

and "grant that I may die to all that I possess." Another word that is a key to detachment is "sanctify" which means to make ourselves, our desires holy, which we cannot do unless we detach ourselves from that which is not holy.

Bahá'u'lláh refers to Christ as the "Essence of Detachment" in Gleanings and the Kitab-I-Iqan. He also refers to all the Manifestations of God as "Tabernacles of Holiness", showing us that there is a definite process by which we are to detach ourselves from the world in order to achieve holiness..

The Twelve Step programs have a familiar phrase that we can draw on to explain detachment: "Let go and let God." And here's a story that children enjoy about a monkey who wanted a piece of fruit that was inside a hole in a tree. His hand could just barely fit inside the hole and once grasping the fruit, he could no longer withdraw his hand. Yet he wanted the fruit so badly that even though he was in great danger he clung tightly to it. Instead of escaping from an animal that was in pursuit of him, he was captured and eaten. All he would have had to do was let go of the fruit. His hand would be "free" from what he wanted to possess and he would have been able to escape the danger.

So, too, we need to be free from our desires, be detached from them, in order to let God work wonders in our lives. We have just finished the Fast, one of the purposes of which is to teach us about detachment. Bahá'u'lláh teaches us to "hold" to His Name and "cling" to His hem. "Thou seest me, O my God, holding to Thy Name, the Most Holy, the Most Luminous, the Most Mighty, the Most Great, the Most Exalted, the Most Glorious, and clinging to the hem of the robe to which have clung all in this world and in the world to come." BP, p. 238-239. If we want to "drink the cup of detachment from all things", we need to examine a few of the things that we are holding onto and clinging to.

Since I am the author of "Assisting the Traumatized Soul: Healing the Wounded Talisman", I believe I should first state that we must be detached from our own "authority" . It seems obvious that because we are fallible and must seek a higher authority all of our lives, that all of our powers must be subject to the Will of God, the Authority of God. This would include, of course, our will and the other 23 powers.

We know that we each have a unique perspective with resulting opinions and viewpoints about life, the behavior of others, the decisions our friends, children, spouse, parents, or local Spiritual Assemblies make, and our own experiences; but these, too, we must be detached from, for as Abdu'l-Bahá states, we may be worshipping "an error of perception." When we come to the point where we recognize comfortably that there are "multiple-perspectives", each of them valid, then we will be at the point where we can be released from error and find "truth" or "certitude."

We must be detached from consultation and remember that there are many different types and degrees of consultation. The highest form is a spiritual consultation with our institutions of Authority on earth, as well as consultation with a recognized, trusted professional. The lowest form would be "consulting" with those who have a private interest in the results or the

outcome.

We must be detached from blame, too, whether it is the blame that someone is trying to attach to us or the blame we are trying to attach to others. We live in a culture that assigns blame to mothers and to women in general. So that if we are a woman who has not been offered or sought equality, we are likely to accept this blame without question. We must also recognize that when we are blaming others or ourselves, we are participating in an unhealthy aspect of our culture--using old world order behavior in our precious Bahá'í community.

We need to be detached from passion and desire. Another way of stating detachment from passion is this: We need to be detached from emotional reasoning, because emotional reasoning fuels our passion and desire. Our emotions are a power that is meant to give us information about how we feel about what we are doing or what is happening to us. We then transfer this information to other powers such as our reasoning power which includes inductive and deductive reasoning. If our emotions are negative and indeed false depending upon the situation, then the result of our reasoning is going to be detrimental to our mental and emotional well-being. We will draw wrong conclusions about people as well as God. It seems to me that "superiority" must be emotional reasoning about our abilities or presumed rights because it leads to an emotional high about our presumed "station," as well as "justification of anger and prejudice" against others, anger being another emotion we reason with. Reasoning must be based on facts, scientific knowledge, the Word of God and the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh. This does not preclude using the power of "intuition" as a means of establishing certitude.

