

ACTIVITIES FOR ENHANCING LEARNING, APPLICATION, AND SERVICE, UNIT 3 OF RUHI BOOK 1, *REFLECTIONS ON THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT*

INTRODUCTION

The intent of this material is not to provide you with a comprehensive guide to activities that are possible while tutoring *Reflections on the Life of the Spirit*. The Internet, particularly www.ruhiresources.org is an excellent resource for additional ideas. The purpose of this material is to help you utilize tactics that assist the participants to better understand the content of the section and apply the content to their lives and to the betterment of others' lives. A key goal is helping you to expand the service capacities of the participants.

IMPORTANT NOTE!

Building the human resources necessary to meet the needs of the Bahá'í community and of humanity requires focus and intentionality. It is both unwise and unnecessary to make a study circle full of endless exciting activities. The more activities that you do, the longer the study circle will likely take. On the other hand, moving so quickly through the material that you eliminate the arts and skip key practices, learning points, and service makes no sense whatsoever. So, balance and moderation apply here, as in every other aspect of life.

There are many suggested activities and services in the pages that follow. Please use your best judgment and knowledge of your participants to guide you in choosing only the ones that will most assist them in building their knowledge and capacities. Assess each section for where it will be useful to have the group make a more concrete connection to abstract concepts. Use discernment to carefully choose the ones that best fit, and then learn through observations, actions, and consultation about what works well and what does not. None of these activities have to happen exactly as written either. Use creativity and improvise or adjust them as appropriate and needed. Of course, you are also free to use other resources and develop your own ideas for activities. These suggested activities are only ones to get you started.

Remember as you plan activities to gracefully integrate arts and crafts. Working with one's hands is an expression of creation, an affirmation for each person of life and fully living.

There is no one rigid approach to tutoring a study circle. Flexibility, sensitivity, discernment, and wisdom are all important. "Much is left...to the judgment of the tutor who should decide which activities, in addition to the basic study of the material, are to be introduced in order to enhance learning." (Ruhi Book 7, *Walking Together on a Path of Service*, p. 60) The size of your group, the venue in which you meet, the level of energy everyone has, the time of day, and more are factors that will affect your choices. Essentially, do what works!

UNIT 3: LIFE AND DEATH - OVERVIEW

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.

Practice: None given.

Reflection:

This unit helps participants to understand that they have souls and that it is vital to develop their souls in preparation for the spiritual life after the physical death occurs that faces everyone. The quotations in this unit are often abstract and address mysterious concepts. The tutor can aid the participants to focus on practical actions to take in this world that help prepare their souls. The arts can also help with concrete expressions of the soul and its qualities.

Opening Discussion:

Note: Reading Book 7, Section 26, pp. 98 and 99, as well as Book 1 “To the Collaborators”, pp. 3-5 is helpful before tutoring this Unit.

Before beginning a study of the content of this unit, it can give you valuable information and help the participants learn about one another to discuss the following items:

- What is your understanding of the soul?
- What do you believe about life after death?
- How does the realization of your own mortality affect how you choose to live?

Service Opportunities for This Unit

As with Unit 2, the service opportunities for this Unit are not necessarily connected to a particular section but rather to the topic of the whole unit. This unit gives the participants context for the importance of service in their lives here on the physical plane. The skills and personal development needed for effective service here will help each soul continue to serve in the next world.

The specific services related to this unit are often powerful and life changing for the recipients. Participants can accompany friends and relatives (or themselves) by giving them hope that life does not end with death, helping them understand that they have souls, helping them to die peacefully with the consciousness that their souls will live on, and comforting them while grieving.

Outreach could include planning and conducting a memorial service for a friend or family member of the group or doing the same type of service for someone in the community.

UNIT 3, SECTIONS 1 & 2

Purpose: To increase understanding of the soul and body as separate but connected components.

Materials:

- Large sheets of paper
- Paint and paintbrushes or markers

Instructions:

1. Study and do the exercises in these two sections.
2. As a group, draw or paint a picture of the relationship between the soul and the body.
3. Discuss everyone's perceptions of the final product and how it relates to the sections studied.

UNIT 3, SECTION 3

Purpose: To visualize in concrete terms the progress they have made in developing their souls.

