



# Walking Together on a Path of Service

Ruhi Institute



Book 7



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Ruhi Institute

## Books in the Series:

Below are the current titles in the series designed by the Ruhi Institute. The books are intended to be used as the main sequence of courses in a systematic effort to enhance the capacity of youth and adults to serve their communities. The Ruhi Institute is also developing a set of courses that branch out from the third book in the series for training Bahá'í children's class teachers, as well as another set from Book 5 for raising up animators of junior youth groups. These, too, are indicated in the list below. It should be noted that the list may undergo change as experience in the field advances, and additional titles will be added as a number of curricular elements under development reach the stage where they can be made widely available.

- Book 1     *Reflections on the Life of the Spirit*
- Book 2     *Arising to Serve*
- Book 3     *Teaching Children's Classes, Grade 1*  
              *Teaching Children's Classes, Grade 2 (branch course)*  
              *Teaching Children's Classes, Grade 3 (branch course)*  
              *Teaching Children's Classes, Grade 4 (branch course)*
- Book 4     *The Twin Manifestations*
- Book 5     *Releasing the Powers of Junior Youth*  
              *Initial Impulse: The first branch course of Book 5*  
              *Widening Circle: The second branch course of Book 5*
- Book 6     *Teaching the Cause*
- Book 7     *Walking Together on a Path of Service*
- Book 8     *The Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh*
- Book 9     *Gaining an Historical Perspective*
- Book 10    *Building Vibrant Communities*
- Book 11    *Material Means*
- Book 12    *Family and the Community*
- Book 13    *Engaging in Social Action*
- Book 14    *Participating in Public Discourse*

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All rights reserved. Edition 1.1.1.PE published May 2001  
Edition 2.1.1.PE February 2024  
ISBN 978-628-95545-8-8

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## A Few Thoughts for the Tutor

The raising up of a new civilization, prosperous both materially and spiritually, requires ever-increasing capacity on the part of individuals, institutions, and communities to draw on the society-building powers inherent in the Bahá'í teachings. Enhancing this capacity is the principal aim of the Ruhi Institute's main sequence of courses. Insights into the various dimensions of this capacity, and how it can be fostered, are sought from two primary sources: from the ocean of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation and from experience generated worldwide in enabling growing numbers of people to partake of its treasures and offer its life-giving waters to all around them. Those who serve as tutors of the courses bring to their efforts not only the knowledge they have gained through study but also their experience in performing the acts of service that the courses lay out—acts of service that seek to set in motion a process of individual and collective transformation at the local level. And, at no point does their participation in this process become more important than here, at Book 7, where the tutor, in helping others take up this act of service, will be engaging participants in an exploration of a path that he or she has come to know well through ongoing experience in walking it.

This exploration begins by focusing on the nature of spiritual growth engendered by service—the subject of the first unit, “The Spiritual Dynamics of Advancing on a Path of Service”. The unit presents a series of ideas that will enable participants to reflect on the process of spiritual transformation on which they embarked in recognizing Bahá'u'lláh and in arising to serve His Cause and humanity: the condition of a heart that is turned towards the Sun of Truth, the capacity with which we are each endowed to know God and to reflect His attributes, the force of the love of God that animates our lives and the illumination we receive from obedience to His commands, the assurance we gain from His knowledge and the faith and certainty that compels us to action, the sense of hopefulness that must characterize our hearts and the longing desire to achieve His purpose that must stir them, the need for us to put forth effort and make sacrifices, and the state of joy that must quicken our steps.

For participants, study of the unit will heighten their awareness of a concept already well familiar to them—that it is in the field of service that we are each able to realize our God-given potential and contribute to the betterment of society. At a more profound level, they should come to understand that, in entering this field, we are impelled towards a state of servitude, a state in which “being” and “doing” are completely merged, one that calls for the forces of purity and knowledge, of faith and obedience, of hope and longing desire, of sacrifice and joy. Walking the path of service in such a state creates a dynamic interaction between the powers latent in the human soul and the potent forces that the advent of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation has released. As fledgling tutors, the participants need to go further to recognize that it is these dynamics that give shape to our relationships as we walk the path together, that steel our resolve and augment our capacity individually and collectively.

Having reflected on these spiritual dynamics, participants are provided with an opportunity to examine how the educational approach of the Ruhi Institute and its courses

enable individuals to progress along this path—an examination that constitutes the core of the next unit, “Serving as a Tutor of the Institute Courses”. Section 15 describes this approach briefly, outlining some of the thinking that led to its development and touching on some of its central concepts—the pursuit of a twofold moral purpose, simultaneous engagement in study and action, the strengthening of capabilities—concepts that underlie the content of the courses and determine the manner in which the path of service is to be trodden. The sections that follow then consider, each in turn, the first six books of the main sequence in an effort to shed light on the pedagogical principles that govern the curriculum and to help participants gain a more profound understanding of what the materials seek to achieve. To this end, these core sections draw heavily on the prefatory remarks of each book, “A Few Thoughts for the Tutor”.

In guiding the participants through this central part of the unit, the tutor should not underestimate its importance. The extracts from the prefatory remarks and the exercises that accompany them will, to an extent, serve as a means for participants to analyze the content of the books they have already studied and reflect on the acts of service they encourage. But, more crucially, they should come to recognize some of the characteristics that distinguish an educational process which takes service to the Cause and humanity as its organizing principle. What should stand out to them is the role accorded to fostering understanding and developing spiritual qualities in this process. It is the attention given to ensuring that these two imperatives go hand in hand that sets the educational process conceived by the Institute apart from courses which narrowly focus on training in skills, imparting only the knowledge and information that carrying out specific tasks requires.

Participants will readily see how this theme is woven into the discussion of the first six books, undertaken in Sections 16 to 26, and the tutor should be prepared to help them appreciate how so many of the other characteristics of the educational process derive meaning from it. Among these characteristics there are a few the tutor will want to keep especially in mind.

First, what should become clear is that a life committed to the pursuit of a twofold moral purpose is one that is centered on God and His Revelation. This, in fact, is the main thrust behind the structure and content of the sequence of courses—evident as early as Book 1. Dedicated to awakening in those who study it a sense of their true identity—the identity of one who walks the path of service—the book begins by focusing participants on the Sacred Writings and on the effort required to understand them and apply them to their lives. Only in this light does it then direct their attention to the life of the spirit and the nourishment their souls receive through supplication and communion with Him. It can be imagined that an educational process that seeks to raise consciousness in this way would be better suited to helping individuals quiet “the insistent self” than one that encourages prolonged introspection as a primary channel for the release of the spiritual powers at their disposal.

Second, these sections should serve to highlight the centrality given to capacity building in the educational process. That this process is concerned with both knowledge—specifically, knowledge of the Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh—and practice should come into sharp focus. Indeed, its effectiveness in raising capacity relies primarily on its ability to take full advantage of the mutual interaction between the two: new insights are generated when understanding achieved through study is enriched in light of practice, and ongoing engagement in acts of service increases thirst for knowledge and stokes the desire to seek the inner meanings concealed in the Writings of the Faith. It is the emphasis placed on capacity building that makes the educational process distinct from the various kinds of deepening efforts that have



emerged over the years which, beneficial in their own right, generally focus on study of the Writings in isolation from action. Here, instead, the acquisition of knowledge is pursued in the context of the twofold purpose to attend to one's own spiritual and intellectual growth and to contribute to the transformation of society. So it is, then, that the progress of the individual and the advancement of the collective are brought together into one forward movement.

Third, the exploration should shed light on the nature of the capabilities developed in walking the path of service—how they not only build on one another but are also interrelated. The concept of “capabilities” was, of course, introduced to participants in Book 2, where they were encouraged to raise their capacity to initiate and sustain meaningful and uplifting conversations. They will have gained an intuitive sense of what this term implies through the study of that book, and their appreciation of its significance will have increased as they were assisted in Book 3, as prospective teachers of young children, in grasping certain fundamental educational concepts, in reflecting on the spiritual qualities and attitudes involved, and in practicing the skills and abilities needed. They will have seen, too, how the study of each of the subsequent courses contributed to a further increase of capacity, commensurate with the widening scope of service in which they engaged.

Now, as fledgling tutors, they will have an opportunity to reflect on the concept of “capability” explicitly for the first time. Here they should come to realize that the development of capabilities, as conceived in the educational process, involves advancing in a set of interrelated attributes—in the understanding of concepts, in the acquisition of spiritual qualities, in the formation of appropriate habits and attitudes, and in the sharpening of certain skills and abilities. To think of capabilities in this way calls for participants to distinguish the concept as used here from how it is employed in everyday language. To be capable of doing something, in day-to-day speech, can refer to anything from, say, baking bread to serving as an animator of a junior youth group. The concept assumes its intended meaning only in the case of the latter, for to be capable of serving as an animator requires a constellation of certain attributes from each of the categories mentioned above. In identifying clusters of capabilities, as well as those attributes most essential to them, the Ruhi Institute has avoided mapping them out precisely; it decided early on that it would be counterproductive to do so. It would be sufficient, it felt, for the educational process to be aware of the need to develop the necessary attributes in a way that would enable participants to carry out increasingly complex acts of service for the advancement of their communities.

This relates closely, then, to another point. The acts of service addressed in the main sequence of courses perform two concurrent functions: while developing in ever greater measure the capabilities of the individual, acts of service ensure that his or her efforts help expand and strengthen vibrant patterns of community life. Accordingly, the first act on the path of service—to share prayers and reflect on them with others, particularly with families—is not to be set aside once some experience is gained after the study of Book 1. Nor does one stop visiting homes in one's village or neighborhood following some practice in exploring deepening themes with families, as suggested in Book 2. The individual, bolstered by the energies of a growing nucleus of committed friends, continues to gain more and more experience, advancing in the corresponding capabilities as he or she does so, and helps in this way to weave the fabric of a purposeful community through continuous engagement and maturity of experience.

For the tutor of Book 7, the above thoughts should assist in facilitating a fruitful discussion around the core of the second unit. While sufficient time should be dedicated to study of the relevant sections, it should also be remembered that participants will likely return

to them again and again as they take up this act of service. Of course, the introductory remarks to each book, “A Few Thoughts for the Tutor”, will, in themselves, be a most essential resource as they seek to gain further insight into the nature of the educational process, a process that will rely so decisively on their contribution for its steady unfoldment.

In this connection, it will be helpful for the tutor to keep in mind the overall structure of the unit and to have a clear idea of what precedes and follows these central sections. To lay the groundwork for the examination undertaken there, two essential themes are addressed in the first part of the unit. Sections 2 to 9 explore the theme of motivation, and Sections 10 to 14 discuss the subject of participation.

With regard to the former, the unit suggests that, whatever other factors may be involved, it is understanding that is the greatest of all motivators. To the extent that an educational process is able to nurture understanding, then, will it succeed in tapping the roots of motivation that lie deep within the human soul. Section 5 provides an extract from the introduction to Book 1 that describes the purpose of its first unit, “Understanding the Bahá’í Writings”. In doing so, it guides the aspiring tutor through a reflection on the concept of understanding, specifically as it pertains to the Writings as a source of veritable knowledge. The exercises in that section will help participants appreciate the different dimensions of understanding that the courses hope to advance, and it will be important for them to have these dimensions in mind when they eventually embark on the study of the courses with a group of friends. That said, no attempt should ever be made to apply the ideas discussed too narrowly. The Ruhi Institute itself, in reflecting on how an educational process can nurture understanding, has avoided any kind of formulaic approach. It has placed trust, instead, in the potential of participants to achieve a greater and greater grasp of the inexhaustible meaning enshrined in the Sacred Word as they study it, as they strive to apply it to the betterment of their own individual lives and the life of their community, and, in the final analysis, as they allow it to shape their thoughts and actions.

As for the question of “participation”, this is a profound concept that underlies the entire sequence of courses. After all, any educational process concerned with raising capacity for building the world civilization conceived by Bahá’u’lláh, Whose teachings are intended for all of humanity, would necessarily have to take an approach that is participatory in nature. Section 10 discusses what this means for the teaching-learning dynamics envisioned in the courses, and adequate attention should be given to the points addressed. The courses are designed so as to enable each individual to take charge of his or her own learning. The imaginary conversations in Sections 12 and 14, which highlight some of the implications of this participatory approach for the tutor, should heighten appreciation for the simplicity with which the study of the courses is to be approached. They should raise consciousness, too, of the dangers inherent in resorting to techniques to elicit the desired participation and in allowing them to take precedence over substance. The difficulty lies not merely in the amount of energy and resources that may be expended in the search for techniques but, more crucially, in how reliance on them diminishes the efficacy of study in achieving its principal aim—enhancement of understanding. While it is true that certain simple techniques can sometimes be helpful for specific purposes, aspiring tutors should recognize that it is ultimately their familiarity with the content of the courses, including the acts of service to which they give rise, that will assist them in creating the requisite teaching-learning dynamics.

Having addressed the concept of participation as it relates to study of the courses, the unit moves naturally into the exploration of the main sequence in the central sections discussed above. It then touches briefly, in Section 27, on the question of the courses that

branch off from the main sequence, before turning to the system for their delivery. What should become clear is that the system is not arbitrary. Made up of three primary elements—the curriculum, the study circle, and the tutor—it reflects an important principle at the heart of the educational process, a principle that applies equally to study and to action: individuals, ultimately responsible for their own learning, must be allowed to advance on the path of service at a pace and stride suitable to their personal circumstances. That the flexibility inherent in the system accommodates this principle should not be lost on the participants as future tutors. This flexibility is found chiefly in the way the system operates—in, for example, the way study circles are formed, in the frequency of their meetings, and in the complementary modes of delivery that allow for some variation in the intensity of study. It should not be taken to suggest that the basic logic of the sequence of courses can be ignored. There may, occasionally, be specific circumstances in which, in response to a momentary need, one or another book is studied as a standalone course or the order of study is adjusted for a time. Yet, it is the movement of individuals through the courses sequentially that builds capacity. Not only are they able to deal with more and more challenging content in this way, expanding their understanding of concepts on the basis of what they have learned, but they are also able to carry out more demanding acts of service as, at each step along the path, they gain the practical knowledge and insights necessary for them to make further progress.

As for the tutor—so key to the entire educational system—study of the unit will have shed light on the interrelated attributes that this act of service requires: on the spiritual qualities, attitudes, skills, and abilities that are drawn upon in guiding a group through the courses, in addition to a deep understanding of the concepts and principles that govern the curriculum. In this, participants will be reminded that, as with any capabilities, those needed to serve as tutors with greater and greater effectiveness will develop over time through experience. They will also be encouraged to take advantage of the many opportunities they will have to reflect regularly on the content of the courses and learn from the experience of fellow tutors in reflection gatherings organized for this purpose. To help them gain a sense of what their participation in these gatherings will entail, Sections 32 to 35 present an imaginary conversation between a few tutors and an institute coordinator for the main sequence of courses. Their discussion is concerned primarily with study of the content; yet it would be reasonable to assume that such a gathering would also provide a space for sharing insights gained from efforts to assist individuals in undertaking the acts of service for which the courses try to build capacity.

Here another idea deserves mention. Participants will have, in one way or another, since the opening pages of the book, caught many a glimpse into the nature of an educational process that seeks to release the spiritual and intellectual powers of the individual in pursuit of a twofold moral purpose. That the focus given to developing capabilities along a path of service contributes, in no small measure, to empowering individuals morally and spiritually will become evident to participants as they reach the close of the unit. What should not be overlooked by fledgling tutors—and, indeed, what should galvanize their future endeavors—is the potential inherent in the process to generate a movement of a population towards the World Order envisioned by Bahá'u'lláh. For it is as individuals, rank upon rank, tread a common path together, accompanying and supporting one another and engaging the participation of countless others in uplifting their communities, that spiritual forces are released at the magnitude required and the dynamics of a movement set in motion.

The third unit of Book 7 constitutes a natural companion to the second. Relatively short, “Promoting the Arts at the Grassroots” builds on the insights participants have gained into the educational process to examine the role artistic activity can play in enhancing this

process and in strengthening the patterns of community life to which it gives rise. By now participants will have a good understanding of the intimate connection between the two and will appreciate that, especially in the context of the educational process, collective endeavors like institute campaigns and camps provide a wide latitude for making use of the arts in different forms—music, storytelling, drama, and crafts. Before looking at these art forms in some detail, each in turn, participants reflect on several quotations from the Writings that speak to the nature of artistic endeavors and their ability to awaken in the human soul the force of attraction to beauty. The impulse to promote the arts at the grassroots is one manifestation of this powerful force, which, in the final analysis, is but a reflection of the force of attraction to the beauty that shines forth from the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, before “Whose glory the very essence of beauty must pale and wither”. It is in the Word of God which He has revealed for the regeneration of humanity, then, that we must seek the standard for artistic expression, both in elevating the human spirit and in creating the culture being shaped through the teachings of the Faith.



# The Spiritual Dynamics of Advancing on a Path of Service

## Purpose

To gain increased awareness of the spiritual dynamics  
of advancing along a path of service to the Cause and humanity  
and to acquire an understanding of the forces at work



## SECTION 1

Like others who take up the study of Book 7, you have by now had the opportunity to go through the previous six books of the Ruhi Institute. Your participation in the institute process, we have mentioned before, can be described in terms of walking a path of service. As you advance on this path, you grow spiritually and develop capabilities needed to contribute to the progress of your community, engaging in increasingly complex areas of activity. Aware of the joy inherent in walking the path of service, you now wish to assist others who are eager to embark on this same path. If you are to become more and more effective in doing so, it will be important for you to reflect often on the nature of spiritual growth—growth so intimately connected with the release of capacity to serve the Cause and humanity. This unit hopes to assist you in such reflection.

## SECTION 2

On this earthly plane of existence, we endeavor to develop the spiritual qualities that we potentially possess. The way we possess spiritual qualities is profoundly different from the way we own material things. When a mirror reflects the sun, in a sense it possesses the image of the sun. But, in fact, the sun is not in the mirror. Our spiritual qualities are gifts from God that we receive as we turn the mirrors of our hearts towards Him. Divine attributes, however, are but dimly reflected in hearts that are covered and obscured by the dust and dross of this world. It seems appropriate, then, that the first passage we study in this unit, which seeks to explore the nature of spiritual growth, should be one that stresses the importance of polishing the mirror of the heart. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá says:

**“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.”<sup>1</sup>**

1. Complete the following sentences:
  - a. We should \_\_\_\_\_ the mirrors of our hearts in order that they may become \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_ light.
  - b. One heart may \_\_\_\_\_ the capacity of the \_\_\_\_\_ mirror; another heart may be \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ by the \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ of this world.

- c. The same Sun \_\_\_\_\_ upon \_\_\_\_\_ the polished mirror and the mirror covered and obscured by the dust and dross of this world.
- d. In the mirror which is polished, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ we may see the Sun in all its \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, revealing its \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
- e. In the mirror which is \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ there is no \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_.
- f. Our duty lies in seeking to polish the mirrors of our hearts in order that we may become \_\_\_\_\_ of the divine light and \_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_ which may be fully \_\_\_\_\_ through them.

2. Decide whether the following statements are true:

- \_\_\_\_\_ A polished mirror reflects the light of the physical sun.
- \_\_\_\_\_ A mirror that is rusted and tarnished does not reflect the light of the physical sun.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The Sun of Truth shines upon pure hearts.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The Sun of Truth shines upon hearts obscured by the dust and dross of this world.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Pure hearts reflect the light of the Sun of Truth.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Hearts obscured by the dust and dross of this world reflect the light of the Sun of Truth.

3. Decide which of the following are “dust and dross” of this world:

- |   |                      |
|---|----------------------|
| _____ attachment to worldly possessions | _____ self-love      |
| _____ love for humanity                 | _____ knowledge      |
| _____ greed                             | _____ love of luxury |
| _____ envy                              | _____ arrogance      |

4. Decide which of the following help us “polish the mirrors of our hearts”:

- |   |                                      |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| _____ joy                                     | _____ preferring others to ourselves |
| _____ faith                                   | _____ love for humanity              |
| _____ kindness                                | _____ love of God                    |
| _____ knowledge                               | _____ prayer                         |
| _____ competing with others                   | _____ goodly deeds                   |
| _____ thinking of the imperfections of others | _____ studying the Creative Word     |



5. To keep the dust and dross of this world from gathering on the mirrors of our hearts, we have to make constant effort. Decide whether the following statements are true:

\_\_\_\_\_ Prayer alone will polish the mirrors of our hearts.

\_\_\_\_\_ Goodly deeds alone will polish the mirrors of our hearts.

\_\_\_\_\_ Prayers together with goodly deeds will polish the mirrors of our hearts because they attract the bounties of God.

\_\_\_\_\_ Only through the bounty of God can we polish the mirrors of our hearts.

\_\_\_\_\_ It is possible to lose one's purity of heart.

\_\_\_\_\_ At some point in our lives, the task of polishing the mirrors of our hearts comes to an end.

6. Answer the following questions:

a. What is the purpose of a pure heart? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

b. What can a heart that is not pure achieve? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

c. What is the condition of a heart that is not turned towards the Sun of Truth? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

7. Discuss the following question with the other members of your group: How can someone who is walking the path of service protect himself or herself from the dust and dross of this world?

8. You may wish to memorize the following quotation:

**“All praise and glory be to God Who, through the power of His might, hath delivered His creation from the nakedness of nonexistence, and clothed it with the mantle of life. From among all created things He hath singled out for His special favor the pure, the gem-like reality of man, and invested it with a unique capacity of knowing Him and of reflecting the greatness of His glory.”<sup>2</sup>**

### SECTION 3

Every one of us has been endowed with the capacity to know God and to reflect His names and attributes. We also have been endowed with innumerable other potentialities. However, the measure of capacity is not the same for everyone, and God will not ask from us that which is beyond our capacity. What we are asked to do is to develop to its fullest that which we potentially possess. Bahá'u'lláh states:

**“ . . . I have perfected in every one of you My creation, so that the excellence of My handiwork may be fully revealed unto men. It follows, therefore, that every man hath been, and will continue to be, able of himself to appreciate the Beauty of God, the Glorified. Had he not been endowed with such a capacity, how could he be called to account for his failure?”<sup>3</sup>**

To acquire divine attributes, we must be aware of the high spiritual station that God has destined for each of us and steadily move towards it. Our hearts must be drawn towards true beauty, the Beauty of the All-Glorious. That is the perfect standard to guide our thoughts and actions; we should not be satisfied with mediocrity. Living according to the standards of today’s society lulls us into mediocrity. Many people think that excellence is achieved through competition with others. But, in fact, competition entangles us even further in the trappings of this world. The force that drives us towards excellence should be our ardent desire to achieve what God has bountifully ordained for us. Striving for excellence means striving to develop to their fullest the potentialities with which we have been endowed. Shoghi Effendi tells us that those who yearn to draw closer to God

**“should not look at the depraved conditions of the society in which they live, nor at the evidences of moral degradation and frivolous conduct which the people around them display. They should not content themselves merely with relative distinction and excellence. Rather they should fix their gaze upon nobler heights by setting the counsels and exhortations of the Pen of Glory as their supreme goal. Then it will be readily realized how numerous are the stages that still remain to be traversed and how far off the desired goal lies—a goal which is none other than exemplifying heavenly morals and virtues.”<sup>4</sup>**

1. On the basis of the first quotation above, let us reflect briefly on the concept of “capacity”. Decide whether the following statements are true:

- \_\_\_\_\_ All people have the capacity to know God and to reflect His names and attributes.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The reason some reject the Manifestation of God is that they lack the capacity to know God and to appreciate His Beauty.
- \_\_\_\_\_ An unkind person does not have the capacity to be kind.
- \_\_\_\_\_ A person who was brought up to be dishonest does not have the capacity to be honest.
- \_\_\_\_\_ It is possible to know the capacity of another.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Each of us knows his or her own capacity.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Only God knows how much capacity each of us has.
- \_\_\_\_\_ We develop our potentialities through personal efforts alone.
- \_\_\_\_\_ We develop our potentialities through the grace of God as we strive to purify our hearts and contribute to the transformation of society.

2. Now that we have given some thought to the concept of “capacity”, we can explore the related notion of “excellence” in order to gain further insights into the nature of spiritual growth. To help us do so, we will focus on the second quotation above in this and the next several exercises. Fill in the blanks in the following sentences:

a. Shoghi Effendi tells us not to look at

— \_\_\_\_\_  
— \_\_\_\_\_  
— \_\_\_\_\_

b. We should not content ourselves with

- relative \_\_\_\_\_
- relative \_\_\_\_\_

c. Rather than being content with relative excellence, we should \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

d. We should fix our gaze on nobler heights by \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

e. Once we set the counsels of God as our supreme goal, we will realize \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. To rise above the depraved conditions and moral degradation of society, we need to develop heavenly morals and virtues. Listed below are some of the conditions found in society. For each, choose one or more of the following attributes that most directly seem to combat it:

chastity, obedience to God's laws, all-embracing love, honesty,  
detachment, moral rectitude, understanding, justice, humility

Oppression: \_\_\_\_\_

Materialism: \_\_\_\_\_

Lawlessness: \_\_\_\_\_

Moral laxity: \_\_\_\_\_

Corruption: \_\_\_\_\_

Prejudice: \_\_\_\_\_

Arrogance: \_\_\_\_\_

Hatred: \_\_\_\_\_

Pursuit of misdirected pleasures: \_\_\_\_\_

4. What are some attitudes and habits that protect us from frivolous conduct? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- 
- 
5. The first column below gives some examples of relative excellence and the second some examples of true excellence. Match the examples of relative excellence to those of true excellence.

_____ To study hard so that we can get ahead of others in our class	a. To always act with rectitude of conduct, under all conditions
_____ To give to the Fund some of the money we have left over after paying our monthly expenses and setting a portion aside for entertainment	b. To strive to fully understand the subjects we are studying in class
_____ To avoid doing something wrong because we think we might get caught	c. To have overflowing love and respect for all humanity
_____ To treat people of other races and classes with tolerance	d. To actively promote the welfare of our fellow human beings
_____ To harm no one	e. To give generously and sacrificially to the Fund

6. Discuss the following questions with the members of your group:
- Why should we not be content with “relative distinction and excellence”?
  - What should our standard of excellence be?
  - Some people think that competition is the only way to achieve excellence. In the Hidden Words, Bahá’u’lláh tells us: “Of all men the most negligent is he that disputeth idly and seeketh to advance himself over his brother.” How do you think excellence can be achieved, if it is not through competition?
  - Pursuing excellence requires that we strive to develop our capacity to the fullest. Can we ever assume that we have reached the goal of “exemplifying heavenly morals and virtues”?

## SECTION 4

The human heart was created to love. It is in its nature to be bound to something. If it is not to be attached to earthly things and is to be able to reflect the light of God, it has to be bound to Him. There are many ways of expressing love. We love our families, our friends, our community, and our country. However, all of these forms of love are limited. The only unlimited love is the love of God. His love is all-embracing. When our hearts are pure and reflect His love, we express unlimited and unselfish love for the entire human race. Unless our love for others is illumined by the limitless love of God, it can take on undesirable characteristics, such as jealousy, possessiveness, and prejudice.

There is one very important characteristic of love we must all understand. Love is always accompanied by fear. This does not mean that we fear the ones we love. What we fear is either losing our loved ones or losing their love. Thus, together with the love of God, we must also have the fear of God in our hearts—fear that our actions, our wrongdoings, will prevent the love of God from reaching us. This is not to say that our actions will stop God from loving us, for His love is infinite and never ceases to rain down upon humanity. But the things we do may become like barriers that will not allow His love to reach us. Bahá'u'lláh states in the Hidden Words:

**“O Son of Being! Love Me, that I may love thee. If thou lovest Me not, My love can in no wise reach thee. Know this, O servant.”<sup>5</sup>**

The development of spiritual qualities is entirely dependent on both the love of God and the fear of God. Many passages from the Writings clarify our understanding of these two essential forces of our spiritual lives. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá says:

**“For love of God and spiritual attraction do cleanse and purify the human heart and dress and adorn it with the spotless garment of holiness; and once the heart is entirely attached to the Lord, and bound over to the Blessed Perfection, then will the grace of God be revealed.**

**“This love is not of the body but completely of the soul. And those souls whose inner being is lit by the love of God are even as spreading rays of light, and they will shine out like stars of holiness in a pure and crystalline sky. For true love, real love, is the love for God, and this is sanctified beyond the notions and imaginings of men.”<sup>6</sup>**

Bahá'u'lláh says:

**“He that seeketh to be a helper of God in this Day, let him close his eyes to whatever he may possess, and open them to the things of God. Let him cease to occupy himself with that which profiteth him, and concern himself with that which shall exalt the all-compelling name of the Almighty. He should cleanse his heart from all evil passions and corrupt desires, for the fear of God is the weapon that can render him victorious, the primary instrument whereby he can achieve his purpose. The fear of God is the shield that defendeth His Cause, the buckler that enableth His people to attain to victory. It is a standard that no man can abase, a force that no power can rival. By its aid, and by the leave of Him Who is the Lord of Hosts, they that have drawn nigh unto God have been able to subdue and conquer the citadels of the hearts of men.”<sup>7</sup>**

1. Complete the following sentences:

- a. If we do not \_\_\_\_\_ God, His love can in no wise \_\_\_\_\_ us.
- b. The love of God and spiritual attraction do \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ the human heart.
- c. Once the human heart is entirely \_\_\_\_\_ to the Lord, and \_\_\_\_\_ over to the Blessed Perfection, then will the \_\_\_\_\_ of God be revealed.

- d. This love is not of the \_\_\_\_\_ but completely of the \_\_\_\_\_ .
  - e. Those souls whose inner being is \_\_\_\_\_ by the love of God are even as spreading rays of \_\_\_\_\_ .
  - f. Those souls whose inner being is lit by the love of God \_\_\_\_\_ like \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ in a pure and crystalline sky.
  - g. For \_\_\_\_\_ love, \_\_\_\_\_ love, is the love for \_\_\_\_\_ , and this is sanctified beyond the \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ of men.
2. Answer the following questions:
    - a. What cleanses and purifies the human heart? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
    - b. What condition does the heart have to fulfill in order to attract the grace of God?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
    - c. Is the love of God a physical or spiritual condition? \_\_\_\_\_
    - d. What do we become when our souls are lit by the love of God? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
    - e. What is true love? \_\_\_\_\_
  3. Discuss the following question with the members of your group: How do those whose inner being is illumined by the love of God, who shine out like stars of holiness in a pure and crystalline sky, affect the people around them?
  4. All manifestations of love are limited unless illumined by the all-embracing, limitless love of God. Using the words listed below, write sentences that express this idea. A few examples are given to assist you.

Joy	<u>The love of God brings joy to our hearts.</u>
Freedom	<u>The source of our true freedom is the love of God and being</u> <u>bound to Him.</u>
Greed	<u>Love of worldly things can lead to greed.</u>
Jealousy	<u>If our love for our friends is not illumined by the love of</u> <u>God, it can lead to jealousy.</u>
Light	_____
Sorrow	_____
Disappointment	_____
Life	_____

Passion	_____
Longing	_____
Grace	_____
Imaginings	_____
Possessiveness	_____
Fear	_____
Mercy	_____
Compassion	_____
Holiness	_____
Prejudice	_____
Justice	_____
Knowledge	_____
Courage	_____

5. Complete the following sentences:

- a. The fear of God is the \_\_\_\_\_ that can render us victorious when we choose to be a helper of God in this Day.
- b. The fear of God is the \_\_\_\_\_ whereby we can achieve our purpose.
- c. The fear of God is the \_\_\_\_\_ that defends His Cause.
- d. The fear of God is the \_\_\_\_\_ that enables His people to attain to victory.
- e. The fear of God is a \_\_\_\_\_ that no one can abase.
- f. The fear of God is a \_\_\_\_\_ that no power can rival.
- g. The fear of God aids those who have drawn nigh unto Him to \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_ of the hearts of the people of the world.

6. Discuss the following questions with your group:

- a. Why is the love of God important in the development of spiritual qualities?
- b. Why is the fear of God important in the development of spiritual qualities?

