

Encouragement

In every avenue of service, the friends need sustained encouragement.

The Universal House of Justice

Importance of Encouragement

For inspiration and guidance let us turn unto His life-imparting exhortations: `O friends, show forth your fidelity! O my loved ones, manifest your steadfastness and your constancy! O ye who invoke His Name, turn ye and hold fast unto Him! O ye who lift up your hearts and implore His aid, cling to Him and walk in His ways! It is incumbent upon every one of us to encourage each other, to exert our utmost endeavour to diffuse His divine fragrances and engage in exalting His Word. We must, at all times, be stirred by the breeze that bloweth from the rose-garden of His loving-kindness, and be perfumed with the fragrances of the mystic flowers of His grace.'

Shoghi Effendi, *Bahiyih Khanum*, pp. 163-164

The people of Baha must associate and deal with each other with the utmost love and sincerity. They should be mindful of the interests of all, especially the friends of God.

Baha'u'llah, *Kitab-I-Aqdas*, Notes, p. 209

You live to do good and to bring happiness to others. Your greatest longing is to comfort those who mourn, to strengthen the weak, and to be the cause of hope to the despairing soul. Day and night your thoughts are turned to the Kingdom, and your hearts are full of the Love of God.

Thus you know neither opposition, dislike, nor hatred, for every living creature is dear to you and the good of each is sought.

`Abdu'l-Baha, *Paris Talks*, pp. 112-113

Each one should endeavor to develop and assist the other toward mutual advancement

Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 39

The friends should be helped to overcome their problems, deepen in the Faith, and increase their unity and their love for each other. In this way you will find that your work goes ahead speedily, and that the National Body is like the beating of a healthy heart in the midst of the Community, pumping spiritual love, energy and encouragement out to all the members.

Shoghi Effendi, *High Endeavors*, P. 35

Defined

Encourage

1. **give somebody hope or courage to:** to give somebody hope, confidence, or courage
2. **be supportive of somebody:** to urge somebody in a helpful way to do or be something
3. **foster something:** to assist something to occur or increase

From French *encoragier*, from *en-* "to cause" + *corage* "courage."]

Encouragement

1. **support that inspires confidence:** support of a kind that inspires confidence and a will to continue or develop
2. **something that encourages:** somebody who or something that encourages

Importance of Encouragement

The first quality for leadership, both among individuals and Assemblies, is the capacity to use the energy and competence that exists in the rank and file of its followers. Otherwise the more competent members of the group will go at a tangent and try to find elsewhere a field of work and where they could use their energy.

Shoghi Effendi, *The Local Spiritual Assembly*, p. 54

Training alone, of course, does not necessarily lead to an upsurge in teaching activity. In every avenue of service, the friends need sustained encouragement. Our experience is that the Auxiliary Board members, together with their assistants, will give special thought to how individual initiative can be cultivated, particularly as it relates to teaching. When training and encouragement are effective, a culture of growth is nourished in which the believers see their duty to teach a natural consequence of having accepted Bahá'u'lláh. They "raise high the sacred torch of faith," as was 'Abdu'l-Bahá's wish, "labour ceaselessly, by day and by night," and "consecrate every fleeting moment of their lives to the diffusion of the divine fragrance and the exaltation of God's holy Word." So enkindled do their hearts become with the fire of the love of God that whoever approaches them feels its warmth. They strive to be channels of the spirit, pure of heart, selfless, and humble, possessing certitude and the courage that stems from reliance on God. In such a culture, teaching is the dominating passion of the lives of the believers. Fear of failure finds no place. Mutual support, commitment to learning, and appreciation of diversity of action are the prevailing norms.

Message of the Universal House of Justice to the conference of the Continental Board of Counsellors dated 9th January 2001

It is very discouraging to find inactive and unresponsive believers; on the other hand we must always realize that some souls . . . are not capable of carrying on an active administrative burden. They need encouragement, the love of their fellow Baha'is, and assistance. To blame them for not doing more for the Cause is useless, and they may actually have a very firm belief in Baha'u'llah which with care could be fanned into flame.

If some of these isolated and inactive people gradually turn to other work than the Cause we should not always blame them - they probably needed more help, more stimulating, more teaching and Baha'i comradeship than they received.

From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, April 25, 194, *Lights of Guidance*, P. 84

Encouragement

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

Who should we encourage and What should we encourage them to do?

Encourage the Individuals and Communities

. . . encourage the friends individually to teach the Cause of God and draw their attention to this meaning of wisdom mentioned in the Writings, which is itself the essence of teaching the Faith - but all this to be done with the greatest tolerance, so that heavenly assistance and divine confirmation may aid the friends.

‘Abdu’l-Baha, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Baha*, p. 268

He (the Guardian) urges you to encourage the friends to observe our Baha’i laws and ordinances, deepen themselves in the administration, and realize they are followers of a Faith - not a mere movement.

Shoghi Effendi, *Japan Will Turn Ablaze*, p. 105

. . . encourage and inspire one another to love each and all;

‘Abdu’l-Baha, *The Nineteen Day Feast*, p. 425

Visiting teachers, who are, at least in a general way, supposed to be more competent and able than the rest, are undoubtedly of a great help. But these can never replace the mass of individual believers and fulfil what must be inevitably accomplished through the collective effort and wisdom of the community at large. What visiting teachers are supposed to do is to give the final touch to the work that has been done, to consolidate rather than supplement individual efforts and thereby direct them in a constructive and suitable channel. Their task is to encourage and inspire individual believers, and to broaden and deepen their vision of the task that is to be done. And this, not by virtue of any inherent spiritual right, but in the spirit of simple and whole-hearted cooperation.

Shoghi Effendi, *Arohanui: Letters to New Zealand*, pp. 34-35

. . . encourage the believers there to do their utmost to achieve their goals . . .

Shoghi Effendi, *Arohanui: Letters to New Zealand*, p. 68

. . . encourage each other, to exert our utmost endeavour to diffuse His divine fragrances and engage in exalting His Word.

Shoghi Effendi, *Bahiyih Khanum*, pp. 163-164

. . . encourage the friends to observe our Baha’i laws and ordinances, deepen themselves in the administration, and realize they are followers of a Faith - not a mere movement.

Shoghi Effendi, *Japan Will Turn Ablaze*, p. 105

He hopes you will constantly encourage the . . . Baha’is and the isolated believers . . . to increase their teaching activities, to strengthen the work of the Faith, to pioneer in new centres, and, above all, to be united; as unity is one of the greatest forces at our disposal for achieving the work of the Cause.

