

# Teaching the Faith

## INTRODUCTION: *Approaching the threshold...*

In this Faith there is no professional clergy. No individual or group is singled out to share its healing and unifying Message. The Bahá'ís, one and all, are called upon to teach this Faith to others by their words and by their deeds. This is not only a sacred duty, but a privilege as well.

Understanding that humankind is really one entity suggests that part of humanity cannot spiritually progress independently, no matter how hard it tries, while the rest of humankind remains deprived. For as long as part of the body of humanity remains ill, no other part can find total health. By helping others to embrace this Faith we not only assist those individuals on their path towards God, but we also become the recipient of God's gifts, both of which contribute to the general advancement of humanity. It is, therefore, a sacred service we perform when we teach other souls of the illuminating Message of Bahá'u'lláh.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá wrote to an individual believer: “O thou messenger in the command of God! Blessed art thou for guiding ... unto the Fountain of Life, caused him to enter the Ark of Safety, demonstrated unto him the manifest signs, and proved to him the elegant proofs.

“May God reward thee with the best of rewards, in the end and the beginning. Therefore, continue spreading the fragrances of God in this new age, which dawns as the sun with the lights of favors unto the horizon of ages and centuries.”<sup>1</sup>



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## OBJECTIVE: *A look to the horizon...*

### Facilitator

Review the following objective with the participants:

The objective of this lesson is to understand the fundamental verities or basic truths regarding the importance and responsibility of teaching the Faith to others.

## THE STUDY PROCESS: *Attaining the water of life...*

### Facilitator

Review the following study process with the participants. Then study the numbered quotations on the following pages, one at a time as described below.

<sup>1</sup> TAB, Vol. 1, p. 189

1. **READING:** *A drink from the cup of guidance...*  
Have two participants take turns reading the quotation out loud so that it is read twice.
2. **CONFIRMING MEANING:** *A spray from the fountain of light...*
  - A. If anyone would like to have better understanding of a word used in the quotation, now is the time to refer to its substitute phrase, definition or synonym, which can be found in the boxes below each quotation. Read the substitute phrase, definition or synonym out loud so everyone can hear.
  - B. Read the sentence again that contains the word you selected, while **substituting for that word**, its given phrase, definition or synonym from the box below the quotation.
  - C. If anyone would like a better understanding of another word, repeat the process above until everyone is satisfied with their understanding of the words in the quotation.
3. **FINDING VALUE:** *Mining the gems of truth...*  
Take turns stating each basic fact or truth you can find in the quotation about the importance and responsibility of teaching the Faith to others.

**QUOTATIONS:** *Within the meadows of Thy nearness...*

1. *Teach ye the Cause of God, O people of Bahá, for God hath prescribed unto every one the duty of proclaiming His Message, and regardeth it as the most meritorious of all deeds.*  
(*Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 278)

**Cause of God:** Bahá'í Faith  
**duty:** required or morally obligated action  
**meritorious:** deserving of honor and esteem  
**Message:** Divine Revelation

**people of Bahá:** followers of Bahá'u'lláh  
**prescribed:** laid down as a guide, direction, or rule of action  
**proclaiming:** formally and publicly declaring  
**teach:** impart knowledge that causes others to learn

2. Bahá'u'lláh has enjoined upon the Bahá'ís the sacred obligation of teaching. We have no priests, therefore the service once rendered by priests to their religions is the service every single Bahá'í is expected to render individually to his religion. He must be the one who enlightens new souls, confirms them, heals the wounded and the weary upon the road of life, and gives them to quaff from the chalice of everlasting life—the knowledge of the Manifestation of God in His Day.  
(Written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, cited in *The Individual and Teaching: Raising the Divine Call*, p. 39)

**chalice:** drinking cup or goblet  
**confirms:** removes doubt or gives certainty by indisputable fact [for]  
**enjoined:** imposed as an order or command  
**enlightens:** gives knowledge, insight, and spiritual illumination to  
**everlasting:** eternally enduring  
**expected:** considered bound by duty  
**individually:** personally, or on one's own  
**knowledge:** clear recognition and acknowledgment  
**Manifestation:** great Prophet Who reveals the ☞

