**NAVIGATING LIFE’S TRANSITIONS:**

**Finding Our Sources of Strength and Support**

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**OPENING SONG**

**OPENING 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 forever, 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.

**A CLEAR VISION OF OUR PURPOSE**

* *One must remember that the purpose of this life is to prepare the soul for the next…*

In the beginning of his human life man was embryonic in the world of the matrix. There he received capacity and endowment for the reality of human existence. The forces and powers necessary for this world were bestowed upon him in that limited condition. In this world he needed eyes; he received them potentially in the other. He needed ears; he obtained them there in readiness and preparation for his new existence. The powers requisite in this world were conferred upon him in the world of the matrix, so that when he entered this realm of real existence he not only possessed all necessary functions and powers but found provision for his material sustenance awaiting him.

Therefore in this world he must prepare himself for the life beyond. That which he needs in the world of the Kingdom must be obtained here. Just as he prepared himself in the world of the matrix by acquiring forces necessary in this sphere of existence, so likewise the indispensable forces of the divine existence must be potentially attained in this world…That divine world is manifestly a world of lights; therefore man has need of illumination here. That is a world of love; the love of God is essential. It is a world of perfections; virtues or perfections must be acquired. That world is vivified by the breaths of the Holy Spirit; in this world we must seek them. That is the Kingdom of life everlasting; it must be attained during this vanishing existence.

* As the child in the womb does not yet know the use of its members, it does not know what its eyes are for, neither its nose, nor ears, nor tongue — so also it is with the soul on earth. It cannot understand here the uses and powers of its spiritual gifts, but directly it enters the eternal kingdom, it will become clearly apparent.
* 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.

* The more difficulties one sees in the world, the more perfect one becomes. The more you plough and dig the ground the more fertile it becomes. The more you put the gold in the fire the purer it becomes. The more you sharpen the steel by grinding the better it cuts. Therefore, the more sorrows one sees the more perfect one becomes. That is why, in all times, the Prophets of God have had tribulations and difficulties to withstand. The more often the captain of a ship is in the tempest and difficult sailing the greater his knowledge becomes.

**TRUST**

* O thou who art turning thy face towards God! Close thine eyes to all thins 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.
* Oh, trust in God! for His Bounty is everlasting, and in His Blessings, for they are superb. Oh! put your faith in the Almighty, for He faileth not and His goodness endureth forever! His Sun giveth Light continually, and the Clouds of His Mercy are full of the Waters of Compassion with which He waters the hearts of all who trust in Him. His refreshing Breeze ever carries healing in its wings to the parched souls of men!
* Not for a moment are ye alone. Not for a second are ye left to yourselves. The beauty of Abhá is with you. The Glorious God is with you. The King of Kings is with you.

**DETACHMENT**

* Whenever you see tremendous personal problems

in your private lives…you must remember that these afflictions are

part of human life; and, according to our teachings one of their

wisdoms is to teach us the impermanence of this world and the

permanence of the spiritual bonds we establish…

* All these examples are to show you that the trials

which beset our every step, all our sorrow, pain, shame and grief,

are born in the world of matter; whereas the spiritual Kingdom

never causes sadness…Man is, in reality, a spiritual being, and only when he lives in the spirit is he truly happy…A man living with his thoughts in this Kingdom knows perpetual joy. The ills all flesh is heir to do not pass him by, but they only touch the surface of his life, the depths are calm and serene.

* Our greatest efforts must be directed towards detachment from the things of the world; we must strive to become more spiritual, more luminous, to follow the counsel of the Divine Teaching, to serve the cause of unity and true equality, to be merciful, to reflect the love of the Highest on all men, so that the light of the Spirit shall be apparent in all our deeds, to the end that all humanity shall be united…

**SONG:**

* Until a being setteth his foot in the plane of sacrifice, he is bereft of every favour and grace; and this plane of sacrifice is the realm of dying to the self, that the radiance of the living God may then shine forth. The martyr's field is the place of detachment from self, that the anthems of eternity may be upraised. Do all ye can to become wholly weary of self, and bind yourselves to that Countenance of Splendours; and once ye have reached such heights of servitude, ye will find, gathered within your shadow, all created things. This is boundless grace; this is the highest sovereignty; this is the life that dieth not. All else save this is at the last but manifest perdition and great loss.

**PRAYER:**

* God, my God! Fill up for me the cup of detachment from all things, and in the assembly of Thy splendours and bestowals, rejoice me with the wine of loving Thee. Free me from the assaults of passion and desire, break off from me the shackles of this nether world, draw me with rapture unto Thy supernal realm, and refresh me amongst the handmaids with the breathings of Thy holiness.

