

Approaching Some Answered Questions- A *Daily Effort* in Spiritual Growth

A Study Guide for **Some Answered Questions** version. 1.1

Foreword

Spectacular in its crystal clarity, expansive in its generative vision, broad and comprehensive in its range of explanation, profoundly simple in its numerous interpretations of age-old Scripture, mysteries yet tantalizing in its unspoken meanings, harmonized in its influence with the Kitáb-i-Íqán, unparalleled in the world's religious literature, progressive in its emerging concepts, enjoyable in its constant perusal, *Some Answered Questions* stands as an irreplaceable and undeniably perfect gem from the heart and soul of our Beloved 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

In stark contrast sighs a world, steeped in blind fanaticism, drowning in man-made dogma, fettered in ignorance, lost in the wilderness of tradition and wayward beliefs, groaning under the weight of consciously administered injustices, and desperately holding on to its final precious moments of life, that is now, at the brink of cataclysmic events, being purified and healed of its numerous infirmities. Through the agency of Bahá'u'lláh's all-powerful Revelation the old world order is being rolled up and a new one is being rolled out in its stead. Such a Revelation has brought the light of hope, joy, and everlasting life. To deeply reflect upon the no less than 500,000 year, most great spiritual cycle that has been set in motion with the onset of such a Revelation, is bewildering to the mind and heart. We find ourselves unable at such an early stage in the unfoldment of such a cycle to fully appreciate the penetrating influence that these provocative words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá will have in the arena of mankind's spiritual development. Challenging though the task be, it is our divine mission to consecrate every fleeting moment of our lives to the diffusion of this stupendous Revelation and such a high destiny must needs call upon all of us to study such a central book as *Some Answered Questions*, which embodies a masterful understanding of this newest surge of God's shoreless love.

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History and Importance

Laura Clifford Barney Changes History Forever

Laura Clifford Barney belonged to an American family established in Paris and well-known among its literati. At the dawn of the century she accepted the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh. Soon after, she went on pilgrimage to 'Akká. Then she went a second time, and in 1904 a third time in the company of Ethel Rosenberg.[1] These, as we shall see, were perilous years in the ministry of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Then came a short visit to Egypt and a lightning visit to Europe during the spring. She returned to the Holy Land and took her mother with her. During the summer of 1905 Hippolyte Dreyfus accompanied Laura Clifford Barney and her travelling companion to the native land of Bahá'u'lláh. That autumn she was once again in 'Akká, where her sojourn extended into the year 1906. In 1908 she made yet another pilgrimage. [1 Ethel Rosenberg's first pilgrimage was in 1900.]

It is of particular interest to know the details of Laura Clifford Barney's repeated and extended visits to the Holy Land, because it was during those months, stretched over several years, that a book unique in the entire range of the Writings of the Founders of the Faith took shape. The book was *Some Answered Questions*. Questions came from Laura Barney and 'Abdu'l-Bahá answered them. In her own words, taken from the introduction to the book:

...these answers were written down in Persian while 'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke [1], not with a view to publication, but simply that I might have them for future study . . . But I believe that what has been so valuable to me may be of use to others, since all men, notwithstanding their differences, are united in their search for reality; and I have therefore asked 'Abdu'l-Bahá's permission to publish these talks.

[1 These table talks were given in a small room in the House of Abdu'llah Pashá in 'Akká- note below for description of this House.]

That permission was granted in the year 1906. The English edition appeared in 1908, and the Persian text was published in the same year. Hippolyte Dreyfus translated it into French under the title, *Les Lecons de Saint Jean-d' Acre*. By the generosity of the compiler herself, the original Persian manuscript containing 'Abdu'l-Bahá's occasional corrections and emendations is deposited and preserved in the International Archives of the Bahá'í Faith.

The Persian text has a sub-title: 'Talks During Luncheon'. "I have given to you my tired moments," Laura Barney recalls that 'Abdu'l-Bahá told her, 'as he rose from table after answering one of my questions.' Weighed down with the oppression of the times; facing hostile officials resolved to destroy Him -- officials dispatched under the guise of a 'Commission of Enquiry' from the seat of Ottoman autocracy, 'the Enquiry' set afoot by the treachery of His own kith and kin; balked momentarily in the greatest enterprise He had undertaken -- raising the mausoleum of the Báb on Mount Carmel; every minute of

the life of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was filled with sorrow, demanding vigilant action and unflinching fortitude. Such were the moments that He gave to Laura Clifford Barney as she sought knowledge and understanding.

Yet, in this book, *Some Answered Questions* the supreme genius of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is overwhelmingly manifest. Men who have devoted precious years of their lives to study and research -- to the building of arguments, the laying of premises, and the marshalling of facts -- have never presented the fundamentals of life and belief, the basic truths of the universe around them, and the mainsprings of action, with such lucidity and coherence as are here apparent. Nor can they hope to rival, much less to match ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s all-encompassing wisdom. And these were words spoken without previous intimation of the nature and purport of the query. Not only do His answers arrest attention and compel thought, the strength wedded to the crystal clarity of the language enchant the mind. His statements are unencumbered, His similes most apt. His reasoning is flawless. His conclusions are unhedged and emphatic, informed with authority. *Some Answered Questions* has no equal, and the service rendered by its compiler has been characterized by the Guardian of the Faith as ‘imperishable’.

Dr. Yunis Khán Afrukhtih, from whose memoirs valuable excerpts have been quoted in this narrative, recalls a delightful occasion when ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was answering Miss Barney’s questions on the theme of ‘Evil’. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had said: There is no evil in existence.’ Then He turned to Yunis Khán who was acting as His interpreter and said with a smile: ‘Next she will ask, how is it then that God has created the scorpion.’ In a moment Laura Barney posed this very question. The Master remarked: ‘Did I not say so?’ and proceeded to explain that the venom of the scorpion’s sting is its means of defense, and does not constitute evil in its own milieu. (H.M. Balyuzi, *‘Abdu’l-Bahá - The Centre of the Covenant*, p. 82.)

Description of the House of Abdu’l-lah Pashá

Some of the most poignant, dramatic and historically significant events of the Heroic Age of our Faith are associated with this house, which derives its name from the Governor of ‘Akká who built it and used it as his official residence during his term of Office, from 1820 to 1832. It stands just inside the north-western corner of the sea wall of ‘Akká in the close neighbourhood of the citadel where Bahá’u’lláh was confined. The main building is L-shaped, facing south and east on its outer prospects. The structure, though chiefly on two stories, is irregular and on the inside angle has balconies, uncovered stairways, a bathhouse and a well. The entire property comprises large courtyards and is bounded on the west, or seaward, side by a wall, which turns due east at its southern angle and continues towards the heart of ‘Akká, forming after a few yards, the wall of a narrow street; at the eastern terminus of this wall, and within the property, is an imposing house which was occupied by that Governor of ‘Akká whose incumbency coincided with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s residence in the main building, and whose northern windows permitted him to maintain a constant surveillance of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s activities. Beyond this house is a small mosque. The eastern boundary of the property is a row of houses giving directly,

on its western aspect, to the courtyard and offering many additional vantage points for observing the Master. A similar row of houses extends from the north-eastern corner along the northern boundary until they terminate at the longitudinal wing of the main building which, at this point, projects northwards into several conjoined buildings, making a large irregular outcrop on the northern boundary. The western end of the northern boundary is a short stretch of wall completing the enclosure at the north-western corner of the west wall. Large stables, coach houses and storerooms line the southern boundary. (The Universal House of Justice, *Messages 1963 to 1986*, p. 290.)

Parallel Events of Great Importance

It was during these troublous times, the most dramatic period of His (‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s) ministry, when, in the hey-day of His life and in the full tide of His power, He, with inexhaustible energy, marvelous serenity and unshakable confidence, initiated and resistlessly prosecuted the varied enterprises associated with that ministry. It was during these times that the plan of the first Mashriqu’l-Adhkár of the Bahá’í world was conceived by Him, and its construction undertaken by His followers in the city of ‘Ishqábád in Turkistán. It was during these times, despite the disturbances that agitated His native country, that instructions were issued by Him for the restoration of the holy and historic House of the Báb in Shíráz. It was during these times that the initial measures, chiefly through His constant encouragement, were taken which paved the way for the laying of the dedication stone, which He, in later years, placed with His own hands when visiting the site of the Mother Temple of the West on the shore of Lake Michigan. It was at this juncture that that celebrated compilation of His table talks, published under the title “Some Answered Questions,” was made, talks given during the brief time He was able to spare, in the course of which certain fundamental aspects of His Father’s Faith were elucidated, traditional and rational proofs of its validity adduced, and a great variety of subjects regarding the Christian Dispensation, the Prophets of God, Biblical prophecies, the origin and condition of man and other kindred themes authoritatively explained. (Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 268.)

Laura Barney’s Contemporary Co-workers

No sooner had one of these pilgrims, the afore-mentioned May Bolles, returned to Paris than she succeeded, in compliance with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s emphatic instructions, in establishing in that city the first Bahá’í center to be formed on the European continent. This center was, shortly after her arrival, reinforced by the conversion of the illumined Thomas Breakwell, the first English believer, immortalized by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s fervent eulogy revealed in his memory; of Hippolyte Dreyfus, the first Frenchman to embrace the Faith, who, through his writings, translations, travels and other pioneer services, was able to consolidate, as the years went by, the work which had been initiated in his country; and of Laura Barney, whose imperishable service was to collect and transmit to posterity in the form of a book, entitled “Some Answered Questions,” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s priceless

explanations, covering a wide variety of subjects, given to her in the course of an extended pilgrimage to the Holy Land. (Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 259.)

In the East, social conditions of the time had virtually dictated that the initiative in the promotion of the Cause would be taken largely by men. Few such constraints prevailed in North America and Europe, where a galaxy of unforgettable women became the principal exponents of the Bahá'í message on both sides of the Atlantic. One thinks of Sarah Farmer, whose Green Acre school provided the infant Bahá'í community with a forum for the introduction of the Faith to influential thinkers; of Sara Lady Blomfield, whose social position lent added force to the ardour with which she championed the teachings; of Marion Jack, immortalized by Shoghi Effendi as a model for Bahá'í pioneers; of Laura Dreyfus-Barney, who gave the Faith the priceless collection of the Master's table talks, *Some Answered Questions*; of Agnes Parsons, co-founder with Louis Gregory of the "Race Amity" initiatives inspired by 'Abdu'l-Bahá; of Corinne True, Keith Ransom-Kehler, Helen Goodall, Juliet Thompson, Grace Ober, Ethel Rosenberg, Clara Dunn, Alma Knobloch and a distinguished company of others, most of whom pioneered some new field of Bahá'í service. (Commissioned by The Universal House of Justice, *Century of Light*, 2001, p. 65.)