Shoghi Effendi, *Light of Divine Guidance*, p. 236

. . . encourage the believers to disperse, to settle, to persevere, and to appeal more directly and effectively to the masses who are waiting for this Divine Message, and on whose ultimate response the triumph of the Cause of Baha’u’llah must depend.

Shoghi Effendi, *Unfolding Destiny*, p. 174

. . . encourage those who are talented to give expression to the wonderful spirit that animates them. We need poets and writers for the Cause . . .

Shoghi Effendi, *Unfolding Destiny*, p. 429

Encourage the Individuals and Communities (Continued)

The National Assembly should . . . encourage the friends to follow the correct procedure. The whole object in Baha'i administration is not only to manage the affairs of the Cause, but to stimulate the believers to work for it and to teach it to the masses.

Shoghi Effendi, *Dawn of a New Day*, pp.194-195

. . . encourage the believers in their efforts for the emancipation of the Cause from the doctrines and traditions of the past, and for its wide and effective recognition as an independent religion.

Shoghi Effendi, *Dawn of a New Day*, p. 200

. . . encourage them to carry forward the work with even greater energy than before.

Shoghi Effendi, *High Endeavors*, p. 29

encourage them to understand the Administration and take an active, constructive part in its workings. Without a proper understanding of the Administrative Order, extensive plans cannot be undertaken and harmony will not prevail within the community.

Shoghi Effendi, *Japan Will Turn Ablaze*, p. 93

Not only must your Body provide the encouragement and leadership required, and stimulate the friends to arise and play their part, but the Local Assemblies must likewise do everything in their power to help the friends to go forth and attain their objectives.

Shoghi Effendi, *Living the Life*, P. 27

The proper growth of a community is possible only when the National Spiritual Assembly, through its office and secretary, is able to maintain a steady flow of communication to the believers in its jurisdiction, offering guidance and encouragement to them.

The Universal House of Justice,
Lights of Guidance, P. 29

Your Assembly should constantly bear this in mind, encourage and stimulate the friends in the teaching field, smooth out difficulties and misunderstandings and hurt feelings through love,

Shoghi Effendi,
National Spiritual Assembly, p. 128

. . . encourage application of the principles of consultation among all classes, and to adhere in all dealings to a standard of scrupulous integrity.

Shoghi Effendi, *Trustworthiness*, p. 348

. . . encourage them to participate in Baha'i activities and be unified under all circumstances.

From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to all Continental Boards of Counsellors, November 17, 1971, *Lights of Guidance*, p. 41

. . . encourage that the friends should engage in such literary pursuits which, no doubt, can be of an immense teaching value.

From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, July 25, 1936, *Lights of Guidance*, p. 99

. . . encourage the local Baha'is and to help them to elect their Local Spiritual Assemblies should the friends be either unaware of the procedure required, or perhaps illiterate and in need of help in casting their ballots.

From the Message of the Universal House of Justice to the Baha'is of Ecuador, Ridvan 1984
Lights of Guidance, p. 637

The members of the Boards should likewise encourage the friends to contribute freely to the various Funds which have been established, as the Funds are the life-blood of the Community, and the work cannot be carried forward unless the life-blood is constantly circulating.

From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the Hands of the Cause of God, June 7, 1954
Lights of Guidance, p. 330

Encourage the Parents and the Children

. . . to encourage the people in every possible way to have their children learn to read and write.

‘Abdu’l-Baha,
Secret of Divine Civilization, p. 111

Encourage the children from their earliest years to master every kind of learning, and make them eager to become skilled in every art - the aim being that through the favouring grace of God, the heart of each one may become even as a mirror disclosing the secrets of the universe, penetrating the innermost reality of all things; and that each may earn world-wide fame in all branches of knowledge, science and the arts.

‘Abdu’l-Baha, *Excellence in All Things*, p. 374

. . . encourage the child to acquire perfections and goodly manners, warn him against unbecoming qualities, and encourage him to show forth resolve, firmness, and endurance under hardship, and to advance on the high road to progress.

‘Abdu’l-Baha, *Women*, p. 374

Encourage the Youth

. . . every effort should be made to encourage all believers, as well as Baha’i youth, to observe requirements of Baha’i membership even at the cost of some hardship or inconvenience.

Universal House of Justice,
Lights of Guidance, p. 161

. . . encourage young Baha’is to prepare themselves for pioneer work,

Shoghi Effendi, *Youth*, p. 433

The Guardian feels that the role of Baha’i youth in these days is becoming increasingly important, and that your Committee, as well as all local youth committees, should do all in your power to encourage the Baha’i young people to a greater activity and sense of responsibility. In the field of teaching, in pioneer service and settlement, in the administration of the Cause, they must increasingly take an active part, as upon these same youth will devolve the many and heavy responsibilities of the future when the Baha’is will be called upon to demonstrate to their fellow-men the perfection of Baha’u’llah’s laws and World Order in such a manner that bewildered humanity will turn to them as their only refuge.

Shoghi Effendi, *Dawn of a New Day*, pp. 180-181

The incalculable value of Baha’i youth in the service of our Faith cannot be overlooked. They should be enlisted as travelling teachers, going on foot when necessary, in the mountains and jungles to visit, teach and encourage the local Baha’is

From the Message of the Universal House of Justice to the Baha’is of Ecuador, Ridvan 1984
Lights of Guidance, p. 637

The youth should be encouraged to hold youth classes, to convey to their peers the Message of Baha’u’llah, to learn to give courses and lectures on the Teachings, and above all, to exemplify by their high moral behavior that which makes the Baha’is outstanding in a corrupt and decadent society.

From the Message of the Universal House of Justice to the Baha’is of Ecuador, Ridvan 1984
Lights of Guidance, p. 637

Who should we encourage and What should we encourage them to do?

Encourage the Institutions

These new Assemblies must receive every aid and encouragement from your Assembly and every effort must be made to carry the Faith to new Centres, and to stimulate pioneering amongst the friends.

Shoghi Effendi, *Dawn of a New Day*, pp.118-119

Each Auxiliary Board Member who is allotted a specific area in which to serve, should establish contact with the Local Spiritual Assemblies and other localities of his area, encourage and guide all such centres in the implementation of the goals of the Plan, become informed of the relative strength and weakness of each locality, and feel responsible before God in the discharge of his responsibilities.