7. You may wish to memorize the following quotation:

**“The seeker, when immersed in the ocean of the love of God, will be moved by intense longing and will arise to carry out the laws of God.”<sup>8</sup>**

## SECTION 5

Love for God is the motivating force which impels us to walk a path of service to His Cause. Each step we take on this path increases our love for Him. And with each step, the mirrors of our hearts become more polished and we further develop our spiritual qualities. That which illumines our thoughts, guiding our actions on this path, is the Law of God. Unless we obey His laws, we will find ourselves in darkness and lose the way. In the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, Bahá'u'lláh speaks thus of our twin duties, to recognize God's Manifestation and to follow His commands:

**“The first duty prescribed by God for His servants is the recognition of Him Who is the Dayspring of His Revelation and the Fountain of His laws, Who representeth the Godhead in both the Kingdom of His Cause and the world of creation. Whoso achieveth this duty hath attained unto all good; and whoso is deprived thereof hath gone astray, though he be the author of every righteous deed. It behooveth everyone who reacheth this most sublime station, this summit of transcendent glory, to observe every ordinance of Him Who is the Desire of the world. These twin duties are inseparable. Neither is acceptable without the other. Thus hath it been decreed by Him Who is the Source of Divine inspiration.”<sup>9</sup>**

Regarding the laws of God, Bahá'u'lláh tells us:

**“O ye peoples of the world! Know assuredly that My commandments are the lamps of My loving providence among My servants, and the keys of My mercy for My creatures.”<sup>10</sup>**

In one of His Tablets, He says:

**“Indeed, the laws of God are like unto the ocean and the children of men as fish, did they but know it.”<sup>11</sup>**

Bahá'u'lláh further declares:

**“Indeed His ordinances constitute the mightiest stronghold for the protection of the world and the safeguarding of its peoples—a light upon those who acknowledge and recognize the truth, and a fire unto such as turn away and deny.”<sup>12</sup>**

**“Say: By God! His Law is a fortress unto you, could ye but understand.”<sup>13</sup>**

In reference to the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, which contains the laws and ordinances of His Dispensation, He admonishes us:

**“Say: Take hold of it, O people, and observe that which hath been sent down in it of the wondrous precepts of your Lord, the Forgiving, the Bountiful. It will truly prosper you both in this world and in the next and will purge you of whatsoever ill besee meth you.”<sup>14</sup>**

And in one of His Writings, we read:

**“The ordinances of God have been sent down from the heaven of His most august Revelation. All must diligently observe them. Man's supreme distinction, his**



**real advancement, his final victory, have always depended, and will continue to depend, upon them. Whoso keepeth the commandments of God shall attain everlasting felicity.”<sup>15</sup>**

1. The above quotations imply that:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Our first duty is to recognize the Manifestation of God.
- \_\_\_\_\_ After we have recognized Him, our next duty is to obey Him.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Recognition of the Manifestation of God is more important than obedience to His laws.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Obedience to the laws is more important than recognition of the Manifestation of God.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Recognition of the Manifestation of God and obedience to His laws are of equal importance; neither is acceptable without the other.
- \_\_\_\_\_ God has given us laws because He loves us.
- \_\_\_\_\_ God has given us laws so that we will fear Him.
- \_\_\_\_\_ We should obey God’s laws out of fear of punishment.
- \_\_\_\_\_ We should obey God’s laws because we love Him.
- \_\_\_\_\_ We should obey God’s laws in order to attract His mercy.
- \_\_\_\_\_ God only loves those who obey Him.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Those who obey God open their hearts to receive His love.
- \_\_\_\_\_ We cannot live outside the ocean of God’s laws.

2. In the quotations above, the laws of God are described as

- the \_\_\_\_\_ of God’s loving providence.
- the keys of God’s \_\_\_\_\_ .
- the \_\_\_\_\_ in which all human beings are immersed.
- the mightiest stronghold for the \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ of the peoples of the world.
- a \_\_\_\_\_ upon those who acknowledge and recognize the truth and a \_\_\_\_\_ unto such as turn away and deny.
- a \_\_\_\_\_ unto us.

3. Now list below, after the two examples provided, some of the laws and ordinances of God. How does viewing each of them in light of the above phrases increase our understanding of their significance to our lives and to the efficacy of our efforts on the path of service?

Reading and reflecting on the Word of God every morning and evening

Reciting the obligatory prayer each day

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4. What does it mean to be an obedient servant of God?

- ☐ To constantly question the wisdom of what God has ordained
- ☐ To constantly protest against or disregard the decisions of Bahá'í institutions
- ☐ To blindly follow other servants of God
- ☐ To investigate the truth with the intention of accepting and living by it
- ☐ To walk in the ways of God with steadfast feet
- ☐ To strive to align our thoughts and actions with the teachings of God
- ☐ To joyfully uphold the Law of God and exalt His Word
- ☐ To be constant in our faithfulness to God's laws, no matter the circumstances
- ☐ To not dwell on our weaknesses and frailties, placing our whole trust and confidence in God's grace and bounty

5. Memorize the following passage from the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, if you have not already done so on an earlier occasion:

**“The Tongue of My power hath, from the heaven of My omnipotent glory, addressed to My creation these words: ‘Observe My commandments, for the love of My beauty.’”<sup>16</sup>**

## SECTION 6

Recognition of the Manifestation of God opens our eyes. We come to know that which conduces to our upliftment and that which leads to our abasement. As we study the Revelation brought to us by the Manifestation, we become aware of God's purpose for humankind. In everything we see a sign of His might and His inscrutable wisdom. The knowledge we gain through the Manifestation of God and the love we feel towards Him give us assurance. Our hearts no longer vacillate and tremble.

As we humbly walk the path of service, we grow in faith and certitude. And as the measure of our faith increases, our capacity to receive the bounties of God and develop our spiritual qualities grows correspondingly. We turn our sight towards the Sun of Truth and constantly receive illumination. So it is that every act on this path is undertaken with conscious

knowledge—knowledge of God, of His Revelation, and of His purpose for humanity. This is what is implied by faith. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá says:

**“Pleasing and acceptable as is a person of righteous actions before God’s Holy Threshold, yet deeds should proceed from knowledge. However matchless and exquisite may be a blind man’s handiwork, yet he himself is deprived of seeing it. How sorely do certain animals labor on man’s behalf, what loads they bear for him, how greatly they contribute to his ease and comfort; and yet, because they are unaware, they enjoy no recompense for all their pains. The clouds rain down their bounty, nurturing the plants and flowers, and imparting verdure and enchantment to the plain and prairie, the forest and the garden; but yet, unconscious as they are of the results and fruit of their outpourings, they win no praise or honor, nor earn the gratitude and approbation of any man. The lamp imparteth light, but as it hath no consciousness of doing so, no one is indebted to it. This apart, a man of righteous deeds and goodly conduct will assuredly turn towards the Light, in whichever quarter he beholdeth it. The point is this, that faith compriseth both knowledge and the performance of good works.”<sup>17</sup>**

Bahá’u’lláh exhorts us:

**“Say: O people! Withhold not from yourselves the grace of God and His mercy. . . . He it is Who hath unveiled to your eyes the treasures of His knowledge, and caused you to ascend unto the heaven of certitude—the certitude of His resistless, His irrefutable, and most exalted Faith.”<sup>18</sup>**

**“Attire yourselves, O people, with the raiment of certitude, that it may protect you from the darts of idle fancy and vain imaginings and that ye may be numbered with the faithful in these days—days wherein none may attain certitude nor achieve constancy in the Cause of God save by renouncing that which is current amongst men and by turning towards this hallowed and refulgent Beauty.”<sup>19</sup>**

1. Complete the following sentences on the basis of the first quotation above:
  - a. A blind man’s handiwork may be matchless and exquisite, but \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Certain animals labor on man’s behalf, bear loads and contribute to his ease and comfort, but \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - c. The clouds rain down their bounty, nurturing the plants and flowers, and imparting verdure and enchantment to the plain and prairie, the forest and garden; but \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- d. The lamp imparts light, but \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- e. Man performs righteous deeds, but his deeds should proceed from \_\_\_\_\_
2. Now, referring to the next two quotations, complete the following sentences:
- a. We should not withhold ourselves from \_\_\_\_\_ .
- b. God has unveiled to our eyes \_\_\_\_\_ and  
caused us to \_\_\_\_\_—the  
certitude of His \_\_\_\_\_ , His \_\_\_\_\_ , and  
\_\_\_\_\_ .
- c. We should \_\_\_\_\_ ourselves with the raiment of \_\_\_\_\_ ,  
that it may \_\_\_\_\_ us from the darts of \_\_\_\_\_ and  
\_\_\_\_\_ .
- d. These are days in which none may attain \_\_\_\_\_ nor achieve \_\_\_\_\_  
in the Cause of God save by \_\_\_\_\_ that which is current amongst  
men and by \_\_\_\_\_ this hallowed and refulgent Beauty.

3. For each of the words below, write a sentence that includes the word “faith”. An example is given to assist you.

Immovable	<u>His faith in the Covenant was like a mountain; it was immovable.</u>
Unquestioning	_____
Vitality	_____
Firm	_____
Increase	_____
Newly awakened	_____
True	_____
Steadfast	_____
Undoubting	_____
Genuine	_____
Unshakable	_____

4. Decide whether the following statements are true:

\_\_\_\_\_ The source of faith is knowledge of God and recognition of His Manifestation.

\_\_\_\_\_ Faith in Bahá'u'lláh implies obeying His commands.

\_\_\_\_\_ If one has faith in the Manifestation of God, one will always obey His commands.

- \_\_\_\_\_ To have faith means to never ask questions.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Faith increases as one's knowledge of God increases.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Faith increases as one acts in accordance with the teachings of the Manifestation of God.
- \_\_\_\_\_ To have unwavering faith is the same as being fanatical.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Faith is not something one can lose.
- \_\_\_\_\_ If we have faith, we will never doubt our own understanding of the teachings.
- \_\_\_\_\_ If we have faith, we will never doubt the truth of the teachings of the Manifestation of God.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Knowing the truth of the Revelation and hesitating to act on it shows weakness of faith.
- \_\_\_\_\_ We naturally pass through stages of doubt to reach the state of certitude.
- \_\_\_\_\_ As we grow in faith, we are able to abandon idle fancy and vain imaginings.
- \_\_\_\_\_ To attain a state of certitude in the truth of God's Revelation requires faith.

5. Write down some things of which you are certain. Two examples are given to assist you.

- a. I am certain that the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh will be established.
- b. I am certain that the Faith will overcome any obstacles in its path and achieve its high purpose.
- c. \_\_\_\_\_
- d. \_\_\_\_\_
- e. \_\_\_\_\_
- f. \_\_\_\_\_

6. Discuss the following with your group:

- a. If you believe in Bahá'u'lláh's teachings but, in a difficult situation and under a great deal of pressure, decide that it is not to your advantage to act according to the principle of honesty, what are you doubting?
- b. Is acquiring knowledge alone sufficient to strengthen our faith? How do conscious knowledge and action together help us to rid ourselves of doubt and gain certainty?
- c. Are we able to attain faith and certitude without earnest supplication to the Almighty and the outpouring of His grace?

## SECTION 7

Faith is the bedrock upon which we build our spiritual existence. We believe in the truth of the Revelation of God and do not hesitate to act in accordance with His laws and exhortations. We are steadfast in our love for God and His Manifestation. We are certain that the Will of God will be done and submit our own will to His. Yet, our knowledge of God's spiritual and material creation is limited, and we never know what is to happen from one day to the next. So, with hearts full of hope, we constantly anticipate the outpouring of God's bounties upon us. We trust in God's mercy and are ever hopeful of receiving His blessings. 'Abdu'l-Bahá says:

**“Never lose thy trust in God. Be thou ever hopeful, for the bounties of God never cease to flow upon man. . . . Man is under all conditions immersed in a sea of God's blessings. Therefore, be thou not hopeless under any circumstances, but rather be firm in thy hope.”<sup>20</sup>**

**“If the heart turns away from the blessings God offers how can it hope for happiness? If it does not put its hope and trust in God's Mercy, where can it find rest? Oh, trust in God! for His Bounty is everlasting, and in His Blessings, for they are superb. Oh! put your faith in the Almighty, for He faileth not and His goodness endureth forever! His Sun giveth Light continually, and the Clouds of His Mercy are full of the Waters of Compassion with which He waters the hearts of all who trust in Him. His refreshing Breeze ever carries healing in its wings to the parched souls of men!”<sup>21</sup>**

And as to the source of our hope, He says:

**“The joyful tidings of the Revelation were announced, and the blazing flame and glowing fire of the Burning Bush shone resplendent. The billows of the ocean of unity, even as the hosts of guidance, beat upon the shores of discord and cast the precious pearls of unity and concord far and wide. The divine springtime encircled the earth, heavenly flowers bloomed, vernal showers rained down, and life-bestowing winds blew on every side, till at last all were filled with hope that the beauty of Oneness would be unveiled in the assemblage of the world, and that the brightness of its countenance would shine resplendent throughout all regions.”<sup>22</sup>**

1. Complete the following sentences:
  - a. We should be hopeful, for the \_\_\_\_\_ of God will never \_\_\_\_\_ to flow upon humanity.
  - b. We should not be hopeless under any circumstances, but be \_\_\_\_\_ in our \_\_\_\_\_ .
  - c. We should not be \_\_\_\_\_ under any \_\_\_\_\_ , but be firm in our hope.
  - d. The Clouds of God's \_\_\_\_\_ are full of the Waters of \_\_\_\_\_ .

- e. With the Waters of \_\_\_\_\_, God waters the \_\_\_\_\_  
of all who \_\_\_\_\_ in Him.

2. Decide whether the following statements are true:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Trust in God is an unfailing source of hope.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The real source of hope is confidence in one's abilities.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Hope springs from confidence in God's all-embracing mercy.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Faith in the truth of the teachings of God's Manifestation is a limitless source of hope.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The greatest sources of hope are material possessions and connections with people in power.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Only naive people are hopeful. A realistic person has reason to doubt everything.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Hope only springs from the hearts of fools.
- \_\_\_\_\_ We remain ever hopeful when we are content with the Will of God under all circumstances.
- \_\_\_\_\_ We remain ever hopeful when we have complete faith that the bounties of God will be showered upon us unceasingly.
- \_\_\_\_\_ We will never lose hope if we have faith that the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh will ultimately be established.

3. Hopefulness implies that, when we desire to develop spiritual qualities,

- \_\_\_\_\_ we are certain that we will succeed in doing so, regardless of how much effort we put forth.
- \_\_\_\_\_ we need to remind ourselves constantly that we may not succeed in doing so.
- \_\_\_\_\_ we need not make any effort.
- \_\_\_\_\_ we need only have confidence in our own capacity to do so, as it will be the main factor in determining our success.
- \_\_\_\_\_ we are certain that, if we exert sincere effort, we will succeed through God's bounty and grace.

4. Which of the following sentences are spoken by a hopeful person?

- \_\_\_\_\_ I'm no good, and there's no sense in trying to change.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Despite knowing that I have limitations, I always try to do my best.
- \_\_\_\_\_ During the most difficult times of my life, I pray for divine assistance and trust that I will be assisted in accordance with God's Will.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The lower nature of the human being always overcomes the higher nature, and I will never see the day when people act nobly.

- \_\_\_\_\_ It is conviction in the nobility of every human being that enables us to remain committed to service.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Some of the children in my class misbehave, but I know that if I patiently assist them, they will progress.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The negative social forces acting on junior youth are so strong that there is no use trying to help them resist their influence.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Despite the forces that encourage passivity in junior youth, many of them will, with proper and constant nurturing, learn to resist their influence and dedicate themselves to service to the community.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The obstacles we face on the path of service can often be turned into stepping stones for progress.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Our community is going through a crisis at the moment, but I am sure that we will be able to overcome any difficulties and continue to progress by drawing on the powers inherent in the Cause.
- \_\_\_\_\_ There is so much divisiveness in society that communities will never be able to achieve unity.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Although at times it seems a formidable task, we can draw on spiritual principles to build greater unity.

5. Memorize the following prayer:

**“He is the Compassionate, the All-Bountiful! O God, my God! Thou seest me, Thou knowest me; Thou art my Haven and my Refuge. None have I sought nor any will I seek save Thee; no path have I trodden nor any will I tread but the path of Thy love. In the darksome night of despair, my eye turneth expectant and full of hope to the morn of Thy boundless favor and at the hour of dawn my drooping soul is refreshed and strengthened in remembrance of Thy beauty and perfection. He whom the grace of Thy mercy aideth, though he be but a drop, shall become the boundless ocean, and the merest atom which the outpouring of Thy loving-kindness assisteth, shall shine even as the radiant star.**

**“Shelter under Thy protection, O Thou Spirit of purity, Thou Who art the All-Bountiful Provider, this enthralled, enkindled servant of Thine. Aid him in this world of being to remain steadfast and firm in Thy love and grant that this broken-winged bird attain a refuge and shelter in Thy divine nest that abideth upon the celestial tree.”<sup>23</sup>**

## SECTION 8

A close companion of hope is longing desire. A heart that does not long to receive the bounties of God is lifeless. A soul that does not burn with the desire to reach the presence of God can but wander in the desert of waywardness. Desire is a property of the human heart. But the object of desire must be heavenly qualities, spiritual joy, acceptance at the Divine Threshold and humble service to His Cause. For if the dictates of self and passion direct



desire towards the world and its vanities, the very force that impels the progress of the soul will be exhausted. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá says:

**“The fountain of divine generosity is gushing forth, but we must have thirst for the living waters. Unless there be thirst, the salutary water will not assuage. Unless the soul hungers, the delicious foods of the heavenly table will not give sustenance. Unless the eyes of perception be opened, the lights of the sun will not be witnessed. Until the nostrils are purified, the fragrance of the divine rose garden will not be inhaled. Unless the heart be filled with longing, the favors of the Lord will not be evident. . . . If an ocean of salubrious water is surging and we be not thirsty, what benefit do we receive? If the candle be lighted and we have no eyes, what enjoyment do we obtain from it? If melodious anthems should rise to the heavens and we are bereft of hearing, what enjoyment can we find?”<sup>24</sup>**

In a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, we read:

**“Stop being conscious of your frailties, therefore; have a perfect reliance upon God; let your heart burn with the desire to serve His mission and proclaim His call; and you will observe how eloquence and the power to change human hearts will come as a matter of course.”<sup>25</sup>**

1. Complete the following sentences:
  - a. The fountain of divine generosity is \_\_\_\_\_ forth, but we must have \_\_\_\_\_ for the living waters.
  - b. The fountain of \_\_\_\_\_ is gushing forth, but we must have thirst for the \_\_\_\_\_ .
  - c. The delicious foods of the heavenly table will not sustain us unless our souls \_\_\_\_\_ .
  - d. The \_\_\_\_\_ of the heavenly table will not sustain us unless our souls hunger.
  - e. The favors of the Lord will be evident when our hearts are filled with \_\_\_\_\_ .
  - f. The \_\_\_\_\_ of the Lord will be \_\_\_\_\_ when our hearts are filled with longing.
  - g. We must stop being conscious of our \_\_\_\_\_ .
  - h. Our hearts should \_\_\_\_\_ with the \_\_\_\_\_ to serve His mission and proclaim His call.
  - i. Our hearts should burn with the desire to \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ .

- j. Eloquence and the power to change human hearts will come as a matter of course when we have \_\_\_\_\_ and let \_\_\_\_\_ .
2. On the basis of the first quotation above, write five sentences that begin with the word “unless”.
- a. Unless \_\_\_\_\_
- b. Unless \_\_\_\_\_
- c. Unless \_\_\_\_\_
- d. Unless \_\_\_\_\_
- e. Unless \_\_\_\_\_
3. Decide whether the following statements are true:
- \_\_\_\_\_ All desire is praiseworthy.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Desire for heavenly perfections is praiseworthy.
- \_\_\_\_\_ If we do not desire heavenly perfections, we will not attain them.
- \_\_\_\_\_ We would be much happier if we did not have any desires.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The desire to bring true joy to every heart is praiseworthy.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Our hearts are filled with joy when we desire only what God desires for us.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Selfish desires are always in conflict with what God desires for us.
- \_\_\_\_\_ When we act with hearts filled with longing desire to teach the Cause, we receive divine confirmations.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Longing desire is a prerequisite for receiving God’s favors.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The desire to improve one’s material circumstances is acceptable, provided that it does not overshadow the desire to please God.
- \_\_\_\_\_ We must always be vigilant that worldly desires do not rule our lives.
- \_\_\_\_\_ When we purify our hearts from selfish desire, we draw closer to God.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The ultimate desire is to enter the presence of God.

4. Which of the following desires are not acceptable? Why not?

- ☐ To attain excellence in one's occupation
- ☐ To see peace established on earth
- ☐ To teach the Cause
- ☐ To have a happy family
- ☐ To grow in faith and certitude
- ☐ To remain firm in the Covenant
- ☐ To serve the Cause and humanity selflessly
- ☐ To become known for service to the Cause and humanity
- ☐ To develop spiritual qualities
- ☐ To work for the happiness of others
- ☐ To be elected to the Local Assembly
- ☐ To witness the progress of the Cause
- ☐ To attain a high status in the community
- ☐ To exercise power over others
- ☐ To witness the progress of others
- ☐ To promote personal interests
- ☐ To selflessly promote the best interests of the Faith

5. Discuss with the other participants in your group the following two statements:

- a. Meditating on life after death helps us acquire thirst for spirituality.
- b. The ultimate desire is the desire to burn away completely the veil of self and enter into the presence of God.

## SECTION 9

Knowledge, faith and certitude, hope and longing desire are indispensable to those who walk the path of service. But they are not sufficient; we must strengthen the will to act and constantly put forth effort, if we are to make significant strides on this path and fulfill our twofold purpose to grow spiritually and intellectually and contribute to the progress of society. Bahá'u'lláh says:

**“Unto each one hath been prescribed a preordained measure, as decreed in God’s mighty and guarded Tablets. All that which ye potentially possess can, however, be manifested only as a result of your own volition. Your own acts testify to this truth.”<sup>26</sup>**

‘Abdu’l-Bahá says:

**“Indulge not your bodies with rest, but work with all your souls, and with all your hearts cry out and beg of God to grant you His succor and grace. Thus may ye make this world the Abhá Paradise, and this globe of earth the parade ground of the realm on high. If only ye exert the effort, it is certain that these splendors will shine out, these clouds of mercy will shed down their rain, these life-giving winds will rise and blow, this sweet-smelling musk will be scattered far and wide.”<sup>27</sup>**

1. Complete the following sentences:

- a. All that we \_\_\_\_\_ possess can be manifested \_\_\_\_\_ as a result of our own volition.
- b. Everything that we potentially possess can be \_\_\_\_\_ only as a result of \_\_\_\_\_ .
- c. We should not \_\_\_\_\_ our bodies with \_\_\_\_\_ , but should \_\_\_\_\_ with all our \_\_\_\_\_ and should \_\_\_\_\_ to God with all our \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ Him to grant us His \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ . In this way can we make this globe of earth the \_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_ .
- d. If only we exert the effort, it is certain that \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- e. If only we exert the effort, it is certain that \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- f. If only we exert the effort, it is certain that \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- g. If only we exert the effort, it is certain that \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. Which of the following are implied by the first quotation?

- \_\_\_\_\_ Since our capacities are preordained by God, they will be developed regardless of the choices we make in our lives.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Since our capacities are preordained by God, they will be developed whether or not we make an effort.
- \_\_\_\_\_ God has given us each certain capacities, but they will only be developed through the exercise of our own will.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Through the power of our will, we will each be able to overcome all human limitations and attain a state of absolute perfection.

\_\_\_\_\_ No matter how far we may advance spiritually, none of us can ever manifest fully the potentialities which God has preordained for us; we must therefore continuously exert effort to develop them further.

3. Answer each of the following questions and explain the reason for your answer:

- a. Does the fact that God already knows our capacity to acquire heavenly perfections mean that their acquisition is not in our power but in His?

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- b. Do we have the free will to either develop our spiritual capacities or not develop them?

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- c. Does the fact that we have free will imply that we are responsible to God for the choices we make in our lives?

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- d. Suppose a student does not study for his exams and fails them. Can he say that it was fate that caused him to fail?

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- e. Suppose a student has been very purposeful and determined in his studies and gets excellent grades. Can his success be attributed to “good luck”?

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- f. If you meet resistance in trying to achieve one among several equally worthy goals, does it mean that it was not meant to be and you should give up? If you continue to make an effort without success, does it mean you should then give up? How do you know when you should stop trying to achieve a particular goal and pursue others instead?

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- g. Does the fact that we must make an effort to develop our spiritual qualities mean that we can do so without supplicating God for His assistance?

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- h. Is the effort one makes on the path of service—both to develop one’s own capacity and contribute to the transformation of society—as important as the accomplishments that are attained along the way?

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4. On the basis of the passage below, discuss the relationship between human will and effort and the power of divine assistance:

**“ . . . man’s stillness or motion itself is conditioned upon the aid of God. Should this assistance fail to reach him, he can do neither good nor evil. But when the assistance of the all-bounteous Lord confers existence upon man, he is capable of both good and evil. And should that assistance be cut off, he would become absolutely powerless. That is why the aid and assistance of God are mentioned in the Sacred Scriptures. This condition can be likened to that of a ship that moves by the power of wind or steam. Should this power be cut off, the ship would become entirely unable to move. Nevertheless, in whatever direction the rudder is turned, the power of the steam propels the ship in that direction. If the rudder is turned to the east, the ship moves eastward, and if it is directed to the west, the ship moves west. This motion does not arise from the ship itself, but from the wind or steam.**

**“In like manner, all the doings of man are sustained by the power of divine assistance, but the choice of good or evil belongs to him alone.”<sup>28</sup>**

## SECTION 10

As we walk the path of service, we must remain acutely conscious that heavenly perfections are not acquired without sacrifice. The mystery of sacrifice lies in the renunciation of all that pertains to the realm of self in order to attain unto that which belongs to the higher

realms of the Divine. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá explains to us the mystery of sacrifice through the example of iron thrown into fire. The iron is grey, cold, and hard. It must give up these properties in order to acquire the qualities of fire—to become red, hot, and fluid. Sacrifice involves parting with things to which we are attached, and therefore it entails pain. Yet, to the knowing heart the pain is sweet, for it is the bearer of true joy. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá tells us:

**“ . . . look at me, follow me, be as I am; take no thought for yourselves or your lives, whether ye eat or whether ye sleep, whether ye are comfortable, whether ye are well or ill, whether ye are with friends or foes, whether ye receive praise or blame; for all of these things ye must care not at all. Look at me and be as I am; ye must die to yourselves and to the world, so shall ye be born again and enter the kingdom of heaven. Behold the candle, how it gives light. It weeps its life away drop by drop in order to give forth its flame of light.”<sup>29</sup>**

On another occasion, He explains:

**“ . . . nearness to God necessitates sacrifice of self, severance and the giving up of all to Him. Nearness is likeness.”<sup>30</sup>**

And if we are to see the fruits of our highest hopes, we must be willing to exert effort and make the necessary sacrifices. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá says:

**“This is the time for gladness, the day of joy and exhilaration, for, praised be God, all doors are opened wide through the bounty of the Abhá Beauty. But high endeavor and self-sacrifice are needed and the concentration of one’s thoughts is required for the tree of hope to yield its fruit and results to be achieved.”<sup>31</sup>**

1. Complete the following sentences:

If we wish to follow ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, we should take no \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_ or our \_\_\_\_\_, whether we \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_, whether we are \_\_\_\_\_, whether we are \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_, whether we are with \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_, whether we receive \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_; for all these things we must care not at all. We must \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ and to the \_\_\_\_\_, so that we shall be \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ the kingdom of heaven.

2. Answer the following questions:

- a. What happens to a candle when it is lit? \_\_\_\_\_
- b. Is it possible for a candle to give light without burning down? \_\_\_\_\_
- c. Of what worth is a candle that is never lit? \_\_\_\_\_
- d. Can a seed achieve its potential by retaining the form of a seed? \_\_\_\_\_
- e. What does a seed sacrifice in order to become a tree? \_\_\_\_\_

- f. What are some of the things we need to give up in order to realize our God-given potential? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
- g. Can we draw near to God without sacrifice? \_\_\_\_\_
- h. Can we develop spiritual qualities without sacrifice? \_\_\_\_\_
- i. Of what value are our lives if we do not strive to develop spiritual qualities? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
- j. Why are self-sacrifice and the concentration of our thoughts necessary, if our efforts are to yield the fruits we hope for? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

3. The purpose of sacrifice is

- \_\_\_\_\_ to attain eternal life  
 \_\_\_\_\_ to draw nearer to God  
 \_\_\_\_\_ to get rid of our material wealth  
 \_\_\_\_\_ to get rid of our selfish desires  
 \_\_\_\_\_ to test ourselves  
 \_\_\_\_\_ to develop spiritual qualities  
 \_\_\_\_\_ to suffer  
 \_\_\_\_\_ to follow the example of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá  
 \_\_\_\_\_ to bring the light of guidance to human hearts

4. The station of sacrifice is great indeed. We should make sure that we do not trivialize it by constantly boasting that every little thing we do is a great act of sacrifice. Let us think about sentences in which the word “sacrifice” may not be an appropriate choice, for example: “I sacrificed watching my favorite TV show to go to the Nineteen Day Feast.” Is the use of the word “sacrifice” justified here? It is true that something has been given up, but are we not trivializing the station of sacrifice by referring to such a thing as “sacrifice”? Let us take another example: “I sacrificed my weekend to participate in an intensive campaign to teach the Cause in my neighborhood.” What does this sentence imply? Does it imply that we recognize the true joy that springs from teaching the Cause? What is it that we have given up? Can it compare to the bounty of receiving God’s grace and favor? Write a number of sentences in which the use of the word “sacrifice” is unwarranted.



- a. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- d. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- e. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- f. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- g. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. Discuss the following statement with your group:

From the beginnings of our Faith, even to more recent times, thousands of souls have made the ultimate sacrifice, offering up their very lives for the Cause of God. Most of us are not called upon to become martyrs, but we must be animated by the same sacrificial spirit in walking the path of service. Sacrifice is the hallmark of a life of service.

6. Discuss the relationship between sacrifice, pain, and joy.

7. Memorize the following quotations:

**“That one indeed is a man who, today, dedicateth himself to the service of the entire human race. The Great Being saith: Blessed and happy is he that ariseth to promote the best interests of the peoples and kindreds of the earth.”<sup>32</sup>**

**“Thus I exhort each of you . . . to sacrifice all your thoughts, words and actions to bring the knowledge of the Love of God into every heart.”<sup>33</sup>**

## SECTION 11

Throughout this course, we have explored the spiritual dynamics of walking a path of service. We have examined the conditions of a heart that reflects the attributes of God. We have meditated on the love of God and the fear of God and on the indispensability of obeying His commands. We have considered the absolute necessity of faith, hope, and longing desire in

making progress on this path. We have seen how pursuing one's own intellectual and spiritual development and contributing to the betterment of society requires will, determination, and effort and calls for sacrifice. What we must remember is that regardless of hardships and moments of crisis, we walk the path in a state of joy. Joy is a quality of the human soul and not an emotion resulting from outside influences. Naturally there are times when we feel sad and there are times when we feel happy. But the fundamental condition of our hearts is one of joy—the joy of knowing God, the joy of recognizing His Manifestation, the joy of being immersed in the ocean of His mercy, the joy of serving at His Holy Threshold.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá was the essence of joy. Throughout your life, you should regularly read the words of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, memorize them and reflect on their meaning while remembering the example of His life. So intense should be your study of His words and statements that they become an integral part of your thinking. At every moment, whether happy or sad, in difficulty or ease, at work or rest, you should be able to call His words to mind, think of Him and be filled with joy. In this light, you may wish to reflect on the following quotations from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and memorize as many as you are able:

**“ . . . ye must in this matter—that is, the serving of humankind—lay down your very lives, and as ye yield yourselves, rejoice.”<sup>34</sup>**

**“If only thou couldst know what a high station is destined for those souls who are severed from the world, are powerfully attracted to the Faith, and are teaching, under the sheltering shadow of Bahá’u’lláh! How thou wouldst rejoice, how thou wouldst, in exultation and rapture, spread thy wings and soar heavenward—for being a follower of such a way, and a traveler toward such a Kingdom.”<sup>35</sup>**

**“Hold ye fast to the hem of God’s garment, and direct all your efforts toward furthering His Covenant, and burning ever more brightly with the fire of His love, that your hearts may leap for joy in the breathings of servitude which well out from the breast of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.”<sup>36</sup>**

**“Let us put aside all thoughts of self; let us close our eyes to all on earth, let us neither make known our sufferings nor complain of our wrongs. Rather let us become oblivious of our own selves, and drinking down the wine of heavenly grace, let us cry out our joy, and lose ourselves in the beauty of the All-Glorious.”<sup>37</sup>**

**“At all times do I speak of you and call you to mind. I pray unto the Lord, and with tears I implore Him to rain down all these blessings upon you, and gladden your hearts, and make blissful your souls, and grant you exceeding joy and heavenly delights.”<sup>38</sup>**

**“My only joy in this swiftly passing world was to tread the stony path of God and to endure hard tests and all material griefs. For otherwise, this earthly life would prove barren and vain, and better would be death. The tree of being would produce no fruit; the sown field of this existence would yield no harvest. Thus it is my hope that once again some circumstance will make my cup of anguish to brim over, and that beauteous Love, that Slayer of souls, will dazzle the beholders again. Then will this heart be blissful, this soul be blessed.”<sup>39</sup>**

**“Then rose the Sun of Truth and the splendors of the Kingdom were shed over east and west. Those who had eyes to see rejoiced at the glad tidings and cried out: ‘O blessed, blessed are we!’, and they witnessed the inner reality of all things, and uncovered the mysteries of the Kingdom. Delivered then from their fancies and their doubts, they beheld the light of truth, and so exhilarated did they become from draining the chalice of God’s love, that they utterly forgot the world and their own selves. Dancing for joy they hastened to the place of their own martyrdom and there, where men die for love, they flung away their heads and hearts.”<sup>40</sup>**

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# Serving as a Tutor of the Institute Courses

## Purpose

To understand some of the concepts and  
to acquire some of the spiritual qualities, attitudes and skills  
that contribute to the capabilities needed to help  
a group of friends go through the institute courses





## SECTION 1

Participants in the educational process put in place by the Ruhi Institute for those aged fifteen and above study a sequence of courses intended to prepare them to carry out acts of service—acts that contribute to a vibrant pattern of community life. From among these, one act of service is indispensable, for, without it, it will ultimately prove impossible for this pattern to be sustained and strengthened. Indeed, the unfoldment of the educational process itself depends upon it—that is, for an increasing number of individuals to develop the capacity to serve as tutors of the institute courses, helping participants advance along a path of service. The sequence of courses is often studied among a group of friends that meets regularly in a neighborhood or village in the setting of a study circle. Sometimes, however, groups are formed as part of a campaign arranged for intensive study or during a camp that takes place over the school holidays. Whatever the occasion, one member of the group acts as a tutor.