Passing of Laura Dreyfus Barney

ASCENSION DISTINGUISHED MAIDSERVANT LAURA DREYFUS-BARNEY
FURTHER DEPLETES SMALL BAND PROMOTERS FAITH HEROIC AGE. [1]
MEMBER FIRST HISTORIC GROUP PARIS TAUGHT BY MAY MAXWELL SHE
ACHIEVED IMMORTAL FAME THROUGH COMPILATION SOME ANSWERED
QUESTIONS UNIQUE ENTIRE FIELD RELIGIOUS HISTORY. OFFERING
ARDENT PRAYERS SACRED THRESHOLD PROGRESS HER SOUL ABHA
KINGDOM URGE ALL COMMUNITIES FRANCE HOLD MEMORIAL
GATHERINGS GRATITUDE OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT.

[1]. Laura Clifford Dreyfus-Barney was born in the United States in 1879 into a family of scholars and artists. She learned about the Bahá'í Faith from May Bolles Maxwell in Paris, circa 1900, during the Heroic Age of the Faith (1844-1921). *Some Answered Questions*, first published in London in 1908 and issued five times since by the Bahá'í Publishing Trust of the United States, consists of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's responses to questions put to Him at table by Miss Barney between 1904 and 1906. In 1911 she married the distinguished Hippolyte Dreyfus, the first French Bahá'í. She died in Paris on 18 August 1974. For an account of her life and services, see BW 16:535-38.] (From a letter written by the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of France, 22 August, 1974.)

Destiny of the Original Manuscript

Equally significant has been the founding on Mt. Carmel of two international Archives, the one adjoining the shrine of the Báb, the other in the immediate vicinity of the resting-place of the Greatest Holy Leaf, where, for the first time in Bahá'í history, priceless treasures, hitherto scattered and often hidden for safekeeping, have been collected and are now displayed to visiting pilgrims. These treasures include portraits of both the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh; personal relics such as the hair, the dust and garments of the Báb; the locks and blood of Bahá'u'lláh and such articles as His pen-case, His garments, His brocaded tájes (head dresses), the kashkúl of His Sulaymáníyyih days, His watch and His Qur'án; manuscripts and Tablets of inestimable value, some of them illuminated, such as part of the Hidden Words written in Bahá'u'lláh's own hand, the Persian Bayán, in the handwriting of Siyyid Husayn, the Báb's amanuensis, the original Tablets to the Letters of the Living penned by the Báb, and the manuscript of "Some Answered Questions." (Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 346)

Authentic Tablets or Pilgrim Notes

This being a basic principle of the Faith we should not confuse Tablets that were actually revealed and mere talks attributed to the founders of the Cause. The first have absolute binding authority while the latter can in no way claim our obedience. The highest thing this can achieve is to influence the activities of the one who has heard the saying in person.

Those talks of the Master that were later reviewed by Him and corrected or in some other form considered authentic by Himself, such as the "Some Answered Questions", these could be considered as Tablets and therefore be given the necessary binding power. All the other talks such as are included in Ahmad's diary or the other diaries of pilgrims, do not fall under this category and could be considered only as interesting material to be taken for what they are worth. (From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi addressed to an individual believer, December 29, 1931; cited in *Extracts from the USBN*.)

Repeated Guidance to Study Some Answered Questions

Shoghi Effendi hopes that you will exert all your effort to deepen your knowledge of the literature of the movement, until you become fully acquainted with its spirit and tenets. Unless you do obtain such a firm hold you will never be able to teach others and render real service to the promulgation of the Faith. Of special importance is the Book of the Íqán which explains the attitude of the Cause towards the prophets of God and their mission in the history of society. Besides this there is Some Answered Questions of the Master and the 'Dawn-Breakers' of Nabíl. Every Bahá'í should master these books and be able to explain their contents to others. Besides their importance, they are interesting

and most absorbing. (From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, 9 February 1932; cited in *Lights of Guidance*, p. 559.)

He fully approves the idea of holding study classes, for the deeper the friends go in their understanding of their teachings the more firm and steadfast they will become and the more unwavering in their support of the institutions of the Faith. Books such as the “Íqán”, “Some Answered Questions” and “The Dawn-Breakers” should be mastered by every Bahá’í. They should read these books over and over again. The first two books will reveal to them the significance of this divine revelation as well as the unity of all the Prophets of old. The last book will show you how the Faith was ushered into the world and how its early adherents heroically faced martyrdom and suffering in their desire to establish the Cause throughout the world. Knowing the life of those heroes will create in us the urge to follow their footsteps and achieve the same. (From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, 1 October 1933, in the Bahá’í International Archives; cited in *Compilations, The Compilation of Compilations vol. I*, p. 216.)

Regarding the questions raised in our beloved Bahá’í brother, Mr. Dewing’s letter, I feel that I can not add to what has already been fully and clearly stated by our Master ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in the book of “Some Answered Questions”, where, I am sure, she will find the clue to all the perplexing questions that agitate the mind of man in his search after true knowledge. The more this Book is read with care and patience, the greater are its revelations, and the more complete the understanding of its inner truth and significance. (From a letter written by Shoghi Effendi to the Australasian Bahá’ís, 13 March 1923; cited in *Messages to the Antipodes*, p.15.)

“He does not ask us to follow Him blindly; as He says in one of His Tablets, God has endowed man with a mind to operate as a torchlight and guide him to the truth. Read His words, consider His Teachings and measure their value in the light of contemporary problems and the truth will surely be revealed to you. Read books such as the Íqán, Some Answered Questions, Nabil’s Narrative, and you will appreciate the truth of His Mission, as well as the true spirit He creates in whosoever follows His ways.” (From letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, February 26, 1933; cited in *Bahá’í News*, No. 80, January 1934, p. 5 and in *Lights of Guidance*, p. 474.)

By holding study classes where the Word is read and understood and obtaining a thorough knowledge of the spirit that animated the early believers we can make sure that these newcomers are grounded in the teachings and made real and devoted believers. Books such as the Íqán, Some Answered Questions, the Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh, Nabil’s Narrative and Dr. Esslemont’s book should be read and read over again by every soul who desires to serve the Movement or considers himself an active member of the group. (From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, November 9, 1932; cited in *Lights of Guidance*, p. 566.)

The Guardian feels that a sound knowledge of history, including religious history, and also of social and economic subjects, is of great help in teaching the Cause to intelligent people; as to what subjects within the Faith you should concentrate on he feels that the young Bahá'ís should gain a mastery of such books as the “Gleanings”, “The Dawn-Breakers”, “God Passes By”, the “Íqán”, “Some Answered Questions” and the more important Tablets. All aspects of the Faith should be deeply studied -- and ... they need to know more about the Administration. (From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, 4 May, 1946; cited in *Compilations, Scholarship*, p. 27.)

Shoghi Effendi advises you to study ‘Some Answered Questions’ and the ‘Dispensation of Bahá’u’lláh’ which help you to grasp these questions. (From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer in response to a question about the Souls of the Prophets being pre-existent, October 9, 1947; cited in *Lights of Guidance*, p. 504.)

He thinks that “Some Answered Questions” is more important in the teaching work than “Paris Talks”, and recommends to get “Some Answered Questions” out first. (Shoghi Effendi, *Lights of Guidance*, p. 167.)

He feels that the urgent need now is to get out “Some Answered Questions”, which is one of the most important books for a proper study of the Faith. When this has been printed, the next publication of the Master’s Works can be considered.... (Shoghi Effendi, *The Unfolding Destiny of the British Bahá’í Community*, p. 383.)

The Universal House of Justice has asked us to recommend your continued study of “Some Answered Questions” since this book contains the interpretations given by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá on the meaning of some of the passages you mention from the Book of Daniel as well as other subjects found in the Old and New Testaments. You will note that in addition to giving His explanations, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá encourages personal initiative in unravelling divine mysteries. For example, at the end of Chapter XX on “The Necessity of Baptism” He says: “This subject needs deep thought. Then the cause of these changes will be evident and apparent.” And at the end of Chapter XXX on “Adam and Eve”, after setting forth His own interpretation of the subject, He goes on to say: “This is one of the meanings of the Biblical story of Adam. Reflect until you discover the others.” (From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, 17 January, 1978)

Purpose and Guiding Principles

This study guide, one in a continuing series of the *Daily Effort* study guides, was designed for a group of participants who would meet regularly to deepen in the Writings of the Faith though it is also applicable to individual study. It is hoped that the fruit of such thorough study that is so needed at such a critical stage in the evolution of mankind may spur on every devoted soul in their individual and collective teaching efforts.

Spiritual discussion and discourse stems in part from the guiding Questions, Reflections, and Meditations that are given though the participants should feel free to allow their own thoughts and ideas to carry the conversation as desired. A large number of participants can be broken into smaller groups in order to facilitate discussion.

It is suggested that the participants first read through the above quotations concerning the history and importance of Some Answered Questions as well as the forwards given in the actual book itself before proceeding through the rest of the study guide.

Questions, Reflections, Meditations: There are two main types of questions, reflections, and meditations that are given for each topic. The first type is concerned with the immediate and explicit meaning of the text and most often an answer can be derived directly from the passage itself. The second type is an exploration of the deeper, implicit meanings of the passage which also attempts to connect the participant with parallel ideas and concepts found in the Writings of the Cause.

Drawing on the words and utterances of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá: The fill in the blank sections seek to reinforce the understanding of the participants by allowing them to reexamine particular pieces of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s talks as well as to strengthen their memory of these phrases and sentences.

Memorization: Key passages from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s talks are selected for memorization by the participants in main as a preparation for the teaching work in their communities. It is advised that various methods of memorization can be applied as well as the use of arts in this activity.

PART ONE: ON THE INFLUENCE OF THE PROPHETS IN THE EVOLUTION OF HUMANITY

Digestion of Passage / Preparation for Teaching work: After reading each passage try to explain in your own style the topic being studied using the passage as your foundation.

Memorization: As you work through *Part One* select one verse or passage from this section that resonates in your heart or strikes you as particularly meaningful and commit it to memory!

The sanctified souls should ponder and meditate in their hearts regarding the methods of teaching. From the texts of the wondrous, heavenly Scriptures they should memorize phrases and passages bearing on various instances, so that in the course of their speech they may recite divine verses whenever the occasion demandeth it, inasmuch as these holy verses are the most potent elixir, the greatest and mightiest talisman. So potent is their influence that the hearer will have no cause for vacillation. (Bahá'u'lláh, Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 199.)

1. NATURE IS GOVERNED BY ONE UNIVERSAL LAW

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. What is Nature?
2. What are some views that people have of nature?
3. What does it imply that mankind transcends Nature?
4. Meditate on the ideas presented in the second to last paragraph and seek to understand this at a simple and profound level.
5. Name some of the laws of Nature.

Drawing on the words and utterances of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

1. Nature is that condition, that reality, which in appearance consists in life and death, or, in other words, in the _____.
2. One of the things which has appeared in the world of existence, and which is _____, is human life.

