

SECTION 10

We should remember that, in addition to the blessings we receive from obeying the law of obligatory prayer and the nourishment we obtain from saying other prayers individually, our souls are uplifted when we hear prayers being recited in gatherings, large or small. Bahá'u'lláh tells us:

“Gather ye together with the utmost joy and fellowship and recite the verses revealed by the merciful Lord. By so doing the doors of true knowledge will be opened to your inner beings, and ye will then feel your souls endowed with steadfastness and your hearts filled with radiant joy.”²¹

We all derive great joy from the knowledge that, around the world, devotional gatherings in which friends and neighbors come together to commune with God are multiplying by the thousands. The Universal House of Justice writes:

“Devotional meetings are occasions where any soul may enter, inhale the heavenly fragrances, experience the sweetness of prayer, meditate upon the Creative Word, be transported on the wings of the spirit, and commune with the one Beloved. Feelings of fellowship and common cause are generated, particularly in the spiritually heightened conversations that naturally occur at such times and through which the ‘city of the human heart’ may be opened.”²²

When we feel moved to pray, we wait quietly for a moment in order to cleanse our minds of the things of this world. While praying, we keep our thoughts centered on God. After we have recited prayers, we remain silent for some time and do not move abruptly into another activity. The same is true when we listen to prayers offered by others in a gathering. On such occasions, we maintain a prayerful attitude and follow the words closely, as though we were the one reciting them.

SECTION 11

The first unit of this book focused on the habit of reading passages from the Writings every day and pondering their meaning. You have reflected here on the significance of prayer and have, as a result, reinforced the habit of praying daily. The previous section brought to your attention the importance of community worship. All that you have studied so far has prepared you to undertake, if you wish, a first act on the path of service: hosting a devotional meeting.

As an initial step, you may want to memorize several prayers and find an opportunity to share them with a few friends. At the same time, you could ensure that you attend at least one devotional meeting in your community and are counted among its enthusiastic supporters. Eventually, then, you may decide to host a devotional meeting yourself, inviting your friends, family members, and neighbors to gather regularly for prayer and fellowship. It is not uncommon for two or three participants of this course to start such a devotional meeting together.

As you can imagine, there are no formulas for how a devotional meeting is to be organized. But it is clearly a gathering of friends in which prayers are offered, passages from the Writings are read, and uplifting conversations take place—all in a markedly spiritual atmosphere. Can you say a few words about each of the following ideas, in the context of hosting a devotional meeting?

- Extending warm and loving invitations
- Creating a welcoming environment
- Maintaining an atmosphere of reverence
- Promoting joyful fellowship
- Encouraging spiritually uplifting conversation