hath taken his flight unto the celestial Concourse. And how often hath a devout believer, at the hour of his soul's ascension, been so changed as to fall into the nethermost fire. Our purpose in revealing these convincing and weighty utterances is to impress upon the seeker that he should regard all else beside God as transient, and count all things save Him, Who is the Object of all adoration, as utter nothingness.

. . . When the detached wayfarer and sincere seeker hath fulfilled these essential conditions, then and only then can he be called a true seeker. . . .

Only when the lamp of search, of earnest striving, of longing desire, of passionate devotion, of fervid love, of rapture, and ecstasy, is kindled within the seeker's heart, and the breeze of His loving-kindness is wafted upon his soul, will the darkness of error be dispelled, the mists of doubts and misgivings be dissipated, and the lights of knowledge and certitude envelop his being. At that hour will the mystic Herald, bearing the joyful tidings of the Spirit, shine forth from the City of God resplendent as the morn, and, through the trumpet-blast of knowledge, will awaken the heart, the soul, and the spirit from the slumber of negligence. Then will the manifold favours and outpouring grace of the holy and everlasting Spirit confer such new life upon the seeker that he will find himself endowed with a new eye, a new ear, a new heart, and a new mind. He will contemplate the manifest signs of the universe, and will penetrate the hidden mysteries of the soul. Gazing with the eye of God, he will perceive within every atom a door that leadeth him to the stations of absolute certitude. He will discover in all things the mysteries of divine Revelation and the evidences of an everlasting manifestation.

I swear by God! Were he that treadeth the path of guidance and seeketh to scale the heights of righteousness to attain unto this glorious and supreme station, he would inhale at a distance of a thousand leagues the fragrance of God, and would perceive the resplendent morn of a divine Guidance rising above the dayspring of all things. Each and every thing, however small, would be to him a revelation, leading him to his Beloved, the Object of his quest. So great shall be the discernment of this seeker that he will discriminate between truth and falsehood even as he doth distinguish the sun from shadow. If in the uttermost corners of the East the sweet savours of God be wafted, he will assuredly recognize and inhale their fragrance, even though he be dwelling in the uttermost ends of the West. He will likewise clearly distinguish all the signs of God—His wondrous utterances, His great works, and mighty deeds—from the doings, words and ways of men, even as the jeweller who knoweth the gem from the stone, or the man who distinguisheth the spring from autumn and heat from cold. When the channel of the human soul is cleansed of all worldly and impeding attachments, it will unfailingly perceive the breath of the Beloved across immeasurable distances, and will, led by its perfume, attain and enter the City of Certitude.”

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, pp. 192-7



THE SEARCH FOR THE BELOVED

Focus Questions:

As a lover, what can the seeker do to find the Beloved?

How can we assist a seeker to find the Beloved?

1 One must judge of search by the standard of the Majnún of Love. It is related that one day they came upon Majnún sifting the dust, and his tears flowing down. They said, 'What doest thou?' He said, 'I seek for Layli.' They cried, 'Alas for thee! Laylí is of pure spirit, and thou seekest her in the dust!' He said, 'I seek her everywhere; haply somewhere I shall find her.'

Yea, although to the wise it be shameful to seek the Lord of Lords in the dust, yet this betokeneth intense ardor in searching. 'Whoso seeketh out a thing with zeal shall find it.'

The true seeker hunteth naught but the object of his quest, and the lover hath no desire save union with his beloved. Nor shall the seeker reach his goal unless he sacrifice all things. That is, whatever he hath seen, and heard, and understood, all must he set at naught, that he may enter the realm of the spirit, which is the City of God. Labor is needed, if we are to seek Him; ardor is needed, if we are to drink of the honey of reunion with Him; and if we taste of this cup, we shall cast away the world. On this journey the traveler abideth in every land and dwelleth in every region. In every face, he seeketh the beauty of the Friend; in every country he looketh for the Beloved. He joineth every company, and seeketh fellowship with every soul, that haply in some mind he may uncover the secret of the Friend, or in some face he may behold the beauty of the Loved One.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *The Seven Valleys and The Four Valleys*, pp. 6-7

2 The state in which one should be to seriously search for the truth is the condition of the thirsty, burning soul desiring the water of life, of the fish struggling to reach the sea, of the sufferer seeking for the true doctor to obtain the divine cure, of the lost caravan endeavoring to find the right road, of the lost and wandering ship striving to reach the shore of salvation.

Therefore, the seeker must be endowed with certain qualities. First of all, he must be just and severed from all else save God; his heart must be entirely turned to the supreme horizon; he must be free from the bondage of self and passion, for all these are obstacles. Furthermore, he must be able to endure all hardships. He must be absolutely pure and sanctified, and free from the love or the hatred of the inhabitants of the world. Why? because the fact of his love for any person or thing might prevent him from recognizing the truth in another, and, in the same way, hatred for anything might be a hindrance in discerning truth. This is the condition of seeking, and the seeker must have these qualities and attributes. Until he reaches this condition, it is not possible for him to attain to the Sun of Reality.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *Some Answered Questions*, pp. 38-9

3 There was once a lover who had sighed for long years in separation from his beloved, and wasted in the fire of remoteness. From the rule of love, his heart was empty of patience, and his body weary of his spirit; he reckoned life without her as a mockery, and time consumed him. . . .

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

His feet carried him on, the one bleeding with the arrow of love, and his heart lamented. Then he came to a garden wall, and with untold pain he scaled it, for it proved very high; and forgetting his life, he threw himself down to the garden.

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

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

Now if the lover could have looked ahead, he would have blessed the watchman at the start, and prayed on his behalf, and he would have seen that tyranny as justice; but since the end was veiled to him, he moaned and made his plaint in the beginning. Yet those who journey in the garden land of knowledge, because they see the end in the beginning, see peace in war and friendliness in anger.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *The Seven Valleys and The Four Valleys*, pp. 13-5



THE SEARCH AS THE CULTIVATION OF A GARDEN

Focus Questions:

As a gardener, what can the seeker do to effectively cultivate the recognition of truth? How can we assist a seeker to cultivate the recognition of truth?

1 God has given man the eye of investigation by which he may see and recognize truth. He has endowed man with ears that he may hear the message of reality and conferred upon him the gift of reason by which he may discover things for himself. This is his endowment and equipment for the investigation of reality. Man is not intended to see through the eyes of another, hear through another's ears nor comprehend with another's brain. Each human creature has individual endowment, power and responsibility in the creative plan of God. Therefore, depend upon your own reason and judgment and adhere to the outcome of your own investigation; otherwise, you will be utterly submerged in the sea of ignorance and deprived of all the bounties of God. Turn to God, supplicate humbly at His threshold, seeking assistance and confirmation, that God may rend asunder the veils that obscure your vision. Then will your eyes be filled with illumination, face to face you will behold the reality of God and your heart become completely purified from the dross of ignorance, reflecting the glories and bounties of the Kingdom. 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. In this same way man must free himself from the weeds of ignorance, thorns of superstitions and thistles of imitations that he may discover reality in the harvests of true knowledge. Otherwise, the discovery of reality is impossible, contention and divergence of religious belief will always remain, and mankind, like ferocious wolves, will rage and attack each other in hatred and antagonism. We supplicate God that He may destroy the veils which limit our vision and that these becloudings, which darken the way of the manifestation of the shining lights, may be dispelled in order that the effulgent Sun of Reality may shine forth. We implore and invoke God, seeking His assistance and confirmation. Man is a child of God, most noble, lofty and beloved by God, his Creator. Therefore, he must ever strive that the divine bounties and virtues bestowed upon him may prevail and control him. Just now the soil of human hearts seems like black earth, but in the innermost substance of this dark soil there are thousands of fragrant flowers latent. We must endeavor to cultivate and awaken these potentialities, discover the secret treasure in this very mine and depository of God, bring forth these resplendent powers long hidden in human hearts. Then will the glories of both worlds be blended and increased and the quintessence of human existence be made manifest.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 293-4

2 Behold how the sun shines upon all creation, but only surfaces that are pure and polished can reflect its glory and light. The darkened soul has no portion of the revelation of the glorious effulgence of reality; and the soil of self, unable to take advantage of that light, does not produce growth. The eyes of the blind cannot behold the rays of the sun; only pure eyes with sound and perfect sight can receive them. Green and living trees can absorb the bounty of the sun; dead roots and withered branches are destroyed by it. Therefore, man must seek capacity and develop readiness. As long as he lacks susceptibility to divine influences, he is incapable of reflecting the light and assimilating its benefits. Sterile soil will produce nothing, even if the cloud of mercy pours rain upon it a thousand years. We must make the soil of our hearts receptive and fertile by tilling in order that the rain of divine mercy may refresh them and bring forth roses and hyacinths of heavenly planting. We must have perceiving eyes in order to see the light of the sun. We must cleanse the nostril in order to scent the fragrances of the divine rose garden. We must render the ears attentive in order to hear the summons of the supreme Kingdom. No matter how beautiful the melody, the ear that is deaf cannot hear it, cannot receive the call of the Supreme Concourse. The nostril that is clogged with dust cannot inhale the fragrant odors of the blossoms. Therefore, we must ever strive for capacity and seek readiness. As long as we lack susceptibility, the beauties and bounties of God cannot penetrate. Christ spoke a parable in which He said His words were like the seeds of the sower; some fall upon stony ground, some upon sterile soil, some are choked by thorns and thistles, but some fall upon the ready, receptive and fertile ground of human hearts. When seeds are cast upon sterile soil, no growth follows. Those cast upon stony ground will grow a short time, but lacking deep roots will wither away. Thorns and thistles destroy others completely, but the seed cast in good ground brings forth harvest and fruitage.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 148-9

3 In short, it behooves us all to be lovers of truth. Let us seek her in every season and in every country, being careful never to attach ourselves to personalities. Let us see the light wherever it shines, and may we be enabled to recognize the light of truth no matter where it may arise. Let us inhale the perfume of the rose from the midst of thorns which surround it; let us drink the running water from every pure spring.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *Paris Talks*, pp. 133-4

Extended After-Class Activities

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

1. Carefully choose a quotation from the selections describing the seeker's quest. Memorize it and share it at the beginning of the next session. Also share the quotation with one or more other souls before the next session.
2. Study *The Seven Valleys* as another description of the journey of the soul. Bring a 2-minute report of your study to the next session.
3. Please also consider the following questions as you complete your Personal Teaching Plan:

What specific steps can I take to continue meeting many people?

What specific steps can I take to build relationships into strong friendships through love, kindness, hospitality and listening with love?

With which of my friends could I share the teachings about the seeker's quest? Under what circumstances? Can I create those circumstances?

How can I follow the Master's example in my contacts with others?

How can I host a devotional gathering or support a children's class?

A Personal Teaching Plan

Listen to quiet music, possibly one of the beautiful songs written in tribute to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, as you complete your Personal Teaching Plan.

Closing Devotions

Close the session with singing and prayers for teaching.



A PERSONAL TEACHING PLAN

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

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

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



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

How can I draw upon...?



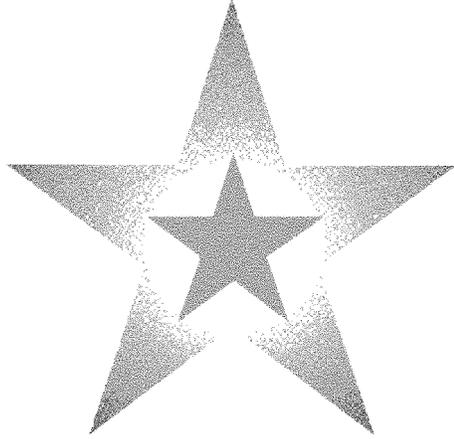
My love for Bahá'u'lláh; the power of the Covenant; the dynamics of prayer; the inspiration and education derived from regular reading and study of the Holy Texts?



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



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



*B*e righteous, O servants, in your actions!

Turn not away from the helpless;
make mention of Me amidst the great,
and have no fear.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

The Seeker's Quest

COURSE THREE

Some
Fundamental
Verities of the
Bahá'í Faith

Session 6

Forming
Friendships

Opening Devotions

Begin the study circle with prayers and singing or recorded music. You may also consider including the following quotation in your opening devotions:

What a power is love! It is the most wonderful, the greatest of all living powers.

Love gives life to the lifeless. Love lights a flame in the heart that is cold. Love brings hope to the hopeless and gladdens the hearts of the sorrowful.

In the world of existence there is indeed no greater power than the power of love. When the heart of man is aglow with the flame of love, he is ready to sacrifice all—even his life. In the Gospel it is said God is love.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *Paris Talks*, p. 179

Objectives of the Session

Read aloud the learning objectives for this session.

Knowledge

To become familiar with some of the writings on teaching the Cause.

Wisdom

To understand that it is the power of love that assist us to form friendships.

To understand the importance of teaching people of capacity.

To understand the importance of teaching to enhance the diversity of the Bahá’í community.

Spiritual Perception

To perceive the advantages to the Cause of God in teaching prominent people and diverse peoples.

To appreciate the power of love in the teaching work.

Eloquent Speech

To develop steps to weave the bonds of fellowship with prominent people and with people who will enhance the diversity of the community.

To create and implement a Personal Teaching Plan.

Consultation About Individual Acts of Teaching, Study, and Service

Reflect upon your teaching plan:

1. Who would like to recite a memorized quotation?
2. Who was able to share quotations about the process of a spiritual search with others? What happened?
3. Who would like to share what you learned about the journey of the soul in *The Seven Valleys*?
4. Who would like to share examples of the power of listening and continued efforts to increase friendships with others?
5. Who was able to host a devotional gathering or assist a children's class?

Activity *The Power of Love*

1. Consider a mirror and its capacity to reflect light. Place a candle near the mirror so that we can see its power to reflect the light.
2. When we follow the example of the Master, the perfect mirror of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation, we reflect the light of the love of God. It is the power of love that assists us "to form friendships, to interact personally with others, to build relationships" as suggested by the Universal House of Justice in the Ridván 153 letter to the Bahá'ís of the world.
3. As we know, 'Abdu'l-Bahá showed love to seekers in many different ways. Consider the following story:

Mrs. Parsons . . . had asked some twenty people, all outstanding in various walks of life, to meet 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Culture, science, art, wealth, politics, achievement—all were represented. Most of those present at this luncheon party knew a little of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's life history, and presumably were expecting a dissertation from Him on the Bahá'í Cause. The hostess had suggested to the Master that He speak to them on . . . Immortality. However, as the meal progressed, and no more than the usual commonplaces of polite society were mentioned, the hostess made an opening, as she thought, for 'Abdu'l-Bahá to speak on spiritual things.

His response to this was to ask if He might tell them a story, and He related one of the Oriental tales, of which He had a great store and at its conclusion all laughed heartily. The ice was broken. Others added stories of which the Master's anecdote had reminded them. Then 'Abdu'l-Bahá, his face beaming with happiness, told another story, and another. His laughter rang through the room.

He said ‘ . . . It is good to laugh. Laughter is a spiritual relaxation.’ ‘When they were in prison,’ He said, ‘and under the utmost deprivation and difficulties, each of them at the close of the day would relate the most ludicrous event which had happened. Sometimes it was a little difficult to find one but always they would laugh until the tears would run down their cheeks. Happiness,’ He said, ‘is never dependent upon material surrounding, otherwise how sad those years would have been.’ As it was, they were always in the utmost state of joy and happiness.

