

TO KNOW ABOUT THE LIFE OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ

THE YOUTH OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ

**SPIRITUAL QUALITIES RELEVANT TO THIS TOPIC:
SERVICE, COURAGE, HUMILITY**

We have made Thee a shelter for all mankind, a shield unto all who are in heaven and on earth, a stronghold for whosoever hath believed in God, the Incomparable, the All-Knowing. God grant that through Thee He may protect them, may enrich and sustain them, that He may inspire Thee with that which shall be a wellspring of wealth unto all created things, an ocean of bounty unto all men, and the dayspring of mercy unto all peoples.

Bahá'u'lláh, quoted by Shoghi Effendi in *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 135

Through all those months of travel, upheaval and discomfort ‘Abdu’l-Bahá served indefatigably. Increasingly He shouldered the burden of all domestic cares for Bahá'u'lláh's household and also saw to the welfare of the other exiles.

Mary Perkins, *Servant of the Glory*, pp. 32-33

LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES



KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVES

- To know the events of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s life during His stay in Baghdád with His Father
- To be familiar with the challenges faced by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá during His youth
- To know about the special relationship between Bahá’u’lláh and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Share stories of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s life in Baghdád, His services to His Father upon Bahá’u’lláh’s return from the wilderness of Sulaymáníyyih and during Their subsequent exiles.
- Study ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s relationship with His Father. Consult in groups to identify the various aspects of this relationship.
- Assist the class to research, write about and illustrate specific ways ‘Abdu’l-Bahá served Bahá’u’lláh and the Holy Family during His youth.



WISDOM OBJECTIVE

- To understand the role and responsibilities of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá during the period of His youth

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Tell stories of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s visits to mosques and the way in which He discussed religious questions with the theologians of His time.
- Discuss and imagine how ‘Abdu’l-Bahá might have received children during this period.
- Reflect upon the challenges of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá during this period and list the virtues demonstrated by Him to overcome these challenges.
- Invite the students to imagine that they meet ‘Abdu’l-Bahá while visiting Bahá’u’lláh. They can write about what this experience would be like, or they can dramatize it through acting, movement or mime. Remember not to portray any members of the Holy Family.



SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION OBJECTIVE

- To learn from examples of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s youth how to deal with the many needs and demands of other people

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Invite the students to role-play situations from their own lives to show how they think ‘Abdu’l-Bahá would want them to respond.
- Encourage the students to read prayers daily for the acquisition of spiritual qualities.
- Invite the friends to share situations from their lives when they have helped to meet the needs of others, and vice versa.
- As a group, reflect upon and discuss how ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s example influences the students’ interactions with other people.
- Ask the students to interview family members and friends to gather examples of how ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s example has helped them in their interactions with others.



ELOQUENT SPEECH OBJECTIVES

- To emulate ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s methods of creating unity among those who hold contrary opinions to one’s own
- To emulate the example of service set by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá during His youth
- To engage in forms of service that promote unity, happiness, and harmonious functioning in one’s family and community

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Teach the students how to recognize the needs of other individuals. Then plan and implement a special initiative which will develop those qualities of caring exemplified by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.
- Ask the students to prepare and serve refreshments at a Feast or a Holy Day celebration.
- Provide opportunities for students to express ways that they can promote unity.
- Encourage students to memorize prayers for the acquisition of spiritual qualities.
- Encourage the students to study and memorize quotations from the Tablets of the Báb, as ‘Abdu’l-Bahá did during His Father’s sojourn into the mountains.

GOAL: To KNOW ABOUT THE LIFE OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ

TOPIC: THE YOUTH OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ

Sample Activities

ACTIVITY: EXILE FROM TIHRÁN TO BAGHDÁD

KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVES: To know the events of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s life during His stay in Baghdád with His Father; To be familiar with the challenges faced by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá during His youth

SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION OBJECTIVE: To recognize how one can deal with the needs and demands of others, from the examples of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s youth

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS: Engage the mind and heart; Use of research; Use of art; Study of the Writings

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 45 MIN.

In Advance:

- make copies of the quotations for each student, p. 36-37 of this Lesson Planning Guide
- make one sample of a completed book, as described below

Materials Needed:

- framed photograph of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in His youth
- flour, water, salt (one cup of each)
- strips of paper, 6" x 18"
- cardboard pieces, 5" x 6.5" (two per student)
- glue sticks
- assorted wrapping paper

1. Display a framed photograph of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá as a young Man, as you introduce the topic of learning. Explain that the story of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s youth begins when, at the age of nine, His childhood was turned upside down with the sudden imprisonment of His Father, Bahá’u’lláh, in the dungeon of Síyáh-Chál.
2. Begin to share the story of the events from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s youth. Unless otherwise cited, the following story of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s youth, continued throughout the next several lessons, is summarized from the sources cited on p. 38.
3. Pause to carry out an activity: Allow the students to assist you in making a dough. Mix together one cup flour, one cup water and one cup salt – which was supposed to be the sugar! Invite each student to taste the resulting dough, then continue the story:
4. Discuss the reaction of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and His sister: what does their eating the bad-tasting dough – without complaint – tell you about their love for their mother? What could one learn from this example, to use in one’s own life?

Bahá’u’lláh, His Family and friends were sent away from their homeland of Persia, on a 3-month journey to the far-away city of Bagdad. They traveled through the mountains in winter, when temperatures dropped to 38° below zero. Nine-year old ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had on only a lightweight robe.

At one point in their journey, ‘Asíyih Khánum (‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s mother) wanted to make a little sweet cake for Bahá’u’lláh, who was still very ill and weak from His imprisonment. In the dark, she mistook salt for sugar...