To develop the capabilities of an effective tutor requires some initial training followed by participation in periodic gatherings for reflection, in which the content of the courses is examined and experience analyzed. We know that spiritual qualities constitute the foundation of all of our capabilities and determine, in the final analysis, the extent of our effectiveness. That is why the first unit of this book was concerned with the nature of the spiritual dynamics generated by walking the path of service traced out by the courses. In this second unit, we will focus more on some of the educational concepts we must understand, the approaches and methods we need to adopt, and the spiritual qualities, attitudes, skills and abilities we have to develop through ongoing experience if we are to prove capable of taking group after group through the sequence of courses.

## SECTION 2

Let us begin our discussion by examining the concept of motivation. Without motivation, participants in the courses will learn little and their numbers will dwindle. How to tap the roots of motivation and maintain a high level of enthusiasm is a question that you will ask yourself often. You will face this challenge whenever you invite your friends and others in the community to join you in the study of the courses and, later, each time you come together with them as a group.

As an initial step in our exploration of this question, we may divide the factors that motivate people into two categories: transitory and permanent. In the first fall those factors that excite people momentarily and spur them on to action, usually for a short period of time. The second category consists of those factors that generate motivation, with roots deep in a person's heart and soul. You will recall from the third unit of Book 2 the rich conversation between Alejandra and Beatrice which led Beatrice to enter the institute process. Consider if Alejandra had, instead, simply extended the following invitation to her friend:

“I would like to invite you to join a study circle we have recently established in our community. There are already twelve people in our group, and I am sure you will like every one of them. We have a great deal of fun together. We study twice a week for a couple of hours but also engage in other activities. This Saturday, for example, we will have a picnic, to which you are most welcome, and some of us are thinking to play volleyball afterwards.”

In which category would you place the type of motivation sought by this appeal? There is, of course, nothing wrong with the invitation as formulated above. The extracurricular activities mentioned are suitable for a study group, especially one consisting of young people. That such activities would persuade a person to join a study circle is not to be disputed either. What is being suggested here, however, is that this type of motivation is usually transitory. It works for a time but eventually ceases to be effective. When you depend only on enthusiasm generated in this way, you put yourself in a very difficult position. You constantly have to invent “fun things to do”, until finally, you become exhausted. That learning should be joyful does not imply that education is the same as entertainment.

To fulfill the purpose of the courses, which is the spiritual and moral empowerment of the participants, you will have to seek sources of motivation that are more permanent. You are already well familiar with many of these sources and will easily remember them if you reflect on your own reasons for participating in the institute process. What prompted you to study the various courses, and what creates in you now the desire to develop the capabilities you will need to act as a tutor of these same courses?

### SECTION 3

You have heard it said that enthusiasm is contagious. The zeal and the vigor with which you approach this act of service, therefore, will help motivate your friends in their study of the courses. This enthusiasm is not to be understood as mere excitement, as simply a momentary and superficial emotion. It is the natural expression of inner joy, a joy that is a quality of one’s soul and not the result of passing circumstances. In the units that you have already completed and that you will soon be studying with interested individuals, reference is often made to this joy—for example, in the first unit of Book 2, the subject of which is the joy of teaching. Section 11 of the previous unit is also concerned with joy. Read that section again. How do the comments made there apply to you in your desire to serve as a tutor? With the group in which you are studying this unit, discuss how reflecting on the life of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, reading and memorizing His words, and calling to mind His inexhaustible love will be a source of enduring joy to you.

Clearly, the joy from which springs your zeal to serve as a tutor, and which will therefore generate enthusiasm in the participants of a study circle, is a quality of a pure heart. Again, purity of heart has been a subject of our discussion on various occasions, including the first unit of this book. In the second unit of Book 6 we discussed three impurities that affect our teaching efforts: a desire for recognition, a sense of superiority, and ambition. Let us think about how these can diminish the effectiveness of a tutor:

1. Do you think participants can sense the purity of a tutor’s intentions?

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2. How would the motivation of the participants be affected if they sensed that the tutor of the group felt superior to them?

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3. How would their motivation be affected if they got the impression that the tutor was carrying out the act of service because he or she hoped to gain status in the community?

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To think further about the question of purity, look at the list below. It gives some possible reasons that a person may have for serving as a tutor. A few are absolutely unacceptable and are included here only for the sake of contrast. First mark with the letter “U” those that, without question, are unacceptable. Then consider those that remain and discuss, with the other members of your group, what they require detachment from, keeping in mind such things as personal ambition, desire for success and recognition, the vanities of the world, and the promptings of the self.

A person may serve as a tutor because he or she

- \_\_\_\_\_ takes joy in seeing people progress.
- \_\_\_\_\_ wants to grow spiritually and contribute to community-building activities in his or her village or neighborhood.
- \_\_\_\_\_ hopes to eventually become a regional coordinator and receive a small stipend.
- \_\_\_\_\_ wants to impress the Auxiliary Board member.
- \_\_\_\_\_ wants others to emulate him or her.
- \_\_\_\_\_ wants to be liked by other people.
- \_\_\_\_\_ wants to be respected by other people.
- \_\_\_\_\_ likes to do things and get results.
- \_\_\_\_\_ wants to be considered a leader in the community.
- \_\_\_\_\_ is enamored of the Well-Beloved.
- \_\_\_\_\_ is enraptured by the summons of God.
- \_\_\_\_\_ wants to contribute to the global Plans given to the Bahá’í world by the Universal House of Justice.
- \_\_\_\_\_ has inhaled the fragrance of disinterested service to the Cause.
- \_\_\_\_\_ wants to attract the blessings of God to his or her community.
- \_\_\_\_\_ has no other wish but to please God.

## SECTION 4

As you strive to assist others in studying the courses of the Ruhi Institute, you will become increasingly convinced that understanding is in itself the greatest of all motivators. There is a longing in every human heart for meaning; there is a natural craving for knowledge of the outer and inner realities of creation. Education has to address this longing. When it does so, it succeeds in tapping the roots of motivation. We suggest that you meditate on the following words of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá from a Tablet in which He praises the efforts of an eminent Bahá’í to train, through what He calls the “teaching meeting”, those who arise to teach the Cause:

**“O Company of God! To each created thing, the Ancient Sovereignty hath portioned out its own perfection, its particular virtue and special excellence, so that each in its degree may become a symbol denoting the sublimity of the true Educator of humankind, and that each, even as a crystalline mirror, may tell of the grace and splendor of the Sun of Truth.**

**“And from amongst all creatures He hath singled out man, to grant him His most wondrous gift, and hath made him to attain the bounties of the Company on High. That most precious of gifts is attainment unto His unfailing guidance, that the inner reality of humankind should become as a niche to hold this lamp; and when the scattering splendors of this light do beat against the bright glass of the heart, the heart’s purity maketh the beams to blaze out even stronger than before, and to shine in glory on the minds and souls of men.**

**“The attainment of the most great guidance is dependent upon knowledge and wisdom, and on being informed as to the mysteries of the Holy Words. Wherefore must the loved ones of God, be they young or old, be they men or women, each one according to his capabilities, strive to acquire the various branches of knowledge, and to increase his understanding of the mysteries of the Holy Books, and his skill in marshaling the divine proofs and evidences.**

**“The eminent Şadru’ş-Şudúr, who hath verily attained a most exalted station in the Retreats of Bliss, inaugurated the teaching meeting. He was the first blessed soul to lay the foundation of this momentous institution. God be praised, during the course of his life he educated persons who today are strong and eloquent advocates of the Lord God, disciples who are indeed pure and spiritual descendants of him who was so close to the Holy Threshold. After his passing, certain blessed individuals took steps to perpetuate his teaching work, and when He learned of it, this Captive’s heart rejoiced.”<sup>1</sup>**

These words of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá offer us valuable insight into the desired dynamics of a study circle. According to the above passage, the greatest gift bestowed on us by God is the gift of attaining His guidance. To attain this “most great guidance”, we need knowledge and wisdom and must become informed of the mysteries enshrined in the Holy Words. It is only natural, then, that receiving the bounty of His unfailing guidance and exploring the mysteries of the Holy Words constitute in themselves a primary source of motivation. Your challenge is to ensure that participants of a study circle are in fact engaged in such a thrilling exploration and receive this wondrous gift.

To further appreciate this point, turn now to the first book in the sequence of courses and identify at least three sections that increased measurably your understanding of a spiritual subject. Mention some of the insights you gained from the study of each section.

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In the same Tablet presented to you above, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá reveals a prayer of particular beauty. You may wish to memorize it and call it to mind each time you arise to serve as a tutor.

**“O God, O Thou Who hast cast Thy splendor over the luminous realities of men, shedding upon them the resplendent lights of knowledge and guidance, and hast chosen them out of all created things for this supernal grace, and hast caused them to encompass all things, to understand their inmost essence, and to disclose their mysteries, bringing them forth out of darkness into the visible world! ‘He verily showeth His special mercy to whomsoever He will.’**

**“O Lord, help Thou Thy loved ones to acquire knowledge and the sciences and arts, and to unravel the secrets that are treasured up in the inmost reality of all created beings. Make them to hear the hidden truths that are written and embedded in the heart of all that is. Make them to be ensigns of guidance amongst all creatures, and piercing rays of the mind shedding forth their light in this, the ‘first life’. Make them to be leaders unto Thee, guides unto Thy path, runners urging men on to Thy Kingdom.**

**“Thou verily art the Powerful, the Protector, the Potent, the Defender, the Mighty, the Most Generous.”<sup>2</sup>**

## SECTION 5

When studying the courses with a small group, you will need to assess whether the participants have acquired a reasonable degree of understanding of the material. In this context, you should be aware that, in general, understanding is not something one achieves and is done with. It is true that there are many ideas which are understood once and for all. But a profound comprehension of most issues develops over a long period of time. The question you will have to ask yourself frequently, then, is not whether participants “have understood” but whether they “have advanced in their understanding of” a given subject. Read and reflect on the following paragraphs from the preliminary section of Book 1, “A Few Thoughts for the Tutor”, which focus on the concept of understanding. As you do so, refer to the relevant sections of the first unit of the book that are mentioned.

Walking the path of service opened up by the institute courses calls for an ever-deepening understanding of Bahá'u'lláh's teachings, which the materials endeavor to set forth unequivocally . . .

Not surprisingly, then, it is with the question of understanding, so central to all the books in the sequence, that this first one begins. To read from the Holy Writings is not the same as reading the many thousands of pages that a person sees in a lifetime, and the unit, “Understanding the Bahá'í Writings”, seeks to foster the habit of reading passages from the Sacred Text every day and meditating on their meaning, a habit that will greatly aid participants as they embark on the path of service. To guide them in its study, the tutor must give a great deal of thought to the subject of understanding.

The Bahá'í Writings contain profound spiritual truths, and even as we strive to advance in our understanding of their infinite meaning, we know that we can never reach a definitive end. We generally gain a basic comprehension of the immediate meaning of a passage when reading it for the first time, and Section 1 of the unit takes this as a starting point. Thus, after reading the quotation, “The betterment of the world can be accomplished through pure and goodly deeds, through commendable and seemly conduct”, participants are simply asked, “How can the betterment of the world be accomplished?” At a glance, most of the questions and exercises of this kind appear to be too simple. But years of experience seem to justify the Institute's decision to begin this way. We all need to be reminded that, in its haste to find the layers of truth in a passage, the mind should not overlook its obvious meaning. Attention to this first level of comprehension also proves vital to group consultation; it strengthens unity of thought, readily attainable when personal opinions are allowed to be illumined by Divine wisdom.

It is important to note here that understanding the immediate meaning of most passages does not benefit from a long discussion of single words out of context. That said, it may be necessary, on occasion, for a group to look up a word in the dictionary. What may be more fruitful, however, is for the participants to learn how to infer the meanings of words from whole sentences and paragraphs.

For understanding to expand beyond the realm of immediate meaning, examples that show how ideas find concrete expression can be helpful. All that is called for in this respect are straightforward exercises. In Section 2, for instance, participants are asked to determine, in light of a passage they have just read, whether certain characteristics are commendable. In a similar exercise in Section 4, they are encouraged to name five virtues and then decide whether it is possible to acquire any of them in the absence of truthfulness—described in the Writings as “the foundation of all human virtues”.

To achieve its purpose, the unit demands a further advance in understanding by challenging participants to think about some of the implications of the passages presented. In Section 2, they are required to determine whether the statement “There are so few good people in the world that their actions do not have any effect” is true. Here the intent is not to elicit mere opinion. The tutor must pause and query the reason for the participants’ answers. That the statement must necessarily be false because it contradicts the first quotation in the preceding section is the conclusion to which the group should come. The question of whether Bahá’ís may confess their sins to others is also an example of this kind of exercise. It refers to the prohibition in the teachings against confession as a means of absolving sin, which, not mentioned expressly in any of the passages studied, can be drawn out by exploring the meaning of the verse, “Bring thyself to account each day ere thou art summoned to a reckoning.”

Now, in light of your reflections on the concept of understanding, answer the questions below.

1. How does focusing on the immediate meaning of passages from the Writings contribute to building unity of thought in a group?

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2. Why is it necessary to go beyond the immediate meaning of a passage and think about how it finds concrete expression in our lives?

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3. How does gaining insights into the broader implications of passages from the Writings assist us in aligning our thoughts and actions with the teachings of the Faith?

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## SECTION 6

Your ability to foster understanding will require you to continually develop such attributes as sensitivity, detachment, and generosity and draw on the power of spiritual perception. You will need to listen to everyone carefully. Sometimes, an individual, while actually comprehending quite well the subject under discussion, does not have sufficient words to express his or her thoughts. You should not focus on words alone but should look for intended meaning. To do so, you must have faith in your friends and hold the conviction that each has significant things to say.

To reflect on the ability to foster understanding, read each of the sentences below and mark the ones with which you agree.

- ☐ When I am studying a passage from the Writings with others, it is my duty as a tutor to make sure that they understand the passage in the same way that I do.
- ☐ When I am studying a passage from the Writings with others, I must respect their understanding but still hold on to my own ideas, since they are the correct ones. After all, I am the tutor and have a clearer understanding than others.
- ☐ When I am studying a passage from the Writings with others, I learn many things from our discussions, no matter how much I already know.
- ☐ When I am studying a passage from the Writings with others, I should share my understanding with humility and candor.
- ☐ When I serve as a tutor, although I should never assume that my own understanding of the material is complete, I need to make sure that the participants do not reach conclusions contrary to the explicit meaning of a passage from the Writings.
- ☐ I should never express my own views and convictions when I am serving as a tutor.
- ☐ The purpose of the discussion in our study circle is for me to teach the correct meaning of the material.
- ☐ The purpose of the discussion in our study circle is for everyone to express whatever comes to his or her mind because self-expression is the highest value we hold.
- ☐ The purpose of the discussion in a study circle is for the members to help one another reach a deeper understanding of what is being studied.



- \_\_\_\_\_ Detachment from my own opinions means that I should allow discussion among the participants to go on, even when I see it is not getting anywhere.
- \_\_\_\_\_ If they are really detached from their own opinions, members of a study circle will accept as true everything everyone says.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Detachment from personal views facilitates open, courteous, and frank discussion in the study of the materials.
- \_\_\_\_\_ When I serve as a tutor, I should pray earnestly to God to unlock the gates of true understanding.

## SECTION 7

Closely associated with thirst for knowledge and understanding is a powerful spiritual force: attraction to beauty. Consider the following passage from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh:

**“Hear Me, ye mortal birds! In the Rose Garden of changeless splendor a Flower hath begun to bloom, compared to which every other flower is but a thorn, and before the brightness of Whose glory the very essence of beauty must pale and wither. Arise, therefore, and, with the whole enthusiasm of your hearts, with all the eagerness of your souls, the full fervor of your will, and the concentrated efforts of your entire being, strive to attain the paradise of His presence, and endeavor to inhale the fragrance of the incorruptible Flower, to breathe the sweet savors of holiness, and to obtain a portion of this perfume of celestial glory. Whoso followeth this counsel will break his chains asunder, will taste the abandonment of enraptured love, will attain unto his heart’s desire, and will surrender his soul into the hands of his Beloved. Bursting through his cage, he will, even as the bird of the spirit, wing his flight to his holy and everlasting nest. . . .**

**“The everlasting Candle shineth in its naked glory. Behold how it hath consumed every mortal veil. O ye moth-like lovers of His light! Brave every danger, and consecrate your souls to its consuming flame. O ye that thirst after Him! Strip yourselves of every earthly affection, and hasten to embrace your Beloved. With a zest that none can equal make haste to attain unto Him. The Flower, thus far hidden from the sight of men, is unveiled to your eyes. In the open radiance of His glory He standeth before you. His voice summoneth all the holy and sanctified beings to come and be united with Him. Happy is he that turneth thereunto; well is it with him that hath attained, and gazed on the light of so wondrous a countenance.”<sup>3</sup>**

You must feel certain in your heart that those with whom you are studying the courses are imbued with a natural attraction to beauty. If, during their study of the institute courses, they are helped to see the sublimity of God’s Revelation and to appreciate the beauty of the revealed Word, the joy they will feel in each session will be a most powerful source of motivation for them. As you reflect on this point, you will find it useful to look through Book 1 and choose three or four sections that offered you glimpses of the Beauty of the Beloved. For each section, say a few words about that which attracted you so.

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## SECTION 8

The profound meaning and beauty of the revealed Word, contained in the many passages quoted in the materials, will be the strongest source of attraction for the participants. But the environment that the participants in a study circle create, with the help of the tutor, will also be important. Attraction to beauty is a force generated within a group of people working together in a loving atmosphere. Thus, you will constantly need to be aware of the atmosphere of the study circle and ensure that it contributes to the participants' spiritual upliftment.

One important factor will be the physical environment in which the group meets. Unfortunately, in today's world, physical beauty is often associated with wealth. But a lavish setting is not what is required. There is beauty in nature, in orderliness, in tidiness. You will

want to make sure that the environment in which every group studies is one that satisfies the individual's yearning for beauty and perfection, whether the group is sitting under the shade of a tree or gathering in an expensively decorated living room, a humble hut or an institute facility.

Your own behavior is another factor that will contribute to the atmosphere. Behavior can be beautiful and can, therefore, have the power to attract. There is beauty in kindness, in gentleness, in respect for others. To consider this point further, think of different occasions when your sense of beauty has been insulted. Sadly, this happens all too often in the workplace, in places of leisure, in gatherings of friends, in family get-togethers, and even in educational establishments. Examples of this kind of behavior include:

- People shouting at each other
- People using offensive language
- Someone embarrassing another person in front of others
- People looking at and treating others as if they were sex objects
- People acting under the influence of alcohol

It is hard to imagine that the ugly behavior mentioned above would ever be displayed by the participants of a study circle. But a tutor will have to watch for more subtle forms of conduct that could undermine the atmosphere of loving-kindness. Here are, for example, some difficult situations. For each, you are presented with an inappropriate response, which you are asked to correct.

- a. One of the participants is slumped down and doodling on his materials. An inappropriate response would be: "You are being idle and bringing down the rest of the group." You would say:

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- b. One of the participants speaks so softly that it is impossible for the others to hear. An inappropriate response would be: "Can't you speak any louder?" You would say:

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- c. One of the participants gives an obviously wrong answer to a question. An inappropriate response would be: "Does anyone have the right answer?" You would say:

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- d. Two of the participants are whispering to each other and giggling. An inappropriate response would be: “Do you want to share the joke with the rest of us?” You would say:

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- e. One of the participants asks a question that does not relate to what the group is studying. An inappropriate response would be: “That has nothing to do with what we are talking about.” You would say:

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- f. Two of the participants start to argue over one of the exercises, each insisting that his or her opinion is correct. An inappropriate response would be: “Stop it. You’re both wrong.” You would say:

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- g. One of the participants gives an answer that is not in agreement with the quotation being studied. An inappropriate response would be: “Don’t you understand the quotation you just read?” You would say:

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- h. One of the participants is getting off the subject. An inappropriate response would be: “Please stick to the subject.” You would say:

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It is suggested that you memorize the following quotation, extracted from a much larger passage from *God Passes By* in which Shoghi Effendi delineates the main features of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas. As you do so, reflect on how adherence to the exhortations outlined in this quotation is indispensable to creating an appropriate atmosphere in a study circle.

**“... Bahá’u’lláh exhorts His followers to consort, with amity and concord and without discrimination, with the adherents of all religions; warns them to guard against fanaticism, sedition, pride, dispute and contention; inculcates upon them**

immaculate cleanliness, strict truthfulness, spotless chastity, trustworthiness, hospitality, fidelity, courtesy, forbearance, justice and fairness; counsels them to be *‘even as the fingers of one hand and the limbs of one body’*; calls upon them to arise and serve His Cause; and assures them of His undoubted aid.”<sup>4</sup>

## SECTION 9

Our exploration in the first eight sections of this unit revolved around the theme of motivation. Clearly, in such a brief discussion, we could not do justice to this vital subject. All we could do was to consider a few sources of motivation with the hope that, as your experience grows, you will gradually discover the secrets of maintaining a high degree of enthusiasm among those with whom you study the courses. To consolidate the insights you have gained thus far, take some time to review the earlier sections and then write a paragraph about motivation using the following words and phrases: transitory, permanent, joy, purity of heart, understanding, advance, Word of God, environment, roots, thirst for knowledge, attainment unto God's unfailing guidance, attraction to beauty.

[illegible]

## SECTION 10

The next subject we should discuss is participation, which naturally follows the previous theme, for, only if those studying the courses engage actively in learning will they maintain a high level of motivation.

It is often said that the courses of the Ruhi Institute are participatory. In this connection, you have probably heard the phrase “participatory method”. “Method”, “approach”, “technique”, and “procedures” are words commonly employed in various fields, but, for us, it is important to gain an appreciation for the significance of such words in the context of education. What should be emphasized here is that the Ruhi Institute’s fundamental concern with participation is not at the level of technique and procedures. What we seek is for the participant to take charge of his or her own learning. This can occur even when the teaching method is not, strictly speaking, participatory. An example will help to clarify this point.

Suppose you attend a lecture offered by a professor at a conference on a subject that interests you. The professor delivers a rather lengthy talk but explains the ideas fully and in a clear and coherent manner. Given the large size of the audience, the speaker can take only a few questions, and it is not possible to have a discussion involving everyone. Clearly the method employed on this occasion is not exactly participatory. Yet, you are completely engaged in learning during the entire lecture because you are eager to expand your own understanding of the subject beyond what you already know. You listen, you think about every idea presented by the speaker, you organize a series of questions in your mind, and later you look through several reliable sources to find answers.

Now imagine thousands upon thousands of students throughout the world sitting in classrooms, bored, yawning, listening to teachers who lecture at them. This is not the picture to be found in every school, but enough such classrooms exist that you must have seen one or two. What is the difference between the two situations, in both of which the same method of teaching is employed?

The difference, of course, lies in the degree of participation. In the first case, you are actively engaged. The professor delivers a lecture, but you are in charge of your own learning. You have assumed responsibility for examining the ideas presented and, in this sense, are participating fully in the educational activity. The opposite is happening in the second situation. The students are passive. The teacher, while active, fails to elicit participation from the students.

This brief comparison of two educational situations clarifies what we mean by the statement that the Ruhi Institute’s approach is participatory. This implies that, when serving as a tutor for the courses, you will assist participants in assuming ownership of their education. During the hours you are studying together, their minds should be fully occupied in the exploration of the content presented, and each participant should feel a keen sense of responsibility for his or her own learning.

Unlike the example of your own attendance at a conference, it is highly improbable that the requisite level of participation can be achieved in a study circle if you simply lecture at its members. The books of the Ruhi Institute will provide you with the tools that will make it possible for you to adhere to its participatory approach.

Before continuing our discussion of this topic, we ask you to bring to mind certain images and think about them in the context of a study circle. While none of the images below paints a complete picture of the teaching-learning dynamics being called for here, they will provide you with valuable insights. A few of these images are totally inappropriate. Cross them out and give your reason for doing so. For the remaining ones, explain in what sense each image is useful.

- a. A fire that you are feeding: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- b. Empty glasses that you are filling up: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- c. Savings accounts in a bank into which you are depositing money: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- d. Candles that you are lighting: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- e. Friendships you are nurturing: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
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- f. A team with whom you are building something: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- g. The foundation of a great edifice you are laying together: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- h. Mines full of precious gems you are polishing: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- i. A football game you are umpiring: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- j. A competition you are judging: \_\_\_\_\_  
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- k. Plants you are watering: \_\_\_\_\_  
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## SECTION 11

What we have said about participation implies that everyone engaged in the educational process fostered by the courses of the Ruhi Institute must take an active role in his or her own learning. We have also indicated that its books will provide you with tools that will make it possible for you as a tutor to adhere to its participatory approach. We should turn our attention, then, to the study of the books and try to gain insight into how the tutor can foster the kind of teaching-learning dynamics envisioned.

First, it must be clear to you that the relationship between the tutor and the other participants is not one of teacher-to-student. But this does not mean that he or she can be a detached and passive facilitator of discussion. All throughout, the tutor must be alert, attentive, and observant. His or her thoughts should be focused at all times on how to help each of the participants gain a more complete understanding of what is being studied.

In embarking on the study of any given unit with a group, the tutor will begin by explaining its purpose, often highlighting the most significant concepts that it covers. The participants will then read and discuss each section, carrying out the exercises that accompany it, either individually or as a group. Indeed, the exercises constitute an important tool in nurturing understanding and in helping participants engage actively in the learning process. While certain exercises may be carried out with little assistance from the tutor, there will be instances when he or she will need to offer comments to assist participants in deepening their comprehension of an idea. The following excerpt from the section “A Few Thoughts for the Tutor” of Book 1 sheds light on how the exercises are to be approached:

By no means do the exercises in the unit attempt to encompass the range of meaning enshrined in the passages under consideration. One question every tutor must contemplate is how much discussion should go into any given exercise. Here it is important to bear in mind that prolonging deliberations by introducing many related but peripheral concepts tends to diminish the effectiveness of the material. Every group needs to establish a reasonable rhythm of progress; participants should feel a distinct sense that they are advancing steadily according to their own possibilities. The tutor must, however, stay attentive, lest sections are passed over quickly and superficially without the thoughtful analysis of exercises; groups that have proceeded in this way, merely filling in answers, have never attained lasting results.

What two tendencies should a tutor avoid in taking a group through each section in order to ensure that the purpose of the material is achieved?

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What might be useful for you now is to select a few sections from the three units of Book 1 and go through the exercises. Decide which ones are likely to elicit discussions that may require some guidance from you as a tutor. Write them down below.

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## SECTION 12

To clarify some of the issues under discussion, let us look at an imaginary conversation between the tutor who is helping you study Book 7 and one of the participants during a break.

- *Participant: I am beginning to understand the concept of participation in a new way. At first I thought the approach to studying the institute courses was simply that the members of a study circle would read passages from the Writings, answer some questions, and then go around and express their individual opinions.*
- *Tutor: I have also heard such an oversimplified description in the past. Unfortunately, it gives the impression that participation is some kind of a formula.*
- *Participant: But soon after entering the institute process, one realizes that there is much more to the approach than one first imagines.*
- *Tutor: What is true, of course, is that the material we study depends heavily on Bahá'í Text and places a strong emphasis on reading and understanding passages from the Writings. It is also true that the questions and exercises require participants to discuss relevant ideas among themselves.*
- *Participant: But some say that discussion should not be encouraged—that, in an effort to stay faithful to the materials, we should just get everyone to answer the questions and then move on to the next ones. I see, now, that the purpose of the exercises cannot be achieved if they are treated like worksheets. While the answers to many of them might, on the surface, be apparent, they are meant to elicit some level of thought and reflection from each participant.*

- *Tutor: You are absolutely right. That is why a tutor needs to be especially attentive. He or she should have some sense of what is meant to be achieved in going through each of the sections of a given unit and, at appropriate times, open up a discussion among the participants, helping them reflect further on the application and implications of concepts and ideas presented. Some of the ideas might merit a short consultation, and others a somewhat lengthier one.*
- *Participant: On a few occasions, when studying a course, I have noticed that certain exercises were treated with a degree of rigidity. For example, there was an insistence on giving a correct “yes” or “no” answer in exercises that ask us to select from a list of statements the ones that are true.*
- *Tutor: When the answer to such an exercise is not so straightforward, it is this way intentionally so that participants, through discussion and reflection, gain insight into complex issues in light of the Writings. Again, a tutor must encourage exploration.*
- *Participant: I guess as a new tutor I might, at first, be timid about doing this, fearing that the discussion could go all over the place, and I might not be able to guide it properly or answer the questions participants may raise.*
- *Tutor: It is perfectly natural to feel that way, but I assure you that, with experience, you will learn to help participants to engage in disciplined consultation. They will see that the mere expression of random thoughts does not increase understanding. You will learn to keep the discussion focused without being too rigid. It is all right for people to say what they wish, even though their contributions may at times not be so relevant to the consultation. However, if you see that the group is going totally off the subject and for too long a time, then you will need to help your friends get back to the study of the material. This will actually not be too difficult, since your relationship with the group will be based on courtesy and kindness.*
- *Participant: But it will not be easy all the time. In the study circles in which I have participated, sometimes there were individuals who could not stop talking. Then there were a few who never said a word.*
- *Tutor: Of course, the issue is not really the length or brevity of an individual’s contribution to a discussion, but whether the ideas expressed add to the collective understanding of the group. You need to keep this point clear in your mind. Regardless, it is most important to remember never to embarrass anyone, the talkative or the silent. You have to make sure that you do not become frustrated with those who take up a lot of the time of the group. Often they believe that they are helping to move the discussion along, and they may not realize when they are going too far. Of course, other times they may simply be too attached to their own ideas. Whatever the case, if you have established a bond of love and friendship with the members of the group, you will find ways to redirect the conversation and draw others into the discussion without causing the talkative ones to feel offended.*
- *Participant: And the silent ones?*
- *Tutor: That is actually a most interesting subject. You see, sometimes we tend to attach too much importance to talking. If someone is silent we become nervous. We even think that those who are quiet or shy are not very intelligent or that they are*

*not paying attention. Talking is not necessarily an indication of participation. If you observe the group, which after all is not that large, you can see who is engaged in learning, who is listening, thinking, and carrying out the exercises with diligence. The shy members of the group will gradually build confidence and participate in the discussions, but let this happen naturally.*

With the above discussion in mind, write in the space below some of your thoughts on what it means for a tutor to be fully engaged throughout the teaching-learning process.

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## SECTION 13

The challenge of keeping the discussion focused while moving at a steady pace is not an easy one, and you will strengthen your ability to do so as you gain practical experience. Below are some situations. The two suggested responses in each case are both valid, but under different circumstances. Describe the circumstances in which each response would be the most effective. Can you think of another response that could be appropriate depending on the circumstances?

1. You ask one of the participants to offer a few thoughts on a question, but he or she is taking a long time to respond.

- a. You wait quietly until he or she finally answers:

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- b. You gently direct the question to another participant, asking for his or her thoughts:

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- c.

