

# When You Have a Spouse Who Is Not a Bahá'í Based on the Bahá'í Faith's Teachings

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## Overview

The circumstances of each marriage and family are unique. Below is a collection of quotations that may provide you with insights to guide you in your particular situation. You may also benefit from consultation with Bahá'í institutions, friends or relatives you trust, or professionals who can provide you with additional assistance.

In these quotations, there is mention of a few character qualities that may be helpful for you to practice. Following the quotations is some information about character that may apply in your relationship.

Of course, prayer and meditation will also help you. At the end of the document are prayers you may wish to say for your spouse and marriage.

## From Bahá'u'lláh

1. And when He [God] 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), p. 118)

## From 'Abdu'l-Bahá

1. According to the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh the family, being a human unit, must be educated according to the rules of sanctity. All the virtues must be taught the family. The integrity of the family bond must be constantly considered, and the rights of the individual members must not be transgressed. The rights of the son, the father, the mother—none of them must be transgressed, none of them must be arbitrary. Just as the son has certain obligations to his father, the father, likewise, has certain obligations to his son. The mother, the sister and other members of the household have their certain prerogatives. All these rights and prerogatives must be conserved, yet the unity of the family must be sustained. The injury of one shall be considered the injury of all; the comfort of each, the comfort of all; the honor of one, the honor of all. ('Abdu'l-Bahá: *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 168)
2. As to thy respected husband: it is incumbent upon thee to treat him with great kindness, to consider his wishes and be conciliatory with him at all times, till he seeth that because thou hast directed thyself toward the Kingdom of God, thy tenderness for him and thy love for God have but increased, as well as thy concern for his wishes under all conditions. ('Abdu'l-Bahá: *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, #91)

## From Shoghi Effendi

### ***Relationship Between Husband and Wife***

1. He will pray that the opposition of your husband and sister may be changed, through your own acts of love, kindness, and the patience and tolerance you show to them. (On behalf of Shoghi Effendi: *Compilations of Compilations, Vol. 1, #907*)
2. He would not advise you to in any way force the teachings on your husband, but rather through prayer, love and example attract his heart to what he will be forced to see has not only made you a happier person but a better wife and mother than ever before. It is often most difficult to teach those nearest to us, but the Guardian will earnestly pray that your husband and children will join you in serving this wonderful Cause. (On behalf of Shoghi Effendi: *High Endeavours: Messages to Alaska*, pp. 72-73)
3. He feels you should by all means show your husband the greatest love and sympathy; if we are ever in any doubt as to how we should conduct ourselves as Bahá'ís we should think of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and study His life and ask ourselves what would He have done, for He is our perfect example in every way. And you know how tender He was, and how His affection and kindness shone like sunlight on everyone.  
Your husband and your child have a right to your love, and give you a wonderful opportunity of demonstrating your faith in the Cause. Also you should pray to Bahá'u'lláh to help unite you with your husband and make your home a true and happy home. (On behalf of Shoghi Effendi: *Compilations of Compilations, Vol. 1, #886*)
4. It is sad and distressing that...husbands and wives have not always seen eye to eye. In all such cases, I believe, our departed Master urged the utmost care and consideration on the part of those Bahá'í believers who husbands were not in sympathy with their work. He thought that they ought to be won by love perhaps more than argument, but it would be very unfortunate if he objected to her work for the Faith, over and above all that she is to give to her family. (On Behalf of Shoghi Effendi: *Family Life* (revised 2008), p. 7)
5. When such difference of opinion and belief occurs between husband and wife it is very unfortunate for undoubtedly it detracts from that spiritual bond which is the stronghold of the family bond, especially in times of difficulty. The way, however, that it could be remedied is not by acting in such wise as to alienate the other party. One of the objects of the Cause is actually to bring about a closer bond in the homes. In all such cases, therefore, the Master used to advise obedience to the wishes of the other party and prayer. Pray that your husband may gradually see the light and at the same time so act as to draw him nearer rather than prejudice him. Once that harmony is secured then you will be able to serve unhampered. (On behalf of Shoghi Effendi: *Family Life* (revised 2008), p. 7)
6. The Guardian...is very much grieved indeed to learn of the severe opposition which you are encountering from your husband because of your affiliation with the Cause. He can very well realize the terrible condition facing you, but feels confident that Bahá'u'lláh is guiding you to follow the right way, and is continually assisting and strengthening you in your efforts to solve this most serious and challenging problem of your life. The staunch and unwavering loyalty and devotion which you have thus far so splendidly demonstrated in your attitude to the Faith is truly remarkable and worthy of the highest praise and admiration. The persecutions from which you are now suffering have this one great advantage, namely to deepen your faith in the Cause, and to revive and refresh your energies for its service. You should, therefore, rejoice and welcome those sufferings in so far as they serve to further awaken your consciousness of being a member of the New World Order of Bahá'u'lláh.  
The Guardian wishes me specially to urge you to remain patient and confident, and above all to show your husband the utmost kindness and love, in return for all the opposition and hatred you receive from him. A conciliatory and friendly attitude in such cases is not only the duty of every Bahá'í but is

