

What Do Bahá'ís Believe About God?

O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is
your name in all the earth!

Psalms 8:1

This is God, your Lord, and unto
Him shall ye return. Is there any
doubt concerning God? He hath
created you and all things. The
Lord of all worlds is He.¹ The Báb

President Lincoln once told the story
of “a young boy who had gone with
his father on a hunting trip. While
asleep on the mountainside, the boy
was awakened by a meteor shower.
Scared, he shook his father awake.
The father said, ‘Son don’t be con-
cerned about the shooting stars. Keep
your eyes on the fixed stars that have
long been our guides.’” In a fast-
changing world, God is the only con-
stant. He is our heavenly star, the One
who is ever present and bestows His
glory on all who overcome the clouds,
who seek Him with their whole
hearts.

God is the light and the spirit of the
world. Without Him life is worthless;
with Him it is peace, joy, hope, and
happiness.

Thy Paradise is My love; thy heav-
enly home, reunion with Me. Enter
therein and tarry not. This is that
which hath been destined for thee
in Our kingdom above and Our
exalted dominion.² Bahá'u'lláh

My love is My stronghold; he that
entereth therein is safe and secure,
and he that turneth away shall
surely stray and perish.³ Bahá'u'lláh

How blest are those who know
their need of God; the kingdom of
Heaven is theirs. Christ (Matt. 5:3)

Make My love thy treasure and
cherish it even as thy very sight
and life.⁴ Bahá'u'lláh

When God enters our lives, we become
far more precious. Without light, a
diamond is as inviting as a piece of
coal. But the light brings out the
diamond’s brilliance and makes it spe-
cial. Love of God is the light that
makes us shine with hope and happi-
ness, that brings out the best in us.

Thank God, there is God. What if we
didn’t have Him? Remember the small
child’s prayer? “O God, bless me,
bless my mom, dad, and sister. But
make sure you take care of yourself.
If something happens to you, we’re all
in trouble!”

In Him all things find their highest
consummation, both in this world
and in the world to come.⁵ The Báb

Bahá'u'lláh refers to God as “the un-
knowable Essence” who stands above

human thoughts. No being can ever
fully know the Creator’s identity or
essence. The best we can do is recog-
nize some of His names or attributes.
Any image of God that we may cher-
ish is our creation, not that of our
Creator:

Our imagination can only picture
that which it is able to create.⁶

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Even God’s supreme Messengers ac-
knowledge their inability to know God
in all His glory and grandeur. They
know Him only by what He chooses
to reveal to them:

I have known Thee by Thy making
known unto me that Thou art un-
knowable to anyone save Thyself.⁷

The Báb

Our understanding of God is very nar-
row, as it is confined to our own ex-
periences. It is not much better than a
child’s. Here are a few questions from
children’s letters to God:

Dear God,
How did you know you were God?

Dear God,
Are you really invisible, or is that
just a trick?

Dear God,
Are you for real? Some people
don’t think so. If you are, you’d
better do something quick!

Dear God,
My sister never stops talking. I am
getting desperate. Do you have any
miracles left?

Dear God,

Thanks for all the food you have given us. I have tried most of them. Ice cream and chocolate are your best ideas.

Dear God,

Do you have to go everywhere I go?

Dear God,

They say you are smart. The people you made are weird. Can you figure them out?

Apparently, God has the same question:

The heart is deceitful above all things...Who can understand it? I the Lord search the heart and examine the mind... Jeremiah 17:9-10

Whatever we think about God is bound by our experiences and limited to our narrow vision of reality. We can learn about the attributes of God from His Messengers, from nature, and from uncovering the mysteries within our own souls. But we can never learn the essence of God.

To awaken us to our greatness, to our spiritual destiny, and to Himself, God manifests Himself periodically through human beings known by such titles as divine Messengers, Mediators, Redeemers, Saviors, Prophets, Teachers, and Manifestations. Through them God teaches us truths beyond our reach and inspires us to purity and nobility.

Each day the sun dawns from a different point. Atmospheric changes around the earth may also alter its appearance.

yet it is the same sun, always radiating with full glory. The same principle applies to God's great Messengers; they come from different places and appear to be different, yet they are one:

The Revelation of God may be likened to the sun. No matter how innumerable its risings, there is but one sun, and upon it depends the life of all things...