Materials:

- Poster paper (any size is fine, but larger than 8.5 in. x 11 in. is preferred)
- Magazines (participants may wish to bring their own because they will match their own lives better)
- Markers, scissors (one pair per participant), glue
- Stickers (optional)
- Photos of their lives (optional)

Instructions:

1. Explain to the group that they will be creating a collage. A collage is a collection of pictures, words, and images that are arranged in any order on a page and that reflect a particular theme.
2. The theme for this activity is “The Journey of My Soul” This collage will reflect landmarks of their spiritual development, spiritual crises and triumphs, and spiritual or religious experiences. Essentially you are asking them to depict whatever they consider the path that their soul or spiritual life has taken to be where it is today.
3. Participants cut out pictures and words from the magazines and glue them onto the poster paper. The arrangement can be linear, but often it is random, with pictures overlapping or angled. They may wish to glue on as they find pictures and words, or they may wish to finish cutting out first and lay out their design before gluing. They may wish to use colored markers to add their own words or drawings as well. Note: Occasionally a participant may wish to add their own personal and family photos, and they may prefer to use their own magazines, so you may wish to give advance notice of this activity.
4. Once all have completed their posters, invite each person to share with the group about what they included in their poster and why. Encourage them to date the poster for later reference and also to share it with others in their lives.

Time Involved: Approx. 1 hour; time will lengthen depending on how many people there are to share. You can save time if you ask participants to search for their words and pictures at home and come with them already cut out. However, magazines should still be available, because doing a collage is a creative activity, and they may need to supplement with additional material. You may also wish to study the quotations and content in Book 1 at one session and then do this activity the following session.

Alternative: Draw or paint the assignment instead of doing a collage.

UNIT 3, SECTION 4

Purpose: To internalize the vibration of the words that indicate we belong to God.

Instructions:

1. Study the quotation but pause before doing the exercises and do the activity.
2. Ask one person to sit or stand in the center of a circle comprised of the remaining participants. Ask the person to close his or her eyes and picture their ears as “pure and undefiled”. Each participant then says, “Verily, we are God’s and to Him shall we return”, reading from the book. Do this repeatedly until each participant has had a turn in the middle.
3. Discuss as a group how it felt to hear this quotation “from every direction” and their impression of the significance of this concept.

UNIT 3, SECTION 5

Purpose: To appreciate and expand what they know of God in the abstract and make their understanding more concrete.

Materials:

- Paper (at least 2 sheets per person)
- Writing utensils

Instructions:

1. Ask the participants to write down on one sheet of paper everything that they can think of that they know about God both from scripture and experience. Examples could include: All-Powerful; created the world; loves us...
2. On the second sheet of paper, ask them to arrange some of the key words and phrases they wrote down about God, leaving 1-2 blank lines below it . Below each line, have them write other phrases or words about their experiences with these descriptions of God. Here is an example:

God is a Creator of Beauty.
I appreciate the beauty of the flowers in my garden.

God is All-Powerful.
I feel the power of God in thunderstorms.

God is Loving.
I feel love toward my children and grandchildren.

3. Invite those who wish, to read what they wrote aloud to the group.

UNIT 3, SECTION 6

Photocopy this supplemental material for all participants and discuss and set goals to prepare for life after death:

Therefore, in this world he must prepare himself for the life beyond. That which he needs in the world of the Kingdom must be obtained here. Just as he prepared himself in the world of the matrix by acquiring forces necessary in this sphere of existence, so, likewise, the indispensable forces of the divine existence must be potentially attained in this world.

What is he in need of in the Kingdom which transcends the life and limitation of this mortal sphere? That world beyond is a world of sanctity and radiance; therefore, it is necessary that in this world he should acquire these divine attributes. In that world there is need of spirituality, faith, assurance, the knowledge and love of God. These he must attain in this world so that after his ascension from the earthly to the heavenly Kingdom he shall find all that is needful in that eternal life ready for him.

That divine world is manifestly a world of lights; therefore, man has need of illumination here. That is a world of love; the love of God is essential. It is a world of perfections; virtues, or perfections, must be acquired. That world is vivified by the breaths of the Holy Spirit; in this world we must seek them. That is the Kingdom of everlasting life; it must be attained during this vanishing existence.