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2. One of the participants is always the first to offer the answer to a question, making it difficult for the others to speak.
- a. You address some of the questions to individual members of the group, calling on them by name:
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- b. At some point, when you are outside the group and having a friendly conversation with the participant, you ask what insights he or she has gained from listening to the contributions others have made to the discussions:
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- c.
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3. One of the participants has not contributed to the discussion for a long time.
- a. When you notice that the participant has something to say, you ask him or her a direct question:
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- b. You leave the participant alone, allowing him or her to remain silent for as long as he or she wishes:
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- c.
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4. In carrying out one of the exercises, a couple of participants introduce a number of peripheral ideas, and the discussion goes off topic.

- a. You help the participants return to the theme under discussion by reminding them of the purpose of the exercise:

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- b. You call on one of the participants who seems to have a clearer grasp of the purpose of the exercise and ask him or her a direct question to bring the group back to the theme under discussion:

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- c. 

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## SECTION 14

The discussion in the previous section will have helped you to see that there are no formulas for a tutor to follow in studying the books of the Ruhi Institute with a group. Indeed, every tutor must resist the temptation of reducing the study of the courses to a series of simple steps to be followed. This is not so easy when we are constantly presented with technical recipes that promise a solution to almost every kind of challenge we face, including those related to education. We must especially be cautious, lest, in our enthusiasm to enrich the teaching-learning experience, we inadvertently introduce into the study techniques and procedures that hamper the efforts of participants to engage meaningfully with the material.

A basic simplicity characterizes the educational process fostered by the courses of the Ruhi Institute. Any setting in which its materials are studied should be governed by a spirit of fellowship and joy. In the final analysis, it is not rituals, procedures, and techniques that will foster learning but the motivation to seek knowledge and to serve.

The above does not mean that there are not some techniques that can facilitate the learning process. But “technique” cannot come to dominate the process. Nor can it be allowed to trivialize the serious pursuit of understanding or undermine the dignity of the Sacred Word, so central to the educational process. The following imaginary conversation between someone serving as a tutor of Book 7 and a group of participants who have just studied these sections may help you identify possible pitfalls and learn to avoid them:

- *Participant 1: It is so helpful to know that there are no rituals or a fixed set of steps to be followed in studying the courses of the Ruhi Institute. There are things I noticed in the way their study is sometimes carried out that I assumed were part of the “method” of the Institute, but now I realize that is not the case.*

- *Participant 2: Like how memorization is sometimes treated. Teachers of children’s classes help the youngsters memorize a prayer or quotation using a simple technique, in which the children repeat the first sentence or phrase of a quotation until they know it by heart and then go on to add the one that follows, and in this way they memorize the whole quotation. That is a simple but effective technique, and, even as an adult, I often use it to memorize long passages from the Writings. But, then, I have observed that a lot of energy can be spent on looking for techniques that would help participants memorize quotations while having “fun”.*
- *Participant 3: I have seen, for example, that sometimes a tutor writes the quotation in full on a white board and asks a participant to read it aloud. Then the tutor erases one or more words, and another participant reads it by recalling the missing word. The process continues until very few words are left. This way of memorizing can be unnecessarily drawn out.*
- *Participant 4: I remember that, when I was studying Book 1, we were all asked to do a drawing for every quotation. To be honest, the purpose of this was lost on me, and some of us did not enjoy this activity, as it made it harder to focus on and follow the sequence of concepts. We’d rather have moved at a sprightly pace through the material. It was not until many months later that I learned this is not part of the method of studying the courses.*
- *Participant 2: I can see that the question of “technique” is not always straightforward, and, as tutors, we need to have confidence that participants will derive joy from the serious pursuit of understanding. From all that we have discussed in these sections, it seems important that, in our eagerness to help participants engage in the learning process, we do not fall back on activities that can become ritualized and which, in the end, undermine the effectiveness of the courses.*
- *Tutor: You have all reached an important conclusion. While it is natural that some tutors may include certain activities in the study of the courses, when we refer to them as elements of a “Ruhi method”, it introduces rigidity into a process that is otherwise simple, joyful, and sensitive to a diversity of needs. You can no doubt appreciate that the Ruhi Institute cannot issue a series of dos and don’ts since this would, itself, lead to rigidity. Much is left, therefore, to the judgment of the tutor in deciding what contributes to the enhancement of understanding, while not allowing technique to overshadow the substance of the material that is being studied or obscure the simplicity of the process.*

## SECTION 15

It must be clear to you by now that, beyond the ability to guide discussion, tutors need to know well the material under study if they are to assist participants in advancing in their understanding of the content and in taking ownership of their own learning. Of course, you yourself have completed the first six books of the Ruhi Institute with the aid of a tutor and have gained a good deal of experience in carrying out the acts of service they recommend—this, as part of a growing nucleus of individuals in your village or neighborhood working for its betterment. Now, however, as an aspiring tutor, you need to go further and reflect on some of the central concepts and underlying principles that have helped shape the content

of the courses. To begin, read the following extract from the introductory remarks provided for tutors of Book 1:

From the outset, it should be clear to every participant that the courses of the Ruhi Institute trace a path of service to humanity, upon which we each walk at our own pace, assisting and being assisted by others. Treading this path implies the pursuit of a twofold moral purpose: to attend to one's own spiritual and intellectual growth and to contribute to the transformation of society. Progress on the path entails the development of a number of capabilities that require understanding and knowledge, spiritual qualities and praiseworthy attitudes, as well as a host of abilities and skills. The sources of knowledge upon which the books of the Institute draw are, on the one hand, the teachings of the Bahá'í Faith and, on the other, the accumulating experience of the worldwide Bahá'í community in furthering material and spiritual civilization. It is Bahá'u'lláh's vision of the individual we can become and of the civilization we can build that inspires the Institute.

Earlier in this book you had an opportunity to examine the spiritual nature of the path that you have been treading for some time now. All along, the pursuit of a twofold moral purpose has strengthened your steps and galvanized your commitment to service. You have seen firsthand how capacity to serve increases as one makes progress on this path and have gained many invaluable insights into the dynamics of individual and collective transformation.

It is important to note here that, in trying to design courses that would develop in individuals the requisite capacity, the Ruhi Institute initially had a number of choices. It could adopt, for example, the more common approach of Bahá'í deepening programs—namely, that of presenting the student with adequate knowledge of the Faith: its principles, its spiritual and social teachings, its history, its laws, and its administration. It would then be expected that this knowledge, in itself, would motivate individuals to arise and serve the Cause. What would have to be added would be some training in specific skills, reinforced by constant encouragement.

After examining several such alternatives, the Institute decided it would take an educational approach in which study and action are joined. It became convinced that it is through the integration of knowledge and practice that capacity for service to the Cause and humanity is built. Specifically, no approach that sought to develop capacity to effect the kind of individual and collective transformation envisioned in the Bahá'í Writings could ignore the significance of action in fostering understanding. Study alone—the pursuit of knowledge outside the field of service—would not be sufficient.

Strong emphasis would, naturally, need to be placed on the study of passages from the Writings. But equal emphasis would have to be given to the application of the Bahá'í teachings to one's own life and to the life of one's village or neighborhood. The educational process would need to connect participants not only to the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh but to the Bahá'í experience in applying the teachings and principles of the Faith. What is more, it would need to ensure that participants contribute to the further unfoldment of this experience and to its propagation.

Eventually the Ruhi Institute adopted a pedagogy that would attend simultaneously to the knowledge and habits, skills and abilities, attitudes and spiritual qualities to be progressively acquired by those who wish to dedicate their energies to the progress of their communities. The concept of “capability”, which brought together these requirements, thus began to emerge. To enhance the capabilities of a growing number of people to serve the Cause and humanity, the Ruhi Institute decided to organize its courses into a sequence defined in terms of a “path of service”. The Institute felt that, in this way, it could help participants learn about the path of individual and collective transformation as they walked it by performing specific acts of service.

The path would have to be laid out in such a way that participants would be able to advance systematically along it as they developed their capacity for service. Accordingly, acts of service would have to build on one another, increasing in terms of complexity from course to course. And, wherever individuals found themselves on the path of service, they would also accompany others earlier on the path in their efforts, helping them to progress. This, it became clear, was inherent to the process of capacity building. Those with more experience assist those with less as they strive to walk the path and learn, in time, to assist others.

It may be useful for you to pause at this point and discuss with your group the ideas listed below. Then write down a few thoughts about each. Over time you will be able to observe how your understanding of these ideas evolves.

- a. The importance the courses give to knowledge of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation and its application to individual and collective life: \_\_\_\_\_

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- b. The role of action, combined with study, in fostering understanding: \_\_\_\_\_

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- c. The development of capabilities along a path of service: \_\_\_\_\_

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- d. The process of individual and collective transformation fostered by the path of service laid out by the courses: \_\_\_\_\_

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## SECTION 16

To explore further how the educational approach discussed above and its underlying concepts have given shape to the materials of the Ruhi Institute, we will look at the path of service traced out by the first six courses, with which you are well familiar. To do so, we will consider the phrase, “I walk a path of service.” What is the real identity of the “I” in this sentence? What is the nature of the path, and what does walking it entail?

Book 1 addresses the first of these questions. Three aspects of one’s true identity are explored: “The reality of my existence is my soul which passes through this world to acquire the attributes it needs for an eternal and glorious journey towards God. My most cherished moments are those spent in communion with God, for prayer is the daily nourishment that my soul must receive if it is to accomplish its exalted purpose. My main occupation is the study of Bahá’u’lláh’s Revelation, deepening my understanding of God’s teachings for this age, and learning to apply them to my own life and to the life of the community.” To create an awareness that these are, in fact, the central elements of one’s true identity is the aim of *Reflections on the Life of the Spirit*.

You already realize, of course, that the three ideas mentioned above are actually treated in the reverse order in the book. This, the Institute has found, builds a vision of life that is centered on God and His Revelation, rather than on one’s own self. The comments and exercises in this and the next two sections will assist you and the other members of your group in your explorations of this subject.

The first unit of Book 1, “Understanding the Bahá’í Writings”, focuses on one-sentence statements from the Writings. As indicated earlier, in Section 5, emphasis is on the immediate meaning of each statement and its direct application to one’s life, as well as some broader implications. Further, there is an insistence on keeping discussion at a certain level of “simplicity”. Simplicity, however, does not imply lack of depth. Nor does it suggest that complex subjects are reduced to a few simple ideas. To appreciate this, try to describe the following four categories of educational materials and some of their effects on students:

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|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| a. Simple and superficial | c. Complicated and superficial |
| b. Simple and profound    | d. Complex and profound        |

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Why, we may ask, is the straightforward approach to studying the Writings presented in Book 1 so helpful for those setting out on a path of service? One answer may be that they become more conscious of the value of focused reflection on what they read from the Writings. They begin to see how, as they form the habit of reading and reflecting on passages from the Writings every day, the teachings increasingly shape their thoughts and actions.

Below are two sets of statements. The statements in the first column describe dispositions which, though undesirable, are not uncommon. Those in the second are desired goals to be achieved. In walking a path of service, every one of us is moving toward these goals. Draw an arrow from each statement in the left-hand column to the one in the right-hand column indicating this movement.

Our views of the world are shaped by mere transitory opinions.	Decisions are made in the light of the teachings of the Faith.
It is difficult for us to distinguish between good and bad, right and wrong; everything seems relative.	Individual needs and aspirations are harmonized with that which is conducive to collective well-being.
Our notion of freedom makes us wary of anything that places limitations on what we say and do.	The standard of the Faith is consistently used to measure the value of words and actions.
Our decisions are based entirely on the emotions of the moment.	A framework inspired by the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh is formed within which the world is viewed.
It is difficult to resist the messages that tell us we should follow our every desire, no matter the consequences.	It is recognized that true freedom is to be gained by surrendering one's will to the Will of God.
Our own self-interest takes precedence over the well-being of the whole.	Awareness of the consequences of indulging in one's desires is cultivated, as is the discipline to act in ways that are commensurate with the dignity of a human being's station.

## SECTION 17

The second unit of Book 1 aims to foster an understanding of the significance of prayer and help individuals develop the habit of praying regularly. Since embarking on the path of service, you have no doubt reinforced this habit in your own life and have seized opportunities to share prayers with members of households in your village or neighborhood and exerted every effort to strengthen the devotional character of your community. At this point, it would be worthwhile for you to read the following excerpt from “A Few Thoughts for the Tutor” in Book 1 and review the unit with the ideas it raises in mind:

The second unit in the book is concerned, like the first, with a habit essential to spiritual life: praying regularly. It makes explicit in the opening section the concept of “path of service”, suggesting that, to walk this path, we must be imbued with a twofold purpose. Participants examine an initial set of quotations that offer insight into the nature of this purpose, a theme that will be elaborated in future courses.

Against the backdrop of this theme the unit takes up its exploration of the significance of prayer. It adopts an approach similar to the one described in the preceding paragraphs. Questions and exercises are formulated so as to advance understanding of the meaning of passages from the Writings being studied. As the group progresses through the unit, the tutor may be required to dissipate doubts by analyzing notions rooted in interpretations and practices of the past. In some traditions, ritual and form have gradually overshadowed the importance of inner state, and so many ignore the necessity of prayer, which, for the human soul, is no less crucial than is food in nourishing the body.

Above all, then, the unit aspires to awaken in participants the desire to “converse with God” and to draw near to Him. Among the ideas addressed are what it means to enter into a state of prayer, the posture of our hearts and minds when we do so, and the conditions that should be created in our surroundings, whether we are alone or in a gathering. Indeed, after giving some thought to the forces generated through communal worship, participants are asked to consider hosting a gathering for prayer and devotions.

1. What relationship between prayer, personal growth, and efforts to contribute to the betterment of society do the first two sections of the unit establish?

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2. What concepts does the unit help participants understand about the nature of prayer?

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3. What are some of the misunderstandings about prayer prevalent in your society that the study of the unit helps dispel?

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4. Reflect on the significance of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s statement that “Man must live in a state of prayer.” Identify those passages in the unit that you feel contribute most to the participants’ efforts to attain this state of being.

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5. It is hoped that, upon completing the unit, participants will exert effort towards the enrichment of the devotional character of their community—for example, by visiting homes to share prayers with members of a household, by enthusiastically supporting a devotional gathering in their village or neighborhood, and eventually by hosting one themselves. In this way, the unit immediately calls upon participants to apply the knowledge they have gained not only to their own lives but to the life of their community—this, through a series of small actions that will provide a foundation for the acts of service they will later be asked to undertake. To think about the importance of assisting participants to act, so early in the educational process, reflect on what is unfolding in your own village or neighborhood.

- a. To share a prayer with someone, though seemingly simple, is not always easy for participants. What is being learned in your village or neighborhood about sharing prayers, with friends and families, with young and old, and reflecting on their meaning?

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- b. How does this apparently simple step, as it is undertaken by more and more individuals in a community, lead to the creation of spaces where growing numbers are drawn together for worship and uplifting conversation?

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- c. How are efforts progressing in your village or neighborhood to assist participants in Book 1 in sharing prayers with individuals and families?

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- d. How would you describe the devotional character of your community?

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## SECTION 18

We will now turn our attention to the third unit of Book 1. Read each of the excerpts below from “A Few Thoughts for the Tutor” and carry out the exercises that follow them.

The study of the third unit of the book, “Life and Death”, will strengthen, it is hoped, commitment to walking the path of service and endow it with more profound meaning. Service in this world is best understood in the fullest context of life, which extends beyond our earthly existence and continues forever as our souls progress throughout the worlds of God. In a process of education, as opposed to technical training, participants should become increasingly conscious of the meaning and significance of what they are doing. Only if such consciousness grows, experience indicates, will they come to see themselves as active, responsible “owners” of their own learning.

1. Awareness that the life of the soul extends beyond this physical plane strengthens our commitment to walking the path of service and endows what we do on this path with profound meaning. Read the following statements, which expand on this idea, and then write a few others:

- The knowledge that life does not consist of the changes and chances of this world helps us persevere in our efforts, despite the setbacks we are sure to encounter on the path of service.
- Remembering that life on earth is but one phase of our eternal journey towards God helps us to stay focused on developing the spiritual qualities that draw us closer to Him and to dedicate ourselves to advancing humanity towards its intended destiny.

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Each section of the unit opens with one to three quotations from the Bahá'í Writings, followed by a few exercises. The language of the passages quoted in this unit is more demanding than in the previous two. There is no need, of course, for the group to dwell on difficult words; the tutor will want to ensure that everyone grasps the central idea addressed in each section, which is precisely what the exercises try to bring out.

Given the nature of the subject, exercises involving concrete examples are few and far between. Most tend to operate at a conceptual level. What should be noted is that some of the questions posed by the exercises cannot be answered quickly or in a clear-cut way. They are introduced to raise awareness about the subject; if participants merely think about such questions, the objective of learning will have been fulfilled.

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- This image shows a full page of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page, providing a template for handwriting practice or general note-taking. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the page.

- The first exercise of Section 2: “When does the human soul come into being?”
- The third exercise of Section 5: “Can you give examples of the soul’s influence and action without bodily instruments?”
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- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

Why is it important to avoid prolonged discussions on the above type of questions, which are posed only to raise awareness?

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The first several sections focus on the relationship between the soul and the body, which, together, constitute the human being in this plane of existence. The central idea presented in these sections is that the soul is not a physical entity; its association with the body can be likened to the light that appears in a mirror. Neither the dust covering its surface nor the eventual destruction of the mirror can affect the splendor of the light itself. Death is just a change of condition, when the association between the body and soul is broken; afterwards, the soul progresses eternally towards its Creator.

The unit turns next to the question of the purpose of life—to know God and to attain His presence. Discussion here revolves around two broad themes. The first is the purpose of our lives in this world, and the second the journey of the soul after death. The soul is a sign of God and can reflect all of His names and attributes. Yet the potential within the human being is latent; it can only be developed with the help of the Manifestations of God, those sanctified Beings Who come from time to time to guide humanity. Through the spiritual education They provide, the treasures hidden within us can be revealed.

As for the journey of the soul after death, a series of ideas are laid out for participants to contemplate: that those faithful to God will attain unto true happiness; that none of us can ever know our own end and, therefore, we should forgive one another and not feel superior to others; that in the next world, as in this one, the soul will continue to progress and the spiritual faculties we developed here will aid and assist us there; that we will recognize our loved ones in the realms beyond, will remember our lives in this world, and will enjoy companionship with holy and sanctified souls.

4. The above three paragraphs outline the main ideas that you have already noted from your review of the unit. These ideas represent spiritual truths, and the tutor should make sure that participants do not become muddled in their thinking by drawing unnecessary inferences. With this in mind, look at the pairs below. For each, decide which one a tutor should do, if participants are to gain clarity about the concept under discussion. Do not be content with simply marking your choice, which may seem obvious, but write down a few thoughts about your reasoning.



\_\_\_\_\_ Bring into the discussion certain other ideas about life after death, existing in the culture, which are often the subject of speculation

\_\_\_\_\_ Stay away from certain other ideas about life after death that exist in the culture, which are often the subject of speculation

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\_\_\_\_\_ Dismiss a question a participant raises because it is related to an erroneous idea, such as reincarnation

\_\_\_\_\_ Clarify a question a participant raises that is related to an erroneous idea, such as reincarnation, while avoiding prolonged discussion

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\_\_\_\_\_ Respond to a question about the time that marks the beginning of the life of the soul by delving into many related subjects, both legalistic and medical

\_\_\_\_\_ Simply refer the participants back to the relevant quotation from the writings in response to a question about the time that marks the beginning of the life of the soul

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Finally, as you know, the last section of the unit reminds participants of the concept of a twofold moral purpose introduced in the second unit. It asks them to reflect on the significance of attending to the two aspects of this purpose, in light of the insights they have gained into the progress of the soul. They are encouraged to include in their discussions the following themes:

1. Developing spiritual qualities
2. Obeying the laws of God
3. Contributing to the well-being of the human race
4. Advancing on the path of service

Why is it important for a tutor to ensure that participants carry out a rich discussion around the themes mentioned above?

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## SECTION 19

We have already seen how Book 1 invites us to reflect on the significance of the word “I” in the sentence “I walk a path of service.” Though it deals largely with the issue of identity, it should, as we have discussed, stimulate some activity on the part of those who study it—most notably, the sharing of prayers with members of households in their community. Book 2, *Arising to Serve*, is intended to help them take the next few steps on this path and further develop their capacity to serve.

The introductory remarks for Book 2, “A Few Thoughts for the Tutor”, discuss the capabilities that it seeks to address and the objectives of each of its three units. Though you will want to study this introduction thoroughly in preparing to guide a group through the course, for our purposes here, you are encouraged to read the following excerpt, which describes the overall aim of the book and its structure:

This book, the second in the main sequence of courses offered by the Ruhi Institute, is concerned with capabilities that enable us to contribute to meaningful and uplifting conversation. The specific act of service on which the book focuses is described in the third unit. In a world in which powerful forces are tearing communal bonds asunder, the practice of visiting friends and neighbors in their homes to explore themes central to the life of society can, if it becomes a prominent feature of culture, remedy some of the ills engendered by increasing isolation. The ties of fellowship thus created, the unit suggests, serve to fortify the process of building vibrant and harmonious communities.

A sustained program of visits to homes in a neighborhood or village calls for a degree of organization, involving a nucleus of dedicated friends supported by the requisite administrative institutions and agencies. In guiding a group through the book, the tutor should bear in mind that participants are being prepared to join such an ongoing effort. Visits arranged for them as a component of their study should lead to a commitment to take part in this effort year after year, an important aspect of a life of service.

The practice of visiting homes for the explicit purpose of exploring themes of spiritual and social significance clearly enriches the culture of a community. Equally crucial in this respect are the many informal discussions that occur at home and in the workplace, at school and in the market. To introduce spiritual principles into everyday conversation from time to time, then, is an ability that deserves attention. Its development is the focus of the second unit, laying, in this way, a foundation for the study undertaken in the third.

If our conversations with friends and neighbors are to be uplifting, we must be able to bring joy to our interactions with them. This is the subject addressed in the first unit, “The Joy of Teaching”. All the acts of service recommended by the Ruhi Institute involve, in essence, sharing with others the pearls of divine wisdom that we discover in the ocean of Bahá’u’lláh’s Revelation. The study of the first unit is intended to heighten awareness of the joy inherent in this pursuit. Participants are asked over several sections to think about the Word of God and what a blessing it is to share it with others. From this act, the unit proposes, arises the joy that quickens our steps as we walk the path of service.

As indicated above, the second unit, “Uplifting Conversations”, is concerned with some of the knowledge, skills, and habits essential to engaging in meaningful conversation in different social spaces. Participants are asked to study a number of short statements on various principles of the Faith that are based on the utterances of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. In doing so, they learn to draw on His explanations and are encouraged, in this way, to adopt a posture in which they look to Him in their efforts to better understand the significance and implications of Bahá’u’lláh’s teachings and share them with others. How does undertaking each of the following activities strengthen in participants the capabilities needed to initiate and sustain meaningful and uplifting conversations?

- a. Identifying the sequence of ideas in each of the statements and then taking turns in the group, saying them to one another until they can express them with ease

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- b. Thinking about their interactions with friends, family members, and acquaintances and identifying some of the topics that occupy their minds, topics that offer the possibility of sharing the ideas in the statements

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- c. Choosing, while study of the book is still in progress, one or more of the statements and trying to converse on the ideas they contain with a couple of friends or family members

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You may now wish to present to the group with which you are studying today a few instances when you were able to incorporate into your conversation in a natural way some of the spiritual principles introduced in the second unit of Book 2.

As for the third unit, it focuses on the act of service addressed in Book 2—paying visits to friends and neighbors to discuss themes vital to the life of the community. Content for three types of conversations is outlined. You know from your study of the book that the greater share of the unit is devoted to the first of these. It elaborates a series of themes that can be discussed with members of households as part of a systematic program of home visits, with the primary aim of helping them to deepen their knowledge of the Faith. Content for the second type of conversation responds to growing experience worldwide in making regular visits to parents of youngsters in classes for their spiritual education and in groups for their spiritual empowerment—a practice that is now an integral feature of the community-building endeavor. Finally, the unit outlines a series of ideas to be incorporated into conversations with youth that address their desire to find avenues of service. Such conversations often lead young people to join the institute courses as a means of developing the requisite capacities. Discuss with the other members of your group the following questions:

- a. Many of those who study Book 2 will further deepen their understanding of the approaches and underlying concepts of the educational programs for children and junior youth when they go on to study Books 3 and 5, and some of them will choose to carry out these specialized acts of service. How does becoming aware of the significance of these programs as early as Book 2 and engaging in conversations with parents in the company of teachers and animators, as suggested there, quicken the participants' steps on the path of service?

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- b. How does learning the content of the conversation that unfolds between Alejandra and Beatrice, two young people who are eager to serve their community, prove helpful to all those walking the path of service?

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- c. As the practice of paying visits to households and engaging their members in meaningful and uplifting conversation becomes part of the culture of a neighborhood or village, the spiritual and social fabric of community life is strengthened. How does learning to share significant spiritual themes with members of households—beginning with those introduced in the third unit—increase capacity in those walking a path of service to contribute to the process of community building?

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When the Ruhi Institute first began offering the content of what is now the third unit, it noticed that some of those who paid visits to households were persistent in their efforts, while others soon stopped. The difference seemed to lie in the fact that those who persisted found joy in the very act of teaching itself, independent of the immediate results. The first unit of Book 2 was designed to address this issue. It follows the sequence of ideas below. Read through the ideas and think about them in terms of your efforts to serve as a tutor. Then write a short paragraph that explains in what way this act of service will be a constant source of joy to you.

- Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation can be compared to an ocean in the depths of which lie pearls of divine guidance. When we discover the pearls of wisdom that lie in Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation and share them with others, our hearts are filled with joy.
- We receive the benefits of the ocean of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation in proportion to the effort we exert.
- The ocean of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation is astonishingly near to us. If we but wish it, we can reach its shores in the twinkling of an eye.
- Having received the bounty of recognizing Bahá'u'lláh, we draw from the treasures of the ocean of His Revelation and share liberally and unconditionally with others its pearls of divine guidance.
- The Word of God is a constant source of inspiration as we advance on the path of service. We share the Word of God with others, for it has a special power and effect on the human heart.
- Of all the activities that occupy us in our daily lives, those that involve helping others discover the pearls hidden in the ocean of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation are invested with special blessings.
- The joy we derive from service lies in the act itself. If we are too attached to the results or affected by praise or criticism, we lose this joy. Detachment is a requisite of joyful service.
- We must also be willing to exert effort and make sacrifices. We should remember, though, that to sacrifice is to renounce that which is lower for that which is higher. When we do so, we gain spiritual happiness and further our spiritual progress.

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It should be noted that the acts of service described in this series of books, though central to the growth and development of a community, are above all elements of a process that seeks to raise individual capacity through study and action. What every tutor should realize is that these acts build on one another, increasing in terms of complexity from book to book. Learning to carry out each act of service effectively proves crucial to the capacity required to perform those that follow. To maintain an ongoing conversation over the course of several visits to a home, as proposed in this book, is clearly more demanding than the activity encouraged in Book 1, that of hosting a regular

devotional gathering, whether on one's own or in collaboration with a few others. And it is not difficult to see how, to undertake the more complex acts of service ahead, it will be essential for participants to advance in the capabilities addressed here.

Discuss with your group how the capabilities addressed in Book 2—capabilities that enable us to contribute to meaningful and uplifting conversation—build on the knowledge and abilities participants gain from their study of Book 1 and their involvement in the activities that emerge from it, particularly the act of sharing a prayer with others.

## SECTION 20

The next act of service addressed by the sequence of courses is in the area of the spiritual education of children. Book 3, *Teaching Children's Classes, Grade 1*, focuses on some of the knowledge, skills and abilities, and qualities and attitudes necessary for those wishing to enter this field of endeavor.

Of course, many who study the book, while firmly set on the path of service, may not be inclined to teach such classes. Yet, concern for the spiritual education of the young is shared by all. As family members, as members of the community, and as members of the institutions and agencies of the Faith, we all have to give attention to this responsibility of paramount importance. In addition to its primary aim, then, Book 3 hopes to reinforce such a collective awareness. With this in mind, read the following excerpt from the section "A Few Thoughts for the Tutor" and discuss it with the other members of your group:

From their study of the second unit of Book 2, participants are already acquainted with 'Abdu'l-Bahá's statement that education is of three kinds: material, human, and spiritual. Here they will be given an opportunity to further their understanding of the latter type of education, by the aid of which the spiritual nature, the higher nature, of the individual is developed. What should be clear from the outset is that spiritual education for children as conceived in the Bahá'í Faith differs fundamentally from the imposition of dogmatic beliefs sometimes associated with religious instruction. It aims to foster, instead, a love for knowledge, an open attitude towards learning, and a constant desire to investigate reality.

It is equally important to acknowledge that, in the education of the young, religious precepts cannot be swept aside, for to do so would be to deny them access to divine truths and spiritual principles, principles that must come to govern their thoughts and actions. Those supporting the claim that youngsters are best left to acquire their own standards and worldviews from their interactions with society, supposedly by free choice, do not seem to appreciate how aggressively political, economic and cultural powers promote patterns of belief and behavior that serve their own interests. But even if this were not

so, there is no reason to assume that succeeding generations would be able to create a better world without an education that nurtures the spiritual nature of the individual. Humanity bereft of guidance from the Divine Educator can produce little more than chaos, injustice, and suffering.

The above excerpt explains that the spiritual education of children, as conceived in the Faith, has nothing to do with dogmatic religious instruction. But it also makes clear that such education draws on the divine truths and spiritual principles found in the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, the universal Educator of humanity for this Day.

- a. What are some of the characteristics of dogmatic instruction—characteristics that are not exclusive to the religious domain?

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- b. How would you respond to someone who says that memorizing the Word of God is dogmatic?

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- c. When children are denied access to spiritual truths and principles contained in divine Revelation, they can easily absorb the values of a rampant materialism that is invading the cultures of the diverse peoples of the world. What are some of these values?

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- d. How do the values you mentioned above undermine the development of the spiritual nature of a human being?

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You know from your own study of the two units of Book 3 that the Ruhi Institute’s program for the spiritual education of children is concerned with helping youngsters develop a praiseworthy character and upright conduct. The attitudes and habits that distinguish a commendable character will, of course, only take root if they are the manifestations of spiritual qualities, and the lessons for Grade 1 focus, accordingly, on nurturing such qualities in five- and six-year-olds. The paragraph below from “A Few Thoughts for the Tutor” discusses this idea, which is taken up in the first unit of the book.

Among the gems with which every individual is endowed, the unit proposes, are those called “spiritual qualities”, seen as permanent structures upon which a noble and upright character can be built. That they constitute a distinct category of “virtues”—a general term used for every kind of praiseworthy attribute, including habits and attitudes as well as skills and abilities—is an essential idea that all participants should adequately grasp. Sections 6 and 7 consider some of the implications of this statement. The tutor will want to make sure that members of the group are able to relate what they are discussing to their study of the third unit of Book 1, where they thought about how spiritual qualities, as faculties of the human soul, must be developed in this life to aid and assist us on our eternal journey towards God. Love of God and knowledge of God are indispensable in nurturing spiritual qualities. It is important for participants to see how the ideas in these two sections set the Grade 1 lessons apart from, say, a course on virtues that treats punctuality and truthfulness as one and the same type of attribute. And, when teachers appreciate this distinction, they will avoid the tendency to view the development of a goodly character primarily in terms of behavior modification.

It is suggested above that, in helping youngsters to refine their character, teachers should appreciate the distinction between spiritual qualities—essential attributes of the human soul—and “virtues” in general, which is a term used to refer to all attributes considered praiseworthy, including habits, skills, and attitudes. The following statements shed further light on why it is important to keep this distinction in mind when teaching the lessons for Grade 1. Can you add a few other statements to the list? In carrying out this exercise, you will find it helpful to read and reflect on the ideas presented in Sections 6 and 7 of the first unit.

- In developing spiritual qualities, children are guided to focus their hearts and minds on God as the inexhaustible Source from which these qualities emanate.
- Praiseworthy attitudes and dispositions, no matter how much they may be reinforced by social norms, are fleeting and limited in nature unless they are built on the foundation of spiritual qualities.
- Nurturing in children spiritual qualities such as compassion, love, and generosity will instill in them appropriate attitudes and habits such as empathy, care, and sharing.
- Learning to behave in accordance with cultural and social norms will not, on its own, lead to the development of spiritual qualities.

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As you have observed, one of the important concepts explored in the unit is discipline. The extract below from “A Few Thoughts for the Tutor” elaborates on how this concept is to be viewed in an educational process concerned with fostering spiritual qualities, as opposed to one that seeks to modify behavior in other ways.

