

The Bahá'ís of Florence, OR ☩ Inter-Faith Devotional Service



PRAYER AND MEDITATION

PRAYER

Native American Traditions

The Indian loved to worship. From birth to death, he revered his surroundings. He considered himself born in the luxurious lap of Mother Earth, and no place was to him humble. There was nothing between him and Wakan Tanka. The contact was immediate and personal, and the blessings of Wakan Tanka flowed over the Indian like rain showered from the sky.

Luther Standing Bear, Ogallala Sioux chief

Hinduism

On Me fix thy mind; be devoted to Me; sacrifice to Me; prostrate thyself before Me....

Bhagavad-Gita, in the Portable World Bible, p. 66

Judaism

The Holy One, praised be He, longs for the prayers of the righteous. The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon Him in truth.

The Talmud, Yebamot 64a; The Old Testament, Psalm 145:18

And it shall come to pass that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.

The Old Testament, Isaiah 65:24

Zoroastrianism

Worship Me...by day and by night, with offerings of libations well accepted. I will come unto thee for help and joy....

Zend-Avesta, in the PWB, p. 185

Christian

And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men.

Matthew 6:5

Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask Him.

Matthew, 6:7-8

This is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask any thing according to His will, He heareth us.

John 5:14

Islam

There is a polish for everything that becomes rusty, and the polish for the heart is the remembrance of God.

Hadith of Tirmidhi

The regular act of prayer is a sacred obligation upon believers in its prescribed times....When you have completed the prayer-rite, keep God in constant recollection.

Remember your Lord in your soul with humility and reverence morning and evening.

The Qur'an, 4:104; 7:205

Báb'í

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....The most acceptable prayer is the one offered with the utmost spirituality and radiance; its prolongation hath not been and is not beloved of God.

Writings of the Báb, pp. 94, 77

Bahá'í

No man that seeketh us will We
ever disappoint, neither shall he
that hath set his face towards
Us be denied access unto Our
court.

*Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh,
pp. 271-272*

Blessed is the spot, and the
house, and the place, and the
city, and the heart, and the
mountain, and the refuge, and
the cave, and the valley, and
the land, and the sea, and the
island, and the meadow where
mention of God hath been
made and His praise glorified.

Bahá'u'lláh: Bahá'í Prayers, p.1

“He, verily, loveth the one that
turneth towards Him.”

Bahá'u'lláh

Reflect, O people, on the grace
and blessings of your Lord, and
yield Him thanks at eventide
and dawn....

We have commanded you to
pray and fast from the
beginning of maturity; this is
ordained by God, your Lord,
and the Lord of your forefathers.

Bahá'u'lláh: Kitab-i-Aqdas, paras. 33, 10

It is true that God knows the
wishes of all hearts; but the
impulse to pray is a natural one,
springing from man's love for
God....But if this love and this
desire are lacking, it is useless
to try to force them. Words
without love mean nothing.

*Abdu'l-Baha: Quoted in Bahá'u'lláh and the
New Era, p. 94*

The wisdom of prayer is this:
That it causeth a connection
between the servant and the
True One, because in that state,
man with all heart and soul
turneth his face towards His
Highness the Almighty, seeking
His association and desiring
His love and compassion. The
greatest happiness for a lover
is to converse with his beloved,
and the greatest gift for a
seeker is to become familiar
with the object of his longing;

Bahá'í

(Continued)

that is why with every soul who is attracted to the Kingdom of God, his greatest hope is to find an opportunity to entreat and supplicate before his Beloved, appeal for His mercy and grace and be immersed in the ocean of His utterance, goodness and generosity.

Beside all this, prayer and fasting is the cause of awakening and mindfulness and conducive to protection and preservation from tests. The obligatory prayer is revealed from the Supreme Pen....

Tablets of Abdu'l-Baha, pp. 683-684

O thou who art turning thy face towards God! Close thine eyes to all things else, and open them to the realm of the All-Glorious. Ask whatsoever thou wishest of Him alone; seek whatsoever thou seekest from Him alone. With a look, He granteth a hundred thousand

hopes; with a glance, He healeth a hundred thousand incurable ills; with a nod, He layeth balm on every wound; with a glimpse, He freeth the hearts from the shackles of grief. He doeth as He doeth, and what recourse have we? He carrieth out His Will, He ordaineth what He pleaseth. Then better for thee to bow down thy head in submission, and put thy trust in the All-Merciful Lord.

*Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Baha,
p. 51*

O Son of Spirit! Ask not of Me that which We desire not for thee, then be content with what We have ordained for thy sake, for this is that which profiteth thee, if therewith thou dost content thyself.

Bahá'u'lláh: Arabic Hidden Words, 18

A servant is drawn unto Me through prayers until I answer him; and when I have answered his prayers, I become the ear wherewith he heareth.

Bahá'u'lláh: Seven Valleys, p. 22

It is the language of the spirit which speaks to God. When, in prayer, we are freed from all outward things and turn to God, then it is as if in our hearts we hear the voice of God. Without words we speak, we communicate, we converse with God and hear the answer....

....Therefore strive that your actions day by day may be beautiful prayers. Turn towards God, and seek always to do that which is right and noble.