also the most effective way of winning for the Cause the sympathy and admiration of its former foes and enemies. Love is, indeed, a most potent elixir that can transform vilest and meanest of people into heavenly souls. May your example serve to further confirm the truth of this beautiful teaching of our Faith. (On behalf of Shoghi Effendi: *Lights of Guidance*, #741)

7. As to your husband who, he is most sorry to hear, seems to be so antagonistic to the Cause...; the Guardian wishes you to be patient with him, and to endeavor through loving kindness, wisdom and tact to enlist his consideration and sympathy for the Faith. However unfriendly his present attitude to the Cause may be, and no matter how seriously he may interfere in your activities as a believer, you should never lose hope of winning him to the Faith, nay even of guiding him to openly and actively assist you in your Bahá'í activities. With the unfailing help of Bahá'u'lláh and the example of your own conduct your task will assuredly be made easy and will be crowned with success. (On behalf of Shoghi Effendi: *Lights of Guidance*, #742)

8. He feels that now that you have found the thing you were searching for inwardly, and have this added joy in your life of our glorious Faith, you should be kinder to your husband and more considerate than ever, and do everything in your power to make him feel that this has not taken you away from him, but only made your love for him and your desire to be a good wife to him, greater. Whether he will ultimately be able to become a Bahá'í or not, is something that only time can tell; but there is no doubt where your duty lies, and that is to make him appreciate the fact that your new affiliation has not interfered in any way with his home life or his marriage, but on the contrary, has strengthened both.

It is very difficult when one has found what one knows is the truth, to sit by and see a dear and close relative completely blind to it. The temptation is to try and "stir them up and make them see the light", but this is often disastrous. Silence, love and forbearance will win greater victories in such cases. However, your husband has no right to ask you to give up being a Bahá'í. That is going too far. Nobody should trespass on the sacred bond every human being has a right to have with their Creator.

The Guardian assures you he will pray that you may be guided to do the right thing at this difficult time, and that your husband's attitude may change. (Shoghi Effendi, *High Endeavours, Messages to Alaska*, p. 61)

