

Elimination of all Forms of Prejudice

INTRODUCTION: *Approaching the sacred valley...*

Facilitator

The following is an introduction. Please read it out loud without comment, and then proceed with the study of the quotations.

One basic and essential spiritual principle necessary for peace and harmony among the people of the earth is the elimination of all forms of prejudice. Prejudice, in its simplest form, is an erroneous preconceived judgment of others. It originates from an unawareness or misinformation of the true character of people we perceive as different from ourselves.

Prejudice often stems from thoughtlessly imitating those around us. So it is not unusual that prejudice sometimes get passed on from generation to generation, until it actually seems proper and correct. People begin to believe that since these attitudes have always existed, they must be alright. Consequently, one may not perceive the wrong in what one says or does that is based on prejudice.

Prejudice is often subconscious, in that, we just think, talk or act a particular way without ever thinking about the consequences. So it takes self examination and effort to reconsider if our thoughts, words and actions are based on what is true and real, or if it is mere prejudice.

A careful examination of conflict in the world will ultimately result in a mature understanding that prejudice is one of its major causes. Prejudice can cause us to act with fear and hostility towards others who really pose no threat at all. Prejudice causes us to judge others as “less than” our selves and those who are like us. This superiority thinking leads to treating others as inferior, which is the surest condition for aggression and conflict.

Effort to change requires we not only eliminate our prejudice thoughts and behaviors, but that we replace them with more desirable traits and qualities. It means we redirect our focus away from meaningless differences and towards sameness. It means we search to find praiseworthy qualities in others so that we might praise others and not just ourselves or those like us. It means we give value to differences and welcome them with true interest and joy.

Peace, love and unity in our families, our neighborhoods, our towns, cities, nations and the world, depend upon our efforts to think, talk and act upon what is true and real, and not upon that which is in error or is denigrating to others. May our sincerest effort to examine this topic, and apply this timely spiritual principle help us all to be loving contributors to peace and unity in our personal lives and in the world at large.



“O My Brother! A pure heart is as a mirror; cleanse it with the burnish of love and severance from all save God, that the true sun may shine within it and the eternal morning dawn.”

— Bahá'u'lláh

OBJECTIVE: *A look to the horizon...*

Facilitator

Review the following objective with the participants:

The purpose of this group experience is to *explore* the concept of “the elimination of all forms of prejudice”, through a study of selected Bahá’í Writings.

THE STUDY PROCESS: *Attaining the pure water...*

Facilitator

Review the following study process with the participants. Then study the numbered quotations on the following pages, one at a time as described below.

1. **READING:** *A drink from the sacred stream...*
Have two participants take turns reading the quotation out loud so that it is read twice.
2. **CONFIRMING MEANING:** *A spray from the fountain of light...*
 - A. If anyone would like to have better understanding of a word used in the quotation, now is the time to refer to its substitute phrase, definition or synonym, which can be found in the boxes below each quotation. Read the substitute phrase, definition or synonym out loud so everyone can hear.
 - B. Read the sentence again that contains the word you selected, while **substituting for that word**, its given phrase, definition or synonym from the box below the quotation.
 - C. If anyone would like a better understanding of another word, repeat the process above until everyone is satisfied with their understanding of the words in the quotation.
 - D. Have the quotation read one more time by one of the participants.
3. **FINDING VALUE:** *Gem-like discoveries...*
In the tradition of the “talking circle” ask the participants to take turns sharing, one at a time, in a round, **WHAT WAS PERSONALLY MOST MEANINGFUL FROM THE QUOTATION AND WHY.** (Remember show and tell?) Remind the participants that *whatever* is shared should be considered as a valid perspective, and that in this *exploratory study* there are no right or wrong perceptions and no lesser or greater understandings. All are therefore asked to avoid comments, corrections, or judgments on the perceived insights of others. This is not a time for questions and answers, it is an exercise for the purpose of bonding hearts by sharing and receiving personal heartfelt perspectives without discussion.

1. “In the days of old an instinct for warfare was developed in the struggle with wild animals; this is no longer necessary; nay, rather, co-operation and mutual understanding are seen to produce the greatest welfare of mankind. Enmity is now the result of prejudice only.”

