

A. A. Furútan

Bahá'í Education for Children

Book 4

"...for when the bough is green and tender
it will grow in whatever way ye train it."

A Teacher's Guide
For Children 9 Years Old



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**For children
9 years old**

A Teacher's Guide

by A. A. Furútan

**Bahá'í Publishing Trust
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He is God!

The saplings of the rose garden
of divine unity who attend classes
for character training are
recipients of God's favour and
protected under the shelter of
His bestowals and tender care.¹

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Foreword

Bahá'í education for children is one of the most important lines of action for the consolidation of the Bahá'í communities. Through children's education, the whole community can gradually be transformed. Observing the great need for a systematic approach to this task, some fifty years ago Hand of the Cause of God 'Alí-Akbar Furútan developed a set of 13 books for the Bahá'í education of children. The books were written in the Persian language for use in the Bahá'í communities in Írán (Persia) and were known as the *Kitáb-i-Dars-i-Akhlagh* (*Books for Moral Education*). The set included 12 books for children aged 5 to 16–18 and a *Teacher's Manual* on the principles of Bahá'í education.

An administrative system was put in place by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Írán to assist generations of Bahá'í children to attend these classes, first as students, and later on in their youth and adulthood, as teachers. Availability of these materials and the efforts of various institutions of the Faith and parents to systematically follow up the progress and assist Bahá'í communities to hold children's classes made children's education a vital activity in almost every Bahá'í community in Írán.

Inspired by the spirit of the Four-Year Plan and the need for the systematization of human resource development, a group of Bahá'í friends in Zambia decided to translate these books into English for possible use by interested national communities. It was obvious from the outset that the books needed not only to be translated but adapted in many instances. With the full permission of Mr. Furútan, the adaptation and changes made in the books include information on the update of the progress of the Faith, modifications based on cultural considerations and the addition of new topics. We are very grateful to Mr. Furútan for his kind permission to make these changes.

We are also thankful to the friends who translated the books for their interest and hard work. May their meritorious service be crowned with the bounty of the acceptance of the Blessed Beauty.

National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Zambia

Lusaka, June 1998

Note on South African Edition

In preparing this edition, an attempt has been made to carry on the work of improving these books, by making corrections to the text, and reviewing some of the stories in the light of versions already published in the West.

Some of the laws mentioned in the lessons are not yet applicable to all Bahá'ís. There is no harm in teaching these to children, who can be told they will apply at a time in the future when the Universal House of Justice notifies the Friends. Such laws are indicated as 'not yet universally binding' in the lessons.

Editor

Introduction

Book 4 is for the teacher's use and provides some guidelines on how to manage the classes. As in earlier years, there is no reading book for the children and the teacher is expected to talk to them about different subjects. As it is expected that the teacher would have studied the contents of Books 1, 2 and 3 before starting Book 4, many issues from those books regarding how to manage the classes have not been repeated.

Parents and friends are requested to send their views for the improvement of this book to the National Child Education Committee or other agencies of the National Spiritual Assembly responsible for the Bahá'í education of children.

A. A. Furútan

Format of a Typical Lesson

Each children's lesson will follow basically the same format. It is helpful for children to be in a structured and familiar environment. They will soon learn the format of the class and will look forward to each part of it. The class will begin with prayers. Then the teacher and children will review what was learned in the previous class. There is a brief break after the review, which includes songs, games, and an opportunity for the teacher to register the students. Following the break, the new lesson will be presented, usually with a brief explanation, a story, and sometimes a quotation or prayer to learn. If the teacher has materials for the children to use, they may then draw and colour pictures related to the lesson. The class will close with a prayer, and then a final suggestion from the teacher, asking the children to do something specific at home. Below is a more detailed description of each part of the class.

1 Opening prayer – Each lesson should begin with an opening prayer. One of the students or the teacher may say a prayer to start the lesson. If more than one student would like to say a prayer, this would also be acceptable, as it is good to encourage the children to do this. If they all know the same prayer, however, this is not the time for each of them to recite it. That can be done later as a class activity.

2 Review of previous lesson – Except for the first three lessons, each lesson will begin by reviewing what was learned in the previous class. The teacher can ask questions to give the children a chance to recall what they have learned.

3 Break: songs, games, stories, student registration and children's cleanliness – After the review, the children will enjoy singing and learning new songs and playing games.

Songs – Children should be encouraged to learn Bahá'í songs. If the teacher knows how to play a guitar or a local musical instrument, this will add to the joyful atmosphere

of the class. Members of the community who play musical instruments may also be invited to play for the children.

Games – If the location and the environment are suitable for simple games, the teacher may play with the children; this will help them not to become bored. Games are already included with each lesson in these materials. Of course, if there is another game that the children enjoy, you should feel free to use it. Choose games that are suitable to the children's age and the environment. Games should be played under the teacher's supervision. If the environment is not suitable for this purpose, the children can be asked to have a break and rest, with the teacher lovingly, patiently and firmly ensuring that they maintain acceptable behaviour.

Stories – The children should also be told stories. The teacher should try to tell the children, whenever appropriate, interesting stories with positive and spiritual morals. Other members of the community can also be invited to the class for the same purpose. Tapes of interesting stories can be played at times.

Student registration – The teacher should take advantage of the break time to register the students in a notebook specially prepared and maintained for this purpose. The teacher can ask the children to listen for their names. When the teacher calls a child's name, the child can stand up to show that he or she is present. When the teacher notices one of the students has been absent for more than one or two sessions, he or she may enquire from the others and from the student's parents, and may help, if possible, to encourage the student to attend regularly.

Children's cleanliness – Another objective of the break time is for the teacher to see if all the students have paid sufficient attention to being clean. Undoubtedly, this must be done with utmost love, kindness and patience, and without any student feeling, in the slightest way, that he or she is being inspected for cleanliness. The teacher, lovingly and kindly,

tries to look closely at the children to see if any one of them has neglected this important matter. Should it be necessary, the teacher may, without addressing any one given child, initiate a discussion in which the importance of cleanliness and the disadvantages of uncleanness are explained to them.

4 New lesson, story or memorization – This is the new material presented during the lesson. It may be a story that the teacher tells to the children, or a prayer for the children to memorize. Remember that stories should be told in ways that make them interesting to the children. The teacher should learn the story before telling it.

5 Drawing and colouring pictures (if material is available) – Children enjoy drawing and colouring and this should be encouraged whenever possible. A picture can be included with each lesson of the course. If the teacher has paper and colouring materials, he or she may trace the pictures for the children to colour. The parents and the Bahá'í community may be able to contribute such items or help raise funds to buy them.

6 Closing prayer – Each class will end with a closing prayer. It is good to encourage the children to say a prayer. However, if none of them knows one, the teacher may say one. Also, the teacher should lovingly remind the children how to behave when prayers are being said. They should be still and listen quietly and attentively.

7 Teacher's suggestion for the week – Before the children leave, the teacher will remind them of what they have learned and will ask them to do something at home. The teacher may ask them simply to think about what they have learned, or to tell the story they have heard in class to their family, or to practise the prayer they are memorizing, or practise being clean, and so on.

In the Name of God, the Peerless

1 Getting to Know the Children: Review of Lessons 4, 5, 6, and 7 of Book 3

1.1 Opening Prayer

One of the students says the prayer of Lesson 11 from Book 3.

1.2 Getting to Know the Children

If the teacher is working with the same children as last year, this may not be necessary. However, if the teacher does not know the children, follow the suggestions given in the previous books on how to get to know the children. If there are only a few children who are not known to the others, efforts to get to know them will be briefer and can even be done outside the class time.

1.3 Entering Children’s Names and Details in the Class’s Register

1.4 Review of Lessons 4, 5, 6, and 7 of Book 3

1.5 Break: Songs, Games, Student Registration and Children’s Cleanliness

Children to sing songs in Lesson 6 of Book 3.

1.6 Closing Prayer

One of the children to recite the prayer from Lesson 21 in Book 3.