### **Interfaith Participation/Freedom of Belief**

1. The matter of your giving up your church membership is a conscientious obligation. He does not force you to do so, but as you no longer believe in all the doctrines of your former church, to continue to be a member of it is really to put yourself in a position of one who is acting insincerely. Should you decide to withdraw from the church as a member, however there is no reason why you should not continue to go to church with your husband, and to continue your friendly association with the congregation. He will pray that your husband may be willing for you to take this step. (Shoghi Effendi: *The Light of Divine Guidance*, Vol. 2, p. 85)
2. He was very sorry to see you are having trouble in your home because of the Bahá'í Faith. He feels that you should do all in your power to promote love and harmony between your husband and yourself, for your own sakes and for the sake of your children. You should, however, point out to him that every man is free to seek God for himself, and that, although you will never seek to influence him or even discuss the Bahá'í Faith with him, if he does not want to, he should leave you free to attend the meetings. The Guardian hopes that through patience, tact and prayer, you will gradually overcome his prejudice. (On behalf of Shoghi Effendi: *Compilations of Compilations*, Vol. 1, #887)
3. It seems to him that just as you leave your husband free to believe or not to believe in whatever pleases him, he should accord you the same rudimentary privilege. Surely the right to worship God in the way one believes to be right is the greatest fundamental freedom in the world? On the other hand no one should force one's own convictions on another and if Mr. ... objects to your Bahá'í affiliation you should

carry on your activities not secretly, but not in such a way as to force him to be constantly conscious of them. In other words, you should, for his sake, sometimes forgo the pleasure of attending a Feast or meeting if there is something he wants you to do with him.

The Guardian does not feel your daughter should deceive her father and not let him know she is a Bahá'í. She, like you, for his sake should be willing to sacrifice her attendance at meetings sometimes, but he cannot very well force her to not believe and accept what she holds to be the Truth for this Age!

Every sincere believer in God must inevitably make some sacrifices, and, however heavy these may be, they are insignificant compared to the blessing of accepting Bahá'u'lláh. This is certainly true of dear Mr... who has suffered because of the firmness of his faith. We cannot bow to the blindness of the world; all we can do is to be tactful. (On behalf of Shoghi Effendi: *Lights of Guidance*, #745)

4. Not every one is ready to receive the Cause, but in every walk of life there are souls longing for this new Divine Outpouring, and sufficiently mature spiritually to accept it. The Bahá'ís each according to his own opportunities, must seek out such people.

The Guardian deeply regrets the hostile attitude of some members of your family towards the Cause you have arisen to serve, and he feels that you should do everything in your power to avoid antagonizing them—short, of course, of giving up your Faith and becoming inactive in it.

As you cannot induce them to be interested in it, the best thing to do is what the Master always advised in such cases: leave them to themselves, and pray for them. The Guardian, you may be sure, will also pray for their illumination. Many people have, after bitterly opposing the Faith, been eventually won over by the patience, love, tact and prayers of their Bahá'í relative or friend. (On behalf of Shoghi Effendi: *Lights of Guidance*, #747)

5. As regards your husband's attitude towards the Cause: unfriendly though that may be you should always hope that, through conciliatory and friendly means, and with wise, tactful and patient effort, you can gradually succeed in winning his sympathy for the Faith. Under no circumstances should you try to dictate and impose upon him by force your personal religious convictions. Neither should you allow his opposition to the Cause to seriously hinder your activities for its spread... You should act patiently, tactfully and with confidence that your efforts are being guided and reinforced by Bahá'u'lláh. (On behalf of Shoghi Effendi: *Family Life* (revised; 2008), p. 9)

6. He was sorry to hear that Mrs. ... is in an unhappy state of mind. She should certainly not grieve if she finds that her family are not receptive to the teachings—for not every soul is spiritually enlightened. Indeed, many members of the families of the Prophets themselves have remained unconverted even in face of the example and persuasion of the Manifestation of God; therefore, the friends should not be distressed by such things but rather leave the future of those they love in the hand of God, and by their services and devotion to the Faith, win the right to plead for their spiritual re-birth. (On behalf of Shoghi Effendi: *Lights of Guidance*, #744)

7. He advises you to, at least for a period of time, try and placate your husband by devoting yourself to him, being loving and patient. Perhaps in this way you can soften his opposition towards the Faith. However, he has no right to try and make you give it up. The relation of the individual soul towards its Creator is a purely personal and sacred one, and no one has a right to dictate in such matters. (On behalf of Shoghi Effendi: *Family Life* (revised; 2008), p. 13)

