Teaching the Faith

INTRODUCTION: *Approaching the threshold…*

International Teaching Centre, Haifa, Israel

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 divine privilege.

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 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 individuals on their path towards God but also become recipients 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 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."[1]

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 importance and responsibility of teaching the Faith to others.

[1] *Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas*, (New York: Bahá'í Publishing Committee, 1909, 1930 printing), vol. I, p. 189.

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 **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.* **—Bahá'u'lláh**

Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1952, 1971 printing), CXXVIII, p. 278.

Cause of God: Bahá'í Faith
duty: required or morally obligated action
His Message: the content and reality of Bahá'u'lláh's Divine Revelation
meritorious: deserving of honor and esteem
people of Bahá: followers of Bahá'u'lláh

prescribed: with authority assigned
proclaiming: openly and publicly making known
regardeth: looks upon or considers
teach ye: impart, convey, demonstrate, or exemplify spiritual wisdom and understanding that lovingly enables 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*, (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1977), no. 113, p. 39.

chalice: drinking cup or goblet
confirms: removes doubt or gives certainty through indisputable facts [for]
enjoined: required to responsibly join in
enlightens: gives knowledge, insight, and spiritual illumination to
everlasting: eternally enduring
expected: considered bound by duty
heals: restores to original purity and integrity
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 and responsibility
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. **—`Abdu'l-Bahá**

Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Bahá, (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 1978), no. 213, p. 268.

`Abhá Kingdom: most glorious spiritual World
blessings: divine gifts and favors
confirmations: validations and assurances that cause spiritual strength
dependent: able to exist and be sustained only through reliance
deprived of: hindered or withheld from
display: make clearly evident
divine: God given
kindness: a sympathetic, generous, tenderhearted, gentle, and loving nature
love: an unconditional, vulnerable compulsion to be spiritually intimate, dominated by warm-hearted affection, compassion, and concern for the good of all
obligation: moral duty or responsibility
patience: calm endurance with disagreement or provocation
pursued: engaged in

refrain: hold oneself back
teaching: imparting of knowledge that causes others to learn [the Bahá'í Faith]
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, *A Traveler's Narrative*, (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1980), 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, (Evanston: Bahá'í Publishing, 2006), par. 66, pp. 78-68.

administrative: connected or related to the management or directing of affairs
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: simple, plain, or common
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: roots or beginnings
participate: take part in common with others
potency: capacity and ability to achieve or bring about desired results
preoccupations: focused engagement in [other] concerning activities
pressing: urgently important or critical
privilege: granted right
proclaim: openly and publicly make known
restricted: confined within set bounds
sole: limited to one specified individual or group
teach: impart, convey, demonstrate, or exemplify spiritual wisdom and understanding that lovingly enables others to learn the true path of God
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.* **—Bahá'u'lláh**

Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1952, 1971 printing), CXLVII, p. 316.

adorn: add splendor and attractiveness to
afire: impassioned, spirited, and enlivened
ancient Faith of God: Bahá'í Faith
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 of one's light or life
fail: be found unsuccessful
fallen: morally ruined, defeated, or degraded
flame: burning zeal or passion
goodly: pleasantly attractive or excellent
heart: seat of spiritual consciousness
impending: imminent; looming
knit: draw and join closely and firmly
ornament: addition of the luster, grace, and beauty
praiseworthy: deserving of honor or commendation
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
this blessed night: from a tablet revealed by Bahá'u'lláh while in Adrianople; see Adib Taherzadeh, *The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh*, (Oxford: George Ronald, 1977), vol. II, p. 188.
unity: heartfelt condition of peace, love, and harmony in human relations, free of conflict, contention, dissension, and the struggle for dominance
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.* **—Bahá'u'lláh**

Fountain of Wisdom, (Wilmette, Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1988, 2016 printing), par. 12.25, p. 176.

afraid: filled with fear or apprehension
All-Knowing: sole One fully comprehending all that is
Almighty: One having absolute power over all
enabling: providing the means and opportunity for
fountains: spouting streams
gush: suddenly and forcefully flow
heart: seat of spiritual consciousness: *"…the recipient of the light of God and the seat of the revelation of the All-Merciful,…"*—Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1952, 1971 printing), XCIII, p. 186.
proclaim: openly and publicly make known
purge: make pure and free
raise: increase the strength and vigor of
remembrance: bringing to mind by making mention
sake: pleasure and honor
tongue: expression through speech
trust: absolute and assured reliance
unloose: release from restraints and 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

7. *Let some teach with their words, some with their deeds and actions, and some with their characters, drawing others towards God. Virtuous deeds and spiritual conduct are themselves teachers of the Cause.* **—Bahá'u'lláh**

Provisional Translation by Adib Masumian of a passage from the *Lawh-i-Karim,* par. 4, published in Iqtidárát va Chand Lawḥ-i-Dígar, pp. 164–74. Online: "Lawh-i-Karim", Adib Masumian, December 2022: Lawh-i-Karim | Adib Masumian

Cause: Bahá'í Faith
characters: highly developed or strongly marked moral qualities
conduct: ways of acting and behaving
teach: impart, convey, demonstrate, or exemplify spiritual wisdom and understanding that lovingly enables others to learn the true path of God
virtuous: having or exhibiting divine spiritual qualities and attributes

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. As one of our responsibilities to God, 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."*[1] 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."[2] Does this mean that when we teach this Faith, 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? _____

_____

Continued on next page…

[1] Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1952, 1971 printing), CLIV, p. p. 330.

[2] `Abdu'l-Bahá, "Guidelines for Teaching." In *The Compilation of Compilations: Prepared by the Universal House of Justice 1963-1990*, (Maryborough: Bahá'í Publications Australia, 1991), vol. II, no. 1913, p. 297.

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 to 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."*[1]
- ☐ d. teach with enthusiasm, courage, vigor, and reliance on God.

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. God

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 #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 "Teaching the Faith," describe what ***you*** are inspired to put into reality and action. ***I will*** *make conscious efforts to...* _____

_____

My *next step will be...* _____

_____

[1] Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1952, 1971 printing), CXXXII, p. 289.

CLOSING MEDITATION: *A heart song…*

Verses from Bahá'u'lláh on 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! Erelong 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**

Quoted by Shoghi Effendi, published in *The Advent of Divine Justice*, (Evanston: Bahá'í Publishing, 2006), par. 114, pp. 125-28.

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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