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This Day of God

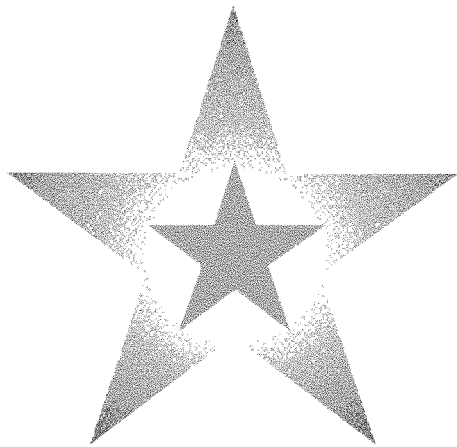
COURSE ONE

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



*H*ow 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!

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

This Day of God

COURSE ONE

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. Rather than an in-depth study of the Faith, this sequence of courses provides an introduction to ongoing study of the writings of Bahá'u'lláh to inspire the love of God and service to all the human race.

Course Design and Presentation

This course is the first 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 sequence of courses

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. Minds and hearts are touched when different methods are used, and one is also taken beyond the bounds of one’s usual learning modes to explore new horizons and vistas.

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 One: This Day of God

Introduction

- Session 1 The Meaning of Divine Unity
Session 2 Tests and Sacrifices
Session 3 The Human Soul: A Sign of God
Session 4 Divine Law and Spiritual Growth
Session 5 The Manifestations of God
Session 6 Progressive Revelation
Session 7 The Greater Covenant
Session 8 The Manifestation of God for this Day: Bahá'u'lláh
Session 9 The Power of Prayer

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 and act in a way that manifests one's learning.

Activity

Verities of the Faith

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



VERITIES OF THE FAITH

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

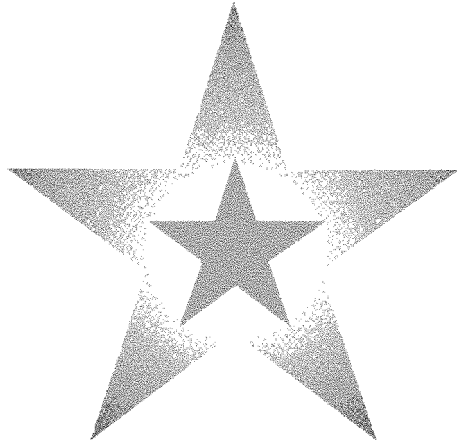
WRITTEN ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, *Compilation of Compilations, Volume 1*, pp. 228-9

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

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

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

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



*H*aving created the world and all that liveth and moveth therein, He, through the direct operation of His unconstrained and sovereign Will, chose to confer upon man the unique distinction and capacity to know Him and to love Him – a capacity that must needs be regarded as the generating impulse and the primary purpose underlying the whole of creation . . .

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

This Day of God

COURSE ONE

Some
Fundamental
Verities of the
Bahá'í Faith

Session 1

The Meaning of
Divine Unity

Devotions

Welcome! This session begins with reverent, uplifting devotions. You may want to include prayers for spiritual insight and sung or recorded music as part of the opening devotions.

If desired, the following passages could be included:

Know thou of a truth that the worlds of God are countless in their number, and infinite in their range. . . . Verily I say, the creation of God embraceth worlds besides this world, and creatures apart from these creatures. In each of these worlds He hath ordained things which none can search except Himself, the All-Searching, the All-Wise.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 151-3, LXXIX

Through the movement of Our Pen of Glory 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, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 84

Objectives of the Session

As a group, read through the learning objectives for this session.

Knowledge

To know that there is only one God, the Creator of all things.

To know that this is the time for worldwide regeneration.

Wisdom

To understand that every created thing is a sign of the revelation of God.

Spiritual Perception

To discern invisible forces that operate on visible objects.

Eloquent Speech

To be able to explain to others the principle of the Oneness of God.

Welcome to the Course

Welcome to the first session in this first 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. This course explores some of the fundamental spiritual teachings of Bahá'u'lláh about the human soul and the spiritual reality of the universe in which we live. In this study circle, we hope to strengthen our God-given spiritual capabilities to be of service to the entire human race.

Get Acquainted Activity

1. Pair with someone in the room that you may know less well than some of the others.
2. While in pairs, take turns learning one or more of the following:
 - something you have in common, that you didn't before know;
 - something unique about your friend, that you didn't before know;
 - some hope that the friend has for the class;
 - some contribution the friend could offer the class;
 - if one is a seeker, new believer, or long-time student of the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh.
3. After 2-3 minutes of sharing, introduce your friend to the group.
4. After group introductions, please review logistical information such as cost, time frame, location of washrooms, refreshments available, child care, etc. for the study circle.

Overview of the Verities Courses

As a group, review the Fundamental Verities Sequence, which includes six courses, and the contents of *Course One: This Day of God*.

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

Each session in each of these courses provides the opportunity to study, consult, and prepare to “translate that which hath been written into reality and action.”

Contents of Course One: This Day of God

Introduction	
Session 1	The Meaning of Divine Unity
Session 2	Tests and Sacrifices
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Session 9	The Power of Prayer

Activity *The Oneness of God*

Read the following aloud:

Just as intellects have revealed mysteries of matter and have brought forth from the invisible nature her mysteries, may the minds and spirits likewise come in touch with the verities of God and the realities of the Kingdom may be made manifest.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, No. 3, p. 10

1. Use science to demonstrate invisible powers. Some examples are:
 - a magnet that can pick up small tacks
 - a magnetizer (available from hardware stores) that can turn an ordinary nail into a magnet
 - a balloon that can be charged with static electricity and then make hair stand on end.

Can you think of other examples?

2. In the whole group, read aloud the quotations on the next page entitled "The Oneness of God," perhaps with 2 readers alternating, pausing after each reading. Consider playing beautiful, quiet music during the reading.
3. Share with each other in teams of two a story of the power of God in your lives.
4. Individually and silently choose one picture from a prepared collection of pictures from magazines (such as *National Geographic*) that indicates one of the signs of God. Briefly share with others your choice and the meaning behind this choice.



Questions for reflection and meditation:

Is it possible for a human being to define God?

How could we use the words and phrases in these quotations to indicate the beauty, power, and majesty of God to others?

1 To every discerning and illumined heart it is evident that God, the unknowable Essence, the divine Being, is immensely exalted beyond every human attribute, such as corporeal existence, ascent and descent, egress and regress. Far be it from His glory that human tongue should adequately recount His praise, or that human heart comprehend His fathomless mystery. He is and hath ever been veiled in the ancient eternity of His Essence, and will remain in His Reality everlastingly hidden from the sight of men. . . .

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 98

2 Praise be to God, the All-Possessing, the King of incomparable glory, a praise which is immeasurably above the understanding of all created things, and is exalted beyond the grasp of the minds of men. . . .

A drop of the billowing ocean of His endless mercy hath adorned all creation with the ornament of existence, and a breath wafted from His peerless Paradise hath invested all being with the robe of His sanctity and glory. A sprinkling from the unfathomed deep of His sovereign and all-pervasive Will hath, out of utter nothingness, called into being a creation which is infinite in its range and deathless in its duration. The wonders of His bounty can never cease, and the stream of His merciful grace can never be arrested. The process of His creation hath had no beginning, and can have no end. . . .

So perfect and comprehensive is His creation that no mind nor heart, however keen or pure, can ever grasp the nature of the most insignificant of His creatures; much less fathom the mystery of Him Who is the Day Star of Truth, Who is the invisible and unknowable Essence.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 60-2, XXVI

3 Having created the world and all that liveth and moveth therein, He, through the direct operation of His unconstrained and sovereign Will, chose to confer upon man the unique distinction and capacity to know Him and to love Him – a capacity that must needs be regarded as the generating impulse and the primary purpose underlying the whole of creation. . . . Upon the inmost reality of each and every created thing He hath shed the light of one of His names, and made it a recipient of the glory of one of His attributes. Upon the reality of man, however, He hath focused the radiance of all of His names and attributes, and made it a mirror of His own Self. Alone of all created things man hath been singled out for so great a favor, so enduring a bounty.

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

4 Every man hath been, and will continue to be, able of himself to appreciate the Beauty of God, the Glorified. Had he not been endowed with such a capacity, how could he be called to account for his failure? . . . For the faith of no man can be conditioned by anyone except himself.

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

5 Regard thou the one true God as One Who is apart from, and immeasurably exalted above, all created things. The whole universe reflecteth His glory, while He is Himself independent of, and transcendeth His creatures. This is the true meaning of Divine unity. He Who is the Eternal Truth is the one Power Who exerciseth undisputed sovereignty over the world of being, Whose image is reflected in the mirror of the entire creation. All existence is dependent upon Him, and from Him is derived the source of the sustenance of all things. This is what is meant by Divine unity; this is its fundamental principle.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Gleanings from the Writings of Babá'u'lláh*, p. 166, LXXXIV

6 The essence of belief in Divine unity consisteth in regarding Him Who is the Manifestation of God and Him Who is the invisible, the inaccessible, the unknowable Essence as one and the same. By this is meant that whatever pertaineth to the former, all His acts and doings, whatever He ordaineth or forbiddeth, should be considered, in all their aspects, and under all circumstances, and without any reservation, as identical with the Will of God Himself. This is the loftiest station to which a true believer in the unity of God can ever hope to attain. Blessed is the man that reacheth this station, and is of them that are steadfast in their belief.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Gleanings from the Writings of Babá'u'lláh*, p. 167, LXXXIV

7 He is really a believer in the Unity of God who recognizeth in each and every created thing the sign of the revelation of Him Who is the Eternal Truth, and not he who maintaineth that the creature is indistinguishable from the Creator.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Gleanings from the Writings of Babá'u'lláh*, p. 189, XCIII

8 From the exalted source, and out of the essence of His favor and bounty He hath entrusted every created thing with a sign of His knowledge. . . . This sign is the mirror of His beauty in the world of creation. The greater the effort exerted for the refinement of this sublime and noble mirror, the more faithfully will it be made to reflect the glory of the names and attributes of God, and reveal the wonders of His signs and knowledge. . . . There can be no doubt whatever that, in consequence of the efforts which every man may consciously exert and as a result of the exertion of his own spiritual faculties, this mirror can be so cleansed from the dross of earthly defilements and purged from satanic fancies as to be able to draw nigh unto the meads of eternal holiness and attain the courts of everlasting fellowship.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Gleanings from the Writings of Babá'u'lláh*, p. 262, CXXIV

1. Read aloud quotations on the next page, entitled “This Day of God.” Find examples from these writings that answer the focus question at the top of the page.
2. Create a notecard to share these ideas with others. Consider gluing your selected photograph indicating one of the signs of God onto a blank notecard.
3. Using photocopies of the quotations just read, **choose one quotation** to place inside your card (or copy the quotation or a portion of it by hand).
4. **Identify** a friend, a neighbor, a relative, possibly someone currently facing a test, or a person receptive to these ideas to whom you could offer this card.
5. **Add a personal note** to the card you have made. One option is to share a story of God’s power in our lives as part of your note. If possible, address the card so the facilitator can mail it, or make a commitment to personally deliver the card.
6. At the next session check in with each other to share any surprising, unusual or heartening experiences that resulted from lovingly sharing this teaching of Bahá’u’lláh.



THIS DAY OF GOD

Focus Question: What are some of the evidences of this Day of God?

1 Through the movement of Our Pen of Glory 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, *Tablets of Babá'u'lláh*, p. 84

2 The purpose underlying all creation is the revelation of this most sublime, this most holy Day, the Day known as the Day of God, in His books and Scriptures – the Day which all the Prophets, and the Chosen Ones, and the holy ones, have wished to witness.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, Quoted in *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 77

3 By the righteousness of the one true God! If one speck of a jewel be lost and buried beneath a mountain of stones, and lie hidden beyond the seven seas, the Hand of Omnipotence would assuredly reveal it in this Day, pure and cleansed from dross.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, Quoted in *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 80

4 Through the generative power of His utterance the whole earth hath been made the recipient of the wondrous signs and tokens of Thy sovereignty, and the heavens have been filled with the revelations of Thine incomparable majesty, and the seas have been enriched with the sacred pearls of Thine omniscience and wisdom, and the trees adorned with the fruits of Thy knowledge. . . . [T]he whole creation was revolutionized, and all that are in the heavens and all that are on earth were stirred to the depths. Through that Word the realities of all created things were shaken, were divided, separated, scattered, combined and reunited, disclosing, in both the contingent world and the heavenly kingdom, entities of a new creation, and revealing, in the unseen realms, the signs and tokens of Thy unity and oneness.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Prayers and Meditations*, pp. 294-5

5 The world's equilibrium hath been upset through the vibrating influence of this most great, this new World Order. Mankind's ordered life hath been revolutionized through the agency of this unique, this wondrous System – the like of which mortal eyes have never witnessed.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Proclamation of Babá'u'lláh*, p. 118

Individual Acts of Service, Study, and Teaching *To complete before the next session.*

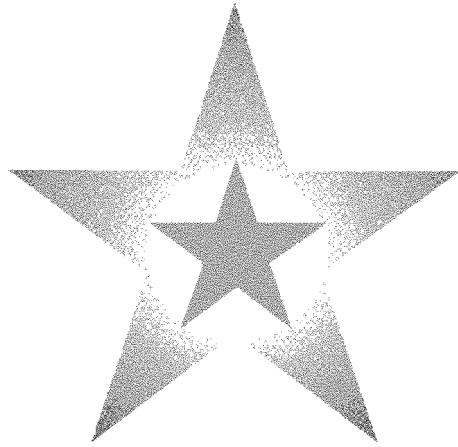
Service to humanity is an essential component of the Fundamental Verities Sequence of courses. Bahá'u'lláh encourages us to “become a source of all goodness unto men, and an example of uprightness to mankind.” Please take a few minutes to select a service to carry out before the next session. Here are some service options that directly relate to this course.

1. Deliver or send the card you created.
2. Read and reflect on some or all of the following passages:
 - ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections From the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp. 46-51, # 21
 - ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections From the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp. 53-5, # 24
3. Select other group or individual service as you like.

Closing Devotions

Close with singing and prayers for steadfastness.





*H*ow 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!

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

This Day of God

COURSE ONE

Some
Fundamental
Verities of the
Bahá'í Faith

Session 2

Tests and Sacrifices

Devotions

Plan the opening devotions to include prayers for teaching, and sung or recorded music. You may also wish to include the following quotation:

In the beginning of every Revelation adversities have prevailed, which later on have been turned into great prosperity.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, Quoted in *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 69

Objectives of the Session

As a group, read through the learning objectives for this session.

Knowledge

To know that this is the time for worldwide regeneration.

Wisdom

To understand that tests accompany this period of revolutionary change in human history.

Spiritual Perception

To perceive that the human spirit can overcome tests through the love of God.

Eloquent Speech

To share stories of the power of God in one's life.

Consultation About Individual Teaching

Recall the after-class activity to give the card you created to a friend, family member, neighbor, or co-worker.

- What happened when you offered this gift?
- Did anything surprising or unusual happen?
- Did unanticipated obstacles interfere? How might those obstacles be overcome?
- Did you discover another opportunity to share the teachings about the power of God this week?
- How can we build on this act of service? Could we follow up with a personal visit, a phone call, or another note to share with this friend – or another – the teachings about the soul?

Consultation About Individual Study

- If you were able to read from *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, what did you learn?

Activity Tests and Sacrifice

1. Read aloud the quotations entitled “Tests and Sacrifice” and the story that follows them. Discuss responses to the focus question at the top of the page of quotations.
2. Divide into small groups so that there is a diversity of perspectives in each small group.
3. In your group, briefly share a few stories of recent sacrifices for the Cause of Truth—either personal experiences, the experiences of those you know, or experiences that you have read about, such as the letters from prison by the Bahá’ís who were imprisoned or killed for their Faith in the early 1980s. Some of these letters are included on p. 26.



TESTS AND SACRIFICES

Focus Question: How should we regard tests and sacrifices in our lives?

1 In the beginning of every Revelation adversities have prevailed, which later on have been turned into great prosperity.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, Quoted in *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 82

2 O my servants! Sorrow not if, in these days and on this earthly plane, things contrary to your wishes have been ordained and manifested by God, for days of blissful joy, of heavenly delight, are assuredly in store for you. Worlds, holy and spiritually glorious, will be unveiled to your eyes. You are destined by Him, in this world and hereafter, to partake of their benefits, to share in their joys, and to obtain a portion of their sustaining grace. To each and every one of them you will, no doubt, attain.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, Quoted in *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 82

3 I swear by My life! Nothing save that which profiteth them can befall my loved ones.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, Quoted in *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 82

4 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

When Bahá'u'lláh was in Baghdád a certain Mírzá Muhít-i-Kirmání . . . sent a message to Bahá'u'lláh through Prince Kayvân Mírzá. He requested a confidential interview with Bahá'u'lláh late at night so that no one except the Prince would know about it. The reason given for this secrecy was that, should the meeting become public knowledge, the position of Mírzá Muhít in the Muslim community would be undermined. Bahá'u'lláh asked the Prince to share with him two lines of an ode He had composed while in Kurdistán, setting forth the conditions for those who wish to partake of His glory.

These are the lines:

“If thine aim be to cherish thy life, approach not our court; but if sacrifice be thy heart's desire, come and let others come with thee. For such is the way of Faith, if in thy heart thou seekest reunion with Bahá; shouldst thou refuse to tread this path, why trouble us? Begone!”

Bahá'u'lláh is reported to have said to the Prince, “If he be willing, he will openly and unreservedly hasten to meet Me; if not I refuse to see him.”

When Mírzá Muhít heard this, he did not find the courage to go and meet Bahá'u'lláh. A few days later he died.

Adib Taherzadeh, *The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh*, V. 2, p. 54



Excerpts from the Letters that Some Bahá'ís Wrote from Prison in the Early 1980's

There is an end to every life. How wonderful it is when the end is accompanied by honor, truth and faith! In my last moments of life I beseech the Blessed Beauty to grant you hearts full of faith, love and kindness toward all people. I rejoice that my life has had a happy ending.

(Last letter of Mr. Husayn Mutlaq Arání of Hamadán, written from prison before his execution of June 14, 1981, published in Bahá'í News, January 1982, p. 3)

It is five minutes to 11 p.m. on 23/3/1360 (June 13, 1981). We have been summoned by the revolutionary court and called to the field of martyrdom. My wish is that you may share the tranquillity of conscience and confidence of heart that I feel in these last moments before my physical separation from you. It is stated in our Sacred Writings that we Bahá'ís should always observe calmness, dignity and moderation.

At this hour I express my recognition of the station of the Exalted Lord (the Báb) and of the Ancient Beauty as Manifestations of God; of 'Abdu'l-Bahá as the Center of God's Covenant; of the Guardian of the Cause of God as the interpreter of the Teachings; and of the station of the Universal House of Justice.

(Last letter of Mr. Subráb (Muhammad-Báqir) Habíbi of Hamadán, written from prison before his execution on June 14, 1981, published in Bahá'í News, January 1982, p. 2)

Perhaps it is for the good of the Cause of God that at this point in time a few should be imprisoned and some even attain to the high rank of martyrs, for the liberation of the Bahá'í community from the claws of the enemies requires sacrifice on the part of a few of the followers of Bahá'u'lláh. Therefore, should it be decreed that this humble creature be as a mere point in the great circle of the Cause it would be the greatest honor for him and his family. I am not sad, therefore, but happy and proud.

(Last letter of Mr. Sattár Khushkhubí of Shíráz, written from prison before his execution on April 30, 1981, published in Bahá'í News, January 1982, p. 2)

My dear wife, . . . I wish you happiness and success during your life. The will of God is that we should be physically separated, but spiritually we are always together. Do not grieve and have no sorrow because of what has happened to me. Be steadfast like a high mountain. My dearest children . . . will be under your care.

Ask forgiveness from all my friends and family.

(Last letter of Mr. Subráb (Muhammad-Baqir) Habíbi of Hamadán, written from prison before his execution on June 14, 1981, published in Bahá'í News, January 1982, p. 3)

Journaling is a valuable tool for reflection.

1. Discuss the questions:

- What is this Cause that it has inspired such devotion, such sacrifice?
- What progress have you made with your personal, teaching, and service goals in the past week?

2. Take some time for journaling, using the blank inside cover pages of this book.

- Privately consider what deeds you wish to offer to the Creator of all, the Day-Star of Truth, this week.
- Privately choose one small act of kindness you may wish to undertake this week in memory of these dear ones and all the others whose “experience is a signal and an example to us all wherever we may live.”

