

TO BE A BAHÁ'Í

FROM NEW BELIEVERS TO
NEW TEACHERS IN THE CAUSE OF GOD



*T*he first duty prescribed by God for His servants is the recognition of Him Who is the Dayspring of His Revelation and the Fountain of His laws, Who representeth the Godhead in both the Kingdom of His Cause and the world of creation. Whoso achieveth this duty hath attained unto all good . . .

Bahá'u'lláh

F A C I L I T A T O R H A N D B O O K

NOVEMBER, 2003

INTRODUCTION

This course, developed and distributed by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States, has as its essential purpose to evoke the spirit of the Faith and to make every new Bahá'í feel loved and welcomed into the Bahá'í community. For those just investigating the Bahá'í Faith, the course is also an excellent introduction to the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. The course is a companion to the book *So Great An Honor*, a book intended as an overview for new believers and is available from the Bahá'í Distribution Service. It is hoped that during this course an atmosphere can be created which will set the foundation for ongoing study of the verities of the Faith and continual turning to the Sacred Writings for guidance and inspiration. The new believer should be aroused to realize his or her capacity in many new paths of service to the Cause, the most vital of these being to teach others about their new-found Faith.

Focus Quotation

This course derives its focus and outline from the following quotation of the Guardian, Shoghi Effendi:

“Above all, the utmost endeavor should be exerted by your Assembly to familiarize the newly enrolled believers with the fundamental and spiritual verities of the Faith, and with the origins, the aims and purposes, as well as the processes of a divinely appointed Administrative Order, to acquaint them more fully with the history of the Faith, to instill in them a deeper understanding of the Covenants of both Bahá'u'lláh and of ‘Abdu'l-Bahá, to enrich their spiritual life, to rouse them to a greater effort and a closer participation in both the teaching of the Faith and the administration of its activities, and to inspire them to make the necessary sacrifices for the furtherance of its vital interests. For as the body of the avowed supporters of the Faith is enlarged, and the basis of the structure of the Administrative Order is broadened, and the fame of the rising community spreads far and wide, a parallel progress must be achieved, if the fruits already garnered are to endure, in the spiritual quickening of its members and the deepening of their inner life.”

SHOGHI EFFENDI
*The Importance of Deepening Our Knowledge and
Understanding of the Faith*, #89, pages 26-27

Course Design and Presentation

The design of this short course is intended to span a full day – with 3-4 hours before and after lunch. The course may also be expanded to a weekend, week-long or ongoing study.

As in any course or training program, there are some guidelines and preparations necessary in order to make it successful. Some suggested preparations on the following pages will give the facilitator ideas of how an atmosphere might be created in order to facilitate spiritual learning. Of course, there is much flexibility in how this might be achieved, and different materials may be available in different localities. Still, most or all of the suggested preparations should be followed in order to make the program as successful as it has been during its piloting stages.

The facilitator should also be mindful of the timing of different parts of the course. In order to aid in the allotment of time for each section, approximate times have been added in parenthesis after the instructions for each activity. Although there can be some give and take, especially if important consultation is taking place, the facilitator should try to adhere as best as possible as to these suggested times in order to cover all the material.

Facilitation Guidelines

Some more specific guidelines may be helpful in facilitating this course:

- **Using the Master as our example.** Constantly bringing to mind the life and words of our beloved ‘Abdu’l-Bahá will assist you to respond in a loving manner to these precious new believers. Please feel free to personally study and reflect upon some of the writings and prayers of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá before you begin so you will have His image clearly in mind when delivering the course.
- **Use the Sacred Texts as a basis for your answers.** When answering questions, always try to refer the new believers to where those answers can be found in the Writings. Inspiring in the new believers the confidence to know that by going to the Writings they will find answers and advice that they can then translate into action in their daily lives is an invaluable lesson that they will carry with them forever.
- **Keep your comments brief.** Creating an atmosphere where the participants themselves feel free to share their views and concerns necessitates that the facilitators and lecturing guests keep their presentations and answers brief. Allowing them to have the opportunity to connect their hearts to Bahá’u’lláh through use of the Sacred Texts will have much more impact on them than the typical lecture might. For this reason, very little of this course is based on lecturing or giving long answers to the questions of the new believers.
- **Practice patience.** It is important to realize that each of us come to our recognition of Bahá’u’lláh through many different avenues and after varying lengths of search. Some may have read every book in sight and others may have that spark of faith after a brief explanation of Bahá’u’lláh’s life and mission. All come with something unique to offer and assisting them to realize that their contributions are important is part of making people feel welcomed.
- **Be happy!** An uplifting environment will always make learning easier and a cheerful presenter can really make all the difference. You may even find your own Faith renewed as you joyfully assist these new believers 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.

Supplemental Activities

Besides the activities in each of the four sections of this course, you will find some supplemental activities. These have been included in case your Assembly or organizing committee for the presentation of the new believers course decides to extend it beyond the 8 hours. In fact, 8 hours may not seem like enough time for the presentation of all the materials on this course, especially when a larger number of participants is involved. The supplemental activities provided will serve to reinforce the themes of the course and enhance the learning of the material presented. Some communities prefer to give several hours at a time over a period of several weeks rather than presenting all parts of the course at once. Those involved in your area will have to consult and decide which method best suits the new believers and facilitators in that area.

