

Purpose:

To know the assignments given in our Writings to men, to women, and to both men and women for promoting the principle of equality.

∞ KEY

Working individually, or in teams of two, read with care the following passages from the Writings. Mark each passage with “M” when it indicates an assignment for men, with “W” when it indicates an assignment for women, and “B” when it indicates an assignment for both men and women. Be careful to watch for both attitudes and actions as they are assigned.

As participants read through the quotations, divide a flip chart page into three columns, headed as follows:

Required of men

Required of women

Required of both men and women

In the whole group, complete the chart with brief passages from the Writings that indicate the actions and attitudes assigned to men, to women, and to both men and women.

Then briefly discuss the questions:

1. In what ways do the actions and attitudes assigned in our Writings distinguish the Bahá'í approach from the various modes of thinking and acting in society at large?
2. What will be the impact on society at large as Bahá'í men and women are able to increasingly reflect in our daily lives the transformative patterns of thought and action enjoined by our Faith?

Process the session:

How will our communities be different when aggression and use of force are replaced with cooperation and consultation?

Equality: A Shared Responsibility



All should know, and in this regard attain the splendours of the sun of certitude, and be illumined thereby: Women and men have been and will always be equal in the sight of God. The Dawning-Place of the Light of God sheddeth its radiance upon all with the same effulgence. Verily God created women for men, and men for women. The most beloved of people before God are the most steadfast and those who have surpassed others in their love for God, exalted be His glory....

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *THE COMPILATIONS*: VOLUME 2, PAGE 379

The happiness of mankind will be realized when women and men coordinate and advance equally, for each is the complement and helpmeet of the other.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE*, P. 182

The handmaidens of God and the bondswomen in His divine Court should reveal such attributes and attitudes amongst the women of the world as would cause them to stand out and achieve renown in the circles of women. That is, they should associate with them with supreme chastity and steadfast decency, with unshakable faith, articulate speech, and eloquent tongue, irrefutable testimony and high resolve. Beseech God that thou mayest attain unto all these bounties.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, QUOTED IN *MESSAGES FROM THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE*, 1963-1986, PAGE 707

Woman must endeavour then to attain greater perfection, to be man's equal in every respect, to make progress in all in which she has been backward, so that man will be compelled to acknowledge her equality of capacity and attainment.

In Europe women have made greater progress than in the East, but there is still much to be done! When students have arrived at the end of their school term an examination takes place, and the result thereof determines the knowledge and capacity of each student. So will it be with woman; her actions will show her power, there will no longer be any need to proclaim it by words. It is my hope that women of the East, as well as their Western sisters, will progress rapidly until humanity shall reach perfection. God's Bounty is for all and gives power for all progress. When men own the equality of women there will be no need for them to struggle for their rights! One of the principles then of Baha'u'llah is the equality of sex. Women must make the greatest effort to acquire spiritual power and to increase in the virtue of wisdom and holiness until their enlightenment and striving succeeds in bringing about the unity of mankind. They must work with a burning enthusiasm to spread the Teaching of Baha'u'llah among the peoples, so that the radiant light of the Divine Bounty may envelop the souls of all the nations of the world!

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *PARIS TALKS*, PP. 162-63

In this wondrous Dispensation the favours of the Glorious Lord are vouchsafed unto the handmaidens of the Merciful. Therefore, they should, like unto men, seize the prize and excel in the field, so that it will be proven and made manifest that the penetrative influence of the Word of God in this new Dispensation hath caused women to be equal with men, and that in the arena of tests they will outdo others. Therefore, the true bondswomen of the Blessed Beauty must be revived by the spirit of detachment, and refreshed by the breezes of attraction. With hearts overflowing with the love of God, with souls gladdened by the heavenly glad-tidings, and with extreme humility and lowliness, let them speak out with eloquent speech, and praise and glorify the Great Lord, for they are the manifestations of His bounty and adorned with the crown of splendour.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *THE COMPILATIONS*: VOLUME 2, PAGES 396-397

Divine Justice demands that the rights of both sexes should be equally respected since neither is superior to the other in the eyes of Heaven.

¹ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *PARIS TALKS*, p. 162.

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."

²ABDU'L-BAHA: *PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE*, PAGES 76-77

Bahá'í men have the opportunity to demonstrate to the world around them a new approach to the relationship between the sexes, where aggression and the use of force are eliminated and replaced by cooperation and consultation.

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