By what means can man acquire these things? How shall he obtain these merciful gifts and powers? First, through the knowledge of God. Second, through the love of God. Third, through faith. Fourth, through philanthropic deeds. Fifth, through self-sacrifice. Sixth, through severance from this world. Seventh, through sanctity and holiness. Unless he acquires these forces and attains to these requirements, he will surely be deprived of the life that is eternal. But if he possesses the knowledge of God, becomes ignited through the fire of the love of God, witnesses the great and mighty signs of the Kingdom, becomes the cause of love among mankind and lives in the utmost state of sanctity and holiness, he shall surely attain to second birth, be baptized by the Holy Spirit and enjoy everlasting existence.

~ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 226

Reflection Questions and Goal Setting

1. How can you increase your “knowledge and love of God”?

2. How can you increase your “faith” and your “assurance”? How will you know when these are strong?

3. List a few of the “virtues” or qualities of God that you think are very important.

4. What are the ways to strengthen “virtues” in this world?

5. Which “virtues” will you focus on strengthening? What specific ways can you act differently?

Virtue:

Action:

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6. What is your understanding of “self-sacrifice”? What actions can you do that will demonstrate this quality?

7. What “philanthropic deeds” can you now do?

8. What would be examples of “the great and mighty signs of the Kingdom”?

9. What ways can you be the “cause of love among mankind”?

10. How can you increase your “spirituality” and “severance from this world”?

11. What words, actions, and visible signs would show that you are acquiring and expanding your “illumination” and “radiance”?

12. How can you “seek” “the breaths of the Holy Spirit”?

13. What words and actions would show that you are living in a “state of sanctity and holiness”?

UNIT 3, SECTION 7

Purpose: To understand the concept of “portion” and capacity, our limited or restricted view of these in others and ourselves, and how to fill the capacity that is present.

Materials:

- Various sizes of non-see-through containers (3-5)
- Lids or aluminum foil
- Various sizes of rocks or objects to put in the containers
- Water in a pourable container; a large measuring cup is ideal

Instructions:

1. Ahead of time, set up a selection of containers on a counter or table. Place a different number of rocks or objects in each one. Cover each one with a lid or foil.
2. After studying the quotation and completing the questions, arrange the participants two-thirds of the way around the containers. Stand behind the containers with the container of water.
3. Ask the participants to guess how much water will go into the first container. Then carefully lift the corner up of the lid or foil and pour the water in to the top. Have someone write down how much water went in compared to how much was guessed.
4. Repeat the questioning and pouring for the remainder of the containers.
5. Discuss the activity:
 - Why did the guesses not match the outcome?
 - Do we ever know the capacity of others or ourselves?
 - What happens when we assume what someone’s capacity is or what their limitations are?
 - What becomes possible when we approach people as if they have unlimited capacity?
 - What ways can we fill our own “receptacles” and those of others?

UNIT 3, SECTION 8

Purpose: To increase the experience of being illumined.

Instructions:

1. Ask the following questions:
 - a. How would you know that you are illumined?
 - b. How could someone looking at you see that you are illumined?
 - c. When in your life have you felt most filled with light?
 - d. When have you felt your light reflected and making a difference for another person?
2. Discuss and carry out as a group two specific actions that everyone feels might increase illumination for them. [Examples: prayer, meditation, quotations, music, service, smiling, hugging...]

UNIT 3, SECTION 9

Purpose: To increase clarity of specific and constructive ways to avoid or become free of entrapment in the “clay” and “dust” of the world.

Materials:

- Container of clay, mud, or damp dirt
- Spoon or small shovel
- Figurine of a person or some kind of beautiful object (Note: Ensure that it is washable)

Instructions:

1. Study the quotation and only question 1. Bringing their books and writing utensils, participants should then gather around the container of clay/mud/dirt.
2. Begin asking the questions in number 2. As items “a-d” are being answered, gradually immerse the figurine in the clay/mud/dirt. Pause to discuss how the image appears to the participants and their feelings about this process for themselves of ending up mired in the muck.
3. Discuss item “e”.
4. Then ask the question: “How can we as human beings recover from being mired in the muck and resume flights after being trapped in the “clay”? [examples: go to sleep and start over fresh the next day; pray; meditate; read the Writings; immerse ourselves physically in clean water; do the right thing; apologize; make amends; forgive; ask God to forgive us...] Take the figurine out of the clay/mud/dirt and wash it off.
5. Then say, “Now that the object is clean, what can we do to keep it that way and prevent it from becoming mired in the muck another time?” [Note: Many of the answers will be the same as those in number 4 above. It is good though to also discuss the role of living a righteous life, following the laws of the Faith and the civil laws, behaving according to the virtues/heavenly qualities, reading the Writings twice a day, living a prayerful life, paying attention to having a soul...essentially everything that has been studied in Book 1 so far.]