## Parenting

1. Bahá'u'lláh explicitly reveals in His Book of Laws that the very purpose of marriage is the procreation of children who, when grown up, will be able to know God and to recognize and observe His Commandments and Laws as revealed through His Messengers. Marriage is thus, according to the

Bahá'í Teachings, primarily a social and moral act. It has a purpose which transcends the immediate personal needs and interests of the parties.... (On behalf of Shoghi Effendi: *Family Life* (revised 2008), p. 9)

2. He is very sorry to hear of the difficulties that have arisen between you and your husband regarding the education of your children. In all cases where Bahá'ís marry non-Bahá'ís, especially of another Faith, they should have some understanding beforehand about the children's future religious training; when this has not been done, and if the parents cannot agree, the Bahá'í should turn to his Assembly for advice. (On behalf of Shoghi Effendi: *Family Life* (revised; 2008), p. 12)

### **Separation and Divorce**

1. Shoghi Effendi wishes me to add this note in connection with your marriage: he does not feel that any believer, under any circumstances whatsoever, can ever use the Cause or service to it as a reason for abandoning their marriage; divorce, as we know, is very strongly condemned by Bahá'u'lláh, and only grounds of extreme gravity justify it.... (On behalf of Shoghi Effendi: *Compilations of Compilations, Vol. 1, #889*)

### **From the Universal House of Justice**

1. ...If the believer is the only one of his family who has embraced the Faith, it is his duty to endeavour to lead as many other family members as possible to the light of Divine guidance. As soon as a Bahá'í family unit emerges, the members should feel responsible for making the collective life of the family a spiritual reality, animated by Divine love and inspired by the ennobling principles of the Faith. To achieve this purpose, the reading of the Sacred Writings and prayers should ideally become a daily family activity. As far as the teaching work is concerned, just as individuals are called upon to adopt teaching goals, the family itself could adopt its own goals. In this way the friends could make of their families strong healthy units, bright candles for the diffusion of the light of the Kingdom, and powerful centers to attract the heavenly confirmations. (Universal House of Justice: *Lights of Guidance, #746*)
2. In any group, however loving the consultation, there are nevertheless points on which, from time to time, agreement cannot be reached. In a Spiritual Assembly this dilemma is resolved by a majority vote. There can, however, be no majority where only two parties are involved, as in the case of a husband and wife. There are, therefore, times when a wife should defer to her husband, and times when a husband should defer to his wife, but neither should ever unjustly dominate the other. In short, the relationship between husband and wife should be as held forth in the prayer revealed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá which is often read at Bahá'í weddings: "Verily, they are married in obedience to Thy command. Cause them to become the signs of harmony and unity until the end of time." (On behalf of the Universal House of Justice, *Lights of Guidance, #751*)
3. ...[A] Bahá'í who is married to a non-Bahá'í may well have to limit his activities to some degree in order to maintain the unity of his family. (On behalf of the Universal House of Justice: *Lights of Guidance, #301*)
4. In considering the problems that you and your wife are experiencing, the House of Justice points out that the unity of your family should take priority over any other consideration. Bahá'u'lláh came to bring unity to the world, and a fundamental unity is that of the family. Therefore, we must believe that the Faith is intended to strengthen the family, not weaken it. For example, service to the Cause should not produce neglect of the family. It is important for you to arrange your time so that your family life is harmonious and your household receives the attention it requires.

Bahá'u'lláh also stressed the importance of consultation. We should not think this worthwhile method of seeking solutions is confined to the administrative institutions of the Cause. Family consultation employing full and frank discussion, and animated by awareness of the need for moderation and



## Helpful Character Qualities to Practice

(Excerpted from *Creating Excellent Relationships: The Power of Character Choices*, a Marriage Transformation® publication)

### Kindness

**Kindness is** considering the needs or wants of others and acting in a deliberately warm-hearted and empathetic manner to meet them.