Words, and exhibits the signs and qualities  
**obligation:** moral duty to a binding agreement or covenant  
**priests:** official ministers of religion  
**quaff:** drink deeply  
**render(ed):** give(n) in obligation  
**sacred:** holy and spiritually important  
**service:** deeds performed for the benefit of others  
**teaching:** imparting knowledge that causes others to learn [the Bahá'í Faith]  
**weary:** spiritually or mentally exhausted or fatigued

3. The teaching work should under all conditions be actively pursued by the believers because divine confirmations are dependent upon it. Should a Bahá'í refrain from being fully, vigorously and wholeheartedly involved in the teaching work he will undoubtedly be deprived of the blessings of the `Abhá Kingdom. Even so, this activity should be tempered with wisdom — not that wisdom which requireth one to be silent and forgetful of such an obligation, but rather that which requireth one to display divine tolerance, love, kindness, patience, a goodly character, and holy deeds.

(*Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 268)

**`Abhá Kingdom:** most glorious spiritual World  
**blessings:** divine gifts and favors  
**confirmations:** validations and assurances that cause spiritual strength  
**dependent:** subject to or conditioned  
**deprived:** withheld from and shut out  
**display:** make clearly evident  
**divine:** God given  
**obligation:** moral duty or responsibility  
**pursued:** engaged in  
**refrain:** hold oneself back  
**teaching:** imparting of knowledge that causes others to learn [the Bahá'í Faith] [kind of]

**tempered:** softened to be moderate and attuned  
**tolerance:** sympathy or indulgence for beliefs or practices differing from or conflicting with one's own  
**vigorously:** with intense energy and strength  
**wholeheartedly:** with complete and sincere devotion  
**wisdom:** suited and timely disclosure of knowledge; "...the lamp which giveth light was and is wisdom. The dictates thereof must be observed under all circumstances. And of wisdom is the regard of place and the utterance of discourse according to measure and state." ('Abdu'l-Bahá, *TN*, p. 46)

4. To teach the Cause of God, to proclaim its truths, to defend its interests, to demonstrate, by words as well as by deeds, its indispensability, its potency, and universality, should at no time be regarded as the exclusive concern or sole privilege of Bahá'í administrative institutions, be they Assemblies, or committees. All must participate, however humble their origin, however limited their experience, however restricted their means, however deficient their education, however pressing their cares and preoccupations, however unfavorable the environment in which they live.

(Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 45)

**administrative:** connected or related to the management or directing of affairs [kind of]  
**Assemblies:** the local Administrative Body of each Bahá'í community  
**cares:** feelings of concern or interests  
**Cause of God:** Bahá'í Faith  
**defend:** ward off attack, danger, or challenge [to]  
**deficient:** lacking in some necessary quality or element [in]  
**demonstrate:** illustrate and explain, especially with examples  
**environment:** surrounding circumstances, conditions, or forces  
**exclusive:** restricted right of  
**experience:** previous participation or learning in the activity  
**humble:** insignificant, plain, or simple  
**indispensability:** inability to be set aside or neglected  
**institutions:** established administrative structures authorized and maintained through prescribed

rules and agencies  
**interests:** particular concerns and involvements  
**limited:** lacking or confined  
**means:** useful and helpful available resources  
**origin:** beginnings  
**participate:** take part in common with others  
**potency:** capacity and ability to achieve or bring about particular results  
**preoccupations:** engrossment in activities  
**pressing:** urgently important or critical  
**privilege:** granted right  
**proclaim:** formally and publicly declare  
**restricted:** confined within set bounds  
**sole:** limited to one specified individual or group [type of]  
**teach:** impart knowledge that causes others to learn  
**truths:** factual teachings  
**unfavorable:** unpleasant; disadvantageous; contrary  
**universality:** ability to be operative everywhere or under all conditions

