



Linking Marriage Strengthening with the Plans from the Universal House of Justice *Vision and Perspectives from Marriage Transformation®*

Marriage is one of many services that you as a married couple can offer to the Bahá'í Faith and to the world. Choices for your time as individuals and as a couple are endless and require careful thought, prayer, and consultation. The actions outlined below may assist you with integrating the process of maintaining your marriage as happy and unified while also aligning yourselves with the rhythm of the global community-building plans of the Faith and the rhythm of community life.

“Praise be to God, those two faithful birds have sought shelter in one nest. I beseech God that He may enable them to raise an honored family, for the importance of marriage lieth in the bringing up of a richly blessed family, so that with entire gladness they may, even as candles, illuminate the world. For the enlightenment of the world dependeth upon the existence of man. If man did not exist in this world, it would have been like a tree without fruit. My hope is that you both may become even as one tree, and may, through the outpourings of the cloud of loving-kindness, acquire freshness and charm, and may blossom and yield fruit, so that your line may eternally endure.” (‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 120)

Some couples find it unifying to do the same community service together; other couples find this stressful and prefer separate lines of action in a spirit of cooperation and love. With your knowledge of your strengths and an attitude of learning-in-action, you can make the best choices for the well-being of your marriage and family.

1. **Strengthen couple friendship and neighborhood friendships.**

“The Lord...hath made woman and man to abide with each other in the closest companionship, and to be even as a single soul. They are two helpmates, two intimate friends, who should be concerned about the welfare of each other. If they live thus, they will pass through this world with perfect contentment, bliss, and peace of heart, and become the object of divine grace and favor in the Kingdom of heaven.” (‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, #92)

“...[E]stablish ties of friendship, on the basis of shared understanding, with those previously regarded as strangers.” (Universal House of Justice, Ridván 2010)

2. **Host a devotional/prayer meeting** on the theme of marriage; pray together as a couple and family [Note: Some pre-planned devotionals are on www.bahaimarriage.net].

“The...capacity to shape a pattern of life distinguished for its devotional character has risen perceptibly. In diverse settings, on every continent, groups of believers are uniting with others in prayer, turning their hearts in supplication to their Maker, and calling to their aid those spiritual forces upon which the efficacy of their individual and collective efforts depends.” (Universal House of Justice to Continental Counsellors, 12-28-10)

3. **Serve in core activities together;** co-tutor a study circle, teach children’s classes, or animate junior youth groups together; happily married couples are more likely to serve through the core activities and other means, because they will have an outward-looking orientation instead of being inwardly focused on problems.

“Bahá'ís should be profoundly aware of the sanctity of marriage and should strive to make their marriages an eternal bond of unity and harmony. This requires effort and sacrifice and wisdom and self-abnegation.” (On behalf of the Universal House of Justice: *Lights of Guidance*, p. 391)

Note: Marriage preparation and strengthening materials that include Bahá'í principles and quotations are available through Marriage Transformation®, www.marriagetransformation.com, as are pre-marital readiness and marriage assessments, workshops, and coaching; extensive resources are free as a service on www.bahaimarriage.net. Susanne M. Alexander, Relationship & Marriage Educator, susanne@marriagetransformation.com; 423-599-0153

“...[T]he unity of your family should take priority over any other consideration. Bahá'u'lláh came to bring unity to the world, and a fundamental unity is that of the family. Therefore, we must believe that the Faith is intended to strengthen the family, not weaken it. For example, service to the Cause should not produce neglect of the family. It is important for you to arrange your time so that your family life is harmonious and your household receives the attention it requires.” (On behalf of the Universal House of Justice: *The Compilation of Compilations, Vol. II, “Preserving Bahá'í Marriages”*, p. 453)

“Every effort is being exerted to ensure that the process reflects the complementarity of ‘being’ and ‘doing’ the institute courses make explicit; the centrality they accord to knowledge and its application; the emphasis they place on avoiding false dichotomies; the stress they lay on memorization of the Creative Word; and the care they exercise in raising consciousness, without awakening the insistent self.” (Universal House of Justice to Continental Counsellors, 12-28-10)

4. **Increase social vitality** through couple activities and those with other community members and friends.

“...[A Spiritual Assembly’s] strength must be measured, to a large extent, by the vitality of the spiritual and social life of the community it serves—a growing community that welcomes the constructive contributions of both those who are formally enrolled and those who are not.” (Universal House of Justice, Ridván 2010)

5. **Prepare readings for the 19-Day Feast** on the topic of marriage and family [Note: Pre-planned readings are on www.bahaimarriage.net].

“It is my hope that this feast will be given on one day out of every nineteen, for it bringeth you closer together; it is the very well-spring of unity and loving-kindness.” (‘Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 89)

“...[I]f the friends are not able to maintain harmony within their families, on what other basis do they hope to demonstrate to a skeptical world the efficacy of the pre-eminent character of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh? What possible influence could they hope to exert on the development of nations and the establishment of world peace?” (On behalf of the Universal House of Justice: *Lights of Guidance*, p. 222)

6. **Make decisions using consultation** in marriage, family, and community.

“Consultation...is applicable to the marriage partners and within the family, and indeed in all areas where believers participate in mutual decision-making. It requires all participants to express their opinions with absolute freedom and without apprehension that they will be censured and/or their views belittled....” (Universal House of Justice: January 24, 1993)

“In all things it is necessary to consult...inasmuch as it is and will always be a cause of awareness and of awakening and a source of good and well-being.” (Bahá'u'lláh: *The Compilation of Compilations, Vol. I, “Consultation”*, p. 93)

7. **Have marriage reflection sessions** with consultation and goal setting with timing similar to those for the cluster and community; consult about the health of your relationship, pray, and move forward with new learning to improve the quality and vitality of your marriage.

“...[T]he process of growth in the cluster will conform to the rhythm established by pronounced cycles of expansion and consolidation, which, punctuated every three months by a meeting for reflection and planning, are unfolding without interruption.” (Universal House of Justice to Continental Counsellors, 12-28-10)

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