#### Someone practices Kindness effectively when he/she:

- Looks outside of himself/herself and makes efforts to meet the needs of others
- Shows a warm, pleasant, and considerate attitude towards others
- Offers positive, understanding, hopeful, and uplifting words and gestures to calm, comfort, or assist others or himself/herself in difficult circumstances
- Acts or speaks spontaneously with concern and understanding to assist someone and uplift his/her spirits, sometimes privately without the recipient knowing the source of assistance

#### Someone needs to strengthen Kindness when he/she:

- Insists on or seeks the most severe consequences for other people's mistakes
- Lives a self-centered life, ignoring the needs and wishes of those around him/her
- Behaves in a harsh, mean, cruel, rude, neglectful, or critical way
- Holds a resentful, grudging, or bitter attitude towards others
- Sees the needs of others but ignores them and chooses not to take any action

### Love

**Love is** connecting to others through affection and joining with them to express the powerfully magnetic and caring force that unites the universe.

#### Someone practices Love effectively when he/she:

- Prays and meditates to maintain a spiritual bond of connection with a loving God
- Uses words, gestures, and actions to communicate warm, affectionate, and appreciative feelings towards others and himself/herself
- Expresses affection consistently to others in ways they prefer
- Maintains a healthy and unified relationship with a partner or spouse, his/her children, parents, and other close relatives
- Bases actions on genuine caring and commitment to the well-being of others
- Recognizes and respects his/her own worthiness and the vital importance of giving and receiving affection as part of living life to its fullest
- Acts with tolerance and respect to create positive change in families, neighborhoods, communities, organizations, companies, countries, and the world

### **Someone needs to strengthen Love when he/she:**

- Acts in a self-centered or careless way, taking for granted the affection of others or ignoring ways of making a difference for others
- Hesitates to take actions that might build a positive connection or bond with others
- Holds a bitter, critical, contemptuous, hateful, or condemning attitude towards others
- Treats other people as if they are opponents or enemies
- Backbites, gossips, or spreads slander about the character of others
- Ignores, refuses, or belittles someone's request for him/her to express affection in a specific and appropriate way
- Ends relationships because he/she feels personally unworthy of others or superior to them
- Spends time with others only if they meet his/her standards or if the relationship seems personally beneficial
- Equates infatuation or the experience of intimate or sexual touch from someone as signs of lasting affection and respect in the absence of other words, actions, or commitments

## **Patience**

**Patience is** maintaining steady awareness and control of one's thoughts and responses while waiting for or seeking an outcome; controlling one's words and actions while willingly and calmly taking the time to respond to difficult, inconvenient, hurtful, delaying, or troublesome situations.

### **Someone practices Patience effectively when he/she:**

- Listens attentively, stays aware, holds back a hasty or angry reply, thinks before speaking, and responds in a calm and level-headed way
- Works carefully through a task that has many steps, going at an even pace, or waiting for someone else to do the same
- Appreciates and even enjoys the moment without agitating for it to move forward
- Shows acceptance of and tolerance for differences and limitations in others
- Tolerates a delay, waiting alertly and calmly for what is in motion to unfold or for difficulties to be resolved
- Taking calm and appropriate actions as needed to move something forward
- Accepts calmly and with a positive and hopeful attitude what he/she cannot change
- Allows himself/herself and others the time, attention, and practice needed to develop character strengths, learn new skills, accomplish tasks, and give effective service to others
- Maintains quiet, steadfast hope and intention for positive outcomes, trusting that matters will come together in the best way possible

### **Someone needs to strengthen Patience when he/she:**

- Acts in an unreasonable, irrational, or short-tempered way because things do not go the way he/she wants
- Forces someone to rush or pushes for something to happen faster than is wise, denying the reality of circumstances
- Criticizes, agitates, yells, and becomes anxious or angry about the pace of something or the slow actions of others or himself/herself