The Universal House of Justice, Ridván 153

Activity
Memorization

In the whole group, memorize the statement:

Nothing save that which profiteth them can befall my loved ones.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, Quoted in *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 82

This passage, and others in the course, can be easily memorized by choosing one of the following strategies:

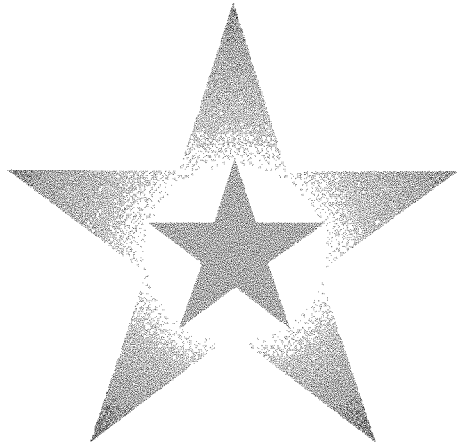
- In the whole group, recite aloud until all have memorized the passage.
- Set the passage to music.
- Write the passage on a chalkboard. While reciting aloud, erase a few words each time the passage is recited, until all words are erased.
- Use movement to mime phrases.

Individual Acts of Service, Study, and Teaching
To be completed before the next session.

1. Read and reflect on some or all of the following passages:
 - ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, pp. 3-4
 - ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, pp. 5-6
 - ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, pp. 200-1
 - ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, pp. 205-7
 - ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, pp. 220-2
2. Carry out your chosen act of kindness as a sign of your love for God and humanity.

Closing Devotions

Close with singing and prayers for steadfastness.



*K*now, verily, that the soul is a sign
of God, a heavenly gem whose reality
the most learned of men have failed to
grasp, and whose mystery no mind,
however acute, can ever hope to
unravel.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

This Day of God

COURSE ONE

Some
Fundamental
Verities of the
Bahá'í Faith

SESSION 3

The Human Soul:
A Sign of God

Devotions

Welcome! This session begins with devotions. You may wish to include some of the individual study quotations from the last session. Include music appropriate to the theme of the session.

If desired, you may also include the following quotation:

Know, verily, that the soul is a sign of God, a heavenly gem whose reality the most learned of men hath failed to grasp, and whose mystery no mind, however acute, can ever hope to unravel. It is the first among all created things to declare the excellence of its Creator, the first to recognize His glory, to cleave to His truth, and to bow down in adoration before Him.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 158-9, LXXXII

Objectives of the Session

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

Knowledge

To know that the human soul is created in the image of God.

Wisdom

To reflect on some of the metaphors used to describe the soul.

Spiritual Perception

To see the interconnectedness of one's behavior in this life with the powers of the soul after its separation from the body.

Eloquent Speech

To be able to share with others some of the metaphors that describe the human soul.

Consultation About Service

Recall the after-class activity to offer a gift of kindness to a friend, family member, neighbor or co-worker.

- What happened as a result of this action?
- How did the person respond? Then what happened?
- How can we build on this act of service?

Consultation About Individual Study

- Recall the suggested readings mentioned for after-class study following the last session. If you would like, share a favorite passage from the suggested readings and explain what makes it a favorite.
- If you would like, recite the passage memorized during the study of Session 2.

Nothing save that which profiteth them can befall my loved ones.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, Quoted in *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 82

Activity *The Soul – A Sign of God*

1. In your study circle, read aloud the quotations entitled “The Soul – A Sign of God” on the following pages.
2. Then, working in small groups of two or three, select one of these quotations. Carefully study it in light of the focus question: “What is the relationship between our actions in this world and our spiritual development in the next?”
3. After studying this passage carefully, create a visual representation of the metaphor in that passage, using poster paper, markers, and the art supplies provided. Alternatively, you may choose to create a small visual representation of the quotation to display in your private work space.
4. Share the posters in the large group, reading aloud the highlighted passages. Decide how you’d like to display these posters in your study circle, for firesides, or in your home.
5. Discuss the question: How can the display of quotations such as these help us to achieve our goals?



THE SOUL – A SIGN OF GOD

Focus question: What is the relationship between our actions in this world and our spiritual development in the next?

1 Know, verily, that the soul is a sign of God, a heavenly gem whose reality the most learned of men hath failed to grasp, and whose mystery no mind, however acute, can ever hope to unravel. It is the first among all created things to declare the excellence of its Creator, the first to recognize His glory, to cleave to His truth, and to bow down in adoration before Him. If it be faithful to God, it will reflect His light, and will, eventually, return unto Him. If it fail, however, in its allegiance to its creator, it will become a victim to self and passion, and will, in the end, sink in their depths.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 158-9, LXXXII

2 Know thou that all men have been created in the nature made by God, the Guardian, the Self-Subsisting. Unto each one hath been prescribed a pre-ordained measure, as decreed in God's mighty and guarded Tablets. All that which ye potentially possess can, however, be manifested only as a result of your own volition.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 149, LXXVII

3 Know thou of a truth that the soul, after its separation from the body, will continue to progress until it attaineth the presence of God, in a state and condition which neither the revolution of ages and centuries, nor the changes and chances of this world, can alter. It will endure as long as the Kingdom of God, His sovereignty, His dominion and power will endure. It will manifest the signs of God and His attributes, and will reveal His loving kindness and bounty. . . . Blessed is the soul which, at the hour of its separation from the body, is sanctified from the vain imaginings of the peoples of the world. Such a soul liveth and moveth in accordance with the Will of its Creator, and entereth the all-highest Paradise.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 155-6, LXXXI

4 The nature of the soul after death can never be described, nor is it meet and permissible to reveal its whole character to the eyes of men. The Prophets and Messengers of God have been sent down for the sole purpose of guiding mankind to the straight Path of Truth. The purpose underlying their revelation hath been to educate all men, that they may, at the hour of death, ascend, in the utmost purity and sanctity and with absolute detachment, to the throne of the Most High. The light which these souls radiate is responsible for the progress of the world and the advancement of its peoples. They are like unto leaven which leaveneth the world of being, and constitute the animating force through which the arts and wonders of the world are made manifest. Through them the clouds rain their bounty upon men, and the earth bringeth forth its fruits. All things must needs have a cause, a motive power, an animating principle. These souls and symbols of detachment have provided, and will continue to provide, the supreme moving impulse into the world of being. The world beyond is as different from this world as this world is different from that of the child while still in the womb of its mother. When the soul attaineth the Presence of God, it will assume the form that best befitteth its immortality and is worthy of its celestial habitation.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Gleanings from the Writings of Babá'u'lláh*, pp. 156-7, LXXXI

5 O friends! Be not careless of the virtues with which ye have been endowed, neither be neglectful of your high destiny. . . . Ye are the stars of the heaven of understanding, the breeze that stirreth at the break of day, the soft-flowing waters upon which must depend the very life of all men, the letters inscribed upon His sacred scroll.

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

Individual Acts of Service, Study, and Teaching

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

- Research the question: What are some of the powers of the human spirit? Prepare a one-minute presentation on your research to share at the beginning of the next session.

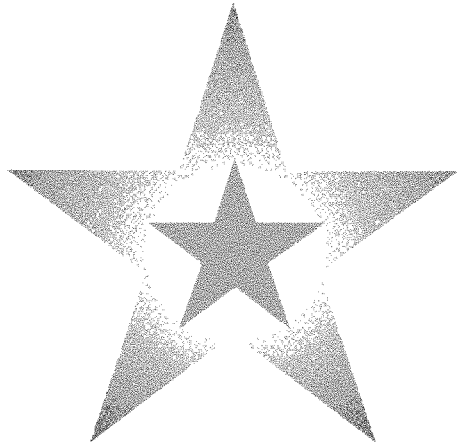
What process would you use to research this question?

Possible sources to check: *Foundations for a Spiritual Education, Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, Some Answered Questions.*

- Memorize one of the quotations on the human soul that can be used to explain the Bahá'í concept of the soul. Offer it for devotions at the beginning or end of the next session.

Closing Devotions

Conclude the session with prayers and singing.



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

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

This Day of God

COURSE ONE

Some
Fundamental
Verities of the
Bahá'í Faith

SESSION 4

Divine Law and
Spiritual Growth

Devotions

Welcome! Begin the session with devotions. You may wish to include some of the individual study quotations from the last session, music appropriate to the theme of the session, and memorized prayers or writings.

If desired, include the following quotation in your devotions:

O ye peoples of the world! Know assuredly that My commandments are the lamps of My loving providence among My servants, and the keys of My mercy for My creatures. Thus hath it been sent down from the heaven of the Will of your Lord, the Lord of Revelation.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, paragraph 3

Objectives of the Session

Read aloud together this session's learning objectives:

Knowledge

To know some of the factors influencing spiritual growth.

Wisdom

To begin to appreciate the eternal nature of the soul.

Spiritual Perception

To appreciate the Laws of God as a gift that fosters spiritual growth.

Eloquent Speech

To make a spiritual growth plan that supports one's teaching plan.

Consultation About Individual Teaching

- If you had the opportunity to display the poster from the last session, what was the effect of doing this?
- Who was able to share ideas about the soul with others? How did they respond?

Consultation About Individual Study

- If you chose to research the powers of the human spirit, what did you learn?

Allow 5-10 minutes for this short discussion.

Activity Transformation Stories

Enjoy listening while your facilitator reads aloud the transformation stories on the following pages about Hand of the Cause of God, Dorothy Baker.

Discuss:

How would you compare these two stories about this individual who made great contributions to the welfare of humanity? What changed? What are some examples of times that you've experienced yourselves changing in a positive direction? What happened?



A TEACHER AT BAHÁ'Í SCHOOL

Excerpted from the book *From Copper to Gold* by Dorothy Freeman, pp. 131-3

The summer of 1936, following her classes at Louhelen, Dorothy Baker taught for the first time at Green Acre. After each class the audience crowded to the front to ask questions or just to be near the well-dressed, dignified woman who radiated such love and was so knowledgeable. Their adoration flowed over her as her love had washed over them when she spoke, but day by day, unnoticed, the praise began to sink in. Her classes had been good; she knew that. At last she had done something worthwhile, worthy of recognition. When Dorothy's listeners spoke of her beautiful analogies, her apt descriptions, she thanked them, glad of their respect and admiration, glad to finally count.

On the last day the meeting room was emptying after a final round of compliments. All that week Dorothy had noticed Louis Gregory, a lawyer, one of the most outstanding speakers on the Bahá'í Faith in America, standing in the back of the room during her lectures. Usually he stepped out the side door of the classroom as soon as the talk ended, but today Dorothy saw him walking up toward her. She busied herself with her papers, feigning an effort to order things, to cover the nervousness she felt.

“That was a very good course, Dorothy.”

She was ecstatic. She wondered which parts he had enjoyed most, wanted to ask, but felt it might seem self-centered, so instead tried to collect her thoughts for a proper reply. Before she could speak, Louis Gregory continued, “You thought so too, didn't you?”

Dorothy was sure she misunderstood, or at least she hoped so. “I'm sorry?”

“Remember, the moment you begin to think it is Dorothy Baker who is accomplishing this work, that moment your service to Bahá'u'lláh ends.”

Horrified, she wondered how he could stand there so calmly saying those words. She wanted to deny it, to tell him he was wrong, to believe he had some hidden motive. Louis Gregory continued quietly looking at her, not with the authority she expected from a past member of the National Spiritual Assembly, not even with an expression of superior knowledge on his serene, dark face.

It was true – just a moment before she had felt quite content – but was it self-satisfaction or simply joy at being of service? He smiled; she blushed at the recognition that her self-satisfaction was not only present, but so strongly evident. Everyone must've seen it, all the people before whom she had been proud just moments ago.

Then her embarrassment vanished – replaced by something worse. What difference did it make whether others knew or didn't? The real horror was that it was true.

Driving from Green Acre toward Portsmouth, Dorothy's mind was still on Louis Gregory. The strength she'd felt from the praise of her audience had dissipated instantly standing there with him. The real source of strength, as he said, is absolute reliance on God and complete awareness of one's own nothingness, which negates individual pride but increases individual power a thousand fold. Dorothy had worked to cleanse the mirror of her soul, but driving through Maine's summer green she knew, without a doubt, that the reflection the Bahá'ís saw there was not of her, but of God's teachings. She had only turned toward the light, not created it. In the car, alone, Dorothy decided never to give a talk again, unless she first begged God to strike her dumb rather than let her speak from the self. Humility, unlike the idle fancies of greatness that rush to fill quiet moments with disquieting suggestions, was not automatic. Louis Gregory was right; vanity had to be overcome.

It wasn't his words that triggered Dorothy's desire for purity of motive. She could have ignored his comments as a reprimand she didn't need if it had not been for his manner, his gentleness. Louis Gregory had no doubt learned from his own humbling experiences. He spoke to Dorothy as one who battled self every day. He once wrote to a friend, "I know it is all the Will and Power of 'Abdu'l-Bahá which brought success. Every day I ask 'Abdu'l-Bahá not to let me forget that I am dust, and to acknowledge my absolute nonexistence in that Court. The love of 'Abdu'l-Bahá is the sole magnet that renders life possible."

That week at Green Acre Dorothy joined forces with the truly great ones on earth; those who, regardless of their worldly station, whether well-known or faceless in the crowds, wish above all else to be of service to humanity – no selfish strings attached.



APPOINTMENT AS A HAND OF THE CAUSE OF GOD

Excerpted from the book *From Copper to Gold* by Dorothy Freeman, pp. 255-6

Soon after, Edna True called from the National Center. A cable had been received from Shoghi Effendi. The scope of the Guardian's cable was tremendous, covering the superstructure of the Báb's Sepulcher, the International Bahá'í Council, various historic sites in the Holy Land, and the four upcoming international conferences. She did not read all of it but quoted his last point,

HOUR NOW RIPE TAKE LONG INEVITABLY DEFERRED STEP,
CONFORMITY PROVISIONS 'ABDU'L-BAHA'S TESTAMENT,
CONJUNCTION WITH SIX ABOVE MENTIONED STEPS
THROUGH APPOINTMENT FIRST CONTINGENT HANDS CAUSE
OF GOD. . .

Edna read the names of the three Hands in the Holy Land, the three in Persia, then those for the American continent, Horace Holley, Dorothy Baker. . . Dorothy interrupted.

"Wait, Eddie. You're kidding!"

Edna repeated again, and again, as Dorothy continued to insist it was a practical joke. Dorothy was sure that it was a hoax. As Edna True recalled, she had to insist again.

"I'm not kidding."

"Yes, you are. You're kidding. You must be!"

"Please be serious, Dorothy. I'm not kidding."

"You've got to be. There's no reason why he would appoint me. Eddie, I think he means you."

"No, he doesn't. There's no chance of a mistake here."

Years later Edna was still amazed at Dorothy's persistence.

"I kept talking, and it took quite a bit of talking. And I said, "Now you just go back and think about this, until you realize it's true." But she just fought it off. She just knew it was not true. I said, "Well, you just wait and see; see how many things develop. There isn't anything more I can tell you except that it's sitting right here in front of me, dear, and your name is on it." It was so peculiar, trying to persuade somebody that she was on this very important list. . .

"I was all ready to explode with excitement, but she put me down to a solid argument of persuading her. It was characteristic of Dorothy. . . She even cut off from me still saying, 'You'll find it's a mistake. It can't be true.'"

In Portugal the summer before Dorothy had given a course called, “What Is a Good Administrator?” In it she listed qualities one must have. Among them were:

Detachment: from people, love or dislike, from praise or censure, from your work.

Frankness: Combined with courage and courtesy.

Integrity: in personal affairs consulted on by the Assembly, and loyalty to Assembly decisions.

Humility: Take the Cause seriously, but don’t take yourself seriously.

It seems Dorothy had thoroughly mastered the application she suggested for the last quality. Unable to believe the Guardian’s cable, Dorothy’s humility came to the top and she just couldn’t conceive that this could be true.

To Hubert and Louise Matthias, late December 1951 or very early January 1952, Dorothy wrote:

Darlings:

Wanted you to see this first from me, and not from outside sources and read the two long messages of our Guardian. There are twelve Hands! I am amazed, thrilled, baffled, and uplifted, and only realize vaguely what it all means. Above all, I am humbled to a small spot.

It is the International phase opening up, and it is overwhelming.
All my love, Dorothy

Dorothy described her vanished voice and other symptoms of the shock she felt in letters to friends, family and Bahá’í institutions around the world. But as the days passed there were signs of her growing assurance and understanding, and finally of the eagerness she felt to begin a “completely new epoch.”

Activity
Divine Law and Spiritual Growth

1. Read the quotations on the next page, “Divine Law and Spiritual Growth” silently. Allow 5 to 7 minutes. Remember that some people will enjoy reading through the entire set while others will prefer to focus on one or two of these beautiful selections from the Bahá’í writings. Alternatively, you may choose to read the quotations aloud in the whole group.
2. Briefly discuss the focus question for each group of quotations.
3. Brainstorm ways to incorporate the patterns of daily prayer and readings, obligatory prayer, and personal reflection time into our daily lives. Record these ideas on chart paper.
4. Remember that these daily habits, as well as character development, teaching and a life of service can be developed “little by little, day by day.”



Purpose of Divine Law

Focus Question: What is the purpose of Divine Law?

1 O ye peoples of the world! Know assuredly that My commandments are the lamps of My loving providence among My servants, and the keys of My mercy for My creatures. Thus hath it been sent down from the heaven of the Will of your Lord, the Lord of Revelation.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, paragraph 3

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

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, paragraph 5

Fostering the Life of the Spirit

Focus Question: How can we foster the life of the spirit?

1 We have enjoined obligatory prayer upon you. . . .

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, paragraph 6

2 We have commanded you to pray and fast from the beginning of maturity; this is ordained by God, your Lord and the Lord of your forefathers.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, paragraph 10

3 Occupy thyself in remembrance of the Beauty of Him Who is the Unconstrained, at early morn and seek communion with Him at the hour of dawn.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *The Compilation of Compilations, Vol. II*, p. 228

4 Recite ye the verses of God every morn and eventide. Whoso faileth to recite them hath not been faithful to the Covenant of God and His Testament, and whoso turneth away from these holy verses in this Day is of those who throughout eternity have turned away from God.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, paragraph 149

5 It hath been ordained that every believer in God, the Lord of Judgement, shall, each day, having washed his hands and then his face, seat himself and, turning unto God, repeat “Allah-u-Abhá” ninety-five times. Such was the decree of the Maker of the Heavens when, with majesty and power, He established Himself upon the thrones of His Names.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, paragraph 18

6 Do thou meditate on that which We have revealed unto thee, that thou mayest discover the purpose of God, thy Lord, and the Lord of all worlds. In these words the mysteries of Divine Wisdom have been treasured.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Tablets of Babá'u'lláh*, p. 188

Character Development

Focus Question: How can we develop our characters?

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

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Gleanings from the Writings of Babá'u'lláh*, p. 299

2 Let your eye be chaste, your hand faithful, your tongue truthful, and your heart enlightened.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Tablets of Babá'u'lláh*, p. 138

3 If any differences arise amongst you, behold Me standing before your face, and overlook the faults of one another for My name's sake and as a token of your love for My manifest and resplendent Cause.

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

4 Breathe not the sins of others so long as thou art thyself a sinner . . .

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *The Hidden Words*, Arabic #27

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

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *The Hidden Words*, Arabic # 31

Service and Teaching

Focus Question: What is the purpose of service? Why is teaching the Faith and contributing to the Fund a service to humanity?

1 To assist Me is to teach My Cause.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Tablets of Babá'u'lláh*, p. 196

2 God hath prescribed unto every one the duty of teaching His Cause. Whoever ariseth to discharge this duty, must needs, ere he proclaimeth His Message, adorn himself with the ornament of an upright and praiseworthy character, so that his words may attract the hearts of such as are receptive to his call. Without it, he can never hope to influence his hearers.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Gleanings from the Writings of Babá'u'lláh*, p. 335

3 That one indeed is a man who, today, dedicateth himself to the service of the entire human race. The Great Being saith: Blessed and happy is he that ariseth to promote the best interests of the peoples and kindred of the earth.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 167

4 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 therein lies the secret of wealth, O men of understanding! 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, *The Hidden Words*, Persian #80

5 They that have kept their promises, fulfilled their obligations, redeemed their pledges and vows, rendered the Trust of God and His Right unto him—these are numbered among the inmates of the all-highest Paradise.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Huqúqu'lláh Compilation*, #26

6 And as the progress and extension of spiritual activities is dependent and conditioned upon material means, it is of absolute necessity that immediately after the establishment of local as well as national Spiritual Assemblies, a Bahá'í Fund be established, to be placed under the exclusive control of the Spiritual Assembly. All donations and contributions should be offered to the Treasurer of the Assembly, for the express purpose of promoting the interests of the Cause, throughout that locality or country. It is the sacred obligation of every conscientious and faithful servant of Bahá'u'lláh, who desires to see His Cause advance, to contribute freely and generously for the increase of that Fund.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *Bahá'í Administration*, pp. 41-2

7 There is nothing that brings success in the Faith like service. Service is the magnet which draws the divine confirmations. Thus, when a person is active, they are blessed by the Holy Spirit.

