

DEVOTIONAL/STUDY PROGRAM

FRIENDSHIPS IN MARRIAGE AND IN THE COMMUNITY

Prayer Requests and Open Prayers; Prayers and Music with Children; Discussion about best qualities of friends with the children

Music – Marriage Prayer

“Praise be to God, the Ancient, the Ever-Abiding, the Changeless, the Eternal! ... [W]hen He desired to manifest grace and beneficence to men, and to set the world in order, He revealed observances and created laws; among them He established the law of marriage, made it as a fortress for well-being and salvation, and enjoined it upon us in that which was sent down out of the heaven of sanctity in His Most Holy Book. He saith, great is His glory: ‘Enter into wedlock, O people, that ye may bring forth one who will make mention of Me amid My servants. This is My bidding unto you; hold fast to it as an assistance to yourselves.’” (Bahá’u’lláh: *Bahá’í Prayers* (US 2002), pp. 117-118)

“Bahá’í marriage is the commitment of the two parties one to the other, and their mutual attachment of mind and heart. Each must, however, exercise the utmost care to become thoroughly acquainted with the character of the other, that the binding covenant between them may be a tie that will endure forever. Their purpose must be this: to become loving companions and comrades and at one with each other for time and eternity....

“The true marriage of Bahá’ís is this, that husband and wife should be united both physically and spiritually, that they may ever improve the spiritual life of each other, and may enjoy everlasting unity throughout all the worlds of God.” (‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 118)

“Bahá’ís should be profoundly aware of the sanctity of marriage and should strive to make their marriages an eternal bond of unity and harmony. This requires effort and sacrifice and wisdom and self-abnegation.” (On behalf of the Universal House of Justice: *Lights of Guidance*, p. 391)

FRIENDSHIP AS A FOUNDATION FOR MARRIAGE AND COMMUNITIES

Quotations on Friendship in Marriage

1. “The Lord... hath made woman and man to abide with each other in the closest companionship, and to be even as a single soul. They are two helpmates, two intimate friends, who should be concerned about the welfare of each other. If they live thus, they will pass through this world with perfect contentment, bliss, and peace of heart, and become the object of divine grace and favor in the Kingdom of heaven.” (‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, #92)
2. “...[T]he life of a married couple should resemble the life of the angels in heaven—a life full of joy and spiritual delight, a life of unity and concord, a friendship both mental and physical.” (‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *The Compilation of Compilations, Vol. I, “Family Life”*, p. 397)
3. “The love between husband and wife should not be purely physical, nay rather it must be spiritual and heavenly. These two souls should be considered as one soul. How difficult it would be to divide a single soul! Nay, great would be the difficulty! ... [T]he foundation of the Kingdom of God is based upon harmony and love, oneness, relationship and union, not upon differences, especially between husband and wife.” (‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Lights of Guidance*, p. 391-2)
4. “...[M]arriage should lead to a profound friendship of spirit....” (On behalf of Shoghi Effendi: *Lights of Guidance*, p. 206, #689)
5. “Chastity in no way implies withdrawal from human relationships. It liberates people from the tyranny of the ubiquity* of sex. A person who is in control of his sexual impulses is enabled to have profound and enduring friendships with many people, both men and women, without ever sully that unique and priceless bond that

should unite man and wife.” (On behalf of the Universal House of Justice: *The Compilation of Compilations, Vol. I*, “A Chaste and Holy Life”, p. 51)

* Defined as: present everywhere

Reflection and Discussion

1. How do we define friendship in marriage?
2. What activities help sustain marital friendship?
3. How is marital friendship different than friendship with others?

Music

Quotations on Friendship in the Community

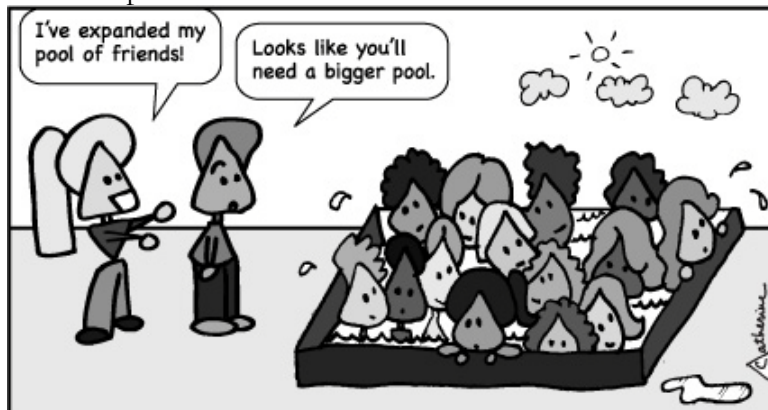
1. “The love of God has brought us together, and this is the best of means and motive. Every other bond of friendship is limited in effectiveness, but fellowship based upon the love of God is unlimited, everlasting, divine and radiant.” (‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 442)
2. “The individual alone can exercise those capacities which include the ability to take initiative, to seize opportunities, to form friendships, to interact personally with others, to build relationships, to win the cooperation of others in common service to the Faith and society, and to convert into action the decisions made by consultative bodies.” (Universal House of Justice, Ridván 1996)
3. “...[E]stablish ties of friendship, on the basis of shared understanding, with those previously regarded as strangers.” (Universal House of Justice, Ridván 2010, para 3)
4. “To the extent that the conversation continues beyond the initial encounter and veritable* friendships are formed, a direct teaching effort of this kind can become a catalyst for an enduring process of spiritual transformation.” (Universal House of Justice, Ridván 2010, para. 4)

* Defined as: genuine or true

The Universal House of Justice (International Bahá’í governing body) asks us to develop friendships at the neighborhood and community level. If we are happy as a married couple, and if we have developed friendship and helping skills in our marriage, we will be more effective in the neighborhood. When we are helpful to others in our lives together, it can strengthen our marital friendship, too. We can build skills this way that help us in our marriage.

Reflection and Discussion

1. What behaviors and character qualities are present in excellent friendships generally?
2. How can we begin new friendships?



Music