2. PROOFS AND EVIDENCES OF THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. How does every single thing prove the existence of a creator? Give an example.
2. How does change prove the existence of a Creator?
3. Is it possible that the universe came into existence through the action of matter and elements as a result of the divine creative forces of God?
4. Why are logical and external proofs often needed before spiritual proofs?
5. How do imperfections prove that perfections must exist elsewhere, and how do perfections imply that imperfections must also necessarily exist?

Drawing on the words and utterances of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

1. One of the proofs and demonstrations of the existence of God is the fact that _____: nay, his creator and designer is another than himself.
2. Throughout the world of existence it is the same; _____ proves that there is a creator.

3. THE NEED OF AN EDUCATOR

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. What are three kinds of education?
2. What is true education and what is its source?
3. Why cannot a highly intelligent statesman, economist, or philosopher be the source of the education of the whole of mankind?
4. What is the result of divine education?
5. What are the essential conditions of a true Educator? Apply these conditions to several outstanding figures in history and see if the conditions are met.

Drawing on the words and utterances of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

1. ...that man, if he is _____, becomes bestial, and, moreover, if left under the rule of nature, becomes lower than an animal...
2. Divine education is that of the Kingdom of God: it consists _____, and this is true education...

4. ABRAHAM

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. Where was Abraham born and what was the belief of the people in that area?
2. Why was Abraham truly banished from His native land?
3. What is the Unity of God that Abraham established?
4. Will the next Manifestation of God to appear be traced back through their genealogy to Abraham?
5. Reflect on the banishments of Bahá’u’lláh and the future impact they will have on the lives of people all over the world.

Drawing on the words and utterances of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

1. But Abraham stood fast and showed forth extraordinary firmness -- and God made this exile to be to His eternal honor -- until He established _____ in the midst of a polytheistic generation.

2. See _____ it is that enabled a Man Who was a fugitive from His country to found such a family, to establish such a faith, and to promulgate such teachings.

5. MOSES

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. What occupation did Moses hold and how was He regarded by the people of Pharaoh?
2. What effect did the education of Moses have on the Israelites?
3. Which wise philosopher spread the teachings of Moses and was killed for it?
4. What was the cause of Moses striking down an Egyptian? Was this action unjust?
5. Meditate on the influence of the supernatural powers available to the Manifestations of God.

Drawing on the words and utterances of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

1. Moses established _____; these gave life to the people of Israel, and led them to the highest possible degree of civilization at that period.
2. In spite of His evil repute, how wonderfully He was guided by a _____ in establishing His great institutions and laws!

6. CHRIST

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. What occurs when spiritual statements are understood to be completely literal in meaning?
2. Why had the condition of the Israelite people sunk to such a great low?
3. What type of laws did Christ abrogate? Does this refer to social or spiritual laws?
4. Ponder the reasons why the Manifestations of God do not overcome their enemies and rule the realms of men while They are on this world? Will this change in the future?
5. In what ways has Christ’s grace surrounded the world?

Drawing on the words and utterances of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

1. Afterward Christ came, saying, “_____.”

2. This young Man, Christ, by the help of a supernatural power, abrogated the ancient Mosaic Law, reformed the general morals, and once again laid the _____ for the Israelites.

7. MUHAMMAD

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. Why have Muhammad and Islám become so misrepresented in history and obscured in the minds of people.
2. What was the condition of the Arabian tribes at the time of Muhammad's appearance?
3. What were Muhammad's teachings towards Jewish and Christian followers, their Holy Writings, and the Station of Moses and Christ?
4. What scientific truth was unveiled in the Qur'án long before its discovery by scientists? What verses of the Qur'án support this truth?
5. Why does 'Abdu'l-Bahá dwell for so long on Muhammad and Islám as compared to the previous Manifestations He had spoken about in previous talks?

Drawing on the words and utterances of 'Abdu'l-Bahá:

1. Americans and Europeans have heard a number of stories about the Prophet which they have thought to be true, although the narrators were either _____.
2. These Arab tribes were in the lowest depths of savagery and barbarism, and in comparison with them the savages of Africa and wild Indians of America were - _____.

8. THE BÁB

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. Using the *Dawn Breakers* find an example of the Báb confounding the 'ulumá of Persia.
2. What were some of the prevailing conditions, habits, and customs of Persia when the Báb arose to such heights of sacrifice?
3. How did the Báb prepare the people for the appearance of Bahá'u'lláh?
4. Meditate upon the youthful age of the Báb when He achieved such feats.
5. How does justice enable people to overcome veils that hold them back from truth?

Drawing on the words and utterances of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

1. It was universally admitted by the Shi’ites that He had never _____ and had not _____ from any teacher; all the people of Shíráz bear witness to this.
2. The government, the nation, the doctors of divinity and the great personages desired _____, but they could not do so.

9. BAHÁ’U’LLÁH

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. What is profound obscurantism?
2. What occupation did Bahá’u’lláh’s father hold?
3. Why has mankind always had the tendency to question the power and authority of God?
4. Reflect on the banishments and persecutions of Bahá’u’lláh. Why were earthly powers never able to thwart His purpose or destroy His Cause?
5. 12 souls arose for Christ, thousands for Bahá’u’lláh. Ponder on the future of this mighty stage of the Cause of God.

Drawing on the words and utterances of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

1. Bahá’u’lláh appeared at a time when the Persian Empire was immersed in profound obscurantism and ignorance and lost in the _____.
2. Finally, we must be just and acknowledge what _____ this Glorious Being was, what marvelous signs were manifested by Him, and what power and might have been realized in the world through Him.

10. TRADITIONAL PROOFS EXEMPLIFIED FROM THE BOOK OF DANIEL

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. Why are miracles not sufficient proof for all people?
2. What are some of the essential qualities that a true seeker must possess?
3. Analyze the two prophecies of Daniel concerning the martyrdom of Christ and set them clearly in your mind.
4. What is the significance of one day in terms of time in the Holy Writings?
5. What does the verse “Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days,” signify?

Drawing on the words and utterances of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

1. But now, as _____, all are in need of proofs; so we have undertaken to demonstrate rational proofs of the truth of His claim.
2. Briefly, my meaning is that many wonderful things were done by Bahá'u'lláh, but we do not recount them, as they _____ for all the peoples of the earth, and they are not decisive proofs even for those who see them: they may think that they are merely enchantments.

11. COMMENTARY ON THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER OF THE REVELATION OF ST. JOHN

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. What does the reed signify?
2. What is the Holy of Holies?
3. What is the difference between the temple and the court?
4. What is the Holy City?
5. Reflect upon the outward and inner meanings that have been given.

Drawing on the words and utterances of 'Abdu'l-Bahá:

1. And there was given me a reed _____: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein.
2. Briefly, what is meant by the term Holy of Holies is that _____ which will never be modified, altered or abrogated; and the Holy City means the _____ which may be abrogated...

12. COMMENTARY ON THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER OF ISAIAH

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. Who is represented by the rod and Branch?
2. What meanings can be found in the verse, "... and a little child shall lead them."?
3. Why is the passage not referring to Christ and His Dispensation?
4. Ponder the force of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation that will accomplish the Most Great Peace and bring unity to all the nations?
5. Meditate for a while that 'Abdu'l-Bahá has made tremendous statements about the Jewish people that at the time had not occurred and now realize how the initial phases of this have come true in the sovereign state of Israel.

Drawing on the words and utterances of 'Abdu'l-Bahá:

1. But these verses apply word for word to _____.
2. But in this cycle of _____ all the nations and peoples will enter under the shadow of this Flag.

13. COMMENTARY ON THE TWELFTH CHAPTER OF THE REVELATION OF ST. JOHN

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. How has the Law of God been referred to in the Holy Scriptures?
2. Analyze the prophecy of St. John found in chapter 12 in relationship to the symbolic terms that are used.
3. Why have prophecies become such a source of conflict and contention instead of harmony or unity?
4. Why do religious leaders fear the Manifestations even though they often recognize that they are the Truth?
5. How were the prophecies to occur at the appearance of the Promised One such as having a kingdom and being seated on the throne of David fulfilled by Christ.

Drawing on the words and utterances of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

1. We have before explained that what is most frequently meant by the Holy City, the Jerusalem of God, which is mentioned in the Holy Book, is _____.
2. There are no clearer proofs than this in the Holy Books for any Manifestation. For him who is just, the _____ indicated by the tongues of the Great Ones is the most conclusive proof.

14. SPIRITUAL PROOFS

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. How is the cycle of the material world in close similarity with the spiritual cycle?
2. Is the Bahá’í cycle destined to end in a winter of the destruction of the foundations of Religion and leave only a spiritless form?
3. Why must we be lovers of divine light and not the place of its appearance?
4. Will the majority of mankind always choose to turn away from the Manifestations of God at the time of Their return?
5. Ponder on the beautiful metaphor of the Divine Aurora.

Drawing on the words and utterances of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

1. It is the same with the spiritual cycles of the Prophets -- that is to say, the day of the appearance of the Holy Manifestations is _____...
2. The _____ are like the cycles of the material sun: they are always revolving and being renewed.

15. TRUE WEALTH

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. If the greatest attainment for the animal is to enter into the human existence how should we consider this statement in terms of respectful and humane hunting?
2. Why do birds and other animals enjoy the most complete enjoyment and freedom in relation to the physical world?
3. What are the divine attributes and qualities that constitute true wealth?
4. Meditate upon the path towards true wealth.
5. What can the divine perfections be likened to?

Drawing on the words and utterances of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

1. The exaltation of the animal world is to possess _____, and to have all its needs supplied.
2. Then it is clear that the honor and exaltation of man must be something more than _____.

PART TWO: SOME CHRISTIAN SUBJECTS

Digestion of Passage / Preparation for Teaching work: After reading each passage try to explain in your own style the topic being studied using the passage as your foundation.

Memorization: As you work through *Part Two* select one verse or passage from this section that resonates in your heart or strikes you as particularly meaningful and commit it to memory!

The sanctified souls should ponder and meditate in their hearts regarding the methods of teaching. From the texts of the wondrous, heavenly Scriptures they should memorize phrases and passages bearing on various instances, so that in the course of their speech they may recite divine verses whenever the occasion demandeth it, inasmuch as these holy verses are the most potent elixir, the greatest and mightiest talisman. So potent is their influence that the hearer will have no cause for vacillation. (Bahá'u'lláh, Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 199.)

16. OUTWARD FORMS AND SYMBOLS MUST BE USED TO CONVEY INTELLECTUAL CONCEPTIONS

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. What are two kinds of knowledge?
2. What purpose do symbols play in helping to understand an intellectual reality?
3. Why did Bahá'u'lláh say that He was like a man asleep upon His couch when the Divine breezes blew over Him?
4. Ponder the state of the Manifestations. Are the Manifestations always Manifestations or do They become so at the time of their Revelation?
5. Ponder how we are slowly able to grow spiritually by acquiring divine knowledge and understanding through metaphor and symbol before moving on to the next world.

