



*Do you really
know who
you are?*

*The glory and the joy of
knowing yourself*

Do You Really Know Who You Are?

The Glory and the Joy of Knowing Yourself

True loss is for him whose days have been spent in
utter ignorance of his self.¹ Bahá'u'lláh

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Do You Really Know Who You Are?

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...what is man that you are mindful of him...? You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet... Psalms 8:4-6 NIV

Consider the goldsmith: Verily, he makes a ring, and although he is its maker, yet he adorns his finger with it. Likewise, God the Exalted appears in the clothing of the creatures.²
Bahá'u'lláh

...beings are consummated in perfect man. There is no other being higher than a perfect man.³
'Abdu'l-Bahá

Man is...the Book of Creation because all the mysteries of beings exist in him.⁴
'Abdu'l-Bahá

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Who Are We?

I am a human being! So what?

What is man, that thou art mindful of him? Psalms 8:4

After the tragic sinking of the “Titanic” an American newspaper carried two pictures. One showed the ship’s side torn open and about to sink—the symbol of fragility—and underneath the picture were these words, “The weakness of man; the supremacy of nature.” The other illustration showed the passengers stepping back to give the one place in the lifeboat to a woman with her baby in her arms. Under this picture were the words, “The weakness of nature; the supremacy of man.”⁵

I believe that man will not merely endure: he will prevail. He is immortal not because he alone among creatures has an inexhaustible voice, but because he has a soul, a spirit capable of compassion and sacrifice and endurance.⁶

These quotations portray how God perceives us. They give us a glimpse of who *He thinks* we are:

What is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him? For You have made him a little lower than the angels, and You have crowned him with glory and honor. You have made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet...

Psalms 8:4-6 NKJ

Consider a goldsmith; verily, he makes a ring, and although he is its maker, yet he adorns his finger with it. Likewise God the Exalted, appears in the clothing of the creatures.⁷

The Báb

...beings are consummated in perfect man. There is no other being higher than a perfect man.⁸ 'Abdu'l-Bahá

His works are perfect... Deut. 32:4 NIV

Man is...the Book of Creation because all the mysteries of beings exist in him.⁹ 'Abdu'l-Bahá

What We Think, We Become

Ideas are precious. An idea is the only lever which really moves the world.¹⁰

How do you see yourself? One of the facts declared throughout the ages and confirmed by modern psychologists is this: "Our life is what our thoughts make it." Our dreams shape our destiny. What our minds perceive, our hands pursue. "Glory gives herself to those who always dream of her."

Great men are they who see that spiritual is stronger than any material force, that thoughts rule the world.

Waldo Ralph Emerson

We tend to live up to expectations. If told we are kind, we will act kindly; if told unkind, we will act unkindly. If convinced we are warlike, we will seek war; if peace loving, we will seek peace. "Since wars begin in the minds of people, it is in their minds that we must erect the ramparts of peace."

We reveal what we see within. An evil vision of man leads to evil tendencies; a noble vision of man leads to noble tendencies. This is one of the fundamental facts of psychology.

For as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he... Proverbs 23:7

Man is made by his belief. As he believes, so is he.

Bhagavad-Gita

The mind is everything; what we think, we become. Buddha

Man becomes that of which he thinks.

Upanishads

Our thoughts also control our health. Drs. Michael Murray and Joseph Pizzorno in *Encyclopedia of Natural Medicine* state:

The most important factor in maintaining or attaining health is a consistent ‘positive mental attitude.’ More and more evidence is accumulating that what we think, feel and internally represent has a tremendous effect on the way our body functions. Our mind is so powerful, yet we only utilize a fraction of its capabilities.¹¹

Perfections are without limit. There is no limit to what we can do and become.

...all things are possible to him who believes.

Christ (Mark 9:23 NKJ)

Knowing One’s Self

After recognizing that our thoughts mold our lives, we are ready to take the next step: strive to gain a true knowledge of our own selves. “To be granted the opportunity to know one’s true self, a self much greater and finer than one has ever dared to suspect, such is indeed the gift of gifts.”

...man should know his own self and recognize that which leadeth unto loftiness or lowliness, glory or abasement, wealth or poverty.¹²

Bahá’u’lláh

True loss is for him whose days have been spent in utter ignorance of his self.¹³

Bahá’u’lláh

He hath known God who hath known himself.¹⁴

Bahá’u’lláh

A Reason for Living

Have you ever asked: “What is my reason for living?” Living without fundamental and lasting goals is like embarking on a

life-long journey, only to find, at the end, that we set out for the wrong reason, for an illusive destination, and with no guiding lights to make even the journey itself worthwhile. As Tolstoy notes: “Without knowing what am I and why I am here, life is impossible.”

Why not spend some time in determining what is worthwhile for us, and then go after that?¹⁵

As the earth revolves and moves forward with astonishing speed, so do the days and hours of our lives. Nature is kind and bountiful, but it waits for no one. If we fail to move forward with the swiftly-passing moments, if we decline to grow with the seasons, the harvest of our lives may be nothing but draught and famine, nothing but grief and anger for lost opportunities.