Compact Disc Accompanying This Course

Included with this course packet is an introductory CD. Along with some further helpful instructions, there is inspiring Bahá'í music recorded on this CD for your use throughout the course presentation. The use of music is encouraged to prepare the hearts for the study of the Sacred Texts.

The National Spiritual Assembly wishes to extend its thanks to the people who granted permission for the use of these songs on the accompanying CD:

Davis, Mary. "Blessed is the Spot." Words of Bahá'u'lláh.
On Wings of Prayer, Wildflower Music, 1992.

World Congress Choir. "All Praise be to Thee." Words of Bahá'u'lláh. Music by Mozart.
Music from the World Congress, Live Unity, 1994.

Odulate, Dorothy (formerly Dorothy Newton Powells). "Healing Prayer." Words of Bahá'u'lláh.
Nightingale, Wildfire Productions, 1985.

Seaforth, Paul. "Look at Me, Follow Me." Words by and based on 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Music by Tom Price.
Music from the World Congress, Live Unity, 1994.

El Viento Canta. "El Viento Canta." Words and music by El Viento Canta.
El Viento Canta, Seventh Valley Music, 1994.

Bahá'í Gospel Singers. "We Have Come to Sing Praises." Words and music by Van Gilmer.
We Have Come to Sing Praises, Global Music, 1993.

Grammer, Red. "One Family." Words and Music by Red Grammer.
Free Falling, Red Note Records, 1993.

Narges. "Ay Yad-i-Toh (Thy Remembrance)." Words by Ahdieh Pakravan. Music arranged by Tom Price.
Narges, Global Music, 1993.

World Congress Gospel Choir. "In This Day Bahá'u'lláh." Words and music by Fred Ward.
Music from the World Congress, Live Unity, 1994.

Locke, Kevin. "Morning Star Love Song."
Love Songs of the Lakota, Indian House, 1983.

Please do not make unnecessary copies of this CD. Many of these recordings are available for purchase from the Bahá'í Distribution Service: 1-800-999-9019, 5397 Wilbanks Drive, Chattanooga, TN 37343, bds@usbnc.org, or through Special Ideas, 1-800-326-1197, www.special-ideas.com.

☞ A SPIRITUAL FRAMEWORK FOR SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING ☞

The purpose of this program is to inspire the new believers and assist them in their path of self-directed learning of the creative word. To accomplish this, the program is structured using a learning model derived from the writings of Bahá'u'lláh:

“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

Most learning experiences start and end with knowledge and wisdom, but using this model the learner can achieve a deeper level of understanding. He or she internalizes what is learned by applying it to his or her own everyday experiences and actions.

The activities in this program are organized to achieve these 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.

This program attempts to engage the mind and heart in a variety of activities such as reading, discussing, listening, reflecting and expressing through the arts. Some of the activities and methods used in this course are derived from those developed for the Core Curriculum for Spiritual Education program. Extensive study of the Sacred Writings was undertaken in order to develop a program that uses diverse methods compatible with the teaching methods described therein. Not only will each mind and heart be touched when different methods are used, but one is also taken beyond the bounds of their usual learning modes so that new horizons and vistas can be discovered.

You are welcomed and encouraged to read more about the different methods of teaching and learning suggested in our Holy Texts in the book *Foundations for a Spiritual Education* available through the Bahá'í Distribution Service.

PRE-COURSE PREPARATION

Preparing the Participant

- Send each registered participant a brief inspirational quotation and/or prayer which participants are asked to read prior to coming to class.

Preparing the Environment

The environment is extremely important in making this an enriching experience for the new believer. Please take the time to make sure the atmosphere is set for spiritual learning. Some steps might include:

- Prepare the environment so that it is clean, orderly and beautiful.
- Pictures help to set the tone: place pictures of the Holy Places, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, etc., around the room.
- Be early and say prayers in the room.
- Play music when students enter.
- Set the mood of joy, meditation, spiritual upliftment.
- The environment should be intimate and interactive for the participants; a classroom, conference room, lounge or living room may be preferable to a lecture hall.
- Flowers lend a caring touch, if it is possible to have them.
- Quotations displayed around the room can provide additional inspiration.

Preparing for Teaching the Course

- Create a resource table used in Part 2 by having a table with different copies of the Sacred Texts and other reference materials. (The new believers should be encouraged to peruse this material throughout the day.)
- Prepare your handouts and gather all necessary materials (see next page) well in advance.
- Cue up video and audio tapes in advance.
- Prepare “gifts” of books, pamphlets, special cards with a prayer or quotation, etc.
 - A nice and very useful gift for the new believer (to be given upon finishing this short course) would be the book *So Great An Honor*, prepared especially as an orientation to the new believer.
- Plan refreshment breaks, snacks, and meals.
- Gather and prepare materials for the scientific demonstration in Part 3.

