

RELIGION AS THE GREATEST MEANS FOR UNITY

RELIGION MUST BE

THE CAUSE OF LOVE AND UNITY

**SPIRITUAL QUALITIES RELEVANT TO THIS TOPIC:
LOVE, UNITY, COMPASSION, OBEDIENCE**

Religion is verily the chief instrument for the establishment of order in the world and the tranquility amongst its peoples.

Bahá'u'lláh, Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, pp. 63–64

. . . The Guardian feels that one of the chief instruments for promoting [greater unity among the friends] is to teach the Bahá'ís themselves, in classes and through precepts, that love of God and consequently of men, is the essential foundation of every religion. . . .

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, Directives of the Guardian, p. 75

Learning Objectives and Suggested Activities



KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVES

- To know from the Bahá'í writings the glorious destiny awaiting a world that is free from prejudice
- To know from the Bahá'í writings and other sources how the religions of the past have brought order and unity, peace, and progress to the people who received the teachings of the Manifestation
- To know the common threads of the spiritual teachings of the world's great religions

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Study talks by 'Abdu'l-Bahá on this topic in *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 128–29. Acquaint the students with the places, warring peoples, and the subsequent civilizations given as examples. Use photographs and maps from history and geography books and magazines.
- Brainstorm categories of teachings that any religion might have (prayer, love for others, afterlife, etc.). Provide a different color of yarn to represent each teaching, and a cardboard weaving loom for each of the world's religions. Create a weaving for each religion using all the colors representing that religion's teachings. Compare weavings; find the common "threads."



WISDOM OBJECTIVES

- To understand the spiritual and material meaning of "organic unity"
- Through the study of the history of world culture, gain a deep appreciation of how the teachings of divinely revealed religion has been a cause of the unity of people and the advancement of their moral, social, and technological life
- To understand the obligation to consort lovingly with members of all religions

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Work in groups to research various world cultures, and create an illustrated time line of these cultures. Juxtapose the appearance of the Manifestations of God on the time line and consult to draw conclusions.
- Provide hands-on experiences with the principle of inertia, comparing the object to be moved with humanity and the outside force with religion.

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SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION OBJECTIVES

- To perceive the relationship of one’s individual character and behavior to the organic unity of the planet
- To imagine the possibilities in one’s own life and in the life of the community when there is a world culture based on unity, loving kindness, and fellowship
- To perceive all the divinely revealed religions as part of one’s own religious heritage and as contributing to one’s appreciation of the oneness of humanity
- To discern the common threads that have been the cause of the unity and advancement of all the divinely revealed religions of the world and how these apply to one’s own life
- To discern the differences in belief, social teachings, and practices of the world’s religions and appreciate the reasons for these differences
- To reflect on one’s plan to consort lovingly with members of other religions

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Create a personal “family album” of the world’s revealed religions, including favorite quotations, symbols, name of the Manifestation and holy book, and pictures of followers from around with world.
- Create a plan to associate with followers of other religions.
- Work in groups, with each group studying a different divinely revealed religion and writing its beliefs, social teachings, etc., on a card. Try matching cards with other groups. Consult about how the “matches” have been the cause of unity and advancement, and the reasons for the “non-matches.” Encourage peer questioning to gain a better understanding of other groups’ cards.



ELOQUENT SPEECH OBJECTIVES

- To demonstrate reliance on Bahá’u’lláh and His exhortations
- To demonstrate understanding of the vision for a truly united world from the Bahá’í writings and be able to share this vision with others
- To demonstrate an open and unbiased mind as one investigates the history and teachings of every religion
- To demonstrate acceptance of the eternal truths of all religions by consorting with the followers of all religions in a spirit of love and unity

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Invite students of different religious backgrounds to a Bahá’í class observance of a Holy Day, devotional meeting, or United Nations Day.
- Set family goals to own and read from each of the divinely-revealed Holy Books.
- Encourage families to make devotional visits to places of worship of other religions in one’s community.

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Sample Activities

ACTIVITY 1: THE GLORY OF HUMANITY

SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION OBJECTIVES: To imagine the possibilities in one’s own life and in the life of the community when there is a world culture based on unity, loving kindness, and fellowship; To perceive all the divinely revealed religions as part of one’s own religious heritage and as contributing to one’s appreciation of the oneness of humanity

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS: Direct use of the Bahá’í sacred writings; Use of reflection

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 45 MIN.

Materials Needed:

- Chart paper and markers
- Student journals or blank paper and pencils
- Background music
- Student folders with work from previously-completed activities

Advance Preparation: This activity may incorporate art, quotations, and student reflections from previously completed activities on pages 33–34 in this Lesson Planning Guide. Student work for activities on pages 61–62 may also be included. If students have not already begun planning a devotional meeting, World Religion Day celebration, or other event to celebrate the world’s religions (pp. 33, 61), they may begin to do so in this activity.