The Universal House of Justice, *Lights of Guidance*, p. 333

If he be member of any Spiritual Assembly let him encourage his Assembly to consecrate a certain part of its time, at each of its sessions, to the earnest and prayerful consideration of such ways and means as may foster the campaign of teaching, or may furnish whatever resources are available for its progress, extension, and consolidation.

Shoghi Effendi,
The Advent of Divine Justice, p. 53

. . . to activate and encourage Local Spiritual Assemblies, to call the attention of Local Spiritual Assembly members to the importance of holding regular meetings, to encourage local communities to meet for the Nineteen Day Feasts and Holy Days, to help deepen their fellow-believers' understanding of the Teachings, and generally to assist the Auxiliary Board members in the discharge of their duties. . .

Universal House of Justice, *Lights of Guidance*, p. 333

Encouragement

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

How should we encourage?

Through Visiting the Friends and Communities

He (the Guardian) urges you to make a special effort to visit the friends in other places where you stop, no matter how short the time, as the news of the progress of the Faith in general will encourage and hearten them.

Shoghi Effendi, *Japan Will Turn Ablaze*, p. 108

Such persons who travel from one country to another, meeting the friends and exchanging thoughts with them, achieve a great part in strengthening the link between the new friends in different parts of the world. They give a new spirit and impart courage and perseverance to those who feel disappointed and overwhelmed by the greatness of the task laid before them.

Shoghi Effendi, *Japan Will Turn Ablaze*, p. 78

The members of the Boards in turn should encourage the friends -individuals and Assemblies alike - through correspondence and through visits, and impress upon them that the foundation of all of our activities is unity; they should encourage the friends to be unified under all circumstances, so that the work may go ahead with the confirmation of the Holy Spirit.

From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the Hands of the Cause of God, June 7, 1954, *Lights of Guidance*, p. 330

It is at this same level that our beloved Guardian urged Auxiliary Board members to establish contact with Local Spiritual Assemblies, groups, isolated centres and the individual believers, and through periodic and systematic visits to localities as well as by correspondence help in promoting the interests of the Plan, assist in the efficient and prompt execution of the goals, watch over the security of the Faith, stimulate and strengthen the teaching and pioneer work, impress upon the friends the importance of individual effort, initiative and sacrifice, and encourage them to participate in Baha'i activities and be unified under all circumstances."

The Universal House of Justice, *Lights of Guidance*, p. 41

Through Attending Meetings and Gatherings

Your active participation in all Baha'i gatherings and meetings, and the zeal and enthusiasm which you succeed in creating among the attendants are, indeed, a real source of strength to the community of the believers in your centre.

The success of your past endeavours should encourage you all and the Community whom you represent, to forge ahead, unmindful of obstacles, and forgetful of personal differences of opinion in one united and unanimous effort to carry out all the work you have set for yourselves and achieve all your goals.

Shoghi Effendi, *Dawn of a New Day*, p. 146

The importance and significance of such annual gatherings are immense, since they offer each and every one of you a unique opportunity to come and discuss together the ways and means whereby the Faith can extend and develop By the collective spirit, the unity and the enthusiasm they create, these meetings serve to strengthen the bonds of amity and cooperation among the friends and to give them a new vision of the Cause, of its imperative needs and requirements

How should we encourage?

Through Attending Meetings and Gatherings (Continued)

He is, indeed, very much pleased, and feels greatly encouraged, to learn of the beautiful meeting you have organized in order to commemorate this most sad and yet unique event in the history of the Cause, and sincerely trusts that the recollection of these early days of the heroic age of the Faith will have served to fill with fresh enthusiasm and renewed vigour your souls, and that as a result you all now feel the urge to play a more active part in establishing the Cause in Austria.

Shoghi Effendi, *Light of Divine Guidance*, Vol. 1, p. 75

Since the purpose of the Summer School is not only to impart knowledge of the Teachings, but to infuse in the hearts of all those present such spirit as will enable them to translate the ideals of the Cause into daily deeds of constructive spiritual living, it is more than fitting therefore that this year's meetings should be principally devoted to the study of Baha'i morals, not only in their theoretical aspect, but first and foremost in their relation to the present-day needs and requirements of Baha'i community life.

Shoghi Effendi, *Centres of Baha'i Learning*, p. 34-35

The Guardian cherishes the hope that at the termination of your school this summer every one of the attendants will have derived such mental and spiritual benefits, and acquired such a fresh enthusiasm to serve as will enable him, upon his return to his local community, to labour with a determination and vigour that will excite the envy and admiration of his fellow-believers, and stimulate them to greater heights of consecration to the service of our beloved Cause.

Shoghi Effendi, *Centres of Baha'i Learning*, p. 28

Shoghi Effendi wishes me to acknowledge the receipt of your letter dated November 28th 1932 written on the occasion of the commemoration of the passing away of our beloved Master Abdu'l-Baha.

The Guardian is very glad to see that at such celebrations the friends come together and with a true spirit of service and devotion renew their determination to consecrate their life to the service of the Faith. It is only through such methods that the fire of enthusiasm can be kept burning in our hearts, and that we can keep the goal of our very being upon this earth ever present before our minds.

Shoghi Effendi, *Light of Divine Guidance*, Vol.2, pp. 21-22

Through Sharing the Good News of the Successes of the Faith

The many activities undertaken by the . . . friends, their determined efforts to bring the Cause before a wider public and reach people of outstanding importance, their new centres and study groups, are all signs which should greatly encourage them and demonstrate to them that the Holy Spirit is ever ready to sustain and reinforce the believers in all work for the good of our precious Faith.

Shoghi Effendi, *Unfolding Destiny*, p. 150

How should we encourage?

Through Sharing the Good News of the Successes of the Faith (continued)

At the holy Threshold of the Abha Beauty we fervently pray at all times for outstanding success to attend that exalted body. Indeed, by virtue of the brilliant achievements won and the distinguished services rendered by those blessed souls, the heart of this lowly one is filled with utmost joy and assurance, and there is no doubt that through the loving-kindness of God this measure of joy and happiness will be multiplied day by day.

Shoghi Effendi, *Bahiyih Khanum*, pp. 225-226

The remarkable achievements in the pioneer field, a field in which your own Assembly has been far from backward, are a source of great encouragement to all the believers as well as to him.

Shoghi Effendi, *Unfolding Destiny*, pp. 335-336

He was, however, quite pleased with Mr. Hall's work and the measure of success which he has met with. He shared this good news with his friends here with a view to inspire all to action.