Building a support network for the participant

- Request LSA sponsorship for course participant.
- Suggest that new believer come with a partner, another new believer, their teacher, an assembly member, or other devoted friend.

MATERIALS NEEDED

Equipment

- Tape and/or CD Player
- VCR/TV
- Chalkboard, Marker Board or Flip Chart

Video Tapes

- *Lasting Remembrances* 4-volume set, official video recordings, Bahá'í World Congress, 1992

Participant Materials

- Participant Workbook: "To Be a Bahá'í . . . From New Believers to New Teachers in the Cause of God"
- Magazine *The Bahá'ís* (One copy per participant. Order from the Bahá'í Distribution Service - 1-800-999-9019.)

Audio Tapes or CDs

- Music from introductory cassette accompanying this course

Other sources might include:

- Music of the Bahá'í Gospel Choir
- Music from the Bahá'í World Congress
- Any other music, from Bahá'í and other celebratory sources; may include Nargas, Red Grammer, Mary Davis, Seaforth and Jenkins, Kevin Locke, Kiu Haghghi, El Viento Canta, Matthew Levine; jazz, classical, etc. (Be creative!)

Resource Materials

- A good selection of Bahá'í Writings, which may include:
 - The Hidden Words
 - Compilation of Compilations
 - Bahá'í Prayers (several)
 - Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá
 - Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh
 - The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh
 - and more.
- *Brilliant Star* Magazines

Other Materials

- Teaching Packet Gifts (pamphlets, etc.)
- Name Tags
- For experiment/demonstration: iron filings, magnet, bleach and food coloring
- Art supplies for arts and crafts table
- *So Great An Honor*, (Bahá'í Distribution Service – 1-800-999-9019) if you will be supplying it as a gift.

Other Materials for Supplemental Activities

- Tinker Toys
- 1993 Vision in Action Video (Bahá'í Distribution Service – 1-800-999-9019)
- Ball of Yarn

Refreshments

- Coffee and tea set up, or other drinks; perhaps some light snacks
- Provisions for lunch

☞ OVERVIEW ☞

PART ONE

THE MAGNIFICENCE OF THIS DAY OF GOD

**A Personal Relationship with Bahá'u'lláh
The Magnificence of this Day of God**

PART TWO

THE VERITIES OF THE FAITH

**The Transformation of Civilization
Applying the Healing Message of Bahá'u'lláh to a Suffering Humanity**

PART THREE

THE TWIN DUTIES: A PRESCRIPTION FOR THIS AGE

**Recognition and Obedience
The Covenant and Daily Life: The Love Between God and Us
His Call, Our Actions
Tests and Difficulties
Aims, Origins and Purposes of the Administrative Order**

PART FOUR

MOVING TO ACTION

**Personal Spiritual Development
Memorization
Service and Action
Conclusion of Session/Questions and Answers**

☞ PART 1: THE MAGNIFICENCE OF THIS DAY OF GOD ☞

Themes

- Nobility of the Human Being
- The Greatness of this Day of God

Part One Goals

Knowledge

- Become aware of the Core Curriculum learning model to be used in this course.
- Learn something of the life and teachings of Bahá'u'lláh.

Wisdom

- Understand Bahá'u'lláh's love as the cause of our attraction to His Faith.

Spiritual Perception

- Perceive more clearly (through careful listening) humanity's response to Bahá'u'lláh.

Eloquent Speech

- Describe one's process of becoming a Bahá'í. Question others about their path to Bahá'u'lláh.

Activities

- A Personal Relationship with Bahá'u'lláh
- The Magnificence of this Day of God

Possible Metaphor*

- The Gift – “I knew My love for thee, therefore I created thee...” Bahá'u'lláh, The Hidden Words, Arabic #3

Advance Preparation

- Prepare the environment (see page 2) for spiritual learning.
- Cue up music and/or videos. Make sure equipment is functional.
- Set up coffee, tables, etc.
- Set up an arts and crafts table with the art supplies.

* Metaphors can be very useful tools for explaining profound spiritual concepts. Throughout the Bahá'í Writings we can find many metaphors used by the Central Figures, and so, in each section of this course we have recommended some possible metaphors which may be used to explain the main themes.

A Personal Relationship with Bahá'u'lláh

Welcome and devotions

- Arrive early, and lovingly greet each person as they enter.
- Invite two of the friends to recite, read, or chant prayers. Possibly begin with group singing, or recorded music, such as the following prayers on the cassette accompanying this course: “Blessed is the Spot” or “The Healing Prayer” (10-15 min. for prayer and music)
- Welcome the friends on behalf of the National Spiritual Assembly and Bahá'í community to the Faith and this program. (5 min)

The process of attraction: personal stories

- Have the friends share their stories, in pairs, of investigating and becoming a Bahá'í. Invite them to take turns, one listening in silence, with loving and complete attention while the other speaks, asking questions for understanding. The purpose is to learn what Bahá'u'lláh has done to capture our hearts. What has attracted us to Him? How did we come to be here today? (10 min.)
- Have participants introduce their partner to the whole group. (2 min. per person)
- Discuss as a group what patterns the friends discern in this process of attraction. What then, are the implications for our interactions with others? Briefly list. (10 min.)
- Celebrate with music or perhaps a short video clip. The video of the Gospel choir singing “We Have Come to Sing Praises” might be useful. An option might be a group singing activity, if facilitator has access to song sheets of Bahá'í music or knows simple songs to teach a group. (5 min.)

