

Purpose of Life

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“The two most important days in your life are the day you are born and the day you find out why,” wrote Mark Twain.

According to the Baha’i writings, the cause of creation is God’s love: “I loved thy creation, hence I created thee.”

But what is the primary purpose of our lives?

These writings say that God has “exalted the gemlike reality of man; honored it with intellect and wisdom, nobility and immortality; and conferred upon man the unique distinction and capacity to know Him and to love Him -- a capacity that must ... be regarded as ... the primary purpose underlying the whole of creation.”

Knowing and loving God is therefore the primary purpose.

There is also a social aspect; the Baha’i writings say that all humanity has been created to “carry forward an ever-advancing civilization.”

These writings emphasize, however, that humanity cannot live in peace and make progress without being unified: “The well-being of mankind, its peace and security are unattainable unless and until its unity is firmly established.”

At the start of this year, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres also stressed this point in his alert to the whole world: “As we begin 2018, I call for unity. ... We can settle conflicts, overcome hatred and defend shared values. But we can only do that together.... Unity is the path. Our future depends on it.”

But what will pave the way to unity?

First, is the recognition of our oneness. Baha’i writings say that God has “created all humanity from the same stock” and therefore “no one should glorify himself over another; no one should manifest pride or superiority toward another; no one should look upon another with scorn and contempt; and no one should deprive or oppress a fellow creature.”

Next, is the acquiring of certain qualities. Given our reality is “gemlike” and is honored with “intellect and wisdom, nobility and immortality”, these writings say: “To act like the beasts of the field is unworthy of man. Those virtues that befit his dignity are forbearance, mercy, compassion and loving-kindness towards all the peoples and kindreds of the earth.”

Finally, according to these writings, our vision needs to be “world-embracing,” rather than confined to our own selves: “That one indeed is a man who, today, dedicateth himself to the service of the entire human race. ... It is not for him to pride himself who loveth his own country, but rather for him who loveth the whole world. The earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens.”

By first knowing and loving God, and then dedicating ourselves to the cause of unity, we will be able to “carry forward an ever-advancing civilization”, and fulfill the purpose of our lives.