1. Welcome students. Encourage them to introduce themselves and any new students by responding to the question: What is the weirdest thing that has happened in your life this week? After all students have shared, briefly discuss the question: How can we learn from weird experiences, happy experiences, and even sad experiences in our lives?
2. Explain that this topic (the next several lessons) will complete our series of lessons on the oneness of religion. Briefly discuss: What are some of the most important things that we’ve been learning as we’ve studied this topic?
3. Explain that we can learn from everything we’ve studied together and also from our own experiences that we may not have yet discussed. Invite students to individually write their responses to the next several questions in their journals. Read each question one at a time and give students 2–3 minutes to write or draw their answers. Invite students to share their answers after all have completed their work on each question.
 - a. What examples have you personally observed of people working to promote the oneness of religion and respect for people of all religions? Consider such things as interfaith organizations, outreach efforts of the Bahá’í community or other religious groups, civic groups, etc.
 - b. How would a truly unified community look? What would you see or hear in this town if all people shared an understanding of the oneness of religion?
 - c. What are some actions that we could do as individuals or as a class to promote the oneness of religion and appreciation of people from all backgrounds?
4. After students have finished writing and sharing their answers, read aloud the following words of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá at least twice:

The glory of humanity is the heritage of each one.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Paris Talks, p. 129

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5. Play quiet background music and invite students to write or draw their reflections to the following questions in their journals: What does “the glory of humanity” mean to me? How can I show my appreciation for the fact that the religious heritage of the entire human race is my own personal heritage?
6. After students have had several minutes to work, suggest that they pause for a few minutes while the teacher reads eloquently the quotations on Resource Page 101.
7. After a brief period of silence, encourage students to continue to write or draw their reflections to the question: How does the richness of your religious heritage contribute to your appreciation of the oneness of humanity?
8. After allowing time for students to work, invite them to share their personal reflections with each other as desired.
9. Explain that over the next several class periods, they will have the opportunity to create their own books on the oneness of religion that they may use to explain these important ideas to others.
10. Provide time for students to begin organizing their previously completed work for inclusion in their books. Students may also need to complete or refine some pieces.
11. Then explain that the class will also have the opportunity to host a devotional meeting, World Religion Day commemoration, or other event to celebrate the world’s religions. Refer to pages 33 and 61 to initiate or to continue class consultations about this upcoming event. Especially consider program ideas and strategies for inviting guests.
12. Encourage each student to have at least one conversation with another person about this upcoming event before the next class.

JIGSAW ACTIVITY 2: ALL RELIGIONS HAVE BROUGHT LOVE AND UNITY

KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVE: To know from the Bahá’í writings and some other sources how the religions for the past have brought order and unity, peace, and progress to the people who received the teachings of the Manifestation

WISDOM OBJECTIVE: To understand how the teachings of divinely revealed religions have been a cause of unity of people and the advancement of their moral, social, and technological life through the study of the history of world culture

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS: Direct use of the Bahá’í sacred writings; Use of consultation; Use peer questioning; Use of the arts

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 60 MIN. OR MORE, AS DESIRED, OVER 1 OR MORE CLASS PERIODS

Materials Needed:

- Copies of Resource Pages 102–105
- Chart paper, markers
- Reference materials, if available
- Internet access, if available

Advance Preparation: Gather reference books as desired from the library about Moses, Jesus Christ, and Mohammad and the religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. These may include Holy Books (Old and New Testaments of the Bible, the Qur’án), histories, maps, cultural items, etc. Consider also including books such as the Kitáb-i-Íqán, Some Answered Questions, Paris Talks, and The Promulgation of Universal Peace.

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1. Welcome students and invite them to share their efforts to promote unity since the last class. Acknowledge all.

2. Explain that they are going to review evidence that the major religions of the world have all brought order, unity, peace, and progress to the people who followed these religions, using Judaism, Christianity, and Islam as examples.

3. Distribute copies of Resource Page 102. In the large group take turns reading aloud the passage.

4. Ask students what they have learned about Moses, Christ, and Muhammad and write their answers on chart paper under each Prophet's name.

5. Invite all students to decide which of these three Prophets they would like to research more, and organize the class into 3 groups according to their selection. Encourage each group to use their Resource Pages (pp. 103–05) and other available materials to answer the following questions: Where did the Prophet reveal Himself (country/people)? What were the people like before the coming of the Prophet? What did the Prophet bring to the people?

Please also select a favorite quotation from the Holy Book of this Manifestation of God. If copies of these Holy Books are not available, students may select quotations from Resource Pages 15, 63, 82, and 107.

6. This information should be agreed upon by the group. Each member of the group is responsible for making notes of the answers.

7. Reorganize the class into new groups so that each new group has one member from each of the 3 previous study groups. In these new groups, ask students to share the results of their previous group's study.

While still in these new groups, encourage students to add new ideas to their notes (made in step 6) about the gifts of the Manifestation of God to human civilization.

8. Remind students that all people are like leaves on the tree of humanity and that:

. . . The mission of the Prophets is to educate men, so that . . . this fruitless tree may be engrafted and yield the sweetest, most delicious fruits.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, Some Answered Questions, p. 236

Briefly discuss: What are some of the fruits that the Prophets have caused to come from the tree of humanity?

9. In the whole group briefly discuss: Thinking about the real trees we see, where are the larger and small branches? How are the trunk, branches, twigs, and leaves arranged? Where does the fruit appear? Make a simple sketch of a tree on chart paper as students answer these questions, to show the general shape of the tree they describe. Does it look somewhat like a tree in your region?

Discuss: How does this tree make a beautiful illustration of the human family and the Mission of the Prophets?

10. Note that students will use this image of the tree of life in a future class (Activity 5, p. 97). Consider saving the sketched tree for future reference.

11. Encourage students to continue inviting friends and acquaintances to their upcoming celebration of world religions. Encourage students also to learn about their friends' beliefs by asking questions such as: What are your beliefs about religion? Encourage them to listen with care to their friends' reflections.