Drawing on the words and utterances of 'Abdu'l-Bahá:

1. So the symbol of knowledge is light, and of ignorance, darkness; but reflect, is knowledge sensible light, or ignorance sensible darkness? No, _____
2. _____
Briefly, the Holy Manifestations have ever been, and ever will be, Luminous Realities; no _____ takes place in Their essence.

17. THE BIRTH OF CHRIST

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. Is it not possible that the Holy Spirit has the power to create a life when it is the Living Power that has brought into being all of creation?
2. Why do materialists and theologians find it so difficult to agree?
3. Are there examples in nature that reproduce without a separate female and male partnering?
4. What two viewpoints are given from the materialists and the theologians?
5. Ponder if true solutions and unity can be achieved through arguments that are presented without any intention of listening to any other viewpoints of the truth.

Drawing on the words and utterances of 'Abdu'l-Bahá:

1. And We sent _____ unto her, and He appeared unto her in the shape of a perfect man...
2. ...and of everything have We created _____...

18. THE GREATNESS OF CHRIST IS DUE TO HIS PERFECTIONS

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. What is Christ's true greatness due to?
2. What is the source of a human's true life?
3. How was Adam created and brought forth into this world?
4. What influence does the Holy Spirit have on the egg and sperm when they are brought in the union of conception?
5. How powerful are divine perfections and qualities as compared to earthly learning and attainments?

Drawing on the words and utterances of 'Abdu'l-Bahá:

1. That which causes _____ is the splendor and bounty of the divine perfections.
2. To conclude: the splendor and honor of the holy souls and the Divine Manifestations come from _____, bounties and glory, and from nothing else.

19. THE BAPTISM OF CHRIST

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. What is the significance of baptism and why was it practiced during the time of John the Baptist?
2. What occurs to a soul that undergoes a spiritual cleansing or baptism?
3. Was the essence of baptism practiced in past dispensations of Religion?
4. Are there any parallels with the washing of one's body in the act of baptism and the performance of ablutions before reciting the 95 Allah-u-Abhás and the Obligatory Prayer.
5. Why is the symbol of baptism no longer needed in the cycle of Bahá'u'lláh.

Drawing on the words and utterances of 'Abdu'l-Bahá:

1. As Christ desired that this institution of John should be used at that time by all, He Himself conformed to it in order to _____ and to _____ of the former religion.
2. That is why He says baptism with the _____, with _____ and with _____ is necessary, and that it is essential -- that is to say, the spirit of divine bounty, the water of knowledge and life, and the fire of the love of God.

20. THE NECCESITY OF BAPTISM

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. Why is the social Law of Religion constantly undergoing change and alteration?
2. Has the alteration of such laws acted as a veil for those who only adhere to the form of Religion and not its spirit?
3. How has the practice of baptism changed from the time of John the Baptist?
4. Reflect on the wisdom of God that shows itself in the changing of laws.
5. What are some examples of laws that have changed over time in form though not in essence?

Drawing on the words and utterances of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

1. Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are _____ is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled.
2. As the _____ are necessities for beings, so laws also are changed and altered in accordance with the changes and alterations of the times.

21. THE SYBMOLISM OF THE BREAD AND THE WINE

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. What is the true symbolic meaning of bread and wine as used in the Bible?
2. Describe the path that one must travel in order to attain the divine perfections.
3. Throughout history what have been the sources of authoritative interpretations?
4. What was Christ seeking to express when breaking bread and sharing wine with the disciples during the last supper?
5. Reflect as to how this new understanding of the bread and wine can be shared with others who may have a different comprehension of the subject.

Drawing on the words and utterances of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

1. Then it is evident and established that the celestial food is the _____, the _____, the _____, the _____ of Christ. To eat is to draw near to Him, and to drink is to believe in Him.
2. ... when Christ blessed the bread and gave it to His disciples, saying, "This is My body," and gave grace to them, He was with them in person, in presence, and form. He was not transformed into _____; if He had been turned into bread and wine, He could not have remained with the disciples in body, in person and in presence.

22. MIRACLES

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. Are the Manifestations of God constrained by the universal laws of nature?
2. Why can miracles of the Manifestations never be used as a proof for all people?
3. Even if the physical miracles spoken of in the Holy Texts have occurred what is truly more important and essential that occurs with the dawn of the Manifestations?
4. Who are the 'people of Reality'?
5. What are some examples of laws that have changed over time in form though not in essence?

Drawing on the words and utterances of 'Abdu'l-Bahá:

1. For Them, any _____ thing is possible and easy. For through a _____ wonders appear from Them; and by this power, which is beyond nature, They influence the world of nature.
2. As this _____, _____, _____ and _____ are eternal, they are of importance. What, comparatively, is the importance, the value and the worth of this animal life with its powers? In a few days it will cease like fleeting thoughts.

23. THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. What interpretations have various clergy given to the resurrection of Christ after three days?
2. How have their interpretations differed from the spiritual meaning that 'Abdu'l-Bahá unfolds?
3. See how important it is to have a broad understanding of the Holy Writings so that various verses can be compared and used in conjunction to glean a fuller meaning. Ponder what happens when only one verse is taken and explained without a comparison with other verses on the same topic.

4. Which one of the Disciples rallied the rest to their mission and purpose after the three dark days of Christ's absence?
5. How does a physical resurrection contradict science?

Drawing on the words and utterances of 'Abdu'l-Bahá:

1. And as it has become evident that Christ came from the spiritual heaven of the Divine Kingdom, therefore, His disappearance under the earth for three days has an _____ and is not an outward fact.

2. In other words, the Cause of Christ was _____ until the life and the bounty of the Holy Spirit surrounded it.

24. THE DESCENT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT UPON THE APOSTLES

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. What is the Holy Spirit?
2. To what condition did the disciples attain when the Holy Spirit descended upon them?
3. To what mission in the world did they arise to accomplish?
4. What can we learn from the sacrifice and spiritual state of the disciples?
5. What power can turn the gnat into an eagle, the drop into the ocean, the atom into a sun?

Drawing on the words and utterances of 'Abdu'l-Bahá:

1. Disregarding themselves, they renounced their comfort and worldly happiness, sacrificing their body and soul to the Beloved, abandoning their houses, and becoming wanderers and homeless, even _____.
2. Through the spirit of the love of God they gained a new life, and they saw Christ _____, _____ and _____ them.

25. THE HOLY SPIRIT

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. What is the association between intellectual realities and the mind and soul?
2. What is the relationship with the Holy Spirit and the Manifestations of God?
3. In past Dispensations of Religion how has the Holy Spirit been described and portrayed? Reflect on various examples.
4. Why has the outpouring of the light of the Holy Spirit upon the world differed in intensity from Manifestation to Manifestation?
5. Meditate upon God and the Holy Spirit. Try to understand their relationship using a metaphor of sun and light.

Drawing on the words and utterances of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

1. The Holy Spirit is the _____ and the luminous rays which emanate from the Manifestations...
2. Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but _____, that shall He speak.

26. THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST AND THE DAY OF JUDGEMENT

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. Read and reflect on Bahá’u’lláh’s explanation of this passage of Matthew concerning the second coming of Christ starting on paragraph 24 of the Kitáb-i-Íqán.
2. Why is it scientifically impossible for a literal falling of the stars on the earth?
3. How were the signs of the first coming of Christ fulfilled symbolically?
4. What was Christ warning about when He said that perhaps He would come like a thief in the night while all were asleep?
5. What is the true meaning of the falling of the stars from heaven?

Drawing on the words and utterances of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

1. It is clear to all that Christ came from _____, although apparently He came from the womb of Mary. At the first coming He came from heaven, though apparently from the womb; in the same way, also, at His _____ He will come from heaven, though apparently from the womb.
2. The second coming of Christ also will be in like manner: the signs and conditions which have been spoken of all have _____, and are not to be taken _____.

27. THE TRINITY

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. How can the oneness of God be explained in such a way that it leaves no doubt about His exalted, indivisible, incomprehensible Essence?
2. Identify the Three Persons of the Trinity.
3. How can we say that the Sun reflected in a mirror is not the same as the real Sun and at the same time be able to truthfully say that it is?
4. Can the mind understand spiritual meanings without the help of metaphors?
5. Meditate on the approach one can take to explain the Trinity to a Christian.

Drawing on the words and utterances of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

1. The Divine Reality is sanctified from _____, then how much more from _____.
2. Now if we say that we have seen the Sun in two mirrors -- one _____ and one _____ -- that is to say, that we have seen three Suns, one in heaven and the two others on the earth, we speak truly. And if we say that there is _____, and it is pure singleness, and has no partner and equal, we again speak truly.

28. EXPLANATION OF VERSE FIVE, CHAPTER SEVENTEEN, OF THE GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. What are the two kinds of preexistence?
2. Into which category of preexistence does God exist?
3. Into which category of preexistence does the Manifestation of God exist?
4. How does understanding these two types of preexistence apply to the comprehension of a glory that has existed before the world was?
5. Ponder the true inner glory of Christ while taking into account the outward glory that Christ achieved amongst the nations of the earth after His Ascension.

Drawing on the words and utterances of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

1. And now, O Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine own self, with the _____ which I had with Thee _____.
2. There are two kinds of priorities: one is essential and is _____, but its existence is in itself... The second sort of preexistence is the _____, and that has no beginning.

29. EXPLANATION OF VERSE TWENTY-TWO, CHAPTER FIFTEEN, OF THE FIRST EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. What two natures exist in humans?
2. In the quotation what is signified by Adam and Christ respectively?
3. Is it wrong to say that the sin of Adam has been transmitted to His descendants without any wrong action on the part of the individuals?
4. What is the source of sin?
5. What are two meanings of the sacrifice of Christ?

Drawing on the words and utterances of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

1. Know that there are two natures in man: the _____ and the _____. The physical nature is inherited from Adam, and the spiritual nature is inherited from the Reality of the Word of God, which is the spirituality of Christ.
2. The Christ is the central point of the Holy Spirit: He is _____ of the Holy Spirit; He is _____ by the Holy Spirit; He is the _____ of the Holy Spirit -- that is to say, that the Reality of Christ does not descend from Adam; no, it is born of the Holy Spirit.

30. ADAM AND EVE

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. In the story of Adam what is one explanation of the terms; the serpent, the tree of good and evil, Eve, Adam, the tree of life, and the act of eating the apple?
2. What is the one of the common interpretations that Christians and Jews give to the story of Adam? Why is this interpretation incorrect?
3. What is Bahá’u’lláh’s position in the appearance and manifestation of divine perfections?
4. Meditate if Adam has in reality sinned or if this was a way of God teaching mankind what happens when one chooses the path of material attachments in that it leads to sin. In parallel when Moses struck down an Egyptian was this a sin or God’s Will.
5. Reflect on other possible meanings of the Biblical story of Adam?

