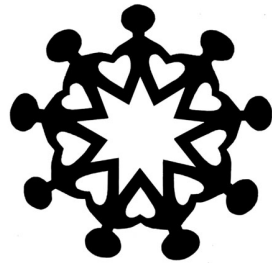


Oeness

Oeness of Religion



Level One

**TO DEVELOP AN UNDERSTANDING
OF THE ONENESS OF GOD**

**THE ONENESS OF GOD
AND THE MEANING OF DIVINE UNITY**

**SPIRITUAL QUALITIES RELEVANT TO THIS TOPIC:
FAITH, LOVE, OBEDIENCE, RESPECT**

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

*Bahá'u'lláh, *The Compilation of Compilations*, vol. I, p. 248*

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.

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

GOAL: TO DEVELOP AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE ONENESS OF GOD

TOPIC: THE ONENESS OF GOD AND THE MEANING OF DIVINE UNITY

LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES



KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVES

- To know from the Bahá'í writings that there is only one God, the Creator of all humankind
- To know that all people are created to know and worship God

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Teach the students songs about the Oneness of God and God as the Creator of all humankind.
- Assist the students in memorizing the short Obligatory Prayer.
- Invite students to work in groups to extract passages from the writings that declare the Oneness of God and humanity's relationship to God.



WISDOM OBJECTIVES

- To realize that God loves and showers blessings and bounties upon all the peoples of the world
- To understand that all things are of God and to see a door to the knowledge of God in every created thing

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Create a visual aid based on the analogy of the sun and its different rising points to illustrate the oneness of the Manifestations of God.
- Take a nature walk. Compare God's love and bounties to the sun shining, or the rain falling, on all creation.
- Take a meditative nature walk. Invite each student to choose one thing from the natural world that represents a door to the knowledge of God.
- Create artwork symbolizing the understanding gained from this nature walks.
- Work in groups to create a maze or board game showing various paths leading to one goal.

**TOPIC: THE ONENESS OF GOD AND THE
MEANING OF DIVINE UNITY**



SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION OBJECTIVES

- To perceive the implications for humanity when the peoples of the world gain knowledge of the principle of the Oneness of God
- To reflect on the reality that the knowledge of God is understood through the teachings of His Manifestations

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Work in groups to find examples in newspapers or magazines of war and strife throughout the world that have arisen from religious differences. Ask each group to research one conflict and consult on the effect that knowledge of the oneness of God would have on that problem.
- Explore the difference between realities we can understand and experience individually – such as the taste of a delicious fruit – and those that we understand and experience through the explanation of a teacher, such as how apples grow on trees.
- In pairs, students should brainstorm a list of questions about God and then ask an adult Bahá'í to help them find the answers to these questions in the Bahá'í writings or writings of other religions.



ELOQUENT SPEECH OBJECTIVES

- To be able to explain to others the principle of the oneness of God
- To recite passages from Bahá'u'lláh's writings and prayers concerning the oneness of God
- To demonstrate one's belief in the oneness of God by developing the qualities of humility, love for all people, service, and appreciation of diversity
- To demonstrate one's understanding that the signs of God are inherent in all created things

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Share with others the art work inspired by the nature walk, and explain its meaning.
- Create poetry about the oneness of God, and hold a poetry reading.
- Plan a devotional gathering with readings and songs on the oneness of God and the meaning of Divine Unity.
- Carry out service projects in the community, inspired by the sacred writings on the oneness of God and His love for all people.

TOPIC: THE ONENESS OF GOD AND THE MEANING OF DIVINE UNITY

Sample Activities

ACTIVITY: GOD IS EVERYWHERE

WISDOM OBJECTIVE: To understand that all things are of God and see a door to the knowledge of God in every created thing

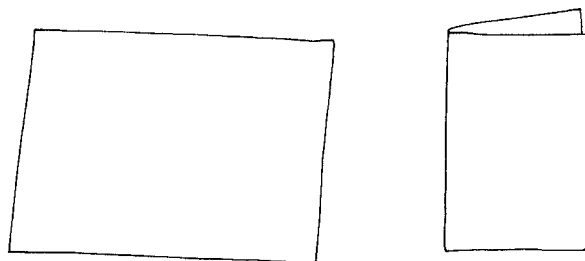
INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS: Direct use of the Sacred Writings; Use of reasoning; Use of reflection; Use of art; Use of nature

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 60 MIN.

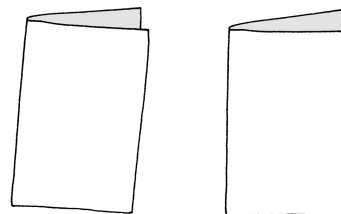
Materials Needed:

- 2 sheets of 8½" x 11" paper per student
- Scissors/cutting board (for teacher use only)
- Ruler
- Glue

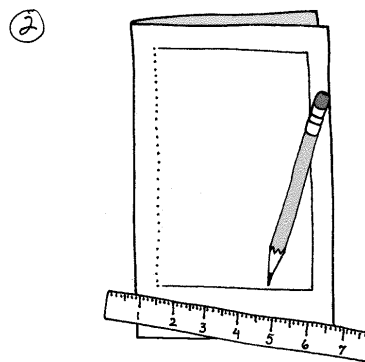
1. Invite the students to individually identify at least three things that are of God. Then ask each student to share at least one idea with the class.
2. Share with the class that there are many things in this world created by God that could never be created by people. Collectively brainstorm several examples.
3. Explain that those things which can only be created by God help us to know that there is a God. In *The Kitáb-i-Iqán*, p. 29, Bahá'u'lláh tells us that "in each and every thing a door of knowledge hath been opened."
4. Escort the class on a nature walk. Encourage the students to choose one thing from nature that they perceive as a door to the knowledge of God. If appropriate, bring the items back to the classroom.
5. After the nature walk, invite the students to share their selected item from nature with the class, and to explain how it serves as a door to the knowledge of God.
6. To remember that all things are from God, invite the students to make a door card as explained.

