



SPIRITUAL GROWTH **DEVOTIONAL PROGRAM**

1. Welcome & Introductory Prayer

*From the sweet-scented streams of Thine eternity give me to drink, O my God, and of the fruits of the tree of Thy being enable me to taste, O my Hope! From the crystal springs of Thy love suffer me to quaff, O my Glory, and beneath the shadow of Thine everlasting providence let me abide, O my Light! Within the meadows of Thy nearness, before Thy presence, make me able to roam, O my Beloved, and at the right hand of the throne of Thy mercy, seat me, O my Desire! From the fragrant breezes of Thy joy let a breath pass over me, O my Goal, and into the heights of the paradise of Thy reality let me gain admission, O my Adored One! To the melodies of the dove of Thy oneness suffer me to hearken, O Resplendent One, and through the spirit of Thy power and Thy might quicken me, O my Provider! In the spirit of Thy love keep me steadfast, O my Succorer, and in the path of Thy good pleasure set firm my steps, O my Maker! Within the garden of Thine immortality, before Thy countenance, let me abide for ever, O Thou Who art merciful unto me, and upon the seat of Thy glory stablish me, O Thou Who art my Possessor! To the heaven of Thy loving-kindness lift me up, O my Quickener, and unto the Daystar of Thy guidance lead me, O Thou my Attractor!

Before the revelations of Thine invisible spirit summon me to be present, O Thou Who art my Origin and my Highest Wish, and unto the essence of the fragrance of Thy beauty, which Thou wilt manifest, cause me to return, O Thou Who art my God!

Potent art Thou to do what pleaseth Thee. Thou art, verily, the Most Exalted, the All-Glorious, the All-Highest.

(Bahá'u'lláh, Compilations, Baha'i Prayers, p. 140-141)

2. Reading: Spiritual Growth

*When love is realized and the ideal spiritual bonds unite the hearts of men, the whole human race will be uplifted, the world will continually grow more spiritual and radiant and the happiness and tranquillity of mankind be immeasurably increased. Warfare and strife will be uprooted, disagreement and dissension pass away and Universal Peace unite the nations and peoples of the world. All mankind will dwell together as one family, blend as the waves of one sea, shine as stars of one firmament and appear as fruits of the same tree. This is the happiness and felicity of humankind. This is the illumination of man, the glory eternal and life everlasting; this is the divine bestowal. I desire this station for you and I pray God that the people of America may achieve this great end in order that the virtue of this democracy may be insured and their names be glorified eternally. May the confirmations of God uphold them in all things and their memories become revered throughout the east and the west. May they become the servants of the Most High God, near and dear to Him in the oneness of the heavenly Kingdom.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Bahá’i World Faith – ‘Abdu’l-Bahá Section, p. 229)

3. Prayers and Readings

Open session – friends may choose any prayer or reading that they would like to recite. This may include the selected writings from the Bahá'í Faith included below.

*Create in me a pure heart, O my God, and renew a tranquil conscience within me, O my Hope! Through the spirit of power confirm Thou me in Thy Cause, O my Best-Beloved, and by the light of Thy glory reveal unto me Thy path, O Thou the Goal of my desire! Through the power of Thy transcendent might lift me up unto the heaven of Thy holiness, O Source of my being, and by the breezes of Thine eternity gladden me, O Thou Who art my God! Let Thine everlasting melodies breathe tranquility on me, O my Companion, and let the riches of Thine ancient countenance deliver me from all except Thee, O my Master, and let the tidings of the revelation of Thine incorruptible Essence bring me joy, O Thou Who art the most manifest of the manifest and the most hidden of the hidden!

(Bahá'u'lláh, Compilations, Bahá'í Prayers, p. 141-142)

*O my Lord! O my Lord! This a a lamp lighted by the fire of Thy love and ablaze with the flame which is ignited in the tree of Thy mercy. O my Lord! Increase his enkindlement, heat and flame, with the fire which is kindled in the Sinai of Thy Manifestation. Verily, Thou art the Confirmer, the Assister, the Powerful, the Generous, the Loving.

(Abdu'l-Bahá, Compilations, Bahá'í Prayers, p. 152)

*O God! Refresh and gladden my spirit. Purify my heart. Illumine my powers. I lay all my affairs in Thy hand. Thou art my Guide and my Refuge. I will no longer be sorrowful and grieved; I will be a happy and joyful being. O God! I will no longer be full of anxiety, nor will I let trouble harass me. I

will not dwell on the unpleasant things of life.

O God! Thou art more friend to me than I am to myself. I dedicate myself to Thee, O Lord.

(Abdu'l-Bahá, Compilations, Bahá'í Prayers, p. 150)

*O God, my God! These are Thy feeble servants; they are Thy loyal bondsmen and Thy handmaidens, who have bowed themselves down before Thine exalted Utterance and humbled themselves at Thy Threshold of light, and borne witness to Thy oneness through which the Sun hath been made to shine in midday splendor. They have listened to the summons Thou didst raise from out Thy hidden Realm, and with hearts quivering with love and rapture, they have responded to Thy call.

O Lord, shower upon them all the outpourings of Thy mercy, rain down upon them all the waters of Thy grace. Make them to grow as beautiful plants in the garden of heaven, and from the full and brimming clouds of Thy bestowals and out of the deep pools of Thine abounding grace make Thou this garden to flower, and keep it ever green and lustrous, ever fresh and shimmering and fair.

Thou art, verily, the Mighty, the Exalted, the Powerful, He Who alone, in the heavens and on the earth, abideth unchanged. There is none other God save Thee, the Lord of manifest tokens and signs.