Discussion on the above concepts and ideas should lead participants to the realization that, ultimately, through a process of spiritual education, children should come to regard the acquisition of spiritual qualities as a reward in itself and the possession of an unworthy character as the greatest punishment. All of this, then, should enable participants to view the modification of behavior in youngsters from a proper perspective—not as a central aim but as an aid to the refinement of character. They will, accordingly, find appropriate ways in their interactions with children to encourage desirable conduct and to discourage unbecoming patterns of behavior, and some of these are mentioned in Section 13. Other concepts briefly addressed in the section are those related to freedom and discipline. While harsh punishment obviously has no place in the education of children, allowing them absolute freedom to do as they wish is equally damaging to their spiritual development.

Below are a few statements. Decide which ones are consistent with the concept of discipline as presented in the unit.

- ☐ Discipline should be harsh.
- ☐ Discipline, if it is to endure, must come from inside the person.
- ☐ True freedom depends on self-discipline.
- ☐ When discipline is imposed, it stifles creativity.
- ☐ Discipline protects creative initiative from self-indulgence.
- ☐ If a teacher infuses in the students the love of God, it is not necessary to set standards of conduct.
- ☐ Without self-discipline, it is impossible to develop spiritual qualities.
- ☐ Children need freedom to discover things for themselves; discipline can only interfere with the process of discovery and true learning.
- ☐ Children thrive on discipline; they learn more effectively in a well-organized, structured environment.
- ☐ Individuals acquire wisdom by adopting the humble posture of a learner. The discipline imposed by this posture of learning frees one from fear of failure and opens the way for the constructive exercise of initiative.

\_\_\_\_\_ The exercise of discipline cannot be taken to mean any form of violence or abuse, whether psychological or physical, for violence is fundamentally incompatible with the nobility of the human spirit and harms human development.

Now, take a moment to discuss the following question with your group: In what way does the concept of discipline apply to a study circle, given that the participants are not children but youth and older adults?

As for the second unit, it consists of two parts: the twenty-four lessons suggested for this grade and preliminary sections designed to enable teachers to become well acquainted with the content of the lessons, each of which is structured around the development of a particular spiritual quality. You know that, to cultivate spiritual qualities in youngsters, the lessons put them in immediate contact with the Word of God and inspire them with stories of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, the embodiment of the highest human ideals. Prayer, memorization of quotations, and stories form the core elements of these lessons, and the preliminary sections of the second unit take four lessons at a time and guide participants through a review of these core elements in each one. You may wish to examine these sections now and then write one or two sentences about the role these elements play in the spiritual education of children.

Prayer: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Memorization of quotations: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Stories: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Now, can you say a few words about the role of each of the other elements of the lessons?

Songs: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Cooperative games: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Coloring: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

The second unit encourages participants to practice presenting the various elements of the lessons as part of their study of the materials, including, possibly, going through them with three or four children. Some groups may proceed through the entire unit in this way, studying four lessons at a time, before gaining experience with a class of children. It is also possible for participants to study a set of four lessons and then immediately gain some experience—either by assisting another teacher or by starting a class on their own. Discuss what kind of knowledge a tutor would need to have about what is unfolding in his or her village or neighborhood to be able to take such a flexible and responsive approach.

## SECTION 21

Having gained a deeper appreciation of the acts of service to which study of the first three books gives rise, let us now look at the next book in the Institute’s main sequence, which turns again to the question of Bahá’í identity, the “I” in the statement “I walk a path of service.” History shapes much of the identity of the individual, as well as entire peoples. When connection with history is severed, confusion sets in and people become as rootless trees. But where, we may ask, during this age of transition in the life of humanity, when the old order is disintegrating and a new creation appearing in its place, is each person to find the historical roots of his or her existence? This is a difficult question for most, but for Bahá’ís, the answer is simple enough: we must seek the elements of our identity in the myriad events that have brought the Cause of God forward from that fateful evening when the Báb declared His Mission to Mullá Ḥusayn.

Book 4, *The Twin Manifestations*, is dedicated to the study of the life history of the Báb and Bahá’u’lláh. In the first unit, the significance of this Day, the Day of God, is briefly examined. The second and third units, then, familiarize participants with the Ministries of these two Sacred Beings. The spiritual import of the episodes is underscored through the study of relevant passages from the Writings, which illuminate profound themes associated with the appearance of God’s Manifestations. No matter how important it is for participants to learn essential facts about the lives of the Báb and Bahá’u’lláh, it is the understanding they gain through reflection on these themes that will sustain them in the path of service. In this connection, the introductory remarks for the tutor explain:

In preparing to take a group through the second and third units, then, the tutor should give careful thought to the spiritual themes addressed. Among these are, for example, that every divine Luminary is made manifest in the world of humanity not at His own choosing, but by the Will of God, and is endowed by Him with innate knowledge; that the first to recognize His Station are called upon to perform deeds of great heroism, deeds which bear witness to the transforming power of His Faith; that He accepts to endure a life of suffering in order to guide humanity to the truth and make God’s Will and purpose known to His creation; and that no force on earth, however powerful, can succeed in diminishing His influence or prevent Him from achieving the Mission with which He has been entrusted. In this connection, one important concept treated in the third unit is that of crisis and victory. An understanding of this concept—that every crisis in the Cause of God serves to release a fresh

measure of its inherent power—is essential for all those treading the path of service, not only that they may appreciate the history of the Faith but also that they may contribute to its steady unfoldment in their neighborhoods and villages, a process which invariably passes through a series of crises and victories.

In your efforts to serve as a tutor, how will your own understanding of the spiritual significance of the events surrounding the lives of the Twin Manifestations affect the way participants engage with the material?

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Participants in the course should be encouraged to narrate the history they are learning in some detail. How can a tutor help them develop the ability to do so?

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As noted above, a theme that runs throughout the third unit is that of crisis and victory. One of your challenges will be to ensure that participants acquire a profound understanding of this principle. To gain a fuller grasp of the dynamics of crisis and victory, you may wish to make a list of the significant events described in the third unit of the book in chronological order. Having done so, decide which events mark the beginning of a fresh stage of either crisis or victory.

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Now, think about your own community. How has progress been achieved through the dialectic of crisis and victory?

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It should be noted that, in this book, participants are challenged to memorize passages from the Writings that are much lengthier than the ones they committed to memory in earlier books. In the second unit they are encouraged to learn by heart the address of the Báb to the Letters of the Living and, in the third, the opening five paragraphs of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas. That the educational process fostered by the courses of the Ruhi Institute places emphasis on memorization is apparent from the outset. Though no pressure is ever put on those who find it difficult, by the time they reach Book 4, all participants will have become increasingly aware of the value of bringing to mind passages from the Writings and will have gained many insights into the effects of the Word of God on the human heart. Think back to your own study. How did your ability to memorize the lengthy passages in Book 4 gradually develop as you advanced through each of the earlier courses?

## SECTION 22

The fifth book in the main sequence, like Book 3, takes up the question of the education of the young. *Releasing the Powers of Junior Youth* strives to help those wishing to serve as “animators” develop the capabilities needed to engage groups of youngsters between the ages of twelve and fifteen in a three-year program for their spiritual empowerment. As in the case of Book 3, it is hoped that everyone proceeding through the main sequence of courses will benefit in some way from their study of the book. But tutors should recognize that this act of service is intended primarily, though not exclusively, to open before youth from every background an avenue through which they can contribute to the betterment of society. The introductory section for the tutor addresses this point and describes how the capacity-building process will have prepared such participants to undertake this act of service:

What those who act as tutors for Book 5 should acknowledge is that, among the participants, there will be many youth in their late teens or early twenties that entered the main sequence of courses with the expressed desire of serving as an animator and with all the latent capacity needed to do so. Some will have come into contact with the Faith through discussions with their peers that emphasized the role they can play in educating younger generations. Others will have gone through the spiritual empowerment program themselves as junior youth and embarked on the study of Book 1 soon thereafter. Whatever the avenue that brought them to the institute process, they will now form part of a growing nucleus of individuals in their village or neighborhood committed to its betterment and, in this context, will be gaining experience in visiting households in order to explore with families themes central to the Faith—the act of service addressed in Book 2. As part of this nucleus, a good number of them will also be closely associated with at least one group of junior youth in the locality and will be assisting the animator in carrying out various activities and joining him or her on regular visits to parents to discuss concepts and approaches related to the program. At this point, all of them will possess considerable knowledge of the Bahá’í teachings, which will have deepened through their study of Books 3 and 4, and will display the skills, abilities, attitudes and spiritual qualities needed to initiate and sustain meaningful conversations with friends and neighbors. It is particularly here, when they reach Book 5, that the significance of the capacity-building process inherent in the Ruhi Institute’s main sequence of courses—a process conceived in terms of walking a path of service—will become apparent. To engage a group of junior youth in a three-year program for their spiritual empowerment is a demanding act of service, and the efforts of fledgling animators to do so will rely, in no small measure, on the capacity they have steadily built on the path thus far.

As an aspiring tutor, it would be useful for you to think about the young person who has gradually proceeded through the main sequence of courses in the manner described above and has now reached Book 5. What are some of the attributes that will distinguish him or her? A few are mentioned below. Can you add some others to the list?



- An understanding that it is through strengthening one’s higher nature that one attains one’s true station
- A sense of responsibility for one’s personal growth and for the progress of one’s community
- An understanding that it is in the field of service that one can pursue a twofold moral purpose, to take charge of one’s own intellectual and spiritual growth and contribute to the betterment of society
- Recognition of the transforming power of the Word of God
- Some ability to introduce spiritual principles into everyday conversation
- A strong sense of history and an understanding of the nature of this historical moment and one’s place in it
- Steadfastness in the face of the tests and trials that one invariably encounters on the path of service

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Now, you know that the first unit of Book 5, “Life’s Springtime”, includes a selection of passages from the writings that, in their entirety, provide a picture of a young person who is capable of acting effectively at this moment in human history. Review that unit now. After doing so, decide whether you would add any other attributes to the above list.

The aim of the second unit, “An Age of Promise”, is essentially twofold. It seeks to consolidate in the minds of those who study it the understanding that junior youth are members of a distinct age group, one with its own particular characteristics. At the same time, it hopes to make clear that the approach adopted by the Bahá’í community towards this period of life,

shaped by the writings of the Faith, is radically different from approaches based on prevalent assumptions and theories. Again, let us read from the section for the tutor:

. . . the unit takes a brief look at the nature of early adolescence and then asks participants to reflect on the challenge of directing the growing awareness of youngsters in this age range appropriately. In this, the unit raises a warning: such efforts must avoid the pitfall of some programs, which, instead of directing the rising self-awareness of those in this formative phase of life towards selfless service to others, turn it in on the “self” and, sadly, end up making them captives of the “insistent self”. Sections 5 through 9 try to alert participants to some of the subtle dangers of this pitfall by taking them through a series of relevant quotations from the Bahá’í writings. The unit goes on to consider the effects of the social environment on the lives of early adolescents, introduces the concept of a “junior youth group” as an environment of mutual support, and defines the posture to be assumed by all those arising to serve as animators of such groups.

Take some time to review the unit and then say a few words about what you think participants should come to understand about each of the following through their study. What kind of notions might they have to discard in achieving this understanding?

a. The nature of early adolescence: \_\_\_\_\_

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b. The challenge of directing the growing awareness of junior youth: \_\_\_\_\_

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c. The effects of the environment on the lives of junior youth: \_\_\_\_\_

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d. The concept of a junior youth group as an environment of mutual support: \_\_\_\_\_

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e. The posture to be assumed by all those arising to serve as animators: \_\_\_\_\_

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Recognition of the potentialities of junior youth by growing numbers of people in a village or neighborhood contributes to a culture that promotes attitudes towards young people different from the ones being perpetuated in society today. What kind of shift in attitudes at the level of community have you noted in your village or neighborhood as the study of Book 5 has become widespread?

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The third unit, “Serving as an Animator”, builds on the insights participants gained in the second one to open up a discussion around the principal aim of the junior youth program—to release their spiritual, moral, and intellectual powers. In preparing to take a group of fledgling animators through the unit, you will want to give considerable thought to the question of moral and spiritual empowerment. Yet this question will, of course, be uppermost in your mind in all your efforts to serve as a tutor. Read and reflect on the excerpt below, which points to a conception of power that diverges fundamentally from those prevalent in society today.

The question of spiritual empowerment requires, in general, a great deal of thought and reflection by tutors. Indeed, the educational process set in motion by the institute courses can, in the final analysis, be seen as a means of moral and spiritual empowerment, one through which people of all walks of life and every background are enabled to arise and participate in building a better world. The conception of power employed here differs greatly from prevalent definitions that associate it with the intention to dominate or to induce others to acquiesce to one’s wishes and demands. The aim, instead, is

to become channels for the flow of the powers of the human spirit: the power of unity, of love, of humble service, of pure deeds. How to contribute to the dynamics needed for such a process to advance—nay, accelerate—is central to the act of serving as a tutor, and with experience in engaging group after group in the study of the courses, every tutor is able to catch glimpses into the many interacting factors involved, none of which is more powerful than nurturing true understanding.

Earlier in this unit we discussed the theme of motivation. There you will have gained some initial insight into the nature of an educational process that releases the spiritual and intellectual powers latent in the individual. One aspect of this process that will be an object of your constant reflection is the dynamics between humility and power. Read Section 19 of the third unit of Book 5, which discusses this theme, and then write a few words about how, in the absence of the spiritual quality of humility, the kind of power we seek will remain untapped.

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An educational process that seeks to empower those between the ages of 12 and 15 will, the third unit of Book 5 suggests, necessarily involve developing spiritual perception, enhancing the powers of expression, and building a sound moral structure. On this subject, the introductory remarks for the tutor continue thus:

In this book, of course, the concern before the tutor extends further, to the next generation and to the nature of the educational process that will enable young adolescents to exercise their emerging powers fruitfully. At the heart of this process are the mutually reinforcing powers of thought and expression. The power of the mind to engage in abstract thought, which increases dramatically during early adolescence, is strengthened in junior youth as they learn to apply relevant scientific, moral, and spiritual concepts to their analysis of the world around them and to their initial attempts to act on society. Yet, no matter how important, the power of rational analysis is in need of spiritual perception. Through it, channels of understanding, not available through the exercise of mental powers alone, are opened. Junior youth, then, must be helped to recognize spiritual forces and identify spiritual principles in the situations they encounter if they are to make sound moral choices. That the moral structure governing a person's thoughts and behavior is closely connected to the structure of language in which he or she expresses thought is a basic premise of the educational process envisioned. Whatever insights the first two units of Book 5 may have offered into this process, Sections 5 through 19 of the third unit strive to make its various dimensions explicit,

drawing on examples from the texts used in the program, as necessary. Every tutor would do well to review these sections carefully in preparing to guide a group through them. It is hoped that participants will take away from their study an understanding of the potential of the texts to empower junior youth across diverse cultures.

This is not the place to analyze the texts studied by junior youth to see how, in the themes and concepts addressed and in the language employed, they contribute to the aims of the program as described above. You will, of course, need to be prepared to do this in the context of a study circle focused on Book 5 and help its members acquire some understanding of the potential of the texts to develop spiritual perception, enhance the powers of expression, and build a sound moral structure in junior youth. The exercises in the sections mentioned, as well as in Sections 20 to 23, will assist you in this respect.

What might be useful for you to do here is to reflect on the concept of spiritual perception as it pertains to your efforts as a tutor. Spiritual perception is one of those powers of the human soul that tutors need to develop if they are to assist participants in every institute course in reaching the shores of true understanding. In this light, it is suggested that you review Sections 5 through 7 of the third unit of Book 5, which explore this concept, and then say a few words about how a tutor can sharpen this inner faculty.

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## SECTION 23

Walking a path of service throughout one's life clearly implies teaching. Although the propagation of Bahá'u'lláh's Message is one of the most essential services we can render, teaching is also a state of being, one in which we are constantly sharing with others that which has so bountifully been bestowed upon us. Given the profound nature of this subject, we will discuss Book 6, *Teaching the Cause*, over three sections, looking at the first unit here and the next two in Sections 24 and 25.

At the outset, it should be clear to you that capacity to teach the Cause of God, whether according to individual plans or through collective action, cannot be developed in one course. The conditions of humanity differ considerably from place to place, and every culture, every age group, and every population presents its own set of circumstances that those who wish to share the teachings of the Faith with their fellow human beings need to take into account. Nevertheless, there are certain basic universal truths on which the relevant capacity can be built, and it is these that are the central concern of Book 6.

Among these truths, none is more crucial here than the complementarity of “being” and “doing”. In serving as a tutor of the book, you will need to make sure that the interdependence of the two is fully appreciated by the participants. Indeed, this theme underlies the educational process fostered by the main sequence itself—a process in which study and action are joined. In general the sequence of courses tries to weave together a number of elements that are sometimes held in opposition to one another but are, in fact, complementary dimensions of one reality. It is hoped that in this way, as individuals progress through the courses, the tendency to reduce reality to a set of dichotomies will gradually be overcome. The extract below from the introductory material for the tutor sheds light on this theme:

In exploring the nature of the duty enjoined on us by Bahá'u'lláh to teach His Cause, the first unit takes up several fundamental concepts. Among those introduced early in the unit is the concept of “enkindlement”. Participants are encouraged to recognize that our duty to teach is concerned as much with our inner condition as it is with the actions we carry out. That “being” and “doing” are two complementary aspects of a life lived according to the Bahá'í teachings is a theme underlying the entire sequence of courses. Here it is made explicit and, indeed, gives shape to the overall structure of the book. The initial sections of the unit will assist participants in gaining spiritual insight into this idea as it relates to teaching the Faith. Several metaphors found in the Writings are employed to help them see the interconnectedness between “being” and “doing”—most notably, the image of a flame, which, no matter how small, gives forth warmth and light. The act of teaching, it is suggested, is a natural expression of a state of being, one that can best be described as a state of enkindlement, in which the love of God burns so brightly in our hearts that we strive ceaselessly to diffuse His Word.

It may be useful for you to review now Sections 1 through 13 of the first unit of Book 6. How does the understanding participants reach through their study of the passages in these sections enable them to appreciate how the complementarity of “being” and “doing” is manifested in practical terms in the field of service? In this, the implications of certain commonly held notions that separate the two will need to become clear to participants, if they are to keep such dichotomous thinking from influencing the way they view a life dedicated to the promotion of the Cause. Below are some ideas about teaching they may have upon entering the course. How will their thinking have changed from their study of these sections?

- a. “Only those who have a profound knowledge of the Cause should teach.”

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- b. “We should wait until we are fully deepened before we teach.”

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- c. “What is important is to say the right things to the seeker; our spiritual condition is secondary.”

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- d. “It is our inner condition that really matters; therefore, we should not teach until we acquire the qualities of a true Bahá’í. Then our example will be the best teacher, and there will be no need for words.”

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It is hoped that, in discussing these sections, participants will come to see that the twofold moral purpose they have been pursuing since entering the path of service ties together every aspect of their lives—their search for knowledge, their obedience to Divine law, their efforts to serve God and draw closer to Him and to acquire spiritual qualities and refine their character. How will you ensure that they will be able to make this connection in the context of teaching the Faith?

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As you will recall from your own study of Book 6, another truth explored in this unit is the sacred nature of teaching, which can be seen as the opening of the city of the human heart to Bahá’u’lláh’s Revelation with the key of utterance. Sections 14 through 17 introduce this concept to participants, and the introductory remarks for the tutor underscore the importance of these sections:

In the sections here, they are asked to think about how a heightened consciousness of the sacredness of this act does not merely increase the effectiveness of endeavors in the field. Rather, and more importantly, it releases the spiritual forces needed to raise such endeavors above worldly affairs, setting in motion, thereby, processes that can bring about fundamental change, both individual and collective. In Section 17 participants will spend some time examining the implications of this heightened consciousness. Among the points the tutor will want to make sure come across to them, two stand out: First, they will have to take care, lest they adopt certain mindsets which, however widespread in society, would introduce into their teaching efforts attitudes and practices that would compromise their sacred nature. The act of teaching should not be

approached as though one were recruiting members for a progressive social cause, much less be conceived in terms of selling a product, no matter how beneficial to the user. Second, they should recognize that, since all their undertakings on the path of service involve bringing hearts into contact with the Word of God, these, too, are sacred in nature and should be approached with this awareness.

Now review Sections 14 through 17. What insights do you hope the participants will gain, especially from the study of Section 17, about the implications of sacredness for the act of teaching? What kinds of thoughts will help them resist the tendency to apply to the act of teaching ideas and approaches that are embedded in dominant culture? Consider the thoughts below that one might have about teaching the Cause. What does each suggest about the message being conveyed? What view does it take of the human beings with whom we hope to share that message?

- a. “The way our message is packaged is what really counts.”

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- b. “Teaching the Cause is like recruiting people to join a progressive social movement. It is sufficient to share the principles of the Faith with people because that is what attracts them most.”

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- c. “When we teach the Cause of God, we are addressing a human heart, which belongs to Him, and are using the key of our utterance to open the gates of the city of that heart to the Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh.”

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Following on the discussion of sacredness, the unit takes up in Section 18 another profound spiritual truth—that, when the gates to the city of the human heart are opened and the heart is connected to Bahá’u’lláh’s Revelation, an enduring process of transformation begins. Of course, in Book 5, you gave thought to the dual transformation—at the level of the individual and in the structure of society—that is envisioned in the writings of the Faith. That there is a reciprocal relationship between the intellectual and spiritual growth of the individual and organic change in social structures is, by now, integral to your own thinking. In this, you will recall the statement of the Guardian that the human heart cannot be separated from the environment, for the standards and behavior of individuals shape their environment



and are, in turn, molded by social structures and processes. How does understanding of this profound concept advance through the discussion in the first unit of Book 6, beginning in Section 18, of the power of the Word of God to transform the human heart?

## SECTION 24

Having helped participants think about how effective teaching involves both “being” and “doing”—attention to one’s inner condition as well as constant activity—Book 6 turns more directly to our inner state. The second unit, then, focuses on some of the qualities and attitudes essential for teaching, emphasizing at the outset the idea that the perfection of an individual’s character naturally finds expression in efforts to serve others, while one’s desire to serve others enhances the refinement of one’s character. For the tutor, in preparing to take a group through the unit, this is a chance to think once again about the spiritual nature of the path of service that we each, according to our own circumstances, tread. In this light, the introductory section for the tutor picks up, in a sense, the discussion in Book 3 on spiritual qualities and expands on it:

The development of spiritual qualities, together with corresponding attitudes, is a theme addressed repeatedly in the courses of the Ruhi Institute, but always in the context of building a particular capacity—the capacity needed, for example, to contribute to the devotional character of a community, to share with others pearls of wisdom from Bahá’u’lláh’s Revelation, to conduct classes for the spiritual education of children. In this way, participants’ understanding of these essential attributes of the human soul expands and assumes greater depth over time, as they examine the dynamics of each one in a new light and witness its operation in some new area of action.

In guiding a group through the unit, a tutor will want to bear in mind a concept central to the exploration of spiritual qualities, which, present in all the courses of the main sequence, moves to the forefront in this one—namely, that such qualities depend on one another for their proper expression. Of particular significance to the act of teaching is an understanding of how courage demands wisdom; how wisdom remains unexpressed in the absence of courage; how purity requires detachment from worldly ambition, as well as selflessness; how kindness, if not modified by faith in people’s capacity, can be overshadowed by paternalism or how, without sincerity, it is, in reality, nothing more than hypocrisy.

Tutors are by now familiar with the idea, put forward in Book 3, that spiritual qualities are those permanent structures that constitute who we are as human beings. The acquisition of these qualities enables us to display proper attitudes in our interactions with others and to eschew the undesirable ones which we might have acquired through our upbringing and culture. . . .

Those who serve as tutors are, of course, also aware that the development of any spiritual quality involves an understanding of a number of associated concepts. Attaining higher and higher degrees of purity, to take an example,

requires some understanding of what the human heart has been created to mirror forth, of what constitutes the dust and dross that can obscure its radiance, and of what is needed to keep it cleansed of such impurities. But, beyond a deepening understanding of such concepts, one must possess the will and the sincere desire to advance spiritually. Will and desire are not created by mere intellectual discussion; there is need for deep and profound reflection by each individual on his or her inner state. It is the task of the tutor, then, to foster an environment conducive to such reflection—an environment that does not give rise to feelings of guilt, that does not call for confessions, that does not encourage accusations, one in which a group of friends can dispassionately discuss both abstract and practical matters, leaving each to reflect privately on what is required of him or her.

It is noted above that our understanding of spiritual qualities expands as we exercise the capabilities we are developing in carrying out different acts of service. Consider the two qualities below, which are the subject of reflection as early as Book 2. Can you say a few words about how your understanding of them has expanded as you have advanced on the path of service and have visited homes to engage in conversations of spiritual significance, have conducted classes for children, and have assisted a group of junior youth as an animator?

Detachment: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Humility: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Let us go further now. You are well familiar with the content of the first six institute courses: you have gone through the material once as a participant, have carried out acts of service that have enhanced your understanding of the application and implications of the teachings in your own life and in the life of the community, and have reflected here on the concepts and principles that shape the educational process. In light of this rich experience, reflect on the concept of “capabilities”, the development of which, we have said, requires knowledge, spiritual qualities and praiseworthy attitudes, as well as a host of abilities and skills. Is there not a real possibility that, in the absence of fostering spiritual qualities and nurturing understanding, a process of capacity building would end up becoming nothing more

than technical training, in some narrow sense of the term, concerned only with assimilation of information and acquisition of skills?

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Now, how does a tutor ensure that sufficient and appropriate attention is given to creating an environment that enables participants in a study circle to engage in the kind of profound reflection mentioned in the extract above, which is a vital part of every institute course?

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## SECTION 25

The third unit of Book 6 focuses on the act of teaching itself. Among the capacities involved, two are addressed in the unit: the capacity to recognize and nurture receptivity to Bahá'u'lláh's Message and the capacity to present the Bahá'í teachings in a cogent manner, appropriate to the circumstances. The core of the unit is dedicated to the latter, and you remember well that, to help participants think about its nature, an imaginary situation is presented for them to analyze—a conversation between two young people, Anna and her friend Emilia. As a tutor, you will want to make sure participants take away two important points related to the capacity under consideration, the first of which is described below.

. . . it is imperative that participants appreciate not only the difference between concepts and information, raised in Sections 4 through 6, but also why the distinction is so important. It is, after all, the understanding of concepts and profound truths that enables souls to draw closer to Bahá'u'lláh, not the mere assimilation of information. To the extent that the act of teaching is concerned with raising consciousness and fostering understanding it can be seen as a means of helping to empower individuals, intellectually and spiritually. Here, the capacity participants have been developing since entering the institute process to interact with the Word of God and achieve understanding will come into play, as they now consider how to guide others towards the shores of true knowledge.

You are encouraged to reread Sections 4 through 6 now. How does the ability to see the distinction between concepts and information

- apply to our efforts in teaching the Faith to our fellow human beings and in helping them to reach the shores of true knowledge?

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- enhance the ability of a tutor to contribute to the advancement of understanding, so central to the entire sequence of courses?

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As for the second point related to the capacity to present the teachings in a cogent manner, participants should come to see that, while there is no formula to follow, not every way of putting the ideas together is effective. Analyzing Anna’s conversation with Emilia will help them to appreciate what a cogent presentation involves. That the conversation does not represent a fixed set of ideas they should follow indiscriminately will need to be understood by the participants. Indeed, the exercises have been included precisely to encourage them to think about how they would adapt the presentation in response to different backgrounds and interests. In this, what they should also come to realize is that all effective presentations of the Faith have certain characteristics in common. Bearing in mind Anna’s presentation, decide which of the following are characteristics of an effective presentation (E) and which ones definitely are not (N):

An effective presentation

- \_\_\_ is simple and profound.
- \_\_\_ is clear.
- \_\_\_ is vague.
- \_\_\_ demonstrates an attitude of openness.
- \_\_\_ reflects the depth of the presenter’s faith.
- \_\_\_ focuses on Bahá’u’lláh as a Manifestation of God—a universal Educator—and clearly identifies His teachings as the source of what is being said.
- \_\_\_ introduces the concept that there are laws in the Faith which are an expression of God’s love and mercy and that following them is the cause of progress and development.
- \_\_\_ provides a glimpse into the roles of the three participants working together to build a new civilization—the individual, the community, and the institutions of the Faith—and the relationships of love and trust that unite them.
- \_\_\_ gives the impression that the Bahá’í community is perfect as it is today.

- \_\_\_\_\_ introduces the Central Figures of the Faith.
- \_\_\_\_\_ explains enough of the history of the Faith to create a connection between the listener and the Twin Manifestations.
- \_\_\_\_\_ avoids going into a detailed analysis of the relationship of Bahá'u'lláh to earlier Manifestations.
- \_\_\_\_\_ conveys enthusiasm.
- \_\_\_\_\_ is inviting.
- \_\_\_\_\_ is pushy.
- \_\_\_\_\_ draws aptly on passages from the Writings.
- \_\_\_\_\_ makes use of analogies.
- \_\_\_\_\_ is logical.
- \_\_\_\_\_ is based mostly on prophecies.
- \_\_\_\_\_ is argumentative.
- \_\_\_\_\_ appeals to both the heart and the mind of the listener.
- \_\_\_\_\_ manipulates the seeker's emotions.
- \_\_\_\_\_ makes it clear that becoming a Bahá'í carries with it responsibilities.
- \_\_\_\_\_ plays on the seeker's fears.
- \_\_\_\_\_ avoids burdening the seeker with too many details.
- \_\_\_\_\_ provides a lot of information.
- \_\_\_\_\_ focuses on intricate details.
- \_\_\_\_\_ reflects faith in the listener's capacity to recognize the Manifestation of God for today.

Inherent to the exploration of the capacity needed to present the Faith in a cogent manner, appropriate to the circumstances, is the understanding that such conversations can take place in the context of personal teaching efforts or collective campaigns. Participants, in thinking about the former, are encouraged to see how such efforts complement—and, indeed, are woven into—collective action. They should be given an opportunity to reflect on their own personal circumstances and their efforts to develop a pattern of life in which teaching the Faith constitutes an essential part. Sections 26 and 27 are intended to assist them in this regard. How important is it for the tutor to have carried out the exercises in Section 26 and to have devised his or her own teaching plan in Section 27—a plan which will have been modified over time through action—in motivating the participants of a study circle to do the same?

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In the context of the neighborhood or village in which you live, describe how personal efforts to teach the Faith complement collective action focused on its expansion and consolidation.

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The subject of collective action is taken up in Section 28 and is the focus of the remainder of the unit. Here the exercises are not extensive, and responsibility will fall on the tutor to assist participants in relating what they study to their own experience. They should come to see how, in collective action, every individual is to contribute to an environment characterized by increasing degrees of unity, in its various dimensions. They should gain a vision of how unified action at the grassroots, together with individual exertions, serves to advance the global enterprise in which the Bahá'í community is engaged. This paragraph describes the nature of the task at hand for the tutor:

To this end, the sections raise a number of questions that participants will consider: What is the nature of collective action? What does it mean for collective action to be unified? What are the features of the approach to the growth of the Faith worldwide, and what is the role of intensive campaigns? What are some of the characteristics of the people among whom they are working, whether the inhabitants of a village or a receptive population living in a neighborhood or dispersed throughout the cluster? How strong are the forces being generated by their collective action to propel the movement of the population towards the vision of Bahá'u'lláh's World Order? How intimately connected to the growth of the Faith is the capacity built through the educational process being promoted by the institute for children, junior youth, and youth and adults? Are the requisite conditions for effective collective action being created? Are bonds of fellowship continually being strengthened? Is unity of purpose being achieved among participants in collective action? Is it being made manifest in joyful and intense activity? To what extent is their approach to learning about growth being defined by action, reflection on action, and consultation? The importance of this last question cannot be overstated, for it is the extent to which such an approach becomes the mode of operation among an expanding nucleus of friends that they will be able to build higher and higher degrees of unity of thought, so necessary if they are to discover what is needed to advance from one stage of growth to the next.

It will be important for the tutor, in going through the final sections of the unit with a group, to recognize opportunities to open up discussion around the above questions. To this end, it would be useful for you to consider each of them with the other members of your group today. In doing so, try to move away from engaging in abstract discussion and draw on

examples with which you have firsthand experience. It would be especially worthwhile for you to give thought to the questions below, in the context of your own neighborhood or village.

How is the growth of the Faith, in this moment in history, inseparable from the capacity built through the educational process promoted by the institute courses, particularly the capacity of youth as they advance through the main sequence?

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The pattern of action, reflection on action, and consultation among a nucleus of friends working in a village or neighborhood enables them to assume collective ownership for learning. Can the learning process that such a pattern propels be reduced to the mere planning and implementation of campaigns to multiply activities? How is the process distinct from one that involves simply following a number of steps mechanically? In what way does such a pattern allow for the generation of insights into individual and collective transformation within the particular reality that the friends find themselves?