As Bahá'ís who want to teach others about the Faith, we must also be detached from the results of our teaching. This does not mean that we will not be concerned about improving our methods of teaching, but that we will not become disheartened that others do not respond right away, whether it is our spouse, our children, our neighbors or friends. Certainly we must pray for them, but trust that God is working toward their good in ways that we may never know.

As parents, we must be detached from the character development of our children. This does not mean that we will not be involved in their character development. We are most definitely responsible for teaching them the Word of God, the importance of obedience to a higher authority, the development of virtues, and the vital necessity of unity, cooperation and reciprocity. However, they are fully responsible for the development of their character all throughout their lives, as we are for our own. This does not mean that we do not continue to pray and attempt to guide. Detachment from the path a child takes would be the greatest difficulty for mothers especially. Women are criticized for not meeting the expectations of onlookers who always seem to know best what to do and fall into the trap of blaming mothers. Women are expected to be "attached" to others' expectations. Women are expected to be attached to relationships that fail and the failure of children in school..

Those of us who have had a troubled childhood desire to be detached from shame.

We also desire to be detached from the memory of abuse, the rehearsing of abuse issues, and the very figure that abused us. It is difficult if an adult has never spoken out loud that they have internalized shame about sexual abuse, verbal abuse, physical abuse, as well as having lived with parents who have been addicted to alcohol or other drugs. The only way that I know to become detached from the shame of others, which I have owned, is to externalize it verbally and have it validated, as well as pour it out in prayer to Bahá'u'lláh. When we have been "locked" into a perspective of shame for decades, we need to hear multiple viewpoints on this topic that will invalidate our ownership of this injustice. Turning to the Writings we find that Abdu'l-Bahá comforts us with this quotation from Fire and Gold, "Thy letter was received. Thou has written: 'I am not worthy.' Who is worthier than thee? Hadst thou not been worthy, thou wouldst not have turned to God and wouldst not have wished to enter the Kingdom. Thy worthiness has guided thee until this blessing and bounty have encompassed thee." Those who are recovering from abuse need to feel that worthiness. And there's a clue! Worthiness obliterates blame and thereby increases our ability to detach from our propensity to cling to our memories of abuse and our abuser. Our inherent worthiness and nobility have guided us from our early experience of degradation to knowledge, understanding and detachment from that experience.

Here's another thought: We need to be detached from our weakness and frailty. Speaking for myself, I take medication that is necessary for my mental stability. I feel that is a weakness because I do not like to take medication. Nor do I like to admit that under stress my mental balance is at risk without medication. Either I feel shame about that or I detach myself from that shame and refuse to own the stigmatism that is prevalent in our culture. Every body has a weakness. What difference does it make if it is a weakness in the colon or a propensity for migraine headaches or varicose veins? Is it better to have a weakness of body or a weakness of character? And for those of us who believe they have a weakness of character, the above quotation on "worthiness" is meant to support them, too. All of us have weakness of character. That's why there are prayers for steadfastness, forgiveness, protection and assistance with tests. Bahá'u'lláh states, "Even or odd, thou shalt win the wager", if we are keepers of His Covenant. I believe that this relates to mental and physical disabilities as well as weakness of character. There are those in the history of the Faith who had such physical disabilities that they had to be carried on a gurney to teach the Faith. So we are told to not heed our weakness and frailties, to be detached from them.

It is obvious that we must be detached from materialism and the comforts that come with it. We are lured by our culture and the media that drives it to live as comfortably as we can possibly live. But tragically, what goes wanting is justice for those who are poverty stricken. And poverty is driven by racism and sexism and the numbers of African American men and women in prison, whose families are destitute and destroyed by their imprisonment. So in order to strive toward greater and greater equity for those who are destitute we need to be detached from materialism and comfort. But Bahá'u'lláh tells us, "O My

servants! Sorrow not if, in these days and on this earthly plane, things contrary to your wishes have been ordained and manifested by God, for days of blissful joy, of heavenly delight, are assuredly in store for you. Worlds, holy and spiritually glorious, will be unveiled to your eyes. You are destined by Him, in this world and hereafter, to partake of their benefits, to share in their joys, and to obtain a portion of their sustaining grace. To each and every one of them you will, no doubt, attain." GL, p. 329

