

AN OUTLINE OF THE PROGRAMME

THE GEMSTONE PROGRAMME IS A PROJECT IN LIVING A BAHÁ'Í LIFE, NOT JUST A STUDY PROGRAMME... It has three aspects:

- (i) Deepening understanding of the Bahá'í teachings by studying and discussing compilations on different aspects of Bahá'í life.
- (ii) Attempting to put the teachings which have been studied into practice and thereby learning from experience.
- (iii) Deriving support and inspiration from a group which is working over a six week period on studying the Bahá'í teachings together, individually and in small groups, and sharing what is learned.

BASIC GUIDELINES



REGARD MAN AS A MINE RICH
IN GEMS OF INESTIMABLE
VALUE. EDUCATION CAN ALONE
CAUSE IT TO REVEAL ITS
TREASURES AND ENABLE MAN-
KIND TO BENEFIT THEREFROM
• BAHÁ 'U' LLÁH.

G E M S T O N E

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AN OUTLINE OF THE PROGRAMME

THE GEMSTONE PROGRAMME IS A PROJECT IN LIVING A BAHÁ'Í LIFE, NOT JUST A STUDY PROGRAMME. It has three aspects:

- (i) Deepening understanding of the Bahá'í teachings by studying and discussing compilations on different aspects of Bahá'í life.
- (ii) Attempting to put the teachings which have been studied into practice and thereby learning from experience.
- (iii) Deriving support, encouragement and inspiration from a group which is committed to working over a six week period on studying the Bahá'í teachings together, individually applying them in daily life and sharing what is learned with each other.

All who wish may participate, Bahá'í or non-Bahá'í, provided they sincerely wish to understand and apply the Bahá'í teachings in their own lives. A definite commitment of time is necessary. The programme is only for a limited period, but improving the quality of a Bahá'í life requires some effort and perseverance, and making a commitment of time is a good start as it expresses a recognition of the value of the task. Furthermore the quality of the group consultation depends very substantially on the real commitment of the participants.

The Deepening Materials

The materials consist of compilations on the following topics:

Prayer and Daily Reading

Meditation and Action

Justice

Love

Purity and Detachment

Happiness

The compilations consist primarily of quotations from the Bahá'í Writings to define specific goals for applying the Bahá'í teachings. THE COMPILATIONS ARE GIVEN OUT ONE WEEK AT A TIME SO THAT TASKS FOR JUST THAT WEEK CAN BE CONCENTRATED ON.

Individual Goals and Practice

Each compilation has a list of specific goals. Each person should decide at the end of the consultation session which goal (or goals) he/she will work on that week and write it down in the space provided. Tick-boxes are supplied to assist the participant check on the completion of his/her task every day.

It is not necessary or even advisable to attempt every goal. To apply just one teaching throughout the six week period would make the programme worthwhile.

Indeed Shoghi Effendi writes: *"How often the beloved Master was heard to say: Should each one of the friends take upon himself to carry out, in all its integrity and implications only one of the teachings of the Faith, with devotion, detachment, constancy and perseverance and exemplify it in all his deeds and pursuits of life, the world would become another world and the face of the earth would mirror forth the splendors of the Abha Paradise."*

Living the Life, p.7

Group Consultation

The purpose of the consultation session is to obtain a deeper understanding of the teachings with a view to applying them and sharing experiences which may be helpful to others.

In accordance with the Bahá'í teachings confession of sins is definitely to be avoided, and discussion of particular personalities is likewise not very helpful.

The role of the leader is simply that of a Bahá'í chairman, to see that the consultation proceeds in an orderly fashion, that everyone has an opportunity to contribute and that the objectives of the particular session are achieved. It is generally prudent for the chairman to refer questions first to the group before offering his/her own opinion. The chairman's role is to keep consultation directed to practical means for applying the teachings.

How to Begin

The group leader should familiarize himself/herself with the materials before the session. Each session begins with a prayer for the development of spiritual qualities. At the first session, the leader reads through the programme outline so that everyone understands the aims and procedure. Then group members read passages from the first study. There is a break after each section for consultation. At the end of the session, each person decides on a task or goal to work on during the week and writes this down in the space provided. The session may take about an hour and a half.

At subsequent sessions, the first ten or fifteen minutes can be allowed for a discussion of difficulties encountered or new understanding gained from applying the teachings during the previous week, and helpful ideas from other people. Then the teachings for the coming week are discussed.

UNIT 1: PRAYER & READING



G E M S T O N E

P R A Y E R & R E A D I N G

"O Son of Light! Forget all save Me and commune with My Spirit. This is of the essence of My command, therefore turn unto it."

Bahá'u'lláh, The Hidden Words, Arabic 16

".....the core of religious faith is the mystic feeling which unites man with God.... This state of Spiritual communion can be brought about and maintained by means of meditation and prayer. And this is the reason why Bahá'u'lláh has so much stressed the importance of worship. It is not sufficient for a believer merely to accept and observe the teachings. He should, in addition, cultivate the sense of spirituality which he can acquire chiefly by means of prayer...."

The believers, particularly the young ones, should therefore realise the necessity of praying. For prayer is absolutely indispensable to their inner spiritual development, and this, already stated, is the very foundation and purpose of the religion of God".

Shoghi Effendi, Bahá'í News, No.102

SPECIFIC GOALS

1. To rethink how you feel about God

God has created us out of love as spiritual beings, and has created for our pleasure and happiness every good thing.

"Veiled in My immemorial being and in the ancient eternity of My essence, I knew My love for thee, therefore I created thee, have engraved on thee Mine image and revealed to thee My beauty."

Bahá'u'lláh, The Hidden Words, Arabic 3

"God hath ordained every good thing, whether created in the heavens or in the earth, for such of His servants as truly believe in Him. Eat ye, O people, of the good things which God hath allowed you, and deprive not yourselves from His wondrous bounties."

Bahá'u'lláh, in The Advent of Divine Justice, p.28

God does not need our prayers, but we need to pray to realise our true nature as spiritual beings and to open a channel of communication to that ultimate Spiritual Power through Whom we have originated.

"Far, far from Thy glory be what mortal man can affirm of Thee, or attribute unto Thee, or the praise with which he can glorify Thee! Whatever duty Thou has prescribed unto Thy servants of extolling to the utmost Thy majesty and glory is but a token of Thy grace unto them, that they may be enabled to ascend unto the station conferred upon their own inmost being, the station of the knowledge of their own selves."

Bahá'u'lláh, Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, I, p.4

*"O Son of Man!
I loved thy creation, hence I created thee. Wherefore, do thou love Me, that I may name thy name and fill thy soul with the spirit of life."*

Bahá'u'lláh, The Hidden Words, Arabic 4

"We must strive to attain to that condition by being separated from all things and from the people of the world and by turning to God alone. It will take some effort on the part of man to attain to that condition, but he must work for it, strive for it. We can attain to it by thinking and caring less for material things and more for the spiritual. The further we go from one the nearer we are to the other. The choice is ours.