Drawing on the words and utterances of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

1. For attachment to the world has become the cause of the bondage of spirits, and this bondage is _____, which has been transmitted from Adam to His posterity.
2. Adam is the _____, and Eve is _____; the tree is the _____, and the serpent is that _____ which constitutes sin, and which has infected the descendants of Adam.

31. EXPLANATION OF BLASPHEMY AGAINST THE HOLY SPIRIT

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. What are the two spiritual conditions of the Manifestations of God?
2. To what does ‘Abdu’l-Bahá relate the condition of hating the divine perfections?
3. What is the personality of a Manifestation of God?
4. Throughout the history of our Faith are there examples of enemies that have hated the Central Figures and eventually turned back and embraced the Cause?

5. Why must we be lovers of light and not the place of its appearance?

Drawing on the words and utterances of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

1. One is the _____, which can be compared to the position of the globe of the sun, and the other is the resplendency of the manifestation, which is like its light and radiance; these are the perfections of God -- in other words, the _____.
2. This is why many people who were the _____ of the Manifestations, and who did not recognize Them, when once they had known Them became Their _____.

32. EXPLANATION OF THE VERSE “FOR MANY ARE CALLED BUT FEW ARE CHOSEN”

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. How does the diversity of station and form found in the world of nature relate to the diversity of spiritual station and perfection?
2. Though a person’s spiritual capacity and state is chosen through the bounty of God does this mean that one does not need to strive to progress in perfection?
3. Is it through God’s justice that we are chosen?
4. Who have been called in the Dispensation of Bahá’u’lláh?
5. What is blameworthy in the human condition?

Drawing on the words and utterances of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

1. It is from the bounty of God that man is selected for the highest degree; and the differences which exist between men in regard to spiritual progress and heavenly perfections are also due to _____ of the Compassionate One.
2. The differences among mankind are of two sorts: one is a difference of _____, and this difference is not blameworthy. The other is a difference of _____ and assurance; the loss of these is blameworthy...

33. THE “RETURN” SPOKEN OF BY THE PROPHETS

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. Read pg. 110 in the Kitáb-i-Íqán on the subject of return.
2. Why did John the Baptist say that he was not the return of Elias while Christ proclaims just the opposite?
3. What other examples in religious history show the spiritual return of the qualities of a person or the conditions of former times?
4. What other interpretations have been given to the meaning of return?
5. Can it be truthfully said that one Manifestation of God is the return of any of the other Manifestations of God?

Drawing on the words and utterances of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

1. The explanation is this: not the personality, but _____, is meant -- that is to say, the same perfections that were in Elias existed in John the Baptist and were exactly realized in him.
2. In the same way, if we regard the return of _____, it is another individual; but if we regard the _____, the same have returned.

34. PETER’S CONFSSION OF TRUTH

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. What was Peter’s understanding of the Station of Christ?
2. What does petras mean in Aramaic?
3. When Christ said “upon this rock I will build my church” did He intend the outward form of church that developed years after?
4. Why did the Papal Government stray so far from the Teachings of Christ?
5. Reflect on the description expanding the reality of knowledge.

Drawing on the words and utterances of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

1. ... thy belief that Christ is the Son of the living God will be the foundation of the Religion of God, and upon this belief the foundation of the church of God -- which is _____ -- shall be established.
2. The purport of our argument is this, that the instructions of Christ are one thing, and the manner of the _____ is quite another; they do not agree.

35. PREDESTINATION

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. What is the cause behind the occurrence of events that are prophesized by the Prophets?
2. How is the knowledge of God identical with the realities of things in relation to the contingent realm?
3. What are some examples from this world that prove that the knowledge of an upcoming event is not the cause of its occurrence?
4. Is one’s fate set in stone, unable to be changed?
5. How has the question of predestination been viewed in the past?

Drawing on the words and utterances of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

1. The foreknowledge of a thing is not the _____; for the essential knowledge of God surrounds, in the same way, the realities of things, before as well as after their existence, and it does not become the cause of their existence.
2. Therefore, the knowledge of God in the realm of _____ does not produce the forms of the things. On the contrary, it is purified from the past, present and future. It is identical with the _____ of the things; it is not the cause of their occurrence.

PART THREE: ON THE POWERS AND CONDITIONS OF THE MANIFESTATIONS OF GOD

Digestion of Passage / Preparation for Teaching work: After reading each passage try to explain in your own style the topic being studied using the passage as your foundation.

Memorization: As you work through *Part Three* select one verse or passage from this section that resonates in your heart or strikes you as particularly meaningful and commit it to memory!

The sanctified souls should ponder and meditate in their hearts regarding the methods of teaching. From the texts of the wondrous, heavenly Scriptures they should memorize phrases and passages bearing on various instances, so that in the course of their speech they may recite divine verses whenever the occasion demandeth it, inasmuch as these holy verses are the most potent elixir, the greatest and mightiest talisman. So potent is their influence that the hearer will have no cause for vacillation. (Bahá'u'lláh, Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 199.)

36. THE FIVE ASPECTS OF SPIRIT

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. Generally speaking what are five divisions of spirit and in which category are humans placed within?
2. How is the human spirit distinguished from the animal spirit?
3. Though a human soul is eternal what will be its condition and state after death if it does not attain to the spirit of faith?
4. How is the Holy Spirit the mediator between God and His creatures?
5. Meditate how the perfections of every spirit of a lower nature can be found in the level of spirit above it.

Drawing on the words and utterances of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

1. This _____ can be compared to a mirror, and the _____ to the sun. Nevertheless, if the mirror breaks, the bounty of the sun continues; and if the

mirror is destroyed or ceases to exist, no harm will happen to the bounty of the sun, which is everlasting.

2. But the spirit of man has two aspects: one _____, one _____ -- that is to say, it is capable of the utmost perfection, or it is capable of the utmost imperfection.

37. THE DIVINITY CAN ONLY BE COMPREHENDED THROUGH THE DIVINE MANIFESTATIONS

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. Why is our purpose to know God and in reality it is utterly impossible to know Him?
2. What is anthropomorphism?
3. Why does the essence of praise offered by humans to God only return to the Manifestations of God?
4. If we in the last end can only imagine a Divine Reality that is seen in the Manifestation of God how might this relate to our prayers that we offer up to God?
5. Reflect how to keep vain imaginings and subtle images of God that are untrue from the mind and heart.

Drawing on the words and utterances of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

1. Know that the Reality of Divinity or the substance of the Essence of Oneness is _____ and _____ -- that is to say, it is sanctified and exempt from all praise.
2. We affirm these names and attributes, not to prove the perfections of God, but to deny that He is _____.

38. THE THREE STATIONS OF THE DIVINE MANIFESTATIONS

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. Ponder the verse "...though They have the degrees of endless perfections...".
2. As there are different degrees of perfection is there also different degrees of eternity?
3. What is one essential difference between the rational soul of a Manifestation of God and that of any other human being?
4. What is the relationship between the rational soul and the divine appearance of the Manifestation of God?
5. Why does the Holy Spirit have neither beginning nor end?

Drawing on the words and utterances of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

1. The first station is the _____; the second station is the human, which is that of the _____; the third is that of the _____ and the _____.
2. For God the end is the same thing as the beginning. So the reckoning of days, weeks, months and years, of yesterday and today, is connected with the terrestrial globe; but in the sun there is no such thing -- there is neither yesterday, today nor tomorrow, neither months nor years: all are equal.

39. THE HUMAN CONDITION AND THE SPIRITUAL CONDITION OF THE DIVINE MANIFESTATIONS

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. From which soul do other souls receive their light?
2. Meditate that the individual realities of the Manifestations have no separation of the Divine Bounty.
3. Are the Manifestations of God conscious of what They are even when infants?
4. What occurs to the Manifestations of God when Their bodies are killed, murdered, and martyred?
5. Are the individual souls of the Manifestations preexistent as compared to the beginning of other souls at conception?

Drawing on the words and utterances of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

1. But the _____ of the Manifestations of God is a holy reality, and for that reason it is sanctified and, in that which concerns its nature and quality, is _____ from all other things.
2. Verily, from the beginning that Holy Reality is _____ of the secret of existence, and from the age of childhood signs of greatness appear and are visible in Him.

40. THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE DIVINE MANIFESTATIONS

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. What are two kinds of knowledge?
2. In what state is the knowledge of the Manifestations of God?
3. What is religion?
4. How is the Law of God established?
5. Can other human beings be born with innate knowledge?

Drawing on the words and utterances of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

1. But the second sort of knowledge, which is the knowledge of being, is intuitive; it is like the _____ and _____ that man has of himself.

2. Religion, then, is the _____ which emanates from the reality of things; and as the supreme Manifestations of God are aware of the mysteries of beings, therefore, They understand this essential connection, and by this _____ establish the Law of God.

41. THE UNIVERSAL CYCLES

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. Even as the earth has a cycle what might the cycle of the universe be like?
2. What causes the obliteration of records and traces from past cycles?
3. At the conclusion of the no less than 500,000 year Bahá'í Cycle will every trace and record be effaced from the completion of this universal cycle?
4. What does it mean that future Manifestations of God will appear under the shadow of Bahá'u'lláh?
5. Have there been other universal Manifestations of God during the history of mankind on this planet?

Drawing on the words and utterances of 'Abdu'l-Bahá:

1. Each of the Divine Manifestations has likewise a _____, and during the cycle His _____ and _____ prevail and are performed. When His cycle is completed by the appearance of a new Manifestation, a new cycle begins.
2. Briefly, we say a _____ in the world of existence signifies a long duration of time, and innumerable and incalculable periods and epochs.

42. THE POWER AND INFLUENCE OF THE DIVINE MANIFESTATIONS

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. What station can the Manifestations of God never attain to?
2. What is the result of the influence of the Manifestations of God on the world?
3. Could the universe exist without the Manifestations of God?
4. Can anything be imagined that is outside the power and influence of the Manifestations of God?
5. Reflect... is it possible to know God without His Manifestations.

Drawing on the words and utterances of 'Abdu'l-Bahá:

1. "In the beginning was the _____," meaning that it became the cause of all life.

2. For example, in this divine age see what development has been attained in the world of minds and thoughts, and it is now only the beginning of its dawn. Before long you will see that new _____ and divine _____ will illuminate this dark world and will transform these sad regions into the paradise of Eden.

43. THE TWO CLASSES OF PROPHETS

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. What is the difference between independent Prophets and dependent prophets?
2. What role and function is performed by each kind of Prophet in the physical world?
3. Who was Confucius?
4. What is the purpose of renewal in Religion?
5. Should the dependent prophets be considered with the independent Prophets as one and the same soul?

