

Bahá'í Daily Practices

This compilation of the following writings from the Central Figures of the Faith is composed with the humble intention of providing a basic primer on the daily focal points & practices of living life as a fully engaged Bahá'í, Inshallah. - Bert Taylor

ESSENTIAL REQUISITES FOR SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Bahá'u'lláh has stated quite clearly in His Writings the essential requisites for our spiritual growth, and these are emphatically repeated by Abdu'l-Bahá in His talks and Tablets. One can summarize them briefly in this way:

1. The recital each day of one of the Obligatory Prayers with pure-hearted devotion.
2. The regular reading of the Sacred Scriptures, specifically at least each morning and evening, with reverence, attention and thought.
3. Prayerful meditation on the Teachings, so that we may understand them more deeply, fulfill them more faithfully, and convey them more accurately to others.
4. Striving every day to bring our behaviour more into accordance with the high standards that are set forth in the Teachings.
5. Teaching the Cause of God.
6. Selfless service in the work of the Cause and in the carrying on of our trade or profession.

(The above except from the 1983-09-01 Universal House of Justice compilation, Meditation, Prayer, and Spiritualization)

Obligatory prayer

The essential daily practice of Bahá'í prayer is reciting one prayer out of the set of the three obligatory prayers. The recital serves on a daily basis the purpose of renewing a refreshing personal communion with the ultimate reality of the divine. Bahá'u'lláh revealed the set of obligatory prayers that are in use today. A variety of three different prayers were unveiled: a short prayer for recital at noon; a longer prayer to be repeated three times with the first time being in the morning between sunrise and noon, the second time in the afternoon between noon and sunset, and the third time in the evening from sunset till two hours after sunset; and the long prayer to be recited once anytime within twenty-four hours.

In place of every Obligatory Prayer that has been missed the believer is to kneel and bowing forehead to the ground, say "Glorified be God, the Lord of Might and Majesty, of Grace and Bounty", or only "Glorified be God". After the requisite number of prostrations, sit cross-legged and repeat eighteen times "Glorified be God, the Lord of the kingdoms of earth and heaven."

Ablutions

Ablutions (the washing of hands & face) are required before reciting any obligatory prayers in a place that must be clean. When water is unavailable or unsafe for washing, the specifically revealed verse to be recited five times in place of ablutions is: "In the Name of God, the Most Pure, the Most Pure."

Qiblih (The point of adoration to face when offering obligatory prayer)

The Báb said that when revealed, the faithful should face in prayer He Whom God shall make manifest. Presently, that makes Bahá'u'lláh's shrine the Qiblih. It is obligatory to face the Qiblih while reciting any of the three obligatory prayers.

Repetition of The Most Great Name - Alláh'u'Abhá.

Bahá'u'lláh has commanded the faithful to repeat "Alláh'u'Abhá" ("God is Most Glorious") 95 times every day while facing the Qiblih after performing ablutions. When said immediately after the obligatory prayer, repetition of ablutions is not required.

Recitation of verses

Every Bahá'í must "recite ye the verses of God every morning and evening." Any of the Bahá'í Sacred Writings by the Central Figures of the Faith (the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh and `Abdu'l-Bahá) may be used. Bahá'u'lláh emphasizes this obligation by placing it in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas to reinforce that the faithful must fulfill this daily pledge.

Meditation

Abdu'l-Bahá says that "while you meditate you are speaking with your own spirit. In that state of mind you put certain questions to your spirit and the spirit answers: the light breaks forth and the reality is revealed."

Daily Accounting

"Bring thyself to account each day ere thou art summoned to a reckoning; for death, unheralded, shall come upon thee & thou shalt be called to give account for thy deeds." - Bahá'u'lláh

Physical health & healing

The following Tablet revealed by Bahá'u'lláh contains guidelines for daily healthy eating habits, exercise & healing.

Lawh-i-Tibb

(Tablet of Medicine) - Trans. Anonymous

A TABLET REVEALED BY BAHÁ'U'LLÁH TO A DOCTOR. UPON HIM BE BAHÁ 'EL ABHÁ!

He is God!

O God the supreme Knower! The ancient Tongue Speaks that which will content the wise in the absence of the Doctors. Say: O people, do not eat except when you are hungry. Do not drink after you have retired to sleep. Exercise is good when the stomach is empty; it strengthens the muscles. When the stomach is full, exercise is very bad. Do not neglect treatment when it is necessary but leave it off when the body is in good condition. Do not take nourishment except when digestion is completed. Do not swallow until you have thoroughly masticated.