Our spiritual perception, our inward sight must be opened, so that we can see the signs and traces of God's spirit in everything. Everything can reflect to us the light of the spirit."

*'Abdu'l-Bahá, talk reported by Mrs. E.J. Rosenberg,
Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era, p.112*

We can attain our highest happiness only through the love for God, and God will give us this love if we sincerely ask for it.

"As to spiritual happiness, this is the true basis for the life of man, for life is created for happiness, not for sorrow, for pleasure not for grief. Happiness is life; sorrow is death. Spiritual happiness is life eternal.....

This happiness is but the love of God...."

'Abdu'l-Bahá, The Divine Art of Living p.18

"Beg everything thou desirest from Baha'u'llah. If thou art asking faith, ask of Him. If thou art yearning for knowledge, He will grant it thee. If thou art longing for love of God, He will bestow it unto thee. He will descend upon thee all His blessings."

'Abdu'l-Bahá, Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, May 19, 1914.

2. To pray every day

"At the dawn of every day he (the true seeker) should commune with God, and with all his soul persevere in the quest of his Beloved."

Bahá'u'lláh, Kitab-i-Igan, p.194

"Supplicate to God, pray to Him and invoke Him at midnight and at dawn. Be humble and submissive to God and chant the verses of thanksgiving at morn and eve....."

'Abdu'l-Bahá, The Divine Art of Living, p.33

3. To speak to God from your heart

"Prayer should spring from love, from the desire of the person to commune with God. Just as the lover never ceases wishing to communicate with the beloved, so does the lover of God always wish for constant prayer or communication with the Deity.

Prayer need not be in words but in thought and attitude. But if this love and this desire are lacking it is useless to try to force them. Words without love mean nothing. If a person talks to you as an unpleasant duty with no pleasure in his meeting with you, do you wish to converse with him? Efforts should first be made to make attachment to God.

When asked how this attachment is to be made, how the love of God is to be obtained, since there are many people in the world who admit the existence of a Deity, but without emotion, 'Abdu'l-Bahá said, 'Knowledge is love. Study, listen to exhortations, think, try to understand the wisdom and the greatness of God.... The soil must be fertilized before the seed is sown.'"

*Words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Star of the West,
Vol. VIII, p.42*

"Prayer is communion with God.... Its efficacy is conditional upon the freedom of the heart from extraneous suggestions and mundane thoughts. The worshipper must pray with a detached spirit, unconditional surrender of the will, concentrated attention and a magnetic spiritual passion. His innermost being must be stirred with the ethereal breeze of holiness. If the mirror of his life is polished from the dross of all desires, the heavenly pictures and star-like images of the Kingdom of God will be reflected therein. Then he will be given power to translate these celestial forms into his own daily life and the lives of many thousands."

'Abdu'l-Bahá, Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, September 3, 1914.

4. To wait on any answer

There are a number of different ways in which an answer to prayer may be perceived: as a feeling of communion with God or being in His presence, as guidance in the form of thoughts or ideas, or as events or happenings in the lives of ourselves or others.

"Reveal then Thyself, O Lord! By Thy merciful utterance and the Mystery of Thy Divine Being, that the holy ecstasy of prayer may fill our souls - a prayer that shall rise above words and letters and transcend the murmur of syllables and sounds - that all things may be merged into nothingness before the revelation of Thy splendour."

'Abdu'l-Bahá, Bahá'í Prayers, U.K. No.99, p.103

"It is the language of the spirit which speaks to God. When, in prayer, we are freed from all outward things and turn to God, then it is as if in our hearts we hear the voice of God. Without words we speak, we communicate, we converse with God and hear the answer... All of us, when we attain to a truly spiritual condition, can hear the Voice of God."

'Abdu'l-Bahá, from a talk reported by Mrs. E.J. Rosenberg, Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era, Ch.6

"We cannot clearly distinguish between personal desire and guidance, but if the way opens, when we have sought guidance, then we may presume God is helping us."

Letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, January 25, 1943.

"God will answer the prayer of every servant if that prayer is urgent. His mercy is vast, illimitable... But we ask for things which the divine wisdom does not desire for us and there is no answer to our prayer... God is merciful. In His mercy He answers the prayers of all His servants when according to His supreme wisdom it is necessary."

'Abdu'l-Bahá, The Divine Art of Living, p.31-32

5. To read aloud from the Writings every morning and evening

"Chant (or recite) the words of God every morning and evening. The one who neglects this has not been faithful to the Covenant of God and His agreement, and he who turns away from it today is of those who have turned away from God."

Bahá'u'lláh, in Divine Art of Living, p.40

The readings may be quite brief so long as they express spiritual feelings.

"To chant but one verse with joy and gladness is better for you than reading all the revelations of the omnipotent God with carelessness."

Bahá'u'lláh, in Divine Art of Living, p.41

"Intone, O My servant, the verses of God that have been received by thee, as intoned by them who have drawn nigh unto Him, that the sweetness of thy melody may kindle thine own soul, and attract the hearts of all men. Whoso reciteth, in the privacy of his chamber, the verses revealed by God, the scattering angels of the Almighty shall scatter abroad the fragrance of the words uttered by his mouth, and shall cause the heart of every righteous man to throb. Though he may, at first, remain unaware of its effect, yet the virtue of the grace vouchsafed unto him must needs sooner or later exercise its influence upon his soul. Thus have the mysteries of the Revelation of God been decreed by virtue of the Will of Him Who is the Source of power and wisdom."

Bahá'u'lláh, Gleanings, CXXXVI, p.294

TASKS FOR WEEK 1

1. To rethink how you feel about God.
2. To pray every day.
3. To speak to God from your heart.
4. To wait on any answer.
5. To read aloud from the Writings every morning and evening.

My task for Week 1 is

Mon.	Tue.	Wed.	Thu.	Fri.	Sat.	Sun.

"Should each one of the friends take upon himself to carry out, in all its integrity and implications, only one of the teachings of the Faith, with devotion, detachment, constancy and perseverance and exemplify it in all his deeds and pursuits of life, the world would become another world and the face of the earth would mirror forth the splendours of the Abhá Paradise."

'Abdu'l-Bahá Living the Life, p.7

UNIT 2: MEDITATION & ACTION



1. To meditate on at least once a week.

• BAHĀ 'U' LLĀH.

G E M S T O N E

M E D I T A T I O N & A C T I O N

"One hour's reflection is preferable to seventy years of pious worship."

Bahá'u'lláh, in The Divine Art of Living, p.39

"Investigate and study the Holy Scriptures word by word so that you may attain knowledge of the mysteries hidden therein. Be not satisfied with Words, but seek to understand the spiritual meanings hidden in the heart of the words ..."