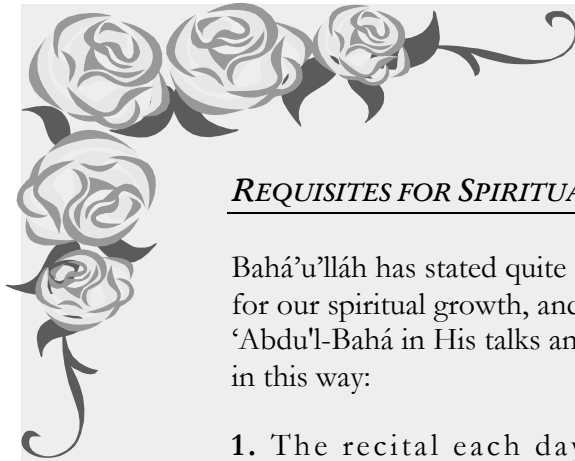
SHOGHI EFFENDI, *The Compilation of Compilations, Vol. II*, page 23



REQUISITES FOR SPIRITUAL GROWTH

In the whole group read the “Requisites for Spiritual Growth” and the Individual Acts of Service, Study, and Teaching on page 48.

Then individually prepare your own Personal Development Plan. There will be opportunities in other sessions to review your journals and spiritual development plans.

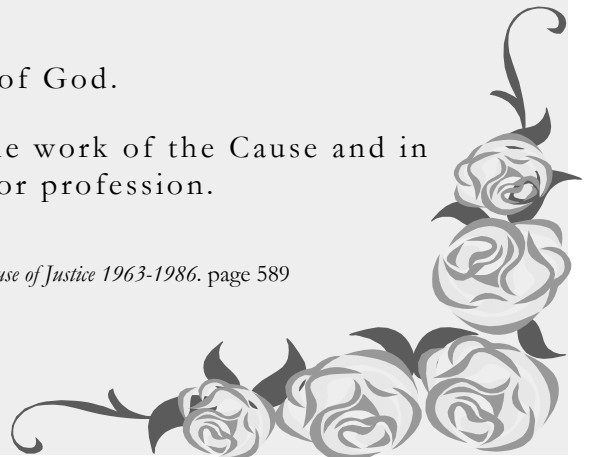


REQUISITES FOR SPIRITUAL GROWTH

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

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

Messages from the Universal House of Justice 1963-1986. page 589





“ . . . each individual, too, must make a conscious decision as to what he or she will do to serve the Plan, and as to how, where and when to do it. This determination enables the individual to check the progress of his actions and, if necessary, to modify the steps being taken. Becoming accustomed to such a procedure of systematic striving lends meaning and fulfilment to the life of any Bahá’í.”

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, Letter to the Bahá’ís of the World, Ridván 155 B.E.



What is a daily habit I need to acquire?



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? When and where will I take it?



Remember that change can be accomplished little by little, day by day.

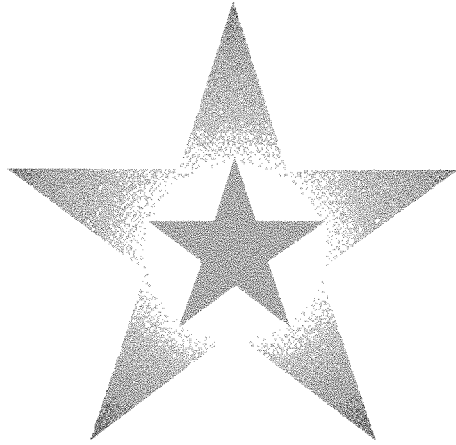
Individual Acts of Service, Study, and Teaching

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

- Develop a systematic plan for calling yourself to account daily on your progress with your personal development plan. Those who wish may briefly share their experiences at the next session.
- Research the writings on the effects of backbiting on one's own soul and on the souls of others. Share this information in a one-minute presentation during the next session of this course, including some ideas from the sacred writings for preventing backbiting.
- Share your reflections on the human soul with a family member or friend close to you. Invite those individuals also to share their ideas with you.
- Select a personally meaningful quotation from this session's study to memorize. Recite it each day and at the beginning of the next session.

Closing devotions

Conclude the session with prayers and singing.



*T*he Prophets of God should be regarded as physicians whose task is to foster the well-being of the world and its peoples, that, through the spirit of oneness, they may heal the sickness of a divided humanity.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

This Day of God

COURSE ONE

Some
Fundamental
Verities of the
Bahá'í Faith

SESSION 5

The Manifestations
of God

Devotions

Singing is ideal for uniting the hearts. Some recorded music that refers to the themes of the Covenant and progressive revelation include “Song of the Prophets,” from the recording *We Are Bahá’ís*; “The Spirit’s the Same,” from *Sing This Melody*; “Expectation” from *Music of the Bahá’í World Congress*; “Walk a Little Farther,” and “Passing Through” from *Bridges*, or other appropriate music. Begin the session with music, prayer and memorized passages from the writings.

You may also choose to include the following quotation:

And since there can be no tie of direct intercourse to bind the one true God with His creation, and no resemblance whatever can exist between the transient and the Eternal, the contingent and the Absolute, He hath ordained that in every age and dispensation a pure and stainless Soul be made manifest in the kingdoms of earth and heaven.

BAHÁ’U’LLÁH, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, pp. 66-7, XXVII

Objectives of the Session:

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

Knowledge

To become familiar with some of the writings that explain the concept of the Manifestation of God.

Wisdom

To understand the dual station of the Manifestation of God.

Spiritual Perception

To strengthen one’s relationship to the Manifestation of God.

Eloquent Speech

To be able to describe the dual station of the Manifestation of God.

Consultation about Individual Study

Discuss the question:

- Who was able to research the effects of backbiting and ways to prevent it?
- Who would like to recite a memorized quotation?

Allow 5-10 minutes for this brief discussion.

Consultation About Teaching

Allow about 10 minutes for this consultation.

- Briefly describe your teaching activities during the past week: Who was able to share the teachings on the human soul, the teachings about God, or any other of the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh?
- How can we follow up with those individuals with whom we have shared these ideas?
- What specific actions can we take this week to draw at least one soul—friends, co-worker, family member, child or youth—closer to the Manifestation of God for this Day?

Activity: The Manifestation of God

1. Divide into three working groups.
2. In your group, select one of the following focus questions, read the quotation pages aloud, and then answer the question incorporating brief passages from the writings in your answer.

Group One:

- How is it possible for the human being to know God?

Group Two:

- What is the twofold station of the Manifestation of God?

Group Three:

- Why do the teachings of the Manifestations of God vary?

3. After discussing your group's focus question, create a brief skit or situation in which a natural occasion arises to explain the concept of the Manifestation of God. Consider including some of the words or phrases from the quotations in your explanation.
4. Share the skits with the whole group. Applaud all contributions!
5. Discuss: How does drama help us understand the meaning of these quotations more deeply? How does drama increase our confidence that we can share these ideas with others?



THE MANIFESTATION OF GOD

Focus Questions:

Group One: How is it possible for the human being to know God?

Group Two: What is the twofold station of the Manifestation of God?

Group Three: Why do the teachings of the Manifestations of God vary?

1 Far, far from Thy glory be what mortal man can affirm of Thee, or attribute unto Thee, or the praise with which he can glorify Thee! Whatever duty Thou hast prescribed unto Thy servants of extolling to the utmost Thy majesty and glory is but a token of Thy grace unto them, that they may be enabled to ascend unto the station conferred upon their own inmost being, the station of the knowledge of their own selves.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 4-5, I

2 The door of the knowledge of the Ancient of Days being thus closed in the face of all beings, the Source of infinite grace . . . hath caused those luminous Gems of Holiness to appear out of the realm of the spirit, in the noble form of the human temple, and be made manifest unto all men, that they may impart unto the world the mysteries of the unchangeable Being, and tell of the subtleties of His imperishable Essence. These sanctified Mirrors, these Day-springs of ancient glory are one and all the Exponents on earth of Him Who is the central Orb of the universe, its Essence and ultimate Purpose. From Him proceed their knowledge and power; from Him is derived their sovereignty. The beauty of their countenance is but a reflection of His image, and their revelation a sign of His deathless glory. They are the Treasuries of divine knowledge, and the repositories of celestial wisdom.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, pp. 99-100

3 These Tabernacles of holiness, these primal Mirrors which reflect the light of unfading glory, are but expressions of Him Who is the Invisible of the Invisibles. By the revelation of these gems of divine virtue all the names and attributes of God, such as knowledge and power, sovereignty and dominion, mercy and wisdom, glory, bounty and grace, are made manifest.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 103

4 These attributes of God are not and have never been vouchsafed specially unto certain Prophets, and withheld from others. Nay, all the Prophets of God, His well-favoured, His holy, and chosen Messengers, are, without exception, the bearers of His names, and the embodiments of His attributes. They only differ in the intensity of their revelation, and the comparative potency of their light.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, pp. 103-4

5 Beware, O believers in the Unity of God, lest ye be tempted to make any distinction between any of the Manifestations of His Cause, or to discriminate against the signs that have accompanied and proclaimed their Revelation. This indeed is the true meaning of Divine Unity, if ye be of them that apprehend and believe this truth. Be ye assured, moreover, that the works and acts of each and every one of these Manifestations of God, nay whatever pertaineth unto them, and whatsoever they may manifest in the future are all ordained by God, and are a reflection of His Will and Purpose.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Gleanings from the Writings of Babá'u'lláh*, p. 59, XXIV

6 And since there can be no tie of direct intercourse to bind the one true God with His creation, and no resemblance whatever can exist between the transient and the Eternal, the contingent and the Absolute, He hath ordained that in every age and dispensation a pure and stainless Soul be made manifest in the kingdoms of earth and heaven. Unto this subtle, this mysterious and ethereal Being He hath assigned a twofold nature; the physical, pertaining to the world of matter, and the spiritual, which is born of the substance of God Himself. He hath, moreover, conferred upon Him a double station. The first station, which is related to His innermost reality, representeth Him as One Whose voice is the voice of God Himself. . . .The second station is the human station. . . .

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Gleanings from the Writings of Babá'u'lláh*, pp. 66-7, XXVII

7 These Essences of Detachment, these resplendent Realities are the channels of God's all-pervasive grace. Led by the light of unfailing guidance, and invested with supreme sovereignty, they are commissioned to use the inspiration of Their words, the effusions of Their infallible grace and the sanctifying breeze of Their Revelation for the cleansing of every longing heart and receptive spirit from the dross and dust of earthly cares and limitations. Then, and only then, will the Trust of God, latent in the reality of man, emerge . . . and implant the ensign of its revealed glory upon the summits of men's hearts.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Gleanings from the Writings of Babá'u'lláh*, p. 67, XXVII

8 The Prophets of God should be regarded as physicians whose task is to foster the well-being of the world and its peoples, that, through the spirit of oneness, they may heal the sickness of a divided humanity. . . . Little wonder, then, if the treatment prescribed by the physician in this day should not be found to be identical with that which he prescribed before. How could it be otherwise when the ills affecting the sufferer necessitate at every stage of his sickness a special remedy? In like manner, every time the Prophets of God have illumined the world with the resplendent radiance of the Day Star of Divine knowledge, they have invariably summoned its peoples to embrace the light of God through such means as best befitted the exigencies of the age in which they appeared.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Gleanings from the Writings of Babá'u'lláh*, p. 80, XXXIV

9 Whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth is a direct evidence of the revelation within it of the attributes and names of God. . . . To a supreme degree is this true of man, who, among all created things, . . . hath been singled out for the glory of such distinction. For in him are potentially revealed all the attributes and names of God to a degree that no other created being hath excelled or surpassed. . . . And of all men, the most accomplished, the most distinguished, and the most excellent are the Manifestations of the Sun of Truth. Nay, all else besides these Manifestations, live by the operation of their Will, and move and have their being through the outpourings of their grace.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, pp. 100-3

10 [The] Manifestations of God have each a twofold station. One is the station of pure abstraction and essential unity. In this respect, if thou callest them all by one name, and dost ascribe to them the same attributes, thou has not erred from the truth. . . .

The other station is the station of distinction, and pertaineth to the world of creation, and to the limitations thereof. In this respect, each Manifestation of God hath a distinct individuality, a definitely prescribed mission, a predestined revelation, and specially designated limitations. Each one of them is known by a different name, is characterized by a special attribute, fulfills a definite mission. . . .

Viewed in the light of their second station . . . they manifest absolute servitude, utter destitution, and complete self-effacement. Even as He saith: "I am the servant of God, I am but a man like you. . . ."

Were any of the all-embracing Manifestations of God to declare: 'I am God,' He, verily, speaketh the truth, and no doubt attacheth thereto. For . . . through their Revelation, their attributes and names, the Revelation of God, His names and His attributes, are made manifest in the world. . . . And were any of them to voice the utterance, 'I am the Messenger of God,' He, also, speaketh the truth, the indubitable truth. . . . Viewed in this light, they are all but Messengers of that ideal King, that unchangeable Essence. . . . And were they to say, 'We are the Servants of God,' this also is a manifest and indisputable fact. For they have been made manifest in the uttermost state of servitude, a servitude the like of which no man can possibly attain. . . .

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 50-5, XXII

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

- Read pages 51-66 of *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, #23-31. Prepare a brief oral report for the next session of this course.
- Research the Bible, the Qur’án, or other Holy Book for quotations about the Prophets of God. Share these quotations at the beginning of the next session.
- Invite another person to pray with you.
- Show your love for God through service to family, friends, or co-workers.

Planning for Spiritual Growth

Refer to the Personal Development Plan on the following page. Spend some quiet time contemplating the questions and planning to better fulfill these requisites for spiritual growth, based on guidelines excerpted from a letter of the Universal House of Justice.

Closing Devotions

Conclude with beautiful devotions. Consider using music or video from the first day of the Bahá’í World Congress or the Dedication Program for the Arc and Terraces on Mount Carmel to convey the majesty of the Manifestation of God for this Day.



PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

“... each individual, too, must make a conscious decision as to what he or she will do to serve the Plan, and as to how, where and when to do it. This determination enables the individual to check the progress of his actions and, if necessary, to modify the steps being taken. Becoming accustomed to such a procedure of systematic striving lends meaning and fulfilment to the life of any Bahá'í.”

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, Letter to the Bahá'ís of the World, Ridván 155 B.E.



What is a daily habit I need to acquire?



How will I structure my daily prayers and meditations?



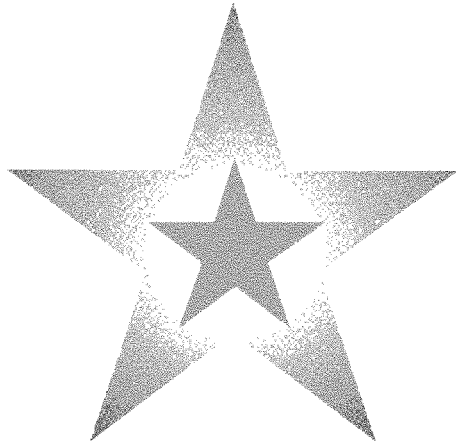
How will I be involved in community life, service and teaching?



What one step can I take today? When and where will I take it?



Remember that change can be accomplished little by little, day by day.



*E*very 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.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

This Day of God

COURSE ONE

Some
Fundamental
Verities of the
Bahá'í Faith

SESSION 6

Progressive
Revelation

Devotions

Begin the session with music, prayers, and memorized passages from the writings.

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

Contemplate with thine inward eye the chain of successive Revelations that hath linked the Manifestation of Adam with that of the Báb. I testify before God that each one of these Manifestations hath been sent down through the operation of the Divine Will and Purpose, that each hath been the bearer of a specific Message, that each hath been entrusted with a divinely-revealed Book and been commissioned to unravel the mysteries of a mighty Tablet. The measure of the Revelation with which every one of them hath been identified had been definitely foreordained.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 74-5, XXXI

Objectives of the Session

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

Knowledge

To be familiar with the term “progressive revelation” as described by Bahá'u'lláh and explained by ‘Abdu'l-Bahá.

Wisdom

To perceive Bahá'u'lláh's explanation of progressive revelation as the way to comprehend the interrelationship among all the world's divinely revealed religions.

Spiritual Perception

To realize that the principle of the oneness of religion promotes the unity of the human race.

Eloquent Speech

To communicate the concept of progressive revelation to others as proof and evidence of Bahá'u'lláh's Mission.

Consultation About Teaching

Discuss the questions:

- Who was able to invite another soul to say prayers with you? What happened? What was the result?
- Who was able to show kindness in an unexpected way? What happened? What was the result?

Consultation About Individual Study

Discuss the questions:

- Who was able to read the pages from *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá?* What did you learn?
- Who would like to share quotations from the Holy Books of other religions?

Activity Progressive Revelation

1. Read aloud and briefly discuss the following pages of quotations, “Progressive Revelation,” in the whole group, then divide into small groups.
2. In your small group, reflect upon the quotations and their implications.
3. In your small groups, choose one group of the prophets of God to study, using the following pages entitled “The Manifestations of God,” “Selected Verses of or about the Manifestations,” and other research materials provided.
4. In your small group, prepare a 3-5 minute report for the whole group about the particular Manifestation of God you studied. Incorporate the concept of progressive revelation in your presentation.
5. Share your report with the whole group. Provide about 20 minutes for sharing from all groups. Applaud all contributions.

Additional Materials

Other sources include *Some Answered Questions* by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá; *God and His Messengers* by David Hofman; *The Story as Told*, Jalil Mahmoudi; *A Story of Stories* by C.M. Kay; and *The New Garden* by Hushmand Fatheazam.

Consider creating a display and reference table by checking out the Holy Books of various religions from the library and if possible gathering artifacts used in each of these religions as well as photos from some of the regions of the earth where each religion has many adherents.



Focus Questions:

In what ways are all the Manifestations of God the same? How are they different?

1 Contemplate with thine inward eye the chain of successive Revelations that hath linked the Manifestation of Adam with that of the Báb. I testify before God that each one of these Manifestations hath been sent down through the operation of the Divine Will and Purpose, that each hath been the bearer of a specific Message, that each hath been entrusted with a divinely-revealed Book and been commissioned to unravel the mysteries of a mighty Tablet. The measure of the Revelation with which every one of them hath been identified had been definitely foreordained. This, verily, is a token of Our favor unto them, if ye be of those that comprehend this truth. . . . And when this process of progressive Revelation culminated in the stage at which His peerless, His most sacred, and exalted Countenance was to be unveiled to men's eyes, He chose to hide His own Self behind a thousand veils, lest profane and mortal eyes discover His glory. This He did at a time when the signs and tokens of a divinely-appointed Revelation were being showered upon Him – signs and tokens which none can reckon except the Lord, your God, the Lord of all worlds. And when the set time of concealment was fulfilled, We sent forth, whilst still wrapt within a myriad veils, an infinitesimal glimmer of the effulgent Glory enveloping the Face of the Youth, and lo, the entire company of the dwellers of the Realms above were seized with violent commotion and the favored of God fell down in adoration before Him. He hath, verily, manifested a glory such as none in the whole creation hath witnessed, inasmuch as He hath arisen to proclaim in person His Cause unto all who are in the heavens and all who are on the earth.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 74-5, XXXI

2 In thine esteemed letter thou hadst inquired which of the Prophets of God should be regarded as superior to others. Know thou assuredly that the essence of all the Prophets of God is one and the same. Their unity is absolute. God, the Creator, saith: There is no distinction whatsoever among the Bearers of My Message. They all have but one purpose; their secret is the same secret. To prefer one in honor to another, to exalt certain ones above the rest, is in no wise to be permitted. Every true Prophet hath regarded His Message as fundamentally the same as the Revelation of every other Prophet gone before Him. If any man, therefore, should fail to comprehend this truth, and should consequently indulge in vain and unseemly language, no one whose sight is keen and whose understanding is enlightened would ever allow such idle talk to cause him to waver in his belief.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 78-9, XXXIV

3 The measure of the revelation of the Prophets of God in this world, however, must differ. Each and every one of them hath been the Bearer of a distinct Message, and hath been commissioned to reveal Himself through specific acts. It is for this reason that they appear to vary in their greatness. Their Revelation may be likened unto the light of the moon that sheddeth its radiance upon the earth. Though every time it appeareth, it revealeth a fresh measure of its brightness, yet its inherent splendor can never diminish, nor can its light suffer extinction.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 79, XXXIV

4 It is clear and evident, therefore, that any apparent variation in the intensity of their light is not inherent in the light itself, but should rather be attributed to the varying receptivity of an ever-changing world. 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*, pp. 79-80, XXXIV

5 The Manifestations of His Divine Glory . . . have been sent down from time immemorial, and been commissioned to summon mankind to the one true God. That the names of some of them are forgotten and the records of their lives lost is to be attributed to the disturbances and changes that have overtaken the world.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 174, LXXXVII

6 There have been many holy Manifestations of God. One thousand years ago, two hundred thousand years ago, one million years ago, the bounty of God was flowing, the radiance of God was shining, the dominion of God was existing.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 463



Ancient and Unknown Manifestations

Adam and Noah: The Bahá'í writings talk about Adam and Noah as if they were Manifestations of God, but it is difficult to determine whether they were historical figures, when and where they lived, and what they taught.

