

Integrating Spiritual Principles into Our Work Life

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Recently I was listening to a talk called “A Baha’i Perspective on the Meaning of Work” by Dr. Tiffani Razavi and as someone in recovery from workaholism and work anorexia (also called underearning or under-being), it got me wanting to know more about what the Writings have to say about work.

What is the Bahá’í Standard for Work?

I think many of us are familiar with this quote:

[Bahá’u’lláh exalts] work, performed in the spirit of service, to the rank of worship. (Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, p. 281-282)

But how do we know if we are performing our work in the spirit of service? And what is service? These are the questions I started with.

First of all, the best definitions of work done in the spirit of service I’ve found are:

Bahá’u’lláh has even said that occupation and labor are devotion. All humanity must obtain a livelihood by sweat of the brow and bodily exertion, at the same time seeking to lift the burden of others, striving to be the source of comfort to souls and facilitating the means of living. This in itself is devotion to God . . . But the energies of the heart must not be attached to these things; the soul must not be completely occupied with them. Though the mind is busy, the heart must be attracted toward the Kingdom of God in order that the virtues of humanity may be attained from every direction and source. (‘Abdu’l-Bahá, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 186)

It is the commandment of the Blessed Beauty, may my life be a sacrifice at His Threshold, that whosoever engageth in a craft, should endeavour to acquire in it utmost proficiency. Should he do so, that craft becometh a form of worship. (‘Abdu’l-Bahá, The Compilation of Compilations vol. I, p. 3)

In the Baha’i Cause arts, sciences and all crafts are (counted as) worship. The man who makes a piece of notepaper to the best of his ability, conscientiously, concentrating all his forces on perfecting it, is giving praise to God. 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. (‘Abdu’l-Baha, Paris Talks, p. 176-177)

This suggests that:

- paid employment requires both exertion and seeking to lift the burden of others
- neither should be the focus of our attention
- our attention should be focused on drawing closer to God and acquiring the virtues we’ll need in the next world
- if we do our jobs with utmost proficiency we will be worshipping God
- if we do our job to the best of our ability, conscientiously, concentrating all our forces on perfecting it, we are giving praise to God
- all effort and exertion must come from the fullness of our hearts and be prompted by the highest motives and the will to do service to humanity

The dictionary suggests that service is:

- an act of helpful activity; help; aid
- ready to be of help or be of use to someone
- something made or done for the public benefit and without regard to direct profit

So the implication is that we do our jobs, with an attitude of helpfulness, usefulness and of benefit to others, without expectation of payment. Can that be true? The Bahá'í Writings seem to suggest that it is.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá tells us:

All government employees, whether of high or low rank, should, with perfect integrity, probity and rectitude, content themselves with the modest stipends and allowances that are theirs. (‘Abdu’l-Bahá, The Compilation of Compilations vol II, p. 344)

Let them be content with their wages, and seek distinction in truthfulness, straightforwardness, and the pursuit of virtue and excellence; for vanity in riches is worthy of none but the base, and pride in possessions besemeth only the foolish. (‘Abdu’l-Bahá, The Compilation of Compilations vol II, p. 344)

So far from acting thus, he should content himself with his salary and allowances, seek out the way of righteousness, and dedicate his life to the service of state and people. Such must be the conduct and bearing of the Bahá'ís. Whoso transgresseth these bounds shall fall at length into manifest loss. (‘Abdu’l-Bahá, The Compilation of Compilations vol II, p. 344)

They should ... content themselves with the salaries they are receiving, taking pride, rather, in the degree of sagacity, competence and judgement that they can bring to their work. If a person content himself with a single loaf of bread, and perform his duties with as much justice and fair-mindedness as lieth within his power, he will be the prince of mortals, and the most praiseworthy of men. Noble and distinguished will he be, despite his empty purse! Pre-eminent will he rank among the free, although his garb be old and worn! (‘Abdu’l-Bahá, The Compilation of Compilations vol II, p. 343)

So to summarize, these quotes seem to suggest that we should:

- be content with our wages, salaries and allowances, no matter how modest
- take pride in the degree of competence and sound judgement we bring to our work
- seek distinction in truthfulness, straightforwardness, and the pursuit of virtue and excellence instead of delighting in riches

If we achieve this, even if our purses are empty and our clothes old and worn, we will be the prince of mortals, the most praiseworthy of men, noble, distinguished and pre-eminent

And if we don't do it, we will fall into manifest loss.