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ACTIVITY 3: RELIGIOUS HERITAGE

KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVE: To know the common threads of the spiritual teachings of the world’s religions mentioned in the Baha’i writings

SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION OBJECTIVE: To discern the common threads that have been the cause of the unity and advancement of all the divinely revealed religions of the world and how these apply to ones own life

ELOQUENT SPEECH OBJECTIVE: To demonstrate understanding of the vision for a truly united world from the Baha’i writings and be able to share this vision with others

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS: Direct use of the Bahá’í sacred writings; Use of consultation; Use of peer teaching; Use of reflection

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 60 MIN. OR MORE, AS DESIRED, OVER 1 OR MORE CLASS PERIODS

Materials Needed:

- Copies of Resource Page 106
- Research materials, as available
- Internet access, if available
- Resource Page 107
- Student journals or plain paper
- Writing instruments
- Chart paper and markers

Advance Preparation: Gather reference books as desired from the library about all world religions. These may include Holy Books, histories, maps, cultural items, etc. Consider also including books such as the *Kitáb-i-Iqán*, *Some Answered Questions*, *Paris Talks*, and *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*.

1. Welcome students and encourage them to share something new they’ve learned about religion, the love of God, or service to humanity since the last class. This could be something they’ve learned about their friends’ beliefs or reflections on their own spiritual path. Acknowledge all.
2. In the whole group, brainstorm a list of common threads in the teachings of all the world’s religions. Record student ideas on chart paper.
3. Invite students to think about all the religions they’ve explored in this class and to think of one religion that they’d like to investigate further. Distribute copies of Resource Page 106 and encourage students to record their reflections to the questions at the top of this Resource Page.
4. Then encourage students to work individually or in small teams to learn more about their selected religion, using the research materials provided. They may also refer to Resource Page 107 and to any other materials they’ve studied in this class and collected in their Oneness of Religion folders.
5. Invite students to share the results of their work in the whole group. Applaud all!
6. Encourage students to use their journals and write or draw their commitment to the oneness of religion. Suggest that they begin their reflection with the words, “I will . . .”
7. After allowing time to write, invite students to share their statements in the whole group as desired.
8. Encourage students to look for examples of the power of divine assistance as they strive to promote the oneness of religion in the coming week.

ACTIVITY 4: COOPERATIVE GAME—A RELIGIOUS UNITY CIRCLE

WISDOM OBJECTIVE: To understand the obligation to consort lovingly with members of all religions

SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION OBJECTIVE: To reflect on one’s plan to consort lovingly with members of other religions

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS: Direct use of the Bahá’í sacred writings;
Use of play

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 30 MIN.

Materials Needed:

- Copies of Resource Page 108 or display these quotations on chart paper

1. Welcome students and invite them to share their progress in inviting others to their upcoming celebration of world religions. Encourage them also to support each other’s efforts to promote the oneness of religion.
2. Invite students to read aloud the passages on Resource Page 108, A Religious Unity Circle, or as displayed in the classroom.
3. Explain that these passages come from the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, the Most Holy Book of Bahá’u’lláh, and that we all have an obligation to develop a plan of action to assure that we are doing God’s will.
4. Explain that they will play a game to practice the skills necessary to consort with the followers of all religions.
5. Ask students to stand in a circle and link arms elbow to elbow. Each student should silently select one of the religions studied in this class and think of something wonderful about that religion.
6. The circle then begins to shuffle very slowly to the left, continuing until someone says, “Stop!”
7. That person then shares something wonderful about her or his selected religion.
8. When finished sharing, that same person says “Go!” and the circle begins shuffling in the other direction until someone else calls “Stop!” and shares something wonderful about his or her selected religion.
9. This continues until everyone has an opportunity to share. When all have done so, the game is over, and all rush into the Center of the circle to give themselves, humanity, a gigantic ovation.
10. Return to the usual class area and encourage students to develop a personal plan to consort lovingly with members of other religions. Encourage them to think about when, where, and how to complete their action steps.
11. Invite the students to write their plans in the form of letters to themselves and place these letters in self-addressed envelopes.
12. Collect all student letters and mail them to individual students after one month.

Game adapted from *Wonderful Circle, The Second Cooperative Sports and Gamebook*, Terry Orlick, p. 90

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ACTIVITY 5: ORGANIC UNITY, THE TREE OF LIFE

WISDOM OBJECTIVE: To understand the spiritual and material meaning of organic unity

SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION OBJECTIVE: To perceive the relationship of individual character and behavior and the organic unity of the planet

ELOQUENT SPEECH OBJECTIVE: To demonstrate understanding of the vision for a truly united world from the Bahá'í writings and be able to share this vision with others

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS: Direct use of Bahá'í sacred writings; Use of independent investigation; Use of the arts

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 45 MIN.

Materials Needed:

- Art paper for painting
- Heavy paper for creating covers for student books
- Drinking straws
- Tempera paint—green, black, brown, or other colors as desired
- Small sponges, felt, or other materials for leaves
- Fruit shapes cut out of colored paper or cloth (apples, pears, oranges, etc.) if desired
- Journals
- Resource page 109, Organic Unity
- Writing instruments

Advance Preparation: Step 7 of this project uses student work created for activities described previously, on pages 93–94.

1. Welcome students and invite them to share their efforts to promote the oneness of religion since the last class. Acknowledge all.
2. In the whole group, invite at least two students to read aloud the quotation on Resource Page 109.
3. Invite students individually to write or draw their own definition of organic unity in their journals or their Spiritual Words Dictionary.
4. Form groups and encourage all students to share their definitions with the other members of their group.
5. Invite each group to act out or mime their group's definition of organic unity. Applaud all!
6. Remind students that all people are like leaves on the tree of humanity and that:

. . . The mission of the Prophets is to educate men, so that . . . this fruitless tree may be engrafted and yield the sweetest, most delicious fruits.
7. Next, encourage students to individually create their own illustrations of the organic unity of the tree of life using paint and straws, following the procedure below. This illustration may become the cover illustration for the students' Oneness of Religion books.
 - Instruct students to place a small blob of brown or black paint somewhere near the bottom of a piece of paper. Blowing through a drinking straw, demonstrate how to create the trunk and branches of a tree. (You may have to do this a few times in order to create a fully-branched tree.)
 - After the paint dries a bit, encourage students to add leaves, using green paint and a stamp made from a small sponge, felt pieces, or other materials for making leaves.
 - Then, if desired, let them glue paper or cloth fruits onto the tree.

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‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Some Answered Questions, p. 236

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8. Invite students to work on their Oneness of Religion books by gathering materials into a folder made of heavy paper. Pages may be stapled, sewn with yarn, or hole-punched and tied with ribbon. As the illustration dries, consider how to position it on the book covers, add a book title, and student's name.
9. In the whole group, briefly discuss: How could we display our books during our celebration of world religions? Would we like to read some of the quotations or other entries as part of the program? And how could we use these books to teach others about the oneness of religion after our celebration is over?
10. Encourage students to listen carefully to their friends' ideas about religion, learn from their friends, and also share their own ideas at least once before the next class. Ask students to be prepared to share one new thing they learned from a friend about that friend's beliefs at the beginning of the next class.

ACTIVITY 6: IN SPIRIT WE ARE UNITED

KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVE: To know the common threads of the spiritual teachings of the world's great religions

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS: Direct use of Bahá'í sacred writings; Use of consultation; Use of Music

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 20 MIN.

Advance Preparation: Learn the songs "In Spirit We Are United," "God of Power," "Prayer Is a Ladder," and "Pleasant Words" by reading the sheet music on Resource Pages 110–112, listening to the songs on the CD *Singing With Ernestine* (available from the Louhelen Bahá'í School bookstore, 810-653-5033, or Louhelen@usbnc.org), or download samples from the Core Curriculum website, www.core-curriculum.org.

1. Tell the students that when the first group of Bahá'í pilgrims from the west was about to leave Haifa to return to their homes, 'Abdu'l-Bahá comforted them with these words:

The time has come when we must part, but the separation is only of our bodies; in spirit we are united forever.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, Bahá'í Scriptures, p. 503
2. Briefly discuss: Why is it important to remember that in spirit we are united forever? In what ways are we united with one another, and with people of all religious backgrounds?
3. Teach the songs "God of Power" that uses the words of Bahá'u'lláh, "Prayer Is a Ladder" from the Qur'an, and "Pleasant Words" from the Bible, using the methods taught in the Core Curriculum Teacher Development Workshop Eight or by simply repeating the song over and over.
4. Encourage students to sing these songs to help them remember the power of God to assist us as we turn to Him in prayer.
5. Then celebrate our unity by teaching the song "In Spirit We Are United."
6. Consider incorporating these songs in an upcoming devotional meeting or by including them in the songs you sing regularly at Bahá'í class.

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ACTIVITY 7: CELEBRATE THE ONENESS OF RELIGION

ELOQUENT SPEECH OBJECTIVE: To demonstrate acceptance of the eternal truths of all religions by consorting with the followers of all religions in a spirit of love and unity

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS: Education directed towards God; Use of consultation; Establish bonds of unity and fellowship; Involve service to humanity

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 60 MIN. PLUS TIME TO CARRY OUT PLANNED EVENT

Materials Needed:

- List of community service organizations collected in previous activity, p. 61 of this Lesson Planning Guide
- Completed Oneness of Religion books
- Decorated cloth strips made in previous activity, p. 33 of this Lesson Planning Guide

Advance Preparation: Consider this activity as a culminating experience for this theme of the Oneness of Religion.

1. Invite students to recite memorized quotations and prayers. Encourage them to share the results of their efforts to learn more about a friend’s religion. Acknowledge all.
2. Remind students of the previous activity to plan a celebration of World Religion Day or a devotional meeting to celebrate the central unifying truth of all religion (p. 61). Briefly discuss:
 - Who have we invited to this event?
 - Are there other members of various faiths we have yet to invite?
 - Are there other like-minded groups we have yet to invite?
 - How will we invite people—personal invitations to individuals, formal invitations to groups, written invitations to families, announcements at community events?
 - How can we create the spirit of loving hospitality, joyful fellowship, and reverence?
 - Will we invite our guests to read, sing, or chant? Do we wish to offer a prayer or selected passage on a card as a gift to our guests?
 - What simple refreshments would enhance the spirit of the occasion?
 - How can we increase awareness of this event?
3. Invite students to recall earlier discussions about music, devotional readings, artistic presentations, short talks, refreshments, environment, and invitations for this event. If the class has not already finalized plans for the gathering, discuss:
 - What do we feel will be most effective in attracting the hearts of the children that participate in our event?
 - What will attract the hearts of adults?
 - How will we use our completed Oneness of Religion books?
 - Do we want to wear the cloths we decorated for the activity “The Changeless Faith of God” on p. 33 of this Lesson Planning Guide?