That was the nearest He came to talking about the Bahá’í message but the effect on those present was undoubtedly greater than any ‘learned dissertation’ would have caused in them. After the guests had gone . . . He came close to his hostess and asked her, with a little wistful smile, almost, she . . . used to say, like a child seeking approbation, if she were pleased with Him.

HONNOLD, *Vignettes from the Life of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp. 150-1

4. Pair with another member of your study circle to read the quotations on the following pages aloud with great care and identify two important points made in the quotations. You will have the opportunity to share these points later in this session.



1 What a power is love! It is the most wonderful, the greatest of all living powers.

Love gives life to the lifeless. Love lights a flame in the heart that is cold. Love brings hope to the hopeless and gladdens the hearts of the sorrowful.

In the world of existence there is indeed no greater power than the power of love. When the heart of man is aglow with the flame of love, he is ready to sacrifice all—even his life. In the Gospel it is said God is love.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *Paris Talks*, p. 179

2 If thou wishest to guide the souls, it is incumbent on thee to be firm, to be good and to be imbued with praiseworthy attributes and divine qualities under all circumstances. Be a sign of love, a manifestation of mercy, a fountain of tenderness, kind-hearted, good to all and gentle to the servants of God, and especially to those who bear relation to thee, both men and women. Bear every ordeal that befalleth thee from the people and confront them not save with kindness, with great love and good wishes.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. 2, p. 298

3 The friends of God should weave bonds of fellowship with others and show absolute love and affection towards them. These links have a deep influence on people and they will listen. When the friends sense receptivity to the Word of God, they should deliver the Message with wisdom. They must first try and remove any apprehensions in the people they teach. In fact, every one of the believers should choose one person every year and try to establish ties of friendship with him, so that all his fear would disappear. Only then, and gradually, must he teach that person. This is the best method.

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

4 Let him remember the example set by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, and His constant admonition to shower such kindness upon the seeker, and exemplify to such a degree the spirit of the teachings he hopes to instill into him, that the recipient will be spontaneously impelled to identify himself with the Cause embodying such teachings.

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

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

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

6 Not all of us are capable of serving in the same way, but the one way every Bahá'í can spread the Faith is by example. This moves the hearts of people far more deeply than words ever can.

The love we show others, the hospitality and understanding, the willingness to help them, these are the very best advertisements of the Faith. . . .

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

7 The Guardian feels that the most effective way for the Bahá'ís to teach the Faith is to make strong friends with their neighbours and associates. When the friends have confidence in the Bahá'ís and the Bahá'ís in their friends, they should give the Message and teach the Cause. Individual teaching of this type is more effective than any other type.

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

8 The Guardian thinks perhaps a different approach to the aborigines might attract them; one of being interested in their lives and their folklore, and of trying to become their friend, rather than trying to change them or improve them.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. 2, p. 320

9 The all-important thing of course is that every activity . . . is for the purpose of teaching the Faith and confirming people. Therefore you and the other Bahá'ís should watch the situation very closely. You should study those who attend the meetings, and when you find one who you feel would become a strong and active Bahá'í, then you should concentrate on teaching him. Thus, if you are able to confirm some souls, you will have rendered distinguished and outstanding service. Actually this is the goal of all such activities in all of the universities.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. 2, p. 320

10 The spirit of the hour is teaching on the Home Fronts. Its goal can only be won by a new spirit of dedication and consecration on the part of the friends at home. Miraculous victories are being won, in the difficult virgin areas, because the pioneers have consecrated their lives to the Noble Mission they have embarked upon. The Friends at home must display this same consecration and dedication. Never must they let a day pass, without teaching some soul, hoping that Bahá'u'lláh will cause each seed to grow. The Friends should seek pure souls, gain their confidence and then teach that person carefully until he becomes a Bahá'í—and then nurture him until he becomes a firm and active supporter of the Faith.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. 2, p. 322

11 We must be careful not to teach in a fanatical way. We should teach as the Master taught. He was the perfect Exemplar of the Teachings. He proclaimed the universal truths, and, through love and wise demonstration of the universal verities of the Faith, attracted the hearts and the minds.

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

1. Consider the following quotations:

The friends must certainly explore new channels and have more audacity, if they are to get anywhere in adding to their numbers.
ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. 2, p. 323

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

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *Teaching the Bahá'í Faith*, p. 23

Discuss: Why is it important to explore new channels in the teaching work? In what ways is the Universal House of Justice guiding us to these new channels?

2. Organize your study group into two teams, so one team studies “Teaching Prominent People” and the other team studies the handout “Teaching to Enhance Diversity.” In your team, read the quotations aloud carefully, answer the focus questions, and prepare a poster on chart paper to teach the other team the key points gleaned from these passages.
3. After about 20 minutes, present your key points for the other team, using the poster as a teaching aid.
4. Return to your study group. Recall the key point that you identified about the importance of real love in the teaching work. Create a brief role play to illustrate building true friendship and successfully teaching to enhance the diversity of your community or to teach prominent people.
5. Briefly discuss: How do these role plays help us identify practical actions that we can take to blazon the name of Bahá'u'lláh and share His message with all people?



TEACHING PROMINENT PEOPLE

Focus Questions:

What are the advantages to humanity in teaching prominent people the Cause of God? What specific advice do these passages give us in this important teaching work?

1 Be righteous, O servants, in your actions! Turn not away from the helpless; make mention of Me amidst the great, and have no fear.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. 2, p. 267

2 I hope that thou wilt . . . endeavour to teach some high-ranking and influential persons, for the hearts of the people have become attracted to the Cause of God and their minds bewildered and enthralled by its awesome grandeur. Those who occupy high positions, too, have become profoundly receptive to its message. The loved ones of God should therefore make a determined effort and guide these distinguished souls to the Cause.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. 2, p. 259

3 You should always seek to guide prominent people inasmuch as once such a person is regenerated he is likely to bring about the quickening of a thousand souls. Thus the spirit of truth would flow forth unimpeded into the veins and arteries of a multitude.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. 2, p. 259

4 You should give serious concern to the matter of teaching, and think of ways of imparting the Message to prominent people, for once such persons have given their allegiance to the Faith they will cause the people to be led, troop after troop, to the wellspring of unfailing guidance.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. 2, p. 259

5 Some of the loved ones should establish ties of friendship with the notables of the region and manifest towards them the most affectionate regard. In this manner these men may become acquainted with the Bahá'í way of life, learn of the teachings of the Merciful One, and be informed of the pervasive influence of the Word of God in every quarter of the globe. If but one of these souls were attracted to the Cause, others would quickly be similarly moved, since the people tend to follow in the footsteps of their leaders.

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

6 He was also very pleased to see that the Cause is receiving newspaper publicity there, and you are winning the sympathetic interest of editors and people of importance. The Faith needs friends as well as adherents, and you should always endeavour to attract the hearts of enlightened leaders to its teachings.

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. 2, p. 259

7 A very important activity which has been pursued effectively in all too few countries is the undertaking by the National Spiritual Assembly of a sustained, planned effort to foster cordial relations with prominent people and responsible government officials and to familiarize them personally with the basic tenets and the teachings of the Faith. Such an activity must be carried out with wisdom and discretion, and requires the constant attention of a responsible committee as well as periodic review by the National Spiritual Assembly itself. Where successful it can effectively forestall opposition to the Faith and smooth the way for many essential aspects of the development of the Bahá'í community.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. 2, p. 267

8 You mentioned in your letter your intention to make contact with the representatives of movements which are akin to the Cause in the principles they advocate. Shoghi Effendi trusts that in all such communications and activities you would maintain the prestige and superiority of the Cause. We should never compromise our principles for some temporary benefits we are apt to reap. It is very important to bring the Cause to the attention of such leaders of thought and for this purpose we have to get in touch with them, but our aim should be to draw them to the Cause rather than follow their footsteps.

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. 2, p. 277

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

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

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

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. 2, p. 314



TEACHING TO ENHANCE DIVERSITY

Focus Questions:

What are the advantages to humanity of enhancing the diversity of the adherents of the Cause of God? What specific advice do these passages give us in this important teaching work?

1 No more laudable and meritorious service can be rendered the Cause of God, at the present hour, than a successful effort to enhance the diversity of the members of the American Bahá'í community by swelling the ranks of the Faith through the enrollment of the members of these races. A blending of these highly differentiated elements of the human race, harmoniously interwoven into the fabric of an all-embracing Bahá'í fraternity, and assimilated through the dynamic processes of a divinely appointed Administrative Order, and contributing each its share to the enrichment and glory of Bahá'í community life, is surely an achievement the contemplation of which must warm and thrill every Bahá'í heart.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 54

2 Particular attention, I feel, should, at this juncture, be directed to the various Indian tribes, the aboriginal inhabitants of the Latin republics, whom the Author of the Tablets of the Divine Plan has compared to the 'ancient inhabitants of the Arabian Peninsula.' 'Attach great importance,' is His admonition to the entire body of the believers in the United States and the Dominion of Canada, 'to the indigenous population of America. For these souls may be likened unto the ancient inhabitants of the Arabian Peninsula. . . . When the light of Muhammad shone forth in their midst, however, they became so radiant as to illumine the world. Likewise, these Indians, should they be educated and guided, there can be no doubt that they will become so illumined as to enlighten the whole world.'

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *Citadel of Faith*, p. 16

3 I am reminded, on this historic occasion, of the significant words uttered by Bahá'u'lláh Himself, Who as attested by the Center of the Covenant, in His Writings, 'compared the colored people to the black pupil of the eye,' through which 'the light of the spirit shineth forth.' I feel particularly gratified by the substantial participation in this epoch-making conference of the members of a race dwelling in a continent which for the most part has retained its primitive simplicity and remained uncontaminated by the evils of a gross, a rampant and cancerous materialism undermining the fabric of human society alike in the East and in the West, eating into the vitals of the conflicting peoples and races inhabiting the American, the European and the Asiatic continents, and alas threatening to engulf in one common catastrophic convulsion the generality of mankind. I acclaim the preponderance of the members of this same race at so significant a conference, a phenomenon unprecedented in the annals of Bahá'í conferences held during over a century, and auguring well for a corresponding multiplication in the number of the

representatives of the yellow, the red and brown races of mankind dwelling respectively in the Far East, in the Far West and in the islands of the South Pacific Ocean, a multiplication designed ultimately to bring to a proper equipoise the divers ethnic elements comprised within the highly diversified world-embracing Bahá'í fellowship.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *Messages to the Bahá'í World*, p. 136

4 He feels that particularly at present in Latin America this intimate, loving and friendly approach will do more to further the work than anything else. Indeed, he would go so far as to advise your Assembly to avoid deluging the friends with circulars and unnecessary bulletins. You must always bear in mind the genuine difference between the peoples of the south and the peoples of the north; to use the same techniques as those adopted in the United States would be disastrous because the mentality and background of life are quite different.

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. 2, p. 127

5 It is a great mistake to believe that because people are illiterate or live primitive lives, they are lacking in either intelligence or sensibility. On the contrary, they may well look on us, with the evils of our civilization, with its moral corruption, its ruinous wars, its hypocrisy and conceit, as people who merit watching with both suspicion and contempt. We should meet them as equals, well-wishers, people who admire and respect their ancient descent, and who feel that they will be interested, as we are, in a living religion and not in the dead forms of present-day churches.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. 2, p. 317

6 The unsophisticated people of the world—and they form the large majority of its population—have the same right to know of the Cause of God as others. When the friends are teaching the Word of God they should be careful to give the Message in the same simplicity as it is enunciated in our Teachings. In their contacts they must show genuine and divine love. The heart of an unlettered soul is extremely sensitive; any trace of prejudice on the part of the pioneer or teacher is immediately sensed.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. 2, pp. 61-2

7 Efforts to reach the minorities should be increased and broadened to include all minority groups such as the Indians, Spanish-speaking people, Japanese and Chinese. Indeed, every stratum of American society must be reached and can be reached with the healing Message, if the believers will but arise and go forth with the spirit which is conquering the citadels of the southern states.

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

Individual Acts of Teaching, Study, and Service

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

1. Select one quotation about the power of love to memorize before the next session.
2. Share a quotation about love with at least one other soul before the next session.
3. Bring examples of your efforts to reach specific people or groups as you teach the Faith.
4. Plan and host a devotional gathering or support your local children's class.
5. Consider the following questions as you complete your teaching plan for the coming week:

What specific steps can I take to continue meeting many people?

What specific steps can I take to weave bonds of fellowship with prominent people and/or with people who will enhance the diversity of our community?

What specific steps can I take to build relationships into strong friendships through love, kindness, hospitality and listening with love?

How can I follow the Master's example in my contacts with others?

A Personal Teaching Plan

Play quiet music while you take complete your plan.

Closing Devotions

Close the session with singing and prayers for teaching.



A PERSONAL TEACHING PLAN

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

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

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



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

How can I draw upon...?



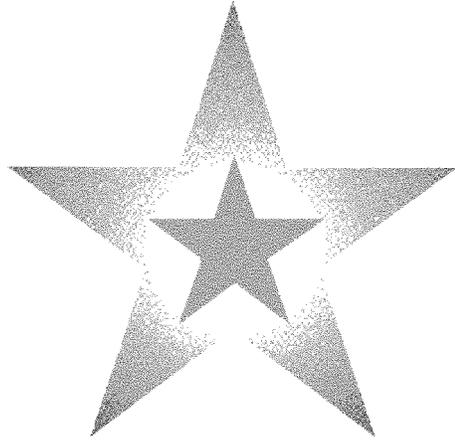
My love for Bahá'u'lláh; the power of the Covenant; the dynamics of prayer; the inspiration and education derived from regular reading and study of the Holy Texts?



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



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



*T*he day is approaching when that which God hath purposed will have prevailed and thou shalt behold the earth transformed into the all-glorious paradise.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

The Seeker's Quest

COURSE THREE

Some
Fundamental
Verities of the
Bahá'í Faith

Session 7

Spiritual
Transformation

Opening Devotions

Begin the study circle with prayers and singing or recorded music. You may also consider including the following quotation in your devotions:

Even as the clouds let us shed down tears, and as the lightning flashes let us laugh at our courings through east and west. By day, by night, let us think but of spreading the sweet savours of God. Let us not keep on forever with our fancies and illusions, with our analyzing and interpreting and circulating of complex dubieties. Let us put aside all thoughts of self; let us close our eyes to all on earth, let us neither make known our sufferings nor complain of our wrongs. Rather let us become oblivious of our own selves, and drinking down the wine of heavenly grace, let us cry out our joy, and lose ourselves in the beauty of the All-Glorious.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, p. 236

Objectives of the Session

Read aloud the learning objectives for this session.

Knowledge

To become familiar with some of the writings that describe the spiritual prerequisites for teaching.

Wisdom

To understand the relationship between personal transformation and success in teaching.

Spiritual Perception

To perceive the transformative power of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh.

Eloquent Speech

To be able to describe the specific actions that can assist in personal transformation.