Shoghi Effendi, *Unfolding Destiny*, p. 24

Indeed the splendid spirit that animates the American believers these days is a great source of joy and inspiration of the Guardian, and as the good news comes in of new victories won and new sacrifices made, one can see his spirits rise and a wave of new strength sweep over him - tired and over-burdened as he so often is.

Shoghi Effendi, *Funds*, p. 540

Through Study of Life of the Early Believers

Books such as the "Iqan", "Some Answered Questions" and "The Dawn-Breakers" should be mastered by every Baha'i. They should read these books over and over again. The first two books will reveal to them the significance of this divine revelation as well as the unity of all the Prophets of old. The last book will show you how the Faith was ushered into the world and how its early adherents heroically faced martyrdom and suffering in their desire to establish the Cause throughout the world. Knowing the life of those heroes will create in us the urge to follow their footsteps and achieve the same.

Shoghi Effendi, *The Importance of Deepening*, p. 216

The Guardian sincerely hopes and prays that the study of the Dawn-Breakers will inspire the friends to greater activity and more exerted energy in serving the Cause and spreading its message in that town. The life of those heroes of the Faith should teach us what true sacrifice is, and to what extent we should forego our personal and worldly interests while endeavouring to carry the divine message to the four corners of the earth.

Shoghi Effendi would advise the friends . . . to hold regular study classes and read that book with great care, committing its salient facts to memory, so that while teaching the Cause, they may be able to show the motivating spirit of the Faith by referring to some incidents of those early days.

Shoghi Effendi, *Light of Divine Guidance*, Vol. 2, p. 24

How should we encourage?

Through Study of Life of the Early Believers (continued)

I would strongly urge you to utilize, to the utmost possible extent, the wealth of authentic material gathered in Nabil's stirring Narrative and to encourage the youth to master and digest the facts recorded therein as a basis for their future work in the teaching field, and as a sustenance to their spiritual life and activities in the service of the Cause

Shoghi Effendi, *The Importance of Deepening*, p. 207

Shoghi Effendi undertook the translation of "The Dawn-Breakers" only after being convinced that its publication will arouse the friends to greater self-sacrifice and a more determined way of teaching. Otherwise he would not have devoted so much time to it.

Reading about the life and activities of those heroic souls is bound to influence our mode of living and the importance we attach to our services in the Cause. Shoghi Effendi therefore hopes that the friends will read, nay rather study that book, and encourage their young people to do that as well.

Shoghi Effendi, *The Importance of Deepening*, p. 216

Through Study of the Holy Writings

A true and adequate knowledge of the Cause is, indeed, indispensable to every one who wishes to successfully teach the Message. The book of "Gleanings" gives the friends a splendid opportunity to acquire this necessary knowledge and understanding. It gives them, in addition, that inspiration and spiritual fervour which the reading of the Holy Words can alone impart.

From a letter dated 2 December 1935 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer

In brief, spend your nights and days in the study of the holy Utterances and in acquiring perfections. Occupy yourselves always in discussing these matters. When ye meet each other, convey the glad-tidings and impart hope to one another because of the confirmations and bounties of the Ancient and Ever-Living Lord. Let each set forth proofs and evidences, and talk about the mysteries of the Kingdom, so that the true and divine Spirit may permeate the body of the contingent world and the secrets of all things, whether of the past or of the future, may become openly manifest and resplendent.

`Abdu'l-Baha, *Women*, p. 397

. . . Peace of mind is gained by the centering of the spiritual consciousness on the Prophet of God; therefore you should study the spiritual Teachings, and receive the Water of Life from the Holy Utterances. Then by translating these high ideals into action, your entire character will be changed, and your mind will not only find peace, but your entire being will find joy and enthusiasm.

From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, October 15, 1952
Lights of Guidance, p. 112

His advice to you is to continue deepening your knowledge and understanding of this Revelation, both by means of patient and thorough study of Baha'i writings, and through active association with your fellow-believers and close participation in the activities of your local Baha'i community.

How should we encourage?

Through Example

Let your actions cry aloud to the world that you are indeed Baha'is, for it is actions that speak to the world and are the cause of the progress of humanity.

If we are true Baha'is speech is not needed. Our actions will help on the world, will spread civilization, will help the progress of science, and cause the arts to develop. Without action nothing in the material world can be accomplished, neither can words unaided advance a man in the spiritual Kingdom. It is not through lip-service only that the elect of God have attained to holiness, but by patient lives of active service they have brought light into the world.

Therefore strive that your actions day by day may be beautiful prayers. Turn towards God, and seek always to do that which is right and noble. Enrich the poor, raise the fallen, comfort the sorrowful, bring healing to the sick, reassure the fearful, rescue the oppressed, bring hope to the hopeless, shelter the destitute!

This is the work of a true Baha'i, and this is what is expected of him. If we strive to do all this, then are we true Baha'is, but if we neglect it, we are not followers of the Light, and we have no right to the name.

God, who sees all hearts, knows how far our lives are the fulfilment of our words.

‘Abdu'l-Baha, *Paris Talks*, pp. 80-81

We can never exert the influence over others which we can exert over ourselves. If we are better, if we show love, patience, and understanding of the weakness of others, if we seek to never criticize but rather encourage, others will do likewise, and we can really help the Cause through our example and spiritual strength.

Shoghi Effendi, *Lights of Guidance*, p. 83

How badly we need such souls (Greatest Holy Leaf) in the world at present when it seems so full of sorrows and discouragements! Every one is suffering and no person to give them courage and brighten their hearts.

Shoghi Effendi hopes that the friends will follow her example and become a source of inspiration to the world at large, giving hope to the depressed and joy to the disconsolate.

Shoghi Effendi, *Bahiyih Khanum*, pp. 90-91

When once a few bold, self-sacrificing individuals have arisen to serve, their example will no doubt encourage other timid would-be pioneers to follow in their footsteps. The history of our Faith is full of records of the remarkable things achieved by really very simple, insignificant individuals, who became veritable beacons and towers of strength through having placed their trust in God, having arisen to proclaim His Message.

Shoghi Effendi, *Unfolding Destiny*, pp. 172-173

Qualities that can help us become more encouraging

Patience

. . . Baha'is in their deep love for Baha'u'llah should be eager to apply every spiritual precept in their own lives while at the same time exercising patience, forbearance and forgiveness in respect to the shortcomings of others.

The Universal House of Justice, *Lights of Guidance*, p. 363-364

The greater the patience, the loving understanding and the forbearance the believers show towards each other and their shortcomings, the greater will be the progress of the whole Baha'i community at large.