1.7 Teacher’s Recommendation

“Dear children, let us all promise to be regular participants in this year’s classes. Next week we will review more of the lessons from the previous year.”

2 Review of Lessons 8, 11, 13 and 17 of Book 3

2.1 Opening Prayer

One of the children recites the prayer from Lesson 25 of Book 3.

2.2 Review of Lessons 8, 12, 13, and 17 of Book 3

This must be done in such a way as not to make the children tired. Be brief.

2.3 Break: Songs, Games, Student Registration and Children's Cleanliness

2.4 Closing Prayer

2.5 Teacher's Recommendation

“Dear children, always remember to do what Bahá'u'lláh tells us. Don't use bad language, even when you hear your friends use it.”

3 Review of Lessons 19, 23, 24 and 27 of Book 3

3.1 Opening Prayer

3.2 Review of Lessons 19, 23, 24 and 27 of Book 3

3.3 Break: Songs, Games, Student Registration and Children's Cleanliness

3.4 Learning a Bahá'í Poem

When in our feelings, thoughts and actions
The noblest is allowed to shine,
Then those who walk in our direction
Will deeply sense our luck divine.²

3.5 Closing Prayer

3.6 Teacher's Recommendation

“Dear children, remember to put into practice the Writings when you study them, as our actions are very important. We need to practise obeying our parents, being kind to animals, and following the example of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.”

4 The Báb: Brief History

4.1 Opening Prayer

4.2 The Báb

The teacher will tell the story of the Báb, along with the following example:

His blessed name was Mírzá Siyyid ‘Alí-Muḥammad. One of His titles is “The Primal Point”. He was born in the city of Shíráz, Persia (Írán). From childhood, friends and strangers alike admired Him for His praiseworthy qualities and character. All knew that this child was different from all other children. He spent most of His time in prayer and meditation; unlike other children, He had no desire to play and sightsee.

In His childhood, the Báb had a teacher who has recounted this story about the Him:

Some mornings, the Báb was late for school, and when I asked Him the reason, He remained silent as though He wanted to hide what He was doing. One day, not knowing what to do with Him, I asked one of His classmates to follow Him and find out the reason for His frequent tardiness. The classmate reported, on one of the days when the Báb was late, that He was busy saying His obligatory prayers in His home. Another day when He was late, I asked Him the reason. He replied, quietly, “I was with My Grandfather” (i.e. referring to the Prophet Muḥammad). I told Him, “You are only a child and are not required to say the obligatory prayers. Why do you say this prayer so often?” Again, quietly, He replied “I wish to be like My Grandfather.”

The same teacher has said that even though the Báb was engaged in prayers most of the time, He was the best student and was very fast in learning any difficult subject.

At the age of twenty-five, the Báb declared His Mission in Shíráz telling people that He was a Divine Messenger from God and that He had been sent by God to guide people and show them the right path. He continuously gave the glad tidings of the imminent coming of Bahá’u’lláh and prepared people for His coming, in the

same way that the appearance of the dawn foretells of the coming of the sun.

After His Declaration* many of the people who were Muslims, including many of the prominent clergymen, accepted Him and became His followers. However, the Báb had no peace after His Declaration. He suffered constantly at the hands of His enemies, those who did not have a pure heart to recognize the coming of the new Messenger of God. He was put in prison, and He was exiled† from one town to another. He was persecuted until the time He was killed, in the city of Tabríz in Írán. Because He was killed in the path of God, we say He was martyred.

4.3 Break: Songs, Games, Student Registration and Children’s Cleanliness

4.4 Closing Prayer

4.5 Teacher’s Recommendation

“Dear children, think about the story of the Báb. Tell the story to your parents and friends who do not know it. Remember that the Báb loved us all. He gave His life so that humanity would recognize Bahá’u’lláh and through Him find eternal life.”

* “declaration” means “announcement”

† “exiled” means “sent away”

5 The Situation of the Bábís after the Martyrdom of the Báb

5.1 Opening Prayer

5.2 The Situation of the Bábís after the Martyrdom of the Báb

Teacher to tell the story in a manner such as the following:

Dear children, you know that those who believed in the Báb and followed Him were called Bábís. Many of the Muslims, including the clergy and prominent leaders of Islám who had pure hearts and were genuinely waiting for the appearance of the promised One of God, believed in Him and became His followers. Those who were afraid the Message of the Báb would spread and people would join Him (which meant they were going to lose their followers and their positions as leaders) decided to take the opportunity of the Martyrdom of the Báb to try to eradicate His Faith and His followers.

After the Báb was martyred in Tabríz, His followers, who were all over Persia, were attacked by their enemies and became the subject of many persecutions. Many of them were killed, driven away from their homes, lost their families, belongings, their jobs, their farms and even their children. Among those who gave their lives for the Báb were many of the pure-hearted Muslim clergy and prominent leaders of Islám who had recognized the Báb and were ready to sacrifice everything they had for Him, even their precious lives. Thousands of the people who gave their lives were Muslims who had been moved by the power of God's new Revelation. The enemies were doing this, hoping that the message of the Báb would completely die out. The enmity and tyranny of the enemies of the Bábí Faith were so severe and so many Bábís were killed, displaced, in hiding and afraid of openly saying they believed in the Báb, that everybody thought that there would be no more Bábís left in Írán.

The king of Persia, the clergy and the mobs were united and did

everything they could to extinguish the light of God. Wherever they found a Bábí they would try to kill him cruelly.

In brief, after the Martyrdom of the Báb the Bábís suffered a great deal; they were sad and heartbroken, scattered and without hope. In the midst of this situation, Bahá'u'lláh appeared and stood firm, facing the cruel, dangerous and powerful enemies of the Báb. He gave courage to the Bábís and told them to be ready to withstand these tests and to sacrifice whatever they had for their Faith.

Bahá'u'lláh never went into hiding; He was well known amongst the enemies of the Báb. He began the process of educating the Bábís and encouraged them to teach and promote the Faith. By doing so Bahá'u'lláh did not allow the religion of God, brought by the Báb, to be forgotten. 'Abdu'l-Bahá has said that if Bahá'u'lláh had not arisen to support the Bábí community, the Bábí religion would have died out. Bahá'u'lláh was imprisoned by the order of the King.

In the history of every religion, we read how people, encouraged by some of the selfish religious leaders, initially reject the new Prophet. History has also shown that, because of the Will of God and because of the steadfastness of those believers who accepted to be persecuted and to suffer in the path of God, the religion of God has always triumphed over the enemies of God. This is also what happened in the case of the Bahá'í religion.

5.3 Break: Songs, Games, Student Registration and Children's Cleanliness

5.4 Closing Prayer

5.5 Teacher's Recommendation

“Dear children, think of the difference, in the sight of God, between the spiritual rewards for those Muslims who accepted the Báb and gave their lives for Him and those who, because of their selfish interests, denied Him, killed Him and persecuted His followers.”

6 Bahá'u'lláh: A Brief History

6.1 Opening Prayer

6.2 Review of Lesson 5

6.3 Break: Songs, Games, Student Registration and Children's Cleanliness

6.4 Bahá'u'lláh: A Brief History

The teacher may narrate the story of Bahá'u'lláh in a way similar to the following:

Bahá'u'lláh was born in the city of Tīhrán, the capital of Persia (Írán). His father had great fame in Írán and was one of the Ministers of the Court of the King of Persia. When Bahá'u'lláh was a child, His mother was very surprised at how different He was from other children. For instance, she used to say that this Child (Bahá'u'lláh) did not cry and unlike other children, did not make loud and unpleasant noises. As a child, Bahá'u'lláh liked nature and enjoyed roaming in the gardens and green meadows. He became famous as a child since many were attracted to Him.

