

Virtue Workshop

Children, Youth and Adults Learning Together

Printable resources are included

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Three Conditions of Existence

General Introduction

This Material is designed for workshops/conferences, children's classes, families, and individual learning.

Unless we can make deep spiritual concepts understandable, we risk losing future generations to the distorted thinking of a deteriorating materialistic world..

Each spiritual concept explored includes activities specifically designed for groups of youth and adults and activities designed for children.

It is a method of group learning, based on the model of the oneness of humanity.

Everyone is a student, and everyone is a teacher. Our mission is not to provide exhaustive research and explanation of concepts for scholars. Our goal is to enable everyone to gain a basic knowledge of concepts indispensable for spiritual survival.

It is our hope that parents and teachers gathered in living rooms, backyards; in cities and villages, will use these spiritual concepts to improve the lives of children, youth and adults. The writers, as members of the Baha'i Faith, are guided by its teachings and principles. We have used language that allows the concepts to be accessible to the wider community. Reference is made to the sources of authority of the Bahá'í Faith. We are referring to the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Shoghi Effendi and the Universal House of Justice.

This material reflects the personal interpretations of the authors and should not be taken as authoritative.

Instructions

Materials listed in the Resource section of each activity, including images, should be carefully prepared. Images can be enlarged and are essential for presentation. If some of the materials listed are not available, facilitators may modify and adapt material to best meet the unique needs of different groups.

Activities for youth/adults may be completed in approximately one hour.

Activities for children are approximately twenty minutes to an hour in length.

Adult Activity

Document with text to be read aloud by participants. Facilitator may choose to use a projector.

Materials and Set Up in Resource Section

Facilitator says: In order to know who we are, we need to know who we are not. We are not God and we are not Prophets of God.

“Know thou that the degrees of existence are finite—the degrees of servitude, of prophethood, and of Divinity”

- ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Bahá’í Reference Library: *Some Answered Questions*: 62

A Prophet/Manifestation of God is a unique life form. A human being cannot evolve to become a Prophet of God.

Facilitator asks: participant to read the following quotation in a loud voice:

“For example, Peter cannot become Christ. At most, he can attain infinite perfections in the degrees of servitude, for every existing reality is capable of progress.”

-ibid.

Facilitator says: Jesus, Buddha, Muhammad, Bahá'u'lláh and the other Founders of the World Religions serve as indispensable links between God and man. They take our thoughts, hopes, worries and prayers to God for us because we cannot do this directly.

Facilitator shares image A with participants:



Facilitator says: We can take the Prophets -- the Manifestations of God -- for granted just as we take our telephones for granted. We all make statements such as, “I talked to a relative on the other side of the world.” We neglect to say the intermediary of the

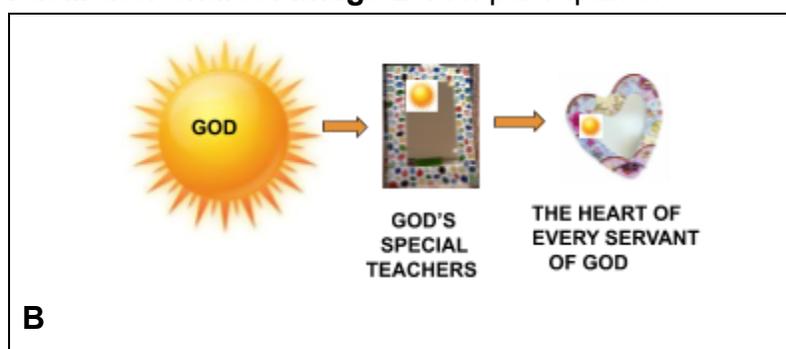
telephone made this possible. God's Prophets are like Telephones. What we say to God is transmitted through the intermediary of His Prophets.

Facilitator asks: participant to read the following quotation in a loud voice:

“And since there can be no tie of direct intercourse to bind the one true God with His creation, and no resemblance whatever can exist between the transient and the Eternal, the contingent and the Absolute, He hath ordained that in every age and dispensation a pure and stainless Soul be made manifest in the kingdoms of earth and heaven.

-Bahá'í Reference Library: *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*: XXVII

Facilitator shares: image B with participants:



Facilitator says: Here is another image depicting the Prophets as intermediaries between God and man.

