

The Paramount Importance of Teaching

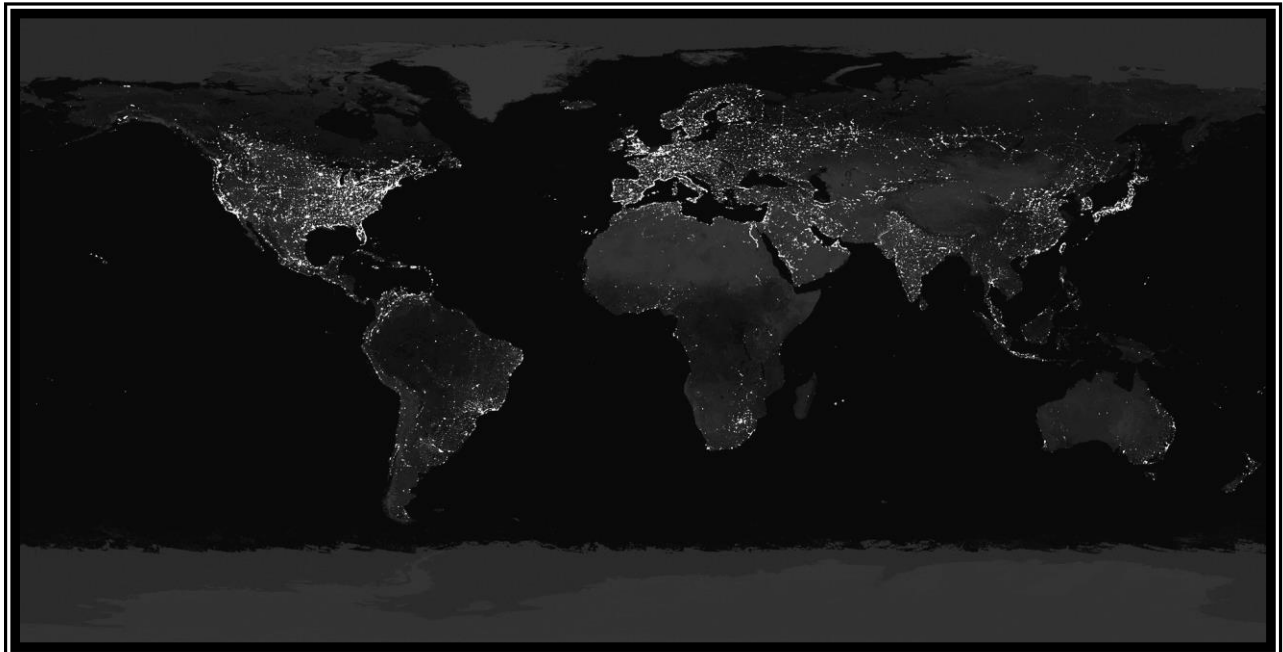
INTRODUCTION: *Approaching the threshold...*

What else can we do, once God so generously confers upon us the honor of recognizing His Manifestation for this Day, than share this wondrous gift with our fellow-man? To magnify Him and His Way, to recite His Word, to give vision, comfort, and hope to the people—this is our task. To help rescue the souls from the “*slough of impending extinction*” and to help bestow upon them the great gift of “*everlasting life*” to which Bahá’u’lláh calls us, is a privilege, an honor, and an obligation to which we dare not deprive ourselves.

Teaching the Faith is therefore paramount in importance. It is necessary for our own spiritual growth, the salvation of the peoples, and the coming of God’s kingdom on earth. For it is not only *our* great honor to know about this Revelation, it is also the right and privilege of all the inhabitants of the earth.

No doubt, the following Words of Bahá’u’lláh, have inspired, and will continue to inspire, such heroic efforts as to transform the entire world. May these blessed Words inspire each one of us to arise in our turn and partake of the generous gift of teaching.

(Earth at Night: Made from a composite of hundreds of satellite images)



“It is better to guide one soul than to possess all that is on earth...” — The Báb

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

Facilitator

Review the following objective with the participants:

The objective of this study is to become informed, inspired, and strengthened, by understanding the paramount¹ importance of teaching the Faith.

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

Facilitator

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

1. READING: *A drink from the cup of guidance...*

A. Read the quotation out loud in its entirety.

2. CONFIRMING MEANING: *A spray from the fountain of light...*

To better understand certain words used in the quotation, take turns with the following:

A. Each participant **choose a word** from the quotation and **state it** for the whole group to hear. (Like a fun game – pick a word!) Then...

B. Read out loud the sentence that contains the **word** you selected, **while substituting for that word**, its given phrase, definition, or synonym from the boxes below the quotation.

C. Repeat A and B above until everyone is satisfied with their understanding of the words.

D. Read the quotation out loud again in its entirety.

3. FINDING VALUE: *Gem-like discoveries...*

In the tradition of the “talking circle” ask the participants to take turns sharing, one at a time, in a round, **WHAT WAS PERSONALLY MOST MEANINGFUL FROM THE QUOTATION AND WHY.** (Remember show and tell?) Remind the participants that *whatever* is shared should be considered as a valid perspective, and that in this *exploratory study* there are no right or wrong perceptions and no lesser or greater understandings. All are therefore asked to avoid comments, corrections, or judgments on the perceived insights of others. This is not a time for questions and answers, it is an exercise for the purpose of bonding hearts by sharing and receiving personal heartfelt perspectives without discussion.