(*Abdu'l-Bahá in London*, p. 20)

co-operation: associating with others for a common benefit
enmity: bitter attitudes or feelings of hatred or ill will, often concealed
mutual: reciprocally shared; giving and receiving
prejudice: preconceived judgments or opinions

prejudice: ignorant and preconceived judgment of different others, marked by a sense of self-superiority, suspicion, intolerance, or irrational hatred
welfare: well-being in respect to prosperity, happiness, and good fortune

2. “Bahá’u’lláh declares that all forms of prejudice among mankind must be abandoned and that until existing prejudices are entirely removed, the world of humanity will not and cannot attain peace, prosperity and composure. This principle cannot be found in any other sacred volume than the teachings of Bahá’u’lláh.”

(*Abdu'l-Bahá, The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 434)

abandoned: given up with the intent of never again claiming a right or interest
composure: mental and emotional calmness
forms: kinds or types

prejudice: ignorant and preconceived judgment of different others, marked by a sense of self-superiority, suspicion, intolerance, or irrational hatred
principle: basic governing truth or standard
sacred volume: Holy Book

3. “Let us strive to blot out from our lives every last trace of prejudice - racial, religious, political, economic, national, tribal, class, cultural, and that which is based on differences of education or age.”

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice, dated 13 July 1972)

blot out: wipe out or destroy
prejudice: ignorant and preconceived judgment of different others, marked by a sense of self-superiority, suspicion, intolerance, or irrational hatred

trace: minute amount or indication

4. “The purpose of the Faith of Bahá’u’lláh is the realization of the organic unity of the human race, and Bahá’ís are enjoined to eliminate from their lives all forms of prejudice and to manifest respect towards all. Therefore, to regard those with homosexual orientation with prejudice or disdain would be against the spirit of the Faith.”

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice, dated 27 October 2010)

disdain: an arrogance or aversion so as to one regarded as unworthy
eliminate: get rid of or remove
enjoined: directed by the authority [of Bahá’u’lláh]
homosexual: a sexual affinity for people of the same-sex
manifest: exhibit or display plainly and clearly
organic: having parts that work together [for]
orientation: inclination or interest

prejudice: ignorant and preconceived judgment of different others, marked by a sense of self-superiority, suspicion, intolerance, or irrational hatred
realization: bringing into existence; accomplishment
respect: high and special regard or consideration
spirit: disposition, outlook, or attitude
unity: spiritual condition of harmony, agreement, peace and accord in human relations, free of conflict, dissension, contention and strife

5. “And the breeding-ground of all these tragedies is prejudice: prejudice of race and nation, of religion, of political opinion; and the root cause of prejudice is blind imitation of the past - imitation in religion, in racial attitudes, in national bias, in politics. So long as this aping of the past persisteth, just so long will the foundations of the social order be blown to the four winds, just so long will humanity be continually exposed to direst peril.”

(*Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 247)

aping: copying; imitating
blind imitation: thoughtless copying or unquestioned repetition of the behavior of others
blown to the four winds: dissipated and lost
breeding-ground: circumstances suitable for favorable growth and development
direst: the most oppressive, horrid, and dreadful

foundation: underlying base for establishment and support
peril: risk, danger, harm or loss
prejudice: ignorant and preconceived judgment of different others, marked by a sense of self-superiority, suspicion, intolerance, or irrational hatred
root: origin or source
tragedies: disastrous events or calamities leading to misery and misfortune

6. “Other sources of human dissension are political, racial and patriotic prejudices. These have been removed by Bahá’u’lláh. He has said, and has guarded His statement by rational proofs from the Holy Books, that the world of humanity is one race, the surface of the earth one place of residence and that these imaginary racial barriers and political boundaries are without right or foundation. Man is degraded in becoming the captive of his own illusions and suppositions. The earth is one earth, and the same atmosphere surrounds it. No difference or preference has been made by God for its human inhabitants; but man has laid the foundation of prejudice, hatred and discord with his fellowman by considering nationalities separate in importance and races different in rights and privileges.”