Record student ideas on chart paper. Return to the questions listed in the Activity on pp. 61–62 as needed.
4. Using consultation, revisit the steps made so far by individuals or planning teams. Then have the class finalize the planning for World Religion Day. Reconfirm action steps to be taken between this class time and the event.

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GOAL: RELIGION AS THE GREATEST MEANS FOR UNITY

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5. Carry out your planned event. Arrive early to set up the space. Remember to invite visitors to ongoing devotional meetings, Bahá'í classes, and study circles in the local community.
6. Then gather students to celebrate their success. Briefly assess: What worked especially well for our planning and completion of this event? What would we like to do differently and what would we like to do the same for future activities?
7. As a class, write, phone, or personally thank all who contributed to the success of this event.



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Resource Pages

Activity 1: The Glory of Humanity

The glory of humanity is the heritage of each one.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, p. 129

Let me ask what is the purpose of prophethood? Why has God sent the prophets? It is self-evident that the prophets are the educators of men and the teachers of the human race. They come to bestow universal education upon humanity, to give humanity training, to uplift the human race from the abyss of despair and desolation and enable man to attain the apogee of advancement and glory.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 405

God is one. He is the shepherd of all. We are his sheep and therefore should live together in love and unity. We should manifest the spirit of justness and good-will toward each other. Shall we do this or shall we censure and pronounce anathema, praising ourselves and condemning all others? What possible good can come from such attitude and action? On the contrary, nothing but enmity and hatred, injustice and inhumanity can possibly result. Has not this been the greatest cause of bloodshed, woe and tribulation in the past?

Praise be to God! You are living in a land of freedom. You are blessed with men of learning, men who are well versed in the comparative study of religions. You realize the need of unity and know the great harm which comes from prejudice and superstition. I ask you, Is not fellowship and brotherhood preferable to enmity and hatred in society and community? The answer is self-evident. Love and fellowship are absolutely needful to win the good-pleasure of God which is the goal of all human attainment. We must be united. We must love each other. We must ever praise each other. We must bestow commendation upon all people, thus removing the discord and hatred which have caused alienation amongst men. Otherwise the conditions of the past will continue, praising ourselves and condemning others; religious wars will have no end and religious prejudice, the prime cause of this havoc and tribulation, will increase. This must be abandoned, and the way to do it is to investigate the reality which underlies all the religions. This underlying reality is the love of humanity. For God is one and humanity is one, and the only creed of the prophets is love and unity.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 410

Activity 2: All Religions Have Brought Love and Unity

. . . Religion must be conducive to love and unity among mankind; for if it be the cause of enmity and strife, the absence of religion is preferable. **When Moses appeared**, the tribes of Israel were in a state of disunion as captives of the Pharaohs. Moses gathered them together, and the divine law established fellowship among them. They became as one people, united, consolidated, after which they were rescued from bondage. They passed into the promised land, advanced in all degrees, developed sciences and arts, progressed in material affairs, increased in divine or spiritual civilization until their nation rose to its zenith in the sovereignty of Solomon. It is evident, therefore, that religion is the cause of unity, fellowship and progress among mankind. The function of a shepherd is to gather the sheep together and not to scatter them. **Then Christ appeared.** He united varying and divergent creeds and warring people of His time. He brought together Greeks and Romans, reconciled Egyptians and Assyrians, Chaldeans and Phoenicians. Christ established unity and agreement among people of these hostile and warring nations. Therefore, it is again evident that the purpose of religion is peace and concord. **Likewise, Muhammad appeared at a time** when the peoples and tribes of Arabia were divergent and in a state of continual warfare. They killed each other, pillaged and took captive wives and children. Muhammad united these fierce tribes, established a foundation of fellowship among them so that they gave up warring against

each other absolutely and established communities. The result was that the Arabian tribes freed themselves from the Persian yoke and Roman control, established an independent sovereignty which rose to a high degree of civilization, advanced in sciences and arts, extended the Saracen dominion as far west as Spain and Andalusia and became famous throughout the world. Therefore, it is proved once more that the religion of God is intended to be the cause of advancement and solidarity and not of enmity and dissolution. If it becomes the cause of hatred and strife, its absence is preferable. Its purpose is unity, and its foundations are one.

When Bahá'u'lláh appeared in Persia, violent strife and hatred separated the peoples and tribes of that country. They would not come together for any purpose except war; they would not partake of the same food, or drink of the same water; association and intercourse were impossible. Bahá'u'lláh founded the oneness of humanity among these people and bound their hearts together with such ties of love that they were completely united. He reestablished the prophetic foundations, reformed and renewed the principles laid down by the Messengers of God who had preceded Him. And now it is hoped that through His life and teachings the East and West shall become so united that no trace of enmity, strife and discord shall remain.

