**Christianity & The Bahá’í Faith:**

**Thinking about the meaning of**

**“The Way”**

**Introduction:**

* **“The Way” from several angles: Suffering of the Manifestation; Recognition of God; and Following God. Part of all religions**
* **Study circle format. 3 songs, a story, passages from the Bible and the Baha’i Writings.**
* **Suggest keep the pace up and keep comments to the point, based on the passages being read.**
* **Every Revelation is like an ocean. The Manifestations invite us to not just observe and analyse, but to “plunge right in”.**



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**Show Me The Way**

Such a tall and gentle man, such a strong and slender hand

reached out and touched me, with His, lovin’ heart

Jesus show me the way to find the way

show me the way to find the way

nailed up on a cross all day I heard all that He had to say

reached out and touched me, with His, lovin’ heart

Forgive them Father for they know not what they do

Father forgive them, ‘cause that pain of mine is your pain

Jesus show me the way to find the way

show me the way to find the way

etc …

Brian Cadd & Don Mudie

<https://www.flashlyrics.com/lyrics/brian-cadd/show-me-the-way-24>

**Discussion:**

* **Any thoughts or questions?**
* **Why did Jesus ask that God forgive His enemies? [“For they know not what they do”]**
* **In the next passage ‘Abdu’l-Baha offers an explanation of why His Holiness Jesus Christ suffered all difficulties and ordeals.**

**The Bond of Divine Affection**

Love is the source of all the bestowals of God. Until love takes possession of the heart no other divine bounty can be revealed in it.

All the prophets have striven to make love manifest in the hearts of men. His Holiness Jesus Christ sought to create this love in the hearts. He suffered all difficulties and ordeals that perchance the human heart might become the fountain-source of love. Therefore we must strive with all our heart and soul that this love may take possession of us so that all humanity whether it be in the east or in the west may be connected through the bond of this divine affection; for we are all the waves of one sea; we have come into being through the same bestowal and are recipients from the same center. The lights of earth are all acceptable, but the center of effulgence is the sun and we must direct our gaze to the sun. God is the supreme center. The more we turn toward this center of light, the greater will be our capacity.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*



**Discussion:**

* **Any thoughts or questions?**
* **Why did Jesus accept suffering? [“That love take possession of our hearts”]**
* **Why is it important that love take possession of our hearts [Otherwise no other divine bounty can be revealed in it.**
* **Is there a connection between individual transformation and the oneness of humanity?]**

**On the way to the dungeon**

From Shimírán to Tihrán, Bahá’u’lláh was several times stripped of His garments, and was overwhelmed with abuse and ridicule. On foot and exposed to the fierce rays of the midsummer sun, He was compelled to cover, barefooted and bareheaded, the whole distance from Shimírán to the dungeon already referred to. All along the route, He was pelted and vilified by the crowds whom His enemies had succeeded in convincing that He was the sworn enemy of their sovereign and the wrecker of his realm. Words fail me to portray the horror of the treatment which was meted out to Him as He was being taken to the Síyáh-Chál of Tihrán. As He was approaching the dungeon, an old and decrepit woman was seen to emerge from the midst of the crowd, with a stone in her hand, eager to cast it at the face of Bahá’u’lláh. Her eyes glowed with a determination and fanaticism of which few women of her age were capable. Her whole frame shook with rage as she stepped forward and raised her hand to hurl her missile at Him. “By the Siyyidu’sh-Shuhada, I adjure you,” she pleaded, as she ran to overtake those into whose hands Bahá’u’lláh had been delivered, “give me a chance to fling my stone in his face!” “Suffer not this woman to be disappointed,” were Bahá’u’lláh’s words to His guards, as He saw her hastening behind Him. “Deny her not what she regards as a meritorious act in the sight of God.”

-- Nabíl, *The Dawn-Breakers*, p. 606-608



**Discussion:**

* **Any thoughts or questions?**
* **Did the old lady know what she was doing?**
* **Why did she believe it was a meritorious act? [“enemies had succeeded in convincing…”]**
* **“Siyyidu-shuhada” means “The Master of Martyrs” and refers to the uncle of Mohammad.**
* **Next is a song from the 1970s musical called “Godspell”. It includes a prayer, and a passage from the Bible about preparing the way of the Lord.**

**Day by Day/Prepare ye the way of the Lord**

Prepare ye the way of the Lord

\* \* \*

Day by day

Day by day

O Dear Lord

Three things I pray

To see thee more clearly

Love thee more dearly

Follow thee more nearly

Day by day

\* \* \*

Prepare ye the way of the Lord

Sung by Colleen Hewitt

*from the musical “Godspell”*

*Based on a prayer by St Richard of Chichester, and a verse from Isaiah 40:3*



**Discussion:**

* **Any thoughts or questions?**
* **Is humanity prepared to make the way easy for God’s Messengers?**
* **Many Christians and followers of other religions prayer to see, love and follow God. Does this mean “the way of the Lord” will be smooth? What “clouds’ might obscure one’s view of the Lord?**

**I am the way and the truth and the life**

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you?And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going.”