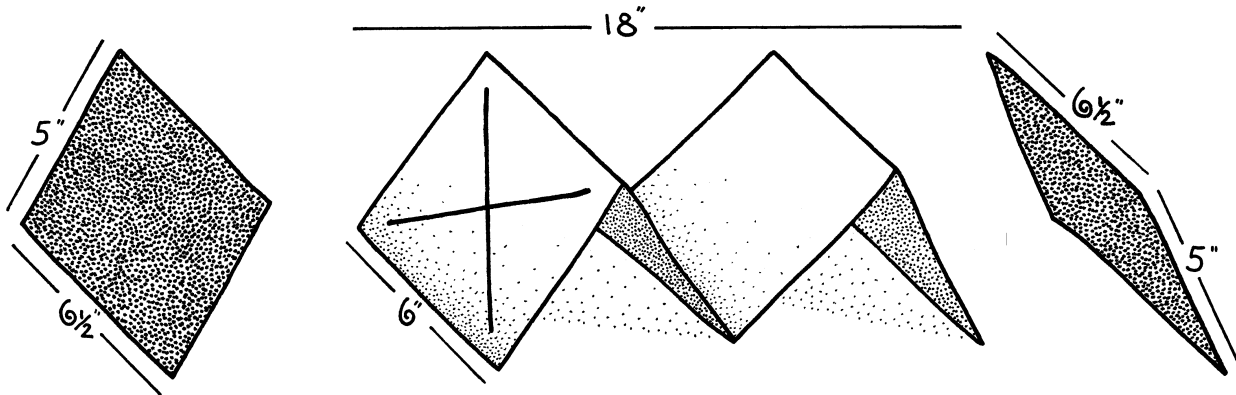
GOAL: TO KNOW ABOUT THE LIFE OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ
TOPIC: THE YOUTH OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ

5. Distribute copies of this remembrance by Bahíyyih Khánúm. Ask a student to read aloud:

“My father was very ill. The chains had left his neck galled, raw and much swollen. My mother, who was pregnant, was unaccustomed to hardships, and was worried and harassed over our recent trials and the uncertainty of our fate...We were all insufficiently clothed, and suffered keenly from exposure. My brother in particular was very thinly clad. Riding upon a horse, his feet, ankles, hands, and wrists were much exposed to the cold, which was so severe that they became frost-bitten, swollen and caused him great pain.”

quoted by Phelps, pp. 19-21

6. Introduce the books they will make about ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s youth, and show your completed book as an example. Instruct the students to each fold a 6" x 18" paper accordion-style, so that there are four sections. Place these papers on a table so that two folds face up and one faces down. Mark an “X” on each of the end sections that are face-up – these will be glued to the covers when books are assembled. Instruct the class not to write on or decorate those pages. The first usable page of the book is the second section from the left, next to the X-marked section on the far left.



7. Suggest that the students title their first page “Exile to Baghdád.” Direct them to affix the above quotation from Bahíyyih Khánúm on that page (see page 37), and to either write a summary of the Holy Family’s journey or draw a picture depicting that journey, in that same section. Remind the class that we show our love and respect for the Holy Family by drawing symbols of their actions, not representations of their persons.
8. Next make the book covers. Invite each student to choose wrapping paper or cloth to cover both pieces of cut poster board, using glue or a glue stick to attach. One side of each board should be fully, neatly covered – the back side may have overlapping edges, as these will be covered when the book is assembled.
9. Write the title of the book on nice paper. Then mount this paper on one of the covered boards, as the book’s cover. Keep students’ covers and accordion-paper together for completion during the next lesson.

GOAL: TO KNOW ABOUT THE LIFE OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ

TOPIC: THE YOUTH OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ

ACTIVITY: YEARS IN BAGHDÁD

KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVE: To know about the special relationship between Bahá’u’lláh and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

WISDOM OBJECTIVE: To understand the role and responsibilities of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION OBJECTIVE: To recognize how one can deal with the needs and demands of other people from the examples of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s youth

ELOQUENT SPEECH OBJECTIVE: To engage in service activities inspired by the examples set by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá during His youth

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS: Engage the mind and heart; Use of art; Study of the Writings

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 45 MIN.

Materials Needed:

- materials for creating books, from prior lesson
- hardcover copy of *Kitáb-i-Iqán*
- writing paper and pencil or pen, for each child
- chart paper or chalkboard
- photocopies of selected quotations, p. 36-37 of this Lesson Planning Guide

1. Continue the story of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s youth:

While in Baghdad, Bahá’u’lláh’s half-brother, Mírzá Yahyá, created much strife among the little band of Bábís. Bahá’u’lláh, wishing not to be the source of disunity, abruptly left home, without telling even His Family, and went to live alone in the mountains of Sulaymáníyyih for two years.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, age 10, Who had fully recognized Bahá’u’lláh as God’s promised One, was overcome with grief at His Father’s disappearance.

2. Distribute this remembrance by Bahíyyih Khánum, asking one student to read it aloud:

“...my brother was deeply attached to his father; this attachment seemed to strengthen with his growth. After our father’s departure he fell into great despondency. He would go away by himself, and, when sought for, be found weeping, often falling into such paroxysms of grief that no one could console him. His chief occupation at this time was copying and committing to memory the tablets of the Báb. The childhood and youth of my brother was, in fact, in all respects unusual...Horseback riding was the only diversion of which he was fond; in that he became proficient.”

quoted by Phelps, p. 25

3. Discuss the story: What do ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s grief, His prayers and His efforts to find His Father tell you about the bond between Him and Bahá’u’lláh?

4. Invite the students to prepare page two of their booklets, on the page immediately to the right of page one. Suggest that they title this page “Bahá’u’lláh in the mountains of Sulaymáníyyih.” Encourage them to affix the remembrance by Bahíyyih Khánum, and add a summary or illustration of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s life during His Father’s absence.

5. Continue the story:

‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s formal schooling had ended with His Father’s imprisonment in the Síyáh-Chál, at age 9. After that, He had occasional lessons with His mother, His uncle Mírzá Músá, and with His Father. Nabíl has recorded Bahá’u’lláh’s explanation of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s powers of comprehension:

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Read the following quotation:

“The essence of the Most Great Branch is indicative of the essence of God...The Most Great Branch effortlessly comprehends scientific matters and perceives realities which others are incapable of fathoming; even as the Báb, Who, with only a few pages of practice, was able to produce such exquisite handwriting, and although He spent no more than a few days in school, prolific was the divine knowledge which flowed from His heart. In the same way, as soon as some aspect of knowledge comes to the attention of the Most Great Branch, He comprehends it to a degree that no scholar, however competent, can ever match.”