Similarly, this quote applies specifically to teachers, who occupy so high a station in the Bahá'í Faith, that they receive a portion of a person's estate, if they die without leaving a will (see the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, p. 254). In neither quote do we understand the meaning of the word “teachers”. Could it be “teachers of the Cause”? Teachers of Children? Teachers of Higher Education? We don't know, and maybe it doesn't matter. The principle is the same:

This matter of teachers requires the greatest condition; that is, they should never stain themselves with the world, they should not look for the least pecuniary reward from any soul; nay, rather they should bear the utmost poverty and with the perfect wealth of nature [a state wherein man can dispense with things and be happy in their absence], through the bounty of God, may they associate with the people. They should seek no reward nor recompense. Freely have thy received, freely should they give. (‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Tablets of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá v2, p. 359-360)

Teachers should not look for a financial reward or recompense but bear the utmost poverty and be happy. Let's look at what else the Writings can tell us about our work.

What are the Principles?

Bahá'u'lláh's solution of the social question provides for new laws, but the different social classes are preserved. An artisan remains an artisan; a merchant, a merchant; a banker, a banker; a ruler, a ruler; the different degrees must persist, so that each can render service to the community. Nevertheless, every one has the right to a happy, comfortable life. ('Abdu'l-Bahá, Divine Philosophy, p. 83-84)

Work is to be provided for all and there will be no needy ones to be seen in the streets. The vocational labor adjustment provided by BAHÁ'O'LLAH precludes there being people too poor to have the necessaries of life on the one hand, nor the idle rich on the other. ('Abdu'l-Bahá, Divine Philosophy, p. 83-84)

Bahá'u'lláh has even said that occupation and labor are devotion. All humanity must obtain a livelihood by sweat of the brow and bodily exertion. ('Abdu'l-Bahá, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 186)

So from these quotes we learn that under Bahá'u'lláh's new laws:

- everyone has the right to a happy, comfortable life
- everyone must obtain a livelihood by sweat of the brow and bodily exertion
- work is to be provided for everyone
- there will not be people too poor to have the necessaries of life or too rich they can be idle
- the different social classes are preserved, so that everyone can render service to the community

What is the Standard?

Let's start by looking at some quotes:

Bahá'u'lláh enjoins work on all. (Shoghi Effendi, Unfolding Destiny, p. 462).

No one need ever be ashamed of his job. (Shoghi Effendi, Unfolding Destiny, p. 462).

In the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh, it is incumbent upon every soul to acquire a trade and an occupation. For example, I know how to weave or make a mat, and you know some other trade. This, in itself is an act of worship, provided that it is conducted on the basis of utmost honesty and faithfulness. And this is the cause of prosperity. ('Abdu'l-Bahá, Star of the West, Vol. 19, No. 7, p. 219)

It is necessary for all to learn a craft, through which the people may earn their living. This commandment is universal. ('Abdu'l-Bahá, The Compilation of Compilations vol. I, p. 3)

It is the commandment of the Blessed Beauty, may my life be a sacrifice at His Threshold, that whosoever engageth in a craft, should endeavour to acquire in it utmost proficiency. Should he do so, that craft becometh a form of worship. ('Abdu'l-Bahá, The Compilation of Compilations vol. I, p. 3)

Perfection in worldly things is a joy to the body of a man but in no wise does it glorify his soul. ('Abdu'l-Bahá, Paris Talks, p. 62-63)

Please God, the poor may exert themselves and strive to earn the means of livelihood. This is a duty which, in this most great Revelation, hath been prescribed unto every one, and is accounted in the sight of God as a goodly deed. Whoso observeth this duty, the help of the invisible One shall most certainly aid

him. He can enrich, through His grace, whomsoever He pleaseth. He, verily, hath power over all things. (Bahá'u'lláh, Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 202)

Service to humanity is a primary motivation for those employed by Bahá'í institutions. In addition, the attitude that work is a form of worship is one of Bahá'u'lláh's healing remedies for mankind which should permeate Bahá'í institutions. (Universal House of Justice, Guidance for Bahá'í Radio, p. 14)

The most despised of men in the sight of God are those who sit idly and beg. Hold ye fast unto the cord of material means, placing your whole trust in God, the Provider of all means. When anyone occupieth himself in a craft or trade, such occupation itself is regarded in the estimation of God as an act of worship; and this is naught but a token of His infinite and all-pervasive bounty. (Bahá'u'lláh, Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 26)