There are many references to “mirrors” in religious literature. Mirrors refer to both the Prophets of God and their followers. God’s attributes and teachings are reflected in the “mirrors” of His Teachers. They are then reflected into the mirrors -- hearts of God’s servants -- us.

Anything which comes between the individual and God forms dust that covers the mirrors of our hearts. The dust consists of our worldly attachments, our faults, our grudges, -- anything that comes between us and God.

Our responsibility is to make sure our mirror is free of dust so that we can clearly reflect the attributes and teachings of God.

Let’s divide into groups of four people each.

Facilitator divides participants into groups.

Facilitator gives each group: a tray or paper plate, small mirror, a small bag of dirt, small paper sun and tape.

Facilitator says: Each group: Work together to first attach the sun to the center of the mirror and then cover the mirror with dirt.

Participants respond

Facilitator asks: Now can we see the sun clearly in our mirrors? ... Why not?

Participants respond

Facilitator says: Sometimes we do things that make our own mirrors of our hearts dirty. Sometimes if we are not kind or we make choices that hurt ourselves and others, our mirrors get covered with dust.

What are some things we can think of that get us into trouble -- that cover the mirrors of our hearts with dust?

Participants respond

Facilitator may write responses on a large sheet of paper or on a whiteboard.

Facilitator says: Do we want to clean off our mirrors -- the mirrors of our hearts?

Participants respond: yes

Facilitator asks: participant to read the following in a loud voice:

“The most important thing is to polish the mirrors of hearts in order that they may become illumined and receptive of the divine light. One heart may possess the capacity of the polished mirror; another may be covered and obscured by the dust and dross of this world.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Bahá’í Reference Library: *Promulgation of Universal Peace*: 6

Facilitator says: What are some things we can do that will clean the dust off the mirrors of our hearts?

Participants respond

Facilitator may write responses on a large sheet of paper or whiteboard.

Facilitator gives each group: a small bottle/cup of water, a small paper label with text: “prayers and acts of service” and a paper towel.

Facilitator says: Now we will work together in our groups to clean the mirror of our hearts.

First attach the label “ prayers and acts of service” to the bottle/cup of water.

Participants respond

Facilitator says: Now clean the dirt off of the mirror.

Participants respond

Facilitator says: In the physical world, the angle that the sun reflects on our souls -- our mirrors -- changes by the second. We would have to constantly adjust and clean a hand-held mirror to see a clear reflection of the light of the sun.

In a similar way, we need to continually align our souls to ever-changing Guidance from God. This Divine Guidance then guides us in our own acts of service.

Our acts of service are uniquely our own. They are not exact repeats of what someone else does.

For example: My father saw the reflection of God in the mirror of his heart and based his acts of service on what he saw inside of himself. That was fine for my father. But the guidance from God continually changes. We can not fall into the habit of blindly imitating what our parents or grandparents did -- even what we ourselves did yesterday or did last year.

Facilitator asks: participant to read the following in a loud voice:

Every day I need to ask myself what special act of service can I do today that I wasn't capable of doing yesterday.

And every day I know that my capacity is increasing because of the service I did yesterday.

Facilitator shares Image C with participants:



Facilitator says: When we look at these mirrors we see that they are each decorated differently. Notice that the gem and flower decorations are all unique. These are symbolic of our own unique spiritual qualities and acts of service.

Now we will create our own mirrors. We can draw them and decorate them in our own style. If we want, we can also write our own attributes of God that we have or want to develop.

Allow up to 10 minutes:

Participants complete activity using materials that have been set out on table

Facilitator says: Are any of our mirrors absolutely the same? Why not? What do the differences in the mirrors say about all of us?

Participants respond

Facilitator closing remarks: We have talked about the three separate and unique conditions of existence: God, His Teachers and His servants. God is the Supreme Creator. God reflects His teachings for us into the Mirrors of His Prophets. These Mirrors then reflect the light of God into the mirrors of our hearts -- the hearts of God's servants.

To the Facilitator and all participants:

The physical world has been created by God to teach us deep spiritual concepts. It is the hope of the creators of this activity that we all make the transition as quickly as possible, from being student participants, to being teachers, sharing

these ideas with others. Spiritual concepts are the building blocks for an ever-progressing world civilization.

Please feel free to adapt this material to best meet the unique needs of different groups.

