

Possess a Pure, Kindly and Radiant Heart

Stories About Bahá'u'lláh's Love For His Family

Bahá'u'lláh advised us to “Deal ye one with another with the utmost love and harmony.”¹ He modeled this love and harmony in all of His actions.

1. Bahá'u'lláh: Gleanings, page 288



Bahá'u'lláh's wife's name was Ásíyih Khánum. Bahá'u'lláh loved her very much. He was saddened by how hard her life was and how much work she had to do. She was not very healthy because of difficult winter journeys the Holy Family had to make and the harsh living conditions they had to endure in prison. Even though she was not strong, she always worked hard to serve her family.

Bahá'u'lláh tried to ease Ásíyih Khánum's hard life in any way He could. Sometimes He even helped with the cooking. Imagine, Bahá'u'lláh, a Manifestation of God, in the kitchen with His wife cooking for His family!

— Inspired by The Spoken Chronicle of Bahíyyih Khánum, Daughter of Bahá'u'lláh, in The Chosen Highway by Lady Blomfield, page 47



Bahá'u'lláh's granddaughter remembers that she and the other grandchildren looked upon Bahá'u'lláh as another loving Father. They carried all their difficulties and their joys to Him because He cared about everything in their lives.

Every year Bahá'u'lláh sent someone to the big city to buy bolts of cotton fabric so that everyone in His family could have new clothes. Bahá'u'lláh would call the children to choose which fabric they liked best for their dress or shirt; then the children would help Bahá'u'lláh's wife and daughter make the new fabric into clothes.

All the children's holidays, their treats and their happiness came from Bahá'u'lláh. When people brought Bahá'u'lláh boxes of sweets, He would always set some aside for His grandchildren. Sometimes Bahá'u'lláh would invite the children to come with Him on a picnic in the little Ridván garden near Akká.

How the children loved Bahá'u'lláh!

— Inspired by The Spoken Chronicle of Túbá Khánum, daughter of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, in The Chosen Highway by Lady Blomfield, page 98

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Stories about Ásíyih Khánum

Ásíyih Khánum was Bahá'u'lláh's wife. Bahá'u'lláh said these words about her:

"God hath been and will be pleased with thee, and hath singled thee out for His own Self, ... and hath made thee the companion of His Person in the day-time and in the night-season."

— Bahá'u'lláh, quoted in Ásíyih Khánum, The Most Exalted Leaf, page 62



Bahá'u'lláh married Ásíyih Khánum when He was almost eighteen. She was the daughter of a noble family. Ásíyih Khánum was tall and graceful. She had bright, dark-blue eyes. She was gentle, wise and full of compassion for others. Many people came to her for nursing if they were sick, or comforting if they had troubles. She was always helping others.

Both Bahá'u'lláh and Ásíyih Khánum inherited much money from their parents. Instead of spending all this money on themselves, they used their money to help poor and sick people get the food, clothing, medicines and other things that they needed. The poor people called Bahá'u'lláh the 'Father of the Poor' and they called Ásíyih Khánum the 'Mother of Consolation'.



In the prison, many of Bahá'u'lláh's family members lived together. There was much cooking, cleaning and laundry to do by hand. They did not have electric stoves, dish washers or washing machines. It was very hard work. Since Ásíyih Khánum was the lady of a noble household, no one expected her to do this kind of work. They had one servant to help the family, but Ásíyih Khánum was very concerned that this servant would become too tired from doing all the work, so Ásíyih Khánum and her daughter, Bahíyyih Khánum, did much of the washing and cooking themselves. Ásíyih Khánum was always more concerned for others than she was for herself.

— Inspired by The Spoken Chronicle of Túbá Khánum, daughter of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, in The Chosen Highway by Lady Blomfield, page 93

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Stories about ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

‘Abdu’l-Bahá was Bahá’u’lláh’s oldest son. Bahá’u’lláh said:

“Blessed, doubly blessed, is ... the heart that hath tasted the sweetness of His love...”

— Bahá’u’lláh: Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh, page: 227



‘Abdu’l-Bahá was nine years old when Bahá’u’lláh was thrown into prison in the Síyáh-Chál prison. His family’s home was destroyed and all their lovely things were stolen or broken. For the four months that Bahá’u’lláh was in prison, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá lived in hiding in a tiny room with His mother, His sister, Bahíyyih Khánum, and His baby brother, Mírzá Mihdí. His family was left with nothing, not even enough food to eat. Trouble, suffering and worry over Bahá’u’lláh’s safety filled their days.

When His Father was finally freed from the prison, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was so happy just to be near Bahá’u’lláh that He hardly noticed all the miseries of their new life as exiles in Baghdad.

