

To Study and Deepen

INTRODUCTION: *Approaching the threshold...*

To deepen our love and understanding of this glorious Faith, to study its life-giving principles, and to partake regularly of its illuminating guidance, does nothing less than to lovingly and comprehensively nurture our very soul in the purpose for which it was created—to know and love God.

To study and deepen in the Faith, among other things, requires one to read, meditate on, and study the Writings of the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh, `Abdu'l-Bahá, Shoghi Effendi, and the Universal House of Justice on a regular basis. Furthermore, attendance at Bahá'í summer and winter schools, institute courses, study classes, deepenings, study circles, lectures and talks, or the reading of Bahá'í books, listening to Bahá'í recordings, or watching Bahá'í videos can all constitute study and deepening in the Faith.



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We are encouraged by `Abdu'l-Bahá to “...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.”¹

From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian we read: “The more deep our studies the more we can understand the significance of the teachings. In the Cause we cannot divorce the letter from the spirit of the words. As Bahá'u'lláh says we should take the outward significance and superimpose upon it the inner. Either without the other is wrong and defective.”²

Let us explore this subject of study and deepening with eagerness and joy.

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

Facilitator

Review the following objectives with the participants:

The objective of this study is to understand the fundamental verities or basic truths regarding the importance of studying and deepening in the Faith.

¹ `Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1982), par. 137.1, p. 459.

² Written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, “Deepening.” In *The Compilation of Compilations: Prepared by the Universal House of Justice 1963-1990*, (Maryborough: Bahá'í Publications Australia, 1991), vol. I, no. 461, p. 215

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 **studying or deepening in the Faith**.

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

1. *Immerse yourselves in the ocean of My words, that ye may unravel its secrets, and discover all the pearls of wisdom that lie hid in its depths.* —Bahá'u'lláh

Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1952, 1971 printing), LXX, p. 136.

depths: profound, immeasurable, and vast extent
immerse: engross the attention of; absorb
My words: the revelation and teachings of Bahá'u'lláh
ocean: great source; immensity; "...the oceans of inner meaning and explanation..."—Bahá'u'lláh, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1953, 1971 printing), p. 147.

pearls: highly valued insights of knowledge and wisdom; "...the pearls of Divine knowledge and wisdom that lie concealed within the ocean of its words."—Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas: The Most Holy Book*, (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 1992), par. 180, p. 85.
wisdom: deep, thorough, and mature knowledge and understanding of truth and reality

2. Indeed if an avowed follower of Bahá'u'lláh were to immerse himself in, and fathom the depths of, the ocean of these heavenly teachings, and with utmost care and attention deduce from each of them the subtle mysteries and consummate wisdom that lie enshrined therein, such a person's life, materially, intellectually and spiritually, will be safe from toil and trouble, and unaffected by setbacks and perils, or any sadness or despondency.

—Shoghi Effendi

“Deepening.” In *The Compilation of Compilation: Prepared by the Universal House of Justice 1963-1990*, vol. I, no. 427, p. 204.

attention: mental concentration; careful thinking
avowed: openly declared or frankly acknowledged
consummate: complete, perfect, and of the highest quality
deduce: determine by logical reasoning; infer
depths: abundant inmost parts; profoundness
despondency: temporary or partial loss of courage or hope; dejection
enshrined: held as sacred; cherished
fathom: penetrate and come to a thorough understanding of; comprehend
immerse: engross the attention of; absorb
mysteries: things unexplained or unknown that remain so secret or obscure as to excite ☞

curiosity and wonder
perils: exposure to risk, danger, harm, or loss
safe: free of harm, danger, or loss; protected
setbacks: that which reverses or hinders progress; impediments
subtle: marked by or requiring mental keenness
teachings: specific beliefs, concepts, perceptions, principles, standards, morals, ideals, and truths taught [in the Bahá'í Faith]
toil: long, strenuous, and fatiguing labor; drudgery
unaffected: not changed, affected, or influenced
utmost: the greatest or highest degree of
wisdom: deep, thorough, and mature knowledge and understanding of truth and reality

3. *The understanding of His words and the comprehension of the utterances of the Birds of Heaven are in no wise dependent upon human learning. They depend solely upon purity of heart, chastity of soul, and freedom of spirit.*

—Bahá'u'lláh

The Kitáb-i-Íqán: The Book of Certitude, (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1950, 1970 printing), p. 211.