'Abdu'l-Bahá, in The Divine Art of Living, p.40

"Guidance hath ever been given by words, and now it is given by deeds. Every one must show forth deeds that are pure and holy, for words are the property of all alike, whereas such deeds as these belong only to Our loved ones. Strive then with heart and soul to distinguish yourselves by your deeds. In this wise We counsel you in this holy and resplendent tablet."

Bahá'u'lláh, The Hidden Words, Persian No. 76

SPECIFIC GOALS

1. To meditate on some aspect of the teachings at least once a week.

"The friends are urged - nay enjoined - to pray, and they should also meditate, but the manner of doing the latter is left entirely to the individual."

Shoghi Effendi, in Bahá'í Life, p.41

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

This faculty of meditation frees man from the animal nature, discerns the reality of things, puts man in touch with God."

'Abdu'l-Bahá, Paris Talks, p.175

"The Guardian hopes that along with whatever other studies you take up, you will continually study the teachings and endeavour to acquire a profound knowledge of them. The importance of young Bahá'ís is becoming thoroughly steeped in every branch of the teachings cannot be over-emphasised..."

Letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi,
Bahá'í Life, p.43

During the Gemstone program, the meditation periods are used to study and understand the Bahá'í teachings for that week, to find ways of applying them, and to find solutions to the practical problems which arise at each stage of the project.

2. To meditate on the development of your own unrealized spiritual potentialities.

"O SON OF BEING!

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

Bahá'u'lláh, The Hidden Words, Arabic No.12

"O MY FRIEND!

Thou art the day-star of the heavens of My holiness, let not the defilement of the world eclipse thy splendor. Rend asunder the veil of heedlessness, that from behind the clouds thou mayest emerge resplendent and array all things with the apparel of life."

Bahá'u'lláh, The Hidden Words, Persian, No.73

".....man should know his own self, and know those things which lead to loftiness or to baseness, to shame or to honour, to affluence or to poverty."

Bahá'u'lláh, Bahá'í World Faith, p.167

"We must be patient with others, infinitely patient!, but also with our own poor selves, remembering that even the Prophets of God sometimes got tired and cried out in despair!..... He urges you to persevere and add up your accomplishments, rather than to dwell on the dark side of things. Everyone's life has both a dark and bright side. The Master said: turn your back to the darkness and your face to me."

(From a letter dated October 22, 1949, written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer).

Bahá'í National Review, October 1979.

"When a person becomes a Bahá'í, actually what takes place is that the seed of the spirit starts to grow in the human soul. This seed must be watered by the outpourings of the Holy Spirit. These gifts of the spirit are received through prayer, meditation, study of the Holy Utterances and service to the Cause of God. The fact of the matter is that service in the Cause is like the plough which ploughs the physical soil when seeds are sown. It is necessary that the soil be ploughed up, so that it can be enriched, and thus cause a stronger growth of the seed. In exactly the same way the evolution of the spirit takes place through ploughing up the soil of the heart so that it is a constant reflection of the Holy Spirit. In this way the human spirit grows and develops by leaps and bounds.

Naturally there will be periods of distress and difficulty, and even severe tests; but if that person turns firmly towards the divine Manifestation, studies carefully His spiritual teachings and receives the blessings of the Holy Spirit, he will find that in reality these tests and difficulties have been the gifts of God to enable him to grow and develop.

Thus might you look upon your own difficulties in the path of service. They are the means of your spirit growing and developing. You will suddenly find that you have conquered many of the problems which upset you and then you will wonder why they should have troubled you at all. An individual must centre his whole heart and mind on service to the Cause, in accordance with the high standards set by Bahá'u'lláh. When this done, the Hosts of the Supreme Concourse will come to the assistance of the individual, and every difficulty and trial will gradually be overcome."

From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi,
Living the Life, p.35-36.

3. To think about some aspect of the teachings and put it into practice.

"The reality of man is his thought, not his material body.....

Some men and women glory in their exalted thoughts, but if these thoughts never reach the plane of action they remain useless: the power of thought is dependent on its manifestation in deeds."

'Abdu'l-Bahá, Paris Talks, p.17-18

"This faculty brings forth from the invisible plane the sciences and arts. Through the meditative faculty inventions are made possible, colossal undertakings are carried out; through it governments can run smoothly. Through this faculty man enters into the very kingdom of God."

'Abdu'l-Bahá, Paris Talks, p.175

There is an interesting (if unauthenticated) pilgrim's note on meditation in "Do'a - On Wings of Prayer" by Ruth Moffett.

"One day our Guardian said to a prominent pilgrim in Haifa, 'Do you pray?' 'Of course, beloved Guardian, I pray every morning.' 'Do you meditate?' The man paused a bit and said slowly 'No, I guess I do not.' The Guardian replied 'Prayer is of no use without meditation.'"

Then the Guardian continued, 'Meditation must be centred on the Writings.' The Guardian continued very earnestly and said, 'Meditation is of no use unless it is followed by action...'

'Meditation is not just sitting down, closing your eyes, keeping silent in a silent atmosphere, and being blank. That is not meditation. You must concentrate on the teachings, concentrate on their implications, and how they can be used. Prayer is of no consequence if it remains the murmur of syllables and sounds.....of what use is that? God knows really. We are not saying the prayers for God, we are saying them for our own selves. If we do not reflect upon the Writings that we read, if we do not make the Writings part of our daily action, I think we are wasting our time.'"

Do'a - On Wings of Prayer, by Ruth Moffett, p.16-17

"It is incumbent upon every man of insight and understanding to strive to translate that which hath been written into reality and action..... That one indeed is a man who, today, dedicateth himself to the service of the entire human race....."

Bahá'u'lláh, Gleanings, CXVII, (U.S.) p.250

4. To take stock of yourself each day.

"Bring thyself to account each day ere thou art summoned to a reckoning, for death, unheralded, shall come upon thee, and thou shalt be called to give account for thy deeds."

Bahá'u'lláh, The Hidden Words, Arabic, No.31

There appear to be two aspects to taking stock of one's spiritual condition - to recognise achievements and give thanks for them as divine confirmations and blessings, and to recognise problems and mistakes and take corrective action.

"Be fair to yourself and to others...."

Bahá'u'lláh, in The Advent of Divine Justice, p.20

"Wherefore, be thankful to God for having strengthened thee to aid His Cause, for having made the flowers of knowledge and understanding to spring forth in the garden of thine heart."

Bahá'u'lláh, Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh
CXXXIX p.303

"We must always look ahead and seek to accomplish in the future what we may have failed to do in the past. Failures, tests and trials, if we use them correctly, can become the means of purifying our spirits, strengthening our characters, and enable us to rise to greater heights of service."

Letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi,
Living the Life, p.17

"He is very happy to see that you have put into practice one of the most encouraging precepts of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in which He said that we should try and make every stumbling-block a stepping-stone to progress. In the course of your past life you have all stumbled very gravely; but, far from being embittered or defeated by this experience, you are determined to make it a means of purifying your natures, improving your characters, and enabling you to become better citizens in the future. This is truly pleasing in the eyes of God."

Letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, to the
Bahá'ís in H.M. Prison Farm, Kitalya, Uganda, Living
the Life, p.37

One method of stocktaking is to spend a few minutes before going to sleep in reviewing the past day, particularly noting any moments of discomfort which may suggest insensitivity to someone's need, or having compromised one of the teachings.

TASKS FOR WEEK 2

1. To meditate on the teachings relating to meditation and action.
2. To meditate on the development of your own unrealized spiritual potentialities.
3. To think about some aspect of the teachings and put it into practice.
4. To take stock of yourself each day.

CONTINUING TASKS

1. To pray daily.
2. To read aloud from the Writings in the morning and evening.

My task for Week 2 is

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Mon. Tue. Wed. Thu. Fri. Sat. Sun.

"Should each one of the friends take upon himself to carry out, in all its integrity and implications, only one of the teachings of the Faith, with devotion, detachment, constancy and perseverance and exemplify it in all his deeds and pursuits of life, the world would become another world and the face of the earth would mirror forth the splendours of the Abhá Paradise."

'Abdu'l-Bahá Living the Life, p.7



REGARD MAN AS A MINE
IN GEMS OF KNOWLEDGE
VALUE EDUCATION
CAUSE IT TO BE
TREASURABLE KNOWLEDGE
KIND TO PROMOTE
• ENDA •

G E M S T O N E

UNIT 3

UNIT 3: JUSTICE



REGARD MAN AS A MINE RICH
IN GEMS OF INESTIMABLE
VALUE. EDUCATION CAN ALONE
CAUSE IT TO REVEAL ITS
TREASURES AND ENABLE MAN-
KIND TO BENEFIT THEREFROM
• BAHÁ 'U' LLAH.

G E M S T O N E

J U S T I C E

"The best beloved of all things in My sight is Justice; turn not away therefrom if thou desirest Me, and neglect it not that I may confide in thee. By its aid thou shalt see with thine own eyes and not through the eyes of others, and shalt know of thine own knowledge and not through the knowledge of thy neighbour. Ponder this in thy heart; how it behoveth thee to be. Verily justice is My gift to thee and the sign of My loving-kindness. Set it then before thine eyes."

Bahá'u'lláh, The Hidden Words, Arabic 2.

"The light of man is Justice; quench it not with the contrary winds of oppression and tyranny. The purpose of justice is the appearance of unity among men."

Bahá'u'lláh, Bahá'í World Faith, p.182

"That which traineth the world is Justice, for it is upheld by two pillars, reward and punishment. These two pillars are the sources of life to the world."

Bahá'u'lláh, The Advent of Divine Justice, p.23

SPECIFIC GOALS

Truthfulness:

1. Sensitivity to situations in which you are tempted to deviate from truthfulness.
2. To speak the truth.

"Truthfulness is the foundation of all human virtues. Without truthfulness progress and success, in all the worlds of God, are impossible for any soul. When this holy attribute is established in man, all the divine qualities will also be acquired."

'Abdu'l-Bahá, The Divine Art of Living, p.78

"Consider that the worst of qualities and most odious of attributes, which is the foundation of all evil, is lying. No worse or more blameworthy quality than this can be imagined to exist; it is the destroyer of all human perfections, and the cause of innumerable vices. There is no worse characteristic than this; it is the foundation of all evils."

'Abdu'l-Bahá, Some Answered Questions, LVII

"As to the question whether it is right to tell an untruth in order to save another, he feels that under no condition should we tell an untruth but at the same time try and help the person in a more legitimate manner. Of course it is not necessary to be too outspoken until the question is directly put to us."

From letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi,
Living the Life, p.10-11

Because the importance of truthfulness is so fundamental it is important to observe and recognize the types of situations in which one tends to deviate from the truth (or perhaps bend it a little). The first goal is to become sensitive to these situations. For instance, for some people a temptation situation may be one in which there is a degree of uncertainty as to the exact truth and a personal interest in it being more in one direction than the other. It is the task of each person to identify the characteristics of his own temptation situations. It may also be helpful to try to analyse one's motive for telling a lie, e.g. to protect oneself from embarrassment or inconvenience rather than face up to the truth.

Not backbiting

1. To recognize when you are speaking about someone else.
2. Never speak against someone behind his or her back.

"How couldst thou forget thine own faults and busy thyself with the faults of others?"

Bahá'u'lláh, The Hidden Words, Arabic, 26

"Beware lest ye offend any heart, lest ye speak against any one in his absence....."

'Abdu'l-Bahá, Bahá'í Life, p.37

"Do not complain of others. Refrain from reprimanding them, and if you wish to give admonition or advice let it be offered in such a way that it will not burden the receiver."

'Abdu'l-Bahá, The Divine Art of Living, p.118-9.

The purpose of the first goal is simply to develop sensitivity to situations in which one is talking about someone else, so that particular care may be taken not to slip into backbiting.

Honesty

1. To review situations in which it is common for people not to practice strict honesty.
2. To be honest.

Prohibitions in the Kitab-i-Aqdas include: "Theft".

Synopsis and Codification of the Kitab-i-Aqdas, p.47

"This wronged one enjoineth on you honesty and piety".

Bahá'u'lláh, Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, p.23

"It is not advisable to show kindness to a person who is a tyrant, a traitor or a thief because kindness encourages him to become worse and does not awaken him."

'Abdu'l-Bahá, Bahá'í World Faith, p.412

It is suggested that the group make a list of situations in which honesty is not always practised, starting with filling in income tax returns.

Fairness

1. Sensitivity to situations in which you are balancing the rights or interests of others.
2. To be fair.

"Be fair to yourselves and to others that the evidences of Justice may be revealed through your deeds among Our faithful servants..... Equity is the most fundamental among human virtues. The evaluation of all things must needs depend upon it..... Observe equity in your judgment, ye men of understanding heart! He that is unjust in his judgment is destitute of the characteristics that distinguish man's station."

Bahá'u'lláh, cited in Advent of Divine Justice, p. 20

"If thou lookest towards justice, choose thou for others what thou choosest for thyself."

Bahá'u'lláh, The Divine Art of Living, p.117

"Such rectitude of conduct must manifest itself, with ever-increasing potency, in every verdict which the elected representatives of the Bahá'í community, in whatever capacity they may find themselves, may be called upon to pronounce. It must be constantly reflected in the business dealings of all its members, in their domestic lives, in all manner of employment, and in any service they may, in the future, render their government or people. It must be exemplified in the conduct of all Bahá'í electors, when exercising their sacred rights and functions."

"It must be demonstrated in the impartiality of every defender of the Faith against its enemies, in his fairmindedness in recognizing any merits that enemy may possess, and in his honesty in discharging any obligations he may have towards him."

Shoghi Effendi, The Advent of Divine Justice, p.22

"To discriminate against any race, on the ground of its being socially backward, politically immature, and numerically in a minority, is a flagrant violation of the spirit that animates the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh."