From a letter dated 27 February 1943 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer

We must be patient with each other's shortcomings, and always strive to create love and unity among the believers,

Shoghi Effendi, *Excellence in All Things*, p. 383

Love the creatures for the sake of God and not for themselves. You will never become angry or impatient if you love them for the sake of God. Humanity is not perfect. There are imperfections in every human being, and you will always become unhappy if you look toward the people themselves. But if you look toward God, you will love them and be kind to them, for the world of God is the world of perfection and complete mercy.

`Abdu'l-Baha, *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 93

Care for others

It is my dearest hope that you may all become a blessing to others, that you may give sight to the spiritually blind, hearing to the spiritually deaf and life to those who are dead in sin.

May you help those sunk in materiality to realize their Divine son-ship, and encourage them to arise and be worthy of their birthright; so that by your endeavour the world of humanity may become the Kingdom of God and of His elect.

`Abdu'l-Baha, *Paris Talks*, p. 100

Thus is it incumbent upon us, when we direct our gaze toward other people, to see where they excel, not where they fail.

Praise be to God, thy goal is to promote the well-being of humankind and to help the souls to overcome their faults. This good intention will produce laudable results.

`Abdu'l-Baha, *Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Baha*, p. 169

O ye lovers of God! Be kind to all peoples; care for every person; do all ye can to purify the hearts and minds of men; strive ye to gladden every soul.

`Abdu'l-Baha, *Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Baha*, pp. 244-245

Wherefore must the loved ones of God, laboriously, with the waters of their striving, tend and nourish and foster this tree of hope. In whatsoever land they dwell, let them with a whole heart befriend and be companions to those who are either close to them, or far removed. Let them, with qualities like unto those of heaven, promote the institutions and the religion of God. Let them never lose heart, never be despondent, never feel afflicted.

`Abdu'l-Baha, *Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Baha*, p. 258

Qualities that help us become more encouraging

Love for Humanity

For you I desire spiritual distinction; that is, you must become eminent and distinguished in morals. In the love of God you must become distinguished from all else. You must become distinguished for loving humanity; for unity and accord; for love and justice. In brief, you must become distinguished in all the virtues of the human world; for faithfulness and steadfastness; for philanthropic deeds and service to the human world; for love toward every human being; for unity and accord with all people; for removing prejudices and promoting international peace

Abdu'l-Baha, *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 190

What a power is love! It is the most wonderful, the greatest of all living powers.

Love gives life to the lifeless. Love lights a flame in the heart that is cold. Love brings hope to the hopeless and gladdens the hearts of the sorrowful.

Abdu'l-Baha, *Paris Talks*, p. 179

Indeed the believers have not yet fully learned to draw on each other's love for strength and consolation in time of need. The Cause of God is endowed with tremendous powers, and the reason the believers do not gain more from it is because they have not learned to draw fully on these mighty forces of love and strength and harmony generated by the Faith.

From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer,
May 8, 1942, *Living the Life*, p. 8

It is my dearest hope that you may all become a blessing to others, that you may give sight to the spiritually blind, hearing to the spiritually deaf and life to those who are dead in sin.

May you help those sunk in materiality to realize their Divine son-ship, and encourage them to arise and be worthy of their birthright; so that by your endeavour the world of humanity may become the Kingdom of God and of His elect.

Abdu'l-Baha, *Paris Talks*, p. 100

We must never dwell too much on the attitudes and feelings of our fellow-believers towards us. What is most important is to foster love and harmony and ignore any rebuffs we may receive; in this way the weaknesses of human nature and the peculiarity or attitude of any particular person is not magnified, but pales into insignificance in comparison with our joint service to the Faith we all love.

Shoghi Effendi, *Living the Life*, p. 19

Be kind to all people, love humanity, consider all mankind as your relations and servants of the most high God. Strive day and night that animosity and contention may pass away from the hearts of men, that all religions shall become reconciled and the nations love each other so that no racial, religious or political prejudice may remain and the world of humanity behold God as the beginning and end of all existence. God has created all, and all return to God. Therefore, love humanity with all your heart and soul. If you meet a poor man, assist him; if you see the sick, heal him; reassure the affrighted one, render the cowardly noble and courageous, educate the ignorant, associate with the stranger. Emulate God. Consider how kindly, how lovingly He deals with all, and follow His example. You must treat people in accordance with the divine precepts - in other words, treat them as kindly as God treats them, for this is the greatest attainment possible for the world of humanity.

Abdu'l-Baha, *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 291

Qualities that help us become more encouraging

Reliance

Whosoever ye behold a person whose entire attention is directed toward the Cause of God; whose only aim is this, to make the Word of God to take effect; who, day and night, with pure intent, is rendering service to the Cause; from whose behaviour not the slightest trace of egotism or private motives is discerned - who, rather, wandereth distracted in the wilderness of the love of God, and drinketh only from the cup of the knowledge of God, and is utterly engrossed in spreading the sweet savours of God, and is enamoured of the holy verses of the Kingdom of God - know ye for a certainty that this individual will be supported and reinforced by heaven; that like unto the morning star, he will forever gleam brightly out of the skies of eternal grace.

‘Abdu'l-Baha, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu'l-Baha*, pp. 71-72

Never lose thy trust in God. Be thou ever hopeful, for the bounties of God never cease to flow upon man. If viewed from one perspective they seem to decrease, but from another they are full and complete. Man is under all conditions immersed in a sea of God's blessings. Therefore, be thou not hopeless under any circumstances, but rather be firm in thy hope.

‘Abdu'l-Baha, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu'l-Baha*, p. 205

I hope that you may become assisted and confirmed, and never lose courage in the promotion of the divine teachings. Day by day may you add to your effort, exertion, and magnanimity.

‘Abdu'l-Baha, *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, p. 17

He fully realizes the great handicaps you are all labouring under, and admires the wonderful spirit of devotion to the Cause of God which keeps you going. You must never feel discouraged, but persevere in your labours, knowing Baha'u'llah will bless them.

Shoghi Effendi, *Light of Divine Guidance*, Vol. 2, p. 63

At all times we must look at the greatness of the Cause, and remember that Baha'u'llah will assist all who arise in His service. When we look at ourselves, we are sure to feel discouraged by our shortcomings and insignificance!