Seize the time, therefore, ere the glory of the divine
springtime hath spent itself...¹⁶ Bahá'u'lláh

Goals release our untapped energies and supply the needed fuel for life's journey. They not only elevate and strengthen the state of our soul, but also lead us forward in every aspect of our lives:

To inspire thinking, Joel Baker, a futurist, poses these questions: “Do you know people who just ‘let things happen’ as though they had no personal connection with future? What can you lose if you don't dream about the future? Have you ever heard someone who says, ‘Don't dream about tomorrow when we have to worry about today?’ How did that make you feel? If you aren't supposed to focus on tomorrow, how do you measure the decisions that you need to make today? What kinds of decisions are likely to be made if you have no clear sense of direction?”

Mr. Baker concludes: “Nations rise and fall with their visions of their future. Fred Polak's research suggests that this has been true since the dawn of recorded history, and that great accomplishments are always preceded by great visions.”

Benjamin Singer's research indicates that what, more than anything else, separates successful students from unsuccessful is this: successful students share a profound and positive vision of their future.

Abraham Maslow, the eminent psychologist declares: "When the philosophy of man changes, then everything changes." "Dr. Viktor Frankl, a renowned psychotherapist, holds that man's primary source of motivation is the will to find meaning in life. Without an adequate outlet for this basic human need, man develops a state of mind that Frankl calls existential vacuum. This vacuum creates a feeling of emptiness due to losing a sense of personal identity. Frankl maintains the way to health is through finding a purpose beyond one's self. Alcohol and drug abuse is one way people try to alleviate this feeling of emptiness."

Some people spend more time planning their week-end vacation to another village than they do for their eternal voyage to another world. No one likes to leave his house or work without a final goal. Yet many go through their whole life without a final destination in mind. How can they do this? By keeping themselves preoccupied with distractions or immediate goals: working, vacationing, watching TV, gardening, fishing, or going to a game. As long as they keep busy doing something, they can repress or postpone the thought of an ultimate goal and destiny.

Our greatest danger in life is in permitting the urgent things to crowd out the important.¹⁷

Why are the people of our age, in spite of countless conveniences at their service, busier than ever before? Is it not partly due to the need to fill a vacuum? Is it not that by keeping busy, they save their minds and souls from the agony of thinking grand but annoying thoughts? Emphasis on technology as a panacea for all human problems may also have its roots in the same deficiency. "The truth is more important than the facts," but the facts leave no room for the truth:

People [who live at the end of the age] will be...always learning but never able to acknowledge the truth.

II Tim. 3:2-7 NIV

...their religion is...learned by rote...

Isaiah 29:13 NEB

We can deny a need, but the need continues to cry out. We can keep our minds occupied with distractions but our hearts continue to clamor for meaning, our souls continue to demand purpose.

Men need nothing so much in these modern days as they need a working philosophy of life...Loosed from their moorings that have held life, many are now adrift. They have thrown overboard the chart, compass, steering wheel, and the consciousness of destination.¹⁸

Perhaps it would be a good idea, fantastic as it sounds, to muffle every telephone, stop every motor and halt all activity for an hour some day to give people a chance to ponder for a few minutes on what it is all about, why they are living and what they really want.¹⁹

Without a spiritual purpose, we act like a little child who on his way to school finds a small toy and forgets about school.

The Glory and the Joy of Knowing Who We Are

All things have I willed for thee, and thee, too, for thine own sake.²⁰

Bahá'u'lláh

All things have been created for your sakes, and for the sake of naught else hath your creation been ordained.²¹

The Báb

Dr. Dyer declares:

What do you think you are worth? You are a divine creation in this endlessly perfect universe. You are it all. As Walt

Whitman declared, “The whole theory of the universe is directed unerringly to one single individual—namely to you.” This is not a selfish proclamation. It is perfectly sensible within Whitman’s world-view. You are at once all of humanity and the same time an individual human.²²

The unfoldment of our humanity begins with self-knowledge, and self-knowledge begins with this inquiry: what is the human nature, good, neutral, or evil? The answer to this inquiry forms the first building block of our self-esteem. It is the seed from which grows either dignity or doubt, self-respect or self-degradation, guilt and shame, or glory and honor. If we think we are bad, how can we like ourselves, and if we don’t like ourselves, how can we expect others to like us? Psychologist, Dr. Nathaniel Branden, director of Biocentric Institute and author of several books on self-esteem states:

There is no judgment a person can pass that is more significant than the one passed on him or herself, no single factor more responsible for the shape his or her life takes.

The basis of self-respect is respect for God’s handiwork. These questions are in order: Can evil come from good? Can hate come from love, or imperfection from perfection? Can God, like humans, create poor or mediocre work?

High self-esteem leads to humility, not egotism:

It is a curious psychological fact that the man who seems to be “egotistic” is not suffering from too much ego, but from too little.²³

Only the person who has faith in himself is able to be faithful to others.²⁴

We can only give away what we have inside. If you have regard for yourself, that is what you will give to those whom you love. If you have self-contempt, it will be reflected in how you treat those closest to you.²⁵

Potentially we are perfect. Imperfection comes from lack of development, rather than from deficiency in the design. Can we call water—the source of life for all beings—evil because some people drown in it?

