

Service to the Cause

INTRODUCTION: *Approaching the threshold...*

Bahá'ís believe the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh is the sole means for the eventual peace, security, and tranquility of the people of the planet. All other causes, movements, or organized activities in the world that produce meaningful and valuable benefits will be effective on a temporary basis only, until the true remedy of this Ancient Faith of God is directly applied. The greatest use of one's time and energy then, both to further one's spiritual development and to contribute to the betterment of humanity, is to labor for the permanent establishment and further advancement of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh.



‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s shoes and suitcase under His bed

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

Facilitator

Review the following objective with the participants:

The objective of this study is to understand the fundamental verities or basic truths regarding the importance of sacrifice and selfless participation in service to the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh.

THE STUDY PROCESS: *Attaining the water of life...*

Facilitator

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

- 1. READING:** *A drink from the cup of guidance...*
 - A. Read the quotation** out loud in its entirety.
- 2. CONFIRMING MEANING:** *A spray from the fountain of light...*

To better understand certain words used in the quotation, take turns with the following:

 - Each participant **choose a word** from the quotation and **state it** for the whole group to hear. (Like a fun game – pick a word!) Then...
 - Read out loud the sentence that contains the **word** you selected, **while substituting for that word**, its given phrase, definition, or synonym from the boxes below the quotation.
 - Repeat A and B above until everyone is satisfied with their understanding of the words.

3. **FINDING VALUE:** *Mining the gems of truth...*
- A. **Read the quotation** out loud again in its entirety.
- B. Take turns **stating each basic fact or truth** you can find in the quotation about **the importance of sacrifice and selfless participation in service to the Cause.**

QUOTATIONS: *Within the meadows of Thy nearness...*

1. *Wert thou to consider this world, and realize how fleeting are the things that pertain unto it, thou wouldst choose to tread no path except the path of service to the Cause of thy Lord. None would have the power to deter thee from celebrating His praise, though all men should arise to oppose thee. Go thou straight on and persevere in His service.*
(Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 314)

arise: come about
Cause: purpose and plans of the Bahá'í Faith
deter: discourage, prevent, or turn
fleeting: swiftly passing and gone
oppose: resist or antagonize
persevere: continue a given course with grace ↗

and persistence against difficulties
pertain: are a part of or belong
realize: become fully aware of
service: performance of beneficial deeds or work
tread: walk along or follow

2. Therefore, we also must strive in this pathway of love and service, sacrificing life and possessions, passing our days in devotion, consecrating our efforts wholly to the Cause of God so that, God willing, the ensign of universal religion may be uplifted in the world of mankind and the oneness of the world of humanity be established.
(`Abdu'l-Bahá, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 146)

Cause: purpose and plans of the Bahá'í Faith
consecrating: dedicating and setting aside
devotion: acts of ardent dedication and affection
ensign: banner signaling
established: confirmed and made permanent
oneness: unity, harmony, and agreement of mind, feeling, and purpose

sacrificing: giving up something of value for something of greater value; offering up
service: performance of beneficial deeds or work
strive: devote serious energy or effort
uplifted: made to improve the spiritual, social, or intellectual condition
wholly: to the fullest extent; completely

3. When a person becomes a Bahá'í, actually what takes place is that the seed of the spirit starts to grow in the human soul. This seed must be watered by the outpourings of the Holy Spirit. These gifts of the spirit are received through prayer, meditation, study of the Holy Utterances and service to the Cause of God.
(Written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, cited in The Compilation of Compilations, Prepared by the Universal House of Justice, 1963-1990, Vol. II, p. 24, #1334)

Holy Spirit: "The Holy Spirit it is which, through the mediation of the Prophets of God, teaches spiritual virtues to man and enables him to attain Eternal Life." (*`Abdu'l-Bahá, Paris Talks, p. 59*)
Holy Utterances: oral or written Expressions of the Manifestation of God, Bahá'u'lláh
meditation: deep reflection or contemplation on sacred matters

outpourings: full and continuous outflowings
seed: original stage
service: performance of beneficial deeds or work
soul: immortal essence of one's rational, spiritual, and emotional self
spirit: activating or vital force giving life to the soul

4. Whatever the particular field of service you may choose, whether teaching or administrative, the essential is for you to persevere, and not to allow any consciousness of your limitations to dampen your zeal, much less to deter you from serving joyously and actively.

