

A Life of Service



Level Three — Coming of Age

TO DEVELOP ONE'S INTELLECTUAL FACULTIES SCHOLARSHIP AND THE LIFE OF THE MIND

**SPIRITUAL QUALITIES RELEVANT TO THIS TOPIC:
COURAGE, INITIATIVE, COLLABORATION**

Man is the supreme Talisman. Lack of a proper education hath, however, deprived him of that which he doth inherently possess. . . . Regard man as a mine rich in gems of inestimable value. Education can, alone, cause it to reveal its treasures, and enable mankind to benefit therefrom.

Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 259–60

The Prophets and Messengers of God have been sent down for the sole purpose of guiding mankind to the straight Path of Truth. The purpose underlying Their revelation hath been to educate all men, that they may, at the hour of death, ascend, in the utmost purity and sanctity and with absolute detachment, to the throne of the Most High.

Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 156–57

Learning Objectives and Suggested Activities

KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVES

- To know some of the Bahá'í teachings regarding scholarship and the life of the mind
- To become familiar with a learning model for spiritual development
- To become familiar with bounties and responsibilities of spiritual maturity

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Read selections from the writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá on the life of the mind.
- Research the importance of excellence in scholarship in the writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi and create a compilation.

WISDOM OBJECTIVES

- To gain a deeper appreciation of the gift of the intellect and the importance of scholarship in all fields of human endeavor
- To gain understanding of a learning model for spiritual development

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Select a passage about the life of the mind or scholarship to memorize and create a beautiful illuminated version of it.
- Create a list of important themes relating to scholarship from the writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi.
- Discuss the value of scholarship and the life of the mind from a Bahá'í perspective.

SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION OBJECTIVES

- To discern ways to develop one's intellectual gifts in service to one's own life goals
- To reflect on the application of a learning model for spiritual development toward one's goals
- To identify attitudes and actions that help a learning group succeed
- To reflect on one's own contributions to a learning group

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Select a quotation and develop goals toward implementing the message of this quotation in our daily lives.
- Create a plan for tracking progress toward these goals.
- Encourage students to reflect on the importance of scholarship for their generation and its connection to the progress of the Faith and of humanity.

ELOQUENT SPEECH OBJECTIVES

- To describe the importance of scholarship in all fields for the advancement of human civilization
- To research and report on a selected topic, using the Bahá'í writings and other literature as desired
- To create and achieve a personal goal using a learning model for spiritual development

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Invite students to create a poster illustrating their achievements toward meeting their personal goals.
- Encourage students to prepare a fireside on selected research topics and assist them to carry out this event.

TOPIC: SCHOLARSHIP AND THE LIFE OF THE MIND

Sample Activities

ACTIVITY 1: COMING OF AGE

KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVE: To become familiar with bounties and responsibilities of spiritual maturity

SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION OBJECTIVES: To identify attitudes and actions that help the group succeed;
To reflect on one’s own contributions to a learning group

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

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 45 MIN.

Materials Needed:

- Folder for each student, to save all work, handouts, and journal entries for the Life of Service topics
- Copies of Resource Pages 23 and 24
- Chart paper and markers
- Background music

Advance Preparation:

Note that students compile all their papers from the next several topics into a book during Activity 7 of the Teaching Our Peers topic, p.142 of this Lesson Planning Guide. Consider keeping these folders in the classroom.

Display the following quotation in the classroom:

O loved ones of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá! . . .

‘Abdu’l-Bahá eagerly anticipates that each one of you may become even as a fearless lion moving in the pastures of human perfection and a musk-laden breeze wafting over the meads of virtue.

The glory of glories rest upon you.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Bahá’í Prayers and Tablets for the Young*, p. 30

1. Welcome students! Consider including music in your opening devotions and invite students to read, recite, or sing their favorite prayers. Also include the posted quotation.

Briefly discuss: Who is ‘Abdu’l-Bahá? Why do we imagine that He anticipates such wonderful things for us all? Listen carefully to responses.

You may add that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was a prisoner most of His life in the Holy Land. When He was finally free in 1909, He traveled to Africa, Europe, and North America to spread Bahá’u’lláh’s Message of love and peace, justice and unity, throughout the world. We can learn from His example as we strive to make our mark on the world and attain spiritual maturity.

2. Read the quotation a second time. Explain that “musk” is a natural scent used in making perfume and that “mead” is another word for a meadow. Briefly discuss: What might it mean to be “a fearless lion moving in the pastures of

human perfection”? Can we think of examples of being fearless in the path of human perfection? What might it mean to be “a musk-laden breeze wafting [or floating] over the meads of virtue”? Can we think of examples of people being like a fragrant breeze of virtue?

3. Encourage students to think about a time that they felt like “a fearless lion moving in the pastures of human perfection” or “a musk-laden breeze wafting over the meads of virtue.” If students have a hard time thinking of an example, encourage them to recall a time that they were more fearless or more like a fragrant breeze than usual. Invite students to nod their head when they have a memory in mind.
4. Encourage them to share these memories with another student. Then affirm that one goal for this class is to increase the number of times that we have these feelings of power, strength, beauty, and virtue in our everyday lives.

TOPIC: SCHOLARSHIP AND THE LIFE OF THE MIND

5. Provide students with copies of Resource Page 23. Play background music while students write their answers. Then invite them to move around the classroom, pose these questions to 3–4 others in the class, and write their names in the appropriate column. You may wish to signal when it is time to move to another person. Teachers should also participate in this activity.
6. After students have had time to trade questions and answers, briefly discuss: What are some of the ways that we're the same as others? What are some ways that we're different? Do we see patterns in our similarities and differences? Were any of the answers a surprise?
7. In the whole group, invite volunteers to read aloud the posted quotation again. Ask students to briefly discuss with the person beside them: What are some ways that we can draw on our similarities and differences while we're together, so that each of us can be more fearless in the path of human perfections and more like breezes of virtue as we interact with others? How can we support each other in this group?
8. After allowing time for students to discuss, invite each pair to contribute one idea to the group. Record ideas on chart paper. After each team has given one idea, invite teams to share additional ideas, as desired. Record these ideas.
9. Distribute copies of Resource Page 24. Explain that 'Abdu'l-Bahá has explained some ways that groups can function effectively. Encourage the teams to read the quotations aloud and then discuss the questions again: What can we do in this group so that we're more like a fearless lion or a fragrant breeze? Circulate as students read to provide assistance, as needed.
10. After students have had time to read and discuss the questions, invite the whole group to look again at the ideas suggested in Step 8 above. Briefly discuss: Would we like to add to these suggestions?
11. In the whole group, continue the discussion until the class agrees on 4–5 general guidelines for the group. Teachers may contribute to this discussion, as desired. Explain that the class will have the opportunity to refine these guidelines in the next class, if desired. Save this list of guidelines.
12. Explain that the following lessons on a Life of Service consider important questions about coming of age spiritually, including developing our powers of intellect, our spiritual powers, and our engagement in community life. The first topic in this Lesson Planning Guide concerns scholarship and the life of the mind, a topic that will be considered in the next activity.
13. Refer again the suggested class guidelines and their purpose of helping the group succeed in its goals. Invite students to offer any contributions they'd like toward making this class a total success. Acknowledge all. Teachers may begin this process by offering a contribution that you'd genuinely like to make to the group. Some examples might be: to arrive early for class each time to greet the students as they arrive; to learn the names of every member of students' families; to share about oneself and to learn about others; to work together, study together, pray together, and have fun together.
14. After all have had the opportunity to share, encourage students to save their copies of Resource Pages 23 and 24 in their folders. Explain that they will compile all their papers into a book in a subsequent class.
15. Invite students to ask a parent or other adult the following question before the next class: What is an experience that helped you come of age or move from childhood into maturity?

Students will have the opportunity to share what they learn from their parents or other adults at the beginning of the next class.
16. Conclude the class with favorite prayers. Consider also teaching students the song introduced in Activity 2.

TOPIC: SCHOLARSHIP AND THE LIFE OF THE MIND

ACTIVITY 2: MAKE ME FEARLESS

SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION OBJECTIVE: To reflect on one’s own contributions to a learning group

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS: Use of music

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 15 MIN.

Materials Needed:

- Copies of Resource Page 25, if desired

Advance Preparation:

Learn the song “Make Me Fearless” to teach to students, using the music on Resource Page 25. You may also listen to a sample of the song on the Core Curriculum website, www.core-curriculum.org.

1. Remind students that it takes courage to fulfill our spiritual destiny and become whom we truly wish to be. Briefly discuss: What are some of the challenges we face in living a life of service? How might courage help us through these challenges? How can we gain courage?
2. Teach the song “Make Me Fearless,” one phrase at a time, using the methods taught in Teacher Development Workshop 8 or another favorite method.
3. Encourage students to remember this song as a source of courage. Consider sharing it with others at upcoming community events.

ACTIVITY 3: THE LIGHT OF HUMAN PERFECTIONS

KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVE: To become familiar with a learning model for spiritual development

WISDOM OBJECTIVE: To gain understanding of a learning model for spiritual development

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

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 60 MIN.

Materials Needed:

- Plain paper
- Chart paper and markers
- Pictures of the sun, sunrise, sunset, lamps, street lights, overhead lights, candles, fire, etc., cut from magazines or downloaded from the internet
- Copies of Resource Page 26
- Note paper and envelopes
- Nice stickers of the sun, moon, stars, candles, etc.
- Other art supplies, as desired
- Means for darkening the classroom
- Candle for each student, also used in Activity 4
- Display candle, lamp, window, and other available light sources
- Background music expressing light or brightness
- Student folders
- Dictionary
- Postage stamps, as desired
- Class guidelines from Activity 1

Advance Preparation:

Display the group guidelines created in Activity 1 in the classroom.

Display the following quotation in the classroom:

Strain every nerve to acquire both inner and outer perfections, for the fruit of the human tree hath ever been and will ever be perfections both within and without. It is not desirable that a man be left without knowledge or skills, for he is then but a barren tree. Then, so much as capacity and capability allow, ye needs must deck the tree of being with fruits such as knowledge, wisdom, spiritual perception and eloquent speech.

Bahá’u’lláh, *The Compilation of Compilations*, vol. 1, p. 247

TOPIC: SCHOLARSHIP AND THE LIFE OF THE MIND

1. Welcome students and begin the class with favorite songs and prayers.
2. Invite students to share what they learned from parents or other adults about experiences that helped them come of age. Invite students to also share their own reflections if desired. Briefly discuss: Have we noticed times that we've been more fearless or more like a breeze over the past week? Acknowledge all.
3. Refer to the posted group guidelines developed during Activity 1. Invite a volunteer to read them aloud. Invite the class to share their further reflections on these guidelines: Do we like them as they are or do we want to add or change anything?
4. When the entire group, including teachers, is satisfied with the group guidelines, invite each person to affirm them. Encourage all to turn to a person beside them and say one reason these guidelines are important. Encourage them to turn in another direction and tell that person why these guidelines are important. Applaud all! Invite students to copy these guidelines on plain paper to place in their folders. Briefly discuss: Why is it important for us to create guidelines for our group?
5. Explain that the class will have the opportunity to learn more about the process of gaining maturity with the help of a wonderful phenomenon in the world of existence—light. Pose the question: What is light?
6. Encourage students to draw on their factual knowledge to respond to this question. Acknowledge all. Then invite a volunteer to look up the definition in a dictionary and share one or more meanings of the word “light.” Affirm that light is a form of radiant energy. Ask: Is this knowledge enough?
7. Show pictures of sunrise, sunset, lamps, candles, streetlights, fire, candles, etc. Then darken the room to the extent possible. Provide a variety of experiences of light: a single candle; a small lamp; an overhead light; sunlight from a window. Briefly discuss: How do these examples build our knowledge about light?
8. Again darken the room, keeping a single candle lit. Provide a single lit candle for each student. Invite students to hold their candle close to themselves, examine all aspects of it, blow it out, and then light it again. Briefly discuss: How does this experience further build our understanding of light?
9. Play background music that has a feeling of light and brightness. Distribute copies of Resource Page 26. Invite volunteers to read these passages aloud one by one, pausing for reflection after each quotation.
10. Invite students to think about their own experiences with light, both physical and spiritual. Encourage them turn to the person beside them and share their experiences in pairs, while the music continues to play.
11. Provide students with note cards, envelopes, and beautiful stickers of the sun, moon, stars, candles, etc. Encourage them to think about a person whose life can be brightened by sharing a spiritual light. Invite them to write a short note of encouragement to that person and decorate it with stickers or with their own simple drawings. Invite them to consider including a portion of one of the quotations.
12. As students finish writing, encourage them to address the envelope and plan to deliver or send their message before the next class. You may also provide stamps and offer to mail these notes for the students.

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TOPIC: SCHOLARSHIP AND THE LIFE OF THE MIND

13. About 15 minutes before the end of class, call students' attention to the posted quotation. Carefully, eloquently read this quotation aloud twice. Then read again the last sentence and discuss the questions:

- Thinking about everything we did since we first started to define the meaning of the word "light," what helped us build our factual knowledge about light?

Listen to student responses and affirm that the definition and pictures were intended to build knowledge.

- What did we do that helped us build our deeper understanding (or the beginnings of wisdom) about light?

Listen carefully. Affirm that our experiences with the candles, etc., help us build understanding.

- So far we've talked about the physical aspects of light; what part of our experience today helped us gain a more spiritual perception about light?

Listen carefully. Affirm that the quotations and sharing of personal experiences are intended to help us develop a more spiritual perception.

- Which aspects of our experiences today reflect eloquent speech—words or actions that share our knowledge, understanding, and spiritual perceptions with others?

Listen, and then affirm that the card is a way of sharing with others.

- Encourage students to save their copies of Resource Page 26 in their folders.

14. Explain that this cycle of learning—knowledge, wisdom, spiritual perception, and eloquent speech—can help us spread the light of love, truth, justice, and unity. These fearless actions are like a breeze of virtue around the world.

15. Continue the discussion: What happens when we are separated from material light? How do we feel? What happens to the physical world around us? Record answers on chart paper.

Then discuss: What happens when we feel disconnected from spiritual light? What do we notice in the world around us? What specific actions or words tell us that humanity feels disconnected from God's Light for this day? Add to the list of answers. Read aloud the following words of Bahá'u'lláh:

. . . Backbiting quencheth the light of the heart, and extinguisheth the life of the soul.

Bahá'u'lláh, Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 265

Invite volunteers to explain what this passage means to them. Then brainstorm as a class: How can we, as individuals and as a class, help ensure that we are spreaders of light? How can we respond when we hear others backbite? Add to the group guidelines affirmed in Steps 3–4 above, as desired.

16. Invite volunteers to recopy and decorate these guidelines, to be displayed in the classroom during future classes. Remind students to send or deliver their notes of encouragement. Invite them to look for the light in the people around them during the coming week. Conclude with favorite songs and prayers.

TOPIC: SCHOLARSHIP AND THE LIFE OF THE MIND

ACTIVITY 4: THE LIGHT IN US

WISDOM OBJECTIVE: To gain a deeper appreciation of the gift of the intellect and the importance of scholarship in all fields of human endeavor

SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION OBJECTIVE: To discern ways to develop one's intellectual gifts in service to one's own life goals

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS: Direct use of Bahá'í sacred writings; Use of consultation; Use of reflection; use of arts and crafts; Use of science

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 60 MIN.

Materials Needed:

- Copies of Resource Page 27, cut apart
- Group guidelines created in the previous activity
- Chart paper and markers
- Plain paper
- Student folders
- Candle for each student
- Materials for student demonstrations:
 - The Gift of Understanding: box with a lid; wrapping paper; tape; ribbon
 - The Light of the Mind: lamp, flashlight, or candle
 - The Eyes and Ears of Investigation: glasses or magnifying glass; paper to make cut-out ears or eyes; scissors
 - The Meditative Faculty: mirror; "worldly" objects (fake gems, toy money, etc.); candle, sunlight, or other light source
 - The Mirror of the Heart: mirror; candle, window, or other light source; dust; water, or glass cleaner; paper towels
- Paper cups, plates, etc.—taper candles may be safely held by students if these candles are inserted through a slit in the center of the cup, plate, etc.
- Tiny pebbles, shells, glitter, sequins, or other noncombustible materials, if desired
- Toothpicks, if desired
- Candle decorating wax, if desired
- Background music

Advance Preparation:

Display in the classroom the group guidelines created in the previous activity.

Display the following questions during Steps 4–6 of this activity:

- Knowledge: What is this quotation telling us?
- Wisdom: Why is it important?
- Spiritual Perception: What does it mean to us personally?
- Eloquent Speech: What can we do about it?

Create a sample decorated candle. You may soften candles by placing them in a 200° oven for 10 min. You may then decorate the candle by pressing noncombustible items into the softened wax. You may choose to carve designs with a toothpick and press glitter, sequins, etc., into the softened wax to color the designs. Do not use flammable materials which may catch fire when the candle is lit. Candle decorating wax is available at craft stores or online at www.hearthsong.com. It is not necessary to soften candles if you decorate them with colored wax.

1. Welcome students. Consider including the following quotation in your opening devotions:

O ye candles which have been lighted by the fingers of the Blessed Perfection!

Praise be to God that ye are illumined by the light of knowledge and are earnestly striving to acquire noble virtues. . . . I beseech God that ye may be so highly distinguished in sciences that your fame will be noised throughout all regions

and your fair name be on the lips of all enlightened people; that ye may become the means of the exaltation of the Cause of God and the exponents of the manifold blessings of the Abhá Beauty.

May the glory of the Most Glorious rest upon you!

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Bahá'í Prayers and Tablets for the Young, p. 28

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TOPIC: SCHOLARSHIP AND THE LIFE OF THE MIND

2. Invite students to reflect on their experiences since the last class. Pose the following questions for silent reflection and then invite students each to share their thoughts or experiences in turn: What examples of the light of love, truth, justice, or unity have we noticed in the people around us? What progress have we seen in our own selves? Acknowledge all.
3. Refer to the group guidelines developed in the previous activities. If volunteers have decorated a clean copy, post and admire these. Invite a volunteer to read through the guidelines. Briefly discuss: How does our commitment to these guidelines strengthen us as individuals and as a group? Why is wholehearted agreement important? Encourage students to turn to one other person and share one positive example of a person upholding one of these guidelines. Acknowledge all.
4. Organize students into small teams. Provide each team with one of the quotations on Resource Page 27. Encourage teams to read their quotation at least twice and discuss the posted questions. Circulate as students work to provide encouragement and assistance, as needed.
5. After students understand their quotation and respond to the questions, provide each team with the materials described above for that quotation. Encourage teams to use the materials to teach other students about their quotation, including all or part of the quotation, their answers to the questions in Step 4, and a physical demonstration of the metaphor. Continue circulating as students work to provide assistance, as needed.
6. Invite teams to share their presentations in the whole group. Applaud all!
7. Provide students with plain paper. Explain that journals provide us with an important means to track our own path to maturity. Encourage them to write or draw their answer to the questions: What am I learning about the light inside myself? What are some of my gifts and powers? How can I develop my mental and spiritual powers in service to my life goals? Add these to the list of posted questions. Consider playing background music as students work. After students have time to record their reflections, encourage students to save these papers in their folders.
8. Provide each student with a softened candle and materials to press into it or a hard candle and candle decorating wax. Display a sample candle, if possible. Invite students to decorate their candles to express their inner light. Consider playing background music as students work.
9. About 10 minutes before the end of class, slightly darken the room, and invite students to light their candles and share one statement about the power of their inner light. Insert taper candles through a small paper plate or cup to prevent drips. Invite them to reflect on the light that God has placed in them and to identify one new or stronger way to reflect this light at home, at school, or with their friends. Encourage them to use their powers of investigation to search for and acknowledge the light in the people around them. Encourage them to take their candles home and with their parents' permission, light them when they say their prayers, reflect on their day, and read the sacred writings.
10. Conclude the activity with favorite songs and prayers, perhaps including the song taught in the next activity.

TOPIC: SCHOLARSHIP AND THE LIFE OF THE MIND

ACTIVITY 5: THE SOUL IS THE SUN

WISDOM OBJECTIVE: To gain a deeper appreciation of the gift of the intellect and the importance of scholarship in all fields of human endeavor

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS: Use of music

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 15 MIN.

Materials Needed:

- Copies of Resource Page 25, if desired

Advance Preparation:

Learn the song “The Soul Is the Sun” to teach to the students, using the music on Resource Page 25. You can hear a sample of this song on the Core Curriculum website, www.core-curriculum.org.

1. Explore the importance of developing our spiritual reality through the song on Resource Page 25.
2. Then discuss: What are the analogies in this song? How are the analogies of light used in this song the same or different from those which we have discussed in previous activities (see Activities 3 and 4)? How does this song add to our understanding of the light within us?
3. You may also enjoy singing other favorite songs together. Consider including this and other songs in upcoming community gatherings.

ACTIVITY 6: SETTING A PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT GOAL

SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION OBJECTIVE: To reflect on the application of a learning model for spiritual development toward one's goals

ELOQUENT SPEECH OBJECTIVE: To create and achieve a personal goal using a learning model for spiritual development

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

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 30 MIN.

Materials Needed:

- Copies of Resource Pages 28 and 29
- Chart paper and markers
- Plain paper
- Glue
- Background music
- Uplifting pictures of nature, diverse groups of people, or abstract designs cut from magazines or downloaded from the internet
- Student folders

Advance Preparation:

Display the following quotation in the classroom:

Strain every nerve to acquire both inner and outer perfections, for the fruit of the human tree hath ever been and will ever be perfections both within and without. It is not desirable that a man be left without knowledge or skills, for he is then but a barren tree. Then, so much as capacity and capability allow, ye needs must deck the tree of being with fruits such as knowledge, wisdom, spiritual perception and eloquent speech.

Bahá'u'lláh, *The Compilation of Compilations*, vol. 1, p. 247

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TOPIC: SCHOLARSHIP AND THE LIFE OF THE MIND

1. Welcome students. Invite them to share the results of their efforts to spread light: Did anything surprising happen? What did they notice in others? How can it help us and help the world when we focus on the light in ourselves and in others?
2. Invite volunteers to read aloud the posted quotation twice. Discuss the questions:
 - Why should we strain every nerve to acquire inner and outer perfections?
 - What are some examples of inner perfections? Outer perfections?
 - Why should we pay attention to capacity and capability? Are we all the same?
 - What is an example of knowledge? Wisdom? Spiritual perception? Eloquent speech? Acknowledge all.

Invite a volunteer to read the posted quotation again. Explain that we will practice using this learning model to achieve a goal that we choose for ourselves.

3. Encourage students to think about all the people they know—young and old, rich and poor, well schooled or educated primarily through life experience—and identify someone that seems truly spiritually mature. Encourage them to reflect: What is it that makes that person mature? How do we recognize spiritual maturity when we see it in others? Invite students to share their reflections with the person beside them. Then in the whole group discuss: What makes a person mature? Record student responses on chart paper.
4. Encourage students to listen as you or other capable readers share the stories about ‘Abdu’l-Bahá on Resource Page 28. Then continue the discussion: What did people experience when they met ‘Abdu’l-Bahá? What would we like to add to our list of ways to recognize maturity when we see it? Record student responses on chart paper. Read again this entire list.
5. Play background music while you invite students to silently and individually reflect on

the elements of spiritual maturity. Invite them to select one element of spiritual maturity that they’d like to strengthen in themselves. Provide students with plain paper and invite them to describe the quality that they’d like to strengthen. Teachers may also select a goal.

6. Then invite students to move to the selection of magazine pictures provided. Encourage them to select one picture that represents that quality in themselves today. Invite them to also select a picture that represents themselves after a period of a few months, with this quality made stronger through their own efforts, the support of others, and the power of divine assistance. Teachers may also select pictures.
7. When students have selected their pictures, invite them to share these 2 pictures in the whole group. Acknowledge all. Encourage students to glue these pictures to their paper and save these papers in their folders.
8. Then provide students with copies of Resource Page 29. Encourage them to respond to the questions with words and pictures, creating a simple plan to make progress toward their selected goal. Remind students that simple plans actually completed are more powerful than complex plans that are not fulfilled. Circulate as students work to provide encouragement and respond to questions. Teachers may also create their own plans.
9. After students have finished writing or drawing their plans, invite volunteers to share elements of their plans in the whole group if they like. Acknowledge all. Save both Resource Pages in student folders.
10. Briefly discuss: What are some practical ways that we can encourage each other and support each other as we work toward our goals? Record student ideas on chart paper. Encourage students to individually and silently commit to one way to contribute positively to the plans of others in the group. Invite students to conclude the activity with favorite songs and prayers.

TOPIC: SCHOLARSHIP AND THE LIFE OF THE MIND

Resource Pages

Activity 1: Coming of Age

Directions:

- Write your answers to the questions in the first column. Complete Question 11 to add to this list and write your answer.
- Then pose these same questions to others. If their answer is the same, write their name in the “Same Answer” column. If their answer is different, write their name in the “Different Answer” column.

Questions and Your Answers	Same Answer	Different Answer
1. Where were you born?		
2. How many sisters and brothers do you have?		
3. What pets do you have, if any?		
4. What languages do you speak?		
5. Where did your ancestors live?		
6. What is your favorite food?		
7. What is your favorite prayer?		
8. What is a time that you felt like a fearless lion?		
9. What is a time that you felt like a refreshing breeze?		
10. What is one hope for this class?		
11. What is _____?		

Activity 1: Coming of Age

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

Bahá'u'lláh, in *The Proclamation of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 9

They must when coming together turn their faces to the Kingdom on High and ask aid from the realm of Glory.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Consultation: A Compilation*, p. 6

The prime requisites for them that take counsel together are purity of motive, radiance of spirit, detachment from all else save God, attraction to His Divine Fragrances, humility and lowliness amongst His loved ones, patience and long-suffering in difficulties and servitude to his exalted Threshold.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Consultation: A Compilation*, p. 5

True consultation is spiritual conference in the attitude and atmosphere of love. Members must love each other in the spirit of fellowship in order that good results may be forthcoming.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 72–73

Man should weigh his opinions with the utmost serenity, calmness and composure. Before expressing his own views he should carefully consider the views already advanced by others.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 72

They must then proceed with the utmost devotion, dignity, care and moderation to express their views.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Consultation: A Compilation*, p. 6

. . . Every member expresseth with absolute freedom his own opinion and setteth forth his argument. Should anyone oppose, he must on no account feel hurt for not until matters are fully discussed can the right way be revealed.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Consultation: A Compilation*, p. 5

. . . It is in no wise permissible for one to belittle the thought of another.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Consultation: A Compilation*, p. 6

Remember, above all, the teaching of Bahá'u'lláh concerning gossip and unseemly talk about others. Stories repeated about others are seldom good. A silent tongue is the safest. Even good may be harmful, if spoken at the wrong time, or to the wrong person.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *'Abdu'l-Bahá in London*, p. 125

TOPIC: SCHOLARSHIP AND THE LIFE OF THE MIND

Activity 2: Make Me Fearless

"Make Me Fearless"

By Rose McCoy

C F C F C F G7

Make me fear - less like a jun - gle li - on, like a roar - ing o - cean, like an ea - gle in flight. Make me

C F C F C G7 C G7 C

fear - less like Mul - lá Hu - sayn, like Tá - hi - rih, like 'Ab - du'l - Ba - há. Make me 'Ab - du'l - Ba - há.

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Activity 5: The Soul Is the Sun

The Soul Is the Sun

Text and Music: Nancy Ward, 1985

Sing verse, then chorus; then divide group in half and sing both at the same time.

C Am Dm G C Am

1. The soul _____ is the sun and the
soul _____ is the flame and the

Dm G C Am

earth _____ is the bo - dy, the soul _____ is the light and the
earth _____ is the can - dle, the soul _____ is the bird and the

Dm G C Am Dm G

bo - dy is the lamp. 2. The shines, it flows, it
bo - dy is the cage. Chorus: It

C Am Dm G Dm G

1. flies. it glows, it
2. Repeat verse and end.

Activity 3: The Light of Human Perfections

So powerful is the light of unity that it can illuminate the whole earth.

Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 288

The light of a good character surpasseth the light of the sun. . . .

Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 36

No light can compare with the light of justice. The establishment of order in the world and the tranquility of the nations depend upon it.

Bahá'u'lláh, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, pp. 28–29

God grant that the light of unity may envelop the whole earth, and that the seal, “the Kingdom is God’s,” may be stamped upon the brow of all its peoples.

Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 11

The Heavenly Father gave the priceless gift of intelligence to man so that he might become a spiritual light, piercing the darkness of materiality, and bringing goodness and truth into the world.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, p. 113

If ye will follow earnestly the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, ye shall indeed become the light of the world. . . .

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, pp. 113–14

Truth is God’s guidance, it is the light of the world, it is love, it is mercy.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, p. 120

Love is the light that guideth in darkness, the living link that uniteth God with man, that assureth the progress of every illumined soul.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 27, no. 12

Every child is potentially the light of the world—and at the same time its darkness; wherefore must the question of education be accounted as of primary importance.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 130

O ye candles which have been lighted by the fingers of the Blessed Perfection!

Praise be to God that ye are illumined by the light of knowledge and are earnestly striving to acquire noble virtues. . . . I beseech God that ye may be so highly distinguished in sciences that your fame will be noised throughout all regions and your fair name be on the lips of all enlightened people; that ye may become the means of the exaltation of the Cause of God and the exponents of the manifold blessings of the Abhá Beauty.

May the glory of the Most Glorious rest upon you!

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Bahá’í Prayers and Tablets for the Young*, p. 28

TOPIC: SCHOLARSHIP AND THE LIFE OF THE MIND

Activity 4: The Light in Us

The Gift of Understanding

First and foremost among these favors, which the Almighty hath conferred upon man, is the gift of understanding. His purpose in conferring such a gift is none other except to enable His creature to know and recognize the one true God—exalted be His glory. This gift giveth man the power to discern the truth in all things, leadeth him to that which is right, and helpeth him to discover the secrets of creation.

Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, XCV, p. 194

The Light of the Mind

The mind is the power of the human spirit. Spirit is the lamp; mind is the light which shines from the lamp. . . . Mind is the perfection of the spirit and is its essential quality, as the sun's rays are the essential necessity of the sun.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 208

The Eyes and Ears of Investigation

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. This is his endowment and equipment for the investigation of reality. Man is not intended to see through the eyes of another, hear through another's ears nor comprehend with another's brain. Each human creature has individual endowment, power and responsibility in the creative plan of God.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 293

The Meditative Faculty

The meditative faculty is akin to the mirror; if you put it before earthly objects it will reflect them. Therefore if the spirit of man is contemplating earthly subjects he will be informed of these. But if you turn the mirror of your spirits heavenwards, the heavenly constellations and the rays of the Sun of Reality will be reflected in your hearts, and the virtues of the Kingdom will be obtained. Therefore let us keep this faculty rightly directed—turning it to the heavenly Sun and not to earthly objects—so that we may discover the secrets of the Kingdom, and comprehend the allegories of the Bible and the mysteries of the spirit.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, p. 176

The Mirror of the Heart

The most important thing is to polish the mirrors of hearts in order that they may become illumined and receptive of the divine light. One heart may possess the capacity of the polished mirror; another, be covered and obscured by the dust and dross of this world. Although the same Sun is shining upon both, in the mirror which is polished, pure and sanctified you may behold the Sun in all its fullness, glory and power, revealing its majesty and effulgence; but in the mirror which is rusted and obscured there is no capacity for reflection, although so far as the Sun itself is concerned it is shining thereon and is neither lessened nor deprived. Therefore, our duty lies in seeking to polish the mirrors of our hearts in order that we shall become reflectors of that light and recipients of the divine bounties which may be fully revealed through them.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 14–15

Activity 6: Setting a Personal Development Goal



Major Wellesley Tudor-Pole, a British officer who met ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in Palestine on many occasions, has written a great deal about the Master. The following is a brief excerpt:

Although of a little less than medium height, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá made an impression on all who met him by His dignity, friendliness, and His aura of spiritual authority. His blue-grey eyes radiated a luminosity of their own and His hands were beautiful in their grace and healing magnetism. Even His movements were infused with a kind of radiance. . . .

The most abiding impression I received from intimate contact with Him was His immense breadth of outlook, permeated with the spirit of deep and loving kindness. Whatever the topic under discussion—ranging from religion to the weather, from sunsets to the flowers, from ethics to personal behavior, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá always struck the universal note, the note of Oneness as between the Creator and all His creation, great or small. . . .

He was a man of great spiritual stature and prophetic vision and I shall always cherish the affection He bestowed upon me and the inspiration that His life and example have given to me ever since He first came into my life in 1908.

Horace Holley, an American Bahá’í later appointed as one of the Hands of the Cause of God, met ‘Abdu’l-Bahá for the first time in the summer of 1911. He described his memorable meeting with the Master in these words:

He displayed a beauty of stature, an inevitable harmony of attitude and dress I had never seen nor thought of in men. Without having ever visualized the Master, I knew that this was He. My whole body underwent a shock. My heart leaped, my knees weakened, a thrill of acute, receptive feeling flowed from head to foot. I seemed to have turned into some most sensitive sense-organ, as if eyes and ears were not enough for this sublime impression. In every part of me I stood aware of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s presence. From sheer happiness I wanted to cry—it seemed the most suitable form of self-expression at my command. While my own personality was flowing away, even whilst I exhibited a state of complete humility, a new being, not my own, assumed its place. A glory, as it were, from the summits of human nature poured into me, and I was conscious of a most intense impulse to admire. . . .

To look upon so wonderful a human being, to respond utterly to the charm of His presence—this brought me continual happiness. I had no fear that its effects would pass away and leave me unchanged. . . . Patriarchal, majestic, strong, yet infinitely kind, He appeared like some just king that very moment descended from His throne to mingle with a devoted people. . . .

Adib Taherzadeh, *The Covenant of Bahá’u’lláh*, pp. 107–08

TOPIC: SCHOLARSHIP AND THE LIFE OF THE MIND

Activity 6: Setting a Personal Development Goal

Strain every nerve to acquire both inner and outer perfections, for the fruit of the human tree hath ever been and will ever be perfections both within and without. It is not desirable that a man be left without knowledge or skills, for he is then but a barren tree. Then, so much as capacity and capability allow, ye needs must deck the tree of being with fruits such as knowledge, wisdom, spiritual perception and eloquent speech.

Bahá'u'lláh, *The Compilation of Compilations*, vol. 1, p. 247

Knowledge: What perfection or quality would I like to develop in myself? How will I know it when I see it? Can I think of a quotation that describes what I want to be or do?

Wisdom: Why is this quality important? Who demonstrates this quality well? How do they show it?

Spiritual Perception: What are some possible action steps that I could take to strengthen this quality in myself?

