

Establishing the Unity of Humankind

INTRODUCTION: *Approaching the threshold...*

All the teachings of the Bahá'í Faith, its principles, ideals, beliefs, and standards revolve around, and find their basis in, a central theme of unity. Unity can be described as a heartfelt condition of peace, love, and harmony in human relations, free of conflict (passionately expressed differences), contention (striving in opposition against another or others), dissension (differences leading to contesting groups), and strife (the violent struggle or fight for dominance).

The purpose or vision of this Faith is to establish a peaceful and harmonious condition of worldwide unity wherein all individuals, groups, states, and nations of people consider one another as equal and rightful parties to the oneness of humankind: a condition wherein race, nationality, politics, religion, gender, education, economic status, age, or other differences find no cause for separation, conflict, dissension or strife.

The unique nature of Bahá'í unity is that the method for accomplishing this vision is not through force or coercion, but intentional friendliness, kindness, harmony, attraction, peacefulness, and love.

The objective then, of all Bahá'í endeavors, and the means for their attainment, is unity.



View from one of Bahá'u'lláh's rooms
in 'Akká, Israel

*"Ye are the leaves of one tree and the
drops of one ocean." — Bahá'u'lláh*

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

Facilitator

Review the following objective with the participants:

The objective of this study is to understand the fundamental verities or basic truths regarding the main purpose of the Faith in establishing the unity of Humankind.

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.
3. **FINDING VALUE:** *Mining the gems of truth...*
- A. **Read the quotation** out loud again in its entirety.
 - B. Take turns **stating each basic fact or truth** you can find in the quotation about **unity**.

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

1. *The Great Being saith: O ye children of men! The fundamental purpose animating the Faith of God and His Religion is to safeguard the interests and promote the unity of the human race, and to foster the spirit of love and fellowship amongst men. Suffer it not to become a source of dissension and discord, of hate and enmity. This is the straight Path, the fixed and immovable foundation.* —Bahá'u'lláh

Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1952, 1971 printing), CX, p. 215.

animating: giving life, spirit, or energy to
discord: absence of unity, producing active disagreement or conflict
dissension: difference in opinion, causing separating or opposing groups
enmity: bitter attitudes or feelings of hatred or ill will, often concealed
fellowship: companionship, friendly association, and mutual sharing
foster: carefully promote the growth and development of
foundation: underlying truth or principle
fundamental: basic and essential
immovable: incapable of being altered

interests: welfare, benefits, and advantages
love: an unconditional, vulnerable compulsion to be spiritually intimate, dominated by warm-hearted affection, compassion, and concern for the good of all
men: the people
promote: advance, further, and elevate in rank, grade, or position
purpose: goal to be attained; intention
safeguard: make safe against loss or injury; protect
suffer: allow; permit
unity: heartfelt condition of peace, love, and harmony in human relations, free of conflict, contention, dissension, and strife

2. All the divine Manifestations have proclaimed the oneness of God and the unity of mankind. They have taught that men should love and mutually help each other in order that they might progress. Now if this conception of religion be true, its essential principle is the oneness of humanity. The fundamental truth of the Manifestations is peace. This underlies all religion, all justice. The divine purpose is that men should live in unity, concord and agreement and should love one another. —`Abdu'l-Bahá

The Promulgation of Universal Peace, (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1982), no. 12.7, p. 32.

agreement: a state of harmony in opinion, character, and action
conception: general idea
concord: friendly and peaceful relations
divine: God inspired; holy; sacred
essential: most important and necessary
fundamental: basic and essential
justice: that is morally right, true, and good
love: have warm attraction, strong affection, and concern for the good of (others)
Manifestations: great Prophets Who reveal the Words, and exhibit the signs and qualities of God
mankind: humankind
men: people

mutually: with shared concern for one another; commonly
oneness: quality, state, or fact of being single and indivisible; unity, harmony, and agreement of mind, feeling, and purpose
peace: serenity and harmony in human relations, free of disturbance and disorder
principle: basic governing truth or standard
proclaimed: formally and publicly declared
progress: develop to a more advanced state
purpose: goal to be attained; intention
underlies: is the basic and essential principle
unity: heartfelt condition of peace, love, and harmony in human relations, free of conflict, contention, dissension, and strife

3. Of such cardinal importance is this principle of unity that it is expressly referred to in the Book of His [Bahá'u'lláh's] Covenant, and He unreservedly proclaims it as the central purpose of His Faith. "We, verily," He declares, "have come to unite and weld together all that dwell on earth." "So potent is the light of unity," He further states, "that it can illuminate the whole earth." "At one time," He has written with reference to this central theme of His Revelation, "We spoke in the language of the lawgiver; at another in that of the truth seeker and the mystic, and yet Our supreme purpose and highest wish hath always been to disclose the glory and sublimity of this station." Unity, He states, is the goal that "excelleth every goal" and an aspiration which is "the monarch of all aspirations." —Shoghi Effendi