In our time the glory and honor of being human has been tarnished. Preoccupation with “sin” and its massive, constant and dramatic exposure in our homes through the public media, have cast their shadow on every good motive or deed. They have diminished the dignity and nobility of being human. “Our belief in the bad comes from religion on the right and Freud on the left--original sin and original id...We are [considered] a mass of grasping, greedy, destructive, angry and rather appalling characteristics. Abraham Maslow, who was one of the few psychologists to try and help us out of this pessimistic view, once observed that not only do we associate our nature with animal nature, but with the worst of the animals.”²⁶ God has made us as gentle and as beautiful as butterflies. We drop the “butter” and live like flies.

Who knows our true nature, our powers, blessings, and potentials? Can anyone assess our true greatness as perfectly as the One who made us? He is the One who calls us His masterpiece, the mirror of all His names and attributes. He is the One who considers us as the essence of His light, the jeweled crown of His creation, the most luminous ray of His love, the most evident sign of His wisdom, the most exquisite gem on His hand, the book of creation, enfolding every perfection and paradox. He is the One who regards us as the marvel of marvels, the universe of mysteries, the sublime image of His grand and immortal glory, that we are indeed His most dearly prized possession. What more can we expect?

God said, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness.”

Genesis 1:26 NIV

God created man for immortality, and made him the image of his own eternal self.

Wisdom of Solomon 2:23 NEB

You...crowned him with glory and honor. You made him ruler over the works of your hands... Psalms 8:5-6 NIV

What! have you no belief in Him who created you...a perfect being? Qur'án 18:35

His work is perfect... Deut. 32:4

My work is perfect...²⁷ Bahá'u'lláh

Man is the most noble of beings...²⁸ 'Abdu'l-Bahá

God is the supreme King of the universe. And He has placed a miniature model of His vast and splendid kingdom in every heart:

Behold, the kingdom of God is within you. Christ (Luke 17:21)

As a token of His grace, He allows us to carry everything that we build in “the kingdom of heart” into “the kingdom of heaven.” Despite all these favors and splendors, we doubt, we demean ourselves, we wonder and waver. “Man is the only creature that refuses to be what he is.” Once again the voice of the Creator assures the doubters, this time through His Chosen One, Bahá'u'lláh:

O SON OF BEING!

With the hands of power I made thee and with the fingers of strength I created thee; and within thee have I placed the essence of My light. Be thou content with it and seek naught else, for My work is perfect and My command is binding. Question it not, nor have a doubt thereof.²⁹ Bahá'u'lláh

O SON OF SPIRIT!

Noble have I created thee, yet thou hast abased thyself. Rise then unto that for which thou wast created.³⁰ Bahá'u'lláh

O SON OF SPIRIT!

I created thee rich, why dost thou bring thyself down to poverty? Noble I made thee, wherewith dost thou abase thyself? Out of the essence of knowledge I gave thee being,

why seekest thou enlightenment from anyone beside Me?
Out of the clay of love I molded thee, how dost thou busy
thyself with another?³¹ Bahá'u'lláh

Can an honor equal this: to be called the children of God?

Ye are the children of the Lord your God... Deut. 14:1

Ye are the sons of the living God. Hosea 1:10

Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called the
children of God. Christ (Matt. 5:9 NIV)

Can anyone think of an honor that can even remotely resemble
this: to be a jeweled ring on the Hand of God?

Consider the goldsmith: Verily, he makes a ring, and
although he is its maker, yet he adorns his finger with it.
Likewise, God the Exalted appears in the clothing of the
creatures.³² Bahá'u'lláh

Has Anyone Ever Seen a Master Serving His Servant?

Has anyone ever seen a master serving and waiting on his
servant? Yet we are told by our infinitely greater Master that if
we prepare ourselves for Him and investigate the news of His
coming, He will actually serve us and wait on us.

Be dressed ready...It will be good for those servants whose
Master finds them watching when He comes...He [the
Master]...will have them recline at the table and will...wait
on them. Christ (Luke 12:35-37 NIV)

Has anyone ever seen a master suffering for his servant? Yet
this is what our infinitely greater Masters Christ, the Báb, and
Bahá'u'lláh did.

...the Deputy-Governor...attempted “to hold in check the
passions which had been aroused”, by ordering ‘his

attendants to prepare the rods and promptly inflict a befitting punishment upon the captives,” and promising to hold them in prison until the Governor’s return. At this point, Bahá’u’lláh intervened to prevent His companions receiving the bastinado, and requested that the punishment be inflicted upon Him in their stead. The Deputy-Governor “was reluctantly compelled to give orders that Bahá’u’lláh alone be chosen to suffer the indignity which he had intended originally for His companions.”³³

Has anyone known a powerful master who suffers at the hand of his servants, and yet he refuses to use his power to punish his servants?

No matter how severe the persecutions inflicted upon those holy, those precious, and tender Souls, they still remained, in the plenitude of their power, patient, and, despite their ascendancy, they suffered and endured.³⁴ Bahá’u’lláh

Has anyone ever seen a master die for his servant? Yet this is what our infinitely greater Masters Christ and the Báb did.

Those who passed by hurled insults at him...saying, “...Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!” In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked him. “He saved others,” they said, “but he can’t save himself! He’s the King of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, ‘I am the Son of God.’” ...one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a stick, and offered it to Jesus to drink. The rest said, “Now leave him alone. Let’s see if Elijah comes to save him.” And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit.