African and American Manifestations: Because Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá have emphasized that God's guidance has always been provided to humanity, one can infer that the peoples of the vast continents of Africa and the Americas were not cut off from revelation. Tribal histories preserve the names of many great cultural and religious figures. Bahá'ís cannot be sure, however, whether these figures were Manifestations or lesser sources of guidance such as “seers.”

The Sabeian Manifestation: Even the name of this Manifestation has been lost, and nothing is known about His life and mission. “Sabeian” refers to the biblical Sheba, a country on the southern end of the Arabian peninsula or the corresponding shores of Africa.

Húd and Sálíh: These figures appear to have been Arab Manifestations who appeared to the 'Ád and Thamúd tribes (*The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, pp. 9-10). The Íqán and Qur'án mention their names and say a little about their missions, but otherwise nothing is known of them.

Manifestations of the Indian Subcontinent

Krishna: Krishna is the chief hero of the Bhagavad-Gita, an ancient Hindu text of unknown origin. The Gita recounts a dialogue between Krishna and his cousin Arjuna on the eve of a great battle. The central theme of the dialogue is devotion to God: “Center thy mind on me, be devoted to Me, sacrifice to Me, revere Me, and thou shalt come to Me. I promise thee truly, for thou art dear to Me.” (Gita 18:64-65). Krishna describes the individual soul as immortal, and stresses the importance of each soul following and fulfilling its dharma (its place in society and its destiny in the world). The universe is run by a personal force called brahman. Obedience to the dharma is obedience to the divine will, and, when done selflessly, leads to oneness with the brahman. This oneness with the brahman is moksha (freedom; liberation), which is the goal of Hindu life. Scholars think Krishna lived in northern India about 800 B.C.E., but his dates are extremely uncertain.

Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha: The Buddha was born about 563 B.C.E. in what today is southern Nepal. His father, the local king, sought to shelter his son from exposure to all suffering, but when the Buddha finally saw sickness, old age, and death, He renounced the palace and sought enlightenment. After three years he achieved a breakthrough and devoted the rest of His life to bringing enlightenment to others. He said that the key to understanding life was to recognize the pervasiveness of suffering; that suffering is caused by cravings, thirst, and attachment to the things of this world; that there is the possibility of escaping from suffering (known as nirvana or “blowing out” suffering); and that there is an eightfold path of correct moral behavior and rightmindedness that leads to nirvana. He died about 483 B.C.E.

Semitic Manifestations

Abraham: According to scripture, Abraham was born in the city of Ur in Mesopotamia about 1800 B.C.E. Because He opposed worship of many gods He was exiled and wandered, eventually to modern Palestine and Israel. He established the oneness of God and demonstrated His great faith by showing willingness to sacrifice His son, Ishmael. God promised that because of Abraham’s great faith His descendants would become countless in number. The modern Arabs and Jews are His descendants.

Moses: The book of Genesis says that Moses was born to a Hebrew woman and raised in the court of the Pharaoh. Because he murdered an Egyptian soldier who was beating a Hebrew slave he fled to the wilderness, where God, speaking through a burning bush, commanded Him to return to Egypt and demand that the Pharaoh free the Hebrew slaves. After Moses performed a series of demonstrations of divine power the Pharaoh agreed. In the wilderness of Sinai Moses received divine revelation, including the ten commandments, which became the basis of Judaism. He led the people forty years and died just before they entered the promised land of Israel, about 1250 B.C.E. Centuries after His death a great civilization arose in Israel, Jerusalem became the center of commerce and culture, and Judaism became a great source of learning.

Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ: Jesus was born of a traditional Jewish family about 4 B.C.E. and began His ministry when He was in His late twenties. He taught that the kingdom or rule of God was always present within each of us and among us, and that we had to live every moment of our lives as God willed. Ignoring social conventions, He dined with society’s outcasts, exemplifying God’s love for all. He demonstrated the power of God through spiritual healings and sent out disciples to call people to the Kingdom. He was crucified for His teachings but His spirit reinvigorated His followers, who spread His message of love and the coming of the kingdom to all the world.

Muhammad: Muhammad was born in Mecca about 570 C.E. and received His call to prophethood when He was 40. He called people to submit their wills to the Will of God; to confess the oneness of God and the prophethood

of Muhammad, to pray, fast, give alms, and perform a pilgrimage to Mecca; and He revealed numerous social laws for the creation of a just society. His teachings united the Arab tribes and, after His death in 632 C.E., they spread Islám from Spain to China. Centuries after the Prophet's death, Islám became the basis for the greatest civilization humanity had ever seen.

Iranian Manifestations

Zoroaster: Zoroaster lived about 1000 B.C.E. when Iran was divided into small warring states and was filled with lawlessness and violence. He emphasized that Ahura Mazda, the “Wise Lord” ruled over the world, but evil had a powerful grip on the world as well. Human beings must choose whether they will support the truth or the lie, peace or violence, and will be judged after death based on the quality of their lives. He taught an obligatory prayer and transmitted the essence of His teachings in dozens of hymns that have been preserved to this day. Under the early Persian kings, Zoroastrianism became the basis of a great civilization.

Universal Manifestations

‘Alí-Muhammad, The Báb: The Báb was born in Shíráz, Írán, in 1819 and declared His mission on May 23, 1844. He emphasized the fulfillment of the prophecies of Islam, the abrogation of its laws, and the coming of a new divine messenger. In the Bayán He laid down new laws of prayer, fasting, and social order. He was executed for His teachings in Tabríz in 1850.

Mírzá Husayn-‘Alí, BAHÁ’U’LLÁH: Bahá’u’lláh was born in Tehrán in 1817 to a court family and accepted the Báb in 1844. He became an active leader of the Bábí movement, received His call to Prophethood in 1853, and publicly announced His mission on April 22, 1863. In spite of exiles to Baghdád, Constantinople, Adrianople, and ‘Akká, He revealed thousands of tablets in which He described the nature of God, humanity, and creation; delineated the basis of prayer, fasting, reciting the Word of God, and pilgrimage; and laid down the principles of organizing society based on the unity and oneness of humanity.



SELECTED VERSES OF OR ABOUT THE MANIFESTATIONS

Krishna

Whenever there is a declining righteousness, O Bharat, and the rise of irreligion, it is then that I send forth My spirit. For the salvation of the good, the destruction of the wicked, and for firmly establishing true religion (Dharma), I manifest myself from age to age.

The Bhagavad-Gita Gita, 4.7-8

The Lord is the supreme poet, the first cause, the sovereign ruler, subtler than the tiniest particle, the support of all, inconceivable, bright as the sun, beyond darkness.

This supreme Lord who pervades all existence, the true Self of all creatures, may be realized through undivided love.

The Bhagavad-Gita Gita, Ch. 8

O God, Let us be united; Let us speak in harmony; Let our minds apprehend alike. Common in our prayer; Common be the end of our assembly; Common be our resolution; Common be our deliberations. Alike be our feelings; Unified be our hearts; Common be our intentions; Perfect be our unity.

Hindu Scriptures, (*Rig-Veda*) *The Oxford Book of Prayer* #1092, p. 363

Buddha

Thereafter, while the Bo tree remained in blossom, that full mooned May night, Guatama's meditation deepened through watch after watch until, as the Morning star glittered in the transparent skies of the east his mind pierced at last the bubble of the universe and shattered it to naught only, wonder of wonders, to find it restored with the effulgence of true being. The Great Awakening had arrived. Guatama's being was transformed, and he emerged the Buddha.

The Religions of Man, Smith, H. p. 128

Speak quietly to every one, and they will be gentle in their speech. Harsh words hurt, and will come back to the speaker.

The Dhammapada, p. 111

Cultivate the patience that endures, and attain Nirvana, the highest goal in life. Do not oppress others or cause them pain; that is not the way of the spiritual aspirant.

Do not find fault with others, do not injure others, but live in accordance with the dharma. Be moderate in eating and sleeping, and meditate on the highest. This sums up the teachings of the Buddhas.

The Dhammapada, p. 133

Before trying to guide others, be your own guide first. It is hard to learn to guide oneself.

The Dhammapada, p. 159

Conquer anger through gentleness, unkindness through kindness, greed through generosity, and falsehood by truth.

The Dhammapada, p. 148

Moses

Now Moses kept the flock of Je'thro, his father in law, the priest of Mid'ian: and he led the flock to the back side of the desert, and came into the mountain of God, even to Ho'reb. And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and beheld, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt, and when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses, and he said Here am I. And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. . . . Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of I'ssac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God. And the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows.

Exodus 3: 1-6

O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!

Psalms 8

Every word of God is pure, he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him.

Proverbs 29

To know wisdom and instruction, to perceive the words of understanding; To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgement, and equity; To give subtlety to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion. A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels.

Proverbs 1:2-5

O love the Lord, all ye his saints for the Lord preserveth the faithful, and plentifully rewardeth the proud doer. Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord.

Psalms 31: 23-24

O Lord my God, in thee I put my trust: save me from all them that persecute me, and deliver me . . .

Psalms 7:1

Jesus

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

Matthew 6:9-13

And there followed him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judaea, and from beyond Jordan. And seeing the multitudes, he went up onto a mountain, and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying:

Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 5:4-10

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

Matthew 5:16

I thank thee Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to babes; yea, Father, for such was thy gracious will. All things have been delivered to me by my Father; and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, or who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

Luke 10:21b-22

And when he entered into a ship, his disciples followed him. And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with waves: but he was asleep. And his disciples came to him, and woke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish. And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was great calm.

Matthew 8

And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith.

And the Lord said, if ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you.

Luke 17:5-6

Muhammad

The vehicle of the Revelation which came to Muhammad on Mount Hírrá has been traditionally described as the angel Gabriel. He held up a tablet to Muhammad to read. But Muhammad was untutored and He could not read. Again He was told to read and again He pleaded ignorance. A third time the Angel told Him to read, and once again Muhammad said that read He could not. Then the words of revelation reached Him: "Read in the name of thy Lord Who created; Who created Man from blood congealed. Read, thy Lord is the Most Beneficent; Who taught by the Pen, Who teacheth Man what he knoweth not." Muhammad was so overcome that He would have hurled Himself down a precipice. Then the clear voice rang out again, in the stillness of the lone hillside, to tell Muhammad that God had chosen Him to be His Messenger to Mankind. The weight of revelation was too great to bear, and Muhammad, now aware of His awesome mission to proclaim the oneness of Godhead, fled to His home, not more than three or four miles away, and asked Khadíjah, His wife, to cover Him with His mantel. Muhammad said, on this occasion, that as He lay covered, He felt that His soul had left His body for a while.

H.M. Balyuzi, *Muhammad and the Course of Islám*, p. 22

In the Name of God, the Merciful Lord of mercy. Praise be to God, the Lord of all being, the Merciful Lord of mercy, Master of the Day of Judgement. You alone do we serve: to you alone do we come for aid. Guide us to the straight path, the path of those whom you have blessed, not of those against whom there is displeasure, nor of those who go astray.

Súrah 1

Our Lord, in You we have trusted. To You we have turned in penitence. Yours is our final destiny. Lord, ever mighty and wise, let us give no occasion to the enemies of truth, but forgive us.

Súrah 60: 4-5

Piety does not lie in turning your face to East or West: Piety lies in believing in God, the Last Day and in angels, the Scriptures and the prophets, and disbursing your wealth out of love for God among your kin and the orphans, the wayfarers and the mendicants, freeing slaves, observing your devotional obligations and paying the Zakát and fulfilling a pledge you have given and being patient in hardship, adversity and times of peril.

Súrah 2

God is the light of the heaven and the earth, the likeness of His lamp is as a niche, wherein is a lamp, (the lamp in a glass, the glass as it were a glittering star), kindled from a Blessed Tree, an olive that is neither of the East nor of the West, whose oil well-nigh would shine, even if no fire touched it. Light upon Light (God guides to His light whom He will.) (And God strikes similitudes for men, and God has knowledge of everything.) In temples God has allowed to be raised up, and His name to be commemorated therein; Therein glorifying Him, in the mornings

and in the evenings, are men whom neither commerce nor trafficking divert from the remembrance of God, and to perform the prayer, and to pay alms, fearing a day when hearts and eyes shall be turned about, that God may recompense them for their fairest works, and give them increase of His bounty; and God provides whomsoever He will, without reckoning.

Súrah 24; 35-38

No doubt is there about this Book: It is a guidance to the God-fearing. Who believe in the unseen, who observe prayer, and out of what we have bestowed on them, expend for God; And who believe in what hath been sent down to thee, and in what hath been sent down before thee, and full faith have they in the life to come: These are guided by their Lord, and with these it shall be well.

(The Cow) Súrah 2

Zoroaster

The auspicious hour is at hand, the archangel Voho Manah is to reveal himself to Zoroaster . . . Zaratusht suddenly beholds a glorified image of the archangel Vohuman (Good Thought) coming towards him from the south, and bearing in his hand a glossy staff – the spiritual twig of the religion.

And after bidding him to lay aside his ‘garment’ (or the vesture of his material body), the seraphic messenger leads away his soul in ecstatic trance into the glorious and dazzling presence of Ahuramazd. . . .

The door of heaven having thus been opened, . . . the first and most important of all conference is begun. The Supreme Being himself presides; the Prophet is instructed in the great cardinal doctrines of the faith, by the Omniscient Wisdom.

Zoroaster, The Prophet of Ancient Iran, pp. 39-43 (extracts)

Dear Ahura Mazda, men in this world claim greatness for many a varied reason but the truly great man in thine eyes is the one who is wholly righteous, who has acquired an insight into Thy Law of Righteousness and who guides and helps others along its path. Thy gift of Divine wisdom is vouchsafed unto them who serve thy cause and purpose in life. The very strength and power are reserved for those who succor the poor and lowly. For righteousness is the highest blessing which Thou, Ahura Mazda, hast bestowed upon man.

The Oxford Book of Prayer, #976, p. 321

The Báb

Verily the equivalent of that which God revealed unto Muhammad during twenty-three years, hath been revealed unto Me within the space of two days and two nights. However, as ordained by God, no distinction is to be drawn between the two. He, in truth, hath power over all things.

Selections from the Writings of the Báb, p. 39

God hath in truth testified in His Book and so also have testified the company of His angels, His Messengers and those endued with divine knowledge, that thou hast believed in God and in His signs and that everyone is guided aright by virtue of thy guidance. This is indeed a boundless grace which God, the Ever-Living, the Self-Subsisting, hath graciously conferred upon thee aforetime and will confer hereafter.

Selections from the Writings of the Báb, p. 10

Thy loving providence hath encompassed all created things in the heavens and on the earth, and Thy forgiveness hath surpassed the whole creation. Thine is sovereignty; in Thy hand are the Kingdoms of Creation and Revelation; in Thy right hand Thou holdest all created things and within Thy grasp are the assigned measures of forgiveness. Thou forgivest whomsoever among Thy servants Thou pleasest. Verily Thou art the Ever-Forgiving, the All-Loving. Nothing whatsoever escapeth Thy knowledge, and naught is there which is hidden from Thee.

Selections from the Writings of the Báb, p. 178

They that truly believe in God and in His signs, and who in every Dispensation faithfully obey that which hath been revealed in the Book – such are indeed the ones whom God hath created from the fruits of the Paradise of His good-pleasure, and who are of the blissful. But they who turn away from God and His signs in each Dispensation, those are the ones who sail upon the sea of negation.

Selections from the Writings of the Báb, p. 147

Bahá'u'lláh

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

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

Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, pp. 21-2

Create in me a pure heart, O my God, and renew a tranquil conscience within me, O my Hope! Through the spirit of power confirm Thou me in Thy Cause, O my Best-Beloved, and by the light of Thy glory reveal unto me Thy path, O Thou the Goal of my desire! Through the power of Thy transcendent might lift me up unto the heaven of Thy holiness, O Source of my being, and by the breezes of Thine eternity gladden me, O Thou Who art my God! Let Thine everlasting melodies breathe tranquillity on me, O my Companion, and let the riches of Thine ancient countenance deliver me from all except Thee, O my Master, and let the tidings of the revelation of Thine incorruptible Essence bring me joy, O Thou Who art the most manifest of the manifest and the most hidden of the hidden!

Prayers and Meditations, p. 248, CLV

Be generous in prosperity, and thankful in adversity. Be worthy of the trust of thy neighbor, and look upon him with a bright and friendly face. Be a treasure to the poor, an admonisher to the rich, an answerer of the cry of the needy, a preserver of the sanctity of thy pledge. Be fair in thy judgment, and guarded in thy speech. Be unjust to no man, and show all meekness to all men. Be as a lamp unto them that walk in darkness, a joy to the sorrowful, a sea for the thirsty, a haven for the distressed, an upholder and defender of the victim of oppression. Let integrity and uprightness distinguish all thine acts. Be a home for the stranger, a balm to the suffering, a tower of strength for the fugitive. Be eyes to the blind, and a guiding light unto the feet of the erring. Be an ornament to the countenance of truth, a crown to the brow of fidelity, a pillar of the temple of righteousness, a breath of life to the body of mankind, an ensign of the hosts of justice, a luminary above the horizon of virtue, a dew to the soil of the human heart, an ark on the ocean of knowledge, a sun in the heaven of bounty, a gem on the diadem of wisdom, a shining light in the firmament of thy generation, a fruit upon the tree of humility.

Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 285, CXXX

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

Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 215, CX

Activity

Memorization

In pairs, work on memorizing the following passage:

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.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 79, XXXIV

Individual Acts of Service, Study, and Teaching

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

1. Interview a member of one of the religions studied to learn how that person views his or her religion. Make a brief report at the next session.
2. Read selections from one of the Holy Books of the religions studied, i.e., Judaism, Christianity, Islám, etc. Develop a short presentation to share with people of other religious backgrounds. This presentation could be a devotional gathering incorporating the scriptures of several religions.
3. Plan an act of generosity to another person.
4. Fully memorize the passage above from *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 79, XXXIV*

Planning for Spiritual Growth

Refer to the Personal Development Plan on the following page. Spend some quiet time contemplating the questions and planning to better fulfill these requisites for spiritual growth, based on guidelines excerpted from a letter of the Universal House of Justice.

Closing Devotions

Conclude the session with prayers and singing. Consider including music from the diverse religions of the world.



PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

“... each individual, too, must make a conscious decision as to what he or she will do to serve the Plan, and as to how, where and when to do it. This determination enables the individual to check the progress of his actions and, if necessary, to modify the steps being taken. Becoming accustomed to such a procedure of systematic striving lends meaning and fulfilment to the life of any Bahá'í.”

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, Letter to the Bahá'ís of the World, Ridván 155 B.E.



What is a daily habit I need to acquire?



How will I structure my daily prayers and meditations?



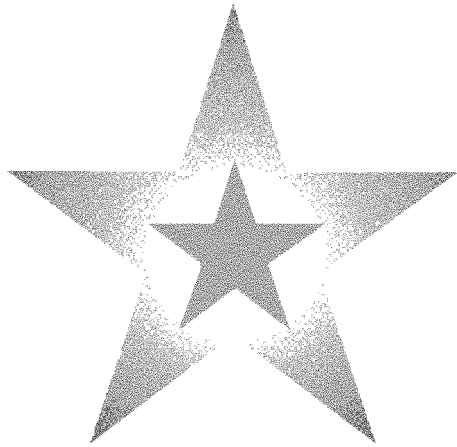
How will I be involved in community life, service and teaching?



What one step can I take today? When and where will I take it?



Remember that change can be accomplished little by little, day by day.



*T*he Lord of the universe hath never raised up a prophet nor hath He sent down a Book unless He hath established His covenant with all men, calling for their acceptance of the next Revelation and of the next Book; inasmuch as the outpourings of His bounty are ceaseless and without limit.

THE BÁB

This Day of God

COURSE ONE

Some
Fundamental
Verities of the
Bahá'í Faith

SESSION 7

The Greater Covenant

Opening Devotions

Begin the session with music, prayers, and the following quotation:

The Lord of the universe hath never raised up a prophet nor hath He sent down a Book unless He hath established His covenant with all men, calling for their acceptance of the next Revelation and of the next Book; inasmuch as the outpourings of His bounty are ceaseless and without limit.

THE BÁB, quoted in *The Compilation of Compilations*, Volume I, #216, p.114

Objectives of the Session

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

Knowledge

To know that a Covenant is a binding agreement between God and humanity.

To know that the Báb prepared the way for the coming of Bahá'u'lláh.

Wisdom

To appreciate the Greater Covenant between the Manifestation and His followers, a Covenant to accept the next Manifestation.

Spiritual Perception

To perceive that the Covenant of the Báb anticipates Bahá'u'lláh.

Eloquent Speech

To be able to explain aspects of the Covenant of God with humanity.

Activity
The Water of Life

1. Share images (slides or pictures from magazines) of water, the water of life. Include droplets, trickles, rivers, oceans, rainbows, etc., as well as images of the desert. Discuss the question:
 - What is the role of water in this world?
2. Choose a partner and offer each other a glass of pure water, from a large pitcher of water.
Discuss the question:
 - What is the role of water in our lives?
3. Mention that water can help us understand the importance of the pure teachings of God. The Word of God is the pure water that brings life to the world.
4. Observe as one person gradually adds drops of different colored food coloring into a glass of pure water, until the water is cloudy. Discuss the questions:
 - What clouds the pure teachings of God?
 - What happens to pure religion as time passes?
5. Pour a fresh glass of pure water from the same pitcher. Discuss the questions:
 - What restores the purity of true religion?
 - What is the Eternal Source of all true religion?