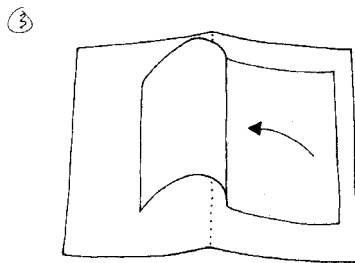
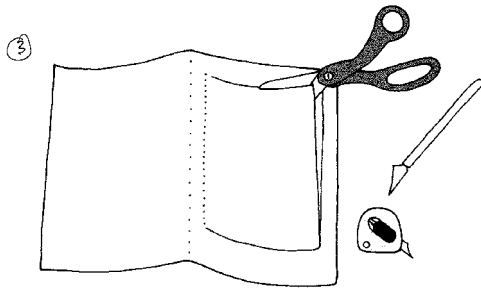


7. Take two pieces of paper, each 8½" x 11" (21.5 cm. x 14 cm.). Fold both sheets of paper in half. Put one paper aside.



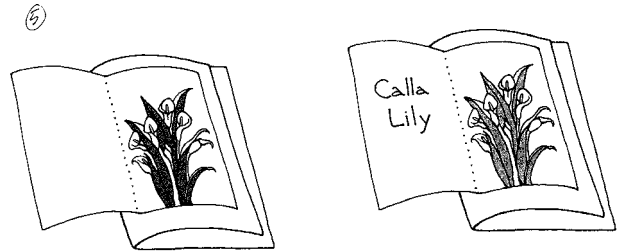
8. Draw a rectangle, 4½" x 6½", in the center of the other folded paper.





9. Cut three sides of the square with a cutting blade or a pair of pointed scissors, so that the window flaps open. It is easiest to make cuts in the middle of a page with a cutting blade. If you use scissors, puncture one of the corners of the square with the point of your scissors, and then start cutting very carefully. Fold the uncut side of the square towards the outside of the card.

11. Open your door and draw a little picture of your nature item or the actual item selected from nature (if it fits).



12. Write one of the following quotations inside the card:

Dominion is God's, the Lord of the seen and the unseen, the Lord of creation.

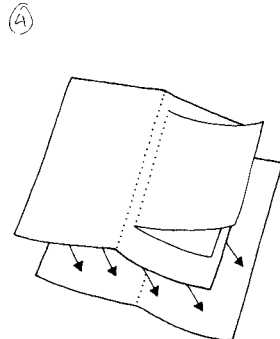
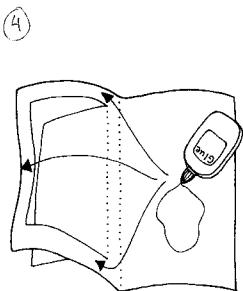
Bahá'u'lláh, The Kitáb-i-Aqdas, p. 23

...In each and every thing a door of knowledge hath been opened.

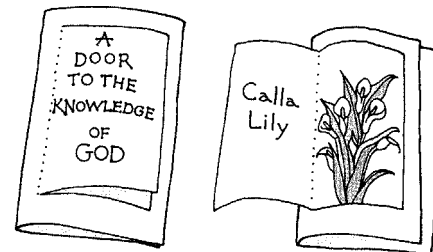
Bahá'u'lláh, The Kitáb-i-Iqan, p. 29

13. Beautify the outside of the card and write "A Door to the Knowledge of God" on the cover.

14. Once all students are finished, invite them to share their cards with the class and with their families at home.



10. Apply glue to the inner side of your card. Place it over the paper you put aside which now becomes the inside of your card. *Do not apply glue to the door area.*



GOAL: TO DEVELOP AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE ONENESS OF GOD

TOPIC: THE ONENESS OF GOD AND THE MEANING OF DIVINE UNITY

ACTIVITY: TO KNOW AND WORSHIP GOD

KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVE: To know that all people are created to know and worship God

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS: Direct study of the Bahá'í Sacred Writings;
Use of questions; Use of memorization; Use of recitation; Use of art

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 45 MIN.

Materials Needed:

- Copy of the short obligatory prayer for each student, Resource Page 15
- Chalk board or dry erase board
- Chalk or dry erase makers
- Markers, crayons, colored pencils, or other art supplies

1. Invite the students to think of one of the Names for the Creator of the universe. Listen attentively and encourage them to respond with such words as: God, the All Powerful, the All-Knowing, the All-Loving, etc.
2. Encourage the students to remember a time when they felt close to God. After a short period of reflection, encourage those who wish to share their memories with the class. The teacher should also share a short, sweet memory of feeling close to God.
3. Then encourage the students to share examples of the actions they take to feel close to God. These examples may include such actions as praying, showing kindness to others, etc.
4. Explain that God wants us to feel this wonderful closeness with Him; He tells us that this is why He created us.
5. Read aloud the short obligatory prayer. Encourage students to share what they know about this prayer. Some answers might include: short obligatory prayer, noonday prayer, obliged to say one of the Obligatory Prayers beginning at age 15, etc.

I bear witness, O my God, that Thou hast created me to know thee and to worship Thee. I testify, at this moment to my powerlessness and to Thy might, to my poverty and to Thy wealth.

There is none other God but Thee, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting.

Bahá'u'lláh, Prayers and Meditations, CLXXXI

6. Read the prayer a second time. Ask the students to listen for the prayer's meaning.
7. Hand out copies of the prayer, Resource Page 15, and read for a third time, asking students to follow along.
8. Explain to the class that you will ask for volunteers to read just one sentence and after each sentence is read, the class will discuss its meaning.
9. Memorize the prayer together. Once memorized, invite the students to illuminate their printed copy of the prayer.
10. Encourage the students to share this prayer with their families and to recite it every day between the hours of noon and sunset.