Treat disease first of all through the diet and refrain from medicines. If you find what you need in a single herb, do not use compound medicines. Leave off medicine when the health is good and use it in case of necessity. If two opposites are put on the table do not mix them, be content with one of them. Begin first with liquid food before partaking of solid food. The taking of food before what you have is digested, is dangerous--avoid this.

When you begin to eat, begin with My Name El Abhá, and finish with the Name of God, the Possessor of the Throne and the earth. When you have eaten, walk a little that the food may settle. What is difficult to masticate is forbidden by the Wise. --Thus the Supreme Pen Commands you.

A little food in the morning is like a light to the body. Leave all harmful habits, they cause unhappiness in the world. Search for the cause of disease. This saying is the end of this speech.

Be content in all conditions, by this the person is preserved from a bad condition and from lassitude. Shun grief and sorrow, they cause the greatest misery. Say: Jealousy eats the body and anger burns the liver. Refrain from these two as you would avoid a lion.

To cleanse the body is essential, but only in temperate seasons. He who over-eats, his illness becomes more severe. We have arranged for each thing a cause and We have bestowed upon it an effect. All this is from the Effulgence of My Name, which Influences everything. Your God is the Commander of all things. Say: From what We have explained, the humors of the body should not be excessive and their quantity depends upon the condition of the body. One sixth of each sixth part in its normal condition.

In God must be our trust. There is no God but Him, the Healer, the Knower and the Helper. The Supreme Pen has not written such Words but for the Love of thee, that thou mayest know that grief has not seized upon the Blessed Beauty. He is not sorrowful because of what has befallen Him from the nations, but the sadness is for him who is not granted something. Nothing in the earth or Heaven is outside the Grasp of God.

O Doctor! Heal the sick first by the mentioning of the Name of God, the Possessor of the Day of Judgment and after that what God hath destined for the health of the constitution of His creatures.

By My Life! The Doctor who has drunk from the Wine of My Love, his visit is healing and his breath is mercy and hope. Say: Cling to him for the welfare of the constitution. He is confirmed by God in his treatments. Say: This knowledge is the most knowable of all the sciences for it is the greatest means from God to preserve the bodies of the peoples and He has put it in the forefront of all the sciences and wisdoms. For Today is the Day when you must arise for My victory detached from all the world.

Say: O my God, Thy Name is my healing. Thy Remembrance is my remedy. Thy Nearness is my hope. Thy Love is my joyous companion, and Thy Mercy is my healer and my helper in this world and in the next. Thou art the Giver, the Knower, the Wise!

Give Greetings and Love to all the friends on the Path of God. Say: Today two things are loved and sought for. One is Wisdom and Interpretation, and the second is Preservation of the Cause of God, the Merciful. Each soul that has attained these two Commandments, he is accounted before God an inhabitant of the City of Eternity, because by those two things the Cause of God has been and will be made firm. For if Wisdom and Interpretation do not exist all will be afflicted. In this case, there would be no breath left to convert the people to the Law of God and if Preservation is lacking there would not be any breath to mention God or to affect the people.

Say: O friends! Fear and anguish are womanly qualities but if the friends of God meditate on the world and the apparent disharmony in it the power of the oppressors will not frighten them and they will fly with the wings of longing to the Light of Heaven. Whatever this One has Wished for Himself, He has Desired it for all the friends of the True One and that Preservation was and will be Commanded.

The Purpose is that those who speak will remain on the earth so that they may be occupied with the remembrance of the God of the Universe. That is why the preservation of yourselves and your brothers is necessary and obligatory for the Cause of God.

If all the friends were acting in accordance with what they are commanded, the condition of the greater part of those on the earth would be adorned by the Garment of Faith. Blessed is the soul that brings another to the Law of God and has guided him to Eternal Life. This is one of the greatest actions in the Sight of God, the Dear One, the Supreme, the Highest. The Spirit of Bahá be upon you.

O God! The Supreme Knower! The Ancient Tongue speaks that which will satisfy the wise in the absence of doctors.

O People, do not eat except when you are hungry. Do not drink after you have retired to sleep.

Exercise is good when the stomach is empty; it strengthens the muscles. When the stomach is full it is very harmful.

Do not neglect medical treatment, when it is necessary, but leave it off when the body is in good condition.

Do not take nourishment except when digestion is completed. Do not swallow until you have thoroughly masticated your food.

Treat disease first of all through diet, and refrain from medicine. If you can find what you need for healing in a single herb do not use a compound medicine. Leave off medicine when the health is good, and use it in case of necessity.