The process of the rise and setting of the Sun of Truth will thus indefinitely continue—a process that hath had no beginning and will have no end.

Well is it with him who in every Dispensation recognizeth the Purpose of God for that Dispensation, and is not deprived therefrom by turning his gaze towards the things of the past.⁸ The Báb

Because of the great favors bestowed on His Messengers, they become His most intimate and devoted disciples and friends. Since they recognize His infinite perfections, they glorify Him beyond measure. They follow His bidding and stand firm in their love and devotion to Him.

Their main goal is to teach us so that we too may learn to *know*, *love*, and *glorify* God. This knowledge, love, and devotion are the most powerful motivators in all the universe. They can uplift an individual from the depths of immorality, selfishness, despair, and gloom to the highest and

richest realms of purity, peace, and perfection.

We can learn to know and love God in three ways: by looking deep into our own souls, by piercing the mysteries of the universe, and best of all, by pondering the lives and teachings of great Messengers, who give us perfectly accurate and direct knowledge about our Creator. They are the most polished and splendid Mirrors of God's glory and knowledge. Whatever they teach us is indeed God's Word.

In his book *God's Loving Words*, Dr. Ray Stedman offers this story to demonstrate the relationship between God and humanity:

The Danish Christian philosopher Søren Kierkegaard tells the story about a king who fell in love with a peasant maiden. This king was the wealthiest, most respected, most powerful king in the entire region. No one dared oppose him or speak a word against him. But this king—as powerful and respected as he was—had a problem: How could he tell this maiden that he loved her? And how could he know for sure that she loved him?

The very fact that he was a king—rich, famous, and powerful—was a barrier.

He could lead an armed escort of knights to the door of her humble cottage, and he could demand, by his authority as king, that she marry him.

But that wouldn't do. The king didn't want a fearful slave for a wife. He wanted someone who would love him, someone to share his life, someone who would be happy and eager to spend her days at his side.

He could shower her with gifts and jewels and beautiful robes and—No, no, that wouldn't do either. He didn't want to buy her love. He wanted her to love him for himself, not for his gifts and his wealth.

Somehow he had to find a way to win the maiden's love without overwhelming her, without destroying her free will. Somehow he had to make himself her equal.

So the king clothed himself in rags and went to her as a peasant. But the truly amazing thing is this: The king did not merely disguise himself as a poor man. He actually became poor! He loved this maiden so much that he renounced his throne, his wealth, and his kingly power to win her love!⁹

This beautiful parable shows how the King and Creator of the universe manifests Himself in a humble human being and subjects Himself to the requirements of nature: hunger, pain, disease, and even death. If God overwhelmed us with His infinite power and glory, we could not love Him freely. We would act more like fearful slaves.

Knowing God is the first and foremost knowledge:

The source of all learning is the knowledge of God, exalted be His Glory, and this cannot be attained save through the knowledge of His Divine Manifestation.¹⁰ Bahá'u'lláh

The purpose of God in creating man is but for him to know Him.¹¹
The Báb

Knowing God does not mean simply acknowledging Him, but rather discovering His design of creation—learning how He works, how He does things, and why. Is there a test to show how much we know God? Here is one: The more we know God, the less we ask, "Why?" and the more we say, "Thanks!" Knowing God increases gratitude, and decreases grief and griping. Disappointment comes from deficiency of knowledge, from thinking that our plans for our lives are better than God's plan.

Love of God makes our hearts cheerful. Even when we feel bad, we feel good for feeling bad, for we know that the magic of His love always turns the rain into a rainbow.

It is absolutely essential to recognize that, in this world, God relates to us in two ways: by manifesting Himself and by remaining secret. Look back at your life and see how many times, at a critical point, somehow you managed, somehow "you made it." If you look at one piece or one point, you

may say it was coincidence. But if you put all the points and pieces together, you realize that an unseen hand must have been at work—secretly sending you subtle signals, just strong enough to keep you from stumbling, to get you over the hurdle.