Drawing on the words and utterances of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

1. The _____ Prophets are the _____ and the founders of a new cycle.
2. The _____ Prophets are _____ and promoters, for they are branches and not independent; they receive the bounty of the independent Prophets, and they profit by the light of the Guidance of the universal Prophets.

44. EXPLANATION OF THE REBUKES ADDRESSED BY GOD TO THE PROPHETS

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. Are the Manifestations of God free from sin and error even from birth?
2. What is the purpose of directing rebukes apparently at the Manifestations though in reality they are for the people?
3. Ponder prayers in the light of how the Manifestations have revealed their verses in different modes.
4. Could it be possible in the future as we develop as a people that the rebukes of God might be more and more directed towards people in general?
5. What is the intention and purpose of rebuke?

Drawing on the words and utterances of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

1. All the divine discourses containing reproof, though apparently addressed to the Prophets, in reality are directed to the _____, through a wisdom which is absolute mercy, in order that the people may not be discouraged and disheartened.
2. Moreover, the powerful and independent king represents his country: that which he _____ is the word of all, and every _____ that he makes is the agreement of all, for the wishes and desires of all his subjects are included in his wishes and desires. In the same way, every Prophet is the expression of the whole of the people. So the promise and speech of God addressed to Him is addressed to all.

45. EXPLANATION OF THE VERSE OF THE KITÁB-I-AQDAS, “THERE IS NO PARTNER FOR HIM WHO IS THE DAYSPRING OF REVELATION IN HIS MOST GREAT INFALLIBILITY”

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. What are two kinds of infallibility?
2. What is the meaning of infallibility?
3. What are some examples of those with essential infallibility and some examples of those with conferred infallibility?
4. What is the cause of opposition to the Manifestations if every command or law they provide is perfect and free from error?
5. Meditate on the verse, “He doeth whatsoever He willeth”.

Drawing on the words and utterances of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

1. Know that infallibility is of two kinds: _____ and _____ . In like manner there is essential knowledge and acquired knowledge; and so it is with other names and attributes.
2. In like manner, when the Holy Manifestation of God, Who is the _____, shines upon the worlds of spirits, of thoughts and of hearts, then the spiritual spring and new life appear, the power of the wonderful springtime becomes visible, and marvelous benefits are apparent.

PART FOUR: ON THE ORIGIN, POWERS AND CONDITIONS OF MAN

Digestion of Passage / Preparation for Teaching work: After reading each passage try to explain in your own style the topic being studied using the passage as your foundation.

Memorization: As you work through *Part Four* select one verse or passage from this section that resonates in your heart or strikes you as particularly meaningful and commit it to memory!

The sanctified souls should ponder and meditate in their hearts regarding the methods of teaching. From the texts of the wondrous, heavenly Scriptures they should memorize phrases and passages bearing on various instances, so that in the course of their speech they may recite divine verses whenever the occasion

demandeth it, inasmuch as these holy verses are the most potent elixir, the greatest and mightiest talisman. So potent is their influence that the hearer will have no cause for vacillation. (Bahá'u'lláh, Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 199.)

46. MODIFICATION OF SPECIES

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. Has man always existed?
2. What proof can be given for an ever-existing perfect man?
3. Does the combination of atoms and elements in a balance that generates man mean that man was always in the same physical shape and size?
4. Why do European philosophers claim that man is related to ape and what proofs do they give?
5. What affect does the knowledge of one's origin have on the soul?

Drawing on the words and utterances of 'Abdu'l-Bahá:

1. If, however, the creation in the past had not been adorned with utmost perfection, then existence would have been _____ and _____, and in this case creation would have been _____.
2. ...since man was produced ten or a hundred thousand years ago from these earthly elements with the same _____ and _____, the same method of combination and mingling, and the same influence of the other beings, exactly the same _____ existed then as now.

47. THE UNIVERSE IS WITHOUT BEGINNING

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. In Genesis it states that God created all existence in 6 days. How might we understand this expression of time in relation to this current explanation?
2. Why cannot life be generated from a commingling of elements and atoms through scientific methods?
3. How is man's evolution similar to that of an embryo in the womb and the evolution of the universe?
4. Ponder on the one matter that existed in the beginning. How was it generated?
5. How does this evolution mirror the spiritual growth of a soul?

Drawing on the words and utterances of 'Abdu'l-Bahá:

1. If we could imagine a time when no beings _____, this imagination would be the denial of the Divinity of God.
2. Then it is clear that original matter, which is in the _____, and the mingled and composed elements which were its earliest forms, gradually grew and developed during many ages and cycles, passing from one shape and form to another, until they appeared in this _____, this system, this organization and this establishment, through the supreme wisdom of God.

48. THE DIFFERENCE EXISTING BETWEEN MAN AND ANIMAL

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. What type of memory is referred to in the passage that is superior to man?
2. What are several logical proofs that show how man and other animals are entirely from different Kingdoms?
3. Do animals possess spirit?
4. How has man controlled and used nature?
5. What is the motive and animating purpose of certain philosophers proving that we are derived from animals?

Drawing on the words and utterances of 'Abdu'l-Bahá:

1. So with powerful arguments and proofs they make the descent of man go back to the animal, and say that there was once a time when man was an animal, that then the species _____ and _____ little by little until it reached the present status of man.
2. Thus it is clear that if there were not in man a _____ different from any of those of the animals, the latter would be superior to man in inventions and the comprehension of realities.

49. THE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE HUMAN RACE

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. How can the existence of a thing be proved logically?
2. What might the wisdom be for existing members in a body that have no known function?
3. Why have animals in past centuries never progressed and evolved except in their physical state whereas mankind continually evolves and progresses both materially and intellectually?
4. Does the physical evolution of a species prove that it can evolve into a completely different state than its own? For instance can a vegetable after billions of years of evolution attain to the animal perfections of sight, hearing, and memory?
5. What are some of the physical changes that the species of man has progressed through over the years?

Drawing on the words and utterances of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

1. The first answer to this argument is the fact that the animal having preceded man is not a proof of the evolution, change and alteration of the species, nor that man was raised from the animal _____ world to the human world. For while the individual appearance of these different beings is certain, it is possible that _____ came into existence after the animal.
2. Second, these _____ and traces of members have perhaps a great reason of which the mind is not yet _____.

50. SPIRITUAL PROOFS OF THE ORIGIN OF MAN

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. How is man the sum of all perfections?
2. Which man is referred to in this explanation?
3. How can a person regard the reality of his own self? What is the soul’s relationship to God and to the Perfect Man?
4. Is the sign of a perfection the same as the perfection itself?
5. Are the essential attributes of God the same as His Reality and in what form are these essential attributes seen in mankind?

Drawing on the words and utterances of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

1. ... that is to say, for each name, each attribute, each perfection which we affirm of God there exists a _____ in man.
2. This Man of Whom we speak is not every man; we mean the _____ Man.

51. THE SPIRIT AND MIND OF MAN HAVE EXISTED FROM THE BEGINNING

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. What are some examples in nature that show the gradual emergence of the latent perfection in a thing?
2. If the perfection of things occurs gradually how might the future influence of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation make its impact felt on the hearts of people the world over?
3. Ponder the new sciences and arts that will gradually be discovered as mankind's spiritual forces evolve.
4. Where have human beings existed in the past before the earth was formed?
5. If life on other planets is under one universal system and law in what ways may those lifeforms be similar and different from humans beings on planet earth?

Drawing on the words and utterances of 'Abdu'l-Bahá:

1. Only when man attains _____ do the mind and the spirit appear and become evident in utmost perfection.
2. Similarly, the terrestrial globe from the beginning was created with all its elements, substances, minerals, atoms and organisms; but these only appeared by _____...

52. THE APPEARING OF THE SPIRIT IN THE BODY

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. How is the travel of a person throughout the world similar to the journey of a soul?
2. In what way does the existence of humans make the universe a perfect creation?
3. What does it signify that the physical body acts as a magnet for the spirit?
4. What is the nature of the relationship between the body and the spirit?
5. Is the spirit of man affected if the body is damaged, ill, or tired?

Drawing on the words and utterances of 'Abdu'l-Bahá:

1. The wisdom of the appearance of the spirit in the body is this: the human spirit is a Divine Trust, and it must _____, for its passage and movement through the conditions of existence will be the means of its acquiring _____.
2. ... when the elements are arranged and combined in the _____, organization and manner, the human spirit will appear and be _____ in them.

53. THE RELATION BETWEEN GOD AND THE CREATURE

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. What is the difference between emanation and manifestation?
2. Why is manifestation not applicable to God?
3. What is the 'First Will'?
4. Examine the statement, 'the phenomenality of contingency is essential and not temporal'.
5. Ponder upon what emanated from God after the universal reality, termed the 'First Will'?

Drawing on the words and utterances of 'Abdu'l-Bahá:

1. The dependence of the creatures upon God is a dependence of _____ -- that is to say, creatures emanate from God; they do not manifest Him.
2. The first thing which emanated from God is that universal reality, which the ancient philosophers termed the "First Mind," and which the people of Bahá call the "_____."

54. ON THE PROCEEDING OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT FROM GOD

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. What is breathed from God into man?
2. Though we refer to Bahá'u'lláh and the Báb as Manifestations of God does this mean They become sharers in the Essence of God?
3. Why are the Manifestations described as the Word?
4. Reflect upon the condition of the Sun of Reality and the condition of the Word.
5. Ponder the change that comes over a soul who is illumined with the reflection from the Word. Does this enable that soul to achieve its purpose in life?

Drawing on the words and utterances of 'Abdu'l-Bahá:

1. The proceeding through _____ is like the coming forth of the action from the actor, of the writing from the writer. Now the writing emanates from the writer, and the discourse emanates from the speaker, and in the same way the _____ emanates from God.
2. But the proceeding through _____ (if by this is meant the divine appearance, and not division into parts), we have said, is the proceeding and the appearance of the Holy Spirit and the Word, which is from God.

55. SOUL, SPIRIT, AND MIND

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. What powers are associated with each category of spirit?
2. What must the human reality first be assisted by in order to be acquainted with the divine secrets and heavenly realities?
3. What is the power of the human spirit?
4. What is mind?
5. What is the spirit of faith?

Drawing on the words and utterances of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

1. The human spirit which distinguishes man from the animal is the _____, and these two names -- the human spirit and the rational soul -- designate one thing.
2. But the _____ is the power of the human spirit. Spirit is the lamp; mind is the light which shines from the lamp. Spirit is the tree, and the mind is the _____. Mind is the perfection of the spirit and is its essential quality, as the sun’s rays are the essential necessity of the sun.

56. THE PHYSICAL POWERS AND THE INTELLECTUAL POWERS

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. What are the five outer powers and five inner powers of a human being?
2. What is the common faculty?
3. Do the spiritual powers continue to operate when the physical powers have been injured or diminished?
4. When the spirit of faith illumines a soul will the physical powers receive its influence as well?
5. If memory is a spiritual power what does this imply?