If two diametrically opposite foods are put on the table do not mix them. Be content with one of them. Take first the liquid food before partaking of solid food. The taking of food before that which you have already eaten is digested is dangerous....

When you have eaten, walk a little that the food may settle.

That which is difficult to masticate is forbidden by the wise. Thus the Supreme Pen commands you.

A light meal in the morning is as a light to the body.

Avoid all harmful habits: they cause unhappiness in the world.

Search for the causes of disease. This saying is the conclusion of this utterance.
(Star of the West, vol. 13, no. 9, December 1922, p. 252)

In God must be our trust. There is no God but Him, the Healer, the Knower, the Helper.... Nothing in earth or heaven is outside the grasp of God.

O doctor! In treating the sick, first mention the name of God, the Possessor of the Day of Judgment, and then use what God hath destined for the healing of His creatures. By My Life! The doctor who has drunk from the Wine of My Love, his visit is healing, and his breath is mercy and hope. Cling to him for the welfare of the constitution. He is confirmed by God in his treatment.

(Star of the West, vol. 21, no. 5, August 1930, p. 160)

The following verses were compiled by the Research Department of the Universal House of Justice at the Baha'i World Centre in the two compilations entitled:

xxxx. - The Importance of Prayer, Meditation and the Devotional Attitude (excerpts)
from The Compilation of Compilations March 1980

xxx. - The Importance of Deepening Our Knowledge and Understanding of the Faith

Extracts from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh

1732. Occupy thyself in remembrance of the Beauty of Him Who is the Unconstrained at early morn, and seek communion with Him at the hour of dawn. O 'Ali! Remembrance of Me is a healing medicine to the souls and a light to the hearts of men. (From a Tablet of Bahá'u'lláh to an individual believer - translated from the Persian)

1. Recite ye the verses of God every morn and eventide. Whoso faileth to recite them hath not been faithful to the Covenant of God and His Testament, and whoso turneth away from these holy verses in this Day is of those who throughout eternity have turned away from God. Fear ye God, O My servants, one and all.

— Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 73

1723. Recite ye the verses of God every morning and evening. Whoso reciteth them not hath truly failed to fulfil his pledge to the Covenant of God and His Testament, and whoso in this day turneth away therefrom hath indeed turned away from God since time immemorial. Fear ye God, O concourse of My servants! Take heed lest excessive reading and too many acts of piety in the daytime and in the night season make you vainglorious. Should a person recite but a single verse from the Holy Writings in a spirit of joy and radiance, this would be better for him than reciting wearily all the Scriptures of God, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting. Recite ye the verses of God in such measure that ye be not overtaken with fatigue or boredom. Burden not your souls so as to cause exhaustion and weigh them down, but rather endeavour to lighten them, that they may soar on the wings of revealed Verses unto the dawning-place of His signs. This is conducive to nearer access unto God, were ye to comprehend. ("Kitáb-i-Aqdas" provisional translation from the Arabic)

12. Intone, O My servant, the verses of God that have been received by thee, as intoned by them who have drawn nigh unto Him, that the sweetness of thy melody may kindle thine own soul, and attract the hearts of all men. Whoso reciteth, in the privacy of his chamber, the verses revealed by God, the scattering angels of the Almighty shall scatter abroad the fragrance of the words uttered by his mouth, and shall cause the heart of every righteous man to throb. Though he may, at first, remain unaware of its effect, yet the virtue of the grace vouchsafed unto him must needs sooner or later exercise its influence upon his soul. Thus have the mysteries of the Revelation of God been decreed by virtue of the Will of Him Who is the Source of power and wisdom.

— Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 295

31. O SON OF BEING!

Bring thyself to account each day ere thou art summoned to a reckoning; for death, unheralded, shall come upon thee and thou shalt be called to give account for thy deeds.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Arabic Hidden Words*)

1724. The wine of renunciation must needs be quaffed, the lofty heights of detachment must needs be attained, and the meditation referred to in the words "One hour's reflection is preferable to seventy years of pious worship" must needs be observed, so that the secret of the wretched behaviour of the people might be discovered, those people who, despite the love and yearning for truth which they profess, curse the followers of Truth when once He hath been made manifest.... ("Kitáb-i-Iqán" [rev. ed.], (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1985), p. 238)