There is no general rule, or any particular standard requiring a believer to serve in one field at the exclusion of others. Every believer is to choose for himself any avenue of work in which he conscientiously feels he can render the greatest amount of service to the Cause. He can seek the advice of his Assembly, and of his fellow-believers before taking such a step, but there is no obligation requiring him to do so.

(Written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, cited in *Lights of Guidance: A Bahá'í Reference File*, p. 119, ¶408)

administrative: connected or relating to the management or directing [of Bahá'í affairs]
advice: suggestions about a decision or action
Assembly: local Administrative Body of the Bahá'í community
avenue: way of approach
conscientiously: with a sense of rightness
consciousness: personal awareness
dampen: depress or deaden
deter: discourage, prevent, or turn
essential: necessary characteristic
exclusion: prevention from consideration

field: area or division
limitations: binding or restricting conditions
obligation: moral duty
persevere: continue a given course with grace and persistence against difficulties
render: give
service: performance of beneficial deeds or work
standard: definite rule or principle established by authority, custom, or tradition
teaching: imparting knowledge that causes others to learn [the Bahá'í Faith]
zeal: eagerness in pursuit of anything

5. The problem of to what extent we should sacrifice our time for the interest of the Cause depends for its solution upon individual means and circumstances. It is a personal problem that we ought to settle individually. One person may give all his time to teaching and rely upon small personal income and another may find himself more fitted to business and give his share of service in the form of financial assistance.

(Written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, cited in *Lights of Guidance: A Bahá'í Reference File*, p. 118, ¶403)

Cause: purpose and plans of the Bahá'í Faith
circumstances: accompanying events and conditions
extent: amount or degree
fitted: furnished with the essentials and suited
interest: welfare, benefit, and advantage

means: useful and helpful available resources
problem: question or issue
sacrifice: give up something of value for something of greater value; offer up
service: performance of beneficial deeds or work
teaching: imparting knowledge that causes others to learn [the Bahá'í Faith]

6. *By the righteousness of God! If thou wert present before My Throne and didst hearken unto the Tongue of might and grandeur, thou wouldst sacrifice thy body, thy soul, thine entire being as a token of thy love for God, the Sovereign, the Protector, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise, and wouldst so thrill to the fascination of His Voice that every pen would be powerless to recount thy station and every eloquent speaker would be confounded in his attempt to describe it. Ponder a while concerning this Revelation and its invincible sovereignty; aid it then as it beseemeth thy Lord, the Gracious, the All-Bountiful.*

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Fountain of Wisdom*, p. 241 ¶17.113)

aid: give help and assistance to
All-Bountiful: One solely and completely generous in giving gifts and favors
attempt: act with effort
beseemeth: seems proper for
confounded: frustrated and caused to fail
eloquent: moving and persuasive
fascination: spellbinding and irresistible attraction
Gracious: One having and showing abundant grace, kindness, and mercy
grandeur: moral and intellectual greatness
hearken: give respectful attention and listen
invincible: incapable of being overthrown or conquered
ponder: deeply and carefully think it over
recount: tell in detail of
Revelation: Communication of God and His Will to man
righteousness: quality of doing what is morally right, fair, and just
sacrifice: give up something of value for something of greater value; offer up

soul: immortal essence of one's rational, spiritual, and emotional self
Sovereign: One with supreme and independent authority and power
sovereignty: all-encompassing, all-pervading, and supreme spiritual influence and power; "...by sovereignty is meant that sovereignty which in every dispensation resideth within, and is exercised by, the person of the Manifestation, the Day-star of Truth. That sovereignty is the spiritual ascendancy which He exerciseth to the fullest degree over all that is in heaven and on earth, and which in due time revealeth itself to the world in proportion to its capacity and spiritual receptiveness..." (Bahá'u'lláh, *Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 107)
station: position or rank
thrill: be filled with deep moving feelings of excitement
token: expression given or shown as a guarantee
Tongue: God's spoken Word

SHARING EXERCISE: A breath from the spirit of inspiration...

Facilitator

Ask the participants to complete the statements below. When everyone has finished, have each person share, in a round, one thing that was outstanding or inspiring and what spiritual feelings it enkindled. Please remind everyone not to remark on the comments of others.

One thing from the quotations that was outstanding or inspiring to me was _____

It made me feel _____

Explain _____

SOME QUESTIONS: A cup from the showers of confirmation...