Shoghi Effendi, The Advent of Divine Justice, p.29

The first goal is to become sensitive to situations in which one's judgment or treatment of others involves some balancing of rights or interests. For instance in a family or community a selective love or kindness to some particular members may be unfair and divisive if others are always left out. The third and fourth quotations identify eight situations in which fairness is a vital responsibility of the individual Bahá'í.

Trustworthiness

1. To list important unfulfilled obligations.
2. To reassess priorities and decide whether it is possible to carry them out.

".....We beheld one of the countenances of the exalted Paradise, standing on a pillar of light, and calling out in the loudest voice, saying: 'O ye concourse of heaven and earth, gaze upon my beauty, my light, my appearance and my effulgence. By God, the True One, I am Trustworthiness, its manifestation and its beauty, and I am the reward to him who clings thereto, who knoweth its rank and position and holdeth fast unto its hem. I am the most great ornament to the people of Bahá, and the mantle of honour to all in the kingdom of emanation. I am the greatest cause for the affluence of the world, and the horizon of tranquillity to the people of existence.'"

Bahá'u'lláh, Bahá'í World Faith, p.170.

".....say not that which thou doest not."

Bahá'u'lláh, The Hidden Words, Arabic, 29.

"It (rectitude of conduct) must characterize the attitude of every loyal believer towards non-acceptance of political posts, non-identification with political parties, non-participation in political controversies, and non-membership in political organizations and ecclesiastical institutions. It must reveal itself in the uncompromising adherence of all, whether young or old, to the clearly enunciated and fundamental principles laid down by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in His addresses, and to the laws and ordinances revealed by Bahá'u'lláh in His Most Holy Book."

Shoghi Effendi, The Advent of Divine Justice, p. 22

".....every organized community, enlisted under the banner of Bahá'u'lláh, should feel it to be its first and inescapable obligation to nurture, encourage, and safeguard every minority belonging to any faith, race, class, or nation within it."

Shoghi Effendi, The Advent of Divine Justice, p.29

Courtesy

1. To show greater consideration to others.
2. To be punctual.

"O people of God! I exhort you to courtesy. Courtesy is, in the primary station, the lord of all virtues."

Bahá'u'lláh, Bahá'í World Faith, p.175

".....no man should enter the house of his friend save at his friend's pleasure, nor lay hands upon his treasures, nor prefer his own will to his friend's, and in no wise seek an advantage over him. Ponder this, ye that have insight!"

Bahá'u'lláh, The Hidden Words, Persian, 43

TASKS FOR WEEK THREE

Truthfulness

1. To identify situations in which you are tempted to deviate from truthfulness.
2. To speak the truth.

Not backbiting

1. To recognize when you are speaking about someone else.
2. Never to speak against someone behind his or her back.

Honesty

1. To review situations in which it is common for people not to practice strict honesty.
2. To be honest.

Fairness

1. To be sensitive to situations in which you are balancing the rights or interests of others.

2. To be fair.

Trustworthiness

1. To list important unfulfilled obligations.
2. To reassess priorities and decide whether it is possible to carry them out.

Courtesy

1. To show greater consideration to others.
2. To be punctual.

CONTINUING TASKS

1. To pray daily for the development of your spiritual qualities.
2. To read aloud from the writings every morning and evening.
3. Meditation: To meditate on the Bahá'í teachings about Justice.
4. Reflect on your day.

My task for Week 3 is _____

Mon.	Tue.	Wed.	Thu.	Fri.	Sat.	Sun.

"Should each one of the friends take upon himself to carry out, in all its integrity and implications, only one of the teachings of the Faith, with devotion, detachment, constancy and perseverance and exemplify it in all his deeds and pursuits of life, the world would become another world and the face of the earth would mirror forth the splendours of the Abhá Paradise."

'Abdu'l-Bahá Living the Life, p.7

G E M S T O N

UNIT 4: LOVE

UNIT 4: LOVE

Recall's Bold, The Divine Art of Living, p. 92



REGARD MAN AS A MINE RICH
IN GEMS OF INESTIMABLE
VALUE. EDUCATION CAN ALONE
CAUSE IT TO REVEAL ITS
TREASURES AND ENABLE MAN-
KIND TO BENEFIT THEREFROM
• BAHĀ' U' LLĀH.

G E M S T O N E

[illegible]

L O V E

Love for God is the source of spiritual attraction between people

"Real love is impossible unless one turn his face towards God and be attracted to His beauty".

'Abdu'l-Bahá, Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Vol.3, p.505.

"The love which exists between the hearts of believers is prompted by the ideal of the unity of spirits. This love is attained through the knowledge of God, so that men see the Divine love reflected in the heart. Each sees in the other the beauty of God reflected in the soul, and, finding this point of similarity, they are attracted to one another in love."

'Abdu'l-Bahá, The Divine Art of Living, p.98.

".....The love of God, and consequently of men, is the essential foundation of every religion, our own included. A greater degree of love will produce a greater unity, because it enables people to bear with each other, to be patient and forgiving."

Letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi,
Living The Life, p. 21.

SPECIFIC GOALS

1. To recognize that all human beings are wholly in need of God's mercy and grace, and therefore to be gentle and helpful.

"Every human creature is the servant of God. All have been created and reared by the power and favor of God; all have been blessed with the bounties of the same Sun of Divine truth; all have quaffed from the fountain of the infinite mercy of God; and all in His estimation and love are equal as servants. He is beneficent and kind to all. Therefore no one should glorify himself over another; no one should manifest pride or superiority toward another; no one should look upon another with scorn and contempt and no one should deprive or oppress a fellow creature. All must be considered as submerged in the ocean of God's mercy. We must associate with all humanity with gentleness and kindness. We must love all with love of the heart. Some are ignorant; they must be trained and educated. One is sick; he must be healed. Another is as a child; we must assist him to attain maturity. We must not detest him who is ailing, neither shun him, scorn, nor curse him; but care for him with the utmost kindness and tenderness. An infant must not be treated with disdain simply because it is an infant. Our responsibility is to train, educate and develop it in order that it may advance toward maturity."

'Abdu'l-Bahá, The Divine Art of Living, p.110-111.

"Be in perfect unity. Never become angry with one another.....Love the creatures for the sake of God and not for themselves. You will never become angry or impatient if you love them for the sake of God. Humanity is not perfect. There are imperfections in every human being and you will always become unhappy if you look toward the people themselves. But if you look toward God you will love them and be kind to them, for the world of God is the world of perfection and complete mercy. Therefore do not look at the shortcomings of anybody; see with the sight of forgiveness. The imperfect eye beholds imperfections. The eye that covers faults looks towards the Creator of souls. He created them, trains and provides for them, endows them with capacity and life, sight and hearing; therefore they are the signs of His grandeur."