Consultation About Teaching

- Who has been able to share the teachings on the oneness of religion with other people? How have they responded to these ideas?
- How can we follow up with those individuals with whom we have shared these ideas?
- What are some of the “clouds” that prevent individuals from recognizing the new Manifestation of God? How can we help dispel those clouds?
- What specific actions can we take this week to draw at least one soul (friends, co-worker, family member, child or youth) closer to the Manifestation of God for this Day?

Consultation About Individual Study

If you brought reports of interviews, study, presentations, memorized passages from the writings, or devotional gatherings on the topic of the Oneness of Religion, please share them at this time.

Activity

The Concept of the Covenant and the Greater Covenant

1. Divide into small groups to read aloud the quotations on “The Concept of a Covenant and the Greater Covenant” on the following page. In your small groups choose **one** of the following questions to answer in the whole group. Please include a brief phrase from the writings in your answer.
 - *What is a Covenant in the religious sense?*
 - *What are the twin duties prescribed by God for His servants?*
 - *Who makes a Covenant with humanity regarding the next Manifestation?*
 - *When do we expect the next Manifestation of God?*
 - *What is one of the evidences of this great Day of God?*
2. Please share your questions and answers in the whole group. Applaud all contributions!



THE CONCEPT OF A COVENANT AND THE GREATER COVENANT

Focus Questions: What is a Covenant in the religious sense? What are the twin duties prescribed by God for His servants? Who makes a Covenant with humanity regarding the next Manifestation? When do we expect the next Manifestation of God? What is one of the evidences of this great Day of God?

1 A Covenant in the religious sense is a binding agreement between God and man, whereby God requires of man certain behaviour in return for which He guarantees certain blessings, or whereby He gives man certain bounties in return for which He takes from those who accept them an undertaking to behave in a certain way. There is, for example, the Greater Covenant which every Manifestation of God makes with His followers, promising that in the fullness of time a new Manifestation will be sent, and taking from them the undertaking to accept Him when this occurs.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Volume 1, p. 111

2 There is also the Lesser Covenant that a Manifestation of God makes with His followers that they will accept His appointed successor after Him. If they do so, the Faith can remain united and pure. If not, the Faith becomes divided and its force spent. It is a Covenant of this kind that Bahá'u'lláh made with His followers regarding 'Abdu'l-Bahá and that 'Abdu'l-Bahá perpetuated through the Administrative Order. . . .

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Volume 1, p. 111

3 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 everyone 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

4 This is the Day, O my Lord, which Thou didst announce unto all mankind as the Day whereon Thou wouldst reveal Thy Self, and shed Thy radiance, and shine brightly over all Thy creatures. Thou hast, moreover, entered into a covenant with them, in Thy Books, and Thy Scriptures, and Thy Scrolls, and Thy Tablets, concerning Him Who is the Day-Spring of Thy Revelation, and hast appointed the Bayán to be the Herald of this Most Great and all-glorious Manifestation, and this most resplendent and most sublime Appearance.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Prayers and Meditations*, p. 275

5 Every Prophet hath announced the coming of this Day, and every Messenger hath groaned in His yearning for this Revelation – a revelation which, no sooner had it been revealed than all created things cried out saying, 'The earth is God's, the Most Exalted, the Most Great!'

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, Quoted in *The Advent of Divine Justice*, pp. 77-8

6 Whoso layeth claim to a Revelation direct from God, ere the expiration of a full thousand years, such a man is assuredly a lying imposter. . . . Should a man appear, ere the lapse of a full thousand years – each year consisting of twelve months according to the Qur'án, and of nineteen months of nineteen days each, according to the Bayán – and if such a man reveal to your eyes all the signs of God, unhesitatingly reject him!

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, paragraph 37

7 "I testify before God," proclaims Bahá'u'lláh, "to the greatness, the inconceivable greatness of this Revelation. Again and again have We in most of Our Tablets borne witness to this truth, that mankind may be roused from its heedlessness." "In this most mighty Revelation," He unequivocally announces, "all the Dispensations of the past have attained their highest, their final consummation." "That which hath been made manifest in this preeminent, this most exalted Revelation, stands unparalleled in the annals of the past, nor will future ages witness its like."

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

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

BAHÁ’U’LLÁH, Quoted in *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh*, pp. 110-1

9 The Lord of the universe hath never raised up a prophet nor hath He sent down a Book unless He hath established His covenant with all men, calling for their acceptance of the next Revelation and of the next Book; inasmuch as the outpourings of His bounty are ceaseless and without limit.

THE BÁB, in *The Compilation of Compilations*, Volume I, #216, p. 114

10 Abraham, on Him be peace, made a covenant concerning Moses and gave the glad-tidings of His coming. Moses made a covenant concerning the promised Christ, and announced the good news of His advent to the world. Christ made a covenant concerning the Paraclete and gave the tidings of His coming. The Prophet Muhammad made a covenant concerning the Báb, and the Báb was the One promised by Muhammad, for Muhammad gave the tidings of His coming. The Báb made a Covenant concerning the Blessed Beauty, Bahá’u’lláh, and gave the glad-tidings of His coming for the Blessed Beauty was the One promised by the Báb. Bahá’u’lláh made a covenant concerning a Promised One Who will become manifest after one thousand or thousands of years. That Manifestation is Bahá’u’lláh’s Promised One, and will appear after a thousand or thousands of years. . . .

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Volume I, #217, pp. 114-5

Individual Acts of Service, Study, and Teaching

Please choose one or more of these actions to complete before the next session.

- Memorize one of the quotations about the Manifestation of God to be used in explaining these ideas to others.
- Invite a friend to go with you to a devotional gathering.
- Read pp. 206-10, Sections 179-84, in *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*. Share these ideas at the beginning of the next session.

Planning for Spiritual Growth

Spend some quiet time, perhaps while listening to meditative music, to complete your Personal Development Plan on the following page.

Closing Devotions

Conclude the session with prayers and singing.



PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

“... each individual, too, must make a conscious decision as to what he or she will do to serve the Plan, and as to how, where and when to do it. This determination enables the individual to check the progress of his actions and, if necessary, to modify the steps being taken. Becoming accustomed to such a procedure of systematic striving lends meaning and fulfilment to the life of any Bahá'í.”

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, Letter to the Bahá'ís of the World, Ridván 155 B.E.



What is a daily habit I need to acquire?



How will I structure my daily prayers and meditations?



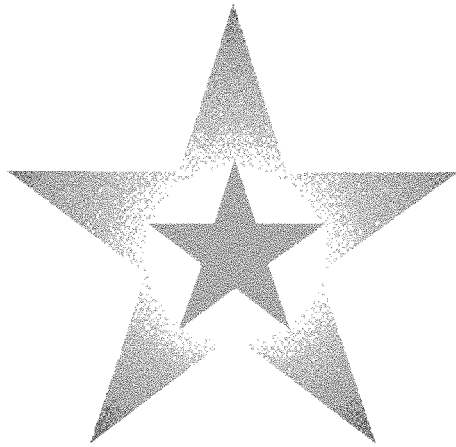
How will I be involved in community life, service and teaching?



What one step can I take today? When and where will I take it?



Remember that change can be accomplished little by little, day by day.



*T*his is the Day in which God's
most excellent favors have been
poured out upon men,
the Day in which His mighty grace
hath been infused into all created things.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

This Day of God

COURSE ONE

Some
Fundamental
Verities of the
Bahá'í Faith

SESSION 8

The Manifestation of
God for this Day:
Bahá'u'lláh

Opening Devotions

Begin the session with prayer and singing. Also consider using recorded music and the following quotations:

This is the Day, O my Lord, which Thou didst announce unto all mankind as the Day whereon Thou wouldst reveal Thy Self, and shed Thy radiance, and shine brightly over all Thy creatures. Thou hast, moreover, entered into a covenant with them, in Thy Books, and Thy Scriptures, and Thy Scrolls, and Thy Tablets, concerning Him Who is the Day-Spring of Thy Revelation, and hast appointed the Bayán to be the Herald of this Most Great and all-glorious Manifestation, and this most resplendent and most sublime Appearance.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Prayers and Meditations*, p. 275, CLXXVI

This is the Day in which God's most excellent favors have been poured out upon men, the Day in which His most mighty grace hath been infused into all created things. It is incumbent upon all the peoples of the world to reconcile their differences, and, with perfect unity and peace, abide beneath the shadow of the Tree of His care and loving-kindness. . . . Soon will the present-day order be rolled up and a new one spread out in its stead. Verily, thy Lord speaketh the truth, and is the Knower of things unseen.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 6-7, IV

Objectives of the Session

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

Knowledge

To know that the Báb prepared the way for the coming of Bahá'u'lláh.

To know that the Manifestation of God for this Age is Bahá'u'lláh.

Wisdom

To understand that Bahá'u'lláh is the fulfillment of the prophecies of the Báb that are recorded in the Bayán.

Spiritual Perception

To realize that the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh is God's guidance for this Day.

To see the power of Bahá'u'lláh's remedy for humankind.

Eloquent Speech

To be able to explain the Station of Bahá'u'lláh.

To be able to use the understanding of Bahá'u'lláh's prescription for justice, unity and peace in proclaiming the Faith to others.

Consultation About Teaching

Discuss the questions:

- Who was able to memorize an additional quotation?
Would you like to share it now?
- Who was able to invite a friend to a devotional gathering?
What were the results?
- Who was able to share spiritual teachings with another person?
What happened? What can we learn about teaching from that conversation?

Consultation About Individual Study

Discuss the question:

- Who was able to read the passage from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá?
What are the main points from that passage?

Activity

Bahá’u’lláh: The Manifestation of God for this Day

1. In the whole group, describe conditions in the world in 1800. List comments on a flip chart. See Appendix pp. 118-9 for some additional ideas.
2. Read aloud the passages from the writings on following pages. Discuss the following question; record your answers on chart paper.
 - What are some of the prescriptions made by the Manifestation of God for this Day?
3. Discuss the following question and record your answers on chart paper.
 - How will the world be different when these prescriptions are applied?
4. Working in teams of two, select one of the quotations that address issues faced by individuals and families in your community. Read this quotation aloud carefully together.
5. Discuss: How can we share these ideas with our families and friends in a way that will attract their hearts to these beautiful teachings of God? How can we show our love and care for our friends while we share these ideas? What short phrase from the quotation would we like to include?
6. Role play a brief (2-3 minute) realistic situation in which friends or family members are discussing current issues. Listen with love to the friend, then share the teachings of God that apply to these issues in a way that will attract a warm response from the friend.
7. After all teams share their demonstrations, applaud the group.



BAHÁ'U'LLÁH: THE MANIFESTATION OF GOD FOR THIS AGE

Focus Question:

What are some of the prescriptions made by the Manifestation of God for this Day?

1 We can well perceive how the whole human race is encompassed with great, with incalculable afflictions. We see it languishing on its bed of sickness, sore-tried and disillusioned. They that are intoxicated by self-conceit have interposed themselves between it and the Divine and infallible Physician. Witness how they have entangled all men, themselves included, in the mesh of their devices. They can neither discover the cause of the disease, nor have they any knowledge of the remedy. They have conceived the straight to be crooked, and have imagined their friend an enemy.

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

2 Every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God is endowed with such potency as can instill new life into every human frame. . . .All the wondrous works ye behold in this world have been manifested through the operation of His supreme and most exalted Will, His wondrous and inflexible Purpose. . . .No sooner is this resplendent word uttered, than its animating energies, stirring within all created things give birth to the means and instruments whereby such arts can be produced and perfectedIn the days to come, ye will, verily, behold things of which ye have never heard before. . . .Every single letter proceeding out of the mouth of God is indeed a mother letter, and every word uttered by Him Who is the Well Spring of Divine Revelation is a mother word. . . .

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 141-2, LXXIV

3 Upon the reality of man . . . He hath focused the radiance of all His names and attributes, and made it a mirror of His own Self. Alone of all created things man hath been singled out for so great a favor, so enduring a bounty.

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

4 This is the Day in which God's most excellent favors have been poured out upon men, the Day in which His most mighty grace hath been infused into all created things. It is incumbent upon all the peoples of the world to reconcile their differences, and, with perfect unity and peace, abide beneath the shadow of the Tree of His care and loving-kindness. . . .Soon will the present-day order be rolled up and a new one spread out in its stead. Verily, thy Lord speaketh the truth, and is the Knower of things unseen.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 6-7, IV

5 O contending peoples and kindreds of the earth! Set your faces towards unity, and let the radiance of its light shine upon you. Gather ye together, and for the sake of God resolve to root out whatever is the source of contention amongst you. . . .There can be no doubt whatever that the peoples of the world, of whatever race or religion, derive their inspiration from one heavenly Source, and are the subjects of one God. The difference between the ordinances under which they abide should be attributed to the varying requirements and exigencies of the age in which they were revealed. All of them, except a few which are the outcome of human perversity, were ordained of God, and are a reflection of His Will and Purpose. Arise and, armed with the power of faith, shatter to pieces the gods of your vain imaginings, the sowers of dissension amongst you.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 217, CXI

6 The time must come when the imperative necessity for the holding of a vast, an all-embracing assemblage of men will be universally realized. The rulers and kings of the earth must needs attend it, and, participating in its deliberations, must consider such ways and means as will lay the foundations of the world's Great Peace amongst men. Such a peace demandeth that the Great Powers should resolve, for the sake of the tranquillity of the peoples of the earth, to be fully reconciled among themselves. Should any king take up arms against another, all should unitedly arise and prevent him. If this be done, the nations of the world will no longer require any armaments, except for the purpose of preserving the security of their realms and of maintaining internal order within their territories. . . .

The day is approaching when all the peoples of the world will have adopted one universal language and one common script. When this is achieved, to whatsoever city a man may journey, it shall be as if he were entering his own home. . . . That one indeed is a man who, today, dedicateth himself to the service of the entire human race. . . .

It is not for him to pride himself who loveth his own country, but rather for him who loveth the whole world. The earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 165-7

Individual Acts of Service, Study, and Teaching

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

1. Read *The Promise of World Peace*, a statement of the Universal House of Justice, before the next session. This statement, addressed to the peoples of the world, explains many of Bahá'u'lláh's teachings. It is available on the internet at a number of sites, including

- <http://www.us.bahai.org/pdf/promise.pdf>

and

- <http://bahai-library.org/published.uhj/world.peace.html>

Share at least one aspect of these teachings with another person (in any context) before the next class session.

2. Visit a friend that faces one or more of the issues discussed today. Consider inviting that friend to say prayers with you.
3. Begin to reflect on the devotional meeting that we will plan as a group during our next session.
4. Memorize the following passage:

O contending peoples and kindreds of the earth!
Set your faces towards unity,
and let the radiance of its light shine upon you.
Gather ye together, and for the sake of God
resolve to root out whatever is the source of contention amongst you. . . .

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

Gleanings from the Writings of Babá'u'lláh, p. 217

Planning for Spiritual Growth

Refer to the Personal Development Plan on the following page. Spend some quiet time contemplating the questions and planning how you will arrange your life to better fulfill these requisites for spiritual growth, based on guidelines excerpted from a letter of the Universal House of Justice.

Closing Devotions

Conclude the session with prayers and singing. Consider including the following quotation in your closing devotions:

O contending peoples and kindreds of the earth! Set your faces towards unity, and let the radiance of its light shine upon you. Gather ye together, and for the sake of God resolve to root out whatever is the source of contention amongst you. . . .

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Gleanings from the Writings of Babá'u'lláh*, p. 217, CXI



PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

“... each individual, too, must make a conscious decision as to what he or she will do to serve the Plan, and as to how, where and when to do it. This determination enables the individual to check the progress of his actions and, if necessary, to modify the steps being taken. Becoming accustomed to such a procedure of systematic striving lends meaning and fulfilment to the life of any Bahá'í.”

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, Letter to the Bahá'ís of the World, Ridván 155 B.E.



What is a daily habit I need to acquire?



How will I structure my daily prayers and meditations?



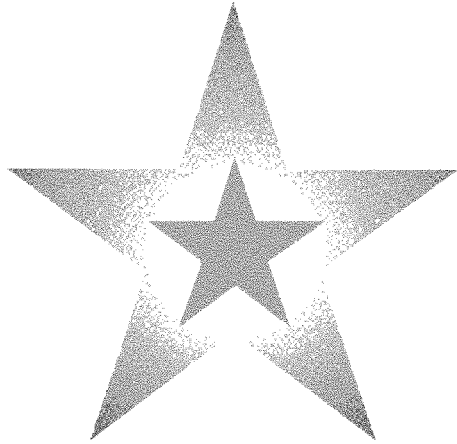
How will I be involved in community life, service and teaching?



What one step can I take today? When and where will I take it?



Remember that change can be accomplished little by little, day by day.



*P*ut your whole trust and confidence in God,
Who hath created you,
and seek ye His help in all your affairs.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH,

This Day of God

COURSE ONE

Some
Fundamental
Verities of the
Bahá'í Faith

SESSION 9

The Power of Prayer

Opening Devotions

Begin the session with music, singing, and prayers. As today's topic is the power of prayer and we'll be planning a devotional gathering together, consider adding additional beauty in all its forms to the environment. Consider including the following passages in the opening devotions:

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

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

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

'**ABDU'L-BAHÁ**, *Compilation of Compilations, vol. 1*, p. 99

Objectives of the Session

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

Knowledge

To know that devotional gatherings are one of the core activities of the Bahá'í Faith.

To know that the media campaign includes a video for broadcast and plans for firesides on The Power of Prayer.

Wisdom

To understand that devotional gatherings can foster the spirit of unity among all people.

To understand the importance of teaching children prayers and holy writings.

Spiritual Perception

To reflect on the power of prayer in our own lives.

To appreciate that music can be a latter for our souls.

Eloquent Speech

To prepare and host an intergenerational devotional gathering open to all.

To plan for continued service and fellowship among study circle participants.

Consultation About Individual Study and Teaching

Discuss the following questions. Allow about 15 minutes for this consultation.

- Who was able to read *The Promise of World Peace*? What did you learn?
- Who was able to share one of the prescriptions of God for this Day with other people? How did they respond? What are your ideas for continuing the conversation?
- Who was able to visit a friend facing one of the contemporary social issues this week? Were you able to say prayers with the person? What happened? What can we learn about our service from these conversations?

Activity *The Power of Prayer*

As you know, this course has focused on this Day of God. One of the teachings of God that has been renewed in this Day is the link between the human soul and its Creator. We may have increased our individual prayer life during this course.

1. Thinking about the time we've been studying together, or other times in your life, remember a time in which you felt profoundly aware of the power of prayer in your own life or in the life of someone close to you: What were the circumstances? What makes this experience stand out in your memory? What happened? And what happened after that? Why are these experiences important?
2. After that memory is clearly in mind, turn to the person next to you and listen carefully to that person's memory. Then share your own.
3. After a brief period of sharing, read aloud the quotations, "The Power of Prayer," and discuss the focus questions.



THE POWER OF PRAYER

Focus Questions:

What is the power of prayer in our own lives? How can we assist others to have these powerful experiences in this time of great transition in the world?

1 Put your whole trust and confidence in God, Who hath created you, and seek ye His help in all your affairs. Succour cometh from Him alone. He succoureth whom He willeth with the hosts of the heavens and of the earth.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *Proclamation of Babá'u'lláh*, p. 9

2 The most acceptable prayers is the one offered with the utmost spirituality and radiance.

THE BÁB, *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 78

3 Spirit has influence: prayer has spiritual effect.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 246

4 God is merciful. In His mercy He answers the prayers of all His servants when according to His supreme wisdom it is necessary.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 247

5 It behooveth the servant to pray to and seek assistance from God, and to supplicate and implore His aid.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *Spiritual Foundations: Prayer, Meditation, and the Devotional Attitude*, p. 9

6 The Guardian . . . sees no objection to the friends coming together for meditation and prayer. Such a communion helps in fostering fellowship among the believers. . . .

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *Spiritual Foundations: Prayer, Meditation, and the Devotional Attitude*, p. 15

7 . . . We must not be rigid about praying; there is not a set of rules governing it; the main thing is we must start out with the right concept of God. . . .

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *Spiritual Foundations: Prayer, Meditation, and the Devotional Attitude*, p. 18

Activity *Planning a Devotional Gathering*

1. Consider the following observations of the Universal House of Justice:

. . . The flourishing of the community, especially at the local level, demands a significant enhancement in patterns of behavior. . . This calls for the integration of the component elements—adults, youth and children—in spiritual, social, educational and administrative activities. . . . It involves the practice of collective worship of God. Hence, it is essential to the spiritual life of the community that the friends hold regular devotional meetings in local Bahá'í centers, where available, or elsewhere, including the homes of believers.