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## SECTION 26

It is hoped that this overview of the first six books of the Ruhi Institute has provided you with insight into some of the pedagogical principles governing its curriculum, particularly how it is organized around a process of capacity building likened to that of walking a path of service. Book 7, which you are now studying, is dedicated to an act of service that we have said is crucial to the expansion of the educational process itself—namely, helping group after group go through the courses in the main sequence. As you know, the main sequence does not end here but continues with several other courses that address increasingly complex acts of service. We need not, however, consider them at this point. For now, you are encouraged to take a moment to reflect on the significance of developing capacity systematically through a sequence of courses. Read the following excerpt from a message dated 27 December 2005 written by the Universal House of Justice which, underscoring the progress that had taken place during the preceding years, observes:

**“Developments since then have served only to demonstrate further the efficacy of a sequence of courses that seeks to build capacity for service by concentrating on the application of the spiritual insights gained through profound study of the Writings. Participants are exposed to a body of knowledge that fosters a set of related habits, attitudes and qualities and are assisted in sharpening certain skills and abilities needed to carry out acts of service. Discussions that revolve around the Creative Word, in the serious and uplifting atmosphere of a study circle, raise the level of consciousness about one’s duties to the Cause and create an awareness of the joy one derives from teaching the Faith and serving its interests. The spiritual context in which specific deeds are addressed endows them with significance. Confidence is patiently built as the friends engage in progressively more complex and demanding acts of service. Yet, above all, it is reliance on God that sustains them in their endeavors. How abundant the accounts of believers who enter the teaching field with trepidation only to find themselves bolstered by confirmations on all sides. Seeing the possibilities and opportunities before them with new eyes, they witness firsthand the power of Divine assistance, as they strive to put into practice what they are learning and achieve results far exceeding their expectations. That the spirit of faith born out of intimate contact with the Word of God has such an effect on souls is by no means a new phenomenon. What is heartening is that the institute process is helping such large numbers experience the transforming potency of the Faith.”<sup>5</sup>**

On the basis of your own experience treading the path of service opened up by the courses of the Ruhi Institute, say a few words about how each book builds on the one before it, enabling participants to carry out increasingly complex acts of service.

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Now, to consolidate the insights you have gained into the central concepts and underlying principles that have shaped the content and order of the sequence of courses, reflect on the excerpt below from a message of the Universal House of Justice.

**“Without exception, having witnessed the transformative effects of the institute process firsthand, the friends in such clusters are striving to gain a fuller appreciation of the dynamics that underlie it—the spirit of fellowship it creates, the participatory approach it adopts, the depth of understanding it fosters, the acts**



**of service it recommends, and, above all, its reliance on the Word of God. Every effort is being exerted to ensure that the process reflects the complementarity of ‘being’ and ‘doing’ the institute courses make explicit; the centrality they accord to knowledge and its application; the emphasis they place on avoiding false dichotomies; the stress they lay on memorization of the Creative Word; and the care they exercise in raising consciousness, without awakening the insistent self.”<sup>6</sup>**

You will of course gain increasing insights into the dynamics of the institute process as you continue to walk the path of service it opens up. With the understanding you have acquired so far, write down some thoughts about the following aims of the courses:

- a. To make explicit the complementarity of “being” and “doing”: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- b. To give centrality to knowledge and its application: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- c. To place emphasis on avoiding false dichotomies: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- d. To lay stress on memorization of the Creative Word: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- e. To exercise care in raising consciousness, without awakening the insistent self: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Now say a few words about the nature of the educational process that the courses seek to foster, as it relates to each of the following:

- a. The spirit of fellowship the educational process creates: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- b. The participatory approach it encourages: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- c. The depth of understanding it seeks to foster: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

d. The acts of service it recommends: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

e. The reliance on the Word of God the educational process promotes: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## SECTION 27

Before we end our discussion of the curriculum of the Ruhi Institute, it may be useful to discuss briefly the courses that branch off from its main sequence. The nature of a path of service, as laid out by the main sequence, allows for specialized paths concerned with the knowledge, spiritual qualities, and skills needed in particular areas of action. At present, there are two series of branch courses being elaborated by the Ruhi Institute. In this respect, the Universal House of Justice explains in a letter dated 12 December 2011:

**“There are currently two points along the sequence at which an individual may choose to follow a specialized path of service. The first appears at Book 3. From among the friends who complete it and begin to offer a relatively simple class for children in the first grade of a program for their spiritual education, a percentage will want to dedicate themselves to this field of service, pursuing in time a series of progressively more complex branch courses for teaching Grades 2 to 6. This does not mean that they will abandon study of the main sequence. Indeed, courses that make up a specialized path of service anticipate that participants are continuing to progress, each at a pace suitable to his or her situation, along the path traced out by the main sequence. Book 5, which seeks to raise up animators of junior youth groups, constitutes the second point at which a series of courses branch out.**

**“Additional avenues of exploration will no doubt appear along the main sequence in due time. Some may be of universal interest, such as the two mentioned above, while others may be limited to specific local needs. As with the main sequence itself, content and structure must emerge out of continued collective experience in the field, an experience that is not haphazard or subject to the forces of personal preference but is guided by the institutions of the Faith. The generation of such an experience will call for a still greater infusion of energy from a much larger portion of the population . . .”<sup>7</sup>**

There is no need for us to examine the question of branch courses in detail here. What is important for us to realize is that branch courses, as indicated in the passage above, are to emerge out of collective experience under the guidance of the institutions and agencies of the Faith. The House of Justice elaborates further on this point in a message dated 1 January 2022:

**“We have in the past likened the main sequence to the trunk of a tree that supports other courses branching from it, each branch addressing some specific area of action. The preparation of such branch courses would necessarily occur over time through a pattern marked by action and reflection and in which conceptualization**

**and activity in the field go hand in hand. For training institutes that take on this task, there are several requisites. They will need to be able to understand profoundly the content of the institute's main sequence and the pedagogical principles involved, analyze clearly the experience arising at the grassroots as activities advance, collaborate with teams of friends dedicated to the progress of specific aspects of the community-building process, operate in a learning mode, and draw into their work individuals with abilities needed for preparing materials. Once in place, the branch course would help the friends promoting the related activity to further strengthen their capacity, and it would contribute to extending the associated process of learning in the life of the population. The course would also serve as a repository of the accruing knowledge and as a means for its propagation.”<sup>8</sup>**

The approach to curriculum development followed by the Ruhi Institute is not the concern of this course. Yet, as an aspiring tutor of its books, you should be aware that they are not the product of any one individual's mind, nor have they emerged from the consultations of a group carried out in abstract, divorced from practice. Rather, they have been written over decades as the Institute learned, through an intense process of action-reflection, how to systematically raise up human resources for the advancement of the Cause and the progress of society. If one follows this approach, the elaboration of material necessarily takes a long time. The process is gradual and organic, but the patience that it requires yields enduring fruits.

## **SECTION 28**

So far in this unit you have explored in some depth the educational approach of the Ruhi Institute and the materials to which it has given rise. From the outset the value the Institute attached to participation guided it to develop these materials for group study. It also realized early on that its approach would have to respect the pace at which different individuals learn. Everyone would advance according to his or her own possibilities, which would evolve as each one moved forward in the educational process. Competition would have no place in this process.

There is, then, one more point worth discussing here related to the educational approach—that is, inherent in the characteristics of the materials is a system for the delivery of courses, one which enables the educational process to perpetuate and expand itself at the grassroots. Organized around the concepts of a study circle and a tutor, together with the materials, this system allows ever-growing contingents of individuals, who support and accompany one another, to build their capacity for service. You already have some knowledge of the system, as part of these contingents, and have gained further insight into its operations as you have advanced through this unit. Referring to the effects of this system of distance education and its capacity to reach large numbers, the Universal House of Justice states:

**“Let no one fail to appreciate the possibilities thus created. Passivity is bred by the forces of society today. A desire to be entertained is nurtured from childhood, with increasing efficiency, cultivating generations willing to be led by whoever proves skillful at appealing to superficial emotions. Even in many educational systems students are treated as though they were receptacles designed to receive information. That the Bahá'í world has succeeded in developing a culture which promotes a way of thinking, studying, and acting, in which all consider themselves**

**as treading a common path of service—supporting one another and advancing together, respectful of the knowledge that each one possesses at any given moment and avoiding the tendency to divide the believers into categories such as deepened and uninformed—is an accomplishment of enormous proportions. And therein lie the dynamics of an irrepressible movement.”**<sup>9</sup>

You are encouraged now to examine the following paragraphs, which describe the general features of the system, and discuss them in your group:

*A study circle is one element of a system of distance education, administered by a national or regional training institute, designed to take the sequence of courses to the local level. It usually consists of several individuals from a given locality, who, with the aid of a tutor, study the courses together at their own pace. As a member of the group, the tutor is as much engaged in the process of learning as the others but, having completed the requisite courses and gained some experience, can help ensure the purpose of the course under study is achieved. To this end, if the number of participants is large, the tutor may divide them into two or three smaller groups with which he or she works concurrently.*

*There is a great deal of flexibility in the functioning and membership of a group. Some groups may wish to meet once a week over an extended period, while others may choose to meet daily, or for a weekend every so often. Upon the completion of a course, all of the members may go on to study the next one together. But some may leave the group and join another at a later time. The same tutor may stay with the group from one course to the next. But it is also possible for the tutor to change at the conclusion of a course.*

*Participants may come to join a study circle in any number of ways. In villages and neighborhoods where a growing nucleus of active supporters of the Faith exists, study circles are often formed in the context of efforts to expand and consolidate the community through three-month cycles of activity. Increasingly, as efforts to approach schools, clubs and local organizations bear fruit, participants are drawn from the ranks of young people who, eager to enter the arena of service, wish to develop their capacity through study of the courses. Still others are fifteen- or sixteen-year olds that have completed the junior youth spiritual empowerment program and are already endowed with a strong sense of a twofold moral purpose.*

*As a result, camps during school holidays have become another setting for study of the courses. These and institute campaigns bring together at a central location larger numbers who, divided into small groups, engage in the intensive study of various courses, each group with the help of one or two tutors. Indeed, it is the combination of such campaigns, camps, and regularly held study circles that proves to be most effective. The flexibility afforded by these different modes of delivery makes it possible for each participant to advance in the educational process at an appropriate rhythm according to his or her own circumstances. Naturally, small groups of individuals who have reached more or less the same point in the sequence of courses end up studying together. And, eventually, some are able to reach the point where they can act as tutors and contribute to the multiplication of study circles.*

*As an element of a distance education system, the study circle has two essential functions: One is the study of the material, and the other is related to experience.*

*If participants are to develop the capabilities for service envisioned in the courses, it is not enough for them to simply study the material, complete the exercises, and carry out any suggested practice in their group. Opportunities need to be created for them to gain actual experience. For example, if the members of a study circle are to develop the capacity to explore themes central to the life of the community with friends and neighbors, the aim of the third unit of Book 2, they cannot be content with just practicing among themselves. They will need to be provided with opportunities to visit the homes of families, especially of children and junior youth, with a more seasoned friend and acquire experience in carrying out this act of service—an act that should become integral to their own lives as individuals, one that is manifested in the collective efforts of the growing nucleus working for the betterment of the village or neighborhood, cycle after cycle. Within the dynamics of such an expanding nucleus, a tutor is able to provide participants with concrete support and assistance, as they serve shoulder to shoulder.*

*The task of a tutor is not limited, then, to occasions when participants come together to study the material. He or she ensures that they are accompanied in carrying out the relevant act of service, especially in the early stages. Institutions and agencies, particularly the Area Teaching Committee and institute coordinators, are there to offer support to individuals and groups in specific areas of service: in hosting devotional gatherings, in paying systematic visits to households, and in serving as children's class teachers, as animators of junior youth groups, or as tutors of study circles. Whatever the act of service involved, the study and action undertaken by participants should serve to bind them together in fellowship, attracting others to their mode of learning.*

After discussing the above paragraphs in your group, describe the various modes of delivery for the courses being employed in your region. How do such modes enable growing numbers to advance along a path of service, a path distinguished by study and action?

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## SECTION 29

Having reflected on the various modes for the delivery of courses, let us look at the study circle in particular, as one of the central elements around which the educational system is built, and examine briefly how it operates, from the perspective of a tutor. You already know that there is no fixed procedure to which a group must adhere. So what we will do is to consider certain instances of activity in a study circle. The situations depicted will be varied

and will not necessarily be the ones you encounter in serving as a tutor. But considering the questions presented at the end of each one will help you think about how you might respond to similar situations you may face.

1. You have just initiated a study circle with eight youth. Their ages range from 16 to 19. After devotions, you say a few words on the nature of the institute courses in general and then ask whether they have any thoughts they wish to share. Only three of them offer any comments and, seeing the reluctance of the others, you do not insist on their doing so. You proceed to introduce the first unit of Book 1, explaining its purpose and its content. What do you say?

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2. In the same session, immediately after your introduction, the participants begin to study Section 1 of the first unit. You decide that the best way to go through the section is to ask one of the participants to read the first quotation aloud and then pose the question that follows to the rest. You explain that the purpose of this exercise is to help them focus on the immediate and explicit meaning of a quotation before thinking about its application and implications. They all look back at the quotation and a couple of them respond to the question by reciting it. You then ask another participant to do the same with the second quotation and continue this way until the end of the section. Later, when you reach the next set of quotations in Section 3, you divide the participants into four groups of two, inviting them to carry out this activity in pairs. What will you be doing while this is going on? Will you observe how each pair is carrying out this activity? What will you do if one pair finds the exercise easy and goes through it thoroughly but quickly?

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3. Several weeks later, the same group is studying Section 3 of the third unit of Book 1, which discusses the relationship between the soul and the body. The introductory paragraph and quotation have been read aloud, and some time has been given for reflection on the ideas expressed. Now everyone is doing the exercises individually. There is silence in the room, and the atmosphere is one of serious and disciplined reflection. What have you done to help create such an atmosphere?

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4. You are serving as a tutor in a study circle made up of young people in a village or neighborhood where the community-building process is still in its early stages. A few junior youth groups have been established and the practice of visiting homes, especially of the participants in the spiritual empowerment program, is starting to take hold. As a result, many of their families are drawn to the teachings of the Faith. You have just finished studying Book 1 with the youth in the study circle, and they are eager to seize the opportunity to visit some of these families and share prayers with them. How will you help them to do so?

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5. You are studying Book 2 with a group of high school students in your village or neighborhood. As they go through the second unit, “Uplifting Conversations”, you suggest they try to apply what they are learning by entering into conversations on subjects of social and spiritual import with their peers at school. What are some things you can do to make sure that their ability to converse on spiritual matters begins to increase? Why is it, for example, necessary that you first help each participant choose, during the study of the unit, at least one of the statements and identify a couple of friends with whom to converse on the ideas it contains?

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6. Some weeks later, the same group of youth has entered into the third unit of Book 2 and has just started Section 3, in which they study a statement on the eternal Covenant of God. Why is it important that, after reading the statement, the participants take time to reflect on it paragraph by paragraph, identify the sequence of ideas it contains, and learn to express them with clarity?

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7. A group you have been guiding through Book 2 has now completed its study, and the time has come for them to put into practice what they have learned by visiting homes and entering into discussions with families around a series of themes. Bearing in mind the circumstances where you reside, how will each of the youth be accompanied in preparing for and in carrying out such visits, particularly in the early stages, as their capacity is being built? How will it be possible to ensure that their participation in a systematic program of home visits serves to strengthen the pattern of community life?

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8. On another occasion, you are helping a group of friends study Book 3, *Teaching Children's Classes, Grade 1*. They are working on the second unit, which includes the twenty-four lessons for the classes. Having gone over the first set of four lessons in some detail, you encourage the participants, as suggested in Section 5, to try giving the lessons to a few children they know—from their own extended families or from neighboring households. How will you assist each of them in drawing up a plan of action to this effect? What approach will you use in helping them to reflect on the action they have taken the next time the study circle meets?

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9. You have just finished studying the second unit of Book 4 with a group of young people. They have practiced narrating each of the episodes of the life of the Báb as they have gone through the various sections of the unit, and they have now memorized two prayers He revealed and are trying to commit to memory His address to the Letters of the Living. The anniversary of the Declaration of the Báb is approaching, and the group volunteers to arrange the program for the Holy Day celebration in the community. They are eager to draw on what they have learned. How do you help them plan the program and prepare for the event? What could you do as a tutor to ensure that each of the members of the group is able to contribute to the creation of a reverent and joyful gathering?

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10. At the request of the coordinator for the main sequence, you are taking a small group of young people through Book 5. Upon completion of the second unit, you assist them in holding conversations with a few junior youth in order to gain some insights into how those in this age group think about certain significant themes. How will you help them do this? For example, will they speak with junior youth individually? Will they engage in conversations in pairs, and who will accompany them? How will you guide them in reflecting on their experience?

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11. You are going through the third unit of Book 6 with a group of youth, all part of the expanding nucleus of friends working in your village or neighborhood. A new three-month cycle of activity is soon to begin, and efforts during the expansion phase will focus on teaching the Cause to interested families of young people in the educational activities of the institute. The participants have studied the conversation between Anna and Emilia and have practiced saying the ideas among themselves. What assistance will you ensure they receive, during the campaign, so that they are able to gain experience in presenting the teachings of the Faith in a cogent manner?

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## SECTION 30

The sequence of courses, the study circle, and the tutor constitute the three central elements of the Ruhi Institute's educational system. Clearly the preceding sections have raised your awareness of the critical role the tutor plays in this system. Now may be an opportune time, then, for you to review what you have studied here so far and write one or two paragraphs about the endeavor on which you are embarking.

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**only a barren tree stump. Therefore, well is it with thee for thou dost carry out the service of the friends and art their loyal thrall. This is sovereignty in both worlds and glory both here and hereafter.”<sup>11</sup>**

## **SECTION 31**

Your deliberations on the various themes presented in this unit have probably convinced you that the capabilities to serve as a tutor are only acquired over time and through experience. The purpose of this book is to introduce to you certain concepts and to set you on a path in which you will increasingly enhance your capacity to help group after group advance through the Ruhi Institute’s main sequence of courses, from the earliest ones to those courses beyond Book 7. One of the most fruitful ways to further your understanding of the relevant concepts and to gain insights into the spiritual qualities and attitudes, as well as the skills and abilities, that this act of service requires is to attend the regular gatherings for tutors organized by the institute in your region. In such meetings, varied experiences are analyzed and answers to scores of questions sought.

The introductory sections found in each book, “A Few Thoughts for the Tutor”, are often examined in light of experience in these gatherings. One particular point deserves mention here. These sections are intended largely for those serving as tutors, and there is no need for participants to read them in taking up their study of a book. Indeed, doing so may actually prove counterproductive. Yet, a tutor may find it useful to draw on some of the ideas such sections contain in helping participants gain an appreciation of the overall aim of each unit in a book and the purpose of certain exercises. But this would always be done, in a measured way, in response to the teaching-learning experience unfolding in the group.

Now let us consider the nature of a tutor gathering. One portion of the gathering may be dedicated to the discussion of some salient points regarding the institute courses, many of which can be gleaned from “A Few Thoughts for the Tutor” of Book 1. Several of these are set out below. You may wish to add others to the list.

- All the participants in the courses of the Ruhi Institute, whether they are studying the materials for the first time or acting as tutors, are engaged in a reciprocal process of learning.
- The responsibility for learning rests with each participant.
- The tutor, far from acting as a detached and passive facilitator of discussion, assists each member of the group in achieving a reasonable degree of understanding of the material being studied.
- The tutor’s capacity to engage participants effectively in the teaching-learning process is enhanced as he or she takes group after group through the courses and assists its members in gaining some initial experience in carrying out the acts of service that each book recommends.
- In a process of education, in contrast to one concerned merely with the acquisition of simple skills, it is essential that the participants become increasingly conscious of the meaning and significance of what they are doing.

- The courses of the Ruhi Institute trace a path of service to humanity, upon which each participant walks at his or her own pace, assisting and being assisted by others.
- In treading this path, participants pursue a twofold moral purpose—attending to their own spiritual and intellectual growth and contributing to the transformation of society.
- Progress on this path entails the development of a number of capabilities that require understanding and knowledge, spiritual qualities and praiseworthy attitudes, as well as a host of abilities and skills.
- The books of the Ruhi Institute draw on two sources of knowledge: the teachings of the Bahá'í Faith and the accumulating experience of the worldwide Bahá'í community in furthering material and spiritual civilization.
- It is Bahá'u'lláh's vision of the individual we can become and of the civilization we can build that inspires the Institute, and it is assumed that all participants, independent of background, are open to embracing this vision, which is explicit in every unit of every book.
- Walking the path of service opened up by the institute courses calls for an ever-deepening understanding of Bahá'u'lláh's teachings, which the materials endeavor to set forth unequivocally.
- The first unit of Book 1 addresses the question of understanding, which is central to all the courses of the Institute.
- Participants are expected in the first instance to comprehend the immediate meaning of passages from the Writings. On that basis, they are then assisted in seeing how the ideas they contain find concrete expression before advancing their understanding still further by considering some of their implications.
- The ability to focus attention on the immediate and explicit meaning of passages from the Writings contributes to the creation of unity in Bahá'í communities.
- Long discussions on the meaning of single words out of the context of the material being studied can be counterproductive.
- A rhythm of progress should be established in the study of each course.
- Study groups should avoid, on the one hand, a superficial approach in which the exercises are not carefully analyzed and, on the other, the prolonged discussion of an idea that distracts from the main purpose of the unit.
- Some questions cannot be answered in a clear-cut way and are intended only to raise awareness about a subject.
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## SECTION 32

Another activity undertaken in the gatherings of tutors is a review of one or more units of a book, in which the content is examined in light of experience and specific passages and exercises are discussed. To illustrate for you the kind of consultation in which you will engage during these gatherings, we will present to you in this and the next three sections a few imaginary conversations between a person of considerable experience and a group of tutors consulting together about the content of Book 1, *Reflections on the Life of the Spirit*, in the usual atmosphere of friendship, humility, and learning. Each conversation will be followed by one or two exercises for you to carry out. For the purpose of these pages, “A”, “B” and “C” will refer to three tutors taking part in the meeting and “M” to the coordinator for the main sequence. They are discussing the exercises in Section 2 of the first unit. It would be helpful for you to turn to that section now.

*A: I would like to say that one of the comments in “A Few Thoughts for the Tutor” has been of great help to me. It is related to the statement in Exercise 3 that “There are so few good people in the world that their actions do not have any effect.” Everyone in the group for which I was serving as a tutor rightly said the statement was false. When I asked them why, they gave many reasons, all of which were good. But I finally had to ask them to look at the first quotation of the preceding section and evaluate the statement in that balance. Then everyone realized that the sentence contradicted the words of Bahá’u’lláh. This realization brought confidence and excitement to the group.*

*B: But such clear answers for all of the exercises are not to be found in the quotations. Take the next statement in the same exercise that “Something is correct when it is in agreement with the opinions of other people.” None of the preceding quotations explicitly addresses this issue. Everyone usually says the statement is false. Should one just accept the answer or is some discussion necessary?*

*M: This is something you have to decide according to the circumstances of the group. I know of some groups in which a little discussion on the implications of this statement has deepened the understanding of the participants. It is true that the teachings of God determine what is right and what is wrong, but we also need to listen to the ideas and opinions of people. Yet how much importance we should place on these opinions and how far we should allow them to influence us are matters that deserve reflection.*

*C: Exercise 5 in that section examines situations in which people’s words differ from their deeds. The immediate answers are easy, and I think they are meant to be that way. But it seems to me that there is a purpose behind this exercise. Sometimes we can fall into*

*the habit of telling people what to do and what not to do: Don't drink. Be chaste. Don't lie. I can see that the books of the Ruhi Institute try to avoid preaching at people. They help people think and make moral decisions. In the case of this exercise, realizing that by acting in a certain way they would find themselves among those whose "words differ from their deeds"—which Bahá'u'lláh has warned us so strongly against—had a profound effect on the members of the group I was studying with. And, I enjoyed the exercise because we could talk about the wisdom of certain moral laws and principles in a detached way, while respecting the participants' dignity.*

*M: You have raised a good point. Here is a case where the exercise is deceptively easy. It sets the standard, without explicitly stating as much. Rather, it allows the participants themselves to reach some understanding of moral laws and principles. You have probably found that the five questions which follow that exercise have a similar effect, although they are not so straightforward. It is usually a good idea to have the participants consult about them. Of course, you will not want the consultation to go off in too many directions, but the participants need a chance to reflect on moral behavior. They also need to acquire an awareness that one's actions affect the world and the well-being of humanity and to gain an appreciation for the fact that one is responsible for one's actions.*

1. Consider the comment made by tutor "B" above. Not in all instances can answers to the questions in the exercises be found by simply reading the quotations in the material. As you know, some of the exercises aim at helping the participants think about the concrete expression of passages from the Writings in one's daily life. The study of the Revelation should lead to concerted effort to apply the teachings, which requires thinking, consulting, and analyzing one's understanding in the light of experience. If this process is not well understood, unhealthy characteristics can appear in an individual or even in a community. For example, if someone constantly quotes from "scripture", ignores every other source of knowledge, and refuses to give any credence to accumulated experience, he or she will have a tendency to be narrow-minded. On the other hand, a person who attaches too much importance to experience and human opinions and devalues the authority of the Holy Text falls prey to the kind of relativism according to which everything is a matter of culture or personal preference. Discuss with the members of your group how both of these positions can result in superstition, intolerance, fanaticism, and sloppiness.

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2. The reply given to tutor "B" by "M", who serves as coordinator for the main sequence, deserves some reflection. It may not be sufficient for participants to simply mark as false the statement "Something is correct when it is in agreement with the opinions of other people." You may need to discuss with them, for example, the importance

of listening to those with relevant experience and of seeking wise counsel on many issues we face in life. To facilitate such a discussion, you will naturally have to give this matter some thought in light of your knowledge of the writings. On which of the following do you think one should seek advice?

- \_\_\_\_\_ One's future studies
- \_\_\_\_\_ How to give appropriate attention to one's studies and to service to the Faith
- \_\_\_\_\_ Whether or not one should serve the Faith
- \_\_\_\_\_ The meaning of a dream one has had
- \_\_\_\_\_ The application of one of the laws of the Faith to a situation
- \_\_\_\_\_ Whether or not one should obey the laws of the Faith
- \_\_\_\_\_ How to raise one's children
- \_\_\_\_\_ Whether or not to forgive someone for a wrong he or she has done
- \_\_\_\_\_ Whether or not to help someone in need of assistance
- \_\_\_\_\_ The treatment for a physical illness
- \_\_\_\_\_ A problem one is having with a friend
- \_\_\_\_\_ Whether or not to give a weighty responsibility to a person one does not know well

3. It would be useful for you to think about the comments made by tutor "C" and the remarks given by the coordinator that follow. Oftentimes, when one is trying to get an idea across, one falls into the habit of "preaching" at people. But this approach seldom brings the desired results. Look at the exercise discussed by "C". Following the completion of the exercise, a tutor could have the participants make a list of things they should not do and then talk to them in some detail about the importance of correct behavior, introducing into the conversation the adverse consequences of disobeying moral laws. Explain why such an approach would be neither effective nor advisable.

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## SECTION 33

Let us return to the imaginary conversation between the participants in the gathering for tutors. They are now discussing the remaining sections of the first unit of Book 1.



*A: I had some difficulty with the fourth question of Section 4 when I was going through it with a group. The participants had very different ideas about whether it is possible to lie to oneself, and it was hard to reach consensus.*

*M: There are many questions throughout the various units whose purpose is to stimulate thinking and consultation. The issues involved are too complex to be resolved immediately, and the same person may change his or her opinion on the subject numerous times over the years. The answer to the question you mention happens to be positive: It is possible to lie to oneself and indeed many people do so. However, there are those who will think that, in the final analysis, a person knows that he or she is lying. This is not a matter that can be settled easily. What we can do is to give examples of certain situations and ask our groups to decide whether each represents a case of lying to oneself or not. We should then listen to all the reasons given for the answers and be content that the question has been discussed and that everyone has advanced in his or her understanding. After all, the question is posed at the level of behavior, and not in a philosophical sense.*

*C: I may be jumping ahead but I want to share with you an experience and then ask a question. In our group, I began to feel that everyone was rushing through Exercise 4 of Section 8, which asks us to decide whether or not a statement is true. So I suggested that we stop and talk about the discipline needed to overcome backbiting—the subject of that exercise. The discussion was fascinating. We realized that backbiting is in fact a social custom; it is a part of our culture. We went on to figure out some practical steps that would help us to avoid backbiting. This conversation took about fifteen minutes. We then returned to the exercise, which, it seemed to me, was carried out with better understanding. Do you think I was justified in asking for such a discussion?*

*M: I think you were entirely justified. You took advantage of the flexibility that is an important characteristic of the materials in order to enhance understanding. We all know, of course, that this type of exercise is not like the kind students get on tests in school. Exercises that ask us to decide what statements are true often bring out subtleties and clarify implications of words and actions.*

*A: I wish I had done what you did when our group studied that section. Judging from some instances of disunity we have had recently, we do not fully appreciate the harm backbiting can cause in a group of friends.*

*B: Something happened to me that might interest you. The first time I studied this unit, I realized that it is necessary, on occasion, to present people with examples of behavior contrary to the teachings in order to stimulate thinking about their proper application. So when the group for which I am now serving as a tutor reached Exercise 2 of Section 6, which as you know asks the participants to review several phrases and decide if they proceed from a “kindly tongue”, I prepared a few statements of my own. One of the participants has a rather sharp tongue, and I thought that if I added to the exercise a few of the sentences he often uses, he would become aware of his own bad habit. Well, did I ever hurt him. When I read out the first sentence, an uneasy silence fell over the group and I found him looking at me with surprise. All of a sudden, I realized that I had been unkind myself and felt terrible. That is one thing I will never do again.*



*M: Exercises depicting negative situations are useful only if they can be examined in a detached way, which is impossible when they point a finger at someone. Now, I would like to bring to your attention one last point before we finish our discussion of the first unit. It is important not to pass over the final section about reading from the Writings daily. You will need to discuss this when you study it with a group and, if necessary, even help the participants choose passages that they can read in the morning and the evening for some time. To this end, you should make sure that they all have at least a copy of “The Hidden Words”. If not, you will have to see to it that they are able to acquire one. In subsequent meetings of the study circle, then, you can ask those who wish to do so to share with the others some of the passages they have read.*

1. In responding to the comments of “A” regarding the fourth question in Section 4, the coordinator explains that it is one of many questions throughout the courses intended simply to stimulate thinking and consultation and that, rather than hoping to create consensus around such issues, tutors should be content to help participants advance in their understanding. With this in mind, the coordinator suggests that it is often useful in this particular case for a tutor to give examples of certain situations and ask the group to decide whether each represents a case of lying to oneself or not. Try to come up with some examples that you could offer to the members of a study circle in order to stimulate their thinking.

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2. As mentioned by the coordinator, “M”, the exercises in the Ruhi Institute materials in which participants are asked to identify the statements that are true differ from the type of multiple choice questions given on tests in schools, which can often be answered mechanically. They are designed to take the participants through a sequence of thoughts or help them to examine a concept from various angles. It is suggested that you review the exercises of this kind in the first unit of Book 1 with your group today and discuss how they are used to enhance understanding.

## SECTION 34

Having reflected on the comments of a group of tutors and an institute coordinator on the content of the first unit of Book 1, read through the conversation below about the second unit, “Prayer”.