When the Báb declared His mission, Bahá'u'lláh, without any hesitation, accepted Him as the Messenger of God and told everyone He met that the Báb was a Messenger of God and that it was incumbent upon him or her to believe in Him and to arise to serve Him. As He very openly and courageously supported the Cause of the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh faced a lot of persecution and hardship from the enemies of the Faith of God. He was imprisoned in a dangerous, dark and dirty dungeon called the "Black Pit", where a very heavy chain was put around His neck. Bahá'u'lláh Himself has described the prison as a wet, dark, smelly underground pit and has explained how dirty, how dark and how dangerous it was. For four months He was kept in this prison and then exiled to Baghdád. In 1863, after several years of living in Baghdád, He proclaimed Himself as the Promised One foretold by the Báb and by all the Prophets of the past. This took place in a garden, just outside Baghdád, called the Garden of Riḍván.

Immediately after His proclamation, Bahá'u'lláh's suffering at the hands of the cruel government of Persia, the Ottoman Empire and through the influence of some of the clergy increased. He was exiled again from Baghdád to Constantinople (also known as Istanbul), and shortly after from Constantinople to Adrianople, and finally to the prison city of 'Akká. 'Akká was a town known for its terrible climate. Bahá'u'lláh, His family and some of His followers were imprisoned in this town. After almost fifty years of suffering and persecution He passed away from this world into the realms above. His life clearly demonstrates how He sacrificed His comfort, His ease and His wealth for the education of the human race and for the sake of leading the people of the world to the path of God.

6.5 Closing Prayer

6.6 Teacher's Recommendation

“Remember the story of the life of Bahá'u'lláh and how He suffered so that the world may find peace and tranquillity. Share the story with your parents and friends.”

7 Cleanliness

7.1 Opening Prayer

7.2 Review of Lesson 6

7.3 Cleanliness

Dear children, in the past we have talked about the importance and necessity of being clean. Bahá'í laws emphasizing cleanliness and what it means to be clean, were revealed to us by Bahá'u'lláh. This year, too, because of its vital importance, we shall study the topic further.

Bahá'u'lláh has told us to be clean and neat at all times. We should also try to keep our homes clean and orderly. Our clothes should be clean and tidy. He further emphasizes that Bahá'ís should be refined at all times, as cleanliness is conducive to spirituality.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá describes cleanliness as one of the laws of the Bahá'í Faith, and asks the Bahá'ís to be clean in all aspects and at all times. He says physical cleanliness has a positive effect on the human soul:

And although bodily cleanliness is a physical thing, it hath, nevertheless, a powerful influence on the life of the spirit.³

Dear children please note how much God wants us to be clean, and how much it has been emphasized in the Writings.

Here are some of the ways we can be clean, as discussed in the previous book.

- Do not use dirty water for washing.
- Do not use a public bath.
- Cut your nails regularly.
- Wash your feet regularly.
- Use perfume regularly.

We can see how Bahá'u'lláh has emphasized cleanliness and

refinement at all times. We need to remember it and obey Him.

7.4 Break: Songs, Games, Student Registration and Children's Cleanliness

7.5 Closing Prayer

7.6 Teacher's Recommendation

“Dear children, today we have learned that physical cleanliness is conducive to a feeling of spirituality. Remember that praying is communing with God. After all, we try to be very clean if we want to meet someone very important. So much more when we want to be in communion with our Lord, God.”

8 Reading of the Holy Writings Every Morning and Evening

8.1 Opening Prayer

8.2 Review of Lesson 7

8.3 Reading the Holy Writings Every Morning and Evening

Dear children, Bahá'u'lláh tells us to read the words of God every morning and every evening. He says:

Recite ye the verses of God every morn and eventide.
Whoso faileth to recite them hath not been faithful to the
Covenant of God and His Testament, and whoso turneth
away from these holy verses in this Day is of those who
throughout eternity have turned away from God.⁴

We all, including you dear children, should follow Bahá'u'lláh's instruction and read the Holy Writings every morning and every evening. By doing so, not only do we obey Bahá'u'lláh, but we also attract great blessings to ourselves. Study of the Words of God strengthens our soul and makes our soul joyful and radiant. Study of the Holy Writings every morning and evening does the same thing to the soul that eating food does to the body. As the body needs food to develop, our souls need regular study of the Holy Writings in order to grow.

To study the Holy Writings every morning and evening, you need to be disciplined. First of all you must talk to your parents about this so that they can support and encourage you. They may want to join you or you may have to do it by yourselves. If you find that in the morning you are in a rush and there are many other things to do in order to get to your school on time, and therefore you have no time to study the Writings peacefully, you may have to get up a little bit earlier. You should set up a regular schedule for yourselves. For example, you may find that studying the Writings after washing and praying but before eating and getting ready to leave the house is very helpful. Whatever the situation, you should

make sure that you do not miss this important duty in the morning. As for the evenings, it is the same; you should think of how to organize your life to make sure that the study of the Holy Writings is done before you get too tired.

Study of the Holy Writings is in addition to saying our prayers. In prayers, we ask God to protect us and to guide us. Through reading the Holy Writings, we learn what God has asked us to do.

Remember, Bahá'u'lláh has told us to study the Holy Writings every morning and evening. But, He did not tell us how long we should do this for. So, even if it is done for a short time, say five to ten minutes, it is fine. What is important is to meditate on the meaning of what we read. We should not be too tired or in a rush when we study the Holy Writings. If we read one line and understand its meaning and meditate on it, it is better than reading the whole page or a chapter without understanding. One way to better understand the meaning of the Holy Writings is for the whole family to read and study the Writings together, with every person in the family sharing his or her understanding of what was read.

As you read the Holy Writings, select some passages and try to memorize them. Remember, as children you have a strong memory and can memorize a lot more than adults do. What you memorize as a child normally stays with you for several years. When you grow up you will enjoy whatever you have memorized from the Holy Writings.

If you do not have Bahá'í books at home from which to read the Holy Writings, copy some of the Writings at the end of the class and use them at home.

8.4 Break: Songs, Games, Student Registration and Children's Cleanliness

8.5 Closing Prayer

8.6 Teacher's Recommendation

“Dear children, please tell your parents about your decision to study the Holy Writings every morning and evening. Ask for their support. Tell them also that you should be memorizing some of the Writings as you read them.”

9 Learning a Prayer

9.1 Opening Prayer

9.2 Review of Lesson 8

9.3 Break: Songs, Games, Student Registration and Children's Cleanliness

9.4 Learning a Prayer

O God, my God! Aid Thou Thy trusted servants to have loving and tender hearts. Help them to spread, amongst all the nations of the earth, the light of guidance that cometh from the Company on high. Verily Thou art the Strong, the Powerful, the Mighty, the All-Subduing, the Ever-Giving. Verily Thou art the Generous, the Gentle, the Tender, the Most Bountiful.⁵

'Abdu'l-Bahá

The teacher should invite several children to read the prayer until they all know how to read it fluently. Then they can be invited to share their understanding of the prayer.

9.5 Closing Prayer

9.6 Teacher's Recommendation

“Dear children, try to memorize this prayer during the week.”

10 Backbiting is Forbidden

10.1 Opening Prayer

One of the children is asked to recite the prayer from Lesson 9.

10.2 Backbiting is Forbidden

“Backbiting is saying bad and negative things about someone in their absence; if they were to hear these things, it would cause them to be heartbroken and disappointed. Calumny is making false statements about a person to damage his or her character. Bahá’u’lláh has forbidden backbiting and calumny. He has emphatically warned that no one who calls himself or herself a Bahá’í should backbite.

Bahá’u’lláh says:

O Emigrants! The tongue I have designed for the mention of Me, defile it not with detraction. If the fire of self overcome you, remember your own faults and not the faults of My creatures, inasmuch as every one of you knoweth his own self better than he knoweth others.⁶

From the warning in the above Hidden Word, we realize that one of the causes of backbiting is the habit of “fault-finding”. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá says:

The worst human quality and the most great sin is backbiting, more especially when it emanates from the tongues of the believers of God.⁷

There is nothing worse than backbiting and fault-finding. It has a negative effect on our spiritual growth. We should always try to see and talk about the good qualities and habits of others. We should never talk about the negative characteristics or qualities of other people; in fact, we should practise not even to see them. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá uses the following story:

It happened one day in the time of Christ – may the life of the world be a sacrifice unto Him – that He passed by the dead body of a dog, a carcass reeking, hideous, the limbs rotting away. One of those present

said: 'How foul its stench!' And another said, 'How sickening! How loathsome!' To be brief, each one of them had something to add to the list.