All too soon Bahá’u’lláh went away from His family again to live in the wilderness of Sulaymáníyyih. He did not tell anyone where He was going or when He would return.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s life was once again very hard. He was beside Himself with worry and longing for His Father.

Bahá’u’lláh was gone for two long years. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá helped His dear mother, Ásíyyih Khánum, in every way he could. He spent hours copying the Tablets of the Báb. He prayed without ceasing for Bahá’u’lláh to return. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá would sometimes spend a whole night praying a certain prayer over and over.

One day after He had been praying all night, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s family found a clue about where Bahá’u’lláh was! They send a message to Bahá’u’lláh and very soon He returned home.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, His mother and His sister were overjoyed to see Bahá’u’lláh!

‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s sister described the day that Bahá’u’lláh returned. She said that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá held His Father’s hand so tightly that she thought He would never again let Bahá’u’lláh out of His sight. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá pressed His small body so close to His Father that He was almost folded up inside Bahá’u’lláh’s cloak. She was very touched by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s great love for Bahá’u’lláh.

— Inspired by The Chosen Highway, pages 51, 54, 80, 81

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Stories about Munírih Khánum

Munírih Khánum was 'Abdu'l-Bahá's wife. Bahá'u'lláh wrote this about her:

"Oh Munírih! Oh my Leaf! I have destined you for the wife of My Greatest Branch. This is the bounty of God to you. In earth or in heaven there is no greater gift."

— Bahá'u'lláh, quoted in *The Chosen Highway* by Lady Blomfield, page 88



"A young and beautiful girl, called Munírih Khánum, was crying in her bedroom. She was sad because she had heard that Bahá'u'lláh was shut away in a dark prison, far away from the fields and flowers which He loved so much.

"Then one day Bahá'u'lláh sent a message to Munírih Khánum, telling her to come with her brother to 'Akká. She was very excited and quickly began to get ready for the long journey.

"After many weeks they arrived and, every day they were taken to see Bahá'u'lláh. Munírih Khánum also met the Master and sometimes watched from her window as He swam in the sea.

"One day Bahá'u'lláh lovingly told her that He had chosen her to be the Master's wife.

"On the day of the wedding, Bahá'u'lláh was there with His wife, His daughter and five other ladies. Munírih Khánum wore a white dress which the Master's mother and sister had made, and on her head was a long, white veil. She had long, thick plaits and looked very lovely.

"Prayers were chanted, and Munírih Khánum and the Master were married."

— *Stories of 'Abdu'l-Bahá* by Jacqueline Mehrabi, page 20



Munírih Khánum once described her joy in being married to 'Abdu'l-Bahá in these words:

"I was the wife of my Beloved. How wonderful and noble He was... I adored Him. I recognized His greatness, and thanked God for bringing me to Him....

"His unfailing love, His kindness, His cheerfulness, His sense of humour, His untiring consideration for everybody, He was marvellous, without equal, surely in all the earth!...

"For fifty years my Beloved ['Abdu'l-Bahá] and I were together. Never were we separated, save during His visits to Egypt, Europe, and America....

"You, who have known Him, can imagine what my fifty years have been—how they fled by in an atmosphere of love and joy..."

— *The Chosen Highway* by Lady Blomfield, pages 89-90

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Stories about Bahíyyih Khánum

Bahíyyih Khánum was Bahá'u'lláh's daughter and 'Abdu'l-Bahá's sister. 'Abdu'l-Bahá described her love for their Father, Bahá'u'lláh in these words:

"Moth-like she circled in adoration round the undying flame of the Divine Candle, her spirit ablaze and her heart consumed by the fire of His love..."

— 'Abdu'l-Bahá: Bahíyyih Khánum, The Greatest Holy Leaf, page 10



Bahíyyih Khánum never married or had children of her own, but she loved children very much and all the children loved spending time with her.

'Abdu'l-Bahá was Bahíyyih Khánum's brother. When He died, the hearts of everyone who knew Him were very sad. He had showered His kind words and His gentle love on each of them. They all missed Him terribly. Sometimes the children cried when they missed 'Abdu'l-Bahá too much. Usually their parents comforted them. But one day it seemed like the parents had completely forgotten their children.

It was the third anniversary of the day of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's death. Family members and a few pilgrims had gathered in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's house to grieve together in the Eastern style. Most of the adults were crying. Some were sobbing loudly. Some were even wailing. The house was full of crying people. The children became scared and began to cry, too. Their parents were crying too hard to even notice the children. The children began to whimper and to run about. They did not know where to turn – until they thought of their dear friend.