To develop and implement a Personal Teaching Plan

Consultation About Individual Acts of Teaching, Study, and Service

Reflect upon your personal teaching plan:

- Who would like to recite a memorized quotation?
- Who was able to share a quotation with another person?
- Who was able to take steps to build friendships, show kindness, or offer hospitality to others?
- Who was able to host a devotional gathering or support a children's class?

Activity

Commitment to Spiritual Transformation

1. As we know, our own ongoing spiritual transformation forms an essential condition for our effectiveness in sharing Bahá'u'lláh's beautiful message with others. If available, we may begin our explanation of the relationship between spiritual transformation and growth by viewing the short video, *Consecration*, a talk by Mr. Ali Nakhjavani, former Member of the Universal House of Justice.
2. Let's recall a time in our lives when we were able to discern that, through the grace of God, one of our human qualities became transformed into a more spiritual quality. This change may be large or small, quick-acting or over a long period of time.
3. Turn to the person beside you and briefly share that story while, naturally, avoiding confession. Take turns listening with love—as the Master listened—for about two minutes and sharing your memory with your study partner.
4. Now recall a time when you were able to share something of the message of Bahá'u'lláh through your actions, although words may also have been used. Once again, take turns sharing your memory and listening to your study partner.
5. Then briefly, in the whole group, discuss the question:
How have we noticed the power of this Revelation changing us into effective instruments for spreading the Cause?
6. Play soft music while you individually read the quotations entitled “Commitment to Spiritual Transformation.” Individually reflect on your answers to the focus questions.
7. After this period of individual study, choose one quotation, or part of a quotation, that you would like to keep close at hand to ponder further. Using a small piece of card stock, index cards, posterboard cut down, or other nice paper, copy this quotation beautifully and decorate it with markers, stickers, or other art supplies. You may also choose to place a magnet on the back of the card so that you can display it on your refrigerator or other metal surface.
8. Then consult with a partner to come up with a specific plan for how and when you will use that quotation to teach a seeker, family member or group about the process of spiritual transformation. Consider possibilities such as a devotional gathering on the topic, a fireside, or an informal conversation.



COMMITMENT TO SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION

Focus Questions:

What is the relationship between spiritual transformation and success in teaching?
What specific actions can we undertake to assist in our own spiritual transformation?

1 The vitality of men's belief in God is dying out in every land; nothing short of His wholesome medicine can ever restore it. The corrosion of ungodliness is eating into the vitals of human society; what else but the Elixir of His potent Revelation can cleanse and revive it? Is it within human power, O Hakím, to effect in the constituent elements of any of the minute and indivisible particles of matter so complete a transformation as to transmute it into purest gold? Perplexing and difficult as this may appear, the still greater task of converting satanic strength into heavenly power is one that We have been empowered to accomplish. The Force capable of such a transformation transcendeth the potency of the Elixir itself. The Word of God, alone, can claim the distinction of being endowed with the capacity required for so great and far-reaching a change.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Gleanings from the Writings of Babá'u'lláh*, p. 200, XCIX

2 Thou art God's shadow on earth. Strive, therefore, to act in such a manner as befitteth so eminent, so august a station. If thou dost depart from following the things We have caused to descend upon thee and taught thee, thou wilt, assuredly, be derogating from that great and priceless honor. Return, then, and cleave wholly unto God, and cleanse thine heart from the world and all its vanities, and suffer not the love of any stranger to enter and dwell therein. Not until thou dost purify thine heart from every trace of such love can the brightness of the light of God shed its radiance upon it, for to none hath God given more than one heart.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Gleanings from the Writings of Babá'u'lláh*, p. 237, CXIV

3 The ordinances of God have been sent down from the heaven of His most august Revelation. All must diligently observe them. Man's supreme distinction, his real advancement, his final victory, have always depended, and will continue to depend, upon them. Whoso keepeth the commandments of God shall attain everlasting felicity.

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

4 Let your thoughts dwell on your own spiritual development, and close your eyes to the deficiencies of other souls. Act ye in such wise, showing forth pure and goodly deeds, and modesty and humility, that ye will cause others to be awakened.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Babá*, p. 203

5 The blessings of Bahá'u'lláh are a shoreless sea, and even life everlasting is only a dewdrop therefrom. The waves of that sea are continually lapping against the hearts of the friends, and from those waves there come intimations of the spirit and ardent pulsings of the soul, until the heart giveth way, and willing or not, turneth humbly in prayer unto the Kingdom of the Lord. Wherefore do all ye can to disengage your inner selves, that ye may at every moment reflect new splendours from the Sun of Truth.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, pp. 192-3

6 With reference to what is meant by an individual becoming entirely forgetful of self: the intent is that he should rise up and sacrifice himself in the true sense, that is, he should obliterate the promptings of the human condition, and rid himself of such characteristics as are worthy of blame and constitute the gloomy darkness of this life on earth—not that he should allow his physical health to deteriorate and his body to become infirm.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 180

7 The aim is this: The intention of the teacher must be pure, his heart independent, his spirit attracted, his thought at peace, his resolution firm, his magnanimity exalted and in the love of God a shining torch. Should he become as such, his sanctified breath will even affect the rock; otherwise there will be no result whatsoever. As long as a soul is not perfected, how can he efface the defects of others? Unless he is detached from aught else save God, how can he teach severance to others?

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, p. 54

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

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *Bahá'í Administration*, p. 66

9 . . . spiritual prerequisites of success . . . of all teaching plans, Temple projects, and financial schemes. . . . These requirements are none other than a high sense of moral rectitude in their social and administrative activities, absolute chastity in their individual lives, and complete freedom from prejudice in their dealings with peoples of a different race, class, creed, or color.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, pp. 20-1

10 Just one mature soul, with spiritual understanding and a profound knowledge of the Faith, can set a whole country ablaze—so great is the power of the Cause to work through a pure and selfless channel.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. 1, p. 231

Individual Acts of Teaching, Study, and Service

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

1. Initiate friendly conversations with at least 5 people prior to the next session. These can be new acquaintances or old friends. Continue your prayers for receptive souls.
2. Carry out your plan to the quotation you copied today to teach others about the process of spiritual transformation.
3. Memorize the following quotation and share it with one other person before the next session. Be prepared to recite this passage at the beginning of the next session.

Even as the clouds let us shed down tears, and as the lightning flashes let us laugh at our courings through east and west. By day, by night, let us think but of spreading the sweet savours of God. Let us not keep on forever with our fancies and illusions, with our analyzing and interpreting and circulating of complex dubieties. Let us put aside all thoughts of self; let us close our eyes to all on earth, let us neither make known our sufferings nor complain of our wrongs. Rather let us become oblivious of our own selves, and drinking down the wine of heavenly grace, let us cry out our joy, and lose ourselves in the beauty of the All-Glorious.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 236, no. 195

4. Read the *Tablets of the Divine Plan* with specific attention to the Tablets addressed to the believers in the U.S. and Canada and to the Tablets addressed to your specific region of the United States. Prepare a brief report that outlines specific instructions for teachers of the Faith.
5. Plan and host a devotional gathering, perhaps on the topic of spiritual transformation.
6. Support your local children's class open to all.

Personal Teaching Plan

Play quiet music as you complete your Personal Teaching Plan.

Closing Devotions

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



A PERSONAL TEACHING PLAN

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

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

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



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

How can I draw upon...?



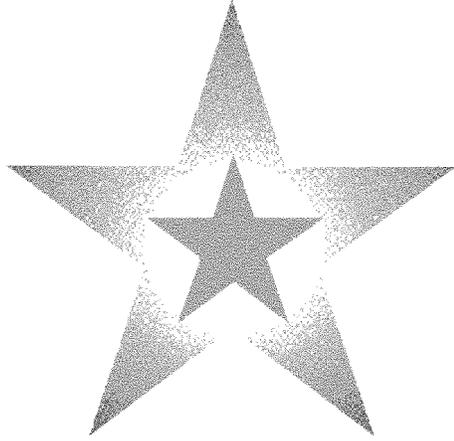
My love for Bahá'u'lláh; the power of the Covenant; the dynamics of prayer; the inspiration and education derived from regular reading and study of the Holy Texts?



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



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



*N*o sooner had mankind attained the stage of maturity, than the Word revealed to men's eyes the latent energies with which it had been endowed—energies which manifested themselves in the plenitude of their glory when the Ancient Beauty appeared, in the year sixty, in the person of 'Alí-Muhammad, the Báb.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

The Seeker's Quest

COURSE THREE

Some
Fundamental
Verities of the
Bahá'í Faith

Session 8

Finding Receptive
Souls

Opening Devotions

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

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

It hath been decreed by Us that the Word of God and all the potentialities thereof shall be manifested unto men in strict conformity with such conditions as have been foreordained by Him Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. . . . Should the Word be allowed to release suddenly all the energies latent within it, no man could sustain the weight of so mighty a Revelation. Nay, all that is in heaven and on earth would flee in consternation before it No sooner had mankind attained the stage of maturity, than the Word revealed to men's eyes the latent energies with which it had been endowed—energies which manifested themselves in the plenitude of their glory when the Ancient Beauty appeared, in the year sixty, in the person of 'Alí-Muhammad, the Báb.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Gleanings from the Writings of Babá'u'lláh*, pp. 76-7, XXXIII

Objectives of the Session

Read aloud the learning objectives for this session.

Knowledge

To become familiar with some of the writings on finding receptive souls.

Wisdom

To understand the role of the teacher in finding receptive souls.

Spiritual Perception

To perceive the relationship between transformation and the maturation of humanity.

Eloquent Speech

To be able to answer the question “What is the Bahá'í Faith?” in several different ways.

To develop and implement a plan for teaching the Faith everyday.

Consultation About Individual Acts of Teaching, Study, and Service

Consider your Personal Teaching Plan:

- Who would like to share examples of initiating friendly conversations with new acquaintances or old friends?
- Who was able to memorize or share a quotation with another person?
- Who was able to teach others about the process of spiritual transformation? How did it go?
- Who chose to read *Tablets of the Divine Plan*? What did you learn?
- Who was able to host a devotional gathering or support a children's class?

Activity

Transformation and Maturation of Humanity

1. As we know, the same forces of this Revelation that are transforming us are also transforming and maturing all humanity. Share the following passage written by the beloved Guardian, Shoghi Effendi, with the friends:

That mystic, all-pervasive, yet undefinable change, which we associate with the stage of maturity inevitable in the life of the individual and the development of the fruit must, if we would correctly apprehend the utterances of Bahá'u'lláh, have its counterpart in the evolution of the organization of human society. A similar stage must sooner or later be attained in the collective life of mankind, producing an even more striking phenomenon in world relations, and endowing the whole human race with such potentialities of well-being as shall provide, throughout the succeeding ages, the chief incentive required for the eventual fulfillment of its high destiny. Such a stage of maturity in the process of human government must, for all time, if we would faithfully recognize the tremendous claim advanced by Bahá'u'lláh, remain identified with the Revelation of which He was the Bearer.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 163-4

2. Consider a bowl of fruit that contains both ripe and unripe fruit. If possible, use real fruit or refer to pictures of fruit. In groups of three, very quickly list the characteristics of ripe fruit and unripe fruit, mature human beings and immature human beings.
3. Share your lists with the whole group. Then, create a master list for each of these four items on chart paper, or a chalkboard. Briefly discuss: What are the characteristics of mature and immature civilization?
4. In the whole group, read aloud the quotations entitled "Transformation and Maturation of Humanity." Discuss the focus questions.



TRANSFORMATION AND MATURATION OF HUMANITY

Focus Questions:

How does the maturation of fruit illustrate the process of social change? How does the maturation of fruit illustrate our role as teachers in that process?

1 It hath been decreed by Us that the Word of God and all the potentialities thereof shall be manifested unto men in strict conformity with such conditions as have been foreordained by Him Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. . . . Should the Word be allowed to release suddenly all the energies latent within it, no man could sustain the weight of so mighty a Revelation. Nay, all that is in heaven and on earth would flee in consternation before it No sooner had mankind attained the stage of maturity, than the Word revealed to men's eyes the latent energies with which it had been endowed—energies which manifested themselves in the plenitude of their glory when the Ancient Beauty appeared, in the year sixty, in the person of 'Alí-Muhammad, the Báb.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Gleanings from the Writings of Babá'u'lláh*, pp. 76-7, XXXIII

2 All created things have their degree, or stage, of maturity. The period of maturity in the life of a tree is the time of its fruit bearing The animal attains a stage of full growth and completeness, and in the human kingdom man reaches his maturity when the lights of intelligence have their greatest power and development. . . . Similarly, there are periods and stages in the life of the aggregate world of humanity, which at one time was passing through its degree of childhood, at another its time of youth but now has entered its long presaged period of maturity, the evidences of which are everywhere visible and apparent. . . . That which was applicable to human needs during the early history of the race could neither meet nor satisfy the demands of this day and period of newness and consummation. Humanity has emerged from its former degrees of limitation and preliminary training. Man must now become imbued with new virtues and powers, new moralities, new capacities. New bounties, bestowals and perfections are awaiting and already descending upon him. The gifts and graces of the period of youth, although timely and sufficient during the adolescence of the world of mankind, are now incapable of meeting the requirements of its maturity.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 438-9

Activity
What Is the Bahá'í Faith?

We can assist the maturation of humanity with practice introducing the message of Bahá'u'lláh to others.

1. In teams of two, write three short answers to the question, “So what is the Bahá'í Faith?” Please limit each answer to one or two sentences, incorporate a phrase from the writings of Bahá'u'lláh in the answer, and if possible, stimulate more questions as you share your answer. Consider including the concept that this is a time of great changes in the world. In another answer, mention the pivotal principle of oneness. In your third answer, include mention of the name of Bahá'u'lláh. Because different people respond well to different teachings, please consider the hopes and interests of specific individuals that you know personally as you prepare your answers. Here are some examples created by other Bahá'í teachers:
 - Bahá'u'lláh teaches us that this is the time for humanity's coming of age and that “all created things proclaim the evidences of this world-wide regeneration.”
 - The Bahá'í Faith was founded by Bahá'u'lláh who taught that “the earth is but one country and mankind its citizens.”
 - One of the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh is the oneness and wholeness of the entire human race. “So powerful is the light of unity that it can illuminate the whole earth.”
 - One purpose of the Bahá'í Faith is to enable human beings to “lay bare those gems that lie hidden within the mine of their true and inmost selves.”

You may choose to refer to books such as *The Hidden Words* to identify short phrases from the writings to incorporate in your answers.

2. After about 15 minutes of work time, share your answers in the whole group. Then, take turns asking and answering the question, “What is the Bahá'í Faith?”
3. At the conclusion of this activity, enjoy some ripe fruit to celebrate the increasing maturation of humanity!

Activity

Finding Receptive Souls

1. As we have seen, some of the first steps in the teaching process include transforming ourselves, making many contacts, sowing many seeds, and then teaching those who are receptive. The following story illustrates the process by which the distinguished scholar, Mírzá ‘Abu’l-Fadl came to accept an invitation to the home of a Bahá’í.

