

Book 1: Reflections on the Life of the Spirit

Course Outline

Ruhi Book 1: *Reflections on the Life of the Spirit* is the first in a course sequence designed to raise up human resources capable of fostering the growth of the Baha'i Community with efficiency and love. It provides insight into spiritual matters, imparts knowledge of the Faith, and helps develop skills and human resources for Service.

This course has three main purposes for the participants:

- understanding the Bahá'í Writings in order to fulfill the obligation of studying the Writings every day
- developing the required attitudes toward prayer, and acquiring the habit of memorizing them
- understanding that the true significance of life is to be found in the development of the soul

Unit 1: Understanding the Baha'i Writings

Purpose: To develop the capacity to read the Baha'i Writings and to meditate on their meaning in order to fulfill the obligation of studying the Writings every day.

Practice: Read daily, in the morning and evening, some of the Writings of the Faith.

Excerpted from "To the Collaborators": This section's purpose is to develop in the participants the habit of reading the Writings and thinking about them, beginning at first with one-sentence statements. To read the Holy Writings every day, at least in the morning and at night, is one of the very important ordinances of our Faith. But reading the Writings is not the same as reading the thousands of pages that a literate person sees during a lifetime. To read the Sacred Word is to drink from the ocean of Divine Revelation. It leads to true spiritual understanding and generates forces that are necessary for the progress of the soul. In order to reach true understanding, however, one must think deeply about the meaning of each statement and its application in one's own life and in the life of society.

Unit 2: Prayer

Purpose: To understand the importance of daily prayer and to develop the required attitudes of prayer. To memorize five prayers and understand their meaning.

Practice: Visit at least two Baha'is and study a prayer with them.

Excerpted from "To the Collaborators": This section reflects on three principal objectives. The first is to clarify the concept of prayer itself and to help the participants understand its great importance as one of the laws of this Dispensation. In order to achieve this objective, it is sometimes necessary to dissipate doubts and carefully examine ideas that may have their roots in erroneous interpretations of the past. Above all, this objective implies clear understanding of the necessity to observe this law, a need that is no less essential than that of nourishing our bodies every day. Beyond observing the law of prayer, each person must feel a profound desire to pray. Therefore, the second objective of this course is to awaken in participants the desire to "converse with God" and to feel the joy of being near to Him. Moreover, from an early age, everyone should develop spiritual habits; the habit of praying daily is among the most important of these. The third objective of the course concerns the attitudes with which prayer should be approached...the attitudes of heart and mind that help one enter the state of prayer, and to the conditions that should be created in one's surroundings at the time of prayer.

Unit 3: Life and Death

Purpose: To understand that life is not the changes and chances of this world, and its true significance is found in the development of the soul. True life, the life of the soul, occurs in this world for a brief time and continues eternally in other worlds of God.

Excerpted from "To the Collaborators": The theme of life and death has been included in the first book of the Institute's program because it is considered essential for participants' understanding of the paths of service they will choose to follow. Service in this world has to be understood in the fullest context of life which extends beyond our earthy existence and continues forever as our souls progress through the worlds of God.

1. How life begins and what is death.

- The soul is a spiritual entity, created by God
- The soul and the body, together, constitute the human being.
- Death is just a change of condition; afterward the soul progresses eternally.

2. The purpose of our lives.

- The purpose of life is to know God and to attain His presence.
- One who recognizes the Manifestation draws near to God, and one who rejects Him condemns himself to a life of misery and remoteness from God.

- Just as in the womb of the mother one acquires the powers needed for this world, so in this world should we acquire the powers needed for the next world.

3. The nature of the soul.

- The soul is a sign of God.
- A soul which is faithful to God will reflect His light and be drawn to Him.
- Worldly attachments and vain desires impede the soul's flight towards To and finally make it weak and impotent.
- God has bestowed on man the capacity to reflect all His names and attributes.

4. The need for the Manifestation of God as the Universal Educator.

- The capacities of the human being are latent; they can only be developed with the help of the Manifestation of God.
- To know the Manifestation of God is to know God.
- Through spiritual education, the treasures hidden within us can be revealed.

5. The condition of the soul after death.

- The faithful soul will attain a sublime position and eternal happiness, but the unfaithful soul will recognize its loss and be consumed in eternal remorse.
- No one knows his own end; therefore, we should forgive others and not feel superior towards them.
- In the next world, the holy souls become acquainted with all mysteries and behold the beauty of God.
- In the next world, we will recognize our loved ones and enjoy companionship with the friends of God; we will remember the life we had in this material world.

6. The appropriate attitude towards the present conditions in our lives.

- Nothing should sadden us in this world, because days of blissful joy await us.