UNIT 3, SECTION 10

Activity 1

Purpose: To understand the purpose of radiating attributes (virtues/character qualities) out to others.

Materials:

- Large pieces of paper, at least 2 per participant
- Markers or paints and paintbrushes

Instructions:

Note: Because this is a creative activity, your instructions should be general; not everyone's drawings will look the same.

1. Draw a circle to represent yourself.
2. Draw something to depict the attributes (examples: courage, compassion, patience...) pointing inward.
3. Draw a second circle to represent yourself.
4. Draw something to depict the attributes pointing outward.
5. Participants may wish to note some of the attributes on their pages, such as patience, courage, perseverance, truthfulness, love...
6. Discuss the drawings and what value there is when the attributes stay inside of oneself. Can they grow and develop this way? Then discuss the value when the qualities radiate outward to others. How does this help growth and development? What is the connection between the radiance of the attributes and knowing and loving God?

UNIT 3, SECTION 11

Purpose: To understand the analogies of ourselves as a mirror of divine light.

Materials:

- Hand mirror
- Flour or dirt
- Water
- Glass cleaning product
- Paper towel or clean rag
- Candle, lamp, flashlight, or other light source

Definition: Dross – Impure matter or scum that forms on the surface of something.

Instructions:

1. Ahead of time, mix a small amount of water and flour or dirt together and spread it on the mirror to mimic the presence of dross. It is best for it to be dry prior to the study circle beginning.
2. After carefully reading and studying the quotation, but before answering the questions, shine the light at the mirror and ask the participants to comment on the ability of the mirror to reflect the light.
3. Discuss whether the mirror can clean itself off. Ask, “What can clean the dross off the mirror of ourselves?” Then use the cleaning materials to clean the mirror.
4. Shine the light in the mirror again and have the participants discuss how well the mirror is reflecting and what reflects in our spiritual mirrors. Ask, “What is the difference between direct light and reflected light? What are the consequences in our lives when God’s light/inspiration cannot make it through to our mirrors?”

UNIT 3, SECTION 12

Purpose: To increase understanding of the interconnectedness of the Manifestations of God.

Materials:

- Multicolored, art-grade pipecleaners (approx. 20 should be enough for every group of 5 people)

Instructions:

1. Construct a model depicting the interconnection between multiple Manifestations, God, and mankind.
Note: If the group is uncomfortable with feeling as if they are using pipecleaners for God and His Messengers, then suggest that they create some other kind of hierarchical model, such as parents, children, and grandchildren, or Spiritual Assemblies, National Spiritual Assemblies, and the Universal House of Justice.
2. Discuss the value of the interconnection between the parties and what happens when there is a disconnection at any point (demonstrate this with the pipecleaner model).
3. Note: The Bahá'í ringstone symbol depicts this model of interconnection between God, the Manifestations of The Báb and Bahá'u'lláh, and mankind. If appropriate, you may wish to have a picture of it or an actual ring handy to show the participants.

UNIT 3, SECTION 13

Purpose: To understand the concept of human beings actually being mines full of gems.

Materials:

- Long paper streamer (usually available at party supply stores for party decoration) or a cloth that is a few feet long and 3-4 inches wide.
- Decorative gems or confetti that is bright and shiny (usually available at an arts and crafts supply store)

Instructions:

1. Ahead of time, unroll a streamer and lay out on it about 1 foot apart enough “gems” for two for each person in the study circle. Tightly roll up the streamer so that the gems stay enclosed in the roll.
2. After studying the quotation and completing the questions, hand the roll to a participant. Ask the person to begin unrolling the streamer and to stop when they find something.
3. When the participant finds the “gem”, he or she can pick it up and keep it. Ask them as they find and hold a “gem” to share something that is a gem inside of themselves. These could include such things as a character/virtue strength, a talent, or an ability. Ask them to share briefly what person or experience has helped to educate them and make their gem visible.
4. The first participant hands the roll to the next person, who then unrolls it further, finds a “gem”, and repeats the sharing process. Go around the circle until each person has found two gems each.