Matthew 27:39-50 NIV



The Báb knew that He would die the next day and on the night before His death He was full of joy...His face glowed with a joy that His companions had never seen before. He spoke cheerfully to comfort and encourage them.

‘Tomorrow’, He said, ‘will be the day of My martyrdom. Would that one of you might now arise and, with his own hands, end My life. I prefer to be slain by the hand of a friend rather than by that of the enemy.’ His companions wept on hearing these words and all refused, except for Anís who sprang forward and said that he would do whatever the Báb asked. The others were horrified and made him give up the idea at once, but when all was calm again the Báb said:

‘This same youth who has risen to comply with My wish will, together with Me, suffer martyrdom. Him will I choose to share with Me its crown.’³⁵

The Báb and His disciple Anís were tied up against the wall. Seven hundred and fifty soldiers stood ready to fire at the command of their officer. Before the shots were fired the Báb uttered His parting words:

“Had you believed in Me, O wayward generation,” He said, “every one of you would have followed the example of this youth, who stood in rank above most of you, and willingly would have sacrificed himself in My path. The day will come when you will have recognized Me; that day I shall have ceased to be with you.”

As the shots were fired, a great wind arose and swept over the city. A whirlwind of dust came with it, a dust so dense that it hid the light of the sun and blinded the eyes of the people. A violent storm broke over their heads and the strange darkness lasted from noon until nightfall. The bodies of the Báb and Anís were shattered by the seven hundred and fifty bullets to such an extent that their flesh was blended

together and could not be separated. The face of the Báb had not been marked by a single bullet; it was clam and serene.³⁶

Can a love greater than this be ever imagined?

Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. Christ (John 15:13-14 NIV)

The true Friend [Bahá'u'lláh] hath loved and doth love you for your own sakes; indeed He hath suffered for your guidance countless afflictions.³⁷ Bahá'u'lláh

Has a master ever allowed his angry servant to beat him to satisfy his anger? Yet this is what Bahá'u'lláh did when He asked that an angry woman not be prevented from having the pleasure of hurling stones at Him.

As Bahá'u'lláh was being taken to be imprisoned in an infamous dungeon (the Black Pit), a fanatical woman emerged from the onlookers with a stone in her hand. She pleaded with the guards to let her to throw her stone at Bahá'u'lláh. Bahá'u'lláh told the guards “Suffer not this woman to be disappointed...Deny her not what she regards as a meritorious act in the sight of God.”³⁸

Has anyone known a Master who would bestow his most splendid Name on his servant?

Him who overcomes [spiritual obstacles]...I will write on him the name of my God...and I will also write on him my new name. Revelation 3:12 NIV

Has anyone known a Master so proud of His servant?

Thou art My glory and My glory fadeth not...³⁹ Bahá'u'lláh

Has anyone known a Master who wishes for His servant what He wishes for Himself?

I...have desired for thee that which I have desired for My Self.⁴⁰ Bahá'u'lláh

Has anyone seen a Master with so much faith in his servant's potential to tell him that you can do even greater things than I do?

I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these...

John 14:12 NIV

Has anyone known a Master so intent on giving and receiving love?

I have breathed within thee a breath of My own Spirit, that thou mayest be My lover.⁴¹ My love has made in thee its home, it cannot be concealed.⁴²

Bahá'u'lláh

Has anyone known a Master so humble as to say:

Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God.

Matthew 19:17 NKJV

Has anyone known a Master who has made everything for his servant and withheld nothing from him?

All things have I willed for thee, and thee, too, for thine own sake.⁴³

Bahá'u'lláh

All things have been created for your sakes, and for the sake of naught else hath your creation been ordained.⁴⁴

The Báb

Has anyone known a Master who lives in his servant's house?

O SON OF BEING!

Thy heart is My home; sanctify it for My descent. Thy spirit is My place of revelation; cleanse it for My manifestation.⁴⁵

Bahá'u'lláh

Has anyone seen a Master who offers fruits to his servants?

Upon the tree of effulgent glory I have hung for thee the choicest fruits...⁴⁶

Bahá'u'lláh

Can a Master be more generous than this?

Thou art My light...⁴⁷

Bahá'u'lláh

...within thee have I placed the essence of My light.⁴⁸

Bahá'u'lláh

Out of the essence of knowledge I gave thee being...⁴⁹

Bahá'u'lláh

Has anyone seen a Master who suffers “countless afflictions” for the sake of His servant?

Worldly friends, seeking their own good, appear to love one the other, whereas the true Friend hath loved and doth love you for your own sakes; indeed He hath suffered for your guidance countless afflictions.⁵⁰

Bahá'u'lláh

Has anyone seen a Master who would give to his servant the twin gifts of “eternity” and “unity,” so that he may manifest the wonders of His Master for all eternity?

O SON OF MAN!

My eternity is My creation, I have created it for thee. Make it the garment of thy temple. My unity is My handiwork; I have wrought it for thee; clothe thyself therewith, that thou mayest be to all eternity the revelation of My everlasting being.⁵¹

Bahá'u'lláh

Has anyone seen the Master so generous to his servant?

“Well done, my good servant!” his master replied. “Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.”

Christ (Luke 19:17 NIV)

Has anyone known a Master who calls his servant?

O Companion of My Throne!⁵²

Bahá'u'lláh

O my friend! Thou art the daystar of the heavens of My holiness...⁵³

Bahá'u'lláh

Has anyone ever seen a master washing his servants' feet and hands?

