Compilation for the 2018 Counsellors' Conference

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We cherish the hope that through the loving-kindness of the All-Wise, the All-Knowing, obscuring dust may be dispelled and the power of perception enhanced, that the people may discover the purpose for which they have been called into being. In this Day whatsoever serveth to reduce blindness and to increase vision is worthy of consideration. This vision acteth as the agent and guide for true knowledge. Indeed in the estimation of men of wisdom keenness of understanding is due to keenness of vision.

(*Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh Revealed After the Kitáb-i-Aqdas* (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1988, 2005 printing), p. 35) **[1]**

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Whatsoever driveth thee away from the one true God and shutteth thee out from the Best-Beloved is blameworthy and reprehensible, whilst everything that draweth thee nigh unto Him is acceptable and praiseworthy. One must consider matters with the eye of discernment, shun whatsoever may be the cause of remoteness from God, and awaken to all that is the source of nearness and illumination.

(From a Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahá—translated from the Persian) **[2]**

Each soul must consider where the good-pleasure of God resideth and what conduct, manners, and words will draw him nigh unto his Lord. He should then strive with heart and soul, and endeavour to act accordingly.

(From a Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahá—translated from the Persian) **[3]**

When the light of faith is kindled in the lamp of the heart and soul, its spreading rays illumine every limb of the body. When this resplendent light shineth forth through the medium of the tongue, it is made manifest in the powers of speech and utterance. When its beams fall upon the eyes, insight and true vision are revealed, and when it stirreth the ear, it bestoweth attentive hearing. When this light sheddeth its radiance upon the mind, it leadeth to the recognition of the All-Merciful, and when it setteth aglow the limbs, it findeth expression in purity and the worship of God. Otherwise, all physical powers, all limbs and members would remain useless and futile and their actions would fade like a mirage in the desert.

(From a Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahá—translated from the Persian) **[4]**

First and foremost, one should use every possible means to purge one's heart and motives, otherwise, engaging in any form of enterprise would be futile. It is also essential to abstain from hypocrisy and blind imitation, inasmuch as their foul odour is soon detected by every man of understanding and wisdom. Moreover, the friends must observe the specific times for the remembrance of God, meditation, devotion and prayer, as it is highly unlikely, nay impossible, for any enterprise to prosper and develop when deprived of divine bestowals and confirmation. One can hardly imagine what a great influence genuine love, truthfulness and purity of motives exert on the souls of men. But these traits cannot be acquired by any believer unless he makes a daily effort to gain them…

(From a letter dated 19 December 1923 to the Bahá'ís of the East—translated from the Persian, in *Living the Life: Excerpts from the Writings of Shoghi Effendi*, Third Edition (New Delhi: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1997), p. 2) **[5]**

The need is very great, everywhere in the world, in and outside the Faith, for a true spiritual awareness to pervade and motivate people's lives. No amount of administrative procedure or adherence to rules can take the place of this soul-characteristic, this spirituality which is the essence of Man.

(From a letter dated 25 April 1945 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, in *Living the Life*, pp. 26–27) **[6]**

...we must reach a spiritual plane where God comes first and great human passions are unable to turn us away from Him. All the time we see people who either through the force of hate or the passionate attachment they have to another person, sacrifice principle or bar themselves from the Path of God....

We must love God, and in this state, a general love for all men becomes possible. We cannot love each human being for himself, but our feeling towards humanity should be motivated by our love for the Father Who created all men.

(From a letter dated 4 October 1950 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, in *Living the Life*, pp. 41–42) **[7]**

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Servitude to God lieth in servitude to the friends. One must be the essence of humility and the embodiment of meekness. One must become evanescence itself and be healed of every disease of the self, in order to become worthy of thraldom to the Threshold of the Almighty.

(From a Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahá—translated from the Persian) **[8]**

Rest not, even for an instant, and seek not comfort, even for a moment; rather labour with heart and soul that thou mayest render devoted service to but one amongst the friends and bring happiness and joy to but one luminous heart. This is true bounty, and by it the brow of 'Abdu'l-Bahá is illumined. Be thou my partner and associate therein.

(From a Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahá—translated from the Persian) **[9]**

To live to teach in the present day is like being martyred in those early days. It is the spirit that moves us that counts, not the act through which that spirit expresses itself; and that spirit is to serve the Cause of God with our heart and soul.