1726. O brother, we should open our eyes, meditate upon His Word, and seek the sheltering shadow of the Manifestations of God, that perchance we may be warned by the unmistakable counsels of the Book, and give heed to the admonitions recorded in the holy Tablets; that we may not cavil at the Revealer of the verses, that we may resign ourselves wholly to His Cause, and embrace wholeheartedly His law, that haply we may enter the court of His mercy, and dwell upon the shore of His grace. He, verily, is merciful, and forgiving towards His servants. ("Kitáb-i-Iqán" p. 217)

25. The sanctified souls should ponder and meditate in their hearts regarding the methods of teaching. From the texts of the wondrous, heavenly Scriptures they should memorize phrases and passages bearing on various instances, so that in the course of their speech they may recite divine verses whenever the occasion demandeth it, inasmuch as these holy verses are the most potent elixir, the greatest and mightiest talisman. So potent is their influence that the hearer will have no cause for vacillation. I swear by My life! This Revelation is endowed with such a power that it will act as the lodestone for all nations and kindreds of the earth. Should one pause to meditate attentively he would recognize that no place is there, nor can there be, for anyone to flee to.

— Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 200

Extracts from the Writings of the Báb

1733. It is seemly that the servant should, after each prayer, supplicate God to bestow mercy and forgiveness upon his parents. Thereupon God's call will be raised: 'Thousand upon thousand of what thou hast asked for thy parents shall be thy recompense!' Blessed is he who remembereth his parents when communing with God. There is, verily, no God but Him, the Mighty, the Well-Beloved. ("Selections from the Writings of the Báb" [rev. ed.], (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 1982), p. 94)

1734. The reason why privacy hath been enjoined in moments of devotion is this, that thou mayest give thy best attention to the remembrance of God, that thy heart may at all times be animated with His Spirit, and not be shut out as by a veil from thy Best Beloved. Let not thy tongue pay lip service in praise of God while thy heart be not attuned to the exalted Summit of Glory, and the Focal Point of communion. Thus if haply thou dost live in the Day of Resurrection, the mirror of thy heart will be set towards Him Who is the Day-Star of Truth; and no sooner will His light shine forth than the splendour thereof shall forthwith be reflected in thy heart. For He is the Source of all goodness, and unto Him revert all things. But if He appeareth while thou hast turned unto thyself in meditation, this shall not profit thee, unless thou shalt mention His Name by words He hath revealed. For in the forthcoming Revelation it is He Who is the Remembrance of God, whereas the devotions which thou art offering at present have been prescribed by the Point of the Bayan, while He Who will shine resplendent in the Day of Resurrection is the Revelation of the inner reality enshrined in the Point of the Bayan--a Revelation more potent, immeasurably more potent, than the one which hath preceded it. ("Selections from the Writings of the Báb, pp. 93-94)

Extracts from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Bahá

1737. Praise be to God, thy heart is engaged in the commemoration of God, thy soul is gladdened by the glad tidings of God and thou art absorbed in prayer. The state of prayer is the best of conditions, for man is then associating with God. Prayer verily bestoweth life, particularly when offered in private and at times, such as midnight, when freed from daily cares. ("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá" sec. 172, p. 202)

1752. Bahá'u'lláh says there is a sign (from God) in every phenomenon: the sign of the intellect is contemplation and the sign of contemplation is silence, because it is impossible for a man to do two things at one time --he cannot both speak and meditate. It is an axiomatic fact that while you meditate you are speaking with your own spirit. In that state of mind you put certain questions to your spirit and the spirit answers: the light breaks forth and the reality is revealed. You cannot apply the name 'man' to any being void of this faculty of meditation; without it he would be a mere animal, lower than the beasts. Through the faculty of meditation man attains to eternal life; through it he receives the breath of the Holy Spirit--the bestowal of the Spirit is given in reflection and meditation. The spirit of man is itself informed and strengthened during meditation; through it affairs of which man knew nothing are unfolded before his view. Through it he receives Divine inspiration, through it he receives heavenly food. Meditation is the key for opening the doors of mysteries. In that state man abstracts himself: in that state man withdraws himself from all outside objects; in that subjective mood he is immersed in the ocean of spiritual life and can unfold the secrets of things-in-themselves. To illustrate this, think of man as endowed with two kinds of sight; when the power of insight is being used the outward power of vision does not see. This faculty of meditation frees man from the animal nature, discerns the reality of things, puts man in touch with God. This faculty brings forth from the invisible plane the sciences and arts. Through the meditative faculty inventions are made possible, colossal undertakings are carried out; through it governments can run smoothly. Through this faculty man enters into the very Kingdom of God. Nevertheless some thoughts are useless to man; they are like waves moving in the sea without result. But if the faculty of meditation is bathed in the inner light and characterized with divine attributes, the results will be confirmed. The meditative faculty is akin to the mirror; if you put it before earthly objects it will reflect them. Therefore if the spirit of man is contemplating earthly subjects he will be informed of these. But if you turn the mirror of your spirits heavenwards, the heavenly constellations and the rays of the Sun of Reality will be reflected in your hearts, and the virtues of the Kingdom will be obtained. Therefore let us keep this faculty rightly directed--turning it to the heavenly Sun and not to earthly objects--so that we may discover the secrets of the Kingdom, and comprehend the allegories of the Bible and the mysteries of the spirit. May we indeed become mirrors reflecting the heavenly realities, and may we become so pure as to reflect the stars of heaven. ("Paris Talks: Addresses given by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Paris in 1911-1912", pp. 174-76)