'Abdu'l-Bahá, The Divine Art of Living, p.115-116

2. To practise thinking of people in terms of their good qualities.

"To look always at the good and not at the bad. If a man has ten good qualities and one bad one, to look at the ten and forget the one; and if a man has ten bad qualities and one good one, to look at the one and forget the ten."

'Abdu'l-Bahá, Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era, Ch. 5

3. To review how you make friends.

"The followers of sincerity and faithfulness must consort with all the people of the world with joy and fragrance; for association is always conducive to union and harmony, and union and harmony are the cause of the order of the world and the life of the nations. Blessed are they who hold fast to the rope of compassion and kindness and are detached from animosity and hatred!"

Bahá'u'lláh, The Divine Art of Living, p.117

"Consort with all men, O people of Baha, in a spirit of friendliness and fellowship. If ye be aware of a certain truth, if ye possess a jewel, of which others are deprived, share it with them in a language of utmost kindness and good-will. If it be accepted, if it fulfill its purpose, your object is attained. If anyone should refuse it, leave him unto himself, and beseech God to guide him. Beware lest ye deal unkindly with him. A kindly tongue is the lodestone of the hearts of men. It is the bread of the spirit, it clotheth the words with meaning, it is the fountain of the light of wisdom and understanding."

Bahá'u'lláh, The Divine Art of Living, p.116-117

"When you meet those whose opinions differ from your own, do not turn your face from them....."

Do not allow difference of opinion, or diversity of thought to separate you from your fellow-men, or to be the cause of dispute, hatred and strife in your hearts."

'Abdu'l-Bahá, The Diving Art of Living, p.117

"Wouldst thou seek the grace of the Holy Spirit, enter into fellowship with the righteous, for he hath drunk the cup of eternal life at the hands of the immortal Cup-bearer and even as the true morn doth quicken and illumine the hearts of the dead."

Bahá'u'lláh, The Hidden Words, Persian, 58.

"We know absence of light is darkness, but no one would assert darkness was not a fact. It exists even though it is only the absence of something else. So evil exists too, and we cannot close our eyes to it, even though it is a negative existence. We must seek to supplant it by good, and if we see an evil person is not influenceable by us, then we should shun his company for it is unhealthy."

Letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi,
October 4, 1950.

4. To show special kindness to strangers.

"When a man turns his face to God he finds sunshine everywhere. All men are his brothers. Let not conventionality cause you to seem cold and unsympathetic when you meet strange people from other countries. Do not look at them as if you suspected them of being evil-doers, thieves and boors. You think it necessary to be very careful, not to expose yourselves to the risk of making acquaintance with such, possibly, undesirable people."

I ask you not to think only of yourselves. Be kind to the strangers, whether they come from Turkey, Japan, Persia, Russia, China or any other country of the world. Help to make them feel at home; find out where they are staying, ask if you may render them any service; try to make their lives a little happier.

In this way, even if, sometimes, what you at first suspected should be true, still go out of your way to be kind to them - this kindness will help them to become better.....

Let those who meet you know, without your proclaiming the fact, that you are indeed a Bahá'í.

Put into practice the teaching of Bahá'u'lláh, that of kindness to all nations. Do not be content with showing friendship in words alone; let your heart burn with loving-kindness for all who may cross your path."

'Abdu'l-Bahá, The Divine Art of Living, p.115

5. To visit those who are sick.

"We should all visit the sick. When they are in sorrow and suffering it is a real help and benefit to have a friend come. Happiness is a great healer to those who are ill..... The people in the east show the utmost kindness and compassion to the sick and suffering. This has greater effect than the remedy itself. You must always have this thought of love and affection when you visit the ailing and afflicted."

'Abdu'l-Bahá, Promulgation of Universal Peace, p.199.

TASKS FOR WEEK 4

1. To recognize that all human beings are wholly in need of God's mercy and grace, and therefore to be gentle and helpful.
2. To practise thinking of people in terms of their good qualities.
3. To review how you make friends.
4. To show special kindness to strangers.
5. To visit those who are sick.

CONTINUING TASKS

1. To pray daily for the development of your spiritual qualities.
2. To read from the Writings every morning and evening.
3. To meditate on the Bahá'í teachings about love.
4. Reflect on your day.

My task for Week 4 is

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Mon. Tue. Wed. Thu. Fri. Sat. Sun.

"Should each one of the friends take upon himself to carry out, in all its integrity and implications, only one of the teachings of the Faith, with devotion, detachment, constancy and perseverance and exemplify it in all his deeds and pursuits of life, the world would become another world and the face of the earth would mirror forth the splendors of the Abhá Paradise."

'Abdu'l-Bahá Living the Life, p.7

PURITY AND DETACHMENT

".....Possess a pure kindly and radiant heart, that thing may be a sovereignty radiant, imperishable and everlasting."

Bahá'u'lláh, *The Hidden Words*, Arabic 1

"He is not to be numbered with the people of Bahá who followeth his madraw desires, or fixeth his heart on things of the earth. He is my true follower who, if he come to a valley of pure gold will pass straight through it aloof as a cloud, and will neither turn back, nor pause. Such a man is assuredly of Me. From his garment the Concourse on high can inhale the fragrance of sanctity..... and, if he met the fairest and most lovely of women, he would not feel his heart drawn by the least shadow of desire for her beauty. Such an one is free from all selfishness."

Bahá'u'lláh, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 25-27

UNIT 5: PURITY & DETACHMENT



SPECIFIC GOALS

PURIFY

1. To strive to

REGARD MAN AS A MINE RICH
IN GEMS OF INESTIMABLE
VALUE. EDUCATION CAN ALONE
CAUSE IT TO REVEAL ITS
TREASURES AND ENABLE MAN-
KIND TO BENEFIT THEREFROM
• BAHÁ 'U' LLÁH.

G E M S T O N E

P U R I T Y A N D D E T A C H M E N T

".....Possess a pure kindly and radiant heart, that thine may be a sovereignty ancient, imperishable and everlasting."

Bahá'u'lláh, The Hidden Words, Arabic 1

"He is not to be numbered with the people of Bahá who followeth his mundane desires, or fixeth his heart on things of the earth. He is my true follower who, if he come to a valley of pure gold will pass straight through it aloof as a cloud, and will neither turn back, nor pause. Such a man is assuredly of Me. From his garment the Concourse on high can inhale the fragrance of sanctity..... And, if he met the fairest and most comely of women, he would not feel his heart seduced by the least shadow of desire for her beauty. Such an one indeed is the creation of spotless chastity."

Bahá'u'lláh, in The Advent of Divine Justice, p.26-27

".....Therefore, today "victory" neither hath been nor will be opposition to any one, nor strife with any person; but rather what is well-pleasing is that the cities of (men's) hearts, which are under the dominion of the hosts of selfishness and lust, should be subdued by the sword of the Word, of wisdom and of exhortation. Everyone, then, who desireth "victory" must first subdue the city of his own heart with the sword of spiritual truth and of the Word, and must protect it from remembering aught beside God; afterwards let him turn his regards towards the cities of (other's) hearts....."