- A: *The group I was working with was eager to start the second unit. They welcomed the opportunity to study longer passages and reflect on the significance of prayer. It made so much sense that, right in the beginning, they were introduced to the concepts of a “path of service” and a “twofold moral purpose”. It helped them gain insight into the intimate relationship between prayer and service as they advanced section by section. We went through the four quotations in Section 1 and the corresponding questions in the same way that we did in the first unit. They were quick to grasp the immediate meaning of the passages and to catch a glimpse of the twofold moral purpose underlying them. When we got to Exercise 5, it was necessary to pause and explore the statements presented in light of the quotations. For example, some of the participants were challenged by the statement: “If you are always helping others, you will end up losing sight of your own goals.” The discussion helped everyone see that “service to others” and “personal goals” contradict one another only if goals are defined in terms that are self-centered. It became clear to them that, when our intentions are pure, we will set for ourselves noble goals to serve others and that, when we recognize that the purpose for which we have been brought into being is to work for the betterment of the world, then the pursuit of our personal development, spiritually and intellectually, is viewed as inseparable from our contribution to the progress of society.*
- B: *We did the same with the statements in our group. I made sure, of course, that the discussion was not prolonged and that we stayed focused on what the exercise was trying to achieve. For example, so many these days believe in the statement “You are your closest friend.” We needed to explore its implication in the context of God’s mercy—how a pure heart is the recipient of His bestowals as mentioned in the last quotation in that section. The participants naturally concluded that God is our true Friend.*
- C: *In studying the passage in the Hidden Words quoted in Section 2, we had a profound discussion on what it means that we have been created “rich”, recognizing that it is not material possessions that make us rich but the potential to show forth spiritual qualities such as humility, truthfulness, and generosity. We could then connect the idea to the attributes of a heart that is cleansed “with the burnish of love and severance from all save God” and reflect on how, in our efforts to purify our hearts from all except Him, it is natural to seek “enlightenment” from the source of all knowledge, our Creator, our true Friend. Our discussion also helped us gain more insights into the nature of our relationship with God as that of love, which paved the way for our deliberations in Section 3, which asks the question, “Why do we pray?”*
- M: *It seems that the participants with whom you studied the unit reflected deeply on the Writings quoted in these early sections and that the exercises facilitated a rich discussion and furthered their understanding of the concepts addressed.*
- C: *In relation to exercises, I found participants were keen to carry out the ones that ask about the meaning of specific words—“intone”, “recite”, “scatter”, “obligatory”. We constructed various sentences with each word to make sure its meaning was clear and, once or twice, used the dictionary.*
- M: *I think what you did is fine. As described in the “A Few Thoughts for the Tutor” section, there is no rule against using dictionaries from time to time. It is just that words should be understood in context, especially where passages from the Writings*

*are concerned. Otherwise, the discussion of the meaning of a single word or of two similar words and what makes them different can be carried too far. Sometimes when people try to look at a quotation word by word, the greater purpose, which is to understand the meaning of the passage, is forgotten. So, for example, in Section 6 in the unit on prayer, the questions regarding the meaning of the words “intone”, “recite” and “scatter” are there to focus the participants on certain concepts in the quoted passage; they are not exercises in vocabulary.*

*B: There is another kind of exercise introduced in Section 2 of the unit that the members of the study circle I mentioned earlier found very effective. It is the one in which the participants are asked to fill in the blanks in sentences based on a passage from the Writings.*

*C: I have noticed that this is a type of technique used throughout the various units of the books. It helps the participants to think about a passage by focusing them on certain key words.*

*M: Now that we have discussed the purpose of some of the exercises, let us go back to consider another important concept in the unit. How did the participants respond to the concept of the “state of prayer” introduced in Section 5?*

*B: Many of the participants who were studying the unit with me had never considered prayer in that way. Like myself when I first studied the unit, they had thought about prayer only in terms of something you do, not as a state you strive to reach. So we paused and talked about that idea before moving on to the next section.*

*C: I had a similar experience with Section 8, where the discussion on the purpose of prayer that begins in Section 3 is taken further. For a few of the participants, the idea of aligning ourselves with the Will of God was new. At first, it was not clear to them how we can pray to God, asking Him to fulfill our needs, and at the same time be content with whatever He wills. But, after reflecting more on the quotation from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, we were able to gain some spiritual insights into this question.*

*M: All these concepts are important to explore. Unfortunately, as religious feeling loses its depth in the world, more and more people either do not pray or treat prayer as a ritual. There is also the tendency to pray only when one is in crisis. That is why reflecting on such important concepts related to prayer is essential for those who seek a life centered on God and on service in His path. In this sense, what we said at the beginning of our reflection, about how study of the unit provides insight into the intimate relationship between service and prayer, is particularly significant. As participants conclude the unit, they will need to have achieved a heightened awareness of this relationship—how true prayer purifies the heart, making it the recipient of knowledge and heavenly attributes, and how disinterested acts of service enable the individual to draw on these attributes to contribute to the progress of the Cause and the upliftment of humanity. Prayer intensifies the fervor to serve God, and service fans the fire produced in moments of supplication to Him—a fire which burns away the veils that shut us out from His beauty.*

*A: I have a question about Section 7. There the participants are asked to memorize two passages, which actually come from the Long Obligatory Prayer. Should I have encouraged them to memorize the entire prayer?*

*M: Like so many other things, this depends on the participants. Some will have only just begun to acquire the habit of praying every day, so memorizing the two passages suggested will be sufficient. Later, they can learn the entire prayer. Of course, some may already know the Long Obligatory Prayer by heart. In any case, I have a feeling that, as tutors of the course, it would be a good idea for each of us to memorize it, if we have not already done so.*

1. Suppose that, while studying Section 8, the members of a study circle have difficulty with the concepts mentioned by “C” above. How would you help them gain insight into the dynamics of prayer? What questions based on the three quotations in that section could you ask them in order to enhance their understanding of the relevant concepts?

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2. We have talked about the importance of memorization on numerous occasions, including in this unit. By now, you yourself have learned many passages by heart and know the value of being able to draw upon the power of the Creative Word, whether in moments of personal reflection, in times of difficulty, or in teaching the Cause. Much of the experience you have acquired will be helpful to you now in working with the members of a study circle. At this point, it would be worthwhile for you to explore how you can encourage them to put forth effort to memorize passages from the Writings. After having done so, you may wish to commit to memory the following short passage:

**“ . . . and every breast which committeth His Words to memory, God shall cause, if it were that of a believer, to be filled with His love . . . ”<sup>12</sup>**

## SECTION 35

The third unit of Book 1, “Life and Death”, can represent a special challenge for participants and tutors alike. Let us see how a group of tutors might review the unit. You may turn to that unit now.

*A: Although serving as a tutor for this course was difficult, I found it rewarding. I now understand what is meant by the statement in the “A Few Thoughts for the Tutor” section that the relationship between the tutor and the other participants is not one of teacher-to-student, that all are consciously engaged in a process in which everyone is seeking to learn. I gained so many insights in studying the material with the group. I had thought, for example, that the exercises in the third section were fairly straightforward, so I was surprised when a few of the participants marked as “true” the statement in Exercise 2 that “Life consists of the things that happen to us every day.” And when we reached a similar type of exercise in the following section, a couple of the same participants marked as true the statements that “Death is the*

*end of life” and “Life ends with death”. I realized that we needed to discuss this theme a bit further. Some of the comments made during our consultations were very interesting and led to clarity in the minds of the participants.*

*B: I found, too, that these exercises really helped us think through ideas. In Section 9, many of the participants marked as true the statement that “True life begins when one dies and goes to the divine Kingdom.” Then they came to the next statement, “True life begins in this world and continues after physical death”, and realized that, if that statement was true, the one above was not as straightforward as they had thought. I could see that everyone was thinking deeply about the nature of the soul. We had to break at the end of that section that day and, maybe it was my imagination, but I noticed a change in everyone when we met the following week.*

*A: The unit assisted the participants in our group in gaining a fuller grasp of the powers of the human spirit. The first few sections, in particular, helped dissipate certain misconceptions about the soul as they reflected on profound spiritual truths—that the soul does not enter or leave the body; that while it uses bodily instruments to perceive and exert influence, it can also act without such instruments; and that the metaphor of the mirror and the light describes best its relationship with the body. The mirror reflects the light, but the light continues to shine even if the mirror is covered in dust or broken.*

*M: The reason that people find the unit inspiring is precisely because it poses so many questions about the life of the soul in this and the next worlds of God. In relation to living a life defined by the Bahá’í teachings, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is reported to have said that the first thing to do is to acquire a thirst for spirituality. To acquire this thirst, He has recommended, one should meditate on life after death.*

*C: When we were studying Section 12, we had a very interesting discussion about the question, “Why would a soul exchange its heavenly home for the dust of this world?” One member of the group raised the point that spirituality is not something one achieves once and for all and that one always has to work at controlling one’s lower nature. “There is always something trying to pull us down,” she suggested. This prompted another participant to bring up the question of desire. She made the point that it is in the nature of the human heart to desire and that we have to rid ourselves of vain desires. We then discussed the nature of desire. We talked about the fact that some desires are good desires, for example, the desire to work hard in order to improve one’s material condition. But we decided that even these should have certain limits. If one works so hard to improve one’s material comfort that it interferes with one’s service to the Cause and humanity, the desire has turned into something else, maybe greed. Then somebody asked, “What about the desire to please God?” and we realized that there are desires that we should not try to limit. We decided that, in fact, the stronger spiritual longings become, the more they control our vain desires and keep them in their proper place.*

*A: What you said about desire reminds me of another section in the unit, with which I had some difficulty. In Section 18, the participants are asked to name some “vain imaginings”. For whatever reason, the members of our group had a hard time thinking of any. I had just assumed that they would come up with a few, so I hadn’t prepared myself beforehand. It was a bit awkward.*

*M: It's all right to have these awkward moments every now and again. You shouldn't be discouraged. That is what "gaining experience" means. Now that you have shared your experience with us, we are all aware that it is a good idea to have a short list of "vain imaginings", in case we find ourselves in a similar situation.*

*B: I also would like to share a little about the discussion in Section 19 among the friends I studied the book with. It was enlightening for them to read what 'Abdu'l-Bahá says about the effect of prayer on the progress of souls who have passed on. The thought that they could help their loved ones in the worlds beyond brought a great deal of comfort and joy to two participants who had recently experienced loss.*

1. In the exchange above, the coordinator for the study of the main sequence suggests that it may be a good idea for tutors to prepare in advance a short list of examples of "vain imaginings" in order to help participants carry out an exercise in Section 18. It may be worth your while to look at that section and make such a list in the space below.

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2. No doubt, there are other exercises in the unit that may prove challenging for participants. You may wish to list some here:

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## SECTION 36

We began this unit by looking briefly at the question of motivation, exploring a few of its primary sources, including thirst for knowledge and attraction to beauty. This led us naturally to a discussion on the issue of participation. We then undertook an examination of the teaching-learning dynamics that the courses of the Ruhi Institute strive to foster and some of the concepts and principles that give shape to these courses. This opened the way



for us to consider the three central elements of the Institute's educational system: the main sequence of courses, the study circle, and the tutor. We have mentioned that the study of Book 7 sets you on a path in which you will increasingly develop the capacity necessary to take group after group through the courses. You will continue enhancing your capabilities to serve as a tutor through such ongoing experience and through your participation in periodic reflection gatherings for tutors. You have now been given a glimpse of what these meetings will involve. It is hoped that, at this point, you are eager to enter this area of service. Other more experienced tutors serving in your community, or the cluster coordinator for study of the main sequence, stand ready to assist you.

In these final sections, then, let us take the opportunity to envision the effects we might expect to witness as a growing number of friends in a village or neighborhood become engaged in the study of the courses and the acts of service they recommend. You know that there are three participants in the construction of a new civilization: the individual, the community, and the institutions. Further along in the main sequence, we will explore the contribution the educational process makes to the progress of each. For now, let us look at the individual and consider the effects on the participants in a study circle. Referring to the "irrepressible movement" that this process seeks to set in motion within a population, the Universal House of Justice writes:

**"What is imperative is that the quality of the educational process fostered at the level of the study circle rise markedly over the next year so that the potential of local populations to create such dynamics is realized. Much will fall on those who serve as tutors in this respect. Theirs will be the challenge to provide the environment that is envisioned in the institute courses, an environment conducive to the spiritual empowerment of individuals, who will come to see themselves as active agents of their own learning, as protagonists of a constant effort to apply knowledge to effect individual and collective transformation."**<sup>13</sup>

Below are some of the characteristics which an educational process that is morally and spiritually empowering cultivates in the individual. Add a few more to the list.

- Rectitude of conduct
- Reliance on God
- Abundant joy and radiance of heart
- Generosity of soul, purity of heart, and clarity of mind
- An ever-deepening understanding of the guidance enshrined in Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation
- A growing thirst for knowledge
- Reliance on the transformative power of the Word of God
- Freedom through obedience to the laws of Bahá'u'lláh
- A desire to achieve excellence kindled by attraction to beauty
- A consciousness of the oneness of humankind and a profound love for humanity
- A strong sense of history and one's place in it
- Eagerness and a burning desire to teach the Cause and serve humankind

- A posture of learning
- A desire to pursue a twofold moral purpose—to attend to one’s own spiritual and intellectual growth and to contribute to the transformation of society
- The ability to surrender one’s will to the Will of God
- Steadfastness in the face of tests and trials
- Dedication to applying the teachings to one’s life
- A high level of commitment to the spiritual advancement of one’s people
- A consciousness of the spiritual powers on which every individual can draw
- The ability to take part in community action as a determined yet humble participant
- The capacity to contribute to consensus and agreement through consultation
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## SECTION 37

The various features of the study circles for which you will serve as a tutor will contribute to the development of the characteristics you have identified. Below are several of these features. For each, write a couple of sentences that describe how it nurtures one or more of the above characteristics. In each case, an example is given to assist you.

1. The atmosphere of love that permeates a study circle:
  - a. The atmosphere of love that permeates a study circle strengthens the participants’ love for humanity.
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



- c. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. The spirit of fellowship created among the participants in a study circle:
- a. The spirit of fellowship in a study circle reinforces the participants' commitment to the spiritual advancement of their people.
- b. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. The environment of spiritual discipline in which a study circle meets:
- a. The environment of spiritual discipline in which a study circle meets assists the participants in achieving freedom through obedience to the laws of Bahá'u'lláh.
- b. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. The participatory approach adopted by the Ruhi Institute:
- a. The participatory approach adopted by the Institute engenders a desire to pursue a twofold moral purpose—to attend to one's own spiritual and intellectual growth and to contribute to the transformation of society.
- b. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. The rhythm of study that is set in each group:
- a. The rhythm of study that is set in each group reinforces the members' ability to take part in community action as a determined yet humble participant.
- b. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. The emphasis given to the study of the Sacred Writings:
  - a. The emphasis on the study of the Sacred Writings gives rise to joy and radiance of heart.
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Memorizing prayers and passages from the Writings:
  - a. Memorizing prayers and passages from the Writings contributes to clarity of mind.
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. Exercises in the material that focus on the immediate meaning of passages from the Writings:
  - a. Exercises that focus on the immediate meaning of passages from the Writings increase participants' capacity to reach consensus through consultation.
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. Exercises that help participants see the concrete expression of the Writings in their daily lives:
  - a. Exercises that help participants see the concrete expression of the Writings in their daily lives strengthen their dedication to the ongoing task of applying the teachings.
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

10. Exercises that try to give insight into the implications of passages from the Writings:
- a. Exercises that give insight into the implications of passages from the Writings deepen participants' understanding of the guidance enshrined in Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation.
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
11. The flexibility inherent in the educational approach of the Ruhi Institute:
- a. The flexibility inherent in the educational approach contributes to the development of attitudes essential for a posture of learning.
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
12. The specific acts of service that members of a study circle carry out:
- a. The acts of service that members of a study circle carry out give expression to their eagerness and burning desire to teach the Cause and serve humankind.
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## SECTION 38

The reflections in the previous two sections must have reaffirmed your conviction that, to become an effective tutor, one must learn to nurture others and create an environment within a study circle conducive to the moral and spiritual empowerment of its participants. You need to learn the art of encouragement and develop the capacity to recognize and release potential. This is only possible if you detach yourself from your own accomplishments and rejoice in the growth and progress of your friends. Indeed, this may well be the secret of an excellent tutor.

Let us end this unit by reflecting on the following two passages from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

**“O friends, show forth your fidelity! O my loved ones, manifest your steadfastness and your constancy! O ye who invoke His Name, turn ye and hold fast unto Him! O ye who lift up your hearts and implore His aid, cling to Him and walk in His ways! It is incumbent upon every one of us to encourage each other, to exert our utmost endeavor to diffuse His divine fragrances and engage in exalting His Word. We must, at all times, be stirred by the breeze that bloweth from the rose-garden of His loving-kindness, and be perfumed with the fragrances of the mystic flowers of His grace. We must impart zeal and rapture to the hearts of the righteous and bring joy and ecstasy to the souls of the faithful.”<sup>14</sup>**

**“... the Cause of the Ancient Beauty is the very essence of love, the very channel of oneness, existing only that all may become the waves of one sea, and bright stars of the same endless sky, and pearls within the shell of singleness, and gleaming jewels quarried from the mines of unity; that they may become servants one to another, adore one another, bless one another, praise one another; that each one may loose his tongue and extol the rest without exception, each one voice his gratitude to all the rest; that all should lift up their eyes to the horizon of glory, and remember that they are linked to the Holy Threshold; that they should see nothing but good in one another, hear nothing but praise of one another, and speak no word of one another save only to praise.”<sup>15</sup>**

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# Promoting the Arts at the Grassroots

## Purpose

To appreciate the role of artistic endeavors  
in enhancing the educational process fostered by the institute courses and  
in strengthening the patterns of community life being shaped by it





## SECTION 1

As a member of a burgeoning community, you have seen how the power of the arts can be drawn upon in strengthening its collective life—how hearts are knitted together as beautiful songs inspired by the Writings are sung at devotional gatherings and how a sense of mission is fortified as episodes from the history of the Faith are narrated on Holy Days and other occasions. In a message dated 30 December 2021, referring to the work under way in villages and neighborhoods everywhere, the Universal House of Justice writes:

**“Uplifting, well-prepared community gatherings—extending in some cases to camps and festivals—occur with increasing frequency, and music and song feature prominently on such occasions. Indeed the arts as a whole, so integral a part of the development of a community from the start, stand out in such settings as an important means of generating joy, strengthening bonds of unity, disseminating knowledge, and consolidating understanding, as well as of acquainting those in the wider society with the principles of the Cause.”<sup>1</sup>**

You know, too, that artistic activities are woven into the educational process fostered at the grassroots, most notably for the younger generations. Teachers of Bahá’í children’s classes are encouraged to develop their skills in the art of storytelling, an art which can stir tender emotions in the heart of the listener and awaken spiritual susceptibilities. They learn to lead youngsters in song, helping to improve their sense of rhythm and their ability to carry a tune, while reinforcing themes taught in the lessons. At children’s festivals in your region, you have no doubt been enchanted by the sweetness of their voices and been inspired by dramatic presentations that demonstrate skills acquired in the higher grades. If you are serving as an animator of a group of junior youth, you have looked for ways, as suggested in Book 5, to employ the arts to enrich their learning—perhaps through poetry writing as their proficiency with language has increased or through a craft that, drawing on their heritage, has reinforced their sense of order and symmetry and refined their ability to work with their hands, an important educational objective that contributes to the overall training of any individual. And as you and your friends have progressed through the courses of the main sequence, you have probably been encouraged to take up the practice, seen in all parts of the globe, of setting to music passages from the Writings, which, when sung during your study sessions, has helped to strengthen bonds of fellowship, facilitate joyful and focused learning, and motivate the pursuit of excellence.

This unit seeks to deepen your appreciation for the role artistic endeavors at the grassroots can play both in enhancing the educational process as a whole and in bolstering the patterns of community life being shaped by it. It is hoped that studying its pages will fortify your resolve as a tutor to help those embarked on the path of service gain a similar appreciation and contribute—to the extent that their talents and abilities permit—to the efflorescence of artistic expression inspired by a profound understanding of Bahá’u’lláh’s Revelation.

## SECTION 2

Before we consider a few specific art forms—music, storytelling, drama, and crafts—we will study a number of quotations in this and the following sections and ponder their meaning. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá says:

**“All Art is a gift of the Holy Spirit. When this light shines through the mind of a musician, it manifests itself in beautiful harmonies. Again, shining through the mind of a poet, it is seen in fine poetry and poetic prose. When the Light of the Sun of Truth inspires the mind of a painter, he produces marvelous pictures. These gifts are fulfilling their highest purpose, when showing forth the praise of God.”<sup>2</sup>**

1. On the basis of the above quotation, answer the following questions:
  - a. What is the highest purpose of artistic expression? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - b. From where does the gift of art come? \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. How does the gift of art manifest itself through the mind of a musician? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - d. How does the gift of art manifest itself through the mind of a poet? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - e. How does the gift of art manifest itself through the mind of a painter? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Identify with the other members of your group, from the songs you know, one which fulfills the purpose of praising God. In what way is it a gift of the Holy Spirit?  
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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### SECTION 3

‘Abdu’l-Bahá says:

**“It is natural for the heart and spirit to take pleasure and enjoyment in all things that show forth symmetry, harmony, and perfection. For instance: a beautiful house, a well-designed garden, a symmetrical line, a graceful motion, a well-written book, pleasing garments—in fact, all things that have in themselves grace or beauty are pleasing to the heart and spirit . . .”<sup>3</sup>**



## SECTION 4

As we have read in the previous section, “all things that have in themselves grace or beauty are pleasing to the heart and spirit”. We know from our discussions on the subject of motivation that attraction to beauty is one of the spiritual forces that lifts us up to higher realms of existence. It is this force that compels us to seek harmony in our daily lives and in our relationships with others. So, too, the visual arts, music and crafts are an expression of this essential longing of the human soul. What you need to remember is that the expressions of beauty in this world are but a reflection of the Beauty of the Most Beloved. They all perish, but the Blessed Beauty is eternal. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá tells us:

**“Mortal charm shall fade away, roses shall give way to thorns, and beauty and youth shall live their day and be no more. But that which eternally endureth is the Beauty of the True One, for its splendor perisheth not and its glory lasteth forever; its charm is all-powerful and its attraction infinite. Well is it then with that countenance that reflecteth the splendor of the Light of the Beloved One! The Lord be praised, thou hast been illumined with this Light, hast acquired the pearl of true knowledge, and hast spoken the Word of Truth.”<sup>4</sup>**

1. Complete the following sentences:
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_ charm shall \_\_\_\_\_ .
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_ shall give way to \_\_\_\_\_ .
  - c. Beauty and \_\_\_\_\_ shall live their \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ .
  - d. That which eternally \_\_\_\_\_ is the \_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_ .
  - e. The splendor of the Beauty of the True One \_\_\_\_\_ .
  - f. The glory of the Beauty of the True One \_\_\_\_\_ .
  - g. The charm of the Beauty of the True One is \_\_\_\_\_ .
  - h. The attraction of the Beauty of the True One is \_\_\_\_\_ .
2. When you think about artistic activity and the force of attraction to beauty, it is important to remember that the outer form derives its value from the inner condition. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá says in this connection:

**“The body without spirit is not capable of real accomplishment. Although it may be in the utmost condition of beauty and excellence, it is, nevertheless, in need of the spirit. The chimney of the lamp, no matter how polished and perfect it be, is in need of the light. Without the light, the lamp or candle is not illuminating.”<sup>5</sup>**

In reflecting on the meaning of the above passage, think of a time when you heard an episode from the history of the Faith narrated in a way that caught the imagination of those present. Presumably, the form was correct: words were pronounced clearly;

pauses were made in the right places; an appropriate rhythm was maintained; and gestures were used to underscore certain points. But this would not have been all that inspired the listeners. A higher emotion purified of self and desire must have come through the narration. Susceptibilities of the spirit must have been stirred. Discuss with your group the source of that stirring. Is it not, in the final analysis, the Beauty of the Most Beloved?

## SECTION 5

With the above thoughts in mind, let us look at various forms of art, beginning with music. There is, of course, much ugliness in today's world that presents itself in the name of beauty, and we should exercise care to select those artistic expressions that appeal to the higher nature and be wary of those that lead to abasement. The following words of Bahá'u'lláh from the Kitáb-i-Aqdas contain fundamental guidance for this activity:

**“We have made it lawful for you to listen to music and singing. Take heed, however, lest listening thereto should cause you to overstep the bounds of propriety and dignity. 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. We, verily, have made music as a ladder for your souls, a means whereby they may be lifted up unto the realm on high; make it not, therefore, as wings to self and passion. Truly, We are loath to see you numbered with the foolish.”<sup>6</sup>**

And, on the nature of music, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá says:

**“... in this new age the Manifest Light hath, in His holy Tablets, specifically proclaimed that music, sung or played, is spiritual food for soul and heart.”<sup>7</sup>**

**“... melodies, though they are material, are connected with the spiritual, therefore, they produce a great effect. A certain kind of melody makes the spirit happy, another kind makes it sad, another excites it to action.”<sup>8</sup>**

**“Singing melodies will bring animation and happiness to the world of humanity, the hearers will be delighted and joyful and their deeper emotions stirred. But this gladness, this sense of emotion is transitory and will be forgotten within a short time. However, praise be to God, thou hast blended thy tunes with the melodies of the Kingdom, wilt impart solace to the world of the spirit and wilt everlastingly stimulate spiritual feelings.”<sup>9</sup>**

1. Complete the following sentences:
  - a. Bahá'u'lláh tells us that, when listening to music and singing songs, we should take care not to \_\_\_\_\_ the bounds of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
  - b. We are encouraged to think of music as a ladder for our \_\_\_\_\_, a means whereby they may be \_\_\_\_\_ unto the \_\_\_\_\_ on high.

- c. We are warned against making music as \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ .
  - d. In this new age, Bahá'u'lláh has specifically \_\_\_\_\_ that \_\_\_\_\_ , sung or played, is spiritual food for \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ .
  - e. In this \_\_\_\_\_ , Bahá'u'lláh has \_\_\_\_\_ proclaimed that music, \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_ , is \_\_\_\_\_ for soul and heart.
  - f. Though melodies are \_\_\_\_\_ , ‘Abdu’l-Bahá tells us, they are connected with the \_\_\_\_\_ .
  - g. \_\_\_\_\_ , though they are material, are \_\_\_\_\_ with the spiritual, therefore, they \_\_\_\_\_ a great \_\_\_\_\_ .
  - h. A certain kind of melody makes the spirit \_\_\_\_\_ .
  - i. Another kind of melody makes the spirit \_\_\_\_\_ .
  - j. Another kind of melody excites the spirit to \_\_\_\_\_ .
2. Answer the following questions:
    - a. What does it mean to blend “tunes with the melodies of the Kingdom”? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
    - b. What does this “blending” do? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
  3. Music is a potent force that must be drawn on judiciously. It might be helpful for you to identify some songs you know that lift one up “unto the realm on high” and others that act as “wings of self and passion”.

## SECTION 6

The passages above leave no doubt that music makes a significant contribution to spiritual upliftment. The following statement of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá illustrates the ability of music to create conditions, whatever the setting and purpose, conducive to heightened spiritual receptivity to a message being conveyed:

**“ . . . although music is a material affair, yet its tremendous effect is spiritual, and its greatest attachment is to the realm of the spirit. If a person desires to deliver a**

discourse, it will prove more effectual after musical melodies. The ancient Greeks, as well as Persian philosophers, were in the habit of delivering their discourses in the following manner:—First, playing a few musical melodies, and when their audience attained a certain receptivity thereby they would leave their instrument at once and begin their discourse. Among the most renowned musicians of Persia was one named Barbod, who, whenever a great question had been pleaded for at the court of the King, and the Ministry had failed to persuade the King, they would at once refer the matter to Barbod, whereupon he would go with his instrument to the court and play the most appropriate and touching music, the end being at once attained, because the King was immediately affected by the touching musical melodies, certain feelings of generosity would swell up in his heart, and he would give way.”<sup>10</sup>

1. Complete the following sentences:

- a. Although music is a \_\_\_\_\_ affair, its tremendous \_\_\_\_\_ is \_\_\_\_\_ .
- b. Although \_\_\_\_\_ is a material affair, its greatest \_\_\_\_\_ is to the \_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_ .
- c. If a person desires to deliver a \_\_\_\_\_ , it will prove more \_\_\_\_\_ after \_\_\_\_\_ .

2. You are already aware from your study of Book 3 that songs can act as a powerful pedagogical tool. If the theme of a song is relevant to the subject under consideration, singing it will complement the study of the material and can increase its effectiveness. Do you know any songs composed in your region that could complement the study of Book 1?

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## SECTION 7

The power of music is increased many fold when it is inspired by the teachings of the Faith, even drawing upon the utterances of God. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá tells us:

**“Music is an important means to the education and development of humanity, but the only true way is through the Teachings of God. Music is like this glass, which is perfectly pure and polished. It is precisely like this pure chalice before us, and the Teachings of God, the utterances of God, are like the water. When the**

**glass or chalice is absolutely pure and clear, and the water is perfectly fresh and limpid, then it will confer Life; wherefore, the Teachings of God, whether they be in the form of anthems or communes or prayers, when they are melodiously sung, are most impressive.”<sup>11</sup>**

1. Complete the following sentences:
  - a. Music is an important means to the \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ of humanity.
  - b. The only \_\_\_\_\_ way for \_\_\_\_\_ to serve as a means to the education and development of \_\_\_\_\_ is through the \_\_\_\_\_.
  - c. Music is like a \_\_\_\_\_, while the Teachings of God are like the \_\_\_\_\_.
  - d. When the glass is absolutely \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, and the water is perfectly \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, then it will confer \_\_\_\_\_.
  - e. The Teachings of God, whether in the form of \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_, when they are \_\_\_\_\_ are most impressive.
  
2. In accord with the above quotation, as efforts to build vibrant communities gather momentum in every part of the globe, an increasing number of prayers and passages from the Writings are being set to music in all languages, in a manner befitting the Sacred Word. During institute campaigns or camps, and even in study circles, participants can learn many of these and possibly contribute to the creation of others. Below is one song that is well loved throughout the Bahá’í world, but you surely know several more. Sing a few now with the other members of your group.

### Blessed Is the Spot

A	Amaj7	A7	D
Blessed is the spot, and the house, and the place,			
Bmin	E	A	E7
And the city, and the heart, and the mountain,			
A	Amaj7	A7	D
And the refuge, and the cave, and the valley, and the land,			
Bmin	E7	A	
And the sea, and the island, and the meadow			
Bmin	E	A	F#min
Where mention of God hath been made,			
D	E	E7	
And His praise glorified.			



3. The talents of participants in the institute courses and their knowledge of music will have developed to different degrees, with some quite accomplished and others not at all musically inclined. A few may feel inhibited to sing in front of others. Some may only want to hum a tune in a voice so low that it is impossible to hear them. Whatever their inclinations and talents, you will want to accept and encourage all of them and make sure that no one is ever embarrassed. In this respect, it is important for you to separate the question of performance by a talented individual from group singing. Both are valuable. But sometimes the perfection sought by one stifles the participation of others. Discuss with your group the dynamics that need to be created for the collective expression of the arts, particularly music, to emerge at the grassroots.

## SECTION 8

Now, in light of the quotations you have studied in these sections, it would be worthwhile for you to pause and think about what kinds of music would be most appropriate for different community events. What kinds of songs would uplift souls and contribute to a spiritual atmosphere during devotional gatherings? Which songs would be appropriate at reflection meetings? What songs might be particularly suitable during intensive institute campaigns? What kinds of songs are appropriate for teaching campaigns? What are examples of songs that could be well suited for occasions in which the whole community gathers to consult about its affairs? Which would be fitting to sing at festivals for children and junior youth? What are some examples of songs that increase the friends' knowledge of the history of the Faith and their love for Bahá'u'lláh and that touch their hearts and move them to serve the Cause? Which songs are appropriate for the observance of Holy Days and for the celebration of the Nineteen Day Feast? Write down a few of your thoughts here.

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## SECTION 9

Storytelling is an art that can inspire, animate, stimulate imagination, convey profound concepts, and impart spiritual insights. Stories can be used in various settings—during visits to homes, in community gatherings and festivals, in campaigns, and in the evenings during camps to strengthen the connection of youth with the history of the Faith.

The ability to tell stories in an attractive and inspiring way is something that one develops through experience. Book 3 offers a few hints about the techniques of this often-neglected art form. We will not discuss the necessary skills here. Nor is this the place for a long list of suggested stories to learn. What you will remember from Book 5 and what you should keep in mind as a tutor is the special significance of episodes from the history of the Faith in shaping identity, individual and collective. You know, of course, that *The Dawn-Breakers* is of unique value as a source of such episodes. The Guardian refers to this work as an “essential adjunct” to teaching programs and an “unchallengeable textbook” in summer schools. Further, he calls it a “source of inspiration in all literary and artistic pursuits,” an “invaluable companion in times of leisure,” an “indispensable preliminary to future pilgrimage to Bahá’u’lláh’s native land,” and an “unfailing instrument to allay distress and resist attacks of a critical, disillusioned humanity.” On the importance of that book, which was left for us by the great historian Nabíl, Shoghi Effendi writes:

**“Utilize, as extensively as you possibly can, the wealth of material which Nabíl’s stirring and precious narrative contains, and let it be your chief instrument wherewith you can feed the flame of enthusiasm that glows in every Bahá’í heart and upon which the success of your magnificent, your incessant efforts must ultimately depend.”<sup>12</sup>**

In a letter written on his behalf, we read:

**“Nabíl’s narrative is not merely a narrative; it is a book of meditation. It does not only teach. It actually inspires and incites to action. It quickens and stimulates our dormant energies and makes us soar on a higher plane. It is thus of an invaluable help to the historian as well as to every teacher and expounder of the Cause.”<sup>13</sup>**

Although you already know many episodes from the history of the Faith and can probably narrate them in some detail, we include in this section a passage from *The Dawn-Breakers*, which you are asked to read a number of times and then narrate, being careful to

do so as accurately as possible. This passage provides you with a good example of the kind you will want to learn, especially to recount during camps and collective campaigns, for it lends itself to being told either in part or in full, as occasion demands.