One Friday afternoon, Mírzá ‘Abu’l-Fadl, in company with a few mullas, left the city to visit a certain shrine in the countryside in the vicinity of the capital. They were all riding on donkeys. It was customary in those days for the people to leave the city for nearby villages on Fridays (which is a public holiday in Islámic countries) for pleasure as well as visiting holy places.

It so happened that on the way out one of the donkeys lost a shoe, so the party called at the nearest blacksmith for help. Noticing the long beard and large turban of Mírzá ‘Abu’l-Fadl—indications of his vast knowledge—the blacksmith Ustád Husayn-i-Na’l-Band (shoeing smith), who was illiterate, was tempted to enter into conversation with the learned man. He said to Mírzá that since he had honoured him with his presence, it would be a great privilege for him if he could be allowed to ask a question which had perplexed his mind for some time. When permission was granted he said, ‘Is it true that in the Traditions of Shíah Islam it is stated that each drop of rain is accompanied by an angel from heaven? And that this angel brings down the rain to the ground?’ ‘This is true,’ Mírzá ‘Abu’l-Fadl responded. After a pause, the blacksmith begged to be allowed to ask another question to which Mirza gave his assent. ‘Is it true,’ the blacksmith asked, ‘that if there is a dog in a house no angel will ever visit that house?’ Before thinking of the connection between the two questions, Mírzá ‘Abu’l-Fadl responded in the affirmative. ‘In that case,’ commented the blacksmith, ‘no rain should ever fall in a house where a dog is kept.’ Mírzá ‘Abu’l-Fadl, the noted learned man of Islám, was now confounded by an illiterate blacksmith. His rage knew no bounds, and his companions noticed that he was filled with shame. They whispered to him, ‘This blacksmith is a Bahá’í!’

This incident left a deep impression on Mírzá ‘Abu’l-Fadl. The blacksmith, on the other hand, reported the whole story to ‘Abdu’l-Karím and suggested that because his pride had been hurt, Mírzá ‘Abu’l-Fadl would now welcome an encounter with a Bahá’í teacher in the hope of restoring his superiority. This assessment proved to be correct. For when ‘Abdu’l-Karím invited Mírzá ‘Abu’l-Fadl to take part in a discussion with a certain Bahá’í friend, he accepted the invitation. It appears that even up to this point, Mírzá ‘Abu’l-Fadl had not realized that Abdu’l-Karím himself was a Bahá’í.

The meeting was arranged in the home of ‘Abdu’l-Karím. But the Bahá’í teacher whom ‘Abdu’l-Karím had invited was a man devoid of learning. He was not an educated man. But his heart was connected to the Source of all Knowledge. Every abstruse subject that Mírzá ‘Abu’l-Fadl brought up during the discussion and every objection he raised was dealt with in simple terms and in such a manner that he could not question the validity of the arguments put forward by the Bahá’í teacher.

It may seem strange that uneducated people may become the recipients of the knowledge of God. Indeed, one of the proofs of the power of God in this Revelation is that in addition to the many learned people who ranked foremost among the teachers of the Faith, there were those who did not have a proper education and in some cases were even illiterate, but who succeeded in guiding many souls to the Cause of God.

As has been stated . . . the knowledge of God and His Manifestations, the power to discover the mysteries of life, to comprehend religious truth, and to understand the reality of man is not dependent upon academic education. This knowledge is bestowed upon the individual by God. And it is the heart of man which receives it and becomes the wellspring of enlightenment, power and understanding.

ADIB TAHERZADEH, *The Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh*, Vol 3, pp. 92-4

2. Organize your study circle into groups of two or three and, if possible, with friends that live near each other or share common acquaintances. While in your small groups, read the quotations, “Finding Receptive Souls” aloud and answer the focus questions as specifically as possible, according to your circumstances.
3. Share your answers with the whole group.



FINDING RECEPTIVE SOULS

Focus questions:

According to the writings, how can we find receptive souls?

What are some practical, achievable steps to “teaching some soul” every day?

How can we support each other in this process?

1 Never must they let a day pass, without teaching some soul, hoping that Bahá'u'lláh will cause each seed to grow. The Friends should seek pure souls, gain their confidence and then teach that person carefully until he becomes a Bahá'í—and then nurture him until he becomes a firm and active supporter of the Faith.

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, *Teaching the Bahá'í Faith*, p. 83

2 Not every soul is receptive to the Divine Message, but many truth-seekers, like yourself, are thirsting for the Cause of God. The friends must exert their utmost in teaching these days, that those souls who are ready and waiting may not be deprived of the bounty of accepting the Faith.

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, from a letter dated 29 November 1944

3 Every single believer should consider himself or herself as a teacher and propagator of the Faith. Millions surround you; amongst them must be many thousand receptive souls. Through prayer, effort, self sacrifice and forgetfulness of self, these people should be sought for and taught.

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, from a letter dated 26 March 1947 to the Bahá'ís of New York City

4 There are, as you truly observed, many souls ready to accept not only the enlightened and progressive teachings of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, but the high standard of personal conduct He requires of His followers. To find these receptive souls and teach them, with tact and understanding, is the duty and privilege of every single Bahá'í.

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, from a letter dated 20 October 1949

5 He will certainly pray that your teaching efforts may be blessed. Teaching the Faith is not conditioned by what occupation we have, or how great our knowledge is, but rather on how much we have studied the Teachings, to what degree we live the Bahá'í life, and how much we long to share this Message with others. When we have these characteristics, we are sure, if we search, to find receptive souls.

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, from a letter dated 9 May 1957

6 The primary duty laid upon all Bahá'ís by Bahá'u'lláh, Himself, is to teach the Cause of God. It is their greatest privilege and bounty. They should seek out receptive souls, mingle with all classes, races and denominations, and find amongst them those who are receptive to the spirit of God, and then with wisdom and love lead them to take the great step of acknowledging the Manifestation of God for this Day.

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, from a letter dated 4 July 1957

7 . . . make a special point of praying ardently not only for success in general, but that God may send you the souls that are ready. There are such souls in every city. . . .

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, *Teaching the Bahá'í Faith*, p. 77

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

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *The Four Year Plan*, p. 73

Individual Acts of Teaching, Study, and Service

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

1. Initiate friendly conversations with at least 5 people prior to the next session. These can be new acquaintances or old friends. Continue your prayers for receptive souls.
2. Create two new answers to the question, “What is the Bahá’í Faith?” Continue practicing all your answers.
3. Create opportunities for friends to ask “What is the Bahá’í Faith?” Share your answer.
4. Consider the following questions as you complete your personal plan.
Where are the places where I come in contact with people?
Which groups and individuals can I get to know better?
What are the names of those individuals who have already shown receptivity?
What do I know about their interests, opportunities, tests and difficulties, questions and issues?
How can I begin to respond to those friends?
5. Read the *Tablets of the Divine Plan* with specific attention to the Tablets addressed to the believers in the U.S. and Canada and to the Tablets addressed to your specific region of the United States. Be prepared to share one or two specific instructions for teachers of the Faith.

A Personal Teaching Plan

Listen to quiet music while carefully completing this session’s Personal Teaching Plan.

Closing Devotions

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



A PERSONAL TEACHING PLAN

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

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

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



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

How can I draw upon...?



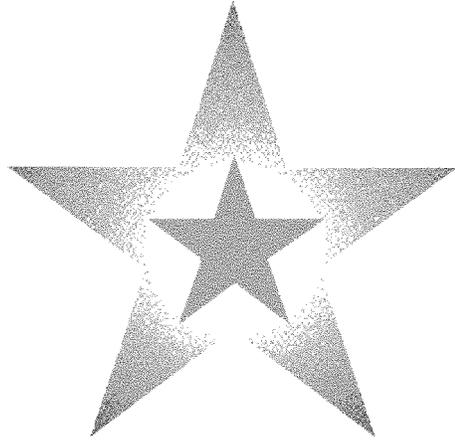
My love for Bahá'u'lláh; the power of the Covenant; the dynamics of prayer; the inspiration and education derived from regular reading and study of the Holy Texts?



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



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



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

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

The Seeker's Quest

COURSE THREE

Some
Fundamental
Verities of the
Bahá'í Faith

Session 9

The Word of God

Opening Devotions

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

You may also choose to include the following quotation:

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

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

Objectives of the Session:

Read aloud the objectives for this session:

Knowledge

To become familiar with the writings on the power of the Word of God.

Wisdom

To understand the importance of using the Word of God while teaching the Faith.

To understand the power of the Word of God to influence the human heart.

Spiritual Perception

To discern how one could use the Word of God in teaching the Faith.

To perceive teaching opportunities in every day life.

Eloquent Speech

To plan and carry out text-based firesides and devotional gatherings.

To consult about the teaching work and create a teaching plan.

Consultation on Individual Teaching, Study, and Service

Consider your personal teaching plan:

- Who has been able to share information about the Bahá'í Faith this week with others? Did you share quotations, stories, principles? What was the result?
- Who was able to make a new friend or strengthen a friendship this week? What happened?
- Who was able to make contact with a particularly chosen individual or group this week? What happened?
- What happened when you initiated friendly conversations with others?
- What difference did you notice from increasing your prayers for receptive souls?
- Who was able to host a devotional gathering or support your local children's class?
- Who would like to share the instructions for teaching given in *Tablets of the Divine Plan*?
- Who would like to share additional answers to the question, "What is the Bahá'í Faith?"

Memorization The Word of God

1. Working in pairs, read aloud the quotations on the next page entitled "The Word of God" and discuss the focus questions.
2. Then choose one quotation to memorize.
3. Allow time to work, then recite your memorized passage in the whole group. Applaud all!



THE WORD OF GOD

Focus questions:

What is the impact of the Word of God on the human heart? Recall a time when the Word of God created a profound and positive change in your own heart. Share your memory with your study partner.

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

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

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

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

3 The Word of God may be likened unto a sapling, whose roots have been implanted in the hearts of men. It is incumbent upon you to foster its growth through the living waters of wisdom, of sanctified and holy words, so that its root may become firmly fixed and its branches may spread out as high as the heavens and beyond.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 93-4

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

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

5 And this is clear: a power above and beyond the powers of nature must needs be brought to bear, to change this black darkness into light, and these hatreds and resentments, grudges and spites, these endless wrangles and wars, into fellowship and love amongst all the peoples of the earth. This power is none other than the breathings of the Holy Spirit and the mighty inflow of the Word of God.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 53, no. 23

Activity
Unlocking the Human Heart

1. Read again the following words of Bahá'u'lláh:

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

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

2. Briefly discuss: In this quotation, how does Bahá'u'lláh describe the human heart? What does He say has the power to unlock the human heart?
3. Reflect upon your own experiences: Who has had the happy experience of sharing the Word of God with another soul, followed by the bounty of seeing that soul respond positively? What happened? What was the role of friendship and listening in your experience? What was your own experience? How did you perceive the experience of the person with whom you were sharing?
4. Please turn to the person beside you and take turns listening and sharing your happy memories.
5. Then, briefly discuss in the whole group: In what ways do our experiences confirm that sharing the Word of God with others is a key to unlocking “the doors of heaven” both for them and for us? How can we experience this joy more frequently? Are we responsible for our friend’s response or simply for sharing the Message?

Activity
Hosting Text-Based Firesides or Devotional Gatherings

1. Organize your study circle into two or more small working groups that could work together to plan and host one or more text-based firesides or devotional gatherings within the next few weeks.
2. If you have already completed the first two courses in the Fundamental Verities Sequence of Courses, you have already used the text-based Fireside Packets associated with the media campaign in the United States. In first course, we made use of the Fireside Packet, “The Power of Prayer.” In the second course, we worked with the materials, “Family: The Seeds of World Peace,” to plan a gathering that specifically included and welcomed all ages. In this course, we draw from the remaining four Fireside Packets to plan and host one or more of these text-based gatherings for seekers.
3. In your working group, briefly recall: What were the highlights of those gatherings? Did you host them as firesides or use the materials to fit into

your community's regular pattern of devotional gatherings? What elements of your gathering would you want to build on or enhance for the next set? Whether we're describing our gatherings as firesides or as devotional gatherings, why is it important to base the experience on the Word of God? In what ways do the activities included in the Fireside Packets enhance our guests' interaction with the Word of God?

4. Working in your small group, select one of the plans provided in the Appendix, pp. 125-50. Note that while each of these sample firesides is linked to a specific video developed for the Media Campaign, they also are suited to a variety of circumstances and because they are based on the Word of God, directly relevant to human beings from all walks of life, not just the segment of the population mentioned in the video. The videos offer an excellent introduction to the topics explored in the Fireside Packets. At the same time, these Packets provide the heart of a seeker with direct access to the Word of God, with or without the video. Please also refer to the facilitator notes and materials checklist on p. 123 of that Appendix.
5. Develop the specific plans necessary to use the materials provided either for a fireside or a devotional gathering. Consider specifically:
 - Where will you host your gathering?
 - Who will you invite? How will you invite them?
 - How will you engage the hearts and minds of the younger participants in your gathering?
 - How will you support the participation of parents of very young children?
 - What refreshments might you serve?
 - How will you create a welcoming and joyous atmosphere?
 - How will you include music or beautify the environment?
 - Will you use the Fireside plans exactly as they are written or do you prefer to adjust them to better respond to the needs and interests of the people you plan to invite?
 - How could you build on your success with follow-up gatherings?
6. After completing your specific plans, please share your plans in the whole group. Encourage each other in these plans and offer to support each other to bring these plans to fruition.

Please note that the complete set of Fireside Packets developed for the Media Campaign may be downloaded from the Web at http://www.education.usbnc.org/a_themes/fireside_manuals.htm. These materials provide a rich resource for your individual firesides or devotional gatherings.

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

1. Carry out your plans for your firesides or devotional gatherings.
2. Consider the following questions as you complete your teaching plan:
What opportunities can I create to share the Word of God with my friends and acquaintances?
Can I meet someone for coffee or a soft drink?
Can I invite a friend to my home?
Can I listen with love to their hopes and cares and then share an encouraging passage from the writings?
How will I recognize opportunities to share Word of God with others?
3. Continue to support your local children's classes open to all and to create a loving environment for the young people in your community.
4. Get together with the participants in your study circle for fellowship and service. Do you know each other's families? Do you know other families you could meet?
5. Tell a friend what this course has meant to you. Invite your friend to join a study circle. Offer to give your friend a ride if needed.
6. Choose when to begin Course Four in the Fundamental Verities Sequence of Courses.

A Personal Teaching Plan

While listening to quiet music, complete your Personal Teaching Plan, including your choices of the acts of study, service, and teaching listed above.

Course Evaluation

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

Closing Devotions

Congratulations on your completion of Course Three in the Fundamental Verities Sequence of Courses!

Conclude the session with a joyful celebration of the power of the Word of God, including prayers for teaching and group singing or other music.



A PERSONAL TEACHING PLAN

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

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

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



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

How can I draw upon...?



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



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



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

Fundamental Verities Course—Course Three The Seeker's Quest

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

Session(s) Attended:

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

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

What sessions were most informative and why?

What type of activity did you most enjoy and why?

What session was the least informative and why?

What activity did you least enjoy and why?