“No,” said Peter, “you shall never wash my feet.” Jesus answered, “Unless I wash you, you have no part with me.” “Then, Lord,” Simon Peter replied, “not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!” John 13:8-9 NIV

As I [the Báb’s first disciple] entered the house and followed my Host to His chamber, a feeling of unutterable joy invaded my being. Immediately we were seated, He ordered a ewer [pitcher] of water to be brought, and bade me wash away from my hands and feet the stains of travel. I pleaded permission to retire from His presence and perform my ablutions in an adjoining room. He refused to grant my request, and proceeded to pour the water over my hands.⁵⁴

The Negligent Servant

Why is man so ungrateful to God’s blessings? Why? Why?

O ESSENCE OF NEGLIGENCE!...myriads of hidden mysteries are revealed in a single melody; yet, alas, there is no ear to hear, nor heart to understand.⁵⁵ Bahá’u’lláh

O LOVERS OF WORLDLY DESIRE!...Ye have cast to the winds the loving counsels of the Beloved and have effaced them utterly from the tablet of your hearts...⁵⁶ Bahá’u’lláh

O YE THAT ARE LYING AS DEAD ON THE COUCH OF HEEDLESSNESS!... ye walk on My earth complacent and self-satisfied, heedless that My earth is weary of you...⁵⁷ Bahá’u’lláh

O SON OF BOUNTY!

Out of the wastes of nothingness, with the clay of My command I made thee to appear, and have ordained for thy training every atom in existence and the essence of all created things. Thus, ere thou didst issue from thy mother’s womb, I destined for thee two founts of gleaming milk, eyes

to watch over thee, and hearts to love thee. Out of My loving-kindness, 'neath the shade of My mercy I nurtured thee, and guarded thee by the essence of My grace and favor. And My purpose in all this was that thou mightest attain My everlasting dominion and become worthy of My invisible bestowals. And yet heedless thou didst remain, and when fully grown, thou didst neglect all My bounties and occupied thyself with thine idle imaginings, in such wise that thou didst become wholly forgetful, and, turning away from the portals of the Friend didst abide within the courts of My enemy.⁵⁸

Bahá'u'lláh

O CHILDREN OF NEGLIGENCE AND PASSION!

Ye have suffered My enemy to enter My house and have cast out My friend, for ye have enshrined the love of another than Me in your hearts.⁵⁹

Bahá'u'lláh

O CHILDREN OF VAINGLORY!

For a fleeting sovereignty ye have abandoned My imperishable dominion, and have adorned yourselves with the gay livery of the world and made of it your boast.⁶⁰

Bahá'u'lláh

O MOVING FORM OF DUST!

I desire communion with thee, but thou wouldst put no trust in Me... At all times I am near unto thee, but thou art ever far from Me. Imperishable glory I have chosen for thee, yet boundless shame thou hast chosen for thyself. While there is yet time, return, and lose not thy chance.⁶¹

Bahá'u'lláh

How should human beings respond to the Creator's infinite blessings?

Know thou, that I have wafted unto thee all the fragrances of holiness, have fully revealed to thee My word, have perfected through thee My bounty and have desired for thee that which I have desired for My Self. Be then content with My pleasure and thankful unto Me.⁶²

Bahá'u'lláh

The Infinite Joy and Honor of Meeting God

Can any joy, any hope, any goal compare with this?

Rejoice in the gladness of thine heart, that thou mayest be
worthy to meet Me and to mirror forth My beauty.⁶³

Bahá'u'lláh

Would a genius not delight in his masterpiece?

The Lord was my support...he delighted in me.

Psalms 18:18-19 NIV

The honor and the glory that God has ordained for us are
beyond the dream of the most adventurous dreamers:

O friends! Be not careless of the virtues with which ye have
been endowed, neither be neglectful of your high destiny.
Suffer not your labors to be wasted through the vain
imagination which certain hearts have devised. Ye are the
stars of the heaven of understanding, the breeze that stirreth
at the break of day, the soft-flowing waters upon which must
depend the very life of all men, the letters inscribed upon His
sacred scroll.⁶⁴

Bahá'u'lláh

Without us the universe would be a beautiful but empty shell,
without purpose. God Himself would be alone.

But for man, who, on My earth, would remember Me, and
how could My attributes and My names be revealed?⁶⁵

Bahá'u'lláh

God has created everything for us. The only thing He wants
from us in return is to keep our hearts as pure and radiant as He
made them. The pure heart is the only place He loves to visit,
the only place to make His home. Yet we are unwilling to do
even that much:

All that is in heaven and earth I have ordained for thee,
except the human heart, which I have made the habitation of

My beauty and glory; yet thou didst give My home and dwelling to another than Me...⁶⁶

Who is the richest in all the universe? God. He owns infinite treasures. Where does He hide them? In our hearts and souls. All He asks is that we preserve them:

Thine heart is My treasury, allow not the treacherous hand of self to rob thee of the pearls which I have treasured therein.⁶⁷
Bahá'u'lláh

Ye are My treasury, for in you I have treasured the pearls of My mysteries and the gems of My knowledge. Guard them from the strangers...⁶⁸
Bahá'u'lláh

No human being can comprehend the infinite expanse of the universe, yet in all its vastness, it cannot contain God.