Nabíl, quoted by Furútan, pp. 25-26

6. Continue the story:

In His early teens, the Master (as Bahá’u’lláh now called ‘Abdu’l-Bahá) took on the role of being a shield of protection for His Beloved Father. He also had the task of supervising the routine work and daily activities of the large household.

7. Discuss the story: What responsibilities do we shoulder – at home, at school, and in the community? List the students’ responses on chart paper. How do these compare to the duties ‘Abdu’l-Bahá took on at their ages? Ask students to consider what additional tasks they may be ready for, especially those relating to serving the Faith in their community and teaching the Faith to others. Encourage their pledges of service, and provide the necessary support outside of class.
8. Display, and pass around reverently, a hard-cover copy of the *Kitáb-i-Íqán*. Explain that this book was revealed by Bahá’u’lláh in less than 48 hours, during His stay in Baghdád. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was 15 years old at the time, and had begun serving as His Father’s secretary. It was He Who later transcribed the *Kitáb-i-Íqán* by hand, when He was 18 years old. There still exists a copy of the original book, in ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s own calligraphy.



9. Provide sheets of paper and pens or pencils. Invite the students to copy accurately and carefully the words from one page of this Book.
10. Again display the *Kitáb-i-Íqán* and ask them to reflect upon ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s careful attention to accurately transcribe Bahá’u’lláh’s Words.
11. Invite students to create the next page in their booklet by turning the paper strip over: all sections on this side will be used. Page three will be at the far left on this side.
12. Encourage the class to title this page “Service in Baghdád.” Each should affix the statement by Bahá’u’lláh about “the essence of the Most Great Branch” (see p. 37) on this page, and summarize or illustrate ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s duties.

GOAL: TO KNOW ABOUT THE LIFE OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ

TOPIC: THE YOUTH OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ

ACTIVITY: EXILE TO CONSTANTINOPLE

KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVES: To become familiar with the challenges faced by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá during His youth; To know about the special relationship between Bahá’u’lláh and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

WISDOM OBJECTIVE: To understand the role and responsibilities of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá during the period of His youth

SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION OBJECTIVE: To recognize how one can deal with the needs and demands of others from the examples of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s youth

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS: Engage the mind and heart; Use of music; Use of art; Use of research; Study of the Writings

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 15 MIN.

Materials Needed:

- materials for creating books, from prior lesson
- song, “Garden of Ridván,” from album *Lote Tree* or other music

1. Continue the story of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s youth:

After ten years in Baghdad, the jealous leaders decided to send Bahá’u’lláh and His followers even further away from Persia, this time to Constantinople. So many people were sad to hear Bahá’u’lláh was leaving, and wanted to come to give their respects. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá rented a garden, on an island in the River Tigris, which runs through the city of Baghdád, where Bahá’u’lláh could receive visitors.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá and His brothers were in the boat with Bahá’u’lláh as it crossed the Tigris, and were present when Bahá’u’lláh first declared His Mission. We now remember this event as the First Day of Ridván, the Most Holy Festival.

2. Pause to remember that Day by listening to the song, “Garden of Ridván” on *Lote Tree*.
3. Continue the story:

Throughout the 3-month journey to Constantinople, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá tried always to ride beside His Father’s howdah. The 19-year old ‘Abdu’l-Bahá became the Blessed Beauty’s attendant, servant and bodyguard. The trip was utterly exhausting, especially for ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Who had also taken on the job of arranging food for all the travelers, including fodder for the 36 pack animals.

4. Distribute this remembrance from Bahíyyih Khánum, and ask one student to read it aloud:

“He guarded him day and night...riding by his wagon and watching near his tent. He thus had little sleep, and being young, became extremely weary. His horse was Arab and very fine, and so wild and spirited that no other man could mount him, but under my brother’s hand as gentle and docile as a lamb. In order to get a little rest, he adopted the plan of riding swiftly a considerable distance ahead of the caravan, when, dismounting and causing the horse to lie down, he would throw himself on the ground and place his head on his horse’s neck. So he would sleep until the cavalcade came up, when his horse would awake him by a kick and he would remount.”

quoted by Phelps, pp. 39-41

5. Invite the students to make the next page in the booklet of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s youth, to the right of page three. Encourage them to title it “Journey to Constantinople.” Each student should affix the above quotation (see p. 37), and summarize or illustrate the events of Bahá’u’lláh’s Declaration in the Garden of Ridván, and/or the long journey.

GOAL: TO KNOW ABOUT THE LIFE OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ
TOPIC: THE YOUTH OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ

ACTIVITY: EXILE TO ADRIANOPE

KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVES: To be familiar with the challenges faced by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá during His youth;
To know about the special relationship between Bahá’u’lláh and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

WISDOM OBJECTIVE: To understand the role and responsibilities of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá during the period of His youth

SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION OBJECTIVE: To recognize how one can deal with the needs and demands of others, from the examples of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s youth

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS: Engage the mind and heart; Study of the Writings; Use of art

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 20 MIN.

Materials Needed:

- materials for creating books, from prior lesson
- assorted ribbon for finishing books

1. Continue the story of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s youth:

After only four months in Constantinople, the authorities again exiled Bahá’u’lláh and His family and followers, this time to Adrianople, now known as Edirne. They were forced to leave Constantinople in the dead of winter, at a time of unusually severe cold. The little band traveled 12 days through snow and ice and bitter winds, again with inadequate clothing, food or shelter. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s feet froze again. He carried the scars of frostbite for the rest of His life.