UNIT 3, SECTION 14

Activity 1

Purpose: To understand the concept of “vain imaginings” and how to stop them.

Materials:

- Optional: A copy of the book *From Copper to Gold*, by Dorothy Freeman about an early Bahá’í named Dorothy Baker; pages 175-179

Instructions:

1. After studying the quotation in this section but before doing the exercises, do this activity.
2. The following is a brief summary of the story on the pages above. Dorothy Baker often traveled by car around the United States to give talks about the Bahá’í Faith. One day she had a bad accident. While she was not seriously hurt, the car was totally wrecked. She later attended a meeting of the National Spiritual Assembly, of which she was a member. In telling the story of her trip and the accident, she and a few of the members began speculating about “why the wreck might have happened, guessing at reasons why Providence would have had it occur.” After a few minutes, one of the members, Louis Gregory, caught Dorothy’s attention. He said, “Dorothy...You were simply driving too fast.”
3. Discuss how this story relates to the concept of “vain imaginings”. Identify other types of “vain imaginings” in people’s lives. What types of “vain imaginings” could be a barrier at the time of death?

Activity 2

Purpose: To become more skillful at forgiving.

Instructions:

1. Study the quotation and do the exercises in the section.
2. The final paragraph of the quotation talks about forgiving the sinful. Discuss what forgiveness is and how to do it. The information below may be helpful to you in guiding the discussion:

Forgiveness is pardoning someone for saying or doing something hurtful or harmful, giving up a desire for revenge and letting go of anger and resentment.

Someone practices Forgiveness effectively when he/she:

- Examines what happened with discernment and compassion, tries to understand it and the person, accepts it as unchangeable, grieves sufficiently, and lets go of his/her feelings of anger, resentment, pain, or bitterness
- Gives others and himself/herself the opportunity to restore a relationship after a hurtful experience, speaking and acting as needed to express remorse, apologize, change, make amends, resolve issues, reconcile, and start over anew

- Seeks to understand the values, culture, and viewpoints of others
- Resists focusing excessively on the faults and mistakes of others and himself/herself, releasing grudges or hurts about words or actions
- Values inner harmony and unity with others enough to let go of negative feelings about the past
- Pardons a wrongdoer, including oneself, with sincerity and courage

Someone needs to strengthen Forgiveness when he/she:

- Keeps replaying the incident in his/her mind, feels like a victim, and holds onto bitterness and anger
- Seeks revenge
- Refuses to accept an apology when someone else has made a mistake or to make amends when he/she is at fault
- Holds grudges and resentment and raises a problem or former error repeatedly
- Withholds acceptance and pardon until the other person specifically asks for it
- Criticizes the words or actions of others or himself/herself repeatedly and often harshly

Someone misuses* the strength of Forgiveness when he/she:

- Accepts unjust, abusive, or harmful actions from someone without resolution
- Avoids holding others or himself/herself accountable for words or actions
- Behaves poorly without restraint because he/she presumes automatic pardon
- Equates pardon with forgetting what happened
- Thinks that having an explanation for an action should equate with receiving pardon

*A misuse occurs when someone practices a quality to excess or in the wrong time or place

Note: Forgiveness description is © 2010 Marriage Transformation (www.marriagetransformation.com), used with permission.

3. Read the following brief story to the participants, which is part of a description of Bahíyyih Khánum, Bahá'u'lláh's daughter, and discuss it in relation to forgiveness:

“You were sure that if one tried to hurt her she would wish to console him for his own cruelty. For her love was unconditioned, could penetrate disguise and see hunger behind the mask of fury, and she knew that the most brutal self is secretly hoping to find gentleness in another....

“Something greater than forgiveness she had shown in meeting the cruelties and strictures in her own life. To be hurt and to forgive is saintly but far beyond this is the power to comprehend and not be hurt.... She was never known to complain or lament. It was not that she made the best of things, but that she found in everything, even in calamity itself, the germs of enduring wisdom. She did not resist the shocks and upheavals of life and she did not run counter to obstacles. She was never impatient. She was as incapable of impatience as she was of revolt. But this was not so much long-sufferance as it was quiet awareness of the forces that operate in the hours of waiting and inactivity.” (Marjory Morten, *Bahá'í World*, Vol. 5, pp. 182-185)

UNIT 3, SECTION 15

Activity 1

Purpose: To increase understanding of the relationship between the souls who have passed on and those remaining in this world.