God always whispers His signals and secrets with a precise pitch—just loud enough and quiet enough—so that we can either hear them or not hear them at all:

This is the Voice of God...the manifest and hidden Secret...¹²
Bahá'u'lláh

Only when we soften our hearts can we hear His Voice:

Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts... Psalms 95:7

Incline thine ear unto the voice of thy Lord, the Lord of all mankind...¹³
Bahá'u'lláh

Only a whole-hearted desire can reveal the glory of God:

Seek the Lord your God, you will find him if you look for him with all your heart and with all your soul.
Deuteronomy 4:29

Just as radar must be highly sensitive to a signal while filtering out noise, so must be our souls. If we filter out "the noise," we will hear God's voice from every atom in the universe. Every stone, every leaf, every bird sings His praise, except a heart that is out of order and out of tune.

God never breaks His veil of secrecy. That would destroy His entire design of creation. Expecting the display of miraculous powers from God at the time of the advent of every Redeemer is an example of a failure to understand and appreciate this principle, this most fundamental link between God and His creatures.

Within the depths of every soul God has deposited the potential to know Him:

He hath moreover deposited within the realities of all created things the emblem of His recognition, that everyone may know of a certainty that He is the Beginning and the End, the Manifest and the Hidden, the Maker and the Sustainer, the Omnipotent and the All-Knowing, the One Who heareth and perceiveth all things, He Who is invincible in His power and standeth supreme in His Own identity...¹⁴ The Báb

And this is another sign of knowing God: The one who truly knows God also recognizes His Messengers. The Pharisees who rejected Jesus considered themselves strong believers in God, yet Jesus told them they did not know Him:

My Father, whom you claim as your God, is the one who glorifies me. Though you do not know Him, I know Him. Christ (John 8:54-55)

Their preoccupation with earthly power and glory was the best evidence of

their ignorance and lack of spiritual insight. They expected God to break the veil of secrecy and suddenly manifest His power and majesty by giving them visible dominion and supremacy over their enemies.

Divine Messengers provide the most direct and obvious link between God and His creatures. By speaking through them, God can maintain His secrecy and still talk to us in our language, just like another human being. It is impossible to imagine that God could speak more directly to us than this, short of actually revealing Himself to us as He does to His Messengers and Redeemers.

This is an amazing phenomenon: God, the Creator of the universe, speaking to us just like a friend and telling us that He is our true Beloved! Yet so many human beings refuse to accept this honor—to be God's true lover and friend!

God respects our freedom. That is one of His choicest gifts to us. Without it we would be like slaves. He wants us to know Him and to love Him by choice, not by force; by desire, not by demand. *Every choice is both an evidence and a test of our freedom.* The tests bring to light our hidden selves. They show whether we are gold or mere glitters. They allow our souls to *choose* and *reveal* a given level of goodness and perfection. Some reach for the sublime; others for mediocrity.

One drop out of the ocean of His bountiful grace is enough to confer upon all beings the glory of everlasting life. But inasmuch as the divine Purpose hath decreed that the true should be known from the false, and the sun from the shadow, He hath, therefore, in every season sent down upon mankind the showers of tests from His realm of glory.¹⁵ Bahá'u'lláh

The more we love God, the more we love one another. The closer we are to God, the closer we are to happiness. Today, many live in the darkness of unbelief. The light of God is absent in many a heart and home.

Is God present in the houses of worship? "A Sunday school teacher asked her students to write a letter to God. One little girl wrote, 'Dear God, we had a great time at church today. I wish you could have been there.'"

Seeing and recognizing God and His Messengers requires spiritual sight. As much of God is visible as we have eyes to see.