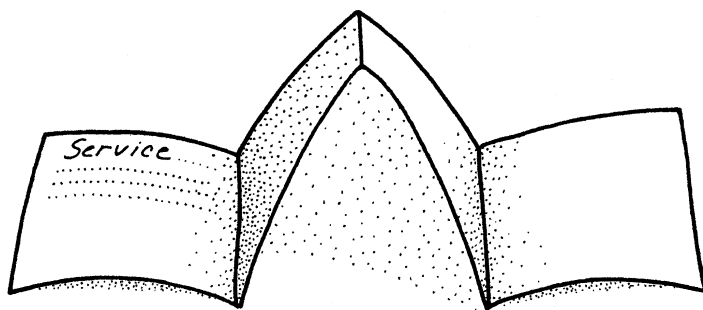
2. Share copies of this remembrance of Bahíyyih Khánum; read aloud:

“Our family, numbering eleven persons, was lodged in a house of three rooms just outside the city...It was like a prison; without comforts and surrounded by a guard of soldiers. Our only food was the prison fare...which was unsuitable for the children and the sick.

“That winter was a period of intense suffering, due to cold, hunger and, above all, to the torments of vermin, with which the house was swarming. These made even the days horrible, and the nights still more so. When they were so intolerable that it was impossible to sleep, my brother would light a lamp (which somewhat intimidated the vermin) and by singing and laughing seek to restore the spirits of the family.”

quoted by Phelps, p. 48

3. Ask students to imagine they were all living in such horrible conditions. Invite each person, in turn, to find some way to lift the spirits of the group, as ‘Abdu’l-Bahá did. Encourage each student to increase the group’s humor, through telling a joke or leading a song for all to sing together. Increase the joy!
4. Create page five of the booklets: “Journey to Adrianople.” Invite the friends to include the above story from Bahíyyih Khánum, as well as illustrations or written descriptions of the Holy Family’s winter travel.



ACTIVITY CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE >

EXILE TO ADRIANOPE, CONTINUED

5. Finish the story:

Bahá'u'lláh and the believers spent five years in Adrianople, during which time His Revelation flowed out unceasingly. Mírzá Yahyá's evil intentions intensified, as he twice tried to poison Bahá'u'lláh, and claimed that he, himself, had a revelation from God to succeed the Báb. Finally, Bahá'u'lláh had to completely cut the primal bonds of family ties between them. He announced the Most Great Separation between Himself and Yahyá and Yahyá's followers.

6. In Adrianople, Bahá'u'lláh also for the first time alluded to the unique station which His Son, ‘Abdu'l-Bahá, was destined to assume, as He wrote the Tablet of the Branch. Distribute copies of the Tablet, see p. 37, and read it aloud.

“There hath branched from the Sadratu'l-Muntahá this sacred and glorious Being, this Branch of Holiness; well is it with him that hath sought His shelter and abideth beneath His shadow. Verily the limb of the Law of God hath sprung forth from this Root which God hath firmly implanted in the Ground of His Will, and Whose Branch hath been so uplifted as to encompass the whole of creation. Magnified be He, therefore, for this sublime, this blessed, this mighty, this exalted Handiwork! “...Render thanks unto God, O people, for His appearance; for verily He is the most great Favour unto you, the most perfect bounty upon you; and through Him every mouldering bone is quickened. Whoso turneth towards Him hath turned towards God, and whoso turneth away from Him hath turned away from My Beauty, hath repudiated My Proof, and transgressed against Me.

He is the Trust of God amongst you, His charge within you, His manifestation unto you and His appearance among His favored servants...We have sent Him down in the form of a human temple. Blest and sanctified be God Who createth whatsoever He willeth through His inviolable, His infallible decree. They who deprive themselves of the shadow of the Branch, are lost in the wilderness of error, are consumed by the heat of worldly desires, and are of those who will assuredly perish.”

Bahá'u'lláh, quoted by Shoghi Effendi in *World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 135

7. To complete their booklets, invite the students to affix this selection from the Tablet of the Branch on the final empty page. Encourage them to decorate a border around this passage.
8. To attach the covers, first choose two 12" lengths of ribbon or raffia for the ties. Lay the book so that the side with the two blank end sections faces up. Liberally apply white glue on the left-side blank section. Place one end of a ribbon in the center of this section, with the remainder of the ribbon extending to the left of the book. Take the book cover, with title facing up, and press firmly down on the glue-covered section, so that the ribbon is attached in-between the cover and the book itself. Repeat this process with the back cover, on the blank section at the right, with the other ribbon extending out to the right.
9. When fully dry, close up the books and tie closed with the ribbons.

GOAL: TO KNOW ABOUT THE LIFE OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ
TOPIC: THE YOUTH OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ

ACTIVITY: SHARING ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ’S EXAMPLE WITH OTHERS

ELOQUENT SPEECH OBJECTIVES: To use the example of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s youth in developing methods of creating unity among those who hold opinions contrary to one’s own; To explain events of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s youth in teaching the Cause

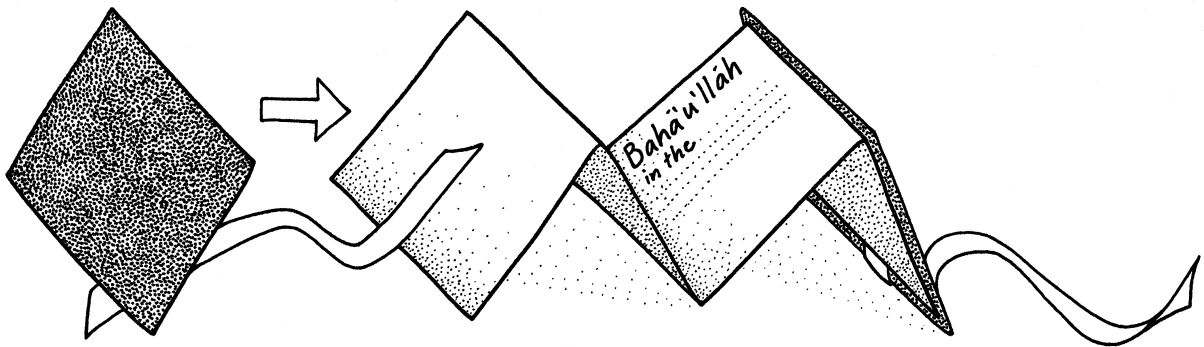
INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS: Engage the mind and heart; Use of consultation; Peer teaching

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY 10 MIN.