(From a letter dated 3 August 1932 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, in *Living the Life*, p. 9) **[10]**

The advice that Shoghi Effendi gave you regarding the division of your time between serving the Cause and attending to your other duties was also given to many other friends both by Bahá'u'lláh and the Master. It is a compromise between the two verses of the "Aqdas", one making it incumbent upon every Bahá'í to serve the promotion of the Faith and the other that every soul should be occupied in some form of occupation that will benefit society. In one of His Tablets Bahá'u'lláh says that the highest form of detachment in this day is to be occupied with some profession and be self-supporting. A good Bahá'í, therefore, is the one who so arranges his life as to devote time both to his material needs and also to the service of the Cause.

(From a letter dated 26 February 1933 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, in *Living the Life*, p. 10) **[11]**

There is nothing that brings success in the Faith like service. Service is the magnet which draws the divine confirmations. Thus, when a person is active, they are blessed by the Holy Spirit. When

they are inactive, the Holy Spirit cannot find a repository in their being, and thus they are deprived of its healing and quickening rays.

(From a letter dated 12 July 1952 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, in *Living the Life*, p. 44) **[12]**

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In this day, to serve the Cause of God is to engender love and fellowship amongst His friends. Let us associate with one another with the utmost selflessness and evanescence, with radiance of spirit, with meekness, humility, and faithfulness. Let us strive to spread the divine fragrances, for the receptiveness of the people in these days is exceedingly great. Should there be a lapse, it would be due to our failings, the cause of which is a lack of unity and concord.

(From a Tablet of ʻAbdu'l-Bahá—translated from the Persian) **[13]**

In this day, any deed, however infinitesimal, when not performed for the sake of God, is manifest loss; and any word, when not uttered for the sake of God, can cause a conflagration.

(From a Tablet of ʻAbdu'l-Bahá—translated from the Persian) **[14]**

The purpose of the appearance of the holy Manifestations hath ever been the establishment of fellowship and love in the world of humanity. The friends should therefore lay down their lives in this arena that they may exhilarate the people of the world with the wine of love for one another and may gladden the hearts of the whole human race. The more they strive for harmony, the greater their progress; the more they exert effort to achieve unity, the more they will witness the tokens of divine assistance.... Root out the sources of dissension and raise up the foundations of harmony. Cling tenaciously to the hem of the love of God and cleanse your hearts of any trace of estrangement or conflict. Thus may the light of divine bestowal shine resplendent, and ye become the recipients of the effulgent glory of the Sun of Truth. Let each one of you become the servant of the other; let each sacrifice himself for the sake of the other.

(From a Tablet of ʻAbdu'l-Bahá—translated from the Persian) **[15]**

If we Bahá'ís cannot attain to cordial unity among ourselves, then we fail to realize the main purpose for which the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh and the Beloved Master lived and suffered.

In order to achieve this cordial unity one of the first essentials insisted on by Bahá'u'lláh and ʻAbdu'l-Bahá is that we resist the natural tendency to let our attention dwell on the faults and failings of others rather than on our own. Each of us is responsible for one life only, and that is our own. Each of us is immeasurably far from being "perfect as our heavenly father is perfect" and the task of perfecting our own life and character is one that requires all our attention, our will-power and energy. If we allow our attention and energy to be taken up in efforts to keep others right and remedy their faults, we are wasting precious time. We are like ploughmen each of whom has his team to manage and his plough to direct, and in order to keep his furrow straight he must keep his eye on his goal and concentrate on his own task. If he looks to this side and that to see how Tom and Harry are getting on and to criticize their ploughing, then his own furrow will assuredly become crooked.

On no subject are the Bahá'í teachings more emphatic than on the necessity to abstain from faultfinding and backbiting while being ever eager to discover and root out our own faults and overcome our own failings.

If we profess loyalty to Bahá'u'lláh, to our Beloved Master and our dear Guardian, then we must show our love by obedience to these explicit teachings. Deeds not words are what they demand, and no amount of fervour in the use of expressions of loyalty and adulation will compensate for failure to live in the spirit of the teachings.