Shoghi Effendi, *The Power of Divine Assistance*, p. 223

O ye League of the Covenant! Verily the Abha Beauty made a promise to the beloved who are steadfast in the Covenant, that He would reinforce their strivings with the strongest of supports, and succour them with His triumphant might. Ere long shall ye see that your illumined assemblage hath left conspicuous signs and tokens in the hearts and souls of men. Hold ye fast to the hem of God's garment, and direct all your efforts toward furthering His Covenant, and burning ever more brightly with the fire of His love, that your hearts may leap for joy in the breathings of servitude which well out from the breast of Abdu'l-Baha. Rally your hearts, make firm your steps, trust in the everlasting bounties that will be shed upon you, one following another from the Kingdom of Abha. Whosoever ye gather in that radiant assemblage, know ye that the splendours of Baha are shining over you. It behoveth you to seek agreement and to be united; it behoveth you to be in close communion one with the other, at one both in body and soul, till ye match the Pleiades or a string of lustrous pearls. Thus will ye be solidly established; thus will your words prevail, your star shine out, and your hearts be comforted . . .

Qualities that help us become more encouraging

Reliance (continued)

Remember not your own limitations; the help of God will come to you. Forget yourself. God's help will surely come!

When you call on the Mercy of God waiting to reinforce you, your strength will be tenfold.

Look at me: I am so feeble, yet I have had the strength given me to come amongst you: a poor servant of God, who has been enabled to give you this message! I shall not be with you long! One must never consider one's own feebleness, it is the strength of the Holy Spirit of Love, which gives the power to teach. The thought of our own weakness could only bring despair. We must look higher than all earthly thoughts; detach ourselves from every material idea, crave for the things of the spirit; fix our eyes on the everlasting bountiful Mercy of the Almighty, who will fill our souls with the gladness of joyful service to His command 'Love One Another'.

‘Abdu'l-Baha, *Paris Talks*, pp. 38-39

When you concentrate your thoughts on realizing that you now belong to Baha'u'llah, are His servant whom He loves and will always help, if you ask Him to, and that the great spiritual strength of the Cause of God is behind you for you to draw upon, you will soon see your fears melting away.

Shoghi Effendi, *High Endeavors*, p. 70

Obstacles to encouragement

Fault finding

. . . do not look at the shortcomings of anybody; see with the sight of forgiveness. The imperfect eye beholds imperfections. The eye that covers faults looks toward the Creator of souls. He created them, trains and provides for them, endows them with capacity and life, sight and hearing; therefore, they are the signs of His grandeur.

‘Abdu'l-Baha, *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 93

Strive ye by day and night to cultivate your unity to the fullest degree. Let your thoughts dwell on your own spiritual development, and close your eyes to the deficiencies of other souls. Act ye in such wise, showing forth pure and goodly deeds, and modesty and humility, that ye will cause others to be awakened.

‘Abdu'l-Baha, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu'l-Baha*, p. 203

Heedless souls are always seeking faults in others. What can the hypocrite know of others' faults when he is blind to his own? This is the meaning of the words in the Seven Valleys. It is a guide for human conduct. As long as a man does not find his own faults, he can never become perfect. Nothing is more fruitful for man than the knowledge of his own shortcomings. The Blessed Perfection says, "I wonder at the man who does not find his own imperfections.

‘Abdu'l-Baha, *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 244

O COMPANION OF MY THRONE! Hear no evil, and see no evil, abase not thyself, neither sigh and weep. Speak no evil, that thou mayest not hear it spoken unto thee, and magnify not the faults of others that thine own faults may not appear great; and wish not the abasement of anyone, that thine own abasement be not exposed. Live then the days of thy life, that are less than a fleeting moment, with thy mind stainless, thy heart unsullied, thy thoughts pure, and thy nature sanctified, so that, free and content, thou mayest put away this mortal frame, and repair unto the mystic paradise and abide in the eternal kingdom for evermore.

Baha'u'llah, *Persian Hidden Words*, p. 44

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.

Baha'u'llah, *Persian Hidden Words*, p. 66

All religions teach that we should love one another; that we should seek out our own shortcomings before we presume to condemn the faults of others, that we must not consider ourselves superior to our neighbours! We must be careful not to exalt ourselves lest we be humiliated.

‘Abdu'l-Baha, *Paris Talks*, pp. 147-148

One must see in every human being only that which is worthy of praise. When this is done, one can be a friend to the whole human race. If, however, we look at people from the standpoint of their faults, then being a friend to them is a formidable task."

Abdu'l-Baha, *Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Baha*, p. 169

Obstacles to encouragement

Fault finding (Continued)

Backbiting, slander and dwelling on the faults of others have been repeatedly condemned by Baha'u'llah. In the Hidden Words, He clearly states: "O Son of Being! How couldst thou forget thine own faults and busy thyself with the faults of others? Whoso doeth this is accursed of Me." And again: "O Son of Man! Breathe not the sins of others so long as thou art thyself a sinner. Shouldst thou transgress this command, accursed wouldst thou be, and to this I bear witness." This strong admonition is further reiterated in His last work, "the Book of My Covenant": "Verily I say, the tongue is for mentioning what is good, defile it not with unseemly talk. God hath forgiven what is past. Henceforward everyone should utter that which is meet and seemly, and should refrain from slander, abuse and whatever causeth sadness in men.

Baha'u'llah, *Kitab-I-Aqdas*, Notes, pp. 181-182

. . . Each of us is responsible for one life only, and that is our own. Each of us is immeasurably far from being 'perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect' and the task of perfecting our own life and character is one that requires all our attention, our will-power and energy. If we allow our attention and energy to be taken up in efforts to keep others right and remedy their faults, we are wasting precious time. We are like ploughmen each of whom has his team to manage and his plough to direct, and in order to keep his furrow straight he must keep his eye on his goal and concentrate on his own task. If he looks to this side and that to see how Tom and Harry are getting on and to criticise their ploughing, then his own furrow will assuredly become crooked.

From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer,
May 12, 1925, *Living the Life*, pp. 2-3

Backbiting

As to backbiting, the House of Justice points out that learning not to concern oneself with the faults of others seems to be one of the most difficult lessons for people to master, and that failing in this is a fertile cause of disputes among Baha'is as it is among men and women in general. In 'Star of the West', Volume 8, No. 10, on page 138, there is a record of a reply given by Abdu'l-Baha in a private interview in Paris in 1913. He was asked 'How shall I overcome seeing the faults of others - recognizing the wrong in others?', and He replied: 'I will tell you. Whenever you recognize the fault of another, think of yourself! What are my imperfections? - and try to remove them. Do this whenever you are tried through the words or deeds of others. Thus you will grow, become more perfect. You will overcome self, you will not even have time to think of the faults of others . . . !'