Materials Needed:

- booklet created in previous activities

1. Encourage students to choose a special place in which to keep their books about the youth of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, and to turn to it for inspiration when they face challenges in their own lives. Suggest that re-reading the accounts of the difficulties He faced, and how He faced them, may give reassurance when life seems difficult.
2. Assign the students to share their booklets with at least one other person before the next class session. At that session invite the students to describe how they used their books, and the listeners’ response.



Resource Pages

Quotations for the book of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s youth

1

My father was very ill. The chains had left his neck galled, raw and much swollen. My mother, who was pregnant, was unaccustomed to hardships, and was worried and harassed over our recent trials and the uncertainty of our fate... We were all insufficiently clothed, and suffered keenly from exposure. My brother in particular was very thinly clad. Riding upon a horse, his feet, ankles, hands, and wrists were much exposed to the cold, which was so severe that they became frost-bitten, swollen and caused him great pain.

– Bahíyyih Khánum

2

...my brother was deeply attached to his father; this attachment seemed to strengthen with his growth. After our father’s departure he fell into great despondency. He would go away by himself, and, when sought for, be found weeping, often falling into such paroxysms of grief that no one could console him. His chief occupation at this time was copying and committing to memory the tablets of the Báb. The childhood and youth of my brother was, in fact, in all respects unusual... Horseback riding was the only diversion of which he was fond; in that he became proficient.

– Bahíyyih Khánum

3

The essence of the Most Great Branch is indicative of the essence of God...The Most Great Branch effortlessly comprehends scientific matters and perceives realities which others are incapable of fathoming; even as the Báb, Who, with only a few pages of practice, was able to produce such exquisite handwriting, and although He spent no more than a few days in school, prolific was the divine knowledge which flowed from His heart. In the same way, as soon as some aspect of knowledge comes to the attention of the Most Great Branch, He comprehends it to a degree that no scholar, however competent, can ever match.

– Nabil

4

He guarded him day and night...riding by his wagon and watching near his tent. He thus had little sleep, and being young, became extremely weary. His horse was Arab and very fine, and so wild and spirited that no other man could mount him, but under my brother's hand as gentle and docile as a lamb. In order to get a little rest, he adopted the plan of riding swiftly a considerable distance ahead of the caravan, when, dismounting and causing the horse to lie down, he would throw himself on the ground and place his head on his horse's neck. So he would sleep until the cavalcade came up, when his horse would awake him by a kick and he would remount.

– Bahíyyih Khánúm

5

Our family, numbering eleven persons, was lodged in a house of three rooms just outside the city...It was like a prison; without comforts and surrounded by a guard of soldiers. Our only food was the prison fare...which was unsuitable for the children and the sick.

That winter was a period of intense suffering, due to cold, hunger and, above all, to the torments of vermin, with which the house was swarming. These made even the days horrible, and the nights still more so. When they were so intolerable that it was impossible to sleep, my brother would light a lamp (which somewhat intimidated the vermin) and by singing and laughing seek to restore the spirits of the family.

– Bahíyyih Khánúm

Tablet of the Branch

There hath branched from the Sadratu'l-Muntahá this sacred and glorious Being, this Branch of Holiness; well is it with him that hath sought His shelter and abideth beneath His shadow. Verily the limb of the Law of God hath sprung forth from this Root which God hath firmly implanted in the Ground of His Will, and Whose Branch hath been so uplifted as to encompass the whole of creation. Magnified be He, therefore, for this sublime, this blessed, this mighty, this exalted Handiwork!

...Render thanks unto God, O people, for His appearance; for verily He is the most great Favour unto you, the most perfect bounty upon you; and through Him every mouldering bone is quickened. Whoso turneth towards Him hath turned towards God, and whoso turneth away from Him hath turned away from My Beauty, hath repudiated My Proof, and transgressed against Me. He is the Trust of God amongst you, His charge within you, His manifestation unto you and His appearance among His favored servants...We have sent Him down in the form of a human temple. Blest and sanctified be God Who createth whatsoever He willeth through His inviolable, His infallible decree. They who deprive themselves of the shadow of the Branch, are lost in the wilderness of error, are consumed by the heat of worldly desires, and are of those who will assuredly perish.

-- Bahá'u'lláh

GOAL: TO KNOW ABOUT THE LIFE OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ

TOPIC: THE YOUTH OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ

LIST OF ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Stories & Articles:

Afshin, Mahnaz, *The Beloved Master*, pp. 6-17
Furútan, ‘Ali-Akbar, *Stories of Bahá’u’lláh*, pp. 25-26
Perkins, Mary, *The Servant of the Glory*, pp. 3-42
PHELPS, Myron H., *The Master in ‘Akká*, pp. 19-41

Music:

Sears, Hand of the Cause William, narrated by, with various artists, *Lote Tree*, “Garden of Ridván”

Visual Aids:

Brilliant Star: “Photo of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in Adrianople” November-December 92
Armstrong-Ingram, R. Jackson, *Written in Light, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and the American Bahá’í Community*, p. 3
(photograph of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in Adrianople)

Reference:

Balyuzi, H.M., *Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp. 3-32

List other favorite resources:

If you find any additional resources, please notify the National Teacher Training Center, or submit your findings to the Educational Materials web site.