Eloquent Speech: When and where do I plan to take the first step? Who will be served by my actions? How will I celebrate my progress?

LIST OF ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Books, Stories, and Articles:

“Excellence in All Things: Bahá’í Education,” *The Compilation of Compilations*, vol. 1

Brilliant Star magazine:

“Solutions to Every Problem,” Sep/Oct 1995

“What Would You Invent?” Sep/Oct 1999

“What in the World?” Sep/Oct 1999

“Is There a God?” Sep/Oct 1999

“Your Amazing Body,” Sep/Oct 2000

“When I Grow Up,” Jul/Aug 2001

“A Festival of Fun Jobs,” Jul/Aug 2001

“Someday I Could Be . . .” May/June 2005

“Your Imaginative Invention,” Jan/Feb 2006

“Stretch Your Creative Muscles,” Jan/Feb 2006

“Unlock Your Powers,” Jan/Feb 2006

Activities:

Brilliant Star magazine:

“Children’s Speech Club,” Sep/Oct 1993

“A-wording We Will Go,” Nov/Dec 1999

“Brain-Maze,” Sep/Oct 2000

“Explore Your Talents,” Jul/Aug 2001

“Job Search,” Jul/Aug 2001

Poetry:

Brilliant Star magazine:

“The Forest of Knowledge,” Sep/Oct 1999

“Poetry Peak,” Jul/Aug 2000

Other Favorite Resources:

If you find any additional resources, please notify the Office of Education and Schools at the Bahá’í National Center, email SCHOOLS@usbnc.org, or submit your findings to the Core Curriculum website, www.core-curriculum.org.

TO DEVELOP ONE'S INTELLECTUAL FACULTIES

THE KITÁB-I-AQDAS

**SPIRITUAL QUALITIES RELEVANT TO THIS TOPIC:
POWER, BEAUTY, STRENGTH**

We have directed that in the beginning they should be trained in the observances and laws of religion. . . .

Bahá'u'lláh, in *Bahá'í Education*, p. 6, no. 26

In such a manner hath the Kitáb-i-Aqdas been revealed that it attracteth and embraceth all the divinely appointed Dispensations. Blessed those who peruse it! Blessed those who apprehend it! Blessed those who meditate upon it! Blessed those who ponder its meaning! So vast is its range that it hath encompassed all men ere their recognition of it. Ere long will its sovereign power, its pervasive influence and the greatness of its might be manifested on earth.

Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 16

Learning Objectives and Suggested Activities

KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVE

- To become familiar with the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, its style, structure, and contents

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Working in pairs, create an outline of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas through a class jigsaw activity.
- Select one of the laws in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas with a partner and memorize a relevant quotation about this law.
- Encourage students to read selections of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas each night. Track progress and share reflections during each class.

WISDOM OBJECTIVE

- To gain a deeper appreciation of the purpose and the language of divine law in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, the Most Holy Book

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Identify the merciful language of this book of laws and contrast it with autocratic and dogmatic rules of the past.
- In pairs, examine the tone and language in which selected laws are given and report findings to the whole group.
- Identify and discuss indications in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas that it was written for a more mature stage of human civilization than previous divinely revealed books of laws.

SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION OBJECTIVES

- To meditate on ways to incorporate the laws of God into one's own daily life and one's path of service to God and to humanity
- To recognize challenges in obeying the laws of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas and strategies for addressing and overcoming these challenges

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Play soft music and invite students to reflect silently on specific laws from the Kitáb-i-Aqdas to understand and implement more fully in their lives.
- In small groups, identify possible challenges in implementing the laws chosen and discuss ways to overcome these challenges.
- In small groups, create posters illustrating the challenges and solutions in implementing of laws of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas. Share these posters with classmates and with the community.

ELOQUENT SPEECH OBJECTIVES

- To share with others key insights from the Kitáb-i-Aqdas and one's understanding of the importance of this Most Holy Book for transforming human civilization
- To establish a systematic process for calling oneself to account each day regarding one's own appreciation of and actions regarding the laws established in the Most Holy Book

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Assist students to prepare and present a fireside on the Kitáb-i-Aqdas.
- Working in pairs, prepare a presentation on one segment of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, including its structure and importance.
- Present a copy of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas to a school or community library. Share your plans with and seek guidance from the Local Spiritual Assembly.

TOPIC: THE KITÁB-I-AQDAS

Sample Activities

ACTIVITY 1: THE MATURITY OF THE HUMAN RACE

KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVE: To become familiar with the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, its style, structure, and contents

WISDOM OBJECTIVE: To gain a deeper appreciation of the purpose and language of divine law in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, the Most Holy Book

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS: Direct use of Bahá’í sacred writings; Use of stories; Use of independent investigation; Use of consultation

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 60 MIN.

Materials Needed:

- Chart paper and markers
- Paperback gift copies of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, if possible
- Dictionaries
- Small note pads or plain paper
- Pencils
- Basket
- Ribbon, yarn, or embroidery floss, if desired
- Small beads, if desired
- Heavy paper or cardstock, if desired
- Brass fasteners, if desired

Advance Preparation:

If it is not possible to offer gift copies of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas to students, borrow enough copies so that each student or small team of students will have access to a book.

Consider how you might reverently present students with personal copies—or copies that they may use—of the Most Holy Book during Step 10 of this activity. Some options include: moving students to another area that you have prepared with flowers and a photograph of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá or of Holy Places; darkening the room and lighting candles; singing or playing music; inviting student into a lovely outdoor area; offering rosewater or other fragrance; placing the books on a special cloth; or sharing your own memories of the first time you saw or read this book.

Familiarize yourself with the contents of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas to be able to assist students to refer to all sections in the book. Read and reflect on the introduction, pp. 1–12.

Note that the Kitáb-i-Aqdas is also studied in the Central Figures: Bahá’u’lláh, Level 3 Lesson Planning Guide. If students have studied that topic recently, you may wish to remind them of some of the points in that study.

1. Welcome new and returning students. Invite them to share their reflections on spiritual maturity and their observations of the power of mature acts in themselves and others. If desired, also invite students to share their reflections on their efforts to develop spiritual qualities. Acknowledge all.
2. Invite students to form teams of 2. Encourage these teams to identify and describe 3 ways that they’re alike and 3 ways that they’re different. Acknowledge all.
3. Affirm that when we’re united, our differences become a source of strength and that the ability to draw on the strength of our differences is a sign of maturity. Read aloud the following quotation twice:

The suckling babe passeth through various physical stages, growing and developing at every stage, until its body reacheth the age of maturity. Having arrived at this stage it acquireth the capacity to manifest spiritual and intellectual perfections. The lights of comprehension, intelligence and knowledge become perceptible in it and the powers of its soul unfold.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 285

4. Invite the teams of 2 to create a very brief role-play that shows the actions of first an immature individual and then a mature individual with the lights of comprehension, intelligence, and knowledge. Applaud all!
5. Then read aloud twice the next part of that same quotation:

Similarly, in the contingent world, the human species hath undergone progressive physical changes and, by a slow process, hath scaled the ladder of civilization, realizing in itself the wonders, excellencies and gifts of humanity in their most glorious form, until it gained the capacity to express the splendors of spiritual perfections and divine ideals and became capable of hearkening to the call of God. Then at last the call of the Kingdom was raised, the spiritual virtues and perfections were revealed, the Sun of Reality dawned, and the teachings of the Most Great Peace, of the oneness of the world of humanity and of the universality of men, were promoted.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, pp. 285–86

Briefly discuss: Why do we think that the teachings of the Most Great Peace and of the oneness of the world of humanity are attributes of the maturity of the human race? Acknowledge all.
6. Explain that the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh provide the guidance necessary for this new stage in the development of humanity. Briefly discuss: What are some things that we already know about the teachings for this age of human maturity? Record student ideas on chart paper.
7. Then discuss: What are some things that we'd like to know? Record student questions on chart paper.
8. Explain that the class will have the opportunity to explore the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh by reading, as a class, parts of the Most Holy Book, the Kitáb-i-Aqdas. Explain that the first authorized translation into English of this book, that Charter of the future world civilization that Bahá'u'lláh's teachings will build, was published in 1992, as the 100th Anniversary of the Ascension of Bahá'u'lláh was commemorated worldwide.
9. Bahá'ís everywhere celebrated this auspicious occasion. For example:

In Papua New Guinea, the residents of the village of Medene prepared a temporary meeting house and a program of prayers, readings, and speeches of welcome for the Most Holy Book. They constructed a dignified flower-decorated bower beside the river two kilometers from the village where they knew those carrying the Aqdas over the mountain would need to place it while they rested. The footpath leading to the village was widened and decorated with palm fronds and fragrant flowers. Bahá'í youth composed songs in the local languages to mark the occasion.¹
10. Reverently present students with copies of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, as planned during your Advance Preparation, to provide an example of reverence for the Most Holy Book.
11. Invite students to open their books and find the table of contents. Briefly discuss: What is in the book? Why do we imagine there might be all these different parts? Listen carefully to student comments and then affirm that the notes, questions and answers, and Shoghi Effendi's description of the book help assure our accuracy of understanding. Encourage students to use the table of contents and find all the different sections of the book.

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¹ *The Bahá'í World*, 1994–95, pp. 96–97

TOPIC: THE KITÁB-I-AQDAS

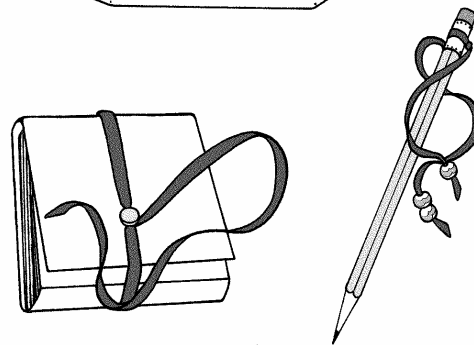
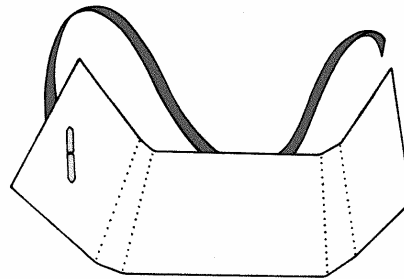
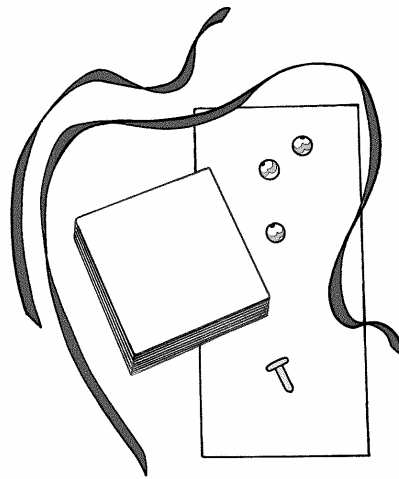
12. Encourage students to continue working in teams of 2 to turn to the index and find a heading that interests them. Encourage them to look up the references to the paragraphs in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, as well as any notes or questions and answers that apply to that topic, referring to dictionaries as desired. Circulate as students work to provide encouragement and assistance. After all students have identified paragraphs in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas and related texts that apply to their topic, invite teams to summarize what they learned in the whole group. Acknowledge all. Briefly discuss: What do these examples tell us about the teachings of God needed for this new age? Have we answered some of our questions from Step 7 above?

13. Invite students to undertake a personal study of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas by reading 1–2 paragraphs or 1–2 pages each day between now and the next class and to bring their books back to the next class. Consult together and agree on a realistic plan that students are confident they can fulfill.

Alternatively, you may decide to keep the books for use in the classroom.

14. Provide students with small note pads or plain paper. Explain that this note paper is for recording their important questions as they read the Kitáb-i-Aqdas. Suggest that they write at least 2 questions each week. Briefly discuss: What are some good ways to start questions? Record these words and phrases—who, what, when, where, why, how—on chart paper.

15. As time permits, encourage students to begin their study between now and the end of class. About 10 minutes before the end of class, invite students to place any questions they've already created in a basket. Also add questions generated in Step 7. Explain that these questions will be explored in the next activity. If desired, provide students with cardstock or heavy paper to make simple folders for their note pads. They may also use ribbon, yarn, etc., to tie around the book and notepad to keep them together.



Students may also wrap their pencils and keep this special pencil and notepad with their copy of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas.

16. Encourage students to think of one person at home that they can tell about their study plan and to invite that person's support for their plan. Encourage them also to think of one person they know who is not from a Bahá'í family that they feel may be interested in Bahá'u'lláh's plan for human civilization. Suggest that they also tell those people about their study plan, and consider inviting them to join this class.

17. Conclude the activity with favorite songs and prayers.

ACTIVITY 2: THE LANGUAGE OF THE LAWS OF GOD

WISDOM OBJECTIVE: To gain a deeper appreciation of the purpose and the language of divine law in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, the Most Holy Book

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS: Direct use of Bahá'í sacred writings; Use of consultation; Use of peer teaching; Use of independent investigation; Use of arts and crafts

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 60 MIN.

Materials Needed:

- Student copies of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas from Activity 1
- Basket with remaining questions from Activity 1
- Chart paper and markers
- Reference copies of Resource Page 43
- Ribbon, palm fronds, or long blades of grass
- Fine-point permanent marker
- Glue
- Needle and thread
- Tape
- Sequins, if desired

Advance Preparation:

Fold a sample fish according to the directions on Resource Page 43.

Read and reflect on Shoghi Effendi's Description of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, pp. 13–18 of the Most Holy Book. Page numbers throughout this topic refer to the 1993 paperback version of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas.

Read and reflect on the first portion of this book, according to whatever plans were made by the class in Step 13 of Activity 1 for this topic.

Write 2–3 questions inspired by your reading of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas to place in the basket.

1. Welcome new and returning students. Invite them to share their reflections on the Kitáb-i-Aqdas: What might it mean in our own lives to be studying this Charter for a new world civilization—a civilization that will mark the coming of age of the human race—while we are approaching spiritual maturity as individuals?
2. Invite students to share highlights of their efforts to reach out in friendship to others. Acknowledge all.
3. If students have read portions of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas since the last class, invite students to place their questions in a basket. Explain that the class will consider these questions later in this activity.
4. Encourage students to turn to p. 6 in the introduction to the Kitáb-i-Aqdas. Invite volunteers to take turns reading sentences in the paragraph in the middle of the page, beginning with the words, “Indeed, the laws of God are like unto the ocean and the children of men as fish, did they but know it.” Then invite a volunteer to read the first sentence of this paragraph a second time.
5. In the whole group, discuss: How do we imagine that the laws of God are like the ocean and people like fish? How can we guide our friends to the ocean of true understanding? Can we think of some examples of Bahá'u'lláh's tact in the paragraphs we've already read of the Most Holy Book?
6. Encourage students to turn to paragraph 3 of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, pp. 21–22. Again, invite volunteers to take turns reading this paragraph sentence by sentence. In the whole group, discuss: What are some of the ways that Bahá'u'lláh describes the laws of God? Record these phrases on chart paper.
7. Next invite teams of students to read aloud one of the following paragraphs: 4, 5, 185, 186. Encourage teams to find additional descriptions of the laws of God in their assigned paragraph.
8. After teams have read their paragraphs, invite them to share these descriptions in the whole group. Add the phrases to the chart paper. If desired, refer to note 2 on pp. 167–68.

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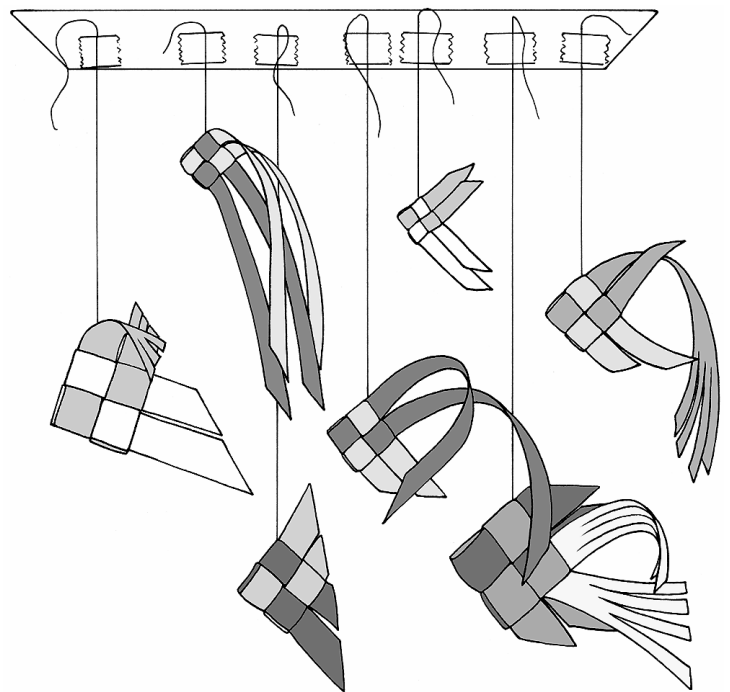
TOPIC: THE KITÁB-I-AQDAS

Briefly discuss: How do all these phrases help humanity to understand the purpose of divine law? How do they show Bahá'u'lláh's tact and wisdom? How do they help us remember that this is the time for humanity's coming of age?

9. Show students the sample ribbon fish. Explain that friends from the country of Laos taught many people how to make these fish, and they are also used in other countries. Using copies of Resource Page 43, demonstrate how to fold these fish from ribbon or other materials.
10. Invite students to make their own ribbon fish and write one of the phrases that describe the laws of God on the long tail of the fish. If desired, use permanent marker or glue sequins for eyes.
11. When the fish are complete, use the needle to pull a thread through one of the loops of ribbon. Hang the fish in a group from the ceiling, doorframe, or window frame. Consider leaving these fish on display while the class continues its study of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas. Suggest that the class use them as a reminder that the laws of God are like the ocean and that we are like the fish in that ocean.
12. When most students have completed their fish and the display is nearly complete, invite a student to pull a question from the basket (Step 3 above) and read it in the whole group. Discuss this question in the whole group, referring to the text of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, notes, questions and answers, etc., as desired. It is not necessary to definitively "answer" the question, as some questions may not be fully answerable from this one book. After discussion, if the class would like to explore the question further, make a plan that may include additional out-of-class research of the Bahá'í writings, consultation with a Bahá'í institution, etc.

Decide who will carry out these various action steps. Remember that in this age of human maturity, only the Bahá'í sacred writings are authoritative; we also learn by sharing our ideas with each other.

13. As your time permits, explore additional questions in class. Explain that other questions will be considered in a future activity.
14. If the class made a plan for independent reading of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas in Step 13 of the previous activity, review the plan. Briefly discuss: Is our plan working as we thought or would we like to modify it in some way? Re-confirm class plans and remind students to continue writing questions as they read.



15. Encourage students to think about the people they know: Who might have an interest in spiritual law? Could they ask that person to share their own questions or would they prefer to invite the person to join the class? Encourage students to record their friends' questions about spiritual laws and bring them to the next class.
16. Conclude the activity with favorite songs and prayers.

ACTIVITY 3: SELECTING A SPIRITUAL LAW

WISDOM OBJECTIVE: To gain a deeper appreciation of the purpose and the language of divine law in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, the Most Holy Book

SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION OBJECTIVE: To meditate on ways to incorporate the laws of God into one's own daily life and one's path of service to God and to humanity

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

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 60 MIN.

Materials Needed:

- Student copies of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas from Activity 1
- Chart paper and markers
- Basket with remaining questions from Activities 1 and 2
- Heavy paper or cardstock
- Cardboard
- Glue
- Tiny shells, seeds, beads, etc.
- Lightweight cardboard, as from a cereal box
- Scissors

Advance Preparation:

Continue reading and reflecting on the Kitáb-i-Aqdas. Add one or more questions to the question basket, if desired.

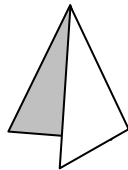
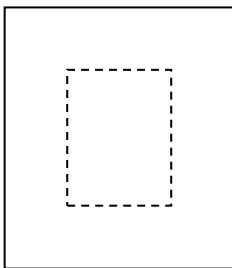
Consider making a sample quotation and frame as described in Step 8.

1. Warmly welcome students. If they've had the opportunity to converse with others about the nature of spiritual law, invite them to share the results of those conversations. Also invite students to share spiritual highlights of their week. Acknowledge all.
2. If the class selected a reading plan in Activity 1, invite students to place their questions in the basket. Place any questions that their friends may have asked in a special place to be addressed later in the class.
3. Invite students to turn to paragraph 182 of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas. Invite 2 volunteers to eloquently read aloud the entire paragraph. Then invite small teams or pairs of students to each take responsibility for 1–2 sentences of that paragraph.
4. Provide a few minutes for teams to reread their sentences and consider the following questions:
 - How do these words demonstrate the courtesy with which Bahá'u'lláh addresses the maturing human race?
 - Can we also imagine ways that following this spiritual law can help us live joyful lives of mature service to humanity?
5. Invite teams to share their responses in the whole group. Acknowledge all.
6. Next, encourage individuals or teams to browse through the entire book and identify one law to select as their particular focus for the coming week. Students may choose whether to do this as individuals or in teams, so that each person has freedom of choice regarding the selected short quotation. Circulate as students work to provide assistance and encouragement, as needed. If students are not yet skillful browsers, you may invite them to consider looking at paragraphs 12, 18, 33, 46, 51, 76, 95, 102, 106, 115, 119, 144, 148, 149, 153, 155, 160, or 190.
7. When students have selected one particular spiritual law as their focus, invite them to share their selection with one other person. Encourage students to briefly discuss their choices with each other. Affirm all.

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TOPIC: THE KITÁB-I-AQDAS

8. Provide students with nice paper. Encourage them to:
- Draw a 1" border around the edge of the paper.
 - Use pencil to very carefully copy the paragraph, sentence, or phrase they selected onto the center of the paper, in their best handwriting.
 - Show their copy to another person to check for accuracy.
 - Darken the words with ink or marker.
 - Glue the paper onto a cardboard backing.
 - Glue tiny shells, seeds, rocks, or other items onto the border to make a frame.
 - If desired, make a stand by cutting a cardboard triangle to fold and tape to the back of their frame, as demonstrated below.



9. As students begin to complete their work, invite a volunteer to read aloud a question brought to class on behalf of a student's friend (Step 2 above) and read it in the whole group. Alternatively, select one from the basket of student questions. Discuss this question in the whole group, referring to the text of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, notes, questions and answers, etc. Remember that if the question is not fully answerable, spiritual principles outlined in the Most Holy Book can provide insights to apply to the question. If desired, students may choose to research the question further. Discuss: What courteous language would help our friends understand our responses to their questions? Consider all questions brought by students from their friends in the same way.

10. As time permits, consider additional questions from the question basket. Explain that other questions will be considered in a future activity.
11. If the class made a plan for independent reading of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, confirm the plan and remind students to continue writing questions as they read.
12. Invite students to share their quotation cards in the whole group. Acknowledge all. Briefly discuss: What are some actions that will help us fulfill our goal to focus on these teachings of maturity this week? What obstacles might make it difficult to achieve our goal? How could we overcome those obstacles?
13. Encourage students to continue discussing questions about spiritual laws for human maturity during the coming week. Consider asking them: How can spiritual laws be good? Encourage students to ask their friends' permission to share their responses during the next class.
14. Conclude the activity with favorite songs and prayers.



ACTIVITY 4: QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT THE KITÁB-I-AQDAS

WISDOM OBJECTIVE: To gain a deeper appreciation of the purpose and the language of divine law in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, the Most Holy Book

ELOQUENT SPEECH OBJECTIVE: To share with others key insights from the Kitáb-i-Aqdas and one's understanding of the importance of this Most Holy Book for transforming human civilization

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS: Direct use of Bahá'í sacred writings; Use of consultation; Use of independent investigation; Use of peer teaching

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 60 MIN.

Materials Needed:

- Student copies of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas from Activity 1
- Chart paper and markers
- Basket with remaining questions from Activities 1–3
- Reference books such as *The Compilation of Compilations* or *Lights of Guidance*, if desired
- Internet access, if desired, for researching Bahá'í writings online at <http://reference.bahai.org>

Advance Preparation:

Continue reading and reflecting on the Kitáb-i-Aqdas. Add one or more questions to the question basket, if desired.

1. Warmly welcome students. Invite them to share highlights of their reflections or conversations with others about the nature of spiritual law. Also invite students to share the results of their focus on a particular spiritual law or their work toward other spiritual goals. Acknowledge all.
2. If the class selected a reading plan in Activity 1, invite students to place their questions in the basket. If the class has not planned between-class reading, provide time for students to look through the book and write questions about the sections they read.
3. Then in the whole group, read aloud all questions in the question basket. Organize students into small teams and read all the questions again. Invite teams to select one question to research.
4. Circulate as students research these questions. Encourage them to refer to their copies of the Most Holy Book to respond to these questions. They may also refer to Bahá'í compilations or Bahá'í writings on the internet, if desired.
5. When teams have made progress with their question, invite them to share their results in the whole group. Acknowledge all. Add information if desired, without contradicting students' work.
6. Repeat Steps 3–5, as desired. When students are comfortable with this process, teachers may research particularly challenging questions. Remind students that the Word of God has many meanings, not just one.
7. When about 10 minutes remains for this activity, review class plans for independent reading of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas. Encourage students to continue writing questions as they read and to discuss these questions with friends and family members.
8. Encourage students to continue discussing spiritual laws with their friends over the coming week. Encourage them to ask their friends: Can you think of a time that you followed a spiritual law even though it was difficult; what happened? Encourage students to request their friends' permission to share their responses during the next class.
9. Conclude the activity with favorite songs and prayers.

TOPIC: THE KITÁB-I-AQDAS

ACTIVITY 5: PRESENTING THE KITÁB-I-AQDAS TO A LIBRARY

ELOQUENT SPEECH OBJECTIVE: To share with others key insights from the Kitáb-i-Aqdas and one’s understanding of the importance of this Most Holy Book for transforming human civilization

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS: Direct use of Bahá’í sacred writings; Use of consultation; Involve service and teaching

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 45 MIN. PLUS VISIT TO SELECTED LIBRARY OR LIBRARIES

Materials Needed:

- Student copies of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas from Activity 1
- Chart paper and markers

Advance Preparation:

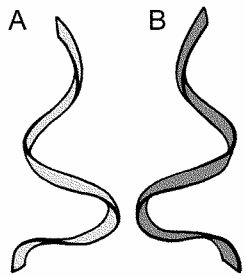
Continue reading and reflecting on the Kitáb-i-Aqdas.

Research possibilities for presenting the Kitáb-i-Aqdas to a public library or school libraries: Will neighborhood libraries or school libraries accept student presentations of this book? Does the Local Spiritual Assembly have guidelines for presenting books to the local library?

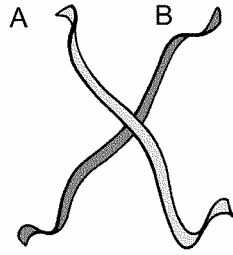
1. Warmly welcome students. Invite them to share their experiences of following a spiritual law and the results of their conversations with others about this same topic. Acknowledge all.
2. Briefly discuss: What are some examples of laws of natural or physical laws? What are some examples of human laws that are easy to follow? Record student comments on chart paper. Consider adding: gravity, magnetism, rules of the road for driving, rules in sports, rules of hygiene for preserving health, etc.
3. Continue the discussion: When is it easy to follow laws of nature or human laws? What do we gain? What might happen if more and more people chose to follow the laws of God? What are the benefits of following them?
4. Encourage students to work in pairs to look through their copies of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas and find several words and phrases that describe the value of this book. Students may also recall statements selected in Activity 2 of this topic.
5. Invite teams to restate their phrases as complete sentences that they could use to explain the importance of this book to a person who’s hearing about it for the first time. Applaud all.
6. Explain that the class will have the opportunity to present one or more copies of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas to libraries. Briefly discuss: Should we present one book as a class? Would we prefer to work in teams to give copies of the book to multiple neighborhood or school libraries?
7. Record student ideas on chart paper. Consult together to create a plan to present this book to one or more libraries. Consider including:
 - Make an appointment with the librarian.
 - Inform the Local Spiritual Assembly of your plans.
 - Encourage friends to check out the book after it is in the library.
 - Take a photograph to submit with an article or caption to a local or school newspaper.
8. Organize students into teams. Invite each team to develop a short role-play to demonstrate presenting the book to the librarian, perhaps using the sentences they created in Step 5.
9. Share role-plays with the class. Applaud all.
10. Review student plans created in Step 7. Decide who is responsible for each action and create a timeline for completing these plans.
11. Encourage students to continue discussing spiritual laws with their friends and families and to continue reading the Kitáb-i-Aqdas according to class plans. Conclude with favorite songs and prayers.

Resource Pages

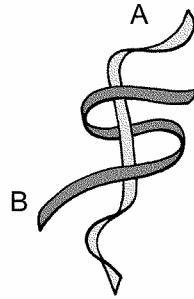
Activity 2: The Language of the Laws of God



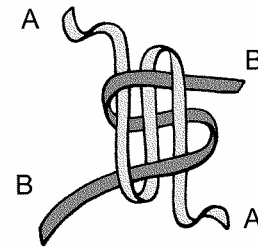
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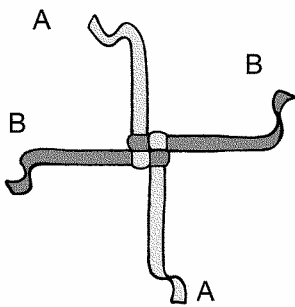
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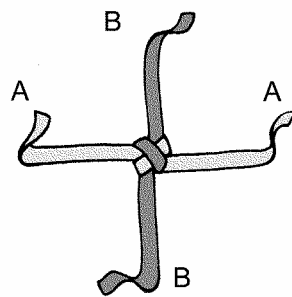
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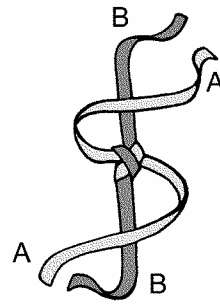
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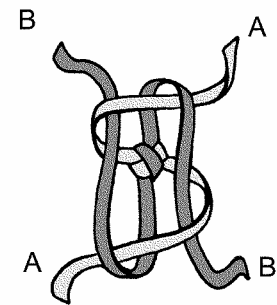
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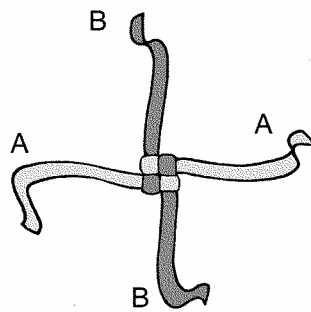
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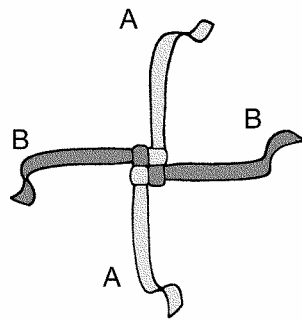
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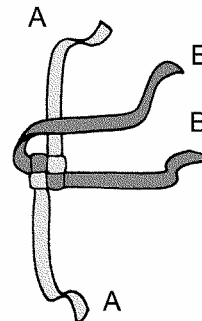
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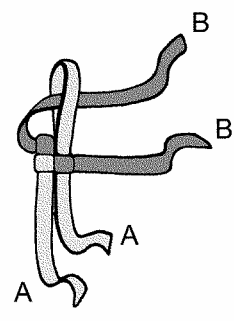
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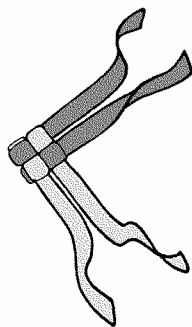
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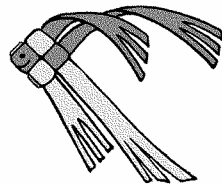
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13



14

1. Cut 2 18"-lengths of ribbon.
2. Lay the ribbons in an "X" pattern.
3. Wrap B around A so that B forms 2 loops.
4. Weave A through B so that A forms 2 loops.
5. Pull on 4 ends to tighten the weave.
6. Flip it over.
7. Repeat step 3 on the reverse side.
8. Repeat step 4 on this same side.
9. Pull on 4 ends to tighten the weave.
10. Flip it over again.
11. Fold 1 end of B over the weave.
12. Fold 1 end of A over this end of B and tuck the end into the weave.
13. Your weaving is finished!
14. Trim ends and draw a face, as desired.

GOAL: TO DEVELOP ONE’S INTELLECTUAL FACULTIES

TOPIC: THE KITÁB-I-AQDAS

LIST OF ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Books, Stories, and Articles:

The Kitáb-i-Aqdas

Brilliant Star magazine:

“The Book,” May/June 2000

“Forbidden Questions?” Mar/Apr 2001

Activities:

Brilliant Star magazine:

“Robes of Courtesy,” Sp Ed 1993

“Diving Into Kitáb-i-Aqdas,” Nov/Dec 1998

Music:

O Most Mighty Ocean, Caroline MacKay

Other Favorite Resources:

If you find any additional resources, please notify the Office of Education and Schools at the Bahá’í National Center, email SCHOOLS@usbnc.org, or submit your findings to the Core Curriculum website, www.core-curriculum.org.

TO DEVELOP ONE'S INTELLECTUAL FACULTIES

LIVING THE HEROIC LIFE

SPIRITUAL QUALITIES RELEVANT TO THIS TOPIC: COURAGE, DEDICATION, WILL-POWER

Encourage ye the school children, from their earliest years, to deliver speeches of high quality, so that in their leisure time they will engage in giving cogent and effective talks, expressing themselves with clarity and eloquence.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, p. 134

He urges you to make up your minds to do great, great deeds for the Faith; the condition of the world is steadily growing worse, and your generation must provide the saints, heroes, martyrs and administrators of future years. With dedication and will-power you can rise to great heights!

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, The Compilation of Compilations, vol. 2, p. 437

Learning Objectives and Suggested Activities



KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVES

- To become familiar with the Bahá'í writings regarding some of the qualities of character necessary for heroic lives of service
- To know the Bahá'í writings regarding the role of tests and difficulties in a heroic life of service

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Working in groups, identify qualities of spiritual heroism in the writings of Bahá'u'lláh, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and Shoghi Effendi. Share findings in a jigsaw activity.
- Brainstorm the characteristics of spiritual heroism and create a colorful chart of these results.
- Working individually, research the role of tests and difficulties in lives of heroes and heroines of the Faith. Take notes and prepare a brief report for the class.



WISDOM OBJECTIVES

- To develop a deeper understanding of the importance of improving one's character and building on the legacy of spiritual heroes and heroines
- To understand that tests and difficulties can increase one's heroic capacities

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Encourage each student to select a heroic figure from Bahá'í history and identify the spiritual qualities that were developed in the path of service.
- Examine the role of tests and difficulties in the life of each heroic figure and write a poem or paragraph about the interconnection between hardship and spiritual growth.
- Invite students to write a tribute to their selected heroic figure.

SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION OBJECTIVES

- To meditate on ways to increasingly reflect the heroic qualities of character in one's own life—little by little, day by day—as shown in the lives of spiritual heroes and heroines
- To reflect on spiritual benefits one has already gained through heroically facing tests and difficulties in one's own life

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Record reflections on heroic figures of the Faith as well as personal struggles and achievements in the path of spiritual heroism.
- Continue writing regular entries about personal progress toward spiritual heroism.
- Create poems, stories, drawings, or musical selections that demonstrate the role of tests, victories, and spiritual development in the path of heroism.

ELOQUENT SPEECH OBJECTIVES

- To demonstrate heroic qualities of character through service
- To explain to others the role of tests and difficulties in a heroic life
- To be able to retell stories of heroic action of benefit to humanity

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Create opportunities to share personal adventures in the path of spiritual heroism.
- Develop a role-play based on these adventures.
- Share selected entries on spiritual heroism from students' journals through community, regional, or national Bahá'í newsletters.
- Create opportunities to share stories from the lives of heroes and heroines of the Faith.
- Compile a book of students' poetry and prose on spiritual heroism to share with the community.

Sample Activities

ACTIVITY 1: WHAT IS A HERO?

KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVE: To become familiar with the Bahá'í writings regarding some of the qualities of character necessary for heroic lives of service

WISDOM OBJECTIVE: To gain a deeper understanding of improving one's character and building on the legacy of spiritual heroes and heroines

SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION OBJECTIVE: To meditate on ways to increasingly reflect on the heroic qualities of character in one's own life—little by little, day by day—as shown in the lives of spiritual heroes and heroines

ELOQUENT SPEECH OBJECTIVE: To be able to retell stories of heroic action of benefit to humanity

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS: Direct use of Bahá'í sacred writings; Use of stories; Use of creativity and the arts; Use of peer teaching; Use of reflection

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 60 MIN., CONTINUED IN THE NEXT ACTIVITY

Materials Needed:

- Copies of Resource Pages 55–63
- Chart paper and markers
- Plain paper and simple art supplies
- Student folders

Advance Preparation:

Read all the stories on Resource Pages 55–63 to be able to share 1–2 sentences about each of these Hands of the Cause of God.

If desired, you may include additional stories about the Hands of the Cause of God available in the Teacher Resources section of the Core Curriculum website, www.core-curriculum.org/act_res.html. Additional stories about these heroic figures are also included in the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh: Institutions, Level 2 Lesson Planning Guide, pp. 68–79.

Write the questions in Step 10 on chart paper for student reference.

1. Warmly welcome all new and returning students. Consider including the following prayer as part of your opening devotions.

Heroes are they, O my Lord, lead them to the field of battle. Guides are they, make them to speak out with arguments and proofs. Ministering servants are they, cause them to pass round the cup that brimmeth with the wine of certitude. O my God, make them to be songsters that carol in fair gardens, make them lions that couch in the thickets, whales that plunge in the vasty deep.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, p. 224

2. Invite students to share highlights of their spiritual adventures over the past week, perhaps beginning with a story of your own that includes some aspect of personal challenge and divine assistance. Acknowledge all.

3. If students are reading the Kitáb-i-Aqdas (as introduced on pp. 34–38 of this Lesson Planning Guide), briefly discuss their insights, observations, and questions about their reading.

4. Remind students that Bahá'u'lláh tells us:

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

Bahá'u'lláh, The Kitáb-i-Aqdas, paragraph 181

Briefly discuss: What are some examples of the revolutionary changes—both positive and negative—that the world has seen over the last 150 years? Acknowledge all.

5. Explain that times of great change in the world are also times for heroic action. Read aloud twice the following words that Shoghi Effendi’s secretary wrote on his behalf to youth:

He urges you to make up your minds to do great, great deeds for the Faith; the condition of the world is steadily growing worse, and your generation must provide the saints, heroes, martyrs and administrators of future years. With dedication and will-power you can rise to great heights!

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi,
The Compilation of Compilations, vol. 2, p. 437

Briefly discuss: What are heroes or saints? How would we recognize them if we see them?

Record student comments on chart paper.

6. Encourage students to silently reflect on their own experiences and identify a time that they consciously chose—in however small or seemingly insignificant a way—to become more heroic through dedication and will-power. Pose the questions: What happened? What inspired us to choose to change? What did we do to help ourselves change? What evidences of success—however small—did we see with our own eyes?
7. When all have identified a memory, invite students to share their memories with the person beside them. Allow a few minutes for this pair sharing. Then in the whole group, briefly discuss: What do our own experiences teach us about developing the qualities of a true hero or heroine? Do these changes happen quickly or little by little, day by day?
8. Explain that the 50 Hands of the Cause of God show us a rich diversity of heroic actions and heroic qualities. Briefly discuss: What do we know about the Hands? Who are they? What did they do? What makes a Hand of the Cause of God a hero? Record student comments on chart paper.
9. Suggest that the Hands of the Cause of God show us how ordinary people like us can become heroes. In the whole group show the pictures of the Hands of the Cause of God included on Resource Pages 55–63 and share 1–2 sentences about each Hand. Then briefly discuss: What do these examples teach us about the spiritual qualities of a real hero?
10. Invite students to select one of the Hands of the Cause of God to explore more deeply, working individually or in pairs. Encourage students to read aloud the episodes provided on their Resource Pages and prepare to eloquently retell their stories in the whole group. Encourage students to create 4 simple sketches about their story to use as visual aids for retelling the story. Consider including:
- What is the setting of the story: who, when, where?
 - What is the main event or problem to be resolved? How does this event get more and more important?
 - What is the turning point of the story? What happens? And what happens after that?
 - How do I feel after reading this story? What does it make me want to do?
- Circulate as students work to provide encouragement and assistance, as needed. Note that students will have time to continue their work on this project during the next activity.
11. About 10–15 minutes before the end of class, gather students and invite them to share their progress preparing to retell stories about the Hands of the Cause of God. Encourage them to simply tell what happened as best they can, realizing that they will have time to improve their presentation during the next activity. Acknowledge all.

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GOAL: TO DEVELOP ONE'S INTELLECTUAL FACULTIES

TOPIC: LIVING THE HEROIC LIFE

12. Provide students with plain paper and invite them to write or draw their responses to the following questions: What am I learning about becoming a real hero? What questions do I want to ask about a life of heroic service to others?
13. After allowing some time for students to write, invite them to save these papers, illustrations, and Resource Pages in their folders. Encourage students to share their stories of the Hands of the Cause of God informally with at least 3 people—including friends, family, children, and adults—before the next class and to pay attention to which aspects of the story seem to attract the hearts of the listener.
14. Encourage students to talk with their parents or other people they respect about what it means to be a hero and to bring to the next class a photograph, family memento, award, ribbon, news story, or other item to share. Explain that they will have the opportunity during the next class to share a story about heroism from their own family history or others that they respect.
15. Conclude the activity with favorite songs and prayers, perhaps including the prayer in Step 1 above.

ACTIVITY 2: SHARING STORIES OF HEROIC ACTIONS

KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVE: To become familiar with the Bahá'í writings regarding some of the qualities of character necessary for heroic lives of service

WISDOM OBJECTIVE: To gain a deeper understanding of improving one's character and building on the legacy of spiritual heroes and heroines

SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION OBJECTIVE: To meditate on ways to increasingly reflect on the heroic qualities of character in one's own life—little by little, day by day—as shown in the lives of spiritual heroes and heroines

ELOQUENT SPEECH OBJECTIVE: To be able to retell stories of heroic action of benefit to humanity

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS: Direct use of Bahá'í sacred writings; Use of stories; Use of creativity and the arts; Use of peer teaching; Use of reflection

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 60 MIN. PLUS COMMUNITY EVENT IN WHICH STUDENTS MAY RE-TELL THEIR STORIES

Materials Needed:

- Copies of Resource Pages 55–63
- Chart paper and markers
- Plain paper and simple art supplies
- Student folders
- Background music



Advance Preparation:

This activity continues preparation and practice in retelling stories of Hands of the Cause of God initiated in the previous activity.

Display the following quotation in the classroom:

He urges you to make up your minds to do great, great deeds for the Faith; the condition of the world is steadily growing worse, and your generation must provide the saints, heroes, martyrs and administrators of future years. With dedication and will-power you can rise to great heights!

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, *The Compilation of Compilations*, vol. 2, p. 437

Identify an event in which students could share their stories with the wider community such as an upcoming fireside, devotional meeting, Nineteen Day Feast, cluster meeting, visiting another Bahá’í class, visiting elders in your community, opening or closing program for your local Bahá’í school, or other occasion.

Find copies of biographies of Hands of the Cause of God that students may read as an extension activity. These biographies include:

- *A Tribute to Amatu’l-Bahá Rúhiyyih Khánum* by Violette Nakhjavání: Nine Pines Publishing.
- *To Move the World: Louis Gregory* by Gayle Morrison: Bahá’í Publishing Trust.
- *From Copper to Gold: The Life of Dorothy Baker* by Dorothy Freeman Gilstrap: Bahá’í Publishing Trust.
- *Martha Root: Lioness at the Threshold* by M.R. Garis: Bahá’í Publishing Trust.
- *Corinne True: Faithful Handmaid of ‘Abdu’l Bahá* by Nathan Rutstein: George Ronald Publishers.
- *God Loves Laughter* by William Sears: George Ronald Publishers.
- *Bill: A Biography of Hand of the Cause of God Williams Sears* by Marguerite Sears: Desert Rose Publishing.
- *Zikrullah Khadem: Itinerant Hand of the Cause of God* by Javidukht Khadem: Bahá’í Publishing Trust.
- *Milly: A Tribute to Amelia E. Collins* by A.Q. Faizi: Howard Fertig Publisher.
- *Conqueror of Hearts: A Biography of Hand of the Cause of God Abu’l-Qásim Faizí* by Shirley Macias: published online at www.bahai-library.com.
- *Enoch Olinga* by Rúhiyyih Khánum: Bahá’í Publishing Agency, Kenya.

1. Welcome students! Invite them to share favorite prayers and writings as well as their stories or mementos of heroic action from their families or other people they respect. Acknowledge all. Briefly discuss: How do these examples help us better understand the qualities of a hero or heroine in the world today?
2. Invite students to share what happened when they informally shared their stories with the people around them. What seemed to attract the hearts of our listeners? Record student comments on chart paper.
3. Invite 2 volunteers to read aloud the posted quotation. Briefly discuss: What do we think it might mean to be a saint, hero, martyr, or administrator of the Cause of God in this day? Listen carefully and then share the following quotation:

Every day has certain needs. In those early days the Cause needed Martyrs, and people who would stand all sorts of torture and persecution in expressing their faith and spreading the message sent by God. Those days are, however, gone. The Cause at present does not need martyrs who would die for the faith, but servants who desire to teach and establish the Cause throughout the world. To live to teach in the present day is like being martyred in those early days. It is the spirit that moves us that counts, not the act through which that spirit expresses itself; and that spirit is to serve the Cause of God with our heart and soul.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi,
The Compilation of Compilations, vol. 2, p. 5

Briefly discuss: Can we imagine some ways that teaching today might be like martyrdom in the early days of the Faith?

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4. Explain that one of the purposes of learning stories about Hands of the Cause of God is to inspire our own selves to lives of heroic service and teaching. Another purpose is to be able to share them with others. Discuss together: What makes us want to listen to a story when someone is telling it? What catches and holds our attention and makes us think about the story again later? Record student comments on chart paper. If desired, consider adding:
 - Have a clear beginning, middle, and end to the story.
 - Memorize the first and last words to the story so you know how to begin and end your story.
 - Use pictures to remember what you want to say.
 - Talk directly to the listeners, just as you would in a conversation.
5. Invite the students to continue preparing to tell their stories as described in Step 10 of the previous activity. If you have new students, invite them to select a story to tell from Resource Pages 55–63 or to join a team. Circulate as students work to provide encouragement and assistance, as needed.
6. Encourage students or student teams to practice telling their stories in pairs. Encourage the listening partner to say 2 things that the storyteller did well and 1 idea for improvement.
7. After all students or teams have completed their preparation, and shared their stories with one other person or team, invite them to retell their stories in the whole group, with each team member included in the presentation. Warmly applaud all!
8. In the whole group, discuss: What spiritual qualities do we see in these stories about the Hands of the Cause of God? What is the role of sacrifice in these stories? What are the long-term benefits of the sacrifices and good deeds of the Hands? Record student comments on chart paper.
9. Play quiet background music and invite students to reflect on the stories they heard, the stories they told, and their own goals as a spiritual hero or heroine. They may write or draw their responses to the questions: What do I want to remember about these stories? How can I show these same qualities in my own life?
10. After students have had time to write, save all papers in their folders. Explain that in a future topic, they will have the opportunity to carry out acts of service inspired by these stories of Hands of the Cause of God (see pp. 92–95).
11. Provide information about the upcoming event in which students may share their stories with others. Follow up so that students come early to that event and have their sketches ready to use.
12. Encourage students to practice telling their stories to 2 people before that event. Encourage students also to notice the heroic actions of the people around them and in their own selves.
13. Next, show the collection of biographies of Hands of the Cause of God. Invite students to consider borrowing one of these biographies to read on their own time. Explain how students may be able to purchase their own copies of these books, if desired.
14. If the class has an ongoing plan to read the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, invite students to share their questions and comments about that book. Acknowledge all.
15. Conclude the activity with favorite songs and prayers.

ACTIVITY 3: TESTS AND DIFFICULTIES IN THE HEROIC LIFE

KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVE: To know the Bahá'í writings regarding the role of tests and difficulties in a heroic life of service

SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION OBJECTIVE: To reflect on spiritual benefits one has already gained through heroically facing tests and difficulties in one's life

ELOQUENT SPEECH OBJECTIVE: To explain to others the role of tests and difficulties in a heroic life

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS: Direct use of Bahá'í sacred writings; Use of memorization; Use of science; Use of play; Use of consultation; Use of reflection

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 30 MIN.

Materials Needed:

- Chart paper and markers
- Sticky notes or small pieces of paper and tape
- Plain paper and student folders
- Background music

Materials for each group of 3–4 students:

- 12' of clear ½" vinyl tubing
- 1 kernel of popcorn (or lentil) for each person in the class
- Yard stick or meter stick, if desired

Advance Preparation:

Display the following quotation in the classroom:

Be generous in your days of plenty, and be patient in the hour of loss. Adversity is followed by success and rejoicings follow woe.

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

Experiment with the vinyl tubing and popcorn kernels or lentils to become familiar with processes described in Step 7.

1. Welcome students and share favorite prayers and songs. Invite students to share examples striving toward heroism in their own selves as well as heroic acts in the people around them. Briefly discuss: How has our study of the Hands of the Cause of God helped us refine our understanding of a real hero or heroine?
2. If students are reading the Kitáb-i-Aqdas or biographies of Hands of the Cause of God, invite them to share their insights and questions. Acknowledge all.
3. Remind students that the topics in this Lesson Planning Guide highlight some important aspects of our Faith as we make our spiritual journey toward maturity. Explain that 'Abdu'l-Bahá tells us that tests and difficulties form a necessary part of that process. Encourage students to listen carefully as you read aloud the following quotations twice:

The hearts of all children are of the utmost purity. They are mirrors upon which no dust has fallen. But this purity is on account of weakness and innocence, not on account of any strength and testing, for as this is the early period of their childhood, their hearts and minds are unsullied by the world. They cannot display any great intelligence. They have neither hypocrisy nor deceit. This is on account of the child's weakness, whereas the man becomes pure through his strength. Through the power of intelligence he becomes simple; through the great power of reason and understanding and not through the power of weakness he becomes sincere. When he attains to the state of perfection, he will receive these qualities; his heart becomes purified, his spirit enlightened, his soul is sensitized and tender—all through his great strength. This is the difference between the perfect man and the child. Both have the underlying qualities of simplicity and sincerity—the child through the power of weakness and the man through the power of strength.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 53

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Grief and sorrow do not come to us by chance, they are sent to us by the Divine Mercy for our own perfecting.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, p. 50

Briefly discuss: What is the role of tests and difficulties in the lives of the Hands of the Cause of God, in the people we know, and in our own selves? How do tests and difficulties help us mature? Does that mean that tests are always fun or easy?

4. Invite students to think about their own lives and recall a time in which they stood up to a difficulty and became stronger as a result. Provide time for students to think and then invite them to share their examples in the whole group. Teachers may begin this sharing with a personal example.
5. Explain that facing tests and difficulties helps us become more and more perfect, more and more mature, and more and more capable of truly heroic action—little by little, day by day. Yet Bahá’u’lláh reminds us that life includes both tests and joys. Invite 2 student volunteers to read aloud the posted quotation:

Be generous in your days of plenty, and be patient in the hour of loss. Adversity is followed by success and rejoicings follow woe.

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

Briefly discuss: Why do we think that life has so many “ups” and “downs”? What does Bahá’u’lláh tell us to do when things are going well? What does He tell us to do when things are not going so well? How can the spiritual qualities of generosity and patience help us in these different circumstances?

6. In the whole group, memorize this short quotation by reciting it in unison several times, then covering every 4th word with sticky notes or other paper. Recite the passage several more times; then cover more words. Continue reciting and covering more words until the

entire group has memorized the passage. Applaud all!

Briefly discuss: How can we use this quotation to help us attain the strength of maturity?

7. Organize students into teams of 3–4. Provide each team with the vinyl tubing and popcorn kernels (or lentils). Invite each team to build a roller coaster to explain how to address the challenges and joys of life. Encourage them to hold the tubing so that the first hill is at least 4' high and there are 2 or more smaller hills. Suggest that hills may represent life's tests.
8. When teams have created their demonstrations of life's joys and challenges, invite them to:
 - Launch the kernel successfully though the path they created.
 - Explain how the kernel's path reflects human experience.
 - Suggest at which points patience or generosity would most fit the circumstance.
 - Describe how “tests” help the kernel complete its journey.

Applaud all!

9. Provide students with plain paper. Remind them that while the kernel moves though the path simply following the laws of nature, we have the power to choose how we respond to our circumstances. Encourage them to think about their own circumstances and identify a specific situation in which they can apply Bahá’u’lláh’s admonition to be generous in days of plenty and patient in times of loss. Consider playing quiet background music while students write or draw their reflections. Save these papers in student folders
10. Convene the group, and invite students to share some of their reflections if they like. Conclude the activity with favorite songs and prayers.

Resource Pages

Activity 1: What Is a Hero?



Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánúm

*In the garden of existence a rose hath bloomed
with the utmost freshness, fragrance and beauty.
Educate her according to the divine teachings. . . .*

‘Abdu'l-Bahá, in a Tablet addressed
to Rúhíyyih Khánúm's mother

Rúhíyyih Khánúm was often asked if she remembered ‘Abdu'l-Bahá's 3-day visit to her home during the fall of 1912. She would answer, “I was only two years old. I don't think I remember it, but all my life I heard my mother telling me in detail of all those precious and blessed days, so the events imprinted on my subconscious seem like my own memories.”

During this visit ‘Abdu'l-Bahá told His companions: “Today I was resting on the chaise lounge in my bedroom and the door opened. The little girl came in to me and pushed my eyelids up with her small finger and said, ‘Wake up, ‘Abdu'l-Bahá!’ I took her in my arms and placed her head on my chest and we both had a good sleep.”

When her mother complained that she was naughty, the Master said, “Leave her alone. She is the essence of sweetness.”

During her first pilgrimage at age 12, the Greatest Holy Leaf had asked to see her performance of the Egyptian ‘shimmy’ . . . and had laughed till the tears rolled down her cheeks while the young girl dressed in full costume, with *kobl* around her eyes and a drum under her arm, sang and danced before her in the Master's House.

During another pilgrimage in 1937 . . . Rúhíyyih Khánúm broke a small branch of the mimosa flower and carried it with her into the presence of Shoghi Effendi and offered it to her beloved. That was the day he told her of his wish to marry her.

When the Universal House of Justice was first elected in 1963, Rúhíyyih Khánúm ordered thousands of roses and carnations to carpet the inner rooms of all three Shrines. With just a handful of helpers she worked through the day and all through the night, nipping the buds and culling the blossoms to lay thick upon the ground. This lovely gesture became a tradition, and was an exquisite example of Rúhíyyih Khánúm's aesthetic and spiritual sensibilities combined. The beauty and the fragrance of the Shrines on that day were imprinted in the hearts and memories of all present.

Adapted from Violette Nakhjavání,
A Tribute to Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánúm, pp. 3–14, 26, 65–66

Activity 1: What Is a Hero?



Enoch Olinga

One of Mr. Olinga’s most endearing qualities was his laugh, a great, joyous, consuming, and contagious laugh. His fellow Hands were not slow to appreciate this and went so far as to save up funny stories the whole year so they could tell them to Mr. Olinga at the next Conclave. Sometimes they made Enoch laugh so much that I scolded them, saying they would make him ill; of course others laughed too—but not like Enoch, who would begin by chuckling and end up convulsed.

Mr. Olinga’s good nature extended to other events in life. The first time Mr. Olinga arrived in Chicago, he took a taxi to the Bahá’í Temple in Wilmette. He had always carried a picture of the Temple and showed it to many people, but he had never seen the Temple himself. The taxi driver, noticing that it was almost night, expressed his doubts that Mr. Olinga would be able to see much of the beautiful Temple. Mr. Olinga still wanted to go there, and all the way to the Temple the taxi driver expressed his sorrow that Mr. Olinga would not be able to see much of the Temple. “You know it’s too bad you couldn’t have come just an hour earlier, because you’re going to get

there at the wrong time. It will be dark, and you won’t see that Temple. It’s there all right, and there is a moon, and you’ll have a glimpse of it, but it won’t be anything like it would have been had you just been there in the daytime.”

“Oh,” Mr. Olinga said, “don’t worry about that. I’ll have a look at it. That’s all I want, I just want to see it, so don’t worry. I’ll see it.”

The more Mr. Olinga insisted on going all the way to the Temple, the more the taxi driver expressed his sorrow that Mr. Olinga would not be able to see much of the beautiful building, and Mr. Olinga kept telling him not to worry.

When the taxi finally arrived at the Temple the whole place was in darkness. Mr. Olinga went out of the cab and onto the flight of steps leading up to the entrance of the Temple. At the steps he leaned down and put his forehead to the floor in prayer. Suddenly the Temple lights came on, the main entrance was opened, and the guide came out and asked him if he wished to visit the Temple. Mr. Olinga was grateful, and they both went in.

What exactly had happened? The guide had just put out all the lights and was leaving the Temple when he saw a cab stop and someone come out and walk towards the Temple. That must be someone who has come from afar, he said to himself; I should do something about it. So he went back in, put on the lights, and invited Mr. Olinga inside.

Adapted from Enoch Olinga, by Rúhíyyih Rabbaní, with reminiscences of Rowshan Mustapha, pp. 26, 80–82

Activity 1: What Is a Hero?



Martha Root

Martha Root brought the message of Bahá'u'lláh to Queen Marie of Romania. The queen responded. Miss Root observed, “from her grave blue eyes flashes the light of a great spirit; she knows, she understands, she loves!” She was the first monarch to become a Bahá'í.

Miss Root describes her first visit with Queen Marie:

The American Minister said I could not see the Queen Marie of Romania, but I wrote her a letter and sent her ‘Abdu'l-Bahá’s picture and Dr. Esslemont’s book. Next day came a letter from the Palace inviting me to visit her the next day at noon. Next to my visit to the Greatest Holy Leaf, this visit to Queen Marie was one of the most splendid events of my life. I took her the Greatest Name and Seven Valleys—and two Esperanto books and my Esperanto pin, a little bottle of perfume, a little box of candy, a branch of white lilacs, and a report of the Education Congress in Edinburgh (she was the Princess of Edinburgh before

her marriage). She asked me to tell her about the Bahá'í Movement and said she had been reading the book I sent and was very interested in the Principles. . . . She asked a number of questions. I loved her and felt more at home with her than with many other people who are not queens—I learned a great deal from her, too. It was such a happy visit, she was so sweet, so gracious—she held the Greatest Name and ‘Abdu'l-Bahá’s picture in her hands while we talked—for most of the hour.

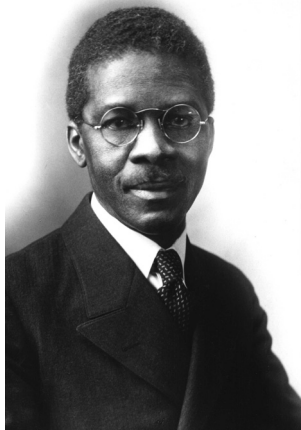
This interview led to a lasting friendship. Not only was Queen Marie herself transformed by the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, but she also used her public influence to share this Message with others, writing articles that were syndicated in more than 200 newspapers throughout the United States and Canada.

When Miss Root wrote a note of appreciation to Queen Marie for this interview, Her Majesty responded warmly:

I received your books and dear letter safely. Having today your address can send loving thanks. The beautiful truth of Bahá'u'lláh is with me always, a help and inspiration. What I wrote (for the syndicates) was because my heart overflowed with gratitude for the Revelation you brought me. I am happy if you think I helped. I thought it might bring Truth nearer, because my words are read by so many. . . .

Adapted from M.R. Garis,
Martha Root: Lioness at the Threshold, pp. 240–46

Activity 1: What Is a Hero?



Louis Gregory

All the Bahá'ís had gathered for the Nineteen Day Feast. It was being held some eight or nine blocks from our house. Apparently, after the Feast a Local Spiritual Assembly meeting had been called. Mr. Gregory was our guest at the time, so rather than keep him there I was asked by my mother to guide him to our home. I was no more than eight years old and accepted the responsibly with great dignity. The night was dark. . . . I remember to this day one glance in which I looked up at him. My gaze was held for a moment on the beauty and peace of his face, but most of all, it was the shimmering radiance that was so remarkable, that seemed to be part of him. I was so amazed that in such darkness and also in the darkness of his coloring that there could be so much light. I was unable to take my eyes off of his face.

—Elaine Eilers' memory of Mr. Gregory's visit to Urbana, Illinois

Louis Gregory's bright spirit was never tarnished by attention or by praise. Self-importance had no place in his nature. He attributed the light that others perceived in him to the power of unity. Mr. Gregory worked his whole life for unity.

While Louis Gregory was on pilgrimage 'Abdu'l-Bahá asked, "What of the conflict between the white and colored races?"* Mr. Gregory replied that there was much friction between the races.

Again 'Abdu'l-Bahá asked: "Are the colored and white believers entirely united?"* Mr. Gregory answered that although there was not entire unity, there were earnest souls of both races who desired closer unity. 'Abdu'l-Bahá said: "The best means is to accept this Cause. All differences must fade among believers. In the present antagonism there is great danger to both races. Intermarriage is a good way to efface racial differences. It produces strong, beautiful offspring, clever and resourceful."*

Mr. Gregory shared the bright light of unity in public talks, letters, and actions throughout his life. 'Abdu'l-Bahá wrote, "How luminous is the face of this person!" "That pure soul has a heart like unto transparent water. He is like unto pure gold. That is why his is acceptable in any market and is current in every country."

Adapted from Gayle Morrison, *To Move the World*, pp. 313–15; and Mr. Gregory's pilgrim notes, *The Pilgrimage of Louis G. Gregory*

* These may not be the exact words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá but express His meaning.

Activity 1: What Is a Hero?



Dorothy Baker

Dorothy Baker first received the Bounty of Bahá'u'lláh when her grandmother took her to meet 'Abdu'l-Bahá. She said, "It is a blessed thing to remember the child who sat entranced at the feet of her Lord and received His all-merciful love. In that hour all fear was replaced by a passion for all people."

Mrs. Baker showed that passion for all people during her travels to teach about Bahá'u'lláh, her service to Bahá'í institutions, and by hosting firesides in their home in Lima, Ohio, a small conservative town that had been known for activities of the Ku Klux Klan. All people were welcome to their home where Mrs. Baker's radiant spirit and eloquent speech attracted people from 50 miles around. An African American friend recalls:

This was the period of the early thirties, when racism and bigotry were the accepted way of life. . . . Because of this atmosphere the courage and stand for human unity which the Bakers took in opening their home to teach a new Faith and to persons of many races and

backgrounds was a traumatic thing for Lima. The comings and goings of so many different people attracted much attention, yet the Bakers were never apologetic or furtive in their efforts for the Faith. Their courage and their sincerity gave real results, for nearly every person who went to those firesides became a dependable and predictable Bahá'í.

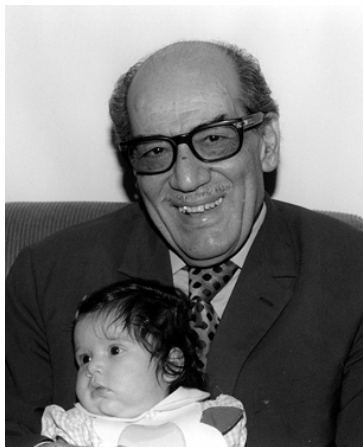
One of the friends who went to these meetings said:

Really, I did not want to go. I had heard that the speaker was a rather wealthy person and I must admit that contact with other "rich" ladies had not been a pleasant experience. Frankly, I had a strong prejudice against most anyone "rich."

It was a small fireside where all knew each other except I did not know Mrs. Baker. First impressions can be powerful and I was struck with the thought of how this sincere, beautiful lady could possibly be associated with "rich" people. The economic barrier was dissolved—instantly. The lesson, too, was powerful. . . . That fireside was long ago, but the impression of the compelling personality has remained. I had experienced something that evening most people rarely have. I had met someone who could demonstrate her teachings through her own life.

Adapted from Dorothy Freeman Gilstrap,
From Copper to Gold, pp. 295, 299–300, 365

Activity 1: What Is a Hero?



Abu'l-Qásim Faizi

How can one write an adequate tribute to a man who, for over half a century, brought happiness and inspiration to all who crossed his path? How can one tell of the influence of his spirit on the countless children he held in his arms, the numberless young people whose talents he helped to develop, and the old men and women he visited with reverence and gratitude for what they had given to the world? Faizi, as he wished to be called, did not like the celebration of birthdays, except those of the Manifestations of God, and did not know the exact date of his own birth which was probably in 1906.

Faizi spoke with sadness about his early days surrounded by fanatical people. One of the few happy memories of his childhood was the local gymnasium—the zúr-kháníh—a traditional Persian establishment for physical training, and also for inculcating human virtues such as chivalry, modesty, and chastity in those who must bow in

humility as they enter through its low door. Many fervent Muslims frowned upon the zúr-kháníh. Faizi had to sneak away from home to watch the feats of wrestling and weight-lifting. The leader of the zúr-kháníh, a man of dignity and great moral as well as physical stature, befriended Faizi and left a permanent mark on his character.

Everything he had was shared with others. When he was asked how he would be able to pay for his children's higher education, he said, "There are so many children around me who need help now. How can I deprive them in order to save for an unknown future?"

Once Faizi had to be rushed to hospital in the middle of a talk, but he would not look after his health. He fell and rose again and again until his body could go no more. He continued to receive pilgrims in his home to the end of his life in 1980. Among the last papers he left on his desk were a few gifts he had prepared to give away—quotations from the Bahá'í writings in his own calligraphy. At the bottom of each he had written, "For the dear pilgrims."

Among the hundreds of messages of grief which reached the World Center of the Bahá'í Faith, there was one which expressed the feelings of all. It said, "... A special sweetness has gone out of the world and out of my heart . . ."

Adapted from Gloria Faizi,
The Bahá'í World, vol. 18, pp. 659–65

Activity 1: What Is a Hero?



Zikrullah Khadem

“The very atmosphere of our home reverberated with the sweet and powerful intonations of Bahá’í tablets and prayers in my father’s strong and melodious voice. I remember often waking up in the morning to hear the voices of my father and my mother in an adjoining room, chanting the long obligatory prayer in tones of absolute rapture.”

—Jena Khadem Khodadad, quoted in *Zikrullah Khadem*

Mr. Khadem met the Guardian during his first pilgrimage to the Holy Land in May 1925. This ardent pilgrim was eager to serve and Shoghi Effendi gave him the first of many tasks. The Guardian asked him to convey to the youth of Iran his love and encouragement, to ask them to deepen themselves in the Faith, and to study English, especially English literature.

Shoghi Effendi continued to give Mr. Khadem special assignments. He traveled through Nayríz in 1938–39 to photograph the resting places of the martyrs of Nayríz.

He retrieved the sword of Mullá Husayn and took it to the Holy Land, where it is now on display in the International Archives Building. Only the grace of God allowed Mr. Khadem to pass through customs with this sword.

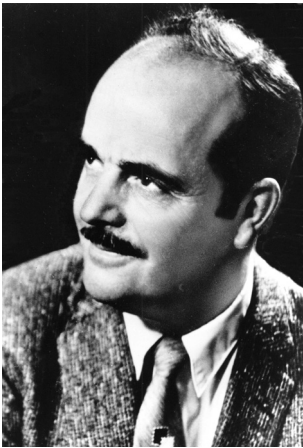
Mr. Khadem longed to be the one to carry the original Kitáb-i-Íqan to the Holy Land. The Kitáb-i-Íqan had been revealed by Bahá’u’lláh in just 48 hours, responding to questions posed by one of the uncles of the Báb and was still held by the Báb’s family in Iran. This precious volume in the handwriting of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s had Bahá’u’lláh’s own written notes in the margins. Lo and behold, a cable from the Guardian gave Mr. Khadem this mission, which he completed in 1952.

The Guardian asked Mr. Khadem to bring a piece of plaster from the prison fortress in Máh-Kú, Iran, where the Báb had been imprisoned, to the Holy Land. Shoghi Effendi placed this bit of plaster beneath one of the tiles that covered the dome of the Shrine of the Báb.

Anything that the beloved Guardian requested of this eager youth became a precious treasure that Mr. Khadem would recall over and over again with gratitude throughout his life. Every event that included any interaction with the Guardian became an indelible and precious memory.

Adapted from Javidukht Khadem, *Zikrullah Khadem*, pp. 10-11, 191; and additional conversations with Jena Khadem Khodadad

Activity 1: What Is a Hero?



William Sears

Bill and Marguerite Sears pioneered to South Africa during the years of apartheid when laws to keep people apart were rigidly enforced. Mr. Sears spent many hours carving puppets to use humor to share Bahá'u'lláh's great message of unity. One puppet was an impala named Imp. Mrs. Sears recalls:

Imp was an avid teacher. Once on our way home from a show, we stopped for gas at a station not far from the Farm. I was driving and Imp remained on Bill's arm, because he simply had been too tired to remove him. While the African attendant filled the tank, Bill tried to speak to him, but the startled fellow said, "I don't speak to white people."