5. *The Word of God hath set the heart of the world afire; how regrettable if ye fail to be enkindled with its flame! Please God, ye will regard this blessed night as the night of unity, will knit your souls together, and resolve to adorn yourselves with the ornament of a goodly and praiseworthy character. Let your principal concern be to rescue the fallen from the slough of impending extinction, and to help him embrace the ancient Faith of God.*

(Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 316)

**adorn:** add splendor and attractiveness to  
**afire:** impassioned, spirited, and enlivened  
**ancient Faith of God:** Bahá'í Faith  
**blessed:** holy, adored, and revered  
**character:** distinguishing trait, quality, or nature  
**concern:** interest or matter of importance  
**embrace:** take to heart and accept readily and gladly  
**enkindled:** stirred up, excited, or aroused  
**extinction:** dying out  
**fail:** be found unsuccessful  
**fallen:** morally ruined, defeated, or degraded  
**flame:** burning zeal or passion  
**goodly:** pleasantly attractive or excellent  
**heart:** seat of spiritual or conscious life; soul; spirit  
**impending:** threatening to occur very soon

**knit:** draw and join closely and firmly  
**ornament:** addition of the luster, grace, and beauty  
**praiseworthy:** deserving of honor or commendation [kind of]  
**principal:** highest ranking  
**regard:** look upon or consider  
**regrettable:** deserving of mourning or great sorrow  
**rescue:** save or liberate  
**resolve:** with determination, decide  
**slough:** state of moral degradation or spiritual dejection from which one cannot free oneself  
**unity:** spiritual harmony, agreement, peace and accord, free of conflict, dissension, contention and strife  
**Word:** Revelation of God; today, Bahá'u'lláh's Writings

6. *Purge thou thy heart that We may cause fountains of wisdom and utterance to gush out therefrom, thus enabling thee to raise thy voice among all mankind. Unloose thy tongue and proclaim the truth for the sake of the remembrance of thy merciful Lord. Be not afraid of anyone, place thy whole trust in God, the Almighty, the All-Knowing.*

(Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, pp. 189-90)

**afraid:** filled with fear or apprehension  
**All-Knowing:** sole One completely informed, knowledgeable, and understanding  
**Almighty:** One having absolute power over all  
**enabling:** providing the means and opportunity for  
**fountains:** spouting streams  
**gush:** suddenly flow forcefully  
**heart:** nature that becomes attracted, loves, and grows attached  
**proclaim:** formally and publicly declare  
**purge:** clear the guilt and moral defilement from

**remembrance:** bringing to mind by making mention  
**raise:** increase the strength and vigor of  
**sake:** beneficial purpose  
**tongue:** expression through speech  
**trust:** absolute and assured reliance  
**unloose:** release from restraints or set free  
**utterance:** oral or written expressions  
**We:** used by one in authority to denote himself  
**wisdom:** sage-like judgment in the application of knowledge

**SHARING:** *A breath from the spirit of inspiration...*

**Facilitator**

Ask the participants to complete the statements below. When everyone has finished, have each person share, in a round, the one thing that was most outstanding or inspiring and how it made him or her feel. Please remind everyone not to remark on the comments of others.

The one thing from the quotations that was the most outstanding or inspiring to me was \_\_\_\_\_

It made me feel \_\_\_\_\_

Explain \_\_\_\_\_

## SOME QUESTIONS: *A gentle breeze from the testing winds...*

### Facilitator

Ask the participants to answer the following questions. They can usually find answers in the quotations just studied or in the introduction. When everyone has finished, review the questions, then share and discuss the answers.