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

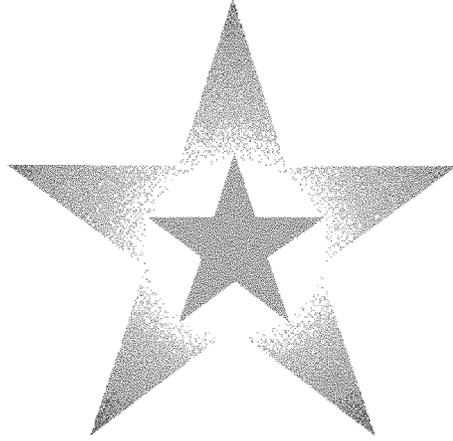
(Check one of the boxes for each question.)

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

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

Please return this form to:

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



Facilitation Guidelines	p. 112
Suggestions for Facilitators, Lists of Materials	p. 114
Sample fireside materials	p. 125

The Seeker's Quest

COURSE THREE

Some
Fundamental
Verities of the
Bahá'í Faith

Appendix

Facilitation Guidelines

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

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

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

Devotions and Spiritual Atmosphere

The environment sets the tone for study:

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

Consultation About Individual Acts of Teaching, Study, and Service

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



SUGGESTIONS FOR FACILITATORS

Session 1

THE NATURE OF GROWTH

Suggested Schedule of Activities

Opening Devotions	10 minutes
Objectives of the Session	5 minutes
Welcome, Overview, Contents	5 minutes
A Time to Grow	10 minutes
A Vision of Growth	40 minutes
The Nature of Growth	20 minutes
Individual Acts of Teaching, Study, and Service	5 minutes
A Personal Action Plan for Service and Teaching	10 minutes
Closing Devotions	5 minutes

Materials Needed

- Prayer books
- Music, recorded or sung
- 2 plants of the same variety, one in bloom, one not yet blooming
- Pictures of nature cut from magazines

Preparation Needed

Prepare in advance and have available a collection of pictures cut from magazines including a variety of nature scenes, photographs of diverse groups of people, water, sky, animals, plants, etc.

Suggestions for Music

- “Bahá’u’lláh’s Getting Us Ready for that Great Day,” *Lift Up Your Voices and Sing*, vol. 2, Tom Price with various artists
- “To the Planters of Trees,” “Let It Be This Generation”, *Encore*, Jack Lenz with various artists
- “In this Day,” *Music of the Bahá’í World Congress*
- “Spring Returneth,” *Melodies from the Sacred Writings of Bahá’u’lláh and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, Nancy Ward

Session 2

DIFFUSING THE DIVINE FRAGRANCE

Suggested Schedule of Activities

Opening Devotions	10 minutes
Objectives of the Session	5 minutes
Consultation About Individual Acts ...	10 minutes
Diffusing the Divine Fragrance	40 minutes
The Divine Fragrance	10 minutes
The Science of Sociability	10 minutes
Individual Acts of Teaching, Study, and Service	5 minutes
A Personal Teaching Plan	5 minutes
Closing Devotions	5 minutes

Materials Needed

- Prayer books
- Music, recorded or sung
- Small vial of rose water (or perfume)

Suggestions for Music

- “Say Hi!” *Teaching Peace*, Red Grammer
- “Soldiers in God’s Army,” *Lift Up Your Voices and Sing*, vol. 1, various artists
- “Unite the Hearts of Thy Servants,” “Armed with the Power of Thy Name,” *Prayers*, Sandy Simmons
- “New Century,” *Search*, Seaforth & Jenkins
- “Friendship,” “Love All the World,” *Love All the World*, Tim Urbonya

Session 3

NOBILITY OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT

Suggested Schedule of Activities

Opening Devotions	10 minutes
Objectives of the Session	5 minutes
Consultation About Individual Acts ...	10 minutes
Barriers and Veils	25 minutes
Nobility of the Human Spirit	35 minutes
Individual Acts of Teaching, Study, and Service	5 minutes
Personal Teaching Plan	5 minutes
Closing Devotions	5 minutes

Materials Needed

- Prayer books
- Music, recorded or sung
- Chart paper, whiteboard, or chalkboard
- Markers, pens, chalk (if using chalkboard)

Suggestions for Music

- “Remover of Difficulties,” “If We Ever Needed Love,” *We Have Come to Sing Praises*, Bahá’í Gospel Choir
- “Healing Prayer,” *Prayers*, Sandy Simmons
- “Short Healing Prayer,” “Whatever Hath Befallen Thee,” *Melodies from the Sacred Writings of Bahá’u’lláh and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, Nancy Ward
- “Remover of Difficulties...” “Bring My Soul Out of Prison,” *City of Love*, Minarets of the West
- “Arabic #11,” “Arabic #14,” “Arabic #13,” *Selections from The Hidden Words of Bahá’u’lláh*, Remembrance Ensemble
- “Hidden Words, Arabic #11,” “Remover of Difficulties,” “Healing Prayer,” *Selections from the Bahá’í Writings*, Paul Parrish
- “Remover of Difficulties,” “Tests and Difficulties,” *Search, Seaforth & Jenkins*
- “Remover of Difficulties,” “Healing Prayer,” *Desire of the Heart*, Narges

Session 4

OUR PERFECT EXEMPLAR

Suggested Schedule of Activities

Opening Devotions	10 minutes
Objectives of the Session	5 minutes
Consultation About Individual Acts ...	10 minutes
Our Perfect Exemplar	35 minutes
Memorization	10 minutes
Individual Acts of Teaching, Study, and Service	5 minutes
Personal Teaching Plan	10 minutes
Closing Devotions	5 minutes

Materials Needed

- Prayer books
- Music, recorded or sung, including song about ‘Abdu’l-Bahá
- Portrait of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá
- Candle

Suggestions for Music

- “Look at Me, Follow Me,” *Lift Up Your Voices and Sing, vol. 1*, various artists
- “‘Abdu’l-Bahá,” *Lote Tree*, William Sears with various artists
- “Look at Me, Follow Me,” “Dastam Begir, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá,” “Tribute to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá,” *Music of the Bahá’í World Congress*
- “I Am Thy Servant,” *Melodies from the Sacred Writings of Bahá’u’lláh and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, Nancy Ward
- “Dastam Begir, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá,” *Narges, Narges*

Session 5

THE SEEKER'S QUEST

Suggested Schedule of Activities

Opening Devotions	10 minutes
Objectives of the Session	5 minutes
Consultation About Individual Acts ...	10 minutes
The Search	60 minutes
Individual Acts of Teaching, Study, and Service	5 minutes
Personal Teaching Plan	5 minutes
Closing Devotions	5 minutes

Materials Needed

- Prayer books
- Music, recorded or sung
- Drawing paper
- Markers and other art supplies
- Poster paper (or newsprint)

Preparation Needed

Carefully prepare an environment that is welcoming, serene and reflects the beauty and excitement of this Revelation. Consider praying in the room before the friends arrive. Joyfully greet the friends as they arrive. Encourage each to greet the others so that the spirit of loving fellowship pervades the room. This will increase the effectiveness of the learning activities.

Begin the session with carefully selected prayers. Consider asking friends to chant or sing prayers. Consider inviting the friends to recite memorized prayers and passages from the writings. Consider using prayers for teaching, including the teaching prayer for your region. Include sung or recorded music as part of the opening devotions.

Suggestions for Music

- “Seven Valleys,” *Lote Tree*, William Sears with various artists
- “Windflowers,” *Lift Up Your Voices and Sing, vol. 3*, various artists
- “O Thou Who Art Turning Thy Face,” *Melodies from the Sacred Writings of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, Nancy Ward
- “Search,” *Search*, Seaforth & Jenkins
- “Desire of the Heart,” *Desire of the Heart*, Narges

Session 6

THE POWER OF LOVE

Suggested Schedule of Activities

Opening Devotions	10 minutes
Objectives of the Session	5 minutes
Consultation About Individual Acts ...	10 minutes
The Power of Love	20 minutes
Who to Teach	40 minutes
Individual Acts of Teaching, Study, and Service	5 minutes
Personal Teaching Plan	5 minutes
Closing Devotions	5 minutes

Materials Needed

- Prayer books
- Music, recorded or sung
- Mirror
- Candle
- Poster paper (or newsprint)
- Art materials for posters

Suggestions for Music

- “Brothers and Sisters,” *Down the Do-Re-Mi*, Red Grammer
- “Love is the Secret,” “Bahá’u’lláh Wam,” *Fruits of the Spirit*, various artists
- “Proclaim the Greatest Name,” “World Citizens,” *Lift Up Your Voices and Sing, vol. 2*, various artists
- “Soldiers in God’s Army,” *Lift Up Your Voices and Sing, vol. 2*, various artists
- “Unite the Hearts of Thy Servants,” “Armed with the Power of Thy Name,” *Prayers*, Sandy Simmons
- “Rose of Love,” “Love All the World,” *Love All the World*, Tim Urbonya
- “The Pure Heart,” “Glad Tidings,” *Desire of the Heart*, Narges
- “If We Ever Needed Love,” “Love Me,” *We Have Come to Sing Praises*, Bahá’í Gospel Singers

Session 7

SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION

Suggested Schedule of Activities

Opening Devotions	10 minutes
Objectives of the Session	5 minutes
Consultation About Individual Acts ...	10 minutes
Commitment to Spiritual Transformation	50 minutes
Individual Acts of Teaching, Study, and Service	5 minutes
Personal Teaching Plan	5 minutes
Closing Devotions	5 minutes

Materials Needed

- Prayer books
- Music, recorded or sung
- Video (if available, for setting the tone of the session): “Consecration” available from the Bahá’í Distribution Service.
- Flip chart or chalkboard
- Markers, pens, chalk (if using chalkboard)
- Card stock, or index cards
- Decorative papers
- Arts and craft supplies

Preparation Needed

Consultation About Individual Acts of Teaching, Study, and Service:

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

Suggestions for Music

- “Love Me,” “I’m So Glad,” “Shine Your Light On Me,” *We Have Come to Sing Praises*, Bahá’í Gospel Choir
- “Create in Me a Pure Heart,” “Ye Are the Stars,” *Bird*, Susan Lewis Wright
- “To the Planters of Trees,” *Encore*, Jack Lenz with various artists
- “Refresh and Gladden My Spirit,” *Prayers*, Sandy Simmons
- “Refresh and Gladden,” “This is Faith,” *Fruits of the Spirit*, various artists
- “Amazing Grace,” *The Gift*, Gordi Munro
- “Make Me an Instrument,” “Hollow Reed,” *Search*, Seaforth & Jenkins
- “Hollow Reed,” *City of Love*, Minarets of the West

Session 8

FINDING RECEPTIVE SOULS

Suggested Schedule of Activities

Opening Devotions	10 minutes
Objectives of the Session	5 minutes
Consultation About Individual Acts ...	10 minutes
Transformation and Maturation of Humanity	40 minutes
What Is the Bahá'í Faith?	20 minutes
Finding Receptive Souls	20 minutes
Individual Acts of Teaching, Study, and Service	5 minutes
Personal Teaching Plan	5 minutes
Closing Devotions	5 minutes

Materials Needed

- Prayer books
- Music, recorded or sung
- A bowl with fruit: both ripe and unripe
- Books of Bahá'u'lláh's writings
- Flip chart or chalkboard
- Markers, pens, chalk (if using chalkboard)

Preparation Needed

Activity: What Is the Bahá'í Faith

The facilitator should allow about 15 minutes for this work and during that time, circulate among the friends to provide encouragement and support as needed.

Activity: Finding Receptive Souls

Practice the story several times in advance to be able to share it smoothly and easily with the friends.

Suggestions for Music

- "We Have Come to Sing Praises," "The Spirit of Bahá'u'lláh Is Everywhere," "In This Day Bahá'u'lláh," *We Have Come to Sing Praises*, Bahá'í Gospel Choir
- "Unity," "Turn this World Around," *Bird*, Susan Lewis Wright
- "We Have Come to Sing Praises," "Bahá'u'lláh Wam," *Fruits of the Spirit*, various artists
- "Soldiers in God's Army," "Have You Heard of Bahá'u'lláh." "God Is One," *Lift Up Your Voices and Sing, vol. 1*, various artists
- "Bahá'u'lláh's Getting Us Ready for that Great Day," "Proclaim the Greatest Name," *Lift Up Your Voices and Sing, vol. 2*, various artists
- "One Planet, One People, Please," *Lift Up Your Voices and Sing, vol. 3*, various artists
- "Glad Tidings," "In this Day Bahá'u'lláh," *Music of the Bahá'í World Congress*
- "Jubilation," "When Will It Be," "Let It Be this Generation," *Encore*, Jack Lenz with various artists

Session 9

THE WORD OF GOD

Suggested Schedule of Activities

Opening Devotions	10 minutes
Objectives of the Session	5 minutes
Consultation About Individual Acts ...	10 minutes
Memorization: The Word of God	20 minutes
Unlocking the Human Heart	15 minutes
Hosting a Text-based Fireside or Devotional Gathering	30 minutes
Individual Acts of Teaching, Study, and Service	5 minutes
Personal Teaching Plan	5 minutes
Course Evaluation	5 minutes
Closing Devotions	5 minutes

Materials Needed

- Prayer books
- Music, recorded or sung

Materials for Sample Fireside Workshops

The Power of Race Unity

- Prayer books
- Music
- Paper and pencils or pens
- Poster or chart paper
- Recording of “Unity Prayer”
- Art and craft materials
- Copies of quotation page

Two Wings: Speaking of Gender

- Prayer books
- Music
- Paper for airplane or origami bird
- Copies of quotation page

Latinos in the Bahá’í Faith

- Prayer books
- Music
- Embroidery floss in five colors to represent skin colors
- A standard size brick
- Scissors
- Copies of quotation pages

We Are One #3

- Prayer books
 - Music
 - “Work as Worship” quotations cut apart
 - Either (A): empty soft drink bottle; pennies, dimes, nickels; water or cooking oil.
 - or (B): long piece of lumber; soup ladle or ice cream scoop; lubricating oil; balloon; piece of wool cloth or fur.
- NOTE: to assure success, please practice your demonstration in advance.
- Copies of quotation pages

We Are One #5

- Prayer books
- Music
- *Thoughts* by Irene Taafaki or *The Virtues Guide* by Linda and Dan Popov, optional
- Small bags with 3-5 different items in each
- Copies of quotation pages

The Power of Race Unity

An Intergenerational Activity

Purpose: To understand the richness of diversity in the community.

Manifesting Diversity in the Community

(90 minutes)

Opening Prayer (if workshop is conducted without first viewing “The Power of Race Unity” video)

Begin by explaining to the guests that the purpose of the workshop is to explore the Bahá’í perspective of race unity.

Invite guests to reflect on the question, “What are your beliefs about race unity?” Then ask the guests to write a one sentence response to the question. Ask each person to read their sentence to the group.

If desired, share with the guests the Guidelines for Discussion listed below.

1. Ask for God’s assistance.
2. Speak your own thoughts—with love, courtesy, care and moderation.
3. Welcome different opinions.
4. Maintain confidentiality.
5. Listen more than you talk. Share the time.
6. Look for the good in each other. Avoid criticism.