TOPIC: THE ONENESS OF GOD AND THE MEANING OF DIVINE UNITY

ACTIVITY: CELEBRATING GOD'S LOVE

WISDOM OBJECTIVE: To realize that God loves and showers blessings and bounties upon all the peoples of the world

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS: Engaging the mind and heart; Use of reflection; Use of consultation; Use of crafts; Use of music

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 50 MIN., DEPENDING ON THE TYPE OF INSTRUMENTS CREATED

Materials Needed:

- Pictures of cows (available in library books), a place to see real cows, or Resource Page 16
- Quotations, Resource Page 17
- Chalkboard or chart paper
- Chalk or markers
- Assorted supplies for creating musical instruments, such as:
 - Soup can
 - Oatmeal box
 - Coffee can
 - Balloon
 - String
 - Rubber band
 - Sticks wrapped in cloth
 - Pop tops from soft drink cans
 - Coat hanger wire
 - Wood blocks
 - Sandpaper
 - Soft drink cans filled with rocks, seeds, beans, rice, etc.
 - Small clay pots
 - Large can, bucket, or washtub
 - Broom handle
 - Suitcase
 - Bells
 - Bowls
 - Glasses, bottles or drinking glasses filled with water
 - Ring of keys
 - Fishing line strung between nails
 - Springs
 - Combs and wax paper
 - Bicycle tubes
 - Whatever else you think might work

1. Provide the class with as many different pictures of cows as possible. Or, if circumstances allow, visit a farm or zoo to observe cows. Ask the students to pay attention to how the cows move, what they eat, how they interact with others, etc.
2. Encourage the students to imagine what it must be like to be a cow. They will probably get a little silly with this, which is okay. Assist the students to seriously consider what it might be like to live, think, eat and be like a cow. What do they imagine it might be like? Would they like to be a cow? Why or why not? Would they want to be cow, safely living in a pasture? Why or why not?
3. Share the following observations of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

The cow, for instance, is a lover of the visible and a believer in the tangible, contented and happy when pasture is plenty, perfectly serene...

...the virtue of man is this: that he can investigate the ideals of the Kingdom and attain knowledge which is denied the animal in its limitation. The station of man is this: that he has the power to attain those ideals and thereby differentiate and consciously distinguish himself an infinite degree above the kingdoms of existence below him.

The station of man is great, very great. God has created man after His own image and likeness.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 262

4. Encourage the students to imagine a cow joining them in their class at school. How would the cow do in math, science, or other classes? How would the cow do in band, choir, or art?
5. The students again may make fun of such an idea, but encourage them to seriously reflect: Why does it seem so ridiculous to imagine a cow going to school, or studying art, or science or math?

ACTIVITY CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE ➤

GOAL: TO DEVELOP AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE ONENESS OF GOD

TOPIC: THE ONENESS OF GOD AND THE MEANING OF DIVINE UNITY

6. Help the students to realize that humans are different from cows because of the special capacities that God has given all humanity.
7. One by one, read aloud the passages from the Bahá'í writings found on p. 17. After reading each passage, invite the students to respond with words or short phrases directly from these writings to complete the following statement: "We're not cows because God gave us... (or, God made us...)." Record their words and phrases on the chalkboard or chart paper.
8. When the students have finished listing the words and phrases, ask them: Has God made some people or all people in His image? Has He given these gifts to some people or all people? Why did He give us these gifts?
9. Invite them work in small groups to celebrate these gifts arranging these words and phrases into simple poems. Encourage the students to add rhythm or melody so that they can sing or chant the poems. Then create simple musical instruments to accompany their songs, using items from the supplies listed.
10. After practice, encourage the students to perform the songs for each other and for their families. Some songs may also be appropriate for devotional gatherings or other events.

ACTIVITY: THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION OBJECTIVE: To reflect on the reality that the knowledge of God is understood through the teachings of His Manifestation

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS: Engaging the heart and mind; Use of reflection; Use of science; Use of questioning

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 20 MIN.

Materials Needed:

- Seasonal fruit from the area
- Diagram of the growth process of fruit, optional
- Picture of a caterpillar
- Picture of a moth/butterfly
- Dry erase board or paper flip chart

1. Explain that there are some things that we understand and experience our own, such as the taste of a fruit – provide students with seasonal fruit to taste. Discuss what they know about the fruit.
2. Explain that there are also some things that we experience through the help of teachers, for example, the details of how fruit grows on the tree, or the specifics of how a caterpillar becomes a moth or butterfly.

GOAL: TO DEVELOP AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE ONENESS OF GOD

TOPIC: THE ONENESS OF GOD AND THE MEANING OF DIVINE UNITY

3. Remind them that the way we know about God is through the teachings of His Manifestations, humanity's Teachers, the Founders of the world's great religions.
4. Encourage the students to recall the names of some of the Manifestations of God, such as, Krishna, Buddha, Zoroaster, Moses, Christ, Muhammad, the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh. List these Names on the board or chart paper.
5. Invite students to quietly think about what they know about God through the teachings of His Manifestations.
6. Ask the students to share their thoughts with one other person in the class.

ACTIVITY: GOD IS ONE

KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVE: To know from the Bahá'í Writings that there is one God, the Creator of all humankind

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS: Direct study of the Bahá'í Sacred Writings;
Use of music

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 10 MIN.