In response to that statement, Imp jumped off Bill's lap and leaned out the window. This was different. Gene, the attendant, had no qualms about talking to an impala. Before we left, Imp told Gene where we lived and mentioned that every Sunday afternoon a group came to visit, and told him that he was

welcome too. But Gene firmly told Imp, "I don't go to white people's houses."

After that we made a point of stopping at the station often, but Gene remained aloof. Yet on Sunday we looked up and saw him walking up the circular drive in front of our house. Bill went out to greet him, but Gene immediately turned away. Bill quickly popped in to the house and returned with Imp on his arm. At Imp's invitation, Gene joined the others who had assembled for the regular Sunday get-together. Gene became a regular visitor after that and eventually became a Bahá'í.

One day, after Bill had told a funny story, Gene, seated next to him, enthusiastically gave a playful slap on Bill's shoulder. Immediately aghast at what he deemed a totally inappropriate gesture, he froze with a horrified expression on his face. Bill smiled and replied, "Well, you're not as shy as you used to be." Gene relaxed and replied, "Well, you're not as white as you used to be."

Through humor, creativity, and courage, Mr. and Mrs. Sears shared Bahá'u'lláh's great message of unity, in spite of the cruel laws. In 1956 they celebrated the election of 5 Africans and 4 pioneers to the first Regional National Spiritual Assembly of South and West Africa.

Adapted from Marguerite Sears,
Bill: A Biography of Hand of the Cause of God Williams Sears,
pp. 26–30, 45

Activity 1: What Is a Hero?**Corinne True**

In 1907 when the American Bahá'ís were planning to build the first Bahá'í House of Worship in the West, Corinne True's ideas sparked controversy. She felt that the Temple should be near a large body of water, in a spot that would delight the eye and soul, away from the blight and noise of the city. These ideas came from her talks with 'Abdu'l-Bahá during her recent pilgrimage.

Mrs. True searched and searched for a suitable site. For weeks she headed north of Chicago along the lakefront. The trek required heavy work shoes. She took a horse-drawn trolley to the end of the trolley line, then walked through fields, climbed fences, and waded across streams. Finally she found "the chosen place . . . a thickly-wooded tract . . . overlooking Lake Michigan. . . ."

Meanwhile, the House of Spirituality, which later became the Local Spiritual

Assembly, focused its search on the south side of Chicago, believing that a city location would make it easier for people to get to the temple.

Mrs. True urged the House of Spirituality to sponsor a national conference to discuss the Temple Project. The House of Spirituality agreed. Although the conference was held in the Trues' home, Mrs. True didn't enter the discussion. Some preferred a peaceful rustic setting. Others felt that the temple should be built in the heart of the city's poor, as a tower of strength and hope. No decision was made.

In 1908 the Women's Assembly of Teaching convinced the all-male House of Spirituality to buy a small portion of Mrs. True's "chosen spot." In 1909 a second national conference unanimously approved this location. This conference also formed a new organization—Bahá'í Temple Unity—to include both women and men, and elected Mrs. True and two other women to the 9-member executive board. The conference ended in complete unity and "eternal joy."

Later, 'Abdu'l-Bahá Himself laid the cornerstone and the Bahá'ís built the Temple, a Temple of love and unity for all people everywhere.

Adapted from Nathan Rutstein,
Corinne True: Faithful Handmaid of Abdu'l-Bahá, pp. 76–83

LIST OF ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Books, Stories, and Articles:

Brilliant Star magazine:

“God’s Will,” Jan/Feb 1998
“Badr’s Sacrifice,” Mar/Apr 1998
“Oh, Ella Bailey,” May/June 1998
“Louis G. Gregory,” Jul/Aug 1998
“Your Goal Is Great . . .” Sep/Oct 1998
“Mona Mahmudnizhad Angel Shiraz,” Sep/Oct 1998
“The Joy and Wonder,” Nov/Dec 1998
“Zaynab, Spiritual Warrior!” Sp Edition 1998
“Lidia Zamenhof’s Story,” Jan/Feb 1999
“Shinji Yamamoto,” Jan/Feb 1999
“Eight Women,” Mar/Apr 1999
“Pure One and Greatest Holy Leaf,” Mar/Apr 1999
“The Man of the Trees,” May/June 1999
“Bullock, Alexander, Gillespie,” Jul/Aug 1999
“Dr. John E. Esslemont,” Sep/Oct 1999
“Thomas Breakwell,” Nov/Dec 1999
“Zenobia,” Nov/Dec 1999
“Mount Your Steeds, O Heroes,” Sp Ed 1999
“Amatu’l-Bahá Rúhiyyih Khánúm,” Jan/Feb 2000
“The Book,” May/June 2000
“Leonora Stirling Armstrong,” May/June 2000
“Auntie Victoria Bedikian,” Jul/Aug 2000
“The Story of John Bosch,” Jul/Aug 2000
“Dr. Adelbert Mühschlegel,” Sep/Oct 2000
“Asking the Master,” Mar/Apr 2001
“Mr. William Sears,” Mar/Apr 2001

“Sylvia Parmelee,” Mar/Apr 2001
“Nabil-i-A’zam,” May/June 2001
“We Are with You at All Times,” May/June 2001
“Star Kids: A Brave Warrior,” May/June 2001r
“Weaver of Souls,” May/June 2001
“Lua Getsinger,” Jul/Aug 2001
“Louis Bourgeois,” Sep/Oct 2001
“Corrine Knight True,” Nov/Dec 2001
“Dorothy Beecher Baker,” Mar/Apr 2002
“Finding the Friend (Vahíd),” Sep/Oct 2002
“Shining Lamp: Nabil-i-A’zam,” Jan/Feb 2003
“Alí-Akbar Furútan,” Mar/Apr 2004
“Martha Root: Dangerous. Journey,” May/June 2004
“Zaynab: Heroine of Zanján,” Nov/Dec 2004
“Q & A with Khalil Thabit Greene,” Nov/Dec 2004
“A Heroic Adventure,” Nov/Dec 2004
“Ramatu’lláh Muhájir,” Jan/Feb 2005
“Stargazer: Olya Roohizadegan,” Jul/Aug 2005
“Shining Lamp: Sarah Farmer,” Jul/Aug 2005
“Shining Lamp: Rúhiyyih Khánúm,” Sep/Oct 2005
“Shining Lamp: Louis Gregory,” Sep/Oct 2005
“Shining Lamp: R. Muhájir,” Sep/Oct 2005
“Shining Lamp: Lady Blomfield,” May/June 2006
“Shining Lamp: Patricia Locke,” Jul/Aug 2006
“Badr: Pride of the Martyrs,” Jan/Feb 2007
“Mona Mahmudnizhad,” Mar/Apr 2007
“Persian Rose,” Mar/Apr 2007

Worksheets and Coloring Pages:

The Virtues: Activity & Coloring Book, Ages 5–7, Changing Times
The Virtues: Activity & Coloring Book, Ages 8–10, Changing Times
Unity Flows from Every Color, A Coloring Book for the Whole Family

Activities:

Brilliant Star magazine:

“How to Make a Hero Cape,” Sep/Oct 1991
“Super Heroine Book,” Jul/Aug 1993
Decision,” Sp Edition 1994
“Write Bahá’í History . . . Reports,” Mar/Apr 1995
“Hero for a Day!” Sp Ed 1998

“Behind the Veils,” Jan/Feb 2001
“Profile of a Leader,” Jan/Feb 2001
“True Heroes,” Jul/Aug 2001
“The Hero’s Journey,” Nov/Dec 2004
“The Dance of Heroes,” Nov/Dec 2004

Drama:

Brilliant Star magazine:

“Heralds of the Covenant,” Sp Ed 1993
“Táhirih,” Jul/Aug 1993
“A Simple Hero,” Nov/Dec 2004

Games:

Brilliant Star magazine:

“Helpful Heroes,” Sep/Oct 1991
“Peace Process,” Jul/Aug 1993
“Where in the World Was Martha Root,” Jul/Aug 1993
“Apostles of Bahá’u’lláh . . .” Sp Edition 1994
“Servant Game,” May/June 1996
“Knights of Adventure,” Nov/Dec 2004

Other Favorite Resources:

If you find any additional resources, please notify the Office of Education and Schools at the Bahá’í National Center, email SCHOOLS@usbnc.org, or submit your findings to the Core Curriculum website, www.core-curriculum.org.

TO DEVELOP ONE'S SPIRITUAL CAPACITY

SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

**SPIRITUAL QUALITIES RELEVANT TO THIS TOPIC:
PRAYERFULNESS, DEVOTION, PERSEVERANCE**

Gather ye together with the utmost joy and fellowship and recite the verses revealed by the merciful Lord. By so doing the doors of true knowledge will be opened to your inner beings, and ye will then feel your souls endowed with steadfastness and your hearts filled with radiant joy.

Bahá'u'lláh, *The Compilation of Compilations*, vol. 1, p. 188

May they all, throughout the reaches of the spirit, learn well of the hidden mysteries; so well that in the Kingdom of the All-Glorious, each one of them, even as a nightingale endowed with speech, will cry out the secrets of the Heavenly Realm, and like unto a longing lover pour forth his sore need and utter want of the Beloved.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 134

Learning Objectives and Suggested Activities



KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVES

- To become familiar with the Bahá'í writings about obligatory prayer
- To know about the Bahá'í laws and writings on fasting
- To become familiar with the Bahá'í writings on reflection and meditation
- To become aware of one's inner self and familiar with the Bahá'í writings on bringing oneself to account each day

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Study the compilation *The Importance of Obligatory Prayer and Fasting* in a jigsaw activity or through individual reports.
- Over a series of class periods, collect lists of newly discovered facts or other information about fasting and obligatory prayer.
- Memorize a passage from the Bahá'í writings about bringing oneself to account each day.
- Invite students to each research and bring to class a quotation about meditation and reflection; read some of these quotations each class time.



WISDOM OBJECTIVES

- To understand the importance of obligatory prayer and fasting for the spiritual development of the individual and of humanity as a whole
- To understand the value of reflection and meditation for one's spiritual development
- To understand the importance of setting spiritual goals and assessing one's own progress toward those goals

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- In pairs, share why fasting and obligatory prayers are important.
- Create a decorative quotation card on meditation or reflection to display at home.
- Consult on techniques that may be effective in bringing oneself to account each day.
- In small group, discuss examples of spiritual goals and how we can assess our progress toward them.
- Develop artistic representations through poems, dance movements, music, painting, etc., that demonstrate the unique role of any of the following spiritual processes: obligatory prayers, fasting, reflection, meditation, or search for inner self.



SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION OBJECTIVES

- To reflect on one's own plan for establishing a regular habit of saying one of the obligatory prayers and the value of this habit for one's own life
- To meditate on one's own upcoming obligation for fasting and how to manage this obligation in light of one's own life circumstances
- To reflect on ways to make a regular time and place for meditation and reflection as well as one's own effective manner and mode of reflection and meditation
- To discern when one has been able to identify goals and assess one's progress toward these goals

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Consult about ways to establish the habit of regular recitation of the obligatory prayers.
- Consult on strategies for obeying the law of the Fast at school and other locations.
- In pairs, share plans for daily prayer, meditation, and reflection.
- Consult about potential challenges and their solutions for establishing daily habits of these spiritual acts.
- In groups, develop goals for establishing spiritual habits and check progress toward these goals.



ELOQUENT SPEECH OBJECTIVES

- To have established a regular habit of saying one of the obligatory prayers
- To have established a regular habit of reading the Bahá'í writings morning and evening
- To have established a regular habit of reflection and meditation
- To demonstrate the ability to make conscious decisions about one's daily actions
- To share the results of one's study of spiritual practices by planning and carrying out devotional meetings or the devotional portion of a Nineteen Day Feast or Holy Day commemoration

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Encourage students to develop the habit of recording in a journal a list of the Bahá'í writings they read as well as their reflections on prayer and meditation. Encourage them also to beautify these journal entries with drawings or other means.
- Assist students to plan and host the devotional portion of a Nineteen Day Feast, incorporating passages that they have identified through personal study of the Bahá'í sacred writings.
- Invite students to plan a monthly devotional gathering for their friends and peers.
- Encourage students to establish a regular book club, perhaps beginning with *Paris Talks* or *Some Answered Questions*. Suggest that they keep a personal journal for writing or drawing reflections on their reading which they can share during book club meetings.

Sample Activities

ACTIVITY 1: PRAYER, FASTING, AND SPIRITUAL MATURITY

KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVE: To become familiar with the Bahá'í writings about obligatory prayer

WISDOM OBJECTIVE: To understand the importance of obligatory prayer and fasting for the spiritual development of the individual and of humanity as a whole

SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION OBJECTIVE: To reflect on one's own plan for establishing a regular habit of saying one of the obligatory prayers and the value of this habit for one's own life

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS: Use of Bahá'í sacred writings; Use of science; Use of reflection

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 60 MIN.

Materials Needed:

- Student copies of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas OR Bahá'í prayer books
- Chart paper and markers
- Globe or world map
- Bar magnet or strong refrigerator magnet
- Sewing needles
- Thimbles, if available
- Small pieces of cork
- Small cups of water
- Plain paper and student folders
- Background music

Advance Preparation:

Practice the magnet demonstration described in Step 6.

Display the following quotations in the classroom:

We have ordained obligatory prayer and fasting so that all may by these means draw nigh unto God, the Most Powerful, the Well-Beloved.

Bahá'u'lláh, *The Importance of Obligatory Prayer and Fasting*, no. 1

Fasting and obligatory prayer are as two wings to man's life. Blessed be the one who soareth with their aid in the heaven of the love of God, the Lord of all worlds.

Bahá'u'lláh, *The Importance of Obligatory Prayer and Fasting*, no. 3

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

Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, paragraph 10

1. Warmly welcome all new and returning students and invite them to share their favorite songs and prayers as part of opening devotions.
2. Invite students to use their imaginations and silently reflect on their favorite or ideal day. Invite them to consider: How would it begin? What would you do? Who else would be involved? What would be a particular high point? How would you show your spiritual powers during this favorite day?
3. Encourage students to share their responses with the person beside them. Provide time for this pair sharing and then invite students to reflect again: If you were to send a postcard to our class, what would it be? Invite students to briefly describe their postcards in the whole group. Warmly acknowledge all.
4. In the whole group briefly discuss: Thinking again about our favorite days, how do our spiritual powers show that we're made in the image and likeness of God? Acknowledge all responses.

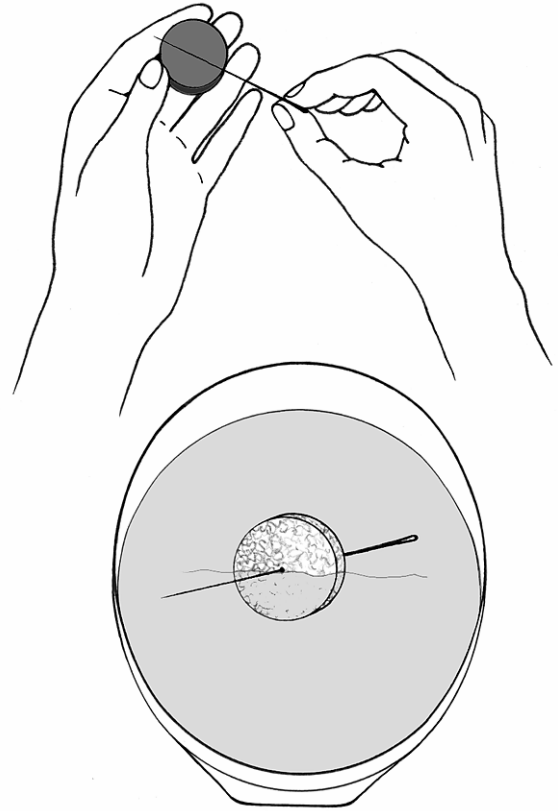
Briefly discuss: What are some ways that we can strengthen our spiritual powers? Acknowledge all.

5. Invite student volunteers to read aloud the 1st posted quotation twice. Briefly discuss: How can obligatory prayer and fasting help us strengthen our spiritual powers?

If the class has implemented a plan for reading the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, invite students to briefly share their questions and reflections. Discuss: How does this reading also help to strengthen our spiritual powers?

6. Show students the needle. Explain that we're like this needle. When the needle is magnetized, it becomes a compass that points to the magnetic pole. When we fast and say our obligatory prayers, we become more and more attracted by the love of God. Our spiritual powers grow stronger day by day. Invite students to:

- Rub a magnet over the needle a few times—always in the same direction—to magnetize the needle.
- Drive the needle through a small circle of cork, so that the needle extends from one side of the circle to the other. Consider using a thimble to protect fingers during this process.
- Float the cork-plus-needle in the cup of water, so that the floating needle lies roughly parallel to the surface of the water.
- Notice that the needle points to the nearest magnetic pole, the north or south pole of the planet, like a compass.
- Use this compass and the globe or map to find their orientation toward the Qiblih of the Bahá'í world, the Shrine or resting place of Bahá'u'lláh.



Explain that when we say our obligatory prayers (but not every prayer) we turn toward the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh. Briefly discuss: When we turn to the Manifestation of God during our obligatory prayers, how are we like the magnetized needle that points to the earth's pole?

7. Invite volunteers to read aloud the 2nd posted quotation twice. Encourage students to reflect on the following questions and then to discuss in pairs: How could fasting and obligatory prayer be like wings that draw us to the heaven of the love of God? What examples from our own lives or the lives of the people around us show the power of obligatory prayer or fasting to draw us closer to God? Invite student pairs to decide upon one idea or example to share in the whole group. Acknowledge all.

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8. Invite volunteers to read aloud the 3rd posted quotation twice. In the whole group, briefly discuss: Why might the obligation to say obligatory prayers and to fast become binding at the age of 15?
9. Invite students to refer to their copies of the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* or Bahá’í prayer books. Encourage students to turn to the short obligatory prayer. Invite a volunteer to read through the prayer. Invite one or more students to share their experiences saying this prayer. Briefly discuss: What questions do we have about this prayer? How could we organize our daily routine to use the short obligatory prayer?
10. Then encourage students to turn to the medium obligatory prayer. In the whole group, invite student volunteers to take turns reading through the text and instructions of this prayer. Students may demonstrate the postures described, if desired. Briefly discuss: What questions do we have about this prayer? How could we organize our daily routine to use the medium obligatory prayer?
11. Next, encourage students to read or look through the text and instructions for the long obligatory prayer in teams of 2. After teams have had some time to become familiar with this prayer, students may demonstrate the postures described, if desired. Then discuss in the whole group: What questions do we have about this prayer? How could we organize our day to use the long obligatory prayer?
12. Record any questions that are not easily answered in the text of these prayers to address during the next activity. Save these for the next class.
13. Provide students with plain paper, play quiet background music, and invite volunteers to read aloud the posted quotations again. Encourage students to reflect upon themselves as spiritual beings approaching maturity. Invite them to create a plan to say one of the obligatory prayers each day between now and the next class. If they are already saying one of these prayers on a regular basis, invite them to consider using a different obligatory prayer one or more times.
14. Write the following questions on chart paper and encourage students to record their answers on plain paper.
 - Which obligatory prayer would I like to say?
 - When and where shall I say it?
 - How shall I plan for ablutions and facing the Qiblah?
15. After allowing time for students to write or draw their responses, save all papers in student folders. Then encourage them to think of a person they respect. Encourage them to ask that person about their experiences with obligatory prayer or other prayers before the next class: How does that person benefit from prayer?
16. Conclude the activity with favorite songs and prayers.

ACTIVITY 2: RECITING “ALLÁH-U-ABHÁ”

KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVE: To become familiar with the Bahá’í writings about obligatory prayer

SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION OBJECTIVE: To reflect on one’s own plan for establishing a regular habit of saying one of the obligatory prayers and the value of this habit for one’s own life

ELOQUENT SPEECH OBJECTIVE: To have established a regular habit of saying one of the obligatory prayers

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

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 60 MIN.

Materials Needed:

- Copies of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas OR Bahá’í prayer books
- Questions about obligatory prayer from Activity 1
- Copies of Resource Pages 78–79
- Chart paper and markers
- Plain paper
- Student folders
- Set of prayer beads, if available
- Many assorted beads, if desired
- String, if desired
- Needles or tape, if desired
- Background music

Advance Preparation:

Experiment with available materials for creating prayer beads as described in Step 13 below.

1. Welcome students and begin the activity with favorite songs and prayers.
2. If the class is reading the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, discuss any questions or comments. Invite students to share their reflections about the past week: What has been our experience using the obligatory prayers? What have we also learned from others about their experiences with prayer? Drawing on our own experiences and the experiences of others, what are some ways that we can strengthen our habit of saying one of the obligatory prayers each day? Brainstorm a list of ideas and record them on chart paper.
3. Remind students that Bahá’u’lláh revealed the Most Holy Book in Arabic and that His title “Bahá’u’lláh” is also Arabic. Briefly discuss: What is the meaning of the title “Bahá’u’lláh”? Can we think of other Arabic words or phrases with similar sounds? Acknowledge all.
4. Invite students to turn to the obligatory prayers in their Bahá’í prayer books or the Kitáb-i-Aqdas. Notice that the long obligatory prayer calls for the recitation of the Greatest Name 9 times during this prayer.

Briefly discuss: Where does this prayer call for the Greatest Name? What is the Greatest Name? What is the meaning of the Greatest Name in English? Acknowledge all responses. Affirm that one form of the Greatest Name is “Alláh-u-Abhá,” an Arabic phrase meaning “God the All-Glorious.”

5. If students have access to the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, invite a capable reader to read aloud Note 33, pp. 181–82. If this book is not available, explain that in Islam, a tradition holds that among the many names of God, the Greatest Name was hidden. Bahá’u’lláh confirmed that the Greatest Name is “Bahá” or “Glory.” Shoghi Effendi’s secretary wrote on his behalf:

The Greatest Name is the Name of Bahá’u’lláh. “Yá Bahá’u’l-Abhá” is an invocation meaning: “O Thou Glory of Glories!” “Alláh-u-Abhá” is a greeting which means: “God the All-Glorious.” Both refer to Bahá’u’lláh. By Greatest Name is meant that Bahá’u’lláh has appeared in God’s Greatest Name, in other words, that He is the supreme Manifestation of God.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, note 33

- Briefly discuss: When might we use the invocation “Yá Bahá’u’l-Abhá”? When might we use the greeting “Alláh-u-Abhá”? What are some of the other names of God?
- Affirm that many Bahá’í prayers begin and end by calling on the Names of God. Invite students to find some of the Names of God used in prayers. Affirm all these beautiful Names of God. Also affirm that Bahá, Bahá’u’lláh, Abhá, Alláh-u-Abhá, and Yá Bahá’u’l-Abhá are all forms of the Greatest Name of God and all refer to the supreme Manifestation of God.

- If students have access to the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, invite students to turn to paragraph 18. Invite volunteers to read this paragraph aloud twice.

If students do not have copies of the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, read aloud the following excerpt twice:

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

Bahá’u’lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, paragraph 18

Briefly discuss: For which other prayers do we wash our hands and face? Would anyone like to share a personal experience about reciting “Alláh-u-Abhá”?

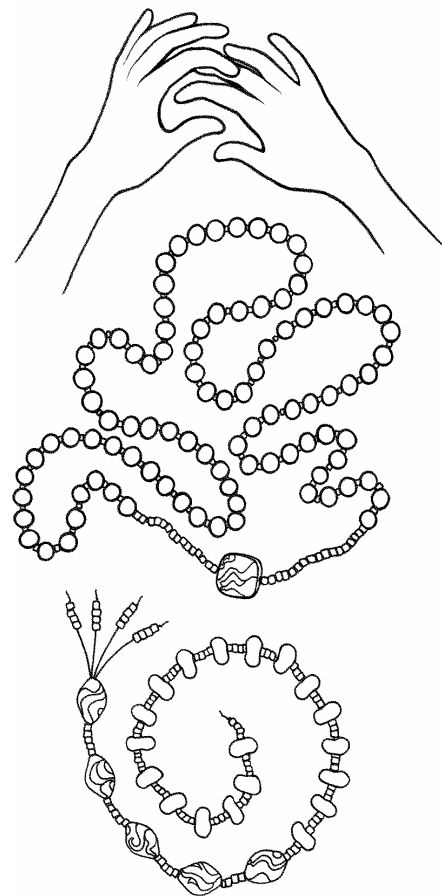
Explain that we may use the same ablutions for reciting our obligatory prayers as we use for reciting “Alláh-u-Abhá” 95 times, if we do them both together.

- Show students how to count “Alláh-u-Abhá” 95 times using prayer beads and also with the knuckles of their fingers and thumb. Using the tip of their thumb or a finger, they may touch the tip and 3 knuckles on each finger (4 fingers x 4 touches) and the tip and 2 knuckles of the thumb (3 touches) to count to 19 on one hand. They may use their other hand to count this process 5 times, for a total of 95 touches.

- Then distribute index cards or small pieces of paper. Invite students work in pairs to write 1 or more questions about obligatory prayer or the recitation of “Alláh-u-Abhá,” writing each question on a separate piece of paper.
- Collect the questions and read them all aloud in the whole group. Invite these same pairs to select 1 or more questions to answer using the index to their copies of the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* or, if needed, Resource Pages 78–79. Teachers may also take responsibility for finding answers to some of these questions.

If questions are posed for which answers are not found, students or teachers may offer to research answers to share during the next class.

- After allowing time for student work, invite teams to share their questions and answers in the whole group. Acknowledge all. Remind students that unanswered questions may be addressed during the next class. Save Resource Pages in student folders.



Consider also providing string and beads, for students to create their own sets of prayer beads. If the holes in the beads are large, tape may be used to stiffen the end of the string. If the beads have small holes, needles may be necessary for stringing beads. Prayer beads may be made by creating:

- A single loop of 95 beads, with one unique bead to serve as the starting and ending point.
 - A loop of 19 beads, with 5 separate beads to be used for counting 5 sets of 19 for a total of 95.
13. Provide students with plain paper and their folders. Play quiet background music and encourage them to return to the plan they created in the previous activity for saying one of the obligatory prayers each day. Encourage them to reflect on their own experiences, as well as the ideas recorded in Step 2 above, and to refine their plan to strengthen their habit of daily obligatory prayer along with the recitation of “Alláh-u-Abhá” 95 times each day. Would they also like to call on the assistance of family members to help them strengthen this habit?
 14. If desired, students may share their plans with the group. Conclude the activity with favorite songs and prayers.

ACTIVITY 3: WHAT IS MEDITATION?

KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVE: To become familiar with the Bahá'í writings on reflection and meditation

WISDOM OBJECTIVE: To understand the value of reflection and meditation for one's spiritual development

SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION OBJECTIVE: To reflect on ways to make a regular time and place for meditation and reflection as well as one's own effective manner and mode of reflection and meditation

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS: Direct use of Bahá'í sacred writings; Use of meditation and reflection; Use of music; Use of stories; Use of crafts

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 30 MIN.

Materials Needed:

- Copies of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, if available
- Copy of Resource Page 83 on cardstock
- Plain paper and student folders
- Lightweight cardboard, cardstock, or craft foam
- Scissors
- Glue
- Rulers
- Markers
- Assorted paper or fabric scraps
- Other art materials, as desired
- Background music

Advance Preparation:

Consider ways to foster a meditative spirit in students: A pleasant outdoor space may be ideal. You may also consider meeting in a different room, arranging the classroom without tables, placing a candle or vase of flowers where students will see them, or otherwise creating an atmosphere of simplicity and beauty for this activity. Your own reverence for the Word of God, quiet focused movements and voice, and interest in students' experiences will also help create this atmosphere.

Display the questions in Step 8 in the classroom.

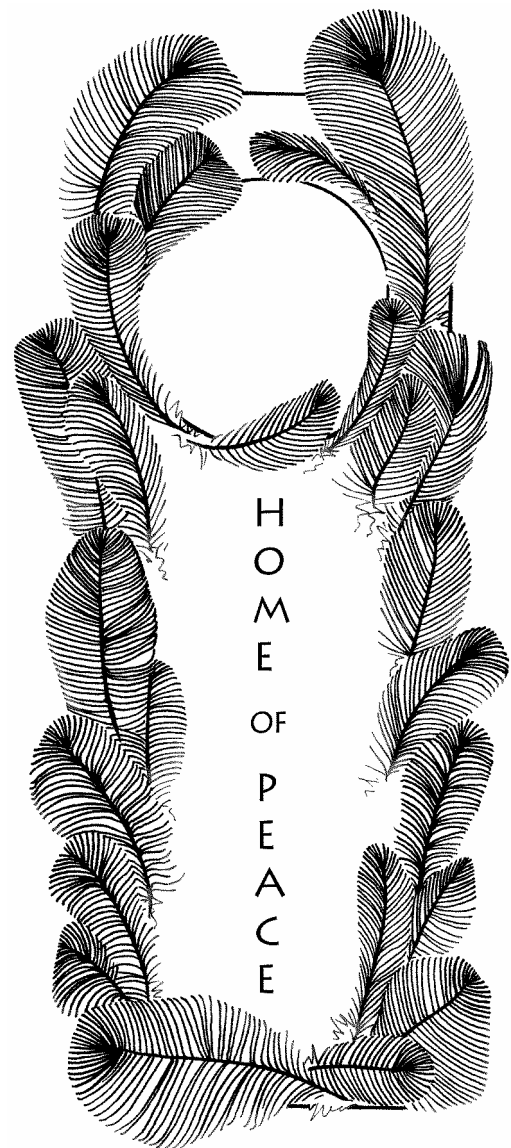
Consider making a sample door hanger, as described in Step 9.

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1. Welcome students. Invite them to share their reflections about the past week: What has been our experience using the obligatory prayers and reciting “Alláh-u-Abhá” 95 times? What are we learning about our own processes for developing habits of spiritual discipline?
2. If students are independently reading the text of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas or if reference copies of the Most Holy Book are available, briefly discuss: How many paragraphs can we find in the Most Holy Book that are devoted to prayer, meditation, and reading the verses of God? How does it make us feel to realize that the Manifestation of God gives so much attention to developing our spiritual capabilities?
3. Explain that the religion of God has the purpose of drawing us ever closer to God, helping us develop our God-given talents in service to others, and building a happy, just, and peaceful world.
4. Briefly discuss: When we reflect on spiritual things, what are some ways that we can position our bodies to help us keep our focus? Acknowledge all and then show students Resource Page 80 that shows some of the positions that different peoples around the world use for prayer or meditation. Explain that students may wish to try out one or more of these positions later in this class when they have the opportunity to reflect on the Word of God. Invite students to show how they position themselves for prayer or meditation if they like.
5. Then invite students to stand and move with you in some gentle ways: raise arms and stretch, bend and sway, swing arms while walking about the classroom. If your students are very active, consider beginning with vigorous movements and gradually slowing the pace until students are moving in a slow, deliberate manner.
6. Then encourage students to find a comfortable reverent position, open their hearts, and listen as you begin playing quiet background music, call their attention to the sounds of nature, or simply observe silence.

Allow students to listen quietly to the music, nature sounds, or silence for a time. Slowly and eloquently read the quotations and stories on Resource Pages 81–82. Pause to allow time for reflection after each quotation or story.
7. After allowing time for reflection, pose the following questions for quiet discussion: What did we notice about our own meditative faculty as we listened to the quotations and story? Did we find ourselves reflecting on the meaning of the words in the quotations? What happens in our hearts when we allow ourselves time to ponder and reflect? What are some times and places in which we can read the verses of God, ponder the meaning of these verses, and begin to see how we might translate them into action? Listen carefully and acknowledge student responses.
8. Provide students with plain paper and allow a longer time than usual for them to silently record their reflections in words or pictures. After allowing a period of time for student reflection, encourage them to turn their attention toward their daily routine and reflect on their mornings, afternoons, and evenings and consider the following questions:
 - Thinking about my own spiritual habits, what possibilities do I see for strengthening my practices of saying my obligatory prayer, reciting “Alláh-u-Abhá,” reading the verses of God, and reflecting on their application in my own life?
 - What would I like to keep doing? What small changes could make a difference?
 - How might I find encouragement from friends or family members as I strive to strengthen these habits in myself?
 - How can I sustain my spiritual growth “little by little, day by day?”

9. As students complete their journal reflections, save these papers in their folders. Then invite them to make a door hanger to let other members of their household know when they are engaged in prayer or meditation. Briefly discuss: How could using a door hanger help us focus our attention on prayer, meditation, and the verses of God? Then invite students to:
 - Select a shape for the door hanger: circle, square, oval, rectangle, or use the template on Resource Page 83.
 - Draw around the template or another shape, or use a ruler to outline your door hanger on cardboard from a cereal box, cardstock, craft foam, or another material.
 - Write a message or short quotation on your door hanger. Some possibilities include: Blessed Is the Spot; Reciting the Verses of God; The Home of Peace.
 - Decorate the door hanger as desired.
10. Encourage students to continue working on their spiritual habits during the coming week, to use the door hanger, and to ask at least one other person about their experiences with fasting: What are the spiritual benefits of fasting? Assist students to identify whom they might ask, if necessary.
11. Conclude the activity with favorite songs and prayers, perhaps including the songs taught in the following activity.



ACTIVITY 4: MUSIC AND MEDITATION

WISDOM OBJECTIVE: understand the value of reflection and meditation for one’s spiritual development

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

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 20 MIN.

Materials Needed:

- Copies of Resource Pages 84, if desired
- Copies of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, if available

Advance Preparation:

- Learn the melody “I Have Breathed within Thee,” Resource Page 84, using one of the methods taught in Teacher Development Workshop 8 or a method of your own choosing. The melody can be heard on the Core Curriculum website, www.core-curriculum.org.

1. If students have access to copies of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, invite volunteers to read aloud paragraphs 116 and 51.

If copies of this book are not available, share the following quotations:

They who recite the verses of the All-Merciful in the most melodious of tones will perceive in them that with which the sovereignty of earth and heaven can never be compared. From them they will inhale the divine fragrance of My worlds—worlds which today none can discern save those who have been endowed with vision through this sublime, this beauteous Revelation. Say: These verses draw hearts that are pure unto those spiritual worlds that can neither be expressed in words nor intimated by allusion. Blessed be those who hearken.

Bahá’u’lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, paragraph 116

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*, paragraph 51

2. Briefly discuss: How can melodies help us “inhale the divine fragrance” from the verses of God? Have we experienced in our own selves the power of music as a ladder for our souls? Do we find ourselves reflecting on the meaning of the words as we sing or listen to a melody?
3. Invite students to learn with you a selection from *The Hidden Words* that can assist us to reflect on our own soul’s relationship with the Divine.
4. Teach “I Have Breathed within Thee,” Resource Page 84, using one of the methods learned in Teacher Development Workshop 8 or another method of your own choosing.
5. Encourage students to practice this melody on their own and sing it at an upcoming community gathering.