Before reading the passage, you should call to mind the circumstances surrounding the brief but dramatic Ministry of the Báb—how, following His declaration as the promised One in 1844, thousands accepted the new Faith and began to share His Message, arousing fear and jealousy among the leaders of Iran, who banished Him to a remote corner of the country, hoping to stem the rising tide of His influence. Yet, as you know, despite their efforts, His Message continued to spread, and so, in July 1850, He was executed along with one of His faithful followers, Anís. Already, before that tragic event, His followers were subjected to the most shameful cruelties; they were attacked, beaten, and imprisoned, that they might recant their faith. Thousands would eventually be called upon to lay down their lives in the path of their Beloved. Indeed, four months prior to the Báb's martyrdom, a "tragedy" was enacted in the city of Tīhrán that would prove, according to the Guardian, "but a prelude to the orgy of massacre" that would convulse "its inhabitants" and sow "consternation as far as the outlying provinces". "The heroes of that tragedy", he tells us, "were the Seven Martyrs of Tīhrán".

All hailing from well-respected professions, these seven blessed souls were arrested and incarcerated for twenty-two days, during which every kind of ill treatment was inflicted upon them in an effort to convince them to deny their faith. Finally, by order of the Prime Minister, they were threatened with execution. But neither the "repeated and vigorous intercessions" of their influential colleagues, nor the "considerable sums" that were offered for their release, nor the "impassioned pleas of state officials" could prevent them from receiving the crown of martyrdom. The "defiant answers" they gave to their persecutors, the "ecstatic joy" they showed forth as they approached the scene of their death, the "jubilant shouts" they raised as they faced their executioner, the "poignancy of the verses" that some of them recited in their last moments, and the "appeals and challenges" they addressed to the multitude of onlookers—these are among "the chief features of the tragedy of the Seven Martyrs of Tīhrán," a tragedy which the Guardian describes as "one of the grimmest scenes witnessed in the course of the early unfoldment of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh." Here is how Nabíl recounts their stories:

"1. Hájí Mírzá Siyyid 'Alí, surnamed Khál-i-A'zam, the Báb's maternal uncle, and one of the leading merchants of Shíráz. It was this same uncle into whose custody the Báb, after the death of His father, was entrusted, and who, on his Nephew's return from His pilgrimage to Hijáz and His arrest by Husayn Khán, assumed undivided responsibility for Him by pledging his word in writing. It was he who surrounded Him, while under his care, with unfailing solicitude, who served Him with such devotion, and who acted as intermediary between Him and the hosts of His followers who flocked to Shíráz to see Him. His only child, a Siyyid Javád, died in infancy. Towards the middle of the year 1265 A.H., this same Hájí Mírzá Siyyid 'Alí left Shíráz and visited the Báb in the castle of Chihríq. From thence he went to Tīhrán and, though having no special occupation, remained in that city until the outbreak of the sedition which brought about eventually his martyrdom.

"Though his friends appealed to him to escape the turmoil that was fast approaching, he refused to heed their counsel and faced, until his last hour, with complete resignation, the persecution to which he was subjected. A considerable number among the more affluent merchants of his acquaintance offered to pay his ransom, an offer which he rejected. Finally he was brought before the Amír-Nizám. 'The Chief Magistrate

of this realm,' the Grand Vazír informed him, 'is loth to inflict the slightest injury upon the Prophet's descendants. Eminent merchants of Shíráz and Ṭíhrán are willing, nay eager, to pay your ransom. The Maliku't-Tujjár has even interceded in your behalf. A word of recantation from you is sufficient to set you free and ensure your return, with honors, to your native city. I pledge my word that, should you be willing to acquiesce, the remaining days of your life will be spent with honor and dignity under the sheltering shadow of your sovereign.' 'Your Excellency,' boldly replied Hájí Mírzá Siyyid 'Alí, 'if others before me, who quaffed joyously the cup of martyrdom, have chosen to reject an appeal such as the one you now make to me, know of a certainty that I am no less eager to decline such a request. My repudiation of the truths enshrined in this Revelation would be tantamount to a rejection of all the Revelations that have preceded it. To refuse to acknowledge the Mission of the Siyyid-i-Báb would be to apostatize from the Faith of my forefathers and to deny the Divine character of the Message which Muḥammad, Jesus, Moses, and all the Prophets of the past have revealed. God knows that whatever I have heard and read concerning the sayings and doings of those Messengers, I have been privileged to witness the same from this Youth, this beloved Kinsman of mine, from His earliest boyhood to this, the thirtieth year of His life. Everything in Him reminds me of His illustrious Ancestor and of the imáms of His Faith whose lives our recorded traditions have portrayed. I only request of you that you allow me to be the first to lay down my life in the path of my beloved Kinsman.'

"The Amír was stupefied by such an answer. In a frenzy of despair, and without uttering a word, he motioned that he be taken out and beheaded. As the victim was being conducted to his death, he was heard, several times, to repeat these words of Háfiz: 'Great is my gratitude to Thee, O my God, for having granted so bountifully all I have asked of Thee.' 'Hear me, O people,' he cried to the multitude that pressed around him; 'I have offered myself up as a willing sacrifice in the path of the Cause of God. The entire province of Fárs, as well as 'Iráq, beyond the confines of Persia, will readily testify to my uprightness of conduct, to my sincere piety and noble lineage. For over a thousand years, you have prayed and prayed again that the promised Qá'im be made manifest. At the mention of His name, how often have you cried, from the depths of your hearts: "Hasten, O God, His coming; remove every barrier that stands in the way of His appearance!" And now that He is come, you have driven Him to a hopeless exile in a remote and sequestered corner of Ádhirbáyján and have risen to exterminate His companions. Were I to invoke the malediction of God upon you, I am certain that His avenging wrath would grievously afflict you. Such is not, however, my prayer. With my last breath, I pray that the Almighty may wipe away the stain of your guilt and enable you to awaken from the sleep of heedlessness.'

"These words stirred his executioner to his very depths. Pretending that the sword he had been holding in readiness in his hands required to be resharpened, he hastily went away, determined never to return again. 'When I was appointed to this service,' he was heard to complain, weeping bitterly the while, 'they undertook to deliver into my hands only those who had been convicted of murder and highway robbery. I am now ordered by them to shed the blood of one no less holy than the Imám Músáyi-Kázim himself!' Shortly after, he departed for Khurásán and there sought to earn his livelihood as a porter and crier. To the believers of that province, he recounted the tale of that tragedy, and expressed his repentance of the act which he had been compelled to perpetrate. Every time he recalled that incident, every time the name of Hájí Mírzá Siyyid 'Alí was mentioned to him, tears which he could not repress

flowed from his eyes, tears that were a witness to the affection which that holy man had instilled into his heart.

“2. Mírzá Qurbán-‘Alí, a native of Bárfurúsh in the province of Mázindarán, and an outstanding figure in the community known by the name of Ni‘matu’lláhí. He was a man of sincere piety and endowed with great nobleness of nature. Such was the purity of his life that a considerable number among the notables of Mázindarán, of Khurásán and Tihrán had pledged him their loyalty, and regarded him as the very embodiment of virtue. Such was the esteem in which he was held by his countrymen that, on the occasion of his pilgrimage to Karbilá, a vast concourse of devoted admirers thronged his route in order to pay their homage to him. In Hamadán, as well as in Kirmánsháh, a great number of people were influenced by his personality and joined the company of his followers. Wherever he went, he was greeted with the acclamations of the people. These demonstrations of popular enthusiasm were, however, extremely distasteful to him. He avoided the crowd and disdained the pomp and circumstance of leadership. On his way to Karbilá, while passing through Mandalíj, a shaykh of considerable influence became so enamored of him that he renounced all that he had formerly cherished and, leaving his friends and disciples, followed him as far as Ya‘qúbíyyih. Mírzá Qurbán-‘Alí, however, succeeded in inducing him to return to Mandalíj and resume the work which he had abandoned.

“On his return from his pilgrimage, Mírzá Qurbán-‘Alí met Mullá Ḥusayn and through him embraced the truth of the Cause. Owing to illness, he was unable to join the defenders of the fort of Ṭabarsí, and, but for his unfitness to travel to Mázindarán, would have been the first to join its occupants. Next to Mullá Ḥusayn, among the disciples of the Báb, Vaḥíd was the person to whom he was most attached. During my visit to Ṭihrán, I was informed that the latter had consecrated his life to the service of the Cause and had risen with exemplary devotion to promote its interests far and wide. I often heard Mírzá Qurbán-‘Alí, who was then in the capital, deplore that illness. ‘How greatly I grieve,’ I heard him several times remark, ‘to have been deprived of my share of the cup which Mullá Ḥusayn and his companions have quaffed! I long to join Vaḥíd and enroll myself under his banner and strive to make amends for my previous failure.’ He was preparing to leave Ṭihrán, when he was suddenly arrested. His modest attire witnessed to the degree of his detachment. Clad in a white tunic, after the manner of the Arabs, cloaked in a coarsely woven ‘abá, and wearing the headdress of the people of ‘Iráq, he seemed, as he walked the streets, the very embodiment of renunciation. He scrupulously adhered to all the observances of his Faith, and with exemplary piety performed his devotions. ‘The Báb Himself conforms to the observances of His Faith in their minutest details,’ he often remarked. ‘Am I to neglect on my part the things which are observed by my Leader?’

“When Mírzá Qurbán-‘Alí was arrested and brought before the Amír-Nizám, a commotion such as Ṭihrán had rarely experienced was raised. Large crowds of people thronged the approaches to the headquarters of the government, eager to learn what would befall him. ‘Since last night,’ the Amír, as soon as he had seen him, remarked, ‘I have been besieged by all classes of State officials who have vigorously interceded in your behalf. From what I learn of the position you occupy and the influence your words exercise, you are not much inferior to the Siyyid-i-Báb Himself. Had you claimed for yourself the position of leadership, better would it have been than to declare your allegiance to one who is certainly inferior to you in knowledge.’ ‘The knowledge which I have acquired,’ he boldly retorted, ‘has led me to bow down in allegiance

before Him whom I have recognized to be my Lord and Leader. Ever since I attained the age of manhood, I have regarded justice and fairness as the ruling motives of my life. I have judged Him fairly, and have reached the conclusion that should this Youth, to whose transcendent power friend and foe alike testify, be false, every Prophet of God, from time immemorial down to the present day, should be denounced as the very embodiment of falsehood! I am assured of the unquestioning devotion of over a thousand admirers, and yet I am powerless to change the heart of the least among them. This Youth, however, has proved Himself capable of transmuting, through the elixir of His love, the souls of the most degraded among His fellow men. Upon a thousand like me He has, unaided and alone, exerted such influence that, without even attaining His presence, they have flung aside their own desires and have clung passionately to His will. Fully conscious of the inadequacy of the sacrifice they have made, these yearn to lay down their lives for His sake, in the hope that this further evidence of their devotion may be worthy of mention in His Court.'

"I am loth," the Amír-Nizám remarked, 'whether your words be of God or not, to pronounce the sentence of death against the possessor of so exalted a station.' 'Why hesitate?' burst forth the impatient victim. 'Are you not aware that all names descend from Heaven? He whose name is 'Alí, in whose path I am laying down my life, has from time immemorial inscribed my name, Qurbán-'Alí, in the scroll of His chosen martyrs. This is indeed the day on which I celebrate the Qurbán festival, the day on which I shall seal with my lifeblood my faith in His Cause. Be not, therefore, reluctant, and rest assured that I shall never blame you for your act. The sooner you strike off my head, the greater will be my gratitude to you.' 'Take him away from this place!' cried the Amír. 'Another moment, and this dervish will have cast his spell over me!' 'You are proof against that magic,' Mírzá Qurbán-'Alí replied, 'that can captivate only the pure in heart. You and your like can never be made to realize the entrancing power of that Divine elixir which, swift as the twinkling of an eye, transmutes the souls of men.'

"Exasperated by the reply, the Amír-Nizám arose from his seat and, his whole frame shaking with anger, exclaimed: 'Nothing but the edge of the sword can silence the voice of this deluded people!' 'No need,' he told the executioners who were in attendance upon him, 'to bring any more members of this hateful sect before me. Words are powerless to overcome their unswerving obstinacy. Whomever you are able to induce to recant his faith, release him; as for the rest, strike off their heads.'

"As he drew near the scene of his death, Mírzá Qurbán-'Alí, intoxicated with the prospect of an approaching reunion with his Beloved, broke forth into expressions of joyous exultation. 'Hasten to slay me,' he cried with rapturous delight, 'for through this death you will have offered me the chalice of everlasting life. Though my withered breath you now extinguish, with a myriad lives will my Beloved reward me; lives such as no mortal heart can conceive!' 'Hearken to my words, you who profess to be the followers of the Apostle of God,' he pleaded, as he turned his gaze to the concourse of spectators. 'Muḥammad, the Day-Star of Divine guidance, who in a former age arose above the horizon of Hījáz, has today, in the person of 'Alí-Muḥammad, again risen from the Day-Spring of Shīrāz, shedding the same radiance and imparting the same warmth. A rose is a rose in whichever garden, and at whatever time, it may bloom.' Seeing on every side how the people were deaf to his call, he cried aloud: 'Oh, the perversity of this generation! How heedless of the fragrance which that imperishable



Rose has shed! Though my soul brim over with ecstasy, I can, alas, find no heart to share with me its charm, nor mind to apprehend its glory.'

"At the sight of the body of Hájí Mírzá Siyyid 'Alí, beheaded and bleeding at his feet, his fevered excitement rose to its highest pitch. 'Hail,' he shouted as he flung himself upon it, 'hail the day of mutual rejoicing, the day of our reunion with our Beloved!' 'Approach,' he cried to the executioner, as he held the body in his arms, 'and strike your blow, for my faithful comrade is unwilling to release himself from my embrace, and calls me to hasten together with him to the court of the Well-Beloved.' A blow from the executioner fell immediately upon the nape of his neck. A few moments later, and the soul of that great man had passed away. That cruel stroke stirred in the bystanders feelings of mingled indignation and sympathy. Cries of sorrow and lamentation ascended from the hearts of the multitude, and provoked a distress that was reminiscent of the outbursts of grief with which every year the populace greets the day of 'Áshúrá.

"3. Then came the turn of Hájí Mullá Ismá'il-i-Qumí, who was a native of Faráhán. In his early youth, he departed for Karbilá in quest of the Truth which he was diligently striving to discover. He had associated with all the leading 'ulamás of Najaf and Karbilá, had sat at the feet of Siyyid Kázim, and had acquired from him the knowledge and understanding which enabled him, a few years later when in Shíráz, to acknowledge the Revelation of the Báb. He distinguished himself by the tenacity of his faith and the fervor of his devotion. As soon as the injunction of the Báb, bidding His followers hasten to Khurásán, reached him, he enthusiastically responded, joined the companions who were proceeding to Badasht, and there received the appellation of Sirru'l-Vujúd. Whilst in their company, his understanding of the Cause grew deeper and his zeal for its promotion correspondingly increased. He grew to be the very embodiment of detachment, and felt more and more impatient to demonstrate in a befitting manner the spirit with which his Faith had inspired him. In the exposition of the meaning of the verses of the Qur'án and the traditions of Islám, he displayed an insight which few could rival, and the eloquence with which he set forth those truths won him the admiration of his fellow-disciples. In the days when the fort of Tabarsí had become the rallying center for the disciples of the Báb, he languished disconsolate upon a sickbed, unable to lend his assistance and play his part for its defense. No sooner had he recovered than, finding that that memorable siege had ended with the massacre of his fellow-disciples, he arose, with added determination, to make up by his self-sacrificing labors for the loss which the Cause had sustained. That determination carried him eventually to the field of martyrdom and won him its crown.

"Conducted to the block and waiting for the moment of his execution, he turned his gaze towards those twin martyrs who had preceded him and who still lay entwined in each other's embrace. 'Well done, beloved companions!' he cried, as he fixed his gaze upon their gory heads. 'You have turned Tihrán into a paradise! Would that I had preceded you!' Drawing from his pocket a coin, which he handed to his executioner, he begged him to purchase for him something with which he could sweeten his mouth. He took some of it and gave the rest to him, saying: 'I have forgiven you your act; approach and deal your blow. For thirty years I have yearned to witness this blessed day, and was fearful lest I should carry this wish with me unfulfilled to the grave.' 'Accept me, O my God,' he cried, as he turned his eyes to heaven, 'unworthy though I be, and deign to inscribe my name upon the scroll of those immortals who have laid

down their lives on the altar of sacrifice.’ He was still offering his devotions when the executioner, at his request, suddenly cut short his prayer.

“4. He had hardly expired when Siyyid Ḥusayn-i-Turshízí, the mujtahid, was conducted in his turn to the block. He was a native of Turshíz, a village in Khurásán, and was highly esteemed for his piety and rectitude of conduct. He had studied for a number of years in Najaf, and was commissioned by his fellow-mujtahids to proceed to Khurásán and there propagate the principles he had been taught. When he arrived at Kázimayn, he met Hájí Muḥammad-Taqí-i-Kirmání, an old acquaintance of his, who ranked among the foremost merchants of Kirmán, and who had opened a branch of his business in Khurásán. As he was on his way to Persia, he decided to accompany him. This Hájí Muḥammad-Taqí had been a close friend of Hájí Mírzá Siyyid ‘Alí, the Báb’s maternal uncle, through whom he had been converted to the Cause in the year 1264 A.H., while preparing to leave Shíráz on a pilgrimage to Karbilá. When informed of the projected journey of Hájí Mírzá Siyyid ‘Alí to Chihríq for the purpose of visiting the Báb, he expressed his eager desire to accompany him. Hájí Mírzá Siyyid ‘Alí advised him to carry out his original purpose and proceed to Karbilá and there await his letter, which would inform him whether it would be advisable to join him. From Chihríq, Hájí Mírzá Siyyid ‘Alí was ordered to depart for Tihrán, in the hope that after a short stay in the capital he would be able to renew his visit to his Nephew. Whilst in Chihríq, he expressed his reluctance to return to Shíráz, inasmuch as he could no longer endure the increasing arrogance of its inhabitants. Upon his arrival in Tihrán, he requested Hájí Muḥammad-Taqí to join him. Siyyid Ḥusayn accompanied him from Baghdád to the capital and through him was converted to the Faith.

“As he faced the multitude that had gathered round him to witness his martyrdom, Siyyid Ḥusayn raised his voice and said: ‘Hear me, O followers of Islám! My name is Ḥusayn, and I am a descendant of the Siyyidu’sh-Shuhadá, who also bore that name. The mujtahids of the holy cities of Najaf and Karbilá have unanimously testified to my position as the authorized expounder of the law and teachings of their Faith. Not until recently had I heard the name of the Siyyid-i-Báb. The mastery I have obtained over the intricacies of the Islamic teachings has enabled me to appreciate the value of the Message which the Siyyid-i-Báb has brought. I am convinced that, were I to deny the Truth which He has revealed, I should, by this very act, have renounced my allegiance to every Revelation that has preceded it. I appeal to every one of you to call upon the ‘ulamás and mujtahids of this city and to convene a gathering, at which I will undertake in their presence to establish the truth of this Cause. Let them then judge whether I am able to demonstrate the validity of the claims advanced by the Báb. If they be satisfied with the proofs which I shall adduce in support of my argument, let them desist from shedding the blood of the innocent; and if I fail, let them inflict upon me the punishment I deserve.’ These words had scarcely dropped from his lips when an officer in the service of the Amír-Nizám haughtily interjected: ‘I carry with me your death-warrant signed and sealed by seven of the recognized mujtahids of Tihrán, who have in their own handwriting pronounced you an infidel. I will myself be answerable to God on the Day of Judgment for your blood, and will lay the responsibility upon those leaders in whose judgment we have been asked to put our trust and to whose decisions we have been compelled to submit.’ With these words he drew out his dagger and stabbed him with such force that he immediately fell dead at his feet.



“5. Soon after, Ḥájí Muḥammad-Taqíy-i-Kirmání was led to the scene of execution. The ghastliness of the sight he beheld provoked his violent indignation. ‘Approach, you wretched and heartless tyrant,’ he burst forth as he turned to his persecutor, ‘and hasten to slay me, for I am impatient to join my beloved Ḥusayn. To live after him is a torture I cannot endure.’

“6. No sooner had Ḥájí Muḥammad-Taqí uttered these words than Siyyid Murtaḍá, who was one of the noted merchants of Zanján, hastened to take precedence of his companions. He flung himself over the body of Ḥájí Muḥammad-Taqí, and pleaded that, being a siyyid, his martyrdom would be more meritorious in the sight of God than that of Ḥájí Muḥammad-Taqí. As the executioner unsheathed his sword, Siyyid Murtaḍá invoked the memory of his martyred brother, who had struggled side by side with Mullá Ḥusayn; and such were his references that the onlookers marvelled at the unyielding tenacity of the faith with which he was inspired.

“7. In the midst of the turmoil which the stirring words of Siyyid Murtaḍá had raised, Muḥammad-Ḥusayn-i-Marághí’i rushed forward and begged that he be allowed to be martyred immediately ere his companions were put to the sword. As soon as his eyes fell upon the body of Ḥájí Mullá Ismá‘íl-i-Qumí, for whom he entertained a deep affection, he impulsively threw himself upon him and, holding him in his embrace, exclaimed: ‘Never will I consent to separate myself from my dearly beloved friend, in whom I have reposed the utmost confidence and from whom I have received so many evidences of a sincere and deep-felt affection!’

“Their eagerness to precede one another in laying down their lives for their Faith astonished the multitude who wondered which of the three would be preferred to his companions. They pleaded with such fervor that eventually they were beheaded, all three, at one and the same moment.

“So great a faith, such evidences of unbridled cruelty, human eye has rarely beheld. Few as they were in number, yet when we recall the circumstances of their martyrdom, we are compelled to acknowledge the stupendous character of that force which could evoke so rare a spirit of self-sacrifice. When we remember the exalted rank these victims had occupied, when we observe the degree of their renunciation and the vitality of their faith, when we recall the pressure which from influential quarters had been exerted to avert the danger with which their lives were threatened, above all when we picture to our minds the spirit that defied the atrocities which a heartless enemy so far bemeaned themselves as to inflict upon them, we are impelled to look upon that episode as one of the most tragic occurrences in the annals of this Cause.”<sup>14</sup>

## SECTION 10

Another powerful form of art is drama. Dramatic productions can be grandiose, with elaborate settings, costumes and props. We are not thinking, of course, about drama in such complex terms. This is not to say that we need shy away from accessories altogether; sometimes a small gesture, like putting on a hat, can increase the dramatic value of an activity. But even the most rudimentary use of drama can have profound effects. For, in addition to its value as an art form, it is an important pedagogical tool. Through it, one can see oneself in imaginary situations and unconsciously examine one’s own behavior and habits.

Indeed, as children progress through the program for their spiritual education, lessons draw on this tool in cultivating those habits and patterns of conduct that are an expression of the spiritual qualities they are striving to develop, and teachers are provided with appropriate scenarios for this purpose. But teachers are cautioned in the higher grades, when they get to the history of the Faith, to approach this matter with great care. They reflect on the following guidance, which applies equally to all stages of the educational process and more broadly to artistic activities in general. The first is a passage from a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi:

**“As to your question concerning the advisability of dramatizing Bahá’í historic episodes: the Guardian would certainly approve, and even encourage that the friends should engage in such literary pursuits which, no doubt, can be of immense teaching value. What he wishes the believers to avoid is to dramatize the personages of the Báb, Bahá’u’lláh and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, that is to say to treat them as dramatic figures, as characters appearing on the stage. This, as already pointed out, he feels would be quite disrespectful. The mere fact that they appear on the scene constitutes an act of discourtesy which can in no way be reconciled with their highly exalted station. Their message, or actual words, should be preferably reported and conveyed by their disciples appearing on the stage.”<sup>15</sup>**

The following quotation from a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice elaborates this idea further:

**“The prohibition on representing the Manifestation of God in paintings and drawings or in dramatic presentations applies to all the Manifestations of God. There are, of course, great and wonderful works of art of past Dispensations, many of which portrayed the Manifestations of God in a spirit of reverence and love. In this Dispensation however the greater maturity of mankind and the greater awareness of the relationship between the Supreme Manifestation and His servants enable us to realize the impossibility of representing, in any human form, whether pictorially, in sculpture or in dramatic representation, the Person of God’s Manifestation. In stating the Bahá’í prohibition, the beloved Guardian pointed out this impossibility.”<sup>16</sup>**

And the extract below from a letter written by the House of Justice offers additional guidance.

**“. . . an examination of the letters of the beloved Guardian makes it absolutely clear that it is not permissible to portray on the stage the figure of the Manifestation of God, nor even of the Master. . . .**

**“The use of light, either of great intensity or in different colors, needs your careful consideration. If the use of light in any way at all suggests a personification of the Manifestation of God it should not be used, but if it can be done without in any way giving the impression that the Prophet is being represented or personified then there is no objection to its use.”<sup>17</sup>**

In this regard, while some episodes from the early days of the Faith may lend themselves to reenactment, this would need to be done with circumspection. In the case of certain episodes, for example, it might prove possible for one person to assume the role of narrator, providing the structure for a sequence of events and pausing at appropriate moments

to allow others to enact selected portions. With the members of your group today, choose one episode from the early history of the Faith, and then decide which sections of the story should be narrated and which lend themselves to being enacted. Discuss at what point in the study of the main sequence it would be beneficial for a group of youth to be assisted in creating such a drama.

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Dramatic activities need not, of course, be confined to reenactments of history. As mentioned earlier, simple forms of drama can act as a tool to enhance the teaching-learning experience. For such a tool to be effective, however, it is necessary that a spirit of loving fellowship, free from frivolity and ridicule, pervade the atmosphere within which a group studies and reflects, be it a study circle, an institute campaign, or a camp. When the requisite spiritual discipline is present among its members, those who are keen and talented can create and act out simple skits and role-plays that give concrete expression to some of the concepts and spiritual principles they are studying in the institute courses. Think of the first unit of Book 1, and discuss which ideas and spiritual concepts could be reinforced by skits and role-plays. How would you ensure that this activity is carried out with grace and beauty and without the frivolity and lack of respect for human nobility that have unfortunately come to denigrate this form of art?

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There will be occasions when the members of a study circle will want to include a dramatic presentation in a program they organize for an audience. One such occasion is the celebration that is often held upon the completion of a course, to which the families and friends of the participants are usually invited. This practice is also followed by a group of junior youth when they finish studying a text. At events like these, the members would not only make dramatic presentations but also recite poetry, give talks, tell stories, and perform music.

## SECTION 11

Artistic expression includes a vast area of human endeavor referred to as crafts. Here, scores of materials—such as leather, wool, cotton, silk, stone, clay, glass, metal, wood, wax, straw, dried flowers—are transformed in myriad ways by skillful hands into objects, both practical and not, taming the inherent qualities of the materials to create beauty. The list of crafts is long indeed. Among the most well-known are weaving, embroidery, needlepoint, knitting, crocheting, sewing, dyeing, ceramics, pottery, jewelry-making, leatherwork, basket-weaving, carving, woodwork, frame-making, candle-making, puppet-making, toy-making, printmaking, lacemaking, and quilting. You should be able to add some more to the list. After doing so, discuss with your group which are the most prominent ones in your region.

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If you have served as an animator of a group of junior youth, you probably have some experience in helping them to learn about a few local crafts. How you might effectively introduce craft making into the educational process for youth and older adults requires careful thought. It will be imperative for you to consider the circumstances of the members of each group and their talents, the availability of resources, and so forth. Further, unless you happen to be proficient in one or more crafts, you will need to find someone with the requisite knowledge to assist you, and there might be opportunities, especially during a camp or an intensive campaign, to set up several sessions for participants to learn the skills of a particular craft. To help you reflect on the importance of this form of artistic expression, read the following two quotations from the Writings and discuss them with the other members of your group:

**“One of the names of God is the Fashioner. He loveth craftsmanship. Therefore any of His servants who manifesteth this attribute is acceptable in the sight of this Wronged One. Craftsmanship is a book among the books of divine sciences, and a treasure among the treasures of His heavenly wisdom. This is a knowledge with meaning, for some of the sciences are brought forth by words and come to an end with words.”<sup>18</sup>**

**“The one true God, exalted be He, loveth to witness handiworks of high craftsmanship produced by His loved ones. Blessed art thou, for what thy skill hath produced hath reached the presence of thy Lord, the Exiled, the Wronged. Please God every one of His friends may be enabled to acquire one of the crafts, and be confirmed in adhering to what hath been ordained in the Book of God, the All-Glorious, the All-Wise.”<sup>19</sup>**

## SECTION 12

It is hoped that the foregoing sections have increased your awareness of the role artistic endeavors play in the enrichment of the educational process being fostered at the grassroots, as well as in the vibrancy of our collective efforts. You may have also come to realize that when such endeavors, particularly in the case of crafts, draw, to whatever extent possible, on the artistic traditions of a region, they can go far in heightening appreciation for the richness of diverse cultures. In this, you will of course remember the point raised in Book 5 that, as an expression of culture, artistic activity carries with it values. You will be mindful, then, to choose suitable artistic pursuits, ones that do not end up inadvertently imposing values which undermine, in subtle ways, the educational process or the patterns of community life being shaped by it. Such patterns, it should be recognized, reflect the values of a new emerging culture inspired by the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh. Read the following quotation from a message written by the Universal House of Justice, which you studied, in part, in Book 6:

**“Propelled by forces generated both within and outside the Bahá'í community, the peoples of the earth can be seen to be moving from divergent directions, closer and closer to one another, towards what will be a world civilization so stupendous in character that it would be futile for us to attempt to imagine it today. As this centripetal movement of populations accelerates across the globe, some elements in every culture, not in accord with the teachings of the Faith, will gradually fall away, while others will be reinforced. By the same token, new elements of culture will evolve over time as people hailing from every human group, inspired by the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, give expression to patterns of thought and action engendered by His teachings, in part through artistic and literary works. It is with such considerations in mind that we welcome the decision of the Ruhi Institute, in formulating its courses, to leave for the friends to address locally issues related to artistic activity. What we ask at this stage, then, when energies are to be invested in the extension of children's classes and junior youth groups, is that the multiplication of supplementary items for this purpose be allowed to occur naturally, as an outgrowth of the process of community building gathering momentum in villages and neighborhoods. We long to see, for instance, the emergence of captivating songs from every part of the world, in every language, that will impress upon the consciousness of the young the profound concepts enshrined in the Bahá'í teachings. Yet such an efflorescence of creative thought will fail to materialize, should the friends fall, however inadvertently, into patterns prevalent in the world that give license to those with financial resources to impose their cultural perspective on others, inundating them with materials and products aggressively promoted. Further, every effort should be made to protect spiritual education from the perils of commercialization.”<sup>20</sup>**

Culture, then, will be one of your constant concerns. You will need to be on your guard, if you are to resist the influence of the materialistic culture that is invading the life of humanity, and will want to make sure that at least some of the artistic expressions you choose represent the richness of the culture of your people, drawing on traditional methods and instruments but with a new spiritual and moral content inspired by the Faith. This might be a good opportunity, then, for you to take a moment to reflect on the artistic heritage of your people. Answer the following questions and write a short paragraph on this subject:

- a. What different types of music do people play or listen to in your region? Does the region have its own traditional work songs, such as those sung in the fields during harvest or when tending animals, or its own love songs, lullabies, children's songs and sacred music? Is there a certain kind of music traditionally used for special occasions, such as weddings, funerals, or celebrations? What are some examples of songs and music that have emerged in your region as the institute process has gained strength?
- b. Are there any musical instruments that are particular to the region? For what kind of music are they suitable? Are there any that youth and older adults play to enliven community events?
- c. Is storytelling a tradition among your people? Has this tradition become enriched through sharing stories from the life of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and the history of the Faith during visits to homes and in community gatherings?
- d. What are some popular forms of drama in your region? How do they portray episodes from the history of your people and tales of its heroes and heroines? Is this form of art being used to raise collective consciousness of spiritual concepts and principles being studied in the institute courses?
- e. How do the traditional crafts of your region express beauty, symmetry, and grace? How are they used to enhance the overall development of young people, particularly those participating in the junior youth spiritual empowerment program?

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