The work done by the individual in trade, craft, art or profession is the core of his life and not merely the source of his living. Work performed in the spirit of service can today be accounted as an act of worship. The obligation to work is essentially a moral obligation and one not discharged by possession of wealth. (Bahá'í International Community, 1947 Feb, A Bahá'í Declaration of Human Obligations and Rights)

Thus the right to work, the right to contribute to society, takes on a spiritual dimension, and the responsibility to be productive applies to everyone. This attitude toward work profoundly influences the Bahá'í approach to social and economic development. (Bahá'í International Community, 1993 Feb 12, Human Rights Extreme Poverty)

The Teachings are most emphatic on this matter, particularly the statement in the Aqdas to this effect which makes it quite clear that idle people who lack the desire to work can have no place in the new World Order. As a corollary of this principle, Bahá'u'lláh further states that mendicity should not only be discouraged but entirely wiped out from the face of society. (Shoghi Effendi, Principles of Bahá'í Administration, p. 12-13)

It is the duty of those who are in charge of the organization of society to give every individual the opportunity of acquiring the necessary talent in some kind of profession, and also the means of utilizing such a talent, both for its own sake and for the sake of earning the means of his livelihood. (Shoghi Effendi, Principles of Bahá'í Administration, p. 12-13)

Every individual, no matter how handicapped and limited he may be, is under the obligation of engaging in some work or profession. (Shoghi Effendi, Principles of Bahá'í Administration, p. 12-13)

It is obvious, therefore, that the inheritance of wealth cannot make anyone immune from daily work. (Shoghi Effendi, Principles of Bahá'í Administration, p. 12-13)

There are no solitaries and no hermits among the Baha'is. Man must work with his fellows. ('Abdu'l-Baha in London, p. 93)

This seems to suggest:

- those in charge of the organization of society must give everyone the opportunity to acquire and use a necessary talent in some kind of profession
- everyone must acquire a craft, trade and an occupation, even the handicapped, the rich and the poor
- this is the core of our life and not merely the source of our living
- perfection in worldly things doesn't glorify our souls

- the obligation to work is a moral obligation, not discharged by possession of wealth
 - the most despised of men in the sight of God are those who sit idly and beg
 - idle people who lack the desire to work can have no place in the new World Order
 - we need to work with others
 - prosperity comes from conducting our jobs with the utmost honesty and faithfulness
 - when we strive to earn the means of livelihood, we can count on the help of the invisible One
- When we apply all of these principles in our work life, there's no need for anyone to ever be ashamed of his job

Why Do We Work?

Let's look at some quotes:

Every person must have an occupation, a trade or a craft, so that he may carry other people's burdens, and not himself be a burden to others. ('Abdu'l-Bahá, The Compilation of Compilations vol. I, p. 3)

If a man is successful in his business, art, or profession he is thereby enabled to increase his physical wellbeing and to give his body the amount of ease and comfort in which it delights. ('Abdu'l-Bahá, Paris Talks, p. 62)

To engage in some profession is highly commendable, for when occupied with work one is less likely to dwell on the unpleasant aspects of life. (Bahá'u'lláh, Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 175)

With reference to Bahá'u'lláh's command concerning the engagement of the believers in some sort of profession: the Teachings are most emphatic on this matter, particularly the statement in the Aqdas to this effect which makes it quite clear that idle people who lack the desire to work can have no place in the new World Order. As a corollary of this principle, Bahá'u'lláh further states that mendicity should not only be discouraged but entirely wiped out from the face of society. It is the duty of those who are in charge of the organization of society to give every individual the opportunity of acquiring the necessary talent in some kind of profession, and also the means of utilizing such a talent, both for its own sake and for the sake of earning the means of his livelihood. Every individual, no matter how handicapped and limited he may be, is under the obligation of engaging in some work or profession, for work, specially when performed in the spirit of service, is according to Bahá'u'lláh a form of worship. It has not only a utilitarian purpose, but has a value in itself, because it draws us nearer to God, and enables us to better grasp His purpose for us in this world. It is obvious, therefore, that the inheritance of wealth cannot make anyone immune from daily work. (Shoghi Effendi, Principles of Bahá'í Administration, p. 12-13)