ACTIVITY 5: PREPARING FOR THE FAST

KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVE: To know about the Bahá’í laws and writings on fasting

WISDOM OBJECTIVE: To understand the importance of obligatory prayer and fasting for the spiritual development of the individual and of humanity as a whole

SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION OBJECTIVE: To meditate on one’s own upcoming obligation for fasting and how to manage this obligation in one’s own life circumstances

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS: Direct use of Bahá’í sacred writings; Use of peer teaching; Use of creativity and the arts

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 45 MIN.

Materials Needed:

- Copies of Resource Page 85
- Student folders
- Plain paper
- Simple art materials, as desired
- Bahá’í prayer books

Advance Preparation:

Familiarize yourself with paragraphs 10, 13, 16, 17, and pp. 146–48 in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas for background information about the law of fasting. Use its index to find additional notes, questions, and answers, if desired.

1. Welcome students and encourage them to share favorite songs and prayers. Invite student reflections on their spiritual development plans: Did everything go as anticipated? Did we change our plans in some way? What bounties did we notice as a result of our efforts?
2. Invite students also to share what they learned about fasting from others. Acknowledge all. Remind students that Bahá’u’lláh says:
Fasting and obligatory prayer are as two wings to man’s life. Blessed be the one who soareth with their aid in the heaven of the love of God, the Lord of all worlds.
Bahá’u’lláh, The Importance of Obligatory Prayer and Fasting, no. 3
Briefly discuss: How do these experiences help us appreciate the truth of these words?
3. Distribute copies of Resource Page 85. Invite volunteers to read aloud these quotations. Encourage students to underline important words and phrases and share their underlined words and phrases with the person beside them.
4. Invite the pairs to use their words and phrases—and other short words, as desired—to create a haiku or other poem about the Fast. A haiku is a 3-line poem with 5 syllables in the 1st line, 7 in the 2nd, and 5 in the 3rd. Circulate to provide encouragement, as needed.
5. Invite pairs to share their poems. Applaud all! Then encourage students to copy and illustrate their poem on plain paper. Save poems and Resource Pages in student folders.
6. Discuss: What are the spiritual benefits of the Fast? What are some practical ways to fulfill this obligation in light of our family, school, and other circumstances? How could we support each other in this process? How could we also support other members of our family or community during the 19-Day Fast?
7. Distribute copies of Bahá’í prayer books. Encourage students to turn to the prayers that Bahá’u’lláh revealed for the Fast and identify a prayer that especially attracts their hearts. Invite students to read a portion of those prayers in the whole group. Acknowledge all.
8. Invite students to record their reflections and practical ideas about fasting on plain paper, along with a note about the prayer they selected. Save these papers in student folders. Conclude the activity with favorite songs and prayers.

Resource Pages

Activity 2: Reciting “Alláh-u-Abhá”

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

Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, paragraph 10

Perform ye . . . ablutions for the Obligatory Prayer; this is the command of God, the Incomparable, the Unrestrained.

Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, paragraph 18

Let him that findeth no water for ablution repeat five times the words “In the Name of God, the Most Pure, the Most Pure,” and then proceed to his devotions.

Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, paragraph 10

It hath been ordained that obligatory prayer is to be performed by each of you individually.

Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, paragraph 12

When traveling, if ye should stop and rest in some safe spot, perform ye—men and women alike—a single prostration in place of each unsaid Obligatory Prayer, and while prostrating say “Glorified be God, the Lord of Might and Majesty, of Grace and Bounty.” Whoso is unable to do this, let him say only “Glorified be God”; this shall assuredly suffice him. He is, of a truth, the all-sufficing, the ever-abiding, the forgiving, compassionate God. Upon completing your prostrations, seat yourselves cross-legged—men and women alike—and eighteen times repeat “Glorified be God, the Lord of the kingdoms of earth and heaven.”

Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, paragraph 14

This prostration is to compensate for obligatory prayer omitted in the course of travel, and by reason of insecure circumstances. If, at the time of prayer, the traveler should find himself at rest in a secure place, he should perform that prayer. This provision regarding the compensating prostration applieth both at home and on a journey.

Bahá'u'lláh, “Questions and Answers,” *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, answer 21, pp. 113–14

If there be a safe place, obligatory prayer is not suspended during travel.

Bahá'u'lláh, “Questions and Answers,” *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, answer 58, p. 124

Facing in the direction of the Qiblih is a fixed requirement for the recitation of obligatory prayer, but for other prayers and devotions one may follow what the merciful Lord hath revealed in the Qur'án: “Whichever way ye turn, there is the face of God.”

Bahá'u'lláh, “Questions and Answers,” *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, answer 14, p. 111

Activity 2: Reciting “Alláh-u-Abhá”

The age of maturity is fifteen for both men and women.

Bahá'u'lláh, “Questions and Answers,” *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, answer 20, p. 113

That which hath been revealed in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas concerneth a different Obligatory Prayer. Some years ago a number of the ordinances of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas including that Obligatory Prayer were, for reasons of wisdom, recorded separately and sent away together with other sacred writings, for the purposes of preservation and protection. Later these three Obligatory Prayers were revealed.

Bahá'u'lláh, “Questions and Answers,” *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, answer 63, pp. 125–26

Question 81: Should the third [short] Obligatory Prayer be offered while seated or standing?

Answer: It is preferable and more fitting to stand in an attitude of humble reverence.

Bahá'u'lláh, “Questions and Answers,” *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 130

Question 83: Concerning the definition of “morning,” “noon” and “evening.”

Answer: These are sunrise, noon and sunset. The allowable times for Obligatory Prayers are from morning till noon, from noon till sunset, and from sunset till two hours thereafter.

Bahá'u'lláh, “Questions and Answers,” *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 131

. . . The point to which the worshipper should turn when offering obligatory prayer, is called the Qiblih. . . Bahá'u'lláh ordains His resting-place as the Qiblih after His passing. The Most Holy Tomb is at Bahjí, 'Akká.

“Notes,” *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, no. 7–8, pp. 170–71

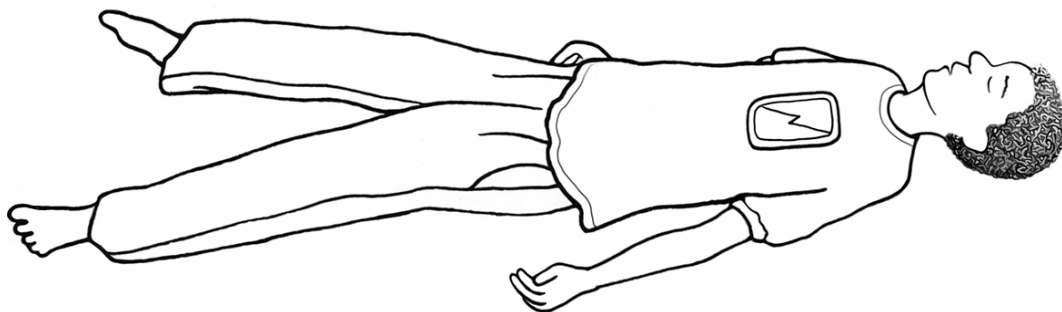
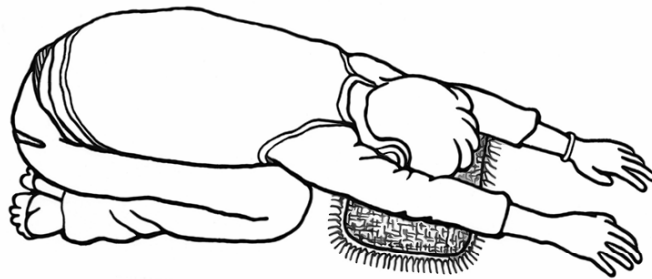
The prescribed ablutions consist of washing the hands and the face in preparation for prayer.

“Notes,” *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, no. 34, p. 180

Bahá'u'lláh has reduced all ritual and form to an absolute minimum in His Faith. The few forms that there are—like those associated with the two longer obligatory daily prayers—are only symbols of the inner attitude. There is a wisdom in them, and a great blessing, but we cannot force ourselves to understand or feel these things, that is why He gave us also the very short and simple prayer, for those who did not feel the desire to perform the acts associated with the other two.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, *The Compilation of Compilations*, vol. 2, p. 242

Activity 3: What Is Meditation?



Activity 3: What Is Meditation?

Recite ye the verses of God every morn and eventide. . . . Lay not upon your souls that which will weary them and weigh them down, but rather what will lighten and uplift them, so that they may soar on the wings of the Divine verses towards the Dawning-place of His manifest signs; this will draw you nearer to God, did ye but comprehend.

Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, paragraph 149

Do thou meditate on that which We have revealed unto thee, that thou mayest discover the purpose of God, thy Lord, and the Lord of all worlds.

Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, LXXIX, p. 152

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

It is an axiomatic fact that while you meditate you are speaking with your own spirit. In that state of mind you put certain questions to your spirit and the spirit answers: the light breaks forth and the reality is revealed. . . .

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

This faculty brings forth from the invisible plane the sciences and arts. Through the meditative faculty inventions are made possible. . . .

The meditative faculty is akin to the mirror; if you put it before earthly objects it will reflect them. Therefore if the spirit of man is contemplating earthly subjects he will be informed of these.

But if you turn the mirror of your spirits heavenwards, the heavenly constellations and the rays of the Sun of Reality will be reflected in your hearts, and the virtues of the Kingdom will be obtained.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, pp. 174–76

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

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, *The Compilation of Compilations*, vol. 2, p. 325

Activity 3: What Is Meditation?

Meditation

A Pilgrim's Note

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

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

Ruth Moffet, *Du'á: On Wings of Prayer*, p. 29

The Bejeweled Sword

A Persian Folktale

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

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

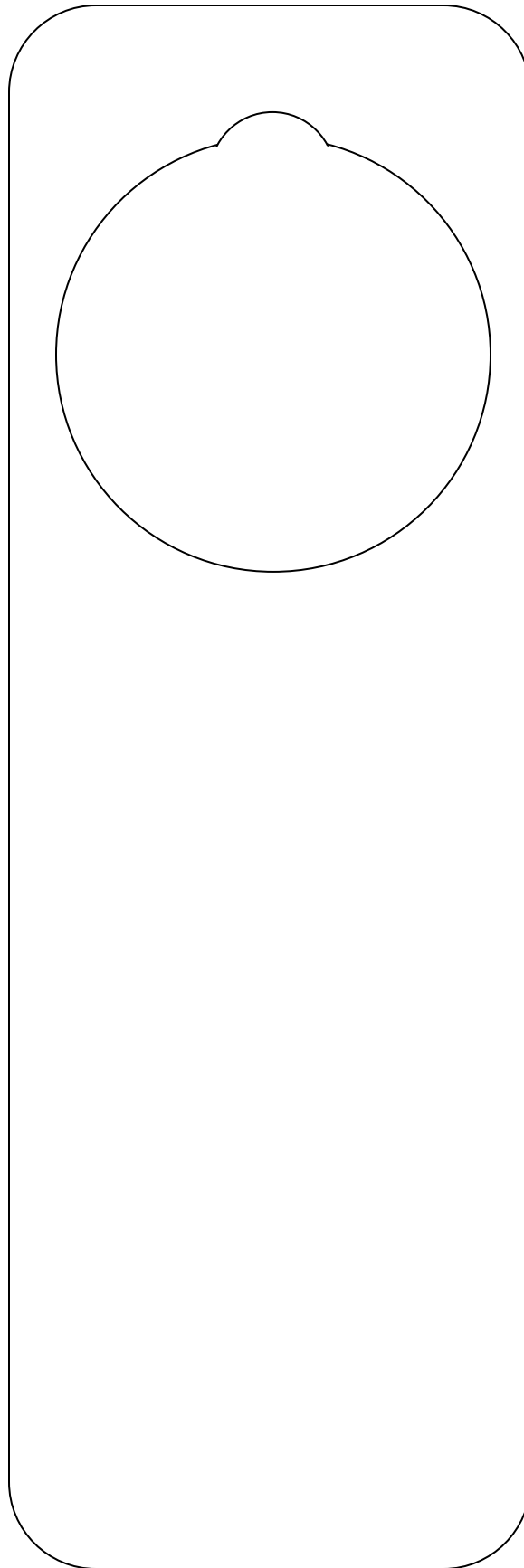
His father, who never believed in God or in any kind of prayers, saw his son's disappointment and said, "My son, can't you see, your prayers were not answered?" The son looked at his father and replied, "Oh yes father, my prayers were answered." "How can that be?" asked the father in surprise. "You did not receive the bejeweled sword that you desired so much."

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

Irene Taafaki, *Thoughts: Education for Peace and One World*, pp. 212–13
George Ronald, Publisher. Reprinted with permission.

Activity 3: What Is Meditation?

Door Hanger Template



Activity 4: Music and Meditation

I Have Breathed within Thee

Words: Bahá'u'lláh, *Hidden Words of Bahá'u'lláh*, Arabic no. 19

Music: Ernestine Atkins

Voice

“I have breathed with - in thee a breath of My own Spi - rit, that

5 thou may - est be _____ My _____ lov - er. I have breathed with - in thee _____ a

11 breath of My own Spi - rit, that thou may - est be _____ My _____ lov - er. *Fine*

17 Why hast thou for - sa - ken Me? Why _____ hast thou for - sa - ken

24 Me?” Tell me “Why _____ hast thou for - sa - ken Me and sought a be - loved

31 oth - er than Me?” _____ For “I have

D.C. al Fine

Activity 5: Preparing for the Fast

Fasting and obligatory prayer are as two wings to man's life. Blessed be the one who soareth with their aid in the heaven of the love of God, the Lord of all worlds.

Bahá'u'lláh, *The Importance of Obligatory Prayer and Fasting*, no. 3

We have commanded you to pray and fast from the beginning of maturity; this is ordained by God, your Lord and the Lord of your forefathers. He hath exempted from this those who are weak from illness or age, as a bounty from His Presence, and He is the Forgiving, the Generous.

Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, paragraph 10

These are the days of the Fast. Blessed is the one who through the heat generated by the Fast increaseth his love, and who, with joy and radiance, ariseth to perform worthy deeds. Verily, He guideth whomsoever He willeth to the straight path.

Bahá'u'lláh, *The Importance of Obligatory Prayer and Fasting*, no. 15

We have enjoined upon you fasting during a brief period. . . . The traveler, the ailing, those who are with child or giving suck, are not bound by the Fast; they have been exempted by God as a token of His grace. He, verily, is the Almighty, the Most Generous.

Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, paragraph 16

Even though outwardly the Fast is difficult and toilsome, yet inwardly it is bounty and tranquility. Purification and training are conditioned and dependent only on such rigorous exercises as are in accord with the Book of God and sanctioned by Divine law, not those which the deluded have inflicted upon the people. Whatsoever God hath revealed is beloved of the soul. We beseech Him that He may graciously assist us to do that which is pleasing and acceptable unto Him.

Bahá'u'lláh, *The Importance of Obligatory Prayer and Fasting*, no. 16

Verily, I say, fasting is the supreme remedy and the most great healing for the disease of self and passion.

Bahá'u'lláh, *The Importance of Obligatory Prayer and Fasting*, no. 17

Man is, in reality, a spiritual being, and only when he lives in the spirit is he truly happy.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, p. 72

LIST OF ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Books, Stories, and Articles:

Brilliant Star magazine:

- “Heroic Deeds,” Jan/Feb 1997
- “The Secret Club,” Sep/Oct 1999
- “A Shirt Tale,” Mar/Apr 2001
- “God’s Answer,” Sep/Oct 2001
- “Practicing Prayerfulness,” Nov/Dec 2001
- “Nineteen Day Feast,” Jan/Feb 2002
- “Star Kids: Spiritual Food,” Jul/Aug 2002

Daily Meditations on the Virtues

Youth: Channels for Change

- “Powerful Prayers,” Jul/Aug 2002
- “Wayne and Wilma: Daily Prayers,” Jul/Aug 2002
- “Lena and the Dreadful Dragon,” Jul/Aug 2002
- “A Place for Prayer,” May/June 2003
- “Secret Revealed,” Nov/Dec 2004
- “The Rice Farmer and His Donkey,” Sep/Oct 2006
- “Fast Facts: True or False,” Mar/Apr 2003

Worksheets and Coloring Pages:

Brilliant Star magazine:

- “My Bahá’í Community,” Jan/Feb 1993
- “Feast at My House,” Jan/Feb 1993

Flickerings

Tablet of the Heart: God and Me

The Virtues: Activity & Coloring Book, Ages 5–7

The Virtues: Activity & Coloring Book, Ages 8–10

Unity Flows from Every Color, A Coloring Book for the Whole Family

Activities:

Brilliant Star magazine:

- “Preparing Myself for Feast,” Jan/Feb 1993
- “Feast Puzzle,” Jan/Feb 1993
- “Make a Community Goal,” Nov/Dec 1993
- “Virtue Notes,” Jan/Feb 1994
- “My Family and the Fast,” Jan/Feb 1994
- “Ten Thousand to One,” Nov/Dec 1994
- “Word Search,” Jan/Feb 1995
- “Make a Meditation Journal,” Mar/Apr 1997
- “About Me and My Prayers,” Sep/Oct 1998
- “Secret Servants,” Sp Ed 1999
- “What’s on the Blue Bench?” Sp Ed 1998
- “Feast Around the World,” May/June 2000
- “The Case of the Missing Meals,” Mar/Apr 2001
- “Sacred Memories,” Sep/Oct 2001
- “My Bahá’í Journal,” Jul/Aug 2002
- “Memory Tips,” Jul/Aug 2002
- “Protect Your Prayer Book,” Jul/Aug 2002

- “Refresh and Gladden My Spirit,” Jul/Aug 2002
- “Nine Kinds of Prayer,” Jul/Aug 2002
- “Exercise for the Spirit,” Jul/Aug 2002
- “Mystery Door Maze,” Jul/Aug 2002
- “Chameleon Crossword,” Jul/Aug 2002
- “Nimni Finds Out About Feast,” Mar/Apr 2003
- “Virtues Placemats,” Mar/Apr 2003
- “Maya’s Mysteries: Amazing Egg,” Mar/Apr 2004
- “Nur’s Nook: Light Up Darkness,” Jul/Aug 2005
- “How to Make Mistakes,” Sep/Oct 2006
- “What Do You Say?” Sep/Oct 2006
- “You Be the Judge!” Sep/Oct 2006
- “Tame Your Dragons,” Sep/Oct 2006
- “Your Internal Compass,” Sep/Oct 2006
- “Super Stress Pal,” Sep/Oct 2006
- “Maya’s Mysteries: Spirit Soar,” Mar/Apr 2007

Music:

Brilliant Star magazine:

- “Children’s Prayer,” Jul/Aug 2002
- “Be Generous,” Jul/Aug 2005
- “Think for Yourself,” Sep/Oct 2006

Poetry:

Brilliant Star magazine:

- “Waiting at Bahjí,” Mar/Apr 1992

Games:

Brilliant Star magazine:

- “Come to Feast,” Jan/Feb 1993
- “Lena’s Magical Rescue Game,” Jul/Aug 2002

Other Favorite Resources:

If you find any additional resources, please notify the Office of Education and Schools at the Bahá’í National Center, email SCHOOLS@usbnc.org, or submit your findings to the Core Curriculum website, www.core-curriculum.org.

TO DEVELOP ONE'S SOCIAL LIFE

COMMUNITY SERVICE

**SPIRITUAL QUALITIES RELEVANT TO THIS TOPIC:
SELFLESSNESS, HUMILITY, COOPERATION**

It is incumbent upon every man of insight and understanding to strive to translate that which hath been written into reality and action.

Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 166

Service to the world of humanity should be obligatory. Every student should know, with perfect certainty, that he is the brother of the people of all religions and nations and that he should be without religious, racial, national, patriotic or political bias, so that he may find the thoughts of universal peace and the love of humankind firmly established in his heart. He should know himself as a servant of human society of all the countries in the world. He should see God as the Heavenly Father and all the servants as His children, counting all of the nations, parties, and sects as one family.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Star of the West*, vol. 17, no. 5, p. 161

Learning Objectives and Suggested Activities



KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVES

- To know that service to humanity is a paramount purpose of human life
- To know the role of youth as servants of humanity and teachers of the Cause of God
- To identify simple lines of action that can result in service to the community, at school, and at home

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Study quotations from the Bahá'í writings about service.
- Invite students to each study a selected quotation about the role of youth as servants to humanity. Then create a list of important themes as a group.
- Research service opportunities in the community at large.
- Memorize quotations about service.



WISDOM OBJECTIVES

- To understand that service to humanity provides a source of profound happiness for individuals
- To appreciate the power of working in groups

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Interview community members about the relationship between service and happiness.
- Read stories about heroic acts of service.
- Create artwork to illustrate thoughts and feelings about service.

SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION OBJECTIVES

- To discern the qualities and attributes that enable effective service
- To discern one's own strengths and plan to use them in service to the community
- To perceive ways to offer service to the community at large both as individuals and as a class
- To perceive the benefits of service to the person serving as well as the people served

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Prepare a poster highlighting spiritual qualities used in service. Share these posters with the community.
- Identify the unique strengths of class members and brainstorm ways to develop these strengths through service to the community.
- Pray and reflect on the importance of service; identify ways to serve others.
- Plan a community service project as a class.

ELOQUENT SPEECH OBJECTIVES

- To plan, initiate, and complete a simple project of outreach and service to the community at large
- To share information about service opportunities with family, friends, and the Bahá'í community

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Tell stories and recite memorized quotations about service.
- Carry out a service project individually or as a class.
- Involve others in a class service project.
- Present information about community service opportunities at the Nineteen Day Feast or other community gatherings.
- Present community service awards to members of the community at large.

Sample Activities

ACTIVITY 1: HANDS OF POWER

KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVE: To know that service to humanity is a paramount purpose of human life

WISDOM OBJECTIVE: To appreciate the power of working in groups

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

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 60 MIN. + INTERVIEW WITH COMMUNITY MEMBER

Materials Needed:

- Assorted gloves, as described below
- Pencils and paper
- Copies of Resource Pages 98–99
- Chart paper and markers
- Student folders
- Plain paper

Advance Preparation:

Find, borrow, or invite students to bring gloves from home: rubber gloves, work gloves, driving gloves, winter gloves, mittens, gloves for various professions, children's gloves, fancy gloves, paper gloves, etc., so that each team will be able to use 3–5 unmatched gloves.

If students have not studied the topic “The Heroic Life” in this Lesson Planning Guide, read a few of the stories on Resource Pages 55–63 to be able to retell them during Step 2 of this activity.

1. Welcome new and returning students. Invite them to select favorite prayers to begin the class. Consider including the following quotation in your opening devotions:

How vast is the tabernacle of the Cause of God! It hath overshadowed all the peoples and kindreds of the earth, and will, erelong, gather together the whole of mankind beneath its shelter. Thy day of service is now come. Countless Tablets bear the testimony of the bounties vouchsafed unto thee. Arise for the triumph of My Cause, and, through the power of thine utterance, subdue the hearts of men. Thou must show forth that which will ensure the peace and the well-being of the miserable and the down-trodden. Gird up the loins of thine endeavor, that perchance thou mayest release the captive from his chains, and enable him to attain unto true liberty.

Bahá'u'lláh, Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 92
2. Place all gloves in the middle of the room. Explain that these gloves can remind us of the exemplary service of the Hands of the Cause of God. Briefly discuss: Who are the Hands of the Cause of God? What did they do? What stories do we recall about the Hands and their service to humanity? Acknowledge all.
3. Continue the discussion: Let's think about the people we know personally: our parents, teachers, young people or elders in the community, other people we know. Who do we know that really makes the world a better place as a result of their words and their actions? What do they do to serve humanity? How does it make us feel to know people like this? Acknowledge all responses.
4. Organize students into teams of 2–3 and distribute the gloves as evenly as possible among the teams. Provide each person with pencil and paper. Remind students that Bahá'u'lláh tells us, “Thy day of service is now come.”¹ The 50 Hands of the Cause of God and the people we know personally show us many, many ways to serve.

¹ Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 92

5. Explain that for the next few minutes, each glove is a “person.” Encourage teams to use their imaginations to create a story of heroic service to others, in which each glove is a major character. The story should be dramatic as possible and may include heroes, heroines, villains, and others. It should reflect the truth that all people are created with the God-given capacity to serve.
6. After allowing time for students to work, invite teams to tell their stories. Applaud all!
7. Then encourage the class to select an award for each story: most dramatic story, most realistic story, funniest story, most imaginative story, best single character, best overall cast of characters, best storytelling style, character people would most like to meet, most significant transformation in a character, overall creativity, etc. Wildly applaud all awards! Then discuss: In what ways did working in groups make the stories better than if we'd each created a story individually? Why?
8. Distribute copies of Resource Page 98. Encourage these same teams to read the quotations aloud twice. Alternatively, assign one of the quotations to each team. After reading their quotation or quotations twice, encourage teams to discuss the focus questions from the point of view of the characters in their story. Circulate to provide encouragement and assistance, as needed.
9. Invite teams to share their insights in the whole group. Acknowledge all.
10. Encourage students to think again about the people identified in Step 3 above and select one of these individuals, or another person they respect, to interview before the next class. Provide students with copies of Resource Page 99. Read through the questions in the whole group. As time permits, invite students to practice interviewing each other.
11. Consult until each student or team of students has a clear idea of whom they might interview and how, when, and where they might do so. How will they invite that person to participate in the interview? Explain that students will have the opportunity to share the results of their interviews and to plan a community service project during the next class. These interviews will help us identify possibilities for service. Encourage students to support this process by agreeing to check in with each other mid-week. Teachers may also conduct service interviews and participate in this mid-week check-in.
12. Invite students also to undertake an act of secret service during the coming week: What act of kindness, generosity, or service could they do for another person without letting anyone know what they did? Brainstorm a few possibilities, distribute plain paper, and encourage students to record their plans for secret service. Save these papers and Resource Pages in student folders. Conclude the activity with favorite songs and prayers.

TOPIC: COMMUNITY SERVICE

ACTIVITY 2: SERVE THE WORLD

KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVE: To identify simple lines of action that can result in service to the community, at school, and at home

WISDOM OBJECTIVE: To understand that service to humanity provides a source of profound happiness for individuals

SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION OBJECTIVES: To discern the qualities and attributes that enable effective service; to perceive ways to offer service to the community at large both as individuals and as a class

ELOQUENT SPEECH OBJECTIVE: To plan, initiate, and complete a simple project of outreach and service to the community at large

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS: Direct use of Bahá'í sacred writings; Use of peer teaching; Use of consultation; Involve service

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 60 MIN. + SERVICE PROJECT

Materials Needed:

- Copies of Resource Pages 100–03
- Chart paper and markers
- Index cards, sticky notes, or small pieces of paper and tape
- Stickers, if available
- Student folders
- Plain paper

Advance Preparation:

Encourage students to conduct interviews as described in the Hands of Power activity above. Teachers may also conduct one or more service interviews. Participate in the class's mid-week check-in as explained in Step 11 of that activity.

Read through all the service ideas on Resource Pages 100–02. Identify ongoing outreach and service projects in your community, if applicable.

1. Welcome students. Invite them to share favorite songs and prayers. Consider including the following quotation as part of your opening devotions.

. . . The honor and distinction of the individual consist in this, that he among all the world's multitudes should become a source of social good. Is any larger bounty conceivable than this, that an individual, looking within himself, should find that by the confirming grace of God he has become the cause of peace and well-being, of happiness and advantage to his fellow men? No, by the one true God, there is no greater bliss, no more complete delight.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, The Secret of Divine Civilization, pp. 2–3
2. Invite students to reflect on their time since the last class and to recall their secret service or another time that they could see that their words or actions brought joy to the heart of another. Briefly discuss: Why do we think that it makes us so happy to make others happy? How does it feel to serve others without talking with them about our service? Acknowledge all.
3. Encourage students to share the results of their interviews by telling about the interview and reading their interview notes. Invite volunteers to record key points on chart paper as students speak. Encourage students to listen carefully to these reports and suggest what the recorder what should write, so that actions and spiritual qualities are listed for each report. Teachers may also share the results of their interviews.

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4. After student reports are complete, read again the quotation in Step 1. Briefly discuss: How do all these interviews also show that service brings happiness?
5. Distribute copies of Resource Pages 100–02. Invite students to look through these pages and find a Hand of the Cause of God or a spiritual quality that particularly attracts them. Encourage them to share the Hand they selected, and read the quotation and service options listed by that Hand's name. Acknowledge all.
6. Provide students with index cards, sticky notes, or small pieces of paper. Remind students of their own service to others and the service described in their interviews. Also mention some of the service ideas listed on Resource Pages 100–02.
7. Invite one or more volunteers to read or recite a prayer for the class in their role as servants of humanity. Then encourage each student to write one possibility for a class or small group service project on the card. Encourage them to write an idea that attracts them personally, that is achievable, and that they feel could make an important difference in the community.
8. Collect all cards. Read them aloud in the whole group and tape each card to the wall or to a piece of chart paper. Group cards with similar themes together.
9. Provide each student with 3 stickers (or a pen). Encourage them to circulate around the room, read again all the service ideas, and place their stickers (or draw a star) beside the 3 ideas they like best. After students have finished placing their stickers (or stars), read aloud the service possibilities with the most stickers in the whole group.
10. Consult in the whole group to select one or more service projects to complete as a class. The class may choose to undertake one project as a whole group or the class may choose to organize teams of students so that each team carries out a separate project. Use consultation for the group to choose a plan that fits its circumstances.
11. After selecting one or more projects, continue the consultation in the whole group or as small teams to answer the questions on Resource Page 103. Encourage students to write their answers in the space provided. If students are working in small teams, circulate to provide assistance and encouragement as needed.
12. Encourage students or teams to share their answers to the questions on Resource Page 103. If students are working in teams, encourage teams to offer 2 positive comments and 1 suggestion (if desired) following the reports of other teams. Acknowledge all. Teachers should keep notes from student plans on Resource Page 103 for future reference.
13. Decide on a means for students and teachers to stay in touch with each other while taking initial action steps to carry out their chosen acts of service. Follow through with additional consultation as needed so that plans evolve in light of experience. Provide students with their plain paper and encourage them to record one hope that they have as they undertake this service. Save these papers and Resource Pages in student folders.
14. Conclude the activity with prayers for divine assistance.

TOPIC: COMMUNITY SERVICE

ACTIVITY 3: PERSEVERING IN SERVICE

KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVE: To know that service to humanity is a paramount purpose of human life

SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION OBJECTIVE: To discern the qualities and attributes that enable effective service

ELOQUENT SPEECH OBJECTIVE: To plan, initiate, and complete a simple project of outreach and service to the community at large

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS: Direct use of Bahá'í sacred writings; Use of science; Use of consultation; Involve service and teaching

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 45 MIN. + ONGOING SERVICE

Materials Needed:

- Chart paper and markers
- Student folders
- Plain paper
- Notes of student plans completed on Resource Page 103 in the previous activity
- Plastic bag placed under a heavy stack of books so that the open end of the bag is visible

Advance Preparation:

Take action to initiate outreach and service to the community at large as described in the previous activity. Although the entire project may be ongoing, this activity builds upon some initial action steps.

Display the following quotation in the classroom:

Arise ye, under all conditions, to render service to the Cause, for God will assuredly assist you through the power of His sovereignty which overshadoweth the worlds.

Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, paragraph 74

Consider displaying the questions in Step 2 in the classroom.

Practice the demonstration in Step 5.

1. Welcome students. Invite them to share favorite songs, prayers, and highlights of the past week including the results of the action steps they've taken to serve the community. Acknowledge all.
4. Explain that a great Bahá'í teacher, Mrs. Lua Getsinger, told the following story about herself, as recorded by Howard Colby Ives:

2. Encourage students to continue the discussion in teams of 2: What confirmations have we received as we've begun our service to the community? What obstacles have we faced? What will help us persevere in our service?
3. After students have discussed these questions in pairs, invite each pair to share one important insight or question in the whole group. Acknowledge all. Explain that as we encounter obstacles, we gradually develop our spiritual qualities, including the quality of perseverance.

In the very early days of the knowledge of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh in America, Mrs. Getsinger was in 'Akká, having made the pilgrimage to the prison city to see the Master ['Abdu'l-Bahá]. She was with Him one day when he said to her, that He was too busy today to call upon a friend of His who was very ill and poor and He wished her to go in His place. Take him food and care for him as I have been doing, He concluded. He told her where this man was to be found and she went gladly, proud that 'Abdu'l-Bahá should trust her with this mission.

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She returned quickly. “Master,” she exclaimed, “surely you cannot realize to what a terrible place you sent me. I almost fainted from the awful stench, the filthy rooms, the degrading condition of that man and his house. I fled lest I contract some terrible disease.”

Sadly and sternly ‘Abdu’l-Bahá regarded her. “Dost thou desire to serve God,” He said, “serve thy fellow man for in him dost thou see the image and likeness of God.” He told her to go back to this man’s house. If it is filthy she should clean it; if this brother of yours is dirty, bathe him; if he is hungry, feed him. Do not return until this is done. Many times had He done this for him and cannot she serve him once?

Howard Colby Ives, Portals to Freedom, pp. 84–85

Of course, Mrs. Getsinger returned to the sick man and followed the Master’s instructions, truly happy to serve her fellow human being and follow the example of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

Briefly discuss: How many of us have had an experience like this in which we realize that we must change both our thoughts and our actions if we are to follow the example of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá?

5. Refer to the stack of books with the bag underneath. Invite volunteers to move this stack using only their breath. If needed, demonstrate the process: gather the open end of the bag and blow into it. The compressed air will easily lift the books. Briefly discuss: How does this demonstration show the power of perseverance, a new approach, and divine assistance?

6. Invite volunteers to read aloud the posted quotation twice. Continue the discussion: What are some of the conditions that we face in our service? How have we already seen the power of divine assistance in our service?
7. Work together to memorize this quotation by copying the quotation onto chart paper, reading it repeatedly, and gradually covering every 4th word until all words are covered; singing the quotation to a simple melody; reciting it repeatedly and rhythmically; or using another favorite method for memorization. Applaud all!
8. Review plans created in the previous activity and identify actions for each student. Decide how to stay in touch with each other, obtain necessary permission or supplies, etc. Refer to class notes from Resource Page 103, as desired. Record these decisions on chart paper.
9. Provide students with plain paper. Invite them to record the quotation along with their next steps in service to the community and decorate as desired. Save these papers in student folders.
10. Encourage students to tell at least one new person—perhaps a friend at school or in their neighborhood—about this project before the next class, and invite that person to participate in the next steps of this service project. Continue to support this activity by periodic check-ins until the project is complete and students are ready for another project.
11. Encourage students to share information about their service at regular community events such as the Nineteen Day Feast, your local Bahá’í school gatherings, or others. Conclude the activity with favorite songs and prayers.