Materials Needed:

- Lyrics/music to "God is One," Resource Page 18

1. Share with students that the way we know there is only one God is through the teaching of the Manifestations of God.
2. Share with students the following quotation:
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.
Bahá'u'lláh, Proclamation of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 114
3. Affirm that the quotation informs us that there is but one God, the God of all people and all things.
4. Explain that you will teach them a song that, once learned, will remind them of the basic principle.
5. Teach the song "God is One," Resource Page 18.
6. Once all have learned the song, enjoy singing it together. Encourage the students to teach this song to their families.

GOAL: TO DEVELOP AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE ONENESS OF GOD

TOPIC: THE ONENESS OF GOD AND THE MEANING OF DIVINE UNITY

ACTIVITY: A DEVOTIONAL GATHERING

ELOQUENT SPEECH OBJECTIVE: To recite passages from Bahá'u'lláh's Writings and prayers concerning the oneness of God

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS: Direct study of the Bahá'í Sacred Writings; Engaging the mind and heart; Use of consultation; Use of peer teaching; Use of reflection; Use of memorization

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 30-60 MIN.

Materials Needed:

- Devotional Meetings handout, Resource Page 20
- The Oneness of God and the Meaning of Divine Unity handout, Resource Page 19
- Chart paper or chalk board
- Markers or chalk
- Recorded music, songs known by students

1. Explain that the class will be preparing and hosting a devotional meeting with the theme: The Oneness of God and the Meaning of Divine Unity.
2. Provide each student with the Devotional Meetings quotation page. The teacher or selected students should reverently read aloud each quotation. After the readings, ask students to identify the actions called for in each passage. List or draw the students' responses.
3. As a group, discuss the theme and purpose of the devotional meeting.
4. Decide whether this short program should be prepared for other classes at Bahá'í school, a regularly scheduled devotional meeting, or as a special short program for the students' parents and friends.
5. Carefully read the quotations provided on the resource page: The Oneness of God and the Meaning of Divine Unity. In consultation, select quotations to be used for the devotional meeting. Students could be assigned to memorize one of the quotations.
6. Encourage the students to identify what they would like to include in their devotional meeting. Then assign students with specific tasks. Tasks might include selection of prayers, selection of music or songs, development of a program, selecting refreshments, creating the environment, etc.
7. Encourage students to consider including other prayers and passages they have memorized and songs they have learned or created.
8. Once all the planning is complete, rehearse the entire program while focusing on dignity, reverence, self-discipline, excellence in all things, and the spiritual qualities of love and service.
9. After the program has been presented, encourage students to briefly review their challenges and successes at that next class, so that their next devotional meeting can be even sweeter than this one.



SHORT OBLIGATORY PRAYER

I BEAR WITNESS, O MY GOD,
THAT THOU HAST CREATED ME
TO KNOW THEE
AND TO WORSHIP THEE.

I TESTIFY, AT THIS MOMENT,
TO MY POWERLESSNESS
AND TO THY MIGHT,
TO MY POVERTY
AND TO THY WEALTH.

THERE IS NONE OTHER GOD BUT THEE,
THE HELP IN PERIL,
THE SELF-SUBSISTING.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

GOAL: TO DEVELOP AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE ONENESS OF GOD

TOPIC: THE ONENESS OF GOD AND THE MEANING OF DIVINE UNITY



A WORLD OF COWS

Africa



North America



South America



Asia



North America



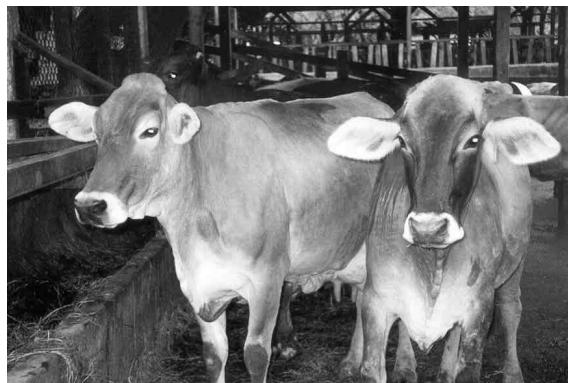
Europe



Africa



Central America



TOPIC: THE ONENESS OF GOD AND THE
MEANING OF DIVINE UNITY



Celebrating God's Love

The truth is that God has endowed all humankind with intelligence and perception and has confirmed all as His servants and children; therefore, in the plan and estimate of God there is no distinction between male or female. The soul that manifests pure deeds and spiritual graces is most precious in His sight and nearer to Him in its attainments.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 293

God has given man the eye of investigation by which he may see and recognize truth. He has endowed man with ears that he may hear the message of reality and conferred upon him the gift of reason by which he may discover things for himself.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 293

...the love that flows from God to man [consists] of the inexhaustible graces, the Divine effulgence and heavenly illumination. Through this love the world of being receives life. Through this love man is endowed with physical existence, until, through the breath of the Holy Spirit—this same love—he receives eternal life and becomes the image of the Living God. This love is the origin of all the love in the world of creation.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Paris Talks, p. 180

God, the Almighty, has created all mankind from the dust of earth. He has fashioned them all from the same elements; they are descended from the same race and live upon the same globe. He has created them to dwell beneath the one heaven. As members of the human family and His children He has endowed them with equal susceptibilities. He maintains, protects and is kind to all. He has made no distinction in mercies and graces among His children.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 297

GOAL: TO DEVELOP AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE ONENESS OF GOD

TOPIC: THE ONENESS OF GOD AND THE MEANING OF DIVINE UNITY

God is One

Music and Words:
Margaret Jane King

God is one, man is one and all the re-li-gions are

one. Land and sea, Hill and val-ley, Un-der the

beau-ti-ful sun God is one, man is one and

all the re-li-gions a-gree. When ev'ry one

learns the three one-ness-es, We'll have world u-ni-ty.

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**TOPIC: THE ONENESS OF GOD AND THE
MEANING OF DIVINE UNITY**



The Oneness of God and the Meaning of Divine Unity

Judaism

I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside me.