‘Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 128–29

TOPIC: RELIGION MUST BE THE CAUSE OF LOVE AND UNITY

Activity 2: All Religions Have Brought Love and Unity: Moses

For example let us review the events connected with the history of **His Holiness Moses**—Upon him be peace! His Holiness dwelt in Midian at a time when the children of Israel were in captivity and bondage in the land of Egypt, subjected to every tyranny and severe oppression. They were illiterate and ignorant, undergoing cruel ordeals and experiences. They were in such a state of helplessness and impotence that it was proverbial to state that one Egyptian could overcome ten Israelites. At such a time as this and under such forbidding conditions His Holiness Moses appeared and shone forth with a heavenly radiance. He saved Israel from the bondage of Pharaoh and released them from captivity. He led them out of the land of Egypt and into the Holy Land. They had been scattered and broken; he unified and disciplined them; conferred upon them the blessing of wisdom and knowledge. They had been slaves; he made them princes. They were ignorant; he made them learned; they were imperfect; he enabled them to attain perfection. In a word—he led them out of their condition of hopelessness and brought them to efficiency in the plane of confidence and valor. They became renowned throughout the ancient world until finally in the zenith and splendor of their new civilization the glory of the sovereignty of Solomon was attained. Through the guidance and training of His Holiness Moses these slaves and captives became the dominating people amongst the nations. Not only in physical and military superiority were they renowned but in all the degrees of arts, letters and refinement their fame was widespread. Even the celebrated philosophers of Greece journeyed to Jerusalem in order to study with the Israelitish sages and many were the lessons of philosophy and wisdom they received. Among these philosophers was the famous Socrates. He visited

the Holy Land and studied with the prophets of Israel, acquiring principles of their philosophical teaching and a knowledge of their advanced arts and sciences. After his return to Greece he founded the system known as the unity of God. The Greek people rose against him and at last he was poisoned in the presence of the king. Hippocrates and many other Greek philosophers sat at the feet of the learned Israelitish doctors and absorbed their expositions of wisdom and the inner truth.

Inasmuch as His Holiness Moses through the influence of his great mission was instrumental in releasing the Israelites from a low state of debasement and humiliation, establishing them in a station of prestige and glorification, disciplining and educating them, it is necessary for us to reach a fair and just judgment in regard to such a marvelous teacher. For in this great accomplishment he stood single and alone. Could he have made such a change and brought about such a condition among these people without the sanction and assistance of a heavenly power?

Could he have transformed a people from humiliation to glory without a holy and divine support?

No other than a divine power could have done this. Therein lies the proof of prophethood because the mission of a prophet is education of the human race such as this personage accomplished, proving him to be a mighty prophet among the prophets, and his book the very Book of God. This is a rational, direct and perfect proof.

In brief, His Holiness Moses—Upon whom be peace!—founded the law of God, purified the morals of the people of Israel and gave them an impetus toward nobler and higher attainments.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Foundations of World Unity*, pp. 94–96

Activity 2: All Religions Have Brought Love and Unity: **Christ**

When the Messianic star of Jesus Christ dawned, he declared he had come to gather together the lost tribes or scattered sheep of Moses. He not only shepherded the flock of Israel, but brought together people of Chaldea, Egypt, Syria, ancient Assyria and Phoenicia. These people were in a state of utmost hostility, thirsting for the blood of each other with the ferocity of animals; but His Holiness Jesus Christ brought them together, cemented and united them in his cause and established such a bond of love among them that enmity and warfare were abandoned.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Foundations of World Unity*, p. 22

His Holiness Jesus Christ was an educator of humanity. His teachings were altruistic; his bestowal universal. He taught mankind by the power of the Holy Spirit and not through human agency, for the human power is limited whereas the divine power is illimitable and infinite. The influence and accomplishment of Christ will attest this. Galen, the Greek physician and philosopher, who lived in the second century A.D., wrote a treatise upon the civilization of nations. He was not a Christian but he has borne testimony that religious beliefs exercise an extraordinary effect upon the problems of civilization. In substance he says, “There are certain people among us, followers of Jesus the Nazarene who was killed in Jerusalem. These people are truly imbued with moral principles which are the envy of philosophers. They believe in God and fear Him. They have hopes in His favors, therefore they

shun all unworthy deeds and actions and incline to praiseworthy ethics and morals. Day and night they strive that their deeds may be commendable and that they may contribute to the welfare of humanity; therefore each one of them is virtually a philosopher, for these people have attained unto that which is the essence and purport of philosophy. These people have praiseworthy morals even though they may be illiterate.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Foundations of World Unity*, p. 55

His Holiness Jesus Christ referring to the prophecy of Isaiah, spoke of those who “having eyes, see not, having ears, hear not, having hearts, understand not,” yet they were to be healed. Therefore it is evident that the bounties of Christ transformed the eye which was blind into a seeing one, rendered the ear which was formerly deaf, attentive, and made the hard, callous heart tender and sensitive. In other words the meaning is that although the people possess external eyes, yet the insight or perception of the soul is blind; although the outer ear hears, the spiritual hearing is deaf; although they possess conscious hearts they are without illumination; and the bounties of His Holiness Christ save souls from these conditions. It is evident then that the manifestation of the Messiah was synonymous with universal mercy. His providence was universal and his teachings were for all.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Foundations of World Unity*, pp. 105–06

TOPIC: RELIGION MUST BE THE CAUSE OF LOVE AND UNITY

Activity 2: All Religions Have Brought Love and Unity: Muhammad

Mohammed through his power was enabled to elevate a nation, for on his teachings a mighty civilization was constructed in the Arabian peninsula, the influence of which, as recorded in history, extended as far west as Spain. Let us be just. When a being, alone, in the midst of a savage tribe begins by teaching them and finally succeeds in raising them to a high degree of civilization, we must admit that he has an extraordinary power.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Divine Philosophy*, p. 89

At a time when the Arabian tribes and nomadic peoples were widely separated, living in the deserts under lawless conditions, strife and bloodshed continual among them, no tribe free from the menace of attack and destruction by another—at such a critical time Mohammed appeared. He gathered these wild tribes of the desert together, reconciled, united and caused them to agree so that enmity and warfare ceased. The Arabian nation immediately advanced until its dominion extended westward to Spain and Andalusia.