God Passes By, (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1944, 1970 printing), p. 217.

aspiration(s): ardent desire(s) to achieve something great
Book of His Covenant: the will and testament of Bahá'u'lláh
cardinal: key and superior
central: basic and dominant
disclose: make known or expose
dwell: live as residents for a period of time; reside
excelleth: is above or superior to; surpasses
expressly: directly, explicitly, and in unmistakable terms
glory: distinguishing quality and magnificence
illuminate: give intellectual and spiritual enlightenment, insight, and knowledge to
lawgiver: one who gives codes of law to people
light: emanating spiritual knowledge and goodness
monarch: one surpassing all others
mystic: one who intuitively comprehends esoteric truths beyond human understanding
Our: used by one in authority to denote himself

potent: powerful and effective
principle: basic governing truth or standard
proclaims: formally and publicly declares
purpose: goal to be attained; intention
referred to: given direct attention by clear and specific mention
Revelation: communication of God's will to humanity
station: rank and status of reality
sublimity: the awe-inspiring spiritual, intellectual, and moral worth
theme: topic or subject
unity: a heartfelt condition of peace, love, and harmony in human relations, free of conflict, contention, dissension, and strife
unreservedly: without limits or holding back; frankly; openly
verily: in very truth
We: used by one in authority to denote himself
weld: bring into close or intimate union; bond

4. The principle of the Oneness of Mankind—the pivot round which all the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh revolve ... concerns itself primarily with the nature of those essential relationships that must bind all the states and nations as members of one human family. ... It implies an organic change in the structure of present-day society, a change such as the world has not yet experienced. ... It calls for no less than the reconstruction and the demilitarization of the whole civilized world—a world organically unified in all the essential aspects of its life, its political machinery, its spiritual aspiration, its trade and finance, its script and language, and yet infinite in the diversity of the national characteristics of its federated units. —Shoghi Effendi

The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1974), p. 42-43.

aspects: features or characteristics
aspiration: ardent desire to achieve something great
bind: tie together by commitment and obligation
calls for: requires; demands
demilitarization: doing away with the military organization
diversity: difference in one from another
essential: most important and necessary
federated: political units that surrender their individual sovereignty to a central authority but retain limited powers
finance: systems of money, credit, and investment
implies: involves by necessary consequence
machinery: system by which a desired result is obtained
mankind: humankind

nature: character and disposition
oneness: quality, state, or fact of being single and indivisible; unity, harmony, and agreement of mind, feeling, and purpose
organic(ally): having parts that work together
pivot: central role or function
political: of or relating to government
primarily: in the first place
reconstruction: re-creation of the organization
relationships: shared connections or associations
revolve: relate to as a central point
spiritual: higher, divine, or sacred
structure: interrelation of parts as dominated by the whole
trade: exchange, purchase, or sale of goods
unified: joined together in peace, harmony, and agreement

5. *My object is none other than the betterment of the world and the tranquillity of its peoples. The well-being of mankind, its peace and security, are unattainable unless and until its unity is firmly established. This unity can never be achieved so long as the counsels which the Pen of the Most High hath revealed are suffered to pass unheeded.*

—Bahá'u'lláh

Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1952, 1971 printing), CXXXI, p. 286.

betterment: improvement that adds to the value
counsels: given wisdom and guidance; advise
established: originated with its permanent existence secured
mankind: humankind
object: intention or purpose
peace: serenity and harmony in human relations, free of disturbance and disorder
Pen of the Most High: Manifestation of God [Bahá'u'lláh]
revealed: made known
security: assured safety and protection

suffered: allowed; permitted
tranquillity: state of calmness, serenity, and peacefulness, free of turmoil or agitation
unattainable: not capable of being achieved or accomplished
unheeded: without attention or consideration; ignored
unity: heartfelt condition of peace, love, and harmony in human relations, free of conflict, contention, dissension, and strife
well-being: condition of physical and moral wellness and happiness

6. Endeavor ye as much as possible that differences may not arise in the affairs; let not every insignificant matter become the cause of disagreement. If such conditions exist the end will be complete dispersion. The believers and maid-servants of the Merciful must all consider how to produce harmony, so that the unity of the human world may be realized. . . .