## Prayers

### For Woman/Wife

Magnified be Thy name, O Lord my God! Behold Thou mine eye expectant to gaze on the wonders of Thy mercy, and mine ear longing to hearken unto Thy sweet melodies, and my heart yearning for the living waters of Thy knowledge. Thou seest Thy handmaiden, O my God, standing before the habitation of Thy mercy, and calling upon Thee by Thy name which Thou hast chosen above all other names and set up over all that are in heaven and on earth. Send down upon her the breaths of Thy mercy, that she may be carried away wholly from herself, and be drawn entirely towards the seat which, resplendent with the glory of Thy face, sheddeth afar the radiance of Thy sovereignty, and is established as Thy throne. Potent art Thou to do what Thou wilt. No God is there beside Thee, the All-Glorious, the Most Bountiful. (Bahá'u'lláh, *Prayers and Meditations*, pp. 147-148)

O Lord! Help this daughter of the Kingdom to be exalted in both worlds; cause her to turn away from this mortal world of dust and from those who have set their hearts thereon and enable her to have communion and close association with the world of immortality. Give her heavenly power and strengthen her through the breaths of the Holy Spirit that she may arise to serve Thee. Thou art the Mighty One. ('Abdu'l-Bahá, *Handmaidens of God - Baha'i Prayers for Women*)

### For Man/Husband

O God, my God! This Thy handmaid is calling upon Thee, trusting in Thee, turning her face unto Thee, imploring Thee to shed Thy heavenly bounties upon her, and to disclose unto her Thy spiritual mysteries, and to cast upon her the lights of Thy Godhead.

O my Lord! Make the eyes of my husband to see. Rejoice Thou his heart with the light of the knowledge of Thee, draw Thou his mind unto Thy luminous beauty, cheer Thou his spirit by revealing unto him Thy manifest splendors.

O my Lord! Lift Thou the veil from before his sight. Rain down Thy plenteous bounties upon him, intoxicate him with the wine of love for Thee, make him one of Thy angels whose feet walk upon this earth even as their souls are soaring through the high heavens. Cause him to become a brilliant lamp, shining out with the light of Thy wisdom in the midst of Thy people.

Verily Thou art the Precious, the Ever-Bestowing, the Open of Hand. ('Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 121)

### For Marriage

He is the Bestower, the Bounteous!

Praise be to God, the Ancient, the Ever-Abiding, the Changeless, the Eternal! He Who hath testified in His Own Being that verily He is the One, the Single, the Untrammelled, the Exalted. We bear witness that verily there is no God but Him, acknowledging His oneness, confessing His singleness. He hath ever dwelt in unapproachable heights, in the summits of His loftiness, sanctified from the mention of aught save Himself, free from the description of aught but Him.

And when 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)

O my God! O my God! Unite the hearts of Thy servants, and reveal to them Thy great purpose. May they follow Thy commandments and abide in Thy law. Help them, O God, in their endeavor, and grant them strength to serve Thee. O God! Leave them not to themselves, but guide their steps by the light of Thy knowledge, and cheer their hearts by Thy love. Verily, Thou art their Helper and their Lord. (Bahá'u'lláh: *Bahá'í Prayers* (US 2002), p. 238)

Glory be unto Thee, O my God! Verily, this Thy servant and this Thy maidservant have gathered under the shadow of Thy mercy and they are united through Thy favor and generosity. O Lord! Assist them in this Thy world and Thy kingdom and destine for them every good through Thy bounty and grace. O Lord! Confirm them in Thy servitude and assist them in Thy service. Suffer them to become the signs of Thy Name in Thy world and protect them through Thy bestowals which are inexhaustible in this world and the world to come. O Lord! They are supplicating the kingdom of Thy mercifulness and invoking the realm of Thy singleness. Verily, they are married in obedience to Thy command. Cause them to become the signs of harmony and unity until the end of time. Verily, Thou art the Omnipotent, the Omnipresent and the Almighty! (‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Bahá'í Prayers* (US 2002), p. 120)