Instructions:

1. Read the following stories from *The Chosen Highway* to the participants, or ask one of them to read them:

Story 1:

A woman, full of sorrow and despair, came to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá: “I pray you remove my doubt, and give me consolation, I have lost my beloved husband.”

The Master answered her:

If you have a bed of lilies-of-the-valley that you love and tenderly care for, they cannot see you, nor can they understand your care, nevertheless, because of that tender care, they flourish.

So it is with your husband. You cannot see him, but his loving influence surrounds you, cares for you, watches over you. They, who have passed into the Divine Garden, pray for us there, as we pray for them here.

Story 2:

Another day a woman came to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and told Him of a dream.

Last night, Master, I dreamed that I was in a garden of such beauty that it seemed beyond the power of the most perfect human gardener to have created it. In this garden I saw a beautiful girl, about nineteen, who was caressing the flowers. As I came into the garden she lifted her lovely head and came towards me with outstretched arms, as though in great love and joy at my visit. I look at her amazed, and then I saw a startling resemblance to the tiny daughter I lost many years before.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá smiled His miraculous smile:

“My child, you have been permitted to see your daughter as she is now, walking in the sacred garden of one of the worlds of God. This is a bounty of God to you. Rejoice and be happy.”

Story 3:

Ridvaniyyih Khanum related that when her child was ill, the Master came and gave two pink roses to the little one, then, turning to the mother, He said in His musical voice so full of love: “Be patient.”

That evening the child passed away.

“Ridvaniyyih,” said the Master, “there is a Garden of God. Human beings are trees growing therein. The Gardener is Our Father. When He sees a little tree in a place too small for her development, He prepares a suitable and more beautiful place, where she may grow and bear fruit. Then He transplants

that little tree. The other trees marvel, saying: “This is a lovely little tree. For what reason does the Gardener uproot it?”

“The Divine Gardener, alone, knows the reason.

“You are weeping, Ridvaniyyih, but if you could see the beauty of the place where she is, you would no longer be sad.

“Your child is now free, and, like a bird, is chanting divine joyous melodies.

“If you could see that sacred Garden, you would not be content to remain here on earth. Yet this is where your duty now lies.”

Story 4:

When my own mother [Lady Blomfield’s mother] made the “great change” from one world of God to another, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá wrote a very beautiful tablet to me, in which He spoke of my mother as being “in the garden of rejuvenation.” One day a friend, who had not yet heard of the tablet of the Master, told me of a vivid dream she had of my mother, whom she had known and loved. “I seemed to be in a marvelous garden, where every type of rare and beautiful flower was in bloom. Moving about among the flowers was a young girl. She seemed to be in a state of inexpressible joy over the loveliness of her garden. Her voice, as she chanted, was full of the ecstasy of a complete happiness. She listened to the song of birds, and inhaled the odor of the flowers as though she were filling her soul with their fragrance. Suddenly she turned towards me, as though conscious that someone was there beside herself. The young girl facing me with an enchanting smile was your mother, in the full beauty of youth.”

(Lady Blomfield, *The Chosen Highway*, pp. 215-217)

2. Ask the participants to discuss their reactions and feelings to these stories. Ask them to relate the stories to those that they know who have passed away.

Activity 2

Purpose: To honor the souls of those who have passed on to the next world.

Materials:

- Photos of close family members or friends who have died
- Favorite readings, poems, or quotations of those who have died
- Prayer books
- Music

Instructions:

1. The session before, ask participants to identify someone they love who has died and they are looking forward to being reunited with in the future. Ask them to bring to the next session a photo of the person and something to read that reminds them of the person or that was a favorite of the person.

2. At the session, after studying the quotation and the questions, begin an honoring ceremony. Ask each person to show the photograph they brought and tell a story about the loved one.
3. After the stories have been shared, place the photos on a table where everyone can see them.
4. Use music and prayers to honor the souls of the departed.
5. Read this quotation: “Question: Through what means will the spirit of man, that is to say, the rational soul, after departing from this mortal world, make progress? Answer: The progress of man’s spirit in the divine world, after the severance of its connection with the body of dust, is through the bounty and grace of the Lord alone, or through the intercession and the sincere prayers of other human souls, or through the charities and important good works which are performed in its name.” (‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 240)
6. Ask each person to think of and share an action he or she could do or begin in the next week that would be in honor of the soul of their loved one.