1. As one of our responsibilities to the Covenant, it is both a \_\_\_\_\_ and a sacred \_\_\_\_\_ to teach the Bahá'í Faith to others.
2. Since we have no clergy or priests in the Bahá'í Faith, who is to share with the people the healing Message of Bahá'u'lláh? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Bahá'u'lláh wrote: "*Unloose your tongues, and proclaim unceasingly His Cause. This shall be better for you than all the treasures of the past and of the future, if ye be of them that comprehend this truth.*"<sup>1</sup> Name another personal spiritual benefit to teaching. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. What do you think it means to use wisdom in teaching this Faith to others? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. `Abdu'l-Bahá wrote: "By the Lord of the Kingdom! If one arise to promote the Word of God with a pure heart, overflowing with the love of God and severed from the world, the Lord of Hosts will assist him with such a power as will penetrate the core of the existent beings."<sup>2</sup> Does this mean that when we teach we are aided in some way?  
 Yes How? \_\_\_\_\_  
 No If no, what *does* it mean? \_\_\_\_\_
6. According to `Abdu'l-Bahá, teaching the Faith is one of the essential requirements for spiritual growth. What does "essential requirement" mean to you? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. There are four things we can do to assist our fellow humans "on the road of life." What are these things? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. How do we acquire courage if we are afraid to teach others this Faith? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. Which of the following do you think are true? In teaching this Cause to others, we will want to  
 a. take the time and give everyone we can an opportunity to know about it.  
 b. proceed wisely with those who show an interest.  
 c. remain detached, and with those who show no interest, "...leave him unto himself, and beseech God to guide him."<sup>3</sup>  
 d. teach with enthusiasm, courage, vigor, and reliance on God.

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<sup>1</sup> *GWB*, p. 330

<sup>2</sup> *COC*, Vol. II, p. 297, #1913

<sup>3</sup> *GWB*, p. 289

10. Many of us feel unable to teach this Faith because we don't know what to say, or feel we don't know how to teach. We can still, however, fulfill our obligation to teach. We merely share what we can with others, and then for those souls who are receptive, we set up a time and place to further investigate the Faith. Then, we merely call on \_\_\_\_\_ to assist us.
- a. any other Bahá'í
  - b. a Bahá'í clergyman
  - c. 1-800-GOD-HELP
  - d. a tutor from the Teaching and Training Institute
11. How long do you have to be a Bahá'í before you can teach others about the Bahá'í Faith?
- a. one year
  - b. you can start any time
  - c. long enough to be recognized as an authority on Bahá'í theology
  - d. two years

**APPLICATION:** *Showing forth divine light...*

**Facilitator**

Read through the following paragraph together and proceed as stated. Then take time for the participants to write out their individual plans for action. When everyone has finished, move on to the closing reading.

**Bahá'u'lláh wrote:** *“It is incumbent upon every man of insight and understanding to strive to translate that which hath been written into reality and action...”* Imagine how the Bahá'í Teachings in this study class could be translated into reality and action. Take turns sharing the possibilities. Begin your statements with: **“One could....”**

From your experience in this study class on teaching the Faith, describe what **you** are inspired to put into reality and action. **I will make conscious efforts to...** \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

*The importance of teaching...*

*“This is the day in which to speak. It is incumbent upon the people of Bahá to strive, with the utmost patience and forbearance, to guide the peoples of the world to the Most Great Horizon. Every body calleth aloud for a soul. Heavenly souls must needs quicken, with the breath of the Word of God, the dead bodies with a fresh spirit. Within every word a new spirit is hidden. Happy is the man that attaineth thereunto, and hath arisen to teach the Cause of Him Who is the King of Eternity.” “Say: O servants! The triumph of this Cause hath depended, and will continue to depend, upon the appearance of holy souls, upon the showing forth of goodly deeds, and the revelation of words of consummate wisdom.” “Center your energies in the propagation of the Faith of God. Whoso is worthy of so high a calling, let him arise and promote it. Whoso is unable, it is his duty to appoint him who will, in his stead, proclaim this Revelation, whose power hath caused the foundations of the mightiest structures to quake, every mountain to be crushed into dust, and every soul to be dumbfounded.” “Let your principal concern be to rescue the fallen from the slough of impending extinction, and to help him embrace the ancient Faith of God. Your behavior towards your neighbor should be such as to manifest clearly the signs of the one true God, for ye are the first among men to be re-created by His Spirit, the first to adore and bow the knee before Him, the first to circle round His throne of glory.” “O ye beloved of God! Repose not yourselves on your couches, nay, bestir yourselves as soon as ye recognize your Lord, the Creator, and hear of the things which have*