Setting Expectations

- Set expectations for the course with the new believers. Draw their attention to the quotation from Shoghi Effendi which is a Key Reference on what new believers should know (page 3 in the Participant Workbook and on the introduction page in this Facilitator Handbook) and read the quote together. Ask them what would they like to know or see. List their questions and desires on paper or flip chart (but remember to list these comments only; this is not the time to address answers to these questions) and save this paper so that you can return to them again at the end of the course to make sure needs have been met. Also, you may want to set some guidelines for consultation. Elicit from them what might be some of the guidelines to follow for participation and consultation. Discuss with the friends that you realize that flexibility is important, but that timing is also important so that all or most of the material in this course can be covered in the allotted timeframe. Make sure that all the participants are in agreement. (15 min)
- To facilitate the process of having all questions and concerns answered, have a box and papers available and let the participants know that at any time they may insert a question and that you will try to answer all of them before the end of the course. (Remember to check the box every once in a while.)
- Share with the participants the learning model on page 1. It is in their workbook on page 1. (5 min.)
- Briefly share with the participants the goals for part 1. (5 min.)

A 5-minute stretch break may be incorporated here.

The Magnificence of this Day of God

- The following quotations may be used to introduce this section (Participant Workbook page 4):

“Every Prophet Whom the Almighty and Peerless Creator hath purposed to send to the peoples of the earth hath been entrusted with a Message, and charged to act in a manner that would best meet the requirements of the age in which He appeared. God’s purpose in sending His Prophets unto men is twofold. The first is to liberate the children of men from the darkness of ignorance, and guide them to the light of true understanding. The second is to ensure the peace and tranquillity of mankind, and provide all the means by which they can be established.”

BAHÁ’U’LLÁH
Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh, p. 79-80

“We have, at the bidding of the Omnipotent Ordainer, breathed a new life into every human frame, and instilled into every word a fresh potency. All created things proclaim the evidences of this world-wide regeneration.”

BAHÁ’U’LLÁH
Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh, pgs. 92-93

- Let the participants know that (in their workbooks, pgs. 5-6) there are additional quotations relating to this topic. You (the facilitator) might also wish to reflect on these additional quotations in preparing brief remarks on living in the Day of God.

Discussion

- The facilitator or guest teacher (some sources for guest teacher include Auxiliary Board members, Assistants to the Auxiliary Board, LSA members, etc.) should lead a discussion on the significance and magnificence of this Day of God, including information about the Central Figures and Progressive Revelation. One key reference for preparation is *The Significance of Bahá’u’lláh’s Revelation*. In addition, the titles of Bahá’u’lláh compiled in the *Desire of the World* may be useful. Presentation is key – the material should be informative, but not dry; inspirational and fulfilling. (Please confine to 30 minutes, including question and answer period.)

Some important things to mention in this presentation might be general information about:

- the Central Figures of the Faith
- Progressive Revelation
- The Life of Bahá’u’lláh (brief timeline)

A 10 minute break may be incorporated here.

Supplemental Activities

- Show the portion of the 1993 “Vision in Action” video in which Dr. Robert Henderson, Secretary-General of the National Spiritual Assembly, points out that Bahá’u’lláh’s Teachings are the only remedy for a suffering humanity. Dr. Henderson’s talk is entitled “America’s Only Hope” and is the last talk on the tape. (30 min.)
- Other videos that could be shown include: “The Prisoner of Akká,” “The Bahá’í World Congress, Day One, Oratorio,” and “The Secret of This Century.”

☞ PART 2: THE VERITIES OF THE FAITH ☞

Themes

- The Divine Physician has come
- Sharing the Message

Part Two Goals

Knowledge

- Study the Bahá'í principles and quotations that serve as healing medicine for the ills of humanity.

Wisdom

- Understand that there is no solution to the suffering of humanity but the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, the Divine Physician.

Spiritual Perception

- Perceive ways to share this Message with family and friends.

Eloquent Speech

- Prepare some possible answers to initial questions about Bahá'u'lláh.
- Learn to prepare a brief presentation of Bahá'u'lláh's answer to one of the ills of humanity.

Activities

- The Transformation of Civilization
- Applying the Healing Message of Bahá'u'lláh to a Suffering Humanity

Possible Metaphor

- The Ocean: The Healing Water of Life

Advance Preparation

- Provide art supplies and “props” for the skits created demonstrating the transformation of civilization.
- Prepare Resource Table, include:
 - Sacred Writings - various books should be available
 - Writings (or compilations) specifically about the issues covered here, i.e., the Covenant, race unity, gender issues, the environment, economic justice, peace, family life, etc.
 - The magazine *The Bahá'ís* is a good source for data, charts, etc.