Facilitator

Ask the participants to answer the following questions. They can usually find answers in the quotations just studied or in the introduction. When everyone has finished, review the questions, then share and discuss the answers.

1. Service to the Cause may include serving on a Bahá'í committee, hosting or helping to host a Feast, serving an elected or appointed position in the administration, teaching the Faith to others, teaching children's classes, hosting a Holy Day event, and numerous other possibilities. Service to the Cause is...
 - a. enforced by others.
 - b. voluntary.
 - c. the most effective use of time and energy to alleviate the ills of the world.
 - d. one of the requisites necessary for one's spiritual growth.
 - e. a personal choice.
 - f. just for people who like that kind of thing.

2. One's spiritual growth is dependent upon prayer, meditation, study of the Holy Utterances and _____

3. Certain qualities are identified as necessary for a life of service to the Cause. Some of them are...

<input type="checkbox"/> a. sacrifice	<input type="checkbox"/> e. capabilities
<input type="checkbox"/> b. striving	<input type="checkbox"/> f. consecration
<input type="checkbox"/> c. experience	<input type="checkbox"/> g. expertise
<input type="checkbox"/> d. perseverance	<input type="checkbox"/> h. pride

4. "These are the very words of `Abdu'l-Bahá: 'In these days, the Holy Ones of the Realm of Glory, dwelling in the all-highest Paradise, yearn to return unto this world, and be of some service to the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh and prove their servitude to the Threshold of `Abhá beauty.' What a wondrous vision these words unfold to our eyes! How great our privilege to labor in this Day in the Divine Vineyard!"¹ Why do you think the Holy Ones of the Realm of Glory yearn to be of service in these days? _____

5. `Abdu'l-Bahá wrote: "Expend your every breath of life in this great Cause and dedicate all your days to the service of Bahá, so that in the end, safe from loss and deprivation, ye will inherit the heaped-up treasures of the realms above."² What does this mean to you? _____

6. Bahá'u'lláh wrote: "*Vie ye with each other in the service of God and of His Cause. This is indeed what profiteth you in this world, and in that which is to come. Your Lord, the God of Mercy, is the All-Informed, the All-Knowing.*"³ Vie means to strive to equal or excel. What are some ways we could vie with one another in service to the Cause? _____

7. List some forms of service to the Cause. _____

¹ Bahá'í Administration, p. 37
² Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Bahá, p. 271
³ The Advent of Divine Justice, p. 83

APPLICATION: Showing forth divine light...

Facilitator

Read through #1 together and proceed as stated. Then take time for the participants to write out their individual plans for action in #2. (these are not shared) When everyone has finished, move on to the closing reading.

1. IMAGINING THE POSSIBILITIES: Visions of radiant lights...

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....” Imagine how the Bahá’í Teachings in this study class could be translated into reality and action. Take turns sharing the possibilities. Begin your statements with: “*One could....*” Suggest as many ideas as you want.

2. DECIDING ACTION: Mirroring forth a beam of light...

From your experience in this study class on Service to the Cause, describe what **you** are inspired to put into reality and action. **I will make conscious efforts to...** _____

My next step will be... _____

CLOSING MEDITATION: A heart song...

A talk by `Abdu'l-Bahá in New York, 1912.

We have just returned from a visit to Philadelphia, spending two nights there and speaking in two large churches. The weather proved unpleasant and affected my health. The purpose in these movements here and there is a single purpose—it is to spread the light of truth in this dark world. On account of my age it is difficult to journey. Sometimes the difficulties are arduous, but out of love for the friends of God and with desire to sacrifice myself in the pathway of God, I bear them in gladness. The purpose is the result which is accomplished—love and unity among mankind. For the world is dark with discord and selfishness, hearts are negligent, souls are bereft of God and His heavenly bestowals. Man is submerged in the affairs of this world. His aims, objects and attainments are mortal, whereas God desires for him immortal accomplishments. In his heart there is no thought of God. He has sacrificed his portion and birthright of divine spirituality. Desire and passion, like two unmanageable horses, have wrested the reins of control from him and are galloping madly in the wilderness. This is the cause of the degradation of the world of humanity. This is the cause of its retrogression into the appetites and passions of the animal kingdom. Instead of divine advancement we find sensual captivity and debasement of heavenly virtues of the soul. By devotion to the carnal, mortal world human susceptibilities sink to the level of animalism.