We must also examine the need to be detached from the ever-present media. It's influence is so overpowering considering that we are bombarded with it from birth. Our characters have been shaped by it unless we were born to parents who had a highly developed power of discernment and who, therefore screened every movie we watched, every book and magazine we read, and every hero we worshipped, instead of using the television as a babysitter. For myself, I absorbed the sexism, racism and materialism in my culture and it contributed to my being dependent, misinformed, ignorant, racist, and a great lover of material comfort. However, I also absorbed Christianity in my culture which laid the foundation for my spiritual growth, investigation into other religions, and eventually led me to Bahá'u'lláh. The greatest protection from the invasive media that surrounds us is turning to the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, deepening every single day, reciting His Most Glorious Name 95 times each day as well as our obligatory prayer, teaching the Faith daily, and striving through prayer and action to keep His Covenant.

This is the meaning of "holding to His Name" and "clinging to the Hem of His Robe." Islam holds to One Book, the Qu'ran, completely detached from everything else in the culture in which they live. That is an admirable detachment and sanctification (or holiness).

Bahá'u'lláh offers in Words of Wisdom: "The essence of true safety is to observe silence, to look at the end of things and to renounce the world." TB, p. 156 The way that I understand this is that we cannot speak safely about faulty philosophies, theologies, and psychologies, unless they are verified by His Revelation. That we are to be detached from them because we cannot possibly have enough wisdom to expound upon all of them. This silence is not imposed upon us to disempower us, but is encouraged because our voice, our power of utterance, is important to the guidance of others. Their future and safety is dependent upon hearing what Bahá'u'lláh has to say about whatever issues they bring to us. Therefore we have a grave responsibility to either speak correctly if we are imbued with knowledge or to observe silence if we do not have wisdom about the subject at hand. If we are not detached from the ignorance in the culture the seeker is trying to escape, we will perpetuate the ignorance, instead of guiding him or her toward the light. This would illustrate being detached from our power of utterance.

A good example of being detached from faulty psychology would be in such a simple thing as the concept of "low self-esteem." We, of course, want to encourage those who have low self-esteem, but there are now conflicting theories about how we get our self-esteem. We can encourage others, give them

praise and acknowledgement around the clock, but they will still leave our Firesides with low self-esteem. This is the way psychology has been for years teaching us to remedy this difficulty. However, recent studies now prove that men and women develop self-esteem in different ways. For women self-esteem is based on relationship and connection rather than being told that they are "special" and "unique." From this we can make the connection of self-esteem with "unity", a Bahá'í theological concept, instead of "individualism," a western philosophy. The issues the world faces today are filled with nuances like this that conflict greatly with what the Bahá'í teachings really are all about.

Aside from these issues, the very purpose of striving for detachment is God's plan for the unification of the planet, and Bahá'u'lláh's dearest wish for the Oneness of all humankind, as He shows in the Hidden Words: "O CHILDREN OF MEN! Know ye not why We created you all from the same dust? That no one should exalt himself over the other. Ponder at all times in your hearts how ye were created. Since we have created you all from one same substance it is incumbent on you to be even as one soul, to walk with the same feet, eat with the same mouth and dwell in the same land, that from your inmost being, by your deeds and actions, the signs of oneness and the essence of detachment may be made manifest. Such is my counsel to you, O concourse of light! Heed ye this counsel that ye may obtain the fruit of holiness from the tree of wondrous glory." HW #68 This is proof that in order to prepare for the signs of oneness, we must first develop detachment. It also indicates that detachment prepares us for holiness, and that the fruit of holiness follows detachment.

So, whether you identify with a "let go and let God" philosophy, or the story of the monkey whose hand is caught as he clutches too tightly to the fruit he so desires, or the "detachment from all things" that Bahá'u'lláh wants us to "choose" in order to attain to holiness, these are some ideas to consider.

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