Thomas said to him, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?”

Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.”

Philip said, “Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.”

Jesus answered: “Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work...”

*The New Testament*, John 14: 1-10



**Discussion:**

* **Any thoughts or questions?**
* **What do these words of Jesus mean?**
* **Is “the way” recognition of God, or following His path, or both?**

**The Way of God**

....The door of the knowledge of the Ancient Being hath ever been, and will continue for ever to be, closed in the face of men. No man’s understanding shall ever gain access unto His holy court. As a token of His mercy, however, and as a proof of His loving-kindness, He hath manifested unto men the Day Stars of His divine guidance, the Symbols of His divine unity, and hath ordained the knowledge of these sanctified Beings to be identical with the knowledge of His own Self. Whoso recognizeth them hath recognized God. Whoso hearkeneth to their call, hath hearkened to the Voice of God, and whoso testifieth to the truth of their Revelation, hath testified to the truth of God Himself. Whoso turneth away from them, hath turned away from God, and whoso disbelieveth in them, hath disbelieved in God. Everyone of them is the Way of God that connecteth this world with the realms above, and the Standard of His Truth unto every one in the kingdoms of earth and heaven. They are the Manifestations of God amidst men, the evidences of His Truth, and the signs of His glory.

*Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*

**Discussion:**

* **Any thoughts or questions?**
* **Compare with Jesus’ words “If you really know me you will know the father as well”.**
* **Can we see the essentials of a Baha’i theology in this passage.**
* **In what way is the knowledge of a Manifestation of God identical with the knowledge of God?**



**The central truth of revealed religion**

…the soul’s ability to attain to an understanding of its Creator’s purpose is the product not merely of its own effort, but of interventions of the Divine that open the way. The point was made with memorable clarity by Jesus: “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” If one is not to see in this assertion merely a dogmatic challenge to other stages of the one ongoing process of Divine guidance, it is obviously the expression of the central truth of revealed religion: that access to the unknowable Reality that creates and sustains existence is possible only through awakening to the illumination shed from that Realm.

From *One Common Faith*, Baha’i World Centre, 2005

**Discussion:**

* **Any thoughts or questions?**
* **Background to the quoted passage: 2002 letter to religious leaders about prejudice. 2005 document “One Common Faith” addressed to Baha’is about raising the level of dialogue above sectarian issues.**
* **What kinds of inter-faith dialogue could be most helpful?**



**Show us the right way**

Wherefore, relevant to this, Khájih ‘Abdu’lláh1 —may God the Most High sanctify his beloved spirit—hath made a subtle point and spoken an eloquent word as to the meaning of “Guide Thou us on the straight path,” 2 which is: “Show us the right way, that is, honor us with the love of Thine Essence, that we may be freed from turning toward ourselves and toward all else save Thee, and may become wholly Thine, and know only Thee, and see only Thee, and think of none save Thee.”

Bahá’u’lláh*, The Seven Valleys*

1 Shaykh Abú Ismá’íl ‘Abdu’lláh Ansárí of Hirát (1006–1088 A.D.) Súfí leader.

2 Qur’án 1:5.

**Discussion:**

* **Any thoughts or questions?**
* **Compare with the earlier quoted passage of ‘Abdu’l-Baha –“we must strive with heart and soul that this love may take possession of us”. ?**

**I’ll Walk the Path**

I’ll walk the path of my Lord

I’ll walk the path of my Lord

And when I fall, like all men, I will hope for His grace

I’ll walk the path of my Lord

I’ll seek the pleasure of my Lord

I’ll seek the pleasure of my Lord

And what He asks, like Quddús, I will make my desire

I’ll seek the pleasure of my Lord

I’ll bear the banner of my Lord

I’ll bear the banner of my Lord

And unafraid, like Ḥusayn, I will raise up His Name

I’ll bear the banner of my Lord

I’ll walk the path

I’ll seek the pleasure

I’ll bear the banner

I’ll be a sign from my Lord

By R. Gregory Shaw

<http://www.ruhi.org/resources/songs2/EN_Ill_Walk_the_Path.mp3>



**Discussion:**

* **This is a song taught in Baha’i children’s classes. Can a child understand “the way” and “walk the path” of their Lord?**