*But then Christ Himself spoke, and He told them: 'Look at that dog's teeth! How gleaming white!'*⁸

The point that 'Abdu'l-Bahá is emphasizing for us in this story is that we should always see good and positive things in people and never their faults. Everybody has some good qualities. If we want to talk about people, we should talk about their good qualities and say to ourselves, "How can I possibly mention any fault about anyone when I am full of faults and shortcomings myself?"

Dear children, I am sure you realize that both Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá give us strong warnings against backbiting and fault-finding. You should never defile your tongue with backbiting or finding faults in others. You should never talk negatively about anyone in his or her absence. If you are unhappy about someone and you feel like backbiting, say some prayers in your heart, try to remember some of his or her good qualities and if you still want to backbite, think of your own faults and ask God to forgive you. If you still want to talk about something that someone has done which has bothered you, you can always talk to the person (in a loving way) but not to others. If someone else begins to backbite to you about someone else, do not listen and do not allow the person to continue with his or her backbiting. In a nice way, interrupt the conversation, change the subject and, if needed, remind the person that you are not ready to listen to any backbiting.

10.3 Break: Songs, Games, Student Registration and Children's Cleanliness

10.4 Closing Prayer

10.5 Teacher's Recommendation

"Dear children, never allow yourselves to be involved in backbiting. That is, never talk badly about someone in his or her absence and never listen to someone else who is backbiting." (The teacher

should make sure to explain to the children that if they have a problem with something that somebody did, e.g. if someone has hurt them physically, then they may talk about it with a parent or teacher in order to find a solution to their problem).

11 Consulting Experienced Physicians When Sick

11.1 Opening Prayer

One of the children to recite the prayer from Lesson 9.

11.2 Review of the Memorization of Prayer from Lesson 9

11.3 Consulting an Experienced Physicians

Bahá'u'lláh has told us in the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* that when we are sick, we should consult experienced and skilful physicians. There are occasions when there are not many doctors to choose from and one has to see the only doctor available. But if there are choices, then this instruction of Bahá'u'lláh tells us first to find out which one is a competent and a more able physician and then go to see him or her. Once we have consulted a competent physician about our illness, then we should follow his or her instructions until our health returns. Our health has priority and we should give it due attention. Remember, it is only when we are healthy that we can serve the Faith effectively.

Dear children, why do you think Bahá'u'lláh emphasized these two important points for us? (The teacher should encourage a discussion amongst the children).

Below are some reasons:

- 1 Our health is very important and when we are sick we should do everything possible to get better quickly.
- 2 A competent physician who has been well trained is usually in the best position to advise us what to do to start the process of recovery from illness. This is so because their training includes the science of knowing the body and its functions. Good doctors know about many different germs which cause illnesses in the human body and how the human body reacts to these sicknesses and to different medicines. After consultation with him or her we should follow the advice of the physician.

It is true to say that some doctors are better than others are. We should try to get the best possible medical help. Of course, we know that this is not always possible. In some parts of the world there are, unfortunately, some people who do not have enough money to go and see a doctor and the country does not provide good medical care. These are some of the miseries we still have in this world. Bahá'u'lláh has come to show us how to build the Kingdom of God on earth, and how to have a better society where everyone will work hard and be taken care of.

In the future, there will no longer be wars, people will live in peace and harmony and their energies and resources will be used to build a just society. As Bahá'í children, by dedicating your lives to serving the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh you will help to establish this society.

Let us talk a little about what some people do when they are sick instead of going to see a competent physician.

- 1 Some people say prayers and do nothing else and expect to be cured. This is unacceptable. As Bahá'ís, we strongly believe in the power of prayer for healing. There are some wonderful prayers that we can say either for ourselves when we are sick or for others who are ill, beseeching God for healing. But in addition to the prayer, Bahá'u'lláh tells us to consult a competent physician when we are sick.
- 2 Some wait, thinking that the problem will go away by itself. They take a risk because by waiting and delaying to see the doctor the illness may become worse and something that could have been easily cured becomes more complicated.
- 3 Some consult an older person instead of a medical doctor about what to do to get better. They do this because they think that the older person, through experience and seeing many sick people in the past, knows how to cure the illness. It may be true that such older persons have some experience about some illnesses, but we need to remember that people are different and the treatment of the same illness may not always be exactly the same for everyone. A medical doctor normally

examines each person carefully before prescribing his or her treatment. An older person, even if experienced, cannot do this properly.

- 4 Yet other people go to see others who use unscientific ways of healing. We should know that the use of science is highly praised in the Bahá'í Faith and the use of unscientific means for health can involve high risks.

11.4 Break: Songs, Games, Student Registration and Children's Cleanliness

11.5 Teacher's Recommendation

“Dear children, remember the instruction of Bahá'u'lláh to consult with competent physicians when we are sick.”

12 Do Not Shave Your Head

12.1 Opening Prayer

12.2 Review of Lesson 11

12.3 Break: Songs, Games, Student Registration and Children's Cleanliness

12.4 Shaving of the Head is Forbidden

Dear children, Bahá'u'lláh has said in the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* that shaving of the head is forbidden.* He further says that it is also forbidden for men to have hair longer than their ear lobe. (The hair should not cover the ear lobe)

'Abdu'l-Bahá, in explaining this law of Bahá'u'lláh, says that since God has created hair to cover our heads, there must be a wisdom in it and we should not shave it off. Hair is a means of adding beauty and we should appreciate it and not shave it off completely.

On the other hand men should keep their hair short and not let it grow below the ear lobes.* When the hair is shorter, it is much easier to keep it clean. It should be noted that it is allowed to shave one's head, if prescribed by a medical doctor.

12.5 Closing Prayer

12.6 Teacher's Recommendation

“Dear children, please remember that men and boys are not supposed to shave their heads, nor should they let their hair grow over the ear lobe. Whether we fully understand the laws of God or not, we must obey them if we want God's good pleasure.”

* Not yet universaloly binding

13 Learning a New Prayer

13.1 Opening Prayer

13.2 Review of Lesson 12

13.3 Learning a New Prayer

Children should be assisted to read fluently and understand the new prayer.

O my God! O my God! Unite the hearts of Thy servants, and reveal to them Thy great purpose. May they follow Thy commandments and abide in Thy law. Help them, O God, in their endeavour, and grant them strength to serve Thee. O God! Leave them not to themselves, but guide their steps by the light of Thy knowledge, and cheer their hearts by Thy love. Verily, Thou art their Helper and their Lord.⁹

Bahá'u'lláh

13.4 Break: Songs, Games, Student Registration and Children's Cleanliness

13.5 Closing Prayer

13.6 Teacher's Recommendation

“Dear children, read this prayer several times at home with the idea of memorizing it.”

14 Review of Lesson 13

14.1 Opening Prayer

One of the children recites the prayer from the previous lesson.

14.2 Review of Lesson 13

The teacher should assist the children to read and understand the prayer from Lesson 13 and try to memorize it.

14.3 Break: Songs, Games, Student Registration and Children's Cleanliness

14.4 Closing Prayer

14.5 Teacher's Recommendation:

“Dear children, all of you should try to memorize this prayer at home. You can share it with your parents and friends.”