If desired, show the video (or telecast), “The Power of Race Unity.” (28 minutes)

Begin with the Unity Prayer on page 204 of *Bahá’í Prayers*. Have someone sing it, or play the recording of the prayer from the cassette “Artists for the Arc” by Sandra Simmons.

Read the following quotations aloud:

We must become entirely selfless and devoted to God so that every day and every moment we seek to do only what God would have us do and in the way He would have us do it. If we do this sincerely then we shall have perfect unity and harmony with each other. Where there is want of harmony there is lack of the true Bahá’í spirit. Unless we can show this transformation in our lives, this new power, this mutual love and harmony, then the Bahá’í teachings are but a name to us.

-- On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, *Living the Life*, p. 9

The friends must, at all times, bear in mind that they are, in a way, like soldiers under attack. The world is at present in an exceedingly dark condition spiritually; hatred and prejudice of every sort, are literally tearing it to pieces. We, on the other hand, are the custodians of the opposite forces, the forces of love, of unity, of peace and integration, and we must constantly be on our guard, whether as individuals or as an assembly or

community, lest through us these destructive, negative forces enter into our midst. In other words, we must beware lest the darkness of society become reflected in our acts and attitudes, perhaps all unconsciously. Love for each other, the deep sense that we are a new organism, the dawn-breakers of a New World Order, must constantly animate our Bahá'í lives, and we must pray to be protected from the contamination of society which is so diseased with prejudice.

-- Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá'í News*, No. 210, 8/48, p. 2

Your souls are as waves on the sea of the spirit; although each individual is a distinct wave, the ocean is one, all are united in God....Every heart should radiate unity, so that the Light of the one Divine Source of all may shine forth bright and luminous. We must not consider the separate waves alone, but the entire sea. We should rise from the individual to the whole. The spirit is as one great ocean and the waves thereof are the souls of men.
-- 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, p. 84

In the large group, have the guests:

1. Go around the room and ask everyone to say in one word how they are unique and how they add to the diversity of this group.
2. Ask everyone to find a partner—first someone who is different from them, and then someone with whom they have something in common. Partners stand or sit together. Allow 5 minutes for these friends to share with each other their similarities and differences.
3. Ask each pair to tell the whole group what they have in common.

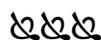
Break into 4 groups by giving each person a choice of their favorite activity—song, mime/dance, skit, or visual art. Allow each group 15 minutes to prepare a presentation based on one phrase/sentence from 'Abdu'l-Bahá:

- song "Difference reinforceth harmony."
- mime/dance "Your souls are as waves on the sea of the spirit; although each individual is a distinct wave, the ocean is one, all are united in God."
- visual art "Multiplicity is the greatest factor for coordination."
(3-dimensional model)
- skit "Differences of customs, manners, habits, ideas, opinions and dispositions embellish the world of humanity."

Have each group present to the larger group.

Discuss in the whole group: How does awareness and celebration of diversity add to unity?

Closing Prayer



**Manifesting Diversity in the Community:
Presentations Inspired by the Words of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá**

Unity in Diversity

Prepare a **musical presentation** inspired by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s words:

Difference reinforceth harmony. Many different notes blend together in the making of the perfect chord.

Please involve everyone in your group in this project.

Unity in Diversity

Prepare a **mime or dance** inspired by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s words:

Your souls are as waves on the sea of the spirit; although each individual is a distinct wave, the ocean is one, all are united in God.

Please involve everyone in your group in this project.

Unity in Diversity

Prepare a **3-dimensional model** inspired by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s words:

Multiplicity is the greatest factor for coordination.

Please involve everyone in your group in this project.

Unity in Diversity

Prepare a **skit** inspired by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s words:

Differences of customs, manners, habits, ideas, opinions, and dispositions embellish the world of humanity.

Please involve everyone in your group in this project.



What Is Equality?

Carefully prepare the learning environment so that it reflects the principles of hospitality, beauty, cleanliness, dignity and refinement. Arrive early to say prayers in the room where this spiritual gathering is held. Lovingly greet each person at the door as she or he arrives. Consider playing recorded music as the friends arrive. Consider serving light refreshments to demonstrate the spirit of hospitality.

- Begin the spiritual gathering with carefully selected prayers and music to set a joyful tone.
- Welcome the friends, invite them to introduce themselves, ask each to share a hope for the workshop. Listen carefully to each answer.
- Watch the broadcast of Speaking of Gender, show the video, or show the FIRST SEGMENT of the video, after which the question is raised: “What is gender equality?”
- Invite the friends to read aloud the following quotations and discuss the focus questions. *A reproducible copy of the quotations and focus questions can be found on page 133 of this book.*

Focus Questions

- *What is the spiritual foundation of the principle of equality of women and men?*
- *What are some of the ways that human civilization can become more balanced?*

All should know “Women and men have been and will always be equal in the sight of God.”

Bahá’u’lláh, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Volume 2, p. 379

God hath created all humankind in His own image, and after His own likeness. That is, men and women alike are the revealers of His names and attributes, and from the spiritual viewpoint there is no difference between them. Whosoever draweth nearer to God, that one is the most favoured, whether man or woman.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp. 79-80

Know thou that the distinction between male and female is an exigency of the physical world and hath no connection with the spirit; for the spirit and the world of the spirit are sanctified above such exigencies, and wholly beyond the reach of such changes as befall the physical body in the contingent world.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, cited in Janet Kahn and Peter Kahn, *Advancement of Women*, p.38

In former ages, men enjoyed ascendancy over women because bodily might reigned supreme and the spirit was subject to its dominion. In this radiant age, however, since the power of the spirit hath transcended that of the body and assumed its ascendancy, authority and dominion over the human world, this physical distinction hath ceased to be of consequence; and, as the sway and influence of the spirit have become apparent, women have come to be the full equals of men. Today, therefore, there is no respect or circumstance in which a person’s sex provideth grounds for the exercise of either discrimination or favor.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, cited in Janet Kahn and Peter Kahn, *Advancement of Women*, p. 38

The world in the past has been ruled by force, and man has dominated over woman by reason of his more forceful and aggressive qualities both of body and mind. But the balance is already shifting; force is losing its dominance, and mental alertness, intuition, and the spiritual qualities of love and service, in which woman is strong, are gaining ascendancy. Hence the new age will be an age less masculine and more permeated with the feminine ideals, or, to speak more exactly, will be an age in which the masculine and feminine elements of civilization will be more evenly balanced.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Volume 2, p. 369

The world of humanity has two wings—one is women and the other men. Not until both wings are equally developed can the bird fly. Should one wing remain weak, flight is impossible. Not until the world of women becomes equal to the world of men in the acquisition of virtues and perfections, can success and prosperity be attained as they ought to be.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 302

That men and women differ from one another in certain characteristics and functions is an inescapable fact of nature and makes possible their complementary roles in certain areas of the life of society; but it is significant that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá has stated that in this Dispensation “Equality of men and women, except in some negligible instances, has been fully and categorically announced.”

Universal House of Justice: Introduction to the *Kitab-i-Aqdas*, p. 7

Humanity: Balanced for Flight

Invite each individual to make a paper airplane or an origami bird. You will find directions and illustrations on the following pages. Note that it usually takes somewhat longer to fold a bird than to fold a paper airplane. To equalize the time, invite those who are making planes to experiment with more than one type of plane. Test fly each plane. Suspend each bird from a thread so that it can fly. Observe the flight pattern of each bird or plane.

Discuss the following questions:

- *What enables flight?*
- *What factors improve flight?*

Then give each person a paper clip and ask:

- *How can you place this paper clip to help or hinder flight? Invite demonstrations.*

Discuss the following questions:

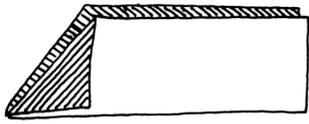
- *What does this demonstration tell us about equality and the need for balance?*
- *What can it tell us about the complementary contributions of women and men to the world of humanity?*

Then discuss:

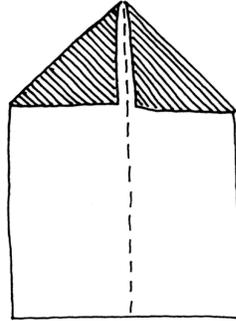
- *What practical steps can we take to make the spiritual reality of true equality known in the world?*
- *What practical steps can we take to implement the principle of equality in our own lives?*
- *What initial steps could be taken within the next week or even within the next 24 hours?*

Invite those who would like to commit to taking a single specific action to promote equality during the next day to write their promise to themselves on their bird or their plane as a reminder.

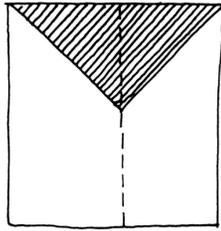
Paper Airplane



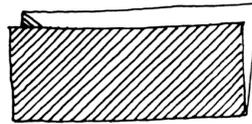
A Fold a sheet of paper lengthwise. Fold down two corners, like the start of a standard airplane.



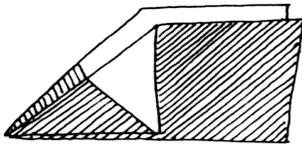
B Unfold your first fold. Your paper will look like a house.



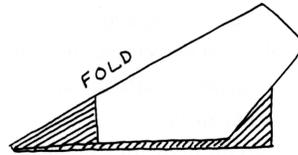
C Fold the peak of the "house" down.



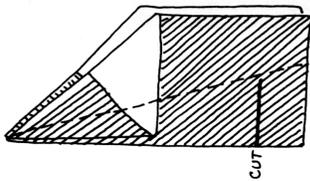
D Refold your paper lengthwise with the peak on the inside.



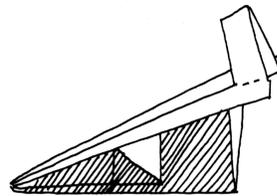
E Fold down the two corners, like the start of the plane again. Half the peak should now show.



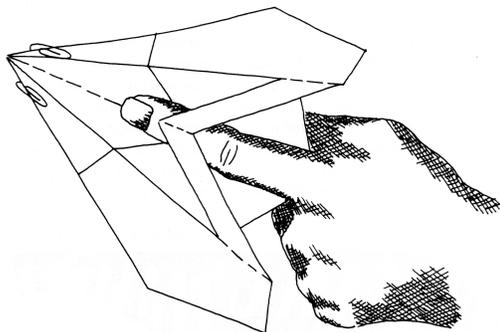
F Fold down the two wings. Line up the diagonal edges with the bottom.



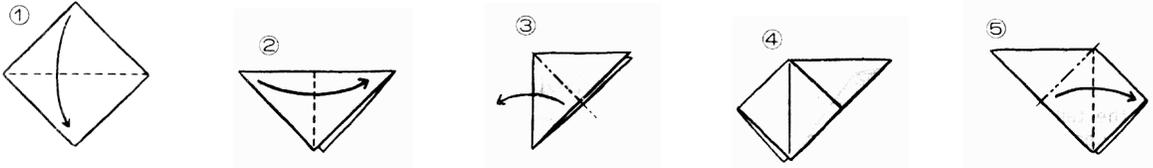
G Put the wings up again. Then cut along the back from the bottom to the wing fold, 1" from the back.



H Open the wings. Fold up the cut flap into an upside-down V.

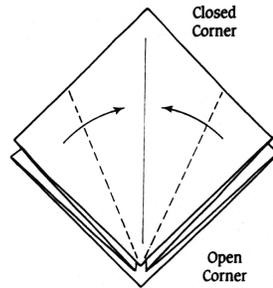


Paper Crane

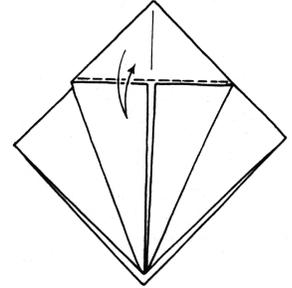


Fold a Square Base following the small diagrams above.

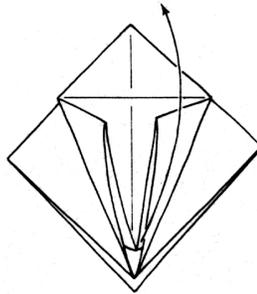
1 Place closed corner away from you. Fold the outer edges on the front flaps to the middle crease. Turn the paper over and repeat this with the two flaps on the back.



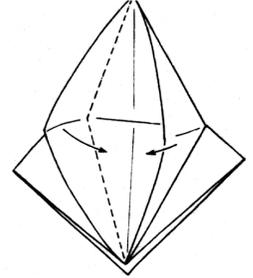
2 Draw a pencil (or imaginary) line between the ends of the creases. Fold back and forth on that line. Paper looks as before, but the crease helps you with the next step.



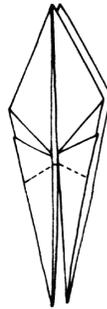
3 Pop the two front flaps apart. Find the loose corner at the bottom. Lift it up in the direction of the arrow.



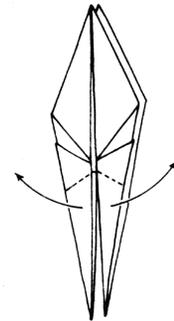
4 Bring the outside edges of the paper to the middle and flatten it into a long diamond. The trick is to keep the crease made in previous step. Turn the paper over and repeat on the back.



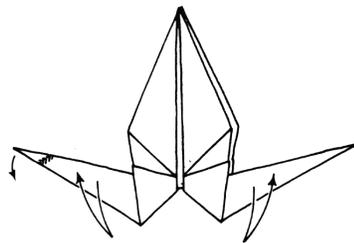
5 This diamond shape is called the Bird Base. It has two "legs" at the bottom. Fold their outer edges to the middle, first on the front flaps. Turn the paper over and repeat on the back.



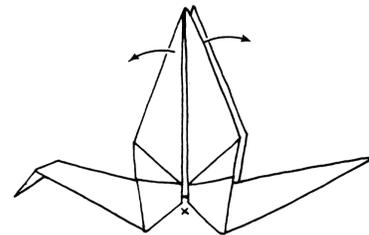
6 Make the neck and tail by folding the "legs" to the outside.



7 Fold the "legs" down again. Then fold them up on the creases made in the previous step, but this time in between the two main layers of paper. Fold the head down in between the two main layers of the neck.



8 Inflate the crane by holding a wing in each hand. Pull your hands apart gently and at the same time blow into the opening at point X.





What Is Equality?

Focus Questions

- What is the spiritual foundation of the principle of equality of women and men?
 - What are some of the ways that human civilization can become more balanced?
-

All should know “Women and men have been and will always be equal in the sight of God.”

Bahá'u'lláh, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Volume 2, p. 379

God hath created all humankind in His own image, and after His own likeness. That is, men and women alike are the revealers of His names and attributes, and from the spiritual viewpoint there is no difference between them. Whosoever draweth nearer to God, that one is the most favoured, whether man or woman.

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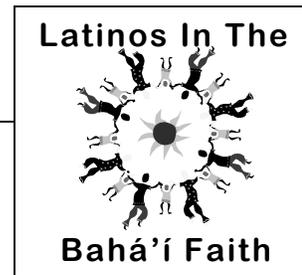
‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Volume 2, p. 369

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‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 302

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Universal House of Justice: *Introduction to the Kitab-i-Aqdas*, p. 7



THE STRENGTH OF UNITY

- See the introduction for tips on preparing your fireside.
- Prepare ahead for a demonstration with these materials:
 - embroidery floss in five colors to represent skin colors;
 - a standard size brick;
 - scissors.
 - Cut about a 2-foot length of each color of embroidery floss.
 - Separate three single strands from each of the 2 foot pieces of floss.
- Make handout copies of the quotation on page 139.