(Note: It is probably preferable to set up the resource table before starting the course so that it is available and ready for reference at any time.)

The Transformation of Civilization

Role-playing skits

- Divide the group into 5 small groups (this could be either individuals, pairs or small groups, depending on the number of participants) and provide each group with the Writings on one of the following topics (Refer participants to pages 7-11 in Participant Workbook):
 - 1 A chaste and holy life (p. 7)
 - 2 Marriage and family life (p. 8)
 - 3 Oneness: Race unity and the equality of men and women (p. 9)
 - 4 Fellowship and the power of unity (p. 10)
 - 5 Consultation (p. 11)
- Each group will deepen on one topic, then quickly sketch out a short skit or monologue (an outline for an improvisation is fine) demonstrating the application of Bahá'í principles to various relationships. Presentations should be roughly 2 minutes in length. (20 min)
- Present the skits, and follow with discussion as time permits. (20-25 min)

Applying the Healing Message of Bahá'u'lláh to a Suffering Humanity

- Invite the friends to brainstorm issues facing a suffering humanity. Create a list of ideas. List the sort of statements or questions that we hear in our daily life about these issues. (10 min.)
- Depending on the number of participants, invite the friends to work as individuals, in pairs, or as small teams to prepare a response to one of these questions or issues.

Refer the participants to the learning station, books and other materials to help them complete this task. They should choose an issue facing humanity that in fact touches the lives of people they know personally. Their work should result in a short paragraph (3-4 sentences) that includes at least one brief quotation or an artistic presentation of the content/spirit of the guidance. The following steps will guide them (these steps are in the Participant Workbook on page 12): (20 min.)

- 1 Name a problem facing humanity that is a major concern to you and those in your school, community, workplace, or family.
- 2 According to the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, what are the root causes of this problem?
- 3 What are the Bahá'í teachings on this issue?
- 4 Prepare a brief presentation (a written paragraph, a skit, or artistic representation, i.e. poster) that explains Bahá'u'lláh's Teachings on this subject. Include at least one quotation from the Sacred Writings.

Note: An option is to present a focused group of major themes, and have the small teams choose from a list of themes. Such themes might include: equality of men and women, race unity, strengthening family life, education, peace, economics, hope for the future. The facilitator may wish to have focused learning stations and handouts prepared in advance so that a group studying a particular topic will have adequate references from the Writings readily available. Published compilations can be very helpful.

- Briefly share presentations with the whole group. (3 min. per person.)
- Introduce the closing activity by sharing the following quote from Bahá'u'lláh (page 13 in Participant Workbook):

“God’s purpose in sending His Prophets unto men is twofold. The first is to liberate the children of men from the darkness of ignorance, and guide them to the light of true understanding. The second is to ensure the peace and tranquility of mankind, and provide all the means by which they can be established.”

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH
Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, pp. 79-80

Personal Reflection

- Participants are encouraged to briefly record in their workbooks on this “personal reflections page” (with this quotation on the top, page 13 in their workbooks) their reflections on this Revelation. As they are recording their thoughts, you may want to play the video portion of the procession of humanity from the World Congress Video (day one) to demonstrate the wondrous results of God’s sending mankind His Prophet for this Day. (10 min.)

(Break for lunch.)

Supplemental Activity

Meditation Walk

- To provide an opportunity for participants to reflect on and write about what they are learning, invite them to take a solitary walk, to read and meditate on the Writings, taking time to write and/or draw responses to the focus topics:

The importance of religion in one's own life, and for the world

Thoughts on the nature of God:

**How knowing God brings spiritual joy; What is one's relationship to God;
What is one's relationship to all mankind.**

☞ PART 3: THE TWIN DUTIES: A PRESCRIPTION FOR THIS AGE ☞

Themes

- The Covenant
- The Administrative Order

Part Three Goals

Knowledge

- Study the Sacred Texts on the Covenant and administration.

Wisdom

- Understand the Covenant and Administrative Order as the last refuge for a tottering civilization.

Spiritual Perception

- Appreciate the Covenant as the source of our unity.

Eloquent Speech

- Begin the process of a life-long plan for spiritual development.

Activities

- Recognition and Obedience
- The Covenant and Daily Life: The Love Between God and Us
- Tests and Difficulties
- Aims, Origins and Purposes of the Administrative Order

Possible Metaphors

- A Stronghold; a Refuge
- The Ringstone Symbol

Advance Preparation

- Prepare for the scientific demonstrations, gathering the materials needed, including a magnet, some iron filings, a sheet of blank white paper, food coloring, and some liquid bleach.
- Cue up videos and audio tapes.

Recognition and Obedience

- Reconvene with sweet, well-planned prayers and music. Group singing is particularly desirable. Explain the term **Alláh-u-Abhá** and sing it together as a group. Also explain to them the Ringstone Symbol and the star symbols. (Both are illustrated and explained on page 14 of Participant Workbook.) (10 min.)
- Read the following quotation twice, the second time isolating and identifying the twin duties – note salient points on flip chart paper, marker board or blackboard. (For quote, refer participants to page 15 in the Participant Workbook . . . also let them know that this is the continuation of the quotation which is excerpted on the front of their workbook.) (5 min.)