TO KNOW ABOUT THE LIFE OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ

THE SACRIFICES OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ

**SPIRITUAL QUALITIES RELEVANT TO THIS TOPIC:
GENEROSITY, SELF-DISCIPLINE, HELPFULNESS, DETACHMENT**

The burden of all these affairs has fallen upon the shoulders of the Master. To provide Us with some peace and comfort, He has made Himself Our shield, and thus He sees to Our affairs both with the government and with the people...He is so devoted to His services and so intensely occupied that sometimes weeks pass by and He cannot come here to visit Us. While We consort with the friends and reveal Tablets, He is immersed in the toils and troubles of the world.

Bahá'u'lláh, quoted in *Stories from the Delight of Hearts*, pp. 120-121

We can prove ourselves worthy of our Cause only if in our individual conduct and corporate life we sedulously imitate the example of our beloved Master, whom the terrors of tyranny, the storms of incessant abuse, the oppressiveness of humiliation, never caused to deviate a hair's breadth from the revealed Law of Bahá'u'lláh.

Such is the path of servitude, such is the way of holiness He chose to tread to the very end of His life. Nothing short of the strictest adherence to His glorious example can safely steer our course amid the pitfalls of this perilous age, and lead us on to fulfill our high destiny.

Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá'í Administration*, p. 132

LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES



KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVES

- To know that the greatest sacrifice of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was His own Self
- To know that His thoughts and actions were always focused on the Spirit, even when His body was exhausted
- To know that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá paid little heed to His own personal safety and comfort

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Talk with students about the meaning of sacrifice.
- Share stories about ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s sacrifice and personal courage in times of danger.
- Discover the different ways in which ‘Abdu’l-Bahá sacrificed His own rest and comfort.



WISDOM OBJECTIVES

- To reflect on man’s capacity to sacrifice self for the love of God
- To understand the outcome of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s sacrifices for the world of humanity

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Tell stories from Bahá’í literature, religious history and world literature on the meaning of sacrifice.
- Share instances from the students’ lives when they have noticed others making sacrifices. Consult about why they thought the person made the sacrifice and the effect it had upon others.
- Explore the effect that the sacrifices of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá have had on the rest of humanity.
- Investigate the meaning of analogies used to describe sacrifice. For example, conduct an experiment with a burning candle to illustrate and understand ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s metaphor of the candle giving its life for the flame.

TOPIC: THE SACRIFICES OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ



SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION OBJECTIVES

- To gain personal inspiration from the examples of sacrifice set by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá
- To reflect upon the degree to which one can be detached from physical comfort
- To recognize the moral strength gained from one’s detachment from all else but God

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Make a list with the students of some of the things they have and divide them according to *needs* and *wants*. Include non-material needs and wants (e.g., love, care and concern).
- Use ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s example of sacrifice to help students recognize and appreciate the various kinds of sacrifice made by the Bahá’ís for the progress of the Faith (e.g., pioneering, travel teaching, fasting and martyrdom).
- Invite the students to reflect upon instances in their own lives when they have given to others. Share these experiences together.



ELOQUENT SPEECH OBJECTIVE

- To sacrifice in one’s own life in order to continually find ways to serve God

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Encourage each student to commit to do something for someone else or to assist in a Bahá’í activity.
- Share dramatizations of the sacrifices of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá with other community members.
- Prepare presentations, including stories that students can present at Feast, which describe ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s sacrifice and personal courage.

GOAL: TO KNOW ABOUT THE LIFE OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ

TOPIC: THE SACRIFICES OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ

Sample Activities

ACTIVITY: THE MASTER IN ‘AKKÁ

KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVE: To know that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá paid little heed to His own personal safety and comfort

WISDOM OBJECTIVE: To understand the outcome of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s sacrifices for the world of humanity

SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION OBJECTIVE: To gain personal inspiration from the examples of sacrifice set by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS: Engage the mind and heart; Use of stories; Use of music; Peer group work

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 35 MIN.

Materials Needed:

- candle and matches
- framed portrait of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá
- song, “Behold A Candle” from *Lasting Remembrances*, or other albums
- pp. 44-47 of this Lesson Planning Guide

1. Set the tone by darkening the room, lighting a large candle placed near a portrait of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and playing the song “Behold A Candle.” The students may have heard this song many times. When the song has ended, ask them if they know where the words come from – did they know these are ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Words, as He said farewell to the first party of American pilgrims to ‘Akká? (See p. 46-47.)
2. Read aloud ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s words of guidance that inspired the lyrics to the song:
“...look at Me, follow Me, be as I am.... Look at Me and be as I am; ye must die to yourselves and to the world, so shall ye be born again and enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Behold a candle how it gives its light. It weeps its life away drop by drop in order to give forth its light.”
3. Suggest to the students that perhaps ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is talking about how He lived His own life and is encouraging us to do likewise. Discuss the quotation: What does it mean to weep your life away, drop by drop, to give your flame?
4. Read aloud the story “The Master in ‘Akká,” on pp. 44-45 of this Lesson Planning Guide.
5. Discuss the questions: What sacrifice does ‘Abdu’l-Bahá make? What physical discomfort does He accept? For whom does ‘Abdu’l-Bahá make this sacrifice or endure this discomfort? What effect do ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s actions have on the people he serves? What is ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s attitude during this sacrifice and service? What results came about from His sacrifices?
6. Conclude the activity by reminding the students that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s sacrifices can be summarized by His sacrifice of self. Refer again to the candle, comparing ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s sacrifice of self to the weeping of a candle to give forth its light.