—`Abdu'l-Bahá

Bahá'í World Faith, (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1956, 1971 printing), p. 411.

affairs: concerns or activities (of the Bahá'í community)
differences: disagreement in opinion; disputes; quarrels
dispersion: breaking up and scattering in different directions
endeavor: try to achieve with earnest effort
harmony: peace, friendship, and agreement in ☞

facts, opinions, manners, interests etc.
insignificant: little or of no real importance; trivial
maid-servants: female believers
realized: brought into being and made real; accomplished
unity: a heartfelt condition of peace, love, and harmony in human relations, free of conflict, contention, dissension, and strife

7. Bahá'u'lláh endured ordeals and hardships sixty years. There was no persecution, vicissitude or suffering He did not experience at the hand of His enemies and oppressors. All the days of His life were passed in difficulty and tribulation — at one time in prison, another in exile, sometimes in chains. He willingly endured these difficulties for the unity of mankind, praying that the world of humanity might realize the radiance of God, the oneness of humankind become a reality, strife and warfare cease and peace and tranquillity be realized by all.

—`Abdu'l-Bahá

The Promulgation of Universal Peace, (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1982), no. 54.4, p. 145.

cease: come to an end; stop
endured: continued patiently in putting up with
exile: forced to leave home and country
mankind: humankind
oneness: quality, state, or fact of being single and indivisible; unity, harmony, and agreement of mind, feeling, and purpose
oppressors: those whose unjust abuse of power and authority weighed down and burdened the mind and spirit with worry and distress
ordeals: severe and trying experiences; tribulations
peace: serenity and harmony in human relations, free of disturbance and disorder
persecution: injury, grief, or suffering from being afflicted or harassed constantly because of difference

radiance: emanating energy, light, and love
reality: true to life actuality
realized: accomplished and made real
strife: the violent struggle or fight for dominance where there is conflict or disagreement
tranquillity: a state of calmness, serenity, and peacefulness, free of turmoil or agitation
tribulation: great misery, distress, and suffering from oppression or persecution
unity: heartfelt condition of peace, love, and harmony in human relations, free of conflict, contention, dissension, and strife
vicissitude: difficulty and hardship from the changing courses of life
warfare: active armed conflict between opposing forces

SHARING EXERCISE: *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, one thing that was outstanding or inspiring and what spiritual feelings it enkindled. Please remind everyone not to remark on the comments of others.

One thing from the quotations that was outstanding or inspiring to me was _____

It made me feel _____

I felt this way because _____

SOME QUESTIONS: *A cup from the showers of confirmation...*

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. What is the main purpose of the Bahá'í Faith (in fact, of all Divine Religions)? _____

2. Shoghi Effendi wrote: "Cling therefore to unity if you desire to succeed and abide by the will of your Lord Bahá'u'lláh; for that is the true objective of His Mission in this world."¹ What is unity?

3. `Abdu'l-Bahá stated: "Whatever is conducive to the unity of the world of mankind is most acceptable and praiseworthy; whatever is the cause of discord and disunion is saddening and deplorable."²
Unity cannot exist when _____ or _____ are present.
What do you think deplorable means? _____
4. The unity and oneness of humankind apply not only to individual relationships, but also to the nature of those essential relationships that must bind all the _____
and _____ as members of one human family.
5. Bahá'ís believe in and support those behaviors and activities that promote the oneness of humankind. This principle does not entail a unity merely among individuals and groups, it envelops a world organically unified in all the essential aspects of its life, its political machinery, its spiritual aspiration, its trade and finance, its script and language. Explain one way that the oneness of humankind can positively effect the world society. _____

Continued on next page...

¹ Written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, "Youth." In *The Compilation of Compilations: Prepared by the Universal House of Justice 1963-1990*, (Maryborough: Bahá'í Publications Australia, 1991), vol. II, no. 2252, p. 421.

² `Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1982), no. 23.1, p. 56.

6. Promoting unity in the world means...

- a. solving problems without contention, conflict, or strife.
- b. Bahá'ís get involved in spreading the concept of unity among the people.
- c. forcing others into peace and harmony.
- d. arguing to prove you're right in a religious quarrel.
- e. fighting for racial equality.
- f. forgoing aggressive national patriotism for a higher commitment to the brotherhood of humankind.
- g. avoiding disagreement if it is sure to lead to argument.
- h. harmony and peace between you and another person is more important than competing to prove you're right.
- i. solving problems through aggression-free consultation.
- j. avoiding everything that relates to unity, harmony, and peace.
- k. avoiding those things that disunify, or cause enmity.
- l. avoiding activities that cause people to separate and oppose one another.
- m. not correcting others if it causes them to feel belittled.
- n. reprimanding Bahá'ís if they are acting inappropriately.
- o. making sure you blame the right person every time something goes wrong.
- p. being sensitive to the needs of others and doing that which brings them joy.
- q. being friendly with people who are different than you.
- r. avoiding those things that cause others to feel repulsed.
- s. being involved with organizations or groups that promote racial harmony.
- t. being cautious so as never to cause grief to another soul.
- u. when conflict arises always seek peace first and then solutions.
- v. supporting the development or adoption of a universal language.
- w. opposing a single world currency.
- x. seeking fairness in international trade.
- y. helping others to overcome their fears of a world governmental system.
- z. demonstrating equality of men and women.