Children's Activity

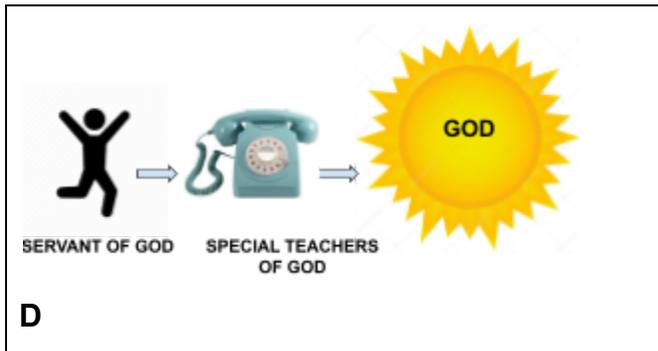
Document with text to be read aloud by participants. Facilitator may choose to use a projector.

Materials and Set Up in Resource Section

Facilitator says: We know that God knows everything. We know that He made us. We are His servants. We know that God and His Prophets know things about life that we do not know. We also know that we can talk to God at any time. We can talk to God when we are really happy or sad -- or when we feel alone or scared. Like our families, He is always there for us. He is our best friend. He really knows us well.

Since we can't see God, it feels like He is very far away from us. But He is not. We can talk to God through His Great Teachers. These Teachers, like our teachers in school, know more about life than we do. They guide us and teach us what we need to learn. If we listen to God's Teachers, like we listen to our teachers at school, we will be happier and have more friends and get along better with everyone.

Facilitator shares image D with participants:



Facilitator says: The way we can talk to God is through His Special Teachers. The Special Teachers are like telephones that we use to talk to God. They take our thoughts and prayers to God for us. When we ask God for help, they carry our words to God. We share our thoughts and prayers with God's Special Teachers. Moses, Jesus, Muhammad and and Bahá'u'lláh and the other Great Ones are God's special Teachers. They are like our school teachers. Our first grade teacher teaches us more than our kindergarten teacher. And our second grade teacher teaches us even more than our first grade teacher. God always sends us new Special Teachers to help us continue to learn and grow.

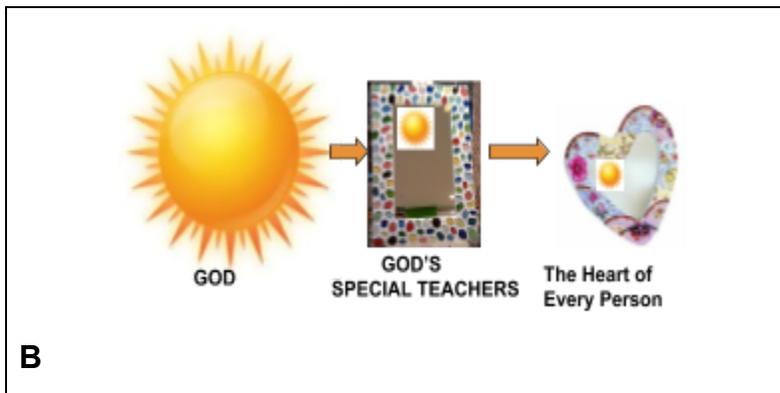
When we want to talk to God, we say the prayers and words that His Special Teachers gave us. It is also okay for us to use our own words when we talk to God.

Facilitator shares: image C with participants:



Facilitator says: Each of these three mirrors are different. They are decorated differently. They are also all alike because they all are able to reflect light. God's Special Teachers are like these mirrors. In one way, They are all different. They look different. They come to the world in different places and at different times. They speak different languages and wear different clothes. But they are also all alike. They are like mirrors. They all reflect the one and only God. They reflect God's teachings so we can see and understand them.

Facilitator shares: image E with participants:



Facilitator says: God's Special Teachers reflect God's light onto the mirrors of our hearts.

Our mirrors -- our hearts need to be clean and clear so we can see what God's Special Teachers are reflecting in our mirrors. When our mirrors are clear, we can feel God's love warm our hearts. Then we share and reflect God's love to everyone else!

Let's divide into groups.

Facilitator divides participants into small groups

Facilitator gives each group: a tray or paper plate, a small mirror, a small bag of dirt, small paper sun and tape.

Facilitator says: Each group please put your mirror on your tray/paper plate. This will be where we will do our work and how we will keep our area clean. Now work together to first attach the heart to the center of the mirror.