(From a letter dated 12 May 1925 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, in *Living the Life*, pp. 5–7) **[16]**

Indeed the believers have not yet fully learned to draw on each other's love for strength and consolation in time of need. The Cause of God is endowed with tremendous powers, and the reason the believers do not gain more from it is because they have not learned to fully draw on these mighty forces of love and strength and harmony generated by the Faith.

(From a letter dated 8 May 1942 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, in *Living the Life*, p. 19) **[17]**

These, indeed, are the days when heroism is needed on the part of the believers. Self-sacrifice, courage, indomitable hope and confidence are the characteristics they should show forth, because these very attributes cannot but fix the attention of the public and lead them to enquire what, in a world so hopelessly chaotic and bewildered, leads these people to be so assured, so confident, so full of devotion? Increasingly, as time goes by, the characteristics of the Bahá'ís will be that which captures the attention of their fellow-citizens. They must show their aloofness from the hatreds and recriminations which are tearing at the heart of humanity, and demonstrate by deed and word their profound belief in the future peaceful unification of the entire human race.

(From a letter dated 26 October 1941 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, in *Living the Life*, p. 17) **[18]**

Regarding the matter of ... and the inharmony that seems to exist among certain of the friends ... when Bahá'ís permit the dark forces of the world to enter into their own relationships within the Faith they gravely jeopardize its progress;... All should be ready and willing to set aside every personal sense of grievance—justified or unjustified—for the good of the Cause, because the people will never embrace it until they see in its community life mirrored what is so conspicuously lacking in the world: love and unity.

(From a letter dated 13 May 1945 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of Australia and New Zealand, in *Living the Life*, p. 27) **[19]**

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O ye that are enamoured of the divine Beauty! O ye that are enraptured by the true Beloved! In this day when the fierce gales of tests and trials have encompassed the world, and fear and trembling have agitated the planet, ye must appear above the horizon of unwavering constancy with shining faces and radiant brows in such wise that the gloom of terror and confusion may be entirely obliterated and the light of certitude may shine resplendent in the luminous skies.

(From a Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahá—translated from the Persian) **[20]**

O ye friends of 'Abdu'l-Bahá! The tumult of the nations and the clamour of their peoples are certain and inevitable in the Day of the Manifestation of the Most Great Name. The wisdom of this irrevocable decree is clear and evident. For when the winds of tests blow, the frail trees are uprooted while the blessed trees are made firm and immovable. Torrents of rain distress and scatter the creeping things that walk upon the earth while the gardens are filled with anemones and bring forth roses and sweet herbs, and the nightingales warble their melodies, chanting a myriad songs at every moment. This is a bounty unto the righteous and a calamity unto those who are weak. Render thanks unto God that your feet are firm and your faces, like pure gold, are aglow in the fire of tests. I beseech the one true God that day by day ye may increase in firmness and steadfastness.

(From a Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahá—translated from the Persian) **[21]**

I supplicate God that day by day thou mayest become more steadfast, so that like unto an impregnable stronghold thou mayest withstand the surging of the ocean of tests and trials. The people of the world are like unto trees. Those that are rootless are toppled by the slightest breeze, while those that grow deep roots and become strong and firm are not shaken by violent winds, and in time bring forth leaves and blossoms and fruit.

(From a Tablet of ʻAbdu'l-Bahá—translated from the Persian) **[22]**

The consummate wisdom of God, however, is manifold and not every soul is apprised of its mysteries. Indeed, His all-encompassing mercy and His all-embracing wisdom entail certain exigencies that transcend the ken of human mind. Sorrow not, then, if trials, tribulations and adversities wax ever more severe, for the grace and bestowals of God are likewise unceasing. How often doth man flee from one thing, fixing all his hopes upon another, yet in the end it becometh apparent that the object of desire is harmful and deleterious, whereas the thing despised is the source of advantage and benefit!

Tread, therefore, the path of acquiescence and resignation. Let no hardship sadden thy heart, nor set thy hope upon any worldly gifts. Be happy and content with whatsoever God hath willed, that thy heart and soul may find tranquillity and thine inner being and conscience may experience true joy. Erelong shall this hardship and tribulation pass away and inner peace and joy be attained.