...can God indeed dwell on earth? Heaven itself, the highest heaven, cannot contain thee...
I Kings 8:27

The only thing in the universe that can contain God is a pure heart.

A pure heart is as a mirror; cleanse it...from all save God...Then wilt thou clearly see the meaning of “Neither doth My earth nor My heaven contain Me, but the heart of My faithful servant containeth Me.”⁶⁹
Bahá'u'lláh

O friend, the heart is the dwelling of eternal mysteries, make it not the home of fleeting fancies...⁷⁰
Bahá'u'lláh

Why is it that, instead of rising to our divine destiny, we demean ourselves? Instead of seeking our immortal essence, we wander far in pursuit of the perishable and temporal? Where can we find a creation nobler than our own self? What glory can we find greater than being fashioned in the Fashioner's own luminous Image? “For God is the light and we the light's shadow.”

Is it not astonishing that although man has been created for the knowledge and love of God, for the virtues of the human world, for spirituality, heavenly illumination and eternal life, nevertheless, he continues ignorant and negligent of all this?⁷¹

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

God desires us to soar like eagles, but many are content to scratch like sparrows.⁷²

In our age high self-esteem is in short supply and in high demand. Many search in vain for simple and superficial solutions. Some people try to get a high from expensive or exotic cars, clothes, and diamonds. Others try to get a lift from psychologists, who themselves stand in need of greater powers. And still others try to raise their self by touching the hands of a famed champion or a star, without knowing that they too can become champions and stars, not the ones that soon fall and fade away but those that are immortal and everlasting:

Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.

Daniel 12:3 NIV

The Lord their God will save them on that day... They will sparkle... like jewels in a crown. How attractive and beautiful they will be!

Zechariah 9:16-17 NIV

Everything reveals God and testifies to His unspeakable splendor. The sun shows His warmth, the wind His power, the earth His enchanting artistry, the heavens His timeless glory. Humans manifest the power of His freedom, the beauty of His thoughts, and the wonders of His vision. They show His grandest dreams of glory, His most exquisite handiwork:

...I have perfected in every one of you My creation, so that the excellence of My handiwork may be fully revealed...⁷³

Bahá’u’lláh

Upon the inmost reality of each and every created thing He hath shed the light of one of His names, and made it a

recipient of the glory of one of His attributes. Upon the reality of man, however, He hath focused the radiance of all of His names and attributes, and made it a mirror of His own Self. Alone of all created things man hath been singled out for so great a favor, so enduring a bounty.⁷⁴ Bahá'u'lláh

Among all the capacities conferred upon us, the loftiest is to know and to love Him who made us—our Creator.

Having created the world and all that liveth and moveth therein, He, through the direct operation of His unconstrained and sovereign Will, chose to confer upon man the unique distinction and capacity to know Him and to love Him—a capacity that must needs be regarded as the generating impulse and the primary purpose underlying the whole of creation.⁷⁵ Bahá'u'lláh

All praise and glory be to God Who, through the power of His might, hath delivered His creation from the nakedness of non-existence, and clothed it with the mantle of life. From among all created things He hath singled out for His special favor the pure, the gem-like reality of man, and invested it with a unique capacity of knowing Him and of reflecting the greatness of His glory.⁷⁶ Bahá'u'lláh

After recognizing the supreme station and honor our Creator has granted us, our search for self-knowledge will lead us to this point: the source of our happiness lies within us, but concealed and dormant. We need a searchlight to find it and a spark to activate it.

The Purpose of the one true God, exalted be His glory, in revealing Himself unto men is to lay bare those gems that lie hidden within the mine of their true and inmost selves.⁷⁷ Bahá'u'lláh

God grant that all men may turn unto the treasures latent within their own beings.⁷⁸ Bahá'u'lláh

Among the treasures hidden within us is God Himself. We must search for the glimmerings of the divine in our souls with an undying determination:

Turn thy sight unto thyself, that thou mayest find Me
standing within thee...⁷⁹ Bahá'u'lláh

And also in your own selves; will ye not behold the signs of
God? Qur'án 51:21

Like a diamond we cannot dazzle and shine until we live in the light of the Lord. And like a candle we cannot glow and come alive until we touch the glimmerings of God.

...nothing lighteth up a heart save the splendor that shineth
from the realm of the Lord.⁸⁰ 'Abdu'l-Bahá

The candle of thine heart is lighted by the hand of My
power...⁸¹ Bahá'u'lláh

And like a drop, we cannot last unless we drown in the ocean of divine knowledge.