The Universal House of Justice, Ridvan 153, 1996

Among the initial goals for every community should be the establishment of study circles, children's classes, and devotional meetings, open to all the inhabitants of the locality.

The Universal House of Justice, Jan. 9, 2001

2. As a study circle, create a plan to host a devotional meeting in the near future by discussing the following questions. After discussing these questions, we will work together to plan the program.
 - Why is it important to hold devotional gatherings that welcome all ages and are open to all the inhabitants of a community?
 - When and where could we host our devotional gathering?
 - Who could we invite to the devotional gathering? How could we convey the invitation?
 - How can we create the spirit of loving hospitality, joyful fellowship, and reverence?
 - Will we invite our guests to read, sing, or chant? Do we wish to offer a prayer or selected passage on a card as a gift to our guests?
 - What simple refreshments would enhance the spirit of the occasion?
 - How could we assess the success of our gathering?
3. Choose one of three working groups: the music group, the eloquent speech group, or the art group. In your small working group, study the quotations on the following pages and plan your portion of the upcoming devotional gathering.
4. As you work in your group, feel free to share your ideas with other groups, if desired.



PLANNING A DEVOTIONAL GATHERING

The Music Group

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

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 38

Discuss: In what way is music a ladder for our souls? Why is it important to include music in our devotional meetings? Why is it important to include the young people in our community in devotional gatherings?

Assignment: Select one or both of the prayers below to put to music, select background music to listen to while the prayers are being read, choose a prayer to be sung that can be taught to the whole group, or plan another way to use music with Sacred Writings or prayers.

O Thou kind Lord! Make these children excellent plants. Let them grow and develop in the Garden of Thy Covenant, and bestow freshness and beauty through the outpourings of the clouds of the Abhá Kingdom.

O Thou kind Lord! I am a little child, exalt me by admitting me to the kingdom. I am earthly, make me heavenly; I am of the world below, let me belong to the realm above; gloomy, suffer me to become radiant; material, make me spiritual, and grant that I may manifest Thine infinite bounties.

Thou art the Powerful, the All-loving.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *Bahá'í Prayers*, p. 36-7

O God! Refresh and gladden my spirit. Purify my heart. Illumine my powers. I lay all my affairs in Thy hand. Thou art my Guide and my Refuge. I will no longer be sorrowful and grieved; I will be a happy and joyful being. O God! I will no longer be full of anxiety, nor will I let trouble harass me. I will not dwell on the unpleasant things of life.

O God! Thou art more friend to me than I am to myself. I dedicate myself to Thee, O Lord.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *Bahá'í Prayers*, p. 152

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

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 150

Discuss: Why is it important for us to recite the Tablets of the All-Merciful? Why is it important to teach prayers and holy Writings to the children of our community? How can we create a welcoming spirit for children at our devotional meeting?

Assignment: Select one or both of the prayers below or select other prayers to eloquently recite or memorize. Practice sharing these prayers in a group setting.

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

Thou art the Bountiful, the All-Loving.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *Bahá'í Prayers*, p. 36

O my God! O my God! This, Thy servant, hath advanced towards Thee, is passionately wandering in the desert of Thy love, walking in the path of Thy service, anticipating Thy favors, hoping for Thy bounty, relying upon Thy kingdom, and intoxicated by the wine of Thy gift. O my God! Increase the fervor of his affection for Thee, the constancy of his praise of Thee, and the ardor of his love for Thee.

Verily, Thou art the Most Generous, the Lord of grace abounding. There is no other God but Thee, the Forgiving, the Merciful.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *Bahá'í Prayers*, pp. 153-4

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

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *The Arts*, p. 7 in *Compilation of Compilations*, vol. 1

Discuss: Why is art a powerful means to awaken noble sentiments? Why is it important to use the power of art with the young members of our community?

Assignment: Select one or both of the prayers below and use art or reverent movements to express the words of the prayers.

O Lord! Make this youth radiant, and confer Thy bounty upon this poor creature. Bestow upon him knowledge, grant him added strength at the break of every morn and guard him within the shelter of Thy protection so that he may be freed from error, may devote himself to the service of Thy Cause, may guide the wayward, lead the hapless, free the captives and awaken the heedless, that all may be blessed with Thy remembrance and praise. Thou art the Mighty and the Powerful.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *Bahá'í Prayers*, p. 38-9

O my Lord! O my Lord! This is a lamp lighted by the fire of Thy love and ablaze with the flame which is ignited in the tree of Thy mercy. O my Lord! Increase his enkindlement, heat and flame, with the fire which is kindled in the Sinai of Thy Manifestation. Verily, Thou art the Confirmer, the Assister, the Powerful, the Generous, the Loving.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *Bahá'í Prayers*, p. 153

Activity

Hosting Firesides on The Power of Prayer

One of the important purposes of the study circle is to offer service to others. Planning and hosting devotional gatherings is an important service that we can offer our communities. Please complete your plans for your group's devotional meeting before continuing with this next activity.

Another important service that we can offer is an invitation to our friends and family members to informal home gatherings to explore the power of prayer, why it is important to pray, how to pray, and the role of meditation and prayer in our own lives.

These little home gatherings, or firesides, are intended to introduce the entire community to the life of the spirit and may be used with the video *The Power of Prayer* that was created as part of the media campaign.

Page through these firesides included in the appendix.

Discuss:

Are the videos broadcast in our area? If not, would we like to arrange to show the video in a home or public place? Would we like to plan to host these fireside gatherings in our own homes to share these beautiful teachings with others? What would be our first steps? These materials may also be adapted for devotional meetings, if desired.

Note: Electronic files of all media campaign fireside workshops are available for download in PDF and Microsoft Word format from the World Wide Web at http://www.education.usbnc.org/a_themes/fireside_manuals.htm.

Individual Acts of Service, Study, and Teaching

Choose one or more of these extended activities to complete in the coming weeks.

1. Carry out your plan for the devotional gathering. Remember highlights so that you can build on this success for future devotional gatherings.
2. Think about your friends and family members. Prepare one or more of the firesides on *The Power of Prayer*. Invite your friends and family to this fireside.
3. Get together with the participants in your study circle for fellowship and service. Can you continue to build links of friendship with the people you've made efforts to serve during the course of this study circle?
4. 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.

Planning for Spiritual Growth

Refer to the Personal Development Plan. Spend some quiet time contemplating the questions and planning how you will arrange your life to better fulfill these requisites for spiritual growth, based on guidelines excerpted from a letter of the Universal House of Justice.

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

Conclude the session with the music group, the eloquent speech group, and the art group sharing their contributions to the devotional gathering. These contributions will be repeated during the devotional gathering that you have planned for the community as a whole.



PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

“ . . . each individual, too, must make a conscious decision as to what he or she will do to serve the Plan, and as to how, where and when to do it. This determination enables the individual to check the progress of his actions and, if necessary, to modify the steps being taken. Becoming accustomed to such a procedure of systematic striving lends meaning and fulfilment to the life of any Bahá'í.”

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, Letter to the Bahá'ís of the World, Ridván 155 B.E.



What is a daily habit I need to acquire?



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? When and where will I take it?



Remember that change can be accomplished little by little, day by day.

Fundamental Verities Course – Course One – This Day of God

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?

What service did this course inspire you to offer to your family or community?

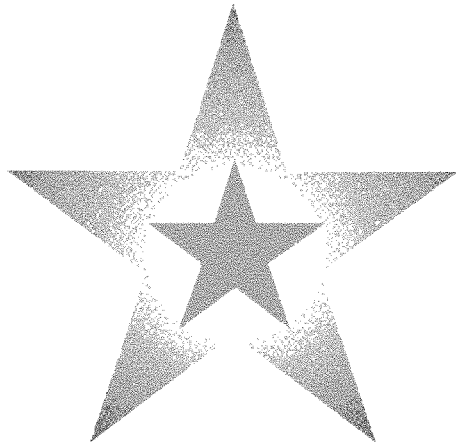
(Check one of the boxes for each question.)

	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. 108
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This Day of God

COURSE ONE

Fundamental
Verities of the
Bahá'í Faith

APPENDIX

Facilitation Guidelines

Materials for a weekend course, *The Art of Facilitation*, to train friends to effectively serve as facilitators in the Fundamental Verities Sequence of Courses may be obtained through the National Teacher Training Center. Call 810-653-5033, or email: NTTC@usbnc.org.

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 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.

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.



Suggestions for Facilitators

Session 1

THE MEANING OF DIVINE UNITY

Suggested Schedule of Activities

Devotions	10 minutes
Welcome to the Course / Objectives	10 minutes
Get Acquainted Activity	10 minutes
Overview of the Verities Courses	5 minutes
Activity: The Oneness of God	35 minutes
Activity: This Day of God	20 minutes
Individual Acts of Service, Study, and Teaching	5 minutes
Closing Prayers and Singing	5 minutes

Materials Needed

- Prayer books
- Music, recorded or sung
- Science materials (choose from magnets and tacks, or magnetizer and nails, or balloon)
- Blank note cards and envelopes
- Collection of pictures cut from magazines
- Flip chart or whiteboard and markers
- Glue or glue sticks; Scissors
- Pens or markers
- Optional decorating materials such as glitter, sequins, yarns, etc.
- Journals or paper for journaling

Suggestions for Music

“Persian Hidden Word #40,” *Selections from the Babá’i Writings*, Paul Parrish

“God Is One,” *Lift Up Your Voices and Sing, Vol. One*, Tom Price

“God Sufficeth,” *Lift Up Your Voices and Sing, Vol. Two*, Tom Price

“He Is God,” *We Are Babá’ís, Too!* Jack Lenz

“Arabic Hidden Word #3,” Persian Hidden Word #12,” *Selections from the Hidden Words of Babá’u’lláh*, Remembrance Ensemble

Session 2

TESTS AND SACRIFICE

Suggested Schedule of Activities

Devotions	10 minutes
Objectives	5 minutes
Consultation About Individual Teaching	10 minutes
Activity: Tests and Sacrifice	35 minutes
Journaling	10 minutes
Memorization	10 minutes
Individual Acts of Service, Study, and Teaching	5 minutes
Closing Devotions	5 minutes

Materials Needed

- Prayer books
- Music, recorded or sung
- Pens, pencils or markers
- Journals or paper for journaling

Preparation Needed

You may wish to prepare decorated cards with the memorization passage to give each participant as a gift at the end of this session.

Suggestions for Music

“Arabic Hidden Word #48,” “Arabic Hidden Word #18,” *Selections from the Hidden Words of Bahá’u’lláh*, Remembrance Ensemble

“A Sacrifice to Thee,” *A Sacrifice to Thee*, Matthew Levine

“Whatever Hath Befallen Thee,” *Melodies from the Sacred Writings of Bahá’u’lláh and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, Nancy Ward

“Remover of Difficulties” prayer set to music. Some sources include:

Search, Seaforth & Jenkins

We Have Come to Sing Praises, Bahá’í Gospel Choir

Selections from the Bahá’í Writings, Paul Parrish

A Sacrifice to Thee, Matthew Levine

Songs of the Ancient Beauty, Voices of Bahá Chorale

Desire of the Heart, Narges

Session 3

THE HUMAN SOUL: A SIGN OF GOD

Suggested Schedule of Activities

Devotions	10 minutes
Objectives	5 minutes
Consultation About Service	5 minutes
Consultation About Individual Study	5 minutes
Activity: The Soul-A Sign of God	60 minutes
Individual Acts of Service, Study, and Teaching	5 minutes
Closing Devotions	5 minutes=

Materials Needed

- Prayer books
- Music, recorded or sung
- Poster paper
- Markers and other art supplies such as colored paper, scissors, glue, glitter, ribbon, foil, tissue paper, crayons, etc.

Suggestions for Music

“You Are a Soul,” *We Are Bahá’ís, Too!*, Jack Lenz

“The Soul is the Sun,” *We Want to Grow Up*, Nancy Ward

“Bird,” *Bird*, Susan Lewis Wright

“Arabic Hidden Word #11,” “Arabic Hidden Word #32,” *Selections from Bahá’í Writings*, Paul Parrish

“My Home is My Soul,” *Melodies from the Sacred Writings of Bahá’u’lláh and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, Nancy Ward

“Arabic Hidden Word #33,” “Arabic Hidden Word #59,” “Arabic Hidden Word #64,”
“Arabic Hidden Word #4,” “Arabic Hidden Word #11,” “Arabic Hidden Word #14,”
“Arabic Hidden Word #13,” *Selections from the Hidden Words of Bahá’u’lláh*, Remembrance Ensemble

“The Pure Heart,” *Desire of the Heart*, Narges

Session 4

DIVINE LAW AND SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Suggested Schedule of Activities

Devotions	10 minutes
Objectives	5 minutes
Consultation About Individual Teaching	5 minutes
Consultation About Individual Study	5 minutes
Activity: Transformation Stories	20 minutes
Activity: Divine Law and Spiritual Growth	30 minutes
Activity: Requisites for Spiritual Growth	10 minutes
Individual Acts of Service, Study, and Teaching	5 minutes
Closing Devotions	5 minutes

Materials Needed

- Prayer books
- Music, recorded or sung
- Whiteboard or chart paper and markers (if needed for brainstorming activity)
- Pens and pencils
- Journals or paper for journaling

Preparation Needed

Facilitator should prepare in advance to share stories of Dorothy Baker's transformation, taken from the biography *From Copper to Gold*. See pages 36-9 for reprints of these stories. Relate these stories in an expressive manner.

Facilitator may wish to make beautiful gift copies of the "Requisites for Spiritual Growth" (see p. 44) to give to participants at the end of this session.

Suggestions for Music

"Persian Hidden Word #31," "Persian Hidden Word #34," *Selections from the Hidden Words of Bahá'u'lláh*, Remembrance Ensemble

Persian Hidden Word #80," *Selections from the Bahá'í Writings*, Paul Parrish

"I Am Thy Servant," "O Thou Who Art Turning Thy Face," *Melodies from the Sacred Writings of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, Nancy Ward

"Protect Us," *Fruits of the Spirit*, Louhelen Bahá'í School

"Submission to the Will of God," *Desire of the Heart*, Narges

"Be Thou Content," *We Have Come to Sing Praises*, Bahá'í Gospel Choir

Session 5

THE MANIFESTATIONS OF GOD

Suggested Schedule of Activities

Devotions	10 minutes
Objectives	5 minutes
Consultation About Individual Study	5 minutes
Consultation about Teaching	10 minutes
Activity: The Manifestation of God	50 minutes
Individual Acts of Service, Study, and Teaching	5 minutes
Planning for Spiritual Growth	5 minutes
Closing Devotions	5 minutes

Materials Needed

- Prayer books
- Music, recorded or sung
- Hats or other simple costume items for skits, if desired
- Pens and pencils
- Music or video of Bahá'í World Congress

Suggestions for Music

“Arabic Hidden Word #67,” “Arabic Hidden Word #41,” *Selections from the Hidden Words of Bahá'u'lláh*, Remembrance Ensemble

The Messengers, Jack Lenz and Ron Allen

“The Man Upstairs,” “Forever Will Stand,” *A Sacrifice to Thee*, Matthew Levine

“Glory Be To My Lord,” “Paradise of the Placeless,” *Fruits of the Spirit*, Louhelen Bahá'í School

Session 6

PROGRESSIVE REVELATION

Suggested Schedule of Activities

Devotions	10 minutes
Objectives	5 minutes
Consultation about Teaching	5 minutes
Consultation About Individual Teaching	5 minutes
Activity: Progressive Revelation	60 minutes
Memorization	5 minutes
Individual Acts of Service, Study, and Teaching	5 minutes
Planning for Spiritual Growth	5 minutes
Closing Devotions	5 minutes

Materials Needed

- Prayer books
- Music, recorded or sung
- Reference materials listed at bottom of page 57, if available
- Poster paper and art supplies, if desired for reports on Manifestations
- Whiteboard or chart paper & markers
- Pens and pencils

Suggestions for Music

“Song of the Prophets,” *We Are Bahá’ís*, Jack Lenz

“The Spirit’s the Same,” *Sing This Melody*

“Expectation,” *Music of the Bahá’í World Congress*, Live Unity

“Walk a Little Farther,” “Passing Through,” *Bridges*

“We May Never Pass This Way Again,” *Lift Up Your Voices and Sing, Vol. 2*, Tom Price

“God Is One,” *Lift Up Your Voices and Sing, Vol. 1*, Tom Price

Session 7

THE GREATER COVENANT

Suggested Schedule of Activities

Devotions	10 minutes
Objectives	5 minutes
Activity: The Water of Life	15 minutes
Consultation about Teaching	10 minutes
Consultation About Individual Study	10 minutes
Activity: The Concept of the Covenant and the Greater Covenant	35 minutes
Individual Acts of Service, Study, and Teaching	5 minutes
Closing Devotions	5 minutes

Materials Needed

- Prayer books
- Music, recorded or sung
- Images of water
- Large pitcher of pure water
- Water glasses for each participant
- Food coloring
- Flip chart or chalkboard to record answers

Suggestions for Music

“Have You Heard of Bahá’u’lláh,” *Lift Up Your Voices and Sing, Vol. 1*, Tom Price

“Bahá’u’lláh’s Getting Us Ready for that Great Day,” “East of Ginger Trees,” *Lift Up Your Voices and Sing, Vol. 2*, Tom Price

“See the Light,” “Glad Tidings,” Music from the Bahá’í World Congress

“The Kingdom of Glory,” “Glad Tidings,” *Desire of the World*, Narges

“We Have Come to Sing Praises,” “The Spirit of the Lord is Everywhere,” *We Have Come to Sing Praises*, Bahá’í Gospel Choir

“We Have Come to Sing Praises,” *Fruits of the Spirit*, Louhelen Bahá’í School

Session 8

THE MANIFESTATION OF GOD: BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

Suggested Schedule of Activities

Devotions	10 minutes
Objectives	5 minutes
Consultation about Teaching	10 minutes
Consultation about Individual Study	5 minutes
Activity: Bahá'u'lláh: The Manifestation of God for this Age	50 minutes
Individual Acts of Service, Study, and Teaching	5 minutes
Planning for Spiritual Growth	5 minutes
Closing Devotions	10 minutes

Materials Needed

- Prayer books
- Music, recorded or sung
- Flip chart or chalkboard to record answers
- Several copies of *The Promise of World Peace*, if available

Preparation Needed

For reference to conditions in the world at the beginning of the 19th century, you may refer to the information on the following pages.

Suggestions for Music

“Bahá'u'lláh,” “Bahá'u'lláh Wam,” *Fruits of the Spirit*, Louhelen Bahá'í School

“In This Day Bahá'u'lláh,” *We Have Come to Sing Praises*, Bahá'í Gospel Choir

“O Bahá'u'lláh,” “In This Day Bahá'u'lláh,” *Music from Bahá'í World Congress*

Bahá'u'lláh,” “O Bahá'u'lláh,” *Lift Up Your Voices and Sing, Vol. 1*, Tom Price

“Bahá'u'lláh's Getting Us Ready for that Great Day,” Proclaim the Greatest Name,” *Lift Up Your Voices and Sing, Vol. 2*, Tom Price

“Have You Heard of Bahá'u'lláh,” “The Prince of Peace,” *Lift Up Your Voices and Sing, Vol. 3*, Tom Price

The Nineteenth Century in North America and Europe

adapted from *The Nineteenth Century*, by E. R. Chamberlin and other sources

The 19th century was like a bridge connecting the past with the present, the old with the new.

Event/Sphere	Beginning of the Century	Changes During the Century
Land travel	By foot or by animal	Steam trains, railways, first automobiles
Sea travel	Ships propelled by wind	Iron and steel ships powered by steam
Where most people lived	Country villages	Growing towns and cities
Where food came from	Kitchen garden or local farm	Canning allowed food produced on one side of the world to be eaten much later elsewhere
Inventions		Photography, gas lights, electric motors, typewriters
Families	Children as young as five worked in factories, farms, mines and shops	Trade unions grew, wages began to rise and working hours got shorter; child labor began to be limited in some places
Farming	Poor farmers split their farms between their sons so farms became smaller and produced less; farm work was hard, back-breaking manual labor	Larger farms developed, railways improved markets, tools improved from the scythe to machines like seed drills, steam threshers, and combine harvesters
Earning a living	People worked at their own pace in or near their homes	Factory workers forced to start work and finish at regular times; industrial accidents, diseases and deaths were horrifyingly common
Growth of cities	22 European and no American cities had more than 100,000 people	84 European and 53 American cities had more than 100,000 people
Crime	Laws enforced by army, night watchmen, and private action; Britain had over 200 hanging offenses including shoplifting, stealing bread, wrecking a factory machine	First police forces set up to provide public law enforcement; fewer hangings within law, but lynchings of blacks in USA
Health and medicine	Diseases like cholera, smallpox and typhus killed thousands; most families lost at least one child before its fifth birthday	Improved hygiene, better living conditions; antiseptics, anaesthetics helped make death rates fall
Communications	Travel in person, send a messenger, slow and irregular letter delivery	Public postal services; electric telegraph, telephones, newspapers
Education	Only rich could afford school; mostly for boys	Free, compulsory public education for all; girls gradually included
Religion	Country church center of local life; most people thought the world was created by God	Church plays smaller role in life of city dwellers; educated people begin to question belief in God; scientists challenge Bible beliefs about creation of the world.