42. Read ye The Hidden Words, ponder the inner meanings thereof, act in accord therewith. Read, with close attention, the Tablets of Tarazát (Ornaments), Kalímát (Words of Paradise), Tajallíyyát (Effulgences), Ishráqát (Splendours), and Bishárát (Glad Tidings), and rise up as ye are bidden in the heavenly teachings. Thus may each one of you be even as a candle casting its light, the centre of attraction wherever people come together; and from you, as from a bed of flowers, may sweet scents be shed.

— `Abdu'l-Bahá, Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Bahá, pp. 35-36

44. We hear that the Tablets of Bishárát (Splendours), Tarazát (Ornaments), Bishárát (Glad Tidings), Tajallíyyát (Effulgences), and Kalímát (Words of Paradise) have been translated and published in those regions. In these Tablets will ye have a model of how to be and how to live.

— `Abdu'l-Bahá, Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Bahá, p. 79

Extracts from Letters written by Shoghi Effendi

73. The Bahá'í youth must be taught how to teach the Cause of God. Their knowledge of the fundamentals of the Faith must be deepened and the standard of their education in science and literature enhanced. They must become thoroughly familiar with the language used and the example set by `Abdu'l-Bahá in His public addresses throughout the West. They must also be acquainted with those essential prerequisites of teaching as recorded in the Holy Books and Tablets.

(Shoghi Effendi, from a letter dated 9 June 1925 to the Spiritual Assembly of the East)

84. As the processed impelling a rapidly evolving Order on the highroad of its destiny multiply and gather momentum, attention should be increasingly directed to the vital need of ensuring, by every means possible, the deepening of the faith, the understanding and the spiritual life of the individuals who, as the privileged members of this community, are called upon to participate in this glorious unfoldment and are lending their assistance to this historic evolution. A profound study of the Faith which they have espoused, its history, its spiritual as well as administrative principles; a thorough understanding of the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh and of the Will of `Abdu'l-Bahá; a deeper realization of the implication of the claims advanced by the Founders of the Faith; strict adherence to the laws and principles which They have established; a greater dedication to the fundamentals and verities enshrined in Their teachings-these constitute, I feel convinced, the urgent need of the members of this rapidly expanding community. For upon this spiritual foundation must depend the solidity of the institutions which they are now so painstakingly erecting. Every outward thrust into new fields, every multiplication of Bahá'í institutions, must be paralleled by a deeper thrust of the roots which sustain the spiritual life of the community and ensure its sound development. From this vital, this ever-present need attention must, at no time, be diverted; nor must it be, under any circumstances, neglected, or subordinated to the less vital and urgent task of ensuring the outer expansion of Bahá'í administrative institutions.

(Shoghi Effendi, from a letter dated 30 December 1948 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Australia and New Zealand)

89. Above all, the utmost endeavour should be exerted by your Assembly to familiarize the newly enrolled believers with the fundamental and spiritual verities of the Faith, and with the origins, the aims and purposes, as well as the processes of a divinely appointed Administrative Order, to acquaint them more fully with the history of the Faith, to instill in them a deeper understanding of the Covenants of both Bahá'u'lláh and of `Abdu'l-Bahá, to enrich their spiritual life, to rouse them to a greater effort and a closer participation in both the teaching of the Faith and the administration of its activities, and to inspire them to make the necessary sacrifices for the furtherance of its vital interests. For as the body of avowed supporters of the Faith is enlarged, and the basis of the structure of its Administrative Order is broadened, and the fame of the rising community spreads far and wide, a parallel progress must be achieved, if the fruits already garnered are to endure, in the spiritual quickening of its members and the deepening of their inner life.

(Shoghi Effendi, from a letter dated 26 June 1956 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Canada)