From a letter dated 12 May 1925 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi

As regards backbiting, i.e., discussing the faults of others in their absence, the teachings are very emphatic. In a Tablet to an American friend the Master wrote: 'The worst human quality and the most great sin is backbiting, more especially when it emanates from the tongues of the believers of God. If some means were devised so that the doors of backbiting were shut eternally and each one of the believers unsealed his lips in praise of others, then the teachings of His Holiness Baha'u'llah would spread, the hearts be illumined, the spirits glorified, and the human world would attain to everlasting felicity.' (Quoted in *Star of West*, Vol. IV. p. 192) Baha'u'llah says in the Hidden Words: 'Breathe not the sins of others so long as thou art a sinner. Shouldst thou transgress this command ACCURSED ART THOU.' The condemnation of backbiting could hardly be couched in stronger language than in these passages, and it is obviously one of the foremost obligations for Baha'is to set their faces against this practice. Even if what is said against another person be true, the mentioning of his faults to others still comes under the category of backbiting, and is forbidden.

Obstacles to encouragement

Backbiting (Continued)

On no subject are the Baha'i teachings more emphatic than on the necessity to abstain from fault-finding and backbiting while being ever eager to discover and root out our own faults and overcome our own failings.

If we profess loyalty to Baha'u'llah, to our Beloved Master and our dear Guardian, then we must show our love by obedience to these explicit teachings. Deeds not words are what they demand, and no amount of fervour in the use of expressions of loyalty and adulation will compensate for failure to live in the spirit of the teachings.

From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer,
May 12, 1925: *Living the Life*, p. 3

It is obvious that if we listen to those who complain to us about the faults of others we are guilty of complicity in their backbiting. We should therefore, as tactfully as possible, but yet firmly, do our utmost to prevent others from making accusations or complaints against others in our presence.

From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to
the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles, February 11, 1925

. . . Backbiting quencheth the light of the heart, and extinguisheth the life of the soul.

Baha'u'llah, *The Kitab-i-Iqan*, p. 193

. . . If any soul speak ill of an absent one, the only result will clearly be this: he will dampen the zeal of the friends and tend to make them indifferent. For backbiting is divisive, it is the leading cause among the friends of a disposition to withdraw. If any individual should speak ill of one who is absent, it is incumbent on his hearers, in a spiritual and friendly manner, to stop him, and say in effect: would this detraction serve any useful purpose? Would it please the Blessed Beauty, contribute to the lasting honour of the friends, promote the holy Faith, support the Covenant, or be of any possible benefit to any soul? No, never! On the contrary, it would make the dust to settle so thickly on the heart that the ears would hear no more, and the eyes would no longer behold the light of truth.

Abdu'l-Baha, *Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Baha*, pp. 230-31

. . . When a difficulty is brought out into the daylight and freely discussed by a duly authorised and responsible group of people who are sincerely desirous of finding the best solution and are free from prejudice or personal motive, then there is a good chance of overcoming it, but discussion of the faults of others behind their backs by unauthorised people who have no authority to take action in the matter, is surely one of the most fertile causes - probably THE most fertile cause - of disunity, and the importance of putting an end to this practice should be impressed on all Baha'is.

From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi
to the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles,

Obstacles to encouragement

Harsh Words and Criticism

. . . Vicious criticism is indeed a calamity. But its root is lack of faith in the system of Baha'u'llah, i.e., the Administrative Order - and lack of obedience to Him - for He has forbidden it! If the Baha'is would follow the Baha'i laws in voting, in electing, in serving and in abiding by Assembly decisions, all this waste of strength through criticising others could be diverted into cooperation and achieving the Plan

From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer,
December 18, 1949, *Baha'i News*, No. 233, p. 2, July 1950

When criticism and harsh words arise within a Baha'i community, there is no remedy except to put the past behind one, and persuade all concerned to turn over a new leaf, and for the sake of God and His Faith refrain from mentioning the subjects which have led to misunderstanding and inharmony. The more the friends argue back and forth and maintain, each side, that their point of view is the right one, the worse the whole situation becomes.

From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer,
February 16, 1951 - *Living the Life*, p. 12

. . . gossip, trouble-making, criticism, seem easier than the putting into practice of love, constructive words and cooperation. It is one of the functions of the older and the more mature Baha'is to help the weaker ones to iron out their difficulties and learn to really function and live like true believers!

From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, January 11, 1950

One of the greatest problems in the Cause is the relation of the believers to each other; for their immaturity (shared with the rest of humanity) and imperfections retard the work, create complications, and discourage each other. And yet we must put up with these things and try and combat them through love, patience and forgiveness individually, and proper administrative action collectively.

Shoghi Effendi, *Unfolding Destiny*, p. 449

Perhaps the greatest test Baha'is are ever subjected to is from each other; but for the sake of the Master they should be ever ready to overlook each other's mistakes, apologize for harsh words they have uttered, forgive and forget.

Shoghi Effendi, *Living the Life*, p. 15

Abdu'l-Baha does not permit adverse criticism of individuals by name in discussion among the friends, even if the one criticizing believes that he is doing so to protect the interests of the Cause. If the situation is of such gravity as to endanger the interests of the Faith, the complaint, as your National Spiritual Assembly has indicated, should be submitted to the Local Spiritual Assembly, or as you state to a representative of the institution of the Counsellors, for consideration and action. In such cases, of course, the name of the person or persons involved will have to be mentioned.

From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer
February 16, 1951, *Living the Life*, p. 17

Obstacles to encouragement

Assumption of superiority

All religions teach that we should love one another; that we should seek out our own shortcomings before we presume to condemn the faults of others, that we must not consider ourselves superior to our neighbours! We must be careful not to exalt ourselves lest we be humiliated.

‘Abdu'l-Baha, *Paris Talks*, p. 147

no one should glorify himself over another; no one should manifest pride or superiority toward another; no one should look upon another with scorn and contempt; and no one should deprive or oppress a fellow creature. All must be considered as submerged in the ocean of God's mercy. We must associate with all humanity in gentleness and kindness. We must love all with love of the heart. Some are ignorant; they must be trained and educated. One is sick; he must be healed. Another is as a child; we must assist him to attain maturity. We must not detest him who is ailing, neither shun him, scorn nor curse him, but care for him with the utmost kindness and tenderness

‘Abdu'l-Baha, *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 63

The ones in real authority are known by their humility and self-sacrifice and show no attitude of superiority over the friends. Some time ago a tablet was written stating that none are appointed to any authority to do anything but to serve the Cause as true servants of the friends - and for this no tablet is necessary; such service when true and unselfish, requires no announcement, nor following, nor written document. Let the servant be known by his deeds, by his life! To be approved of God alone should be one's aim.