“The first duty prescribed by God for His servants is the recognition of Him Who is the Dayspring of His Revelation and the Fountain of His laws, Who representeth the Godhead in both the Kingdom of His Cause and the world of creation. Whoso achieveth this duty hath attained unto all good; and whoso is deprived thereof hath gone astray, though he be the author of every righteous deed. It behoveth every one who reacheth this most sublime station, this summit of transcendent glory, to observe every ordinance of Him Who is the Desire of the World. These twin duties are inseparable. Neither is acceptable without the other. Thus hath it been decreed by Him Who is the Source of Divine inspiration.”

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH
The Kitáb-i-Aqdas, p. 19

The Short Obligatory Prayer

- Refer the participants to page 16 in their handbooks where they will find the Short Obligatory Prayer. Have one person read the prayer and one person read aloud the instructions below it (or facilitator can walk them through the instructions.) You may want to also point out to them the other two Obligatory Prayers in the Prayer Book. (5 min.)

The Covenant and Daily Life: The Love Between God and Us

Scientific Demonstrations

If the materials are handy, the following simple scientific experiments demonstrate very well the unifying power of Bahá'í law and the Holy Word. They may be introduced by telling the following story from the book *Reflections on the Eve of November 4th* by the Hand of the Cause of God Mr. A.Q. Faizi (his reflections on the day of the passing of the Guardian). Mr. Faizi asks an Armenian believer “How did you become a Bahá'í?” . . . (2 min.)

In answer to this question he taught me a beautiful lesson. He said, “Have you ever seen a cobbler’s shop? In the evening the floor of the shop is nothing but a heap of rubbish. The cobbler takes a magnet in his hand and moves it in the heap. All the clean, useful and shining nails jump to the magnet. The cobbler stores the nails and throws away the rubbish. The same is true with the Word of God. It is held up between heaven and earth and all who have the required intrinsic qualities are attracted to it. . . .” (p. 15)

Demonstration 1

Drop iron filings haphazardly on white cardstock. Place a magnet below the paper. This creates a beautiful, ordered pattern, demonstrating Bahá'í law as an organizing force for human relations. (This demonstration is so quick, it can be repeated several times if necessary for all to see.) (2 min.)

Alternate (or additional) Demonstration

Add many drops of different colored food coloring to a glass of water, mentioning the different ills and individuals that make up society. Then add some liquid bleach, and explain how law liberates, makes clear, illumines the hearts and minds of individuals. (2 min.)

Lecture

The facilitator or guest teacher will discuss with the friends the nature and purpose of the Covenant. The term needs definition, explanation, and loving connection to the individual. A key resource is *The Covenant: Its Meaning and Origin and Our Attitude Toward It*. Quotations about the Covenant have been included on page 17 of the Participant Workbook. (30 min. including answer and question period)

Video

As an alternative or supplement to a talk or lecture/discussion, we highly recommend the video portion of the World Congress videos entitled “Victories of the Covenant,” found on the Day 3 tape. It may be used instead of a talk and can be the basis for questions and consultation about the Covenant. (The participants can be directed to find more quotations for further study about the Covenant in their handbooks on page 17.) (20 min.)

Suggestion

Stories may be shared that tell of the sacrifice and service of the early believers and which demonstrate their firmness in the Covenant. (For example, the story of Lua Getsinger and the sick man found in *The Proud Helper*, by Anthony Lee, Kalimat Press; stories from *Vignettes from the Life of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, The Chosen Highway*.) These stories may also be used to introduce the talk or video.

His Call, Our Actions

- Provide Writings to seven small groups, pairs or individuals on the following topics (see Participant Workbook pages 18-24):
 - 1 Prayer and Meditation (p.18)
 - 2 Deepening and Education (p.19)
 - 3 Teaching and Pioneering (p. 20)
 - 4 The Law of Huqúqu'lláh (p. 21)
 - 5 Giving to the Funds (p. 22)
 - 6 The Covenant and Administration (p. 23)
 - 7 The Feast; Fasting; Living the Life (p. 24)
- Each group will read the Writings on one of the topics, briefly discuss the implications for one's life as a Bahá'í found therein, and identify points to share with the group. (20 min.)
- The group will reconvene and each small group or pair will briefly share one quotation and their sense of the guidance. They may choose to illustrate their report with song, poster, drawing, etc. (20-25 min.)
- To close this section, refer participants to page 25 in their workbooks as you mention some of the other Bahá'í laws and ordinances. Recommend that they read and study more, on their own, about these important topics.

Tests and Difficulties

- The facilitator may want to lead a brief discussion, or offer a story, on the nature of the Covenant and obedience and the reality of tests. Using the story of Shoghi Effendi from *In the Days of the Guardian* (page 26 in Participant Workbook) lead a discussion of the personal aspects of reacting to tests and difficulties. The Facilitator should give an overview of who the Guardian is and what is his role. The story illustrates that even Shoghi Effendi had to surmount tests and difficulties, especially at the beginning of his life-long service to the Cause as its Guardian.