Drawing on the words and utterances of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

1. The _____ between the five outward powers and the inward powers is the sense which they possess in common -- that is to say, the sense which acts between the outer and inner powers, conveys to the inward powers whatever the outer powers discern.
2. It is termed the _____, because it communicates between the outward and inward powers and thus is common to the outward and inward powers.

57. THE CAUSES OF THE DIFFERENCES IN THE CHARACTERS OF MEN

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. What are the three kinds of human character?
2. What is the reason for the variance in innate character?
3. Are the blessings of inherited character dependant on action and deed?
4. What is the fundamental reality of creation?
5. How can it be proven that creation contain no evil?

Drawing on the words and utterances of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

1. He has the _____ character, the _____ character, and the _____ character which is gained by education.
2. But the difference of the qualities with regard to _____ is very great, for education has great influence... Through education savage nations become civilized, and even the animals become domesticated.

58. THE DEGREE OF KNOWLEDGE POSSESSED BY MAN AND THEN DIVINE MANIFESTATIONS

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. How are the hidden sciences and arts uncovered?
2. What is the universal divine mind?
3. What is the relationship between the Holy Manifestations and the hearts of the righteous?
4. When man transcends material perceptions and sees things through the eyes of God what will he experience?
5. What hinders souls from true perception?

Drawing on the words and utterances of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

1. The first condition of _____ in the world of nature is the perception of the _____. In this perception and in this power all men are sharers, whether they be neglectful or vigilant, believers or deniers.
2. But the _____, which is beyond nature, is the bounty of the Preexistent Power. This universal mind is divine; it embraces existing realities, and it receives the light of the mysteries of God. It is a conscious power, not a power of _____ and of _____.

59. Man’s Knowledge of God

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. What does it truly mean to know God?
2. What is the source of our knowledge of the attributes and qualities of God?
3. What occurs when we seek the knowledge of God from human beings? How can we balance our knowledge of God through the Writings and from the understanding of other souls?
4. Ponder why it is impossible to know the essence of a thing.
5. Meditate upon the lives of your closest, dearest friends. Though you may have known them for years do you really know the essence of their being? Even the essence of your own being?

Drawing on the words and utterances of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

1. Know that there are two kinds of knowledge: the knowledge of the _____ of a thing and the knowledge of its _____. The essence of a thing is known through its qualities; otherwise, it is unknown and hidden.
2. Therefore, if man attains to the knowledge of the _____, he will attain to the knowledge of God; and if he be neglectful of the knowledge of the Holy Manifestations, he will be bereft of the knowledge of God.

60. THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SPIRIT (1)

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. What are the paradise and hell of existence which can be found in any world of God?
2. What is the meaning of the second birth?
3. Meditate upon the condition that must await the soul that is dedicated and steadfast in the path of God.
4. Should the intent of living a spiritual life be to receive spiritual rewards in the next life?
5. What are the signs and effects of the soul?

Drawing on the words and utterances of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

1. When they are delivered through the light of faith from the darkness of these vices, and become illuminated with the radiance of the sun of reality, and ennobled with all the virtues, they esteem this the _____, and they know it to be the _____.
2. Likewise, the rewards of the other world are the _____ which is clearly mentioned in all the Holy Books, the _____, the _____ and _____.

61. THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SPIRIT (2)

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. Have you ever experienced dreams that have later in life become reality? Is there any connection between dreams and the feeling of *deja vu*?
2. Ponder on the world of dreams and give some regard to powerful and vivid dreams?
3. What influence does the knowledge of immortal life have on the martyrs?
4. How is the soul of a person with physical or mental handicaps affected? Is this soul hindered in its spiritual progress?
5. Reflect on the examples of those who though laden with physical hardships and pain are able to overcome these tests through the strength and powers of their soul.

Drawing on the words and utterances of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

1. To consider that after the death of the _____ the spirit perishes is like imagining that a bird in a _____ will be destroyed if the cage is broken, though the bird has nothing to fear from the destruction of the cage.
2. But when the body is wholly subjected to disease and misfortune, it is deprived of the _____ of the spirit, like a mirror which, when it becomes broken or dirty or dusty, cannot reflect the _____ nor any longer show its bounties.

62. PERFECTIONS ARE WITHOUT LIMIT

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. What is the relationship between divine bounties and divine perfections?
2. What is the limit or boundary that human beings can never cross in their quest after perfection? Do we have an example of the limit of human perfections?
3. By what means do souls progress in this world and the next?
4. Meditate upon the thoughtful exertions that one should carry out on behalf of one’s parents for the care and trouble that they have shown you in your life?
5. What is intercession and what role does it have in attaining spiritual perfection?

Drawing on the words and utterances of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

1. Know that the conditions of existence are limited to the conditions of _____, of _____ and of _____, but the divine and the contingent perfections are unlimited.
2. But for every being there is a point which it cannot overpass -- that is to say, he who is in the condition of _____, however far he may progress in gaining limitless perfections, will never reach the condition of _____. It is the same with the other beings.

63. THE PROGRESS OF MAN IN THE OTHER WORLD

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. What does it mean that in the next life to cease to progress is the same as decline? Can this also be applied to this world?
2. What is the meaning of apogee and perigee?
3. What happens to the molecules of water when frozen? Boiled? How can this analogy be related to the motion of a soul in terms of progress and decline?
4. What understandings can be gleaned from knowing that divine perfections are endless within one's own state?
5. Though the Manifestations of God are of an entirely different state than mankind do they also progress in perfections?

Drawing on the words and utterances of 'Abdu'l-Bahá:

1. Now, as the spirit continues to exist after death, it necessarily _____ or _____; and in the other world to cease to progress is the same as to decline; but it never leaves its own condition, in which it continues to develop.
2. So the moon which is in the heavens, however far it might evolve, could never become a _____, but in its own _____ it has apogee and perigee.

64. THE STATE OF MAN AND HIS PROGRESS AFTER DEATH

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. Why were we created with an animal side as well as an angelic side?
2. What is the Book of Creation?
3. Meditate upon the essential need that is molded into the very clay of our souls to have true life through the Manifestations of God.
4. What are some logical proofs of endless perfections?
5. Reflect! What causes a soul to sink into the abyss of his animal nature?

Drawing on the words and utterances of 'Abdu'l-Bahá:

1. Man is in the highest degree of materiality, and at the beginning of spirituality -- that is to say, he is the end of _____ and the beginning of _____.
2. The reason of the mission of the Prophets is to educate men, so that this piece of coal may become a _____, and this fruitless tree may be engrafted and yield the sweetest, most delicious _____.

65. EXPLANATION OF A VERSE IN THE KITÁB-I-AQDAS

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. After having being informed and introduced to the Faith yet still remaining indifferent, are the deeds performed by that soul acceptable?
2. What is the difference between a soul that is veiled and performs good deeds and a sinner that follows their own passions and has an unseemly character?
3. What causes a soul that is veiled to perform good deeds?
4. When the knowledge of God is diffused over a people how does it affect them?
5. Is it enough to simply perform good deeds?

Drawing on the words and utterances of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

1. Nevertheless, it is certain that between the _____, the _____ and the wicked who are _____ from God there is a difference.
2. Therefore, the blessed verse means that _____ alone, without the _____, cannot be the cause of eternal salvation, everlasting success, and prosperity, and entrance into the Kingdom of God.

66. THE EXISTENCE OF THE RATIONAL SOUL AFTER THE DEATH OF THE BODY

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. What is meant by veiled spirits?
2. By what means will a soul progress in the next world?
3. Everlasting existence is ordained for ever soul. What is the difference then for a soul who has quaffed the wine of faith and the soul that remains in the abyss of ignorance?
4. Reflect upon the means provided by Bahá’u’lláh to strengthen our soul. Make a short list of these.

5. What shall be the fate of a soul that was born dead or never reached the age of maturity?

Drawing on the words and utterances of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

1. ... it (the rational soul) will make progress and will attain to the _____, or it will remain in the lowest _____, veiled and deprived from beholding the signs of God.
2. The progress of man’s spirit in the divine world, after the severance of its connection with the body of dust, is through the bounty and grace of the Lord alone, or through the intercession and the _____ of other human souls, or through the _____ and important good works which are performed in its name.

67. ETERNAL LIFE AND ENTRANCE INTO THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. How is the earth and heaven the same to the spirit?
2. What is the Kingdom?
3. What are the essential prerequisites for entrance into the Kingdom?
4. How are the divine perfections developed?
5. Meditate upon the dream world. Is this world free which is free from time and place a glimpse of the Kingdom?

Drawing on the words and utterances of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

1. This is because the spirit has no place; it is placeless; and for the spirit the _____ and the _____ are as one since it makes discoveries in both.
2. Entrance into the Kingdom is through the _____, through detachment, through holiness and chastity, through _____, purity, steadfastness, faithfulness and the _____.

68. FATE

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. What are two kinds of fate?
2. Give several examples of decreed fate?
3. What is conditional fate?
4. Reflect. What can keep a soul protected from conditional fate?
5. Can decreed fate be changed by the Manifestation of God?

Drawing on the words and utterances of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

1. Fate is of two kinds: one is _____, and the other is conditional or _____.
2. This is a conditional fate. It is wise to avoid it, to _____ oneself from it, to be _____ and circumspect.

69. THE INFLUENCE OF THE STARS

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. Why were we created with an animal side as well as an angelic side?
2. What is the Book of Creation?
3. Meditate upon the essential need that is molded into the very clay of our souls to have true life through the Manifestations of God.
4. What are some logical proofs of endless perfections?
5. Reflect! What causes a soul to sink into the abyss of his animal nature?

Drawing on the words and utterances of 'Abdu'l-Bahá:

1. In the same way, the parts of this infinite universe have their _____ and elements connected with one another, and influence one another _____ and materially.
2. Although by existing rules and _____ these connections cannot be discovered, nevertheless, their existence between all beings is certain and _____.

70. FREE WILL

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. What things are subject to the free will of man?
2. What are several things to which man is forced or compelled?
3. Meditate upon the connection between justice and free will.
4. What is free will dependant upon?
5. How does a soul align his will with the overwhelming Will of God?

Drawing on the words and utterances of 'Abdu'l-Bahá:

1. He can be an enkindled light through the _____, and a philanthropist loving the world, or he can be a hater of mankind, and engrossed with material things. He can be just or cruel. These actions and these deeds are subject to the control of the _____ himself; consequently, he is responsible for them.
2. Also the inaction or the movement of man depend upon the _____. If he is not aided, he is not able to do either good or evil. But when the help of existence comes from the Generous Lord, he is able to do both _____; but if the help is cut off, he remains absolutely helpless.