7. List some other examples of promoting unity. _____

8. A letter written on behalf of the Guardian said: "...harmony, unity, and love are held up as the highest ideals in human relationships."¹ If unity is "a heartfelt condition of peace, love, and harmony in human relations, free of conflict, contention, dissension, and strife," what does this suggest about our relationships with our children, parents, spouses, co-workers, friends, or enemies? _____

9. The Universal House of Justice wrote that unity is "the alpha and omega of all Bahá'í objectives."² What does alpha mean? _____. What does omega mean? _____.

¹ Written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, cited in *Lights of Guidance: A Bahá'í Reference File*, (New Delhi: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1997), no. 1313, p. 394.

² *Messages from the Universal House of Justice 1986-2001*, (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 2010), par. 183.29, p. 384.

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 “Establishing the Unity of Humankind,” describe what ***you*** are inspired to put into reality and action. ***I will make conscious efforts to*** _____

My next step will be _____

CLOSING MEDITATION: *A heart song...*

From a talk by `Abdu'l-Bahá while in Paris.

All men are servants of the One God. One God reigns over all the nations of the world and has pleasure in all His children. All men are of one family; the crown of humanity rests on the head of every human being.

In the eyes of the Creator all His children are equal; His goodness is poured forth on all. He does not favour this nation nor that nation, all alike are His creatures. This being so, why should we make divisions, separating one race from another? Why should we create barriers of superstition and tradition bringing discord and hatred among the people?

The only difference between members of the human family is that of degree. Some are like children who are ignorant, and must be educated until they arrive at maturity. Some are like the sick and must be treated with tenderness and care. None are bad or evil! We must not be repelled by these poor children. We must treat them with great kindness, teaching the ignorant and tenderly nursing the sick.

Consider: Unity is necessary to existence. Love is the very cause of life; on the other hand, separation brings death. In the world of material creation, for instance, all things owe their actual life to unity. The elements which compose wood, mineral, or stone, are held together by the law of attraction. If this law should cease for one moment to operate these elements would not hold together, they would fall apart, and the object would in that particular form cease to exist. The law of attraction has brought together certain elements in the form of this beautiful flower, but when that attraction is withdrawn from this centre the flower will decompose, and, as a flower, cease to exist.

So it is with the great body of humanity. The wonderful Law of Attraction, Harmony and Unity, holds together this marvellous Creation.

As with the whole, so with the parts; whether a flower or a human body, when the attracting principle is withdrawn from it, the flower or the man dies. It is therefore clear that attraction, harmony, unity and Love, are the cause of life, whereas repulsion, discord, hatred and separation bring death.

We have seen that whatever brings division into the world of existence causes death. Likewise in the world of the spirit does the same law operate.

Therefore should every servant of the One God be obedient to the law of love, avoiding all hatred, discord, and strife. We find when we observe nature, that the gentler animals group themselves together into flocks and herds, whereas the savage, ferocious creatures, such as the lion, the tiger, and the wolf, live in wild forests, apart from civilization. Two wolves, or two lions, may live amicably together; but a thousand lambs may share the same fold and a large number of deer can form one herd. Two eagles can dwell in the same place, but a thousand doves can gather into one habitation.

Man should, at least, be numbered among the gentler animals; but when he becomes ferocious he is more cruel and malicious than the most savage of the animal creation!

Now Bahá'u'lláh has proclaimed the "Unity of the World of Mankind". All peoples and nations are of one family, the children of one Father, and should be to one another as brothers and sisters! I hope that you will endeavour in your lives to show forth and spread this teaching.

Bahá'u'lláh said that we should love even our enemies and be to them as friends. If all men were obedient to this principle, the greatest unity and understanding would be established in the hearts of mankind.

—`Abdu'l-Bahá

Paris Talks, (London: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1995), pp. 138-40.

ANSWERS: *Affirming treasures...*

1. promote the unity of the human race
2. a heartfelt condition of peace, love, and harmony in human relations, free of conflict, contention, dissension, and strife
3. discord or disunion. That considered regretful or sorry about; very bad; wretched; detestable
4. states, nations
5. all answers are valuable
6. a, b, f, g, h, i, k, l, m, p, q, r, s, t, u, v, x, y, and z
7. anything that is consistent with the definition of unity
8. anything that is consistent with the definition of unity
9. Alpha is from the Greek alphabet, indicating the beginning. Omega is from the Greek alphabet, indicating the ultimate end.

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