Revolutionaries	Working people accepted lot in life	Workers in European countries revolt; trade unions become legal; workers fight employers for better pay and working conditions
Nations old and new	People feel drawn toward other people who speak the same language and have similar customs, but no sense of nationalism	Nations formed from smaller kingdoms and states into one country (ex. Italy and Germany)
Women's issues	Women were property of their husbands; not allowed to vote; girls were not valued as highly as boys; women had few choices in education, jobs or marriage partners; wore uncomfortable clothing such as tight corsets and cage crinolines; many women and babies died in childbirth	More girls attended school; women become teachers, factory workers, nurses and ultimately, a few doctors; wore comfortable clothing which allowed them to exercise and feel stronger; medical advances, healthier diets, sterilized tools helped women and babies survive; could vote in local elections
African American status	Trade in slaves widespread; Slavery legal	Slave trade outlawed; slavery abolished; development and entrenchment of segregation after Civil War; Ku Klux Klan and lynchings terrorize blacks
American Indian status	Conflict with European settlers, most of North America belonged to sovereign Indian nations	Conflict with European settlers and pioneers intensified; Indian tribes removed from lands and forced onto reservations; efforts to destroy Indian way of life

Session 9

THE POWER OF PRAYER

Suggested Schedule of Activities

Devotions	10 minutes
Objectives	5 minutes
Consultation About Teaching	5 minutes
Consultation About Individual Study	5 minutes
Activity: The Power of Prayer	15 minutes
Activity: Planning Devotional Gatherings	30 minutes
Activity: Hosting Firesides on The Power of Prayer	10 minutes
Individual Acts of Service, Study, and Teaching	5 minutes
Planning for Spiritual Growth	5 minutes
Course Evaluation	5 minutes
Closing Devotions	20 minutes

Materials Needed

- Prayer books
- Music, recorded or sung
- Flip chart or chalkboard and pens to record answers
- Art supplies such as: construction and tissue paper, markers, scissors, glue, glitter, feathers, scraps of felt, rubber stamps, stickers, etc.
- Journals or paper for journaling

Suggestions for Music for “Music Group”:

Tablet of Ahmad, Red Grammer

Melodies from the Sacred Writings of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Nancy Ward

Selections from the Hidden Words of Bahá'u'lláh, Remembrance Ensemble

At the Sacred Threshold, Lisa Janti

Music of the Bahá'í World Congress, Tom Price

Sounds of the World, Music of the Opening Evening of the Official Opening of the Mt. Carmel Terraces, Jack Lenz

Amame, Palabras Ocultas de Bahá'u'lláh (Hidden Words in Spanish), Leonor Dely

Long Healing Prayer, Allen Tyrone Johnson

Long Healing Prayer, Christina Quinn

We Laugh and We Pray, Black Men's Gathering

Songs of the Ancient Beauty, Vol. I and II, Voices of Bahá Chorale, Tom Price

Desire of the Heart, Narges

Prayers, Sandy Simmons

THE POWER OF PRAYER

*Firesides
to accompany the video
“The Power of Prayer”*

*A collaborative project by the National Education
Task Force, the National Education and Schools Office,
and the National Teaching Committee*

Overview of the Workshops to Complement
“The Power of Prayer” Videotape



These workshops have been developed and distributed by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States to assist the friends in making the greatest possible use of the nation-wide broadcasts of “The Power of Prayer” video. All five workshops are designed for use as fireside gatherings or other gatherings of similar intent. Each is approximately 90 minutes in length, including time to view the “The Power of Prayer.” If the friends gathered have recently seen the video, showing it again is not a requirement. These fireside gatherings are intended to assist seekers to explore the meaning of prayer, and to teach the Bahá'í Faith to others, as part of the National Teaching Plan. The workshops also examine the role prayer plays in our daily lives, and how to communicate more meaningfully with our Creator.

We encourage the fireside host and/or workshop facilitator to read about the different methods of teaching and learning suggested by the Writings in our Faith in the book, *Foundations for a Spiritual Education* available through the Bahá'í Distribution Service. We also suggest that you contact any of the Core Curriculum Trainers to assist with the facilitation of these workshops. Please contact the National Teacher Training Center at Louhelen Bahá'í School if you need help identifying Core Curriculum trainers in your area.

We suggest that the fireside host or workshop facilitator carefully consider how to create an atmosphere to facilitate spiritual learning. While there is much flexibility in how this might be achieved, we have found that advance preparation of the devotional readings and the environment creates a more reverent and relaxed atmosphere for Bahá'ís and seekers alike to receive the Word of God.

Some specific guidelines for facilitating these workshops:

Use 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 friends. Please feel free to 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 delivering the workshops.

Use the Sacred Texts as a basis for your answers. When answering questions, try to refer to the answers that can be found in the Writings.

Be sensitive to varying levels of literacy. If the amount of reading or number of quotations suggested in the workshops becomes a burden to the friends, select 2-3 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 comments brief. Creating an atmosphere where the participants themselves feel free to share their views and concerns necessitates that the facilitators keep their presentations and answers brief. Allow the participants to have the opportunity to connect their hearts to Bahá'u'lláh through use of the Sacred Texts.

Practice patience and sensitivity. 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 will always make learning easier and a cheerful presenter can really make all the difference. You will find your own Faith renewed as you joyfully assist the friends to come to a deeper understanding of the mystery of prayer and meditation.

Allow time for fellowship. Following the structured parts of the fireside gathering, encourage informal conversation to occur so that friends of the Faith can raise additional questions in a less formal setting.

Make liberal use of music. Selections from a diverse array of musical styles may enhance spiritual learning and appeal to people of many different backgrounds. Some sources include: music of the Bahá'í Gospel Choir, music from the Bahá'í World Congress, *Songs of the Ancient Beauty*, parts I and II. Music from these artists: Narges, Red Grammer, El Viento Canta, Kevin Locke, Matthew Levine, Mary Davis, Seaforth and Jenkins, Kiu Haghghi, Paul Parrish (*Hidden Words* put to music), Remembrance Ensemble (a cappella *Hidden Words* renderings), and instrumental jazz pieces as well as classical music are possibilities.

Materials Checklist for Workshop Facilitators

Advance Preparation and Materials Needed for All Workshops:

- photocopy the set of pages for the workshop you are facilitating for each participant or guest.
- TV/VCR and videotape: *The Power of Prayer* (optional if seen recently)
- Prayer book(s)
- copies of small prayer books and/or copies of small booklet, *The Light of Unity: The Power of Prayer* to offer to each participant
- flip chart and markers
- blank paper for recording personal notes and reflections
- pens/pencils

Creating a Spiritual Environment:

- special touches—flowers, candles, a picture of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá—may set the tone and signal that this is going to be special
- extensive use of diverse music to set the tone before the fireside or workshop gets started and at any appropriate time during the program
- refreshments—something very simple such as coffee, tea, cookies—to offer either during a break or following the workshop

Specific Workshop Materials:

2 How Do We Pray?

- small poster boards
- simple arts and crafts supplies, e.g. markers, pieces of different kinds of paper: construction, tissue, etc., glue, glitter glue pens, feathers, scraps of felt, rubber stamps, stickers, etc.

#3 Meditation in the Life of the Soul

- copy the short verses for meditation on special paper for all participants

#4 The Role of Prayer in Our Daily Lives

- carefully cut out magazine pictures—make sure there are at least twice the number of pictures as participants.** Pictures from *National Geographic Magazine*, or any magazine with pictures from nature, pictures depicting the diversity of the human family, animals, or generally interesting photos are appropriate
- copies of the tale, “The Bejeweled Sword” for participants (optional)

#5 The Power of Prayer

- make copies of the brief Compilation on Prayer for each participant
- CD or cassette tape selection of possible background music for the “Music Group”
- simple arts and crafts supplies, e.g. markers, pieces of different kinds of paper: construction, tissue, etc., glue, glitter glue pens, feathers, scraps of felt, rubber stamps, stickers, etc.

Planning a Devotional Meeting

It may be helpful to view these firesides or workshops as devotional meetings. While we are trying to share the Message of Bahá'u'lláh in each fireside through explaining the Bahá'í perspective on prayer, we need to be sure that the manner in which the meetings are conducted reflect spiritual realities. The importance of preparing the environment before guests arrive cannot be overemphasized. When the devotions are planned effectively, the participants' hearts will be connected to Bahá'u'lláh, and we will set an example of what Bahá'í devotions are.

Please consider these questions:

- Who will be invited to attend the workshop? How will you convey the invitation?
- How can you create the spirit of loving hospitality, joyful fellowship, and reverence?
- Which prayers and passages from the Writings will you include? Who will you ask to read, sing, or chant? Do you wish to offer a prayer or selected passage on a card as a gift to your guests?
- How will you incorporate music or other arts?
- What simple refreshments would enhance the spirit of the occasion?
- How will you assess the success of your gathering?

Guidance from the Writings of our Faith:

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

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Bahá'í Meetings/The Nineteen Day Feast*, Page 3)

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

(Bahá'u'lláh: *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, Page: 38)

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

(`Abdu'l-Bahá: *Consultation*, Page: 99)

Fireside #1

Why Should We Pray?

Purpose: To gain a deeper understanding of the Bahá'í beliefs on why one should pray.

Workshop/Fireside/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. You may wish to use the prayer, “Intone, O My servant . . .” as it explains why we pray. (*Bahá'í Prayers*, introduction)

Introduction

Begin by explaining to the guests that the purpose of the gathering is to explore the Bahá'í perspective on the purpose of prayer--communing with God.

Power of Prayer video

Have the guests watch the video (or telecast), “The Power of Prayer.” (approximately 30 minutes)

Learning Experience

➤ Begin by asking guests *why* they pray—at a very basic level, prayer is the expression of a great longing for life, for a more powerful, purer life.

When one supplicates to his Lord . . . this supplication brings light to his heart, illumination to his sight, life to his soul and exaltation to his being.
(`Abdu'l-Bahá: *Spiritual Foundations: Prayer, Meditation, and the Devotional Attitude*, #32, P. 11)

➤ Divide the group into small groups of 4-5 people. Ask the guests to read the following quotations and based on the information gleaned from the quotations, try to answer the two focus questions.

➤ Explain to the participants that together they will be looking to answer these questions:

- Why should one pray?
- What are some of the benefits of prayer?

➤ There are a number of reasons why human beings pray. Ask the participants for examples of why we pray, or reasons for praying. If these reasons are not mentioned, suggest these possibilities: asking for assistance, asking for forgiveness, praying for someone else, expressing gratitude, and so on.

➤ Bring the small groups together and ask each group to share their answers with the larger group.

➤ Ask participants to quietly reflect for a few moments on any shift in understanding to the initial question of this workshop, “Why should we pray?”

Closing

If the friends do not already have a copy of *The Light of Unity: The Power of Prayer* booklet, a small Bahá'í prayer book, or other printed materials, please offer them to the participants and invite them to investigate the Bahá'í Faith.

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

Why Should We Pray?

Focus Questions:

- Why should one pray?
- What are some of the benefits of prayer?



As to thy question, “Why pray? What is the wisdom thereof, for God has established everything and executes all affairs after the best order and he ordains everything according to a becoming measure and puts things in their places with the greatest propriety and perfection—therefore what is the wisdom in beseeching and supplicating and in stating one’s wants and seeking help?” Know thou, verily, it is becoming of a weak one to supplicate to the strong One and it behoveth a seeker of bounty to beseech the glorious, bountiful One. When one supplicates to his Lord, turns to Him and seeks bounty from His ocean this supplication is by itself a light to his heart, an illumination to his sight, a life to his soul and an exaltation to his being.

Therefore during thy supplications to God and thy reciting, “Thy name is my healing,” consider how thy heart is cheered, thy soul delighted by the spirit of the love of God and thy mind attracted to the kingdom of God! By these attractions one’s ability and capacity increase. When the vessel is widened the water increaseth and when the thirst grows the bounty of the cloud becomes agreeable to the taste of man. This is the mystery of supplication and the wisdom of stating one’s wants.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Divine Art of Living*, p. 26)

Spirit has influence; prayer has spiritual effect. Therefore, we pray, "O God! Heal this sick one!" Perchance God will answer. Does it matter who prays? God will answer the prayer of every servant if that prayer is urgent. His mercy is vast, illimitable. He answers the prayers of all His servants. He answers the prayer of this plant. The plant prays potentially, "O God! Send me rain!" God answers the prayer, and the plant grows. God will answer anyone. He answers prayers potentially. . . . Did we not pray potentially for these needed blessings before we were created? When we came into this world, did we not find our prayers answered? Did we not find mother, father, food, light, home and every other necessity and blessing, although we did not actually ask for them? Therefore, it is natural that God will give to us when we ask Him. His mercy is all-encircling.

But we ask for things which the divine wisdom does not desire for us, and there is no answer to our prayer. His wisdom does not sanction what we wish. We pray, "O God! Make me wealthy!" If this prayer were universally answered, human affairs would be at a standstill. There would be none left to work in the streets, none to till the soil, none to build, none to run the trains. Therefore, it is evident that it would not be well for us if all prayers were answered. The affairs of the world would be interfered with, energies crippled and progress hindered. But whatever we ask for which is in accord with divine wisdom, God will answer. Assuredly!

For instance, a very feeble patient may ask the doctor to give him food which would be positively dangerous to his life and condition. He may beg for roast meat. The doctor is kind and wise. He knows it would be dangerous to his patient so he refuses to allow it. The doctor is merciful; the patient, ignorant. Through the doctor's kindness the patient recovers; his life is saved. Yet the patient may cry out that the doctor is unkind, not good, because he refuses to answer his pleading.

God is merciful. In His mercy He answers the prayers of all His servants when according to His supreme wisdom it is necessary.

(`Abdu'l-Bahá: *Promulgation of Universal Peace**, Pages: 246-7)

The wisdom of prayer is this: That it causeth a connection between the servant and the True One, because in that state (i.e., prayer) man with all heart and soul turneth his face towards His Highness the Almighty, seeking His association and desiring His love and compassion. The greatest happiness for a lover is to converse with his beloved, and the greatest gift for a seeker is to become familiar with the object of his longing; that is why with every soul who is attracted to the Kingdom of God, his greatest hope is to find an opportunity to entreat and supplicate before his Beloved, appeal for His mercy and grace and be immersed in the ocean of His utterance, goodness and generosity.

(`Abdu'l-Bahá, *Tablets of `Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 683-4)

It behooveth the servant to pray to and seek assistance from God, and to supplicate and implore His aid. Such becometh the rank of servitude, and the Lord will decree whatsoever He desireth, in accordance with His consummate wisdom.

(`Abdu'l-Bahá: *Spiritual Foundations: Prayer, Meditation, and the Devotional Attitude*, #25, P. 9)

In the highest prayer, men pray only for the love of God, not because they fear Him or hell, or hope for bounty or heaven. . . .When a man falls in love with a human being , it is impossible for him to keep from mentioning the name of his beloved. How much more difficult is it to keep from mentioning the name of God when one has come to love Him. . . .The spiritual man finds no delight in anything save in commemoration of God.

(Report of Abdul'-Baha's words, quoted in *Bahá'u'lláh and the New*

Era, p. 105, U.S. 1976 edition)



How Do We Pray?

Purpose: To gain a deeper understanding of the Bahá'í beliefs on how one should pray.

Workshop/Fireside/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. You may wish to use the prayer, “Praised be Thou, O Lord my God!” (*Bahá'í Prayers*, p. 124-5), or “Create in me a pure heart” (*Bahá'í Prayers*, p. 142-3).

Introduction

Begin by explaining to the guests that the purpose of the gathering is to explore the Bahá'í perspective on how to pray.

Power of Prayer video

Have the guests watch the video (or telecast), “The Power of Prayer.” (approximately 30 minutes)

Learning Experience

- Explain to the participants that together they will be looking to answer these questions:
 - How do we pray?
 - Is one method of praying preferable to another?
 - With what attitude should we approach prayer?

- Divide the group into three small groups, each taking one of the above questions. Have each group read the quotations with their question in mind, underlining pertinent ideas.

- Ask the groups to record, either by listing or in a more artistic way, their findings on small poster board. (see Materials Checklist for more details)

- Present the poster to the larger group.

- End by reading a short story of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá regarding how we should pray and discussing how ‘Abdu’l-Bahá taught someone to pray. Practice reading the story several times so that you can read it smoothly and with feeling, pausing in appropriate places.

➤ Ask participants to reflect again on their answers to the focus questions to consider how this story assists them to come to a deeper understanding of these concepts, and if they personally need to make adjustments in how they pray.

Closing

If the friends do not already have a copy of *The Light of Unity: The Power of Prayer* booklet, a small Bahá'í prayer book, or other printed materials, please offer them to the participants and invite them to investigate the Bahá'í Faith.

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

How Do We Pray?

Answer your assigned Focus Question:

- How do we pray?
- Is one method of praying preferable to another?
- With what attitude should we approach prayer?



. . . were a man to read a single verse with joy and radiance it would be better for him than to read with lassitude all the Holy Books of God. . . . Read ye the sacred verses in such measure that ye be not overcome by languor and despondency.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 73-4)

While praying it would be better to turn one's thoughts to the Manifestation as He continues, in the other world, to be our means of contact with the Almighty. We can, however, pray directly to God Himself.

(Shoghi Effendi: *Dawn of a New Day*, page 67)

The Guardian wishes me to assure you that he sees no objection to the friends coming together for meditation and prayer. Such a communion helps in fostering fellowship among the believers and as such is highly commendable.

(Shoghi Effendi: *Spiritual Foundations: Prayer, Meditation, and the Devotional Attitude*, #45, P. 15)

In regard to your question: we must not be rigid about praying; there is not a set of rules governing it; the main thing is we must start out with the right concept of God, the Manifestation, the Master, the Guardian- -we can turn, in thought, to anyone of them when we pray. For instance you can ask Bahá'u'lláh for something, or, thinking of Him, ask God for it. The same is true of the Master or the Guardian. You can turn in thought to either of them and then ask their intercession, or pray direct to God. As long as you don't confuse their stations, and make them all equal, it does not matter much how you orient your thoughts.

(Shoghi Effendi: *Spiritual Foundations: Prayer, Meditation, and the Devotional Attitude*, #55, P.18)

If you find you need to visualize someone when you pray, think of the Master. Through Him you can address Bahá'u'lláh. Gradually try to think of the qualities of the Manifestation, and in that way a mental form will fade out, for after all the body is not the thing, His Spirit is there and is the essential, everlasting element.

(Shoghi Effendi: *Directives of the Guardian*, page 59)

The reason why privacy hath been enjoined in moments of devotion is this, that thou mayest give thy best attention to the remembrance of God, that thy heart may at all times be animated with His Spirit, and not be shut out as by a veil from thy Best Beloved. Let not thy tongue pay lip service in praise of God while thy heart be not attuned to the exalted Summit of Glory, and the Focal Point of communion.

(The Báb: *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, Pages: 93-4)

The most acceptable prayer is the one offered with the utmost spirituality and radiance; its prolongation hath not been and is not beloved by God. The more detached and the purer the prayer, the more acceptable is it in the presence of God.

(The Báb: *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, Page: 78)

Of course prayer can be purely spontaneous, but many of the sentences and thoughts combined in Bahá'í writings of a devotional nature are easy to grasp, and the revealed Word is endowed with a power of its own. . . .

(Shoghi Effendi: *Unfolding Destiny*, Page: 154)



Story of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

When 'Abdu'l-Bahá was in New York, He called to Him an ardent Bahá'í and said, "If you will come to Me at dawn tomorrow, I will teach you to pray."

Delighted, Mr. M. arose at four and crossed the city, arriving for his lesson at six. With what exultant expectation he must have greeted this opportunity! He found 'Abdu'l-Bahá already at prayer, kneeling by the side of the bed. Mr. M. followed suit, taking care to place himself directly across.

Seeing that 'Abdu'l-Bahá was quite lost in His Own reverie, Mr. M. began to pray silently for his friends, his family and finally for the crowned heads of Europe. No word was uttered by the quiet Man before him. He went over all the prayers he knew then, and repeated them twice, three times--still no sound broke the expectant hush.

Mr. M. surreptitiously rubbed one knee and wondered vaguely about his back. He began again, hearing as he did so, the birds heralding the dawn outside the window. An hour passed, and finally two. Mr. M. was quite numb now. His eyes, roving along the wall, caught sight of a large crack. He dallied with a touch of indignation but let his gaze pass again to the still figure across the bed.

The ecstasy that he saw arrested him and he drank deeply of the sight. Suddenly he wanted to pray like that. Selfish desires were forgotten. Sorrow, conflict, and even his immediate surroundings were as if they had never been. He was conscious of only one thing, a passionate desire to draw near to God.