TOPIC: THE SACRIFICES OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ

ACTIVITY: SET PERSONAL GOALS FOR SACRIFICIAL ACTION

SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION OBJECTIVE: To gain personal inspiration from the examples of sacrifice set by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

ELOQUENT SPEECH OBJECTIVE: To sacrifice in one’s own life in order to continually find ways to serve God

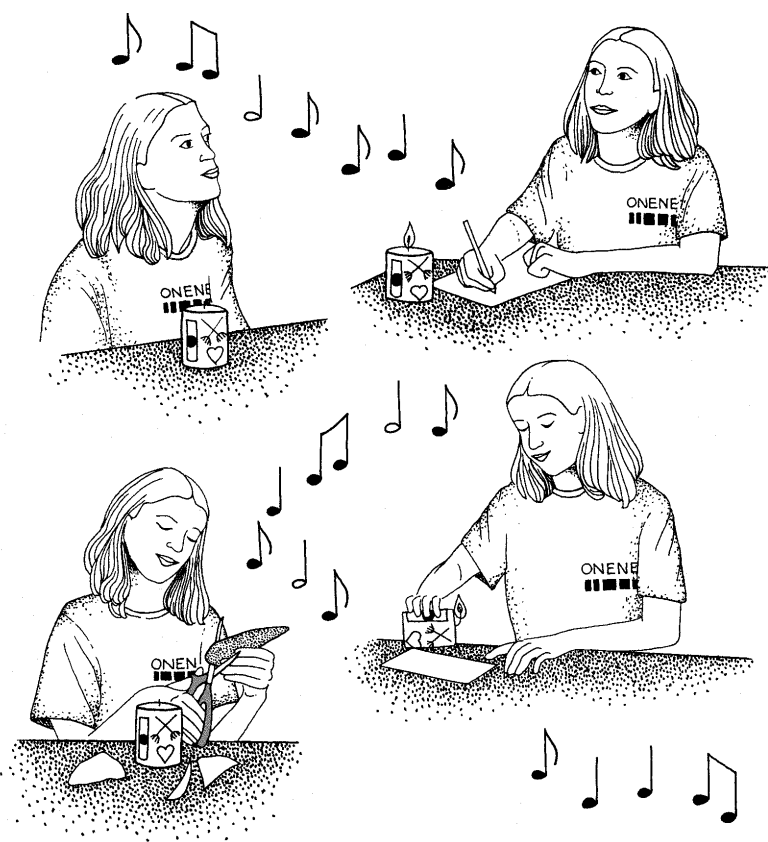
INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS: Engage the mind and heart; Use of art

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 25 MIN.

Materials Needed:

- short, wide candles for each student
- candle decorating beeswax (available at craft stores)
- fancy writing paper and pens, and assorted rubber stamps

1. Give each student a candle. Ask the students to let the candles represent their own selves. Provide a supply of candle-decorating beeswax and invite students to use the wax to personalize their candle, making symbols of things they are ready to sacrifice for the sake of God and for the benefit humanity.
2. Ask the students to now take a few moments to reflect upon how they can follow ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s example and His advice, to sacrifice for others and for the Faith. Share some of these examples verbally. Assist as needed with ideas, such as: assisting with activities and tasks of the local Bahá’í community; giving goods for the needy or performing service projects; giving more sacrificially to the Bahá’í Funds.
3. Provide fancy writing paper and pens. Ask students to write a pledge to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá which describes the sacrifices that they are willing to make. Instruct the students to spread out in the room, light their own candle and write their pledge while watching the candle burn. Play the song “Behold a Candle” again in the background. Supervise carefully for fire safety.



4. As a conclusion to this activity, instruct the students to fold their letter in a tri-fold and seal it by carefully dripping a small amount of candle wax on the closure edge. Mark the seal by gently pushing a rubber stamp into the wax while still soft. Suggest a meaningful date, a month or more away (an upcoming Holy Day for instance), on which the students should break the seal and re-read their pledge. At that time, the students should take stock of their personal progress in sacrificial efforts.

Resource Pages



The Master in ‘Akká

From the book *The Master in ‘Akká* by Myron H. Phelps

Imagine that we are in the ancient house of the still more ancient city of ‘Akká, which was for a month my home.... Above is the bright sun of Palestine; to the right a glimpse of the old sea-wall and the blue Mediterranean. As we sit we hear a singular sound rising from the pavement, thirty feet below – faint at first, and increasing. It is like the murmur of human voices. We open the window and look down. We see a crowd of human beings with patched and tattered garments. Let us descend to the street and see who these are.

It is a noteworthy gathering. Many of these men are blind; many more are pale, emaciated, or aged . . . Most of the women are closely veiled, but enough are uncovered to cause us well to believe that, if the veils were lifted, more pain and misery would be seen. Some of them carry babes with pinched and sallow faces. There are perhaps a hundred in this gathering, and besides, many children. They are of all the races one meets in these streets -- Syrians, Arabs, Ethiopians, and many others....

We have not to wait long. A door opens and a man comes out. He is of middle stature, strongly built. He wears flowing light-coloured robes. On his head is a light buff fez with a white cloth wound about it. He is perhaps sixty years of age. His long grey hair rests on his shoulders. His forehead is broad, full, and high, his nose slightly aquiline, his moustaches and beard, the latter full though not heavy, nearly white. His eyes are grey and blue, large, and both soft and penetrating. His bearing is simple, but there is grace, dignity, and even majesty about his movements. He passes through the crowd, and as he goes utters words of salutation. We do not understand them, but we see the benignity and the kindness of his countenance. He stations himself at a narrow angle of the street and motions to the people to come towards him. They crowd up a little too insistently. He pushes them gently back and lets them pass him one by one. As they come they hold their hands extended. In each open palm he places some small coins. He knows them all. He caresses them with his hands on the face, on the shoulders, on the head. Some he stops and questions.... He stops a woman

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with a babe and fondly strokes the child. As they pass, some kiss his hand. To all he says, Marhabbah, marhabbah – Well done, well done!

So they all pass him. The children have been crowding around him with extended hands, but to them he has not given. However, at the end, as he turns to go, he throws a handful of coppers over his shoulder, for which they scramble.

In the cold weather which is approaching, the poor will suffer, for, as in all cities, they are thinly clad. Some day at this season, if you are advised of the place and time, you may see the poor of Akká gathered at one of the shops where clothes are sold, receiving cloaks from the Master. Upon many, especially the most infirm or crippled, he himself places the garment, adjusts it with his own hands, and strokes it approvingly, as if to say, ‘There! Now you will do well.’ There are five or six hundred poor in Akká, to all of whom he gives a warm garment each year.