To know, to love, and to glorify God is the noblest and most supreme honor. Every human being is invited to partake of this honor, to celebrate His praise with the utmost joy and ecstasy:

Bestir thyself, and magnify, before the entire creation, the name of God, and celebrate His praise, in such wise that all created things

may be regenerated and made new. Speak, and hold not thy peace.¹⁶

Bahá'u'lláh

For every one of you his paramount duty is to choose for himself that on which no other may infringe and none usurp from him. Such a thing... is the love of God, could ye but perceive it.¹⁷ Bahá'u'lláh

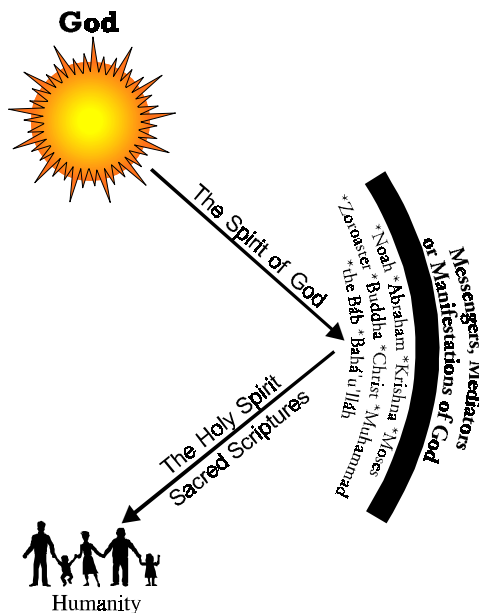
We were not made to eat, to sleep, and to exercise. We were not made to work, to wash, and to watch TV. We were not made to make money, to build beautiful houses, and to buy the finest furniture and jewelry. We were not even made to get married and live happily ever after. We were made for one reason and one purpose:

- To learn as much as we can about God,
- To learn to love Him passionately, perfectly, and unconditionally, and
- To glorify Him and thank Him for making all these possible, for creating and loving us, for giving us the chance to be His lovers and His most sublime creation, and for all the infinite gifts, pleasures, and bounties He has provided for us.

If we spend our lives for any purpose other than knowing Him, if we live for any reason other than loving Him and glorifying Him, it is like going into a theater that presents the most majestic and beautiful movie and, instead of enjoying the splendid scenes,

hearing the heavenly music, and basking in the company of friends and loved ones, we sit down, close our eyes, and go to sleep! What a sense of loss and failure, what a sense of anger, grief, and remorse, when we wake up to discover that the movie has ended, that the opportunity is gone forever!

The Relationship Between God, His Mediators, and Humankind



Be ye assured, that the works and acts of each and every one of these Manifestations of God, nay whatever pertaineth unto them, and whatsoever they may manifest in the future, are all ordained by God, and are a reflection of His Will and Purpose.¹⁸ Bahá'u'lláh

From Him proceed their knowledge and power; from Him is derived their sovereignty. The beauty of their countenance is but a reflection of His image, and their revelation a sign of His deathless glory.¹⁹

Bahá'u'lláh

The Lord God of your fathers... hath sent me... Moses (Exodus 3:15)

I do nothing on my own authority, but in all that I say, I have been taught by my Father.

Christ (John 8:28)

Only what is revealed to me do I follow. Muhammad (Qur'an 6:50)

Not of Mine own volition have I revealed Myself, but God, of His own choosing, hath manifested Me.²⁰ Bahá'u'lláh

The sweetest and most sublime music comes from the beating of a heart in tune with the knowledge and love of God. Our attachment to God gives us the strength to cope with the stress and distress of living. It protects the flame and fuels the candle. "A lady went to her doctor and said, 'Doctor, I know I've been working too hard, but I don't want you to tell me to stop

burning the candle at both ends. What I need is more wax.” Love of God is an everlasting flame.

The Lord’s unfailing love surrounds the man who trusts in him. Rejoice in the Lord and be glad, you righteous; sing, all you who are upright in heart! Psalms 32:10-11

With thee is the fountain of life. In thy light shall we see light.

Psalms 36:9

In thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore. Psalms 16:11

No joy can compare with the joy of knowing, loving, serving, and glorifying God. The purpose of religion is to spread and strengthen this knowledge, love and devotion, and to bring them into every heart and every home. Without God, the world is a place of gloom and darkness, and the heart an abode of despair and emptiness.

Like an old tree that begins to rot and break down, when a religion loses its spiritual and transforming powers, it becomes an instrument of division and discord rather than of unity, harmony, and love. It promotes rote learning and superstition rather than reasoning and understanding; consequently, believers begin to lose their faith and their sense of connection with other human beings. They wonder why God does not care anymore, they blame Him for their troubles and sufferings,

and eventually they ignore His counsels. When people lose touch with God, they also lose touch with themselves. Knowledge of God leads to knowledge of self; ignorance of God leads to ignorance of self.