The Divine Art of Living, p.74

SPECIFIC GOALS

PURITY

1. To strive to purify your motives

"O friends! Prefer not your own will to Mine, never desire that which I have not desired for you, and approach Me not with lifeless hearts, defiled with worldly desires and cravings...."

Bahá'u'lláh, The Hidden Words, Persian, 19.

"Consider to what extent the friends of God have been urged and exhorted in the Will and Testament as well as in the holy Tablets and Writings to show forth uprightness, good will, tolerance, sanctity, detachment from all things besides God, and severance from whatever pertains to this world, and to exemplify heavenly qualities and traits. First and foremost one should resort to every possible means to purge one's heart and motives, otherwise it would be futile to engage in any form of enterprise. It is also essential to abstain from hypocrisy and blind imitation, inasmuch as their foul odour would soon be detected by every man of understanding and wisdom. Moreover, the friends must observe the specific times for the remembrance of God, meditation, devotion and prayer, as it is highly unlikely, nay rather impossible, that any enterprise should prosper and develop short of divine bestowals and confirmation. One can hardly imagine what a great influence genuine love, truthfulness and purity of motives exert on the souls of men. But these traits cannot be acquired unless every believer makes a daily effort to gain them...."

Shoghi Effendi, in Living the Life, page 7-8

2. To practice physical cleanliness

"Even when applied to physical things, delicacy causeth the attainment of spirituality, as it is established in the Holy Scriptures.

External cleanliness, although it is but a physical thing, hath a great influence upon spirituality."

'Abdu'l-Bahá, Bahá'í World Faith, p. 334

CHASTITY

1. To be sensitive to situations and actions which go beyond the bounds of chastity and moderation.

"The brightness of the light of chastity sheddeth its illumination upon the worlds of the spirit, and its fragrance is wafted even unto the Most Exalted Paradise."

Bahá'u'lláh, in The Advent of Divine Justice, p.25

"It demands daily vigilance in the control of one's carnal desires and corrupt inclinations. It calls for the abandonment of a frivolous conduct, with its excessive attachment to trivial and often misdirected pleasures."

Shoghi Effendi, The Advent of Divine Justice, p.25

"Such a chaste and holy life, with its implications of modesty, purity, temperance, decency and clean-mindedness, involves no less than the exercise of moderation in all that pertains to dress, language, amusements, and all artistic and literary avocations."

Shoghi Effendi, The Advent of Divine Justice, p.25

"It condemns the prostitution of art and of literature, the practice of nudism and of companionate marriage, infidelity in marital relationships, and all manner of promiscuity, of easy familiarity, and of sexual vices."

Shoghi Effendi, The Advent of Divine Justice, p.25

"We have received your letter of 19 June, 1973 and can sympathise with the problems that Bahá'í youth face when trying to live up to the Bahá'í standards of behaviour. It is, perhaps, natural that in the bewildering amoral environment in which Bahá'í youth are growing up they feel the need for specific instructions on which intimacies are permissible and which are not. However, we feel it would be most unwise for any Bahá'í institution to issue detailed instructions about this.

The Bahá'í youth should study the teachings on chastity and, with these in mind, should avoid any behaviour which would arouse passions which would tempt them to violate them. In deciding what acts are permissible to them in the light of these considerations the youth must use their own judgment, following the guidance of their conscience and the advice of their parents.

If Bahá'í youth combine such personal purity with an attitude of uncensorious forbearance towards others they will find that those who have criticised or even mocked them will come, in time, to respect them. They will, moreover, be laying a firm foundation for future married happiness."

The Universal House of Justice, Bahá'í Journal, (U.K. publication), October, 1973.

".....we must reach a spiritual plane where God comes first and great human passions are unable to turn us away from Him. All the time we see people who either through the force of hate or the passionate attachment they have to another person, sacrifice principle or bar themselves from the Path of God.....

We must love God, and in this state, a general love for all men becomes possible. We cannot love each human being for himself, but our feeling towards humanity should be motivated by our love for the Father who created all men."

From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi,
quoted in Living the Life, page 32.

AVOIDANCE OF ALCOHOL AND HABIT-FORMING DRUGS

1. To recognize and break up habit sequences associated with the use of alcohol or other habit-forming drugs.
2. To reduce and discontinue use of habit-forming drugs.

"It requires total abstinence from all alcoholic drinks, from opium and from similar habit-forming drugs."

Shoghi Effendi, The Advent of Divine Justice, p.25

"In letters to the U.S. National Spiritual Assembly, the Universal House of Justice has taken a clear position on the use of hallucinogenic drugs.

'....Bahá'ís should not use hallucinogenic agents, including L.S.D., Peyote and similar substances, except when prescribed for medical treatment. Neither should they become involved in experiments with such substances.' "

Universal House of Justice to U.S. N.S.A. May 19, 1966
From Alaska Bahá'í News, May 1968

"As you have rightly noted in your letter of 27 February, 'Abdu'l-Bahá advised against the smoking of tobacco. While the Teachings strongly condemn its use, they do not forbid it. To letters inquiring about this subject, the beloved Guardian replied through his secretary that we had not right to prevent anyone from smoking; that Bahá'ís were free to smoke but it was preferable for them not to do so; and, that this question should not be made an issue."

Letter from the Universal House of Justice to an
individual believer, 8 April, 1965.

DETACHMENT

1. To meditate on the transience of this material world.

"Be forbearing one with another and set not your affection on things below. Pride not yourselves in your glory, and be not ashamed of abasement. By My beauty! I have created all things from dust, and to dust will I return them again."

Bahá'u'lláh, The Hidden Words, Persian No.48

"Be not troubled in poverty nor confident in riches, for poverty is followed by riches, and riches are followed by poverty. Yet to be poor in all save God is a wondrous gift, belittle not the value thereof, for in the end it will make thee rich in God, and thus thou shalt know the meaning of the utterance, "In truth ye are the poor," and the holy words, "God is the all-possessing," shall even as the true morn break forth gloriously resplendent upon the horizon of the lover's heart, and abide secure on the throne of wealth."

Bahá'u'lláh, The Hidden Words, Persian No.51

2. To re-assess your financial contributions to the Faith and make an annual budget for contributions to the Local and National Funds.

"Contributions to this fund constitute, in addition, a practical and effective way whereby every believer can test the measure and character of his faith, and prove in deeds the intensity of his devotion and attachment to the Cause."

Principles of Bahá'í Administration, p.94

"It is the sacred obligation of every conscientious and faithful servant of Bahá'u'lláh who desires to see His Cause advance, to contribute freely and generously for the increase of that Fund."

Principles of Bahá'í Administration, p.95

TASKS FOR WEEK 5

Purity

1. To strive to purify your motives.
2. To practice physical cleanliness.

Chastity

1. To be sensitive to situations and actions which go beyond the bounds of chastity and moderation.
2. To practice clean-mindedness and self control.