On feast days he visits the poor at their homes. He chats with them, inquires into their health and comfort, mentions by name those who are absent, and leaves gifts for all.

Nor is it the beggars only that he remembers. Those respectable poor who cannot beg, but must suffer in silence -- those whose daily labour will not support their families -- to these he sends bread secretly....

All the people know him and love him -- the rich and the poor, the young and the old -- even the babe leaping in its mother’s arms. If he hears of any one sick in the city -- Moslem or Christian, or of any other sect, it matters not -- he is each day at their bedside, or sends a trusty messenger. If a physician is needed, and the patient poor, he brings or sends one, and also the necessary medicine. If he finds a leaking roof or a broken window menacing health, he summons a workman, and waits himself to see the breach repaired. If any one is in trouble, -- if a son or a brother is thrown into prison, or he is threatened at law, or falls into any difficulty too heavy for him, —it is to the Master that he straightway makes appeal for counsel or for aid. Indeed, for counsel all come to him, rich as well as poor. He is the kind father of all the people....

~Myron H. Phelps, *The Master of ‘Akká*, pp. 2-6



AN EARLY PILGRIMAGE

by May Maxwell (pp. 39-42)



From that time a great peace descended upon us, and in the heavenly calm and beauty of that last night in ‘Akká, we were girded with strength for the future. We were to leave next morning for Haifa, and in the afternoon we would be again on the sea, every hour taking us further from the presence of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. When we awoke on Saturday morning it seemed that the full realization of this separation descended like a great darkness upon us, and we were utterly alone in the wide world, save only for Him. He called us to Him at an early hour, and as we gazed upon His merciful face we saw that He knew all and that He would uphold us and give us strength; that verily He was sufficient for the whole world. In the might and majesty of His presence our fear was turned to perfect faith, our weakness into strength, our sorrow into hope and ourselves forgotten in our love for Him. As we sat before Him waiting to hear His words, some of the believers wept bitterly. He asked them for His sake not to weep, nor would He talk to us or teach us until all tears were banished and we were quite calm. Then He said:

Pray that your hearts may be cut from yourselves and from the world, that you may be confirmed by the Holy Spirit and filled with the fire of the love of God. The nearer you are to the light, the further you are from the darkness; the nearer you are to heaven, the further you are from the earth; the nearer you are to God, the further you are from the world. You have come here among the first and your reward is great. There are two visits; the first is for a blessing; then ye come and are blest and are sent forth to work in God’s vineyard; the second ye come with music and the banners flying, like soldiers, in gladness and triumph to receive your reward... And now I give you a commandment which shall be for a covenant between you and Me – that ye have faith; that your faith be steadfast as a rock that no

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storms can move, that nothing can disturb, and that it endure through all things even to the end; even should ye hear that your Lord has been crucified, be not shaken in your faith; for I am with you always, whether living or dead, I am with you to the end. As ye have faith so shall your powers and blessings be. This is the balance – this is the balance – this is the balance.’

Then He arose and bade us follow Him. He led us into the next room, and there resting on a divan against the wall was the portrait of Bahá’u’lláh. We fell on our knees before it, and the tears that flowed were of pure love and adoration. We could have remained thus forever with our eyes fastened on that wonderful face, but the Master touched us on the shoulder, that we might see also the picture of His Highness the Báb. His was a beautiful young face, but I could not keep my eyes from the eyes of Bahá’u’lláh, until ‘Abdu’l-Bahá turned suddenly to us, and raising His voice in a tone so poignant that it pierced every heart, He stretched His hands above us and said:

Now the time has come when we must part, but the separation is only of our bodies, in spirit we are united. Ye are the lights which shall be diffused; ye are the waves of that sea which shall spread and overflow the world. Each wave is precious to Me and My nostrils shall be gladdened by your fragrance. Another commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another even as I love you. Great mercy and blessings are promised to the people of your land, but on one condition: that their hearts are filled with the fire of love, that they live in perfect kindness and harmony like one soul in different bodies. If they fail in this condition the great blessings will be deferred. Never forget this; look at one another with the eye of perfection; look at Me, follow Me, be as I am; take no thought for yourselves or your lives, whether ye eat or whether ye sleep, whether ye are comfortable, whether ye are well or ill, whether ye are with friends or foes, whether ye receive praise or blame; for all of these things ye must care not at all. Look at Me and be as I am; ye must die to yourselves and to the world, so shall ye be born again and enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Behold a candle how it gives its light. It weeps its life away drop by drop in order to give forth its flame of light.’

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LIST OF ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Stories & Articles:

Afshin, Mahnaz, *The Beloved Master*, pp. 3-6, 11, 15-16, 36, 45, 53, 72, 77-78, 83, 85-87

Perkins, Mary, *The Servant of the Glory*, pp. 12-23, 31-33, 35, 50-58, 62-63, 67, 70-72, 76-77, 84-85, 89, 112-116, 126-127, 146-147, 157, 165-167, 170-175, 178-179, 207-208, 222, 247, 294-295

Mehrabi, Jacqueline, *Stories of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp.5-10, 16 19, 21, 26-28, 30, 33-36, 39, 42

Activities:

Candle decorating supplies are available from Hearthsong, 1-800-325-2502 or www.hearthsong.com

Music:

Lasting Remembrances, Bahá’í World Congress Commemorative Video, “Behold A Candle”

Lift Up Your Voices & Sing, Vol. 1, various artists, “Look at Me, Follow Me”

Music of the Bahá’í World Congress, “Behold a Candle”

Poetry:

Brilliant Star:

“Holy Day Vision” November-December 96

Reference:

The Passing of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá: A Compilation

Balyuzi, H.M. *‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp. 90-102, 111-114, 118-125

Maxwell, May, *An Early Pilgrimage*

Townshend, George, *‘Abdu’l-Bahá, The Master*, pp. 43-45

Yazdi, Ali M., *Blessings Beyond Measure, Recollections of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi*, pp. 41-44

List other favorite resources:

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