ACTIVITY 4: WORK IS WORSHIP

KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVE: To know that service to humanity is a paramount purpose of human life

SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION OBJECTIVE: To discern one's own strengths and plan to use them in service to the community

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS: Direct use of Bahá'í sacred writings; Use of stories; Use of play; Use of reflection

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 45 MIN.

Materials Needed:

- Plain paper and student folders
- Simple art supplies, as desired
- Background music

Advance Preparation:

Display the following quotation in the classroom:

O people of Bahá! It is incumbent upon each one of you to engage in some occupation—such as a craft, a trade or the like. We have exalted your engagement in such work to the rank of worship of the one true God.

Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, paragraph 33

1. Welcome students. Begin the activity with favorite prayers and songs. Invite students to share highlights of their ongoing outreach and service to humanity. Briefly discuss: What challenges have we encountered in managing our time to carry out these important acts of service? Acknowledge all.
2. Share the following anecdote, recorded by Lady Blomfield about 'Abdu'l-Bahá's visit to her home in London:

"A workman who had left his bag of tools in the hall was welcomed with smiling kindness by 'Abdu'l-Bahá. With a look of sadness the man said: 'I don't know much about religious things, as I have no time for anything but my work.'

"That is well. Very well. A day's work done in the spirit of service is in itself an act of worship. Such work is a prayer unto God."

"The man's face cleared from its shadow of doubt and hesitation, and he went out from the Master's presence happy and strengthened, as though a weighty burden had been taken away."

Lady Blomfield, *The Chosen Highway*, p. 152

Explain that service to our families and friends, dedication to excellence in our schoolwork, and other daily deeds of service help us fulfill our obligation to serve others in very practical ways. Briefly discuss: Why must we maintain the spirit of service in our everyday actions?

3. Invite volunteers to read aloud the posted quotation twice. Encourage students to turn to the person beside them and share 2–3 ideas of the sort of work that they might enjoy doing in the future. Encourage them to think about the people they know and share: Who does the sort of work that interests you? What attracts you to that kind of work?
4. Allow several minutes for students to share their reflections with the person beside them, taking turns to speak and listen.
5. Organize students into groups of 4–6 or convene the entire group if your class is small. Invite each student to select one possible future line of work to share with the group. Then encourage all students to use their imaginations to suggest how that work could make magnificent contributions to the human race.

For example, if a student says that she'd like to become a farmer, encourage all students to

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share one idea about how farmers can contribute to a better world. Some examples might be: Raise enough food that all the people in your city have delicious fresh fruits and vegetables; teach young people everywhere to raise animals with kindness so that animals are no longer kept in cages that are too small; turn a city parking lot into an orchard, playground, and community garden; help end world hunger by establishing fair prices for food; etc.

If a student says that he'd like to become a musician, some imagined contributions might be: teach children to enjoy singing so much that they sing and play together rather than watch TV; compose melodies to the Bahá'í writings that broadcast on radios everywhere; conduct the national orchestra in your country and highlight the diverse contributions of people of all nationalities; become famous for living the Bahá'í life as a musician; etc.

6. After each student has had a chance to share one possible future line of work and hear possible magnificent deeds related to that trade or profession, invite a volunteer to participate with you in a demonstration.
 - Arrange enough space for the student to be able to walk a straight line for about 9'.
 - Invite the student to select one aspect of their possible future service as a goal. Write that goal on a piece of paper. Place the paper at the end of the imaginary line.
 - Ask the student to identify one possible obstacle that might interfere with the achievement of that goal. Explain that the teacher's arm will represent that obstacle.
 - Invite the student to stand at the beginning of the imaginary line toward the goal and state the obstacle over and over while walking toward the goal. The teacher will stand to the side of the imaginary line with an arm extended into the student's path. The student's job is to gently but firmly push the teacher's arm aside and walk toward the goal.
7. Invite the student to notice how easy or difficult it is to reach the goal.
 - Then invite the student to return to the beginning of the line, focus attention firmly on the goal (not the obstacle), and say the name of the goal over and over while walking toward the goal. The teacher stands in the same way with an arm extended into the student's path. The student gently but firmly moves the teacher's arm aside while walking toward the goal.
 - After the student reaches the goal, invite the student's reflections: Was it harder or easier to reach the goal the second time? What difference did it make to focus on the goal rather than the obstacle?
 - Invite other students to participate in the same demonstration, as desired.
7. Provide students with their plain paper. Invite them to copy the posted quotation and then draw their imagined future contributions to the world of humanity. Consider playing quiet background music as students work.
8. As students finish their drawings, remind them that many young people complete a Bahá'í year of service as a step toward their future line of work. Briefly discuss: What do we know about the youth year of service program? Do we know anyone who has completed a year of service? Even if the service doesn't directly relate to our chosen line of work, how could it help prepare us for a life of service?
9. Invite students to add notes to their journal reflections about the possibility of a year of service. Save these papers in student folders. Encourage them to ask questions and share their reflections about crafts, trades, and professions and a youth year of service with family members, friends, and others during the coming week. Encourage them also to continue their daily deeds of service at home, at school, and in their neighborhood. Conclude the activity with favorite songs and prayers.

Resource Pages

Activity 1: Hands of Power

Focus Questions:

1. How can we serve others through our words?
2. How can we serve others with our hands?
3. Why must we serve others with genuine love in our hearts?
4. Why must our loving service include both words and actions?

O Son of Being!

With the hands of power I made thee and with the fingers of strength I created thee; and within thee have I placed the essence of My light. Be thou content with it and seek naught else, for My work is perfect and My command is binding. Question it not, nor have a doubt thereof.

Bahá'u'lláh, *The Hidden Words*, Arabic no. 12

Thy day of service is now come. . . . Arise for the triumph of My Cause, and, through the power of thine utterance, subdue the hearts of men. Thou must show forth that which will ensure the peace and the well-being of the miserable and the down-trodden. Gird up the loins of thine endeavor, that perchance thou mayest release the captive from his chains, and enable him to attain unto true liberty.

Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 92

In truth, the hearts of men are edified through the power of the tongue, even as houses and cities are built up by the hand and other means. We have assigned to every end a means for its accomplishment; avail yourselves thereof, and place your trust and confidence in God, the Omniscient, the All-Wise.

Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, paragraph 160

Strengthen my hand, O my God, that it may take hold of Thy Book with such steadfastness that the hosts of the world shall have no power over it.

Bahá'u'lláh, Medium Obligatory Prayer, in *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 98

For service in love for mankind is unity with God. He who serves has already entered the Kingdom and is seated at the right hand of his Lord.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 186

Activity 1: Hands of Power

Service Interview

Interviewee _____ Interviewer _____ Date _____

Thank you for agreeing to talk with me about service. We hope that you will enjoy sharing your experiences with me so that I can share them with our Bahá'í class.

1. As you think about your own experiences of service to others, can you tell me about a high point—a time that you could tell that you were really making a difference to the people around you?

2. How did this service require you to use your God-given qualities and talents?

3. How did other people also contribute to this experience? What are the best qualities that you saw in others?

4. What might be a next step along this path of service? What small change could make a big difference in our community—little by little, day by day?

Thank you for sharing your experiences with us. We hope that you will enjoy hearing these words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá about service:

Be ye confident and steadfast; your services are confirmed by the powers of heaven, for your intentions are lofty, your purposes pure and worthy. God is the helper of those souls whose aim is to serve humanity and whose efforts and endeavors are devoted to the good and betterment of all mankind.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 448

Activity 2: Serve the World

Rúhíyyih Khánum: Beauty



. . . Make of my prayer a fire that will burn away the veils which have shut me out from Thy beauty, and a light that will lead me unto the ocean of Thy Presence.

Bahá'u'lláh, Long Obligatory Prayer, in *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 92

- Beautify the Bahá'í center or a public space.
- Create a recycling project to protect the environment and keep it clean.
- Clean the home of a senior citizen on a regular schedule; bring flowers or another element of beauty for your first visit.
- Volunteer in an animal shelter.

Enoch Olinga: Joy



Let your joy be the joy born of My Most Great Name, a Name that bringeth rapture to the heart, and filleth with ecstasy the minds of all who have drawn nigh unto God.

Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, paragraph 51

- Make quotation cards on the spiritual quality of joy to send as gifts to newcomers to your area.
- Create a funny and uplifting program for children in your community.
- Make cupcakes or other treats to take to all the teachers in your school.
- Plan and carry out a joyful multicultural music celebration for your neighborhood.

Martha Root: Courage in Teaching



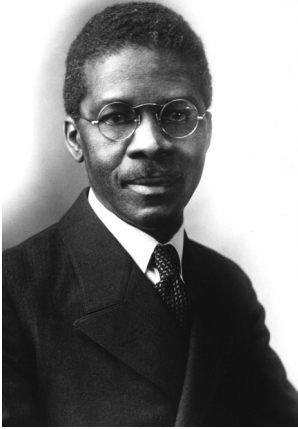
The source of courage and power is the promotion of the Word of God, and steadfastness in His Love.

Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 155

- Present the gift of Bahá'í book to city or school officials; inform your Local Spiritual Assembly of your plans.
- Organize interfaith dialogue for youth in your school or neighborhood.
- Set up a booth on social issues and the Bahá'í Faith at a community or school fair.
- Contact Bahá'ís in another town, region, or country; visit them and offer service.

Activity 2: Serve the World

Louis Gregory: Unity



The well-being of mankind, its peace and security, are unattainable unless and until its unity is firmly established.

Bahá'u'lláh, quoted in the introduction to the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 11

- Offer race unity activities—such as those in the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh: Principle of Oneness and Race Unity, Level 3 Lesson Planning Guide—for young people in your neighborhood or school.
- Plan and carry out a peace conference for children and youth.
- Plan and host a devotional meeting on the principle of oneness; invite your friends.
- Consult with students, teachers, and administrators at your school to plan a one-day whole-school celebration of the oneness of humanity.

Dorothy Baker: Generosity in Teaching



One must guide mankind to the ocean of true understanding in a spirit of love and tolerance.

Bahá'u'lláh, quoted in the introduction to the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 6

- Participate in a local teaching project.
- Provide treats and devotional readings for a fireside; invite your friends.
- Plan a story hour for children using the Core Curriculum storybooks.
- Prepare treats and games to take to a family with young children.

A.Q. Faizi: Love



Say: God hath made My hidden love the key to the Treasure; would that ye might perceive it!

Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, paragraph 15

- Create gifts to give to children in hospitals.
- Read books to preschool children at a local daycare program, your local Bahá'í school, or another program for young children.
- Volunteer in a preschool for children with special needs.
- Contact a homeless shelter about the items needed; create gift packs of bedding, toiletries, or other necessary items.

Activity 2: Serve the World

Zikrullah Khadem: Spirit of Service

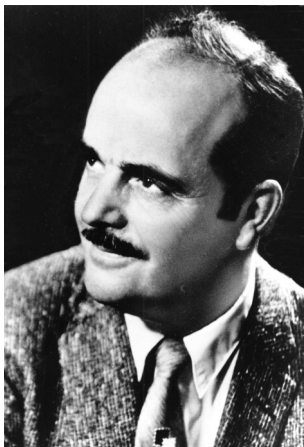


Arise ye, under all conditions, to render service to the Cause, for God will assuredly assist you. . . .

Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, paragraph 74

- Beautify gravesites of Bahá'ís or other individuals in your community.
- Contact a refugee or immigrant service center; offer your service, such as making gift bags of personal necessities along with a quotation card for new arrivals, or getting together to practice speaking the language spoken in your community.
- Make get-well cards and visit individuals who are ill.
- Identify one or more elders in your community, visit them, and invite them to your school, sports, and Bahá'í class events.

William Sears: Excellence



. . . In every art and skill, God loveth the highest perfection.

Bahá'u'lláh, *The Compilation of Compilations*, vol. 1, p. 1

- Practice the art of storytelling; then offer regular storytelling for children in your neighborhood.
- Set a personal goal for academic achievement; consult with your schoolteacher and make a plan for systematic progress.
- Develop public speaking skills and present at least one public talk.
- Design an attractive website for your local Bahá'í school; feature news and activities of interest to all children and youth in your neighborhood.

Corinne True: Perseverance



Go thou straight on and persevere in His service.

Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 314

- Schedule regular service at a daycare center or residence for the elderly.
- Schedule ongoing service at a hospital, homeless shelter, or soup kitchen.
- Tutor children in your school or neighborhood on an ongoing basis.
- Co-teach Bahá'í class for preschool children for an entire term.

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Activity 2: Serve the World

Student Names _____ Date _____

. . . The honor and distinction of the individual consist in this, that he among all the world's multitudes should become a source of social good. Is any larger bounty conceivable than this, that an individual, looking within himself, should find that by the confirming grace of God he has become the cause of peace and well-being, of happiness and advantage to his fellow men? No, by the one true God, there is no greater bliss, no more complete delight.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, The Secret of Divine Civilization, pp. 2–3

What is our project? What do we hope to achieve?

What spiritual qualities will we need to succeed in our service?

What information do we need?

What might be some possible first steps?

Who can take these steps?

Whose permission or assistance do we need to take these steps?

When should we take our first steps?

What materials might we need?

What might be our next steps after we carry out these actions?

When should we consult again?

How will we be able to tell when we achieve our goal?

LIST OF ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Books, Stories, and Articles:

Youth: Channels for Change

Brilliant Star magazine:

- "Golden Rule Service Club," Jan/Feb 1993
- "Saving Stars," "Singing to Teach in Russia," Sep/Oct 1994
- "Rocks in Your Feeling Box," Sp Ed 1994
- "A Life of Service," May/June 1995
- "Man of the Trees," Jul/Aug 1995
- "Bahá'is around the World," "How Can I Hug the World?" "Lunch Club," "Solutions to Every Problem," Sep/Oct 1995
- "Collection," Jan/Feb 1996
- "A Martyr's Life," "Dear Children," May/June 1996
- "Let's Have a Unity Fair," "Mas'úd Serves Bahá'u'lláh," "Work Some+Play Some=Service," May/June 1996
- "Hope Ellen and the Brilliant Star," Jul/Aug 1996
- "What shall we do with the Chikeks?" Sep/Oct 1996
- "Come to the Bahá'í Unity Center," Nov/Dec 1996
- "Maui Bahá'í Youth Workshop," "Heroic Deeds," Jan/Feb 1997
- "Warrior On the Air Waves," "Maui Bahá'í Youth Workshop," "World Citizen," "Teach the World!" "One World Family," Sep/Oct 1997
- "A Bench for the Guardian," Nov/Dec 1997
- "Pebbles on the Path," Jan/Feb 1998

- "The Kingfisher's Wing," "Now Is Time to Be on Fire," Mar/Apr 1998
- "Dear Brilliant Star," Jul/Aug 1998
- "We've Got You Surrounded!" Sp Ed 1998
- "Save Our Earth!" May/June 1999
- "Star Kids: Making a Difference," "Virtuwoman: Bored No More," Jan/Feb 2000
- "A Very Special Honor," "Youth In Service," Mar/Apr 2000
- "Virtueman," Jul/Aug 2000
- "Keeping Bahá'í Temple Healthy," "A Hospital in the Jungle," Sep/Oct 2000
- "Do You Want to Serve the Faith?" Nov/Dec 2000
- "Nothing Is Too Much Trouble," Jan/Feb 2001
- "A Year of Service for Bahá'u'lláh," Jul/Aug 2001
- "Deeds, Not Words," "Service," Jan/Feb 2002
- "The Pilgrim's Tale," "The Case of the Puzzling Pioneers," "Star Kids: Career Day Creativity," "Wayne & Wilma: Snowy Service," "Service Riddles," Jan/Feb 2003
- "In the Neighborhood," Jul/Aug 2003

Music:

Brilliant Star magazine:

- "Bahá'u'lláh, I Long to Praise Thee," Jan/Feb 1998
- "It's Up to Me!" Sp Ed 1998
- Healthy Planet, Healthy People*, "Live Simply on our Mother Earth"

Worksheets and Coloring Pages:

Brilliant Star magazine:

- "Hidden Helpers," May/June 1991

Poetry:

Brilliant Star magazine:

- "Trio," May/June 1995
- "Poetry Peak," Jul/Aug 1998

Games:

Brilliant Star magazine:

- "Paths of Service," Sep/Oct 1994
- "Customs of the Kingdom," Sep/Oct 1995
- "Unity Bingo," Sp Ed 1995
- "Go Serve," "Servant Game," "Who Started It?" May/June 1996
- "God-Given Talents," Sp Ed 1997
- "Pathway of Service Game," Jan/Feb 2003

Activities:

Brilliant Star magazine:

- "Super Server's Badge," Sep/Oct 1991
- "What Kind of Doctor Are You?" Sep/Oct 1993
- "Make a Personal Spiritual Goal," "Make a Teaching Goal," "Make a Family Goal," "Make a Community Goal," Nov/Dec 1993
- "Plan to Take Action," "Taking Action," Sep/Oct 1994
- "Sacrifice," Sp Ed 1994
- "Light Up Your World," Nov/Dec 1994
- "Love Plan," Mar/Apr 1995
- "Bahá'í Time," "Helping Hands," May/June 1995
- "A Family Fireside," Jul/Aug 1995
- "Service Plan," "Connection," Sep/Oct 1995
- "Take Action/One Destiny," "Together We Can Make It . . ." "We Are All Connected," Sp Ed 1995
- "Giving with Confidence," Jan/Feb 1996
- "Cooking Up a Plan," Mar/Apr 1996
- "Bring On the Food," "Greetings," "3-D Mapping," May/June 1996
- "Amazing Days," Nov/Dec 1996
- "Me? Host A Devotional Meeting?" Jan/Feb 1997
- "Create ServANTS," Jul/Aug 1997
- "New World Construction Teams," "Common Vision," Sp Ed 1997
- "We've Got You Surrounded!" Sp Ed 1998
- "Virtueman," May/June 1999

- "Secret Servants," "A Trip to 'Where Mention . . .'" "Community Treasure Hunt," "Building Communities," "Come On Over to My House," Sp Ed 1999
- "Share-Your-Stuff Party," "Hidden Picture: World of Service," "Make Rocky Road Bars," "Virtues Day Maze Activity," Jan/Feb 2000
- "Nothing Is Too Much Trouble," Jan/Feb 2001
- "Spirit of Service," Jul/Aug 2002
- "Your Story of Service," "Clean-Up Day Dilemma," "Jose's Pioneering Puzzler," "Working and Serving," "Wayne & Wilma: Snowy Service," "Service Starfish or Selfish Shrimp," "Word Picture Puzzles," "Helping Hands Relay," "Service is Prayer," "Chameleon Crossword," "Service Scramble," Jan/Feb 2003
- "Fingers of One Hand," "Teaching Stories," "Community Collage," Mar/Apr 2003
- "Be a Friend," May/June 2003
- "Make a Plan," Jul/Aug 2003
- "Creative Communities," "Neighbors Unite," Jul/Aug 2004
- "Circle of Service," Jan/Feb 2005
- "Zeke's Journal, Earth-Day 3," Sep/Oct 2005
- "L&L: Travel & Transformation," "Endangered Friends," Jul/Aug 2006
- "Today's Hobby, Tomorrow's Career," Sep/Oct 2006
- "Help with Hunger," "Choose Charity," Mar/Apr 2007

TO DEVELOP ONE'S SOCIAL LIFE

PREPARATION FOR MARRIAGE

**SPIRITUAL QUALITIES RELEVANT TO THIS TOPIC:
VISION, FRIENDLINESS, CHASTITY**

They must be constantly encouraged and made eager to gain all the summits of human accomplishment, so that from their earliest years they will be taught to have high aims, to conduct themselves well, to be chaste, pure, and undefiled, and will learn to be of powerful resolve and firm of purpose in all things. Let them not jest and trifle, but earnestly advance unto their goals, so that in every situation they will be found resolute and firm.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, p. 135

The Guardian has urged, over and over again, the paramount necessity for Bahá'í Youth to exemplify the Teachings, most particularly the *moral* aspect of them. If they are not distinguished for their high conduct they cannot expect other young people to take the Cause very seriously.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, The Compilation of Compilations, vol. 1, no. 159

Learning Objectives and Suggested Activities

KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVES

- To know that marriage is a divinely ordained institution of great importance to society
- To become familiar with Bahá'í writings on the choice of a marriage partner and parental consent
- To know the Bahá'í teachings regarding a chaste and holy life

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Read the compilation of Bahá'í writings on marriage in a jigsaw activity.
- In small groups, discuss selected quotations on marriage and compile information about Bahá'í marriage.
- Invite students to individually study the Bahá'í writings about a chaste and holy life and share with the class 3 main points that made an impression on them. Compile these in a reference list for students to keep.

WISDOM OBJECTIVES

- To understand the importance of marriage for the well-being of the individual, the family, and society
- To understand the importance of the principle of equality of women and men for a happy marriage
- To gain a deeper appreciation of the relationship of a chaste and holy life to a happy marriage

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Develop a role-play highlighting the importance of equality of women and men and a chaste and holy life in successful marriages.
- Create a sculpture or structure that shows the role of families in creating a healthy community.

SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION OBJECTIVES

- To perceive the link between self-knowledge and a happy marriage
- To perceive ways that one's current choices, friendships, and family relationships build skills necessary for a happy marriage
- To perceive ways to draw on spiritual power for upholding the principle of chastity

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Encourage students to write essays which relate their personal study of the Bahá'í writings about a chaste and holy life to their current life and social circumstances. Share these essays in pairs.
- Read and discuss the Bahá'í writings concerning the connection between knowing oneself and having a successful marriage.
- In pairs or small groups, discuss the role of prayer in assisting us to live a chaste and holy life.

ELOQUENT SPEECH OBJECTIVES

- To articulate the spiritual foundations and social purposes of marriage
- To create and implement one's own plan for upholding Bahá'í standards for a chaste and holy life

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Create opportunities for pairs or small groups of students to share their understanding of this topic with older youth, young adults, or other adults in the community.
- Develop individual plans for creating a social life that upholds the Bahá'í standards for a chaste and holy life. Share these plans in pairs and identify ways to encourage each other.

TOPIC: PREPARATION FOR MARRIAGE

Sample Activities

ACTIVITY 1: THE PURPOSE OF MARRIAGE

KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVE: To know that marriage is a divinely ordained institution of great importance to society

WISDOM OBJECTIVE: To understand the importance of marriage for the well-being of the individual, the family, and society

ELOQUENT SPEECH OBJECTIVE: To articulate the spiritual foundations and social purposes of marriage

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS: Direct use of Bahá'í sacred writings; Use of stories; Use of peer teaching

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 60 MIN.

Materials Needed:

- Copies of Resource Pages 120–22
- Student folders
- Chart paper and markers
- Cardstock or nice note paper
- Simple art supplies
- Background music
- Items associated traditional weddings in your culture: flowers, small jar of bubbles, balloons, confetti, small pieces of cake, bow tie, dress shoes, white lace, toy rings, recorded music, etc., if available; pictures may be substituted for some items

1. Welcome students. Invite them to share their reflections on their service to others since the last class: Did we perceive divine assistance for our service or find a way to overcome obstacles? Are there challenges that the class could resolve together?
2. If the class has an ongoing plan for individual study of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, invite students to share insights and questions from their reading. Acknowledge all. Briefly discuss the questions and identify strategies to research the more challenging questions that arise, as needed.
3. Explain that the next few classes will explore an important part of human life that can help us improve our spiritual lives and become more effective servants of God and humanity. Encourage students to imagine what part of life this might be and to silently raise their hands when they think that they know.
4. Silently bring out the artifacts associated with traditional weddings in your culture, one by one. Display them, and pass them around the room, showing the less obvious items first.
5. When all have their hands in the air or you've displayed all the items, invite all students to say their idea simultaneously. Briefly discuss: Did we all have the same idea? Why or why not?
6. Affirm that Bahá'u'lláh describes marriage as a "fortress for well-being and salvation" that can assist us in our service to God and humanity. Briefly discuss: How might marriage be a "fortress for well-being"? How might marriage help us serve God and humanity? Do these items (refer to the items shared in Step 4) help us focus on the spiritual purposes? Why or why not? What do movies and television tell us about the purpose of marriage? Draw a line to separate chart paper into halves; record student perceptions of the purpose of marriage as portrayed in the media on one half of this chart paper.

TOPIC: PREPARATION FOR MARRIAGE

7. Invite students to think about a happily married couple—parents, grandparents, other relatives, or friends—that they know personally. Ask students to nod their heads when they have thought of a couple and to keep this couple in their hearts as you read aloud the following prayer:
- Glory be unto Thee, O my God! Verily, this thy servant and this Thy maidservant have gathered under the shadow of Thy mercy and they are united through Thy favor and generosity. O Lord! Assist them in this Thy world and Thy kingdom and destine for them every good through Thy bounty and grace. O Lord! Confirm them in Thy servitude and assist them in Thy service. Suffer them to become the signs of Thy Name in Thy world and protect them through Thy bestowals which are inexhaustible in this world and the world to come. O Lord! They are supplicating the kingdom of Thy mercifulness and invoking the realm of Thy singleness. Verily, they are married in obedience to Thy command. Cause them to become the signs of harmony and unity until the end of time. Verily, Thou art the Omnipotent, the Omnipresent and the Almighty!
- ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Bahá’í Prayers, 1991 U.S. ed., p. 105*
- Briefly discuss: What does this prayer tell us about the purpose of marriage? How do happily married people also show us some of the purposes of marriage? Record student ideas on the other half of the chart paper used in Step 6.
8. Continue the discussion: Why should we learn about marriage?
9. Provide students with copies of Resource Page 120. Read aloud the quotations in the whole group. Briefly discuss the meaning of any new or unfamiliar words.
10. Then organize students into 2 teams. Encourage the teams to reread the quotations on Resource Page 120 and discuss the questions: What do these quotations tell us about the purpose of marriage? How does marriage help the individual? The family? Human civilization?
11. After allowing time for students to discuss the question, distribute chart paper and invite them to write or draw their answers. Share their answers in the whole group. Applaud all.
12. In the whole group read aloud or retell the stories on Resource Pages 121 and 122 that describe the weddings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi as told by their wives. Briefly discuss: How do these stories reflect the spiritual purposes of marriage?
13. Invite students to turn to the person beside them and briefly share their favorite parts of these stories with each other.
14. Then encourage students to think again about a happily married couple that they know personally. Invite students to create a card for that couple to give or send before the next class. The card may include:
- All or part of one of the quotations on Resource Page 120.
 - 1 or 2 sentences sharing the student’s appreciation of that couple’s marriage.
 - Simple decoration to add an element of beauty to the card.
- Consider playing quiet background music while students work. As students complete their cards, encourage them to think when and where they will deliver them or send them. Save Resource Pages in student folders.
15. In addition to delivering their cards, encourage students to share their favorite detail from one of these stories with 3 people before the next class and to ask at least 1 person: What makes a happy marriage?
16. Conclude the activity with favorite songs and prayers.

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ACTIVITY 2: SIGNS OF GOD IN THE HUMAN SOUL

SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION OBJECTIVES: To perceive the link between self-knowledge and a happy marriage; To perceive ways that one's current choices, friendships, and family relationships build skills necessary for a happy marriage

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

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 60 MIN.

Materials Needed:

- Bahá'í prayer books
- Access to the outdoors or fresh leaves, flowers, rose petals, etc., as described below
- Chart paper and markers
- Plain paper
- Heavy books
- Background music

Advance Preparation:

If you have access to the outdoors, plan to take a nature walk in which students may gather wildflowers, flowering weeds, leaves, ferns, or grasses. Alternatively you may simply provide fresh rose petals, leaves, flowers, etc., from potted plants or another source.

Display the following quotation in the classroom:

All the virtues which have been deposited . . . in human hearts are being revealed from that Reality as flowers and blossoms from divine gardens. It is a day of joy, a time of happiness, a period of spiritual growth.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 38

1. Welcome students. Invite them to share favorite songs and prayers and then to share highlights of their week.
2. If students had the opportunity to send or deliver their card to a happily married couple (Activity 1), invite them to share how the couple responded to their gift. Invite students to also share what they learned from others about the sources of happiness in marriage. Briefly discuss: How do these ideas reflect the purposes of marriage to improve our spiritual lives and help us to serve others?
3. Read aloud the following words of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá twice:

God hath created all humankind in His own image, and after His own likeness.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, p. 79

Briefly discuss: What does it mean for a person to be created in the image and likeness of God? Does this mean that we all reflect the image of God in the same way? Why or why not?

4. Invite volunteers to read aloud the posted quotation twice.

Briefly discuss: What are some examples of virtues that God has placed in human hearts? Record student ideas on chart paper.

Continue the discussion: What “Reality” is the source of these virtues? What does it mean to say that these virtues are potential in us? Why do we think ‘Abdu’l-Bahá says that this is a day of joy?

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5. Provide students with Bahá'í prayer books. Remind them that many prayers begin and end with some of the Names of God. These Names of God also show us virtues that God places in us. Invite individuals or small teams to browse through prayer books to find some of the Names of God, and then to share those Names in the whole group. Add these Names to the list of virtues from Step 4. Briefly discuss: How do these Names of God show us the potential of a human being?
6. Provide students with plain paper. Encourage them to write the name of each person in the class, including themselves. Then ask them to write one or more of the virtues—or signs of God—that they've noticed in each person beside that person's name. Consider playing background music while students work.
7. When all students have written at least one virtue for everyone in the class, read again the posted quotation. Invite them to go with you on a nature walk, or alternatively, to consider the flowers and leaves that you've brought to class. Ask students to select a flower, petal, leaf, etc., to represent a virtue that they've noticed in each member of the class, including themselves.
8. Gather students in a sharing circle. Invite students to take turns presenting their flowers, leaves, etc., to each person in the class. Acknowledge all.
9. Explain that when we see these signs of God in each other, we become attracted to that "Beauty of God." This attraction is the foundation of real friendship and real love.¹ Briefly discuss: Why should we notice the signs of God in every soul? How can true spiritual friendships help prepare us for a strong and happy marriage? Why should we also notice the signs of God in our own selves? How can knowing our own selves help prepare us for a happy marriage?
10. Explain that we will preserve these gifts from each other by carefully pressing them and using the pressed flowers or leaves in the next activity. Encourage students to:
 - Place their leaves, petals, etc., on a plain piece of paper.
 - Write the name of the virtue beside the leaf or flower it represents.
 - Place another piece of paper over the leaves, etc.
 - Place these papers between the pages of heavy books.
 - Keep these books in a safe place until the next class.

The flowers will be pressed and preserved after 7–10 days. Consider pressing extra flowers, leaves, etc., to use in the next activity.
11. Encourage students to continue noticing the signs of God or virtues in other people during the coming week. Encourage them to find at least 3 opportunities before the next class to name a virtue that they see in another person and also to notice at least 1 virtue in their own selves each day.
12. Conclude the activity with favorite songs and prayers.

¹ 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, p. 180

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ACTIVITY 3: TO BE A FRIEND

SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION OBJECTIVES: To perceive the link between self-knowledge and a happy marriage; To perceive ways that one's current choices, friendships, and family relationships build skills necessary for a happy marriage

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS: Direct use of Bahá'í sacred writings; Use of reflection; Use of peer teaching; Use of stories; Use of consultation; Use of arts and crafts

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 30 MIN.

Materials Needed:

- Copies of Resource Pages 123–24
- Copies for Resource Page 125, if desired
- Chart paper and markers
- Plain paper
- Background music
- Old newspapers
- Student folders
- Waxed paper
- Old or broken crayons
- Pencil or crayon sharpener
- Glitter, if desired
- Household iron
- Colored paper
- Glue
- Pressed flowers, petals, leaves, and grasses from the previous activity

Advance Preparation:

Decide how many teams you will have in Steps 7–8 below. Copy the questions for each team onto chart paper, so that each team will have 1 piece of chart paper for each quotation studied.

Consider making a sample “stained glass” picture, as described in Step 12.

Consider learning the melody on Resource Page 125. The melody may be heard on the Core Curriculum website, www.core-curriculum.org.

1. Welcome students. Begin the activity with favorite songs and prayers. Briefly discuss: What difference did it make to notice good qualities in ourselves and in others this week?
2. Remind students that Bahá'u'lláh encourages us to call ourselves to account each day. Briefly discuss: When we call ourselves to account, why must we notice the good and thank God for it? How does it also help us to notice the times we fall short, pray for forgiveness, and find a way to try again?
3. Invite students to reflect on spiritual qualities and friendship. Briefly discuss: How can our friendships help us develop good qualities?
4. Provide students with copies of Resource Page 123. Invite them to individually mark the qualities that they want in a friend and the qualities that they offer their friends. Consider playing background music while students work.
5. After students complete their work, discuss: Are the qualities we offer our friends the same or different from the qualities we want in our friends? How can friendship help us develop the qualities that we'll need in our families someday? Does being a friend to all people mean that we do the same things with all people? Why or why not?
6. Provide students with copies of Resource Page 124. Read through all quotations in the whole group and define new words, as necessary.
7. Organize students into small teams. Encourage each team to focus on 1–2 of the quotations on Resource Page 124. Ask them to read their quotations again and to answer the questions that pertain to their quotations:
 - Quotation 1: If we have nothing but love in our hearts, how can we treasure the companionship of the righteous but avoid fellowship with the ungodly? What does it

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mean to be righteous? What does it mean to be ungodly?

- Quotation 2: What are some of the pearls and gems that God has placed within us? How can we guard them from the ungodly?
 - Quotation 3: Why should we be a friend to the whole human race? How is this possible? What are some ways to make a new friend?
 - Quotation 4: What are some practical ways to bring those who have been excluded into the circle of intimate friends? How can we build real friendships?
8. Invite teams to share their answers in the whole group. Acknowledge all.
 9. Share the following pilgrim's note about 'Abdu'l-Bahá:

... An Arab beggar with filthy clothes and dirty, uncombed hair came to 'Abdu'l-Bahá. With utmost affection 'Abdu'l-Bahá caressed his face and beard and spoke many words of encouragement and humor to him: "May God grant you bounties. May God gladden your heart. What a wonderful chin! How is your health?" After the beggar left, 'Abdu'l-Bahá said:

"When it is revealed, 'Consort with all the religions,' the intention is association with such people. Although there is no connection between us, I have served him for twenty years.