From these facts and premises we may conclude that the establishing of the divine religions is for peace, not for war and the shedding of blood.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Foundations of World Unity*, p. 22

He appeared amongst the Arabs who were a people nomadic and illiterate, barbarous in nature and blood-thirsty. He guided and trained them until they attained a high degree of development. Through his education and discipline they rose from the lowest levels of ignorance to the heights of knowledge, becoming masters of erudition and philosophy. We see therefore that the proofs applicable to one prophet are equally applicable to another.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Foundations of World Unity*, p. 98

When the Light of Muhammad shone forth all Arabia was brightened. These oppressed and degraded peoples became enlightened and cultured; so much so, indeed, that other nations imbibed Arabian civilization from Arabia. This was the proof of Muhammad’s divine mission.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *‘Abdu’l-Bahá in London*, p. 42

Muhammad was sent with His divine Message. He taught the people that idol worship was wrong, but that they should reverence Christ, Moses and the Prophets. Under His influence they became a more enlightened and civilized people and arose from the degraded state in which He found them. Was not this a good work, and worthy of all praise, respect and love?

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, p. 46

Activity 3: Religious Heritage

What do I know and how much do I know about this religion?

How can I increase my knowledge and understanding of this religion?

What are my feelings about this religion and about the members of this religion?

How can I create more and more positive feelings about this religion?

How do I act toward members of this religion?

How do I speak about this religion and its members?

How can I promote the oneness of religion when I'm with members of this religion or when I speak about this religion?

What is one new and wonderful fact about this religion?

How does this religion reflect the common threads in all religion?

What is a favorite quotation from this religion's holy book?

TOPIC: RELIGION MUST BE THE CAUSE OF LOVE AND UNITY

Activity 3: Religious Heritage

Ye were created to show love one to another and not perversity and rancor.

Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 138

. . . What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?

Micah, 6:8

I have been to the end of the earth.

I have been to the end of the waters.

I have been to the end of the sky.

I have been to the end of the mountains.

I have found none that are not my friends.

Navajo Proverb

Do not refuse a kindness to anyone who asks it, if it is in your power to perform it.

Proverbs, 3:27

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

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

Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

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

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

Matthew, 5:5–10 (King James Bible)

It is not righteousness that ye turn your faces to the East and the West; but righteous is he who believeth in God

. . . and giveth wealth, for love of Him, to kinsfolk and to orphans and the needy and the wayfarer and to those who ask. . .

The Qur'an, Surih 2, 177

Virtue and vice do not come by mere words; actions repeated, over and over again, are engraved on the soul.

Sikhism, Shri Guru Granth Sahib, Section 1—Jup

Blessed is the teaching of the truth;

Blessed is the harmony of the community;

Blessed is the devotion of those who live in peace.

Buddhist, Dhammapada—Sayings of the Buddha 2

It is better to give than to receive.

Malagasy (Madagascar) Proverb

We must continue to do good throughout our lives. If we have corn and meat, and know of a family that have none, we divide with them.

Black Hawk, Sauk chief, 1830

Activity 4: A Religious Unity Circle

Consort ye then with the followers of all religions, and proclaim ye the Cause of your Lord, the Most Compassionate; this is the very crown of deeds, if ye be of them who understand.

Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, paragraph 75, p. 47

Consort with all religions with amity and concord, that they may inhale from you the sweet fragrance of God. Beware lest amidst men the flame of foolish ignorance overpower you. All things proceed from God and unto Him they return. He is the source of all things and in Him all things are ended.

Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, paragraph 144, p. 71

TOPIC: RELIGION MUST BE THE CAUSE OF LOVE AND UNITY

Activity 5: Organic Unity, the Tree of Life

O honoured lady! For a single purpose were the Prophets, each and all, sent down to earth; for this was Christ made manifest, for this did Bahá'u'lláh raise up the call of the Lord: that the world of man should become the world of God, this nether realm the Kingdom, this darkness light, this satanic wickedness all the virtues of heaven—and unity, fellowship and love be won for the whole human race, that the organic unity should reappear and the bases of discord be destroyed and life everlasting and grace everlasting become the harvest of mankind.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, no. 15, p. 30

God of Power

Words of Bahá'u'lláh, *Prayers and Meditations*, p. 6

Music: Ernestine Atkins

♩ = 96

F C7

Soprano
Alto (Melody)
Bass-Baritone

God of pow - er, of glo - ry and _____

Thou art the God of pow - er, of glo - ry and _____

4 F C7 F

S
A
Bs.-Bar.

boun - ty. No God is there be-side _____ Thee, the Su - preme Ru -

boun - ty. No God is there be-side _____ Thee, the Su - preme Ru -

8 C7 F

S
A
Bs.-Bar.

