

## Consultation

“The question of consultation is of the utmost importance, and is one of the most potent instruments conducive to the tranquility and felicity of the people. For example, when a believer is uncertain about his affairs, or when he seeketh to pursue a project or trade, the friends should gather together and devise a solution for him. He, in his turn, should act accordingly. Likewise in larger issues, when a problem ariseth, or a difficulty occurreth, the wise should gather, consult, and devise a solution. They should then rely upon the one true God, and surrender to His Providence, in whatever way it may be revealed, for divine confirmations will undoubtedly assist.”(Abdu’l-Bahá: *Consultation*, pp. 96-97; *Fire & Gold*, p. 270)

## Directing the Course of One’s Life

11 October 1978

To an individual Bahá’í

Dear Bahá’í friend,

The Universal House of Justice has received your moving appeal for guidance in your letter of 5 September 1978, and has instructed us to convey to you the following advice.

Each individual is unique and has a unique path to tread in his lifetime. In espousing the Bahá’í Faith you have defined the direction of that path, for your recognition of God’s Manifestation for this Day and your devotion to His Message provide the spiritual and ethical basis for all aspects of your life of service to mankind, while the continuing guidance that He has provided for the community of His followers enables you to know the directions in which the most effort is required at the present time.

While, during the early years of the development of the Faith, Bahá’u’lláh, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi sometimes gave specific instructions to individual believers on how they should serve the Cause, the Universal House of Justice seldom does this. It is, indeed, the precious privilege of the individual human being to direct the course of his own life. Through exercising this privilege while striving always to conform his conduct to the divine Teachings and devote his talents in the best possible way to the service of the Cause and mankind, a soul deepens his understanding of God and His will.

This does not mean that you are left to make your decisions without guidance. This you will find from several sources. Firstly, in general, you will find it in the Writings. Secondly, and more specifically, in the teaching plans issued by the Universal House of Justice. Thirdly, in the plans and projects of your own National Spiritual Assembly. All these, it would seem from your letter, you have been striving to follow. Fourthly, with regard to your own personal goals and actions, is the guidance you can receive through consultation -- with your wife, with friends of your choice whose opinions you value, with your Local Spiritual Assembly, with such committees of your National Assembly as are concerned with the fields of activity towards which your inclinations lie. Fifthly, there is prayer and meditation.

You mention that the answers to your prayers never seem to have come through clearly. Mrs Ruth Moffett has published her recollection of five steps of prayer for guidance that she was told by the beloved Guardian. When asked about these notes, Shoghi Effendi replied, in letters written by his secretary on his behalf, that the notes should be regarded as “Personal suggestions,” that he considered them to be “quite sound,” but that the friends need not adopt them ‘strictly and universally.’”

The House of Justice feels that they may be helpful to you and, indeed, you may already be familiar with them. They are as follows:

... use these five steps if we have a problem of any kind for which we desire a solution, or wish help.

Pray and meditate about it. Use the prayers of the Manifestations, as they have the greatest power. Learn to remain in the silence of contemplation for a few moments. During this deepest communion take the next step.

Arrive at a decision and hold to this. This decision is usually born in a flash at the close or during the contemplation. It may seem almost impossible of accomplishment, but if it seems to be an answer to prayer or a way of solving the problem, then immediately take the next step.

Have determination to carry the decision through. Many fail here. The decision, budding into determination, is blighted and instead becomes a wish or a vague longing. When determination is born, immediately take the next step.

Have faith and confidence, that the Power of the Holy Spirit will flow through you, the right way will appear, the door will open, the right message, the right principle or the right book will be given to you. Have confidence, and the right thing will come to meet your need. Then as you rise from prayer take immediately the fifth step.

Act as though it had all been answered. Then act with tireless, ceaseless energy. And, as you act, you yourself will become a magnet which will attract more power to your being, until you become an unobstructed channel for the Divine Power to flow through you.

Also the Guardian’s secretary wrote to an individual believer on his behalf: “The Master said guidance was when the doors opened after we tried. We can pray, ask to do God’s will only, try hard, and then if we find our plan is not working out, assume it is not the right one, at least for the moment.”

The Universal House of Justice deeply appreciates your candor and Spirit of devotion, and assures you of its prayers in the Holy Shrines on your behalf.

With loving Bahá’í greetings, Department of the Secretariat

(The Universal House of Justice, *Messages 1963 to 1986*, p. 383)