Personal Reflection

- The following quotations, found at the top of a personal reflection page (page 27 in Participant Workbook) may be used for their meditation, as they now take some time to record some of their thoughts: (10 min.)

“O Son of Man! My calamity is My providence, outwardly it is fire and vengeance, but inwardly it is light and mercy. Hasten thereunto that thou mayest become an eternal light and an immortal spirit. This is My command unto thee, do thou observe it.”

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH
The Hidden Words, Arabic #51

“Ye are the lights which shall be diffused; ye are the waves which shall spread and overflow the world Another commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another even as I love you Never forget this; look at one another with the eye of perfection; look at me , follow me, be as am Ye must die to yourselves and to the world, so shall ye be born again and enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Behold a candle how it gives its light. It weeps its life away drop by drop in order to give forth its flame of light.”

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ
Cited in An Early Pilgrimage, p. 41-42

- To close the reflection time, play the song “Behold a Candle” from the video or audio of the World Congress or sing it as a group. Offer ‘Abdu’l-Bahá as an example of how we can respond to tests and difficulties.

(10-15 minute break may be incorporated here.)

Aims, origin, and purposes of the Administrative Order

- Divide into in small groups, and consult on the Writings provided in the Participant Workbook on Page 23 on Bahá'í Administration. As a fruit of this consultation, construct a model of the Administrative Order using tinker toys (or other parts).
- In the large group, share the models and other fruits of the discussion. To sum up, connect the learnings about the Administrative Order to this quote from Bahá'u'lláh:

“God’s purpose in sending His Prophets unto men is twofold. The first is to liberate the children of men from the darkness of ignorance, and guide them to the light of true understanding. The second is to ensure the peace and tranquillity of mankind, and provide all the means by which they can be established.”

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH
Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, pp. 79-80

☞ PART 4: MOVING TO ACTION ☞

Themes

- Personal Spiritual Development
- Using the Creative Word
- Teaching the Faith

Part Four Goals

Knowledge

- Become familiar with information about the Faith for one's own development and to share with others.

Wisdom

- Understand how to lovingly introduce the Message of Bahá'u'lláh to others.

Spiritual Perception

- Discover ways that early believers have served the Cause and how we can model their service.

Eloquent Speech

- Create an initial teaching plan.
- Prepare and present a brief talk about Bahá'u'lláh and an aspect of His teachings.

Activities

- Personal Spiritual Development
- Memorization
- Service and Action
- Conclusion of Session/Questions and Answers

Possible Metaphors

- Key to paradise (The Word of God is the key to hearts/paradise)
- Word of God is master key

Advance Preparation

- Cue up any video or audio tapes used.

Personal Spiritual Development

Reopen session after break

- Begin this section with some active song with movement! Some suggestions are “El Viento Canta” (by El Viento Canta) or music from the Gospel Choir.

Visualizing our spiritual development and making plans

- Have the participants turn to page 28 in their Participant Workbooks. There they will find some questions (listed below) relating to their own personal spiritual development. Ask them to reflect on the questions and record their thoughts and hopes and plans. (10-15 min.)
 - What is a daily habit I need to acquire?
 - What qualities do I need for sharing the Faith with others?
 - What is an area of knowledge in which I need to expand?
 - What book will I read first?
 - How will I structure my daily prayers and meditations?
 - How will I be involved in community life, service and teaching?
 - What one step can I take today that will bring my life more into accord with the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh?

Memorization

- Reliance on the Creative Word and daily obligatory prayers are an essential part of our spiritual sustenance. Help the new believers memorize a Hidden Word using the following method:

Write the quotation on the blackboard along with simple drawings that correspond to key words in the phrase. (For example, over the word “candle” draw a candle; over “heart” draw a heart, etc.) Have the group read and re-read the passage together out loud. As they recite it again, erase every fourth word. Continue in this way until all the words are erased. At this point, the group is reciting from memory! (10 minutes)

“O Befriended Stranger! The candle of thine heart is lighted by the hands of My power, quench it not with the contrary winds of self and passion. The healer of all thine ills is remembrance of Me, forget it not. Make My love thy treasure and cherish it even as thy very sight and life.”

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH
The Hidden Words, Persian #32

Here's how you might draw it on the board with symbols above some of the words:

“O Befriended Stranger! The candle of thine heart

is lighted by the hands of My power,

quench it not with the contrary winds of self and passion.

The healer of all thine ills is remembrance of Me, forget it not.

Make My love thy treasure and cherish it even as thy very sight and life.”

Service and Action

- Presentations about Bahá'u'lláh and His teachings:
Lovingly present a copy of the magazine, *The Bahá'ís*, as a gift to each participant.
- Have the participants look through and interact with the magazine, perhaps with a partner. Have the participants practice answering three basic questions, which are very often asked of Bahá'ís, while using the magazine for support (the questions and space for writing are on page 29 of Participant Workbook): (15 min.)

Who is Bahá'u'lláh?