Lovingly greet your guests as they arrive. Offer beverages and show guests to the refreshment table. Keep the atmosphere informal, encouraging everyone to think of your home as his or her own. Give a little background along with introductions, to encourage conversation. Be certain to introduce children, as well.

When all your guests have arrived and are comfortable, invite volunteers to offer prayers. Ask for prayers of other faiths and in other languages, especially Spanish. Ask a Bahá'í guest to say the prayer for unity (*Bahá'í Prayers*, p. 204), if possible, in Spanish.

Explain to your guests that they will be seeing the video “*Latinos in the Bahá'í Faith*” (or that they have recently seen it, in some cases). Ask why they think Latino culture is important to the Bahá'ís. Positively acknowledge any response related to diversity or the power of unity.

Invite each guest to tell about one of the strengths of his or her own Latino culture. Non-Latino guests may share personal experiences that gave them insight into a Latino culture.

Present the video *Latinos in the Bahá'í Faith*. Offer additional refreshments.

Ask everyone how he or she feels about the video.

Explain to the group that Bahá'u'lláh has told us that “No power can exist except through unity.” Offer to demonstrate the strength of unity.

With the materials you prepared ahead of time:

- Explain that the different colors of thread stand for the diverse people in the world. The task is to lift the brick.
- Invite a volunteer to choose which color will work best.
- Have volunteer tie the single strand around the brick and try to lift it. (The floss will break.)
- Offer to try another color. (All will probably agree that color makes no difference.)
- Point out that working toward a better future is a lot like lifting that brick. People often think it's easier to work alone. Some think that one race or group if people can do a better job than another. Yet, most of the work can't be done by just one person, and color doesn't matter at all!

- Place five strands, one of each color, parallel to each other about an inch apart.
- Place the brick across all five strands and tie each strand around the brick.
- Ask assistants to lift the strands, one in each hand, at the same time. (The floss usually breaks.)
- Point out that following our laws can be like using separate strands. When the law requires diversity, the hearts of some people remain separate. This can end in failure.
- Now twist five strands, one of each color, into a single multi-colored cord.
- Tie this cord around the brick and try again to lift it. (It holds without difficulty.)

Ask a volunteer to read this Bahá'í verse:

“We must all strive with heart and soul until we have the reality of unity in our midst, and as we work, so will strength be given unto us.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 290-291

- Discuss ways that we can strive toward unity with heart and soul. Could the strengths that were discussed earlier work together for greater strength?
- Allow time for questions and casual socializing.
- Offer your guests a copy of the quotation about unity and a prayer book (if available).
- Close with the following prayer for humanity, published on page 102 of *Bahá'í Prayers* (U.S.).

O Thou kind Lord! Thou hast created all humanity from the same stock. Thou hast decreed that all shall belong to the same household. In Thy Holy Presence they are all Thy servants, and all mankind are sheltered beneath Thy Tabernacle; all have gathered together at Thy Table of Bounty; all are illumined through the light of Thy Providence.

O God! Thou art kind to all, Thou hast provided for all, dost shelter all, conferrest life upon all. Thou hast endowed each and all with talents and faculties, and all are submerged in the Ocean of Thy Mercy.

O Thou kind Lord! Unite all. Let the religions agree and make the nations one, so that they may see each other as one family and the whole earth as one home. May they all live together in perfect harmony.

O God! Raise aloft the banner of the oneness of mankind.

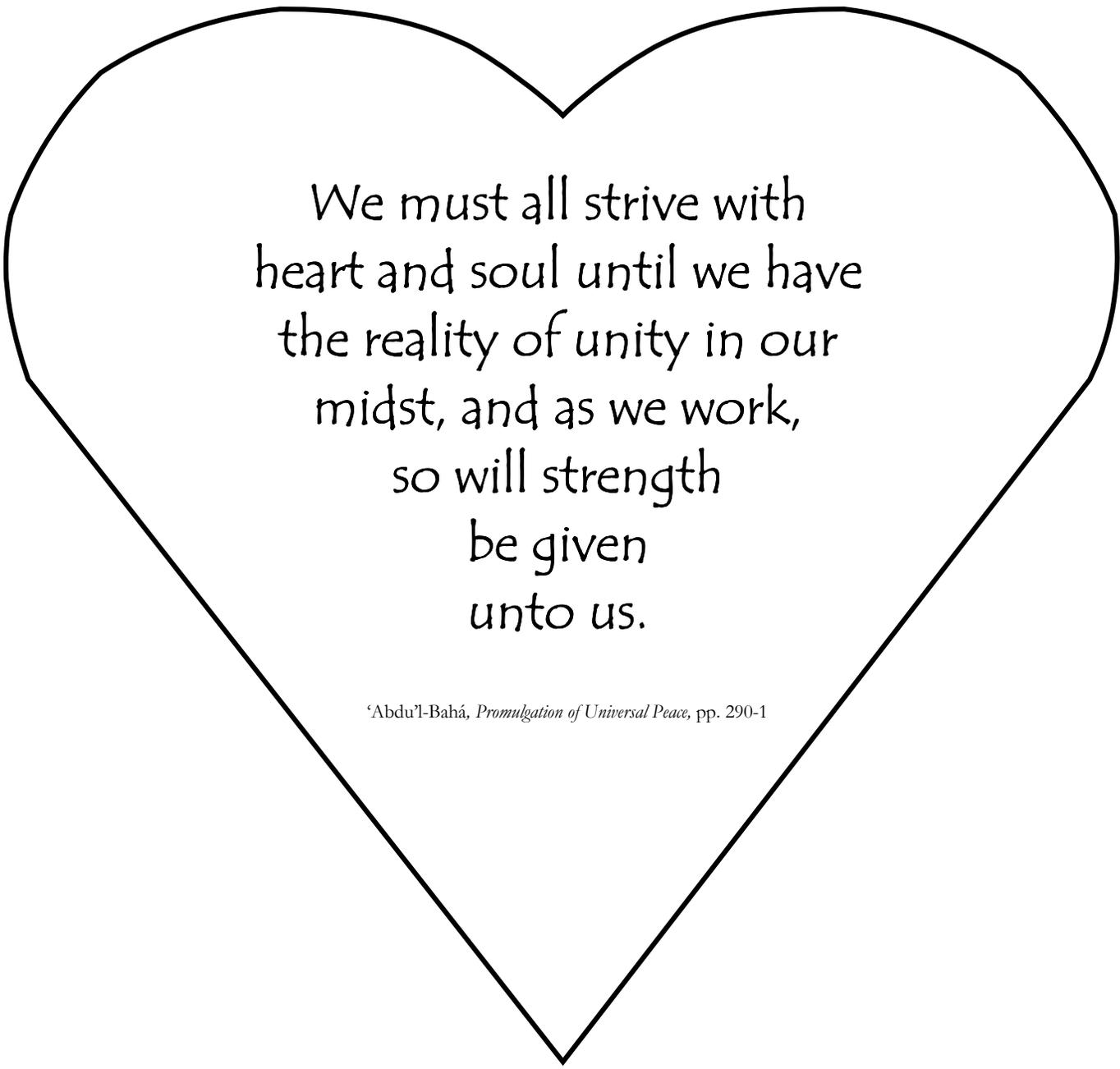
O God! Establish the Most Great Peace.

Cement Thou, O God, the hearts together.

O Thou kind Father, God! Gladden our hearts through the fragrance of Thy love. Brighten our eyes through the Light of Thy Guidance. Delight our ears with the melody of Thy Word, and shelter us all in the Stronghold of Thy Providence.

Thou art the Mighty and Powerful, Thou art the Forgiving and Thou art the One Who overlooketh the shortcomings of all mankind.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá



We must all strive with
heart and soul until we have
the reality of unity in our
midst, and as we work,
so will strength
be given
unto us.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 290-1

Work as Worship of God

Purpose:
To understand the Bahá'í perspective on work.

Fireside/Workshop/Meeting
90 minutes

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

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

Introduction

Begin by explaining to the guests or participants that the purpose of the gathering is to begin to understand how the Bahá'í perspective on work is distinct from the commonly held view that work is primarily a means to earn money in order to live.

We Are One Video

Have the guests watch the video (or telecast) of "We Are One" (approximately 30 minutes).

Learning Experience

Before guests arrive, cut apart the "Work as Worship" quotations from the following pages and pass out one quotation to each participant willing to read. Read the quotations aloud in the large group. Have the following three questions written so everyone can see them. Ask for reactions from the participants—turn to someone sitting nearby and answer at least one of the following questions:

- What can we gather about the Bahá'í perspective on work?
- How does this view expand the importance and necessity of work?
- What are some of the implications of effort being an "inseparable part of man's life?"

Share any insights with the whole group. You may wish to record the insights on chart paper and post them for all to see.

Next, perform a simple science experiment (either A, B or one that you know) that demonstrates how energy, or effort, can be transferred to other objects to create unexpected results. After completing the demonstration, invite the friends to discuss the question:

For experiment A: In what way does the simple action of placing our hands on the bottle illustrate the contributions that we all make to human civilization through our work?

For experiment B: In what way does the simple action of stroking the balloon with a piece of cloth illustrate the contributions that we all make to human civilization through our work?

Closing

Conclude by mentioning again the Bahá'í perspective that any work done in the spirit of service to humanity is worshipping God.

Invite participants to continue to investigate the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh and their practical value in our lives.

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

Work as Worship



It is enjoined upon every one of you to engage in some form of occupation, such as crafts, trades and the like. We have graciously exalted your engagement in such work to the rank of worship unto God, the True One. Ponder ye in your hearts the grace and the blessings of God and render thanks unto Him at eventide and at dawn. Waste not your time in idleness and sloth. Occupy yourselves with that which profiteth yourselves and others. Thus hath it been decreed in this Tablet from whose horizon the day-star of wisdom and utterance shineth resplendent.

The most despised of men in the sight of God are those who sit idly and beg. Hold ye fast unto the cord of material means, placing your whole trust in God, the Provider of all means. When anyone occupieth himself in a craft or trade, such occupation itself is regarded in the estimation of God as an act of worship; and this is naught but a token of His infinite and all-pervasive bounty.

Bahá'u'lláh: *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, Page: 26

Blessed are those who have fixed their gaze on the realm of glory and have followed the commandments of the Lord of Names. Blessed is he who in the days of God will engage in handicrafts. This is a bounty from God, for in this Most Great Dispensation it is acceptable in the sight of God for man to occupy himself in a trade which relieveth him of depending upon charity. The craft of every craftsman is regarded as worship.

One of the names of God is the Fashioner. He loveth craftsmanship....Craftsmanship is a book among the books of divine sciences, and a treasure among the treasures of His heavenly wisdom. This is a knowledge with meaning, for some of the sciences are brought forth by words and come to an end with words.

Bahá'u'lláh: *The Arts*, Page: 1

"You ask about the admonition that everyone must work, and want to know if this means that you, a wife and mother, must work for a livelihood as your husband does...the directive is for the friends to be engaged in an occupation which will be of benefit to mankind. Homemaking is a highly honourable and responsible work of fundamental importance for mankind."

From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, June 16, 1982: *Women* and in *Lights of Guidance*, Pages: 626-627

When 'Abdu'l-Bahá was in London (England), there was a workman who had left his bag of tools in a hall. He chanced upon the smiling Master. Sadly the workman told of his predicament: "I don't know much about religious things, as I have no time for anything but my work." Words of reassurance came in reply: "That is well. Very well. A day's work done in the spirit of service is in itself an act of worship, such work is a prayer unto God."

'Abdu'l-Bahá, quoted in *Vignettes from the Life of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, by Annamarie Honnold, p. 48

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*, Page: 110

O MY SERVANTS! 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 results depend upon means, and the grace of God shall be all-sufficient unto you. Trees that yield no fruit have been and will ever be for the fire.

Bahá'u'lláh: *Persian Hidden Words*, Page: 80

...be occupied always in mentioning the Lord and display effort to complete thy profession. Thou must endeavour greatly so that thou mayest become unique in thy profession and famous in those parts, because attaining perfection in one's profession in this merciful period is considered to be worship of God.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, Pages: 145-146

Whatever the progress of the machinery may be, man will have always to toil in order to earn his living. Effort is an inseparable part of man's life. It may take different forms with the changing conditions of the world, but it will be always present as a necessary element in our earthly existence. Life is after all a struggle. Progress is attained through struggle, without such a struggle life ceases to have a meaning; it becomes even extinct. The progress of machinery has not made effort unnecessary. It has given it a new form, a new outlet.

Written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to Robert Moffett, December 26, 1935, quoted in *The Glorious Journey* by W. Craig Weaver and Helen M. Bond

It is the duty of those who are in charge of the organization of society to give every individual the opportunity of acquiring the necessary talent in some kind of profession, and also the means of utilizing such a talent, both for its own sake and for the sake of earning the means of his livelihood. Every individual, no matter how handicapped and limited he may be, is under the obligation of engaging in some work or profession, for work, specially when performed in the spirit of service, is according to Bahá'u'lláh a form of worship. It has not only a utilitarian purpose, but has a value in itself because it draws us nearer to God, and enables us to better grasp His purpose for us in this world. It is obvious, therefore, that the inheritance of wealth cannot make anyone immune from daily work.

Shoghi Effendi, cited in *Bahá'í Procedures*, pp. 7-8, quoted in *The Glorious Journey* by W. Craig Weaver and Helen M. Bond

Experiment A—The Dancing Penny

You will need: an empty soft drink bottle (glass bottles are best, but plastic bottles will work); pennies, dimes, nickels; a few drops of water or cooking oil

Instructions: Chilling the bottle for several minutes before presenting the demonstration will increase the effect but is not necessary. Select a coin that will “seat” in the opening of the bottle without falling into the bottle. You may need to try different coins and bottles to find an acceptable combination.

Presentation: Lay the coin flat over the opening of the bottle. Place a few drops of water or cooking oil at the edge of the coin to form a seal between the coin and lip of the bottle. Wrap both hands around the body of the bottle. Direct participants to focus their attention on the coin. The coin will begin to tap on the lip of the bottle. If the coin does not tap, warmed air might be escaping between the coin and the lip of the bottle. Add a few more drops of water or oil. [In a closed container of any gas—including oxygen—there is a direct relationship between temperature and pressure; as temperature increases through the heat of the hands around the bottle, so does pressure. The pressure increase is caused by the increase in motion of the gas molecules as they become warmer. The added energy increases the motion of the gas molecules until they lift the coin. As some of the gas escapes, the coin drops.]

Elicit explanations and/or comments from the participants.