¹ superior to all others

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

1. *If it be Our pleasure We shall render the Cause victorious through the power of a single word from Our presence. He is in truth the Omnipotent, the All-Compelling. Should it be God's intention, there would appear out of the forests of celestial might the lion of indomitable strength whose roaring is like unto the peals of thunder reverberating in the mountains. However, since Our loving providence surpasseth all things, We have ordained that complete victory should be achieved through speech and utterance, that Our servants throughout the earth may thereby become the recipients of divine good. This is but a token of God's bounty vouchsafed unto them. Verily thy Lord is the All-Sufficing, the Most Exalted.*

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Fountain of Wisdom*, pp. 182 ¶13.9)

All-Compelling: One solely and completely able to overcome resistance or unwillingness through irresistible force

bounty: generously bestowed gift or favor

Cause: Bahá'í Faith; zealously advocated and upheld System of belief

celestial: heavenly

divine: God given

forests: figuratively — great quantity

good: desirable qualities and benefits

indomitable: unconquerable; undefeatable

lion: ferocious, courageous, dignified, and dominate one

Omnipotent: infinitely powerful and influential

ordained: destined by divine power

Our: used by one in authority to denote himself

peals: loud succession of sounds

providence: power that sustains and guides human destiny

recipients: receivers

render: make

roaring: loud proclaiming utterance

token: expression given or shown as a guarantee

utterance: oral or written expressions

victory: conversion of souls to faith in God

vouchsafed: given or bestowed out of graciousness

2. *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.*

(Bahá'u'lláh, quoted by Shoghi Effendi in *The Advent of Divine Justice*, pp. 82-83)

arisen: actively come forth

attaineth: has reached or achieved

breath: life giving inspiration

Cause: zealously advocated and upheld System of belief [the Bahá'í Faith]

day: specified time, age, or period

dead: "...the dead of the valley of self and desire..." (Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 209)

forbearance: leniency, generosity, and consideration when provoked or offended

incumbent: imposed as a duty

Most Great Horizon: figuratively — greatest extent of perception; the Manifestation of God, Bahá'u'lláh

must needs: of necessity or requirement

patience: calm endurance under suffering or provocation

people of Bahá: Bahá'ís

quicken: bring to [spiritual life]

spirit: activating or vital force giving life to the soul

strive: devote serious energy or effort

teach: impart knowledge that causes others to learn

utmost: greatest or highest degree of

word: expressed idea or concept [of the Revelation Writings of Bahá'u'lláh] (Bahá'u'lláh, *Fountain of Wisdom*, p. 220, ¶17.44)

Word of God: Revelation of God, today Bahá'u'lláh's Writings

3. *Proclaim unto men the Message of thy Lord, that it may haply deter them from following the promptings of their evil and corrupt desires, and bring them to the remembrance of God, the Most Exalted, the Most Great.*

(Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 276)

corrupt: morally degenerate or perverted
desires: cravings for enjoyment or satisfaction
deter: discourage, prevent, or turn
evil: morally wrong, reprehensible, sinful, or wicked

haply: perhaps
Message: Divine Revelation
proclaim: declare publicly and formally
promptings: inciting or suggestive feelings
remembrance: thinking and mentioning

4. *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.*

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

adore: worship with profound reverence
ancient Faith of God: “*This [Bahá'í Faith] is the changeless Faith of God, eternal in the past, eternal in the future.*” (Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 85)
concern: interest or matter of importance
embrace: take to heart and accept readily and gladly
extinction: dying out
fallen: morally ruined, defeated, or degraded

impending: threatening to occur very soon
manifest: make known
principal: highest ranking
re-created: given new spiritual life
rescue: save or liberate
signs: indications of the presence or existence
slough: figuratively — state of moral degradation or spiritual dejection from which one cannot free oneself

5. *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.*

*(Bahá'u'lláh, quoted by Shoghi Effendi in *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 83)*

consummate: complete and perfect
depend: be subject to or conditioned
depended: relied upon for support

revelation: making known through communication
triumph: success and victory
wisdom: suited and timely disclosure of knowledge

6. *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.*

(Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 330)

assistance: “*To assist Me is to teach My Cause.*” (Bahá'u'lláh, *Fountain of Wisdom*, p. 180 ¶13.4)
befallen: happened by fate or destiny to
bestir: rouse to action
hasten: move swiftly
if: on the condition that

proclaim: formally and publicly declare
recognize: formally acknowledge and accept
repose: be at rest without activity
tongues: expressions of speech
treasures: things of great value or worth
unloose: release from restraints and set free

7. *“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 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.”*

