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 **LARGE PRINT** / Standard Print.Developing the Three Core Activities  

## Developing the Three Core Activities

### Ruhi Book One Study Circle: what it did for me!

WHEN I BEGAN studying Book One with our study circle, I had only been a Bahá'í for a couple of months and so being round Bahá'ís was still a very new thing for me. In addition, I had very little knowledge of the Writings and although I had begun to read them, I hadn't really studied them a great deal. Looking back, studying Book One was a fantastic experience for me as each unit filled a particular need that I didn't even know I had, and just at the right time too.

For example, soon after I declared, I realised how little I knew about the Faith, apart from the basic principles, as well as the Writings. I had so many questions. I knew that we were supposed to teach the Faith in our daily lives by example, but what did that mean? How were we really supposed to behave? Well, completing the first unit of Book One, "Understanding the Bahá'í Writings", certainly helped me answer these, as it talked about the kinds of morals and virtues a Bahá'í should adopt and practise on a day to day basis. That was one need fulfilled.

The second need was the need to pray. I come from a Catholic background, and as many people know, in the Catholic faith most of the readings and prayers tend only to be read by the priest. The other thing is, the only prescribed prayers we have are the Our Father, the Hail Mary and the Glory Be, so if you wanted to say something more personal to God, you had to make it up yourself. However, when I became a Bahá'í and was introduced to all the beautiful prayers revealed by Bahá'u'lláh I was pleasantly surprised. They were so powerful! Many times I would read them and find myself crying they stirred my heart so much. Only one problem: the Obligatory Prayer. I found this very hard to say, and even though I could recite it, I didn't really understand its meaning, and couldn't really see the point of having to recite one of them every day; so for a long time I avoided it and came up with all kinds of excuses not to bother. Thankfully, Unit two of Book One helped me sort this problem out. It taught me to see the Obligatory prayer as a means of giving food to the soul, and then there was this thing it said about the prayers being a form of communion with God. What? This was new – the only thing I'd heard about communion was to do with bread and wine as a child, and I never really understood that then either. But this idea of prayer being communion, or conversation with God really helped me get to grips with saying the Obligatory prayer – I mean, if I'm good at anything, its making conversation! And so after looking at it like that, I found I could relax, be myself when I pray, and now I love it!

The third unit was all about life after death, and this came just when I needed it, as, a couple of weeks before we began the unit, both my aunty and my great Nan, whom I was extremely close to had passed on to the Abhá kingdom. I remember feeling pretty lost and doubtful. Fortunately, as we studied the passages on life after death, I felt comforted as they reminded me that really my Nan wasn't that far away after all, and I felt sure she was okay.

One thing's for sure, I could not have made all these discoveries on my own. Everyone in the study circle was lovely, not to mention patient, putting up with all my questions, explaining anything about the Faith that I didn't understand, and generally giving me insights into the Writings that I would not have had if I just studied them on my own. Most importantly of all the "Eternal Spirit" study circle gave me friendship and encouragement

importance of my life. During Spirit Study there gave me meaning and encouragement that, being as yet the only Bahá'í in my family, has been extremely important to me. Not long ago a friend was telling me how when she became a Bahá'í there was no such thing as Study Circles and that the only thing the friends had to rely on for bonding and deepening was the 19 Day Feast; therefore, I count myself a very lucky fairly new Bahá'í to have the bounty of our study circle and feel very privileged to be part of it, and, even though, (judging by the length of this reflection), you might not believe me, I honestly can't wait to get stuck into Book 2, which I'm sure will be very interesting.

Nadia O'Connell

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## Reflections on Ruhi Training and Spiritual Insights

*(Martin Wagg enrolled as a Bahá'í in July 2002 after completing Ruhi Book One. Having since completed Book Two, he reflects on his experience of the Study Circle process.)*

I AM SURE that the Ruhi Study Groups work at a deeper level than that of merely teaching the Bahá'í scriptures and ideals to the students.

I felt that I was being taught how to behave as a Bahá'í, not only by studying the Holy Word, but also by the method of learning through practice how to consult and work in a loving group, how to read aloud, how to organise devotional meetings, keep the minutes, and share my deepest thoughts with my new friends. This was similar for all of us in our Portishead Study groups of 2002/2003 and some of our group have gone on to the Tutor Training Courses.

There wasn't any mystique to being a tutor, I realised, and this thought led me on to the basic conclusions that participating in the Ruhi courses has two extra effects; of preparing the student to be the tutor, and of creating a loving group. If the students do not learn how to tutor their own group and if the tutors cannot facilitate the growth of love in the group, then the groups that they facilitate will not be great successes. The two go hand in hand.

I am now attending my second Ruhi Book One, with a first-time tutor and some others who have also done Book One. What is the point of this repetition? After only two sessions, our group is becoming closer and more loving, our new tutor is gaining in confidence, and Sunday afternoons are be looked forward to.

So these seemingly simple tuition courses do much more than help us to acquire knowledge and skills: they enable the participants to acquire spiritual insights, primarily through the love that grows between the members.

It's amusing to think that some of our Bahá'í communities and institutions are only just beginning to realise how potent Study Circles are!

Martin Wagg