Abdu'l-Baha: quoted in Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era, p. 94

God is merciful. In His mercy

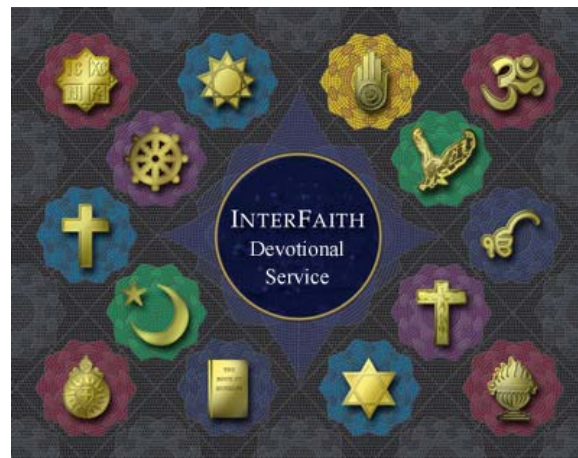
He answers the prayers of all His servants when, according to His supreme wisdom, it is necessary.

The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 247

Prayer need not be in words, but rather in thought and action.

Briefly, all effort and exertion put forth by man from the fullness of his heart is worship, if it is prompted by the highest motives and the will to do service to humanity. This is worship: to serve mankind and to minister to the needs of the people.

Paris Talks, pp. 176-177, 81



MEDITATION

Hinduism

Worship Me through meditation
in the sanctuary of the heart.

Srimad Bhagavatam 11.5

If...he places his mind in meditation upon the Supreme Spirit, he comes to the regions of light of the sun. There he becomes free from all evil, even as a snake sheds its old skin, and...goes to the heaven of Brahma wherefrom he can behold the Spirit that dwells in the city of the human body and which is above the highest life.

The Prasna Upanishad

When meditation is mastered, the mind is unwavering like the flame of a lamp in a windless place. In the still mind, in the depths of meditation, the eternal Self reveals itself.

Beholding the self by means of the Self, an aspirant knows the joy and peace of complete fulfillment. Having attained that abiding joy beyond the senses, revealed in the stilled mind, he never swerves from the central truth. He desires nothing else, and cannot be shaken by the heaviest burden of sorrow. The practice of meditation frees one from all affliction. This is the path of yoga....

Wherever the minds wanders, restless and diffuse in its search for satisfaction without, lead it within; train it to rest in the Self. Abiding joy comes to those who still the mind. Freeing themselves from the taint of self-will, with their consciousness unified, they become one with God.

Bhagavad Gita 6.18-27

Buddhism

To meditate means to realize the imperturbability of one's original nature....The original nature is by itself pure and calm....Freeing the mind from all wrong is the discipline of our original nature. Freeing the mind from all disturbances is the calmness of our original nature. And freeing the mind from all delusions is the wisdom of our original nature.

From the Platform Sutra

While in the same way that rain cannot break into a well-roofed house, desire cannot break into a mind that has been practicing meditation well.

From meditation springs wisdom. From lack of meditation, loss of wisdom. Recognizing these alternative roads of progress and decline, one should so direct oneself so that one's wisdom will increase.

The Dhammapada, vv. 14, 282

Judaism

The book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.

Joshua 1:8

Báb'í

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 splendor thereof shall forthwith be reflected in thy heart. For He is the Source of all goodness, and unto Him revert all things.

The Báb, Selections from the Writings of the Báb, p. 94

Bahá'í

“O Son of Light! Forget all save Me, and commune with My spirit...”

Bahá'u'lláh: Arabic Hidden Words, 16

Meditate profoundly, that the secret of things unseen may be revealed unto you, that you may inhale the sweetness of a spiritual and imperishable fragrance, and that you may acknowledge the truth that from time immemorial even unto eternity the Almighty hath tried, and will continue to try, His servants, so that light may be distinguished from darkness, truth from falsehood, right from wrong, guidance from error, happiness from misery, and roses from thorns.

Bahá'u'lláh: The Kitab-i-Iqan, p. 8

Were any man to ponder in his heart that which the Pen of the Most High hath revealed and to taste of its sweetness, he would, of a certainty, find himself emptied and delivered from his own desires, and utterly

subservient to the Will of the Almighty. Happy is the man that hath attained so high a station, and hath not deprived himself of so bountiful a grace.

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

343

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. ...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.

Bahá'í

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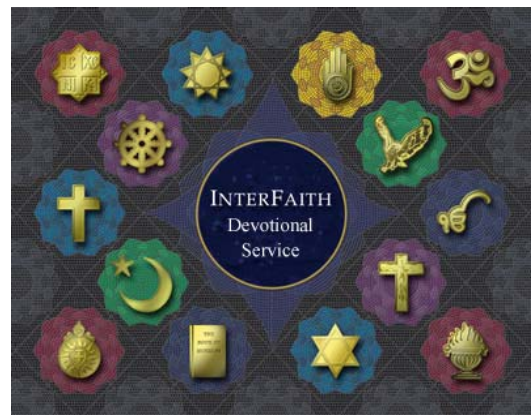
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Meditation is the key for opening the doors of mysteries. In that state man abstracts himself: in that state man withdraws himself from all outside objects; in that subjective mood he is immersed in the ocean of spiritual life and can unfold the secrets of things-in-themselves.

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....May we indeed become mirrors reflecting the heavenly realities, and may we become so pure as to reflect the stars of heaven.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, Paris Talks, pp. 174-176





PRAYER FOR AMERICA

O Thou kind Lord! This gathering is turning to Thee. These hearts are radiant with Thy love. These minds and spirits are exhilarated by the message of Thy glad-tidings. O God! Let this American democracy become glorious in spiritual degrees even as it has aspired to material degrees, and render this just government victorious. Confirm this revered nation to upraise the standard of the oneness of humanity, to promulgate the Most Great Peace, to become thereby most glorious and praiseworthy among all the nations of the world. O God! This American nation is worthy of Thy favors and is deserving of Thy mercy. Make it precious and near to Thee through Thy bounty and bestowal.

Abdu'l-Bahá