Isaiah 45:5

Christianity

The Lord our God is one Lord.

Mark 12:29

Hinduism

The One and Only God exists eternally...wise persons have called God by many names.

Rigveda

Islam

He is God, the One and Only; God the Eternal, Absolute...and there is none like unto Him.

Qur'án, 112:1-4

Buddhism

There is O monks, an Unborn, Unoriginated, Uncreated, Unformed.

Udana, 80-81

Bahá'í Faith

...There is none other God but Thee, the Help in Peril, the Self Subsisting.

Bahá'u'lláh, *Prayers and Meditations*, CLXXXI

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.

Bahá'u'lláh, *Proclamation of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 114

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

Bahá'u'lláh, *Bahá'í Education*, p. 248

As a token of His mercy, however, and as proof of His loving-kindness, He hath manifested unto men the Day Stars of His divine guidance, the Symbols of His divine unity, and hath ordained the knowledge of these sanctified Beings to be identical with the knowledge of His own Self.

Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 49-50

TOPIC: THE ONENESS OF GOD AND THE
MEANING OF DIVINE UNITY



DEVOTIONAL MEETINGS

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'ís Meetings: The Nineteen Day Feast*, p. 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*, K51

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, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. I, p. 99

At these meetings, there should be no extraneous conversation whatever. Rather, the assemblage should confine itself to reading and reciting the Holy Words, and to the discussion of matters relating to the Cause of God, expounding, for example, conclusive proofs and arguments, and the Writings of the Best Beloved of mankind. Those who present themselves at these gatherings must first array themselves in spotless clothing, turn their faces toward the Kingdom of Abhá, and then with lowliness and submissiveness enter in. During readings they must maintain complete silence. Should anyone wish to speak, he should say his say in all humility, with exactitude and eloquence. Salutations be unto you and praise.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Bahá'ís Meetings: The Nineteen Day Feast*, p. 9

TOPIC: THE ONENESS OF GOD AND THE
MEANING OF DIVINE UNITY

LIST OF ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Stories & Articles:

Brilliant Star: “Why Did God Create You?” MJ 93
“Manifestations” MJ 97
“Admiring Nature,” “Wonders of the World” MJ 99

Worksheets and Coloring Pages:

The Light of a Good Character, p. 13
Dominey, Kel, *Flickerings*
Brilliant Star: “Solve the Mystery!” MJ 97
“Who Made It?” “The Hidden Signs of God” JA 97
Tablet of the Heart, God and Me, pp. 5, 9, 41, 45
The Garden of Bahá’u’lláh, pp. 23, 25, 29, 37, 63, 69

Activities:

Brilliant Star: “Who Made It?” JA 97
“Gardens of Goodness” MJ 99
“Mysteries of Nature” MA 01

Music:

Brown, Mahony, Doomun-Rouhani, *Melodies of the Nightingale*, “Turn Thy Face Unto Me”
Cameron, Doug, *C’mon Rise Up*, “My Heart Soars”
Engle, Susan, *Loving Hands*, “Noon Day Prayer”
Ladjamaya, *Intone, O My Servant*, “I Loved Creation”
Sims, Bob, *Words of Wisdom*, “There is None to Be Worshipped,” 1994, This Day Productions
Various, *Happy Ayyam-I-Ha*, “Here Am I”
Various, *Lift Up Your Voices and Sing Vol. 1*, “God is One”
Ward, Nancy, *We Want to Grow Up*, “The Soul is the Sun;” also in *Brilliant Star*, MJ 93, p. 26

Games:

Brilliant Star: “Nature’s Wisdom” MA 00

World Wide Web:

<http://www.bahaidevotions.org/>

This is a great site for a variety of sample devotional programs and study guides.

Other favorite resources:

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, pp. 23-27, 180
‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 79, 192-193, 402, 410
‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, pp. 5-6, 146-150, 171-174, 290-296

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

TO DEVELOP AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE MAJOR RELIGIONS OF THE PAST

THE NATURE AND PURPOSE OF RELIGION

**SPIRITUAL QUALITIES RELEVANT TO THIS TOPIC:
FAITH, LOVE, OBEDIENCE, RESPECT**

The Guardian feels that a sound knowledge of history, including religious history, ...is of great help in teaching the Cause to intelligent people; as to what subjects within the Faith you should concentrate on he feels that young Bahá'ís should gain a mastery of such books as "Gleanings," "God Passes By," the "Iqán," "Some Answered Questions," and the more important Tablets. All aspects of the Faith should be deeply studied...

written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, *The Compilation of Compilations, vol. I, p. 227*

Such stories regarding the lives of the different prophets, together with their sayings will also be useful to better understand the literature of the Cause for there is constant reference to them.

written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, *The Compilation of Compilations, vol. I, p. 299*

LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES



KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVES

- To become familiar with the Bahá'í concept of the role and purpose of religion

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Demonstrate an analogy for religion's role in drawing a person out of self, desire, and the material world: dip a paper cut-out or origami bird on a string into a tub of mud so that the wings become mired and unable to fly. See Persian Hidden Word No. 13.
- Create a visual aid that illustrates religion's role in building ever-widening circles of unity. Show a series of concentric circles labeled *self, family*, etc.
- Ask pairs or small groups to research a few of the references on the purposes of religion. Share the findings in the form of an art project with the full group. Encourage each group to memorize a short part of the quotation.
- Sing songs about love, unity, and why God sent His Messengers.