Participants respond

Facilitator says: Each group work together to cover the mirror with dirt.

Participants respond

Facilitator asks: Now can we see the sun clearly in our mirrors? ... Why not?

Participants respond

Facilitator says: Sometimes we do things that make our own mirrors dirty. Sometimes if we do not use our good behavior, our mirrors get covered with dust: When we don't listen to our parents; when we fight with our brothers or sisters; when we don't tell the truth...

What are some things we can think of that get us into trouble -- that cover our mirrors with dust?

Participants respond

Facilitator may write responses on large sheet

Facilitator says: Do we want to clean off our mirrors -- the mirrors of our hearts? Do we want to have good behavior ? Do we want to listen to our parents and get along with our friends?

Participants respond: yes

Facilitator says: What are some things we can do that will clean the dust off of our mirrors -- off of our hearts?

Participants respond

Facilitator may write responses on a large sheet of paper or on a whiteboard.

Facilitator reads or asks: participant to read the following in a loud voice:

“The most important thing is to polish the mirrors of hearts.”

- ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Bahá’í Reference Library: *Promulgation of Universal Peace*: 6

Facilitator gives each group: a bottle or cup containing a small amount of water, a small paper label with text: “prayers and acts of service” and a paper towel.

Facilitator says: Each group will now work together to clean the dust off their mirrors. Make sure each person in the group participates.

First attach the label to the bottle/cup of water with tape

Participants respond

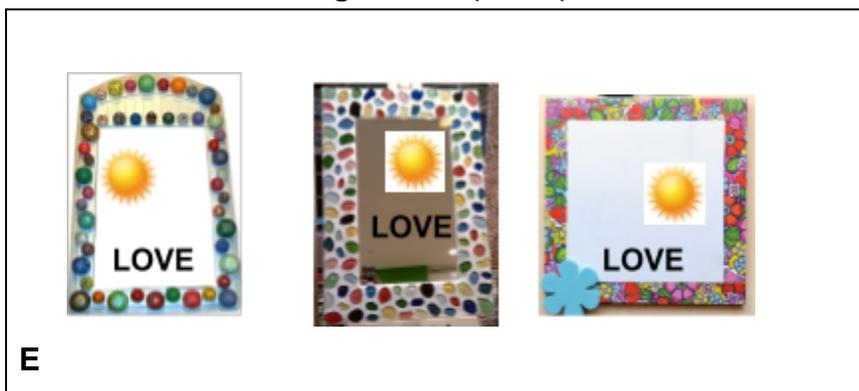
Facilitator says: Now clean the dirt off of the mirror with the water and paper towels.

Participants respond

Now do we all see the sun in our mirrors?

Participants respond: yes

Facilitator shares Image E with participants:



Facilitator says: When we look at these mirrors we see that they are each decorated differently. We are like mirrors. We all reflect God’s love in our hearts in different ways. But we all reflect God’s love.

Now we will create our own mirrors. We can draw them and decorate them in our own style. If we want, we can also write our own good qualities of God, like: friendly, loving, etc. that we have or want to have.

Allow approximately 10 minutes for participants to complete activity

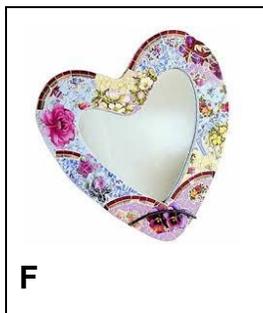
Facilitator says: Are any of our mirrors absolutely the same? Why not?

Let's each come up one at a time to show our mirrors and share about how we decorated them.

Participants respond

Facilitator closing remarks: We have learned that God sends Special Teachers to us to help us learn about God and how we should live and behave. They are like mirrors. They reflect to us what God wants to tell us.

Facilitator share Image G with participants:



Facilitator says: Each of our different heart mirrors need to be clean and clear so we can see what God's Special Teachers are reflecting in our mirrors. When our mirrors are clear, we can feel God's love warm our hearts. Then we share and reflect God's love to everyone else!

Resources

Adult Activity

Materials and Set Up:

Set craft materials out on large table:

Cardboard or thick paper (preferably white) 15cm x 21cm or larger - enough for one per participant

Markers and or crayons

Aluminum foil

Colorful stickers, small buttons, plastic gems, glue etc.