(Abdu'l-Bahá, Compilations, Bahá'í Prayers, p. 154-155)

*Lauded be Thy Name, O Lord my God! I am Thy servant who hath laid hold on the cord of Thy tender mercies, and clung to the hem of thy bounteousness. I entreat Thee by Thy name whereby Thou hast subjected all created things, both visible and invisible, and through which the breath that is life

indeed was wafted over the entire creation, to strengthen me by Thy power which hath encompassed the heavens and the earth, and to guard me from all sickness and tribulation. I bear witness that Thou art the Lord of all names, and the Ordainer of all that my please Thee. There is none other God but Thee, the Almighty, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.

Do Thou ordain for me, O my Lord, what will profit me in every world of Thy worlds. Supply me, then, with what Thou hast written down for the chosen ones among Thy creatures, whom neither the blame of the blamer, nor the clamor of the infidel, nor the estrangement of such as have withdrawn from Thee, hath deterred from turning towards Thee.

Thou, truly, art the Help in Peril through the power of Thy sovereignty. No God is there save Thee, the Almighty, the Most Powerful.

(Bahá'u'lláh, Compilations, Bahá'í Prayers, p. 143-145)

*He is the prayer-hearing, prayer-answering God!

By Thy glory, O Beloved One, Thou giver of light to the world! The flames of separation have consumed me, and my waywardness hath melted my heart within me. I ask of Thee, by Thy Most Great Name, O Thou the Desire of the world and the Well-Beloved of mankind, to grant that the breeze of Thine inspiration may sustain my soul, that Thy wondrous voice may reach my ear, that my eyes may behold Thy signs and Thy light as revealed in the manifestations of Thy names and Thine attributes, O Thou within Whose grasp are all things!

Thou seest, O Lord my God, the tears of Thy favored ones, shed because of their separation from Thee, and the fears of Thy

devoted ones in their remoteness from Thy Holy Court. By Thy power, that swayeth all things, visible and invisible! It behooveth Thy loved ones to shed tears of blood for that which hath befallen the faithful at the hands of the wicked and the oppressors on the earth. Thou beholdest, O my God, how the ungodly have compassed Thy cities and Thy realms! I ask Thee by Thy Messengers and Thy chosen ones and by Him whereby the standard of Thy divine unity hath been implanted amidst Thy servants, to shield them by Thy bounty. Thou art, verily, the Gracious, the All-Bountiful.

And, again, I ask Thee by the sweet showers of Thy grace and the billows of the ocean of Thy favor, to ordain for Thy saints that which shall solace their eyes and comfort their hearts. Lord! Thou seest him that kneeleth yearning to arise and serve Thee, the dead calling for eternal life from the ocean of Thy favor and craving to soar to the heavens of Thy wealth, the stranger longing for his home of glory 'neath the canopy of Thy grace, the seeker hastening by Thy mercy to Thy door of bounty, the sinful turning to the ocean of forgiveness and pardon.

By Thy sovereignty, O Thou Who art glorified in the hearts of men! I have turned to Thee, forsaking mine own will and desire, that Thy holy will and pleasure may rule within me and direct me according to that which the pen of Thy eternal decree hath destined for me. This servant, O Lord, though helpless turneth to the Orb of Thy Power, though abased hasteneth unto the Dayspring of Glory, though needy craveth the Ocean of Thy Grace. I beseech Thee by Thy favor and bounty, cast him not away. Thou art verily the Almighty, the Pardoners, the Compassionate.

(Bahá'u'lláh, Compilations, Bahá'í Prayers, p. 145-148)

*O my God! O my God! This, Thy servant, hath advanced towards Thee, is passionately wandering in the desert of Thy love, walking in the path of Thy service, anticipating Thy favors, hoping for Thy bounty, relying upon Thy kingdom, and intoxicated by the wine of Thy gift. O my God! Increase the fervor of his affection for Thee, the constancy of his praise of Thee, and the ardor of his love for Thee.

Verily, Thou art the Most Generous, the Lord of grace abounding. There is no other God but Thee, the Forgiving, the Merciful. (*'Abdu'l-Bahá Compilations, Bahá'í Prayers, p. 152-153*)

4. Closing Prayer

*O Thou Provider! Thou hast breathed over the friends in the West the sweet fragrance of the Holy Spirit, and with the light of divine guidance Thou hast lit up the western sky. Thou hast made those who were once remote to draw near unto Thyself; Thou hast turned strangers into loving friends; Thou hast awakened those who slept; Thou hast made the heedless mindful.

O Thou Provider! Assist Thou these noble friends to win Thy good pleasure, and make them well wishers of stranger and friend alike. Bring them into the world that abideth forever; grant them a portion of heavenly grace; cause them to be true Bahá'ís, sincerely of God; save them from outward semblances, and establish them firmly in the truth. Make them signs and tokens of the Kingdom, luminous stars above the horizons of this nether life. Make them to be a comfort and a solace to humankind and servants to the peace of the world. Exhilarate them with the wine of Thy counsel, and grant that all of them may tread the path of Thy commandments.

O Thou Provider! The dearest wish of this servant of Thy Threshold is to behold the

friends of East and West in close embrace; to see all the members of human society gathered with love in a single great assemblage, even as individual drops of water collected in one mighty sea; to behold them all as birds in one garden of roses, as peals of one ocean, as leaves of one tree, as rays of one sun.

Thou art the Mighty, the Powerful, and Thou art the God of strength, the Omnipotent, the All-Seeing. (*'Abdu'l-Bahá Compilations, Bahá'í Prayers, p. 155-159*)

5. Social Portion

Refreshments and conversation.