The drop must not estimate its own limited capacity; it must realize the volume and sufficiency of the ocean, which ever glorifieth the drop. The tender and simple seed, solitary though it may be, must not look upon its own lack of power.⁸² 'Abdu'l-Bahá

He whom the grace of Thy mercy aideth, though he be but a drop, shall become the boundless ocean, and the merest atom which the outpouring of Thy loving-kindness assisteth, shall shine even as the radiant star.⁸³ 'Abdu'l-Bahá

How resplendent the luminaries of knowledge that shine in an atom, and how vast the oceans of wisdom that surge within a drop! To a supreme degree is this true of man, who, among all created things, hath been invested with the robe of such gifts, and hath been singled out for the glory of such distinction. For in him are potentially revealed all the attributes and names of God to a degree that no other created

being hath excelled or surpassed. All these names and attributes are applicable to him. Even as He hath said: “Man is My mystery, and I am his mystery.”⁸⁴ Bahá’u’lláh

How lofty is the station which man, if he but choose to fulfill his high destiny, can attain! To what depths of degradation he can sink, depths which the meanest of creatures have never reached! Seize, O friends, the chance which this Day offereth you, and deprive not yourselves of the liberal effusions of His grace. I beseech God that He may graciously enable every one of you to adorn himself, in this blessed Day, with the ornament of pure and holy deeds. He, verily, doeth whatsoever He willeth.⁸⁵ Bahá’u’lláh

O MY SERVANTS!

Ye are the trees of My garden; ye must give forth goodly and wondrous fruits, that ye yourselves and others may profit therefrom.⁸⁶ Bahá’u’lláh

O CHILDREN OF NEGLIGENCE!

Set not your affections on mortal sovereignty and rejoice not therein. Ye are even as the unwary bird that with full confidence warbleth upon the bough; till of a sudden the fowler Death throws it upon the dust, and the melody, the form and the color are gone, leaving not a trace. Wherefore take heed, O bondslaves of desire!⁸⁷ Bahá’u’lláh

The Alphabet of Perfection*

Make perfection the passionate purpose of your life. Perfection does not mean having no flaws; it means growing every day to become the greatest and noblest person you can be. Just as you started with the alphabet in the first grade, and gradually worked your way to Shakespeare, start your journey of perfection little by little day by day.

Be absolutely certain of this: you cannot attain genuine and enduring joy until you make perfection the passionate purpose of your life.

Many people are afraid of the word “perfection,” until I show them *the 11th commandment*:

Be perfect...as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Christ (Matt. 5:48)

When they discover this heavenly commandment, they are pleasantly surprised. I do not know why theologians prefer to ignore it. Does it undermine their theology?

Here are nine steps to start your journey:

1. ***Begin*** your journey to perfection by greeting anyone who passes your way. Make it one of the main goals in your life to become an Olympian Greeter.

* From a talk delivered by the author at Central Michigan University to honor students and their parents. A copy of this talk was given to everyone in the audience.

2. **If** someone greets you before you do, surprise him or her by a much louder and warmer greeting!
3. **Always** wear a button with a positive message, such as: peace, unity, love, optimism, forgiveness; or against an evil, such as prejudice, pollution, drugs, and alcohol. The button reminds you that you care. You also set a silent example to everyone who sees you.
4. **Make** a commitment never to hurt anyone's feelings. If you do, then fine yourself from 10 to 20 dollars for every incidence. (Send the money to a charity.)
5. **Just** as you save for your tuition or retirement, make a kindly deposit in your spiritual account. Always look for a chance to do some good. Each of those kindly acts is like a flower you plant around you. After a while, you will be surrounded by a beautiful garden filled with the fragrance of joy. The fragrance will lift your soul so high you will be scared to look down.
6. **Be** a detective. Discover the critical flaws in your life, and then correct them. Examples of critical flaws:
 - Having a closed mind.
 - Thinking that life has no purpose.
 - Assuming that you already know what you need to know about life.
 - Taking for granted the gifts you already have.
 - Failing to appreciate your parents.
 - Being negative. Concentrating on what you don't have.
 - Seeking happiness from or for your body instead of your spirit.
 - Lacking self-knowledge. Failing to see your faults.
 - Assuming that life ends in grave.
 - Feeling too proud to seek help when you need it.
 - Placing too much emphasis on your appearance.

- Using alcohol and narcotic drugs for relief and joy. Your mind is among the most precious gifts God gave you. Why make it dull? Why take away the gift that allows you to be human?
- Accepting mediocrity in your character. Not knowing that perfection must be the passionate purpose of your life.

Even one of these critical flaws can undermine your happiness and prevent you from attaining perfection. Do not underestimate their destructive powers. Please remember the fate of the spacecraft *Challenger*. It was the most expensive machine ever made, yet it vanished in one instant because of one critical flaw.

7. **Be** selfish! Set aside at least 10 minutes every day exclusively for yourself—for growing, for expanding your vision. How can you do this? If you wanted to improve your athletic performance, who would approach? A coach, of course. Do the same here. The following is a list of a few books that can have a positive impact on your life. Each book will help you advance in a unique way:

<i>Title</i>	<i>Author</i>
<i>You Will See It When You Believe It</i>	Dr. Wayne Dyer
<i>Peace With Your Partner</i>	Dr. Blumenthal
<i>The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People</i>	Stephen Covey
<i>The Light Beyond</i>	Dr. Melvin Morse
<i>The Spiritual Design of Creation</i>	Dr. Hugh Motlagh
<i>Awaken the Giant Within</i>	Anthony Robins

These books can teach you survival skills for this difficult age. They can inspire you to advance in your journey of perfection.

8. ***Do not*** plan to be happy only in the future, as if happiness is a retirement. If you are not happy now, when will be the right time? The best rule for happiness is to grow a little every day. Today you must be a better person than you were yesterday. To be alive is to grow. If you are not growing, you are dead! This is the purpose of the Alphabet of Perfection: to help you get started on this magnificent mission, this everlasting journey.
9. Cultivate the quality of open-mindedness. This is the quality that will lead you to everything good and noble. Study the paper I wrote: *An Open Mind Is the Gateway to Heaven*. That paper contains the first and most significant message for every human being. It has the key to treasures of joy and happiness.