15 ‘Abdu’l-Bahá: A Brief History

15.1 Opening Prayer

One of the children to recite the prayer from Lesson 13

15.2 Brief History of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

‘Abdu’l-Bahá was the eldest Son of Bahá’u’lláh. His name was ‘Abbás. He was born in Tīhrán, Írán, on the same night that the Báb declared His mission in Shīráz, on 23 May 1844. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá Himself has testified that from childhood, He was very eager and deeply interested to read and study the Writings of the Báb. It was His habit to memorize some of the Writings of the Báb. When Bahá’u’lláh was exiled from Írán to Baghdád, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was only eight years old. At the age of twelve, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was very famous in Baghdád for His knowledge, qualities and wisdom. He was often called “the young Learned One”.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá accompanied Bahá’u’lláh and the rest of His family on all of their journeys. From Tīhrán to Baghdád, from Baghdád to Constantinople and to Adrianople and finally from Adrianople to ‘Akká.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá loved children very much. He would often say:

Children are the ornaments of the home. A home without children is like a home without light.¹⁰

Dear children, you might have seen photos of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá both as a young man and when He was older. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was of average height and a very attractive countenance. He often wore a white robe and a táj. There was hardly anyone who met ‘Abdu’l-Bahá who did not testify to His greatness and glory. He was very kind to the poor and would always protect them and gave them alms. Here are two stories about ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s generosity.

One fine day the Master was joyfully riding His pony over the green fields and up the mountainsides. He was on His way to visit some shepherds in the hills. The shepherds lived in a village owned by Bahá’u’lláh. All the houses, the fields and the sheep belonged to

Bahá'u'lláh too. The farmers grew corn and looked after the animals and Bahá'u'lláh gave them money and food and medicine when they were ill. They all loved Him very much.

The Master was only seven years old and so a servant was looking after Him during His long ride to the hills. They soon saw the shepherds with the sheep and the servant told the Master that when the owner, or his son, came to visit the shepherds he should thank them for looking after the sheep by giving them a present.

The Master thought hard. He had no money or food to give them. Then He had a lovely idea and smiled at the shepherds. "I will give to each shepherd all the sheep in his flock," He said.

The shepherds were very surprised at such a generous gift. Later, when Bahá'u'lláh heard what His Son had done, He laughed heartily and said that one day the Master might give Himself away as well.¹¹

The Present

When 'Abdu'l-Bahá was in the West He was travelling all the time, visiting the friends and giving talks. One of the Bahá'is wanted to help so she offered 'Abdu'l-Bahá enough money to buy His own car, so that He could travel more comfortably. 'Abdu'l-Bahá accepted the money and thanked the lady. However, He then gave it back to her and asked her to buy presents for the poor.¹²

'Abdu'l-Bahá travelled to Europe and America and invited the people in these countries to the Faith of God. He passed away in Haifa when He was seventy-seven years old. His Shrine (resting-place) is on Mount Carmel under the same dome as the Shrine of the Báb.

15.3 Break: Songs, Games, Student Registration and Children's Cleanliness

15.4 Closing Prayer

15.5 Teacher's Recommendation

"Dear children, you should also try to follow 'Abdu'l-Bahá's example in your life and be kind to everyone."

16 Be Kind to the Poor

16.1 Opening Prayer

16.2 Review of Lesson 15

16.3 Break: Songs, Games, Student Registration and Children's Cleanliness

16.4 Be Kind to the Poor

Bahá'u'lláh has emphasized that we should be very considerate to the poor. We should take care of them and be kind to them. In the *Hidden Words*, He says:

O Children of Dust! Tell the rich of the midnight sighing of the poor, lest heedlessness lead them into the path of destruction, and deprive them of the Tree of Wealth. To give and to be generous are attributes of Mine; well is it with him that adorneth himself with My virtues.¹³

He further says:

O Ye Rich Ones on Earth! The poor in your midst are My trust; guard ye My trust, and be not intent only on your own ease.¹⁴

(Children may be encouraged to memorize these quotes as an option.)

‘Abdu’l-Bahá Himself was very kind to the poor. We should always follow His footsteps and be kind to the poor.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá believed in using medicine as well as spiritual healing. As there was no hospital in ‘Akká, He hired a doctor by the name of Nikolaki Bey. He gave the doctor a regular salary to look after the very poor, and He asked the doctor not to reveal who had paid for the service. But still, the poor always turned to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá for help.

For instance, there was a poor, crippled woman named Na‘úm who used to come to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá every week for a gift of money.

One day a man came running to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá: “O Master,” he said, “poor Na‘úm has the measles, and everybody is keeping away from her. What can be done?” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá immediately sent a woman to take care of her; He rented a room, put His own bedding in it, called the doctor, sent food and everything she might need. He saw to it that she had every attention, and when she died in peace and comfort, He arranged a simple funeral and paid all the expenses Himself.

Dear children, while we are encouraged to be kind to the poor, we are told that giving alms to those whose profession is begging is not allowed. This is because God does not like people to choose begging as their profession. God wants mendicancy to be eradicated completely. Everyone should try hard to work and earn a living. This is good and necessary for, among other things, the dignity of man. At the same time, we are told to be kind and generous to those who are poor.

16.5 Closing Prayer

16.6 Teacher’s Recommendation:

“Dear children, share the stories you have learned about ‘Abdu’l-Bahá with your parents and with your friends. Try to show kindness to those in need.”

17 Telling Lies is Forbidden

17.1 Opening Prayer

17.2 Review of Lesson 16

17.3 Break: Songs, Games, Student Registration and Children's Cleanliness

17.4 Telling Lies is Forbidden

Bahá'u'lláh has repeatedly commanded His followers not to lie. He has emphasized that we should never say anything unless it is the truth. He says:

The tongue hath been created to bear witness unto My truth; defile it not with falsehood.¹⁵

'Abdu'l-Bahá has said in effect that the worst habit and the source of all evils is the telling of lies. There is nothing worse than this. It is the basis of all other ungodly acts. If all the sins were put on one side of the scale and the telling of lies on the other, lying would weigh more than all the other sins, and it is more harmful.

Dear children, let us try to remember what 'Abdu'l-Bahá said about lying.

Here is a story that shows us the benefits of being truthful at all times.

Mullá Bahrám was one of the great Bahá'ís of Írán. One day he received a letter that made him very sad. His cousin's small child had died. Since the child was a Bahá'í they had given him a Bahá'í burial. This had angered the Muslim priests, who complained to the police. The child's father was taken to jail.

After reading the letter, Mullá Bahrám thought deeply about this problem and decided to go to see a high government official to ask for help. When Mullá Bahrám arrived at this official's home he found him at a feast with many guests. One of them, who saw the poorly dressed man in the doorway, wanted to have him thrown out. But the owner of the house saw Mullá Bahrám, and with a great deal of love and respect,

invited him to come in. All of the guests were surprised to see the courtesy and warmth with which the official treated Mullá Bahrám, a poor and humble man. The host explained, “The respect I feel towards Mullá Bahrám is well deserved because he is a righteous and honest man, even in moments of tests.” Mullá Bahrám explained his problem and with a great deal of pleasure the official wrote out the order for his cousin’s immediate release. The guests were surprised and asked the official how he knew that Mullá Bahrám was honest and merited such respect from a high government official. The official answered:

“Some time ago I had a debt which I had to pay without delay, but I did not have enough money. So I arrived at an agreement with a money-lender that he would receive a piece of property in exchange for the debt. However, he would not come to an agreement on the property’s value. We could not accept the judgement of a friend of his nor a friend of mine, because each one of us could have paid our friend to alter the property’s price in our favour. So we asked a merchant to send one of his employees to the property to put a value on it. He sent Mullá Bahrám. To ensure that the property was worth enough to pay the entire debt, I went to him the day he was to value the property and offered him a big bag of money so that he would speak in my favour. He would not have earned that much money in six years of hard work, but he did not accept it. He said it was better to wait and see the property. It turned out that Mullá Bahrám estimated the property at much more than what I had thought it was worth. So, I went to him and offered him a bigger bag of money so he would be pleased. He did not take it this time either. He said that the only reason he had put that value on the property was that it was the true value. His appraisal was part of his work, for which he received a salary, and it would not be right to receive anything extra for it.”

17.5 Closing Prayer

17.6 Teacher’s Recommendation

“Dear children, try hard never to say things that are not true. God loves those that are truthful.”