One by one the children all came to Bahíyyih Khánum's room. She was sitting in her chair, quiet and peaceful. The children were drawn to her peacefulness. Her gentle smile dried their tears. They crowded around her, all standing still and as close to her as they could get. It was like she had gathered them all up in her embrace. She was their comfort and their safe haven on a day when sadness was all around them.

— Inspired by Marzieh Gail's story on page 20 of "Khanum, the Greatest Holy Leaf"



Shoghi Effendi, too, was grief-stricken after his beloved grandfather, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, died. 'Abdu'l-Bahá had named Shoghi Effendi to be the next leader of the Bahá'í Faith. Shoghi Effendi was a young man, a college student. He would, of course, obey 'Abdu'l-Bahá but he did not feel that he was ready for this job.

"Shoghi Effendi went to the high mountains of Europe, to pray and prepare himself for the important work God had chosen him to do. While he was away, Bahíyyih Khánum looked after the Bahá'ís, and wrote letters to them in many parts of the world. She was the one who first wrote telling everyone about the passing of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and about the wonderful things He had written in His Will and Testament about His grandson, Shoghi Effendi."

— Stories of the Greatest Holy Leaf, page 34

Bahíyyih Khánum was nearly eighty years old when she stepped out of the Eastern woman's traditional place in the home to give the Bahá'ís the leadership they so desperately needed and to support Shoghi Effendi in his new role as the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith.

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Stories about Shoghi Effendi

Shoghi Effendi was the grandson of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. 'Abdu'l-Bahá told us to:

"Turn unto Shoghi Effendi ... as he is the sign of God, the chosen branch, the Guardian of the Cause of God..." — 'Abdu'l-Bahá: Will and Testament, page: 11



When Shoghi Effendi was only five years old he was pestering 'Abdu'l-Bahá to write something for him. 'Abdu'l-Bahá wrote:

"He is God!

"O My Shoghi, ... Now is not the time for you to read and write, it is the time for jumping about and chanting 'O my God!' therefore memorize the prayers of the Blessed Beauty [Bahá'u'lláh] and chant them that I may hear them..."

— Priceless Pearl, pages 8-9

Shoghi Effendi immediately began to memorize many of Bahá'u'lláh's prayers. He chanted them so loudly that everyone in the neighbourhood could hear him.

Sometimes when Shoghi Effendi chanted the sad words that 'Abdu'l-Bahá had written after Bahá'u'lláh died, tears would roll down his face.

One of the Bahá'ís asked 'Abdu'l-Bahá to reveal a special prayer for children. Shoghi Effendi was, of course, the first one to memorize and chant this prayer.



"Shoghi Effendi had a heart so tender and a nature so sweet that if he had offended any playmate—even though he would never do so unless that child had cheated or schemed—he would not go to sleep before he had embraced him and left him happy; he always urged his little companions to make up their differences before they went to bed." — Priceless Pearl, page 10



Shoghi Effendi consoled his wife, Rúhíyyih Khánum, in an unusual way after they received the news that her mother, May Maxwell, had died quite suddenly.

"Shoghi Effendi went over to her, held her in his arms and broke the news to her with great tenderness.... Then he spoke of the high station of May Maxwell in the Abhá Kingdom, of her joy in ... having reached her heart's desire, of her nearness to her beloved Lord and Master, 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Then gently, in order to dispel her shaking grief, he began to talk to [Rúhíyyih Khánum] in a lighter mood, to describe her mother's activities in the next world.... [May] would have been ushered immediately into the presence of Bahá'u'lláh first, of course... And ... she naturally asked permission to tell Him about her precious daughter. But she talked so much that Bahá'u'lláh had finally become tired and had passed her on to 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Here again she did nothing but talk about her beautiful daughter [Rúhíyyih Khánum], until at length, exhausted, 'Abdu'l-Bahá passed her on to the Greatest Holy Leaf. And there she is still, said Shoghi Effendi laughing ... stopping every passing member of the Concourse with her opening lines, 'Do let me tell you about my daughter...!' By the time he reached this point ... Rúhíyyih Khánum was laughing through her tears."

— A tribute to Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánum, page 38

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Stories about Rúhíyyih Khánum

Rúhíyyih Khánum was born in Canada. Her parents knew and loved 'Abdu'l-Bahá even before she was born. 'Abdu'l-Bahá said these words about Rúhíyyih Khánum to her mother when Rúhíyyih Khánum was just seven months old:

"In the garden of existence a rose hath bloomed with the utmost freshness, fragrance and beauty. Educate her according to the divine teachings so that she may grow up to be a real Bahá'í..."