Closing his eyes again he set the world firmly aside and amazingly his heart teemed with prayer, eager, joyous, tumultuous prayer. He felt cleansed by humility and lifted by a new peace. 'Abdu'l-Bahá had taught him to pray!

The "Master of Akká" immediately arose and came to him. His eyes rested smilingly upon the newly humbled Mr. M. "When you pray," He said, "you must not think of your aching body, nor of the birds outside the window, nor of the cracks in the wall!"

He became very serious then, and added, "When you wish to pray you must first know that you are standing in the presence of the Almighty!"

(Vignettes from the Life of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, pp. 131-2)

Meditation and Prayer in One's Spiritual Life

Purpose: To explore the Bahá'í perspective on the role of meditation and prayer

Workshop/Fireside/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. You may wish to use the prayer, “From the sweet-scented streams of Thine eternity” (*Bahá'í Prayers*, p. 141-2).

Introduction

Begin by explaining to the guests that the purpose of the gathering is to look at the relationship between prayer and meditation.

Power of Prayer video

Have the guests watch the video (or telecast), “The Power of Prayer.” (approximately 30 minutes)

Learning Experience

➤ Explain to the participants that together they will be looking to answer these questions:

- What is meant by meditation in the Bahá'í Faith?
- What are the conditions necessary for meditation?
- What is the connection between prayer and meditation?
- What could be the results of meditation?

➤ Begin by asking the question, “What is meditation?” and “Why do people meditate?” Request participants to turn to someone near them and share their thoughts. Ask guests to form groups of three or four if there are a large number of people present.

➤ Share that the Bahá'í Faith suggests that one goal of meditation is to achieve that “. . . mystic feeling which unites Man with God. This state of spiritual communion can be brought about and maintained by means of meditation and prayer.” (Shoghi Effendi: *Directives of the Guardian*, Page: 86)

➤ Divide the group into small groups or pairs. After reading the quotations, respond to the focus questions.

➤ In the large group, invite each group to share their answers to the focus questions.

➤ Read a short story of Shoghi Effendi about prayer and meditation. Practice reading the story several times so that you can read it smoothly and with feeling, pausing in appropriate places.

➤ Have participants reflect on how to incorporate prayer and meditation into their regular spiritual practices.

Closing

Select some or all of the short verses for meditation from the Bahá'í Writings to use as a closing devotional program. Read the verses slowly and clearly, playing soft music between them to allow guests to quietly meditate on each verse.

Offer each guest a copy of the list of short verses for meditation on special paper for them to take home and use.

Meditation and Prayer in One's Spiritual Life

Focus Questions:

- What is meant by meditation in the Bahá'í Faith?
- What are the conditions necessary for meditation?
- What is the connection between prayer and meditation?
- What could be the results of meditation?



Do thou meditate on that which We have revealed unto thee, that thou mayest discover the purpose of God, thy Lord, and the Lord of all worlds. In these words the mysteries of Divine Wisdom have been treasured.

(Bahá'u'lláh: *Gleanings*, Page: 153)

. . . the sign of the intellect is contemplation and the sign of contemplation is silence, because it is impossible for a man to do two things at one time - he cannot both speak and meditate.

It is an axiomatic fact that while you meditate you are speaking with your own spirit. In that state of mind you put certain questions to your spirit and the spirit answers: the light breaks forth and the reality is revealed . . . Through the faculty of meditation man attains to eternal life; through it he receives the breath of the Holy Spirit - the bestowal of the Spirit is given in reflection and meditation.

The spirit of man is itself informed and strengthened during meditation; through it affairs of which man knew nothing are unfolded before his view. Through it he receives Divine inspiration, through it he receives heavenly food.

Meditation is the key for opening the doors of mysteries. In that state man abstracts himself: in that state man withdraws himself from all outside objects; in that subjective mood he is immersed in the ocean of spiritual life and can unfold the secrets of things-in-themselves. To illustrate this, think of man as endowed with two kinds of sight; when the power of insight is being used the outward power of vision does not see.

This faculty of meditation frees man from the animal nature, discerns the reality of things, puts man in touch with God.

This faculty brings forth from the invisible plane the sciences and arts. . . . Through this faculty man enters into the very Kingdom of God.

(`Abdu'l-Bahá: *Paris Talks**, Pages: 174-5)

Chant the Words of God and, pondering over their meaning, transform them into actions!

(`Abdu'l-Bahá: *The Importance of Deepening our Knowledge and Understanding of the Faith*, #51, Page 14)

. . . the core of religious faith is that mystic feeling which unites Man with God. This state of spiritual communion can be brought about and maintained by means of meditation and prayer. . . .The Bahá'í Faith, like all other Divine Religions, is thus fundamentally mystic in character. Its chief goal is the development of the individual and society, through the acquisition of spiritual virtues and powers. It is the soul of man which has first to be fed. And this spiritual nourishment prayer can best provide.

(Shoghi Effendi: *Directives of the Guardian*, Pages: 86-7)

There are no set forms of meditation prescribed in the teachings, no plan as such, for inner development. The friends are urged - nay enjoined - to pray, and they also should meditate, but the manner of doing the latter is left entirely to the individual."

(Shoghi Effendi: *Directives of the Guardian*, Page: 35)

Prayer and meditation are very important factors in deepening the spiritual life of the individual, but with them must go also action and example, as these are the tangible results of the former. Both are essential.

(Shoghi Effendi: *Spiritual Foundations: Prayer, Meditation, and the Devotional Attitude*, #51, P. 17)



Story of Shoghi Effendi

One day the Guardian said to a prominent pilgrim in Haifa, “Do you pray?” “Of course, beloved Guardian, I pray every morning.” “Do you meditate?” The man paused a bit and said slowly, “No, I guess I do not.” The Guardian replied that prayer is of no use without meditation and that meditation must be centered on the Writings. He continued very earnestly that meditation is of no use unless it is followed by action. He thus made clear another step to this most important process in the life of the soul.

The Guardian then explained further that meditation is not just sitting down, closing your eyes, keeping silent in a silent atmosphere, and being blank. That is not meditation. We must concentrate on the teachings, concentrate on their implications and how they can be used. Prayer is of no consequence if it remains the murmur of syllables and sounds—of what use is that? God knows already. We are not saying the prayers for God, we are saying them for our own selves. If the words do not strengthen us, if we do not reflect upon the Writings we read, if we do not make the Writings part of our daily action, we are wasting our time.

Shoghi Effendi, in a letter written on his behalf, makes clear that the “inspiration received through meditation is of a nature that one cannot measure or determine. God can inspire into our minds things that we had no previous knowledge of, if He desires to do so.”¹ In another letter written on his behalf, the Guardian emphasizes that “prayer and meditation are very important factors in deepening the spiritual life of the individual, but with them must go also action and example, as these are the tangible results of the former. Both are essential.”²

(Ruth Moffett, *Du'á: On Wings of Prayer*, p. 29)

¹ Letter on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual, 25 January 1943, cited in *Spiritual Foundations*, p. 17

² *ibid.*, 15 May 1944, p. 17

Short Verses for Meditation from the Writings of BAHÁ'U'LLÁH and 'Abdu'l-Bahá

- ✠ In the garden of thy heart plant naught but the rose of love . . .
(Bahá'u'lláh: *Persian Hidden Words*, Page: 3)
- ✠ Until love takes possession of the heart, no other divine bounty can be revealed in it.
(`Abdu'l-Bahá: *Promulgation of Universal Peace**, Page: 15)
- ✠ In the world of existence there is indeed no greater power than the power of love.
(`Abdu'l-Bahá: *Paris Talks**, Page: 179)
- ✠ Know ye not why We created you all from the same dust? That no one should exalt himself over the other.
(Bahá'u'lláh: *Arabic Hidden Words*, Page: 68)
- ✠ The well-being of mankind, its peace and security, are unattainable unless and until its unity is firmly established.
(Bahá'u'lláh: *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*: Other Sections, Page: 11)
- ✠ Through you the countenance of the world hath been wreathed in smiles, and the brightness of His light shone forth.
(Bahá'u'lláh: quoted in Shoghi Effendi: *The Advent of Divine Justice*, Page: 76)
- ✠ The purpose of God in creating man hath been, and will ever be, to enable him to know his Creator and to attain His Presence.
(Bahá'u'lláh: *Gleanings*, Page: 70)
- ✠ Verily God hath made adversity as a morning dew upon His green pasture, and a wick for His lamp which lighteth earth and heaven.
(Bahá'u'lláh: *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, Page: 17)
- ✠ Man is, in reality, a spiritual being, and only when he lives in the spirit is he truly happy.
(`Abdu'l-Bahá: *Paris Talks**, Page: 72)
- ✠ If we are not happy and joyous at this season, for what other season shall we wait and for what other time shall we look?
(`Abdu'l-Bahá: *Bahá'í World Faith**, Page: 351)

The Role of Prayer in Our Daily Lives

Purpose: To examine the conditions of prayer, how prayer is answered, and the role of prayer in our daily lives.

Workshop/Fireside/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. You may wish to use the prayer, “He is the prayer-hearing, prayer-answering God!” (*Bahá’í Prayers*, p. 147-9), or “O Thou Whose tests are a healing medicine” (*Bahá’í Prayers*, p. 191).

Introduction

Begin by explaining to the guests that the purpose of the gathering is to look at the role of prayer in our individual, daily lives.

Power of Prayer video

Have the guests watch the video (or telecast), “The Power of Prayer.” (approximately 30 minutes)

Learning Experience

- Begin by asking participants to find a picture, from carefully chosen magazine pictures available, that illustrates the role of prayer in their own lives. Share the picture and the role prayer plays with a partner. (See Materials Checklist for more details)
- Ask participants to brainstorm answers to these questions: What is prayer? What is not prayer?
- Many people do not have a lot of confidence in the power of prayer because they feel their prayers are not answered. Read the folk tale, “The Bejeweled Sword” and, time permitting, discuss the implications of the story.
- Explain that this workshop will try to look at what prayer really is, and the way prayers are answered.
- In small groups, read the following quotations, keeping these focus questions in mind:
 - How can we best prepare ourselves to pray?
 - What should we pray for?
 - How does God answer our prayers?

- After everyone has had a chance to read and discuss the quotations, bring the small groups together. Ask each participant to choose a new picture to illustrate how their views or perceptions have changed regarding the role of prayer in their personal lives.
- Share the two pictures along with an explanation of the change of perception with the rest of the group (optional). Some guests may prefer to keep their insights private.
- Spend a few moments in quiet reflection on how one can effectively use prayer in one's daily life.

Closing

Give each participant a copy of the small *The Light of Unity: The Power of Prayer* booklet or a small Bahá'í prayer book, and invite him or her to investigate the Bahá'í Faith.

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

The Bejeweled Sword

There was once a little child in Persia during the days of Persia's ancient glory. It was a custom in those days that whenever there was an important feast the people would share gifts with their friends and loved ones. So this little child prayed very hard and loudly for a bejeweled sword to be his gift.

At the time of the feast, this little boy was waiting eagerly to receive the sword he had prayed so hard for. However, the time passed and the feast was almost over and yet the child did not receive any sword as a gift. He was quite sad and disappointed.

His father, who never believed in God or in any kind of prayers, saw his son's disappointment and said, "My son, can't you see, your prayers were not answered?"

The son looked at his father and replied, "Oh yes father, my prayers were answered."

"How can that be?" asked the father in surprise. "You did not receive the bejeweled sword that you desired so much."

"But father, don't you understand?" said the child. "The answer is 'no.' God said 'no.'"

(A Persian Folk Tale, taken from *Thoughts—Education for Peace and One World*, compiled by Irene Taafaki, p. 212-3)

The Role of Prayer in Our Daily Lives

Focus Questions:

- How can we best prepare ourselves to pray?
- What should we pray for?
- How does God answer our prayers?



"In the Bahá'í Cause arts, sciences and all crafts are (counted as) worship. . . . Briefly, all effort and exertion put forth by man from the fullness of his heart is worship, if it is prompted by the highest motives and the will to do service to humanity. This is worship: to serve mankind and to minister to the needs of the people. Service is prayer. . . ."

(Abdu'l-Bahá: *Paris Talks*, pp. 176-7)

So long as the thoughts of an individual are scattered he will achieve no results, but if his thinking be concentrated on a single point wonderful will be the fruits thereof.

One cannot obtain the full force of the sunlight when it is cast on a flat mirror, but once the sun shineth upon a concave mirror, or on a lens that is convex, all its heat will be concentrated on a single point, and that one point will burn the hottest. Thus is it necessary to focus one's thinking on a single point so that it will become an effective force.

(Abdu'l-Bahá: *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, Pages: 110-11)

He, verily, shall increase the reward of them that endure with patience . . . Blessed are the steadfastly enduring, they that are patient under ills and hardships, who lament not over anything that befall them, and who tread the path of resignation. . . .

(Bahá'u'lláh: *Gleanings*, Page: 129)

It is the spirit behind the words which is really important.

(16 March 1946 to an individual believer, Shoghi Effendi: *Spiritual Foundations: Prayer, Meditation, and the Devotional Attitude*, #54, Page 18)

Verily the Will of God acts sometimes in a way for which mankind is unable to find out the reason. The causes and reasons shall appear. Trust in God and confide in Him, and resign thyself to the Will of God.

(Esslemont, 'Abdu'l-Bahá quoted in *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era*, p. 110)

My calamity is My providence, outwardly it is fire and vengeance, but inwardly it is light and mercy.

(Bahá'u'lláh: *Arabic Hidden Words*, Page: 51)

Ask not of Me that which We desire not for thee, then be content with what We have ordained for thy sake, for this is that which profiteth thee, if therewith thou dost content thyself.

(Bahá'u'lláh: *Arabic Hidden Words*, Page: 18)

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

(From a letter dated 22 August 1957 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi: *Guidelines for Teaching*, Page: 325)

But we ask for things which the divine wisdom does not desire for us, and there is no answer to our prayer. His wisdom does not sanction what we wish. We pray, "O God! Make me wealthy!" If this prayer were universally answered, human affairs would be at a standstill. There would be none left to work in the streets, none to till the soil, none to build, none to run the trains. Therefore, it is evident that it would not be well for us if all prayers were answered. The affairs of the world would be interfered with, energies crippled and progress hindered. But whatever we ask for which is in accord with divine wisdom, God will answer. Assuredly!

(`Abdu'l-Bahá: *Promulgation of Universal Peace**, Pages: 246-7)

. . . O thou who hast surrendered thy will to God! By self-surrender and perpetual union with God is meant that men should merge their will wholly in the Will of God, and regard their desires as utter nothingness beside His Purpose. Whatsoever the Creator commandeth His creatures to observe, the same must they diligently, and with the utmost joy and eagerness, arise and fulfill. They should in no wise allow their fancy to obscure their judgment, neither should they regard their own imaginings as the voice of the Eternal.

(Bahá'u'lláh: *Gleanings*, Page: 337)



The Power of Prayer

Purpose: To provide an intergenerational experience (for all ages) that illustrates the power of prayer.

Workshop/Fireside/Meeting
For all ages--intergenerational
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. You may wish to use the prayer, “O God! Refresh and gladden my spirit” (*Bahá’í Prayers*, p. 152), or “O my God! O my God! Unite the hearts of Thy servants” (*Bahá’í Prayers*, p. 204)

Introduction

Begin by explaining to the guests that the purpose of the gathering is to experience the Bahá’í perspective on prayer—communing with God.

Power of Prayer video

Have the guests watch the video (or telecast), “The Power of Prayer.” (approximately 30 minutes)

Learning Experience

- Explain to the participants that this workshop is designed for **all members of the human family: children, youth, and adults**. Together they will experience the joy of praying together.
- Distribute copies of the brief compilation on prayer and read together in the large group, pausing after each quotation, so that everyone can have the same general understanding of what Bahá’í prayer is and can keep these quotations in mind while working on their assignment.

Compilation on Prayer



Spirit has influence: prayer has spiritual effect.

(Abdu'l-Bahá, *Promulgation of Universal Peace*., page 246)

God is merciful. In His mercy He answers the prayers of all His servants when according to His supreme wisdom it is necessary.

(Abdu'l-Bahá, *Promulgation of Universal Peace*., page 247)

It behooveth the servant to pray to and seek assistance from God, and to supplicate and implore His aid.

(Abdu'l-Bahá: *Spiritual Foundations: Prayer, Meditation, and the Devotional Attitude*, #25, Page 9)

The Guardian . . . sees no objection to the friends coming together for meditation and prayer. Such a communion helps in fostering fellowship among the believers . . .

(Shoghi Effendi: *Spiritual Foundations: Prayer, Meditation, and the Devotional Attitude*, #45, Page 15)

. . . we must not be rigid about praying; there is not a set of rules governing it; the main thing is we must start out with the right concept of God . . .

(Shoghi Effendi: *Spiritual Foundations: Prayer, Meditation, and the Devotional Attitude*, #55, Page 18)

The most acceptable prayers is the one offered with the utmost spirituality and radiance.

(The Báb: *Selections from the Báb*, page 78)



- Divide the group into three groups: the music group, the eloquent speech group, and the art group.
- Ask each group to read aloud the quotation on their specific handout page.
- Each group will be responsible for the following instructions:

Music--Select one or both prayers to perform musically or select background music while the prayer(s) are being read, or select a prayer to be sung that can be taught to others in the group.

Art--Select one or both prayers that can be artistically represented. This group may want to make small, individual renderings for everyone present, or one large poster.

Eloquent Speech--Select one or both prayers (or any others) that each person can practice reading or reciting eloquently.

- These prayers will be presented for the closing devotions using the specific form assigned to their group. Allow each group time (about 20-30 minutes) to develop their portion of the closing devotions.
- The facilitator will sequence the order of the presentations, the content of which forms the closing devotions. Remind the participants of the importance of instilling prayer in one's family life.

Closing

Each group will participate in the closing devotions which should be reverent, dignified, and diverse in content.

Give each participant a copy of the small *The Light of Unity: The Power of Prayer* booklet or a small prayer book, and invite them to investigate the Bahá'í Faith.

Quotation for the Music Group

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

(Bahá'u'lláh: *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, Page: 38)

Assignment: Select one or both of the prayers to put to music, or select background music to listen to while the prayer(s) are being read.

O Thou kind Lord! Make these children excellent plants. Let them grow and develop in the Garden of Thy Covenant, and bestow freshness and beauty through the outpourings of the clouds of the Abhá Kingdom.

O Thou kind Lord! I am a little child, exalt me by admitting me to the kingdom. I am earthly, make me heavenly; I am of the world below, let me belong to the realm above; gloomy, suffer me to become radiant; material, make me spiritual, and grant that I may manifest Thine infinite bounties.

Thou art the Powerful, the All-loving.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Bahá’í Prayers*, p. 36-7)



O God! Refresh and gladden my spirit. Purify my heart. Illumine my powers. I lay all my affairs in Thy hand. Thou art my Guide and my Refuge. I will no longer be sorrowful and grieved; I will be a happy and joyful being. O God! I will no longer be full of anxiety, nor will I let trouble harass me. I will not dwell on the unpleasant things of life.

O God! Thou art more friend to me than I am to myself. I dedicate myself to Thee, O Lord.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Bahá’í Prayers*, p. 152)



Quotation for the Eloquent Speech Group

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

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, page 150)

Assignment: Select one or both of the prayers to be recited eloquently:

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

Thou art the Bountiful, the All-Loving.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Bahá’í Prayers*, p. 36)



O my God! O my God! This, Thy servant, hath advanced towards Thee, is passionately wandering in the desert of Thy love, walking in the path of Thy service, anticipating Thy favors, hoping for Thy bounty, relying upon Thy kingdom, and intoxicated by the wine of Thy gift. O my God! Increase the fervor of his affection for Thee, the constancy of his praise of Thee, and the ardor of his love for Thee.

Verily, Thou art the Most Generous, the Lord of grace abounding. There is no other God but Thee, the Forgiving, the Merciful.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Bahá’í Prayers*, p. 153-4)



Quotation for the Art Group

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

(Shoghi Effendi: *The Arts*, Page: 7 in *Compilation of Compilations*, vol. 1)

Assignment: Select one or both of the prayers and use art to represent the prayer(s):

O Lord! Make this youth radiant, and confer Thy bounty upon this poor creature. Bestow upon him knowledge, grant him added strength at the break of every morn and guard him within the shelter of Thy protection so that he may be freed from error, may devote himself to the service of Thy Cause, may guide the wayward, lead the hapless, free the captives and awaken the heedless, that all may be blessed with Thy remembrance and praise. Thou art the Mighty and the Powerful.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Bahá’í Prayers*, p. 38-9)



O my Lord! O my Lord! This is a lamp lighted by the fire of Thy love and ablaze with the flame which is ignited in the tree of Thy mercy. O my Lord! Increase his enkindlement, heat and flame, with the fire which is kindled in the Sinai of Thy Manifestation. Verily, Thou art the Confirmer, the Assister, the Powerful, the Generous, the Loving.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Bahá’í Prayers*, p. 153)



*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