"The intention is to consort with such people as are not antagonistic, or two-faced, or conniving, or hypocritical. Such people [as this poor Arab] are not believers, and there is no harm in that; let him believe in his own convictions. It is exhorted that if we disfavor someone, it should not be over his religion. For instance, we should not avoid a Christian because of his beliefs. However, we should eschew people with abhorrent behavior, such as a thief, or a philanderer, or a murderer. . . ."

Ahang Rabbani, "'Abdu'l-Bahá in Abu-Sinan,"
Bahá'í Studies Review, vol. 13 (2005), p. 9

Briefly discuss: In this story, how does 'Abdu'l-Bahá bring someone into the circle of friends? Why should we avoid people with abhorrent or disgusting behavior? How can we protect ourselves from abhorrent behavior while also showing respect to all people?

10. Provide students with plain journal paper. Invite them to record their reflections on how to show friendship while also protecting themselves at school, in their neighborhoods, and elsewhere.
11. After students have had time to write or draw their reflections, save these papers and Resource Pages in their folders. Invite them to recall the spiritual qualities or virtues in themselves and the power of their choices to protect those qualities and build friendship with others. Encourage students to:
 - Turn to the flowers, leaves, etc., they pressed in the previous activity. If students did not complete the previous activity, use pre-pressed leaves, flowers, etc.
 - Name the spiritual qualities in themselves represented by these pressed items.
 - Think about the ways that each of these spiritual qualities can build friendships: How could these virtues also build a strong marriage and happy family? How does fellowship with the righteous help us protect ourselves and share our "gems" with others?
 - Share these ideas with another student.
12. Then invite students to use these pressed items to create a "stained glass" to remind them of the power of their choices. Ask students to:
 - Place a sheet of plain paper on an old newspaper.
 - Place a sheet of waxed paper on the plain paper.

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- Arrange their dried leaves, flowers, etc., on the waxed paper. These leaves and flowers represent the “gems” within.
 - Remove the paper covering from old crayons. Sharpen the crayons over the flowers so that crayon shavings fall evenly over the flowers. Sprinkle glitter over the flowers and crayon shavings. These decorations can represent the actions we take to cultivate fellowship with the righteous.
 - Place a 2nd sheet of waxed paper over the flowers and decorations. This paper represents the protection we gain from positive friendships.
 - Place another newspaper over the 2nd sheet of waxed paper; set the iron on a low temperature and press it over the newspaper to seal the sheets of waxed paper together.
 - Use strips of colored paper to frame the picture, as desired.
13. Invite students to share their completed pictures with the class along with one idea for making positive friendships. List these ideas on chart paper.
14. Encourage students to:
- Display their pictures, perhaps in a window, as a reminder of their spiritual qualities.
 - Take action to strengthen a positive friendship with a new person.
 - Ask 2–3 married people how they met their spouse, what positive qualities or virtues attracted them, and how the friendship led to courtship and marriage.
15. Share the following vignette about the friendship and courtship of Shoghi Effendi and Rúhíyyih Khánum:
- “It was at the end of their pilgrimage that one day the mother of Shoghi Effendi asked to speak to May Maxwell and told her of Shoghi Effendi’s offer of marriage to her daughter. Mary [Rúhíyyih Khánum] did not know of it until some weeks later. In reminiscing about those days, Rúhíyyih Khánum used to say, with a twinkle in her eyes, that the beloved Guardian took her in hand and taught her Persian calligraphy after dinner in the course of those unforgettable evenings. He gave her a set of reed pens and ink and special mulberry papers and tutored her in the art of writing the Persian script. . . . And then she would add, with a bewitching smile, ‘I think Shoghi Effendi wanted an excuse to stay longer with me and to get to know me better!’ ”

Violette Nakhjavání,
A Tribute to Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánum, pp. 25–26

16. Conclude the activity with favorite songs and prayers, perhaps including the melody on Resource Page 125.

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ACTIVITY 4: LOVING COMPANIONS FOR TIME AND ETERNITY

KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVE: To become familiar with Bahá'í writings on the choice of a marriage partner and parental consent

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

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 60 MIN. WITH A GUEST; 40 MIN. WITHOUT A GUEST

Materials Needed:

- Copies of Resource Page 126
- Simple refreshments, if desired
- Chart paper and markers
- Plain paper and student folders
- Background music

Advance Preparation:

Consider inviting one or more happily married people to visit the class to share how they met their spouse, the spiritual qualities that attracted them, and how friendship led to courtship and marriage.

If you have a visitor to your class, consider providing students with 3–4 sample questions such as: How does marriage help you develop virtues? How does marriage help you serve God and humanity? What are some of the benefits of marriage?

1. Welcome students. Invite them to share where they placed their stained glass picture; their actions to build friendship with others; and highlights from their conversations with married people. Acknowledge all. If the class has a plan for reading the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, also check in on this process.
2. If you have invited guests to your class, invite them to share how they met their spouse, the spiritual qualities that attracted them, and how friendship led to courtship and marriage. Encourage students to ask questions of your guests or serve refreshments. Thank your guests for visiting the class.
3. Provide students with copies of Resource Page 126. Read aloud the first question. Invite students to share their responses with the person beside them. Then read aloud the quotation that follows the question. Ask students to adjust their answers, if desired, and share again with the same person. Repeat with questions 2 and 3.
4. Organize students into teams. Encourage each team to imagine that they're old enough to have children that want to get married.

Ask each team to come up with 3 things that they'd like to see the couple do, and 3 questions they'd like to ask the couple, before giving an answer to the question of consent. Circulate to provide assistance and encouragement, as needed.

5. In the whole group, read again the quotations on Resource Page 126. Invite teams to refine their plans, if desired, and then share their plans in the whole group. Acknowledge all.
6. Share the following story with the class:

“Shoghi Effendi, like his grandfather and great-grandfather before him, had a delightful sense of humor which was ready to manifest itself if he were given any chance to be happy or enjoy a little peace of mind. His eyes would fairly dance with amusement, he would chuckle delightedly and sometimes break out into open laughter. To a young pilgrim, who had expressed his interest in getting married, Shoghi Effendi remarked: ‘Don’t wait too long and don’t wait for someone to fall from the sky!’ ”

Rúhíyyih Khánúm, *The Priceless Pearl*, p. 128

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Briefly discuss: What are some ways to meet lots of people from diverse backgrounds? What are some ways to get to know the character of a person?

Record student ideas on chart paper. Teachers may add suggestions, as desired.

7. Remind students of the Hidden Word:

O Ye Sons of Spirit!

Ye are My treasury, for in you I have treasured the pearls of My mysteries and the gems of My knowledge. Guard them from the strangers amidst My servants and from the ungodly amongst My people.

Bahá'u'lláh, The Hidden Words, Arabic no. 69

Briefly discuss: How can we get to know the character of a person while also protecting the gems that God has placed inside each of us?

Record student ideas on chart paper. Teachers may add suggestions as desired. Explain that we

will consider that question more carefully in the next activity.

8. Provide students with plain paper. Invite them to record their reflections on ways to meet people of diverse backgrounds, learn about the character of others, and protect themselves while they build friendships with others. Consider playing quiet background music as students work. Save these papers and Resource Pages in student folders.
9. Encourage students to look again at the list of ideas created in Steps 7 and 8. Encourage them to select at least one action to reach out in friendship to a new person before the next class. Briefly discuss: How can we help each other make more friends? Whom would we like to invite to join this class or another junior youth group?
10. Conclude the activity with favorite songs and prayers.

ACTIVITY 5: CHASTITY: THE WAY TO A HAPPY AND SUCCESSFUL MARRIAGE

KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVE: To know the Bahá'í teachings regarding a chaste and holy life

WISDOM OBJECTIVE: To gain a deeper appreciation of the relationship of a chaste and holy life to a happy marriage

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

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 60 MIN.

Materials Needed:

- Copies of Resource Page 127
- Dictionaries
- Chart paper and markers
- Plain paper and student folders

1. Welcome students. Begin the class with favorite songs and prayers. Invite students to share their efforts to reach out in friendship to another person since the next class. Briefly discuss: Why are the skills of friendship so important in marriage and family life?
2. Remind students that the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh help us to express the noble qualities within us and build successful marriages. Briefly discuss: How can the Bahá'í teachings about chastity be the way to a happy and successful marriage? Listen carefully to student responses, then read aloud the following quotation twice:

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. . . Chastity should be strictly practiced by both sexes, not only because it is in itself highly commendable ethically, but also due to its being the only way to a happy and successful marital life.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi,
in *Messages from the Universal House of Justice*, p. 107

- Briefly discuss: What is chastity? Listen carefully to student responses, record student ideas on chart paper, then read aloud the following quotation:

Chastity implies both before and after marriage an unsullied, chaste sex life. Before marriage absolutely chaste, after marriage absolutely faithful to one's chosen companion. Faithful in all sexual acts, faithful in word and in deed.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi,
The Compilation of Compilations, vol. 1, p. 57

Briefly discuss: What does this quotation add to our definition of chastity? Record student comments.

- Distribute copies of Resource Page 127. Invite volunteers to read aloud the first 2 quotations. Then explain that the third quotation can help us complete our definition of a chaste and holy life. Encourage students to underline new and important words as you read it aloud. Pause after each sentence to invite students to restate the general meaning of that sentence, focusing on the parts they understand. Acknowledge all, clarifying misunderstandings as needed.
- Invite students to look through this quotation again and to call out the new words they underlined. List these words on chart paper.
- Organize students into teams of 2. Provide each team with 2–3 important words from this list. Teachers may also work with some words. Encourage teams to:
 - Use dictionaries to look up each word.
 - Select the most relevant dictionary definition.
 - Find the word again in the quotation. Make sure that the definition fits the sentence.
 - Write or draw the word's meaning on chart paper in a way that others can understand.
 Circulate as students work to provide encouragement and assistance, as needed.
- Invite teams to share their definitions in the whole group. Applaud all.
- Invite student volunteers to read again the third quotation on Resource Page 127, one sentence at a time. Again encourage students to restate the meaning of each sentence in their own words. Briefly discuss: What does it mean to lead a chaste and holy life? How can a chaste and holy life build a happy marriage?
- Continue the discussion: How can chastity also guard the gems that the Creator has placed within each of us? What actions can help us live a chaste and holy life?
- Provide students with their plain paper. Encourage them to select one action to help them gain the benefits of a chaste and holy life and record their plans on this paper. Save these papers and Resource Pages in student folders.
- Encourage students to pay attention to the things they see, hear, and experience over the coming week: Which things might help us lead a chaste and holy life? What are the challenges to leading a chaste and holy life?
- Conclude the activity with favorite songs and prayers.

TOPIC: PREPARATION FOR MARRIAGE

ACTIVITY 6: LIVING A CHASTE AND HOLY LIFE

SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION OBJECTIVE: To perceive ways to draw on spiritual power to uphold a chaste and holy life

ELOQUENT SPEECH OBJECTIVE: To create and implement one's own plan for upholding Bahá'í standards for a chaste and holy life

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

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 60 MIN.

Materials Needed:

- Chart paper and markers
- Plain paper and student folders

Advance Preparation:

Display the following questions in the classroom during Steps 6–7 of this activity:

- What is the challenge or problem? How does it bother you?
- Who is involved? Are some people older or younger than you?
- How often do you face this challenge?
- How have you tried to address it so far? What happened then?
- What else could you try? Who could help?

Identify resources within and outside the Bahá'í community—including parents and Bahá'í institutions—to protect or assist young people who may face serious issues regarding this topic.

1. Welcome students. Invite them to share highlights of their week. Briefly discuss: What helps us lead a chaste and holy life? What are some of the challenges to living a chaste and holy life? Record student ideas on chart paper.
2. Read aloud the third quotation on Resource Page 127. Briefly discuss: What new insights have come to us as we've reflected on this quotation since the last class?
3. Invite students to work with the person beside them to come up with 3 or more reasons why people might smoke, use alcohol or drugs, or fall short of Bahá'í standards of chastity.
4. Invite teams to share their ideas in the whole group. Record student ideas on chart paper. Briefly discuss: Why else might people our age or older smoke, use alcohol or drugs, or fall short of Bahá'í standards of chastity? Add any new ideas to the list.
5. Brainstorm a list of alternatives to smoking, alcohol, and drugs. Also brainstorm a list of ways to build friendships while upholding chastity. Then discuss: What could we do to support a friend facing challenges in living a chaste and holy life?
6. Next, invite students to work in pairs to think about themselves, the people they know, and select one real-life challenge to leading a chaste and holy life. Distribute paper. Encourage teams to write answers to the questions posted in the classroom, remembering not to use the names of other people. Teachers may also write about challenges facing junior youth. Remind students that other people will see their answers to these questions.

TOPIC: PREPARATION FOR MARRIAGE

7. Collect all papers. Read each challenge aloud in the whole group. Invite teams to select one challenge to address, saving the most challenging situations for teachers. Encourage teams to discuss ways to protect or assist a person with this challenge by answering:

- How could you show true friendship to a person with this challenge?
- What might this person also do?
- Who else could help? How could they help?

Consider also posting these questions in the classroom for reference. Circulate as teams work to provide encouragement or assistance, as needed.

8. Invite teams to share their answers to these challenges in the whole group. Acknowledge all. Offer additional suggestions as desired, after all student teams have shared. Briefly discuss: How can we draw on the power of divine assistance for living a chaste and holy life? How can we also support each other? If a mistake is made, how can we get back on the straight path?

9. Read aloud the following quotation:

Make ye then a mighty effort, that the purity and sanctity which, above all else, are cherished by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, shall distinguish the people of Bahá; that in every kind of excellence the people of God shall surpass all other human beings; that both outwardly and inwardly they shall prove superior to the rest; that for purity, immaculacy, refinement, and the preservation of health, they shall be leaders in the vanguard of those who know.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, p. 150

On plain paper, invite students to record one important idea for living a chaste and holy life that can make a positive difference in their own lives. Save these papers in student folders.

10. Conclude the activity with favorite songs and prayers. Consider including the following prayer:

O Thou Lord of wondrous grace! Bestow upon us new blessings. Give to use the freshness of the spring. We are saplings which have been planted by the fingers of Thy bounty and have been formed out of the water and clay of Thy tender affection. We thirst for the living waters of Thy favors and are dependent upon the outpourings of the clouds of Thy generosity. Abandon not to itself this grove wherein our hopes aspire, nor withhold therefrom the showers of Thy loving-kindness. Grant that from the clouds of Thy mercy may fall copious rain so that the trees of our lives may bring forth fruit and we may attain the most cherished desire of our hearts.

May the glory of God rest upon the people of Bahá!

'Abdu'l-Bahá, Bahá'í Prayers and Tablets for the Young, pp. 26–27

NOTE: If you notice that students are facing difficult challenges, consult with them individually, share information about Bahá'í and other resources—including parents—that can assist them, and refer the situation to an appropriate institution, as needed.

Resource Pages

Activity 1: The Purpose of Marriage

He established the law of marriage, made it as a fortress for well-being and salvation. . . .

Bahá'u'lláh, *Bahá'í Prayers*, 1991 U.S. ed., p. 104

Enter into wedlock, O people, that ye may bring forth one who will make mention of Me amid My servants. This is My bidding unto you; hold fast to it as an assistance to yourselves.

Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, paragraph 63

We will all, verily, abide by the Will of God.

Bahá'u'lláh, Bahá'í marriage vow in "Questions and Answers," *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 105

Bahá'í marriage is the commitment of the two parties one to the other, and their mutual attachment of mind and heart. Each must, however, exercise the utmost care to become thoroughly acquainted with the character of the other, that the binding covenant between them may be a tie that will endure forever. Their purpose must be this: to become loving companions and comrades and at one with each other for time and eternity. . . .

The true marriage of Bahá'ís is this, that husband and wife should be united both physically and spiritually, that they may ever improve the spiritual life of each other, and may enjoy everlasting unity throughout all the worlds of God. This is Bahá'í marriage.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 118, no. 86

TOPIC: PREPARATION FOR MARRIAGE

Activity 1: The Purpose of Marriage

The Marriage of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Munírih Khánum



[Bahá'u'lláh's daughter, Bahíyyih Khánum] brought a dainty white frock (which Ásíyih Khánum and she had made for me of white batiste) and put it on to me, with a fresh white niqáb (head-dress) on my head—and I was adorned for my wedding.

The guests were few, Ásíyih Khánum, Bahíyyih Khánum, the wife of 'Abbúd, her three daughters (one of these wished to dress my hair more elaborately than usual, but I preferred to leave it in its two plaits), and the wife of Mírzá Músá. . . .

Bahá'u'lláh had said to the Master:

“Come back early this afternoon, the wedding must take place today.”

Bahá'u'lláh chanted the prayers.

Oh, the spiritual happiness which enfolded us! It cannot be described in earthly words.

The chanting ended, the guests left us. I was the wife of my Beloved. How wonderful and noble He was in His beauty. I adored Him. I recognized His greatness, and thanked God for bringing me to Him.

It is impossible to put into words the delight of being with the Master; I seemed to be in a glorious realm of sacred happiness whilst in His company.

You have known Him in His later years, but then, in the youth of His beauty and manly vigor, with His unfailing love, His kindness, His cheerfulness, His sense of humor, His untiring consideration for everybody, He was marvelous, without equal, surely in all the earth!

At the wedding there was no cake, only cups of tea; there were no decorations, and no choir, but the blessing of [Bahá'u'lláh]; the glory and beauty of love and happiness were beyond and above all luxury and ceremony and circumstance.

For fifty years my Beloved and I were together. Never were we separated save during His visits to Egypt, Europe, and America.

O my Beloved husband and my Lord! How shall I speak of Him?

You, who have known Him, can imagine what my fifty years have been—how they fled by in an atmosphere of love and joy and the perfection of that Peace which passeth all understanding, in the radiant light of which I await the day when I shall be called to join Him, in the celestial garden of transfiguration.

Munírih Khánum, quoted in Lady Blomfield, *The Chosen Highway*, pp. 88–90

Activity 1: The Purpose of Marriage

The Marriage of Shoghi Effendi and Rúhíyyih Khánum



Surely the simplicity of the marriage of Shoghi Effendi . . . should provide a thought-provoking example to the Bahá'ís everywhere. . . . His heart drew him to that Most Sacred Spot on earth at such a moment in his life. I remember I was dressed, except for a white lace blouse, entirely in black for this unique occasion, and was a typical example of the way oriental women dressed to go out into the streets in those days, the custom being to wear black. . . . When we arrived at Bahjí and entered the Shrine he requested me to give him his ring, which I was still wearing concealed about my neck, and this he placed on the ring-finger of my right hand, the same finger that corresponded to the one of his own on which he himself had always worn it. This was the only gesture he made. He entered the inner Shrine, beneath the floor of which Bahá'u'lláh is interred, and gathered up in a handkerchief all the dried petals and flowers that the keeper of the Shrine used to take from the threshold and place in a silver receptacle at the feet of Bahá'u'lláh. After he had chanted the Tablet of Visitation we came back to Haifa and in the room of the Greatest Holy Leaf our actual marriage took place, as already mentioned. Except for this visit, the day he told me he had chosen to confer this great honor on me, and one or two brief moments

in the Western Pilgrim House when he came over for dinner, I had never been alone with the Guardian. There was no celebration, no flowers, no elaborate ceremony, no wedding dress, no reception. His mother and father, in compliance with the laws of Bahá'u'lláh, signified their consent by signing our marriage certificate and then I went back to the Western Pilgrim House across the street and joined by parents (who had not been present at any of these events), and Shoghi Effendi went to attend to his own affairs. At dinner-time, quite as usual, the Guardian appeared, showering his love and congratulations on my mother and father. He took the handkerchief, full of such precious flowers, and with his inimitable smile gave them to my mother, saying he had brought them for her from the inner Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh. My parents also signed the marriage certificate and after dinner and these events were over I walked home with Shoghi Effendi, my suitcases having been taken across the street by Fujita while we were at dinner. We sat for a while with the Guardian's family and then went up to his two rooms which the Greatest Holy Leaf had had built for him so long ago.

Rúhíyyih Khánum, *The Priceless Pearl*, pp. 151–52

TOPIC: PREPARATION FOR MARRIAGE

Activity 3: To Be a Friend

Mark the 5 most important qualities you want in a friend.

Mark the 5 most important qualities you offer your friends.

I want in a friend	Friendship qualities	I offer my friends
1. _____	Sees the good in me	_____
2. _____	Understands me	_____
3. _____	Wants the best for me	_____
4. _____	Cares about me; cares about others	_____
5. _____	I'm my best self when we're together	_____
6. _____	Truthful and honest	_____
7. _____	Loyal, I can count on my friend	_____
8. _____	Trustworthy, fulfills agreements	_____
9. _____	Doesn't gossip	_____
10. _____	Stands up for me and for others	_____
11. _____	Listens when I want to talk	_____
12. _____	Shows respect to all people	_____
13. _____	Shares thoughts and feelings	_____
14. _____	Likes my family	_____
15. _____	Likes the same things	_____
16. _____	Have fun together	_____
17. _____	Shares problems with me	_____
18. _____	Helps me with my problems	_____
19. _____	My family appreciates the friendship	_____

Activity 3: To Be a Friend

A Friend to All People

1. O Friend!

In the garden of thy heart plant naught but the rose of love, and from the nightingale of affection and desire loosen not thy hold. Treasure the companionship of the righteous and eschew all fellowship with the ungodly.

Bahá'u'lláh, *The Hidden Words*, Persian no. 3

2. O Ye Sons of Spirit!

Ye are My treasury, for in you I have treasured the pearls of My mysteries and the gems of My knowledge. Guard them from the strangers amidst My servants and from the ungodly amongst My people.

Bahá'u'lláh, *The Hidden Words*, Arabic no. 69

3. One must see in every human being only that which is worthy of praise. When this is done, one can be a friend to the whole human race. If, however, we look at people from the standpoint of their faults, then being a friend to them is a formidable task.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 169

4. Wherefore, O ye illumined youth, strive by night and by day to unravel the mysteries of the mind and spirit, and to grasp the secrets of the Day of God. Inform yourselves of the evidences that the Most Great Name hath dawned. Open your lips in praise. Adduce convincing arguments and proofs. Lead those who thirst to the fountain of life; grant ye true health to the ailing. Be ye apprentices of God; be ye physicians directed by God, and heal ye the sick among humankind. Bring those who have been excluded into the circle of intimate friends. Make the despairing to be filled with hope. Waken them that slumber; make the heedless mindful.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Compilation of Compilations*, vol. 2, p. 415

TOPIC: PREPARATION FOR MARRIAGE

Activity 3: To Be a Friend

Open Your Lips in Praise

Text: 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Compilations of Compilations*, vol. 2, p.203
 Music: Barb Qualls

Chords: C, B \flat /C, C, B \flat /C

5 O ye il - lu - mined youth, strive by night and by day to un -

Bass-Baritone

Chords: C, B \flat /C, C

5 rav - el the mys - teries of the mind and spir - it, and to grasp the se - crets of the

Bs.-Bar.

Chords: B \flat /C, G m7, G, B \flat , G

8 Day of God. In - form your - selves of the ev - i - den ces that the Most Great Name hath

Bs.-Bar.

Chords: G7, Chorus C, G m7, F, C

12 dawned. Open your lips in praise. Oooh

Bs.-Bar.

Chords: C, G m7, F, C

17 O - pen your lips in praise. Oooh

Bs.-Bar.

Chords: C, G m7, F, C, C

21 Lead those who thirst to the foun - tain of life; O - pen your lips in

Bs.-Bar.

Chords: G m7, F, C

26 grant... true health to the ail - ing. praise. Be... ap - pren - ti - ces of God;

Bs.-Bar.

Chords: G m7, F, C

Be... ap - pren - ti - ces of God.

Bs.-Bar.

Activity 4: Loving Companions for Time and Eternity

1. How many people must agree before a couple can be married? Why?

. . . Marriage is dependent upon the consent of both parties. Desiring to establish love, unity and harmony amidst Our servants, We have conditioned it, once the couple's wish is known, upon the permission of their parents, lest enmity and rancor should arise amongst them. And in this We have yet other purposes. Thus hath Our commandment been ordained.

Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, paragraph 65

2. Why should a couple become thoroughly acquainted with the character of each other?

Bahá'í marriage is the commitment of the two parties one to the other, and their mutual attachment of mind and heart. Each must, however, exercise the utmost care to become thoroughly acquainted with the character of the other, that the binding covenant between them may be a tie that will endure forever. Their purpose must be this: to become loving companions and comrades and at one with each other for time and eternity. . . .

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 118, no. 86

3. Should we marry someone from a different race, nation, or culture? Why or why not?

If it be possible, gather together these two races, black and white, into one Assembly, and put such love into their hearts that they shall not only unite but even intermarry. Be sure that the result of this will abolish differences and disputes between black and white.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Bahá'í World Faith*, p. 359

TOPIC: PREPARATION FOR MARRIAGE

Activity 5: Chastity: The Way to a Happy and Successful Marriage

. . . Chastity should be strictly practiced by both sexes, not only because it is in itself highly commendable ethically, but also due to its being the only way to a happy and successful marital life.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, in *Messages from the Universal House of Justice*, p. 107

Chastity implies both before and after marriage an unsullied, chaste sex life. Before marriage absolutely chaste, after marriage absolutely faithful to one's chosen companion. Faithful in all sexual acts, faithful in word and in deed.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, *The Compilation of Compilations*, vol. 1, p. 57

. . . A chaste and holy life, with its implications of modesty, purity, temperance, decency, and clean-mindedness, involves no less than the exercise of moderation in all that pertains to dress, language, amusements, and all artistic and literary avocations. It demands daily vigilance in the control of one's carnal desires and corrupt inclinations. It calls for the abandonment of a frivolous conduct, with its excessive attachment to trivial and often misdirected pleasures. It requires total abstinence from all alcoholic drinks, from opium, and from similar habit-forming drugs. It condemns the prostitution of art and of literature, the practices of nudism and of companionate marriage, infidelity in marital relationships, and all manner of promiscuity, of easy familiarity, and of sexual vices. It can tolerate no compromise with the theories, the standards, the habits, and the excesses of a decadent age. Nay rather it seeks to demonstrate, through the dynamic force of its example, the pernicious character of such theories, the falsity of such standards, the hollowness of such claims, the perversity of such habits, and the sacrilegious character of such excesses.

Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, pp. 29–30

LIST OF ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Books, Stories, and Articles:

Brilliant Star magazine:

“Our Bahá’í Wedding,” Jan/Feb 1994

“Asking Permission,” Jan/Feb 1994

“Me . . . Married?” Mar/Apr 1999

“Case of the Mysterious Marriage,” Jul/Aug 2001

Together Forever

Some Thoughts on Marriage

Bahá’í Marriage and Family Life

Marriage: A Fortress for Well-Being

A Bahá’í Marriage Programme

Conscious Courtship: Finding Someone to Love for the Rest of Your Life

Pure Gold: Encouraging Character Qualities in Marriage

A Perfectly Funny Marriage: A Humorous View of Creating a Successful Marriage

Consent of Parents

Marriage Can Be Forever—Preparation Counts!

Activities:

Brilliant Star magazine:

“My Family and the Fast,” Jan/Feb 1994

“A Fortress for Well-Being,” Mar/Apr 1999

Music:

“Marry O People,” *Selections from the Writings*, Paul Parrish

“We Will All Verily Abide,” *If You Only Knew*, Doug Cameron

“My Friend,” *To The Planters of Trees*, Nancy Ward

Drama:

Brilliant Star magazine:

“Princess Shayda,” Jan/Feb 1994

Other Favorite Resources:

If you find any additional resources, please notify the Office of Education and Schools at the Bahá’í National Center, email SCHOOLS@usbnc.org, or submit your findings to the Core Curriculum website, www.core-curriculum.org.

TO DEVELOP ONE'S SOCIAL LIFE

TEACHING OUR PEERS

**SPIRITUAL QUALITIES RELEVANT TO THIS TOPIC:
LOVE, COURAGE, INDIVIDUAL INITIATIVE**

May they all, throughout the reaches of the spirit, learn well of the hidden mysteries; so well that in the Kingdom of the All-Glorious, each one of them, even as a nightingale endowed with speech, will cry out the secrets of the Heavenly Realm, and like unto a longing lover pour forth his sore need and utter want of the Beloved.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, p. 134, no. 107

The Bahá'í youth must be taught how to teach the Cause of God.

Shoghi Effendi, in The Importance of Deepening our Knowledge and Understanding of the Faith, p. 21, no. 73

Learning Objectives and Suggested Activities

KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVES

- To know the primacy of teaching in one's life of service to God and humanity
- To know the three prerequisites for success in teaching
- To know the power of the Word of God for teaching

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Invite students to create personal compilations of Bahá'í writings on the importance and prerequisites of teaching the Faith.
- Encourage students to memorize a teaching prayer of their choice, perhaps a relevant prayer from *Tablets of the Divine Plan*.

WISDOM OBJECTIVES

- To understand the relationship between genuine friendships with all people and teaching the Cause of God
- To appreciate the importance of complete freedom from prejudice, moral rectitude, and a chaste and holy life as prerequisites for success in teaching

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- In pairs or small groups, make a list of important themes from the Bahá'í writings pertaining to making and maintaining genuine friendships. Share and compile lists as a class.
- Create artistic representations of friendship across social barriers and friendship among diverse groups.

SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION OBJECTIVES

- To reflect on the teaching opportunities in one's daily life
- To perceive the value of the sacred gift of teaching in one's own life

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Invite students to identify possibilities and create goals for forming new friendships and strengthening acquaintanceships.
- In pairs or small groups, consult about ways to develop these new friendships, remembering the value of diversity.
- Identify ways to support each other as we work toward personal goals.
- Share reflections on the value of teaching to our personal and social lives.
- Keep a journal of old and new friendships, the spiritual bounties of these friendships, and enriching teaching experiences that arise with friends.
- Discuss the importance of praying and caring for the spiritual growth of our friends. Consider selecting and regularly reciting a prayer for each friend.

ELOQUENT SPEECH OBJECTIVES

- To offer the Message of Bahá'u'lláh to one's peers with genuine friendship, respect, humility, and love
- To create and implement a personal teaching plan within the context of one's daily life
- To be able to explain the connection between obedience to the laws of God and teaching

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Prepare a presentation to share with the community on the connection between humility and teaching the faith.
- Use science to demonstrate the connection between obedience to the laws of God and teaching.
- Plan uplifting social events to bring their old and new friends together on a regular basis.
- In pairs, develop a way to regularly assess progress towards the goals of personal teaching plans.

Sample Activities

ACTIVITY 1: FELLOWSHIP AND TEACHING

KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVE: To know the primacy of teaching in one's life of service to God and humanity

WISDOM OBJECTIVE: To understand the relationship between genuine friendships with all people and teaching the Cause of God

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

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 60 MIN.

Materials Needed:

- Chart paper and markers
- Plain paper and student folders

Advance Preparation:

Display the following quotation in the classroom:

The friends of God should weave bonds of fellowship with others and show absolute love and affection towards them. These links have a deep influence on people and they will listen. When the friends sense receptivity to the Word of God, they should deliver the Message with wisdom.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Compilation of Compilations*, vol. 2, p. 300

1. Welcome students. Begin the class with favorite songs, prayers, and highlights of the past week. Acknowledge all.
Lead the movement back from feet stomping to thigh slapping, hand clapping, finger snapping, and finally palm rubbing.
2. If the class has a plan for reading the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, invite students to discuss their insights and questions from their reading.
For the last round, stop rubbing palms together and take the hand of the person beside you. Others follow one by one until everyone in the circle is holding hands.
3. Briefly discuss: How do we think that the teachings of God will spread to all the people in the world? Listen carefully to student responses; then play a game to answer this question:
Encourage students to sit with you in a circle, close their eyes, and listen carefully for a sound from the person on their left. When they hear the sound, they should make the same sound.
Rub your palms together back and forth. Other people join one by one, making the same sound, until the last person joins this movement.
Next begin snapping fingers. Other people join one by one until all are snapping their fingers.
Start clapping hands. Others join one by one.
Move to thigh slapping. Others join one by one.
Begin to stomp feet. Others join one by one.
4. In the quiet that follows briefly discuss: How did this “rainstorm” demonstrate the power of unified action? How did it also demonstrate the power of individual choices?
5. Affirm that we use the same powers of individual choice and unified action to teach the Cause of God. Briefly discuss: What is the role of individual choice and unified action as we teach the Cause to our friends and neighbors?
6. Continue the discussion: What are some of the things that we've enjoyed learning and doing in this class? What would happen if all the people in the world learned and did these same things?

GOAL: TO DEVELOP ONE'S SOCIAL LIFE
TOPIC: TEACHING OUR PEERS

7. Read aloud the following words of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá twice:

So intensely hath the glory of Divine Unity penetrated souls and hearts that all are now bound one to another with heavenly ties, and all are even as a single heart, a single soul. . . . I beg of God to strengthen these spiritual bonds . . . that they may strive with all their might until universal fellowship, close and warm, and unalloyed love, and spiritual relationships, will connect all the hearts in the world.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, p. 19

Briefly discuss: What does ‘Abdu’l-Bahá say has happened to our hearts and souls? What does He ask us to do?

8. Continue the discussion: What do we think will happen if we do as He asks? Listen carefully to student responses and then read aloud:

Then will all humankind, because of this fresh and dazzling bounty, be gathered in a single homeland. Then will conflict and dissension vanish from the face of the earth, then will mankind be cradled in love for the beauty of the All-Glorious

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, pp. 19–20

Briefly discuss: What is the relationship between universal friendship, teaching the Cause of God, and world peace?

9. Affirm that we must be able to make friends to teach the Cause of God. Invite students to think about a time that they made a new friend, to remember a specific person, time, and place. Invite some or all students to describe those experiences without mentioning names. Teachers may also share.
10. Invite volunteers to respond to the questions: What do you say and do when you meet new people? How do you greet them? Who can show us how you introduce yourself?

11. Continue the discussion: How do you start a conversation? What sort of questions do you ask to start learning about the other person? Record student ideas on chart paper. Then brainstorm a list of conversation starters. Record at least 6 questions that could be used to start a conversation.

Affirm that first steps in making friends could be:

- Decide to approach a person.
 - Look at the person, smile, and say “hi.”
 - Start a conversation by asking a question, such as, “What do you think about . . . (a sports team, a class at school, a movie, the weather, etc.)?”
 - Listen to your friend; then share your thoughts.
 - Ask another question to continue the conversation.
12. Encourage students to work in small teams to practice introducing themselves and starting a conversation. Each person should take at least one turn approaching others to start a conversation. Discuss: How did it feel to practice introducing ourselves? Was this harder or easier than really greeting a new person?
13. Work with the whole group to create a list of places where they meet people. Record these ideas on chart paper. Some possibilities include classes or clubs at school, sports, activities after school, service organizations, etc. Encourage students to tell the person beside them which of these activities interest them.
14. Invite volunteers to read aloud the posted quotation. Briefly discuss: Why should we weave bonds of fellowship with people before sharing the Word of God?