— A Tribute to Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánum, page 3



'Abdu'l-Bahá told this little story about Rúhíyyih Khánum when she was only two years old.

"Today I was resting on the chaise lounge in my bedroom and the door opened.... [Rúhíyyih Khánum] came in to me and pushed my eyelids up with her small finger and said, 'Wake up, 'Abdu'l-Bahá!' I took her in my arms and placed her head on my chest and we both had a good sleep."

— Inspired by A tribute to Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánum, pages 10-11



Rúhíyyih Khánum married Shoghi Effendi when she grew up. He called her "my helpmate", "my shield", "my tireless collaborator in the arduous tasks I shoulder." In 1952 Shoghi Effendi elevated Rúhíyyih Khánum to the rank of Hand of the Cause of God.



After Shoghi Effendi died, Rúhíyyih Khánum began to visit and help the Bahá'í pioneers around the world. One of these pioneers told this story:

"Imagine this: you are a young woman, pioneering to a Latin American country with your husband and several small children. Something wonderful is going to happen, Rúhíyyih Khánum is coming to visit your area and your husband leaves for a journey of several days to escort her to your pioneering post. You begin to prepare for the momentous visit, but the next morning your youngest child is quite ill with a fever, vomiting, diarrhea. By late afternoon another child is equally as sick and, exhausted from the care of these sick little ones, as you fall into bed, you realize that you, too, have a fever ... you pray and struggle for two more days and nights with comforting, bathing, cleaning, forcing liquids and medicating as best you can yourself and the children. You scarcely realize that ... [your husband] has returned, except that you are put to bed and somehow you know that someone else is taking care of things.

"Hours later, you awaken, you have been bathed and dressed in a clean gown, you can smell something cooking ... your floors have been scrubbed, your children ... have been bathed and are wearing clean garments. Someone brings you a cup of tea, her sleeves are rolled up, her gentle hands are red from the washing and scrubbing and you think you must be still asleep and dreaming, hallucinating even, because it is Rúhíyyih Khánum who has brought you the tea, who has scrubbed floors, washed dishes, taken care of sick children and given you clean sheets and combed your tangled hair.

It is Rúhíyyih Khánum."

— Healing Through Unity, March 2000, Rúhíyyih Khánum Assists a Sick Family in a Latin American Country, By Ruth Robin.
This story was told to Ruth Robin about 20 years ago by the mother-in-law of the pioneer in the story.

7 Key Elements of an Intergenerational Program

1. **Connect Hearts**

Use icebreakers, small group projects, buddy systems, written reminders in the instructions – anything you can think of to connect the participants. Especially concentrate on making the children and seniors feel welcome, comfortable and valuable.

2. **Keep it simple**

Concentrate on grasping the heart of the subject you are studying, not every nuance of thought. Don't try to do too much in one program. Two hours is about the longest one of these programs should run. An hour and a half is better.

3. **Provide Age Appropriate Study and Materials**

Young children need concrete images (which abound in the Bahá'í Writings) and should be allowed to express their understandings in actions and projects as well as in words. Tell stories rather than read lengthy passages, use props, do drawings, make flags, pair quotations with photographs – make it concrete!

When studying long or complicated concepts or passages, it is often best to divide groups by age for study. Give children's facilitators the necessary lead-time to adjust the content and prepare hands-on materials for their age group. After all have studied the material in an age-appropriate way, form mixed-age groups to do projects based on the study.

4. **Use Manipulative Materials**

Many children and adults learn best when their hands are busy. Sometimes discussion can continue while some group members make a poster, props, or other projects on the subject being discussed. Provide free access for all ages to art materials and dress up clothes. Encourage (even require) groups to dress up and to create props for their presentations.

5. **Use the Arts**

Build personal and small group projects using mime, drama, music, dance, visual arts, etc., into your program. These projects connect hearts and develop personal insights into the material being studied.

Allow almost enough time to prepare a presentation, but certainly not enough time to perfect it. Preparing presentations quickly activates the very creative and intuitive right side of the brain, producing powerful statements that shine through their hastily patched together surfaces.

6. **Travel**

Don't spend too long in any one group or doing any one project. Kids (and many adults) need to move on quickly and will become disruptive or disinterested if given too much time in an activity that doesn't interest them.

7. **Give Clear Directions**

Poorly worked-out logistics can kill an otherwise good program. Know exactly how you are going to divide into small groups and jigsaw into other groups or move into the presentation. Think through how long each different activity will take. Allow at least 5 extra minutes in your schedule for every shift from group to group.

Give clear and simple directions for dividing into groups and moving from group to group. Provide written directions for each activity so participants know exactly what they are to read, discuss or do and how long they have to complete their project.