Ye are the trees of My garden; ye must give forth goodly and wondrous fruits, that ye yourselves and others may profit therefrom. Thus it is incumbent on every one to engage in crafts and professions, for therein lies the secret of wealth, O men of understanding! For results depend upon means, and the grace of God shall be all-sufficient unto you. Trees that yield no fruit have been and will ever be for the fire. (Adib Taherzadeh, The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh v 2, p. 281)

You should also endeavour to engage in some useful occupation, or by training yourself to have such an occupation, as work in itself another means at our disposal, in accordance with our Teachings, to draw nearer to God, and to better grasp His purpose for us in this world. (Universal House of Justice, Lights of Guidance, p. 282)

The attitude that work is a form of worship is one of Bahá'u'lláh's healing remedies for mankind . . . (Universal House of Justice, Guidance for Bahá'í Radio, p. 14)

When anyone occupieth himself in a craft or trade, such occupation itself is regarded in the estimation of God as an act of worship; and this is naught but a token of His infinite and all-pervasive bounty. (Bahá'u'lláh, Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 26)

These seem to suggest that we work because by working we:

- carry other people's burdens instead of being a burden to others
- are able to increase our physical wellbeing and give our bodies the amount of ease and comfort in which it delights
- are less likely to dwell on the unpleasant aspects of life
- draw nearer to God and are better able to grasp His purpose for us in this world
- find the secret of wealth
- benefit from one of Bahá'u'lláh's healing remedies
- obtain a token of God's infinite and all-pervasive bounty

How do we choose a career?

We assess our talents, skills, specialized training and material resources, and then we consider how much time and energy we want to expend, and whether or not we can apply Bahá'í principles:

Let them step forth to take their places in the arena of service where their talents and skills, their specialized training, their material resources, their offers of time and energy and, above all, their dedication to Bahá'í principles, can be put to work in improving the lot of man. (Universal House of Justice, Lights of Guidance, p. 546)

We weigh the earning capacity of the job with the benefit of the work to mankind:

Every Bahá'í has a duty to work and earn his living, and in choosing a career a Bahá'í should consider not only its earning capacity but also the benefit of the work to his fellowmen. All over the world Bahá'ís are rendering outstanding services in this way. (The Universal House of Justice, Messages 1963 to 1986, p. 513)

We choose a field of science that profits the people of the world:

Knowledge is as wings to man's life, and a ladder for his ascent. Its acquisition is incumbent upon everyone. The knowledge of such sciences, however, should be acquired as can profit the peoples of the earth . . . Great indeed is the claim of scientists and craftsmen on the peoples of the world. (Tablets of Baha'u'llah Revealed After the Kitab-i-Aqdas, p. 51-52)

This includes craftsmanship:

One of the names of God is the Fashioner. He loveth craftsmanship. Therefore any of His servants who manifesteth this attribute is acceptable in the sight of this Wronged One. Craftsmanship is a book among the books of divine sciences, and a treasure among the treasures of His heavenly wisdom. This is a knowledge with meaning.... (from a Tablet of Baha'u'llah's, translated from the Persian)

We place our whole trust in God:

Concerning the means of livelihood, thou shouldst, while placing thy whole trust in God, engage in some occupation. He will assuredly send down upon thee from the heaven of His favour that which is destined for thee. He is in truth the God of might and power. (Bahá'u'lláh, Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 267)

In the Workplace, What Attitudes Should We Have Towards Work?

To the extent that work is consciously undertaken in a spirit of service to humanity, Bahá'u'lláh says, it is a form of prayer, a means of worshipping God. (Bahá'í International Community, 1995 Mar 03, The Prosperity of Humankind)

True reliance is for the servant to pursue his profession and calling in this world, to hold fast unto the Lord, to seek naught but His grace, inasmuch as in His Hands is the destiny of all His servants. (Bahá'u'lláh, Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 155)

We have enjoined upon all to become engaged in some trade or profession, and have accounted such occupation to be an act of worship. Before all else, however, thou shouldst receive, as a sign of God's acceptance, the mantle of trustworthiness from the hands of divine favour; for trustworthiness is the chief means of attracting confirmation and prosperity. (Bahá'u'lláh, The Compilation of Compilations vol II, p. 335)

Every man of discernment, while walking upon the earth, feeleth indeed abashed, inasmuch as he is fully aware that the thing which is the source of his prosperity, his wealth, his might, his exaltation, his advancement and power is, as ordained by God, the very earth which is trodden beneath the feet of all men. There can be no doubt that whoever is cognizant of this truth, is cleansed and sanctified from all pride, arrogance, and vainglory. (Bahá'u'lláh, Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, p. 44)