‘Abdu'l-Baha, *Star of the West*, Vol. VI, No. 6, p. 43

In brief, the assumption of superiority by man will continue to be depressing to the ambition of woman, as if her attainment to equality was creationally impossible; woman's aspiration toward advancement will be checked by it, and she will gradually become hopeless. On the contrary, we must declare that her capacity is equal, even greater than man's. This will inspire her with hope and ambition, and her susceptibilities for advancement will continually increase. She must not be told and taught that she is weaker and inferior in capacity and qualification. If a pupil is told that his intelligence is less than his fellow pupils, it is a very great drawback and handicap to his progress. He must be encouraged to advance by the statement, "You are most capable, and if you endeavor, you will attain the highest degree."

‘Abdu'l-Baha, *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 76-77

It is Our wish and desire that every one of you may become a source of all goodness unto men, and an example of uprightness to mankind. Beware lest ye prefer yourselves above your neighbors. Fix your gaze upon Him Who is the Temple of God amongst men. He, in truth, hath offered up His life as a ransom for the redemption of the world. He, verily, is the All-Bountiful, the Gracious, the Most High

Baha'u'llah, *Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'ullah*, pp. 315-316

Obstacles to encouragement

Assumption of superiority (continued)

O ye lovers of this wronged one! Cleanse ye your eyes, so that ye behold no man as different from yourselves. See ye no strangers; rather see all men as friends, for love and unity come hard when ye fix your gaze on otherness. And in this new and wondrous age, the Holy Writings say that we must be at one with every people; that we must see neither harshness nor injustice, neither malevolence, nor hostility, nor hate, but rather turn our eyes toward the heaven of ancient glory. For each of the creatures is a sign of God, and it was by the grace of the Lord and His power that each did step into the world; therefore they are not strangers, but in the family; not aliens, but friends, and to be treated as such.

Wherefore must the loved ones of God associate in affectionate fellowship with stranger and friend alike, showing forth to all the utmost loving-kindness, disregarding the degree of their capacity, never asking whether they deserve to be loved. In every instance let the friends be considerate and infinitely kind. Let them never be defeated by the malice of the people, by their aggression and their hate, no matter how intense. If others hurl their darts against you, offer them milk and honey in return; if they poison your lives, sweeten their souls; if they injure you, teach them how to be comforted; if they inflict a wound upon you, be a balm to their sores; if they sting you, hold to their lips a refreshing cup.

‘Abdu’l-Baha, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Baha*, p. 24

Humility exalteth man to the heaven of glory and power, whilst pride abaseth him to the depths of wretchedness and degradation.

Baha’u’llah, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 30

Envy

O MY SERVANT! Purge thy heart from malice and, innocent of envy, enter the divine court of holiness.

Baha’u’llah, *Persian Hidden Words*, p. 42

O SON OF EARTH! Know, verily, the heart wherein the least remnant of envy yet lingers, shall never attain My everlasting dominion, nor inhale the sweet savors of holiness breathing from My kingdom of sanctity.

Baha’u’llah, *Persian Hidden Words*, p. 6

All over the world one hears beautiful sayings extolled and noble precepts admired. All men say they love what is good, and hate everything that is evil! Sincerity is to be admired, whilst lying is despicable. Faith is a virtue, and treachery is a disgrace to humanity. It is a blessed thing to gladden the hearts of men, and wrong to be the cause of pain. To be kind and merciful is right, while to hate is sinful. Justice is a noble quality and injustice an iniquity. That it is one's duty to be pitiful and harm no one, and to avoid jealousy and malice at all costs. Wisdom is the glory of man, not ignorance; light, not darkness! It is a good thing to turn one's face toward God, and foolishness to ignore Him. That it is our duty to guide man upward, and not to mislead him and be the cause of his downfall. There are many more examples like unto these.

‘Abdu’l-Baha, *Paris Talks*, pp. 79-80

Obstacles to encouragement

Envy (Continued)

It is clear from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, as well as from those of Abdu'l-Baha and the interpretations of the Guardian, that the proper functioning of human society requires the preservation of ranks and classes within its membership. The friends should recognize this without envy or jealousy, and those who occupy ranks should never exploit their position or regard themselves as being superior to others

From a letter of the Universal House of Justice
to all National Spiritual Assemblies, March 27, 1978

Courtesy, reverence, dignity, respect for the rank and achievements of others are virtues which contribute to the harmony and well-being of every community, but pride and self-aggrandisement are among the most deadly of sins.

The House of Justice hopes that all the friends will remember that the ultimate aim in life of every soul should be to attain spiritual excellence -to win the good pleasure of God. The true spiritual station of any soul is known only to God. It is quite a different thing from the ranks and stations that men and women occupy in the various sectors of society. Whoever has his eyes fixed on the goal of attaining the good pleasure of God will accept with joy and radiant acquiescence whatever work or station is assigned to him in the Cause of God, and will rejoice to serve Him under all conditions.

The Universal House of Justice, *Lights of Guidance*, p. 327

Expecting immediate results

Do not feel discouraged if the work you are doing for His Cause does not bear rich and immediate fruit. The seeds you are so patiently and devotedly sowing will assuredly germinate, and future generations will reap an abundant harvest. The Master is watching over and blessing your historic services. Rest assured.

Shoghi Effendi, *Japan Will Turn Ablaze*, p. 65

Do not feel discouraged at the meagerness of the results you now obtain. The Master's promises regarding the share you are destined to contribute towards the spread of the Faith in the Far East will sooner or later be completely realized. No matter how dark the present may appear, you should feel nevertheless confident that the distant future is immeasurably bright. Strive, therefore, with a joyful radiant and confident heart to hasten the fulfillment of Abdu'l-Baha's glorious promises. Your reward is unimaginably great, and the success that awaits your labours certain.

Shoghi Effendi, *Japan Will Turn Ablaze*, p`Abdu'l-Baha,. 66

. . . if a soul is endowed with the attributes of true faith and characterized with spiritual qualities he will become to all mankind an emblem of the outstretched mercies of God. For the attributes of the people of faith are justice and fair-mindedness; forbearance and compassion and generosity; consideration for others; candor, trustworthiness, and loyalty; love and loving-kindness; devotion and determination and humanity.

`Abdu'l-Baha, Secret of Divine Civilization, p. 55