befallen Him, and hasten to His assistance. Unloose your tongues, and proclaim unceasingly His Cause. This shall be better for you than all the treasures of the past and of the future, if ye be of them that comprehend this truth.” “I swear by Him Who is the Truth! Ere long will God adorn the beginning of the Book of Existence with the mention of His loved ones who have suffered tribulation in His path, and journeyed through the countries in His name and for His praise. Whoso hath attained their presence will glory in their meeting, and all that dwell in every land will be illumined by their memory.” “Vie ye with each other in the service of God and of His Cause. This is indeed what profiteth you in this world, and in that which is to come. Your Lord, the God of Mercy, is the All-Informed, the All-Knowing. Grieve not at the things ye witness in this day. The day shall come whereon the tongues of the nations will proclaim: ‘The earth is God’s, the Almighty, the Single, the Incomparable, the All-Knowing!’” “Blessed is the spot, and the house, and the place, and the city, and the heart, and the mountain, and the refuge, and the cave, and the valley, and the land, and the sea, and the island, and the meadow where mention of God hath been made, and His praise glorified.” “The movement itself from place to place, when undertaken for the sake of God, hath always exerted, and can now exert, its influence in the world. In the Books of old the station of them that have voyaged far and near in order to guide the servants of God hath been set forth and written down.” “I swear by God! So great are the things ordained for the steadfast that were they, so much as the eye of a needle, to be disclosed, all who are in heaven and on earth would be dumbfounded, except such as God, the Lord of all worlds, hath willed to exempt.” “I swear by God! That which hath been destined for him who aideth My Cause excelleth the treasures of the earth.” “Whoso openeth his lips in this day, and maketh mention of the name of his Lord, the hosts of Divine inspiration shall descend upon him from the heaven of My name, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. On him shall also descend the Concourse on high, each bearing aloft a chalice of pure light. Thus hath it been foreordained in the realm of God’s Revelation, by the behest of Him Who is the All-Glorious, the Most Powerful.” “By the righteousness of Him Who, in this day, crieth within the inmost heart of all created things, ‘God, there is none other God besides Me!’ If any man were to arise to defend, in his writings, the Cause of God against its assailants, such a man, however inconsiderable his share, shall be so honored in the world to come that the Concourse on high would envy his glory. No pen can depict the loftiness of his station, neither can any tongue describe its splendor.” “Please God ye may all be strengthened to carry out that which is the Will of God, and may be graciously assisted to appreciate the rank conferred upon such of His loved ones as have arisen to serve Him and magnify His name. Upon them be the glory of God, the glory of all that is in the heavens and all that is on earth, and the glory of the inmates of the most exalted Paradise, the heaven of heavens.” “O people of Bahá! That there is none to rival you is a sign of mercy. Quaff ye of the Cup of Bounty the wine of immortality, despite them that have repudiated God, the Lord of names and Maker of the heavens.”

(Bahá’u’lláh, cited in *The Advent of Divine Justice*, pp. 82-84)

## ANSWERS: *Affirming treasures...*

1. duty; obligation
2. every single Bahá’í, or, all must participate
3. divine confirmations or blessings of the `Abhá Kingdom
4. all answers are valuable
5. yes, all answers are valuable
6. all answers are valuable
7. enlightens new souls, confirms them, heals the wounded and the weary upon the road of life, and gives them to quaff from the chalice of everlasting life the knowledge of the Manifestation of God in His Day
8. “Be not afraid of anyone, place thy whole trust in God, the Almighty, the All-Knowing.”
9. a, b, c, and d
10. a and d
11. b

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