Activity 3

Purpose: To honor the souls of those who have passed on to the next world.

Materials:

- Small rocks
- Acrylic/waterproof paints in a variety of colors
- Paint brushes and water
- Paper plates or cardboard (for wet rocks)

Instructions:

Note: Members of the Jewish faith sometimes leave a stone at a gravesite to mark their visit to their loved one. This activity is related to that practice.

1. Collect stones before the session or ask participants to come with stones (a few per person). If participants wish, these can be collected from a place of special significance to the loved one. It is best if the stones are small enough to hold in the hand and that they have some flat or smooth surface.
2. Agree which gravesites the group will visit. Tell brief stories about the people.
3. Paint the stones in whatever way the participants wish to that related to the person who died. Place them on paper plates or cardboard to dry.
4. Set a date and time for visiting the gravesites of the loved ones. Plan what will be read or done at each of them. Participants may wish to share favorite scriptures or prayers of the person who died. They may also wish to read the stories from Activity 1.
5. Place the stones on the gravesite or headstone/marker.

UNIT 3, SECTION 16

Purpose: To more deeply understanding walking “in the ways of God”.

Materials:

- Magazines
- Scissors

Instructions:

1. Ahead of time, cut out pictures from magazines of people in action or various settings from everyday experiences. Some will depict people engaging in what you think are positive behavior activities, and some will be “ungodly”. Ensure that you have enough for one per person and a few extra.
2. Read and study the quotation and complete the questions, ensuring that there is a discussion about what qualifies as walking in “the ways of God.” Examples could include telling the truth, being compassionate to a sick friend, doing ones’ work with excellence...
3. Lay the pictures you cut out on a table.
4. Ask everyone to gather around the pictures and to choose one that reminds them of some aspect of walking “in the ways of God.” (Give them a few minutes to choose)
5. Request that each participant show the photo choice and explain why he or she made that choice and how it fits with the assignment.

Note: Participants can keep their photos, or you can keep them in a large envelope for another study circle or for another topic. Magazine photos can work well for a wide variety of topics by simply changing the focus question.

UNIT 3, SECTION 17

Purpose: To understand what in each person's life interferes between them and God and where detachment from these would help them.

Materials:

- Small pieces of paper, cardboard, objects that can be written upon
- Pens or markers
- A container large enough to hold many pieces of paper...

Instructions:

1. Study the quotation and do the exercises.
2. Give a handful of the pieces of paper to each participant.
3. Ask them to write one thing or person (or the behavior of a person) per piece of paper that they feel some amount of "attachment" to holding onto, particularly where it feels like the attachment is excessive. Examples could include material objects, expectations of others, events happening a certain way, a work supervisor, a relative...
4. After a few minutes of writing, place the container in the middle of the floor. Ask everyone to close their eyes and reflect on why they are attached to these things. Then ask them to say a silent prayer requesting the courage and strength to let go of these things.
5. Ask each person to randomly choose and look at one of their pieces of paper, pray for detachment, and then place it in the container.
6. Then ask each person to "steal" a slip of paper from someone else and place it in the container. Ask each of these questions one at a time, "When someone forces you to physically let go of something, how do you feel? How do you respond? Can you spiritually detach under these circumstances?"
7. Talk about circumstances such as natural disasters where people lose their possessions and/or lives very quickly. Ask them to place the remainder of the pieces of paper in the container. Ask "When circumstances force you to detach from something or someone, how do you feel and respond?"
8. Discuss how it felt to do this detachment activity and what would make them take back their attachments to the item or person. Relate the activity back to the content of the section.

UNIT 3, SECTION 18

This section provides you the opportunity to:

- Invite any members of the study circle who are not Bahá'ís to join the Bahá'í community and continue to offer service to humanity through it.
- Inquire whether anyone wishes reading materials on the Bahá'í Faith.
- Offer to arrange a presentation on the Bahá'í Faith for anyone who is interested (consider Anna's Presentation as outlined in Ruhi Book 6, *Teaching the Cause*.)
- Share with the participants information about the following books in the Ruhi sequence of courses and invite them to choose which they wish to study next. Note: Book 2, *Arising to Serve*, is encouraged as the next course, but flexibility is possible. Some groups may choose to re-do Book 1, *Reflections on the Life of the Spirit*.
- Make specific plans to continue meeting as a group.