(Bahá'u'lláh, quoted by Shoghi Effendi in *The Advent of Divine Justice*, pp. 83 & 84)

adorn: add splendor and attractiveness to
exert: bring forth
glory: feel distinguished and honored
illumined: given spiritual knowledge and insight
influence: outpouring of spiritual or moral power without direct force

journeyed: traveled by any means
movement: changing of one's location or residence
sake: good advantage or enhancement
station: position or rank
undertaken: putting one's self under obligation

8. *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 Concurrence on high would envy his glory. No pen can depict the loftiness of his station, neither can any tongue describe its splendor.*

(*Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 330)

arise: actively come forth
assailants: aggressive opponents in controversy
Cause of God: today, the Bahá'í Faith
Concourse on high: souls gathered together from the higher spiritual realm
defend: maintain support in the face of argument or hostile criticism; prove the validity of
depict: describe
envy: strongly desire to possess the same advantage [of]

glory: distinguishing honor and admiration
honored: regarded as an esteemed and distinguished soul
inconsiderable: unworthy of any attention or formal respect
loftiness: impressively high status
man: human individual
share: allotted amount
splendor: brilliance, magnificence, and glory
station: rank or position

9. *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!”*

(Bahá'u'lláh, quoted by Shoghi Effendi in *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 83)

Cause: zealously advocated and upheld System of belief [the Bahá'í Faith]
day: specified time, age, or period
grieve: distress, suffer, and sorrow
profiteth: is of use or advantage [to]

service: performance of beneficial deeds or works; “To assist Me is to teach My Cause.”
 (Bahá'u'lláh, *Fountain of Wisdom*, p. 180 ¶13.4)
tongues: expressions of speech
vie: strive to equal or excel

10. 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.

(Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 197)

arisen: actively come forth
conferred: bestowed from the position of authority
glory: distinguishing honor and admiration
inmates: souls occupying the single place of residence
magnify: cause to be held in greater esteem and respect

please: by the will or pleasure of
rank: degree or position of dignity and eminence
serve: perform beneficial deeds or works [for]
strengthened: caused to have added power, effectiveness, and vigor
Will: choice and desire

APPLICATION: Showing forth divine light...

Facilitator

Read through #1 together and proceed as stated. Then take time for the participants to write out their individual plans for action in #2. (these are not shared) When everyone has finished, move on to the closing reading.

1. IMAGINING THE POSSIBILITIES: Visions of radiant lights...

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*....” Suggest as many ideas as you want.

2. DECIDING ACTION: Mirroring forth a beam of light...

From your experience in this study class on *The Paramount Importance of Teaching*, describe what *you* are inspired to put into reality and action. **I will make conscious efforts to...** _____

My next step will be... _____

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CLOSING MEDITATION: A heart song...

Bahá'u'lláh's record of the Voice that spoke to His heart.

O Tongue of this Temple! We, verily, have created thee through Our name, the All-Merciful, have taught thee whatsoever had remained concealed in the Bayán, and have bestowed upon thee the power of utterance, that thou mayest make mention of Mine exalted Self amidst My creatures. Proclaim, then, this wondrous and mighty Remembrance, and fear not the manifestations of the Evil One. Thou wert called into being for this very purpose by virtue of My transcendent and all-compelling command. Through thee have We unloosed the Tongue of Utterance to expound all that hath been, and We shall again, by My sovereign power, unloose it to speak of that which is yet to come. Erelong shall We bring into being through thee eloquent tongues that will praise and extol Me amongst the Concourse on high and amidst the peoples of the world. Thus have the verses of God been revealed, and thus hath it been decreed by the Lord of all names and attributes. Thy Lord, verily, is the True One, the Knower of things unseen. Nothing whatsoever shall prevent these tongues from magnifying their Creator. Through them, all created things shall arise to glorify the Lord of names and to bear witness that there is none other God save Me, the All-Powerful, the Most-Glorious, the Best-Beloved.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, p. 11)

A closing prayer.

Magnified be Thy name, O my God, for that Thou hast manifested the Day which is the King of Days, the Day which Thou didst announce unto Thy chosen Ones and Thy Prophets in Thy most excellent Tablets, the Day whereon Thou didst shed the splendor of the glory of all Thy names upon all created things. Great is his blessedness whosoever hath set himself towards Thee, and entered Thy presence, and caught the accents of Thy voice.

I beseech Thee, O my Lord, by the name of Him round Whom circleth in adoration the kingdom of Thy names, that Thou wilt graciously assist them that are dear to Thee to glorify Thy word among Thy servants, and to shed abroad Thy praise amidst Thy creatures, so that the ecstasies of Thy revelation may fill the souls of all the dwellers of Thine earth.

Since Thou hast guided them, O my Lord, unto the living waters of Thy grace, grant, by Thy bounty, that they may not be kept back from Thee; and since Thou hast summoned them to the habitation of Thy throne, drive them not out from Thy presence, through Thy loving-kindness. Send down upon them what shall wholly detach them from aught else except Thee, and make them able to soar in the atmosphere of Thy nearness, in such wise that neither the ascendancy of the oppressor nor the suggestions of them that have disbelieved in Thy most august and most mighty Self shall be capable of keeping them back from Thee.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Prayers and Meditations*, pp. 117-18)