For each group of 4 participants (groups may be larger or smaller):

Tray or paper plate

Small hand held mirror

Small paper image image of sun

Small plastic bag of dirt

Small bottle or cup of water

Paper label with text: "prayers and acts of service",

Tape

Paper towels

Images A,B,C

Children's Activity

Materials and Set Up

Set craft materials out on large table:

Cardboard or thick paper (preferably white) 15cm x 21cm or larger - enough for one for each participant

Markers or crayons

Aluminum foil

Colorful stickers, small buttons, plastic gems, glue etc.

For each group of 4 participants (groups may be larger or smaller):

Tray or paper plate

Small hand held mirror

Small paper image image of sun

Small plastic bag of dirt

Small bottle or cup of water

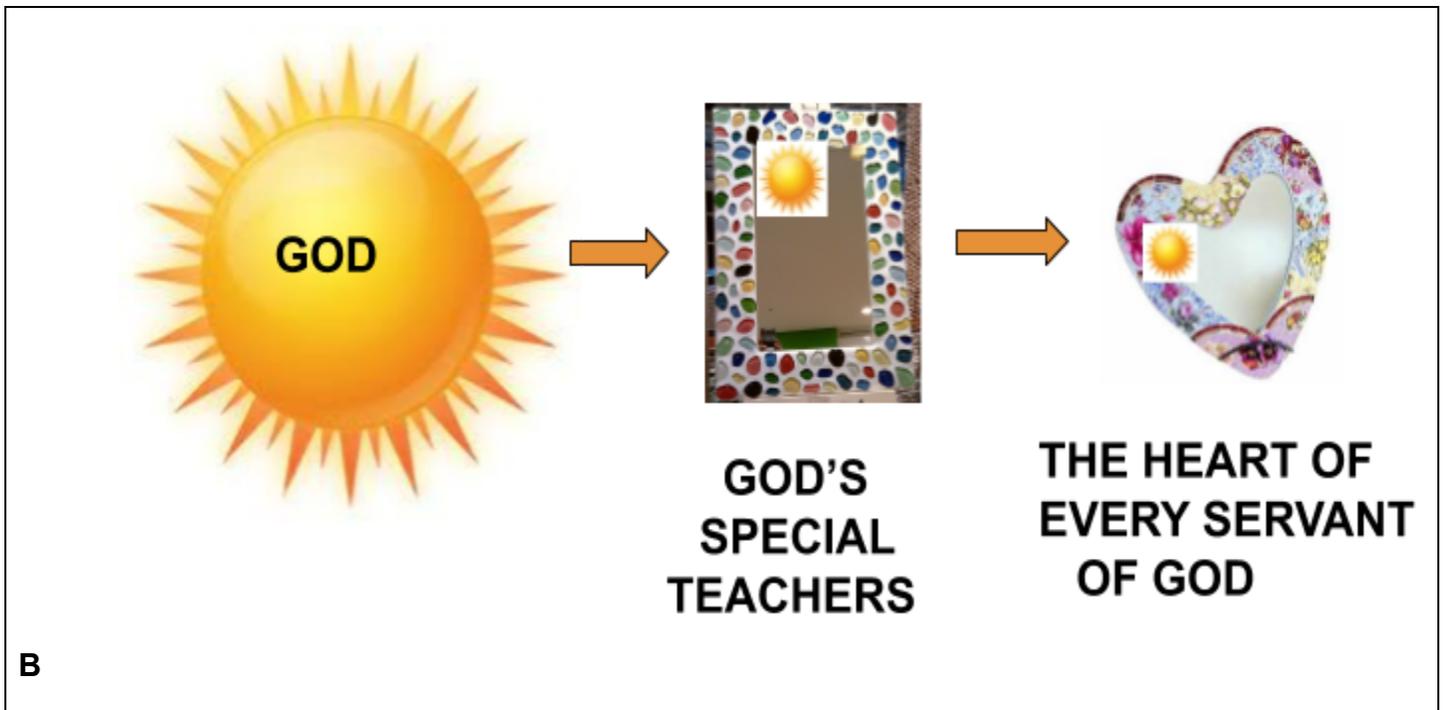
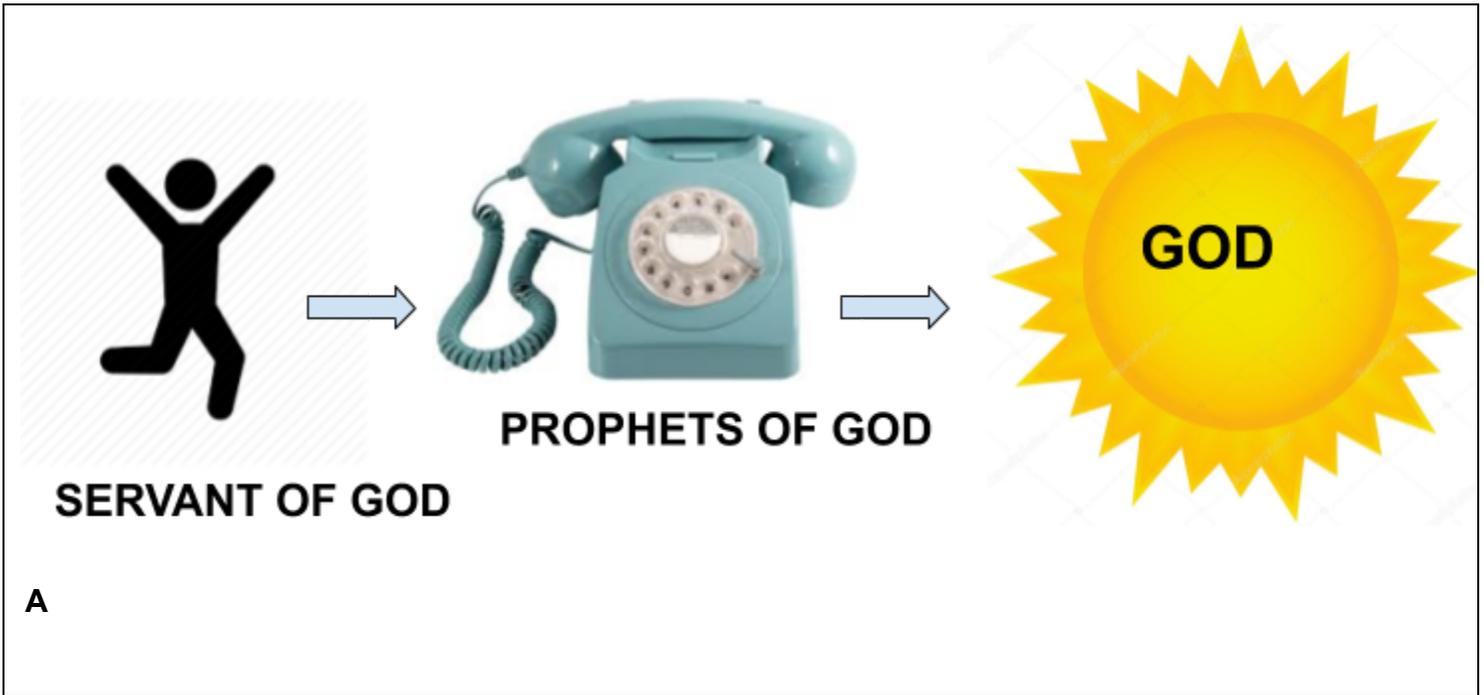
Paper label with text: "prayers and acts of service"

Tape

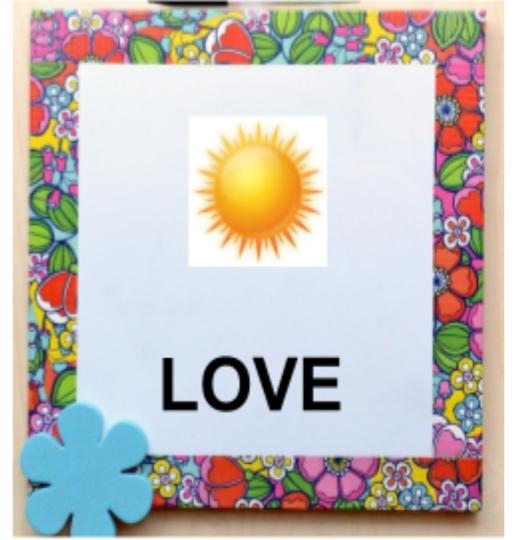
Paper towels

Images B,C,D,E,F

Images:







E



F