ler, the All - Glo-ri - us, the Om - ni - scient. Thou art the

ler, the All - Glo-ri - us, the Om - ni - scient. Thou art the

Prayer Is a Ladder

Words of Muhammad, as quoted in J.E. Esslemont, *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era*, p. 87

Music: Ernestine Atkins

D G D A7

Voice

Prayer is a lad-der by which ev - ery - one may as-cend__ to Hea-ven.____

D G D A7

5

Prayer is a lad-der by which ev - ery - one may as-cend__ to Hea-ven.____

Pleasant Words

Words from the Bible, Proverbs 16:24

Music: Ernestine Atkins

Voice

The musical score is written on a single treble clef staff in a 2/4 time signature. It consists of four lines of music. The first line starts with a Dm chord and contains the lyrics 'Pleas-ant words___ are like a hon - ey-comb Pleas -ant words___ are like a'. The second line starts with a 4-measure rest and a Dm7 chord, with lyrics 'hon - ey-comb Pleas - ant words___ are like a hon - ey-comb'. The third line starts with a 7-measure rest and contains chords F and Gm, with lyrics 'Pleas - ant words___ are like a hon - eycomb sweet-ness to the soul and'. The fourth line starts with an 11-measure rest and contains chords C and Dm, with lyrics 'health_____ to_____ the bo - - - dy._____'. The piece ends with a double bar line.

Dm

Pleas-ant words___ are like a hon - ey-comb Pleas -ant words___ are like a

4 Dm7

hon - ey-comb Pleas - ant words___ are like a hon - ey-comb

7 F Gm

Pleas - ant words___ are like a hon - eycomb sweet-ness to the soul and

11 C Dm

health_____ to_____ the bo - - - dy._____

In Spirit We Are United

Words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Bahá'í Scriptures*, p. 503

Music: Ernestine Atkins

The musical score is written for a single voice part in 4/4 time. It begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The melody is simple and repetitive, with lyrics written below the notes. Chord symbols (C, G7, F) are placed above the staff to indicate accompaniment. The score is divided into measures, with measure numbers 5, 10, 15, 19, 24, and 29 marked at the beginning of their respective lines. The lyrics are: "In spi - rit we ___ are ___ u - ni - ted In spi - rit we ___ are ___ u - ni - ted In spi - rit we ___ are ___ u - ni - ted for - e - ver In spi - rit we ___ are ___ u - ni - ted In spi - rit we ___ are ___ u - ni - ted spi - rit we ___ are ___ u - ni - ted In spi - rit we ___ are ___ u - ni - ted for - e - - - ver Now the time has come when we must part But the sep - ar - a - tion ___ is on - ly of ___ the bo - dy. In spi - rit we ___ are ___ u - ni - ted In spi - rit we ___ are ___ u - ni - ted In spi - rit we ___ are ___ u - ni - ted for - e - - - - - ver".

LIST OF ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Stories & Articles:

Brilliant Star magazine:

“Junior Peacemaker Club” Jan/Feb 92

“Solutions to Every Problem” Sep/Oct 95

Herald of the South, “Religion—Agent for Equality,” Jan 1998

A Child’s Book of Values, Lesley Wright

A Faith like Mine: A Celebration of the World’s Religions through the Eyes of Children, Laura Buller

I Can Teach, Shidan Toloui-Wallace, Salka Hotz

Islam and Universal Peace, Sayyed Qutb

To the World’s Religious Leaders: A Message from The Universal House of Justice

Where Is God?, Lawrence Kushner, Karen Kushner

Worksheets and Coloring Pages:

Brilliant Star magazine:

“Always With Us” May/June 97

“Dream Dance” Nov/Dec 97

The Virtues Activity and Coloring Book

“The Earth is But One Country” May/June 02

“Consort with the followers . . .” Sep/Oct 02

Activities:

Brilliant Star magazine: “Keys to Victory” SE 95

Music:

Love Setteth the World Aflame, Bauman, Roya, “Unity Prayer”

Melodies of the Nightingale, Brown, Mahony, Doomun-Rouhani, “Unity Prayer”

Wings of Prayer, Davis, Mary, “Unity Prayer”

Lift Up Your Voices and Sing, Lenz, Jack with various artists, Volume One: “God Is One;” Volume Two: “World Citizens;”

Volume Three: “One Planet, One People, Please,” “We Will Have One World”

“*We Are One*” Leslie & Kelly,

“*Forever Will Stand*” Levine, Matthew,

“*Unity in Diversity*” Munro, Gordi,

Barley Bread and Reindeer Milk, Van Manens, “Under One Sky”

Games:

Brilliant Star magazine: “The Same Game” SE 95; “Unity Bingo” SE 95; “Customs of the Kingdom” Sep/Oct 95

Poetry:

Brilliant Star magazine: “One Heart” Jan/Feb 98

Videos:

Embrace the World Tour: A Documentary DVD

Other favorite resources:

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, pp.121–123, 130

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 128–29, 231–32, 338–38, 404–05

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, pp. 57–58

Children’s Prayers for America: Young People of Many Faiths Share Their Hopes for our Nation, introduction and compilation, Karlynn Keyes Lee

One Common Faith, on behalf of the Universal House of Justice

Peace Bible, Steven Scholl

Gems of Guidance, David Journey

Ultimate Visions: Reflections on the Religions We Choose, Martin Forward

As you find additional resources, please notify the Office of Education and Schools at the Bahá’í National Center.