Birds of Heaven: Holy Prophets or Manifestations of God
chastity of soul: faithfulness in thought and intention to the love of God
comprehension: understanding; grasping of the knowledge of
dependent: conditioned or reliant
freedom of spirit: liberated from influence, restraints, or restrictions in perception or course of action
His words: the inspired Word of God through the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh
human learning: learning directly from other human beings

in no wise: in no way or manner
purity of heart: “A pure heart is as a mirror; cleanse it with the burnish of love and severance from all save God, that the true sun may shine therein and the eternal morning dawn.”
—Bahá'u'lláh, *The Call of the Divine Beloved*, (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 2018), par. 43, p. 31; “The pure heart is one that is entirely cut away from self. To be selfless is to be pure.”
—`Abdu'l-Bahá, *Abdu'l-Bahá in London*, (London: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1982), p. 107.
solely: to the exclusion of all else
utterances: oral or written expressions

4. Deepening is far more a matter of developing a spiritual attitude, devotion and selflessness than it is of acquiring information, although this, of course, is also important.

—The Universal House of Justice

Messages from the Universal House of Justice 1963-1986, (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1996), par. 289.4, p. 499.

attitude: mind set, disposition, or emotional state
devotion: acts of ardent dedication and affection

selflessness: devotion to the welfare and concerns of others above one's own.

5. The principles of the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh should be carefully studied, one by one, until they are realized and understood by mind and heart—so will you become strong followers of the light, truly spiritual, heavenly soldiers of God, acquiring and spreading the true civilization in Persia, in Europe, and in the whole world.

—`Abdu'l-Bahá

Paris Talks, (London: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1995), no. 8, p. 9.

civilization: society characterized in all its aspects by spiritual enlightenment, progressive development, and human refinement
heavenly soldiers: holy ones who put forth effort and sacrifice for the Cause
light: illuminating spiritual knowledge and ↗

goodness of God
principles: basic truths and beliefs
realized: brought into being and made real
studied: read and examined with diligence and attention
true: intended; ideal

6. His advice to you is to continue deepening your knowledge and understanding of this Revelation, both by means of patient and thorough study of Bahá'í writings, and through active association with your fellow-believers and close participation in the activities of your local Bahá'í community.

—written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi

“Deepening.” In *The Compilation of Compilations: Prepared by the Universal House of Justice 1963-1990*, vol. I, no. 491, p. 225.

association: joint action in common interests or activities
deepening: making deeper, more comprehensive, and more developed
means: the use

participation: partaking in common
patient: calm endurance under suffering or provocation
thorough: carried through to completion with full detail and exactness

7. His brotherly advice to you, and to all loyal and ardent young believers like you, is that you should deepen your knowledge of the history and of the tenets of the Faith, not merely by means of careful and thorough study, but also through active, whole-hearted and continued participation in all the activities, whether administrative or otherwise, of your community. The Bahá'í community life provides you with an indispensable laboratory, where you can translate into living and constructive action the principles which you imbibe from the Teachings. By becoming a real part of that living organism you can catch the real spirit which runs throughout the Bahá'í Teachings. To study the principles, and to try to live according to them, are, therefore, the two essential mediums through which you can ensure the development and progress of your inner spiritual life and of your outer existence as well. May Bahá'u'lláh enable you to attain this high station, and may He keep the torch of faith forever burning in your heart!

—written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi

“Deepening.” In *The Compilation of Compilations: Prepared by the Universal House of Justice 1963-1990*, vol. I, no. 475, p. 219..

administrative: connected or relating to the management or directing [of Bahá'í affairs]
ardent: eager and zealous
community: Bahá'í community
deepen: make deeper, more comprehensive, and more developed
imbibe: take into the mind and retain
indispensable: absolutely necessary and not subject to being set aside or neglected

laboratory: place for observation, study, and practice
mediums: means for learning
principles: basic truths and beliefs
station: standing or position
study: to read and examine with diligence and attention
tenets: principles, beliefs, and doctrines held to be true

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. One of the reasons we study and deepen is to acquire wisdom. What is wisdom? _____

2. How is it, do you think, that study and deepening in the Bahá'í writings can help keep us unaffected by setbacks and perils, or any sadness or despondency, or toil or trouble? _____

3. Bahá'ís can continue to deepen their knowledge of the spirit and truths of the Bahá'í Faith...
 - a. by means of patient and thorough study of the Bahá'í Writings.
 - b. by wearing sacred things.
 - c. from genetic memory passed on from being born to Bahá'í parents.
 - d. by close participation in the activities of the local Bahá'í community.
 - e. through active association with fellow believers.
4. Understanding of the Word of God is dependent upon what three things? _____

5. Understanding the Word of God is *not* dependent upon human learning. What is human learning? _____

Continued on next page...