Love of God turns us from mortal to immortal beings. It changes the monotony of daily chores into an ever-advancing journey of hope and fulfillment, of wonder, exhilaration, and ecstasy. Today many are deprived of this most exciting dimension of human life; they see the mud holes, but miss the rainbow.

The Bahá’í Faith has proved capable of restoring God’s love to the heart of humanity by making religion rational and relevant to our time. Bahá’ís believe that Bahá’u’lláh’s Revelation is a clear proof that God *cares* and *always will*. In the teachings of the Bahá’í Faith, we can find peace, hope, and harmony. By the guidance it provides we can resolve the world’s distressing problems. Through Bahá’u’lláh’s teachings we can build a heavenly kingdom, a glorious civilization that has been the promise of all the great Messengers and the hope of humanity since the dawn of history.

1. *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 153.
2. *The Hidden Words of Bahá’u’lláh* (Arabic), no. 6.
3. *The Hidden Words of Bahá’u’lláh* (Arabic), no. 9.

4. *The Hidden Words of Bahá’u’lláh* (Persian), p. 32.

5. *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 23.

6. *Paris Talks*, p. 24.

7. *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 196.

8. *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, pp. 109-106.

9. Stedman, Ray C. and James E. Denney. *God’s Loving Word*, Grand Rapids, MI: Discovery House, 1993, p. 11.

10. *Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 156.

11. *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 62.

12. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 33.

13. *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 59.

14. *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 112.

15. *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 53.

16. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, pp. 27-28.

17. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 261.

18. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 59.

19. *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 100.

20. *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 11.

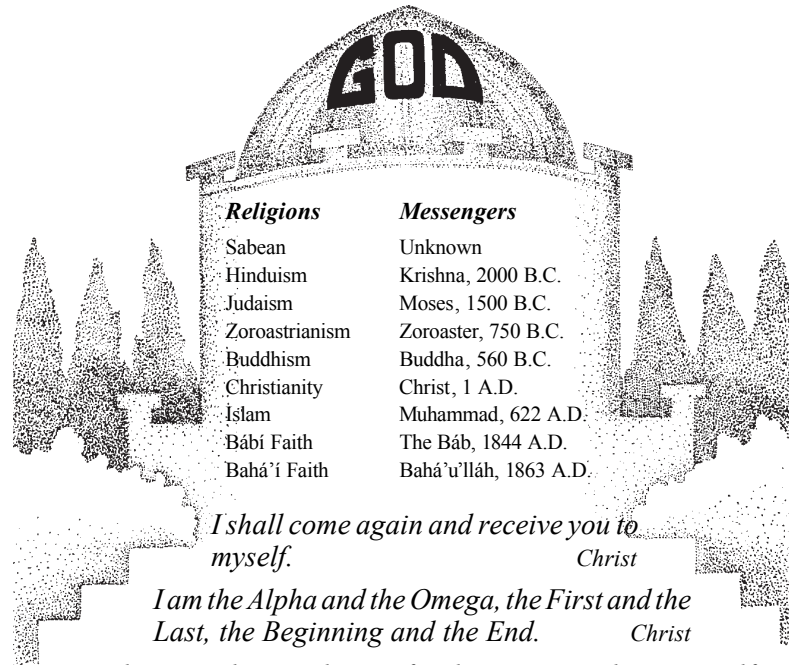


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One God Many Messengers



I shall come again and receive you to myself.

Christ

I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.

Christ

Whenever there is decay of righteousness...then I Myself come forth...for the sake of firmly establishing righteousness. I am born from age to age.

Krishna

I am not the first Buddha who came upon the earth, nor shall I be the last. In due time another Buddha will arise...He shall reveal to you the same eternal truths which I have taught you.

Buddha

All these holy, divine Manifestations are one. They have served one God, promulgated the same truth...and reflected the same light...In name and form they differ, but in reality They agree and are the same.

Bahá'u'lláh

The Revelation of God may be likened to the sun. No matter how innumerable its risings, there is but one sun, and upon it depends the life of all things.

The Báb