Suppose a rich relative died and left you a hundred million dollars. How would you feel, and how would you respond? Would you hesitate to claim your share? The good fortune is already on your side. You already own riches beyond measure. They are priceless. Because what you inherit from someone else you will eventually lose. But the spiritual treasures within you are yours for evermore. All you need is to claim them. Most people live and die without ever being aware of these treasures. What a loss!

To Conclude:

Do not be afraid to make perfection the passionate purpose in your life. Be afraid only of pursuing the path of mediocrity, which masquerades as “the Innocent Average” and then secretly steals your precious potentials.

This paper offers you nine reachable goals, which can change your destiny forever. They appear ordinary, but have the power to activate your heart and soul.

These are some of the most precious days of your life. Appreciate them; do not let them be squandered. These are the

days to choose your future course not only for now but for all eternity. ***Begin making choices before chance has made all the choices for you.***

Do not underestimate the power of these seemingly nine little ideas. Like a little key that can flood a whole city with light, they can fill your life with joy and fulfillment. They can guide you and inspire you to climb the mountain.

Please remember that I am on the same journey, and cannot advance without your help. When I help you, I am indeed helping myself. I consider each of you a gift, a teacher who can teach me a lesson. I regard each of you as a lever by which I can lift my soul. Thank God we are not alone. All around us there are many wonderful people. Only illusive barriers separate us.

May God bless you and aid you in all your endeavors.

Attributes of Perfection

Be generous in prosperity, and thankful in adversity.

Be worthy of the trust of thy neighbor, and look upon him with a bright and friendly face.

Be a treasure to the poor, an admonisher to the rich, an answerer of the cry of the needy, a preserver of the sanctity of thy pledge.

Be fair in thy judgment, and guarded in thy speech.

Be unjust to no man, and show all meekness to all men.

Be as a lamp unto them that walk in darkness, a joy to the sorrowful, a sea for the thirsty, a haven for the distressed, an upholder and defender of the victim of oppression. Let integrity and uprightness distinguish all thine acts.

Be a home for the stranger, a balm to the suffering, a tower of strength for the fugitive.

Be eyes to the blind, and a guiding light unto the feet of the erring.

Be an ornament to the countenance of truth, a crown to the brow of fidelity, a pillar of the temple of righteousness, a breath of life to the body of mankind, an ensign of the hosts of justice, a luminary above the horizon of virtue, a dew to the soil of the human heart, an ark on the ocean of knowledge, a sun in the heaven of bounty, a gem on the diadem of wisdom, a shining light in the firmament of thy generation, a fruit upon the tree of humility.⁸⁸ Bahá'u'lláh

Bahá'í Principles for a Peaceful World

- ✿ *Spirituality is the key to enduring happiness.*
- ✿ *Our life's purpose is to know, to love, and to serve God by serving others.*
- ✿ *We should revere or recognize the truth of all great religions.*
- ✿ *We should choose our beliefs by reason, not by birth or tradition.*
- ✿ *Racism and sexism must be abolished.*
- ✿ *Religious prejudice is the most deadly spiritual disease. Its raging fire can set the world ablaze.*
- ✿ *It is better to have no religion than have one that divides and breeds prejudice.*
- ✿ *Education of children is the key to a peaceful world.*
- ✿ *Schools must teach both knowledge and nobility.*
- ✿ *Religion must make sense, be reasonable and in harmony with science.*
- ✿ *Choosing our spiritual destiny is by far the most significant choice of our life.*
- ✿ *Love of God is the most powerful unifying force.*

**To Have a Peaceful World,
We Should Also Promote
These Principles:**

- ✿ *Equal rights for all people.*
- ✿ *A just distribution of wealth. A world without extremes of wealth and poverty.*
- ✿ *A universal auxiliary language for all the peoples of the world.*
- ✿ *An enduring peace sustained by a federation of nations.*

The Bahá'í Faith is a new and independent Faith that God has sent to bring together and unify all the peoples of the world. It has already accomplished this goal on a scale never achieved before. It is now the second most widely spread religion in the world. It is the Faith promised in all sacred Scriptures.

The Bahá'í Faith began in 1844 by the Báb (the Gate of the Lord), the divinely inspired Herald of the new Faith. The Báb was imprisoned, exiled, and executed in 1850 by a firing squad of 750 soldiers! In 1863, Bahá'u'lláh (the Glory of the Lord) declared that He is the One promised by the Báb and all great Messengers and Redeemers of the past. ***The Bible predicts the Advent of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh and the critical events of their lives more than a thousand times! We invite you to investigate the evidence.*** Both the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh are buried in Israel, not far from Nazareth.

Bahá'u'lláh wrote a hundred volumes of Scriptures. His Works contain the divine plan for creating a world of peace and prosperity and a blueprint to guide each of us toward our everlasting destiny. Bahá'u'lláh spoke with the same authority with which Jesus and all other great Messengers spoke. He was imprisoned and exiled for 40 years. We invite you to investigate God's Plan for your spiritual destiny and for a peaceful world.

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