O Lord, brighten Thou my face with the lights of Thy bestowals, light Thou mine eyes with beholding the signs of Thine all-subduing might; delight my heart with the glory of Thy knowledge that encompasseth all things, gladden Thou my soul with Thy soul-reviving tidings of great joy, O Thou King of this world and the Kingdom above, O Thou Lord of dominion and might, that I may spread abroad Thy signs and tokens, and proclaim Thy Cause, and promote Thy Teachings, and serve Thy Law, and exalt Thy Word. Thou art verily the Powerful, the Ever-Giving, the Able, the Omnipotent.

**PATIENCE**

* Change is an evolutionary process requiring patience with one's self and others, loving education and the passage of time…
* This material world of ours is a world of contrasts. It has in itself abundance and destitution, joy and sorrow, youth and old age. It is all the time changing and one has to undergo these different stages. Hence it behooves every faithful person to be patient and to be grateful for that which he receives. It is fitting for those in the Kingdom to be satisfied with their fate and look only toward the increase of the heavenly spark in their hearts for this, alone, will give them rest and consolation. And you, too, should endeavor to increase that spiritual flame, known as the love of God, for through its increase you will enter into a new world of love and contentment…
* Life afflicts us with very severe trials sometimes, but we must

always remember that when we accept patiently the Will of God

He compensates us in other ways. With faith and love we must

be patient, and He will surely reward us.

* In His Tablets, Baha’u’llah says that were we able to

comprehend the facilities that await us in the world to come,

death would lose its sting; nay rather we would welcome it

as a gateway to a realm immeasurably higher and nobler

than this home of suffering we call our earth. You should

therefore think of their blessings and comfort yourself for

your momentary separation. In time all of us will join our

departed ones and share their joys.

* We must not only be patient with others, infinitely patient!,

but also with our own poor selves, remembering that even

the Prophets of God sometimes got tired and cried out in

despair.

**GRATITUDE**

* Be generous in prosperity and thankful in adversity. Be worthy of the trust of thy neighbor and look upon him with a bright and friendly face.
* In this day, to thank God for His bounties consisteth in possessing a radiant heart, and a soul open to the promptings of the spirit. This is the essence of thanksgiving.
* The best way to thank God is to love one another.

FRIENDSHIP

* Of all pilgrimages, the greatest is to relieve the sorrow-laden heart.
* In the sweetness of friendship let there be laughter, and sharing of pleasures. For in the dew of little things the heart finds its morning and is refreshed. -Khalil Gibran
* Your acts of kindness are iridescent wings of divine love, which linger and continue to uplift others long after your sharing. -Rumi
* The more we make others happy the greater will be our own happiness and the deeper our sense of having served humanity.

**PRAYER**

* Who is there that hath cried after Thee, and whose prayer hath remained unanswered? Where is he to be found who hath reached forth towards Thee, and whom Thou hast failed to approach?
* Pray for strength. It will be given to you, no matter how difficult the conditions.
* The true worshipper, while praying, should endeavor not so much to ask God to fulfill his wishes and desires, but rather to adjust these and make them conform to the Divine Will. Only through such an attitude can one derive that feeling of inner peace and contentment which the power of prayer alone can confer.
* If it be Thy pleasure, make me to grow as a tender herb in the meadows of Thy grace, that the gentle winds of Thy will may stir me up and bend me into conformity with Thy pleasure, in such wise that my movement and my stillness may be wholly directed by Thee.
* God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Psalm 46:1

**PRAYER:**

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.

**PRAYER:**

O Lord, my God and my Haven in my distress!  My Shield and my Shelter in my woes!  My Asylum and Refuge in time of need and in my loneliness my Companion!  In my anguish my Solace, and in my solitude a loving Friend!  The Remover of the pangs of my sorrows and the Pardoner of my sins!

Wholly unto Thee do I turn, fervently imploring Thee with all my heart, my mind and my tongue, to shield me from all that runs counter to Thy will in this, the cycle of Thy divine unity, and to cleanse me of all defilement that will hinder me from seeking, stainless and unsullied, the shade of the tree of Thy grace.

Have mercy, O Lord, on the feeble, make whole the sick, and quench the burning thirst.

Gladden the bosom wherein the fire of Thy love doth smolder, and set it aglow with the flame of Thy celestial love and spirit.

Robe the tabernacles of divine unity with the vesture of holiness, and set upon my head the crown of Thy favor.

