

Becoming a Bahá'í

Summary: To convert to the Bahá'í Faith, one must simply state one's understanding of Bahá'í scripture and declare one's belief. Bahá'í children are raised to become active members in the Bahá'í community and tradition, beginning obligatory prayers at the age of fifteen.

There is no formal initiation ritual for becoming Bahá'í. If one believes in Baha'u'llah and wishes to be Bahá'í, one can register one's declaration of faith by signing a membership card—even online. The person's enrollment as a member of the Bahá'í community occurs after it has been verified that he or she understands the basic teachings of the Bahá'í Faith and desires to be a member. It is not unusual for the new member to receive a Bahá'í prayer book or other work of Bahá'í scripture as a gift and for his or her enrollment to be informally celebrated.

Bahá'ís teach their children from infancy to memorize Bahá'í prayers. Once a child is about three years old, he or she can attend children's classes. Children's classes, which are open to all children regardless of their religious background, seek to teach virtues such as freedom from prejudice, open-mindedness, love, honesty, compassion, and patience. They may stress working in groups. They may include learning Bahá'í prayers, principles, and history. There are also special programs for junior youth (ages 12-14) that focus on providing service to the community. Youth (ages 15-20) often take a series of skills-oriented books, the Ruhi Curriculum, which aims to help them learn how to conduct devotional meetings, become comfortable visiting people in homes, coordinate classes for children and junior youth, explain Bahá'í history, and answer questions about the Bahá'í Faith.

When Bahá'í children reach the age of fifteen, they are expected to begin to perform the obligatory prayers and fast, although children can volunteer to begin such observances, especially partial observance of the fast, at an earlier age. Bahá'í children are automatically considered Bahá'ís unless, at some point, they express a desire not to be. There is no penalty for choosing not to be a Bahá'í; the decision should be made freely based on the Bahá'í principle of independent investigation of truth.