

Proclamation 1,2,3 *

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"*Master the News*" presented the kernel of a method to conduct proclamation of the Baha'i message. Inspired by the example of 'Abdu'l-Baha, known as the Master, it has been used by the author with tangible, concrete success. The method is so simple even I can understand it and will now be disclosed.

WARNING: if you read further and disclose this secret to others, I cannot be held responsible for what all those new Baha'i members might wind up doing.

Let us start with a thought experiment. Collect some books of talks by 'Abdu'l-Baha in the West, such as Paris Talks and many others. Notice that the content of the talk tended to match the interests of the audience. If the group was liberal-minded women, he spoke of woman's rights, suffrage, and such. If the venue was a church, he addressed Baha'i thought on Christian subjects. For humanists and philosophers, he discussed Baha'i teachings matched to their interests.

Next, mix up the talks and the venues randomly. Now we might see a talk geared to the understanding and interests of group A given to group B, and so forth. In short, a real mess, failed communication. Such a scenario might actually have produced negative publicity. Agreed? OK, now let's go with *Proclamation 1,2,3*.

Step 1. Learn audience interests and needs

Upon selecting a proclamation audience -- local, national, international, make it your business to know their interests and needs. This step is represented by the news headlines and stories quoted in "*Master the News*".

* Posted as a sample chapter at https://bahai-library.com/keene_essays_bahai_topics . Purchase online at <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B096WBTP44>

Nowadays, many will use the internet to complete Step 1, any way you like, not limited just to top news stories. If various mass media are not available for your selected audience, use your general knowledge, conversations with locals, etc.

Perhaps the most important consideration to complete Step 1 in a *Proclamation 1,2,3* cycle is that the identified audience interest or need must be gut-level, emotion-packed, lower-brain stuff. Think hot and controversial -- that is what makes an item a top news story and subject of conversation among your audience members.

For example, if the selected audience is Wall Street financial workers (brokers, bosses, back-room functionaries, etc), you pass right by "Securities Exchange Commission (SEC) Ponders Arcane Accounting Rule" and go with "SEC Employees Watch Porn All Day on Your Dime". Avoid the cerebral stuff and home in on the emotional. The rationale here is simple: both you and your audience will need strong motivation to motor through Steps 2 and 3. In short, the interest or need selected must be as juicy as possible.

Generally, news headlines are already selected on this basis, since the news media itself strives to have a large audience. So look for starvation, riots, fighting, anger, confusion, frustration, disappointment, bankruptcy, scandal and all such good things for Step 1.

Another example: if your audience is mostly sports fans, look for the most outrageous, scandalous dirt you can find in the favored sport for Step 1.

Oh, yes, and avoid old news -- people are already talked out about that.

Step 2: Get Useful Information

In *"Master the News"*, this step is represented by a quote from the Baha'i writings, and not to be worried if I did only an average, moderate to poor job there in matching those quotes with the selected headlines. You surely can do better. You have your knowledge of the writings, internet search of the writings for keywords if available, or even just one book, such as *Hidden Words* or *Gleanings*, if that is all you have on hand.

The useful information in Step 2 might also be from other sources, secondary writings on Baha'i topics or simply secular knowledge from textbooks, etc, as long as it speaks clearly and directly to the audience interest or need. In that case, the Baha'i presence can be indicated by a short generic quote or just your signature as a member.

Step 3: Distribute to audience

Before the internet, I used public service meetings (free professional advice on juicy, sexy, controversial topics -- and the public likes free stuff), paid newspaper ads, appearances on radio talk shows and hand-distributed flyers. All work. Today, forget it. You can sit naked at your keyboard and blog your brains out.

As the internet gurus might say, if you choose the most hot topics of the day in Step 1 (is or is not Halle Berry hot in my "*Master the News*" item?), you might get hits for your *Proclamation 1,2,3* efforts from all over, including the orbiting space station.

Easy as 1,2,3

Notice that your own commentary is optional. In "*Master the News*", I added some comments just for fun and some along the smarty-pants line. People generally do not like smart-ass, flippant persons, so leave all that out. Besides, in the real-deal, you have chosen serious, emotional content in Step 1, so flippant remarks are really not appropriate and probably distracting.

In sum, add your own commentary if you like, keep it short and pithy. If you don't have a clue about the subject matter beyond completing Steps 1 and 2, let it ride; let your audience figure it out; maybe it will be a sort of puzzle of the day.

If there is a Local Spiritual Assembly in your area, I have found that the following works. Meet and explain the *Proclamation 1,2,3* method, it has to be instant to work and that you (and optionally, your rag-tag group of vagabonds) will serve as the Editor. That way, when the inevitable reactions like "Jim Keene has gone crazy" or "Jim Keene is going to get us all shot" and the like come in, the Assembly can honestly say, "You are right, it is all Jim Keene's fault" or "We are so busy processing new enrollments that we can't deliberate on that until next month". In brief, the Assembly is informed and in charge, because they cleared you as "Editor" for your *Proclamation 1,2,3* project.

Strongly suggest avoiding headlines that might appear to favor some politician or political party. For one thing, partison politics is the kiss of death, and you don't want to be seen as a pawn for these people. Not to mention that the public generally disfavors all politicians.

Although the interest or need in Step 1 may be some ugly stuff, your Step 2 should be upbeat, thought-provoking in a way that people will want to talk about the package you present. If the headline is, say, "Draught destroys crops; starvation feared", the Step 2 useful information is not "We are all doomed", which may be somewhat useful and correct, as far as it goes. But it is not positive, a solution, something providing hope. Better something like, "For a few bucks we can pipe some water from well to field" or something like that.

Lastly, please do not forget contact information on your flyer, blog, web site, etc. Regarding possible redundancy, not to worry. There are so many audiences, interests and needs out there, it is unlikely that any particular permutation would be repeated all that much in this wide, wide world.

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