What are the animals’ propensities? To eat, drink, wander about and sleep. The thoughts, the minds of the animals are confined to these. They are captives in the bonds of these desires. Man becomes a prisoner and slave to them when his ultimate desire is no higher than his welfare in this world of the senses. Consider how difficult for man is the attainment of pleasures and happiness in this mortal world. How easy it is for the animal. Look upon the fields and flowers, prairies, streams, forests and mountains. The grazing animals, the birds of the air, the fishes neither toil nor undergo hardships; they sow not, nor are they concerned about the reaping; they have no anxiety about business or politics—no trouble or worry whatsoever. All the fields and grasses, all the meadows of fruits and grains, all the mountain slopes and streams of salubrious water belong to them. They do not labor for their livelihood and happiness because everything is provided and made possible for them. If the life of man be confined to this physical, material outlook, the animal’s life is a hundred times better, easier and more productive of comfort and contentment. The animal is nobler, more serene and confident because each

hour is free from anxiety and worryment; but man, restless and dissatisfied, runs from morn till eve, sailing the seas, diving beneath them in submarines, flying aloft in airplanes, delving into the lowest strata of the earth to obtain his livelihood — all with the greatest difficulty, anxiety and unrest. Therefore, in this respect the animal is nobler, more serene, poised and confident. Consider the birds in the forest and jungle: how they build their nests high in the swaying treetops, build them with the utmost skill and beauty — swinging, rocking in the morning breezes, drinking the pure, sweet water, enjoying the most enchanting views as they fly here and there high overhead, singing joyously — all without labor, free from worry, care and forebodings. If man's life be confined to the elemental, physical world of enjoyment, one lark is nobler, more admirable than all humanity because its livelihood is prepared, its condition complete, its accomplishment perfect and natural.

But the life of man is not so restricted; it is divine, eternal, not mortal and sensual. For him a spiritual existence and livelihood is prepared and ordained in the divine creative plan. His life is intended to be a life of spiritual enjoyment to which the animal can never attain. This enjoyment depends upon the acquisition of heavenly virtues. The sublimity of man is his attainment of the knowledge of God. The bliss of man is the acquiring of heavenly bestowals, which descend upon him in the outflow of the bounty of God. The happiness of man is in the fragrance of the love of God. This is the highest pinnacle of attainment in the human world. How preferable to the animal and its hopeless kingdom!

Therefore, consider how base a nature it reveals in man that, notwithstanding the favors showered upon him by God, he should lower himself into the animal sphere, be wholly occupied with material needs, attached to this mortal realm, imagining that the greatest happiness is to attain wealth in this world. How purposeless! How debased is such a nature! God has created man in order that he may be a dove of the Kingdom, a heavenly candle, a recipient of eternal life. God has created man in order that he may be resuscitated through the breaths of the Holy Spirit and become the light of the world. How debased the soul which can find enjoyment in this darkness, occupied with itself, the captive of self and passion, wallowing in the mire of the material world! How degraded is such a nature! What an ignorance this is! What a blindness! How glorious the station of man who has partaken of the heavenly food and built the temple of his everlasting residence in the world of heaven!

The Manifestations of God have come into the world to free man from these bonds and chains of the world of nature. Although They walked upon the earth, They lived in heaven. They were not concerned about material sustenance and prosperity of this world. Their bodies were subjected to inconceivable distress, but Their spirits ever soared in the highest realms of ecstasy. The purpose of Their coming, Their teaching and suffering was the freedom of man from himself. Shall we, therefore, follow in Their footsteps, escape from this cage of the body or continue subject to its tyranny? Shall we pursue the phantom of a mortal happiness which does not exist or turn toward the tree of life and the joys of its eternal fruits?

I have come to this country in the advanced years of my life, undergoing difficulties of health and climate because of excessive love for the friends of God. It is my wish that they may be assisted to become servants of the heavenly Kingdom, captives in the service of the will of God. This captivity is freedom; this sacrifice is glorification; this labor is reward; this need is bestowal. For service in love for mankind is unity with God. He who serves has already entered the Kingdom and is seated at the right hand of his Lord.

(`Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 183-86)

ANSWERS: Affirming treasures...

1. b, c, d, and e
2. service to the Cause of God
3. a, b, d, and f
4. all answers are valuable
5. all answers are valuable
6. all answers are valuable
7. all answers are valuable

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