Avoidance of alcohol and habit-forming drugs

1. To recognize and break up habit sequences associated with the use of alcohol or habit-forming drugs.
2. To reduce and discontinue the use of alcohol and habit-forming drugs.

Detachment

1. To meditate on the transience of the material world.
2. To re-assess your financial contributions to the Faith and make an annual budget for contributions to the Local and National Funds.

CONTINUING TASKS

1. Daily prayer for the development of your spiritual qualities.
2. To read from the Writings every morning and evening.
3. To meditate on the Bahá'í teachings relating to purity and detachment.
4. Reflect on your day.

My task for Week 5 is _____

Mon.	Tue.	Wed.	Thu.	Fri.	Sat.	Sun.

UNIT 6
HAPPINESS

"Should each one of the friends take upon himself to carry out, in all its integrity and implications, only one of the teachings of the Faith, with devotion, detachment, constancy and perseverance and exemplify it in all his deeds and pursuits of life, the world would become another world and the face of the earth would mirror forth the splendours of the Abhá Paradise."

'Abdu'l-Bahá Living the Life, p.7

REGARD MAN AS A MINE
IN GEMS OF INTELLIGENCE
VALUABLE EDUCATION CAN BE
CAUSE IT TO REVEAL ITS
TREASURES AND ENABLE MAN
KIND TO BENEFIT THEREFROM
- BAHÁ' U LLÁH

G E M S T O

H A P P I N E S S

"As to spiritual happiness, this is the true basis of the life of man, for life is created for happiness, not for sorrow; for pleasure, not for grief. Happiness is life; sorrow is death. Spiritual happiness is life eternal. This is a light which is not followed by darkness. This is an honour which is not followed by shame. This is a life that is not followed by death. This is an existence that is not followed by annihilation. This great blessing and precious gift is obtained by man only through the guidance of God.....

This happiness is the fundamental basis from which man is created, worlds are originated, the contingent beings have existence and the world of God appears like unto the appearance of the sun at mid-day.

This happiness is but the love of God.....

Were it not for this happiness the world of existence would not have been created."

'Abdu'l-Bahá, The Divine Art of Living, p.18.

SPECIFIC GOALS

Cultivate Happiness

1. Be happy, for the source of joy is in your own heart.

"Rejoice in the gladness of thine heart, that thou mayest be worthy to meet Me and to mirror forth My beauty."

Bahá'u'lláh, The Hidden Words, Arabic, 36.

"Veiled in My immemorial being and in the ancient eternity of My essence, I knew My love for thee; therefore I created thee, have engraved on thee Mine image and revealed to thee My beauty."

Bahá'u'lláh, The Hidden Words, Arabic, 3

"Lift up your hearts above the present and look with eyes of faith into the future! Today the seed is sown, the grain falls upon the earth, but behold the day will come when it shall rise a glorious tree and the branches thereof shall be laden with fruit. Rejoice and be glad that this day has dawned, try to realize its power, for it is indeed wonderful! God has crowned you with honour and in your hearts has He set a radiant star; Verily the light thereof shall brighten the whole world."

'Abdu'l-Bahá, The Reality of Man, p.27-8

2. Do not harbour negative thoughts about yourself and your circumstances.

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

Bahá'u'lláh, The Hidden Words, Arabic, 12.

".....I will no longer be sorrowful and grieved, I will be a happy and joyful being. O God, I will no longer be full of anxiety, nor will I let trouble harass me. I will not dwell on the unpleasant things of life....."

'Abdu'l-Bahá, Bahá'í Prayers (U.S.) p.80-81

3. Confront difficulties with faith, courage and persistence.

"Everything of importance in this world demands the close attention of its seeker. The one in pursuit of anything must undergo difficulties and hardships until the object in view is attained and the great success is obtained."

'Abdu'l-Bahá, The Divine Art of Living, p.92

".....Have determination to carry the decision through. Many fail here. The decision, budding into determination, is blighted and instead becomes a wish or a vague longing. When determination is born, immediately take the next step.

.....Have faith and confidence that the power will flow through you, the right way will appear, the door will open, the right thought, the right message, the right principle or the right book will be given to you. Have confidence, and the right thing will come to your need. Then, as you rise from prayer, take at once the fifth step.

.....Then, he said, lastly, ACT;....."

Pilgrim's note of Mrs. Ruth Moffett, re. the Guardian's statement on the Dynamics of Prayer, Principles of Bahá'í Administration, p.9

4. Do something you enjoy.

"God hath ordained every good thing, whether created in the heavens or in the earth, for such of His servants as truly believe in Him. Eat ye, O people, of the good things which God hath allowed you, and deprive not yourselves from His wondrous bounties. Render thanks and praise unto Him, and be of them that are truly thankful."

Bahá'u'lláh, in The Advent of Divine Justice, p.28

5. Laugh, or at least smile.

"His laughter rang through the room. He said that the Orientals had many such stories illustrating different phases of life. Many of them are extremely humorous. It is good to laugh. Laughter is spiritual relaxation. When they were in prison, He said, and under the utmost deprivation and difficulties, each of them at the close of the day would relate the most ludicrous event which had happened. Sometimes it was a little difficult to find one but always they would laugh until the tears would roll down their cheeks. Happiness, he said, is never dependent on material surroundings, otherwise how sad those years would have been."

Story about 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Portals to Freedom, by Howard Colby Ives, p.120

6. Radiate joy to others.

"Let the love and the light of the kingdom radiate through you until all who look upon you shall be illumined by its reflection."

"All faces are dark except the face which is a mirror of the light of the love of divinity."

"I pray for each and all that you may be as flames of love in the world, and that the brightness of your light and the warmth of your affection may reach the heart of every sad and sorrowing child of God."

"May everyone point to you and ask 'Why are these people so happy?' I want you to be happy..... to laugh, smile and rejoice in order that others may be made happy by you."

'Abdu'l-Bahá, cited in Counsels of Perfection by
Genevieve Coy, p.24

TASKS FOR WEEK 6

1. Be happy, for the source of joy is in your own heart.
2. Do not harbour negative thoughts about yourself and your circumstances.
3. Confront difficulties with faith, courage and persistence.
4. Do something you enjoy.
5. Laugh or at least smile.
6. Radiate joy to others.

CONTINUING TASKS

1. Pray daily for the development of your spiritual qualities.
2. Read from the Writings every morning and evening.
3. Meditate on the Bahá'í teachings about happiness.
4. Reflect on your day.

My task for Week 6 is _____

Mon.	Tue.	Wed.	Thu.	Fri.	Sat.	Sun.

"Should each one of the friends take upon himself to carry out, in all its integrity and implications, only one of the teachings of the Faith, with devotion, detachment, constancy and perseverance and exemplify it in all his deeds and pursuits of life, the world would become another world and the face of the earth would mirror forth the splendours of the Abhá Paradise."

'Abdu'l-Bahá Living the Life, p.7