

**Unity and  
Consultation**

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For a Bahá'í Community to be truly united, every believer must flee from strife and contention. Bahá'u'lláh says:

“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. Flee them, through the power God and His sovereign aid, and strive ye to knit together the hearts of men, in His Name, the Unifier, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.”

We should love all the believers in our community, and this we should do entirely for the love of God. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá says:

“Be in perfect unity. Never become angry with one another.... 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.”

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If, with all the love we feel for one another, tensions arise among us, we should immediately remember this counsel of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

“I charge you all that each one of you concentrate all the thoughts of your heart on love and unity. When a thought of war comes, oppose it by a stronger thought of peace. A thought of hatred must be destroyed by a more powerful thought of love. Thoughts of war bring destruction to all harmony, well-being, restfulness and content. Thoughts of love are constructive of brotherhood, peace, friendship, and happiness.”

And if, having made every effort to control them, we see our passions overtaking us and find ourselves entering into conflict, these words of Bahá’u’lláh will help us through moments of weakness:

“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.”

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Unity of thought is unfulfilled if it is not translated into unity of action. Acting in unity does not mean that we all do the same thing. On the contrary, when a community devises a plan of unified action, then the diverse talents of every individual are used to the fullest. Our powers multiply and even a small community is enabled to achieve what most large and powerful organizations in the world are incapable of accomplishing.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá says:

“The supreme need of humanity is cooperation and reciprocity. The stronger the ties of fellowship and solidarity amongst men, the greater will be the power of constructiveness and accomplishment in all the planes of human activity.”

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A most important key to successful community action is frank and loving consultation on all matters. Through consultation, the various ways we each look at an issue merge together and we discover the best direction we should follow in our collective actions. Through consultation, we achieve unity of thought, and with our thoughts and views united, we create imaginative plans for the growth of our communities. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá says of those who consult:

“...they must, when coming together, turn their faces to the Kingdom on high and ask aid from the Realm of Glory. They must then proceed with the utmost devotion, courtesy, dignity, care and moderation to express their views. They must in every matter search out the truth and not insist upon their own opinion, for stubbornness and persistence in one’s views will lead ultimately to discord and wrangling and the truth will remain hidden. 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.”

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The spiritual discipline of overlooking the faults of others, focusing on their praiseworthy qualities and abstaining totally from backbiting, is a most effective measure against disunity. We should remember that we tend not to see the faults of those we love and have no difficulty looking upon them with a sin-covering eye. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá says:

“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. You must love and be kind to everybody, care for the poor, protect the weak, heal the sick, teach and educate the ignorant.”

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Bahá'u'lláh says:

“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 forevermore.”

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Unity, of course, is not merely the absence of strife and dissension, and love is not to be expressed in words alone. We can only claim that true unity exists in our group if our love for one another is translated into service, and if our activities are governed by a spirit of cooperation and mutual aid. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá says:

“Some of the creatures of existence can live solitary and alone. A tree, for instance, may live without the assistance and cooperation of other trees. Some animals are isolated and lead a separate existence away from their kind. But this is impossible for man. In his life and being, cooperation and association are essential. Through association and meeting we find happiness and development, individual and collective.”

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