18 Do Not Harm Animals

18.1 Opening Prayer

18.2 Review of Lesson 17

18.3 Break: Songs, Games, Student Registration and Children's Cleanliness

18.4 Do Not Harm Animals

Dear children, you know that we use animals in many different ways. We use them to help us and to guard our homes. We use them for food and companionship.

Some animals carry heavy loads for us. If we load an animal with a heavier load than it can carry, it suffers but cannot tell us since it cannot speak. We should be considerate and not overburden it. Chickens provide us with eggs and we use their feathers for beauty. Sheep, cows and goats provide us with milk. There are thousands of ways that various animals help our lives, so it is our duty to take good care of them. (The teacher can ask the students to give other examples of how animals are important to humans and how humans can be kind to animals.)

Bahá'u'lláh, in His Most Holy Book, the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, tells us never to load an animal with more than it can bear. He admonishes us to observe fairness and justice at all times, even with animals.

'Abdu'l-Bahá has also emphasized this matter on many occasions. He has explained to us that people of understanding should be kind to both animals and humans. As far as possible, we should try and provide the animals with comfort and protection. He further explains that animals have many of the same physical feelings that we humans have. If we harm an animal, it is as if we have harmed a human. There is no difference. In fact, He says it is more unfair to harm an animal since it does not have the ability to speak out and complain, whereas humans have. So, we should try to be very kind to animals.

Dear children, you should learn how to be kind to animals. Here are a few ideas: If an animal is sick, we should try to cure it. If it is hungry, feed it; if thirsty, give it water; if tired, give it a place to rest and be comfortable.

Exceptions of course are the ferocious animals such as wolves, lions, snakes and other dangerous animals. With dangerous animals, we should be careful, as they may harm us as well as others if we are kind to them. For example, if we see a thirsty kitten as we are walking, and we have some water, we should give it some to drink. Yet, if we come across a wolf, then we need to be careful and hide, as it is a wild animal.

18.5 Closing Prayer

18.6 Teacher's Recommendation

“Dear children, think of animals as God’s creation. Try to differentiate between avoiding the dangerous and ferocious animals and being kind and gentle to the others.”

19 Do Not Hurt People's Feelings

19.1 Opening Prayer

19.2 Review of Lesson 18

19.3 Break: Songs, Games, Student Registration and Children's Cleanliness

19.4 Avoid Hurting People's Feelings

In the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, Bahá'u'lláh has told us to avoid doing things to others that we do not want them to do to us. Since we do not like it when others make us sad or hurt our feelings, we should avoid doing it to others. We should not do anything that will cause someone's heart to be unhappy.

Bahá'u'lláh even advises us to avoid doing anything that may have the slightest possibility of causing unhappiness to others and hurting their feelings. In one of His Tablets, He says:

Verily I say, the tongue is for mentioning what is good, defile it not with unseemly talk. God hath forgiven what is past. Henceforth everyone should utter that which is meet and seemly, and should refrain from slander, abuse and whatever causeth sadness in men. ¹⁶

In another Tablet, He says:

Be not the cause of grief, much less of discord and strife.¹⁷

'Abdu'l-Bahá also has emphasized this issue. He says that the best people are those who are kind to others and avoid hurting other people's feelings, and the worst are those who cause unhappiness amongst people and hurt other people's feelings. He emphatically says that in the sight of God, those who make others sad and bring about unhappiness are considered at fault. We should always be alert to other people's feelings lest we hurt those feelings with what we do or what we say. It should always be our intention to make people happy and to bring joy to their hearts. (The teacher should encourage a discussion amongst the children on ways of making others happy, how to be sensitive to other

peoples' feelings, and what to do when one sees another person unhappy.)

Dear children, in our daily lives we have the choice to be a source of joy or unhappiness to others. For example, when we have a misunderstanding with our brothers, sisters or friends, we can try and find a peaceful way of solving the problem instead of fighting with them. Happiness is just like the rippling effect of throwing a stone into a pond. When you make others happy they will make others happier, and the circle of happiness grows bigger and bigger.

19.5 Closing Prayer

19.6 Teacher's Recommendation

“Dear children, remember always to try to be a source of joy to other people's hearts and to avoid causing unhappiness.”

20 Learning a New Prayer

20.1 Opening Prayer

20.2 Review of Lesson 19

20.3 Learning a New Prayer

Thy name is my healing, O my God, and remembrance of Thee is my remedy. Nearness to Thee is my hope, and love for Thee is my companion. Thy mercy to me is my healing and my succour in both this world and the world to come. Thou, verily, art the All-Bountiful, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.¹⁸

Bahá'u'lláh

20.4 Break: Songs, Games, Student Registration and Children's Cleanliness

20.5 Closing Prayer

20.6 Teacher's Recommendation

“Dear children, I know you say your prayers at home every day. For the coming week, try to say the prayer we learned today and try to memorize it. You may say this prayer in times of illness, for yourself and your loved ones.”

21 Review of Lessons 4 and 5

21.1 Opening Prayer

One of the children to recite the prayer from Lesson 20

21.2 Review of Lessons 4 and 5

21.3 Break: Songs, Games, Student Registration and Children's Cleanliness

21.4 Questions and Answers

Teacher should ask if children have any questions regarding the lessons just reviewed. By encouraging everyone to participate in the discussions, an active learning atmosphere can be created.

21.5 Closing Prayer

21.6 Teacher's Recommendation

“Dear children, share the story of the Báb and His early followers with your friends and at home with your parents.”

22 Review of Lesson 6

22.1 Opening Prayer

One of the children to recite the prayer from Lesson 20

22.2 Review of Lesson 6

22.3 Break: Songs, Games, Student Registration and Children's Cleanliness

22.4 Questions and Answers

Teacher should ask if children have any questions regarding the lesson just reviewed. By encouraging everyone to participate in the discussions, an active learning atmosphere can be created.

22.5 Closing Prayer

22.6 Teacher's Recommendation

“Dear children, think how Bahá'u'lláh and the Báb suffered all their lives on this earth to bring about peace and happiness to all of humanity. As Bahá'ís, we can respond to the bounty of being a Bahá'í by trying to live a Bahá'í life and by sharing the message of Bahá'u'lláh with others.”

23 God Knows the Secrets of Our Hearts

23.1 Opening Prayer

23.2 Review of Prayer from Lesson 20

23.3 God knows the Secrets of our Hearts

There is nothing that is hidden from God. God knows the secrets of our hearts. He knows everything about us. He knows our thoughts and ideas. He hears what we say. He is with us under all circumstances; whether we are alone or whether we are in a crowd; whether we are in an open place or in a closed room; whether we are at home or travelling.

Bahá'u'lláh, confirming this, says that what goes on in our hearts and minds is as evident and clear to God as the midday sun. Nothing is hidden from God. The actions and the thoughts of all the people as well as what they say and do, are known to God. As Bahá'ís therefore, we should know that God is a witness, an observer and a hearer, to whatever we do, whatever we think and whatever we say.

If we remember this every day of our lives, then perhaps we will be more careful about not doing things that will not please God.

Story of Opiyo's experiment

Opiyo was a nine-year-old boy who always tried to do what his parents told him.

One day during a family deepening, Opiyo's father told him that God knows what everybody does and thinks. Opiyo found that very interesting. He decided to do an experiment to see if what his dad said was true.

He asked God (in his mind) to help him find a little toy car that he had lost several months ago. So he started searching for the car and kept on asking God to help (in his mind). To his surprise, he found the car in five minutes! It was in his cupboard under a pile of books.

“Wow!” said Opiyo

“If God can read my thoughts, it means He can read all my thoughts, the good and the bad.”

From that day on, whenever Opiyo had a bad thought he tried to replace it with a good thought.

23.4 Break: Songs, Games, Student Registration and Children’s Cleanliness

23.5 Closing Prayer

23.6 Teacher’s Recommendation

“Dear children, remember that God is always with us, because He loves us. He is with us to protect us. He is a witness to what we do, what we think and what we say. He is everywhere. It is important to remember this and try to behave and act at all times in a way that is pleasing to God and to Bahá’u’lláh.”