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TOPIC: TEACHING OUR PEERS

15. Provide students with plain paper. Encourage them to:

- Copy all or part of the posted quotation into their journals.
- Think about a time and place to start a friendly conversation with a new person (or a person they don't know well) and learn something about that person's interests before the next class.
- Write their plans in their journals.

Save these papers in student folders.

16. Then discuss: What social activities could we do together to strengthen old and new friendships—a movie night, game night, pool party, other? Record student ideas on chart paper.
17. Encourage students to work in groups of 2–3 to share their ideas with their parents and to host one or more social events in the near future.
18. Conclude the activity with favorite songs and prayers.

ACTIVITY 2: SUCCESS IN TEACHING

KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVE: To know the three prerequisites for success in teaching

WISDOM OBJECTIVE: To appreciate the importance of complete freedom from prejudice, moral rectitude, and a chaste and holy life as prerequisites for success in teaching

ELOQUENT SPEECH OBJECTIVE: To be able to explain the relationship between obedience to the laws of God and teaching

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS: Direct use of Bahá'í sacred writings; Use of science; Use of peer teaching; Use of reflection

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 60 MIN.

Materials Needed:

- Chart paper and markers
- Copies of Resource Pages 143–45
- Plain paper
- Student folders
- 2 small bowls
- Dry yeast
- Small amounts of sugar and flour
- Fork or whisk
- Access to warm and cool water
- Handkerchief
- Rubber band
- 4–6 drinking glasses
- Spoon or chopstick

Advance Preparation:

Display the following quotation in the classroom:

Whoso ariseth among you to teach the Cause of his Lord, let him, before all else, teach his own self, that his speech may attract the hearts of them that hear him.

Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 277

1. Welcome students. Begin the class with favorite songs and prayers. Invite students to share highlights of their week, including social activities with friends. Acknowledge all.
2. Briefly discuss: What happened when we carried out our plans to start a conversation with a new person? What did we learn about our friend's interests? Acknowledge all. List the interests of students' new friends on chart paper.

3. Invite volunteers to read aloud the posted quotation. Briefly discuss: Why must we teach ourselves before arising to teach others? Do we have to wait until we're perfect before we can teach the Cause of God? Why or why not?
4. Explain that Shoghi Effendi tells us that there are 3 "spiritual prerequisites" for success in teaching and other service. Briefly discuss: What might it mean to say that something is a "spiritual prerequisite" for success?
5. Affirm that these spiritual prerequisites or requirements are:
... a high sense of moral rectitude in their social and administrative activities, absolute chastity in their individual lives, and complete freedom from prejudice in their dealings with peoples of a different race, class, creed, or color.

Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 22

Briefly discuss: What does it mean to have high standards of morality? To live a chaste and holy life? To be free of prejudice?

6. Organize students into 3 teams to examine these concepts. Provide each team with a copy of Resource Page 143, 144, or 145 and materials for the team's demonstration. Encourage them to read their quotations, set up their demonstration, and answer their questions. Circulate as teams work to provide encouragement or assistance, as needed.
7. Invite teams to share their demonstration, answers to the questions, and one or more of their quotations in the whole group. Applaud all! Encourage students to save these handout pages in their folders.
8. In the whole group, invite volunteers to read again the posted quotation. Discuss: What are some ways that we can teach ourselves the Cause of God?
9. Provide students with plain paper. Encourage them to copy the posted quotation into their journals. Encourage them also to record their plans for learning more about their new friends' interests and one action to demonstrate moral rectitude, leading a chaste and holy life, and uphold complete freedom from prejudice. Save these papers and Resource Pages in student folders and check on progress toward social activities for building friendships.
10. Conclude the activity with favorite songs and prayers.

TOPIC: TEACHING OUR PEERS

ACTIVITY 3: APPLYING THE SPIRITUAL PREREQUISITES FOR SUCCESS

WISDOM OBJECTIVE: To appreciate the importance of complete freedom from prejudice, moral rectitude, and a chaste and holy life as prerequisites for success in teaching

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

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 60 MIN.

Materials Needed:

- Copies of Resource Page 146
- Plain paper
- Student folders

1. Welcome students. Invite them to share the results of their efforts to reach out in friendship to others. Invite them also to share their efforts to demonstrate moral rectitude, chastity, and complete freedom from prejudice. Briefly discuss: Why do we think that these qualities are prerequisites for success in teaching?
2. Provide students with copies of Resource Page 146. Explain that a watchword is a slogan.
3. Read aloud the first quotation in the whole group. Invite students to listen carefully and underline key points as they listen.
4. Encourage students to share their key points with the person beside them. Then in the whole group discuss: Where should we demonstrate complete freedom from prejudice? How many places does Shoghi Effendi mention? What is an example of showing freedom from prejudice in a public or formal setting? What is an example of showing freedom from prejudice in a private or informal setting?
5. Organize students into teams of 2. Encourage them to read again the first quotation on Resource Page 146, pick one of the places listed, and create an action plan or role-play showing complete freedom from prejudice in that place.
6. Invite teams to share their plans or role-plays in the whole group. Applaud all!
7. Repeat the process described in Steps 3–6 with the second and third quotations on Resource Page 146.
8. Briefly discuss: What are some times that we've noticed people being attracted by efforts to lead the Bahá'í life?
9. Provide students with their plain paper. Invite them to write one new idea and action plan for teaching their friends through words and actions during the coming week. Students may share their ideas in the whole group if they like. Save these papers and Resource Pages in student folders.
10. Conclude the activity with favorite songs and prayers.

ACTIVITY 4: THE GIFT OF FRIENDS

SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION OBJECTIVE: To reflect on the teaching opportunities in one's daily life
ELOQUENT SPEECH OBJECTIVE: To create and implement a personal teaching plan within the context of one's daily life

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

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 60 MIN.

Materials Needed:

- Photographs of diverse junior youth and youth, cut from magazines or from the internet; nature pictures could also be used to symbolize diverse friendships
- Paper
- Glue
- Scissors
- Background music
- Student folders

Advance Preparation:

Display the following quotations in the classroom:

Bahá'u'lláh hath said that the various races of humankind lend a composite harmony and beauty of color to the whole. Let all associate, therefore, in this great human garden even as flowers grow and blend together side by side without discord or disagreement between them.

‘Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 68

Bring those who have been excluded into the circle of intimate friends.

‘Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Compilation of Compilations*, vol. 2, p. 415

1. Welcome students. Invite them to share spiritual highlights of the past week as well as progress strengthening friendships.
2. Invite students to look through the collection of images, find a picture to represent their friends, and glue that picture to a piece of paper.
3. Encourage students to write the names of their close friends on this paper. Beside each friend's name encourage students to write their friend's special gifts; what their friend brings to their life; and one idea for sharing the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh with that friend. Play quiet music while students work.
4. Invite volunteers to read aloud the posted quotations twice. Then encourage students to find another picture to represent friendships they'd like to make. Encourage them to glue that picture to another piece of paper.
5. Play quiet music and invite students to think about all the people they meet. Encourage them to copy one of the posted quotations onto their paper and also to write their answers to the following questions: How can I diversify my friendships? What new friends can I make? What will be my first step?
6. Invite students to share their plans in the whole group if they like. Save papers in their folders.
7. Read again the posted quotations. Invite students to select closing prayers especially for their friends.

ACTIVITY 5: A SUMMONER TO LOVE

KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVE: To know the power of the Word of God for success in teaching
SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION OBJECTIVE: To reflect on the teaching opportunities in one's daily life
ELOQUENT SPEECH OBJECTIVE: To offer the Message of Bahá'u'lláh to one's peers with genuine friendship, respect, humility, and love
INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS: Direct use of Bahá'í sacred writings; Use of stories; Use of consultation; Involve service and teaching

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 60 MIN. + ADDITIONAL PREPARATIONS + STUDENT-HOSTED FIRESIDE OR OTHER GATHERING

Materials Needed:

- Chart paper and markers
- Bahá'í prayer books, sacred writings, etc.
- Songs, instruments, and recorded music, as desired
- Core Curriculum storybooks, as desired
- *Vignettes from the Life of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, if desired
- Local school and Bahá'í calendars for reference
- Paper and simple art supplies for making invitations

Advance Preparation:

Display the following quotation in the classroom:

Be thou a summoner to love, and be thou kind to all the human race.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, p. 26

Consider possibilities for indoor or outdoor locations for a student-hosted fireside or other gathering.

1. Welcome students. Begin the class with favorite songs and prayers, perhaps including the following quotation:

Be thou a summoner to love, and be thou kind to all the human race. Love thou the children of men and share in their sorrows. Be thou of those who foster peace. Offer thy friendship, be worthy of trust. Be thou a balm to every sore, be thou a medicine for every ill. Bind thou the souls together. Recite thou the verses of guidance. Be engaged in the worship of thy Lord, and rise up to lead the people aright.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, p. 26

2. Invite students to share highlights of their week: What steps have we taken to build friendships? What else would we like to share?
3. Invite all students in turn to read aloud the posted quotation. Allow a brief period of silence and then discuss: What happens in our hearts when we hear the words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá or Bahá'u'lláh? Warmly acknowledge all.

4. Read aloud the following short quotations:

The heart is like a box, and language is the key. Only by using the key can we open the box and observe the gems it contains.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 60

The Word of God is the king of words. . . .

Bahá'u'lláh, Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 173

Discuss: How can our language open the heart of another? Why is the Word of God the king of words? Why must we share the Word of God through both words and actions?

5. Explain that while students carry out their plans for ongoing social activities, the class as a whole will also plan a fireside, devotional gathering, or other event to share the Word of God with their friends. Briefly discuss: Thinking about all the times we've wanted to share the teachings of God with our friends, which times have been most successful? What did we do? Record student comments on chart paper.

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6. Remind students that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is the perfect example of a Bahá’í teacher. Share the story on Resource Page 147. Briefly discuss: What did ‘Abdu’l-Bahá do to open the hearts of the people at that gathering?
7. Suggest that there are many ways to reach the heart of our friends. Briefly discuss: What are some of the keys that open hearts? Listen carefully to student responses. Affirm that the Word of God, genuine friendship, following the Bahá’í teachings, associating with many different people, music, stories, humor, service, etc., can all open hearts.
8. Invite students to work together to plan a gathering to invite their friends. In the whole group consult about the following questions:
 - What quotations from the Bahá’í writings do we want to be sure to include? What theme would we like? Would we like to include stories from the Core Curriculum storybooks, *Vignettes from the Life of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, or other sources?

If the group wants to focus on the pivotal principle of oneness, students may consider using the text on Resource Page 148: Seven Candles of Unity.

 - Bahá’u’lláh wrote:
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*, paragraph 51

How shall we include music in our gathering?
- How shall we provide an opportunity for our friends to ask their own questions about Bahá’u’lláh and His teachings?
- How shall we show real friendship or fellowship? Do we want to include ice-breaker activities, games, or uplifting humor?
- What refreshments do we want to serve? How shall we prepare and serve them?
- How will we invite our friends to join this class or another junior youth group?
- Who would we like to invite? How can we increase the diversity of our gathering? How exactly will we invite people—written invitations, phone calls, personal invitation, all of the above?
- When and where shall we host this gathering? How would we like to make the environment clean and attractive?
- What permission or assistance do we need to carry out our plans? How will we request it?
9. Invite volunteers to carry out the group’s decisions in small groups or as individuals. Begin working on these plans in class.
10. When about 10 minutes remain for the activity, invite students to review their ideas, and adjust as desired. Acknowledge all.
11. Affirm class plans for carrying out this fireside or other gathering and follow through to bring these plans to completion. Conclude this activity with favorite songs and prayers.
12. When the day arrives, encourage students to arrive early to greet their friends, or plan to arrive with their friends. Carry out your plans and debrief the experience during the next class.

TOPIC: TEACHING OUR PEERS

ACTIVITY 6: THE GIFT OF TEACHING

SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION OBJECTIVE: To perceive the value of the sacred gift of teaching in one's own life

ELOQUENT SPEECH OBJECTIVE: To create and implement a personal teaching plan within the context of one's daily life

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS: Direct use of Bahá'í sacred writings; Use of reflection; Use of arts and crafts; Involve teaching

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 60 MIN.

Materials Needed:

- Chart paper and markers
- Plain paper and student folders
- Heavy-duty aluminum foil
- Mixing dish and water
- White glue
- Spoon or stick for stirring
- Colored tissue paper
- Glitter
- Sequins or metallic thread, if desired
- Background music

Advance Preparation:

Consider making a sample picture, as described in Step 8.

Display the following quotation in the classroom:

Of all the gifts of God the greatest is the gift of Teaching. It draweth unto us the Grace of God and is our first obligation. Of such a gift how can we deprive ourselves?

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Will and Testament of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 25

Display the following questions during Step 6. Save this list for the next activity.

- When and where do I pray for divine assistance?
- When and where can I meet new people?
- How can I build or strengthen friendships?
- How can I attract hearts through my actions?
- How can I attract hearts through my words?
- How do I know that they are interested? What would I like to invite them to do?

1. Welcome students. Consider including the following quotation in your opening devotions:

Of all the gifts of God the greatest is the gift of Teaching. It draweth unto us the Grace of God and is our first obligation. Of such a gift how can we deprive ourselves? Nay, our lives, our goods, our comforts, our rest, we offer them all as a sacrifice for the Abhá Beauty and teach the Cause of God.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Will and Testament of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 25

2. Invite them to share highlights of their week: What have we done to bring joy to the hearts of others or make a new friend? How have we been able to share the Message of Bahá'u'lláh? How have we been able to teach through our actions?
3. If students are still planning their fireside or other gathering, review progress toward that event. If the event has been completed, discuss: How could we tell that Bahá'u'lláh was confirming our service? How shall we follow up with our friends to help them know that all are welcome to Bahá'í class and other activities in the Bahá'í community?

4. Invite volunteers to read aloud the posted quotation twice. Discuss: How do we feel when we can see that through the grace of God, we've been able to share the Message of Bahá'u'lláh with another person? Why do we think that teaching is the greatest gift of God? What are some practical ways that we can enjoy this gift every day of our lives? Record student ideas on chart paper.

5. Organize students into 2 teams. Provide each team with a piece of chart paper. Invite one team to create an outline of ways to teach the Cause of God on school days. Invite the other team to create an outline of ways to teach the Cause of God on weekends or during school holidays. After allowing time for teams to work, invite them to share their ideas in the whole group. Applaud all!

6. Distribute plain paper. Invite students to think about their school days and other days and to select one or more of these ideas to carry into action. Remind them that simple plans are sometimes the most effective plans. Encourage them to think about their daily routine and the posted questions.

Encourage students to imagine themselves interacting with the people they know and the people they meet to share the Message of Bahá'u'lláh. Consider playing background music while students write.

7. After students have had time to work on their plans, invite them to share their plans with

another person or in the whole group if they like. Save these papers in student folders.

8. Remind students that they will have the opportunity to complete their journal reflections and handouts related to their study of the Life of Service into a book. Invite them to create a cover for the book as a permanent reminder of the gift of teaching with the following steps:

- Mix equal parts of water and white glue in a dish.
- Spread out a piece of foil (approximately 9 x 12") shiny side up. Spread the water-glue mixture over the foil.
- Tear colored tissue paper into strips and pieces. Lay a piece of tissue paper onto the foil. Brush more glue over it. Add another piece of tissue paper.
- Keep adding tissue and glue, overlapping some pieces to make a design.
- Add sequins or metallic thread if desired. Sprinkle glitter over the final design to add a sparkle finish.
- Keep the picture in a safe place while it dries.

9. Encourage students to carry out the first steps in their teaching plan before the next class. Conclude the activity with favorite songs and prayers.

TOPIC: TEACHING OUR PEERS

ACTIVITY 7: THE GIFT OF TEACHING IN A LIFE OF SERVICE

SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION OBJECTIVE: To perceive the value of the sacred gift of teaching in one's own life

ELOQUENT SPEECH OBJECTIVE: To create and implement a personal teaching plan within the context of one's daily life

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS: Direct use of Bahá'í sacred writings; Use of reflection; Use of arts and crafts; Involve teaching

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 60 MIN.

Materials Needed:

- Student folders, with all handouts and journal pages from all Life of Service topics studied in this Lesson Planning Guide
- Cover art created in the previous activity, if available
- Questions posted in the previous activity
- Copies of Resource Page 149
- Dry powdery dirt in a nice dish
- Plain paper
- Glue
- Colored construction paper or cardstock
- Hole punch
- Ribbon or cord
- Background music

1. Welcome students. Invite them to share highlights of their efforts to live the Bahá'í life and teach the Cause of God. Briefly discuss: How do we feel when we're able to share the Word of God with others or serve others? Acknowledge all.
2. Pass around the dish of dirt. Invite students to take a small bit of this dirt and hold it in their hands. Discuss the question: How are we like dirt?
3. Distribute copies of Resource Page 149. Explain that this quotation highlights some important concepts about teaching. In the whole group, read the quotation, stopping after each paragraph to discuss the questions: What is Bahá'u'lláh telling us? What should we do about it?
4. After reading and discussing the entire page, discuss again: How are we like dirt? Listen carefully, then discuss: In what way is the earth beneath our feet the source of all wealth? What are some ways that we can be a source of wealth—both practically and spiritually—to the people around us?
5. Provide students with plain paper. Encourage them to select one or more favorite phrases from Resource Page 149 to record on this

paper. Encourage them to think again about their daily routine, the results of their teaching efforts, and consider again the questions posted during the previous activity.

Encourage students to imagine themselves interacting with the people they know and the people they meet to share the Message of Bahá'u'lláh. Consider playing background music while students write their teaching plan.

6. When students are ready, invite them to share their plans with each other. Acknowledge all.
7. Then encourage students to assemble all their completed papers and handout pages into a book about their responsibilities in a Life of Service to God and humanity. Encourage them or organize the pages in an order that pleases them, select colored paper for front and back cover, punch holes, and use ribbon or cord to bind their books.
8. When the books are ready, encourage students to glue the art completed in the previous activity to the front cover of their books or decorate their covers, as desired.
9. Invite students to share these books with family members and friends. Conclude the activity with favorite songs and prayers.

Resource Pages

Activity 2: Success in Teaching

Moral Rectitude

1. Read the quotations.
2. Set up your demonstration.
3. Read the quotations again and answer the questions.
4. Share your demonstration, questions, and answers with the whole group.

The companions of God are, in this day, the lump that must leaven the peoples of the world. They must show forth such trustworthiness, such truthfulness and perseverance, such deeds and character that all mankind may profit by their example.

Bahá'u'lláh, quoted in Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 23

Be fair to yourselves and to others that the evidences of justice may be revealed through your deeds among Our faithful servants.

Bahá'u'lláh, quoted in Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 24

Let truthfulness and courtesy be your adorning. . . .

Bahá'u'lláh, quoted in Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 25

Demonstration

Materials—2 small bowls, warm water, flour, sugar, 1 tablespoon or packet of dry active yeast, measuring cup, measuring spoon, fork or whisk for stirring

Instructions—In both bowls, mix 2 tablespoons flour, 1 tablespoon sugar, and 1/3 cup warm water. Add 1 tablespoon or packet of yeast to the mixture in one bowl. Wait 10–15 minutes. What happens to the mixtures? Why is yeast important? How can moral rectitude help us be like yeast?

Questions

1. A lump of yeast makes bread dough rise: How can trustworthiness, truthfulness, and perseverance help humanity rise to its destiny?
2. How can fairness to ourselves and others attract others to the Cause of God?
3. How can truthfulness and courtesy adorn (beautify) our words?
4. Think of 2 examples of junior youth attracting a friend to the Cause of God by showing truthfulness, trustworthiness, and courtesy.

Activity 2: Success in Teaching

A Chaste and Holy Life

1. Read the quotations.
2. Set up your demonstration.
3. Read the quotations again and answer the questions.
4. Share your demonstration, questions, and answers with the whole group.

We, verily, behold your actions. If We perceive from them the sweet smelling savor of purity and holiness, We will most certainly bless you.

Bahá'u'lláh, quoted in Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 32

The drinking of wine is, according to the text of the Most Holy Book, forbidden; for it is the cause of chronic diseases, weakeneth the nerves, and consumeth the mind.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, quoted in Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 33

Chastity implies both before and after marriage an unsullied, chaste sex life. Before marriage absolutely chaste, after marriage absolutely faithful to one's chosen companion. Faithful in all sexual acts, faithful in word and in deed.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, *The Compilation of Compilations*, vol. 1, p. 57

Demonstration

Materials—water, drinking glass, handkerchief, rubber band

Instructions—Soak the handkerchief in water and fill the glass with water. Stretch the wet handkerchief over the top of the glass of water and hold it in place with a rubber band. Turn the glass upside down. What happens to the water? Imagine that the water-soaked handkerchief represents our obedience to the laws of God and the glass of water represents us. How can obedience protect us?

Questions

1. What might be some of the blessings of a chaste and godly life?
2. Why do we think that “complete chastity before marriage and complete faithfulness within marriage” is the way to a happy marriage?
3. How do we know that alcohol and drugs harm our bodies and our minds?
4. Think of 2 examples of junior youth attracting a friend to the Cause of God by leading a chaste and holy life.

Activity 2: Success in Teaching

Complete Freedom from Prejudice

1. Read the quotations.
2. Set up your demonstration.
3. Read the quotations again and answer the questions.
4. Share your demonstration, questions, and answers with the whole group.

Close your eyes to racial differences, and welcome all with the light of oneness.

Bahá'u'lláh, quoted in Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 37

The diversity in the human family should be the cause of love and harmony, as it is in music where many different notes blend together in the making of a perfect chord.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, quoted in Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 38

If you meet those of a different race and color from yourself, do not mistrust them, and withdraw yourself into your shell of conventionality, but rather be glad and show them kindness.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, quoted in Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 38

Demonstration

Materials—3–5 drinking glasses, water, spoon or chopstick

Instructions—Fill the glasses with different levels of water. Tap one glass over and over. Is this a pleasant sound? Then tap all the glasses to create a simple melody. Why is diversity of notes necessary for harmony or melody in music? Why is diversity necessary in the human family?

Questions

1. Why must we close our eyes to racial difference and welcome all with the light of oneness?
2. What are some examples of ways that diversity increases love and harmony?
3. What should we do when we meet someone of a different race or color than ourselves?
4. Think of 2 examples of junior youth attracting a friend to the Cause of God by showing complete freedom from prejudice.

Activity 3: Applying the Spiritual Prerequisites for Success

Freedom from racial prejudice, in any of its forms, should, at such a time as this when an increasingly large section of the human race is falling a victim to its devastating ferocity, be adopted as the watchword of the entire body of the American believers, in whichever state they reside, in whatever circles they move, whatever their age, traditions, tastes, and habits. It should be consistently demonstrated in every phase of their activity and life, whether in the Bahá'í community or outside it, in public or in private, formally as well as informally, individually as well as in their official capacity as organized groups, committees and Assemblies. It should be deliberately cultivated through the various and everyday opportunities, no matter how insignificant, that present themselves, whether in their homes, their business offices, their schools and colleges, their social parties and recreation grounds, their Bahá'í meetings, conferences, conventions, summer schools and Assemblies.

Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 36

A chaste and holy life must be made the controlling principle in the behavior and conduct of all Bahá'ís, both in their social relations with the members of their own community, and in their contact with the world at large. . . . It must be upheld, in all its integrity and implications, in every phase of the life of those who fill the ranks of that Faith, whether in their homes, their travels, their clubs, their societies, their entertainments, their schools, and their universities. It must be accorded special consideration in the conduct of the social activities of every Bahá'í summer school and any other occasions on which Bahá'í community life is organized and fostered. It must be closely and continually identified with the mission of the Bahá'í youth, both as an element in the life of the Bahá'í community, and as a factor in the future progress and orientation of the youth of their own country.

Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, pp. 29–30

. . . Rectitude of conduct, with its implications of justice, equity, truthfulness, honesty, fair-mindedness, reliability, and trustworthiness, must distinguish every phase of the life of the Bahá'í community.

Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 23

Activity 5: A Summoner to Love

I remember a luncheon party in Dublin, to which came a number of . . . summer residents to meet 'Abdu'l-Bahá. There were present a famous scientist, two well known artists, a physician of note, and all of the fifteen or twenty people present had a background of more than one generation of wealth or culture. . . .

Most of those present at this luncheon party knew a little of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's life history, and, presumably, were expecting a dissertation from Him on the Bahá'í Cause. The hostess had suggested to the Master that He speak to them on the subject of Immortality. However, as the meal progressed, and no more than the usual commonplaces of polite society were mentioned, the hostess made an opening, as she thought, for 'Abdu'l-Bahá to speak on spiritual things. His response to this was to ask if He might tell them a story, and he related one of the Oriental tales, of which He had a great store and at its conclusion all laughed heartily.

The ice was broken. Others added stories of which the Master's anecdote had reminded them. Then 'Abdu'l-Bahá, His face beaming with happiness, told another story, and another. His laughter rang through the room. He said that the Orientals had many such stories illustrating different phases of life. Many of them are extremely humorous. It is good to laugh. Laughter is a spiritual relaxation. When they were in prison, He said, and under the utmost deprivation and difficulties, each of them at the close of the day would relate the most ludicrous event which had happened. Sometimes it was a little difficult to find one but always they would laugh until the tears would roll down their cheeks.

Happiness, He said, is never dependent upon material surroundings, otherwise how sad those years would have been. As it was they were always in the utmost state of joy and happiness. That was the nearest approach He came to any reference to Himself or to the Divine Teachings. But over that group before the gathering dispersed, hovered a hush and reverence which no learned dissertation would have caused in them.

After the guests had gone, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá was leaving for His hotel, He came close to His hostess and asked her, with a little wistful smile . . . if she were pleased with Him. She was never able to speak of this conclusion to the event without deep emotion.

Howard Colby Ives, *Portals to Freedom*, pp. 117–21

Activity 5: A Summoner to Love

Seven Candles of Unity

Some options to consider: Light a new candle when reading or reciting each of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's 7 candles below. Add favorite prayers and songs. Invite guests to each light a candle and say one hope for humanity or one action they will complete to promote unity.

In cycles gone by, though harmony was established, yet, owing to the absence of means, the unity of all mankind could not have been achieved. Continents remained widely divided, nay even among the peoples of one and the same continent association and interchange of thought were wellnigh impossible. . . . In this day, however, means of communication have multiplied, and the five continents of the earth have virtually merged into one. . . .

Hence the unity of all mankind can in this day be achieved. Verily this is none other but one of the wonders of this wondrous age, this glorious century. Of this past ages have been deprived, for this century—the century of light—hath been endowed with unique and unprecedented glory, power and illumination. Hence the miraculous unfolding of a fresh marvel every day. Eventually it will be seen how bright its candles will burn in the assemblage of man.

Behold how its light is now dawning upon the world's darkened horizon.

The first candle is unity in the political realm, the early glimmerings of which can now be discerned.

The second candle is unity of thought in world undertakings, the consummation of which will ere long be witnessed.

The third candle is unity in freedom which will surely come to pass.

The fourth candle is unity in religion which is the corner-stone of the foundation itself, and which, by the power of God, will be revealed in all its splendor.

The fifth candle is the unity of nations—a unity which in this century will be securely established, causing all the peoples of the world to regard themselves as citizens of one common fatherland.

The sixth candle is unity of races, making of all that dwell on earth peoples and kindreds of one race.

The seventh candle is unity of language, i.e., the choice of a universal tongue in which all peoples will be instructed and converse.

Each and every one of these will inevitably come to pass, inasmuch as the power of the Kingdom of God will aid and assist in their realization.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, pp. 31–32

Activity 7: The Gift of Teaching in a Life of Service

This is the Day whereon the Ocean of God's mercy hath been manifested unto men, the Day in which the Day Star of His loving-kindness hath shed its radiance upon them, the Day in which the clouds of His bountiful favor have overshadowed the whole of mankind. Now is the time to cheer and refresh the down-cast through the invigorating breeze of love and fellowship, and the living waters of friendliness and charity.

They who are the beloved of God, in whatever place they gather and whomsoever they may meet, must evince, in their attitude towards God, and in the manner of their celebration of His praise and glory, such humility and submissiveness that every atom of the dust beneath their feet may attest the depth of their devotion. The conversation carried by these holy souls should be informed with such power that these same atoms of dust will be thrilled by its influence. They should conduct themselves in such manner that the earth upon which they tread may never be allowed to address to them such words as these: "I am to be preferred above you. For witness, how patient I am in bearing the burden which the husbandman layeth upon me. I am the instrument that continually imparteth unto all beings the blessings with which He Who is the Source of all grace hath entrusted me. Notwithstanding the honor conferred upon me, and the unnumbered evidences of my wealth—a wealth that supplieth the needs of all creation—behold the measure of my humility, witness with what absolute submissiveness I allow myself to be trodden beneath the feet of men. . . ."

Show forbearance and benevolence and love to one another. Should any one among you be incapable of grasping a certain truth, or be striving to comprehend it, show forth, when conversing with him, a spirit of extreme kindness and good-will. Help him to see and recognize the truth, without esteeming yourself to be, in the least, superior to him, or to be possessed of greater endowments.

The whole duty of man in this Day is to attain that share of the flood of grace which God poureth forth for him. Let none, therefore, consider the largeness or smallness of the receptacle. The portion of some might lie in the palm of a man's hand, the portion of others might fill a cup, and of others even a gallon-measure.

Every eye, in this Day, should seek what will best promote the Cause of God. He, Who is the Eternal Truth, beareth Me witness! Nothing whatsoever can, in this Day, inflict a greater harm upon this Cause than dissension and strife, contention, estrangement and apathy, among the loved ones of God. Flee them, through the power of God and His sovereign aid, and strive ye to knit together the hearts of men, in His Name, the Unifier, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.

Beseech ye the one true God to grant that ye may taste the savor of such deeds as are performed in His path, and partake of the sweetness of such humility and submissiveness as are shown for His sake. Forget your own selves, and turn your eyes towards your neighbor. Bend your energies to whatever may foster the education of men. Nothing is, or can ever be, hidden from God. If ye follow in His way, His incalculable and imperishable blessings will be showered upon you. This is the luminous Tablet, whose verses have streamed from the moving Pen of Him Who is the Lord of all worlds. Ponder it in your hearts, and be ye of them that observe its precepts.

Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Babá'u'lláh*, V, pp. 7–9

LIST OF ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Books, Stories, and Articles:

Brilliant Star magazine:

- "Teaching Stories," Jul/Aug 1991
- "Her Own Year of Service," Mar/Apr 1992
- "Answering . . . the Guardian," May/Jun 1992
- "Teaching with Music," Jul/Aug 1992
- "Shalton's Confirmation," Jul/Aug 1992
- "Young Pioneers Today," Jul/Aug 1992
- "Calling All Colors," Nov/Dec 1992
- "Divine Courtesy," Nov/Dec 1992
- "A Village Returns," Jan/Feb 1993
- "Pebbles on the Beach," Mar/Apr 1993
- "Bahá'í Kids in Action," May/Jun 1992, Jul/Aug 1992, Sep/Oct 1993, Nov/Dec 1993
- "Bahá'í Youth Service Corps," Sep/Oct 1993
- "Bahá'í Speakers Club," Sep/Oct 1993
- "Patience and Perseverance," Nov/Dec 1993
- "Family Band," Jan/Feb 1994
- "Courage in the Czech Republic," Mar/Apr 1994
- "Courage in Malta," Mar/Apr 1994
- "A Party in Mtwara, Tanzania," Sep/Oct 1994
- "Art in the Park," Sep/Oct 1994
- "Camp Louhelen," Sep/Oct 1994
- "Making Friends in New Mexico," Sep/Oct 1994
- "Pioneering in St. Lucia," Sep/Oct 1994
- "Singing to Teach/in Russia," Sep/Oct 1994
- "Afnán Stories—The Thief," Nov/Dec 1994
- "Light in the Darkness," Nov/Dec 1994
- "Treasures Within," May/Jun 1995
- "Success—What Is It?" Jul/Aug 1995
- "Bahá'ís Around the World," Sep/Oct 1995
- "Solutions to Every Problem," Sep/Oct 1995
- "Confidence Takes Practice," Jan/Feb 1996
- "Kids Speak Out!" Jan/Feb 1997, Mar/Apr 1993
- "Heroic Deeds," Jan/Feb 1997
- "Teaching Tools," Mar/Apr 1993
- "Warrior on the Air Waves," Sep/Oct 1997
- "Why I Became a Bahá'í," Sep/Oct 1997
- "World Citizen," Sep/Oct 1997
- "Teach the World!" Sep/Oct 1997
- "The Best Way to Teach," Sep/Oct 1997
- "Virtuewoman," Nov/Dec 1998
- "Teaching," Jan/Feb 1999
- "Teaching in a New Land," Jan/Feb 1999
- "Why Should I Teach?" Jan/Feb 1999
- "Spirit Run," Sep/Oct 2000
- "A Hospital in the Jungle," Sep/Oct 2000
- "A Visit to Africa," Nov/Dec 2000
- "Blazon His Name," Nov/Dec 2003
- "What is a Champion," Mar/Apr 2004
- "Blazon Bahá'u'lláh's Name," Mar/Apr 2004
- "Traveling Champions Puzzle," Mar/Apr 2004

Activities:

Brilliant Star magazine:

- "How Will You Teach?" Sp Ed 1991
- "A Special Gift from God," Mar/Apr 1992
- "Prayer Works!" Nov/Dec 1994
- "Shine Forth," Sp Ed 1994
- "Write Bahá'í History Reports," Mar/Apr 1995
- "My Teaching Kit," Jul/Aug 1995
- "Teaching with 'Little Ben' Books," Jan/Feb 1996
- "O Son of Being," Mar/Apr 1998
- "Shining Stars," Sp Ed 1996
- "Today I Am . . . on a Teaching Trip," Sp Ed 1996
- "Personal Love Plan," Sp Ed 1996
- "Fall Sparks Teaching," Nov/Dec 1997
- "Spiritual Family Tree," Jul/Aug 1997
- "Words from the Heart," Jan/Feb 2001
- "My Mission: Become a Champion," Mar/Apr 2004
- "What Do You Say?" Sep/Oct 2004

Music:

Brilliant Star magazine:

- "Let Us Be about Our Father's Business," Jul/Aug 1991

Poetry:

Brilliant Star magazine:

- "Bahá'u'lláh Has Come!" Jul/Aug 1992
- "Close the Door of Complaint," Sp Ed 1996

Other Favorite Resources:

If you find any additional resources, please notify the Office of Education and Schools at the Bahá'í National Center, email SCHOOLS@usbnc.org, or submit your findings to the Core Curriculum website, www.core-curriculum.org.