(From a Tablet of ʻAbdu'l-Bahá—translated from the Persian) **[23]**

O thou whose eyes are fixed upon the Abhá Kingdom! In this grievous day, when dire adversities have shaken the pillars of the earth, and the tests and trials sent by God have rocked the foundations of the world, remain thou firm and staunch in His Cause through the power of the Kingdom and the confirmations from on high. Be thou as steadfast as an immovable mountain, an impregnable stronghold, a solid bulwark, and an impenetrable barrier. Be not perturbed by the winds of tribulations or dismayed by grievous calamities. The splendours of divine assistance are shed abroad from the Kingdom of God, and the hosts of heavenly confirmation are continually descending from the throne of the Most High. Rest thou assured and be thou confident.

(From a Tablet of ʻAbdu'l-Bahá—translated from the Persian) **[24]**

We should not, however, forget that an essential characteristic of this world is hardship and tribulation and that it is by overcoming them that we achieve our moral and spiritual development. As the Master says, sorrow is like furrows, the deeper they go the more plentiful are the fruits we obtain.

(From a letter dated 5 November 1931 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, in *Living the Life*, p. 7) **[25]**

You have complained of the unsatisfactory conditions prevailing in the ... Bahá'í Community; the Guardian is well aware of the situation of the Cause there, but is confident that whatever the nature of the obstacles that confront the Faith they will be eventually overcome. You should, under no circumstances, feel discouraged, and allow such difficulties, even though they may have resulted from the misconduct, or the lack of capacity and vision of certain members of the Community, to make you waver in your faith and basic loyalty to the Cause. Surely, the believers, no matter how qualified they may be, whether as teachers or administrators, and however high their intellectual and spiritual merits, should never be looked upon as a standard whereby to evaluate and measure the divine authority and mission of the Faith. It is to the Teachings themselves, and to the lives of the Founders of the Cause that the believers should look for their guidance and inspiration, and only by keeping strictly to such [a] true attitude can they hope to establish their loyalty to Bahá'u'lláh upon an enduring and unassailable basis. You should take

heart, therefore, and with unrelaxing vigilance and unremitting effort endeavour to play your full share in the gradual unfoldment of this Divine World Order.

(From a letter dated 23 August 1939 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, in *Living the Life*, pp. 15–16) **[26]**

Perhaps the greatest test Bahá'ís are ever subjected to is from each other; but for the sake of the Master they should be ever ready to overlook each other's mistakes, apologize for harsh words they have uttered, forgive and forget. He strongly recommends to you this course of action.

(From a letter dated 18 December 1945 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, in *Living the Life*, pp. 28–29) **[27]**

Human frailties and peculiarities can be a great test. But the only way, or perhaps I should say the first and best way, to remedy such situations, is to oneself do what is right. One soul can be the cause of the spiritual illumination of a continent.

(From a letter dated 30 September 1949 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, in *Living the Life*, p. 39) **[28]**

Often these trials and tests which all Bahá'í communities inevitably pass through seem terrible, at the moment, but in retrospect we understand that they were due to the frailty of human nature, to misunderstandings, and to the growing pains which every Bahá'í community must experience.

(From a letter dated 25 November 1956 written on his behalf to an individual believer, in *Living the Life*, p. 49) **[29]**

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If thou desirest eternal life, inhale the heavenly fragrance; and if thou seekest life everlasting, abide beneath the shelter of the Word of God.

(From a Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahá—translated from the Persian) **[30]**

In this day, true power and strength reside in the Supreme Elixir, which transformeth darkened realities into illumined souls and changeth the quintessence of ignorance into a sign of the All-Merciful. The Supreme Elixir is none other than the Word of God, which hath shed divine illumination upon the contingent world and wafted the fragrances of holiness throughout the earth.

(From a Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahá—translated from the Persian) **[31]**

The Word of God may be likened to the life-giving breezes of the divine springtime. When chanted in spiritual tones, it bestoweth the breath of life and granteth true salvation. It bringeth forth a garden of roses from the pure soil, and wafteth its musk-laden fragrance throughout the world.

(From a Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahá—translated from the Persian) **[32]**

If you read the utterances of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá with selflessness and care and concentrate upon them, you will discover truths unknown to you before and will obtain an insight into the problems that have baffled the great thinkers of the world.

(In the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi, appended to a letter dated 30 January 1925 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, in *Living the Life*, p. 4) **[33]**

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