It behoveth the craftsmen of the world at each moment to offer a thousand tokens of gratitude at the Sacred Threshold, and to exert their highest endeavour and diligently pursue their professions so that their efforts may produce that which will manifest the greatest beauty and perfection before the eyes of all men. (Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Baha, p. 144)

Having taken up an occupation, youth naturally try to contribute to their field, or even to advance it in light of the insights they gain from their continued study of the Revelation, and they strive to be examples of integrity and excellence in their work. (Universal House of Justice, to the Conference of the Continental Boards of Counsellors, 29 December 2015)

The right attitudes seem to include:

- performing our jobs with diligence, in order to produce results that manifest beauty and perfection
- performing work that is consciously undertaken in a spirit of service to humanity
- contributing to their field or advancing it in light of insights gained from study of the Revelation
- having true reliance on God, holding fast and seeking nothing but His grace
- trusting that in God's Hands lies our destiny
- being grateful
- receiving the mantle of trustworthiness from the hands of divine favour, as the chief means of attracting confirmation and prosperity
- striving to be examples of integrity and excellence in their work
- being fully aware that the source of our prosperity, wealth, might, exaltation, advancement and power is, as ordained by God, the very earth which is trodden beneath the feet of all men

If we are aware of this truth, we will be cleansed and sanctified from all pride, arrogance, and vainglory.

How Do We Handle Problems at Work?

When problems arise at work, and we want to overcome them, we need to first of all to centre our whole hearts and minds on service:

An individual must center his whole heart and mind on service to the Cause, in accordance with the high standards set by Bahá'u'lláh. When this is done, the Hosts of the Supreme Concourse will come to the assistance of the individual, and every difficulty and trial will gradually be overcome. (Shoghi Effendi, Living the Life, p. 20)

Then consult in a spirit of unity and love, without ego and without insisting on your own opinion:

Strive with all your hearts and with the very power of life that unity and love may continually increase. In discussions look toward the reality without being self-opinionated. Let no one assert and insist upon his own mere opinion; nay, rather, let each investigate reality with the greatest love and fellowship. Consult upon every matter, and when one presents the point of view of reality itself, that shall be acceptable to all. Then will spiritual unity increase among you, individual illumination will be greater, happiness will be more abundant, and you will draw nearer and nearer to the Kingdom of God. (Abdu'l-Baha, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 183)

And then be content and resigned to whatever God has ordained.

However, one of the most important attributes for one who earns his living is to be content and resigned to whatever God has ordained for him. 'The source of all good,' Bahá'u'lláh states, 'is trust in God, submission unto His command, and contentment in His holy will and pleasure. (Adib Taherzadeh, The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh v 2, p. 281)

What About Mothers and Homemakers?

In relation to your specific queries, the decision concerning the amount of time a mother may spend in working outside the home depends on circumstances existing within the home, which may vary from time to time. Family consultation will help to provide the answers. (Universal House of Justice, Compilation on Women)

Mothers can now be the primary agents for empowering individuals to transform society. They alone can inculcate in their children the self-esteem and respect for others essential for the advancement of civilization. It is clear, then, that the station of mothers, increasingly denigrated in many societies, is in reality of the greatest importance and highest merit. (Bahá'í International Community, 1995 Aug 26, Girl Child A Critical Concern)

You ask about the admonition that everyone must work, and want to know if this means that you, a wife and mother, must work for a livelihood as your husband does... . You will see that the directive is for the friends to be engaged in an occupation which will be of benefit to mankind. Home-making is a highly honourable and responsible work of fundamental importance for mankind. (Universal House of Justice, Lights of Guidance, p. 625-626)

The principles seem to be:

- the station of mothers is of the greatest importance and highest merit
- home-making is a highly honourable and responsible work of fundamental importance for mankind
- decisions about the amount of time a mother may spend in working outside the home depends on circumstances existing within the home
- this may vary from time to time
- this should be decided by family consultation

What About Those Who Can't Work?

The House of Justice will provide him with a monthly allowance for his subsistence:

In one of His Tablets, 'Abdu'l-Bahá states that "if a person is incapable of earning a living, is stricken by dire poverty or becometh helpless, then it is incumbent on the wealthy or the Deputies to provide him with a monthly allowance for his subsistence ... By 'Deputies' is meant the representatives of the people, that is to say the members of the House of Justice." (Bahá'u'lláh, Kitáb-i-Aqdas, Notes, p. 193).