WISDOM OBJECTIVES

- To understand that religion is a way of life
- To understand that religion is the blueprint for the civilization of the world

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Use group consultation to draw out daily actions and moral choices that reflect religious principles, laws and beliefs.
- Connect the teachings of the Manifestations of God to humanity's ever-widening circles of social unity, i.e. Christ's love for your neighbor, Mohammad's love for your nation, Bahá'u'lláh's love for humanity.
- Create skits that show the results of following, or not following, the social teachings of Bahá'u'lláh and of previous Revelations.
- Invite small groups to each examine a social teaching or law of Bahá'u'lláh and find examples in newspapers and magazines of society aspiring to that condition. Create a visual display.



SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION OBJECTIVES

- To discern the difference between the pure teachings of divinely revealed religion and ritual, superstition, dogma and idle fancy
- To reflect on the purpose of religion in one's own life

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Provide opportunities for meditation on words from the Holy Scriptures of the world's religions on the themes of love, the oneness of humanity, forgiveness, and peace.
- Collect publications from various religious sects. Encourage students to identify which statements in the publications are in accord with religion's divine purposes, and which are not.
- Bring in examples of natural items and their artificial imitations, such as real and silk flowers, a pet and stuffed animal, authentic and fake gems, etc. Use these items as analogies for true religion and human imitations.
- Facilitate a class consultation on how students can become skilled in recognizing the truth on their own.



ELOQUENT SPEECH OBJECTIVES

- To be able to articulate the Bahá'í concept of religion
- To be able to teach this knowledge in a clear, kind, and loving manner to the followers of other religions

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Prepare and give devotional meetings or fireside talks on the Bahá'í perspective of the role and purpose of religion.
- Role-play, with some students being followers of various religions, and others, lovingly presenting the Bahá'í concept of the true purpose of religion.
- Carry out a community service project, as an expression of religion as a way of life, by serving in an aspect that relates to one of the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, i.e., attend to the poor, attend to the education of children. Share a quotation on that topic at the place of service.

Sample Activities

ACTIVITY: THE PURPOSE OF RELIGION

KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVE: To become familiar with the Bahá'í concept of the role and purpose of religion

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS: Direct study of the Bahá'í Sacred Writings; Use of Memorization; Use of art; Use of consultation

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 45 MIN.

Materials Needed:

- Copy of one quotation for each student
- Art materials
- Poster board or chart paper
- Markers

1. Divide the class into small groups. Give each group one of the following quotations:

The purpose of religion as revealed from the heaven of God's holy Will is to establish unity and concord amongst the peoples of the world...

Bahá'u'lláh, Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 129

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

Bahá'u'lláh, Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 287

...it is again evident that the purpose of religion is peace and concord.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 128

...the purpose of religion is the acquisition of praiseworthy virtues, the betterment of morals, the spiritual development of mankind, the real life and divine bestowals.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 52

The whole purpose of religion is to change not only our thoughts but our acts; when we believe in God and His Prophet and His Teachings, we find we are growing, even though we perhaps thought ourselves incapable of growth and change!

written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, Lights of Guidance, p. 209

2. Encourage each group to select one reader to read the passage aloud.
3. Ask each group to memorize the passage.
4. Encourage the students to express the meaning of the quotation in the form of a visual image, using the art materials provided.
5. Invite a member of the group to explain the artistic representation of their quotation.
6. Display the projects for the entire class and, if possible, at a community gathering.

ACTIVITY: THE GOLDEN RULE: A BLUEPRINT FOR ACTION

WISDOM OBJECTIVE: To understand that religion is the blueprint for the civilization of the world

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS: Direct study of the Bahá'í Sacred Writings;
Use of consultation; Use of Questioning; Use of manipulatives

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 20 MIN.

Materials Needed:

- Posters of the Golden Rule from several different religions, prepared from Resource Page 32
- Paper
- Pencils

1. Encourage students to work in teams of two.
2. Ask the teams to draw a simple diagram of the classroom. Once all have completed this task, explain that their diagram could be a blueprint for an architect, a person who plans buildings and oversees their construction. A blueprint is a plan of action.
3. Explain that religion provides humanity with the blueprint on how to live our lives.
4. One way to explore this concept is to look at what is commonly called the Golden Rule, an ethical statement shared by all the world's religions.
5. Display posters of at least five versions of the Golden Rule, selecting those that represent religions most common in your area.
6. Carefully read aloud each of the quotations.
7. Discuss specific, concrete examples of how we can apply the Golden Rule in our families, at school, and with our friends. Encourage the students to choose one of these actions to practice this week.
8. In the next class, remember to invite students to share examples of what they did and how they feel about these special actions, as we all strive to live by the Golden Rule.

ACTIVITY: THE GOLDEN RULE: THE LAW OF LOVE

WISDOM OBJECTIVE: To understand that religion is a way of life

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS: Direct study of the Bahá'í Sacred Writings;
Use of questioning; Use of art

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 45 MIN.

Materials Needed:

- Photocopy of Resource Page 32 for each student
- 2 large pieces of poster board
- Chalkboard or chart paper
- Pictures cut from old magazines
- Scissors
- Glue
- Markers

Advance Preparation:

Cut a large heart shape from poster board and cut it into 11 pieces, each piece large enough to hold words and images of one of the Golden Rule statements. Ten pieces will be used by students. The teacher prepares the eleventh piece, the center of the heart, by beautifully copying these words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá onto it:

“All the Prophets have promulgated the law of love.”