(`Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 232)

captive: held under control
degraded: reduced far below civilized standards
discord: disunity, causing active disagreement or conflict
dissension: difference in opinion, causing separating or opposing groups
foundation: underlying base for establishment and support
guarded: exercised cautious forethought
illusions: misleading and deceptive perceptions
patriotic: of or relating to one’s love of country and support of its interests and authority

political: of or relating to one’s government or a political party
preference: giving greater advantage or value to one over another
prejudices: ignorant and preconceived judgments of different others, marked by a sense of self-superiority, suspicion, intolerance, or irrational hatred
privilege: granted benefits and advantages
race: people of a common ancestry
racial: of or relating to one’s particular race
rights: powers or privileges to which one is justly entitled
separate: set apart for a special purpose
suppositions: imaginings or assumptions

7. “I ask you, is not fellowship and brotherhood preferable to enmity and hatred in society and community? The answer is self-evident. Love and fellowship are absolutely needful to win the good pleasure of God, which is the goal of all human attainment. We must be united. We must love each other. We must ever praise each other. We must bestow commendation upon all people, thus removing the discord and hatred which have caused alienation amongst men. Otherwise, the conditions of the past will continue, praising ourselves and condemning others; religious wars will have no end, and religious prejudice, the prime cause of this havoc and tribulation, will increase. This must be abandoned, and the way to do it is to investigate the reality which underlies all the religions. This underlying reality is the love of humanity. For God is one and humanity is one, and the only creed of the Prophets is love and unity.”

(Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 410)

abandoned: given up with the intent of never again claiming a right or interest
alienation: physically or emotionally separation
bestow: give
brotherhood: treating one another like brothers and sisters
commendation: compliments and praise
condemning: pronouncing as wrong and strongly disapproving of
creed: fundamental belief
discord: active disagreement and conflict
enmity: bitter attitudes or feelings of hatred or ill-will, often concealed
fellowship: companionship, friendly association, and mutual sharing
good pleasure: what is good, beneficial, and favorable

havoc: widespread confusion, disorder, and destruction
investigate: seek out information with questions and examination
one: a quality, state, or fact of being single and indivisible
prejudice: ignorant and preconceived judgment of different others, marked by a sense of self-superiority, suspicion, intolerance, or irrational hatred
reality: that which is actual and real
tribulation: great misery, distress, and suffering
underlies: is the foundation upon which everything is based [of]
unity: spiritual condition of harmony, agreement, peace and accord in human relations, free of conflict, dissension, contention and strife

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APPLICATION: *Showing forth divine light...*

Facilitator

Read the first paragraph and ask the participants to state their ideas out loud. Then, read through the last paragraph and allow time for the participants to write out their plans for action. These plans are not shared.

IMAGINING POSSIBILITIES: *Visions of radiant lights...*

How **could** the concepts in this study on *Elimination of Prejudice* be applied a person's life in these modern times? Begin your answers with: "**One could...**" Suggest as many ideas as you want.

DECIDING ACTION: *Mirroring a beam of light...*

Bahá'u'lláh wrote: "*It is incumbent upon every man of insight and understanding to strive to translate that which hath been written into reality and action...*" From your experience in this study on *Elimination of Prejudice*, describe what **you** are inspired to put into reality and action. **I will make conscious efforts to...** _____

CLOSING MEDITATIONS: *A heart song...*

Facilitator

Read the following out loud.

"O Divine Providence! This assemblage is composed of Thy friends who are attracted to Thy beauty and are set ablaze by the fire of Thy love. Turn these souls into heavenly angels, resuscitate them through the breath of Thy Holy Spirit, grant them eloquent tongues and resolute hearts, bestow upon them heavenly power and merciful susceptibilities, cause them to become the promulgators of the oneness of mankind and the cause of love and concord in the world of humanity, so that the perilous darkness of ignorant prejudice may vanish through the light of the Sun of Truth, this dreary world may become illumined, this material realm may absorb the rays of the world of spirit, these different colours may merge into one colour and the melody of praise may rise to the kingdom of Thy sanctity.

"Verily, Thou art the Omnipotent and the Almighty!"

(Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Bahá, pp. 105-106)