Experiment B—Static Charged 2 X4's

You will need: a long piece of lumber: an 8' 1 X 4, 2 X4, or 4 X 4 works well; soup ladle or ice cream scoop; lubricating oil; balloon; piece of wool cloth or fur

Instructions: Invert the soup ladle or ice cream scoop on a table top. The smooth convex surface is used as a pivot for the lumber. Place a few drops of oil on top of the curved surface. Carefully balance the board on the pivot. The oil allows the board to rotate freely. Place a static charge on the surface of the balloon by rubbing it in one direction on a piece of wool or fur. Hold the charged balloon a few inches from one end of the balanced board. The board will move toward the balloon.

Presentation: Most people are familiar with the standard static electricity demonstrations of picking up bits of paper with a charged comb or sticking a charged balloon to the wall. This is a dramatic extension to those activities! [The action of stroking the balloon with a piece of cloth causes some electrons to be dislodged from the cloth and deposited on the balloon. The electrons on the surface of the charged balloon give it a negative charge. When the balloon is held near the board, the charge on the balloon affects the position of the electrons in the board creating the opposite charge on the surface of the board. This causes the board to move.]

Elicit explanations and/or comments from the participants.

Building the Qualities that Promote Unity

Purpose: To understand the importance of practicing behaviors in order to acquire specific virtues.
To understand how acquiring virtues leads to more loving communities.

Fireside/Intergenerational Activity for all ages
90 minutes—2 hours

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

Opening prayer(s). When possible, include the use of music, recorded or sung. Especially consider inviting friends of all ages, young children through the aged, to contribute to these opening prayers. This will be most effective if you ask several children, youth, adults or seniors to come prepared to share their prayer with the group.

Introduction

Begin by explaining to the guests or participants that the purpose of the gathering is to begin to understand how becoming more aware of and practicing virtues in our lives can help make families and communities more loving and peaceful.

We Are One Video

Have the guests watch the video (or telecast) of "We Are One" (approximately 30 minutes). If many small children are present, it may be a good idea to do the activity first and show the videotape later.

Learning Experience

In advance prepare the following materials:

- Handouts of various spiritual qualities—a different quality for each group of 3-10 people. Limit the number of groups to five or fewer. The quotations and stories on the following pages come from chapters of the book, *Thoughts—Education for Peace and One World*, compiled by Irene Taafaki, and are examples of possible spiritual qualities to use. The book is available from the Bahá'í Distribution Service: 1-800-999-9019.
- *The Virtues Guide* by Linda and Dan Popov, published by The Virtues Project, Inc. is also a good resource. Visit their web site: www.virtuesproject.com or call: 604-537-4647 for more information.
- Small bags with 3-5 different items for each group. The contents of each sack should be unique, but there should be the same number of items in each sack. Make the items fun and diverse—anything from staplers to apples to wigs.
- Make enough copies of the directions for each group.

Organizing the intergenerational activity:

- Talk briefly about the importance of identifying and building spiritual qualities within ourselves, our children and our community that will help us coexist in unity and peace.
- Describe the activity to the participants—We are going to divide into new "family" groups and explore one of the qualities that will help us and our community become more loving and united. Each family group will select one spiritual quality handout to explore. You will read the handout aloud together, making sure that each member of the group has some level of understanding about "what the spiritual quality looks like." Discuss examples you have seen of people demonstrating this quality. How is this quality essential for creating a community of peace and unity? Then prepare a skit that demonstrates the spiritual quality without naming it. The audience will guess what it is when your skit is over. For props, you will receive a bag of "fun" items. Use every item in your bag during your performance. The skits should not be longer than three minutes.

- Divide participants into groups of 3-10, including different ages and family members in each group. This might be done by counting off, or by handing out small pieces of colored paper as participants arrive and then grouping by color, etc.
- Give each group a directions sheet, a spiritual quality handout and a bag with various items in it.
- Repeat the directions simply: Read the spiritual quality. Discuss the spiritual quality. Create a simple, three minute skit. Return in 30-40 minutes prepared to perform.

Possible spiritual qualities to explore:

Caring	Love
Compassion	Patience
Courtesy	Peacefulness
Forgiveness	Respect
Humility	Tolerance
Justice	Unity

Closing

Bring everyone back together. How did watching or participating in these simple skits help you think of new, practical ways to practice specific spiritual qualities in your lives?

Invite participants to investigate the Bahá'í Faith.

Close the session with prayer, either spoken, chanted or sung. Include the younger members of the group in the closing prayers.

Caring

I hope that each one of you will become just, and direct your thoughts towards the unity of mankind; that you will never harm your neighbours nor speak ill of any one; that you will respect the rights of all men, and be more concerned for the interests of others than for your own.

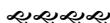
'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Paris Talks*, Page: 160

Be a home for the stranger, a balm to the suffering, a tower of strength for the fugitive.

Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings*, Page 285

... let thy aim be the good of all and then carry on thy task in life.

Bhagavad-Gita, 3, v. 20



... Mrs. Getsinger was in Akká having made the pilgrimage to the prison city to see the Master. She was with Him one day when he said to her that He was too busy to call upon a friend of His who was very ill and poor and He wished her to go in His place. Take him food and care for him as I have been doing, He concluded. He told her where this man was to be found and she went gladly, proud that 'Abdu'l-Bahá should trust her with this mission

She returned quickly. 'Master,' she exclaimed, 'surely you cannot realise to what a terrible place you sent me. I almost fainted from the awful stench, the filthy rooms, the degrading condition of that man and his house. I fled lest I contract some terrible disease.'

Sadly and sternly 'Abdu'l-Bahá regarded her. 'Dost thou desire to serve God,' He said, 'serve thy fellow man for in him dost thou see the image and likeness of God.' He told her to go back to this man's house. If it is filthy she should clean it; if this brother of yours is dirty, bathe him; if he is hungry, feed him. Do not return until this is done. Many times had He done this for him and cannot she serve him once?

Howard Colby Ives, *Portals to Freedom*, Page 85



Androcles and the Lion

In Rome, many centuries ago, there lived a poor slave whose name was Androcles. His master was a cruel man and so unkind to him that one day Androcles ran away.

He hid himself in a wild wood for many days. There was no food to be found and so Androcles became weak and sick, so much so that he thought he would die. He crept into a cave and fell asleep.

After a while a great noise woke him up. A lion had come into the cave and was roaring loudly. Androcles was badly frightened, for he felt sure the beast would kill him. However, he soon saw that the beast was not angry, but that he limped as though his foot hurt him.

Then Androcles wasn't afraid any more. He lifted the lion's paw from the ground and saw there was a long sharp thorn sticking into it. He gave the thorn a strong quick pull and out it came. The lion was much relieved and very grateful. He jumped about like a dog and licked the hands and feet of his new friend.

Androcles was not at all afraid after this and when night came, the lion and Androcles slept side by side.

For a long time the lion brought food to Androcles every day and the two became such good friends that Androcles found his new life a very happy one.

One day soldiers were passing through the wood. They captured Androcles and dragged him back to Rome.

It was the law at that time that any slave who ran away from his master should be made to fight a hungry lion. So a fierce lion was shut up in a cage for a while and a time was set for a fight. Thousands of people gathered to see Androcles fight the lion, but when the lion rushed into the arena Androcles gave a cry of gladness, not fear, for the lion was his old friend. The people expected to see him killed. Instead they saw him hugging a lion who lay down at his feet. Androcles said, 'I am a man, but no man has befriended me. This lion is my brother.' They were then set free and lived together for many happy years.

Traditional

(avoiding) Backbiting

...backbiting quencheth the light of the heart, and extinguisheth the life of the soul.

Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings*, Page 265

... good is restraint in speech...[he] who is controlled in tongue, who speaks wisely...sweet, indeed, is his speech.

Dhammapada, XXV, v. 361,363, Page 81

O Son of Man! Breathe not the sins of others so long as thou art thyself a sinner. Shouldst thou transgress this command, accursed wouldst thou be, and to this I bear witness.

Bahá'u'lláh, *Arabic Hidden Words*, no. 27

... the tongue is a smouldering fire, and excess of speech a deadly poison. Material fire consumeth the body, whereas the fire of the tongue devoureth both heart and soul. The force of the former lasteth but for a time, whilst the effects of the latter endureth a century.

Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings*, Page 264



Control Your Tongue

One day a rich lady went to a saintly man to ask his advice. She said that she wished to be a saintly woman, but there was one fault which she found difficult to overcome. The saint told her that there was no fault one could not overcome if one wanted to overcome it.

Then the lady told the saint how she was in the habit of gossiping about others and how she had failed to overcome that fault although she had tried very hard.

'Can you help me?' she asked the holy man. 'I will do anything you ask me to do.'

'Very well,' answered the holy man, 'go to the market and buy a fowl. On your way back home, pluck the fine feathers of the fowl and throw them on the street as you walk along. Come and see me after you have done this.'

The rich lady was surprised to hear this, but she respected the holy man. So she did as she was told and faithfully obeyed his orders.

The next day she went and told the holy man that she had obeyed his commands.

'Very good,' answered the saint. 'You have done the first part of your task very well. Now comes the second part. Go to the market and walk along the street again and try to pick up the feathers which you threw on the road yesterday.'

'That's impossible!' said the rich lady. 'The wind has already blown them in all directions. How can I collect the feathers again?'

'That is so,' answered the holy man. 'The same happens when you gossip about others. Your words are passed from mouth to mouth and it is impossible to stop the evil spreading, once it has started. The best thing to do is not to start it.'

The lady was so impressed by this object lesson that she went home determined never to speak evil of anybody ever again.

Traditional



Humility

Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

The Holy Bible, Matthew 5:5

Be...a fruit upon the tree of humility.

Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings*, Page 285

Humility exalteth man to the heaven of glory and power, whilst pride abaseth him to the depths of wretchedness and degradation.

Bahá'u'lláh, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, Page 30

...man must become evanescent in God. Must forget his own selfish conditions that he may thus arise to the station of sacrifice. It should be to such a degree that if he sleep, it should not be for pleasure, but to rest the body in order to do better, to speak better, to explain more beautifully, to serve the servants of God and to prove the truths. When he remains awake, he should seek to be attentive, serve the Cause of God and sacrifice his own stations for those of God. When he attains to this station, the confirmations of the Holy Spirit will surely reach him, and man with this power can withstand all who inhabit the earth.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Bahá'í World Faith*, Page 384



A man took his son into a beautiful garden where many people had gathered to pray. After an hour of chanting prayers, the boy looked around and observed that many of the worshippers were lost not in prayer but in sleep. He turned to his father and asked, 'Are we not better than those who are sleeping instead of praying?' The father simply replied, 'We might have been better had we not asked this question.'

Traditional



Patience

He, verily, shall increase the reward of them that endure with patience.

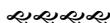
Bahá'u'lláh: *Gleanings*, Page: 129

O SON OF MAN! For everything there is a sign. The sign of love is fortitude under My decree and patience under My trials.

Bahá'u'lláh: *Arabic Hidden Words*, Page: 48

O believers, be patient, and vie you in patience...haply so you will prosper.

Muhammad, *Qur'án*, III, v. 200, p. 99



Bruce and the Spider

A long time ago there lived a King of Scotland named Robert Bruce. He was a greatly troubled man because his country was at war with England and the English were winning. In battle after battle they drove back the Scottish army until at last the King himself had to retreat to the mountains to save his life.

Wandering desperately through the mountain forests, cold and hungry and exhausted, at last the King found a miserable little wooden hut empty and deserted. Glad of any kind of shelter, he lay down on the floor of the hut in deep despair.

'There is no use in going on,' he thought. 'The enemy has thrown back our armies six times. We can never repulse them. I have failed my people. I might as well give up.'

At that moment the King noticed a little grey spider spinning a long thread from one of the rafters. The spider swung along on the thread in an effort to attach the other end to another rafter so he could start spinning his web. But the thread broke and the spider fell to the floor of the hut.

A little dazed perhaps, but with no hesitation at all, the spider climbed up the wall and began spinning again. He kept patiently at it until the thread was long enough. Then he again swung himself to the end of it and tried once more to attach it to the rafter across the corner. But again the spider fell to the floor.

And once more he climbed up and began again.

Six times the spider's thread broke. Six times he fell to the ground. Six times he began. Six times he failed.

Robert Bruce, the King of Scotland, watched in fascination. He became so absorbed in the little spider's efforts that for a time he forgot his own troubles.

The spider did not give up even when he failed for the sixth time. He just tried again, and this time, on the seventh try, he was successful. The end of the thread held! The spider attached it to the far rafter and began spinning his web.

Robert Bruce arose and bowed low to the tiny grey creature. 'O little spider!' he cried. 'You have taught me a wonderful lesson in patience and persistence. You were not ready to give up, as I was. No matter how often you failed, you were always willing to try again. Perhaps I too shall win if I keep on trying.'

And so, though he was still cold and hungry and weary, he was no longer disheartened. Watching the spider had given him new strength and courage. He buckled on his sword, gathered together his scattered armies and, with the example of the courageous spider to inspire him, King Robert Bruce let his men, on the seventh try, to victory.

Traditional



Unity

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

Baha'u'llah: *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, Page: 14

Be ye as the fingers of one hand, the members of one body.

Baha'u'llah: *The Kitab-i-Aqdas*, Page: 40

What is real unity? When we observe the human world, we find various collective expressions of unity therein. For instance, man is distinguished from the animal by his degree, or kingdom. This comprehensive distinction includes all the posterity of Adam and constitutes one great household or human family, which may be considered the fundamental or physical unity of mankind...The unity which is productive of unlimited results is first a unity of mankind which recognizes that all are sheltered beneath the overshadowing glory of the All-Glorious, that all are servants of one God; for all breathe the same atmosphere, live upon the same earth, move beneath the same heavens, receive effulgence from the same sun and are under the protection of one God. This is the most great unity, and its results are lasting if humanity adheres to it

`Abdu'l-Baha: *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, Pages: 190-191



The Bundle of Sticks

There was once a farmer with several sons who could never agree among themselves. He had often told them how foolish they were to be always quarrelling, but they kept on and paid no attention to his advice.

One day the father called his sons before him and showed them a bundle of sticks tied tightly together. 'See which one of you can break this bundle in two,' he commanded.

Each son in turn took the bundle in his hands and tried his best to break it. They all tried, but in vain, for the bundle was so strong that not one of them could even bend it. At last they gave it back to their father saying, 'We cannot break it.'

Then the father untied the bundle and gave a single stick to each of his sons. 'Now see what you can do,' he said. Each one broke his stick with the greatest of ease.

'My sons,' said the wise father, 'you, like these sticks, will be strong if you stand together; but once you quarrel and become separated, then you are destroyed.'

Traditional



Demonstrating Spiritual Qualities--Directions

Read aloud about the spiritual quality you have selected. Be sure to make it simple enough for the youngest person...and everyone else in your group to have some level of understanding about "what the quality looks like." Discuss examples you have seen of people demonstrating this spiritual quality.

How is this quality essential for creating a community of peace and unity?

Prepare a simple skit that demonstrates the spiritual quality without naming it. The other friends will guess what it is when your skit is finished. Use every item in your bag during your performance.

Skit length—under 3 minutes.



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

Core Curriculum for Spiritual Education

Fundamental Verities Course Series

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

Programs for Developing Patterns of Bahá'í Life

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

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

Local Assembly Development Program

Training for Pioneers

Training for Media Representatives

Training for Local Treasurers

Permanent Schools and Institutes

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