'Abdu'l-Bahá, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 297

1. Distribute copies of the Golden Rule statements, Resource Page 32.
2. Read the statements aloud with the whole class.
3. Encourage students to say in their own words what the statements mean. Encourage the students to think of examples of actual, real-life behavior that come to their minds as they read the statements.
4. Discuss the common themes in the Golden Rule statements: What do these statements ask us to do? What are the similarities in these statements? What are the differences? List on chart paper or on the board the actions called for in these statements.
5. Without describing the final product, invite the students to work with you to illustrate these actions: Provide a piece of the heart puzzle to each student or each team of students, so that all ten of the Golden Rule statements can be included in the final presentation.
6. Encourage the students to copy the Golden Rule statement in their best handwriting on the heart puzzle piece.
7. Then invite the students to find pictures, from a selection cut from old magazines, to illustrate the list of actions that they just created. Encourage the students to glue the pictures onto their heart pieces to illustrate the statement.
8. Finally, encourage the students to assemble their completed pieces as if they were a puzzle. Enjoy their surprise as they learn that these statement create the shape of a heart, with 'Abdu'l-Bahá's statement at the center. Mount the completed heart on the second piece of poster board.
9. Encourage the students to continue working toward their goals of acting in accordance with the Golden Rule in their everyday lives. Plan to display this completed heart at an upcoming devotional gathering prepared by the students.

TOPIC: THE NATURE AND PURPOSE OF RELIGION

ACTIVITY: LIFTING HEARTS

SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION OBJECTIVE: To reflect on the purpose of religion on one's own life

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS: Direct study of the Bahá'í Sacred Writings;
Use of reflection; Use of questioning; Use of manipulatives; Use of science

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 30 MIN.

Materials Needed:

- Pre-cut construction paper hearts and circles (each 4"-5" across, with a hole punched in the center of the circle), 2 per student and a few extras
- Quotations on the Purpose of Religion, Resource Page 33
- Non-flexible drinking straws, one per student
- Transparent tape, 5 rolls
- Markers

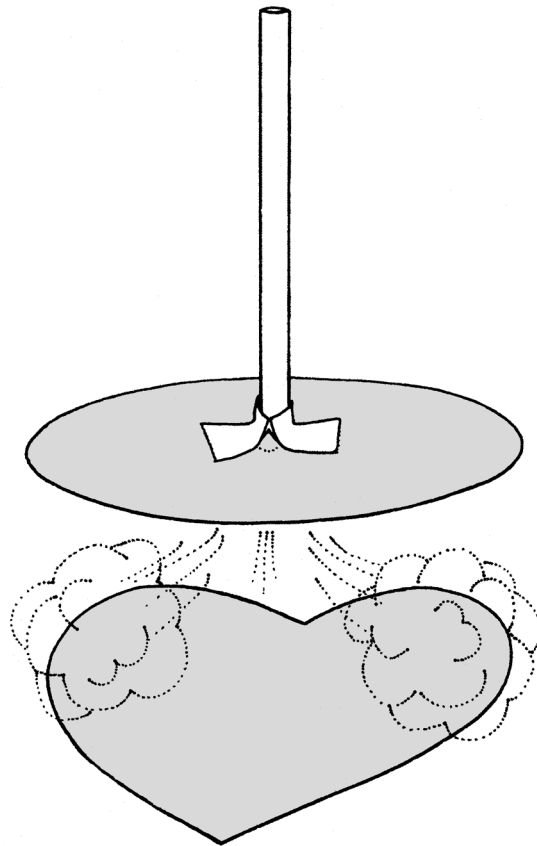
1. Invite the students to reflect on the purpose of religion in their own lives: Read the Purpose of Religion quotations, p. 33, and invite the students to share their reflections with the group.
2. Share these words of Bahá'u'lláh: "We desire but the good of the world and happiness of the nations," *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. II, p. 157. Invite the students to share their progress toward their Golden Rule goals. How have they noticed their actions bringing happiness to others?
3. Then invite the students to remember a time when their own hearts felt a little heavy, but someone did something that helped them feel happy again. Invite them to tell the story of actions that lifted their hearts. Also encourage examples of students lifting the hearts of others through their actions.
4. Explain that you will be using a physics experiment to demonstrate how we can lift the hearts of others.
5. Give the students each one pre-cut paper circle and heart. Ask them to write their names on both. They may also decorate them if desired. Encourage the students to make a "blower" by inserting a straw into the hole in their circles and taping them in place as shown in the diagram below.
6. Invite them to imagine that their blower spreads these beautiful teachings of joy and happiness to their friends, and each paper heart represents a friend. Encourage the students to place the paper hearts on the table. Holding their blowers several inches above the paper hearts, blow through the straw onto the hearts. What happens? The paper heart is blown aside.
7. Suggest that, in order to really lift hearts, we must move closer to our friends. Encourage them to repeat the experiment, but this time, hold the blower only about one half-inch above the heart. Blow again. What happens? The heart should jump up and attach to the bottom of the blower!
8. Encourage the students to think of another example in which fast moving air over the top of something causes that object to lift. This phenomenon, called *lift*, is how airplanes get off the ground.
9. Encourage students to take their blowers and hearts home to practice over and over, and demonstrate to their families how kind actions that build close friendships can attract hearts. Explain that for all people and all time, religion has the purpose of lifting our hearts to God, and helping us all to be happy.

**SEE ILLUSTRATION AND EXPLANATION
ON NEXT PAGE ➤**

TOPIC: THE NATURE AND PURPOSE OF RELIGION

The physics behind the demonstration:

When the blower was placed close to the paper, the air coming through was forced into streams of rapidly moving air. Fast-moving air has lower air pressure than slow-moving air. The fast-moving, low-pressure air moving between the blower and the paper heart pushed down less than the slow, high-pressure layer of air that exists between the table top and the bottom of the paper heart. So, the high-pressure air below pushed the heart up – giving it lift! This is how air passing over a plane’s wing creates lift.



ACTIVITY: THE PURPOSE OF RELIGION DEVOTIONAL MEETING

ELOQUENT SPEECH OBJECTIVE: To articulate the Bahá'í concept of religion

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS: Direct study of the Bahá'í Sacred Writings;
Use of reflection; Use of consultation; Use of peer teaching

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 50 MIN.