What About Retirement?

The House of Justice will have to legislate on this matter in the future:

Concerning the retirement from work for individuals who have reached a certain age, Shoghi Effendi in a letter written on his behalf stated that "this is a matter on which the International House of Justice will have to legislate as there are no provisions in the Aqdas concerning it". (Bahá'u'lláh, The Kitáb-i-Aqdas, p. 192)

Earning Money

We do earn money while working, so what do we do with it?

We spend it first on ourselves, then on our families for the love of God:

The best of men are they that earn a livelihood by their calling and spend upon themselves and upon their kindred for the love of God, the Lord of all worlds. (Bahá'u'lláh, The Persian Hidden Words, 82)

When we get into debt, there are five things we have to do:

Thou hast asked regarding the means of livelihood. Trust in God and engage in your work and practice economy; the confirmations of God shall descend and you will be enabled to pay off your debts. Be ye occupied always with the mention of Bahá'u'lláh and seek ye no other hope and desire save Him. ('Abdu'l-Bahá, Bahá'í World Faith, p. 375)

- trust in God
- engage in our work
- practice economy
- always be occupied with the mention of Bahá'u'lláh
- seek no other hope and desire but God

How Do We Have Work/Service/Life Balance?

In this materialistic world, where employers demand more of our time and attention, where one person does the work of three, it's hard to not become a workaholic. This is compounded by the demands of the Faith, which are so urgent and demand many sacrifices and a herculean effort. So how do we have a work-life balance?

Here are some suggestions:

Now I shall tell you the essence of service. Share your time with God. Spend half of the day in search of livelihood, guaranteeing your material life and dignified appearance and dedicate the other half in the acquisition of moral virtues and service at the threshold of God ('Abdu'l-Bahá, Star of the West, Vol. 17, Mar. 1927, p. 365)

It is a compromise between the two verses of the "Aqdas", one making it incumbent upon every Bahá'í to serve the promotion of the Faith and the other that every soul should be occupied in some form of

occupation that will benefit society. In one of His Tablets Bahá'u'lláh says that the highest form of detachment in this day is to be occupied with some profession and be self-supporting. A good Bahá'í, therefore, is the one who so arranges his life as to devote time both to his material needs and also to the service of the Cause. (Universal House of Justice, The Importance of the Arts in Promoting the Faith)

The delicate balance between the claims of the Cause of God and the claims of one's profession is an intensely personal matter which can only be resolved eventually in the heart and soul of each individual. Many Bahá'ís have become, and are, distinguished in their professions and at the same time have rendered and are rendering great services to the Cause and it is obviously possible to achieve distinction in one's profession and calling and to serve the Cause of God at the same time. The House of Justice realizes, however that circumstances can conspire at critical times in the fortunes of the Faith, to require individuals to make the heart-searching decision of sacrificing one's own prospect for the apparent good of the Cause. Here again, the history of the Cause provides many examples of believers who have willingly forgone promotion in, or even the continued practice of, their professions in order to meet the needs of the Faith. As in all difficult decisions facing individual officer, such as a Counsellor or Board member, or even one or two friends of his own choosing. Even then, however, the eventual decisions rests with the individual himself. (Universal House of Justice, Lights of Guidance, p. 31-32)

These seem to suggest:

- a good Bahá'í devotes time both to his material needs and also to the service of the Cause
- it is possible to achieve distinction in one's profession and calling and to serve the Cause of God at the same time
- a guideline to aspire to is to spend half the day in your profession and half the day in service
- it's a delicate balance and an intensely personal matter
- it requires us to make heart-searching decisions
- it requires us to sacrifice our own prospects for the apparent good of the Cause
- we can study the history of the Cause for examples of those who have willingly forgone promotion in, or even the continued practice of, their professions in order to meet the needs of the Faith
- we can consult a Counsellor or Board member, or even one or two friends
- the decisions rests with the individual
- it can only be resolved eventually, and in the heart and soul of each one of us

Conclusion:

I'd like to end with this quote from the Bahá'í International Community:

Thus the right to work, the right to contribute to society, takes on a spiritual dimension, and the responsibility to be productive applies to everyone. This attitude toward work profoundly influences the Bahá'í approach to social and economic development. (Bahá'í International Community, 1993 Feb 12, Human Rights Extreme Poverty)