24 The Beloved Guardian, Shoghi Effendi

24.1 Opening Prayer

24.2 Review of Lesson 16

24.3 The Beloved Guardian, Shoghi Effendi

After the passing of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, His Will and Testament was read, and the Bahá’ís and relatives of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá learned that they should, from then on, all follow and obey Shoghi Effendi. Shoghi Effendi was the eldest grandchild of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. He was the Guardian of the Cause of God and the Bahá’ís all over the world should turn to him for guidance. In several places in His Will and Testament ‘Abdu’l-Bahá emphasized that no excuse is accepted from anyone who does not obey Shoghi Effendi, and whoever opposes Shoghi Effendi, has opposed God. He even said that such a person is no longer a Bahá’í and cannot be a member of the Bahá’í community.

Shoghi Effendi lived in Haifa in the house of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. He spent all his life working hard day and night to educate the Bahá’ís about the Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh and how to serve it. During the ministry of Shoghi Effendi, the Faith spread to all corners of the earth and people from many different races, tribes, nationalities and religious backgrounds became Bahá’ís. Today, as we travel around the world, we see what a wonderful Bahá’í family we all are and how many brothers and sisters we have in every country of the world. Shoghi Effendi spent his whole life showing us how to do this. He passed away in 1957

He trained the Bahá’ís how to administer the affairs of their communities, appointed Hands of the Cause of God to assist him with his work and showed us how to elect the Universal House of Justice, which has guided the Bahá’ís all over the world since 1963.

Shoghi Effendi loves us all. He expects all of us Bahá’ís to arise and serve the Cause of God in any way we can, and do whatever is in our ability for the progress of the Faith. Children are not an

exception. In a letter written by his secretary, on his behalf, we read:

. . . Bahá'í children like you have a lot of wonderful work to do for others in the future. But you don't even have to wait until you grow up, you can help your dear Mother teach the Cause to others right now, and also tell your playmates about it. . . .¹⁹

He on another occasion says:

. . . Just because you are children does not mean you cannot serve the Faith, and teach it, by your example . . .²⁰

Children can serve the Faith well and in a number of ways. For instance, if Bahá'í children try under all conditions at home, at school and in the neighbourhood to have a Bahá'í behaviour, they will attract others to the Faith. If the Bahá'í children act the way that Bahá'u'lláh wants them to, they will:

- Be gentle and kind to all
- Never backbite
- Never use bad and rude words
- Not hurt anyone's feelings
- Be clean and neat all the time
- Be polite and obey their parents
- Never harm anyone, nor animals
- Be truthful and not lie.

In brief, they will:

- Be adorned with all divine virtues.

They can serve the Faith of God and teach it in this way. Others will then see how Bahá'í children, because of the influence of the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, are distinguished from others. They will want their children to be like Bahá'í children and will gradually grow to love the Faith.

24.4 Break: Songs, Games, Student Registration and Children's Cleanliness

24.5 Closing Prayer

24.6 Teacher's Recommendation

“Dear children, think about the Beloved Guardian, Shoghi Effendi, and how he expects us all to arise to serve the Cause, everyone according to his or her own capacity and circumstances. Think about how he expects you, dear children, to serve and teach the Cause.”

25 Learning a New Prayer

25.1 Opening Prayer

25.2 Review of Lesson 24

25.3 Learning a New Prayer

He is God!

O Mighty Lord! Thou seest what hath befallen Thy helpless lovers in this darkest of long nights; Thou knowest how, in all these years of separation from Thy Beauty, the confidants of Thy mysteries have ever been acquainted with burning grief.

O Powerful Master! Suffer not Thy wayfarers to be abased and brought low; succour this handful of feeble creatures with the potency of Thy might. Exalt Thy loved ones before the assemblage of man, and grant them strength. Allow those broken-winged beings to raise their heads and glory in the fulfilment of their hopes, that we in these brief days of life may gaze with our physical eyes on the elevation and exaltation of Thy Faith, and soar up to Thee with gladdened souls and blissful hearts.

Thou knowest that, since Thy ascension, we seek no name or fame, that in this swiftly passing world we wish henceforth no joy, no delight and no good fortune.

Then keep Thy word, and exhilarate once more the lives of these, Thy sick at heart. Bring light to our expectant eyes, balm to our stricken breasts. Lead Thou the caravans of the city of Thy love swiftly to their intended goal. Draw those who sorrow after Thee into the high court of reunion with Thee. For in this world below we ask for nothing but the triumph of Thy Cause. And within the precincts of Thy boundless mercy we hope for nothing but Thy presence.

Thou art the Witness, the Haven, the Refuge; Thou art He who rendereth victorious this band of the innocent.²¹

Shoghi Effendi

By learning this prayer the children will have a better feel for

the depth of the love that Shoghi Effendi had for ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, and how he prays to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. (The teacher should try and explain the above prayer to the children.)

25.4 Break: Songs, Games, Student Registration and Children’s Cleanliness

25.5 Closing Prayer

25.6 Teacher’s Recommendation

“Dear children, try to learn the prayer of Shoghi Effendi and continue to think about how much he loves you all. Pray that we will all succeed in arising to serve the Cause in a way that will make Shoghi Effendi happy.”

26 Review of Lessons 7, 8 and 10

26.1 Opening Prayer

26.2 Review of Prayer from Lesson 25

26.3 Review of Lessons 7, 8 and 10

26.4 Break: Songs, Games, Student Registration and Children's Cleanliness

26.5 Questions and Answers

The teacher will lead the children into a lively discussion and ask questions from the previous Lessons.

26.6 Closing Prayer

26.7 Teacher's Recommendation

“Dear children, think about how lucky we are to be Bahá’ís, to be followers of Bahá’u’lláh and to be able to receive divine guidance for our lives.”

27 The Universal House of Justice

27.1 Opening Prayer

27.2 Universal House of Justice

The teacher can begin by asking the following question:

“Who can tell me what we have learned about the Universal House of justice in previous years?”

Yes, you are right!

The Universal House of Justice is an institution created by Bahá'u'lláh with nine members who are elected by members of National Spiritual Assemblies every five years. It was first elected in the year 1963. Its Seat, called the Seat of the Universal House of Justice, is a beautiful white marble building on Mount Carmel, Haifa, Israel. The Universal House of Justice is an infallible Institution. We have been promised by Bahá'u'lláh that He Himself protects the Universal House of Justice from making any mistake in its decisions. After the passing of the Guardian, the Universal House of Justice became the Head of the Bahá'í Faith and now looks after the affairs of the Bahá'ís. It consults with the Hands of the Cause of God and with the International Teaching Centre. It also seeks the views of the Counsellors, National Spiritual Assemblies and when necessary, individuals. We should always obey the Universal House of Justice.

Dear children, every year at Riḍván (21 April to 2 May) we celebrate the declaration of Bahá'u'lláh, which occurred in Bagh-dád. Bahá'ís in every town and village come together on 21 April to elect their Local Spiritual Assemblies; you might have attended one of these meetings with your parents. Soon after, the delegates from various parts of the country who were elected by the adult Bahá'ís, come together to elect the National Spiritual Assembly. It is during this very special time that the Universal House of Justice sends an important message, called the Riḍván message, to all the Bahá'ís of the World.

In this message, the Universal House of Justice tells us about the great events and achievements of the Bahá'í world during the past year. It shares with us guidance for the progress of the Faith. It inspires the friends to work harder to take individual initiatives and support the plans of their Local and National Assemblies and Regional Councils. It often includes inspiring words about the children and youth.

The Universal House of Justice is the Head of our Faith and was given to us by Bahá'u'lláh. Receiving a message from it is a bounty since it contains divine guidance for today.

(The teacher can bring the latest message to the class and discuss briefly some of the aspects, with which the children can help.)