What is the Bahá'í Faith ?

Why did you become a Bahá'í?

- Either as individuals or in pairs, create a paragraph and brief presentation on the Faith using the magazine and other information from this course. Some participants may wish to share their “fireside” with the group. (15 min.)

Creating teaching plans

- As a group, sketch out a survey of teaching opportunities and create a sample teaching plan. Consider teaching opportunities within the immediate family and co-workers, Bahá'í community life, and other factors that vary with each person. Be as realistic and concrete as possible. Include the source of support (Writings, other Bahá'ís, prayer and teaching partner).

Conclusion of Session

- Draw the attention of the new believers to the following items. All addresses are on the last page of their Workbooks. (See last page of this Facilitator Handbook for the same list)
 - The four permanent Funds that they can contribute to – explain how and where.
 - Master Key - where they can order books and Sacred Texts.
 - Order form for other publications, such as *Brilliant Star* and *World Order*.
 - The Bahá'í National Center
 - All Permanent Bahá'í Schools, including The National Teacher Training Center at Louhelen for more information about the Core Curriculum for the Spiritual Education of Children, and other programs related to the Core Curriculum.

(Note: These items may also be discussed during answer and question portions of this program.)

- Return to the chart of expectations for the new believer's course gathered from the participants in Part 1. Make sure that any unanswered questions or concerns are addressed.

(Note: You may want to mention that on pages 31 - 32 of the Participant Workbook there is a compilation of Writings entitled "True Bahá'ís" for their further study)

Joyful and spiritual conclusion

- A gift, either from the Local Assembly or from you as a facilitator, may be given to the new believers. This might be a prayer book, a hand-made quotation from the Writings, a picture of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, etc. – something they can keep that will remind them of this time you had together.
- Conclude with uplifting songs and prayers, either from tapes or videos or live singing.

Supplemental Activity

Roles of Service Web

- This game helps each person discover ways to serve, to be connected to and have a life in his or her Bahá'í community. Proceed as follows:
 - 1) Each participant writes 2 - 3 of his or her own talents, abilities, special skills, experiences - their "gifts" – on tags to stick on their chests. (i.e. "computer buff", "speak Japanese", etc.)
 - 2) All stand in a circle (this represents a Bahá'í community), and one person starts a ball of yarn around, holding firmly to one end while tossing the ball to someone else. The "tosser" must state how he or she can see the "tossee's" gift serving the community. Continue until all are connected at least once.
 - 3) Ask everyone to feel the strength of the web that has been created: comment on how actively serving, becoming involved in the work of the Faith connects one and makes the whole community strong and united.

Teaching Stories

- Share teaching stories of true life events of early and recent believers, demonstrating their spirit of selfless sacrifice and service. Emphasize to the friends that one's own spiritual life, and the fate of humanity, depend on teaching and obedience to the Covenant. (See, for example, the story of Badí found in *The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh*, by Adib Taherzadeh, pp 174-191, and the poem "The Pioneer" by Roger White, found in *Another Song Another Season*. This poem is also in the Participant Workbook, page 30)

Teaching Plans

- Ask for reflections and for the participants to record in a personal journal their plans for their spiritual development and teaching.

INFORMATION

Permanent Bahá'í Schools and Institutes in the United States

Bosch Bahá'í School
500 Comstock Lane
Santa Cruz, CA 95060
(408) 423-3387
(408) 423-7564 FAX
email: bosch@usbnc.org

Louhelen Bahá'í School
National Teacher Training Center
3208 South State Road
Davison, MI 48423
(810) 653-5033
(810) 653-7181 FAX
email: louhelen@usbnc.org

Native American Bahá'í Institute
P.O. Boc 3167
Houck, AZ 86506
(602) 521-1064
(602) 521-1063 FAX
email: nabi@usbnc.org

Green Acre Bahá'í School
188 Main Street
Eliot, ME 03903
(207) 439-7200
(207) 439-7202 FAX
email: greenacre@usbnc.org

Louis Gregory Bahá'í Institute
Rt. 2, Box 71
Hemingway, SC 29554
(803) 558-5093
(803) 558-2921 FAX
email: lgi@usbnc.org

National Education and Schools Office
Bahá'í National Center, Wilmette, IL 60091, (708) 733-3492, (708) 733-3502 FAX, email: schools@usbnc.org

Bahá'í Funds

National Bahá'í Fund
112 Linden Avenue
Wilmette, IL 60091.

Local Bahá'í Fund
(Check with the nearest
Local Spiritual Assembly.)

Bahá'í International Fund
P.O. Box 155
Haifa, Israel 31-000
(Or make check payable to "National Bahá'í Fund"
and earmark for International Bahá'í Fund or Arc.
Send to National Bahá'í Fund, Wilmette, IL 60091.)

Continental Bahá'í Fund
Make check payable to "National Bahá'í Fund"
and earmark for Continental Bahá'í Fund.
Send to National Bahá'í Fund, Wilmette, IL 60091.

Huqúqu'lláh

Bahá'í Trustees of Huqúqu'lláh

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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