6. Shoghi Effendi wrote: “If you read the utterances of Bahá’u’lláh and `Abdu’l-Bahá with selflessness and care and concentrate upon them, you will discover truths unknown to you before and will obtain an insight into the problems that have baffled the great thinkers of the world.”¹ How could this be? _____
7. One of the outcomes of study and deepening is the acquisition of knowledge and understanding that allows us to better contribute to the development of true civilization. What is true civilization? _____
8. Is participation in this study considered deepening?
 Yes No
9. Bahá’í community life provides a living environment wherein one can apply the following guidance from Bahá’u’lláh: “*Treasure the companionship of the righteous....*”² How might this constitute deepening? _____
10. To best acquire a clear understanding of the Bahá’í teachings requires one to study primarily...
 a. the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh.
 b. the Writings of the Báb.
 c. the writings of `Abdu’l-Bahá.
 d. the writings of the Guardian, Shoghi Effendi.
 e. the writings of the Universal House of Justice.

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 Daily Readings and Deepening, describe what **you** are inspired to put into reality and action. ***I will make conscious efforts to...*** _____

My next step will be... _____

¹ Shoghi Effendi, “Deepening.” In *The Compilation of Compilations: Prepared by the Universal House of Justice 1963-1990*, vol. I, no. 430, p. 205.

² Bahá’u’lláh, *The Hidden Words*, (Evanston: Bahá’í Publishing, 2012), Persian no. 3, p. 81.

CLOSING MEDITATION: *A heart song...*

A Talk by `Abdu'l-Bahá to a Bible class in 1912.

I have been informed that the purpose of your class meeting is to study the significances and mysteries of the Holy Scriptures and understand the meaning of the divine Testaments. It is a cause of great happiness to me that you are turning unto the Kingdom of God, that you desire to approach the presence of God and to become informed of the realities and precepts of God. It is my hope that you may put forth your most earnest endeavor to accomplish this end, that you may 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. ... It is difficult to comprehend even the words of a philosopher; how much more difficult it is to understand the Words of God. The divine Words are not to be taken according to their outer sense. They are symbolical and contain realities of spiritual meaning. For instance, in the book of Solomon's songs you will read about the bride and bridegroom. It is evident that the physical bride and bridegroom are not intended. Obviously, these are symbols conveying a hidden and inner significance. In the same way the Revelations of St. John are not to be taken literally, but spiritually. These are the mysteries of God. It is not the reading of the words that profits you; it is the understanding of their meanings. Therefore, pray God that you may be enabled to comprehend the mysteries of the divine Testaments.

Consider the symbolical meanings of the Words and teachings of Christ. He said, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever." When the Jews heard this, they took it literally and failed to understand the significance of His meaning and teaching. The spiritual truth which Christ wished to convey to them was that the reality of Divinity within Him was like a blessing which had come down from heaven and that he who partook of this blessing should never die. That is to say, bread was the symbol of the perfections which had descended upon Him from God, and he who ate of this bread, or endowed himself with the perfections of Christ, would undoubtedly attain to everlasting life. The Jews did not understand Him, and taking the words literally, said, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" Had they understood the real meaning of the Holy Book, they would have become believers in Christ.

All the texts and teachings of the holy Testaments have intrinsic spiritual meanings. They are not to be taken literally. I, therefore, pray in your behalf that you may be given the power of understanding these inner real meanings of the Holy Scriptures and may become informed of the mysteries deposited in the words of the Bible so that you may attain eternal life and that your hearts may be attracted to the Kingdom of God. May your souls be illumined by the light of the Words of God, and may you become repositories of the mysteries of God, for no comfort is greater and no happiness is sweeter than spiritual comprehension of the divine teachings. If a man understands the real meaning of a poet's verses such as those of Shakespeare, he is pleased and rejoiced. How much greater his joy and pleasure when he perceives the reality of the Holy Scriptures and becomes informed of the mysteries of the Kingdom!

I pray that the divine blessings may descend upon you day by day, that your hearts may be opened to perceive the inner significances of the Word of God. There is no fruit in knowing the mere letters of the Book. ... I pray that you may be quickened by the breaths of the Holy Spirit and illumined by the rays of the Sun of Truth. May you be favored with heavenly blessings in the threshold of God and attain to eternal life. This is my prayer. May God bless and enlighten you.

—`Abdu'l-Bahá

The Promulgation of Universal Peace, (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1982), par. 137.1-137.4, pp. 458-60.

ANSWERS: *Affirming treasures...*

1. anything similar to: deep, thorough, and mature knowledge and understanding of truth and reality
2. all answers are valuable
3. a, d, and e
4. anything similar to: "...*purity of heart, chastity of soul, and freedom of spirit.*"
5. anything similar to: learning directly from other human beings
6. all answers are valuable
7. anything similar to: the intended or ideal society characterized in all its aspects by spiritual enlightenment, progressive development, and human refinement
8. yes
9. all answers are valuable
10. a, b, c, d, and e

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