27.3 Break: Songs, Games, Student Registration and Children's Cleanliness

27.4 Closing Prayer

27.5 Teacher's Recommendation

“Dear children, think how fortunate we are and what a bounty it is for us to have the Universal House of Justice, an institution ordained by Bahá'u'lláh, protected by Him from all error, and guided by the Holy Spirit.”

28 Obeying Our Parents and Being Considerate of Them

28.1 Opening Prayer

28.2 Obeying Parents and Being Considerate of Them

In the Bahá'í Faith, the importance of having good manners is heavily emphasized. Bahá'u'lláh in many of His Tablets has told us to exert ourselves to acquire divine virtues and avoid doing things that are not acceptable to God.

One of the most important and well-pleasing behaviours for children is to be considerate of and obedient to their parents. This means that every child should obey his or her parents and be considerate of and polite towards them at all times.

Parents want the best for their children. They love their children more than anything in the world. At times, the children may not understand the wisdom of what their parents want them to do; this is why it is necessary for children to obey their parents even if they do not agree with or understand them.

Bahá'u'lláh, to emphasize this important law for us, has said that under some circumstances, obeying one's parents is like obeying God. He has warned children never to do things that will make parents sad or heartbroken. Further, He has encouraged children to serve their parents.

'Abdu'l-Bahá says:

If thou wouldst show kindness and consideration to thy parents so that they may feel generally pleased, this would also please Me, for parents must be highly respected and it is essential that they should feel contented . . .²²

'Abdu'l-Bahá has further emphasized this important point. He explains that parents do a lot to bring up their children and it is important for the children to be kind and considerate of them. Furthermore, He advises us to pray for our parents and ask God's mercy for them. And when they pass away, we should continue to

pray for them and to undertake charitable deeds in their loving memory, like giving to the poor, contributing to the funds of the Faith, and initiating and supporting humanitarian and charitable projects. We do all this while beseeching God to shower our parents with His grace.

With all this emphasis on obeying parents, we realize that Bahá'í children should be very considerate towards their parents, show respect to them at all times, and obey their instructions. Of course, Bahá'í parents should also be very careful never to say or do anything to their children which is not in conformity with the Writings of the Faith. They should also never condone the actions of their children that would not be acceptable to Bahá'u'lláh.

Here is a story that shows the importance of obeying our parents:

Once upon a time, near a great forest, lived a mother goat with her three kids. The kids were called Lilly, Taabu and Shradha. Deep in the same forest lived a bad old hyena, who loved to eat young goats. Mother and father goat always told their children not to open the door for anyone while they were away. They said that whenever they returned, the mother goat would sing a special song twice. This is how the special song went:

“Hear me Lilly, get ready Taabu, open Shradha”

[You can make up your own tune to these words.]

One day mother and father goat went to gather food for the family. While they were gone, the bad old hyena came up to the house and said in his terrible and ugly voice,

Lilly, Taabu, Shradha, open the door. I am your mother.”

Lilly said, “Go away, you old hyena. We know who you are from your rough voice!”

So then the hyena went away disappointed. When mother goat came, she sang the special song twice. The little goats opened the door and told her what had happened. She said, “You did very well not to open the door. I am happy that you obeyed what your father and I told you.”

The following day, mother and father goat went out again. The hyena was hiding behind a tree and as soon as he saw that they had gone, he ran up to the door. This time he knew he had to sing the song and he began to sing as sweetly as he could:

“Hear me Lilly, get ready Taabu, open Shradha.”

He sang the song three times, then continued singing the song waiting for the kids to open the door. Lilly and Taabu heard the song and wondered. “Can that be our mother?” They asked one another, “Why did she sing the song more than twice?” But Shradha said, “Let us open the door.”

Taabu said, “No, do not open the door. The song has been sung more than twice.” Shradha said, “It does not matter what mother said. I am hungry. Open the door.” They began to quarrel among themselves. Shradha said they should open the door and turned the key. As soon as she did this, the hyena pushed the door open and caught her. He looked around for Lilly and Taabu but could not find them, so he left.

When mother and father goat returned they were surprised to see the door open. Lilly explained to them what had happened.

They were so unhappy. They said, “Lilly and Taabu, look at what happened to Shradha. She did not obey what we had told you.”

The teacher should encourage the children to discuss the moral of the story.

28.3 Break: Songs, Games, Student Registration and Children’s Cleanliness

28.4 Closing Prayer

28.5 Teacher’s Recommendation

“Dear children, try to be polite, respectful and obedient to your parents. God loves children who do so.”

29 Review of Lessons 11, 12 and 17

29.1 Opening Prayer

29.2 Review of Lessons 11, 12 and 17

29.3 Break: Songs, Games, Student Registration and Children's Cleanliness

29.4 Questions and Answers

Children should be assisted and encouraged to participate in an active question and answer session arising from the topics of these lessons.

29.5 Closing Prayer

29.6 Teacher's Recommendation

“Dear children, as we review these lessons and we learn more about what Bahá'u'lláh and ‘Abdu'l-Bahá have told us to do, we should try to practise them in our lives as this is the only way to have true happiness.”

30 Review of Lessons 16, 17, 18, 19 and 24

30.1 Opening Prayer

30.2 Review of Lessons 16, 17, 18, 19 and 24

30.3 Break: Songs, Games, Student Registration and Children's Cleanliness

30.4 Questions and Answers

Children should be assisted and encouraged to participate in an active question and answer session arising from the topics of these lessons.

30.5 Closing Prayer

30.6 Teacher's Recommendation

“Dear children, as we review these lessons and we learn more and more about what Bahá'u'lláh and ‘Abdu'l-Bahá have told us to do, we should try to practise them in our lives as this is the only way to have true happiness.”

31 Preparation for End of Year Celebration

31.1 Opening Prayer

31.2 Preparation for the Year-End Celebration

The teacher should consult with the students about what they would like to do for the year-end celebration.

One example of the programme for the celebration is as follows. The teacher should feel free to consult the children and change it as he or she sees appropriate. The teacher may have other exciting ideas to make this a special event for the children and their families.

- 1 Opening Prayer (One of the children says a prayer.)
- 2 Songs sung by the children
- 3 A talk by one of the students on the benefits of Bahá'í children's classes. The teacher will have to assist the student to prepare the talk.
- 4 A talk by a few of the students on the various subjects they have learned during the year. Topics such as cleanliness, kindness to animals, and obedience to one's parents could be included. The teacher is to help in the preparation.
- 5 Songs
- 6 Closing Prayer (One of the children to say a prayer)

The teacher will need to explain the programme carefully to the children, so they understand what is going to happen, and know the different parts of the programme. The teacher should try to make sure that all the children are involved and have a role to play in the programme. Some will say prayers, some will give short talks and some may perform in a play.

The children should have plenty of opportunity to practise the programme before the actual celebration takes place. It is important that they feel familiar and comfortable with the programme

so that they can be excited when the real celebration takes place, and not be nervous.

31.3 Break: Songs, Games, Student Registration and Children's Cleanliness

31.4 Closing Prayer

31.5 Teacher's Recommendation

“Dear children, let us make the year-end celebration a success. Let us all help.”

32 Year-End Celebration

The celebration is organized with the full participation of all the students and is held in the presence of their parents and close family friends. Members or representatives of the Local Spiritual Assembly and the Child Education Committee, as well as Auxiliary Board members and their assistants, should be invited. If there are other children's classes in the nearby communities, those children may also be invited. You may wish to consult with the children and parents as to what they want to do, and how they may help.

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- 4 Bahá’u’lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas* (Bahá’í World Centre, Haifa, 1992), p. 73
- 5 ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Bahá’í Prayers* (Bahá’í Publishing Trust, Wilmette, 1991) pp. 174–5
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- 9 Bahá’u’lláh, *Bahá’í Prayers*, p. 206
- 10 ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, authorized translation
- 11 See Honnold, A. *Vignettes from the Life of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá* (George Ronald Publisher, Oxford, 1982), p. 58 and references there.
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- 21 Shoghi Effendi, in *The Bahá'í World, 1979–1983* (Bahá'í World Centre, Haifa, 1986), p. 35, no. V
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