

# **How Should We Speak With One Another?**

**Baha'i Faith and Spiritual Teachings Meetup Group**

# A Kindly Tongue

“A kindly tongue is the lodestone of the hearts of men. It is the bread of the spirit, it clotheth the words with meaning, it is the fountain of the light of wisdom and understanding.”

Above quotation from Bahá'u'lláh

# How to Share Knowledge with Others

“Not everything that a man knoweth can be disclosed, nor can everything that he can disclose be regarded as timely, nor can every timely utterance be considered as suited to the capacity of those who hear it.”

“If ye be aware of a certain truth, if ye possess a jewel, of which others are deprived, share it with them in a language of utmost kindness and good-will. If it be accepted, if it fulfil its purpose, your object is attained. If any one should refuse it, leave him unto himself, and beseech God to guide him.”

“He (the true seeker) must never seek to exalt himself above any one, must wash away from the tablet of his heart every trace of pride and vain-glory, must cling unto patience and resignation, observe silence and refrain from idle talk.”

Above quotations from Bahá'u'lláh

# Truthfulness

“Truthfulness is the foundation of all human virtues.”

“Without truthfulness progress and success, in all the worlds of God, are impossible for any soul.”

“Beautify your tongues, O people, with truthfulness, and adorn your souls with the ornament of honesty.”

Above quotations from Bahá'u'lláh

# Conflict and Contention

“O ye beloved of the Lord! In this sacred Dispensation, conflict and contention are in no wise permitted. Every aggressor deprives himself of God’s grace.”

“Nothing whatever can, in this Day, inflict a greater harm upon this Cause than dissension and strife, contention, estrangement and apathy, among the loved ones of God.”

Above quotations from 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Bahá'u'lláh

# Backbiting and Fault Finding (1)

“... backbiting quencheth the light of the heart, and extinguisheth the life of the soul.”

“O Son of Being! How couldst thou forget thine own faults and busy thyself with the faults of others?”

“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.”

Above quotations from Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá

# Backbiting and Fault Finding (2)

“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-Bahá tells us: “To look always at the good and not at the bad. If a man has ten good qualities and one bad one, to look at the ten and forget the one; and if a man has ten bad qualities and one good one, to look at the one and forget the ten.”

“It happened one day in the time of Christ—may the life of the world be a sacrifice unto Him—that He passed by the dead body of a dog, a carcass reeking, hideous, the limbs rotting away. One of those present said: ‘How foul its stench!’ And another said: ‘How sickening! How loathsome!’ To be brief, each one of them had something to add to the list. But then Christ Himself spoke, and He told them: ‘Look at that dog’s teeth! How gleaming white!’ The Messiah’s sin-covering gaze did not for a moment dwell upon the repulsiveness of that carrion. The one element of that dead dog’s carcass which was not abomination was the teeth: and Jesus looked upon their brightness.”

Above quotations from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

# Group Decision Making (1)

## **Be Guided by Spiritual Principles**

“There are spiritual principles, or what some call human values, by which solutions can be found for every social problem. Any well-intentioned group can in a general sense devise practical solutions to its problems, but good intentions and practical knowledge are usually not enough. The essential merit of spiritual principle is that it not only presents a perspective which harmonizes with that which is immanent in human nature, it also induces an attitude, a dynamic, a will, an aspiration, which facilitate the discovery and implementation of practical measures. Leaders of government and all in authority would be well served in their efforts to solve problems if they would first seek to identify the principles involved and then be guided by them.”

## **The First Condition**

“The first condition is absolute love and harmony amongst the members of the assembly. They must be wholly free from estrangement and must manifest in themselves the Unity of God...”

Above quotations from the Universal House of Justice and 'Abdu'l-Bahá



# Group Decision Making (2)

## Offering your Contribution

“...Consultation must have for its object the investigation of truth. He who expresses an opinion should not voice it as correct and right but set it forth as a contribution to the consensus of opinion, for the light of reality becomes apparent when two opinions coincide. A spark is produced when flint and steel come together.”

“They must then proceed with the utmost devotion, courtesy, dignity, care and moderation to express their views. ... The honored members must with all freedom express their own thoughts, and it is in no wise permissible for one to belittle the thought of another, nay, he must with moderation set forth the truth, and should differences of opinion arise a majority of voices must prevail, and all must obey and submit to the majority.”

“The second principle is that of detachment in consultation. The members of an Assembly must learn to express their views frankly, calmly, without passion or rancor. They must also learn to listen to the opinions of their fellow members without taking offense or belittling the views of another. Bahá’í consultation is not an easy process. It requires love, kindness, moral courage and humility. Thus no member should ever allow himself to be prevented from expressing frankly his view because it may offend a fellow member; and, realizing this, no member should take offense at another member's statements.”

Above quotations from 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi

# Group Decision Making (3)

## **Making and Implementing Decisions**

“The ideal of Bahá’í consultation is to arrive at a unanimous decision. When this is not possible a vote must be taken.”

“As soon as a decision is reached it becomes the decision of the whole Assembly, not merely of those members who happened to be among the majority.”

“But once the opinion of the majority has been ascertained, all the members should automatically and unreservedly obey it, and faithfully carry it out.”

Above quotations from the Universal House of Justice and Shoghi Effendi

# Group Decision Making (4)

## Handling Disputes

“If any differences arise amongst you, behold Me standing before your face, and overlook the faults of one another for My name’s sake and as a token of your love for My manifest and resplendent Cause.”

“The Bahá’ís must learn to forget personalities and to overcome the desire-so natural in people-to take sides and fight about it.”

“The friends should therefore not feel discouraged at the differences of opinion that may prevail among the members of an Assembly for these, as experience has shown,...fulfill a valuable function in all Assembly deliberations.”

“The honored members...should exert their efforts so that no differences may occur, and if such differences do occur, they should not reach the point of causing conflict, hatred and antagonism, which lead to threats. When you notice that a stage has been reached when enmity and threats are about to occur, you should immediately postpone discussion of the subject, until wranglings, disputations, and loud talk vanish, and a propitious time is at hand.”

Above quotations from Bahá’u’lláh, Shoghi Effendi and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá