

What Are the Bahá'í Teachings on Marriage and Family?

Our world suffers from a desperate sense of separation and a scarcity of love. The highest rates of murder and assault are found among friends and family members. Today, parents and children spend little time together. This prophecy from Micah describes the trends of our time:

For a son dishonors his father, a daughter rises up against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law—a man's enemies are the members of his own household. Micah 7:6

Bahá'u'lláh has declared the dawning of the age of peace and oneness between all members of the human race, including family members. He has come to turn the hearts of parents and children towards each other. This, too, has been prophesied:

See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers. Malachi 4:5-6

A good family starts with a good marriage. Bahá'í teachings describe

marriage as a divine institution, a fundamental feature of the design of creation. It will never be outmoded, for it reflects the very purpose for which God created the universe.

The purpose of God in creating man hath been, and will ever be, to enable him to know his Creator and to attain His Presence.¹ Bahá'u'lláh

Marriage is a sacred pledge not only between a man and a woman, but also between a couple and God. It is not a contract for convenience but a covenant between two lovers of God who decide to become one physically and spiritually. This awareness elevates marriage from the physical plane to the spiritual. According to Bahá'í principles, those united by the marriage bond should not base their relationship on convenience or personal needs and desires, but on the Will of God. An evidence of this is the Bahá'í marriage vow, which reads, "We will all, verily, abide by the Will of God." The spiritual bond formed on earth should endure for all eternity.

Marriage, among the mass of the people, is a physical bond, and this union can only be temporary, since it is foredoomed to a physical separation at the close.

Among the people of Bahá [Bahá'ís], however, marriage must be a union of the body and of the spirit as well...² 'Abdu'l-Bahá

In a letter addressed to two Bahá'ís who planned to get married, 'Abdu'l-Bahá wrote:

O ye two believers in God! The Lord, peerless is He, hath made woman and man to abide with each other in the closest companionship, and to be even as a single soul. They are two helpmates, two intimate friends, who should be concerned about the welfare of each other.

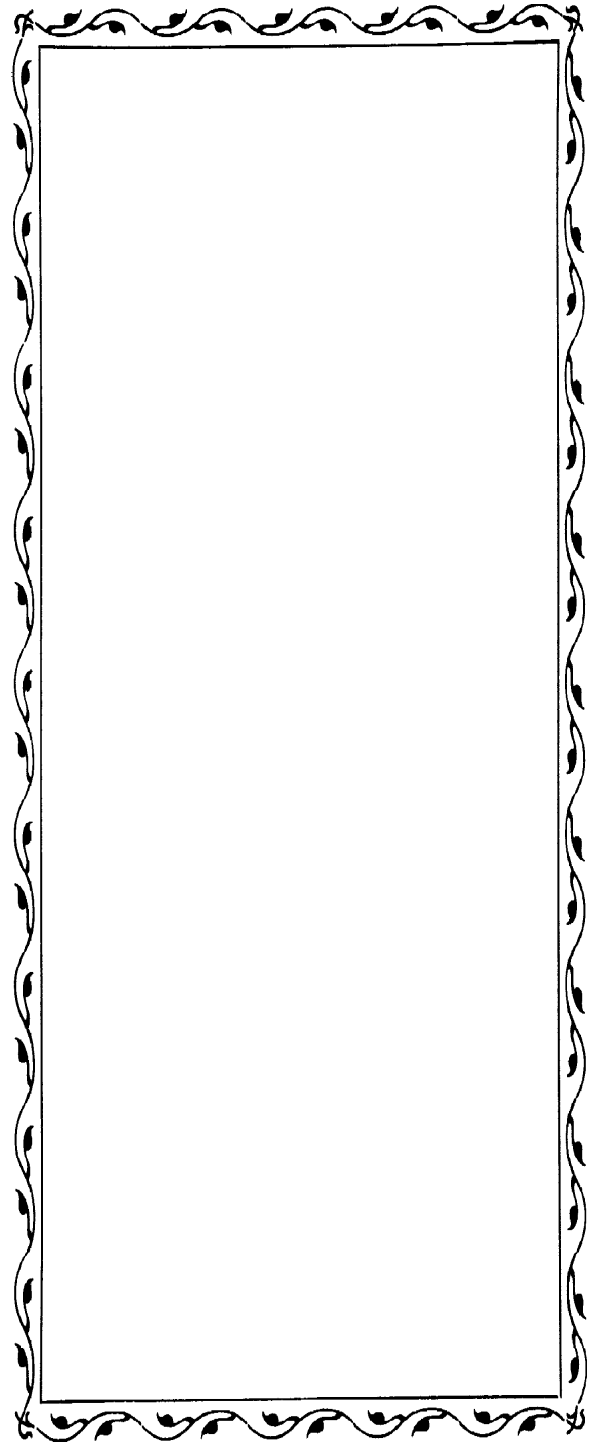
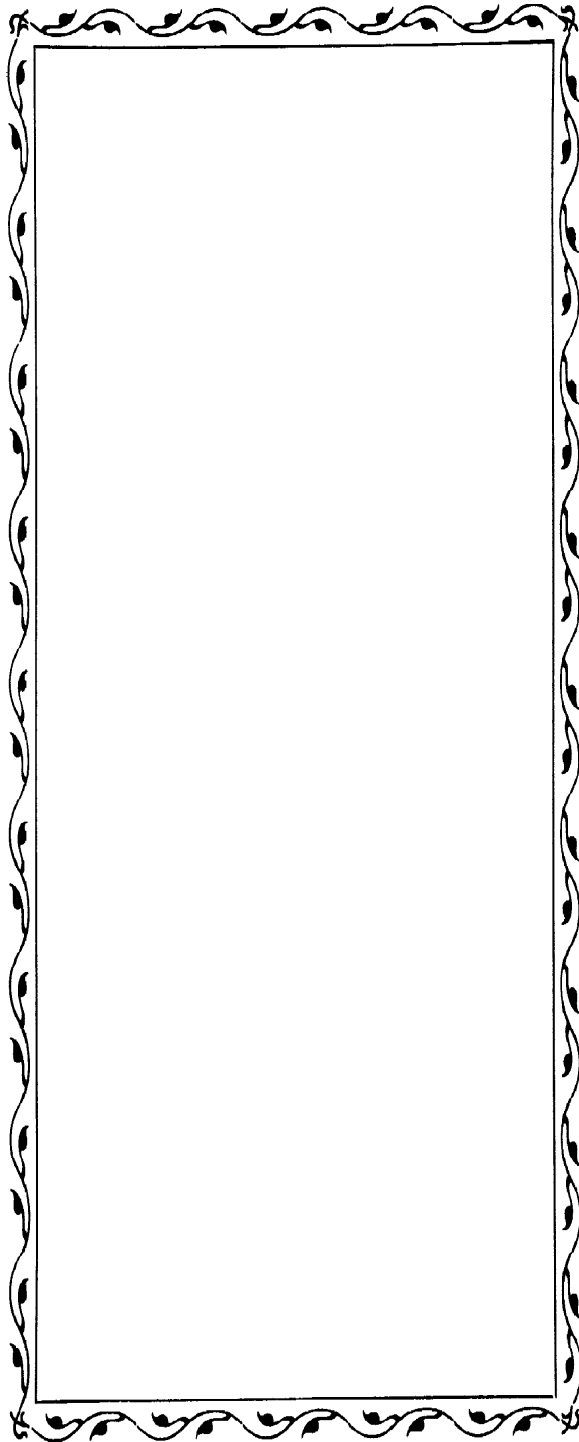
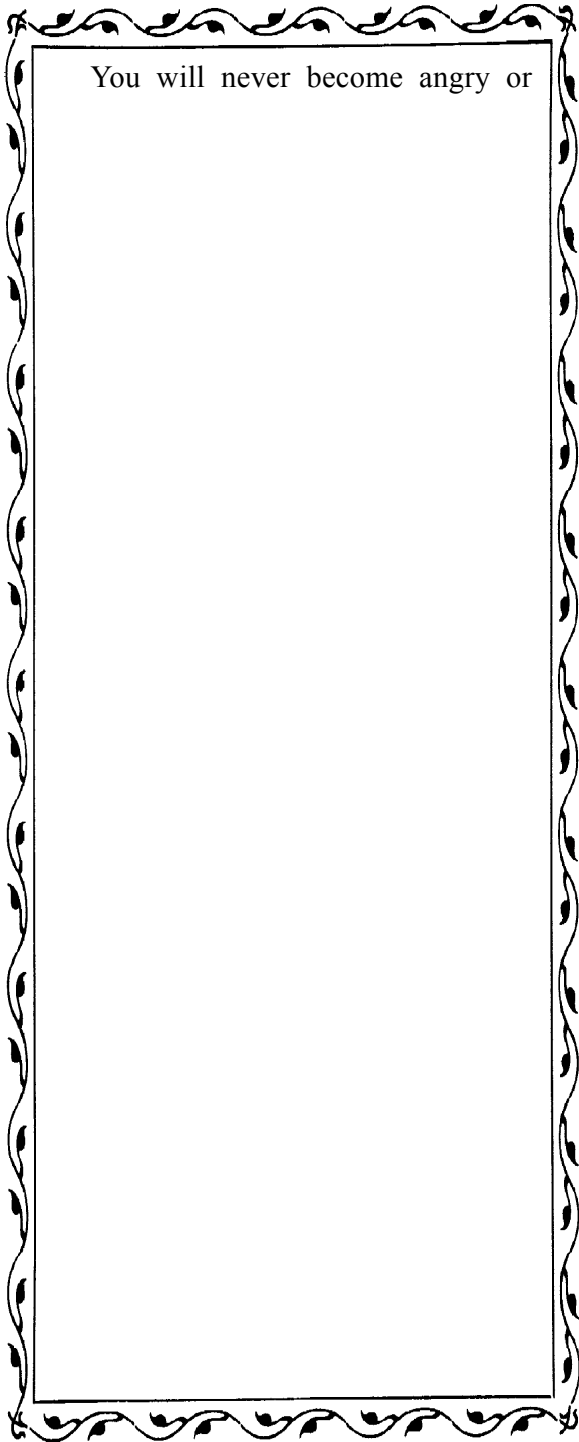
If they live thus, they will pass through this world with perfect contentment, bliss, and peace of heart, and become the object of divine grace and favor in the Kingdom of heaven. But if they do other than this, they will live out their lives in great bitterness, longing at every moment for death, and will be shamefaced in the heavenly realm.

Strive, then, to abide, heart and soul, with each other as two doves in the nest, for this is to be blessed in both worlds.³

Love in Bahá'í marriage is not based simply on physical attraction but on attraction to God.

Real love is impossible unless one turns his face towards God and be attracted to His Beauty.⁴ 'Abdu'l-Bahá

If we love people, including our family, for the sake of God and not for their assets, our love remains unshakable, even in times of trouble:



12. *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 130.

13. *The Compilation of Compilations*, vol. 1, p. 269.

14. *The Compilation of Compilations*, vol. 1, pp. 266-267.



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