71. VISIONS AND COMMUNICATION WITH SPIRITS

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. What are two kinds of spiritual discoveries?
2. What are two kinds of thought?
3. What is an essential condition of true spiritual visions and communion with spirits?
4. Reflect upon the wonderful effects that are produced when a soul reads of the visions that a Manifestation of God has experienced.
5. How should we view the claims of those who have visions, talk with spirits, visualize ghosts, etc.?

Drawing on the words and utterances of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

1. That which proves it clearly is that from this controlling of spirits no _____ has ever been produced. No, they are but narratives and stories.
2. What we mean is that this state, which we call the converse and communications of spirits, is of two kinds: one is _____, and the other is like the _____ which are mentioned in the Holy Book, such as the revelations of St. John and Isaiah and the meeting of Christ with Moses and Elias.

72. HEALING BY SPIRITUAL MEANS

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. What are four types of healing without medicine?
2. Describe a situation where a person can become sick without having eaten anything and with nothing harmful coming into contact with them.
3. How is a cordial connection between a strong soul and an invalid established?
4. Give several examples from the lives of the Manifestations of God when healing through the power of the Holy Spirit was accomplished.
5. Is the power of healing through the Holy Spirit given to other souls besides the Manifestations of God?

Drawing on the words and utterances of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

1. Know that there are four kinds of curing and healing without medicine. Two are due to _____ causes, and two to _____ causes.
2. But the fourth kind of healing is produced through the power of the _____. This does not depend on contact, nor on sight, nor upon presence; it is not dependent upon any condition. Whether the disease be light or severe, whether there be a contact of bodies or not, whether a personal connection be established between the sick person and the healer or not, this healing takes place through the power of the Holy Spirit.

73. HEALING BY MATERIAL MEANS

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. What is the current state of medicine in the twenty-first century?
2. What are the principle causes of disease?
3. How can vegetables heal a sick person?
4. Reflect upon the medicines administered that have horrible and displeasing smell and taste. Are they truly the best cures?
5. Can physical sicknesses also be brought on by certain mental and spiritual conditions?

Drawing on the words and utterances of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

1. But the principal causes of disease are _____, for the human body is composed of numerous elements, but in the measure of an especial - _____.
2. The majority of the diseases which overtake man also overtake the animal, but the animal is not cured by drugs. In the mountains, as in the wilderness, the animal's physician is the power of _____.

PART FIVE: MISCELLANEOUS SUBJECTS

Digestion of Passage / Preparation for Teaching work: After reading each passage try to explain in your own style the topic being studied using the passage as your foundation.

Memorization: As you work through *Part Five* select one verse or passage from this section that resonates in your heart or strikes you as particularly meaningful and commit it to memory!

The sanctified souls should ponder and meditate in their hearts regarding the methods of teaching. From the texts of the wondrous, heavenly Scriptures they should memorize phrases and passages bearing on various instances, so that in the course of their speech they may recite divine verses whenever the occasion

demandeth it, inasmuch as these holy verses are the most potent elixir, the greatest and mightiest talisman. So potent is their influence that the hearer will have no cause for vacillation. (Bahá'u'lláh, Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 199.)

74. THE NONEXISTENCE OF EVIL

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. What is evil? Give some examples.
2. In the next world is there a lack of divine perfections in the same way that we describe evil in this world?
3. Meditate upon the verse “Hallowed be the Lord, the most excellent of all creators”!
4. Various things in relation to each other can be evil though in the limit of their proper beings are they evil?
5. Ponder! What is the highest form and state of achievement that we should have as our everlasting goal?

Drawing on the words and utterances of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

1. Briefly, the intellectual realities, such as all the qualities and admirable perfections of man, are purely good, and exist. Evil is simply their _____.
2. The epitome of this discourse is that it is possible that one thing in relation to another may be _____, and at the same time within the limits of its _____ it may not be evil.

75. TWO KINDS OF TORMENT

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. What are two kinds of torment?
2. For those seeking after God what is the greatest torment?
3. As mankind becomes progressively spiritualized how will the fear of God keep people from the torment of self?
4. What social laws has Bahá’u’lláh given in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas related to gross torment?
5. Reflect. How is torment best avoided?

Drawing on the words and utterances of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

1. Certainly for an intelligent man death is better than _____, and a cut tongue is better than _____ or calumny.
2. The other kind of torment is gross -- such as penalties, imprisonment, beating, expulsion and banishment. But for the people of God _____ is the greatest torment of all.

76. THE JUSTICE AND MERCY OF GOD

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. Why is the Supreme Institution of our Faith termed the Universal House of Justice and not the Universal House of Mercy?
2. What is the result if the community shows forgiveness to an aggressor?
3. What is the true foundation of reason?
4. How does reason condemn injustice even when the commands of the Prophet are not known?
5. Is vengeance conducive to producing beneficial fruits?

Drawing on the words and utterances of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

1. But in a place where the _____ of a Prophet are not known, and where the people do not act in conformity with the divine instructions, such as the command of Christ to return good for evil, but act according to the desires of nature -- that is, if they torment those who torment them -- from the point of view of religion they are _____ because the divine command has not been delivered to them.
2. The law of the community will _____ the aggressor but will not take _____. This punishment has for its end to warn, to protect and to oppose cruelty and transgression so that other men may not be tyrannical.

77. THE RIGHT METHOD OF TREATING CRIMINALS

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. What are two types of retributory punishments?
2. What is the purpose of chastisement?
3. Contemplate the future condition of the world when people, through the redeeming power of education, will avoid and shrink from perpetrating crimes. What type of education can achieve this?
4. What is the standard of individual conduct for a person on the receiving end of an injustice?
5. What is the highest means of moral change and how is this completely opposite to the demoralizing effect of expecting crimes to be committed?

Drawing on the words and utterances of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

1. But the most essential thing is that the people must be _____ in such a way that no crimes will be committed; for it is possible to educate the masses so effectively that they will avoid and shrink from perpetrating crimes, so that the crime itself will appear to them as the greatest chastisement, the utmost condemnation and _____.
2. Therefore, the communities must think of preventing crimes, rather than of _____.

78. STRIKES

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. What are two causes of strikes?
2. What is the root of prevailing conditions that leads to strikes?
3. What results from profit sharing in a company?
4. Why is accumulation of excessive wealth a terrible burden?
5. Which law in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas establishes that a wealthy man should give over a portion of his wealth each year for the poor and unfortunate?

Drawing on the words and utterances of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

1. It would be well, with regard to the common rights of manufacturers, workmen and artisans, that laws be established, giving _____ to manufacturers, and to workmen the _____ of existence and security for the future.
2. Good God! Is it possible that, seeing one of his fellow-creatures _____, destitute of everything, a man can rest and live comfortably in his luxurious _____?

79. THE REALITY OF THE EXTERIOR WORLD

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. What is the state of created beings in relationship to God? To themselves?
2. What is man's state in relationship to the rest of the exterior world?
3. Though the exterior world in relationship to God is but an allusion, what can be learned from physical things and occurrences?
4. Who are Sophists and what are their beliefs?
5. Ponder upon the interactions between this exterior world and the world of spirit.

Drawing on the words and utterances of 'Abdu'l-Bahá:

1. In the same manner the existence of beings in comparison with the existence of God is but _____; it is an appearance, like the image reflected in a mirror.
2. Then it is evident that although beings in relation to the existence of God have no existence, but are like the mirage or the _____ in the mirror, yet in their own degree they exist.

80. REAL PREEXISTENCE

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. What types of preexistence exist? Give examples.
2. How are existence and nonexistence relative?
3. Are the Manifestations of God essentially preexistent?
4. Meditate upon a state of life where there is no time.
5. What is the Eternal Bounty?

Drawing on the words and utterances of 'Abdu'l-Bahá:

1. _____ is an existence which is not preceded by a cause, but essential phenomena are preceded by causes.
2. Therefore, though the world of contingency exists, in relation to the _____ it is nonexistent and nothingness. Man and dust both exist, but how great the difference between the existence of the mineral and that of man!

81. REINCARNATION

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. What is the nature of a true and genuine explanation of truth?
2. What are two classes of belief in reincarnation?
3. What is the arc of ascent and the arc of descent?
4. Reflect upon the theme of spiritual return and how the Manifestations of God reincarnate the same light of each and all Manifestations of God.
5. How does the sacrifice and suffering of the Manifestations of God prove that reincarnation of the actual soul is but child's play.

Drawing on the words and utterances of 'Abdu'l-Bahá:

1. As the proof of uniqueness exists in all things, and the Oneness and _____ is apparent in the reality of all things, the repetition of the same appearance is absolutely impossible.
2. Moreover, this material world has not such value or such excellence that man, after having escaped from this _____, will desire a second time to fall into this snare. No, through the _____ the worth and true ability of man becomes apparent and visible by traversing the degrees of existence, and not by returning.

82. PANTHEISM

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. What is one of the arguments of the believers in pantheism?
2. What is the Unity of God?
3. Reanalyze manifestation of and emanation from God.
4. What is true pantheism?
5. What are the world of God, the Kingdom, and creation?

Drawing on the words and utterances of 'Abdu'l-Bahá:

1. To recapitulate: the Sufis admit God and the creature, and say that God resolves Himself into the infinite forms of the creatures, and _____ like the sea, which appears in the infinite forms of the waves. These phenomenal and imperfect waves are the same thing as the _____, which is the sum of all the divine perfections.
2. The difference resides in that which the Sufis say, “The reality of the things is the _____ of the Real Unity.” But the Prophets say, “it _____ from the Real Unity”; and great is the difference between manifestation and emanation.

83. THE FOUR METHODS OF ACQUIRING KNOWLEDGE

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. What are the four ways of attaining knowledge?
2. How is logic and reason limited?
3. Are the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh logical and reasonable?
4. Why is personal interpretation of divine verses flawed?
5. What is the perfect force to acquire knowledge from?

Drawing on the words and utterances of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

1. Therefore, it is evident that the _____ is not perfect, for the differences of the ancient philosophers, the want of stability and the variations of their opinions, prove this.
2. But the bounty of the _____ gives the true method of comprehension which is _____. This is through the help of the Holy Spirit which comes to man, and this is the condition in which certainty can alone be attained.

84. THE NECESSITY OF FOLLOWING THE TEACHINGS OF THE DIVINE MANIFESTATIONS

Questions, Reflections, Meditations:

1. What is the fruit of human existence and what would occur without the beauty and perfection of the fruit?
2. Why is a righteous action imperfect if it is deprived of the knowledge and love of God as well as a pure intention?
3. Why have souls conformed to good actions even though they do not believe in Religion?
4. Meditate upon the love of God.

5. How has indifference kept people back from the Teachings of God?

Drawing on the words and utterances of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

1. In the same way, when a person performs a good action, although it is praiseworthy, if it is not caused by the _____ of God, it is _____.
2. Moreover, if you reflect justly, you will see that these _____ of other men who do not know God are also fundamentally caused by the _____ of God.