Illumine my face with the radiance of the orb of Thy bounty, and graciously aid me in ministering at Thy holy threshold.

Make my heart overflow with love for Thy creatures and grant that I may become the sign of Thy mercy, the token of Thy grace, the promoter of concord among Thy loved ones, devoted unto Thee, uttering Thy commemoration and forgetful of self but ever mindful of what is Thine.

O God, my God!  Stay not from me the gentle gales of Thy pardon and grace, and deprive me not of the wellsprings of Thine aid and favor.

‘Neath the shade of Thy protecting wings let me nestle, and cast upon me the glance of Thine all-protecting eye.

Loose my tongue to laud Thy name amidst Thy people, that my voice may be raised in great assemblies and from my lips may stream the flood of Thy praise.

Thou art, in all truth, the Gracious, the Glorified, the Mighty, the Omnipotent.

*‘Abdu’l-Bahá*

**PRAYER FOR THE DEPARTED:**

O my God!  O my God!  Verily, thy servant, humble before the majesty of Thy divine supremacy, lowly at the door of Thy oneness, hath believed in Thee and in Thy verses, hath testified to Thy word, hath been enkindled with the fire of Thy love, hath been immersed in the depths of the ocean of Thy knowledge, hath been attracted by Thy breezes, hath relied upon Thee, hath turned his face to Thee, hath offered his supplications to Thee, and hath been assured of Thy pardon and forgiveness.  He hath abandoned this mortal life and hath flown to the kingdom of immortality, yearning for the favor of meeting Thee.

O Lord, glorify his station, shelter him under the pavilion of Thy supreme mercy, cause him to enter Thy glorious paradise, and perpetuate his existence in Thine exalted rose garden, that he may plunge into the sea of light in the world of mysteries.

Verily, Thou art the Generous, the Powerful, the Forgiver and the Bestower.

**PRAYER FOR HUMANITY:**

O Thou kind Lord! Thou hast created all humanity from the same stock. Thou hast decreed that all shall belong to the same household. In Thy Holy Presence they are all Thy servants, and all mankind are sheltered beneath Thy Tabernacle; all have gathered together at Thy Table of Bounty; all are illumined through the light of Thy Providence.

O God! Thou art kind to all, Thou hast provided for all, dost shelter all, conferrest life upon all. Thou hast endowed each and all with talents and faculties, and all are submerged in the Ocean of Thy Mercy.

O Thou kind Lord! Unite all. Let the religions agree and make the nations one, so that they may see each other as one family and the whole earth as one home. May they all live together in perfect harmony.

O God! Raise aloft the banner of the oneness of mankind.

O God! Establish the Most Great Peace.

Cement Thou, O God, the hearts together.

O Thou kind Father, God! Gladden our hearts through the fragrance of Thy love. Brighten our eyes through the Light of Thy Guidance. Delight our ears with the melody of Thy Word, and shelter us all in the Stronghold of Thy Providence.

Thou art the Mighty and Powerful, Thou art the Forgiving and Thou art the One Who overlooketh the shortcomings of all mankind.

*—Bahá’u’lláh*

**SMALL GROUP RELECTION QUESTIONS:**

* Share a time of transition in your life. Drawing on the analogy of the caterpillar, cocoon and butterfly, how is it/was it inviting you to transform?
* What are your sources of strength during times of change?
* Think about one of the following spiritual qualities and reflect on its significance on your journey: friendship, faith, gratitude, hope, patience, detachment and/or trust.

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**CLOSING PRAYER IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:**

He is the Compassionate, the All-Bountiful!  O God, my God!  Thou seest me, Thou knowest me; Thou art my Haven and my Refuge.  None have I sought nor any will I seek save Thee; no path have I trodden nor any will I tread but the path of Thy love.  In the darksome night of despair, my eye turneth expectant and full of hope to the morn of Thy boundless favor and at the hour of dawn my drooping soul is refreshed and strengthened in remembrance of Thy beauty and perfection.  He whom the grace of Thy mercy aideth, though he be but a drop, shall become the boundless ocean, and the merest atom which the outpouring of Thy loving kindness assisteth, shall shine even as the radiant star.

Shelter under Thy protection, O Thou Spirit of purity, Thou Who art the All-Bountiful Provider, this enthralled, enkindled servant of Thine.  Aid him in this world of being to remain steadfast and firm in Thy love and grant that this broken-winged bird attain a refuge and shelter in Thy divine nest that abideth upon the celestial tree.

*‘Abdu’l-Bahá*