Materials Needed:

- Resource Page 33
- Music
- Items to beautify an environment for devotions

1. Invite the students to remember a time and a place where they felt very happy saying prayers and reading or reciting the verses of God. Your class may have hosted – or participated in – a devotional meeting for the community. They may also want to consider times they say prayers with their families or at the beginning of Bahá'í class. Encourage them to remember a very specific time and place and share their happy memories with as much detail as possible: Who was there? Which prayers and writings do they remember? Was their music? Was it indoors or out? Encourage the students to listen carefully to each other as they share their happy memories. This happy feeling of love for God is one of the important purposes of religion. Another important purpose of religion is to help us bring happiness to everyone.
2. Invite the students to work with you to prepare another devotional meeting, taking into account everything they know about bringing happiness to everyone: When and where shall we host this devotional meeting – as part of an ongoing series, as part of our Bahá'í classes, or at another time and place? How shall we prepare the environment to bring happiness to our guests? How shall we invite them? How shall we greet them? How can we bring them joy? Can we include music and singing?
3. All of the worlds religions have the same purpose: to draw our hearts close to God, to help us make the world a better place, and to bring happiness to everyone. Carefully study several of the attached quotations about the purpose of religion from several of the world's scriptures. Add Golden Rule statements as desired, including scriptures from the religions of the students in your class. Carefully discuss the meaning of these passages. You may choose to have the students work in small groups, with each group focusing on one of these passages. You may choose to have them memorize the passage or make a picture to show how the passage makes them feel.
4. After this period of study, select prayers, writings, and music for your devotional meeting. Consider including a story such as “A Journey Across a Desert,” pp. 100-101, *The Central Figures: Bahá'u'lláh*, vol. I.
5. Carefully practice the entire devotional program. Also practice warmly greeting the guests and other ways to show love for them. Prepare verbal or written invitations for your guests, and carry out this devotional meeting before or during the next class. It could be as simple as inviting another class to join your class for devotions or it could include the entire community.
6. After hosting this important devotional meeting, briefly review your actions at the next class. What did you do that brought happiness to your guests? What ideas do you have for future devotional meetings?

Resource Pages



The Golden Rule: The Law of Love

African Traditional

One going to take a pointed stick to pinch a baby bird should first try it on himself to feel how it hurts.

Yoruba Proverb (Nigeria)

American Indian

Do not kill or injure your neighbor, for it is not him that you injure, you injure yourself. But do good to him, therefore add to his days of happiness as you add to your own. Do not wrong or hate your neighbor, for it is not him that you wrong, you wrong yourself.

Shawnee Indian teaching

Bahá'í

Blessed is he who preferreth his brother before himself.

Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 71

Buddhism

Hurt not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful.

Udana Varga, 5:18

Christianity

Whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them.

Matthew 7:12

Confucianism

Try your best to treat others as you would wish to be treated yourself.

Mencius VII.A.4

Hinduism

One should not behave towards others in a way which is disagreeable to oneself.

Mahabharata, Anusasana Parva 113.8

Islam

Deal not unjustly, and ye shall not be dealt with unjustly.

Qur'án, 2:279

Jainism

A man should wander about treating all creatures as he himself would be treated.

Sutrakritanga 1.11.33

Judaism

You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

Leviticus 19:18



The Purpose of Religion: Devotional Meeting

Hinduism

By undivided love alone can I be truly seen, in such a form and as I am be known and entered in. So work for Me, Intent on Me be free from ties, have love for Me, and lacking hate to everyone. Who e'er is so to Me shall come.

Bhagavad Gita, 11:54-55

Buddhism

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.

Dhammapada, p. 133

Judaism

To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding; To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, 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

Christianity

The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.

Mark 12:29-31

Islam

Thus have we sent amongst you an apostle of yourselves, to recite to you our signs, to purify you and teach you the Book and wisdom, and to teach you what ye did not know; remember me, then, and I will remember you; thank me, and do not misbelieve.

Qur'án, 2: 151-2

Bahá'í Faith

O ye children of men! 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. Suffer it not to become a source of dissension and discord, of hate and enmity. This is the straight Path, the fixed and immovable foundation.

Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 168

LIST OF ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Stories & Articles:

Brilliant Star: “The Greater Covenant,” SE 92
“Manifestations,” “Always With Us” MJ 97
“Prayer Around the World” SO 98
“What Do Bahá’ís Believe?” JF 02
“Powerful Prayers” JA 02
Hofman, David, *God and His Messengers*
Herald of the South, Jul 1993, Religion as Light and Darkness”

Worksheets and Coloring Pages:

The Garden of Bahá’u’lláh, pp. 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15, 17, 19
Tablet of the Heart, God and Me, pp. 5, 9, 13, 25, 29, 49
The Light of a Good Character, p. 16

Activities:

Brilliant Star: “Holy Book of God” SE 93

Music:

Bahá’í Chorale conducted by Tom Price, *Songs of the Ancient Beauty*, “The Lords Prayer”
Bridges, *Bridges*, “Walk a Little Farther,” “Isaiah’s Rose”
Grover, Dick, *Rise Up and Sing*, “The Spirit’s the Same”
Lenz, Cameron and Sheper, *We Are Bahá’ís*, “Song of the Prophets”
Ward, Nancy, *To the Planters of Trees*, “Bismi’llah”

Games:

Brilliant Star “The Same Game” SE 95

World Wide Web:

<http://www.bahaidevotions.org/>

This is a great site for a variety of sample devotional programs and study guides.

Other favorite resources:

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, pp. 68-70, 106-109, 142-146
‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 152, 179, 327-328, 338, 361-370, 394, 404-405
‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, pp. 7-11, 236-237
Bahá’í International Community Office of Public Information, *The Prosperity of Humankind*, p. 12
Momen, Moojan, *The Phenomenon of Religion: A Thematic Approach*

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